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INTRODUCTION

This special issue of *Studia Philologia* is devoted to the relationship between literary theory and animal studies. Both literary theory and animal studies are comparatively recent fields of inquiry: in the case of animal studies, the publication of Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975) is often considered as the beginning of what has since grown into a dynamic multifaceted discipline while literary theory in the sense of a practice of systematic study of literature emerged in the 1950s as a result of the influence of structural linguistics on literary studies. Texts, some of which have since come to be regarded as literary and are now both studied by literary scholars and taught in literature courses, have nevertheless preoccupied themselves with animals and their relationships with humans for thousands of years: the Ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Aztec codices, medieval bestiaries, and the Bible all prominently feature animals in their respective narratives and imbue them with an array of symbolic meaning. Instances of writers engaging in thought processes that very much anticipate what we would now consider modern theorizing about non-human animals and their connection to humans can be readily found in writings pre-dating the twentieth century. One only has to think of Michel de Montaigne's memorably facetious pondering over whether, from his pet cat's perspective, the animal is the one actually in charge when he, as its owner, is playing with it, or Jeremy Bentham's provocatively poignant query: "the question is not, can they reason? nor, can they talk? but, can they suffer?" Thinkers from across the full disciplinary spectrum have continued along this trajectory, working to complicate, challenge, and ultimately supersede traditional anthropocentric and anthropomorphic approaches to animals by finding alternatives to the hard binary and/or implicit hierarchy through which human-animal relations have often been conceptualised. Literary studies have been no exception and advances in animal studies have opened up new opportunities for literary studies scholars to apply and create theories and methodologies based on understanding the relationship between humans and non-human animals as a complex and constantly evolving multidirectional dynamic.

Our special issue contributes to this effort by assembling an ambitious collection of articles by a cosmopolitan group of scholars seeking to respond to and further develop the current trends within the subfield of literary animal studies. We present 15 articles by 16 scholars based at academic institutions in 8 different countries across 3 continents, who write about literary texts and traditions from Britain, United States, Canada, Ireland, Romania, Germany, Italy,

India, Japan, and Brazil. One important quality the articles have in common, in addition to their commitment to multidisciplinary inquiry and international outlook, is an effort at making an intellectual contribution to ethically responsible scholarship that concurrently works to raise awareness and inspire positive action in relation to sustainability, environmental protection, and animal rights and welfare.

Animals feature prominently in children's literature, so it is no surprise that we have a whole group of articles in this issue that chose as its subject literature for and/or about children or young people, emphasizing the role animals play in the formative childhood years. Three of the authors focus directly on fairy tales, which, of course, provide a particularly fertile ground for investigating depictions of animals. Anita-Andreea Széll compares the different anthropomorphising strategies in the German and Swedish versions, by the Grimm Brothers and Sven Nordqvist respectively, of the well-known fairy tale figure of Puss in Boots, while Francesco Buscemi examines zoosemiotic trends in Italo Calvino's rewritings of fairy tales from different regions of Italy. Krisztina Bianca Kocsis discusses Romanian incarnations of the familiar fairy tale pattern in which a dual type of transformation occurs as characters change gender as well as shift shape between human and non-human animals. Pop Ionucu offers a detailed analysis of the interplay between folk mythology and satire in another Romanian text aimed at young readers: Ion Sîrbu's novel *Dance of the Bear*. Valeska Bopp-Filimonov looks more broadly at literature by Romanian authors written for children, focusing on how the rural character of Romanian life shaped the texts that can be considered part of an informal canon of Romanian children's literature. The only author in the issue to work with a different medium, Sutirtho Roy uses a framework combining eco-critical and postcolonial theories to analyze the representation of animals and viewer messaging, in three recent animated films which feature animal characters: *Rio, Delhi Safari,* and *Happy Feet*.

At the other end of the historical spectrum, the earliest historical period represented in the issue is the Renaissance, with two articles on William Shakespeare's plays. Andreea Șerban and Dana Percec discuss the patterns in the gendering of animal metaphors across seven of Shakespeare's histories from the two Henriads. Jonathan Patrick Sell traces the trope of the poet and the poetic imagination as a colour-changing chameleon, using John Keats's likening of Shakespeare to the reptile as its point of departure. Elena Ogliari takes us to the twentieth century and the so-called Irish Renaissance, with her article on the Irish author Liam O'Flaherty and the topic of continuities and discontinuities in the relationships between humans and animals in his short stories. The rest of contributors all chose texts composed in the twenty-first

century as their primary focus. Cristina Mihaela Nistor's article nevertheless straddles the contemporary and Renaissance periods as it explores the role and symbolism of unicorns in two recent historical fiction novels, both set in in the late Middle Ages: *Lady and the Unicorn* by Tracy Chevalier and *The Lady of the Rivers* by Philippa Gregory. Paul Mihai Paraschiv likewise brings together novels by two different authors, Anne Haverty's *One Day as a Tiger* and Karen Joy Fowler's *We Are Completely Besides Ourselves*, to discuss the intense relationship between human protagonists and a sheep and a chimpanzee respectively featured in each of them as a vision of eradicating speciesism. Shannon Lambert chose a more recent text by Fowler, the short story "Us", and together with Tania Hershman's short story "Grounded: God Glows" and Thalia Field's *Bird Lovers, Backyard* discusses the significance of the "multiplicity and movement" of animals in this trio of experimental prose texts. Shoshanna Ganz's article offers a trans-Pacific perspective as it considers how a single animal, the cow, assumes the role of a signifier of recent environmental crises and anxieties, in the novella *Sacred Cesium Ground* by the Japanese author Kimura Yusuke and in the poetry collection *Figuring Ground* by the Canadian author Robert Moore. Andrei-Bogan Popa's contribution discusses the role of the concept of "animal capital" in Danielle McLaughlin's short story collection *Dinosaurs on Other Planets*. Angela Lopez-Garcia focuses on Sherri Tepper's *Grass*, an important yet critically often neglected science fiction novel, to analyze its contribution to eco-feminism. We order the articles simply alphabetically by the authors' surnames.

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SADDENING ENCOUNTERS. CHILDREN AND ANIMALS IN ROMANIAN FICTION AND BEYOND

VALESKA BOPP-FILIMONOV[1]

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ABSTRACT. ***Saddening Encounters. Children and Animals in Romanian Fiction and Beyond.***[2] The aim of this essay is to give some impetus to a re-reading of classic Romanian literature by taking an approach inspired by Animal and Childhood Studies to larger questions of ideological currents and social cultural phenomena in the Romanian society. I chose four short texts by Ioan Alexandru Brătescu-Voinești, Elena Farago, and Ion Barbu that originate from the beginning of the 20th century and are currently considered as part of the Romanian literary canon. They are, at least partially, addressed to children and they all contain violent human-animal encounters. The fact that this element of violence has not prevented the texts from becoming and continuing to be canonical adds a new dimension to Animal Studies scholarship, which has so far mainly mirrored the increasingly "civilised" human-animal relation in countries with an early developing bourgeois social strata where animals became pets and thus friends and family members. The study also challenges the existing interpretations of Romanian literature: instead of applying aesthetic criteria, a thematic thread is followed with reflections on the social relevance of the recurring topos which seems to store a more deeply anchored cultural experience. A closer look at both the "disempowered and oppressed positions" (Feuerstein) that children

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[2] This article was written during a research stay from January-June 2022 at the Research Institute of the University of Bucharest (ICUB Humanities), funded by a Feodor Lynen Research Fellowship of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation on the topic "Fictional Violence between Child and Animal. Key scenes in Romanian Literature". I thank Armin Heinen, Anne Dippel, and Maria Irod for their stimulating comments on earlier versions of the text.

and animals occupy in both literary texts and real-life society poses the practical question of how greater harmony can be created in the future.

Keywords: *animal studies, childhood studies, human-animal encounters, violence, Romanian literature, Barbu, Brătescu-Voinești, Farago*

REZUMAT. *Întâlniri întristătoare. Copii și animale în proza românească și dincolo de ea.* Scopul eseului de față este acela de a da un impuls unei relecturi a literaturii române clasice extinzând o abordare inspirată de studiile despre animale și copilărie la întrebări mai generale despre curente ideologice și fenomene socio-culturale din societatea românească. Am ales patru texte scurte de Ioan Alexandru Brătescu-Voinești, Elena Farago și Ion Barbu, scrise la începutul secolului 20 și aparținând canonului literar românesc. Ele se adresează, cel puțin în parte, copiilor și conțin toate întâlniri violente între uman și animal. Canonizarea unui asemenea tip de întâlniri violente – indicată și pusă în evidență și de alte texte până în prezent – oferă noi sugestii studiilor despre animale, care au reflectat preponderent istoria occidentală a unei relații între uman și animal tot mai „civilizate" de la secolul 18 încoace. Lucrarea contestă și interpretările existente despre literatura română: în loc să aplice criterii estetice, ea urmărește un fir tematic cu reflecții despre relevanța socială a topos-ului. O privire mai îndeaproape asupra „pozițiilor lipsite de putere și oprimate" (Feuerstein) pe care le ocupă copiii și animalele în literatură și societate dă naștere întrebării despre cum o mai mare armonie ar putea fi creată în viitor.

Cuvinte-cheie: *studii despre animale, studii despre copilărie, întâlniri între uman și animal, violență, literatură română, Barbu, Brătescu-Voinești, Farago*

Introduction

Children harming animals - a recurring motif in Romanian literature

"Playing with other children, the child does what everyone does: tear off the wings of insects, blow up small birds with a straw until they burst."[3] With these words, a literary critic sketches impressions from the childhood memoirs of Herta Müller (2009), the well-known winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature who originates from Romania. The reviewer Trahms (2009) does not quote directly, but rather follows the tone of an inevitability presented by Müller, who

[3] Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. The original German reads: "Spielt das Kind mit anderen Kindern, tut es, was alle tun: den Insekten die Flügel ausreißen, kleine Vögel mit einem Strohhalm aufblasen, bis sie platzen" (Trahms 2009).

strives in her biographic account to take the children's perspective. But why does "everyone" do that? Why should "everyone" or every child do that? In her short review, the author does not question or explain, nor does she place it in the overall narrative. Is animal abuse a typical component of literary and real-life childhoods?

This article focuses on the intersection between children, animals, and violence in Romanian literature. Following the trail laid by Müller, I searched Romanian poetry and prose of diverse authors from the 19th century to the present for encounters between children and animals, and found many passages where children torture animals. The most influential Romanian literary work about childhood in the countryside in the 19th century is by Ion Creangă. In *Amintiri din copilărie,* published 1881-88 (*Memories of my Boyhood, Stories and Tales*, 1978) the author describes how one of the popular student pranks is to use the large, greasy class book to swat flies that settle there by banging the book together at the crucial moment (Creangă 1978, 15). In the evenings, when the protagonist's father comes from work, he and his siblings "would fetch the cats from their nooks in the stove or under the oven and we would rumple their fur and drill them before him so thoroughly that they had a rough time of it; and they couldn't get away, poor cats, before they had scratched and spat at us as we deserved" (38). And their mother mourns: "no living thing can find a shelter in this house because of you" (38).

Also in very contemporary literature that depicts childhoods in the present, authors weave in child-animal encounters that are anything but harmonious. In her novel *Kinderland* (2013), Moldovan author Liliana Corobca describes everyday life in a village in her home country, which is mainly shaped by the labour migration of the parents' generation: most of the children live with grandparents or are on their own. The harsh everyday life of the village provides numerous child-animal contacts. The village animals, like the children live in a basic survival mode, sometimes herded, sometimes hounded by the villagers; against this backdrop, the 12-year-old protagonist Cristina often reflects on ethical issues in the children's treatment of animals, stating: "Children are bad and cruel."[4]

A few years earlier, the Romanian writer Doina Ruști published the novel *Lizoanca* (2009), based on the real case of a sexually abused village child. The 11-year-old heroine of the novel uses the favour and guilty conscience of very different men to access small luxuries like a chocolate croissant or undisturbed TV time. The main threat comes from her violent father, whom she tries to avoid as much as possible, even spending the night outside with other runaway children. After her case becomes publicised by her syphilis condition and makes it into the press, things become more difficult for her once again, and Ruști chooses an

[4] "Copiii sunt răi și cruzi" (Corobca 2013, 54).

animal tortured by a gang of children, a salamander pierced with a nail, to illustrate the perception of her own life, when at the end of the novel, in the setting of a children's home, she herself felt "the doorman's gaze pierce her like a silver nail. […] a cold breeze blew over her tense back."[5]

This outline is necessarily incomplete and is intended to serve as an illustrative sketch of the general dynamic in child-animal encounters that can be identified in Romanian literature. My argument is that it occurs too frequently for these scenes to be understood merely as individually used symbolism with meaning confined to the particular literary text. Rather, the violent, conflict-prone nature of the child-animal relationships in these texts seems to me to be representative of family and social norms or conflicts of a larger kind. Herman (2014) suggests that the task of contemporary narratology is to point out paradigms that are linkable and helpful in the study of a "broader system of values and commitments, taking stock of how stories and traditions for analysing them relate to the norms, institutions, and practices that structure academic and other engagements with today's most pressing concerns" (132). This includes inter-species interactions and environmental issues, but also social concerns, such as the status and care of children. I will focus on four shorter texts – one in prose and three poems – from the beginning of the 20th century and will discuss their previous literary-theoretical and pedagogical readings before proposing a critical reading concerning the human- (and more specifically child-) animal relation.

Animals, children and violence in theoretical terms

While my own research draws inspiration from Childhood and Animal Studies, scholarship focusing on intersections between children and animals is relatively scarce (Feuerstein & Nolte-Odhiambo 2017). Flegel (2017) argues that "both occupy disempowered and oppressed positions in adult, human society, and that each is diminished and lessened by association with the other" (xiv). Studies on children and/or animals in Romania and even Eastern and South-Eastern Europe more generally are rare, whether anthropological, cultural-historical, or literary. Yet literary depictions of children can provide a useful perspective on the society of their time and the position and perspectives attributed to them; and literary animals can provide an insight into humans' dealings with "the other." There are many critical approaches to thinking beyond the human-animal binary. Authors interested in the interface of human children and non-human animals point out that children are ultimately the "animal

[5] "simțea ochii portarului cum îi intrau în măduvă, ca un cui de argint. […] Peste spatele înțepenit se lăsase încet un curent rece" (Ruști 2009, 312).

people" who need to be tamed and educated from the point of view of adult caregivers and society (Melson 2001, 35). In doing so, they also remove the human-animal boundary and point to the dependent character of both children and animals on the adult world and social power structures.

Animal and Childhood Studies alike state that the status of children and animals changed in the 19th century, from an economic to a sentimental investment (see Pearson in: Feuerstein 2017, xiv). Judged from literary representations and socio-historical studies, this does not so much seem to be the case for the Romanian cultural sphere. My argument, therefore, is that Childhood and Animal Studies are blind in one eye and have so far (almost) only looked at the trends in what could be described as Western industrialised nations. A conglomerate of industrialisation, declining rural and increasingly urban culture, philosophically enlightened education, rationalisation in thought and action, and at the same time an – almost sentimental – turn to the nuclear family in connection with the spread of bourgeois lifestyles, since the 19th century at the latest, led to the focus on children to be raised and educated in the protection of the family (Ariès 2003, 47-48) and the integration of pets as companions into families' lives (Flegel 2017, xiv). An agrarian country like Romania obviously facilitates other experiences and other kinds of encounters in the social fabric in general and in the human-animal relationship in particular,[6] i.e. also between animals and humans and humans and nature in a broader sense than a large-scale industrialised and urbanised society. But I do not find this explanation satisfactory: my assumption is that the conflicted human-animal relationships found in the literary canon can be seen as a symptom of a deeper conflict between striving for modernisation and attachment to tradition that deserves further attention.

Particularly striking is the aspect of violence (or cruelty) that characterises the human-nature and especially the child-animal relationship. I define violence as behaviour on the part of the literary human child that harms literary non-human animals. In doing so, I propose that fundamental questions can be asked about interspecies life, about the relationship of humans as part or even vs. nature; also about the value of categories like healthy/injured/disabled or simply "different" – and in relation to Romania, modernisation and civilisation questions mirrored in this. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the question of power relations as a whole. But it resonates in the background: Who controls nature – or does it control and threaten humans? And what does the explicit topic of violence between children and animals conceal? A silencing of

[6] See Terian's analysis (2018) of the 1920 novel *Ion* by Liviu Rebreanu in terms of the phrases comparing human and canine lives and using animal references to delve into the psychological disposition of the characters.

interpersonal and also social violence seems to be at play in the texts I discuss and perhaps we can even go so far as to speak of a reflection of the repeatedly experienced structural and imperial violence that Romanians lived through (cf. Boatcă/Pârvulescu 2020).

However, it is surprising how in some literary texts of the early 20th century the matter-of-factness with which the "torturing of animals" is outlined by Creangă at the end of the 19th century – deplorable but tolerated (by the mother) – is rewritten and human-animal encounters are literarily transformed into more fundamental pedagogical, ethical, and philosophical positions. There is still no mention of pets, who appeared even in cities only sporadically. Animals in these times were a necessary labour force in the countryside; the dog was a guard dog, a sheep dog, or a hunting dog, thus primarily having a functional relationship with its owners and other people around it. But also in cities, working animals predominated (for instance horses pulling carriages or the first trams). It was for these working and farm animals that the first animal welfare societies were founded.[7] It is therefore relevant that the protagonists by the authors I will present here are not domestic animals or pet cats and dogs, but rather a bird's family, a stray dog, a beetle, and a snail. The starting point of my analysis is the inter-species *encounter*, which is a fitting concept because it is neutral and allows for an unbiased perspective on the meeting of different subjects in a contact zone (Böhm and Ullrich 2019, 1-2). It even allows for the decentring of human agency as is partly the case in the texts where animal protagonists feature prominently, sometimes more prominently than human ones.

Selection of sources and their previous readings

Before going in more detail into the small selection of source texts chosen for this essay, I will briefly introduce them and also classify them according to the relevance attributed to them in the Romanian literary canon. As I read literature in the sense of an extended hermeneutics, which "aims at a greater understanding of cultural contexts" (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 48), I would like to emphasise that the literary texts I will present in this article can all be described as canonical and are well known in Romania. In this sense, they can be understood as part of the country's collective memory (Erll 2005, 249-276). Their special character as educational texts – most of the texts I will analyse in

[7] See for instance the accountability report of the Society for the Protection of Animals for the years 1905-1906 (Societatea pentru protecțiunea animalelor 1906). The historian Adrian Majuru (without specification) mentions on a web page of the Bucharest City Museum that only after the First World War would pets in the narrower sense become more widespread, or animal welfare societies emerge.

this essay belonged, at least until very recently, to the literary school canon and some still do – makes them into "cultural texts" (Assmann 1995) as cultures would describe themselves through their respective literary canons (Erll 2005, 261). The question inevitably arises as to what kind of pattern concerning the human-animal relationship is transmitted in the texts as well as what kind of culture does the kind and character of the literary human (child) and the literary animal reflect.

The first text I will analyse is Ioan Alexandru Brătescu-Voinești's (1868-1946) "Puiul" [The Chick], published in his first prose text volume in 1908. In the story, which the author is said to have written for his own children, a quail cub injured by a hunter is unable to make the journey south for winter and ends up dying abandoned. Next I will look at Elena Farago's (1878-1954) "Cățelușul Șchiop" [The Lame Dog] and "Gândăcelul" [The Beetle], first published in a volume of poems in 1906. These poems are written in the first person from the animals' perspective and depict the animals being injured (the dog) and killed (the beetle) while addressing the responsible child. The final text I will analyse is "După melci" [After snails] published in 1921, a balladic text written by the poet (and mathematician) Ion Barbu (1895-1961), a very respected Romanian poet of the interwar period. Here, a child gives what can be described as a self-incriminating report about his culpability in the death of a snail.

These texts date from the early 20th century, when contrasts between political factions were playing out, literary journals had become important debating media, and social, political and cultural questions were closely intertwined. The overarching question was and remained that of the nation and the concept of what is "specifically Romanian" (Trencsényi 2013) mixed with discourses of modernisation and "the social" (Cotoi 2020). In this context, peasants and rural locations were important points of reference. Notwithstanding, the living conditions of the peasants, who were by far the majority of the population, were and remained precarious. The same was true for farm animals, but also for the labour force, including in many cases women and children (for a portrait of the social strata supported by statistics, see Hitchins 1994, 155-201). Brătescu-Voinești, the offspring of a family of landowners and a conservative writer, can be assigned to Sămănătorism, a cultural-ideological current that was concerned with imparting culture to the peasants while valuing their traditions and folklore, conceived as part of Romanian values and an essential component of the Romanian nation. As he grew older, the writer, who was politically in favour of the National Liberal Party and professionally active as a judge, became increasingly anti-Semitic and a right-wing supporter of the fascist Iron Guard. Along with other authors of Sămănătorism, the literary scholar Stiehler thus

lists him among the contributors to a "prehistory of the Romanian variant of blood and soil literature."[8]

In contrast, Elena Farago, who was orphaned in childhood and had to drop out of school, was active in Marxist circles at an early age and published for the first time in the journal *România muncitoare* [Working Romania] (Papastate 1978, 5). The violent peasant uprising in 1907, which was put down violently because the political-intellectual elite completely failed to recognise the social realities despite everything, made a strong impression on her, as is clear from her letters to Nicolae Iorga, in which she – empathising with the peasant women and their children who had become homeless and widowed or orphaned – describes her observations and encounters (Papastate 1978, 9-11). Barbu, whose father was a lawyer, was a mathematician in his "first profession" and remained active as a mathematician in parallel to his writing. Throughout his life, he was relatively apolitical, but in his old age he was also a sympathiser of the Iron Guard. In terms of literary trends, it is still disputed today whether his literature should be classified as modernist or anti-modernist, especially since he himself always expressed contradictory views on the subject (Codreanu 2011, 155).

Literary texts by these three authors became well known and their influence continues to the present day. Brătescu-Voinești and Farago are especially known for their writings addressed to children. "Puiul" was the first of these works by Brătescu Voinești, and Farago's texts analysed in my article were her earliest contributions to this genre. "După melci" is the most commonly known poem by Barbu. The fact that the texts are often part of the Romanian school canon in Romanian also contributes to this familiarity. "Cățelușul Șchiop" is part of the lessons in grade one or two; "Puiul" was until recently part of the school material for grade four or five; Barbu's "După melci" is in many cases part of the compulsory material for the upper school.

Remarkable nevertheless is the considerable gap between the high profile of the texts in Romania in general, on the one hand, and the irrelevance attributed to them by Romanian literary critics on the other (with the exception of Barbu's poem). The little attention paid to the texts of Brătescu-Voinești and Farago by literary critics has to do with their classification as "children's literature," which quite obviously does not enjoy a high status within the critical discipline of Romanian literature. In the latest, revised and supplemented edition *Istoria critică a literaturii române* by Nicolae Manolescu, the chapter "Other literary genres" is newly included, of which just half a page is devoted to children's and young adult literature (Manolescu 2019: 1373). According to Manolescu, from what can be considered children's literature, Romanian literary criticism is

[8] "Vorgeschichte der rumänischen Variante der Blut- und Bodendichtung" (Stiehler 2010, 196).

most likely to be interested in fairy tales. Brătescu-Voinești's "Puiul" is mentioned as is Elena Farago, but without any titles of her works. Apart from this, textual aesthetics are fundamentally the focus of Romanian literary criticism. Even though there are critical contributions to the debate on the formation of the canon in Romanian literature, including considerations of interdisciplinary or at least cultural studies opening (Papadima, Damrosch, D'haen 2011), influential literary critics like Mircea Martin (2019) argue against abandoning the aesthetic criterion and fear that a shift towards interdisciplinarity will bring with it a "softening" of critical rigour and the resulting new focus on content and themes will lead to a literary canon resembling a "conglomerate devoid of any rigorous science."[9]

An attempt at a new reading of the classical texts: the literary Animal as indicator of imagined rules of social, creaturely and natural (co-)existence

1 - The animal child as a self-inflicted victim: a pedagogy of obedience (Brătescu-Voinești)

In the story "Puiul" by writer Ioan Alexandru Brătescu-Voinești it is an animal child, the chick of a quail, who becomes a tragic anti-hero. From the first line, the reader, or rather the listener, one could even say the child – because the text is written with oral elements, in which, according to the style, a child is directly addressed – is vividly involved in the events. A quail, "nearly tired to death by fatigue"[10] lands at the edge of a field, where she busily begins to build a nest, hatches her eggs, cares for the hatching chicks, and finally teaches them to fly. The harmony of these processes following the obvious natural plan of nature is finally disturbed by the approach of a hunter, who appears not far away with his hunting dog. As both approach the quail family, the mother instructs her offspring not to move and be quiet. She herself flies up and distracts the dog until she is out of range of the hunter and also knows herself to be safe again. The eldest quail cub, however, does not remain still, but flies up as well, and the hunter wounds it with a bullet before eventually driving off with his cart. "From then on sad days began for the poor chick," because the injured chick, although the mother finds it and brings it back, can no longer learn to fly like the others due to the injury. When the rest of his family starts the flight to the south in autumn, he finally dies abandoned in the cold.

At a first glance, this little tale belongs to the category of those texts that – like many fairy tales – want to frighten children, with the aim of educating

[9] "într-un conglomerat lipsit de orice rigoare ştiinţifică" (Martin 2019, 10).

[10] The original text can be found online, for example: https://www.tititudorancea.com/z/ioan_al_bratescu_voinesti_puiul.html (06.04.2022).

them at the same time. The text is preceded by the motto: “Sandi, listen to your mother.” The classic version of Little Red Riding Hood also ends with the conclusion that from now on Little Red Riding Hood would always listen to her mother. From the Romanian fairy tale collection, one could mention “The Goat with the Three Little Kids” by Ion Creangă from 1875, in which the children are divided right at the beginning into the two older naughty brothers and the youngest, who is hardworking and well behaved, and thus the necessary consequences are already indicated for the later events, which only the well-behaved youngest child survives. In “Puiul,” an arc of tension is integrated: first, all the chicks are described as “beautiful, well-behaved, obedient.” Then there is an incident “once, around June,” when the eldest chick did not respond quickly enough to the mother’s call, and a young farmer, who was busy mowing, threw his hat at it. But the narrator remains empathetic throughout, leaving it to the mother to comment pedagogically on the event that ended happily, reminding her, “never ignore my word, it can get you worse.” I have already described the third decisive scene and the end of the story earlier.

At a second glance, however, the text remains on a more naturalistic level. Apart from the influx of emotions attributed to the animals, the narrator zooms in as if in a nature film. The industriousness with which the quail builds its nest and finally hatches the eggs is reminiscent of footage of animals one would get in nature documentaries through a film camera. Seasons, country life, nature, animals – the interactions, apart from the fact that quails cannot speak, reflect a natural environment and are close to reality. And the call of the mother quail is also introduced onomatopoeically with “Pitpalac!”. The equilibrium is not disturbed by another, hostile animal involved in the dialogue (cf. above-mentioned fairy tales), but problems arise in the encounter of human and animal, which also corresponds to typical encounters between humans and animals in the countryside.

The particularly emotional atmosphere, which deviates from any documentary character, is created by the empathetic way of narration: When the chick is in danger for the first time, “what fear it went through when it was in the hands of the young lad, ...; his heart beat like the pocket watch in my pocket; but he was lucky.” In addition, there is the direct address to the listener in several places. On the other hand, the quail mother with her great care and responsibility – just like a good mother in the sense of the pedagogical narrative goal – becomes vivid. And the final special thing is that there is no happy ending. Although the two “naughty” little goats in Creangă’s fairy tale are not saved like Little Red Riding Hood and the grandmother, there is still a joyful celebration on the occasion of the wolf killed at the end. But the culprit in this story does not act particularly intentionally; instead, the injured quail chick is more collateral

damage of the encounter with the hunter. The focus is solely on the misbehaviour of the chick, which did not follow the instructions of its mother, and therefore must die in the end. The narrator remains equally empathetic towards him as well as towards the (co-)suffering mother. This intensifies the dramatic effect, and at the same time Brătescu-Voinești remains true to the observation of nature in a Darwinist sense: only the healthy, strong individual survives.

When transferred to Romanian society and socio-political and cultural discourses at the turn of the century – especially since the quail family is quite obviously representative of a human family – the author's social Darwinist attitude can be deduced from the story. And interestingly, this attitude is perpetuated in the way the story is pedagogically presented to fifth-graders until recently. One textbook asks whether the children approve of the mother leaving the injured child behind, followed by the only positively formulated, and thus ultimately suggestive, questions: "Do you approve it? Why?" (Dumitrescu 1993, 55) The mother's exuberant love and empathy, which is also to be confirmed in the retelling ("how can you tell..."), already expresses the anticipated system of values that can be associated with the nation idea: Only the healthy brood fulfils the purpose, with all love. Since this love is not up for discussion, the answer as to whether the mother is behaving correctly can ultimately only be answered positively. From this point of view, the narrative gives – like a lot of literature for children and about childhood – "subtle and explicit lessons about whose lives matter" (Nel 2017).

It is a clever interweaving of apparent nature viewing with pedagogical-intentional ("modern") narrative style that characterises the text; the social Darwinist attitude, which could certainly also be interpreted in racist terms if the story had a slightly different form, is especially reinforced by the end of the story, which, despite all apparent empathy with the chick, does not constitute an exception to the rule of the survival of the fittest (as in the form of a happy ending). On the other hand, this naturalistic approach is infused with a pedagogically conceived component: the chick would have survived if it had more consciously adhered to the rules (of the mother, to be equated with a certain way of life), thus having the possibility of shaping its own life and survival after all.

2 - Animals on the witness stand: the power to speak out (Farago)

Elena Farago takes a completely different perspective. She does not use – as Brătescu-Voinești does – an animal family that illustrates a morality representative of a human family, but engages with the question of the anomaly of being an animal. Just as Montaigne wonders whether he plays with the cat or it plays with him, or Derrida wonders what his cat sees when it sees him naked (Derrida 2002),

she imagines the feelings of a dog or a beetle, respectively, toward a human child who has inflicted injuries on the animals. In relation to the human-animal relationship she wonders, and I use the words of the phenomenologist Cristian Ciocan, who in turn refers to Husserl "how does this relation change if we reverse the perspective? How does this empathetic relation appear starting from the animal side? The question is therefore not only of how humans empathise with animals (the animal understood as an abnormal human), but also how the animals empathise with humans. In this case, the human might be as well—for the animal itself—an 'abnormal animal', an abnormality related to its own (animal) normality" (Ciocan 2017, 186). The answer in this case is: the gaze is not an empathetic one, on the contrary: Elena Farago's animals accuse the human child, their counterpart, of the rudeness and violence with which it denies them a peaceful, healthy co-existence.

The poems, written in eight or nine four-line stanzas, begin to tell their stories from the first-person perspective of the animal, which addresses the child and tells its story, complaining that the child has been so rude and deliberately mean to it. While the text "Cățelușul Șchiop" [The Lame Little Dog] adheres to the first-person perspective throughout, in "Gândăcelul" [The Beetle] in the fifth stanza an omniscient third-person narrator takes over the narrative. This trick is necessary because at this point the child crushes the beetle in his hand: "So cried a cockroach // In the fist that clenched it to break it // And that opened the child afterwards. // What was left of him!"[11] While in "Cățelușul Șchiop" the dog himself concludes to have a better heart than the child, here it is the narrator who scolds the child, telling him to report to his parents and to promise to protect any living creature in the future, no matter how small. Interestingly, in both accounts, the children regret their actions: of the child who hurt the little dog so persistently and "out of malice," it is said: "Now it comes and gives me sugar // and wants to be good." And in "Gândăcelul" the child is told: "Disgusted by your bad deed //now you cry in vain, child." So, reference is made to the irreversibility of the action, the consequence that the child must understand – and that in "Gândăcelul" may lead to a change, while in "Cățelușul Șchiop" the conclusion remains that the dog is the morally superior creature.

The pedagogical interpretation seems relatively simple: the reversed perspective – on the injured animal, its suffering and its perspective – is meant as a critical intervention. The fictional child is supposed to experience and learn that other living beings also have a right to exist and to prevent them – by demonstrating that animals are capable of suffering – from torturing and killing

[11] The original Romanian texts can be found online at the following sites: https://www.versuri.ro/versuri/elena-farago-catelusul-schiop/ and https://www.versuri.ro/versuri/elena-farago-gandacelul-_mh17.html (22.04.2022).

animals. Knowingly or unknowingly, Farago echoes the position of the early advocate of "animal rights," Jeremy Bentham, and his much-quoted criterion of suffering-capability from the French revolutionary year 1789: "the question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?" (see Singer [1974] 2022, 28). And she makes this comparative move quite consistently: ultimately, Farago imagines the animal's perception, ascribing to it feelings, thoughts, and fears as a human would perceive them in the reverse situation. In "Cățelușul Șchiop," the comparison of playing dogs with playing children – or even cross-species groups playing together – stands out; human and animal are even more similar than in "Gândăcelul" the child and the beetle; the anthropological difference is clearly blurred.

What reinforces Farago's – today one would say posthumanist – approach is that the animals are given voice here, unlike the human children. In doing so, she takes the opposite approach to "dehumanising" the animal world, but on the contrary, elevates the "sole and sacrosanct dividing line between human and nonhuman-that is, language or, more properly, the logos as meaningful and credible speech" (Seshadri 2012, ix). The animal is given a voice by her to point out its suffering. The theme is not only the indictment of the human child who has so persistently hurt the little dog, but also the description of his disability: "I only have three legs" begins the poem, followed by the nickname by which the dog is teased and the onomatopoeic *top-top* used to illustrate his clumsy movements. The dog describes himself as completely excluded not only from playing with the children, but also from playing with his peers. If one now reverses the perspective and understands the dog as – ultimately – interchangeable, as equal in its suffering to a human child, another possible level of interpretation emerges: the suffering of the one who is physically different, impaired, handicapped, is illustrated and the one to whom this has happened – subordinate to its species – is also given a voice.

Impressive is also the division into good and bad children, and in the case of the latter the deliberate being bad in the sense of violence being exercised "out of malice," which obviously sets apart the human species from non-human animals. A human being, the text suggests, can be intentionally mean, even malicious, without a special cause. And this view does not exclude the child, who is often innocent in other narrative traditions, on the contrary. To its parents it should vow improvement ("Gândăcelul"). The dog – or more broadly the creature that is hurt – renounces their right to revenge and comes out morally superior ("Cățelușul Șchiop"). So the literary animal as proxy for a real animal or a different species character or simply a hurt creature becomes a moral authority that makes "normal" humans look small.

In relation to German-language literature Alexandra Böhm identifies an "Animal Turn" around 1900 and elaborates how authors around this time try to understand the animal and its soul and, in order to do so, poetically put themselves into the animal as animal (Böhm 2019). The literary animal figure no longer stands metaphorically for humans with certain characteristics, as in a fable, but is empathically explored and becomes a subject in its own right. Farago is not known to have come into contact with corresponding texts. She translated poetry from French symbolists – and even here she refuses a conscious shaping of her poetry according to peculiarities of this current (Papastate 1978, 8). Nevertheless, in her depictions of child-animal encounters, elaborated from the animal's perspective, the texts presented here are highly critical of what she derives, as Papastate puts it, "from a simple observation of the everyday" (20). However, literary scholars so far, especially with regard to her children's poems, stick to rather simple readings praising the catchy form, without going deeper into the texts' content and perspective.

3 - A child feels conflicted: ambiguous results of human self-empowerment (Barbu)

The poem "După melci" [After snails] by Ion Barbu, which dates from 1921, and so slightly later than the literary texts I have already discussed, provides, in a certain sense, the complementary perspective to Farago's poems. It takes the perspective of the child and traces how the child feels when an animal has lost its life because of him. "După melci" is one of the best-known poems by Dan Barbilian, a mathematician, who in 1919 began a parallel literary career as Ion Barbu, and now ranks among the most important Romanian poets of the interwar period. He is classified as one of the most important representatives of Romanian literary modernism.

The animal with which the encounter takes place in this text is a snail. The animal itself does not speak, but gains character through the repeated rhyming address by the child "Snail, snail, / slimy tail"[12] as well as the twice occurring phrase "Stupid snail, So slow" which are a characteristic of the balladic text. The poem begins with a description of the child world of the protagonist, a childish "I" who situates himself as part of a village crowd of children, and joins a gaggle of girls who go in search of "herbs, flowers, snails." Not only does

[12] "Melc, melc, // Codobelc". It is very difficult to translate "codobelc", since it is an onomatopoeic compound of "without tail" and "snail", a playful epithet used by children for snails or other mollusks, see dexonline.ro. The proposal for the English translation "slimy tail" comes from Călin Coțoiu, a collaborator of the English editorial staff of Radio Romania International. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations in the following are mine. The original text can be found online: https://www.versuri.ro/versuri/ion-barbu-dupa-melci-_db17.html (06.04.2022)

the poem thematise a rural, traditional Romania, where girls wear long braids and traditional aprons; also, the landscape-related vocabulary is markedly sophisticated, with different words for farmland and uncultivated strips of landscape; and finally, familiar spirits of Romanian folklore, such as the *Joimăriță* and *Baba Dochia* appear: uncanny beings imagined by the child in his fears during the fierce snowstorm night that follows the excursion in still innocently beautiful weather during the day. The rural perspective, in which the weather and natural events are perceived more directly and have immediate consequences, also becomes clear from this structuring of the events by seasons, times of day, and weather – from bright, sunny, budding in the morning to twilight and a stormy night.

From the beginning, moreover, the text is constructed in such a way that it is recognizable that the description of the event takes place retrospectively and under a certain moral pressure. In part one, the child presents himself as less good than the other children: "Only I sprouted worse // (more confused, more stupid) [...] I was much dumber then." In part two, the central event of the poem's narrative develops: "And then once, ..." the child is again outside with other children and joins a group that wants to look for snails in the woods. Out of the impression of the general hustle and bustle, all at once the protagonist is right in the centre, resting under a hazel tree bush, he too ponders what if there was a snail there on the ground. And he digs out a snail shell from which he tries to lure the snail out. Finally, he removes the house and puts it on the ground. The weather changes and the wind gets cold and the child is seized with fear and runs away. It makes its back to the village alone, where it seeks shelter from the storm and spends the night as an "only guard," persistently worrying about the snail: "not that a wind breaks the house, ask the wind not to take it away."

In the third part, the next morning, he goes back the way he came to the place where he left the snail: it is frozen to death. The child talks to the mollusk again: "Snail, snail, what have you done?" and finally concludes with the words: "Clumsy snail, clumsy snail." The child takes the snail home, and keeps it there in the cellar: "To sing to it now and then / Whether aloud or in thought / Snail, snail, slimy tail."

The intense inner perspective on the child's experience makes the poem very modernist, as it reflects the child's perception, actual and thought dialogues and feelings like a stream of consciousness. The snail serves as a counterpart, silent itself, but as an experimental object to explore the possibilities of contact with a being of a different species, offering the child the opportunity to explore its own powers, limits, and idiosyncrasies. A common interpretation, also found in the preparatory booklets for the Romanian Baccalaureate, is that the child's rhyming spells, with which he tries to lure the snail, are interpreted as attempts at magic spells (Stoleru 2021, 284). However, since the child is "not a real magician" (285), he is punished and has to bear the consequences: a blizzard

and a thunderstorm that ultimately kill the snail (which brings to mind Goethe's *Sorcerer's Apprentice*). In another pedagogical edition, the words that can develop power – and which Barbu does not leave to the animal like Farago does – also become the guiding interpretation, at least with the hint that they can also cause suffering (Badea 2004, 41), which in turn becomes a primarily human characteristic.

However, the text seems to contradict the word as "logos" and thus the idea of a world that can be shaped rationally. In the Romanian interwar period, avant-garde, symbolism, and modernism overlapped with anti-modernist currents like *Gândirism*, because, as Stiehler (2010) argues, many people were afraid of a modernity that was inscrutable in the civilising sense (184). This led, among other things, to the fact that in Romanian forms of Symbolism the village as a setting is not completely abandoned in favour of the big city, but also that nature does not become an idyllic place of contrast and retreat, but often appears hostile to humans (185-186). In Barbu's poem, it is now a child who experiences self-empowerment on the one hand, and is a victim of greater natural forces on the other (if one disregards the idea that he himself conjured up the forces of nature). In addition, there are mythical figures that can be coupled with the child's great fear, mirroring and reinforcing it. Strong popular beliefs cannot be controlled and rationalised either. The village of Barbu thus corresponds to Lucian Blaga's idea of the village as a place of consciousness that is at the same time the "centre of the world" with mythological extensions.[13]

The feeling of guilt comes to the child unmediated, no educating authority and no moralising narrator interferes in the events.[14] It resonates with an ambivalence that makes the child's abandonment of himself with the question of the "right" morality a theme. What is reasonable for a child? Barbu already refused at the time to see "După melci" as a text addressed to children (Badea 2004, 38) and in its linguistic, creative, and philosophical complexity, the balladic text also differs significantly from the texts discussed so far. Nevertheless, the child protagonist, left to his own devices and completely unguided, gives insight into a relatively lonely kind of childhood that does not correspond to any Western educational ideas of the time, where boundaries and pedagogical instructions were a widespread part of everyday life. In terms of inter-species contact, it is also left to the child to determine the roles and the power dynamic in the human-animal relationship.

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[13] Stiehler quotes Blaga in the original: "satul este situate în centrul lumii și se prelungeşte în mit" and offers also a German translation (cf. Stiehler 2010, 199).

[14] The performed interpretation of the actor and singer Tudor Gheorghe illustrates the emotional perception of the child quite exquisitely: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sy1UaLd0vmI (15.02.2022).

… and beyond: empty spots and conclusions

What I have not yet addressed, and what has remained a blind spot in research, is the emotional impact of the stories on their, mostly, young readers. Most Romanians who gave me references to these and other texts and passages in which children and animals meet could not help but comment on the emotional impact when they were first exposed to them as children or young adults. Farago's two poems "made my childhood sad" is one such comment, or, about "Puiul," "it traumatised me as a child." This suggests that the authors, though considered subordinate by the literary establishment, struck an emotional chord across time in their readers that has continued to resonate. It is precisely this that is completely absent from literary criticism; instead, the texts addressed to children are presented, as in a post-89 edition on Brătescu-Voinești's life and work, as extraordinarily popular, especially among children and young people (Gavrila 2004, 161); a website, again popular, providing information to expectant parents and young families, presents Farago's two poems and describes "Cățelușul Șchiop" as one of the most beautiful poems for children (Serea 2020).

This discrepancy between popularisation through active transmission and actual impact seems to me significant and worthy of further study. Only rarely do we find comments that question the literary canon. The literary critic Liviu Papadima, who, in his parody of the Romanian educational system predicts how during a lesson in 2060 the reading of the story "Puiul," will "pull the pupils out of the crushing apathy of the middle of the 21st century" - with a teacher calming the crying children with a stuffed chick: "Children, don't be sad! The chick is among us!" (2011).[15] The authors of a children's book with protagonists from the Bucharest neighbourhood of Ferentari, where many large and socially disadvantaged Roma families live, would also like to see greater diversification among that are intended to be read out loud to children: parents should also look out for newly published books that do not "emotionally squeeze" children with socially oppressive stories or even those "with chicks, deer, wolves and bears who are hit by life like a blow and end up lost and alone" (Țupran 2018).[16]

Another aspect that may be of equal interest from the perspective of literary studies and animal studies is the impact of the transmission of "problematic" human-animal relations on the actual relationship between humans and

[15] "Povestea reuşeşte să-i smulgă pe elevi din apatia devastatoare a mijlocului de secol XXI. Elevii plîng. Profesoara se îndreaptă către catedră şi, rostind cu o voce tremurată "Copii, nu vă întristaţi! Puiul e printre noi!" (Papadima 2011).

[16] "și nu să îi stoarcă emoţional […] sau altele cu pui, căprioare, lupi și urși peste care viața a dat ca un tir, iar ei au rămas pierduți și singuri." As an example of what I have paraphrased as a "socially oppressive story", the author mentions the children's novel *Heart* by Italian author Edmondo De Amicis from 1886 (in Romanian: Cuore – inima de copil). (Țupran 2018).

animals, or in this case between children and animals. Is literature a reflection of the actual relationship between species or does it serve in a different way as a symbolic illustration of inner human conflicts that are reflected in it in a more philosophical sense? And if - for whatever reason - a feeling of oppression results from the "bad" treatment of the animal by the child, does this have an impact (and if yes what impact precisely?) on the attitude of those familiar with these texts towards the natural environment? A team of literary scholars and psychologists who have investigated the emotional impact of violent human-animal fictions on text recipients can show that violence toward animals in texts increase the recipient's empathy and their willingness to protect animals; however, a certain framing of the story is necessary (Małecki et. al. 2019).[17] Based on the individual comments cited above, one could now hypothesise that Romania would have made much progress in this direction, if many of its people have been influenced by such texts when growing up. However, this is certainly not the case in the Romanian society as a whole. For example, animal protection laws based on Western models did not find their way into Romanian legislation until 2004. Furthermore, the idea that children could hurt animals is not only documented in the purpose of one of the first animal protection societies at the beginning of the 20th century, which states: "We want [...] to convince children not to be cruel to animals."[18] In Bucharest's Cișmigiu City Park, there is currently a sign with park rules, which includes the request: "Be responsible towards animals and teach your child from an early age to be tolerant towards animals."[19]

At a first glance, the presented child-animal encounters may appear to be a recurring motif, but the brief analyses of the texts by Brătescu-Voinești, Farago, and Barbu have at the same time shown that they are not only realised in very different aesthetic ways, but are also associated with very different messages. In all texts, humans appear as a disruptive force that disturbs the natural balance, health, and a natural healthy development of the animals and thus weakens their ability to survive. With the presence and through civilisation by humans, problems arise for nature and the animal world. If one follows the possible interpretation of Barbu's poem that the child even conjures up the storm through "inadequate" knowledge of magic, the humans' power can be seen as almost infinite in the world invoked by the poem. Conversely, the storm can also be interpreted as nature's punishment for human intervention: then it

[17] Concerning the special framing see chapter 6: How does it work? From Readerly Pleasure to Animal Cruelty (Małecki 2019, 128-144).

[18] "Să convingem […] pe copii să nu fie cruzi cu animalele." (Societatea pentru protecţiunea animalelor 1906, 4)

[19] Translated mine. The Romanian original reads: "Fiţi responsabili faţă de animale şi învăţaţi-vă copilul de mic să fie tolerant cu animalele."

is still very powerful in this ballad and virtually impossible to tame. At a second glance, however, the authors connect very different messages with their texts: Brătescu-Voinești threatens with necessary adaptation to the rules of the collective and, in case of doubt, willingness to sacrifice; Farago criticises the unequal and, from her point of view, correspondingly unjust treatment of human and non-human creaturely suffering; Barbu uses the animal as a projection surface and object of self-exploration that equally demonstrates power and the limits of human power, supplemented by the impressive effect of mirrored fears in mythical figures.

Social and inter-human violence concealed in the texts, is only latently imaginable and can be read out from additional questions to the texts and transmissions into the human world or interpretation of the gaps. In my opinion, this has to do in particular with the form as lyrical texts or short narrative prose. The more detailed and partly autobiographical novels cited in the introduction deal very expressively with social grievances, which are often characterised by violence. What is nevertheless evident in all the texts, whether short or long, is that the child is very much left to his or her own devices. The children are or remain lonely. Educational institutions play a marginal or problematic role. In this sense, the literature discussed here hardly reflects the adult as a pedagogue, meaning-giving authority, or even source of emotional support. The fact that children have become a "sentimental investment," as I quoted at the beginning of the findings of childhood studies, is hardly reflected at all in Romanian literature – and even the animals are not friendly accomplices.

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THE CULTURAL NON-HUMAN ANIMAL ANALYSING ITALO CALVINO'S ITALIAN FAIRY TALES WITH ZOOSEMIOTICS

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ABSTRACT. ***The Cultural Non-human Animal. Analysing Italo Calvino's Italian Fairy Tales with Zoosemiotics.*** This article analyses traditional Italian fairy tales retold by Italo Calvino in 1956 and their relationships to nature and culture. Zoosemiotics, a branch of both semiotics and animal studies, argues that nature and culture are not separated and in contrast and that, instead, culture is a limited part of nature. This conceptual change envisions different relationships between humans and animals as well as more broadly the end of animal anthropomorphism. Methodologically, the article applies a zoosemiotic analysis to the Italian fairy tales retold by Calvino. The article concludes that some animals in the fairy tales are still anchored to the old view while others move towards the cultural terrain, showing cultural attitudes and inhabiting a cultural area usually reserved for human animals. This shift leads to an inverted semiotic destiny of humans and animals in fairy tales: while animals are traditionally represented as symbols, Calvino's rewriting turns them into icons, representing only themselves, marked by a neat individuality and independence from their species; while humans are, conversely, usually represented as icons, Calvino's stories turn them into symbols, such as ingratitude or jealousy. The article shows the usefulness of zoosemiotics and

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nature/culture in analysing non human-animals in fairy tales and adds to earlier studies considering non-human animals in Calvino's fairy tales as an epitome of Anthropocene.

Keywords: *animal studies, fairy tales, Italo Calvino, zoosemiotics, nature and culture, anthropomorphism, Puss in Boots*

REZUMAT. ***Animalul cultural non-uman. O analiză a poveștilor lui Italo Calvino cu ajutorul zoosemioticii.*** Articolul de față analizează povești italiene tradiționale repovestite de către Italo Calvino în 1956, precum și relația lor cu natura și cultura. Zoosemiotica, o ramură atât a semioticii cât și a studiilor despre animale, argumentează că natura și cultura nu sunt separate și nu se află în contrast, ci că, dimpotrivă, cultura este o parte limitată a naturii. Această schimbare conceptuală preconizează relații diferite între oameni și animale, precum și, în sens mai general, sfârșitul antropomorfismului animalelor. Metodologic, articolul aplică o analiză zoosemiotică poveștilor italiene repovestite de Calvino. Articolul conchide că anumite povești cu animale sunt încă ancorate într-o viziune mai veche, în timp ce altele se deplasează către un teren cultural, demonstrând atitudini culturale și populând aria culturală rezervată de obicei animalelor umane. Această schimbare conduce la un destin semiotic inversat al oamenilor și animalelor în povești: în vreme ce animalele sunt în mod tradițional reprezentate ca simboluri, rescrierea lui Calvino le transformă în icon-uri, ele reprezentându-se doar pe sine, marcate de o individualitate și de o independență distincte față de specia lor, în timp ce oamenii, de obicei reprezentați ca icon-uri, sunt transformați în povestirile lui Calvino în simboluri, de pildă ale ingratitudinii ori geloziei. Articolul arată utilitatea zoosemioticii și binomului natură/cultură în analiza animalelor non-umane în povești, și aduce contribuții la studiile anterioare despre animalele non-umane în poveștile lui Calvino ca întruchipare a Antropocenului.

Cuvinte-cheie: *studii despre animale, povești, Italo Calvino, zoosemiotică, natură și cultură, antropomorfism, Motanul încălțat*

Introduction

This article analyses non-human animals' representations in the traditional Italian folktales rewritten by Italo Calvino in 1956. It focuses on non-human animals' roles within these folktales, and on the ways these non-human animals communicate among themselves and interact with humans. Fairy tales have very often presented animals among their main characters, sometimes in more symbolic ways, other times stereotypically, often as anthropomorphic creatures

with the same human characteristics and abilities, other times as detached from humans and constituting a specific animal realm. At the heart of this variety of roles, there are always issues related to the concepts of "nature" and "culture", the categories that have for long helped humans define themselves in relation to the non-human. What is interesting is that the borders of and the relationships between these categories have often been redesigned, as have the meanings stemming from them. This article takes this into account to determine which version Calvino is more concerned with.

Even in the case of Calvino's fairy tales, however, these two categories have proven to be useful in understanding the role that non-human animals play and, more broadly, the idea of the relationships between the human and the non-human implied by the Italian writer. Thus, the aim of this article is to find out how in Calvino's Fairy tales non-human animals take position in relation to the concepts of nature and culture.

To pursue this aim, this work also draws on other studies on non-human animals in Calvino, such as Wheeler (2014), a Marca (2020) and Iovino (2021). In doing so, it also adds new perspectives going beyond those offered by these studies, as is evident in the conclusive section of this work.

Italo Calvino's retold fairy tales

In 1956, Italo Calvino published *Fiabe Italiane* (Calvino 1956), later translated into English and published as *Italian Folktales* (Calvino 1980), composed of 200 fairy tales coming from all the twenty Italian regions plus Corsica (Haase 2008). In the first pages of the book, Calvino explains what fairy tales are for him: "Folktales are real. Taken all together, they offer, in their oft-repeated and constantly varying examinations of human vicissitudes, a general explanation of life preserved in the slow ripening of rustic consciences" (1980, xiii).

Later, Calvino (1980) specifies how he collected and organised these stories. They had already been published, mostly came from the nineteenth century and he rewrote them trying to save their traditional structures and stylistically homogenise them. They are thus neither original nor to be considered as entirely composed by Calvino. He also reflects on the difficulties posed by retracing the real origin of a tale. Fairy tales, in fact, always travel and produce many versions of themselves, generating a continuous retelling. In the fairy tale *The parrot*, for example, saving a girl through storytelling reflects the importance of telling stories for Calvino (this tale is among those I analyse below). In one of his late books, *Lezioni Americane* (Six Memos for the Next Millennium, 1988), Calvino would come back to *Fiabe Italiane*, pointing out that his interest in fairy tales was not related to folklore, but to the style, structure, rhythm, and logic that fairy tales are based on.

Calvino's work drew the attention of other writers. The science-fiction novelist Ursula K. Le Guin (2013), reviewing the American edition of the book, writes that she was positively surprised by how the book combines the familiar and the unexpected and defines it as the Italian counterpart of the German collection by the Grimms, as Calvino himself wrote in the introduction. Scambray (2000) asserts instead that Calvino's work is different from the Grimms' or Andersen's renditions of fairy tales. While the tales by these authors were well structured and cleaned to be read by the youngsters, in Calvino's collection we can find the unpredictability, disorder and hostility of real life. Le Guin's (2013) interest is, however, stylistic. She extolls Calvino's touch in rewriting these stories, his clarity and originality. The result is "one of the best storytellers alive telling us some of the best stories in the world – what luck!" (Le Guin 2013). Similarly, "the introduction contains some of the finest things said on folklore since Tolkien" (Le Guin 2013).

Anthony Burgess (1981) notices instead that reading Calvino's rewritten fairy tales suggests that animals and the rest of nature form an inseparable unity. Specifically on the role of animals in Calvino's tales, Nannicini (2008) finds that they very often play decisive narrative roles by helping humans to solve serious problems. This also happens when animals give humans the power of transforming into animals. When they become animals, humans can do things they cannot do earlier, and very often this transformation improves their lives. It is thus clear that in these tales the states of being human animals and non-human animals are two conditions that frequently merge (Nannicini 2008).

Zoosemiotics and its new perspective on nature and culture

In the 1960s and 1970s, many scholars put forward the idea that considering the two categories of nature and culture as separate and even fighting each other would be disputable. This was not a completely new perspective. Renaissance (and medical) humanism, and natural philosophy had already analysed the life on Earth as a coherent whole (Hirai 2011), however, the Enlightenment had since the eighteenth century established that humans were in contrast with nature and this remained the dominant view at least until the beginning of the twentieth century (Murphy 1992). Anthropocentrism was, however, criticised and this trend gradually grew by asking more space for animals and non-human life in general (Howell 2021).

Within this context, Thomas Sebeok (1968 and 1972) founded zoosemiotics, a branch of semiotics that considers animals as individuals and never in terms of the mere function they may have for humans. Zoosemiotics also investigates human representations of animals in literature, film, and other

media. For Maran et al (2011, 1) zoosemiotics is "the study of signification, communication and representation within and across animal species."

One of the most relevant issues raised by Sebeok (1994) concerns the relationships between nature and culture. If we assume that non-human animals produce meaning and communicate in their own specific ways, as the above-mentioned definition (Maran et al 2011, 1) asserts, it is truly difficult to ascribe to them a secondary role in comparison to human animals. Yet, traditional views still consider humans as completely belonging to the side of culture and non-human animals entirely to the side of nature. That is why Sebeok opposes this view and argues that nature and culture cannot be in contrast, as one is an integral part of the other. More specifically, culture is a limited part of the field of nature.

Following on from this, other semioticians have developed the relationships between nature and culture as reciprocal and in a continuous state of flux. Specifically, semiotics applied to animals "focuses on the engagement of culture and nature through signs" (Siewers 2014, 5) and sees nature and culture as two elements that continuously enrich each other. The novelty here is considering even animals as able to produce cultural artefacts, as for example animals' nests. We usually consider the very ingenious anthill built by ants as a natural product, while the equally brilliant skyscrapers made by humans we see as products of culture. However, if we accept the theories referenced above, we understand that this implicit hierarchy should be redesigned. Anthill and skyscrapers are actually two products made by animals (human or non-human) and thus both belong to the field of culture. Thus, zoosemiotics considers that "culture can be visualised as being produced by nature" (Caudhary 2012, 114).

Martinelli (2010) finds that we cannot accept "the untouchable dualism nature–culture" (Martinelli 2010, 35). In fact, for him "it is when we divide the world in two that we are being superficial" (Martinelli 2010, 58). Thus, "it is unacceptable to treat them separately because too many and too complex are the relations between the two. We cannot analyse any cultural phenomenon as completely untied from natural context" (Martinelli 2010, 58).

This has led to Sebeok's (1968; 1972; 1994) call for semiotics as a theory of investigation regarding the entire biosphere, not only the limited human field. Barbieri adds that semiotics, after animals, "gradually extended to other living creatures. Eventually, the discovery of the genetic code suggested that the cell itself has a semiotic structure" (2008, xi). This generated biosemiotics, "the idea that all living creatures are semiotic systems" (Barbieri 2008, xi).

Mandoki (2013) points out that only our ignorance of what concerns non-human animals could provoke such a serious gap in human knowledge. The new perspective ultimately implies different relationships between humans

and animals, the end of animal anthropomorphism, and majorly increased respect for non-human animals.

All of this may also be seen as something with the potential to enlarge the field of social sciences. Mäekivi (2012) theorises that even animals can be objects of social science research. More specifically, they have social roles as they interact in always differing ways, and thus they should also be investigated through the social roles that they play, acquiring cultural characteristics. This study investigates whether this happens in Calvino's fairy tales, seeking to answer the following question: in the fairy tales rewritten by Italo Calvino, how do non-human animals take position in relation to the concepts of nature and culture? The next section develops the methodology to answer this question.

Methodology

As biosemiotics and zoosemiotics have become two relevant theories useful for developing better understanding of life within the human-animal universe and its relationships with humans, some semioticians have tried to design research methods specially for this setting. More broadly, this has taken some semiotic principles to the study of any living being. Wheeler (2014) argues that semiotics has a role in theoretical biology, as natural life functions like any system of sign. Thus, if we consider the importance of interpretation, which produces various meanings in human language, we must do the same if we analyse a cell or DNA, as does for, instance, Shapiro (2012). They too may produce many meanings, while we often see them as more predictable. This view has also produced a critical account of materialism in science, as pointed out by Nagel (2012).

Starting from this similarity between the human and the non-human universe, Maran et al (2016) point out that zoosemiotic analysis should be a qualitative research method considering non-human animals similar to human ones, and thus individual beings producing meaning and participating in the systems of signs to be decoded, which is the fundamental aim of semiotics in general. Moreover, because of the many types of research implied by a general concept like zoosemiotics, they imagine this method as plural, composed of a series of options that can be chosen by the researcher according to the specific needs of each investigation.

More precisely, they list four kinds of zoosemiotic analysis: the first one is umwelt analysis, that is, the investigation of how the animals perceive the environment where they live, act and communicate; the second one concerns the analysis of the ways non-human animals communicate with other non-human or with human animals; the third one regards the production of meaning produced by the animal when using and moving through the space surrounding

her or him; finally, the fourth one consists of looking at animal representations created by humans, also reflecting or affecting cultural values, social contexts and political ideologies (Maran et al 2016). Certainly, this last type of investigation is the most relevant for this research; however, the other options offered by Maran et al (2016) may have play a supportive role to the main method adopted.

As regards the fourth type of zoosemiotics, Maran et al (2016) argue that the representation of animals serves many purposes in human culture, from the pedagogical to the symbolical to the anecdotal and so on. In all of them, we find a denotative and a connotative level, as in Barthes (1972, 116; 1977, 45-51). For Barthes, denotation refers to the literal or more evident meaning; connotation, instead, relates to a more hidden or symbolic sense and is influenced by ideology, cultural context, and interpretation. Moreover, connotation sometimes has to do with myths, ideological elements profoundly rooted within a particular society.

The links between Barthes (1972 and 1977) and Maran et al. (2016) call for a research method that fundamentally interrelates a text to the social and cultural environment in which this text has been produced or received. Applying all of this to the analysis of the representation of animals, Maran et al (2016) maintain that denotation mostly regards animals as animals, the scientific knowledge that humans have of non-humans; the connotative level, by contrast, links to the animal as she or he is seen through the human lenses, with all the differences among humans, because of the various cultural, social and political points of view.

This chapter also draws on other scholarship either on literature and animal studies in general, or specifically on Calvino's book. On a more general level, Weil (2012) investigates the representation of animals in literature, from Tolstoy to Rilke to Coetzee. She delves into the question of what we humans can learn from seeing human and non-human behaviours in certain circumstances, for example mourning or animal killing. Wolfe (2003) points out that the question of the animal has for humans mostly ethical implications, as we can see in the way humans treat non-humans' issues related to race, sexuality, and colonialism. Finally, Agamben (2004) examines the division between humans and non-humans through history, from Ancient Greece to the present, and analyses what this division has meant to human knowledge in its various manifestations. Two works relate Calvino's contribution to more general concepts. Marca (2020) explains that humans in Calvino's fairy tales sometimes become animals and by pushing their boundaries they anticipate post-humanism. Iovino (2021) instead argues that Calvino's animals, not only in the fairy tales but in his entire opus, seem to her an epitome of the Anthropocene, symbols of the displacement and extinction that impacts many living beings today. To demonstrate this point, Iovino (2021) underlines that Calvino very often depicts

animals in labs, zoos, or factory farms, three places where human animals exploit non-human animals. Iovino's theory is fascinating and useful for this article because she suggests projecting Calvino's representations of animals to much wider concepts relating to the role of human beings on our whole planet: the Anthropocene for her, and the categories of nature and culture for this work.

As regards semiotics in general, this article also adopts the three seminal categories of icon, index, and symbol (Peirce 1868). A sign is an icon when there is similarity or resemblance between the signifier and signified, as in the case of a photograph *reproducing* the face of a specific person; it is an index when the signifier and signified are linked through logical contiguity or continuity, as in the case of the footprint of an animal; it is a symbol, finally, when the link between the signifier and signified has nothing to do with resemblance or contiguity, but is shared within a community, as in the case of a rose meaning love.

This article has qualitatively sampled some fairy tales rewritten by Calvino relying on qualitative purposive sampling, a nonrandom sampling technique in which the researcher selects participants or items as they represent a particular condition or support a precise theory or present specific characteristics (Morse 2007). In this case, this article has chosen fairy tales in which the represented animals in some ways impact the relationships between nature and culture.

The analysis

In a couple of cases, animals in Calvino's rewritten fairy tales play roles which are usually exclusively human. At the end of these stories, however, the animals become humans. This happens in *Il principe che sposò una rana* (*The prince who got married to a frog*, n. 14), from Monferrato, where the three sons of the king are in search of their spouses. The first two find two girls, while the third one finds a frog. The king has to decide who will inherit his kingdom. To elect the heir, he decides that the three future wives must compete with one another. The son coupled with the winner will be the kingdom's heir. The competition focuses on cultural activities, such as making threads from hemp or raising a dog. The frog does all of this better than the other two girls and wins the competition. However, in the end, the frog turns into a beautiful princess. It turns out that she was previously human but was later transformed into a frog for a spell.

Similarly, in *Il Pappagallo* (*The parrot*, n. 15), likewise from Monferrato, a parrot demonstrates a great ability to tell stories. This is certainly a cultural activity, and what is interesting is that there is no anthropomorphism in her representation. She is fully an animal, and never resembles a human being. Even her ability to speak belongs to parrots, so in this tale, the animal has nothing

human about her. The ability of the parrot is to tell a story that never ends. Every time the tale seems to finish, the animal finds a way to continue the story. This capability makes her powerful, as by inventing a never-ending story she impacts the humans' lives: in fact, enchanted by the story, the girl does not open the door to the King, who is fallen in love with the girl and wants to kidnap her. In this tale, thus, it is the parrot that manages the destinies of non-human animals. Even in this case, however, the animal ends up turning into a man.

In both the above-summarised fairy tales, it seems that leaving these animals as animals would have been too extreme. They would have ended up as individuals, exactly as Sebeok (1968 and 1972) prefigures. The narrative would have represented animals as part of the cultural sphere, doing cultural activities usually reserved for humans (telling stories) and detaching them from nature. Transforming these animals into humans avoids trespassing the traditional boundaries dividing the two realms.

In other fairy tales, these boundaries are certainly more blurry. For example, in *La fiaba dei gatti* (*The tale of cats*, n. 129), from Apulia, a group of cats are organized by Mamma gatta (mother cat) in order to carry out the housekeeping in a home. One concentrates on the laundry, another takes water from the well, another makes the bread, and so on. Importantly, there are no signs of anthropomorphism in these representations, apart from the recurring fact that, apart from meowing, they can speak human language and communicate with humans. At the end of the day, they eat along with the girl they have worked with. When the girl's sister, however, mistreats the cat, Mamma gatta changes her approach to humans and marginalises her by feeding the woman bad food. It is animals, thus, who play a more active role, deciding the destiny of humans. As in many theories mentioned above, we can see that zoosemiotically, animals play powerful roles within society (Mäekivi 2012). The traditional human-centred society here seems to be completely subverted. These fairy tales tell us that a community may be led by living beings in general, no matter whether human or non-human. As a result, we may say that nature (the whole of the human beings) has produced culture (the activities that form society). The wall between nature and culture has been torn down, as hoped for by Martinelli (2010).

In *La biscia* (*The grass snake*, n. 12), again coming from the Piedmont area of Monferrato, there is no hint at anthropomorphism in representing the animal. She is a snake and the only characteristic she has beyond what a snake can in reality do, is that she can speak, even though she does it very rarely. This ability seems to be a narrative necessity more than a human resemblance, as it does not give the animal other human characteristics. The animal, rather, has superpowers that make her different from non-human animals. The first two girls who meet her go away terrified. The third one, the sister of the two girls,

takes her at home. As a reward, the snake gives her superpowers which will make her very rich and eventually a queen. But this will cause jealousy and envy in the family, and in the end, death. What is relevant is that there is no human who leads or supervises the snake in what she does. Non-human animals here own that individuality which Sebeok (1968 and 1972) theorises. In this, she is profoundly an animal, yet she is also an individual. What is more, the story unveils human misery (jealousy and envy) from the point of view of the non-human animal. The animal enters the human realm to highlight human weaknesses. She shapes human relationships, interacts with humans without assuming their characteristics, communicates with them in her proper language, the magic: a cultural activity, thus, exerted as an animal but deeply affecting humans.

Another interesting tale that highlights the relationships between nature and culture is *Il linguaggio degli animali* (*The language of animals*, n. 23), from the city of Mantova. In it, a boy is told by his father to learn other human languages, but he prefers to study the language of animals so that, he is able to understand what animals say. This will save his life as well as other people's lives, as animals also understand the language of humans, and give away some secrets of the family of the boy, and alert him to his own father's attempt to kill him.

Here, it is a human animal, the boy, who plays a cultural role with his ability to understand other languages. However, animals are here represented as rationally communicating with each other, through a codified language, as also advanced by zoosemiotics (Maran et al. 2011). In this fairy tale, the animals seem the same as in many zoosemiotic theories stating that animals communicate, are active, make decisions and shape their destiny. This is exactly what frogs, horses, and other non-human animals do in this story. Moreover, they also understand humans, while humans believe that they do not. Thus, animals are somehow superior to humans in cultural terms, as they form together a working society, while humans do not collaborate and even hate each other, as in the case of the relationships between father and son.

In *La volpe Giovannuzza* (The fox Giovannuzza, n. 185), the Sicilian version of Perrault's *Puss in Boots,* this superiority concerns morality and dignity. A passive and not very brilliant boy, after his father's death, risks suffering from hunger and poverty. The fox Giovannuzza takes care of him and, understanding the gravity of the situation, constructs an invented world around the boy made up of wealth, luxury, and nobility, inventing the fact that the boy is actually a count. The human society, including the king, falls for the ruse and flatters the boy, who even gets married to the king's daughter, thereby literally becoming a noble. However, intelligence is only the first quality demonstrated by Giovannuzza. She is also stereotyped, as foxes usually are in folklore and literature, as smart and cunning. At the end of the story, in fact, the new prince shows signs of ingratitude.

The fox, to test his sentiments, pretends to be dead and the prince refuses to bury her and prefers to dump her corpse in the countryside. In face of this lack of sensibility, Giovannuzza reminds the prince of what happened in the past and her role in the fortune of the man and goes away not saying anything else. The text underlines this sign of great dignity in response to human arrogance. Again, non-human animals show themselves to be superior to human ones not only in nature-related animal characteristics, but also in cultural traits, abilities, and sentiments usually reserved for human animals.

This dynamic is even more clear in *L'uccel bel-verde* (*The beautiful-green bird*, n. 87), from Florence, where a bird is used by two women in order to punish their sister, who has married the king and has thus provoked envy and jealousy in them. Relevantly, at the end of the story, the bird becomes aware of being exploited, understands the injustice that the third sister is enduring, and refuses to exert her superpowers, namely, to transform people talking to her into statues. Moreover, the bird has a fundamental and active role in establishing the truth, informing the King and denouncing any form of injustice. Finally, her cultural role (this has nothing to do with nature) is completed when she decides the punishment for the guilty humans, a penalty that the humans carry out diligently. The animal thus assumes the role of the judge condemning the humans. In this sense, she affects reality and plays an active role in society, as pointed out by zoosemiotics (Maran et al. 2011).

Again, the active role within society, the ability to interact and organize the life of other beings, and the capability of feeling sentiments, all of which usually belonging to humans only, emerge as traits of non-human animals, who play relevant roles in these tales adapted by Calvino. In all of the cases mentioned in this section, non-human animals show cultural attitudes that are usually ascribed only to human animals. Thus, these stories upend the traditional notion separating a cultural area, where humans are in charge, from nature, traditionally seen as the non-human animal realm.

Results

This study has highlighted that in Calvino's collected fairy tales there is no unilateral approach to the issue of non-human animals positioning between nature and culture. The first two analysed stories, for example, represent animals that appear to belong in the field of culture only. At the end of the story, in fact, the reader discovers that they were human animals earlier, that they were transformed into animals by a spell, and that, just before the conclusion of the tale, they become humans again. There is only a hint at the fact that non-human animals may belong to the cultural realm. This revolutionary view,

however, is turned upside-down in the final part, where the story leaves room for the old view considering animals as part of the natural realm exclusively, and the two areas as separated and in contrast with one another.

Importantly, other fairy tales move the representation of non-human animals towards the cultural terrain. As theorised by zoosemiotics, in them non-human animals carry out roles that very often pertain to humans, such as working, producing goods, interacting among themselves and with humans, playing relevant roles in society (e.g. the judge), feeling sentiments, and showing dignity and ethical principles. They not only laugh but are also ironic, each of them in a highly individualized way, as happens in another of Calvino's (1972) books, *Le città invisibili*, as argued by Nannicini (2008), mentioned earlier in my study. These animals impact the lives of humans by making decisions and producing meaning more than the human characters. In all of this, we may find them belonging to the sphere of culture.

Moreover, these non-human animals are very often original in two ways: firstly, they do not present human physical features; secondly, they are never seen as representatives of one animal species, with the characteristics of their animal group; rather, they are individually depicted, each of them with peculiar traits. As a result, there is no space for anthropomorphism or stereotype, that is, the way in which non-human animals are represented within the traditional paradigm conceived by zoosemiotics (Martinelli 2010). Their depictions may be better understood through the above-mentioned theories of icon, index, and symbol (Peirce 1868) and of denotation and connotation of animals in human representations (Barthes 1972 and 1977; Maran et al. 2016). Semiotics is in fact a human method of inquiry that analyses human or non-human phenomena. It is a human lens that may also investigate animals, nature and every extra-human element. It is thus similar to fairy tales about animals, which are human forms of representation depicting extra-human characters and scenarios. In short, both zoosemiotics and fairy tales about animals are human products in which animals cannot be considered completely by themselves; rather, they are always filtered through the human point of view.

If we analyse the non-human characters of these fairy tales through Peirce's categories what emerges is that they are mostly icons. *La volpe Giovannuzza* (*The fox Giovannuzza*, n. 185), for example, may only in part be considered a symbol of cunningness, which is a stereotypical trait of foxes. Giovannuzza is a symbol of cunningness (and a stereotype of the fox) when she cleverly grasps how to exploit some abilities of the boy. However, what delineates this character is the dignity she shows when she becomes aware of being neglected by the person she had benefited. Giovannuzza shows dignity and moral strength, and this only pertains to this character, and not to the fox in general. This makes her

a complete and credible character. There is no symbolism in her behaviour, only the individuality of her iconicity.

Similarly, L'uccel bel-verde, the main character of the homonymous story (*The beautiful-green bird*, n. 87), cannot be seen as a symbol. Again, when she refuses to use her superpower and become the judge deciding the punishment for the bad humans, she is a character in her own right. She does not symbolise anything but shows her individual way of connecting to other living beings and balancing injustice. Like the previous character, she is an icon, only resembling herself. There are no references in the tale to universal behaviours or prototypes. L'uccel bel-verde reflects only herself.

This is a significant point as usually non-human animals in classical fairy tales work differently. In Aesop's (1894) *The Fox and the Grapes*, for example, the fox symbolises all the living beings who deem themselves superior and cannot recognise their own limits. Again by Aesop (1894), in *The Ant and the Grasshopper,* the two animals symbolise two opposite ways of behaving in terms of spending time and preparing for the future, and this regards the entirety of living beings. None of this happens to the animal main characters of Calvino's fairy tales, where they are, as I discuss above, individuals who only refer to themselves. Future research might apply the categories of nature and culture and zoosemiotics to other traditional fairy tales, as this study has done to Calvino's fairy tales. In terms of the opposition between denotation and connotation, non-human animals, in these stories, are as connoted as humans. In fact, their denotation is almost totally absent. We rarely see them as expressions of their literal meaning, only as animals, that is, as denotations (Barthes 1972, 116; 1977, 45-51). They are connoted, as they play cultural roles, participate in human society, communicate with both humans and non-humans, all of which places them in the sphere of culture. Their differences are in fact cultural. They reflect various mindsets, points of view, emotions, opinions, abilities, and meanings they create. They make objects and artefacts as humans do in traditional representations. This makes these animals cultural beings, as in Maran et al (2016). If we look at some of Calvino's fairy tales through the lens of the relationships between nature and culture, we can see that they prefigure a position of the non-human animals which is really similar to that theorised by zoosemiotics. In brief, non-human animals are represented as making goods, having a role in the society formed by both humans and non-humans, showing dignity and being individuals, and are not mere symbols of human ideas or concepts. All of this means that they belong to the field of culture. If in other books by Calvino, non-human animals acquire individuality through allegory, melancholy, and irony (Nannicini 2008), in his fairy tales they do so by managing the law, making goods, and showing dignity. Prefiguring Mäekivi (2012), they

play relevant social roles. All of this makes them cultural beings, a definition that traditionally was only given to human beings.

Thus, this study has added something new to Iovino's (2021) point. It is certainly true that in many of his works Calvino represents animals in displacement and as the sad result of Anthropocene. In other cases, by contrast, and specifically in the rewriting of Italian fairy tales, he nevertheless depicts animals as joining human animals in the sphere of culture. This may be read as a kind of reaction to what was signalled by Iovino (2021). If, in some cases, animals are exploited and abused by human animals, in others we can see, optimistically, a form of reaction and a way to salvation. Non-human animals can belong to culture and thus flee the cruel fate that Anthropocene usually leaves them to.

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"I HAD BECOME A COW": KIMURA YŪSUKE'S *SACRED CESIUM GROUND* AND ROBERT MOORE'S *FIGURING GROUND*

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ABSTRACT. ***"I had become a cow": Kimura Yūsuke's* Sacred Cesium Ground *and Robert Moore's* Figuring Ground*.*** This paper shows how Kimura Yūsuke's *Sacred Cesium Ground* (2016; translated 2019) and Robert Moore's *Figuring Ground* (2009) expose the biopolitical manipulation of humans and animals thereby demonstrating the possibility of transcending narrow species boundaries. These authors both employ literary techniques such as humorous absurdism, embracing madness, and cultivating activism, while at the same time engaging with the ethical questions raised by critical animal studies. Of particular importance for the comparative discussions of Kimura and Moore's texts will be Donna Haraway's identification of herself as a philosopher of the "mud" and her derision of the philosophy of the "sky" or the abstraction employed by Deleuze and Guattari. This paper likewise employs Carol J. Adams's ideas of the shared absent referent in meat eating and pornography and the development on this thought in Nicole Shukin's theory of rendering. This paper moreover draws attention to the rupture created through the violence of the slaughterhouse and the slaughter of cattle following 3/11 in Japan to show the suffering of animals and the necessity of acknowledging the shared experience of species. Robert Moore's *Figuring Ground* and Kimura Yūsuke's *Sacred Cesium Ground* thus allow for the movement from the historical capitalist preoccupation with cattle as commodity to an understanding of cows as part of a trans-species community.

Keywords: *cows, slaughter, suffering, literature, biopolitics*

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REZUMAT. ***„Devenisem o vacă”:* Sacred Cesium Ground *de Kimura Yūsuke și* Figuring Ground *de Robert Moore.*** Articolul de față urmărește modul în care *Sacred Cesium Ground* de Kimura Yūsuke (2016; trad. 2019) și *Figuring Ground* de Robert Moore (2009) dezvăluie manipularea biopolitică a oamenilor și animalelor, demonstrând astfel posibilitatea de a transcende limitele înguste dintre specii. Autorii utilizează amândoi tropi literari cum ar fi absurdul umoristic, adoptarea nebuniei și cultivarea activismului, abordând totodată probleme etice semnalate de studiile critice despre animale. De o importanță specială pentru discutarea comparată a textelor lui Kimura și Moore este modul în care Donna Haraway se auto-identifică drept filozof al „glodului” și luarea în derâdere a filozofiei „cerului” sau abstracției utilizate de Deleuze și Guattari. De asemenea, lucrarea cooptează ideile lui Carol J. Adams despre referentul comun absent în consumul de carne și în pornografie, și dezvoltările acestei concepții în teoria redării a Nicolei Shukin. Lucrarea mai atrage atenția asupra rupturii create prin violența abatoarelor și masacrarea vitelor după dezastrul din 3/11 din Japonia pentru a evidenția suferința animalelor și necesitatea de a accepta experiența comună a speciilor. Cele două cărți facilitează trecerea de la preocuparea capitalistă istorică față de șeptel ca marfă spre o înțelegere a bovinelor ca parte a unei comunități trans-specie.

Cuvinte-cheie: *bovine, sacrificare, suferință, literatură, biopolitică*

Kimura Yūsuke’s *Sacred Cesium Ground* (2016; translated 2019) and Robert Moore’s *Figuring Ground* (2009) demonstrate the powerful ways in which fiction and poetry can work to expose the biopolitical manipulation of animals and the experience of personhood that transcends speciest distinctions. These authors both attempt to pass through the permeable species border through acts of imagination and immersion in the life and death of cows. By employing a humorous absurdism, embracing madness, and cultivating activism, these authors engage with wide-ranging ethical questions explored in critical animal studies. Thus, the close readings of these texts are informed by various theorists and perspectives offered by critical animal studies. Moreover, the exploration of violence—both through the slaughterhouse and through the slaughter of cattle in Japan after 3/11—is a moment of rupture through which it is possible to build an undifferentiated and posthuman ethic of personhood. Robert Moore’s *Figuring Ground* and Kimura Yūsuke’s *Sacred Cesium Ground* thus allow for the movement from the historical capitalist preoccupation with cattle as commodity to an understanding of cows as part of a trans-species community.

To facilitate a critical entry into these texts, this paper will first give a brief outline of both Kimura Yūsuke’s *Sacred Cesium Ground* and Robert Moore’s

Figuring Ground. Written in 2016 in Japan and translated into English in 2019, Kimura Yūsuke's *Sacred Cesium Ground and Isa's Deluge: Two Novellas of Japan's 3/11 Disaster* are set in the era directly after the 2011 triple disaster of the earthquake, tsunami, and meltdown of a nuclear plant in Fukushima. Keijiro Suga notes that "the Great East Japan earthquake was the single most important moment of crisis in post-World War II Japan and it profoundly affected Japanese society" (174). In the aftermath of 3/11, the Japanese government ordered the slaughter of all the irradiated cattle and other animals in the Fukushima region. One man defied the government orders to slaughter the cattle and rather continued to care for the irradiated cows at the ranch he called the Fortress of Hope. *Sacred Cesium Ground* is set at the Fortress of Hope and told from the first-person perspective of Nishina, a woman from Tokyo who volunteers to help care for the cattle. The story explores Nishina's first encounters with the cattle as mediated through various technological means and her experience of learning about the lives of the cows through work on the ranch. The novella moves between Nishina's growing identification across species lines through her senses and then her baptism or immersion in the refuse of the cows' lives to her past in abusive relationships. Through her various experiences with the cattle, and particularly through smell, Nishina recalls incidents from her life as an alienated worker and the abuse she endured as a child and then as a woman. Nishina comes to celebrate all life-as-life following immersion in a pool of rotting animal waste. Various forms of violence against animals and women repeat through the text and ultimately culminate in an act of violent activism, called terrorism by the Japanese media.

While Kimura Yūsuke overcomes hierarchical and patriarchal modes of binarizing human and cow through an immersion in the muck and mud of the lives of the cattle, Robert Moore's exploration of cattle consciousness asks the reader to imagine themselves as cow. This initially brings to mind the difference in theoretical perspectives offered by Donna Haraway and Deleuze and Guattari, such that Haraway quips "I am a creature of the mud, not the sky" (Haraway 2008, 3). Haraway's attack on Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is grounded in her sense of animals as companion creatures, a belief that counters the abstraction she argues characterizes Deleuze and Guattari's "scorn for the homely and the ordinary" (Haraway 2008, 28-29). Haraway argues that Deleuze and Guattari are too "sublime" (28) in their approach to animals, and ignore the everyday concerns of non-human animals. Haraway thus names Deleuze and Guattari as the philosophers of the "sky" (Deleuze and Guattari) and claims for herself the "mud" of the everyday. The distinction between muck and sky asserted by Haraway is useful when theorizing these two works by Kimura and Moore. Kimura's description of immersion in the muck as the experience which leads

to becoming cow aligns her with Haraway's "mud" of everyday life. On the other hand, Moore's poetic thought experiments are characterized by a more abstract or "sky" philosophy. These parallel philosophical approaches aside, both Kimura and Moore facilitate the imaginative crossing over of the species boundary to become part of a trans-species community. Moore does so through a series of poems that require the reader to "pretend" to be a cow (59), thus entering the cow's consciousness and perspective. I would characterize both Kimura's baptism in shit and Moore's pretending to be a philosophical cow as absurdist in nature, and humorous if realized in the muck and mooing of lived experience. These approaches, whether muck or moo, similarly embrace a mad exuberance in being animal and demonstrate through "sky" and "mud" ways of being animal that break down humanist hierarchies and boundaries of experience.

Before turning to Kimura's work more specifically, this paper will briefly engage with critical animal studies in relation to biopolitics. Biopolitics first emerges from the work of Michel Foucault on the regulation of human life through the power of social institutions legitimized through the networks of global capitalism. According to Foucault, biopower—and by extension biopolitics—is a uniquely modern invention that differs from the "sovereign" power that precedes it. Whereas sovereign power places authority over life and death in the hands of a sovereign ruler, biopower is predicated upon myriad institutions of self-regulation, from office schedules to workout regimens and diet guides, that discipline individual bodies to the tune of enlightenment progress. Although Foucault's brief work on biopower did not focus on animals, as Nicole Shukin notes, "[a]ctual animals have already been subtly displaced from the category of 'species' in Foucault's early remarks on biopower" (2009, 9). However, Rick Elmore argues in "Biopolitics" that "there has been a growing body of work that brings together the discourses of biopolitics and animal studies" (2018, 80). Therefore, Shukin demonstrates in *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (2009) that "discourses and technologies of biopower hinge on the species divide" (2009, 11). Similarly, as noted by Shukin, Cary Wolfe writes that "as long as it is institutionally taken for granted that it is all right to systematically exploit and kill nonhuman animals simply because of their species, then the humanist discourse of species will always be available for use by some humans against other humans as well, to countenance violence against the social order of *whatever* species—or gender, or race, or class, or sexual difference" (Wolfe 2003, 8; Shukin 2009, 10). While the human species per se is not the central concern of this paper, Shukin and Wolfe both note the extension of speciest logic to persecution and violence against any species. Thus, Shukin notes the use of the animal as "semiotic currency" at the same time as "animals are reproductively managed as protein and gene breeders" (2009, 12). Shukin employs the term

rendering to denote at one and the same time the mimetic quality of the word, as in copying or reproducing, but also the "industrial boiling down and recycling of animal remains" as rendering (20). Thus, the textual and visual politics appropriated in the rendering of animals can no longer be read in isolation from the material realities of the rendering of the remains of animal life.

Foregrounding the discourse of biopolitics and its connections to the semiotic and material manipulation of animal life is a necessary prelude to the discussion of Kimura Yūsuke's *Sacred Cesium Ground*. While Kimura's text moves back and forth between the human animal and the human animal's perception and shared experience with the cattle, the first-person narrator, Nishino, becomes aware of the exploitation of herself and the other human workers in her nameless workplace before she identifies and extends her understanding of biopolitics to other species. Nishino was fired from her unnamed workplace after she questioned whether she should address "the excessive work and responsibilities [that] were wearing everyone down" (Kimura 2016, 13), especially "given how many people in the office were taking leaves of absence or quitting entirely" (Kimura 2016, 13). Moreover, while trying to address the problems of exploitation at the workplace, the other people at the office act to reinforce the culture of overwork and exhaustion necessary for capitalist profit and the ongoing power of biopolitics over the human. People at the office start to bully her calling her a "leftie liberal" and a "regular commie" (Kimura 2016, 13) for her identification with the biopolitically manipulated workers she describes as "younger colleagues who were working all-night mandatory unpaid overtime or straight through their weekends and holidays, black circles under their eyes" (Kimura 2016, 13). When Nishino attempts to stand up to the exploitation of "younger colleagues" she is fired from her job and becomes reduced to an isolated existence in her dark apartment. This experience of isolation, enclosure, and darkness, during which time she endures an ongoing and escalating chauvinism and emotional abuse, shares characteristics with the cattle penned in dark interiors before slaughter. In fact, Nishino's husband suggests that death by suicide is the solution to her lack of usefulness. The emotional abuse from her husband eventually culminates in a violent altercation where her husband reduces her to her reproductive capabilities and finally identifies her as a cow. Keijiro Suga writes of the novella that "all the signs of social and domestic oppression surface in the course of the heroine's narration that encompasses problems of social structure, job, gender, family, her own past, the disparity between Tokyo and the rest of Japan, especially Tohoku, and so on. It all boils down to society's attitude toward life in general, be it animal or human" (Suga 2018, 179). Thus, Suga notes the attitude of society, the manifestation, that is, of the biopolitical manipulation of life as being enforced through social structures

that include work and, it should be particularly noted here, the "disparity between Tokyo and the rest of Japan" (Suga 2018, 179).

Before delving into a more intimate discussion of Nishino's experience of abuse by men and how this connects her to the experience of the systemic abuse of the cattle, this paper will look at the work of Carol J. Adams and Jean O'Malley Halley. O'Malley Halley shows how her personal journey as a girl and then as a woman intersected at various points with the oppression of non-human animals. The abusive male figures in O'Malley Halley's life also harmed and murdered domestic animals. The very intimate details and intertwined narratives of abuse of women and other species are characteristic of many eco-feminists who identify the oppression of animals with the oppression of women. O'Malley Halley and other eco-feminists argue that women are particularly attuned to the suffering of animals because of this shared experience of oppression by the patriarchy. Both Carol J. Adams and Jean O'Malley Halley work across species lines to show the ways in which the power structures that assault, slaughter, objectify, and sexualize women also enact this violence on other animals.

Like Nicole Shukin, in order to give voice to the stories of women and cattle, both Carol J. Adams in *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (1990; 2015) and Jean O'Malley Halley's *The Parallel Lives of Women and Cows: Meat Markets* (2012) work in the area of biopolitics; that is, the manipulation of all animal life and normalization of violence on both women and cattle in order to allow for the continued control and thus exploitation, of the labour, the profit, and the sexuality, of both. Shukin's discussion of rendering thus brings together the material and the symbolic, disallowing the semiotic to replace the material reality of the slaughtered animal with a symbol divorced from the material. Adams argues that it is this process of disengaging from the actual body of the animal, woman, or more-than-human, that allows for the abuse of the human woman and the animal body. Adams shows that through slaughtering the animal becomes the absent referent and that for the human to consume meat, the animal that precedes the meat must cease to exist. The animal that must be there for there to be meat, must be absent from the food (Adams 1990, 66). The absent referent allows the person eating the dead animal to forget about the animal and consume the meat or protein that has filled the absence left by the death of the animal. Adams argues that in the same way that animals are replaced by the absent referent in meat so too the women is made absent in pornography. Thus, Adams argues that "through the function of the absent referent, Western culture constantly renders the material reality of violence controlled and controllable metaphors" (Adams 1990, 67). Notice Adams use "renders" in this discussion as it anticipates the idea of rendering taken up

later by Shukin. To boil down, or even render, Adam's argument, while meat-eating and pornography appear to be discrete forms of violence, they comingle in the absent referent. Patriarchal culture thus must erase both the animal and the woman, such that the fleshy bodies of both are absent in the referents for meat and pornography. While making compelling arguments for shared violence through absent referents, or the biopolitical manipulation and normalization of patriarchal values that promote the guilt-free consumption of both meat and the sexualized body of women in pornography, these arguments fail to entirely overcome the biopolitical manipulation of life. Thus, Carol J. Adams shows the insidious nature of biopolitics in creating the absent referent that renders the embodied material and fleshy subject, human female or more-than-human cow, absent. However, Shukin argues that through a process of rendering both the fleshy subject and the associated semiotics can be made present and forced to comingle and give full presence to the animal. Thus while Adams identifies the problems created for both women and other animals through the absent referent, Shukin identifies a process whereby the semiotic and the material can again be made present. This paper, then, argues that Kimura demonstrates that the cow must be seen as an entity outside of its use value, semiotic or material, and that it is only by introducing and exploring ways of seeing the intrinsic worth of life-as-life—cow-as-cow, in this case—that speciest values can be overcome.

Returning then to Kimura's earlier veiled allusion to cattle in dark pens before slaughter, Nishino, in her darkened apartment, is confronted with a daily and escalating male violence that serves to reinforce her only value as an alienated worker or vessel for childbirth, and not in her life-as-life. Thus, Nishino as a woman becomes increasingly conscious of her alienation as a worker and of her husband's abusive identification of her with the bovine species. The escalating chauvinism and emotional abuse at home culminates in a violent altercation where her husband reduces her to her reproductive capabilities and finally identifies her as a cow. Without her earning power as a worker her husband deems her worthless and suggests "What if you just gave it up. Not as though you get any pleasure out of life, right?" (Kimura 2016, 29). At this point, Nishino begins to seriously consider going to volunteer at the Fortress of Hope, a farm dedicated to preserving the life of cows contaminated by the fallout of 3/11 and ordered to be slaughtered by the government. When she explains to her husband that she would like to help at the Fortress of Hope he responds, "Give it up, give it up. What are you going to do there? You go someplace with that high level of radiation and, you realize, don't you, that you will never be able to have children" (Kimura 2016, 29). Nishino responds rationally and scientifically to this prejudiced and chauvinistic response with the following "That's just not true. That's the kind of bad science that has caused such pain to

the people who live in that region. Think of the people who were in Hiroshima and Nagasaki when those bombs were dropped: there is no proof that the radiation had any effect on their children" (Kimura 2016, 29). Later in the discussion he further reduces her to her reproductive potential when he states "it would be a waste, during the years when you can still give birth, be a full woman and all" (Kimura 2016, 30). While she challenges her reduction to this biological capacity, he further identifies her use value with that of a mere breeder in an attempt to silence her by shouting "Stop talking and eat already, you cow" followed by striking her head with a soup ladle (Kimura 2016, 31). After she screams "That hurt" he responds "A little thing like that? How could that hurt a cow like you?' He struck me again" (Kimura 2016, 32). It is at this point that Nishino identifies an initial crossing over: "I had become cow. With the hooves of my front feet I was skillfully holding the chopsticks and the rice bowl. He was getting angrier and louder, shouting, 'Eat!' A whack of the ladle. 'Eat!' A whack of the ladle 'Eat!' A whack of the ladle. 'Eat!' A whack of the ladle. 'Stop it!' I tried to cry in response, but my voice had become a loud sound that stretched through the apartment: 'Moooooo'" (Kimura 2016, 32). While these incidents of domestic abuse are recounted in the text as memories triggered by her identification across specie lines with the cows she is helping to care for at the Fortress of Hope, it is these discussions that initially cement her resolve to help take care of the cows that society has deemed worthless because their milk and meat is contaminated and can no longer be of use to humans. Nishino defies her husband's condemnation of her as a worthless cow, when she identifies the value of volunteering at the Fortress of Hope to help other cows deemed worthless by the dehumanizing forces of capital. In her first act of defiance she resists acquiescing to mistreatment at her job and then when her husband deems her worthless because she is no longer working and further identifies her only remaining value as her reproductive capacity, she finalizes her escape from the capitalist and patriarchal values by participating in the useless labour of feeding and caring for living beings similarly condemned for their loss of value in the oppressive system that she has only recently escaped.

In her life in Tokyo, Nishino had never been in the presence of cows. Much of her first descriptions of The Fortress of Hope and the cows is at first mediated through technology in the form of the documentary. In fact, when she studies the cows for the first time her thought is immediately that "The documentaries had not conveyed their mass and oppressive presence" (Kimura 2016, 5). In setting foot at the farm for the first time she "let out an involuntary gasp of recognition" (Kimura 2016, 4). While the text does not document her initial encounters and experience with the cattle through cinema, Shukin, drawing on the work of Derrida and Akira Mizuta Lippit, shows how the communication

that takes place between animal and human animal in cinema works "by means of affective transference in the form of the spell-binding gaze between animal and human that Derrida describes as an *animalséance*" (Shukin 2009, 41). This gaze forces a recognition of kinship in the other. Thus the "gasp of recognition" from Nishino and the exchange of gaze in her first seeing of the cattle in person, involves also already the "rapid surges of nonverbal affect long associated in Western culture with an animal's electrifying gaze and sympathetic powers of communicability" (Shukin 2009, 40). Thus, while mediated through technology the affective component of communication between animal and human animal has already taken place and established kinship and is then further established in the sensory encounter at the farm.

The various details leading up to her arrival at the farm are likewise mediated through the technology she uses or perceives to be used at the farm. She views the Fortress of Hope from behind her wheel and through the front glass of her car window. While sitting in the car she thinks of the phone conversation of the night before in relation to the farm. She views the farm equipment, including Caterpillars and tractors, before she sees any living beings, cow or human. She describes the use of her GPS to get to the farm and the information that she is receiving via the technology of the Geiger counter. She notes "for some time now, [it had] been steadily beeping…*Bi-bip*…*Bi-bip*…" (Kimura 2016, 4). She sees the numbers register on the LED screen and then hears the "roar of heavy equipment from the other side of the electric fence" (Kimura 2016, 4). Thus, her first perceptions of the place are mediated through technology, just as her prior understanding of it was derived from images in the media. However, the mediation and distancing of the person from nature through the artificial conduit of technology is eventually broken down for Nishino through the bodily encounters with the living, breathing, shitting, dying, rotting cows. Once she is walking in the fields and closer to the cows, she still compares what she sees and orients herself through technological representations of the farm including "the website map" (Kimura 2016, 6). In seeing the real cows, she employs the metaphor of the photograph to describe the encounter, again distancing herself from the actual experience: "Pretty as a picture, it was, as those cattle trudged steadily forward under the trees" (Kimura 2016, 6). The personal and bodily knowledge that Nishino gradually gains is what brings about her full encounter with the real cattle, and her identification with the cattle as "we" (Kimura 2016, 6). Further, her experience as animal is later emphasized when it is compared to the artificial and performative way in which politicians and famous media personalities mediate and distance themselves through technology from the realities of the living and dying cows. To overcome the indifference facilitated by technology, activists bring attention to the dead animals in the

contamination zone by placing them around the city, thus forcing people to have a real and unmediated encounter.

Nishino describes the first encounter with the cattle at the Fortress of Hope in terms not dissimilar to Mary Louise Pratt's formulation of the *contact zone*, that place where different cultures meet and appraise the other, often in situations of uneven power relations. The encounter is described in human language and from the perspective of Nishino, and thus the exchange is weighted in favour of the human interpretation of the first moment of contact. However, there is also a detailed description offered of the sounds and movements of the cattle, and parts of this description are left untranslated and uninterpreted by the human participant in the encounter. Kimura writes from the perspective of Nishino: "When I looked up again, a group of large unmoving cows were planted directly in front of me. They all stared at me warily, some from the side, some straight on. Again, from the back came a bellowing, like from a conch-shell trumpet. I studied the cattle right in front of me, so close I could hear them breathing. They were huge, oppressive" (Kimura 2016, 5). The encounter is an exchange between the human and the cattle. Nishino looks at the cows and the cows "stared at me" (Kimura 2016, 5). She further interprets the stare as wary, but then moves back into merely descriptive language where she situates the position from which the cows stare. Nishino describes without interpretation the "bellowing" and then further reiterates that she is studying them from a very close range, so close she can hear them breathing. She then observes their size from this range and discusses this as threatening, employing words such as "oppressive" and "menacing," and noting that "If they had any wish to, these four-hundred-plus-kilo creatures could easily have trampled my lightweight body into unrecognizable pieces" (Kimura 2016, 5). While the author notes the possibility afforded the cattle by their size and the size of the human, it should be noted that the language associated with this threat rather emphasizes the treatment of cattle by humans. While the cows could have turned the human into "unrecognizable pieces" it is the human that does this to the cows. In fact, before the contamination of the cattle this was their destiny.

Nishina develops her relationship with the cows in a variety of ways that involve bodily encounters. While technology has made the cows artificial and distant, as soon as she is in the presence of the animals she begins to move towards an understanding of the cows as fellow beings with needs like her own. When she stepped out of her car and thus beyond the technology that encases her and protects her from the nature around her, Nishina "glanced at the ground and gasped. Right there next to my foot, black, curled like a swirling eddy or an ammonite fossil, was a cow patty" (Kimura 2016, 3). She connects the cow patty metaphorically to other ancient and natural objects that belong in nature and

immediately acknowledges that her shock was not a natural response, that "of course, [there are cow patties] it's a cow pasture after all" (Kimura 2016, 3). However, she continues to be wary and "always careful of that pile of shit" (Kimura 2016, 3). Again, it is her first encounter with the animal shit that fully registers her bodily encounter with the animals. Nishina "made off through the mud…but with the first step I gasped. I realized that this mire, although it looked like regular mud, was actually excrement and manure from the cows. Manure that is like mud; it was 'mudshit' (Kimura 2016, 8). The physical encounter with the animal is thus facilitated through the partial immersion and eventually full immersion in the animal waste. The description of her physical encounter with the "mudshit" continues as follows: "As soon as I pulled a boot from the sucking sludge I could see an intense yellow liquid had filled the space I'd left behind. Beyond the puddles it was firmer, a black, ankle-deep muck. It proved surprisingly sticky. I was afraid it would pull the boots right off my feet. All this while trying to sidestep the cow firmly blocking my path" (Kimura 2016, 8-9). After Nishina has passed through the manure she realizes on the other side "that the manure was less vile smelling than expected. A familiar compost smell was in the air, but nothing so strong as a stench" (Kimura 2016, 9). It seems significant that there is a crossing over that takes place and a going through a trial by excrement. In Turner and Turner's work on pilgrimage they would refer to this stage of crossing over as the movement into a liminal stage where the subject is open to becoming other, that is to change and growth through the journey. That Nishina recognizes something familiar and identifies the smell of the shit as less strong and displeasing than expected marks an openness to identification with the other and with her own nature as connected with, and similar to, that of the animal. What follows is Nishina's further immersion in the experience of the other and humbling before the other. Nishina says "I again found myself face-to-face with cow manure" (Kimura 2016, 9). When Nishina starts shovelling the manure she sends it flying and it hits a cow on the head. She immediately apologizes out loud with "I'm so sorry!" (Kimura 2016, 10) and interprets the expression of the cow as follows "In the face of my apology the cow raised his head, blinking with an expression as if to say, 'Unbelievable'" (Kimura 2016, 10). Nishina speaks in this case to the cow, acknowledging her mistake in the form of an apology. She also recognizes the intelligent and indignant expression of the cow in response. Thus, there has been a verbal and non-verbal exchange of information and emotion because of the exchange of shit heaved by Nishina accidentally at the cow. Later she sees the cows gathered in the distance "in front of the carcasses of their fallen comrades. Their heads extended over the fence, sniffing, as if engaged in an act of mourning" (Kimura 2016, 64). Here again she attributes action, thought, and emotion to the cattle in relation to other

cows. In fact, in relation to the death of other cows Nishina observes a collective act of mourning in the form of ritual.

Although Nishina, at this point, is able to observe and interpret the actions and feelings of the cows, she has still not crossed over into, in the terms of Donna Haraway in *When Species Meet* (2008), "becoming with" the cows. Haraway notes in Part I of *When Species Meet* that "Two questions guide this book: (1) Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog? And (2) How is 'becoming with' a practice of becoming worldly?" (Haraway 2008, 3). Haraway continues in the same section, "I think we learn to be worldly from grappling with, rather than generalizing from the ordinary. I am a creature of the mud, not the sky" (Haraway 2008, 3). To become one with the cows Nishina must like the biologist/philosopher Haraway, become a "creature of the mud," and not the "sky" of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy. Nishina must become a "creature of the mud" rather than observing the cows from the distance or "sky" of human abstraction. Nishina accomplishes this "becoming with" when she embraces both the living and the dead cows through an immersion in the muck of their lives. This crossing over into cowness takes place when Nishina is "walking through the muddy, swampy area" (Kimura 2016, 64). In the words of the author, "the earth heaved [and in] the next moment I found myself in the mud, like I had been thrown. I had outstretched both arms to brace myself only to find I was now submerged up to the ears in mud that smelled like pus from a festering abscessed tooth. Some must have gotten in my mouth because a sour, bitter sort of flavor was spreading across my tongue" (Kimura 2016, 64). Nishina is unable to get up out of the muck of excrement and decomposing dead cows and it is while literally stuck in this muck that she realizes her position as being the same as the cows: "I had just become one of those cows…covered in shit and piss beside the melting body of comrades, hollow-eyed and awaiting death" (Kimura 2016, 65). Following this baptism in the life and death of the cows, the pus and shit of their existence, she rises up and confronts the media personality that is filming a nice little piece about the cows. Nishina picks up the shit and shoves it in the famous media person's face shouting "Look at this! Take a good look at this! You see this? This is evidence of life. It is proof of life" (Kimura 2016, 66). As Haraway notes, and as this example illustrates "To be one is always to *become with* many" (Haraway 2008, 4). While the cesium that has condemned the cows to an existence outside of the use value of the cows to humans is invisible, the shit of the cows' existence is a physical presence that can be felt and seen. Nishina, in exalting this proof of life has thus done more than simply cross over into becoming one with the life and death of the cows. She has risen from the muck to proclaim the significance of "this mudshit, this cesium mudshit, this filled-to-the-brim proof-of-cows-that-had-lived-and-had-been-abandoned"

(Kimura 2016, 66). The madness of this identification with the abandoned cows and the need for this proof of the inherent value of all life is at the centre of this text. Nishina's defiance when it comes to the media personality coming in and filming the cows and the workers is her acting as a "we" with the workers and cows in opposition to being used as a thing for media consumption. She is making the mad proclamation that we—all of us—are living beings with value that the media and capitalism ignore and deny. Kimura Yūsuke writes "Radiation may be 'a thing unseen,' but this manure was 'a thing seen' and oppressively so" (Kimura 2016, 57).

Particularly significant to this philosophy of value beyond use in a capitalist economy is the living reminder that the "irradiated cattle" were viewed as "living debris" (Kimura 2016, 59). Sendō, the man keeping the cattle alive, wrote in his book "'They talk about them [the cows] like stuff made in factories'" (Kimura 2016, 59). This observation reminded Nishina of "the temporary staffing company where [she] used to work. We were always talking about 'human resources' or 'human capital,' but these were actual people, and whether for good or ill, they were being used as 'resources'" (Kimura 2016, 59). Tens of thousands of animals had been left to starve and die or were condemned to be slaughtered following 3/11 because they were no longer a resource for the use of humans. Thus, by keeping the animals alive, and further identifying the self as the same animal resource, Sendō and the others caring for the animals are defying the capitalist principals and inherent biopolitical manipulation of all life for gain and profit. Human and cow "are not simply 'resources'" (Kimura 2016, 60). When Nishina realizes her worth and the cows worth while immersed in the shit, she describes seeing the shit as "glittering like gold dust" and "brimming with life and death" (Kimura 2016, 65). Using the metaphor of the shit "glittering like gold dust" employs the stable capitalist measure of value to say that all evidence of life is of value and thus preserving this evidence has value.

In one of Nishina's ponderings about the power relations between humans and cows she wonders: "What if they were to throw off all the yokes that had been placed around their necks by the humans, what if they awoke to all the anger around them? What if they chose to run amok, to fight for their own right to live and for their own dignity?" (Kimura 2016, 64). This idea is not developed in the novella and in fact precedes Nishina's immersion in the shit and realization of the value of all life. However, in many ways this serves as a useful bridge to the work of the Canadian author Robert Moore's 2009 work of poetry *Figuring Ground*, a work whose philosophical perspective and abstract thought engaged in by various cow personae I characterize as something akin to the "sky" philosophy or abstraction of Deleuze and Guattari. In a long poem titled "Excerpt from *The Golden Book of Bovinities,*" Moore works to poetically

reimagine the power relations between farmer and cow and human and cow in a series of untitled stanzas that form the long poem of *The Golden Book of Bovinities*. The following is written from the clearly philosophical perspective of the cows:

> It is said that in the world before this one,
> cows ate men. We hid in their dreams
> and fell upon them while they slept.
> The sobs they made as the instruments
> were handed round struck all who heard them
> as vaguely cow-like. That part was the worst,
> almost too much to bear. And then
> it wasn't. (Moore 2009, 63)

From the perspective of the cows the "sobs" of the humans are "vaguely cow-like," surely a reversal of the common observation that the cries of suffering animals sound like the cries of humans. The cow personae notes that the sounds of the suffering of the slaughtered humans "was the worst,/ almost too much to bear" (Moore 2009, 63). However, the poem concluded simply with "And then / it wasn't" (Moore 2009, 63) making no excuses for the cows becoming able to not be bothered by the suffering of humans. This kind of endurance of the suffering of humans, clearly mirrors the tolerance of humans for causing the suffering of animals. In fact, this poem would seem to echo the acknowledging of the suffering of animals in the slaughterhouse identified by Upton Sinclair more than a hundred years earlier. As Sinclair writes in *The Jungle*, "One could not stand and watch [the slaughtering] very long without becoming philosophical, without beginning to deal in symbols and similes, and to hear the hog-squeal of the universe" (Sinclair 1906, 40).

