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CAST A COLD EYE …

VIRGIL STANCIU[♦]

ABSTRACT. The article, a survey of the work accomplished so far by one of Britain's most puzzling and controversial novelists, Ian McEwan, argues that that author's fiction is a kind of reformed morality play, in which moral ambiguity – thought by the author to be the mark of modern man and of modern times – prevails over any reductive representation of the indiviual or collective psyche. Furthermore, McEwan's narrative mode is devoid of empathy, the author almost never warms up to his theme and regards human follies with a cold clinician's eye, though not all the 'case studies' he presents are pathological.

The novel, Milan Kundera shows, "has accompanied man uninterruptedly and faithfully since the beginning of the modern era. It was then that the 'passion to know', which Husserl considered the essence of European spirituality, seized the novel and led it to scrutinize man's concrete life and protect it against 'the forgetting of being'; to hold the 'world of life' under permanent light." Kundera shares Herman Broch's conviction that "the sole *raison d'etre* of a novel is to discover what only the novel can discover" and contends that "a novel that does not discover a hitherto unknown segment of existence is immoral; knowledge is the novel's only morality".[1] This (relatively, if we think of Oscar Wilde) new acceptation of the term 'morality' is undoubtedly characteristic of postmodern fiction, which sees no reason why it should not ignore the traditional moral categories that once barred the novelist from approaching certain aspects of human experience. If any trick of the novelist's trade is permitted where postmodern narrative strategy is concerned, it is equally acceptable to tackle morally

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[1] Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, Faber and Faber, London, 1988, p. 5.

ambiguous topics, as long as one really makes a contribution to that intriguing, but aptly named epistemic category: novelistic knowledge.

The reputation of one of the most controversial story-tellers in contemporary Britain, Ian McEwan, was consolidated by the Booker Prize awarded his novel *Amsterdam* in 1998. The very peculiar kind of fiction McEwan writes had made him an early subject of literary chit-chat, but it was with considerable reluctance that the literary establishment conceded to regard him as one of the significant writers of the last decades of the 20th century, so shocking and, for some, unpleasant was the thematic range of his books. A survey of the ways in which literature has overrun one taboo after another, in its search for fresh 'novelistic knowledge', would be, of course, a fascinating subject of research, and one of the final chapters in such an account would undoubtedly have to be dedicated to Ian McEwan. There are things that a gentleman does not discuss in a loud voice, repelling, revolting deeds that one may read about in the yellow papers and then express one's outrage by way of the most condemning reaction of all: meaningful silence. It is equally true, of course, that the novel of the end of the millennium will not admit that there are regions of the mind and of human experience that it is not welcome to investigate; notwithstanding, the English are much less used to the kind of violent, shocking fiction typified, say, by Bret Easton Ellis in the US. Or, McEwan seems to specialize precisely in revealing the lability and frailty of the human psyche, in deviance, in the Sado-Masochism that often lends a sickly colour to interhuman relations, in the reckless and casual cruelty with which some people treat their fellow-humans, even their own kin. If the literary community found it hard to accept the morbid topics, with psycho-pathological resonances, of Ian McEwan's short stories and novels, his elegant, suple prose, of a remarkable concision and propriety of expression, was duly noted and appreciated from the outset. Eventually, the author's narrative and stylistic competence won the day, triumphing over the maladive penchant for disgraceful, nauseating subjects (substantially reformed in the most recent books). As a result, after being eulogized and deprecated to an almost equal extent, Ian McEwan was boosted to the top, among England's few prize worthy novelists. In fact, before winning the Booker, he had been short-listed twice, for *The Comfort of Strangers* in 1981 and *Black Dogs* in 1992, losing to Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children*) and Michael Ondaatje (*The English Patient)* respectively. And his *The Child in Time* (1987) received the Whitbread Award.

Born in 1948, Ian McEwan took the creative writing course taught by Malcolm Bradbury at the University of East Anglia. *First Love, Last Rites* (1975) was a collection of short stories, and so was his second volume, *In-between the Sheets* (1977). McEwan's short pieces immediately drew attention due to their oddity (focus on morbidity, obsessions and perversions, the cruel depiction of the motivation behind sex) but also due to their clear, cold and descriptive, perfecty modulated style. *First Love, Last Rites* contains stories on nasty subjects, such as the

drowning of a child, an incest, the abuse and murder of a child etc., but even so the critics were lavish with their praise. This dichotomy, in fact, will be perpetrated in the writer's subsequent works, whether novels or TV scripts. D. J. Taylor considers brevity one of McEwan's distinctive stylistic marks: "One of McEwan's strengths has always been the ability to convey information about his characters with the minimum effort or verbiage. The sharp, meagre outlines are sufficient: the chasms of absent detail hardly matter".[2] The reader may find this curtness quite offensive and one of the commonest complaints is that McEwan's books are too sketchy, but the truth is that even a few pages added to most of his carefully weighed out novels or short stories would spoil the whole. Brief, relying on understatement, these writings convey a sense of having been perfectly wordcast in the moulds wrought by the author. The novel of 1978, *The Cement Garden* – an enlarged novella, like most of McEwan's novels – enhanced his reputation of a disturbing author, permanently in search for shocking subjects, like madness or the morbid fantesieis of adolescent imagination. Malcolm Bradbury considers *The Cement Garden* a Gothic novella, told from the perspective of a child, about a family in which the parents are deceased and buried in the garden, which allows the children to indulge in a world of perversion and incest, to regress to the animalic.[3] According to Bradbury, the loss of innocence leads to sin, to the discovery and exploitation of the somber aspects of the human mind. The fascination of the unknown, the lure of the forbidden and the bitter-sweet taste of perverted love are the features of his next books, the crepuscular *Comfort of Strangers* (1981) in particular. This book probably owes its somber poetic mood and its death-wooing subject to a desire to emulate the Thomas Mann of *Death in Venice*. With McEwan the city (unnamed, a venue of holidaymakers, possessed of a declining splendour, obviously modelled on Venice) is essentialized and spiritualized, a stage-set fit now for dreams, now for nightmares, veiled in an atmosphere of gloom in which normalcy easily derails and self-abandonment (pushed to where it becomes self-denial) becomes a method of quelling existential anxieties. Related in a light, almost matter-of-fact tone, the story of the relationships among the four characters, seen against the backdrop of the city of past splendour and present madness becomes a frightening parable of the unfathomable depths of the psyche, of fascination with death, of love perverted into the full, physical and spiritual, possession of the other. Kiernan Ryan is right to call McEwan "the sick, delinquent confrere of Genet, Burroughs and Celine." He also considers him – and the description, despite its metaphorical formulation, probably grasps the essence of McEwan's trajectory so far – " … a kind of prodigal son, who gradually grows out of his nasty adolescent fantasies and into a responsible adult novelist."[4]

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[2] D. J. Taylor, *A Vain Conceit. British Fiction in the 1980s*, Bloomsbury, London, 1989, pp 55-56.

[3] Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern English Novel*, Secker and Warburn, London, 1993, p.389.

[4] Kiernan Ryan, *Ian McEwan*. Writers at Their Work, Northcote House, London, 1994, p. 2.

The Child in Time tells a more normal story: that of a couple whose daughter is abducted at a supermarket and never found. The author's concern for social contextualization is more sustained in this novel, which resorts to Science Fiction gimmicks: the story is set in an Orwellian England of the near future, where Thatcherism has been carried to its extreme. Left by his wife, Stephen Lewis - the author of children's books whose daughter has been kidnapped - must struggle along by himself in a hostile London and he falls prey to rememberance. McEwan employs the Sci Fi motif of a time-warp, allowing his protagonist to peep on his own mother through the window of a country pub, and letting the latter see the face of her own unborn child and feel how the motherly instinct is swelling in her. In other words, Stephen gives a hand to his own birth. He also begets a new child, whose birth, at the end of the book, makes it possible for the spouses to be reunited and heals the wounds inflicted by the loss of their daughter. What surprises in this novel is the ease with which McEwan switches registers, passing from the inner world of individual psychodrama to public, even political issues. Stephen is a member of a Government committtee, he has a close friend who is a politician, and is planning to write a childcare textbook. Childhood again becomes the pivotal theme, like in *The Cement Garden*, but, this time, the perspective is changed: instead of the adult world being perceived by a child, childhood is framed in the complex vision of the adult[5]. In D. J. Taylor's opinion, the political dimension of the novel is flawed, being too close to caricature; by contrast, though, the personal and family problems, the dialogues of the protagonists become the support of consistent meditation on solitude, the individual, the individual's relation to time. "As an examination of the way in which families function, the novel is masterly. As an examination of the way in which people formally react to political contingency it strikes me as fundamentally flawed."[6] The intrusion of the social and of the political in McEwan's fiction is far more forceful in his following books, *The Innocent* (1990) and *Black Dogs* (1992), which confirms the novelist's remark in an interview granted to Rosemary Garing in *Spectrum* (August 10, 1997): "Some time ago, at the beginning of the eighties, the sphere of my preoccupations began to enlarge. First, working on the scripts *The Imitation Game* and *Ploughman's Lunch*, I became more socially committed and wrote the libretto of a oratorium, which was a real change for me."

The Innocent takes stock of the state of affairs in Europe at the end of the eighties, when the collapse of communism brought about a radical change of ambiance and a mutation in human relations. The book takes its cues from the espionage novel as practised by John Le Carre or Len Deighton, authors concerned with the fate of divided Germany during the Cold War. In the occupied Berlin of the fifties, Leonard Marham, the "innocent", has an affair with an older German woman, Maria Eckdorf, and is forced to kill, in self-defence, the woman's ex-

[5] Malcolm Bradbury, *op. cit.* P. 430.
[6] D. J. Taylor, *op. cit*, p. 59.

husband and to carve up his body. In his brutal lovemaking to Maria and the dismemberment of Otto the critics saw a metaphor of the physical and spiritual rape of Germany by the allies, after the Second World War[7] . But *The Innocent* also shows how the disfiguring of the ego is made possible by desires springing from the political imagination and McEwan's favourite theme, that of possession through love, receives a firmer social mooring. *The Innocent* ends with Marham's premonition regarding the fall of the Wall; in *Black Dogs*, the narrator accompanies his father-in-law to Berlin, so that they might eye-winess this crucial event, the importance of which is belittled by the lamentable behaviour of the on-lookers.

Peter Kemp thinks there is an evolution in Ian McEwan's fiction, from damaged and damaging children to tampered-with childhoods.[8] With *The Innocent*, McEwan made an even clearer distinction crucial in his work: between childishness and childlikeness. "For him, men tend to manifest the worst aspects of the former – self-centredness, impatience, violence; women, the best aspects of the latter – trust, candour, attachment. *The Child in Time* and *The Innocent* are both placed in crudely divided communities: a near-future Britain of plutocracy and state-registered beggars, the politically partitioned Berlin of the 1950s. Against these backdrops, McEwan subtly examines healing modes of psychological and emotional integration."[9]

Black Dogs may well be the most political of McEwan's novels, even though in this case the term must be used with circumspection. Didn't the novelist say "I am aware of the danger that in trying to write more politically, in the broadest sense – trying to go out more into the world, because it is a world that distresses me and makes me anxious – I could take up moral positions that might pre-empt or exclude that rather mysterious and unreflective element that is so important in fiction"?[10] He also declared, before having composed *Black Dogs:* "It is a minefield, politics and the novel. If you set about writing fiction with a clear intention of persuading people of a certain point of view, you cramp your field, you deny yourself the possibility of opening up an investigation or free enquiry."[11] but *Black Dogs* is the very book that deals with the dilemmas, hesitations and anxieties of today's intellectual, a capacious metaphor – in spite of its relatively narrow scope – that draws on the two essential views on life – male and female – and the possible interpretations of the universe, corresponding, we are given to understand, to the masculine and feminine principles: the one wholly rational, solar, rigorous, reductive, embodied by Bernard; the other wholly spiritual, lunar, all-

[7] Kiernan Ryan, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
[8] Peter Kemp, *British Fiction of the 1980s*, Routlege, London, 1988, p. 223.
[9] Idem, p. 224.
[10] John Hoffenden, *Novelists in Interviews*, Methuen, London, 1985, p. 168.
[11] Interviewed by Rosa Gonzales Casademont, *English European Messenger*, vol. I., no. 3 (autumn 1992), pp. 40-45.

encompassing, tinged with mysticism, ineffable, embraced by June. In this respect, the episode of June's meeting the two black hounds is significant: they arouse in her a mystical fear of death, a glimpse of the chasms of non-being, precisely when Bernard succumbs to his entomologist's curiosity and tries to make a drawing of the march formation of the cartepillars. Caught between the accented personalities of his in-laws, Jeremy, observer, narrator and budding biographer, seems a rather feeble figure, a member of the supporting cast, a Sancho Panza to Bernard's Don Quixote, a humble apprentice of June's. Nevertheless, he is not only a catalyst, but also the representative, in the novel, of the caste of professional writers who, in a manner of speaking, are parasites, sponging on men of action. Kiernan Ryan is right to see in this novel "a sinister (the word is too harsh, our note) portrait of the artist as vampire"![12] Jeremy, like a cuckoo reared by other birds, clings to his in-laws, trying to fathom both their past and their characters, as a sort of compensation for his own lost parents, but also as a means of defining his own being, his identity, his involvment in the community. His reconstitution of June's meeting with the black dogs in Southern France is allegorical and can be interpreted as a dark vision of the future (which, indeed, in June's case, is one of illness and seclusion), a revelation of the evil in the deep recesses of the soul, a sudden glimpse of the nothingness surrounding human efforts, an encounter with the malefic forces of history. Maybe it is the ending that makes one assign such symbolical values to the hounds that vanish into the forest but will no doubt emerge from it again, some time, somewhere. They are the hounds of history, coming from immemorial times to remind mortals of the frailty of their lives. They are not mere symbols of evil. "They trouble me when I consider what happiness I owe them, especially when I allow myself to think of them not as animals, but as spirit hounds, reincarnations", Jeremy observes at one point.[13] Kiernan Ryan's interpretation – faithful to his theory of the vampirism of literary inspiration – that the dogs stand for the insatiable whirlpool of creative imagination, gluttonous source of the art of story-telling[14] seems to me not to hold much water. But he certainly lays his finger on the essence when he says:"The anxiety which lies behind the creation of *Black Dogs* is the widespread fear that, far from having left the apocalyptic horrors of both world wars behind, we may be *en route* to re-living them, because the human drives which fuelled them have only been suppressed, not eradicated."[15]

Joe Rose, the protagonist of *Enduring Love* (1997) is stalked by a psychotic who pledges to love him for ever and swears to take him to see God. An author of scholarly articles, Joe represents reason, while his sweetheart, Clarissa, who is also in love with another man, dead for two hundred years (John Keats) is

[12] Kiernan Ryan, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
[13] Ian McEwan, *Black Dogs*, Picador, London, 1993, p. 173.
[14] Ibidem, p. 67.
[15] Ibidem, p. 64.

more given to emotions and spiritual exercise – this polarity reproduces, on a different plane, the one between Bernard and June in *Black Dogs*. Like the preceding novel, *Enduring Love* boils over with ambiguities and tension, succeeding in providing an almost physical, almost palpable image of the anxiety underlying modern man's life. Devised as a psychological thriller – Joe, the atheist, is relentlessly dogged by the absurd character Jed Parry, who is positive that the Lord has commissioned him to bring Joe face to face with him – the novel dramatizes, as Peter Kemp showed in *Sunday Times*, the various types of love, from the mystical one to the pathological. *Enduring Love* employs a sophisticated narrative technique, alternating superb periods of action-writing with stills during which the author openly muses upon the possible ramifications of the action (when everything else fails, philosophize!) and choses the most appropriate narrative solution. The first chapter – the account of the five men's desperate effort to hold the baloon to the ground – and the last one are good examples of the way in which McEwan can pass from fast-moving prose to slow-motion description – of great emotional intensity – and analytical "stills': "Best to slow down. Let's give the half minute after John Logan's fall careful consideration. What occurred simultaneously or in quick succession, what was said, how we moved or failed to move, what I thought – these elements need to be separated out. So much followed from this incident, so much branching and subdivision began in those early moments, such pathways of love and hatred blazed from the starting position, that a little reflection, even pedantry, can only help me here. The best description of a reality does not need to mimic its velocity. Whole books, whole research departments are dedicated to the first half minute in the history of the universe. Vertiginous theories of chaos and tulburence are predicated upon the supremacy of initial conditions which need painstaking depiction."[16]

Amsterdam, winner of the 30st Booker Prize, is also composed on the keyboard of moral ambiguity, as a parable full of teachings – though with a slightly unnatural twist – about love, friendship, small personal satisfactions, all seen against the background of public life, of politics and social ambition. This time, however, McEwan foregrounds the artificial geometry of the plot – a kind of *dance macabre* involving the late Molly Lane's three lovers – and takes considerable delight in playing the "Godgame". Faithful to the structural pattern already successfully employed, McEwan again conceives two poles between which tensions will run to and fro: the composer Clive Linley and the editor Vernon Halliday, close friends and former lovers of the same society woman, the photographer Molly Lane, whose cremation is narrated in the first scene of the novel. The inheritance Molly bequeathes her husband and lovers is a poisonous one: George Lane, the husband, will stop to nothing to avenge himself on the third lover, Julian Garmony, the Foreign Secretary, and asks Vernon to publish some

[16] Ian McEwan, *Enduring Love*, Vintage, London, 1998, p. 17.

compromising photographs taken by Molly in his newspaper, *The Judge*, thereby greatly reducing Garmony's chances to become Prime Minister. The boomerang effect of this deed (which Vernon sees as an act of justice, rather than of revenge, while Clive thinks it is a blemish on Molly's memory) will result in a broken frienship, the caving in of personal ambitions and projects (Clive's chance of completing the Millennium Symphony he has been commissioned to compose) and an ironic resolution of the conflict through a double death. Written with considerable irony, but with a serious substratum, this book is quite different from McEwan's earlier novels, as ponderous existential problems such as suicide and creativity are brought down from the overwhelming level of the individual to the disparaging one of man seen as a replaceable part of a social aggregate (as seen in the last conversation on the disappearance of the two friends).

"What binds all McEwan's books together is their power to unsettle our moral certainties and sap our confidence in snap judgements. *His writings are adventures in the art of unease* (italics mine)".[17]

The glass house, Kundera considers, is an old utopian idea and at the same time one of the most horrifying aspects of modern times. The more opaque the affairs of the State, the more transparent an individual's affairs must be. "The urge to violate another's privacy is an age-old form of aggressivity that in our days is institutionalized (bureaucracy with its documents, the press with its reporters), justified morally (the right to know having become firsat among the rights of man) and poeticized (by the lovely French word *transparence*)."[18]

McEwan's fiction is distinguished by a singular choice of topics (which, in my view, maintains it in a zone of minor relevance), by the accuracy and expressivity of the style, which puts to a new, modern use Hemingway's technique of the iceberg tip, by a cool detachment and lack of empathy that makes the characters seem insects studied under a glass bell. Something of Bernard's cold scientific interest has certainly contaminated the author – or is it the other way round? The comparison with the greatest entomologist in the world of letters, Vladimir Nabokov, is tempting, but will not be pursued for the time being. Suffice it to say that McEwan shares with Nabokov a mildly amused curiosity for the follies of the human race, but whereas the Russian-American master occasionally warms up to his subject, McEwan remains clinically cold. The handling of both quill and scalpel requires precision.

[17] Idem, p. 5.
[18] Milan Kundera, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS BABEŞ-BOLYAI, PHILOLOGIA, XLV, 4, 2000

KILLING YOU SOFTLY. . .

DORIN CHIRA[♦]

ABSTRACT. The article tackles an issue that has changed our standards of behaviour, especially in matters of sex. Many people see it as a punishment for wrong behaviour. But AIDS is more than that; it is the biggest health menace of the century. I bring to notice its origins and the first known cases, as well as the way in which it turned into a political issue in Britain in the 1980s.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a particular group of diseases that result from the destruction of the immune system (it no longer protects the human body against viruses), related to infection with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). A person infected with HIV becomes vulnerable to pneumonia, infections and other diseases due to the loss of the immune function. Yet, infection with HIV does not inevitably imply that a person has AIDS, though it is often thought that HIV-positive persons have AIDS. A person can remain HIV positive for more years without showing any of the clinical signs that would identify AIDS.

