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Intrusions of Life in Modern Literature
A Perspective on Customs and Discourse

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ECATERINA-OANA BRÎNDAŞ
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Issue Editors

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REDISCOVERING A RITUAL.
BETWEEN KITSCH AND AUTHENTIC VALUE

ALIN SERAFIM ŞTEFĂNUŢ*
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ABSTRACT. Researching and decoding a ritual is a complex analytical and interpretive process, as it takes into consideration the linguistic system, as well as other semiotic systems, such as the visual—the analysis of colors, materials, forms and symbols; the gestural—observing body language and facial expressions; and the auditory—melodic lines, intonation, volume, ambient sounds. This paper aims to capture the constitutive elements of the ceremony of the nuptial flag, characterized by symbolic *polyglossia*. Deciphering the meanings of this ritual is deemed impossible in the absence of the mythical symbolic thought that shapes traditional culture. This ceremony, defined by pomp, novelty and spectacle, marks the transition towards a new stage of existence and adds to the idea of the formation of the couple, which in the archaic mentality represents the foundation of world's entire architecture. The aspect of the wedding flag differs from one region to another, even if there are common prop elements. Also especially important in this ritual is the role of the flag bearer, revealed at three different stages of this ceremony: at the groom's house, at the bride's house, and on the way to church. The manner in which we approach the ritual of the wedding flag is diachronic, since we follow it to our very times, underlining those elements that ensure its uniqueness and places it at the opposite pole of kitsch.

KEY WORDS: ritual, nuptial flag, archaic mentality, symbolic syncretism, lyrical repertoire

Introduction

A ceremonial symbolism regards a syncretic analysis of the ritual in terms of its artistic codes and languages. A series of issues related to signs are, usually, approached, especially given that the ritual absorbs almost all of the forms and species of folk art, such as: dancing, music, drama, poetry, lyric genres, and the language of colors and objects. Thus, the scientific research of a ritual does not settle on a simple description of the facts. This is also the case in the ritual of the nuptial flag, which, like any other nuptial manifestation, comprises various meanings, the symbolic *polyglossia* of this ritual representing clear proof of the unique and organic nature of folk culture.

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There is an interpretation and grouping of the symbols present in the ritual of the flag through vegetal, zoomorphic objects and chromatic symbols, as well as the symbolism of dancing. These all syntagmatically interact in the texts and acts of the ritual.

As any nuptial manifestation, the ritual of the wedding flag contains a number of meanings and forms of expression preserved through the power of tradition. These can be deciphered only through by referring to the entirety of the mythical symbolic thought specific to traditional culture. The picturesque character of this ceremony, the agglomeration of means of expression are dictated by the need to ensure a tinge of novelty, through pomp and spectacle, to the moment of transition from a beardless to a married man. On the other hand, the complexity of the ceremony stems from the participants' desire to ensure maximum magical, ethical, aesthetic and affective efficiency to all moments of the scenario. For folkloric semiotics and hermeneutics, the symbolic syncretism and *polyglossia* of this ritual is clear proof of the unique and organic character of folk culture.

The Nuptial Flag. Customs and Functions
The wedding itself represents an extremely complex ceremony with stages that have to be strictly preserved, while some tohers have an optional character. When staging the wedding process, the researchers, generally show particular interest to the wedding flag (see Chiş Şter 1983: 291-292.) The symbolic sides of the flag are currently preserved but the stages of its making are not that strictly preserved, and the decorations used to make it have not any more the same values. It stands out the flag's role of necessity in the traditional wedding process as previously mentioned.

The symbols that are paired with the ritual of the nuptial flag crystallize the idea of the formation of the couple, which, in the archaic mentality, represents the foundation of the entire edifice of the world. The entire lyrical corpus accompanying the ritual, as well as all of the dramatic, actant elements along with the ritualistic objects, are subordinate to the union of the two youths, to the foundation of a family. The languages, consisting of instrumental, material, zoomorphic, vegetal or chromatic symbols, interweave with the choreographic and musical language in said ceremony.

Generally speaking, the custom of the wedding flag is perceived in Transylvania as a necessary element belonging to the extensive wedding process. The majority of the participants to the ritual has not access to the plenty of the custom's meanings because of a relative indifference towards the traditional mentality and the invasion of modern. The initial meanings often remain undiscovered by people today, who choose to replace these traditional elements with modern ones or simply disregard to organize a traditional wedding, and thus rescind what was once perceived as the sacred

nature of the wedding. The wedding flag ceremonial is an element that has changed its meanings over time, however it has been preserved by certain Transylvanian communities. The reasons are several and we believe that they regard the attitude towards the archaic way of thinking, which is considered to be a source of wisdom and coherence in times marked by uncertainties. As the rediscovering of this ritual proves, the customs may last longer in a community and trace their place in the community once it shows interest towards them.

It is obvious, in what concerns the props of the nuptial flag that they preserve the archaic elements, loaded with deep meanings decoded by the community. There are common prop elements, but, obviously, each region displays elements that set it apart. An example of this is the very pole that the nuptial flag is placed on, but the examples can be much more numerous.

Sometimes, a single, large bell nailed to the tip of the flag is used, and, other times, the flag bearers use several, smaller bells nailed to leather belts attached across the flagpole. Obviously, each region has prop elements of the flag that set it apart. Given the importance of the flag bearer in the ritual, throughout time, the duties and traits of the flag bearer have crystallized in each folkloric area. The flag bearer is captured during three important moments of the ritual: at the groom's house, at the bride's house, and on the way to church. The lyricism specific to the flag bearer and his pack (provided by performers) in each ritualistic moment can be analyzed. The functions of the flag and flag bearer are easy to deduce from the very lyrical corpus. For example, an oration from Bihor county presents the role of the flag bearer in leading the nuptial procession to the bride's house:

Lăzlăuşu-i om dă samă!/ Pă uliţă lume chiamă/ Şi merem după mireasă/ Ş-o ducem la noi acasă! (The flag bearer's a big shot!/ 'Sembling people by the lot/ So that we can take the bride/ Put her in our home beside!)

Other lyrics, recited by the flag bearer himself, represent his physical traits in a comical register:

Nu ti uita că-s micuţ,/ Că am fost la oi desculţ/ Şi n-am putut creşti mari,/ Că mi-o fost frig la picioari! (Don't you mind that I am small,/ Herded sheep, no boots at all/ And I couldn't really grow/ As my feet were cold as snow!)

After highlighting the functions of the main actors of the ceremony, it is also necessary to draw parallels between the flag bearers of various traditional regions. The emphases always fall on the detailed description of the male costume of the flag bearer (wherever the case), as well as on a comparative analysis of the flag bearer's duties in the context of the ritual.

At the end of the 19th century as the renowned folklorist and ethnographer Simeon Florea Marian said, in Transylvania and Hungary there was no wedding without a flag and it was seen as a symbol of the groom's heroism (Marian 2009:186). Usually the flag is done before the wedding itself and just in exceptional cases in the same day with the wedding. The kerchief or the clothes used for making the wedding flag are specific to each area and wear the symbolic colors, shapes, zoomorphic or anthropologic elements of that specific area. In their turn, the plants used for the flag have their meanings established in the community and known by its members and maybe some others that choose to show interest towards the hermeneutics of these folkloric customs. The apotropaic proprieties of the wedding flag and those with reference to the union of the wedded pair are obvious along the flag dance, the object being gifted with magical powers that contribute to the couple's happiness. The flag's dance also symbolizes the breakup with a certain age, the uninitiated stage that the wedded used to belong to (Şuleanu :30). The wedding itself starts with the making of the wedding flag.

The point-by-point research of this ritual proves the apotropaic and propitious function of the flag. Even though we live in the 21st century, it seems that in numerous folkloric areas of the country superstitions have not been given up. They can also be found in the ritual, which unveils novel practices in archaic mentality. The apotropaic function of the nuptial flag is remarkable through "the charms of the flag" or "the spells of the flag", whose role it is to protect the newlyweds from evil spirits, while also ensuring prosperity and fertility. These symbols encounter alterations from one area to another: „farmecele steagului: cărbune, grău, busuioc, mercur, usturoi— să fugă ăl' cu corniţe de steag" ("the charms of the flag: coal, wheat, basil, mercury, garlic—so the horned one runs away"); „vrăcili steagului—să pun cărbuni, grâu de la litie, tămâie, bani" ("the spells of the flag—to set down coal, processional wheat, incense, money"); „sare şi tămâie într-o batistă" ("salt and incense in a handkerchief"). Also ever present are humorous superstitions meant to ensure fertility or to pay heed to the bride's chastity: „La mnireasă subsuoară să băga câte un ou crud cu care mere la cununie, ş-apoi când vine acasă de la biserică şi trece pragu păstă steag, mnireasa trebuie să dea drumul la ou în timp ce trece pragu, să pice şi aşe di uşor să nască copiii—cum pică ou să pice şi pruncu." ("A raw egg was fastened at the bride's armpit, with which she would go to the wedding, and when she has returned from church and crossed the threshold over the flag, the bride ought to let go of the egg so that it fell: that is how easy her children would be born—as the egg drops, so may the infant"); „....Mirii trebuie să treacă pragul casei peste steag. Stegaşii ţin steagul şi o ridicau pe mireasă peste steag să vadă dacă-i fată mare... zîceau." ("...The newlyweds had to cross the threshold over the flag. The flag bearers held the flag and raised the bride over it so that

they could see if she was a maid... they said".) „Când era gata steagu, mnireasa bătea steagu cu pumnu, îl bătea ca să fie bărbatu bun." ("When the flag was ready, the bride would hit it with her fist, so that her man was vigorous.")

The renowned folklorist and ethnographer Simeon Florea Marian shows (2009: 186) that at the end of the 19th century there was no wedding in Transylvania and Hungary without the flag, seen as a symbol of the groom's heroism. Usually the flag is done before the wedding itself and just in exceptional cases in the same day with the wedding. The kerchief or the clothes used for making the wedding flag are specific to each area and wear the symbolic colors, shapes, zoomorphic or anthropologic elements of that specific area. In their turn, the plants used for the flag have their meanings established in the community and known by its members and maybe some others that choose to show interest towards the hermeneutics of such popular customs. The apotropaic proprieties of the wedding flag and those with reference to the union of the wedded pair are obvious along the flag dance, the object being gifted with magical powers that contribute to the couple's happiness. The flag's dance also symbolizes the breakup with a certain age, the uninitiated stage that the wedded used to belong to (Şeuleanu 2000:30). The wedding itself starts with the making of the wedding flag.

Based on a valuable ethnographical and folkloric material, Ernest Bernea (1967) attempts at sociologically interpreting the wedding in the belief that

> the wedding is a collective manifestation with an organic character in its multiplicity of elements and forms, it is an animated braiding of spiritual, religious and magic elements and forms, of aesthetic, legal and economic elements and forms. (Bernea 1967: 54)

Here we find an analysis of this phenomenon that brings forth a new methodological point of view, a novel one when it comes to research of this type, the analysis of the elements that comprise the phenomenon, the manner in which they are structured, the highlighting of the particular and general functions of this phenomenon in the life of the Fagaras village. The ethnographer reconstructs the wedding based on material gathered through direct observation and through inquiry, analyzing the main moments of the phenomenon. We should keep in mind the events preceding the wedding that take place both at the groom's house, as well as the bride's house, which are an integral part of the rites of passage to family life and leaving behind the bachelor life. These are then followed by the engagement and wedding, along with all of their rites for the fulfillment of the Christian bond between the bride and groom, as well as by the events occurring at their new home, carried out in order to strengthen this bond and to bring forth prosperity. The second point of view presents the events in a concrete manner, analyzing the ten parts of the nuptial ritual in ten distinct chapters: summoning people

to the wedding, placing the engagement ring on the finger, organizing the cooks, adorning the bride, taking the bride, the engagement and wedding, welcoming the bride and accepting the dowry, the feast and the bestowing of gifts, the dancing and the aspects that come after the wedding.

The ceremony of the nuptial flag in itself is less abundant in ritualistic practices. The deep dissection of the investigated reality shows that the most popular superstitions refer to the fact that the flag bearer must have both parents alive, because otherwise the newlyweds would separate. The same symbolism of separation is suggested by the detachment of the bell from the flag: „dacă să rupe ţângalău, aduce ghinion la miri; trebuia legat bine" ("if the ringer breaks off, it brings bad luck on the newlyweds, so it should be tied well"). We can also find the propitious function of the flag here: „cu cât dă lăzlăuşul mai sus de tari cu steagul, cu atât le mere mai bine mnirilor" ("the harder the flag bearer waves the flag, the better the newlyweds shall have it in life"). We conclude that these archaic superstitions are in close connection to the investigated ritual. These should not be interpreted as an expression of lack of culture, as they crystallize the respect paid to the archaic mentality which has created a system of unwritten rules for itself that are dictated by a rational prudence.

Even if the ritual of the nuptial flag manifests in a unitary fashion, there are numerous differences, even within the same ethnographical and folkloric area. Although, throughout time, there have been alterations in terms of the content of this ceremony, emphasizing the ceremonial and spectacular function to the detriment of the ritualistic one, the fundamental meaning is preserved. Even if, currently, the aesthetic and entertainment function is at the forefront, the practical function is not cancelled.

According to sources such as Brăiloiu (2002: 311-314), in Bihor the flag bearer was called *lăzlăuş*, a young lad from the village who had both parents and carried the flag (*lazlău*). In Bihor County, the person with the flag is the leading wedding from beginning to end. However we can see that the act of adorning the wedding flag sees variations. Thus, in Bulz, it has the name of *zazlău*, being crafted by the girls in the bride's group from a large headscarf attached on one end to a stick in a triangular shape, and smaller, floweredrags (*cârpe*) and tassels (*ciupi*). In Căpâlna it is called a *lăzlăuş*, and crafted from towels (*ştergare*) set on a long stick by girls and women. In Ceica it is called *lazlău*, and is made by women and waved by the summoners, being crafted from a long club cloaked in ribbons, kerchiefs, a green branch, and the tricolor flag. In Gurani, where both girls and boys used to gather at the groom's house, it was called *lazlău* and was crafted from a 2-3 meter long club with colored kerchiefs, flowers, a bell and ribbons (Bernea 1967: 89). In these areas the flag of the wedding was seen as an object of prestige. The flag was

also a sign for the villagers that the young people in the house who waved a flag they were married.

In Roşia, the pre-wedding party held on a Saturday evening, a dance in which the youths, along with the relatives, participate at the groom's home. The flag was made of ribbons, kerchiefs, and a green branch, and was waved by the summoner. In Tărcăiţa, the flag was called *lazlău*, and was crafted just days before the wedding by elderly women and also the girls in whose home the wedding was to take place. Towels (*ştergări*) were fastened to the stick along with tablecloths, tricolor ribbons, natural flowers and kerchiefs (Bernea 1967: 92).

The Nuptial Flag. The Crafting
There cannot be said that there is an ideal wedding ceremony even if there is a certain pattern for each specific region, in the given case, Bihor county. In the same pattern there are to be found differences, being underlined certain gestures signs or symbols or even moments of the rituals in spite of others. It is mentioned that, in Tinca, a fiddler party was organized one night before the wedding in the bride's home, where girls and boys gathered. The flag (*lazlău*) was crafted by women, from among the relatives, who adorned a club with ten kerchiefs on both sides, a white lace tablecloth, small handkerchiefs, decorative ribbons and bells, etc. In Vadu Crişului the flag was commonly tricolor, so that everyone would know that was a Romanian wedding (Bernea 1967: 92). The same flag is done in the picturesque Maramures, where it is decorated with ribbons, handkerchiefs, bells and wheat ears, these being considered a symbol of male power and vitality. The tradition says that that all the decorative elements of the flag are collected from the grooms' former girlfriends. After the wedding, only the ears of wheat are kept, which are used at the baptism of the couple's first child.

Given the importance of ritualistic poetry in the general context of rituals, as the lyrical texts grant force to the act and sacred substance to the gesture, the discussion of the ritual cannot be torn from the analysis of the gestural system. Progressively carried out on the village stage, the acts and scenes that compose this ceremony cement, based on a traditional protocol, the attributions of the actors playing their roles according to the tradition, before the village community which preserves and carries on praising the most spectacular folkloric ceremony: the Romanian wedding.

Approaching the ritual of the nuptial flag on several levels—historical, ethnographical, aesthetic, contextual—proves a continuity and consistency in forms, thematic, techniques and functions. Between the nuptial flag of the past and the one of the present, one can notice a series of similarities, a common spiritual vibration passed on from generation to generation. The particularities of this ritual have been preserved to this day. The ritual is

organically integrated in the stylistic consistencies of the spirituality of the investigated regions. Certainly, the ritual has seen certain metamorphoses due to progress, but this has not led it to slip down the slope of hybridization and non-value.

The ritual of the nuptial flag distances itself from kitsch through the very emotion it incites both in the actors and the receptors. The ritual, through its forms and all of the practices and functions associated with it, entails a deep emotion that moves both the insiders and the receptors. Even if, in certain regions, the first part of the ritual—knitting the flag—has regressed, since renting the nuptial flag is preferred, without the organization of an evening dedicated to the flag, the role, as well as the functions preserved by the ritual should be retained. The ceremony of the nuptial flag represents, to the 21st century, an axis of perpetuity adorned with archaic elements.

The narratives and descriptions recorded throughout the specialized research of the past decades represent an ethnographical material collected from performers with acting roles in the ritual. In each investigated area, there are those competent persons who have been involved in the conduct of the ritual, describing, thus, the perspective of an insider. It is only in this way that the solemnity of the atmosphere dominated by an amalgamation of feelings, sometimes of joy, other times of sadness, could be described, generated as they are by the emotions felt by the actors. From these materials, we can deduce certain parallelisms between the old and the new, between the traditional and the modern that the insiders experience. For example, in our times, in certain areas, the youths prefer to rent the flag, which is already adorned and has been used for several nuptial ceremonies. Whereas, for the elders, this suggests the separation of the future bride and groom, the young generation no longer respects these preconceptions. What seemed interesting to us was that the local youths are those who prefer to rent a flag, violating the unwritten rules of the traditional village, while the youths who are abroad return to the roots, preserving the archaic tradition of crafting the flag. The latter probably learned to appreciate the true Romanian values.

The emotional weight of detaching from the patriarchal universe appears allegorically here, through suites of metaphors, comparisons, epithets and inversions. After analyzing the history of research on the nuptial flag, it is remarkable how, until the present day, there has been a lack of attention given to interviews authentically describing the manner in which the nuptial flag is crafted. As it is a nuptial ritual rooted in the mentality of the archaic collective, it is necessary to reproduce a corpus of narratives and descriptions detailing the insiders' perspective every single time.

The evening dedicated to crafting the nuptial flag is part of the category of rites separating the young groom from his previous self, similar to the crowning night for the bride. The evening before the wedding is dominated

by the nuptial flag, as a symbol of virility, and the garland, as a symbol of purity. We can deduce that both ritualistic moments occur at night, a time associated to sexual relations. Sexuality is introduced as an element specific to marriage. This sexual function is also characteristic to the lyrical repertoire of the flag bearer's pack: „La mnireasă sub rochiță/ Iest-un pui chie veveriță/ Oare cine l-o-mpușca?/ Mirili când s-o culca!" ("Under the bride's white dress/ There's a squirrel closely pressed/ Wonder who'll take it away?/ That's the groom when he shall lay!").

The ritual of separating the young man from his celibate self is similarly performed in most parts of Romania. There are, of course, differences. Some variations can be picked up even within the same region. For instance, the very regional name given to the flag fluctuates. Another conclusion that is easy to notice from the descriptions of the performers has to do with the main actors crafting the flag. Sometimes, the main actors are the so called "stegași" ("flaggers") or "drujbe" ("friendlies"), yet other times the sewing of the flag is left to elderly women and its completion is celebrated through "the flag dance". The evening dedicated to the flag is itself a particular in the wedding ceremony. The crafting of the flag is celebrated by the flag dance, the music of the cetera players and the sound of shouted incantations ("țâpurituri"). The flag crafting evening is meant to re-actualize the wedding orations and accommodate them to the social and familial context of the bride and groom. From this perspective, this moment is also considered to be the rehearsal evening before the packs' confrontation. Obviously, the women must preserve their reputation as the most skilled in the village in perfecting this ceremony. Throughout the wedding, the flag would always be subject to a veritable aesthetic analysis by other women specialized in the bride's pack. Thus, even the slightest transgression shall be noticed by the eye of a rural aesthete.

The functions that the nuptial flag are also suggested by the lyrical repertoire. An oration from Bihor county defines the double function fulfilled of this "lazlău" (flag bearer) on his way to the wedding:

> Lazlău îmbrăcat cu flori,/ Leagă feti și feciori!/ Și-i duce la cununie,/ Dumnezău cu iei să fie! (Flag bearer in flowers covered,/ Bind the girls and boys, now lovers!/ Take them to their very wedding,/ May God give them all His blessing!)

On the one hand, the flag bearer's role is highlighted, namely that of *binding* new relationships between the young unwed actors involved in the flag bearer's dance before the nuptial procession, which could lead to the creation of other marriages. In this context, the flag represents the witness to the initiation of future loves, and their binding agent. On the other hand, the flag is the leader of the entire nuptial procession. It is present all through the wedding ceremony as a sign and symbol of the happy event where all the

traditional community is invited. The flag's dance represent the vitality and the metamorphoses that take place both at individual and community levels. Moreover, it is observed in the newlyweds' house the first week after the wedding as a sign of their happiness.

Conclusions

The values of the past are processed and developed through ample folkloric manifestations, while the wedding flag remains the same symbol of virility in our times, spoken of in old books, and by the elderly and young alike. Rich in embellishment and loaded with symbolic value, it is plain to see that the flag and its bearer become ceremonial elements just as important as the bride and the groom. The traditional is not completely eluded from the nowadays individual prospect, as proven by the revival of the wedding flag in some Romanian weddings. Its rediscovery entails a search for coherence, founded on its patterned and preserved structure. Thus kitsch is far from the intentions of those who choose to preserve the wedding flag ritual, even though its original meanings are no longer at hand.

The ceremony of the wedding flag is, without a doubt, a picturesque folkloric manifestation. It encodes deep meanings about the relationship of man with their surrounding world, with nature, about inter-human relationships, about the usual development of social life. As an act of traditional communication, the ritual of the nuptial flag bears a complex language. Verbal expression combines with musical and choreographic expression, with gestures and facial expressions. The ceremony deserves our attention, and, in order for us to grasp its full meaning, the ritual needs to be examined in depth. In so doing, our eye is not caught by its spectacular and picturesque elements only, but also by its profoundly encoded human essence.

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TRANSLATING LITERARY TEXTS WITH MEMOQ

BORBÁLA BÖKÖS[*]

ABSTRACT. In this paper I intend to explore the challenges that literary translations might experience following the advent of online translation software (such as MemoQ) and will discuss the advantages/disadvantages of using such software in the translation of different types of literary texts. In my research I shall demonstrate that the use of MemoQ in the case of literary texts is ambiguous: while it can be useful for translating even literary texts, the quality of such translations differs from one text type to another.

KEY WORDS: translation studies, MemoQ, literary translations, CAT tools, audio-visual translations

Introduction

Technological progress and, in particular, the use of CAT (Computer-Assisted Translation) tools in translation, have allowed translators to produce quality translations in a very short amount of time, thus leading to an unprecedented transformation of the work at translation agencies, as well as of the translation practices *per se*. Online dictionaries and encyclopedias, translation memories and term bases, corpora and parallel texts have proven to be of crucial importance in a modern translator's work. Yet, what truly revolutionized the translators' work was the use of CAT software, such as SDL Trados, MemoQ, Wordfast, with their built-in dictionaries, term bases, translation memories, and functions such as: quality assurance, machine translation, spell- and grammar checkers, text alignment, as well as managing whole projects. Such programs not only help translators create consistency in their translated texts, but also greatly increase productivity on a highly competitive market. Indeed, translations are made more quickly and effectively, but a general truth is that such programs only assist the translator in her/his work, and do not do the work instead of her/him. Moreover, a CAT tool might be extremely useful in the translation of certain types of texts, and might create some frustration in the case of another.

