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Transcultural Studies and Novels for Young Readers: The Refugee Experience in Alan Gratz's *Refugee* and Gillian Cross' *After Tomorrow*

Margarete Rubik

Summary

As a response to recent mass migratory movements, numerous children's novels about refugees have been published in the last decades. The paper analyses two of these novels, Alan Gratz's *Refugee* (2017) and Gillian Cross's *After Tomorrow* (2013), and puts them into the context of the 'transcultural turn' in cultural studies. The paper also presents the results of a survey among university lecturers of various countries about the benefits, challenges and teaching aims of including migrant and refugee literature into the courses they teach.

Keywords: transcultural literature, migrant literature, children's novels

The significance of the growing body of migrant ethnic literature has been widely acknowledged in academia. The genre has long had a fixed place in the University classroom – as is also evinced by the analysis of questionnaires answered by lecturers teaching at various universities in Europe and America (see the appendix to this paper). At least until the recent past, however, migration or refugee literature was not widely read in secondary schools. Yet in the last decades a broad spectrum of novels written for children and young adults have been published that deal with migrants and/or asylum seekers. This is hardly surprising, given the successive waves of immigration in recent years, due to wars, and political, ethnic or religious persecution, and the millions of displaced persons and economic migrants worldwide, who are often receiving polarized coverage in the Western media. These migrants and refugees have, naturally, impacted the environment and experiences of children as well, not only through media broadcasts or family discussions, but also through new schoolmates and neighbours.

Many children's novels about refugees are composed as autodiegetic narratives, presenting the flight from terror and war in the former homeland, as well as the challenges of adjustment to a new and alien culture in the host country through the eyes and voices of protagonists approximately the age of the young readers. Such a first-person perspective tends to render the narrators likeable to the audience and to invite identification. Scholars interested in pedagogy have therefore recommended the use of texts about refugees in the classroom, in order to interest children in Europe and the United States in their fates and to invite them to consider the current debate about asylum seekers from the perspective of characters from different cultures forced to flee and seek sanctuary abroad. Imaginatively projecting oneself into another person's place is an important social competence, Narratives, cognitive psychologists have argued, can promote this ability: reading fiction has been found to facilitate the development of empathy in children, which supports the conjecture that there is a connection between the empathy readers feel for fictional characters and their ability to empathise with real-life people (Stansfield/Bunce, 9). Therefore novels about refugees, it is hoped, can promote rapport with foreigners, decrease prejudice, foster an understanding between cultures, motivate altruism and prosocial behaviour, and encourage students to show solidarity towards marginalized and discriminated groups (Volkman, 'Opportunities', 244). Such solidarity, of course cannot consist in the reader's unreflecting adoption of the fictional narrator's values, but should involve critical reflection on both the characters' views and the reader's own cultural norms (Freitag-Hild, 85; Delanoy, Eisenmann and Matz, 5, 9), which in turn may contribute to overcoming "monocultural standpoints" and promoting "exchange and interaction" (Welsch, "Transculturality", 201, 205). Though literary works, Knellwolf (forthcoming) argues, "cannot directly and intentionally develop the [...] ethical predispositions of their readers", they may elicit "responses that can

inculcate a more welcoming attitude toward cultural difference”, and they can engender interest in the characters portrayed, which may eventually turn into “interestedness”. Teaching “ethically benign behaviour” (Volkman, ‘Opportunities’, 244) seems particularly important in view of the increasingly hostile climate towards migrants, who are presented by populist politicians “as threats to national unity and security” and as opportunists who have no claim to asylum (Nyman, 11, 17).

While it is certainly true that readers will relate problems dealt with in literature to their real world situations (Volkman, “Literary Literacies”, 53), it is, as I have argued elsewhere, impossible to prove conclusively how robust the influence of literary texts on real world behaviour might be, given that children are exposed to a deluge of simultaneous influences from friends and family members, quite apart from the negative images often disseminated in the social media (Rubik, forthcoming). Positive attitudes towards minority groups developed during the reading process may well wear off after a time. Nonetheless many scholars firmly believe in the potential of literature “to make readers more open-minded, more tolerant, and less parochial” and to help them negotiate transcultural encounters successfully (Volkman, “Opportunities”, 247, 259).

Intercultural competence and understanding have long been set down as teaching objectives in secondary education, though the term ‘intercultural’ has become increasingly discredited in recent years in the course of the ‘transcultural turn’. The concept of ‘intercultural’ understanding, it is argued, is based on outmoded concepts which treat cultures as monoliths with clear boundaries (Eisenmann, 221-2). Therefore, its critics maintain, it unduly focusses on the differences between various cultures – hence the term ought to be replaced by transculturality, which concentrates on the mutual permeation of cultures (Welsch, “Transkulturalität”, 334-5), tries to dissolve the self – other binary implied in the term ‘intercultural’, and prioritises hybridity and heterogeneity within one culture (Blell and Dorff, 80). Transcultural studies challenge the old concept of the collective identity of a particular nation (Freitag-Hild, 18; Stein, 252-3), blurring the difference between insider and outsider and acknowledging the multiplicity of individual and group affiliations (Bell and Dorff, 83). Modern individuals, it is argued, creatively assemble their identities from a “pool” of cultures (Hannerz, 49) and are no longer determined by one culture only. Modern identities are plural and hybrid, merging elements from various cultures and social classes in very individual combinations. Transcultural studies hence should teach us to reflect critically upon essentialist concepts of culture and identity (Freitag-Hild, 54) and make us aware of the interdependence of cultures in the age of globalisation (Eisenmann, 221). It needs to be added, however, that other critics have argued that intercultural and transcultural learning are complimentary terms and should not be conceived as opposites (see Siegmann, 171; Delanoy, 26).

Some scholars seem to use the terms ‘transcultural’ and ‘transnational’ almost interchangeably. In the *Cambridge Companion to Transnational American Literature* (2018), Yogita Goyal defines the aim of transnationalism as the unsettling of national myths of cultural purity, the displacement of nationalist binaries and the revelation of the interconnectedness of various parts of the world and peoples (6, 10) – which largely ties in with the way scholars have defined transculturality. The term ‘cosmopolitan’ is also used in a related manner. Hannerz underlines that we are influenced by the people we meet, the places we travel to, the books and papers we read, the TV channels we watch, and stresses the transnational ties of kin, friends and business associates in the modern world, but defines a more genuine cosmopolitanism as intellectual openness and a willingness to engage with the Other (89, 103).

While it is important to be aware that there is no unified national culture and that our individual identities –not only those of migrants drawing upon two or more cultures – are composites of diverse elements, the celebration of such creolized identities in some transcultural studies is problematic, not only because of the disturbing biologist overtones of the term ‘hybrid’. In the modern world a certain kind of cosmopolitanism is undoubtedly no longer the privilege of the “globetrotting ... elite” but open to a much wider section of the population, from students on exchange programmes to work migrants (Nyman, 4). Yet the very diversity of these mobile groups points to the danger of occluding the very different power relations and life options such ‘cosmopolitan’ border crossings involve. Hence transcultural studies have, with some reason, been accused of being blind to the power asymmetries between cultures and economies (Freitag-Hild, 33, Delanoy, 25). The concept of transculturality is potentially elitist, catering to the tastes of the rich, the young, the urban intellectuals, and disregarding the poor, the rural, the elderly and more traditional part of the population. Volkmann, for instance, criticizes that the concepts of transculturality and postmodernism gratify the personal sensitivities of privileged bourgeois elites in high- and post-industrial societies, and that the academy in its ivory tower fails to acknowledge the continued existence of binary and hierarchical patterns of thought (“Abkehr”, 43–4). Transcultural studies, Schulze-Engler defined pointedly, focus not on what culture does to the individual, but what an individual does with culture (46), concentrating on the myriad different ways in which individuals in a society construct their selfhood. This focus on the individual, however, involves the danger of underestimating the importance of class, religion and community (Fischer, vii). A sizable section of the population still feel themselves strongly rooted within a particular nation and define themselves in relation to “a collective ‘we-identity” (G. Alter, 63). Besides, terrorist attacks and the high number of people seeking refuge in Europe and America in recent years have aroused wide-spread fears of

foreign infiltration, giving new impetus to essentialist concepts of a national cultural identity imperilled by alien immigrants – unrealistic and plain xenophobic though this may be. The concept of intermingling cultures, Hannerz suggests, may be more easy to integrate into the old American ideal of the melting pot (although President Trump’s rhetoric and policies suggest otherwise), but in European countries “other ideas of historical roots would seem much more difficult to contest” (87). Instead of celebrating the cultural potential of hybridity and creolisation, as some postcolonial critics have done, many politicians and a majority of the population in the West demand that immigrants assimilate to the prevailing cultural norms, and that they should be speedily deported or preferably hindered from crossing the national border in the first place. Throughout Europe the influx of migrants and asylum-seekers has led to a continuous tightening of immigration laws, so that nowadays the global flow of money, media and goods is encouraged, while more and more border restrictions for people are introduced (Woolley, 6). Frontiers in Europe and the US are no longer as penetrable as Nyman predicted, and a large number of refugees are being deported. (36).

Nyman’s criticism of unrealistic visions of “easy adaptation”, “triumphant hybridities” and “such forms of postcolonial discourse that celebrate them as unproblematic ways of countering hierarchies and hegemonies” (1) has gained added topicality in view of these political developments. Transcultural identities, he reminds us, are not always voluntary, and refugees cannot be romanticized and posited as privileged models of identity in the postcolonial world (Nyman, 35). Besides, transitions between cultures in the writings of literary celebrities like Rushdie or Mukherjee “appear much less problematic and patrolled” than in other refugee narratives (Nyman, 20). Woolley (3), too, emphasizes that refugee narratives, which frequently tell about displacement, loss, death and trauma, are markedly different from this celebrated diaspora identity. Besides, as Volkmann (“Opportunities”, 241) points out, there is, today, both a proclivity towards globalisation and at the same time a resistance to homogenizing, for fear that cultural diversity may be wiped out. Particularly for minority groups cultural identity has gained enormous significance: it is a protection against a fading identity and against becoming invisible (G. Alter, 63). A transcultural, that is, instable, hybrid identity would mean the loss of a voice for these minorities.

In the classroom a transcultural approach should thus be negotiated with care. It can teach pupils to reflect upon essentialist concepts of culture and identity (Freitag-Hild, 54) and might offer them a sense of freedom to construct their own, individual identity, leaving behind confining traditions. It may open up routes of bonding with foreign classmates with similar interests, preferences and problems, which in turn might ease acceptance and tolerance of those foreign habits and cultural conventions which will seem unfamiliar and outlandish. The challenge,

then, is to acknowledge local traditions, customs and beliefs, but to show that they are historically constructed, open to change, not unanimously and universally accepted even within the national community, but open to contest. The difficulty is to find a way to accept and/or tolerate as much difference as possible, but also to uphold some basic values as not open to negotiation. Although Welsch has frequently expounded that all cultures are a conglomeration of diverse historical and recent influences and that there is no such thing as, for instance, a German, 'Leitkultur' (core culture), he also acknowledges the existence of something like a European core culture involving non-negotiable values such as the international human rights, an independent judiciary, democracy and the equality of the sexes, which new settlers must subscribe to if they want to be accepted in our communities (Welsch, Discussion).

Various critics have regarded literature as a privileged site for "exploring transcultural experience" (Nordin, Hansen and Llena, x), and indeed as a "'contact zone' [...] where transculturation takes place" (Loomba, 70). However, setting in motion such transculturation processes in a classroom is not so easy. Literary texts about different cultures and ethnicities can arouse empathy and understanding for the 'Other'; but they are also potential sources of misunderstanding. The schemata readers apply to interpret any text (and real-life encounters as well) are culture-dependent. As Freitag-Hild (335) has warned, and as has also emerged from the questionnaires briefly discussed in the appendix to this paper, pupils (and university students as well) often lack the background knowledge necessary to understand unfamiliar customs, values and attitudes of a foreign culture and tend to judge fictional characters from the limited perspective of their own cultural norms. Teachers must hence devote some time to explain the cultural, social, and historical background to the text.

What features do critics regard as characteristic of texts that offer a transcultural perspective? Helff (83) thinks that transcultural narratives challenge the collective identity of a particular community, dispute traditional notions of home and narrate experiences of border crossing. According to Hannerz (87) many stress hybridity and intermingling. Transcultural writers, Dagnino (74-5) argues, have normally undergone transpatriation themselves and had to re-negotiate their identity; they write about the dynamics of cultural encounters, presenting characters with more than one background and mixing languages and narrative genres. Freitag-Hild (3) suggests that transcultural stories develop alternative concepts of cultural identity; the stories are usually set in various countries and often employ multiperspectivity as a narrative technique. These descriptions partly overlap with features that are typical of the refugee and migrant genres: there, too, journeying across countries and questioning the concept of home are typical features, but narratives of forced migration also thematise death, trauma and lack of agency,

loneliness, melancholy and displacement, racialized borders between the migrants and the host community, the lack of full integration and acceptance in a hostile host community, and they want to give a voice to their subjects (Nyman, 12, 76). Many of these works, it should be added, also blur the distinction between refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants, between forced and voluntary migration – a distinction which is often unclear in real life as well, as many people seeking sanctuary abroad are not actually fleeing state persecution but state failure and the loss of livelihood possibilities (Loescher, 320).

In studies about transcultural texts and recent refugee narratives, scholars concerned with anglophone literature tend to concentrate on postcolonial authors from the periphery who have migrated to the metropolises of the West, have undergone transpatriation and have had to negotiate new identities, which draw on the cultures of both their home and host country. It is mainly in a historical context of American or Australian studies that also narratives, for instance, of Jewish, Italian or Eastern European immigrants are considered, which force students to revise the stereotyped contemporary image of migrants as coming mainly from the Middle East or Africa. Obviously, texts written by white writers of the metropolis are usually not taken into account. Yet many acclaimed children's novels about refugees, surprisingly, were written by white American or British writers, who tackle the problem of displacement sympathetically, but of course cannot really offer the wanted insider's perspective or a privileged insight into the target culture. The arrogation of refugee voices by writers from the majority culture is, of course, very problematic – a no-go in postcolonial theory. On the other hand, the critical praise the narratives have received and the fact that "teachers and librarians have embraced these titles as a way to explain the refugee crisis to children" (A. Alter) suggest that their authors indeed manage to make the plight of refugees accessible to Western children and to ease the clash of schemata which can mislead inexperienced readers in their comprehension and evaluation of foreign culture-specific forms of behaviour.

Many of these texts about refugees for young readers take an intercultural, rather than a transcultural approach, focussing primarily on the cultural differences the young refugees have to negotiate before they can develop a hybrid identity, in which they retain their roots but also adapt to their new home. In the following, I want to deal with two refugee novels written by award-winning white writers of children's books – *Refugee* by the American author Alan Gratz and *After Tomorrow* by the British author Gillian Cross – which not only promote tolerance and understanding but, I think, also convey a transcultural agenda and are well suited for the classroom. Narratives written for children, of course, cannot be expected to be as complex and sophisticated as novels for adults. However, Gratz's and Cross' novels do challenge concepts of collective national identity and narrate

experiences of border crossing and traumatic flights in which the protagonists have to face death, despair and helplessness, need to re-negotiate their identities and to re-think notions of home. The authors also question the distinction between refugees and economic migrants, which nowadays is often decisive for an applicant's right of residency in Europe; and they even manage to imply a form of multiperspectivity,

REFUGEE

Alan Gratz's highly acclaimed novel *Refugee* was on the *New York Times* bestseller list for more than a year; it received numerous awards, among them the Sidney Taylor Book Award and the National Jewish Book Award, and was chosen as a Global Read Aloud Book in 2018 (Gratz, "About Me"). It is recommended for children from nine years up, but contains some violence (though never gratuitous) in connection with the perils the protagonists have to brave during their flights, so that slightly older readers might be more appropriate. The characters become eye-witnesses of deadly shootings and shark attacks, see corpses floating in the water, and hear reports about torture and executions in concentration camps. In an EFL classroom learners would probably have to be older anyway, and more proficient in English: although the book is written in a comparatively simple language, its 338 pages still present a formidable challenge to young foreign readers, despite the fact that the suspenseful narrative is likely to captivate their interest. In an interview Gratz said that he wanted to personalize the current conflict around incoming refugees: "I wanted to make individual refugees visible and turn statistics into names and faces that kids could relate to" (Gratz, qtd. in A. Alter). He wrote the novel with middle-graders in mind, who "are shaping their views of the world *right now* because the world is forcing them to", and, he felt, should be offered an antidote to the "racist and intolerant rhetoric" they hear from political leaders or on the internet (Gratz, qtd. in Jordan).

Novels for children, as mentioned above, usually employ a fairly simple narrative technique – most often, first person narration. A sophisticated technique like multiperspectivity – which is regarded as one of the features typical of trans-cultural novels for adults – is rare, because it can be potentially confusing to inexperienced readers. *Refugee* is one of the few children's novels that indeed manage to juggle multiple perspectives: it interweaves the stories of three different fictional characters forced to flee from their different mother-countries at different times, but whose fates and routes cross, although the main characters never meet in person. Yet their experiences seem to repeat themselves. Twelve-year-old Joseph is a German Jew whose father is arrested and whose family is terrorized by Nazi

storm troopers in the Kristallnacht of 1938. A little later, in May 1939, the family try to flee to Cuba – the only state willing to grant them visas – on the MSS St. Louis. The ship, and some of the characters on it, such as Captain Gustav Schroeder and the Nazi sailor Otto Schiendick, are historical; Josef's father is an amalgam of two real-life men (Gratz, "Author's Note", 326-7). As in real life, the Jewish passengers in the novel are denied entrance into Havana and also into the United States, and have to return to Europe, where Josef, his mother and sister are given sanctuary in France, which is soon afterwards occupied by German troops. Josef and his mother are arrested and killed in a concentration camp; his young sister Ruthie survives the holocaust.

The father of eleven-year-old Isabel stands in danger of being thrown into prison after a riot because of food shortages in Havana in 1994. Again, these food riots are historical, as is Fidel Castro's short-lived decision to let Cubans who want to leave go – which led to the exodus of hundreds of would-be emigrants on make-shift boats. Isabel, her parents, grandfather and neighbours (all of them fictional characters), too, try to flee to the United States. The US policy in operation at the time decreed that if they make it to the American shore, they will be granted asylum, but if they are caught at sea, they will be returned to Cuba, possibly facing prison sentences. Contrary to their expectations, the dangerous voyage lasts five days: they are almost run over by a tanker, almost drown, are blown off-course, are denied entrance in the Bahamas, lose a boy in a shark attack, and finally reach the coast of Florida – finding the sanctuary there that was denied to the Jews on the MSS St. Louis. In order to buy the family time to make the last meters to the shore, Isabel's grandfather – the very policeman who was forced to prevent the Jewish passengers of the St. Louis from disembarking in Havana – jumps into the sea, thereby forcing the American coast guard boat to start a rescue action, though this means that the Americans will send him back to Cuba. For him, this is an act of atonement for not taking action to help the Jewish refugees 55 years earlier.

The third strand of action, also merging historical incidents with fictional characters modelled on the thousands of Syrian refugees who fled to Europe in 2015, deals with twelve-year old Mahmoud from Aleppo, who in the Syrian civil war is in constant danger of being hit by barrel-bombs or killed by warring factions or religious fanatics in a city where law and order has completely broken down. When their house is destroyed by a missile, the family flees to Germany, braving a perilous sea-passage from Turkey to Greece, in which the majority of the passengers is drowned. On their way along the Balkan route they are exploited and robbed at gunpoint, arrested and incarcerated in a Hungarian refugee camp, before they finally make it to Berlin, where they are taken in by Ruthie, Josef's sister, the holocaust survivor who, as an old woman, offers a new home to the Syrian refugees. The novel thus comes round full circle, ending in the place where

it began: Germany, from which Jews in the 1930s had to flee if they wanted to survive, now offers sanctuary to asylum-seekers from another part of the world, who in turn had to flee for their lives. Mahmoud wonders whether Aleppo will rise from the ashes as Berlin did after the second world war.

Throughout the novel things seem to repeat themselves: “refugees continue to suffer because we make the same mistakes again and again”, Gratz complained (qtd. in Jordan). Although the protagonists have different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, different religions and live in different times, they share basic experiences typical of refugees, such as helplessness, fear, loss of family members and friends – which ought to make young readers aware that refugees are not a singular, contemporary phenomenon, but that the tragedies of displacement, persecution, flight and asylum-seeking repeat themselves over and over again. The three narratives alternate, with each consecutive chapter devoted to another protagonist in turn, in order to make the similarities between them all the more eye-catching. In all three strands of action immigration policies and officials who stolidly administer these policies deny entrance to refugees who have fled from terror, tyranny and death. Although the governments of their home countries hate and persecute these people, they nevertheless refuse to let them emigrate; and other countries incarcerate them if they pass through their territory during their flight. All three protagonists need to cross the sea on their way to sanctuary and are threatened by similar dangers: Josef’s father, who jumps over board to commit suicide, is saved from sharks by a police officer who turns out to be Isabel’s grandfather, but Isabel’s friend does not survive a shark attack. The Jewish would-be immigrants are put off by the Cuban authorities by constant promises for ‘tomorrow’; so is Mahmoud’s family by the people’s smuggler who promised them a crossing from Izmir to Lesbos. The question of the benefits and ills of visibility and invisibility is raised in all three narrative strands. In Nazi Germany and in occupied France Jews have to hide to escape arrest, and Josef’s father needed to be ‘invisible’ not to draw the attention of Nazi henchmen upon himself in the concentration camp; however, Josef also realizes that they cannot just be passive and therefore tries to help the passengers who mutiny to take command of the MSS *St. Louis*, but are finally persuaded to give up, lest they be officially charged with piracy and extradited to Germany. Isabel’s boat is nearly cut in two by a tanker, because it is so small and hardly visible on the ocean; but on the other hand the tiny craft also escapes discovery by the coast guards until the very last minutes. In Aleppo Mahmoud has learned to be invisible to escape from bullies and soldiers, but he comes to realize that the refugees need to be visible, otherwise they will be overlooked and no-one will help them.

Despite their young age all three protagonists are forced to mature fast and to take up the responsibilities of adults. Josef – originally proud of having become

a 'man' at his bar mitzvah – all too soon must in full earnest take the role of the man of the family, which his paranoid father is no longer able to fulfil; from now on Josef is the one who takes action and decisions. Isabel, too, grows beyond her years, saving her neighbour from drowning, helping to bail the sinking boat, and carrying her baby brother, born on the boat, to safety in America. During the shipwreck Mahmoud makes the fateful decision of handing his baby sister to a passing boat of other refugees because they cannot keep her above water any longer – which makes him feel responsible for her loss when they cannot find her again after their own rescue. And he leads the flight of the imprisoned refugees from the Hungarian camp because he realizes that, under the eyes of UN officials, the Hungarians will not dare to detain them.

In spite of such similarities, however, Gratz is at pains to avoid essentialised descriptions of either the refugees or the majority population, but paints varied pictures of their reactions. While each community – the German Jews, the Syrian Muslims, and the Cubans – shares particular habits and customs (such as certain prayers, coming of age ceremonies, burial rites, etc.), each of the refugees is shown to be different. The behaviour of the Jewish passengers of the MSS St Louis ranges from the persecution mania of Josef's traumatized father to the innocent mischief of two little girls, from the distraught mother's wish to spend the last safe days on board dancing, to some desperate men's attempt (including Josef) to hijack the ship to run her aground in US waters. Gratz also makes it clear that not all Germans are monsters: the fanatical Nazi sailor is counterpointed with the St Louis's humane captain, who tries everything he can to save the passengers of his ship. The sadistic Nazi soldier (obviously taken from *Sophie's Choice*) who forces Josef's mother to decide which of her two children he should let go, is contrasted to the unnamed Germans who hid Ruthie's cousin during the war, and to the Hitler Youth who steals Josef's candy but otherwise lets him go with a warning from the restaurant car he is forbidden to enter as a Jew. And the disturbing images of the Kristallnacht are contrasted with the generous welcome Germany gives to Syrian refugees in 2015. Similarly, Isabel's relatives and the neighbours have different plans and attitudes, although they ultimately show solidarity with each other. The officials of the Bahamas, who are not allowed to admit aliens, are contrasted to the tourists, who try to help the refugees by giving them water and food. Mahmoud is contrasted to his catatonic brother, his optimistic father, his anxious mother. During their flight they meets people who ruthlessly exploit Syrian refugees, charging them horrendous sums for sleeping in a derelict shopping centre or selling them dysfunctional life vests, while others offer their help. The picture drawn of Hungary is almost completely negative (probably owing to the broadcasts about the brutal treatment of refugees there that went around the world in 2015): the policemen shoot tear-gas, whose effects are graphically

described, incarcerate and beat the refugees, throwing them food as if they were animals in a zoo: “We don’t want your filth here [...] You’re all parasites!” (Gratz, *Refugee*, 267). But some civilians cheer them on their way, while others boo. And while the tourists on the ferry from Lesbos seem annoyed when the Muslims kneel down to pray, the Austrians at the border applaud them after the prayer and welcome them kindly. Thus by and large Gratz tries to deconstruct national stereotypes, stressing the diversity of people in all nations.

I have already discussed *Refugee’s* unusual intertwining of three different refugee narratives. Unlike many other children’s books, Gratz also does not employ first person narrative, with the exception of Ruthie’s brief recollection, winding up Josef’s story, in which she tells Mahmoud that her brother volunteered to go to the concentration camp, so that she could go free. The rest of the novel is a third person narrative using the three protagonists as focalisers and showing the events through their eyes. Thereby, Gratz extends a similar invitation to the reader as autodiegetic narratives do to empathize with the main characters and understand their thoughts and feelings. However, as the world-views of eleven- to thirteen-year olds are occasionally too limited for the author’s didactic purposes, the young focalisers are at times endowed with insights and clairvoyance that are not entirely credible, given their age. Would a thirteen-year-old boy really have sensed that going back to Germany means going to their deaths – even if his father told him about the horrors of Dachau? And would he have feared, before the war broke out, that Germany might occupy half of Europe? Even if Mahmoud might notice the tourists’ frowns of displeasure when the Muslim migrants all kneel down to pray on the ferry, would he be able to formulate the insight that Westerners only see the refugees when they do something they do not want them to do? And could a twelve-year-old boy really lead the walk-out from the refugee camp to the border (although such a walk-out did happen in Denmark in reality), and have the perspicacity to understand that the Hungarians will not use violence under the eyes of the UN inspectors?

Such slight dissonances in narrative perspective are probably due to the author’s wish to spell out the book’s message to its young readers. Gratz was aware that his “sympathetic look at people whose lives are upended by war and oppression, might repel some readers” who assume he wanted “to push an agenda” (Gratz, qtd. in A. Alter). Such a resentful reaction – indeed, something like a caricature of the very attitude Gratz attacks – appears, for instance, in the blog of a rightist mother enraged at her child’s school-reading: she accuses Gratz of inculcating pupils with left-wing ideas, arguing that only Josef really qualifies as a refugee, whereas Isabel’s father should not have rioted, then he need not have fled from Cuba, and that Mahmoud’s family should have stayed in Turkey instead of “shopping for a better life” in Europe (Lee). As is typical of the migrant and

refugee genres, however, Gratz consciously blurs the distinction between asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, implying that such legal quibbles do not do justice to the problem. Josef undoubtedly should have qualified for asylum, which in 1939 both Cuba and the United States failed to grant. However, Gratz also describes a Cuba in which there is not only scarcity of food but in which political opponents and even people who just want to leave the country are imprisoned. Isabel's family hope to gain both (political) freedom and a better life in the US. Mahmoud's family are in constant danger of their lives in Aleppo. His father has heard that Germany will accept Syrians, so he never thinks of staying in the Turkish refugee camp, but crosses border after border, if need be also illegally, because he does not have enough money to wait for weeks for official permits. Readers are invited to ask themselves whether they would not have done the same, given the civil war in Syria, and the terrible living conditions and exploitation on the way. Not everything the family do is legal, but neither are all of Josef's actions (after all, he is willing to help hijack a ship). If we understand Josef's despair, Gratz tries to show, we should also understand Isabel's and Mahmoud's families.

Towards the end of the novel, there are some regrettable mistakes which a careful editor should have corrected. Why English-speaking authors feel that they should include German words for the sake of authenticity when they do not know the language is not clear – in any case “komm hier” (Gratz, *Refugee*, 316) is not correct German. It is also not clear how Mohammed can understand Ruthie's report about Josef's fate and her promise to help him find his baby sister, if he does not speak a word of German. In the attached ‘Author's Note’, which gives interesting information about the historical background of the narrative and recommends donating money for UNICEF or Save the Children, Hungary is erroneously listed together with Germany and Sweden as having accepted “hundreds of thousands of refugees” (Gratz, *Refugee*, 334) – when, in fact, it has obdurately refused to take in refugees. This is all the more surprising because in the novel itself Hungary is excoriated for its treatment of refugees.

In their survey of refugee fiction for children and young adults Liang, Brendler and Galda (60) have identified three phases in the usual plot of refugee stories, on one of which these narratives tend to concentrate: either the novels focus on the precarious situation in the home country, explaining the reason for the flight of the characters; or they direct attention to the suspenseful journey, in which the young refugees are often in danger and have to overcome numerous difficulties; or they centre on the arrival, the difficulties of adaptation to the host country and the question of whether the hopes and expectations of the refugees are actually fulfilled. *Refugee* clearly belongs to the second type. It concentrates on the perilous journeys, providing only a brief background to the political, social and economic situation occasioning the decision to leave, and giving hardly any information

about the protagonists' lives after arrival: Josef never makes it to safety, but in Mahmoud's narrative we learn that Josef's sister now lives in a little house in Berlin (an American's view of urban life, that – Berlin being a city where few people would actually own a house, be it ever so small). We are told that, after her arrival in Miami, Isabel is proud of soon becoming an American citizen and that she starts to develop a hybrid identity, symbolized by the fact that at an audition she plays the American anthem on her trumpet Cuban-style. Of Mahmoud we only learn that he has a sense that Germany and Ruthie's house might feel like home; he has not yet had time to re-negotiate a new identity, and Gratz shies away from giving more than a very fleeting glimpse at the Syrian boy's surprise at being taken in by a Jewish family. By leaving the two survivors at the threshold, as it were, of their new lives, the novel also suggests to its young readers that they, too, might contribute to a positive new beginning for refugees by welcoming their foreign classmates in their midst.

AFTER TOMORROW

Gillian Cross' novel *After Tomorrow* (2013) won the Little Rebels Children's Book Award 2014, was longlisted for the Carnegie Medal 2014 and the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, and shortlisted for the Leeds Book Awards 2014, age category 11-14 ("LoveReading View"). The book is "a real page-turner with a strong sense of danger always present, and many big issues of a possible future just below the surface" (Wendy Cooling, judge of the Little Rebels Children's Book Award 2014, qtd in "Gillian Cross Wins"), and an exciting read for teenagers. In order to appreciate the full effect of the ironies it employs, however, children must be mature enough to understand its inversion of familiar schemata and expectations as far as migrants are concerned. The novel is quite unlike the run-of-the mill stories of persecuted, starving refugees from the Middle East, Africa or Latin America fleeing to freedom in the West (or, if a historical perspective is included, as in *Refugee*, German Jews trying to escape from Nazi terror). Instead, in this dystopian novel set in the near future, public order has completely broken down in Britain, and it is British citizens who by the thousands flee to France for sanctuary, reversing the wonted scenario of displacement and breaking up the protective layer of habituation and complacency most of us have developed vis-a vis migrants. By this strategy the narrative gets under one's skin, suddenly confronting readers with the spectre that this could also happen to them, a premise that is "a little too close for comfort" (Buckley-Archer).

After a black Monday in which five banks crashed all at once, the British economy has collapsed, putting an end to "a way of life we take for granted" (Buckley-Archer): there are food-shortages, and what food there is, is sold at exorbitant

prices. Hungry “raiders” break into houses in order to steal food and anything else of value, sometimes raping and even killing the owners in the process. Matt’s father, a truck driver delivering potatoes, was killed by robbers who were after his load, and his grandfather died of a heart-attack when his small allotment, in which he grew vegetables and fruit to supply his family, was raided. Matt’s mother is raped when she fails to knuckle down to a group of robbers, and his step-father is badly injured in the face. The family is also listed on a hate internet page identifying so-called “scadgers”. that is, hoarders, “[r]ich people who buy up all the food and hide it away so they don’t have to share it with anyone else” (Cross, *After Tomorrow*, 6). But Matt’s family is anything but rich – his mother just managed to collect a few provisions by trading home-grown vegetables for other food-stuffs. After this incident the family decide to do what many others have done before – namely to flee to the continent. However, the French are closing the border because of this mass exodus, justifying the measure by the familiar rhetoric of false regret politicians have lately adopted to vindicate the erection of fences, border controls and the rejection of refugees:

The people of France have great sympathy with their British cousins, but these are hard times for our country. We cannot afford to receive the great numbers of people who are trying to enter France, Therefore, with great regret, we must follow the example of other European countries and close our borders (Cross, *After Tomorrow*, 37).

For once Britons – who in real life have taken a stream of measures to prevent increased immigration (see Woolley, 4-5) – are at the receiving end of such frontier management; now they are the aliens that other European countries try to keep out. For Matt it comes as a shock that he needs to revise his view of the TV-pictures of long lines of people walking down a country road with bundles and babies: “*Refugees*, I thought automatically. But they weren’t. They were people like us” (Cross, *After Tomorrow*, 37). The novel thus prevents the readers from othering the refugees, but forces them to put themselves in their place.

Teenaged Matt, his little brother Taco and his step father manage to make it through the Channel Tunnel with the help of Bob, who, for money, crams his truck full with desperate people making a last-minute bid to escape to the continent. The truck-load of refugees suddenly stuck in the Chunnel not only conjures up appalling memories of migrants suffocated in vans on their way into Europe, but also constitutes a deliberate challenge of propaganda branding both people’s smugglers and illegal immigrants who make use of them as criminals. Given their circumstances – could anyone really blame the family for making use of Bob’s help? Then, however, we can hardly blame Mahmoud’s father in *Refugee* either for

paying money to an unscrupulous smuggler to help them cross the Aegean. At the other end of the tunnel, it turns out in *After Tomorrow*, armed French soldiers have erected crowd barriers, keeping the refugees penned up in a floodlight-lit space without any food, water, or protection from the rain. Finally, most of them are sent straight back to England, with the exception of parents with children and people whose “lives have been in danger” (Cross, *After Tomorrow*, 64). In locked-up trains uncomfortably reminiscent of Nazi transports, those allowed to stay are taken to a desolate camp, where they are housed in tents made of corrugated iron, cardboard and polythene. There is no proper hygiene or medical care, and Taco almost dies when he contracts fever from a rat-bite and no penicillin is available.

In its reversal of stereotypes, *After Tomorrow* goes even one step further: one of the TV crews reporting on the “desperate, starving refugees” (Cross, *After Tomorrow*, 107) and their precarious living conditions are Arabs probably working for Al Jazeera. The humane journalist Salman is genuinely upset by the misery he sees, yet has little power to change the refugees’ appalling situation. But he does save Taco’s life, although, as a reporter, he is not supposed to get involved. “But you can’t stay human in this job unless you break the rules sometimes” (Cross, *After Tomorrow*, 274). He sends an ambulance and pays for the hospital, so that the boy can receive proper treatment, in recompense, to be sure, for a sensational and probably mawkish cover story – an effective reversal of our wonted schemata of Western journalists reporting about and occasionally organizing aid for desolate Middle Eastern refugees.

Unlike *Refugee*, *After Tomorrow* is a straightforward first person narrative; yet like *Refugee*, it achieves some kind of multiperspectivity by showing the ways in which not only the narrator Matt, but also various other people react to the crisis: there is no uniformity, no national communality, either among the British or the French. For some raiders and scadgers in Britain, this is a matter of life and death: “It’s your kids or ours, mate” (Cross, *After Tomorrow*, 4); others are criminals who want to enrich themselves. Moreover, the British refugees cope with hunger, cold, powerlessness and boredom in the camp in different ways: the girl Paige manages because she can communicate in French. Bob is a fixer, adroit at getting his share of everything, but also good at motivating people, while Matt’s step-father seems to despair, hardly rousing himself from his cot. One refugee cooks soup for the community, inviting people to contribute edibles like nettles or gnawed chicken bones thrown away by some older boys outside the camp, obviously illegal aliens, who survive by stealing chickens and bicycles. Matt earns a little money by repairing these bicycles, and he himself steals the spare-parts from old, rusty bikes he finds in a Frenchwoman’s shed. The reactions of the French are equally varied: most people have little sympathy with the British migrants, but are angry because they get food vouchers for nothing. They stare at the unkempt refugees, even spit

at Matt's shopping trolley, and sneer when he wants to pay for a plastic bag with a worthless British banknote. But there are others who give little children food. The Frenchwoman Steff befriends Matt, Taco and Paige and even lends them her bike when they need to fetch penicillin for Taco from another town, and she feels ashamed for her compatriots when they defraud Matt of the bikes and give him old aspirins instead of penicillin.

Thus, as in *Refugee*, there is an emphasis on diversity rather than a national culture or stereotype. What most of the English refugees share, however, is ignorance of the French language, and indeed something like indignation that they are expected to communicate in it and have to fill out forms which are not in their own language. Paige needs to translate for all the others. Matt, in contrast, is anything but cosmopolitan, and is implicitly ridiculed for his narrow-mindedness. He dislikes both France and the French: to learn their language would mean to accommodate to the situation and to give up hope of returning home in the near future. He continues to call the camp of Les Mandeaux (Longshanks) Lemon Dough, though after a time he ought to know better. He gets het up that Paige should speak French when she is English. "You don't need to know that stuff. You're English", he reprimands his little brother and is shocked when Taco starts to think in French, "[a]s if he belonged here" (Cross, *After Tomorrow*, 79, 213). Taco, however, constructs his identity in a more transcultural manner – his very nick-name, referring to his favourite Mexican food, indicates that he indeed chooses from a diversified pool of cultures. It is only when Matt traverses the French landscape by bike to fetch the penicillin that he begins to appreciate its beauty. And it is only when Steff takes him to watch the Tour the France that he can develop a new dream (of participating in the race one day) which incorporates France. For the first time, he wishes to thank Steff in her own language for letting him see the race. And when, in the end, Paige and he agree to cooperate on a bicycle repair business, he is also willing to learn French himself. Relinquishing his insular mentality, he can finally appreciate Einstein's metaphor, which points to the fluidity of identity: "*Life is like a bicycle. If you want to stay balanced, you have to keep moving*" (Cross, *After Tomorrow*, 277).

While, as I have shown, *Refugee* concentrates on the journeys of the three protagonists, providing just enough information about their plight at home to make the flight understandable, and giving only the briefest information about the time after the arrival, this is different in *After Tomorrow*: Cross only hints at violence (for instance, the mother's rape) without describing it at length, but she nonetheless takes time to illustrate why the situation in Britain has become intolerable and Matt's family have to flee, no matter by what means (though in the end the mother has to stay behind with the sick grandmother). The journey itself is only tackled very briefly. The main part of the book is devoted to the adjustment

to the horrible conditions in the camp and the test of characters the refugees are subjected to by them.

Apart from reversing the perspective on migrants, the novel also raises ethical questions for which there are no simple answers. Clear-cut moral differences break down. Is it immoral to steal food, if you are starving? Is it wrong to hoard food? How much solidarity can you expect of people if their own subsistence is in danger? What if those who still have food will defend their possessions and kill the raiders – as happened to Paige’s parents? And how much threat and violence must an individual be exposed to in order to qualify as a refugee, and not as an economic migrant? In France, the moral dilemma continues: how culpable is Matt for stealing spare parts from derelict bicycles and cooperating with chicken-rustlers? Even the villain Bob, who as a “Super-Scadger” (Cross, *After Tomorrow*, 291) in fact had to run for his life from England, defies easy classification. To be sure, it is unforgivable that he cheats Matt by procuring him false penicillin from one of his cronies, but without his shrewdness Matt and his relatives would hardly have coped in France. In the end of the novel, only the small problem of how to punish Bob and get rid of him is resolved, but there is no solution to the economic crisis, and the future of the characters remains open.

When composing her novel Gillian Cross, a renowned author of children’s books, evinced a disconcerting clairvoyance for coming developments. She had her first inspiration for writing *After Tomorrow* when she saw pictures of Sudanese boys who had fled to Chad and wondered how English boys would cope as refugees if the British economy broke down – soon afterwards, in 2010, the euro-crisis began. In the book, the lack of food supplies leads to riots – in 2011, riots indeed broke out in the UK. And in 2012, when the book was finished, Prime Minister Cameron “announced that he would flout EU law and close the UK’s border to Greek economic migrants” (Cross, “Writing Reality”) – an ominous historical counterpart to the French president closing the border to British refugees in the novel. *After Tomorrow* has received additional topicality by the refugee crisis of 2015 and recent measures across Europe of preventing refugees from reaching the continent.

Like *Refugee*, *After Tomorrow* is capable of arousing empathy and understanding, and of questioning received notions of migrants. Both novels also open up room for the discussion of wider ethical issues. Both, of course, were written primarily with native speakers in mind and are, also because of their comparative length (317 pp and 296 pp. respectively), particularly suitable for young Anglophone readers. However, they are also of high interest for foreign readers who have acquired enough language competence both to enjoy the exciting plot and to engage with the moral questions raised in its course. Unfortunately, young readers with mother tongues other than English are often unaware of novels like *Refugee* and *After Tomorrow*, which are usually not available in translations. As a

rule, such texts are also not taught at University level, so that students who will become foreign language teachers are often unfamiliar with them as well and thus cannot recommend them to their pupils – quite apart from the fact that topical issues that could be discussed in the ELF classroom change so quickly that the necessary turnover hardly leaves time for the development of any ‘canon’ – even if there were such a thing in the field of modern children’s literature. This means that teachers will be on a constant lookout for suitable reading material that might be interesting and profitable to their pupils. The present paper has intended to bring two interesting novels for children to their attention.

APPENDIX:

An assessment of the outcome of a survey on the teaching of migrant/refugee/ethnic literatures in English at university level

As evinced in a brief survey among a number of colleagues teaching English literature in various European and American universities – mainly Austria, Slovenia, Germany, Italy and the United States –, the teaching practice as regards texts about migrants and refugees, and diasporic and ethnic literature in general, is varied, also depending, of course, on the respective university curricula, which usually require a wide coverage of historical and canonical textual material. Responses to questionnaires devised by Igor Maver and myself show that lecturers interested in the field on an average devote some 10-30% of their teaching time to ethnic texts. However, there are considerable differences: while some colleagues (among them many who offer courses on American literature) teach ethnic and/or migration texts regularly, others manage to devote a class to the subject only once a year, or even less often. A great variety of authors is being taught, ranging from black British writers to ethnic and indigenous American and Canadian, Australian, African and Indian writers. Migrant texts are sometimes included into mainstream courses (for instance, when it comes to dealing with works written by authors who emigrated from the home country of the students to America or Australia, or in courses devoted to specific themes and motifs); in other cases special courses on transcultural writing are on offer.

In spite of these differences, which seem to be mainly due to institutional constraints of the curriculum and the need to offer a wide variety of courses in English and American literature, a number of remarkable similarities across various countries and teaching practices have emerged. Most lecturers dealing with migrant or ethnic literature select prose texts for their teaching – novels, short stories or life-stories, usually from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries –, though some also teach historical surveys and hence include earlier narratives. Although the

books discussed in some classes also comprise less known texts (including children's literature or non-English texts in translation), not surprisingly many courses concentrate on canonized authors (such as Rushdie, Kureshi, Zadie Smith, Adichie, Amy Tan, etc.), or, as the term does not really work in postcolonial studies, authors (as one respondent phrased it) who are widely recognized and considered publishing successes. Selection criteria include literary quality (many of these texts employ striking and innovative stylistic techniques), and thematic and narrative complexity on the one hand, and the insights afforded by the texts into the thematic foci of the course, on the other. Topics which are specifically addressed and discussed in these courses include transcultural relations and identities, the culture clash, attitudes to ethnicity, cultural stereotypes, problems of mobility and displacement, the refugee experience, racism and pioneer life, gender roles, the intersectionality of gender, race and class, and ways of dealing with traumatic memory.

Respondents generally affirmed that students are interested in ethnic literature and narratives about migrants and refugees, relating these texts to their own experiences and to those of their families, though, obviously, they connect to some texts better than to others. Students, respondents reported, tend to be intrigued by how different the world looks when approached from a different ethnic vantage point, but (just like pupils in secondary schools) as a rule lack the background knowledge necessary to understand the cultural context of these literary texts, which needs to be explained and taught before they can fully appreciate them, either through information given by the teacher herself or through students' group activities and oral presentations. The feedback considered necessary ranges from the historical background of the narratives to politics, religion and cultural practices. Naturally, the more alien the culture, the more difficult the reading is for students, a difficulty that is sometimes exacerbated by the writers' choice of a complex narrative technique and structure and their use of variants of English. Thus, in my own experience, a novel about first encounters like *That Deadman Dance* by Aboriginal author Kim Scott poses more problems to students than Kate Granville's *The Secret River*, narrating events from the a white settler's perspective (and controversial for that reason). Some of Rushdie's and Mukherjee's narratives require more explanations of Indian cultural norms and religious taboos than those of Zadie Smith or Rohinton Misty.

Although teaching aims in these courses of course vary, it is noteworthy that responses to the question why texts about migrants and refugees, or ethnic texts in general, are being selected for discussion in the University classroom frequently referred to the attempt of teachers to raise ethical consciousness in the students, and to invite them to reflect on the humanitarian crisis, the consequences of armed conflict and ethnic intolerance – objectives very similar to the teaching goals formulated by pedagogues for the school reading of migration texts and,

I would suggest, different from the major teaching goals in University courses dealing with the literary canon. Volkmann, in his remarks on foreign language teaching in secondary schools, recommends going beyond mere language acquisition to include aesthetic aspects and wider educational aims (“Abkehr”, 45). In a related manner, in University courses on migrant and refugee literature lecturers wanted to go beyond aesthetic appreciation and an education in liberal arts to include humanitarian aspects and to raise moral awareness.

In addition, a transcultural agenda was also frequently addressed by the respondents: including ethnic narratives and stories about migrants and refugees into their teaching, they maintained, widens the concept of a British or American national literature and culture, expands students’ knowledge of the variety of literatures in English and creates awareness of transnational identities. Such texts, teachers affirmed, challenge racial and cultural hierarchies and deconstruct binaries, helping students to transcend their own narrow perspective and to appreciate the complexity and diversity of migrant experiences. Several respondents also emphasized the ability of literature to render abstract political arguments concrete, to personalize the fates of refugees and migrants, and to engender empathy and a sense of responsibility – a reading experience, one might add, which students who want to become teachers of English can hopefully then pass on to their pupils in secondary schools.

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Transkulturene študije in romani za mlade bralce: begunska izkušnja v romanih Alana Gratza *Begunec* in Gillian Crossove *Pojutrišnjem*

Kot odziv na nedavna masovna migrantska gibanja so v zadnjih desetletjih izšli številni romani za otroke. Članek analizira dva izmed njih in jih postavlja v kontekst transnacionalnega obrata v okviru kulturnih študij. Članek predstavlja tudi rezultate kratke raziskave med univerzitetnimi učitelji v različnih deželah o pozitivnih elementih, izzivih in ciljih poučevanja pri vključevanju migrantske in begunske književnosti v process poučevanja.

Ključne besede: transkulturena književnost, migrantska književnost, romani za otroke

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Tracing Transnationalism and Hybrid Identities in Aleksandar Hemon's *The Making of Zombie Wars*

Nina Bostič Bishop

ABSTRACT

Transnationalism is a current reality as globalisation has accelerated by the never before experienced boost in the development of technology, transport and telecommunications. The modern era is also characterised by migrations - voluntary and involuntary, but most of today's transmigrants do not live the exilic lives once lived by migrants, longing for their homeland. Instead, they live in an in-between space - the host country and the homeland, where the mixing of cultures takes place. Although these zones have often been idolized in the recent literature, the lives of many transmigrants are characterised by feelings of loss, displacement and trauma. The present article attempts to map Bosnian-American author Aleksandar Hemon as a transnational diasporic writer by tracing the features of transnationalism in his life and his novel *The Making of Zombie Wars*. It will also position that several of the migrant characters in the novel are hybrid identities, battling the consequences of displacement, trauma and mobility, following the ideas of Homi Bhabha and Jopi Nyman. It will explore the processes as they occur in spaces in-between.

Keywords: Aleksandar Hemon, transnationalism, hybridity, diasporic literature, displacement, *The Making of Zombie Wars*

INTRODUCTION

The present globalised world is characterised by voluntary and involuntary transnational migrations where cultural, linguistic and national boundaries are crossed, transforming the once homogenous cultures. These processes are reflected in contemporary diasporic writing that typically addresses the subjectivities formed in the process of transnational migrations, questioning the fixed ideas of home, identity and mobility while undergoing a transformation into new hybridised identities as constructed in Homi Bhabha's liminal Third Space, challenging the traditional movement from the centre to periphery.

TRANSNATIONALISM

Transnationalism as a term was first used by the radical social critic and multiculturalist, pacifist and anti-nationalist Randolph Bourne at the moment of emerging nationalism and American politics of isolationism in 1916. He used the term to counter-argue the then immigration policies of 'Americanisation', which aimed at eliminating enemies of the state by condemning the otherness of the immigrants, thereby attempting to strengthen the nationalist tendencies of the Anglo-Saxons, which would eventually bring solidarity amongst them (Vaughan 443). Bourne challenged these attitudes in an essay titled "Trans-National America", which he published in 1916 where he presented the idea of inter-cultural cooperation that would in his view also serve as a strategy for the survival of America's newest immigrants and in turn, reinforce the idea about the American identity which, according to Bourne, could not be explained by ignoring the immigrants since being an American to him meant to be a product of not only one, but many cultures (Resek 123). In Bourne's view American identity would comprise both, the ethnic and the modern and would therefore be signalled with a "hyphen" between the two nations. Although Bourne's idea of transnationalism appears to be somewhat idolised, it is related to the concept of hybrid identities as discussed below. On the other hand, while the contemporary concept of transnationalism emphasises its significance in battling essentialism, it also focuses on today's possibilities of transnational interaction, communication and mobility that are available in real time as Vertovec states and defines transnationalism as follows:

Transnationalism describes a condition in which, despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws and, regulations and national narratives they represent), certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common – however virtual – arena of activity" (Vertovec 3).

In addition to Vertovec, transmigration and transnationality were first employed by Nina Glick-Schiller, Linda Basch, Christina Blanc-Szanton, Ludger Pries, and Ulrich Beck who understood the need to address the new phenomenon of a transmigrant, who lives in two countries, cultures or even nations at the same time, surpassing the international boundaries and is active in developing and maintaining these relations across the social fields of the multiple homelands. Similarly, Sladja Blazan states that “To stress activity on the part of the migrant is programmatic, since taking actions and decision making are [the] main characteristics separating the transmigrant from the immigrant” and this agency on the part of the migrant is also notable in Hemon’s life and in the life of some of his characters (Blazan 38).

TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE

If transnationalism was first used in the field of migration studies, it was eventually adopted in literary studies and American Studies in the USA underpinning the transnational and cross-cultural features of ethnic writing. The transnational turn in American Studies was marked by Shelley Fisher Fishkin’s presidential address to the American Studies Association in November 2004, in which Fishkin emphasised that in today’s globalised world, it is necessary to look beyond one’s national borders and recognise the ways in which the nation is seen from “vantage points beyond its borders” (Fisher Fishkin 23).

Despite the fact that the transnational paradigm has been discussed in the fields of sociology, anthropology and especially migration studies since the 1990s, and Fishkin’s address in 2004, the work suggesting a shift from a political understanding of transnational literature towards a more aesthetic one, suggesting the modes by which “authors have responded to major historical, political, and ethical issues prompted by the globalization of literary studies” (Goyal 2017) and putting forward the transnationalism methodology that might be used in the analysis of literary works, was not published until 2017. In *Transnational American Literature*, Yogita Goyal argues that despite the fact that some critics have labelled transnationalism as an attempt to reinforce American exceptionalism, they have not been successful in providing an acceptable alternative as in this globalised, international, multilingual and supranational world, a return to national canons is no longer possible as the transnational turn opens up new possibilities of analysing literary works in terms of “spaces in between” (Goyal 5) encompassing “cosmopolitan travels, linguistic encounters, oceanic adventures, freedom dreams, and paranoid linkages” (6). Moreover, a transnational approach may also battle nationalisms and cultural exceptionalism by comparing and analysing the interconnectedness of different parts of the globe, their people and cultures. In short, transnationalism,

therefore, questions borders and boundaries – may they be political, geographical or linguistic and attempts to understand the processes as they occur at contact zones as inspired by Mary Louise Pratt, signifying intercultural interaction (Pratt).

Many narratives published recently focus on the presence of migrants in what were once culturally homogenous spaces as a result of the increasingly globalised world that has accelerated the cultural, linguistic and ethnic mixing in the West, which to an extent always existed, but in comparison to past diasporic writing these contemporary stories are characterised by transnationalism, hybridity and mobile identities (Nyman 2009: 10) instead of focusing on the “fixed understandings of the issues of home, identity and nation” (10) and longing for the homeland. As Nyman points out it is “such an understanding of the interconnectedness of cultures that is at the core of the contemporary writing” (11) or to put it in the words of Schulze-Engler:

Highlighting the transnational dimensions of literature is thus not a matter of privileging “migrant” contexts of culture over all others [...] but of drawing attention to the fact that the dynamics of transnational and transcultural connections have long since become a lived reality even among the non-migrant majority of the world’s population – and a ubiquitous reality shaping modern literature in “Western” and “non-Western” settings alike. (Schulze-Engler 382)

Therefore, for Schulze-Engler also, the post-colonial theoretical framework, which tends to be based on alterity industry does not suffice to be applied in the contemporary transcultural and transnational reality as culture in a globalised modernity should be understood “in terms of transnational connections and a global ecumene (Schulze-Engler 381) and as a result, the focus then shifts from international relations between cultures towards the productive communicative processes by which individuals and social groups make sense of culture in the contemporary world (Nyman 2007: 381). Similarly, Igor Maver states that “living in a diasporic space today essentially signifies the forging of a new identity and a new diasporic hybrid subjectivity” (Maver X) and that while diasporas today live in spaces of in-betweenness and are still part of the “process of construction of Us vs. the Others” (ibid.), it is not quite clear how to identify Us and the Other as the binaries of post-colonialism can no longer be applied (ibid.).