The first cases of AIDS (though under a different name) were recorded and described in 1981 in the USA, among the gay community of San Francisco and Los Angeles, where homosexuals died of an unknown disease that ruined their immune system. It seems that the first recorded date, connected with the presence of HIV (retrodiagnosed), is 1959, when traces of HIV1 were discovered 'in the tissues of a British sailor who died in Manchester' (Karpas, 1990:578); in the summer of 1983 he was diagnosed as having died of AIDS. In 1959, a 48 year old New York clerk, coming from Haiti, showed symptoms similar to those of the British sailor and died (Garfield, 1994:in The Independent). Moreover, a case outside Africa was reported from Norway; it was that of a sailor, who "probably became infected in the 1960s and whose wife and third daughter died of what would be diagnosed today as AIDS' (Karpas, 1990:578). According to Garfield,

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an anonymous person from Zaire, had serum samples drawn and stored; many years later the samples were proved to contain antibodies against HIV.

Scientists soon realised that they were facing an unknown disease. Unfortunately, one thing was unquestionable: it was fatal. According to Garfield (1994), many theories concerning its origins emerged: the disease was the will of God who wanted to correct gays' degeneracy and depravity; some say HIV is a virus from another planet; it was presumed that the CIA or KGB devised a virus meant to clear the gay world. No comment. The fact is that man does not always see the real world; where there is imagination there might be horror too.

However, there were some theories (not too numerous) that had to be taken into consideration. One of these theories implied that the mass vaccination against polio in the Congo in 1957 may have originated the AIDS epidemic (it was believed that simian cells sheltered simian monkey immunodeficiency viruses-SIV-which evolved into HIV after being inoculated into human body through vaccination).

Another theory suggested that amyl nitrite or isobutyl nitrite (a drug known in the gay world as 'poppers') may have caused the disease. It was affirmed that it relieved you from strain, put an end to the habitual suppression of feelings or inner drives, stimulated your sexual activity. It was on legal sale in the U. K.

Karpas (1990) oferred a reasonable explanation for the origin of AIDS. It is a theory associated with faith, allegiance, convictions and the sexual habits of the African tribes from the Lake Kivu region in East Zaire. A widely spread ritual among the members of these tribes was to inoculate monkey blood into their thighs, back and pubic area in order to stimulate their sexual activity. Karpas argues that this may have been a trans-species transmission, as it is known that certain species of monkeys are naturally infected with viruses related to HIV. But evolutionary and inborn processes have proved non-malignant for monkeys; the virus becomes deadly only when transmitted to the human species.

There are numerous theories about the origin of AIDS but none of them is definite and unquestionable. The same thing can be said about its possible cure. AZT-Zidovudine which seemed to be the winning drug against the disease turned out to be almost ineffective (The Independent, 30. 11. 94). However, researchers consider the possibility of mixing it with other drugs which are known to prevent HIV replicate in the test tube. In November1994 researchers announced that the combination of AZT and 3TC (a drug whose effects are similar to AZT) can diminish the level of the virus in the blood. The only problem is that AZT and other related drugs cause toxic effects. Another approach to a possible cure of AIDS is by transfusing antibodies from the blood vessels of HIV positive persons into those of patients who have already shown symptoms of AIDS. Researchers in France and the U. S. implied that this form of therapy appears to delay the outbreak of AIDS. However, because of the ability of the virus to mutate into different

subtypes, the way to a vaccine or a cure is still long and difficult (The Independent, 30. 11. 94).

AIDS was indeed a major medical issue in the earlt 80s. The disease was dominated by its associations with the gay population and, therefore, the result was a complete imagery of 'plague' and 'pestilence' which led to a moral panic reflected in widespread discrimination against homosexuals and people with AIDS. The name of the disease was associated, as stated above, with the gay people: Gay Compromise Syndrome, Gay Related Immune Deficiency or Gay Cancer (Garfield, 1994). 'Gay plague' was the name used in the British media and in the minds of the British public. Still, little attention was given to the disease;for British gays in 1981, AIDS was an American problem. By the end of June 1982 things changed dramatically. Terrence Higgins, 37, was examined at St. Thomas's hospital in London and the doctors involved in the case recognised the symptoms of AIDS. He died on July, 4, 1982 (Garfield, 1994).

A 1982 prediction proved to be true:

> 'British gay men had better prepare themselves for some major shocks in the months ahead. They will be under a double-edged attack from both disease and media coverage if recent American experience is repeated here. '
>
> (Poulter, 1991:177)

Time proved these predictions to be true. The attitude towards homosexuality was a disapproving one; it suggested that the homosexual men brought this fate upon themselves by indulging in 'perverted sexual practices' (Poulter:178). The repulsion and discrimination against this minority group created a mass phenomenon, still known as 'homophobia', which has been connected with 'the unfinished nature of the revolution in attitudes towards homosexuality' (Weeks, 1989:302). The representations of AIDS as a 'plague' or 'gay plague' showed that 'marginalised communities', such as gays or lesbians, became emblems of all other meanings and connotations that had to do with different questions about sexuality and moral behaviour. Is this attitude a fair one?Gay culture has not only had a distinct history, prior to AIDS crisis, but it has also participated in fighting AIDS all over the world. It emerged from the experience of gay activists in America and has become a central issue for the European gay liberation movement. In the early 1980s, many of the gay responses were obstructed by lack of funds. In November 1992 (Garfield, 1994) the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) was set up, first as a charity to raise funds for research; the other aim was to supply a health education programme. Gay Switchboard organised the first AIDS seminar on May, 21, 1983 (Poulter:179) with funding provided by the Health Education Council.

Articles about AIDS and gay lifestyle were published in America but most of them underlined the absence of this issue in Britain. According to Poulter (1991), the ignorance of those responsible for this question to be solved offered

the Government a very good chance to pretend that the problem did not exist in Britain. For the gay people it was a signal of distress; they understood they have to help themselves so, consequently, the first THT leaflet was alloted in gay clubs. It mentioned the symptoms but did not allude to incubation time; it provided health education information but it did not recommend specific lifestyle. Unfortunatelly, events took on a new dimension. Garfield shows that, by July 1983, 14 cases of AIDS were reported – of which 12 were diagnosed in homosexual men, the other two cases in a haemophiliac and a heterosexual man. By September 1983 there had been 24 cases which included a haemophiliac and woman who neither a drug user nor a transfusion recipient. The fact that AIDS affected not only gay people and drug users but heterosexuals as well, gave rise to a state of panic and worry. The gay community was responsible for the spread of the disease (Poulter, 1991). Consequently, the right of the gay community to exist in the public domain was questioned (The Times, 21/11/1984); gay people with HIV were called 'walking bombs' (The Sun, 21/12/1984); even more, The Sunday Telegraph (20/01/1994) suggested that homosexuality be made a criminal offence. Homophobic attacks continued in the media: 'their defiling act of love is not only unnatural. . . In today's AIDS-hit world it is lethal. . . What Britain needs is fewer gay terrorists. . . '' (The Sun, 12/21/1986). But the Government showed no way of feeling or thinking about this issue. However, many politicians approved of the attitude of the newspapers and consequently expressed their hatred of homosexuality.

Geoffrey Dickens, MP, suggested that homosexuality should be made illegal (Garfield, in The Independent on Sunday, 13/11/1994); Sir Alfred Shermann wrote to The Times that AIDS was a problem of 'undesirable minorities. . . mainly sodomites and drug abusers, together with numbers of women who voluntarily associate with this sexual underworld' (Garfield, ibid.).

Clause 28 forbids local government authorities from spending money on any activity which gives favourable treatment to homosexuals. The then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, strongly supported Clause 28 , so a conclusive step was taken in November 1986 when the first meeting of the Whitelaw Committee was held (Garfield, 1994). On November 21, 1986 the AIDS issue was discussed at length in Parliament and, finally, the Government launched its campaign against AIDS. It was founded on leaflets, posters and wide media coverage targeted on heterosexual community. The general feelings and opinions concerning health education became highly politicised at the time. According to Beharell (1994:215), in November 1989, Lord Kilbracken affirmed in the All Parliamentary Group on AIDS that only one proven case of AIDS was considered as due to heterosexual transmission. The media promptly pointed out the faults of the Government's campaign: 'the Government's advertising campaign-mainly beamed at heterosexuals indulging in normal sex- is focused on the wrong group' (The Daily Mail, 17/11/1989); The Sun (17/11/1989) published the following:

‘. . . At last the truth can be told. The killer disease AIDS can only be caught by homosexuals, bisexuals, junkies or anyone who has received a tainted blood transfusion. Forget the television adverts, forget the poster campaign, forget the endless boring TV documentaries and forget the idea that ordinary heterosexual people can contract AIDS. They can’t. . . The risk of contracting AIDS if toy are a heterosexual is statistically invisible. In other words impossible. So now we know – anything else is just homosexual propaganda’. And the ‘show’ could go on.

The final judgement reached after sound consideration is that by the end of the 1980s AIDS turned from a medical issue into a political one; it became an instrument of diving society into ‘us’ and ‘them’ (i. e. the ‘normal’, heterosexual people vs. the ‘promiscuous’ homosexuals), into ‘innocent victims’ and ‘guilty victims’; it became a highly controversial issue which has polarized the country. Sexuality- its principles of right and wrong behaviour, now associated with AIDS- became a central problem in British politics and very soon morality was added to it. In the 1970s people like Mary Whitehouse (she is known for protesting about television programmes, magazines, and plays that have a lot of sex, bad language, violence) or clergymen were the defenders of morality; in the 1980s, morality was supported by politicians, who believed that the weakening of traditional values, such as the family, brought about all the moral ills and misery (Ferris, 1993;295). A return to ‘traditional morality’ was reconsidered; the idea that AIDS was a heterosexual disease was considered as untrue and misleading, meant only to turn off attention from those responsible for it, the homosexuals. Despite of the great efforts made by authorities and their arguments over meanings, morality, sexual behaviour, politically correct language, etc. , AIDS remained, to a high degree, in the 1990s a disease associated with homosexuality and promiscuity; it divided society and caused the gay world to become unimportant and powerless (many taboos associated with homosexuality are very strong today and it will take years until gay people will enjoy legal support and moral approval). Undoubtedly, Aids ‘ throws a bright searchlight into the complexities, contradictions, divisions and needs of the contemporary world. It poses different questions about personal behaviour and social policy. It dramatises the debate about moral and ethical values that had rumbled on since at least the 1960s’ (Weeks, 1989:303).

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LANGUAGE, POLITICS AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

ECATERINA POPA♦

ABSTRACT. This article pinpoints the basic issues linked to a verbal and social behaviour that has been around for about twenty years: **to be politically corect.** Having in view that the trend which started in the United States has spread beyond its boundaries, the paper looks its the Orwellian view on language cleansing, and at the postmodernist impact of political correctness as a vehicle of tolerance, linguistic and mental inoffensiveness.

I. ISSUES:

1. What is Political Correctness?

An imposed or self-imposed, ideologically oriented verbal or non-verbal behaviour.

2. What does it aim at?
   - non-offensiveness in language
   - raising awareness in relation to certain issues in order to avoid offending women, black people, disabled people, etc.

3. Where and when did it start?
   - American university campuses
   - in the '80ies – feminist oriented

4. What linguistic features does it display and what linguistic theory lies at its basis?
   a) lexical level
   - adverbially premodified adjective phrase

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- noun-phrases: premodified
  0-modifier

b) Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (1940)

- change of behaviour is induced by changing the terms that relate to it.

5. What fields does it cover?

- minority groups, politics, social life, sciences, education, literary criticism

6. Is it used? Where? By whom?

- Yes; media; educated middle-class

7. Criticism:

- external sensor self-imposed censorship
- language cleanser
- reformatory and moralising.

II. COMMENT

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS – A NEW NEWSPEAK?

In 1949 Orwell wrote: "The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical thought – that is a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc – should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words"[1].

When we look at the above mentioned quotation it is impossible not to bring back to our minds the much-quoted samples of the wooden-language that seem to perfectly comply with the purpose of Newspeak. For what is the following fragment but an example of Newspeak? "Literatura, artele – care au cunoscut o puternic¾ dezvoltare în anii socialismului ¿i care, în cincinalul trecut, au dat noi opere de mare valoare, având un rol important în întreaga activitate cultural-educativ¾ – trebuie s¾ promoveze cu mai mult¾ îndr¾zneal¾ spiritul revolußionar în noile creaßii..." (20 November, 1984).

Further analysis of Orwell's theory in *1984* points to the fact that behind Newspeak there is a very strong ideological grain which is intended towards changing patterns of thought in an indirect way by making use of a certain language which is supposed to obscure reality. Perhaps *doublethink* is the most relevant word that describes what Newspeak meant to do to humans. "*Doublethink* lies at the very

[1] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Penguin Books, 1949, p. 241.

heart of Ingsoc, since the essential act of the Party is to use conscious deception while retaining the firmness of purpose that goes with complete honesty"[2].

The question whether Political Correctness is a New Newspeak may seem inappropriate, but if one looks at the development of Political Correctness in the last decade, the issue is still an issue and consequently debatable.

Started on the American University campus, as a result of the anger of the feminists towards manifestations of male chauvinism in social and everyday life, political correctness is present nowadays in language, mostly the language of media which attempts to be neutral, non-offensive and cooperative. It is interesting that as Newspeak, Political Correctness does not affect the structure of the language, but it introduces a number of words, and dictates a new type of discourse. As Orwell said, Newspeak was founded on the English language as we know it, though many Newspeak sentences, even when not containing newly-created words, would be barely intelligible to an English speaker of our own day. The Newspeak variety of the language is based mostly on a set of newly-created words, which had been deliberately constructed for political purposes. So such words as *doublethink*, *oldthink*, *bellyfeel*, *joycamp* and others were supposed on one hand to raise awareness regarding ideology, and on the other to beautify what actually was grim or disastrous (joycamp = forced-labour camp). The relationship between language and politics as it is manifest in Newspeak would ultimately aim at shaping a certain pattern of thought which is meant to bring about change in social and political behaviour.

"Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? ... Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller... The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect."[3]

The focus on words leads one to the study of the lexis and to the way they were coined. In Newspeak the newly-constructed vocabulary was made up in most cases by compound words. When working on the dictionary of Newspeak, Syme the lexicographer says: "When we have finished with it, people like you will have to learn it all over again... we are destroying words, and our chief job is inventing new words."[4] Apparently something similar is happening with politically correct words. For how many of the native English speakers will learn that the "janitor" is "the environmental hygienist", and a "deaf old man" is "aurally inconvenienced?" The newly-created words cover, first and foremost, ***a) gender distinction***, from acceptable chairpersons or partners to "heras" or "herstories". ***b)*** Secondly they cover ***minority groups***, as ethnic groups (African-Mexican, Mexican-American), ***disabled people***, who are "differently abled", "developmentally challenged", or "vocally challenged, ***c) social life*** (the poor are differently advantaged, and have substandard housing), ***d) family life*** as well as ***e) politics and culture***. The impact

[2] Idem, p. 250.
[3] Idem, p. 45.
[4] Idem, p. 44.

of Political Correctness goes back to Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and mostly justifies the first principle of their theory, namely that of linguistic determinism. By stating that language determines *the way we think*, and we will add, *what we think*, the present status of the language does not and perhaps cannot dismiss the existence of political correctness. The newest Random House dictionary is gender free and politically correct, in as much as it acknowledges *wait person* as a waiter or waitress, and a *firefighter* as a fireman, and *humankind* as mankind. If dictionaries guide us towards political correctness, when we come to the question "who uses it"? it is obvious that media representatives are most aware of political correctness. Any reference to black people, gays or lesbians, women jobs, disabled people are carefully veiled in terms that sometimes may become hilarious. The backlash against attempts to impose political correctness manifests itself in harsh criticism as in the statement made with reference to the new Random House dictionary: "the activity is calculated to protect the sensitivity of minority groups, even from objectionable phrases that bear little or no relationship to discrimination or racism" while on the other side of the coin are the comic strips or jokes that backbite on the reality hiding verbal devices or on incomprehensible words.

Still, going back to the linguistic theory that lies at the heart of *this Newspeak*, we have to think of the validity of Orwell's philosophy regarding the impact of the new language on the mental attitude of the people.

As changes in the society take a longer time to take place, political correctness might be seen as a vehicle to engineer social changes (mostly in the case of the feminist movement, but political correctness might also be a linguistic outcome of postmodern theories at least in matters of multiculturalism, diversity, and minority groups.

III. MINI DICTIONARY

Ethnic groups – Minority
Emergent group – minority group
Sun person – black
People with special needs – disabled

Feminism
Companion, partner – husband
wife
girl-friend
boy-friend
spinster's degree – master's degree
sex-care provider – prostitute
flight-attendant – stewardess

Non-offensiveness
alternative body image – an obese person
cerebrally challenged – stupid
charm free – boring
ethically disoriented – dishonest
incomplete success – failure
person of differing sobriety – alcoholic

Social life
culturally dispossessed – culturally deprived
policy guidelines – policy
procedural safeguards – red tape

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THE PRAGMATICS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION (I): TRANSLATING CULTURAL ENCODING USING PRAGMATIC DATA

ANCA LUMINIȚA GREERE♦

ABSTRACT. The paper distinguishes between two types of cultural encoding relevant for the translation context corresponding to the following translation difficulties: partial intercultural differences and total intercultural differences. These difficulties are defined and detailed while emphasis is laid on the importance of pragmatic concepts brought into the problem-solving process of a translator. It is suggested that the pragmatic effect of the utterance in the global communicative situation should be the starting point of an analysis rather than the linguistic elements composing a culturally encoded utterance.

Any translation theory will have to be concerned primarily with the difficulties that arise in the translation process. Translation difficulties should be analyzed from the point of view of the communicative intention. The translator[1] should

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[1] The **participants** of a translation context will be considered in this paper as being three: **speaker, translator, hearer.** The fact that there may be more hearers or speakers will be disregarded here for the sake of reducing the range of variability, as these terms will be used generic, viewed as speaking and hearing entities. The term **interlocutor** will mainly refer to the hearer and speaker ignoring the translator, although he is not to be ignored as part of the communicative process. The term **translator** will be used to refer to a third individual, who does not play an active part in the conversation. By not active it is meant that he does not convey his own experience, knowledge directly, although his contribution in liaising the meaning transferred between participants will exhibit his background knowledge and experience in a highly encoded form.

Basically situations of oral translation will be taken into consideration, where the participants have a face-to-face interaction. I have chosen not to use the term **interpreter** (Gile, 1995) as this has more or less to do with a professional translator in an organized simultaneous or consecutive translation environment. Translator seems more general and can be applied even in situations where no translation-training occurred in the education of the translator.

firstly guide his[2] attention towards the intention of the discourse rather than the actual words in order to be able to convey the appropriate meaning in the target language.

Whenever somebody utters a sentence, behind the actual words there might be the intention to generate a pragmatic effect. Translation involves more than just linguistic knowledge on the part of the translator, it also involves knowledge of situational, social and cultural usage. What is used when by whom and with what effect? Both a linguistic and pragmatic analysis is called for in all instances of translation. The need to translate generates this double-sided analysis.

Translation should thus be viewed as a bridge between linguistics and pragmatics. The translator has to cross this bridge an infinite number of times in the translation process, even if only to ask himself whether a pragmatic encoding took place and whether he should apply more than just linguistic knowledge in the final version he passes onto the hearer. There should be a permanent shift between the words and the intention. The words as lexical items entailing different meanings in different contexts should be appropriately weighed against the possible intentions until a conclusion is reached by the translator concerning the final version.

It must be noted that such a conclusion cannot be based simply on inferences made by the translator about the utterance. The translator, in the translation process is not in isolation, the hearer and the speaker have to be taken into account with their specific system of knowledge. The three form a unit. So that before inferring about the meaning and intention of an utterance, the translator has to make a number of assumptions regarding the knowledge he shares on the one hand with the hearer and on the other with the speaker and also the knowledge shared by the hearer and speaker disregarding the translator and his potential input to clear-up misunderstandings and fill knowledge gaps. Making such inference regarding the shared knowledge[3] of the interlocutors he is liaising for will enable him to come up with an appropriate solution that will not affect in the least the meaning of the

[2]The pronoun ‘he’ and its grammatical variants will be used throughout this study as generic terms incorporating both gender types. This should be viewed as a means to fluidize the argument not as a statement in terms of feminist theory.

[3] The concepts of '**shared knowledge'** and '**background knowledge'** will be used here with the following implications. The concept **'background knowledge'** will be used in this paper to refer to the knowledge that the participants in communication acquired prior to their interaction on the basis of their linguistic and non-linguistic experience. This concept will include pragmatic, social and cultural data stored in the memory of the participants. This should not be confused with the concept of '**shared knowledge',** also termed 'common ground' (Clark,1996), that refers to the knowledge - also acquired prior to the conversation- that the participants have in common, that enables them to communicate, to make similar inferences regarding specific subjects. The term 'background knowledge' involves the individual and his ability to interact with a potential interlocutor in a potential situation, while the term ' shared knowledge' involves the individual and his ability to interact with a given individual in a given situation. 'Background knowledge' is a wider term and it includes 'shared knowledge'.

utterance as part of a communicative intention. The translator must always seek to overcome the knowledge gaps in situations with a high degree of difficulty given by the fact that the message contains cultural encoding that is relevant to the communication process.