In this paper I intend to explore the challenges that literary translations might experience following the advent of online translation

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software (such as MemoQ) and will discuss the advantages/disadvantages of using such software in the translation of different types of literary texts. In my research I shall demonstrate that the use of MemoQ in the case of literary texts is ambiguous: while it can be useful for translating even literary texts, the quality of such translations will differ from one text type to another. The research was conducted among, and with the help of, the students at the Partium Christian University in Oradea. The twelve students at the Multilingualism and multiculturalism MA program were already familiar with MemoQ, since the English Department has become part of MemoQ's "academic program" since 2018, that is, at our department English Majors receive the licenses from the provider and can use the software during translation classes for almost a year. At the MA program we generally used MemoQ for translating technical and tourism texts, but during a course of literary translations we became curious about the possibilities, as well as limitations of the software in the case of various fictitious narratives. To put it simply, we wanted to check to what extent MemoQ helps the work of a literary translator, as well as how its various functions—so useful in translating technical texts—aid or confuse the translator in the case of a literary text.

Moreover, the literary texts we have chosen were also very different: we used a fragment from a fantasy novel, some lyrics/poems from Disney cartoons, and finally, we attempted to translate a fragment from a documentary film, a tourism video about Oradea, the text of which was written in a very sophisticated literary style (thus, it was very different from "traditional" tourism film narratives). Some of the students were already working as professional, others as amateur translators (freelancers), but everyone was already familiar with the use of online dictionaries, term bases, as well as MemoQ itself.

A Short Note on MemoQ as well as Other Online Tools

In the last few decades CAT tools have significantly reshaped not only the industry of translation, but the process of translation as well. Even before the appearance of CAT tools one could find numerous online resources designed to aid the work of the translator. Online dictionaries such as Merriam Webster, Oxford, SZTAKI, dictzone.com and many others not only offer the translation of certain words, but they also offer example sentences, context, even synonyms/antonyms, as well as audio files for pronunciation. Parallel text databases, such as Linguee or Glosbe are even more useful tools, since these operate with search engines in which one can type not just words, but entire expressions, sentences, and the displayed results will appear in two columns: in one the original, source language text, and in the other the results in the target language, that is, the various official translations. Usually

such databases contain the translation memories created by professional translators. These are mostly legal and technical texts produced by the EU institutions, associations, as well as political bodies. The advantage of such parallel text databases could be that the translator can safely choose from many different versions in the target language, as all versions are being created by other professional translators, moreover, as the context is always displayed, the translator can choose that version which best fits her/his needs. Similarly to any online dictionary, parallel text databases can be added to MemoQ, so while working in the program, a translator can search simultaneously in many online databases/dictionaries.

Software such as MemoQ increase the productivity of translator, so that they can do more work in less time, in a more accurate and consistent way. In an Ebook entitled *Why Use CAT Tools? An Introduction to Computer-Assisted Translation* (which can be freely downloaded from MemoQ's website), the MemoQ team asserts that the most important benefits of a CAT tool are the following functions: a translation memory, a term base, quality control, preview pane and spell checking (*Why Use CAT Tools?* 2020: 5). An important question arises here: if a CAT tool is so efficient, is it possible that we will no longer need the work of a human translator? The MemoQ team claims that

> The main difference between CAT tools and machine translation is one involves humans while the other does not. Even if machine translation engines have become sophisticated, they are not yet capable of understanding the context in which words are said or written. Context constitutes an intangible asset crucial to understanding meaning. (*Why Use CAT Tools?* 2020: 7)

Thus, the logical conclusion might be that a human translator will always be more capable of understanding context, which is of course true; however, I would like to add another feature of the human translator to this palette of skills: creativity. Surely the extent to which the intervention of the human translator becomes necessary is also greatly determined by the types of texts being translated: some machine translations of technical and legal texts will require a minimum of editing and revising, while in other cases, especially when translating literary texts, it is precisely human creativity which will ensure quality in the target language. Among the most beneficial functions of MemoQ one can find the TMs, or "translation memories":

> The translation memory (TM) is a collection of source and target segment pairs from previous translation work. You can choose to use one or multiple translation memories per translation project. When you start to translate, the CAT tool will show in the translation results pane segments from these databases which are similar to the segment being translated, these are called matches. (*Why Use CAT Tools?* 2020: 13)

When one uses MemoQ, or any other CAT tool for the first time, one might be pleasantly surprised that the program splits the imported (source language) document into segments: mostly sentences, but also words and phrases. The translator thus translates the whole text segment by segment, that is, sentence by sentence, in a grid-like interface, which is very similar to an excel file. Below the grid, in the preview section, one can see the entire document in its current state of translation. A translator can also build her/his Translation Memory and terminology database during each translation process: s/he can add new terms to the database, so that in the future, while working on new translations, the program would automatically offer exact or fuzzy matches. If a segment (a sentence) is repeated, MemoQ will automatically type the translation in the target language grid. This is a very useful feature in many ways, and it is truly efficient and time saving. On the one hand, however, in the case of creative (literary) translations, such "auto-translate" functions might slow down the process, since the translator might want to avoid repetitions, thus avoiding redundancy. On the other hand, building up a Term Base is quite useful in the case of a literary translation, since it helps creating consistency. (A Term Base is not similar to a Translation Memory. One can imagine it as a huge dictionary that is built up by the translator day by day. It can be bilingual or even multilingual.) The database comes in handy when translating names, geographical locations, specific cultural expressions, and so on.

For almost fifteen years MemoQ has been one of the most popular CAT tools in the translation market. Designed by a Hungarian company, Kilgray, the program runs on Microsoft windows operating systems, and has an extremely user friendly interface. More importantly, it is compatible with other CAT tools, so one can easily import and work with a translation memory created in Trados or Wordfast. Besides the well-known CAT features—term bases and translation memories—MemoQ offers some extra functions that shortly become indispensable in the translation process. The Muse feature works as a kind of autosuggest function (predictive typing), thus saving time and energy for the translator, the web search offers simultaneous searching in the previously added online dictionaries, the AutoCorrect function automatically corrects typos while typing, and the MemoQ Server works as a cloud, thus helping project managers to organize and manage projects stored on the server.

When we first started to use MemoQ at the Partium Christian University, all English Majors were extremely enthusiastic about it. After one year of studying and using all the features of the program, after having translated a great variety of texts, I conducted a focus group research in which I have asked students about what they like or dislike about the program. Almost all of them considered that Translation Memories and Term Bases are the most

useful features of the software, and they agreed upon the fact that translation is quicker, more effective and more accurate with MemoQ. However, they disagreed in terms of what types of texts it should be used for: while some students argued that MemoQ can be used for translating any type of text, others said that the software is useful only in the case of technical and legal texts, where you have specific terms and repetitive expressions, and will not be efficient in the case of literary texts. Up until that point I have only translated technical texts with this group of students. So, I decided that in the next academic year we will test MemoQ with other texts, namely, literary texts, or, to be more precise, texts which require a great deal of creativity and focusing on the part of the translator.

On Literary Translations. The First Attempt

Literary translations raise the never ending question of *verbum pro verbo* or *sensum de sensu* translation, that is, either a word for word or a sense for sense translation. In the case of literary texts it is never enough to simply translate the text word for word, but one has to "adapt" it to the culture specific needs of the target language audience. This seems to be a very difficult task for a translator as it involves a different type of reading and understanding. According to Ágnes Somló, there are three crucial reading levels in the case of literary translations: "(1) first reading; (2) re-reading or critical reading; (3) translator's reading, that is, the re-reading by the cultural mediator" (2012: 95). A translator, therefore, must read the source text several times so that s/he would have a deep understanding of the various hidden contexts and references, as well as culture-bound expressions.

Moreover, if any translation can be seen as adaptation, one might ask the question: to what extent should a translation be faithful to the source language text? To what extend does the translator make use of artistic freedom? Jirí Levý, a Czech critic argues in his *The Art of Translation*, that in translation studies the "fidelity principle" is mostly based on what types of texts get to be translated. He speaks about two approaches: the "reproductive norm", which is a kind of a *verbum pro verbo* translation, mostly in the case of technical and informative texts that should be translated with great accuracy, so that they would preserve the same meaning; and the "artistic norm" which provides great liberty to the translator to use her/his imagination especially in the case of expressive texts (2011: 60-61). Obviously, in the case of a literary translation, one has to be aware of the cultural context of both the target language and the source language, and tailor the translation in such a way that it would become an enjoyable and valuable piece of reading for the target language audience.

What interested me in this process of literary translation was the method and the technical tools translators would consider useful in the whole process.

I asked some of my colleagues who were working as freelancer literary translator for various publishing houses, whether they use traditional or "modern" tools (e.g.: CAT tools) for translating literary texts. They unanimously responded that they prefer the traditional ways; that is, offline and online dictionaries, and the word processor. They could not imagine a CAT tool to be used for literary translation.

Thus, in the first phase of my research I conducted a focus group discussion with my MA students regarding the use of MemoQ for a literary text. We have chosen George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* for the experiment (to be translated from English into Hungarian), and each group started to work with the first page of the very first chapter: the scene in which Bran is taken by his father and brothers to see a man beheaded. There were four groups of three students working on the same task, and two groups were asked to use MemoQ, while the other two were asked to use traditional methods, such as online and/or offline dictionaries and a Word processor. Before starting, I had asked them to estimate the duration of the task, and to express their opinion on which method would they consider to be faster and more efficient. All groups presumed that students working with MemoQ will complete the task in a faster and more effective way due to the use of translation memory and terminology database, that is, in less than half an hour. The groups working with traditional methods (monolingual and bilingual dictionaries) estimated that they will complete the task in an hour. I assured them that there was no deadline for the task.

All groups had a pre-translation exercise: they have read the text at least two times and started to make notes, to find expressions. Those students working with MemoQ created an Excel file with the most common expressions knowing that they can import it in MemoQ's terminology database. The others took notes in a Word document. After the pre-translation exercise the groups started to work on the tasks. Those working with MemoQ finished the translation in twenty-five minutes; those using traditional methods finished it in more or less one hour, just as they presumed. Then we compared and discussed the translations. We discussed grammatical and structural issues at first, but then we focused on problems of consistency and creativity. From a grammatical point of view all of the translations were quite correct, but in terms of style and "creating atmosphere" the translations made with the help of MemoQ were of poorer quality, while the "traditional" translations had some truly creative solutions.

Since this is a fantasy novel that makes references to our actual Middle Ages, it was of utmost importance to find creative translations for specific expressions: names, titles, creatures, and so on. The groups using traditional methods found some very creative solutions to words, such as: ghouls, direwolf, the Others, Winterfell, and they have used them consistently. The

translations made by the "MemoQ groups" were also correct, but lacked the specific fantasy atmosphere, and seemed to be rather mechanic, full of redundancy. From the discussions it has been revealed that the groups working with MemoQ encountered the following problems during translation:

- because MemoQ segmented the text into sentences, they could not see the text as a whole (even if they knew how to use MemoQ's preview function), therefore, they could not imagine the setting, the characters, and, as a consequence, the entire story. They simply could not play with words, synonyms, expressions, as they thought they should accept the terms coming from the terminology database and the built-in dictionaries of the program;
- because they saw the whole text in sentences, the process of translation became somehow mechanical, and a huge rush: even if they remembered that there was no time limit for the task, they felt that going through the text sentence by sentence, bit by bit is somehow speeding everything up, so they got the illusion that they have to finish it as quickly as possible, as if they were meeting a deadline. The inconsistencies found in the MemoQ group translations were also partly due to the fact the students did not take their time to re-read as well as proofread the translations, while the other groups did so.

Such results partly met my previous expectations, since the students I was working with have only translated technical texts during the semester, and had no significant experience in literary translations. We have also concluded that it was perhaps the segmentation function of MemoQ that was very disrupting in finding creative solutions in the process of translation.

On Audiovisual Translations. The Second Attempt
In the second stage of the research students used MemoQ for the translation of audiovisual texts. We have chosen four Disney songs (lyrics) from four well-known animations. For each applying a different type of spoken/written translation method, that is, encompassing voice-over and lip-synchronized dubbing as well as subtitling. The four songs were the following: "I'm Still Here" (Jim's song from *Treasure Planet*,2002), "Let it Go" (Elsa's song from *Frozen*, 2013), "Diggah Tunnah" (Timon's song from *Lion King 3: Hakuna Matata*, 2004), and "Strangers Like Me" (from Tarzan, 1999). For two songs—"I'm Still Here" and "Strangers Like Me"—we have created the written translations in the form of subtitles, while for the other two songs—Let it Go and Diggah Tunnah—students' group work also focused on lip-

synchronized dubbing, therefore our initial expectations were that these translations would take more time. All groups used MemoQ for the translation of lyrics, and in the focus group interviews prior to the translation task students agreed on two things: on the one hand, despite belonging to the audiovisual medium these lyrics fall into the category of literary texts (just like poems, they have specific rhymes, rhythms, and express feelings, ideas), and therefore, on the other hand, they would need a very creative method in the process of translation.

But how should we approach the discourse of audiovisual translation? Translators of audiovisual texts have to take into consideration many semiotic codes (verbal, nonverbal, audio, and visual) so that the translation would fit the needs of the target audience, that is, it would provide an authentic and meaningful spectatorial experience. "In audiovisual texts there is semiotic interaction between the simultaneous emission of image and text and its repercussions for the translation process. One characteristic of audiovisual texts is its redundancy: oral and written messages are conveyed with sound and image" (Bartina and Espasa 2005:85). It is precisely this redundancy, which makes audiovisual translation difficult, especially in the case of very artistic texts (such as in our case, translating Disney lyrics), because it involves a multimodal shift: meaning has to be redistributed across several semiotic codes while the cinematic narrative has to be tailored/adapted to the rhetorical preferences of the target audience. While talking about system and norm-based approaches, Luis Perez-Gonzales argues that there are source-text- and target-text oriented film translations:

> Source-text oriented film translations […] involve a relatively straightforward linguistic recoding, with minimal adaptations of culture-specific meaning. In this regard, source-text oriented film translations are widely held to foster formal and conceptual innovation in the receiving culture. By contrast, the linguistic and cultural configuration of target-text oriented film translations is the result of an effort to conceal the translated nature of the target text through processes of cultural realignment and adaptation. (2014: 121)

Also, in the case of target-text oriented translations the translators have more freedom and creativity in creating a new text—just as my students have experienced during the group work: in the cases of Disney lyrics sometimes the Hungarian text had to be rewritten to such a great extent that only the message remained the same. Many of the students asserted that they felt like writing poetry by themselves, that they were recreating the songs instead of merely translating them. The situation became more complex when they were writing the Hungarian lyrics as "lip-synch scripts", and realized that they not only have to fit the actors' lips but also have to provide a natural flow of the cinematic narrative, that is, to "tell the story". Lip-synching is one of

the most complex processes in translation. "The translator should maintain the impression of verisimilitude fitting the open vowels and bilabial consonants into those instants in which the person on the screen in close-up shot visibly opens his/her mouth or closes his/her lips in order to articulate a bilabial vowel or consonant respectively" (Chaume 2004: 20). Synchrony, thus, is not only visual (the sounds of the target language matching exactly the actors' lip movement on the screen), but also audio (the number of heard syllables in the target language matching exactly the syllables perceived in the source language). Besides, as in our case of Disney songs, the tone and tempo of the dubbed voice should also match the rhythm of the music played and the specific (cultural) aspects of various characters.

Given the aforementioned challenges, in our group work of dubbing the Disney songs, we have assumed that each translation will have gains and losses. Most students' translations tried to preserve as much as possible from the original text, yet many times omissions were necessary, and sometimes the text had to be rewritten to such a great extent that only the original message remained the same. Throughout the whole process we have assumed that lip synchronization would be one of the greatest challenges, yet, it was exactly this part in which MemoQ proved to be of great help. After finishing the tasks, all students claimed that the text segmentation feature of MemoQ was especially useful in breaking down the sentences into smaller pieces, so they were able to create the Hungarian version as perfectly matching the number of syllables and the lip movement in the source language. In the lip-synching exercise the easiest proved to be Eliza's song from *Frozen*, while the most difficult one seemed to be Timon's Diggah Tunnah from *Lion King 3*.

Students claimed that Eliza's song was well articulated and they could easily find Hungarian words that fitted the lip movement of the cartoon character. Timon's song, however, involves quick and large lip movements, a chorus, and a specific gospel rhythm. As the meerkats are digging their tunnel and dancing at the same time, their faces, and especially their mouth are seen for flashes of seconds, while uttering the words. Many words and phrases are repeated, so once the students found the perfect Hungarian equivalents for these, MemoQ automatically translated the recurring segments, and from that point on the translation of the whole song became real quick. The most difficult expression proved to be the title/refrain: "Dig a tunnel, dig, dig a tunnel", as the word "dig" is repeated several times, while also showing the facial expression of the meerkats: singing it with a wide smile. The Hungarian equivalent, "áss", proved to be quite effective, as its pronunciation also fits a lip wide open, while for "tunnel" the best option proved to be "alagút".

Quite unexpectedly, the song which became the most difficult to translate was "Strangers Like Me" from *Tarzan*. For this song no lip-synching was needed, but there were two particular things students had to pay attention to: firstly, because the song has a very specific ragged rhythm it was difficult to find words with the exact number of syllables that would fit the original song's tempo, and secondly, as the song has a very deep message—it is about the feelings of Tarzan, who falls in love with Jane and wants to discover the whole human world with all of its strangeness—the emotional mood and atmosphere created in the Hungarian translation would be of utmost importance. The original text written by Phil Collins has a very poetic style, and the official Hungarian translation (written by Ákos, a Hungarian poet and musician) also rises above every expectation. With these in mind students attempted to create a *sensum-de-sensu* translation, that is, they tried to "rewrite" the original English lyrics in such a way that the result in Hungarian would convey the message, would have the same number of syllables and would fit the rhythm and the tempo of the music, but it surely could not follow the original text word by word. So, in this case, even the basic line in and the title of the original song "Strangers like me" became in the Hungarian version "Idegenérzés", that is, "a strange feeling" (also in the official Hungarian translation), and the students' translation used many words and expressions that referred to a personal feeling of Tarzan, sometimes strongly demanding Jane to teach him, tell him specific things about the outside world.

Students while working in MemoQ made use of MemoQ's in-built dictionaries and online parallel text databases (linguee, glosbe). Text segmentation proved to be again a crucial feature in the translation process, as it was easier to figure out the number of syllables in each line, as well as to find the appropriate Hungarian expressions that would fit the emotional mood of the segment and the tempo of the music. It was precisely this process of finding the proper words, the hesitation about how to provide a similar emotional atmosphere in the Hungarian version that took them much time, therefore in the whole MemoQ translation experiment it was Tarzan's song that took the longest time to translate (two and half hours). The result was, however, quite acceptable, and students were also satisfied with their MemoQ experience.

All in all, translating these Disney songs with the help of MemoQ proved to be a great success. Some difficulties, however, occurred due to the "literary" nature of such texts, yet these obstacles were overcome this time as the program made it possible for the translators to dwell on specific segments, as well as expressions. As students had to spend more time on each sentence—trying to find the perfect Hungarian equivalents that would match lips and/or the number of syllables—they came up with very creative

solutions. Thus, text segmentation and translation memory, the two features responsible for the rush and the poor quality of the translations in the case of the previous exercise, now brought about the opposite effect: even if these MemoQ features slowed down students in the process of translation, they made them more attentive to the specificities of audiovisual texts, and, thus, helped them create quality work.

On Tourism Texts. The Third Attempt
Tourism texts translation has always played an important part in the promotion of the Bihor region. Examining the translation quality of bilingual, or trilingual tourism promotion materials on Oradea and Bihor county has been a part of our translation courses for a long time, and students attempted several times to create quality texts in their translation exercises from English to Hungarian and vice versa: they have translated leaflets, brochures, web blogs, and many other materials that offered tourism information for foreign visitors. For such translation exercises we have used MemoQ quite frequently, and students claimed that it was of great help. Indeed, texts were translated much quicker and in a relatively good quality. But can tourism texts be looked at as literary texts, and if yes, is MemoQ an effective tool in the translation of such texts?

In the case of tourism texts written in the quality and style of literary texts, problems of translation might not arise only from linguistic issues, but also from cultural aspects. The text I have chosen for the last stage of our research is the text written for a tourism documentary on Oradea, a film created in 2012 by journalist Zoltán Villányi. The title of the documentary is *Erdély nyugati ablakában* [*In Transylvania's Western Window (Oradea and Bihor County)]*, and the voiceover narrative of the film was written by a renown local journalist couple, Attila Lakatos and Tünde Balla. Lakatos and Balla have written a text in Hungarian which can be considered as both literary and tourism text: it describes the city as a place which has a significant role and function related to the local history and culture of both Hungarians and Romanians. (The film was translated into three languages: English, German and Romanian. The official English translation was done by myself.)

Besides important historical data provided throughout the documentary (names, dates, places, etc.), the text adds a beautiful picture of the city through the usage of a very poetic style, also quoting from literary works that were written about Oradea. This combination of standard, informative tourism text full of exact data and literary style brings about a unique translation experience as well as a professional challenge. Thus, I decided to bring the introductory part of the documentary into the class and ask my students to try to translate it with the help of MemoQ (the fragment we translated is the very beginning of the documentary, see the Appendix). I was

interested in how the culture-related expressions in the source text would be translated into English, so that the meaning gets mediated in such a way that the readers would fully understand the message, moreover, they would also enjoy the atmosphere of a narrative written in a sophisticated, poetic style.

Students estimated that the duration of the task would be around 30-40 minutes without proofreading, due to the use of the translation memory and terminology database that they would build with the help of MemoQ. In the pre-reading and pre-translating exercises they have estimated that the segmentation would be disrupting again, as it was in the case of the first literary translation exercise, and they claimed that they would not be able to see the text as a whole, only fragments of it in the preview section. During pre-translation all groups have created an Excel file with the most important expressions taken from the text, so that they could later import it into the project's terminology database (names, dates, historical facts).

Upon finishing the tasks, we have discussed the translations comparing them with the official English translation (see the Appendix). During this discussion, I mainly evaluated the translations in terms of consistency and misinterpreting, and also asked students to peer-review each other's works to identify grammatical and structural issues in the English versions. Almost all groups have created decent translations, yet all of them failed to provide the literary style and the atmosphere of the original. All translations used simplification in the case of more complex, poetic expressions, and attempted to create a more logical, minimalist text, which they considered to be more appropriate for a tourism documentary. In this process of "adaptation", many of the original text's meanings were lost, or, in some cases, heavily reformulated.

We asked students to share what kind of difficulties they experienced during translation, and some groups mentioned the fact that because of the unique style (a combination of literary text and tourism texts) they had a problem with deciding upon the proper style, that is, they were not sure whether in terms of style they should get closer to a literary text or a tourism brochure. Moreover, segmentation, again, ruined the perception of the narrative as a literary piece of work, and encouraged them to look at it as if it were taken from a tourism promotion material (a type of text they have already had experience with, especially when translating with MemoQ).

In terms of translating the cultural references the groups used many different solutions, and it was partly due to this difficulty of translating cultural issues that ruined the literary atmosphere of the translations. One of the culturally problematic references in the source text was "A Holnap városa", and later, "a Holnap Irodalmi Társaság", that is, a literary society flourishing in Oradea at the turn of the century. In many of the translations "Holnap" remained untranslated, yet this name has a meaning which is only

identifiable to the source language speakers, and not necessarily to the target language audience. Therefore, preserving the word "Holnap" in itself is not a mistake, but a little mediation work in this context would have been welcome (even if using the English word for word translation: "Tomorrow"). Another difficulty occurred right in the case of the first line, when the writers quote from a novel, in which the city of Oradea is compared to a French-like, careless singer: "franciásan bájos, könnyelmű, de szemtelenül tehetséges, daloló sanzonett". The sentence contains many adjectives, and the word "sanzonett" proved to be difficult to translate, so most groups simply shortened the sentence, omitting several adjectives, and using the simple word "singer," instead of the equivalent of "sanzonette". With this they have created a more simplified translation, thus losing the literary charm of the original text. Students claimed that the segmentation in MemoQ urged them to create a word for word translation, so that they could not consider meanings in a larger context. Another example of omission occurred in the case of the next sentence: "Lágyan daloló váradiság lengi be a költő-újságíró Dutka Ákos Nagyvárad-regényét", a sentence that contains expressions quite difficult to translate. "Váradiság" in this case means the "state of being a citizen of Oradea, to be faithful to the city", yet in our students' translations this expression was mistranslated, or entirely left out.