However, as much as migration and mobility are undisputable characteristics of today’s globalised world, the transnational migrant experience is often overly celebrated on account of simpler, cheaper and quicker communication technology and transport, simplifying and promoting unrealistic views of the processes of migration and their triumphant hybridities, which might serve as examples of the final victory over essentialist nationalist identities. While it is indisputable that diasporic

and hybrid identities are able to challenge homogeneity and fixed identifications, it should also be taken into account that transmigrants are not always voluntary migrants, but may have migrated due to economic or environmental reasons, or as it is the case with Hemon and many of his characters, may be political migrants, asylum seekers or refugees. Although these migrants might be living fluid lives in their host countries and may be hybridizing their identities, their transitioning may not have been an easy one, but filled with feelings of displacement and trauma. It seems that one of the roles of contemporary transnational diasporic literature might be to disclose some of the more negative aspects of contemporary transnational migrant subjectivities as they are living the in-between and exilic lives marked by struggles to overcome displacement, trauma and linguistic barriers.

In light of the above, in his volume *Displacement, Memory and Travel in Contemporary Migrant Writing* (2017), a study of diaspora and hybridity with a focus on melancholia and displacement as well as migration and related cultural encounters, scholar Jopi Nyman argues that transnational encounters are not at all, all positive, but are often accompanied by traumatic feelings due to voluntary or involuntary exile, feelings of displacement and a sense of belonging nowhere, existing in a non-place which reoccurs in Hemon's work including in the *Making of Zombie Wars*, a novel in which one of the characters Bega, a disillusioned war migrant from Bosnia says: "Where do we go from nowhere?" (Hemon 2015: 12). Further, Nyman suggests that text analyses have shown that migration and up-rootedness are frequently expressed with language expressing pain and affect, demonstrating that while migration and hybridity may counter nationalisms and essentialist identities, they may also be critiques of "such forms of postcolonial discourse that celebrate them as unproblematic ways of countering hierarchies and hegemonies (Nyman 2017: 1). Here, Nyman is expanding on the idea first proposed by Paul Gilroy in his work *The Black Atlantic* (1993) in which the author proposes a culture that is not a single culture, but a mix of several cultures, eventually producing a new culture that transcends ethnicity and nationality and that is, extended by Nyman's study of contemporary global mobility and cultural encounters, frequently accompanied by trauma, forced exile and diaspora, displacement, and hybrid identities, and experiences of transnational migrants that are worlds away from the free cosmopolitan nomads as suggested by Steven Vertovec.

ALEKSANDAR HEMON

Aleksandar Hemon is known as an American, Bosnian and (post)-Yugoslav author and as such "actively pursues the role of a 'hyphenated' writer" (Kozmos 50), which is as shown above, a transnational characteristic in itself as it has been claimed that

taking action and decision-making transform a migrant into a transmigrant (Blazan 38). In 1992, a few months before the siege of Sarajevo began and after having been accepted to the cultural exchange program called the International Visitor Program, Hemon came to Chicago where he soon afterwards applied for political asylum. During that time he worked as an ESL teacher where he encountered many other migrants, the experience he has employed in many of his works of fiction.

Nyman argues that the present times appear to be characterized by border-crossing movements, notable in the emergence of new migrant literatures written in the language of the host and that this increased mobility of people generates new kinds of migrant narratives and “sites for identity construction” (Nyman 2009: 15). The latter applies to Hemon since he has published texts in English, which is not his mother tongue but which he learned to perfection by fiercely studying Nabokov after he had arrived in the USA to an extent that he eventually won a nomination for the National Book Award with *Nowhere Man* in which he addressed displacement of migrants and migrant identity dealing with transnational encounters and border crossings (Hemon 2005). Hemon is currently a guest lecturer at Princeton University, he had his autobiography *The Book of My Lives* (2013) turned into a play and premiered in Sarajevo in 2017, and curated the Bookstan international festival in Sarajevo, so his professional and personal activities demonstrate that he is actively engaged in two places at the same time or that he is here and there; in Bosnia where he used to reside and in America where he is currently living. While he might have never referred to himself as a hybrid he mentioned in several interviews that he is “complicated” in the sense that he has not only one home and that he is not defined by only one nationality, which is in itself a transnational feature as shown above. In an interview with John Freeman Hemon stated that he was interested in the “multicultural presence, not just of religions, but also of languages, empires, occupiers, histories, borders, neighbors, classes” (Freeman). In an interview conducted by Irina Reyn for an online art magazine *Guernica*, Hemon said that he had never felt cut off from Bosnia and that he felt that he was “everywhere”, had several identities, was a citizen of two countries and that he did not feel that he was writing in exile because he had always felt that he was connected to his homeland:

Well exile, as you pointed out, is not the word I would apply to myself because I'm not cut off from where I came from. I'm in touch with Bosnia in many ways, not just that I go back, but because I'm connected to the diaspora. I also participate in the American cultural and political space: from playing soccer in Chicago to voting in the American election to participating in American literature. Whereas people who may describe themselves as being in exile are nowhere, I'm actually in two places at the same time, which is different. (Reyn)

Hemon also fits Vertovec's description of transnationalism as he identifies with a "diaspora consciousness marked by dual or multiple identification" (Vertovec 6) and continues to emphasise his fluid presence in the world:

What I think I may be typical of is a multiple identity situation. Assimilation is not an issue for me; I feel sufficiently assimilated in the United States. I'm not completely absorbed, I have not melted into the pot. My cultural instincts are satisfied by American culture. And the same thing with Bosnia. I am an American and Bosnian writer and I like to think that what happens in my books and in my life is that those two spaces overlap because I want them to overlap – I write about people who are finding ways to live in the States because their life is defined by their Bosnian experience. So this multiplicity of identities or double identities, these are not necessarily mutually exclusive and they don't create a vacuum but rather create an overlapping space where interesting things happen. This is what defines what I write and defines the other members of who you might include in that group." (Reyn)

From the above it is also clear that Hemon is a transmigrant as he has been able to maintain social, cultural and economic relations that span national borders. In addition, he considers himself as a writer operating across and beyond national boundaries in the so-called transnational and liminal Third Space as defined by Bhabha, addressing the polyvocality and in-betweenness stemming from his belief that "[c]ultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in the relation of Self to Other" (Bhabha 52), denouncing the binary concept.

On the basis of the above, it is therefore possible to say that Hemon is a transnational writer, a transmigrant and a member of the diaspora. However, while it seems that his life is a triumph over his initial involuntary exile enabled by the processes of globalisation and transnationalism, in his work rather than celebrating exile and in-betweenness, Hemon exposes the issues that migrants deal with related to the notions of home and identity, trauma, displacement and feelings of belonging nowhere while at the same time assuming hybrid identities in the space of in-betweenness. In his words, he writes "about people who are finding ways to live in the States because their lives are defined by their Bosnian experience".

The concept of hybridity is at the core of post-colonial theory and in its basic sense denotes intercultural transfer and the identities that evolve during this process and can thus be applied in transnational and transcultural studies. Homi Bhabha views hybridization as a process that is happening in the Third Space of enunciation where identity is reconstructed, negotiated and translated and which involves an "estranging sense of the relocation of the world – the unhomeliness" that is "the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations" (Bhabha 9) and as a hybrid is imagined through spatial terms, Bhabha links hybridity with diaspora

whereby “To be unhomed is not to be homeless” (9). Similarly, Nyman argues that diaspora is a hybrid space where transnational flows may remould identities so that diasporic identities are essentially hybridized identities, moulded in a space that is in-between affected by issues of home and belonging (Nyman 2009: 22) and the hybrids’ potential is that they are able to transverse cultures and difference.

THE MAKING OF ZOMBIE WARS

The Making of Zombie Wars (2015) portrays migrants and their struggles to integrate, but also the building of cultural bridges and processes that foster cultural understanding between diaspora and the host, promoting cultural fluidity. New identities and subjectivities are imagined in the novel and fixed notions of home and belonging are questioned. The main character is a 33-year old wannabe screenplay writer Joshua Levin, who has a Japanese–American girlfriend Kimmy, is of Jewish descent and works as a teacher of English as a second language to a group of seven dislocated migrants from Eastern Europe, one of whom is Ana, a migrant from Sarajevo that Joshua falls in love with. In addition, in his screen-writing class Joshua meets Bega, who is also a traumatised and displaced migrant from Sarajevo. The novel’s settings of the ESL classroom and the screen-writing class are in line with Igor Maver’s observation that the immigrants’ reintegration and (re)construction of identity and cultural adjustment after the initial trauma caused by their sudden displacement from their original cultural and linguistic setting is facilitated by communication through language and other means of creative-expression (Maver 20). Maver’s position also holds true for Hemon himself, who reintegrated and reconstructed his identity by teaching ESL initially, moving on to writing.

Another example of cultural fluidity and intertwining cultural practises is the way with which Hemon brings together American (Western) music and Yugoslav (Balkan) music as Bega is a fan of both, so Led Zeppelin, Bob Dylan, Pantera and Nirvana are mentioned alongside the TV show that most of us who grew up in former Yugoslavia remember - “The Top List of Surrealists”. Bega therefore displays a transcultural mixing of cultures, the intertwining of the Balkans and the West, of the periphery and the centre, which are no longer binary opposites. This is in line with Stuart Hall’s understanding of the role of music in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” where he shows how reggae music mediates between Jamaican and African identity (Hall 223). As Hemon uses music to demystify the poor and isolated Balkans and according to Blazon demystification is one of the key principles of transmigrant literature (Blazon 44), it can be further argued that the novel is an example of transnational fiction.

Furthermore, Joshua's ESL classroom, otherwise a recurrent theme in Hemon's work is an example of a contact zone where mixing of cultures takes place and is a hybrid Third Space since Teacher Josh is teaching the immigrants how to speak the language of their host country and is at the same time learning about their respective cultures and homelands. The ESL classroom may therefore be understood as a micro-space, exemplifying the interconnectedness of cultures that Schulze-Engler refers to when stating that transnational connections are also a reality amongst the non-migrant majority as well as Bhabha's Third Space of enunciation, where fixed meanings are reconstructed into new ones, comes to life. When Joshua gives his students an assignment to write about their respective hometowns, he hears about places such as Vitebsk, Moscow, Kazakhstan and Sarajevo, which Ana describes as it was before the war: "people greeted one another on the street; the youth danced all night; there was a linden tree smelling sweetly and quaintly right under her window" (Hemon 2015: 45). Here, Hemon again demystifies Sarajevo by mentioning the city's positive characteristics. In the novel Hemon created several scenes featuring Bhabha's Third Space of in-betweenness. For example, Joshua is invited to Ana's party in the apartment building wittily called the Ambassador as it is mostly populated by migrants and functions as a transnational Third Space. As Joshua is on his way up to Ana's apartment and he listens closely for the sounds on the other side of doors, he can hear "a radio gibbering in an obscure language" and "Mexican oompah-oompah music" (75), signalling hybrid spaces. The party is a further example of a transnational space where Joshua learns about the migrants' food, decorating style and sense humour. At the party Hemon puts Joshua in the place of a migrant looking into the centre from the periphery as he is the only American surrounded by migrants who are mostly from Bosnia and where he is the one who needs to adjust as they are speaking in a foreign language and eating food that he had never seen before:

"What am I eating?" he asked her. She pointed at things and named them in Bosnian and he kept trying to repeat the words. There was no hope-Bosnian sounded like Hebrew spoken by someone with a debilitating speech impediment..." (84).

Here, Hemon reverses the hierarchy, the hegemon becomes the subaltern, the post-colonial Us assumes the role of the Other, even if only for the duration of the party. This is in accordance with another characteristic of migrant writing that by questioning the fixed notions of home and identity, it remaps cultural identities for everyone involved:

It is argued instead that migration changes individual and group identities, affiliations and cultural attitudes and practices, among the mobile population and the "hosts". As soon as it is recognized that cultures are fluid and temporary social constructions, made and remade over time - [James] Clifford's translocal

culture – it is apparent that movement involves the remapping of cultural identities for all those involved. (McDowell 210).

Cultural identities of all those involved are remapped as Joshua is othered at this party not only by not knowing the food that is served, by not understanding the language, but also by not being familiar with the culture. As the guests are telling each other jokes in Bosnian and everyone but Joshua is laughing and Ana makes an attempt to translate one of them, she finally says: “Very hard to translate” and indeed Joshua laughed, “but his laughter was devoid of the abandon he’d witnessed in the Bosnian” (84). Hemon uses this situation to show the trauma and displacement as after the translation of the joke to Joshua was not successful the real migrants “sat in silence for a while” and “the mistranslated joke had reminded them how sad and displaced they really were” (85). The party is an example of a translocal space as migrants are making a new place their home and are engaging in reciprocal links between themselves and a representative of the host country, who in this case, is Joshua as the only host country national at the party. In line with transnationalism cultures are porous and open to influences. While there is still Us and the Others, these relations are not fixed, but fluid as Joshua is othered.

In line with McDowell’s observation above, in Hemon’s novel it is therefore not only the migrants who undergo a process of transformation, but Joshua as the representative of the host, hegemonic culture, also transforms as he begins to understand the migrant better. For example, when he talks about Ana, the Bosnian migrant whom he is becoming infatuated with, he at some point begins to understand that the shortness of her skirt does not “signify promiscuity-contrary to the consensual interpretation to other male teachers-but a kind of nostalgia” (46) and that this was what she used to wear when she was happy, when she used to live a normal life back in her hometown of Sarajevo.

Next, displacement in Nyman’s terms is shown on several occasions throughout the novel. For example, Bega is on an occasion called ‘Vega’ by the screenplay-writing teacher:

“Bega,” Bega said. “I am Bega. As I was before” (17). When Bega says ‘As I was before’ this suggest that he divides his life in ‘before exile’ and ‘after exile’, or ‘before displacement’ and ‘after displacement’ and that by someone not pronouncing his name correctly, he is automatically put in an inferior position in accordance to Nyman’s understanding above. He is othered. In fact, Bega is unlike Ana, a character who is in exile, longing for belonging to his homeland. The novel contains several allusions to the ‘before’ and ‘after’ that Bega makes: “But the before was no longer available, nor would it ever be...” (34), or “The clothes belonged to the before, and he had no attire for the after” (40), suggesting displacement. When Bega is asked to say something about his screenplay he reveals the exile baggage:

“It’s basically love story,” Bega said. “Man is from Sarajevo. He was happy there. He was young, he had rock group, had women. War came. He is refugee now. He goes to Germany. They are Nazis there. He works like security in disco, plays his guitar only for his soul. He drinks, remembers Sarajevo, writes blues songs. Comes 1997, Nazis throw him out. He goes back to Sarajevo, but nothing is same. Heart-break.” (18) and then: “Man has no more friends in Sarajevo. Half of his group is dead, other half everywhere. Women have husbands. Everybody talks about the war all the time. He says, Fuck it! and goes to America – country of Dylan and Nirvana and best basketball. But he lost his soul. And American women are all feminists-” (18). Here Hemon quite clearly gives the reader an insight into the soul of a transnational migrant, who knows about American music as a result of globalisation and “mediascapes” to use Appadurai’s terminology (Appadurai), who can go back to his home country, but feels displaced there also as the homeplace has changed and his friends are also “everywhere”. In accordance with Nyman, the language Bega uses expresses pain and affect.

The migrants in Hemon’s novel all had lives before coming to the US and they were a somebody. The ESL class that Joshua teaches, for example, is composed of Captain Ponomarenko who used to be an officer of the KGB, Fyodor was a rocket scientist and a Bosnian woman Ana used to study medicine until the war broke out. By coming to America their ‘before’ is no longer and they are reduced to role play in Joshua’s ESL class.

Nyman in his book *Displacement, Memory and Travel in Contemporary Migrant Writing* (2017) writes that as migrants experience displacement differently from one another and have different memories of their pre-exile lives, they also integrate differently into their new society and the degree to which they become attached to their new culture also varies (ibid.). This is shown in Hemon’s novel by Ana on one hand, who is Joshua’s best student, has plans for her future in America, while the other students in the class and Bega who are all more on the outside looking in. But Ana’s transitioning is not without difficulties as her identity is reduced to that of an ESL student as when she invites Joshua to her party, before answering he corrects her English, immediately putting her in an inferior, peripheral position:

“There is a party,” she said. A dimple in her left cheek appeared and disappeared without anything else in her face changing.

“A party,” Joshua said.

“Saturday in the evening.”

“Saturday evening.” (Hemon 2015: 50)

But Ana wants the future and symbolically this desire to transform is expressed by her being the only one to use the Future Perfect Tense after they have studied

it in class and as she says to Joshua at some point, she wants to improve her English because she wants to find a better job. Her affair with Joshua, a local, is her way of negotiating hybridity, the stairwell, or the Third Space, while her marriage to Esko, a Bosnian traumatized special forces veteran, symbolizes her ties with Bosnia. While their apartment symbolizes Bosnia, her home country, which she symbolically describes as: “crazy messy” (81), spending the night with Joshua in his apartment symbolizes America, the host country, while the ESL classroom represents a hybridized space. The in-betweenness and hybridity in the novel are also signalled by the way that the past perpetually enters the present, especially by way of memories about the homeland, which is in line with what Nyman argues namely that identity is fluid and transitional and based on fragments of place memories, on the migrants’ wishes and past experiences. Similarly, David Morley positions that migrants’ sense of home, which is essential to one’s identity is more than just geography and is as such not always place-related, but may mean more symbolic objects, which may help the migrant to connect to home while living in the land of the Other (Morley 44). In this way migrants’ recollections of their home countries appear throughout the novel, an example is Bega’s Bosnian carpet in his apartment as well as the ethnic food that the migrants enjoy at the party.

Further evidence that the novel fits the characteristics of transnational writing is that in accordance with Goyal’s claim that while exile and expatriation have always been central to the study of modernism, it is only a transnational approach that has made it possible to expand on these themes and explore how “writers imagine and represent other worlds in relation to their own” (Goyal 10) and in Fishkin’s words how the nation, in her case American, is seen from “vantage points beyond its borders” (Fisher Fishkin 23), through his characters in *The Making of Zombie Wars*, Hemon gives several insights into how the author and his immigrant characters see America, which is often as vain, populist and generally not very intelligent: “Tell me why is that,” Bega said, “last eight presidents have simple names: Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Clinton, two with Bush. You need to have Washington, Roosevelt, and Eisenhower, and then something happened. You can’t elect your president with complicated name anymore. Idiot voters have to be able to spell fucking name” (Hemon 2015: 23). In fact, the book features many such observations, for example, Captain Ponomarenko “still resented the fact that America, the land of limp imbeciles – amply represented by Teacher Josh-somehow managed to win the Cold War” (43) and the students brought up the Iraqi war every lesson “to expose the external rottenness of America’s imperialist soul” (43).

CONCLUSION

Hemon might be living an almost idyllic transnational existence by being personally (he is married to an American), professionally and politically involved in Bosnia and the USA, his characters in *The Making of Zombie Wars* are still transitioning into becoming comfortable hybrid identities. However, the novel features transnational settings as Third Spaces ranging from the ESL class to a party featuring guests of various ethnicities, which Hemon uses to show the relations as they unfold when cultures come into contact, interact, intertwine and affect each other. If past migrant writing concentrated on the migrants' longing for their lost homelands, Hemon's diasporic writing emphasises the desire to belong while questioning the fixed notions of home, and identity. But as shown above, the life of the diaspora should not be glorified as it has been by some critics who neglected the fact that the current era of transnational migrations does not only include voluntary migrants or "wanderers" as Bhabha refers to them (Bhabha 315), but also refugees and political migrants who populate the works of Aleksandar Hemon.

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Transnacionalizem in hibridne identitete v delu *The Making of Zombie Wars* Aleksandra Hemon

Transnacionalnost je trenutna realnost in je posledica globalizacije, ki se odvija z največjo hitrostjo doslej zaradi razvoja tehnologije, transporta in telekomunikacij. Vsesplošne migracije, bodisi prostovoljne ali prisilne, so značilnost sodobnega sveta, vendar transmigranti ne živijo v izgnanstvu na način, ki je bil običajen v preteklosti, ko je veliko migrantov hrepenelo po bivši domovini. Transmigranti živijo v vmesnem prostoru med državo gostiteljico in domovino, kjer se mešajo kulture. Čeprav literatura ta vmesni prostor pogosto idealizira, mnogi transmigranti živijo z občutji izgube, razseljenosti in travme. Članek umešča bosansko-ameriškega avtorja Aleksandra Hemon v transnacionalno književnost v diaspori in išče prvine transnacionalizma v avtorjevem življenju in njegovem romanu *The Making of Zombie Wars*. Članek analizira hibridne identitete, ki nastopajo v romanu in se borijo s posledicami razseljenosti, travm in mobilnosti, sledeč teorijam Homi Bhabhe in Jopi Nymana. Članek razkriva procese, kot se odvijajo v teh vmesnih prostorih.

Ključne besede: Aleksandar Hemon, transnacionalnost, hibridnost, književnost v diaspori, razseljenost, *The Making of Zombie Wars*

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Jože Žohar: a Forgotten Slovenian Migrant Poetic Voice from 'Down Under'

Igor Maver

Abstract

The article discusses the verse written by Jože Žohar, the recently deceased and forgotten Slovenian poet migrant poet from Australia. The poet despite his not enormous poetic output shows a prodigious gift for poetic experimentation and tries to reconcile in himself the affiliation with the two "Homes", Slovenia and Australia, neither of which paradoxically seems to in his poetry qualify as such any more in his poetry.

Keywords: Slovenian migrant literature, Australia, Jože Žohar, diaspora

In memory of Jože Žohar (1945–2018)

In the late fall of 1994 I arrived at Sydney Central Station by train from Brisbane in Queensland, where I was doing research at the time. In the station I was supposed to meet Jože, who had an afternoon shift that day. I thus waited in the big lounge for Jože whom I had previously only met once before in Ljubljana and who promised to act as my *cicerone* during my stay and fellowship in Sydney. Of course, we were planning to discuss his poems and cultural life in the Sydney area as well. He was very late and I almost gave up, but the meeting and his kindness that evening en route to a hotel and the days afterwards made up for the wait. Through him I got to know many prominent Slovenians in Australia (among them the tireless cultural activist, editor, poet and consequently a good friend Pavla Gruden, 1921–2014) and this stay was the beginning of a long friendship, which also resulted in my writing several introductory studies to his poetry collections and the public reading and presentation with him of one of his collections at the Slovene Writers' Association in Ljubljana in 1995.

Born in 1945, Jože Žohar has been living in Australia since 1968, where he came as a very young man to try his luck as an economic migrant in search of a better life. He died in 2018 in a small town of Lithgow in the Blue Mountains, almost at the far outskirts of Sydney. He loved the Blue Mountains and found a new emotional and artistic home there after the Panonian Prekmurje plains of his childhood and adolescence he had left behind many decades before. As a contemporary Slovenian migrant poet (Maver 2010), Žohar experiments with the potential of the Slovenian language and constantly tries to expand the borders of his world and language by transcending traditional poetic aesthetics and through linguistic self-awareness. Žohar's verse written in Slovenian is characterized by linguistic experimentation using palindromes, alliterations, vocal colouring, puns, homonyms and ornamental adjectives, as well as lexical and syntactic play.

Contemporary Slovenian literary creativity is, despite the slow disappearance of the older generation of Slovenian migrants to this country under the Southern Cross, still much alive (Maver 2002). In fact, there has recently emerged fiction written in English by Draga Gelt (who published only very recently two books of poetry and fiction, *Utrinki/Starburst* and *Dreams of Love/Sanje o ljubezni* (Gelt 2018; 2016), Cilka Žagar (unpublished fiction manuscript *Lovers and Ratters*) and her new verse collection *Od tu do tja, nikjer doma/From Here to There, Nowhere at Home* (Žagar), poetry by Krissy Kneen in her collection *Eating my Grandmother: a Grief Cycle*, whose grandmother was Slovenian and who has herself become an awarded prominent mainstream Australian writer and who is trying to rediscover her Slovenian roots: she is going to be dealt with in the next issue of this journal (Kneen 2015). The truth is, however, that many new

migrants, mostly professionals and highly qualified people from Slovenia are currently trying to establish their homes there. Hopefully, they will at some stage of their translocation also find the time to reflect their new experience in words, literature or literary blogs that are today more trendy.

Jože Žohar could be described as a migrant poet from the Prekmurje region, for *genius loci* is of great importance in his verse: the Prekmurje region on the one hand (the plain and the hills of the Goričko region in Slovenia bordering with Hungary and Austria), and Australia (the arid bush) on the other. In all three collections of his poetry, an element which is present strongly is the specific geographical environment, which appears in a dual relation: on the one side the poet's native Prekmurje and Goričko, and on the other the Australian landscape. Jože Žohar published quite a few of his poems in the Slovenian press as well as the migrant press in Australia. But it was only in 1990 that his first collection of poems in the Slovenian language, *Aurora Australis*, appeared in Slovenia, which became an independent European country only in 1991 after the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. In an interview Žohar made it clear that he did not approve of the division into a physical and a spiritual migration, for "a physically displaced Slovenian is at the same time also a spiritually displaced Slovenian." He chose exile primarily for social-economic and not for political reasons, unlike many of the Slovenian migrants who left immediately after the Second World War to go to Argentina, Canada, and also Australia.

Žohar's collection of verse *Aurora Australis* features the poetic cycle entitled "Apple Poems," written during a sleepless night in a motel in Orange in April of 1987. They transcend the typical migrant nostalgia and again reflect the poet's erotic relationship with his homeland, tinged with thoughts on death. The external flight is replaced, and thus balanced, by the withdrawal into an "inner exile" that remains laden with existential anguish: "We are drowning, drowning, oppressed and twisted, deafened by the howl inside [. . .]" (*Aurora Australis* 25). These poems feature unusual tropes, paradoxical comparisons and very private symbolism. An apple as the symbol of "Slovenianness" has turned into mere apple-skins, Australia having squeezed out all its juices of life. Elsewhere, only sour, sulphured wine remains, as in the poem "We Are Apple-Skins." Žohar's stream-of-consciousness technique enables him to make ample use of private hermetic symbols which are difficult to decode. "Apple Poems" also point to the multiple alienation of the speaker of the poems (geographical, personal, social.). The "black sister" which appears in some of the poems metaphorically stands for the night, death or a prostitute, with an Eros-Thanatos relationship firmly in place. The poet contends that there is no easy or relaxed erotic connection between man and woman, but rather a constant mutual self-denial and fear, a

search for something else, a fear of spiritual chaos and hallucinations caused by separation. Frequent sound effects and typography, not devoid of semantic significance, show the poet's postmodern *penchant*.

It all betrayed me.
Even the sun and the sky.
Through a blind pane the black sister
Stares black into my Eye....

APPLE-TREES MIGRATE with overripe faces
Into my dreams that are for me by the town of Orange.

THE APPLE WIND from the apple ships
Is breaking through the cracks of the tired windows.
The galleon oars are rowing into darkness.
Oh, Man, why are we so alien to each other,
Why is there no Sybilla, no words among us? [. . .]

WE ARE APPLE-SKINS and nothing can save us.
The black sister squeezes us black
Among the apples in the green press. (*Aurora Australis* 26)

The Eros-Thanatos relationship is clearly recognizable in the final stanzas of the twelve-poem cycle "Apple poems," where night, death, the poet's mistress, and by extension his homeland, all metaphorically merge into one:

SATISFY ME, oh Night! Make me
A statue, a beam, something
That knows no nightmares and peaceful dreams.
But you are growing pale, retreating from the room!
Far behind the mountains you take off your clothes,
The black robe, and you are white. You are hope.
You are faith. (*Aurora Australis* 27)

The second part of *Aurora Australis* in particular shows the poet's predilection for linguistic experimentation in the fields of Slovenian lexicon and syntax, which is difficult to render in English translation. He is, for example, fond of homonyms, synonyms, phonetic intensifications; he deftly uses onomatopoeia, occasionally adds alliterations, internal rhymes, assonance, interlocking and end-rhymes. The poetic cycle "Mourning Poems," is still tinged by the hue of sometimes pathetic migrant nostalgia. The speaker of these poems longs for a spiritual and physical *néant* and laments the fact that he shall forever try in vain to return home:

Only you shall never sleep
 In these beds between the furrows,
 Your own with your people.
 You are too far. A disconnected joint.
 In vain searching for the way back. (*Aurora Australis* 66)

As a migrant poet in Australia Jože Žohar finds himself in a double exile; as an emigrant from his native country and as an artist, thus by definition an outsider in society at large. His verse has nevertheless managed, metaphorically, to span two continents, Europe and Australia. He has found a striking balance between his memories of the old country, Slovenia, and the experiences in the new country, Australia, with an emphasis on the characteristic Australian landscape, this paramount Australian literary trope. In contrast to many other migrant poets, there is no place for pathetic, maudlin melancholy in *Aurora Australis*. The two elements causing schizoid displacement in his verse are geographical distance and the poet's past. Hence his constant departures and returns create an impression of the transitoriness of life:

Every time I come back, there are fewer warm hands,
 Ready to be shaken.
 And there are more and more of those
 Who cannot recall me.
 At least I know how I fade into nothingness [. . .]
 And southerly wind blows
 Over white bones. (*Aurora Australis* 40)

In his very first collection of poems, *Aurora Australis*, Jože Žohar states that he does not acknowledge the division between a "physical" and "spiritual" migration, since the two appear to him complementary, never appearing separately. He feels „dis-placed“ and never „trans-placed“, remaining a cultural hybrid, half Slovenian and half Australian, which in his case represents a sort of homelessness (see Maver 1992).

Žohar's second collection is called *Veku Bukev* (1995; *To the Crying of Beeches*), which can mean a chronological definition of his youth spent among the beeches but also crying after it; that is, an ode to a Proustian "time lost," time spent among the reeds, poplars and beeches. Geographical locale is again of prime importance in the book and it appears in the typical dichotomic relationship: the Prekmurje and the Australian bush country are constantly contrasted and juxtaposed. This second collection of the poet's verse represents his attempt to identify Australia as his new home; yet Žohar remains caught "in between" and sings to the Australian "harem of camels in the desert, tombstones under the eucalypt trees, the

waves broken on the shore, kangaroos, run away from bush fires" (*Veku Bukev* 29; my translation). Žohar revives alliterative verse, amply uses paronyms (words that are identical but have a different meaning in a changed context) and palindromes (that can be read forwards and backwards and may have the same or a different meaning), amasses numerous homonyms, synonyms and uses onomatopoeia. As in his first collection *Aurora Australis*, Žohar still remains set asunder in the pain between Eros and Thanatos, between the erotic experience of the homeland, Slovenia, and a wish for a physical and spiritual nothingness in the vicinity of death that can only bring "salvation." This dichotomy also accounts for the poet's ambivalent attitude towards his homeland, which on the one hand urges him to become erotically involved with it and also makes him suffer, triggering off a wish for death for abandoning it.

An element that is very apparent in Žohar's collection is a specific geographic environment, which again appears in a typically dichotomous relationship: on the one hand there is the poet's native Prekmurje and Goričko, the river Mura, and on the other the Australian desert landscape. They are being constantly juxtaposed in his verse. In his melancholy, the poet is constantly returning home and at the same time bidding farewell to it: he wants to be "one in the two, to be there and to be here," which he finds a special privilege that excites him (*Veku Bukev* 9). However, it is not that he thus finds himself in a sort of schizophrenic divided position, he who describes himself as "an excited galley-slave between Scyla and Charybdis"? (*Veku Bukev* 29). Žohar's displacement and geographic schizophrenia never become a self-centred, pathetic tearful lamentation and weeping. The poetic account of Žohar's migrant experience is clearly enough set into the Slovenian-Australian context, although it could represent any migrant or exilic experience.

The collection structurally consists of four cycles, each of which comprises several sections or units, which could only conditionally be called stanzas, for the poems are written in free verse, with occasional embracing and internal rhymes. Not only does he experiment with typography (for example, in the verse sections "a mar rama" and "mure erum"), sound colouring and ballad characteristics, but also tries to revive the old Germanic alliterative verse, which is an important novelty in contemporary Slovenian poetry. Žohar uses sophisticated paronyms (cognate words) and palindromes (see Eckler). His experimentation with words, the changing of individual letters in them, which completely changes the meaning, the poetic description of his stream-of-consciousness represent a significant development in contemporary Slovenian poetic expression. The surprising introduction of alliteration into contemporary Slovenian poetry is perhaps the result of Žohar's knowledge and attachment to the Anglo-Saxon, Germanic accentual-syllabic metrical system. The palindromic arrangement of letters and the search for new or similar meanings, lexical and syntactical experimentation, synonyms

and onomatopoeic sound colouring, places him among successful Slovenian verse experimenters.

In the first poetic cycle of the collection *Veku bukev* titled "Emigrants" Žohar asks himself about the motives of Slovenian migrants to go and live in Australia "by the muddy rivers," "in the snowy Mountains" or on the sugar cane plantations of Northern Queensland (*Veku Buktev* 6). In Žohar's descriptions Nature is completely indifferent to the fate and life of an individual, a migrant—"the beeches in the Panonian marshes do not care" (*Veku Buktev* 6). The poet is "an erring figure," the Prodigal Son who has to write his poems, odes to "the time of beeches that is no more," which turn out to be elegies (*Veku Buktev*). The last part of this artistically effective cycle is partly surrealistic and full of painful awareness of the approaching old age. The second cycle of the collection, "To the Time of Beeches," establishes Žohar's life paradox: "To grow there. To grow up here."

"I Am in Between, I Am in Between," the third cycle of the collection, is the longest one. The speaker suffers because he is split between the two countries, Slovenia and Australia, he is "in between," "a mixture, a conglomerate of both, the blood of the blood of generations, departed beyond their boundaries" (*Veku Buktev* 35). He is aware of his flight that has found expression in "crying" from "the time of beeches," which opens itself as a spiral and at the same time it closes and collapses within. The attitude of the poet towards his homeland is very telling: in his first collection the erotic relationship man-woman comes to the fore, while in *Veku bukev* it is complemented with the relationship ("old") baby-("ancient") mother.

The collection ends by the fourth cycle, "The Dry Shadow-time," which is not set in the Australian setting by coincidence. This is the environment where the poet now lives, "the kind second home, surrounded by the power of oceans" (*Veku Buktev* 44). The cycle is actually dedicated to Australia, which in his eyes is a dry, deserted and empty "stolen continent" (*Veku Buktev* 45). There is a biblical allusion to the saviour—"him who shun the grave" (*Veku Buktev* 45), who is to return "from the sky". But according to the poet, the saviour is not going to arrive there, "there will be no sky with clouds above the poor consumed by fire." The ironic label "Lucky country" refers to the description of a kind of hell, where the Australian Aborigines live. They are identified with the land, which represents for them "a bowl of memory" and is no hell to them (*Veku Buktev* 47). Žohar envies them, for in contrast to him, the migrant, they are on their own piece of land and they feel at one with it, with "the land into which they are cursed" (*Veku Buktev* 47). How to win over time and transience in the dead, dried-out country? This question, too, is posed by the poet himself and he answers it by describing a metaphysical search in a love act between two people, who "pant into the sky and the earth, who hold back, prolong the moment" (*Veku Buktev* 48), with which they would at least for a

moment experience this illusion. Just as the black Aborigine blows the memory of ancient times into his *didgeridoo*, the poet at the end of the poetic cycle cries out for darkness and water for the dried-out land. It should drink till it is drunk, which he himself also desires: to forget.

Žohar's most recent verse collection *Obiranje Limon* (2004; Lemon-picking) shows that he has remained true to his bold linguistic experimentation. As a migrant he constantly tests the borders of Slovenian poetic expression, and in this book for the first time he uses rhythmical prose, representing the dark inventory of the poet's life via the metaphors of lemon-picking in Australia. This rhythmical prose or poems in prose also represent some sort of reconciliation with the anguish of a migrant abroad and the significance of "homeland," reflected in "Wanderings" for an emigrant as "one of us, displaced, with home away from home. Jernej. Domen. The tenth child. And much more" (*Obiranje Limon* 49; my translation). Žohar intimately yet only partly accepts Australia as his new homeland, because as a migrant he remains constantly displaced (Maver 2004). He sees his life as an endless process of saying good-bye and himself as the prodigal son, who tries to find his peace but also finds poetic inspiration. In "Complaints, Conciliations" he writes:

Where you are now, there is June, when lemons and oranges become ripe, time when you leave all behind and everybody leaves you behind, because you want it like this for a change. For you know full well that among lemon-trees sensually rich poems happen too. Find yourself shelter among them. (*Obiranje Limon* 29; my translation)

The poet's collection of poems *Obiranje Limon* contains seven cycles or thematic clusters: "At Home! At Home! At Home! (The Two of Us)," "Symposion," "From Apple-tree Orchards," "Indian Fragments," "Lemon-picking," "Nameless," and "Word Anguishes."

"Lemon-picking" consists of lengthy poems in prose, and the cycle "Nameless" features puns and linguistic experimentation. Žohar's poems in rhythmical prose are a new form for him, where he shows his essential dividedness between the two "Homes" (the Australian one is in the Blue Mountains, Lithgow N.S.W., where he lived later in his life) in the collection "Lemon-picking":

From the Blue Mountains, when they dwell cold in silence or when they speak out in fire.
From the house which is the home of Home. From eucalypts,
magnolia. From fences and walls between wordless neighbours.
From new roots. Yes: from new roots. You feel: there is no more of you with
each new coming back. You bite into a ripe lemon,

Suck out its juice. The tongue pricks you. The tongue that is called [. . .].
You feel like crying. (*Obiranje Limon* 35; my translation)

The cycle titled “Indian Fragments” represents an important novelty in Žohar’s poetic opus, although certain references to Buddhism (or Hinduism in his most recent collection) can already be found in the collection *Veku Bukev*. In “Pilgrimages,” Man’s anguish at the realization of his own transience suddenly strikes the poet— a Man, a migrant, as Everyman and as a pilgrim through life—as less dense and pressing during his visits to India, for he seems to be able to find a way out of it in an after-life voyage and search for a new life after death:

Scented flames,
O, bright flames of cremation,
Anoint the body that through you
Offers itself to the gods.
There is the time of search and migration.
All the destinations and terminals are also the returns. (*Obiranje Limon* 18; my translation)

It is interesting that the speaker’s experience and thinking about life (abroad) ends with a certain projection into the future, into what is for him a more “neutral” locale and culture, India—not Slovenia and not Australia. India represents for him, physically and symbolically, “something in-between,” the phrase he uses to describe himself in a previous collection, a Slovenian migrant to Australia (“Pilgrimages,” “For Indira,” and “Vishnu”). Jože Žohar’s *Obiranje Limon* connects descriptions of Man’s existential anguish with questions of migration.

Contemporary theory of diasporic/migrant literature perceives Home as several locales, non-spatial transnational concept of location, i.e. being here and there at the same time, which is at the same time deeply embedded in the cultural memory of a migrant and their own specific personal biography (for more Goyal). Jože Žohar’s poetic heritage, after his untimely death in 2018, amply shows this transnational turn in an aesthetic(ized) manner. It is unfortunate that despite the richness of his language, unusual experimentation which shows his linguistic freedom and playfulness, his work has unfortunately remained practically unknown in mainstream Slovenian poetry to date. His literary opus, as well as that of other important migrant Slovenian authors, however, does feature on university syllabi in the English department of the University of Ljubljana and some other Slovenian literature university courses in Slovenia. Migrant literature was, is and will continue to be part of the national literary creativity tradition and collective consciousness and historical experience and should be taught on all the various levels of education, especially on the tertiary one. However, in contemporary

mainstream Australian literature ethnic subjects are increasingly not depicted as traditional immigrant characters constructing their diasporic identities, but as modern transnational subjects seeing especially urban space as both the alternative space and as a space defining the marginality of their cultural identity. This transnational identity within the context of Bill Ashcroft's concept of Australian transnation is an identity expressing the specificity of the plethora of cultural and ethnic identities of the contemporary generations in Australia.

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Jože Žohar: pozabljen slovenski izseljenski pesniški glas od 'tam spodaj'

Članek obravnava poezijo Jožeta Žoharja, nedavno preminulega izseljenskega pesnika iz Avstralije. Pesnik kljub svoji ne ravno veliki pesniški produkciji kaže neverjeten talent za eksperimentiranje in skuša v svojem delu in v sebi samem pomiriti povezanost z obema 'domoma', Slovenijo in Avstralijo.

Ključne besede: slovenska izseljenska književnost, Avstralija, Jože Žohar, diaspora

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An Unwilling Suspension of Misbeliefs: Acknowledging the Complexity of Reality in *Night of Happiness* by Tabish Khair

Elisabetta Marino

ABSTRACT

By focusing on Tabish Khair's latest literary endeavour, a short novel entitled *Night of Happiness* (2018), this paper sets out to investigate what, in the writer's opinion, is the root of most problems affecting human relationships and society as a whole: our unwillingness to embrace the unexpected complexity of reality, reassuringly misperceived through the filter of one's misconceptions.

Key-words: fundamentalisms, identity, *Night of Happiness*, stereotypical perceptions, Tabish Khair

A highly-esteemed critic, an insightful journalist, a prolific author of poems, plays, and novels (shortlisted for several prestigious prizes), Tabish Khair (1966-) is also an associate professor in the Department of English of the university of Aarhus (Denmark), where he currently lives. His thriving artistic career has followed an unconventional path, thus challenging the “prerequisite requirement” of the global publishing industry that, according to Om Dwivedi, binds promising authors with a non-Western background together: their coming “from major places which share some connection with British colonialism” (10). Quite the opposite, Khair was brought up in a Muslim family in Gaya, a small town in the backward and remote state of Bihar. He spent the first thirty years of his life in India, where he earned both his BA and MA; then, for purely personal reasons, he decided to move to Copenhagen (not to London or any other Western metropolis), where he broadened his education and gained a PhD in 2000. Given the cross-cultural and religious relevance of Gaya (Buddha’s place of enlightenment as well as an internationally renowned Hindu pilgrimage destination), he grew up “more as a cosmopolitan person” (Dharker 33); hence, as he observes, he “was attracted to the world and [he] was interested in difference” (33).¹

Khair has been recently described by Om Dwivedi and Cristina Gámez-Fernández as “a humanist” (xv), as a “socially responsible writer” (xv) who, far from merely entertaining his readers, wishes “to provoke thought and thus augment moral and ethical values in society” (xv). Moreover, the two scholars have emphasized Kahir’s uncompromising rejection of literary labels – postcolonial/ diasporic/ transnational/ postmodern, to name a few – applied to his (or anybody’s) output, as categorizations entail (over)simplifications and restrictions, through the adoption of theoretical lenses that fail to capture the complexity of a work of art, mirroring a multi-faceted and ever-changing reality. In his view, valuable books are those that “make you think anew” (Khair, “Non-Fiction”), by suggesting fresh perspectives, while unsettling deeply ingrained sets of beliefs and assumptions. As he further underlined in the 2011 volume of criticism he wrote with Sebastián Doubinsky, literature “is where we are confronted with the possibilities, problems and limits of language, which are finally also the problems of reality (and representation)” (Khair, Doubinsky 10). Innuendoes, gaps, silence, therefore, are equally important, since “the best writers make the most of not just what can be said but, above all, what *cannot* be said” (11). Accordingly, the reader

1 Besides, as he mentioned to Gautam Karmakar, he “grew up in an open and religious Muslim family, going to a Roman Catholic school, and surrounded by Hindu friends and neighbours. The idea that one has to show respect to other religions [...] was a lifestyle” (273).

envisioned by Khair refuses to stay “on the surface of the text” (Khair, “The Death” 131): by assuming the role of a critic, s/he is an “active thinker and interpreter” (131), who explores the crevices between words and lines and, just like the protagonist of Seamus Heaney’s renowned poem, digs out previously unforeseen alternatives.

In recent years, Khair has been engaged in tackling crucial contemporary issues, such as Islamic fundamentalism and xenophobia.² As this essay sets out to elucidate, in his latest literary endeavour, a short novel entitled *Night of Happiness* (2018), the author encourages his readers to expose the root of most problems affecting human relationships and, therefore, society as a whole: our unwillingness to embrace the intricacies, the unexpected multiplicity of reality, reassuringly misperceived through the filter of one’s biases and preconceptions, and thus commonly misinterpreted. As will be shown, religious radicalism and discrimination also stem from this core pathology.

Narrated by a high-flying entrepreneur, Anil Mehrotra, the narrative explores his increasingly perplexing connection with his right-hand man, Ahmed, regarded as a trustworthy and diligent employee until the incident that triggers the plot. Always cooperative and unpretentious, Ahmed has only ever asked for one day off a year to celebrate Shab-e-baraat, the night of happiness and salvation, a Muslim festival that “links the past to the future” (Khair, *Night* 15) through the commemoration of the dead. Due to pressing and unexpected business commitments, Ahmed is compelled to work with his boss even on that special occasion. As soon as the most urgent tasks are completed, however, Mehrotra decides to assuage his feelings of guilt by driving Ahmed home, where his wife is supposedly waiting for him to taste the delicious *maida ka halwa* she has especially prepared for the event. Invited to join them in the feast (even though the lady of the house might not show herself, since she observes strict *purdah*), Mehrotra is confronted with a most distressing experience: he is served a plate of non-existent *halwa*, which his host seems to be enjoying immensely, eating from his own empty dish. Furthermore, the conspicuous lock on the front door (signalling the absence of any occupant, before the two men walked in), coupled with the remarkable invisibility of Ahmed’s spouse, suggest that she might also be a figment of his troubled mind. Concerned for the future stability of his company, in the hands of an evidently insane person, the narrator is determined to solve Ahmed’s mystery by hiring a private investigator, who

2 Tabish Khair has released two “sister novels” (Karmakar 279), *How to Fight Islamist Terror from the Missionary Position* (2012) and *Just Another Jihadi Jane* (2016), and a philosophical treatise entitled *The New Xenophobia* (2016). In 2008, some of his essays published between 2001 and 2007 were collected by Renu Kaul Verma in a volume, entitled *Muslim Modernities: Tabish Khair’s Essays on Moderation and Mayhem*.

gradually uncovers the tragedies of his individual (and collective) past, first of all the ferocious murder of his beloved wife during the Gujarat riots.³

From the very choice of the genre for his novel, Tabish Khair challenges his readers to think beyond conventions and expand their horizons. Depicted by Avantika Mehta as a “literary thriller with a gripping and well-constructed plot” (“Review: Night of Happiness by Tabish Khair”), *Night of Happiness* actually defies any form of classification, as Mandira Nayar has also pointed out, by viewing it as “part fable, part thriller and part philosophical” (“*Night of Happiness: A Serving of Distilled Wisdom from Tabish Khair*”). By following the narrator of this “haunting tale” (Mokkil, “The Islamic Factor”) and his line of reasoning, readers gather that appearances may be deceptive, perceptions (even self-perceptions) might prove inaccurate, and simplifications inevitably lead to misunderstandings and mistakes. Indeed, only when the end of the story is reached, can its beginning be thoroughly understood, thus casting a different light on its main characters.

The son of a diplomat and a successful manager, Anil Mehrotra belongs to a privileged class, as his PhD from Columbia University, his brand-new Toyota Innova (normally driven by a chauffeur), his iPhone, his golf-club membership, and the fancy party he gives and attends unmistakably testify. He introduces himself as “a man of action” (Khair, *Night* 42), who takes pride in “thinking logically” (42), while running his “life (and business) on clear lines” (50).⁴ His most used adjective is probably *sensible*: he leads a “sensible life” (139, 144), plays golf, a “sensible game” (64), and his marriage is “a sensible one” (75), surely meant to last, since no “deep existential issues” (75) are ever addressed in conversation. The charming family picture sketched by Khair – a refined and cultivated couple with two adorable, cornflakes-eating girls in immaculate school uniform, against the background of a lavishly furnished house⁵ – is reminiscent of many a scene of delightful domesticity taken from a 1960s Hollywood movie.

With his perfectly balanced, successful, and well-organized existence, Mehrotra seemingly epitomizes the virtues of dependability and integrity. Readers are, therefore, persuaded to accept his account of the facts as truthful, while sharing his doubts on Ahmed’s mental sanity, after the unpleasant episode of the invisible

3 As Tabish Khair explains in his novel (126), the 2002 violence was instigated by the death of more than fifty Hindu pilgrims on a train that was seemingly set on fire in Godhra (Gujarat). Returning from Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh), the Hindu pilgrims had taken part in a ceremony at the site where Babri Masjid (a large mosque) used to stand before its demolition (supposedly, the mosque had replaced a pre-existing temple of Rama and, therefore, it had been pulled down). Accused of causing what, later on, turned out to be most likely an accident, the minority Muslim population in Gujarat was persecuted and hundreds were slaughtered.

4 In Mehrotra’s words, his business is “a well-oiled machine” (Khair, *Night* 49).

5 See, for example, p. 49.

halwa. Yet, from the opening pages of *Night of Happiness*, Tabish Khair provides a variety of conflicting clues that betray the narrator's lack of judgement, his partiality, and his total unreliability, despite his impeccable façade. To begin with, Mehrotra is a confirmed liar, who often fabricates alternative versions of the facts to suit his purposes.⁶ Secondly, he does not seem to know his own country and its history: educated abroad, he believes Surat (where Ahmed and his wife had previously settled) is "a relatively small place" (125); in truth, it is the eighth largest city in India and one of the fastest growing in the world. Besides, when the detective mentions 2002 as a tragically pivotal year in Ahmed's life, the narrator cannot recall any particular incident connected with it, apart from the frivolous "golden jubilee of Queen Elizabeth" (124) and the outbreak of the Iraq War (which, in actual fact, began only in 2003). Hence, the detective has to remind him of the Gujarat riots and the brutal killings of Muslims committed in Surat by groups of Hindu nationalists.⁷ A beef-eater Hindu (another proof of his inconsistency), Mehrotra is strongly prejudiced against the Indian Muslim community. When he relates his initial acquaintance with Ahmed, during a job interview at his newly started company, he candidly admits that, being the only Muslim applicant, he was "prepared to reject him" (8) even before meeting him, for the very reason that he "had never known a Muslim intimately" (8): "one wants to work with known factors. First rule in business, first rule in life: work with known factors" (8). Behind this seemingly winning (and *sensible*) motto, there lurk the spectres of narrow-mindedness and bigotry. Eventually, Ahmed is selected among the other candidates for his outstanding knowledge of foreign languages,⁸ surely an asset for any import-export business. Nonetheless, even after years of fruitful and peaceful collaboration with him, the association between Islamic faith and the dangers of fundamentalism continues to be inextricable and unavoidable in the narrator's mind. Indeed, thus acting like Proust's madeleine, the non-existent *halwa*⁹ actually kindles his dormant – albeit viable – suspicions and innermost fears. Consequently, "Islamist atrocity[ies] or terrorist attack[s]" (73), "Jihad" (23), and "Islamist terror" (94) are often hinted at in Mehrotra's remarks, especially when his disturbing employee is alluded to. Besides, in his opinion, Ahmed's stay in

6 He often lies to his wife, as when he lingers at Ahmed's house, while pretending he is being delayed by the traffic (31).

7 Mehrotra openly confesses his carelessness by admitting that, later on, he had looked up the events in Gujarat on Wikipedia, "so deep down in the swamp of [his] consciousness had the tragedy sunk" (126).

8 Ahmed speaks English, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, Gujarati, Bhojpuri, Bangla, Arabic, French, German, Thai, Tibetan, Japanese and "a smattering of Chinese" (8).

9 For Md. Sajidul Islam, "the halwa is a metaphor for Ahmed's faith" (1131) and for the "invisibilization" of the Muslim minority.

Mumbai (a city with “a huge underworld [... and] terrorist links” [117]) constitutes the supposedly irrefutable evidence of his involvement in obscure Islamist plots.¹⁰ Lastly, his polite but insistent request to have a day off on Shab-e-baraat is depicted as an unmistakable act of intimidation and harassment: “it sent a sliver of unease through [Mehrotra] – perhaps what you would feel if a loaded gun was pointed, playfully, at you” (17).

Just like in life, however, in *Night of Happiness* the texture of reality is always more complex than one’s perception of it. Surprisingly enough, the narrator’s assumptions and dark conspiracy theories are paradoxically undermined through his own portrayal of Ahmed which, most of the times, clashes against the expected image of the disquieting Other. In truth, far from resembling a religious fanatic, a would-be schemer, or even a lunatic, Ahmed appears to be the only, truly sensible and reliable character in the story. Trust is his primary value: when his boss asks him to spy on his business partners to verify their honesty, he refuses to comply, adding one of his “Ahmedisms” (43), i.e. wise and insightful sentences that reveal his personality: “What does knowledge have to do with trust, Mehrotra sa’ab? [...] There is no *need* for trust if one has knowledge” (56). Besides being gentle and considerate (he looks after his ailing neighbours and usually plays the part of the mediator in every dispute¹¹), Ahmed is also a frank and communicative person; he believes in the importance of establishing solid human connections to such an extent that, wherever he may be, he always leaves one window open since, in his words, “to seal a space is to shut out a soul” (25). As far as his creed is concerned, he identifies himself as “nor religious or irreligious” (21). Even though Mehrotra is inclined to perceive him as a Jihadi militant, actually Ahmed is highly critical of fellow Muslims who manipulate the verses of the Quran to serve their own agendas. His family belongs to the Tableeghi Jamaat, a pacifist, non-political missionary group that places a strong emphasis “on education and living an ethical life defined by Islamic precepts” (71-72), while encouraging women to further their education and look for employment opportunities. When, on Shab-e-baraat, his mother is unpredictably denied access to the cemetery on account of her gender, Ahmed does not surrender to the new regulation, which he deems unfair; instead of entering without the elderly lady, in fact, he prefers to catch one last glimpse of his father’s grave from afar, walking with her along the railway tracks behind the burial ground. Ahmed’s utmost esteem and consideration for women (at odds

10 The gulf between Mehrotra and Ahmed is also widened by the social distance that separates them; given its poverty, the neighbourhood where the latter lives is perceived as hostile and intimidating by the narrator: it exudes “a mix of sadness and threat” (Khair, *Night* 21). It should not pass unnoticed that Ahmed is even stripped of his right to a surname, which is never disclosed in the novel.

11 “Violence, Ahmed had once said, is a virus; it spreads by contaminating others” (125).

with Mehrotra's perniciously stereotypical notion of Muslim men) can also be detected in his relationship with his wife. While the narrator assumes he had married within his own community, even insinuating he had chosen one of his cousins, "as Muslims are reputed to do" (26), Ahmed falls in love with a girl with a questionable background,¹² whose dark complexion, slanted eyes, and high cheekbones are obvious indicators of her mixed ancestry. As Ahmed elucidates, his spouse ignored the faith she had grown up in, nor had he ever asked her to convert and observe *pardah*, since her belief did not matter to him (eventually, wearing a veil had been her own decision). From their initial meeting, he had unreservedly embraced the complexity of her identity: no pressure on his part to reach a clear-cut, unambiguous definition of her self. Indeed, when he had first inquired about her, he had been given different names, corresponding to as many ethnic and religious groups: Ahmed had opted for Roshni (a Muslim name) simply because he liked the sound of it.