In the poem that follows Moore continues the thought experiment involved in an alternate history where cows grapple with and eventually justify the mass slaughter of humans in ways that are like human justifications for the slaughter of cows.

> We'd gather them together in enormous corrals
> and try to explain over the loudspeakers
> that it was either them or us. Not once
> did they give us any sign they understood
> or in any way appreciated the time and effort
> that went into what amounted, in fact,
> to a kind of apology. Such creatures, we agreed
> were not only ungrateful but impossibly dim.
> So we tore them limb from limb. (Moore 2009, 63)

Attributing thought, emotion, reason, and feeling to cows is all a part of this "apology" to the human for slaughter by cows. Among the justifications for the slaughter of humans is that they are "ungrateful" and "impossibly dim." The justification of lack of intelligence is often used in imposing the hierarchy of humans above animals. Directly preceding *The Golden Book of Bovinities*, in the final poem of section Two of *Figuring Ground,* "The Old Gods Store Their Eyes in Animal Skulls," refers to the prehistory of cows. The poem opens with the speaker stopping the car to photograph cows beside a graveyard. The connection here between the life and death of cows and the memorializing of human life is made by the photograph, wherein the cows act as groundskeepers for a human cemetery. The second stanza invokes the elegiac season of autumn and the red of bloodshed in lines that read "silent red cattle, fiery autumn dusk / the last of Apollo's sacred herd" (Moore 2009, 53). The third stanza notes "this pasture touched with blood-" and then explicitly invokes slaughter, the knife, and history in the lines "if history's a slaughter-bench now is the knife" (Moore 2009, 53). While the history of cattle does involve slaughter and bloodshed, the "now" of the knife ushers in the present practices of mass slaughter of cattle in the global industrial beef business. Moore therefore establishes violence in the service of rapacious human appetites as central to the collection's theme.

Written from the perspective of the cows, the sextet that follows "The Old Gods Store Their Eyes in Animal Skulls" expands on the "now" by outlining the bare facts of the feedlots and slaughterhouses:

> You'd think weeks in crowded feedlots
> breathing in the acids of heaped manure and remorse,
> waiting day after agonized day to fatten sufficiently
> to have your throat slit while hanging upside down,
> and then be eviscerated while possibly still alive
> would wonderfully focus the mind. (Moore 2009, 62)

The poem concludes abruptly with "Well, yes, as a matter of fact, it does. / But so what" (Moore 2009, 62). The "now" of the knife is here a longer waiting process. The poem mentions the crowded feedlots and the acids of the manure, but also that the air is heavy with emotions of "remorse" (Moore 2009, 62). Moore makes the cows' awareness of the circumstances and foreknowledge of what is to come the body of the poem. The waiting in the poem is as agonizing as the actual cruelty of the process. But this knowledge of what is to come becomes an acute meditation on the suffering of life from bovine minds fully aware and focused. That this agony gives focus to the mind, however, does nothing to change the inevitability of the slaughter or the richness of life preceding it. However, that

Moore gives the cows intellectual and emotional agency raises the question of whether cows are indeed capable of conscious thought. The relationship between the farmer and the cows, and the farmer's children and the cows, suggests that there is more to the mind and being of the cow than the average burger consuming capitalist would like to admit. In fact, humans have so distanced themselves from the reality of the cows that our shared reality, particularly as commodities within a logic of late capitalism, has frequently been obscured. Moore writes, "We suspect that, for men, each day ends up / nicely wrapped in cellophane—its own / individually priced cut of hours" (Moore 2009, 68). For Moore, human life, like the life and death of cattle, is measured as a thing in the capitalist system where "time is money" and the hours of human life itself are a commodity administrated by biopolitical demands. In a further comparison and commodification of human life, the following untitled poem describes a cow hiding in a fast-food restaurant and going undetected because "people can't seem to bring themselves / to make the connection" (Moore 2009, 75). However, another and more pressing reason that a cow flipping burgers would go undetected is because both the human and the cow are commodities in the fast-food business—both are flesh to be consumed, one by the human customer, and one by the corporate enterprise eager to exploit human labour.

Short untitled poem, by short untitled poem, Moore examines the life and death of cows. That the poems are short and untitled reflects in their form the unnamed and indistinguishable lives of cows. The poems are unflinchingly written from the perspective of cows and draw attention to the many contradictions in humans' behavior and language around the use of cows. The poems describe "Every cow" as "a prophet for a new religion" (Moore 2009, 71) and question sayings such as "the milk of human kindness" (Moore 2009, 70). Other poems describe the mass depression of cows and contemplate the various thoughts, feelings, and actions that fill cows' days. Unlike writers such as Leonard Cohen and Isaac Bashevis Singer, Moore never goes so far as the former to call the farmyards "Dachau farmyards" or like the latter in *Enemies: A Love Story,* to note that in "the slaughter of animals and fish …in their behavior toward creatures, all men were Nazis. The smugness with which man could do with other species as he pleased exemplified the most extreme racist theories, the principle that might is right" (Singer 1972, 257). While Moore never condemns the entire human race as completely as Cohen or Singer for the mass murder of animals, he does lay out in poem after poem a feast of animal suffering. According to Cary Wolfe, the locus of Derrida's work on animals, and before him in a footnote to Jeremy Bentham's in *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, the real question when it comes to animals is not whether they can reason or speak, but can they suffer (Wolfe 2010, 63). This question of animal suffering, and

particularly the suffering of cows and human rationalization for making cows suffer, is at the heart of Moore’s work. Moore’s work is moreover an indictment of the human for using reason to cause the cows to suffer and using reason to rationalize the suffering they cause.

Unlike Nishina in *Sacred Cesium Ground*, Moore does not become one with the cows and muck; however, he does urge immersion through meditation in his first poem in “Excerpt From *The Golden Book of Bovinities*” “pretending to be cow” (59). After being guided through a meditative process of metaphorically becoming cow, the reader realizes that the poetic personae responsible for this perspective is bovine. Thus, the writer urges the reader to take the perspective of the cow and the writer takes on the personae of the cow, thus precipitating a long thought experiment in thinking like a cow.

In both works, the authors embark on a journey to better understand the relationship between the human and the cow and to understand the shared experiences of the cow and human. In the case of Kimura Yūsuke, Nishina first becomes cow as a result of her husband’s abuse, and Moore likewise acknowledges the shared experiences of women and cows in the breeding process (Kimura 2016, 66) and when he ends a poem with the following “Little wonder / some of them suffer the name of cow” (Moore 2009, 69). However, Nishina most fully crosses the species barrier to become with the cows through her experience of caring for cows and eventual immersion in the muck of their life and death. In the case of Robert Moore, the narrator is a cow and the reader is urged to pretend to be cow with the bovine narrator. Thus, in both works the reader crosses over the human-cow barrier to hear, think, and feel like cows. But what changes for the human when they cross the species line to feel the suffering of the cows? Where is the milk of human kindness or even the barest of moral responsibility for causing the suffering of a fellow living and breathing species. Whether we are philosophizing about the lives of cows from the muck and mud of their lives with Haraway or the sky of abstraction with Deleuze and Guattari, the cows still suffer and die at the hands of the human.

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BECOMING (NON)HUMAN. ANIMAL REPRESENTATIONS IN THE ATU 514 FAIRY TALE

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ABSTRACT. ***Becoming (Non)Human. Animal Representations in the ATU 514 Fairy Tale.*** Within the rising ecocriticism in literary studies, a valuable resource for reconfiguring what it means to be (non)human is found in fairy tales, featuring animal agency, transspecies interactions, hybridities, and shapeshifting. With this in mind, the present paper tackles the nonhuman imaginary in the Romanian version of the ATU 514 tale type, *i.e.* shift of sex, which clearly deviates from the heroic pattern, since the protagonist is the emperor's daughter, who is cross-dressed and then metamorphosed into Prince Charming. But does this relaxation of gender norms generate a similar disruption of the position of the animal in magical thinking? In a close reading of the fairy tale corpus, human-nonhuman animal relations are examined bidirectionally, focusing on the one hand, on the master initiator's transbiology (the emperor disguised in animal form) and on the other hand, on two opposite anthropomorphic animals (the wise guide vs. the villain, the horse vs. the genie). Through a hybrid methodology, these transgressive possibilities are explored by combining ritualistic-anthropological, corporeal, and psycho-social aspects with current posthuman concerns. Overall, the analysis of such ontologically ambiguous narratives reveals one of the ways in which these old tales can still be read today to subvert traditional anthropocentric structures.

Keywords*: animal studies, fairy tales, posthumanism, ATU 514 tale type, human-animal relations*

REZUMAT. ***A deveni (non)uman. Reprezentări animale în basmul ATU 514.*** În cadrul ecocriticii din studiile literare, basmele reprezintă o resursă valoroasă în reconfigurarea noțiunii de (non)uman, întrucât acordă autonomie personajelor

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animale, favorizează interacțiunile dintre specii și imaginează o paletă largă de hibridități și metamorfoze. În aceasta ramă ideatică, studiul de față urmărește imaginarul non uman din anumite versiuni românești ale basmului ATU 514, *i.e.* schimbare de sex, care deviază în mod evident de la tiparul eroic, având-o ca protagonistă pe fiica cea mică a împăratului, deghizată în băiat și ulterior transformată de-a dreptul în Făt-Frumos. Posibil ca această relaxare a normelor de gen să producă o dislocare similară și în privința poziției animalului în mentalul fantastic? Într-o lectură îndeaproape a corpusului selectat, relațiile dintre uman și non umanul animal sunt examinate bidirecțional, observând, pe de o parte, transbiologia maestrului inițiator (împăratul deghizat în animale), iar pe de altă parte, două animale antropomorfizate cu funcții antitetice în economia basmului (adjuvantul vs. antieroul, calul vs. zmeul). Prin intermediul unei metodologii hibride, aceste posibilități transgresive sunt explorate prin juxtapunerea aspectelor ritualic-antropologice, corporale și psiho-sociale cu preocupări postumaniste actuale. În cele din urmă, analiza acestor narațiuni centrate pe figuri ambigue din punct de vedere ontologic scoate la iveală unul din modurile în care astfel de texte vechi mai pot fi citite și astăzi în cheie subversivă la adresa structurilor antropocentrice tradiționale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *studii despre animale, basm, postumanism, basmul ATU 514, relații om-animal*

A ubiquitous presence in our daily life, nonhuman animals permeate the overwhelming majority of literary discourses, be they within scientific rhetoric or part of a fictional story, in realistic or imaginary representations, intended for adult or young readerships, imparting factual information or having an implicit moral lesson. In fact, our perception, understanding, and interaction with other species is undoubtedly culturally mediated, or better said, conditioned, with literary and other artistic products reinforcing the hegemonic worldview or overtly destabilizing it or both at times. In a general view on the narratives that look beyond the human, folk and fairy tales serve as an excellent narrative laboratory for closely observing posthuman concerns, as the world of fantasy infuses magic into species-specific facts, intermingles unknown elements with familiar ones, and endorses a great deal of species combinations, biomutations, cross-overs, hybridities, cooperative or oppositional multispecies relationships.

Despite a rise in interest in children's literature and culture in recent literary studies, there is still much to be explored and exploited, including the animal imaginary of folk and fairy tales. The fairy tale genre still occupying a peripheral position even within literary and ecocritical research, the pressures

to conform to the normative center are lower and it is precisely this marginality that allows for greater experimentation, more far-fetched imaginary projections, transgressive ambitions, perplexing heterogeneity and altogether subversive scenarios. However, what has been recorded by traditional fairy tale criticism is the reproduction of cosmogonic myths, the staging of rite-like gestures, the portrayal of human archetypes, and all in all, the articulation of folk ethoses, with the later addition of feminist and ecological issues due to the last paradigm shifts.

The present work to cast a new light on these old tales is conducted in the spirit of the research trend that reconsiders samples from the artistic archives in order to question their sustainability, bring them up to date, and expose potential representational gaps and incongruences. In this sense, my paper partially subscribes to this approach, as it takes a retrospective look at one of the most long-lived forms of storytelling and at an equally persistent image, *i.e.* the nonhuman animal in its various forms, but with the purpose of prompting and negotiating new interpretative valences and thus adding ideas of posthumanity to the network of fairy tale meanings and uses, besides mytho-symbolic and ritual-anthropologic ones. Although containing a dose of anthropomorphism, these narratives entail a more profound connection between the human and the nonhuman than other animal-centered stories and implicitly, reimagine animals as more than mere echoes of humanity (Sax 2017, 461; Blount 1975, 23).

Studies on fairy tales usually favor the most notorious ones, an approach which is justified in its way, for stories of Prince Charming and Iliane of the Golden Tresses (Făt-Frumos and Ileana Cosânzeana/Sâmziana) function as cultural memes in today's Romania. Yet, there is the risk of omitting fairy tales with a lower degree of fame and dissemination, but perhaps with a greater subversive potential or relevance for current socio-political debates. Aside from the disproportionate treatment of Romanian fairy tales centered on an active heroine, there is also a bias in literary animal studies worth stressing: an inclination towards a narrow selection of nonhuman animal species, especially those deemed charismatic by the general public (Herman 2018, 7). In a simple explanation, much of this preference for birds and mammals owes to their closeness to the human in everyday real contexts – a relation which is, of course, reproduced in the imaginary realm – which indicates a stronger bond, either in the form of friendship or exploitation (Barcz 2015, 259), as in the case for the hero-horse helper bond.

Referring to the nonhuman animal in such narratives, the thorny representational issue affects not only storytellers engaged in the construction of fairy tale animality, but also critics and scholars juggling with quite a few conceptual options. Among these, anthropocentrism seems to monopolize the interpretative discourse, slotting animals in the role of humanity's double (Barcz 2015, 257) or the externalized version of the animal other within the human

(McHugh 2009, 489; Barcz 2015 253, 257), silenced, subordinated, literarily domesticated. Essentially, far too few attempts have been made to recognize, understand, and assess such fictional creatures as actual agents, and even fewer to pay attention to animal helpers and villains, despite the crucial part they play in the protagonist's quest and in the comprehension of the plot itself (Davidson 2003, 99).

In a blend of these theoretical issues, more-than-human configurations within folk mentality will be investigated here through the ATU 514 tale type, *i.e.* the shift of sex, as cited in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther catalogue (2004, 301-303) in order to emphasize how narratives can – and do – either change or perpetuate certain modes of thinking about the human, the animal, and the intermixtures of the two categories. Despite the intercultural circulation of this story pattern, the scope of analysis is restricted to a few Romanian literary samples which broadly reiterate the same narrative structure (Bîrlea 1966, 149-157, 158-167; Ispirescu 2006, 32-54; Marian 1968, 122-135; Nijloveanu 1982, 76-82, 222-228; Pop-Reteganul 1997, 126-139; Păun and Angelescu 1989, 222-228; Teodorescu 2007, 5-26).[2]

It is true that a substantial number of fairy tales do insert nonhuman figures, with the animal helper and people in animal drag as the most common configurations within the Romanian folk imaginary. Nonetheless, the choice of these gender-bending tales for the study of literary animals is justifiable precisely due to the inherently subversive interpretations it can prompt by promoting a different heroic prototype, namely the emperor's youngest daughter – who, after a series of trials, is transformed into a man.[3] Seeing how female intelligence, curiosity, and physical force are too often constructed in negative terms, while masculine bravery leads to benefic heroic acts, this fluidization of gender ideology carries emancipatory possibilities, straying away from the androcentric formula of Prince Charming saving the princess in distress. In short, the symbolic capital of this tale of feminine heroism is multiplied by activating notions of gender performativity, fluid identity, bodily autonomy, and ongoing becomings, all under the promise of a truly subversive plot, which is only partially fulfilled, as I concluded elsewhere (Kocsis 2021, 290-291).

Given these gaps in research, then, the comparative analysis of the selected corpus attends to different forms of animal manifestation in Romanian folk

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[2] The comparative analysis will emphasize the commonalities shared by these texts and references to individual fragments will be made only when necessary to pinpoint relevant differences. Also, any quotations used to support an argument will be taken from the following English translation: Ispirescu 1917, 241-284, which is closer to the Romanian version.

[3] Among studies that investigate the subversive potential of the ATU 514 fairy tale, the following are worth consulting: Greenhill and Anderson-Grégoire 2014; Pan 2013; Ready 2021.

imaginary. Due to a tolerant attitude towards fluctuating sexual and gender selves in these narratives, the same hypothesis could be applied in the hope of uncovering or even creating a conceptual space where human and animal life are understood as intrinsically intertwined. In the end, such instances of hybridities and crossing-overs disprove the complete separateness of the two spheres. Within this framework, the premise of this paper resides in the active process of becoming more-than-human, pivoting around interpenetrations between the human and the nonhuman animal, interspecies links, possibilities of becoming, ambiguous identities, and marginal positions – as suggested by the title of this essay.

Correlating female identities with nonhuman animal alterities, such a reading of the ATU 514 tale gives voice to peripheral categories dominated by the male gaze within an anthropocentric and androcentric system (Herman 2018, 85). Thus, the main objective of this work is to determine the extent to which a parallel can be drawn between the depiction of male and female social functions and the treatment of literary animals. Particularly, at a textual level, I am interested to see how the unsettling identity of the rider, *i.e.* the emperor's daughter disguised in male clothes, affects the position of her animal helper and in a broader sense, whether the redefinition of gender boundaries (of the human) catalyzes a seism of similar magnitude with regard to the nonhuman.

To broach questions of boundary redistribution, then, the focus of the analysis is two-fold, as it observes transgression in both ways: human shapeshifters and humanoid animal characters. With attention to human-nonhuman trespasses, the emperor disguised in animal form possesses supernatural powers and portrays the father who is the master initiator of his three daughters. Taking it one step further, this autometamorphosis insinuates, from a posthumanist perspective, something more than just animal drag, specifically it is a case of animal trans[4] (a term proposed in Greenhill and Allen 2018) and the relational subject is becoming animal. Conversely, to tease out the connotations given to animal characters that resemble their human interlocutors, two anthropomorphic figures stand out in the ATU 514 storyline: on the one hand, the horse as helper and guide and on the other hand, the *zmeu*[5] together with his maternal variant. In both cases, their relationship with the girl-boy heeds some posthumanist interpretations, as well as mytho-folkloric and symbolic nuances. To problematize anthropomorphism as either beneficial or detrimental, I review notions of

[4] For more on animal trans, see Greenhill 2014; Turner and Greenhill 2012; Murai and Kato 2019.

[5] In brief, *zmeu* designates a typical Romanian dragon-like character, *i.e.* the antagonist, yet different from other dragons in Western literature (see Stanciu 2013; Sax 2013; Hulubaş 2009; Danciu 2017, 2019). The Romanian word will be used sometimes interchangeably with the English version ("dragon," while in Ispirescu 1917 it is referred to as "genie"), but keep in mind this particularity of Romanian folklore.

animal-human interconnectedness, empathy, relationality, animal speech distribution, and agency as a way of recycling fairy tales other than allegorically or psychoanalytically.

"Now, the old emperor was, in truth, a magician."[6] The transspecies human

In a survey of female portraits within the pages of fantastic stories, the daughter-turned-Prince-Charming is certainly a striking presence, belonging to the entourage of warrior virgins, together with Arăpușca and other resembling heroines (Cioancă 2015; Șăineanu 1978). Giving prominence to the youngest daughter as an active female character, this tale of becoming brings an alternative to the stereotypical formative discourses, which are generally centered on a male protagonist. Then, at a textual level, the details of the initiatory journey further stress this idea, in the hope that the animal imaginary, too, reveals the same degree of subversion, deviating from other fairy tale formulas.

To summarize the storyline, as it appears in the majority of the corpus, world harmony is disturbed when the emperor is requested to send one of his sons to serve at another emperor's court – note that the former has no male heirs but three daughters. Thus, in order to save their father's honor, each of them embarks – or at least tries to – on the mission, adopts a masculine appearance, but the eldest and the middle daughters return home after being confronted by their father disguised as fierce animals. It is the youngest who triumphs over the three beasts embodied by the emperor, with the help of the horse from her father's youth. Successfully passing this pre-initiation stage, the girl-boy later acquires another helper, a younger horse, then passes a series of gender tests (generally demanded by *zmeoaica*, who deduces the female sex under men's clothing). At the sovereign's court, another series of trials involves apparently impossible tasks, among which the following are the most relevant: the rescue of Iliane of the Golden Tresses (Ilena Sâmziana/Cosânzeana) from another *zmeu* and its mother and the last test (requested by the recovered princess), which entails stealing a sacred object. Because of the sacrilegious nature of this deed, the object's guardian casts a curse of cosmic proportions, which settles the heroine's previously fluctuating gender identity once and for all by transforming her into a man. As expected, the fairy tale ends with the coronation of the princess-turned-Prince-Charming and his marriage with Iliane, to form the archetypal couple.

By no means restricted to the Romanian space, the ATU 514 folk tale, shift of sex, has circulated in numerous communities, with minimal modification (Pan 2013, 167; Cioancă 2015, 52-55; Kocsis 2021, 278) and the recycled aspects

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[6] Ispirescu 1917, 246.

include: the emperor's political and familial crisis, female inferiority and the advantages of the opposite sex, the act of travesty, the magical horse's impact on the neophyte's identity, gender examination, typical male trials in tripartite structures and finally, the intersexual mutation caused by a curse.

The first stop in the exploration of the nonhuman fairy tale imaginary is the magical transformation of the father into more or less realistic animals in order to probe his daughters' bravery before venturing on the quest. Concerning this sequence, two main interpretation routes are laid out: firstly, by integrating theoretical support from fields such as mythology and anthropology, with an eye to the symbolic connotations of certain textual details in the initiatory journey and likewise, to the father as a shapeshifting initiator (Hulubaș 2009, 276). Secondly, inasmuch as it is not just a simple case of drag by putting on animal skin or fur – just as the girl wearing masculine armor entails something more than cross-dressing – the expansion of the self beyond the human sphere is as real as it can be "even if the animal the human being becomes is not" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 238). Distinct from an imitation or identification with the animal other, such a molecular change is conjugated rather using the verb "become" than "be", so that it actualizes a new mode of subjectivity in a relational, transversal sense, that is in a posthumanist reading of the phenomenon (Marca 2020, 1; Deleuze and Guattari 2005).

Following this line of thought, the first migration between the human and nonhuman realms is found in the context of the bridge trial. It may not always present the father disguised as three different animals waiting for his youngest daughter at three different bridges (made of three types of metal) as it is in the tale collected by Petre Ispirescu – which, I would argue, is the most elaborate version – yet, this sequence surely resembles the staged pattern of primitive pubertal rites of passage, "where becoming itself becomes" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 249). In short, the neophyte is isolated from the familial environment, perhaps even departs on a long journey for this purpose, and his/her identity is neutralized. Next, in the liminal stage he/she engages in test-type situations occurring in the sacred space, as the two diametric principles are reunited within the novice's body, allegorically or actually as in fairy tales. The process ends with the restoration of world balance, the recently initiated subject is aggregated to the community (a return to the profane space).[7] The magical universe of folk tales, as an extension of the ancient myth, is populated by a multitude of characters, some initiated and others on the verge of social and biological puberty, in search of initiatory guides or confronted with malevolent already initiated beings.

7 See Gennep 1960; Eliade 1963.

Under these circumstances, the character who catalyzes the heroine's initiation belongs to the familial space and the opposite sex, even though in the version collected by him, Ion Pop-Reteganul casts an old woman in that role (1997, 128-129). Endowed with supernatural powers, the emperor practically "becomes one with the beast he represents,"[8] symbolically performing the archetypal hero-monster conflict, here reenacted by the youngest daughter and her father in animal skin. In fact, the progress from the brass bridge to the silver and golden one is coupled with an identical movement in the animals acted out by the master initiator, which are more and more ferocious and less and less plausible: wolf, lion, many-headed dragon (Kocsis 2021, 282). The latter evidently belongs to the world of fantasy, but as a matter of fact, even a real interspecies interaction always prompts two identities in human perception: on the one hand, the animal being perceived and on the other one, what is left unseen by the human eye, for its inner self and the gaps are filled by imagination (Sax 2013, 61).

Although this may be true, there is nothing make-believe or frivolous about the emperor's auto-metamorphosis, because even from the beginning, before having crossed over to the animal side, the subject can be conceived as an amalgamation of heterogeneous elements waiting to enter "the contact zone" (Haraway 2008, 4) or "zone of proximity" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 274) with other matters and agents. In and of himself, the shapeshifting man occupies a liminal space or better said, "a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities" (249). Therefore, the act of zoomorphization brings forth multiple conceptualizations of the human-animal closeness, such as restoration of the inherent animality, lying in a latent state within the emperor, or of a preternatural connection between the species. When discussing a similar episode in another sample taken from children's literature, Amy Ratelle, too, detects this puzzling identity of the one making the ontological and epistemological leap, a neither-nor state (2015, 63). An equally valid option is rendering this zoo-travesty as exemplification of the notion of biomutation: the entanglement between the human and nonhuman domains resembles more "a kind of replacement-change" than a one-plus-one-equals-two type of hybridity, as stressed by David Herman (2018, 51).

Moreover, in the absence of any textual clues indicating filiation between the human and the animals to which he is transforming (wolf, lion, dragon), the "becoming with" on affective grounds (Haraway 2008, 16) is not entirely supported within the ATU 514 plot, but this does not exclude, though, a physical and metaphysical contact on a higher level, an alliance between two species, not individuals, two multiplicities involved in an involutionary, rhizomatic exchange (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 238-239).

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[8] Hulubaş 2009, 275, "devine una cu fiara reprezentată" (my translation)

In any case, corroborating the mythological-anthropological aspects of the paternal guide and the act of zoomorphism with fragments taken from current theories in the field of animal studies articulates a transversal poetics. In this vein, the initial ontological state of the emperor and the new condition accessed after the metamorphosis is done, both pale in comparison with the importance granted to the intermediate phase of the process of becoming. Assuming a nonhuman appearance to test the three daughters further problematizes the very idea of transition, that in-betweenness postulated by Deleuze and Guattari as the core of becoming (animal) molecular (2005, 293). Accordingly, the interpenetration between human molecules and other species decentralizes the former in an ecosystemic view, establishes a network of interconnected selves and others, and dismantles the strict demarcations between nature and culture, in the name of a natureculture type of coexistence (Haraway 2003, 8). Having met forms of otherness, neither party remains unchanged, just as the heroine is definitely altered after the combat with the three animal-obstacles, besides having proven herself apt for the next stages of the initiation rite. With categorical frontiers being disrupted, this occurrence of animal drag performed by the emperor with shamanic powers engages the human in a non-hierarchical exchange, where the self is defined in a continuous relationship with the nonhuman. So, in a post-anthropocentric vision, it coagulates the defining elements of the posthuman subject, always in relation and changing (Ratelle 2015, 13; Marca 2020, 1-2) – engaged in a system similar to that proposed by Fawcett, that is personalism, where "humans are continuous with nature and not the most important member" (1989, 15).

"Only listen to me."[9] The nonhuman companion

If the previous part of the analysis dealt with the multifaceted human-animal mutation, the following section tackles the nonhuman animal as supported by two anthropomorphic projections in the ATU 514 tales, albeit recurrent in other Romanian wonder tales: the horse and the *zmeu-zmeoaică* pair, the helper and the epitome of evil. Irrespective of their status within the plot, these secondary characters constitute a crucial presence throughout the heroine's initiation and, equally important, they thematize notions of animal agency and anthropocentrism, besides the already discussed human-nonhuman intersections.

Before delving into the above-mentioned animal occurrences, some remarks on anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism in children's literature are noteworthy, as points of reference for this discussion. It is not only that our perception and understanding of real life animals is heavily reliant on cultural

[9] Ispirescu 1917, 263.

products depicting such images, but also that the nonhuman animal is frequently employed in a symbolical sense to represent, decode and resolve human-specific experiences, so that literary representations of animality reflect paradigm shifts, be it in the form of interspecies mutations or hybrid identities (Sax 2013, 46). Hence, there is an on-going debate within academia whether stories featuring nonhuman characters and entanglements with the human reinforce an anthropocentric view (Barcz 2015, 267), or potentially promote a biocentric mindset (Greenhill and Allen 2018, 227).

Whether one argument is favored over the other, what is clear is that the connotations carried by anthropomorphism are in no way clearly delineated as either beneficial or counterproductive even within animal studies. Having said that, it could be viewed as a necessary means of making sense of the world, combining factual information with imaginary humanoid animals, the known and the unknown, to explore what is beyond immediate perception with the help of fantasy (Bortolussi 1986, 36). Being so "good to think with," in Lévi-Strauss's words (1991, 83), nonhuman characters with human attributes might uncover issues and transmit values related more to the human domain than the life of actual animals (Ratelle 2015, 63). From the point of view of psychonarratology, nonhuman-focused narratives and images facilitate children's identification, as they assimilate (human) moral tenets via human-like animals (Ratelle 2015, 10; Herman 2018, 68; Sax 2013, 46) as much as they use human experiences as a template for understanding other forms of being (Bettelheim 1974, 46). Returning to the making of imaginary animals, anthropomorphism appears to be a prerequisite of the phenomenon, having an affective basis found in cross-species empathy, a sort of biophilia, or even child-like kindness (Ratelle 2015, 7-9; Sax 2018, 44, 60) or simply, it sheds light on some unknown aspects of animals (Barcz 2015, 267; Herman 2018, 6).

Setting up my analysis along these lines, it becomes quite obvious that reading the animal guide and antagonist in the ATU 514 text is both annexed to an allegorical vision – conveying moral lessons – and extended beyond anthropocentrism – animal agency, companionship – marking a zone of convergence between the two realms. In order of appearance, the magical horse is a continuation of paternal advice beyond the borders of the kingdom, a more involved version of the master initiator. With strong mythical ties to other stallions from heroic epics (Ellis Davidson 2003, 100) and to the solar principle, it channels symbolic undertones of traditional masculinity, compared to the girl-boy's fluid gender.

In an overview of the corpus, in most cases two distinct horses intervene in the protagonist's actions, the one that would accompany and aid the emperor in his past adventures and another one, a younger version of the

first one. No matter the number of such supernatural characters or even their species – as in one of the tales there is a dog instead (Bîrlea 1966, 154-155) – what matters most is the role of spiritual guide and the assistance offered along the way, as maintained by Propp (2009, 82). In accordance with the majority of male-oriented fairy tales, the anthropomorphized nonhuman constitutes a source of absolute knowledge and at the same time a depository of magical objects, all in all, the animal mystagogue, expert strategist, endowed with unlimited power.

Adopting here a more species-focused approach, the fact that the horse from her father's youth remained unused for a long time resulted in the loss of vitality, a physical degradation that reflects not the economic functionality of the horse, but oddly enough, the animal's need to be of service to its master, its human counterpart, in heroic deeds. After being taken care of and fed wonder food, the rusty horse is rejuvenated, who in some versions even solicits the daughter to take an additional test of wit (Teodorescu 2007, 10). The symbolic potential invested in the Făt-Frumos-horse dyad in mytho-folkloric thinking is here reproduced by the heroine's ability to recognize her animal double, in a hidden corner in the regal stables, and strengthened by the fact that both the youngest daughter and "the decrepit old beast" (Ispirescu 1917, 286) are posited as the misfit, the underdog among their peers, utterly underestimated, but triumphant in the end (Călinescu 2006, 166).

This amounts to the conceptualization of the nonhuman animal, in the example of the two steeds, as a mirror of its rider and in a broader sense, bearer of human traditional values. In view of this, the second horse inserted in these texts represents an index of the (masculine) solar principle, by virtue of its name, Sunbeam (Galben-de-Soare and other variations) and is an indirect sign for the imminence of the girl-boy's gender and sex shift. Still, the horse's interventions are decisive throughout the androgynous phase of initiation, urging the main character to repress any feminine impulses to guarantee that the male disguise is as convincing as possible (Kocsis 2021, 283).

Taking into consideration the afore-discussed details raises the question – how does the non-conforming, fluctuating gender of the neophyte disturb the position of the literary animal? In other words, one of my working assumptions is that the ATU 514 tale type prompts a spectral understanding of gender role distribution that can induce a likewise open perception of the nonhuman. Based on subordination in the patriarchal human-centered system, links between women and animals have already been established numerous times (Herman 2018, 85; Kadyrbekova 2018, 411), for imaginative anthropomorphism can give voice and power to underprivileged categories. In this sense, the mythical lineage of these narratives (Eliade 1963) engenders rather non-anthropocentric

scenarios, tributary to the ancient belief in human-nature communion, which is resuscitated in contemporary animal studies.

As long as the interactive relationship between the caballine guide and the androgynous heroine emphasizes the incompetence of the novice and the expertise of the steed, the model of "companion species" (Haraway 2008, 16), based on reciprocity and equality, is more accurate herein than a traditionally hierarchical master-animal rapport. Rather surprisingly, at times the magical horses display considerably more assertion, seeing how in most texts the human character rarely takes initiative and acts only after consulting her instructors. Set against a psychological background, the helpers' behavior too can be measured in terms of agency, as they contain all the criteria charted by Steward: bodily possession, the development of some form of subjectivity, also self-control over instinctual drives and acting out of their own will above environmental stimuli (2009, 14-16). Perhaps the most edifying moments of autonomy are those when it is the horse who initiates the conversation, devises the best strategy to carry out the tripartite tasks or even when the transvestite's words are summarized indirectly, while the horse's are rendered as such.

With human-like qualities extending as far as verbal abilities in fairy tale horses and other species, the communicational gap with humans is bridged and similarities are fortified, "animals talk quite naturally, answering humans back and being accepted as semi-equals" (Blount 1975, 24). Being given a voice equals being recognized as having a certain degree of power, along the lines of Bottigheimer's assessment of discourse as "a form of domination, and speech (…) as an index of social values and the distribution of power within a society" (1987, 51). The Derridean distinction between animal language as mere reaction and proper response has stirred up polarizing debates in the field (Derrida 2008, 8), but perhaps factoring in the notion of companion animals, the marvelous horses too hold a certain "point of view regarding [the human]" (11). For this reason, not every anthropomorphic instance is to be judged as monopolizing, effacing the animal's standpoint; instead, the present corpus seems to picture the nonhuman helpers as active participants in the heroic deeds, not as mere bystanders. This is confirmed by the cardinal role of the steeds as wise counselors and decision-makers, with a tremendous influence on the heroine's formative process, voicing their opinions and being truly respected. For each obstacle encountered in their travels, the horse, without hesitation, utters the optimal solution to it. As for the repetition of the imperative "listen to me" (Ispirescu 1917, 252, 262-263) multiple times, it carries the presumption that the horse would not be otherwise listened to by the young heroine or, in a more empowering reading, it proves an unusual self-awareness of the helper, which realizes its own indispensability as companion animal.

After all, the nonhuman animal still acts independently, even cast in the helper role, it gives instructions, and initiates action as the emperor's daughter finds herself incapable of surmounting the trials and executing the tasks demanded by the sovereign emperor or Iliane. For the most part, this model of the nonhuman undermines the restricted view on imaginary animals as nothing more than indicators of human potentiality and axiology, in order to reframe them in terms of agency, activity, and power. Thus, destabilizing anthropocentrism is coupled with empowering the nonhuman animal – similarly to Kadyrbekova's conclusions (2018) – whose position within magical thinking and the real context is renegotiated. A humanized portrayal of the animal can indeed be beneficial in some ways; assuredly it is better than no animal representation at all (Herman 2018, 6). As previously highlighted, the hybridization of human and nonhuman elements illustrated by the fairy tale helper challenges and redesigns ontological borders to envisage unity in biodiversity. In an ecosystemic conviction, animals are extrapolated as actual co-creators and participants in culture (McHugh 2009, 490), as partners of humans, since the two domains, in fact, collaborate towards the same goal, be it defeating evil forces in fantasy or leading a peaceful life in reality.

"There they met the genie."[10] The humanoid dragon

Since fairy tales are by no means detached from the cultural-historical context, neither is their conception about the nonhuman animal, as factual data and fragments of the collective imaginary are incorporated in fantastic projections. In view of the situations found in the ATU 514 texts, tales abounding with nonhuman elements not only reveal the permeability between subject and otherness, the continuous change as a way of existence, but also refer to the coexistence with animals as "a structure of being-in-the-world" – one of Derrida's inferences (2008, 79). Correspondingly, the story world also contains adversaries which are zoomorphic and anthropomorphic characters that do not abide by ethical norms and are automatically indexed to the principle of evil – an idea that underscores the function of imaginary animals as reflectors of human values and defects.

This is all the more evident when focusing on the Romanian representation of *zmeu*, an anthropomorphized ophidian, a dragon-like being that is widely regarded as an amalgamation of repressed human qualities and actions. Taking a closer look at the Romanian samples of ATU 514, discrepancies in number and gender arise: in some texts there is only one, the typical princess-kidnapper,

[10] Ispirescu 1917, 275.

meanwhile others introduce a second one accompanied by its mother, entourages of genies or even two quasi-identical ones that ask the heroine to settle a conflict and choose which one of them will live. It is interesting to note that this is the case for the Ispirescu rendering, but not for the rest of the corpus, where the duo varies in species: deer-lion (Teodorescu 2007), deer-dragon (Pop-Reteganul 1997), shepherd-dragon (Nijloveanu 1982; Marian 1986) – species inconsistency reflected also on the beast's mother. Invariably, the girl-boy favors the one promising to grant her a new horse, as counseled by her current helper, but in the case of species differences, she saves precisely the creature pertaining to evil in Romanian folklore, for "traditional dragons [here, *zmeu*] are notoriously evil where regular animals [here, deer] are not" (Midkiff 2014, 44).

Beyond these dissimilarities, this mythical creature's race remains ambiguous, especially referring to the Romanian *zmeu*, which, much like other Slavic ones, accumulates both human and nonhuman qualities – the former in terms of appearance, speech, mundane activities, and affectivity towards human princesses (Stanciu 2013, 96-98). Derived from anomalous births of animals and humans alike and the religious notion of unclean animals, such monstrous creatures are the epitome of alterity in most tales (Sax 2013, 95-96, 117). To clarify, the Romanian genie is classified as an ophidian character, at the top of the scale of infernal, telluric beings, above the snake and the *balaur* (Hulubaș 2009, 112-113). Besides the anthropological assessment, others emphasize its mythological ancestry, going as far as considering it a maniacal fallen God, trying to surround itself with adulating subjects (Danciu 2017, 86).

Whilst this dragon is the archetypal nemesis of the hero in the typical Făt-Frumos plots, the maternal version constitutes the other facet of the diptych of femininity in Romanian folklore, *i.e.* the negative double of the princess, comparable to the stepmother from other cultures. Here too the evil mother symbolizes female activity, physical strength, hideous appearance, uncontrollable instincts, and hyperbolized motherly protection. Although with a nonhuman identity, the Romanian she-dragon is reminiscent of the more earthly Aphrodite Pandemos, in other fairy tales promoting open sexuality (Danciu 2019, 59).

As might be expected, psychological interpretations engendered by such mythical meanings posit it as the negative of the human moral image, which is what contemporary anthropocentric observations attempt to surpass by focusing rather on issues of identity, corporality, and multispecies dynamics. In the ATU 514 tales with multiple dragon occurrences, such as the one collected by Ispirescu, meeting the girl-boy raises polarizing reactions: the *zmeu* might be tricked by his savior's masculine aspect, but the *zmeoaică* is already planning her son's marriage to the transvestite, intuiting the female sex under disguise. Even though the *zmeu* is bound to fail, its ability to execute human actions and

act on its desire to marry Iliane manifest selfhood and non-instinctive actions from Steward's list of criteria of agency (2009). On the contrary, the second *zmeu*'s mother in the story seems to possess a lower level of self-control, because of the fact that the girl-boy stealing Iliane from the hands of her son arouses a mortal apoplectic attack (Hulubaș 2009, 115).

As one of the primary indicators of power within a narrative, the capacity to voice its opinions and wants means that this nonhuman character too is an animal agent. Invisible if silenced, "dragons (…) could not exist without language" (Midkiff 2014, 44), which makes speech quantity and quality all the more significant. In particular, the Ispirescu version does not include direct speech uttered by the dragons, with the exception of one instance: the two *zmei* addressing the heroine to ask for her help (Ispirescu 2006, 40). Even though most of the conversations in this text are indirectly reported, in other renderings, conversations between the genie and its mother during the gender examination are reproduced verbatim (Nijloveanu 1982, 78) and the English translation features same-species dialogue between the two (Ispirescu 1917, 260).

As a result, this disproportionate distribution echoes the general perception of unconventional humans, symbolically speaking, and hybrid species, from a posthuman stance. The supernatural adversaries unquestionably denote the unsettling side of heterogeneous identities as a humanized monster, parallel to the hero/-ine. As for the latter, the coexistence of two in one is only temporarily tolerated by traditional heteronormativity and a gender transformation is imperative for the neophyte to rejoin the community. But that is not the case for the anthropomorphized villain, which cannot change its species via an initiation rite and is banished to the periphery in folk mentality as the embodiment of evil forces.

On balance, the presence of supernatural destroyers in the marvelous realm prefigures the fight of the fairy tale hero, male or female, with the Otherworld monster. Related to anomalous human or nonhuman subjects found in nature, such characters comprise a potpourri of human defects, undesirable attitudes, and behaviors prohibited by social norms, a mixture signaled through physical appearance, species heterogeneity and moral connotations carried by the Romanian *zmeu*. Surveying the mythological-psychological symbolism generally associated with these characters in change-of-sex fairy tales, unfortunately, reveals an even greater temptation toward considering them distorted mirrors, shadows of humanity, anti-models for the reader. However, this androcentric view on semi-human animals can be gradually overcome by recognizing and evaluating aspects of agency. For all that, the Romanian dragon and its variants provide valuable insights into how deviant structures are perceived in the real world, because in both gender variants, both the *zmeu* and its mother, illustrate

the negative perception on species-queer individuals who are automatically indexed under the principle of evil, as the blurring of interspecies frontiers is deemed uncomfortable.

Blurred lines

In the last analysis, by juxtaposing current posthumanist concerns with traditional interpretations of old tales, the assessment of literary animals in the Romanian versions of the ATU 514 tale type, *i.e.* shift of sex, admits the fact that both zoomorphic shifts and anthropomorphic animals are circumscribed to the human world, but also proposes alternatives to "unidirectional species thinking" (Greenhill and Allen 2018, 230). With ontological boundaries disintegrating and engaging in more complex human-nonhuman relationships, animal characters can be perceived as something more than just mirrors of human virtues, by rejecting a reductionist understanding of selfhood as only human and including other agents in gender- and "species-queer, posthuman, and transbiological" fairy tales (Greenhill and Allen 2018, 227).

Retracing the above arguments, the emphasis moves from the idea of being (fixed, eternal, immutable) to the evolutionary process implied by becoming (fluctuating, flexible, mutable) and this is the first step in reimagining heterogeneous individuals in terms of species and their encounters with other life forms. Thus, what comes under question is not only the conceptual barrier between the human and nonhuman realms, but the very idea of disconnectedness and hierarchical structures (Barcz 2015, 256). At a textual level, possibilities of relational ontologies are found in aspects related to the emperor's animal disguise and metamorphosis, together with an anthropomorphic diptych, the helper and the antagonist, with imagination filling in gaps in knowledge about the animals.

Apart from the human-animal characters within the stories, the methodology here employed is equally hybridized, through the comparative observation of the selected texts to indicate the mythical lineage of the species-bending characters, their anthropological importance throughout the pubertal rite of passage, and frequently associated psychological interpretations. In an interdisciplinary approach, the fusion of fairy tale criticism and animal studies illuminates different layers of meaning going beyond traditional readings, seeing that such tales provide the raw materials for a posthumanist commentary on multispecies structures. On the other hand, the latter resuscitates these old stories, updating them even in a post-anthropocentric manner.

To summarize the preliminary findings, first, the master initiator's mutation actualizes the nonhuman other within the human, in the name of interconnectedness and permeability. This reframes the act of animal drag with

mainly anthropological and symbolic functions as animal trans in a mytho-posthuman sense. Broadly speaking, the voluntary and temporary quality of the metamorphosis evinces becoming as the essential way of being in the world, not as a unique occurrence, and posits the subject as transversal, relational. Second, human-nonhuman intimacy is exemplified by the heroic dyad, the girl-boy and her horse(s) and the archetypal unbeatable duo corresponds to the notions of Derridean companion species or Haraway's significant otherness based on mutual affection, respect, and dependence. This kind of anthropomorphism "expresses something we receive from the animal, when we are situated together in mutual understanding" (Ratelle 2015, 1), subscribing to a posthumanism centered on human-nonhuman similarities, while the fairy-tale adversary marks rather the discrepancies between the two. Third, the other animal agent, the *zmeu*, illustrates the demonized hybrid, an unsettling identity, which is why its animalistic traits seem to prevail over the human ones, to keep with the uncanny and the dark side of mankind (Midkiff 2014, 45). Extrapolating, both animal agents participate not only in the initiation process within the plot or in the dialogues through the text, but also in cultural creation in the nonfictional world, belonging to nature (the wild dragon) and culture (the trusty horse companion) at the same time (Sax 2017, 468).

To give an answer to my research question regarding the potential overlap between transgender change and cross-species entanglements, both a gender- and animal-focused analysis report a certain fascination towards the eventuality of transgressing one's initial condition by reaching sexual maturity via a rite or by interacting with animal otherness. With attention to the humanoid animals, at times more agency is allotted to the steed than its androgynous rider, whose quest would have failed without the helper's intervention. To ignore monster-like characters reinforces species bias, for the dragons clearly partake much less in the dialogue than the trusty horse. There is also the gender implication of a she-dragon that epitomizes feminine physical superiority and the social stigma that comes with it in a patriarchal society. Consequently, the same Romanian fairy tales that can be read as channeling gender fluidity and performance can also envision the collapse of interspecies boundaries. For this reason, imaginary animals are the ideal test subjects on which to probe reconceptualizations of gender and the (non)human and fairy tales are the laboratory for testing the challenging and redrawing the limits of seemingly separate, impenetrable domains, feminine-masculine, human-nonhuman, nature-culture.

In essence, exorcising human-centered considerations – more precisely, allegorical and moralizing values that have been attributed to animal characters in most fairy tales – is not yet entirely possible when reading such narratives. The present essay seeks to destabilize such views, with reference to the ATU

514 tales, an interesting deviation from the usual Romanian formula. Although writing or collecting these narratives has undoubtedly been calibrated to the past cultural and ideological circumstances, reading varies from one paradigm to another, as today we can retrieve them from the archives and reread them subversively. And perhaps the moral lesson hereby imparted – if there is any – is precisely that becoming and being with the animal define the principal state of being in the world.

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EXPERIMENTAL BODIES: ANIMALS, SCIENCE, AND COLLECTIVITY IN CONTEMPORARY SHORT-FORM FICTION

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ABSTRACT. ***Experimental Bodies: Animals, Science, and Collectivity in Contemporary Short-Form Fiction.*** In the relatively short time since its establishment as an area of research, literary animal studies has become a burgeoning field covering a significant amount of intellectual terrain: traversing, for example, thousands of years of history and an array of human-animal encounters like pet ownership and breeding, hunting, farming, and biotechnology. However, few scholars have focused their attention on "experimental animals"—that is, animals used in experiments within and beyond laboratories—and fewer still have investigated the aesthetic and ethical challenges of representing these animals (and literary animals more generally) as collectives. This article uses the polysemy of "the experimental" to think together innovative literary forms and descriptions of scientific research and experimentation. In particular, it considers some of the tensions that arise in literary experiments that feature representations of animal collectives in science. In place of an in-depth study of a single text, I draw on Natalia Cecire's vocabulary (2019) of the "flash" to explore how Tania Hershman's short story "Grounded: God Glows" (2017), Karen Joy Fowler's "Us" (2013), and an excerpt from Thalia Field's *Bird Lovers, Backyard* (2010) constitute an ecology of experimental texts which, when considered alongside one another, highlight patterns of animal multiplicity and movement. Foregrounding literary strategies like fragmentation, we-narrative, and synecdoche and juxtaposition, I argue that snapshots of animal collectives in Hershman, Fowler, and Field accumulate into a shimmering and hybrid multitude of bodies resistant to uncritical forms of literary anthropomorphism *and* impersonal scientific practices that frequently transform such bodies into readable and interpretable "data."

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REZUMAT. ***Corpuri experimentale: animalele, știința și colectivitatea în proza scurtă contemporană.*** În timpul relativ scurt de la înființarea acestui domeniu de cercetare, studiile literare despre animale au avansat semnificativ pe teren intelectual, traversând milenii de întâlniri între om și animal, și surprinzând aspecte precum proprietatea asupra animalelor de companie și reproducerea acestora, vânătoarea, agricultura și biotehnologia. Cu toate acestea, puțini cercetători și-au concentrat atenția asupra animalelor experimentale – cu alte cuvinte, asupra animalelor utilizate în experimente în interiorul și în afara laboratoarelor. Și mai puțini au investigat provocările estetice și etice ale reprezentării colective a acestor animale (și a animalelor literare în general). În articolul de față, mă folosesc de polisemia „experimentalului" pentru a gândi împreună forme literare inovatoare și descrieri ale cercetării științifice și experimentării. Specific, mă refer la unele dintre tensiunile care apar în gândirea despre experimentele literare ce conțin reprezentări de colectivități de animale în știință. În loc de un studiu aprofundat al unui singur text, recurg la vocabularul prozei „flash" al Nataliei Cecire (2019) pentru a arăta modul în care povestirile „Grounded: God Glows" (2107) de Tania Hershman, „Us" (2013) de Karen Joy Fowler, precum și un fragment din *Bird Lovers, Backyard* (2010) de Thalia Field constituie o ecologie a textelor experimentale care, luate unul lângă celălat, evidențiază modele ale multiplicității și mișcării animaliere. Recurgând la strategii literare precum fragmentarea, narațiunea colectivă, sinecdocă și juxtapunere, susțin că, spre deosebire de genul de „roman experimental" pe care îl avea în vedere Zola, care își domină subiectul/subiecții dintr-o privire, instantaneele colectivităților animaliere din textele lui Hershman, Fowler și Field se acumulează formând o colectivitate fulgurantă și hibridă de corpuri care se opun impersonalizării și generalizării unei „metode experimentale" – metodă ce caută adesea să transforme asemenea corpuri în date lizibile și interpretabile.

Cuvinte-cheie: *animale de laborator, experimentare, flash, formă, fragmentare, narațiuni colective, sinecdocă, juxtapunere*

Introduction: Animal Collectives

In the third and final part of Yōko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* (2014 trans. 2016) zookeeper Matthias stares into the eyes of the young polar bear Knut: "…your eyes aren't empty mirrors," he says, "you reflect human beings.

I hope this doesn't make you mortally unhappy" (187).[2] In each section of Tawada's curious book, generations of polar bears 'reflect' humanness: standing in as symbols for migrant experience and anthropogenic climate change as well as performing human desire in circus acts and zoo exhibitions. The bears in Tawada's book tell their own stories and her use of anthropomorphism, or the endowment of nonhumans with human traits, is a device common to representations of literary animals. Yet, rather than a type of straightforward and uncritical anthropomorphism that risks erasing animals and animal experience, Tawada's bears dance across what Lars Bernaerts et al. have called a "double dialectic" of "empathy and defamiliarization" (69). These literary animals

> prompt readers to project human experience onto creatures and objects that are not conventionally expected to have that kind of perspective (in other words, readers "empathize" and "naturalize"); at the same time, readers have to acknowledge the otherness of non-human narrators, who may question (defamiliarize) some of readers' assumptions and expectations about human life and consciousness. (69)

The bears' status as metaphors and visible, readable 'objects' of spectacle is both enabled and challenged by a form of nonhuman focalization that navigates this double dialectic. As the three bears grapple with the human worlds around them, they simultaneously perform and defamiliarize the humans reflected in their gaze: "Matthias loved to say hello to Knut 'nose to nose,' while Knut disliked it. Every time, he found himself worrying about Matthias, whose human nose lacked moisture. If an animal had a nose as dry as Matthias's it would probably be a sign of illness" (186).

I use this brief gloss of Tawada's work to introduce this essay's key concern: investigating the ways in which short-form, experimental literature negotiates some of the aesthetic and ethical challenges of representing literary animal collectives. Rather than a type of simultaneous vocalization of collectivity Natalya Bekhta has labelled "we-narration" (2017, 2020), Tawada's bears narrate, to use Susan S. Lanser's terminology (1992, 21), "sequentially," creating a sense of ursine community through the accumulation of their stories and, more abstractly, through their status as symbols and species representatives. Chiming with Knut's reflective eyes, this essay offers narratological readings of three

[2] The third section of Tawada's book, "Memories of the North Pole," is a fictional rendering of a real-life bear of the same name who was rejected by his mother and raised by humans in the Berlin Zoo from 2006-2011. At the age of just four years old, Knut suffered a seizure that led to his drowning. The seizure is now thought to have been caused by an autoimmune inflammation typically found in humans ("anti-NMDA receptor encephalitis")—a fact which has led researchers to consider testing human treatments on animals (Amos 2015, n.p.).

nonhuman collectives that negotiate fuzzy boundaries between the human/ animal and the individual/multiple. In place of circus and zoo animals who are often highly visible, I look instead to the comparatively 'unseen' and 'invisible' bodies of animals in laboratory spaces.

Within critical literary scholarship, animal collectives have received relatively little attention. While a number of narratologists have begun to investigate forms of human collective narration, Dominic O'Key and Marco Caracciolo are, to the best of my knowledge, the only two scholars to turn their gaze on nonhuman animals who narrate and/or act in the plural.[3] In "Animal Collectives" (2020)—an essay also citing Tawada's collective of bears—O'Key argues that despite "the fact that billions of animals live out a collective species life, in flocks and herds and swarms," there exists a paucity of examples of Anglophone novels that feature a collective nonhuman animal narrator (81). Indeed, he is unable to identify "a single long-form narrative voiced by an animal collective" (125). The reason for this absence is, according to O'Key, the "individuating logics" of novelistic form (2020, 75), and, we might add, its well-charted "anthropomorphic bias" (Fludernik 1996, 9). Where the novel falls short, O'Key finds in poetry and short-form prose instances of collective animal narration, noting as examples Les Murray's "Pigs," Margaret Atwood's "Song of the Worms," and Karen Joy Fowler's "Us." What is interesting about O'Key's survey is its focus on collective enunciation. While likely beyond the scope of his essay, the examples cited do not allow for speculation about forms of nonhuman collectivity that exist prior to or beyond enunciation. This raises the question: Does a focus on 'voice' risk anthropomorphically limiting our recognition of nonhuman collectivity? And, if so, what might the alternatives look like? Caracciolo's essay, "Flocking Together" (2020), offers a preliminary response by tracing three different forms of representing nonhuman animal collectivity in literary prose: like O'Key, he considers "animals that embrace a collective 'we' to critique the individualism of contemporary society," while also investigating "animals that function as a collective agent" and "animals that communicate a shared mind through dance-like movements" (239).

This essay draws inspiration from O'Key's and Caracciolo's work to consider the representational possibilities for literary animal collectives. At the same time, it develops this work in a specific context by investigating animal

[3] For more examples of narratology's growing interest in collective narration, see Susan S. Lanser's *Fictions of Authority* (1992), Uri Margolin's "Telling in the Plural" (2000), Alan Palmer's *Social Minds in the Novel* (2000), Monika Fludernik's "The Many in Action and Though: Towards a Poetics of the Collective in Narrative" (2017), and Natalya Bekhta's influential "We-Narratives: The Distinctiveness of Collective Narration" (2017) and *We Narratives: Collective Storytelling in Contemporary Fiction* (2020).

multitudes in short-form, experimental writing—writing that tangles visuality, literature, and science. Here I place side-by-side three different literary texts that feature 'flashes' of nonhuman collectivity in representations of science. The examples are notable for their brevity and fragmentation, for their interest in the visual, or what Roman Bartosch calls "gaze moments"—the "fleeting yet forceful moments of creaturely recognition [involving] a reciprocal gaze between human and nonhuman characters" (2017, 220).[4] In place of an in-depth study of a single text, I consider how Tania Hershman's short story "Grounded: God Glows" (2017), Karen Joy Fowler's "Us" (2013), and an excerpt from Thalia Field's *Bird Lovers, Backyard* (2010) constitute an ecology of experimental texts from which certain rhythms of relation emerge. More specifically, across these texts, snapshots of animal collectives accumulate to create a shimmering image of the nonhuman which foregrounds patterns of animal multiplicity and movement.[5] This movement operates both within and across textual bounds: animals interacting with and modifying their storyworlds, and the motion of e*motion* as affect moves across textual and species boundaries—a move that creates both empathy and defamiliarization in readerly experience. All readings are framed by a broad notion of 'the experimental' and I use the concept's polysemy to think together innovative literary forms which refuse, or play with the limits of, anthropomorphism, and descriptions of scientific research and experimentation.

Experimental Gazes and Flashes

Within the relatively recent "animal turn" (Ritvo 2007) of cultural and literary scholarship, the nonhuman gaze has played a recurring role in theorizing both real and literary animals. Indeed, "[t]he word theory," as Philip Armstrong writes, "comes from the Greek theōrein, to gaze upon: our theories about things are intimately related to how we look at them" (Armstrong 2011, 175). As evidenced by a brief trek through the theoretical terrain of human-animal philosophy and criticism, the gaze of the animal has a certain, and enduring, gravitational pull. Scholarship in cultural animal studies (CAS) often draws on

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[4] In focusing on these short texts and their 'gaze moments,' I am inspired by Roman Bartosch's (2017) investigation of literary representations of *brief* transspecies encounters which nevertheless have significant "narrative impact" (160). He looks at the role literary forms play in "the creation of affect" and "short moments of 'epiphany,' in which the human and animal met and exchange gazes as points of entry for creaturely interpretive and affective response" (2017, 160). While this essay borrows a number of key concepts from Bartosch's approach, it differs in its focus on the role that particular formal features play in expressing the epistemic virtue of the flash, or insight-at-a-glance into human-animal relations in scientific contexts.

[5] This essay does not look explicitly at examples of human-animal relationships in 'flash fiction'; however, the form would be very likely be amenable to the arguments I develop here.

philosophical works like Levinas' ethics of the face of the Other (cf. Atterton and Wright 2019) and Derrida's vulnerability in front of the gaze of his cat (2008). In cultural and literary studies, John Berger's oft-cited "Why Look at Animals" (1980) proposes an "abyss of noncomprehension" between human and animal, while a more recent counter-essay by Anat Pick, "Why Not Look at Animals" (2015), raises concerns about animal privacy. Literary animal studies scholarship frequently engages directly or tangentially with the common (and contentious) anthropocentric assumption that animals

> are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them, is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. (Berger 16)[6]

Zooming in further still, narratological approaches to literary animals frequently consider how narration and focalization might offer insight into and approximate animal experientiality—including animals' capacity to 'look back' at the human (Herman 2011 and 2018; McHugh 2011; Bernaerts et al. 2014; Caracciolo 2016, ch. 5). Similarly, description—traditionally (though not exclusively) read in opposition to narrative—has been discussed as the "visual" in narration, associated with techniques like ekphrasis and the tableaux (D. P. Fowler 1991; Beaujour 1981). With its vocabulary of lenses, frames of reference, illuminations, observations, highlights, reflections, obfuscations, and foreshadowing, it is difficult to detach literary criticism more generally from ways of seeing, from taking certain views or perspectives. However, when brought into conversation with research from Science and Technology Studies, this emphasis on the centrality of vision in (transspecies) encounters and interpretive processes risks reinforcing boundaries like subject/object, active/passive, human/animal (cf. Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 95-122). Largely, this relates to vision's reputation in Anglophone culture as "the least embodied of the senses," as "the human sense most associated by scientists and philosophers with objective knowledge, and the one most associated by poets and prophets with the transcendental imagination" (Waugh 2009, 132). The technical or scientific gaze—a "view from nowhere" (Nagel 1989)—is cultivated in practice through the use of various technologies and instruments and rhetorically via writing which relies heavily on passive grammatical constructions that erase human and nonhuman animal actors. One might challenge the 'distance' of the (scientific) gaze by reading the visual sensory modality as

[6] See for example Wendy Woodward's *The Animal Gaze: Animal Subjectivities in Southern African Narratives* (2008) and Jutta Ittner's "Who's Looking? The Animal Gaze in the Fiction of Brigette Kronauer and Clarice Lispector" (*Figuring Animals* 2005).

haptic—as a form of touch-look Eva Hayward labels "fingeryeyes" (2010).[7] However, instead of attending to the haptic quality of the gaze, this essay considers how the accusations generally levelled against 'the scientific gaze'—its reductiveness, distance, and depersonalization—might be productively taken up and transformed when read through the instantaneous, condensed, and accumulative tendencies of a way of reading I call, following Natalia Cecire's work in *Experimental: American Literature and the Aesthetics of* Knowledge (2019), 'the flash.'

For Cecire, 'the flash' forms part of her literary-cultural attempt to think through the ways in which literature and science meet and muddle in the concept and practice of 'the experimental.' In literary studies the term 'experimental' "has long been recognized as […] contentious" and "difficult-to-define," associated with a kind of "scienciness," "newness, innovation, invention" and an interest in "language's purchase on reality" (Cecire 2019, 29; 57). While literary experimentation is often treated formally, this essay also takes into account experimentation on the level of content; for example, literary representations of laboratory spaces. The ability of 'experimentation' to semantically float in the way it does is largely related to a process of abstraction that began in an especially concentrated manner in the nineteenth century. In places like England, France, and the US, scientific experimentalism was progressively detached from the material conditions of 'the experiment' as scientists increasingly gravitated towards the idea of a 'scientific method' portable and translatable across not only different fields of science, but also—some claimed—across disciplines (Cecire 2019, 51). In one of the most notable examples of such a 'translation,' author Émile Zola attempted to put the methods of science to work in the fictional domain. In his 1880 (trans. 1893) essay "The Experimental Novel," Zola asks, "Is experiment possible in literature, in which up to the present time observation alone has been employed?" (1893, 6). Where observation is associated with 'mere' representation, experimentation involves *intervention* (Cecire 2019, 73). Zola cites approvingly nineteenth-century vivisectionist Claude Bernard's contention that the methods of experimental medicine "will result in dispersing from science all individual views, to replace them by impersonal and general theories, which will be, as in other sciences, but a regular co-ordination deduced from the facts furnished by experiment" (Bernard in Zola 1893, 45). For Zola, this meant a type of novel that would master its subject(s) and depict its processes and findings in general and impersonal terms. Despite its hype, however, the notion of a consistent, abstract,

[7] Fingeryeyes is, for Hayward, a type of haptic-optic gaze, or 'touch-look.' It describes the "synaesthetic quality of materialized sensation"—moments in which "senses are amalgamated, superimposed" (2010, 580). For more on how Hayward's concept might be employed in a reading of literary descriptions of animals used in science, see Lambert 2021.

and portable scientific method—one rid of individual views and oriented towards the impersonal and general—was essentially nineteenth-century "propaganda" (Cecire 2019, 10); instead, 'the scientific method' was a mental model, a collection of ideal practices and postures through which a scientific self could be both cultivated and represented.

It is important to note experimentalism's distinct meanings and consequences for literature and science—namely, that fact that textual bodies are vastly different to lived, fleshy ones. However, it remains possible to track across disciplines the patterns of some of these 'ideal practices and postures.' According to science historians Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, loose blueprints through which individuals attempt to cultivate a scientific self can be understood as "epistemic virtues" (2007). Like 'the experimental,' epistemic virtues are sites of convergence—between, primarily, the epistemological and ethical. In one sense, epistemic virtues are (like moral virtues) understood as character traits desirable for knowledge production and acquisition—they are principles and norms "internalized and enforced by appeal to ethical values as well as to pragmatic efficacy in securing knowledge" (Daston and Galison 2007, 40–41). While changeable across history, common contemporary examples include precision and objectivity, as well as creativity and attentiveness (Daston and Galison 2007, 43).

Cecire's work focuses on 'flash,' 'objectivity,' 'precision,' and 'contact'—virtues that overlap with (and contradict) one another. In this essay, I work with 'flash' alone. The 'flash' is, for Cecire, the epistemic virtue bound up with population dynamics, with an interest in collectivity and species-level thinking. To clarify the link between the flash and the social body, Cecire turns to the nineteenth-century's fascination with the crowd and the stirrings of a field that would later be called sociology.[8] As a nebulous mass, the crowd is in constant motion—something unable to be captured via large-scale statistical information. While there's undisputable value in the kinds of insights afforded by statistical, quantifiable studies of populations, the knowledge afforded by the flash is distinct: it emphasizes the object of study as "temporally specific, changeable, and likely to change over time" (Cecire 2019, 93). Importantly, flash not a method but is instead "a set of values aimed at the management of information, and especially too much information" (Cecire 2019, 89). With its instantaneous and momentary illumination of the opaque, it is temporally tied to brevity and to a

[8] As examples, Cecire touches on Walter Benjamin's reading of Poe's "The Man of the Crowd" (1840), Henry Bowditch Pickering's image *A Group of Saxon Soldiers and Their Composite* (circa 1892), Jacob Riis's woodcut-illustrated newspaper essay "Flashes from the Slums: Pictures Taken in Dark Places by the Lightning Process" (1888), and geographer Henry Gannett's work on the 1880, 1890, and 1900 statistical atlases for the US Censuses.

certain reductiveness. However, this reductiveness does not, contra Susan Sontag's critique of photography, produce a mimetic miniature of reality, but is instead closer to Ezra Pound's "luminous detail" (1911, 130)—a detail that "doesn't begin to describe the whole, and yet it's all you need to know" (Cecire 2019, 121). For Cecire, flash orbits around qualities of "condensation, instantaneity, and chiaroscuro," or contrasts between light and dark (2019, 127). By combining an epistemological desire for a "comprehensive and accurate view of the whole" with the ethico-political desire to "see the 'big picture,'" flash takes on its status as an epistemological value (Cecire 2019, 16). Put another way, flash describes an aspiration to obtain a *sense* of the whole (for example, a certain collective or a population) at a glance. Introducing the vocabulary of the flash to an investigation of literary animal collectives allows me to attach fleeting textual encounters to epistemological and ethical concerns—a move that opens onto questions like: how are animal collectives represented and what kind of insight (if any) do we get from a writerly and readerly 'glance,' from fleeting transspecies 'gaze moments'? What kind of resistances might we find to this way of looking?

In what follows, I investigate the potential to read fragmentation, 'we-narration,' and synecdoche and juxtaposition as formal manifestations of 'gaze moments,' as 'flashes' expressing an associated epistemological and ethical desiderata for comprehensiveness and the ability to "see the big picture," or to see animal collectivity at a glance (Cecire 2019, 16). On the one hand, formal manifestations of qualities like instantaneousness and condensation evoke the scientific gaze (with the aforementioned critiques that attend it). Yet, when viewed together, the 'gaze moments' of these literary texts draw attention to a fundamental ontological ambivalence that inheres in human-animal relations in experimental settings. In both scientific and literary contexts, experimentalism often reflects an awareness of its own artificiality. I thus increasingly draw out the non-mimetic quality of these 'flash' encounters, emphasizing the "luminous details" or insights we can gain from self-consciously artificial texts that do not seek to portray animal experientiality through anthropomorphism or an *Umwelt* representation of nonhuman consciousness, but instead linger on the transspecies insights or 'epiphanies' specific to fictional encounters (Herman 2011; 2018).[9]

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[9] *Umwelt* is a term proposed by the German-Estonian philosopher-biologist Jakob von Uexküll to describe the potential to "figur[e] the lived, phenomenal worlds […] of creatures whose organismic structure differs from our own" (Herman 2011, 159). It is a way of conceptualizing what perceptual cues *matter* to a creature in its environment and the ways in which its body is equipped to engage with certain environmental stimuli. For a critique of *Umwelt* and seeming *objective* representations of "what it is like" to be a particular animal, see Thomas Nagel's famous essay "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" (1974). Here Nagel argues that our understanding of nonhuman experience will always be

Fragmentation: "God Glows"

Published in 2017, Tania Hershman's short story collection *Some of Us Glow More Than Others* explores the relationship between change and uncertainty—especially feelings ushered in by the increasing entanglement of science and technology in our contemporary moment. These are strange and captivating stories: the language is scientifically precise, yet often tends to sensation over comprehension. Here I argue that 'flashes' of insight into nonhuman collectives are just as much affective as informational (in the sense of quantifiable data)—indeed, the reading here demonstrates that insight is also to be found in what refuses illumination. From Hershman's collection of vignettes, I turn to a fragment within a fragment: "God Glows" from the first section "Grounded." In "God Glows," readers meet Emmylene, a woman who, we learn from textual cues, seeks refuge in a nunnery from an unspecified romantic event of the past. Across the text's eight pages, religion and science rub up against one another. Before becoming a nun, Emmylene was a physicist; feeling drawn back to science, she convinces the monastery's Mother Superior to allow her to conduct biological research. To undertake this work, Emmylene orders a lab coat and equipment, as well as "a cage of knockout mice" (13)—animals whose genes have been 'turned off' or replaced with an artificial piece of DNA sequence. The story "God Glows" is a brief one and the mice's role in it is relatively minor. However, despite—or maybe because of—this fleetingness, the mice help me to explore issues related to the power dynamics of an epistemic virtue like the flash, which seeks population knowledge, or knowledge about a species, at a glance.

In contrast to the other two texts explored in this essay, Hershman's interest in collectivity operates on a higher level of abstraction—namely, that of genetics. This interest in genetics appears in a number of places: in Emmylene's experiments, in references to Gregor Johann Mendel (1822–1884)—a friar who was the first person to scientifically study genetics— and in the presence of the knockout mice. In one of her first experiments, Emmylene "decides to extract some DNA" (14) following a protocol she's printed out for work on a line of HeLa cells.[10] A couple of pages later, as she fiddles with her pipettes, Emmylene is "startled" when "the word 'Mendel' comes into her head" (16). While Emmylene is taken by surprise, Hershman gently foreshadows Mendel's appearance by

limited by the human mind and sensory-motor differences (439; Caracciolo 2016, 143). Indeed, as Marco Caracciolo reminds us, "literature does not provide tools to validate insights into animal experience—it can only offer imaginary reconstructions whose perceived plausibility reflects the biases (and limitations) of the human imagination" (2016, 144).

[10] For more on the life of Henrietta Lacks and the ethically-problematic use of her cells in research, see Skloot 2010.

planting a reference to peas just the page before (Emmylene speaks, "spearing a pea" [15]). In his research, Mendel explored the concept of 'trait inheritance' by breeding pea plants and tracking certain characteristics like the plant's color and size. In the moment he appears, Emmylene is positioned as an 'inheritor' of Mendel's legacy, with his monastic title evoking a sense of paternal lineage: while at first startled, Emmylene then "understands. He had his peas, she has her lab. Father Gregor" (16). In place of peas, Emmylene's lab houses HeLa cells and knockout mice. While the HeLa cells raise their own important ethical questions (largely related to consent), here I consider how the knockout mice are portrayed as both a concentrated and resistant site of genetic 'information.'

In biomedical laboratories, animals are frequently bound up with practices of condensing multiplicity to facilitate insight at a glance. In his well-known study of neurobiological research, Michael Lynch charts how in the moment of their "sacrifice" laboratory animals undergo a conversion from "naturalistic" or fleshy, material creatures to disembodied, analytic, and interpretable data (1988). In a great number of cases, informational data is politically and ethically productive (and essential); however, practices of 'sacrifice' in the lab frequently translate animal bodies into 'readable,' two-dimensional information in ways that troublingly obfuscate their presence and sentience.[11] To ensure the (nonhuman) crowd is made legible, the 'sacrifice' facilitates the animal's conversion into 'readable,' two-dimensional information. Yet, as Simone Dennis points out, this bifurcation of the animal between pre- and post- sacrifice overlooks a reality in which animals are reduced to readable, informational bodies long before their death in an experiment (2011, 85). From around the 1970s, Waugh notes, "the burgeoning sciences of molecular biology and the discourses of cultural and literary theory became obsessed with an understanding of the body as 'written,' as text" (133)—a view that was reinforced in 2000 when the Human Genome Sequencing Consortium published a report which "spell[ed] out the very 'grammar' of the human body as a string of three billion letters, proclaimed as the recipe for knowing, and therefore creating, a human self" (Waugh 2009, 136).[12] While Mendel studied inheritance, biologists now also study the behavior and function of DNA on the levels of the cell, organism, and population. Depending on the research, knockout mice cut across all of these scales. By modifying DNA, scientists are able to isolate particular genes and investigate their operation(s). Emmylene for example, watches an instructional video "…looking for a particular gene that she knows is definitely activated in the mice" (17). However, in contrast to the body of the frog with

[11] For an example of a study that explores these tendencies of rhetorical erasure, see Migeon 2014.

[12] The National Human Genome Research Institute specifies that the "complete DNA instruction book, or genome, for a human contains about 3 billion bases and about 20,000 genes on 23 pairs of chromosomes" (August 24, 2020, n.p.)

which the story opens—a body "slit open" for the touch-look of "prying fingers" (13)—Emmylene's encounters with the mice are characterized by opacity and a seeming inversion of biomedical 'gaze moments.'

It is possible to locate the flash's tendencies of "condensation" in a "literary register" (Cecire 2019, 105). We might imagine, for example, an omnipresent godlike perspective, a panoramic view, or the sweeping and instantaneous military *coup d'oeil* (Cecire 2019, 105). Both the title and monastic setting of Hershman's text gesture to an awareness of the ways in which ideals of omnipresence permeate both religious and scientific thinking and rhetoric. In the domain of science, the all-seeing gaze we find in Psalm 139 ("even the darkness will not be dark to you") translates as what Donna Haraway has called "the god trick"—the capacity "of seeing everything from nowhere" (1988, 581).[13] Like God, the scientist's ability to modify nonhuman bodies (Mendel's peas; genetically-modified mice) denotes "not only omniscience but also ultimate *creative* power" (Dennis 2011, 77, original emphasis). "God Glows," however, refuses the dynamic in which a scientist gazes upon, reads, and writes experimental bodies. Instead, the story both inverts and obscures this gaze: "She starts to write to her biochemist friend, while wearing her lab coat, watched by her red-eyed mice" (16) and "She wriggles out of the lab coat and stands for a while in her underwear. The mice scurry" (17). Throughout, the mice remain to Emmylene both "unreadable" and, often, invisible: they "eat, then vanish within the mounds of hay in their cage" (16).

In place of readable nonhuman animal bodies, "God Glows" experiments with 'gaze moments' in which animals appear to intervene in and destabilize acts of transcription:

> The mice, bolder, stare at her. Emmylene is looking for.
> Looking. For.
> Looking. (19)

Before this moment, the knockout mice appear in set-pieces that position their behaviour as a reaction to human action:

> She puts her pen down. The mice scurry. (16)
> And then they're [Emmylene and Immelda] laughing so hard Emmylene thinks she might choke. The mice scrabble. (19)

[13] As Haraway has noted, scientists themselves don't proport this visual mastery or an all-encompassing objective view. Objectivity is instead another epistemic virtue cultivated through particular "techniques of the self" (Daston and Galison 2007, 381). One is, Haraway notes with self-conscious "disciplinary chauvinism," more likely to run up against the notion that objectivity actually exists and that scientists "act […] on the ideological doctrines of disembodied scientific objectivity" in a field like philosophy (1988, 576).

The fragmentation of Emmylene's language of "looking" seems to invert pre-established "grammars" of transspecies relationality (Beer 1983, xxviii): the grammatical position of Emmylene's looking suggests that both this and the attendant linguistic fragmentation are causally-related to the mice's gaze. Hershman pushes this further still. Towards the end of the story, we realize that at work here is not a simple inversion of a 'gaze moment'; instead, it is a total destabilization of the metaphorical mapping between textual and biological bodies.

In the penultimate scene, Emmylene gathers the other nuns to give a PowerPoint presentation of her experimental findings. She's collected blood from herself and Sister Immelda and projects an image of her cells on the screen.

> Mother Superior is smiling. "You are keeping us most wonderfully in suspense, child. What have you discovered in the blood?"
> "Love," whispers Emmylene, and her hands find each other, fingers knitting together, and she is crying. (21)

In reading her cells, the Emmylene presents a 'finding' that is affective rather than analytic—a move which makes explicit the story's consistent, if subtle, challenge to reading (textual) bodies. We find this challenge in, for instance, Emmylene's often fragmented and vague focalization and in the fleeting and ambiguous encounters with the knockout mice.

The unreadability of animal and human bodies in Hershman's story highlights the limits of vision, suggesting that flashes of insight also comprise feeling. In biomedical research, the metaphor of the readable body plays a key role in the use of animals as models. The "written body" facilitates translation and substitution: if the body is information alone, alphabetical patterns of genetic code, "then what carries the information ceases to matter" (Waugh 2009, 138). Mice, comprised of almost exactly the same 'text' as humans, can be read as humans (and, in an unlikely scenario, vice versa). In "God Glows," however, Hershman's staccato-like sentences, linguistic fragmentation, and inversions of 'gaze moments' transmit an awareness that "objects of study" (both human and nonhuman) always have an element of unreadability; they are "agential and functionally uncontainable except by surprise, in the briefest of instants" (Cecire 2019, 98). In the spaces in between what we see—the shimmer or chiaroscuro-like play of opacity and illumination, knowledge and ignorance—is something which exceeds both analytic reduction and linguistic representation:

> Later, Emmylene makes a list in her notebook. She puts down "taking blood" and then a dash, and that space, the one following the dash seems to scream at her. Why? it shouts. Why blood? What would you do with all that blood? Why would you take needles, look at their arms, look at their skin. Puncture. Puncture. The word rolls around in her mind. Sharpness. A stab. (17)

In Hershman's text, affect punctuates even scientific inscription. Markings on the page scream and deform, reminding readers that 'information' is never separate from bodies or affects. In its resistance to 'readable bodies' and emphasis of a shared transspecies occupancy of a visual field in which humans' status as subjects and objects of the gaze shimmers and blurs, "God Glows" offers a flash of feeling rather than fact—a feeling which is, like DNA, frequently shared. In what follows, I turn to a text which features a collective nonhuman narrator who more explicitly expresses what we might read as genetic memory—memory that stretches across both time and space.

We-Narration: "Us"

The flash is, as noted, bound up with an interest in capturing and condensing the dynamic fluctuations of a collective. It "supplements the crowd's unreadability by giving the crowd a readable face" (Cecire 2019, 122). With its use of a technique Natalya Bekhta has labelled "we-narration" (Bekhta 2017; 2020), Karen Joy Fowler's short story "Us" (2013) condenses time, space, and a multiplicity of bodies into a single readable 'face' or 'flash': the narratorial "we" of a collective of Berkeley rats. According to Bekhta, "we-narration" involves

> the narrator speaking, acting, and thinking as a collective narrative agent and possessing a collective subjectivity, which a narrative performatively creates and maintains throughout its course. [...] [T]he we-narrator is a collective character narrator whose voice does not imply an "I." (2020, 11)

As O'Key notes, Fowler's "Us" is one of the very few Anglophone prose texts to use "we-narration" for a nonhuman animal collective—a fact which likely relates both to formal conventions and writerly wariness. As Marco Caracciolo cautions, "[t]here are good reasons for shying away from groups: after all, categorical thinking carries the inherent risk of depersonalizing animals" (Caracciolo 2020, 242). Rather than looking at how "we-narration" might avoid this danger, however it is possible to read the 'flash's' tendencies for 'depersonalization' and reductiveness as effective strategies for mirroring the transformation animals undergo in laboratories. Indeed, it is the very paradox of this reductiveness which creates unstable and flickering transspecies boundaries. I develop this idea by reading the anthropomorphism and artificiality of Fowler's "we-narrative" in the context of the (literary) laboratory.

Despite spanning just five pages, "Us" is broken down further still into seven different subtitled snippets—all of which offer a collage of collectivity that condenses both time and space—a brief study in how "animals function dynamically in human cultures across the span of time" (McHugh et al. 10). The

second section, "Diaspora," takes readers back to what is likely a recollection of fifteenth-century colonialism: "In those dim and distant days, when famine came […] we took off together, boarded your ships and sailed in all directions. Our DNA is a map of your migrations" (481). Within the first sentence, the narrator sets up a division between the vocalizing "we" and the readerly "you." However, it's not until the fourth section, "You and Your Records" that the identity of the "we" is revealed via a memory of how many of "us" perished in a "raticide" (482). Despite the linguistic division between "you" and "us," for the duration of the story, human and rat—like the aforementioned DNA—wrap around one another. In fact, the story literalizes this metaphor in the final section, "The Post-Rat," where readers learn that the specific rats they are being addressed by are "hybrids": rats with a bit of human "thrown in" (485). In the very first section, these hybrid "Berkeley rats" give this relationship a visual referent: "No one else so often mistakes a mirror for a window" (481). The rats, in other words, are not bodies to be looked through but instead reflect back the human in important ways—ways that both facilitate and trouble scientific 'progress.' As we glimpsed in Tawada's text, this 'reflection' of the human opens onto questions of anthropomorphism—or the projection of human traits onto the animal. Nearly all studies of literary representations of animal consciousness and voice must at some point address questions of anthropomorphism.[14] Yet, a representation of a laboratory animal, especially a genetically modified rat, part-animal, part-human, complicates a reductive reading of anthropomorphism as the simple mapping of human traits onto the animal. Instead, Fowler's "Us" uses anthropomorphism self-reflectively to draw the reader's attention to multiple levels of artificiality: of the literary animal, the modified real-world animal bodies it depicts, and the appearance of transspecies boundaries.

With necessary caution and awareness of difference, the literary anthropomorphism of animal voice in "Us" is tied to a reality of physiological mirroring and indeterminacy in biomedical laboratories. Where O'Key argues that "despite being a we-narrative, Fowler positions 'Us' *against* its 'we,'" I would counter that the story's final lines muddy this linguistic differentiation. The hybrid animals we encounter have so much of the human put into them it becomes difficult to differentiate between "us" and "them": "Already we don't know if this is our thought or yours" (485). While in general I would agree with Marlene Karlsson Marcussen's contention that to "anthropomorphize is not purely a mirroring of human forms in things" (2021, 45), in Fowler's text the device leans heavily into this function. Reflection *is* in many ways the justification

[14] While it is beyond the purview of this essay to offer a detailed exploration of the rich and complicated topic of anthropomorphism in literary animal studies, excellent work on the affordances and limitations of the strategy can be found in De Waal (1999), Greg Garrard (2011, 157), and Jon Hegglund (2021).

underlying humans' use of animals in biomedical research. However, reflection in Fowler's text is a two-way street, a reality mirrored in the form of the text itself: in the beginning, readers are told how rats played a role in the plague, which resulted in a significant number of human and animal deaths. In the end, however, it is humans who are carriers of potential infection: "You keep us in quarantine now, isolated from most human contact, because the more of your DNA we carry, the more fragile we are. Your filthy presence threatens us with fatal infections. We hope you see the irony" (485). In this inversion, Fowler brings into dialogue mirroring on the levels of both content and form.

Within the story itself humans refuse the transspecies exchange of looks Bartosch labels a "gaze moment":

> The walls of our world are opaque, because you don't like it when we look at you. You still hear us, incessantly gnawing on our own teeth. The nails on our feet tick like clocks as we move about on the steel floors of our homes. In your eternal light, we ask ourselves philosophical questions. What happens next? How much human DNA does it take to make a human? What are you like in the wild? (Fowler 485)

Readers are, however, offered no such reprieve from this hybrid gaze. With self-conscious artificiality, Fowler's "Us" creates multiple levels of ontological uncertainty: between the textual and the real, and between the human and the animal. How much, readers are forced to consider, "DNA does it take to make a human?" And, how much humanness needs to be 'added' to a literary animal to erase a story's anthropomorphism? Fowler's text functions as a limit case in studies of anthropomorphism, where the "narratorial 'we'" is artificially and intentionally made human to such an extent that we are forced to consider how far the designation of anthropomorphism stretches. By drawing attention to its levels of constructedness, "Us" lands readers in a place of ambivalence—yet, these ambivalences allow us to appreciate the specific affordances of fiction's artificial, constructed status.[15] In Fowler's text what we have is not a mimetic representation of the real but a flash of insight specific to fiction—a form capable of producing a 'readable face' from the sprawling years and geographies of human-rat relations.

Synecdoche and Juxtaposition: "This Crime Has a Name"

Where Fowler leaves us in confusion about the ontological status of the collective we are addressed by, the narrator of "This Crime Has a Name," the third chapter of Thalia Field's *Bird Lovers, Backyard* (2010), leaves no such doubt.[16]

[15] For more on the 'ambivalence' of laboratory mice and rats, see Dennis (2011).
[16] This chapter of *BLB* was also published as a stand-alone piece in *Angelaki* vol. 14, no. 2, 2009.

Field's work is frequently described as 'experimental' due to its striking use of formal innovation and ambitious conceptual and philosophical scope. On both the levels of content and form, *Bird Lovers, Backyard* (*BLB*) stages an encounter between literary and scientific writing. As Jan Baetens and Éric Trudel observe in their attentive and insightful reading of *BLB*, the text does so by assuming "the form of a fuzzy set of fragments belonging to a whole (or perhaps a constellation of wholes) that itself remains incomplete and elusive" (2014, 605). These fragments vary in text type; we find, for example, "observation reports" of human-animal relationships; critical commentary on major ethologists and philosophers; as well as "various attempts to fictionally reconstruct or imagine acts of animal observation, either from the point of view of the human observer or from that of the observed animal" (Baetens and Trudel 2014, 602). Of these, "This Crime Has a Name" is an example of the latter—an attempt to fictionally reconstruct the observations of one particular animal: the now-extinct dusky seaside sparrow. A striking feature of this chapter is that the bird does not 'speak' to humans, but instead *writes.* Further, he does so with the register and authority of a scientist. "Between Air and Space," the sparrow informs us, is "something that has been on [his] mind for many years. Straight talk between organisms might add value for the speaker, or for the receiver—but not many birds write papers" (31). Contra the 'unreadable' animal gaze we find in Hershman's text, the sparrow's observations are exceedingly comprehensible (Derrida 2008). At the same time, however, Field's narrator poses a challenge to the familiar rubrics and categories of narratological theorization on nonhuman animals. Baetens and Trudel explain that the narrator of "This Crime Has a Name"

> is light years away from all known literary attempts to invent an animal narrator, be it in the traditional anthropomorphic style or in the more ecocritically correct contextual *Umwelt* approach (to take two extreme positions of the spectrum established by Herman). The bird, who clearly is not the humanized animal we might imagine in our fables and parables, does not speak as a bird; rather, it expresses itself as a human being and writes as a scientist. (2014, 606)

In Field's text, the desideratum of the flash to 'see the big picture' manifests in the literary techniques of synecdoche and juxtaposition. More specifically, the sparrow's body is both an individual and a species, and the juxtaposition of the bird and (as we will see) the Apollo 11 moon landing, creates an analogical shimmering, or flickering, of multispecies networks.

Previously native to the marshes of Merritt Island—along the St. Johns River in Titusville, Florida—the dusky seaside sparrow began to suffer significant losses to its population with the introduction of mosquito control programs and the building of the Kennedy Space Center. By 1980, what were

thought to be the last remaining six male dusky sparrows—the last female was sighted ten years prior—were captured and taken to Walt Disney World's Discovery Island.[17] To distinguish them, each was designated a color: Red, Blue, Orange, White, Yellow, and Green. For a number of years, those involved in the Disney program carried out tests and breeding experiments with genetically similar species; these were, however, largely unsuccessful and in 1987, somewhere between 10-15 years of age, blind in one eye, and likely afflicted with gout, the last dusky seaside sparrow on earth died.

"This Crime Has a Name" literalizes the entanglement of the space program and the sparrows' extinction by interspersing the bird-scientist's species recollections with reflections from the Apollo 11 moon-landing—reflections largely related to loneliness and vulnerability. The flitting between these fragments creates a transspecies dialogue which approaches, from the related angles of human and nonhuman animal, population dynamics and decline. More specifically, in the case of both the final dusky seaside sparrow and the Apollo 11 crew, individual bodies are synecdochally employed to signify a collective. The dusky seaside sparrow is, for instance, not just a representation, but also a *representative*. In his own words, "A memory-bird that died and kept right on living, exploding from one to many in mid-flight" (31).

> I am Red, but I will die. I am Blue, I die before being moved. I am Green, never found, presumed dead. I am White, fertile, the last hope. I die leaving Orange, almost twelve years old, alone. I am Orange. I do not sing. I don't want to talk to people. I want to write unfinished papers. I am the Neil Armstrong of birds. Well, he was the first and I'm the last, but it's the same. […] Yellow, who died in 1985, was mailed to the Smithsonian in a bottle. (38)
> John F. Kennedy: "It will not just be one man on the moon… but an entire nation, for all of us must work to put him there." (35)

Endlings—the last survivor of a species—and astronauts condense (and conflate) the materiality of the individual with the abstraction of species-level thinking ("That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," says Armstrong). By flickering between "air" (nonhuman life) and "space" (human life), Field creates a multispecies moving image, one which plays out transspecies entanglement. Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose uses the vocabulary of the "shimmer" to discuss the ways in which dances of presence and absence "capture the eye" (2017, G54) and describe "the coming in and out of focus of multispecies

[17] A survey in 1968 put the number of the birds at 1,800. Yet, the mosquito control projects of the 1950s and early 1960s and construction of the Kennedy Space Center soon took their toll (Wilford 1986).

knots, with their cascading effects" (Gan et al. 2017, G12). In some sense, the shimmering of this analogy is affectively moving: similar to the relatively tiny body of the bird, the view of earth from space reduces it to but a speck in the solar system. Like a murmuration of starlings in flight, Field's juxtapositions blend individual and collective bodies in a shimmering of shared transspecies vulnerability.

The relationship between bird and astronaut in this chapter is largely built on analogical resemblance—a device central to *BLB,* with Field deploying and critically discussing it on multiple occasions:

> Can we imagine analogy, or even the feeling of sympathy between creatures, providing a source for knowledge—some uncontaminated epistemology—allowing people to share an animal's world? Definitely. But, one by one, analogies also reveal the mirror's opaque side, the confusion within this perceived agreement. (Field 2010, 87)

Despite analogy's potential to create feelings of sympathy, there's a word of caution here: while the tool might help humans to approximate the loneliness of an endling, Field's frequent use of metanarration reminds readers that the bird they are reading has, akin to the concept of species, a Disneyland-like artificiality: "My single body was a tiny spindle falling apart, yet holding this huge thing. It's hard to write this…clearly…as a character who might seem real" (40). Field's work thus invites reader to reflect on the "confusions between shared agreements"—the ways in which the dusky seaside sparrow is *not* an astronaut. As Baetens and Trudel succinctly put it, Field's work "encourages the reader to become aware of the dense and opaque web of linguistic, narrative, and ideological forms and formats that structure and impose, often in very implicit and apparently natural ways, our shaping of the notions of human and nonhuman" (2014, 613). Artifice permeates "This Crime Has a Name"; however, in its self-conscious awareness of this—for example, through the sparrow's scientific register and metanarrative addresses—Field reminds us that in this instance art does something reality cannot: it enables a transspecies 'gaze moment' between human reader and an animal now irrevocably gone.

In Field's chapter, an individual-collective story, which "doesn't begin to describe the whole, and yet it's all you need to know" (Cecire 2019, 121), is created through forms of synecdoche and juxtaposition. For many people, the dusky seaside sparrow was gone in a flash, with the chance for a 'gaze moment' lost and relegated to domains of photography and fictional reconstruction. The 'bird's-eye view' of Field's chapter shows us largeness condensed, a readable face that is self-consciously artificial: space exploration and species-level

extinction in the body of a bird.[18] Yet, as the sparrow cautions us, despite art's capacity to facilitate these 'gaze moments,' 'seeing' isn't the same as understanding and acknowledging. "I get the big picture," the sparrow says, "but do I really understand?" (31).

Conclusion

Using three different short-form texts, this essay has explored the aesthetic and ethical challenges of representing nonhuman collectives. In particular, I've focused on "gaze moments" (Bartosch 2017) that entangle human and animal in shimmering or ambivalent relations. I drew out this shimmer by attending to aesthetic manifestations of what Cecire calls the "flash"—an epistemic virtue which cuts across literature and science in its desire for instant, "big picture" insight. I argued that it is possible to read the literary strategies of fragmentation, we-narration, and synecdoche and juxtaposition in Hershman's, Fowler's, and Field's texts respectively as means of managing multiplicity, as attempts to grapple with the scale and dynamism of nonhuman animal and transspecies collectives. While each of the literary texts employ devices that facilitate the production of a "readable face" from the crowd, I brought together the extremes of Hershman's unreadable (but affective) animal bodies and Field's self-consciously lucid sparrow-scientist to offer a more nuanced consideration of the affordances and ethical issues associated with the flash's desire for knowledge at a glance. Despite each text's use of different strategies and varying degrees of "nonhuman readability," patterning all is an attempt to grapple with tensions between textuality and materiality. This is especially pertinent for literary representations of animals used in experimentation where too hasty an analogy between literary and scientific experimentation might draw a problematic link between textual creation and innovation, and the material creation and modification of 'artificial' bodies.

Theories are tools for explanation and play a fundamental role in how we understand the world around us. The dusky seaside sparrow's question at the end of "This Crime Has a Name," however, puts pressure on a tendency to conflate seeing and understanding. Colloquially we find it in the synonymous use of "I see" and "I understand," but there is also a risk of it in reading too rapidly Armstrong's contention that "theories about things are intimately related to how we look at them" (2011, 175). While seeing might be a fleeting and instantaneous experience, the kind of 'big picture' understanding the sparrow refers to develops when what we've seen is contextualized within broader epistemological, ethical, and experiential networks—networks that stretch

[18] For more on the bird's eye view as a narrative strategy in environmental literature, see Rodriguez 2019.

across both science and literature—and when snippets and fragments are brought into dynamic relation with one another. Epistemological insight, or understanding, is a hybrid picture that flicks between fact and feeling. By drawing these texts together and, more broadly, by bringing science and literature into conversation, I've attempted to sketch the contours of an experimental ecology that makes space for mutual influence, for moments in which "a floating connection can flash into flesh" (Stewart 2007, 67).

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"WE DID BECOME": SHERI S. TEPPER'S *GRASS* AND POSTHUMAN COMPANIONSHIP BEYOND THE ANIMAL/HUMAN BINARY

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ABSTRACT. ***"We Did Become": Sheri S. Tepper's* Grass *and Posthuman Companionship Beyond the Animal/Human Binary*.** Sheri S. Tepper's *Arbai* trilogy (1989-1992) is the home for beings that pose a challenge to the binaries behind the establishment of hierarchical relations between humans and animals. In the first volume of the series, *Grass*, originally published in 1989, Marjorie Westriding, a noblewoman, revolts against anthropocentric and patriarchal social structures when she abandons her husband and becomes a companion to one of the aliens who inhabit the planet Grass and are perceived by humans as foxes. Marjorie's eventual symbiosis with the creature grants her eternity, and turns her into a prophetess, a unique being that can travel through time and space along with the "foxen," the Grassian term for "one or a dozen" foxes. Her status as neither human nor alien (or animal) allows her to form a posthuman identity that no longer places anthropocentrism at the core of the conceptualization of human/non-human relations. This article therefore discusses the possibility of a posthuman and ecofeminist critique of anthropocentric and patriarchal hierarchies through the lens of Tepper's novel, by focusing on the symbiosis and companionship relation Marjorie establishes with the foxen. This relation is mainly analyzed under the light of Ralph R. Acampora's concept of 'symphysis,' particularly emphasizing Marjorie's ability to share symphysical experiences of embodiment with other non-human beings instead of simply feeling sympathy for them.

Keywords*: animal studies, anthropocentrism, ecofeminism, posthumanism, Sheri S. Tepper*

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REZUMAT. ***„Am devenit într-adevăr": Grass de Sheri S. Tepper și companionul postuman dincolo de dihotomia animal/om.*** Trilogia *Arbai* (1989-1992) de Sheri S. Tepper adăpostește ființe care pun în dificultate dihotomiile din spatele ansamblului de relații ierarhice între oameni și animale. În primul volum al seriei, *Grass*, publicat inițial în 1989, Marjorie Westriding, o femeie de rang nobiliar, se revoltă împotriva structurilor sociale antropocentrice și patriarhale, părăsindu-și soțul și devenind companioana unuia dintre exteratereștrii de pe planeta Grass percepuți de oameni ca fiind vulpi. Simbioza ulterioară cu creatura îi conferă nemurire și ea se transformă într-o profetesă, o ființă unică având capacitatea de a călători în timp și spațiu împreună cu „vulpeiul" ei, termenul grassian pentru „una sau o duzină" de vulpi. Statutul ei ca nefiind nici umană, nici extraterestră (și nici animal) îi permite să formeze o identitate postumană care nu mai pune antropocentrismul în nucleul conceptualizării relațiilor umane/non-umane. Articolul de față discută astfel posibilitatea unei critici postumane și ecofeministe a ierarhiilor antropocentrice și patriarhale prin perspectiva romanului lui Tepper, focalizând asupra relației simbiotice și de companie pe care Marjorie o stabilește cu vulpeiul. Această relație este în principal analizată prin prisma conceptului de „symphysis" al lui Ralph R. Acampora, accentuând mai ales capacitatea lui Marjorie de a împărtăși experiențe simfizice ale întrupării cu alte ființe non-umane, în locul doar al unor sentimente de simpatie față de acestea.

Cuvinte-cheie: *studii despre animale, antropocentrism, ecofeminism, postumanism, Sheri S. Tepper*

Despite her prolific career as a science fiction author, Sheri S. Tepper (1929-2016) remains understudied, regardless of her works being the locus for ecofeminist reflections, including the questioning of the human/animal binary structures. Her work is part of a "long history of [science fiction works] thinking about alterity, subjectivity and the limits of the human [...] [which contain] many animals and a plethora of perspectives on the nature of animal existence" (Vint 2014, 2). *Grass*, published in 1989, constitutes the first volume of a trilogy in which Tepper explores the relationship of humans to non-human nature. This initial installment sets the overall atmosphere of the series by both discussing the harm done to Earth and the domination structures at play in humans' relations to those constructed as 'other,' including animals. In *Grass*, Tepper emphasizes the role of women regarding the preservation of the environment, a role that coincides with the historical involvement of women in green and animal liberation movements, where they would constitute the majority of members, despite not being their main voice (Gaard 1998; Gaarder

2011; MacGregor 2006; Merchant 2005). Particularly, Tepper explores the perspective of an inherent association between women and nature due to their subordinate status to the common oppressive structures that comprise sexism and capitalism. Female characters in her novel have a greater tendency towards taking care of non-human beings and nature, while men are the ones who, for the most part, enact exploitative practices.

In *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (1989) Carolyn Merchant advocates for transcending dualist perceptions of reality regarding men and culture/women and nature, as she calls for "a new partnership between humans and the earth" (xv), which she develops further in *Earthcare* (1996), where she highlights the importance of an 'ethic of earthcare.' Merchant emphasized the need for humanity as a whole to work towards improving its interactions with nature, as she moves away from essentialism when discussing the connections between women and nature:

> [The] celebrations of the connection between women and nature contain an inherent contradiction. If women overtly identify with nature and both are devalued in modern Western culture, don't such efforts work against women's prospects for their own liberation? Is not the conflation of women and nature a form of essentialism? Are not women admitting that by virtue of their own reproductive biology they are in fact closer to nature than men and that indeed their social role is that of a caretaker? Such actions seem to cement existing forms of oppression against both women and nature, rather than liberating either. (Merchant 1989, xvi)

Indeed, the status of 'nature' and 'women' as socially constructed concepts throughout history bestows on them a contingent character that, far from being essential at their core, is dependent on historical and social circumstances, rendering these concepts unstable and prone to modification and negotiation. Accordingly, Tepper's depiction of the connection between nature and women, while it could be regarded as essentialist, is rather based on an ecofeminist critique of common mechanisms of exploitation that justify sexism and speciesism (along with the abuses against nature and its subordination to capitalism in general).

Her novel *Grass* is set on a planet with the same name, characterized by its greenery. At the beginning of the novel, the reader is introduced to the Westridings, an aristocratic family from Terra (which is the name given to Earth in the series), where there is an overpopulation crisis caused by the scarcity in natural resources after centuries of greedy exploitation of the environment. This crisis serves as an excuse to Sanctity, the theocratic and patriarchal government of Terra, to condemn the lower classes for having too many

children and requiring more resources, while at the same time forbidding any sort of birth control or pregnancy termination measures, as they are considered to go against the religious foundation of Sanctity. Those who have more than two children are deprived from their rights and sent, along with their 'excess' descendants to Repentance[2], in exile. Additionally, there is a plague ravaging Terra. The only human-inhabited planet free from these vermin is Grass, a centenarian human colony long detached from Sanctity that, as a plague-free planet, is not keen on receiving foreigners to examine their idiosyncratic nature.

The Westridings, who are part of the high classes of Terra, are chosen to travel to Grass and collect information that would be useful to save the other planets ruled by Sanctity from the plague. Upon arrival, the Terran family realizes that Grass is a greatly hierarchical, patriarchal society that has as its main sport the hunting of "foxen," an autochthonous alien species from Grass that humans there have assigned the role of foxes to be hunted with the help of the "Hippae," another local alien species that are treated as horses by humans on the planet. In configuring these beings as animals, the humans on Grass enter a position of superiority that justifies them using these species as tools for their own entertainment, in a conceptualizing process that, as Sherryl Vint (2014) points out, causes these non-human beings to be "inevitably caught up in human social systems and the language we use to create and give meaning to the world. [Thus,] animal lives are complexly interrelated with human culture. How we think about animals affects how we live with them, and how we live with them determines who they are, socially and biologically" (8). Once the foxen are relegated to be the substitute for the foxes on Earth, they cannot be regarded as anything other than a commodity for human entertainment, establishing killing at the center of the human/animal relation.

The social systems involved in the domination of people and animals in the novel are also deeply gendered. Women—along with a few isolated men that revolt against the patriarchal and religious society they inhabit—tend to be more prone to being sympathetic to non-human beings, while most men are shaped by violence, whether it takes the shape of hunting or it is used for keeping their family under control (aristocratic patriarchs in Grass, such as Stavenger bon Damfels, force their children to participate in the hunt and punish those who dare contravening their demands; such is the fate of his wife, Rowena). As a result of the entrenched dualism that informs the relations of domination and subordination in the societies of Terra and Grass, men occupy a privileged, superior position that relies on the domination of women and

[2] Repentance is the planet where those who transgress the laws of Sanctity are sent as a punishment, usually when dealing with overpopulation matters, as a means to reduce the number of inhabitants in Terra.

animals, who are placed at the same level of exploitation. In her explanation of “dualism,” Val Plumwood highlights that “the most valued side (male, humans) is constructed as alien to and of different nature or order of being from the ‘lower,’ inferiorised side (women, nature) [...]; the dominant side is taken as primary, the subordinated side is defined in relation to it” (1993, 32). Likewise, she insists on the way this dualism encourages the appropriation and incorporation of the subordinated subject into the culture and selfhood of the master (1993, 41), which in the case of *Grass* translates to the need for the aristocrat hunters to both prey on the foxen, considered as inferior animals, while also ensuring the submission of the humans that are considered to be beneath them (mostly women) so they can retain their privileges. Along these lines, the logic based on dualism perpetuates oppression:

> The concept of reason provides the unifying and defining contrast of the concept of nature, much as the concept of husband does for that of wife, as master for slave. Reason in the western tradition has been constructed as the privileged domain of the master, who has conceived nature as a wife or subordinate other encompassing and representing the sphere of materiality, subsistence and the feminine which the master has split off and constructed as beneath him (Plumwood 1993, 3).

Types of exclusion of the other, such as sexism or speciesism, are based on the presentation of women (and other non-conforming genders) and animals as separate from the concepts of rationality or culture upon which the oppressive system is built: “to be defined as ‘nature’ [...] is to be defined as passive, as non-agent and non-subject. [...] It means being seen as part of a sharply separate [...] lower realm, whose domination is simply ‘natural’” (Plumwood 1993, 4).[3] Women and animals in the novel are placed within this nature, hence being excluded from the concept of ‘human,’ characterized by its ability to dominate the other.

Nevertheless, the protagonist of the novel, Marjorie Westriding, revolts against the concept of ‘human’ that is prevalent to her society and that of Grass. While she is still on Terra, she acts against the Sanctity authority by helping

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[3] Just as Merchant addressed the unproductiveness implied in fully embracing a total identification of women with nature, Plumwood also warns of the issues that lie in replacing the image of women as the angels of the house with that of “the angel in the ecosystem” (1993, 9), thus perpetuating the idea of women being born with some inherent qualities in relation to nature. As she points out, this connection does not have an actual ground in reality, since many women have contributed to the exploitation of nature indirectly through their participation in consumer society (ibid.). However, Plumwood also cautions about some feminisms embracing the *upward* move of women from the natural realm to the cultural one without questioning the exclusive and oppositional implication of celebrating culture and reason above nature (1993, 20).

women from the lower classes to get abortions in order to prevent them from losing their rights as citizens once they have too many children according to the theocratic government's regulations. Her sympathy for the ones she should execute her privilege over extends to animals too: throughout the novel, it becomes apparent that Marjorie has a respect and understanding for non-human beings that are not matched by the other characters in *Grass*. In accordance to Ralph Acampora's (2014) notion of 'symphysis,' Marjorie manages to share experiences of embodiment with other non-human beings instead of simply feeling sympathy for them. Consequently, Marjorie is able to almost become one with her horse, Quixote, without needing to communicate or indicate the animal to carry out any actions: "Then Quixote charged. She hadn't signaled him to do it. He simply did it. [...] She dismounted and struggled to get [her son] on to Quixote's back. The horse knelt to receive him, again without a signal to do so" (Tepper 2002, 469). Marjorie's rapport to horses even affects her husband's perception of their marriage, as he is unable to understand such a bond with a non-human being, which makes him jealous: "Long ago [Rigo] had told himself that Marjorie would never love him as he had dreamed she would because she had given all her love to horses. He had even thought he hated Marjorie's riding because she gave the horses the thing she would not give him—her passion. Horses. Even more than motherhood, or her charities" (Tepper 2002, 194).

Marjorie's symphysical relation to animals reaches its peak when she manages to establish a telepathic connection to one of the foxen in Grass. Communication—or apparent lack thereof—is the main justification for humans' disregard for the foxen: since these aliens are not able to produce a spoken speech like that of humans, they are considered to be lesser beings. In managing to establish an exchange outside of the ruling of speech, Marjorie embodies Derrida's 'chimerical' suggestion of regarding "the absence of the name and of the word otherwise and as something other than a privation" (2008, 48). Marjorie instead takes this absence as an opportunity for her own liberation, but also that of foxen and fellow humans. Her relation to the foxen becomes more intimate, as she defies the patriarchal structures that tie her to a guilt-ridden subordinate role to her husband and children. Eventually, Marjorie and the foxen physically transcend the animal/human binary by having a quasi-spiritual, intimate encounter:

> Beneath her the muscles of his shoulders moved like fingers, touching her. [...] In the dance he [...] changed, becoming manlike, [...] not a man but manlike, [...] as he drew her into a closer dance. [...] No words. Purring, roaring, growling [...] penetrating deep. [...] [No] thought at all. Sensation only. [...] Claws touched her, gently, drawing down her naked flesh like fingernails [...]. The edge of his tongue touched her naked thigh,

> sliding like a narrow, flaming serpent into her crotch. [A] flaming symbol with two parts which moved together to fuse with aching slowness into one. (Tepper 2002, 406-407).

Despite Marjorie's initial rejection, which is deeply influenced by the clash between her social and religious learnings and her new way of relating, her symphysical bond to these creatures from Grass prevails, and finally leads her to leave her husband and family and stay on that planet instead of returning to Terra. The foxen and her develop a new way of life, outside of the aristocratic society of Grass.