Difficulties in translation have a wide range of sources. We can identify problems of different sources and different types, beginning with lexical items -in isolation and in the context of utterance-, grammatical phenomena, pragmatic intentions, social conventions and cultural incompatibilities. Each of these needs proper identification and a system of problem-solving focused on the communicative needs. The limits of this paper do not permit a detailed description of all the difficulties in translation as the main aim is to discuss and analyze the problems regarding cultural matters in translation, in particular and in conversation, in general.

This paper will not be looking at how translation creates cultural identity, nor will it be interested in the role of the translator and ethics in promoting a culture. The aim of the paper is to see how the encoding of cultural issues and perceptions in utterances that need translating is dealt with.

Culture will be referred to in this paper as the sum total ways of living and thinking built up by a community or nation speaking one language[4]. It is the whole reality of that community, with its beliefs, customs, institutionalized systems, concepts, ways of perceiving the reality around them. **Cultural knowledge** refers to knowledge regarding these aspects that make up the reality of the community/nation. The culture of a community is reflected in the encoding in the language spoken. Linguistic aspects sometimes lack cultural connotations, but at times these are vital for the proper understanding of an utterance.

Cultural incompatibilities differ greatly in intensity: from aspects that appear just slightly changed in the cultures of those that are participants in a conversation to aspects that refer to totally different realities and thus are practically untranslatable. In such situations the translator may be faced with the fact that the target culture does not include linguistic means to describe the specific aspect and it also lacks appropriate referencing. Because of these incompatibilities, gaps appear between the source language and the target language.

These gaps may be greatly reduced by calling onto the background knowledge of the translator involving the two cultures that are in interaction. We may presume that in most cases either the target language or the source language is the translator's matrix language. As a result the background knowledge regarding one culture involved in the interaction might be considered as posing no problems. Thus knowledge regarding one culture is -hopefully- extensive and insight into the other compulsory.

[4] The fact that some nations include ethnic-groups speaking different languages is not the issue here. For argument's sake we will consider that a language corresponds to one culture, that the reality of one culture is encoded in one language.

The paper will take a closer look at encounters that are solved correctly by interpreting the intercultural dimension emphasizing the importance of decoding cultural data embedded in utterances. In a situation of translation we can presuppose that not only do the interlocutors speak different languages but that they are of different cultural backgrounds possessing or not some knowledge about the other's culture. In most translation situations we may expect utterances to have been enriched with cultural encoding. It is generally expected of the translator to be extremely knowledgeable in both languages and cultures so that he may assign the correct meaning and intention to specific utterances- that may or may not have culturally encoded data- in order for him to come up with an appropriate variant in the target language, a variant that will generate the effect expected by the initial utterance. If the translator is not adequately equipped to tackle these situations his translation may give rise to misunderstandings.

Not all translation interactions require cultural knowledge but if they do, the interlocutors mainly rely on the translator to convey such information. The translator has to deal with two different cultures that have to interact and reach an agreement in the communication process. He is the one liaising this interaction so as to reach a benefic outcome for both parties to the communication. This is the reason why dealing with culturally determined utterances is extremely tricky as the translator must be able to identify the cultural nuance embedded in an utterance, he must be able to identify the intention with which the cultural data was used and by analyzing this intention convey the message adapting it to a new culture, that of the target language. He may choose to do so in a variety of forms: from supplying an equivalent to actually explaining the reality that the speaker makes reference to according to the type of difficulty he encounters. The highest degree of difficulty in cases of utterances containing cultural data is when the encoding refers to a unique reality in the source culture, one that has no correspondent in the target culture.

The process of adapting an utterance to the target culture is a very complex one as it has to take into account the intention of the speaker and the possible reaction of the hearer based on their cultural knowledge. This can be done only if the translator has properly identified the cultural reference and translates according to the intention of the speaker to convey a specific message, not merely by transposing[5] the information contained in the utterance. By transposing the information - adapting

[5] The term **to translate** will be used to refer to that process where the utterance will be treated as a whole in trying to convey its meaning in the target language (hereafter TL) and the equivalent utterance in the target language may or may not keep the initial words as semantic units. The equivalent utterance will be of such nature that the hearer will be able to infer from the variant that is presented to him what was behind the words of the initial utterance, what intention did the speaker have and what effect was expected. The term **to transpose** will be used here to refer to the process where in a translation context, the translator treats words individually and simply adapts them phonetically and grammatically, sometimes even lexically using the denotation into the target language. Trying to equate words not the whole utterance that may have pragmatic encoding can prove to be a mistake as in such cases the translator cuts off a part of the meaning or presents the hearer with an utterance that he may fully misinterpret in context as it may have lost all meaning.

just the form of the words to the TL, etc.- he may make terrible blunders: possibly insulting the hearer, as the hearer's cultural values may differ from those of his interlocutor's, or the translator may find himself unintentionally misleading the hearer as he himself is not aware of the differences between the two cultures and of the result a mere transposition of the information may bring about. Some situations provide clues as to the fact that a transposition will not suffice, others do not. The translator, who does not have sufficient cultural knowledge, may risk not acknowledging the fact that a cultural decoding is required. Situations providing clues may be very difficult to deal with but the fact that they enable the identification of the problem is a step in the right direction. Situations that do not provide clues, may at times be easier to solve if properly acknowledged, but if not, they may lead to misunderstandings due to the possibility on the part of the translator to transpose. Such situations may arise from the degree of difference between cultures.

Two distinct cultures may be in some ways similar and in other ways different. The degree of differenciality is to be analyzed concerning the values of the two cultures, the way in which they interpret and react to the surrounding reality, what stereotypes they have developed, both linguistically - regarding specific expressions that are bound to specific contexts- and behavioristically - concerning how specific reactions are viewed and what behavior constraints exist.

Considering the above-mentioned aspects we can distinguish differences regarding designators and their referents, i.e. the encoding of specific cultural realities into the language system and the reality the encoding refers to. So we may say that either the words are different[6] or the reality they express is different. The reality of one culture may differ to such extent from that of the other culture that no correspondent may be found in the other culture.

In cases of words designating culture-specific realities that exist only in the source culture no correspondent being available in the target language the translator's task is quite difficult. But there is no way he may overlook such a cultural encoding, and take it to be just another encoding, that does not require specific cultural data in order for it to be decoded as this is the type of situation that we have referred to as providing a clue. As no correspondent exists the translator's attention will be automatically drawn to this fact and he will be forced to acknowledge the difficulty. He has to come up with an appropriate solution to render the meaning of such an utterance and just transposing words of the utterance will prove to be of no help.

Similarly, if the words used to designate a type of reality existing in both cultures are totally different in form, and no formal correspondent can be found in that language, then there is no fear of misleading the hearer as the translator either

[6]When speaking of lexical items being different in different language, we are distinguishing between a difference in form and/or a semantic difference. We will refer to lexical items as being similar in form disregarding the phonetic and spelling adjustments which are to be expected when a word is borrowed from one language into the other or from a common language.

knows the correspondent or he doesn't, there is no way he will come up with an erroneous variant due to transposition.

But if both languages contain words that are similar in form but refer to totally different or partially different realities then the chance of mistake will increase. In the situations described above there was no possibility of transposition as no equivalent in form existed, but in this case where transposition is possible, the translator who is not aware of the different realities these words or concepts refer to, may take it for granted that he can use the formal equivalent. In such situations nothing forces him to analyze the utterance further as he has at hand a very convenient solution: transposition. That is why this situation is more difficult than the others as the problems start with the identification, while in the others the identification is not a problem but finding an equivalent is.

Partial Intercultural Differences

Situations where the translator has to deal with partial differences regarding either the linguistic system or the reality encoded in this system are very difficult to deal with due to the extensive knowledge of the two cultures that is required of the translator in order to solve such situations appropriately.

Partially different realities encoded partially differently pose more problems than realities that are totally different because they allow the translator to make wrong inferences about the source utterance. The translator who does not know the subtle difference between the realities may assume that no difference actually occurs and may transpose the information as given without noting the difference, without equating the realities, without attracting attention to the shift in meaning that takes place when the two cultures interact, when the information is taken out of its original context and placed in the target culture. By simply transposing the information literally in the other language, depriving it of the culture of reference - the culture it originates from - the information will lose its reference and thus the meaning will be wrongly inferred by the hearer who will accommodate the utterance according to his culture, according to the knowledge his culture provides on the specific subject.

The situation in which translation is involved is more interesting in this respect as once a translation having been made, the cultural reference the language of utterance provides will have been lost. The language of utterance is a clue for the interlocutor to know what cultural reference, what knowledge to apply in decoding the message. Once a translator receives this clue and gives the hearer a version in another language, for the hearer this clue will not exist anymore, so that he will regard as culture of reference that culture of the language of translation. If the translator does not adapt the message so that the cultural implication will be maintained in the culture of translation, then a shift will occur in the interpretation.

Consider the following utterance in Romanian: *Sunt asistent la Facultatea de Litere a Universitatii Babes-Bolyai.* If in the English translation rendering this

utterance the Romanian word *asistent* is maintained, then the message will suffer a shift in meaning in the way the hearer will interpret this utterance. The translation: *I am an assistant at the Faculty of Letters, Babes-Bolyai University* can be misleading for a hearer who is especially interested in the speaker's work experience. An *assistant* in English will be take for a shortened form of *teaching assistant* which is *"a faculty member in a college or university ranking below an instructor"* (Random House Webster Dictionary), it is actually the lowest possible academic rank which is not the case for *asistent* in Romanian. The Romanian word corresponds to the English *instructor*. So if *assistant* is used in the translation instead of *instructor*, the speaker will be considered by the hearer to have less professional experience and competence than is actually the case. Such an interpretation may be damaging for the Romanian speaker.

In this example the Romanian *asistent* and the English *assistant* form a pair which is often referred to in contrastive linguistics as false friends i.e. words that have similar forms in two languages but have totally different or only partially different meanings. Using them in transposition will lead to semantic mistakes as the meaning will change when the source term enters the target language. The difference in this example is to be extracted from the different cultural realities encoded in the source, respectively the target language. We notice here a partial difference as both terms refer to an academic rank except each refers to a different rank not one and the same, so the words are apparently interchangeable, can apparently be transposed as they fit the same cultural contexts. Unless the translator is aware of the difference, there is no other way he will be made attentive to the fact that transposition in this case cannot function as it is misguided. False friends are often misleading for a translator, whether they have cultural encoding attached or not, whether they fit the same context or not.

The lexical items that build up the pair English *vacancy*-Romanian *vacanta* cannot be said to have cultural connotations, as the difference does not come from the fact that the cultural realities differ, fact which lead to the formation of false friends, but they are simply similar words that are attributed different meanings in the two languages, meanings that do not even have a compatible context of usage. Of course it is easier for a hearer to spot the mistake if the contexts of usage are not the same, if the meaning totally differs as is with *vacancy-vacanta* contrary to *assistant-asistent.* In such cases even the translator will probably notice that something does not function in the communication process if transposition is adopted as translation method.

Transposition is adopted in cases where it does not function mainly because the translator fails to identify this aspect. Identification, as mentioned above, is extremely difficult especially if the concepts accept usage in the same context, without providing a clue as to the difference they exhibit.

Another example of partial difference in meaning involving lexical items that are similar in form and may be subject to false transposition in the process of

translation pertains to the translation of grades from French into Romanian or vice versa. The grading system in France ranges from 1 to 20, 1 being the lowest grade possible and 20 the highest. 10 is the grade given to barely pass a subject. In the translation of the French utterance *Le premier semestre, j'ai recu que des notes de 10* (in English word-for-word *In the first semester I received 10s*), into Romanian by maintaining the 10, the assessment of the student will be highly erroneous. In French this utterance intends to show that he was a poor student, while maintaining the 10 in Romanian will make him an exceptional student, as ten is the highest possible grade in the Romanian grading system. For the initial French utterance the reference system for the interpretation of the meaning is given by the language used which will provide a clue as to the context of origin. The translator will have to perceive this utterance as revealing a French reality and will have to interpret it according to his knowledge about the French academic system. If he fails to do so he will completely have destroyed the meaning. So a possible translation will be 5, which is the passing grade in Romania, instead of 10, in order to maintain the initial meaning.

As this example proves translation does not necessarily refer to words as lexical units but to any type of item that may form a semantic unit. The example above may be further exploited. Take for example *When I was in France I got a 1 at one point.* In this example the utterance is made in English but the reference system for decoding is embedded in the utterance in the form of *When I was in France...* By placing the action in France the interlocutor will know that in order to decode the utterance he will have to filter this utterance through his background knowledge on French academic system and use that specific knowledge to derive the meaning i.e. the speaker knew next to nothing at an examination. If this English utterance is translated into Romanian by maintaining the 1, the inference the Romanian hearer will make is that the speaker was caught cribbing, as 1 in given in Romania only in instances of cribbing. 2 would be the least one would get for lack of knowledge, but still this would not appear in a transcript, only 4 appears to exemplify the fact that the student failed the exam.

These examples go to show that a partial difference in reality is highly risky to be dealt with in the manner of transposing one reality into the other literally without equating it, without adapting it to the target culture. Concepts must be correctly equated for the meaning to come across. The difficulty in conveying the meaning of a concept referring to a reality that is to be found partially different in the other culture is that they can be mistaken to be identical, this reality can be easily misinterpreted as it seemingly has a cultural equivalent. The fact that 10 exists in both grading systems can lead to wrongly attributing sense to this semantic unit through the inferences that the reality may correspond in the two cultures. The fact that they exist in both cultures provides the translator with an alternative translation, that cannot at first sight be doubted.

These examples are to be viewed as a partial difference because we may identify some similarities between the two cultures: both grading systems are on

numbers, both grading systems start from 1 and go up to 20 (French), respectively 10 (Romanian) showing increase in knowledge. In the first case 10 has completely different meanings attached to it. In the second 1 proves to be a shade in meaning not a different meaning as in both cultures 1 is the lowest possible grade, but Romanian attaches a cultural-specific connotation to this meaning: cribbing.

Another example is translating the concept *the greens* from English into Romanian. This semantic unit is formed from the word *green,* to which the grammatical category of number has been added. If by translating into Romanian, the translator transposes the elements that built up this semantic unit, he will come up with the Romanian equivalent of *green,* which is *verde* and will add to it the plural form. He may consider that this adaptation will suffice to convey the initial message from English into Romanian. But this adaptation does nothing else but maintain the elements of the initial lexical item but it devoided it of the semantic connotation, the meaning of the unit formed by those elements has been lost in the adaptation. So though the elements have been maintained in the translation the connotation is gone and with the change from one language to another the reference system given by the English language has also been lost. By using Romanian the reference system will be interpreted by the hearer to be a Romanian one. The hearer will make inferences according to his cultural background, his knowledge of Romanian. He will not stop to think that the initial message was in English and that he might apply knowledge from his cultural background involving the English culture. He expects the translator to act so and analyze the initial utterance with the English cultural connotation and to pass over a variant for which no further confrontation between cultures is required from the hearer. The hearer expects the translator to have adapted the utterance to the hearer's cultural background, so that the hearer may be able to decode the message with the knowledge he possesses.

If the Romanian *verzii* is used instead of *ecologistii* for the English term *the greens*, we are dealing with a mistake in translation due to transposition by devoiding the context of cultural implication. In Romanian the term *verzii* refers to a political group the so-called *legionari* having nothing to do with environmental problems. So a context containing the word *verzii* will be interpreted by a Romanian by placing it against the Romanian background to mean *legionari,* which is completely wrong, and throws the hearer way off track as regarding the content of the message. The fact that a misinterpretation is possible without the hearer noticing that another interpretation might be appropriate, without the hearer questioning the translator as to the validity of his translation is the fact that both terms may be used in similar contexts referring to similar - to some extent- realities i.e. historical / political movements. Again we are dealing with similar words (see above how the adaptation took place) that entail partially different interpretations. The partial aspect is to be identified in the binding nature of the two realities. We cannot see them as being totally different realities as they have in common the fact that they are historical/political groups fighting for some cause, etc. They are different but still

have something similar. This is why they fit in the same contexts and one can be mistaken for the other.

Notice how the following text taken from the booklet entitled *European Federation of Green Parties : Guiding Principles* fosters misinterpretation:

"*Over the past decade, many issues championed by Greens have entered everyday vocabulary of citizens, the media and political parties throughout Europe. Greens are now able to influence decision-making in many national parliaments as well as regional and local councils. This calls for new level of co-ordination of goals, solutions and approaches among Greens of different parts of the continent and, in particular, between the Green traditions of western and eastern Europe."* (1997:1)

Translation 1:
In decursul ultimului deceniu multe din problemele ridicate de ecologisti/miscarea ecologista au intrat in vocabularul cotidian al cetatenilor, al mass-mediei si al partidelor politice in toata Europa. Ecologistii sunt capabili sa influenteze luarea de decizii in multe parlamente nationale, precum si in consilii locale si regionale. Acest lucru impune un nou nivel de coordonare a scopurilor, solutiilor si modurilor de abordare a problemelor de catre ecologistii din diferite parti ale continentului si, mai ales, intre traditiile miscarii din Europa de Vest si cea de Est.

Translation 2:
In decursul ultimului deceniu multe din problemele ridicate de verzi au intrat in vocabularul cotidian al cetatenilor, al mass-mediei si al partidelor politice in toata Europa. Verzii sunt capabili sa influenteze luarea de decizii in multe parlamente nationale, precum si in consilii locale si regionale. Acest lucru impune un nou nivel de coordonare a scopurilor, solutiilor si modurilor de abordare a problemelor de catre verzii din diferite parti ale continentului si, mai ales, intre traditiile miscarii din Europa de Vest si cea de Est.

Translation 3:
In decursul ultimului deceniu multe din problemele ridicate de legionari/miscarea legionara au intrat in vocabularul cotidian al cetatenilor, al mass-mediei si al partidelor politice in toata Europa. Legionarii sunt capabili sa influenteze luarea de decizii in multe parlamente nationale, precum si in consilii locale si regionale. Acest lucru impune un nou nivel de coordonare a scopurilor, solutiilor si modurilor de abordare a problemelor de catre legionari din diferite parti ale continentului si, mai ales, intre traditiile miscarii din Europa de Vest si cea de Est.

The difference between the translations is the way in which the word *Greens* has been translated. As argued above the first translation is the appropriate one as it transfers the message revealing the intended meaning of the word *greens* in the English text. The second translation is not correct but it can be done by a translator

who is not fully aware of the cultural implications of the word *greens* in contrast with that of *verzii* interpreted against an English, respectively a Romanian context of culture. The third translation where the English *greens* has been reproduced with the Romanian 'equivalent' *legionarii* is totally wrong. It springs from lack of knowledge regarding the source culture and it fully ignores the source culture and its implications to convey a particular meaning. One might come up with this third variant by transposing the English word into Romanian and then by further exploiting the transposition and attributing it the cultural connotation of the target culture as if the initial utterance containing this word has made use of cultural references from the target culture rather then the source culture. If one assumes that the word was used for a Romanian to be able to decode it and that it was intended that a Romanian background be used for interpretation then the third translation could come into existence. Otherwise it is highly improbable for a translator to come up with the third variant, because English does not have the connotation of *legionari* embedded in it, it only has that of *ecologisti.*

Actually translation no.1 and no.2 are possible translations for the above-given excerpt, translation no.3 can be viewed more like an interpretation by the hearer of translation no.2 rather than a variant given by the translator. The Romanian hearer who is presented with the text of translation no.2 may make the inference that *verzii* refers to *legionari* - the only connotation available in Romanian for the word *verzii*- mainly due to the fact that no deictical elements of time are present in the text. Due to this lack of temporal determination the hearer will find no reason to question his interpretation of the text of the translation. He will prove satisfied with his interpretation as it is the only one that he can come up with in a Romanian background. If some reference of time were made then by being able to place the situation on a historical scale in time the hearer might become suspicious of his interpretation of the translation and of the translation itself. The source text referring to environmentalists as *greens* could have the following time deixis mentioned: *Over the past decade (1987-1997), ...* By adding the years that make up the past decade, it becomes obvious to the hearer that *legionarii* is an invalid interpretation, that the text cannot function with this word as subject, *legionarii* being according to *Dictionarul Explicativ al Limbii Romane*[7], second definition *:*

> *membru al unei organizatii teroriste de tip fascist din Romania interbelica*
> (in English *member of a Romanian interwar fascist-type terrorist organisation*)
> (1975:494)

[7]Romanian Explanatory Dictionary.

Important about this definition is the factor revealing the historical time of this organisation: between the two World Wars, fact which proves to be incompatible to the time limits specified in the text for what represents the past decade: 1987-1997.