What leaves the narrator of *Night of Happiness* thoroughly baffled is the bewildering split between appearance and reality,¹³ as well as his own inability to definitively "slot" (122) and classify Ahmed who, in his puzzled mind, passes from being a hard-working and self-effacing employee, to being labelled a madman or a prospective criminal.¹⁴ Tabish Khair plainly shows the dangers of such a partial and short-sighted simplification when the detective hired by Mehrotra exposes the gruesome details of Roshni's death in Surat. First of all, the author prompts his readers to break the clichéd connection between *fundamentalism* and *Islam*, by showing that radicalization is a multi-headed monster. The woman had been brutally abused and then burned alive by a mob of Hindutva activists, who longed to "teach 'those Muslims a lesson'" (127). Despite her mild nature and her respect for her neighbours' religious confession (together with her husband, she even participated in *pujas*, Hindu prayer rituals), Roshni had been branded as a "Muslim"¹⁵ (or, better, she had been hastily *constructed* as such¹⁶), and therefore regarded, by definition, as an enemy, whose death would compensate for the lives of the Godhra train victims.

12 Nobody knew who her father was, while his mother was the mistress of a married man.

13 As the narrator sadly observes, "what a relief it was when things were exactly what they seemed" (42). Before the halwa incident, in fact, reality was almost bidimensional in his view.

14 As well as viewing Ahmed as a terrorist, Mehrotra also believes he might have murdered his wife.

15 Ironically, given her looks and upbringing, Roshni was not perceived as Muslim by the Muslim community. In his narrative the author also highlights that Muslim is actually an umbrella-term, as there are many varieties of Islam (Sufism is also mentioned).

16 As Khair noticed in *The New Xenophobia*, "it is not the difference of the stranger that is feared when we are xenophobic; it is a certain construction and understanding of difference (which might or might not exist)" (31).

Nevertheless, as will be shown, in his novel Khair also suggests that the divide between the One and the Other may be finally bridged, and that literature is still entrusted with a crucial social function.¹⁷ *Night of Happiness* might be considered as a rewriting of a famous poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge delving into the themes of guilt and atonement: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which is literally quoted in an epigraph placed at the beginning of the narrative,¹⁸ while serving as the leitmotiv of the volume. Weighed down by the burden of sin (he killed the albatross), the ancient mariner detains a guest, on his way to a wedding, with his compelling and disconcerting account of his South Seas experience. At first, in Mehrotra's perception, Ahmed is assimilated to Coleridge's creation, with the "glitter in [his] eye,¹⁹ a fervour in [his] voice, a grasping of the hand" (51); in fact, just like the wedding guest crafted by the Romantic poet, the narrator is prevented from joining the party he is heading to by his employee, who forcefully invites him to share his *maida ka halwa* together with his story. After that evening, Mehrotra is haunted by the nightmare of a hand (Ahmed's hand, as he initially believes) detaining him by the sleeve. He himself mentions *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* as the possible source of his recurring dream; yet, he continues to be disturbed by its sinister and ominous implications: Ahmed might have committed a crime he still feels guilty for, or he might be planning to perpetrate one in the future. However, as the plot unravels and the narrator starts digging underneath the surface of phenomena (not unlike the mindful reader Tabish Khair wishes for in his critical essays²⁰), he begins to suspend his judgements and misbeliefs – albeit unwillingly, at first –, thus acknowledging facets of reality he had previously overlooked or consciously discarded. Consequently, as soon as the disheartening details of Ahmed's story are disclosed, the narrator realizes that, actually, the mysterious hand in his nightmare did not belong to his employee but to himself: "it was my hand – I had recognized the scar that I have carried from the time I fell down and cut myself while doing the hurdles in school" (108). Hence, as Tabish Khair seems to imply by using Coleridge's poem as a strategic and thought-provoking tool, the One and the Other may play interchangeable roles, depending on one's perspective

17 Conversely, the novel lampoons both the contemporary publishers that exploit the exotic allure of some of their authors to advertise them, and the pseudo-writers that capitalize on their ethnic background to promote their self-image and the sales of their books. A humorous, recurring figure in the text is that of "a British writer of Indian origin [who] had won a major award" (41): even though he has visited India only twice in his entire life, he is hailed by his publisher as "a son of the nation" (41) and he markets himself as such.

18 "They groan'd, they stirrd, they all uprose,/ Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;/ It had been strange, even in a dream,/ To have seen those dead men rise" (3).

19 In the third line of the poem, Coleridge's mariner is identified by his "glittering eye."

20 Actually, Mehrotra even interprets the gaps and silences in the detective's account of Ahmed's past life (see, for example, pages 102 and 103).

or point of observation. Furthermore, towards the end of the novel, the narrator is delivered a fragrant tiffin carrier containing *halwa* which, unlike any other person in his office, he can not only smell, but also see, and taste. The confusing episode that had triggered the whole narrative is, therefore, reproduced exactly one year later: only this time Mehrotra acts as a suspicious and delusional person. In the end, the narrator eventually questions himself and his own assumptions: “what if it was *my* failure to see, feel, smell, touch – a lack Ahmed could not have imagined or expected after all those years we shared?” (151). Oppressed by guilt (stemming from the newly-gained awareness of his own self-centredness and frivolity), like the ancient mariner Anil Mehrotra feels obliged to tell his story, which is also Ahmed’s.²¹ Indeed, *Night of Happiness* supposedly corresponds to the manuscript he frantically writes and leaves in a drawer of the five-star hotel room he locks himself in, on Shab-e-baraat, the night of forgiveness and salvation. Meaningfully enough, even though he intends to give a title to his story, since he “likes to label and file” (153), readers already know that the title “~~the spectral infinitude of small distances~~” (3) has been crossed out by its author: the invisible but thick walls that separate the various components of society (castes, classes, ethnic communities, religious groups, genders) can be annihilated by shifting one’s point of view and embracing the multiplicity of reality.²²

As Tabish Khair stated in a 2018 interview, “for me literature is the kind of writing that demands deep attention – and repeated excavations of meaning. [...] That is the reason why literature remains the best antidote to fundamentalism – religious, political or economic” (Karmakar 280). In this light, given the insights it offers as well as its challenging implications, *Night of Happiness* certainly deserves to be read and, most of all, taught.

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21 “I do not know if it is my story or Ahmed’s, or whether, as I believed once, we even have separate stories” (153).

22 The novel even ends with the word *unknowable* followed by a question mark.

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Pripoznavanje kompleksnosti resničnosti v romanu *Night of Happiness* Tabisha Khairja

Z analizo zadnjega dela Tabisha Khairja, kratkega romana *Night of Happiness* (2018) članek raziskuje, kaj je po pisateljevem mnenju vir večine težav, ki zadevajo človeške odnose in družbo kot celoto.

Ključne besede: fundamentalizmi, identiteta, *Night of Happiness*, stereotipne percepcije, Tabish Khair

Transning the Algerian Nation-State: Textual Transgender and Intersex from Pre-Independence to the Black Decade

Chantal Zabus

ABSTRACT

The article examines the role of transgender and intersex in two key-texts, Marie-Pierre Pruvot's *Marie parce que c'est joli* (2007) and Fériel Assima's *Roublem ou le sexe des anges* (1996). Both texts chronicle two «moments» in Algerian history: 1) the two decades leading to Algerian independence in 1962; and 2) the Black decade spanning 1988-1998. These «moments» are experienced by two protagonists—*pied-noir* Jean-Pierre Pruvot and MTF Marie-Pierre Pruvot, rolled into one; and Assima's intersex character raised as a boy, Rhoulem. Both their repressed feminine genders and bodies-in-transition, reflected through the discursive erosion of male genitalia, augur the “transning” of the Algerian nation-state, away from a traditional engendering of the nation-state as male.

Keywords: Transgender, Intersex, Trans(ion)ing, Algeria, Nation-State, queer Maghreb

On the traditional model of governmentality, Foucault sardonically comments that a good government manages the nation-state in the same way that a good father governs the household and monitors the sexuality of its dependent members (Foucault 2001: 208-209). The art of governing, which claims social coherence and adherence to strict, patriarchal gender regimes, is therefore a pre-requisite for the stability and success of a socially and culturally coherent nation-state. In postcolonial African fiction, the disappearance, absence, impotence or transformation of male genitals, as they embody patriarchy, is often conjured up as an allegory to signify the collapse and failure of the postcolonial nation-state. This is certainly the case in Sub-Saharan African fiction and film, starting with Sembène Ousmane's *Xala* (1975)¹. Maghrebi texts are no exception, but some of them come with a twist in that the repression of the feminine in the transgender or intersex protagonist points to a crisis of masculinities in a nation-state such as Algeria that insists on maintaining an exclusively patriarchal type of governmentality.

TRANSING NATIONS

In his seminal book, *Queer Nations* (2000), Jarrod Hayes approaches fiction by Maghrebi writers such as Tahar Djaout, Mohammed Dib, Kateb Yacine, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Assia Djebar and Leïla Sebar in an attempt to delineate "allegories of the Queer Nation." Using mainly novels to illustrate such allegories on the grounds that nations are fictions supported by narratives, Hayes postulates that when Maghrebi authors represent "homosexuality, sodomy, homoeroticism, lesbianism, cross-dressing, the joys of emasculation, women's resistance, public unveiling, and feminist guerilla warfare, they do not merely challenge sexual taboos, sexual normativity, and patriarchy (which they do), they also reveal the queerness of the Nation" (Hayes 2000: 16). Building on such a premise, this study holds that at least two Francophone Algerian texts foregrounding transgender and intersex focus, in varying degrees, on the erosion or questioning of orthodox sexual and gender paradigms. In the process, they point to cracks in the making of the heteronormative postcolonial nation-state to the point of *transing* the nation.

1 This is also illustrated in Souleymane Cissé's *Yeleen* (1987); Benoit Lamy and Ngangura Mweze's *La vie est belle* (Life is Rosy) (1987), Jean-Pierre Bekolo's *Quartier Mozart* (1992) and science-fiction film *Les saignantes: A Story of Corruption, Sexuality, and Supernatural Power* (2005), previewed during the 2005 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and translated as *The Bloodettes*.

Transing is part of new vocabularies associated to transgenderism (TG) and transsexualism (TS),² i.e. the transitioning from the birth sex to the targeted gender identity, usually but not necessarily through sex reassignment surgery (SRS), also called gender confirmation surgery. *Transing* is here extended to intersexuality, generally understood as a condition of gonadal or external genital ambiguity. The notion of *transing* reflects a necessary process of transcending and “transpassing” (Najmabadi 2008) across Algeria’s sex/gender walls and other patriarchal scaffoldings.

The consequences of the Algerian war which culminated in the independence of Algeria in 1962 has been equated with a festering wound, a long-lasting trauma waiting to be re-invoked in order to be turned into a healing memory. Yet, according to Franco-Algerian historian Benjamin Stora in *La Grangrène et l’oubli*, this healing had not yet been properly processed in the late 1990s; Stora used very apt phrases—“une guerre ensevelie, [...] oubliée [...] intériorisée” (Stora 1998: 238)—to refer to the collective amnesia unfolding in stages and culminating in an internalized war. Stora has since moved away from such an introspective reading. In a Conference at the Institut français d’Alger on 3 December 2018, Stora evoked the necessity of transcending “mourning” and the role of culture during the post-mourning process in healing breaches between France and Algeria while questioning the aptness of the family metaphor used in a TV documentary significantly titled “France/Algérie: une histoire de famille” broadcast on 29 November 2018 by public TV channel France 2.³

Taking her cue from Stora in *La gangrène et l’oubli*, Helen Vassallo has diagnosed Franco-Algerian novelist Nina Bouraoui’s autobiographical writing as reflecting the waging of the war between Algeria and France within the sexually dissident body (Vassallo 2009: 39), particularly in the years following the conflict and its ongoing legacy. In *Garçon Manqué* (2000), translated as *Tomboy* (2007), Bouraoui, whose father is Algerian and mother French, writes: “Je viens d’une union rare. Je suis la France avec l’Algérie” ; «Je viens de la guerre» (Bouraoui 2000: 9 & 32). Additionally, Bouraoui’s male cross-dressing as a young girl, according to Vassallo, reveals her escape from “the confines of a stereotypical feminine model

2 By “transgender (TG) individuals,” we refer to individuals ranging from a) “non-operative” individuals who often live and identify as belonging to a sex different from that assigned at birth and who may or may not cross-dress; to b) individuals who consider themselves a “third sex” or “Two-Spirit” and cultivate a certain, often culture-specific, gender liminality (genderqueer) to the point of resisting the predominant view of gender categories as a male/female binary; and to c) transsexual individuals (transmen and transwomen) who have changed their bodies through sex reassignment surgery (SRS), also called *gender confirmation surgery*. The term “transsexualism” was first used in its modern sense by Cauldwell (1940) and elaborated in the clinical literature by Benjamin (1966).

3 <http://lesavoir.over-blog.com/2018/12/benjamin-stora-au-sujet-des-relations-algero-francaises-la-culture-pour-depasser-le-deuil.html>. Accessed on 28 February 2019.

only to embrace a stereotypically masculine one” (Vassallo 2009: 43). *Tomboy* indeed features a cross-dresser, but that cross-dresser is also a transgender character in that the female-born I-narrator takes on a full-fledged and even double male identity as “Ahmed” or “Brio.” Such a transgender character opens the portal to Francophone FTM (Female-to-Male) narratives, for most contemporaneous Francophone novels still tend to privilege MTF (Male-to-Female) narratives, from Eric Fottorino’s *Caresse de rouge* (2004) to Juliette Jourdan’s *Le choix de Juliette* (2009) and Jean-Noël Sciarini’s *Le garçon bientôt oublié* (2010).⁴

A few Moroccan writers like Abdelkebir Khatibi and Abdelhak Serhane have alluded to some aspects of transgenderism.⁵ More recently, Moroccan Abdellah Taïa, who, in *Une mélancolie arabe* (2008), had already recounted his tribulations as a queer child, features, in *Le jour du roi* (2010), one boy Omar, who has put on lipstick and declares: “Je ne suis ni garçon, ni fille. Je suis dans le désir” (Taïa 2010: 179). Taïa had confided in 2008 to Rabat-based sociologist Jean Zaganiaris that he wished, in his writing, to go “au-delà de l’hétérosexualité et de l’homosexualité ... vers le transgenre, la transformation” (Zaganiaris 2008: n.p.) but Taïa’s will to move towards transgender remains thus far a metaphor within a same-sex libidinal economy.

In one of his short stories, “J’aime les filles” (2013), Moroccan Hicham Tahir chronicles a love story between two Moroccan female teenagers, Ghizlane and Niaama. Niaama reasons that, even though she is attracted to Ghislane, she does not think of herself as «homosexual»: «Etre homosexuelle impliquait que je devais être attirée par les femmes, mais je ne l’étais pas, aussi difficile de le croire, je ne l’étais pas. J’étais attirée par Ghizlane et Ghizlane seule” (Tahir 2013: 54). Niaama’s statement could be read as emanating from an FTM character who desires a female partner as a transman or at any rate as a non-operative transman, that is, a transgender individual who has not undergone sex reassignment surgery. This would explain why Niaama considers herself⁶ as not falling into the “homosexual” category. However, Ghislane confirms the same thing—“ni les garçons ni les filles n’étaient sa tasse de thé” (Tahir 2013: 54)—and therefore locates her desire outside of the homosexual/heterosexual divide, in a multigendered perspective. Beyond this hint at a variant of transgender verging on a non-binary or genderqueer perception of masculinity and femininity, Tahir’s surrogate character, in another short

4 For a list of transgender novels, films and documentaries in French in the first decade of the twenty-first century, see Todd Reeser, “Introduction,” p. 2 ff.

5 Already in *Le livre du sang* (1979) Moroccan sociologist Abdelkebir Khatibi had portrayed androgyny but more in an eighth-century Sufi sense than in the contemporary understanding of transgender. Moroccan Berber novelist Abdelhak Serhane in *Messaouda* (1983) describes the eponymous prostitute as a “solitary hermaphrodite” (Serhane 2002: 43, 45, 11).

6 Hir and herself are third-person, gender-neutral or multigendered pronouns resulting from the rise of transgender theory.

story, “Assim,” dreams of resorting to aesthetic surgery and of cultivating doubt as to his gender: “Laisser le doute planer chez les gens à se demander si je suis un homme ou si je suis une femme” (Tahir 2013: 44). But unlike texts dealing with Algeria, these Moroccan texts seldom engage with and confront the body politic. The reason may lie in the fact that more so than other Maghrebi countries, Algeria has been more intricately enmeshed in the recent history of the rise of Islamism.

This study relies on two texts in order to account for the internalizing of the Algerian war, its aftermath, and the inscription of political turmoil onto the bodies of gender non-confirming individuals: Marie-Pierre Pruvot’s *Marie parce que c’est joli* (2007) and Fériel Assima’s *Rhoulem ou le sexe des anges* (1996). These two texts feature, respectively, transgender and intersex protagonists and chronicle two textual moments: the first “moment” covers the 1940s up to independence in 1962; the second “moment” occurs during the *décennie noire* or Black decade (1988-1998). Despite being “fictive,” both texts host degrees of autobiographical or testimonial vestment and feature cross-dressing, stealth or transgender passing in the targeted gender, as well as transsexualism. They both feature a birth and, as is often the case with transgender, transsexual, and intersex characters, their “failure”⁷ to fit into prescribed gender (and genital) categories points to tensions in Franco-Algerian relations and in the erection of the new Islamic nation-state.

BAMBI’S MIRROR BIRTH, AMNESIA, AND EARLY SEXUAL CITIZENSHIP

Marie-Pierre Pruvot, née Jean-Pierre Pruvot (1935-), also called Marie-Pier Ysser (after Isser, the Kabyle village where she was born) and known under her former stage name Bambi, remains the most famous transsexual woman alive in present-day France. *Marie parce que c’est joli* (2007) is Marie-Pierre Pruvot’s first memoir out of many such rehearsals, including the first of five volumes, *J’inventais ma vie* (2010), and the 2013 Lifshitz documentary. The aim in this section is to link some of her early writing with nation-building in Algeria where she grew up and, accessorially, Morocco, where she was among the first patients of Dr. Burou, who carried out among the first MTF (male-to-female) surgeries in his transgender clinic in Casablanca as of the 1950s.

In *Marie parce que c’est joli*, which Pruvot conceived as a fictional biography (“biographie romanesque”), she recounts her life or rather the life of Jean-Pierre Pruvot, in colonial Algeria as of the 1940s. Jean-Pierre Pruvot is a *piéd-noir*, that is, an individual of European origin, who lived in Algeria

7 “Failure” is here understood in the positive way in which Halberstam understood it in *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011).

under French rule. Unlike Muslim Algerians dispossessed of French citizenship rights,⁸ pied-noirs had voting rights in France and were part of French nationals of either sex in the French Constitution of 1958. As a pied-noir, Jean-Pierre Pruvot thus enjoyed a seeming state of empowerment in colonial Algeria. However, the reader is soon introduced to cracks in that discourse of colonial empowerment through the young Jean-Pierre's wrestling with his first name and his tendency to cross-dress in what might be described as an inaugural "birth" scene. This form of cross-dressing reverses Bouraoui's; yet is, like Bouraoui's, inscribed within a quest for subjectivity and agency in a (post-)colonial Franco-Algerian context.

Jean-Pierre Pruvot's questioning of his male first name and the inaugural scene of cross-dressing occur while growing up at his paternal grandmother's place in Bordj-Menaïel, a little town between Algiers and Tizi-Ouzou, in Western Kabylia, Northern Algeria. Jean-Pierre Pruvot's present-day first name—Marie-Pierre—is a concession to his mother's initial choice—"Marie parce que c'est joli," as in the title of Pruvot's fictional memoir, and an endorsement of his father's preference: "[il] penchait pour Pierre" (Pruvot 2007: 9). In one harrowing moment, the mother, who has been worrying about Jean-Pierre wearing girls' dresses, coaxes her son into confessing his "real," hyphenated name amidst choking sobs and hiccups—"Jean-Pierre" (Pruvot 2007:9)—in a proleptic gesture of "deadnaming" her son. The mother indeed has her son entrench his birth name as part of his gender identity, that is, the "deadname" which the older Marie-Pierre will discard to suit her targeted gender.

Jean-Pierre's humiliating confession of his birth name is preceded by a scene of cross-dressing with his older sister's hand-me downs, which signals his first fumbling attempts at recuperating his gender identity as a girl as of the age of four and a half. In this scene, Jean-Pierre sees his true female self in the mirror of his sister's wardrobe, as he is trying on his sister's European-style, imported red dress with little white dots: "...je pus enfin me voir dans la robe rouge à petits points blancs. Ce fut un éblouissement, comme toutes les fois où la tante Sophie, après s'être amusée à me maquiller, me retournait, pour que je m'admire, vers le miroir de son lavabo, et me disait : 'Oh ! la jolie petite fille !' « (Pruvot, 2007: 6). In trans writing, the mirror is customarily linked with the autobiographical genre and with the Lacanian mirror-stage passage from the pre-linguistic Imaginary order to the Symbolic stage of language acquisition. Even though the latter aspect lies beyond the scope of the present article, it is worth noting that Pruvot's mirror birth is resonant with prior mirror-scenes in which his aunt Sophie had made up his face and had exclaimed on his behalf—"What

8 On Algerian Jews, the Crémieux decree and its repeal, see Aron (1976).

a pretty little girl!," in an endorsement by a female family member which he here recuperates for himself.

In an early, pioneering book theorizing written trans autobiographies, *Second Skins* (1998), Jay Prosser points to his involvement as an FTM (female-to-male transsexual) with reading other trans individuals' autobiographies: "I am not uninvolved: reading autobiography is always a pointed engagement of the self, and these texts on several levels constitute *my* mirror-scene" (Prosser 1998: 103). All mirror-scenes, including recent "screen births" in vlogs,⁹ can therefore be read as interchangeable for all trans individuals. At this pre-Internet stage, Jean-Pierre's assessment of his targeted self as female in the mirror is crucial in confirming gender identity processes and in launching a form of what Gayle Rubin has termed "sexual migrancy" (Rubin 1993: 24) on account of his later migrating to Paris and his shuttling between France and Algeria because of his transgender identity.

While auguring contemporary screen births, Pruvot's mirror vignette also harks back to earlier processes, such as in French *Belle Époque* traveler and explorer Isabelle Eberhardt who moved to Bône (Annaba), Algeria in 1897, converted to Islam, cross-dressed, and gradually adopted a masculine, Muslim identity, including a changed name. Her subsequent marriage to an Algerian man enrolled in the French military, her role as a free-lance advisor to the colonial authorities in the Sud-Ornaïs territory, her death in a flash flood in Aïn Sefra and the recovery of her body with her Arab cavalryman garb still on are the usual ingredients that make up her legend. Eberhardt's cross-dressing as of an early age and name change to Si Mahmoud Essadi—oddly anticipating, albeit contrapuntally, Alexandra Cerdan's *Transsexuelle et convertie à l'Islam* (2010)—unwittingly reflects on the mirror scene in which Jean-Pierre/ Marie-Pierre sees herself as a girl dressed like her sister in a European-style alluring dress at a time when the French standard of femininity in the colonies was strictly codified. In the sense in which Eberhardt's cross-dressing is also a misogynistic reinforcement of colonial patriarchy, she provides the almost photographic *negative* of Jean-Pierre growing up as a transgender pied noir boy in a feminized, subjugated and weakened Algeria and of Bambi's future legend in the Parisian cabaret culture of the early 1950s.

Against similar lines of refraction, Jean-Pierre Pruvot's snapshot recalls a previous scene from Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), in which the protagonist Stephen Gordon tears off her (female) dress in an inverted mirror-scene and, ultimately, expresses a sense of pity for the poor lost materiality of the body

9 On the use of YouTube as a publishing platform for self-staging or what is referred to as "screen birth," see Raun (2016). Tobias Raun argues that "the vlog works as a *mirror*, a diary, an autobiography, and a vehicle of artistic creation and intervention [...]" (and) as a kind of DIY therapy [...] oriented towards a confession" (Raun 2016: 19, my italics).

and dress, of both the dressed and naked body (Hall 1928: 72 & 187-188). As in Hall's *The Well*, "the slippage from dress to self" (Prosser 2001:136-137) occurs in *Marie* but the dress here confirms the self. The difference between acceptance and non-acceptance of the transgender individual's split between sex and gender in both works lies in the way the mirror helps decrease or increase the difference between the reflection of the image and its mental projection of the body image or its phantom morphology. Unlike Stephen Gordon (and, to some extent, Radclyffe Hall), Marie-Pierre Pruvot sees a congruence between Jean-Pierre's reflected image and Marie-Pierre's body image in the polka-dot dress because of the congruence between Jean-Pierre and the author of *Marie parce que c'est joli*, which projects, albeit timidly, the possibility of transition and a phantom sexual citizenship in France. Marie-Pierre Pruvot's mirror-scene triggers off a disdain for the Algerian birth place which acts as an embarrassing reminder of the despised birth sex and prompts her to leave Algeria. Like Radclyffe Hall's move across the Channel, Jean-Pierre's transnational move to Paris is part of migrating flows, which, at the time, had not yet interacted with advanced sexual cultures to constitute what J. Binnie has termed a "transnational sexual citizenship" (Binnie 1997: 237).

Pruvot's birth scene in *Marie parce que c'est joli* significantly takes place against the tormented canvas of the Second World War and the conspicuous absence of Pruvot's father who is enlisted in the French forces. Jean-Pierre's father is thus conveniently away at war, as his garrison is stationed in Ouargla, in the Algerian South. Jean-Pierre is thus raised, along with his older sister, by their mother and grandmother in a quintessentially female environment until his demobilized father returns to Bordj-Menaïel in 1940 in time for Jean-Pierre's fifth birthday. He brings back to his daughter—Jean-Pierre's older sister—a doll made of bran which represented a traditional Berber woman with a transparent veil on her hair and glittering sequins adorning her forehead, her wrists, and ankles whereas he gives his son, Jean-Pierre, a Tuareg doll clad in purple cloth, without any sequins or jewels: "un poupon de son qui était censé représenter un touareg, entièrement vêtu d'un tissu violet, sans sequin ni bijou, rien, comme toujours, exprès pour me dire : 'Tu es un garçon'" (Pruvot 2007 : 16). Jean-Pierre therefore attempts to modify the doll's virile sobriety by removing what he deems to be the hideous clothes sown onto the doll's body and thereby rejects his father's not so hidden agenda of confirming his son's gender identity as masculine.

Besides, this scene, which involves using a pair of scissors to destroy the male Tuareg doll, augurs Marie-Pierre Pruvot's later passing under the knife, that is, her MTF sex reassignment surgery in Casablanca, Morocco, where the blade is turned against her, yet is put under erasure in *Marie parce que c'est joli*. Additionally, the incident involving the destruction of the Tuareg doll by a transgender pied noir child is an eye-opener for understanding the enmeshing of two minority

discourses: transgender discourse (and its wrestling with non-transgender or cisgender¹⁰ discourse) and the colonial domination of ethnic minorities—the Berbers and the Tuaregs—by the Arabs, themselves dominated by the French in a two-tiered colonial hierarchy. “On balaya la guenille avec le son” (Pruvot 2007: 16). With the rag being swept away, along with the bran inside the doll, one could conclude: “End of story.” Yet, the “story” has only just begun. The transformation of the male doll into a shapeless rag, which lies dejected and thus acts as an enactment of Jean-Pierre’s loathed and discarded birth sex, follows upon the inaugural scene of self-mirroring.

Jean-Pierre’s birth scene in the mirror at age five coincides with his father’s return to Bordj-Menaïel in June 1940, following a decree stipulating that the French military, who were not prisoners in Germany, would be sent back to their families (Pruvot 2007: 14). Like the resulting split in Jean-Pierre’s sex/gender identity, France is divided into occupied and non-occupied territory. Algeria was indeed at the time part of the non-occupied Vichy government (July 1940–September 1944), which was a German puppet régime headed by Field Marshall Pétain. In November 1942, Algeria became free from German control: «En novembre 1942, ce fut le débarquement américain en Afrique du Nord. L’Algérie était ‘libérée’» (Pruvot 2007: 22). In turn, as Moshe Gershovich argued, “the liberation of North Africa by Allied Troops in November 1942 enabled the French military there to switch its allegiances away from Marshall Pétain’s collaborationist Vichy Government and to resume active participation in the war against Nazi Germany” (Gershovich 2003: 51). In 1942, that is, two years after the inaugural mirror-scene, Jean-Pierre, who is now six and a half, is thus introduced to the antonymic vocabulary of liberation and collaboration, and is forced to attend a school for boys set up by French minister of public instruction, Jules Ferry, who implemented a set of laws establishing free and mandatory education under the Third Republic (1870–1940) and was in favor of French colonial expansion overseas. The boys were groomed to become the cisgender, active, political citizens of a Renanesque nation of “great men” (Renan 1990: 19), who are responsible for making History.

In this His-story, Algeria was to be part of a geopolitically larger France. Yet, the very transgender status of Jean-Pierre at this stage, his dropping out of school, and his later embracing sex reassignment surgery in Morocco, topple the somatechnological interrelation between individual corporeality and the body politic, which, in its Hobbesian understanding, is conventionally gendered male.¹¹ In *Le-*

10 Cisgender is a term from modern endocrinology to refer to non-transgender individuals, that is, individuals who experience a congruence between their gender identity and the sex assigned at birth or birth sex.

11 By “Hobbesian,” reference is made to Hobbes 1651: 81–82. In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes writes: “by art is created that great *leviathan* called a *commonwealth* or state . . . which is but an artificial man;

viathan (1651), Hobbes indeed imagined a natural contiguity between the body of “man” and the anatomy of the body politic.¹² Pruvot’s “occupied,” divided, transitional body in *Marie parce que c’est joli* is clearly post-Hobbesian in that it disturbs the safe gendering of the body politic as male at a time when Algeria is starting to resist absorption by a masculinized, Leviathanesque French nation-state.

When Marie-Pierre moves to Paris at age eighteen (in 1953; a decade or so before Algerian independence), she prefigures the wave of pied-noirs—Stora numbers 930, 000 of them (Stora 1998: 259)—who returned to France after independence. Unlike most “transnational” pied-noirs who returned to France with a sense of “remorseless” belonging and “nostalgeria” (Stora 1998: 257 & 239), Marie-Pierre Pruvot, who is still officially Jean-Pierre, enters France through the back door of Parisian *cabarets travestis*. Even if her life is studded with glittering moments when performing as a woman at *Chez Madame Arthur* and then at the top-notch *Carrousel*, where she as Bambi was headlining beside the famous Coccinelle (Jacqueline Charlotte born Jacques Charles Dufresnoy), she leads a precarious life. She lives almost exclusively by night in Pigalle, Paris’s red-light district, and the low-down Boulevard Clichy, in fear of police checks. Indeed, her *état civil* does not correspond to her gender, an incongruence which acts as a pointer to the legislative force of the French nation-state.

Most Parisian pre-operative transwomen in the 1950s and 1960s received their hormonal tablets over the counter in local Pigalle pharmacies, without medical control (Lifshitz 2013: 13 min 22 sec), and were often financially dependent on some well-off men so that it can be conjectured that these *transformistes*—also called by the French tell-tale phrase *folles*—, despite the wigs, the sequins, and the boas worn on stage, lived dismal lives and often experienced a form of gilded prostitution. The *travestis*’ most recurrent fear was that of imprisonment, which was used to toughen them up and “masculinize” them, short of “exterminating” them altogether (Pruvot 2007:113) at a time when French law forbade men from wearing feminine clothes except during Carnival time.¹³ At that point in time, Jean-Pierre is assimilated to a *travesti*, that is, a male cross-dresser, much to Marie-Pierre’s chagrin, as she relays in the Lifshitz documentary (2013: 16 min 24 sec). In late-1950s France, Marie-Pierre Pruvot’s transnational and transitional body, rolled into one, was thus assimilated to

though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended: and in which the sovereignty is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body.”

- 12 Stryker and Sullivan, taking their cue from Foucault (Foucault 2003: 265-266) have intuited, in their discussion on self-demand amputation, that “a society within the nation-states of Eurocentric modernity is not an orderly arrangement, structured like an organically integrated social body” (Stryker and Sullivan 2009: 50)
- 13 See Bambi’s official website : www.bambi-officiel.com/cabarets-mythiques-et-personnages-celebres/lhommage-a-coccinelle-par-bambi; see also Espineira et al., p. 78 ; and Foerster, *passim*.

a transgressive body which, unless it is hidden in the nocturnal subculture of Parisian cabarets, threatens the sexually, racially, and morally “pure” and amnesic French nation-state, which refused to recognize its Others.

By her own reckoning, Marie-Pierre Pruvot, who ran the risk of being asked to do her military service as Jean-Pierre, saw her involvement with the Algerian war at a safe remove. Even though the euphemistically called *événements d’Algérie*, which masked France’s fear of an Algerian independent nation-state and the definitive end of the Renanesque project, were rapidly unfolding, Bambi saw History stagnate—“Je voyais l’Histoire stagner” (Pruvot 2007: 184). The seemingly insouciant Marie-Pierre, who heard about the National Assembly giving full powers to General De Gaulle in 1958, fell into a torpor: “Je m’endormis sur ses lauriers” (Pruvot 2007: 184). However, despite the dreamy quality of her account, her Algerian relatives, facing forced exile and camping in her mother’s flat, are said to be “abattus et désespérés. Vaincus... *trahis*” (Pruvot 2007: 216; italics in original). Her torpor, it turns out, does not quite obliterate her possible resentment since the pied-noirs, who had supported De Gaulle’s return to power, were disappointed that he had failed to uphold colonial rule and instead paved the way to granting independence to Algeria. On Bambi’s official website, Marie-Pierre Pruvot expresses regrets about staying away from the Algerian war: «Je me suis tenue à l’écart de la querelle de la Guerre d’Algérie.¹⁴» Later, she amply made up for that political void in *France, ce serait aussi un beau nom* (2011). With its echoes in its concern with renaming, as in *Marie parce que c’est joli*, the book takes up the history of France (and its entanglements with Algeria) from the end of World War II and the Fourth Republic (1946–1958) to the 2000 London protocol.

Although suspect, Marie-Pierre’s slipping into an almost catatonic state in *Marie parce que c’est joli* illustrates the amnesia characteristic of what Stora called *la guerre intériorisée*, here experienced from the perspective of a transgender pied-noir at a liminal intersection between dominance and disempowerment. This amnesiac state complicates the salutary recall of trauma, however delayed and “unclaimed,” after Caruth’s apt phrase (Caruth 1996). It is indeed amidst such political upheaval that Jean-Pierre Pruvot returned to Algiers, where the Algerian authorities granted him, without an *exequatur* procedure, his gender change to “Marie-Pierre Pruvot, born female,” after he had undergone sex reassignment surgery in 1960 at Dr. Burou’s Clinique du Parc in Casablanca, two years after Coccinelle.

These (mostly MTF) surgeries in the late 1950s and early 1960s were to initiate a fluid trail of “Coxes,” after “Coccinelle” in Burou’s parlance, in crossing

14 This can be found at: <https://www.bambi-officiel.com/tout-sur-bambi>. Accessed 14 September 2018.

borders between Morocco and France, as well as other European countries.¹⁵ Against a charged political canvas, which involved the exiled Sultan and future King Mohammed V's return in 1955 and Morocco's independence in 1956 following anti-French rioting, Morocco, almost incongruously, acted then as a haven of transsexual or TS transitioning. This early form of transnational "crossing" also initiates the gradual untangling of many gender "conundrums," after British FTM Jan Morris's famous, semi-Orientalist autobiography, *Conundrum* (1974; reed. 2002). Morocco has since moved from being what Cerdan termed "the hub of transsexuality" (Cerdan 2010: 112) to its present-day function as a "pre-Europe," in Hicham Tahir's words. In Tahir's short story "Mama Africa" (Tahir 2013: 19), Morocco is a nation-state where the Sub-Saharan immigrant refugee "transitions" before reaching the targeted European country.

"We forget we forgot," as Nietzsche memorably remarked (qtd Carver 1998: 21). The silencing of Bambi's surgery in Pruvot's autobiographies (2007, 2010) and in the 2013 Lifshitz documentary,¹⁶ where Marie-Pierre Pruvot puts it under erasure between the outbound flight to Casablanca and the inbound flight to Paris, is however amply made up for in Maghrebi fiction. In *Au bonheur des limbes* (2006), Moroccan Mohamed Leftah portrays Jeanne the transvestite's newly created vagina after her body was mutilated with acid and glass : «elle y a cisailé (dans son corps) avec l'acide et le verre, la béance centrale de la féminité, en donnant l'une des formes les plus pures de la géométrie, le triangle équilatéral sphérique [...]. Elle a travaillé sur le rêche, l'anguleux, le pointu [...] Femme réalisée, elle allait jouer le simulacre de la femme» (Leftah 2006 : 69-70). The "central void of femininity" thus created after "work" on the "angular" and the "pointed" evokes a penectomy whereas the resulting geometrical patterns—the ultimate "spherical equilateral triangle"—recalls Burou's medical sketches detailing the invagination of the penile skin and the resulting vulva.¹⁷ On the other hand, the "simulacrum of womanhood" during Jeanne's *travesti* performance obliquely conjures up the French cabaret culture of the late 1950s.

Pruvot devotes one laconic paragraph to her sex reassignment surgery whereby the "mirage" of embodied femaleness at long last materializes, and one paragraph to the debacle of French Algeria as of 1958, which she experienced as in a dream— "comme dans un rêve" (Pruvot 2007: 215). Significantly, Pruvot uses

15 See the role of Belgium in Michiel Van Erp's documentary *I am a Woman Now* (2012) in which a Belgian transwoman attempts to locate Burou's clinic where she stayed in the early 1970s. Note that it is today a building occupied by a Xerox company. Conversely, Ghent Ziekenhuis in Flanders, Belgium now reads more like a haven for French transgender individuals, among other Europeans.

16 April Ashley is more explicit in her *Odyssey*: "I've just been born. ... I am a woman in Casablanca and I'm in agony but my spirit is soaring" (Qtd Ashley & Fallowell 1982: 88).

17 <http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/Burou/Burou.htm>. Accessed 22 February 2019.

the word “mirage,” an optical phenomenon in which light rays bend to produce a displaced image of distant objects, to refer to her self-imagining as a female. Equally significantly, that displaced image gets materialized when the material events of the Algerian war and its consequences—forceful displacement—fade out in the distance in her narrative. In *The History of Forgetting* Norman Klein defines “selective forgetting” as a literary tool for describing a social imaginary: “how fictions are turned into facts, while in turn erasing facts into fictions” (Klein 1997: 16). Using Klein, Judith (now Jack) Halberstam argues in *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) that “forgetting allows for a release from the weight of the past and the menace of the future” (Halberstam 2011: 83). Marie-Pierre’s memory loss, which enacts Stora’s internalized war, as previously argued, is therefore also an opportune form of amnesia which denies the colonial past. Memory loss is, however, necessary to confirm that France can be “imagined” (Anderson 1983: 10; Bhabha 1990: 2) as a nation detached from Algeria, and Marie-Pierre as severed from her colonial past as a pied-noir male.

Marie parce que c'est joli ends on a note of social success as the older Marie-Pierre graduates from the Sorbonne and, in 1974, takes up a job as a teacher in a *lycée* in the suburbs of Paris, where no one suspects her previous life as Bambi, let alone her status as a transwoman, which she only revealed long after she retired from her position with the French Ministry of National Education.

In both *Marie parce que c'est joli* and her second autobiography *J'inventais ma vie* (2010), which details Général de Gaulle’s plan for a Renaissance *grande nation* extending from Dunkerque to Tamanrasset (Pruvot 2010: 176) and the subsequent dissolution of French Algeria, Pruvot bypasses the gruesome and gory police repression of the Algerian demonstrators for Algeria’s independence in Paris on 17 October 1961. These events were repressed from France’s collective memory for thirty-eight years (if we take the Parisian Head of Police Maurice Papon’s court hearing in 1999 as a watershed date), until the French General Assembly transformed *les événements d'Algérie* into the Algerian war for Independence. The 1961 incident turned massacre was not officially recognized by France until October 2012 when then French President François Hollande officially apologized for the senseless carnage and none other than Benjamin Stora helped him write his apology.

On 16 May 2009 Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin, the then French Minister of Health and Sports, made the announcement that she had consulted with the HAS (Haute Autorité de la Santé) in order to publish the (2010-125) decree officially declaring that transsexualism—*les troubles précoces de l'identité de genre* known under the French acronym TIG—was to be removed from the DMS manual of mental illnesses, identified in French as ALD, that is, “affections psychiatriques de longue durée.” National and international media as well as organizations like

IDAHO reacted to this ministerial decision suggesting that France was the first country to destigmatize transsexuality so openly. The irony of a *French* initiative intended to de-pathologize transsexualism was forgotten in the fervor to relay the announcement. Ever since Jacques Lacan, the father of French psychoanalysis, declared in a 1971 seminar that transsexuals confused the sexual organs with the *signifiant*—“C’est en tant que signifiant que le transsexualiste n’en veut plus, et non pas en tant qu’organe” (Lacan 2011: 17), a generation of psychoanalysts beginning with Catherine Millot, the infamous author of *Horsexe* (1983; trans. 1991), produced a series of texts stigmatizing transsexuals as very ill individuals (see Zabus & Coad 2014:1). Turning its back on this tradition of interpreting transsexualism as a psychological illness, France was now leading the world in the attempt to normalize transsexuality. The governmental modifications to the medical nosology have even been understood as “part of an effort to re-imagine France as a harbinger of human rights around gender identity and orientation” (Sekuler 2013: 15-16). As if to confirm the status of France as a rights-protecting nation, Roselyne Bachelot, in 2014, conferred onto Marie-Pierre Pruvot the prestigious title of Chevalier de l’Ordre du Mérite.¹⁸

These two official announcements, both made in the early 2010s— Hollande’s official apology and Bachelot’s honorary gesture —show the French nation-state grappling with two of its demons: the Franco-Algerian past and the post-Lacanian transgender body, which is subsumed to the larger controversy around *la théorie du genre*, which led the then socialist French Government to abandon its program of promoting sex equality in schools and schoolbooks in 2014.¹⁹ Both micro-events hook up Jean-Pierre/Marie-Pierre Pruvot/Bambi’s transgender status and her ambidextrous sexual and legal citizenship with “transpassing” across the sex/gender walls of both France and Algeria before and after the Algerian War and her transitioning to a full-fledged femininity in post-colonial France.

THE INTERSEX OF ANGELS AND THE ISLAMIC SALVATION FRONT

If Marie-Pierre Pruvot in *Marie parce que c’est joli* almost incarnates the events that led up to Algerian Independence, the intersex protagonist, Rhoulem, in Fériel Assima’s *Rhoulem ou le sexe des anges* (1996), embodies the Civil War which sparked off the *décennie noire*. The Black Decade (1988-1998) is often said to have started

18 See <https://www.bambi-officiel.com/bambi-chevalier-dans-lordre-national-du-merite/> Accessed 21 December 2018.

19 https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/theorie-du-genre-ou-egalite-entre-les-sexes_1836853.html; Accessed 22 March 2019.

with the riots of 4-5 October 1988 aiming to put an end to the ruling oligarchy of the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale) or the National Liberation Front, that had been the only ruling party since Independence.

The novel opens not with a mirror-birth, as in Pruvot's *Marie*, but with the birth of a child with its penis and, in lieu of testicles, labia minora and majora welded together. After splicing open the newly born baby's thighs, two women acting as witnesses—the mother and the midwife—discover with horror the child's "two sexes": "[...] quand on croyait en discerner un, on oubliait l'autre; quand on reconnaissait l'autre, la forme en était si étrange qu'on était plus sûr de rien" (Assima 1996: 7). The welding effect or suture is said to have spoiled (Fr: *gâté*, Assima 1996: 7) the fruit of this embryonic manhood, as fleshy labia replace the desired scrotum. The imagery of a spoiled, rotten fruit, destined to be unplucked points to a botched *Genesis* but also to penile dysfunctioning, a very sensitive issue in Maghrebi sexological discourse.²⁰ Although classical Islamic discourse classified every human being as either male or female, it recognized the difficulty and often the impossibility to determine the body's "true genus" (Arabic: *jins*, also translated as "sex") (Sanders 1991: 74-95). Although jurists have argued that medical technology can correct the manifestation of that genus, Rhoulem's intersex condition is never medicalized in Assima's novel.

An authorial statement confirms that it is God's will and it is the child's inescapable destiny (Fr: *destin*, Assima 1996: 9) —*maktub*, one would say in Arabic—, according to the twin tenets of divine will and predestination characteristic of Arab-Muslim cultures. God the Welder has decreed that Rhoulem would be "neither a girl nor a boy" and the child's secret is safe with the two women. However, the mother raises the child as a boy, for, she reasons, "[...] un homme peut avoir toutes les tares. Toutes lui sont pardonnées. Sauf une : qu'il ne soit pas un homme" (Assima 1996 : 10). The heralding of masculinity and, particularly, genital masculinity, as a superior category and the ensuing pressures on mothers to conceive boys is confirmed by Muslim feminist R. Hassan: "Generally speaking, the birth of a daughter is met with resignation and even sadness. A woman who only produces daughters is likely to be the target of harsh and abusive behavior and threatened with divorce" (Hassan 1991: 181). The father being written out of Assima's novel, Rhoulem is thus raised as a boy in a protective female environment, which finds its most palpable corollary in the friendly vapors of the women's hammam. But when he is nine, the prepubescent child's chest boasts two small mounds, on which the mother assiduously applies ice cubes to prevent them from growing.

20 For instance, the Association Marocaine de Sexologie organizes congresses every other year and most of the papers delivered at such Conferences, set in various cities in Morocco, are devoted to "dysfonctions érectiles."

In the birth scene, the midwife, who, in most contexts, supervises and even monitors women's naked bodies (Mak 2012: 31), has decreed that one of the sexes might triumph over time: "Les deux sexes assemblés allaient se développer ensemble; le temps seul déciderait lequel triompherait de l'autre" (Assima 1996: 8). The triumph, however, is on the female side, as Rhoulem (which means "Treasure") starts displaying female secondary characteristics. The remainder of the plot is devoted to the repression of the feminine and the display of alpha-male violence. The war of the sexes is etched onto the infant's genitals and so is Algeria, torn by civil war (1991-2002), which opposed the Government and Islamist rebel groups. Tellingly, the growth of Rhoulem's intersexed body unfolds against a bleak sociopolitical canvas. Although the main location is the coastal city of Oran in Northwestern Algeria, the time period is non-descript. The reader of this account by an unnamed female omniscient narrator will however gauge a certain level of physical and psychical devastation following a military take-over, presumably by the FIS, and the razing of the slums around Oran. The specter of the FIS (Front islamique du salut) or the Islamic Salvation Front lingers over the novel but is only named late in the novel when an old woman asks Gabi, a young male lawyer living in her building: "Tu es du FIS? Eh, gamin, militaire? Entas FIS, ya ouled, askari" (Assima 1996: 158). The old woman's question in Arabic, tagged by French, reflects not only the degree of suspicion and discomfort between fellow tenants but also the obscurity of the Black Decade on account of the population's difficulty in identifying the actual perpetrators of terror (Crowley 2017: 7).

Although the spontaneity of the riots of October 1988 have been questioned, since members of the PAGS (Parti de l'Avant-Garde Socialiste) had been arrested and tortured ahead of the riots (Rahal 2017: 84-85), "Octobre noir" is alleged to have started on the night of 4-5 October 1988 in the working-class Bab el-Oued neighborhood by young rioters, who were afterwards "granted [...] the dignity of politically challenging the FLN régime" (Aït-Aoudia 2015: 31). A Sunni political party legalized as of 18 February 1989, the FIS as the main opposition party was elected in the local legislative elections (on 26 December 1991) after the Algerian Constitution was revamped to allow other parties besides the FLN to compete, thus moving Algeria from a single-party régime to a multiparty system. But the second round of elections was cancelled by the military coup in 1992, "thus ending the new-found experience of democracy" (Rahal 2017: 81). The dissolution of the FIS by the Army, which called for the resignation of President Chadli Bendjedid on 11 January 1992, led to the Civil War and the creation of the town-based GIA, that is, the *Groupe islamique armé* or the Armed Islamic Group in 1994,²¹ which

21 The Islamic Armed Movement or MIA (Mouvement islamique armé) was based in the mountains. The MIA then joined other groups to become the FIS-loyalist Islamic Salvation Army.

carried out arbitrary attacks against civilians. The FIS then attempted to build an Islamic state based on sharia law, which entailed, among others, the strengthening of Islamization programs initiated by President Houari Boumediene (1965-1978) in the aftermath of independence (see Crowley 2017:5); Arabization accompanied by anti-French language policies; and sex segregation in public spaces. In addition to the Islamists' casting of women activists as *mécroyantes* (un-believers; Rahal 2017: 90), the imposition of the veil for women turned "white Algiers" "black," as Mohamed Laïd Athmani poetically put it in "L'Après-octobre noir" (Athmani 2012: 33).

Assima captures this era of political upheaval and unchecked violence, the publication of her novel in 1996 testifying to events preceding the 1997 cease-fire and its ensuing "series of amnesties" (Le Sueur 2010: 9). Assima enshrines the Black Decade and, in particular, the Civil War, not only as the war against women, what Wassyla Tamzali has called "la guerre contre les femmes" (Tamzali 2007: 174), but also as the war against the feminine, here presented as repressed in Rhoulem, the intersex individual.

In this semi-autobiographical novel, the French *casques bleus* (Assima 1996: 122) are evoked as a friendly support group that will put an end to the bomb-dropping and the general insecurity, as they are part of the United Nations Peacekeeping forces. The ghost of Mlle Yvonne, an old French lady rumored to be of Jewish ancestry and the owner of a sewing workshop, is conjured up early in the novel, as she had the reputation of having had affairs with "des commandos français" (Assima 1996: 18) based in Oran. The presence of French Special Forces points to the tensions between France and the GIA and other insurgent groups in the mid-1990s. Indeed, in 1993, under Charles Pasqua as Interior Minister, the French Government had launched a counterterrorist Operation (Chrysanthemum) within France, as a retaliation against hostage taking in Algiers, and in 1994 the Chabli network supporting Algerian resistance had been dismantled (Foley 2013: 293). Jeremy Shapiro writes about the unfolding of events thereafter:

Apparently, in response, on Christmas Day 1994, an Air France flight from Algiers to Paris was hijacked. With this hijacking, the GIA announced its ability and desire to strike directly on French soil. The GIA demanded the abandonment of French aid to Algeria and financial reparations for the damages inflicted on Algerians by France between 1945 and 1962 before it would release the plane. ... Expecting further attacks, French authorities decided to increase the pressure on Islamist networks in France. (Shapiro 2007: 143).

Amidst chaos and retaliatory moves culminating in the GIA's orchestration of murders in 1995, French citizen Mlle Yvonne disappeared in mysterious

circumstances and joined the ranks of the 7000 or so “disappeared” who were taken and, it is presumed, killed (see Crowley 2017:7, Footnote 5). She left behind a disused sewing workshop, where she had taken under her wings rejected, pregnant rural girls, until they turned sixteen and were marriageable.

Soon after the disused workshop’s reopening, Rouhlem’s mother gave him up for adoption to the workshop’s new Head. The routine at the sewing workshop was disrupted one day, when a dance was organized and Ginane, an elderly woman, in a trance, modeled a male organ out of her skirts and the girls rubbed themselves against it with a trance-like passion; in their frenzy, they summoned Rhoulem, called the severed man (Fr: “l’homme coupé,” Assima 1996: 39). Rhoulem is further humiliated when the spinner discovers him in the utility room, binding his breasts, and thereby repressing the feminine in a fundamentalist gender regime of femininities and masculinities in crisis.

In foregrounding an intersex individual raised as a boy, Assima is in perpetual dialogue and counterpoint with Moroccan Tahar Ben Jelloun’s *L’enfant de sable* (1985) and its sequel, *La nuit sacrée* (1987), both written approximately one decade earlier and often read as the parallel search for the roots of gendered identity and of national identity. All three novels—Ben Jelloun’s two novels and Assima’s *Rhoulem*—foreground the return of female repressed biology. *L’enfant de sable* is the story of the eighth child, Ahmed, who, born female, is raised as a boy to comfort the father who has been parenting seven daughters. Upon his father’s death, he starts to live as a woman. As Zahra, he is employed by relatives in a circus sideshow, where he is disguised as a man during the first part of the show and as a *femme fatale* in the second (Ben Jelloun 1985: 91; 121). About this “continued unmasking of cross-dressing,” Jarrod Hayes remarks that “Ahmed repeatedly reveals his/her history of dressing and passing as a man on the stage of the freak show. [...] Performing woman, in this vision of gender, means doing so for the profit of a pimp” (Hayes 2000: 169), which is not without recalling some of the Parisian *transformistes*’ gilded prostitution in the 1950s.

The sequel, *La nuit sacrée*, told in the first person by Zahra herself, comes closest to Assima’s novel, in that it features a similar scene, yet in counterpoint, where the protagonist unbinds her breasts. Here the fettered female body is rid of its cords and strings which get unraveled, thereby liberating the woman cast in the “wrong” gender in the process: “Je faisais mes premiers pas de femme libre” (Ben Jelloun 1987 :45). This exemplar of unbinding and figurative unveiling finds an *a contrario* act of binding in *Rhoulem* since he is seen binding his breasts as if he were bandaging a wound—“comme s’il pensait une blessure” (Assima 1996: 47). This literal veiling of Rhoulem’s female forms during this voyeuristic discovery will trigger off his flight and subsequent tribulations as the victim of

several rapes and as a prostitute working for a pimp, thereby marking him, like Ahmed/Zahar in Ben Jelloun's novels, as a woman despite his living as a man.

Taking his cue from Sharon Marcus's insights into the male rapist's casting of his victim as a woman but also into his imprinting "the gender identity of 'feminine victim' on his target" (Marcus 1992: 386), Hayes builds on the "rape script," which points to the violence with which "gender is stamped onto bodies" (Hayes 2000: 175); Hayes concludes that compulsive heterosexuality is performed as contiguous with rape and prostitution. Like Ahmed/Zahra in Ben Jelloun's novels, Rhoulem is subjected to the "rape script." When escaping aboard a truck, Rhoulem is forced to endure the truck-driver Hakim's molestations and the gurgling of Hakim's semen in his throat while he feebly protests twice: "Je n'ai pas de sexe" (Assima 1996: 51, 52). On another day, Hakim forces him to wear women's clothes; Rhoulem goes through the motions in the hope of leaving Oran and going to Algiers, where he is eventually dropped off in a half-constructed building where he is hosted by a man, Bazouz. At this point, the novel tips into another series of destructive encounters, as the self-designated "sexless" Rhoulem meets the castrated Bazouz.