All in all the resulting translations were acceptable in terms of tourism texts (all being finished in 40 minutes as estimated at the beginning), but the literary style was lost in the process. Many beautiful expressions were left out from the English version, and the literary fragment, the quoted part from the beginning, was precisely the part that created the most difficulties for the students. This lack of mediation work in the English versions was partly due to the use of MemoQ, a program that students considered to be suitable for translating more exact texts, with a simpler style, as it was the case of standard tourism materials. Thus, in the case of this task, the language of the documentary—being attractive and poetic in Hungarian—may not work well with target readers.

Conclusions

The use of CAT tools, and especially of MemoQ, has revolutionized the work of translators while also providing them new challenges. In this study I attempted to look at the ways MemoQ can be used for translating various types of texts that fall into the category of literary texts. In the research with students at the Partium Christian University we translated three types of texts with the help of MemoQ: fragments from a fantasy novel, Disney songs, and a tourism text written in literary style. The CAT tool proved to be useful in all cases, yet it seems that it was most successful in the process of translating audiovisual texts (Disney songs). In the case of the other two texts students

could not maintain consistency due to that they felt limited because of the segmentation function of the program, and could not entirely take advantage of the translation memory and terminology database. In the case of the first attempt those students who worked with a simple word document and online dictionaries created more creative and more consistent translations. In the case of the third text all students and all groups worked with MemoQ, which proved to be useful in producing a text that was closer to a tourism promotional material than a literary piece of work, thus the original text's poetic style has been lost in the process. Moreover, some cultural references were not mediated for the target audience. Summarizing students' attitudes and experiences towards MemoQ, it could be said that the program is excellent for time saving in all types of texts, yet in the case of literary texts there is a need for a more creative intervention on the part of the user. Literary translators, if using a CAT tool, should be more aware of the preview section so that they would not lose sight of the context. Moreover, they should extensively rely on creativity, besides using a richly developed terminology database.

Appendix
A Varadinum Film Alapítvány bemutatja

„ERDÉLY NYUGATI ABLAKÁBAN"

Nagyvárad és Bihar megye
Megyejáró dokumentumfilm

„Úgy ült ez a város Erdély nyugati ablakában, hátával a bihari havasoknak fordulva, mint egy franciásan bájos, könnyelmű, de szemtelenül tehetséges, daloló sanzonett... Mindenki imádta, és mindenki magáénak vallotta, úr, polgár és proletár, a megbűvölt szerelmes hitével—hogy csak az övé." A Holnap városa. Lágyan daloló váradiság lengi be a költő-újságíró Dutka Ákos Nagyvárad-regényét, amely sorsfordító pillanatban, a 20. század fordulóján pillant be a sziporkázóan szellemes vidéki város életébe. A tehetős váradi zsidó polgárság ekkorra teremtette meg Nagyvárad eklektikus-szecessziós új arcát, a mai belvárost. A hatalmas közigazgatási- és bérpaloták a legapróbb részleteikben is az áhított Párizs és Budapest nagyvilági eleganciáját mímelték; nemkülönben a hölgyek toalettje, a világfik europer gondolkodása, vagy a költészet és az irodalom, amely a korabeli Magyarország keleti fertályáról kezdte megreformálni az irodalmi életet. E városról ugyanis azt tartják, hogy aki kicsit is haladó és szabad szellemű, az legalább egyszer megfordult Nagyváradon. A Magyar irodalmi élet legnagyobbjai: Ady Endre, Juhász Gyula, Krúdy Gyula és Babits Mihály is

zsurnalisztaként, e helyt kezdték írói, költői munkásságukat az 1900-as évek elején. Kávéházak törzsasztalainál formálódtak a világmegváltó gondolatok. Az EMKE-ben a Holnap Irodalmi Társaság bontogatta szárnyait. A Müllerájban Ady Endre költői zsengéi nyíladoztak; Várad dédelgette a Léda-szerelem, a Diósiné Brüll Adél iránti szenvedélye lángját is.

A román szellemi és irodalmi élet is ez időtájt szerveződött mozgalommá Nagyváradon. A költő, színműíró Iosif Vulcan 1865-ben indította be Budapesten a Familia folyóiratot, melynek 1880-tól napjainkig Nagyvárad ad otthont. E lap az első irodalmi önszerveződés a korabeli Romániában."

In Transylvania's Western Window
Oradea and Bihor County

A tourist documentary

Turning its back upon the Bihor mountains, this city sat in the western window of Transylvania like a charmingly French-like, careless, but impudently talented, singing disuse... Everybody—gentry, bourgeois, proletarian—loved it, and claimed it as their own with the faith of an enchanted lover". This is the City of Tomorrow. A sweet-voiced faithfulness to Oradea pervades the poet-journalist's, Ákos Dutka's novel, offering a glimpse into the provincial city's splendidly witty life at the beginning of the 20th century. By that time the wealthy Jewish middle class established the new Eclectic-Art Nouveau face of Oradea, the nowadays downtown. The monumental mansions and administrative buildings imitated the much adored elegance of Paris and Budapest in every detail, similarly bringing into fashion the ladies' dressing style, the European thinking of the men of the world, and the poetry and literature, which started to reform the contemporary literary life right from the eastern part of Hungary. The city is known to be famous for the fact, that whoever is open-minded and has a progressive spirit must visit Oradea for once at least. The greatest literary representatives, Endre Ady, Gyula Juhász, Gyula Krúdy, and Mihály Babits started their literary and poetic career in this city as journalists, at the beginning of the 1900s. World-saving thoughts had been formed at the customary tables of the coffeehouses. The Tomorrow (Holnap) Literary Society was established in the EMKE. Endre Ady's first poems were written in the Mülleráj, and it was Oradea where Ady passionately fell in love with Adél Brüll (Mrs. Diósi), whom in his later poems he called Léda.

During this time the Romanian literary and intellectual life had also developed into a serious movement. In 1865, Iosif Vulcan, poet and playwright launched a magazine entitled *Familia* in Budapest, a publication that was afterwards moved to Oradea and continued its issues from 1880 to

the present time. This magazine is the first literary self-organization in contemporary Romania.

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A QUIET, CHEAP PLACE TO WRITE OR, THE AVATARS OF SILENCE

DAN HORAȚIU POPESCU[*]

ABSTRACT. This paper aims at identifying major issues related to the process of writing, as reflected in Patrick Leigh Fermor's book, *A Time to Keep Silence*, and also in his correspondence with various people. The famous travel author associated with Romania and its pre-WWII Golden Age, as remembered and recreated in *Between the Woods and the Water*, produced, at the beginning of his literary career, in the early 1950s, a book showing the painstaking of growing into a writer. At the same time, the atmosphere and the spirit of certain places an author would always be willing to fantasize about was wonderfully captured in his book on silence. A *heretic* (read Protestant) from across the Channel, he spent some time in a French Catholic monastery in the years right after WWII, as a result of his search for the perfect place to write. His major experience while at St. Wandrille Abbey, and in a couple of similar locations, definitely contrasted the type of life he previously used to share with some of his socialite friends. Inside the monastic shelters, Fermor eventually engaged in their silence code, and that provided him with a peculiar understanding of an alternative way of life, and a rather compelled return to the roots of his own identity.

KEY WORDS: place to write, monastery, solitude, silence, identity

Introduction. Ivory Towers, Manors and Hotels

In the summer of 1948, Patrick Leigh Fermor, aka Paddy or Major Fermor as people had started to know him due to his heroic deeds as SOE (Special Operations Executive, a British organisation responsible for training and coordinating the operations of partisan groups in countries occupied by the enemies during WWII) officer in occupied Crete during WWII, found himself jobless, without money and a proper/university education, yet very much in love and with a lot of supporting friends. Their entire world had just been shattered and somehow people like Paddy and his dear ones were trying to fix and assemble it back, while still looking over their shoulder to what they must have perceived like a lost and glamorous age, the inter-war Golden Age.

Paddy felt, and he also knew, that he was capable to write, however the road to becoming an accomplished writer would take many and unexpected turns and twists. Some of them came from his own undeniable doubts, others

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from the temptations that everyday life, in the circles he was attending, fully displayed in the process of reconstructing, as already mentioned, a European state of mind and spirituality as well. Yet not having a house, a place of his own, made him even more restless and prone to finding extravagant solutions.

Some friends proved very helpful in this respect and provided him with their hospitality, such being the case of the Gadencourt farmhouse, in Normandy. It was the property of the Smarts, whom he knew from wartime Cairo. Amy Smart, née Nimr (1898-1974), was an Egyptian born artist. Her husband, Walter Smart, had worked for the British Emabssy in Cairo in the 1930s and he was to become the model for Lawrence Durrell's *Mountolive*.

While at Gadencourt, Paddy began working at *The Traveller's Tree*, a book based on the notes taken during his travel in Central America in the autumn of 1947. It was his very first book, and he was happy to benefit from a very stimulating environment—"I love this life, and hate the idea of leaving it" (Cooper 20013: 231). He was soon to discover the joys of a true writer's labour, as his endeavours until then had been entirely journalistic—"How different writing a book is to writing articles!" (Cooper 20013: 231) Still, a sentence in the same context, *i.e.* a letter to his lover, Joan Rayner, points to the well-known *writer's block* and to some circumstantial, and in the long run not very efficient, solutions—"If ever the Muse flags, I nip into the dining room and swallow a *coup de rouge*…" (Cooper 20013: 231).

At times he seemed totally absorbed in the frenzied process of producing the book—"I only move from my desk—a heavenly *malampia* of books and papers now—from 9 a.m. till 9 p.m., for mealtimes which I never thought, seriously, I could do..." (Sisman 2016: 49). Surrounded by the works of classical authors such as Molière, Tacitus, Racine and Corneille, he found the *milieu* "tremendously invigorating. All writers should be equipped with these auxiliaries" (Sisman 2016: 49).

Somehow, the atmosphere at Gadencourt might have brought back sweet memories, probably from his travels in the early 1930s, especially from the sojourns spent in several Transylvanian manors and the prolonged talks with his hosts there; or from the late 1930s, and particularly the winters spent at the Moldavian estate of his Romanian lover, the princess Balasha Cantacuzène. The name of the place was Băleni, a village near Galatzi, where Balasha co-owned what had been left from a larger estate. There,

> snow reached the windowsills and lasted till spring. There were cloudy rides under a sky full of rooks; otherwise, it was an indoor life of painting, writing, reading, talk, and lamp-lit evenings with Mallarmé, Apollinaire, Proust and Gide handy; there was *Les Enfants Terribles* and *Le Grand Meaulnes* and *L'Aiglon* read aloud; all these were early debarbarizing steps in beguiling and unknown territory. (Fermor 2004: 44)

Romania was now far away and on the other side of the Iron Curtain, so the would-be writer had at his disposal, in the late 1940s, locations associated with traditional destinations for British subjects. According to his biographer, Paddy "was rarely in one place for more than a month or two, shifting mainly between Italy, Greece, England and France" (Cooper 2013: 238). Paddy belonged to a post-war generation, with some of its representatives seriously considering travel writing as the basis of a writing career since, according to Peter Hulme, they "felt the need for the kind of direct engagement with social and political issues" (Hulme and Youngs 2013: 89), something that travel writing and journalism as well "seemed to offer" (Hulme and Youngs 2013: 89).

As for his destinations, the paradox consisted in the fact that he was actually catching up with very old patterns of travel. His pre-war deambulations had taken him to Central and Eastern Europe and, eventually, Constantinople. But his post-war ones resembled those of the 17th century Grand Tour, the leading purpose of which was "to round up the education of young men of the ruling classes by exposing them to the treasured artifacts and ennobling society of the Continent" (Buzard in Hulme and Youngs 2013: 38). Thus, a "Grand Tour of France and the Giro of Italy", as recommended by Richard Lassels in his *An Italian Voyage*, published in 1670, would contribute to mastering languages and refining "the manners and gracious behavior necessary to civilized men" (Buzard in Hulme and Youngs 2013: 39). However, a detour up-north, before arriving in Italy or France, in places such as Berlin, Dresden and Vienna, would make the young traveler "fit for the last polish". Paddy had travelled through France, Germany and Austria, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria in the early 1930s; and while staying in Romania, in the late 1930s, he had spent lovely interludes in England and France with Balasha, so one might conclude that his polishing had been happily completed to a higher degree of refinement.

After the war, he resumed his travels and sojourns with friends, except that Eastern Europe was now closed for them and it would remain like that until 1965, when he first dared to venture across the Iron Curtain. Many of his letters, in which lovely memories had been exchanged, to and from people in those countries, must have been lost, unfortunately, making it very difficult for a researcher to recreate the picture of their friendship and of their epoch.

So, a place like Gandencourt in France helped Paddy, and that worked well until the early 1960s, to make up for such a loss, as the owners of the house allowed him to spend plenty of time either in their company or alone, and they did not mind his inviting other people as well. "If you come to France, do come and stay" (Sisman 2016: 114), he was writing to his Greek

friend George Katsimbalis, on November 5 1955. A reputed Greek author, poet and raconteur, George Katsimbalis (1899-1978) was also the protagonist of one of Henry Miller's best books, the half-travelogue and half-novel, *The Colossus of Marousi* (1941). "If you come to France, please for heaven's sake telephone…" (Sisman 2016: 118), he wrote on 7 January 1956 to Ann Fleming, the director of Queen Anne Press, which had published, in 1953, the first limited edition of *A Time to Keep Silence*. "It's only an hour from Paris", he added and also mentioned "a gastronomic pilgrimage to the starred restaurants of Normandy" (Sisman 2016: 118). A British socialite, Anne Fleming (1913-1981) was also the wife of Ian Fleming, the author of James Bond series.

Still, Gadencourt worked only as a temporary heaven, and he had to return to Paris, every now and then, at Hotel Louisiane where, according to his biographer, at a certain stage, his fellow guests "included Simone de Beauvoir and Juliette Gréco" (Cooper 230). He might have been totally unaware of such a distinguished company, although he was going to have a brief affair with the latter, the singer/actress and muse of existentialism, as she came to be known. It would happen a decade later, while in Africa, where Juliette Gréco was shooting *The Roots of Heaven* as the female star. The film, based on Romain Gary's novel, *Les racines du ciel*, would have its script co-written by Paddy.

Monastic Shelters

Neverthless, such frivolous though enjoyable episodes as the ones mentioned above could not prevent Patrick Leigh Fermor from experiencing severe gaps in his writing. On the contrary, and especially in the very first years of writing, there were moments in which he could find no solutions to move on and to honour the promises made to his editors.

Sometime in 1948, he was told that non-paying guests were taken in by the abbey of Saint-Wandrille in Normandy, "even if their reasons for staying did not include religious retreat or instruction" (Cooper 2013: 232), so he decided to try his luck. In the beginning, the novelty of the place seemed all right, despite restrictions, as detectable in a letter to his future wife, Joan Rayner—"I'm a bit more resigned to this place at the moment, and now that I've established my rights as a defaulter at Mass every day, it's not too bad" (Sisman 2018: 28); and things looked even promising in early September 1948, given also the natural setting—"The weather has been perfect, and I have been writing away out of doors under a chestnut tree" (Sisman 2018: 28).

He was impressed by the kindness of the monks, appreciating their discretion and good manners, however he maintained a sort of reserve—"I'm not feeling an atom more disposed to religion at the moment" (Sisman 2018:

30). During one of his daily, half an hour after luncheon, conversations with either the Abbé or the Père Hôtelier, the latter confided to him that "his conversion from atheism and monastic vocation was entirely under the influence of Huysmans" (ibidem) Interestingly enough, Paddy had probably discovered Huysmans's writings on Catholicism while at Gadencourt, just a couple of months earlier, and had connected with the decadent French writer almost instantly. "Above all, he was exhilarated by the author's style." said Artemis Cooper (2013: 231), thus it was less about religion and Huysman's struggling with his return to Church, but more about a kindred spirit. In fact, in the years to come Paddy himself was to be acknowledged as a major stylist, of the 20th century English prose respectively. "Here was someone," continued Cooper on Huysmans, "who could take eight pages to describe the effects of dawn breaking inside Chartres Cathedral, with an almost hallucinatory intensity (Cooper 2013: 230). Therefore we may presume that Patrick Leigh Fermor had arrived at Saint Wandrille filled with literary expectations, which might have created a kind of aura to that alternative life style. He might have grown, just like Durtal, Huysman's protagonist of the novel *En Route*—a novel said to have soothed the pain of incarceration for Oscar Wilde while in the Reading jail—, "enthusiastic in thinking of the convents" (Cooper 2013: 230) But, unlike Durtal, Paddy did not want "to be earthed up among them, sheltered from the herd, not to know what books appear, what newspapers are printed" (Cooper 2013: 230).

On the one hand, part of his expectations were met even through the unusual writing setting from his room—"a pontifical looking *prie-dieu* [prayer-stool], and two tables, one of them a giant escritoire on which I am writing now, seated in a high-backed embroidered armchair." (Sisman 2016: 38); and they eventually bore fruit, as stated in a letter to Joan from 11 October—"my guilt has been evaporating this last week. I think it must be because I'm doing some work. (idem: 26)

On the other hand, he was gradually becoming aware of the distance between the world he was inhabiting at that particular moment and the one he had left behind, as reflected in a slightly angered sentence addressed to his lover—"You're in a capital city, I'm in an abbey, don't I know what it means!" (Sisman 2016: 39); and he even warned her not to give full credit to his lines, which were actually going to form the substance of a couple of articles and later of a highly appreciated book—"And don't you think these accounts of cenobitic [monastic] splendor mean I'm OK here alone!" (Sisman 2016: 39) Isolation and solitude had started to take their toll, as obvious in a bizarre episode described in the same letter:

> Still thinking about the deserts of Chalcedon and Paphlagonia, I walked through the archway, and happening to look to my left, saw a tall monk standing there, his face invisible in his cowl, his hands folded in his sleeves, quite silent. It was so

frightening, I nearly let out a scream, and can still feel my heart thumping. (Sisman 2016: 36)

Such images were not to remain singular, as they were pointing to a reality he was going to encompass in later shorter, and shortly after, monastic stages. A month at St Wandrille was followed by a brief return to Paris, and then he went to another Benedictine Abbey, the monastery of Saint-Jean-de-Solesmes on the river Sarthe. "A much dourer, more Victorian, forbidding place than St W[andrille]" (Sisman 2018: 33), he was writing to Joan in December 1948. He acknowledged that the Plainsong/plainchant, the tradition of which had been revived after the French Revolution by one of the abbots, Dom Prosper Guéranjer,—"is amazing, but, for every other point of view, it's a dungeon compared to my old home." (ibidem)

As for the ivory tower prospects, things looked apparently convenient, yet not encouraging enough—"A lovely comfy room, however, shaded lights, open fire etc." he admitted—"But I don't want to stay long." (ibidem) Just like at St. Wandrille he was "writing like anything" (Sisman 2016: 40), often loosing track of the time, which sometimes bothered him as he kept missing the 3:30 post—"I always think it's earlier and the bloody thing has left by the time I get ready" (Sisman 2016: 40). Letters to his lover and friends had to be put off until the next day and the next, as the monastery had started to work its spell on him—"Apart from all this, it's a delightful place, with a great atmosphere of scholarship and serious meditation" (Sisman 2016: 41).

In the second half of December he went back to Normandy, this time for a ten day stay in the monastery of La Grande Trappe, home to the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance. Like Huysmans' *Durtal*, Paddy would encounter an even more austere way of life, "one of continual prayer and total silence" (Cooper 2013: 234). Nevertheless, he was determined to resist and keep up the good writing, as he had already confessed in a letter from Solesmes to Alexander Mourouzi, a friend from pre-war Roumania—"The least distraction—even the most boring thing—is excuse enough to prevent me from actually working and this is the reason I hide myself in monasteries" (Sisman 2018: 38).

An Alternative Life-Style: Writing at the Place and Writing about the Place
He would occasionally spend time at St. Wandrille in the following decade, but just one year later his feelings towards it appeared to have changed—"It's lovely and quiet here, but it is quite failing to cast the same sort of spell on me that it did last year." (idem: 42) He blamed it, in another letter to Joan, on a kind of *having consummated the marriage* act—"Perhaps having written and talked about St Wandrille so much has dissipated some of the charm." (ibidem) Somehow unintentionally, he was pointing to the distinction between *writing at the place* and *writing about the place*.

Writing at the place had been nevertheless successful and it proved its added value again in 1957, when, according to Cooper (2013: 301), in February Paddy was busy at Saint-Wandrille, correcting the latest typescript of his first travel book on Greece, *Mani*. And in April the same year, also at St. Wandrille, he was enthusiastic about the renewed speeding of his work—"All goes splendidly. This extraordinary place really does seem to do the trick" (Sisman 2016: 144).

Still, Paddy continued to feel the pressure of the monastic life style, so he needed to interact more with the people he cared about. Joan, his lover, was just one of the many recipients of his letters, with some of the sentences being replicated for different addressees. "I got off to a whizz-bang start, and have done more in three days than any ten in London" (Sisman 2016: 144), he was writing to Joan and he would use almost exactly the same words in another letter from April, to Diana Cooper, a famous London socialite and a dear friend of his (and also a famous beauty and a member of the *Bright Young* group; between 1944 and 1948, Diana's husband, Lord Duff Cooper, served as Britain's Ambassador to France)—"I got off to a whizz-bang start and have already written more here than I have done for any week in London recently." (Sisman 2018: 133)

As for *writing about the place*, in 1957 his notes and fragments from the previous letters had already made their way into what was the first edition of *A Time to Keep Silence*, in which he had corroborated experiences from the French monasteries with travel notes on the first Christian monasteries in Cappadocia. The book, published in 1953, was going to be re-edited by his 1957 publisher, Jock Murray, and was well received by both readers and critics.

In her introduction to the 2007 American edition, Karen Armstrong underlined the difficulties Paddy used to have in resuming, when returning to Paris and to other places of the secular world, his ordinary life. Once having adapted to the monastic lifestyle and isolation, his values and priorities underwent significant changes. Armstrong, who happened to have had a longer first-hand experience of monastic life as she was a nun for several years, sympathized with Leigh Fermor, but she also mentioned his remark one day to the Abbot of St Wandrille about "what a blessed relief it was to refrain from talking all day long. "Yes", the Abbot replied; "in the outsideworld, speech is gravely abused" (in the original text, the words of the Abbot are rendered in French: "Oui", the Abbot said, "c'est une chose merveilleuse. Dans le monde hors denos murs, on fait un grand abuse de la parole")[.]

After Patrick Leigh Fermor's death in June 2011, Colin Thubron, in his profile of the writer from *the New York Review of Books*, remarked the conflict, never quite resolved, between Paddy's "natural gregariuosness and the

solitude of writing". *A Time to Keep Silence*, labeled by Thubron as *intriguing*, pointed to the retreat in the French monasteries "not as a religious exercise, but as a need for a haven for writing" (Thubron 2011). As for the nature of the changes in the process, the question mark remained with regard to their leading to a full self-revelation.

This dilemma was also highlighted by Michael Duggan, in a 2018 pretty long article, as he remembered some sentences from an earlier conversation with Paddy's biographer, according to whom Paddy "could live without answers to the big questions: what am I doing here, why is there evil in the world, what has God got to do with it", and that made the difference between him and other of his contemporary writers, like Evelyn Waugh or Graham Greene. Among Paddy's literary idols, Duggan mentioned Huysmans, "who sparked his interest in monasticism" (Dugan 2018), and St Basil of Caesarea, whose writings were felt by Paddy like well ahead his times—"sprinkled with classical allusions one would expect more readily in the writings of a fifteenth-century humanist than in those of a Doctor of the Church living in the reign of Julian (known as the Apostate, Roman emperor between 361 and 363, famous for rejecting Christianity and for promoting Neoplatonic Hellenism in its place" (Fermor in Duggan 2018).