A hearer with a Romanian cultural background will notice immediately that the interpretation will not compile with the data in the text. He cannot be mislead by the word *verzii* and will ask for an explanation, challenging the translator, who has used the word *verzii* without knowing what cultural encoding he will trigger. Such a situation occurs when and if a translator is not fully equipped with cultural data regarding the two cultures and does not realize that transposition of a concept is not sufficient for the meaning to come across and that not only is it not sufficient but that it may give rise to a totally different understanding of the source text, understanding derived from the fact that a specific concept has been de-culturalized and re-culturalized in the target culture, a reculturization that leads to misunderstanding and total incompatibility with the initial concept. The two concepts, the initial one and the one obtained through transposition are far from being equivalent. They are different, but have something in common so that they may be used in the same contextual environment without giving rise to suspicion by the hearer regarding the nature of the translation. Both concepts in the example above make sense in the text, except that the sense given by the interpretation of the word *greens* as *legionarii* is not the correct one as it does not correspond with the initial text, the meaning being thus changed, placing the hearer in a completely different time-space reality by the subject that has been replaced through transposition.

Partially different lexical items have the same or similar form in both languages but they do not have the same meaning, they may be used in the same context but not with the same function. Form and function may differ greatly from one language to another from one culture to another. Lexical items may have undergone a total shift in meaning or just a partial one, they cannot be used as equivalents by simply transposing them into the target language as their meanings in the two languages have acquired a cultural connotation. The words do not correspond in meaning if weighed against the cultural background and the cultural realities encoded in the two languages, even if the realities are more or less similar. The encodings regarding similar realities, even if apparently similar in form, may have totally different functions. If the translator does not spot the difference in meaning and transposes the items into the target language, this will lead to misunderstanding, misinterpreting of the utterance and the meaning that should be assigned to it. The hearer will interpret the lexical items according to his system of reference regarding that item, as he will view it as an identical item both in form and meaning and will wrongly equate the word of one language with that of the other. Such differences are extremely delicate and pose problems for the translator and the hearer. The translator who translates badly deculturalizing, and the hearer who assumes the message badly, reculturalizing, adapting the function of the item he is

presented with -the lexical/semantical item considered by the translator as the equivalent of the source item- to his culture.

Total Intercultural Differences

Total differences between cultures are much easier to be dealt with as they are easily identified. There is no seemingly equivalent alternative in such cases. The translator does not have as an alternative to a correct translation which supplies the cultural implication also a mere transposition that may deculturalize i.e. devoid the utterance of the cultural implications that accompanied it. Total differences are spotted immediately as no adaptation of the source text will lead to a variant of target text. The translator either knows how to convey the concept in the source text or he does not. He may choose to convey the meaning of the message by using an equivalent lexical item -if one is available in the target language-, one that is different in form than the source item or he may want to explain the reality behind the source utterance, reality that has no equivalent in the target culture. The difficulty lies in the possibility of finding an appropriate alternative not in the fact that total differences cannot be identified. Contrary to partial differences which are not that easy to be identified but where an alternative is made available through transposition. Compared to partial differences that render some degree of similarity either regarding the form of the lexical item or the function i.e. the context where it can appear, total differences express no similarity whatsoever, regarding the form or content. Total differences do not provide situations where the hearer might be mislead, as a mere transposition will prove to make no sense whatsoever in the target culture. The hearer cannot adapt an utterance to his culture, cannot reculturalize it, because if no similarity exists there also exists no cultural environment for the source concept.

Total differences may be identified in the following situations: (1) where the same reality is conveyed in the two cultures in totally different linguistic forms and (2) cultural incompatibility proper, meaning that one culture exhibits a specific reality particular to that culture only, which has been encoded in a linguistic form in the language of that culture and for which no possible alternative can be found in the target language.

The first type of situation is not that difficult to be dealt with as the realities being similar and only the encoding different is a great help to the translator who knows that once having found the equivalent lexical item the hearer will know what reality to associate with the target word, he does not have to explain or invent a new reality, one with which the hearer is not familiarized, he just has to identify the correspondent encoding for the common realities.

The second situation is the most difficult as not only does the target lexical item not exist but the reality expressed by the source utterance has no correspondent in the world of the target language. So even an explanation may not make the hearer understand the utterance as he has no reference of interpretation. The translator's

task is truly difficult in such cases as he has to analyze the intention of the utterance containing such cultural-specific elements and equate it as best he can, sometimes even by leaving out the culture-specific element as not to complicate the situation, if he thinks he can convey the intention without making reference to that element.

If we come back to the example of the grading system and take as cultural realities the American culture and the Romanian one, we will witness a total difference as defined above. The American grading system uses % which are afterwards equated in letters (A-highest, F-fail) for the transcript or report card. No similarity can be asserted between these two systems. The same holds good for the German system where grades are viewed as qualifiers: *sehr gut, gut, befriedigend, ausreichend, mangelhaft, ungenügend* and if numbers are used 1 corresponds to *sehr gut* going to 6 *ungenügend.* In a translation into Romanian involving either letters in the source utterance or qualifiers, no transposition is possible. A transposition would give no meaning into Romanian, there would be no possibility of interpretation, no system of reference against which the utterance could be analyzed: e.g. *I received an A on the math test.* A translation into Romanian that would read: *La testul la matematica am obtinut A/nota A* would not convey any message, no possibility of misleading the hearer arises in this case as no appropriate decoding device exists in Romanian that would allow the hearer to falsely reculturalize, to interpret the message against a Romanian background. So unless the translator is familiarized with both cultures and knows what A stands for in the United States, he will not be able to provide the hearer with an appropriate translation, that requires in this case an adaptation of the two systems, an equating process, equating between two similar realities i.e. *grading systems* encoded totally differently, possessing no similarity whatsoever in the encoding method, one being with letters the other with numbers. The fact that the encodings totally differ will help the translator in identifying the problem and realising that he has to make use of cultural data in order to successfully accomplish the translation. This total difference attracts his attention as he is made aware of the difference and does not permit a mistake as the partial difference fostered.

Another such example is: *There's been an accident. Call 911!* In this case if somebody translates: *A avut loc un accident. Suna la / formeaza 911* the outcome of dialling 911 in Romania would not help at all, no for that matter in any country where 911 is not the number for emergencies. So that a translation of the sort *Cheama o ambulanta!* would be more appropriate, rendering the intention of the source message.

If the example *I received an A on the math test* becomes *I received an A on my mid-term* we encounter the second type of difficulty regarding total differences between cultures that interact in the process of conversation mediated by a translator. In Romania, one does not usually take tests of great importance in the middle of the semester, but at the end in what would be called *teza.* So the reality convey by the lexical item *mid-term* does not exist in the Romanian culture, it does not have a

correspondent, so that an explanation is necessary in order to clear up the source utterance in a possible translation.

If we exploit this example further and transform it into *I aced my mid-term* we will be faced not only with cultural incompatibility of the first and second type but also with a linguistic incompatibility. There is no verbal form in Romanian that has the meaning of *to ace = to receive an A on a test* (Random House Webster's Dictionary) so a further transformation would be required, a transformation using the definition. 'To ace', as verb will have to be replaced with 'to receive an A', 'A' will have to be replaced with its cultural correspondent in Romanian 10, and for mid-term a proper explanation should be found as no appropriate terminology exists to represent the American reality as it is not equivalent with the Romanian educational system.

Other instances that provide proof for what is referred to in this paper as cultural incompatibility proper are when in speech cultural-specific elements are mentioned, elements that have to do with the customs of a people, with the traditions and with their way of life. Imagine a situation in Bahamas where a Romanian who does not speak English meets an Englishman - who was never in Romania, who has no knowledge of the Romanian culture- and after they get to know each other with the help of a translator the Romanian says to the Englishman: *Te invit in Romania. Daca vii te voi servi cu sarmale si tuica*. Now the question arises how should the translator go about rendering the lexical items of *sarmale* and *tuica.* If he uses the exact words i.e. *I invite you to Romania. If you come I will serve you sarmale and tuica*, as there is no English equivalent to this reality, the Englishman will surely not understand anything from the message, he will fail to comprehend both the sense and the intention of the Romanian who utters this invitation as he lacks reference regarding these notions. He may try to find an equivalent in the target culture, one that does not express the same reality but may provide a system of reference i.e. for *tuica, a sort of brandy,* for *sarmale* no such equivalent can be found. If he tries to come out of this situation by explaining i.e. ground meat in pickled cabbage leaves and a very strong alcohol beverage made out of plumbs, the Englishman might actually end up by being offended by such an offer, as he has no way of knowing that this is a traditional meal in Romania. Such an explanation might prove disgusting for the Englishmen and instead of conveying the message of hospitality, it may act as reverse. The explanation does not have to be so detailed: *If you come I will serve you traditional food and drink* but in this form it limits itself to being a simple offer not a token of extreme hospitality. Now if we look at this utterance from a pragmatic point of view we notice that the actual intention behind this utterance wanted to express that if the Englishman did come to Romania he would be treated to the best. So if the translator chooses to view these concepts not in a literal sense but more or less metaphorically then he may abandon the apparent need to find a lexical correspondent, or to explain the reality behind the concepts and go only with the intention of the utterance ignoring the means how it was expressed. *I invite you to Romania. If you come you will be treated like a king* or *If you come I will treat you*

to the very best. Even if the actual words were not used, this translation is appropriate as it fits the context of invitation and it conveys the intention of the speaker and also achieves its aim in flattering the hearer by showing deep friendship and respect.

As could be seen there are times when the translator may try in vain to come up with a corresponding solution to the difficulty that poses cultural incompatibility. Finding the equivalent may not always prove to be pragmatically appropriate, it may have a different outcome than the one intended, exactly due to the effort of the translator to be as explicit as possible in a context that does not require explicitness. Contrary, there are contexts that request explicitness. In the following exchange also mediated by a translator:

Englishman: *What is your traditional food and drink?*
Romanian: *Sarmale si tuica.*

Because in this context *sarmale* and *tuica* are used informatively not metaphorically, explicitness in explanation is needed for the Englishman to understand the answer to what he asked. He is seeking information and will be able to absorb it if he is provided with a system of reference, if he receives a translation that will somehow fill the gap between cultural realities and let him analyze the Romanian reality by interpreting it against the English reality he is familiar with. In such cases *The food is called sarmale and it is meat in cabbage leaves and the drink is tuica, a plum brandy* would be a good adaptation of the Romanian *sarmale si tuica* as it would answer the question according to its illocutionary force, that does not merely ask the Romanian for the words but requests an adaptation so that these words would be properly understood. The question has embedded in it the request for explanation not just information. The translator who spots this illocutionary force will provide as translation the one above. In this type of context *sarmale* and *tuica* cannot be translated as in the example of the invitation to Romania, as here they are used literally.

Now if we return to the invitation to Romania and suppose that the Englishman has been to Romania often and has knowledge regarding the cultural realities then *sarmale* and *tuica* in the utterance *Te invit in Romania. Daca vii te voi servi cu sarmale si tuica* can be left untranslated i.e. *I invite you to Romania. If you come I will serve you sarmale and tuica*, as the translator may make the inference that the hearer will know what cultural knowledge to apply for decoding. If the hearer responds *Thank you* it means that the inference of the translator regarding the possibility of decoding of the hearer was correctly made and that the hearer has perceived the intention of hospitality as such and responded to it, the utterance thus having achieved its aim.

The notion of cultural incompatibility does not include just sole concepts and utterances but it may also include reactive responses that are culturally

determined. Take for example an encounter between a Romanian and an Englishmen on Easter day[8]:

Romanian: *Hristos a-nviat! (*in English literally *Christ has risen!)*

The translator who has to convey this utterance will again be faced with a big problem: the fact that a corresponding utterance does not exist in English although the reality behind the utterance exists i.e. in both cultures Easter is celebrated and also the fact that a reactive response is required: *Adevarat ca-nviat! (*in English literally *True that he has!/ So he has!).* These two factors interact and make it difficult to find an appropriate way of conveying the utterance. If the translator translates with *Happy Easter* the Romanian will not have the expected reaction which is to hear *Adevarat ca-nviat*, though it is highly improbable that he awaits such a reaction from somebody that does not know anything about his culture. But then we have to wonder why he has used this highly restrictive formula. It may be to teach the Englishmen something from his culture. If this is indeed the intention, the translator that spots it should explain the whole context to the Englishman and teach him to say *Adevarat ca-nviat!* If still the intention was just to wish the Englishman *Happy Easter*, but the reaction is also subconsciously awaited then the way for a translator to come out of the situation neatly could be:

Romanian: *Hristos a-nviat!*
Translator to Englishman: *Happy Easter!*
Englishman: *The same to you.* or *Thank you!*
Translator to Romanian: *Adevarat ca-nviat!*

In this exchange both sequences that involve reactive responses have been completed, both in English and in Romanian, thus satisfying the linguistic and cultural needs of both participants. Such situations where also a reaction is expected is more complicated than where the use of the language suffices as more often than not the translator does not only adapt a concept to another culture but finds himself initiating the hearer into the source culture instead of supplying a variant that would enable the hearer to draw meaning out of the utterance by making use of his cultural background only.

Sum-up

In this paper we have attempted to demonstrate that the task of the translator in dealing with cultural issues embedded in the utterances that require translation is a very difficult one. Before actually providing a variant a translator must carefully

[8]For the sake of argument we will disregard the fact that usually Easter for a Romanian and an Englishman does not correspond.

analyze the information that is passed on to him, filter it through his linguistic and cultural knowledge, make inferences regarding the cultural knowledge of the interlocutors and their intention as to the conversation and only then attempt to transfer the information -both linguistic and pragmatic- into the target language. There are of course situations where the cultural encoding in an utterance is not relevant for an accurate communicative interaction. In such cases the translator may choose to omit this information for the sake of facilitating a better communication process by not loading the utterance with information that is secondary for the communication. But there are times when the appropriate interpretation of an utterance lies on the cultural encoding embedded in the utterance. For these situations the translator has to be equipped with decoding mechanisms to help him overcome the difficulties of conveying the source message in the target language.

A first step is acknowledging the need to be aware of the difficulties that might arise and to properly identify the type of difficulty presented by a communicative interaction. We have distinguished two types of difficulties filtered through pragmatic concepts: partial intercultural differences and total intercultural differences. It has been shown that in situations of partial difference the translator's task is extremely difficult, if he is not aware of the cultural implications a specific text holds. If partial differences present themselves between cultures he might mistake the aspect and consider them interchangeable, assuming that transposition will suffice. Partial differences can be highly misleading if dealt with incorrectly as it is easy for the hearer to view them in terms of the target culture assuming that if any difference did occur the translator had already filtered it and presented him with the culturally-adapted version. Total differences on the other hand are more easily acknowledged but dealing with them is highly dependent on the pragmatic effect they convey in specific communication instances. If the specific reality referred to is not known to the translator he might find himself at a loss.

To be able to grasp these situations the translator must remember to use a pragmatic filter. This will allow him greater freedom in finding solutions and choosing variants better adapted to the situation at hand, not restricting him to the linguistic constraints of the utterance itself. Ultimately, the translator may find common ground in dealing with these discrepancies despite their distinct nature i.e. the partial difference is not easily identifiable as being a translation difficulty and transposition is a frequent mistake; total differences on the other hand stand out due to their nature to clash with the target culture. In dealing with these differences a translator is advised to use methods based on pragmatic interpretation (as shown by the examples presented) of the communicative situations along with an analysis of linguistic data. The translator's intercultural and interlinguistic knowledge and experience should foster this interpretation so as to facilitate a solution that will convey the pragmatic effect as well. Neglecting the pragmatic effect can prove misleading and may result in a non-sense.

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ARNOLD'S WESKER'S (ALMOST) FORGOTTEN WORLD ON THE STAGE OR ALL THE STAGE IS A WORLD

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ABSTRACT. L'article constate que dans la Grande Bretagne après la deuxième guerre mondiale le théâtre connaît une période de renouvellement des formes de présentation théâtrale mais aussi de redécouverte des dramaturges classiques anglais et introduit le lecteur dans l'atmosphère d'un auteur dramatique souvent oublié par les directeurs des théâtres et des metteurs en scène d'aujourd'hui: Arnold Wesker. Wesker est l'auteur de quelques pièces avec lesquelles cette étude s'occupe et dans lesquelles l'univers sur la scène devient quelque chose d'inédit: une cuisine dans *The Kitchen* (*La Cuisine*) et l'armée dans *Chips with Everything* (*Pommes-Frites avec Tout*) où le microcosme intérieur est celui des personnalités qui, par la force des choses, vivent presque la même vie, qui se croisent, qui quelques fois communiquent mai qui souvent ne peuvent pas le faire et qui établissent ainsi sur la scène une micro-version du monde extérieur. La Trilogie de Wesker est considérée par beaucoup comme trop didactique et dépassée idéologiquement, car elle s'occupe de la vague de sympathie gauche et communiste qui a traversé la Grande Bretagne des années soixante et soixante-dix avant qu'elle se transforme en Utopie lorsque les troupes Soviétiques ont démontré en Hongrie que le communisme se maintient avec l'armée. En dépit des aspects moins réussis que ces pièces contiennent, l'auteur considère qu'elles devraient être redécouvertes par les gens de théâtre, puisqu'elles représentent de vraies réussites de Wesker et aussi des documentaires de la vie anglaise que la nouvelle génération devrait connaître telle quelle.

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When we discuss the post-war tradition in British theatre and modern English drama, the initial characteristics that are revealed are its extreme confusion and eclecticism together with an important burst of vitality. In parallel with a constant tendency of renewal, an interesting movement in the life of the theatres themselves asserted itself, namely the emergence of new institutions – the 'free' or 'independent' companies or theatres that tried to impose new canons, or do away with the old traditions and sterile experiments, as well as produce and stage new plays instead, which responded more directly to the public's demands. Such a company was *The Theatre Workshop* (founded in 1945), which – dissatisfied with commercial productions – revivified the English theatre by staging plays on artistic, social and political grounds. Another case in point is Friel's *Field Day*, whose aim was the promotion of original Irish creations, both in Ireland and England. This trend was however weak, but nonetheless important and the result was that it refreshed the air of orthodox dramatic forms and playhouses.

In spite of this new direction, certain old and acknowledged dramatic forms continued to appeal to the public and offer success to their authors – melodrama and farce, on the one hand and sentimental comedy and domestic intrigue on the other (Williams 1978: 532). This surviving mainstream also included domestic realism and romantic drama. The new realism took the form of protest against drama which was telling lies – as it was not about real people in real situations; they were all conventional, therefore, theatrical and unreal.

The British theatre today, though still being eclectic, encompasses a wide range of problems, and is often a direct result of a long line of development. We still find boulevard drama, light comedy and music hall, serious drama of ideas and experimental theatre together with revivals of classic authors and perennials in modern settings to satisfy the taste of the present-day theatre-goers.

In this often ill-assorted literary and dramatic world, **Arnold Wesker** is a singular figure quite forgotten today and often seen as too didactic a preacher. He is the unquestionable left-wing spokesman of the working world, the cinematic playwright who knew how to bring the army and the kitchen of a restaurant onto the stage. His dramatic legacy to the British theatre includes: *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1958) and *Roots* (1959) and *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* (1960) form the so-called Arnold Wesker Trilogy, *The Kitchen* (1959), *Chips with Everything* (1962), *Their Very Own and Golden City* (1960), *The Four Seasons* (1966), *The Friends* (1970), *Caritas* (1981), *Sheshine* (1988). It is this particular and ideologically outdated world of Wesker – often unfairly disregarded by stage planners and directors – on which we intend to shed some light and draw our modern readers' attention upon.

Arnold Wesker's aim as a playwright was, as he expressed himself in 1958, 'to teach' and thus to form a new audience for a popular theatre.

> I want to write my plays not only for the class of people who acknowledge plays to be a legitimate form of expression: but for those

> to whom the phrase 'form of expression' may mean nothing whatsoever. (*Let the Battle Commence*, p. 158)

His credo as a writer may be very clearly drawn from the statement above and the following one: *art was addressed to the people and was about people*.

> I want to write about people in a way that will somehow give them an insight to an aspect of life which they may not have had before, and further I want to impart to them some of the enthusiasm I have for life. (ibid.)

He is one of the writers who was personally very much involved in his own work and the subject matter of his plays is real and thoroughly lived life. Therefore, his stage is a slice of reality that he knew too well. He is not particularly interested in the form of the play but in its characters, the message of the drama, the way it reflected reality and conveyed a meaning to the audience. He belongs to that generation of writers who wanted to fight the Establishment. Together with Harold Pinter, John Osborne, Shelagh Delaney and Doris Lessing he aims at giving a blow to the society and its institutions, by presenting social realities in a way that was never done before and with a courage that was not frequently seen in a piece of literary creation.