The disfiguration of male genitals is not innocuous in that it reflects the mutilation of the post-independent nation-state and the resulting psychological split or *Spaltung* created by the GIA Army and the FIS, which patrol Algeria's cities, respectively "by day" and "by night," as Assima puts it in her previous novel *Une femme à Alger : Chronique du désastre* (1995: 184). The alleged sexlessness of Rhoulem, under which Assima dissimulates his intersex status, is likened to the conventionally genderless angels in the body of the text, and its subtitle—"le sexe des anges"—, as well as in its subtext. The subtext tells the story of a God-sent angel who comes to the rescue of the two progenies (resulting from the Sultana's rape by a "eunuch"), by gluing them to each other (Assima 1996: 77). In the Qur'an, angels are said to be God's "messengers" endowed with "two, three or four pairs of wings" (Koran/ Qur'an 35:1) and, as God's most obedient creatures, predated the creation of Adam. In a Hadith in which God has a conversation with Gabriel/Djibril, there is an allusion to angels' ability to take on various forms (al-Kisā'i 1997: 13-14), perhaps, as De Soudy ventures, "as humans comport themselves as masculine and feminine" (De Soudy 2015: 97-98). While being angelic or sacred is often linked to not being clearly gendered or to androgyny, as was the case in European nineteenth-century narratives (Mak 2012: 86), Assima's casting of Rhoulem as an ambisexual angel may be read as her endorsement of a pre-Adamic Islamic masculinity. Her endorsement of an "angelic" masculinity goes along with her questioning of Islamist fundamentalist masculinities, such as those of the FIS and the GIA, as well as their hypocrisy: "Race d'obsédés. Ça menace au nom de l'Islam et ça viole dans les maquis" (Assima 1996: 39), the word

maquis not so innocently conjuring up the French resistance movement against German occupation.

The castration of Bazouz, Rhoulem's host, results from a settling of accounts by a tyrannical army figure called the "Commandant," whose strategy of terror duly recalls that of the FIS and the GIA. The "Commandant" has indeed instigated the atrocious mutilation by having Bazouz's testicles wrenched out with a broken bottle neck: "La verge a disparu dans un magma de viande séchée, brûlée. ... Un lambeau de chair pend à la place des testicules arrachées» (Assima 1996: 85). The disappearance of Bazouz's penis in a crater of dried, burnt meat suggests a forcible castration followed by cauterization. The flap of flesh hanging in lieu of testicles recalls Rhoulem's labia which ousted the scrotum in the inaugural birth scene. The reason for such mutilation lies in Bazouz's illicit affair with a young seamstress, whose husband (paralyzed from the waist down) gave the Commandant a substantial sum to get rid of him. The hobbling Bazouz thus harbors dreams of revenge against the Commandant whereas Bazouz's lover cried so much after her lover's castration that she partially lost her eyesight and ended up sewing evening gowns in a brothel.

Assima takes care to cast the Commandant as the ultimate symbol of male authority and its heteronormative impunity, which is, she seems to imply, characteristic of both the GIA Army and the FIS, which she twins as oppressors in her novel *Une femme à Alger* (Assima 1995: 184). Not only is the Commandant content with castrating Bazouz but he also turns the latter's impotence into a form of sadistic torture, as he orders Bazouz to whip his guest Rhoulem and lacerate his feet, a warning against the possibility of escape, as Rhoulem is conditionally hired in Zino's bar as a performer. Zino's bar is a knotty microcosm of sexual exploitation and harassment, which confirms Hayes's intuition that "woman" as a category is always already read as synonymous with rape and prostitution. One night, Rhoulem witnesses, unobserved, an obese young man being hanged and gang-raped by his work mates but one of the men hesitates:

«Je peux pas, je l'ai jamais fait avec ...»

«... un homme ? C'est ça hein ? Parce que pour toi, c'est un homme, cet animal ? On est des pédés, alors, d'après toi ? Des pédés ? Tu préfères les femmes ! Tiens, et comme ça, tu peux toujours pas te la faire, cette femme!» (Assima 1996: 74).

It turns out that this blob of flesh is the baker's son who is mentally challenged and is construed as a "woman" in this constructivist version of the sex binary and therefore passive (or rendered passive) and penetrable by penetrators whose status as heterosexual men is left undisturbed.

Even though intersex or, by his own reckoning, both “sexless” and “genderless,” Rhoulem is likewise construed as a woman, as he is sexually assaulted every night and is offered asylum in the female dancers’ headquarters, where Azria, the female lead singer, with whom he will partner as a dancer in a duo, takes pity on him and offers him protection. This artistic duo, as in Ben Jelloun’s *L’enfant de sable*, is complementary in anatomical terms as well, for, contrary to Rhoulem who has breasts but binds them, Azria appears to have no breasts. The flat-chested Azria undoes Rhoulem’s bandage, sucks his breasts, and lovingly feels the dry and coarse skin of his crotch: “Ses doigts remontent encore comme pour dessiner cette forme nouvelle, inachevée” (Assima 1996: 81). This incomplete form is the ambisexual site of Rhoulem’s gender. One evening, Rhoulem bursts out : «Azria, si Dieu m’avait donné d’être un homme, je t’aurais aimée comme une sainte» (Assima 1996 : 87). The impossibility of the enactment of that fantasy is followed by Azria advising him to leave for fear of the repercussions of the Army finding him there. Strategically, the specter of the GIA is revived every time the heteronormative nation-state feels threatened.

The continued casting of Rhoulem as a woman—that is, a passive object of penetration and denigration—is confirmed in one of the last scenes in the novel. After a failed search for Rhoulem in Algiers, the reader is told that Gabi the lawyer, who is willing to take up Rhoulem’s defense, leads him for a blow job to a Christian cemetery and then contemptuously pees on Rhoulem’s body in a tomb while expressing his horror: “J’ai couché avec une putain!” (Assima 1996: 149). Assima’s exposure of male sexual hypocrisy follows upon an earlier moving passage reflecting on how female victims of rape are shamed and end up in brothels or die as a result of self-abortion (Assima 1996: 129). In the above passage, Rhoulem’s figurative entombing in a Christian cemetery outside of the Islamic faith prefigures Rhoulem’s end, which crowns the novel but not before the Islamists meet their appropriate end and Rhoulem moves from victimhood to agency.

In Zino’s bar, Rhoulem assaults the Commandant with a broken bottle-neck in retaliation against the Commander’s castration of Bazouz. But Rhoulem’s feeble attempt fails and the Commandant exposes to the crowd Rhoulem’s condition as the only hermaphrodite of the whole human species: “Le seul hermaphrodite de toute l’espèce humaine ! ... Il n’a rien sous son pagne: ni le poil fin d’une femme, ni le poil dru d’un homme. Et sa mère l’a bien nommé, puisque c’est le seul trésor (the meaning of Rhoulem is «treasure») dont on peut profiter sans avoir à se faire pardonner ! Dieu ne lui a même pas fait l’honneur d’être une putain!» (Assima 1996: 153; my addition). In response, Rhoulem hurls the broken bottle at the Commandant and opens a gash in the latter’s belly before he then willingly exposes his own ambiguous genitals: “il découvre la flétrissure

camouflée de sa chair. Sexe mutilé qui renie ses deux lobes embrassés. Les testicules, atrophiés, s'affrontent dans un enfoncement vain. Motte à la tige réfugiée, endormie, portée par un corps qui danse. Ici, l'orgueil de l'homme fait silence" (Assima 1996: 154). The Commandant and his men catch up with the exposed Rhoulem on the run and stab him to then leave him in front of Gabi's building, where Gabi picks up the body and calls the police, but to no avail in this lawless nation-state. The Commandant is then found with his head stuck between two stones with poultry blood drying in his mouth, which intimates that one of his orifices, his mouth, was violated and that he choked as a result. While Rhoulem's razed genitals point to a cityscape ravaged by civil war, the Commandant's quasi-decapitation and symbolic political emasculation signifies the end of what Dja Zairi has termed "the reign of the cacti" (Zairi 2008: 139), a metaphor used to refer to bearded Islamists. More largely, the Commandant's death signals the temporary suspension of Algeria as a nation-state masquerading as an impregnable theocracy.

The cut or rather atrophied penis in Rhoulem and the testicles wretched out in Bazouz, that is, the disappearance of male genitals and their corollary impotence reveal utopias about the extinction of exacerbated masculinities and entail the end of the fundamentalist nation-state that can no longer en-gender itself as male and reproduce itself. The circle of violence, however, perpetuates itself, as Rhoulem is found wounded after Bazouz has shoved a poker into him because he could not rape him. This anal defilement recalls a scene in Christopher Marlowe's homoerotic play *Edward II* and, closer to us, Derek Jarman's *Queer Edward II*, where a red-hot poker is shoved into Edward II's bowels. Rhoulem becomes the ultimate insertee whose rectum is "a grave" (Bersani 1987: 197-222). His death by hemorrhage in Oran points to a war-torn Algeria leaking with endless streams of blood while Bazouz, the castrated man, turns his anger against a fellow-victim rather than the Islamist oppressor.

In his death, Rhoulem moves from being an angel to a glittering star, now part of the celestial bodies: "Les étoiles roulent dans leur lumière comme des perles sur un fil d'or" (Assima 1996: 175). Contrary to Nedjma in Kateb Yacine's eponymous, anti-colonial allegory *Nedjma* (1956), Rhoulem is not "a star of blood sprung from murder to obstruct vengeance" (Yacine 1991: 239-240). In 1956, the "star of blood" augured the blood bath in which the new Algerian nation was to be born. Yet, Rhoulem shares with Nedjma a past of rape and violence, which, in this case, culminates with the rape of the sexless angel and, by the same token, the senseless violence of the Black Decade, a violence which was going to be quenched within two years of the publication of Fériel Assima's dystopic novel.

CONCLUSION

Both Jean-Pierre Pruvot's transgender body and Rhoulem's intersex body are defined by social constructions of their genitals and of their repressed femininity in a sociopolitical context wrought with tensions between France and Algeria during pre-independent and post-independent times or within Algeria during the Civil War and the Black Decade. Both texts host an inaugural birth scene, that determines the fate of the transgender or intersex bodies, which transmuted into a transwoman and a sexless angel, respectively, point to Algeria's failed erection of the nation-state as male and its flawed governmentality.

Foucault's analysis of governmentality as "government practices that monitor and shape individuals' conduct" leaves the portal open to "as yet unforeseen kinds of relationships" (Burchell et al 1991: 87). These "unforeseen relationships" are bound to affect notions of citizenship conceived as "*gradations of esteem* ... with respect to the way the state conceives, represents, polices, educates, defines, criminalizes and taxes what its various agencies take to be 'sexuality' or sexualities" (Carver 1998: 14). Against such a Foucauldian discursive canvas, Jean-Pierre Pruvot's life as a privileged pied-noir in colonial Algeria and then as a second-class citizen and passing MTF in France helps articulate the role played in citizenship and nation formation by both the return-migrant, transnational body and the transitional body, as it migrates from one gender to another, from one country to another. Once in France, Marie-Pierre Pruvot aka Bambi, a *transformiste* in the Parisian cabaret subculture of the late 1950s, becomes a "partial citizen" in the sense in which, like gays and lesbians, she is "excluded from the construction of 'nation' and 'nationality'" (Robson & Kessler 2008: 541). Being a "sexual migrant" or rather a trans migrant, that is, an individual who migrates because of his/her transgender status, Pruvot brings added nuance to the necessity of transcending the France-Algeria binary and of embracing the fluidity and, by the same token, the futurity of gender diversity, as it shapes "unforeseen relationships."

Conversely, Rhoulem's intersex body and repressed femininity reflect the Civil War and the aporias of Islamist nation-building during the Black decade. If sexual citizenship entails the relationship between the state and its sexualized citizens, it is also true that sexual identities are regulated by the state. However, Rhoulem and the "doubting sex" paradigms around his "angelic" status show that the state in the person of the Commandant cannot control his dissidence. Yet, Rhoulem as a "sexual migrant" cannot enjoy staying in any specific location (Oran, Algiers) and cannot leave Algeria, that is, home, in order to find a "queer home" outside of its borders (Binnie 1997: 240). He therefore cannot enjoy "the popularity of travel" that Pruvot, for instance, experienced. Therefore, the only escape for Rhoulem is death. Yet, this anti-archive of death, this anarchic space of forgetting, can spur

what Jacques Derrida has called “an archive fever,” a will to memory, which has “both conservative (literally) and revolutionary potential” (Derrida 1998: 10). Rhoulem’s death is therefore double-edged, all the more since it is accompanied by the author’s implicit mourning, and the very notions of memory and commemoration are often the motors of national belonging.

Laura Briggs *et al* have suggested that “transnationalism’ can do to the nation what gender did for sexed bodies: provide the conceptual acid that denaturalizes all their deployments, compelling us to acknowledge that the nation, like sex, is a thing contested, interrupted, and always shot through with contradiction” (Briggs, McCormick, and Way 2008: 627). These insights into the interdependency of transnationalism and transgenderism are bound to erode the naturalness of national and sexual paradigms. Transing the nation therefore points the way to transcending binaries such as the sex/gender divide and embracing forgetfulness. Such a “transing” of the Algerian nation is a necessary rite of passage to move beyond the Franco-Algerian *affaire de famille* through engaging in “unforeseen relationships” outside of family, tradition, and lineage and thus enter the post-mourning phase.

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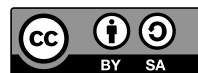
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Proces spolnega prehajanja v alžirski nacionalni državi: tekstovna transspolnost ter interspolnost od obdobja pred samostojnostjo do črnega desetletja

Članek raziskuje vlogo transspolnosti in interspolnosti v dveh ključnih tekstih (Marie-Pierre Pruvot *Marie parce que c'est joli* (2007) in Fériel Assima *Rouhlem ou le sexe des anges* (1996), ki oba predstavljata kroniki dveh pomembnih obdobjih alžirske zgodovine, dveh desetletij, ki sta vodili do alžirske samostojnosti leta 1962 ter t.i. črno desetletje v letih 1988-1998.

Ključne besede: nacionalna država, transspolnost, Alžirija, interseksualnost, magrebski kvir

‘The Delightful Logic of Intoxication’: Fictionalising Alcoholism

Wojciech Klepuszewski

Alcohol invariably connotes different, often conflicting, feelings. As Iain Gately rightly observes in *Drink: A Cultural History of Alcohol* (2009), it “has been credited with the powers of inspiration and destruction” (1). This reflection is as relevant to classical antiquity, when wine was savoured during the Greek symposia, as to the modern world, in which alcoholologists study the devastating effects of alcohol abuse. However, much as sociological, psychological, and medical research into alcoholism provide statistics, problem-analysis, and therapeutic approaches, literature offers representations of alcoholism which allow for a more profound insight into alcohol dependence and its many implications. This article focuses on how alcoholism is dissected and contextualised in literature, predominantly in contemporary English fiction.

Keywords: Alcohol, alcoholism, culture, literature, fiction

The fact that alcohol has been with us for millennia is easily verifiable. However, contrary to popular belief, it is not a phenomenon limited to Western civilisation, even though it has played an important part in its history. As alcohol is traceable to virtually every culture in different geographical locations, it is clear that a study of its manifold functions requires a varied approach. This is what the editor of the *International Handbook on Alcohol and Culture* (1995), Dwight Heath, partly achieves, inviting contributions which examine alcohol use from different perspectives. Heath's volume contains chapters discussing what might be labelled alco-geographies, that is, the ethnic and national customs in nearly thirty different countries, from France and Germany to locations far less obvious in the context of alcohol, such as Zambia or Malaysia. There are also brief references to literature and the way it makes alcohol its theme. One example provided by Heath is "the symbolism of toasting" (343), which can be found in literary texts of various types. In fact, many publications which are alcohol-, but not literature-oriented, such as Heath's volume, include frequent references to literary representations of alcohol. A good example is Neil Gunn's classic *Whisky and Scotland* (1935), which, unsurprisingly, contains passages on the famous Scottish bards and whisky aficionados Robert Burns and Hugh MacDiarmid (cf. 1998: 112-13).

While the two studies mentioned above deal with socio-cultural and, in the case of *Whisky and Scotland*, also technological matters, Donald Goodwin's *Alcoholism: The Facts* (1981) focuses on alcohol-related problems of a medical and psychological nature. Yet, like Heath and Gunn, Goodwin acknowledges the fact that literature offers compelling representations of alcohol(ism), and substantiates some of the points he makes with literary examples. These include, for instance, depictions of DTs in Malcolm Lowry's and Mark Twain's fiction (cf. 44-45). Goodwin also utilises Shakespeare's *Macbeth* to exemplify the influence of alcohol on sexual prowess, quoting the exchange between Macduff and the Porter, who talk about the way alcohol affects potency:

MACDUFF: What three things does drink especially provoke?

PORTER Lechery, sir, it provokes, and unprovokes; it provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance ... (ACT II, Scene III) (41)

Shakespeare's plays contain numerous such references, which inspired Buckner Trawick to examine in *Shakespeare and Alcohol* (1978) the way drink lubricates the plays, how it can "further the dramatic action", "contribute to character portrayal", and "participate in establishing the mood or tone" (8). Albert Tolman, another scholar interested in the way Shakespeare employs alcohol in his works, observes that "[t]he kindliness of Shakespeare toward his toppers is noteworthy" (1919: 82). Such a mode of representing drink and drunkenness in literature also applies to

Middle English literature, to mention Geoffrey Chaucer alone, as well as to many pre-nineteenth-century literary works. The joyous celebration of drink is a feature typical of traditional verse and folk-song¹. A good example of the festive and celebratory is the anonymous "A Jug of This", also known as "Ye Mariners All", inviting sailors to have a drink in an unspecified, tavern-like drinking place: "You tipplers all as you pass by, call in and drink if you be dry" (Gammon 2008: 168).

However, even if Tolman's remark reflects how drink is generally employed in Shakespeare's plays, one has to acknowledge that the great Stratfordian also signals the more murky aspects of alcohol consumption, as in the Clown's definition of a drunken man: "Like a drown'd man, a fool, and a madman: one draught above heat makes him a fool; the second mads him; and a third drowns him" (Twelfth Night, I, V). Similar sober judgement of drunkenness appears in pre-twentieth-century literary works, mostly in Victorian literature. Fatalistic visions of alcoholism leading to destitution or even insanity can be found, for instance, in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) and *The Drunkard's Death* (1836).² Still, as Edward Quinn rightly observes, "despite its long lineage, alcohol does not "come of age" until the 20th century" (2006:16). Consequently, a full-scale literary treatment of alcoholism is relatively rare until the twentieth century, when it comes to the fore in fiction most of all.

The literary focus on alcoholic protagonists coincides with the growth of interest in alcoholism as a socio-medical issue. The term as such, coined in 1849 by the Swedish professor of medicine, Magnus Huss, is discussed in his work titled *Alcoholismus Chronicus*, and subsequently becomes the focus of clinical research, burgeoning in the twentieth-century. One of the first studies to follow Huss's seminal contribution in the realm of alcoholology is George Cutten's *The Psychology of Alcoholism*, published in 1907. Cutten's work considers the problem from different vantage points, as do most such works which appeared in the decades to follow, often reiterating what had been said in preceding publications.

The twentieth-century preoccupation with alcoholism encompasses literary perspectives, either focusing on the interface between alcoholism and creativity, or on how alcohol dependence is represented in and is the theme of literary works.

1 See, for instance, Klepuszewski, Wojciech. "The Joyous Inebriation: Drinking and Conviviality in Poetry and Song." *Ethnic and Cultural Identity in Music and Song Lyric*. Eds. Victor Kennedy and Michelle Gadpaille. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2017: 64-76. Print.

2 The nineteenth-century literary interest in alcoholism was arguably influenced by the then active temperance movement, which found many followers among men of letters, one such being the Scottish poet, Robert Tannahill, who expresses in the following words praise for sobriety in "Epistle to Alexander Borland" (composed in 1806): Hail, Temperance! thou'rt wisdom' first, best lore; The sage in every age does thee adore; (1877: 104). In America, a good example is William Smith's play *The Drunkard, or the Fallen Saved* (1844), considered by Jeffrey Richards as an example of a temperance play which "inaugurated a fashion for such plays" (1997: 244).

As far as the former is concerned, Donald Goodwin shows a particular leaning towards the writing fraternity rather than literature per se³, which is only natural for a clinician specialising in psychiatry. His research perfectly reflects scholarly interest in what might be called alco-biographies, which have proliferated in the last two decades. One of the latest is Aubrey Malone's *Writing Under the Influence: Alcohol and the Works of 13 American Authors* (2017). Its biographical nature is expounded at the very beginning of the book: "I've structured most of the profiles in a cradle-to-grave manner, focusing primarily, though not exclusively, on the drinking escapades that punctuated the lives in question" (2). Interestingly, most of the writer-oriented studies focus on American literature⁴, Malone's being just one example; another, also quite recent, is Brett Millier's *Flawed Light: American Women Poets and Alcohol* (2009). One can occasionally find publications which encompass a handful of British and European figures, but these are very rare. For instance, Kelly Boler's *A Drinking Companion: Alcohol & the Lives of Writers* (2004) includes references to Jean Rhys, Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Lowry and Marguerite Duras. However, what seems much more relevant in a literary context are studies focused specifically on alcohol as a theme in literature. Anya Taylor, for instance, examines in her *Bacchus in Romantic England* (1999) the manner in which the "Romantic writers describe the pleasures and pains of drinking" (5). In *The Pub in Literature* (2000), Steven Earnshaw's analyses the various functions of drinking places, devoting a whole chapter to Dickensian pubscapes, of which he provides forty examples (cf. 188).

While there are numerous publications in which the focus is alcohol as a literary theme, the same does not apply to studies on the portrayals of alcoholism in literature. As Thomas Gilmore explains, one of the reasons that there is little critical investigation of this particular area is because alcoholism is commonly considered an area of interests to physicians, sociologists or psychologists (cf. 1987: 7). One attempt to approach literary renditions of alcoholism is Jane Lilienfeld's *Reading Alcoholisms: Theorizing Character and Narrative in Selected Novels of Thomas Hardy, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf* (1999). The study cannot be denied its analytical value, but, as Lilienfeld emphasises, she decided to apply "a biopsychosocial model of alcoholism" (2), which in practice means that her study is heavily bent towards the sociology of addiction, literary texts being very much subordinated to this end. Another relevant work is *The Existential Drinker* (2018),

3 See, for example, *Alcohol and the Writer* (1988) or "The Alcoholism of F. Scott Fitzgerald" (1970).

4 Even more perplexing is the fact that the criticism coming from countries which can boast a great literary legacy does not seem interested in their own writers, and mainly discusses the American literary scene. A good example is Michael Krüger and Ekkehard Faude's *Literatur und Alkohol* (2004).

discussing selected writers whose protagonists are alcoholics. Earnshaw’s choice is international, encompassing, for instance, the German writer Hans Fallada, and the Russian Venedikt Yerofeev. Obviously, apart from dedicated studies, there are numerous articles in which authors particularise literary representations of alcoholism. Here, one is particularly obliged to pay tribute to *Dionysos: The Literature and Intoxication Triquarterly*, a journal published between 1989 and 2001, comprising an amalgam of articles and reviews.

Criticism concerning literary dissections of alcoholism mostly pertains to fiction, but one has to acknowledge the fact that there is an abundance of source texts across genres. The most conspicuous presence of the theme is observable in alcohol/recovery memoirs, which are non-fictional records, often warning testimonies with a didactic tinge, or triumphant, if painful, accounts of being reclaimed to sobriety. Jack London’s *John Barleycorn* (1913) is one of the first memoirs of the kind, but there are numerous others, such as William Seabrook’s *Asylum* (1935), in which he gives a detailed account of spending almost half a year in an institution, getting his “alcohol-soaked tissues, nerves, organs and senses unpickled” (145). There has been a virtual shower of alcohol memoirs published in recent years, particularly those written by recovering women. In the case of female-authored memoirs, there is often a distinctly feminine aspect attached, such as motherhood and alcohol dependence, a problem examined, for instance, by Jowita Bydlowska in her *Drunk Mom: A Memoir* (2013).

The above-mentioned non-fictional examples provide interesting autobiographical insights into alcoholism and the struggles experienced first-hand by recovering alcoholics. This, of course, is not to say that other literary forms cannot draw on the alcoholic experience of the author. A good example is Kaveh Akbar, an American of Iranian descent, whose volume of poems, *Portrait of the Alcoholic* (2017), “orbits”, as he puts it in an interview, around the theme of alcohol, and reflects his own history of recovery (cf. Schmank 2017). In their analysis of alcoholism-themed poetry, Sarah Gorham and Jeffrey Skinner reflect that it “provides a fresh and open-ended context within which to consider alcoholism” (1997: xix). In fact, much as poetry may seem a genre uninviting in the context of alcohol-dependence, there is a great body of twentieth-century poetry in which one can find disturbing images of alcoholism, such as Louis MacNeice’s “The Drunkard”, which begins with a set of hallucinatory imagery:

His last train home is Purgatory in reverse,
A spiral back into time and down towards Hell
Clutching a quizzical strap where wraiths of faces
Contract, expand, revolve, impinge; disperse
On a sickly wind which drives all wraiths pell-mell

Through tunnels to their appointed, separate places. (Digby and Digby 1988: 228-229)

Similarly in drama, there are compelling representations of alcoholism. Two good examples, though representing completely different settings, are Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* (1946) and Mike Leigh's *Ecstasy* (1979). An interesting discussion on the portrayal of alcoholism in dramatic works is undertaken by John DiGaetani in *Stages of Struggle: Modern Playwrights and Their Psychological Inspirations* (2008), in which, apart from discussing American and English playwrights, he devotes much space to Irish representatives, such as Brian Friel, substantiating the choice by the "legendary problem with drink" (83) in Ireland. Still, neither poetry nor drama for that matter, offer such a profusion of passages and references concerning alcoholism as fiction does, certainly not in twentieth-century literature and onwards. The abundance of fictional material is probably not so conspicuous at first sight, because fiction, owing to its volume, requires more time to research. It is also more difficult to anthologise, for an editor can only include passages from larger works, or a very limited number of short stories, as Miriam Dow and Jennifer Regan do in *The Invisible Enemy: Alcoholism and the Modern Short Story* (1989).

Arguably, the most obvious points of departure in any discussion on how alcoholism is represented in fiction are two classics of the genre, Charles Jackson's *The Lost Weekend* (1944), and Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* (1947). Both novels seem inevitable literary encounters for anyone interested in the fictional representation of alcohol-dependence, partly owing to their film versions⁵, but also because they have been extensively discussed in criticism, unlike, it has to be emphasised, many other fictional representations of alcoholism. The two novels, even though both feature dysfunctional alcoholics, and both are harrowing visions of a descent into an alcoholic abyss, offer completely different portrayals and narratives. *The Lost Weekend*, apart from providing a psychological portrait of an alcoholic, is more focused on the dissection of what might be labelled alcoholic logistics; *Under the Volcano*, on the other hand, is far more elusive, metaphorical, even mystical.

Obviously, apart from Jackson's and Lowry's canonical renditions, there is a whole palette of fictional portrayals of alcoholism. Admittedly mostly in novels which are not entirely focused on the issue, they either contain an alcoholism sub-plot, or one of the characters is severely addicted. The protagonist of Graham Greene's *The Honorary Consul* (1973), Charles Fortnum, for instance, is described in a rather clichéd manner as one whose "veins run with alcohol" (2000: 44).

5 Respectively, 1945, directed by Billy Wilder, and 1984, directed by John Huston.

However, besides a stock pattern of fictionalising alcoholism, there are also more idiosyncratic examples, such as Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). The drinking repertoire of its principal alcoholic character, Sebastian Flyte, is mainly based on vintage wines and a fusion of tastes, such as “strawberries and a bottle of Château Peyraguey” (2008: 18), all perfectly matching his aristocratic background. Unlike most characters in fictional representations of alcoholism, Sebastian can ceaselessly feed his addiction on rare vintages, stocked in wine cellars which hold supplies large enough to last for at least a decade (cf. 75). Nonetheless, the pervading sensuousness of Sebastian’s drinking is soon dispelled when he is formally diagnosed as an alcoholic (cf. 200). Another good example, this time ‘positively charged’, as it were, is *Whisky Galore* (1947) by Compton Mackenzie. The novel is a light comedy, almost a paean to the Scottish ‘water of life’, but it does include a few characters who are definitely on the addicted side, though their portrayals are sympathetically excusable rather than accusatory.

Leaving aside various exceptions⁶, and regardless of the degree to which a given novel is suffused with alcoholism, it is possible to distinguish a number of recurring, if not dominant, narrative and character templates. One is the standard portrait of a self-pitying, self-loathing, and self-destructive alcoholic who sentimentalises about his or her predicament and the wasted chances, often in a rather platitudinous manner. A point in case here is Harlan Ware’s *Come, Fill the Cup* (1952). Ware’s protagonist, Lew Marsh, is a newspaper reporter who has been on the wagon for some time, but the memories of his alcoholic past are still vivid: “In other days he would have taken the stairs and the alley short cut to Abe Rouch’s bar, to slouch with one foot on the rail, erasing the day. A good, stiff, biting slug of rye. Make it a double, Abe, I’m tired tonight” (1952: 3). In other passages of the novel, one will find ‘diagnostic’ reflections, which are, in fact, copious in many fictional accounts of the kind: “A drunk – when he’s happy – drinks to celebrate his happiness. When sad, to drown his sorrow. When tired, to pick himself up. When excited, to quiet down. When ill, for his health. When healthy, because it can’t hurt him. Drunks shouldn’t drink” (64).

Another type of fictionalising alcoholism is characterised by a didactic tenor, which, as the above quote shows, is not at all alien to Ware’s novel. A full-blooded example is *The Truth About Leo* (2010), whose author, David Yelland, draws heavily on his own alcoholic past. The protagonist is ten-year-old Leo, whose mother has died of cancer and who now lives with his father, Tom Rake, a local GP who is a less and less functioning alcoholic. Framing an alcohol-dependent character

6 A particularly good example would be Jonathan Ames and Dean Haspiel’s *The Alcoholic* (2008). However, as it is essentially a graphic novel, it is not discussed in this article. Another interesting instance of pictorial representation of alcoholism is George Cruikshank’s *The Bottle and The Drunkard’s Children* (1847/8), a set of plates with comments.

in the context of parenthood is tempting, but can be a challenge, the more so if the target audience is both adults and (pre-)teens. In his review of the novel, Mal Peet, himself an author of young adult fiction, is quite merciless, claiming that Yelland's depiction "is so earnest that it drives out plausibility", and that the children's conversations about alcoholism "mimic unconvincingly the dialogue of an AA meeting" (2010). Indeed, the novel's "unrelenting emotiveness", as Peet calls it, may seem somewhat overwhelming; but there are, if only a few, passages which clearly show that there is great potential in utilising the parent-child background for fictionalising alcoholism. This is particularly conspicuous in a classroom scene where Leo drops his schoolbag, from which a bottle of vodka, hidden there by his father in an alcoholic haze, rolls on the floor, much to Leo's embarrassment and humiliation (cf. 83-85).

Whereas novels such as *Come, Fill the Cup* and *The Truth About Leo* pay little attention to the graphic depiction of alcoholism, and are laden instead with sermonising reflections, if not cheap didacticism, there is a category which verges on the scatological, a feature mostly prevalent in novels written in the past three decades or so. The protagonists are hard-core alcoholics, desperately refuelling at the local shops or petrol stations as soon as their stock of spirits is depleted. The choice of drink is determined purely by the alcohol proof needed to, as Ames puts it, "recapture intoxication" (2004: 154). The narratives revolve around all that helps to "banish the self" (Gorham and Skinner 1997: xi): the actual act of drinking, getting drunk, and suffering the consequences of the latter. Here, alcoholism is generally viewed through the prism of physiology, rendered with repulsive details. An example which probably surpasses any other in such novels is James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* (2003), where vomitorial depiction is stretched to extremes:

I follow my usual routine. Crawl to the Bathroom. Vomit. Lie on the floor. Vomit. Lie on the floor. Vomit. Lie on the floor. Some of the vomit gets stuck in my new teeth and it hurts cleaning it out. After the cleaning, I vomit again and I clean again and I crawl back to bed. (69)

I vomit twice and I have to clean my own vomit as well as the spit and the piss and the bloody tissue and the shit. (72)

Apart from the fact that the characters of such novels are forever submerged in "the perpetual cloud of alcohol" (1990: 92), to use a phrase from John O'Brien's *Leaving Las Vegas* (1990), the background is often shady, criminal, or debauched, if not utterly perverted. In O'Brien's case it is prostitution; in Alasdair Gray's *1982 Janine*, (1984) the fetishistic and *sadomasochistic fantasies of its alcoholic protagonist*; and in Gordon Williams's *Big Morning Blues* (1974) the setting consists

of sex-shops and strip clubs, complementing and reinforcing, as it were, the alcohol-induced moral decay.

Degeneration, either born out of or combined with alcohol-abuse, is to be found primarily in fiction where the protagonists are mentally unbalanced, alcoholic sociopaths. In its lighter version, the fiction in question includes such novels as *The Woman in the Window* by A. J. Finn (2018): the main character, Ann Fox, is a phobic, steadily sipping wine daily. Even more so this applies to crime fiction, in which alcohol abuse is ubiquitous, particularly since alcohol and crime are often interrelated. A classic here is Patricia Highsmith’s *Strangers on a Train* (1950), where the protagonist, Charles Bruno, is a psychopath and an alcoholic, masterminding a murder exchange. Finally, there is Patrick Hamilton’s *Hangover Square* (1941), with its monomaniac protagonist, George Harvey Bone, who suffers from what seems a dissociative identity disorder, and, constantly fuelled by alcohol, ends up a murderer.

There are, however, novels which ignore the visually repugnant facets of alcoholism, and instead of focusing on mere depiction of physical and mental degradation, contextualise alcohol abuse in a specific, socio-cultural frame. Although the primary focus here is Anglo-American fiction, it seems that the discussion on embedding literary representations of alcoholism in a specific context should not entirely exclude a broader perspective, if only in passing. After all, fictionalising alcohol(ism) is to be found in different literatures, from Joseph Roth’s allegorical *The Legend of the Holy Drinker* (1939) to Antoine De Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince* (1943), in which a tippler drinks to forget that he is ashamed of drinking (cf. 1974: 43). Donald Newlove boasts in *Those Drinking Days: Myself and Other Writers* that he has a “thick notebook of excerpts from world literature” (1981: 151), all, of course, literary representations of alcoholism. However, the factor which seems particularly important here is not just the number of fictionalisations, but the availability of convenient contexts in which to frame a literary representation of alcohol abuse. A good example is Hans Fallada’s largely autobiographical *The Drinker* (written in 1944, and first published in 1955), which features Erwin Sommer, a local entrepreneur whose business suffers numerous setbacks resulting in his final, alcohol-induced downfall. What is more interesting about the novel is the fact that the story is set in Nazi Germany. Admittedly, Fallada does not explicitly refer to the political and military background, but there is a pervading sense of the aura of authority and discipline: the institution to which Sommer is sent in the final stages of his alcoholism employs compulsory and punitive, rather than therapeutic, methods, with a heavy emphasis on hard physical labour and rigid rules, rather like a labour camp (cf. Eghigian 2011). As one of the doctors working there explains euphemistically, “[a] little discipline is good for everybody, isn’t it?” (219).

Similarly fertile context-wise are East European literatures, which contextualise alcoholism utilising cultural, political, and historical specificity. A good example is the literature written by East German writers. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, many of them continued setting their fiction in the political aura of the GDR period.⁷ Likewise, Polish literature offers a whole body of alcoholism fiction framed within the communist context. Agnieszka Osiecka's novella, *White Blouse* (1988), is set in the early 1980s, following the introduction of martial law. In the bleak Warsaw landscape, Osiecka's alcoholic protagonist, Elżbieta, virtually sails between restaurants whose names stand in absurd contrast to the isolated world behind the Iron Curtain. This alcoholic topography, as it were, encompasses places with names such as "Metropol", "Grand", or "Oaza" (cf. 44, 45, 70), which connote all but the quality of life during the communist era. Quite a different fictionalisation of alcoholism is offered in Soviet/Russian literature, where heavy drinking is an inherent element of the mental landscape, referred to by Bakhtin in quite an exculpatory manner as "the mystical and metaphysical atmosphere of Russian alcoholism" (quoted in Shnitman-McMillin 1998: 284). This is well illustrated in Vladimir Kantor's *Crocodile* (1990)⁸, where alcohol abuse of epic proportions has a tinge of national heroism, most conspicuously during a drinking spree when the participants boast that the size of their vodka glasses renders those used by foreigners for double whisky and soda simply laughable (cf. 86-87).

Finally, one cannot omit here the uniquely idiosyncratic literary treatment of alcohol (ab)use by the Czech writer Bohumil Hrabal. His characters, however, even if some of them are heavy drinkers, are euphemistically introduced in *The Gentle Barbarian* (1973) as "beer enthusiasts" (cf. 1997: 20)⁹, suffering from what might be labelled beerholism. The rendition is spiced with the inimitable Czech brand of humour, particularly when the time frame is the communist background (cf. Škvorecký 1993: ix-xviii). In *Too Loud a Solitude* (1977), its protagonist, Hanta, who has spent thirty-odd years operating a press compressing waste paper, openly admits to the habitual drinking of "beer after beer" (2010: 6), particularly at work (cf. 36). It seems, in fact, that Hanta's job is almost integrated with his drinking routine: "In an average month I compact two tons of books, but to muster the strength for my godly labours I've drunk so much beer over the past thirty-five years that it could fill an Olympic pool, an entire fish hatchery" (2). Similarly, *The Little Town Where Time Stood Still* is flooded with beer, some characters

7 See, for instance, **Wolfgang Hilbig's** *Das Provisorium* (2000), a novel featuring an alcoholic writer whose identity is torn between East and West Berlin. Hilbig lived most of his life in the GDR, politically involved as a member of the socialist party, and after reunification he continued setting his novels in the East German reality.

8 No English translation available.

9 No English translation available; my translation from the Polish version.

customarily drinking it "first thing in the morning" (2017: 92). Beer symbolism is overwhelmingly ever-present, as in, for instance, female breasts being likened to "two half-kegs of beer" (52).

Literary portrayals of alcoholics in British and American fiction are generally short of such indigenous contexts providing additional 'colour' to the treatment of the theme. However, one can find novels in which alcoholism functions as an important element of the narrative, rather than its sole focus, reinforcing a particular context, as in the following 'spiritual' settings. In Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* (1940) the protagonist is, as Greene calls him, a "whisky priest" (79). The coinage immediately signals two conflicting areas, most straightforwardly explained in the priest's confession: "I have been drunk – I don't know how many times; there isn't a duty I haven't neglected" (1967: 208). Nick Ripatrazzone's conclusion that the priest's earlier religious aspirations have been "replaced with a constant desire to drink" (2016) can easily be extended to another novel, Edwin O'Connor's *The Edge of Sadness* (1961), whose protagonist, Father Hugh Kennedy, also exemplifies failing vocation. Father Kennedy, afflicted with "unaccountable sadness" and "emptiness where fullness should be" (1962: 115, 120) fills this emotional void with alcohol. The Bishop redirects him to Father Luke Leary, a doctor working with Alcoholics Anonymous, but when Kennedy fails to mend his ways he is relocated. Although the protagonist is a priest, alcoholism in O'Connor's novel is not merely a problem set against a backdrop of faith, but is a tool to probe human nature. This is most evident in Kennedy's ruminations on his addiction: "It's the familiar story of the trap: does it become much different because the narrator is a priest?" (107). By the same token, the Bishop's commentary on Kennedy's alcoholism is not laden with preaching, but reveals a genuine understanding, as in his reply to Kennedy's expiation: "sorrow in itself doesn't really help much. It's too easily neutralized. It doesn't last long" (116).

Embedding alcoholism in a context has a far greater potential than merely depicting patterns of dependence, an approach which, after all, has limited application. The former seems particularly popular with Irish and Scottish writers, who employ alcoholism in varied settings. The range of contexts includes, for instance, the familial backdrops in Roddy Doyle's *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* (1996) or in Agnes Owens's novella *A Working Mother* (1994). The list of novels is indeed quite long here, but there are two which seem worth particular attention. The novels in question are Brian Moore's *Judith Hearne* (1955), subsequently republished as *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* (1956), and George Friel's *Mr Alfred M.A.* (1972). Both of them offer a perspective which reflects the complexity of alcohol dependence, refuting the simplistic view often taken in alcohol-centred debates on whether "alcohol leads to anomie" or, quite the reverse, "anomie leads to alcoholism" (cf. Douglas 2003: 3). What is more, they not only use alcoholism

in a particular context, but do so with what might be called minimalist finesse in the fictionalisation of alcohol dependence. In neither of them does the alcoholic theme appear immediately and obviously, nor does it obscure the focal point of the novel.

In *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* the first signal that Judith Hearne might be more than familiar with immoderate drinking appears quite late in the novel¹⁰, but such hints grow in intensity, as in her visit to the O'Neills', where she is customarily offered a glass of sherry: "The first sip was delicious, steady, making you want a big swallow" (1962: 85). Moore introduces such seemingly trifling drinking vignettes until the narrative takes a rapid turn and Judith's drinking problem becomes apparent. The following passage, in which she discontinues a spell of abstinence, reveals much about her dependence. This is conspicuous first of all in the haste and impetuosity with which she attacks her drink: "she scrambled off the bed, shaking, took a glass from the trunk and scabbled with her long fingers at the seal, breaking a fingernail, pulling nervously until the seal crumbled on the floor and the cork lay upended on top of the bedside table" (111). More importantly still, the habitual nature of her drunkenness becomes evident in her alcoholic tactics – before plunging into drinking she rapidly replaces her clothes with a nightdress, fully aware that once under the influence she might not be in full control; as she puts it, she is "wise in the habits of it, because sometimes you forgot, later" (111). Only having thus prepared for the inevitable aftermath of excessive alcohol intake, can she blissfully enjoy the drink:

The yellow liquid rolled slowly in the glass, opulently, oily, the key to contentment. She swallowed it, feeling it warm the pit of her stomach, slowly spreading through her body, steadying her hands, filling her with its secret power. Warmed, relaxed, her own and only mistress, she reached for and poured a tumbler full of drink (111).

This point in the novel is Judith's 'coming out': from now on her dependence is no longer implied, but comes in full-scale, culminating in her drunken assault on the communion altar and the tabernacle in Chapter Eighteen (238-241).

However, such "dead time of drinking" (131) does not dominate the narrative. Rather, alcohol reflects the various aspects of Judith's 'lonely passion'. It connotes cosy snugness ("the sherry, golden, the colour of warmth", 85), and, in Judith's strong conviction, it is her most dependable comforter. As we learn, this has been

10 Steven Earnshaw claims (cf. 2018: 148) that this does not become manifest until Judith's customary Sunday visit to the O'Neills', which takes place in Chapter Five, but in fact one can trace, or sense it much earlier, at the beginning of Chapter Four, when it appears quite inconspicuously in the following comment: "When Mr Madden came down to breakfast, she saw that he looked ill, or (because she knew the dreadful signs of it) as if he had been drinking" (Moore 1962: 58).

so ever since her youth, when her friend, Edie Marrinan, who herself ends up an alcoholic, convinced her that it possesses curative properties: "the next time she had trouble with her bronchitis, she bought a big bottle of the tonic, drank it alone, and felt wonderfully on it" (127). In fact, Judith eagerly extends her appreciation of the medicinal value of drink, finding it a perfect antidote to just about anything: "It warmed her, it made sad things funny, and if you were feeling down at the mouth, or a little lonely, there was nothing like it for cheering you up" (127). As Judith's life proves to be a string of continuous disappointments, she soon finds a source of permanent solace in the bottle, a remedy for coping with non-physical afflictions and existential confusion: "A drink would put things right. Drink was not to help forget, but to help remember, to clarify and arrange untidy and unpleasant facts into a perfect pattern of reasonableness and beauty" (119).

In retrospect, Judith thinks of her life through the prism of the choices that were not hers but her elderly aunt's, whom Judith had to nurse for many years until her own prime became a thing of the past. Judith dwells on such melancholic as well as resentful recollections of the events that have led to her present state, a life deprived of what could have, but never has taken shape. Again, alcohol has a soothing and consolatory function here:

all the things Miss Hearne used to dream about in those lonely years with her poor dear aunt: Mr Right, a Paris honeymoon, things better not thought of now, all these things were slipping farther away each year a girl was single. So she cheered herself up as best she could and if she overdid it, it was a private matter between her and her confessor, old Father Farrelly, and he was understanding, he liked a drink himself, right up to the end, in 1952, when he had a stroke one Friday night before devotions. (128)

As can be inferred from this passage, what Judith particularly broods over is her lost womanhood. Being tied to her aunt rendered it impossible to follow her own choices, her passions remained unfulfilled, and her femininity non-existent, as it were. This is painfully pinpointed in the way Bernie Rice, the son of her landlady, perceives her: "He stared at Miss Hearne with bloodshot eyes, rejecting her as all males had before him" (8). Her last hope is one of the lodgers, James Madden, an impostor pretending to be a self-made hotel entrepreneur, but in reality merely a hotel doorman in New York. In what is no more than a case of mistaken intentions, Judith's infatuation for Madden turns out to be one-sided. She is abruptly and painfully made aware of this: once again, alcohol proves to be of help, if illusionary only, in coping with and coming to terms with her lonely and loveless fate. In its extreme version, particularly in the more advanced stages of inebriation, alcohol becomes "the stimulant of unreason"(119), whose properties

are almost magical: “Smile,’ she commanded. ‘Just this once: smile.’ And the photograph, converted by the delightful logic of intoxication, smiled. Miss Hearne smiled back, and poured herself another drink” (129).

Although alcohol in the novel plays a key role in many respects, Moore’s novel is not merely a fictional study of alcoholism. Drink is used here as a signifier, not only of Judith’s emotional and mental frame of mind, but several other things, such as, for instance, her social status. Alcohol has an important function here, both narration-wise and in designing Judith’s character. Judith’s permanent financial dire straits are perfectly conveyed through her ‘drink affordability’, an issue well-expounded during her visits to the O’Neills’, particularly in the comments on the amount of sherry offered by Moira O’Neill – “it had to last” (85). During one of her visits, Judith applies a special strategy to benefit as much as possible from the amount of alcohol which Moira quite generously provides: “One more drink would bring the good feeling. But meantime she must wait; she must let it do its work. She refused sandwiches and biscuits; they would spoil the effect of it” (165). Paradoxically, Judith’s economic hardship has a silver lining, because her lack of funds is a factor which, temporarily at least, prevents her from constant intoxication: “Truth to tell, she used to say to herself, I cannot afford even one bottle a month now, with things going as badly as they are and so little money about. The economies will help me struggle through” (128).

However, it is not only the shortage of funds that prevents Judith from drinking as much and often as she did in the not distant past. Alcoholic indulgence is curbed by spiritual principles: “drunkenness was a mortal sin” (151). However, as long as the aforementioned Father Farrelly, himself a heavy drinker, was alive and was lenient with her drinking, he absolved her from this particular sin. Unfortunately, after his death he was replaced by “harsh young confessors, young men who didn’t really understand the circumstances” (128), and instead of at least compassion, Judith had to accept uncompromising condemnation of her weakness. The everyday reminder, as it were, is the picture of the Sacred Heart “the coloured oleograph of the Sacred Heart”, which, along with the “silver-framed photograph of her aunt” always has its prominent place on “the mantelpiece of whatever bed-sitting-room Miss Hearne happened to be living in” (5). The picture of the Sacred Heart is a symbolic guardian of temperance, so in an act of alcoholic despair, Judith first tries to negotiate with it (“I must. Just a little one, it won’t be more, I promise Thee, O Sacred Heart”; 110), and finally resorts to turning the picture to the wall so that it does not witness her drink-thirsty attack on the bottle: “she turned the Sacred heart to the wall, scarcely hearing the terrible warning He gave her” (111). This is just a naive game of make-believe, but elsewhere in the novel Judith keeps up appearances by sending signals of the “[t]wo is my absolute limit” (86) type. She has been

preoccupied with the way she is perceived ever since her drunkenness seriously jeopardised her professional position:

Miss Hearne made a novena, after she lost three of her pupils because that Mrs Strain said she smelled of it one day when she met her in the street. She stopped drinking then, didn't touch a drop. She bought two bottles and kept them in a trunk, a temptation which nightly it gave her comfort to resist. (128)

The two bottles of whisky she keeps in her trunk are actually the ones which she finally fails to resist, but even after her integrity begins to fall apart, she still, almost obsessively, observes the social code. This is particularly the case during her visits to the O'Neills': "She looked down at the pale sherry in the glass and saw that it shook like a tiny sea. She tightened her grip, pressing her fingers against the rim of the glass. But her hand still trembled" (165). However, it is once more the O'Neills' house where Judith's stealth finally fails her, and she becomes fully exposed: "Mrs O'Neill saw the neck of the gin bottle sticking out of the bag. Somehow, it was like seeing Miss Hearne with her clothes undone" (224).

This exposure is the ultimate form of what Judith labels as "the awful hours of conscience" (131), not just in terms of sobering up as such, but the full realisation of the finality of the situation which she both creates and by which she is created:

What is to become of me, O Lord, alone in this city, with only drink, hateful drink that dulls me, disgraces me, lonely drink that leaves me more lonely, more despised? Why this cross? Give me another, great pain, great illness, anything, but let there be someone, someone to share it. (238-239)

Such self-awareness of Judith's plight is particularly well-expounded in the way Moore juggles with the semantics of alcohol, nowhere as meaningful in the novel as in the scene of Judith's vehement argument with Bernie, during which her whisky bottle ends up on the floor (cf. 180). When Judith regains consciousness, she searches for it, but finds it empty: "It was lying by the grate. Spilled. All spilled" (184). The phrasal and proverbial connotations of 'spill' very much exemplify Judith's wasted life, one which cannot be undone; worse still, not even acknowledged by anyone except herself: "Drunk? And why not, nobody's to mind, nobody minds if I'm anything. Nobody, not a single soul" (211).

Similar life-long solitude and, except when drink is concerned ("happy only with a glass in his hand"; 1987: 5), passionless existence lived in permanent stasis is experienced by the protagonist of George Friel's *Mr Alfred M.A.* In fact, the two novels have much in common, both in terms of the thematic contextualisation of alcoholism, and the way Friel and Moore depict their alcoholic protagonists. In both of them, too, alcoholism is a by-focus, rather than a primary

concern. Friel's eponymous Mr Alfred, a teacher, just like Judith Hearne is a solitary figure, utterly deprived of the emotional, let alone sexual, delights offered by relationships, of which he has experienced none: "always on the fringe of company, smiling into the middle distance ... a wallflower since puberty" (5). It seems that all the attributes of adolescence were utterly alien to him, a complete terra incognita of which he was not even fully aware: "He had never been at parties when he was a boy. He had never played at kissing-games. He had only heard of them" (71). Now, well-advanced in years, Mr Alfred has reached the point of surrender, unconditionally accepting his present status: "every door seemed locked, and without a key he was afraid to knock" (5). Mr Alfred is thus a bachelor, whose only remaining family link is an elderly aunt, but unlike Judith's still alive. The soothing agent, as it were, is drink, substituting Mr Alfred's missed opportunities, those concerning potential relationships in particular. Alcohol becomes a substitute, compensating for, or even, seemingly, surpassing the original loss: "I'm happier away from women' ... 'The happiest hours that e'er I spent were spent among the glasses-O!'" (16).

Mr Alfred's professional position is much more stable than that of Judith's in that he has for long had a steady job which allows him to drink regularly, a comfort quite alien to Judith Hearne. Much as in Moore's novel, in Friel's drinking does not come to the fore immediately, apart from the hints which can be found in occasional references, such as hailing Mr Alfred as "a veteran pubcrawler" (1987: 5). Gradually, however, his addicted nature comes to light with more and more references betraying dependence rather than mere drink appreciation: "He wished he had taken just one more whisky at the bar before it closed, or bought a half-bottle to carry out so that he could have another drink before he went to bed" (43). In the tragic finale of the novel, when Mr Alfred ends up in an institution – again, just as Judith Hearne does – he is questioned by Mr Knight, a psychiatrist, and reveals that his casual intake goes far beyond what could be considered as standard for a typical pub visitor: "seven or eight pints and seven or eight whiskies. Maybe more. But then I'm used to it" (174).

When Judith broods over her past, her focus encompasses the unfulfilled potentials, professional and creative ones. Much in the same vein, Mr Alfred 'revisits' his student years, particularly the volume of poems which remained unpublished. This (under)achievement of his is repeatedly recollected throughout the novel, a fond remembrance of the past which stands in sharp conflict with the present resignation: "in the poems of his youth he had tried to negotiate with reality. But in his middle-age reality was no longer open to negotiations" (106). One could venture to say that whereas Judith is devoted to the spiritual realm, a feature instilled in her during upbringing, and resulting from convent school education, Mr Alfred is devoted to literature. In fact, alcohol and literature are his two passions,

the former decidedly dominating, but otherwise quite intertwined. He is submerged in his solitary world of drinking and reading, inspirational, if this is the word, both ways: "he had a habit of thinking in quotations when he had a drink on him" (7). Even when Mr Alfred refers to the Deputy Head Master of his school, the criteria he applies to denigrate him are based on his being a "teetotaller who read nothing" (9), that is, someone who fails to recognise and appreciate fundamental pleasures of life. These pleasures are the two remaining lifelines, as Mr Alfred is convinced that his life has nothing more on offer, perfectly encapsulated in the following passage:

He felt his world was like a crowded bus speeding past the stop. It had left him behind. The daily frustrations of public transport analogised his fate. He didn't get on. Even if the bus did stop and some of the queue was allowed on board he was the one that was put off. He was always the extra passenger the conductor wouldn't take. He was without a home, wife or child, without father, mother, sister, brother or wellwisher. He hadn't even a car. He was unnecessary in the world, superfluous, supernumerary, not wanted. Nobody would miss him. He was an exile in his native land. (58-59)

However, just as Mr Madden appears like a late-flowering and short-lived hope in Judith Hearne's life, Mr Alfred's loneliness is unexpectedly disturbed by an emotional flash in the pan which temporarily fills his emotional void: "Tired of living unloved unloving Mr Alfred fell in love" (61). 'Falling in love' is probably a misnomer here, for Mr Alfred falls victim of a peculiar form of infatuation; much as Judith's is a misplaced case, his is hopelessly inappropriate, because he places his affections in one of his teenage pupils, Rose Weipers, his "ray" (63), found among a new class of girls he is to teach:

They were all agiggle, untidy and sweating after forty minutes in the gym, waddling, mincing, slouching, shuffling, hen-toed, splay-footed, unkempt, unclean, blacknailed, piano-legged, pin-legged, long and short, round and square, fat and thin, bananas and pears, big-breasted and flat-chested, chimps and apes, weeds and flowers, a dazzling tide of miscellaneous mesdemoiselles (63)

Mr Alfred's "autumnal love" (94), though platonic in its nature, is obviously impossible, but at the same time it is his fleeting moment of recognising what he missed in his youth. Mr Alfred is much aware that his emotional entanglement is probably influenced by what he defines as the "alcoholic confusion of his skull" (94). But even though he does not cross the thin line, at times even acting in a fatherly manner (another missing element in his life) his fondness for Rose does not go unnoticed and he is relocated to another school. Unsurprisingly, this

further affects his sense of being a social outcast, which plunges him into bouts of drinking far surpassing his former routines: "He took more and more to drink in the evening. He found he had to drink more to get the right effect of not worrying about anything" (120).