Born an Anglican, but surprisingly identifying himself at the age of thirty, on official forms, as a Roman Catholic, Patrick Leigh Fermor spent half of his long life in a village from Eastern Orthodox Greece, where he eventually built himself a *writer's treat and retreat*. And he minded most Christian holidays, from all sides of the spectre, as one can notice when reading his correspondence with friends from different parts of the world. In this respect, one could read *A Time to Keep Silence* as an enriching stage towards a humanism/ecumenism that helped him to entertain and sustain the image of "a sort of eternal, cultural Europe, (...) where life was dictated by the rounds of the seasons and the feasts of the Church" (Duggan 2018).

Far from the Outside World

> They work like blacks at their various tasks, covered in filthy old 'working habits'—hoods and cowls made of dungaree—in the woods, in the kitchen garden, in the bootblack factory etc.—you see them all over the place—and they go to church seven times a day. (Sisman 2018: 133)

Paddy confessed of having picked up "a superficial acquaintance with monastic matters while staying as a guest" (Fermor 2007), therefore he maintained a certain reserve and cautiosness when time came to testify on his experiences –"to write about them was *intrusive and* indiscreet (italics ours)" (Fermor 2007). The above fragment from the 1957 letter to Diana Cooper is in line with Karen Armstrong's observation, from her introduction to the

2007 edition of *A Time to Keeep Silence*, *i.e.* that people from all times and cultures have embraced varieties of life styles, among which the one dedicated to silence and praying could be counted. The attraction to this dimension is comparable to an artist's endeavours, though implying a more rigorous discipline, as the monks do the same things every day, they dress alike, etc.

In this respect, they "shun individuality and personal style" (Armstrong), which is quite the opposite to a writer's expectations. Still, as noted by Paddy in the same letter—"One of the extraordinary things about a place like this is the amount the monks manage to get into the day" (Sisman 2018: 133). So the concrete results were quite outstanding, something that also happened to his writing labours—"Strange that the same habitat should prove favourable to ambitions so glaringly opposed" (Fermor 2004: 67).

Austerity was part of the game—"It's 8 a.m. and I'm just back in my room (..) after a breakfast of brown bread & coffee standing up in the refectory" (Sisman 2018: 133). Reminiscences of his older life are brought to the surface in a letter to Joan, underlying both his past vulnerabilities and his emerging new sort of energy, physical and intellectual as well—"I haven't drunk anything for three days and feel wonderfully clear-headed and light, the whites of my eyes are becoming as clear as porcelain" (Sisman 2016: 35).

Still, smoking was not allowed in the cloisters, permission to speak to the monks had to be asked from the Abbot, no noise was to be made while walking about the Abbey, so gradually the place was assuming "the character of an enormous tomb, a necropolis of which I was the only living inhabitant" (Fermor 2007). It felt like a mortification of the spirit as well, not only of the flesh, and in her book, Artemis Cooper (2013: 233) contrasted Paddy's state of mind in the Benedictine Abbey with the party life his dear ones might have enjoyed at the same hour—"By nine o'clock—just when his friends in Paris were beginning to think about how to spend the evening—the whole monastery was asleep." The basic rule was very simple, *i.e.* no one should in anyway disturb the everyday life of the monastery, which was, according to the printed "Rules for the Guests' Wing" on the inner side of his door, wrapped up in *silence*:

> A guest's day began at 8:15 with the office of Prime and breakfast in silence. At 10 the Conventual High Mass was sandwiched between Tierce and Sext. Luncheon at 1. Nones and Vespers at 5 p.m. Supper at 7:30, then, at 8:30, Compline and to bed in silence at 9. (Fermor 2007)

Of course, the rules for the guests were different from those for the monks, but even so, to Paddy "the programme of life in a Benedictine abbey (...) appeared at first forbidding" (Fermor 2007). Later, when comparing it with the horarium in La Grande Trappe, it seemed like "the mildest *villeggiatura*"

(Fermor 2007). Readers are not given a detailed horarium, but are told instead that "A Trappist monk rises at one or two in the morning according to the season" and that "Seven hours of his day are spent in church" (Fermor 2007). In his *En Route*, Huysmans had been more generous and exact with the details, underlining his protagonist's relief when realizing that Retreatants in a Trappist monastery, such as himself, were supposed to rise at four. As for the monks, their first part of the day looked as follows:

> Morning.
> 1. Rise. Little Office. Prayer till 1.30.
> 2. Grand Canonical Office chanted.
> 5.30. Prime, Morning Mass, 6 o'clock.
> 6.45. Chapter Instructions. *Great Silence*.
> 9.15. Asperges, Tierce, Procession.
> 10. High Mass.
> 11.10. Sext and special examination.
> 11.30. Angelus, Dinner.
> 12.15. Siesta, *Great Silence* (italics ours). (Huysmans 2013)

Silence and Solitude

Just like the other books of Patrick Leigh Fermor, *A Time to Keep Silence* had (at least) one epigraph. The second was from the Ecclesiastes, III, 1 & 7, and together with the title, they pointed to the most important principle, and also to the philosophy of life, in a monastic environment. "To every thing there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven… a time to keep silence and a time to speak" (as quoted in Fermor) it was written in the Bible, something existentialist thinkers further elaborated on, pondering over the difference between a time to act and a time to testify about that particular acting.

Apparently, in the monasteries Paddy spent most of his autumn towards winter of 1948, there was less acting and people lived even without speaking or barely speaking. "I've been wondering what can be done about these silent meals in the refectory, and am just beginning to see daylight" (Sisman 2016: 34), he was writing to Joan on October 12. Since all meals were taken in silence, all talk was performed in a low voice, and the periods of silence were rigorously observed, Paddy came to imagine, but only up to a certain moment, that all the monks were "almost incapable of laughter, of curiosity or any of the more ordinary manifestations of personal feeling" (Fermor 2007).

A higher degree of silence was to be met in the Trappist monastery, where "except for certain officers in the hierarchy (…) the rule of silence is absolute" (Fermor 2007). Paddy also mentioned a "special deaf and dumb language"

developed for cases of necessity. In Huysmans's *En Route* (2013) readers could notice that the Retreatants, those who came to stay with the Trappist monks for a shorter period, and the Oblates, those who dedicated their lives to God without taking the vows, were allowed to communicate but within specific intervals, such as during the meal. An exception only made to reinforce the rule—"As for that question of silence, as for those of the hours of rising and going to bed, and the offices, the rule allows no modification, it must be observed to the letter" (Huysmans 2013).

However, it was exactly that bizarre, as it seemed, phenomenon or state of silence that would boost the religious conversion of Huysmans's *Durtal*, and *mutatis mutandis* from fiction to non-fiction, Patrick Leigh Fermor's creative energy. Unlike Durtal, who had benefitted from recommendation letters, Paddy had arrived "unknown and unannounced, a citizen of the heretic island across the Channel, without even the excuse that I wished to go into retreat" (Fermor 2007). In his very first afternoon at the monastery he experienced a writer's block and in the evening he was suffering from what Pascal had declared "to be the cause of all human evils", *i.e.* man's inability to sit *quietly* in a room alone.

In time, he would come to appreciate the stillness of his room and of the entire place, as it had "put the roar of the chariot-wheels temporarily out of ear-shot" (Sisman 2016: 26). The almost perpetual silence kept by the monks and their followers/companions, contributed to directing their attention within (Armstrong in Fermor 2007), as the ultimate purpose was, in fact, the search for one's identity. The Abbey came to be perceived as the reverse of the initial *necropolis*, not, "indeed, a Thelema or Nepenthe, but a *silent university*" (Fermor 2007), italics ours.

In this last quote references can take us to the non-fictional Abbey of Thelema, founded in 1920 by the English occultist Arthur Crowley (in Cefalù, Sicily, and later to be demolished by Italian authorities under Mussolini, as a result of the international scandal promoted in British tabloids). This may being in line with Paddy's discoveries in the library—"piled up in a dark corner in a trunk and covered with dust", as revealed in a letter to Joan (Sisman 2016: 34), "a mass of tenth- to sixteenth-century folios bound in vellum, all dealing with the point where mysticism and necromancy merge." On the other hand, we should not forget that Crowley claimed that he had modeled his outrageous establishment after the fictional Abbaye de Thélème from *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, whose author François Rabelais used to be a Franciscan and later a Benedictine monk.

But, as Paddy had pointed out, St Wandrille of his century was a *silent university*, where he could find the energy required to carry on his projects, while enlarging his knowledge on the monastic or heremitic habits. "The library has a mass of stuff about Stylites, which I am devouring. It's too

enthralling and insane" (Sisman 2016: 30), he confessed with unrestrained enthusiasm on getting deeper into details that looked, at least on page, appealing to the 1948 Parisian *flâneur*—"food, sanitary arrangements, fasts, mortifications, hair shirts, flagellations, etc." (Sisman 2016: 30). Something one finds it difficult to assess, since Patrick Leigh Fermor was a traveller with a flair for languages and scholarship. His *flâneur* features were only part of a complex portrait.

Given his crave for knowledge, a monastic library was the perfect place to bridge the gap between his previous, exuberant experiences, typical for a socialite, and the extremes of an alternative life style, the way they had been undertaken and reached by the ancient Stylites. The valuable clusters of information acquired at St. Wandrille, on the famous reclusive saints, might have proved helpful and alleviating when later encountering similar ways of behaviour in the Monastery of La Grande Trappe. "My initial depression had evaporated after a day or two," would acknowledge Paddy, "and turned into a kind of masochistic enjoyment of the sad charm of the Trappe, of the absolute silence and solitude" (Fermor 2007).

Such book shrines had their specific structure and rigors, varying from one location to another—"The library is enormous, much bigger than the one at Saint-Wandrille, and wonderfully kept up with card indexes" (Sisman 2016: 41), he was writing to Joan from Solesmes in late November 1948. Then he complained about regulations, which would prevent him from playing his beloved role of *bookworm on the run*—"but it's terrible difficult to get in, or take books out, it's so efficient. No question of browsing all night by myself, as I did at St W., then locking it up with my own key (Sisman 2016: 41).

Michael Duggan remarked Paddy's admiration for the role played by the Western monks in preserving some of "the things he loved: literature, the classics, scholarship and the humanities." In the company of some of them, "the small number of living monks he was *permitted to speak with*" (Duggan 2018), italics ours. Paddy could find a balance and erudition proper to great minds from the outside world, yet augmented with a grain of calmness specific to the monastic community—"I wander about under the trees for half an hour after luncheon with the Abbé or the Père Hôtelier every day", he was writing to Joan during his comeback to St Wandrille in May 1949, "talking about religion, philosophy, history, Greek and Roman poetry etc. Very pleasant and satisfactory" (Sisman 2018: 30). The fixed schedule, the stillness of the environment, the magic frame of the library, the peripatetics' daily encounters, all these contributed to renewing his spirit and to changing his priorities. "I think it is this strange conjunction of silence and *recueillement* [contemplation] with this busy exploitation of every second of the day",

acknowledged Paddy in the letter to Diana Cooper, "that shames and goads one out of selfish and moody sloth" (Sisman 2018: 133-134).

Conclusions: On Leaving the Tower(s) and a Letter to a Romanian Friend
When analyzing, in Huysmans's *Durtal*, the changes resulted from all the privations undergone in a Trappist monastery, critics underlined the character's newly gained "receptivity to everything that had been earlier drowned out by his own nagging discontents" (Ziegler 1986, in *RMLL* 209-210). This receptivity allowed the character to shift from the awareness wrongly turned within, in a selfish mode, to a deeper awareness of the self, enabling the latter to claim/forge a gap-bridging identity, at the same time "directed at the world outside, at nature" (Ziegler 1986, in *RMLL* 209-210).

In Patrick Leigh Fermor's book, this progressive awareness is also captured. "At St. Wandrille I was inhabiting at last *a tower of solid ivory*", wrote Paddy about his first destination and stage, pointing to his peculiar condition "and I, not the monks, was the escapis" (Fermor 2007). To the shining image of a writer's retreat from the above quote one could oppose the names invoked when the pictorial dimension of the last destination, La Grande Trappe, is noted: Breughel, Hieronymus Bosch and Grünewald. The darkened landscape somehow reflected one of Paddy's conclusions with regard to another path a monk or a Retreatant can choose—"for a humble and completely unintellectual simplicity is one of the characteristics of the Trappist order" (Fermor 2007).

It sounds pretty harsh, all the more with the name Paddy had invoked just a few lines before in the book, *i.e.* of his famous contemporary, the Cistercian monk Thomas Merton. (A proponent of interfaith understanding, Thomas Merton, 1915-1968 was an American Trappist monk and author of many essays and books, among them the most famous was *The Seven Storey Mountain*, published in 1948.) Merton was mentioned when Paddy referred to "certain spiritual consolations" one could still find in a life of penance, according to Cistercians. The first of the tree such consolations, called *unctions* was "the experience of liberty regained by the shedding of all earthly possessions and vanities and ambitions", which was the focus of Merton's book *Elected Silence*.

The Trappists branched off from the Cistercians, and they all followed, to various degrees, the rule of Saint Benedict. As for the Benedictins, Paddy remarked, in the last part of *A Time to Keep Silence*, that they had found their sources of inspiration in the rules instated by Saint Basil of Caesarea for the monasteries in Cappadocia, in a landscape that Hyeronimus Bosch, at least, could have found *motivating*:

> a dead, ashen world, lit with the blinding pallor of a waste of asbestos, filled, not
> with craters and shell-holes, but with cones and pyramids and monoliths from fifty

to a couple of hundred feet high, *each one a rigid isosceles of white volcanic rock like the headgear of a procession of Spanish penitents during Passion Week* (italics ours). (Fermor 2007)

It takes a writer like Patrick Leigh Fermor to reunite, in one sentence-blow, two distinct geographically and, in time, spiritually spaces so far apart. But our question would be where does Patrick Leigh Fermor stand in between the two major options? Between the *ivorian* St Wandrille and La Grade Trappe/as rooted in a Cappadocian *zeitgeist*? An encouraging answer, yet not Paddy's, readers could get when he asked a monk from the first Normandy Abbey to find the words to sum up the way of life there—"He paused a moment and said, "Have you ever been in love?" I said, "Yes." A large Fernandel smile spread across his face. (France's top comic actor at the time, Fernandel's (1903-1971) trademark was a benign caballine smile.) "Eh bien", he said, "c'est exactement pareil..." (Fermor 2007).

As for Paddy's true or ultimate answer, we believe one can find it in the letter from Solesmes already mentioned, to his Romanian friend Alexander Mourouzi. After asking for his correspondant's forgiveness for failing to write on regular bases, something Alexander badly needed as he was in a would-be communist country, Paddy remembered that his Romanian friend had used to share the same passion for literature and the craft of writing—"Are you writing now, A[lexander]? I so enjoyed what you wrote back then" (Fermor 2007). They had met in the 1930s, when Paddy had spent almost four years in Romania before leaving for Britain at the outbreak of WWII, at the end of which Alexander failed to escape from the country that was going to become a Soviet satellite: "I fear that the current situation—the anxiety and loss you're having to endure⁻is hardly conducive to work" (Fermor 2007). Alexander Mourouzi used to live at Golăşei, an estate very close to Băleni, so they frequently met and got to know each other well.

The solution comes through, of course, writing. Although people like Alexander and Paddy were suffering from the same evil, exquisitely described in Goncharov's *Oblomov*, *i.e.* "an inability to start and a lack of faith in what we do because of our high standards" (Fermor 2007: 38), the British traveler, soldier and aspiring writer had faith in the future, and his closing formula pertained to both personal histories and to the spiritual history of our part of the world—"Write to me soon, tell me what you are thinking, reading, writing. I have absolutely no idea how, but I feel sure these vicissitudes will be overcome and that Byzantium will be saved" (Fermor 2007), this term being a formula Patrick Leigh Fermor employed quite often, part of a further study will be dedicated to its contexts.

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UN MONDE ENTIER SOUS LE VOILE DANS L'ŒUVRE D'AZAR NAFISI *LIRE LOLITA À TÉHÉRAN*

Simona D. Ienciu[*]

ABSTRACT. This paper is a literary and political analysis of the book *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, written by Azar Nafisi, an American writer of Iranian origin and English literature Professor at the University of Tehran at the time of the Islamic revolution of 1979. Her incompatibility with the rules of the new Iranian political and religious regime led Azar Nafisi to resign and start a crazy and defiant project, a weekly book club with seven other students at her house, with the intended purpose of studying English literature novels particularly. This was an opportunity to x-ray the Iranian society led by a totalitarian regime that in the name of religion tried to annihilate anyone who had the audacity to think, speak or dress freely. Azar Nafisi raised her voice using writing in protest against a system that sought to standardize individuals in an amorphous ensemble, ready to act when the leaders called. The book presents the creation of a brand-new world where these girls are free to act naturally, without restraints—the world of literature. The artistic dimension of this work proves to be a plea for fiction; on the other hand, its political dimension shows a multi-faceted revolution that completely transfigured the country, keeping the status of women in the loop of the Islamic government.

KEY WORDS: books, fiction, revolution, women, veil

Introduction

L'œuvre d'Azar Nafisi apporte, premièrement pour le public américain et puis pour le monde entier, un nouveau type d'écriture dans le paysage littéraire des années 2003-2005: mélange inclassable ni roman, ni reportage, elle est à mi-chemin entre les deux. Mais elle est plus proche du roman, car l'auteur a été "obligée" d'injecter une certaine dose de fiction. Comme elle l'indique dans une note préliminaire, pour des raisons de sécurité, pour protéger les gens concernés, elle a dû changer leurs noms et "certains traits des personnages et des évènements décrits dans ce récit ont été déformés" (Nafisi 2004). On la peut nommer plutôt confession littéraire, la confession personnelle est aussi présente. L'auteur remet toutes choses en perspective, de l'intérieur et l'expérience de la lecture devient terrible, elle marque le lecteur sans que l'écrivaine donne du pathos à son écriture parce que les éléments d'histoire, de géopolitique ou des droits de la femme se mélangent

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et la lecture devient édifiante. Ouvrant aussi pour protéger ses étudiantes, l'écrivaine a travesti la réalité iranienne et sous couvert de nous présenter un récit historique, l'histoire d'une révolution, Azar Nafisi est forcée de nous présenter un roman fait de personnages fictifs, dont elle a choisi les noms et a inventé les traits de caractère, mais des personnages vivant une vie cruelle. Aussi vrais soient les éléments qui le compose, son récit lorsqu'on les prend individuellement, chacun à leur tour, l'ensemble n'est pas plus vrai et réel qu'un roman créé de toute pièce par un auteur qui s'est inspiré de ses proches de la réalité immédiate pour écrire.

Si on retient une méta idée de cette œuvre, c'est la violence faite à la forme de l'œuvre elle-même. Alors que son auteur dénonce la terreur et l'arbitraire qu'introduit dans sa vie le régime islamique, l'essai, lui, porte la marque de ce pouvoir arbitraire qui s'exerce dans la terreur avec ses contraintes. Si le message est clair, la forme du roman-essai reste contrainte dans ses mouvements venus de la réalité mutilante: il n'est pas question de révéler toute la vérité. C'est le paradoxe d'un exile à l'autre bout du monde (les États-Unis) pour s'affranchir d'un régime qui malgré tout continue d'exercer ses abuses, de travestir les souvenirs et de s'approprier, par la force, la vérité de ceux qui ont osé le défier. En même temps, le livre semble à un portrait brut et déchirant de la révolution islamique en Iran qui finit par faire la démonstration magistrale que l'imagination bâtit la liberté.

Le Club de Lecture

A l'automne 1995, après avoir démissionné de l'université, j'ai décidé de me faire plaisir et de réaliser un rêve. J'ai choisi sept de mes étudiantes, parmi les meilleures et les plus impliquées, et je les ai invitées à venir chez moi tous les jeudis matin pour parler littérature. (Nafisi 2004: 13)

Après avoir étudié aux États-Unis, Azar Nafisi rentre en Iran, son pays natal. Elle enseigne la littérature anglaise à l'Université de Téhéran lorsqu'on éclate la révolution islamique en 1979. Parce qu'elle refuse de porter le voile, dont le port a été rendu obligatoire par le régime islamique, durant ses cours, et qu'elle ne supporte plus la baisse du niveau universitaire et aussi sous la pression des autorités iraniennes, Azar Nafisi démissionne. A cette époque-là, elle commence un projet fou mais d'âme dont elle rêvait depuis longtemps: créer un rendez-vous hebdomadaire, un club avec des étudiantes triées sur le volet et critiquer ensemble des œuvres significatives de la littérature anglaise. Azar Nafisi a réuni chez elle clandestinement pendant près de deux ans, sept de ses étudiantes: Naassrin, Manna, Mahshid, Yassi, Azin, Mitra, Sanaz, pour découvrir de grandes œuvres de la littérature occidentale moderne. Les participantes étaient extrêmement différentes; certaines de ces jeunes filles étaient issues de familles conservatrices et

religieuses, d'autres venaient de milieux progressifs et laïcs; plusieurs avaient même fait de la prison. L'écrivaine nous raconte leurs histoires, leurs réunions, leurs chagrins d'amour, leurs frustrations vis à vis du régime, de leurs existences. On plonge alors totalement dans la vie de ces femmes, mais pas seulement dans leur vie, c'est la vie d'une telle catégorie intellectuelle, expérience unique permettant à toutes, grâce à la lecture de *Lolita* de Nabokov ou de *Gatsby le Magnifique* de Scott Fitzgerald, de remettre en question la situation "révolutionnaire" de leur pays et de mesurer la primauté de l'imagination sur la privation de liberté.

Ce sont les lectures que les participantes au club partagent et leurs réactions qui forment la matière exhibée du document. L'analyse du livre, difficile parfois, montre que, ne suivant pas l'ordre chronologique et sélectionnant des séquences significatives, la narratrice opte pour une autre logique qui met en valeur les expériences de jeunes femmes, ses étudiantes et sa propre expérience vécue, on les peut définir un 'ordre subjectif'. Les livres privilégiés, sujet de plusieurs débats sont: *Lolita* de Nabokov, *Gatsby le magnifique* de Scott Fitzgerald, *Daisy Miller* d`Henry James et *Orgueil et préjugés* de Jane Austen mais de nombreux autres sont cités. Le sujet apparent est bien le pouvoir de la littérature pour aider l'être humain à conserver sa liberté d'imagination malgré le carcan d'un système religieux totalitaire; mais il est aussi le lent cheminement qui conduit Azar Nafisi à prendre le chemin de l'exil après être revenue enseigner volontairement à Téhéran en 1979.

Ce séminaire de littérature à son domicile nous montre ces jeunes étudiantes brillantes, paralysées, contraintes dans leur quotidien, dans leur famille, arrivant chez leur professeur, avec les vêtements, et le voile obligatoires. Leur premier geste pour couronner ces cours de littérature, particuliers, à tous points de vue: le "déshabillage" pour faire place à des vêtements colorés, joyeux, les chevelures se défont pour révéler la beauté cachée de leur féminité vue dehors comme pêcheuse. Il y a un vrai rituel pour chaque rencontre: du thé et des gâteaux partagés, que chacune apporte à tour de rôle. La place centrale est réservée à la Littérature, une sorte de reconquête d'un espace privé de liberté et d'expression spontanée :

> Cette pièce devint pour nous un lieu de transgression, le pays des merveilles. Installées autour de la grande table basse couverte de bouquets de fleurs, nous passions notre temps à entrer dans les romans que nous lisions et à en ressortir. Lorsque je regarde en arrière, je suis stupéfaite de tout ce que nous avons appris sans même nous en rendre compte. Nous allions, pour emprunter les mots de Nabokov, expérimenter la façon dont les cailloux de la vie ordinaire se transforment en pierres précieuses par la magie de la fiction. (Nafisi 2004: 22-23)

Retirée de l'université et aussi de la société car elle sortait rarement, finis donc les étudiants qui se lèvent durant son cours pour dénoncer l'immoralité de

personnages de fiction comme le Gatsby de Fitzgerald, finies les interdictions de courir en public, les interruptions intempestives dues aux manifestations des étudiants engagés politiquement dans la révolution. Dans le cadre sécurisant de son salon, Azar Nafisi réunit des étudiantes qu'elle ne connaît pas encore personnellement mais avec lesquelles elle va nouer les liens forts d'une complicité clandestine. Nous assistons à la création d'un nouvel univers, celui de la fiction ou toutes sont libres à agir naturellement sans contraintes—le monde de la littérature.