Arnold Wesker represents the new wave of dramatists who brought new attitudes, unknown characters on the stage. To be able to achieve this, was tantamount to doing away with the boulevard drama and to writing about social and political issues turning the author sometimes into a kind of moral propagandist. His direct experience in real life together with his commitment to socialism had as a result a drama directly mirroring surrounding reality and turning the stage into a tribune where ideas were debated in an obvious aim to form concepts and beliefs and to educate the audience for whom the play was meant.

To attain this, reality was transposed onto the stage which becomes a world in itself with real living people, a microcosm governed by laws very similar to those in real life. The Shakespearean aphorism 'All the world is a stage' becomes in the case of Wesker 'All the stage is a world'.

Wesker's first play, *The Kitchen* (first performed in 1959) has two versions – the second and final one was staged in 1961. The elements that were added do not so much modify as they amplify the first version. The play presents the world of a kitchen with its dehumanising effect analogous to the effect of all mass-production industry. In fact there is even a discussion in the first act where the crushing work in a factory is juxtaposed:

> RAYMOND: Why you waste your time with dishes in this place? You can't get a job in a factory?

DIMITRI: A factory? You think I find happiness in a factory? What I make there? Uh? This little wire, you see it? This I would make or that ... what you call it?

PAUL: A knob.

DIMITRI: Knob. That perhaps I could put in. All day I would screw in knobs. I tell you, in a factory a man makes a little piece, till he becomes a little piece, you know what I mean? (*The Kitchen*, p. 19)

The whole atmosphere of the play is similar to that of an insane asylum; as everybody moves in and out we hear fragments of conversation, shouts, angry and impatient people and, above all, to underline the oppressiveness of the kitchen, there is the continuous noise and heat of the ovens.

We subscribe to Ribalow's remark that the play reads better than acts; it is more understandable to the readers than to the public as 'people on the stage are known better through the notes to the producer than through stage action.' (1965: 29) The professional notes to the producer that accompany the play are unusually comprehensive and could not have been written had Wesker not worked as a professional pastry-cook. The result of such first-hand experience was a play unique in its kind and not only because of these instructions, but because of the tempo of the play which increases with that of the action and the focus which shifts from one group of characters to another, a technique more cinematic than theatrical. Even the subject of the play is singular: the kitchen as microcosm of human life where different nationalities and mentalities meet in this close-circuit entity represented by the kitchen of the Restaurant Tivoli. The vision is deliberate, because in the introduction the author says:

> The world might have been a stage for Shakespeare, but to me it is a kitchen where people came and go and cannot stay long enough to understand each other, and friendships, love and enmities are forgotten as quickly as they are made. (*The Kitchen*, p. 5)

And in fact we have a mixture of representatives of different nations: the porters are Cypriots and Maltese, Kevin, the new cook, is Irish, Gaston is again a Cypriot by birth, Paul is a young Jew, Alfredo and Raymond are Italians, Hans and Peter are Germans and so on. This is not without importance because they do not only tease each other on their origin:

PAUL: (as if ordering a meal) [to Kevin] Two portions of boiled Irishman, please! With garnish!

but conflicts appear where nationality kindles inflamed spirits:

VIOLET: (very angry) [to Peter] You, Bosche, you! You bloody German bastard! (*The Kitchen*, p. 76)

It is obvious that such racial conflicts spring up in the boiling-pot represented by the kitchen and what one gets 'when the world is filled with kitchens is pigs', as Paul says when he discusses the wider implications of such a world.

If we were to follow the development of the play, step by step, we should begin with the lengthy introduction which accumulates Wesker's experience as pastry-cook combined with his endeavours as a playwright to faithfully render the world of the kitchen on the stage. The 'Character Sketches' which follow are mere descriptions of the members of the staff as a novelist would do in the progress of his novel. In the part called 'The Actions' there are two important statements about how the play should be performed: as there is no food on the stage everything relies on the gesture and the correct manipulation of crockery and cutlery. Activity is the word which best characterises the play to follow.

At the beginning of Part One we have an open stage, without curtain, as Wesker says 'the kitchen is always there', an ominous assertion that this world was, is and will always be present, there is no escape from it.

The tempo of the action is very slow now. Magi, the porter, lights the ovens whose noise and heat will accompany the action as a background, becoming overwhelming when the rhythm speeds up. The entrances and the conversations which follow are very casual but we sense the existence of a latent conflict between different members of the staff – as for instance between Gaston and Peter who had a fight the night before, between Peter and Monique, even though they are lovers, or between the staff and Marengo, the proprietor, whose arrival is feared by everyone. We cannot get much of these conversations and the author does not insist on them as there is a continuous shift from one group to another. It is difficult, due to this technique to find a source of conflict which will trigger the development of the action, because what we have here is a multitude of conflicts interspersed among casual talks, orders for food, manipulation of plates and glasses. The reason is obvious: as in the world outside the world inside, on the stage, does not consist of effects from a single cause, but is made up of myriads of relationships of cause and effect. Therefore there is no backbone narrative but many small narratives, as episodes in a film: apart from the already mentioned quarrels the play presents, among other things, the arrival of a new cook (Kevin) and of a new waitress (Violet), cooks and waitresses start to dance, there are often crossed words. But as stated above, the author does not insist on the characters, they remain as such and never develop. Even when Marengo appears he only 'walks slowly round the kitchen inspecting everything [...]. It is a mechanical movement [...] it is a mechanical tour' (*The Kitchen*, p. 29). Then he exchanges a few words with Kevin, we could say 'mechanically', too.

All these short narratives create the atmosphere of the play, in a linear way but along several plans which are interwoven as the characters meet and get in each other's way. The question which could be asked here is if this way of presenting things was necessary. First of all, it should stressed that if the author wanted to

achieve a global atmosphere and a dramatic tension conferred on the whole, rather than on the individuals, this was the only choice that was left to him. When the tempo heightens and the atmosphere becomes heated and hectic this is achieved through short sentences, replies which come from all directions, orders, questions and complaints, words of protest, shouts, interjections. Any trace of dialogue has been suspended. This strategy has its drawbacks: since the tempo is very intense there is no time to develop the narratives (for instance when Hans burns his face, there is only time to take him away and he reappears in the second act), to insist on the characters and to make them develop from mere sketches, or to go deeper into their relationship (as in the case of Peter and Monique).

The dramatist felt that something had to be done in order to slow down the tempo of the play and he introduced the interlude, although he maliciously wrote:

> The author would prefer there to be no interval at this point but recognises the wish of theatre bars to make some money' (*The Kitchen*, p. 51)

During this period of rest some of the characters relax after the difficult period of lunch serving while the dialogue moves towards a rather unusual and unexpected subject: dreams, which creates a very strong contrast with the previous atmosphere of the kitchen as madhouse, similar to the world itself, as Dimitri says, where 'people come and people go, big excitement, big noise [...] What for?' (*The Kitchen*, p. 52)

Speaking about their dreams the characters reveal something of themselves and the only one incapable of a dream is Peter whose argument is that the kitchen is not a place for dreams. By extrapolation we could generalise that this world is not made for dreams.

The interlude also contains Paul's story about human fraternity and the unexpected reaction of the bus driver. As we could consider him the raisonneur of the play and spokesman for the author himself, the conclusion to Paul's story can only be a bitter one: men fail to understand each other and there is no brotherhood in this world.

To conclude we could cite Brown who maintains that 'the interlude is an occasion for statements but the characters have only questions to supply [...]. Wesker has found a dramatic vehicle for establishing false values more strongly than those he considers to be true.' (1972: 173)

The second part of the play does not continue the hectic rhythm of the first but 'it lifts the play back to the level it reached in Act One'. (Hayman 1974: 19) It is obvious that the author builds the climax: the scene when Peter goes berserk and a logical outcome of the tension that has accumulated so far. The author's interest now shifts from a collective situation to a private case.

From all characters it seems to us that Peter is more individually characterised, although we do not know much about him: and we see him, just as Kitchin does (1968: 76-77), as an imaginative, idealistic and in a way a romantic man. The scene of Peter's crack-up is a good example of expressionist influence in

Wesker's theatre. The kitchen, just as crushing and dehumanising a place as any factory, has had its victim and there is only resignation that may ensue.

The play ends on this rather baffling tone with Marengo's helplessness and on the idea that there is nothing else that could be done, as his rhetorical question is repeated three times:

'MARENGO: What is there more? What is there more? What is there more?'
(*The Kitchen*, p. 83)

At this point, Kitchin claims (1968: 77) that the author does not insist on the social relationships between the proprietor and the members of the staff although one could sense that the former is feared and almost loathed by some. Wesker's insistence is more on the kitchen as a microcosm with the proprietor standing for omnipotent God.

If *The Kitchen* does not insist on the social aspect the three plays that belong to the so-called Wesker Trilogy (*Chicken Soup with Barley, Roots, I'm Talking about Jerusalem*) show another Arnold Wesker: the politically committed writer. In the Trilogy society is viewed through the microcosm of the family and the interest is on the response in the family to social and political events from outside.

Like the previous play, the Trilogy is based on facts from real life: the historic anti-Fascist demonstration in Cable Street and the brutal repression of the Hungarian Revolution by the Soviet troops in l956. We agree with Colin Chamber and Mike Prior who state that 'the Trilogy charts the fate of the socialist ideal from the anti-Fascist fervour of 1936 to the Tory Britain 1959.' (1987: 136) They also underline the two main problems explored by the play: the experience of being political and belonging thus to an extended family of comrades and living in a family of relatives both in a social and political sense. Thus family, which is at the core of society, is also at the core of the Trilogy, shown in a continuous struggle against disintegration caused by the pressures of society.

The first play of the Trilogy covers a period of 19 years from 1936 to 1955, an unusually long period of time for a play. Probably the author did not have in mind to write a whole trilogy at that time. In fact, the time of this play and that of *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* overlap, as the action of the latter play takes place between 1946 and 1959.

The beginning of *Chicken Soup with Barley* shows the Kahns as a family that would sooner belong to the family of comrades who dedicated their forces to the organisation of the demonstration of 4 October 1936 in Cable Street. The attention moves now to the wider microcosm – that of the social and political family. At the centre of both circles we find Sarah Kahn in a kind of matriarchate. She is in fact the backbone of both systems which she tries to hold together with all her might: we watch her calling everybody along with her, organising everything, fighting those who oppose her (even her husband) and stubbornly expressing her

two obsessions that correspond to the two circles: family and communism. And, in fact, she clings to her obsessive conception of the world, carrying the fire that was inoculated in her. She is the only one who 'retains her commitment when everyone about her falls away'. (Chamber and Prior 1987: 136) Why does she hold her dream to the very end? Because in her stubborn mind happiness for her family was equivalent to communism for the whole society.

> MONTY: It was all so simple. The only thing that mattered was to be happy and eat. Anything that made you unhappy or stopped you from eating was the fault of capitalism. Do you think she ever read a book on political economy in her life? Bless her! Someone told her socialism was happiness so she joined the Party. You don't find many left like Sarah Kahn. (*The Wesker Trilogy*, p. 62)

Even when Ronnie tells her about the events in Hungary, which meant that the communist ideal was mere Utopia maintained with Soviet retaliatory armed measures, she would not abandon her credo; Ronnie tells her that he has lost his faith and his ambitions and reproaches his mother that she is still a communist, to which she gives a rather unrelenting Stakhanovist reply:

> SARAH: All right. I'm still a communist! Shoot me then! I'm a communist! I've always been one – since the time when all the world was a communist. You know that? (*The Wesker Trilogy*, p. 73)

Her presence in the other circle – that of the family – is felt by everybody but in different ways: her children oppose her according to the characteristic generation gap, associated here with political problems: Ada is going to build with David her own Utopia in the country after having lost her faith too:

> ADA: I don't believe in the right to organise people. And anyway I'm not sure that I love them enough to want to organise them.(*The Wesker Trilogy*, p. 61)

Ronnie collapses under the weight of the implications of his moral and political commitment, whereas her husband, Harry, presented in continuous search for immediate happiness is reduced to infancy in his senility and does not count.

Let us examine the two worlds presented on the stage at this point: the social and political one has collapsed under the influence of the events both at home (loss of credulity of the Left) and abroad (Socialism seen 'in the flesh' in the Eastern Countries), whereas the family has virtually disintegrated. This is what Ronnie clearly sees at the end of the play:

> RONNIE: And now look what's happened. The family you always wanted has disintegrated, and the great ideal you always cherished has exploded in front of your eyes.' (*The Wesker Trilogy*, p. 75)

At the end of the play we have one of the most pathetic moments when Sarah tries to explain her obsessions to keep both circles together, her belief in socialism ('Socialism is my light') and family (trying to save Ada's life by serving her Mrs. Bernstein's chicken soup and having to fight Harry's irresponsibility then his senility). But still, confronted with these opposing factors there is a binding one she believes in:

'SARAH: There will always be human beings and as long as they are, there will always be the idea of brotherhood' (*The Wesker Trilogy*, p. 75)

The play ends with her plea to Ronnie to recover his lost power to live and to believe in something: 'Ronnie if you don't care you'll die'. (*The Wesker Trilogy*, p. 76)

The second play *Roots* takes us to an isolated cottage in Norfolk, the house of the Beasles, at present. This time, the centre is constituted by another woman figure: Beatie Bryant. The whole action is a kind of 'waiting for Godot' symbolised by Ronnie who never turns up, in a play about 'how impoverished and lack in humanity most of human relationships are'. (Chamber and Prior 1987: 140)

This time the author's exploration is more on the familial side although socialism is still felt through its effects. The two families between who Beatie oscillates are the Bryants and the Beasles.

Beatie is shown as a perfect product of Ronnie's mind who she quotes and considers an ideal worthy to be followed. She is not a particularly sympathetic character with her inquisitorial and over-assertive ways of behaving. For her, family is a refuge, a place where she tries to find her roots. This 'rootlessness [is] the recurrent theme of misunderstanding, compartmentalisation, fragmentation'. (Leeming 1972: 12)

Ronnie's influence on Beatie is to give her knowledge, perspective in life and a way of behaving, ideas which she readily accepts but which do not quite convince her. She is more interested in Ronnie than in his ideas. She accepts him because of her very strong sense of family (as her future husband) and 'she is disturbed because she is not reaching her family; she is caustic because her family does not care about the problem of the atom bomb; she is indignant that everyone seems bored'. (Ribalow 1965: 94)

How does the universe of the family work in Beatie's case? Act One introduces us into the atmosphere of the house of the Beasles where Beatie finds no response. As a matter of fact, she is rejected when she tries to pass political ideas to them (the defence of the country, the MP for the constituency, the British Trade-Union Movement):

'JIMMY: Beatie, you bin away from us a long time now – you got a boy who's educated an' that and he's taught you a lot maybe. But don't come pushin' ideas across to us – we're all right as we are. You can

> come when you like an' welcome, but don't bring no discussion of politics in the house wi' you cos that'll only cause trouble'. (*The Wesker Trilogy*, p. 94)

Another element characteristic of many families in reality and also rendered on the stage is the failure of communication, a common theme of contemporary drama. In the case of Beatie there is a gap between what she knows and what she says whereas in the case of her family, alienation is signified by silence ('Susan won't speak to Mother' or 'You know she [i.e. Pearl] and Mother don't talk to each other'), the elder Bryants quarrel by not speaking. (Leeming and Trussler 1971: 66)

We witness her movement towards the second universe of the Bryants where Beatie does not seem to find her place, because of the same lack of willingness to communicate. It seems that all her activity at home is to reconcile her boy-friend's view of life with that of her family. She has obviously one moment when music places her and her mother on the same co-ordinates: when Beatie plays Bizet's 'L'Arlésienne' at the end of Act Two.

It is this lack of communication which brings about the final blow (Ronnie's letter that he is not coming) followed by her upsurge. It had to be in the circle of the family where Ronnie was to be greeted, but the idea of the new family does not seem to have roots, only Beatie is able to transform her loss into a victory of self-revelation and self-awareness. She has found her voice and her roots:

> 'BEATIE: D'you hear that? D'you hear it? Did you listen to me? I'm talking, Jenny, Frankie, Mother – I'm quoting no more [...] Listen to me someone! (As though a vision were revealed to her) God in heaven, Ronnie! It does work, it's happening to me, I feel it's happened, I'm beginning on my own two feet – I'm beginning...' (*The Wesker Trilogy*, p. 148)

It is obvious that this is not the end , but a new beginning.

The third play of the Trilogy, *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* is a little Utopia in two acts. As the title suggests, it is the Jerusalem of William Morris who believed in the idealism of socialism. Dave and Ada who are a family now try to put into practice their dream – to move into the country and to live away from the crushing domination of machines and industry. The protest is against mechanised life of the city man.

This idea is not new and what we have on the stage is a reflection of what happened in real life: many people believed that they would be better-off if they tried their luck in the country. The experiment begins in the play with a movement away from the basic family, symbolised by the passage from city to rural area, followed, after the defeat, by a movement in the opposite direction – to the city and to the basic family seen as a nucleus.

Ada and David's social experiment fails, for every Utopia is doomed to fail, because there is again lack of communication – as in the incident that triggers the evolution of the conflict: David's refusal to tell Colonel Dewhurst about the lino – a minor failing which will end in David's defeat. This defeat lies in the fact that society has already contaminated David and 'grace cannot be achieved if one shifts one's physical residence'. (Chamber and Prior 1987: 143) This can lead to a generalisation towards the other larger circle. The individual has the right to choose, but then society leaves its mark on the individual, no matter where he lives, in town or in the country.

Probably one of the most touching scenes is Scene 2 in Act Two, when Dave and Ada play with their little boy, Danny. The game is curious: finding what it is like to be a human being, a symbol of finding one's own condition, a necessity for which the play was probably written. The end of the game is didactic – through bestowment and recognition can one achieve the status of human being – first life, then sight, movement and speech, followed by names and colours.

> 'ADA: Now you are a real human being, Daniel, who can look and think and talk and you can come out and slay the lions.' (*The Wesker Trilogy*, p. 197)

The end of the play is again set on a political level: the reactions to the Conservative victory of 1959 and it gives us the possibility to meet old friends. Ronnie has become a cynical reflector of the defeat of the Left set against the defeat of Dave and Ada and Sarah. This failure has turned David into an individualist interested merely in the day-to-day problems of his family, defeated by machinery and the modern technique, Sarah has finally her little victory: her children are coming home.

The trilogy gives Wesker the possibility to see events, families and characters in their evolution over the years, against the changes in British society from the anti-Fascist turmoil of 1939 to the Tory Britain in 1959. Although the outside world is present in the stage with different characters, narrated events, its influence is more felt than actually shown. It would have been impossible to do otherwise because everything is reduced to its essence: here the basic nucleus is the family. From the real world to the fictitious world on the stage family and family relationships are permanently modified and determined by outside forces and are governed by own rules from within.

The last play that we shall consider in the present study – *Chips with Everything* – is like the first one (*The Kitchen*): singular from the point of view of the subject it treats – life in the army and the microcosm created by a RAF camp, a very unconventional setting like the one mentioned at the beginning of this essay. The play startled both critics and public and was favourably appreciated by reviewers in the press: '[A. Wesker] has broken out of the naturalism of the Trilogy and has found a form that allows him to express his feelings and ideas implicitly

without any of that preaching which was the weakening of the earlier plays,' wrote *The Financial Times*, 30 April 1962, whereas Harold Hobson wrote in *The Sunday Times*, 29 April 1962: 'This is the left-wing drama's real breakthrough, the first anti-Establishment play of which the Establishment has cause to be afraid.'

Not only is the setting of the play singular, but also its structure is something new: it is made up of short episodic scenes: in the RAF hut, the NAAFI – Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes –, the lecture hall, the parade ground, the wing commander's office, etc. Such scenes enable the author to emphasise the step-by-step development of the plot as each scene has its autonomous importance and the crowding, changing situations give the action a sense of speed, as Leeming remarked (1983: 19). The formal structure of the play is very similar to that of *The Kitchen*: if here the scenes come one after another in quick succession, in *The Kitchen* there was a permanent shift from one group of characters to another. The technique is cinematic in both cases. The alternation of the scenes is followed by the alternation of individual stories together with the general movement of all the boys into a well trained squad of airmen.

Another common element of the two plays is the fact that they were written from first-hand experience (Wesker had his National Service in 1950 in the Royal Air Force).

The main theme of the play is the way in which the rebel is absorbed in English society. The characters are, this time, conscripts, known by their surnames, nicknames and of course their numbers.

This play, just like *The Kitchen*, cannot have a backbone narrative, a general story. We can sooner follow the individual story of Pip Thompson which touches all the characters so that it seems to carry the whole play, as Brown rightfully remarked (1972: 174). Pip Thompson is the representative on the stage of a rich family with a dominant father. From the very beginning he is the dominant character over his fellow conscripts. He does not tolerate authority over him and his rebellion takes the form of his refusal to carry orders in bayonet practice. His revolt is, in fact, the scenic counterpart of the dominating individual who cannot cope with the rules he has to observe. But Pip's revolt is more a form of manifestation of his need for self-esteem and of the classical Oedipus complex. At the end of the play when his motive was exposed he is ready to become an officer and leave the ranks. The end of the play shows Pip completely absorbed by the mechanism of uniformity which is the Army. As in the East End café where everything was uniformly served with chips, no matter what you ordered.