The final passages of the novel, encompassing the rather drastic scenes of Mr Alfred's drunken pub tour, his encounters with the police and subsequent detention, show a man who is madly lost, but not just because of his inebriety. Friel, like Moore, shows that the protagonist's alcoholism can be framed within a broader context. Mr Alfred and Judith Hearne are both alcoholics, but this is a device which helps in depicting their characters. Judith, entangled in her loneliness and religious as well as social restrictions, eventually breaks up. So does Mr Alfred, who is finally diagnosed by Mr Knight as a phobic who suffers from all possible variants; a man who, though a teacher, feels intimidated by pupils, is afraid to cross the street, hates cats, spiders and bees, and displays a number of other fears (cf. 176). Mr Knight gives his final pronouncement in strictly medical terms, defining his patient as a hopeless case:

The man's got pedophobia, homichlophobia, dromophobia, xenophobia, ochlophobia, haphophobia, planomania, kleptophobia, thanatophobia, he's an onychophagist, he's got gerontophobia, but notice he has no dysphagia, he's got zoophobia, gatophobia, arachnophobia, kainophobia, climacophobia, acrophobia, hodophobia, he suffers from intermittent tachylogia, he's got agoraphobia and kenophobia, thermophobia and melissophobia. (177)

CONCLUSION

Even a quick survey of alcoholism literature will inevitably reveal that, as Newlove remarks, "[g]reat writing about alcohol is an ocean without shoreline" (1981: 151). In fact, one could venture to agree with the Polish writer Ferdynand Goetel, who, quoted in 1932, reflected that so much had been written about "this wretched alcohol" that one feels virtually sick whenever another attempt is made to render it in literature (cf. Witkiewicz 1993: 47). Whether Goetel would stand by his comment had he lived to make a judgement from the present perspective remains open, but it certainly reflects the scope of literary interest in alcohol and its abuse. The most convincing proof is not only the fact that there is a multitude of literary representations of alcoholism, but, more importantly, that the available renditions reflect what Louis MacNeice poetically calls "drunkenness of things being various" (1990: 23). Indeed, literature encapsulates varied facets and shades of alcoholism, allowing much room for

diverse perspectives, perceptions and assumptions. Fictional accounts of alcohol abuse range from narratives of moral and physical decline, the “slippery slope to alcoholism” (1994: 163) as Janice Galloway calls it, or, on the other side of the continuum, returns to sobriety thanks to various schemes of the Alcoholics Anonymous type.

However, this is not to say that the theme has been thoroughly exploited, and that every new attempt to represent it in literature is bound to be a mere reproduction. The problem lies in the means of achieving an end. Nicholas Warner claims that “literature is better than science at conveying what drunkenness or alcoholism feels like – its terror, its pitiableness, its degradation, its ludicrousness, occasionally even its glory” (2013: 11). This is indeed hard to challenge, provided that the ‘conveying’ in question is not just a verbatim representation, but one which situates the topic within a framework allowing one to penetrate the alcoholic mind, simply because, as Roger Forseth rightly reflects, that is where an alcoholic is (cf. 1991: 12).

Quite in the same vein, Jack London defines alcoholic craving as “*quite peculiarly mental in its origin*” (1913: 339). Yet, much of the available alcoholism literature ignores its complexity, often presenting stock types, rather than individuated figures, offering repetitive and predictable depictions of continuous benders, with all their ensuing physicalities; to many readers, this may ring the been-there-and-seen-it bell, but little more. The same applies to the language which, if formulaic and not reaching beyond the cliché-ridden repertoire of lexis depicting various (post)stages of intoxication, will not leave a lasting impression on the reader. Herman Melville’s marine setting of *White-Jacket* (1850) is a good example of how employing more figurative diction can stir the imagination: “if he only followed the wise example set by those ships of the desert, the camels; and while in port, drank for the thirst past, the thirst present, and the thirst to come – so that he might cross the ocean sober” (53).

As mentioned earlier, novels such as *Under the Volcano*, or *The Lost Weekend* remain classics of the genre, each a tour de force of fictionalising alcoholism, often used as benchmarks in critical studies. However, apart from Lowry’s and Jackson’s masterpieces, there is a vast body of novels whose authors have attempted to either dissect alcohol dependency, or have incorporated alcoholic characters and themes in their works; yet, many of them have not received much critical attention as far as fictionalising alcoholism is concerned. Admittedly, in some cases, this does not come as much of a surprise. It seems that one of the reasons, as this article argues, is that a compelling treatment of the theme requires much more than focusing on the obvious, and that framing alcoholism within a specific context is more effectual in terms of its fictionalisation than a mere true-to-life portrayal. *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* and *Mr Alfred M.A.* are good examples of the

potential that lies in contextualisation rather than merely dissecting various facets of alcoholism in its fictional representation.

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'The delightful logic of intoxication': Fictionalising Alcoholism

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'Čudovita logika opijanjanja': fikcionalizacija alkoholizma

Alkohol vselej izzove različne, često konfliktne občutke. Književnost nam ponuja reprezentacije alkoholizma, ki omogočajo globlji uvid v alkoholno odvisnost in njene številne implikacije. Članek se osredinja na podobo alkoholizma v književnosti, predvsem v sodobni angleški prozi.

Ključne besede: alkohol, alkoholizem, kultura, književnost, proza

Wilfried Steiner's *Der Weg nach Xanadu* – an Austrian Campus Novel?

Dieter Fuchs

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on Wilfried Steiner's 2003 novel *Der Weg nach Xanadu* / *The Way To Xanadu* which appears to be an Austrian campus novel owing to the setting of the Austrian world of academia in its first part. Owing to its lack of local coloring, however, the Vienna-based plot of the first part does not feature a (stereo)typically 'Austrian' genius loci. Although this part of the text echoes features of the international campus novel tradition, it may be definitely not considered an Austrian campus novel. The second part of the novel is set in the Lake District, focuses on Coleridge's Romantic poetry and the Doppelgänger-motif. Whereas the first part may be vaguely contextualized within the international campus novel tradition, the second part is deeply imbued with the Romantic tradition of the Künstlerroman or artist's novel.

Keywords: Wilfried Steiner, *Der Weg nach Xanadu*, Austria, Campus Novel, English Romanticism, Künstlerroman, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan", The White Goddess

When Wilfried Steiner's *Der Weg nach Xanadu / The Way to Xanadu* (my translation) appeared in 2003, Sebastian Domsch published a review which claimed that this work is "an Austrian campus novel and much more" (Domsch, my translation). As will be shown in this article, Steiner's book, is much more than a campus novel indeed, and this aspect may be attributed to the work's bipartite structure: whereas the first part may be contextualized within the campus novel tradition of the second half of the twentieth century, the second part is deeply imbued with the tradition of the *Künstlerroman* or artist's novel which flourished in the Romantic period and focuses on an (often overreaching) artist in quest of artistic genius and perfection. Owing to the fact that there is no Austria-related local colouring at all, however, it will be argued that Wilfried Steiner's *The Way to Xanadu* may be definitely not considered an 'Austrian' campus novel: although the protagonist is introduced as a professor from the University of Vienna, the Austrian world of academia is not represented at all.

PART I

The main character of *The Way to Xanadu* is the obese middle-aged Vienna University Professor Alexander Markowitsch. Being a loner and a lifelong bachelor, his *joie de vivre* is restricted to wine, food and Romantic poetry, which is his main field of academic and personal interest. Markowitsch is fascinated by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who wrote his most famous works within the very short time span of a single year – his poetic *annus mirabilis* 1797 –, after which his talent became stale and his physical and mental condition deteriorated. One of the works produced in this year is the famous "Kubla Khan"-fragment alluded to by the novel's title *The Way to Xanadu*:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea. [...]
(Coleridge 1-5)

Markowitsch is convinced that Coleridge's visionary year of exceptional genius must have been triggered off by something even more significant than the commonly affirmed circumstance of the poet's falling in (unfortunate) love with Sara Hutchinson.

The novel begins when Martin – a young doctoral student – enters Markowitsch's study and asks him to supervise his PhD thesis project on Coleridge. Being

annoyed by the young man's upstart zeal and enthusiasm, the rather phlegmatic and disillusioned Professor tries to get rid of his new disciple. Then something unexpected happens: the door opens, and Martin's girl-friend Anna enters the study. Markowitsch looks at the beautiful charismatic young woman, falls in love at first sight, and his life is about to change for good. He accepts to supervise Martin's work to establish contact with Anna. In the months to follow, Markowitsch, Anna and Martin meet in bars and restaurants on a regular basis, and it is at this stage that the Professor's colleagues spread the rumour that there must be something fishy about Markowitsch's private company of the young man and woman. From this moment on, the Professor becomes an increasingly nervous and irate person, and even the very few friends he has let him down. Like the lovesick Coleridge haunted by alcohol- and drug-induced visions, Markowitsch is tortured by nightmares and loses his awareness of reality. In a somewhat schizophrenic manner, the borderline between fact and fiction becomes increasingly blurred.¹

As observed by Domsch, the tale of the physically unattractive and socially isolated teacher falling in love with a good-looking vamp-like young woman may be considered a rewriting of Heinrich Mann's *Professor Unrat* (*Small Town Tyrant*) – a German prototype of campus fiction² which appeared in 1905 and was adapted into the movie *The Blue Angel* (starring the young Marlene Dietrich) in 1930. Anna is not featured as a vulgar, or fallen woman such as the ill-reputed young temptress presented in Heinrich Mann's novel, however. Rather than that, she is fashioned as a sort of Muse-like oracular prophetess, as there are hints that Anna knows things about the Professor which cannot be explained by way of novelistic realism. This is, for instance, the case when she takes two books from one of his chairs and places them in the correct position of the correct shelf of his personal library although she has never been in the Professor's study before (31). Things such as these suggest that the love story, which is about to emerge, cannot be compared with the often shallow affairs between old university teachers and their good-looking but often not really intelligent young students satirized in the traditional campus novel.

The episode with the book shows that Anna is a very cultured and sophisticated person who seduces the Professor by way of textual rather than sexual intercourse. To be more precise, she makes Markowitsch fall in love with her via an intertextual re-enactment of two of the most famous text-induced love-scenes in the Western literary canon. When Anna puts the books into the correct shelves, she demonstrates that she shares the Professor's textual and contextual knowledge, and thus the bookish text becomes a code of mutual empathy and

1 Trombik (181-4) attributes this aspect to the metafictional self-referentiality of the novel.

2 See Fuchs 2016.

intimacy – an aspect which is emphasized by Markowitsch’s ardent desire to browse Anna’s bookshelf when he is invited to her flat for the first time (79). Although the common reader does not get to know the titles of the two books, the literary connoisseur knows that such a matchmaking by way of textual intercourse is foregrounded in Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.³

The scene described above echoes Goethe’s 1774 epistolary *Sturm und Drang* novel where Werther and Lotte fall in love when they contemplate nature and independently associate one and the same poem with this vision: Klopstock’s “Thunderstorm Ode”. When Lotte utters the poet’s name “Klopstock”, the enraptured Werther realizes that they share the same intimate thoughts and feelings and thus emphatically understand each other via the code of poetry. Their love triggered off by the poetic word is philology at its best, as the ancient Greek term ‘philology’ may be translated as ‘love of the word’ in the deeper sense of *logos*, which not only means ‘word’ but also ‘thought’, ‘wisdom’, ‘truth’, the principle of divine order regulating the world of the mortals, and much more.

To fully appreciate Anna’s philological sophistication, the reader has to bear in mind that Goethe rewrote this scene from Dante’s already mentioned *Divine Comedy* which features the unfortunate lovers Paolo and Francesca da Rimini (*Inferno* V,127-38): reading the naughty tale of Sir Launcelot – who commits adultery with the wife of his feudal lord and master – in each other’s company, Francesca and Paolo’s act of communal reading – or textual intercourse – stimulates sexual intercourse and bodily penetration. In contrast to the a-sexual enactment of sentimental love by Lotte and Werther, Dante’s story of Paolo and Francesca presents the bookish text as a bawd-like sexual matchmaker. Owing to the circumstance that Werther becomes desperate and shoots himself⁴, and Francesca and Paolo are killed by Francesca’s vengeful husband and suffer eternal punishment in hell⁵, however, Anna’s (inter)textual intercourse is presented in a highly ambivalent light: like Werther and Paolo, Alexander Markowitsch might have to die and even go to hell if he gives in to Anna’s textual seduction.

3 See Kittler.

4 Orthodox Christian doctrine attributes suicide to the sin of despair. Among all other vices, this is the only sin which cannot be forgiven and thus results in inevitable and irretrievable punishment in hell.

5 Owing to their extra-marital affair, Paolo and Francesca are killed by Francesca’s husband by way of revenge. When they tell their story to the speaker of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, they are trapped in the second circle of hell. In contrast to desperate suicidals such as Werther – who are to be found in the seventh infernal circle –, Paolo and Francesca find some consolation in the circumstance that, although they suffer infernal punishment, they will remain in each other’s company and enjoy immortal love forever.

As can be seen from this key-episode, the *Small Town Tyrant* pattern as a German prototype of campus fiction introduced at the outset is thus about to give way to an enigmatic story of passionate love inflamed by a vamp-like *belle dame sans merci* known from romantic art. This observation ties in with the fact that, throughout the first part of *The Way to Xanadu*, the features of campus fiction are applied as a very general framing devices rather than generic markers – an aspect which can be, first of all, observed from the fact that the plot of Steiner's novel is not situated on a University campus and does not present or reflect campus-life at all. Although the University of Vienna is one of the few continental universities which boasts of a really nice campus, the Vienna University Campus is not mentioned at all. And, apart from a few street names and places, the novel does not offer any local colouring: no typically Viennese coffee houses, no morbid *genius loci*, no Third Mann-style underworld, no Freudian or Wittgensteinian academic debates, no Beethoven or Schubert etc. Although the author Wilfried Steiner is an Austrian graduate of English studies and thus knows the Austrian world of academia, Austrian university life is entirely excluded from his text. This is especially true for the fact that – although the Vienna Institute of English and American Studies offered many quirky characters at the time the novel was written –, there are no topical or satirical references to any of them. The same is true of the University of Salzburg where Steiner received his M.A. and Ph.D. Although the Salzburg institute offered at least as many eccentric staff members as the Vienna Department of English and American Studies at that time – and although parts of the plot of the novel are set in Salzburg – there is no local colouring either. Apart from place names such as 'Vienna' and 'Salzburg', the novel's setting could be literally any place in the Western world. Hence, *The Way to Xanadu* may be definitely not considered an *Austrian* prototype of campus fiction inspired by the German *Small Town Tyrant* tradition, as mentioned in the review quoted at the outset.

PART II

The lack of local colouring in the first part is even more astounding if one considers the circumstance that the second part of the novel contains local colouring in abundance. This part is set in Coleridge's world of the Romantic poets: the Lake District in Northern England.

As already mentioned, the passionate love Markowitsch feels for Anna results in an identity crisis and Coleridge-like visions and nightmares of self-alienation. Again the keyword 'schizophrenia' comes to the reader's mind; or to mention a literary device more appropriate for the study of Romanticism, the motif of the

Doppelgänger. Thus the second part of Steiner's book presents the love-sick Professor Markowitsch as a modern counterpart of Coleridge. A first intertextual key to this aspect can be found in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan"-fragment alluded to in the novel's title *The Way to Xanadu*.

It is universally acknowledged that the composition of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" was triggered off by a dream vision which somewhat coincides with a later found description of the Kubla Khan Palace in an Oriental writing the romantic poet could not have known when he composed his fragmentary poem. As Markowitsch has a recurring vision of an unknown study allegedly used by Coleridge – and as an Anna-like temptress recurs in his nightmarish dreams over and over again –, he finally sets out on a quest-like journey in search of an empirical counterpart of this enigmatic vision. Thus he hopes to be not only cured from the psychological stress symptoms he suffers from as Coleridge's *Doppelgänger*, he also hopes to find an explanation of the enigma the allegedly omniscient and omnipresent Anna represents in his life. In other words, the expert in Romanticism tries to find an *organon*- or synthesis-like overall explanation of his yet fragmentary vision, and this even more so, as he unsuccessfully tried to become a poet in his younger days. As recommended by Coleridge's friend Wordsworth, Markowitsch tries to find a poetic solution to his personal dilemma by 'recollecting the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings [triggered off by Anna] in tranquillity.'⁶ Maybe the middle-aged, *ennui*-ridden Professor has the potential become another Coleridge-like artistic genius – and thus Coleridge's *Doppelgänger* in a quite literary sense – after all? But this would also imply a re-enactment of Coleridge's final, Satan-like, downfall as an overreaching Romantic genius at the end of the novel.

To cut the very long episodic second part of *The Way to Xanadu* short, Markowitsch succeeds in finding the place he saw in his dream visions over and over again: an undiscovered study used by Coleridge, which even contains the copy of a volume of the poet's source material with some handwritten annotations. This philological sensation would boost the Professor's career towards world-renowned academic scholarship, and Alexander Markowitsch would become an international authority in the field of Romantic Studies. A Viennese counterpart or *Doppelgänger* of M.H. Abrams, so to speak.

Markowitsch, however, is much more interested in an esoteric place of divine worship which he finds not far away from Coleridge's undiscovered study: an old chapel which turns out to be built on a pagan place of worship of the White Goddess, as elucidated in Robert Graves' 1948 study published under the same title. According to Graves, the White Goddess chooses a mortal man to live with every

6 See Wordsworth & Coleridge, Preface to Lyrical Ballads (168).

year: for a year, this mortal experiences paradisiacal bliss including sexual fulfilment and poetic inspiration; after the end of this period, however, he will be killed and sent into the underworld. When Markowitsch approaches this archaic place of worship, Anna appears, identifies herself as the White Goddess and offers him a Doctor Faustus-like pact of a blissful year in paradise on earth, as it is mentioned in the two concluding lines of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* fragment alluded to in the title of Steiner's *The Way to Xanadu*:

For he on honeydew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.
(Coleridge 33-34)

At the very end of the novel the sexually and intellectually burnt-out Professor and amateur poet is likely to enter the contract. At this stage it comes as no surprise that the White Goddess Anna explains that she offered the same arrangement to Coleridge who produced his major works within the already mentioned one-year period known as his *annus mirabilis*. Hence Professor Markowitsch and Samuel Taylor Coleridge are not only featured in terms of Romantic *Doppelgänger*s but, first of all, as Faustian overreachers whose souls are bound by a contract with an otherworldly tempting figure. Steiner's novel thus cultivates a character type which may be traced back to Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus fashioned in the early modern era, which recurs in the Satan-figure of Milton's *Paradise Lost* in the second half of the seventeenth century, and which is fused with the overreaching figure of the Byronic Hero in the Romantic period.

What seems to begin like a Campus Novel in the first part, thus turns out to be a *Künstlerroman* which focuses on an overreaching artistic genius and reflects the tradition of the Marlovian overreacher, Milton's Satanic rebel and the Byronic Hero on a meta-level. Hence *The Way to Xanadu* seems to be not so much inspired by Heinrich Mann's *Small Town Tyrant* as the foundational text of the German and Austrian tradition of the Campus Novel. As the second part shows, *The Way to Xanadu* turns out to be a rewriting of the Romantic tradition of the artist's novel which culminates in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* – a twentieth century text which fuses the Faustian myth of the overreacher with the Romantic cult of absolute art.

CONCLUSION

Like the romantic genius Samuel Taylor Coleridge at the beginning of his artistic *annus mirabilis*, the amateur poet Alexander Markowitsch seems to be doomed to surrender to the perverted Muse's kiss offered by the *femme fatale*-like Anna when

The Way to Xanadu approaches its end. The Muse the Professor meets as a *poeta vates*-like visionary thus turns out to be a demonic emissary from the Underworld rather than a truly inspiring emissary from Mount Parnassus. She charms her victims by a *furor-poeticus*-like spell triggering off genius-like artistic composition which, however, turns out to be self-destructive at the end.

In her offer of a perverted Muse's kiss, the White Goddess Anna resembles the archetypal seductress of Western culture featured in Christopher Marlowe's seminal treatment of human overreaching in *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*. In Marlowe's early modern play, the Professor Markowitsch-like Doctor Faustus is tricked into losing his soul by the demonic spirit of Helen of Troy whom the devilish Mephistopheles conjures from Hades: the white(!)-armed⁷ seductress, who vampire-like 'sucks' or swallows Faustus's soul by way of a kiss very similar to the one offered by the White Goddess Anna. These are the famous lines articulated by the Marlovian overreacher Doctor Faustus on this occasion:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
 And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
 Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.
 [Kisses her]
 Her lips suck forth my soul – see where it flies!
 Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
 Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips
 And all is dross that is not Helena.
 I will be Paris, and for love of thee
 Instead of Troy, shall Wittenberg be sacked,
 And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
 And wear thy colours on my plumed crest;
 Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel
 And then return to Helen for a kiss.
 (Marlowe 1986: 859: 5.1.98-110)

Wilfried Steiner's *The Way to Xanadu* ends as a self-reflexive⁸ *Künstlerroman* or artist's novel – and thus turns out to be not without artistic merit. As has been shown, however, the two rather isolated parts of the novel do not really connect into an organic whole: a unified and universal piece of art which corresponds with the Romantic ideal of an *organon*-like or Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

This "deep romantic chasm" (Coleridge 12) – which splits the work into two rather loosely connected parts – may be not so much attributed to the fact that

7 In the Homeric Iliad Helen is referred to as "white-armed" (III; 121). Most frequently, however, this description is attributed to Hera.

8 See Trombik (180-4).

the mode of the Campus Novel vaguely echoed in the first part is transformed into the mode of the artist's novel in the second part. This turns out to be a rather original artistic device.

It may be, however, attributed to the novel's conflicting composition of place: the Austrian world of academia presented as a (non-)place without local colouring opposed to the fully fleshed-out English world of the Lake Poets described in great circumstantial detail – a contrast, which is not motivated by the structural or aesthetic design of the text and thus must be considered an artistic deficit.

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***Der Weg nach Xanadu* Wilfrieda Steinerja – avstrijski kampus roman?**

Članek se osredinja na roman *Der Weg nach Xanadu* (2003), ki se na prvi pogled zdi avstrijski primer kampus romana glede na dunajsko lokacijo dogajanja. Kljub temu pa nima ustrezne lokalne obarvanosti in zato ne predstavlja stereotipnega duha kraja in je bolj prepojen z romantično tradicijo romana o umetniku.

Ključne besede: Wilfried Steiner, *Der Weg nach Xanadu*, Avstrija, kampus roman, angleška romantika, Künstlerroman, Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Slovenes and Friuli as the Other in Hemingway

Rebecca Johnston

ABSTRACT

Ernest Hemingway was known for writing with the “Iceberg Theory” in mind. Thus, there are deeper meanings and contexts moving beneath the surface of his works. His war novel *A Farewell to Arms* takes place along the Soča/Isonzo Front both before and after the Battle of Kobarid/Caporetto and in this setting, consistent with his “Iceberg Theory,” Hemingway has placed both characters and settings that deserve a reconsideration below the surface. While the Italians in the novel are on the surface of the story and thus more easily recognizable, it is the Slovenes and Friuli who run under the surface and carry a deeper meaning. Slovenes and Friuli are not named directly, but as Hemingway was historically accurate in the novel, both ethnic groups are placed along the Front and collectively they represent the “other” in Hemingway’s novels, both unseen and integral to the storyline.

Keywords: World War One, Isonzo Front, Soča Front, Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*, Slovenes, Friuli, Italian Front, Caporetto, Kobarid, Nick Adams

In WWI, Italy invaded the Slovene portion of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thus, when Lt Henry was injured north of Plava, he was injured while assisting the Italian army in an occupied Slovene town. According to Gregor Kranjc, “Hemingway never acknowledged, with the exception of a few obscure references to Slovene place names like Lom or Ravne, that the battles were taking place in territory that was largely populated by Slovenes” (209). In fact, he consistently used the Italian names for every other location in the published version of the novel. However, Hemingway placed Slovenes below the surface of his writing. In addition, a second group, the Friuli, also exists below the surface. Slovenes and Friuli are “the other” in Hemingway’s WWI writing; they are both unmentioned and integral to the story.

Lt Henry and Nick Adams were supporting Italy during irredentism (FTA 19). Just as Hemingway “made every attempt to integrate himself to the foreign culture” so did his characters (Ammary 3). Lt Henry is mostly “embraced by Italians” (Ammary 3). Ammary comments that “Frederic Henry’s close friendship with Rinaldi and the priest exemplifies the sense of brotherhood that has developed between the American Henry and the Italian officers” (14). This immersion into Italian culture is likely connected to Hemingway’s own disconnection from the cultures that were hidden beneath Italian culture. Italians and Slovenes have a history of struggle between them. The Italians sought to gain Slovene towns in WWI, and they took Slovene land after the war. Mark Thompson mentions a moment when Mussolini passed over the old border into ethnically Slovene land and asked the name of a young boy. The boy had the Slovene sounding name of Stanko. Mussolini asks his last name and Thompson states that Mussolini “does not realize that Stanko must be a Slovene” (144). When he is told the Slavic last name of “Robančič, Mussolini “changes the subject” (Thompson 144). Similar to this brief conversation, Mussolini would attempt to bury the Slovene culture and way of life. Given the influence of Italians on Hemingway, it is not surprising that Slovenes do not have a clearer role in his WWI writing. As Branko Drekonja states, “Inevitably...[Hemingway was] a victim of Italian irredentism” (19). However, Hemingway does include Slovenes below the surface, which gives their suffering importance in his works.

One of the ways Hemingway places Slovenes in his writing is when he hints that the Italians are fighting in a foreign land. Lt Henry is speaking with his fellow ambulance drivers when one of the men states “What if we take San Gabriele?... If...[the Austrians] come down into Italy they will get tired and go away. They have their own country” (44). The comment “what if we take San Gabriele” shows that they knew the land was not under Italian control. It would be taken, not taken back—just taken. These men realize they are invading a country. The mountain they are speaking of is Škabrijel, a mountain that belonged to the Austro-

Hungarian Empire within Slovene territory. While these men realized they were invaders, some of the Italians fighting with Lt Henry were not aware. Italian irredentism led the people to believe that they were redeeming land that belonged to Italy. When discussing the war and the difficulties of strategizing for a war in the mountains, Gino said, “Yes, . . . But those were Frenchmen and you can work out military problems clearly when you are fighting in somebody else’s country.’ ‘Yes,’ I agreed, ‘When it is your own country you cannot use it so scientifically’” (160). This discussion takes place before the Battle of Caporetto in a town on the Bainsizza Plateau, which the Italians had taken from the Slovene portion of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Yet, Gino and Lt Henry come to the conclusion that this war is hard to discuss scientifically because the fighting takes place in Italy. There are several similar examples, such as when Lt Henry states that, “The town [of Gorizia] had been captured very handsomely but the mountains beyond it could not be taken,” these mountains would have been in Slovenia (5). When Lt Henry is questioned alongside the Tagliamento during the retreat, he is told “it is you and such as you that have let the Barbarians onto the sacred soil of the fatherland” (FTA 193). However, much of the land was not Italian to begin with. Perhaps in this contradiction Hemingway is showing the contradiction within Italy during the war. So many Italians felt that they were fighting for unredeemed Italian lands, but the obvious fact that they were outside of Italian lines fighting for a country not occupied by Italians was clear. Not all Italians realized it, but soldiers on the front lines were beginning to figure it out, and Hemingway quietly pointed to this invaded group of Slovenes.

Invaded people groups are further seen in FTA. Lt Henry states, “In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains” (FTA 3). This house was not built by the Italian military. Reynolds puts this house in either Gradisca or Lucinico, both of which were in the Slovene portion of the AH empire (91). The following summer, Lt Henry is stationed across the river from Lucinico in “ a house in Gorizia that had a fountain and many thick shady trees in a walled garden” (FTA 5). Gorizia was a city which belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire before the war. This house most likely belonged to a non Italian resident of the Austro-Hungarian Empire who left before the Italians had control of Gorizia. Many of the citizens were evacuated before the Italians arrived, so when they crossed the river into Gorizia, the Italian army was able to station themselves inside of houses that had been abandoned by civilians. Catherine stays in the house that serves as the British hospital, which Hemingway explains “had been the villa of a very wealthy German” (FTA 24). In “Now I Lay Me,” Nick is in a barn listening to silkworms chew. That barn belonged to someone. In “Nick Sat Against the Wall...” Nick leans against the wall of a church. That was a church where civilians would have

gathered for worship, but now they are either evacuated, in hiding or dead in front of the church (143). In “A Way You’ll Never Be,” Nick has nightmares of a yellow house. Hemingway writes:

Outside of Fossalta there was a low house painted yellow with willows all around it and a low stable. There was a canal, and he had been here a thousand times and never seen it, but there it was every night as plain as the hill, only it frightened him. That house meant more than anything and every night he had it. (Hemingway 163)

The house appears in Nick’s nightmares. In his waking moments Nick cannot find the house and the river is different, suggesting that the house was not real but only in his dreams. Nick would wake up “soaking wet, more frightened than he had ever been in a bombardment because of a house and a long stable and a canal” (*The Nick Adams Stories* 162). Later in the same story, Nick cannot sleep because of the image of the house (167). Nick is feeling guilt and concern for those who lived in the battlefield prior to the commencement of the war. The house should have been on the hill. A house and a barn belong on a canal more than dead soldiers do. Yet, the dead soldiers exist and the house does not. Nick regrets the loss of civilian lives and housing—and the loss is what means “more than anything.” That house would have been Friuli, given its location just beyond the Piave. Nick is regretting the Friuli suffering, without mentioning the Friuli by name. Even if the specific house was not real, the idea of the missing and bombarded houses and lives is haunting Nick. In the yellow house readers are given a glimpse into the struggle Hemingway was having accepting the death and destruction he saw to the lives of the civilians in the war torn area of northeastern Italy and southwestern Slovenia.

The Slovene and Friuli presence is also felt in the rubble that forms the background setting on the front. Hemingway mentions passing by “a broken farmhouse” and “there were many iron shrapnel balls in the rubble of the houses and on the road beside the broken houses where the post was” (FTA 162). Lt Henry’s post on the Bainsizza Plateau is situated near houses that have been blown up. At the start of the war this plateau was squarely within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Lt Henry describes Gorizia upon his return to the front in what would have been the summer of 1916 (Reynolds), “The sudden interiors of houses that had lost a wall through shelling, with plaster and rubble in their gardens and sometimes in the street, and the whole thing going well on the Carso” (FTA 6). Here Hemingway juxtapositions a scene of the destruction of the homes of Slovene or Friuli with the victory the Italians are finding on the Carso, which is another Slovene plateau that belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Through this juxtaposition readers gain a glimpse of the victory the Italians are finding in 1916 at the cost of Slovenes and Friuli.

There were Slovene and Friuli civilians who did not evacuate. According to Kranjc, “Able-bodied civilians were dragooned into labour units to dig defensive trenches and to transport goods to the front. Women, the young and the elderly were required to shoulder more of the agricultural labour and even children were employed gathering the ‘cotton’ from the nettles for military uniforms” (214-15). These civilians worked for the military occupying their towns and they worked to farm their own land. Thus, when Italians came to Slovene and Friuli towns, they found food in the fields. In the start of FTA, Lt Henry notes that, “The plain was rich with crops; there were many orchards of fruit trees and beyond the plain the mountains...were brown and bare” (FTA 3). The mountains have been cleared for or by the battles, but in the plain the effects of the Slovenes and Friuli are still felt. Their crops are in the field. The fruits of their labors are left to be gleaned by Italian soldiers. Gino explains to Lt Henry, “When we came here [the Bainsizza] we found fields of potatoes the Austrians had planted” (FTA 160). The Bainsizza, however, was populated by Slovenes, not Austrians. Gino may not have known, but Slovenes would have planted the potatoes that he ate.

FTA is written retrospectively. Lt Henry is, just as Hemingway was, looking back and remembering the war. Lt Henry has had some time to think about who the Italians were fighting. Thus, Lt Henry declares “I did not know what we had against Austria” (FTA 65). He no longer knew why the Italians fought the Austrians, but did he know that the Slovenes were involved in the fight and that the fight was largely on their land? When Hemingway wrote about the weather in FTA, particularly in the Battle of Caporetto, he was careful to be accurate with the weather details from the actual nights he was writing about—even though he was not there to experience the weather himself. He researched thoroughly to insure accuracy. However, he does not accurately describe the army he is fighting, and he does not mention Slovenes by name. Lt. Henry states, “Croatians came over across the mountain meadows and through patches of woods and into the front line” (FTA 162) “...there were Croats in the lines opposite us now and some Magyars [Hungarians]” (FTA 159). He does not mention Slovenes being in the army. However, Slovenes were one of the Slavic nationalities serving in the Austro-Hungarian forces. According to Kranjc, “In the initial mobilization that followed the declaration of war in 1914, no less than 30,000 Slovene soldiers in Austrian uniform marched off to war...Tens of thousands of their comrades would follow their footsteps in the ensuing four years of war” (212). Many of these soldiers would initially be sent to the Eastern Front to fight against Russian and Serbian troops (Thompson 80). However, the Slavic troops were later moved to fight Italians. The Slovenes soon found themselves fighting Italy in their own country. Slovenes were fighting for land that was populated by Slovenes, giving them a better motivation for fighting the invading Italians. According to Slovene

historian Dolenjska, Franc Rueh was a Slovene soldier moved back to fight in his homeland. In his journal Rueh wrote:

My heart seized for a moment when I saw those lands where I will perhaps spill my blood and lay down my life. However, when I gazed upon our beautiful Littoral, when I reached the sea, the tension released and my resolve hardened even more that I am prepared to sacrifice myself so that our enemies do not seize our beautiful lands (Kranjc 243).

Slovene soldiers were not necessarily in support of the empire, but they did want to defend their homeland. Thompson states that Slovenes were not aggressively anti Italian (144). However, while the Slovene citizens may not have fought actively against the Italians, the Slovene soldiers in the Austro Hungarian army defended their homeland against Italy, and they were there fighting the very army that Lt Henry was supporting. Not only were Slovenes in the Austro-Hungarian army, they were performing well in the army. According to Kranjc:

Slovene troops gained a reputation for professionalism and persistency in battle. During the war Slovenes fought within the ranks of units that were almost purely Slovene...the 17th and the 87th infantry regiments based in Ljubljana and Celje respectively, as well as the 2nd mountain rifles regiment were almost entirely Slovene, while the 97th infantry regiment based in Trieste was almost half Slovene. (212-213).

Thus, when Passini, Manera and Lt Henry are discussing the war and one of the men state, "What if we take the Carso and Monfalcone and Trieste," they were discussing fighting an army that was likely half Slovene (FTA 44). In this setting the soldiers speaking should have known they were fighting Slovenes just as they knew they were fighting Croatians and Magyars. The Slovenes are there, but they are not acknowledged by the Italian soldiers in the novel, just as Mussolini did not acknowledge the ethnicity of Stanko.

During the retreat from the Battle of Caporetto, Lt Henry and his men leave Gorizia in their ambulances. They are headed towards Udine, along with troops and civilians, but the retreating stalls and leads to a stop and go situation that continues into the night. The following morning, Aymo picks up two girls in the retreat (FTA 170). Aymo tells Henry, "I can't understand them" (FTA 170). The girls are not speaking Italian. Aymo tells the girls to "Tell the Tenente your name and what you're doing here" (170). The girls cannot understand Aymo and are terrified. They "looked fiercely" at Lt Henry (170). This line is followed by the girl saying "something in a dialect I could not understand a word of" (170). However, in the manuscript, Hemingway wrote the dialect "sounded like gibberish" and then crossed that line out (383). This is a dialect that is completely unfamiliar to the men and the girls do not understand them. This is a foreign dialect. Lt Henry asks the girls "Sorella?" which is Italian for sister, and the girls smile and nod. It is

unclear if they fully understand the word or if Lt Henry's hand motions pointing to the two of them aided in understanding. The confusion continues as Aymo tries to explain to the girls that they will not be raped, that Aymo is a "good man" (170) and that there is no place for sex (171). The girls end up in tears, thinking that the men will rape them. In the end, Lt Henry asks if they are virgins, in Italian, and the girls seem cheered and "both girls nodded their heads and the elder said something in dialect" (171). Aymo responds that this is "all right" and the girls are cheered. They continue on the retreat with Lt Henry and his men until Lt Henry points down a road telling them to go, giving them money to aid in their retreat. These girls are important to the novel as they show the compassion of Lt Henry. They bring Catherine to his mind, as he seeks to protect them and wishes to protect Catherine, as well.

Branko Drekonja and Aleksander Potočnik explain that the scene with the sisters is "a scene of special interest for Slovene readers since it could represent the only contact between Hemingway's Lt Henry and local Slovene population" (201). They further state that Hemingway "mentions two girls that join Henry's crew during their retreat from Gorica [Gorizia]. They speak with a strange accent that neither Henry nor the other soldiers can understand. But he never pays any attention to their particular language, so we shall never know if they were speaking Slovene or Friulian" (20). That may be the case. This may be a mystery that will not be solved, but it is worth a reconsideration.

Perhaps the best way to consider the ethnicity of the sisters is to consider if historically they could have been Slovene. Slovenes were a prominent ethnicity along the Isonzo Front before the war began. In fact, many of the villages the Italians sought to "redeem" were villages populated entirely by Slovenes. According to Kranjc, "On the eve of the war, the Austrian authorities evacuated approximately 80,000 Slovene civilians from the vicinity of the Italian-Austrian border into the interior of the Empire, often to refugee camps...many of those who were not evacuated or chose to stay became displaced persons within Italy proper" (215). Thus, there were Slovenes who chose to stay within what became Italy during the war, choosing to stay in their homes rather than evacuate to a refugee camp. Drekonja and Potočnik tell of residents of the Slovene town of Kanal who chose to stay in Kanal for much of 1915, including Marija Bajt. The residents were eventually pushed out of the town, which would see fighting well into 1917 and is likely the location of Lt Henry's injury in 1917. In a town closer to Gorizia, it seems likely that Slovenes would stay as the fighting slowed in 1916 when Italians seized control and there was a reprieve from fighting under Italian occupation until the Battle of Caporetto in 1917. The town was safe enough that Lt Henry laughs off wearing his steel helmet in town and walks unafraid to the whore house and to the British hospital (FTA 24). Perhaps, then, if Slovenes were determined to

stay in Kanal, a town under much military attack in 1915, they would have stayed in Gorizia, a town that Lt Henry lives in. According to Drekonja and Potočnik, Marija wrote in her diary at the time, "Italian soldiers tried to persuade us to go to Italy and save our lives. But despite the danger nobody felt like leaving his place of birth that day" (155). In August of 1915, when the town was finally needing to be evacuated fully, Marija retreated into Italy (Drekonja 109-10). There remains, then, the distinct possibility that Slovene sisters living in or near Gorizia during the Italian occupation would have fled further into Italy.

Mark Thompson states that Slovenes were the ethnic majority in much of the land fought over along the Isonzo Front. According to Thompson, the lands awarded to Italy under the Treaty of London were "home to some 230,000 German-speaking Austrians and up to 750,000 Slovenes and Croats, far outnumbering the 650,000 native Italians" (31). Areas such as the Carso and the Bainsizza plateau were populated almost entirely by Slovenes. While Caporetto and areas such as Bovec may have been eventually evacuated, they were not all evacuated from the start, just as the towns of Kanal and Gorizia. Slovenes may still have been in and around Gorizia in 1917. The city of Trieste held a majority of Italian civilians, overshadowing the Slovenes nearly 4/1 (Thompson 100). However, the areas around Trieste had an ethnicity of 51% Slavic civilians. In these areas, Slovenes were used to living in Italian cities around Italian civilians. The idea of fleeing from Italians into a possible refugee camp in Austria may have seemed worse to many Slovene citizens. Thompson explains that the Italians saw no "cultural achievements" in the Slovenes and found that Slovenes communicated "in an incomprehensible tongue" (103). Over the course of the war, the Italians sought to force the Slovenes to "assimilate" through forced Italianization (104). For this to happen, Slovenes must have remained in some of the towns along the front. In the cities of Trieste and Gorizia Thompson estimates half of the city evacuated (133, 145). Those Slovenes who chose to evacuate went further into "the interior of Italy" where they could not understand any of the Italian language and often led separate and submissive lives (140). In fact, life was better for Slovenes who chose to stay in Italy under occupation than for those who evacuated into Austria (Thompson 145). The Slovenes who stayed in Gorizia and the surrounding areas had become accustomed to the life they lived. They had adjusted. The Italian army had not abused them. A new army was coming through. Despite fighting for Austria, many Slovenes were leaning towards independence and an ethnic identity, instead of leaning towards either empire. Slovenes would have had a fear that the Austrian and German armies would not treat them as well as they had been treated in the previous occupation. There would have been a fear of becoming collateral damage. Thus there would have been Slovenes in the retreat from Gorizia, making it possible the girls in Aymo's car were Slovene or Friuli. The Germans

had a reputation for fierceness along the front, so both ethnicities would have likely fled from them.

There is another set of young girls along the front towards the end of the war found in an unpublished manuscript. These two girls live in Roncade which “was a hot white town in the backwash of the June offensive” (“How Death Sought”). In a WWI report from the Red Cross, Major Guy Lowell writes, “The months of June and July [1918] were signalized by the great Austrian offensive and the successful Italian counteroffensive” (“WWI: Report” 5). Thus the Austrians had pushed past the Piave River, where the Italians had stopped after the retreat from Caporetto, and the Italians were able to push them back over the Piave and beyond. This put Roncade in the backwash of a June offensive that Hemingway himself would have experienced (Florczyk 67-8). Hemingway writes, “There was no one in Roncade except the town major and the two girls who ran the trattoria and cafe. Of course there were lots of other people...but all of them were going up toward the war or else coming back broken from the war” (“How Death Sought”). The two girls are alone in the town with one man who is not fighting in the war. In a second version of this short story, Hemingway reveals that the major, who is named Vergera, was “afraid to die.” He is a man who is using his position of power to avoid the war. Vergera has “pudgy fingers” and is “fat” (“How Death Sought”). He sits behind the lines admiring a knife he got from an Arditi and looking at grenades. He is controlled by the “maggots of fear” in his mind. The two girls sleep “together in one bed” even though “there were plenty of beds in the Albergo [hotel] but they were frightened of the guns” (“How Death Sought”). All three are afraid, but the girls choose to sleep together for protection and comfort. They are sisters, and they find comfort in one another. These two girls are Aymo’s virgins. The girls fled the area around Gorizia in the fall of 1917, following the Battle of Caporetto, and retreated along with the Italians. They found work in Roncade, perhaps through the lies they claim the town major has made to them. At the time of the retreat they did not speak Italian. The assumption must be made that the girls have learned Italian from October of 1917 to June of 1918, an achievable goal in a desperate situation. Their Italian would only need to be enough to converse with the Arditi briefly and to work in the trattoria.

One of the sisters is pregnant in Roncade, while both girls claim to be virgins in Gorizia. Here readers are given a look into Hemingway’s portrayal of two innocent lives sucked up into a retreat and an offensive. Leaving Gorizia as virgins, they seek safety further in Italy. Once there, they meet the town major. The pregnant sister claims the town major is the father of her child, though he is an adult and she is sixteen. She claims to have “loved no one,” and thus the idea is given that she did not have a choice in this sexual encounter. She fled Gorizia in fear of being raped. Lt Henry looked at her with compassion, and attempted to send her

to safety. However, the safety he sends them to is false and their worst fear comes to fruition. Hemingway has shown a progression in disillusionment similar to the progression in FTA. The sisters' lives are worth nothing to the Italians in leadership and politics. What should have been safety for them is death and destruction.

As the story continues, an Arditi passes through the town and speaks with the girls. The Arditi discerns that the girls were not willing sexual partners with the town major. Hemingway once described the Arditi as "volunteers organized partly from criminals saving time for little mistakes like murder and assault" ("The Woppian Way"). The description is fitting for the punishment the Arditi gives out. The Arditi goes up stairs to the major's bedroom, ties him up, and puts a grenade in his mouth. Thus, the Arditi, who is possibly a reformed criminal, saves the girls from the politician who is too afraid and fat to participate in a war he supports. Hemingway could not save the Slovene and Friuli civilians from the Italian government. Instead, the criminal soldier saved the Slovene girls from the rape of the Italian government.

The sisters could have been Friuli. However, Hemingway was familiar enough with Friulis that he was able to recognize what he felt were Friulian characteristics. In MF Hemingway described Gertrude Stein as having "beautiful eyes and a strong German-Jewish face that also could have been Friulano and she reminded me of a northern Italian peasant woman" (24). The manuscript for this portion exists in four versions—and each version uses "Friuliano" as a description for Stein. Hemingway was sure in this description. He was familiar with Friuli. Hemingway was familiar with several dialects in the area of northeastern Italy. In "Out of Season" he mentions a character speaking partially in "d'Ampezzo dialect and sometimes in Tyroler German dialect" (*The Complete Short Stories* 137). Hemingway took a trip to Italy in 1927 with Guy Hickock who recorded the both of them speaking with a priest "work[ing] hard at talking Italian instead of the San Marino dialect" (Trogon 191). Hemingway was aware of Friuli and of dialects in northeastern Italy, but he does not show his familiarity with the Slovene language. Their language was "gibberish" in his writing. They were the "other" in his writing.

These sisters are Slovenes who, like Marija Bajt, fled the oncoming battle in Gorizia further into Italy where they could avoid being in a refugee camp. Just as the war is not mentioned in "Big Two Hearted River," yet the war is essential to the story, Slovenes are in the background, forming an important part of the story. They are the ripples in the story that lead to the "other" in Hemingway's works. As the "other" in Hemingway's works, they are present but not accounted for.

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Slovenci in Friuli kot tisti drugi pri Hemingwayju

Ernest Hemingway je bil znan po svojem pisanju, ko je imel v mislih “teorije ledene gore”. Tako v njegovih delih najdemo globlje pomene in kontekste, ki se gibljejo pod površino. Njegov vojni roman *A Farewell to Arms* se odvija na soški fronti pred in po bitki pri Kobaridu v tem okolju, kar je v skladu z njegovo teorijo “ledene gore”, saj je postavil oba protagonista v okolje, ki zahteva pogled pod površino. Medtem ko se Italijani na površini zgodbe and torej lažje prepoznavni, se Slovenci in Friuli tisti, ki so prisotni pod površino and imajo globlji pomen. Slovenci in Friuli neposredno niso omenjeni, toda ker je bil Hemingway zgodovinsko natančen v tem romanu, sta obe etnični skupini postavljeni na fronto in kolektivno predstavljata tistega “Drugega” v Hemingwayjevih romanih, hkrati nevidnega in obenem kot pomemben del zgodbe.

Ključne besede: prva svetovna vojna, soška fronta, Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*, Slovenci, Friuli, italijanska fronta, Caporetto, Kobarid, Nick Adams

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Ideological Influences on the Reception of Mark Twain among Slovenians across the Atlantic

Janko Trupej

ABSTRACT

The article discusses the reception of Mark Twain and his works in serial publications by Slovenian immigrants in the United States of America. The analysis encompassed writings published in newspapers and magazines with different ideological orientations, from the beginning of the 20th century to mid-century. The article compares Twain's reception in left-wing and right-wing publications and furthermore discusses the extent to which the reception was affected by the contemporary political situation in the United States.

Key words: Mark Twain, reception, serial publications, ideology, Slovenians in the United States of America, American literature

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, literary studies have focused primarily on discussing authors and their works; only in the second part of the 20th century did interest expand to some extent; specifically, representatives of reader-response criticism began to argue that readers contributed to shaping the meaning of literary works, and therefore these scholars endeavoured to establish how readers experienced particular works of fiction (Pezdiric Bartol 195). Hans Robert Jauss asserted that readers should receive the same amount of attention as texts and their authors, since readers actively shape the ‘historical life’ of each literary work: when it is first published, readers compare it to other literary works, and later each new generation of readers reassesses its aesthetic value (“Literary” 7–9; cf. *Estetsko* 16). Literary theory thus started to focus on “the production of meanings within the reading process” (Baldick 212).

Mark Twain is one of the best-known literary figures in the United States of America. While for Edgar Allan Poe, another giant of world literature, the phrase *nemo propheta in patria* may be somewhat true even to the present day (Zupan 121), this never was the case with Twain. Throughout his lifetime, he was well-known, especially because of his travel writing, for instance the travelogues *Innocents Abroad* and *Roughing It*, which were extremely commercially successful (Messent 12). In the late 19th century, Twain was already regarded as one of the greatest American writers of realistic fiction, along with William Dean Howells and Henry James (Krieg 407). In the first half of the 20th century, some influential literary critics’ opinions about Twain’s oeuvre were somewhat more reserved; for instance, in the influential monograph *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*, Van Wyck Brooks discussed the reasons for Twain’s supposed artistic shortcomings, while Malcolm Cowley did not consider Twain to be as great a writer as Thomas Mann or Leo Tolstoy (180). This changed later, with Twain’s reputation largely resting on *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; there are even claims of a ‘hypercanonization’ of this novel (Arac vii), which is widely considered as one of *the* great American novels, along with works like *The Scarlet Letter*, *Moby Dick*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *The Grapes of Wrath*.¹

The present paper will discuss the historical reception of Mark Twain and his works by Slovenians on the other side of the Atlantic, by analysing writing

1 For instance, Jonathan Culler describes the novel as a “work which does as much as any other to define Americanness” (53), while Sandra M. Gustafson claims that *Huckleberry Finn* “represents the pre-political, natural innocence and camaraderie of Americans reclaimed from the anti-democratic corruptions of slavery” (34). The protagonist’s deliberation whether to help return the runaway slave Jim to his owner or to help him escape, which ends with *Huckleberry Finn* opting for the latter—despite thinking he would go to hell because of it—was even described as “arguably the most moral moment in American literature” by Robert Paul Lamb (482). See Grosman (157–62) for an overview of the novel’s reception in the United States.

about Twain in Slovenian immigrant print in the United States. The analysis encompassed Slovenian serial publications from the beginning of the 20th century, when a few Slovenian newspapers were already being published in the United States, to the mid-1950s; by that time many Slovenian newspapers had ceased publication. It will thus be established how several generations of Slovenian readers in the United States, with diverse ideological orientations, perceived Twain. Furthermore, the paper will shed light on the extent to which this author's reception was influenced by the contemporary socio-political situation.²

ANALYSIS OF THE CORPUS OF SERIAL PUBLICATIONS

News articles about Twain were published in both the oldest right-wing and left-wing Slovenian newspapers in the United States: *Amerikanski Slovenec* and *Glas naroda*, respectively. Before his death on 21 April 1910, the name 'Mark Twain' had appeared in 13 issues of the former and 42 issues of the latter serial publication. *Amerikanski Slovenec* reported on events in Twain's life, for instance the lavish celebration of his 70th birthday (5/1/1906, 4),³ his visit to Europe (26/7/1907, 7),⁴ etc. *Glas naroda* also reported on his travels (9/6/1903, 1; 7/11/1903, 2; 29/6/1904, 2; 21/6/1907, 1),⁵ his birthday celebrations (7/12/1905, 1; 2/12/1908, 1),⁶ his visit to the White House (29/11/1905, 1),⁷ etc. Both newspapers also ran articles on Twain's death. In *Amerikanski Slovenec* (29/4/1910, 1), there is a brief account of his life; the article concludes by asserting that Twain laboured intensively after he had to declare bankruptcy and was a millionaire at the time of his death.⁸ An article in *Glas naroda* (22/4/1910, 1) recounts some of the major events in Twain's life and lauds him as America's greatest humorist,⁹ while another article in the same newspaper (25/4/1910, 1) notes that, despite being world-renowned as a

2 The corpus for the analysis encompassed almost 1,000 individual issues of serial publications, i.e. all the serial publications published by Slovenian immigrants in the United States available on the portal *Digital Library of Slovenia*, which mentioned Twain or some of his major works.

3 N.N. "Mark Twain." *Amerikanski Slovenec*, 5/1/1906, p. 4.

4 N.N. "Mark Twain." *Amerikanski Slovenec*, 26/7/1907, p. 7.

5 N.N. "Mark Twain se [sic] naveličal Amerike." *Glas naroda*, 9/6/1903, p. 1. | N.N. "Evropejske in druge vesti." *Glas naroda*, 7/11/1903, p. 2. | N.N. "Napulj." *Glas naroda*, 29/6/1904, p. 2. | N.N. "Mark Twain v Londonu." *Glas naroda*, 21/6/1907, p. 1.

6 N.N. "Mark Twainov rojstni dan." *Glas naroda*, 7/12/1905, p. 1. | N.N. "Mark Twain star 73 let." *Glas naroda*, 2/12/1908, 1.

7 N.N. "Mark Twain, predsednikov gost." *Glas naroda*, 29/11/1905, p. 1.

8 N.N. "Dva slavna pisatelja umrla." *Amerikanski Slovenec*, 29/4/1910, p. 1.

9 N.N. "Mark Twain umrl. Najboljši humorist." *Glas naroda*, 22/4/1910, p. 1.

humorist, Twain also wrote a philosophical text on the true nature of humankind, entitled “What is Man?”¹⁰

In the decade after Twain’s death, only a few notable articles about him were published in Slovenian serial publications in the United States. In the Catholic newspaper *Glasilo K.S.K. jednote* (12/5/1915, 5), an article describing Twain’s private audience with Emperor Franz Josef in Vienna claims that the monarch was very kind and generous to the greatest American humorist—support for Austria-Hungary during the Great War is clearly evident.¹¹ An article published in *Glas naroda* (16/10/1917, 4) uses Twain’s image to express a rather different sentiment. The anonymous author asserts that no man of letters has ever depicted human weakness better than Twain, and hails him as a prophetic figure because he described the circumstances that cause wars, which could also be applied to the situation leading up to World War I. The article ends on a political note, i.e. by expressly blaming the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the German Empire for the outbreak of the war.¹² An article published in the progressive newspaper *Enakopravnost* (30/7/1920, 2)¹³ after the war can be perceived as criticism of Twain: it discusses the recently published monograph entitled *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*, in which Van Wyck Brooks argues that Twain never reached full artistic maturity because he somewhat conformed to the expectations of society—and that deep down he felt guilty for doing so.