"Les seuls moments où elles s'ouvraient et s'animaient vraiment étaient ceux de nos discussions autour des livres. Les romans nous permettaient d'échapper à la réalité parce que nous pouvions admirer leur beauté, leur perfection, et oublier nos histoires de doyens, d'université et de milices qui serpentait les rues. (...) Les romans dans lesquels nous nous évadions nous conduisirent finalement à remettre en question et à sonder ce que nous étions réellement, ce que nous étions si désespérément incapables d'exprimer" (Nafisi 2004: 64-65). La société islamique est bien connue pour la tradition de la mutilation de toute sorte; le livre d'Azar Nafisi n'a pour objectif de présenter des pratiques cruelles, violentes mais comme tous les régimes abusifs, le régime iranien est absurde, ses individus sont déçus, il leur manque la principale qualité humaine—la raison et puis du droit de s'exprimer libre en articulant la pensée—d'avoir une voix.

Finalement, ce qui reste le plus frappant dans cet essai nous ramène à l'avertissement de l'auteur en première page: "Les faits racontés ici sont vrais, dans la mesure où l'on peut se fier à une mémoire humaine. Mais j'ai fait tout ce que j'ai pu pour préserver mes amis et élèves en leur donnant d'autres noms que les leurs et en les travestissant, peut-être afin qu'eux-mêmes ne se reconnaissent pas, en transformant et en échangeant divers éléments de leurs vies et ainsi sauvegarder leurs secrets" (Nafisi 2004). Le souci pour la protection de ses étudiantes, de ses amis est le respect pour la vie de chaque individu ce qui manque complètement dans les régimes totalitaires—le manque du respect est directement lié celui de la liberté.

La Dimension Politique—le Voile

Au cours de l'histoire, les livres ont servis comme instruments de survie face aux pays placés sous le signe de la tyrannie. Azar Nafisi écrit le sien comme un moyen de proteste contre la perte totale de liberté des femmes, la destruction de l'intimité avec les fouilles corporelles aux entrées de l'université, contre cet abandon de la vie, de la libre pensée, de la liberté.

Lire Lolita à Téhéran illustre première fois très justement la condition de la femme iranienne, femme qui n'était pas habituée à porter le Tchador ni le voile et qui voit ses libertés sérieusement étranglées après la révolution. Notre étude a déjà établi qu'on peut identifier deux niveaux de lecture à cet

ouvrage: politique et littéraire. L'aspect politique devient très puissant avec les nouveaux codes de vie réduisant drastiquement les libertés de la population qui ne peut que se retrancher derrière une muette liberté de penser. *Lire Lolita à Téhéran* offre un aperçu de l'Iran vécu de l'intérieur, et de la vie quotidienne, des peurs, des rêves, des espoirs de ses habitants. Cet aperçu nous aide aussi à mieux comprendre toute la complexité du pays, trop souvent réduit à quelques diatribes de ses dirigeants. C'est le livre d'une intellectuelle qui se permet de regarder et d'analyser une société sans être tributaire à une éducation religieuse mais ayant une puissante éducation laïque, académique et familiale; c'est la raison pour laquelle ses jugements sont clairs et profonds.

"Il ne fallut pas longtemps au gouvernement pour faire instaurer une nouvelle réglementation qui limitait la liberté des femmes en matière d'habillement et les obligeait à porter le tchador ou la longue robe et le foulard" (Nafisi 2004: 37). Le voile et le tchador deviennent les instruments de cette oppression qui se propose de réduire les individualités féminines à des ombres mouvantes sans droits ou pensée libre totalement dépendantes d'une figure masculine:

> Je déclarai que mon intégrité de femme et de professeur serait sérieusement compromise si, pour toucher quelques milliers de rials par mois, je me voyais obligée de porter le voile contre ma volonté. La question n'était pas tant celle du voile lui-même que de la liberté de choix. Ma grand-mère avait refusé de sortir de chez elle pendant trois mois quand on l'avait forcée à se dévoiler. J'étais prête à prendre une position aussi extrême. (Nafisi 2004: 37)

La littérature est libératrice, elle se veut un substitut parce que la femme iranienne présentée par Azar Nafisi est manquée de toute sorte de liberté : par rapport au système politique et religieux, valable pour tous les citoyens iraniens, et doublée par rapport au genre féminin:

> Ce qui m'avait le plus intriguée, dans l'histoire qui sert de fond aux contes des Mille et Une Nuits, c'étaient les trois sortes de femmes qui y étaient décrites, toutes victimes de la loi déraisonnable d'un roi. Avant que Schéhérazade entre en scène, ou bien la femme trahit et elle est tuée (la reine), ou elle est tuée bien la femme trahit et elle est tuée (les vierges). Ces dernières dont les voix, contrairement à Schéhérazade, ne sont jamais entendues, sont la plupart du temps totalement oubliées par la critique. (Nafisi 2004: 87)

L'image de l'entrée à l'université est devenue emblématique: les étudiants entrant quotidiennement à l'Université par la porte centrale, la "Grande porte", alors que les étudiantes doivent pénétrer par une petite porte de côté, 'honteuse' où elles sont, chaque jour, avant leurs cours, fouillées, inspectées de pied en tête, pour vérifier que leur tenue est correcte. Ce pays natal que

l'auteur adore avec ses paysages et ses traditions anciennes provenues de l'aube de l'humanité devient à son grand désespoir, une terre de terreur: "Il n'y a qu'une façon de sortir du cercle, d'arrêter de danser avec le geôlier. Il faut trouver le moyen de préserver sa propre individualité, cette qualité unique qui échappe à la description, mais différencie un être humain d'un autre. Voilà pourquoi dans ce genre de monde les rituels, des rituels vides, deviennent centraux" (Nafisi 2004: 90).

Le déroulement du récit suit pas à pas cette femme—l'écrivaine - et puis ces femmes—les étudiantes - luttant pour ne pas sombrer, ne pas devenir ces ombres muettes auxquelles les autorités veulent les réduire. Il y a de l'humour parsemé dans le livre qui les aide à tenir, à croire en la liberté, pendant ces années de peurs et d'oppression.

Même pour un public avisé, le texte de ce livre comporte parfois quelques difficultés. Ce n'est pas facile de se repérer que les étudiantes dont elle parle ont, pour la plupart, suivi ses cours à l'université à des époques assez différentes avant de toutes se retrouver dans le même séminaire. Une autre difficulté de ce roman c'est qu'Azar Nafisi est restée volontairement floue dans la description des différents personnages, de manière à éviter que quiconque puisse être reconnu et arrêté par le régime. De ce fait, le lecteur n'a jamais vraiment réussi à s'imaginer ces filles qui ne formaient pour lui qu'une masse sans réelles individualités : il ne s'est attaché à aucune, si ce n'est à Azar Nafisi qui est la narratrice principale. Cela n'étonnerait pas que ce soit un effet voulu par l'auteur, montrant que la société efface peu à peu tout ce qui contrevient aux normes morales établies. En effet, dans ce pays, les femmes se voient finalement obligées de se voiler, s'habillent de couleurs sombres, ne peuvent plus porter la moindre trace de maquillage sous peine d'être fouettées par la police de la révolution, ne peuvent pas courir dans les couloirs même si elles sont en retard etc. Elles se transforment peu à peu en ombres, forcées de se déplacer avec la tête baissée:

> Je pris l'habitude de rentrer mes mains à l'intérieur de ces manches et de faire comme si je n'en avais pas. Au bout du compte, j'imaginais que sous la longue robe mon corps disparaissait petit à petit, que bras, poitrine, ventre et jambes fondaient, s'enfonçaient dans le sol, et qu'il ne restait plus qu'un morceau de tissu qui prenait la forme de mon corps et allait d'un endroit à un autre, guidé par une force invisible. (Nafisi 2004: 219)

Les origines du voile se perdent au début de l'histoire de l'islam mais c'était aussi une pratique d'autres civilisations et religions. Dans la deuxième partie du *Harem politique*, Fatima Mernissi nous apprend que le Hijab, le voile est descendu à l'origine pour séparer deux hommes (cf. verset de la Sourate 33, révélé en l'an cinq de l'Hégire (627). C'est le prophète qui aurait tiré un rideau au sens physique et symbolique du terme, entre lui qui venait de se

marier avec Zaynab, sa cousine, et le visiteur Anas qui dut rester sur le seuil de sa chambre (les faits sont relatés par Tabari, auquel Fatima Mernissi se réfère souvent, 119): "Le concept du Hijab est tridimensionnel et les trois dimensions se recoupent très souvent. La première dimension est une dimension visuelle : dérober au regard. La racine du verbe *Hajaba* veut dire *cacher*. La deuxième dimension est spatiale 'séparer, marquer une frontière, établir un seuil'. Enfin la troisième dimension est éthique: elle relève du domaine de l'interdit" (Mernissi 1987: 120). Le Hijab, nous dit encore Fatima Mernissi, fut aussi le rideau derrière lequel se tenaient les Khalifes et les rois pour se soustraire au regard de leurs familiers (Guyencourt 1991: 237).

Cette acception donnée au voile à ses débuts quand a été utilisé pour protéger les khalifes, par Fatima Mernissi, comme une écrivaine dure visant l'islam, préoccupée de l'asservissement des femmes musulmanes mais qui veut aussi restaurer l'image du prophète en défenseur de la condition féminine, est devenu, à travers les siècles, un symbole de l'oppression des femmes. Sa voix se dresse contre la mise en tutelle des femmes dont la valeur est la moitié de celui des hommes conformément à la loi chari'a:

> Dans le cadre de l'application de la *chari'a*, le port du voile, comme garant de la pudeur des femmes et de l'honneur des hommes, est devenu obligatoire d'abord pour les femmes actives, et par la suite, a été généralisé à la population féminine âgée de plus de neuf ans, le droit au divorce et à la garde des enfants pour les mères divorcées est limité, l'âge minimal de mariage de même que de la responsabilité pénale pour les filles est établi à 9 ans et pour les garçons à 15 ans, la polygamie est légalisée, la femme a l'obligation de se soumettre à l'autorité et aux exigences de son époux. Selon le droit successoral, qui reste inchangé, la femme hérite de la moitié de la part de l'homme, pour le code pénal le prix du sang (*diyeh*) des femmes est la moitié de celui des hommes, et le témoignage d'une femme dans une affaire pénale n'est accepté qu'à condition d'être corroboré par celui d'un homme. L'accès des femmes à la magistrature, aux postes administratifs à hautes responsabilités et à plusieurs filières universitaires dont le droit, les études techniques, la gestion et certaines branches de la médecine fut interdit. Grâce aux pressions sociales des femmes qui contestent les rapports sociaux de sexe, ces interdictions furent levées dans les années 1990. (Kian-Thiébaut 2005: 123)

Fatima Mernissi va mettre aussi en évidence la différence entre "les historiens des premiers siècles de l'islam qui ont une attitude beaucoup plus ouverte" et leurs confrères contemporains assujettis à une pensée officielle. Il est fascinant de voir la rigidité dans laquelle s'enferment les historiens arabes modernes qui refusent, même au niveau de l'analyse, d'admettre que des pratiques où l'autodétermination sexuelle de la femme s'affirmaient aient pu exister" (Mernissi 1983: 62).

Tout en connaissant ces détails, on peut identifier dans ce livre pas seulement un voile vestimentaire qui couvre les personnages mais aussi un

qui les protège, c'est l'effet du souci de la narratrice qui donne une autre dimension bénéfique à cet instrument de la censure, c'est un tribut pour la mémoire de sa grand-mère qui a aimé le voile et l'a porté avec amour et dignité de sa propre volonté. Contrairement à l'auteur est le system politique et religieux qui veut dépersonnaliser, déshumaniser les femmes en les dévoilant de tout droit mais en les couvrant dans le voile: "Selon Nima, nous ne comprenons pas les difficultés que les hommes ont à affronter dans ce pays, disait Manna d'un ton légèrement sarcastique. Eux non plus ne savent pas comment agir. Et s'ils se conduisent parfois comme de sales machos, c'est parce qu'ils se sentent vulnérables. -Mais dans une certaine mesure, c'est vrai, lui ai-je répondu. Après tout il faut être deux pour établir une relation digne de ce nom, et lorsque la moitié de la population est rendue invisible, l'autre moitié en souffre" (Nafisi 2004: 107).

Principalement les femmes sont discriminées mais, si on lit attentivement ce fragment, il devient incontestable qu'aussi les hommes ont à peine un problème d'identité et ici on parle des hommes qui pensent et qui ne sont pas aveugles; la relation du couple est en danger parce que pour avoir un couple fonctionnel il faut avoir une relation entre deux personnes de sexes différents mais qui sont complémentaires et c'est la complémentarité ici qui manque.

La Dimension Littéraire—la Fiction

L'autre option, la deuxième du livre *Lire Lolita à Téhéran* est la lecture littéraire, Azar Nafisi enseigne des livres subversifs aux yeux du régime. "Nous vivions au sein d'une culture qui niait tout mérite autonome aux œuvres littéraires, qui ne leur accordait de l'importance que lorsqu'elles servaient quelque chose d'apparemment plus fondamental, c'est-à-dire l'idéologie. C'était un pays où le moindre geste et même le plus intime, était interprété en termes politiques" (Nafisi 2004: 75).

Il est bien connu le fait que certains auteurs ont déjà en leur temps bravé la censure de la même manière que les livres et l'imaginaire peuvent préserver des espaces de liberté. C'est évocatrice la mention spéciale à l'épisode du procès de Gatsby le Magnifique que Nafisi organise dans sa classe (à partir de la page 173), où l'auteur mélange surtout des éléments de sa vie personnelle et de celles de ses étudiantes. Les expériences vécues pendant la guerre, les bombardements, l'oppression et comment ont tenté de résister, en laissant par exemple dépasser une mèche de cheveux de leur voile, au péril de leur vie, dans un pays où tout geste était alors interprété comme 'politique'. Azar Nafisi nous montre quelques morceaux de vie dans un pays où la liberté d'expression est muselée, où l'on est surveillé, où la censure règne. De ce point de vue, son œuvre nous rappelle certains passages de Milan Kundera.

Les œuvres dont elles discutent s'entremêlent parfois d'histoires plus personnelles, sont d'autant plus significatives qu'elles éclairent leur captivité sous le régime islamique d'une lumière interdite. La culture occidentale étant dénoncée comme la source de tous les maux sous le régime islamique et la littérature anglophone fait l'objet d'un peu d'intérêt. On lui préfère la propagande du régime qui contrôle la télévision et la presse pour promouvoir l'action des martyrs morts pour le pays, pour la volonté d'Allah. La similarité de la vie des femmes en Iran avec la vie de Lolita est facile à observer, leur destin est celui des victimes, captives par la volonté d'agresseur: "Lolita appartient à la catégorie des victimes sans défense à qui aucune chance n'est jamais donnée de construire leur propre histoire. Elle est ainsi doublement spoliée, non seulement de sa vie, mais aussi de l'histoire de sa vie. Nous nous disions que ce séminaire devait nous aider à ne pas nous faire voler, nous aussi, l'histoire de notre vie" (Nafisi 2004: 84).

Le récit d'Azar Nafisi révèle aussi, en marge de ses analyses littéraires subtilement intégrées au cours de son livre, en exceptant la dimension subjective, l'histoire plus générale de la guerre en Iran, contre l'Irak, de 1980 à 1988. Le changement radical imposé par l'accession au pouvoir des islamistes (restriction des droits des femmes) n'est pas le seul problème qui fait l'objet des discussions, c'est aussi l'expérience de la guerre, des missiles qui tombent la nuit, des coupures d'électricité, de la peur que l'auteur retranscrit ici. Le problème essentiel qui se met est la maltraitance des femmes en Iran suite à l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'Ayatollah Khomeini, en 1979, puis des mollahs. Ce problème est doublé de nouveaux chefs politiques et religieux à la fois qui se servent d'islam comme d'un instrument de pouvoir, devenu "un business comme le pétrole pour Texaco, avec le meilleur emballage" comme le déclare une opposante au régime.

L'écriture d'Azar Nafisi peut être considérée une œuvre originale par ce parallèle entre ces œuvres de fictions et la réalité vécue et ses livres suivants font la preuve de cette originalité car Azar Nafisi conçoit son œuvre ayant ce style propre. Les œuvres littéraires permettent de mieux qualifier les vécus avec plus d'aisance que des analyses sociologiques et politiques en limitant les implications des acteurs. C'est une sorte de critique, d'oppositions indirectes au réel—le régime, la société, les situations individuelles—par des critiques de situations analogues d'œuvres de fiction. On réalise que les œuvres de fiction sont d'excellents outils pour analyser toutes sortes de situations comme si ces fictions avaient anticipé de réels destins ou situations historiques. C'est un chef d'œuvre du genre par cette originalité mais aussi par l'universalité des analyses qui conviennent parfaitement pour ce pays à cette époque-là mais plus généralement pour toutes les dérives de l'islam dans tout pays et toute époque. On ne peut s'empêcher de faire un parallèle avec les gouvernements islamiques, les rivalités et les guerres civiles entre

frères musulmans suite "au printemps arabe" avec peut-être des situations en pire.

Or, ce que l'écrivaine illustre par de brillantes analyses c'est le pouvoir libérateur de la fiction. Alors que les plus endoctrinés de ses étudiants ne voient qu'affabulations décadentes, symptômes d'un occident malade, mais Azar Nafisi s'acharne à mettre en lumière les leçons qu'enseignent les romans sur le monde réel.

Le rôle de la littérature, de la fiction, dans un mot de l'imagination, dans les sociétés gouvernées par des régimes totalitaires est vu et traité comme un moyen d'échapper de la réalité: "Le pire des crimes que commettent les systèmes totalitaires est de forcer tous les citoyens, y compris ceux qu'ils emprisonnent, torturent et exécutent, à devenir complices de leurs crimes" (Nafisi 2004: 247). Mais sans peu d'empathie parce qu'ils forcent, ils contraignent ne conduisent pas ayant le but de solidariser. Les dictateurs ne s'intéressent pas du processus de devenir que d'un résultat immédiat souvent obtenu par la force. L'individu est important seulement s'il devient asservi, manipulable.

Le dernier livre écrit par Azar Nafisi, *La République de l'imagination*, suggestif par son titre, parle exactement de ce rôle de la fiction, cette fois dans une société différente, occidentale qui relève d'autres interrogations mais dans la même manière originale, par l'intermède de l'étude des livres. Il s'agit d'un essai d'une spécialiste de littérature américaine qui revient sur quatre écrivains qu'elle chérit particulièrement: Mark Twain avec *Les Aventures de Huckleberry Finn*, Sinclair Lewis avec *Babitt*, Carson McCullers avec le *Cœur est un chasseur solitaire*, James Baldwin avec *La Conversion*. Azar Nafisi a été naturalisé américaine en 2008 après plusieurs aller-retour entre l'Iran et les États-Unis. Elle entremêle l'analyse de ces œuvres à sa vie personnelle, des réflexions sur son pays de naissance et son pays d'adoption.

Elle y défend encore et toujours la force de la littérature. Florence Noiville la présentant dans *Le Monde*, le 6 juin 2016, conclut très justement: "Au fond, ce que veut nous dire Azar Nafisi, c'est qu'après l'Iran et les États-Unis elle a opté pour une tierce citoyenneté. Celle que délivrent le 'savoir imaginatif' et la fiction. *La République de l'imagination* est à ses yeux le seul pays vraiment habitable. Le seul où l'on ne pourra jamais vous déchoir d'une nationalité rêvée" (Noiville 2016:12).

Son nouveau livre est un hommage à l'ancienne littérature, une ode à la lecture et à la force de réappropriation de chaque lecteur aux quatre coins du monde, activité si importante non pour gagner de l'argent ou des amis imaginaires mais pour se forger en tant qu'être humain, pour confronter ses idées à celles des autres, pour comprendre le monde qui nous entoure, pour un partage universel sans équivalent: "A l'époque je n'avais pas la moindre idée de ce qui m'attirait dans l'histoire du Petit Prince, je ne savais pas qu'elle

m'apprenait à acquérir ce qui est l'essentiel des grandes œuvres d'imagination: ce battement magique du cœur qui nous définit en tant qu'êtres humains, qui nous relie les uns aux autres, qui nous donne une raison de vivre, un moyen de survivre, ainsi que la capacité de comprendre non seulement la valeur du bonheur et de l'amour, mais leur étroite parenté avec la souffrance et la perte, la capacité de comprendre le prix qu'il nous faut payer lorsque nous osons faire le choix d'une vie et d'un amour authentiques" (Nafisi 2016: 16).

L'auteur débute son essai par la très touchante histoire de son père bien-aimé, lui lisant, enfant, *Le Petit Prince*, œuvre universelle qui a accompagné, accompagne encore des millions de lecteurs et continuera à illuminer les générations à venir. Cela nous rappelle ce que disait Nabokov, les "lecteurs sont nés libres et devraient les rester". On a appris à protester lorsque des écrivains sont emprisonnés ou leurs livres censurés et interdits et c'est un geste pertinent. Mais à présent, la question est différente parce que dans les pays occidentaux il y a cette liberté d'expression et chacun peut en profiter. Le danger imminent est de disparaître le public lecteur, l'image le met en cage. L'image peut être une 'censure' différente et sauver les livres devient sauver l'humanité car la force de la littérature est donnée de sa fragilité; il faut la protéger: "Jusqu'au jour où j'ai eu peur de ne plus pouvoir le faire, je n'ai jamais aimé lire. On n'aime pas respirer. Ainsi parle Scout dans *Ne tirez pas sur l'oiseau moqueur*, exprimant ce que ressentent des millions de gens. Nous devons lire de grands livres subversifs, les nôtres et ceux des autres. Ce droit ne peut être garanti que par une active participation de chacun d'entre nous, lecteurs citoyens" (Nafisi 2016: 49).

Cet essai très personnel part du principe que la fiction est en danger dans l'Amérique d'aujourd'hui, dans un monde où les sociaux médias et YouTube accaparent l'individu au détriment de son imaginaire. L'auteur associe ses souvenirs de lectures des grandes œuvres américaines à son itinéraire d'exilée qui, ayant dû quitter l'Iran, a choisi de devenir citoyenne des États-Unis, pays qu'elle a découvert grâce à ses romans.

En relisant avec elle *Huckleberry Finn* ou *Le cœur est un chasseur solitaire* et aussi les autres romans analysés, le lecteur est amené à porter un regard neuf sur les œuvres fondatrices des États-Unis. Très inspirée par l'écrivain James Baldwin, elle nous engage à lire partout, en toutes circonstances, à la rejoindre dans cette *République de l'imagination*, pays sans frontières ni restrictions, ou le seul passeport requis est un esprit libre et un désir de rêver. "La littérature est délicieusement subversive, car elle enflamme l'imagination et défie le statu quo" (Nafisi 2016: 236). Et Azar Nafisi continue son plaidoyer-confession en faveur de la fiction, de la construction romanesque car confession pour elle signifie authenticité: "La fiction nous permet de comprendre n'importe quel individu, si abominable soit-il. Un bon roman est

celui qui fait apparaître la complexité humaine et créé assez d'espace pour que chaque personnage fasse entendre sa voix. C'est en ce sens que le roman est dit 'démocratique' non parce qu'il appelle à la démocratie mais de par sa nature même. L'empathie est au cœur de Gatsby comme à celui de tant d'autres grands romans: être aveugle aux problèmes et aux douleurs des autres est le pire des péchés. Ne pas les voir c'est nier qu'ils existent" (Nafisi 2004: 174).