If Pip is the representative of the dominant character, the play shows its contrary – the defeated one (represented by the scapegoat of the hut, Smiler, the desperate Smiler who runs away from the intolerable persecutions only to return hopeless and more vulnerable, defeated by his own form of rebellion). Probably one of the most impressive scenes of the play is the one in slow motion where Charles washes Smiler's swollen, bleeding feet in a direct allusion to Christ as he is

put to bed and tucked in by everybody in an action whose scenic indication is to be 'done lovingly and with a sort of ritual' (*Chips with Everything*, p. 72).

The end of the play shows the final march as the colours are hoisted in front of faceless, uniform figures, while the national anthem is being played.

The masculine microcosm is populated with all kinds of characters who stand for counterparts in real life: the altruistic Charles, Ginger, Cannibal and Dickey have dreams of what the RAF could offer; Dodger is thinking of girls all the time; Corporal Hill is totally committed to his job, bullying, threatening, wounding.

The Army community becomes the new family for the conscripts:

> 'HILL: We're going to be the happiest family in Christendom, and we're going to move together, as one, as one solitary man.' (*Chips with Everything*, p. 20)

'As one solitary man' is the expression of the uniformity, where there are no personalities: the result of theoretical indoctrination is that they should be all like Greek Gods, seen by Brown as an ideal model within the new family (1972: 178). Home and family, ideal and sexuality are substituted by discipline. The RAF becomes thus the other world as opposed to this world with its lack of ideals. The alternative is clearly shown by Wesker on the stage.

What is Wesker's alternative to the outside world on the stage? The microcosm is reduced to fit the sizes of a play in an attempt to form and educate the public, who is offered scenic counterparts of the world they come from: a kitchen where all the problems and conflicts are shown in the light imposed by hellish rhythm and stress, families who come apart oppressed, overwhelmed and crushed by the society of machines and industry, or the limited dimension of a RAF camp without personalities and with a well coordinated mechanism of fabricating identical products. This is Wesker's world on the stage, a world far-reaching and comprehensive of Britain in the sixties and seventies: the real world is on the stage, but the stage also stands for the world outside. This is also the world that nowadays more and more theatre managers stage directors should re-discover and offer their public, because the plays are also documentary and ideological records of what Britain used to be in the Cold War period, an epoch that a lot of young people only know from spy novels.

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AMBIGUITY AND NUMBER

ŞTEFAN GENCĂRĂU♦

ABSTRACT. In an article published earlier (Studia, 2, 2000) we showed that - for the literary critics – the story of the main character in I. L. Caragiale's *Two Lottery Tickets* is reduced to the happening of buying two lottery tickets that, eventually, prove to have the winning numbers, but the number of one is the winning number in the other lottery, and the other way round. Operating with concepts like *textual truth, authorial instance, narrative sequence, authorial sequence,* we isolated, in the previous article, some parts of the text in order to show that, in the first part of the story, the author indicates as valid the concordance between numbers and lotteries, which shows Lefter as the genuine winner. We were interested by the mechanisms of authentification and those of ambiguisation, we interpreted the sequences where Lefter is a winner in accordance with the truth of the authorial interventions, with a view to discovering a logic of ambiguisation. In this article we analyse this logic of ambiguisation, which explains Lefter's misfortune. We interpret the lexical elements which bring into stronger relief the role played by the number in generating textual ambiguity.

The final sequence presents Lefter reading the numbers, digit by digit, which, in their strictly numerical hypostasis, in two of the textual sequences bear a truth and become *hit by nullity* or by the disease of *vice-versa*, as in the last sequence of the text, when their expression, as *an appearance* with consequences upon the inside, changes. Saying that Lefter was wrong means to invalidate the truthfulness of the authorial speech. To believe the fact that he is, by birth, an unlucky man just because he confused the winning tickets would mean to minimize the role of the numbers, of the luck and of the destiny in Lefter's adventure. Ironically shaping every textual sequence, Caragiale placed symmetrically, at the beginning and at the end of the (short) story the same symbol, well hidden in the discursive methods, but able to explain or to mislead, giving us the illusion that we came into the possession of an explanation regarding the confusion of the truths of this world. At the beginning,

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driven mad, Lefter shows an unreasonable *certitude* and he seems to consider absurd the loss of the tickets, and this thing makes him exclaim: *Woman, …they have to be in this house… the devil didn't come to take them.* Artistically set in an informal expression, the symbol postpones the rendering of the significations [1], its decoding is left intentionally as a task for a final recurrence; the banker's intervention occasions a new occurrence of the symbol, similar to Lefter's informal way of expressing it: actually called to give significance to the impossible or, maybe, to bring arguments against Lefter, before he uttered the fatal *viceversa*, the banker ends his role with the following statement: *It's a strange thing, that's true… How did it happen! I'll be damned!… You have at one of them the winning number of the other and…*; the intervention of such a power could find its meaning in explaining the disagreement between Lefter's *truth*, sequencially presented as the single kind of veracity, and *the truth* of the world of tickets, finally presented as an absolute *truth*; only ***the devil***, the banker seems to say, trying to explain the impossible, could clear up *how it happened…*, and only ***the devil*** could explain *what happened.* It would be enough for the banker the explanation of the way in which Lefter bought at a lottery exactly the winning ticket of the other and *vice-versa;* but Lefter needs more than that; the image of the devil, important for *the extreme points between which the character evolves*[2] come to confirm the existence, in Zarifopol's terms, of a malicious will which interferes in shaping the climax of ill-luck, anecdotically mentioned by Caragiale; being cautious at every stage of revealing the basis of the world in which his character is placed, Caragiale makes us understand that the tasks of this demonic figure, to which Lefter and the banker refer in turn, are limited, and thus postpones the revelation of the identity of *the malicious will*; mentioning *the devil*, Lefter ironically excludes the interference of this malefic figure in producing the hypothetical ill-luck which could have been caused by the loss of the tickets; acting as if he would only try to seem surprised, the banker creates the pre-requisites necessary to the manifestation of the suspicion; he betrays, at the same time, by spontaneously using the words *"I'll be damned"*, another comprehension of the devilish side that makes impossible the exoneration of the devil in the strange change regarding the agreement and then the disagreement between the tickets at the two *lotteries;* invoked by both the characters called to uphold the divergent points of view regarding the veracity of *the objects* they are interested in,

[1] In fact, as Daniela Rovența Frumuşani shows, in ***Semiotica discursului ştiinţific***, Editura Ştiinţifică, 1995, p. 177, and the following, in a text, which *is preeminently a relational product, the less visible the argumentation is, the more persuasive, more efficient, more manipulating it is, relying on implicit and on the infferential stirring of the collocutor.*

[2] V. Fanache, ***Caragiale***, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1997, where the critic thinks that *the extreme points between which the character evolves* are *one* belonging to the abysmal, *suggesting the image of the devil* and *the other uplifting*, dominated by the light of the shining sun.

the devil from **Two Lottery Tickets** has to do with the lottery ticket or tickets and with their unbelievable disagreement from the final sequence; could this disagreement be the result of its interference? Could *the devil* be that demonic instance which would explain [3] Lefter's statement about ill-luck and, consequently, would the tickets have been always losers, and the agreement with the official lists only a delusion due to an authorial discourse which had such a purpose? Could have been the tickets winners and *then* due to the devilish interference, could have they become interchangeble Being a text under the incidence of the hypothetical, as it is the state of the character whose adventure we are following, **Two Lottery Tickets** continuously changes the symbols' area of meaning and does not discredit either the authorial instance according to which the tickets were winners or the subjective instances taking part to *the comedy* of the lottery tickets; but Lefter is not a winner and a loser at the same time because he manifests an inability to *see* the essence of the objects available to him; in his attempt to shape his own destiny, he doesn't foresee the destiny itself in that 'lot', and also, in his attempt *to win*, he doesn't come to understand that the prize is not bestowed to his being, but to the number, or –and this is more serious than being an unlucky man- the prize is bestowed to a hypostasis of the man, which results, like the one in **My friend, X**, from the deconstruction of the being, it is bestowed to that construct placed at the border between human and object, being defined by the belief that he is only a *number in the population's statistics and maybe he is ignored even there*[4] ; in the continuous change of the symbolical area of meaning, *the devil* leaves place for another demoniac instance; the verbal register of the sequences changes when this instance brings an apparent certitude in building the truth of the text; the first sequence in which the neutrally uttered verdict becomes known in the world of the lucky or unlucky men, stereotipically announces the triumph *of the number;* in this sequence we are told about the first of the two tickets: *the greatest prize of 50.000 lei* ***was won by the number…***, and the same thing about the second: *the greatest prize of 50.000 lei, too,* ***was won by the number***…, in the second sequence, the verbal inventory[5] is

[3] I. Vartic, ***Studiu introductiv***, in ***Momente, schițe, amintiri***, Biblioteca Apostrof, Cluj, 1997**.,** p. LXXXI, to make the difference between demonic and satanic, and to accredit the idea that the demonic *evolved from the figure of man's personal 'giver' of destiny to that of impersonal luck.*

[4] I. L. Caragiale, ***Opere***, I, p. 298-299.

[5] In the second sequence, the statement where appears the concordance between the numbers and *the lotteries* produces a verbal elipsis which suspends, related to the rest of the authorial intervention, the syntagm about the numbers and *the lotteries*; Caragiale displays only the number and the name of *the lottery: 076.384 University – Constantza, 109.520 Bucharest – Astronomy;* doing this, Caragiale seems to give the syntagm an explicative, appositional role; but the verbal elipsis has another purpose, that is not to force the expression to a single acting significance; this preoccupation is confirmed by the verbal occurrence in the previous syntagm, where, for the concordance between the objects of interest for Caragialian heroes, respectively for the concordance between *the lists* and *the notebook*, Caragiale prefers the verb *sounds*. When we are told: *Indeed, the notebook sounds exactly like the lists*, we can decode a symbolic

reduced and it is not the prize which is announced, but the concordance between the numbers and *the lotteries*; the third sequence re-establishes the verb, making it signify by its own presence; from the neuter wording: *the greatest prize was won* we reach to *we have once*, respectively from *to win* we pass to the verb *to have*, to consider that we have in our possession or the luck, or the lucky ticket – with its destiny signification continuously ignored- or the number; the numbers and the luck do not let themselves be taken into possession, but they take into possession the being, and the more they take into possession the being, the more we have to deal with a character who found a disjunction between him and luck, and he admitted that he had access only to the negative structures of the syntagm *to have luck*; as not the character but the numbers won, the dignity to be, beside the demoniac, another image of *the malicious will* is given to the numbers, because, without placing them in the sublime, they exert on the characters an action of a greater tragic sense than the demoniac would have exerted by giving fate at birth; the change of destiny, Lefter's fall into madness does not appear as a result of an error which could not have been avoided anyway, being given from the very beginning, but as a result of a whimsical game in which the objects of Lefter's world understand that they have the liberty to become manifest [6] it would be less tragic for Lefter to have a foreordained destiny, were it the destiny of an unlucky man, a destiny which he cannot change, because the act of predestination is irrevocable; but it is tragic that Lefter Popescu does not have a destiny at all, that's why he cannot be a winner, nor a loser; the winners are not the characters, but *the numbers*; his fall into madness is thus a way of punishing his attempt to take into possession a prize which is not meant to him, a prize which belongs to the numbers, not to the individual; in connection with the destiny, with luck and with hazard, the numbers *play* with the being as they like;

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meaning of this consonance, too; the dictionary meanings become insufficient; when looking up in the dictionaries for finding the semantic sphere of the verb *to sound* we noticed that the Caragialian creation of meaning leads to the use of some peripherical meanings and the addition of meanings specific to the Caragialian context; if check up in The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, we find that *to sound* has no meaning close to the verbs *to correspond, to be identical with*, and *a consona* is strictly specialized; but *to sound* has meanings which bring more than a mere concordance, if we accept that to the situation in which the concordance between the notebook and the lists corresponds a game without actually producing sounds, Pandele's or Lefter's reading the lists or the notebook doesn't mean actually and physically uttering the words; thus, *to sound* registers, in less current usage, the meanings: *to call, to announce, to inform somebody* by using an object; in expressions, *to sound* means *to foresee, to announce the moment of death;* it is obvious that Caragiale's "lots" are foreseeing objects, and he gives the verb *to sound* a meaning which is organized from *to correspond* to *to announce, to foresee.*

[6] Jean-Marie Domenach, **Le retour du tragique,** Seuil, Paris, 1967, p. 242, suggests a searching of tragic outside *the heroic, mythical, legendary or the apocalyptic*, because *the enigma of the tragic*, Domenache says, is *that of everyday, its secret… is displayed in what we feel as normal – between legend and daily, far from all privileged situations.*

they promise the human being certitudes and they cheat as much as they had promised; there where the being is convinced that the number will univocally designate a quantity or will strictly and accurately identify, the numbers allow themselves to offer a completely different thing; from their property of being the results of *spirit's simple intuition* [7], to that of *epistemical auxiliaries*[8] , the numbers cover a long way, step by step, they assume the merit of ordering *the chaotic substance* of the existence, of interfering there where the reason calls them to achieve the necessary continuity for *the rational elaboration of the universe*[9] ; the numbers seem to be, in the different stages of the human personality's fulfilment, above all the gods, like Destiny[10] ; seen or unseen, in Caragiale's world, they make their presence felt, to offer here, too, the illusion of a certitude; being generous, in this respect, the numbers interfere in the configuration of the space, to create the confusion, as they interfere in the configuration of the time to give the impression that the being is in the most favourable circumstance for the debate of a crucial matter, which could be even *the law* regarding the death penalty; used for keeping up the error in the right positioning of the beings, the numbers give, on the one hand, the impression that they are available to their users as instruments of the certitude, acting, on the other hand, as auxiliaries of all the up-side-down turnings of the Caragialian world, as causes of the confusions to which the characters in the sketches and comedies are subjected to, or as masks for plunging into **viceversa** of those who transform the search for luck into the only reason of their existence; thus, the numbers meet halfway the Caragialian hero with a plurality of symbolical meanings, which precede him; the numbers give the heroes' preoccupations the consistency of some acts which are performed or by chance, or due to misfortune or luck; like hazard, the numbers create or separate couples, interfering into the being's intimate manifestations, especially in those who mix up erotic with love and affection with spleen; making available for hazard the space-time backgrounds of the characters' life, the numbers make chance remain the only dimension of their reaction and of their identity, becoming manifest through numbers, *that is* exactly

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[7] H. Bergson, **Eseu asupra datelor imediate ale conştiinţei,** Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1993, p. 64.

[8] Thomas Crump, **Anthropologie des nombres, savoir-compter, cultures et sociétés**, Seuil, Paris, 1995, p. 178.

[9] C. Rădulescu–Motru, **Timp şi destin**, Bucureşti, 1996, p. 127, where he shows that *the spiritual substance gives to a law the possibility, and therefore, to some stipulations when it implies in its progress an order which can be understood by the human reason* and this has as a result a continuity in ordering the universe. For the Greeks, C. Rădulescu-Motru adds, *the entire nature was a whole which had its eternal prototype in the symmetry of the geometrical shape and in the order of the rational number.*

[10] **Ibidem,** p. 116, where, for defining the destiny according *to the Greek philosophy as the human personality's fulfilment in the immanent order of the substantial conditions in which he lives,* C. Rădulescu-Motru mentions that the tragic poets dropped a hint to *the belief that Destiny is above all the gods.* The Caragialian character replaces, in this hierarchy, Destiny with Luck.

through that material which seems to be the most attached to the designation of the concrete objects and processes[11] the Caragialian hazard paradoxically appears as a special modality of *arranging* things; because of the strange coincidences generated in the draft of events, the hazard is perceived by the author of **Moments** as a *pseudo-hazard* [12]; according to Jankelévitch, hazard is, in its quality of being *an object of the action of consciousness*, the material itself transformed by the consciousness into an opportunity for *a passing instance* [13]*;* for Caragiale, the numbers exist in an *intellectual region* where the thinking doesn't change them into auxiliaries of the mathematical spirit, namely, mere means of expressing *just an order considered irrevocable;* being a provisional identity for that *malicious will*, the numbers seem to be at hand to the hero that populates Caragiale's world. Vacillating as regards the convictions he claims to have [14], confused and, at the same time misleading in his manifestations in space and time[15] , being in a total mess when he is forced to *distinguish fundamental truths* in the objects of his interest, the Caragialian character sees himself in all the instances of his existence, subjected to this *will* which takes his place, takes into possession his existence, plays with his destiny, giving him the illusion of a destiny instead of actually giving him a destiny.

[11] Caragiale makes ambivalent not only the number, but also any statement having an epistemical pretension; he ironically speculates *the minded astronomers'* probabilities, disowns *calculations,* projects a shadow of doubt on the truths collection of all *the excellent and brilliant scholars of genius* and, after he seems to be convinced about the relativity of all the thesis that ask not only for a minimum of credibility, but also access to an absolute veracity, he exclaims: *It's over! The entire Encyclopaedia is gone!* Cf. I. L. Caragiale, **Opere**, IV, p. 42-46.

[12] I. Vartic, **op.cit,** p. LXXVIII**.** The denial of the hazard is caused by an appearance of Caragialian world, according to which the impression of *demoniacal* is quickly contradicted, at least for Anghelache, by a cunning flux of creating a new version of the demoniacal.

[13] Vl. Jankelévitch, **Ironia**, Editura Dacia, 1994, p. 119, where the luck is considered a chance that lasts a little, but *everything can be an opportunity for a consciousness capable to fertilize the hazard.*

[14] The familyman's honour Dumitrache recites in all the situations is placed under the incidence of: *at a pinch.*

[15] The placing of the action in the first act of **A Tempestuous Night** maintains the ambiguity; the two characters make use of approximations of the kind: *we follow a road to…, they happened to follow a road,* which proves that their space and acting reference points are subjected to chance.

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ART OR ENTERTAINMENT: SOAP OPERA

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ABSTRACT. Soap operas are both liked and disliked, they have their fans and enemies. For many of their followers they have become a daily drug, like the daily cup of tea. Yet serious critical opinion derides soaps, and their position within television has traditionally been low. However, as a television genre it is more popular than ever, it is television's bread and butter, and their budgets, casting, and scheduling reflect this. In what follows we will try to examine the elements that make them so popular, and to show how the continuous serial is able to run for years, preserving a basic stability while making enough changes to prevent tedious repetition.

1. 1. In our age, mass entertainment is largely provided by visual means like cinema, television and video productions. In fact, television has become one of the most comfortable as well as cheap form of leisure activity. It provides programmes for all kinds of tastes: sport programmes, films, talk shows, documentaries, etc. We are witnessing an age of cultural democracy, when cultural products are destined to all categories of consumers. The umbrella term **culture** hides under its generous roof all kind of cultural tendencies and manifestations which are specific to certain social categories: ethnic minorities, feminists, gay and lesbians, drug-addicts, etc. The main distinction is made nowadays between 'high culture' and 'low culture'. In fact, this 'low culture' comprises all the 'subcultures' mentioned above. The terms 'low culture' or 'subculture' do not necessarily mean that the cultural products belonging to them are not valuable at all. In fact, the distinction 'high' and 'low' can be translated in terms of 'elite' and 'masses' or, in a narrower sense, in terms of 'art' and 'entertainment'.

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Richard Dyer (1992:3) discusses this issue of 'art' as opposed to 'entertainment'. He states that 'just entertainment' is a "term to deny or discount something's aesthetic and ideological qualities", whereas the 'art' label "often prevents people from seeing how enjoyable something is". Dyer (1992:12) refers to Moliere's theory about art and entertainment which puts these two terms in a strong antithesis: art is *edifying, elitist, refined* and *difficult*, while entertainment means exactly the opposite: *not art, not serious, not refined* but *hedonistic, democratic, vulgar and easy.*

1. 2. Soap opera is a genre which belongs to popular television. It is a term that is largely used nowadays regarding a TV narrative form, but its connotations are also to be found in the fields of politics and social life. We can see soap operas everyday, they are largely available on TV screens, on radio or in the popular press' accountings of certain events – political issues, Lady Di's marriage or divorce or, recently, the Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori's domestic scandals. From these numerous examples we can identify some soap features like narrative form, characters, plots, issues at stake or viewers' involvement.