Several articles on Twain in the inter-war period were published in more than one newspaper—even in newspapers with different ideological orientations. In one such article, first published in *Glasilo K.S.K. jednote* (11/11/1925, 6) and next year also in *Glas naroda* (5/11/1926, 2), Twain’s life is recounted, it is asserted that *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* are his best works and furthermore that in some of his writings there is shrewd observation and common sense under the guise of humour and superficiality.¹⁴ Another article published in *Glas naroda* (2/5/1928, 2), *Prosveta* (5/5/1928, 3) and *Amerikanski Slovenec* (9/5/1928, 3) starts by claiming that recently published letters of Twain’s reveal him “not as a light-minded optimist, as he was perceived by the average reader, but as a philosophic writer whose strongly developed sense of humour mastered his deep insight into the drama of life”¹⁵. After a description of his life and

10 N.N. “Skrivnost humorista Mark [sic] Twaina.” , 25/4/1910, p. 1.

11 N.N. “Mark Twain v [sic] avdijenci pri avstrijskem cesarju.” *Glasilo K.S.K. jednote*, 12/5/1915, p. 5.

12 N.N. “Mark Twain kot prerok.” *Glas naroda*, 16/10/1917, p. 4.

13 N.N. “Mark Twainova žaloigra.” *Enakopravnost*, 30/7/1920, p. 2.

14 N.N. “Dne 30. novembra, 1835 — Rojstvo Mark Twain-a.” *Glasilo K.S.K. jednote*, 11/11/1925, p. 6. / N.N. “Obletnice znamenitih Amerikancev.” *Glas naroda*, 5/11/1926, 2.

15 All quotations originally in Slovenian were translated into English by the author of the present paper.

his best known works, the claim is made that in addition to being humorist, Twain was a first-class novelist and that *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* are among the most beautiful examples of American literature.¹⁶ In an article published in both *Enakopravnost* and *Glas naroda* on the very same day (18/12/1935, 2), an author writing under the pseudonym of F.L.I.S. notes that in the United States there exists a debate about Twain's significance: some see him first and foremost as a humorist, while others find more value in his satirical writings, in which he criticized contemporary American society for its lack of tolerance and social justice. F.L.I.S. asserts that works like *The Mysterious Stranger*, *The Gilded Age* and "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg" reflect Twain's feeling of living in a senseless world. The article ends with a quotation from *Mark Twain's Notebook*.¹⁷ In the original, the passage reads as follows: "Europe for a thousand years has existed merely for the advantage of half a dozen seventh-rate families called Monarchs, and some hundreds of riffraff sarcastically called Nobles" (195).

Perhaps the most ideologically charged of all the articles about Twain ever published in *Glas naroda* (2/12/1935, 2) commemorated the 100th anniversary of the writer's birth. Peter Zgaga¹⁸ starts by proclaiming Twain to be the greatest American humorist, who had faith in humanity and democracy, opposed war, and was a true American patriot. The article goes on to assert that Twain was against the Philippine-American War, condemned Belgian atrocities committed in the Congo, and was one of the greatest opponents of tsarist Russia. The main part of the text is devoted to Twain's prose poem "The War Prayer", which was written in 1905, but published only after the writer's death. Zgaga claims that with this masterpiece Twain condemned the hypocrisy of those who send young men to be butchered in the name of divine justice, all the while claiming to be *instruments of God* and placing all the blame on the opposing side. The author of the article further asserts that, during World War I, this prayer was recited by imperialists in all the participating countries, and that in 1935 it is being recited by Mussolini, who has the support of the Italian clergy. The article concludes with a Slovenian translation of the poem¹⁹.

Twain was sometimes featured in the socialist newspaper *Proletarec*. One such article (17/4/1917, 4), mentions that Twain set up a publishing house for both

16 N.N. "Mark Twain." *Glas naroda*, 2/5/1928, p. 3. / F.L.I.S. "Mark Twain." *Prosveta*, 5/5/1928, p. 3. / N.N. "Mark Twain." *Amerikanski Slovenec*, 9/5/1928, p. 3. The author is credited only in *Prosveta*.

17 N.N. "Stoletnica rojstva Mark [sic] Twain-a." *Enakopravnost*, 18/12/1935, p. 2. / N.N. "Stoletnica rojstva Mark [sic] Twaina." *Glas naroda*, 18/12/1935, p. 2.

18 This was the pseudonym used by publicist Janez Trček (1891–1942), who immigrated to New York in 1912. He soon started contributing to the newspaper *Glas naroda* and became its editor-in-chief in 1916; he held this position until his death (Bajec).

19 Zgaga, Peter. "Mark Twain." *Glas naroda*, 2/12/1935, p. 2. The original version of the poem is available online: <https://warprayer.org/>

his own works and those by other authors (for instance, he published the *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*), that he eventually had to declare bankruptcy, but by giving public performances and by writing more works, he regained his fortune. The anonymous author of the article concludes on a bitter note, claiming that Twain could not have accomplished so much if he had been Slovenian, since “it was better to sweep the streets than to write in Slovenian”²⁰. A post-war article entitled “The Path to a Socialist Society” (27/1/1921, 3) references the novel *The Gilded Age*, which Twain co-authored with Charles Dudley Warner.²¹ A note accompanying the translation of the short story “Lionizing Murderers” (26/7/1928, 5) states that Twain ridiculed high society and that he completely saw through the mentality of the American people, whom he thrashed with his vicious satire. Furthermore, the anonymous author of the text proclaims the contemporary general public to be no different from that of Twain’s era.²²

Over the decades, Twain was perhaps featured most prominently in *Prosveta*, a newspaper that also had clear socialist leanings. In an article on his life (1/2/1927, 4), it is noted that in his later works, Twain wrote satires about Christianity, and it is asserted that in his humour there is something serious and ethical; furthermore, his works are compared to those of two other giants of world literature: the anonymous author of the article claims that deep down Twain was melancholic like Cervantes and that, like Molière, he abhorred mendacity, dishonesty and hypocrisy.²³ An author with the initials Fr. B. accompanies a few anecdotes about Twain (19/8/1929, 3) with a biographical note describing him as an “always laughing jovial fellow, who only sees the funny side of life and who can instantly infuse the most serious things with a portion of humour, grotesque and comicality”.²⁴ An anonymous article (13/12/1935, 2) published after the centennial of Twain’s birth criticizes American society for allegedly seeing him only as a great humorist, but suppressing the real Twain: a freethinker and friend to organized workers.²⁵ Another anonymous article (27/11/1935, 4) claims that Twain is the greatest American humorist, who made a name for himself with his unsurpassed satire. The article continues with the assertion that Twain was a harsh critic of organized religion—something which many of his biographers tend to either cri-

20 N.N. “Delavstvo ima rešitev samo v sebi.” *Proletarec*, 17/4/1917, p. 4.

21 N.N. “Koraki v socialistično družbo.” *Proletarec*, 27/1/1921, pp. 2–3.

22 N.N. “Poveličavanje morilcev.” *Proletarec*, 26/7/1928, pp. 5–6.

23 N.N. “Mark Twain.” *Prosveta*, 1/2/1927, p. 4.

24 Fr. B. “Par ameriških humoresk.” *Prosveta*, 19/8/1929, p. 3. The same article had been previously published on Slovenian territory, i.e. in: N.N. “Par ameriških humoresk.” *Življenje in svet*, 2/8/1929, pp. 128–29.

25 N.N. “Dr. Breasted bo živel.” *Prosveta*, 13/12/1935, p. 2.

tique or withhold from the public. Additionally, this article states that America embraced Twain the humorist, but overlooked Twain the freethinker; his views on religion are illustrated by quoting a slightly adapted passage from *The Mysterious Stranger*, which in the original reads as follows:²⁶

[...] God who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; [...] who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man, instead of honorably placing it where it belongs, upon himself; and finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor, abused slave to worship him! (n.p.)

Ivan Molek²⁷ (3/11/1937, 4) reports that Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* has been recently banned in Brazil because the censor there deemed the novel to be communist propaganda.²⁸ The author of the article ridicules this, stating that Twain was not even aware of the existence of communism or Bolshevism, but that indeed he was a freethinker and was highly critical of Russian tsarism, as well as opposed to slavery, tyranny and superstition. Molek goes on to assert that in totalitarian states and in those leaning towards totalitarianism, anybody in favour of true democracy and free thought is labelled a communist.²⁹ In a notable post-war article (15/12/1947, 3), a writer under the pseudonym of ALPA prefaces an in-depth review of the recently published translation of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by stating the following about Twain:

He was resented because of what he said and wrote. The bureaucratic moralizers representing the American public opinion sensed that he was a person with an unadapted mind of his own. That is to say that as a young man Twain did not have the desire to become part of the petty bourgeoisie, which was sustained by money, philistinism and false authority. [...] Twain is regarded as one of the world's greatest humorists. His irony only seldom falls into the realm of sarcasm, and his humour nowadays seems innocent, covered by a thin layer of romantic realism. However, his lying moral contemporaries rightly reproached him with a revolutionary tendency, which threatened to destroy the 'solid' American mentality built upon the patrician petty bourgeoisie, global trade and the Dollar.

26 N.N. "Mark Twain." *Prosveta*, 27/11/1935, p. 4.

27 Ivan Molek (1882–1962) was a writer and publicist, who immigrated to the United States in 1900. He published articles in many left-wing Slovenian serial publications, and served as the editor-in-chief of the newspapers *Proletarec* and *Prosveta*. His writing had a clear ideological agenda: promoting Marxism (Pirjevec).

28 This is later also reported in *Cankarjev glasnik* (71).

29 Molek, Ivan. "Malo tega in onega." *Prosveta*, 3/11/1937, p. 4.

The reviewer then goes on to describe and interpret the plot of the novel, claiming that Twain intended to expose the education system of the provincial petty bourgeoisie, as well as to ridicule the values of the capitalist system. Furthermore, ALPA praises the translation, but criticizes the illustrations, which he or she deems way too comical for a text that is critical of society.³⁰

The monthly *Mladinski list* also published a few lengthy articles on Twain (written in English), for instance one entitled “How Mark Twain Wrote Huckleberry [sic] Finn” by American journalist and author James O’Donnell Bennett (150–51). In another notable article entitled “Some Authors You Should Know”, an anonymous author claims that Twain never reached his full artistic potential because he was held back by his wife and daughters—the following critical account of the writer is given:

America does not honor thinkers, philosophers, or at least it didn’t in Twain’s day. So the heavy-hearted man hid under a shell of humor. Only occasionally did he break through and “turn himself loose,” but when he did he produced work that will last as long as the English language is written. He wrote many volumes, but most of them will be forgotten at a time when every boy and man, too, is still reading “Huckleberry Finn” and thousands of others, in their study of this strange, sad man, will read his bitterly satirical “What is Man” and “The Mysterious Stranger.” [...] God only knows how much Twain might have enriched American literature if he had not been a coward, afraid of his wife, afraid of the disapproval of his neighbors, afraid to “be himself.” [...] If he could only have been free to write what he wanted, we say! Well, perhaps, “Huckleberry Finn” is enough to ask of any man. By all means, every child should read it. There are still libraries that are “simply too nice” to permit it on their shelves, but the book is widely printed and can be procured everywhere. (280)

Another notable article in the same magazine states that Twain participated in the Civil War on the Confederate side, but later felt guilty for having fought to uphold slavery and tried to make up for it by being benevolent towards black people and even paying the tuition for a black student at Yale University. The article relates that, as a young man, Twain joined the printer’s union, that he understood the workers’ point of view and was in favour of unionization throughout his life. The following is also stated:

His friend, William Dean [Howells] said, “His mind and soul were with those who do the hard work of the world in fear of those who give them a chance for their livelihoods and underpay them all they can . . . He saw . . . THAT IN THE UNION WAS THE WORKINGMAN’S ONLY HOPE OF STANDING

30 ALPA. “Pustolovščine Toma Sawyera [sic].” *Prosveta*, 15/12/1947, p. 3.

UP LIKE A MAN AGAINST MONEY AND THE POWER OF IT .” [...] In all of his works, Mark Twain preached the equality of man and democracy. Even in those books that were considered entirely humorous, there was much beneath the surface to make the reader think. [...] Mark Twain was one of those great men who live once in every era of human history, it seems. (7; capitalization in the original newspaper article)³¹

Furthermore, in an article entitled ‘Youth and Democracy’, *Mladinski list’s* editor-in-chief Ivan Molek hails Twain as the greatest American satirist and humorist, as well as a great democrat, freethinker and humanitarian, who should be seen as a role-model by Slovenian-American youth (4).

Although many Slovenian newspapers continued to exist after the end of World War II, Twain is rarely mentioned, and if he is, political sentiments are expressed even less frequently. *Ameriška domovina* (26/4/1946, 6), for instance, states that “Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn are American traditions, as American as apple pie or corn bread”³². In *Zarja* the following is written: “His typical boys’ stories made him very famous. Among his masterpieces are the adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, which are enjoyed by young and old alike” (349). In *Enakopravnost* (21/2/1949, 2), it is mentioned that a Slovenian translation of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has been published;³³ another article in the same newspaper (16/6/1949, 2) compares this novel and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* to Howard Fast’s novel *Citizen Tom Paine* (which also criticizes society),³⁴ while in a later article in *Enakopravnost* (14/11/1956, 2), Twain’s hometown of Hannibal is described as a bigger tourist attraction than Hawaii.³⁵

CONCLUSION

The analysis showed the many different stages in the ‘historical life’ of Mark Twain and his works among Slovenian immigrants in the United States. While the articles published during Twain’s lifetime almost exclusively reported on the events in his life, his posthumous reception was heavily influenced by the ideological orientation of the serial publication in which Twain and/or his works were discussed.

31 For the context of the quoted passage, see Howells (38).

32 N.N. “St. Mary’s Day.” *Ameriška domovina*, 26/4/1946, p. 6.

33 N.N. “Slovenska knjiga v letu 1948.” *Enakopravnost*, 21/2/1949, p. 2.

34 Željeznov, Dušan. “Fastov Tom Paine.” *Enakopravnost*, 16/6/1949, p. 2. This article had been previously published on Slovenian territory, i.e. in: Željeznov, Dušan. “Fastov Tom Paine.” *Slovenski poročevalac*, 15/5/1949, p. 3. Dušan Željeznov (1927–1995) was a publicist and translator who wrote extensively about literature and translated several works from Russian and Italian (Pibernik).

35 N.N. “Mark Twainov Hannibal, Missouri.” *Enakopravnost*, 14/11/1956, p. 2.

Although on a few occasions the same article was published in both conservative and liberal newspapers, as early as World War I, for instance, Twain's image was used to express support for the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Catholic newspaper *Glasilo K.S.K. jednote* and to strongly condemn the Central Powers in the left-wing newspaper *Glas naroda*.

In right-leaning publications, Twain was seldom discussed and was primarily presented as a great and commercially successful humorist. He was featured significantly more frequently and discussed with more depth in left-leaning publications, where he was presented, above all, as a progressive advocate for social justice / social critic, who condemned capitalist and imperialist exploitation, racism, elitism, organized religion, etc. This is true especially for the magazine *Mladinski list* and the newspapers *Proletarec* and *Prosveta*, in all of which several articles about Twain have a clear socialist agenda.

After the Second Red Scare began in 1947 and especially after the onset of McCarthyism in 1950, articles about Twain began to be published far less often and for the most part had no clear ideological agenda, since during that time it was dangerous to express sentiments that could be interpreted as socialist or communist in sympathy. The fact that this is the case even for Slovenian immigrant serial publications, which were published in a foreign language and had limited circulation, is a good example of how the contemporary political situation in the United States substantially influenced the reception of certain literary works and their authors.

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Ideološki vplivi na recepcijo Marka Twaina med Slovenci na drugi strani Atlantika

Članek obravnava recepcijo Marka Twaina in njegovih del v serijskih publikacijah slovenskih priseljencev v Združenih državah Amerike. Analiza je zajemala zapise, objavljene v časopisih in revijah z različnimi ideološkimi usmeritvami od začetka do sredine 20. stoletja. Članek primerja Twainovo recepcijo v levo usmerjenih in desno usmerjenih publikacijah ter obravnava tudi vprašanje, v kolikšni meri so na recepcijo vplivale sodobne politične razmere v ZDA.

Ključne besede: Mark Twain, recepcija, serijske publikacije, ideologija, Slovenci v ZDA, ameriška književnost

“Tell him anyway”: Zu Uwe Timms Roman *Ikarien*

Špela Virant

ABSTRACT

Der Roman *Ikarien* (2017) von Uwe Timm ist in Deutschland der Nachkriegszeit verortet, wo Wagner einem jungen amerikanischen Offizier die Lebensgeschichte des Eugenikers Alfred Ploetz erzählt. Obwohl Timm einen historischen Stoff verarbeitet, werden im Roman aktuelle und philosophische Themen angesprochen. Timm verfolgt dabei Ideen, Denkmuster und Denkfehler, die zu Gewalt, Rassismus und Genozid führen können. Er entwickelt aber auch literarische Gegenbilder dazu. Da sich Timm bereits seit Jahrzehnten in seinen Werken mit diesen Themen beschäftigt, wird der Roman *Ikarien* im Kontext seines Œuvres und der Geschichte von Utopien gestellt, auf die schon der Romantitel verweist.¹

Schlüsselwörter: zeitgenössische deutschsprachige Literatur, Uwe Timm, *Ikarien*, *Morennga*, Eugenik, Utopie

1 Der Beitrag ist im Rahmen des Forschungsprogramms Interkulturelle literaturwissenschaftliche Studien (Nr. P6-0265) entstanden, das von der Slowenischen Forschungsagentur aus öffentlichen Mitteln finanziert wird.

„Wagner: Verzeiht! Es ist ein groß Ergetzen,
 Sich in den Geist der Zeiten zu versetzen,
 Zu schauen wie vor uns ein weiser Mann gedacht,
 Und wie wir's dann zuletzt so herrlich weit gebracht.“
 (Goethe 2007: 373)

Es ist ein anderer Wagner, der in Uwe Timms Roman *Ikarien* (2017) über die Gedanken des Wissenschaftlers, des Eugenikers, Alfred Ploetz erzählt und mit seiner Erzählung zeigt, dass Wissenschaft nicht mit Weisheit verwechselt werden darf. Sein Zuhörer ist Michael Hansen, ein junger amerikanischer Offizier deutscher Herkunft, der ihn in den ersten Wochen nach dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs in den Trümmern der zerstörten deutschen Städte ausfindig macht und die Aufgabe bekommt, ihn zu verhören. Sicherlich war es auch ein Verdienst von Wissenschaftlern wie Alfred Ploetz, dass die Nationalsozialisten es so erschreckend „weit gebracht“ hatten, doch ist Timms *Ikarien* weit mehr als nur ein historischer und biographischer Roman,² denn er stellt, im Subtext, die Frage, wie weit wir es heute gebracht haben und wie weit wir es noch bringen werden, wenn wir so weitermachen. Wie andere wichtige Kunstwerke, lässt auch dieser Roman sich nicht mit einer simplen Etikettierung erfassen. Neben Elementen des historischen, biographischen, sozialkritischen und politischen Romans, die sich dem Text nicht absprechen lassen, ist es auch oder gar vor allem – so die These, die im Folgenden ausgeführt werden soll – ein philosophischer Roman, da er spezifische Denkweisen untersucht, nach ihren Quellen forscht und ihre Folgen verbildlicht. Um diese Aspekte besser darzustellen, soll *Ikarien* zunächst im Kontext von Timms Œuvre verortet werden, denn die Grundfragen, die dieser Roman stellt, begleiten Timm, wie Christine Setzwein berichtet, bereits seit Jahrzehnten:

Die Idee zu „Ikarien“ hatte Timm schon seit 1978, als er „Morenga“ abgeschlossen hatte. Sein Schwiegervater, der älteste Sohn von Alfred Ploetz, habe viel erzählt von seinem Vater. Und die Frage, die Timm schon seit „Morenga“ umtrieb, stellte sich nun auch bei der Beschäftigung mit dem Eugeniker: „Woher kommt dieser Vernichtungswille? Und wie kann ein so begabter und idealistisch friedfertiger Mensch so abdriften ins rassistische Denken?“ (Setzwein 2018)

Der Roman *Morenga*, 1978 erschienen, gilt als erster deutschsprachiger postkolonialer Roman, der die zögerliche Aufarbeitung des wilhelmini-

2 Vgl. z.B. Rainer Moritz (2017), der dem Roman, weil er sich dem ihm zugeschriebenen Genre eines biographischen Romans nicht fügt, eine „Masse an Fakten“ und „Stofffülle“ vorwirft. Carsten Otte (2017) schätzt zwar das Buch, bezeichnet es jedoch als „ein erschreckend aktuelles Geschichtsbuch“ und fokussiert sich vor allem auf die historischen Aspekte des Romans.

schen Kolonialismus einleitete und dessen Qualität und Bedeutung von der Literaturwissenschaft erst relativ spät anerkannt wurde.³ Der Roman, der verschiedene Geschichten und Diskursformen collagiert,⁴ erzählt die Geschichte des Veterinärs Gottschalk und durch sie die Geschichte des Aufstands der Nama und der Herero gegen die deutschen Besatzer in Deutsch-Südwestafrika in den Jahren zwischen 1904 und 1907, der mit einem Genozid an ihnen endete. Schon in diesem Roman greift Timm weit zurück ins 19. Jahrhundert und erzählt skurrile Geschichten über einzelne Abenteurer, die das Land bereisten, missionierten, geschäftlich ausbeuteten oder fotografierten – noch vor der Gründung der Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft und den Verbrechen der Schutztruppe, die Gottschalk in Taten- und Sprachlosigkeit versetzen. Doch bevor es soweit ist, lässt Timm ihn in sein Tagebuch die Fragen schreiben, die sich angesichts eines jeden Völkermords seit Beginn der Neuzeit von neuem stellen:

Wie kommt es zur Tötung? Wie können Menschen andere erschießen oder erhängen? Und wie können andere zusehen wie auf einem Jahrmarkt? Was erzeugt diese Teilnahmslosigkeit und darunter diesen fürchterlichen Haß? Vielleicht ist etwas in ihnen, was ihnen selbst hassenswert ist, ein Teil ungelebten Lebens. Was tötet das ab, das Mitfühlen? (Timm 2010: 388)

Der Roman *Morenga* versucht von Anfang an mögliche Antworten auf diese Fragen zu finden, noch bevor Gottschalk sie expliziert, ungeachtet der Gefahr, dass es womöglich keine Antworten gibt. Die Fiktion ist hier der Raum, um mögliche Antworten durchzuspielen.

Die erste mögliche Antwort bezieht sich auf die finanziellen Interessen, die zwar die Gründung der Kolonialgesellschaften erklären mögen, im Individuellen jedoch unzureichend erscheinen, wie die Geschichte von Klügge es zeigt, dem Unternehmer, der mit einem riesengroßen Fass Brandwein durchs Land zieht: „Er

3 Manfred Durzak vergleicht Timms Roman *Morenga* mit dem 25 Jahre später erschienenen Roman *Herero* (2003) von Gerhard Seyfried und stellt fest: „Herero behauptet sich höchstens als monumentale Fussnote im Vergleich zu *Morenga*.“ (Durzak 2007: 47)

4 Elke Frederiksen beschreibt seine Erzähltechnik sehr genau: „The encounter of these very different cultures (German and African) finds expression in an unusual narrative process, which presents us with a multi-perspective montage of fiction and nonfiction. Documentary reports by the General Staff, telegrams, letters, quotes from colonial memoirs share space with fictional diary entries, geographical and ethnic reports, as well as tales, legends and myths (of the Namas). This montage technique skillfully integrates imagined and authentic text components. Historical documents (identified by precise bibliographical notations) and fictitious elements, nevertheless, blend to such an extent that they cannot always be differentiated. The result is a historical novel, which – while utilizing a de-centered narrative – rewrites the tradition of German colonial novels and succeeds in breaking open hierarchical structures by confronting the reader with widely differing perspectives.“ (Frederiksen 2013: 266)

wollte Geld verdienen, und zwar viel. Das Merkwürdige war, daß er dabei nicht daran dachte, was er mit dem Geld einmal machen würde.“ (Timm 2010: 188) Auch später, als er dann doch Vorstellungen entwickelt, was er machen könnte, kann er „sich selbst mit den genannten Plänen nicht in Verbindung“ (214) bringen und er wird sie auch nie realisieren. So unreflektiert, wie Klügge das Gebot des Kapitalismus, unbedingt Profit zu erwirtschaften, übernimmt, übernehmen andere das alttestamentarische Gebot, sich die Erde untertan zu machen (1.Mose 1,28) – „Jonker und seine Männer bezogen das auf die Weidegebiete der Herero“ (Timm 2010: 199) –, oder die militaristische Prämisse, „daß die Hottentotten die Todfeinde waren“ (375). Als Gottschalk auf den Fragen nach den Ursachen insistiert, wird er abgewiesen, es seien „Sachzwänge, unbeeinflussbar vom einzelnen“ (ebd.). Diese Gebote werden zwar von Gottschalk und einigen anderen Figuren zeitweise angezweifelt, von den meisten jedoch unhinterfragt befolgt. Das Befolgen dieser Gebote, durch welches einerseits die Illusion eines stabil geordneten Lebens und überlegener Zivilisiertheit genährt wird, führt andererseits zum Verlust der Lebensfreude und dem Gefühl eines „ungelebten Lebens“. Wenn die derart „zivilisierten“ oder selbstverstümmelten Kolonialisten auf Menschen treffen, bei denen sie die Lebenslust zu beobachten meinen, die sie sich selbst versagen, entwickeln sie Hass aus einer Art Neid. So könnte die suggerierte sozialpsychologische Erklärung zusammengefasst werden. Die erwähnten Gebote der „Zivilisation“, in denen sich kapitalistische Ideologie, Militarismus und religiöse Dogmen verschränken, wurden seit der frühen Neuzeit entwickelt und eingesetzt, um den Kolonialismus und Paternalismus zu rechtfertigen. Sie prägen zum Teil bis heute die Beziehungen der sogenannten Entwickelten zum Rest der Welt, obwohl sie von post- und dekolonialen Theorien bereits dekonstruiert wurden. Doch in der Figur Gottschalks kündigt sich eine weitere Frage an, die sich in den Diskussionen um die Nach-Postmoderne zwar oft stellt, jedoch mit Vorsicht behandelt wird: die Frage nach der Zukunft, nach neuen Denkweisen, Visionen und Utopien.

Gottschalk wehrt den Vorwurf, er habe mit seiner Arbeit die Kolonialherren bei dem Völkermord unterstützt, mit dem Verweis auf eine Zukunft ab, in der seine Erkenntnisse „allen Menschen in diesem Lande zugute kommen würden. Irgendwann. Eben. Aber wann war das, dieses Irgendwann?“ (Timm 2010: 386) Als Wissenschaftler und Erfinder vertritt er hier die Idee eines stätigen Fortschritts in eine offene Zukunft, der verallgemeinernd „allen Menschen“ Gutes bringen wird. Ebenfalls verlangt er nach neuen Denkweisen: „Man muß etwas Neues denken, etwas ganz anderes zu dem, wie man selbst lebt.“ (376) Es ist eine Forderung nach Utopie, die sich in Gottschalks Worten artikuliert, nach Ideen, die im Leben, wie es hier und jetzt gelebt wird, keinen Platz haben. Doch es ist ihm nicht möglich, sich für den politischen Aktivismus und revolutionäre

Visionen zu begeistern, die den Einzelnen ausblenden. In Gesprächen mit dem zukunftsorientierten und Technik-begeisterten Leutnant Elschner erklärt er wiederholt seine Ansichten: „Elschner hatte einmal gelegentlich zu Gottschalk gesagt: Der einzelne ist nichts. Der einzelne ist alles, hatte Gottschalk geantwortet.“ (386) „Dagegen sagte Gottschalk, es komme gerade auf den einzelnen an, auf ihn ganz allein.“ (375) Bald danach kündigt er den Dienst bei der Schutztruppe, kehrt nach Deutschland zurück, wird Professor und Ballonfahrer.

Gottschalks Betonung des Einzelnen lässt eine innere Logik erahnen, nach der es plausibel ist, dass er sich von allen Welteroberungs- und Weltrettungsversuchen abwendet und seine eigene individuelle Entwicklung verfolgt. In diesem Sinne erscheint auch die Interpretation von Stefan Neuhaus folgerichtig:

Ohne dass dem Leser Innensicht in die Figur gewährt wird, lässt sich nachvollziehen, wie Gottschalks Position erodiert, seine bisherigen Vorstellungen nach und nach außer Kraft gesetzt werden. Daran ist nichts Negatives, im Gegenteil. Es stellt sich heraus, dass dies die Herausbildung einer eigenen, individuellen Identität erst ermöglicht. Dafür steht der Schluss, die Ballonfahrt Gottschalks nach seiner Rückkehr aus Afrika: Er wird hier symbolisch in Freiheit gesetzt. (Neuhaus 2004: 88–89)

Doch was hier aus der Perspektive einer konsistenten Figurenentwicklung im Kontext des Romans wie auch im Kontext der deutschsprachigen Literatur der 1970er Jahre mit ihrem deklarierten Rückzug ins Private überzeugend erscheint, reicht nicht aus für eine Auslegung des gesamten Romans und schon gar nicht für die Verdeutlichung von Timms poetologischer Position. Der Text ist zu komplex und die gestellten Fragen zu schwerwiegend, als dass sie sich in einem Ballon, einer resignativen Selbstverwirklichung, „aufheben“ ließen. Wenn Gottschalk dem Genozid nichts als Ballonfahren entgegensetzen kann, gilt das nicht für Timms Poetik. Julia Schöll untersucht Timms poetologische Schriften und stellt fest: „Von der Position, dass Literatur die Welt verändert – was eine gewisse Machtposition des Autors impliziert –, rückt Uwe Timm in späteren poetologischen Entwürfen explizit ab.“ (Schöll 2012: 30) Die spätere Position fasst sie zusammen: „Der Mensch, der die Welt verändern möchte, muss zunächst seine Wahrnehmung verändern; darin besteht der utopische und humanistische gesellschaftliche Beitrag, den Literatur zu leisten imstande ist.“ (Schöll 2012: 32)

Gottschalks Ballonfahrt ermöglicht einen Perspektivwechsel, gewährt einen neuen Ausblick und eine veränderte Wahrnehmung der Welt. Während sich Leutnant Elschner für Aeroplane begeistert, die bereits einige Jahre später im Ersten Weltkrieg einen entscheidenden militärischen Vorteil durch Luftaufklärung sichern werden, ist die Ballonfahrt ein friedlicher Versuch, durch

Distanz und Übersicht, Einblick und Erkenntnis zu gewinnen. *Ikarien*, die vier Jahrzehnte gereifte Fortsetzung der Thematik von *Morenga*, ist in gewisser Weise ein poetischer – aber keineswegs utopischer – Bericht über die so gewonnenen Erkenntnisse.

Wenn auch *Morenga* auf die Frage, warum potentiell genozidale Systeme fortbestehen können, mit dem Verweis auf die durch kollektive Frustrationen entwickelten Verhaltensweisen einerseits und das Zusammenspiel partieller, individueller Interessen andererseits mögliche Antworten anbietet, wird die Frage nach den Ursachen des Scheiterns bereits angedachter Alternativen, nach denen sich Gottschalk umsieht, erst in *Ikarien* gestellt.

Es liegt eine erschütternde Klarheit und Plausibilität in der Art, wie Uwe Timm die Geschichte einer Idee, deren Träger die Romanfigur Alfred Ploetz ist, erzählt. Der junge Ploetz begeistert sich, auf seiner Suche nach sozialer Gerechtigkeit, über marxistische Ideen, besucht in den USA die von Étienne Cabet gegründete Gemeinschaft der Ikarier, bemerkt ihr Scheitern und kommt im Grübeln über die Gründe ihres Scheiterns zu dem Schluss, dass das gesellschaftliche Konzept der *égalité* zwar gut sei, die Menschen davon aber wegen ihrer unterschiedlichen körperlichen und geistigen Voraussetzungen nicht gleichermaßen profitieren können, weshalb es notwendig sei, sie, die Menschen, der Idee anzupassen und sie, durch das Projekt der Eugenik, biologisch auf einer höheren Entwicklungsstufe einander möglichst anzugleichen. Ploetz hat Anlagen für eine tragische Figur, die Gutes will und Böses tut. Die Figur regt zum Nachdenken über den tragischen Irrtum an, also über den Fehler, der eine schöne Utopie in grausame Realität umschlagen lässt. Wird dabei die Geschichte der Utopien beachtet, so zeigt sich die individuelle Problematik der Figur Ploetz als Konsequenz von einer ganzen Reihe von Verschiebungen und Fehlentwicklungen im europäischen neuzeitlichen Denken über eine ideale Gesellschaftsordnung.

Der Begriff Utopie, der von Thomas Morus geprägt wurde, ist, so Thomas Schölderle in seiner übersichtlichen Studie *Geschichte der Utopie* (2012), „die Bezeichnung für ein literarisches Genre, später ein allgemein gebräuchlicher Begriff, letztlich ein vieldeutiges Schlagwort.“ (Schölderle 2012: 9)⁵ Als das wichtigste Element von Utopien bezeichnet er „die Intention unmittelbarer Sozialkritik.“ (12) Der Altphilologe Marko Marincič, der utopische Elemente in antiken literarischen Vorläufen dieser Gattung untersucht, bemerkt, dass sich alle Utopien im gleichen Maße mit dem Propagieren politischer Ideen befassen

5 Schölderle fast einleitend zusammen, dass sich in der bisherigen Utopieforschung „ein klassischer, ein sozialpsychologischer sowie ein totalitarismustheoretischer Utopiebegriff“ (Schölderle 2012: 12) unterscheiden lassen. Nach genauer Analyse literarischer Utopien schlägt er „Differenzierungen nach Raum und Zeitutopie, nach Eutopie und Dystopie sowie nach anarchistischer wie archaischer Utopievariante“ (148) vor.

wie auch mit der Bestimmung der Grenzen dieser Ideen (vgl. Marinčič 2015: 312). Wie Schölderles Analysen zeigen, lassen sich bei dem literarischen Genre der Utopie, dem Morus' *Utopia* als Prototyp dient, drei Elemente ausmachen: die Kritik aktueller sozialer und politischer Missstände, Entwürfe für deren Lösung und potentielle neue Probleme, die durch die Lösungsversuche hervorgerufen werden könnten. Die Analysen zeigen aber vor allem, dass literarische Utopien lange Zeit nicht als politische Programme, die es zu verwirklichen galt, verstanden wurden, sondern als Gedankenexperimente. Doch Étienne Cabet's Idee, seinen utopischen Roman *Voyage en Icarie* (1840) nicht als Denkübung der Literaturgeschichte zu überlassen, sondern ihn in Realität umzusetzen, kam nicht unvermittelt.

Die Verschiebung im Verständnis der Utopie – vom Gedankenexperiment über einen potentiell realisierbaren Entwurf zum gesellschaftlichen Entwicklungsplan – beginnt im 17. Jahrhundert mit Gerrard Winstanleys Werk *The Law of Freedom* (1652): „Die Utopie war bis dato ein heiter bis ernst gemeintes Gedankenexperiment, ohne den Versuch, konkrete Handlungsanleitungen zu liefern. Die Frage nach Verwirklichung der Utopie rückt erstmals, und nicht zuletzt unter dem Eindruck revolutionärer Ereignisse, mit Winstanley greifbar in den Mittelpunkt.“ (Schölderle 2012: 88) Ein Jahrhundert später, nachdem die Welt in Umrissen kartographiert und der Glaube an den Fortschritt etabliert war, verschiebt sich die Utopie zur „Uchronie“ (106), d.h. die imaginierte Welt wird nicht mehr in einem gegenwärtigen, aber entfernten und isolierten Raum verortet, sondern in einer zeitlich mehr oder weniger entfernten Zukunft antizipiert. „Mit seinem Roman *Das Jahr 2440* projiziert Louis-Sébastien Mercier im Jahr 1771 das fiktive Gemeinwesen in eine ferne Zukunft und verlässt damit erstmals die Dimension der räumlichen Gegenwart.“ (Schölderle 2012: 104)

Die zweite wichtige Verschiebung in europäischen neuzeitlichen Gesellschaftskonzepten, die sich in Timms Ploetz-Figur niederschlägt, ist die allmähliche „Verabsolutierung des Gleichheitsprinzips“ (Schölderle 2012: 93), deren Anfang Schölderle im Kontext der literarischen Utopien in Gabriel de Foignys 1676 anonym in Genf erschienenem Roman *Les Aventures de Jacques Sadeur* beobachtet. Die Verabsolutierung des Gleichheitsprinzips muss jedoch im doppelten Sinn verstanden werden. Einerseits bedeutet es ein Streben nach absoluter Gleichheit der Menschen (Foigny z.B. spielt auch mit der Idee der geschlechtlichen Gleichheit), andererseits verdrängt es andere Prinzipien und wird zu dem wichtigsten, wenn nicht gar einzigen, Maß gesellschaftlicher Gerechtigkeit erhoben. Wenn Gleichheit im Motto der französischen Revolution noch von Freiheit und Brüderlichkeit flankiert, also kontextuell als wertvoll und bedeutsam bestimmt wurde, wird sie im 19. Jahrhundert aus dieser Trias herausgelöst und hervorgehoben. Alexis de Tocqueville beobachtet kritisch diesen Prozess und bemerkt auch

eine Emotionalisierung dieser Konzepte: „On a dit cent fois que nos contemporains avaient un amour bien plus ardent et bien plus tenace pour l'égalité que pour la liberté“ (Tocqueville 2012: 453). Auf der intellektuellen Ebene beobachtet er in Amerika, wie sich aus dem Konzept der Gleichheit die Idee einer unendlichen Perfektionierung des Menschen entwickelt (vgl. das Kapitel „Comment l'égalité suggère aux Américains l'idée de la perfectibilité indéfinie de l'homme“; Tocqueville 2012: 411). Er sieht aber auch die Gefahren, die dieser Liebe zur Gleichheit entspringen, denn sie macht die Menschen blind und es kann passieren, dass sie nicht bemerken, wie ihnen, während sie auf sie fixiert sind, die Freiheit entgleitet: „ils veulent l'égalité dans la liberté, et, s'ils ne peuvent l'obtenir, ils la veulent encore dans l'esclavage“ (455–456).

Diese zwei Verschiebungen prägen die Figur Alfred Ploetz, von dem Wagner berichtet, er sei in seiner Jugend Kommunist gewesen (vgl. Timm 2017: 141). Von Cabet übernimmt er das Bestreben, Ideen zu verwirklichen, die Realität der Idee anzupassen. Er reist nach Amerika, besucht die Ikarier, um die praktische Umsetzung seiner kommunistischen Ideen zu erlernen. Nach der enttäuschenden Erfahrung, die er dort macht, revidiert er seine Vorstellungen, doch nicht im Sinne der Erkenntnis, dass literarische Utopien einer anderen Ordnung angehören als die Wirklichkeit. Im Gegenteil, er revidiert die zu verwirklichende Idee, indem er soziale und biologistische Ansätze verschränkt und radikalisiert. Biologistische, weil er nicht von der Natur, den Lebewesen selbst ausgeht, sondern von Ideen, wie denn die Lebewesen seien und wie sie sein sollten. Ein mit drei Ausrufezeichen versehener Satz, den er in seinem Brief, einem Bericht aus der Neuen Welt, notiert, fasst es zusammen: „Es muss eine biologische Revolution geben, sie muss die soziale ergänzen!!!“ (242) In der Neuen Welt erkennt er, wie vor ihm schon Tocqueville, die große Bedeutung, die der Gleichheit beigemessen wird, und auch er erkennt, dass die Liebe zur Gleichheit auch Schattenseiten hat: „Die schöne Vorstellung der Gleichheit, die schönste Vorstellung, die erst die menschliche Kultur hervorbringen konnte, wird sich selbst zum Hemmnis, diagnostizierte der Freund.“ (241) Doch während Tocqueville, ein Nachfahr der Aufklärung und der französischen Revolution, ihr Hemmnis in der Verblendung sieht, die zum Freiheitsverlust führen kann, versteht Ploetz, der ein Jahr nach dem Erscheinen von Darwins *On the Origin of Species* geboren wurde, sie als Behinderung der evolutionären Entwicklung: „Die Natur ist nicht gerecht! Erst die Ungleichheit befördert eine bessere Anpassung an das Vorgefundene.“ (241)

Wagners Bericht über diesen Brief, in dem sich Ploetzs Wende vom Kommunisten zum Rassisten vollzieht, ist in der Mitte des umfangreichen Romans positioniert und erinnert so an den Wendepunkt in der Struktur klassischer Tragödien. Der Denkfehler, den er begeht, lässt sich in diesem Abschnitt

auch auf der Textebene ablesen, und zwar in einer schlechten Dialektik. Die Idee der Gleichheit entsteht durch die Entwicklung des kulturfähigen Menschen. Sie verhindert aber die biologische Entwicklung. Die biologische Ungleichheit verhindert wiederum die soziale Gleichheit. Die Aufhebung dieser verwirrten Gegensätze erreicht Ploetz, indem er sie auf Biologie reduziert und auf eine höhere Stufe der Evolution projiziert: „Die Gleichheit kann nur durch eine allgemeine Höherentwicklung erreicht werden. Wir müssen diesen Kern, der in Cabets Theorie steckt, herauslösen, ihn in den Mittelpunkt stellen: die Aufzucht eines starken, gesunden, vor allem auch schönen Geschlechts, das sich selbst als stark und schön versteht.“ (241–242) Dass auf der vermeintlich höheren Stufe die Gleichheit wieder zum Hemmnis wird, dass also seine Argumentation keine Lösung bringt, sondern nur in sich kreist, bemerkt Ploetz nicht.

Die Wiedergabe eines Gesprächs zwischen Ploetz und Wagner, die diesem Bericht über den Bericht folgt, klingt wie eine Fortsetzung eines Gesprächs zwischen Elschner und Gottschalk in *Morenga*, in dem die Bedeutung des Einzelnen diskutiert wurde:

Man muss ihn von Grund auf ändern.

Wen?

Man muss den Menschen und nicht nur dem Menschen helfen. Man muss Arzt werden und nicht nur dem Einzelnen helfen.

Der Arzt hilft dem Einzelnen.

Das auch. Es muss aber der Menschheit geholfen werden.

So etwas konnte er sagen. Er trug seine Überlegungen mit einem bohrenden Finsterernst vor: Die Kleinheit ist unerträglich, die Kleinheit und Schäbigkeit der Menschen. (Timm 2017: 243)

Die Verachtung des Menschen, des Einzelnen, lässt Elschner und Ploetz als Vertreter einer „universalistisch-utopische[n] Technik“ erscheinen, wie Karl Popper die „Methode des Planens im großen Stil, die utopische Sozialtechnik, die utopische Technik des Umbaus der Gesellschaftsordnung oder die Technik der Ganzheitsplanung“ (Popper 1975: 213–215) bezeichnet und die er als gefährlich erachtet, da sie zu totalitären Regimen führt. Dem gegenüber stellt Popper eine Sozialtechnik, die er „für die einzig rationale“ hält, „die von Fall zu Fall angewendete Sozialtechnik, die Sozialtechnik der Einzelprobleme, die Technik des schrittweisen Umbaus der Gesellschaftsordnung oder die Ad-hoc-Technik“ (ebd.). Timms Protagonisten Gottschalk und Wagner, also die Gegenspieler von Elschner und Ploetz, sind jedoch nicht Vertreter dieser alternativen „Sozialtechnik der Einzelprobleme“. Es geht nicht um eine einfache literarische Bebilderung der Popperschen Dichotomie. Denn Popper lehnt zwar die Universalisierung als Methode ab, behält aber, da er im Rahmen sozialwis-

senschaftlicher Überlegungen verbleibt, die Methode der Abstrahierung vom Einzelnen auf „Einzelprobleme“ bei. Die Haltung von Gottschalk und Wagner steht hingegen in der Tradition eines Humanismus, der vom Einzelnen ausgeht und nicht von einem abstrakten, vom Einzelnen losgelösten „Problem“. Die zwei Figurenpaare sind nicht nur Streitende, die zwei Meinungen zu einem Thema haben. Sie sprechen vielmehr zwei verschiedene Sprachen, die aus zwei unterschiedlichen Diskurs- und Denktraditionen hervorgehen und zunehmend inkompatibel werden.⁶ Wagner übernimmt nicht Ploetz's Sprache, spricht nicht von dem oder den Menschen, sondern vom Einzelnen, um sich von einer Verallgemeinerung zu distanzieren, die schon Morus ironisiert hatte, von dem „Menschen im allgemeinen“ (...), der doch ein wahrer Koloß ist und größer als jeder Riese“ (Morus 2014: 88).

Die Geschichte von Alfred Ploetz, wie sie von Wagner in Timms Roman erzählt wird, hat durchaus Eigenschaften einer Tragödie. Ihr Held, der anfangs Gutes will und später Böses tut, begeht einen tragischen Irrtum, der einen Wendepunkt in der Mitte der Erzählung markiert. Später muss er einsehen, dass die Experimente, denen er viele Jahre seines Lebens widmet, seine These von der degenerativen Wirkung des Alkoholkonsums auf das Erbgut nicht bestätigen. Schließlich schafft er es, sich über ideologische Zerwürfnisse hinwegzusetzen, als er seinem Freund Wagner das Leben rettet, also eben jenem besonderen Einzelnen, der ihn einst an seine Verantwortung dem Einzelnen gegenüber ermahnte. Doch bildet die Geschichte von Ploetz nur einen Erzählstrang im Roman und zu einer *katharsis* – soweit sie überhaupt das Potential dazu hätte, da es nicht klar wird, ob Ploetz das gesamte Ausmaß seines Fehlers einsieht – führt sie nicht. Erzählt wird sie nämlich in einer Welt, die sich längst mit den Ideen der Rassenhygieniker angefreundet hat und potentielle Gefahren – im Anbahnen des Kalten Kriegs – bereits in anderen Ideologien sucht. Während Hansen, der Protagonist der Rahmengeschichte, den Befehlen der Alliierten gehorchend noch Wagner verhört, um die Verbrechen der Eugeniker aufzudecken und zu verstehen, gilt die Sorge der Amerikaner bereits der potentiellen Gefahr, die von seinen einstigen Sympathien für marxistische Ideen ausgehen könnte (vgl. Timm 2017: 466). Diese Gefahr besteht nicht mehr und Hansens Mission ist beendet. Die Welt hat die Idee der biologischen Perfektionierung des Menschen sowohl von der nationalsozialistischen Ideologie wie auch von den utopischen Bestrebungen nach gesellschaftlicher Gerechtigkeit befreit und sie in die kapitalistische Ideologie überführt, in der sie durch Optimierung der Leistungsfähigkeit im Konkurrenzkampf

6 In dem in Südamerika spielenden Roman *Der Schlangenbaum*, in dem die Hauptfigur auch Wagner heißt und der Aspekte des Post- und Neokolonialismus thematisiert, trifft die Kritik den Paternalismus der europäischen Intellektuellen aller Disziplinen: „Es sind die ewigen Klugscheißer, auch dann, wenn sie sich selbst als Eurozentristen kritisieren.“ (Timm 2010b: 216)

am Arbeitsmarkt und in sozialen Selbstinszenierungen der Profitmaximierung dient. Auch wenn diese Idee durch ideologische Rekontextualisierung, die von diversen Ethikkommissionen überwacht wird, zunehmend annehmbar erscheint, bleibt die Grundstruktur des Irrtums gleich: Der Mensch macht sich die Welt untertan, erhebt sich als Richter über sie und befindet sie als unzulänglich. Sie soll seiner Idee angepasst werden, einer Idee, die *a priori* gut ist, da sie ein Produkt der menschlichen Kultur ist, die aber wiederum verbessert werden kann, da der Mensch als Teil der Welt ebenfalls verbessert werden muss. Diesen selbstverachtenden Gedankenverstrickungen entgegnet Timm nicht mit einer Gegenargumentation, sondern mit literarischen Bildern, deren Träger eine Randfigur ist. George, Hansens Mitbewohner, First Lieutenant und Psychiater, ist Hobby-Ornithologe und macht Hansen auf die Vielfalt und Schönheit der Vögel aufmerksam:

Darin liege das ganze Wunder der Schöpfung. Darwin möge ja recht haben, aber die Möglichkeit dieser Entfaltung, die dann auch das genießende Ohr finde, das sei genau das, was es zu bewahren gelte.

Tell it to your eugenics idiot.

He's dead.

I know, but tell him anyway. (Timm 2017: 170)

Dieses leicht pathetische Plädoyer für das Wahrnehmen und Akzeptieren der Welt, wie sie ist, suggeriert, da es von einem Psychiater geäußert wird, dass die verwirren, in sich kreisenden Argumentationen der Eugeniker nicht nur Denkfehler, sondern Symptome einer Pathologie sind, und zwar einer Pathologie, der Timm bereits in *Morenga* auf der Spur war: „Vielleicht ist etwas in ihnen, was ihnen selbst hassenswert ist, ein Teil ungelebten Lebens.“ (Timm 2010: 388) Doch auf die psychopathologischen Aspekte kann im vorliegenden Artikel, der sich vor allem auf den literarischen Kontext und den philosophischen Utopiediskurs fokussiert, nicht mehr eingegangen werden.

Der knappe, ironische, in Englisch gehaltene Schlagabtausch zwischen Hansen und George, der das Plädoyer abschließt, bricht nicht nur den pathetischen Ton, sondern verweist auch auf die Gegenwart sowie auf die Bedeutung des Erzählens. Trotzdem erzählen, auch wenn scheinbar niemand mehr zuhört, hat nicht nur eine therapeutische, sondern auch eine anthropologische Funktion, wie Jochen Vogt bereits in seinem Kommentar zu Timms Novelle *Entdeckung der Currywurst* feststellte: „Erzählen heißt am Leben bleiben.“ (Vogt 2014: 406) Gerade weil viele Vogelarten vom Aussterben bedroht sind, sollte man erst recht über die Vielfalt ihrer Gesänge erzählen, nicht nur, um sie zu erhalten, sondern auch das „genießende Ohr“, uns selbst.

Uwe Timms *Ikarien* ist ein komplexer Roman, dessen Komplexität durch die Verweise auf seine älteren Werke noch gesteigert wird und von jahrzehntelanger tiefgehender Auseinandersetzung mit dem Stoff zeugt. Im vorliegenden Artikel wurde vor allem auf seine Verwandtschaft mit dem Roman *Morenga* eingegangen, da sie mit der Genese des Romans verbunden ist. Obwohl Timm weit in die Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhundert zurückgreift, sind die Probleme und Denkmuster, die er thematisiert, heute aktuell: sie prägen die Gegenwart und Zukunft des 21. Jahrhunderts. Das Fazit lässt sich nicht auf einfache Statements reduzieren, außer in einer Art übergeordneter Beobachtung, dass die Komplexität des Romans auf die Komplexität der Welt und des in ihr verorteten und sie wahrnehmenden Einzelnen verweist. Diese sollten nicht im Namen eines abstrakten Universalismus reduziert und wegrationalisiert werden. Timms Erzählen leistet Widerstand dagegen und zeigt, dass der Einzelne im 21. Jahrhundert eine Auseinandersetzung mit literarischen Utopien braucht, um die Grenzen seiner Ideen und Denkmuster zu erkunden und die Gegenwart in ihrer Vielfalt wahrzunehmen.

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“Tell him anyway”: roman *Ikarien* Uweja Timma

Roman *Ikarien* avtorja Uweja Timma je postavljen v Nemčijo tik po drugi svetovni vojni, kjer Wagner mlademu amerškemu vojaku pripoveduje o življenju evgenika Alfreda Ploetza. Čeprav Timm posega po zgodovinski snovi, je roman aktualen in prej bi ga lahko označili kot filozofskega kot pa zgodovinskega, saj sprašuje po idejah, miselnih vzorcih in napakah, ki posameznika ženejo k nasilju, rasizmu in genocidu. Ta vprašanja Timma zaposlujejo že od njegovih pisateljskih začetkov, zato članek roman *Ikarien* postavlja v kontekst njegovega opusa in v kontekst zgodovine utopij, na katere se navezuje že s samim naslovom.

Ključne besede: sodobna nemška književnost, Uwe Timm, *Ikarien*, *Morenga*, evgenika, utopija

“Tell him anyway”: The Novel *Ikarien* by Uwe Timm

The novel *Ikarien* (2017) by Uwe Timm is set in Germany after WWII, where Wagner tells the story of the German eugenicist Alfred Ploetz to a young American soldier. Although Timm refers to historical facts about Ploetz and the Icarian movement, the novel deals with philosophical themes relevant to the 21st century reader, while asking basic questions about the ideas, thought patterns and fallacies that lead to racism, violent behavior, and genocide. Since Timm writes about these themes for decades, the article suggests a reading of the novel in the context of his early work and the history of utopian concepts.

Keywords: modern German literature, Uwe Timm, *Ikarien*, Morenga, eugenics, utopia

Slowenien als transkultureller Zwischenraum und antinationalistische Idee im Werk von Paula von Preradović¹

Johann Georg Lughofer

Abstract

Die Verfasserin der österreichischen Bundeshymne Paula von Preradović wurde von Zeitgenossen als bedeutendste Lyrikerin des Landes wahrgenommen, ihr Gesamtwerk geriet aber nahezu in Vergessenheit. Die Enkelin des wichtigen südslawischen Dichters Petar Preradović wird nur in wenigen wissenschaftlichen Auseinandersetzungen bedacht, dann vor allem der Bezug ihres Werkes zu Kroatien und zu südslawischen Motiven sowie zu Österreich verhandelt. Die bedeutende Rolle des Landes »dazwischen« – nämlich Slowenien – in ihrem Oeuvre wurde aber noch nie analysiert, was dieser Beitrag leistet. Darüber hinaus wird damit eine aufschlussreiche, nicht unkundige Perspektive auf Slowenien des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts dargestellt.

Schlüsselwörter: Österreichische Bundeshymne, Petar Preradović, Transkulturalität, Austrofaschismus

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1 EINLEITUNG

Paula von Preradović (1887-1951) wurde zu ihren Lebzeiten als »bedeutendste Lyrikerin des Landes« (z.B. N.N. [ABM] 1950, 387; vgl. Schoolfield 1954, 285) eingeschätzt. Bis heute beschäftigen sich aber nur vereinzelt germanistische Abschlussarbeiten mit dem Werk der Autorin. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit erhielt dabei der Bezug der Autorin zu Kroatien und zu südslawischen Motiven (z.B. Kostić 1957; Orlandić 1979). Wenig überraschend war die österreichische Bundeshymne nicht ihre erste Auseinandersetzung mit diesem Land, seinen Landschaften, seinem Schicksal und seinen Personen. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der bedeutenden Rolle des Landes »dazwischen«, mit Slowenien, in ihrem Werk fehlt aber vollkommen, was dieser Beitrag nachholt.