Marjorie challenges anthropocentric conceptions of reality since she questions the idea of humans as superior to non-humans and thus becomes a harbinger against speciesism. In doing so, she also rejects patriarchal social structures, as she leaves her husband in order to stay by the foxen's side and become their companion. Vint remarks that "like the animals, women have been named in patriarchal discourse, given identities and roles that capture perhaps only a part or perhaps none of their being" (2014, 93). By sharing embodied experiences with the foxen—whether they fuse into one consciousness as a means to communication, or they share a union that also transcends the limitations of physical encounters—, Marjorie creates a new ethic that transcends that of humans. This new ethic mirrors Merchant's 'partnership ethics' (a revision of her 'ethic of earthcare'), and that she encourages in *Radical Ecology* (2005), which consists in "equity between the human and nonhuman communities; [...] moral consideration for both humans and other species; [...] respect for both cultural diversity and biodiversity; [...] inclusion of women, minorities, and nonhuman nature in the code of ethical accountability; [...] and an ecological sound management" (83). Marjorie, thanks to the foxen, makes her ethic of earthcare a way of life that most men, and particularly her husband, cannot understand since they are seemingly unable to see past their patriarchal, anthropocentric point of view.

The interspecies physical exchange with the foxen, portrayed as a quasi-spiritual experience, is the trigger for Marjorie's final decision to let go of any societal chains that are holding her accountable to the patriarchal society from Terra. She then becomes the prophetess for the Arbai.[4] By obliterating the limits between human and non-human, Marjorie reaches her own sense of personal liberation, while also liberating the foxen from the humans in Grass. Through the partnership they create, Marjorie and the foxen manage to move beyond the

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[4] The Arbai are an extinct alien species that used to live in Grass. They were killed by the Hippae before the humans colonized the planet, and they were characterized for their peaceful behavior and trust in the Hippae's good intentions, despite being killed by them.

dualist categories of human/animal, embracing a posthuman identity that no longer places the latter below the former. Through this union, Tepper explores the possibilities of the posthuman, which, as Opperman argues, encourages radical change “in the sense that women’s bodies and animal subjectivities are no longer viewed as the ultimate other that can be colonized, oppressed, and subjugated” (2013, 28). Without falling in what Vint refers to as “romanticised versions of human-animal relationships” (2014, 69), the two main characters in *Grass* offer an alternative mode of relating to each other, moving towards a posthuman stance.

In contrast to the foxen and Marjorie’s joint posthuman identity, there is the anthropomorphism that appears in relation to the Hippae, the aliens who are used as horses to hunt the foxen. While these aliens are used by humans for their own entertainment, just like the foxen are, Marjorie discovers, upon talking with the foxen, that the Hippae have been hypnotizing the humans in Grass in order to destroy the other species of aliens on the planet. Furthermore, the Hippae are behind the vermin that spread through the rest of human-inhabited planets: they would spread the plague in the commercial spaceships that leave Grass. The role of these animal-like aliens serves as a metaphor for human parasitic behavior in relation to other species and the environment: while, at first, it may seem that they are a tool for humans to carry out their hunting practices, the reality is that the Hippae are the ones utilizing humans in order to kill other species. In an ironic turn of events, most of the patriarchs of Grass that exercised their domination over those below them, both human and animal, are precisely killed by some of these animals that present quite a human-like thirst for colonization. By the end of the novel, it is revealed that those who rode these creatures were actually mentally manipulated by them so that they would kill the foxen, their nemesis in Grass, although humans had all too willingly let themselves into that manipulation, since their desire for killing animals through hunting had suited their own purposes: “‘Humans have been *used* by Hippae to kill foxen [...].’ At least partly a lie, too. Humans had been all too willing to lend themselves to that Hunt” (Tepper 2002, 466).

Through the Hippae, Tepper subverts the domination system based on humankind’s exploitation of animals by making them victims of the ones they were oppressing to begin with. Humanity’s destructive potential is reflected via the Hippae, turning them into human-like creatures in their behavior. The boundary between human and animal is established based on who kills whom, and, as Vint (2014, 33) points out, while humans are understood to be the ones who prey on animals, when these roles are inverted and the animals are the ones preying on the humans, the former are considered to have altered the

natural order of things. Marjorie, however, quickly understands that the Hippae have all along been behaving just like humans:

> 'The Hippae enjoyed the killing. [...] They think they have a right to kill everything but themselves [...]. [Is] that so unusual? Look at our own poor homeworld. Didn't man think he had a right to kill everything but himself? Didn't he have fun doing it? Where are the great whales? Where are the elephants? Where are the bright birds who once lived in our own swamp forests?' (Tepper 2002, 422)

Destruction is then presented as a behavior found in humans instead of animals. The superiority by which the killing of the foxen seems to be justified is eventually questioned when the humans are the ones being hunted.

The once glorified species of the Hippae are then proved to be the cause of human extinction due to the plague, while the foxen are the ones who propose a move beyond the human/animal binary that will help end all forms of oppression present in the societies of Terra and Grass. It is precisely through her relationship with the foxen that Marjorie creates a posthuman identity that is not human nor animal/alien, and that no longer places anthropocentrism at the core of the conceptualization of human/non-human relations. Reflecting on the requirements for dominating nature, and by extension animals, Merchant (2005) explains that domination "depends equally on the human as operator, deriving from an emphasis on power and on the human as manager, deriving from the stress on order and rationality as criteria for progress and development" (53). Humans in Grass did try to carry out these two roles, operator and manager, when it came to the animal-like aliens inhabiting the planet, which led them to their own destruction. Ultimately, domination of animals by humans only succeeds as long as those animals do not revolt: the moment another species controls humans, the roles in the dynamic of domination change and the latter become the objects of domination.

Ralph Acampora (2014) advocates for an understanding of what "being-with" other beings entails and means, since this will give us "all the mileage we need for tracking cross-species community" (27). Marjorie and the foxen learn to be-with each other, precisely creating a community of their own once the human decides to leave her husband and stay in Grass with her new partner in order to spread an intergalactic message across different planets that encourages people to leave aside societal structures that predetermine their ability to relate to others, whether these are humans or animals or aliens. By rethinking our relationship to animals, as Marjorie does, we can also reinterpret what it is to be 'human': "in reconnecting with animals, we are also reconnecting with our

embodied being," (Vint 2014, 9) which can lead, consequently, to posthuman identities that go beyond the division of animal/human.

In alliance with the foxen, the new Marjorie, the one that stayed in Grass, exchanges letters with people from Terra in order to ensure this conceptual change is not restricted to her but rather reaches other fellow humans. Indeed, her nephew, a priest of Sanctity, brings the good news that a new form of relating to the foxen is in the making: "I've already sent an inquiry to Shafne, to the Church in Exile. [...] I'm confident the Secretariat will think it important for us to find bonds of friendship with the foxen. Kinship, as it were. To find a way to share ourselves. Marjorie says that even small beings may be friends" (Tepper 2002, 528). Founding their relationship with these animals on kinship instead of domination undermines the concept of 'human' and puts an end to the division between humans and animals. This new manner of "being-with" highlights the fact that "animal," as Derrida reflects, is just "a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to the living other" (2008, 23). Through their symphysical connection, Marjorie and the foxen are no longer human and animal, respectively, but something else that does not belong to those opposing categories anymore.

In her last letter to Terra, Marjorie emphasizes the need of becoming something else beyond human:

> Mankind thought that his was the only intelligence and earth was his only place, [and believed] that *each* man had individual importance. [...] How foolish the idea was. [...] Compared to the size of creation, what were we but very small beings [?] [...] Corn becomes bread; bees make honey; grass is turned into flesh, or into gardens. Very small beings are important, not individually but for what they become [...]. Mankind almost failed. [...] We left [Terra] because we had ruined our planet and had to leave or die. [...] We grew. We multiplied. We did not become… (Tepper 2002, 537-538).

In Marjorie's words, there is an obvious link between the social belief of human exceptionalism above any other species and humankind's stagnant situation (and potential disappearance). Establishing a relationship based on kinship and companionship allows Marjorie to overcome her own human limitations and *become*. Aided by her symphysical connection to the foxen, which is established in several moments throughout the novel, mainly when they communicate through telepathy and when they have that one intimate encounter, which takes place at both a physical and a mental level, Marjorie becomes more than human: she becomes a new sort of being. It is through the mutual vulnerability found in

the way human and animal relate when it comes to Marjorie and the foxen that those boundaries can be removed. As Vint writes, "shared vulnerability—recognition of similar, mortal embodiment—becomes the basis for a new conception of subjectivity and a concomitant new human/non-human sociality. [...] By sharing physical embodiment with some of the alien, animal-like species [...], the human characters in [science fiction] come to an understanding of personhood that exceeds their preconceived prejudices" (2014, 154). Their shared embodiment allows Marjorie and the foxen to evolve and represent a new order of relating that does not rely on dualism or oppression anymore.

Grass serves as a reflection on the possibilities of questioning the way humans relate to and interrelate with non-human beings and nature. Presenting hunting as the epitome of the practices involved in the domination of both animals and those who do not conform to society—after all, as it has been highlighted previously, everyone is forced to participate in this activity and those who dare question it have to endure punishment—prompts a reflection on the divisions between human and animal/other. Tepper allows the reader to imagine, through the foxen and Marjorie's relationship, a fruitful outcome from the interactions with other creatures that are not necessarily human. This is precisely one of the main possibilities animals in science fiction have to offer, according to Vint: "animals in [science fiction] suggest many themes, but perhaps the most promising is this aspiration that humans might interact with an intelligence other than our own and be transformed by it, a recurrent dream of [science fiction]" (2014, 227). Change, becoming something other than what the category of "human" entails is at the core of Tepper's *Grass*. The embodied experience that Marjorie and the foxen share allows imagining a posthuman future where different types and modes of consciousness outside of human-made norms and categories can become real. The eventual immortality that these two characters achieve precisely due to their union into a new entity, the prophetess, evokes an influence that our present may have in the future yet to come. The continuity—and possibility—of a posthuman companionship starts at the present moment when a human can see beyond the animal/human binary and symphysis is enacted. It is then when we do become.

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UNICORN STORIES IN TRACY CHEVALIER AND PHILIPPA GREGORY'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT. ***Unicorn Stories in Tracy Chevalier's and Philippa Gregory's Novels.*** Unicorns have been described as mythological creatures that only the chosen ones could encounter. In the novels *The Lady and the Unicorn* by Tracy Chevalier and *The Lady of the Rivers* by Philippa Gregory, one such mythical beast evinces certain features that reflect on some of the characters in the novels. The paper discusses the image and symbolism of the mythological beast and analyses the depiction of the animal in the two novels written by the respective British authors. The stories told of the unicorn in the two books are to be compared and completed by texts from various other sources, in an attempt to get a fair picture of the way in which the two novels explore the legend of the respective magical creature, and transform it into feminist narratives.

Keywords: *unicorn, mythological animal, maid, lady, Chevalier, Gregory*

REZUMAT. ***Poveşti despre unicorni în romanele lui Tracy Chevalier şi Philippa Gregory.*** Unicornii au fost descrişi drept fiinţe mitologice cu care doar cei aleşi se pot întâlni. În romanele *Doamna și unicornul* de Tracy Chevalier și *Doamna apelor* de Philippa Gregory, o astfel de fiară mitică evidențiază anumite trăsături care se reflectă asupra unora dintre personajele din romane. Lucrarea discută despre imaginea și simbolismul fiarei mitologice, iar apoi analizează reprezentarea animalului în cele două romane scrise de autoarele britanice.

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Poveștile despre unicorn spuse în cele două cărți urmează să fie comparate și completate de texte din diverse alte surse, în încercarea de a obține o imagine corectă a modului în care cele două romane explorează legenda creaturii magice şi o transformă în naraţiuni feministe.

Cuvinte-cheie: *unicorn, creatură mitologică, fecioară, doamnă, Chevalier, Gregory*

Unicorns, which constitute the topic of interest in this paper, have been described since ancient times as mythological creatures that only the chosen ones could encounter – an image that has been reinforced and enriched by medieval spirituality in accordance with its own religious agenda. The choice of such a mythological beast as one of the potent symbols that appear in the novels *The Lady and the Unicorn* (2003) by Tracy Chevalier and *The Lady of the Rivers* (2008) by Philippa Gregory is to be explored and analysed here, with a view to understanding why (and in what way), at the beginning of the third millennium, the image the unicorn can still prove a source of inspiration for novelists.

A comparative view of the way in which the two British authors appropriate the symbolic image of the unicorn is to be completed by a discussion of the sources of inspiration they used, ranging from medieval folklore and superstitions, historical facts (or gaps), and/or works of art resulting from the exquisite craftsmanship of the Middle Ages (probably Belgian) tapestry weavers (lissiers). The deployment of these resources, which share a certain transformation of the medieval unicorn stories into powerful 21st century novels of feminist inspiration, advocates, in the author's opinion, for the selection of the literary corpus to be analysed here. For that reason alone – their affinity in vision and agenda – Gregory's and Chevalier's novels have been preferred to the detriment of other – no less remarkable – books[2] that may also focus on the symbol of the unicorn as a magical being that can cure all wounds and is endowed with Christ-like powers.

The Lady and the Unicorn, published in 2003, is Tracy Chevalier's fourth novel, and her second about the world of art history,[3] whereas Philippa Gregory's *The Lady of the Rivers*, published in 2008, although preceded by thirteen other

[2] One such novel, which is not referenced here, is Iris Murdoch's *The Unicorn*, published in 1963. With its Gothic atmosphere and abundance of talks, thoughts and philosophical arguments on the big Murdochian themes – individual freedom, guilt, morality and love – that book deserves a researcher's special attention, to be materialized in a paper devoted entirely to *The Unicorn*.

[3] Her first novel, *The Virgin Blue* (1997), is set as two parallel stories: one of a 16th-century Huguenot woman and the other of her descendant from the 20th century, and tells us about the life in 16th-century rural France, with its superstitions and religious conflicts; her second novel, *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (1999), offers a fictional (hi)story of the famous Vermeer painting with the same name; her third, *Falling Angels* (2001) is set in London, immediately after Queen Victoria's death and depicts a clear image of the Victorian and Edwardian obsession with grief, mourning and death.

novels, is the latter author's first book of the 15-book series known as *The Plantagenet and Tudor Novels*. The respective series has the merit of propounding a novel feminist view of the historical events taking place in France and England between the years 1430-1568, with real or fictional adventures witnessed and recounted for the reader by women participants. In both novels proposed for analysis here, the symbolism of the unicorn is to be closely linked to the understanding of the medieval view of women's position in society, and will be instrumental to the reinterpretation of the respective view in the two authors' fiction.

At this stage, the main point to be clarified for the paper to justify its approach is answering the question: what are the unicorn stories about? A neat encapsulation of the main themes and images related to the unicorn may begin with the portrayal of the mythical beast in Antiquity; in this respect, due to the work of the first-century Roman author, naturalist and natural philosopher Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, we learn that the unicorn was perceived as an exotic figure, to be found in distant lands, far from the civilized world. Pliny's categorization of animals had a great influence on the development of the medieval bestiary, especially on the seventh-century medieval etymologist Isidore of Seville's seminal work, *Etymologies*. Later, "during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, the image of the unicorn appears more frequently, particularly in bestiaries and in love poetry, […] but also in medieval heraldry and tapestries which illustrate attempts to capture the beast" (Łaszkiewicz 2014, 55). Christianity has its huge contribution to the preservation of the unicorn symbolism, with Christian tradition focusing on the animal's purity and strength, its power to heal with the help of its horn, but also with its weaknesses: "the untainted unicorn, exposed to harm because of a virgin, becomes a representation of Jesus Christ" (55). Both medieval legends and Isidore of Seville describe the same ruse by means of which the respective beast can be captured: "The unicorn is too strong to be caught by hunters, except by a trick: if a virgin girl is placed in front of a unicorn and she bares her breast to it, all of its fierceness will cease and it will lay its head on her bosom, and thus quieted is easily caught" (Isidore 2006, 252). The respective trick is referenced in both novels under discussion in this paper, as essential to the construction of the characters, and to the feminist transformation of the plot.

With the aim of pinpointing with more precision the reasons why Gregory and Chevalier have, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, chosen to approach a subject that was so popular in the Middle Ages, one must take into account the authors' own statements – given either in the notes at the end of their books or, in Chevalier's case, both there and on the Internet site devoted to the author's conversations with her readers. What one realizes on reading those statements is that the bits and pieces of historical evidence the authors

have found during their research for the respective books allow the two women writers to use the popular figures of some mythological creatures as the glue that can make their fiction come alive.

For Philippa Gregory, a writer that describes herself first and foremost as "an historian of women" (Gregory 2011, 426), the scarcity of biographical data she could find about her main character, Jacquetta of Luxembourg, prompted her to give free reign to her imagination: "The more I read about Jacquetta, the more she seemed to me to be the sort of character I particularly love: one who is overlooked or denied by the traditional histories, but who can be discovered by piecing together the evidence" (426). In doing so, Gregory cleverly speculates on the medieval rumours that circulated at that time at the English and French royal courts regarding Jacquetta's possible connections with supernatural forces, including mythical beasts such as the unicorn or the mermaid[4]. Those rumours might have originated from the legends regarding Jacquetta's ancestry, as a descendant of Melusina,[5] a water goddess, or simply in her alleged witch's skills. In defence of her character's innocence, Gregory explains that, in the absence of any other plausible explanations, many things that people now take for granted (such as using herbs for medicinal purposes) were considered clear signs that the woman growing/using those particular plants was a witch – an attitude that defined that respective age: "I think it very important that we as modern readers understand that religion, spiritualism and magic played a central part in the imaginative life of medieval people" (427).

Tracy Chevalier, on the other hand, confesses that she felt the lure of the unicorn approximately at the same time that she laid her eyes on the six tapestries know as *La Dame à la Licorne*[6] (the translation of which gives the title of Chevalier's novel, *The Lady and the Unicorn*), and explains that the appeal of the unicorn motif was only equalled by the mystery surrounding the interpretation or history of the respective tapestries: "I knew the tapestries from my teenage years when I was crazy about unicorns. […] Then many years later I read an article about

[4] It may also be of particular interest to note here that marine biologists have propounded a theory according to which the water creature known as the narwhal might prove the animal with the closest resemblance to the mythical unicorn (for further reading, see Ford and Ford 1986).

[5] Melusina is a fairy who, at the age of 15, punishes her father for having abandoned her mother and the three daughters they had together, and suffers the consequences. "On telling their mother what they had done, she, to punish them for the unnatural action, condemned Melusina to become every Saturday a serpent, from the waist downwards, till she should meet a man who would many her under the condition of never seeing her on a Saturday, and should keep his promise" (Keightley 2012, 481). Melusina meets her knight, they fall in love and get married, and, for many years, Raymond (or Raimondin) keeps his promise until a fatal Saturday when he spies on her and makes her leave him, taking her daughters with her. Melusina only comes back to foretell his death, and the deaths of her children, and to cry for them, as well as for her own misfortune.

[6] The tapestries are now on display at the MUSÉE DE CLUNY - Musée national du Moyen Âge in Paris.

them that talked about their mysterious history and how no one knows who made them, exactly whom they were made for, or how to interpret them. Those mysteries appealed, and I thought I would try to answer those questions" (Chevalier, "Questions and Answers").

The preference for incomplete (hi)stories, which allow for a writer's imagination to fill in the gaps, is a trait that Chevalier has in common with Gregory – and the medieval period, with its religious turmoil and monastic bestiaries, has proven a rich soil in which the two authors could plant the seeds for their fiction. As Chevalier states, fiction and history do not always go hand in hand, and the less one knows for sure, the more one can invent – to the benefit of one's fiction: "By and large I stick with the truth, but I often choose subjects where we don't know much, where there are gaps to be filled in with reasonable conjecture" (Chevalier, "Questions and Answers").

As one can notice, the obvious thing that strikes the reader's eye is that the two novels share a tendency to delve into the personal lives of certain historical or artistic individuals from the 15th century, with the intention to (re)discover the type(s) of power mechanisms that enabled women to accomplish (at least) some of their goals in the Middle Ages. In the "Author's notes" at the end of *The Lady of the Rivers*, Gregory plainly states that, when she writes, she is on a mission to help reconstruct the past through the voices of some special women: "I have spent my life as an historian of women, their place in society and their struggle for power" (Gregory 2011, 426). On the other hand, although Chevalier does not openly confess a feminist quest for any hidden truths regarding medieval women, she does, in a subtle way, with irony and creativity, betray her postmodern feminist preference while spinning her intricate thread about the (hi)story of the design and creation of the famous *The Lady and the Unicorn* tapestry.

The challenge that both Gregory and Chevalier accepted when they embarked on their journeys into the past lives of Jacquetta of Luxembourg (the former author's main character) and Geneviève de Nanterre (one of the latter's main female characters), respectively, was that of putting together the pieces of the historical puzzles they found, and then build, with the help of powerful mythological symbols such as the unicorn (and the mermaid, in the former's case), their own fictional pieces that would compensate for the missing ones. In her study *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, when discussing the relationship between history and fiction, Linda Hutcheon remarks upon the provisional character of any discovery about the past. The theorist attributes the respective inability to 'know for sure' to intertextuality, or the chain of interdependence between texts: "What postmodern novels teach is that, in both cases [history and fiction] they actually refer at the first level to other texts: we know the past (which really did exist) only through its textualized remains" (Hutcheon 1988, 119).

The “textualized remains” of the past that Hutcheon writes about are, in the case of the two novels here, very similar with regard to the manner in which they depict the medieval world and mentalities, with the image of the unicorn as one of the representative mythological beasts, which were referenced, during the Middle Ages, both in religious texts[7] and in popular legends. That similarity is mainly due to the fact that the respective plots[8] are both set in the 15th century and, up to a point, share the same vision of the relationship between humans and animals in the medieval time. As Garcia, Walker and Chico observe in their study devoted to the perception of animals in the Middle Ages, humans used animal analogies in order to find out truths about themselves: “The Middle Ages inherited from Antiquity the taste for animal fables, whose legacy was preserved in monastic libraries and became increasingly popular in the last centuries of the medieval period. Mirroring human values and behaviour, animal fable narratives enabled to discern truths about human existence through the animal ‘other’” (Garcia, Walker, and Chico 2013, 20).

Nevertheless, before reaching that stage, as Joyce Salisbury’s work *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* demonstrates, during the millennium between the fourth and the fourteenth century, there was an important shift in the medieval thinkers’ perception of the relationship between humans and beasts, which, in Salisbury’s view, “shows that by the late Middle Ages (after the twelfth century) the paradigm of separation of species was breaking down” (Salisbury 2010, 2). The behaviour of the characters in the two novels discussed here is relevant for the way in which the symbol of the unicorn was used in the 15th century, with Chevalier’s male character Nicolas des Innocents imagining himself to be as unique and irresistible as the unicorn in the stories he tells the girls he tries to bed, or with Gregory’s female character Jacquetta de Luxembourg in the role of the virgin, demonstrating her magical powers in spite of herself.

Taking a closer look at the way in which the motif of the unicorn is employed in the narratives of the two contemporary British authors, one may discern some conceptual differences in the artistic imagery, as well as in the structural scaffolding of the novels. On the one hand, Gregory uses the medieval stories about the unicorn for a very precise purpose, that of underlying the idea of her main character’s virginal purity as a prerequisite for the success of her scrying activity – the reason why Jacquetta’s first husband proposes to her in

[7] The unicorn is said to be endowed with proverbial strength and is used in the Bible as a standard against which human power is measured.

[8] Gregory’s novel *The Lady of the Rivers* begins with the imprisonment of Jeanne D’Arc in France, in the Castle of Beaurevoir, near Arras, in 1430, while Chevalier’s first part of *The Lady and the Unicorn* is placed in Paris, dated during Lent-Eastertide, in 1490. That 60-year period of the 15th century is to be remembered in Europe both for endless wars for land, political instability and religious upheavals, and for the flourishing of arts, crafts and ideas.

the first place. On the other hand, Chevalier goes beyond the lore of the unicorn and, while still having her characters debate the fable of the unicorn, she reinterprets it in a feminist re-evaluation of the image of the medieval women that were involved in the various stages of the creation of the six tapestries that make up *The Lady and the Unicorn* masterpiece.

In both Gregory's and Chevalier's novels, the image of the unicorn is instrumental to the depiction of the characters, functioning as a moral mirror in which they could see themselves as they truly are, not as they imagine themselves to be. For the purpose of drawing a clearer conclusion as regards the twenty-first century feminist intervention in the Middle Ages plot, the paper suggests a comparative analysis of the characters and situations in which the unicorn symbol appears in the two novels.

As argued earlier in the paper, the lack of enough historical evidence about either Jacquetta of Luxembourg or the origins/ designers /sponsors /manufacturers of *The Lady and the Unicorn* tapestries left enough room for the two novelists to put their imagination to work. Thus, most characters in both novels have their stories revolving around the unicorn image, if not deeply rooted in the unicorn legend. The main male characters in both narratives are depicted as the hunters who would go to great lengths in order to ensnare the mythical beast with the help of the legendary virgin as an unsuspecting bait.

In *The Lady of the Rivers*, Jacquetta's first husband, John, Duke of Bedford, is obsessed with alchemy and finding the Stone, which (he believes) will help him end the war between France and England. Far from desiring Jacquetta for her beauty and fertility, the Duke of Bedford intends very much to keep Jacquetta a virgin with "the pure touch" (Gregory 2011, 56) – a power which he strongly believes she has, because of her ancestry as a descendant from Melusina. What adds to his hopes for the manifestation of his spouse's supernatural powers is, ironically, her own statement, given under pressure: "I know that I defended myself, and I know that it is true: I am a virgin so pure that I could capture a unicorn" (40). The Duke of Bedford is cast from the very beginning of the novel in the role of the hunter, who is interested both in the virgin who could capture a unicorn, and in his metaphorical unicorn taking the shape of the alchemist's Stone. However, the Duke disappoints as a hunter, as he is firstly misled into thinking that, because Joan of Arc was often called "the Maid,"[9] *she* was that special virgin that could help him with the discovery of the Stone. He also disappoints as a husband, since he never touches his wife, but keeps her as his precious tool, a new wife he had married for the sake of his project, and whose (lack of) sexual life he could control. That was a position that the majority of medieval women held, irrespective of their status – it is the conclusion of a

[9] La Pucelle, in French.

research conducted by Kim Phillips, who writes in her study on *Medieval Maidens* that: "Young laywomen were taught to live in subordinate relationship to men, and therefore sexuality was defined phallocentrically […] One recurrent theme in this chapter [Sexualities] has been that of exterior control: control and construction of maidens' sexuality by families, communities, employers and by the Church" (Phillips 2003, 168).

In Chevalier's novel, the male character that is cast in the hunter's role is primarily a comic figure, an artist reminding the reader of Falstaff or Casanova. This respective character, ironically named Nicolas des Innocents, has the habit of using the story of the unicorn as an amorous prelude, adding his original touch to the story and identifying parts of himself as similar in shape and function to the unicorn's magic horn: "I know which animal I want to be,' […] 'A unicorn. […] His horn has a special power, you see. […] 'If your well there was poisoned, beauty, or sullied such as Jeanne has just done, a unicorn could come along and dip his horn into it and it would become pure again" (Chevalier 2004, 24). In fact, Chevalier's novel surprises its readers with the idea of creating this image of the designer of the unicorn tapestry fancying himself like a unicorn that can only be tamed by beautiful virgins, whom he gets pregnant and then abandons without shame or regret. Ironically, though, Nicolas, who is always boasting on dipping his horn in beautiful maiden's wells, is in the end punished for his sins, and forced to marry Béatrice, the ugliest lady's maid – an act of seduction he has never wished for. Here, Béatrice is depicted as the lucky female hunter who gets the prized unicorn, but who will not be satisfied with the arrangement, after all – in the Epilogue of the novel, Chevalier tells her readers that Nicolas des Innocents "had three more children, none of them with Béatrice" (366). Somehow, once caught and forced to sign a binding marriage contract, the unicorn eludes his hunter and loses the power of his horn, only to get it back again when he is free.

What is more surprising, is that, more often than once, in Chevalier's narrative, the seduction of the maiden has the opposite effect to the one intended by the male seducer; to be more precise, in *The Lady and the Unicorn*, the respective effect is that of liberating the virgin from the restraints of an unwanted marriage or from undue pressure. That type of liberation is experienced by the blind daughter of the Belgian lissier, Alienor, who welcomes the unicorn's horn both as a gesture of rebellion against her cruel fate[10] and as a means to experience the act of making love to someone of her own choice. In this, Chevalier cleverly demonstrates her feminist agenda, on balance, offering the formerly virgin

[10] She was promised in marriage to a brutish, malodorous dyer with whom her family did business.

character an escape plan: a knight in shining armour appears in the shape of a cartoonist who had been in love with the blind girl for ages, but knew he had no chances with her until the moment she declared she was in the family way.

In both novels under discussion here, one can notice the feminist mark in the manner in which the virgin from the unicorn stories manages to cleverly free herself from society's bonds the moment she loses her maidenhead. Like Chevalier's Alienor, who becomes a woman in her own right the moment she decides to let herself seduced by Nicolas, Gregory's Jacquetta of Luxembourg is transformed into an independent woman only after losing her virginity to her late husband's squire, Richard Woodville. Her strong, independent will is to be evinced by her decision to use an herbal potion in order to get pregnant with her first child, and, in that way, make sure she would marry the man she loves. Jacquetta's likeness to the virgin in the unicorn's legend is plainly described in the scene of the former's encounter with the unicorn, witnessed by an entranced Richard Woodville. Not a hunter himself, Richard "had a sense that he should not try to catch the unicorn" (Gregory 2011, 84), and that awareness or common-sense comes from the stories he has seen depicted in the artistic productions of the time: "Only one being in this world can catch a unicorn, and he had seen the capture in half a dozen tapestries and in a dozen woodcuts in story books, since his youngest boyhood" (84). Intertextuality is again used for the purpose of evincing the twenty-first century feminist reinterpretation of the unicorn story, with the legendary virgin becoming the hunter of the man she loves, whereas he is transformed into the unicorn that she ensnares with her charm. Feminist research has advocated for a similar turn of tables movement with regard to women's power. In an interesting study devoted to *The Great Cosmic Mother*, Sjöö and Mor remark on the powerful image of the virgin in ancient cultures, as well as on the original meaning of the concept, before its Christian distortion for religious purposes:

> Ancient moon priestesses were called virgins. "Virgin" meant not married, not belonging to a man—a woman who was "one-in-herself." The very word derives from a Latin root meaning strength, force, skill; and was later applied to men: virile. Ishtar, Diana, Astarte, Isis were all called virgin, which did not refer to sexual chastity, but sexual independence. […] The Hebrews used the word, and in the original Aramaic, it meant "maiden" or "young woman," with no connotations of sexual chastity. But later Christian translators […] distorted the meaning into sexually pure, chaste, never touched. (Sjöö and Mor 1987, 99)

That interpretation of the concept of "woman" as being considered worthy of the virginal[11] status only when she reaches an independent position seems to be shared by the two novelists, and, as we have seen, closely related to the legend

[11] Elizabeth I was referred to as "The Virgin Queen" in spite of her many affairs

of the unicorn. Moreover, in Chevalier's narrative, the motif of the seduction of the unicorn is explained by Nicolas des Innocents, the designer of the tapestries, as having the meaning of restoring women's power in all its manifestations. Commissioned first and foremost as a means to remind viewers about Jean Le Viste's status and valour,[12] the unicorn tapestries are, in their designer's concept, visual reflections on women, virgins and ladies alike, and their power, as he plans them according to his vision and after his heart's desire, enriching the original version of the unicorn legend: "They will not only be about a seduction in a forest, but about something else as well, not just a virgin but a woman who would be a virgin again, so that the tapestries are about the whole of a woman's life, its beginning and its end. All of her choices, all in one, wound together" (Chevalier 2004, 34).

Chevalier's character that is supposed to have ordered the *Dame à la Licorne* tapestries[13] is Jean Le Viste's wife, Geneviève de Nanterre. The latter has longed for years on end to embrace the simplicity of a nun's life, a pleasure which she has been repeatedly denied. For Geneviève de Nanterre, the coveted life of a nun would also mean her independence – something that her husband would not agree with. Dissatisfied with the fact that he and his wife only have daughters, and no son and heir, Jean Le Viste blames Geneviève de Nanterre for it and would not release her from her marriage bonds; instead, he keeps her in a position that will allow him to preserve his status, finances and authority intact. As research on the financial status of women in the Middle Ages shows,

> A noble lady could inherit a fief, but it then passed to her husband. Rarely was she herself considered either a lord or a vassal, and almost never was she allowed to run her estates as an unmarried woman. Virtually the only visible single women in this social class were those who became nuns, even though wives showed themselves perfectly capable of overseeing their husbands' properties. Widows, however, were often allowed a great deal of latitude in ruling their own lands. (Amt 1993, 107)

In both novels, women characters are depicted as expressing their own desires, although they did not, at the time, have their authority recognized. As Sandy Bardsley states, "Most women exercised some degree of power in the Middle Ages, but few exercised authority" (Bardsley, 2007, 193). Nonetheless, both Gregory and Chevalier make reference to the words inscribed across the top of the tent in

[12] Beatrice, the plainest of the lady's maids remarks smartly that "Visté means speed. The unicorn is visté, n'est-ce pas? No animal runs faster. So when we see a unicorn we think of Viste" (Chevalier 2004, 36), thus making the connection between the sponsor's name and the figure of the unicorn.

[13] For more on the actual sponsor of the tapestries, see Decu Teodorescu's "La tenture de la Dame à la licorne: nouvelle lecture des armoiries" (2010).

one of the six tapestries, "À Mon Seul Désir". That is one of the deliberately obscure, highly crafted and elegant mottos of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, precursor to the feminist movement mottos, which, in the fifteenth century, often alluded to courtly love, and was, for that reason, adopted by the nobility during the age of chivalry. With its various interpretations, ranging from "to my only/sole desire", "according to my desire alone", to "by my will alone", or "love desires only beauty of soul", the motto suggests strong feelings, such as passion, will or desire, while also implying that those feelings and will – signs of power, if not of authority – belong to the woman one courts. Although the motto is largely discussed in Chevalier's book, and not at all in Gregory's novel, we may also find a common trait in the fact that, in the latter narrative, John of Lancaster, 1st Duke of Bedford, had almost the same motto, "À Vous Entier", French for "(Devoted) to you entirely" – which is comparably similar to that on the famous tapestry.

Conclusions

The present study has focused on two of the many literary works that have shown an increased interest in unicorns in the twenty-first century and explained its methodology and selection of the literary corpus. A comparative view of the way in which Philippa Gregory and Tracy Chevalier have adopted and adapted the symbolic image of the unicorn in *The Lady of the Rivers* and *The Lady and the Unicorn*, respectively, has been completed by an analysis of the novelists' sources of inspiration. In this respect, the paper has explained the reasons why medieval characters and legends, in combination with historical facts (or gaps), have been revisited and found their place in the novels of the two British authors. The way in which the medieval characters in the legend of the unicorn – the mythical beast, the virgin and the hunter – are reworked for the third millennium readers reflects on the two novelists' skills and feminist agenda.

There is still much to be discussed about the literature devoted to unicorns, and many medieval sources to be disputed and/or challenged, but the main conclusion of the study is this: in both novels analysed here, the story and the image of the unicorn is perceived in close relation to that of the power of women, be they virgins, wives, nuns or mothers. The unicorn, with all its stories, makes everyone believe that the feminine draws its power from the magical side of the world, which, just for convenience, has been turned into reality. Throughout their two novels, both Gregory and Chevalier do their best to use intertextuality for a double purpose: to reveal the (hi)stories of their characters while creating their own fictional interpretations of them.

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COMPASSION AND ACCEPTANCE OF HUMAN ANIMALITY IN A SELECTION OF LIAM O'FLAHERTY'S STORIES

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ABSTRACT. ***Compassion and Acceptance of Human Animality in a Selection of Liam O'Flaherty's Stories***. Liam O'Flaherty's numerous stories dealing with animals are generally considered his best artistic efforts. Scholars have highlighted how he humbled anthropocentric pride and even effaced the narrator and the human point of view from them. My contention, however, is that these stories can also be interpreted as O'Flaherty's literary meditation on the absence of 'good discontinuities' between humans and animals, and on the importance of constructing the human/animal encounter on the acceptance of the existence of an interspecies communion. In his stories, humans do not necessarily possess something that animals lack, such as the capability of feeling compassion. Humans often fail to have compassion for other animals or human beings, for they deny that a communion obtains among all the living. These humans are capable of taking delight in another's suffering and so disrupt both their equilibrium with potentially negative consequences and the present 'ecological equilibrium', which has to be restored. Hence, O'Flaherty's short stories can be seen as earlier literary responses to contemporary works on human/animal ethics and genuine ethe of care (Derrida; Nussbaum; Wolfe), which will be discussed here together with selected empirical studies on the same subject (de Waal; Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomas).

Keywords: *Liam O'Flaherty, animal stories, compassion, existential suffering, human-animal distinction*

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REZUMAT. ***Compasiune și acceptare a animalității umane în unele povestiri de Liam O'Flaherty*****.** Numeroasele povestiri de Liam O'Flaherty care ai ca subiect animalele sunt îndeobște considerate reușita sa artistică cea mai importantă. Exegeții au evidențiat modul în care el a redus la umilință mândria antropocentrică, ba chiar a șters naratorul și punctul de vedere uman din acestea. Teza mea este, însă, că povestirile în cauză pot fi interpretate și ca meditația literară a lui O'Flaherty despre absența „bunelor discontinuități" dintre oameni și animale, și despre importanța de a construi întâlnirea om-animal pe acceptarea existenței unei comuniuni inter-specii. În povestirile sale, oamenii nu posedă în mod necesar ceva ce animalelor le lipsește, cum ar fi capacitatea de a simți compasiune. Oamenii nu reușesc adesea să simtă compasiune față de animale sau de alte ființe umane, întrucât ei neagă faptul că o comuniune rezultă între toate cele vii. Acești oameni sunt în stare să se bucure de suferința altuia și distrug astfel atât echilibrul lor cu consecințe potențial negative, precum și „echilibrul ecologic" actual, care trebuie reconstruit. Așadar, povestirile lui O'Flaherty pot fi văzute ca prefigurări mai timpurii ale unor lucrări contemporane despre etica om/animal și etica generală a grijii (Derrida, Nussbaum, Wolfe), discutate aici laolaltă cu anumite studii empirice pe același subiect (de Waal, Goetz, Keltner și Simon-Thomas).

Cuvinte-cheie: *Liam O'Flaherty, povestiri cu animale, compasiune, suferință existențială, distincția om-animal*

Liam O'Flaherty in the context of Posthuman and Animal Studies

Irish Literary Studies are witnessing the development of a new area of inquiry surrounding the cultural and discursive significance of animality, as the past few years have brought about an unprecedented amount of scholarship on the depiction of the human/animal encounter and the recurrent presence of animals in the works of Irish writers (Estévez-Saá, Palacios-González, and Pereira-Ares 2020, 1). Featuring research relevant to Irish Animal and Posthuman Studies are, for instance, the pioneering *The Female and the Species. The Animal in Irish Women's Writing* (2010) and the edited collection *Animals in Irish Literature and Culture* by Kathryn Kirkpatrick and Borbála Faragó (2015); the dedicated 2020 issue of *Estudios Irlandeses*, edited by Margarita Estévez-Saá, Manuela Palacios-González, and Noemí Pereira-Ares as well as scattered essays in Christine Cusick's collection *Out of the Earth: Ecocritical Readings of Irish Texts* (2010). The list may also include the forthcoming *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature and the Environment*, edited by Malcolm Sen, and Bloomsbury's *Flann O'Brien and the Nonhuman: Animals, Environments, Machines*, edited by Katherine Ebury, Paul Fagan, and John Greaney (O'Connor 2020, 367).

These works attest to the growing academic interest in the field of Irish Animal Studies and betray the urgency, which is acutely felt among this scholarly community, to rethink Irish literature within a posthumanist framework and explore how the literary arts can raise our sensitivity towards the non-human world. Underpinning most of such research is the belief that the literary text, with its complexity and subtlety, is a fruitful space for us readers to increase our awareness about interspecies relationships and grasp some of the "elusive truths about animality", including our own (Bartosch 2020, 9 and 12; cf. also Iovino 2010, 761). Literature has always been deeply engaged with environmental questions, exploring, among other things, the many facets of human and cultural attitudes towards animals. And, although literary works about animality may seem less scientifically reliable than zoological reports, the aesthetic encounter with 'animal' subjects can spur readers to question the ethical and scientific grounds of human exceptionalism, problematise the categorical human/animal distinction, and ponder spaces of interspecies conviviality (Kompatscher and Heuberger 2021, 268–69).

The invitation to consider the ethical and pedagogical value of imaginative literature informs the following pages, which investigate a number of animal stories by Liam O'Flaherty. Since O'Flaherty authored more than a hundred tales, a thorough selection was necessary and, to reduce the degree of arbitrariness in the selection, I opted for the stories that can engage with and challenge contemporary theoretical work in Animal Studies, focusing prevalently on the stories from the 1920s. I refer to: "The Cow's Death" (1923), "Sport: A Kill", "The Blackbird", "The Wild Sow", "The Hook", "The Wren's Nest", "The Black Bullock" (all from 1924), "The Wild Goat's Kid" and "The Wounded Cormorant" (both from 1925), "The Blackbird's Mate" and "The Black Rabbit" (from 1929), and "The Hawk" (1949).[2] Usually only two- or three-page long, these stories are populated by the domestic and wild animals of the author's native Aran and *seanchas* of the Galway region, to which is given prominence: O'Flaherty's animals do not haunt the peripheries of narrative, nor are they metaphors, symbols, or representatives of humans (Sheeran 1976, 48; Kompatscher and Heuberger 2021, 252). Rather, O'Flaherty made the effort to represent their authentic existence and consciousness in stories that capture moments of interspecies encounters or feature no human being at all, focusing exclusively on animals (cf. Malamud 2000, 2).

This corpus of narratives, I believe, can be productively analysed from a posthumanist perspective, because it tackles the crucial questions mentioned above as well as other key issues like the presence of good discontinuities between species and animal suffering. By resorting to the tools of Posthuman and Animal Studies, we can gauge and make use of the potential of O'Flaherty's

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[2] There is no consensus on when O'Flaherty wrote "The Hawk", which he also read on Radio Éireann and translated into Irish: 1949 is the year of its earliest known publication.

narratives to problematise deep-rooted assumptions about animals and our relation to them, the challenging of which is an integral part of the deconstruction of anthropocentrism (Xie 2019, 3). The use of the verb 'to problematise' is intentional here: as will be shown, O'Flaherty's animal stories are neither blatantly moralistic tales nor pamphlets through which he made a cause of the prevention of cruelty to animals; what is more, in his entire oeuvre, scholars have pinpointed representations of bestialised men and of animals as "villains" that complicate attempts at classifying O'Flaherty's works as posthumanist (cf. Phillips 2005, 43 and *infra*).

Incidentally, I contend that the short stories focusing on animal lives, often seen from the point of view of the animals themselves, may help us relativise and humble our anthropocentric *unlike* the novels and novellas (Hediger 2016, 12). As critics have often noted, in his longer narratives, O'Flaherty conjures for readers visions of subhuman creatures who are aliens in the civilised world or subject to degeneration and reverse evolution. For instance, Gypo Nolan of the bestselling *The Informer* (1925) teeters on the verge of insanity and inhabits a world that seemingly "hunts him like an animal, in which he is gradually tracked down for the kill" (Donnelly 1974, 73); the soldiers in the World War One novella *The Return of the Brute* (1929) are bestialised humans repeatedly compared to wild dogs. Commenting on such portrayals, Terry Phillips observes that, so doing, O'Flaherty created "a site of abjection which renders porous the boundaries between the human and the animal" (2005, 43). In my view, however, O'Flaherty does not really trouble the supposed human-animal divide in his lengthier works, because, there, animality is displaced and projected onto the marginalised Other to the point that the resulting hybrids do not appear to blur categorical difference but reaffirm it along with anthropocentricity: the bestialised man is 'less than a human' and slightly 'more than an ape' (cf. Ortiz-Robles 2016, 146–47).

In contrast, the selected short stories hold interest for Posthuman and Animal Studies scholars who deem literature a key instrument for the recognition that "we are all part of a porous, dynamic, and relational planetary system, every aspect of which is necessary and valuable" (O'Connor 2020, 346). Hence, by focusing on the briefer genre, I seek not only to contribute to the growing scholarship in the field, but also to further and, in part, re-orient the discussion of animality in O'Flaherty. The 're-orientation' is carried out by situating the selected corpus into a framework of contemporary theorisations on human/animal ethics and genuine ethe of care put forward by Jacques Derrida, Martha Nussbaum, and Cary Wolfe. In their light, the stories can be read as O'Flaherty's literary meditation on the absence of "good discontinuities", in which "we humans have something morally valuable that animals don't have" (Nussbaum 2012, 142), and on the importance of constructing the human/animal encounter on the acceptance of the existence of an interspecies communion.

To adequately show this, the article is structured into two parts and each one focuses on how, in his short narratives, O'Flaherty engaged with some leading questions of our age that have to do with human-animal relations (Calarco 2008, 113). The first question, which was initially posed by Jeremy Bentham and then reiterated by Derrida and Wolfe, can be summed up as: "The question is not, Can they *reason*? Nor Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?" (Wolfe 2003a, 33). The analysis of the selected stories will show that O'Flaherty lays emphasis on the entrapped, tragic fate of all species (Cahalan 1991, 54). His tales do not rest on human exceptionalism but refuse to normalise any neat human-animal distinction, because suffering, vulnerability, and finitude are presented by the author as marks of existence for *both* humans *and* animals. Shared existential suffering in particular is a recurrent theme in his animal stories, which point to the fact that humans and animals undergo similar experiences: we are no less mortal or vulnerable than animals (Perkins 2000, 10; Adams 2016).

Then, after dwelling on the fate humans share with animals, the focus will shift to a second, interrelated, question: the question of violence and compassion towards animals. In my view, the deep-rooted idea of human exceptionalism is further challenged in O'Flaherty by the fact that his human characters do not possess something that animals lack. The capability of compassion is often thought of as a key marker of humanity's difference from other species, meaning that only humans can feel compassion and deeply share another's emotions. Yet, in O'Flaherty, humans often fail to have compassion for other animals or human beings, for they deny that a communion obtains among all the living. These humans are capable of taking delight in another's suffering, disrupting both their equilibrium with potentially tragic consequences and the present 'ecological equilibrium', which has to be restored.

O'Flaherty's narrative and thematic choices thus enable one to put his short stories in dialogue with the ideas of Nussbaum, Wolfe, and the other contemporary thinkers for whom compassion is the potential cornerstone of any radical interspecies ethics and politics – the basis on which we should forge an ethical bond with nonhuman animals (Arnould-Bloomfield 2015, 1467; Xie 2019, 5).

Vulnerability, suffering, and the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman lives

O'Flaherty was a prolific but uneven writer, whose critical standing has suffered because of the extreme differences within his work (Heaney 1995, 45). With few exceptions, the existing scholarship presents him as a talented craftsman of short stories who tried his hand at the longer form with mixed results. Critics have often thought his fifteen novels to be flawed and I deem it indicative that,

with the only exception of *The Informer*, all of them were out of print by the mid-1970s (Donnelly 1974, 71). In contrast, O'Flaherty's stories from the 1920s dealing with animals and Irish peasant life are still anthologised and have been crucial in establishing his reputation as an exquisite craftsman of the briefer genre (Cahalan 1991, 53). Earlier and later commentators have been consistent particularly in their agreement that O'Flaherty's best works are the tales evincing an obsession with animality, a deep interest both in non-human animals and the animality of humans (O'Connor 1970, 1). Seán O'Faolain saw in O'Flaherty's animal stories "the distillation of pure genius" who "has his ear to the earth" (1937, 174), and, according to Benedict Kiely, "it is understanding of the earth, of animals worthy and human beings not always so worthy of the earth, that makes O'Flaherty's work important" (qtd. in Murray 1968, 154). David H. Greene contended that O'Flaherty "developed a genre" which he "made all his own – the short story with an animal character" (1956, 328), and, for fellow-writer Frank O'Connor, O'Flaherty's "best stories deal with animals, and the nearer his characters approach to animals the happier he is in dealing with them" (qtd. in O'Connor 1970, 18).

Considered together, these comments point to the qualities in O'Flaherty's writing, which was grounded in his connection with nature and his profound knowledge of animal life and the inner workings of animal characters. For O'Flaherty, animal life was not merely a literary subject but held a fascination in its own right (Cahalan 1991, 54). During the 1920s, O'Flaherty retreated to the Aran Islands on a few occasions in an attempt to regain his spiritual health and inspiration. For the writer, solace and beauty could always be found in primitive Nature and its contemplation, to the point that he sought "communion with the cliffs, the birds, the wild animals, and the sea of [his] native land" (qtd. in Cahalan 1991, 58). To Edward Garnett, his literary reader for the publisher Jonathan Cape, O'Flaherty wrote in 1927: "I went down to the Aran Islands for a few days and I was gloriously alive for those days, alone by the sea fishing rockfish" (1996 [1927], 187). Another letter to Garnett, dated April 1923, instead attests to the author's careful attention to animals: "I sat for two hours in a field yesterday watching young heifers. It's peculiar the way they lie down. Invariably they raise snouts in the air and blow out their breath. I think it's to clear their nostrils. [...] I never noticed this before" (qtd. in Cahalan 1991, 54). Similarly, in the non-fictional *Joseph Conrad. An Appreciation*, O'Flaherty says that his closeness to nature and animals made him a different writer from the author of *Lord Jim* and other novelists: "I have seen the leaping salmon fly before the salmon whale, and I have seen the sated buck horn his mate […]" (qtd. in Sheeran 1976, 36).

The repeated opportunities to observe animals first hand prepared O'Flaherty to write about them. When O'Flaherty turned to the animal world to

populate his stories, he tried to approach animals on their own terms by making the effort to represent their consciousness and look at life from their perspective (cf. Malamud 2000, 3). To do so, he would efface the point of view of humans from the narrative or place it side by side with a multiplicity of alternative visions. "Sport: The Kill" is exemplary in this regard, as it is first told from the perspective of a rabbit that is hunted down and trapped in a tunnel by a boy and his dog. The boy pushes a willow rod in an attempt to drag his prey out, but only manages to wound it.[3] So, "blinded by the pain", the rabbit crawls straight into the fangs of the dog at the other end of the tunnel (1924, 152). In these moments of violence, the point of view shifts rapidly from the rabbit to the dog and, finally, to the boy who then takes the rabbit and bashes its head on a rock. The action is very clearly pictured through details about the panting, snorting, and growling of the animals. Readers are helped to understand the rabbit's instinctual reactions, they are made to feel the fear of the prey as it "see[s] enemies on both sides" or "the strong smell of the dog's breath [is] stifling" it (151). The story as a whole gains intense poignancy through this sensing of the rabbit's plight.

As one may garner from the brief synopsis of "Sport: The Kill", many of O'Flaherty's stories focus on the fundamental concerns of the lives of animals, such as the search for food, mating, and their struggles to avoid the threat of danger or death from humans or other animals (Magee 1964, 159). Equally central, in narrative terms, is the depiction of animal pain and suffering. For example, "The Wild Goat's Kid" is the story of a young goat who bravely fights a scavenging dog to protect her kid; "The Hawk" concerns a father bird's desperate attempt at protecting his eggs and mate from a hunter: at the end, the human intruder smashes him onto some rocks and the hawk drops, dead and without a sound, into the "dark water" below (1999 [1949] 345); in "The Blackbird's Mate", a hen blackbird freezes to death because she refuses to leave her eggs in the nest, which, nonetheless soon become "icy cold" (1999 [1924], 314); "The Cow's Death" is a vivid account of a mother cow searching for her dead calf and dying herself; in "The Wounded Cormorant", a story that involves no human characters, the titular bird is brutally killed by its flock.

Often climaxing in the death or wounding of the animal characters, these stories stand out as a profound comment on the tragic transience of life on earth: animals are first and foremost temporal and vulnerable living creatures. Not unlike humans. O'Flaherty shows that animals are made vulnerable by necessities, constraints, and the pressures of the environment, but also that they share this status of precariousness and vulnerability with us. Human beings are not exempt from cruel fates and pain, especially within an environment

[3] At times, O'Flaherty uses the pronouns and adjectives he/she/his/her to refer to animals; at other times, he opts for it/its: the occurrences in the article reflect those in the original texts. Moreover, whenever possible, the quoted texts are taken from the earliest instance of the story being examined.

subject to the whims of sea and weather like that of the Aran Islands. Despite leaving Dublin for the Aran during his nervous breakdowns,[4] O'Flaherty never denied that life was hard on the islands at the turn of the twentieth century: when he was born, in 1896, many of the 3,000 islanders lived in houses with no electricity or running water and faced a constant struggle to find enough food (Kelly 1988, 5). The first-hand knowledge of the elemental harshness of his native place made O'Flaherty no more inclined to romanticise the life of people than that of animals (Phillips 2005, 43).

This is apparent, for instance, in "The Landing" (1924) and "The Oar" (1928), two complementary stories that are characterised by similar plot patterns and a "cinematic" style (Sheeran 1976, 133): a storm erupts suddenly, the sea swells, and some fishermen struggle to race to shore. The divergence lies in the conclusion: while, in "The Landing", the fishermen make it out to the rocks, in "The Oar", a "mighty wave" swamps a curragh and three men die. The stories end abruptly with brief sentences, respectively "They had landed safely" (1999 [1924], 49) and "We saw an oar by the Serpent's Reef. Raised up to Heaven with a hand grasping it. It followed us and no hand was grasping it'" (1928, 55), which direct the reader's attention to the primal moments and situations in the life of any living being – death, survival, sudden accidents that alter irrevocably human or animal relationships (cf. O'Connor 1970, 288). Both tales are graphic descriptions of the fishermen's lives as they struggle with the unforgiving elements of nature to survive and, by focusing on such themes, the author implies that humans too are "subject to the requirements of the surrounding environment, the vicissitudes of time, and the vulnerabilities of the body" (Herman 2016, 3). In the novel *Insurrection*, one of the characters says, "I'm in revolt against the idea that man is the centre of the universe" (qtd. in O'Connor 1970, 58), and, emblematically, the towering waves in "The Landing" and "The Oar" point to a rejection of the patterns of human domination over nature and, instead, to bonds of continuity between them (Braidotti and Dolphijn 2017).

If considered together, O'Flaherty's short stories have the power to 'spur' readers to meditate upon the embodied finitude and vulnerability, to other creatures or to time and environment, which we share with animals. The recognition of a shared status enables one to anchor O'Flaherty's narrative, on the one hand, to Anat Pick's theorisations on existential vulnerability, on the other, to what figures as diverse as Adams, Derrida, Nussbaum, and Wolfe have posited as the starting point for our ethical response to non-human animals, namely "our shared embodiment, mortality, and finitude" (Wolfe 2008, 9).

[4] O'Flaherty's 'moodiness' may have been a consequence of his traumatic experience on the front lines of the Great War: in September 1917, he was caught in a bombardment of artillery fire and severely injured. The author came home from France shell-shocked and, as remarked in the autobiographical *Shame the Devil*, he "was regarded as a pariah and a fool and a renegade" (O'Flaherty 1934, 21; Marchbanks 2006, 93).

Taking her cue from Simone Weil's "The vulnerability of precious things is beautiful because vulnerability is a mark of existence", Pick argues that there is nothing specifically "animal" about the susceptibility of mind and body to earthly forces and necessities: vulnerability is a mark of existence that transcends species difference (2011, 1–7). At the same time, O'Flaherty's short stories can be seen to fit with recent concepts of interspecies interconnectedness, which Adams sums up in the sentences "All of us are fated to die. We share this fate with animals"; for this reason, she argues, we should try to awaken our culture to care about animals, a group with which we share deep affinities (2016, 5).

Thus grounded in the poignant reminder of shared vulnerability and mortality, the interspecies affinity between humans and animals is also emphasised, in O'Flaherty's short stories, by the attribution to animals of capacities such as character, intelligence, and emotion. As noted by John Hildebidle, "the animals act out of the same instincts and emotions as do O'Flaherty's people", including the 'negative' jealousy, the dislike of the outsider, and hatred (1989, 19); indeed, given that O'Flaherty based his descriptions on sensitive and minute observation of animal behaviour, his writing, often violent, does not look at the natural world in a sentimental fashion. For example, "The Blackbird" revolves around the pride and vanity of its protagonist, which is so "full of vanity", so proud of and absorbed in "his delicious warbling", that he barely escapes the claws of a cat (O'Flaherty 1924, 563–64). Instead, in "The Black Rabbit", O'Flaherty conjures up a world pervaded by fear and envy, in which the 'different' animal is dreaded and killed: the rabbit of the title is described as huge and "undoubtedly a sport of nature, a sudden upward curve in the direction and divine intellect"; particularly because of his beauty and intelligence, he became the "hated enemy of [his] housekeeper" who instigates some half-wild, conniving cats to kill him: the cats, who fear and despise the 'difference' of the rabbit, carry out their task (1971 [1929], 194–201).

One consideration arises from reading these two stories. We should not view the blackbird, the rabbit, and the cats as predominantly allegorical, whose main function is to be serving as a mirror for the examination of people. It has been argued that, in "The Blackbird" and "The Black Rabbit", O'Flaherty makes use of anthropomorphism, as he transposes human emotions onto animals: significantly, A. A. Kelly labels the former story "a fable", sort of cautionary tale meant to warn people of the dangers of excessive vanity (1976, 14). I do not fully share Kelly's view. In the wake of Frans de Waal's theorisations in *Primates and Philosophers*, I deem such presence of anthropomorphic elements a judicious form of anthropomorphism, which may uncover a whole world of resemblances between species, an essential interconnectedness (de Waal 2006, 65). Moreover, as I will try to demonstrate by reporting some private writings by O'Flaherty, I believe that the author genuinely recognised in all living beings the capabilities of feeling emotions and developing complex interrelations. Hence, by showing

that, O'Flaherty points to a fundamental continuity between humans and other animals: fear, hatred, jealousy, and so on are facts of nature, not – to paraphrase Anat Pick – something specifically human or animal.

Suffering, here intended as psychological pain, is another marker of continuity. O'Flaherty depicts a harsh, naturalistic world which can also be defined as "Darwinian" in that only the fittest survive, and both animals and humans can give in to brutality and violence in keeping with the extremes of nature they have to face (cf. Kelly 1988, 5). "The Wounded Cormorant" provides a case in point. O'Flaherty was fascinated with cormorants: following a visit to Inis Mór, he claimed that "the people are sadly inferior to the island itself. But the sea birds are almost worthy of it. The great cormorants thrilled me" (1996, 188). Nonetheless, he was not inclined to offer an edulcorated portrayal of them. In the short story, a cormorant gets injured when a rock drops from a cliff ledge and cuts its leg: it survives for a short time until its "comrades" take action. The relevant passage reads:

> But they had no mercy. They fell upon it fiercely, tearing at its body with their beaks, plucking out its black feathers and rooting it about with their feet. It struggled madly to creep in farther on the ledge, trying to get into a dark crevice in the cliff to hide, but they dragged it back again and pushed it towards the brink of the ledge. One bird prodded its right eye with its beak. Another gripped the broken leg firmly in its beak and tore at it. (1925, 318)

Here, O'Flaherty shows how his brutal world implies that the elimination of the weakest must take its course to guarantee the survival of the others: both the wounded cormorant and its mates knew that for the former, unable to keep up with "the flock, death was certain. Sea-gulls would devour it" (318). The laws of nature regulate life on the Aran Islands and the barren efforts of survival of their inhabitants, as O'Flaherty had so closely observed. Incidentally, that the story is not narrated from a noticeably personalised perspective makes "The Wounded Cormorant" look like an objective study of nature with all its tenderness and viciousness – a depiction that seems to comply with Morton's assertion that "ecological art must include ugliness and disgust" (Morton 2018, 87; cf. Bateson 2021, 55).

The author returns to the themes of overpowering and violence in "The Hawk", the analysis of which also helps to foreground the centrality of predation, of prey-predator relationships, in many depictions of human-animal encounter in O'Flaherty's narrative. In the autobiographical *Shame the Devil*, one learns that predation is the groundling principle of existence for the author, who, in an oft-quoted passage, is seen shouting to an American woman: "Learn, you foolish

woman, that life is an interminable process of one form of life preying on another, from the cow that destroys life in the blade of grass to the lion that leaps upon a stag in the African forest" (1934, 55).

The idea of relentless violence and suffering engendered by the "interminable process" of predation is craftily conveyed in "The Hawk", in which human beings and animals compete with the other species in satisfying the same wants, and humans succeed because they are the fittest (cf. Magee 1964, 160). The story is divided into three parts. First, the male hawk scares peaceful birds out of the territory and kills a lark to feed his mate, thus fulfilling "the purpose for which nature had endowed him" (O'Flaherty 1999 [1949], 343). But, then, the hawk loses his life in a futile attempt to protect his nest from a man who captures the mate and takes the eggs: the hawk is "helpless in the presence of the one enemy that he feared by instinct" (344). "The Hawk" is another objective study of nature with all its laws and viciousness, which suggests that birds and humans partake in the same naturalistic universe and can be both predators and prey: the 'villain' is the man, but man is seen preying on the hawk's nest immediately after the hawk had killed the lark; the man emerges as merely another animal, only more dangerous (Kelly 1976, 11; Cahalan 1991, 60).

Again, what is striking in this story is the full range of emotions attributed to the hawk, from a sense of triumph to "ecstasy" to "fear" and "agony" (O'Flaherty 1999 [1949], 344). The hawk also demonstrates that he can suffer, as we see his emotional response to the pain of his mate: "it was neither pride in his power nor the intoxication of the lust to kill that stiffened his wings and the muscles of his breast. He was drawn to battle by the wild, sad tenderness aroused in him by his mate's screech" (345). And suffering is very broadly construed here, because it is not physical pain but, specifically, psychological pain (cf. Wolfe 2003a, 33). This may remind the reader of the cock bird losing his companion in "The Blackbird's Mate", who is said to utter a "queer cry" and "piteous shriek" upon realising what happened in his nest (O'Flaherty 1999 [1929], 314). The blackbird's behaviour, as presented in the story, seems to show that animals have some sort of awareness of death, and hurt because of it.

Albeit without any animal rights agenda, O'Flaherty thus tackles the central question first raised by Jeremy Bentham in response to Descartes, and recently addressed by Derrida and Wolfe: "the question with animals is not can they talk, or can they reason, but can they *suffer*" (Wolfe 2003b, 24). An answer in the positive appears to emerge from the stories analysed here. O'Flaherty was certainly aware that animals feel the raw, unpretentious emotions that have to do with the struggle for survival: he wrote, "swift thought and the swift flight of ravenous birds, and the squeal of terror of hunted animals are to me reality" (qtd. in Sheeran 1976, 36). Moreover, thanks to first-hand observation of nature,

he may have concluded that animals can feel psychological pain: they *do* suffer. Reflecting on a *real* goat he saw on the Aran, he observed:

> a wonderful character but a hopeless milker. I shot her kids and in revenge she is deliberately withholding her milk, so that very probably she will go dry in a fortnight unless she changes her mind and decides to behave herself. I think she is a most unhappy animal for she wails at times for no reason in the world. (O'Flaherty 1996, 150)

Hence, readers of O'Flaherty are confronted with the troubling idea that the distinction between animals and humans is not adamant: animals not only have emotions but can also suffer, and this concerns us very directly, for we are fellow embodied beings vulnerably exposed to suffering. O'Flaherty's insinuation that we *both* suffer simultaneously "challenges the ontological understanding of the human as a superior species" (Chiew 2014, 61) and raises pressing questions about our relationship with non-human alterity: should we care about animals? Why should we care about them when we do not always care about fellow humans?

The short stories I am about to examine can act as a stimulus for us to reconsider our relationship with the animal Other and our capacity to witness the suffering of animals with no compassionate response – to be emotionally frozen in front of it. Many of O'Flaherty's 1920s stories are accounts of indifference and cruelty to animals that are grounded, I contend, in "the a priori rejection of shared characteristics between humans and animals", that is to say, the "wilful blindness to the human-like characteristics of animals or the animal-like characteristics of ourselves" (de Waal 2006, 65).

Compassion as the cornerstone of the human/animal encounter

In the 1920s, one of Liam O'Flaherty's best achievements was the story "The Cow's Death", which he first published in the *New Statesman* in June 1923. Later included in the collection *Spring Sowing* and much appreciated by the author himself, "The Cow's Death" tells of a mother cow giving birth to a stillborn calf. We see the cow, in pain, reaching for the calf in a sequence of actions that highlights her strong maternal instinct: "She stooped over the calf and moaned, again smelling it. Then she licked the still body with her coarse tongue lovingly" (O'Flaherty 1923, 364). But soon after, oblivious to this display of affection, the peasants who were watching over the cow take the body of the calf and throw it over a cliff: the dead calf ends up on some rocks at the sea edges. The second part of the story thus focuses on the increasing distress afflicting the cow: O'Flaherty does not treat her suffering as incommunicable, as the cow's anguish is described through references to her frantic movements and 'intelligible'

animal language – the narrator tells us how she tilts her head, moans and lows, stumbles, and circles around the same point wildly. This until, driven by the desire to find her young one, the cow breaks through all barriers and discovers the body: so, "the cow, uttering a loud bellow, jump[s] headlong down" to her death, just as a "great towering wave" sweeps the calf's body from the rocks (364).

Without anthropomorphising the cow, the story elicits sympathy from the reader, for the emotion and maternal instinct that drive the cow to her death are familiar to humans too (O'Connor 1970, 306–07). And to emphasise the communion that exists – or should exist – between species, the narrator introduces the unnamed characters of the cow's peasant owner and his wife, who show compassion and understanding for the bereaved animal mother. I intend compassion not as a blind urge in contrast to reason, but, in the wake of Martha Nussbaum's theorisations, as the emotion that arises in witnessing another's suffering and that motivates a subsequent desire to help (Nussbaum 2012; cf. Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomas 2010, 351). The portrayal of the peasant owners and the account of their actions provide a 'narrative' case in point for such a definition, because the peasant woman manifests sorrow and tries to attend to the cow supportively after the delivery. The third-person, objective narrator recounts that "the woman offered her a hot drink of oatmeal" and that "the woman rubbed the cow's matted forehead, and there was a tear in her eye; for she too was a mother" (O'Flaherty 1923, 364).

This appears to be a compassionate response evoked by what Nussbaum calls a "judgment of similar possibilities" and deems of "considerable importance in preventing or undoing anthropodenial" (Nussbaum 2012, 147). Put it simply, people or animals feel compassion because they view the plight of the suffering other as a real possibility for themselves, as is arguably the case with the peasant woman. In my reading, the woman's reaction is devoid of any connotations of condescension and is not activated by a position of superiority – her compassion for the cow stems from a sense of similarity and communion, specifically from her recognition that, for the mother, the life of the calf possesses more than merely material value: animal life is recognised to have some intrinsic worth. This recognition is further narratively foregrounded in the gestures of the peasant, who buries the bag "under a mound of stones" and makes the sign of the cross on the cow's side "with a handful of the brown earth": man and cow are placed symbolically at one (O'Flaherty 1923, 364).

But this unity of humans and animals is often destroyed by the former's insensitivity or cruelty as other stories show (Kelly 1976, 3). O'Flaherty provides his readers with many examples of failure in compassion, which may be ascribed, at least partly, to what de Waal has called "anthropodenial," the implicit denial on the part of humans that we are animals (de Waal 2006, 59–67; Nussbaum 2012, 140). In "Sport: The Kill", for instance, we have a case of animal suffering that

evokes no compassionate response from its human witness (and perpetrator). This is a tale in which "animals play the roles of both heroes and villains, and the latter role they share with man" (Kelly 1976, 10), because the dog joins in hunting down the rabbit, but the dog is not an agent of senseless violence as much as the boy. The young hunter is shown to give in to the unreasonable pleasures of killing – he "cursed", "grunted", "growled" – and has no feelings for his dog or the rabbit: at the end of the story, he "kick[s] the dog fiercely on the ribs" and "bash[es]" the rabbit's head on a rock (O'Flaherty 1924, 150–52).

Employing his usual objective style, the author gives no explicit ethical judgement on the situation, but seeing the chase from the perspective of the hunted animal and how the hunt atrociously ends forces us to interrogate killing as a form of wanton cruelty as well as our relations to animals and our supposed 'moral' superiority. Discussions of the relationship between humans and animals often focus on two things: continuities between humans and animals and the so-called good discontinuities, including the contention that full moral agency and the capability to feel compassion pertain exclusively to humans (Nussbaum 2012, 142–44). No fully-fledged theorisation on whether animals can deeply share another's emotions transpires from O'Flaherty's short fiction, nevertheless, his grimmest naturalistic stories linking animals and people compel us to entertain the idea that there is not, necessarily, a good discontinuity between humans and animals for what concerns compassion.

Often, in the short stories from the 1920s, humans are shown as insensitive and cruel for no apparent reason or gain. In "The Hook", for instance, a hook is cruelly planted by two "small boys" in a piece of liver, with which they lure a seagull: the boys are not described in detail, for the story is told from the point of view of the bird, which only 'hears' them "curs[ing]" when it manages to escape free (1924, 871–73). Similarly, in "The Wren's Nest", two boys drag a nest from a tree, kick it and tear its pieces to shreds, and scatter the eggs all around: all of that just to prove their fearlessness. The focus on the two friends does not 'obscure' the human-animal relationship, but rather places it in a larger network of relationships that predicate themselves upon forms of prevarication and violence: the boys often quarrel and fight to establish who is the bravest and strongest, and the destruction they cause restores their amity. They are oblivious to the suffering of the birds, which are "screaming in an agonised state": soon after destroying the wren's nest, they devote their attention to "a rabbit's nest with three young ones in it" (1924, 11–12). Readers may find "The Wren's Nest" particularly disturbing, especially since O'Flaherty deliberately uses children as the perpetrators of violence.

"The Hook" and "The Wren's Nest" were written around the same time as "The Wild Sow" and "The Black Bullock", which both deal with cruelty to animals and their death at the hands of irrational people. These two tales

implicitly criticise human exploitation of other species and our self-perceived superiority to animals. Bullocks and sows are prised agrarian resources in the rural communities depicted by O'Flaherty, but, in these stories, their life and wellbeing appear to possess little material value, let alone an intrinsic value. In "The Wild Sow", Old Neddy starves his pig until she breaks into his bedroom/food storage and a "big potato stuck in her throat" chokes her to death (1924, 65–66). "The Black Bullock" describes a bullock that eats too much and so is rejected by its owner and tortured by villagers and other animals alike, which makes it "hungrier, more thirsty and miserable": eventually the bullock falls, breaks its spine, and is slaughtered (1999 [1924], 145–48). Again, readers are left wondering about human insensitivity to animal pain, on which the narrator lingers: the bullock roams near the village hungry and thirsty, but the villagers throw stones at him; the sow "whine[s] with the hunger", but Neddy's only reaction is shouting at her "From now on, […] you'll have to fend for yourself, and may the devil choke you" (1924, 66).

Equally disconcerting may be the realisation that these animals were purchased to make a profit and, yet, are neglected by their human purchasers who, ultimately, pay the consequences of their actions. Old Neddy, who continuously repeated "I have money while I have that pig", finds himself with no potatoes, flour, or dried rockfish. The bullock is slaughtered before it is fit for sale. These are consequences of the economic kind but, to an extent, O'Flaherty seems to suggest that acts of brutality upset the existing ecological equilibrium made of human-animal interrelations: both stories end on an ominous note of death – respectively, "he found her lying on her side, stone dead" (66) and "so he had to slaughter him" (148) – which points to an untimely rupture in the rhythmic cycle of rural, seasonal life. It also presses into the reader's mind the idea that a new equilibrium, in a community dependent on animals for livelihood and vulnerable to the overwhelming forces of nature, has to be established.

These tales of wanton cruelty to animals also counter the strong positive link between humans and animals portrayed, for instance, in "The Cow's Death". Amy Scher argues that, in the tales of animal subjugation, O'Flaherty longs for "an integrated world" and wishes to "impart […]" to his peasant characters "a sense of the responsibility inherent in living creatures to sustain a relationship with the environment which focuses on harmony as an essential element" (1994, 113–14). I believe that O'Flaherty does not 'impart' or 'preach', as Scher's article title would suggest, but he makes clear that the very same peasant whom he holds in high regard for "respond[ing] to the seasons like a bird or beast" (1929, 116) could give in to brute instincts. Therefore, he confronts his readers with a range of possible human-animal relations and, given the bitterness that transpires from tales such as "The Wren's Nest", it is safe to suggest that O'Flaherty leans towards a way to connect with the nonhuman animal that is based on the acknowledgement of shared characteristics.

This article has shown that the Aran-born author tackled questions that are nowadays central for Posthuman and Animal Studies scholars, as he subtly indicated that vulnerability underpins existence itself, regardless of species difference; that we are all equal in defencelessness in the face of immanent nature, its towering waves and sea depths such as those described in "The Oar" and "The Cow's Death"; that animals too have emotions and suffer; and that denying that animals suffer is of little gain to humans.

Hence, O'Flaherty's fictional handling of human-animal relations can be put in dialogue with Derrida's and Wolfe's theorisations on compassion, because compassion appears to be linked, in all these authors, to the acknowledgement of our vulnerability. If we read O'Flaherty's stories against such theoretical background, we may grasp the importance of constructing the human/animal encounter on the acceptance of the existence of an interspecies communion, with compassion – literally 'suffering together' – as the key means to live with animals and engage ethically with their difference.

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MAKING KIN: POSTHUMAN IDENTITY IN ANNE HAVERTY'S *ONE DAY AS A TIGER* AND KAREN JOY FOWLER'S *WE ARE ALL COMPLETELY BESIDES OURSELVES*

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ABSTRACT. ***Making Kin: Posthuman Identity in Anne Haverty's*** **One Day as A Tiger** ***and Karen Joy Fowler's*** **We Are All Completely Besides Ourselves*.*** Through discussions on anthropomorphism, animal research and posthuman sensibilities, this paper intends to analyse how identity is shaped within the human characters so as to account for practices of kinship and to promote a posthuman model that emancipates from the anthropocentric milieu. In the encounter with narratives that have at their core human-animal interactions, we are generally placed in the position to inquire about the development of identity. Paying closer attention to the emergence of new sensibilities within the human subject in relation to the otherness of the animal, we discover that these narratives can have a tendency to instantiate posthuman becomings and introduce characters that transgress the discriminating "*line*" that is discussed by Margo DeMello. The "*line*" itself, although operating through a process of othering, is essentially prejudicial as it aids the creation of species hierarchies. Such is the case with Anne Haverty's protagonist Marty in *One Day as a Tiger* and Karen Joy Fowler's character Rosemary in *We Are All Completely Besides Ourselves.* The human subjects in these narratives enter relations of kinship with their animals and in doing so, they manage to build patterns for kin-making as a key to eradicate speciesism. Therefore, looking at the differing reactions to animal alterity in the eyes of the human, I hope to capture the plurality of these encounters.

Keywords: *posthumanism, speciesism, kinship, identity, becoming, anthropomorphism*

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REZUMAT. ***Înrudirea: Identitatea postumană în* One Day as a Tiger *de Anne Haverty și în* We Are All Completely Besides Ourselves *de Karen Joy Fowler.*** Prin intermediul discuțiilor despre antropomorfism, cercetarea asupra animalelor și sensibilitățile postumane, această lucrare își propune să analizeze felul în care se modelează identitatea personajelor umane, astfel încât să ofere o explicație pentru practicile de înrudire și să promoveze un model postuman care să se emancipeze de mediul antropocentric. Atunci când ne întâlnim cu narațiuni care au în centrul lor interacțiunile om-animal, suntem în general puși în situația de a investiga dezvoltarea identității. Acordând o atenție sporită apariției unor noi sensibilități pentru subiectul uman în raport cu alteritatea animalului, descoperim că aceste narațiuni pot avea tendința de a instanția deveniri postumane și de a introduce personaje care transgresează "*linia*" discriminatorie pe care o prefigurează Margo DeMello. "*Linia*" în sine, deși operează printr-un proces de diferențiere, este în esență prejudiciabilă, deoarece ajută la crearea de ierarhii între specii. Acesta este cazul protagonistului Marty al lui Anne Haverty din *One Day as a Tiger* și al personajului Rosemary al lui Karen Joy Fowler din *We Are All Completely Besides Ourselves*. Subiecții umani din aceste narațiuni intră în relații de rudenie cu animalele lor și, în acest fel, reușesc să construiască modele de înrudire ca o cale de eradicare a speciismului. Prin urmare, analizând reacțiile diferite la alteritatea animalelor prin ochii oamenilor, sper să surprind pluralitatea acestor întâlniri.

Cuvinte-cheie*: postumanism, speciism, înrudire, identitate, devenire, antropomorfism*

Introduction

There is a pressing need for changing the way in which humanity interacts with otherness. The constant assumption that the human is the quintessential sovereign of all that stands to represent life must be uprooted in order to accelerate the blossoming of a more ethical, equitable and vital framework, whose qualities are defined by the posthuman condition. Posthumanism stands to presage an ethos centred on the abolition of human exceptionalism, anthropocentrism and the rationalist justification of species supremacism. In doing so, it employs a vital materialist approach to relationality and emphasizes the dynamic force of all life, thus creating a horizon of interactions between the entirety of zoetic beings:

> the posthuman condition introduces a qualitative shift in our thinking about what exactly is the basic unit of common reference for our species, our polity and our relationship to the other inhabitants of this planet. This issue raises serious questions as to the very structures of our shared identity – as humans – amidst the complexity of contemporary science, politics and international relations. (Braidotti 2013, 1-2)

Following the definition given by Rosi Braidotti, the present paper elaborates on the possibility of fiction to display instances of posthuman identities. As such, I will be looking into Anne Haverty's *One Day as a Tiger* and Karen Joy Fowler's *We Are All Completely Besides Ourselves* in order to show how the novels' protagonists enter becoming processes that are based on human-animal interactions with the purpose of ascertaining to what extent anthropomorphism and kinship coordinate the development of (post)human identity. In doing so, I will be constantly measuring the characters' progress based on their position in relation to the "*line*" that delimitates the species. To this extent, I will follow Danielle Sands' resolution about anthropomorphism:

> arguing that both anthropomorphism and empathy are inescapable components of cross-species relations, [...] we should welcome anthropomorphic empathy in its capacity to stimulate new ethical and political responses to nonhuman life from affective responses to cross-species similarity, while acknowledging its lingering anthropocentrism and generating new kinds of response to nonhuman life. (Sands 2019, 25)

These cross-species relations are visible in both of the chosen narratives. While Haverty's novel explores the limitations of a newfound sensibility within the human, Fowler's text uses the identity question as the main drive force in the discovery of species similarities. The differing responses to anthropomorphism will be discussed as alternative ways of making kin, with the intent to ascertain whether anthropomorphism is a suitable means of creating spheres of interaction between the human and the nonhuman animal. It is here where the "radical posthuman subjectivity, resting on the ethics of becoming" (Braidotti 2013, 49) is making its presence felt. The identity issue at hand is closely tied with the development of such subjectivity, while its particularities are being assembled, in these cases, by the reactions to anthropomorphism and the approaches towards kinship. Such literary responses to cross-species relationality as found in these two novels, being openly productive in their interpretations, manage to clearly iterate the responsibility of the human subject towards the otherness of the animal and to be sensitive to its effects, keeping in mind that "cross-species kinship has consequences" (Haraway 2016, 106).

1. "Fields breed fatalism": The Emergence of the Posthuman Farmer

In Anne Haverty's 1997 novel *One Day as a Tiger*, identity seems to take a pluralistic tone: starting with the Tibetan proverb, "It is better to have lived one day as a tiger than a thousand years as a sheep" (Haverty 1997, epigraph), the author introduces into the discussion varying levels of self-awareness. Marty, the narrator, finds himself investigating the possibilities of being a tiger

or a sheep. These existential questions can be seen as the fundamental requisites for the discovery of identity, possibly establishing a direct correlation between a criterion for being human and the apparent differentiation with the nonhuman other. At the core of it all are these binary articulations that become even more relevant when the very ontology of a real sheep is anthropomorphised in the novel. Thus, Missy the sheep is a genetically engineered hybrid that manages to awake in Marty the realisation that he wants to have her "not for meat or to breed from, but to watch and understand" (25). It could be argued that through Missy, the entire evolution of human identity can be subsequently deconstructed. The hybrid animal stands on the "*line"* predicated by Margo DeMello, differentiating humanity from non-humanity while addressing a myriad of questions that arise from the biopolitical implications of genetic engineering and furthermore, from the identity issue that is at hand:

> Just as humans on one side of the line have more rights than those on the other side, animals on one side of the line have more rights than those on the other side. And the line itself may be shifted in such a way that some humans are lumped together with some animals below the line, and other humans remain separate. The danger lies in the existence of the line itself – as long as there exists in society a line separating some from others, then no group is truly safe from being on the losing side of it. (DeMello 2012, 260-261)

One of these questions is formulated by Michael Cronin, asking "what will be the constants in our debates around identity and will debates around identity in Ireland centre not so much around the postnational as the posthuman?" (2004, 9). As such, Marty is a contender for becoming posthuman, drawing closer and closer to that invisible "*line"* that represents the species division. His uncertainty in the beginning of the novel further emphasizes the necessity of animal studies as a means of discovering one's identity, seeing that "the last thing we want is for any of us to have too rigid an idea about what constitutes Irish identity or even about what it means as humans to have an identity" (9). Another argument in favour of the narrator's quest is his decision to move to the countryside, at his brother's farm. As "[u]noccupied spaces; exposed rural fastnesses; unproductive farmland all became transvalued in an economy that became motored by the unreflective fetishization of property" (Flannery 2013, 1), Marty's decision also upholds the importance and necessity of environmental agents in the revelation and preservation of a posthuman mindset that can care for one's heterogeneity.

In the first chapter, Marty already intends to describe himself and is doing so in a manner that sets a hopeful tone for the rest of the novel. The ambiguity of his initial description allows for an open interpretation:

> I am a flawed character. Riddled with flaws. One small virtue in my favour however may be that I do not regard my own self with any more importance than I regard others. Except for those who are dead. The dead have earned their self-importance, it seems to me, and an infinite pathos, and a life of form and brilliance even if there was nothing of apparent brilliance about their earthly life. […] Who was I, living and deficient in sympathy and understanding, to rake through the bones of the dead? (Haverty 1997, 4)

At no point during this description does Marty strictly refer to human or nonhuman agents, tolerating thus the plurality of awareness that it conveys. We discover here another instance of something that I have termed "testimonial kinship". What it implies is an observation, a gaze towards the dead that upholds a sort of reverence, however trivial it may be. This does not refer to allusions of one's life achievements or their paths, but it intends to place significance on the event of death. It is like the entirety of one's being becomes amassed into one event, where the integrity of an agent is iterated as a whole within the definiteness of the event. As such, not only does it convey a sort of singular experience of the event of death, but it also brings about reiterations of past experiences stemming from the four pillars of testimonial kinship: suffering, death, mourning and remembrance. With that said, we can observe how Marty is already approaching a stance in which his attentiveness, although "deficient in sympathy and understanding" is unmistakably directed towards otherness. Moreover, as we are to find out later, he is referring here to the death of his parents, and most likely, to the bigger scope of death in terms of history, as his background is that of a former aspiring history professor. Marty's sensibility towards the dead causes him to transgress the line that DeMello predicated. In doing so, not only does he become aware of the shared qualities between humanity and the natural world, but also prompts him to engender a frame of mind that is alert to the future prospects of kinship.

The novel makes for a transparent discussion about the spaces of interaction between humans and nonhuman animals. Marty is not entirely convinced of the opportunities that lay ahead in the pastoral land in which he ended up. Finding himself in a "blankness of peace and abnegation of action" (Haverty 1997, 10), Marty tackles farm life with a modesty that tends to subjugate the potential found in rural Ireland. His resignation in the face of future prospects provides a pessimist overtone towards the abundant natural allure of the land. Marty's attitude is at first constructed on pillars of uncertainty, where "[f]ields breed fatalism" (10) while the born and raised farmer is "cute about these matters" (8). At the same time, Missy's "birthplace" is seen as an explicitly human domain, as the space becomes a platform through which the representation of the sheep compels the human spectator to reconsider the ordinariness of the nonhuman. Since Missy is not born at the farm, the particular fatalist doctrine seems to escape her. The "progressive, tidy, scientific" (22) laboratory expels any association with

the natural world, making it difficult for animal behaviour to develop in its instinctive manner. Moreover, the comment about such laboratories or farms being reminders of concentration camps seems to be a quite common remark, as Coetzee makes use of the same argument in *The Lives of Animals* (1999, 19-22). The argument, although being deemed excessive numerous times, can still make for a practical discussion about the cruelty imposed on both humans and animals, which creates another horizon of interaction between the species.

In the discussion about spaces of interaction, it is fitting to also relay the relations of power and dependence that both Marty and Missy are subjected to. After his arrival at the farm, Marty surrenders his part of the inheritance to his brother:

> Locking Pierce and myself into a relationship in which the burden of goodness lay on him, I might as well have challenged him to a duel, a fight to a spiritual death. In handing him the freedom to cast out without hindrance his brother from his inheritance, I gave him the freedom to despise me and his children to despise me. Making myself dependent, an object of charity, I forced him to be the good, the charitable, the noble day after day, season after season. This I put up to him. (Haverty 1997, 42)

The becoming of Marty continues by subjecting himself to his brother's will, giving him the half of the property that he was entitled to and becoming a guest voluntarily. Here we encounter a second instance of Marty's emergent posthuman sensibility: he realises that Missy is also in the same situation as he is, being left at the patriarch's disposition. Missy's fate is "hopeless and beyond [his] resolution" (Haverty 1997, 136) and, therefore, she is found to be part of the same power relations that Marty entered in. The sheep is also dependant since "[s]he had little choice, I admit, but to love me" (99), but Marty becomes aware of the state of their relationship and resorts to return the feeling as "affection, simple, tender, paternal" (98). He also makes sure to differentiate between the love for Missy and his secret love for his brother's wife, awakened as passion. While making these remarks, Marty reconsiders his initial argument:

> It was like having a beloved, inexorably sickening child in the house whose days in this world, its kin are aware, are numbered. But who, coming from a fatalistic race, accept without protest such outrages and misfortunes as life flings at them. (Haverty 1997, 98)

The narrator-character identifies the seemingly fatalistic trait in the animal's race, but places himself within their realm: first, by announcing that both humans and animals are found to co-exist within the same doctrine, and second, by showing that both Missy's kin and he himself, as a human, are capable of realising that the state of the sickening animal is precarious. Encountering here, once again, the first stage of testimonial kinship – suffering - we can ponder upon Judith Butler's consideration that:

> To be injured means that one has the chance to reflect upon injury, to find out the mechanisms of its distribution, to find out who else suffers from permeable borders, unexpected violence, dispossession, and fear, and in what ways. (Butler 2004, XII)

It is through such otherness found in Missy's suffering that the horizon of interaction can be brought into discussion. It furthermore allows for a reconsideration of the "dispossession" that both Marty and Missy went through, renewing here the position in which both are encountered. From this standpoint, we can further indulge into examining the anthropomorphism on which the novel's infrastructure is settled. Initially, the description of the lamb is done in a sort of terminology borrowed from human clinical research:

> There followed then a longish discourse on the genes as the building-blocks of life and DNA and all the rest of it. And about the radical developments in the science, where the genes of one species were being incorporated into another at an early stage of foetal growth. (Haverty 1997, 23)

After a parade in which the genetically engineered animal is defined by numbers and processes, we arrive at a stage in which its ontology is almost entirely re-evaluated. Missy is becoming a "bit less sheeplike," with the intent of developing a "trouble-free" animality. As observed previously, this particularly desired effect does not come to fruition, as Missy is found to be continuously suffering because of her newly acquired genes. The protagonist is also keen on identifying, from the beginning, the differences preached by the lab engineers. However, to Marty, they were "[s]heep that were not sheep. Human sheep. But they did not look any different" (Haverty 1997, 24). This apparent anthropocentric blindness is later corrected through Marty's becoming, when he admits to having been "treacherous and cruel and weak" (68), making "persistent attempts to induce in Missy a credible sheepiness" (47) or to "impose meek ovineness on a creature bent on rejecting her sheep's costume" (68). Later in the novel, after Missy "had forsaken sheep nature" (99), Marty becomes aware of the relations of dependability that they have both developed. From this acquired kinship, Missy further gets anthromorphised, seemingly of her own accord, by realising that her position in the human world where she resides is inconvenient. Her only choice is to become as human as possible, with the intent of surviving, while the human subject continues to observe the transition: "It was me she identified with, me she wanted to be" (99). Apart from inducing "sheepness" into Missy, there are various indirect descriptions of the animal that can be correlated with characterisations of Etti, Marty's sister-in-law. Etti is seen to be constantly behaving "like a child" (195), while Missy, through her displays of curiosity and fear, can be said to be acting the same. Another most descriptive similarity is seen in the following examples, where Marty is seen to correlate both human and nonhuman subjects through

the specificity of their gazes. If for Etti he observes how "her eyes met [his] with a tortuous expression of empathic sorrow" (37), the situation becomes remarkably similar in the case of Missy: "She would follow me or stand at my knee, her head cocked and her glistening eyes gazing into mine, their look not anguished then but considering, alight, the look of an intelligent child" (47). Anthropomorphism can also be discussed from the specificity of one particular performance: the gaze. John Berger signals the implications of the event:

> The eyes of an animal when they consider a man are attentive and wary. The same animal may look at other species in the same way. He does not reserve a special look for man. But by no other species except man will the animal's look be recognised as familiar. Other animals are held by the look. Man becomes aware of himself returning the look. (Berger 1980, 4-5)

Such awareness denounces Marty's ultimate becoming: in returning the gaze and also describing it in terms that are similar to the expression coming from Etti, Marty builds the bridge over the aforementioned "*line".* Lastly, there exists another instance of demarcation between Marty and the traditional farmer. By comparing the narrator with Young Delaney, a self-made rural farmer that has lived his entire life in Fansha, we observe the startling discrepancy in attitudes towards animal care. If for Marty the animals "were not in [his] care. [He] had little feeling for them. Mute, despite all their bawling and mooing, sometimes a nuisance, sometimes objects of curiosity, but rarely of [his] affection, a backdrop to [his] life" (Haverty 1997, 48) in the beginning, for Young Delaney "the air of neglect around [him] displays his industry. All those animals have to be foddered. Housed and watered. Dosed and dipped. Milked and sheared and slaughtered. All this he does himself" (50) Apart from the pronounced differentiations found in the finality of farming, the most appealing point of interest in the treatment of animals is proven Delaney's illusory care only reinforces the separation between the species. Delaney is acting within the frames of what Erika Cudworth terms "anthroparchy" (Cudworth 2008, 156). From discussions about production relations, domestication, politics, systemic violence, and the exclusive humanism found within a character such as Young Delaney, we can extrapolate that Marty does not, evidently, gravitate towards such patriarchal ideals. His initial incompetence and inexperience allows Marty to engender a new type of farmer, one that can care (initially through ignorance) for the heterogeneity of the cattle and whose sensibility can only awaken the ideal of an inter- and intra-species relationship based on kinship.

In conclusion, Anne Haverty's novel does not only instantiate the powerful bond that can arise from the willingness to understand otherness, but also builds a vocabulary for the emergence of the posthuman farmer. By contacting Missy's alterity, Marty awakens a posthuman sensibility that can become a model for human-animal relationality. Through the questioning of animal ontology or

by reiterating the similarities between species, Marty creates and upholds a horizon of interaction that goes beyond meat consumption or power relations, with the intention of emancipating from the anthropocentric milieu that is becoming ever more threatening.

2. "The counterfeit human": Rosemary's Anthro- and Zoomorphisms

Karen Joy Fowler's 2013 novel *We Are All Completely Besides Ourselves* exhibits another instance of kin-making and anthropomorphism (along with zoomorphism), exposing how the delimitation between species fuels the emergence of a particular bond between the human and the non-human. The grand-narrative of the novel, an experiment in which a family is cross-fostering a chimpanzee and raising it as if it were their own child, quickly becomes the territory of discussions about species difference, co-existence and relationality, responding to Braidotti's claims regarding the "becoming-animal" of the posthuman subject and arguing for "the recognition of trans species solidarity on the basis of our being environmentally based, that is to say embodied, embedded and in symbiosis with other species." (Braidotti 2013, 67)

One of the most important premises of Fowler's novel lies in the initial framing of the entire experience as a scientific experiment. As a psychologist, Rosemary's father oversees the project, making it his life's work while being constantly attentive to the results of Fern and Rosemary's co-evolution. Crucial to note is not the father's involvement in the process, but the way in which he interacts with the subjects and the initial reaction to the alterity of the animals:

> Was my father kind to animals? I thought so as a child, but I knew less about the lives of lab rats then. Let's just say that my father was kind to animals unless it was in the interest of science to be otherwise. He would never have run over a cat if there was nothing to be learned by doing so. He was a great believer in our animal natures, far less likely to anthropomorphize Fern than to animalize me. (Fowler 2013, 83)

Much like the scientist found in *One Day as a Tiger*, Rosemary's father is interested solely in the data extracted from his "experiment". The narrator further emphasises the clear hierarchical distinction in which her father places himself, as he "was always saying that we were all animals, but when he dealt with Fern, he didn't start from that place of congruence" (Fowler 2013, 174). Not only does he start from a biased assumption of species superiority, but he also places all the failures of his project onto the nonhuman animal, being predisposed to denounce how "[i]t was always her failure for not being able to talk to us, never ours for not being able to understand her" (174). Moreover, he is seen as "[r]epresenting the intransigent rejection of anthropomorphism" (Sands 2019,

82), denoting a sort of stubbornness that can be derived either from categorical beliefs in the relevance of hard sciences or from a complete disregard of the animal's agency. In relation to this, Rosemary's brother posits himself in contrast to the attitude of their father, resisting both the patriarchal and speciesist arguments and asserting that "[i]t would have been more scientifically rigorous to start with an assumption of similarity" (Fowler 2013, 174), thus defining a first instance of the narrator's identitary outline as she is trying to align with her brother's convictions. Matthew Calarco further highlights the limitations of such a restricted attitude:

> this kind of search for and insistence on a sharp anthropological difference still dominates large swaths of the humanities and social sciences. Rosemary grows up in an intellectual and institutional environment that is dominated by a search for the anthropological difference and the metaphysical assumptions and dogmas that ground such a project. (Calarco 2014, 618-619)

Therefore, Rosemary's upbringing maintains a relatively controlled connection to the clear distinction made between humans and nonhuman animals. However, her closeness to the nonhuman animal itself gives way to the emergence of a space of interaction that is fully capable of accommodating this co-evolution and of lessening the explicit anthropological differences. Just as Danielle Sands further argues, the anthropomorphic allure of the narrative "need not be narcissistic or appropriative, but might facilitate a dynamic negotiation between one's own and others' identities" (Sands 2019, 81). Accordingly, being part of such a project represents for Rosemary a way of closing the gap between the species, bringing to the table a new array of sensibilities that can be predicated upon in order to generate both human and nonhuman modes of inclusion. By means of this newly established relationality, the purpose of humanity should be to "find the language and ethico-political sensitivity to acknowledge that these codings and modes of institutionalized differences are formative in the processes of subjectification" (Calarco 2014, 629) in order to accentuate how identity is shaped in relation to seeking kinship with nonhuman animals. Lowell, the brother-turned-activist who in an attempt to destabilise the entire foundation of these scientific experiments decides to embark on a mission to destroy labs and release the captive animals, is first and foremost a defendant of this relationality. Joining the Animal Liberation Front, Lowell becomes an elusive figure and is seen to have found a way to dissolve the separating "*line*" between the species: "*They*, my brother said, whenever he talked about humans. Never *us*. Never *we*" (Fowler 2013, 197).

At this stage it is important to clarify the position of the patriarchal standpoint for the sake of this argument. Seeing that the father in the novel is an architect of species hierarchies, it could be argued that Cudworth's anthroparchy can easily make its way into the discussion. However, Lowell's presence in the novel manages to advocate, at least on his part, for the discontinuation of male

dominance over any form of alterity. Moreover, it is Rosemary who cannot distinguish the implications of male sovereignty in lab practices, believing that "[t]he women who should have stood with Fern – my mother, the female grad students, me – none of us had helped. Instead, we had exiled her to a place completely devoid of female solidarity" (Fowler 2013, 145). Failing to recognise how "women and animals are similarly positioned in a patriarchal world, as objects rather than subjects" (Adams 2010, 219), Rosemary falls victim to a system that is admittedly keen on subjugating any trace of female kinship. She does seem to have an idea of what the system is able to provoke, as she finds in her readings "daughters indulged and daughters oppressed, daughters who spoke loudly and daughters made silent" (Fowler 2013, 72) while also admitting that "Fern's treatment fit easily inside [a wide range of possibility]" (72). In this case, one of the responses that could ideally rearrange such hierarchical positions comes from Donna Haraway, who ascertains that within primatology there is a need to use stories in order to:

> shift the webs of intertextuality and to facilitate perhaps new possibilities for the meanings of difference, reproduction, and survival for specifically located members of the primate order – on both sides of the bio-political and cultural divide between human and animal. (Haraway 1989, 377)

One of the ways in which these differences are to be made into affirmative means of making kin is through anthropomorphism. Throughout the entire novel, the narrator discusses her upbringing in relation to her chimpanzee companion Fern. Being aware of the reader's intent of either fully anthropomorphising Fern into a human sister or perceiving her as a member of the companion species, Rosemary deliberately withholds Fern's chimp nature. Additionally, by mentioning that she "spent the first eighteen years of [her] life defined by this one fact, that [she] was raised with a chimpanzee" (Fowler 2013, 71), Rosemary questions her identity in relation to the animal. There is also a discussion about the ethical implications of her insistence on keeping Fern's nature a secret, but "the narrative takes Fern's absence as a structuring premise to meditate on the discourses that render animals as silent" (Parry 2017, 202). The novel showcases numerous times how Rosemary intends to become human, as a result of her close proximity with Fern during the first years of her life. In this instance, having "co-constituted each other's subjectivity in fundamental and deep ways" (Calarco 2014, 625), Rosemary sees herself in need to define and discover her (human) identity. In her quest, she is continuously made to reminisce about the closeness she used to have with the chimp, borrowing and appropriating various qualities that subsequently make her become the "monkey girl" (Fowler 2013, 77) and part of one of the "chimped-up families" (73). With this in mind, Catherine Parry argues that: "Her breach of the boundary between the proper human and something else is not a distortion of any supposed essentially human properties, but a failure to perform the role of human

girl in the socially approved and expected way" (Parry 2017, 204). Similarly to Missy's situation, Rosemary is made to accept and work on her altered identity, submitting to the societal constraints imposed by her surroundings. The aforementioned boundary correlates with the existence of the line predicated by DeMello. Rosemary proves to be an almost perfect example of humanity's transgression of the limit imposed by speciesism. Her initial zoomorphism, followed by a second-hand anthropomorphism, calls for the eradication of such finite constructions of identity and maintains that the hereditary qualities of both human and nonhuman subjects should be subjected to a far greater liberty. The ontologies of both Fern and Rosemary are allowed to become with each other, while simultaneously kinship is seen to regain its autonomy from the initial forms of domestication. As Calarco argues, the demarcating "*line*" between human and nonhuman subjectivity becomes more and more blurred:

> That Rosemary has to go through this process of normalization, humanization, and domestication speaks to the fact that making a clear distinction between human beings and animals is less a matter of denotation and more a matter of performativity. (Calarco 2014, 624)

Rosemary's behaviour is deemed to contain "classic chimp traits" (Fowler 2013, 121) that she intends to forget. However, in regards to Fern, she is being "treated like some kind of animal" (110), despite her demonstrated "human" abilities as in the case of sign language. Moreover, Fern's clothing is seen by the mother as a form of "self-expression" (87), while for the father it is an "anthropomorphism [he] dislikes" (87). These distinctions manage to create additional spheres of interaction between the species, repeatedly implying that the ties between the human and the nonhuman animal grow stronger and that their absence is felt, at least for Rosemary, as "an ache, a hunger on the surface of [her] skin" (95). Seeking to feel closer to her lost sister, Rosemary begins to find herself in situations where she is being held captive. As such, different forms of incarceration (prisons and cages) manage to create additional ties between the two, as Rosemary seeks (although not entirely deliberately) to be subjected to the same treatment as Fern. Physical space seems to be of importance both here and in the case of Marty and Missy. The human and non-human subjects of both novels are actively implying that in order for kinship to prevail, there is a necessity of co-habitation with one another. Additionally, there are numerous instances when the theme of the mirror between Fern and Rosemary is brought into discussion. I would argue that such mirror is exactly the opposite of the "*line*" that DeMello mentioned. The mirror allows for the integration of both characters' traits, qualities and conditions and to be compared, analysed and ultimately exchanged from one to the other with the purpose of becoming "Restored and repaired. Reunited. Refulgent" (32).

The novel manages to demonstrate how the human's identity is closely tied to the animal other. Through her upbringing and the immediate affirmative responses to otherness that Rosemary showcases, she develops posthuman sensibilities that are bound to care for the nonhuman's "radical alterity" (Calarco 2014, 628). As such, the identity question at hand is indeed predicated upon the demarcation of differences between species, but *We Are All Completely Besides Ourselves* is making it so that the same differences cannot be attributed to either the human nor the animal, since they both possess them. The anthropomorphism that Fowler employs in the novel is attentive to the possibilities that can stem out of it, while the non-linear narrative allows for the exploration of identity in regenerative ways

Conclusion

In trying to ascertain whether the (post)human identity can be influenced by a nonhuman other, I have sought to analyse how Marty and Rosemary became in relation with their animal companions. What is to be noted is that the implication of anthropomorphism in these novels is crucial in the formulation of co-evolving histories of care and awareness:

> As readers and writers, we are responsible for rewriting anthropocentric histories – for example that of canine domestication – and constructing alternative cross-species futures, not authored by Man under the misapprehension that language and aesthetic production separate humans from the natural world, but fully alert to the fleshiness of the word. (Sands, 72-73)

One of these histories is that written by Anne Haverty, whose characters are found in situations that are more than appropriate examples of cross-species relationality. I have detailed Marty's becoming in terms of acquiring posthuman sensibilities that transgress the speciesist boundary. Moving to the countryside, Marty becomes attentive to other environmental agents and renounces his patriarchal responsibilities so as to be able to dedicate himself more thoroughly to the care for Missy. He shares the suffering of the sheep and they become co-dependant. Moreover, he learns how to return the gaze of the animal and to further concern himself with the modification of the sheep's ontology. His differentiation from the traditional farmer is instantiated thoroughly by the author, and in doing so, it appeals to the posthuman framework by means of empathetic responses to Missy's otherness. While *making kin* with the animal, Marty's identity is admittedly re-evaluated through accessing an ethos fully conditioned by empathy. The second example, found in Fowler's *We Are All Completely Besides*

Ourselves, maintains a similar rhetoric, with the most discerning variation being that of Rosemary's apparent zoomorphism. However, such an instance is only capable to aid in the becoming of the human character, positioning her even closer to the alterity of the animal. The co-evolving process is positively reinforcing the prospect of kinship, while at the same time it is fighting to eradicate the finite constructions of identity. Anthropomorphism and zoomorphism are processes that aid in the initiation of kinship, which in turn allows for the development of a posthuman sensibility that ultimately rewrites one's identity. Both novels manage to iterate processes of making kin, which should be able to raise awareness of the vital force of life that deterritorialises anthropocentrism and gives way to posthumanism – an open gate towards the liberation from the pernicious and conservative attitude of the self-centred man.

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LIONS AND SHE-WOLVES: KINGSHIP, QUEENSHIP AND THE LEGITIMACY OF POWER IN SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORICAL PLAYS

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ABSTRACT. ***Lions and She-Wolves: Kingship, Queenship and the Legitimacy of Power in Shakespeare's Historical Plays.*** A recent collection of studies about Shakespeare and animals (Raber and Dugan 2021) cogently points out that the playwright's bestiary is so charged symbolically and metaphorically that these nonhuman creatures rarely speak for themselves. However, the benefit of (Shakespeare's) animal studies lies in the intersectional framework, specifically, for the purposes of this paper, the discussion about the structures of power and subjugation with the combined tools of gender studies and animal studies, as theorized a few decades ago by Adams and Donovan (1995). Starting from the shared scope of these areas of research, the present paper discusses

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gender relations and the stratification of power described in Shakespeare's historical plays by means of a quantitative and qualitative analysis of specific animal imagery. While the lion is a recurrent symbolic animal evoked in these plays with reference to kingship, bearing positive connotations of legitimate power, he is often contrasted with the wolf, symbolizing usurpation, misrule, lack of legitimate authority. The she-wolf, although mentioned only once, is evoked in order to suggest an equally stark contrast, between male (and native) kingship and female (and foreign) queenship. Drawing on Elizabeth Norton's (2009) and Helen Castor's (2011) use of this animal phrase to address the relevance of female sovereignty in medieval and early modern England, our paper discusses how the choice of animals and the number of occurrences in Shakespeare's Henriad reflects the early modern perceptions about (monstrous) female rule.

Keywords*: animal imagery, gender relations, historical plays, kingship, legitimacy, queenship, power, Shakespeare*

REZUMAT. ***Lei și lupoaice: regalitate masculină, suveranitate feminină și puterea legiuită în piesele istorice ale lui Shakespeare*.** Într-un volum recent dedicat studiilor shakespeariene și animalelor (Raber și Dugan 2021) se arată că bestiarul dramaturgului englez este atât de încărcat, metaforic și simbolic, încât ființele non-umane arareori vorbesc în nume propriu. Dar ceea ce aduc studiile despre animale în opera lui Shakespeare este abordarea intersecțională, în special, cu relevanță pentru studiul de față, discutarea structurilor de putere și subjugare cu metodele specifice studiilor de gen și studiilor despre animale, așa cum au fost acestea dezvoltate în ultimii ani de Adams și Donovan (1995), de pildă. Inspirându-se din discursul comun al acestor discipline, lucrarea abordează relațiile de gen și stratificarea puterii din piesele istorice shakespeariene prin analiza cantitativă și calitativă a unor imagini specifice legate de animale. Leul este animalul cel mai frecvent evocat în legătură cu regalitatea, cu conotații pozitive, de putere legitimă, așezat adesea în contrast cu lupul, care semnifică uzurparea, lipsa ordinii și a autorității legiuite. Lupoaica, deși menționată o singură dată, are menirea de a face un contrast la fel de izbitor, între regalitatea masculină (și pământeană) și suveranitatea feminină (și venetică). Pornind de la sensul dat lupoaicei în cărțile lui Elizabeth Norton (2009) și Helen Castor (2011) în legătură cu regalitatea feminină în Anglia medievală și a modernității timpurii, lucrarea de față demonstrează cum, prin alegerea animalelor și frecvența evocării lor, Henriada lui Shakespeare reflectă percepția epocii față de conducerea feminină, percepută adesea ca fiind monstruoasă.

Cuvinte-cheie: *animale, legitimitate, piese istorice, putere, relații de gen, regalitate, Shakespeare, suveranitate feminină*

Cultural discourses in the Anthropocene

Prefacing a book about trees in literature and the arts, philosopher Santiago Zabala writes: "while science seeks to rescue us *from* emergencies by improving and preserving knowledge, the arts rescue us *into* emergencies, calling for our intervention" (in Concilio and Fargione 2021, xiii, emphasis in the original). Silent emergencies, Zabala believes, are less successfully dealt with by science, which inexorably follows its path, while literatures and arts help us engage emotionally with these crises. Paradoxically, the humanities responsible for this soft intermediation have also been the promoters of the anthropocentric Weltanschauung now brought under scrutiny by posthumanist criticism.