First, it is interesting to see how soap has become associated with a film genre. The history of the term started in the 1930's, during the economic depression in the United States. At that time, soap powder manufacturers were sponsoring fifteen minute radio serials like *Ma Perkins* or *Just Plain Jane*, which had a format of never-ending stories about women and their emotional dilemmas. The manufacturers' purpose was to make housewives form a habit of listening and, of course, of buying their products. This new form of serials was adopted by television in the mid 1950's, expanding its length to twenty-five and then fifty minutes. The best example of the most longevous soap is that of *The Guiding Light* which started on US radio in 1937 and which was the first to switch to television in 1952. It is to be noted that it is still running. In Britain, the first television soap was *The Grooves* (1054 – 1957), while the longest running and most popular one is *Coronation Street* which started in 1960.

2. 0. Indeed, one can state television soap opera is the only form of fiction that can unfold a life in real time. The viewers can see the characters evolving along the years, ageing and even dying. There are actors and actresses who play the same role for years and thus they identify themselves with the character. But this is also a trap: once they have become one and the same with their role, they can hardly play anything else. The audience refuse to take into account the other side of the actor, once the image offered by them for so many years is deeply rooted in the viewers' mind. Thus, there are numerous examples in this sense: Larry Hagman (who is better known as J.R.), Linda Gray (who cannot play but in Sue Ellen's style), or Patrick Duffy (who is not convincing but in the role of a good and loving father and husband).

Daytime soap operas in America and Great Britain are television's bread and butter, and their budgets, casting, and scheduling reflect this. As Glaessner says (1990: 115) they are regularly lambasted for the fact that both 'nothing' and 'too much' happens in them. It is typically assumed, goes on Glaessner (1990: 115) that their audience consists of those whose lives are so deprived as to need spurious enrichment. It is portrayed as an aesthetically naive audience, unable to tell fiction from reality. This critical disdain must be related to the structure of the audience which, especially in the case of the daytime and early-evening soap operas, is assumed by programme makers, advertisers, and those producing the attendant publicity material, to be a largely female one. Forms of popular culture consumed mainly by women, such as soap opera, romantic fiction, or bingo have rarely been accorded a high cultural status in the public domain.

This length of characterisation is considered by Mark Lawson (1995:11) a "unique dramatic aspect of soap […]. However great a stage play or a film or novel is, it can only expose us its central characters for a few hours or, at most, with a long book, a few days – even if, through fiction's collapsing of time, an entire life has been compressed into this span". Such length of characterisation is the effect of the narrative form of soap opera which belongs to the category of continuous serials. Soaps lack resolution, they go on forever, until they lose popularity and the producers and script writers have to come up with new ideas or to find new solutions to end the serial.[1]

But besides this length of characterisation, soaps offer an open narrative form: there are multiple story lines running at the same time; one of them might be tragic and the other comic in the same episode or, as Barbara Roessner (1994: 14) puts it, "one story line may unfold on the mist-shrouded heath, and the other in the swimming pools of Los Angeles". One story line can be central in several episodes, then it is put aside in favour of another one, then it can be resumed and so on and so forth. Nothing is left outside. The main advantage of such an open narrative is that it offers a large variety of characters and plots which can be followed by the viewers. To a certain extent, soap opera can be compared to the postmodernist novel: you can watch/read it on the level you like, i.e. you can read a novel like *The Name of the Rose* from the point of view of a thriller, a philosophical essay or a religious one, or you can follow just one story line like in a soap, respectively.

[1] The impossibility of 'closing' a serial was illustrated by events in *Waggoner's Walk*, which was brought to an untimely end by BBC cuts in May/June 1980. Very little attempt was made to tie up loose ends and several stories were abandoned *in medias res.* Indeed the writers seem to have humorously recognised that a serial – even in this situation – has a future, by finishing the serial with a proposal of marriage which the woman concerned asks for time to think about. 'Of course,' comes the reply, 'you have all the time in the world', and it is left to the signature tune to bring the serial to an end. One is left with a sense that the serial has not stopped but is still taking place, an extreme case of 'unchronicled growth' (Geraghty, 1991:9)

Serials may have stories resolved within one episode but have at least one story-line that continues from episode to episode. In limited-episode serial the narrative is resolved by the final episode. Soap opera, by contrast, is an indefinite serial that in theory can continue for ever. Commonly soap operas feature multiple and interlocking narratives, some of which may be short-lived, while others go on for months or even years. Ultimate narrative closure is indefinitely postponed – in this sense soap opera is open-ended as opposed to the characteristic closed narrative form of situation comedy. As Glaessner remarks (1990:118) "in the soap opera, as one set of problems is resolved another begins its gestation". At the end of an episode certain problems may near resolution, while others develop. We may typically be left with a cliffhanger, a moment of revelation or suspense, or merely a thought-provoking image, but in all cases narrative questions are left open, and closure is postponed. The cliffhanger is often seen as the traditional hallmark of the serial. The suspense in serials is forced on us, so that we are left waiting between one episode and the next, literally in suspense. The cliffhanger marks this enforced interruption. The unfolding of the action is cut off at a crucial point so that the enigma is unresolved and the leading characters remain in danger. The episodic construction means that while major overall questions are left unanswered and unresolved, the cliffhanger can emanate from some minor matter (Geraghty, 1991:14). It varies in intensity and importance. It is not necessary to produce moments of high drama at the end of every episode.

2. 1. Although it may have an open narrative and a generous range of settings and characters, soap opera frequently focuses on a certain limited community – middle class or working-class (especially in the British soap) – a fact signalled from the very beginning by the titles of the serials: *East Enders, Coronation Street, Neighbours* (British), *Santa Barbara, Beverly Hills 90210, Chicago Hope* (U.S.), the Dutch *Herrenstraat 10,* or the Australian *Paradise Beach.* The Byzantine relationships that are played out among the super-elite of *Dallas,* or *Dynasty* would seem to have little in common with the familiar drabness of the everyday world of British soaps. You have to look hard to find traces of the geographical Dallas within the serial. *Dallas* focuses on the oil-rich Ewing family and their rivalry with the Barnes family. In an article about British soap opera, Andy Medhurst (1994: 2) says that "British soaps need a clearly defined geographical location and regional identity, an ideological commitment towards notions of community, interwoven continuous narratives centred on emotions and relationships, recognisable character types (usually and most satisfyingly a strong leaning to matriarchy as the ideal form of social organisation), and a balance between the everyday and the melodramatic".

Here Andy Medhurst compresses all the ingredients of a soap. But one of the key words regarding a soap is **plot**. Soaps cannot exist without plot, something must happen in order to catch the viewer's interest and to maintain it along the

years. The great popularity of the genre is due to the multitude and complexity of **plot.** Each episode brings its contribution to the gradual development of events, it brings to light another dilemma or solves a previous conflictual situation, thus revealing a new dimension of the plot. And this goes on for years and years, as in *Coronation Street, Dallas* or *The Young and the Restless.* But this continuous serialisation is very demanding for script writers, who have to come up with new ideas. In this sense we can speak of an 'adaptability' of soaps to contemporaneity; its rules do not remain immutable, but they adopt and adapt to whatever might interest the audience.

British soaps are very popular because of their social realism. Social realism demands the suggestion of unmediated access to the real world, the real world being understood as the terrain of the ordinary and the everyday. Examining the close fit achieved between social realism, with its emphasis on social problems explored through the personal, and the conventions of the soap opera. One can argue that though events are ostensibly about social problems, they should have as one of their central concerns the settling of people in life; the resolution of these events should always be in terms of the effects of personal interventions. The viewers perceive them as true depictions of the working-class or middle-class communities, they see characters being 'just like us' or, in Barbara Roessner's (1994: 14) words, "they do what they always do and have always done – they love, they hate, they covet, they comfort, they obey or transgress the moral code of their day". Work itself, labour, and industrial relations were largely omitted in *Coronation Street*, and, in the programme, class has always appeared more as a matter of 'lifestyle' than as a set of social relations. The emphasis on home and the domestic gives a prominence to the everyday, the common sense, and to the lives of women. This soap played a major role in establishing the conventions by which social realism was articulated in the form of soap opera.[2] Soaps offer their audience the pleasure of recognition and validation of one's own experience. Viewers place much emphasis on the perceived genuineness of characters. Sonia M. Livingstone (1991: 301) argues that "perception of realism in *Dallas* concern not a statistical correspondence with the viewers' world […] but rather an 'emotional realism', a recognition of the 'tragic structure of feeling' in *Dallas*, where feelings fluctuate between opposed poles of happy and sad, and where happiness is always transitory".

[2] *Coronation Street* can be seen to be definitely about the 'settling of people in life' as well as being a celebration of commonsensical working-class culture. This culture provides the fabric of the programme: the communal gathering in pub and café, and the popping in and out of people's houses. One of the most striking characteristics of *Coronation Street* is its priviliging of the social and communal over the familial. The archetypal nuclear family is absent and its absence forces attention onto the area of social interaction and exchange. The characters function within the community, however limited this community might be, rather than the home, within a semi-public sphere rather than within the fraught hothouse of family relationships.

This experience of 'real life' provided by soaps is an effect of the genre's tackling of contemporary issues.[3] Andy Medhurst (1992: 2) speaks of a "re-invention of plots". In this sense he quotes *Emmerdale* (1994:2) whose "legacy of its years as *Emmerdale Farm*, during which the sheep moved faster then the plots, has been hard to shake, but which has undergone dramatic changes like featuring a regular lesbian character or the wreckage of an airliner down on the village. Contemporary soaps have story lines engaging on a social level. Jay G. Blunder (1991:21) notices that, like a soap opera producer, "we are trying through our serial to make people think about relationships and the problems around us – whether it's race or teenagers and their parents or caring for the elderly".

3. 0. These programmes convey an educational element to a certain extent. They address issues that are central to the lives of people nowadays: drug addiction, teenage pregnancy, suicide, alcoholism, sex, marriage, AIDS, mental breakdowns, divorce and abortion. By tackling these vital problems soaps acquire a huge audience-gathering potential[4] which serves both to maintain their popularity and to promote a certain policy; they often convey 'messages in the plot': AIDS awareness (*East Enders*), awareness of domestic violence (*Brookside*) or of drug abuse and fascism (*Ambridge*).

Peter Golding and Graham Murdoch (1991:27) speak of a reorganisation and recontextualisation of public discourse in order to fit the particular expressive form being used. The discourses about AIDS is largely used in soap opera as this form has a major impact on what can be said and shown, by whom and from what point of view. The two authors define (1991: 27) cultural forms as "mechanisms for regulating public discourse". Sonia Livingstone (1991: 302) argues that viewers are well aware when a message is integrated in a plot, but she believes that they do not object to it: "sometimes a strong message – like a well-woman bus turning up in Albert Square to promote smear tests – breaks the narrative flow, but viewers see the message coming and they don't seem to mind".

The repercussions events will have on the lives of the characters are brought to the fore. This is registered largely through talk – through gossip, confessions,

[3] Within the genre it is possible to suggest a broad typology. British soap operas are broadly within the tradition of social realism, featuring everyday characters, plots, and language, often located within working-class communities. At the other end of the scale is the romantic and melodramatic world of the United States' exports. In these the 'social' background disappears beneath the expressive excesses of *nouveau riche* wealth, thereby throwing the struggles for power, identity, and family control into relief. (Glaessner, 1990: 116)

[4] The soaps have been claimed by some feminists as one of the few areas of television to open up a space for women characters and for an examination of the concerns of women and a representation of the texture of women's lives. The soaps are seen to allow a focus on the area of relationships outside the waged labour, the area that has conventionally been seen as women's sphere of activity. (Glaessner, 1990: 116)

speculations, and exchanges of confidence. Conventionally, the world of gossip is seen as a woman's world, existing as part of the realm of the domestic and personal. Brundson argues (1981:26) that it is in gossip, the repeated mulling over of actions and possibilities, that the moral and ideological frameworks adhere. Modes of behaviour are tested and explored through talk: Will she marry or not? Will she tell or not? It is not a crime that is being investigated but possible modes of behaviour. Hobson suggests (1982:134) that women characteristically use such programmes to talk, indirectly, about their own lives and their own attitudes. Gossip helps to create the feeling of day-to-dayness (Geraghty, 1991:22). In the serial, it continues a commentary on the action. Much of the gossip which takes place provides the audience with new information or gives more detail about what has been happening. It plays an important role formally in binding together the various plots and the different characters and making them coherent.[5]

The audience awareness implies the viewers' participation. The pleasures offered by the soap operas stem from the points of identification offered by their characters. We want to discover what happens to those specific characters locked into that specific network of relationships. While audiences consist of both men and women, some writers have argued that the soap opera genre speaks specifically to women – the gender of the viewer is inscribed in the text (Brunsdon, 1981:25). The audience loyalty is sometimes sustained over a period of a decade or more. Glaessner says (1990: 117) that almost by definition this genre commands strong audience loyalty. As Peter Fiske (1991: 64) puts it, "a popular spectacle is incomplete unless and until people participate in it". People's participation is not reduced only to watching, it actually means making meanings out of what they see, according to their cultural background. The interpretative process has two sides: involvement and critical distance. In this respect of the variety of readings, Sonia Livingstone (1991: 305) reports that viewers of different social and cultural backgrounds have produced very different interpretations of the same episode: the Russian Jews' ideological readings centred on the moral and political messages underlying the narratives; the Americans focused on personalities and motivations to make their readings coherent, while the Moroccan Arabs concerned with event sequencing and continuity.

3. 1. The interpretative process of soap is influenced by personal experience, cultural background and, very important, by gender. Soap opera is traditionally called 'women's genre' as its consumers are predominantly women and it has strong female characters. Soap opera creates a gendered spectatorship

[5] Thus, a character involved in one story will, in apparently casual conversation, pass on information about the story and receive, in exchange, news about the other plots in which s/he is not involved. The locations in which gossip can easily take place are therefore among the most frequently used sets in the serial – the pubs, the corner shops, the church halls. In these public locations, characters can appear and disappear, as required, in a way which seems quite natural. A scene with two or three characters chatting about one story can wholly change direction with the arrival of another character with a different set of news.

and a counterpart of the masculine ethos of most popular culture by providing a female aesthetics, a construction of femininity. "Soap operas, say Ang and Hermes (1991:321), do not simply reflect already existing stereotypical images of women, but actively produce a symbolic form of feminine identity by inscribing a specific subject position – that of the 'ideal mother' – in its textual fabric.

Indeed, portrayal of women is essential to a soap opera, but there is not a large variety of roles ascribed to women; they rather tend to indulge themselves in the same stereotypical positions: mother, wife, daughter or mistress. It is interesting to note that women are portrayed only in their familial settings, they are seldom referred to in connection with their careers. Everything that happens to them, every conflict takes place on the family level. Ien Ang argues (1986:30) that "women in soap operas never rise above their problematic positions. On the contrary, they completely identify with them. In spite of all their miseries they continue to believe in the ideals of patriarchal ideology […] the patriarchal status quo is non-viable but remains intact". They seem to be old-fashioned, thus providing a nostalgic view of community life. But even this way, soap operas provide relevance for their female audiences. Gray (1987:93) states that "these popular texts […] give focus to an almost separable female culture which they [the female viewers] can share together within the constraints of their positions as wives and mothers".

Quite often women make meanings that transfer directly to their own marriages, using the narratives in their daily struggles to increase the space of their own control within family and society. This process of involvement went even further in the case of *Brookside*, when Mandy Jordache is sentenced to life imprisonment because she had killed her brutal husband. Here, the female audience's reaction was so overwhelming that it simply blurred the borderline between fiction and reality. Mandy has transcended her soap opera status and has become a symbol of many battered wives who, watching the episode, called in women's charities in whole Britain asking for help. The case of Brookside trial is more than a process of involvement, it is a process of identification with the character, of losing oneself into him/her.

It is usually stated that identification rarely happens in a soap; rather viewers talk of recognising the realism of characters.[6] But soap characters are not complex – as the people from real life; they tend to be uni-dimensional or subject to sudden inexplicable personality changes. Because the soap has to be comprehensible to both the committed follower and the casual viewer, and given the number of characters involved, characterisation has to be swift and sharp; the immediate sense of what a character is and what role s/he is likely to play has to be given quickly, using such

[6] Soaps will have a fairly wide variation among the characters in terms of age, relationships, and attitudes because such variations permit a wider range of stories. A soap must have a core of characters who appear regularly over the years and who become familiar to the consistent viewer. In addition, most soaps introduce new characters for a smaller number of episodes featuring stories perhaps not applicable to the main characters.

elements as clothes and voice. One can see each character as an individuated character,[7] as a serial type and as the holder of a position.

Let us take, for example, the goodies and baddies from *Dallas*: Bobby, almost a human saint throughout most of the series, the good and honest son, husband, father and businessman takes a villainous turn when he becomes a politician, while J.R., the 'negative character', remains the same bastard till the end. The sweet and loving Pamela has her counterpart in Sue Ellen, the all-time unhappy drunkard, while Miss Ellie is unchanged in her role as a good and pacifist mother. Sonia Livingstone (1991) makes a similar analysis of some characters from *Coronation Street:* Sally, the flirtatious secretary, is seen by the viewers as young and sexy, but immoral and cold, while Deirdre, Ken's wife, is perceived as moral and warm, yet rather older, staid and less sexy. Mike, the suitor of Ken's daughter, Susan, is dominant, sexy, modern, masculine and immoral, while Ken himself is attributed the opposite characteristics: weak, traditional, moral and intellectual. The viewers have their preferences, empathising with one character or another, according to the outlook in their own daily lives.

4. 0. Soap has become a popular genre due not only to its rules, but also to TV programming. Timing is very important for the success of a TV programme. In the US soaps dominate television between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. everyday. In Britain, Alex Duval Smith (1994:10) reports that the audience figures "have more to do with the time of the year than the story line. Britons watch mote television in the winter" while the TV peak is between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.

Nowadays there is a war between the British channels regarding the timing of their soap operas. In April 1994, there was a serious incident labelled by Andy Medhurst (1994:2) as "the real popular cultural showdown of the season" which was to take place at 8 p.m., "when in a historic head-to-head, slug-it-out, three-way-clash, Britain's three premier soaps [East Enders, Brookside, and Coronation Street] will all, for the first time, be broadcast in direct competition".

The audience's involvement has its meanings not only in the cultural field, but also in the economic one: soaps' popularity attracts both the audience and their subscription money. This underlines how central soap opera has become to British television's sense of itself, how, in Medhurs's words (1994:2), " once-derided genre has become a broadcasting flagship".

4. 1. Soap opera is both liked and disliked, it has its fans and enemies. For many of its followers it has become the daily drug, like the daily cup of tea, or, if

[7] The individuated character is the character marked by traits which are presented as uniquely his or her own. Certain characters, very often but not always those used for comic effect, will be particularly marked by one such trait. Others, especially the longstanding characters, will be constructed out of a number of such traits. It is by emphasising the number of these individuated characters that the soap is able to reinforce the notion that is giving us an endlessly rich pattern of life and people (Geraghty, 1991:19)

you want, a cocktail. For indeed, soap opera is a kind of cocktail, with its many ingredients – open narratives, multiple story lines, complicated plots which make you wait for the next episode with bated breath, close-to-reality characters – mixed and well shaken to obtain a successful, tasty and edible product.

Discussion of the soap opera as a genre has come primarily from two different areas: that of film study which has tended towards a theoretical study of the text itself and the possibilities the genre might offer for a progressive reading, and that of television studies which has placed more emphasis on the institutional context. The latter frequently involves taking the empirical existence of a female audience as a starting point. For the implications of a genre like soap opera, made for and watched by women, to be explored, it is necessary to look at the ways in which the conventions or social realism and melodrama are articulated. As Glaessner says (1990: 126) "the soap opera could be seen as embodying a distinctive 'feminine' way of seeing or being".

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NECESSARY FICTIONS: LITERATURE AND IDENTITY POLITICS

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ABSTRACT. Of all literary traditions, gay literature has been the one to suffer most at the repressive hands of censors, critics, literary historians, editors and scholars, who have either refused to acknowledge this tradition, or have been reluctant to including it in anthologies, biographies, reviews, academic curricula, etc. Identity is a sense of belonging to a community, and because heterosexual identity is considered the only valid one, homosexuals are denied identity—they are 'the other', where 'otherness' is exclusion, exile, abnormality, inferiority. Worse even, not only are gay people robbed of their identity, but also 'endowed 'with a distorted image that functions as a surrogate for what was taken away from them. It is the role of gay writers to present the real image of their community, in an accurate way, thus bringing to an end the traditionally imposed stereotypical images promoted by heterosexuals.