2 KROATIEN UND ÖSTERREICH ALS WICHTIGER BEZUGSPUNKTE

Kroatien und Istrien waren in mehrerer Hinsicht für Paula von Preradović von Bedeutung; nicht zuletzt aufgrund ihres biographischen Hintergrunds: sie wuchs in Pula auf, wo ihr Vater als Marineoffizier stationiert war. Mit vierzehn Jahren verließ sie zwar die Halbinsel, um die vom Frauenorden »Congregation Jesu« geführte Mittelschule, das »Institut der Englischen Fräulein« in St. Pölten zu besuchen, kehrte aber nach der Matura wieder zu ihrer Familie nach Pula zurück. Erst nach mehreren Jahren ging sie 1913 nach München für einen einjährigen Pflegerinnen-Kurs des Roten Kreuzes. Danach während des Ersten Weltkriegs lernte sie bei ihrer Tätigkeit im Kriegsspital in der Wiener Universität ihren zukünftigen Mann, den Geschichtsdozenten Ernst Molden (1886-1953) kennen, der nach einer kurzen Diplomatenkarriere in der Zwischenkriegszeit erstmals stellvertretender Chefredakteur der *Neuen Freien Presse*, später 1946 deren Neubegründer und Chefredakteur wurde und damit eine zentrale Stelle im österreichischen Kulturbetrieb innehatte.

Die Bezüge im literarischen Werk zu Kroatien sind vielfältig – die Landschaften, die Ahnen, die Geschichte und Kultur des Landes haben die Dichterin immer wieder inspiriert. Dabei bezieht sie sich oftmals auf ihren Großvater, den bedeutenden kroatischen Dichter Petar Preradović, Vertreter des Illyrismus, der Idee einer Einheit der Südslawen im übernationalen Habsburgerreich. Ihr zentrales Werk, ihr einziger Roman *Pave und Pero* (1940), erzählt die Geschichte ihres berühmten Vorfahrens und seiner ersten Frau, die nach dem Tod ihrer Tochter Suizid begangen hat. Petar Preradović ist bereits zuvor von seiner Enkelin in einigen Gedichten besungen worden und überhaupt für ihre künstlerische Selbstinszenierung von großer Bedeutung gewesen.

Im Debutband *Südliche Sommer* (1929) finden sich volksliedhafte Gedichte, welche die istrische Landschaften – Muschelstrände, Möwen, Olivenbäume und Pinien sowie Leuchttürme, singende Hirten, Guslar und Seeräuber – feiern. Die befreundete Autorin Enrica von Handel-Mazzetti (1929) hörte in der Lyrik dieses Erstlingswerks »süße Fremdklänge der südslavischen Volkslieder«. Es folgten die *Dalmatinischen Sonette* (1933), in denen sie in der titelgebenden Gedichtform Städte wie Trogir und vor allem Dubrovnik, Architektur und Skulpturen – von Ivan Mestrović (1883-1962) – in Dalmatien besingt. Die Gegend ist zumeist Objekt der Heimweh und Nostalgie.

Später folgten Balladen, die kroatische und serbische Sagen bearbeiten, dabei auch den Konflikt mit dem Osmanischen Reich; manche darunter verorten sich nur mit Protagonistinnennamen wie Jelizia und Mandalina in dieser Region. Ihre spätere Literatur bezog sich immer stärker auf den christlichen Glauben wie die Erzählung *Königslegende* (1950), in der sie sich dem kroatischen König Slavac und dessen vermuteter Verbannung widmet. Aus dem Nachlass wurden neben mehreren Gedichten Fragmente zur Kindheit in Pula aus dem unvollendeten autobiographischen Romanprojekt mit dem ansprechenden Titel »Pelagia auf dem berstenden Stern« in den *Gesammelten Werken* (1967) veröffentlicht. Am Anfang sowie am Ende dieser Schriftstellerinnenlaufbahn stand also Istrien als Thema.

Neben kroatischen finden vor allem österreichische Landschaften und Bezüge in den Lyrikbänden Platz und wurden in den *Gesammelten Gedichten* (Preradović 1952a) unter dem Titel »Neue Heimat« zusammengefasst. Wir finden darin schon frühe Gedichte zum Mondsee, zur oberösterreichischen Landschaft um Bad Hall, zum Leopoldsberg bei Wien oder Stift Melk. Dass es aufgrund der neuen Grenze zum dann italienischen Istrien eine »Heimat ohne Meer« (Preradović 1967, 169) war, vergass sie dabei nicht.

Die den »Englischen Fräulein« ihrer klösterlichen Maturaschule gewidmeten Sankt-Pöltener Sonette bilden klar verortete Kindheitserinnerungen in Korridoren, im Schlafsaal und auf Spaziergängen mit einem expliziten Lob der christlichen Erziehung. Die Landschaft mit Pappeln, Weiden und Birken wird zwar als »schlicht« (Preradović 1967, 147) bezeichnet, doch Dom, Madonnenskulptur und »saubrer« (Preradović 1967, 148) Stadtpark – also die Kultur und die darin gespiegelte Gläubigkeit – gewinnen dafür eine eminente Rolle.

Religiöse Überzeugung und Landschaften verbindet der Gedichtband *Lob Gottes im Gebirge* (1936), der nach einleitenden Worten vor allem zwischen 1934 und 1936 in Kühtai entstanden ist. Die Tiroler Berge mit Alpenrosen, Zirben, Enzian, Heidelbeeren, Bergseen, Gletscher und Regenbogen werden dort als Gottesreflexion und -beweis gepriesen.

Während des Zweiten Weltkriegs dichtet Preradović über das Leid der österreichischen Bevölkerung, der Soldatenmütter, über die Stadt in Trümmern.

In dem Lyrikband *Ritter, Tod und Teufel* (1946) findet sich der Zyklus »Wiener Reimchronik 1945«, eine beeindruckende Sammlung zum persönlichen Erlebnis der letzten Kriegstage: zu den Fliegerangriffen, zur Schlacht um Wien und zu den Flüchtlingen. Bekannterweise gipfelte die Auseinandersetzung mit Österreich im Gewinn der Ausschreibung zur Verfassung der – heute noch gesungenen, nur minimal adaptierten – Bundeshymne 1949. Damit ist sie mit Abstand die längstgediente Hymne dieses Landes.

Dass ihr Interesse nicht allen Ländern galt, betont die Tatsache, dass sie andere Orte ihres Lebensweges in ihrem Werk vollkommen ignoriert: ihr Ausbildungsort München wird kein einziges Mal erwähnt. Andere Länder wie England, die Niederlande oder Schweden, wo die Diplomategattin lebte, werden nur in einzelnen Gedichten marginal berührt.

3 »GEWISS AUCH SLOWENISCHES BLUT« - SLOWENIEN IN (AUTO-)BIOGRAPHISCHEN TEXTEN UND KONTEXTEN

Wenn Preradović von österreichischer Seite als Vermittlerin zwischen deutscher und südslawischer Kultur gesehen wurde, war zumeist nicht nur die kroatische, sondern auch die slowenische Kultur mitgedacht, was wohl weniger auf einen illyrischen Einigungsgedanken beruht, sondern auf ein unbekümmertes Subsumieren: So wurde Preradović gerne auf den in Ljubljana geborenen und wirkenden Anastasius Grün bezogen: Direkt nach dem Tod der Dichterin schreibt der Autor Felix Braun (1885-1973) beispielsweise: »Das südliche Slawentum hatte der in Krain geborene Anastasius Grün in seinen Volksliedern entdeckt, doch nicht in eigenen Besitz hinüber gewandelt. Dieses war die Sendung Paula von Preradović, der Enkelin des nationalen Dichters Kroatiens.« (Braun 1951, 10) Im Vorwort einer Anthologie der Texte der Autorin überlegt der Germanist Karl Röttinger, dass viele Landschaften der Donaumonarchie ihre deutschen Dichter fanden, etwa Böhmen Franz Grillparzer und Adalbert Stifter, Mähren Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach oder Ungarn Nikolaus Lenau und Stifter, doch: »Des südlichen Slawentums uraltes Kulturgut allein blieb unbeachtet. Den Volkslieder des in Krain geborenen Anastasius Grün mangelte dichterische Größe, Kroatiens bedeutendster deutschschreibender Dichter Peter von Preradovic vermochte keine Breiten- und Tiefenwirkung zu erzielen.« (Röttinger 1961, 5) Erst Paula von Preradović habe diesen echten Einbezug der südslawischen Kultur in die deutsche Literatur dann nach Röttingers Meinung realisiert.

Wenn diese Stellungnahmen zur deutschsprachigen Dichterin des Südslawentums sich immer wieder auf ein als Einheit gedachtes südliches Slawentum inklusive Anastasius Grün bezieht – und dies vor allem auf eine da-

mals fehlende bewusste Trennung zwischen slowenischer und kroatischer Kultur aus österreichischer Perspektive zurückzuführen ist, liegen die Kommentatoren bezüglich eines Aspektes gar nicht so falsch: auch Slowenien spielt eine wesentliche Rolle im Werk von Preradović.

Nicht ganz zu Unrecht sprach Theodor F. Csokor (1957, 15) von ihr als »Dichterin zwischen zwei Welten«, ihr Gatte Ernst Molden (1955, 14) von der »Dichterin beider Heimaten, der verblichenen wie der gegenwärtigen«. Dabei wird aber vergessen, dass ihr Werk in Fragestellungen zu Kulturen nicht dualistisch zwischen kroatischer Küste und österreichischen Alpen zu fassen ist, sondern viele transkulturelle Elemente in sich trägt (Vgl. Welsch 2017). In ihren Texten wimmelt es von beispielsweise italienischen Dalmatinern und der Wiener Gesellschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts in seiner breiten sich vermischenden, ethnischen Vielfalt. Hierin passt die Darstellung Sloweniens, das mehr als nur Kulisse wird und selbst in ihrem übernationalen Familienkult Eingang fand. Ihr Gatte beschreibt in seiner biographischen Skizze über seine Frau ihre vielfältige Familienabstammung, um »die eigenartige Buntheit des Bildes des alten Donaureiches« hervorzuheben:

Indem der Herkunft der einen Österreicherin nachgegangen wird, die als Dichterin eine Repräsentantin ihres Kreises geworden ist und in der – echt österreichisch! – kroatisches, italienisches, französisches, serbisches – und gewiß auch slowenisches Blut sich mit deutschösterreichischem, ungarischem und ungarländisch-serbischem mischen, ergibt sich die erwünschte Gelegenheit, abseits von aller Politik festzustellen, wie sehr dieses Sichvereinen und Sichüberschneiden der Zugehörigkeiten zu einem halben Dutzend und mehr verschiedener Sprachen und Kulturen gerade für die führenden Kreise des alten Reiches charakteristisch gewesen ist und welche Bedeutung es besaß. (Molden 1955, 21)

Seit diesem *Porträt einer Dichterin* Moldens nimmt die Forschung immer wieder starken Bezug auf die Biographie der Autorin. Wie schon in Sachen Kroatien und Österreich interessieren auch im Kontext Slowenien manche Details: So starb in Ljubljana ihre kleine, 1895 in Pula geborene Schwester Helene als dreijähriges Kind, zwei erst posthum veröffentlichte Gedichte widmete die jugendliche Paula von Preradović dem Tod ihrer kleinen Schwester. Diese unterstreichen wie bedeutsam der Bestattungsort Ljubljana für die Dichterin ist. Das Klagegedicht der sechzehnjährigen Nachwuchsdichtern »An mein kleines Schwesterchen« setzt mit der friedlichen Stimmung am Friedhof ein. Dass dieser in Ljubljana ist, wird nicht klar benannt, doch der Friedhof als Ort gewinnt Bedeutung und wird konkret beschrieben. Er lässt eine tröstende Perspektive auf den Kindestod zu. Spannend dabei ist, dass im Gedanken, die Tote aus dem Süden musste die

dunklen Seiten des Lebens nicht kennenlernen, der Norden für diese dunklen Seiten steht: »Kanntest nur den Sonnenschein, / Nicht den Sturm des Norden.« (Preradović 1967, 1058) Der Sterbe- und Bestattungsort scheint also nicht dieser dunkle Norden zu sein und eine Zwischenstellung einzunehmen, so positiven Töne im Klagelied zuzulassen.

Das Gedicht »Kindergrab (Laibach, Herbst 1906)« der neunzehnjährigen Preradović erlangt Ljubljana explizite Erwähnung. Der Ort wird bereits neben dem Titel mitgenannt, das lyrische Ich ist vom Besuch des Grabs im verregneten Ljubljana ergriffen. Der Blick der Trauernden richtet sich langsam nach oben, vom Grab mit zarten rosa Blüten, zur kleinen Zierpalmen, zur Engelsfigur und zum Grabstein, dessen fehlende Worte nun von dem Gedicht nachgeholt werden. Danach entfernt sich der beschriebene Blick vom bedeutungsschweren Boden. Das Leben versinnbildlicht ein seit dem Tod gewachsenes Birkenbäumchen, eigentlich nicht der klassische Baum des Friedhofs, sondern eher Inbegriff des Weiblichen und des Monats Mai, für Zweisamkeit, Vertrautheit und Liebe. So hat die Birke das Wachsen der Schwester übernommen und zeugt davon, dass der Besuch am Friedhof länger nach dem Ableben der Besungenen stattfindet: »Und heute ist's ein manneshoher Baum./ Wär größer schon als Du, wenn Du am Leben/ Geblieben wärst.« Der dichtende Blick richtet sich aber weiter nach oben, geht über einer dem Süden zuzuordnende Palme und schweift zu den »fremden«, »schönen« Bergen. Wenn der Text auch – nicht zuletzt mit diesem nach oben strebenden Blick – lebensbejahend ist, scheinen die entfernten Berge und die Stadt Ljubljana Lebens- und Todeswunsch auf schaurig-schöne Weise zu vereinen: »Im Hintergrund stehen/ Die fremden Berge voll von neuem Schmerz/ Und kalter Wucht, wenn die nicht kommen können,/ Die Dich voll bittrem Weh und Schmerz verloren./ Als ich die schönen, fernen Berge sah/ Und all den Frieden Deines Kindergrabes,/ Da stieg in mir der bittere Wunsch empor,/ Wie du in einer fremden Stadt zu schlafen« (Orlandić 1979, 253) Die »fremde Stadt« und ihre gebirgige Umgebung sind bei diesem Wunsch ein zentraler Faktor. Wieder scheint Ljubljana eine ruhevolle Zwischenstellung zwischen einer Repräsentanz des Südens – der Palme – und dem Norden – die Berge –, sogar zwischen Leben und Tod einzunehmen.

Doch nicht nur der familiäre Todesfall verbindet Preradović mit den Krainer Gebieten. Sie kannte die slowenischen Region intensiv. Die sommerlichen Urlaubsfahrten der Familie führten in ihrer Kindheit erst ins Salzkammergut, doch »später waren es die von Pola nicht allzuweit entfernten kärntnerischen oder krainischen Gebirgsdörfer, die als Ziele der Sommerfahrten bevorzugt wurden.« (Molden 1955, 24) Auch als Erwachsene besuchte sie Slowenien immer wieder im Sommer, beispielsweise schwärmt sie 1936 in ihrer Korrespondenz von Schloss Wildenegg (Belnek) bei Domžale und der dortigen Umgebung

... Hier sind wir in eine unsägliche Weltferne und Stille verschlagen, eine Lebenslage, die ich namenlos genieße... Wenn Du hier sein könntest, das wäre der Ort, um alles nur Mögliche zu treiben und auch zu Ende zu bringen. Schloß Wildenegg muß etwas Ähnliches sein, wie Euer Falkenstein gewesen ist. Ein kleines Schloß in einer Mittelgebirgslandschaft, mit hohem Gebirge (Triglav und Steiner Alpen, dazwischen der Stou) in ferner Sicht. Fast auf jedem der Waldberge eine weiße, spitzige Kirche, Obstbäume, Mais auf den Feldern, unaufhörliches, schönes Glockenläuten. Im Haus unzählige Bilder und Andenken an dahingegangene Zeiten. Die Menschen gütig, weltfern, leidgeprüft. (Brief an Camilla Lucerna vom 15. August 1936, nach Preradović 1967, 1088)

Slowenien wird hierbei als ideales Gebiet zur kreativen Produktion erkannt, dabei spielen die »weltferne Lage«, die Umgebung sowie die Menschen und ihre ruralen und religiösen Traditionen eine Rolle.

4 LÄNDLICHE UTOPIE SLOWENIEN

So entstand ausgerechnet in Slowenien die in politischer Sicht spannende Broschüre *Ein Jugendreich. Die Neuland-Schulsiedlung in Grinzing-Wien* (1937). Dabei wird die Region nicht nur idyllisch gezeichnet, sondern zur wahrhaften Utopie umfunktioniert. In den ersten Seiten schreibt Preradović von ihrer Schreibhemmung und Unsicherheit, ob sie dem Auftrag gerecht werden könne. Der slowenische Ort und seine Einwohner schienen ihr darüber hinweg geholfen zu haben. Ihre Beschreibung dazu ist eine Hymne auf das »organische« Landleben; dort im »alten Krain« (Preradović 1937, 4) besuchte sie nämlich ein junges Paar auf einem entlegenen Bauernhof, »eine geschützte, kleine Welt« (Preradović 1937, 4). Die Autorin zeigt sich über die spartanische Einrichtung begeistert:

Nicht Unnützes gab es, nichts, was nicht unmittelbarem Bedürfnis gedient hätte. Alles war vollkommen einfach und wirkte deshalb edel. In der Küche zeigte uns die junge Frau mit dem herzförmigen, slawischen Gesicht voll Stolz den Sparherd, den ihr Mann vor der Hochzeit aufgemauert hatte, damit sie sich nicht mit dem offenen Feuer ablagen müsse, und in der Schlafkammer wies sie freudig auf die von ihrem Vater gezimmerten Schränke und Bettstellen. Schlafkammer, Küche, Stube, mehr Räume hatte das Haus nicht. Hier würde das Bauernleben sich abspielen, hier würden der Mann, die Frau, hier würde das Kindlein, zu dessen erhoffter Ankunft im Spätherbst die junge Mutter Windeln und Hemdchen rüstete, und seine Geschwister, die später kommen würden, ihr Leben der Arbeit und des frommen Ausruhens nach der Arbeit führen. Nichts Fremdes würde sie stören, nichts Unorganisches ihr Leben verbiegen. (Preradović 1936, 4)

Diese Lobpreisung des traditionellen Lebens im landwirtschaftlichen Heimatkontext entspricht der politischen und religiösen Haltung der Autorin. Einer christlichen Heimatliteratur steht sie dabei sehr nahe, aber keinesfalls dem Nationalsozialismus. Dies konnte sie gerade mit der Ansiedlung ihrer Lobpreisung des ländlichen Lebens in Slowenien klar unterstreichen. Wenn dies im deutschsprachigen Gebiet erfolgt wäre, kämen diese Worte der Blut-und-Boden-Kunst des Nationalsozialismus allzu nahe. In Slowenien mit explizit slawisch gezeichneten Protagonisten besteht diesbezüglich keine Gefahr, sondern der Text stellt sogar einen Gegendiskurs zu der im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland betriebenen Heimatkunst dar und betont eine andere kulturelle Zugehörigkeit. So kann sie sogar die stolze Genealogie besingen, ohne in die Nähe der damaligen deutschen Machthaber zu rücken:

Ein Geschlecht von rauhen, der Welt wenig kundigen, einigermaßen einseitigen und unwissenden, aber unzersplitterten, in sich ruhenden, selbstverwurzelten Menschen würde hier auf dem Hügel vor dem schwarzen Walde blühen und sich erneuern, so lange es Gott gefallen würde. Die junge Bäuerin [...] – sie erschien mir als eine verehrens- und preisenswerte Stammutter, und das Ungeborene, das sie trug und das einem mühevollen, aber sinnreichen, in Gottes Ordnung eingegliederten Leben entgegenwuchs, schien mir beneidenswert. (Preradović 1936, 5)

Der Text fügt sich bestens in das Regime der Zeit. Der Austrofaschismus wollte mit seinem »Ständestaat« eine mittelalterliche Ordnung wiedererrichten. Der Bauernhof diente dabei als Orientierungspunkt zur Gesellschaftsorganisation; der Begründer des austrofaschistischen »Ständestaates« Engelbert Dollfuß selbst war übrigens Bauernkind, Direktor der Niederösterreichischen Landwirtschaftskammer und zwischen 1931 und 1933 Landwirtschaftsminister. In seiner programmatischen Rede auf dem Wiener Trabrennplatz im September 1933 verwendete er als Bild für die projektierte Volksgemeinschaft jenseits jeglichen Klassenkampfes eine harmonische Bauernfamilie, die unter dem Kruzifix aus einer gemeinsame Schüssel mit den Bediensteten löffelte.

Die Austrofaschisten sahen sich als bodenständige Christen, die gegen die sündhafte Großstadt Stellung bezogen. Die Gegenüberstellung des >wahren Lebens< zur Stadt wird auch mehrfach im Text hervorgekehrt. Preradović bezieht sich auf ein »verlorenes Paradies«. Kultur und Städte verunmöglichen für sie das traditionelle, rurale, gesunde Leben, das auch als Lösung für die turbulente Zeit angeboten wird. Dabei finden wir eine Betonung Sloweniens und des Gegensatzes zu deutschsprachigen Gebieten vor. Die Abwendung von der Großstadt und die Hinwendung zur ländlichen Kultur geschieht ohne jeglichen germanischen Nationalismus, richtet sich aber gegen die Moderne und gegen

die Stadt. Die Unberührtheit der traditionellen Lebensweise wird besungen. Die »Zwischenstellung« Sloweniens erlaubt dabei eine Heimat- und Traditionsliebe ohne Chauvinismus und Nationalismus.

5 DAS TRANSKULTURELLE LAND IM ROMAN *PAVE UND PERO*

Auch die jahrelangen Recherchen für ihr Hauptwerk, den Roman *Pave und Pero* (1940), führte sie mitunter in Slowenien durch. Preradović schreibt beispielsweise 1938 aus Triest:

Nun hat sich alles dahin kristallisiert, daß ich am liebsten in den ersten Augusttagen zwei, höchstens drei Tage in Zagreb sein möchte, und zwar deshalb, weil ich in Laibach, wohin ich Freitag zurückkehre, noch eine geschlossene Zeit von mindestens neun bis zehn Tagen haben möchte, um das Material, das ich auf meinem Abstecher in Italien gesammelt habe, zu verarbeiten... (Brief vom 18. Juli 1938 an Kučera, nach Vospernik 1966, 9).

Dabei war sie Gast der erwähnten Freundin, der bedeutenden slowenisch-deutschen zweisprachigen Dichterin und Übersetzerin Lilli Novy in Laibach (vgl. Eigl 1967, 1089). Diese war eine wichtige intellektuelle Inspiration für Preradović. Die slowenischen Kontakte bedeuteten für Preradović viel; Molden erinnert sich in seiner biographischen Skizze an ihre Begeisterung für die südslawische Kultur:

In vielen Gesprächen mit ihrer mütterlichen Freundin Camilla Lucerna in Agram oder in Laibach, mit Lily Nowy, der Schriftstellerin und ausgezeichneten Übersetzerin des slowenischen Nationaldichters Prešern, hatte sich ihr Interesse für das Altehrwürdige der südslawischen Volksdichtung immer mehr vertieft. Aber noch ehe diese ihr so vertraut war, klang in ihrer eigenen dichterischen Sprache etwas von dem schicksalhaften Dunkel der Stimmen dieser uralten Stämme nach, aus denen ihre Vorväter gekommen waren und deren Heimat sie so stark in ihrem Herzen trug. (Molden 1955, 76)

Wenn auch diese mystisch anmutende Vorahnung seltsam konstruiert wirkt, zeigt sich eine Zuneigung, auf die auch der Gatte exemplarisch hinweist: »Diese Reisen legten unter anderem den Grund zur Liebe, die eine besonders eindrucksvolle Stelle in ihrem Roman »Pave und Pero« über das alte Laibach und die Fahrt durch den Karst bezeugt.« (Molden 1955, 24) Diese Fahrt von Wien Richtung Süden, welche die junge Frau Pave aus Gesundheitsgründen mit ihren drei Kindern unternimmt, während ihr Gatte Pero – Petar Preradović – in Wien bleibt, wird im Anschluss an Molden auch in der Sekundärliteratur im-

mer wieder als bedeutungstragend hervorgehoben (Vospersnik 1960, 48-51; Trojanovic 1977, 16f.; Sobczak 2016, 50 und 67f.). Übersehen wurde dabei von allen Kommentatoren, dass nicht nur die Landschaft, sondern auch der kulturelle Faktor Slowenien dabei eine gewichtige Rolle einnimmt. In Wien scheint dieses Bewusstsein anderer möglicher Heimaten nicht denkbar, aber sofort auf dem Weg zum slowenisch-ethnischen Gebiet, in die Steiermark. Sie fühlt, dass diese schöne Landschaft Heimat sein kann, und denkt, die von ihrem Mann oft eingeforderte Begeisterungsfähigkeit aufbringen zu können. Im Stile der Reisenden früherer Jahrhunderte bewundert sie das erhabene Gebirge, »faltete unwillkürlich die Hände« (Preradović 1967, 484)²: »Es war ein Anblick von so hinreißender Mannigfaltigkeit, der dennoch majestätisch in sich ruhte, daß Pave vemeinte, so Schönes nicht länger allein ertragen zu könne. Sie riß die Gesichter der Kinder an sich, küßte sie stürmisch und immer wieder und sagte [...]: >Ach, wie schön ist dies! Wie schön ist dies! Kinder, merkt ihr, wie wunderbar dies ist!« (486) Die Richtung Süden nach Ljubljana scheint aussagestark, nach dem Semmeringtunnel »ins Steirische«, bergab kommen sie in »eine veränderte, gemilderte, weichere Landschaft« (487) – nicht nur für die Lebenden, sondern auch für die Toten, welche nicht vergessen werden: Ins Abteil kommen eine Witwe und deren Sohn, die um den Mann bzw. Vater trauern und noch lange auf den vorbeiziehenden ländlichen Friedhof blicken. Mit den beiden zieht auch die kulturelle und soziale Ebene der Region verstärkt neben der Landschaft in den Text ein.

Ein Absatzsprung bietet einen abrupten Übergang in das alltagskulturelle Leben Sloweniens, in den »zu ebener Erde gelegene, gewölbte Speisesaal des Gasthofes Kaiser von Österreich zu Laibach« (491).³ Der Ort ist bedeutsame Zwischenstation und wird hervorgehoben. Es ist eine explizit »angenehme Atmosphäre des gediegenen Gasthofs« (491) und selbst die Durchreisenden kleiden sich wie die dortige Gesellschaft elegant. Dabei kommt ein gewisses Lokalkolorit, beispielsweise durch den Čviček aus der Save-Krka-Region, »den hellroten, dünnen Switschek, den einheimischen Wein« (491), nicht zu kurz.

Ein deutschsprachig-österreichischer und ein kroatischer Offizier kümmern sich um die Gattin ihres Kameraden, was einmal mehr eine transkulturellen Komponente, ein Dazwischensein Sloweniens im Roman weiter betont. Die beiden Offiziere sind als verschiedene Typen entworfen: Der junge Oresković,

2 Die Quellenangaben aus dem Roman *Pave und Pero* werden folgend als Seitenzahl in Klammer in den Text gesetzt.

3 Das Hotel »Kaiser von Österreich« bzw. »Pri avstrijskem cesarju« existierte sicher bis 1911 (wohl bis 1918) in der Trubarjeva cesta 5. Vgl. Pešak Mikec, Barbara und Nataša Budna Kordič: »Ljubljanski hoteli do druge svetovne vojne«. In: *Kronika* 2002/3, S. 343-362, hier S. 353f. Für diese Auskunft habe ich Prof. Dr. Mira Miladinović Zalaznik bzw. Dr. Maja Lozar Štamcar herzlich zu danken.

Taufpate eines der Kinder von Pave und Pero, ist lebendig und zeigt ein »übermütiges Mienenspiel« (492). Der ältere Major überzeugt durch »die ruhige, kluge Güte seines grellblauen Blicks und durch die verlässliche Freundlichkeit seines Wesens« (492). Ein italienischer Verehrer Paves stellt noch den dritten männlichen Protagonisten um Pave in Ljubljana. Stereotype werden dabei nicht ausgespart: insbesondere bei dem modebewussten, gepuderten, aufdringlichen Italiener.

Die deutsche, italienische und südslawische Welt scheint in Ljubljana zusammenzutreffen und sich im spannungsreichen Zusammenspiel gegenseitig zu beeinflussen. Slowenien wird durch die Verschiedenheit der Charaktere zur besonders attraktiven Mischung gemacht, obwohl durchaus regionale kulturelle Eigenständigkeit zugestanden wird. Stellvertretend kann hier der kulinarische Aspekt wie der bereits erwähnte Čviček genannt werden. Pave werden die »Delikatesse hierzulande« Krainer Würste angeboten. Am Tisch trinken sie genauso den dunklen dalmatischen »Lissaner« aus Vis. Süden und Norden scheinen sich auf angenehme Weise zu vermengen. Dabei wird keine Idylle gezeichnet, sondern ein bescheidenes Leben mit pragmatischen Vorteilen gegenüber der Reichshauptstadt: Sie fragt Oresković, »ob er sich eigentlich in Laibach wohl fühle oder nach Wien zurücksehne. >Es ist ein lieber, lustiger Ort, die Leute hier sind freundlich und gebildet, und man kann in so einer Mittelstadt aus dem elenden Offiziersdasein immerhin noch mehr herausschlagen als in Wien.« (494)

Nicht nur der Ort per se scheint sympathisch und verbindend zu sein, der slowenische Gastwirt Herr Jak wird selbst als großer Vermittler dargestellt. Er wird sofort als Freund von Feldmarschall Radetzky vorgestellt, erweist sich als guter Kommunikator und Organisator hinsichtlich der Kutschenfahrt nach Triest und hilft auch Paves Bewunderer, den italienischen Operntenor Lorenzi, dezent mit Informationen zur Destination der reisenden Pave, worauf dieser ein Engagement an ihrem angestrebten Aufenthaltsort Motta annimmt. (529).

In Postojna/ Adelsberg wird auf der Weiterreise im »Gasthof zur Krone« Mittagstation gemacht und auch ein Zimmer dazu genommen. Die schwangere Wirtin ist freundlich und an Kindern interessiert. Der bedeutende Transitort wird hervorgehoben: Die Strasse zeigt, als es »dem Meere zunging« (503), viel Betrieb, »daß sie hier auf der großen Straße fahren, die vom Herzen des Reiches nach dessen größtem Hafen führte. Vielerlei Fuhrwerk, hochbepackte Lastwagen und Bauernkaleschen wurden von Herrn Kusmar überholt oder kamen ihnen entgegen.« (503) Auch hier macht die Umgebung Eindruck, die Erzählerposition konzentriert sich auf den Nanos, der die klarste Verortung auf der ganzen Reise darstellt. Die im ganzen Werk so wichtige Landschaft zeigt auf der Weiterreise ein Dazwischen, einen Übergang: »das wellige Land

ringsum, das bald Felder und Wälder aufwies wie zwischen Graz und Wien, bald aber schon karstigen Boden und südlich hartblättriges Buschwerk zeigte, schien ihr anzukündigen, dass es dem Meere zuzuging.«(1967, 503) Das transkulturelle Element wird erneut auf positive Weise unterstrichen – auch in der Architektur und bei den Menschen: Nach einem Radbruch wird die kleine Reisegesellschaft von einer italienisch-slowenischen Gutsbesitzerin eingeladen, in »ein Mittelding zwischen Bauern- und Herrenhof«. Dort werden sie herzlichst mit Kaffee und Reindling, einer Kärntner und slowenischen Spezialität (als Pogača), bewirtet; die ausgesprochen gastfreundliche Gutsbesitzerin, die Witwe Emilia Kozian wurde »nicht müde, Pave und die Kinder zum Zulangen aufzufordern.« (505)⁴ An dieser slowenischen Station wird die transkulturelle Gesellschaft wiederum betont. Die Amme der reisenden Familie fühlte sich so »im Kreis der Italiensch verstehenden Dienstleute sehr wohl« (505). Die Gutsherrin mit triestinischen Hintergrund hat den slowenischen Besitzer geheiratet. Das slowenische Element ist in dieser Familie keineswegs verschwunden: Ihr Neffe fragt Pave wegen des Namens Preradović an den Koffern nach dem Dichter, den er im Priesterseminar in Ljubljana mit nationalistischer Begeisterung gelesen hat.

Alle beschriebenen Orte der fünftägigen Reise sind auffallenderweise in Slowenien – immerhin geht die Reise mehrere Tage inklusive Schiffsreise über Triest, Venedig und Treviso weiter nach Motta, von all diesen Orten lesen wir genau nichts, was die Relevanz der slowenischen Region für den Text einmal mehr unterstreicht. Slowenien wird als trans- und interkultureller Ort des Treffpunkts gezeichnet. Es scheint sogar, Slowenien wäre für die kranke Mutter die richtige Mitte gewesen, welche die Familie gerettet hätte – nahe bei Wien, dem Ehegatten und dessen fürsorglichen Kameraden.

6 FAZIT

Slowenien darf im Werk Paula von Preradović keinesfalls überlesen werden – neben, oder besser zwischen Kroatien und Österreich. Slowenien wird als transkulturelle Region präsentiert, was auch der außerliterarischen Mittellage zwischen deutsch-österreichischer, südslawischer, ungarischer und italienischer Kultur entspricht. Dies wird im Roman *Pave und Pero* von den beiden unterschiedlichen Offizieren, von dem lebendigen kroatischen und den ruhigen deutsch-österreichischen, und dem italienischen Sänger repräsentiert.

4 Sie beschenkt die Kinder mit Spielzeug ihrer verstorbenen Tochter. Ein so erhaltener Muff sollte später sogar ins Grab der gestorbenen Tochter gelegt werden. Die genaue Beschreibung dieses Kinderbegräbnisses im Roman ist dann wohl von dem ihrer Schwester in Ljubljana beeinflusst, was einen Kreis im Bezug auf Slowenien schließt.

Ljubljana wird sehr trans- und interkulturell gezeichnet, auch ganz Slowenien – wie mit der italienisch-slowenischen Familie in Postojna. Slowenien wird dabei wohl weniger ein Symbol für die Donaumonarchie, sondern vielmehr steht diese Multi- und Transkulturalität einem Loblied der traditionellen, einfachen Lebensweise, seiner rural-landwirtschaftlichen Lebensweise dar, ohne einer Blut-und-Boden-Ideologie der Nationalsozialisten nahezukommen, was insbesondere in einer dem austrofaschistischen Gedankengut nahestehende Broschüre von 1937 Betonung erfährt.

Preradović hatte Ahnung von der Region und der Kultur. Sie lebte lange in Istrien und besuchte oft die Krain, als Kind auf Sommerurlaub, als Erwachsene zu Arbeitsaufenthalten. Zu Ljubljana hatte sie auch mehrere persönliche Bezüge: dort starb ihre kleine dreijährige Schwester, was sie auch in ihren Texten aufnahm; gute Freundinnen wie die Intellektuelle Lili Novy lebten ebenso in der Stadt.

So konnte Preradović selbst eine kundige, vermittelnde Rolle einnehmen, wenn sie z.B. in der Wiener *Presse* im Februar 1949 einen Aufsatz zum hundertsten Geburtstag France Prešerens veröffentlicht. Sie vergleicht ihn mit Luther und hebt mehrmals hervor, dass er »durch eine nicht sehr große Anzahl lyrischer Gedichte seine Muttersprache nicht allein aus einem Bauerndialekt in eine Literatursprache verwandelt, sondern diese Muttersprache geradezu vor dem Verschwinden, vor dem Aufgehen in verwandte Sprachen gerettet hat«. (Preradović 1949) Es klingt positiv, wenn sie argumentiert, dass die durch Prešeren gefestigte slowenische Sprache einer gemeinsamen südslawischen Sprache und einem Illyrismus, dessen begeisterter Vertreter ihr Großvater war, widerstanden hatte. Auch der Bezug zum Bauernstand hat bei Preradović nur angenehme Konnotationen: »Ein Dichter von Gottes Gnaden, nahm er von seiner Muttersprache den Bann der Subalternität, er machte sie, die über ein Jahrtausend lang in den fleißigen Häusern der frommen Bauern still gewachsen war, literaturfähig und bereitete ihr den Platz an der Sonne, der ihr zukam.« (Preradović 1949)

Preradović, die Autorin der österreichischen Bundeshymne, beweist sich als Kennerin Sloweniens und Bewunderin seiner trans- und interkulturellen Aspekte.

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Slovenija kot transkulturni vmesni prostor in antinacionalistična ideja v delu Paule von Preradović

Povzetek

Avtorico avstrijske državne himne Paulo von Preradović so sodobniki dojemali kot pomembnejšo avstrijsko pesnico, njen celoten opus pa je skorajda pozabljen. Vnukinjo pomembnega južnoslovenskega pesnika Petra Preradovića obravnavajo le nekatere znanstvene razprave, in če že, potem zlasti v povezavi njenega dela s Hrvaško in južnoslovenskimi motivi kot tudi z Avstrijo. Pomembne vloge dežele "nekje vmes" – namreč

Slovenije – in kakšen pomen ima ta prispevek za njeno celotno življenjsko delo, doslej še nihče ni analiziral. Poleg tega je prikazan pomemben in informativen pogled na Slovenijo z začetka 20. stoletja.

Ključne besede: avstrijska državna himna, Petar Preradović, medkulturnost, avstrofašizem

Les apories du surréalisme

Boštjan Marko Turk

Synopsis

La présente étude se propose de répondre à la question des apories qui concernent la conception surréaliste du langage et de ses outils poétiques. Les surréalistes démettaient du premier rang la disposition d'esprit d'après laquelle ce qui existe possède sa raison d'être et peut – par conséquent – être considéré comme intelligible. Ils postulaient qu'il y avait une sphère au-delà de la réalité dans laquelle la raison n'était pas capable de pénétrer. Or, tous les outils que les surréalistes proposaient afin d'atteindre la surréalité étaient conçus sur les modalités du raisonnement. Ainsi, ils se sont laissés piéger par leur propre piège.

Mots-clefs : surréalisme, raison, pensée, esprit, Descartes, Voltaire, Breton, langue, linguistique, signe, Benveniste, Saussure, antinomie.

La définition du surréalisme qu'a proposée André Breton permet de bien déceler ses options fondamentales :

«Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de tout autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale » (Breton 1924, 12).

Grâce à cette formule, il est possible d'indiquer avec précision deux éléments qui cernent les traits pertinents du mouvement. Au premier plan, il est question de déni intégral de la rationalité et des principes idéaux servant de référence aux membres de la communauté universelle qui se fondent conformément – sans exception ni réserves – sur cette faculté. Il s'agit alors de contester le statut de la pensée en tant qu'élément constitutif de l'identité de l'Occident. Le surréalisme n'est pas uniquement l'antithèse de la pensée et de son emprise sur la réalité rendue possible par l'appareil relatif à la connaissance et permettant au sujet de l'acquérir, tel qu'il s'est formé dans l'histoire de la pensée. Il est l'antithèse de tout ce que la pensée transmet, implique et connote ; il est la désapprobation de la pensée et ce qui plus est : le rejet de tout mode de penser qui procéderait à la prise de la réalité de la façon réfléchie : spontanée mais aucunement automatique et en dehors du contrôle de la logique. Comme on n'a pas vu une chose pareille dans l'histoire de l'Occident, cette prise de position s'avère lourde de conséquences.

Le postulat «*le fonctionnement réel de la pensée*» présuppose donc qu'une formation de la pensée, soumise à ce qui a été communément accepté comme la dialectique cartésienne procédant des quatre règles méthodologiques,¹ ne soit pas suffisante. De plus, la postulation inaugurale de l'ouvrage où la nouvelle approche a été proposée : «*Le bon sens est la chose du monde la mieux distribuée*» (Descartes 1966, 33) se voit, elle aussi, dépourvue de l'envergure nonobstant son caractère général qui établissait la formule au niveau des vérités irrécusables ne pouvant ainsi pas être contredites.

Néanmoins, la vraie «pensée» surréaliste ne devrait être créée qu'en totale indépendance de l'objet de la pensée et des modalités qui la conditionnent. Les surréalistes prenaient de grands airs la disposition d'esprit d'après laquelle ce qui existe possède sa raison d'être et peut – par conséquent – être considéré comme intelligible. Le surréalisme eut peur de l'intelligible. Ses adhérents invoquaient que la raison ne saurait être la source de la connaissance et contestaient sa légitimité concernant les moyens de l'appréhension dont le soubassement est la faculté propre à l'être humain de penser, de connaître et de juger. C'est celle qui se présente sous le terme de «la raison» : nominalement c'est ce qui permet de distinguer le genre *homo sapiens sapiens* des autres, dans l'univers du vivant :

1 *Id est* : le doute, la division, la synthèse et la vérification.

«Pour nous, jeunes surréalistes de 1924, la grande «prostituée», c'était la raison. Nous jugions que cartésiens, voltairiens et autres fonctionnaires de l'intelligence, ne l'avait fait servir qu'à la conservation des valeurs à la fois établies et mortes, tout en affectant un non-conformisme de façade. Et, en accusation suprême, de lui avoir donné pour besogne mercenaire de persifler «l'Amour, la Poésie». Cette dénonciation fut faite par notre groupe avec une extrême vigueur» (Masson 1976, 16-17).

André Breton allait encore plus loin lorsqu'il avançait que la logique devrait être démise du rang qu'elle occupait et reléguée parmi les outils secondaires. La logique, sous-entendue par le chef du groupe surréaliste, doit être étymologiquement entendue dans le sens qu'il recouvre l'ensemble de ses acceptations. Le terme «la logique» vient du mot «*logos*». Celui-ci indique le discours : comme le discours *via pars pro toto* reflète la capacité de produire des signes linguistiques, ceux-ci s'exprimant au niveau des messages organisés, au niveau de la syntaxe, le *logos* connote la langue. Comme celle-ci ne peut être organisée que d'une façon logique, la langue équivaut à la rationalité. Dans la philosophie grecque – dont le christianisme, l'assise de l'esprit occidental, hérita – le *logos* est considéré comme la raison de tout ce qui existe contenant en soi des germes ontologiques de l'existence d'autre chose.

Par là, le mot «logique» rejoint la formulation cartésienne du «*bon sens*», au moins en ce qui concerne le caractère général de cette notion : la rationalité est l'*anabasis*, la clef universelle qui permet de se procurer l'essence des choses qui existent, d'appréhender leur nature intelligible et de soumettre ses éléments aux actes intellectuels du jugement analytique. De ce point de vue, le grief contre le «*bon sens*» (Descartes 1966, 33) qui termine « l'appel » d'André Breton ne devrait pas surprendre :

«Nous vivons encore sous le règne de la logique, voilà, bien entendu, à quoi je voulais en venir. Mais les procédés logiques, de nos jours, ne s'appliquent plus qu'à la résolution de problèmes d'intérêt secondaire. Le rationalisme absolu qui reste de mode ne permet de considérer que des faits relevant étroitement de notre expérience.² Les fins logiques, par contre, nous échappent. Inutile d'ajouter que l'expérience même s'est vu assigner les limites. Elle tourne dans une cage d'où il est de plus en plus difficile de la faire sortir. Elle s'appuie, elle aussi, sur l'utilité immédiate, et elle est gardée par le bon sens» (Breton 1924, 18-19).

Voulant davantage dégrader le domaine de l'intelligible, Breton passe à argumenter l'insuffisance de la raison qui ne saurait fournir que «*des faits relevant étroitement de notre expérience*» ce qui le ramène dans la contradiction : en se servant d'une nouvelle analogie pour montrer les faiblesses du raisonnement, il confronte

2 Cité *supra*.

celui-ci au terme de l'image, celle-ci lui étant, d'après André Breton, nettement supérieure. Or, pour le démontrer, il remet – à son insu – la même image au rang de l'empirisme, c'est-à-dire, au niveau des faits qui servent d'expérience. Le seul enseigne des compétences intellectuelles (le synonyme de la notion «esprit» dont il se sert) serait la faculté qui est reliée «aux problèmes d'intérêt secondaire». Les étincelles et le réseau des idées qu'elles évoquent n'appartiennent qu'au niveau de l'expérience puisqu'elles ne sont perceptibles que par les sens :

» Et de même que la longueur de l'étincelle gagne à ce que celle-ci se produise à travers des gaz raréfiés, l'atmosphère surréaliste créée par l'écriture mécanique, que j'ai tenu à mettre à la portée de tous, se prête particulièrement à la production des plus belles images «. (Breton 1924, 12).

Qu'est-ce que l'étincelle, substitut extralinguistique de l'image sinon un «des faits relevant étroitement de notre expérience» ?³ L'auteur devrait en être conscient, d'autant plus que l'image surréaliste n'est définie que par les termes qui concernent l'expérience. Il appartient toujours au niveau du vécu, c'est donc un fait perçu nominativement. Fait parallèle à cette mise en évidence personnelle, le texte suivant qui met en relief l'expérience comme la clef de toute appréhension de l'outil fondamental du mouvement : «Avec la modernité, que les futurs surréalistes ont déjà découverte chez Apollinaire, la sincérité, qui donne à sa poésie la force poignante de l'expérience vécue « (Légoutière 1972, 36).

L'antinomie s'approfondit dans le texte suivant qui est anthologique en ce qui concerne le rapport entre l'image et l'esprit.⁴ L'image guiderait l'esprit ; celui-ci s'alimentant par les sens, par l'expérience. Hausser les images au-dessus de la raison, c'est suspendre (contredire) leur existence parce que c'est l'expérience qui les fournit à l'entendement. A ne pas parler du fait que les images, dans leur complexité, ne pourraient exister que par la raison et en raison, «bon sens» comme l'appelle Descartes. C'est la garantie de leur «compréhensibilité» par n'importe quel auditoire ou lectorat. Le réseau identitaire entre «l'image», «l'expérience» et «l'esprit» est soumis au contresens, à un arbitraire libéré de toute entrave en ce qui concerne les normes du discours :

» On peut même dire que les images apparaissent, dans cette course vertigineuse, comme les seuls guidons de l'esprit. L'esprit se convainc peu à peu de la réalité suprême de ces images. Se bornant d'abord à les subir, il s'aperçoit bientôt qu'elles flattent sa raison, augmentent d'autant sa connaissance. Il prend conscience des étendues illimitées où se manifestent ses désirs, où le pour et le

3 Cité *supra*.

4 L'entendement égale l'esprit, à voir la définition du mot *in fine*.

contre se réduisent sans cesse, où son obscurité ne le trahit pas. Il va, porté par ces images qui le ravissent, qui lui laissent à peine le temps de souffler sur le feu de ses doigts « (Breton 1924, 12).

Or, ce serait se méprendre sur l'essentiel que de penser que les postulats de l'illogisme que les surréalistes mettaient en relief ciblaient les analyses formelles de la connaissance et le raisonnement que proposaient la philosophie des lumières et celle du rationalisme, notamment la pensée de Voltaire et celle de Descartes. L'ambition du groupe visait plus loin que cela, quoi qu'implicitement. Se voulant instrument de connaissance, le surréalisme se confrontait, à son insu, aux antinomies que le nouveau mode de «penser» n'était pas capable d'envisager, ni de s'en rendre compte, à vrai dire. Ce qui manquait au surréalisme c'étaient les exigences de l'esprit spéculatif. Faute de ça les surréalistes voulant écarter les conventions de la vérité ontologique du langage, telles que les différentes écoles les ont introduites dans la pensée et la civilisation occidentale, se sont heurtés inévitablement aux postulats fondamentaux sans lesquels il n'y pas de pensée, ni occidentale ni une autre.

Ils sont passés outre aux axiomes qui permettent à toute pensée de naître et de s'exprimer comme telle. L'avis critique mettait en question plus que la philosophie dualiste et rationaliste représentée – dans les yeux d'un Français : et les surréalistes étaient français et ne raisonnaient qu'à la française – par Descartes et de Voltaire. La critique ambitionnait davantage et ce qu'elle envisageait comme «*problèmes d'intérêt secondaire*» était, en fait, un problème du premier plan, une réalité, *a parte ante*.

Les surréalistes ne pouvant pas entendre la pensée en tant que telle eurent recours à la série d'accidents circonstanciels par lesquels ils tâchaient de redéfinir «la pensée» en la ployant à toutes sortes de circonstances et de modifications bien que cela ait entraîné des paralogismes. La pensée est un phénomène univoque : son statut ontologique empêche de lui donner des épithètes : il n'y a pas d'épithète non plus concernant le verbe être. Lorsque les surréalistes décidèrent de traiter «la pensée» dans le sens équivoque, la pensée qu'ils envisageaient n'était plus la pensée dans le sens propre du terme. Il n'y a pas de pensée qui fonctionnerait «*réellement*» comme il n'y a pas de pensée qui serait «dictée» *en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale*» (Breton 1924, 12). Si on astreint la pensée à un mode pareil *des aléas*, elle cesse d'exister. Les circonstances que les surréalistes stipulaient afin que la «pensée» existe, n'existaient pas, au moins dans le sens de permettre à la pensée d'exister. C'est une antinomie. Il n'y a pas des pensées, il y a la pensée.

Le raisonnement surréaliste s'avère donc un apriorisme mal fondé surtout si on considère que les surréalistes se définissaient avant tout comme des intellectuels : quelle serait donc cette intellectualité privée de la pensée intelligible : «*Donc envisageant l'origine est la portée du surréalisme comme le mouvement intellectuel spontané,*

nous sommes amenés à reconnaître qu'il ne peut désormais s'engager que dans deux directions» (Naville, 1975, 76). L'aporie tend à s'approfondir davantage étant donné le fait que la famille d'esprit surréaliste est communément perçue dans le sens de former une école philosophique présentant un courant autonome de pensée : «*Au sens le plus étroit, le surréalisme est un procédé d'écriture, au sens large une attitude philosophique qui est en même temps une mystique (ou qui le fut), une poétique, et une politique*» (Raymond 1940, 282). De plus : comment faire «de la politique» «*en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale*» (Breton 1924, 12) est une question *per se*. Quelle serait la politique qui serait conçue «*en dehors de toute préoccupation morale*»? Le siècle d'André Breton en a, pourtant, fourni quelques modèles néfastes.

Il n'y notamment pas de pensée en dehors de la langue et il n'y pas de langue en dehors des catégories linguistiques, basées sur la prédication et présupposant l'objet de toute pensée. Il n'y a pas de pensée sans objet ; la pensée reliée par la prédication à son complément requiert l'objet : elle ne peut pas exister autrement. Le lien reliant les membres du syntagme originel est celui qui a permis – à un moment donné – l'évolution de l'homme moderne. Le cartésianisme et le voltairianisme sont des phénomènes *ex post* ; on pourrait volontiers les définir comme *d'intérêt secondaire* par rapport aux propositions posées *a priori*. Ainsi :

«C'est pourquoi Heidegger insiste tout autant que Benveniste sur cette fusion entre fonction et sens qu'il comprend évidemment, non comme obstacle accidentel à l'intelligibilité linguistique, mais comme abri historial de la multiplicité, rappel de «la façon dont les Grecs comprenaient l'essence de l'être» (Heidegger 1967, 100)» (Cassin 1998, 28).

L'homme est un être de l'intelligible : la logique qui organise le langage (dans l'aperception saussurienne du mot) est le pivot autour duquel tournent les événements ontologiques qui lui sont propres. Ce n'est rien ce que Voltaire et Descartes auraient conçu : c'est une prédisposition qui est propre à l'homme, depuis ses origines :

«C'est alors, dans un temps indécidable de l'histoire ou de l'origine qu'interfèrent le syntaxique et le sémantique, le grammatical et le lexical, et que déteignent l'un sur l'autre le «est» de la logique et le est de réel. La fonction assertive, précipitable en sens véridatif, le montrait déjà par cette hybridation même » (Cassin 1998, 26).

Dénoncer «*la grande 'prostituée', la raison*» et mettre au banc des accusés les *fonctionnaires de l'intelligence*⁵ ainsi que «la logique»⁶ est lourd de conséquences,

5 Cité *supra*.

6 Cité *supra*.

puisque l'histoire de la pensée se présente en tant que domaine de l'intelligible, tout processus mental dont l'équivalence étaient les opérations de l'intelligence ou l'usage du «*bon sens, la chose la mieux distribuée du monde*» (Descartes 1966, 33) fut existant, avant l'invention de la représentation, à l'aide de signes graphiques établis de façon conventionnelle, de la parole, de la pensée. La parole et la pensée naissent avec l'homme : comme les surréalistes étaient de «*genus*» de l'espèce qui ne différait de celui dont la définition se réduit au genre animal, capable de se servir du code sémiotique et de transmettre ainsi la culture, ils ne pouvaient pas ignorer les étapes évolutives dans le devenir de l'homme dont ils étaient la dernière flambée, si on adopte le point de vue diachronique en se mettant à l'actualité de l'année 1924. La «révolution surréaliste» visait le surréalisme lui-même et menaçait de supprimer, d'une façon plus qu'efficace, l'arsenal de ses armes puissantes, parmi lesquelles l'expérience de communiquer en signes linguistiques et de se servir du triplet formé du signifié, du signifiant et de ses règles d'emploi. Le lien entre les trois notions, ainsi que la logique syntaxique étaient toujours là : il a permis la naissance de l'articulation intellectuelle, dans la multiplicité de ses apparences, depuis l'avènement de l'homme ou de l'invention de l'écriture. Le mouvement surréaliste fait partie de l'ensemble quoiqu'il y refuse l'allégeance.

Lorsque le «*temps indécidable de l'histoire ou de l'origine*» (Cassin 1998, 28) se concrétise et fait apparaître les premiers penseurs qui passent à l'élaboration des systèmes, les règles qui régissent les représentations,⁷ soit abstraites soit concrètes, «des phénomènes de l'univers» étaient disponibles de même façon qu'ils le sont aujourd'hui. La civilisation de la parole est redevable aux Grecs, premièrement :

«Le fait que la formation de la grammaire occidentale soit due à la réflexion grecque sur la langue grecque donne à ce processus toute sa signification. Car cette langue est, avec l'allemand, au point de vue des possibilités du penser, à la fois la plus puissante de toutes et celle et le plus la langue de l'esprit » (Heidegger 1967, 67).

C'est une phrase à l'intérieur de laquelle on substituerait facilement une langue à une autre (l'allemand pourrait être, *e.g.* remplacé par le français, la langue plus complète), le message de l'existentialiste ne subirait, pourtant, aucun changement.

Aristote est celui qui a procédé à l'analyse de l'ontologie de la langue, le moyen d'action et l'instrument *sine qua non* de tout transfert linguistique.⁸ Ainsi :

7 La représentation implique la communication.

8 Le texte suivant est extrait du sixième chapitre du livre *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, intitulé : «Catégories de pensée est catégories de la langue». Sa référence principale est la pensée d'Aristote concernant la langue et ses catégories.