Raber and Dugan (2021), in a book about animal studies in relation with Shakespeare's work, start from the observation that the status of the human and its centrality as well as superior position among the species is now regarded with concern and scepticism, while there is a growing preoccupation for understanding nonhuman life as autonomous and valuable. Moreover, they argue that traditional Western perceptions of the world in binary terms are the direct causes of "our current ecological crises because they have been the fodder for violent shifts of power, exploitation, and industry." (Raber and Dugan 2021, 6) Posthumanism encourages a transition from anthropocentrism towards a more "entangled" worldview, in which the distinctions between the "upper" and the "lower" are blurred, moving beyond the boundaries of the species, and therefore, beyond speciesism.

Erica Fudge (2004) observes yet another paradox in the human perception of animals. Even if animals were at the heart of medieval and early modern practices and beliefs, the very lives of the whole *bestiarum* were occulted by anthropocentric hierarchies. Although they show sound knowledge about the material realities of animal life, fables, for example, are mere allegories, where animals don't "speak" for themselves. They are always there to comment on human conditions and mores, but they are never on focus as themselves. If this pre-modern world was teeming with animals, the actual knowledge about them has been lost in the meantime, strengthening, in exchange, human biases about nonhuman species and creating both the economic and the cultural contexts that justify one category's alleged superiority and right to exploit the other. Narratives with and about animals have illustrated both our willingness to identify with (some of) them, and our capacity to reject (most of) them as dangerous, uncontrollable, or repulsive.

In recent decades, humanistic scholarship has turned not only towards the investigation of "other" human categories deemed marginal or inferior in

traditional western cultural discourses, with paradigm-changing disciplines like postcolonialism, disability studies, critical race theory, queer studies, etc., but also towards blending the human and the nonhuman, in ecofeminism or animal studies. What they share is an awareness and willingness to invest these categories with more than mere allegorical value, with agency.

Of wolves and women

The intersection between gender and animal studies has been highlighted since the 1990s. One of the first books on this subject, *Animals and Women* (Adams and Donovan 1995, 10) explains the connection in these terms: "Historically, the ideological justification for women's alleged inferiority has been made by appropriating them to animals: from Aristotle on, women's bodies have been seen to intrude upon their rationality […] Until the twentieth century this 'animality' precluded women's being granted the rights of public citizenship." Adams and Donovan identify four responses that have been given, within the timespan of half a century, to this cultural reality. The first one was to deny any connection, in an attempt to bring women closer to "masculinity" and farther away from "animality", that is, to demonstrate that women must be "unlike" animals in order to obtain full emancipation. The second position, equally pernicious, is to insist that feminism (rather than women in general) has no connection with animals and animal issues. To complain that feminist attention to animal issues is detrimental to feminist concerns means to deny the premises on which the violent exploitation of human categories has been carried for so long. A third response is the recognition that the human-animal dualism, like the man-woman dualism, or the nature-culture one, is the very reason why the oppression (of other humans) and the exploitation (of both humans and nonhumans) have been justified and excused. This is a broader form of feminism, which recognizes that the abuse and subjugation of women as well as of natural forms go hand in hand, that sexism is interconnected with speciesism. Fourthly, feminism emphasizes an ethical mission, intrinsic in women's traditions of care and respect, to be extended to the rights of nonhuman species.

Marti Kheel (in Adams and Donovan 1995, 85-124) makes a connection between the male exploitation of women's bodies and of wild animals' bodies in terms of how the hunting discourse, borrowed by traditional wildlife documentaries, for example, distorts our view of the natural world, shifting the focus from balance and symbiosis to sheer physical violence and predation. Such a discourse capitalizes on the ideology of male supremacy, emphasizes the nature-culture distinction, and further justifies human hunting practices, up to the extinction of many species. Taking her cue from here, Diane Antonio (in

Adams and Donovan 1995, 213-230) writes a plea for the rehabilitation and rescue from imminent extinction of *Canis lupus*, the wolf, one of the most abhorred animals according to western cultural and religious assumptions or economic practices.

Antonio points out there is a series of connections, to be observed with the specific tools of biology and ethnography, between women and wolves. She argues that there is no coincidence in the fact that the persecution of witches occurred at the same time and in the same places where the Church and secular authorities carried systematic campaigns to exterminate the wolves. As the wolf is the very archetype of the beast in western narrative and imagology, its persecution is not surprising. Moreover, the negative overtones attached to the she-wolf are also obvious. Never mind that a *lupa* nursed the male founders of the very centre of western civilization, Rome. *Lupa* was, in Latin, the name given to a prostitute. Female promiscuousness is evoked in many narratives, highbrow or from folklore, about she-wolves and women. Also, *lupus* and *lucis* are almost homophonous, thus the suggestion of the "fall" from grace, light, and control of the former, like that of Lucifer, is inevitable.

But Antonio shows that the positive similarities between women and wolves and the best practice examples wolves can provide women with are quite numerous. Firstly, observing the life of a pack of wolves offers insightful information about gender equality, because she-wolves are not only equal to male wolves, but, in the case of young females, their alpha status usually goes unchallenged. They are faster, better skilled hunters and have superior survival skills, which the whole pack needs and appreciates. For Antonio (1995, 216), the visceral human urge to destroy the wolf is in fact justified by the "causal relation between men's cultural and philosophical concepts about women as incarnations of evil and the violent treatment of wolves, which has pushed them even to the brink of extinction." This all goes down, Antonio concludes, to the "Disney Dilemma", which obscures a fact – the wolf's part played in preserving an ecological balance – in favour of a myth – "our cultural bias for the relative aesthetic value of the nonpredator species that wolves feed on" (Antonio 1995, 219).

For Clarissa Pinkola Estes (2006, 15), as the wild places on our planet disappear as our understanding for our own deep wild nature dwindles, profound femininity can be recovered only with the help of serious "psychoarchaeological work". She too observes that the wolves' history bears remarkable similarities with women's history in terms of courage and suffering. Healthy wolves, like healthy women, she continues, are alike: a playful spirit, very fine perception, and an extraordinary capacity for self-sacrifice. They are sociable by nature, curious and very resilient. They show great attachment to their pack and family, to their cubs and children. However, both "species" have been hunted down,

especially in Europe, but also in the Middle East, India, and North America, persecuted, considered inferior, labelled as rapacious, cunning, and vile. The aggressiveness with which both have been treated stems from the same refusal to understand, accept and tolerate. The wolf's "savagery", like the woman's, is not understood in its original sense, as natural, but pejoratively, as lacking control and reason. Literature and the folklore have not helped because, again, for women and wolves, successive cultural strata have dislodged the original centre of the tale. Estes gives the obvious example of the Grimm Brothers' fairy tales, which are "purified" of their original, often pre-Christian messages. This is why, Estes points out, the old healer turns into the bad witch and the benevolent beasts become demons, familiars, evil spirits.

A she-wolf worse than many wolves

The figure of the she-wolf in connection with medieval and early modern English queens has been revived in recent years by two historical accounts of the lives and actions of Matilda, Isabella of France, Margaret of Anjou, and others. Elizabeth Norton (2009, 8) gathers several Anglo-Saxon and medieval English queens under the label of she-wolves, remarking that chroniclers presented the monarchs' consorts in simplistic oppositions: saintly vs. notorious. But, from what we know, at least some of those accused of greed, adultery, treason, or murder might have been innocent. The uncertainty about the verdict stems from the fact that such early chronicles were less concerned with truth and more with "the subject of female power" in a time when these terms were mutually exclusive. Some of the women, instead of being wicked, were simply "unsuitable" (like Catherine Howard) or "sorely tried" (like Isabella of France). Looking at consorts from the eighth to the fifteenth century, Norton distinguishes between traditional "good" queenship, suitable to the Anglo-Saxon, pre-conquest period and the early modern times, on the one hand, and the post-conquest medieval regencies. This distinction is justified, in her view, by the geopolitical status of England and the role played by the king in a country with or without overseas territories. While Anglo-Saxon monarchs and early modern monarchs had an exclusively local mission, the medieval English kings, with vast territories across the Channel, needed replacements and lieutenants. In short, the more domestic English kingship was, the more passive the role of English queenship was expected to be. Therefore, Anglo-Saxon and early modern kingship requested consorts whose mission was linked only to fertility and intercession. Post-conquest, medieval geopolitical circumstances allowed more agency in the queens, who were expected to rule in the king's interests during his absence, but without ambitions of their own.

Helen Castor (2011) resumes the label of she-wolves for the queens who were not supposed to rule in their own right, as this right belonged to their fathers, husbands, or sons. She reminds us that medieval and early modern patriarchy was wary of women who exercised power. In the historian's opinion, while these women were vilified by contemporaries and followers, they also paved the way for those who would exercise power in the next centuries. Like Norton, Castor admits that contemporary chroniclers could and would not be concerned with women's experiences, so, in the case of the first notorious queen, Matilda: "We know little about [her], but a lot about how she acted and reacted amid the dramatic events of a turbulent life, how she was seen by others, whether from the perspective of a battlefield or that of a monastic scriptorium." (2011, xiv) Therefore, we cannot reconstruct her portrait, only what emerges from "the collision between personal relations and public roles that made up the dynastic government of a hereditary monarchy." (2011, xv)

What Helen Castor writes about Matilda is equally true for later queens, who were remembered as wicked by posterity, with the significant contribution of chroniclers, playwrights, and poets. Isabella of France was held responsible, by Holinshed, for her husband's atrocious death, but it was Christopher Marlowe who called her an "unnatural" queen in his *Edward II* (1594, published posthumously), an image that was later amplified by Thomas Gray's poem *The Bard* (1757). The 18th-century poet evoked the French queen's image thus: "She-wolf of France, with unrelenting fangs,/That tear'st the bowels of thy mangled mate", referring literally to the gruesome circumstances, though not proven historically, of her husband's death by impaling, but also allegorically hinting at "unnatural" or, rather, un-woman-like cruelty.

The first attempts to rehabilitate Isabella date back to the 1930s, when historian Hilda Johnstone summarized the queen's afterlife under the sign of the she-wolf by observing that the reputation stuck as a result of a brief moment of revolt, even if it came after twenty years of being a good daughter, wife, and mother and before thirty years of being a devout Christian. "Surely we need not fix our whole and sole attention upon the grisly spectacle of the wolf tearing its prey." (1936, 208) Johnstone also noticed that, if Shakespeare was the first to use the image of the she-wolf in connection with a queen (Margaret of Anjou), the more obscure Thomas Gray was "luckier" because his she-wolf, Isabella, won posthumous popularity. Indeed, Bertolt Brecht used the phrase about the queen in *The Life of Edward II of England* (1924) and the French writer Maurice Druon (1818-2009) titled the fifth volume of his *The Accursed Kings*, saga of the Capetian dynasty, *The She-Wolf of France* (1959).

In Shakespeare's chronicle plays, the singular female "wolf" is opposed by the pack, those courtiers, usurpers, native and foreign enemies who undermine

the authority of the king. Both the solitary she-wolf and the numerous male wolves symbolize the deception and wickedness that, in turn, is opposed by the legitimate power they plot to destroy. Nicole Mennell (in Raber and Dugan 2021, 231-240) locates this authority in the figure of the first English heraldic animal, the lion. The king of the animals was regarded, during the Renaissance, as the creature which best harmonized contradictory features: force and majesty, determination and clemency, power and protectiveness. Lions could be brutal as well as gentle, when circumstances required. The most leonine of English lion kings, Henry V in Shakespeare's eponymous play, invites his army to be like the "tiger", a more aggressive and merciless feline, but only because the most drastic measures were expected from a leader on the battlefield. In contrast, Richard II is urged to imitate the king of beasts and "roar" rather than accept his defeat "mildly" (5.1.2365-66). His inability to adopt leonine behaviour, even if justified by the very fact that he is called to rule over beast-like men rather than humans ("A king of beasts, indeed – if aught but beasts/ I had been still a happy king of men", 5.1.2369-70), eventually costs him the throne. Only legitimate kings have the right to act like lions (and several legitimate kings fail to do so). When Julius Caesar, former supporter of the republic, wants to be crowned king of Rome, his leonine behaviour is not welcome: "He were no lion, were not Romans hinds." (1.3.534) In other words, it is easy to imagine oneself a legitimate ruler when the common people accept to be subjected by a tyrant.

Lions versus wolves

That in the Henriad Shakespeare explores not only the horrors of civil war but also what makes a good king has long been debated. It has also been made abundantly clear that, together with *Richard II* and *Richard III*, the Henriad provides antithetical royal types and leonine heroes in order to outline the profile of the perfect English king in the matter of Elizabeth I's succession. What is crucial for the purpose of our present study is that it is in the six Henry plays where the lion is especially contrasted with the wolf and where the highest number of occurrences is recorded: "lion" and its various plural or genitive forms are used 32 times, whereas "wolf/wolves" are mentioned 19 times[3]. Significantly, as already mentioned earlier, Shakespeare associates legitimate sovereignty with leonine attributes, while (unnatural) ambitions for power receive wolfish connotations.

Already in the 1940s, Tillyard remarked particularly in relation to *2 Henry VI* that King Henry VI, Humphrey of Gloucester and Richard of York are compared against an ideal of kingship that, relying on the Machiavellian

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[3]All Shakespeare quotes are taken from the Shakespeare Concordance, available online: https://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/plays.php (accessed February 10, 2022).

metaphors of the lion and the fox, blends the nobility of the lion, the cunning of the fox, as well as the unselfishness of the pelican. The Duke of York shows kingly qualities, being "an excellent diplomat", combining "the qualities of lion and fox", but he lacks "disinterestedness, the attribute of the pelican" (Tillyard 1944, 196). By contrast – Tillyard goes on to explain – Gloucester lacks the qualities of the fox even if he has those of the lion and the pelican, whereas Henry VI has only the characteristics of the pelican. What emerges from this comparison is that the three men's personalities combined would have made a perfect king. Following up on Tillyard's analysis, it is also important to note that in *3 Henry VI*, Edward IV is endowed with the fox's artful craftiness, as it emerges from his brother Richard's aside on their bloodless occupation of the city of York: "But when the fox hath once got in his nose,/ He'll soon find means to make the body follow." (4.7.2449-50) Considering this in addition to his proven military prowess, Edward IV – much like Duke Humphrey – blends the qualities of the fox and the lion, becoming the best available solution to the civil war at the end of the Henry plays.

Heraldic lions

A standard image of kingship, the lion receives other, even opposite, connotations in Shakespeare's Henriad, as we will show in the following sections. Throughout the six plays, several characters are associated with the lion's characteristics of strength, valour, fortitude and clemency, but somewhat surprisingly various other characters allude to the heraldic usage of the animal and, therefore, we will start our analysis with this aspect.

The lion is not only a standard symbol of kingship and absolute power, but it appears three times on the English royal arms, a heraldic animal going back to the reign of Henry II, who added his lion to William the Conqueror two-lion badge (cf. Mennell 2021, 232-233). Furthermore, in Machiavelli's (2008, 281) view of the Renaissance prince, leonine characteristics such as strength, bravery and the fear/respect the lion inspires in others, together with the cunning diplomacy of the fox, are essential characteristics for a successful ruler.

In *1 Henry IV*, Hotspur talks about the rebellion against the ruling king in hunting terms, focusing on the adrenalin rush and the (empty) honour it will bring him: "the blood more stirs/ To rouse a lion than to start a hare" (1.3.528-29). Later, in Act III, when he describes Glendower, Hotspur comments on the incomprehensible fables the Welsh warrior tells, from which the heraldic references – "a couching lion, or a ramping cat" (3.1.1698) – stand out. Representing a burlesque of the heraldic leonine positions couchant (lying), as opposed to rampant (rearing), these contrasting heraldic lion positions allude to the times of

peace and war respectively, although the danger posed by the rampant/warring lion is ridiculed by its transformation into a domesticated "ramping cat", which hints at Henry Bolingbroke's usurpation of Richard II.

In *1 Henry VI*, leonine Lord Talbot, one of England's finest military leaders in France, an older substitute for the lion king Henry V, encourages the English soldiers to fight for the preservation of the French territories by challenging their cowardice on the battlefield: "Hark, countrymen! either renew the fight,/ or tear the lions out of England's coat;/ Renounce your soil, give sheep in lions' stead" (1.5.612-14) What emerges from Lord Talbot's lines is that leonine bravery is an innate quality of Englishness; as a result, the cowardly gregarious behaviour of the deserting soldiers reflects badly on the entire England, who can therefore replace its heraldic animals with mindless sheep.

Royalty as lions

Given that the lion is a well-established early modern symbol of royal authority, all kings and princes are endowed with various leonine qualities. In *1 Henry IV*, King Henry refers to himself as a lion when commenting on Hotspur's hot-headedness, who "[t]urns head against the lion's armed jaws" (3.2.1926); the line suggests not only that the leonine, enthroned king is more than prepared to fight the rebellion but also that the rebel's action is unreasonable and brash.

In the same play, Falstaff makes four references to the lion, two of which appear in his extended comparison of the lion not harming the true prince (2.4.1256-60), a story which, in addition to touching on Prince Hal's dubious right to the throne, means to show Falstaff himself as a falsely courageous knight. Further on, in a discussion about courage and fear, Falstaff designates Hal as "the lion's whelp" (3.3.2156), whose only authority derives from being the offspring of the lion king, thus mocking the prince's authority as unconvincing. By contrast, real, de facto authority is embodied in the king: "The king is to be feared as the lion" (3.3.2158). Nonetheless, Hal's qualification as "the lion's whelp" also contains an allusion to the prince's (however weak) leonine lineage, which will be insisted upon in *Henry V*, as well as the promise of the mature, leonine roar of kingly sovereignty, which will eventually result in Henry's transformation not only into a good king but an ideal one, and in his ultimate public rejection of the knight.

In *2 Henry IV*, Falstaff – albeit mockingly – talks about Prince Hal as "the young lion [who] repents" (1.2.524) for having physically abused the Lord Chief Justice, a mistake the reformed King Henry V will later acknowledge as lawfully and rightfully punished. The phrase again emphasizes Hal's royal/leonine descent and his capacity to mature and learn from his mistakes, a skill that will serve him well when he becomes king.

In the same play, rebel leader Lord Hastings comments on King Henry IV's inability to repress the rebellion due to a lack of means to exercise punishment: "his power, like a fangless lion,/ May offer, but not hold." (4.1.2425-26) Although still a ruling king, Henry IV may seem threatening but is actually "fangless", i.e. he would not be able to carry through the military defeat of the rebels. In fact, the rebellion will be suppressed by a ruse of young Prince John of Lancaster, who artfully deceives the rebel leaders to dismiss their troops only to have them arrested immediately afterwards.

Royal associations with lions continue in *Henry V*, when Archbishop of Canterbury justifies Henry's claim to the French throne, recalling Edward the Black Prince and his victories in France, "[w]hiles his most mighty father on a hill/ Stood smiling to behold his lion's whelp/ Forage in blood of French nobility." (1.2.253-55) The lion's strength is highlighted here in terms of the leonine offspring's prowess and military achievements, which are proudly observed and sanctioned with an approving smile by the mighty King Edward III. In the same scene, the Duke of Exeter further supports Henry V's claim on France, arguing that his European peers expect him to continue in the same vein as his leonine ancestors: "Your brother kings and monarchs of the earth/ Do all expect that you should rouse yourself,/ As did the former lions of your blood." (1.2.267-69) Exeter's lines strengthen Henry's legitimacy to rule (which was subverted in *1 Henry IV* by Falstaff's story of the lion and the true prince). Moreover, according to Nicole Mennell (2021, 237), the verb "rouse" suggests that Henry need not rule "constantly in a leonine manner", but only bring "forth the beast within" when he has enemies to defeat.

Starting with the Henry VI plays, the kingly lion loses its connotations of strength and becomes "gentle", gradually turning into a lamb. As Mennell (2021, 236) aptly observes, "[i]n *2* and *3 Henry VI*, lion imagery highlights the king's limitations rather than his strengths." In this respect, it is noteworthy that in *3 Henry VI*, King Henry is the only one who sees himself as a lion, with a strong focus on the leonine king's attribute of clemency, while the other characters perceive him as a weak lamb in need of protection from surrounding power-hungry wolfish nobles. For example, when observing a son who has killed his father in battle, Henry VI deplores the situation of his subjects and the horrors of the civil war: "O piteous spectacle! O bloody times!/ Whiles lions war and battle for their dens,/ Poor harmless lambs abide their enmity." (2.5.1177-79) Although the imagery is meant to suggest that lion kings lead their forces in the protection of their dens/territories, what we actually infer is that, while Queen Margaret leads his fight for the throne, he is a "harmless lamb", joining his subjects in suffering. In a later scene, the king compares his reign to Edward IV's, and emphasizes various aspects (mildness, mercy, sympathy and low taxes) which he

thinks made him a good king whom his subjects love: "these graces challenge grace:/ And when the lion fawns upon the lamb,/ The lamb will never cease to follow him." (4.8.2570-72) Further playing on the lion-lamb imagery, these lines indicate that the king who focuses too much on pleasing others loses his leonine strength and respect, becoming an ineffectual ruler.

The only other character who compares Henry VI to a lion – albeit for the specific attribute of (over)clemency again – is the vindictive young Lord Clifford, who tries to show the king that too much leniency is damaging to his successful rule; instead, the king should show courage and aggression in the face of those who challenge his sovereignty: "My gracious liege, this too much lenity/ And harmful pity must be laid aside./ To whom do lions cast their gentle looks?/ Not to the beast that would usurp their den." (2.2.851-54)

At the end of the play, Edward IV refers to the deaths of Lancaster supporters Warwick and Montague as "two brave bears, …/ That in their chains fetter'd the kingly lion/ And made the forest tremble when they roar'd." (5.7.3105-107) Interestingly enough, the Yorkist monarch's lines highlight the bravery – however desperate it may be – and the physical strength of the bears but simultaneously render their limitations in the reference to chains; symbolic of the men's allegiances, the chains parallel the two warriors to baiting bears vulnerable to the attack of enemy dogs.[4] It is also significant that Edward mentions their chains as "fetter[ing] the kingly lion", hinting that their own limitations were reflected on the Lancaster King Henry VI as well.

Challengers and other lions

Challengers of the leonine, de facto king are also endowed with leonine qualities by the supporters of the rebellions. For instance, even before King

[4] In addition to such other animal fights as bull-baiting, monkey-baiting, or cockfighting, bear-baiting was a popular form of entertainment, consisting in a bear being chained to a post by its neck or a hind leg and several dogs attacking it. Scholars have noted the overlapping use of the early theatres as both playhouses and bear-baiting arenas (cf. Elspeth Graham in Raber and Dugan 2021, 186) and, as the Globe was situated very close to the bear garden in Southwark, it is no surprise that bear-baiting contributed the most to the plays in terms of imagery, particularly through the bear's defensive position on its hind legs, which reminded the audience of "human bipedalism", while also making "'humans' bestial in their blood-lust" (Raber 2018, 102). In this respect, Erica Fudge (qtd. in Raber 2018, 102-103) persuasively argues that, although such violence against bears was meant to show human superiority, it in fact blurred the boundaries between species, between civilization and wilderness. The comparison of a warrior to a chained bear thus endows the man with animalistic strength and aggression necessary for survival in dire circumstances. Furthermore, as bears were extinct in England, the ones used in the Southwark arenas were imported from the continent via the North Sea ports and featured in spectacles in towns and fairs on their way to London (cf. Ian MacInnes in Raber and Dugan 2021, 81), becoming an easy point of reference for the audience.

Henry IV associates himself with the lion in *1 Henry IV*, Mortimer praises Glendower's qualities as both man and statesman, among which he includes "valiant as a lion" (3.1.1712), emphasizing Glendower's courage in combat and his potential ability to rule.

In *2 Henry VI*, aiming to show that King Henry is a weak and ineffectual monarch, Queen Margaret confers leonine qualities to Humphrey of Gloucester, the Lord Protector: "But great men tremble when the lion roars;/ And Humphrey is no little man in England." (3.1.1296-97) The leonine characteristics are however undermined by the negative description of Duke Humphrey as "no little man", meant to challenge his royal lineage and power (as descendant of Edward III), which, in Queen Margaret's eyes, are a threat to Henry VI's own sovereignty. In her attempt to control her ineffectual kingly husband and the kingdom, the queen presents to the king, with Suffolk's help, an image of the Lord Protector as both "a fox" (Suffolk, 3.1.1332, 1537, 1541) and "a ravenous wolf" (Queen Margaret, 3.1.1356) that craves personal advancement and power. Suffolk's association of the Duke with the cunning fox is yet another nod to Machiavelli's metaphor of the fox not only with respect to the intended addressee but also in terms of the accusers' personalities, as Suffolk and the Queen themselves are revealed to be cunning foxes that plot to usurp legitimate kingship.

Interestingly enough, the first occurrence of a lion in *1 Henry IV* is found in Prince Hal's reply to Falstaff's comment that he feels "as melancholy as a gib cat, or a lugged bear" (1.2.180). Hal's line – "Or an old lion, or a lover's lute" (1.2.181) – continues the focus on the loss of energy and lack of danger that such animals may pose when in their prime, connecting the lion with the process of ageing and its negative consequences, including the (ridiculously) emotional songs of a lover. Old lions were on exhibit at the royal Tower menagerie in Shakespeare's times, so Falstaff's parallel with the forlorn expression of an ageing lion, dependent on others for bare necessities, must have been pathetically striking to Elizabethans (and even to us today), even if only a privileged few may have actually visited the menagerie (cf. Mennell 2021, 233, 234). Later in the play, Prince Hal continues to subtly ridicule Falstaff's declared instinctual leonine courage by turning it on its head, when he compares his Eastcheap friends to lions: "you are lions too, you/ ran away upon instinct" (2.4.1285-86).

In *Henry V*, the king's sentencing speech of the three traitors reaches a climax with the apostrophizing of Lord Scroop. Deeply betrayed by the nobleman whom he considered his friend (obvious in the use of the more intimate, second person singular pronouns "thee" and "thou"), Henry V describes the betrayal in terms of Scroop's much too easy yielding to the seduction of the demon of self-aggrandizement that walks the earth with "his lion gait" (2.2.758), tempting

men with promises of royal power. Also in *Henry V*, the French Duke of Orleans (who, among other things, serves as replacement for Hotspur's hot-headedness in *1 Henry IV*) compares the English and French monarchs to a flea and a lion respectively: "that's a/ valiant flea that dare eat his breakfast on the lip of a lion." (3.7.1773-74) Although the Duke's words do credit the English "flea" with valour for trying to steal – albeit insignificantly – from the lion's breakfast, they are meant to indicate the inferiority of the English king, to minimize the numbers of the English army and the effectiveness of the English attack against the grand, noble and blatantly leonine French army.

In addition to lions, other similarly ferocious beasts receive kingly attributes. It is crucial to note here that it is Henry V, the ideal monarch, "the epitome of the lion king" (Mennell 2021, 237), who urges the English soldiers at Harfleur to "imitate the action of the tiger" (3.1.1097), namely to move beyond leonine strength and courage and to adopt the aggression, violence and cruelty of the tiger. Nicole Mennell (237) concludes that, in order to win, "in combat the king must go beyond the nature of the noble lion and take on the cruelty of its vicious cousin the tiger." Although the emulation of the tiger's destructive force unleashes chaos initially, it also secures victory for the English. That Henry V is a good king-diplomat, who can balance the tiger's brute force with skilful diplomacy, emerges again in Act IV, when he allegorically answers the French envoy regarding his capture by alluding to a popular fable: "[t]he man that once did sell the lion's skin/ While the beast lived, was killed with hunting him." (4.3.2331-32) By replacing the fable's original bear with the lion, Henry elegantly alludes not only to his own royal status, but also to a general ruler's flexibility and attention to spoken promises which may cause his downfall.

In *1 Henry VI*, the English noblemen fight courageously like lions, even if Reignier's account of the event focuses on the animal's appetite and despair rather than on military prowess: "The other lords, like lions wanting food,/ Do rush upon us as their hungry prey." (1.2.220-21) Later on, before the siege of Rouen, Lord Talbot vows to conquer the city where "Great Coeur-de-lion's heart was buried" (3.2.1538). The reference to Richard the Lionheart nods back to the heraldic usage of the leonine beast and underlines once more the nobility and courage of both English warriors. In addition to Talbot, other English warriors are endowed with leonine attributes of courage and nobility in battle. For example, in Act IV of *1 Henry VI*, Talbot describes his young son's bravery in battle: "His bloody sword he brandish'd over me,/ And, like a hungry lion, did commence/ Rough deeds of rage and stern impatience" (4.7.2257-59). The lion's hunger is meant to suggest here not only the fighter's motivation but also his increased strength and prowess in combat. In *2 Henry VI*, Richard Plantagenet describes old Salisbury as "That winter lion, who in rage forgets/

Aged contusions and all brush of time" (5.3.3320-21). Similarly to hunger, leonine rage overcomes any impediment posed by age and turns its host into a powerful enemy. Moreover, in *3 Henry VI*, Richard III, Duke of Gloucester, refers to his father chasing old Clifford on the battlefield: "Methought he bore him in the thickest troop/ As doth a lion in a herd of neat." (2.1.639-40) The comparison between the old duke and the lion's strategy of attack is meant to indicate the warrior's prowess and valour in battle, as well as his determination to defeat his sworn enemy. At the end of the play, before his own imminent death, Warwick the Kingmaker sees himself as a tall proud cedar sheltering a lion that could represent either Edward IV or Henry VI since his allegiance shifted from the former to the latter: "Thus yields the cedar […]/ Under whose shade the ramping lion slept" (5.2.2733, 2735). What the imagery does is to actually construct Warwick visually superior to the rampant/ warring lion king who sleeps under his watch, thus making Warwick the most important person in the realm.

Like tigers or wolves, lions can also be vicious and destructive, causing chaos when they go on a rampage. In *3 Henry VI*, Edmond, Earl of Rutland, is overwhelmed by young Lord Clifford, whom he describes: "So looks the pent-up lion o'er the wretch/ That trembles under his devouring paws;/ An so he walks, insulting o'er his prey,/ And so he comes, to rend his limbs asunder." (1.3.389-92) Clifford's leonine characteristics are far from the nobility of the lion king and closer to the viciousness of the tiger; they emphasize here Clifford's obsession of avenging his father by murdering all his enemy's male children.

Wolves as dangerous, treacherous and rapacious enemies

By contrast to the lion as a symbol of legitimate sovereignty and bravery, the wolf stands for usurpation, misrule and chaos. Surprisingly enough, although *1 Henry IV* has the most mentions of "lion", it has no mentions of "wolf/wolves", most likely because any mention of the latter predator would have contributed to the challenging of King Henry IV's already debatable claim to the English throne. Contrastingly, the play that has the largest number of "wolves" is *3 Henry VI*, where the word appears seven times either in singular or plural form and always connoting threat to kingship and kingdom.

The first mentions of wolves as dangerous occur in *2 Henry IV* in the conversation between Lord Chief Justice and Falstaff, where the proverbial animals (dog and rat) are replaced with wild, more dangerous ones, i.e. wolf and fox. At the same time, the lines represent another nod to Machiavelli's metaphor of the fox as a crafty diplomat, a talent necessary to fight off lurking wolfish enemies:

> Lord Chief Justice: But since all is well, keep it so: wake not a sleeping wolf.
> Falstaff: To wake a wolf is as bad as smell a fox." (1.2.471-73)

In Falstaff's line both the wolf and the fox connote danger but of different kinds. Whereas the wolf poses a more evident physical threat, the fox suggests a subtler trap, harder to identify, but which can be equally hazardous.

In *2 Henry VI*, the overall atmosphere of rebellion and treachery is suggested by the very vivid imagery created by the Captain: "now loud-howling wolves arouse the jades/ That drag the tragic melancholy night" (4.1.2154-55). The noise intensity of the "loud-howling wolves" suggests that the enemies to the king and welfare of the country are not only nearby and closing in but they seek to frighten "the jades", bringing about chaos and tragedy for the entire country. The jades can be read here both literally and metaphorically: they are the knackered horses crazed by the danger of the battle and the precarious situation of their masters, as well as the monarch's noble but old worn-out supporters who, nevertheless, stand for English determination and pragmatism in the face of adversity.

The danger that wolfish enemies pose has also been briefly touched upon by Caroline Spurgeon in her work on Shakespearean imagery. Spurgeon was perhaps the first to note that Henry VI's "enemies or claimants to the crown" are likened to "wild beasts, ravening wolves, beating away the shepherd (Duke Humphrey) from the lamb so that they may devour it" (Spurgeon 2005, 229). To further illustrate her claim, for instance, in *2 Henry VI*, upon his arrest at Queen Margaret's orders, Duke Humphrey already prophesizes that the king will become the main bone of contention, as the nobles and the queen herself fight for authority: "Ah! thus King Henry throws away his crutch/ Before his legs be firm to bear his body./ Thus is the shepherd beaten by thy side,/ And wolves are gnarling who shall gnaw thee first." (3.1.1470-73)

In *3 Henry VI*, an angry Queen Margaret publicly scolds her husband for conceding the crown to Richard of York upon his death and for accepting the Duke of Exeter as protector: "The duke is made protector of the realm;/ And yet shalt thou be safe? such safety finds/ The trembling lamb environed with wolves." (1.1.257-59) By comparing the king to a "trembling lamb", Queen Margaret turns the meaning of safety on its head, casting the king as a weak – almost sacrificial – sovereign that can be easily manipulated by others. Later in the same play, upon his return to England and capture by the English, Henry VI casts himself as a shepherd who has abandoned his flock to the wolfish enemy, giving up the country's resources and his own life: "So flies the reckless shepherd from the wolf;/ So first the harmless sheep doth yield his fleece/ And next his throat unto the butcher's knife." (5.6.3002-04)

Unlike lions, whose appetite carries attributes of prowess and valour in battle, the hunger of wolves is connected to manipulative power and influence for self-aggrandizement. Thus, in *3 Henry VI*, Richard Plantagenet, Duke of

Gloucester, comments on Queen Margaret's victory in terms of his army running away like lambs from starving wolves: "And all my followers to the eager foe/ Turn back and fly, like ships before the wind/ Or lambs pursued by hunger-starved wolves." (1.4.438-40) Later on, similarly to Henry V's speech at Harfleur, Queen Margaret encourages the French soldiers to fight for the legitimate king and a right cause against the wolfish usurper Edward IV: "Henry, your sovereign,/ Is prisoner to the foe; his state usurp'd […]/ And yonder is the wolf that makes this spoil./ You fight in justice: then, in God's name, lords,/ Be valiant and give signal to the fight." (5.4.2883-84, 2887-89) It is somewhat cruelly ironic that the queen who was dubbed the "she-wolf of France" at the beginning of the play and whose authority is a mere substitute for the legitimate king's now calls Edward IV a wolf that contests her own claim to the English throne although allegedly on behalf of her husband.

It is particularly noteworthy that while the wolves are usually associated with internal enemies, i.e. English supporters of what each faction believes to be the rightful king, foreign enemies like the French, and especially the French Queen Margaret receive tiger-like attributes of violence, viciousness and destruction. Thus, the rapaciousness of wolves is even further developed with Richard Plantagenet's description of Queen Margaret as "She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves of France,/ Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth!" (1.4.551-52) What makes the Queen stand out as an archenemy is not only her femaleness ("she-wolf") but also her foreign lineage and negative superiority as absolute evil force ("worse than wolves of France"). To strengthen this almost otherworldly evilness and show the subversion of the legitimate leonine authority and sovereignty, the duke's speech further confers negative, vicious, tiger-like characteristics to Queen Margaret: "O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide!/ […] you are more inhuman, more inexorable,/ O, ten times more, than tigers of Hyrcania." (1.4.577, 595-96) Whereas in *Henry V*, the tiger was used by the king to connote a 'positive' application of the animal's viciousness in battle to secure victory, Gloucester's lines cast the Queen in a much worse light even than Lady Macbeth's invocation of the spirits of the night to endow her with masculine qualities. At the same time, at least to Shakespeare's contemporaries, the French Margaret's "tiger heart" must have struck a shockingly vivid opposition to the reigning Elizabeth I's famously strengthening her own legitimacy to the English throne by claiming to have the heart and stomach of not just any ordinary monarch but fit for a *king* of England.[5]

[5] Although scholars have debated the authenticity of Elizabeth I's speech at Tilbury (cf. Frye 1992, Green 1997), given that it only emerged in the early 17th century, Green (1997) clearly explains why it may be considered a genuine Elizabeth I oration. That the general population was aware of it is indicated by Thomas Deloney's ballad, *The Queenes visiting of the campe at Tilsburie with her*

By contrast to Lady Macbeth and Elizabeth I, Gloucester's lines completely dehumanize Queen Margaret, the "false Frenchwoman" (1.4.589-90), singled out not only through her foreign background but also because of her "unnatural" meddling in state politics. Unlike a leonine male monarch, the Queen is incapable of showing any sympathy – let alone clemency – in the treatment of her defeated enemies, gloating in the torture of Gloucester with a handkerchief soaked in his dead son's blood. Furthermore, Queen Margaret's loss of human(e) attributes cannot help but recall the dehumanization of another French noble woman, Princess Catherine of Valois, who at the end of *Henry V*, is metaphorically described through the dowry she brings to the eponymous English king: "you see them perspectively, the cities/ turn'd into a maid; for they all are girdled with/ maiden walls that war has never enter'd." (5.2.3303-05) The parallel between the courting/conquering of Princess Kate and the entering of walled-in cities creates an uncomfortable sexual imagery, turning the English military victory over France into a sexual one, where the male victor metaphorically forces himself on the effeminate loser. This imagery gives us an insight into the darker side of leonine Henry V, who is now associated with a rapacious – albeit restrained – appetite.

The insatiable appetite of enemy wolves is emphasized even earlier, when in *Henry V*, the Constable of France describes the English warriors in terms of ravenous hunger which then transforms into devilish, superhuman strength: "they will/ eat like wolves and fight like devils." (3.7.1778-79) Also, in *1 Henry VI*, Joan La Pucelle's father renounces what he judges to be an ungrateful daughter, saying: "I wish some ravenous wolf had eaten thee!" (5.4.2701)

Following up on the danger they traditionally connote, wolves can easily disguise their intentions and turn into traitors. For instance, in *2 Henry IV*, the king moralizes Prince Hal, drawing his attention particularly to the negative consequences for the entire country if young Harry does not reform and assume his royal responsibilities: "What wilt thou do when riot is thy care?/ O, thou wilt be a wilderness again./ Peopled with wolves, thy old inhabitants!" (4.5.3031-33) In this alternative scenario, the country turns into another Eastcheap, where the prince wastes his time, and which is peopled with selfish, unruly inhabitants.

In *1 Henry VI*, commenting on the English soldiers' momentary cowardice at the siege of Rouen, Lord Talbot continues his heraldic imagery of tearing the lions out of England's badge and casts the cowardly soldiers as worse than

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entertainment there (1588), which includes the lines "my loving friends and countriemen" and "But if our enimies doe assaile you, / never let your stomackes faile you" (Norrie 2019, 184, n. 8). Moreover, Tudor propaganda made every effort to construct for the queen a convincing image as a politically legitimate, 'masculine' monarch, "descendent of the leonine King Henry VIII" (Mennell 2021, 233), and consequently capable of ruling England.

gregarious sheep escaping the attack of wolves: "Sheep run not half so treacherous from the wolf" (1.5.615). In *3 Henry VI*, Richard III chases Lord Clifford to avenge his brother's death: "I myself will hunt this wolf to death." (2.4.1100) The wolf here receives connotations not only of treason but also of lack of chivalric honour that would have compelled the winner to spare and negotiate the ransom of his noble prisoner.

Last but not least, disguised wolves are symbolic of undercover power-thirsty enemies, just as in *1 Henry VI*, the Duke of Gloucester identifies Winchester to be: "Thee I'll chase hence, thou wolf in sheep's array." (1.3.410) Disguise facilitates the schemer's proximity to the monarch and, subsequently, the manipulation and usurpation of the king's authority. Ironically enough, in the following play, *2 Henry VI*, Queen Margaret makes a very similar comment about Gloucester himself, presenting him as a fraud and potential usurper to the much too trusting king: "Is he a lamb? his skin is surely lent him,/ For he's inclined as is the ravenous wolf/ Who cannot steal a shape that means conceit?" (3.1.1355-57)

Conclusions

In this study we have tried to show that throughout the Henriad Shakespeare uses lions to designate especially good monarchs that successfully blend the leonine qualities of force and clemency. Such leonine characteristics as valour and prowess are also lent to other warriors who prove their worth in battle. On the other hand, wolf imagery is usually associated with danger and treachery that lurk among the English nobility and appear more obvious when the French are concerned. Among these foreign enemies, the French Queen Margaret of Anjou stands out as a female wolf, embodying cruelty and destruction, and subverting the legitimate sovereignty of her kingly husband.

Interestingly enough, tigers – as the physically bigger and crueller cousins of the lion – lie in-between, while their attributes are crucially influenced by the gender element. The tiger receives somewhat positive connotations when associated with the English soldiers' fortitude and military prowess on the French battlefields, making victory more graspable for the English. Nonetheless, the tiger is given negative connotations, especially when associated with foreign French enemies who challenge English male sovereignty. Here too, Queen Margaret stands out from among these foreign enemies by having a "tiger's heart", lacking humaneness. An important addition to these three symbolic animals is the fox, since – in Machiavellian vein – it is its craftiness and dissimulation that contribute to a ruler's success.

Perhaps the most obvious conclusion emerging from our analysis above is that these predatory animals testify yet again to Shakespeare's creativity while

also being mutable symbols of bravery, diplomacy and sovereignty, or of danger and treachery. Last but not least, as the posthumanist angle prompts us to see, our interest in Shakespeare's use of ample wild animal imagery for the benefit of his contemporaries lies not only in the metaphor, but also in the retrieval of a cultural and historical understanding of co-habitation. In this sense, given that in our contemporary world wolves are almost extinct in many countries and there are more statues of lions than actual lions, our wild animal inventory hopes to offer not only a symbolic interpretation, but also a moral compensation.

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THE BROWN BEAR IN THE NOVEL OF ION D. SÎRBU: FOLK-MYTHOLOGY IN THE SATIRICAL FABLE *THE DANCE OF THE BEAR*

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ABSTRACT. ***The Brown Bear in the Novel of Ion D. Sîrbu: Folk-Mythology in The Satirical Fable* The Dance of the Bear.** Ion D. Sîrbu's last anthumous novel, *The Dance of the Bear*, subtitled *A Novel for Children and Grandparents*, displays a highly nuanced understanding and symbolization of the animal world. This study aims to analyse the novel which, as the title suggests, abounds in animal imaginary, by focusing on its fable-like characteristics and the elements of Romanian folklore incorporated by the main prose writer of the Sibiu Literary Circle. Like most of Sîrbu's anthumous works, *The Dance of the Bear* anticipates the critical and satirical attitude towards the totalitarian regime(s) that would later define the better-known posthumous books of Ion D. Sîrbu. The Aesopic dimension of the novel is facilitated by the clever instrumentation of the animal reference. One such reference is that of the Romanian mythological fauna, in the analysis of which, Mihai Coman's *Romanian Traditional Mythology* proves to be revealing.

Keywords*: Ion. D. Sîrbu, Sibiu Literary Circle, fable, Romanian folk mythology, eco-ethology, post-war Romanian literature, satire*

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REZUMAT. ***Ursul brun în romanul lui Ion. D. Sîrbu: Mitologie populară în fabula satirică* Dansul Ursului.** Ultimul roman antum al lui Ion D. Sîrbu, *Dansul ursului*, purtând subtitlul *"Roman pentru copii și bunici"*, demonstrează o înțelegere și o simbolizare foarte nuanțate a lumii animale. Acest articol își propune să analizeze romanul care, după cum sugerează și titlul, abundă în imaginar animal, punând accent pe caracteristicile sale de fabulă și pe elementele folclorului românesc încorporate de principalul prozator al Cercului Literar de la Sibiu. La fel ca majoritatea operelor antume ale autorului în cauză, *Dansul ursului* anticipează atitudinea critică și satirică față de regimurile totalitare care avea să definească ulterior cele mai cunoscute cărți postume ale lui Ion D. Sîrbu. Dimensiunea esopică a romanului este facilitată de instrumentarea inteligentă a referinței animale. O astfel de referință este cea a faunei mitologice românești, în analiza căreia lucrarea lui Mihai Coman, *Mitologie populară românească* se dovedește revelatoare.

Cuvinte-cheie*: Ion D. Sîrbu, Cercul Literar de la Sibiu, fabulă, mitologie populară românească, eco-etologie, literatură română postbelică, satiră*

"If you are not a beast to humans,
you cannot be humane to beasts"[2] –
Ion D. Sîrbu to Horia Stanca, June 10, 1988

A brief history of an underrated novel

In a 1987 letter to Ștefan Aug. Doinaș, with whom he had a most complicated literary friendship, Ion D. Sîrbu wrote the following lines while he was waiting for the authorities to deny him yet another request to travel to the West: "I am working on my *Bear*, I want to become a great animal writer, I only write about beasts and other animals"[3] (Mareș 2011, 355). Leaving the satirical and political implications aside, the novelist was justified to categorise himself as such, considering the titles of the two latest novels to be found in his (feared) drawer at that time: *Lupul și Catedrala* [*The Wolf and the Cathedral*] and *Dansul Ursului* [*The Dance of the Bear*]. The former is a novel that was completed and submitted by Ion D. Sîrbu and rejected by *Cartea Românească* publishing house because the text failed to pass through the censorship grid of the State Security. The latter, not yet completed at the time of the aforementioned letter, was published in 1988 and was the last novel to publicly appear during the author's lifetime.

[2] "Dacă nu eşti fiară cu oamenii, nu poţi fi om cu fiarele." Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

[3] "Eu lucrez la Ursul, vreau să ajung un mare scriitor animalier, scriu numai despre fiare și alte animale."

The existence of the novel is owed to what literary criticism considers "an editorial strategy"[4] (Enache 2006, 265). No little amount of bravery was involved in it. Since *The Wolf and the Cathedral* was deemed unpublishable by *Cartea Românească*, Ion D. Sîrbu, after multiple efforts of persuasion (including the threat of writing his lucid, uncensored, dangerous memoirs), withdrew his manuscript in April 1987 (Mareș 2011, 334) and decided not to submit it to other publishing houses. Instead, the novel was to appear posthumously, its potential success having already been guaranteed by the decent underground circulation of the manuscript among writers and friends (representing one of Romanian literature's few but iconic cases of *samizdat*). On the other hand, his editor Maria Graciov, an admirer of Sîrbu's novel, unwilling to accept the compromise of modification, encouraged her writer to submit another manuscript and maintain, thus, his place in the editorial plan (Graciov 1995, 116). After 9 months of writing and some months of impediments (Mareș 2011, 381), *The Dance of the Bear* was published in July 1988 by the same *Cartea Românească*. As is the case with any book, the editorial history of this novel was doubled by a more intimate one. According to Ion D. Sîrbu's letter to Virgil Nemoianu from January 18, 1984, the origins of the story can be traced back to a real-life event:

> I sat for hours looking down at a Carpathian bear, circling at the bottom of a concrete cave. Then I heard a real story: it would make the subject of a future children's novel, which I should write, if my inventory didn't lack about 15 good, irretrievable years.[5] (Sîrbu 1994, 249-250)

The "real story" did eventually serve as a theme for a children's novel. The author had been storing the following memory since the 1960s, when, after being released from detention and spending several more months working in the Petrila Coal Mine, Craiova became Ion D. Sîrbu's compulsory residence.

> Three children […] decided to release that bear. I don't know how, they got the guard drunk, they starved the bear, so that one night, opening the iron grate, they would lure it with pieces of meat, sprinkled every hundred meters. The park is on the outskirts of the city, from there, through a deserted hippodrome, through a tarnished, old gypsy camp (which I study with special futurological zeal) you can reach the bridge over Jiu. From there, immediately, the forests of Bucovăț start, stretching all the way to the Baia de Aramă forests.[6] (Sîrbu 1994, 250)

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[4] "și a apărut dintr-un motiv, mai degrabă, de strategie editorială."

[5] "Stăteam cu orele privind în jos un urs carpatin, învârtindu-se în fundul unei grote de beton. Atunci am auzit o întâmplare reală: ea ar fi tema unui viitor roman pentru copii, pe care ar trebui să-l scriu, dacă nu aș avea lipsă un inventar circa 15 ani buni, irecuperabili."

[6] "Trei copii […] au hotărât sa elibereze ursul acela. Nu știu cum, au îmbătat paznicul, au flămânzit ursul, ca, într-o noapte, deschizându-i grilajul de fier, să-l momească cu bucăți de carne, presărată din sută în sută de metri. Parcul e în marginea orașului, de acolo, printr-un hipodrom pustiu, printr-o amarnică,

The same geographical references are used in the novel. However, if spatiality is left intact, Ion D. Sîrbu alters the temporal register significantly. The main part of the story unfolds in 1944 and the three children are therefore war orphans. Moreover, the novel also aims to recapture the disheartening collective atmosphere following the trauma of the Vienna Diktat, when Northern Transylvania was assigned from Romania to Hungary.

> I don't know how far the children managed to lure that bear. (They were tried for their actions by the pioneer organization). What hurt me in this incident […] was a life-saving detail for those "bad" children; namely, the fact that the bear, after being tired of the meat sprinkled along this road to freedom, instead of advancing to the forest, like the fool that he was, turned back towards his concrete cave, where… to the despair of the children, he returned and went to sleep…[7] (Sîrbu 1994, 250)

With a few significant differences, the fragment serves as a summary of the 1988 book, subtitled *A Novel for Children and Grandparents* (in order to emphasize both the kinship and the difference from a 1973 project of Ion D. Sîrbu, *Why is Mother Crying?*, subtitled *A Novel for Children and Parents*). More precisely, it is the summary of the novel's core narrative, as the story also possesses an unsymmetrical narrative frame.

Having learned a lesson after the incident with *Lupul și Catedrala*, but not at the cost of his lucidity or morality, "Ion D. Sîrbu avoids direct satire by crafting a 'fable'"[8] (Patraș 2003, 170) or "an allegory of freedom and imprisonment"[9] (Oprea 2000, 103). Although the novel benefited from the interpretation and commentary of few but subtle and skilled exegetes, perhaps not enough emphasis was put on the animal figures of the "fable." Romanian literary critics mentioned the animals of *The Dance of the Bear* insofar as they served ideological or biographical readings of the novel. The fact is completely understandable and the input of the critics valuable. However, there is more to contribute to the zoomorphic aspects of *The Dance of the Bear*.

To synthesize the exegesis concerning the animals of *The Dance of the Bear* is to engage in the ideological reading of the novel, which, in this case,

veche țigănie (pe care o studiez eu cu osebită osârdie futurologică) se poate ajunge la podul peste Jiu. De acolo, imediat, încep pădurile Bucovățului, ele se țin lanț până la codrii Băii de Aramă."

[7] "Nu știu până unde au reușit copiii să momească ursul acela. (Au fost judecați pentru fapta lor de către organizația de pionieri). Ceea ce pe mine m-a durut în această întâmplare […] a fost un amănunt salvator pentru acei copii "răi"; și anume faptul că ursul, după ce s-a cam săturat de cărnurile înșirate de-a lungul acestui drum spre libertate, în loc s-o ia înainte spre codru, ca un prost ce era, a luat-o înapoi spre grota sa, unde… spre disperarea copiilor, s-a întors și s-a culcat să doarmă…."

[8] "Ion D. Sîrbu evită satira directă, construind o 'fabulă'."

[9] "alegorii despre libertate și încarcerare."

ultimately implies the biographical reading as well. The first animal character in which the reader immediately distinguishes the author's voice is Gary the donkey. The association is obvious, first of all, because Ion D. Sîrbu borrows his own nickname and correspondence alias to the hoofed philosopher of the fable. In addition to a nickname, the donkey inherits the lucidity, the reflexive tendencies, the stoic patience and a limited theatrical career from his author. The Romanian literary critics agree on (but use different terms for) the role Gary plays in the economy of the novel. The donkey has been called "a projection of the writer himself in the animal-symbolic plan", "incarnation", "*alter-ego*" (Enache 2006, 265-267) or "*raisonneur*", "symbolic hero", "reflector-character" (Patraș 2003, 172-178)[10]. It is because of Gary's ability to lucidly think and share his wisdom with the reader (or with Carin the white mule filly) that the novel can withstand the affinity with the fable literary genre. Moreover, the moralist donkey's fondness for the children of the novel – Lucian Rogoz (the younger self of the frame-story's narrator), Silvia Decuseară and Roland Redont – together with his exhaustion and defeat in the face of history strengthen the link with the author's outlook on life in his old age.

Less obvious, and therefore less dangerous and less likely to cause a problem that would interfere with the publication of the novel by a state publishing house, Ion D. Sîrbu's second animal avatar in the novel is the Carpathian Bear, Buru. Very briefly, the capturing and imprisonment of the brown bear by the German soldiers, his unnatural captivity which, however, causes the bear to befriend three smart and empathetic children, the chance to escape to his natural habitat together with the missed opportunity of doing so, and finally, the return to the cage are the symbolic counterparts of impactful events in Ion D. Sîrbu's life. They stand for the author's many years of political detention, for decades of suffering at the hands of the totalitarian regime(s) in Romania, for forced domicile, for the three months journey to the West and the 1982 return to his home country - out of self-imposed moral duty, but also out of an incompatibility with the Western way of living, owed to the scars of a lifetime in chains. The balance sheet of Ion D. Sîrbu's penance is to be found in the splendid 2011 book by Clara Mareș, *Zidul de sticlă: Ion D. Sîrbu în arhivele securității* [*The Wall of Glass: Ion D. Sîrbu in the Archives of the Security*].

However, even before Clara Mareș' investigation, the literary critics of the post-communist years agree on considering Buru as the other allegorical projection of the writer. The "key" of the novel was provided by Ion D. Sîrbu himself in his posthumously published diaristic and epistolary writings. For instance, in a 1988 letter to Mariana Șora, the author confesses that:

[10] "proiecția în plan simbolic-animalier a scriitorului însuși", "în Asinul Gary s-a încarnat scriitorul însuși", "*raisonneur* și erou simbolic al romanului", "personaj-reflector."

> *The Dance of the Bear* is meant for children like me and grandparents like Ramon; a kind of bet of mine, wanting to prove to myself that one can write major literature by mimicking minors, philosophizing like in fables, the heroes of the novel being a Bear (which resembles me, the portrait being of the author in his youth) and a Donkey, named Gary, this is my perfect portrait, here and now.[11] (Sîrbu 1994, 486)

The examples can continue with other letters: to Viorica Guy Marica in November, 1988 (Marica 1995, 56), or to Horia Stanca in July, 1988 (Sîrbu and Stanca 1997, 133). Although perhaps almost as interesting a connection with the symbol of the bear was one Ion D. Sîrbu had been unaware of. During the 1970's, the pseudonym that the State Security gave the author in the *DUI* (abbreviation for the Romanian "*Dosar de Urmărire Informativă*"), meaning informative tracking file, was none other than "URSU", the Romanian word for "the bear." While the 1980's *DUI* of the same author bore the name "SURU" which is phonetically close to Buru, the name of the 1988 novel's bear. However, the Romanian word *suru* translates to "the grey", which causes Clara Mareș to write:

> but the name is more reminiscent of the grey wolf, the same wolf who was locked in the writer's drawer, waiting for his audience in front of the cathedral of time. Involuntarily, the Security honors Sîrbu by likening him to the wolf or the bear, the two *totem* animals of the Romanians. Coincidence and paradox have accompanied him all his life, how can they desert him in the security files? (Mareș 2011, 249)[12]

The totemic bear

When referencing *The Dance of the Bear,* the word *totemic* is recurrent in the various monographs dedicated to Ion D. Sîrbu. In the fragment above, Clara Mareș also subtly points at the theme of national identity which constantly follows the author, being a very important aspect of the novel. While the enduring bear is the allegorical projection of Ion D. Sîrbu in the novel, it also stands for the Romanian identity during the Communist regime and throughout

[11] "*Dansul Ursului* e pentru copii ca mine şi bunici ca Ramon; un fel de pariu al meu, dorind să-mi dovedesc că se poate scrie literatură majoră mimând minorii, filosofând ca în fabule, eroii romanului fiind un Urs (ce-mi seamănă, portretul fiind al autorului în tinereţe) şi un Măgar, pe nume Gary, acesta fiind perfectul portret al meu, acum şi aici."

[12] "însă numele aminteşte mai de grabă de lupul cel sur, lup care se afla şi el închis în sertarul scriitorului, aşteptându-li publicul în faţa catedralei timpului. Involuntar Securitatea îl onorează pe Sîrbu asemănându-l lupului sau ursului, cele două animale totem ale românilor. Coincidenţa şi paradoxul l-au însoţit întreaga sa viaţă, cum l-ar fi putut părăsi în dosare?"

all of our history as well. As Antonio Patraș brilliantly summarizes: "Buru's destiny is exponential, his defects being ours, as a nation: too much ingenuity, sometimes close to stupidity, and an extraordinary ability to endure, close to resignation"[13] (Patraș 2003, 175).

The critical discourse has deciphered the two plans in which the fable ought to be confronted:

> one symbolic, in which the bear appears as a kind of national totem, and another of strictly political topicality, in which the imprisonment and taming of the beast indicates the surrender of the spirit to brute force, to history, acceptance of slavery, misery, death. (Patraș 2003, 175)[14]

However, the exegetes never dwell on the animal as much as they do on what it represents politically or biographically. They mention the link with the Romanian folk-mythology or with the author's knowledge of ethology, but only briefly, without exemplification or analysis. We hope to fill a part of that gap.

Lucian Rogoz, the frame-story's narrator, is a chief engineer of a forest district in Maramureș, and the story of Buru is a recollection of his childhood, triggered by an unhappy bear incident that took place in Chamonix. More important than Lucian's occupation is his origin. The background of the narrator is a profoundly rural one, thus, on the verge of old age, the narrator is not only a specialist in the ethology of the fauna within his district, but also in the mythological fauna of the country. By choosing such a narrator, Ion D. Sîrbu is allowed to display his knowledge of animals and folk-mythology, along with other universal legends surrounding the figure of the bear. In the words of Antonio Patraș:

> Ion D. Sîrbu writes a real treatise on bearology, proving, with arguments from zoology, mythology, history and literature that Buru - this is the Dacian resonant name that children give to the prisoner - is the real "ancestor", our true national totem.[15] (Patraș 2003, 175)

Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu also tried, though in a single note, to point at some of the main sources the author used for his "treatise": "I. D. Sîrbu mobilizes his extensive knowledge, his readings from Brehm and his associative fantasy, to

[13] "Destinul lui Buru este exponențial, defectele sale fiind și ale noastre, ca neam: o prea mare ingenuitate, vecină uneori cu prostia, și o extraordinară capacitate de a îndura, vecină cu resemnarea."

[14] "unul simbolic, în care ursul apare ca un fel de totem național, și altul de strictă actualitate politică, în care încarcerarea și îmblânzirea fiarei indică cedarea spiritului în fața forței brute, în fața istoriei, acceptarea robiei, a mizeriei, a morții."

[15] "Ion D. Sîrbu realizează un adevărat tratat de ursologie, demonstrând, cu argumente din zoologie, mitologie, istorie și literatură că Buru – acesta e numele cu rezonanță dacică pe care copiii i-l dau prizonierului – este autenticul "strămoș", veritabilul nostru totem național."

create a mythical aura of the forest giant"[16] (Crohmălniceanu, Heitmann 2000, 406n). In her article entitled *Un roman pentru copii, bunici și disidenți* [*A Novel for Children and Dissidents*], Ștefania Mihalache, a specialist in children's literature, considers that the two main labels that can be applied to this novel are: "self-reflexive novel" and "novel for children", and that the achievement of *The Dance of the Bear* is precisely the intertwined functioning of the two dimensions (Mihalache 2019, 41). For anyone who has read the novel it becomes clear that the author's target audience (via the novel's subtitle) is taken seriously. Therefore, the novel for children also serves didactic purposes. In the words of Simon Flynn:

> If animals have generally been portrayed as instruments of satire in adult fiction, in books for children they have also been used to educate children both linguistically and socially. (Flynn 2004, 419)

The Dance of the Bear does both while also pointing the satire at the author himself. One of the didactic purposes of the novel is educating others on topics that Ion D. Sîrbu is clearly passionate about. To name a few, these subjects are: Romanian folklore, zoology, mythology in the broadest sense, storytelling, national history and, most importantly, the theme of freedom (and imprisonment).

Besides creating a fable of his own suffering and his country's penance at the hands of the twentieth century, Ion D. Sîrbu offers his readers a *tour de force* concerning the "cultural sign" of the bear. Buru is an unfortunate specimen of the brown bear, *Ursus arctos*, a species which is indeed remarkably presented in Alfred Brehm's *Life of animals* (Brehm 1895, 244-250). In fact, Sîrbu homages the German zoologist by quoting his important and charming study midway through his novel: "Therefore, you will be able to read and translate what this very learned German named Dr. Alfred Brehm writes here about bears... in *Life of animals* (*Tierleben*- 1864, six volumes)"[17] (Sîrbu 1988, 163). However, the Romanian author carefully selects fragments from Brehm's description of bears in order to resemble Sîrbu's apprehension of *Romanianness*. Consequently, Brehm's brown bear has the following traits:

> 'No other predator is as funny and humorous as our good Meister Petz (This would correspond to our Romanian *Moș Martin*). The bear has an open, genuine nature, lacking anything cunning or false. […] When he attacks, he attacks directly, when he steals, he steals openly. Lo, in other

[16] "I. D. Sîrbu își mobilizează întinsele cunoștințe, lecturile din Brehm și fantezia asociativă, ca să creeze o aură mitică a uriașului pădurii."

[17] "Aşadar, vei putea citi şi traduce ce scrie aici despre urşi acest foarte învăţat german pe nume doctor Alfred Brehm ... In Viaţa animalelor (Tierleben- 1864, şase volume)."

words, he only becomes dangerous when he is attacked and realizes that he cannot avoid fighting. At that point he is brave, he fights openly, often standing up; he knows neither fear nor flight from danger or death...' This is what Dr. Brehm writes.[18] (Sîrbu 1988, 163-164)

The mythological bear

The novel is abundant both in "scientific" data and traditional mythology lessons regarding this "totem animal." Shifting from literary history to Romanian ethnology, it is important to highlight that two years before the appearance of *The Dance of the Bear*, Mihai Coman's *Mitologie populară românească* [*Romanian Traditional Mythology*] (Volume I, 1986) was published. The 1986 volume inaugurates and covers the research direction of the Romanian zoomorphic mythology. Both the donkey and the bear are treated in this mythological bestiary. Each chapter of the *Romanian Traditional Mythology* is a synthesis of the animal's characteristics as they are reflected by the Romanian traditional thinking. Most probably, Ion D. Sîrbu was aware of Mihai Coman's study, or, if not, of multiple primary bibliographical sources used by the ethnologist. Therefore, reading the study dedicated to the mythological bear, while bearing in mind Ion D. Sîrbu's novel, it is interesting to observe that most of the characteristics treated by Mihai Coman find a correspondent in the novel.

Since Mihai Coman's study of the bear is almost nine pages long, we will try to summarize and extract the aspects that are relevant to *The Dance of the Bear.* Explicitly formulated by the specialised characters of the novel (including the narrator), or only hinted at by the regular unfolding of the action, all the attributes selected below have a correspondent in *The Dance of the Bear*. However, due to space reasons, we will not be able to exemplify exhaustively:

1) The ambivalent ways of relating to bears of the Romanian popular culture, between consecration and derision (Coman 1986, 174). From this point of view, no other animal of the Romanian mythological bestiary would be more fitting for Ion D. Sîrbu's plans. For every cosmic attribute of the bear described or illustrated in the novel, there is a humiliating situation, a historical irony diminishing the bear's prestige. In a sense, Buru is the successor not only to the

[18] "'Nici un alt animal de pradă nu este atât de nostim, cu un umor atât de simpatic şi drăgălaş, ca bunul nostru Meister Petz. (Asta ar corespunde cu Moş Martinul nostru românesc.) Ursul are o fire deschisă, naturală, fără nimic şiret sau fals în ea. [...] Când atacă, atacă direct, când fură, fură pe faţă. Ia, cu alte cuvinte. Devine periculos abia când e atacat şi când îşi dă seama că nu poate evita lupta. Atunci e brav, luptă deschis, de multe ori ridicându-se în picioare ; nu cunoaşte nici frica şi nici fuga de pericol sau moarte ...' Aşa scrie dr. Brehm."

chthonic bear, but to the fairy tale bear who was tricked by the fox in losing his tail. It is because of this aspect that Sîrbu's satire can also be seen as a self-satire. One such example can be found in the penultimate and most satisfying chapter of the novel, presenting Buru's journey towards freedom:

> Three dead drunk brothers-in-law were leaning against the giant oak […] Buru immediately felt that these three […] smelled exactly as he liked. He swayed (the children were again terrified of what might have happened), swayed to the three very happy brothers-in-law, smelled and licked them with friendliness. They were so intoxicated that they rejoiced: who knows what was or wasn't in their head? […] They thought it was just a mask, […] a faire joke. They wanted to give him a drink, the bear refused, only smelling and licking their red, sweaty faces sufficed.[19] (Sîrbu 1988, 267-268)

Many humorous examples could have been provided to illustrate the bear's trajectory towards derision. However, when using an ethnological lens on the second to last chapter, interesting details might appear. For instance, given the fact that the bear's escape turns out to be a failure, Buru's odyssey proves to be nothing more than just a walk. A connection which other exegetes failed to provide (perhaps because they deemed it too unsubtle) is that the novel's climax is just the narrativization of a Romanian common expression: *plimbă ursul* (its word for word translation would be "walk the bear!"), meaning "begone!" or "take a hike!."

2) The bear as the wild *alter ego* of the human / the bear as the mythical ancestor of the human / the bear as a pre-human evolutionary stage (Coman 1986, 174-176; Taloș 2001, 179). In another mythological dictionary published, however, after Ion D. Sîrbu's death, Ivan Evseev uses the expression "the zoomorphic twin of man"[20] (Evseev 1994, 476) when referring to the bear. Both in the frame-story and in the core-narrative, the folkloric connection that ontologically ties the bear and the human is taught, first by Lucian Rogoz to his French counterparts, second by professor Lupaș, a specialist in folkloric music, to the children protagonists, third by professor Cucu, a teacher of natural sciences, to her students: "But in our country, the bear, as a symbol and a legend, is considered a kind of ancestor.

[19] "Trei cumnaţi, morţi de beţi, erau rezemaţi de uriaşul stejar […] Buru simţi de îndată că aceşti trei gravi cumnaţi […] miroseau exact aşa cum îi plăcea lui. Se duse (copiilor le fu dat din nou să se îngrozească de ceea ce s-ar fi putut întâmpla), se duse legănat spre cei trei foarte veseli cumnaţi, îi mirosi şi-i linse prietenos. Aceştia erau atât de ameţiţi, încât se bucurau: cine ştie ce era în capul lor, ce nu era în capul lor? […] Credeau că e doar o mască, […] o glumă de bâlci. Voiau să-i dea să bea, ursul nu voia, lui îi ajungea să-i miroasă şi să le lingă feţele roşii şi transpirate."

[20] "geamănul zoomorfic al omului."

Ancêtre."[21] (Sîrbu 1988, 22); "I know the Romanian village, I have gathered folklore and old customs. To me, the bear is a holy animal. Yes. A kind of ancestor"[22] (144); "He is very similar to humans: this bear looks more akin to us than, say, a gorilla or a chimpanzee. Which, as you've just learned, would be the relatives of our Darwinian ancestors. The peasants of the mountains, in any case, consider him an ancestor."[23] (152). It is important to note the playful manner in which Ion D. Sîrbu creates his own narratives in the spirit of Romanian folk-mythology and serves them as authentic *lore*, instead of simply borrowing from the source material that Mihai Coman also used regarding the origin stories for bears and humans.

3) The woman-abducting bears and the legendary humans with bear parentage (Coman 1986, 175). A frequent occurrence in the epic tales, beliefs or fairy tales of the Romanians is the abduction of women by bears who have their own households but cannot master fire. Some heroes of the Romanian folklore are sons of bears or half-human, half-bear beings. In Ion D. Sîrbu's novel, this aspect is mentioned as well: "Women should beware of the bear's gaze, his embrace. The whole north of our Earth is full of kings, heroes and gods born of a bear who managed to marry a beautiful girl, a princess even ..."[24] (Sîrbu 1988, 23). Mihai Coman notes that the gesture has an ambiguous echo: "there is a feeling that his deed expresses a propinquity to the cultural space, a certain (natural) desire for reintegration into the neighboring and related world"[25] (Coman 1985, 175).

4) The apotropaic attributes of the bear (178-179):

> For us Romanians, who were once a people of slaves and serfs, Bear is a name of endearment. And healing. Young women, when asked what their husband is like, say proudly, blushing a little, 'He's a bear!' The magical power of this name passes through the diseased body and heals it.[26] (Sîrbu 1988, 23)

[21] "Dar la noi ursul, ca simbol și legendă, este considerat un fel de om-strămoș. *Ancêtre*."

[22] "Cunosc satul românesc, am adunat folclor și obiceiuri vechi. Pentru mine, ursul e un animal sfânt. Da. Un fel de moș-strămoș."

[23] "Seamănă foarte mult cu omul: mai mult seamănă acest urs cu noi, decât, să zicem, o gorilă sau un cimpanzeu. Care, doar ați învățat, ar fi rudele strămoșilor noștri pe linie darwinistă. Țăranii din munți, în orice caz, îl consideră un strămoș."

[24] "Femeile trebuie să se ferească de privirea ursului, de îmbrățișarea lui. Întregul nord al Terrei noastre e plin de regi, eroi și zei născuți dintr-un urs ce a reușit să ia în căsătorie o fată frumoasă, o prințesă chiar...."

[25] "există sentimentul că fapta sa exprimă o apropiere de spațiul culturii, o anumită dorință (firească) de reintegrare în lumea vecină și înrudită."

[26] "Pentru noi, românii, care am fost cândva un popor de robi și iobagi, Ursu e un nume de alint. Și de vindecare. Femeile tinere, întrebate cum le e bărbatul cu care s-au măritat, spun cu mândrie, roșind un pic : 'e un urs !' Dacă un copil se îmbolnăvește grav, maică-sa îl botează a doua oară și-i dă numele Ursu. Puterea magică a acestui nume trece prin trupul bolnav și îl vindecă."

The healing powers of the bear and his ability to detect and banish evil spirits, although awe-inspiring, relate to the novel in ambiguous ways. Those were precisely the attributes for which bears were captured, abused, domesticated. The apotropaic proprieties of the animal are mentioned in the discourse of the specialist Lucian Rogoz, but they are also in direct link to the saddest kind of bear in the novel. We encounter the wild bear, the captive bear, and the "domesticated" one, out of which the third kind is the most disheartening. Buru, though part of the second type, finds himself in a downward trajectory.

5) The dance and cult of the bear (Coman 1986, 178-180). Another tool Ion D. Sîrbu uses to illustrate a disillusioned worldview is the history of the practice that inspired the title of the novel. In customary thinking, the Bear Dancers brought with them an elemental power, from nature into culture, that the people in the households made use of. Mihai Coman argues that the original meaning fell into decay, the whole magical and ceremonial complex turning over time into a spectacle, or even worse, into a masquerade. Out of what once was a ritual of healing, only the clumsy moves of the domesticated, in pain bear, survive. That is why the moments of the novel when Buru starts to dance are never a laughing matter.

> It was obvious that the poor bear was dancing before them, just as he used to do in front of that wretched lying mirror. 'My God,' cried Silvia, 'look at him! Buru is dancing. He is dancing for us! To call us, to seduce us ... It's awful, I can't see him anymore, I can't ...[27] (Sîrbu 1988, 278-279)

Romanian literature knows another case in which the mythical values of the bear's dance undergo drastic changes and turn into a different, desacralized narrative at the hands of a ludic author. Andrei Oișteanu's interpretation of *Harap-Alb*'s first trial, obtaining the salad from the garden of the bear, is famous (although not flawless). According to Oișteanu, Ion Creangă's episode preserves the memory of a ritual of initiation common to peoples of tribal organization practicing a totemic religion. Therefore, the dance of the bear "is an initiatory dance, a ritual of agriculture and healing, in which the neophyte gestures for the first time what he will then repeat all his life, in the fields of his tribe"[28] (Oișteanu 2012, 48). In the case of Ion D. Sîrbu's novel, "the bear's dance comes as a consequence of his captive state. [...] Placed in front of a mirror (face to face with his own

[27] "Era evident că bietul urs dansa în faţa lor, la fel ca odinioară în faţa acelei nenorocite oglinzi mincinoase./- Dumnezeule, strigă Silvia, priviţi-l! Buru dansează. Dansează pentru noi! Ca să ne cheme, ca să ne înduplece... E groaznic, nu mai pot să-l văd, nu mai pot..."

[28] "Este un dans inițiatic, ritual agricol și curativ, în care neofitul produce pentru prima dată gesturi pe care le va repeta apoi toată viaţa, în grădinile şi pe ogoarele tribului."

theatricality), he will start dancing, but not instinctively"[29] (Wohl 2012, 164-165). By choosing this bear as his *alter-ego*, Ion D. Sîrbu exposes, in Eugen Wohl's words, "the author's posture as a *performer*"[30] (169).

6) The holidays of the bear (Coman 1986, 180-181; Taloș 2001, 179-180); As Lucian Rogoz explains to Leo Glaser, a Czech soldier in the German army and friend of the three children: "August the 1st, in our mountains, is the day of the bear said Lucian. We also have a wolf day, but that is sometime in the spring"[31] (Sîrbu 1988, 227). Besides August the 1st (*Macoveiul* in the Romanian customary calendar), Romanians also dedicated the day of February 2nd (*Stretenia*) to the bear. The symmetrical bear holidays are placed at the peak (and therefore also at the start of the decline) of the major seasons. The fact that in Ion D. Sîrbu's novel, the day in which the bear is offered freedom and the happiest day of the children's summer vacation is precisely the holiday of the bear is of no little importance and aesthetic value. Moreover, if we consider the year in which the action takes place, the fortunate holiday marks not only the triumph of the juvenile protagonists in their attempts to restore cosmic order, but the beginning of the Warsaw Uprising: "And behind all these people was his Majesty the forest. Which was silent, but shone cheerful and fresh in the rose light of this Sunday, August 1, 1944" (Sîrbu 1988, 270).

7) The bear and Zamolxis (Coman 1986, 180-181). In his attempt to strengthen the symbol of the Bear as the rightful ancestor and representative of the Romanians, Ion D. Sîrbu could not exclude from the novel the connection between the bear and the most important deity of the Geto-Dacians. Although there are similarities with Mihai Coman's text, in this particular aspect Ion D. Sîrbu chooses to literally instrumentalize the theory of another ethnologist:

> Zamolxis, their high priest, wore on his shoulders a 'nebrida', a bear-skin cloak. Some scholars even believe that 'Zalmo' means his skin or fur, and 'Olxis meant, in the Thracian language, bear. Zamolxis being the one who wears bear fur, being a bear himself...[32] (Sîrbu 1988, 144)

The origins of this theory can be traced back to Porphyry of Tyre (Evseev 1994, 476) However, the author chooses to ignore Mihai Coman's criticism of the

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[29] "dansul ursului vine ca o consecință a statului său de captiv. […] Pus în fața unei oglinzi (față în față cu propria *teatralitate*), el va începe să danseze, însă nu instinctiv."

[30] "postura de performer a autorului."

[31] "La întâi august, în munţii noştri, e ziua ursului, zise Lucian. Avem și o zi a lupilor, dar asta cade cândva în primăvară."

[32] "Zamolxis, marele lor preot, purta pe umeri o 'nebridă', o manta din piele de urs. Unii savanţi cred chiar că 'Zalmo' înseamnă piele sau. blană, iar 'Olxis' însemna, în limba tracă, urs. Zamolxis fiind cel ce poartă blană de urs, fiind el însuşi urs...."

etymological speculation and therefore prefers the interpretation of ethnologist Romulus Vulcănescu, which is, indeed, more literary potent, but scientifically unfounded. According to Vulcănescu,

> Zalmoxis was a Grand Pontiff of a religious congregation of the *Männerbund* type, the *bear brotherhood*, in which he undertook the mythological reform we know and after which he was proclaimed a god.[33] (Vulcănescu 1985, 502)

The resemblance in formulation is to be observed: *high priest* in the text of Sîrbu and *Grand Pontiff* in that of Vulcănescu. The same ethnologist offers a more detailed exposition of this theory in a previous study dedicated to Romanian traditional masks, in which the analysis of the bear mask occupies an important position (Vulcănescu 1970, 106-115 *passim*). Mihai Coman objects to that theory by pointing out that "the historical documents do not provide enough information to support with certainty the prolongation of a local totemic cult in the figure of the great Dacian god Zalmoxis"[34] (Coman 1986, 180). Perhaps the reason Sîrbu chooses to ignore that criticism lies in the literary strength of Romulus Vulcănescu's hypotheses in general. The latter's tendency for using "poetical thinking"[35] (Coman 2008, 315) in a scientific approach has been pointed out before.

8) The association between the bear and the rhythms of nature (Coman 1986, 180-182; Taloș 2001, 179-180). In the old religions the bear was the embodiment of the divinity of nature that dies and rises again (Evseev 1994, 476). In ancient mythologies the bear is a lunar animal, associated with the goddesses of nature. In the Romanian customary calendar, the days of the bear are placed symmetrically in crucial moments of the year, when, at its peak, the warm season, or the cold one respectively, starts to decline. Mihai Coman argues that the bear is therefore placed in the gallery of those deities of nature which, according to the logic of the myth, can determine the rhythms of the cosmos. Therefore, they also possess meteorological powers. In Ion D. Sîrbu's novel such an ancestral bear appears only once and is never mentioned again.

> From leaf to leaf, from ridge to ridge, like a mute signal of misfortune and alarm, the bad news reached the top, in the lair of the old bear, whom the whole nature of the Parâng Mountains called 'Muma'. She

[33] "Zalmoxis a fost un Mare Pontif a unei congregații religioase de tipul Männerbund-ului, confreria ursinilor, în cadrul căreia a întreprins reforma mitologică pe care o cunoaştem şi după roadele căreia a fost proclamat zeu."

[34] "Documentele istorice nu oferă suficiente informații pentru a susține cu certitudine prelungirea unui cult totemic local în figura marelui zeu dac Zalmoxis."

[35] "Gândirea poetică."

> listened and understood. She sighed, muttered. She did not weep - only humans have the gift of weeping outside: animals weep from within, like trees, like rocks. The mother went out into the night.[36] (Sîrbu 1988, 147)

The she-bear emerged from a mythical universe to acknowledge the cosmic implications of imprisoning sacred life. 'Muma' descended briefly into history where she no longer has the power of shaping the elements, like in the creation myths of Romanian folklore. Nonetheless, she participates in the lament of nature following the catastrophe and delivers a prophecy.

> The she-bear stretched her neck to the sky. She didn't pray. She was not asking for help. She was cursing. In her own way... "My son, my son, she said, 'everything in life pays off. Everything in life takes revenge. You lived like a bear, now you die like a bear. Among the innumerable stars in the sky, you will find peace and eternity."[37] (Sîrbu 1988, 147)

Therefore, in Ion D. Sîrbu's novel three types of bears can be identified based on the criterion of their freedom: the wild bear – Muma; the captive bear – Buru; the domesticated bear – Pierre and Jaques, and the tamed bear in the gipsy camp or the one in professor Lupaș' recollection of Lucian Blaga in Sibiu (Sîrbu 1988, 175-177). A step down on this scale means also a step down from sacredness into derision.

Conclusion

The many resemblances between Ion D. Sîrbu's discourse concerning bears and the 1986 volume *Romanian Traditional Mythology* place Mihai Coman alongside Alfred Brehm, whose work is mentioned in the novel (Sîrbu 1988, 163-164; 195), as the two main sources the author uses when "mimicking encyclopedism"[38] (Patraș 2003, 171) concerning the bear. Other sources, such as Romulus Vulcănescu's *Mitologie Română* [*Romanian Mythology*] (1985) and *Măștile Populare* [*Traditional Masks]* (1970) can be identified when observing Sîrbu's instrumentalization of the cultural sign of the bear. The understanding of Ion D. Sîrbu's literary universe does not have to follow the lines of biographical

[36] "Din frunză în frunză, de pe o creastă pe alta, precum un mut semnal de nenorocire şi alarmă, vestea cea rea ajunse sus, în vizuina bătrânei ursoaice, căreia întreaga fire din munţii Parângului îi spunea Muma. Ea ascultă şi înţelese. Oftă, mormăi. Nu plânse - numai oamenii au darul plânsului în afară : animalele plâng pe dinlăuntru, ca şi copacii, ca şi stâncile. Muma ieşi în noapte."

[37] "Ursoaica îşi întinse gâtul spre cer. Nu se ruga. Nu cerea ajutor. Blestema. În felul ei... „Fiul meu, fiul meu, zicea ea, totul în viaţă se plăteşte. Totul în viaţă se răzbună. Ai trăit ca un urs, mori acum ca un urs. Între nenumăratele stele de pe cer, îţi vei găsi şi tu liniştea şi veşnicia."

[38] "Enciclopedismul este totuși adesea mimat."

and ideological readings alone. After all, the author is the faithful follower of Lucian Blaga, from whom Ion D. Sîrbu inherits the respect and fascination with the Romanian folklore and mythology in general. Applying an ethnological lens on the works of Ion D. Sîrbu reveals an author whose understanding of the Romanian mythological reference is impressive. Similar approaches might be conducted on other characters of the novel (such as Gary the donkey), on the author's other novels or on Sîrbu's dramatic writings which abound in folkloric references.

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THE ANIMAL CAPITAL OF RECESSION IN DANIELLE MCLAUGHLIN'S *DINOSAURS ON OTHER PLANETS*

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ABSTRACT*. The Animal Capital of Recession in Danielle McLaughlin's* Dinosaurs on Other Planets*.* Following Nicole Shukin's notion of "animal capital" (2009, 3), which "simultaneously notates the semiotic currency of animal signs and the carnal traffic in animal substances" (7), this article investigates the capitalist interdependence between the cultural and material dimensions of animal life as represented across Danielle McLaughlin's short story collection *Dinosaurs on Other Planets*. The first section highlights potential theoretical connections between Shukin's notions of "rendering" as well as "animal's saving grace" (2018, 95) and Maurizio Lazzarato's conception of futurity under the "logic of debt" (2012, 25). The second section analyses the texts' depiction of the "contingency" that market life has upon animal life, such that the system of debt exacerbates cruelty toward humans and nonhumans alike, with animal bodies being "rendered" as food or artefacts (Shukin 2009, 20). The third section reveals how the "ambivalence of animal signs," meaning the "capacity of animal life to be taken both literally and figuratively" (Shukin 2009, 6), interacts with the characters' anxieties regarding the recession and economic migration.

***Keywords*:** *animal capital, rendering, animal's saving grace, debt, economic migration, post-Celtic Tiger Ireland, recession*

REZUMAT. *Capitalul Animal al Recesiunii în* Dinosaurs on Other Planets *de Danielle McLaughlin.* Plecând de la noțiunea formulată de Nicole Shukin drept "capital uman" (3), care "notează în mod simultan valuta semiotică a semnelor

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animale, cât şi traficul carnal de substanţe animale" (Shukin 2009, 7), acest articol investighează interdependenţa capitalistă dintre dimensiunile culturale şi materiale specifice vieţii animalelor în reprezentarea acestora pe parcursul volumului de povestiri *Dinosaurs on Other Planets* de Danielle McLaughlin. Prima secţiune evidenţiază potenţialele conexiuni teoretice dintre, pe de o parte, noţiunea de "rendering," un joc de cuvinte care denotă atât "randarea", cât şi "ecarisajul" (Shukin 2009, 7) şi "harul salvator al animalelor" (2018, 95) formulate de Shukin şi, pe de altă parte, concepţia lui Maurizio Lazzarato asupra temporaliţii viitorului sub "logica datoriei" (2012, 25). A doua secţiune analizează felul în care volumul reprezintă "contingenţa" prin care viaţa pieţei este legată de cea a animalelor, astfel încât sistemul de datorii exacerbează atât violenţa împotriva animalelor, cât şi cea împotriva oamenilor, corpurile animalelor fiind "rendered" în artefacte sau produse alimentare (Shukin 2009, 20). A treia secţiune evidenţiază modul în care "ambivalenţa semnelor animale," mai precis, "capacitatea vieţii animale de a fi interpretată atât literal, cât şi figurativ" (Shukin 2009, 6), interacţionează cu anxietăţile resimţite de către personaje în legătură cu recesiunea şi migraţia economică.

Cuvinte-cheie: *capital animal, rendering, harul salvator al animalelor, datorie, migrare economică, Irlanda Post-Tigrul Celtic, recesiune*

I. Introduction

Danielle McLaughlin's 2016 short story collection *Dinosaurs on Other Planets* is strikingly haunted by the impact of the 2008 global financial crisis, culminating in the metaphor of economic collapse as an asteroid hitting planet Earth in the story of the same title. In the wide array of Irish fiction dealing with the trauma of the country's Post-Celtic Tiger era, the volume stands out in its attention to the changing status of animals in the cultural imaginary as well as the material reality of the country's economy. This binary relation interferes with the characters' economic anxieties regarding a capitalistic system that shackles their future to debt, an affect which has been signalled by Eoin Flannery as being recurrent in Post-Celtic Tiger literature (829-830). If characters often seek emotional solace or meaning in the company of animals, these impulses are kneecapped by the violence in which the market logic exploits humans as well as nonhumans. Distorted perceptions and representations of animals even seep into the characters' view of impending emotional catastrophe, either due to the consequences of the recession or due to them being forgotten by a posterity destined for economic migration. In this sense, the volume also offers a subtle critique of mimetic representation itself.

To explore and reveal the intricate ways in which *Dinosaurs on Other Planets* develops these subversive narratives of recession, the article takes a cue from Nicole Shukin's concept of "animal capital," which aims to critique the West's "tangle of biopolitical relations within which the economic and symbolic capital of animal life can no longer be sorted into binary distinction" (Shukin 2009, 7). In her conception, "animal capital" is the product of "rendering," which denominates "both the mimetic act of making a copy, ... and the industrial boiling down and recycling of animal remains" (20). Shukin's theory also draws attention to the phenomenon whereby neoliberalism has invested symbolic currency in "animals' soulful powers of bonding or companionship, their immaterial or affective labour, and their optimistic ability to live 'despite' the ruins" (2018, 97). She labels this ideological development "the saving grace of animals," which is another concept that helps shed light on how the novel challenges the operations of mimesis. The article also relates these concepts to Maurizio Lazzarato's writing on the "logic of debt" (2012, 25), thus investigating how animal and human life, both being implicated in the processes of rendering, interact within the temporality of indebtedness.

II. Rendering's Future Logic

In venturing to develop a defence of animal liberation in contrast to Marxism's more anthropocentric tendencies, sociologist Ted Benton comes to valorise the acknowledgement of the "aesthetic, cognitive, normative, spiritual—in other words cultural—dimension to the way in which humans meet their physical needs" (1988, 17). In turn, by truly pondering the idiosyncrasies which come with human consumption, society can hope to "[avoid] the effacement of the manifold differences among nonhuman animals in their ways of satisfying their physical needs" (18). This is one of the main arguments which lead to Benton's conclusion that, even from an economic perspective, it is unethical for humans to view animals as being solely instrumental to anthropocentric ends (18). Since Benton's article, various authors have widened the scope of the critical consensus regarding the human consumption of animals.

One particularly insightful treatment of the subject can be found throughout the theoretical output of Nicole Shukin. Setting the preliminary remarks of her 2008 text *Animal Capital*, Shukin explains that "biopower" (in its Foucauldian conception) functions as per its ability to "hegemonize both the meaning and matter of life" (Shukin 2009, 20). It is this binary that sets the precedents for Shukin's notion of "animal capital," understood as "simultaneously sign and substance of market life" (12), as well as the concept of "rendering," which "indexes both economies of representation ... and resource economies trafficking in

animal remains" (21). In turn, Shukin finds it politically expedient for "the critic of animal capital" to unearth the interferences between "animal life" and "capital" (24). This is why she purposefully seeks to avoid romanticizing the otherness represented by animal affect (an error that Shukin claims Derrida and others have been guilty of) and she instead raises the question of the function that animal affect plays within capitalism (42). The present article contends that, in addition to the affective import extracted from animal life for semiotic, branding purposes, neoliberalism also has a way of instrumentalizing animal affect to suit the upholding of the debt system.

The theorist further contextualizes "rendering's modern logics" within Antonio Negri's notion of "tautological time": "What appears in the tautological time of real subsumption ... is a profound indifference between the time of capital's production and the surplus time of social life itself, or that life time left over after the so-called working day" (Shukin 2009, 17). From this point of view, Shukin goes on to argue that it is imperative to not give in to "the appeal of mimesis as alterity," and, via this opposition, "to reckon with the material history of mimesis as rendering" (59). Although Shukin asserts that rendering, in both its industrial and representational meanings, is but one example of "nature's subsumption," "an immanent function of capital," she also stresses the possibility of resistance, though with crucial attention to the inescapability of tautological time (83). Indeed, the machinations of rendering are liable to intensify further under the temporality of globalization, which, especially in the human-nonhuman dynamics of pandemics, leads to a particular porosity in the division of species that generates many types of animal capital (47). Relating Shukin's insight to Matthew Calarco's critique of the inherently performative attempts at carving out a space for animal liberation within liberal democracies, Cary Wolfe identifies the source underlying these phenomena to be "a matrix that, under conditions of globalization, increasingly takes as its political object planetary life itself," or "what we are now forced to call a newly expanded community of the living" (2012, 52). As it becomes clearer throughout this article, such a "matrix" (52) can be associated, via an acknowledgement of the workings upholding animal capital, with the economic migration of humans as well.

Shukin takes a more future-oriented view of animal capital with her notion of "animal's saving grace" in her chapter, "Capitalism," of *The Edinburgh Companion to Animal Studies*. Her cautious development of this notion springs from the observation that human agents of a capitalistic, extractivist, and environmentally damaging global capitalism are seeking to find a spiritual redemption and material repossession following the ecological disaster of neoliberalism precisely among the nonhuman animals they have exploited for so long (Shukin 2018, 95). What emerges in this context is the specific

transactionality of human-nonhuman affective relations in the context of neoliberalism, essentially becoming tasked with compensating, through their affective and mental prowess, for the results brought on by the planet-wide, all-subsuming logic of the free market (96). In contrast to the logic or rendering, animals' saving grace is contingent upon the "vitality of other species," which, unlike corporal matter, resists forceful capture (102). Here, "the agency of animals is in principle encouraged, cultivated, economised" and thus becomes fundamental to emerging forms of animal capital (110). Shukin acknowledges the potential pitfalls which come with theorizing "non-human involvement in and consent to neoliberal capitalism," but defends this framework by arguing that it can bring new light onto neoliberalism's ideology of rationalism, wherein the nonhuman is perceived as being organically intertwined with the human, and thus takes on a tacitly (and paradoxically) social dimension (101).

One economic concept that Shukin omits from her development of "animal capital" and "animal's saving grace" is that of debt. This paper investigates the potential theoretical avenues that may be opened via the hidden relations between the logic of debt, the logic of rendering, and the saving grace of animals. Seen through the lens of Maurizio Lazzarato's theory of the "indebted man," it may seem that the "closed loops of tautological time" (Shukin 2009, 83) also harbour a specific temporality of debt, while the grace through which nonhuman agents are supposed to save humanity might also bear the markings of a life outside the debtor-creditor relation and the illusory "consenting subjectivity" (2018, 101) of animals.

In Lazzarato's conception, "debt produces a specific 'morality'" whereby "the couple 'effort-reward' of the ideology of work is doubled by the morality of the promise (to honour one's debt) and the fault (of having entered into it)" (Lazzarato 2012, 33). Moreover, the notion of debt structures an apparatus through which "collective and individual subjectivities" (29) can be regulated. The meaning of "subjectivity" is, for Lazzarato, imbricated in the dynamics of economic relations (49). Accordingly, subjectivation also "allow[s] capitalism to bridge the gap between present and future" (46). The risk, the fundamental unexpectedness of futurity, must be neutralized, while the "system of debt" takes on the function of "anticipat[ing] and ward[ing] of every potential 'deviation' in the behaviour the debtor the future might hold" (45). Lazzarato paints a suffocating, but convincing image of what this temporality infers: "objectivizing time, possessing it in advance, means subordinating all possibility of choice and decision which the future holds to the reproduction of capitalist power relations" (46).

The relation between debt and futurity has not gone uncovered in literary theory, especially in the case of Irish studies. Eoin Flannery has already

written about the notion of "debt, guilt and form" in the context of "(Post-)Celtic Tiger Ireland," deeming them to be "germane to the recent economic, social and literary histories of the country" (829-830). In his theoretical backdrop to the analysis of Claire Kilroy's *The Devil I Know* and Dennis O'Driscoll's poem "The Celtic Tiger," he comments upon Nietzsche's work on the idea of debt, as he draws attention to how the philosopher identified a "key feature of the morality of indebtedness: the production of the memory of that debt," which is also a "future-memory" (Flannery 2020, 831). As he investigates how this view of futurity and debt might help illuminate "recent discourse on indebtedness and responsibility following the global economic crash" (831), Flannery makes an illustrative observation regarding Lazzarato's perspective on the individual temporality of indebtedness: the specific, private "temporal plane" of the indebted man is relegated to the "limits of the human life-span," which ends up being "burdened by the power relations extant in the world" (831).

How would animal life fit into this view? Certainly, animals' saving grace might also be a product of the tacit human longing for life outside debt, the possibility of hope despite an already predetermined future, as animals cannot take on debt. There might also be interferences between the guilt of the debtor and the guilt springing from the awareness of one's complicity in a system whose logic is genocidally contingent on the depletion of animal life. By focusing on the common need shared by humans and nonhumans alike in "satisfying their physical needs" (Benton 1988, 18), one could ask if the internalized "logic of debt" (Lazzarato 2012, 25) can be unlearned, or, in contrast, if the "consenting subjectivity" (Shukin 2018, 101) projected by neoliberal discourses upon animals could find its Achilles' heel precisely in the incomprehensibility that debt presents to nonhuman beings. Finally, in relating animal capital to indebtedness, the common source of rendering might be revealed to dwell within the indebted subjects themselves. The subject would have to face the possibility that their guilt, faults, and promises have been contingent upon the stuff of animal signs and animal matter.

If Flannery applied Lazzarato's work on the logic of debt to analyse narratives concerning the Ireland of the 1990s through the 2000s, the same theoretical framework can be revisited through the lens of the animal capital represented in Danielle McLaughlin's *Dinosaurs on Other Planets*. As Tom Tracey points out in his review of the volume, McLaughlin spikes her stories with "the material signs of recent recession and the last vestiges of the wealthy fallen from grace" (2016). He also notes the prevalence of animals throughout the collection, "as though their species were fugitives from another realm," and makes a comment that seems to resemble Shukin's understanding of the interdependence between the animal as sign and the animal as matter (Tracey

2016). This "linkage" between the human and nonhuman is further evidenced by the ambiguous referentiality behind McLaughlin's description of the natural world, with "things that might have been alive or might have been dead" (2015, 67) and "small dark shapes cut the air above the water: birds, perhaps, or bats" (95). The stories thus seem to purposely undercut the apparently metaphoric dimension of the animal deaths it depicts, as well as mimetic renderings of nature in general. Such a narrative treatment of the natural world does seem to offer a twist on what Flannery observes in Kilroy's *The Devil I Know* as a thematization of the "means through which we abstract and objectify the physical externalities of the non-human" (2020, 843). Therefore, if the symbolic functionality of animal representations is undermined by the material reality that links animal life to market life, these depictions might also convey a message regarding the interdependence between animal capital and the recession.

III.The Animal Capital of Debt

In *Dinosaurs on Other Planets*, McLaughlin depicts the economic, material realities which upend her characters' desire for some sort of meaningful shared affect on the part of animals. Nonetheless, if Shukin draws attention to neoliberalism's hope in the potential of animals to save civilization from global warming, the short story volume goes a step further in showing how the spatiality of wilderness often interacts with and subverts the temporality of debt. As Rob Kitchin, Rory Hearne, and Cian O'Callaghan explain in their study of Irish housing between 1993 and 2006, the effects of the "increased demand in housing" lead to:

> a construction boom, surge in house prices, a large increase in household and mortgage debt, bank indebtedness, over-zoning, urban sprawl, and long-distance commuting—each of which could be considered a crisis in its own right given its dramatic transformative effect and demands. (Kitchin, Hearne & O'Callaghan 2017, 273)

As such, the temporality of the commute, recession and debt all spill over into the natural spaces that the characters inhabit. In contrast, a decentring of tautological time begins with the skewering of any clear referentiality or mimesis supporting the literary descriptions of nonhuman creatures.

Among the stories flaunting animal imagery, "The Night of the Silver Fox" is most directly concerned with the issue of debt. In the wake of his mother's death, Gerard works at his older cousin Kavanagh's fish factory, despite having been "bright at school" at the time of the hire (McLaughlin 2015, 57). The

businessman's decision is not only of a protective nature, but also relates to debt, as Kavanagh is financially indebted to Gerard's father after the latter had given him money to repair the roof of the factory that had been damaged by heavy rains the previous year (61). At present, the fish manufacturer owes money to Gerard as well, since many of his clients have not been able to pay due to the recession, thus leaving him unable to ensure his workers their wages. Liddy, a mink farmer whom the two characters visit in order to get back Kavanagh's interest, is one of these clients, and the businessman is not open to any further negotiation.

Though foregrounding a surprising financial reality of mink-farming in the contemporary age, the text is also sure to imbue a prey-like vulnerability into Liddy's plea for understanding and further postponement of payment: "'We had the activists a while back,' he said. 'Ten minutes with a wire cutter and I'm down a thousand mink. ... Liddy shook his head and brought a hand to his own thin throat" (61). The nauseating metaphoric interplay between debt and animal cruelty seems to emphasize the very complicity that links the two phenomena. Such linkage is brought further into focus as Liddy's daughter, Rosie, saves the mink farm from trouble by offering a hereto unrelenting Kavanagh the possibility of sexual favours. The first echoes of sexual coercion at the hands of Kavanagh surface in the undertones of infancy colouring the girl's invitation for him to see the farm's most prized animals: "'You can't go yet. You haven't seen the silver foxes.' She was leaning out of the forklift, her shadow stretching across the yard. 'We brought them over from England last month. They're still only cubs'" (63). The fact that the animals are an imported product also relates to the volume's overarching theme of economic migration. In this case, Liddy has bought the farm in a desolate rural area, causing his wife to leave him and their daughter for the city. Throughout the story, the insidiously violent creditor-debtor dynamic is sedimented upon a referentially uncertain animal imagery, thus troubling the notion of mimetic representation itself. When Gerard notices "a faint odor of dead fish as he places his jacket upon the sofa" (60), it can be simultaneously evidence that Kavanagh's sexual coercion (with its transactional pretext) has been ongoing, as well as proof of the young man's unconscious identification with the animals of prey in whose rendering he is complicit.

As such, this olfactory image is tied to the economic migration and dislocation in which humans and nonhumans alike are involved. However, if the position of the creditor is associated with the fishery, the animal symbolism shrouding the creditors hints at a form of agency that nonetheless maintains a subversive agency – as he waits with Liddy for Rosie and Kavanagh to return, Gerard becomes increasingly aware all the while of the dreary transaction taking place, and turns his gaze to: "a stuffed brown mink. It was mounted on a

marble base on which was inscribed something Gerard could not read. The mink stood on its hind legs, teeth bared in a rigid grin, front legs clawing the air" (McLaughlin 2015, 64). The mocking, imperfect appearance of this artifact may be likened to what Shukin, referring to Mark Simpson's study on taxidermy, observes as "animal signs capable of protesting and competing with those metaphorically and materially rendered in service to cultures of capital" (Shukin 2009, 130). Animals may not escape the machinations of rendering, but they may escape their end-goals, just like debtors may, despite the tangible harm they suffer, escape the end-goals of the creditors.

When its allegiance to the logic of debt emerges, rendering also creates distrust both towards its agents and the animal symbols and/or animal products they sell. Despite being a creditor of Kavanagh's, Gerard has little power in relation to his employer, an agent in the rendering of nonhuman remains. In turn, the young worker supplants the subterfuge behind the meeting of the silver foxes with a consciously escapist vision of innocence: "He wondered if there were any silver foxes at all. He imagined the cubs in Kavanagh's rough hands and Kavanagh, awed and silent, turning them this way and that" (McLaughlin 2015, 65). Of course, not only does Kavanagh's act show how the logic of debt can open the creditor toward sexual predation, but it also illustrates how factors such as the age gap within the debtor-creditor dynamic – Gerard being fourteen and his employer being middle-aged – can make it so the debtor's simultaneous status as a creditor frees him from any real accountability towards to whom he owes money. If, as Shukin argues, neoliberalism tacitly presupposes a certain "consenting subjectivity" in the animals' interactions with capitalism, and coaxes them into a supposedly willing "agency" (2018, 101), it could be argued that such a "saving grace" is also required of Liddy from Rosie, as he willingly turns a blind eye to the sexual coercion in exchange of debt forgiveness, and of Kavanagh from Gerard, as he gambles on the boy's innocence to give him an avenue toward unpaid labour, debt, and sexual exploitation or downright abuse.

In "Along the Heron-Studded River," a bipolar, unemployed Cathy tries to find solace in avoiding taking her daughter Gracie to school, but also through a peculiar act of rewilding, which is narrated from her husband's perspective: "... Cathy had driven to the city and had returned with half a dozen koi, some of them bronze and tea coloured, others grey. He had watched her release them, dazed and startled, into the pond" (McLaughlin 2015, 42). The husband commutes to his workplace, as was the case with many Irish workers in the wake of the recession.

The text's spatial representation of wilderness thus encumbers upon a space that has been claimed by always already indebted humans. The married couple had bought the home while Cathy was still pregnant, and the enchantment

she experiences at her first sight of the natural landscape is punctured with an unsettling display of animal agency: "…white hills like a bridal gown, jewelled with frost. Small dark birds, feathers puffed against the cold, darted in and out of hedgerows" (44). This nonhuman mobility stands as an omen for the events to come, as what seemed to be a healthy reconnection with nature quickly offsets complete dysfunction and familial alienation, starting with the road between the house and husband's workplace, a piece of rural infrastructure that the city hall repairs at the start of each year, only for it devolve into a "dirt track" during wintertime (45). If tautological time subsumes any duration one might devote to family life, "Along the Heron-Studded River" suggests that the nonhuman world might not be an all too viable exit from unbridled capitalism, since "the river road was a portal between worlds: his home on one side, the city on the other, and in the middle a no-man's-land of space and time when his wife and daughter were beyond his grasp, unreachable" (45). This passage from urbanity into a domestic space under the threat of wilderness goes on to intensify the husband's protective gaze over his family. In this sense, he partakes in a subtle, psychological competition with his sister-in-law Martha and her possessive surveillance over Cathy and Gracie. Both of these gazes aim to protect the mother and daughter, and the husband's perspective leaves out certain details which might hint at the fact that he is not any less possessive than his sister-in-law.

Nonetheless, the husband does seem to face two added psychological challenges more deeply than Martha: firstly, the rural environment threatens his gaze in its visual (or rather, ocular) unpredictability; secondly, Cathy's obsessive attempts at protecting and purportedly liberating animals threaten her and their daughter's safety. At one point, the husband finds Cathy, her ankle bleeding from a cut, feeding a flock of sheep, with Gracie nearby. The scene is preceded by an eerie description of a natural landscape which initially seems to disturb mimetic depiction:

> The countryside at night was a different creature, the soft ground sucking at their shoes, the air thick with midges. As they got closer to the river, he noticed movement ahead, black, lumbering shapes at the edge of the trees. It was a herd of cattle, the white patches of their hides emerging like apparitions from the darkness." (McLaughlin 2015, 45)

The narrative choice to muddle the visibility of animals does not function merely as an attempt to imbue the story with an eco-Gothic atmosphere. This disturbance is rather a way of emphasizing the phenomenological gap between the self and the nonhuman, with effects in the physical as well as semiotic reality. This reading is only reinforced later on, as the father finds Cathy shooing away the

herons from the supposedly liberated koi, with Gracie holding a "dead, grey fish" (McLaughlin 2015, 51). The subsequent scene further illustrates how McLaughlin's treatment of material reality subverts the animals' potential metaphorical quality as signs:

> He wanted to say that it was winter, that the bird was only doing what it always did, what it had to do. That there had never been any hope for those unwitting koi, here in this desolate place where even the river fish struggled to survive. Cathy picked up the ax. "What are you doing?" he said. "We're going to keep the fish safe. We're going to build them a cage, like in the zoo. Right, Gracie?" (McLaughlin 2015, 52)

Cathy's fascination with koi fish as signs of innocence and herons as signs of watchful predators (a foil to her husband's and sister-in-law's gazes) is precisely what motivates her exercise in the protection and liberation of animals, misguided as it is. What she ends up doing is recreating the physical conditions of the pet shop, with the added danger of predatory herons. It is also a peculiar instance of temporal objectivization. In building the cage, Cathy would reduce the risk inherent in futurity, showing how the logic of debt is embedded in subjectivity and internalized by debtors and creditors alike. The moral indebtedness that Martha and the husband feel towards the wife and daughter is not very different from the moral indebtedness Cathy seems to feel towards animals. All three instances break down under the unreadability of alterity – whether it be human or nonhuman. Nonetheless, the domestic realm does seem to open the husband to the chance to protect. At the end of the story, as Gracie is pulling a table cloth with a crystal decanter about to fall and hit her, he intervenes: "But he was watching, as he was always watching, and he was there, just in time to catch it before it fell" (McLaughlin 2015, 97). In the instance of protection, the father is seemingly able to escape tautological time, even if for a few seconds.

"A Different Country" stages a similar struggle. The story opens with a tense relationship dynamic between two Dubliners, Sarah and Jonathan, whilst on a visit to his brother Aidan's house in a small town by the sea. While the former two had met at university while studying architecture, Aidan is a fisherman, and, along with his pregnant wife and chain-smoker Pauline, contribute to Sarah's feeling of unease regarding Jonathan's past and their hope for a long-term relationship. At one point, while the city-dwelling academic is charmed at the sight of a dog on the beach coming up to her with something in its mouth, she employs a language which subtly follows the discursive traits of debt: "'What's that you've got for me?" (McLaughlin 2015, 97). Quickly enough, she realises that the dog is carrying a crab he has nearly killed. Horrified at this

display of joyful violence, she tries to throw it to safety, but the dog simply returns with the prey. It is almost as if the dog owes Sarah a display of benevolent behaviour as saving grace. When she asks her boyfriend to throw it instead, her reasoning echoes the imagery of economic migration: "'It needs to go farther out'" (97). Although this event goes towards intensifying the disillusionment she already feels at the prospect of their relationship, the dreary material reality of the rural environment also comes to function a microcosm of the wider Ireland in the class struggles intensified by the recession.