Dans ce monde-là, l'évasion dans les œuvres de fiction a permis à ces femmes et jeunes filles d'affronter et comprendre la réalité et aussi de se remettre en question et se connaître. *Lire Lolita à Téhéran* devient un hymne merveilleux à l'importance de la littérature.

La question des générations est d'ailleurs un thème important qu'Azar Nafisi traite dans son œuvre. Car elle, elle fait partie d'une génération de femmes qui a connu le pays autrement, qui a perdu des libertés, qui mesure donc cette perte et la différence entre la vie actuelle et la vie d'avant: "Nous avions des souvenirs, des images de ce qui nous avait été pris. Ces jeunes femmes n'avaient rien. Leur mémoire était celle d'un désir qu'elles ne pouvaient exprimer, de quelque chose qu'elle n'avait jamais eu" (Nafisi 2004: 115).

Conclusions

On peut finir l'étude avec espoir car pour les personnages d'Azar Nafisi et pour elle-même, malgré le mal fait par le système politique et religieux, la vie continue et la liberté fortement désirée et rêvée devient réalité, mais ce fait est impossible dans leur pays natale, elles ont émigrées vers les pays de leurs romans—l'Occident. Celles qui sont restées ont continué de lutter à l'aide de mêmes moyens: culture, livre, fiction pour redonner à leur peuple la dignité arrachée par la fausse révolution:

> Sur l'une, sept femmes se tiennent debout contre un mur blanc. Comme le veut la loi du pays, elles portent toutes de longues robes noires et des foulards qui ne laissent apparaître que leurs mains et l'ovale de leur visage. On les retrouve sur l'autre dans la même position, le même groupe de femmes devant le même mur blanc. Mais elles ont enlevé ce qui les cachait. Des éclats de couleur les séparent les unes des autres. Chacune d'entre elles se distingue par la façon particulière dont elle est habillée et coiffée, et même celles qui ont gardé la tête couverte semblent avoir changé. (Nafisi 2004: 14)

Le livre d'Azar Nafisi *Lire Lolita à Téhéran* est vivante et riche sur la place laissée aux intellectuels et aux femmes dans un Iran évoluant chaque jour vers une répression accrue. En même temps, le livre fait son éloge de la littérature et du pouvoir des livres. A l'intermède des livres, de la fiction on lutte contre une société déçue, contre la dictature qui interdit la liberté sous

toutes ses formes sous le mensonge de la religion. C'est une page de confession personnelle aussi pour différentes voix des femmes qui sortent de l'oppression et arrachent le voile sous lequel un régime inhumain prétend les faire disparaître, leur corps, leur âme, et leur liberté de penser et d'imaginer. *Lire Lolita à Téhéran* est une victoire des victimes devenues gagnantes grâce aux livres, à la fiction.

    Lire Lolita à Téhéran fait d'ailleurs largement écho (ou inversement) à la bande-dessinée *Persepolis* de Marjane Strapi. On y retrouve les mêmes anecdotes tour à tour tristes ou plus légères sur la vie en Iran sous le régime islamique et durant la guerre. Il est probable que tous les récits sur cette période de l'histoire, a fortiori si ils sont narrés par des femmes, se ressemblent. Il n'en demeure pas moins intéressant de les confronter et de tirer de chacun d'entre eux le côté unique. Chez Marjane Satrapi frappe sa vision d'enfant, sa rébellion punk d'adolescente et ses dessins si expressifs, chez Azar Nafisi sa vision de femme adulte et de mère, ses parallèles avec des œuvres littéraires.

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TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY POETRY

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ABSTRACT. The present paper analyses the poetic trends manifested by the 21st century poets. It focuses on the traits of the genre, highlighting the great range of poetic forms manifested nowadays all over the world. The fragmentation of poetic culture and tradition, the division into innumerable subcultures is analysed in the context of digitalization, of heightened online connections established at the level of literary societies and clubs. The works of some acknowledged authors are cited in order to prove the novelty brought forth by poets who are contemporary with us. The paper also raises the issues of the validity and the relevance of contemporary poetry, as well as the struggle for establishing a poetic canon. Digital and technological accessibility are also looked upon as influencing factors in the distribution of poetic verse. Contemporary poetry is greatly influenced and enhanced by the establishment of poetic manifestations, such as competitions, public readings and workshops. Creative writing is analysed in the context of more and more creative writing schools that have produced freelance writers and published authors worldwide, irrespective of country, social or political background. Creative writing takes the process of writing poetry to a next level, and the arguments and counterarguments towards it are minutely addressed in this paper.

KEY WORDS: contemporary poetry, poetic forms, social media poetics, creative writing, poetic canon

Introduction

Poetry has proven to be a prolific genre in the 21st century, perhaps more than at any other time in history. The entire process of writing poetry has taken such impressive lengths that, at first sight, one can remain perplexed. At a physical level, this comes mainly as a result of technological and digital development. Poetry has the advantage of condensation, of vast topics condensed within relatively short word spans. Deep, philosophical ideas ingrained within few words. Poets, unlike writers of prose, can easily present their end product in different settings and on different occasions. Hence, the emergence of poetic societies, poetry clubs and organizations, most of which also have a well-sustained online activity. At a simple search on the Internet, we plunge into a vast web of forums, blogs and poetry sites that host emerging or acknowledged poets. Once accepting the challenge, the rabbit hole takes us deeper, providing a wide range of examples such as: Contemporary Poetics Research Centre, BEPC: British Electronic Poetry Centre, The Poetry

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Library, Writing Industries Network, The Poetry Society, to name just a few. Their activity is not limited to poetry writing only, at least not in the sense that we are accustomed to.

The poet is no longer that figure secluded in a remote Romantic enclosure, torn by inner turmoil. "Poetry is an opportunity to discover other worlds while learning more about ourselves, and discerning new meanings in life. Poets reach out in a language of the heart and soul" (Martinez 2014: 1-2). Solitude and isolation are not the attributes of a successful poet any more. On the contrary, the poet of the 21st century takes part in workshops and poetic gatherings held in appealing landscapes or cityscapes. Contemporary poets, at least at the beginning of their writing endeavour, submit their writing to poetry competitions, have their work reviewed by more experienced writers, and, in general, strive to make themselves as visible as possible.

Acknowledged Names and Poetic Themes

Nowadays poetry explores everything from social coping mechanisms and the turmoil of our contemporary society, to relationships and spiritual quests. The current poetic movement includes names already acknowledged, such as Seamus Haney, Fleur Adcock, Wendell Berry, Joyce Carol Oates, Margaret Atwood, Vikram Seth, Sherman Alexie, Carol Ann Duffy, Billy Collins, Derek Walcott, and Ian Humphreys. They are all poets of diverse cultural backgrounds and their work has been visible in anthologies and digital texts. Ian Humphreys is no stranger when it comes to the common traits of the 21st century poetry. In his writings, punctuation steps back and gives way to lyricism. For instance, in *touch-me-not* he zooms on a very small corner of nature and creates a beautiful sensation out if it, the entire perspective is photographic, narrowing down towards minute details: "This flower/ doesn't belong/ on the canal/ hiding/ in an airless tunnel/ where no one goes/ before dark/ rooted/ to a thin layer/ of dirt/ head bowed/ butter bloom/ an open mouth/ that faint smell/ of sherbet/ when someone/ passes/ it brushes/ a thigh/ springs back/ against the wall/ careful/ just one touch/ triggers/ a scattering/ of seed/ into the night."

In another poem, *Bare Branch*, the ancestors are witnesses to the unfolding of life processes and relationships. When the reader expects a deepening into this merging between individual and nature, the 21st century poet reverts things back into the context of technological developments: "She boarded the weekend bus/ to shanghai, found a job dusting iPhones. In spring/ she returned with a husband who worked/ on an assembly line—making buttons/ for Samsung tablets and iPads."

Sasha Dugdale and Dina Queyras write about mothers and foremothers, and the role of female figures in the endurance of history and myth. "This

little town had an ancient centre, but nowhere to eat. The/ little hotel was shut for repairs a thousand years/ in the completing, and the woman who poked her head from a/ window said: - If you're from here then why don't you stay with your family?/ - My family left./ So, asked the woman, why come here then?" The author "escorts the reader courteously and quietly through displacements, disavowals and the destructive forces of history" (Crowther 2018: 125).

Ten: Poets of the New Generation is a collection comprising the work of ten emergent British poets. This anthology "gives the reader the sensation of moving quickly through a brightly chattering crowd in which observation, reaction and interpretation, along with subject matter both light and dark, doggedly personal and expansively wide-ranging, terse and voluble, mix easily together" (Bidisha 2017: 91-92). The collection opens with the poems of Omikemi Natacha Bryan who tackles the topic of unethical experiments against African-American children. As opposed to her, the Anglo-Indonesian writer, Will Harris "brings sardonic levity. He is wonderfully inventive, with a formal sparseness and a great, flat wit" (Bidisha 2017: 92). The above mentioned anthology is part of a vaster publishing scheme entitled *The Complete Works* meant to bring to the frontline of poetic manifestation, British Asian and Black British poets: "The Complete Works project has changed the literary world measurably, letting in variety not just of race, sex and cultural identity, but also of voice, form, attitude, outlook and experience" (Bidisha 2017: 94).

Another poet, Theophilus Kwek, author of *The First Five Storms*, has a unique prevalence for music and he transfers this into his verse. The image of a storm is interwoven with the speaker's emotional, inner landscape: "The delicate tension between the internal and the external, between one's immediate experience of the world and an eclipsed future, is sustained by the subtle, seamless shifts in perspective and imagery." This sense of continuity and shared wisdom between the human and the natural world is also reflected in *The Weaver*, where "creatures love and, like us, try/ to bind the ones they love", or in *What Follows* in which a deer "on the flint of that eternity/ more alive than in the burnished wood". Through measured and elusive verse, Kwek articulates the proximity of history in tender, personal terms (Wong 2017: 130).

Acknowledged topics are reiterated in mundane settings, far away from the Romantic scenery that we are accustomed to. This tendency towards de-romanticization has been a long-lasting process, already announced and manifested in the 20th century: "But the modern poetry that our general reader finds baffling and obscure is a radical departure from the Romantic achievement; it contains features that his 'education' has not prepared him for; neither in sensibility nor in intellect is he ready for a kind of poetry that

does not offer him the familiar poetical objects alongside the familiar poetical truths" (Tate 1940: 3).

The poetry of the 20th century and the poetic currents manifested all along, modernism, the new criticism, have steadily prepared the reader for an estrangement from the poetic objects presented. The reader is no longer instructed on how to decrypt the poetic endeavour; on the contrary, the reader is encouraged to find personal revelations in the poetic message. Poetry is not an end product in itself. It is also a middle agent, a means of self-discovery. As the old saying goes, namely that the translator is a traitor, we can also paraphrase that the reader is also estranging the meaning of poetry from its initial ground.

Certain modern poets offer no inherently poetical objects, and they fail to instruct the reader in the ways he must feel about the objects. All experience, then, becomes potentially the material of poetry—not merely the pretty and the agreeable—and the modern poet makes it possible for us to "respond" to this material in all the ways in which men everywhere may feel and think. On the ground of common sense—a criterion that the reader invokes against the eccentric moderns—the modern poet has a little the better of the argument, for to him poetry is not a special package tied up in pink ribbon: it is one of the ways that we have of knowing the world. And since the world is neither wholly pretty nor wholly easy to understand, poetry becomes a very difficult affair, demanding both in its writing and in its reading all the intellectual power that we have (Tate 1940: 3).

This relationship between poetry and the environment suffered great changes and alterations in recent times. Sarah Nolan points to the term of "ecopoetics" in an attempt to better explain the deeply rooted connection between nature, be it urban nature, and poetry. The human being cannot live and become manifest without an intense connection with the environment. Over the years, the environment has changed drastically, from the engulfing nature to the urban space. The projection of the interior onto the exterior is, nevertheless, as vivid as it used to be with earlier poets: "Ecopoetic theory, in the early 2000s, accounted for poetry that engages with nature, even urban nature, but the majority of my environment was unnatural, and ecopoetics had no way of dealing specifically with the built aspects of the city. (…) much of the poetry of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries lacks traditional nature and arises from entirely urban spaces, and all of which is deeply embedded within physical, textual, and personal space. Given this, it might seem easier to simply toss the term "eco poetics" aside and conjure up something new that better accounts for a broader swath of contemporary poetry and other modes of experimental and lyrical language. But to do so would ignore the sense of environmental significance and formal engagement with space that ecopoetics has contributed to—literary studies

(…) The term uncovers how texts use self-reflexive language and formal experimentation to create a textual space where material and nonmaterial elements of environmentality are uncovered" (Nolan 2017: 129).

The Reconfiguration of Poetic Boundaries
The insertion of the new developments into the creation and spreading of poetic forms and messages has been clearly underlined by critics and essayists altogether. In this age of great velocity, spoken and written words travel the world at incredible speed. Subjective experience reconfigures its boundaries. As readers, we have the opportunity to access the writings of people living on different continents, to experience poetic manifestation in a wide array of forms. This should be regarded as a positive, constructive phenomenon:

> Such changes may reflect shifting boundaries of public and private, far and near, due to the volume, mobility, and immediacy of information from the World Wide Web. Not only have digital media freed word from page, but global politics, travel, and communication are reconfiguring the physical and discursive conditions that structure subjectivity. At the same time, the presence of consolidated traditions of women's, ethnic and gender writing in the U.S. diversify and alter the power dynamic of the contexts in which poets write, challenging the twentieth-century dichotomy between the revolutionary avant-gard majority and minority writers in search of representation in traditional forms. To understand poetry's purpose as well as the forces shaping poetic imagination, we must develop new conceptions of poetic agency and of the politics of form. (Dewey 2013: 615)

All this process of reinterpretation and rediscovery is further taken on by the expansion of our social culture and digitalization, as Anne Day Dewey points out that "poetic activity takes forms hardly recognizable as poetry and poets and audiences inhabit multiple, trans local, and transnational communities. Although conceptions of the poet as visionary and of lyric as private meditation may never have been more than enabling fictions, contemporary poetic forms seem to stem from poets' renunciation of or inability to forge private language" (Dewey 2013: 615). If we take into the account the numerous poetic groups and societies that manifest a vivid interest in poetic expression nowadays, we can definitely conclude that poetry is suffering a profound change and that the process of distillation will be more intense. The so-called poetry canon of a generation or of a culture will be more difficult to establish. David Baker points out the intensely exposed nature of the poetic endeavour nowadays: "We live in extremely public times. The narcissism of the media, the omnipresence of advertising and gossip, an almost Victorian titillation at things overseen—we just can't take our eyes off of everybody else." Moreover, he underlines the striking tendency of our fellow beings to label and judge people, to relate to otherness in a reluctant manner:

Our quickening publicness is frightening especially as its surface images come popping relentlessly, joylessly, out of the popular media; the reductive nature of the media is greatly to blame for the fear and suspicion with which we typically respond to change or to any perceived foreign or "other" cultural phenomena. Confronted, for example, with an increasingly empowered women's movement, with a homosexual community demanding acknowledgment and fairness (even survival), with a growing minority population, and so on, our "majority" citizenry often responds with impatient judgment, blame, exclusion, or dismissal—allowing only the surface image projected by a hasty medium to register, hence allowing that image and its human foundation little credibility, little chance to connect. (Baker 2000: 61)

Still, when translated to the realm of poetry, this tendency may become something resourceful. The approach an individual may take towards reality can reach a multiplicity of manifestations. One may say there are as many such expressions as the number of human beings on earth, and, furthermore, given the mind's perpetual capacity of processing, we reach an infinite web of viewpoints and personal re-creations of the self. In the amorphous mass of possibilities, some are voiced, some are idle. In writing creatively, we explore into our capability of giving form and content to all those limitless possibilities of self-expression:

What disturbs us in one realm may nurture us in another. The impulse to include, document, and monitor our changing cultural phenomena is one of the saving graces in our current poetry. It offers understanding and sympathy, an alternative to the judgments encouraged or inflicted by the popular media; within the ranges of poetry this impulse may lead us out of the narcissistic self-confessions of previous decades, out of the exclusive attitude that the private is the only legitimate locus for art. Compared to the media's typically reductive nature and the public's learned response to pass quick judgment, a poem's desire is more likely to be to name, to include, to praise, to sympathize with—to make room, in this case, for the other. (Baker 2000: 62)

As for the relevance and validity contemporary poetry is granted by critics, the situation is arguable. We may affirm that the only solid recognition contemporary poetry is granted is the one of literary groups, clubs or organizations. In an article entitled "Why Contemporary Poetry is Not Taught in the Academy", Michael McIrvin outlines the lack of any serious enterprise from the academic environment towards the establishment of a recognized poetic cannon:

Contemporary poetry is increasingly not taught in college classrooms. At best, students in non-genre-specific survey courses are offered canned responses to the staid standbys from literature survey textbooks. Although there are valid reasons for the academy's inherent perception of poetry's irrelevance, including the

mainstream tendency to solipsistic banality and to the art as careerist vehicle to tenure, the role that poetry has traditionally played as a means to explore the deeper self and the depths of human reality has not been usurped by anything to be. Consequently, it is incumbent upon the teachers of contemporary literature to search the moribund corpus for the few excellent examples of the genre still being written, the work of the few poets and their publishers struggling to revivify the art. (McIrvin 2000: 89-99)

Robert Wilson addresses the issue of contemporary literature in general. Given the complexity of the postmodern times, it is difficulty to establish criteria that can easily categorize poetry, that can make it fall into categories:

> One of the essential concerns of visual art, performance, and critical thought is the idea of the "contemporary" or the "new". We are part of an era that had cast forth great themes, and complex ways of organizing society and culture, while also being challenged by many received ideas. How does one take the measure of one's work in the zeitgeist of the times? What makes a performance, a play, a piece of music, or an essay contemporary? What does the search for the contemporary or the innovative mean to the arts and to the public today? How is it recognized or understood? Consider your own work, or another artist's work, in this context. (Wilson 2012: 93)

To every aspect of the human existence there is a perceivable and an unperceivable dimension. The former dimension has form and edges whereas the latter can be acted upon harshly or softly, depending on the individual's will, state of mind or purpose. Whatever people project in their minds, whatever they think of, design or simply sketch on pieces of paper comes out into the open. The imaginary allows itself to be brought out to the palpable world. It is very difficult to define personal space; if we take things physically, personal space may reach the margins of one's home, including the objects one uses as part of his/ her belongings, the objects that make up the aesthetic surroundings of the individual. Personal surroundings play an important role in starting the process of writing creatively; the extent to which somebody relates to the physical and temporal space influences his/ her writing. A good writer is able to work with the world around him as with a bank of resources at hand:

> More accurate would be to say that innovation comes as response to the human crisis: innovation is the mark of rethinking, trying to break out of the obsessive repetition-compulsion that we see all around us, whether in an individual or a family, or politically (in the conflict between states or groups). You might say that severe forms of oppression rob a people of its right to poetry—and the crisis for poetry, for the aesthetic, is to create a space for poetry again and again. For that, anything less than invention falters. (Wilson 2012: 93)

Creative Writing and the Ratio Between Inspiration and Work

New poetry stirs from the highly digitalized environment we mentioned previously. Hence, the means through which it is produced have changed dramatically:

> Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter serve millions of people who populate digital space with autobiographical avatars and simulacra. Digital selves are curated, edited, and maintained in a perpetual process of digitizing life experience in order to produce an imagined life. The emergence of social media poetics—and, specifically, what I term digital realism—demonstrates the use of the confessional mode in social media. Digital realism gives name to a process of literary production that obscures the lines between life and writing. (Lor 2015: 153)

Writing is also a process of learning since it brings the writer in front of a blank page and it makes one confront the need to renew himself/ herself. Going beyond that barrier (after having set one's mind on a particular subject) is the true challenge of any writer. In dealing with that page, the mind tries to find new manners of expression. Every piece of writing is new through that personal struggle to express oneself differently. The writer wants to surpass all that he had previously written and voice novelty. Whether there should be clearly delineated techniques, used in a conscious manner, willingly, is a matter to be discussed. The ratio between inspiration and work is again one of those delicate issues the process of writing supposes. To which extent writing creatively is inspiration or work or a combination of the two is yet debatable. We write things that attune with books, things from other people's experiences or from our own experience but there are no definite borders between those sources of inspiration. Images and facts cumulate to produce a new outlook. There are many ways of rendering that outlook, many techniques writers have looked for over the ages in order to have more clarity or impact, in order to produce vivid images and thus to have a strong rendering of feelings and thoughts.

Visualization is one of the most important techniques in writing. We live surrounded by things and entities that we can represent visually, therefore writing must bear the height and width of visualization. Specificity of detail is another characteristic a piece of writing should be bearing. One of the first steps a student learns as concerns writing is that s/he should be as specific as possible, unwrapping broad concepts into clear, maneuverable bits. The sharper the specificity is, the better the piece of writing. The concept is tightly connected to that of personalization. Rendering things personally means rendering them originally, hence the importance granted to personalization.

Creative writing, despite being a realm difficult to define, proves to be a resourceful instrument, a precursor to being a published writer. It can be

used successfully as a means of completing the more traditional teaching methods and it ranges in use from kindergarten to achieving a university degree in such an educational subject. MA programs and even PhDs focus on creative writing. These programs at universities worldwide are more and more demanded by people who are interested in improving their writing skills and in freelancing themselves in the vast realm of writing.

One of the key aspects any writer-to-be should assume is drafting. That process faces difficulty as it presupposes a distance from the fresh piece of creative writing. Nevertheless, some assert that writing in itself is the unique process of the moment and nothing can be altered by a subsequent intervention. That is a rather restrictive outlook as it grants value to the intensity of emotion a writer is thought to attain at certain moments in the process of writing. Still, that process should be observed with great objectivity and detachment in order for it to be cleared from unnecessary repetitions.

But if we look at this issue with a rather detached attitude, we can say that it is an outlook to be taken into account. Redrafting presupposes a lot of patience and detachment. It resembles clearing away of everything that surrounds you and focusing on a certain state. It may be compared to a mental and emotional journey in time to the state of that particular piece of writing. The writer isolates himself/ herself from the exterior reality and practically returns to the moment of creation. That is a rather difficult procedure as no two moments are alike.

There are advantages and disadvantages to the process of redrafting. The advantage is that we can obtain a more refined piece of writing. In redrafting we reread what we have written and we make those changes necessary for a refinement of the poem or the short story we have worked upon. Be they minor changes at the level of vocabulary or figures of speech, or rather radical changes that modify the mood or the tone of the writing in its entirety. A writer needs to be in control of this process of going back to the moment of creation, relieving all those moments, the feeling of a piece of writing at that time and the necessary changes. He is like a silversmith detached from the creation he gives life to and objectively makes the necessary changes.

Among the disadvantages we could number the time length between the two moments of creation, all the perturbing elements the writer may come across to interfere in his/ her work. Another disadvantage would be the inability of the writer to explore too much into the range of possibilities certain elements in the poem allow for and therefore drift away from the original mood of the writing itself.

In redrafting, writers who seek success and lasting recognition among the readers should overview the elements of vocabulary, those tiny elements that need to be changed in order to give more tightness to the poem or the short story. Synonyms, a change in a certain image, it being made clearer, the

adding of a detail, a different hue like a brush stroke, all may add to a new and much better bit of writing. Redrafting necessitates a lot of patience and willingness, time spent to think what works best, weighing possibilities, living things over again. It is not a painful process, but it is surely perturbing, since it makes the writer go through elements of personal experience or imagined processes which require a great amount of energy and willingness.

Another problem a writer may encounter, especially a poet, is that of completeness. Is there a literary work ever complete, finished? When is it complete? To poetry especially, length is of no importance, but the power of suggestion that the words bear matters the most. Ideas can be changed or expressed differently and there is really a great extent to which writing can go in terms of changing one word with another one, one idea with a more appropriate one. Length is determined by the connections one term has with the other or the multiplicity of extra ideas it can line up. The degree of ornamentation to which an idea can get is variable, depending on the writer's availability to open up to the exterior. Ideas can take as many shapes as possible, practically an infinity. Creativity goes beyond one's power of understanding that is beyond reason; it goes beyond somebody's patterned responses and gives the spirit the opportunity to play freely.