«Cette grande structure, qui enferme des structures plus petites et de plusieurs niveaux, donne sa forme au contenu de pensée. (...) Ce contenu doit passer par la langue et en emprunter les cadres. Autrement, la pensée se réduit sinon exactement à rien, en tout cas à quelque chose de si vague et de si indifférencié que nous n'avons aucun moyen de l'appréhender comme «contenu» distinct de la forme que la langue lui confère. La forme linguistique est donc non seulement la condition de transmissibilité, mais d'abord la condition de la réalisation de la pensée. Nous ne saisissons la pensée que déjà appropriée aux cadres de la langue» (Benveniste 1968, 64).

Benveniste reprend la logique cartésienne : il établit le lien identitaire entre la forme linguistique et la pensée. Par la suite il postule résolument :

«C'est à dire que la question de savoir si la pensée peut se passer de la langue ou la tourner comme un obstacle, pour peu qu'on analyse avec rigueur les données en présence apparaît dénuée de sens» (Benveniste, 1968, 64).

Le couplet « *la forme linguistique* » et « *la pensée* » est corroboré par l'introduction de *tertium comparationis* sans lequel ne sont possibles ni la pensée ni son équivalent linguistique, c'est l'objet de la pensée. Ce sont les classes dans lesquelles on répartit chacun des genres les plus généraux de l'actualité afin de pouvoir organiser l'expérience. A travers la substance qui se propose les modes d'exister dont la liste est close⁹ la pensée s'ancre dans la réalité telle que la raison la perçoit. Notamment, la citation suivante a le caractère d'une amère leçon quant au surréalisme :

«Or, nous avons la bonne fortune de disposer de données qu'on dirait prêtes pour notre examen, élaborées et présentées de manière objective, intégrées dans un ensemble connu : ce sont les catégories d'Aristote. Il nous sera permis de considérer ces catégories comme la liste des concepts a priori qui, selon lui, organisent l'expérience. C'est un document de grande valeur pour notre propos» (Benveniste 1968, 65).

À charge de revanche, Benveniste, sur le chemin de l'ontologie, relit les catégories du Philosophe à la forme comme réalité intelligible immanente à la matière sensible et à la pensée, relevant de l'expérience. Rien dans l'intelligible n'existe en dehors de la logique. Les catégories reprises par Benveniste d'après Aristote, ont pour soubassement la logique, puisque l'être même est logique : il ne saurait exister sans celle-ci et vice versa

Les apories de l'approche surréaliste revêtent le caractère insurmontable lorsque la faculté qui remplacerait la raison est en jeu. Le surréalisme postu-

9 Ce sont : substance, quantité, qualité, relation, lieu, temps, position, avoir, agir, subir, bref toutes les modalités et propriétés de l'être que la raison humaine peut concevoir.

lait l'imagination qui se substituerait à l'intelligible. Pourtant l'imagination n'est autre chose qu'un des dérivés de la pensée consciente et rationnellement organisée. L'imagination est le pouvoir de se représenter ou de former des images à travers l'esprit, à partir des éléments qui proviennent de perceptions sensorielles ou bien sont formés *via abstrahendi*. Evolutivement, elle est l'outil de la conscience réflexive née du besoin de résoudre les problèmes par l'utilisation de la simulation mentale.

Il existe deux sortes d'imagination, active et passive. La première apparaît sous la forme de l'activité cognitive : son but est de réassembler différents souvenirs (ou impressions) pour former une nouvelle représentation dont se servira l'esprit. La deuxième apparaît quand l'esprit se représente involontairement les impressions sensibles. L'imagination et les images comme son produit, bien qu'enveloppées par les fervents du mouvement dans un langage abscons – au moins pour les profanes – se reconnaissent unanimement dans les termes, repris d'après *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*¹⁰ et exposés *supra*. Ce sont les surréalistes qui l'admettent en premier.

«*La beauté de l'image, sa «lumière» tient à la fulgurance d'une révélation. L'esprit d'abord ébloui se convainc peu à peu de la réalité suprême de ces images (Breton 1924, 52)* » (Abastado 1971, 83). Et, dans l'espace du même paragraphe : «*Cette connaissance peut être conçue comme subjective ou objective, témoignage sur la psyché ou sur le monde, selon que l'esprit est passif ou actif*» (Abastado 1971, 83). Encore plus relevant est le texte qui concerne le programme du mouvement, celui de Louis Aragon :

«*Cette peur de l'erreur, que dans la fuite de mes idées tout, à tout instant me rappelle, cette manie de contrôle, fait préférer à l'homme l'imagination de la raison à l'imagination des sens. Et pourtant c'est toujours l'imagination seule qui agit. Rien ne peut m'assurer de la réalité, rien ne peut m'assurer que je la fonde sur un délire d'interprétation, ni la rigueur d'une logique ni la force d'une sensation. Mais dans ce dernier cas l'homme qui en a passé par diverses écoles séculaires s'est pris à douter de soi-même : par quel jeu de miroirs fût-ce au profit de l'autre processus de pensée on l'imagine*» (Aragon 1928, 12).

Ce qui est surprenant, c'est que Louis Aragon mette en œuvre le mécanisme cartésien du doute qu'il paraît pasticher du texte où le philosophe en parle. Dans les *Méditations métaphysiques*, Descartes, afin d'établir le socle de la gnoséologie, chasse notamment les «*délires d'interprétation*» (Aragon 1928, 12) que pourrait imposer «*un certain mauvais génie*» (Descartes 2011, 67). Par là le philosophe fonde l'école du doute : la lignée rationaliste qui institue le *cogito* et par cela établit l'autonomie du sujet. Le *cogito* cartésien est libéré par le doute qui remplace le sujet

10 Cf : <https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A9I0182>, consulté le 27 juillet, 2019.

dans l'individualisme de la modernité où il ne dépend que des décisions qui émanent de «soi».

Or, la liberté et le statut de l'indépendance sont ce que revendiquaient les surréalistes lorsqu'ils requéraient un sujet affranchi de toute entrave, surtout de celle des contraintes de la pensée, obliérée et faussée par le prétendu despotisme du raisonnement occidental. En fait : le surréalisme a profité du sujet¹¹ qui a été davantage libéré par la révolution gnoséologique de l'époque rationaliste. Celle-ci se résumait au doute cartésien, indissociable des opérations mentales qui ont – en conséquence – institué le *suppositus* de toute opération se réclamant de caractère «surréaliste». Si on paraphrasait Aragon on mettrait de la sorte : «*Voltaire et Descartes sont surréalistes au même point que Stagrite et Benveniste*» ... Parce que, si on cherchait un mot qui reprendrait efficacement l'entreprise, on hésiterait entre «la négation» et, surtout, «le doute».

En conséquence, le sujet cartésien et celui des surréalistes se rencontrent dans une étrange coïncidence. Celle-ci est logique parce que les objectifs de la philosophie de *cogito* et ceux de l'individuation de la conscience autonome, susceptible des procédés jusqu'à alors inouïs¹², sont concomitants. Il ne faut que considérer les uns et les autres dans l'optique à laquelle est conforme le présent écrit. Ceci n'a pourtant rien de surprenant : depuis l'invention de l'écriture, signe métonymique de l'identité de l'homme moderne, les énigmes analogues tourmentaient ceux qui voulait apporter une réponse aux arcanes de la langue : les approches et les résultats des recherches ne pouvaient pas différer essentiellement les uns des autres, puisque la matière sur laquelle s'imposaient les exercices fut uniforme et commandait le chemin de recherche dans les sens apparentés. Une lecture comparée des textes relève notamment l'enjeu de la coïncidence évoquée :

«Je supposerai donc qu'il y a, non pas que Dieu, qui est très bon et qui est la souveraine source de vérité, mais qu'un certain mauvais génie, non moins rusé et trompeur que puissant, a employé toute son industrie à me tromper. Je penserai que le ciel, l'air, la terre, les couleurs, les figures, les sons et toutes les choses extérieures que nous voyons, ne sont que des illusions et tromperies, dont il se sert pour surprendre ma crédulité. Je me considérerai moi-même comme n'ayant point de mains, point d'yeux, point de chair, point de sang, comme n'ayant aucun sens, mais croyant faussement avoir toutes ces choses. Je demeurerai obstinément attaché à cette pensée ; et si, par ce moyen, il n'est pas en mon pouvoir de parvenir à la connaissance d'aucune vérité, à tout le moins il est en ma puissance de suspendre mon jugement» (Descartes 2011, 67).

11 Le sujet dans le sens de ce (celui) qui est le siège des événements ontologiques, c'est-à-dire, la personne humaine.

12 *Id est* : écriture automatique et la mécanique des images.

À confondre l'entendement, l'image surréaliste, produit de l'imagination, provenant « *des profondeurs de notre esprit* » (Breton 1924, 5) – et obtenue par le processus de l'écriture automatique – se compose des éléments que l'esprit ne peut saisir qu'à l'intérieur du paradigme se fondant sur l'intelligible. La structure de l'image est en conformité avec la dénomination de l'entité du premier niveau quant à l'articulation sémiologique : l'image est – du point de vue de l'ontologie du signe – une entité bipartite. Elle dénote une « chose » en dehors du langage par les moyens du langage articulé. L'image surréaliste confirme notamment l'appréhension structuraliste sur les rapports étroits entre la science de la langue et celle des signes. Aux yeux de Ferdinand de Saussure la linguistique n'était qu'une branche de la sémiologie, la branche toutefois la plus développée, en raison de la complexité du langage. Que l'image soit un signe ultra complexe, les surréalistes le savaient parmi les premiers puisqu'ils tenaient à faire d'elle un outil pour décrypter les messages codés : une langue se servira des signes linguistiques qu'on appelle communément les mots : à l'aide de ceux-ci on découvre – en les nommant¹³ – les entités de l'univers extralinguistique. « *Breton veut voir en image un moyen de déchiffrer le monde qui s'offre à l'esprit comme cryptogramme* » (Abastado 1971, 83).

Aux yeux d'André Breton, l'image serait un outil de l'intelligence : « déchiffrer » équivaut notamment à comprendre ce qui se présente de façon peu distincte ou difficilement intelligible. Le fondateur du mouvement paraît intrigué par l'intelligible : Ferdinand Alquié s'est, à propos de l'ambiguïté intrinsèque exprimé de la sorte¹⁴ :

« Breton reprend à son compte une théorie qui domina l'enseignement philosophique jusqu'aux environs de 1935, théorie selon laquelle l'imagination est une faculté « réalisante », les images tendant, d'elles-mêmes à s'imposer à nous et à se donner pour réelles. Cette théorie issue du cartésianisme, se retrouve dans les philosophies pourtant opposées, de Taine à Bergson » (Alquié, 1955, 170).

Ferdinand Alquié est une voix esseulée en ce qui concerne la mise en évidence des paradoxes du mouvement.¹⁵ Il a proposé de même une explication de ce que l'œuvre de Breton est, en fait, une formule de binôme :

13 Plus concrètement : On opère le transfert de la nominalisation qui passe de la chose nommée par le vocable qui nomme au système d'une langue concrète : le contenu que présuppose la réalité extralinguistique est désormais à la portée des interlocuteurs de la même communauté linguistique.

14 Ferdinand Alquié considérait le surréalisme comme une sorte de philosophie.

15 Il faudrait mentionner aussi Maurice Nadeau qui évoque le caractère rationnel du mouvement en définissant l'époque entre 1925 et 1930 dans le sens de « la période raisonnée du surréalisme ». Cf : Nadeau, Maurice : « La Période raisonnée du surréalisme ». In : *L'Histoire du surréalisme*. Paris : Seuil, 1964, 95.

«Breton, au contraire, ne cède jamais tout à fait à l'irrationalité des images. Le contrôle de la lucidité, les normes morales de la signification des œuvres lui importent toujours. D'aucune production automatique in ne renonce à découvrir le sens ; aux richesses de l'inconscient, il veut joindre les lumières de la conscience» (Alquié 1955, 177).

L'image doit être reliée à l'esprit : elle en est le produit précieux. Pierre Reverdy met le lien entre l'image et l'esprit en tête de son texte sur l'image poétique : «*L'image est une création pure de l'esprit*» (Reverdy 1918, 3). Académie française définit l'esprit comme «*Principe de pensée*»¹⁶ et elle rajoute : «*Faculté de comprendre, intelligence, intellect*»¹⁷ et : «*Forme particulière de l'intelligence*»¹⁸. Comme une des cooccurrences sur la liste des emplois possibles le dictionnaire propose la phrase : «*Les Français ont la réputation d'avoir l'esprit cartésien*»¹⁹. L'image surréaliste émane donc de la même faculté que le raisonnement puisque l'esprit et l'intelligence ou la raison sont synonymes. C'est ce qui est sous-entendu dans l'extrait suivant :

» Si les profondeurs de notre esprit recèlent d'étranges forces capables d'augmenter celles de la surface, ou de lutter victorieusement contre elles, il y a tout intérêt à les capter, à les capter d'abord, pour les soumettre ensuite, s'il y a lieu, au contrôle de notre raison. Les analystes eux-mêmes n'ont qu'à y gagner. Mais il importe d'observer qu'aucun moyen n'est désigné a priori pour la conduite de cette entreprise, que jusqu'à nouvel ordre elle peut passer pour être aussi bien du ressort des poètes que des savants et que son succès ne dépend pas des voies plus ou moins capricieuses qui seront suivies « (Breton 1924, 5).

Le jugement d'André Breton se trouve corroboré par l'analyse à laquelle passe Marcel Raymond dans son livre présentant la figure de référence sur le sujet :

«Notons que ces images, plus ou moins absurdes logiquement, plus ou moins déconcertantes pour les sens, en raison de leur étrangeté, engendrent cependant de représentations sensibles ; des feux-follets bondissent de-ci, de-là, des irradiations, des ondes hertziennes se propagent dans la nuit. L'esprit, quelque précaution qu'il prenne pour s'isoler, ne peut faire qu'il ne soit nourri d'éléments venus du monde extérieur ; il ne peut raconter son histoire, si intérieure soit-elle, qu'en empruntant des formes qui ont des corps et qui portent des noms» (Raymond 1940, 287).

Les images surréalistes quoi que veuillent leurs auteurs se ploient à la logique qui règle les actes de parole ou les assertions que l'on se propose afin de former

16 Cf: <https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A9E2642>, consulté le 27 juillet 2019.

17 *Ibidem*.

18 *Ibidem*.

19 *Ibidem*.

un message. Afin de transmettre les «représentations sensibles»²⁰ les surréalistes recourent à l'arsenal qui fait parti du canon de la poésie en tant que telle : «Image, image poétique ou métaphore sont synonymes aux yeux des surréalistes qui d'ailleurs ne retiennent pas la distinction scolaire entre comparaison et métaphore» (José 1973, 90). Le surréalisme ne recule ni devant l'analogie qui est par son origine un outil philosophique puisqu'elle concerne la répartition de l'être.²¹ Et même lorsque les surréalistes se proposent d'interpréter les entités opaques de leur imaginaire, ils retombent dans l'aporie, car ils sont obligés de se servir de la logique formelle à laquelle ils ont contesté la suprématie pour ne pas dire la valeur. Ils ne peuvent sortir de l'impasse sans avoir au préalable rétabli l'objet dans sa forme initiale :

«À la faveur de ces identités élémentaires, dit Eluard, de nouvelles images, plus arbitraires parce que formelles, se composent : le bocal de ta voix, les tiroirs du vallon»²². Plus précisément, il faudrait dire que l'imagination opère ici en passant d'un objet à un autre objet voisin dans l'espace (poisson → bocal, langue → voix, argenterie → tiroirs, ruisseau → vallon) : procès métonymique ; puis la syntaxe associe – de manière «formelle» dit Eluard – bocal et vallon, comme s'associaient par analogie sémantique partielle, poisson et langue, argenterie et ruisseau» (Abastado 1971, 86).

L'analogie des images surréalistes n'est possible qu'à l'intérieur d'un système des signes qui est celui dont l'exégèse littéraire et philosophique se sert lors de l'analyse de tout texte. Le surréalisme – malgré le charme discret de son apriorisme – n'est pas une exception qui confirmerait la règle. Il confirme la règle, sans exception.

L'imaginaire surréaliste se laisse expliquer par les termes de la syntaxe et logique quotidienne. Prenant deux exemples de l'art du mouvement, *Le Grand Masturbateur*²³ et *L'Âge d'or*.²⁴ On donne volontiers la trame du récit que fournissent les données encyclopédiques à propos de *L'Âge d'or*. Le contenu du film abonde de réseaux des significations prélevées sur la vie du quotidien. A-t-on vu quelque chose de plus dépourvu d'originalité que l'histoire d'un couple dont le bonheur (c'est-à-dire, la liberté sexuelle) est menacé par l'entourage familial ? Pour faire l'écho les auteurs durent recourir au scandale, aux messageries roses d'un érotomane : le marquis de Sade faisait l'objet d'une lecture illégale à l'époque : on

20 Cité supra.

21 Cf : Przywara, Erich. *Analogia entis*. Einsiedeln : Johannes-Verlag, 1962.

22 L'auteur analyse le poème « Ta langue, le poisson rouge dans le bocal de ta voix » in : Apollinaire, Guillaume. *Œuvres poétiques*. Paris : Gallimard, 1965, p. 56 et « Les Reposoirs de la procession ». In : [https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Les_Reposoirs_de_la_procession_\(1893\)/Tome_I](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Les_Reposoirs_de_la_procession_(1893)/Tome_I), consulté le 28 juillet 2019.

23 Cf : https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Grand_Masturbateur, consulté le 30 juillet 2019.

24 Cf : [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%27%C3%82ge_d%27or_\(film,_1930\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%27%C3%82ge_d%27or_(film,_1930)), consulté le 29 juillet 2019.

n'avait d'accès à ses textes que sur autorisation, ce qui n'est plus le cas. La mise en œuvre des « pionniers » cinématographiques de la provenance surréaliste pourrait aujourd'hui paraître sans intérêt, la clientèle « assagie » qu'un tel film enthousiasmait à l'époque a disparu : celle d'actualité préférerait jeter son dévolu sur des sujets plus scabreux. *L'Âge d'or* laisse de plus en plus l'auditoire sur sa faim :

« Histoire de la communion totale mais éphémère de deux amants que séparent les conventions familiales et sociales et les interdits sexuels et religieux, le film est une succession d'épisodes allégoriques teintés d'humour noir, commençant par un documentaire sur les scorpions et s'achevant sur une transposition des Cent Vingt Journées de Sodome de Sade. »²⁵

En ce qui concerne *Le Grand Masturbateur*, la toile est une allégorie de l'auteur lui-même. Son exégèse serait moins difficile que celle d'un *Espolio*²⁶ qui offre une gamme d'interprétations, la majorité d'elle, depuis la découverte de Maurice Barrès (Barrès 1994, 511), allant dans les sens différents et contradictoires.

Il ne peut pas en être autrement, puisque l'unique « surréalité » dont dispose le genre *homo sapiens sapiens* sont la logique, l'intelligence et la raison. Tout le reste n'est que du *bluff*.

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25 *Ibidem*

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Protislovja nadrealizma

Ta študija se ukvarja z vprašanjem aporij, ki zadevajo nadrealistično pojmovanje jezika in njegovih pesniških orodij. Nadrealisti so močno nasprotovali pojmovanju, da je to, kar obstaja, razumu dostopno in zato za razumljivo. Trdili so, da obstaja sfera onkraj realnosti, v katero razum ni sposoben prodreti. A vsa orodja in imaginarij njihove poetične govornice

so bila zasnovana na elementih razuma, četudi si tega niso hoteli priznati in so razumu odrekli sleherno legitimnost. Študija prikazuje, kako so bila njihova teoretična utemeljevanja lastne poetike v esencialnem smislu protislovna.

Ključne besede: nadrealizem, razum, misel, duh, Descartes, Voltaire, Breton, jezik, jezikoslovje, znak, Benveniste, Saussure, protislovje.

Abstract

The present study addresses the problem of the aporias which concern the surrealist conception of language and its poetic tools. The surrealists opposed to the mindset which supposes that what exists has its *raison d'être* and can - therefore - be considered intelligible. They postulated that there is a sphere beyond reality in which reason is not able to penetrate. But all the tools that the surrealists proposed in order to penetrate to a higher sphere of reality were in fact designed out of the modalities of reasoning.

Key words: surrealism, reason, thought, spirit, Descartes, Voltaire, Breton, language, linguistics, sign, Benveniste, Saussure, antinomy.

Traduire Chateaubriand dans le Vermont : les *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* dans *Le livre des illusions* de Paul Auster

Katarina Marinčič

Résumé

Cet article présente une analyse des rapports intertextuels entre le roman *Le livre des illusions* (*The Book of Illusions*) de Paul Auster et les *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* de François-René de Chateaubriand. Le protagoniste-narrateur du roman, bouleversé par une tragédie personnelle, recouvre une raison de vivre dans la tâche quasi impossible de faire une traduction intégrale des *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*. Au cours de l'histoire racontée dans le roman, l'immensité de ce travail entre au second plan. Initialement ressentie comme « un tas de charbon à pelleter », l'autobiographie de Chateaubriand devient un modèle à suivre au niveau formel aussi bien qu'au niveau moral. L'ambition de parler de l'au-delà s'impose à la fois comme l'objectif de vie du protagoniste et comme le squelette narratif du roman.

Mots-clés: Paul Auster, François René de Chateaubriand, intertextualité, traduction, autobiographie

DAVID ZIMMER ET SES DEUX ANGES SAUVEURS

Bien qu'intitulé *Le livre des illusions* (*The Book of Illusions*), le dixième roman de Paul Auster, publié en 2002, se présente avant tout comme un livre sur le deuil. L'histoire primaire, qui constitue le cadre narratif du roman, est celle d'un homme frappé par la plus grande tragédie imaginable, la mort soudaine de ses proches. Après avoir perdu son épouse et ses deux fils dans un accident d'avion, David Zimmer, professeur de littérature, quadragénaire, continue à vivre sans raison de vivre, se noyant dans une stupeur continue, s'isolant de plus en plus, passant ses soirées à boire et à regarder la télévision. Son premier ange sauveur lui apparaît au cours d'une telle soirée. Un extrait d'un vieux film muet le fait rire pour la première fois depuis la disparition de sa famille.

That was how things stood for me when Hector Mann unexpectedly walked into my life. I had no idea who he was, had never even stumbled across a reference to his name, but one night just before the start of winter, when the trees had finally gone bare and the first snow was threatening to fall, I happened to see a clip from one of his old films on television, and it made me laugh. That might not sound important, but it was the first time I had laughed at anything since June, and when I felt that unexpected spasm rise up through my chest and begin to rattle around in my lungs, I understood that I hadn't hit bottom yet, that there was still some piece of me that wanted to go on living. (Auster 9)

Le comédien appelé Hector Mann, lui aussi personnage fictif, sera le deuxième héros du livre, le protagoniste de l'histoire encadrée par le récit à la première personne de Zimmer. C'est donc Zimmer qui nous racontera la vie tourmentée de Mann : il le fera avec une empathie hors du commun, surprenante de la part de quelqu'un qui est en train de reconstruire sa propre existence.

Avant de se plonger dans le destin de l'homme, Zimmer se consacre à l'étude de son œuvre :

I wrote the book because I wanted to share my enthusiasm for Hector's work. The story of his life was secondary to me, and rather than speculate on what might or might not have happened to him, I stuck to a close reading of the films themselves. (*ibid.* 3)

Il le fait par reconnaissance, pour payer sa dette envers l'artiste qui lui avait rendu la capacité de rire, mais aussi pour passer le temps, pour se donner une raison de se lever le matin. Après la publication de sa monographie sur Hector Mann (intitulée *Le Monde silencieux d'Hector Mann*, *The Silent World of Hector Mann*), Zimmer retombe dans la léthargie.

Il fait un séjour prolongé à New York, puis retourne dans le Vermont où il avait

vécu avec sa famille. Au lieu de retourner dans leur ancienne maison, il s'installe dans un bungalow sans caractère qui lui convient parce qu'il est vide de souvenirs. De nouveau, il sombre dans le désespoir.

L'ange qui vient à son secours cette fois n'est pas un personnage inventé. Il s'appelle François René de Chateaubriand. Selon Zimmer, il est l'auteur de *la meilleure autobiographie jamais écrite* (Auster-Le Bœuf 72), *the best autobiography ever written* (Auster 60).

En effet, l'apparition de Chateaubriand dans la vie de Zimmer, quoique littéralement une apparition d'outre-tombe, n'est pas si miraculeuse que celle de Mann. Devenu superstitieux dans son isolement, le professeur Zimmer incline à voir partout des *signes*.

In the past, I had never been one to believe in mystical claptrap of that sort. But when you live as I was living then, all shut up inside yourself and not bothering to look at anything around you, your perspective begins to change. For the fact was that Alex's letter was dated Monday the ninth, and I had received it on Thursday the twelfth, three days later. Which meant that when he was in New York writing to me about the book, I had been in Vermont holding the book in my hands. I don't want to insist on the importance of the connection, but I couldn't help reading it as a sign. It was as if I had asked for something without knowing it, and then suddenly my wish had been granted. (*ibid.* 69)

Or, les coïncidences qui l'amènent à Chateaubriand (ou plutôt : qui lui amènent Chateaubriand) sont beaucoup moins étranges que les hasards qui vont, bientôt, le replonger dans le monde – pas tellement silencieux cette fois – d'Hector Mann. Après tout, Zimmer est un expert en littérature française du XIXe siècle : avant la perte tragique de sa famille il était en train de commencer une étude sur Stendhal. Quand un collègue universitaire lui écrit pour demander s'il serait intéressé de faire une nouvelle traduction intégrale des *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, cette proposition est doublement motivée : le collègue cherche un bon traducteur pour le grand livre, mais aussi et surtout une grande tâche pour Zimmer, quelque chose qui va le tirer de sa léthargie et l'occuper pour longtemps.

Il accepte et se met au travail, oubliant son premier ange sauveur.

So I settled down and began working again. I forgot about Hector Mann and thought only about Chateaubriand, burying myself in the massive chronicle of a life that had nothing to do with my life. (*ibid.* 69-70)

Son admiration, voire sa ferveur pour Chateaubriand est évidente. En témoigne la traduction d'un des extraits les plus anthologiques des *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, incrustée dans la narration de Zimmer et commentée par celui-ci.

Un poète breton, nouvellement débarqué, m'avait prié de le mener à Versailles. Il y a des gens qui visitent des jardins et des jets d'eau, au milieu du renversement des empires : les barbouilleurs de papier ont surtout cette faculté de s'abstraire dans leur manie pendant les plus grands événements ; leur phrase ou leur strophe leur tient lieu de tout.

Je menai mon Pindare à l'heure de la messe dans la galerie de Versailles. L'Œil-de-Bœuf était rayonnant : le renvoi de M. Necker avait exalté les esprits. On se croyait sûr de la victoire : peut-être Sanson et Simon mêlés dans la foule, étaient spectateurs des joies de la famille royale.

La Reine passa avec ses deux enfants ; leur chevelure blonde semblait attendre des couronnes : madame la duchesse d'Angoulême âgée de onze ans, attirait les yeux par un orgueil virginal ; belle de la noblesse du rang et de l'innocence de la jeune fille, elle semblait dire comme la fleur d'oranger de Corneille, dans la *Guirlande de Julie* :

« J'ai la pompe de ma naissance. »

Le petit Dauphin marchait sous la protection de sa sœur, et M. Du Touchet suivait son élève. Il m'aperçut et me montra obligeamment à la Reine. Elle me fit en me jetant un regard avec un sourire, ce salut gracieux qu'elle m'avait déjà fait le jour de ma présentation. Je n'oublierai jamais ce regard qui devait s'éteindre sitôt. Marie-Antoinette, en souriant, dessina si bien la forme de sa bouche, que le souvenir de ce sourire (chose effroyable) me fit reconnaître la mâchoire de la fille des rois, quand on découvrit la tête de l'infortunée dans les exhumations de 1815. (Chateaubriand 1951: 167)

The first thing my eyes had fallen upon was a short passage in volume one. In it, Chateaubriand tells of accompanying a Breton poet on an outing to Versailles in June of 1789. It was less than a month before the taking of the Bastille, and halfway through their visit they spotted Marie Antoinette walking by with her two children. *Casting a smiling look in my direction, she gave me the same gracious salute that I had received from her on the day of my presentation. I shall never forget that look of hers, which was soon to be no more. When Marie-Antoinette smiled, the shape of her mouth was so clear that (horrible thought!) the memory of that smile enabled me to recognize the jaw of this daughter of kings when the head of the unfortunate woman was discovered in the exhumations of 1815.* It was a fierce, breathtaking image, and I kept thinking about it long after I had closed the book and put it on the shelf. Marie-Antoinette's severed head, unearthed from a pit of human remains. In three short sentences, Chateaubriand travels twenty-six years. He goes from flesh to bone, from piquant life to anonymous death, and in the chasm between them lies the experience of an entire generation, the unspoken years of terror, brutality, and madness. I was stunned by the passage, moved by it in a way that no words had moved me in a year and a half. (Auster 68-69)

Hector Mann avait rendu à Zimmer la capacité de rire, Chateaubriand lui rend la capacité de s'émouvoir et, *last but not least*, celle de s'enthousiasmer pour le travail d'un grand styliste. Grâce à Chateaubriand, Zimmer redécouvre la littérature.

IT'S HIGH TIME SOMEONE DID ANOTHER

Pourquoi un expert américain en littérature française se déciderait-il à faire, à la fin des années 80 du XXe siècle, une nouvelle traduction intégrale des *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*? À part son admiration pour l'écrivain, il y a une raison concrète, voire banale derrière la décision de Zimmer. Pour citer le collègue universitaire : *il est temps* que quelqu'un entreprenne cette tâche.

»This,« you said (holding up the first volume of the French edition and waving it in the air), »is the best autobiography ever written.« I don't know if you still feel that way now, but I probably don't have to tell you that there have been only two complete translations since the book was published in 1848. One in 1849 and one in 1902. It's high time someone did another, don't you think? (ibid. 60)

A vrai dire, au moment où David Zimmer se met au travail, il n'existe qu'une seule traduction intégrale en anglais, celle d'Alexander Teixeira de Mattos, publiée en 1902. La traduction anonyme publiée en 1849 (et mentionnée par l'ami de Zimmer) s'arrête au début du treizième livre des *Mémoires*.

Néanmoins, au temps où Zimmer relit et traduit l'extrait sur Marie-Antoinette, le lecteur anglophone peut déjà choisir entre trois versions de cette page anthologique. Détail surprenant : le traducteur anonyme de 1849 est le seul parmi les traducteurs anglo-américains de Chateaubriand à prendre soin d'éviter le mot *woman* pour parler de la reine de France.

The Queen passed, accompanied by her two children; their fair silken locks seemed awaiting a crown; the Duchesse d'Angoulême, then eleven years old, attracted all eyes by the modest dignity of her mien; beautiful in her exalted rank and in her maiden innocence, she seemed to say, like the orange blossom in Corneille's *Guirlande de Julie*:

« J'ai la pompe de ma naissance. »

The little dauphin walked under the protection of his sister, and M. du Touchet followed his pupil; this gentleman saw me, and obligingly pointed me out to the queen. She smiled, and saluted me in the same gracious way as she had done on the day of my presentation. – I shall never forget that glance, so soon to be extinguished in death. When she smiled, Marie-Antoinette showed the form of her mouth so clearly, that the remembrance of that smile (fearful ideal)

enabled me to recognize the jaw, when the head of this unfortunate daughter of kings was discovered during the exhumations in 1815 (Chateaubriand 1849: 207).

Zimmer (ou bien Paul Auster) traduit l'adjectif substantivé *l'infortunée* (employé par Chateaubriand) comme *the unfortunate woman*, Teixeira de Mattos comme *the unhappy woman* :

The Queen passed by with her two children; their fair hair appeared to be waiting for crowns: Madame la Duchesse d'Angoulême, aged eleven, drew all eyes through a virginal pride; beautiful through nobility of birth and maidenly innocence, she seemed to say, like Corneille's orange-blossom in the *Guirlande de Julie*:

« J'ai la pompe de ma naissance. »

The little Dauphin walked under his sister's protection, and M. du Touchet followed his pupil; he noticed me, and obligingly called the Queen's attention to me. Casting a smiling look in my direction, she gave me that gracious bow which she had already made me on the day of my presentation, I shall never forget that look, so soon to be extinguished. Marie Antoinette, when she smiled, outlined so clearly the shape of her mouth, that the recollection of that smile (O horror!) enabled me to recognize the jaw-bone of the daughter of kings when the head of the unhappy woman was discovered in the exhumations of 1815. (Chateaubriand 1902: 206-207)

Robert Baldick (sa traduction abrégée est publiée en 1961 et réimprimée en 1972 dans la collection Penguin Books) opte lui aussi pour *the unfortunate woman*. La version de Baldick se distingue des autres par un rythme plus vivace – ou bien par un ton moins élégiaque. Parmi les traducteurs cités, Baldick est le seul à omettre le vers de la *Guirlande de Julie*, évitant ainsi le besoin de faire une note explicative qui ralentirait le récit.

The Queen passed by with her two children; their fair hair seemed to be waiting for crowns. Mme la Duchesse d'Angoulême, aged eleven, drew all eyes by her virginal dignity. The little Dauphin walked under his sister's protection, and M. Du Touchet followed his pupil; he noticed me and obligingly pointed me out to the Queen. Casting a smiling glance in my direction, she made the same gracious bow to me which she had given me on the day of my presentation. I shall never forget that look of hers which was so soon to be extinguished. Marie Antoinette, when she smiled, shaped her lips so clearly that, horrible to relate, the recollection of that smile enabled me to recognize the jaw-bone of the daughter of kings when the head of the unfortunate woman was discovered in the exhumations of 1815. (Chateaubriand 1972: 134-135)

UN MILLION DE MOTS

En traduisant *Les Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, Zimmer fait quelque chose de nécessaire et d'intellectuellement gratifiant. Du point de vue intime, pourtant, le plus grand attrait que le livre présente pour lui semble être sa longueur. L'énormité du travail auquel il se livre lui apporte une satisfaction presque physique.

Much of the work was mechanical, and because I was the servant of the text and not its creator, it demanded a different kind of energy from the one I had put into writing *The Silent World*. Translation is a bit like shovelling coal. You scoop it up and toss it into the furnace. Each lump is a word, and each shovelful is another sentence, and if your back is strong enough and you have the stamina to keep at it for eight or ten hours at a stretch, you can keep the fire hot. With close to a million words in front of me, I was prepared to work as long and as hard as necessary, even if it meant burning down the house. (Auster 70)

Aussi long et aussi dur qu'il le faudrait, même si cela impliquait l'incendie de la maison (Auster-Le Bœuf 83). Le traducteur doit-il vraiment incendier la maison (ou presque) dans l'effort de traduire un livre de trois mille pages? Alexander Teixeira de Mattos, tout en insistant sur l'énormité de la tâche, s'exprime d'une façon moins dramatique :

/.../ I have striven to perform my task of translation, which has taken me over two years to accomplish, conscientiously, correctly, and above all respectfully. If here and there I have seemed to follow the original a little too closely, my excuse must be that I had too great a respect for this great man to take liberties with his writing. To reproduce his style in another language has been no easy matter: I have done my best. (Chateaubriand 1902: 103)

Seize ans après la parution du roman d'Auster (et presque trente ans après l'aventure de traduction dans la vie fictive de David Zimmer), Alex Andriess publie une nouvelle version anglaise des douze premiers livres des *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*. Dans son avant-propos, il souligne l'importance du *canon littéraire personnel* de Chateaubriand. Chateaubriand, constate Andriess, est un auteur imprégné de tradition littéraire; d'autre part, il est un écrivain innovateur et influent; son traducteur est par conséquent obligé de procéder en historien de la littérature. Toutefois ce travail d'érudit n'est qu'un jeu d'enfant en comparaison avec l'effort nécessaire pour recréer la beauté stylistique de l'original. Selon Andriess, les difficultés rencontrées par le traducteur des *Mémoires* s'expliquent par la *qualité* plutôt que par la *quantité* du texte français.

Although this is not a complete edition of the *Memoirs*, it does reproduce the first of the work's four parts, including the oft-omitted chapter headings

and detailed dates of composition. As for the translation, it is, I recognize, imperfect and provisional—a failure in a sense. However, as I failed, I tried always to bear in mind that the work I was wrenching into English was the work of a writer steeped in literary tradition. I hope that this is reflected in the prose itself, but it is on deliberate display in the notes at Chateaubriand’s personal canon. /.../ Compiling notes is child’s play, though, in comparison with trying to capture some reverberation of Chateaubriand’s style in English. (Chateaubriand 2018: 16)

La version la plus récente de l’extrait anthologique admiré et traduit par David Zimmer (ou bien par Paul Auster) ne s’éloigne pas beaucoup des précédentes – sauf pour un détail. Le *salut gracieux* de Marie Antoinette – salut de la reine de France à un gentilhomme breton de 21 ans – devient, chez Andriessse, « a curtsy ».

The Queen passed by with her two children. Their blond heads seemed to be awaiting their crowns. The eleven-year-old Madame le Duchesse d’Angoulême, in particular, attracted all eyes with her virginal dignity. Beautiful by dint of her noble blood and her girlish innocence, she seemed to say, like Corneille’s orange flower in the *Guirlande de Julie*:

»I have all the splendour of my birth.«

The little Dauphin walked under his sister’s guidance, and M. Du Touchet followed close behind his pupil. He noticed me and obligingly pointed me out to the Queen. Casting her eyes on me with a smile, she made me the same charming curtsy as she had on the day of my presentation. I will never forget those eyes, which were so soon to be extinguished. When Marie-Antoinette smiled, the shape of her mouth was so clear that the memory of this smile (horrible thought!) allowed me to recognize the jaw of this daughter of kings when the unfortunate woman’s head was discovered in the exhumations of 1815. (*ibid.* 203)

UN CONTEMPORAIN DE ZIMMER

Jusqu’à l’époque où se déroule le roman de Paul Auster, et bien au delà, l’histoire des traductions anglaises des *Mémoires d’Outre-Tombe* semble donc présenter une série d’échecs plus ou moins avoués, plus ou moins pénibles. Grâce à ses propres expériences de traducteur (cf. Brown 11; Hutchisson XVI; Varvogli 59; Donovan 183; Barone 21), Paul Auster est tout à fait en état de comprendre de tels échecs et l’humiliation qu’ils apportent. Des traductions intégrales » qui s’arrêtent à un tiers du livre, des abrégés, des « nouvelles éditions » qui ne sont, en vérité, que des reprints (ainsi l’édition Penguin Classics de la traduction de R. Baldick), les traducteurs qui, dans les avant-propos, s’attardent sur les difficultés rencontrées

pendant leur long travail – tout cela nous amène presque à croire (dans l'esprit superstitieux de David Zimmer) à une malédiction frappant les admirateurs anglais et américains de Chateaubriand.

Pour le dire plus sobrement, on arriverait presque à considérer *Les Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* comme un texte intraduisible en anglais – si ce n'était pour A.S. Kline.

En 2005, à peine trois ans après la parution du *Livre des illusions*, une traduction intégrale des *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* est mise en ligne en accès libre par ce traducteur britannique, homme de lettres exceptionnel ainsi qu'exceptionnellement généreux.

Né en 1947, A.S. Kline est contemporain de David Zimmer – et il a exactement le même âge que Paul Auster. (Est-ce une coïncidence? Probablement, mais on ne peut pas nier que c'est une coïncidence profondément ironique.) Mathématicien de formation, Kline se décide, après une carrière d'informaticien, de se consacrer entièrement à la littérature. On lui doit entre autre une traduction en anglais des *Métamorphoses* d'Ovide, une traduction de la *Comédie divine*, une traduction de l'œuvre complète de Chrétien de Troyes, une traduction des *Lais* de Marie de France ... En juin 2019, l'annonce suivante apparaît sur son site internet *Poetry in Translation* (<https://www.poetryintranslation.com>) :

I am in the last stages of work on Guillaume de Lorris: »Le Roman de la Rose«
Written c1230, in 4000 or so lines of Middle French, the Romance of the Rose is an allegorical work on the subject of love, and a fascinating development of the courtly tradition. I am translating in the octosyllabic verse couplets of the original text. In have reconsidered Jean de Meung's Continuation of this work and can now see the seeds of his more satirical approach in Guillaume's sophisticated original. I shall be translating the 17000 line Continuation next.

Pour employer un *understatement* digne d'A.S. Kline : Chateaubriand n'est pas le seul grand auteur (ni le seul auteur prolifique) qu'il traduit. Conformément à cela, son avant-propos aux *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* est sobre et non prétentieux.

Once encountered Chateaubriand is unforgettable, and the *Memoirs* deserve much wider literary and historical recognition. They have suffered from an unmerited neglect, due to their extent, and the previous lack of a complete English translation, a lack which is here remedied, the work being further enriched by over six hundred illustrations, and a fully detailed index. (Chateaubriand 2005: 5)

Un coup du destin digne d'un roman de Paul Auster : ce qui paraît presque impossible dans le monde fictif – comme par exemple de faire une traduction intégrale des *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* – vient, grâce à un personnage extraordinaire, tout à fait possible dans le monde réel.

CHATEAUBRIAND OU MANN

Un après-midi humide et venteux du début de l'été, le traducteur Zimmer, pleinement occupé à compter les pages de la meilleure autobiographie jamais écrite, reçoit une lettre d'une inconnue.

I was almost a hundred pages into the Chateaubriand translation at that point, and when *The Silent World of Hector Mann* was released a year later, I had another twelve hundred pages behind me. If I kept working at that pace, I would have a completed draft in seven or eight more months. Add on some extra time for revisions and changes of heart, and in less than a year I would be delivering a finished manuscript to Alex.

As it turned out, that year lasted only three months. I pushed on for another two hundred fifty pages, reaching the chapter about the fall of Napoleon in the twenty-third book (*miseries and wonders are twins, they are born together*), and then, one damp and blustery afternoon at the beginning of summer, I found Frieda Spelling's letter in my mailbox. (Auster 77)

Frieda Spelling prétend être l'épouse d'Hector Mann. Elle remercie Zimmer pour son livre, l'informe que l'acteur, mystérieusement disparu en 1929, est toujours vivant, quoique de santé fragile, et l'invite de leur rendre visite au Nouveau Mexique où ils habitent depuis des années. Zimmer ne lui répond pas. Intrigué mais incrédule, il n'a aucune intention de faire le long voyage qu'elle lui propose. Peu importe, il y est emmené en personne par une jeune amie du couple qui vient le chercher dans le Vermont.

Avec cette jeune femme, qui s'appelle Alma, Zimmer retrouve l'amour. En faisant la connaissance d'Hector Mann, en apprenant son histoire personnelle, il découvre l'homme derrière l'œuvre. Seulement pour découvrir, derrière l'homme, comme dans une série de mises en abyme, toute une autre œuvre cinématographique, auparavant inconnue, inextricablement liée au destin de son créateur.

Inutile à dire, Zimmer finit par perdre les deux, le nouvel amour et, dans la même suite d'événements catastrophique, tous les films que Mann avait fait après sa mystérieuse disparition. L'héritage artistique d'Hector Mann est détruit par Frieda Spelling, suivant la volonté testamentaire du cinéaste. Alma se suicide après avoir accidentellement tué la veuve d'Hector.

Chateaubriand est-il oublié dans tout ce tumulte? Oui et non. Dans les circonstances changées, avec le nouvel espoir apporté par le nouvel amour, l'énormité du travail perd une grande partie de l'importance qu'elle avait pour Zimmer. S'il se réclame du *million de mots* des *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, c'est pour rassurer son amoureuse : traduire l'autobiographie de Chateaubriand prend presque autant de temps qu'écrire la biographie d'Hector Mann (travail auquel la jeune femme se

consacre avec passion depuis des années) : »I'll work on my Chateaubriand, you'll work on your biography, and when we aren't working, we'll fuck.« (Auster 290)

Par une logique profonde pourtant, les *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, tout en devenant un souci secondaire pour David Zimmer, obtiennent finalement une place organique dans la structure du roman. Ce n'est plus la quantité qui importe, c'est la qualité particulière du texte et, *last but not least*, Chateaubriand lui-même avec son attitude envers le destin.

Au moment de leur première rencontre, Hector Mann donne à Zimmer une impression d'étrangeté : non pas parce qu'il est en train de mourir, mais, au contraire, parce qu'il est vivant, réel, parce qu'il est *quelqu'un d'authentique* (Auster-Le Bœuf 254).

Until I saw him lying there in the bed, I'm not sure that I ever fully believed in him. Not as an authentic person, at any rate, not in the way I believed in Alma or myself, not in the way I believed in Helen or even Chateaubriand. (Auster 222)

Grâce à Alma, Zimmer obtient l'accès à la bibliothèque personnelle de l'acteur. Ce n'est qu'en découvrant les goûts littéraires de Mann que Zimmer reconnaît vraiment l'existence de celui-ci. En tant que lecteur, Hector Mann est son semblable, presque son frère.

I was about to pick it up to see where he had left off, but Alma took my hand again and led me over to the shelves in the back corner of the room. I think you'll find this interesting, she said. She pointed to a row of books several inches above her head (but exactly at my eye level), and I saw that all of them had been written by French authors: Baudelaire, Balzac, Proust, La Fontaine. A little to the left, Alma said, and as I moved my eyes to the left, scanning the spines for whatever it was she wanted to show me, I suddenly spotted the familiar green and gold of the two-volume Pléiade edition of Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*.

It shouldn't have made any difference to me, but it did. Chateaubriand wasn't an obscure writer, but it moved me to know that Hector had read the book, that he had entered the same labyrinth of memories that I had been wandering in for the past eighteen months. It was another point of contact, somehow, another link in the chain of accidental encounters and curious sympathies that had drawn me to him from the beginning. (*ibid.* 237-238)

A première vue, il ne s'agit ici que d'une simple manœuvre narrative : pour prouver qu'il n'a pas été abandonné quelque part en chemin vers le Nouveau-Mexique, Chateaubriand obtient un rôle dans les vies entremêlées des deux protagonistes du roman.

DU DEUIL À LA RÉSIGNATION, DE LA RÉSIGNATION AU REFUS DE SE TAIRE

Mais encore une fois, pourquoi Chateaubriand?

A part leurs goûts littéraires, Zimmer et Hector Mann partagent l'expérience du deuil. Plus spécifiquement, ils sont tous les deux pères endeuillés. Seraient-ils attirés par le désespoir de Chateaubriand, par la morosité qui se dégage son écriture?

Despair gave Zimmer's work an authenticity tenure couldn't. Now he is working on a new translation of the famously morose Chateaubriand's »Mémoires d'outre-tombe« [sic].

Ainsi D.T. Max, le critique du *New York Times*, dans son analyse prudemment admirative du roman, publiée le 2 septembre 2002.

La vie de Chateaubriand, et par conséquent son autobiographie, est certainement marquée par la perte. Néanmoins, on peut trouver dans la littérature française (pour laquelle Zimmer et Mann ont une admiration commune) des livres qui parlent du deuil d'une manière plus directe, plus poignante. Tel par exemple le recueil fragmentaire *Pour un Tombeau d'Anatole* de Stéphane Mallarmé, écrit en 1879 et publié pour la première fois en 1961. Ce texte, le romancier Paul Auster le connaît bien. En effet, il est le premier à le traduire en anglais. (Sa traduction paraît en 1983 sous le titre *A Tomb for Anatole*; celle de Patrick McGuinness *For Anatole's Tomb*, en 2003).

La différence ne pourrait être plus apparente. Du côté de Mallarmé, même pas un cri de désespoir, juste quelques fragments des cris. Du côté de Chateaubriand, un monument littéraire érigé au cours d'un *long goodbye* solennel, voire pathétique.

Une petite remarque. L'humour de Chateaubriand n'est pas, semble-t-il, tellement appréciée par Zimmer, bien qu'il s'attarde sur l'ironie de sa longévité :

In effect, Chateaubriand mortgaged his autobiography to finance his old age. They gave him a nice chunk of money up front, which allowed him to pay off his creditors, and a guaranteed annuity for the rest of his life. It was a brilliant arrangement. The only problem was that Chateaubriand kept on living. The company was formed when he was in his mid-sixties, and he hung on until he was eighty. By then, the shares had changed hands several times, and the friends and admirers who had invested in the beginning were long gone. /.../

What a cheerful story.

Not so funny, I suppose, but let me tell you, the old viscount could write one hell of a good sentence. (Auster 63)

Il y a, pourtant, une conviction que Mallarmé et Chateaubriand expriment tous les deux, et cette conviction est peut-être le lien le plus fondamental entre l'histoire de Zimmer et le destin d'Hector Mann : on peut mourir tout en continuant à vivre, on peut vivre et être mort tout ensemble. Pour citer la phrase poignante de Mallarmé, tirée d'une lettre qu'il écrit peu après la mort de son fils Anatole : « Tout ce que par contrecoup, mon être a souffert, pendant cette longue agonie, est inénarrable, mais heureusement je suis parfaitement mort. » (cit. Laufer 97).

Ce n'est pas par coïncidence que Zimmer radicalise le titre de l'autobiographie de Chateaubriand, en traduisant *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* comme *Memoirs of a Dead Man* : pas seulement que Chateaubriand parle (ou bien parlera) de l'au-delà à son futur lecteur, il se sent déjà mort au moment d'écrire l'histoire de sa vie.

Ce sentiment lugubre n'est pas sans une certaine douceur. Dans sa résignation finale, Hector Mann, comme Chateaubriand avant lui, cultive la compagnie des arbres :

In the darkness behind the main house, I could dimly make out the contours of Hector's trees—great hulks of shadow stirring in the wind.

Memoirs of a Dead Man opens with a passage about trees. I found myself thinking about that as we approached the front door, trying to remember my translation of the third paragraph of Chateaubriand's two-thousand-page book, the one that begins with the words *Ce lieu me plaît; il a remplacé pour moi les champs paternels* and concludes with the following sentences: *I am attached to my trees. I have addressed elegies, sonnets, and odes to them. There is not one amongst them that I have not tended with my own hands, that I have not freed from the worm that had attacked its root or the caterpillar that had clung to its leaves. I know them all by their names, as if they were my children. They are my family. I have no other, and I hope to be near them when I die.* (Auster 220)

« Je cherche dans le mouvement de la forêt, dans le bruit des pins, quelques-uns des accents de la langue éternelle, » écrit Senancour, un autre mort-vivant (Senancour 227). David Zimmer, lui, n'est pas parmi ceux qui se consolent dans la nature. Son romantisme est d'une autre trempe. L'éternité qu'il trouve dans les *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* est une éternité à la mesure d'un homme superstitieux : une éternité basée sur la répétition. Tout dans la vie, même la mort, nous arrive plusieurs fois : « L'homme n'a pas une seule et même vie; il en a plusieurs mises bout à bout, et c'est sa misère. » Dans la traduction de Paul Auster, qui met cette citation en épigraphe de son roman : « Man has not one and the same life. He has many lives, place end to end, and that is the cause of his misery. »

Après la mort d'Alma, plongé dans un nouveau deuil, Zimmer reprend le travail sur les *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*.

I put in long hours with the Chateaubriand, rising early and going to bed late, and I made steady progress as the weeks went on, gradually increasing my daily quota from three finished pages of the Pléiade edition to four. It looked like progress, it felt like progress, but that was also the period when I became prone to curious lapses of attention, fits of absentmindedness that seemed to dog me whenever I wandered from my desk. (Auster 314)

Vers la fin du roman, on se met à soupçonner que sa traduction des *Mémoires* restera à jamais inachevée.

Conformément à l'esprit de l'original, le traducteur français prend soin de rassembler, en appendice au roman, les fragments que « Zimmer » inclut dans sa narration :

La traduction en anglais faite par David Zimmer des *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* est trop belle pour que les lecteurs français soient privés d'une chance de l'apprécier (Auster-Le Bœuf 366).

Tout à la fin du récit une autre possibilité apparaît au lecteur attentif, une autre parallèle entre le destin de Zimmer et celui d'Hector. Il se peut que la traduction de Zimmer, achevée et intégrale, sera trouvée un jour dans la mémoire de son ordinateur, ou bien dans un tiroir, dans un archive – tout comme les films présumés perdus d'Hector Mann :

They're only missing and sooner or later a person will come along who accidentally opens the door of the room where Alma hid them, and the story will start all over again.

I live with that hope. (Auster 321)

« Je vis dans cet espoir, » écrit Zimmer. Or, au moment où nous lisons la dernière phrase de son récit, nous pouvons « avoir la certitude que l'homme qui l'a écrit est mort depuis longtemps » (Auster-Le Bœuf 361) :

Following Chateaubriand's model, I will make no attempt to publish what I have written now. I have left a letter of instruction for my lawyer, and he will know where to find the manuscript and what to do with it after I am gone. I have every intention of living to a hundred, but on the off chance I don't get that far, all the necessary arrangements have been made. If and when this book is published, dear reader, you can be certain that the man who wrote it is long dead. (*ibid.* 318)

Au point final de l'histoire de Zimmer, les *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* ne sont plus « un tas de charbon à pelleter » (Auster-Le Bœuf 82), mais un modèle à suivre. Le lecteur ne saura rien sur le destin de la traduction entreprise par Zimmer. Il

apprendra pourtant que le professeur nous a laissé un manuscrit, un message, et qu'il a nettement exprimé sa volonté de nous parler de l'au-delà. Cette volonté distingue Zimmer d'Hector Mann et le rapproche de son deuxième ange sauveur, le prolifique auteur de la meilleure autobiographie jamais écrite. Hector Mann fait détruire son œuvre; en effaçant ses images, il se condamne à un silence définitif qu'il ne peut plus rompre, qui ne sera probablement jamais rompu, sauf par coïncidence. Chateaubriand et Zimmer, qui s'expriment en paroles, refusent de se taire.

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Prevajanje Chateaubrianda v Vermontu: *Spomini z onstran groba* v romanu *Knjiga iluzij* Paula Austerja

Članek obravnava medbesedilne odnose med romanom *Knjiga iluzij* Paula Austerja ter *Spomini z onstran groba* François Renéja de Chateaubrianda. Glavni junak romana se, potem ko je doživel osebno tragedijo, odloči sprejeti velikansko nalogo: v celoti bo prevedel Chateaubriandove *Spomine z onstran groba*. Delo, ki si ga je naložil, mu sprva služi kot nekakšen začasni motiv za življenje, kot nekaj, s čimer zapolnjuje ure samote in obupa. Vendar pa v nadaljevanju zgodbe monumentalnost Chateaubriandovih spominov kot taka izgubi pomen. Besedilo, ki ga je protagonist-pripovedovalec sprva doživljal kot »kup premoga, ki ga je treba premetati«, postane formalni in moralni vzor. Oglašanje iz onostranstva, kot si ga je zamislil Chateaubriand, se izkaže za pripovedno ogrodje romana in obenem za junakovo moralno vodilo.

Ključne besede: Paul Auster, François René de Chateaubriand, medbesedilnost, prevod, avtobiografija

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