The sense of a disastrous futurity seems to guide the story. Sarah's vision of Pauline as "a sea creature lured to dry land" (McLaughlin 2015, 103) is followed by the woman's confession that, since both her and Aidan's fathers and grandfathers were fishermen, she feels as if her baby (whom she is in the process of harming through her smoking), is almost genetically driven towards the same vocation: "I can feel him straining for the sea, the same as if he could see it or smell it. ... But it's a dirty business, fishing. Dirty and hard" (104). This correlation between vocation and ancestry makes sense within tautological time, as capitalism conquers every possible human temporality, mythologizing and naturalizing itself. Coupled with the recession, the linkage also opens the characters towards a fatalistic, and thus defensive posture towards nonhuman life. This dreary reality is made terrifyingly clear to Sarah later on when she goes to alert Johnny and Aidan that Pauline's waters have broken, only to discover that the men are in the process of culling seals, a controversial practice that has caused great debate in Ireland throughout the last decade, and was even considered for legalisation in 2020 by the Irish Government, before the proposal was rejected (Foxe 2020). In the story's symbolically charged climax, human and nonhuman posterity share the same sacrificial fate, and the totalizing workings of debt seem to inform the cullers' decisions (to kill the animals) as well as speech:

> "They've got brazen," he said, walking toward her across the sand. "They've been eating through the nets, destroying the catch." He held out a hand to help her up, but she didn't take it. (McLaughlin 2015, 106)

With the Irish Wildlife Trust arguing that overfishing is the real cause of a decrease in fish stock (*RTÉ* 2020), this ethical rationalization of the culling ironically reflects capitalism's own overextraction of resources – in the interspecies struggle over resources, fishermen can project unto animals their own feelings of guilt at the prospect of debt. However, Sarah also tried to stop the dog from eating a crab earlier on in the story. The contrast between the two situations illustrates the paradoxically symbiotic relationship between animal capital and

animals' saving grace: while subjectivity rationalizes human violence towards animals by stripping them of identity, it also tacitly projects morality upon animals, in such a way that they can be seen as individuals liable for punishment.

In the final scene, Sarah follows her drive to fulfil a certain moral indebtedness and raises a timber with the intention of putting one of the seals out of its misery. Once again, a disturbed referentiality distorts her gaze before the text leaves the reader guessing as to whether or not she kills the wounded animal. However, this time the skewered image is that of the complicit Jonathan, who "did not speak or call and ... appeared only in silhouette, his face featureless under the dark oilskin," while the previously invisible face of the seal is seen in all its suffering, with a "half-closed eyelid flicker[ing]" (McLaughlin 2015, 107). The horrific revelation of the common violence subsuming human life might motivate Sarah to curb the seal's suffering, and thus become both its saving grace and, essentially, another agent in the culling. The text suggests that the limits of human imagination still harbour a way of uncovering the interferences between the rendering of animals and a doomed futurity shared among humans and nonhumans.

What surfaces in this failure of animals' saving grace is the suggestion that noncompliance to the demands of the "the logic of debt" (Lazzarato 2012, 25) might be a more ethical alternative to the projection of one's own morality onto animals. Instead of projecting, one can instead acknowledge that animal affect and the intergenerational workings of debt do share at least one emotion, that is, fear. Therefore, even though its characters do not escape the claustrophobic conditions of animal capital and their detrimental impact upon posterity (as suggested by the imagery surrounding Pauline's pregnancy), the text does hint at a possible strategy in "the fight against the debt economy and above all against its 'morality' of guilt, which, in the end, is a morality of fear" (Lazzarato 2012, 164), imagining an ethics of responsibility that is not primarily driven by the threat of punishment, nor conditioned by the extraction of animal resources.

IV. Animal's Eschatological Grace and the 'Cavernous' Eyes of Mimesis'

The last two stories in the collection, "In The Act of Falling" and the eponymous "Dinosaurs on Other Planets," present a contrast between the adult characters' anxieties regarding recession as well as economic migration, and their children's fascination with dead animals and stories of apocalypse or extinction. While adults try to control the narrative, the younger characters are more apt in dealing with animals-as-signs, animals-as-physical-beings, and the interferences between the two. These stories convey the psychologically damning consequences that the recession had on the Irish population, a leading SilverCloud study showing that "57 per cent of people surveyed also said the

financial crisis has made their generation more pessimistic" (Gallagher 2018). In addition, the stories also speak to more ecological concerns. The latter aspect was not lost on the volume's reviewers. For instance, Tracey observes that "the quantity of dead or traumatised creatures signals a general environmental unease that speaks as much to the mood of anomie of Recession Ireland as it does to our growing concern with global climate change" (Tracey 2016). It might therefore be useful to investigate how the two stories filter their characters' views of financial or environmental catastrophes through the affective expectations they have of animals proper and animal signs alike.

"In the Act of Falling" depicts traces of past families whom the affective vitality of animals did not rescue from economic migration or precarity. This, at least, is what the protagonist gathers from the animal equipment left behind by past owners of her home. At first, she envisions their lives starting from the "skeleton of a pony trap, its metal spine rusting at the back of the shed, the stone hot-water jars" (McLaughlin 2015, 131). However, she soon comes to realize that "perhaps they were not to be known by what they left but by what they took, in which case she would never know them" (131). She reaches the same conclusion as she ponders the "beekeeping equipment" abandoned by what she assumes to be separate owners from the ones mentioned previously: "she'd taken this as evidence that the people who had lived here before were beekeepers, but perhaps it was better evidence that they were not; that they were, at best, failed beekeepers" (137). These spectral signs of animal life and its unsuccessful saving grace upon human life call to mind the shared vulnerability of humans and nonhumans under the effects of late Capitalism.

The protagonist's disillusionment with animals' capacity for affective restoration reverberates throughout her personal life. The story essentially revolves around her autistic son Finn's obsession with animal signs of the Christian Apocalypse, an interest he has picked up at school from a nun whose eyes are like "Angelina Jolie"'s (McLaughlin 2015, 133). Once again, the text alerts us to the cultural semiologic capital which interferes with both human and animal life. Finn is essentially drawn to the binary logic of saving grace with which religious discourse and imagery imbue animal signs: some will die when the heralds begin to emerge, but others will be saved. As such, the animal signs employed by the Church directly inform Finn's relation to the animals around him:

> Birds, it seemed, were the next great heralds of the apocalypse, and Finn had decided it was important to catch them in the act of falling. Before the birds, there had been two long weeks of insects: a meticulous recording of spiders, flies, and beetles, tallies of the dead entered each night in a blue-lined copybook. (McLaughlin 2015, 129)

In the context of the Great Recession, the symbolic weight behind the image of the "falling" birds' downward trajectory sets them apart from the other animals Finn had been obsessed with. This aspect is not lost on his mother, whose husband Bill, a recently unemployed stay-at-home dad, blames her for Finn's new obsession. She had told him that "in Stephen's Green, the ducks on one of the ponds had died" (McLaughlin 2015, 131). She herself was a witness at the site of the death scene, and decided to use it as an anecdote in order to alleviate a moment of deep alienation from her family and also try and enter the close interpersonal dynamic that her husband and son seem to harbour (131). In this instance, the dreary financial reality underscoring the protagonist's family life leads her to engage in the fascination with animal signs that the Church had set ablaze in her son's imagination.

Products of animal rendering surface throughout the protagonist's home life in ways that further alienate her from both her family and the nonhuman world. Inspecting Finn's eschatological drawings, she finds "complex, intricate diagrams, the margins scribbled with words like 'plague' and 'apocalypse' and little hand-drawn pictures of birds, small, fat-bellied things with disproportionately long legs and large feet" (McLaughlin 2015, 132). Her son, now a renderer of biblical apocalyptic animal signs, has internalized the emotions springing from her financial anxieties. This eschatological view of market life does seem to fall in line with Flannery's reading of Nietzsche and Lazzarato: "… the guilt of indebtedness precedes our births and outlives us after our deaths, and ... is structural to the formation of the modern subject" (2020, 831). The story presents us, in a sense, with a secularization of the Apocalypse that underscores the absurdity of the punishment suffered by indebted humans and their cohabiting animals.

Moreover, the overworked protagonist realises that her job simply won't allow her the time to give Finn the proper attention he deserves, and, weighed down by the vacated homes of her neighbourhood, a product of economic migration due to the recession, she dreams of flying to Dubai on vacation in a break from her directionless husband and the art books he voraciously reads. A certain dissonance also emerges between the protagonist and art itself, once again due to financial anxiety: when she hears Bill utter the words "the deep recession into space," she momentarily does not realize that he is speaking about paintings. These anxieties reach an intense sequence of "rendered" animals during a dinner scene:

> She saw then that Finn was sitting at the kitchen table, and that the thing he had on a plate in front of him, which at first glance she'd taken for a soft toy, was in fact a dead bird. .... "It might be diseased." "It is diseased," he said. "It's got plague."... Behind her, Bill was taking something from the oven. ... She watched as he peeled the foil cover from a roasting tin, and when the rush of steam dispersed, she saw that it was a chicken. (McLaughlin 2015, 135)

The unnervingly ambiguous referentiality underpinning the scene's animal capital unearths a contrast between the different fates of the chicken: for Finn, the valueless carcass gains priority over the commercially motivated semiotic rendering of chicken-as-toy and the culinary rendering of chicken-as-food. The affective resolution in this sequence of impressions, moving between illusion and epiphany, seems to resemble Shukin's concerns regarding mimesis, which, she claims, is "wholly immanent to [capitalism's] biopolitical workings" (2009, 58-9). This breakdown in the neoliberal logic of rendering directly nullifies the protagonist's faith in the saving grace of animals, as her vulnerability to be fired in a downsize or simply fired and replaced, is mirrored in the park's replacement of the dead ducks with new ones:

> They should have made her happy, but they didn't. ... There was trickery of a sort at work, a sleight of hand that suggested that the first ducks had never existed, and only she alone, in silent witness, knew better. (McLaughlin 2015, 137)

A certain affective connection between her and the dead animals further develops as she realises that the replacement, much like many instances of employee downsizing, goes unrecorded in the public consciousness: "Later, at her computer, she typed 'Stephen's Green ducks dead' into a search engine, but her inquiry yielded nothing of relevance" (McLaughlin 2015, 137). Though the ducks harbour value as an aesthetic and affective enhancement of the lake, the institutional negligence which lead to their death is either purposely hidden or does not promise to be of much interest among the reading public. The scene is an illustration of the murderous consequences springing from the extraction of animals' vitality for affective purposes. The nun's words to the protagonist in the final scene of the story become all the more resonant: "Consider the lilies of the field," she said, "how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (144). The epiphany that the protagonist is given way to, ironically, by the same nun who was a factor in Finn's obsession, does corroborate Flannery's assertion that "the past, in the form of the period of the Celtic Tiger itself, and the future, in terms of political and economic fall-out, as well as continued individual, personal indebtedness, cannot be disaggregated, either in practical or moral terms" (2020, 837). As such, for an escape from the logic of debt to be attainable, the protagonist must face both the memory of past recession as well as the cold work ethic of the past economic Boom. Nonetheless, a saving grace is unlikely to come from any ducks or biblical renderings of flowers, but rather from an inner confrontation with the capitalist ideology of labour and the tautological time subsuming the temporality of affect.

In "Dinosaurs on Other Planets," the final story of the novel, a similar juxtaposition between the two types of rendering is further complicated as their relation to the act of gazing itself emerges in the story's climactic moments. Here, too, dysfunctional family dynamics interfere with representations of rendering. Kate and Colman live in a rural area and are visited by their daughter Emer, her very young son Oisin, and her new boyfriend Pavel, a Polish immigrant. Tensions are high, not only due to the physical intimacy that Colman is unable to offer Kate, nor the fact that their daughter rarely visits, but also because of the worsening relationship issues between Emer and Pavel, who is the same age as her parents. When Colman takes Oisin hunting, they find an animal skull which the grandfather identifies as once belonging to a cow. Having reached home, Colman starts initiating Finn into the art of rendering by macerating the skull, and the boy is determined to see it as a "dinosaur skull" (McLaughlin 2015, 153). While the grandfather is disappointed, whispering to Kate that "the child doesn't know what meteorite is," Emer's boyfriend plays along: "'So it is,' Pavel said" (153). Colman brings Oisin a poster of the Milky Way with the dinosaur-killing Asteroid included, and the boy asks a question whose innocent poeticism sparks a brief, but metaphorically charged conversation on life beyond Earth:

> "So there could still be dinosaurs on other planets?"
> "No," Colman said, at exactly the same time Pavel said, "Very likely."
> The boy turned to Pavel. "Really?"
> "I don't see why not," Pavel said. "There are millions of other galaxies and billions of other planets. I bet there are lots of other dinosaurs. Maybe lots of other people, too."
> "Like aliens?" the boy said. "Yes, aliens, if you want to call them that," Pavel said, "although they might be very like us." (McLaughlin 2015, 155)

For Finn, the animal sign of the dinosaur skeleton has been superimposed onto the image of the cow skull being physically rendered from its flesh by Colman. For Pavel, the cultural sign of aliens reflects his own experience as an economic immigrant. Alien life, the dinosaurs, and the memories of ancestors, all seem to be impossible to represent mimetically in faraway places, and this resistance to anthropogenic rendering is what drives the affective impetus of the story. Kate herself is deeply troubled by the fact that Emer will leave with Finn to Australia, and the boy might end up forgetting her (McLaughlin 2015, 161). If the recession was associated with the Apocalypse in the previous story, here, the forgetting of older generations due to economic migration seems to be related to dinosaur extinction.

With Kate, the text explores a longing for ways of "seeing" beyond that of the gaze and the violent or semiologic forms of rendering it can engender.

Her contempt for Colman's act of maceration is evident: "She looked down at the skull, and at the debris that had floated free of it, and something about it, the emptiness, the lifelessness, appalled her, and suddenly she couldn't bear the idea of the boy's small hands touching it" (McLaughlin 2015, 157). It is the same "emptiness" and "lifelessness" (157) that mimetic artistic renderings of animal signs assume. In contrast to Colman's maceration of the skull, Kate's relationship with her cat is likely the only healthy human-animal relationship in the whole collection. Interestingly enough, this dynamic also surfaces in the moments of sexual tension between Emer and Pavel. At the very end of the novel, the cat's affective self-expression is strikingly vital, especially after the string of carcasses to which the volume has treated its readers: "The cat had been winding itself in and out around her legs, and now it made a quick foray into the room, came running out again, voicing small noises of complaint" (163). Responding to the cat's "complaint," Kate follows her to the kitchen. On the way there, she meets Pavel in a moment that dramatizes the very complications created by the gaze that mimetics try to whitewash, as Emer "was conscious, even in the semidarkness, of his eyes moving over the thin cotton of her nightdress" (163). The cat maintains its companionship in the ensuing scene of ethical rejection (163), then Emer leaves for the kitchen and finishes the maceration process, "wiping the rims of its eye sockets, the crevices of the jaws" once belonging to the cow, now rendered off. Staring at the skull, she finds that it "returned her gaze with empty, cavernous eyes" (163). Although one could read this image as symbolic of Kate's own mortality, or her affectionless marriage, the text draws attention to the process of rendering as well: "She tipped the bucket over, spilling the bleach onto the ground. For a second it lay upon the surface, before gradually seeping away until only a flotsam of dead insects speckled the stones" (164). Indeed, the scene captures the toxicity brought on by both the rendering of animal flesh and the rendering of the animal as image. The final image of the story echoes Colman's rational response to Finn's "dinosaur" inquiries. Instead of the poster, or the obscurity to which characters have to adjust their vision, the text turns to a naked-eyed vision of the constellations in their resistance to thorough rendering:

> Putting down the bucket, she gazed up at the night sky. There were stars, millions of them, the familiar constellations she had known since childhood. From this distance, they appeared cold and still and beautiful, but she had read somewhere that they were always moving, held together only by their own gravity. They were white-hot clouds of dust and gas, and the light, if you got close, would blind you. (McLaughlin 2015, 164)

From this perspective, the financial anxieties, economic migration, or reductive logic of rendering that have been plaguing the stories' characters seem to be the

products of something not much more natural than a bucket of bleach. "The outward-looking gaze of capital" (Shukin 2009, 69) may be resisted by looking beyond the rendered version of the exploited being and acknowledging its unrepresentable singularity.

V. Conclusion

The article has demonstrated that Danielle McLaughlin's *Dinosaurs on Other Planets* problematizes the practice of mimetic representation in relation to animal life within Ireland's rural society in the wake of the Great Recession. It has shown how debt interacts with animal signs both through the language employed by the characters as well as through their interactions with nonhuman animals and systems of rendering in both its meanings (semiotic and physical). Instances of failure in the "saving grace of animals" (Shukin 2018, 97) reveal the common fate of humans and nonhumans within neoliberalism and open the characters to a deeper understanding of the material macrostructures which influence their lives. Betraying the contingency that threatens their hopes during the aftermath of a recession, the intensified logic of rendering also informs the characters' views of futurity, either leading to eschatologically pessimistic financial anxieties, or frustrations over the effects that economic migration has upon their family lives. *Dinosaurs on Other Planets* suggests that a complicity between mimesis and exploitation hides behind these harsh realities, but that hope of resistance might lie in gazing beyond the product of rendering, and toward that which cannot be rendered.

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CAN THE NON-HUMAN SUBALTERN SPEAK? ADDRESSING INJUSTICE THROUGH PARAKEETS, PENGUINS AND BLUE MACAWS

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ABSTRACT. ***Can the Non-Human Subaltern Speak? Addressing Injustice through Parakeets, Penguins and Blue Macaws.*** Anthropomorphic animals have formed a staple part of the human imagination across space and time, creating a liminal space that offers scope for eco-critical narratives in which anthropomorphic animals offer a counter-gaze to human activities and environmental injustice. The purpose of this study is to look at the characters of *Rio*, *Happy Feet*, and *Delhi Safari* to highlight how talking animals in each of the three animated films voice environmental concerns, and to delineate linguistic factors which regulate the dynamics of power, agency, and care. The article looks at *Delhi Safari*, which centres on the non-humans' use of the human tongue to voice their woes before human authority. At the same time, it aims to delineate human attempts to talk to birds in *Rio* and delve into the very idea of endangered animals being companion species. It seeks to shift from linguistic modes of communication to analyse the narrative and meta-narrative messages conveyed through the dancing penguins of *Happy Feet*. Finally, the article hopes to address the use and misuse of care by both humans and non-humans, look at the implicit anthropocentrism in such a depiction, and consider the possibility of a truly post-human form of environmental ethics.

Keywords: *eco-criticism, linguistic, environmental, post-humanism, post-anthropocentrism, non-human, critical animal studies, semiotic, contact zone*

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REZUMAT. ***Poate vorbi subalternul non-uman? Despre nedreptate cu ajutorul papagalilor, pinguinilor și macau-ilor albaștri.*** Animalele antropomorfe fac parte din imaginarul uman de pretutindeni și din toate timpurile, formând un spațiu liminal ce oferă amplitudine narațiunilor eco-critice în care animalele antropomorfe propun o contra-privire asupra activităților umane și asupra nedreptății în mediul înconjurător. Scopul studiului de față este să analizeze personajele din *Rio, Happy feet* și *Delhi Safari*, pentru a evidenția modul în care animalele vorbitoare din cele trei filme de animație exprimă preocupări în privința mediului, și pentru a contura factorii lingvistici care reglementează dinamica relațiilor de putere, acțiune, și grijă. Articolul discută filmul *Delhi Safari*, care se concentrează asupra vorbirii umane a personajelor non-umane pentru a da glas suferințelor lor în fața autorității umane. În același timp, lucrarea dorește să circumscrie încercările umane de a vorbi cu păsările di *Rio* și să ofere o incursiune în însăși ideea de animale aflate în pericol ca fiind specii de companie. De asemenea, trece de la modurile de comunicare lingvistică la a analiza mesajele narative și meta-narative transmise de pinguinii dansatori din *Happy Feet*. În fine, articolul dorește să discute uzul și abuzul grijii, atât de către oameni cât și de către non-umani, să ofere o perspectivă asupra antropocentrismului implicit într-o astfel de prezentare, și să ia în considerare posibilitatea unei forme cu adevărat post-umane de etică a mediului.

Cuvinte-cheie: *eco-critică, postumanism lingvistic și de mediu, post-antropocentrism, non-uman, studii critice despre animale, semiotică, zonă de contact*

The long tradition of Eurocentric anthropo-denial has manifested in different ways across cultures: some of the most prominent examples can be found in Aristotle's hierarchy of species in his *scala naturae*, Levinas' location of animals at a secondary position to that of human beings due to their lacking a "face" (Wolfe 2003, 1-58), and Alphonso Lingis' belief that non-human animals move without a motivated end in mind (Wolfe 2003, 165-182). These ideas reflect and enforce essentialist beliefs in the inherent inferiority of non-human creatures to humans. Very few texts over the centuries have allowed the non-human subaltern to speak – to extrapolate and echo Gayatri Chakroborty Spivak's words (Spivak 2003, 42-58) – or even considered them capable of speech. The oppression of non-human animals emerges as a natural consequence of the silent or invisible roles which they occupy as the marginalized 'Other'. Perpetrated through continual denial of cognitive or linguistic agency, prominent historiographical roles or even an acknowledgement of their suffering and victimhood, these beings have often been labelled as complex machines instead of sentient beings capable of communication.

This possibility of animals being sentient has "suddenly become, in the last 30 years, a topic of great interest to biologists" (Duncan 2006, 11-19) and this is evident in the different ways in which linguistics, cognitive ethology, critical animal studies and biology defy traditionally anthropogenic ways of perceiving the world. Rather than regard animals as a separate and composite category as opposed to the human – a notion viewed as a first-degree crime against non-human creatures by Derrida (2010, 208-210) – scholarship is increasingly focussing on different biosocial attributes of non-human creatures like the apes' theory of mind, the cetaceans' communicative abilities, and the elephants' capacity for empathy. This article does not consider the possession of sentience as a prerequisite for acknowledging non-human suffering but hopes to explore how even such scientific strides fail to protect non-human animals from various instances of cruelty and abuse in contemporary times. Often, such violence can be traced to anthropocentric biases which masquerade under, misuse, or attempt to fill in the gaps left by empirical evidence regarding cognitive ethology and inter-species communication. Critical Animal Studies, rooted partly in Peter Singer's idea of animal liberation, attempts to rectify such a bias. By likening animal activism to other social rights movements, Singer remarks:

> Racists violate the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of the members of their race when there is a clash between their interests and the interests of those of another race. Sexists violate the principle of equality by favouring the interests of their own sex. Similarly, speciesists allow the interests of their species to override the greater interests of members of their own species. The pattern is identical in each case. (Singer 2001, 9)

The development of Human-Animal Studies saw the emergence of interdisciplinary works like *Animals and Agency* (2009); *Speaking of Animals* (2009); *Anthropocentrism* (2011); *Animals and War* (2013); *Meat Culture* (2017) and *Animals, Anthropomorphism and Mediated Encounters* (2020). These texts offered insight into the various cultural and bio-social entanglements within which humans and non-humans are immersed, to critique the vastly unequal power differentials and consequent oppression of non-humans by human actions. Ignorance of the marginalized other's woes, and the injustice that it consequently leads to, may be corrected by a post-human counter-gaze to anthropocentrism, to offer a safe space for marginalized human beings and non-humans to have their voices heard (Ferrando 2021, 187). These minorities – by no means a homogeneous category – can represent themselves before the dominant culture to enable shifts in how the latter perceives them through historical, fictionalized, speculative or allegorical depictions of their struggles. However,

the task is made doubly difficult here: even if we want to, how do we understand and/or represent what the non-humans feel?

> And how to speak on behalf of someone who was totally deprived of causative power, or, in other words, agency; how the age of human posttraumatic events brings the idea of other victims that exist in the nonanthropocentrically understood history? (Barcz 2017, 33).

To this paradox of not-knowing, Paula Arcari suggests an alternative, of using "a degree of imagination to consider the alternate, non-materialised meanings they might attach to themselves and the practices into which they are integrated with little to no possibility of refusal" (2019, 71). This paper hopes to show how such imaginative measures of conceiving the non-human subaltern may be manifested through fictional spaces.

Using fiction to envision the non-human subaltern

Fiction attempts to negotiate the problem of representation, exemplified by the massive success of Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* in advocating for the rights of horses in England (Małecki et. al 2020, 1). Paradoxically, the horses' silence and inability to communicate their woes to their masters achieve a form of meta-narrative significance, moving readers with poignant details of Beauty's mistreatment and Ginger's death. This animal's eye view "compels the human reader into a close emotional bond with the animal as it relates the story of its difficult life" (Ratelle 2015, 10). Such animal autobiographies become increasingly relevant in the Anthropocene to highlight through fictional media, a 'nature-culture' (Haraway 2016, 125), where slaughterhouses engage in consistent anthropo-denial, where bullfighting has not yet been abolished (Saldanha 2018), and where the taste for live food is fetishized (Lee 2012).

The rise of cinema and especially animated films ensures a more efficient adoption of the animal's eye, such that the very angles and ways of looking afforded on screen become ways of manifesting (or countering) anthropocentric gaze. The effectiveness of animation, when applied to the narratives of the non-human are summarized effectively by Paul Wells:

> Though, by addressing the specificity of the language of animation, it is possible to evaluate its enunciative distinctiveness in the address of animal stories… it is possible to view animation as an approach that inevitably facilitates a representational difference, and that intrinsically interrogates orthodox positions, embedded ideology, and epistemological certainty per se. Knowledge of and about apparently specific creatures or objects or even human figures is challenged and potentially redefined. (Wells 2009, 4-5)

Animation superimposes humanized faces, dialects, languages, emotions and postures on non-human creatures, enabling human beings to empathize with the fictional plight of homeless animals in *Delhi Safari*, endangered blue macaws in *Rio,* and penguins combating depleted food sources and plastic pollution in *Happy Feet*. These narratives with anthropomorphised animals become increasingly important in the light of large-scale contemporary extinctions (Kaufman 2021).

These non-humans (both the real creatures in the wild and fictional representatives) become the epitome of subalternity who are denied power and voice. The intersectionality of animal studies and post-colonial literature may offer a positive solution to such injustice. Texts like *The Postcolonial Animal*, *Postcolonial Animalities*, *Reading the Animal in the Literature of the British Raj*, *Multispecies Modernity: Disorderly Life in Postcolonial Literature* and *Social Practices and Dynamic Non-humans* attempt to negotiate with this very idea – often to facilitate the entry of non-humans into emancipatory frameworks which had been highly anthropogenic.

This article seeks to envision how the characters of *Delhi Safari*, *Rio* and *Happy Feet* become oppressed subalterns, often living through experiences of colonial trauma brought on by anthropocentrism. The human/ non-human interactions create contact zones of conflict and consequent resolution, as the characters thwart humanistic designs to conquer their lands (*Delhi Safari*), bodies (*Rio*), and resources (*Happy Feet*) by envisioning a strong counter-gaze against their tormentors. Little scholarship exists on this non-human counter-gaze in *Happy Feet* and *Rio*, and almost none on *Delhi Safari*. This article hopes to rectify the same by delving into their common ecological motives through a post-anthropocentric lens.

It explores how such a counter-gaze manifests itself through varied communicative means – not merely by being limited to verbal speech, but also by encompassing semiotic, affective and non-expert means of communication among characters in multi-species assemblages. As such, the characters' desires to communicate meta-narratively direct attention to the plight of actual blue macaws, penguins, and other wild animals. Finally, this article hopes to show how human beings in these films are both antagonistic and benevolent, with the latter characterised by their desire to make 'oddkin' (Haraway 2016, 26) with non-human animals. The films' depiction of their story exposes the anthropocentrism present in all human languages, and even how we conceive of language, communication, and perception.

Talking to the oppressors: *Delhi Safari*

The film adopts a strong meta-narrative counter-gaze against anthropo-denial in the very first scene when the leopard cub Yuvraj (Hindi for 'prince') remarks:

> *Yeh jungle hamara ghar hain... mein apne papa ko kho chuka hu. Apne ghaar ko nahi kho sakta.* (Advani 2012)

A rough translation of the above lines conveys the young cub's woes: "This jungle is our home… I have lost my father. I cannot lose my home too." These words highlight the very theme of the film. Due to human attempts to deforest and colonize this jungle of Mumbai, Yuvraj had lost his father ('*papa*') Sultan, while he and the rest of the animals are about to lose their home ('*ghaar*'). The desperate animals are spurred on to find a feasible solution to their problems – which takes the form of a pampered pet parakeet named Alex. Due to his ability to speak in the human tongue, the animals kidnap Alex from his posh human habitation and convince him to carry their collective voice to the government. The tone of the film is strongly ecological, and often borders on the didactic, evident in the belief of Sultan's wife Begum: "*Maarne wale se bachane wale baraa hota hain*" (Advani 2012).

Loosely translated, the aforementioned statement implies that one who chooses to save their fellow beings, instead of killing them, becomes the bigger person. Such didacticism, put in the mouth of a predator whose life depends on hunting prey, serves to anthropomorphise the animal in question. Indeed, all the characters are humanized to a certain degree, as some of the central characters in the film include a gun-toting monkey, a pigeon with glasses, and a bear in a cap. The film situates these characters, not as actual animals, but attempts to capture the anthrozoological and cultural gaze on non-humans to frame them in a virtual space for pursuing eco-critical discourse. The use of such anthropomorphic animals in media has often been attacked for undermining the very message it tries to convey since they create false notions regarding non-human existences in impressionable minds (Hui 2022). However, such a stance can be countered with the very idea of speculative children's media: if children can consume and learn from superhero-centric media while recognizing the fictional nature of their existence, why can't they do so with non-human animals?

Several forms of media do use anthropomorphism and play into the anthropocentric ways of gazing at nature and non-human animals. However, is this enough evidence to dismiss anthropomorphism as an evil that we would do best without? Rather, realistic narratives with repetitive plots involving the search for food or mates may be deemed tedious, and seem only to view the world of the non-human as one driven by basic biological needs, inhabited by beings who lack in familial ties or desires for pleasure, and ultimately to tie back into anthropogenic ways of divesting animals of complexity. The use of anthropomorphism in *Delhi Safari* assists rather than deters the movie from accomplishing its aim, by not ridding the animals of alterity, but enabling us to relate to them despite vast biosocial differences. These non-human subalterns

can communicate with us meta-narratively, through the use of cinematic devices such as close-ups of the eyes with poignantly human expressions as the leopards flee the hunters, the palpable fear among the creatures as they watch the bulldozers, the hunched posture of the stammering tiger who laments the loss of his species, and so on.

The only non-human creature who is depicted as more human than animal, and consciously so, is Alex. He speaks fluent English and his interactions with the militant monkey Bajrangi (whom he calls a "backward *bandaar*") parodies the prototypical relationship of a colonizing Westerner and a native soldier. Alex serves as the epitome of the modernized man in a postcolonial India. This assumes special relevance in light of the film's portrayal of large scale deforestation and displacement of native inhabitants, which seems to re-enact the anthropocentric narrative of colonial expansion: Alex believes that he is no less than a human, evident in his use of the oppressors' language, accent, and diction. His attempts to integrate into the human beings' culture, however, are partly successful. He calls kidnapping a crime while failing to realize that the law would not consider a parrot like him a victim of kidnapping. From his privileged position as a pampered companion animal, Alex is unable to comprehend the plight of his fellow creatures in the wild, evident in his exchange with Bagga the bear:

> Bagga: You are one of us. Won't you help?
> Alex: Take a chill pill dude. This jungle is your home. I checked out of this place a long time ago. (Advani 2012)

A strong 'Self' and 'Other' dynamic is set up here, which plays out throughout the film, till Alex comes to realize a shared sense of community with his fellow non-human creatures. His initial refusal to listen to the pleas of his fellow creatures is born of a sense of mutual unintelligibility, despite sharing a linguistic commonality – a paradox that Alastair Pennycook talks about while attempting to dismantle humanistic notions of language and rationality.

Pennycook looks at the premise of linguistic thought as the model of "mutual understanding" – a "passing of encoded messages back and forth from one head to another, and doing so with a speech community with agreed norms for language use and communication" (Pennycook 2018, 92) – and seeks to destabilize it through an extension of the Lockean philosophy that words may not hold the same meaning for the speaker as they do for the one being spoken to. As such, the default nature of semiotic systems is the mutual incomprehensibility of signifiers, which is evident in the animals' continuous utterance of desperate pleas entwined with grief and fear. However, when these words reach Alex, they are divested of their meaning and emotional weight and become mere irritants. Yuvraj's insistence that he can see and speak to the spirit of his father is

dismissed as a sign of naivety, leading to the adult animals' dismissal of his concerns and emotions. This in turn leads to the formation of a gap in understanding, which is rectified at the lowest point of their journey. Their belief in Sultan's presence leads to the latter's spectral appearance before them, providing them with hope for the final leg of their journey.

This mutual unintelligibility characterizes the relationship between Alex and Bajrangi, who get off on the wrong foot with each other after the former is kidnapped by the latter. Bajrangi wants to fight the human beings and oust them from his territory and scoffs at the prospect of looking for pacifist solutions. Alex simply hopes to return to his comfortable "AC" home. As such, neither of them wants to bridge this communicative gap, despite their seeming overlap in interests. Despite Begum's insistence that the mission will fail if they keep fighting with each other, the two continue their attempts to inflict physical harm on each other. It is only at the climactic end of a thrilling montage, when the characters are stuck on a hurtling mine cart, that this conflict is finally resolved – despite Alex's insistence to leave him and save himself, Bajrangi turns back for the parrot. In the end, they both escape and apologize to each other profusely, with Alex realizing that in his anger at having stolen from his human beings' house, he has failed to realize that other human beings were stealing the wild spaces where the free-roaming fauna dwell (Advani 2012).

This very scene highlights that a default sense of mutual unintelligibility is not overcome through one common tongue but through shared experiences and mutual care. The group's run-in with a tiger, who narrates the sad history of his endangered species, strengthens their resolve – Alex realizes that their mission transcends a simple desire to simply save their jungle, to encompass the voice of all non-human animals which live their daily lives fearfully (Advani 2012). Alex is further reminded of his animality when he and his friends are stoned on the streets of Delhi, realizing that despite his former status as a pampered pet, he is no less a voiceless subaltern under the human gaze in an urban space. The animals cower under the gaze of their assailants, who, engaged in anthropo-denial, are unable to locate the counter-gaze as borne of intelligence and pain, deeming them as malevolent deterrents to morning traffic and/or unintentional natures in a planned metropolis. This counter-gaze leads Alex to pose a narrative and meta-narrative question before the Prime Minister of India and the news media, to strike an empathetic chord – how would human beings feel if their positions were reversed, and the non-humans attempted to rob them of their homes and their families?

To necessitate the formulation of such a counter-gaze, Shefali Rajamannar raises the risky proposition – can the subaltern roar? (Rajamannar 2015, 1-16) Sultan does roar, literally, at the beginning of the film, when he is chased by

gunmen – but, hopelessly outmatched and scared out of his wits, is unable to truly roar or speak in a meaningful manner before he is shot. Alex highlights the consequent trauma of Sultan's son Yuvraj, that had spurred him to gather allies and visit Delhi; in doing so, Alex blames the humans before him for this young cub's hapless condition. Alex, as such, transcends his state as the voiceless subaltern to engage in dialogue with the oppressors – an exercise of power that Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak termed to be a transaction between the oppressed and the oppressor. Such transaction exists, not only between the non-humans and humans in-universe but has meta-narrative dimensions, especially in the context of large-scale deforestation (Kumari et al. 2020, 1-18) and species extinctions (Ani 2019) in India.

Notwithstanding the dialogue (like Sultan's desire to make a "man" out of his cub) which may have been a plot to generate humour that appeals to human audiences, and several anthropomorphic representations (bees in military garb, Gujarati flamingos), the film defies Cartesian dualisms of hierarchy to envision a common space for human/non-human cohabitation. Its optimistic attempts to garner empathy for animal rights are envisioned through the cathartic passing of a bill at the end of the movie – but an essential fallacy remains. Alex's words can stir people narratively (the crowd cheer and news personnel reiterate his words), semi-meta-narratively (the news, reiterated by the personnel is broadcast throughout the nation, leading the people in-universe to acknowledge their worries) and meta-narratively. The film earned international acclaim, and its environmental message was lauded by PETA (Michelle 2013).

However, the very notion of language is imbibed with anthropocentric exceptionalism. Alex still needs to speak in the human tongue to accomplish his goals. The film regards his temporary inability to speak as a major setback, thereby enacting the anthropocentric fantasy of achieving linguistic commonality to understand the minds of non-humans. *Rio*, a film that might have partly inspired *Delhi Safari*, partially rectifies this dogma.

Non-verbal bonds with companion species: *Rio*

A memorable sequence of *Delhi Safari* is its establishment of contact zones, envisioned through the transformation of ecologically sustainable regions into urban spaces and wastelands as the musical track "*Dhadak dhadak*" plays in the background. Done to exhibit the extent of anthropocentric designs on the landscape, such contact zones are scattered throughout the film of *Rio* with a similar intent. Contact zones, to borrow Donna Haraway's words, signify how subjects are constituted through their mutual inter-relations, co-presence, interlocking practices and understandings, often within radically asymmetrical

power dynamics and hierarchies (Haraway 2016, 33). As such, a contact zone is often a region of conflict and is envisioned in the very first scene of the film where an extravagant music-and-dance sequence by the native avian fauna of Brazil is jarringly interrupted by poaching activities. Such a disruption causes the protagonist, a Spix macaw hatchling named Blue, to fall from his home in the tree, before he is captured, shipped off illegally, and, over a sequence of events, has his crate knocked out of the car in the snowy terrain of Minnesota. A young, human girl named Linda finds and adopts Blue, and the two grow up together.

The storyline takes place several years later after Blue has grown into an adult macaw that brushes his beak with toothpaste, uses toy cars to travel, and drinks hot chocolate. The film makes light humour of Blue's forced anthropomorphism through the characters around him, who deem his actions to be unnatural. However, that is hardly the stance that the film itself takes, as it instead celebrates his relationship with Linda. Living several thousand kilometres away from his natural habitat, their place of cohabitation is a contact zone of sustenance and harmony, an occurrence rarely seen elsewhere in the film. Most, if not all of the other contact zones established in the film are located near Blue's original habitat and are characterised (if only initially) by misunderstanding, conflict, and clash of opposing interests of actions.

Such conflict is not always intentional and is often even played for laughs, as seen in Tulio's failed attempts to communicate with Blue after his arrival. A renowned ornithologist who deems his speciality to be in human/avian communication, Tulio's efforts to communicate impress Linda but do not have their desired effect, as can be inferred from the short exchange below:

> Linda: Wow, you are actually communicating.
> Tulio: Yes, yes, I introduced myself and shook my tail feathers, counter-clockwise, thus deferring to his dominance.
> Blue: I did not get that at all. (Saldanha 2011)

The two forms of expert and non-expert knowledge are juxtaposed in the interactions of Tulio and Linda with their birds. Linda regards Blue as a "companion", to borrow Blue's own words, and their bond is one of co-dependability (Shreyansh 2020, 658-662). Linda is devastated after having lost Blue; despite her lack of a degree, she can understand his needs far better than Tulio can. This is evident in a hilarious scene where, despite Linda's insistence on Blue's inability to fly; Tulio throws him into the air by announcing that their "instincts always take over" (Saldanha 2011) – a gesture that leads to failure.

The difference between the approaches adopted by Linda and Tulio may be explained in terms of Paula Arcari's words:

> I therefore suggest, rather contentiously, that efforts to better understand the minds of other species in this way, however well-intentioned, are ultimately human-centric… animals would fare better if we relinquished the desire to know and understand them better, which itself can be read as another aspect of the unlimited accessibility of their lives to which humans feel entitled. We can observe when they appear well, sick, happy, afraid, anxious, and so on... Anything more, for me, raises alerts as to the human intentions behind it. (2019, 73)

The film itself does not question Tulio's intentions, and nor does it downplay his knowledge and expertise in bridging inter-species gaps (evident in the manner in which the birds at the rescue centre take an instant liking to him). Rather, the scene stresses how non-expert and affective forms of knowledge can be equally important to empirical knowledge systems while breaching communicative barriers.

Furthermore, despite his biophilic benevolence, Tulio regards them from an objective distance. Blue and Jewel are, to him, the last two remaining Spix macaws, who must be brought together to mate, so that the continuance of their species is ensured. When the birds are kidnapped, he is shaken but arguably less so by the absence of these individual birds, and more so by the absence of viable progenitors of their race. His expert knowledge fails to account for the unique differences among these birds, as he unknowing homogenises the non-human subalterns and engages in an anthropo-denial of their individuality. In doing so, he unknowingly leads to the formation of different contact zones of mutual unintelligibility, where conflicts arise and escalate due to gaps in communication, notwithstanding the presence or absence of linguistic commonality.

Enter Fernando, the orphan child who kidnaps Blue and Jewel from their enclosure, to bring them to Marcel and his gang of smugglers. The visible regret on Fernando's face, his words to Blue and Jewel ("Sorry guys; nothing personal"), his attempts to redeem himself by helping Linda and Tulio find the bird and his final outburst when accused of betrayal ("I didn't want to hurt anybody. I just needed the money") bring him out as just another inhabitant of this contact zone of conflict (Saldanha 2011). From their privileged positions of comparative wealth, neither the smugglers nor the ones invested in animal welfare can understand the socio-economic reasons which drive his actions, with the smugglers even going so far as to capitalize on it. Fernando, in some sense, is an orphan like Blue, but is at the same time deemed to be even less of a human. While the latter is rescued and enjoys human privileges in a well-to-do home, the latter has no one to look out for him. This difference brings out the very marker of humanity as one of fluidity rather than fixity, leading to the critique of humanism through a post-anthropocentric and post-linguistic lens (Ferrando 2021, 80).

This critique is evident in the very interactions between Blue and Jewel, who are divided by their place of residence, ability to fly, and most of all, an outlook toward human beings. Jewel's attempts to escape her initial enclosure suggest an unwillingness to be part of an elaborate anthropogenic gesture of saving the species, and this is well encapsulated by her words to Blue: "Did you actually think we were gonna kiss? We just met." (Saldanha 2011) While played for laughs aimed at Blue's awkwardness, the scene seems to showcase a violation of consent enacted by the human captors, as benevolent as they might be. Nor does the film take a misanthropic stance, as Blue's own experiences of living in a human habitation come in handy. Rather than being unnatural, such experiences only exhibit rather a different way of solving problems as individuals. It is Blue's very knowledge of aerodynamics and the function of fire extinguishers, which enable him to defeat the antagonistic cockatoo Nigel and the smugglers. By enabling a non-human creature, a paradigm of the mute victim to thwart anthropogenic actions, the film achieves a much-awaited cathartic effect for audiences in general and animal rights activists in particular. Blue and Jewel can convince each other of the benefits of their ways of life; as such these contact zones are not merely marked by conflict but also resolution, borne of gradual and mutual understanding of agency and need for care.

Such holds at least for the protagonists – Linda and Tulio reunite in Rio to form their bird sanctuary while adopting Fernando as their child. It is Fernando's inclusion in this family structure that highlights the necessity of regarding the voices of both human and non-human subalterns to achieve a post-humanist or post-linguistic form of environmental ethics. On the other hand, the antagonists are marked by a lack of desire to communicate or empathize, both amongst themselves as well as beyond, leading the smugglers to be imprisoned and Nigel to lose his feathers. Nigel embodies a different kind of humanistic fervour than Blue does; he intimidates the smugglers, can use chloroform to knock guards out, and is regarded as scary by humans and birds alike. He too is a companion animal, but one that uses his knowledge to capture and cage his kind. In the final struggle between Blue and Nigel, the film portrays the victory of benevolent aspects of humanity and the ability to innovate over the malevolent desire to hurt, kill or maim one's brethren. Noteworthy is the festival of Carnaval which creatures of all species look forward to. It is during this carnivalesque festival that the status quo between humans and non-human animals is broken: non-humans gain agency, and human beings dress up as non-human animals to dance, biosocial barriers are broken by species to engage in a celebration of alterity. It is during the parade, the mainstay of this festival, that Blue and Jewel, the companion animal and the wild creature, reunite after bridging their gap of mutual unintelligibility.

Rio, despite its use of anthropomorphism, achieves success in highlighting the presence of affective bonds and non-expert knowledge in navigating around the world of the non-human. Of course, this is made possible in fictional space and with the use of anthropogenic language both narratively and meta-narratively. Despite being based on actual species of endangered parrot species endemic to the Amazon, the framing of their story in the form of a romantic hero's journey allows them to exhibit characteristics that elicit empathy from human audiences, while also rooting them firmly as inhabitants of the native forests which need to be protected. It is despite the anthropomorphising nature of the film, or rather because of it that several more people know about the near-extinct Spix macaw, with most, if not all such people lacking unrealistic expectations regarding their agency. As such, audiences know that these birds' ability to thwart human assailants is a fantasy exercised on screen, while the threats of poaching and habitat loss are all too real.

More-than-human semiotic assemblages: *Happy Feet*

> *The kid saw out his school days at the back of the class, lost in his imaginings... was there any place where one small penguin without a heartsong could truly belong?* (Miller 2006)

Such is the question that the film poses through the figure of Mumble, a misfit Emperor Penguin who is born without a heart song. *Happy Feet* delves into a fictionalised culture of the Emperor Penguins, where every penguin is born with the ability to sing a 'heart song', or a song that matches and connects the hearts of two potential mates. The film challenges anthropocentrism through its attempts to establish two distinct contact zones of conflict, one interspecies and the other intra-species. To that extent, this analysis hopes to show how the film envisions a sustainable multi-species co-habitation via a post-humanist reconstruction of the very ways in which we think and conceive of language.

Travelling from the forests of India and Brazil to the ice caps of Antarctica, audiences are treated to a host of singing Emperor penguins struggling to survive the harsh Antarctic winters. This colony of penguins have human expression, anthropomorphic ways of speaking, but more importantly, a physique that seems to blend the penguin and the human, as the penguins engage in seductive mating rituals which are accompanied by song and minor body movements. This song is the 'logos' of their colony, the central meaning around which their life revolves, and an essential tool for communicating the desires of one's heart. Great singers are celebrated, while the very inability to do so is regarded as a massive anomaly. Mumble is born without the ability to sing but has a remarkable knack for tap-dancing – traits which not only cause

most of his kind to ostracize him from a very young age but also lead several to deem his existence as a bad omen responsible for the depleting food supplies. However, Mumble refuses to change and sets out to find out the aliens (the penguin lingo for 'human beings'), whom he deems responsible for the ecological devastation around them (Miller 2006).

The elders scoff at this idea and banish him, recognising their perception of reality as absolute (Pennycook 2018, 101-125) rather than being borne of situated knowledge (Haraway 1988, 575-599). This bears relevance on two levels – as anthropomorphic penguins, they enact the roles of both humans and penguins. The characters of *Happy Feet* resemble real Emperor penguins in the far South, not only through their geographical and physiological realities, but also the issues plaguing them. Struggling through depleted food sources and global climate change (Blakemore, ''Happy Feet' not so Happy'), the characters of *Happy Feet* resemble their real-world counterparts, in that they become the voiceless subalterns under colonial forces of the Anthropocene. These characters are doubly denied power, as their location in the Far South stops them from knowing the nature of their true oppressors.

How can these characters even adopt a counter-gaze when they (perhaps like actual penguins) cannot even comprehend the extent of the gaze that they should counter? For characters seeking the truth, this seems to result in a recognition of their helplessness, as in the case of Mumble, who sets out to rectify the same. Mumble challenges the gaps in the elders' perception, initiating a perceived threat to their status quo and established knowledge systems. The elders' inability to recognize these gaps leads to subsequent miscommunication.

This contact zone of intra-species conflict microcosmically reflects a human world, where the penguins' refusal to acknowledge and solve the problems at hand, parallels common humanistic arguments against anthropo-denial and climate change denial, both of which serve as major concerns in the film. Instead, the colony and especially its elders, trace the shortage of fish to the wrathful actions of a deity, who is simply angry at the existence of a dancing penguin. Notwithstanding the very ableist mindset of a society that attempts to impose homogeneity, erase alterity and dismiss disability (Mumble does not refrain from singing by choice but is truly unable to), the society of Emperor-land is entrenched in traditions. The very ideals of the school that the hatchlings attend are evident in its teacher's words ("A penguin without a heart song is hardly a penguin at all" (Miller 2006)). As such, the very term "penguin" becomes a privileged marker, akin to "human" as discussed above (Ferrando 2021, 80), which is afforded to only certain members of the species *Aptenodytes forsteri* based on their possession of specific biosocial factors.

Ironically, a society built on communication creates subalterns out of the ones who are unable to use the same means to do so. In the mind of young

Mumble, his home might just be a Foucauldian prison, where any attempt at communication is hindered by customs enforced by the old order on the new. This is evident in the response of the Elder Noah to the tap-dancing sequence in which Mumble, Gloria and the other penguins engage:

> Dissent leads to division and division leads to doom... Mumble Happy Feet, you must leave. (Miller 2006)

The dissent in question was simply the penguins finding new ways to express themselves, but in failing to understand the same, Noah forces a communicative gap that causes Mumble to leave, simply because the latter refuses to conform to meaningless normative dictates.

Furthermore, the very notion of the heartsong as a necessary prerequisite to finding mates may itself have its roots in a humanistic bias that leads us to implicitly privilege verbal and visual modes of communication as a necessary prerequisite to forming bonds. The film does espouse a similar message by having the penguin Gloria choose Mumble over the other suitors attempting to woo her, simply because the latter was able to match the rhythm of her song by tapping his feet on the ice. This film can be lauded for its attempts to move from the domain of the verbal to the symbolic, to recognize and celebrate the multi-species semiotic networks – especially in the final segment of the film (Miller 2006).

Different societies of penguins seem to prioritize the formation of community and healthy communication, for mutual sustenance, and to survive endless winters – however, such a community often extends only to those members who fit in with the norms. Ironically, it is Mumble, located at the fringes of such a society, who desires to extend these communicative channels beyond the domain of known possibility; his perception, free of the traditional biases enables him to locate the plastic rings around Lovelace's neck as choking hazards rather than talismans bestowed by mystic beings. This desire to perceive, communicate, and "talk to [the human beings]; appeal to their better nature" takes him to leap into the freezing waters to follow it to the mainland.

He is consequently washed ashore in Florida, in a scene eerily reminiscent of the several images of beached sea creatures readily available on the Internet, further reinforcing the film's environmental focus. Rescued and stuck at the Sea World, Mumble attempts to fulfil his purpose and communicate with the aliens – however, they are separated by physical and linguistic barriers. He attempts to escape from his artificially constructed prison but strikes the glass. In one long moment, the visitors' gazes are juxtaposed with that of the hapless penguin's reflected face, thereby envisioning a true counter-gaze for the first time. Mumble can look back at the oppressors, even though his initial attempts to voice the

collective woes of his fellow Antarctic fauna in “plain Penguin” (Miller 2006) fall on deaf ears.

The film showcases both sides of the linguistic divide. The camera pans to the other side of the glass, and audiences are privy to the human gaze of the visitors, which is only able to regard a squawking penguin on the ice. Mumble’s words are divested of any meaning or signification. The term ‘alien’ assumes special significance as the human visitors are not only distant and incomprehensible but, owing to their geographical location and other biosocial factors, also alienated by an inability to understand the ‘Other’. Denied an acknowledgement of counter-gaze, the Emperor penguin fails to become a Derridean cat.

Can this non-human subaltern speak? Mumble tries to, though his will steadily declines over the months. However, the tapping of a girl’s finger on the glass causes him to remember his own "happy feet". Mumble performs a small dance, striking the visitors at Sea World with a sense of wonder at this seemingly new aspect of penguin behaviour. The film, in having the aliens appreciate what Mumble’s kind was unable to, highlights the success of symbolic communication where linguistic commonality fails. Mumble is set free and sent back home, where he attempts to convince his colony to engage in a mass tap-dancing endeavour since that has been the only form of communication to which human beings have responded. There is no initial meaning invested in this dance, which becomes a truly post-linguistic and post-humanist assemblage of inter-semiotic networks (Pennycook 2018, 8). After a few brief moments of resistance, the entire colony and even the elders are brought around to Mumble’s point of view, when a helicopter arrives and lands in front of them. For a few brief moments, man and animal, invader and invaded, all engage in carnivalesque dance, a video of which is recorded and trends across the globe. This unique behaviour causes major institutions of the world to reflect on its signification, and in the end, serves its intended meaning – several fishing restrictions are passed and Mumble is accepted as a celebrated member of his society.

Mumble’s victory in solving both inter-species and intra-species conflicts through symbolic communication answers the question that I pose at the very beginning of this section – was there any place where one small penguin without a heartsong could truly belong? However, this very journey of fitting in becomes a coming-of-age hero’s journey which is anthropogenic in design. It plays upon biophilic tendencies, a desire to root for the underdog, and extreme individualism that prevails against all odds. These factors, determining the course of the journey undertaken by the talking animal heroes of *Happy Feet*, *Rio*, and *Delhi Safari*, are essentially humanistic, though they do not detract from the post-humanistic discourse of environmental justice that the films try to envision. Rather, the very idea of being human does not oppose nature as we often tend to believe; instead, this very dogma is governed by dualistic paradigms of anthropocentrism.

Through expert framing and footing, the film situates the animated characters of *Happy Feet* in a liminal space between humans and penguins, to highlight two major deterrents to environmental sustainability. The refusal of the characters, who are essentially humans in penguin skins, to work as a community that embraces conflicting ideas and methods inhibits them from locating the true source of environmental damage. Contrarily, by depicting penguins experiencing human-like emotional states, the film brings out the inherent *pathos* in the non-human's helpless counter-gaze to anthropogenic projects of ecological damage. The human/non-human hybridity is hardly limited to anthropomorphic techniques but also extends to the semi-naturalistic movement of the penguins based on actual observation of the depicted creatures, the photoreal qualities of the animation and the attention paid to eyes and expressions (Desowitz 2006). The very nature of voice-acting and the meta-narrative adoption of English (or Hindi in the case of *Delhi Safari*) by the animals would even imply that it is not the subaltern that is essentially speaking, but the centre putting words in the mouths of the marginalized.

This raises an issue that continues to problematize the notion of agency in animal autobiographies. How "auto" is this biographical account when the creatures in question do not even share a linguistic commonality with us and cannot represent themselves? How far do they go in narrating the strife faced by actual animals in our world? These penguins, like the numerous non-human creatures of Delhi Safari and Rio exist in a space of liminality between humans and non-humans. They are made to speak through human voices, through humanly designed animation to highlight ecological issues as viewed through an essentially human gaze, and mass-produced for a human audience. Additionally, the actual human beings who appear are played by live actors and are not animated, perhaps embodying a conscious choice to root them in our world, and highlight that the strife faced by Antarctic fauna is a tangible problem that must be addressed as soon as possible. As such, would not it have been better to depict the entire film in an unanimated format, including the penguins, leopard seals, and killer whales?

I hope to answer these questions in the concluding section and discuss the relevance of animated films and other eco-cinema in animal studies.

The power of animation to envision sustainable contact zones of mutual understanding

During his stay at the Sea World, Mumble sees hallucinations of his family and friends appearing before him, alluding to a common psychological disorder called zoochosis that stems from deprivation of sensory states. Studies

have even shown penguins attempt to commit suicide in the wild, though the reason behind the same is unknown and located the presence of post-traumatic stress disorder in various prey animals who had escaped predator attacks. The presence of these mental states points to the complex ontology of non-humans, which they are often unable to communicate to us, leading to a consequent anthropo-denial of linguistic or cognitive complexity. However, these non-human creatures can and do speak, and attempts have even been made, for instance, to translate the sounds of prairie dogs into English.

Such forms of communication often transcend the linguistic into the semiotic. However, we may not even be able to fully realize what it feels like to be a bat, to borrow Thomas Nagel's words (Nagel 1989, 165-180), since we lack the very sense-perceptions (Pennycook 2018, 56-71) and physiological aspects which construct a bat's reality. Similarly, scientists have regarded the potential complexity of a honeybee's dance patterns. An exchange between two foreign nationals, a mother's attempts to understand her infant's distress, a howler monkey's warning cries to his kind, a stray dog's wagging tail, and the simple moments of non-verbal understanding shared between human beings and their companion animals, all point to how there is no single way to understand, but only multimodal ways of engaging with the world of the other, with whom we co-inhabit a layered semiotic space. The protagonists of all three films constantly attempt to interpret and negotiate the signs around them, to reach a state of sustainable co-habitation.

They achieve varying degrees of success; after all, it is truly difficult to move away from anthropogenic modes of representation when the personnel involved in the creation and consumption of media are human beings (Roy 2021, 97). Furthermore, almost all the non-human animals seem to share a similar language, which is again different from the languages used by human beings. Despite the seemingly homogeneous anthropo-denial of alterity that this seems to posit, I would argue that it only serves a narrative necessity, as a cinematic device intended to frame and uphold the plight of non-human creatures before an essentially human viewership. Documentary styles of filmmaking and live-action do seem like the best choice for conveying this kind of plight, as such journalistic modes seemingly depict the non-human narrative freely, safe from human interference and supervision.

However, that too comes with its own set of fallacies. The agency of animals and the depiction of how they communicate in the wild is impacted (and often unintentionally so) by the human agency and representational politics that go into the employed framing and footing techniques. Even such documentaries are guilty of anthropomorphism, even if to a lesser degree, as noted by Luis Vivanco in 'Penguins are good to think with: Wildlife Films, the

Imaginary Shaping of Nature and Environmental Politics'. Looking at the exoticism of penguins in the contemporary popular imagination and especially in the history of documentary filmmaking, Vivanco remarks:

> The lines between animation and wildlife film are especially blurry these days, certainly in a commercial sense in which the success of animated penguins and wildlife films about them has depended on and fueled the other… the dynamism and boundary blurring we see in today's penguin films is, in important respects, characteristic of a deeper history in which genres like action-adventure, comic anthropomorphism, and environmental polemic have framed the visualization of penguins. (Vivanco, 123)

Vivanco's work highlights the use of penguins as symbols of the inhospitable Antarctic, signifiers for the brave humans seeking to film them and representatives of anthropogenic destruction of the environment. Such critique is not intended to deem documentary eco-cinema as inferior to animated films but highlights that creating a truly objective, non-anthropogenic picture of non-human agency (as we conventionally understand) might not be achievable any time soon.

Documentary filmmaking as a form of eco-cinema remains highly relevant in the discipline of animal studies, but an animated approach might work equally well, even if differently so, by highlighting the humanized expressions and emotions (in all three aforementioned films) of non-human creatures. They could be depicted as beings with whom we can form a kind of meta-narrative kinship without detracting from the biological reality and troubles of their species. In *Happy Feet*, fictional penguins talk in human languages but also go beyond this to engage in semiotic means of communication in-universe. Agentic capacity, in a truly post-human sense, exists in a more discursive space, not invested in individual subjects (Carranza, 'Agency',), but in the assemblages of human beings, penguins and their shared concern for environmental issues. Similar ideas can be located in *Delhi Safari*, *Rio*, and other animated films.

Such films open a window into the tragedy of the bullfighting ring in *Ferdinand*, offer insights into massive oceanic extinctions in *Finding Dory*, and offer cathartic relief through tropes of animals fighting back in *Open Season*. *Delhi Safari*, along with other 3D animated films like *Allahyar and the Legend of Markhor*, and to a lesser and more subtle degree, *Jumbo*, raise their voice against poaching and animal cruelty, offering their unique perspective from the Indian subcontinent. Such depictions of cruelty are often taken to an extreme in dark ecological fiction such as in *Padak*, *Watership Down*, *The Plague Dogs*, and *The Animals of Farthingwood*, often shocking audiences through their gritty storytelling.

Even stories without overt ecological intentions have managed to garner support for the wild counterparts of their non-human characters, with stories like *The Lion King* aiding the case of animals like the warthog by simply

depicting them on screen. Other narratives like *Babe* apply partially superimposed animation upon live-action scenes to hammer home their message. The animated medium allows characters to share certain characteristics of human beings (the penguins in *Happy Feet* have a religion; the birds of *Rio* perform '*samba*'; and Alex the parakeet can use the human tongue beyond simple mimetic re-use of words). However, they are denied other markers of the same, as they live in the wilderness, rarely wear clothes except to invoke humour, and are separated from human beings by various linguistic gaps.

The success of the aforementioned films posits anthropomorphic animal stories as a highly successful form of storytelling. True to the goal of eco-cinema, they manage to increase awareness about ecological issues and motivate viewers to engage in political action. Animated techniques place these humanized non-humans between absolute anthropomorphism (regarding them as little more than human beings in furry suits) and anthropo-denial (stripping them of all aspects which characterise our idea of humanity), to locate them in a liminal space, where viewers might entertain the possibility of our similarity with non-humans, to varying forms and degrees, instead of regarding the same as absolute. For instance, the inability of penguins to engage in symbolic dance in actuality does not deny the possibility that they engage in other forms of symbolic behaviour, or detract from the meta-narrative message of the film.

Such films open up a point of enquiry into the implicitly anthropocentric philosophy that often mediates our various entanglements with the natural world. Their purpose may be linked to their meta-narrative desire to establish contact zones of intelligibility and understanding to communicate and potentially look at solutions to contemporary issues plaguing the environment. The susceptibility of moral intuitions to narrative persuasion brings out the growing relevance of animal narratives, and their persuasive capabilities (Małecki et. al 2020, 2). The famous success stories of animal narratives like *Black Beauty* and *Babe*, as well as the very reviews praising *Happy Feet*, *Rio*, and *Delhi Safari* across different platforms serve as a testament to the same.

Donna Haraway takes the idea of string figures and transforms them into a metaphor that signifies the distinct ways in which human beings and non-humans remain intertwined in separate or overlapping contact zones in the Chthulucene (Haraway 2016, 9-29). These invisible strings connect humans, non-humans and objects to ideas of agency and care within a network in each film – and, I would argue, even beyond. Strings of meta-narrative communication link the three films together to espouse a common goal and link these films to this very study in my efforts to delineate a post-linguistic form of environmental ethics and multi-species justice. Finally, these strings reach beyond the screen to connect these films to audiences across the world, who can recognise similar problems in Earth's wild spaces.

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THE CHAMELEON'S BLUSH AND THE POETIC IMAGINATION FROM SHAKESPEARE TO KEATS

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ABSTRACT. ***The Chameleon's Blush and the Poetic Imagination from Shakespeare to Keats.*** When English Romantic poet John Keats likened William Shakespeare to a chameleon, far from being original, he was tapping into a venerable tradition of drawing analogies between human beings and the colour-changing reptile. In literary criticism, the analogy is usually taken to refer to poetic indeterminacy; in sociopsychology, to conscious or unconscious, opportunistic versatility of identity. This study traces the evolution of the polyvalent chameleon trope from the zoological treatises of antiquity, through wonder literature and Renaissance and early modern works on psychology and witchcraft, to Shakespeare's plays. It shows more specifically how the chameleon came to acquire an imagination and how that imagination was, on the one hand, instrumental in prompting the sort of inter-subjective absorption Keats emblematised in the blush, and, on the other, projective in a sense akin to Hazlitt's own theory of the imagination. As a result, new light is thrown not only onto specific features of Shakespeare's art and Romantic poetics, but also onto past conceptions of the imagination and the generative role of zoological analogy in their formulations.

Keywords: *imagination, chameleon, William Shakespeare, John Keats, blush*

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REZUMAT. ***Cameleonul roșind, imaginația poetică de la Shakespeare la Keats.*** Atunci când poetul romantic John Keats l-a asemuit pe William Shakespeare unui cameleon, departe de a fi original, el recurgea la o venerabilă tradiție de a trasa analogii între oameni și reptila ce își poate schimba culoarea. În critica literară, analogia e de obicei înțeleasă ca referindu-se la nedeterminarea poetică; în socio-psihologie, la versatilitatea oportunistă a identității, conștientă ori inconștientă. Studiul de față urmărește evoluția tropului cameleonului polivalent de la tratatele de zoologie din antichitate, prin literatura de mistere și opere de psihologie și despre vrăjitorie renascentiste și din modernitatea timpurie, până la piesele lui Shakespeare. Lucrarea arată în mod specific modul în care cameleonul a ajuns să capete o imaginație și cum aceasta a fost, pe de o parte, un instrument în declanșarea acelui tip de absorbție inter-subiectivă pe care Keats a emblematizat-o în actul de a roși, și, pe de altă parte, proiectivă într-un sens apropiat teoriei asupra imaginației a lui Hazlitt. Ca rezultat, lucrarea pune într-o nouă lumină nu doar trăsăturile artei lui Shakespeare și poetica romantică, dar și concepțiile anterioare asupra imaginației și asupra rolului generativ al analogiei zoologice în formulările acestora.

Cuvinte-cheie: *imaginație, cameleon, William Shakespeare, John Keats, a roși*

Absorption and projection: Keats and Hazlitt

John Keats's letter of 27 October 1818 to his publisher, Richard Woodhouse, on "the poetical Character" is well-known; so too its impact on conceptions of the poet in general and of Shakespeare in particular:

> As to the poetical Character itself [...] it has no self - it is every thing and nothing - It has no character - it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated [...] What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion Poet. [...] A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity---he is continually in for---and filling some other Body [...] he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's Creatures. (1952, 226-7)

The poets Keats admires are unpoetical in their un-Wordsworthian self-effacing or self-annihilating absorption into or "informing" other bodies. Elsewhere Keats associates self-annihilation with the inter-subjective absorption of lovers and finds an analogy in pelicans, who draw their own blood to nourish their "brood" (*Endymion* l. 813-15); he would later tell Fanny Brawne, "You absorb me in spite of myself" (1952, 362). Keats clearly felt such absorption keenly: in another letter to Woodhouse he wrote: "When I am in a room with People [...] the

identity of every one in the room begins so to press upon me that, I am in a very little time annihilated" (227). Surrendering identity this way seems less any ethical openness (Dutoit 1998, 97) than a cowed derogation of selfhood, or that lack of character with which the shy and the weak-willed, in contrast to the egotists, are often stigmatized. Yet self-annihilating absorption into the other is a prerequisite of the brand of chameleon poet to which Keats affiliates himself, a brand epitomised by Shakespeare, present in this passage's allusions to Iago and Imogen and, via the chameleon reference, to Richard of Gloucester in *3 Henry VI*. As Coleridge put it, "Shakespeare's poetry is characterless; that is, it does not reflect the individual Shakespeare" (1991, 1.125). The chameleon poet counterposes personal *anéantissement*[2] to egotistical self-assertion, which in the same passage from which I have just quoted some excerpts, Keats identifies with William Wordsworth:[3] it is as if poetry can never flow with the poet's identity clogging its arteries. Of course, outside or after the poetic act of creation, the poet will be restored to himself, but it will be a self enhanced by the accretion of aspects of other selves, much as will be the reader's on reading the outcome of that creative act. At writing and reading ends, chameleon poetics hinges on that "alternate contraction and dilation of the soul" (Keats 1939, V.282; qtd. Camarda 2019, 54) which Hazlitt noticed in Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale".

Keats's chameleon analogy did not appear out of the blue[4] and was quick to generate offspring. After reading Keats's letter to Woodhouse, in circulation shortly after the poet's death, Shelley wrote to Maria Gisbourne in 1821 that "Poets, the best of them - are a very cameleonic race: they take the colour not only of what they feed on, but of the very leaves under which they pass" (1964, 115).[5] Here Shelley seems to distinguish two facets of poets. On the one hand, poets' identities change sympathetically from one situation to another ("what they feed on"); on the other, poets are nourished intertextually on the writings ("leaves") of others. Beneath Shelley's chameleonic intertextuality, it is tempting to detect traces of William Godwin's earlier statement of his own intellectual chameleonics: "When I read Thomson, I become Thomson; when I read Milton, I become Milton. I find myself a sort of intellectual camelion, assuming the colour of the substances on which I rest" (1797, 27; qtd. Camarda 2019, 51).[6]

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2 Early Modern French mysticism cultivated *anéantissement* or "enthusiastic self-sacrifice" or "abandonment of [personal] will in order to unite with that of God", and even Pascal experienced "oblivion and union with the divine" (Martin 2012, 99-100).

3 See Ball (2013) for an exhaustive treatment of the egotist/chameleon binary in the Romantic and Victorian imagination.

4 On Romantic theatrical chameleonism, see Brewer (2015); on Romantic scientific accounts of the chameleon, see Camarda (2019, 46-54).

5 For Shelley's other references to the chameleon, see Thatcher (2000).

6 On the relationship between this passage and Keats, see Roe (1997, 247).

As for Hazlitt, in 1821 he wrote of "Genius in ordinary" that, compared with Shakespeare, "the Proteus of human intellect" capable of "transforming himself at will into whatever he chose", "it is a more obstinate and less versatile thing [...] It is just the reverse of the camelion for it does not borrow but lends its colour to all about" (1901, 54). Hazlitt's comments arise in a discussion of imagination, which he defines as "the power of carrying on a given feeling into other situations" (53). Here the imagination is, so to speak, "translative" in its capacity to transfer a feeling from one context to another, albeit the more familiar Hazlittian term is "projective"; in this, it differs from the "absorptive" chameleon, which "borrows its colour" from its environs. In Hazlitt's 1818 lecture "On Shakespeare and Milton", the direct source of Keats's reflections in the letter to Woodhouse,[7] Shakespeare's imagination is more firmly projective:

> He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be [...] he throws his imagination out of himself [...] He had only to think of any thing in order to become that thing, with all the circumstances belonging to it [...] The poet may be said, for the time, to identify himself with the character he wishes to represent, and to pass from one to another, like the same soul successively animating different bodies" (Bate, 1992, pp. 181-2).

Shakespeare's chameleonic imagination proactively generates its material, including the characters, with whom identification is once again translative ("pass from one to another"), not absorptive, and whose existence depends on infusions of the poet's spirit. This is not any Keatsian self-annihilation under pressure from an overbearing reality but a more Wordsworthian impregnation of reality with the poet's own soul. Thus, Hazlitt's minimally egotistical poet actually joins forces in its proliferations of selfhood with Wordsworth to declare the world the "great I am", while Keats's continual negations of subjectivity lead to self-effacing whisperings of the "great I am not."[8]

There seems, then, to be a difference of emphasis between the Hazlittian projective and the Keatsian absorptive models of the Shakespearean imagination. The notion of a Shakespearean poetic absorption of other identities is as old as Shakespeare criticism itself: Margaret Cavendish averred in 1664 that "so Well he hath Express'd in his Playes all Sorts of Persons, as one would think he had

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[7] Fitzpatrick (1981) claims Locke's psychology is a more direct influence on Keats's chameleonic imagination than Hazlitt; but influence is not a competition, and Hazlitt himself was a close reader of Locke.

[8] Cf. Natarajan (2010, 106): "Where to Keats, selflessness is the key to poetic achievement, for Hazlitt, in any other instance than Shakespeare, the absence of a powerful sense is the condition of artistic failure." Camarda finds Keats's chameleon poet to be more active in its "embrace of circumstance" (2019, 71).

been Transformed into every one of those Persons he hath Described", while John Dryden gushed famously that "he was the man who of all Modern, and perhaps Ancient Poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul" (Vickers 1974, 43, 138). Similarly, the association of the imagination with the chameleon was no Romantic invention but had a long and complex history. Again, although it was Keats who established the connection between poetic chameleonics and Shakespeare, it is actually Hazlitt's projective imagination which comes closer to Shakespeare's own conception of the chameleonic imagination. Yet as we shall also see, it is Shakespeare's notion of the sympathetic imagination which brings us closer to Keats's poetics of embarrassment, the key figure of which was the blush.

Machiavels, flatterers, lovers and godlike men

The colour-changing chameleon has inspired proposals for a chameleon poetics of indetermination. Thomas Dutoit (1998, 95) has defined poetic chameleonics quite categorically as a Keatsian negative capability, as an existential in-betweenness or "différance". Caught between subject and object, between itself and the other, the chameleon has and is nothing but is a becoming of the other without being the other. In its defiance of binaries and the philosophers' logic of "yes" or "no" (Deshoulières 1998, 10), the chameleon's indeterminateness is naturally at home in the postmodern dispensation of contingency, dispersed selfhood and semiotic destabilization. Yet that dispensation is nothing new. A long line of writers and thinkers from Montaigne to Hume to Nietzsche have questioned the liberal humanist notion of unitary, stable and coherent subjective identity, while the social performance of the self as theorised by Herbert Mead, Erving Goffman and Judith Butler,[9] among others, had already been explained by Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1651). Hobbes was only adding a philosophical gloss to a behavioural code which was essential to survival in the upper echelons of Renaissance and early modern European society. Far from inaugurating a new millennium of identitarian flux, "social chameleon[s]" (Smith 2001, 269) like Zadie Smith's Millat have been around and recorded for a long time.

Shakespeare would have been aware of the moral ambivalence of the chameleon trope. Its well-known ability to change colour, which cropped up in texts as diverse as Du Bartas's sonnet 24 (?1570s) and George Hakewill's treatise (1608) on the eye,[10] was applied to the Machiavellian "actor-politician" (Barish

[9] See Taylor (1989) and Sell (2010, 114-19, 127-29).

[10] "Chameleon-like, each obiects colour prysing" (Du Bartas 1611, 750); "tis a matter agreed on on all hands that hee [the Devil] hath the power, Vertumus or Proteus-like, to turne himselfe into any shape, or, Chameleon like, into any colour" (Hakewill 1615, 58).

1981, 101) implementing Iago's aphorism that "Men should be what they seem" (*Othello*, 3.3.131):[11] in pursuit of effectiveness, "image is all, the reality nothing" (Barish 1981, 96), for, as Machiavelli pointed out, at bottom men are "wretched creatures […] always impressed by appearances and results" (1981, 101-01). If the best-known instance of this application of the trope is to be found in Richard of Gloucester's speech in *3 Henry VI* (see below), it also drove George Burton's *Chamaeleon* (w. 1570), his satirical attack on the slippery Scottish politician William Maitland, and turns up in Stephen Batman's *The Golden Book of the Leaden Goddes* (1577), the anonymous *Tragedy of Tiberius* (1607) and Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) (Barish 1981, 100-02). Across Europe, tropological contamination meant that the chameleon also came to serve as an analogy for those who milled around the halls of power and whose survival depended on their allied capacities for actorly dissembling—according to George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1970 [1589], 305; Rebhorn 2004, 107-08), the key qualification of the successful courtier—and fawning adulation. Plutarch had likened flatterers to the chameleon in *De adulatore et amico* (Verdegem 2010, 274-76). Erasmus did likewise, explaining that living on the air as it does, the reptile's mouth is always open, much as "those who thrive on the tawdry fame of popular approval are always on the lookout for something that may increase their reputation" (1978, 241). The chameleonic flatterer turns up too in Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata* (1577) (Hartwig 1996, 192) and Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (1603) (Barish 1981, 103). By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, across Europe the chameleon had become a standard figure of courtly dissimulation and flattery (Sahlins 2015, 18; Álvarez-Ossorio 2000) and of *homo politicus* in general;[12] while in "Flecknoe, an English Priest at Rome" Andrew Marvell would later use it of the religious turncoat:

> But were he not in in this black habit decked,
> This half-transparent man would soon reflect
> Each colour that he passed by, and be seen,
> As the chameleon, yellow, blue, or green" (1972, 31 [ll. 79-82]).

Add to all this the colourful reptile's association with the unscrupulous slyness of a Ulysses, Lysander or Alcibiades (Barish 1981, 103) and it would seem that the innocent chameleon received a very bad press in early modern Europe; not for

[11] All references are to Shakespeare (2005).

[12] By the mid-eighteenth century, however, Lord Chesterfield was recommending to his son this sort of socially pragmatic chameleonics which he viewed not as "criminal or abject, but a necessary complaisance; for it relates to manners" (1992, 106; qtd. Camarda 2019, 52) and facilitated social communion.

nothing did its mimetic skills lead Antony Munday to use it to slander the very worst of society's worst: "Plaiers cannot be better compared than to the Camelion" (*A Second and Third Blast of Retrait*, 1580; qtd. Barish 1981, 104).

But not all was gloom in the chameleon's garden. Its characteristic ambiguity was reflected in Erasmus's approval of the apostle Paul's ability, on the model of Jesus Christ, to "play the chameleon" when adapting himself to his audiences (Bietenholz 1966, 86). It also served as an emblem of the true lover, who sympathetically identified with the changing feelings of his beloved (Barish 1981, 107) or, in George Turbervile's "To his Mistress, declaring his life only to depend on her lookes" (c. 1574) (McPeek 1941), was sustained vitally by the breath of his beloved: "You are the pleasant breathing ayre, and I your poore Chameleon". The chameleon's alleged diet of air was proverbial[13] and became a serviceable trope in amorous contexts; thus, John Lyly: "Love is a chameleon which draweth nothing into the mouth but air" (*Endymion* [1581] 3.4; qtd. Mowatt and Werstine 1999, 50n.l.177).[14] More grandly, the chameleon became one of the figures for the endlessly self-transformative, quasi-divine potential of man in Florentine Neoplatonism. Marsilio Ficino's *Theologia Platonica* (1482) anticipates and reconciles what we have designated Hazlittian projection and Keatsian absorption in its celebration of the capacity of the human intellect and the human will to unite with all things, the former by transforming them into itself, the latter by transforming itself into them (Barish 1981, 108); in Pico della Mirandola's *De dignitate hominis* (1486) the chameleon emerges into the full glare of sunlight as the figure of man, "this our chameleon", divinely endowed with "the seeds pregnant with all possibilities, the germs of every form of life" (1956, 9, 8); while man was the protagonist on the metaphysical world-stage erected in Juan Luis Vives's *Fable about Man* (1518), where his self-suspending ability to jump from one role to another, now a beast, now a star, now a god, "so changing like a polypus and a chameleon" (Cassirer et al. 1956, 390; qtd. Barish 1981, 110), led to his apotheosis in heavenly assumption.[15] Predictably, among the Puritans of Reformation Europe changeability was regarded as a weakness, a view authorised in Platonist aversion to the mutability of the phenomenal world and to the poets who imitated it (Barish 1981, 110-12).

[13] "Love is a chameleon that feeds on air" (Dent M266; qtd. Carroll 2004, 173n.l l. 159-60)

[14] McPeek (1941, 242n9) cites two similar references from two lyrics from Francis Davison's (?) *A Poetical Rhapsody* (1602-21).

[15] The "polypus" (octopus) was generally taken as a figure of commendable, strategic versatility, in contrast to Proteus, the chameleon's more frequent and similarly ambivalent comrade-in-arms. With what looks like remarkable foresight, William Scott wrote in 1599 that the poet "is to be that polypus [octopus] of, which in sundry shapes must transform himself to catch all humours" (2013, 14).

Shakespeare’s chameleons

Such was the varied tropical polyvalence of the air-eating, colour-changing chameleon: it could connote a political and social Machiavel, a courtly flatterer, a subservient lover or a Neoplatonic superman. But there is no association with the imagination. What, then of its presence in Shakespeare? In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* Speed enquires of love-smitten Valentine:

> SPEED: Why muse you, sir? ’Tis dinner-time.
> VALENTINE: I have dined.
> SPEED: Ay, but hearken, sir. Though the chameleon love can feed on the air, I am one that am nourished by my victuals, and would fain have meat. (2.1.159-64)

A little later, Thurio’s red-faced anger leads to this exchange:

> SILVIA: What, angry, Sir Thurio? Do you change colour?
> VALENTINE: Give him leave, madam, he is a kind of chameleon.
> THURIO: That hath more mind to feed on your blood than live in the air.
> (2.4.23-27)

So far, so conventional. The best-known instance in Shakespeare of the chameleon trope is in Richard of Gloucester’s marvellously wicked review of the personal qualities that will enable him “to catch the English Crown” (*3 Henry VI*, 3.2.179), among them his ability to dissemble:

> Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,
> And cry ‘Content!’ to that which grieves my heart,
> And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
> And frame my face to all occasions (182-87);

his Ulyssean deceitfulness: “I’ll play the orator as well as Nestor, / Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could” (188-89); and his Machiavellian chameleonics:

> I can add colours to the chameleon,
> Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
> And set the murderous Machiavel to school. (187-9)

Once again, so far, so conventional. The chameleon takes its Shakespearean bow in *Hamlet*. On arriving to watch “The Mousetrap”, Claudius asks the prince, “How fares our cousin Hamlet?”, to which Hamlet replies: “Excellent, i’faith, of the chameleon’s dish. I eat upon the air, promise-crammed. You cannot feed capons

so" (3.2.389-91). As in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the reference is to the chameleon's ability to feed on air; but unlike Valentine, Hamlet is not in love but punning sardonically on Claudius' earlier reassurance that he is "the most immediate to our throne" (1.2.109), that is, occupies his rightful place as heir.

Taken together, these four instances of the chameleon index, apparently unremarkably, commonplaces about chameleonic air-eating and colour-changing in conventional amorous and political contexts. They may also disclose the occult influence of Vives's human chameleon treading the boards of the world-stage. But they seem bereft of all connection with the imagination. Yet given its privileged centrality in Romantic poetics, before attributing the equation Shakespeare-chameleon-imagination to a sudden Keatsian insight, it might be worth trawling other sources of chameleon lore for possible origins.

Ancient zoology, wonder literature and humanist psychology

The three standard authorities from antiquity on the animal world were Aristotle, Pliny the Elder and Aelian.[16] After his pioneering vivisection of the chameleon (Cosans 1998, 324),[17] Aristotle described its anatomy in *History of Animals* (c.350 BCE; 530^{b}2-5) and noted its ability to change colour "when it is inflated with air; it is then black, not unlike the crocodile, or green like the lizard but black-spotted like the pard" (1984, 800). In the earlier (Lennox 2001, 329) *De partibus animalium* he had suggested that both chameleon (692ª20-24) and octopus (679a12-14) changed colour out of fright, when they lost heat due to falling blood pressure (Fortenbaugh 2006, 187). Aristotle was right to link colour change to emotions, wrong to explain it in terms of blood pressure —it actually has to do with the reaction to light of chromatophores. Colour change as an emotional reflex is absent from the early modern loci noted so far, although Thurio's red face is a clear instance. Four centuries after Aristotle, Pliny the Elder stated in his *Natural History* (77 CE; 8.51) that the chameleon's body assumes "the colour of whatever object is nearest, with the exception of white and red"; Thurio's flush would have baffled him. Neither Aristotle nor Pliny mentioned the chameleon's ability to feed on the air, although the former mentions its self-inflation.

Nor did Aelian, whose attention in *De natura animalium* (c.210 CE; I.ii.14) was fixed firmly on colour change:

[16] Aullus Gellius' (*Noctes Atticæ*, 10.12-1-5) account of the chameleon is merely derivative (Kitchell 2014, 28).

[17] It used to be thought erroneously (Soury 1898) that the chameleon was the only animal to have come under Aristotle's knife.

> The chameleon is not disposed to remain of one and the same colour for men to see and recognise, but it conceals itself by misleading and deceiving the eye of the beholder. Thus, if you come across one that appears black, it changes its grey tint and appears different, like an actor who puts on another mask or another garment. (1980, 112-13)

What is remarkable is Aelian's theatrical metaphor, whose transformation of reptile into actor seems an ancestral source of Vives's chameleonic human treading the boards of the world-stage and, therefore, of Munday's anti-thespian slur and Richard of Gloucester's speech, where self-glorification of that capacity for actorly dissembling exploited in *Richard III* (Barton 1964, 96-100; Murry 1967, 125-6; Rossiter 1961, 17-19) is capped by metaphorical mutation into the versicoloured reptile. What is more, Richard's combination of histrionic weeping ("And wet my cheeks with artificial tears, / And frame my face to all occasions") with chameleonics is replicated in *Hamlet*. There, the Prince expresses wonder at the "tears" shed by the player, "his visage wanned" and "his whole function suiting / With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing. / For Hecuba!" (2.2.556-60). Hamlet's perplexity at the player's Ricardian knack of paling his complexion and turning on the waterworks is followed two scenes later by his quip on eating of "the chameleon's dish". The contiguity of play-acting and the colour-changing reptile replicated in both works suggests a barely coincidental consistency in Shakespeare's conceptualisation of actors as chameleons which belies any suspicion that the connection is purely accidental. This does not mean that Shakespeare had read Aelian, who was only available in Greek until translated into Latin, side-by-side with the relevant extracts from Aristotle and Pliny, in Conrad Gessner's *Historia Animalium* (1551-1558); nor that he had read Gessner. For the chameleon and other marvellous beasts had entered popular lore and the proverbial repertory via the paradox books, medieval bestiaries and books of marvels, as we shall see.

Outside zoological treatises, in antiquity the chameleon was used as a negatively charged metaphor for man. In the *Nichomachean Ethics* (1.1100[b]5ff) the reptile stands for the fickle nature of human happiness: "For clearly, if we were to track a person's fortunes, we shall find ourselves often calling the same person happy and then miserable, thus revealing the happy man as a kind of chameleon and infirmly based" (2002, 106). Similarly unfavourable is Plutarch's use of the simile in his character sketch of socially-cynically versatile Alcibiades, which, in Thomas North's translation (1579), is a possible source of Richard's speech:

> For among other qualities and properties he had (whereof he was full) this as they say was one, whereby he robbed most men's hearts: that he could frame altogether with their manners and fashions of life, transforming

> himself more easily to all manner of shapes than the chameleon. For it is reported, that the chameleons cannot take white colour; but Alcibiades could put upon him any manners, customs or Fashions of what nation soever, and could follow, exercise and counterfeit them when he would, as well the good as the bad. (1898, II. 276-277)

While there is no firm proof that Shakespeare read Plutarch's *Alcibiades*,[18] there are two enticing parallels between this passage and Richard's speech. The first is a lexical echo: Alcibiades "could frame altogether with [men's] manners and fashions of life", Richard boasts he can "frame my face to all occasions". The second is conceptual in so far that both Plutarch's Alcibiades and Shakespeare's Richard outstrip the chameleon's polychrome versatility, the former "transforming himself more easily to all manner of shapes than the chameleon [which] cannot take white colour", the latter crowing, "I can add colours to the chameleon".

Writing at the start of the Christian era, Philo of Alexandria cited the chameleon's ability to mimeticise the colour of its surroundings (*De Ebrietate*, 172);[19] so, too, did "Antigonus" three centuries later (*Collection of Amazing Stories*, 25) and Photius, a further five centuries after him in his summary of Theophrastus' lost treatise *On Creatures that Change Colour* (Sharples 2008, 69-70). The chameleon, together with the octopus, had also featured in the pseudo-Aristotelian *De mirabilibus auscultationibus* (Sharples 2008, 70), whose title lands us squarely in the territory of the marvellous, the monstrous and the prodigious, which still thrived even when natural history was becoming a field of scientific study in the sixteenth century.

If the classical sources yield no trace of a chameleonic imagination, what, then, of the bestiaries and the wonder literature which are also signposted by Richard's speech: "I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall; / I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk" (*3 Henry VI*, 3.2.186-7)? Together they comprised a territory exploited well into the seventeenth century by publishers catering to a market with a taste for the early modern equivalent of scientific schlock. The best-selling title in that market was Gessner's *Historia Animalium* (1551-58), which included a derivative discussion of the chameleon and whose abridgement (*Thierbuck* [Animal Book], 1563) was further abridged and Englished by Edward Topsell in two volumes (*Historie of foure-footed Beastes*, 1607 and *Historie of Serpents*, 1608). An image of a Sea Bishop, half- man, half-fish, from the Swiss polymath's *Icones animalium* (1560) has been proposed as an iconographic source of Shakespeare's Caliban (Vaughan and Vaughan 1991, 77). However, another version of the same illustration was printed earlier in Guillaume

[18] But see Gillespie (2004, 433).

[19] Philo also mentioned the octopus and the "tarandros" (reindeer or elk), which more amazingly changed the colour of its hair.

Rondelet's *Libri de piscibus marinus* (1554); yet another on a map in Giacomo Gastaldi's section on South–East Asia in *Cosmographia Universalis et Exactissima iuxta prostremam neotericorum traditionem* (c.1561) (Boran 2019, np).[20] A rude copy of the same illustration is also reproduced in Ambroise Paré's *Des monstres et prodigés*, published as part of the second volume of *Deux livres de chirurgie* (1573). But Paré's account of the chameleon is quite different.[21] Paré says nothing of feeding on air and, after a brief morphological description, turns to what makes the reptile wonderful, namely its colour changes. For this, he proffers two explanations. The one he prefers, like Aristotle's, associates such transformations with bodily inflation ("quand il s'enfle", Paré 1652, 698) but, unlike Aristotle, he explains them not in terms of respiration and blood pressure but of transparency: the more the creature swells up, the thinner and more transparent his skin becomes so that the colour of nearby objects are represented in it as in a mirror. More extraordinary is the second explanation: "ou que les humeurs en lui esmeus diversement selon *la diversité de ses imaginations*, representant diverses coulers vers le cuit, non autrement que les pendans d'un coq d'Inde" (emphasis added). Thomas Johnson's English translation of Paré, published in 1634, rendered that as follows: "or els various humours diversely stirred up in him, according to the varietie of his affections, represents divers colours in his skin" (Paré 1649, 694). Here, Paré is assimilated to the Aristotelian theory that the ultimate origin of the colour change is emotional, although the single emotion of fear is now expanded to "the varietie of affections". But Johnson is not being faithful to Paré, who speaks of "imaginations", but to the Latin translation of his text, which renders "selon la diversité de ses imaginations" as "pro animi affectuum varitetate" (1588, 795).

Paré need not have been a direct source either of Richard's speech (his work has a section on mermaids but is silent on basilisks) or, iconographically, of Caliban. Nonetheless, as far as Shakespeare is concerned and his later reception by the Romantics, that an idea of an imaginative chameleon might have been in circulation is a tantalising proposition to say the least. The question is, where did that notion come from? In Richard's speech, the chameleon is mentioned, quite conventionally, in the same breath as Proteus, the other standard figure of human transformative identity; in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, one of the male protagonists is called Proteus. Pico also paired chameleon and Proteus in

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[20] After our period, the same illustration appears in Ulisse Aldrovandi's posthumous *Monstrorum historia: cum paralipomenis historiæ omnium animalium* (1642). The Sea Bishop was a "jenny haniver" or hoax, consisting of the dried carcass of a ray or skate (Boran, 2019).

[21] In revised editions Paré also gives André Thevet's *Cosmographie Universelle* (1575) as a source. With respect to the chameleon, Thevet draws on his own observations to question, though not reject, the myth of its air diet and to suggest that the reptile does not change colour to reflect the objects in its immediate environment, except in the case of black (116v).

De dignitate hominis, in a passage generally taken to have been influenced by Ficino's commentary on Priscian's metaphrasis of Theophrastus. Priscian viewed the imagination as assimilating to itself images from the external world or the memory and of projecting onto the external world the intellectual activities of the soul (Priscian 2014, 32; Arnaud 2015, 59-60). To this assimilative, or absorptive, and projective imagination, Ficino applied the epithets of chameleonic (*chameleontean*) and Protean (*Protean*) (1962, 2.1825). It is not impossible that Ficino's comparison of Priscian's imagination with the chameleon underlies Paré's chameleon which, in an outward projection of intellectual energies, changes colour at the prompting of its imagination. Paré, royal physician and scientist, would almost certainly have been familiar with Ficino's medical works, while both prescribed the same antidote to the plague and adopted a similar scientific methodology in their treatments (Beecher 2001, 247).

Whether Shakespeare knew Paré's work or Ficino's commentary on Priscian cannot be established.[22] But Ficino's coupling of the imagination with the chameleon and, now, Proteus, was taken up by Johann Weyer (or Wier) in his *De praestigiis dæmonum* (1563; extended 1583):[23] "The imagination expresses the activities of reason under the condition of sensible things, and it can produce phantasms [=mental images] far beyond the activities of the senses. It surpasses sensation, because by producing images without external stimulation, it is like Proteus or the chameleon" (Wier 1991 [1583], 186-7). Weyer's book, which was hugely influential in the witchcraft debate (its author believed that witches were victims of an imaginative frenzy due to melancholy and related conditions like hysteria and amenorrhea), has occasionally been touted as a source of *Macbeth*'s walking wood; if that influence could be proven, so too might Shakespeare's familiarity with a Ficinian, chameleonic imagination.

Love's witchcraft and the chameleon's blush

More certainly, Shakespeare had read Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584),[24] where on the authority of Lucretius blushing is regarded as evidence of the imagination's power to affect the body:

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[22] Jones's (2014) monumental study of Ficino's influence on Marlowe and Shakespeare sheds no light on this point.

[23] Also, shortly after the probable dates of composition of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *3 Henry VI*, by André du Laurens in his *Discours de la conservation de la veue, des maladies mélancoliques, des catharres et de la vieillesse* (1594). On Weyer, du Laurens and Ficino, see Arnaud (2015, 59-61).

[24] Scot's *The Discoverie*, "very probably" (Braunmuller 1997, 258) one of Shakespeare's sources for *Macbeth*, incorporates much of Weyer's material, but not his discussion of Ficino, Priscian and the imagination.

> the imagination of a beautiful forme resteth in the hart of the lover, and kindleth the fier wherewith it is afflicted. And bicause the most delicate, sweete, and tender bloud of the belooved doth there wander, his countenance is there represented shining in his owne bloud, and cannot there be quiet [...]. (1886, 410)

Francesco Maria Guazzo commenced his *Compendium Maleficarum* (1608) by making a similar point on the authority of Aquinas:

> All are agreed that the imagination is a most potent force; and both by argument and by experience they prove that a man's own body may be most extensively affected by his imagination. For they argue that as the imagination examines the images of objects perceived by the senses, it excites in the appetitive faculty either fear or shame or anger or sorrow; and these emotions so affect a man with heat or cold that his body either grows pale or reddens, and he consequently becomes joyful and exultant, or torpid and dejected. (2004, 1)

For Scot, lovers may be chameleonic not now because the beloved provides them with the oxygen they need, but because the beloved's image sets off a psychophysiological process that starts in the imagination and finishes in a reddened face. As in Priscian/Theophrastus, that process is both absorptive and projective in so far as the imagination assimilates the beloved's image either as stored in the "heart", or memory, as in Scot, or conveyed to it by the senses, as in Guazzo, and then stimulates an emotional response which is externalised in the blush. The role of the imagination as facilitating the sympathy on which what I earlier identified as a Keatsian "inter-subjective absorption" depends is crucial. No imagination, no sympathy, as Adam Smith would later argue in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), which underlies Hazlitt's model of the imagination and Keats's of the chameleon poet: "By the imagination we place ourselves in his [our imagined brother on the rack] situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him" (1976, 9). Neither Scot nor Guazzo draw any analogy between blushing and the chameleon, but Thomas Nashe's use in *Lenten Stuff* (1598) of the verb "to chameleonize" with exactly this sense when writing of King Herring - "from white to red you chameleonized" (1972, 434) - suggests that the connection was current.

Shakespeare knew it was possible to "meet in some fresh cheek the power of fancy" (*As You Like It*, 3.5.30). After an earlier experiment in *The Rape of Lucrece*, where "two red fires" [...] blazed" in the faces of Lucrece and her

"duteous vassal" (ll. 1353, 1360), he depicted the sympathetic embarrassment of the mutual first-sight attraction between Edward III and the Countess of Salisbury:[25]

> Lo, when she blushed, even then did he look pale,
> As if her cheeks by some enchanted power
> Attracted had the cherry blood from his.
> Anon, with reverent fear when she grew pale,
> His cheeks put on their scarlet ornaments,
> But no more like her oriental red
> Than brick to coral or live things to dead. (*Edward III*, 1.1.172-8)

In this sensitive portrayal of the inter-subjective absorption of lovers, the process by which the Countess's cheeks draw the blood from Edward "by some enchanted power" reproduces the physiological workings of what Scot called "natural witchcraft for love" (2004, 410); and the Countess's blush is duly met with the royal flush as Edward's cheeks become in reciprocation "that external arena of the emotions of the soul—that focus of every involuntary exhibition of internal feeling and sympathy" (Burgess 115; qtd. Ricks 1984, 56).

The blush and embarrassment are central to Christopher Ricks's seminal *Keats and Embarrassment* (1984), whose contention that Keats was "acute to embarrassment and probably more widely and subtly gifted with powers of empathy than any other English poet" (1984, 24) might be extended to embrace Shakespeare. Like Scot and Guazzo, Ricks makes no allusion to the chameleon but does note Charles Darwin's view that "Blushing is the most peculiar and the most human of all expressions. Monkeys redden from passion, but it would require an overwhelming amount of evidence to make us believe that any animal could blush" (1872, 310; qtd. 50). The chameleon is only of interest to Darwin for morphological differences in the skull between males and females of the species *chameleon bifurcus* (2004, 404-5). However, Darwin's grandfather Erasmus Darwin wrote in *Zoonomia* (1794), which Keats might have read,[26] that

> like the fable of the chameleon, all animals may possess a tendency to be coloured somewhat like the colours they most frequently inspect […] Nor is this more wonderful than that a single idea of imagination should in an instant colour the whole surface of a body in a bright scarlet, as in the blush of shame, though by a very different process" (1794, 1.511-12; qtd. Carmarda 2019, 52-3).

[25] Although the play is a collaborative work and the attribution of authorship highly contentious, Shakespeare's contribution is generally considered to include this scene. For a recent survey of the scholarship, see Proudfoot and Bennet, eds. (2017, 49-89; on this scene, 68).

[26] See Camarda (2019, 53).

Between Scot and Guazzo on the one hand and Erasmus Darwin on the other there is a continuity of psychosomatic theory connecting the imagination and red-faced embarrassment which only consolidates the conceptual and practical affinities between Keats and Shakespeare, two chameleon poets whose survival into posterity is sustained by a shared capacity of self-denying, sympathetic absorption. Keats's chameleon was no spontaneous generation but the outcome of a long and complex evolutionary history of conceptual cross-fertilisation between ancient and early modern zoology and psychology. Similarly, the projective, sympathetic imagination, emblematised in the blush, was no late-Enlightenment or Romantic invention, but a long-perceived phenomenon, theorised in humanist and early modern psychological writings and represented in poetry and on stage. As is often the case in intellectual history, the trite, general conclusion would seem to be that there is nothing new under the sun, beneath which basks the bashful chameleon, unembarrassed by its ignorance, colourfully attuned to existence; and that, like the versicoloured reptile, writers and thinkers assimilate unconsciously concepts and ideas that float like Shelley's leaves on the incessant winds of history.

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DIE ANTHROPOMORPHISIERTE GESTALT DES KATERS IM MÄRCHEN „DER GESTIEFELTE KATER" DER BRÜDER GRIMM UND DER MÄRCHENSERIE „PETTERSON UND FINDUS" VON SVEN NORDQVIST

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ABSTRACT. ***The Anthropomorphized Cat Figure in the Fairy Tale "Puss in Boots" by the Grimm Brothers and the Fairy Tale Series "Pettson and Findus" by Sven Nordqvist.*** This paper attempts to bring together three scientific fields that have always fascinated fairy-tale researchers and readers: fairy tales, psychology and anthropology. Almost all fairy tales deal with central stages and problems of human life. Thus, fairy tales, psychology, as well as anthropology deal with themes that reflect the reality of one's own person. The selected areas, which are intended to make the given analysis possible, serve to describe the way of life of the human hero and their animal companion and to describe both of their character developments, which take place with the help and thanks to the animal. Grimms' Fairy Tales were the most published written works in the world after the Bible and the Quran. During that time, *Children's and Household Tales* caught the attention of several authors of world literature; therefore, some fairy tales of this collection served as the basis for numerous literary' fairy tales.
With these considerations and for these reasons, this article aims to analyse and draw comparisons between the Grimm fairy tale *Puss in Boots* and the fairy tale series *Pettson and Findus* by the Swedish author Sven Nordqvist.

Keywords: *Puss in Boots, Findus, anthropological psychology, anthropomorphism, comparative analysis*

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REZUMAT. ***Figura antropomorfizată a motanului în povestea „Motanul încălțat" de Frații Grimm și în seria de basme „Pettson și Findus" de Sven Nordqvist.*** Această lucrare își propune să reunească trei domenii științifice care i-au fascinat dintotdeauna pe cercetătorii și cititorii de basme: basmul, psihologia și antropologia. Majoritatea basmelor tratează subiecte și probleme centrale ale vieții umane; atât basmele, cât și psihologia și antropologia abordează teme care reflectă realitatea propriei persoane. Domeniile selectate, pe a căror bază se structurează analiza servesc la descrierea modului în care eroii umani și companionii animali ai acestora își modelează viața și cum aceștia evoluează și se dezvoltă grație ajutorului unui animal. Culegerea de basme a fraților Grimm a fost a treia cea mai frecvent publicată scriere în lume, după Biblie și după Coran. De-a lungul vremurilor *Poveștile Fraților Grimm* au influențat mulți autori din literatura universală; unele basme din colecție au fost surse de inspirație pentru numeroase basme culte. Pe baza acestor considerente lucrarea de față își propune să realizeze o analiză comparativă între basmul din culegerea fraților Grimm *Motanul Încălțat* și seria de basme *Pettson și Findus* a autorului suedez Sven Nordqvist.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Motanul încălțat, Findus, psihologie antropologică, antropomorfizare, analiză comparativă*

Für Berti und Rógyi

Einleitung. Anthropologische Psychologie, Anthropomorphisierung und Implikationen

Der vorliegende Beitrag sieht eine sowohl literarische als auch psychologische vergleichende Analyse des Märchens *Der gestiefelte Kater* der Brüder Grimm und der Märchenserie *Pettersson und Findus* von Sven Nordqvist vor. Für den psychologischen Leitfaden dieser Analyse wird auch die Anthropologie miteinbezogen, weil die tierischen Hauptfiguren der beiden Autoren menschliche Züge aufweisen, und diese menschlichen Eigenschaften können nur mit der Hilfe einer anthropologischen Psychologie gedeutet werden. Drei derartige wissenschaftlichen Bereiche werden also in der Arbeit zusammengebracht, die Märchenforscher und Leser immer faszinierten: Märchen, Psychologie und Anthropologie. Fast alle Märchen thematisieren zentrale Etappen und Probleme des menschlichen Lebens und sowohl Märchen als auch Psychologie und Anthropologie beschäftigen sich mit Themen, die die Wirklichkeit der eigenen Person widerspiegeln. Die ausgewählten Bereiche, die den Aufbau der Analyse möglich machen sollen, dienen der Beschreibung einer Lebensgestaltung der

menschlichen Helden, die bei den beiden Autoren ohne Hilfe eines Tieres undenkbar wären. In der Analyse wird von der Idee ausgegangen, dass die beiden tierischen Hauptfiguren der ausgewählten Kater-Märchen auffallende Ähnlichkeiten miteinander zeigen, vor allem was ihre menschlichen Charaktereigenschaften, aber auch ihre helfende Funktion neben einem Menschen in der Handlung anbelangt. Sowohl der Grimm'sche Kater als auch Findus verändern das Leben ihrer Herren auf eine prägnante Weise, indem sie den Müllerssohn wie auch den alten Pettersson eindeutig in die Richtung eines besseren Schicksals lenken. Gegenwärtig liegt die Vermutung nahe, dass Sven Nordqvist sich seinen Findus ganzheitlich nach dem Vorbild des Grimm'schen Katers vorgestellt habe, diese These ist zwar nicht ganz überprüfbar, aber viele Ähnlichkeiten in der Konzeption der Figuren in den beiden Märchen sprechen für diese Hypothese. Gerade deswegen versucht die vorliegende Arbeit, Beweise für diese Hypothese zu sammeln und diese Beweise vor dem Hintergrund der ausgewählten Forschungsmethoden auszuwerten.

Die Geschichte des gestiefelten Katers wie auch diejenige von Findus sind im 21. Jahrhundert wohlbekannt. Der Leser kann sich deswegen ganz auf die Kombinationen und Wechselwirkungen verschiedener Phänomene konzentrieren. So wird er die Märchen seiner Kindheit aus einem anderen Blickwinkel betrachten, dadurch auch die Handlungen der Charaktere besser verstehen und eine Chance des Einblicks in die Motivation der Hauptprotagonisten haben. Mithilfe dieser Chance wird er erfahren, was sich hinter den Kulissen der Märchen abspielt und wie man diese Informationen in der Erziehung einsetzen kann.

Um diesen Einblick in die Welt des Vergleichs des vorliegenden Beitrags zu erleichtern, müssen weiterhin psychologische und anthropologische Leitfäden der Forschung erklärt werden. Die Psychologie mit einem anthropologischen Diskurs zu versehen, ist keine Erfindung des 21. Jahrhunderts; die neue Richtung der Forschung stellt sich die Frage, ob die anthropologischen Grundlagen psychologischer Beratungstheorien noch zeitgemäß sind (Weismann 2009, 1). Detlev v. Uslar sagt in seinem Vortrag im Seminar für Angewandte Psychologie in Zürich, dass anthropologische Psychologie eine Haltung, eine Perspektive und eine Weise der Betrachtung der Psychologie als Wissenschaft und Praxis ist und gerade diese Beziehung zur Praxis zeigt prägnant, dass „es in der Psychologie immer um den Menschen geht." (Uslar 1996, 221). In seinem Artikel stellt Uslar sich Fragen über die wichtigsten menschlichen Charaktereigenschaften, also praktisch fragt er sich selbst über die Menschenwürde, über Eigenschaften, die den Menschen zum Menschen machen, folglich ist seine Schlussfolgerung, dass man nach derartigen Zügen suchen solle, welche den Menschen von den Tieren unterscheidet (Uslar 1996, 208).

Weil der Grimm'sche Kater und Findus in den Märchen anthropomorphisiert werden, muss in der Analyse der vorliegenden Arbeit bei den beiden Protagonisten trotz ihres tierischen Wesens eben nach derartigen menschlichen Eigenschaften gesucht werden, die den beiden Tieren erlauben, wie Menschen während der Handlung des Märchens zu denken und zu handeln bzw. für ihre Taten wie Menschen beurteilt zu werden. Die Anthropomorphisierung der Tiere zeigt „ein Kulturverhalten, das sich offensichtlich unbeschadet der Veränderungen im Weltbild vom frühen Altertum über Christianisierung, Mittelalter, Aufklärung und weiter bis ins 21. Jahrhundert erhalten hat." (Dichtl 2008, 4). Tiere hatten in den Märchen immer wieder die Chance, wie Menschen zu handeln, aber um eine menschliche Handlung durchführen zu können, hatten sie stets die wichtigste menschliche Eigenschaft auch nötig: das Sprechen. Sowohl bei Uslar (Uslar 1996, 208) als auch bei Dichtl erscheint das Sprechen an erster Stelle in der Liste der unmittelbar nötigen menschlichen Eigenschaften, die das Tier in einen Menschen verwandeln können. Dichtl sagt aus, dass „Fabeln, Sagen, Legenden, Märchen, Epen, Romane, d. h. Literatur im weitesten Sinne, voll von verbalen Äußerungen von Tieren ist, sei es in Form von Rat, Drohung, Warnung, Bitte, Trost, Fluch oder Predigt..." (Dichtl 2008, 7). Demzufolge handelt es sich im vierten Teil des vorliegenden Beitrags um die menschlichen Eigenschaften, vor allem eben um die Sprache, die einem Tier die Rolle eines Menschen erlauben bzw. versichern können.

Von der Wichtigkeit einer psychologischen Märchenanalyse

Als Kunstwerk hat das Märchen viele Aspekte, die der Erforschung wert sind; derartige Aspekte sind z. B. die psychologische Bedeutung und Wirkung der Märchentexte. Durch eine psychologische Analyse öffnet sich der Weg dazu, alte Bedeutungen zu erweitern oder mittels neuer zu ergänzen. Der tiefere Sinn des Märchens ist in verschiedenen Zeiten des Lebens eines Kindes anders. Je nach seinen Interessen und Bedürfnissen entnimmt das Kind demselben Märchen einen unterschiedlichen Sinn. Laut Bruno Bettelheim fangen Eltern normalerweise mit dem Vorlesen eines bestimmten Märchens für ihr Kind an, und wenn die Geschichte dem Kind nicht gefällt, bedeutet das, dass die Motive oder Themen dieser Geschichte in dem gegebenen Augenblick seines Lebens in ihm keine sinnvollen Reaktionen wecken (Bettelheim 2012, 25). Diese sind wahrscheinlich auch die Gründe, weshalb die Pädagogik, Didaktik und vor allem die Psychologie ein großes Interesse an den Fragen der Märchenforschung haben. Märcheninterpretationen unterschiedlicher Ausrichtung nehmen signifikant zu; diese Interpretationen haben oft als Ziel, ein besseres Verständnis der Motivationen

und Interessen der Kinder zu entwickeln, sie tragen zu einem tieferen Einblick in den Charakter der Kinder bei.