We can assume there are only two instances of creation: one derived from the exterior, an exterior stimulus taken as source and used as a starting point for the development of a creative line; and one connected to a realm where nothing is predefined; nothing is connected with the already completed forms of the exterior; there is nothing predetermined in creating something with one's imagination; elements connect in a series wherein they harmonize. In writing, one should try to set images in a balance, to introduce elements gradually in a logical chain of images be them olfactory, auditory or especially visual.

The creative idea comes from the unspoken world; there is no distinguished line between ideas at the level of the unspoken. They stay together, light colour changing into dark colour and vice versa. Nuances change from dark to light in a process of fading and burning again. It could be said that, in writing, poets are like painters before a wooden placard. Some want to paint an icon, others a landscape, others an abstract conglomerate of colours. All of them start by looking at the empty board just like writers look at the blank piece of paper. And they start putting a little bit here, another on the other edge, and so on and so forth. The image and the view are created by looking at the piece of work with patience and relaxation. To some writers, it is a difficult process that results paradoxically in contentment of having created an original piece of writing. This cyclic pattern strengthens the writer, in whom there is a sense or rather a thirst for novelty.

Contrary as it may seem, discipline is a must when coming to writing. It goes altogether with having a strong morale, as writers should be ready to accept refusal and criticism a great deal. Discipline has a great influence on both the process of writing and on its result. It influences writing because it should be a style of being while writing. But discipline is really difficult to follow and instill. It is like a programme that somebody needs to set in order to obtain full capability of writing. It means setting a certain pattern in writing, setting ideas in a certain order, trying to follow this order as its aesthetical elements are concerned. Nevertheless, there are drawbacks as well, the following of a certain order in writing can make the piece of writing deficient in terms of spontaneity and novelty. It may make it lack the freshness the sudden outburst of imagination may bring.

Discipline may interfere in the process of imagination but, if exerted consciously, it brings positive effect in the long run, in the process of creating a personal style. One's writing style is set gradually, through ups and downs, moments of prolific imagination and moments of emptiness. They all lead to the creation of a writer's portfolio and help him/ her take steps further towards becoming a freelance writer. Thus, we may say that the profile of poetry in the 21st century has changed dramatically, if we were to compare it to the poetic discourse and techniques of the previous centuries. The production of poetry nowadays is filtered by poetry clubs that inherently boost hierarchies which would perhaps generate a better distillation of poetry.

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IMAGINARY ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN ORIGIN
AS REFLECTED IN THE SOCIALIST REALISTIC DRAMA

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ABSTRACT. This paper aims to highlight the manner in which communist ideology and mythology superimpose over specific symbols of the Christian imaginary by replacing them with its prefabricated system of reading and comprehending literary worlds. As secular religions, dictatorial regimes directly compete with divinity aspiring to dethrone and substitute it in an effort of re-writing history with its humanitarian pretenses. Immediately after its inauguration in Romania, communism intended to create, by using all necessary mean, a literary corpus of itself which would disseminate a coherent message with the supreme promise that it was to bring about heaven on earth. Their propaganda was formulated and conducted via literature and art as well, in the attempt to make this message intelligible and accessible to as wide an audience as possible. Drama was thus one of communism's favorite channels to impart its ideology to the masses, in the hope that the new plays would bestow the regime a human face.

KEY WORDS: communism, drama, rewriting history, false humanism, secular religion

Introduction

In 1500, the famous German painter Albrecht Dürer created his masterpiece entitled "Self-Portrait". The artist depicted himself in the likeness of Christ, in his attempt to overlap his and Christ's image, convinced that in so doing the others would identify him with divinity. The painter looks in the mirror and sees God, a model for the coherence of the universe. According to Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, the individual, "the reflection and image of God, unveils as an active subject, in a representation both historic and transfigured" (Melchior-Bonnet 2000: 162). It is an experiment to notice how Dürer allegedly reproduced Christ's posture and expression, an endeavour that not far from his time would have been considered a blasphemy; he, however, lived in a new era, a time animated by the ideal of the universal man. The artist conceives that he is an instrument of divinity, an absolute sovereign of the canvas, which in turn is fully at his disposal, without restrictions. The artist's powers are deemed unlimited, and his freedom attains unimaginable assay, just like in the Antiquity. The creative act itself—with all that it entails: stepping before the canvas, choosing the colors, etc.—becomes a gateway

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through which intangible realities enter this world, realities that come into shape due to the painter' awareness of his creative omniscience and his boldness in establishing his origins in direct descendency from God. In the words of Melchior-Bonnet, the mirror, a middle space, "calls for another reality within the closed space of the work. The invisible emerges from the visible, the infinitely large into the infinitely small in a *mise en abîme* that reproduces the process of creation" (Melchior-Bonnet 2000: 162). At the same time, the mirror gives birth to a dialogue between the artist and his creation and even the transcendent, in his attempt to deepen its meanings.

Communism and the Lack of Corporeality

If applied to the communist regime, this picture unveils an establishment which, through its ideology and practices, has deeply marked the societies and mental structures of Eastern Europe. What happend when communists first looked in the mirror? What image did they see? What did it uncover? Based on the writing style in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *Communist Manifesto*, which is considered the cornerstone of communism worldwide, it can be said that the communist regime in itself had not yet existed in flesh by the time the manifesto issued, thus it is totally inadequate to call it "a ghost haunting Europe, the ghost of communism" (see Pleșu, Liiceanu, Patapievici 2014: 62-63). This idea is considered inadequate because the ghost is thought of as a posthumous sign of reality, whereas in 1848—when the *Communist Manifesto* was published, communism had not yet materialized (Pleșu, Liiceanu, Patapievici 2014: 63). If it is to look at itself in the mirror, communism must find itself naked, devoid of both form and content, however aspiring to create an image for itself, even if this entails repudiating or reversing the universal truths pertaining to Christian and Jewish religious tradition. The image communism finds in the mirror depicts a mere spectral shadow of the void it belongs to.

Approximately 350 years after Dürer painted his self-portrait, the absence of corporeality, of the tangible is acutely felt by communism, a reason for which, in all Eastern European countries where it becomes the official doctrine, it resorts to creating a face for itself, as it is dictated by the single party through its bodies. Deviation from the official guidelines is not permitted, as communism aspires to appear, gradually, as the secular savior religion *par excellence*. The foremost nature of society, specifically of capitalism and democracy, is strongly challenged by communism, which feels that power should be centralized in the hands of an authoritarian Messiah, who does not allow his followers to stray from the right way. Looking in the mirror, the Communist Party wishes to find itself exactly like the Messiah, blameless and above suspicion, regardless of the particular aspirations of members of society. Moreover, the inner life of the individual is negated in totality, as "the

new man" is perceived as a machine that labors at the foundation of the one true regime. The cosmogony is entire only when the image of society is unitary, when the malign tumors—represented by the bourgeoisie and anything that could pose a threat to communism—have been completely excised. Communism aims to rebuild the world, to create a Heaven on Earth to substitute any aspiration towards a transcendence that is impossible to control. The superposition over the Christian imaginary is obvious, in an attempt to pastiche and attribute new meanings to the Biblical genesis, non-existent in the eyes of communism. Man—at least the new man, who it would be desirable to find in society—is born along with communism. Communist *sapientia* takes shape in the shadow of Christianity, in spite of the former refusal to recognize the identity of the latter, while communist science is nothing but a pale and perverted reflection of the wisdom of the biblical texts. The sacred is replaced by the profane, and the generation of the latter's holiness, forcefully anchored in the mundane, is attempted at any cost.

We can identify this regime's need to colonize new territories, to annex spaces it does not have and are necessary for its complete affirmation. Due to the need to fill the void, the image in the mirror, communism attempts to seize domains of culture and civilization, and superimposes over them its own system of perception in regards to life and society at large. The image in communism's mirror is a distorted one, hideous, represented through a false geometry of the senses and of thought. We are faced with a false reality that aspires to become the norm and monopolize the human being in an attempt to redefine the concept of man, an attempt carried out through the lens of a false humanism. In this attempt to gain a body, communism resorts, through any means possible, to monopolizing all domains of knowledge and substituting their old representations in order to create the space necessary for the affirmation of the triumphalist totalitarian regime. Communism seeks to compete with divinity through an exercise to create and recreate the human being, and to substitute the elements that come from the Christian imaginary with a series of new elements that ensure the substance of the official ideology. The communist regime operates like a parasite occupying its host's body and, subsequently, fully assimilating it. The distortion of the words, of the Christian universe and the desacralization of its symbols or their infusion with communism's own view of holiness are behaviors that are specific to the regime, and they are maintained throughout its entire existence, as if due to a constant need to re-update the meanings and to re-confirm its own ideology.

The emergence of communism as a secular religion was subject to an inspired analysis carried out by Vladimir Tismăneanu in his 2011 book, *Despre comunism: destinul unei religii politice* (*On Communism: The Fate of a Political Religion*). The author captures both the context in which communist

ideology takes form, as well as its aspirations and limits. The central idea of the essay is that, in its capacity as secular religion, communism aspires to "a renovation of the human condition" by negating and overturning established values, and that, in its ideal form, it appears as an ample endeavor that surpasses the limits of the mundane (Tismăneanu 2011: 18). The role of Messiah is assigned to the proletariat, but the idea of the Messiah in itself, as it appears in Christian or Jewish theology, is rendered void by communism in an attempt to definitively wipe history, be it even mythical, and to create its own mythology where the central element is the new man, wholly obedient to the official ideology, who contributes to its materialization with their entire being. We are in the presence of an absolute Evil that, as Tismăneanu states, "falsifies Good in the name of universal happiness" (Tismăneanu 2011: 16).

Through the Veins of Official Ideology

Literature and drama become—in the case of the communist regime—the veins through which the official ideology reaches the citizens, in a constant effort to build the new man. In the case of drama, through the presence of the audience in the auditorium, the effects of the performance of a certain play are much easier to gauge, and its success or lack thereof validates or invalidates the playwright from the point of view of communist ideology. Thus, an official dramatic literature and repertoire starts to take shape, whose purpose is to illustrate the achievements of the one true regime and its structures within various spheres of life. The canon is defined during this time exclusively by its relation to the official ideology and by the creation of socialist realist texts and plays. The written word must be chosen carefully and is proof of allegiance to the vision of the ideology, just as much as it can become incriminating proof and the basis for ostracizing the author. During this time, in the Romanian People's Republic, which would later be named the Socialist Republic of Romania, functioned—as an official body controlling the imaginary created by various writers—the institution of censorship, which was attentively and pertinently analyzed by Liviu Malița (2016: 24).

Horia Lovinescu, a major post-war playwright, aims and succeeds through a significant amount of his drama to contribute to the creation of a philosophy of communism and to promote the image of a regime that is greatly preoccupied with the greater good of the human being, with general well-being. Through his drama, the author of *The Death of an Artist* (*Moartea unui artist*) attempts to legitimize the face of communism superimposing it on the face of God, and, thus, contributes to the creation of a new theology that is secular in nature. The pedagogical value and the quality that some of his dramatic texts have as tools for political education and re-education are easily recognizable. Ioan Stanomir, in an inspired analysis of the impact of Horia Lovinescu's dramatic debut, notes that „the new man is built where one can

see, before a spectating public and critics contemplating the birth of a Lovinescu cleansed of the trespasses of his youth" (Stanomir 2016:222). Horia Lovinescu's destiny itself in relation to the official ideology can otherwise be seen as a reenactment of Paul the Apostle's encounter on the road to Damascus. The future playwright defends his doctoral dissertation on Rimbaud's poetry in 1947, but chooses not to publish it for a sizable period of time, then makes his debut as a playwright—in 1953—with the play *Lumina de la Ulmi* (*The Light from Ulmi*), condemned for the lack of transparency behind the author's allegiance, only for *Citadela sfărâmată* to secure him a place in the socialist realist pantheon of communism a year later and to confer to him the status of „engineer of souls" in a world found in the midst of a process of re-creation.

His most praised drama from the incipient phase of his creation, a clear indicator of Horia Lovinescu's allegiance, *Citadela sfărâmată* is the play that established him and outlined his position as comrade to the regime. The drama presents the transformations that take place within a *petit bourgeois* family named Dragomirescu due to the institution of the communist regime. Each of the family members has a different view on this state of affairs, depending on their own life experiences and their own openness to change. As Ioan Stanomir notes, Horia Lovinescu's intention, shared by other playwrights that were his contemporaries, to apply to "the social conflict a theological angle is obvious. Salvation is the challenge that the party offers to those who belong to the old world. Ascending up or descending into inferno are part of the path that each conscience is summoned to walk" (Stanomir 2016: 226).

What is interesting to analyze here is the path that the two sons of the Dragomirescu family, Matei and Petru, walk after the institution of communism. Matei, the eldest son, is the proponent of a philosophy of the subconscious that favors individualism over everything social and over collective action. Petru puts into action his brother's philosophy and ends up being defeated by fate, losing his eyesight after participating as an aircraft pilot in World War II. What follows for him is a phase during which he comes into contact with his inner abyss and in which every day he waits for death. The days are dull, and the person held accountable for his state is his brother Matei, the one who proposed a philosophy of action, "the great escapes", the search for happiness "beyond good and evil", and affirmed the supremacy of the individual as the only reality, as the universe is just an illusion. Salvation is offered to him by the new social order through the teacher Caterina, who was sent to the Dragomirescu household after the nationalization took place, as she helps him rediscover the beauty of life. The way Petru relates to the threshold in a painting by Grigorescu in the first act is symbolic for this allegiance. When commenting on the painting, the youngest of

Dragomirescu's sons points to the different worlds spotted in the painting. On the one side, there is the dark interior, and on the other side of the threshold—a universe brimming with light and color. Petru's conclusion concerns his own life and highlights his refusal to accept life between two different worlds. His condition as a captive in purgatory is limited in time, which is due to him recognizing the new divinity and social reality, where the power belongs to the proletariat and not in any way to a bourgeoisie whose sun has long set.

We can find the words with which Jesus anointed Peter as the foundation of His Church in the *Gospel of Matthew* chapter 16, verses 15-18. When the Son of God asked Simon Peter who did he think the Son of Man was, Simon Peter answered: 16. "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17. Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (NIV translation).

It is interesting to see how Horia Lovinescu's play unveils its meanings when analyzed in comparison to the above mentioned biblical text. To what extent does a transfer of meaning occur between the two texts? Moving past the choice of names for his characters, it can be said that Horia Lovinescu read the biblical texts and worked on them according to the official directives for literature proclaimed in 1932 by the Central Committee of the Soviet Union.

His choice of names for the Dragomirescu sons is not accidental, as their meanings show. The origin of the name Petru (Peter), a specifically Christian name, can be traced to the Hebrew language, where its literal equivalent is "stone, rock". Peter is the first of the 12 apostles, the son of Jonah and the brother of Andrew. Thus Petru—namesake for stone—symbolizes strength and coarseness. As Mircea Eliade states, the stone expresses "a manner of being absolute" and "in its grandeur and toughness, in its form and color, man encounters a reality and force that belong to a different world, *different* from the profane one that they are a part of" (Eliade 2013: 229). This need for holiness is exactly what communism sought for, this justified appeal to another world, to an idealized space. The sacred and the profane, the two concepts with which Mircea Eliade operates in his work, are redefined by the communist regime according to its own desideratum. The sacred has a profoundly tangible nature represented by the hand extended by the party, while any excess in philosophy or certain escapes towards transcendence are harshly sanctioned by the party, death being one of the solutions proposed in order to solve the issue of dissidents like Matei Dragomirescu. In the biblical text, Jesus is the one who changes the apostle's name from Simon to Peter, a name that comes from the Greek *petros*—meaning stone, a symbol of

wisdom. Thus, Horia Lovinescu's character has the necessary wisdom to recognize and accept the saving hand extended by communism, as opposed to his brother, Matei, who believes in "the magical function of the word" but is unable to show it in action.

Towards a Politically Shaped Heaven

Citadela sfărâmată presents the first years of communism, as its action is placed between 1943 and 1948. The play captures the collective efforts made for the new religion to come into prominence and also cursorily mentions the deficiencies and downsides that characterize these years. The great revolution, however, must target the inner life of the human being, the annexation of this territory that is apparently impossible to control. The anthropological overturn must happen in the deep structures of the human being. An entire belief system about life must be replaced with the new dogma, the dogma that guarantees general and absolute happiness. The fate of the youngest son of the Dragomirescu family is eloquent in this regard. After having directly been confronted with the harmful consequences of the philosophy of the subconscious and of the cult of individuality, he passes through purgatory, a place where he re-learns, thanks to the party, how to re-think life. The individual is abandoned in favor of the collective and the social. The physical disability that he suffers from, his blindness, is only in appearance an obstacle for the new regime. If he so desires, the individual can be helped by the party to find their place in society and prove their usefulness. Nobody is left behind as long as they accept to take the road to the promised paradise along with communism. The new man prevails, hurt, but trained by the ascesis that the grandiose socialist construction entails.

The change in social order is invoked by one of the characters who is, in appearance, a minor factor in the grand scheme of the text, Emilia, who sees in this change the materialization of God's will: "Every day, something changes. You can tell that our time has passed and their time has come. That is God's will" (Lovinescu 1978:136) The divinity that Grigore Dragomirescu's wife is referring to is superimposed over the image of Yahweh and is embodied by the single party whose will generates the course of history. This is a vengeful God, who sanctions any digression from the norm, but extends his hand to those who admit that they have strayed from the straight path outlined by the party. Bolshevik blessing only comes to those who choose the narrow and difficult path of commitment to the cause of communism.

The edifice of communism, in Horia Lovinescu's drama, is erected on the martyrdom—understood as mortal suffering—of the character Petru. He is the one who goes through a state of uncertainty, fueled by his inability to find his place in this new society, especially due to the ideas that his brother instilled in him. The credit for his salvation and re-instatement in society does

not belong to him, because—just like the Bible notices that Simon Peter knows the identity of the Son of God thanks to the divine intervention and not because of his personal abilities—salvation comes from the communist party, an absolute deity to whom Horia Lovinescu attempts to bestow a human face. The new Petru, the namesake of the apostle, retains from his forerunner the ability to recognize divinity and accept the hand it extends to him.

Petru represents the first communist from the series of "new men" in the dramatic oeuvre of Horia Lovinescu. He is the pillar of the world, the foundation on which an edifice is painstakingly erected, an edifice that the author never fully assumed, probably also because of a lack of true allegiance to the official ideology. The class struggle takes the form of a battle between good and evil, between the first Christians and their persecutors. The sprout of communism in the Romanian People's Republic, recreated in *Citadela sfărâmată*, is traced in the view of official ideology to the dawn of Christianity, a time uncertain where the battle is fought at all levels.

The villains—from the point of view of the then political regime—in Lovinescu's drama are more humanized and credible from the artistic standpoint than the heroes, who concede all too easily to the transformations affecting society with the onset of Bolshevism. As Romulus Diaconescu notices, Petru's destiny is much too non-viable from a literary point of view (Diaconescu 1983: 85). His character is deprived of fate: he is a mere puppet in the hand of the playwright, who chooses to alter him as to give in to the new reality. Nevertheless, this acceptance occurs easily and lacks credibility. The existential trajectory of the young Dragomirescu changes drastically upon conceding like the rest.

Matei, the eldest son of the Dragomirescus, bears a name that obviously links him to one of the four Evangelists and is given an already established role by Horia Lovinescu in the construction of the communist soteriology. Far from being a simple victim of the regime, Matei embodies absolute evil from the point of view of communist ideology, the instigating element that must be removed from society at any cost. The decadence he exhibits, as well as his emphasis on individuality to the detriment of all that is social represent inimical behaviors, which must not reach the new society carefully constructed by the communist party. He is the remnant of another time, of mentalities that have no place in this heaven on earth imagined by communism, based on the idea of public property instituted by the Law no. 119 of June 11, 1948. This law is explicitly mentioned in Lovinescu's play. At one point, Caterina, the teacher living in Dragomirescu's house, is exhilarated by the news that "the nationalization has happened" (Lovinescu 1971: 51).

Petru's brother represents the tempter, sharing the same characteristics as the snake in Genesis, an evil that must be punished and whose presence demands heightened watchfulness from the new society currently in the midst of being built. Through the philosophy he preaches, he calls to action and also calls for the situation of the self "beyond good and evil". Essentially, he is the proponent of a form of self-idolatry that has no room in communist society. For Matei, reality and its structures, as known by those around him, are illusory and must constantly be called into question, even being negated as such. The philosopher of Dragomirescu family places himself in opposition to the divine order, as outlined by the single party policies of the communist era. At the same time, in the case of Matei's brother, the transition occurs from the world of ideas to the real world, while the punishment for the elder brother is multiple. This is plainly emphasized by his awareness of the errors of his own system of thought, which have led to Petru's loss of eyesight and, implicitly, the collapse of his whole philosophical setup. Matei, however, needs time to realize the overall failure, convinced as he is that the good he defended is superior to everything the others uphold. In *The Devil's Share*, Denis de Rougemont states that evil men are those who "believe that their own good is of higher value than the real good...; the work of the evil deceives them, precisely because they are the first they dissapoint. The reality they despise shall seek its vengeance by its own nature" (De Rougemont 1994: 25). There are many shapes that this vengeance takes in Matei's case, and they all end in death, perceived by him as deliverance, as liberation, while those close to him feel that it is the supreme form of betrayal, a proof of falsehood and hypocrisy preached as dogma. As communist ideology is concerned, Matei's fate perfectly unmasks absolute evil, expressed by his denial of reality and his refuge in the intangible world of ideas. The punishment of this young nihilistic philosopher is viewed as examplary: it starts with his onstage unmasking as a false prophet, because in the end, when he is of no use to the communist pedagogy, he is removed from stage in the most humiliating manner. Through Matei's death, his angel is also removed from the socialist universe, given that the totem of Matthew the Evangelist is an angel. Matei's death is not only the outcome of him being finally aware of his failure, but it also places him in the line of the damned, the most famous of them being Jesus' betrayer, Judas the apostle. A superposition of images and symbols also occurs here, as the communist dogma aspires to replace the images and meanings in the Christian imaginary with new ones that reciprocate their intentions, namely the creation of "the new man", who is perfectly controllable and wholly subservient to all directives coming from the party. The transcendence specific to Christianity is banned from the communist horizons as it is not materila and cannot be controlled.

In his relationship to those around him, Matei cannot manage to breed anything other than suffering, and the realization of this reality subjects him to a long torture whose end cannot be anything other than death. The mirror of the past that Matei looks into does not correspond with what he discovers in the present or with the manner in which he had imagined the future. Disillusionment is omnipresent around him, and the image of Petru, who is physically affected by his brother's philosophy, is there to constantly remind him of the effect of his ideas applied at the level of the life lived.

When seen in relation to the twelve apostles, Matei is not at all a reflection of the disciple whose name he bears, instead representing Judas, the apostle who betrayed his master. The gospel preached by Matei, Horia Lovinescu's character, rebuilt based on the ideas that he champions in his relationships with those around him, ideas to which Petru and Irina, the woman he loves, especially adhere, is not reminiscent of the gospel by the apostle sharing Matei's name, but is instead a gospel whose chief principles are nihilism and self-idolatry. The human being is not seen as part of a community—a capital sin from the point of view of the official ideology—but as an individual who must fulfill themselves through themselves and not in any way through others or for others.

Matei from *Citadela sfărâmată*, this Judas of communism, is considered fundamentally in error for refusing to accept the state ideology and to actively defend its cause. Through his ideas, he instills in Petru a certain lifestyle based on action and the illusory pursuit of happiness, in a space "beyond good and evil" (Lovinescu 1971:127), which is in sheer opposition to the grand communist project. Matei is responsible for the betrayal of his brother and, implicitly, the official ideology. The acute realization of the errors in his own philosophical system does not secure him his salvation, because it is not accompanied by actions that prove his loyalty to the party's cause. Whereas in Petru's case a new identity can be spotted, the same cannot be said of Matei. To a great extent, he remains constant throughout the entirety of the play and is not affected by the change in political regime, a reason for which his end cannot be any other than the expulsion from the glorious universe that the proletariat is laboring to achieve. His definitive exit by hanging is reminiscent of the death of the apostle who betrayed Jesus and is, ultimately, the proof of the supreme defeat of the bourgeoisie and of a philosophy that is not in accordance with the party's ideal.