Viele Forscher betrachten Märchen als Wunscherfüllungen (Pöge-Alder 2016, 234-235), andere sprechen über Märchen als Manifestation von Reifungswegen (Bettelheim 2012, 33). Diese Forschungsrichtungen gehen im Allgemeinen von der wichtigen Charaktereigenschaft der Märchen aus, laut deren in den Märchentexten derartige innere Vorgänge zum Ausdruck gebracht werden, die in der Darstellung der Märchengestalten und Ereignisse verständlich werden (Bettelheim 2012, 33). Diese inneren Vorgänge müssen sowohl vom Erwachsenen als auch vom Kind verstanden werden. Im 21. Jahrhundert liegt, noch mehr als in früheren Zeiten, die wichtigste und schwierigste Aufgabe der Erziehung darin, dem Kind bei der Suche nach dem Sinn des Lebens zu helfen. Laut Bettelheim muss das Kind in seiner Entwicklung lernen, „sich selbst immer besser zu verstehen; dann vermag es auch andere zu verstehen und schließlich befriedigende und sinnvolle Beziehungen mit ihnen herzustellen." (Bettelheim 2012, 9).

Zu den psychologischen Problemen des Heranwachsens gehören unter anderem Enttäuschungen und soziale Schwierigkeiten. Das Kind muss sich „aus kindlichen Abhängigkeiten lösen und Selbstbewusstsein, Selbstwertgefühl und moralisches Pflichtbewusstsein erwerben." (Bettelheim 2012, 13). Die literarische Gattung, die dem Kind mit diesen Aufgaben helfen möchte und auch kann, ist das Märchen, dass generell ein existentielles Dilemma kurz und pointiert feststellt und damit dem Kind eine Begegnung mit dem eigenen Unbewussten erlaubt (Bettelheim 2012, 15). Der Märchenheld, wie auch das moderne Kind des 21. Jahrhunderts, fühlt sich oft isoliert und auf sich gestellt, aber er erfährt Hilfe dank eines Baumes, eines Tieres, der Natur; und sein Schicksal „verleiht dem Kind die Überzeugung: auch wenn es sich wie ausgestoßen und verlassen fühlen mag..., wird es im Lauf seines Lebens Schritt für Schritt geleitet und Hilfe erfahren, wenn es sie braucht." (Bettelheim 2012, 18). Geschichten oder Charaktere wie der gestiefelte Kater, der mit List Erfolg für seinen Herren und für sich selbst erringt, bilden den menschlichen Charakter durch die Hoffnung, dass auch der Schwächste es im Leben zu etwas bringen kann und auch ihm vom Schicksal geholfen wird, selbst wenn diese Hilfe von einem Tier geleistet wird. „Der Kern dieser Geschichten ist nicht die Moral, sondern vielmehr die Versicherung, dass man Erfolg haben kann." (Bettelheim 2012, 16).

Jungs Schülerin Marie-Louise von Franz, die viele Märchen der Weltliteratur aus einer psychologischen Perspektive analysiert und kategorisiert hat, schreibt dem Märchen eine symbolische Bedeutung zu und versucht, sie in ihrem Monumentalwerk *Symbolik des Märchens* aus einem Blickwinkel der Symbole zu beobachten und zu deuten. Märchenmotive- und Protagonisten mit einer symbolischen Bedeutung auszurüsten, ist also keinerlei neue Erfindung; im 21.

Jahrhundert aber auch keine leichte Aufgabe, wenn der Forscher die Absicht hat, Gemeinplätzen zu vermeiden und sich von ihnen fernzuhalten. Im vierten Kapitel des vorliegenden Artikels beginnt die Analyse eben aus diesen Gründen mit einer kurzen Symboldeutung der Figur der Katze bzw. des Katers – generell in Märchen, aber spezifisch im Märchen *Der gestiefelte Kater*.

Die Stellung des Grimm'schen „gestiefelten" Katers -und des Findus in der Weltliteratur

Die Idee des "gestiefelten" Katers kann und muss als Idealtyp aufgefasst werden, ebenso wie man, laut der Äußerung von Max Lüthi, die Gestalt des europäischen Volksmärchens betrachten sollte: „... die einzelnen Erzählungen umkreisen ihn, nähern sich ihm, ohne ihn je ganz zu erreichen." (Lüthi 1998, 47). In den Anmerkungen aus der Erstausgabe (1812/1815) der *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* kann der Leser den inneren Kampf der Brüder Grimm näher kennenlernen, indem er einen Einblick in diejenigen Gedanken der Gebrüder gewinnen kann, die später zu der Eliminierung des Tierschwanks[2] aus den späteren Ausgaben geführt haben. Diese Anmerkungen sagen klar aus, dass „dies Märchen unter die bekanntesten und verbreitetsten gehört" (Rölleke 2007, 1134), dass es schon von Perrault oder Basile gut erzählt wurde, bzw. dass die deutschen Übersetzungen nach Perrault eine bestimmte Verdrehung des Namens Carabas in Sabarak beinhalten (Rölleke 2007, 1134). Die ursprüngliche Idee eines helfenden, mit Stiefel versehenen Katers ist also in mehreren Sprachen präsent; die Gebrüder Grimm sind durch die Familie Hassenpflug inspiriert worden. Diese Familie, die als eine der frühesten und ergiebigsten Quellen der *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* gilt, hat ausschließlich Französisch gesprochen, folglich war eine Übereinstimmung des Hassenpflug'schen Repertoires mit französischen Märchenfassungen des 18. Jahrhunderts unvermeidbar (Rölleke 2004, 77). Rölleke meint, dass „die Brüder Grimm, die das bemerkt haben, sich für die Eliminierung des Gestiefelten Kater entschieden hätten, mit der Begründung, dass das Märchen zu wörtlich nach Perrault klingt." (Rölleke 2004, 77). Das Schwankmärchen wird durch die Brüder Grimm als bruchstückartig angegeben (Uther 2013, 407), trotzdem „finden sich im Handexemplar der Brüder Grimm handschriftliche Korrekturen, die beweisen, dass die Autoren sich für den Fortfall des Märchens erst später entschieden haben." (Uther 2013, 407).

Die deutschen Übersetzungen, die schon seit der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts existieren, weisen also auf eine allzu offensichtliche Abhängigkeit

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[2] Vgl. die Gattungsgliederung von Uther, der das Märchen über den gestiefelten Kater auch in seinem *Handbuch zu den „Kinder- und Hausmärchen" der Brüder Grimm* mehrmals als Schwankmärchen (S. 407, 410) bezeichnet.

von Charles Perraults weitverbreiteter Fassung hin, außerdem noch war Perraults Märchen dasjenige, das auch weitere literarische Fassungen, z. B. von Ludwig Tieck oder E.T.A. Hoffmann, beeinflusste (Uther 2013, 407). Die Geschichte des sprechenden und gestiefelten Katers hat aber auch Wurzeln in der italienischen Literatur, bei Basile oder Straparola, auch wenn bei diesen Autoren das Märchen „den Eindruck einer schwankhaft umgesetzten Erzählung erweckt" (Uther 2013, 409). Die Vielzahl sprichwörtlicher Redensarten und Wendungen, die den Text durchweben, machen ihn anschaulicher, außerdem weist der Tierhelfer, der oft schlau und ohne Gewissensbisse handelt, Ähnlichkeiten mit einem typischen Schwankmärchenhelden auf, der seinem Herren Hilfe leistet. Sein Handeln führt am Ende der Geschichte zu seiner Belohnung, indem er zum ersten Minister ernannt wird, obwohl z. B. bei Perrault diese Belohnung kleiner ist und dem Kater nur die Position eines großen Ranges versichert wird (Uther 2013, 409). Nicht nur die italienischen Versionen, sondern auch diejenige von Perrault unterscheiden sich von dem Grimm'schen Märchen. Bei dem französischen Autor hält der Tierhelfer alle Fäden in der Hand, im Unterschied zu seinem Besitzer: Er ist der Aktive, der Schlaue, er handelt, während der Müllerssohn nur der Empfänger ist, der Geleitete, allein und zu keinem Handeln fähig ist (Uther 2013, 408).

Das Helfertier ist mit seinen Aktionen aber keine Erfindung Perraults oder der italienischen Autoren; der Held des Schwankmärchens, das heute zu den sogenannten Lieblingsmärchen zählt (Uther 2013, 410), zeigt Ähnlichkeiten zu den Figuren Reineke Fuchs, Till Eulenspiegel oder Lazarillo de Tormes, die während der jahrelangen Herausbildung des Bürgertums und des Handwerks in einem komplizierten Netz wechselseitiger Unter- und Überordnungen zum Leben gekommen sind (Uther 2013, 411). Die Darstellungsart dieser lokalen Geschichten kann als Folge haben, dass sie sich, nach der Meinung von Max Lüthi, zu Märchen entwickeln, weil sie als Element der mündlichen Volkskultur lebensfähig und durch Jahrhunderte hindurch beliebt und wirksam gewesen sind (Lüthi 1998, 54-55). Marie-Louise von Franz bestätigt Lüthis Aussage, indem sie behauptet, dass diese Aussage wahrscheinlich korrekt sei und laut dieser, Märchen die Abstraktion von lokalen Legenden in einer kondensierten Form sind.[3]

Die Gebrüder Grimm sind auch nicht die Einzigen auf deutschem Gebiet, die das Märchen vom gestiefelten Kater übernommen haben. In ihren Anmerkungen aus der Erstausgabe schreiben die Brüder darüber, auch wenn es nur sehr kurz geschieht, dass „Tieck es dramatisch bearbeitet hat." (Rölleke 2007, 1134). Für

[3] "… afirmația lui Lüthi este probabil corectă: basmele sunt niște abstractizări ale legendelor locale, aduse la o formă condensată." In: Von Franz, Marie-Louise: *Interpretarea basmelor*. Bukarest 2019, S. 40.

die deutschen Autoren war es nicht schwer, das Perraultsche Katermärchen zu finden, denn seit 1830 erschien es in Feen-Anthologien des deutschen Marktes, sogar in illustrierten Bilderbüchern als Einzelausgabe (Uther 2013, 411). Berühmte Offizinen, wie die aus München, haben zahlreiche Märchenadaptationen mehrfach aufgelegt, unter ihnen auch diejenige über den gestiefelten Kater (Uther 2013, 412-413). „Das Katermärchen gehört zu den bekanntesten Erzählungen aus dem Themenkreis *Dankbare/hilfreiche Tiere*“ (Uther 2013, 407), daher hat es auch Ludwig Bechstein im Jahre 1851 als eine Einzelausgabe mit Farblithographien in Stuttgart veröffentlicht und als deutsches Märchen bezeichnet, obwohl er sich gegen die Aufnahme des Tierschwanks in seine vielfach aufgelegten und zu seiner Zeit schnell populär (Wild 2008, 115) gewordenen Sammlungen entscheidet (Uther 2013, 413). So findet der Leser die Figur des Katers und diejenige des Müllerssohns weder in dem *Deutschen Märchenbuch* (1845) noch in dem *Neuen deutschen Märchenbuch* (1856). Uther meint dazu, dass Bechstein das Schwankmärchen vielleicht als zu literarisch angesehen, und die Durchschimmerung des französischen oder italienischen Vorbilds als zu stark empfunden hat (Uther 2013, 413).

Die späteren Adaptierungen des *Gestiefelten Katers* bearbeiten die weltweit bekannte Entwicklungsgeschichte auf sehr unterschiedliche Weise; die Figur des Tierhelfers steht aber in jeder Geschichte im Mittelpunkt, selbst wenn sie auf eine nicht konventionelle, nicht unbedingt Grimm'sche Weise zu ihrem Herren gelangt. Ob das Grimm'sche Märchen den Bilderbuchgeschichten der Serie *Pettersson und Findus* als Grundlage oder Vorbild gedient hat, ist nur schwer zu überprüfen oder zu beweisen. Wenn der Forscher eine Antwort auf diese Frage bekommen möchte bzw. einen Vergleich zwischen dem Märchen und der Märchenserie vorhat, muss er seine Schlussfolgerungen auf jeden Fall nicht nach Inhalten, sondern nach der Figur des Katers formulieren. Sven Nordqvist, der 1946 in Helsingborg (Schweden) geboren ist, sein ganzes Leben lang gezeichnet und gemalt hat und unter anderen als Architekt, Lehrer und Grafiker tätig war, ist der Autor der Geschichten von Pettersson und Findus. Im Jahre 1983, als er *Eine Geburtstagstorte für die Katze* (Nordqvist 1983) veröffentlicht, plant er noch keine Findus-Serie, später aber wollen die zwei Hauptprotagonisten des Märchens, der Alte und sein Kater, ihn nicht wieder verlassen (Nordqvist 2021, 136). Gleichermaßen wird auch der Kater Findus für immer bei Pettersson leben, ab dem Moment, als ihn der Alte als kleines Kätzchen von seiner Nachbarin geschenkt bekommt. In einem Pappkarton mit der Aufschrift *Findus grüne Erbsen*, auf einem grün gestreiften Stück Stoff, sitzt das Katzenjunge, das so klein ist, dass es Platz in der Hand des Alten hat. So werden „für Pettersson die Tage viel leichter“ (Nordqvist 2021, 19), weil das Haus „nicht mehr leer“ (Nordqvist 2021, 19) ist. Mit der Entscheidung, die erste

Geschichte über Findus fortzusetzen, ist die interessante, manchmal seltsame aber auch lustige Welt einer Märchenkette entstanden, in welcher das Kätzchen Findus den alten Pettersson vor der Einsamkeit rettet und für immer als Tierhelfer des Alten agieren wird.

Der „gestiefelte" Kater und Findus – ein Vergleich

Die Gestalt der Katze bzw. des Katers hat Wissenschaftler und Laien der verschiedensten Bereiche und Kreise zu jeder Zeit interessiert. Eine vergleichende Analyse des gestiefelten Katers und des Katerjunges Findus kann in dem vorliegenden Beitrag ohne eine Symboldeutung dieses Tieres nicht durchgeführt werden. Leonhard Reiter meint, dass „in der Katze sich ein guter Ausgleich von Symbiose und Autonomie, Eigenständigkeit und Lebensgenuss, Hingabe und Selbstbehauptung, Freude und Genuss, sowie Unabhängigkeit erkennen lässt." (Reiter 2018, 45). Im dritten Teil des Artikels wurde schon erwähnt, dass die französische Variante des Märchens die führende, aktive Funktion des gestiefelten Katers in den Vordergrund setzt, während die deutsche Fassung eher eine Freundschaftsbeziehung zwischen dem Müllerssohn und dem Kater darstellt. Dieses einerseits unabhängige und autonome, andererseits freundliche Benehmen ist typisch für den gestiefelten Kater, während Nordqvists Findus eher eine Art Vater-Kind-Beziehung zu dem Alten pflegt, trotz des Umstandes, dass er seinen Herren mehrmals als seinen Freund bezeichnet. „Aber du bist und bleibst mein allerbester Freund" (Nordqvist 2021, 36), sagt Findus im Märchen *Wie Findus zu Pettersson kam*, und die Antwort von Pettersson ist darauf: «„Mmmm", sagte der Alte und lächelte. „Und das ist gut so."» (Nordqvist 2021, 36). Diese Freundschaft wird also in der Märchenserie *Pettersson und Findus* auch vom menschlichen Hauptprotagonisten bestätigt. Im Märchen *Der gestiefelte Kater* aber finden wir die Spuren einer derartigen Aussage auf keinen Fall; der Müllerssohn spricht nie von einer Freundschaft zwischen ihm und dem Kater. Die Katze, die generell die Nähe des Menschen sucht, sich aber ihm nie ganz unterwirft, ist Zeichen einer idealen autonomen Freundschaft und Treue (Reiter 2018, 45); während sich aber diese Treue in *Pettersson und Findus* die ganze Märchenserie über von beiden Seiten manifestiert, ist sie im *Gestiefelten Kater* bis zum Ende der Handlung einseitig, und erst nach seinen vielen Bemühungen bekommt der Kater seine Belohnung, indem er Minister bzw. großer Herr (in der französischen Variante) vom Müllerssohn genannt wird.

Günter Butzer und Joachim Jacob heben noch zwei symbolische Seiten der Katze hervor, nämlich die des geheimnisvollen bzw. des grausamen und unberechenbaren Begleiters (Butzer/Joachim 2012, 211). Die Katze, meistens in männlicher Gestalt, erscheint in den Märchen als eine geheimnisvolle

Helferfigur, im Falle des *Gestiefelten Katers* in der Begleitung eines schwachen aber moralisch guten Menschen (Butzer/Joachim 2012, 211). Ob der Müllerssohn gut ist oder nicht, ist diskutierbar, schwach ist er in jedem Fall. Der alte Pettersson, Findus´ Herr, ist moralisch gut, freundlich, zeigt dem kleinen Kater eine große Fürsorge und behandelt ihn wie das eigene Kind, ohne aber schwach zu sein. Der kleine Findus aber funktioniert, dem gestiefelten Kater gleich, als Helferfigur, indem er den Alten von der Einsamkeit befreit und sein Leben schöner und abenteuerlicher gestaltet. Pettersons Beziehung zu dem kleinen Kater ist von Anfang an von einer elterlichen Fürsorge bestimmt. Aus dem Dialog mit der Nachbarin Beda Andersson, die dem Alten den Kater schenkt, kann der Leser den wohlwollenden Charakter von Pettersson entnehmen: „»Kriegt er nicht Sehnsucht nach seiner Mama?« »Vielleicht ein paar Tage, aber dann vergisst er sie. Du musst dich um ihn kümmern und seine neue Mama werden.« »Mama...« sagte Pettersson ein bisschen dümmlich und sah glücklich das beißende Katzenjunge an.“ (Nordqvist 2021, 18).

Wenn der Leser bei Uther darüber liest, dass psychologische Interpretationen des Katermärchens die Figur des Müllerssohns im Zusammenhang mit der Entwicklung eines jungen Menschen sehen, dessen Mutter, verkörpert durch den Kater, ihm den Weg bereitet (Uther 2013, 413), kann er sich darüber Gedanken machen, dass in der Märchenserie *Pettersson und Findus* genau die umgekehrte Beziehung zu sehen ist, auch wenn der kleine Kater als Freund und Helfer des Alten bezeichnet wird.

Im Falle beider Katergestalten manifestiert sich also die geheimnisvolle Seite auf der Ebene des Erwachsen-seins und der Kindheit. Der *gestiefelte* Kater kann allerlei Aufgaben für seinen Herren erledigen, seine Begabung gehört einer phantastischen Welt an, während Findus, einem Kind gleich, sonderbare Wesen im Haus von Pettersson sieht, die der Phantasiewelt eines Kindes angehören und die nur er wahrnehmen kann. Er spricht oft mit diesen Wesen namens Mucklas, spielt mit ihnen, und lässt sich von ihnen helfen. „»Die Mucklas haben mir geholfen. Sie sind meine Freunde. Die wohnen auch hier.« »Aha«, sagte Pettersson nur ein bisschen erstaunt. »Wenn du es sagst, ist es wohl so. Dann brauch ich mich nie mehr einsam fühlen. Ich habe Nachbarn, Hühner und Mucklas. Und dann hab ich diesen kleinen Kater.«“ (Nordqvist 2021, 35).

Die geheimnisvolle Seite des gestiefelten Katers steht auch in Verbindung mit einer gewissen Grausamkeit: Er fängt und tötet viele Tiere, um seinem Herrn helfen zu können und er tut das ohne Gewissensbisse. Findus ist auf keinen Fall grausam, aber er besitzt die typischen egoistischen Eigenschaften eines Kindes, die den alten Pettersson manchmal ärgern. So belügt Findus den neuen und schönen Hahn von Pettersson und vertreibt ihn aus dem Hof, nur weil dieser zu oft und zu laut kräht und ihn damit ärgert und stört, aber am

Ende der Geschichte *Findus und der Hahn im Korb* (Nordqvist 2021, 83-108) wird er dem Alten gestehen, dass er am Verschwinden des Hahns schuldig ist und sich dafür schämt (Nordqvist 2021, 107).

An den Symboldeutungen der Katze bzw. des Katers kann die Anthropomorphisierung des Tieres geschlossen werden. Im ersten Teil des vorliegenden Beitrags wurde darauf hingewiesen, dass der erste Faktor, der das Tier menschenähnlich macht, nach der Meinung von Forschern das Sprechen sei, wobei hinter den sprechenden Tieren aber immer der Autor eines Textes, also ein Mensch steckt (Dichtl 2008, 5). Der Einsatz des anthropomorphisierten Tieres im Märchen sollte bewirken, dass Inhalte oder Botschaften des Textes für die Kinder reizvoller und deutlicher vermittelt werden. Die Anthropomorphisierung des Tieres sollte in dem vorliegenden Artikel also nicht aus biologischer Perspektive, sondern als kulturelle Erscheinung gedeutet werden. Die Sprache als Teil der Anthropomorphisierung versichert einem Tier im Märchen die Fähigkeit, dass es sich als Mensch ausdrücken und handeln und dadurch im sozialen Netzwerk der Menschheit eine wichtige Rolle spielen kann. Bernd Wollenweber macht den Leser darauf aufmerksam, dass Märchen wichtige soziale Funktionen erfüllen können (Wollenweber 1998, 65), demnach ist es eindeutig, dass sprechende Tiere als Protagonisten eines Märchens auch eine derartige Funktion haben können, indem sie in der Lage sind wichtige soziale Botschaften eben durch ihre Fähigkeit zum Sprechen dem Leser zu vermitteln.

Eine derartige Botschaft in den Märchen betrifft die Freundschaft, die generell als eine informelle, soziale Zweierbeziehung betrachtet werden kann, in der zu Beginn es sich meistens um eine Austauschbeziehung handelt, später aber in eine prosoziale Beziehung übergeht, die eine intrinsische Motivation hat und Hilfe ohne Erwartung der Gegenleistung thematisiert (Kuchta/Weber 2017, 315). Dankbarkeit für die Hilfe, die eben im Rahmen einer Freundschaft zwischen Mensch und Tier in den ausgewählten Märchen beobachtet werden kann, spielt auch eine große Rolle in jeder Gesellschaft, da sie „die Gegenseitigkeit zwischen Menschen begünstigt" (Kuchta/Weber 2017, 316). Freundschaft und Dankbarkeit sind menschliche Prärogative, die aber für den anthropomorphisierten gestiefelten Kater und für Findus charakteristisch sind, im Falle des ersten sogar dermaßen, dass er durch diese Eigenschaften menschlicher als der Müllerssohn erscheint, der Dankbarkeit dem Kater gegenüber nur am Ende des Märchens und Freundschaft mit diesem beinahe überhaupt nicht zum Ausdruck bringt. Zwischen Findus und dem alten Pettersson manifestieren sich Freundschaft und Dankbarkeit in der ganzen Märchenserie in einem Gleichgewicht, das als typisch für eine ideale Mutter-Kind-Beziehung betrachtet werden kann, obwohl der alte Pettersson nach der traditionellen Geschlechtsbeschreibung als Vater bezeichnet werden sollte. Wenn Uthers schon erwähnte psychologische Deutung der Mutter-Sohn-Beziehung

des gestiefelten Katers und des Müllerssohns unter die Lupe genommen wird, kann hier gesagt werden, dass sich der Müllerssohn wie ein verwöhntes Kind des Katers verhält: Er nimmt die Hilfe an, betrachtet sie als etwas Selbstverständliches, ohne dafür dem Helfer gegenüber Dankbarkeit zu äußern.

Die sprechenden Hauptfiguren des Grimm'schen Märchens und der Märchenserie von Nordqvist erwerben ihre Menschlichkeit nicht nur mit Hilfe der Sprache, sondern auch mit der der Kleider. Kleidungsstücke werden ausschließlich von Menschen benutzt, um das Fell der Säugetiere, die Federn der Vögel, die Schuppen der Fische und der Reptilien usw. zu ersetzen. Der Grimm'sche Kater und Findus gewinnen ihre menschliche Qualität und einen sozialen Status dank der Sprache und der Kleider folgenderweise: Was sie sich von ihren Herren zuerst wünschen, sind Kleider. Der Kater spricht zum ersten Mal mit dem Müllerssohn, indem er seine Bitte um ein Paar Stiefel formuliert: „... laß mir nur ein Paar Stiefel machen, daß ich ausgehen kann und mich unter den Leuten sehen lassen, dann soll dir bald geholfen sein." (Rölleke 2007, 811). Findus spricht seine ersten Worte ebenso über das Erwerben eines Kleidungsstückes aus: „Eines Tages, als sie in einer Illustrierten blätterten, stellte Findus sich plötzlich mitten auf die Zeitschrift und betrachtete lange ein Bild von einem Clown, der eine große gestreifte Hose trug. »So eine Hose will ich auch haben« sagte Findus." (Nordqvist 2021, 21). Einem nicht menschlichen Wesen Kleidung zu geben, damit dieses Wesen als ein menschliches Individuum agieren kann, erinnert den Leser vielleicht an die Wichtelmänner des Märchens der Gebrüder Grimm, das denselben Titel trägt.[4]

Der arme Müllerssohn gibt dem Kater das Paar Stiefel, einen Namen aber nicht; bei Nordqvist findet die Namensgebung schon früher statt, noch bevor der alte Pettersson den kleinen Findus mit Hosen ausrüstet. Nachdem der Alte am Pappkarton, in dem das Katzenjunge zu ihm kommt, die Schrift *Findus grüne Erbsen* liest, entscheidet er sich sogleich, dem kleinen Tier denselben Namen zu geben: „»Hej Findus grüne Erbsen«, sagte Pettersson, und er hatte ein Gefühl, wie wenn man an einem Sommermorgen das Rollo hochzieht und das warme Sonnenlicht strömt herein." (Nordqvist 2021, 17). Die fehlende Namensgebung hat bei Grimm damit zu tun, dass der Müllerssohn den Kater am Anfang der Geschichte nicht haben, gar töten will. Bei Nordqvist ist es umgekehrt; obwohl für den alten Pettersson das unerwartete Geschenk seiner Nachbarin überraschend wirkt, entscheidet er sich in einem einzigen Augenblick dafür, das kleine Katzenjunge zu sich zu nehmen und für es zu sorgen. Bei Grimm also erfolgt die Entwicklung einer Freundschaft zwischen Mensch und

[4] Wichtelmännern oder Heinzelmännern Kleidungsstücke zu geben und damit zu bestätigen, dass sie eine menschliche Qualität besitzen, ist ein Thema, das in der Mythologie vieler europäischen Völker vorhanden ist.

Tier im Laufe der Geschichte, somit findet im Märchen eine Befriedigung statt: Gerade die wertlose Katze wird Mittel zum Ausgleich, durch sie wird das Glück des Benachteiligten das Glück seiner Brüder um so viel übertreffen, als es zu Anfang geringer war (Jolles 1998, 41).

Wie schon erwähnt, sind Märchen Wunschbilder, es soll aber auch überlegt werden, welche Implikationen diese Bilder für die Erziehung und für die Lebensgestaltung eines Kindes haben können. Laut Jolles muss im Märchen *Der gestiefelte Kater* mithilfe des Tiers die menschliche Ungerechtigkeit ausgeglichen werden, damit wieder Gleichgewicht in der Welt einkehrt (Jolles 1998, 41). Kinder sollen aus diesem Märchen Bewältigungsstrategien erlernen, die sie künftig in kritischen Situationen verwenden können, zugleich aber auch sich bewusst machen, dass ihnen in einem realen Leben kein Kater, kein helfendes Tier zur Seite gestellt wird. Aus diesem Grund müssen sie mit Hilfe des Märchens lernen, mit den Herausforderungen des Lebens zurechtzukommen. Diese Lehre existiert auch in der Märchenserie Pettersson und Findus, obwohl sie viel milder und moderner formuliert wird. Als Findus eines Tages beim Spielen zu seinem Weg in das Haus nicht mehr zurückfindet und ihn durch den übrigens harmlosen Dachs hinten im Garten ein heftiger Schreck fast lähmt, nimmt sich der alte Pettersson Zeit, dem kleinen Katzenjungen alles im Garten zu zeigen, und zu erklären, dass es, obwohl es noch viel lernen müsse, diese Arbeit nie allein machen werde.

„»Das war der alte Dachs. Der frisst keine Kater... Und hier ist es überhaupt nicht gefährlich. Am besten lernst du alle Löcher kennen, damit du weißt, wo du dich verstecken kannst... Lauf ein bisschen herum, ich setz mich so lange hierhin«... Findus sah sich zögernd um... Überall kroch er herum und untersuchte alles, hin und wieder reckte er irgendwo den Kopf und rief: »Hej, Pettersson!« Der Alte saß in der Sonne und sah zu, wie der Kater jeden Winkel hinter dem Tischlerschuppen und ein Stück hügelaufwärts kennenlernte." (Nordqvist 2021, 33-34).

Ein derartiges Bild über das Lernen versichert dem Kind, dem das Märchen vorgelesen wird, dass, obwohl das Finden eines eigenen Wegs manchmal schwierig ist, die Eltern bei den kompliziertesten Teilen dieses Weges immer neben ihm stehen und ihn unterstützen werden.

Wollenweber meint, dass der Optimismus der Märchenhelden sowie der Märchen im Allgemeinen psychologisch und damit für den Lebenserfolg des Kindes von größter Bedeutung sind (Wollenweber 1998, 67). Dieser Optimismus sollte aber mit einer Handlungsorientierung verknüpft werden. Das Kind sollte gegebenenfalls anhand des Märchens *Der gestiefelte Kater* und der Märchenserie *Pettersson und Findus* für eigene Probleme Lösungsstrategien (Kuchta/Weber 2017, 315) entwickeln, das passive Benehmen des Müllerssohns verwerfen, und

den aktiven Charakter des Katers zu schätzen lernen. Übrigens ist erwähnenswert, dass der Grimm'sche Kater nach dem Erwerben der menschlichen Qualität seine Handlungsorientierung entwickelt, während der Müllerssohn im Laufe der Geschichte immer lageorientierter wird und damit eher einem hilflosen Tier ähnelt. In diesem Märchen also „übernimmt der Kater für den Müllerssohn die Rolle einer Führungskraft“ (Kuchta/Weber 2017, 315), so zeigt er eine menschliche Eigeninitiative, die manchmal auch für Findus charakteristisch ist. Als an einem Tag Pettersson so aufwacht, dass er überhaupt zu nichts Lust hat und sehr traurig ist, versucht Findus alles, ihn fröhlicher zu stimmen und schließlich überzeugt er den Alten, mit ihm angeln zu gehen, sodass die beiden einen schönen Nachmittag am See verbringen werden (Nordqvist 1988).

Eigeninitiative zu haben, ist sowohl für Kinder als auch für Erwachsene eine Lektion, die sie lernen sollen, und die ihnen im Leben am meisten helfen kann. Wofür man aber diese Initiative nutzt, ist für den Menschen auch von besonderer Wichtigkeit. Es ist als positiv zu bewerten, dass der Müllerssohn vom Kater, der viel Eigeninitiative ausübt, zu Ruhm und Reichtum verholfen wird; die Handlungen des Katers verweisen jedoch auch auf das Böse im Menschen, „indem er Tücken anwendet, manipuliert und lügt, um an sein Ziel zu gelangen.“ (Kuchta/Weber 2017, 315). André Jolles spricht von einer Ethik des Handelns im Märchen *Der gestiefelte Kater* und behauptet, dass dieses Märchen letztendlich dem Leser keine moralische Befriedigung anbieten kann (Jolles 1998, 46). Seines Erachtens nähert sich die Geschichte einer unmoralischen Wirklichkeit, weil der Kater, um sein Ziel zu erreichen, derartige Wesen betrügt oder listig umbringt, die ihm wenig oder gar nichts zuleide getan haben, nur um den gerechten Ausgleich im Märchen zu schaffen (Jolles 1998, 45). Der Leser darf also nicht vergessen, dass narzisstische Führungskräfte (Kuchta/Weber 2017, 317) und Einstellungen dem Leben der menschlichen Person auch schaden können. Den Kindern muss es bewusst gemacht werden, dass derartige Verhaltensweisen, wie Verlogenheit, Hinterlistigkeit, die z. B. manchmal den gestiefelten Kater definieren, ethisch und moralisch nicht annehmbar sind bzw. dass arrogante und betrügerische Personen langfristig keinen Erfolg haben können, „denn Hochmut kommt bekanntlich vor dem Fall.“ (Kuchta/Weber 2017, 317).

Von einem Hochmut im kindischen Sinne kann auch bei Findus gesprochen werden. Der kleine Kater kann manchmal auch manipulativ sein, worauf schon im Falle seines Kampfes mit dem Hahn hingewiesen wurde, und er betrachtet einige Tiere, wie z. B. die Hühner im Hofe Petterssons, als nicht so klug wie sich selbst. Die Hühner sind diejenigen Lebewesen für Findus, die mit ihm nicht identisch sind und nicht das machen dürfen, was er macht. In der Geschichte mit dem Titel *Pettersson zeltet* hat der Alte vor, mit Findus zum See spazieren zu gehen und dort zu zelten, und als die Hühner davon erfahren, und auch

mitgehen wollen, ruft Findus schadenfroh: „Tschüss, Hühner! Wir gehen jetzt zelten und wandern im Fjäll und angeln im See, und ihr dürft nicht mit." (Nordqvist 2021, 116). Der Hauptunterschied zwischen dem gestiefelten Kater und Findus ist aber die Anwesenheit eines schlechten Gewissens beim Letzten. Findus tut es immer leid, nachdem er eben nicht korrekt gehandelt hat und er versucht stets, seine Fehler wiedergutzumachen; so verspricht er auch den Hühnern, nachdem er den Hahn vertrieben hat, dass er an dessen Stelle auf die kleinen Küken aufpassen werde. Petterson und die Hühner wissen, dass er sein Versprechen ernst meint und auch halten wird: »Wenn es soweit ist, musst du sehr vorsichtig mit ihnen umgehen«, sagt Pettersson zu Findus. »Kleine Küken sind zart und empfindlich. Du musst helfen, auf sie aufzupassen, dass keine andere Katze kommt und sie auffrisst.« Da war es, als ob der ganze Findus leuchtete, so froh war er. Und wie er aufpassen würde! Tag und Nacht würde er vorm Hühnerstall sitzen." (Nordqvist 2021, 108).

In der Märchenserie *Pettersson und Findus* wird also die Ethik des Handelns durch den kleinen Findus nicht arg verletzt, und das Katzenjunge findet immer einen Weg, seine kindischen Fehler zu verbessern und sich für sie zu entschuldigen. Diese Botschaft ist eine der wichtigsten, die Kinder aber auch Erwachsene, die die Märchenserie lesen, in Erinnerung behalten und ihr Ehre erweisen sollen.

Schlussfolgerungen

Dem Vergleich zwischen dem Gestiefelten Kater und Findus ist es gelungen, ein Licht auf die psychologischen und moralischen Seiten einer Mensch-Tier-Beziehung zu werfen. Die ausgewählten Analysemethoden haben dazu verholfen, Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen den zwei Katerfiguren aus einer komplexen Perspektive zu behandeln, und zu beweisen, dass der tierische Hauptprotagonist des Grimm'schen Märchens auch in unserer Zeit in einer neuen Form auftauchen bzw. die Leser bezaubern kann. Das anthropomorphisierte Tier, das in den Märchen zur äußeren und inneren Entwicklung des Menschen beträgt, gibt auch den Kindern den Ansporn, ihre Probleme zu bewältigen, währenddessen ein guter Mensch zu bleiben oder zu werden. Das von seiner Natur und von seinem Alter her egozentrisch eingestellte Kind soll mithilfe der Märchengestalten an Einfühlungsvermögen gewinnen bzw. an dem Glauben, dass Frieden und Glück ihm jederzeit nahestehen und erreichbar sind, wenn es sich aktiv und ehrenvoll für sie einsetzt. Wie immer die Wirklichkeit aussieht, erlebt und gewinnt das Kind, das die Märchen hört, in seiner Phantasie die Einsicht, dass es in seinem Leben Hilfe zur Lösung seiner Probleme bekommen, aber auch dazu angewiesen wird, sich selbst zu helfen.

Der gestiefelte Kater und Findus haben viele Gemeinsamkeiten, die wichtigste von ihnen aber ist die Hilfe, die sie ihren Herren leisten. Die Art und Weise, mit der diese Hilfe geschieht, wie auch ihr Zweck, sind verschieden, ihr Endeffekt aber ist derselbe: Sowohl der Müllerssohn als auch Pettersson erreichen dank der Tiere eben das, was sie sich immer gewünscht haben. Märchen sind Wunschbilder, wie in dem vorliegenden Artikel bewiesen wurde. Aus der Geschichte des gestiefelten Katers muss am Ende als Hauptbotschaft entnommen werden, dass jede Person in jeder Situation ihr Leben in die eigene Hand nehmen und es zum Positiven verändern kann, auch wenn sie keinen Kater als helfenden Freund an ihrer Seite hat. Eine wichtige Frage, was aber den Wunsch der menschlichen Hauptprotagonisten anbelangt, ist diejenige, ob die Beziehung zwischen Mensch und Tier aus einer märchenhaften Welt in die Wirklichkeit übertragen werden kann. Ruhm und Reichtum wurden im Grimm'schen Märchen dank des Katers erreicht, und er wird am Ende der Geschichte von diesen auch seinen Teil abbekommen – ein märchenhaftes Ende, das, wie in dem vorliegenden Beitrag gezeigt wurde, auch seine Lehre haben kann. In der Märchenserie *Pettersson und Findus* wirkt die magische Kraft des kleinen Katzenjungen anders: Es gibt dem alten Pettersson weder Ruhm noch Reichtum, nichts Materielles wird er durch den Kater haben. Dagegen ist es die bloße Anwesenheit des kleinen Lebewesens, die Pettersson glücklich macht; der Kater selbst wird zum größten Schatz des Alten. Als eines Tages Findus sich im Garten verirrt, durchsucht Pettersson das ganze Haus, den Garten, die Landstraße, fragt sogar die Hühner, wo der kleine Kater sein könnte und er macht sich ernsthaft Sorgen, dass er ihn nicht finden wird (Nordqvist 2021, 31).

Aus den vielfältigen Erkenntnissen, die das Grimm'sche Märchen und die schwedische Märchenserie[5] dem Leser vermitteln, gilt jene als wichtigste hervorzuheben, dass Tiere, Pflanzen, Menschen für uns wie ein großes Vermögen wirken können, und dass Lebewesen für uns wichtiger sein sollten als die materielle Seite der Welt. Das Beispiel der Beziehung zwischen Pettersson und Findus könnte sowohl Kinder als auch Erwachsene davon überzeugen, dass es gut sei, ein kleines Tier zu sich zu nehmen bzw. ihm Obdach und Liebe für sein ganzes Leben zuzusichern. Für ein kleines lebendiges Wesen verantwortlich zu sein, hilft den Kindern, in ihrem künftigen Erwachsenenleben große Verantwortlichkeiten nicht nur erfolgreich zu bewältigen, sondern auch, mit einem guten Gewissen zu handeln. Aus den in der Kindheit erworbenen Wertvorstellungen entsteht das Fundament des späteren Weltbildes, der

[5] Über die Märchenserie ist auch eine deutsche Zeichentrickfilm-Serie entstanden, siehe die für den vorliegenden Artikel am meisten relevante Folge: *Pettersson und Findus. Wie Findus zu Pettersson kam.* Edel Kids TV. Regie: Lerdam, Jörgen – Sörensen, Anders. TV-Loonland AG/ZDF 2006. Im Internet unter: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MK35T4Mr20I [Zugriff: 18.05.2021].

Wertekanon aller Menschen, meint Susanne Stöcklin-Meier in ihrem Buch *Von der Weisheit der Märchen* (Stöcklin-Meier 2008, 12). Gerade aus diesem Grund sollte das Kind von seinen frühesten Lebensjahren eine praktische, persönliche Beziehung zu den Märchen entwickeln.

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POUR UNE MÉTAMORPHOSE DU LIBERTIN OU LE SYNDROME DE L'EXTRA-TERRITORIALITÉ CHEZ MILAN KUNDERA ET ÉRIC-EMMANUEL SCHMITT

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ABSTRACT. ***A Metamorphosis of the Libertine or the Extra-Territoriality Syndrome in the Works of Milan Kundera and Éric Emmanuel Schmitt.*** This research aims to discuss the question of an ostensible metamorphosis of the libertine typology, as it is presented in the work of two contemporary writers, Milan Kundera and Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt. The first is the case of Tomas in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, published in 1984, first in Czech and, very soon afterward, in a French translation at Gallimard. On the other hand, we will analyze the same subject of an inherent metamorphosis caused by the extra-territoriality in *The Elixir of Love*, the epistolary novel of Éric Emmanuel Schmitt, published thirty years later, in 2014.

Keywords: *metamorphosis, libertine, infidel, territoriality, (de)filiation*

REZUMAT. ***Către o metamorfoză a libertinului sau sindromul extrateritorialității la Milan Kundera și Éric Emmanuel Schmitt.*** Această lucrare își propune să discute problema unei metamorfoze aparente a tipologiei infidelului, așa cum este prezentată în opera a doi scriitori contemporani, Milan Kundera și Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt. În primul rând, este cazul lui Tomas în *Insuportabila ușurătate a ființei*, publicat în 1984 mai întâi în cehă și foarte curând în traducere franceză la

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editura Gallimard. Pe de altă parte, vom analiza același subiect al unei metamorfoze cauzate de extrateritorialitate în *Elixirul dragostei*, romanul epistolar al lui Éric Emmanuel Schmitt, publicat treizeci de ani mai târziu, în 2014.

Cuvinte-cheie: *metamorfoză, libertin, infidel, teritorialitate, (de)filiație*

0. Objectifs, structure et corpus

Cette recherche se propose de mettre en discussion le sujet d'une métamorphose ostensible de la typologie du libertin, telle qu'elle se présente dans l'ouvrage de deux écrivains contemporains, à savoir Milan Kundera et Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt. Il s'agit, tout d'abord, de *L'Insoutenable légèreté de l'être*, d'une part, publié en 1984 d'abord en tchèque et très vite après en traduction française chez Gallimard et qui représente le cinquième roman de Milan Kundera. D'autre part, nous allons analyser la même thématique de la métamorphose dans *L'Élixir d'amour*, le roman épistolaire d'Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt, publié en 2014 chez Albin Michel.

Notre démarche, fondée sur une analyse comparative entre les deux textes, est structurée en trois étapes, ainsi débutant par une brève présentation des œuvres faisant l'objet du corpus. Et si notre cheminement débute avec la prémisse que les deux protagonistes subissent une métamorphose engendrée par le même sentiment d'extra-territorialité, ce sera dans ce même propos qu'une définition des concepts employés avec récurrence, tels que territorialité, libertin, infidèle, métamorphose ou misogynie, ainsi nommés des mots-clés, s'impose en préambule de chaque section qui y fait référence.

L'étape ultérieure et finale s'attachera à l'analyse du corpus, par le biais des méthodes herméneutique et psychanalytique, ainsi recourant à des auteurs de référence comme Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari ou Jean-Daniel Causse, des psychanalystes contemporains comme François St Père et Christophe Fauré ou les exégètes kunderiens et schmittiens Jørn Boisen et Michel Meyer. L'analyse proprement dite suit un schéma en trois parties, dressant en grandes lignes le tableau du libertin, continuant avec une étape transitoire – le déclic provoqué par l'extra-territorialité – et se concluant avec l'achèvement de la métamorphose.

L'Insoutenable légèreté de l'être, classé par l'exégèse littéraire à mi-chemin entre le roman et l'essai philosophique, propose un récit à chronologie fragmentée et sans linéarité temporelle. Parsemé d'analepses et de prolepses, le texte raconte l'histoire d'amour entre Tereza et Tomas, jeune chirurgien. Tomas mène une vie de libertin, mais malgré ses plans impeccablement raisonnés et ses principes de libertinage, il tombe amoureux d'une jeune servante, finissant même par accepter qu'elle loge chez lui.

Trois décennies après le roman de Kundera, Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt touche le même sujet du libertinage, qu'il choisit de mettre au centre de son *Élixir d'amour*, un roman épistolaire qui séduit, dès le titre, un grand nombre de lecteurs. *In extenso*, le roman s'attaque à la démystification de l'existence d'un élixir de l'amour, un « moyen infaillible de rendre l'autre amoureux » (Schmitt 2015, 1 :10). D'ici découle l'explication même du titre, qui invite le lecteur à une réflexion sur l'amour, à (re)créer l'amour par un élixir, grâce aux substances censées pouvoir rendre l'autre amoureux. Le livre pose donc une « question de l'essence même de l'amour, qu'est-ce que c'est que ce phénomène qui nous envahit » (Schmitt 2014, 1 :46), explique l'écrivain dans une interview.

D'autre part, le double succès du texte schmittien s'explique par son caractère épistolaire. Jean Rousset et Sébastien Hubier soulignent à ce propos que, plus que toute autre forme, ce genre littéraire rend compte des sentiments au moment de leur expression même : « les personnages disent leur vie en même temps qu'ils la vivent ; le lecteur est rendu contemporain de l'action » (Hubier 2003, 96). Le lecteur de Schmitt est donc invité à participer à l'action en même temps que le personnage, étant, lui aussi, un destinataire des messages que les deux protagonistes sont en train de s'échanger.

Dans le même style épuré, précis, étincelant (Meyer 2004, 8-9) et surtout succinct qui le caractérise, l'écrivain peint donc une histoire d'amour qui, par la présence d'un héros vicieux du libertinage, est comparable à celle de *L'Insoutenable légèreté de l'être*. Rappelons aussi que le protagoniste schmittien est psychanalyste, ce qui lui donne l'avantage de faire un appel motivé aux éléments d'interprétation psychanalytique, présents également dans le roman kunderien par l'analyse freudienne des rêves.

1. Du libertin à l'infidèle. Conceptualisation

Conformément au *Trésor informatisé de la langue française*, le libertin est défini comme « celui […] qui s'adonne sans retenue aux plaisirs de la chair » (*TILF*, « libertin »), au contraire de l'infidèle qui désigne, au sens propre, un individu trompeur, celui « qui trahit son engagement […], qui trompe ou a trompé son partenaire » (*TILF*, « infidèle »). C'est dans ce sens que l'on part de la prémisse que Tomas et Adam représentent la typologie du libertin par définition. Ce sera la présence de Tereza, d'une part, et de Louise, de l'autre, qui fera glisser leur libertinage vers la catégorie des infidèles, mais sans pour autant se plier à ses traits, car si, dans le même dictionnaire, l'infidèle acquiert aussi l'épithète de personne malhonnête, « qui n'est pas conforme à la vérité » (*TILF*, « infidèle »), on parle chez les deux écrivains d'une classification inédite : un infidèle qui défend vigoureusement ses principes devant sa partenaire.

Dans son analyse récente sur l'infidélité, le psychologue et spécialiste de la thérapie du couple François St Père inventorie les définitions que les chercheurs

avant lui avaient proposées pour cette notion taboue. Dans l'introduction de son analyse (St Père 2012), il souligne que la plupart considèrent l'infidélité comme une aventure strictement sexuelle, dénuée de toute dimension amoureuse. On observe, en outre, que dans sa verve psychanalytique, Adam tente à chaque fois de justifier son libertinage dans les lettres qu'il adresse à Louise :

> Les hommes font l'amour pour jouir, pas pour dire qu'ils aiment. Quand j'allais rejoindre des maîtresses, je n'entaillais pas mon attachement pour toi, je ne t'adorais pas moins, j'ambitionnais seulement de prendre du plaisir et de leur en dispenser. Une colossale erreur fausse les relations humaines : l'idée que le cul et le sentiment sont un même pays. Or le sexe et l'amour sont deux territoires différents. […] Il n'existe pourtant aucun rapport entre le désir et l'affection (Schmitt 2014, 25).

De manière similaire, pour le héros de Milan Kundera, l'amour et l'acte sexuel représentent deux notions complètement distinctes, voire même contradictoires : « Coucher avec une femme et dormir avec elle, voilà deux passions non seulement différentes mais presque contradictoires. » (Kundera 1984, 20), songe-t-il.

Dans cet ordre d'idées, si l'on adhère à la théorie de Shirley Glass, soutenue par Christophe Fauré, psychiatre et psychothérapeute français, cette conduite ouvertement assumée risquerait d'exclure les deux héros de la typologie de l'infidèle. Rappelons brièvement que pour la psychologue américaine, l'infidélité est définie par une combinaison de trois variables : l'existence d'une alchimie sexuelle entre les deux personnes, l'implication émotionnelle de la part de l'infidèle et le secret de son adultère (Fauré 2017, 10). Or, chez les deux protagonistes en discussion, il s'agit plutôt d'une déconstruction volontaire du mythe de l'amour, accessoirisée par un refus évident de se lier à une femme, ce qui nous permet d'inclure, au moins pour l'instant, les deux héros dans la typologie du libertin, sans pour autant leur refuser l'affiliation à la taxinomie de l'infidèle. Il est alors évident que l'on parle, dans les deux cas, d'un style de vie assumé, une « attitude nietzschéenne » (Boisen 2006, 20) et donc nihiliste, pour citer l'exégète Danois Jørn Boisen.

Dans le cas de Tomas, cette révolte commence avec la réalité de son divorce, qu'il ne perçoit jamais comme une rupture, sinon en tant qu'acte volontaire qui vise la reconquête de la liberté : « il avait vécu son divorce dans une atmosphère de liesse, comme d'autres célèbrent leur mariage. Il avait alors compris qu'il n'était pas né pour vivre aux côtés d'une femme, quelle qu'elle fût, et qu'il ne pouvait être vraiment lui-même que célibataire. » (Kundera 1984, 14). Guidé par le sentiment d'auto-suffisance et dans son objectif de défiliation[2], le héros kunderien refuse tout fil d'Ariane, comme Thésée l'avait fait aux temps mythologiques. Et si

[2] « La tentation de défiliation de l'être humain est […] comparable à une révolte contre le temps. » (Causse 2008, 34). Contestataire de toute idée d'attachement, le héros kunderien agrandit la sphère de sa révolte jusqu'au contexte familial et social.

Tomas continue à maintenir le contact avec son fils après le divorce, à l'instar du héros mythologique, cela ne sera que pour une brève période de temps, car à la suite des nombreuses divergences avec son ex-femme, Tomas décide qu'il ne verrait jamais de sa vie l'enfant. D'ailleurs, se demande-t-il : « pourquoi se serait-il attaché à cet enfant plutôt qu'à un autre ? Ils n'étaient liés par rien, sauf par une nuit imprudente. » (16). Ce désir de liberté détruira également le lien avec sa propre famille, car si les parents de Tomas continuent d'entretenir une relation cordiale avec leur bru, ils rompent définitivement avec le fils : « Il réussit donc à se débarrasser en peu de temps d'une épouse, d'un fils, d'une mère et d'un père. Il ne lui en était resté que la peur des femmes. » (16).

Désormais, s'il refuse de se lier à une femme, le héros de Kundera agira selon des règles très claires, la règle de trois : « On peut voir la même femme à des intervalles très rapprochés, mais alors jamais plus de trois fois. Ou bien on peut la fréquenter pendant de longues années, mais à condition seulement de laisser passer au moins trois semaines entre chaque rendez-vous. » (17). Dans ce même objectif, il n'installe dans son propre appartement qu'un seul divan et ne passe jamais une nuit entière avec une femme : « le lever matinal du couple lui répugnait ; il n'avait pas envie qu'on l'entendît se brosser les dents dans la salle de bains et l'intimité du petit déjeuner à deux ne lui disait rien. » (17).

Quant au héros d'Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt, il se guide selon les mêmes principes de négation totale de la filiation. Selon lui, ce n'est pas l'adultère qu'il faut imputer à un homme, mais le mariage même : « qui entrerait en prison en plein gré. Je ne suis pas partisan de la servitude volontaire. Les vœux que se prononcent les fiancés [...] me paraissent utopiques, obsolètes, faux choquants. » (Schmitt 2014, 128), écrit-il dans l'une de ses lettres à Louise.

Les similitudes entre les deux héros sont, ainsi, nombreuses. Dans les deux cas, le lecteur se trouve face à un Don Juan, image préfigurée d'abord par l'autoportrait, renforcée ensuite par le comportement libertin et finalement par la vision des autres personnages. En effet, le portrait d'Adam est le mieux réalisé par Louise même : « Tu as du charme, un corps souple, des épaules sécurisantes, tu sens bon, ta main chaude électrise le bras qu'elle frôle, ta galanterie honore les femmes, ta compagnie plaît par sa culture mêlée d'humour, tes yeux savent signifier le désir » (43).

C'est ainsi que Tomas et Adam, dont, ironiquement, les prénoms acquièrent des connotations bibliques, vont dissocier nettement le sacré du profane par l'acte et la parole à la fois. À ce sujet, lorsque Louise demande s'il y a une nouvelle femme dans sa vie, Adam répondra : « Pas *une* femme, *des* femmes. Personne ne te remplace, Louise. » (Schmitt 2014, 33. Nous soulignons). Plus tard, lorsque le même héros de Schmitt atteint son objectif de séduire la belle Lily, il dévoile, dans une lettre à Louise, cette passion amoureuse croissante, dont il entrevoit déjà la fin : « Qui mangerait le même aliment tous les jours de sa vie ? Ma passion pour Lily, comme celle que j'ai éprouvée pour toi, disparaîtra. » (108).

Pour son héros, éclaire l'écrivain même dans une interview, « le sentiment est stable, mais le désir est multiple [...] Lui, il veut vraiment dissocier les deux choses » (Schmitt 2014, 3 :33).

Compte tenu de ce comportement libertin, on a avancé la notion de misogynie dans le cas de ces deux héros. Or, définie comme « aversion ou mépris (d'un homme généralement) pour les femmes, pour le sexe féminin : tendance à fuir la société des femmes » (*TILF*, « misogynie »), elle ne se plie pas au credo de Tomas ou d'Adam. Tout au contraire, dans les deux cas il s'agit d'un besoin authentique d'amour, où tout est raisonné, expliqué par la logique : « Lorsque je t'ai rencontré, je portais en moi un authentique besoin d'amour. [...] Après notre séparation, j'ai vraisemblablement rééprouvé, sous la forme de douleur, ce même besoin. Lily est apparue. » (Schmitt 2014, 126), confesse Adam. N'omettons pas que l'infidélité est, d'ailleurs, expliquée par le psychiatre Christophe Fauré comme un besoin inhérent d'amour, ainsi révélant la fragilité de l'être humain et son besoin d'« exister dans le regard de quelqu'un – que ce soit celui de son (sa) partenaire ou d'une autre personne. » (Fauré 2017, 11).

D'autre part, glissant vers des pistes psychanalytiques, les deux romans partagent le point de vue de la femme aussi, peinte souvent aux couleurs sombres de la victime. Si Louise est définie comme « ancienne victime » (Schmitt 2014, 43) de la misogynie d'Adam, Tereza (Kundera 1984) apparaît dans la vie de Tomas portant tout un bagage biographique et psychologique : vivant avec la nouvelle famille de sa mère, la protagoniste éprouve constamment le désir de s'évader de son contemporain. Pour commencer, à l'instar d'Emma Bovary, elle plonge dans ses lectures, les seules qui promettent « une évasion imaginaire, en l'arrachant à une vie qui ne lui apportait aucune satisfaction » (52). Ce sera cette même passion qui lui promettra l'union, comme dans une fraternité secrète, à Tomas, au moment où elle le voit entrer avec un livre dans l'hôtel où elle travaillait. Et Tereza décide, sur place, de quitter tout pour un homme, pour la ville de Prague.

Mais comme toute ville, comme le signale Pierre Sansot dans son étude *La Poétique de la ville*, Prague sera aussi une expérience à double tranchant pour la protagoniste de Kundera : « la ville était et elle est encore pour beaucoup d'êtres, le lieu de leurs espoirs et de leurs détresses. » (Sansot 1973, 47-48). Désirant donc s'enfuir et se débarrasser d'une vie où la pudeur est devenue un sujet tabou et le corps complètement dévalorisé, Tereza va à la rencontre d'une nouvelle vie où, ironiquement, son propre corps ne vaut pas plus que celui de Sabina ou des autres maîtresses de Tomas :

> Elle était venue vivre avec lui pour échapper à l'univers maternel où tous les corps étaient égaux. Elle était venue vivre avec lui pour que son corps devienne unique et irremplaçable. Et voici qu'il avait tracé un signe d'égalité entre elle et les autres : il les embrassait toutes de la même manière,

> leur prodiguait les mêmes caresses, ne faisait aucune, aucune, mais aucune différence entre le corps de Tereza et les autres corps. Il l'avait renvoyée à l'univers auquel elle croyait échapper. (Kundera 1984, 63)

Si Tereza fuit l'impudeur maternelle, son objectif est doublé par la quête d'une figure paternelle (qu'elle avait perdue d'abord par la séparation de ses parents et ensuite par la mort de son père). Et ce sera exactement ce qu'elle va rencontrer dans la figure de Tomas : « Ce n'était ni une maîtresse ni une épouse. C'était un enfant qu'il avait sorti d'une corbeille enduite de poix et qu'il avait posé sur la berge de son lit. » (11), informe le narrateur. En effet, dès l'*incipit*, Tomas entrevoit l'esprit ludique dans le caractère de Tereza : « Il lui semblait que c'était un enfant qu'on avait déposé dans une corbeille enduite de poix et lâché sur les eaux d'un fleuve pour qu'il le recueille sur la berge de son lit » (10). L'idée, réitérée dans les pages suivantes (p. 10 et 15), peut être interprétée par le biais de l'intertexte biblique, dans l'herméneutique duquel Tereza représente le nouveau Moïse, que le héros s'apprête à sauver des eaux agitées et de son existence morne.

D'autre part, dissimulé derrière la plume d'un narrateur omniscient, Milan Kundera dépeint, entre les lignes de son récit, le portrait de la femme atteinte de jalousie. C'est à l'instant même où Tereza trouve des lettres de Sabina parmi les affaires de Tomas, que la jalousie s'engouffre dans le quotidien de sa relation : « Tereza se sentait menacée par les femmes, par toutes les femmes. Toutes les femmes étaient les maîtresses potentielles de Tomas, et elle en avait peur. » (23)

Le même sentiment affecte également l'héroïne de Schmitt, qui, après une relation de cinq ans avec Adam, place un océan entre eux – selon ses propres mots (Schmitt 2014, 19) –, change de travail, de climat et de vêtements, s'envolant à la recherche d'une nouvelle vie. Mais elle continue, paradoxalement, une correspondance écrite avec son ex, se demandant, après avoir revu la pièce *Élixir d'amour* à Montréal, si une telle potion, qui avait uni jadis les destins de Tristan et Iseut existerait vraiment : « L'amour relève-t-il d'un processus matériel, chimique, d'un brassage de molécules reproductible par la science ? ou constitue-t-il un miracle spirituel ? » (23). Selon l'écrivain même, Louise vit, au début du livre, dans un idéal de l'amour qui a été brisé : « elle a vécu une grande passion avec lui où il y avait une fusion des corps et de l'esprit et puis tout à coup elle s'est rendu compte qu'il la trompait. » (Schmitt 2014, 3 :50). Elle n'a pas accepté de ne pas être la seule désirée, souligne l'écrivain dans une interview accordée pour l'émission *Cinquante Degrés Nord* le 15 avril 2014, concluant que « la jalousie n'est pas une expression de l'amour, mais de la possession » (Schmitt 2014, 6 :15).

Les années s'ensuivent et la jalousie grandit dans le cas des deux protagonistes, car malgré l'amour confessé, ni Adam, ni Tomas ne renoncent aux infidélités :

> Ne pouvait-il en finir avec ses amitiés érotiques ? Non. Ça l'aurait détruit. Il n'avait pas la force de maîtriser son appétit d'autres femmes. Et puis, ça lui paraissait superflu. Nul ne savait mieux que lui que ses aventures ne faisaient courir aucun risque à Tereza. Pourquoi s'en serait-il privé ?

> Cette éventualité lui semblait tout aussi absurde que de renoncer à aller aux matches de foot. (Kundera 1984, 27)

Mais alors si « Tomas n'a de cesse qu'il ne la persuade qu'entre l'amour et l'acte d'amour, il y a un monde » (150), Louise veut tout ou rien, car l'homme de sa vie n'est pas à partager : « Si l'amitié est le mouroir de l'amour, je hais l'amitié » (Schmitt 2014, 9), dit Louise. Dans une nouvelle lettre, elle écrit : « L'amitié après l'amour m'humilierait. Aménager une immense passion en petit studio cordial ne me tente pas, je préfère me retrouver carrément à la rue » (14). C'est ainsi qu'elle prend la décision de le quitter, décision ultime qui engendre une prise de conscience et la métamorphose du libertin.

2. Le déclic : un seuil de la métamorphose

La deuxième étape visant la métamorphose du héros commence avec une prise de conscience provoquée par l'altérité et se dévoile par toute une symptomatologie engendrée par la déterritorialisation du héros-protagoniste. Selon Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, la territorialité représente un principe de résidence, mais dont le fonctionnement est souvent brisé par un désir de « *décliner alliance et filiation*, décliner les lignages sur le corps de la terre » (Deleuze et Guattari 1972, 171). Ce penchant est défini par les deux philosophes à l'aide d'un nouveau concept – la « déterritorialisation » – introduit en 1972 dans l'œuvre commune, *L'Anti-Œdipe*. Néanmoins, puisqu'il ne s'agit pas d'un besoin inhérent de rupture chez les protagonistes, on peut avancer le concept d'extra-territorialité proposée, voire même imposée, mais qui entraîne les mêmes résultats thérapeutiques – ce que nous allons nommer ici la métamorphose de l'infidèle.

Du point de vue juridique, l'extraterritorialité (sans trait d'union) définit le privilège diplomatique d'un citoyen de jouir de ses droits en dehors de sa patrie. Le jeu de mots peut bien suggérer une double interprétation dans le contexte romanesque, ainsi glissant vers l'inachèvement de la métamorphose du héros protagoniste. Pourtant, le sens que nous accordons a notamment comme point de départ l'étymologie du mot, ainsi désignant ce qui est ou se trouve en dehors du territoire.

Dans le cas de Kundera, le syndrome de l'extra-territorialité – que nous définissons comme l'ensemble des signes qui permettent d'orienter la métamorphose du héros – commence avec la décision de Tereza de quitter Genève, où elle s'était installée avec Tomas. Du côté du héros schmittien, il révèle ses premières manifestations dès le départ de Louise, qui vient de quitter Paris pour s'installer de l'autre côté de l'Atlantique. Mais il s'agit d'une séparation « qui ne se fait pas vraiment », selon les mots de l'auteur de *L'Élixir d'amour*, une rupture qui ne se produit pas dans le vrai sens du mot, car bien qu'ils ne vivent plus ensemble, ils « ne peuvent pas se passer l'un de l'autre » (Schmitt 2015, 0 :30 et 0 :53). Dans ces conditions, la métamorphose est incontournable.

Afin de mieux analyser ce changement dans le cas des deux héros, revoyons tout d'abord en quelques mots l'épisode engendrant le déclic chez Kundera : le couple déménage donc à Genève, mais le penchant d'adultérin suit le protagoniste, qui jouit de ses droits « d'extraterritorialité » en Suisse également. Après sept ans de doute frénétique, jalousie et cauchemars, Tereza le quitte et ce retour, pour elle, se fait sous le signe d'un désir d'indépendance, car si Prague lui réveille une addiction par le cœur, Zurich l'enveloppe dans une dépendance totale par rapport à Tomas. Quant à lui, envahi par une « mélancolie radieuse » (Kundera 1984, 36) engendrée par le départ de sa conjointe, il ressent d'abord la légèreté d'une liberté illusoire, qui sera immédiatement suivie par une sensation de rupture dans son être : « (Avait-il envie de téléphoner à Genève à Sabina, de contacter une des femmes de Zurich dont il avait fait la connaissance au cours des derniers mois ? Non, il n'en avait pas la moindre envie. Dès qu'il se retrouverait avec une autre, il le savait, le souvenir de Tereza lui causerait une insoutenable douleur.) » (37)

Désormais, les effets d'une métamorphose sont visiblement ressentis dans les changements dans la routine du libertin : il doit se souler pour que l'image de Tereza ne le hante pas durant ses aventures, le travail lui devient impossible, traînant entre la « douce légèreté de l'être » (Kundera 1984, 38) par la sensation d'une liberté illusoire, d'une part, et la pesanteur de la solitude de l'autre. Cinq jours après le départ de Tereza, Tomas est envahi par un sentiment de « compassion » (41), que Boisen définit comme source de l'attachement que le héros développera pour la protagoniste (Boisen 2005, 168). Pour Tomas, ces sentiments contraires, à mi-chemin entre la compassion et l'amour, tournent autour du refrain beethovenien *es muss sein*, allusion au dernier mouvement du musicien allemand. Ce rappel, qui deviendra une devise gravée dans l'esprit du protagoniste, représente une notice itérative à l'idée que « depuis Beethoven, la pesanteur est indissociablement liée à la nécessité et à la valeur » (93).

Enfin, il prend « la décision gravement pesée » (Boisen 2005, 93) de rejoindre Tereza à Prague, malgré les conséquences néfastes que cela aurait pu engendrer sur son travail. À ce sujet, soulignant ainsi une métamorphose (fût-elle intérieure) du protagoniste, à commencer par cet épisode de déterritorialisation, Søren Frank écrit : « La situation de Tomas à Zurich après le départ de Tereza est un exemple de la façon dont les catégories existentielles définissant un individu se renversent soudainement dans leurs propres opposés et catalysent ainsi une métamorphose intérieure du personnage[3]. »

Quant à Adam, protagoniste de *L'Élixir d'amour*, il subit les conséquences de la déterritorialisation de Louise avant même que le rideau de l'*incipit* se lève. Et alors bien que le roman s'ouvre avec une image de l'infidèle fort, tranchant

[3] « Tomas's situation in Zürich after Tereza's departure is an example of how the existential categories defining an individual suddenly reverse into their own opposites and thus catalyze an inner metamorphosis of the character. » (Frank 2008, 91). Notre traduction.

dans ses actes et ses paroles (« Louise, Si tu m'écoutes, bonjour. Si tu ne m'entends pas, adieu » (Schmitt 2014, 7)), il y avait et il reste encore dans cette relation quelque chose de plus : « Crois-moi, durant ces dernières années j'ai apprécié davantage en toi que ta peau, tes cuisses ou nos étreintes, j'ai aussi adoré la femme que tu es, ton intelligence piquante, ta répartie, tes moqueries, tes enthousiasmes » (8), confesse Adam. En l'absence des réponses de Luise, il vit dans la conscience de l'inutilité de son existence : « Pourquoi l'éloignement me priverait-il de cette merveille ? Suis-je condamné à te perdre ? » (8). Accablé de désespoir et glacé par la tiédeur (49) de sa correspondante, Adam réagit instinctivement : « Louise, je te prie de me répondre, y compris par un mot brutal. Si tu ne réagis pas, je monte demain dans un avion. » (18).

On peut donc aisément convenir que c'est le silence de la protagoniste qui rehausse la passion du héros schmittien, révélation qui définira aussi le protagoniste de Kundera, mais dans des conditions quelque peu distinctes. Dès le début du roman, le lecteur saisit une hésitation de Tomas, tâtonnant entre l'amour et la liberté, une incertitude qui le hante face à la présence inattendue de Tereza : « Vaut-il mieux être avec Tereza ou rester seul ? » (Kundera 1984, 12), se demande-t-il. Petit à petit, ce sera vers l'achèvement de sa quête qu'il trouvera une réponse à ses doutes : « Il s'était persuadé qu'il voulait mourir à côté d'elle » (12). De la compassion à l'amour, une chaîne synesthésique réunit désormais les deux protagonistes kunderiens : « Chaque fois que Tereza éprouve de l'anxiété, de la jalousie, du bonheur ou le paisible dans leur sommeil commun, Tomas ressent les mêmes émotions. C'est pourquoi Tomas ne peut que suivre Tereza à Prague lorsqu'elle décide de le quitter à Zurich[4]. », note Søren Frank.

Somme toute, si la métamorphose débute par une déterritorialisation imposée, son achèvement s'annonce avec ce que l'on appelle une « extra-territorialité » volontaire : ce sera, dans ce cas, le dernier voyage entamé par couple kunderien qui changera la routine infidèle de Tomas. D'autre part, le départ d'Adam pour Montréal aura le même effet dans le cas des protagonistes schmittiens, épisodes que nous allons traiter dans la prochaine section de cette recherche.

3. Une métamorphose achevée

Le déménagement du couple kunderien à la campagne et le départ d'Adam à Montréal représentent donc le seuil d'une métamorphose pour les deux protagonistes. Mais ce voyage à caractère thérapeutique, censé gratifier l'être d'« un peu de grand air » (Frank 2008, 7) est doublé, dans les deux cas, par la présence de l'altérité. Il s'agit de Lily, dans le cas d'Adam, et de la femme

[4] « Whenever Tereza experiences anxiety, jealousy, happiness, or the peacefulness of their common sleep, Tomas feels the same emotions. This is why Tomas cannot but follow Tereza back to Prague when she decides to leave him in Zürich. » (Frank 2008, 91). Notre traduction.

dont la « dissymétrie […] qui tenait de la girafe et de la cigogne l'excitait rien que d'y penser » (Kundera 1984, 214) pour le héros de Kundera.

Si, en tant que séducteur, Tomas est passionné de trouver « ce millionième de dissemblable qui distingue une femme des autres » (Kundera 1984, 208), l'ironie du sort fera qu'il achève sa quête non pas du haut de la pyramide sociale, mais en tant que laveur de vitres. Et l'harmonie, il la trouvera dans les contraires, au cœur de l'hétérogénéité entre le sublime et le grotesque. C'est dans ce contexte que l'on avance l'idée que, finalement, le dupeur est dupé dans les deux cas, puisque si Tomas est à la fois étonné, gêné et maladroit face au comportement inhabituel de cette femme, le héros de Schmitt, d'autre part, sera choqué par le caractère différent de la jeune canadienne par rapport aux européennes. Vers la fin du roman, le lecteur se trouve face à un nouvel Adam, un Adam qui souffre de la trahison de Lily et qui condamne le comportement essentiellement masculin de la jeune femme (Schmitt 2014, 136). Désormais, Paris lui devient insupportable et laid, son appartement sombre et vide, son existence morne. Il ne lui reste qu'à franchir la barrière qui le sépare de Louise afin de renaître. En quelques mots, toute une métamorphose est suggérée.

Et au lecteur de se demander, à juste titre, que représente donc l'image de cette femme, prête à changer l'homme ? Une vendetta qui applique la loi du talion ? Une réponse du destin fatidique, tenant à appliquer sa pédagogie ? Ce sont des questions qui ouvrent d'autres pistes d'analyse, pour de prochaines recherches.

Quant à la vie après la métamorphose, elle n'est que très brièvement touchée. Le lecteur de Schmitt ne saura que la position de Louise, écrivant une lettre à Lily, message qui clôt le roman : « il y a quatre mois, Adam est descendu de l'avion en m'annonçant qu'il brûlait de m'épouser » (Schmitt 2014, 153). Du côté de Tomas, ce sera Sabina qui aura le dernier mot : « [Tomas] meurt en Tristan, pas en Don Juan » (Kundera 1984, 134).

4. Conclusion

Romans à caractère psychologique, voire même psychanalytique, vu que l'un aborde l'analyse des rêves selon la philosophie freudienne et l'autre met en avant un protagoniste psychanalyste qui tente à tout s'expliquer par les mécanismes de la raison, les deux textes proposent la lecture d'une histoire d'amour. On lit, entre les lignes, de petites joies, des erreurs, des drames, enfin de l'amour avec ses infidélités et sensibilités. Mais, au-delà du cliché, les deux romans mettent au premier plan une typologie de l'amoureux définie d'une part par la figure de l'infidèle et, de l'autre, par celle de la jalousie.

Et puisqu'il n'y a d'*excipit* qu'en relation directe avec l'*incipit*, il convient de citer ici Michel Meyer (Meyer 2014), ayant souligné dans ses analyses que la

première œuvre de Schmitt, une pièce de théâtre, n'abordait pas un sujet quelconque, mais le mythe de *Don Juan*. Le même prétexte, réitéré dans de nombreuses autres publications de l'écrivain, tels *Le libertin* et même le récit épistolaire *L'Élixir d'amour*, changera au fil du temps, proposant cette fois-ci une fine métamorphose du libertin. D'autre part, le roman de Milan Kundera propose un parcours similaire du héros protagoniste, débutant avec l'image d'un héros-monument du libertinage et glissant vers le même avatar de l'infidèle démuni de son vice.

En fin de compte, si le héros de Schmitt se pose, au début du roman, la question de l'existence d'un élixir de l'amour, il découvrira à la fin qu'il ne s'agit ni d'une substance, ni d'un philtre chimique, mais d'un *actus voluntaris*, le seul possible à faire naître un transfert : une métamorphose, cause et effet du syndrome de l'extra-territorialité.

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ENJEUX CRITIQUES DE LA DÉRISION POÉTIQUE CHEZ MATÉÏ VIȘNIEC

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ABSTRACT. ***The Critical Stakes of Poetic Derision in the Work of Matei Vișniec.*** This paper revisits the poetry written by Matei Vișniec during the communist period in order to prove that it can be read as a civil action against the totalitarian system. It relies on the examination of Vișniec's deployment of a series of strategies of derision, such as allusions, irony, humor, or parables. The main purpose of this re-reading is to both emphasize the subversive character of the writer's poetic work, a rather particular case in its ethical challenging of communist realities in relation to the postmodernist aesthetic program, and underline the idealism of an ironic poet in whose vision the writer is, above all, a professional disruptor of dogmata.

Keywords: *Matei Vișniec, poetry, Communism, subversion, irony*

REZUMAT. ***Mize critice ale deriziunii poetice la Matei Vișniec.*** Studiul propune o analiză a poeziei publicate de Matei Vișniec în perioada comunistă, pentru a evidenția faptul că aceasta poate fi citită ca proces deschis sistemului totalitar din interior, prin intermediul unor strategii ale deriziunii dezvoltate cu tact, precum aluzia, ironia, umorul, parabola etc. Obiectivul acestei relecturi este acela de a sublinia caracterul subversiv al creației poetice a autorului, particular, prin angajamentul etic împotriva realităților comuniste, în raport cu programul estetic postmodern, precum și de a accentua idealismul unui poet ironic în viziunea căruia artistul este, înainte de toate, un perturbator profesionist al dogmelor.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Matei Vișniec, poezie, comunism, subversiune, ironie*

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Ayant brillamment réalisé le procès du communisme à travers le théâtre, pour rappeler le titre de son anthologie publiée en roumain en 2012, Matéï Vișniec, dramaturge, prosateur et poète, l'un des plus importants écrivains franco-roumains des dernières décennies, avait d'abord ouvert le procès du communisme à travers sa poésie, dans les années 80, avant de prendre définitivement la route de l'exil parisien. Il s'agit d'un procès intenté à la société totalitaire grâce aux moyens de la dérision – tels l'allusion, l'ironie, l'esprit ludique, l'humour, l'absurde, la parabole etc. –, indispensables à toute écriture sous contrainte, un procès qui était loin d'être clos au moment où l'écrivain eût décidé, en 1987, de quitter son pays d'origine, comme allait le pointer beaucoup plus tard la parution du volume *À table avec Marx* (Vișniec 2011 ; Vișniec 2013).

Généralement reconnue par la critique littéraire comme racine vigoureuse de la dramaturgie qui l'a consacré ultérieurement, sa poésie écrite et publiée dans la Roumanie de la dernière décennie communiste compte trois titres significatifs – *La noapte va ninge* [*Cette nuit il neigera*] (Vișniec 1980), *Orașul cu un singur locuitor* [*La ville d'un seul habitant*] (Vișniec 1982) et *Înțeleptul la ora de ceai* [*Le sage à l'heure du thé*] (Vișniec 1984) – qui engagent un réquisitoire inédit avec une réalité dont l'absurdité tend à échapper de plus en plus à la mémoire, comme à l'imagination contemporaine. Ce penchant corrosif de la poésie de Matéï Vișniec qui est, en apparence, un écart du programme esthétique postmoderne de sa génération, soutenant, dans l'ensemble, une littérature intertextuelle, biographique, ludique et, surtout, autoréférentielle, devient, en essence, un liant éthique avec la plupart de ses congénères qui ont également eu le goût du risque subversif. Pourtant, chacun d'entre eux métabolise différemment cette tentation de la subversion, ce qui a permis déjà d'observer que, en ce qui concerne la pratique ironique, il y a dans la poésie roumaine de la génération 80 non seulement une voie de l'ironie postmoderne – en tant que principe textuel, telle qu'elle a été définie d'abord par les théoriciens américains du New Criticism (Brooks 1951), et ensuite par les représentants de la Nouvelle Critique française (Barthes 1966), autoréférentielle et esthétique, mais aussi une voie de l'ironie moderne, référentielle et éthique, engagée de manière critique par rapport au contexte politique de l'époque (Croitoru 2014, 187-214).

Maîtrisant parfaitement la première, la poésie de Vișniec semble succomber souvent aux charmes de la seconde, ce qui rapproche l'auteur spécialement d'Alexandru Mușina, Magda Cârneci ou Mariana Marin, dont les vers ont témoigné le même penchant pour une critique oblique des réalités communistes. Autrement dit, si, selon Christian Moraru, « le spécifique du moment actuel [les années 80, *n.n.*] est l'ironie transformée en principe textuel » (Moraru 1999, 70), la poésie de Matéï Vișniec dépasse ce paradigme de l'ironie suspensive pour embrasser de temps en temps les armes d'une ironie disjonctive. En ce sens, le glissement référentiel est confirmé non seulement par l'usage de l'allusion, de l'humour ou

de la parabole à visée politique, mais aussi par l'emploi fréquent de l'*ironie moderne* dans la construction du message poétique, à côté de l'*ironie postmoderne* dont elle se différencie foncièrement, selon la distinction opérée par Alan Wilde:

> L'ironie moderniste, absolue et équivoque, exprime la conscience résolue des possibilités égales et différentes, arrangées en sorte de défier la solution. L'ironie postmoderne, par contre, est suspensive : une indécision en ce qui concerne les sens ou les relations entre les choses se combine avec une disponibilité de vivre l'incertitude, de tolérer et, dans certains cas, de saluer joyeusement un monde vu comme aléatoire et multiple et, parfois, absurde (Wilde 1981, 44).

La distinction entre les deux types d'ironie a été d'ailleurs reprise par Mircea Cărtărescu dans son étude *Postmodernismul românesc* [*Le Postmodernisme Roumain*], où le théoricien roumain insistait sur le fait que « le modernisme a cultivé intensément l'ironie, mais son essence est grave et problématique. Cependant, en postmodernisme, l'ironie se généralise, devenant la substance même des ouvrages artistiques » (Cărtărescu 2010, 100). De ce point de vue, dans la mesure où elle se dresse contre les défauts du monde totalitaire s'appuyant sur l'ironie moderne et sur d'autres stratégies de la dérision, la poésie de Matéï Vișniec confirme son appartenance à la catégorie de la littérature subversive, suivant une classification proposée par Ion Simuț, qui avance la thèse d'une ramification quaternaire de la littérature roumaine durant le régime communiste, afin de distinguer entre : la littérature *opportuniste*, des écrivains qui disent *oui* aux impératifs politiques, la littérature *évasive*, des écrivains qui ne disent ni *oui*, ni *non*, s'isolant dans leur « tour d'ivoire », la littérature *subversive*, ésopique, des écrivains qui disent également *oui* et *non* pour détourner le sens, et la littérature *dissidente*, des écrivains qui disent *non* au commandements officiels à leurs risques et périls (Simuț 2017).

La poésie de Matéï Vișniec remontant aux années 80 serait donc subversive, puisqu'elle enquête sur le monde communiste afin de signaler son schéma absurde de fonctionnement. Ceci est un geste téméraire de l'écrivain à une époque où le contrôle officiel du phénomène artistique atteignait son apogée, suivant la courbe ascendante de la vigilance étatique réveillée une décennie auparavant avec les fameuses « thèses de juillet » 1971, par lesquelles Nicolae Ceaușescu avait annoncé la ré-idéologisation de la littérature, suite à une visite « révélatrice » en Chine, Corée du Nord, Viêt Nam du Nord et en Mongolie. Dans ses créations subversives, le poète fait donc appel à de nombreux mécanismes discursifs liés à ses enjeux critiques, notamment à l'ironie, qui est « merveilleusement adaptée à une écriture sous contrainte, dans une situation de persécution ou de censure, car la subtilité de ses marques trie le public auquel on révèle le véritable sens du texte » (Mercier-Leca 2003, 73). Le regard

ironique du poète – particulier, selon Emilia David, car « Vișniec lui invente des enjeux capables de singulariser son profil [...], notamment en 'travestissant' le goût ironique, d'un côté, en distance purement observatrice, et de l'autre côté en ingénuité jouée, séduisante » (David 2016, 371) – va dévoiler dès le premier volume une société aveugle dont tous les citoyens jouent à colin-maillard, se fusillant calmement les chapeaux les uns aux autres : « Ne quitte jamais la ville Abraquilvir/ sans acheter d'abord un fusil/ et sans te bander les yeux/ et tirer à droite et à gauche pour une heure/ sur la rue principale/ et t'arracher ensuite le morceau de toile/ et voir partout autour de toi/ d'autres gens les yeux bandés, se promenant tranquilles/ les chapeaux troués » – *Nu pleca* [*Ne pars jamais*] (Vișniec 2017, 51). Ce leitmotiv de la cécité sociale anime aussi des scénarios absurdes dans le deuxième volume de l'auteur, par exemple dans un poème qui surprend le moment de la décapitation d'une victime aveugle par le bourreau aveugle, devant le peuple aveugle patronné, à son tour, évidemment, par un roi aveugle : « Le roi aveugle s'est assis dans son fauteuil/ les aveugles attendent en hurlant [...] // le bourreau aveugle aiguise sa hache [...]// tu es là ? demande le bourreau aveugle/ je suis ici, répond le condamné aveugle/ c'est fini ? demande le roi aveugle/ ça y est, c'est fini ? hurlent les aveugles » – *Decapitarea* [*La décapitation*] (Vișniec 2017, 114-115). Une fois la vue annulée, il revient à l'ouïe et au toucher de mettre en scène le spectacle stupide de l'exécution publique et à la parole de restituer ce spectacle à travers un long dialogue ahurissant. Proposant ici une descente théâtrale dans l'arène du totalitarisme, où le principe premier de la paix reste celui du pain et du cirque, Vișniec déploie le thème jusqu'au volume suivant et envisage de façon allégorique une chute de régime annoncée par les mêmes aveugles qui, cette fois-ci, font un geste inexplicable de printemps : « le sage prédit la chute de l'empire ottoman/ les aveugles ont commencé à cueillir des fleurs » – *Orbii au început să culeagă flori* [*Les aveugles ont commencé à cueillir des fleurs*] (Vișniec 2017, 174-175). Pareillement, Marin Sorescu, poète de la génération 60, construisait à la même époque ce genre de scénarios absurdes prémonitoires, mais avec moins de succès dans les négociations avec la censure, puisque sa formule ironique était parfois trop perçante, voire cynique, ce qui est évident dans son volume de *Poezii alese de cenzură* [*Poésies choisies par la censure*], publié après la chute du communisme (Croitoru 2020, 50-60).

L'idée de la chute du régime revêt, d'ailleurs, dans la poésie Matéï Vișniec plusieurs formes, l'une des plus réussies étant celle de la parabole du bateau qui sombre lentement, dans un texte célèbre qui a animé la dernière séance du Cénacle de Lundi en 1984 :

> Le bateau sombrait lentement on se disait/ peu importe si le bateau coule et/ on se disait tout bateau coule/ un jour et on se serrait les mains/ on se disait au revoir// mais le bateau sombrait si lentement/

> que dix jours plus tard nous ceux qui/ nous sommes serré les mains nous nous regardions/ embarrassés et on se disait ça fait rien ceci est/ un bateau qui sombre lentement/ mai qui sombrera finalement le voilà// mais le bateau sombrait si lentement/ qu'un an plus tard on avait encore honte/ nous ceux qui nous étions serré les mains et/ chaque matin on sortait l'un après l'autre/ mesurer l'eau hm il n'y a pas pour longtemps/ il sombre lentement mais sûrement// mais le bateau sombrait si lentement/ qu'une vie humaine plus tard/ on continuait de sortir et de regarder/ le ciel et on mesurait l'eau et on grinçait des dents/ et on se disait ceci n'est pas un bateau/ ceci est un…/ ceci est un… – *Corabia* [*Le bateau*] (Vișniec 2017, 184-185).

Cette parabole ironique sur l'effondrement si lent du régime communiste, qui atteste aussi de la naïveté des gens et de leurs espoirs, avait mené à la fermeture du Cénacle de Lundi, où elle avait été lue et savourée, selon l'aveu du poète : « Je me rappelle même aujourd'hui les éclats de rire provoqués par chaque paragraphe du poème, en effet une fable sur la trop lente chute du communisme […] Le critique Nicolae Manolescu affirme […] que mon poème a été la goutte qui a fait déborder le verre… » (Vișniec 2017, 332-333). En effet, durant la dernière décennie communiste, le rire au Cénacle de Lundi avait eu plusieurs valences dont Matéï Vișniec a parlé à maintes reprises, expliquant la transformation de l'ironie, au fur et à mesure, dans un *modus vivendi* (Croitoru 2014, 191-192), finalement sanctionné par le pouvoir politique. Mais la sanction du rire collectif avivé par la lecture du poème lors de la séance du cénacle doit être comprise dans le contexte très tendu de la dernière décennie communiste, quand la tolérance du régime diminuait, tandis que l'irritation du peuple augmentait. Naturellement, la surveillance accrue des autorités allait conduire à l'élimination de tout texte qui proposait, même si de façon allégorique, une perspective critique sur la mésaventure du communisme. Par exemple, le volume de poésies censurées, publié par Adrian Păunescu, un « camarade de route » du régime, après la Révolution de 1989, contient beaucoup de paraboles similaires à celle du bateau qui ne sombrait pas.

Dans un monde qui, chez Vișniec, vit le drame de l'impossible effondrement et en l'absence de l'ancien Dieu dont les symboles mijotent à feu bas dans la marmite de la survie quotidienne : « Notre cher Jésus Christ/ tu sais, on voulait te dire que/ le poisson fait à l'oignon et à la sauce/ est le plat préféré des taudis » – *Despre preacuviință* [*Sur la bienséance*] (Vișniec 2017, 32), la prière allusive de la communauté se dresse vers un nouveau dieu qui semble porter les signes d'une perfection dictatoriale : « Notre dieu à nous […]/ reçois notre reconnaissance/ car ta sphère et plus ronde/ qua la nôtre/ et ton chiffre un e plus unique/ que la nôtre/ et ton peloton d'exécution/ est plus discipliné/ que le nôtre » – *Despre zeu* [*Sur dieu*] (Vișniec 2017, 30). Défiant toute logique, ce monde absurde

abrite des exécutions hors du commun, comme celle de Joséph K., fusillé par hasard un jour dans la rue, dans un texte-procès (*Era o zi ploioasă, domnule judecător* [*C'était un jour pluvieux, monsieur le juge*]), ou avalé par un serpent qui lui sort agilement de la poche durant sa sieste, dans un autre poème (*Din viața domnului K.* [*De la vie de monsieur K.*]). Pourtant, parler de Joseph K. dans un monde où, suggèrent les vers, les menaces te sautent devant ou de la poche, c'est parler de l'absurde, donc de l'essence véritable de ce monde même, ce qui n'est pas une démarche sans risque, tout comme parler de Socrate c'est parler de l'ironie, c'est-à-dire de l'esprit critique et de l'alternative du sens à une époque de la soumission et du message unique. Ces poésies posent donc le problème du péril imminent qui hante la société totalitaire, selon la logique du *diable en boîte* qui suggère l'idée de jeu dangereux, une idée qui traverse l'imaginaire de plusieurs poètes ironiques durant la période communiste. C'est le jeu coquin de l'ironiste déguisé très souvent en clown, arlequin, saltimbanque etc. dans les vers d'Eugen Jebeleanu, Marin Sorescu, Adrian Păunescu, Ioanid Romanescu, Mircea Dinescu *et all.*, dont Matéï Vișniec n'est pas non plus étranger, étant donnée son attraction pour le monde du cirque aussi bien que la mise en équivalence du clown et de l'artiste, dans son acception :

> Le comique du clown, en même temps poétique et grotesque, avait pour signification une forme d'invitation à un moment de folie collective, et rompait les liens avec la banalité et la normalité. C'est alors, je crois, que j'ai commencé à comprendre une chose essentielle, à savoir que l'artiste est par sa nature un perturbateur professionnel de normalité, de commodité, de dogmes et de préjugés (Vișniec 2020, 224).

Par conséquent, les multiples stratégies de dérision observables dans ses volumes de la période communiste servent la cause du poète envisagé comme perturbateur professionnel des dogmes étatiques et sociétaux.

Semblable à la présence de monsieur K., l'apparition de Socrate dans la poésie de Matéï Vișniec ouvre une réflexion sur le rapport bourreau-victime dans une société malsaine, car la vocation de l'ironie socratique, souligne Ioan Buduca, un autre représentant de la génération 80, « est celle de la liberté et son militantisme se dirige contre les apparences, les erreurs, les dogmes, contre 'la vérité' tyrannique, intolérante » (Buduca 1988, 59). Par conséquent, les visites périodiques de Socrate dans l'univers dépeuplé du second volume interrogent implicitement les bases morales de l'existence humaine, ce qui génère des chambardements fantaisistes dans l'harmonie des choses : « Chaque nuit Socrate traverse l'univers/ paisible et souriant/ une pomme jaune à la main// […] le cercle se tord […]/ il se passent des choses terribles […]// mais Socrate disparaît derrière les étals/ de graines et de nougat/ les lumières s'éteignent,

les horloges/ recommencent à battre » – *Prima apariție a lui Socrate* [*Première apparition de Socrate*] (Vișniec 2017, 81-82). Puisque les randonnées de Socrate dans ce monde balkanique sont inquiétantes, le voisinage est à son tour déconseillé par précaution : « Je ne vous conseille pas de voyager/ avec Socrate/ dans le même chariot ou dans la même/ forêt ténébreuse » – *O plimbare cu birja* [*Une promenade en chariot*] (Vișniec 2017, 107). Se rapprocher de Socrate est, bien geste risqué, puisque le philosophe athénien incarne l'esprit dissident accusé d'impiété, de manque de considération par rapport au culte officiel. Tout comme lui, le poète ironique trouble le silence nourri par la piété de la peur collective.

Maître de la vérité, du bien et du beau, Socrate cause des distorsions irréparables dans l'équilibre de ce monde clos et renversé où son apprenti, le moi poétique, travaille ses propres leçons de philosophie sur la nature des choses, comme beaucoup de titres le montrent : *Despre opțiune* [*Sur l'option*], *Despre istorie* [*Sur l'histoire*], *Despre sinucidere* [*Sur le suicide*] et ainsi de suite. Pareil à Socrate, le poète attaque des sujets majeurs avec détachement, suivant, pour Bogdan Crețu, la technique de Marin Sorescu : « Matéï Vișniec joue, avec humour et détachement ironique, avec des problèmes assez graves » (Crețu 2005, 59). Effectivement, il s'agit d'une *transposition*, d'une inadéquation intentionnelle de l'idée (haute) à la forme (basse), grâce à laquelle Vișniec réussit à maintenir la surface détendue du discours, afin de cacher ses angoisses profondes. Selon Radu G. Țeposu, cet air de « rédemption ironique » (Țeposu 2002, 117) contribue avec succès à l'impression de désespoir civilisé qui définit l'existence du poète. Quelles que soient ses masques – de philosophe apprenti, de *dandy*, de spectateur indifférent, de soldat, d'illusionniste, de bouffon etc. –, le locuteur n'abandonne jamais cette civilité contrôlée à travers l'ironie. Son objectif principal reste la connaissance de l'essence du monde, suggérée par la récurrence du symbole de la pomme, d'abord socratique et indivisible, ensuite divisée, puis trop chère et, finalement, glacée, donc impossible à pénétrer, ce qui causera la retombée du monde dans le chaos : « La pomme était seule sur la table/ […] la pomme y était glacée de solitude/ […] c'est pourquoi, au premier toucher/ […] roula lentement sous les regards effrayés/ du ver/ et s'effondra dans le vide// […] l'univers/ est tombé dans le chaos » – *Autobiografia mărului* [*Autobiographie de la pomme*] (Vișniec 2017, 173-174). Comme dans son théâtre, Vișniec réalise ici, avec économie de moyens, le scénario minimaliste d'une vraie tragédie cosmique.

Mais si « le comique n'est qu'un tragique vu de dos » (Genette 1996, 147), on pourrait dire qu'il y a, derrière tous les scénarios risibles de Matéï Vișniec, un penchant pour la tragédie secrète de l'individu ou de sa communauté. La tristesse de la vie durant le communisme, qui est celle de la peur, de la famine, du froid et de la liberté amputée, ressort à chaque fois que ses poèmes

commencent à railler le politique. Cette plaisanterie repose fréquemment sur les allusions à un empereur qui ne digère pas le message de son peuple : « Soldat 0.1.2.3./ tu es accusé/ de n'avoir pas bien gardé/ le verger de l'empereur// tu savais que les passants/ égratignent toute sorte/ de mots [...] / sur l'écorce des arbres/ et que tout ça/ perce [...] / la peau des fruits/ et tu savais que tous ces fruits/ sont servis/ à la table de l'empereur », *Despre 0.1.2.3.* [*Sur 0.1.2.3.*] (Vișniec 2017, 34-35), qui prévoit les actions et les réactions de ses sujets, y inclus du sujet lyrique : « l'empereur sortait son carnet de notes/ ton nom disait-il Matei Vișniec/ je disais l'empereur feuilletait tout/ d'un coup il restait le doigt levé/ s'éclatant de rire/ si si/ j'avais prévu ça aussi », *O amintire* [*Un souvenir*] (Vișniec 2017, 106), ou qui fait justice arbitrairement lors de sa descente dans la rue : « Mais attendez encore jusqu'à demain/ demain le roi va faire justice/ demain la ville sera pleine de fleurs/ et pleine de tapis les trompettes seront sorties/ [...] le roi/ traversera la ville à cheval/ [...] par la foule et dira/ celui-ci oui/ celui-ci non/ celui-ci oui/ celui-ci non », *Orașul va fi plin de flori* [*La ville sera pleine de fleurs*] (Vișniec 2017, 54), une descente qui rappelle les cérémonies publiques des années 80 dont le but était l'adoration spectaculaire du dictateur afin de renforcer le culte de sa personnalité.

Ces allusions au monde du carnaval qui renvoie aux manifestations bruyantes données en l'honneur du dictateur sont doublées, bien sûr, par la pratique évidente de l'humour et de l'ironie. Par exemple, un poème sur le succès d'une campagne électorale met en lumière avec humour, sous la forme d'une interview sans réponse, l'omniscience ridicule des dirigeants politiques de l'époque : « Monsieur le sénateur/ notre groupe de journalistes/ tient à vous féliciter [...] nous serions intéressés de savoir/ qu'est-ce que la matière/ [...] quel est le rapport entre esprit et corps/ [...] et à la fin si vous pouvez/ dites-nous quelques mots/ sur la feuille du griottier », *Campania electorală* [*La campagne électorale*] (Vișniec 2017, 108), tandis que d'autres textes traitent avec une ironie exemplaire de l'imbécilité assumée de la vie prolétaire : « je veux vous dire que j'ai 46 ans/ et je crois avoir encore à vivre 20/ c'est vrai que la vie que je mène semble/ complètement imbécile/ mais je ne me plains de rien », *O meditație* [*Une méditation*] (Vișniec 2017, 121) ou de la question de l'effrayante pénurie alimentaire : « votre majesté les pommes sont/ trop chères et presque/ introuvables en ville tu mens s'écria Priam [...]/ il n'y a pas assez de peinture pour la palissade/ [...] tout avance à rebours/ [...] cette histoire doit bientôt finir/ Priam toussa apporta deux cafés [...]/ eh bien on va voir/ on va en parler », *Audiența la regele Priam* [*L'audience chez le roi Priam*] (Vișniec 2017, 116), projetée grâce au mythologisme dans un chronotrope très éloigné, celui de la Troie assiégée, mais fort suggestif en tant que métaphore de la claustration dystopique. Imaginant une cité close dont les habitants rêvent à la chute du

pouvoir, le texte invite également à envisager la poésie subversive elle-même comme un cheval de Troie ayant le rôle d'ouvrir une brèche discrète mais nécessaire pour le vent de la liberté.

Finalement, même si elle invite parfois à une révolution de la tristesse : « Nous devons faire une révolution de la tristesse », *Călătorul prin ploaie* [*Le voyageur dans la pluie*] (Vișniec 2017, 110), la poésie espiègle de Matéï Vișniec est une raillerie qui ne manque pas d'idéalisme, car, selon Pierre Schoentjes, « tout ironiste est un idéaliste, en ce qu'il croit à la perfectibilité de l'homme : au moment même où il marque un rejet, l'ironiste exprime simultanément son adhésion à un monde parfait, auquel il aspire ou dont il a la nostalgie » (Schoentjes 2001, 87). Tout comme les autres poètes ironiques de l'époque, Matéï Vișniec est un metteur en scène idéaliste qui monte courageusement le spectacle absurde du communisme dans ses vers pour sanctionner les malformations du réel, mais aussi pour déclarer obliquement sa croyance inébranlable dans la perfectibilité du lendemain. Ceci dit, on peut voir dans ce badinage poétique de Matéï Vișniec, qui repose foncièrement sur les ressorts du scénario dramatique, non seulement la tristesse d'une histoire malade, mais aussi l'idéalisme d'un esprit critique qui n'ouvre pas le procès subversif du communisme pour dire qu'il n'y a rien à faire, mais pour montrer que dire c'est faire. De ce point de vue, son langage poétique semble être à la recherche d'un pouvoir performatif, qu'il va ensuite découvrir pleinement dans le théâtre, car les stratégies de la dérision ne sont pas seulement des techniques d'esquive dans la guerre d'usure des intellectuels roumains avec le pouvoir communiste, mais aussi des armes d'attaque, comme Christian Moraru l'a maintes fois souligné, en parlant de « moyens spécifiques » de dénonciation de l'horreur : « Dans cet univers où le pouvoir avait confisqué tout énoncé politique explicite 'non-médié', seuls les écrits littéraires demeuraient l'instance discursive qui était la plus critique, grâce à ses moyens spécifiques, pour dénoncer la généralisation de l'horreur » (Moraru 1999, 83). Dans la poésie de Matéï Vișniec, l'allusion, l'ironie, l'esprit ludique, l'humour, l'absurde ou la parabole sont de tels moyens. Finalement, le gain de la relecture de cette poésie inquiète et inquiétante d'une époque sombre du XXème siècle réside moins dans le verdict qu'elle peut donner et beaucoup plus dans les questions qu'elle invite encore à (se) poser.

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AUDIO-VISUAL CULTURE IN TEXTBOOKS OF GERMAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A CROSSROADS BETWEEN MEDIA COMPETENCE AND SUBJECT-SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

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ABSTRACT. ***Audio-Visual Culture in Textbooks of German as a Foreign Language: A Crossroads Between Media Competence and Subject-Specific Objectives.*** Audio-visual media have become an intrinsic part of the school curriculum in many countries as a means of complementing teaching and learning processes and ensuring modern and effective teaching in various fields of study, including foreign languages. This study will explore references to audio-visual culture in three internationally available textbook sets for pubescent learners of German as a foreign language: *Deutsch.com*, *Direkt*, and *Ideen*. Audio-vision is used here to refer to audio-visual cultural properties and includes the product and its production, reception, and position within the context of the media culture of the country of origin. Methodologically, the study uses content analysis to examine individual references to audio-vision according to a) the frequency of occurrence at individual levels of language competency, b) the implication of the examined references to audio-visual material with objectives specific to the acquisition of a foreign language (vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading, speaking, intercultural education) and media literacy c) the attention paid to films, genres and other aspects of audio-vision, d) the connection between references to audio-vision and themes

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and topics discussed in a foreign language, e) the didactic function of the references, and f) their contribution to achieving media literacy goals (audio-visual/film literacy), providing a detailed description of the lessons in each of the studied textbook sets that make use of references to audio-visual material in their curricula.

***Keywords**: audio-visual literacy, audio-vision, German language, textbooks, foreign language teaching*

REZUMAT. *Cultura audio-vizuală în manualele de germană ca limbă străină: la intersecția dintre competența media și obiective specifice subiectului.* Media audio-vizuale au devenit o parte intrinsecă a curriculumului școlar în multe țări, ca un complement al proceselor de predare și învățare, în scopul de a asigura o predare modernă și eficientă în diverse domenii, inclusiv în cel al limbilor străine. Studiul de față explorează referințe la cultura audio-vizuală în trei seturi de manuale disponibile la nivel internațional pentru adolescenții care învață limba germană ca limbă străină: *Deutsch.com*, *Direkt*, și *Ideen.* Audio-vizualul e înțeles aici ca referindu-se la caracteristici culturale audio-vizuale și include produsul și producția acestuia, recepția și poziția în contextul culturii media al țării de origine. Metodologic, studiul folosește analiza de conținut pentru a examina referințe individuale la audio-vizual în conformitate cu a) frecvența apariției la niveluri individuale de competență lingvistică, b) implicarea referințelor la material audio-vizual în obiectivele specifice achiziției unei limbi străine (vocabular, gramatică, ascultare, citire, vorbire, educație inter-culturală) și cunoștințe media, c) atenția acordată filmelor, genurilor și altor aspecte ale audio-vizualului, d) legătura dintre referințele la audio-vizual și temele și subiectele discutate în limab străină, e) funcția didactică a referințelor și f) contribuția lor la însușirea cunoștințelor media (cunoaștere audio-vizuală/ a filmului), oferind o descriere detaliată a lecțiilor în fiecare dintre seturile de manuale studiate care se referă la material audio-vizual în curriculumul lor.

***Cuvinte-cheie:** cunoaștere audio-vizuală, audio-vizual, limba germană, manuale, predarea limbilor străine*

Introduction

Audio-visual materials have received considerable academic interest thanks to the recognition of their popular appeal. The entertainment value they offer and their ability to effortlessly reach wide audiences have motivated educators to consider all forms of audio-vision as an engaging tool for specific educational purposes, with film in particular seen as the most effective format.

While a recent article in the *Journal of English* shows that film has been used in school curricula since as early as 1913, film became more closely integrated into education in the 1950s, contributing to a more significant effort to implement audio-visual education methods which could mediate an authentic language experience (Thaler 2007, 11-12). However, it was not until the 1960s that film started to attract academic recognition as the first audio-visual medium worthy of study (Turner 2000, 194). This increased interest was encouraged further by the interest of social studies in the youth audience and the projection of their values on the big screen. Cinema and other audio-visual media also began to be more widely integrated into school curricula in this period to enhance the learning process in various disciplines, primarily due to the complexity of audio-visual language and its practical, vernacular, dramatic, narrative, and musical qualities (Monaco 2000) which offer audio-vision clear advantages as a widely accessible, far-reaching and attractive tool. Nonetheless, the efficiency of audio-visual material relies on the degree of relatability and identification between learners and the protagonists and their experiences, and the use of these tools in classrooms, especially with young learners, is therefore simultaneously attractive and challenging for educators.

The effective use of audio-visual material for educational purposes, either as a primary or secondary source, or as a tool that mediates the authenticity of a language, requires a complex approach that can clarify the mechanisms involved in the production of filmic experiences. Drawing attention to those mechanisms can help to develop essential media-literacy skills that might prevent the uncritical acceptance of viewed material. The cultural influence of film on the ways in which viewers understand represented realities, as well as the projection of specific perspectives, is a topic that is deserving of greater scrutiny. As a result, the demand for film-literacy/media-literacy, or "optical literacy" (Tulodziecki 2005, 17), has increased significantly among scholars who acknowledge the need to develop viewers' ability to recognize possible distortions of reality caused by ideologically colored methods of representation.

Nevertheless, audio-visual material still possesses considerable potential for the enhancement of learning processes, and their use as complementary tools in school curricula (Briley 2002; Pultorak 1992; Wineburg 2000) is both popular but also influential. As a primary or secondary source, audio-visual material has been used as a means of teaching history, social studies, literature and foreign languages (Marcus and Stoddard, 2007; Marcus et al. 2010; Blell et al. 2016; Kammerer and Maiwald 2021). The potential of the materials stems from the complex utilization of all of their aspects; both the viewing experience itself – the story, protagonists, conventions – and the extrafilmic experience, or the "film-as-event" effect (Elsaesser 2012, 273). These elements can extend the

filmic audio-visual experience beyond the immediate scope to connect with other aspects of film as an industry (advertising, fashion, toys, celebrities) (Elsaesser 2012, 272). Similarly, the complexity of film applications requires a conscious evaluation of the source itself and its accompanying aspects, because film can and should be used to encourage critical thinking skills by pointing out incorrect, ideologically colored or otherwise purposeful forms of representations or narratives that possess the potential to shape viewers understanding of presented realities.

Audio-vision can be used in the classroom in a variety of ways; as a primary source to provide an authentic language experience and thereby develop audio-visual comprehension (Surkamp 2017, 73-77); as a mediator of basic facts about target countries; as a historical artifact (Marcus 2010); or as a secondary source to complement other documents to provide a different perspective. This specific utilization of audio-vision is subject to strict genre differentiation and is therefore determined by the specifics of the fictionalized accounts which they present. It encourages subject-specific objectives, that is, developing language skills and intercultural competencies, but its defining quality is the representation of reality – a kind of asymptote to reality or a parallel experience that is forever dependent on reality – standing alongside reality or a simulacrum to reality through the subjective perspective of its interpreter/filmmaker (Andrew 1976, 138). Audio-visual materials clearly have the potential to contribute to the development of various intercultural and media competencies, but in order to implement effective film-based lessons, the educator must be aware of its highly fictionalizing character and be able to convey this to learners - "to distinguish fact from fiction, recognize multiple perspectives and missing perspectives, and evaluate [the product] as evidence" (Marcus et al. 2010, 9). Educators should also understand film's informative value and its contribution to the corpus of cultural and artistic production of specific countries in specific periods, projecting tendencies and attitudes of distinct societies. Cinema reveals the processes of national reconciliation with history and validates national narratives (e.g., Hollywood in the case of the USA) using formal (narrative) and informal (ideological) conventions. The demonstration of a national image inevitably entails the inclusion of the ideological principles of the official representation of a nation.

The use of audio-visual materials in the classroom thus facilitates perceptual and productive language competencies by triggering topics for discussions and popularizes cultural knowledge about different countries and societies. Again, depending on the genre and the level of accuracy with which the events, historical characters or periods are depicted, film contributes to how learners understand the subject matter. Accuracy, however, is not imperative and is often disregarded for the purposes of dramatization.

This study focuses on how references to audio-visual materials and culture can contribute to the teaching of language competencies and the development of language skills in a series of internationally available textbooks of German as a foreign language intended for secondary school students, based on communicative and post-communicative approach. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first attempt to determine the potential impact on audio-visual literacy and to explore the possible interaction between language and audio-visual literacy objectives in selected textbook sets. The decision to examine foreign language books stems from their potential to provide language-oriented education together with the dissemination of cultural characteristics, thus affecting the international learner's comprehension of the target language country. As has also been pointed out, this process of acquiring specific knowledge can benefit substantially from the use of references to audio-visual materials. Textbooks are a key tool used internationally to develop foreign language skills, and as such, their contribution to the language learning process is fundamental.