Conclusions

The dramatic literature of Horia Lovinescu is much more complex than it may seem at first glance, with Biblical images, symbols and situations woven into the pages of his plays in an authentic way and contributing to the articulation of a paradise in the midst of dissolution, a dissolution whose

conclusion is postponed by an agony extended over half a century, an agony which best describes the essence of the communist regime. Throughout his entire activity, the playwright oscillated between a full acceptance and advocacy of communism and his subversive attitude which unfortunately he never fully embraced. In *Citadela sfărâmată*, the playwright's attitude is overtly biased, as his preferences lean towards the individual who manage to take on the new political dogma and defend it via discourse and action. For the author of the play *Moartea unui artist* (Death of an Artist), communism means the re-writing of the history of the chosen people, the re-conception of a millenary cultural paradigm through the point of view of the official ideology in a continuous attempt to re-sacralize a universe emptied of the presence of any form of transcendence. Divinity, in the case of communism, is embodied by the single party and the proletariat. Reading *Citadela sfărâmată* with this interpretation system in mind it can be stated that the author is keen on attaching a human face to communism, to dress in "shades the sad bare corpse", as Mihai Eminescu put it in his *Epigonii* (*Epigones*). In this case, this effort is portrayed in the communist ideology, which according to Derrida's understanding has a spectral nature. However, the saving hand of the party extends over those who belong to a world sadly remembered, a party seen as the Messiah, willing to forget past errors as long as the individual joins the others in building the socialist realism.

The social order presented in *Citadela sfărâmată*, back then in its first stages, depicts the heaven on earth that the communist regime promised to erect and share with all. This image is imperfect though, since the communists had to rebuild everything, including the collective mentality, as proven in Horia Lovinescu's play. The inner life of human beings had to be done with if it failed to be controlled and wholly submitted to the absolute political divinity. The new religion raised like the granite block of flats, resilient to external pressure and whose assembly could only be stopped from the inside due to the overall dispersion of allogeneic elements. Far from having been fully disseminated through its sympathizers, communism reveals itself in full expansion as the absolute panacea, within reach for all who welcome the single party ideology.

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GEORGE ELIOT'S COMPLEX REALISM.
RURAL, SOCIAL, MORAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
REALISM IN *ADAM BEDE*

ECATERINA OANA BRÎNDAŞ*

ABSTRACT. The present study aims to discuss the nowelty brought in the literary field by Eliot's complex realistic approach in her literary representations. The first part of the work focuses on the transition to Victorian literary realism and the way in which Eliot manages to masterfully bridge the distance between time gaps by acknowledging that each age, though irrevocably separated from that preceding it, must reinterpret the past it has lost in order to arrange its own present. It also discusses Eliot's strong commitment to the moral vocation of art and her attempt to shape her literary creed that art is moral only if it is aesthetically effective. The second part of the study deals with *Adam Bede,* Eliot's first experimentation with this new type of novel that was quite a novelty and a radical innovation in its time. The focus is on the way in which Eliot manages to embody in one novel her commitment to rustic, social, moral and psychological realism altogether as a literary genre by rejecting the reigning social, religious, and literary aesthetic conventions based on didacticism and focusing on adopting realistic plots, settings and common characters modeled on the image of her present world. Her endeavor represents an unusual phenomenon, at least at the time when Eliot began her career as a novelist.

KEY WORDS: victorianism, rural, social, moral, psychological realism

Introduction. The Realistic Novel During Victorianism

If Renaissance is identified with drama and Romanticism with poetry, the Victorian age can be easily identified with the novel. The novel was the most prevalent genre of those times because it was especially well suited to writers who strove to capture the diversity of industrial life and the class disputes and divisions created by industrialism.

Augustan writers and writings were highly dominated by reason and characterized by an earthly realism, Romantics, on the contrary, by idealism and emotion, therefore, the Victorians had to fuse somehow these contradictory tendencies and synthesize the ideal with the real. Indeed, there was an acute need to compensate the oppressive climate of the actual Victorian life with the transforming power of the ideals but, at the same time, Victorians realized the necessity of continuing to live in a real world and of

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accepting the routine of ordinary life with all its customs and conventions. There was a direct relation between literature and life, for Victorian authors themselves were part of and shared the disillusions, the doubts, the turmoil and radical changes England went through. Every writer, in his/her own way, directly or indirectly, endeavored to come up with some realistic answers and solutions to the pressures of a completely new life style and its demands.

Therefore, the dominant paradigm of the century had very little to do with the previous Romantic idealism, but emphasized in turn a new approach to character and subject matter, that gave birth to a new direction which later came to be known as Realism. As a literary movement, Realism started in France in 1850s and it was a reaction against Romanticism and what it stood for. Gradually it took hold among the great novelist, both in Europe and America, and Victorian English writers made no exception. In England, Realism coincided with Victorianism and was mainly characterized by a certain closeness between the novelist and his reader particularly during the early Victorian period. There was a public demand for realistic novels that faithfully depict the ordinary, real life they lived in. For the Victorian readers, the novel became more than a means of entertaining. They wanted to be close to what they were reading, to pretend that literature was journalism, and that fiction was history.

Literature was seen as a transcript of life as it was happening in the real world. The Victorian novelists depicted in their novels different themes, subjects and created plots that were highly connected to reality. The best novels written during Victorianism transcended the requirements of their reading public and can still be easily read with pleasure by the following generations, including the postmodern readers. During Victorianism, we witnessed a new category of writers that turned to fiction in order to express private passions, personal emotions, symbolic meanings that are, and will continue to be, common for all people regardless of time and space. The Victorian writers considered themselves teachers, who had to deliver a moral message in order to instruct their society. The novel was seriously informed by journalistic methods and techniques, such as objectivity and fidelity to the facts, combined with a close documentation and observation of everyday life. Victorian realism drew its characters from all social classes and explored areas of life usually ignored by the arts. Writing had become an important commercial activity and novels were written primarily to please the public and sell. The middle class readership demanded these realistic novels in which the contemporary world they knew was faithfully described and not idealized as the Romantics had done.

In nuce, one may state that Victorian realist novel emphasized attention to detail and aimed to show "life as it was", to replicate the true nature of reality. In so doing, the Victorian writer set about to heighten his/her readers by

increasing their knowledge and clarifying their moral standards. The characters that the realistic Victorian writers produced are complex and psychologically complicated, and their interior and exterior lives, experiences, actions or emotions, all reflect the daily struggles of their age. In all Victorian novels, the descriptions of streets, buildings and people are realistic and accurately reflect the living conditions in mid-19th century England.

Eliot's Art of Realism

The new Victorian writers continued to preserve in a way some well-established habits from the previous Romantic era, while, at the same time, they continuously and vehemently push the art of writing in new and interesting directions. In a predominantly patriarchal society, women writers often felt the need to write under male pseudonym in order to receive recognition. This was the case of Mary Ann Evans, known as George Eliot. The stories of her novels present a realistic and complex picture of provincial society and deal persuasively with the Victorian ideals of duty and self-sacrifice. Most of all, they speak for the strength and subtleties of woman that had certainly sunk deep into English letters when George Eliot began to write, as Chesterton states.

George Eliot was one of the Victorian *sages* as well as a novelist, who lived a controversial and unconventional life and wrote in the same manner. Although she shocked her contemporaries with some of her choices in life, she eventually earned a much-deserved esteem and recognition of an accomplished author. She has been widely praised both for the richness and intellectual depth of her fiction and the universality of her themes:

> She is interested in science and religion, philosophy and art, ethics and politics, psychology and sociology, finance and law, and the broad cultural and economic developments that attended modernization. As a polymath and a reader of extraordinary range and insight, Eliot brought a great deal of learning to her art, which nonetheless always remained centrally trained on human moral and psychological experience. (Anderson 2016: 10)

Her moral visions regarding social order and the struggles of the common individual that lives in provincial English communities are enriched and sprinkled with depictions of the newest currents and ideas that best characterized the Victorian age. Many ideas regarding religion, social norms, traditional values, ethics, and at times even politics, were communicated through Eliot's realistic fiction. Her endeavor represents an unusual phenomenon, at least at the time when Eliot began her career as a novelist. As previously mentioned, George Eliot wrote her novels in a period of change and transition towards a new order. In Knoepflmacher's words:

> The changes experienced by George Eliot's generation were especially disheartening because of their abruptness. The mid-Victorians had to shift from tradition-a mode of life based on the repetition of sameness-to the insecurity of an existence in which men could neither hark back to time-honored norms nor confidently predict the outcome of the innovations around them. (Knoepflmacher 1968: 2)

Most of Eliot's novels are set in the 1830's, an age of abrupt historical changes, reform and agitation. Her proclaimed aim, to write a "natural history" of English life, drove her back to the time of her childhood and beyond, where the web of society could be held securely in memory. The result was a curious double perspective, for she walked between two eras, upon the confines of two worlds, and has described the old in terms of the new. To the old world belonged the elements of her experience, to the new world the elements of her reflection on experience (Gilmore 2004: 128). In her novel, Eliot manages to masterfully bridge the distance between these time gaps. As U. C. Knoepflmacher noticed, George Eliot understood that each age, though irrevocably separated from that preceding it, must nonetheless reinterpret the past it has lost in order to arrange its own disordered present (Knoepflmacher 1968: 13). As critics have observed, Eliot's use of the nineteenth century rural settings can at times evoke a romanticized nostalgia for an idealized industrial landscape, but at the same time, the human interactions that play out in these places are far from idyllic and demonstrate a deep understanding of the moral complexities of socio-cultural ideologies that shape, and are shaped, by the rural locale (Goodman 2016: 87).

Eliot's novels are notable for their realistic depictions of this pre-industrial English countryside of her own childhood, a period which she describes with a nostalgic tone. More than any of her contemporaries, George Eliot aimed to increase the possibilities of her novel as a literary form, and break with the classical demands of art showing life as it should be, by showing life as it is. The contrast between the pre-Reform Bill world she writes about and the modernity of her reflections upon it, makes for a different fictional treatment of the past than in other Victorian novelists (Gilmore 1986: 128).

Eliot transforms her novels into vocal instruments of social commentary and human analysis. She used her writings as a new way of presenting ordinary aspects of life with great integrity and transparency, attempting a sympathetic presentation of mainly country, middle-class people, whom she depicts in all their dignity and deep humanity. She considered that art was the nearest thing to life, a mode of extending experience and of widening human interaction.

In 1856, at the beginning of her literary career, Eliot wrote an essay *The Natural History of German Life* on the work of the German sociologist, Wilhelm

Heinrich von Riehl and published it in the *Westminster Review*. In this essay, written before the launch of her career as a novelist, she expressed her literary conviction that fiction should cultivate the sympathies of its readers and bring them to a better understanding of those with whom they share their worlds. All these ideas were derived from Riehl's work, including the belief that realistic representation should be based on direct observation and experience and not on suppositions extracted from theoretical, preconceived principles. In all her novels, Eliot endeavoured to depict authentic representations of experience and refused to indulge in current conventions and popular taste.

Another idea inspired by Riehl, which Eliot fully embraced, was that the characters of the realistic fictional representations should be common, ordinary people, depicted in their natural environment, rather than some idealized exotic romantic settings. The anti-town sensibility and a rural, peasant class sympathy were also ideas influenced by Riehl and later on incorporate by Eliot in her novels (Anderson 2016: 358). Therefore, Eliot advocated for realistic portrayals of ordinary and common men and against idealizing trends in literature and in visual arts, especially in depictions of peasants and rural life. Eliot is reacting of course, in part, against the long tradition of "high" style literature which she regards as essentially idealistic, a tradition that has ignored the reality of everyday, common life. Indeed, Eliot was a pioneer and a vocal promoter of literary rustic or village realism that's why her plea was for an art that represented the ordinariness of country life.

Eliot's first fiction, the short stories of *Scenes of Clerical Life* and the novels *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner* are mainly set in rural locations and became literary representations of Eliot's rustic realism, incorporating meticulous descriptions of rural life and traditions and other details of the agricultural landscape such as harvest dates, flora and fauna. Eliot also proves to be a keen observer of the customs that that give each rural location its individual characteristics and pays great attention to the distinct local dialects she incorporates in her writings (Goodman 2016: 87).

Rustic, Moral, and Social Realism in *Adam Bede*

Following G. H. Lewes in his belief that realism is the basis of all Art, and that antithesis is not Idealism but Falsism (Lewes 1858: 493), Eliot herself often defined realism in terms of truth and morality and aimed to be an honest, uncompromising author determined to avoid falsehood. Eliot's intentions are expressed, in both the form and content of *Adam Bede*, in the well known statement on Dutch painting with which she opened the second book of the novel:

So I am content to tell my simple story, without trying to make things better than they were; dreading nothing, indeed, but falsity, which, in spite of one's best efforts, there is reason to dread. Falsehood is so easy, truth so difficult… Examine your words well, and you will find that even when you have no motif to be false, it is a very hard thing to say the exact truth, even about your own immediate feelings—much harder than to say something fine about them which is not the exact truth. It is for this rare, precious quality of truthfulness that I delight in many Dutch paintings, which lofty-minded people despise… I turn without shrinking from cloud-borne angels, from prophets, sibyls, and heroic warriors to an old woman bending over her flower pot, or eating her solitary dinner…"Foh!" says my idealistic friend, "what vulgar details! What good is there in taking all these paints to give an exact likeness of old women and clowns? What a low phase life! - clumsy, ugly people…" Therefore let Art always remind us of them; therefore let us always have men ready to give the loving pains of life to the faithful representing of commonplace things—men who see beauty in these commonplace things, and delight in showing how kindly the light of heaven falls on them. There are few prophets in the world; few sublimely beautiful women; few heroes. I can't afford to give all my love and reverence to such rarities: I want a great deal of those feelings form my every-day fellow man, especially for the few in the foreground of the great multitude, whose faces I know, whose hands I touch, for whom I have to make way with kindly courtesy. (Eliot 2005: 129-130)

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Dutch school of painting was less popular because of its focus on concrete details of the common people and of the everyday life it depicted. Eliot uses this digression in her novel in order to emphasize the idea that this type of realistic representations is more valuable than a romanticized presentation of life. The fragment above functions as a sort of manifesto for the moral value of realism, of how faithful representations of commonplace things and people have the ability to enliven human sympathy by relating the observer or the reader closer to life and to the characters. In Eliot's understanding, people should be accepted as they are, imperfect, hesitant or limited rather than raising them to unattainable ideals. Therefore, unlike her contemporary French realist writers, Eliot's realism is based both on the reliance on one's own experience and on the "fellow-feeling" with other human beings.

Eliot was very familiar with the social context of the 19th century and proved a remarkable talent in depicting the depth and scope of the provincial English world. She used her knowledge to enliven characters who moved naturally in the course of their daily activities and who seemed as real as the historical period they inhabited.

In her novels she deals with a wide range of issues, such as the clashes between the provincial and the metropolitan, or between agricultural, professional life vs. an industrial, commercial one. She also showed a predilection for such issues as social hierarchies, self-deprivation,

marginalization, moral obligation, religion, justice, love and relationships or gender roles.

Eliot demonstrated an amazing ability to penetrate deeply into the minds of her characters and to represent the inner struggle of the soul, thing that earned her a well-deserved place among the "founding-fathers" of the modern psychological novel. Eliot's psychological realism led her to create heroes and heroines that differ radically from those of other Victorian writers of her time. Unlike Dickens and Thackeray, who were less preoccupied with the process of inner change, focusing mainly on one single, external, dominant feature that best served their ultimate thematic purposes, Eliot emphasizes in her writings the complex psychological development of her characters who develop gradually and who go from weakness to strength and vice versa.

In presenting the inner struggles of the soul, Eliot created characters neither good nor evil, which move "from weakness to strength and from strength to weakness according to the works they do and the thoughts they cherish" (Long 2019: 509). The plot of Eliot's stories is born out of the relationships and the inner or outer conflicts of these carefully portrayed characters. It is the development of the characters' soul, the motives behind their behavior, the slow growth or decline of their moral power that Eliot focuses on:

> George Eliot's sphere was the inner man; she exposed the internal clockwork. Her characters are not simply passive, and they do not stand still; they are shown making their own history, continually changing and developing as their motives issue into acts, and the acts become part of the circumstances that condition, modify, and purify or demoralise the will... Thus she rationalizes life and character, bringing the obscure into clear daylight, with her zeal for truth applying the most rigorous logic to the resolution of each problem... (Baker 1968: 235)

Unlike her Victorian contemporaries, Eliot defies and challenges the conventional happy-endings of the novels. Most of her books end in a sober tone, without a real hero or heroine, because her ultimate goal is to give a picture of life wholly unmodified. The ending is often meant to underline the moral of the story, which is rarely optimistic or idealized.

Adam Bede was her first long novel, which she described as "a country story—full of the breath of cows and the scent of hay" (Haight 1985: 179). Although the novel has the air of a pastoral country land, it is not an idealized story of shepherds and peasants that carry on their lives in an undisturbed harmony. It is a story of virtue and vice confronting each other in a social community that is prone to lose its traditional values. *Adam Bede* is Eliot's first experimentation with a new type of novel that was quite a novelty in the literary field of those times. George Eliot did not regard the novel as a simple

means of entertaining. She believed that novels, same as poetry, can and must be vehicles of revealing the human condition and of offering moral lessons about the quality of common life. In all her literary representations, Eliot manifested a strong commitment to the moral vocation of art and tried to shape her literary creed that art is moral only if it is aesthetically effective.

Adam Bede represented a radical innovation in its time and it demonstrates Eliot's great interest both in psychological realism and rural life. In this novel Eliot rejected the reigning social, religious, and literary aesthetic conventions based on didacticism but focused on adopting realistic plots, settings and common characters modeled on the image of her present world, one in which traditional structures were breaking down. In *Adam Bede*, George Eliot sets out her commitment to rustic, social and psychological realism altogether as a literary genre. The germ of this novel, as Eliot herself recorded in her journal, was a true story told her in 1839 by her Methodist aunt, Mrs. Samuel Evans, of a visit to "a condemned criminal, a very ignorant young girl who had murdered her child and refused to confess - how she had stayed with her praying, through the night and how the poor creature at last broke into tears, and confessed her crime" (Johnstone 1997: 24).

The novel depicts a rural community at the turn of the nineteenth century and is set in an agricultural landscape, the fictionalized Midlands village of Hayslope, Loamshire. The book, rich in humor, describes, with truthful observations of minute details, the rural life of four major characters in a fictional, pastoral community in 1799. The plot revolves around a story of seduction and infanticide in which are engaged the beautiful Hetty Sorrel, Captain Arthur Donnithorne, the handsome charming squire who seduces her; Adam Bede, her suitor; and Hetty's virtuous cousin, Dinah Morris, a young Methodist preacher.

Written in a time of radical changes in all fields of life and activity, the novel displays the negative effects of all these transformations on the lives of the common, rustic people who are deviated from the normal, traditional way of living and thinking. Unable to cope with an avalanche of temptations that come from outside, and, at the same time, incapable to manage their own inner weaknesses, Eliot's characters are prone to fall into the traps of their own ambitions.

This is the case of Hetty Sorrel, a physically attractive young girl, who allows herself to be seduced by Captain Arthur Donnithorne, a feudal lord's grandson. Hetty aims to cross the barrier of her social condition by attempting to marry a man that belongs to a higher class, one who lives according to a different code of values. Hetty's character becomes central in the novel because, in contrast with Dinah Morris, who stands for selflessness, piety and inner beauty, she represents the prototype of the woman that hides, behind her external beauty, a hard, emotionless, and ambitious side. Focused

on achieving her goals, regardless the consequences, she ends up by murdering her own newborn child in order to hide her shame. However, her character is the most successful female figure in the novel. Unlike the other characters, she is not idealized, she is depicted in her complexity, as a woman with impulses, ambitions, moments of exaltation and despair, happiness and suffering.

On the other hand, Adam Bede, a skilled, sincere, honest and respected carpenter, blindly in love with Hetty Sorrel, is an idealized character, with no fault to impute. He is the protagonist of the novel, a prototype of the common, but strong, intelligent, gentle and laborious peasant. He has a limited but real social mobility. Through hard, honest work he manages to rise from being the foreman of a workshop to becoming a partner in it. For him working hard is a way of doing God's work and is as important as religion itself. Through virtue and a strong belief in his work, he succeeded to climb the ladder of social success and elevate his humble birth status. He ends up marrying virtuous Dinah, with whom he will share a happy life. His wedding is the social event that reestablishes the harmony in Hayslope, at the end of the novel. The order of their social community, which was under the threat to be destroyed by Arthur and Hetty's transgressions of class boundaries, is eventually reconstructed.

The theme of the novel is that life rewards tolerance, compassion and welfare, and punishes greed and foolish ambition. The novel also celebrates hard work and labor. All characters gain their identity in accordance with what they do. The positive characters work sincerely and with devotion, are busy and do not waste time harming others. Adam is a carpenter whose favorite subject of conversation is duty and the job well done. For him carpentry is as sacred as a religion. He puts his soul in what he does and finds consolation in it. "There's nothing but what's bearable so long as a man can work", he says (Eliot 2005: 88). Hetty also works at a cotton-mill while Mrs. Poysers is engaged in dairy supplies. All positive characters are hard-working people, committed to produce goods for others to use, acting in this way for the social good. They have a certain dignity of work that is strengthened by their desire to fit in usefully to a social environment. Arthur Donnithorne is the only one who complains that he has nothing to do. In many respects he is an outsider or an intruder in the pastoral, idealized world of Hayslope. He is also the one who brings misfortune and causes disorder in the lives of the others. Arthur's laziness becomes, in this context, synonymous with evil behavior. In Eliot's view, hard work and dedication in the benefit of the social community in which one lives is both the process and the landmark of success, fulfillment and eventual happiness.

In an age of transformations, characterized by a widespread faith in unlimited progress, one of the messages delivered by the novel is, in the

words of the narrator, that men like Adam "make their way upwards, rarely as geniuses, most common as painstaking honest men" (Eliot 2005: 152), and the result is that "you are almost sure to find there some good piece of road, some building, some application of mineral produce, some improvement in farming practice, some reform of parish abuses, with which their names are associated by one or two generations after them" (Eliot 2005: 153). Eliot herself revealed that in her novel she wanted, above all, to represent "the working-day business of the world" (Ashton 1996: 163). The message of the novel is that happiness is the reward for tolerance, compassion commitment and hard work for the welfare of others. Adam's progress and ability to adjust underlines the society's ability to absorb social change without being disarranged by it.

Conclusions

George Eliot's ultimate plea was for a novel that embodied a complex realism which envisioned the world. For her, to represent the world adequately was a moral aim. She remains over the centuries one of the first English novelists of intellectual life and of psychological insight, who managed to enlarge the scope of the novel from a mere entertaining one to a medium of intellectual debate and moral meditation, offering it a new, unprecedented air of sobriety and rigor. In Ernest A. Baker's words:

> Again and again it has been pointed out that fiction in her hands is no longer a mere entertainment; it strikes a note of seriousness and even of sternness; it is turned into a searching review of the gravest as well as the pleasantest aspect of human existence, reassuming the reflective and discursive rights and duties pertaining to the novel at its beginnings, without however sacrificing any of the creative and dramatic qualities that had developed in the intervening centuries. (Baker 1968: 221)

By being the voice of an elevated culture, learned, self-reflexive, minded to promote her own aesthetic and moral aspirations, George Eliot managed to be the single most important figure in transforming the novel from a predominantly popular form into a high form of art. The resistant element in Eliot'a art, the leitmotiv of all her novels, is the complex pluri-realistic approach she promoted. By the time George Eliot died, she was celebrated as the greatest of contemporary English novelists. John Tyndall claimed she was a "woman whose achievements were without parallel in the previous history of womankind" (Haight 1968: 549). Her art anticipated the modernist experiments of writers like Henry James and the epistemological skepticism of postmodernism (Levine 2001: 2).

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