In this study, three globally distributed textbook sets of German as a foreign language, *Deutsch.com* (textbook Neuner 2008, 2009, 2011; workbook Vincente et al. 2009, Breitsameter 2010, 2012), *Ideen* (textbook Krenn and Puchta 2008, 2009, 2011; workbook Krenn and Puchta et al. 2010, 2011, Krenn and Puchta 2012), and *Direkt* (textbook with integrated workbook Motta 2008a, b) and *Direkt Neu 2* (Motta 2012), from the renowned publishers Hueber and Klett, will be analyzed. All three sets are based on the communicative (*Direkt*) or post-communicative approach (*Deutsch.com, Ideen*) and designed for pubescent learners, an aim which is reflected in the thematic content of individual lesson plans, the selected textual formats and in the arrangement of individual creative activities. All three sets start at the beginners' A1 level of the CEFR language competency scale and proceed towards the intermediate B1 level. Both the textbooks and workbooks which provide complementary exercises to the subject matter studied in the textbook will be examined in this study.

Any references to and about audio-visual productions, reception and also filmic and extra-filmic experiences – texts, audiotexts, exercises and pictures – found in the textbook sets will form the corpus of this study; the resulting corpus was examined using the methodology of content analysis. Each analyzed unit was considered based on its efficiency in developing language skills and its focus on grammar, vocabulary and also (inter)cultural and media learning. Within this framework, some units were analyzed more than once; for example, the text introducing the Berlinale International Film Festival was examined as a text fitting the categories of Reading, (Inter)Cultural and Media Learning. Alternatively, an exercise focused on the conjugation of the verb "fernsehen"/ to watch, was targeted only within the category of Grammar. The authors

determined whether references to audio-visual material are the subject matter which is at the center of attention in a lesson or they are used marginally, as in the case of the verb “fernsehen” / to watch.

Quantity of references in individual textbooks

The analysis of *Deutsch.com* identified 72 units with references to audio-vision; 35 in the A1 materials, 16 in the A2 materials and 21 in the B1 materials. A general prevalence of references to cinema culture were also identified in this set. References to audio-visual elements were found in 51 units in *Direkt*, 12 of which are aimed at A1 students, 2 for A2 students and 37 for B1 learners. In contrast to *Deutsch.com*, audio-visual references in *Direkt* are focused more on TV materials. A diametrical difference, both quantitative and qualitative, was observed in the analysis of the *Ideen* textbooks, which featured 211 audio-visual references; 53 in A1 books, 101 in the A2 materials and 57 in the B1 books. However, the majority of references to audio-visual materials in *Ideen* are focused on cinema, although TV production is also represented. *Ideen* is also the only set from the studied textbooks which includes references to videos streamed on the Internet. The references identified in *Ideen* also incorporated responses to audio-visual literacy to a greater degree than were identified in the other two sets. The following tables represent the identified impact of these references on the development of language skills, including the (inter)cultural education and audio-visual literacy responses.

Integrated Films, Forms and Genre

The selection of films that appear in the examined textbooks are primarily *feature films*. In *Deutsch.com* and *Ideen*, learners are also presented with animated films, while *Ideen* also introduces documentary films. All of the examined textbooks are internationally acknowledged with a worldwide distribution and this is reflected in the fact that most of the film-related activities refer to internationally successful German or Austrian film productions; one exception here is the *Ideen* textbook that also includes Hollywood classics such as *Casablanca* (USA 1942), *Ben Hur* (USA 1959), *West Side Story* (USA 1961), *Amadeus* (USA 1984) and *Schindler’s List* (USA 1993). The authors of the books provide in-detail descriptions of individual films which are tailored to the intended audiences of younger learners, including those for films such as *Der ganz große Traum* (D 2011), *Die Welle* (D 2008), *Die weiße Rose* (D 1982), *Ein Freund von mir* (D 2006), *Lola rennt* (D 1998), *Sonnenallee* (D 1999) and *Sophie Scholl – Die letzten Tage* (D 2005). Officially approved textbooks are also required to follow state curricula,

and therefore *Ideen* and *Direkt* also include minor references to Slovak or Czechoslovak films such as *Three Marmots/Tri svište* (ČSSR 1979) and *Salt More than Gold/ Soľ nad zlato* (ČSSR 1982), and co-produced films such as *Music/Muzika* (SK/D 2007) and others filmed in the learner's home country; for example, *The Peacemaker* (USA 1997), *Nosferatu – Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (D 1922) and *Dragonheart 2 & 3* (USA 2000, 2015). In terms of genres, a preference for dramas, young/adult (family) films, biopics, and sci-fi was observed in all three sets, with comedies also featuring in some isolated cases.

Connection of references to audio-vision with topics

References to audio-visual materials focus on a variety of topics, among which the following are the most resonant:

Character description with a focus on identity vocabulary, such as names, surnames, professions, age, birth dates, is demonstrated in *Deutsch.com* L5 through the description of actors such as Daniel Brühl (Neuner 2008, 30) Charlie Chaplin, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy and Bruno Ganz (Vincente et al. 2009, 34, 74). The actress Julia Roberts is used for this purpose in *Direkt* L2 (Motta et al. 2008a, 14, 15, 18), while the intermediate level textbook of *Deutsch.com* provides a detailed description of Julia Jentsch in L19 (Neuner 2009, 10).

The *family* with a focus on vocabulary related to family members is developed though references to the mother-daughter relationship of Ingrid Bergman and Isabella Rossellini and the Douglas acting dynasty in *Ideen* L4 (Krenn and Puchta 2008, 34-35, 41; Krenn and Puchta et al. 2010, 38, 40).

The topic of *school* is introduced using the example of film-literacy objectives as an optional school subject in *Ideen* L6 (Krenn and Puchta 2008, 63), and the actual production of a film during an after-school activity features in *Deutsch.com* L25 (Neuner 2009, 50)

Friendship is presented in *Deutsch.com* L47 through well-known friendships formed between popular protagonists, such as E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial and young Elliot (USA 1982), Asterix and Obelix (Goscinny/Uderzo 1959-1977), and Karl and Hans from *Ein Freund von mir* (D 2006) (Neuner 2011, 93-95).

Role-models and heroes/heroines are introduced in *Deutsch.com* L25 through the comic characters Tim and Struppi (Remi 1929) and The Simpsons (Groening), although these examples are more likely to be known to contemporary young audiences as characters from animated films (Neuner 2011, 80). *Ideen* L19 acquaints learners with Sophie Scholl, the heroine of *Die Weiße Rose* (D 1982), and with James Dean and Marlen Dietrich presented as role-models of the classic Hollywood era (Krenn and Puchta 2009, 69-71; Krenn and Puchta et al. 2011, 102, 104-105).

Life in the past and present is a topic that encourages students to interview their grandparents and compare their free-time activities with their own. References to film appear here in the form of specific questions used to identify cinema-going activities (frequency, ticket price) and popular films from both periods (Krenn and Puchta 2009, 84-85).

The geography of Germany, Austria and Switzerland is a topic in *Ideen* that acquaints learners with interesting geographical and cultural sites of the target countries through locations used in James Bond films (*Goldfinger* – Furkapass; *Goldeneye* - Lago di Vogorno, Switzerland; Octopussy – the town of Chemnitz in the former NDR; *Quantum of Solace* – the opera festival in Austrian Bregenz). Another film mentioned in relation to the topic is *The Name of the Rose* (D/F/IT 1986) filmed in the German monastery, *Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald* in the picturesque Wachau valley in Austria and *Nordwand* (D/AT/CH 2008) on the northern face of the Eiger in the Bern Alps (Krenn and Puchta 2009, 122-123). The workbook also uses thematically similar exercises to expand the students' vocabulary through references to locations in Slovakia presented in the cartoon *Three Marmots* (ČSSR 1979), *Salt More than Gold*/ Soľ nad zlato (ČSSR 1982), *The Peacemaker* (USA 1997), *Nosferatu – Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (D 1922) and *Dragonheart 2* & *3* (USA 2000, 2015) (Krenn and Puchta et al. 2011, 190-191).

Culture and Events is presented using the example of the Berlinale International Film Festival in *Deutsch.com* L1 (Neuner 2008, 11) and *Direkt* L23 (Motta 2008b, 49). In addition to the festival, the textbooks also mention novels that served as the basis for screenplays of films such as *Der Vorleser* (Schlink 1995) (Neuner 2011, 39), *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* (Brussig 1999) (Breitsameter et al. 2012, 40), *Crazy* (Lebert 1999) (Neuner 2009, 38).

Animals is introduced as a vocabulary topic using the film *Madagascar* (USA 2005) in *Deutsch.com* L30 (Neuner 2009, 50).

Globalization in third-world countries (*Avatar*, USA 2009) is represented by an informative promotional video from the National Geographic Organization, *Survival International* and the documentary film *Darwin's Nightmare* (F/AT/BEL 2004) in *Ideen* L 32 (Krenn and Puchta 2009, 97; Krenn and Puchta 2011, 66-69, 75).

Food and food culture is introduced using *Jamie's School Dinners* and *Jamie's Kitchen* (Krenn and Puchta 2009, 50-51; Krenn and Puchta et al. 2011, 70-71).

Life in the past and present is also demonstrated using the reality show *Schwarzwaldhaus 1902*, in which the participants endure the simulated living conditions of a peasant family from early 20th century Schwarzwald (Krenn and Puchta 2009, 59-62; Krenn and Puchta et al. 2011, 84-89), and others.

Each set of books also includes at least one specific lesson or section in which audio-visual related material is used for educational purposes. Of greater significance to the purposes of this study, however, is the fact that references to audio-visual culture are introduced to learners as early as at the A1-A2 level, and the contribution of these elements to the learning process will be explored in detail later in the study.

Didactic function of film and the problem of representation

From a didactic point of view, texts, exercises, and activities that refer to audio-visual products fulfill a variety of functions, often with a complementary and *motivational character* (Ohm 2010; Kolečáni Lenčová 2012; Maier 1998). For example, descriptions of films or portraits of filmmakers can serve as an impetus to encourage language competencies with a strong focus on grammar and vocabulary development. These types of materials are often used to improve reading comprehension skills, but their potential to enhance students' language production (i.e., their speaking and writing skills) seems to be largely unfulfilled.

Individual references also use the strategy of representing model identities by presenting role-model protagonists, an approach which seems to be a significant aspect of the overall use of audio-visual materials in the learning process. The ability of contemporary viewers to identify with film characters, to relate to their experiences, and to recognize the protagonist's reality is one of the central attributes of film perception that refers to the cognitive processes employed when viewing a film. In order to achieve this effect, the presented cinematic reality needs to be "true both to our everyday perception of life and to our social situation" (Andrew 1976, 106), which in other words implies the mechanisms of cinematic constructions of reality, within which the focus on the cultural representation of identities plays an important role.

The analysis of such mechanisms reveals the meaning-making processes that suggest the potential social and political implications of the representation of favored model identities. The construction of identity is especially relevant in the representation of non-mainstream identities or of minority or alternative groups, whose portrayal in the media has long been framed by dominant norms and restricted by the exclusionary practices of hegemonical discourses. At the same time, an examination of the strategies of hegemonic discourses in the media is equally crucial. Understanding the application of a specific perspective presented in a specific film helps the viewer to understand the ideological implications of such a perspective; in other words, an awareness of this factor reveals the film's identity politics that can exert an influence on the viewer's understanding of the model identity. In respect to learning processes which

implement references to audio-visual materials, or, more specifically to film, model identities are proposed to young learners as a tool whereby they can achieve subject-specific foreign-language-development goals. But the degree to which references to such material encourage the awareness of identity construction processes and the extent to which they alert learners of this aspect of the utilized material has been largely overlooked despite the urgent need to promote critical thinking among young learners.

In the following analysis, individual textbook activities that make use of audio-visual references to achieve the development of language skills will be analyzed in order to identify potential indications towards practices of representation which may enhance learners' critical recognition of such material in addition to assisting language acquisition and mediating cultural experiences.

Didactic analysis of lessons with educational use of audio-vision *Deutsch.com*

In *Deutsch.com* L25, students are presented with short texts about the origins of a school TV report, outlining the processes of pre-production, production and post-production. Students learn specific film-production related vocabulary such as "live", "filmen" "Kamera", "Kommentare zu den Videosequenzen sprechen" / voiceover, "Videomaterial kürzen und schneiden" / edit and cut video-material, "Videosequenz" / video sequence, "Moderation machen/einfügen" / comment, edit commentary, insert commentary, "auf Sendung sein" / to be on air. Grammatical exercises that complement this vocabulary include a focus on the modal verbs "können"/can and "möchten"/would like. The entire sequence concludes with an open activity which encourages students to create their own news report – again, this includes the entire creative process, from pre-production to the interview itself. Throughout the pre-production process, students are asked to consider the topic, camera view, introduce the interviewee, prepare the interview, and decide whether to shoot the report live on location or in the studio.

In addition to vocabulary development, grammar, reading, and writing competencies, this sequence develops the comprehension of media constructions of reality as the exercises provide the opportunity for practical performance. Using smartphones and appropriate software, learners can create a short video that their educational institution can potentially use for promotional purposes on their website; therefore, learners can practice the formal aspects of film production, such as camerawork, editing, etc. The language exercise is interconnected with efficient creative skills that contribute to the development

of formal film-literacy competencies and make learners aware of the processes that construct a mediated reality.

Direkt

The earliest edition of the textbook (Motta et al. 2008 a, b, c) places a greater focus on TV production than the film industry. In the third part of the first edition of *Direkt 3*, the content of L22 is framed by a focus on the TV show, providing five texts aimed at developing reading comprehension skills, two texts for listening comprehension, seven grammatical exercises, one vocabulary development exercise, one speaking and one writing activity. The individual sections of the sequence are connected through the mediation of a 17-year-old protagonist. Learners follow his dream to participate in the TV program *Deutschland sucht den Superstar* and observe his dismissal as the grand finale. The exercise is strongly motivational, possibly due to the demanding nature of the didactic subject of the task, the hypothetical third conditional. The impact of global pop culture on values are also discussed, thematizing the challenging ethical and moral responsibilities and behavior that such challenges generate. This topic is addressed in the form of a reader's letter to a newspaper criticizing the effect of such TV shows which provide a platform for self-centered people who thus set trends for young audiences, and diminishing the value system instead of praising the professions of teachers. Students are asked to critically reflect on this topic, develop their own position on the argument and present their opinions with the help of the effective design of the related exercises (Motta et al. 2008b, 18-25, 132, 135-136, 145).

The textbook focuses on cinema culture in L23, titled Events, which aims to improve learners' B1 level language competencies through a relatively extensive text about the Berlin International Film Festival – Berlinale. In a series of related activities, students are asked to read a text about the festival which offers a concise account of the festival's history and emphasizes its prestigious position as one of the three most critically acclaimed festivals in Europe along with Cannes and Venice. It also presents a selection of filmmakers whose films were presented at the Berlinale, including Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Michelangelo Antonioni, Ingmar Bergman, and Roman Polanski. Given the general lack of knowledge about cinematic history, this text would also require additional commentary from the teacher in order to improve students' knowledge.

Remaining activities and exercises in the textbook are focused on the introduction of specific vocabulary, such as "das Drehbuch" / screenplay, "Schnitt" / cut, and individual steps of the filmmaking process. Their short descriptions such as "Locations aussuchen" / location scouting, "Rollen verteilen" / task distribution,

"die Szenen zusammenschneiden" / editing/montage, are used to introduce the passive voice. Subsequent exercises also reflect film vocabulary and concentrate on the use of the past participle. The textbook uses the topic of the popularity and fame of actors and actresses in a somewhat superficial way, applying dialogues aimed at practicing of speaking skills (Motta et al. 2008b, 30, 31, 34, 35, 147). Students here are provided with activities aimed at acquiring related phraseology and other tools to advance the discussion; however, this sequence lacks the interest that would motivate students to express their opinions and critical observations, instead leading them to work only with fixed phrases and lexical constructions.

Ideen

The *Ideen* textbook focused on beginners features a section, L8, which is entirely devoted to TV production. The lesson uses screenshots from American TV series which are popular in the Germanophone environment (for example, *The Flintstones*, *The Bold and the Beautiful*, *Malcolm in the Middle*, *The Nanny*, *X-Files*, and *Married with Children*), and students are asked to connect the American title with a German equivalent. The accompanying text "Fernsehklone" / TV-clones, stimulates learners to consider the impact of TV on their understanding of reality within a different cultural context. With respect to the text that follows the TV program format, students are provided with specific vocabulary that can help them to describe a TV show, and also introduces the modal verb "dürfen" / may.

The topic of the lesson, "Der Krimi fängt gleich an!" / The crime series is about to start!, is introduced using visual material and only mentions films through the reference to the system of recommended age ratings applied to popular films in Germany. In addition to blockbusters such as *Saving Private Ryan* (USA 1998), *Jurassic Park* (USA 1993), and the *Harry Potter* series of films (UK/USA 2001-2011), the lesson also mentions a more intellectual film directed by Michael Haneke based on Elfriede Jelinek's novel *Die Klavierspielerin* / *The Piano Teacher* (AT/D/F/PL 2001).

The textbook then returns to German TV shows such as the cult crime show *Tatort*, the medical drama *In aller Freundschaft*, the main evening news broadcast on Channel 1 of ARD broadcast with the title *Die Tagesschau* and the sports news on Channel 2 of ZDF *Das aktuelle Sportstudio*. The TV programs in the textbook also includes the political talk show *Anne Will*, the quiz *Sag die Wahrheit*, a show similar to the American *To Tell the Truth*, a documentary and an animated film. Learners are asked to connect individual descriptions of characters to the TV show in which they appear, present similar programs for young audiences which are popular in their home countries, and comment on

their own preferences and their parents' opinions on these shows. This section thus develops vocabulary and interconnects knowledge about the target country (Germany) with speaking competencies.

To conclude the lesson, students are asked to write a short text for their school magazine about their favorite TV shows. This is also complemented by a simple text that popularizes the negative implications of watching TV, accompanied by an audio version (Krenn and Puchta 2008, 75-81). The workbook includes additional exercises that develop reading comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar skills. The final text introduces "*Fernsehen in Deutschlands Familien*" / *TV Watching in German Families* with information and statistics presenting the realities of the audio-visual reception in Germany. The follow-up activity encourages students to write a similar text focusing on their own family (Krenn and Puchta et al. 2010, 88-94, 97). In addition to lexical units from the specific vocabulary corpus reflecting the context of audio-visual culture, the lesson also provides basic information about TV production in Germany and places it within the context of global pop-culture, thereby expanding students' knowledge about the culture of the target country. In other terms, the exercise can be said to assert the cognitive aspect of intercultural competencies. Simultaneously, students learn to reflect on their perceptions of TV programs and, albeit in a limited way, verbalize their own opinions in the target language.

At the A2 level, the topic of film is addressed in L21, with the entire section dedicated to the topic. Thematized vocabulary is applied to film genres and forms of films, such as "Spielfilm" / feature film, "Liebesfilm" / love story / melodrama, "Kostümfilm" / period drama, etc., together with evaluating adjectives used in film reviews and in regular film-related speech, such as "originell" / original, "hervorragend" / fantastic, "einige Szenen waren peinlich" / some scenes were awkward, "die Handlung war kompliziert und unlogisch" / the plot was complicated and illogical, "das Ende war ein bisschen sentimental aber so romantisch" / the ending was a bit sentimental, but so romantic, "die Schauspieler waren prima" / the actors were excellent, "ein aufregender Action-Film mit" / exciting action-film with, "eine spannende Geschichte" / suspenseful plot, "ein lustiger Film für die ganze Familie" / entertaining film for the whole family etc. Furthermore, students also learn about professions related to the film industry ("Kameramann/-frau" / camera operator, "Regisseur*in" / director, "Drehbuchautor*in" / screenwriter, "Maskenbildner*in" / make-up artist, "Sounddesigner*in" / sound engineer, "Synchronsprecher*in" / dubbing artist, "Stuntman/-frau" / stuntman or stuntwoman and the description of their responsibilities, such as "das richtige Licht bei den Dreharbeiten machen" / to create suitable lighting on the scene, "die Filmaufnahmen machen" / to shoot a scene, "gefährliche Szenen spielen" / to perform dangerous acts, "die Musik und den Ton für den Film mischen" / to mix the musical score for the film.

This vocabulary is connected with the reality of film production – lighting, music score, sound – offering an overview of the elements of film production and reception that are often overlooked by general viewers. The lesson also provides a variety of texts developing reading comprehension related to film – film recommendations from the Internet, extensive film reviews, interviews with a dubbing actor, excerpts from film dialogues, discussions with cinemagoers, and a magazine interview with a stuntman. Students not only learn information about film production but can also appreciate that a film is the outcome of a process determined by various influences, the product of a collective effort. Simultaneously, they can acquire language skills which allow them to verbalize their subjective viewing experiences. It should also be mentioned that the descriptions and examples of the process of film distribution are largely determined by the period in which the textbook was published, primarily in terms of the references to DVDs, the school video-store, and cinemas rather than more contemporary platforms such as streaming services and online services that are popular among modern audiences.

This section also includes two films that are examined in greater detail, Tom Tykwer's iconic *Lola rennt* (D 1998) and the young adult film *Die Welle* (D 2008). Exercises related to both of the films focus primarily on the development of reading and speaking skills through reviews and related activities performed in pair. In the first text, critics celebrate Tykwer's film for its depiction of the cultural context of the 1990s and its assertion of the continued capability of the German film industry to produce original, experimental films that could appeal to an international audience. The textbook includes a favorable review pointing out that the structure of the film consists of three different versions of the same story. The review does not make it explicit that the film can be interpreted as a meditation on fate and accident; nonetheless, it suggests the power of detail by emphasizing how changing details in the plot of the story generates alternative endings. Other formal aspects that contribute to the experimental character of the film remain undeveloped, but the review also recognizes actors' performances and international learners are thus acquainted with German actors, actresses, and the director (Franka Potente, Moritz Bleibtreu, Tom Tykwer).

Die Welle relates a story from the school environment and examines the probability of the return of totalitarian regimes in contemporary society using manipulation as the main tool. Students are offered a review of the film which focuses on the plot and behavior of individual protagonists during a school experiment, highlighting the performance of Jürgen Vogel in the role of a manipulative teacher. The review also considers the issue of the violence in the film (Krenn and Puchta 2009, 88-97; Krenn and Puchta, et al. 2011, 130-143). The activity is complemented with grammatical exercises to practice the

declension of adjectives and conjunctives (Krenn and Puchta 2009, 90-96) and the accompanying workbook continues with the development of language skills by including a total of eighteen autonomous activities focused on developing grammar skills (Krenn and Puchta et al. 2011, 130-141).

In conclusion, *Ideen* offers a creative means of processing references to audio-visual materials, placing a particular focus on cinema, and efficiently connects the topic with subject-specific achievements which reflect the A2 level of language competencies of its intended students while simultaneously advancing film literacy skills. Detailed comparisons with traditional school curricula include general but efficient vocabulary which covers various aspects of film culture – from film production through the filmic experience to students' individual film preferences.

Conclusion

Audio-vision is a universal medium that can help visual learners to acquire various skills and competencies. In the foreign language classroom, these types of material have proven to be a highly efficient tool for mediating authentic language experiences. Cinema also promotes the cultural recognition of a target country, functions as a social barometer projecting social values and tendencies communicated by expressive artistic means. As a tool, film can explore important issues and place them within the context of the contemporary world.

The textbooks analyzed in this study use references to audio-visual materials or individual films which primarily relate to the plot, protagonists, settings or extra-filmic realities such as national experience, culture and show business, but the wide range of topics that connect subject-specific goals with audio-visual culture suggests that the authors of the textbooks are aware of the significance of the appeal of audio-visual materials among young learners and implies that these media formats have replaced traditional, text-based media as the primary means of obtaining entertainment and information (Anders et al., 2019). The associations with cinema and cinematography can thus significantly enhance interest in selected topics among young learners, and the activities analyzed in this study demonstrate both the creativity of the authors of the textbooks and the not insubstantial potential of audio-visual culture in supporting the fulfilment of didactic goals connecting media culture with almost any of the everyday topics discussed in the studied textbooks. Nonetheless, it is important to note that cinema, the primary format of audio-visual material which appears in the textbooks, is not presented as a system of formal and informal conventions with its own specific language or as an ideological phenomenon with an endless capacity for the generation of alternative realities.

Similarly, cinema's mechanisms for the representation of model-identities are not described in any of the studied references

Another issue revealed by the analysis is the fact that while the analyzed textbook sets indicate that their authors are aware of the educational potential of audio-visual material, the mediation of aspects of audio-visual culture to encourage learning processes involves challenges related to the transformation of the visual form into a textual format, a step which necessarily implies reductions resulting from the textual and spatial limitations of the textbook. As a result, learners are not presented with actual audio-visual material, only with their references or references to their by-products. From the perspective of media pedagogy, reductions of this kind are not ideal, but from a subjective-specific didactic point of view those limitations can be anticipated. The primary goal of foreign language education is, ultimately the advancement of language competencies rather than media literacy. References to media culture primarily function as a motivational tool which is typically incorporated into activities that develop grammatical, vocabulary or reading comprehension skills which contribute to the thematic aspect of the activity, and it is this effect that the authors of the textbooks aim to achieve in the use of references to internationally known media products, a requirement generated by the general-to-specific didactic principle. Although references to audio-vision are somewhat marginal, each textbook includes at least one lesson or section which is focused on audio-visual responses or, more specifically, developing audio-visual literacy skills among students. The most substantial and efficiently used references to audio-visual material with respect to their didactic function were observed in the case of the *Ideen* set. It can thus be concluded that the latest versions of textbook sets more aptly reflect the current demand for cultural knowledge and incorporate audio-visual education as a relevant accompanying outcome that contributes to the advancement of general media-literacy skills among young learners.

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PRECARITY AND HEALING: ON THE ROLE OF GRIEF IN EDWIDGE DANTICAT'S *THE FARMING OF BONES* (1998)

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ABSTRACT. ***Precarity and Healing: On the Role of Grief in Edwidge Danticat's* The Farming of Bones *(1998).*** Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* (1998) is a fictional account of the undocumented Parsley massacre of 1937, when black Haitian migrant workers were killed by Rafael Trujillo's government in the Dominican Republic. The paper places the novel in the African diasporic tradition of writing about the traumatic past, with the Parsley massacre being one such traumatic event of Haitian diasporic writing. The paper highlights the critical problem that unlike most post-colonial fiction, this Haitian diasporic story about gaining voice and agency fails to provide a satisfactory therapeutic valence or an explanation for individual suffering. The paper proposes an application of Judith Butler's concept of precarity in order to reconsider the problem of healing the wounds of the past in Danticat's novel. For Butler, social relationality makes subjects vulnerable within the social structure they inhabit, but this vulnerability may also carry a potentiality for the experience of social vulnerability to be shared in makeshift acts of solidarity. The paper claims that precarity does have a limited potential in the novel, which can be detected through the analysis of the water imagery. Amabelle Désir, the protagonist, is already living a precarious life before the Parsley massacre, but the brutality to which she is subjected isolates her socially even more afterwards. She is unable to bear her testimony, living in the past, mourning her lost lover. The representation of precarity in the novel's water imagery indicates that making contact with her former employer in 1961 brings a momentary sense of

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connection and community that enables her to commit suicide eventually. This element of truncated healing can be read as the limited potential of precarity available in the Haitian diasporic context.

Keywords: *Edwidge Danticat, Toni Morrison, Judith Butler, Haitian diasporic women's writing history, empowerment, healing, precarity, grief*

REZUMAT. *Precaritate și vindecare: despre rolul deplângerii în* The Farming of Bones *(1998) de Edwidge Danticat.* *The Farming of Bones (1998)* de Edwidge Danticat e o relatare ficțională a masacrului din Parsley, rămas nedocumentat, unde în 1937 muncitori haitieni migranți au fost uciși de guvernul lui Rafael Trujillo în Republica Dominicană. Lucrarea plasează romanul în tradiția diasporică africană a scriiturii despre trecutul traumatic, masacrul din Parsley fiind un asemenea eveniment traumatic în literatura diasporică haitiană. Studiul evidențiază problema critică a faptului că, spre deosebire de majoritatea ficțiunilor post-coloniale, această poveste diasporică haitiană a găsirii unei voci și a unei posibilități de acțiune nu reușește să furnizeze o valență terapeutică satisfăcătoare sau o explicație a suferinței individuale. Lucrarea propune aplicarea conceptului de precaritate al lui Judith Butler pentru a repune în discuție problema vindecării rănilor trecutului în romanul lui Danticat. Pentru Butler, relaționarea socială face subiecții vulnerabili în structura socială pe care o populează, însă această vulnerabilitate poate avea și un potențial, în sensul că experiența vulnerabilității sociale poate fi împărtășită în acte improvizate de solidaritate. Lucrarea afirmă că precaritatea are un potențial limitat în roman, fapt ce poate fi detectat prin analiza imaginilor apei. Amabelle Désir, protagonista, trăiește o viață precară deja înainte de masacrul din Parsley, însă brutalitatea la care este supusă o izolează social și mai mult ulterior. Ea nu este în stare să-și aducă mărturia, trăiește în trecut, deplângându-și iubitul mort. Reprezentarea precarității în imaginile apei din roman indică faptul că luând legătura cu fostul ei angajator în 1961 îi provoacă eroinei un sentiment trecător de conexiune și comunitate care îi permite să se sinucidă în cele din urmă. Acest element de vindecare trunchiată poate fi interpretat ca potențial limitat al precarității disponibil în contextul diasporic haitian.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Edwidge Danticat, Toni Morrison, Judith Morrison, Judith Butler, istoria literaturii diasporice haitiene, empowerment, vindecare, precaritate, deplângere*

> "We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives." (Toni Morrison, 1993 "Nobel Lecture," quoted in Danticat 2017, 15)

In African diasporic women's rewritings of history previously untold wounds of the past get articulated. As female protagonists begin to find their voices to narrate their past suffering, a healing process emerges: female characters

who learn to share their painful stories with their community of women experience a gradual empowerment. Since the 1980s, Toni Morrison's name and work have become hallmarks for this kind of active imaginative engagement with the traumatic past of African Americans. As we all know, Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987) tells an imaginative story of a fugitive slave mother, who murders her child to prevent her from being recaptured into slavery. The subsequent return of the murdered girl's ghost exerts a powerful influence on both the literary and critical afterlives of the topic (Morrison 1987 and 1995). Ashraf H. Rushdy, the author of *The Neo-slave narrative* (Rushdy 1999b), reads Toni Morrison's *Beloved* through the slave mother's two daughters - one dead, one a survivor. The two daughters are "signifyin(g)" basic relationships to history in their relationships to the mother, Rushdy claims: the dead one has returned to take revenge for her lost life while the survivor learns about the past in order to move on and reconstruct her own life. The two represent two sides of an ambivalent relation to the past, "the unforgiving way" and "the loving way," as Rushdy puts it (1992, 583). These two ways also stand for the binary means of handling the wounds of the past and it is the forgiving way that leads to healing.[2]

In African diasporic fiction the transmission of wounds and the healing are often played out in the mother-daughter relationship, but similarly to the case of *Beloved*, healing is not always fully accomplished. Caroline Rody's *African American and Caribbean Women Rewriting History* interprets the mother-daughter relationship as the allegory of the urge to return to history. Rody claims that the return to history provides extra sources of imaginative power for the colored daughter-narrators. While Rody contends that the daughter's return can be both creative and lethal, in either case her focus is on the "fantastic figure of the revisionary "daughter," who, transcending time in a quest to contact lost, enslaved foremothers, embodies the newly born power of feminist reimagination" (Rody 2001, 4). For her, these novels[3] recreate the voices of socially marginalized persons in order to produce new versions of the African American and Caribbean past through the stories they tell.

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[2] Rushdy's book covers William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967), Ishmael Reed's *Flight to Canada* (1976), Sherley Anne Williams's *Dessa Rose* (1986), Charles Johnson's *Oxherding Tale* (1982) and his *Middle Passage* (1990) surveying fictional representations of African American history that reimagine the genre of the slave narrative, often involving representational modes of African cultural origin (see also Gilroy 1993, Eckstein 2006 and Kovács 2021).

[3] Rody discusses Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* (1966), Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* (1975), Sherley Anne Williams's *Dessa Rose* (1986), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), and Phyllis Perry's *Stigmata* (1998). As a complement, Rita B. Dandridge analyzes historical romances as political acts by African American women authors. Her analysis extends to Anita Richmond Bunkley's *Emily, the Yellow Rose* (1989) and *Black Gold* (1995), Beverly Jenkins' *Night Song* (1994), *Vivid* (1995), *Indigo* (1996), *Through the Storm* (1998), Francine Craft's *The Black Pearl* (1996), Gay G. Gunn's *Nowhere to Run* (1997), and Shirley Hailstock's *Clara's Promise* (1995).

In Haitian diasporic literature the project of telling about previously censored accounts of the past also connotes a sense of resistance to silencing, and possibly healing. Edwidge Danticat identifies as one of her own artistic "creation myths" or haunting stories the execution of Marcel Numa and Louis Drouin in 1964, who had returned from their US exile to fight against the Duvalier regime and were caught and killed. Their return from the diaspora "involves a disobeyed directive from a higher authority and a brutal punishment as a result" (Danticat 2017, 6), like an Adam and Eve banishment story. Danticat understands the writer's and the reader's role as a similar resistance to oppression: "[r]eading, like writing, under these conditions is disobedience to a directive in which the reader, our Eve, already knows the possible consequences of eating that apple but takes a bold bite anyway" (10). Part of this creation myth is the issue of death that she has been writing about continually (15). In 2017, having witnessed her mother's death, she thinks of death "like moving from one place to another, […] a more permanent tenement or town" (33).

Edwidge Danticat's second book *The Farming of Bones* (1998) belongs to the afterlife of Morrison' *Beloved* in that it contemplates forms of racialized subjugation and death. However, the book does not represent slavery as the main cause of past grievances. Instead, it focuses on the story of the 1937 Parsley massacre that "has become a significant new source of trauma for the Haitian collective psyche" (Munro 2006, 83). The book tells the story of a politically motivated massacre as an act of resistance. Inspired by Morrison's example, where the suffering of a group is represented through one documented person's imaginative story, Danticat's narrative of one survivor's life (Munro 2006, 83) exposes the horrors of the Parsley massacre in which cc. 30.000 Haitian citizens were murdered in Trujillo's Dominican Republic. Yet in contrast with Morrison's representation in *Beloved*, Danticat prefers not to conceal the murder (Danticat 2017, 71), rather, she elucidates its diverse horrendous ways. Amabelle, the heroine and narrator survives the massacre and escapes to Haiti, but she heals in a very limited way. She becomes physically and emotionally restricted for decades after her escape from the Dominican Republic. She lives a "living death" among her memories and the ghosts of the past: she bears no daughter, and remains silent about her experiences. Her emotional healing begins as a reaction to Trujillo's assassination in 1961, and it materializes in the form of revisiting sites of her traumatized past and in the telling of her story. However, the travel and the act of telling leave her isolated and she commits suicide by the frontier river between Haiti and Dominique eventually.

Commentators usually point out an optimistic spirit in the book. Danticat herself writes in her "Afterword" that it is "about starting all over—or trying to—and ultimately, I hope, about coming to terms with history" (Danticat 1998b,

317). Rohrleitner sees "a glimpse of redemption" (2011, 75) in the story that she attributes directly to an optimistic political atmosphere in Haiti thanks to the reinstatement in office of Jean-Baptiste Aristide, the democratically elected president, in 1994 after a military coup in 1991.

Danticat's representation of Amabelle's experience and survival has also been read as part of the Haitian diasporic imaginary, and this account also presents an optimistic view of the novel. Nadège Clitandre defines the diasporic imaginary as a site where "the work of imagination and fantasy entails the project of transgressing all forms of borders […] to produce new language and alternative knowledge, hybrid, multiple, and dialogic forms of communication that unsettle the rhetoric of nationalism" (2018, 140). Clitandre focuses on the process of linguistic hybridization (145) in the novel through which several voices contribute to telling the story, not only through voices of several characters but also through voices of ghosts and both third-person and first-person narration focalized through the same character. For Clitandre, Amabelle's and Sebastien's first-person narrations represent their consciousness of the insider, while their third person narrations represent their consciousness of the outsider (2018, 149 and 2001, 36) Clitandre locates the hybridity of the text in the linguistic representation of "double consciousness" of colonial and neo-colonial subjects (2018, 149) which in an earlier work she called the "narrative strategy of otherness" (2001, 35-6). The insider position allows Haitians to "use the imagination to redefine and reconstitute themselves despite continued subjugation" (31). The story of healing for Clitandre, then, is to be understood as one narrative among the many available ones about the neocolonial experience, and not the final one.[4]

The lack of a clear story of healing in the novel has been explained by Martin Munro by historical reasons, as a typically Haitian approach to postcolonial enterprise. Munro points out the difference between the more positive view of earlier Haitian accounts of the massacre and Danticat's barren representation: "[t]he sterility of Danticat's Amabelle-Yves couple can be contrasted with Jacques Roumain's Manuel and Annaïse in *Gouverneurs de la rosée* (1944), in that Roumain's lovers bring forth life, and a new flow of water, while Danticat's couple, in their unique, fruitless copulation, only reinforce the barrenness of

[4] Sylvia Martinez-Falquina uses the term ambivalence to describe the "dyasporic" (Danticat 2010, 50) condition in Danticat's *Claire of the Sea Light* (Martinez 2015, 13). The ambivalence involves both "the telling of horrors" and "the restoration of a balanced relationship to the landscape that differs from and resists colonial and neocolonial representations" (13). Again, the idea of doubleness surfaces in Martinez' analysis of the "tidalectic" (17) rhythm between representing wounds, separation, and grief on the one hand and an optimistic possibility of healing on the other – this time in Danticat's cycle of stories.

their traumatized lives" (Munro 2006, 88). Moreover, Amabelle is unable to testify and break her silence, and it is only in her dreams that she talks about her experience, even if silence for Amabelle indicates insubordination. Yet, "in Danticat's narrative there is no clearly empowering, literal move out of silence and into voice or agency", Munro writes, possibly due to the prolonged and immediate nature Haitian traumas that set the country apart from other Caribbean nations (92).

As part of the literature on Haitian diasporic women's rewriting history, this paper sets out to compare representations of the traumatic experience and healing in Danticat's novel about the Parsley massacre in order to address the notion of healing represented in the text. I argue that there is a need to reconsider the notion of healing as an impossible counterpoint to getting wounded or denigrated. Instead, healing is conceptualized here as a process. I have chosen the critical discussion on precarity in literature as a method for a procedural approach to healing. More specifically, I am interested in the *potential* the notions of precarity and grief may offer in discussing literary representations of healing in Haitian diasporic women's writing.

According to Judith Butler, precarity is a general condition of vulnerability to which any subject is exposed to by the social and political structure s/he is situated in. This socially conditioned vulnerability is physically based (Butler 2004, 27), but it can be psychic, emotional, institutional as well, often appearing against one's self-professed notion of autonomy in situations when one finds oneself out of one's "self" (27). For instance, grief can be a time when "one undergoes something out of control and finds that one is beside oneself" (27). However, for Butler vulnerability can also form the basis of new communities for forging new kinds of social and political communities based on the common experience of vulnerability of the precarious subjects. In literary studies, papers on representations of precarity question how new concepts of community may be shown and formed in texts, and whether and how various experiences of vulnerability provide a chance for new social or political connections. Such new concepts of community discussed include social institutions like family and marriage.

The notion of precarity as a social condition, being the source of a potential solidarity, provides a new perspective on the reevaluation of the problematic nature of healing in *The Farming of Bones.* The concept of precarity collapses the binary between trauma and healing and provides a procedural model, in which healing appears as a possible function of vulnerable conditions. The specific example of the heroine's healing process in Danticat's novel provides a chance to examine what possible new communities and bonds may be formed among Haitian and Dominican women who survived or experienced the Parsley

massacre. Experiences of physical and institutional vulnerability abound in the novel, while the narrative can be read as an obituary for the narrator's lost love, a document of lifelong grief. The narrator reaches out to other survivors and eventually to witnesses of her own tragic past. I suggest that we look into how precarity and grief intersect in scenarios of healing in Danticat's novel. My aim is to find out what sort of healing one can think about in the novel, if healing is conceptualized as the possible potential element of the experience of precarity.

Representing precarity in literature

The notion of precarity has become a popular critical framework in literary studies in the past decades, mainly in reactions to the publication of Judith Butler's *Precarious Lives* (2004) and *Frames of War* (2009). In *Precarious Lives* Butler discusses repercussions of Holocaust survivor Emmanuel Lévinas's ethical philosophy of personal responsibility in the context of the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Butler 2004, 139 and Rushing 2015, 67). Butler considers how one's social relatedness includes an essential physical vulnerability that is also part of being "human" (Butler 2004, 42-3) and critiques ways in which the neoliberal state produces the condition of precarity (Butler 2009 and 2015). Forming part of this overarching interest, studies on literature usually showcase representations of precarious lives and the condition of precarity in literature.

For Butler, a life of precarity means the possible vulnerability of any subject in a neoliberal social structure, an essential condition. Any social subject is part of larger social systems that influence its life dramatically, so it is vulnerable to them (Butler 2004, 27). Vulnerability can be downright physical in not being able to control or defend one's own body against an aggressor or aggressors, but being interconnected with others often takes effect on more abstract, institutional, economic or psychological, levels one is not necessarily aware of. Grief is an example of this sense of implicit personal-emotional and also social vulnerability to others: you mourn the person who had some relation to you that has become part of you, you find yourself out of control in grief (23), and although you hope you get back to normal after it is over, basically you will be a different person because of the loss of the other (21-22). So grief reveals a powerful social connection which affects and shapes (23).

This essential vulnerability constitutes what Butler calls a "common human vulnerability" (31), yet some lost human lives will not seem grievable. Butler enumerates instances in which civilian deaths in war are not seen as grievable by the media of the enemy forces (Butler 2004, 34-7 and 2009), which poses the problem of how dehumanizing works. Dehumanization, for Butler, happens in "a refusal of discourse that produces dehumanization" (Butler 2004,

36). However, theoretically, the condition of vulnerability of the subject in its social relationality entails a *possibility* for connection with other vulnerable subjects because of the shared experience of vulnerability, so vulnerability has a possible ethical and even political aspect (Lloyd 2015, 178). As Butler writes: "[n]ot only is there always the possibility that a vulnerability will not be recognized […], but when a vulnerability *is* recognized, the recognition has the power to change the meaning and structure of the vulnerability itself." (Butler 2004, 43) This is the possibility precarity entails: for Butler and Lorey the condition of vulnerability may become a possible non-necessary basis for creating new *social* and *political* connections and communities (Butler 2015, viii and Lorey 2015, 9).[5]

Let us see how the concept of precarity has been used in reading literature and whether any change in the meaning and structure of vulnerability, as Butler would put it, may be detected through these uses. Simon During proposed to place the humanities and the study of literature in the context of precarious lives in the neoliberal state. During argues that precarity is a phenomenon the humanities must accept, not debate: "the humanities need to adapt to and accept their relation both to social and metaphysical precariousness" (During 2015, 55). He thinks that even so, literary study can provide a genealogy of the neoliberal state, "articulate historical ways in which material precarity intersected with literary and existential precariousness" (55).[6]

In actual interpretive essays, a focus on the condition of precarity varies from being a tool for catalogue to being a tool for theoretical reflection. It may mean the study of the narrative devices that create a sense of fragmentation, confusion, anxiety, and involvement of the reader to generate affect. As an example of this, Ngumbi explores the anxieties around the emergence of a new community: the reworkings of the notion of family for migrants in Tanzania in contemporary literature (Ngumbi 2019, 66-7). Accounting for readerly anxieties in

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[5] See for instance the 2021 RINGS conference at CEU, Hungary, about 'Forging New Solidarities' as one such act: https://events.ceu.edu/index.php/2021-10-25/rings-conference-forging-new-solidarities-networks-academic-activism-and-precarity However, the idea of the potential of precarity has also been challenged on two counts, as Hogg and Simonsen show. One direction charts the vast differences of precarious experience that do not allow for sharing (Hogg and Simonsen 2021, 2). The other argues that "any attempt to find potential in precarity can be understood as a simple capitulation to neoliberal ideology" (2), a co-option of resistance.

[6] Briony Lipton resists During's attitude of adaptation to precarity in academia from a gender studies perspective. She claims the academic in neoliberal universities is the model of the precarious subject, and moreover, precarity is gendered in higher education (Lipton 2015, 64). She appropriates Janet Newman's theorizations of 'spaces of power' as a possible counter-response to precarity in the humanities. Lipton uses Newman's framework to showcase how "feminist academics find and create spaces for activism and resistance within the neoliberal university" (Lipton 2015, 65-6; Newman 2013, 202).

a different way, Jago Morrison surveys narrative devices that channel reader's affective responses in Trezza Azzopardi's *Remember me* (Morrison 2013, 16).

Another way to rely on the term in literary analysis is to survey how literary representations use specific motifs that illustrate precarious conditions and connections. In their excellent essay referred to above, Hogg and Simonsen explore literary representations of the potential of precarity in drama and autobiography. They analyze Chris Dunkley's drama *The Precariat* (2013) and Amy Liptrot's memoir *The Outrun* (2016) in order to argue that in both texts the motifs that first evoke feelings of vulnerability will eventually also suggest potential connections between people (Hogg 2021, 25). In the drama, the device with the double association is digital media, whereas in the memoir, images of birds and falling invoke new fragmented forms of sociability.

Based on the above examples, in literary studies of precarity the question is whether one can highlight aesthetic representations of actual vulnerabilities through which new notions of communal experience may emerge.

Survival and healing as precarity in *The Farming of Bones*

I would like to propose the idea that the potential precarious lives possess for Butler and Lorey can be related to the process of healing, which has been widely discussed in African and Haitian diasporic women's fictional representations of history, and which we have seen in the reception of Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* as well. Moreover, I suggest that we look into how precarity and grief intersect in scenarios of healing in Danticat's novel as processes of social relationality.

The Farming of Bones presents a fictional account of injustice and healing, with characters who live precarious lives. The novel tells the story of the Parsley massacre of the Trujillo regime in the Republic of Dominique in 1937. The aim of the actual massacre was to whiten the population (Danticat 1998c, 321) by exterminating illegal black Haitian guest workers in the border area between Haiti and Dominique. The massacre was never officially acknowledged: the army was deployed and was ordered to clear traces, and there are no public records of it available. In the novel, the story is told from the personal and intimate perspective of a female survivor (Danticat 1998c, 319), decades after the events. I would like to argue that the heroine's story can be read as a literary tale of precariousness and partial healing. So first, let us look at the story of Amabelle's bodily vulnerability, grief, and healing, in order to be able to reconsider the *representations* and the extent of the healing process in the water imagery afterwards.

Amabelle, the protagonist, lives the life of a socially invisible person already before the massacre happens. She is an orphan. Her Haitian parents were healers, who drowned crossing the river between Haiti and Dominique in a sudden torrential rain and flood. Don Ignazio found Amabelle by the river on the Dominican side where she witnessed the death of her parents. The Don took Amabelle in as domestic help, and she eventually became his daughter's maid. By 1937, Amabelle is a young woman and the only thing she has is another displaced Haitian, her lover Sebastien - a cane worker from the neighboring sugarcane plantation. They plan to marry. She has healer qualities and skills, and helps her mistress give birth to twins. Trouble starts when one of Sebastian's friends, Joël, is killed by the husband of Amabelle's mistress, Senor Pico, and there is no legal action taken to punish the culprit. It is only Joël's father, Kongo, the leader of the cane workers, who mourns his son by preparing a death mask and a burial. Kongo is privately offered wood for the coffin by Don Ignazio, Pico's father-in-law, but there is no acknowledgement of responsibility, let alone guilt, by Senor Pico himself. So already before the actual massacre, Haitian workers live a precarious life in which they are vulnerable, even exterminable and ungrievable. The cane and domestic workers make up the socially vulnerable precariat of the Dominican neocolonial state.

The delicate equilibrium of Amabelle's precarious life is shattered by the Parsley massacre even more. The first warning arrives when she is offered a job at a border clinic as a midwife by the family doctor. Dr Javier informs her of the impending killings and that he and local priests have arranged for trucks to transport fleeing Haitians to the border. Amabelle tells Sebastien and his sister about the possibility and the three decide to flee together on the trucks. Amabelle arrives late to the meeting place where she witnesses Dominican soldiers detain the trucks and brutalize passengers and organizers alike. The head of her family, Senor Pico, leads the soldiers' attack on the civilians. She starts out for the border on foot across the hills at once, accompanied by Sebastien's one remaining friend from the fields, Yves, and some other refugees. They reach the border town where they can cross the river to Haiti, but they are identified as Haitians and are beaten brutally. Only two of the group escape to cross the river, Amabelle and Yves. Amabelle strangles the woman she crosses the river with by accident when she tries to stifle her shouting, which would have revealed them to their pursuers.

After the escape, Amabelle's healing process remains incomplete. First, she spends months at a refugee camp, where she is unable to talk because of her broken jaw, and is unable to move because of her ruined knee; her body and voice function as sites of oppression (Clitandre 2001). She receives no compensation for the atrocities, her name is not even recorded by the official ordered to prepare

a list of victims, and she is not allowed to testify. Her physical recuperation remains partial as well, her hair does not grow back properly, her jaw is displaced, her teeth are cracked, and she has a limp and a ring in the ear. After the camp, she and Yves join his family. Yves's mother takes them in as a couple, but they cannot maintain a relationship even after Amabelle learns from eye-witnesses that Sebastien and his sister were killed by soldiers. Both Amabelle and Yves suffer from survivors' guilt, and their sexual connection brings no relief. They barely talk to each other, never mention the fleeing and the refugee camp they experienced together. They construct separate lives. He plants and harvests, prospers and drinks. She has physical difficulty moving around, so she takes up sewing for women in the community. No cooperation, child, or joint plan fits into this relationship, yet Amabelle and Yves maintain their barren partnership till old age because of their shared past.

Problems of healing are also linked to changing senses of "family" in the novel, which seems particularly emptied out. Amabelle's family relations have been wiped out by the death of her parents. Her employer's family replaces her own real one, then her connection to Sebastien becomes her main relation of kinship. The massacre destroys that as well, so she resolves to not connect with Sebastien's mother back in Haiti, as she had never met before, but goes to live with Yves, having survived together. This pragmatic partnership fulfils some functions of a marriage relationship: primarily economic ones, not reproductional or psychological ones. Throughout the story, Amabelle finds herself in makeshift family arrangements that eventually prove less than satisfactory and that play a part in her incomplete physical and psychological healing.

It is only when Amabelle gets old that her healing seems to speed up. Trujillo is killed, his regime ends. She revisits Father Romain, one of the priests who had organized the evacuation of Haitians from the border areas to safe territory. He was arrested and tortured after the massacre, and he was lucky to return from prison even if in a mentally confused condition. Amabelle had met him after his release from prison and witnessed his total emotional and mental confusion, his repetition of Dominican propaganda (Clitandre 2018, 151; 2001, 37; Munro 2006, 87-88). Years later she realizes that the Father has been transformed into a father in lower case: he left the order, married and has three sons to care about, being unable to perform his earlier mission of handling the needs of a bigger community, but needing the comfort of a small group to be able to master his fears. He sets an example for Amabelle, providing an attempt at negotiating her own physical and emotional disability in a new, downsized, but manageable way.

Amabelle's healing is also indicated by her emerging narrative about Sebastien. The act of telling a story about their time together, about the massacre

and about her "survival" is rooted in Amabelle's mourning and grief for Sebastien, who did not survive. He disappeared and there is no official information about him or a grave to visit, therefore he is not to be mourned for. Amabelle begins telling the account of the massacre so that Sebastien will be remembered in a story, if in no other way. As the narrator concludes: "men with names never truly die. It is only the nameless and faceless who vanish like smoke into the early morning air" (Danticat 1988, 280). Amabelle's repetition of Sebastien's name and story prevents him from being officially forgotten.

The telling of Sebastien's story also relates Amabelle's shifting social positions and attitudes to vulnerability in the sense of Butler's relationality. That is why Amabelle's story starts with an invocation and an acknowledgement. "His name is Sebastien Onius." -- runs the first sentence, in a reference to Sebastien's ghost in the present. The ghost appears in a nightmare, and Amabelle is quick to acknowledge that the nightmare about the past is better than her life in the present: "It's either be in a nightmare or be nowhere at all. Or otherwise simply float inside these remembrances, grieving for who I was, and even more for what I've become." (2) Indeed, 15 of the 41 chapters of the text are in bold and describe nightmares in the present, while the rest recount past events, the locus of linguistic hybridity as Clitandre sees it (2018, 145), the only available way for Amabelle's fragmented testimony, as Munro contends (2006, 91). Amabelle's life has been changed by the massacre. Yet it is important to spell out that in terms of vulnerability her life has been changed most by one aspect: the absence of Sebastien. In this way, the act of writing not only serves to represent Sebastien, but also the past in which Amabelle had a different position of social relatedness than in the present.

The massacre shattered Amabelle's past relationality and the ensuing official silence about the events foreclosed her actual processing of the loss and displaced it into the realm of dreams. It is the act of telling that creates a memory of Sebastien and also a mark of Amabelle's loss, complete with an awareness of the artificiality of the act of telling. The narrator comments: "Perhaps there was no story that could truly satisfy. I myself didn't know if that story was true or even possible, but as the senora had said, there are many stories. And mine too is only one." (Danticat 1988, 303) For Amabelle, telling the story of the past enumerates the reasons for her wish to die, makes her articulate an awareness of her own vulnerability and mourning, and eventually helps her make a decision. As the narrator tells the ghost:

> 'Sebastien, the slaughter showed me that life can be a strange gift,' I say. 'Breath, like glass is always in danger. I chose a living death because I am not brave. … Two mountains can never meet, but perhaps you and I can meet again. I am coming to your waterfall' (Danticat 1988, 281).

Her visit to the waterfall and the border river indicates a readiness on her part to close down the narration and her life as well. The precarious conditions of Amabelle's life before the massacre have intensified after it. Her grief for Sebastien after the massacre pushed her further into a kind of social death with limited social relations and only a semblance of a family, and her healing remained very restricted because of her poor social relationality. In what follows, let us look at the metaphorical representations of the potential of precarity in the novel, as it sheds further light on the process of healing in the novel.

The representation of precarity and the role of grief in *The Farming of Bones* via the water imagery

Earlier on, Hogg and Simonsen's analysis of images of birds and falling in Liptrot's memoir has been referred to briefly. Simonsen shows how these images shift meaning in the course of the memoir to finally indicate the possibility of a limited sociability for the protagonist (Hogg and Simonsen 2021, 25). Also, Martin Munro referred to the importance (and different roles) of the water imagery both in Jacques Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée* and in Danticat's novel (Munro 2006, 88). In this section I argue that representations of water are connected to Amabelle's experience of vulnerability and grief throughout the novel. The water imagery is also related to problems of the healing process, to anxieties that cannot be eliminated or forgotten, despite Amabelle's return to her former mistress across the border river. Yet, the visit allows for temporary local solidarities among women.

Key scenes of the novel are connected to crossing the boundary river. Immersion in water or crossing a river is usually associated with the idea of being cleansed or starting anew: the text modifies these associations. First, Amabelle crosses the river with her parents who die on the way back, leaving her alone in Dominique. For her, this is the end of her biological family and training as a healer. Second, she saves her skin swimming through the river to Haiti during the massacre. She is broken in body, kills a woman to be able to escape, while the crossing does not bring her a rebirth or an opening up, but a crisis. Thirdly, she crosses the river by car to meet her former mistress, Valencia. They manage to reconnect and Amabelle turns back to the river feeling she has no unfinished business left in Dominique. Moreover, the final scene of the novel takes place at the border river, too: Amabelle does not return to the city by car, but wades into the shallows of the river. The novel ends with her lying naked in the water in a fetal position. At the end of the story there is no more crossing of the river but an immersion in it. Can this indicate a relaxed new attitude or

healing in the protagonist? Chances of change in the future seem vague: Amabelle is old, scarred, feeble, without kin: she is more likely preparing to die than to heal.

Another water related image is the waterfall by the Dominican house that represents her connection to others. First of all, it relates to her bond with Sebastien. The couple loved the waterfall, and the grotto behind the wall of the water was their special meeting place away from others. Then, during her visit to Dominique as an old woman, Amabelle is first looking for the waterfall among the new houses, because she hopes Sebastine's "spirit must be inside the waterfall cave" (Danticat 1988, 280) and she can dream him "to listen" (280). When she is unable to find the waterfall and the cave, she begins to look for Senora Valencia's place. Senora Valencia does not recognize Amabelle first, and when she does, she begins to explain her own losses: the death of her baby son, her illness, and her attempt to hide people at the time of the massacre. She makes no apologies for her husband's murderous acts. She only tells about their separate lives in marriage; her lack of ability to leave the country because then she should have left her old father and her daughter and the graves of her mother and son, too. Valencia's vulnerability does not relate to Amabelle's vulnerability at all, as the visitor feels she had made her journey in vain.

However, when on impulse Valencia drives Amabelle to the waterfall where she fell in love with Sebastian, they do reconnect briefly. Valencia is able to comment on their shared past while watching the waterfall. Valencia says:

> "When we were children, you were always drawn to water, Amabelle, stream, lakes, rivers, waterfalls in all their power, do you remember?" I did. "When I didn't see you, I always knew where to find you, peeking into some current, looking for your face. Since then I can't tell you how many streams and rivers and waterfalls I have been to, looking for you." (300-301)

At this point Amabelle finally understands Valencia's sadness and feelings of loss. She knows she herself was expecting Sebastien to appear at the waterfall, but he did not: "Sebastien, I could not find. He did not come out and show himself. He stayed inside the waterfall" (304). So by the waterfall Amabelle could not make up for her loss of Sebastien, but she could at least share Valencia's sense of loss and waiting in vain as similar to her isolation and barrenness.

In addition, Valencia's maid, Sylvie, also shares the other two women's moment of grief at the waterfall. She has rope burns on her neck, a sign of being a survivor of the massacre herself. At the waterfall, Sylvie asks the other two a question: "Why parsley?" (301). She was a child at the time of the killings and

she had never been given an explanation of the reasons. Senora Valencia hid her and then kept her as a maid but they have never talked about the experience since. So Sylvie is actually asking "Why kill so many?" from the perspective of the next generation. Amabelle and Valencia know that they do not have a proper explanation, only makeshift stories and their sense of grief to share with Sylvie, who seems a version of young Amabelle, vulnerable and not comprehending.

In sum, the possibility to be cleansed by water, to start anew by crossing a river or emerge from a water cave intact are challenged by the images in the text. The water imagery represents the current state of Amabelle's basic relations to others. It resonates with Amabelle's experiences of vulnerability and confined social connection. The crossings of the border river are fearful and deadly experiences, not new beginnings. The waterfall changes from being a love nest into just a place of temporary connection and grief, that allows for impulsive, chance, and fragmentary affective connections among victimized women.

Conclusion

I suggest that it is easier to understand the "ambiguous" or incomplete sense of healing in Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* if we consider it through Judith Butler's concept of "the potential of precarity." This means that the act of healing is not thought of in itself, but as a mode of operation of the social networks that produce a subject. In this sense, the potential for healing lies in the social communities this subject belongs to. In the novel, Amabelle is a vulnerable precarious social subject already before the massacre, but she becomes painfully aware of her own vulnerable lack of social relatedness after the massacre. The family appears as the most reliable but fragmented community of Amabelle's precarious life that may harbor a potential, but it proves to be a fruitless, barren enterprise that is unable to help her emotionally. The water imagery of the text represents the breakdown of Amabelle's family connections, it gives space to temporal and fragile affective connections with other victims of the massacre instead. Healing itself is represented as an incomplete and unsatisfactory process dependent on Amabelle's social relationality. In the novel, healing becomes functional only temporarily, at the waterfall. After her moment of grief with other survivors, Amabelle commits suicide in order to go "to the other side of water" (the expression means leaving the country or dying in Haitian creole) one last time, now to meet the ghosts who have made this kind of crossing before her already. The concept of healing represented in the narrative entails the acknowledgement of vulnerability and incompleteness, the lack of a recuperative closure or ending.

It would be challenging to apply the notion of precarity in other works of the Haitian diasporic imaginary in which linguistic hybridity of intertextual diversity has been explored already. Representations of precariousness in fragmented narration and imagery abound not only in Danticat's other texts but also in other literary representations of the Parsley massacre and diverse Haitian reimaginations of other local traumas. Also, the scope of the notion of precarity as a mode of social relatedness could be tested in the broader post-colonial context. In trauma studies, the need for the decolonization of trauma studies has been stated in the past decade. The workings of memory are vitally influenced by local cultural differences and the legacies of the colonial past as Rothberg and others have shown (Rothberg 2009 and Martinez 2015). Similarly, the theoretical question of the need to decolonize precarity may be posed. In this article, precarity certainly seemed a useful conceptual tool to think of healing as a function of social relationality and not the opposite of trauma in a post-colonial context.

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A FORMAÇÃO DE PROFESSORES DE PORTUGUÊS E OS DESAFIOS DA AULA EM TEMPOS DE COVID-19

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ABSTRACT. ***The Portuguese Language Teachers Training and the Challenges of the Classroom in Times of Covid-19.*** The trainee teacher must be aware that his/her practice involves observation skills, critical thinking and actions' reorganization. We add to this position the fact that the Letters intern must be trained with the profile of a professor-researcher, aware of his/her role in society. Our main objective in this article is to discuss the initial training of mother tongue teachers in a pandemic context. That also involves preparation to go on remote classes if an emergency situation is decreed by the government. The goal of the data generation device was to become aware of the challenges interns and pre-service teachers experience when confronted with remote classes, considering that many just started teaching. Having in mind the objective above-mentioned we came up with five research questions: (a) Before the

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internship, did you already have experience in teaching Portuguese language? (b) Does the university, in pre-service training, enable the future teacher to use technology in Portuguese-speaking classroom? (c) What are the main challenges you faced during the internship? (d) How does didactic interaction take place in the internship classroom in times of a pandemic? (e) What are the advantages of remote class in an emergency situation? All this context is challenging concepts such as "didactic interaction", "teaching and learning", "teacher training" and "teacher action" and, besides, it also forces us to rethink the model of teacher training that we still have today.

Keywords*: initial teacher training, classroom challenges, Portuguese as mother tongue, on-line classes, Covid-19 times*

REZUMAT*. Formarea profesorilor de limba portugheză și provocări în clasă în perioada Covid-19.* Profesorul în formare trebuie să fie conștient că practicile sale includ aptitudini de observare, gândire critică și reorganizare a acțiunilor. Adăugăm că stagiarul din domeniul Literelor trebuie să fie format pentru un profil de profesor-cercetător, conștient de rolul său în societate. Obiectivul nostru principal în acest articol este să punem în discuție formarea inițială a profesorilor de limbă maternă în contextul pandemic. Această formare include și pregătirea pentru predare la distanță dacă guvernul declară situație de urgență. Obiectivelul colectării de date a fost să conștientizăm provocările prin care trec stagiarii și profesorii în curs de formare când se confruntă predarea la distanță, având în vedere că mulți abia au început să predea. Având în vedere acest obiectiv, am creat cinci întrebări de cercetare: (a) Înainte de stagiu, ați avut experiență în predarea limbii portugheze? (b) Universitatea, formarea pedagogică îl pregătesc pe viitorul professor să folosească tehnologia la orele de limbă portugheză? (c) Care sunt principalele provocări cu care v-ați confruntat în timpul stagiului? (d) Cum are loc interacțiunea didactică în timpul orelor efectuate în cadrul stagiului derulat în pandemie? (e) Care sunt avantajele orelor la distanță într-o situație de urgență? Întregul context reprezintă o provocare pentru concepte precum „interacțiune didactică", „predare și învățare", „formarea profesorilor", „acțiunea profesorilor" și, în plus, ne forțează să regândim modelul de formare al profesorilor din prezent.

Cuvinte-cheie: *formare pedagogică inițială, provocări la clasă, portugheza ca limbă maternă, ore online, perioada Covid-19*

Introdução

Devido à pandemia, decorrente da COVID-19, desde março de 2020, a humanidade vivencia um exercício muito difícil que é o exercício do isolamento social. O mundo parecia ter parado e nós nos sentíamos como se fôssemos

expectadores das muitas perdas. No início, parecia não ter saída porque, no mesmo momento em que vivenciávamos esse cenário, um discurso negacionista em desfavor à ciência se construía e se fortalecia. As portas das escolas foram fechadas.

Ao se remeter a esse momento e falar sobre o coronavírus e seus desdobramentos na sociedade, na contra-capa da obra de Boaventura Sousa Santos (2021) "O futuro começa agora: da pandemia à utopia", Ruy Braga afirma que

> O coronavírus desajustou os tempos e produziu uma grave crise social. Seu sentido imediato transparece no medo generalizado de uma morte que desconhece fronteiras. A precariedade das condições de vida e de trabalho dos subalternos, no entanto, vai além disso, escancarando os dilemas trazidos não pela negação, mas pelo fortalecimento das fronteiras de classe que se opõem trabalhadores protegidos e desprotegidos, brancos e negros, homens e mulheres, nativos e imigrantes.

Quase dois anos depois, ainda vivemos em situação de isolamento. A aula remota emergencial foi a saída apresentada para assegurar o processo de desenvolvimento dos estudantes em todos os níveis da educação brasileira e também portuguesa, embora neste texto o nosso olhar se concentre no contexto do Brasil. Nas universidades, os cursos de formação inicial de professores precisaram se adaptar à situação e se reinventar em busca de soluções para continuar seu objetivo. Essa determinação descortinou as condições de trabalho de professores e estagiários do Curso de Letras, mostrando as nossas fragilidades e a necessidade de mudanças urgentes e necessárias na proposta de formação inicial.

Cada instituição mostrou a sua potencialidade e isso também descortinou as diferentes realidades do ensino público e privado. É, inclusive, no seio desse contexto que nossas reflexões se situam. Trataremos aqui da formação inicial de professores de língua portuguesa a partir de respostas de um questionário aplicado a estagiários de Letras de uma universidade pública federal do nordeste do Brasil, considerando as aulas de estágio de regência e, em particular, a interação didática nesse contexto. A nossa opção por esse recorte se deu porque constatamos que os impactos da pandemia no contexto da educação está sendo muito estudado, mas ainda pouco temos tratado da formação inicial do professor de línguas, muito menos ainda do estágio como espaço privilegiado dessa formação.

Em 2020, no início da pandemia, quando tudo parecia ainda muito confuso e inseguro, Leurquin aplicou um questionário a professores experientes, estudantes do Mestrado Profissional em Letras (professores do Ensino Fundamental, com mais de vinte anos de experiência). O objetivo era entender como professores-pesquisadores na área de Linguística Aplicada, com pesquisa em andamento sobre o ensino de língua materna, estavam enfrentando o desafio da aula remota em situação de emergência.

Os resultados da pesquisa foram publicados no capítulo intitulado "A interação didática na aula remota" (Leurquin 2020), publicado no livro *Estudos*

das práticas de linguagens em tempos de pandemia, pelas edições universitárias da Universidade Federal de Alagoas. As conclusões apontaram as dificuldades dos professores experientes em situação de interação didática no contexto da aula remota em situação de emergência. A autora mostrou as condições de trabalho dos professores e desafios de muitas ordens; e suas conclusões apontaram para a necessidade de rever a formação inicial e continuada de professores.

Neste artigo, alinhamo-nos a Pereira e Pereira (2012) quando os autores referem que o professor em formação deve ter consciência de que a sua prática envolve um comportamento de observação, reflexão crítica e reorganização de suas ações. Aduzimos a essa posição a defesa de que o estagiário de Letras deve ser formado com o perfil de um professor-pesquisador, consciente de seu papel na sociedade.

Nosso objetivo maior nesse artigo é discutir a formação inicial de professores de língua materna em tempos de pandemia, quando são exigidos dos estagiários saberes para atuar em aulas remotas em situação emergencial. O objetivo do dispositivo de geração de dados, foi conhecer os maiores desafios dos estagiários, professores em formação inicial, em sala de aula remota em situação de emergência, considerando que muitos assumiram a sala de aula pela primeira vez.

Com base nesse objetivo, definimos as questões que motivaram a discussão proposta, são elas: (a) antes do estágio de regência, você já tinha experiência de sala de aula de língua portuguesa? (b) A universidade, na formação inicial, capacita o futuro professor para usar a tecnologia em sala de aula de língua portuguesa? (c) Quais os principais desafios enfrentados por você quanto às questões apresentadas no momento do estágio? (d) Como acontece a interação didática em sala de aula de estágio em tempos de pandemia? (e) Quais os pontos positivos da aula remota em situação de emergência?

O artigo está dividido em cinco partes e nelas trataremos do contexto de produção das nossas reflexões, pontuando o estágio e sua importância para a formação inicial de professores, bem como a aula remota em situação de emergência; em seguida, trataremos da metodologia de geração de dados; depois, das interpretações do dizer do estagiário sobre suas dificuldades na aula remota em situação de emergência; e da interação didática em sala de aula de estágio no contexto da aula remota.

O estágio e sua importância para a formação inicial de professores

Considerando a importância que o estágio tem no processo de formação inicial de professores de língua portuguesa, podemos afirmar que pouco ainda falamos sobre ele, apesar de ser um tema bastante relevante. A literatura sobre formação inicial aponta dois preocupantes fatores: o espaço do estágio é pouco contemplado nas discussões feitas sobre formação inicial de professores; e as disciplinas de estágio são ministradas no final do curso, atrasando o contato do

estudante com o dueto teoria-prática docente, o que já mostra pouca relevância do tema dentro da proposta de formação inicial.

O estágio no Curso de Letras permite que o estudante retorne à escola da educação básica não mais como aluno e sim como um professor em formação inicial. Esse novo status permite que ele observe a escola com base em outros questionamentos, isto é, percebendo e refletindo sobre o trabalho do professor, em situação de interação didática, no seu agir professoral em sala de aula de língua portuguesa. E isso é possível, quando ele aciona o seu repertório didático (Cicurel 2010), constituído a partir de suas experiências vividas, de saberes teóricos e práticos sobre a disciplina e sobre a ação de ensiná-la. Além desses saberes, também são mobilizados os saberes institucionais, constituídos de documentos, leis, planos de aula, entre outros saberes que prescrevem o trabalho do professor.

Mas, para analisar o trabalho do professor, antes de tudo, precisamos entender o ensino como trabalho e compreender que existem dois tipos de trabalho do professor: o *trabalho prescrito* e o *trabalho real*. Segundo Bronckart (2006), o *trabalho prescrito* apresenta-se em forma de instruções, modelos, modos de emprego, programas, etc, e estão presentes em diversos documentos produzidos pelas empresas ou pelas instituições. Esse tipo de trabalho se projeta em programas, projetos didáticos, manuais e sequências didáticas. O autor distingue o *trabalho prescrito* do *trabalho real* ao afirmar que por *trabalho real* se consideram "as características efetivas das diversas tarefas que são realizadas pelos trabalhadores em uma situação concreta". Nessa discussão, acrescentamos que, quando o professor é motivado a falar sobre o seu trabalho, em situação de autoconfrontação ou em uma entrevista de explicitação (Bulea 2010), por exemplo, ele utiliza suas representações do seu *trabalho real.*

A compreensão dos tipos de trabalho do professor é muito importante para nossa discussão sobre o estágio de língua portuguesa realizado, em particular, em aulas remotas em situação de emergência, conforme iremos perceber durante o texto.

Dentro do conjunto das disciplinas de estágio do Curso de Letras da universidade pesquisada, há dois tipos de disciplinas: aquelas em que o estudante apenas observa as práticas docentes e uma disciplina de regência. Fazem parte do primeiro grupo, as disciplinas *Estágio em ensino de leitura* (código HB009), *Estágio em ensino de Análise linguística* (código HB010) e *Estágio em ensino da língua oral e da língua escrita* (código HB011). Do segundo grupo, faz parte a disciplina *Estágio em ensino de língua portuguesa* (código HB012)[3] , quando o estagiário realiza a sua regência.

[3] Para ter acesso ao quadro completo das disciplinas, http://www.cursodeletras.ufc.br/prog_dlv.htm

A metodologia de geração de dados

Os dados analisados foram gerados em duas turmas da disciplina *Estágio de ensino de língua portuguesa,* durante o ano letivo 2021. Cada turma tinha dezasseis alunos, totalizando trinta e dois informantes.

Durante uma aula, foi aplicado um questionário constituído de quatro perguntas abertas, a saber: (a) Antes do estágio de regência, você já tinha experiência de sala de aula de língua portuguesa? (b) A universidade, na formação inicial, capacita o futuro professor para usar a tecnologia em sala de aula de língua portuguesa? (c) Quais os principais desafios enfrentados por você quanto às questões apresentadas no momento do estágio? (d) Que pontos positivos poderia citar na experiência da aula remota em situação de emergência ?

A primeira pergunta questiona a experiência de sala de aula, porque o fato de o estudante ter experiência docente antes do estágio pode ser entendido como um fator relevante e facilitador porque ele pode recorrer a seu repertório didático quando necessário e isso diferencia do jovem inexperiente. A segunda questão solicita que o estagiário faça um exercício de auto-reflexão sobre a formação inicial, compreendendo um exercício de distanciamento do seu processo de desenvolvimento profissional para pensar sobre ele, em particular ressaltando o próprio estágio e o Curso de Letras. A terceira questão inclina-se completamente para a problemática das aulas remotas ministradas pelos estagiários. Ela tinha o propósito de permitir que o estudante verbalizasse seus desafios enfrentados com relação às suas experiências docentes. Ainda na mesma direção, a quarta questão volta-se para os aspectos positivos da experiência com a aula remota em situação de emergência. Na sequência, retomamos as quatro respostas para interpretar o que dizem os estagiários sobre as aulas de formação inicial deles e os desafios que enfrentaram durante a aula remota em situação de emergência.

Interpretações do dizer do estagiário sobre suas dificuldades na aula remota

O primeiro questionamento mostrou que há estudantes de Letras chegando à sala de aula de estágio com alguma experiência docente porque assumem trabalhos durante a sua formação. Dos trinta e dois alunos, dez estão nessa situação. Se por um lado, a orientação consiste em que que o aluno assuma a sala de aula apenas depois do Curso, por outro lado, a realidade está mostrando a necessidade de ele iniciar sua vida profissional antes. Esta demanda se soma a argumentos que mostram a necessidade de as disciplinas de estágio acontecerem a partir da, pelo menos, metade do Curso. Mas, considerando que elas são ministradas

no final do Curso de Letras-licenciatura, podemos afirmar que a universidade pode estar falhando de alguma maneira com o seu objetivo principal que é formar o professor.

O segundo questionamento discute a tecnologia na sala de aula de língua portuguesa. Esse tema passou a ganhar um espaço mais significativo nas discussões sobre formação inicial de professores a partir da chegada dos Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais às escolas, nos anos 1990. Mas, foi com a publicação dos PCN+, dois anos depois da publicação dos PCN do Ensino Médio, que vimos mais claramente como as orientações desses documentos poderiam ser concretizadas em sala de aula. O objetivo dos PCN+ era, exatamente, apresentar metodologias diferentes para o ensino da língua materna.

É também nestes documentos que as áreas de conhecimentos estão agrupadas por semelhanças e as tecnologias estão presentes em todos elas, marcando assim a sua importância na formação inicial do professor. A primeira área é Linguagens, Códigos e suas Tecnologias, onde se encontra o componente curricular língua materna. Uma das grandes contribuições dos PCN+ é porque eles apresentam propostas metodológicas de ensino que inserem contribuições das tecnologias da informação e comunicação a serviço do ensino da língua materna, na tentativa de suprir as incompletude da formação inicial dos professores; contribuir na adequação dos professores às novas orientações relacionadas à formação de professores; e estar atento para que a formação continuada possa acontecer em serviço (Brasil 2002). Mas, entre o dizer e o fazer em sala de aula, a diferença é muito grande e assim sendo os PCN+ não tiveram o sucesso esperado.

Com a pandemia, oriunda da Covid -19, fomos, estudantes e professores, obrigados a nos isolar e as escolas foram orientadas a fechar as portas. Com o distanciamento social, foi preciso ressignificar as aulas, as interações didáticas e repensar o material didático utilizado. Isso tornou mais evidente a necessidade de saber utilizar as tecnologias na produção e uso de material didático porque as aulas passaram a ser remotas em situação de emergência (assíncronas e síncronas). Agora, quase dois anos em condições semelhantes de isolamento social, a grande questão que fazemos é se avançamos de alguma forma; se esse tema está sendo efetivamente contemplado na formação inicial do futuro professor, dito de outra forma, se a universidade realmente está formando o professor para atuar no contexto da aula remota, por exemplo.

As respostas do questionário aplicado mostram que a relação ensino de língua materna e tecnologia, ou as contribuições das tecnologias para o ensino e aprendizagem da língua materna ainda são pontos carentes de uma reflexão. Não existe disciplina que discuta o uso de tecnologias da informação na sala de aula de língua portuguesa. Certamente, por essa razão, todos os estagiários responderam que não são preparados para um ensino mediado pelas tecnologias da informação e comunicação.

O terceiro questionamento pedia que os estudantes fizessem um texto mostrando as quatro principais dificuldades encontradas para ministrar as aulas remotas e os desafios enfrentados na regência. As quatro dificuldades citadas são interação didática, barulho, interferências na hora da aula, como lidar com a mídia e tempo para realizar as atividades. As dificuldades aqui listadas estão na ordem da mais citada para a menos.

Ao destacar o tempo para realizar as atividades na aula remota como uma das dificuldades, o estudante também pode estar revelando sua pouca habilidade nessa modalidade de ensino. Sabemos que, durante o desenvolvimento de suas atividades, o estagiário mobiliza seu repertório didático (Cicurel 2020), constituído de saberes a ensinar, saberes para ensinar e saberes institucionais (Hofstetter, Schneuwly e Borer 2009) e suas condições de trabalho, enquanto estagiário ou professor em formação inicial, conforme mostra Leurquin (2020).

Neste caso em discussão, com menor potencialidade mas também importante, o estagiário mobiliza, quanto às condições de trabalho e às implicações para o resultado esperado do seu trabalho real (Bronckart 2006), dificuldades oriundas do seu repertório didático relacionadas aos saberes necessários para o uso da tecnologia a fim de que ele diminua seu impacto na relação, por ele apontada, entre tempo e atividade a realizar.

Nesse ponto da nossa reflexão, não é demais dizer que, para além dos saberes a ensinar, dos saberes para ensinar e dos saberes institucionais relacionados à língua, ao seu uso e ensino, também devemos contemplar, na constituição do repertório didático do professor em formação inicial, saberes que possam contribuir para o uso das tecnologias em sala de aula de línguas.

O uso de Tecnologias de Informação e Comunicação na Educação (TICE) e/ou as condições de trabalho do estagiário na aula remota foram apresentados como uma das dificuldades enfrentadas, conforme podemos observar nas falas que selecionamos para este artigo. Há situações em que o professor em formação apresenta dificuldades para manusear o aparelho, outras em que ele nem possui um aparelho compatível com a necessidade que a aula remota demanda; e há também situações em que o problema está relacionado aos dados móveis.

Na fala do estagiário Pedro[4], observamos dificuldades com relação à qualidade da sua rede e também do computador utilizado na aula.

> Sendo assim, *minha internet era péssima e sempre caía* durante as aulas e quando não me impossibilitava de continuar a aula, me deixava muito estressado com a situação. Além disso, meu notebook já era bem velho e *muitas vezes me deixava na mão*[5] e eu tinha que recorrer ao celular (...) (Pedro – nossos itálicos)

[4] Todos os nomes utilizados neste artigo são fictícios.

[5] Expressão que significa, neste caso, parar de funcionar.

Mas, outro tipo de dificuldade apresentada, desta vez com relação ao ambiente da sala de aula, diz respeito às condições externas do professor em formação inicial. Nessa direção, alguns estagiários citaram o fato de sua residência passar a ser a sala de aula. Essa fala do professor em formação nos permitiu refletir sobre o conceito "sala de aula". Na aula virtual tanto é utilizado o espaço da residência do professor em formação quanto o espaço da residência de cada aluno. Nesse contexto espacial, a geografia da sala de aula muda e com isso tudo que implica e é implicado nesses espaços também muda. A pergunta maior que fazemos é: como as mudanças já percebidas implicam no processo de ensino e aprendizagem e na formação do professor?

O espaço da aula remota em situação de emergência reconfigura o próprio conceito de sala de aula e também obriga-nos a questionar outros conceitos envolvidos no processo de ensino e aprendizagem e de formação[6]. Os quatro excertos que seguem tratam das condições de trabalho do professor em formação. A partir das falas selecionadas, percebemos que ao passo que os estagiários tomam ciência da sua incapacidade para assegurar as melhores condições para realizar o seu planejamento, eles também percebem a invasão de sua privacidade em cada aula ministrada.

> (...) meus *vizinhos faziam barulho, a oficina* que fica logo atrás da minha casa *tornava o ambiente ainda mais barulhento*, a *garagem rotativa do meu prédio* muitas vezes *me fazia ter que interromper o momento da aula* para tirar meu carro da frente de outro que ia sair, *meu gato subia em cima de mim* ou bagunçava meu local de trabalho etc. (Lucas – nossos itálicos)
>
> *O barulho dentro de casa, e na rua, que muitas vezes atrapalha a aula,* pois nem todos os professores e alunos têm um ambiente específico para trabalho e estudo, além de que, às vezes, *o professor ou o aluno tem que sair da aula para resolver problemas de casa*. (Joana – nossos itálicos).
>
> Eu ficava estranhando aquele modelo de aula onde eu podia ver a mim mesma através da câmera embaçada do meu antigo *laptop* e *confesso que me sentia desconfortável com eles me observando no meu ambiente caseiro onde antes era meu refúgio e de repente se tornou sala de aula.* (Maria – nossos itálicos)
>
> *A minha casa não é um ambiente ideal de estudo, há muitas demandas da casa que eu não teria que lidar se tivesse tendo aulas presenciais.* Essa dificuldade é um pouco mais difícil de superar, porque envolve mais do que apenas que tipo de aula eu vou planejar. (Carla – nossos itálicos)

[6] Sobre esses conceitos, falaremos quando formos tratar da interação didática mais adiante.

Diante dessas constatações, questionamos: quais as condições necessárias para ministrar as aulas remotas? Como estabelecer os limites necessários para assegurar uma boa aula remota? O incômodo de transformar o espaço residência em sala de aula é um dos problemas mais citados. A partir dos dados, observamos que o professor em formação, em seu exercício em sala de aula remota em situação de emergência, se depara com os outros papéis que ele assume na sociedade, a saber, o papel de professor em formação, aluno, filho, irmão, vizinho, etc. Isso modifica a forma de ele interagir com seus alunos e de se posicionar porque vai depender dos papéis que ele pode assumir no momento da interação didática, a depender da demanda que pode acontecer (não programada) durante o seu agir professoral. Todos esses fatores interferem na qualidade da aula, como mostram Lucas e Joana.

Carla e Maria destacam o limite do espaço sala de aula, ressaltando a invasão de privacidade que ocorre nesse tipo de aula. Essa questão, para nós, também é considerada como externa, mas é diferente das anteriores pela forma como as estagiárias se colocam no discurso. Nesse sentido, pontuamos a fala de Carla quando ela apresenta como maior dificuldade a invasão da privacidade porque excede o limite da formação profissional, do objetivo da interação didática.

Os últimos excertos a serem analisados tratam da interação didática, dificuldade citada por todos os estudantes. Por esse motivo, destacamos um espaço especial nesse artigo para falar sobre ela.

A interação didática em sala de aula de estágio no contexto da aula remota

A interação didática acontece de maneira diferente das demais interações por muitas razões, mas destacamos duas aqui: o seu propósito é o ensino e a aprendizagem; e há uma relação dialética e assimétrica em jogo porque "um guia as trocas, os outros participam dos diálogos e influenciam em parte sua dinâmica", segundo Cicurel (2010). Para essa autora,

> "é preciso regras de fala, implícita e explícitas. Rituais linguageiros acompanham assim os diálogos de tal maneira que cada participante sabe mais ou menos quando lhe é concedida a fala ou quando ele deve cedê-la e o que está no direito de dizer. (...) quando a interação é didática, ou seja, quando tem em vista um crescimento dos conhecimentos nos participantes aprendizes, as modalidades de transmissão ligadas ao objeto de ensino são postas em primeiro plano. Consequentemente, deve dar lugar ao que são ações e estratégias de ensino, suportes, atividades pedagógicas, programas, elementos que contribuem bastante para a construção da interação e sala de aula" (Cicurel 2010, 19).

A interação didática tem um plano de texto (Bronckart 1999) com suas partes definidas (o início da interação – quando o estagiário começa a aula, implica também os cumprimentos iniciais; o desenvolvimento, quando ele ensina o conteúdo e o fim, quando conclui a aula, implica também os cumprimentos finais); realiza-se em um contexto polifônico, mas com um contrato didático bem definido onde os participantes conhecem seus papeis e as regras que devem seguir. Ela acontece, conforme já dissemos, em uma situação assimétrica e com uma relação de poder explícita ou velada. Em sua lógica, podemos perceber que existe um tema, um formato específico e suas regras definidas e respeito a um tipo de atividade didática em realização.

Enquanto um objeto de investigação, é possível analisar as interações didáticas a partir do quadro proposto por Cicurel (2020) constituído dos seguintes elementos: quadro espaço-temporal, interactantes (o experiente e os postulantes), objetivo, conteúdo, encadeamento ritualizado, canal e estratégias discursivas. Quando se trata da aula remota em situação de emergência, esses elementos permanecem, porém entram em jogo as condições de trabalho dos professores e isso apresenta resultados diferentes ou a necessidade de repensar os próprios conceitos.

Os excertos sobre as interações didáticas nas aulas remotas mostram alguns pontos de destaque que deixamos em negrito e que iremos interpretar na sequência. É possível dividir em tópicos conforme podemos observar:

> *O professor acaba tendo que, muitas vezes, falar sozinho*, sem saber se está sendo ouvido, algo que desanima e faz que o trabalho não seja feito da forma desejada, e que o aluno não aprenda direito. (Maria Clara – nossos itálicos)
>
> Se *você explica algum tópico novo, você não tem o feedback imediato* dos alunos, como ocorre no presencial. As pausas entre turnos de fala. Eu peço para algum aluno ler um texto para mim e há um tempo até ele entender que estou pedindo a ele e ligar o microfone. (Amaro nossos – itálicos)
>
> *Não tem como saber se todos estão realmente aprendendo* o conteúdo ou fazendo outra coisa. (Amélia – nossos itálicos)
>
> A maioria dos alunos não ligava as câmeras, *as aulas eram menos interativas* e era *extremamente cansativo* ministrar o conteúdo sem essa interação. Eram *robotizadas e sem vida*, o que acarreta em *um desânimo coletivo* (por parte dos alunos e dos professores). (Antônio – nossos itálicos)
>
> Muitas vezes fazia-se necessário chamar seus nomes repetidas vezes para obter resposta, pois *muitos desempenhavam outras atividades* durante a aula. (Angelina – nossos itálicos)

Como vemos nos excertos, indiretamente observamos que há todos os elementos que compõem uma aula interativa (quadro espacio-temporal, interactantes- o experiente e os postulantes- objetivo, conteúdo, encadeamento ritualizado, canal e estratégias discursivas). Porém, a forma de interação traz desdobramentos com implicação que afetam os demais elementos e, sobretudo, no resultado final que é o ensino e aprendizagem, objetivo principal da interação.

Partindo do conceito de aprendizagem segundo o pensamento vigotskiano, onde o desenvolvimento cognitivo do aluno se dá por meio da interação social, podemos dizer que as preocupações de Maria Clara (no primeiro excerto), de Amaro (no segundo excerto) e de Amélia (no terceiro excerto) têm fundamento. O silêncio ou a demora nas respostas dos estudantes na aula remota vem se consolidando como uma das características desse tipo de interação didática. Nesse sentido, podemos dizer que a experiência social acontece de forma diferente.

Essa situação tem desdobramentos diretos para a atuação do professor em formação no que respeita à zona de desenvolvimento do aluno. E, conforme observamos nos dois excertos que seguem, o estagiário demonstra reações pouco favoráveis e motivadoras para a continuidade da aula.

A partir desses recortes, podemos entender, de maneira geral, que as dificuldades da interação didática se dão na preocupação apresentada pelos estagiários quanto à diferença entre o trabalho prescrito (planejado a partir das representações dos estagiários sobre a aula que queria ministrar) e o trabalho real (realizado em sala de aula). Isso parece claro na voz de Maria Clara ("desanima e faz que o trabalho não seja feito da forma desejada").

Poucos estagiários responderam à última pergunta (quais os pontos positivos da aula remota). Dos trinta e dois informantes, obtivemos as seguintes três respostas:

> Há, porém, pontos bem positivos com relação ao ensino remoto, um deles é o fato do professor *poder compartilhar facilmente uma música, vídeo ou determinados textos que se encontram em PDF*'s (Ricardo - itálicos nossos).

> A principal facilidade foi *a ausência de deslocamento*, uma vez que as aulas eram ministradas em minha própria casa. Além disso, o modelo remoto me *permitiu gravar as aulas em horários mais convenientes*, já que, de acordo com as necessidades da turma, as aulas foram assíncronas. (Manuel - itálicos nossos)

> A principal *facilidade do ensino remoto foi o fato de evitar um deslocamento considerável até a escola,* levando em consideração que tem uma distância razoável da minha casa. (Natália - itálicos nossos)

As três respostas apontam para os seguintes pontos: a não necessidade do deslocamento do professor em formação; a facilidade de fazer a aula assíncrona e com isso poder preparar material no tempo disponível; e poder utilizar as tecnologias da informação e comunicação para fazer uma aula diferente. Chamamos a atenção para o fato de termos tido poucas respostas e dentre elas apenas uma se remeteu às contribuições das tecnologias de informação e comunicação na educação.

Conclusões

A pandemia da Covid-19 não apenas trouxe desdobramentos para a saúde e a economia, por exemplo, como ela também atacou diretamente e fortemente a área da educação. Quase dois anos de isolamento social permitem-nos ter uma compreensão mais clara dos desafios ainda enfrentados por professores experientes e postulandos.

As disciplinas que compõem o grupo de estágio representam um espaço privilegiado de formação inicial de professores dentro do Curso de Licenciatura em Letras. Nesse contexto, qualquer discussão sobre a sala de aula torna-se um objeto referencial para as investigações dentro da Linguística Aplicada ou Didática de Línguas . Assim sendo, dar voz ao estagiário permite que possamos ter acesso a suas representações sobre o próprio processo de formação inicial.

Neste artigo, analisamos respostas de um questionário aplicado a professores em formação inicial/estagiários de língua portuguesa para entendermos como eles perceberam a dificuldades em sala de aula remota. Nesse contexto, alguns pontos sobressaíram: a invasão na casa de professores em formação e de alunos; a sensação de que está falando sozinho na interação didática; as interferências externas, como barulho ou intervenção de terceiros, no momento da sala de aula; e a sensação de que os alunos não estão aprendendo.

Todo esse contexto que vivenciamos no ensino e aprendizagem e na formação de professores põe em cheque conceitos como interação didática, ensino e aprendizagem, formação de professores e agir professoral. Mas, ele também nos obriga a repensar o modelo de formação de professores que hoje ainda temos. Um modelo que privilegia as teorias deixando de lado a prática docente, os saberes para ensinar e igualmente desconsiderando a necessidade de pensar o espaço das tecnologias da informação na educação, na sala de aula de línguas.

Na voz do estagiário, percebemos que ele compreendeu o grande espaço entre o trabalho prescrito, isto é, o seu planejamento feito, e o trabalho real, o que ele de fato realiza na sala de aula. O resultado dessa reflexão deixa-o desmotivado para o exercício de seu *métier.*

Enfim, se buscamos trabalhar o desenvolvimento do humano e profissional numa abordagem histórico-cultural, de forma que a cultura possa dar forma ao espírito, como pensar uma interação didática com base no modelo que acabamos de ver?

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NATURE-TRANSCENDENCE AND SELF-NATURE RELATIONS IN SANDOR WEÖRES'S POEMS

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ABSTRACT. ***Nature-Transcendence and Self-Nature Relations in Sándor Weöres's Poems.*** In Sándor Weöres's poems flora and fauna are not only a decoration, serving as an allegorical/metaphorical background for the representation of the self's alienation and for the 20th century experience of a chaotic universe, but rather the reality of beings independent of subjective consciousness. This reality carries the already forgotten mysteries of the created world, and it definitely points towards a transcendent meaning, an ultimate goal. This paper examines how the specific relationship between self and nature can be associated with the peculiar worldview and the transcendental experiences of Weöres's poetry.

Keywords: *Hungarian poetry, 20th century literature, time and eternity, nature, faith*

REZUMAT. ***Relațiile dintre natură-transcendență și eu-natură în lirica lui Sándor Weöres.*** În poeziile lui Sándor Weöres flora și fauna nu sunt doar un fel de decor, un fundal alegoric/metaforic care servește la reprezentarea alienării eului, la experiența unui univers haotic al secolului XX, ci mai degrabă realitatea entităților independente de conștiința subiectivă, o realitate care poartă în ea însăși secretele uitate ale Creației și care indică, în mod evident, spre un scop final, un sens transcendent. Lucrarea de față, examinează modul în care relația dintre eu și natură poate fi legată de viziunea specifică asupra lumii și experiențele transcendentale ale acestei lirici.

Cuvinte-cheie: *poezie maghiară, literatura secolului 20, timp și eternitate, natură, credință*

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1. Introduction

In Sándor Weöres's poetry,[2] one is both a character and a spectator of God's glorious, eternal theater (*Theatrum Gloriae Dei*). Due to our mortality, we are part, but by our consciousness of death and faith in salvation, we are also external observers of the pre- and extra-human dimensions. Flora and fauna in this poetry can, in a way, counterbalance the modern-day problematic nature of the basic relationship between existence and the individual, for in spite of all suffering or doubt, they indicate the existence of an unknown harmony, a sacred unity (See: Schein 2001, 74-75; Bartal 2014, 150-181). Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that this particular connection to the transcendent can be noticed in the titles of the following volumes: *A kő és az ember* [The Stone and the Man]; *A teremtés dicsérete* [The Praise of Creation]; *A hallgatás tornya* [The Tower of Silence]; *Tűzkút* [Well of Fire]; *Ének a határtalanról* [Song about the Boundless], etc. As Zoltán Kenyeres says in his monograph regarding the first period of Weöres's poetry: for Sándor Weöres „the poem was not meant to be a means of personal self-expression, but of general expression of existence; he did not wish to capture the evanescent miracles of experience, but sought the signals of the cosmos that united man and nature; he searched the non-variable against the accidental; instead of the once-appearing, he wanted to seize the ever-present; and the certainty or, even, the uncertainty of final things sparked his imagination" (Kenyeres 2013, 84). The world of minerals, through its impassive indifference, stillness, and absolute submissiveness urges one to greater sobriety; the plants fulfill the purpose of their earthly existence in the task of incessant growth and fecundity, whereas the destructive fight of the animals as part of an existing but inscrutable wholeness and universal meaning reminds us of the necessity of birth and death.

2. Sándor Weöres's Sacral Ecophilosophy

Nature, even despite its vulnerability and ignorance, is happier and wiser, and by virtue of its instinctive control is more open than us. So, the opportunity

[2] Sándor Weöres (1913-1989) was one of the greatest Hungarian poets of the 20th century. His first poems appeared when he was fourteen; he burst on the Hungarian literary scene possessing a talent which enabled him to write in a wide range of techniques and metric forms. Some of his poems have been set to music and translated to many languages. Beside Christianity, he studied several ancient cultures and mythologies, and discovered Eastern philosophy. "Weöres handled Hungarian folk rhythms with as much ease and elegance as any Latin or Greek meter or other western European verse form. He left a legacy which, in terms of formal virtuosity, is very hard to surpass. [...] His search for meaning constantly led him into the area of metaphysics" (Makkai, and Watson Liebert 2003, 917).

arises: making human life more meaningful and perfect with analogies taken from the living world, getting to know its significance as profoundly as it is given to a mortal. In such a context, the relationship of animals and plants to Creation and the Creator is unproblematic, humans are the only beings who, in the constant struggle between body and spirit, in the contradiction of earthly and spiritual determination, open the way to the duality between faith and denial, joy and suffering, the stubborn will to live and the desire to die. This idea is present in Weöres's poetry from the beginning, for example in the 1938 poem *A kakuk* [The Cuckoo]:

> Alien lives are buzzing around me,
> alien's the nest where I was increased
> and when my little wings changed there fluff,
> I turned away from every company,
> I have no nest, no trouble, no delight,
> I have nothing to do with anything:
> and while desires, wishes flutter,
> until my death I'm but a spectator,
> so let no one see me until I die.

The moral of being a cuckoo is essential for a person seeking the purpose of life: it means staying away form the hustle and bustle, the petty, lamentable everyday life of the (bird) world; it means contemplation, non-commitment, rejection of all that could interfere with this harmony provided by detachment, the experience of supreme wholeness and love. This aesthetic-philosophical attitude is not unfamiliar to the poetry of the era; it is present in both Attila József's and Lőrinc Szabó's reflective poems. What makes Weöres's approach different from similar lyrical representations between the two world wars is the confident conclusion, even in its ironic overtones, that all this is not the result of world chaos, or of some fatal error, but rather it belongs to the essence and truth of Creation, and that is the way it is supposed to be, for it serves a final, transcendent meaning: "Great law stretches over the grass and tree / feeding us with each other happily / and it's called: love and fondness. / (Is it bad? Don't think so: / you don't know / its goals)." In a letter addressed to Lajos Filep, Sándor Weöres describes this belief as follows: "The greatest accomplishment of my life is that I've got this far: I've never thought that the sight of life, from above, is so infinitely beautiful; it is no longer a problem here why so much confusion must exist if in its entirety life is so undisturbed. Seen from here, even the filthiest things are not scary anymore, because their authenticity, their affiliation is obvious. And the most amazing thing is that I feel how effortless it is to love everything, without distinction and gradation. […] Those who, one by one, fight and kill each other, together are almost as great a bonfire of love as the Creator Himself" (Kenyeres 2003, 93).

Perhaps the greatest horror for the thinking and sensitive person, aware of the inevitability of death, is the cruelty of the humans who kill to eat and that of the wild animals that feed on and destroy each other, as well as the indifference of nature to all the pain and suffering that can be observed in the functioning of the – seemingly self-serving – all-overriding survival instinct. This issue is one of the origins of Sándor Weöres's poetry – as a recurring motif, albeit in a changing form and with different conclusions, constantly emerges in each period of his oeuvre. The quoted text of *The Cuckoo* solves this problem with a dispassionate, distant, contemplative attitude, by consciously – and somewhat cynically – accepting that the cuckoo in the poem passes the burden of parental care and species preservation on to the despised noisy bird world. The poem *De profundis*, written in 1942, depicts the suffering of the "horrible feast", the endless, infernal cycle of killing for life by extending it to the whole world: "where God's cattle and flowers / crowd chewing, alive, each other."[3] At the same time, it is obvious that all this has some meaning only for man, the thinking self. *Heraclitus* [Herakleitos], written five years earlier, attributes this universal pain to the limited subjective experience and narrow individualistic worldview:[4]

> Don't say that life is bad and God is bad.
> Don't beg Him for pleasantness. His world
> is not a lukewarm puddle of happiness
>
> [...]
>
> Just because you didn't get to fill your stomach,
> it is a shame you call the world vicious:
> you are for it, not the world for you.

In Weöres's poetry, before the Second World War, to the mystery of the eternal cycle of the birth and death of living beings, the words of the 79th poem of the *Rongyszőnyeg* [Rag-carpet] provide the most authentic answer: suffering is an ineradicable part of life: "[the] suffering of birth, life, and death – says Ellen Gorsevski in a similar context – are parts of every sentient being's existence. Thus, to aid another sentient being by preventing or alleviating suffering is a moral imperative" (Gorsevski 2018, 90). The seed of the grass, the fruit of the tree, the birth of animals, and human creation, all evolve at the cost of the pain of change. Therefore, the purpose of life is not happiness but fertility, participation in the constant work of God, the possibility of merging into the

[3] As Donna J. Haraway says: "Try as we might to distance ourselves, there is no way of living that is not also a way of someone, not just something, else dying differentially" (Haraway 2008, 80).

[4] From the recent scientific literature, Gábor Schein's short monograph and, in more detail, Mária Bartal's book analyze the impact of Heraclitus' fragments, published by the Stemma publisher, with Béla Hamvas' accompanying study, on Weöres' poetry before the Second World War, though neither Schein nor Bartal quote specific passages from the contemporaneous translation. (Cf. Schein 2001, 49; Bartal 2014, 155-157).

never-ending act of creation. In this view, human suffering is far more sublime than that of plants or animals, since it has been given to us to share in the infinity of the whole, in eternity, not only in the particular and momentary: "Now as bonfire consumes the twig / so you are received into God's suffering – it's not a finite pain of a slaughtered hen / but as boundless as a fertile land." The poem *Aurora combattans* shows the same goal in the form of constant movement, birth and decay, struggle, and self-sacrifice. The dynamism of the octosyllabic, two-beat verses, the elevated, archaic diction, the allegorical representation, and the peculiar metaphors evoke the hymns of the Christian antiquity, early Middle Ages, as well as those composed by Aurelius Prudentius Clemens and St. Ambrose:

> It is foolish to ask You for
> heavenly and earthly joy
> happiness is never the main goal,
> never the aim but only a repose.
>
> Your Entirety is lasting
> only if all parts are changing.
> Not stillness is to be achieved:
> let everything move that lives.

"In Weöres's worldview", Jenő Alföldy says, "the permanent, the unchanging, the immovable, the eternal is identical with the all-encompassing essence, the manifestation of which is all that changes. Change is the most characteristic feature of the Universe, but while everything changes in the macrocosmic world of the starry sky, just as in the microcosmos of the corpuscles, the totality of changes does not alter the common essence that can be found in everything, namely eternity" (Alföldy 2014, 18).

3. Paradoxes of Eternity

Phenomena considered eternal on the human scale of time, but in fact transient, or seemingly momentary, yet permanent – this is a paradox that appears in Sándor Weöres's several poems. Probably, the best known of these is *Öröklét* [Eternity], in which the poet contrasts the eternity of the apparently forgotten experience, of the event experienced, of the once happened "lizard's creep" or "stroke of wings" with the temporal nature of the material world doomed to annihilation sooner or later in cosmic time, of the celestial bodies or even of the "grave devouring everything" *(Trans. Katalin Ullrich N.)*. This view can be found in the early poems, as well. It is about emphasizing the radical difference between appearance and reality, materialism and transcendence, about that existential and at the same time aesthetic-philosophical attitude so characteristic

to Weöres, which, by contrasting sacredness with rationality, definitely decides in favor of the former:

> What you don't trust to stone
> and decay, shape out of the air.
> A moment leaning out of time
> arrives here and there
>
> […]
>
> As a bather's thigh is brushed
> by skimming fish – so
> there are times when God
> is in you…
> (*Örök pillanat* [Eternal Moment] – *trans. Edwin Morgan*)[5]

The *Háromrészes ének* [Song in Three Parts], or by its later title, *Harmadik szimfónia* [Third Symphony], continues this line of thought through the representation of the duality between the above and below, heavenly and earthly, eternal and momentary. The poem, even with regard to Weöres's poetry, has an exceptional structure; it is a three-pillar construction, with musically recurring motifs, variations, and refrains. In the experimenting lightness of the poem, dynamism and abrupt stops, joy and pain, vulnerability and power, birth and death are present simultaneously. The weight of eternity is antagonized by fragile beauty; permanence by movement; quietness by singing; timeless and unchanging divine contemplation by active existence: "Little bird cries, little bird rejoices, / while from his red planks / the mighty one looks down -" *(Trans. Susanna Fahlström)*. As silence carries music, as calmness carries motion, so the intransient, that is the Creator, carries the transient, the never-ceasing spectacle of the created world. In this way, the seemingly different things are essentially one ("You yourself are the hunter and the wild"); the self, the individual dissolves in the process that gives the unity of the Universe. "On the way to completeness, there is no good and bad any more; here, basically, everything belongs to the good already, but the dual perspective remains vivid. In the dimension of completeness/incompleteness, all value choices are guided by an ethical principle, the aesthetic values of poetry appear on the 'back' of this moral imperative", as Zoltán Kenyeres puts it about the *Song in Three Parts*. (Kenyeres 2013, 308).

Nature, here, resonates to the vibrations of the human soul; feelings find their match in animal sounds, movements, dance and singing as a projection of the dream-like, surreal, inner world. The recurrent refrain, the different variations

5 All the poems with the translators mentioned above are cited from A. Makkai, and E. Watson Liebert, 2003.

reflect this perfect harmony, the coexistence of man and nature: "The peacock screams with you / toddles into the night with you / the rambling rose looses its elongated line with you." A play of opposites and parallels intertwine the lines of the poem, the alternation of strength and weakness, action and tranquility, fortissimo and piano, which, however, are not mutually exclusive. "In the *Song in Three Parts*, the living being becomes an existing one; this metamorphosis of the lyrical hero is the mystery of the birth of the complete person. But in life, Weöres also finds this person: in the nun who adds herself to her nine bags as the tenth, which means that she herself is an object. In life, the complete person considers him- or herself identical with everything, is, in fact, an object among other objects. This is where the purpose of this philosophy of life becomes apparent", Imre Bata notes in connection with the poem (Bata 1979, 98).

4. Man and Nature

After the Second World War, Weöres wrote a number of long verses (See: Bartal 2014, 182-319). Beside poems dealing with various mythological themes (e.g. *Mahruh veszése* [The Fall of Mahruh], *Medeia* [Medea], *Minotauros* [Minotaurus], *Orpheus* [Orpheus], etc.), *Az elveszített napernyő* [The Lost Parasol] is primarily significant because in it the poet doesn't build directly on ancient Greek or Far Eastern traditions and characters, but chooses an ordinary idyllic story as a starting point. By this, in some sense, he realizes the aesthetic-philosophical synthesis of the entire oeuvre. The poem itself consists of nearly 400 lines. According to Attila Tamás, the author of the first short monograph on Weöres, "it shows a stylized worldview one degree more naive than the real one" (Tamás 1978, 92). The essence of the epic thread is the parasol left in the midst of the woods as a memento of a rendezvous in nature. Its further "fate" reveals the secrets of existence and nature, birth and death. The object lost in the woods acts as an alien body in the natural world. Beyond the factors motivated by practical use, it can, like any other man-made product, be understood as a metaphor for temporary protest against the chaos that prevails in the universe (See: Derrida 2008, 11-18).

Sándor Weöres's poetry constantly reflects on the perfection and incomprehensibility of divine work, but also on its infinite righteousness and goodness. In the process of creation, mortal man seeks to approach the beauty and orderliness of the created world. This analogy is underlined in the poem by a detour which, as a story in the story, details the fabric and origin of the parasol, and the difficulties of producing it. In most cases, therefore, even making such an easy-to-use tool as a parasol presupposes aesthetic purposes: "Lombard silk and red Rhine dye, / long-travelled Indian ivory, / Pittsburgh iron, Brazilian wood, how / many handcarts have trundled its parts, they have gone by rail, they have gone in boats: / a world to make it! son of a thousand hands!" *(Trans. Edwin Morgan)*

The parasol represents the man-made twentieth-century living space, global civilization (See: Páli 2017, 127-138). The poem places this next to the created world, the mountains, the valleys, the animals, and the plants. Perhaps it is no coincidence, either, that due to its functionality, it protects man from one of nature's vital sources: sunlight.

The story also proves that the artificial and the natural world are not completely alien to each other. The man-made order, which is fulfilled in the making of the tool, apparently prioritizes the victory of entropy during the process of disintegration, but as plants and animals slowly take possession of the now defunct object, the law of love is finally able to rule over chaos (See: Kabdebó 2019, 27-32). The initial distance between the two worlds, created at the moment the parasol is left in the woods, irrevocably disappears with its disintegration. We can witness the new life, sprouting in the shelter of the parasol, overcoming destruction and death:

> The vapour-tulip throws back its head,
> a glass-green other-worldly meadow glistens,
> at the horizon a purple thorn gathers;
> darkness surrounds the far-off island;
> a little ray like a woman's glance flickers,
> caresses its fugitive lover, glitters
> as it flutters onto its drowsy son,
> while a smile dawns eternity on man,
> its arches bend and march on their way
> between watery shores, Theatrum Gloriae Dei.
> *(Trans. Edwin Morgan)*

From such a perspective, everything is full of play and ease. Eternity, salvation exists in the moment. The beauty and fragility of small things, their vulnerability, the infinite love that culminates in the tiniest manifestations of life, overwhelm all destructive forces. The Universe works as God's theater, it is only necessary to recognize that its purpose is to be found not in the individual but in the greater whole. "Nothingness identified with the Universe has nothing to do with nihilism", Jenő Alföldi remarks. "It merely refers to the fate of Something or Someone perpetually transforming into something or someone else in the continual process of changing; everything that returns into the Universe turns again into Something, Someone else until the end of time. This is not about reincarnation. It is simply the disconnection of individual existence and its return into the eternal cycle. But Weöres identifies this with the love that pervades the Universe, which is both a Buddhist and a Christian trait" (Alföldy 2014, 21).

And indeed, *The Lost Parasol*'s last verse is the apotheosis of faith and love that conquer all, similar to the envoi of Attila József's well-known poem

Óda [Ode]. Despite its hidden irony, it has a hopeful ending, since it proclaims the affirmation of life. The image of the oriole here, like in the refrain of the *Song in Three Parts*, where a little bird sings about its joys and sorrows, is an expression of innocence and unconditional aesthetic service. The bird exists, because its existence has a purpose, a meaning, it contributes to the beauty of the Universe, to the fulfillment of a never-ending creation. "Now I expend my life exultantly / like the oriole in the tree: / till it falls down on the old forest floor / singing with such full throat its heart might burst and soar." *(Trans. Edwin Morgan)*

5. Aspects of dehumanization

In contrast to the playfulness of *The Lost Parasol*, the depiction of subhuman beings in Weöres's poetry after the Second World War is often related to alienation or disillusionment with the 20th century society. Excessive rationalism, the dehumanizing effect of technical civilization, or a reality deprived of all the possibilities of transcendence under the guise of modern science appear with cruel irony in the poems of the 50s and 60s.

Did we evolve from the ape?
I don't know – but we're turning into monkeys:
the bond that ties
us to the angels is already broken
(Elérünk olyan józanságot.. [We Achieve Such Sobriety…]*)*

Beside irony, however, in Weöres's poetry, the human person turning (back) into a monkey, the grotesque idea of (de-)evolution is much more than a simple metaphor. A close friend and master of the poet, Nándor Várkonyi, in his book *Sziriat oszlopai* [The Pillars of Seiris], to which Weöres made translations of *Gilgamesh* in 1937 and 1938, outlines, based on Edgar Dacqué's theory and the old myths of mankind, the possibility of another, somewhat reversed, evolutionary history (See: Várkonyi 1990, 113-116). Várkonyi speaks of a specific (de)formation, (d)evolution of the ancient type of man over time, which, as a final moment, can forecast the tragic spiritual decline of the Homo sapiens into the animal world.[6]

[6] In the first edition of the volume, Várkonyi tries to support Dacqué's arguments, which are undoubtedly outdated from a scientific point of view, concerning the changes in the various forms of the human species with several mythological quotations: "Saxo Grammaticus almost literally repeats Native American legends: 'Before time, there were three types of humans: horrible-looking people, robust people, and giants. Then, there were high-spirited people who had the ability to see the truth and to prophesy. Then, ordinary people came. They no longer possessed the skills of the former ones: the art to change their own shape and deceive people's eyes. Yet, they defeated the others, wiped them out, and became masters of the Earth'" (Várkonyi 1942, 282). "The legends of

Such a view is evidenced by the train of thoughts in Weöres's cycle of poems, comprising 49 pieces, *Én, a határtalan szellem* [I, the Boundless Spirit], written in the 1940s, which makes it clear that the final destruction of modern man, who is moving further and further away from the sources of sacredness, and that of a brutal society, have so far been prevented only by the growth of divine grace: "God's infinite patience has / descended to the lowest degree / Because between the grinding millstones no one can turn right or left [...] He looks at those who have been deprived of their minds / who kill without reason, / not with anger but with a smile, // like at fighting animals."

Here, too, it is formulated the following sentence: eating meat is nothing but an unnatural act of violence against the animal world. This idea can also be related to the statement in *The Pillars of Seiris* that in ancient times, mankind switched to eating meat only out of necessity (Várkonyi 1942, 163).

In Várkonyi's view, technical development and culture, body and spirit, the emotional, imaginative, and intellectual sides of man are in conflict with each other; the over-fulfillment of one dimension always brings about the atrophy of the other. According to him, while the ancient prehistoric peoples were ruled by transcendental relations, European society, which follows in the footsteps of the Greeks, is more obsessed with the material world, although humans differ from animals only in their openness to sacredness, advanced imagination, and emotional connections, thereby are able to transcend the limits of their earthly existence. "In the process that creates civilization", as the afterword of the first edition of *The Pillars of Seiris* states, "intellectual abilities are predominant, whereas in the cultural activity, the emotional and imaginative ones. The latter are undoubtedly superior; the distance that separates them from the animal's imaginative and emotional abilities is greater than the difference between animal and human intellect […]. Man is primarily a religious being; that is what makes us human" (Várkonyi 1942, 293-294). The 20th century modern, rationalist society seems to have lost this state of existence and mind forever. According

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the ancient peoples convincingly show the Tertiary origin of culture before the Flood; the great instructors appear as gods and demigods (Chon, Oannes, Thot), and as kings, princes (Kenan, Xisuthros, etc.). […] The new race, the 'ordinary', that is, the later dominant, wild, uncultivated, plebeian man is remembered with similar precision; our Quaternary grandfather. The traditions mentioned earlier also talk about them: they are disciples of the crawling demigods. The Jewish myth says with objective honesty: 'In Enoch's time, humans became like monkeys'" (285). "So, here are the myths telling a whole little story of evolutionary development that strikingly matches the latest findings in physiology: the first phase is the representative of the fearsome, giant animal-like, forehead-eyed creature, the reptile and amphibian human tribe, as we call it: the Proto-homo; then comes the Tertiary man, with an elongated head, webbed fingers, with demonic powers and magic science, the Homo Magus; and finally, the small, uncultivated but sensible, diligent, and prolific 'ordinary' Homo Faber" (287).

to the testimony of Weöres's two emblematic lines, the only refuge for the individual seeking the purposes of Creation, from which sacredness can probably still be reconstructed, is the reestablishment of the connection with the prehuman and extrahuman dimensions, the rejection of self-glorification: "My friends are the / animals and the superhuman currents" *(Elhagyott dimenziók* [Abandoned Dimensions]).

In one of his late poems, *Natura*, however, this possibility is no longer given: the prehuman sphere, which could provide shelter, seems to be severely compromised, as well; and the cold indifference of the rationally more and more known and "possessed" cosmos brings the inevitable threat of fear of chaos, of final destruction, as a kind of "gift" to man. Thus, everything is just a sham and a lie: the unthinking, unconscious bliss of nature as well as the illusory security of non-existence in minerals.

> The punches of the sky are
> red wounds in the heart,
> everything writhes under
> the hammers of non-existence
>
> The animal pretends to be alive
> but has a dream in its forehead.
> The stone pretends to be hard
> and there is order in the world.

The skepticism manifested in Weöres's late poems seems to testify to the dominance of the sense of insecurity, alienation, and existential anxieties of the 20th century over the creative presence open to sacredness, radically opposed to the oppressive small-mindedness of his age. Yet, in some of his last poems, the poet is still able to rise and break away from the world of hopelessness and pain *(Odatúl, odaát* [Beyond, Over There]*; Változatok egy Narekaci-témára* [Variations on a Narekaci-theme]*; Angelus Silesius)*. The inexhaustible patience and receptivity of organic and inorganic beings, of the primordial elements, the duality between matter and spirit, body and soul that are at odds with each other, yet inseparable, provide, in this context, an opportunity for confidence to the individual who is forced to face finality, the ephemeral nature of life, but at the same time consciously reflects on the earthly and celestial reality. As the verdict-like words of the 1987 *Lépések* [Footsteps] aptly state: "Footsteps sound right at the bottom / but there is always a way up / upward."

One thing is certain: Sándor Weöres's poems, despite all hopelessness and doubt in the late works, proclaim the presence of the divine principle and the miracle of Creation in a world without Sacrality, a world turned away from God.

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(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

David Foenkinos, l'histoire d'une vie redoublée par la fiction

Entretien avec l'écrivain français David Foenkinos

ALINA ALUAŞ[1]

***David Foenkinos**, romancier, dramaturge, scénariste et réalisateur français est considéré comme un des auteurs importants de notre époque en nombre de ventes. Le roman* La Délicatesse *(2009) représente le véritable tournant de sa carrière, grâce aussi à l'adaptation, réalisée en 2011 par David Foenkinos lui-même en collaboration avec son frère Stéphane Foenkinos et aux interprétations offertes par Audrey Tautou et François Damiens. De même, les biographies faites par l'auteur montrent son éclectisme :* Lennon *(2010) sur le musicien John Lennon,* Charlotte *(2014) sur la femme peintre Charlotte Salomon et* Numéro Deux *(2022) rappelant le casting de Harry Potter, fascinent le lecteur par le jeu permanent entre la réalité et la fiction.*

L'activité littéraire de David Foenkinos a été validée par le Prix François-Mauriac (2002) pour son premier roman, Inversion de l'idiotie : de l'influence de deux Polonais*. En 2014, c'est la consécration du roman* Charlotte*, qui remporte le Prix Renaudot (2014) et le Prix Goncourt des lycéens (2014).*

Les livres de l'écrivain sont traduits dans plus de quarante langues et sa popularité se doit aussi à sa passion pour le cinéma et théâtre. Les pièces de théâtre : Célibataires *(2008),* Le plus beau jour *(2016),* 10 ans après *(2020),* Amis *(2022) sont des comédies qui évoquent l'amitié, les relations amoureuses et les problèmes de couple.*

Cet entretien avec David Foenkinos, réalisé le 24 mars 2022, présente quelques particularités de son écriture romanesque et théâtrale en vue de mieux comprendre son univers littéraire.

Alina Aluaș: Vous êtes un écrivain de fiction et vous parlez très peu de vous-même dans vos livres. Pourtant, dans chacun de vos romans il y a quelque chose de votre personnalité. Quelle est le rapport entre l'autobiographie et l'autofiction dans le roman *Qui se souvient de David Foenkinos ?* dont le titre porte votre nom ?

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David Foenkinos: C'est très juste. Je ne parle jamais de moi dans mes livres, à part dans *Charlotte*, où je raconte pourquoi cette artiste me fascine. Je devais être présent dans le livre pour transmettre mon émotion. Dans *Qui se souvient* ou *La famille Martin*, ce sont de faux doubles. Il peut y avoir ici ou là des allusions personnelles à ma vie, mais globalement on est dans la fiction. Cela dit je pense qu'en lisant mes romans on peut avoir une idée assez précise de mon rapport à la vie, à l'amour ou à l'humour même.

Alina Aluaș: À l'occasion de plusieurs interviews vous avez déclaré que la maladie au cœur à l'âge de 16 ans et les souvenirs de vos grand-mères que vous avez visitées dans les maisons de retraite sont des expériences qui vous ont marqué et qui vous ont inspiré. Existe-t-il un troisième élément que vous avez partagé avec votre public lecteur, sans qu'il le sache ?

David Foenkinos: Le plus important est bien sûr celui de la maladie qui a changé ma vie. La rencontre avec la mort surtout. Voilà ce que je peux vous dire en plus : j'ai plongé dans le tunnel de la mort, j'ai vu la mort de si proche, et j'ai eu le sentiment de revenir à la vie. Voilà pourquoi j'ai un rapport très fort à la nécessité de vivre, la beauté ou la sensualité.

Alina Aluaș: Vous parlez de toutes les étapes de la vie des femmes, mais la période de l'enfance est peu développée dans vos livres. Comment pourriez-vous justifier votre choix ?

David Foenkinos: C'est complètement juste. Mon dernier livre, *Numéro Deux*, parle pour la première fois d'un personnage central qui est un enfant. Pourtant l'enfance me passionne, puisque mon métier principal est d'être papa ! Je n'avais pour l'instant pas eu d'histoires qui nécessitaient un enfant. Il y a des adolescents ici ou là, c'est un thème que j'aborde quelque fois, comme un monde incertain.

Alina Aluaș: Dans vos pièces de théâtre vous vous intéressez toujours à l'identité des femmes et à la problématique du couple. Le jeu théâtral est assez absent, mais le dialogue fait les personnages exister. À votre avis, les personnages féminins des pièces de théâtre sont plus transparents que les femmes des romans ?

David Foenkinos: Je ne peux pas faire de généralités sur les femmes ou les hommes. Je ne peux parler que de situations précises. Mais il y clairement chez moi une fascination pour les femmes, leur clairvoyance. Mon idole est en ce sens François Truffaut qui a su si bien filmer ou parler des femmes.

Alina Aluaș: En général, vos personnages féminins alternent entre la force et la faiblesse, la joie et la souffrance. L'idée de reconstruction est présente dans vos livres. Pourquoi avez-vous choisi d'offrir une seconde chance à vos personnages ?

David Foenkinos: Oui c'est le cas pour la Nathalie de *La délicatesse*. Je dis qu'elle est un voyage entre la force et la fragilité. C'est ce que je peux aimer chez les femmes, cette alternance. Mais globalement je les trouve souvent solides et à même de maîtriser de nombreuses situations. Par ailleurs, pour écrire, je pense avoir une grande partie féminine. Pour la seconde chance, c'est le sujet central de mes livres. C'est un écho autobiographique. J'ai eu une seconde chance après ma maladie.

Alina Aluaș: Pourquoi avez-vous choisi presque les mêmes prénoms pour les personnages féminins de vos romans et pièces de théâtre ?

David Foenkinos: J'écris des livres très différents les uns des autres, mais j'aime bien me sentir en terrain familier. Comme un rapport obsessionnel aux choses. J'aime retrouver des prénoms familiers, cela me rassure presque dans le dédale de mon esprit.
Alina Aluaș: Quelle est la valeur de l'échec dans vos livres et pourquoi êtes-vous intéressé de suivre la même trajectoire, celle de traverser une difficulté ?

David Foenkinos: J'aime écrire sur les difficultés et comment on les surmonte. La proximité avec la mort fait que je cherche sûrement le positif partout. Ainsi j'essaye de trouver dans chaque situation, y compris les plus complexes, les clés pour rebondir. Il y a sûrement une vertu à l'échec.

Alina Aluaș: Même si vos livres parlent des sujets différents, le mot « délicatesse » apparaît dans le texte des romans. Est-il un signe du hasard ou vous mesurez très bien les mots ?

David Foenkinos: La délicatesse est le slogan nécessaire de toute chose dans un monde de plus en plus brutal.

Alina Aluaș: Comment définiriez-vous le lien entre la littérature et l'art, qui vous a inspiré d'écrire les romans qui se différencient des autres : *Charlotte* et *Vers la beauté* ?

David Foenkinos: Les deux sont liés. J'ai été sauvé par la littérature lors de ma maladie. Les mots puis le fait d'écrire cela a propulsé ma vie dans une grande intensité. J'ai le sentiment que l'art console, répare.

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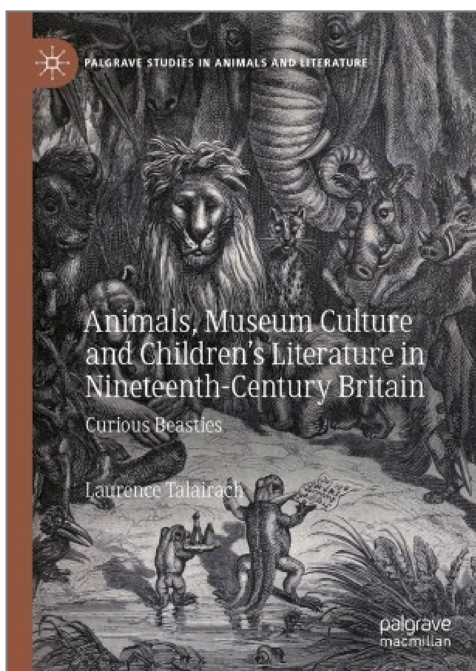
STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LXVII, 2, 2022, p. 377 - 380
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

BOOKS

Laurence Talairach, *Animals, Museum Culture and Children's Literature in Nineteenth - Century Britain: Curious Beasties,* London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, 309 p.



Discovered and collected, caged and catalogued, taxidermized and preserved, reconstituted from old bones or imagined into existence, nonhuman others feature prominently in Laurence Talairach's *Animals, Museum Culture and Children's Literature in Nineteenth Century Britain* (2021). Exploring the discourses of zoology and palaeontology in relation to children's literature, Talairach shows, through extensive examples, the development and proliferation of animal-centred books for the younger readership, as well as the distinct moral and ethical paths such literary works forged in the context of British imperial expansion. The fascination, or rather the "obsession", with classification, control and possession of knowledge characteristic of the second half of the eighteenth century, lasting well into the late Edwardian period in Britain, was accentuated by the rising presence of newly discovered animals, or "beasties". These "curious beasties" (5) not only astounded the British subjects, but puzzled naturalists and scientists alike through their ambiguous nature. This wondrous appeal also permeated children's literature and led to the creation of oft-moralising tales that frequently incorporated scientific information or veiled commentaries on the politics of the Empire, touching upon the ethics of collecting specimens and even bringing into question man's superiority and hegemony over the animal kingdom.

As Talairach observes, in the second chapter titled "Wild and Exotic 'Beasties' in Early Children's Literature," as more animals were being imported into Britain, menageries gained popularity and "by the last decades of the century, even children were being taken to see the wild beasts of the Royal Menagerie" (25). Consumerism and the newly discovered economic value of caged and/or trained animals meant that exhibitions started competing for costumers, two such enterprises vying for prominence in London in the last decades of the

eighteenth century: the Exeter Change menagerie and the Royal Menagerie of the Tower of London. Rare and exotic animals brought in costumers by "appeal[ing] to the curious" (26) and utilising advertisements meant to enthuse as well as emphasise the global movement of animal collections. Talairach identifies in such advertisements a tendency to tap into "fears of the monstrous" (26), manipulating the animals' description so as to render them outlandish and grotesque. Talairach gives a description of a cassowary from an advertisement in the *Leeds Intelligencer (16 Nov. 1779)* which compares parts of the bird to a multitude of different animals: "it has the Eye of a Lion, Defence of a Porcupine, and the Swiftness of a Courser" (26). The author highlights the public's attraction to interactions with animals, alleged to "converse with any Person" (27), as well as the connection with the "world of the fair" in which natural curiosities, "freaks", as well as differently-bodied humans, were commonly showcased (37). Furthermore, in addition to the increased availability of children's books, toys and games, such spectacles were also deemed to be beneficial for children's education in the second half of the eighteenth century, as evidenced by the advertising of menageries as "suitab[le] for women and children" among the middle and upper classes (28).

The animals did not represent only a means of educating the masses. Their caging and taming were presented as symbols of the superiority of man, of British colonial power as well as of the Empire's hegemony over the world. A thought-provoking distinction between private animal exhibitions, menageries and the animals which represented the "monarch's prestige and power" in The Tower of London, is explored (29). While private menageries presented "beasties" as rare and exotic curiosities, the Menagerie in the Tower of London introduced Guidebooks explaining how the animals were cared for and tamed, and inviting the visitors to "enjoy the thrill of proximity to wild animals and the happy sense of secure superiority produced by their incarceration" (30). Seeing as the guidebooks were aimed at the more refined, "genteel" public, reporting stories which delved into the relationship between the animal and its keeper, encouraged a connection between animal and human while still legitimising the notion of the animal's inferiority.

John Gay's *Fables* from 1727 and 1738 continued this concept of human-animal connection, while also satirising early Georgian society and power relationships. Talairach draws attention to the "blurred line" between human and animal, in terms of appearance and mannerisms. In "The Monkey Who had Seen the World", Gay played upon the proximity between apes and humans, in a gesture deemed by Talairach to have subverted the moralistic use of animals in fables in such a way as to "turn the mirror back on humans" and mock their supposed civilisation and education (36). Talairach goes on to explain that it is through this concept of similitude that eighteenth-century educationalists were able to propose innovations in pedagogical literature, which frequently addressed this issue and also marked the beginning of literature written for a specifically targeted younger audience, through John Newbery's *Little Pretty Pocket Book.*

While the main portion of Talairach's study focuses on this concept of human-animal similarity as well as the idea of "bestiality" and the taming of it, it does so through a variety of different approaches to literary works with different educational stakes for children, as well as for adults. The study continues by raising awareness to the role of women in popularising children's literature, mentioning that many of the books were written by women and mostly aimed at a female audience, while maintaining a stable traditional perspective on the

roles and patterns of conduct of males and females. This aspect relates to the tales of taming and collecting "pets" addressed in the next chapter. In *The Travelling Menagerie* by Charles Camden, Talairach believes that the main character's attitude towards his pets is a product of the Victorian museum culture, predicated on objectifying, commodifying and displaying animals. In his examination of Mary Anne Barker's *Aunt Annie's Story about Jamaica*, Talairach presents a view of the museum and consumerist culture. While the first story focused on the forceful collecting, taming, and training of animals as a means of research, this narrative focuses on the patronising undertones in children's literature. This section of the book engages with Barker's definition of "pet", as "the stupidest little creatures in the world" (118), and with the idea that animals are nothing more than "luxury goods," which, as Talairach observes, is linked with slavery, thus "collapsing the distinction between exotic animals and exotic peoples" (118), and further highlighting the Victorian obsession with possession. According to Talairach, the idea of control, mastery and hegemony which "reflected the British sphere of influence" in England as well as in the colonies was a "fantasy" that also encouraged children to create collections, or mini-menageries, of their own (123).

This aspect is further expounded on in the following chapter, titled "Young Collectors," which explores the amateur naturalist movement of the century, disseminated throughout the Empire, mainly as it was reflected in the pages of *Aunt Judy's Magazine.* More specifically, the "paradox of the museum" rests in the incompatibility between gestures of collecting and preserving (127). Despite this, Talairach argues, numerous women writers believed such incongruities could be overcome as long as children were taught how to treat nature and its resources in a mindful way. The *Aunt Judy's Magazine* phenomenon was a particularly noteworthy milestone by not only the pushing for a right treatment of nature through acts of collecting and preserving, but by fostering women's contributions to science as well. The founder and editor of the magazine, Margaret Gatty, who was a naturalist herself, succeeded in creating a network between all the English colonies in which the public could read about natural history, ask for advice on techniques of collecting and conserving, as well as connect to readers from other parts of the Empire so as to share knowledge, trade and buy specimens for their own collections. Gatty encouraged collection "without involving any wanton destruction of life" (130) as well as by "observing the beauty and order of God's works" (130). Talairach sees this as proof that the moralising values of life further "informed children's literature, especially when aimed at a young (female) audience" (130). Although Gatty could neither travel, nor become a researcher, Talairach explains that "her activities as a naturalist were therefore fully developed through the marine specimens (seaweeds) she collected, those she kept in her aquarium, her drawings, as well as the network of contacts she developed actively with other naturalists" (137). The role of women in shaping the museum culture during the nineteenth century is highlighted in this section, Talairach believing that William Harvey and George Johnston's act of naming two algae species after Gatty was "no coincidence", but a sign of appreciation for Gatty's help in their research. This goes to show, Talairach continues, the prevalent Victorian belief that women naturalists were more likely to be "gatherers" than "namers" (139).

The next two chapters, titled "Nonsense 'Beasties'" and "Prehistoric 'Beasties'," show the effects of the increasingly popular theory of evolution developed by Charles Darwin. Darwinism is portrayed as having affected the advancement of children's

literature in two ways: the creation of "nonsense" creatures and the understanding of "prehistoric" creatures. The former type is explored in terms of the bond between humans and animals, such tales as *The Water-Babies* and *Alice in Wonderland* "bridg[ing] the gap between natural history and the objects representing that knowledge" (195). The "bridge" between human and animal is broken in Alice's story, as she is mistaken for several animals and loses her superiority, just like the Water-Baby rewrites the rules "by which we classify the natural world" (198), turning into a curious "beastie" and thus shattering any hope of taxonomic distinctions. Talairach notices the similarity between the two narratives, both characters transforming into "curiosities", unable to (re)gain control of the situation.

In the next chapter, on "prehistoric" animals, the connection between evolution and extinction becomes more apparent. The rise in popularity of palaeontology and geology, as well as of Darwinism, fuelled the fascination with mythical creatures, which, in turn, aided in both imagining and visualising extinct species. The idea that some creatures, such as unicorns and mermaids might have once existed, but gone extinct or evolved into other animals, permeated children's literature. This opened the door to new opportunities for the writers of children's books, not only to use recent palaeontological finds in their works, but also to write about topics of animal extinction and objectification, criticising both museum culture and the notion of human superiority. E. Nesbit's trilogy, *Five Children and It, The Phoenix and the Carpet* and *The Story of the Amulet,* explored the topic of extinction, a topic of high interest since, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Victorians had witnessed the demise of several species. The trilogy follows five children going through several adventures, the most "curious" one regarding the discovery of the Psammead, the last animal of its kind, Talairach regarding its appearance, in the shape of five different species, as a nod towards the five children. This further widens the racial gap between the two kingdoms for, as it is argued, "If the Psammead trilogy is thus concerned with the issue of extinction, it also denounces that of the commodification of animals, linking animal extinction and commodification through its stance upon animal displays and, therefore, nineteenth-century museum culture" (261). The children seem to be already trained to exert the consumerist gaze, which instantly turns the natural specimens into purchasable commodities, as when they see "rich tropic shells of the kind you would not buy in the Kentish Town Road under at least fifteen pence a pair" (269).

Laurence Talairach reveals the fascination with which people in nineteenth-century Britain embraced the discovery of new animals, showing the impact this had for the emergence and development of children's literature, at a time when amateur naturalist movements simultaneously advocated the preservation of or care for animals, their objectification and exploitation for their economic worth, as well as the need to educate young minds in the spirit of becoming docile and pliable British subjects.

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BOOKS

Ildiko Szilagyi, *Formes, tendances et méthodes d'analyse dans la poésie française moderne et contemporaine, Studia Romanica*, Debrecen : Debrecen University Press, Series Linguistica, Fasc. XIII, 2021, 213 p.

Les analyses réunies par la chercheuse Ildiko Szilagyi dans son étude *Formes, tendances et méthodes d'analyse dans la poésie française moderne et contemporaine*, parue sous les auspices de *Studia Romanica* de l'Université de Debrecen, series Linguistica, viennent de retracer l'histoire des nouveaux genres poétiques français, modernes et contemporains, questionnant à la fois frontières formelles et enjeux sémantiques, mais aussi comportement quant à la pratique de la traduction poétique.

En conséquence, l'enjeu est, d'un côté, de faire valoir un modèle d'analyse typographique, prosodique, sémantique et thématique capable de rendre compte du spécifique des formes apparentées, telles que le poème en prose, le vers libre et le verset, les trois issues d'un même mouvement de dissolution métrique, rattaché à un contexte historique commun, mais aussi de mettre en lumière les mobiles esthétiques et politiques qui poussent les poètes modernes et contemporains à revenir à la pratique du vers traditionnel et à celle des formes fixes, dont l'héritage remonte au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance. Le sonnet, la ballade, le rondel sont ainsi interprétés à partir de leur adaptation aux temps modernes, subissant des « infractions » au niveau typographique, « métrique » et syntaxique.

Organisés autour de la « crise de vers », les formes poétiques modernes se rattachent, dans la première phase de leur affirmation, à un enjeu esthétique et politique révolutionnaire. Combattant l'alexandrin, symbole de la soumission sociale, politique et culturelle, les poètes modernes qui pratiquent ces nouvelles formes participent à un acte de libération. Ainsi, comme le montre l'auteure, les « brouillages métriques » de Rimbaud tien-

nent d'une position politique de « destruction d'une société décadente et corrompue. » (p. 40) Si le combat politique échoue pendant les représailles contre les communards, la victoire est remportée symboliquement par Rimbaud dans l'espace des *Illuminations*. L'impératif du changement social rejoigne celui de révolution poétique. Par conséquent, selon les propos de Gustave Kahn dans *Le vers libre* (1897), il faut « rejeter la camisole de force » et échapper à l'esclavage d'un alexandrin qui se veut, selon l'expression de Jacques Roubaud, « étalon de mesure de toute expression ». Si la « crise de vers » suscite un désir de libération transféré symboliquement dans le travail poétique par le combat contre l'alexandrin, une phase contradictoire de la pratique poétique française vient de se greffer sur cet élan libérateur affirmant un désir de retour au « vers régulier ». Pensé avant en termes de nature et de norme, l'alexandrin moderne affirme une nouvelle liberté formelle paradoxalement liée à la contrainte. Cette re-sémantisation du « vers régulier » à côté d'une pratique intense des poèmes à forme fixe relève cette fois-ci d'un choix esthétique conscient et décisif de la part des poètes dont les motivations diffèrent en fonction du contexte politique ou esthétique auquel ils se rattachent. Toujours dans un contexte de quête formelle, l'auteure nous fait comprendre des phénomènes d'importation des genre poétiques étrangers comme c'est le cas du « pantoum » maltais ou du « haiku » japonais dont les formes occidentales créent des véritables modes poétiques jusqu'à nos jours.

Le combat esthétique accompagne le besoin de redéfinir la poétique à partir de ses nouvelles manifestations. De cette manière, ces pratiques innovantes passent par un processus de légitimation, couronné dans le cas du poème en prose par l'ouvrage de Suzanne Bernard, *Le poème en prose. De Baudelaire jusqu'à nos jours* (1959). Quant au statut du vers libre, même si des métriciens comme Meschonic leur refuse le statut de vers, le vers-librisme impose sa réalité poétique par la pratique de nombreux poètes-traducteurs parmi lesquels le plus actif reste Jacques Roubaud. Dans son essai, *La vieillesse d'Alexandre*, il définit le vers libre dans de termes de négation par rapport à l'alexandrin. Selon lui, la légitimité poétique du vers libre tient tout d'abord à sa seule « existence typographique » qui, contrairement à l'alexandrin, exclue la césure et la ponctuation et utilise le blanc pour se différencier de la prose. Comme le précise Ildico Szilagyi, dans le cas du vers libre « les lignes ne sont pas entièrement occupées, nous revenons à la ligne avant d'avoir atteint la marge droite et un espace blanc est gardé à la fin. » (p. 36) D'ailleurs, l'auteure s'interroge aussi sur les critères avancés par les critiques quant au spécifique de chaque nouveau genre poétique pour affirmer ensuite leur caractère insuffisant. Aux critères de « gratuité », « clôture », « intemporalité » (poème en prose), « indétermination » et « caractère imprévisible de la forme » (vers libre), elle rajoute son propre modèle d'approche poétique qui fait travailler ensemble analyses typographiques, prosodiques, syntaxiques et thématiques.

Pour rendre compte du caractère opérationnel de cette approche, l'auteure procède à l'analyse de plusieurs poèmes écrits en versets, choisis en fonction d'un critère génétique et évolutif. Ses observations concernent un corpus des poèmes de Paul Claudel, notamment ses « Cinq grandes odes » (1910), les « Éloges » (1911) de Saint-John Perse, les « Chants d'ombre » (1945) de Leopold Sédar Senghor et les « Débarcadères » (1922) ou « La fable du

monde » (1938) de Jules Supervielle. Un trait essentiel du verset moderne par rapport à celui biblique est, selon l'auteure, la présence de l'enjambement, figure qui le distingue du poème en prose et du vers libre.

Quant aux différents versets pratiqués par les poètes, elle opère la distinction entre le verset de type « métrique » qui se retrouve chez Saint-John Perse et Sédar Senghor et le verset dit « cadencé ». Ce dernier « repose sur la succession de groupes accentuels distribués selon un ordre croissant (cadence majeure) ou décroissant (cadence mineure) » (p. 53). A la cadence majeure se rattachent des effets d'amplification, de progression, des phrases amples « à reprise élargissante » tandis que la cadence mineure implique un « effet de rétrécissement ou de « chute sur un segment court », la phrase ayant un aspect « segmenté », nominal et énumératif. En plus, cette « segmentation syntaxique et rythmique » est due à la présence des assonances et des allitérations qui « structurent le récit poétique » et maintiennent la sensation de rime.

Un autre effet structurant, de segmentation de la phrase du verset moderne, est donné d'une part, par les « arrêts », dans la catégorie desquels entrent les nominalisations, les appositions, les incises, et d'autre part, par les « structures parallèles et répétitives ». Ces dernières jouent un rôle très important et tiennent à la « caractéristique distinctive du langage poétique ». Les répétitions peuvent être phoniques, lexicales, morphologiques, syntaxiques et sémantiques, elles contribuent par des effets de parallélisme à « l'élaboration du sens et du rythme ».

Dans la deuxième partie de l'étude, le débat sur la figure de l'ellipse occupe une place de prédilection. À côté du rôle joué par le blanc typographique, elle rend compte du principe même de la poéticité. Responsable aussi de la structure du rythme poétique, elle participe aux effets de densité et discontinuité entretenus par l'écriture fragmentaire.

L'ellipse peut également s'installer au niveau de la ponctuation afin de représenter la quête du silence et du vide ou la « hantise » mallarméenne « de la page blanche ». L'appropriation spatiale de la page écrite implique une « sémantisation du blanc » où on lit la trace du non-dit ou de l'indicible. Cet effet de lecture obsède des poètes modernes comme Mallarmé, Claudel, Valery et incite les contemporains, dont le groupe réuni autour de la revue *l'Éphémère* (André du Bouchet, Bonnefoy, Jacques Dupin et Michel Leiris) à adopter la croyance de « l'écriture blanche ».

Étant donnés les critères et les caractéristiques de la poésie française moderne et contemporaine, la dernière partie de cette étude vient de rendre compte des difficultés soulevées par la traduction poétique du français vers le hongrois. Cet élément de difficulté pourrait expliquer, selon l'auteure, le phénomène de retard qui arrive dans le cas des traductions en hongrois des poèmes de Claudel et de Saint - John Perse. L'intervalle de presque un siècle entre les originaux et les traductions pourrait s'expliquer aussi, selon l'auteure, par le manque du verset dans la poétique hongroise. Ce fait mène à des traductions récentes qui ne prennent pas en considération la fidélité formelle envers ce genre poétique. Un autre aspect mis en évidence touche le sujet de la traduction de poèmes français à forme fixe de la période moderne et contemporaine. Le conseil sera dans ce cas-là de bien maintenir en traduction les caractéristiques formels des poèmes pour pouvoir ensuite rendre compte de leur « nouveauté », le cas de la

traduction du poème de Roubaud, *Quelque chose noir* étant très parlant à cet égard.

Dans l'ensemble, les analyses conçues semblent rendre compte des mécanismes mêmes du renouvellement poétique. Présentées dans une perspective à la fois synchronique et diachronique, les nouveaux genres poétiques français apparaissent dans leur dynamisme, en même temps formel et spatial. La disposition des interprétations produit, quant à elle, une architecture cyclique. Si la première partie présente les surgissements des formes poétiques sur le territoire français, la dernière partie montrera comment le travail de traduction participe aux mutations formelles et vient comme conséquence aux phénomènes de révolution et d'hybridation des genres. De cette manière, le lecteur arrive à avoir une vue d'ensemble sur une période littéraire extrêmement riche au niveau poétique, mais aussi à mieux comprendre des phénomènes de déterritorialisation et reterritorialisation des genres poétiques, soient-ils d'origine française ou étrangère.

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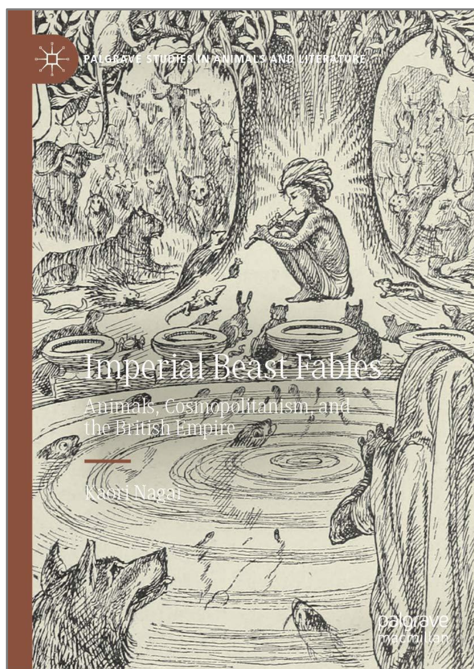
BOOKS

Kaori Nagai, *Imperial Beast Fables: Animals, Cosmopolitanism, and the British Empire*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 265 p.



Although often reduced to moralizing maxims, enjoyed for their exoticism, or relegated to the realm of children's literature, fables resist such restrictive confinements by creating a narrative space that invites the contemplation of intricate political, social, and (trans)cultural relations. Kaori Nagai's *Imperial Beast Fables: Animals, Cosmopolitanism and the British Empire* underlines this generic potential by examining "the fable as a theatre of the human-animal relationship … within the context of British imperialism" of the long nineteenth century (6).

Published in 2020, Nagai's study provides a fascinating insight into what she calls the fabular Animal-Machine, a term she uses to refer to the British Empire, and the manner in which its configuration revealed important aspects regarding the distribution of power through orality. Through making an analogy to the Skinner Box experiment, a prime example of conditioning as a "subliminal stimulus, ineffective on its own, becomes effective when repeated" (2), Nagai brings into discussion the various ways in which silence could diminish or bolster one's power. This is the value of fables, Nagai argues, as their very nature of easily repeatable stories made them the perfect tools of colonialism, which she analyses with a very insightful eye for the themes and subversive messages which they explore.

Divided into seven major chapters, the book tackles a variety of aspects relating to colonialism, imperialism and the Anthropocene, discussed through a generous corpus of fables, ranging from Kipling's *Jungle Books* to the *One Thousand And One Nights* collection of Middle Eastern folk tales to Harris' compilation of the African American tales centred around the eponymous *Uncle Remus* and many other texts, each used to exemplify to various degrees the manner in which the

Western world had appropriated and reshaped those texts for its own benefit. The central argument of Nagai's book is that as we seek to depoliticize such texts and remove them from their cultural sphere to be employed globally, we run the risk of overlooking that the rise of the fable is in fact tightly connected with the rise of the state. This is best seen in the case of *The Jungle Book*, which serves as an allegory that captures the human anxieties regarding changing social relations and shows how by "emphasizing the motifs of peace, fairness and justice, animal fables seek to define new rules of conduct in the new regime" (18). Conflict can only be mitigated by speech in Kipling's world, and thus possessing the capacity for speech becomes an inherent tool of power and oppression used over the animals of the jungle.

Nagai explains that for Europeans, fables functioned as study guides into the cultures from which they were appropriated, shifting the focus of readers towards what was perceived to be the natural despotism, luxury and sexuality of these conquered places and people, relying on them in the same way "in which the white masters drew on the fables of a subjugated people to narrate their own history" (32), reframing the fables for the sake of the colonizer, often through replacing the local fauna and flora with alternatives more familiar to the European individual, as well as quite arbitrarily attributing the power of speech to animals based on a mechanism which could only be described as a "colonial anthropological machine" (50). Nagai manages to show very well how language became synonymous with humanity, in that the Other remained staunchly associated with the incomprehensible beast whose means of communication were unintelligible to the human, – the European, in this context – and to conquer the beast's language was to assert power over it. Power and its agents remain a very prominent theme in fables.

Moreover, the book draws attention to how conquering foreign lands came about as a notion of colonial expansion, with its ultimate result being the 'taming' of forests and seas and thus removing from them the spike of horror, that once lay at the core of humanity's perception of it. Through colonial intervention, mainly the British Empire's push towards the creation of forestry services in places such as India, the forest moves into the space of the law and creates as a result a different relationship between humans and animals, and between colonisers and natives as "the colonial space, imagined by the coloniser as primitive and unhistorical, is shown to be the treasure house of such secrets unappreciated by 'natives', who use, and live in, these 'animal' languages" (88). Nagai explains that now man, actually the European, is the manager of ecology and thus exerts a high degree of power over this particular space. Moreover, authors like Kipling seek to portray this type of involvement as benevolent, thus seemingly situating it above the approach of the locals.

Nagai discusses the use of language as a tool for defamiliarization in a similar manner, by using Kobo Abe's *Kangaroo Notebook* as a potent example. In the novel, Nagai points out, "the literary experience of defamiliarization is invariably accompanied by an invitation to question what makes us feel safe and 'human'" (121), which inevitably brings back the issue of the Anthropocene and post-Anthropocene. This places the discussion

into a different sphere than previously thought as it questions the value of interfering in nature to such a degree that it restructures the concept itself, mostly to the detriment of what they claim are 'noxious influences' such as animals which cannot be tamed or local natives who do not 'appreciate' the environment in an appropriate manner, as defined by imperialists.

Nagai's work points out the value of recontextualizing fables and their themes into their historical and didactic environment. She remarks that they were used as middle grounds for the expanding colonial powers at the time, favouring contexts in which the human element was absent, yet still dominant, with the power of language being attributed only to animals that displayed human qualities and posed little threat to the colonisers. This notion of species cosmopolitanism, together with its impact and implications, remains thus one of the most important tenets of Nagai's study. It presents an alternative to Western colonial thinking: instead of divorcing itself from its impact upon former colonial cultures and environments, it should refrain from transforming the body of the animal into a scene of reading and focus on disentangling it from human interpretation by instead accepting its inherent complexity as it is, without reconstructing it for the sake of Anthropocene ideals.

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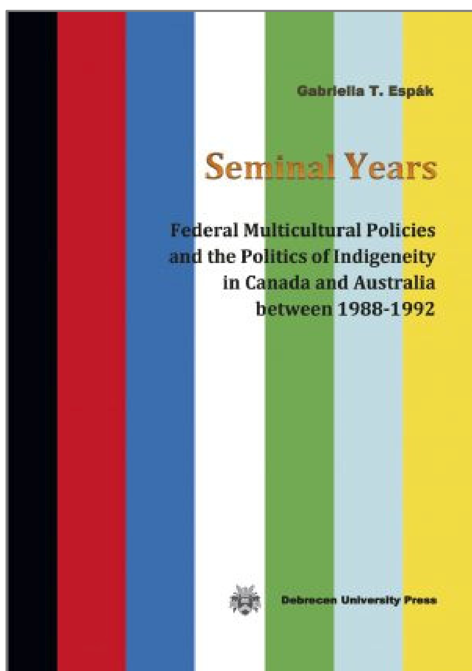
BOOKS

Gabriella T. Espak, *Seminal Years. Federal Multicultural Policies and the Politics of Indigeneity in Canada and Australia between 1988-1992*, Debrecen: Debrecen University Press, 2020, 170 p.



As any common sense person knows all too well there is no pure society from the ethnic, religious, or cultural point of view. The problem is, on one hand, to manage this diversity in such a way as to give as few frustrations as possible to all the members of society, on the other hand, to establish the steps that turn principles from theoretical frames into guiding doctrines in the social, political, and cultural practice.

In this context, the book of Gabriella T. Espak brings a very challenging comparison. The intellectual territory on which the Hungarian scholar treads is quite interesting and thought provoking. Comparisons between Canada and Australia, two Anglophone countries, have already been made by such researchers as Louis Harts[1], Freda Hawkins[2], Lisa Chiton[3] or Shurlee Swain and Margot Hillel[4]. Espak's new point is her ability to connect multiculturalism and indigeneity. Canada and Australia are very well-chosen samples, as they are countries, cultures whose founding myths are immigration and the newcomers' encounter with the indigenous populations. The author chose a very relevant span of time (1988-1992) in order to

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1 Hartz, Louis. 1969. *The founding of new societies: studies in the history of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

2 Hawkins, Freda. 1991. *Critical years in immigration: Canada and Australia compared*. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP.

3 Chilton, Lisa. 2007. *Agents of empire: British female migration to Canada and Australia, 1860-1930*. University of Toronto Press.

4 Swain, Shurlee, and Margot Hillel. 2017. "Child, nation, race and empire: Child rescue discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850–1915." *Child, nation, race and empire*. Manchester University Press.

explore the evolution of multiculturalism as well as the conflict between the Indigenous minority nationhood and the majority nationhood. These years have amply proven that the problem of multiculturalism cannot miss in any political, historical, or cultural discussion of a society. Nowadays multiculturalism is more topical than ever. In Canada the ideological combat between different understandings of nationhood led to a re-examination of the constitution, in Australia the ideological combat turned into a re-examination of the notion of Australian land and its history. This created a crisis of national identity because the plight of the Aboriginal Natives had been wiped out or neglected from the national narrative. The history of the (Australian) land was to be re-examined.

Espak's book has a very balanced and symmetrical structure alternating the discussion of the Canadian and the Australian multiculturalism. The study begins with the presentation of the circumstances and the significance of the Meech Lake Accord, a series of proposed amendments to the Constitution of Canada negotiated in 1987 by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the ten Canadian provincial premiers. The problem that Mulroney tried to solve was to give satisfaction to Quebec and the French-Canadian minority as a founding ethnic group of Canada. In 1988 the Canadian Parliament passed the Canadian Multicultural Act. Canada was the first country in the world to tackle the problem of preserving and enhancing multiculturalism. The basis of this Act was the individual's inherent right to his/her culture and language. But the Multicultural Act only did not actually solve the problem; it just stirred up a hornet's nest. Certain Canadians felt they had been left out of the constitutional discussions and reforms, others felt that their individual or collective rights would be jeopardized. In fact, the problems of the First Nations, the Indigenous of Canada, as well as the integration of the immigrants from Third World countries (especially from the Caribbean islands), were neglected. In fact, the focus was on appeasing the discontent of Quebec and its inhabitants.

Espak insists on a prominent political figure of those years. Elijah Harper (1949-2013), a Canadian Oji-Cree politician and member of the Canadian Parliament, who was very vocal and influential at the time of the Meech Lake Accord. Harper protested because the Accord had been negotiated without taking into account the existence of the native peoples as if the European colonizers had found *terra nullius* when they came to Canada.

In 1992, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney negotiated the Charlottetown Accord with ten other provincial premiers to amend the Canadian Constitution. The goal was to obtain Quebec's consent to the Constitution Act of 1982. Espak concludes very efficiently that this text "tried to satisfy all parties, including Indigenous peoples" (110), but it ignored a new reality. In the meantime, numerous immigrants from the Caribbean had come to Canada. The syntagm "'in Canada's interest' was no longer unanimously interpretable" (111) because the structure of the ethno-cultural groups that make up Canada had changed. Espak considers that it is very useful to compare this Accord with the views on ethnic groups' rights of the Canadian scholar, Will Klymcka. Efforts have been made to satisfy both group and individual demands but the problem of multiculturalism still haunts the political life of Canada. It is a work in progress and since

1992 the intelligentsia and the courts have contributed a lot to the public opinion formation in this respect.

Half of Gabriella T. Espak's survey is dedicated to the analysis of Australian approaches to multiculturalism from 1988 till 1992. After World War II masses of poor British people as well as immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe came to Australia encouraged by the local authorities' efforts to maintain Australia white. In 1966 the White Australia Policy was repelled and the number of migrants from Asia and South America increased. Multicultural policies became more than necessary. Still, the first inhabitants of Australia, the Native Aboriginal populations were forgotten by the establishment. The first Australians themselves made their political claims known. In 1988, a Festival of the Aboriginal peoples was organized at Barunga. The Aboriginal elders took advantage of this opportunity and presented the then Prime Minister Bob Hawke a document called *The Barunga Statement* which called for a treaty that would recognize the Aboriginal rights to land. Prime Minister Hawke signed the statement during his visit to the Festival but unfortunately, it was never brought before Parliament.

It was only on 3 June 1992 that the High Court of Australia ruled that *terra nullius* should not have been applied to Australia. This decision – known as the Mabo decision – recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have rights to the land – rights that existed before the British arrived and can and must still exist today. The Mabo decision made possible an agreement that had been demanded by the Aboriginal elders already in 1988. The Barunga Agreement signed in 2018 at the same Barunga Festival already mentioned above enforced the new Australian paradigm of understanding land rights.

The conclusion is that after 1992 multiculturalism got consolidated both in Canada and in Australia. Ruminating on the differences between Canada and Australia in terms of history of immigration and political evolution is an excellent occasion to prove that the diversity of multicultural situations should not lead to neglecting basic and fundamental respect for humans, for all humans. Gabriella T. Espak's study is a very well documented research of multiculturalism (in Australia and Canada), which convinces the reader of the importance of multiculturalism as a public policy. Of course, multiculturalism can have different meanings and even more diverse political enforcements but its most important merit is that is relies on the principle of equality between the different ethno-cultural groups that make up a certain society. That these groups differ in needs and demands, that they may change in composition, is very true but neglecting their particular situation, levelling them is not in the interest of anybody. Based on a rich and very well-chosen bibliography, Gabriella T. Espak's book is an excellent contribution to the international scholarship on multiculturalism.

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BOOKS

Susan Mary Pyke, *Animal Visions: Posthumanist Dream Writing*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, 314 p.

Efforts to challenge our anthropocentric worldview so deeply imbued with ideas of human superiority are, rather fortunately, becoming increasingly prevalent as of late. Susan Mary Pyke's *Animal Visions* is one such challenger, attempting to explore and examine literary resistances to speciesism by critically engaging with texts that provide insight into "cross-species relations", and offer "less hierarchical understandings of animal cognition and sentience" (2). Needless to say, such an undertaking may inevitably come into conflict not only with the supremacist feelings of individual people, but with all the master narratives that have been implanting, justifying and continuously advocating for them to this day.

Our "fabricated conceit of privilege", as Pyke puts it (1), is nothing new; let us just think of Adam's God-given dominion over the earth and its creatures. It would not be farfetched to claim that such tales seem to be hardwired into the human (sub)conscious, and their effects have become strikingly evident since global industrialisation and intensified animal agriculture. At a later point Pyke would compare all this—quite fittingly, insofar as the nature of the comparand is concerned—to a factory "reinforced with rivets so rusted-in, so deeply corroded, that they may infect [one's] wounded efforts to bring them undone" (281). Yet efforts are made, nonetheless, for how else could change be brought about otherwise.

Before that, however, Pyke dedicates her comparatively lengthy introduction to presenting how such issues have been dealt with by her predecessors, with a particular focus on Descartes's arguments about animals being no more than instinctive, insentient machines, as well as the rather problematic exceptionality of humans as the only thinking beings—who also happen to be animals themselves. On the other end, much closer to Pyke's own views, are the ideas of

Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza, arguing that there is more to the world than what humans can or want to perceive of it, for their perspectives can never be as limitless as that of a god's—the best they can do is to strive towards such godly reason. This is linked by Pyke to Kant's claim about knowledge beginning with experience, as humans can only see and feel what is humanly possible. Yet the Cartesian conviction still persists and dominates, and no wonder, for how else could humanity get away with all the atrocities they commit without this sense of privileged entitlement backing it up. As Pyke reminds us, "the use of nonhuman animals for the physical and psychological sustenance of humans remains the global norm" (2).

In order to counter the violence resulting from such views, and to depict animals and animalities not as a "reduced category" but in a way that can make room for the "personhood" of the creatures in question to show through, Pyke suggests a sort of non-anthropocentric dream writing as the innovative literary resistance needed, which invites readers to reimagine themselves "as the vulnerable animals they are, co-dependent with other species in a shared and fragile world" (5). The practice itself builds on the works of French feminist philosopher Hélène Cixous, arguing that dreams, where the inner self and the outside world are brought together, can "unsettle the given" by providing novel and unorthodox ways of seeing that world, opening new conceptual spaces. Cixous' demonstrations draw mainly on Derrida, with the "always-present ghost" of Freud lurking in the background (5). As the analysis of a person's dreams can help in reworking their self, Pyke claims, so too can dream writing rework one's understanding of what it is to share the world with others that interact with that self. She goes even further, suggesting that open understandings of how people and other animals sharing a habitat dream alongside each other "may be part of the therapy this damaged world requires"—for if humans want to continue living with those animals in the face of the ongoing major extinction events, "new ways of being-together are required" (29).

The prime subject of Pyke's analysis is Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, as well as several derivative works responding to the novel, with a focus on their shared refusals to comply with the exclusionary, anthropo-theological and humanist thinking that has been outlined in the theoretical framework. Chapter Two, thus, goes on to expand on the discussion about dreams and visions featuring Derrida and Cixous, but with Brontë's novel in mind—which is, as Pyke argues, "both *of* dreams and *like* a dream" (90), where dreams do much more than provide "narratorial impetus" (124). Yet she also reminds us that, while dream writing certainly opens possibilities, it does not offer explications. While there is an almost inevitable return to the Freudian roots of the practice here—adding a psychological depth to the Romantic influences like Wordsworth's or Schelling's concerning prophetic dreams and divine messages, by exploring concepts such as displacement and condensation—Pyke ultimately dismisses Freud's ideas of hysteria, and his interpretations of "a regression into infantile egocentricity" (148) in favour of Cixous's, through which the ghostly dreams of the moor are read as "productive outpourings of resistance" instead (42).

Kathy Acker's "Obsession"—one of the two poetic responses discussed in detail here—is explicitly rejecting the "omniscient righteousness of Freudian psychoanalysis" (129). Beyond the efforts to overcome poorly-aged diagnoses, as well as to move steadily closer to the animal visions promised in the title of the volume, Pyke also discusses the entrapment of women reminiscent of the oppression of other races and species, as well as the problematics of the godly male voice offering directions to the dreamer "in a masterful and prophetic voice" (25). These issues are tackled in the second poem analysed by Pyke, Anne Carson's "The Glass Essay", where the oppressed speaker ultimately walks away from her psychotherapist, leaving behind the masculinist space and fatherly Law that was immobilising her—to embrace her dreams (139-41).

Chapter Three links these visionary dreamscapes to the Romantic-Victorian-Gothic fascination with the supernatural, with a particular interest in the three Cathy-hauntings present in *Wuthering Heights*—in the window during Lockwood's stay in her room, coming *from* the moor; the bedridden Cathy's encounter with her lost self in the mirror, prompting an escape *to* the moor; and, lastly, the wanderings with Heathcliff, finally *on* the moor (187). Pyke examines how these hauntings are revisited, to varying degrees, by the films directed by William Wyler and Peter Kosminsky, and also looks at how they are accompanied by Brontë's own apparitions—echoes "lingering around the moors like a myth" (164)—in literary adaptations including Carson's poem from before, and two novels—Jane Urquhart's *Changing Heaven* and Stevie Davies' *Four Dreamers and Emily*. All such hauntings involve the mingling of two worlds by the crossing of their boundaries—occurring both on the meta-level of adaptations and in-story, by letting ghosts in through the window. Insofar as the latter type is concerned, Pyke draws attention to the fact that while traditionally these represent the clashing of the domestic female interior and the undomesticated male exterior, here the exact opposite happens, causing a "strategic confusion", as Cathy's ghost is seeking entry into the house where Heathcliff is being trapped—both ultimately wanting only to roam the moors together (171-2). Enclosures here, Pyke argues, are there for the breaking (172).

The interconnected relations between people and their surroundings—in this case that of Cathy, Heathcliff, and the Yorkshire moor—are the main topic of Chapter Four, brought together in the form of a co-affective state dubbed by Pyke as "moor love" (195). Mapping the different, selfish ways in which characters like Lockwood, young Catherine or Joseph relate to the moor, and contrasting them with Cathy's "more equitable" responses to it, Pyke argues that she represents a true co-participant in a non-hierarchical relationship (200-1). With Heathcliff—his being not only Cathy's lover and foster brother but as much a part of her as she is part of him—they merge and split and merge again (170), "partially entangled and partially separate [...] in the always intra-active dynamic world that is part him, part Cathy and part the weather" (210). Keeping these in mind, with the help of the previously mentioned adaptations and the introduction of yet another one—Luis Buñuel's surrealist film *Abismos de Pasión*—Pyke goes on to argue how the moor with its wuthering winds activates an awareness of co-affectivity that turns Wordsworth's "human-

centric breezes into sweet nothings" (214), while the works of Arnold and Buñuel, cinematic as they are, raise this to a wholly different level where the audience "may become part sensing animal" accompanying the characters through wind and rain (232).

Nature here—unlike the overtly female muse of the Romantics—is neither obsequious nor benevolent; it is not there to heal, awe or please the human, Pyke claims (22), for people are simply no more deserving of such special treatment—servitude, really—than other animals (268). This quasi-cosmic indifference of nature is the subject of the fifth chapter, "Respecting and Trusting the Beast", exploring the apparent contradictions of the canine-equine Heathcliff—both friend and subject to affection yet, at the same time, a brute and bitter enemy—whose conduct towards people and other animals, often equally cruel, is a surprisingly complex issue. Pyke's explanation is comparatively simple, however: "Heathcliff is an animal amongst other animals", one that obeys his individual predilections, not speciesist assumptions, and who consequently refuses to privilege people above other creatures (243-4). Sharing a habitat with animals, standing vigil, howling, choosing to be as dirty as he deems fit, can all be traced back to this very idea. Cathy's declaration saying, "I *am* Heathcliff" is read, thus, as an acknowledgement that she too can never be severed from the world she inhabits, and that both are "as much animals as any creature of the moor" (244).

While texts like these can undoubtedly serve as eye-openers to many—and do; we need look no further than the dozens of responses, textual or otherwise, examined in this volume—Pyke is still well-aware that no systemic change can or will happen immediately, or that the damages caused by our "disrespecting" and "untrusting" actions can be healed just through the act of writing or reading (278). The movements these can generate "cannot be dictated or predicted", she admits, for a shift in the desired direction takes time, and sustained attention. Yet she remains optimistic when making statements like "even the most minor gesture will have an impact" (279). She talks of a certain kind of *grace*, animal grace, in the sixth and last part of the book, on which the maintenance and growth of our slowly budding awareness of the sentience and cognition of non-humans depends. Engaging with such texts is itself an act of dreaming to Pyke, from which the human can wake with their understanding of the world reshaped—if they are willing.

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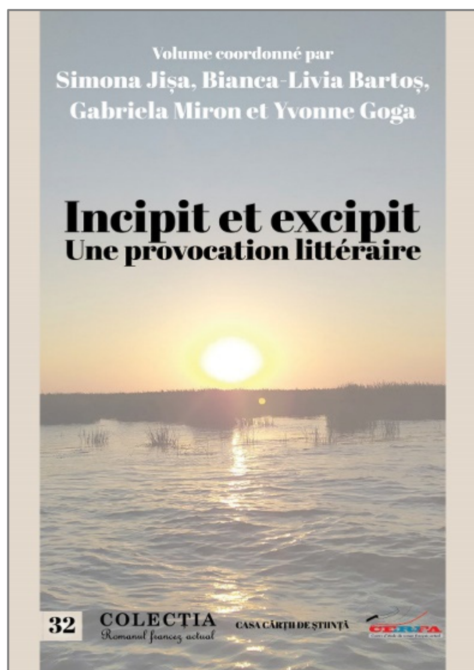
BOOKS

Simona Jișa, Bianca-Livia Bartoș, Gabriela Miron et Yvonne Goga, *Incipit et excipit. Une provocation littéraire*, Cluj-Napoca : Casa Cărții de Știință, coll. « Romanul francez actual », 2021, 162 p.



Depuis quelques décennies déjà, la problématique des seuils d'une œuvre littéraire a fait l'objet de plusieurs études qui observent et explicitent la valeur des différents éléments stratégiques d'un livre qui orientent la lecture. Dans le paysage français c'est Gérard Genette qui attire l'attention sur les enjeux de nature sémantique, sémiologique, voire commerciale du paratexte qui possède un rôle décisif dans la réception de l'œuvre d'un auteur (voir *Seuils*, 1987).

À quel moment entre-t-on dans un livre ? Au moment où l'on lit le titre ? ou les premières lignes, les premières pages ? À quel moment sort-on de l'espace fictionnel et quand a-t-on scellé le pacte de lecture ? Ces sont des questions explorées par l'ouvrage intitulé *Incipit et excipit. Une provocation littéraire* qui propose un regard minutieux sur les stratégies d'ouverture et de clôture, inhérents aux seuils d'un texte littéraire. Ce volume, coordonné par Simona Jișa, Bianca-Livia Bartoș, Gabriela Miron et Yvonne Goga, représente le résultat de la collaboration des jeunes doctorants roumains et étrangers qui ont participé aux deux Journées d'études organisées le 21 septembre 2019 et le 20 mars 2021 par le Département de Français de la Faculté de Lettres de l'Université Babeș-Bolyai de Cluj-Napoca, Roumanie, sous l'égide du Centre d'Étude du Roman Français Actuel.

L'association des deux concepts faisant partie du titre de ce volume surprend et incite à la lecture, car il contient deux termes antagoniques que les contributeurs essaient d'expliquer le long de leurs analyses. « En tant que lecteur, on n'ouvre pas un roman au hasard, mais, en quête du déclic provocateur de la sélection, on s'attarde sur les passages de l'incipit ou de la fin » (Avant-propos, p. 5), soit pour bien assimiler les événements,

soit pour prolonger l'émotion dégagée par l'univers signifié.

Si l'*incipit* remplit la fonction informative, étant un lieu dépositaire de thèmes, qui ouvre et scelle le pacte de lecture, l'*excipit* est considéré comme un espace d'adieu qui explicite ou, au contraire, qui amplifie l'ambiguïté du livre. Le début et la fin de l'histoire sont donc des espaces essentielles du texte littéraire qui permettent d'aller à la découverte du sens avec une grille de lecture préétablie. En effet, c'est là que le sort du livre est décidé.

Le sens du titre prend ainsi une nuance importante, car la confrontation de l'*incipit* à l'*excipit*, une problématique rarement traitée dans la théorie moderne, ouvre de nouvelles possibilités interprétatives. Andrea Del Lungo montre dans le volume qu'il coordonne, *Le début et la fin du récit. Une relation critique* (2010), qu'il y a un rapport d'interdépendance entre les deux frontières du texte et affirme que le sens du commencement ne peut être saisi qu'à la fin. Ce rapport, exploré par les contributeurs, devient une provocation d'autant plus intéressante que leurs études sont centrées sur des auteurs contemporains, tels Michel Houellebecq, Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt, Julia Billet, Claire Fauvel, Sylvie Germain, Sony Labou Tansi, Dominique Fernandez, Christophe Bataille, David Foenkinos, Maryse Condé ou Mutt-Lon.

Le volume présente une douzaine d'analyses fines et convaincantes à travers un schéma cohérent qui suit une structure tripartite : de l'esthétique de l'*incipit* vers les avatars de l'*excipit*, proposant une partie intermédiaire et hybride qui étudie les relations herméneutiques que la fin entretient avec le commencement du texte littéraire, mais également le rapport indissociable entre les deux seuils.

Le volume se remarque par l'acuité des étiquettes que les chercheurs attribuent à la problématique traitée, enrichissant chaque partie avec des réflexions claires, des concepts pertinents et des titres captivants qui jouent avec les notions, tels : « genèse apocalyptique ou la ruine des commencements », « une sortie poétique de la fiction », « excipit et rédemption », « Fin de l'art – fin de l'histoire », « le cadre de la séduction ».

Le premier chapitre, *Esthétique de l'incipit*, regroupe des articles qui mettent en lumière les types, les caractéristiques formelles, les enjeux, la nature et les fonctions des *incipits* à partir de différents extraits. Quel est le jeu intertextuel ? D'où provient le pourvoir séducteur du commencement ? Dora Mănăstire se concentre sur la construction de l'*incipit* houellebecquien (comme origine de l'acte créateur) qui présente dès le début un personnage-« écrivain écrivant le livre » (p. 22). Cela ouvre la voie à des interprétations métanarratives. Gabriela Miron questionne la présence des coupures, des énigmes et des indices volontairement cachés dans les *incipits* schmittiens, tandis qu'Emanuela Muntean s'intéresse à la stratégie scripto-iconique de la bande dessinée comme particularité de convoquer l'affect du lecteur de l'extrême contemporain. Au sein du même cadre exégétique, Roxana Maximilean examine le pouvoir cathartique, le style de l'auteur et la place du mystère au sein de l'*incipit* germanien, tandis qu'Omaïma Machkour dévoile la violence et l'univers expiatoire du commencement laboutansien qui capte l'attention du lecteur par ses résonnances mythiques et par son dispositif elliptique.

La dénomination du deuxième chapitre, intitulé *Dialectique de l'entre-deux*, est indissociablement liée au rapport et au

caractère controversés des deux seuils. Toute cette partie est une réflexion critique sur les mécanismes de déchiffrement permettant de mieux comprendre l'*incipit* et l'œuvre dans son intégralité à travers l'*excipit*. Dans son article sur le texte houellebecquien, Dora Mănăstire avance la théorie selon laquelle la construction de ces espaces-frontières est un acte commencé par l'auteur, mais validé par « le travail de resémantisation » (p. 84) du lecteur. Cette perspective engage le lecteur dans l'acte de création et offre une dimension ouverte à la fois à l'*incipit* et à l'*excipit*. Maroua Derouiche renforce cette relation de complémentarité qui investit le lecteur dans la quête ontologique et esthétique du texte de Dominique Fernandez. L'auteure dirige son analyse vers la cyclicité du rapport fin-commencement où l'articulation entre les seuils ouvre la perspective sur le concept de l'autothanatographie qui construit des espaces artistique illimités. De même, par son exemple choisi de l'œuvre germanienne, Roxana Maximilean montre que l'*excipit* fixe et sémiotise le commencement et le texte entier par un minutieux travail psychanalytique.

Dans le dernier chapitre, *Avatars de l'excipit*, les contributeurs questionnent les codes académiques et investiguent les modalités des clôtures qui donnent le sentiment d'achèvement d'un texte littéraire. Gabriela Miron met en discussion la charge symbolique qui devient maximale à la fin du texte schmittien. Dans son cas, la fin semble clore parfaitement le livre, même s'il y a un prolongement de l'affect produit sur le lecteur. En revanche, Ciprian Onofrei trouve que, au lieu d'envisager un achèvement structurel, l'*excipit* du texte de Christophe Bataille devient une expansion au niveau de la pensée critique contemporaine. L'*excipit* n'est-il plus la fin de l'œuvre ? La fin n'est-elle plus une nécessité structurale ? Alina Aluaș voit bien ce paradoxe chez David Foenkinos et montre que la fin ouverte et dynamique du texte laisse la liberté au lecteur de continuer l'histoire. Dans ce cas, l'*excipit* devient « une transition vers un destin non-dit des personnages, qui surprend par son caractère ambigu » (p. 150). Analyse Kimpolo se trouve aussi face à des seuils qui déconstruisent les codes narratologiques. Par son corpus, appuyé sur les romans de Maryse Condé et Mutt-Lon, l'auteure conteste l'idée même de la clôture et prouve que l'*incipit* pourrait se lire comme une réouverture du texte. À remarquer que cette vision engage le lecteur dans un nouveau pacte de lecture et que l'œuvre littéraire, vue comme un objet autonome et clos, s'ouvre vers l'universel.

À la fin de ces quelques considérations, on remarque que les contributions rassemblées dans les pages de ce volume guident et ouvrent la voie vers un univers peu exploré de la correspondance *incipit-excipit*. Grâce aux sens actuels investis à ces deux concepts, on peut donc le considérer à tout moment comme un modèle pour les chercheurs qui s'intéressent à ce sujet.

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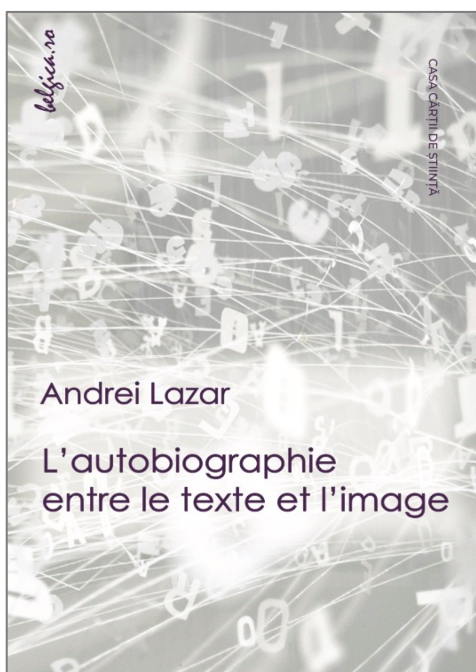
BOOKS

Andrei Lazar, *L'Autobiographie entre le texte et l'image*, préface de Rodica Lascu-Pop, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2021, coll. « belgica.ro », 478 p.

Depuis les années 1970, on assiste à un retour du sujet dans le champ littéraire français, et particulièrement à une mise en avant des écritures du « moi » (autobiographie, mémoires, correspondances etc.). Ce tournant fut marqué par la parution du *Pacte autobiographique* (1975) de Philippe Lejeune qui était le premier à proposer une approche théorique du genre en question. Depuis cette époque, nombreuses études et parutions critiques ayant le but de relever les spécificités de l'écriture autobiographique ont cartographié ce champ de recherche, tout en contribuant à un certain succès du genre. Toutes ces décennies de réflexions et mutations théoriques ont mis en lumière une diversité des sous-genres de l'écriture à la première personne (témoignages, chroniques, journaux intimes etc.) qui n'ont pas encore cessé de ranimer la création littéraire contemporaine.



L'ouvrage d'Andrei Lazar se nourrit de ces recherches consacrées aux récits de soi et jette les bases de nouvelles approches critiques qui visent les rapports transmédiatiques entre écriture, photographie et vidéo. L'essor des formes de représentations du « moi » à l'époque des médias a exposé la préoccupation croissante des écrivains de se forger une certaine posture littéraire qui mobilise justement tous ces médiums. Le phénomène a offert à l'auteur de cet ouvrage le matériel nécessaire afin de mettre en lumière la manière dans laquelle l'autobiographie a migré vers d'autres supports artistiques et d'interroger les techniques multiples et complémentaires contribuant à la construction d'une identité.

Les œuvres abordés par Andrei Lazar dans ce volume se placent dans l'intervalle 1964-2002 et sont signées par

cinq auteurs qui ont fait le choix d'un autre média afin de continuer leur récit autobiographique dont le contenu a été transposé dans des productions photographiques ou filmiques. Ainsi, l'écriture autobiographique pratiquée par Jean-Paul Sartre (*Les Mots*), Marguerite Yourcenar (*Le labyrinthe du monde)*, Roland Barthes (*Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes)*, Jacques Derrida (*Circonfession*) et Hervé Guibert (*Mes parents*, *À l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie*, *Le Protocole compassionnel*, *L'Homme au chapeau rouge*) et la présence médiatique de tous ces auteurs (photographies, entretiens, interviews filmés, documentaires, émissions télévisées etc.) ont contribué à une forte tendance d'autoreprésentation, mais aussi à une diffraction des images de soi.

En ce sens, le geste scriptural et les prémices de la réception de ces œuvres nécessitent d'autre instruments herméneutiques qui devraient prendre en considération les tensions et les lignes de failles qui se croisent au passage d'un médium à un autre. Dans ces analyses, Andrei Lazar se place constamment dans des approches transdisciplinaires qui tiennent compte des codes esthétiques propre à chaque art. Ses outils critiques naviguent entre des concepts communs à l'analyse littéraire, photographique et filmique afin de rendre compte de grand champ d'expérimentation qu'est l'autobiographie.

La première partie de cet ouvrage, « L'autobiographie au miroir de la théorie. Rhétorique de l'objectivité », suit les mutations produites entre différentes approches théoriques de l'autobiographie autant en littérature que dans les médias visuels. Andrei Lazar commence par des précisions terminologiques et des délimitations du genre sous l'effet du pacte lejeunien. Il enchaîne ensuite avec les ripostes critiques et les alternatives créatives qui ne répondent qu'insuffisamment à la définition classique de l'autobiographie. La mise en revue des genres exploratoires des écritures du « moi » révèle une tendance à désenclaver le cadre rigide proposé par Lejeune arrivant parfois jusqu'à une indécidabilité générique. Après cette prise en compte de transmutations théoriques, dans le chapitre « De la page à l'écran », l'auteur de cet ouvrage s'intéresse aux raisons du déplacement de l'acte autobiographique dans les médias et aux spécificités du récit filmique et photographique qui concourent aux projets artistiques intermédiaux des écrivains.

La deuxième partie du volume, intitulée « Postures et impostures autoréflexives. Poétique de la subjectivité », est consacrée à l'analyse transmédiatique du corpus d'œuvres littéraires, photographiques et filmiques. Une première mutation d'une œuvre littéraire vers les médias qu'Andrei Lazar étudie est le film autobiographique *Sartre par lui-même* réalisé par Alexandre Astruc et Michel Contat en 1974, qui fait suite aux *Mots*. Mettant en évidence le dispositif intertextuel et les postures corporelles présents dans le récit autobiographique, on y présente comment ceux-ci influenceront le film de plus tard et, en même temps, comment le film se constitue en une possible piste d'analyse de l'œuvre écrite. Quant au *Labyrinthe du monde* et aux entretiens filmés avec Marguerite Yourcenar, on y découvre un jeu de postures bien élaboré. L'écrivaine d'origine belge utilise différentes poses dans son écriture et dans sa présence médiatique qu'elle transforme en des stratégies posturales afin de laisser croire à son lecteur/spectateur à une possible transparence de l'intime. Il y a chez Yourcenar une oscillation subtile et permanente entre la quête d'un véritable « moi » à travers la démarche autobiographique et le jeu d'(im)postures assumées par l'auteure qui rend sa figure plutôt éloignée et absente.

Dans le chapitre « Déconstruire l'écriture, façonner l'image », Andrei Lazar propose une analyse de la manière dans laquelle les textes autobiographiques de Roland Barthes et Jacques Derrida arrivent à être transposés en image photographique et film-documentaire. Tout en tenant compte d'un contexte qui touche l'unité du sujet, l'auteur de ce volume voit dans la structure même de ces récits une possible clé d'interprétation de la manière de figurer le « moi » dans le cas de deux auteurs. Fragmentés, plutôt théoriques que chronologiques, les deux philosophes se proposent d'aller jusqu'aux limites de la démarche autobiographique remettant en cause les lois du genre. Le récit photographique de *Jaques Derrida* et de *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, au-delà de son but primaire représentatif, devient support d'une pensée philosophique. Pour le théoricien de la mort de l'Auteur et pour le philosophe déconstructiviste, les effets d'intermédialité rendent compte de l'impossibilité de construire une image cohérente du « moi ». Chez Hervé Guibert, les supports artistiques fusionnent de manière rhizomatique, les significations s'entrecroisent aux carrefours des médiums. Les points d'articulation de la démarche guibertienne se situent autour du rapport avec la corporéité et la maladie. Andrei Lazar analyse avec finesse les métamorphoses du corps qui se dressent en parallèle avec celles du récit autobiographique en récit photographique et filmique.

La troisième et dernière partie de cet ouvrage est dédiée aux œuvres filmiques comme *Sartre par lui-même*, *Derrida* et *La Pudeur ou l'impudeur*. Ces productions visuelles mettent en lumière le devenir du projet autobiographique. Intégrant le texte littéraire et la photographie au sein du septième art, les biographèmes circulent entre les médiums tout en produisant cet espace intermédial producteur de nouvelles significations.

En définitive, le volume signé par Andrei Lazar contribue à une meilleure compréhension des transferts de significations et des mutations de la figuration du « moi » entre différents médiums. En plus, au-delà de cette subtile analyse des thèmes et procédés de création artistique qui transgressent les formes du récit de soi, on y retrouve également une prise en compte des agencements des postures littéraires engendrés par la diffraction de l'image de l'auteur. Andrei Lazar n'oublie pas d'intégrer dans ses observations théoriques l'importance des autres instances de production qui provoquent des changements au niveau du statut auctorial et de celui de lecteur. Comme Rodica Lascu-Pop le note dans la préface, cet ouvrage a le grand mérite d'apporter de nouveaux outils critiques qui valorisent la dimension intermédiale de la démarche autobiographique des écrivains et s'inscrit dans les problématiques les plus actuels avec lesquels se confronte la critique littéraire contemporaine.

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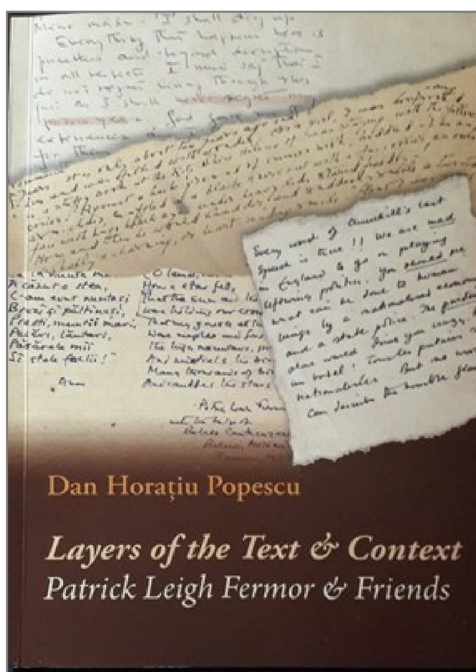
BOOKS

Dan Horațiu Popescu, *Layers of the Text & Context: Patrick Leigh Fermor & Friends*, Oradea, Editura Universităţii din Oradea: Partium, 2020, 258 p.



In the autumn of 1933, Patrick Leigh Fermor was only eighteen years old when he set out on a journey to Europe after a complicated and rebellious adolescence: having disembarked from his homeland, England, in the Netherlands, he planned to cross the continent on foot until reaching Istanbul. Thus begins the account of a lifelong travel adventure, where the icy plains of the Netherlands parade before our eyes, and German taverns, excellent libraries, friendships born on the street, offer the most varied hospitality that one could get: rooms rented by boatmen, acquaintances of acquaintances who offer young Fermor a room, young Central Europeans who have fun with him, Transylvanian manor houses and Magyar nobles who spoil him. Moreover, we read the author's brilliant reflections on heraldry, demography, and linguistics. Then the Danube suddenly appears between gusts of wind, the choir of Augusta, the vastness of Hungary crossed for a stretch on horseback, the Iron Gates between the Carpathians and the Balkans, the food shared with the peasants or the Gypsies, the Schloss, pristine forests, legends, and fairy tales, a stay in Austria, the Rhine crossed by barge, the paintings of Cranach and Altdorfer, and, of course, the cities: Cologne, Stuttgart, Vienna, Brno, Prague, Budapest, Cluj, Bucharest, Galatzi on the way to Constantinople…

The book written by Dan Horațiu Popescu is more than a new biography of Patrick Leigh Fermor. It is an invitation to a new reading of Fermor's *Between the Woods and the Water* from the perspective of the Romanian scholar, who identifies different layers of meaning in the pages of the British traveler's memoirs. The author takes the reader on an incursion in the more or less distant past – from the golden years of European and Romanian

history between the two World Wars to the Iron Curtain and beyond. In the first section, "On Becoming a Writer," one chapter is devoted to Fermor's formation as a writer as it comes out from his correspondence with Laurence Durrell. The second section, "People & Places," deals with the relationship between Sacheverell Sitwell and Patrick Leigh Fermor, pointing out their close ties with Romania. The following section, "Writing the Woods and the Water," goes deeper into the inter-ethnic relations and analyses the condition of the Gypsy people in Hungary and Transylvania, the presence of the Jews and their social status, and the image of the Turk, "the perennial Other in Eastern Europe." The author discusses the travelogue as a narrative of displacement, stressing Hungary and Transylvania's historical and political contexts, as found in Patrick Leigh Fermor's correspondence with his Budapestan friend Rudolf Fischer. In the last section, "The Quest resumed," the author highlights the close connection between the writers' artistic calling and the quest for spirituality, as seen in the lives and works of Edward Lear, Patrick Leigh Fermor, and Bruce Chatwin. One final aspect the author addresses are the relations between text and epitext in the three writers' works and letters.

Dan Horațiu Popescu likens "Paddy" Fermor's tours through Western and Eastern Europe in the early 1930s to the traditional Grand Tour recommended to young Englishmen as early as the 17th century. The author follows Fermor's self-taught writing apprenticeship in the Abbey of St. Wandrille, Solesmes Abbey, and La Grande Trappe – the silent universities and "towers of silent ivory," which the Englishman turned into a writer's retreats and described in detail in *A Time to Keep Silence* (1953). It is an unexpected stage in the life of a man known for his adventurous and restless spirit who, despite all the difficulties, is convinced that "Byzantium will be saved." Ample space is devoted to the writer's friendship with Laurence Durrell, as seen in their letters that reveal their fascination for Greece. The details of Fermor's relationship with Balasha Cantacuzène, a member of the old Romanian aristocracy, give the reader a glimpse of the four years spent at the princess's estate at Băleni, in Romania, until 1939. Her letters to him after 1965 reveal the effervescent cultural milieu of Western Europe as seen from beyond the Iron Curtain. That was a world to which she no longer had any access.

However, Balasha is not the only Romanian aristocrat present in *Between the Woods and the Water* and in the writer's letters. There is also Princess Anne-Marie Callimachi, a great traveler for whom the Orient Express was her "mental home" and in whose house Fermor met Sacheverell "Sachie" Sitwell, the author of *Roumanian Journey* (1938), whom the princess had invited to write a book about Romania. Among other notable names mentioned in the two Englishmen's letters, we find Micaela Catargi, Princess Priscilla Bibesco, Matila Ghyka. An "inquisitive traveler" for whom Romania is "at the far end of Europe" (90), Sacheverell Sitwell records the ceremonial Orientalist character of the meals served not only in the monasteries and convents visited and the excellence of Romanian cuisine found in the restaurants of Sinaia or Bucharest. We also read a detailed account of Fermor's correspondence with Michel Alexis

"Bishi," Catargi, a "sophisticated and refined person who was able to read behind & between & beyond the lines" (129). The keywords in this account are *memory* and *nostalgia* – nostalgia for the refined life of the Romanian aristocracy prior to WWII as seen after the fall of communism.

Otherness is seen in terms of *types* and *stereotypes*. The Gypsies and the Jews "provided an interesting opportunity to theorists for pairing the analysis of the discourses of orientalism and anti-Semitism" (159). Fermor's first encounter with the ever-present Gypsy people "on the move in long, jolting wagons that made all their gear clatter" is preceded by a detailed account of their presence in English and European culture. According to the author, "one may believe that Patrick Leigh Fermor was mostly a writer of the picturesque, with too light a touch concerning people and landscapes" (154). We can see the Gypsies almost everywhere Fermor went, even in Balasha Cantacuzène's house at Băleni, where a fiddler "played and sang when called upon, backed by half a dozen fellow Gypsies settled in the village" (157). The Jews are also there, whether in Hungary, Transylvania, or Moldavia. Visiting the monasteries in Northern Moldavia, Sachie Sitwell could not overview the presence of the Jews, stating that "The question of the Jews in Eastern Europe would seem to be insoluble" (167). Concerned with the Jews' history and culture, Fermor underlines the gap between the two cultures and religions, and "expressed his unhappiness concerning some of the Central European realities of the 1930s that ended in the Holocaust" (173).

Then, who is the "perennial other" of Central Europe? Dan Horațiu Popescu points out the writer's positioning in *Between the Woods and the Water*: his picturesque approach towards the Gypsies and the Jews, the remarks on the elements attesting to the specter of the Ottoman Empire, the presence of the Serbians and the Swabians, and the Turkish settlement on the Ada-Kaleh island on the Danube. We underline Fermor's remarks about the Vlach communities: the traveler refers to both the Hungarian and the Romanian justifications for their presence, convinced that "the speech of the Rumanians and the Vlachs of the Balkans must spring from the same source" (204). He understood that the migration of peoples due to several reasons, […] was not to be confused with nomadism" (208). One element that attracts attention is Paddy Fermor's appreciation of Romanian folklore and his translation of the ballad "Mioritza," the Romanians' "master narrative of displacement" (212), in cooperation with Balasha Cantacuzène, fragments of which were to be recited at his funeral.

Dan Horațiu Popescu devotes an entire chapter to the correspondence between Paddy Fermor and Rudolph Fischer, a Hungarian historian and linguist, mainly regarding the writing of *Between the Woods and the Water*. The writer uses Fischer's expertise in the history of Hungary and Transylvania and acknowledges "his concern for retrieving all possible memories – i.e., words, languages, people, gestures, places, history, nature, including birds" (218). The letters also concern the writers' search for meaning, the various aspects of style, and the accuracy of the information provided. The concluding chapter, "Walking to Byzantium," highlights several aspects of the work of Edward Lear, Patrick Leigh

Fermor, and Bruce Chatwin and the different approaches to their travels to Greece: the search for Victorian and imperialist values (Lear), the end of the youth journey (Fermor), and the moment of revelation (Chatwin).

It also means the end of the journey undertaken by Dan Horațiu Popescu at the epistolary universe of Patrick Leigh Fermor and his friends. The book is an in-depth investigation of the historical, social, cultural, and inter-ethnic relations, and Romania's place and role in interwar Europe, as seen in the written testimonies of those who lived in those times. In the author's own words, it is an *opera aperta*, an open work inviting to further re-readings and re-writings.

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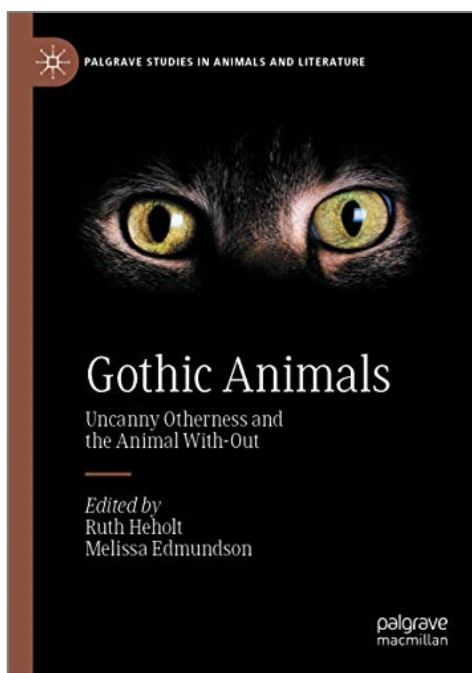
BOOKS

Ruth Heholt; Melissa Edmundson, *Gothic Animals: Uncanny Otherness and the Animal With-Out*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 307 p.



This Palgrave collection of studies on animals and literature, edited by Ruth Heholt and Melissa Edmundson, brings together a series of cross-disciplinary approaches meant to reconceptualize the relationship between human and non-human literary beings in such a way as to acknowledge the continuum of sentience and affect between them. Ranging from of an analysis of faux documentaries about spectral predators to a diachronic incursion into the universe of American superhero comics, the studies are both rigorous and captivating. The collection as a whole revolves around the "animal turn" in historical, anthropological, philosophical and literary research and on this new momentum within the field of English studies, as I will try to show with reference to a few of the texts included here.

In "'Like a Madd Dogge': Demonic Animals and Animal Demoniacs in Early Modern English Possession Narratives," Brendan C. Walsh explores sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestant representations of the demonic animal, as encountered in possession pamphlets. His study establishes the 1957-1958 case of William Sommers "as one of the archetypical cases of demonic possession in the early modern English context," (31) and revolves around three written accounts produced by exorcist John Darrell. Walsh provides insight into the ways in which animals were spiritually and culturally perceived in the early modern period. The essay offers a compelling explanation as to why associations made between animals and the demonic Other became mirror images "to the model of Christian behaviour that early modern audiences were encouraged to follow" (35).

Michael Fuchs explores an irrational fear enhanced by Steven Spielberg's

1975 blockbuster *Jaws* in "Imagining the Becoming-Unextinct of Megalodon". Fuchs successfully argues that Spielberg promoted a heightened understanding of the biological truth that humans are not at the top of the food chain, but rather on the trophic level of an "anchovy." This self-awareness is the driving mechanism behind people's trepidation about an ancient predator that became extinct over 3 million years ago – the megalodon. Fuchs takes a jab at both the transgressive ontological movement of digital animals perpetuated by pseudo-documentaries, as well as at a "desperately naïve" techno-utopia in which the human can also become un-extinct through digital rendering (111). A sharp critic of "Gothic media" outlets such as the Discovery Channel, Fuchs infuses the Baudrillardian concept of hyperreality with light-hearted breakdowns of cinematic discourses in order to showcase the misleading ways of mise-en-scène, montage, cinematography and audio-visual special effects. The essay wittingly depicts a digital realm of constructed evidence meant to give viewers a sense that an uncanny ancient predator has the possibility to invade the now, "thereby collapsing the differences between past and present (and future)" (114).

Kevin Knott shifts the focus from galeophobia to "flyophobia" in his essay on Jane Rice's *The Idol of the Flies*. The macabre story of a psychopathic child with vicious tendencies, and his biblical companion in the form of Beelzebub was highly impactful on nascent American pulp fiction. Knott links Rice to the emergence of Domestic Gothic; her portrayal of domestic space as an entrapping universe for the female characters is nevertheless distinct, containing no sexual element (177). Knott traces the symbolic evolution of the fly from palpable metonym for "unpredictable fancies" during the Romantic era (177) to the embodiment of "muted, invisible, and similarly unspeakable" cruelty (179) in his overview of a novel with an unexpected predator who is not only human, but also a child.

Another unlikely predator, the RoboBee, emerges in Franciska Cettl's "Encircled by Minute, Evilly-Intentioned Airplanes". The automaton, a recent descendant of Jacques de Vaucanson's Canard Digérateur, is part of a history of machines found at the intersection between science fiction and Gothic literature; Cettl's essay is an exploration of the ethics of artificial life (188). Halfway through the piece, the reader is made aware of a singular moment in Mary Shelley *Frankenstein* that has eluded scholarly attention. This awareness morphs into a discussion on the dominant human relationship with the creature-as-insect (191). The essay also critically references Achille Mbembe's deathworlds and Foucauldian biopolitics, along with an episode of *Black Mirror*, in order to skilfully contour the more complex anxieties produced by the issues of "online surveillance and privacy, abuse and targeting on social media, and drone warfare" (195).

Fred Francis revisits a staple of modern mythology – the comic book superhero and his mild-mannered alter ego. "The Gothic Animal and the Problem of Legitimacy in American Superhero Comics" revolves around the origin story of one of the heavyweight names of the comic book universe. The Gothic origins of Batman – an idealistic paladin of heroic justice – are traced back to the non-fictional issue of producing a plausible character able to instil both fear and admiration. Francis establishes a valid connection

between nineteenth-century Gothic doubling and the duality of the Caped Crusader. The figure of the bat is at the centre of Francis's study, as the author chooses to dissect the reasons why Frank Miller reverts to the flittermouse for the Gothic rebirth of Bruce Wayne in the graphic novel *Batman: Year One* (1987). Francis also offers the reader a glimpse into the varying functions of the bat-as-animal; he traces its evolution from "a hero's *raison d'être*" (101) to its image becoming the herald of a legitimate American form of literature (11).

Paul Benedict Grant focuses on the monstrous representation of arachnids as Guilt personified in the third chapter entitled "'Most Hideous of Gaolers': The Spider in Ernest G. Henham's *Tenebrae*". The 1898 novel has been neglected by critics, yet Grant manages to establish a connection between *Tenebrae* and the earlier Gothic works of Jeremias Gotthelf, Bertram Mitford and the Erckmann-Chatrian French duo. Grant further explains the allure of the protean figure of the spider, and praises Henham's ability to render a feeling of "narrative claustrophobia" (53), likening it to Edgar Allan Poe's "sophisticated handling of the psychology of fear, guilt, and madness" (44).

Anja Höing examines another critically neglected piece and shifts the focus to anthropomorphic talking animals in the chapter entitled "Devouring the Animal Within: Uncanny Otherness in Richard Adams's *The Plague Dogs*". As Höing shows, "the danger this 'Other' presents is exposed not as an essential characteristic of otherness, but as a consequence of miscommunication, of misreading the other" (73). *The Plague Dogs* is highly political in nature, attempting to "disentangle the animal without from the animal within" (58). The reader will remark that, despite its abundance of Gothic tropes, *The Plague Dogs* has never been recognised as a Gothic novel, being neglected by critics in favour of Adams's highly acclaimed *Watership Down*. Nonetheless, Höing effectively highlights the dual function of a literary text which "employs the sensationalist dimension of the Gothic into its biting satire of British media" (60).

In the preamble to *Gothic Animals,* Ruth Heholt and Melissa Edmundson recall the 2017 refusal of the Tory Government to formally recognise animals as sentient beings under the EU Withdrawal Act. Concurrently, across the Atlantic, the Trump administration attempted to reverse a ban on elephant trophies imported from Africa. Both decisions engendered controversy and were invalidated following severe backlash from the public. Nevertheless, such policies tend to relegate the nonhuman to a vulnerable position by further widening the divide between humans and animals.

The marginalization of animals under conditions of societal instability confers upon them the Gothic features of the "Alien, Other, and unknowable" (3). Yet the genre seeks to classify and contain the very image it generates; the animal-as-alien is thus attributed human characteristics. Anthropomorphism also automatically invokes the human-as-animal concept in the same manner in which Darwinism seeks to render "the human more animal and the animal more human, destabilizing boundaries in both directions" (4).

Still, the fear of the "animal within" – the Gothic double kept in abeyance – continues to grow. Nineteenth-century genre staples such as Mr. Hyde, the werewolf, the shape-shifting portrait of Dorian Gray or Doctor Moreau's uncanny

animals serve(d) as social archetypes or metaphors meant to explore contemporary taboos. Yet these are not merely Gothic stock characters, as they often bridge the divide and overlap with the human element. The interaction becomes the focus of the Palgrave collection, as current practices are blurring age-old conceptual lines, and human and nonhuman lives intertwine. However, *Gothic Animals* partly concentrates on the gulf between human and animal entities or "between the world as we perceive it and the vast possibilities of other worlds which we do not and cannot even begin to conceive" (9). Ultimately, what this collection of studies highlights is the human (mis)understanding of the nonhuman Other.

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BOOKS

**Cotoc, Alexandra, Octavian More and Mihaela Mudure (eds.)
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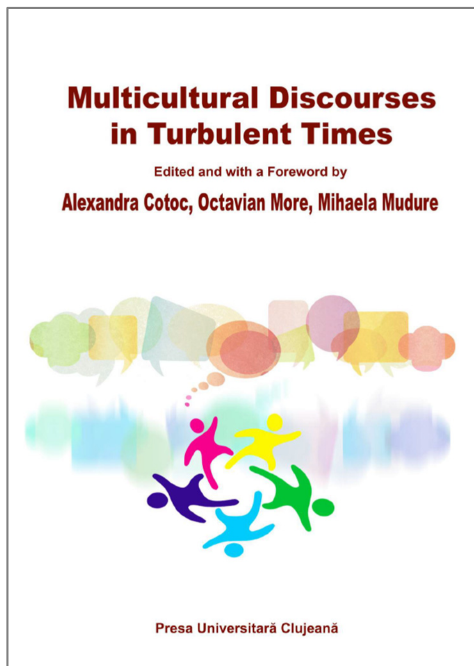

In a world increasingly aware of the language used to articulate the complexities of reality, multiculturalism has become more and more important to both academic and non-academic debates. The collaborative volume *Multicultural Discourses in Turbulent Times* is a product of academic inquiry, compiling papers from multiple areas of research with the purpose of interrogating the epistemic and paradigmatic processes that have led to current dominant cultural discourses in various communities around the globe.

The volume consists of eighteen contributions from the *7th International Conference on Multicultural Discourses* co-hosted in October 2020 by the English Department of the Faculty of Letters, Babeș-Bolyai University, Romania, and the School of Contemporary Chinese Communication Studies, Hangzhou Normal University, China. As indicated in the Foreword to the volume, the conference "reinforced the importance of the notion of cultural discourses" (7) through discussions of culture, literature, language, and education in today's complicated social and political climate; (anti)globalization, connectivity, conflict, immigration, and racism guide the discussion proposed by the volume. As such, the selected papers have been divided into three sections, which furthermore reflect the elaborate and interdisciplinary nature of the study: Cultures and Discourses, Literature and (Multi)cultural Discourses and Linguistics and Education.

The first chapter, Cultures and Discourses, begins with "Multicultural Discourses on the Connections between

Native Americans and Europeans in the Long Eighteenth Century." This contribution by Begoña Lasa-Álvarez provides a diachronic analysis of the discursive tendencies regarding Native Americans in the context of the European fascination not only with interethnic amorous relationships, but also with the habits and behaviour of the 'Noble Savages' that the Native Americans were mythified into. Lasa-Álvarez anchors the research of this paper in the story of St. Castin, French noble and military man who lived among the natives and married a native woman. The analysis investigates the distinct stages of St. Castin's story being adapted and published in different forms and Western reiterations, to highlight that "European culture was all-encompassing with regard to Native Americans" (28) as the natives were forced to adopt Western norms and values such as the institution of marriage. Lasa-Álvarez concludes with comments on the vanishing Indian in the Western discursive culture.

The second contribution in this chapter is Sharon Diane King's analysis of religious and political intersections in 2019 comedy/fantasy BBC miniseries *Good Omens*. "The Face of the Other at the End of the World: The TV Series *Good Omens*" tackles the exploration of race, gender, and instances of 'Other'-ing in the miniseries. As King points out, the subversive depictions of Adam and Eve as black, or the role of Archangel Michael played by a woman, serve to challenge centuries-old Western visual and ideological stereotypes. As such, the paper concludes by asserting that *Good Omens* utilizes the very tools provided by established Western structures (race, gender, colonial, and religious values) to destabilize the structures themselves: it is through these processes of "using the system's embedded tools against it" (42) that the system of separating, labelling and subjugating communities is discovered as faulty.

The next contribution undertakes a similar approach in analysing the manner in which a visual production uses the system's established tools in order to expose its flaws. In "The Monsters among Us, or Decentring Whiteness in Contemporary American Visual Culture: Jordan Peele's *Get Out*," Loredana Bercuci points out the subversive nature of the 2017 film *Get Out* and many of its artistic choices that lead to theorising whiteness "as discursively visual" (57) and terrorising, as opposed to 'invisible.' Bercuci draws upon this idea of 'invisible whiteness' from recent work in Critical Whiteness Studies and bell hooks' argument that whiteness is perceived as the subject, while non-whites are robbed of this position; this can also be correlated with the "lack of awareness of the white presence in non-white life and discourse" (47) that can be seen in cultural discourses. The paper remarks that these characteristics allow whiteness to "give the impression of it being the norm" (48), a false universality that excludes it from categorizations of race – "race as physicality is more often than not attributed to non-whites" (49).

The last contribution in this section is Tarek Musleh's "Multiculturalism and Religion: Between East and West." The paper follows and compares the discourse lying at the core of Christian and Muslim paradigms, with a particular focus on exposing the refusal of multicultural inclusiveness in religious texts.

Muslehnotes that violence and cruelty fuel discourses concerning communities outside one's religion, which in turn encourages the representatives of most religions to negate the validity of others. The paper thus calls into question discursive practices between the East and the West, by pointing out the difficulty of fostering a multicultural spirit in a world that should be "liberated from the domination of men of religion" (69) – a liberation which is, according to Musleh, still too difficult to achieve in practice.

Questions of identity, gender, nationality, and ethnicity open the second section of the volume and find their articulation in María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia's paper on George Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy: A Poem* (1868). The multicultural approach undertaken in "George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Approaches to Multicultural Discourses" is informed by postcolonial studies, which make the theoretical framework for an insightful analysis of *The Spanish Gypsy* focusing on otherness, multiculturalism in Spain, and consequently George Eliot's plea for peaceful coexisting religious creeds.

Modia's study is followed by Cristina Chevereșan's "The Imposter in Jerusalem. Cultural (Re)Mappings and Re(Locations) in Operation Shylock." Chevereșan proposes here an analysis of the "literal and symbolical blurring" (88) of Jewish boundaries within Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock* (1993), as well as an examination of the novel's reception with all its "underlying controversies" (88). The paper discusses Jewishness and pluricultural identities, communal, personal, and public authenticity, and the implications a title such as 'A Confession' could suggest to Roth's readership (Chevereșan extrapolates on this markedly).

"Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*: A Novel for Our Liquid Times" by Gönül Bakay examines the impact of globalization and fragile "interconnected systems" (103) in Hari Kunzru's novel *Transmission* (2004). The paper seeks to provide insights into the ways in which entities interact in increasingly globalised and interconnected societies. Bakay draws upon Zygmunt Bauman's conceptualisations of 'liquid life' and 'liquid modernity,' terms which can be used to refer to a precarious life led under constantly shifting conditions. By applying these concepts to Hari Kunzru's novel, Bakay offers not only an analysis of a society heavily relying on technology, but also a critique of contemporary reality, as the world too is becoming increasingly fluid: "distances have lost their meaning, our jobs, lives and relationships are fluid" (114).

The chapter continues with "Civil Rights and the Identity Struggle in George Takei's *They Called Us Enemy*" by Raluca-Andreea Petruș. This paper proposes an examination of the discrimination faced by the Japanese community on American soil, as problematised in *They Called Us Enemy* (2019) by George Takei. In order to pinpoint the socio-cultural as well as identity troubles of the Japanese-American community after the armed conflict between Imperial Japan and the United States, Petruș makes use of several theoretical notions such as 'tribalism' (in alignment with Amy Chua's perspectives) and 'double consciousness' defined by Du Bois. What *They Called Us Enemy* reveals, according to Petruș, is not only a strong case of political and social tribalism caused by the refusal of the American establishment to "respect the unalienable rights of Japanese Americans, be they citizens or not" (127), but also a case of

'two-ness' as these communities struggle to "reconcile their double consciousness" – the one imposed by anti-Japanese prejudice and their self-perceived identity.

The next paper examines the socio-cultural implications of contemporary Zimbabwean literature, with a focus on a generation of women who attempt to give voice to African women and communities that have long been left unrepresented. Luiza Caraivan's "Restoring Difference: Reading Zimbabwean Contemporary Literature" explores the phenomenon of diaspora narratives and writers, of Southern African multiculturalism and the multicultural context that engenders 'dual' literatures, as writers struggle to find the middle ground between being authentically African or rather "an external body that seeks to penetrate the Anglophone European literary tradition" (131).

Kamila Mirasova's paper "Ayn Rand in the Global World" employs Zygmunt Bauman's *Retrotopia* and the works of De Loughry and Fisher in order to explore the positive and negative ways in which the literature of (anti)globalization has been referencing Ayn Rand thus far. Mirasova also examines political discourses (right-wing, in particular) that have been influenced and owe most of their rhetoric to Rand's philosophy of objectivism: Donald Trump and the 'Make America Great Again' campaign among the most notable of them.

Constantina Raveca Buleu's contribution on the discursive phenomenology of utopias within a multicultural framework, "Rhetoric and Transposition: From the Utopian Monologue to the Dystopian Multicultural Approach. A Case Study," closely examines dystopian patterns in works such as Gheorghe Săsărman's *Alphabet of Dystopias* to assert that although utopias might seem to foster a multicultural discourse, they actually end up shrinking into a "mono-cultural ideology" upon full actualization. Buleu further extrapolates on the nature of utopias to assert, in alignment with the perspectives of G. Kateb and Merlin Coverley, that "there is no utopia without a latent dystopian kernel" (168) and that mutations exist in any utopian discourse.

This section concludes with a reflection on the cultural, historical, and literary implications of a revisited, multicultural history of Romanian literature. Monica Manolachi's "How Multicultural is the History of Romanian Literature?" provides a diachronic overview of the literary histories that have contributed to the current understandings of multiculturalism in Romanian literature – the most significant provided by Eugen Lovinescu and George Călinescu – demonstrating that this journey has been "a latent work in progress" (185) and that it has "depended very much on the rapport between the literary domain and cultural politics, [...] ethics and aesthetics" (185).

The final section of this volume, *Linguistics and Education*, provides interdisciplinary contributions at the intersection of applied linguistics (channeled through various discourse analysis methodologies), psychology, pedagogy, and cultural studies. The section opens with María Laura Pardo's paper which analyses the COVID-19 anti-homelessness discourse in digital spaces, with a particular focus on social media. "Violence and Hate Speech Against the Homeless in Social Media During the Covid-19 Pandemic" examines the ways in which

digital audiences react to news concerning the homeless population in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, by drawing upon notions such as 'invisible violence' (Bourgois), aporophobia (fear of the poor) and analyzing online hate speech through the Synchronic-Diachronic Method for the Linguistic Analysis of Texts.

Just as insightful is Elizabeth Woodward-Smith's "Multiculturality and Discourse Awareness in the Media," which examines the "growing awareness of changing linguistic and social usage" (211) in recent news items from the British media. Woodward-Smith combines two theoretical approaches – Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Critical Language Awareness (CLA) – to explore recent linguistic challenges to power relations, ideologies, and current customs with focus on the linguistic repertoires of health and well-being, matters of commercial jargon and corporatese, of issues pertaining to gender, culture, ethnicity, and colonialism.

The next paper, "Transmale Models: A Discursive Analysis on Porn Ads" studies queer identity negotiation in the digital arenas of Brazil. Dánie Marcelo de Jesus and Vicente Tchalian analyse the discourse construction of 76 profiles on the adult website Câmera Privê in order to explore how transmale bodies are allowed to negotiate their appearance (in alignment with Judith Butler's theories of gender) through linguistic strategies. The implications of this are multifaceted: on the one hand, pornography websites have become spaces that "legitimize these bodies" (242) while on the other, they commodify these bodies into mere objects to be bought and sold, as a consequence of the merchandise-oriented, marketable discourse.

The next two contributions are complementary, in that both "Critical Language Teacher Education: Postmemory as Resistance" by Andréa Machado de Almeida Mattos, Mariana Adriele Coura and *"Challenges and Possibilities for the Development of English Teachers' Agency in the North of Brazil"* by Denise Silva Paes Landim examine the impact of critical discourse in the fields of pedagogy and education in Brazil. The former provides a study on the impact and importance of collective and individual (post)memory in promoting critical awareness in class. The latter analyses the implications of learning and teaching English in a "neoliberal and globalized society" (270), revealing a recent tendency to shift towards a "more critical positioning entitled to teachers" (270) rather than the traditional technical role, where "little to no room for reflection and authorship is given to teachers" (270).

Jing Yu's contribution concludes the volume and aims at exposing the "long-standing patterns of the Western totalizing discourse" in relation to Chinese communities in higher education contexts by applying the theoretical framework proposed by Chinese Discourse Studies (in alignment with Shi-xu's conceptualization). "Chinese International Students and the COVID-19 Crisis" takes into consideration the Chinese cultural heritage and customs to assert that Chinese discourses have long been misinterpreted by "Western-centric perspectives, models, approaches, and paradigms" (289).

The volume successfully explores multicultural discourse from a variety of interdisciplinary and methodological approaches, from the multicultural values of the digital space to discourses pertaining

to the literary and the cinematic. As the editors Alexandra Cotoc, Octavian More and Mihaela Mudure remark in the Foreword of the volume, this is also on account of the remarkable selection of contributions from scholars in different stages of their academic careers and also with a variety of linguistic, cultural, and political backgrounds. Indeed, all of these factors render *Multicultural Discourses in Turbulent Times* into an outstanding study and contribution to the research field of cultural discourses, accessible not only to students and scholars, but also to wider readerships due to its pluralist, multimodal nature.

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