IDENTITY AS OTHERNESS

'*All the people like us are* we, *everyone else is* they.'
Rudyard Kipling (Facing History and Ourselves 1994:v)

Life is a process of socialisation, as all human beings take part in varied range of social relations that determine their place in society. This kind of positioning within a community means acquiring an identity. According to their respective identities, people take a certain position towards others and, in their turn, are treated in a certain way by their fellows, as identity is closely linked to people's values, attitude, and behaviour. Social identity is what you are in the others' eyes,

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in the eyes of the society you live in. There are many levels of identity—gender, class, cultural, religious, ethnic, national, etc., and the people belonging to a certain community often have at least some of these in common, and this fact plays a major role in maintaining a climate of mutual understanding. However, there are situations when a specific identity becomes more prominent and overwhelms all the 'commonalities', emphasising the difference and taking it to the extreme. This is the case especially when sexual orientation comes into question. In situations like these communication is replaced by reticence, respect by superciliousness, understanding by dissent, tolerance by outrage, esteem by contempt and so on. People that we admired and looked up to suddenly fall into disgrace and seem to us unworthy of our consideration, just because they live their lives with partners of the same sex. All their qualities are powerless in front of this great taint, as we are afraid of this way of life, so different from ours and, therefore, wrong. The inability to understand, resulting from ignorance, leads to fear, which provokes violent reactions, be they verbal or physical. Thus, heterosexuals end by imposing their own identity, and denying the others their right to existence.

As a consequence, communication, essential for coexisting in a community, is replaced by conflict. A conflict nurtured by our distorted logic that those who do not live like we do are not like us at all: we are normal, they are abnormal; we are good, they are evil; we are right, they are wrong, therefore we must fight against them. There are most noticeable manifestations of the conflict – hate crimes, homophobic attacks, rape, etc., and others, less obvious, but present in more subtle ways, in the unmotivated preservation of anti-gay laws and regulations, in the refusal to grant homosexuals the same rights heterosexuals have, in the regular flow of complaints about the presence of gay characters in movies and TV series, and, in real life, about the presence of gays among the worlds' greatest political figures—and these are only few examples.

Heterosexual identity being considered the only valid one and identity being a sense of belonging to a community, homosexuals are denied identity—they are 'the other', where 'otherness' is exclusion, exile, abnormality, inferiority. Worse even, homosexuals are not only robbed of their identity, but also 'endowed 'with a distorted image that functions as a surrogate for what was taken away from them. This image created by mass-media, and even by literary works, is so readily accepted by the public because it appeals to widely spread, deeply rooted prejudices, and people accept more easily old ideas, traditional practices, than new ones. And here, the profound social and psychological implications of the inadequate coverage of facts related to homosexuality become obvious, as we all know that the media and the arts exercise a dominant influence on our perception of social reality.

Mass-media has a big responsibility for this state of facts, because instead of promoting dialogue and communication, it presents the issues in a divisive manner, and currently displays signs of intolerance and tension. What people need is accurate information about all aspects of gay life, so that homosexuality can be more readily

understood. Gays should have the opportunity to express themselves, to explain who they really are, in case there is anyone who wants to know or is willing to listen. Thus, expressing a multiplicity of world views and ways of life, the media can help promote an informed awareness of the diversity of human expression and identity.

However, the press is not the only one to preserve heterosexual supremacist attitudes. Unfortunately, publishing houses seem to have heterosexist selection criteria, and instead of providing an increased visibility to gay lifestyles offer publishing opportunities mainly to the proponents of assimilation assuming that they speak from and for a stable, coherent culture, whose superiority will be clear to all, if only they are sufficiently exposed to its values and benefits. Subservient to the hegemonic culture, these writers present, when discussing homosexuality, the heterosexual image of gayness, mainly as structured along stereotypes (like infidelity, lack of affection, and relationships predominantly, if not exclusively, based on sexual attraction) and cultural constructs (active/passive and butch/femme pattern of gay and lesbian couples). As a consequence, many gays and lesbians have internalised society's views of them, undertaking the roles forcibly cast upon them, failing to realise that their lives are not the conventional, preordained narratives, and ended up being transformed by the environment, instead of transforming it themselves.

Still, the members of the gay and lesbian communities have the main role in shaping their identity, enlarging the range of acceptable sexual expression, and making sure that those belonging to the homosexual subculture do not take on beliefs of their oppressors, and are not taught to suppress their sexuality. By 'subculture' sociologists mean a number of different things. 'Culture' is the name given to the whole web of assumptions, religious beliefs, arts and crafts, traditions, language, history that individuals in a society have in common. Society is composed of many groups, and each group will have its own particular subset of traditions that make it a subculture: consciousness of being a group is usually a factor. The number of groups is enormous, since one individual may belong to more than one group, so there is academic interest only in certain types of subcultures: religious, ethnic, women's and deviant subcultures have all been of interest to scholars, often reflecting their own concerns. Because the homosexual community has been forced into hiding and secrecy for so long, lots of their history was locked into closets that were never opened. Today, many closet doors are flung open and gays are attempting to reclaim the bits of history that remain, and openly make tomorrow's history. The problem is that the evidence is mostly literary and, while this does show a continuing tradition of code words, images, and sensibility, one does not know if there were meeting places, lasting relationships or any consciousness among non-literary homosexuals, or whether they formed a group. However, the little evidence allows a perceptive eye to identify a persistent existence of recognisably homosexual sub-cultures and reconstruct a possible framework for their experience. Due to the unfavourable circumstances, gayness has a rather

invisible nature, and it is difficult for outsiders to understand that emotion, affection and love are equally important for a homosexual couple as for a heterosexual one, as they have no idea about what actually occurs within the gay community. Therefore it is fundamental that gays should stand firmly against social constructionist models of homosexual cultures, and define their identity themselves, especially as gayness is not a timeless and unchanging condition, but subject to change.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF GAY LITERATURE

'Human beings use labels to describe and sort their perceptions of the world. The particular labels chosen […] can carry social and moral consequences while burying the choices and responsibility for those consequences.'

(Facing History and Ourselves 1994: 87)

Living in a society which systematically denies the wholeness of 'the others', their full humanity, forcing them to constantly wonder who they really are, trying to persuade them to 'assimilate' and submit to the supreme reign of the heterosexual dream of order, homosexuals *must* react. Allowing the hegemonic culture to impose its 'violence of the letter' upon them, would encourage demagogy and inequity, instead of teaching the promoters of the dominant ideology to accept the unfamiliar, to deal with the difference, thus creating the proper conditions necessary for the evolution of a complex society able to foster all its members in a nurturing climate of respect and understanding. As Adrienne Rich (1987: 155) emphasises,

'it is a basic act of self-respect to refuse to acquiesce in our derogation and dehumanisation; to decide that we will not surrender our bodies or our minds without a struggle, that we will not be bought, or battered, or teased, or terrorised, or numbed, or brain-starved into any state which mutilates our integrity.'

Those who find themselves in such a position like the one characteristic of homosexuals today cannot afford to keep silent and allow for their history to be written by the oppressors. When hegemonic culture bestows an identity upon someone different, it actually defines what one is *not*. As Jill Johnston (1973) points out, 'Identity is what you can say you are according to what they say you can be', which means that identities do not belong to individuals but are social constructs, 'suppressed and promoted in accordance with the political interests of the dominant social order' which establishes 'what identities are and are not appropriate for the oppressed (on the basis of what is convenient in maintaining the status quo)' and offers as a reward minimal social acceptance to 'those members of the oppressed who present self-descriptive discourse in conformity with this ideology.'(Kitzinger, 1994, in *Texts of Identity* 1989: 94-95).

Of all literary traditions, gay literature has been the one to suffer most at the repressive hands of censors, critics, literary historians, editors and scholars,

who have either refused to acknowledge this tradition, or have been reluctant to including it in anthologies, biographies, reviews, academic curricula, etc.This kind of excommunication has had dramatic consequences on the realistic expression of the homosexual experience. The intense censorship has always been an ouvert threat to the affirmation of gay literary history, and has almost reached its aim, as it has deprived the readers of a sense of the continuity of the homosexual tradition. Moreover, hardly anyone is aware that such a tradition exists, because not only were the writers forced to impose a strong self-censorship on themselves when writing their works, but the relevance of their sexual orientation never was an issue when the writings were discussed and analysed. Countless texts have been heterosexualised for publication, and the lives of many authors have been hidden from the reading public by biographers ready to go to outrageous lengths to prevent the truth from coming out (sic!). Thus, the homoerotic tradition that lies behind the shallow 'respectable' image of closeted gay writers has been made invisible to the audience.

A variety of tactics have been employed in order to conceal the existence of gay writers, poets, dramatists, and, consequently, the themes related to homosexual experience. Literary critics who strongly believed in the biographical approach to literature and literary criticism kept silent whenever the sexual orientation of their subject was questionable, but not for fear of venturing on uncertain or unknown ground. They were silent even when there was enough evidence to support the artist's homosexuality, even when there was no shadow of doubt in this respect. The censorship they have imposed on each and every non-canonical work seems to the modern public of today ridiculous, if not outrageous, when we consider the constant replacement of male pronouns with female ones in love poems, Shakespeare's sonnets being one of the most famous examples. This insidious attempt to seal the closet door that had already been pushed open, prevented gay themes from being acknowledged by the reading public, and thus delayed the recognition of gay literature and the appearance of homosexual literary history. The silence surrounding homosexuality issues condemned gay related works to invisibility and supported the hegemonic theory that such writings were an anomaly within the larger mass of heterosexual writings. The fact that the existence of such works has been ignored, hidden and denied for so long a time, resulted in a dramatic distortion of reality, as it prevented so many ideas, thoughts and real life experiences from becoming public.

Nowadays, when the existence of gay literature is acknowledged, we face another problem, related to its definition. Literary critics and theorists seem unable to reach an agreement on what gay literature is. The problem might have its origins in the uncertainty characteristic of sexual orientation. Human features do not always belong to strict categories and cannot be labeled according to dichotomies. Sexuality is not a stable datum given to us at birth, and remaining unchanged during our lifetime, not in all cases, at least, neither is it fixed and immutable. We, humans, are, as far as our sexuality is concerned, scattered on an axis between

homosexuality and heterosexuality, and very few of us belong to one end of this axis or to the other. Most people are to be found somewhere in between the two ends and, more often than not, it takes a lot of time for them to realise where they belong. So many people have discovered what they call their 'real sexual orientation' late in life, after years of heterosexual existence, that it would be irrational to assert either the unchangeable nature of sexuality, or our definite and definitive knowledge of it. I am not arguing here that one can easily jump from one end to the other, and become homosexual or heterosexual overnight. But it is dangerous to focus our attention on the extremes alone, denying the existence of the many who are somewhere in between. How do we account for the existence of the bisexual, transsexual and transgendered members of our community, who may be rather invisible but do exist? Scientists have been searching for the cause of homosexuality, oscillating between a genetic explanation and relational ones, but to no clear result. Their mistake might have been in the approach to sexuality they have employed and in their narrow-minded conviction that dichotomies can always be applied. The '*either..., or...*' rule did not work and cannot function when dealing with subjects as complex as human beings, human personality and sexuality. People must free themselves of this rigid way of thinking, if a solution to all these problems is ever to be found.

Any attempt at defining gay literature is doomed to failure as long as it uses as a yardstick one and only decisive element, be it the artist's gay sexual orientation, the presence of gay characters in a literary work, references to gay life, the rendering of sexual acts between people of the same sex, etc. What we need is an all-inclusive definition that takes into account a variety of factors, combined into a web of meaningful interrelated features, linked by one common theme: gay experience. Not gay *sexual* experience, but *life* experience. A work belonging to gay literature is one that gives a clear, coherent, realistic image of the homosexual lifestyle, with all the aspects it encompasses: emotional, affective, spiritual, erotic, as well as sexual involvement between persons of the same sex. And, most of all, such a work should emphasise the similarities that bring so close together the hetero- and homosexual life styles, both being representative for human relationships, and neither one reduced to sexual activity. At the same time, what I would call gay literature, is one that represents the unique experience of growing up gay in a world that denies *the other* the right to existence, the frightful search for one's sexuality, marked by a terribly confusing lack of accurate information, by an insidious heterosexual propaganda, resulting in a painful inner struggle for the one who feels attraction for people of the same sex. The life of most gays is marked by a series of events which make up a process of gradual self-discovery, self-denial, self-acknowledgement, self-acceptance, and self-assertion. This rather personal process centered on one's own existence takes place in the context of a more general nature, characterised by social, economical, legal discrimination, which adds to the pressure and disorientation the homosexual experiences. Just

undergoing such a process, or only some of its phases, is enough to give you a unique way of seeing life, both the hetero- and the homosexual one. It is said that, while heterosexual writings are characterised by *universality*, homosexual works are too much confined to one type of experience to be of any value. The paradoxical nature of this belief is obvious if we consider that, in fact, as far as life experience is concerned, it is the homosexuals who have access to both the heterosexual world they were born, raised, and forced to live in, and the gay world they started to inhabit sooner or later. Therefore, their cultural, emotional, affective, spiritual, and sexual background is by far more vast and can be characterised by universality sooner than the straight one. While heterosexuality is only too well known to gays, homosexuality is rather a mystery to straight people. And how could it be otherwise, given the politics of disinformation, misinformation and manipulation employed by the hegemonic culture in representing homosexuality? Under these circumstances, homosexuals are the ones called to present the real image of themselves, in an accurate way, thus bringing to an end the traditionally imposed stereotypical images promoted by heterosexuals.

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BECKETT - THE LAST MODERNIST ('BEING' AND 'TIME' IN HIS PLAYS)

SANDA BERCE*

"Being has a **form**. Someone will find it someday.
Perhaps I won't but someone will.
It is a form that has been abandoned,
left behind, a proxy in its place."

Samuel Beckett

ABSTRACT. The contemporary interpretation of S.Beckett's theatre against post- or neo-structuralist critical-theory not only highlights the ontological dimension of his work and him being the last Modernist (through the philosophical formulae and the value of the communicative act challenged by the imagined 'poetic structures'). It rather extends the meaning and significance of his work beyond the mere illustration of an existentialist point-of-view so characteristic for the age of his plays or an avant-gardist for that matter.

In one of his statements about present day 'realities', Pilinszky assumed a reconquest of the 'lost predicate' of action within the "here" and "now" of the event and replaced it with the "discourse", endowed with the many "attributes" which turned life and the world as well into "an as if", a "copy": "Our life became like a *sentence*, which abounds in attributes, adverbs, articles, nouns…only the predicate does not happen. As if our sentences - our lives – had only *horizontal expansion* (…) *the vertical of the predicate*, the *here* and *now* does not fix them, does not make them real any more. Art and reality turned to be a house built on sand, without the cellar of the predicate, without its here and now"(1). Pilinszky's statement concerning the reconquest of the 'lost predicate' means the erasement of the existential pattern of meaninglessness that the accepted 'forms' of the so- called *literature of the absurd* had created. It also means the claim that this literature cannot simply cope with accepted forms of literature. Developing against *canonic forms*, taking the liberty to

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'initiate' and to 'challenge' the literary form, such literary texts state for their own incongruence, describing physical and moral paralysis and referring to the *inconsistency of meaning* which overwhelms the *world of modernity*, deprived of ultimate certainties. Because this is exactly what it is all about: the text once called absurd ("absurd" in its earliest uses referred to 'disharmony' and 'dissonance') is one *reflecting a world of its own*, but also the *referential world* with inner logic and consistency and beyond the understanding of its own contemporaries. Or, rather, it was 'understood' and interpreted with such an attribute as the "absurd". Criticism's inevitable dedication to the revelation of meaning militates sometimes against the enactment of the 'other' scene no matter how 'understanding' occurs or how disruptive the text is. This was the difficulty confronted by Samuel Beckett who, in the opening essay of a Joyce-inspired critical collection focusing on ***Work-in-Progress***, wrote: " And now here am I, with my *handful of abstractions* among which notably: a *mountain*, the *coincidences of contraries*, the inevitability of cyclic evolution, a *system of Poetics*, and the *prospect of self-extension* in the world of Mr.Joyce's *Work in Progress*(…). *Must we wring the neck of a certain system in order to stuff it into a contemporary pigeon- hole, or modify the dimensions of that pigeon- hole for the satisfaction of analogymongers*? Literary criticism is not book-keeping (2). What Beckett confronts here is the paradox of trying to criticize a text which refuses the institutional boundary between *different kinds of writing*, between *inside* and *outside* the text, between *imaginative writing* and critical *righting*.

And yet, reading and interpreting Samuel Becket's theatre today against the perspectives open by the post- or neo-structuralist critical-theory reveals the *ontological validity and value of Beckett's work and him being one of the last Modernists*, not so much through the philosophical formulae or his "handful of abstractions", but through the *value of the communicative acts* activated by the poetic structures imagined by Beckett. The source of the new interpretation is the heideggerian philosophy which deals with the ontological aspects of Being and its existence in time, the controversial and paradoxical (for that matter) "*Dasein*" or "*Being- in-the-World*". As what concerns the possible connection between Heidegger's metaphysics and Beckett's work is, firstly, the common ontology or the ontological vision upon the world, although Beckett's plays expand beyond the mere illustration of an 'existentialist' point of view like Heidegger's or Sartre's. They are free of any abstract concepts or general ideas and escape the inner contradiction of existentialist statements that are submitted to the form of generalizations (3).

Secondly, Beckett's plays extrapolate on the position of doubt, of agnosticism about the external world itself, which, reflected as it must be within the existential experience of the individual, has lost its positive and generally accepted outlines. The only *certain evidence of being is the individual's experience* of his own consciousness. In fact, his plays focus on the gloomy *sense of age's dislocations* reflected in the artist's inability to impose on futility and anarchy the aesthetically achieved *need for order*. Order, indeed, is nothing less than the Modernist age's

talisman and its heroic response to 'the incertitude of the void', to the inadequacies of the human relationships and the frustration of human hopes. As for the heterocosms of the imagination in which *fragmentation* is overcome and *discontinuity* transcended, the Modernists paid a price: the need *to suffer the distance* and *detachment* that are inevitable for an exigent *sense of control* and the manifest form of Modernist irony that of *enduring the estrangement of the Self from the world it seeks to shape and endow with meaning*. The Modernists attempt to overcome their detachment and their aesthetically determined view of life in bridging the gap they themselves originate between the Self and the distant world, simply demonstrate the insolubility of the problem. The problem is often brilliantly thematized into the opposition of the *self-conscious outsider* and the more *fluid, instinctive participant*. The image that opens the fourth of Eliot's *Preludes* ("His soul stretched tight across the skyes") resulting finally in a total *paralysis*, an absolute irony of the '*stasis*' of irresolution ("I can connect *nothing* with *nothing*") describes one direction in which Modernist art moves, a direction in which it represents " the imperial self reversed, hollowed out, emptied of all activity and will"(4). The loss of the Self which is, at the same time, its recuperation embodied in the *language of control* (or the one that takes control over the world) ratifies the *dynamics of the modernist imagination*, itself obedient to the integrity of the self and to the *principles of manipulation* and *arrangement* which are its *aesthetic confirmation*. It is obvious that Modernism was, among other things, a movement that radically probed the nature of selfhood and problematized the means whereby 'self' could be expressed. It is well known by now that the Modernist representation of selfhood was characteristically deconstructive(5). Works such as *Ulysses, The Waste Land, The Waves* and *Four Quartets* (only to mention a few) represent, through experimental means, a selfhood which is *pluralist, heterogenous* and *discontinuous*. The term 'fragmentation' may bear a double implication: writers represent fragmentary selves (and such representations constitute **selfhood** as inherently *fragmentary*) and the fact that there is a subtle complicity between **perceived reality** and **constructed description** and that this is *not a static relationship* but a developing process. Given this 'fragmenting' is used to express (in Modernism) an *active, exploratory process*.

Samuel Beckett's plays are essentially Modernist as they express the position of the individual 'thrown' in the void of the world and, accordingly, is in continuous search for the Self as well as for the irrelevant (because shifting) truth. Consequently, it needs to find evidence that 'it is there' in a way that other things are not. Martin Heidegger found a denomination for this particular (because special) state of being and used '**Dasein**' to denominate man as an entity who is there in a way that other things are not. Beckett's characters overlap that very special entity which is 'Dasein'. As his most famous play *Waiting for Godot* can be read as a debate upon the *problem of existing in the world*, of the meaning of being-in the heideggerian terminoloigy, Beckett's character is forced to 'comport itself' to the question of Being, becoming the questioner as well as the questioned person. In order

to understand one's condition of Being, the character inquires continuously and consistently into *the very condition of being*. This is the ontological characteristic of inquiry and Beckett gives his characters such a dimension as their inquiry is directed towards their own Being. And anything they learn about their own Being implies something about *Being in general* (" The best thing that would be to kill me like the other. What other? What other? Like billions of others. To every man his little cross. Till he dies. And is forgotten." (6) In a similar way, 'Dasein' is the entity for which Being is an 'issue' and understanding of Being is itself " a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being"(7). It follows that '*understanding*' is similar to an 'inquiry' or a 'search for' something: *fabricating stories*, *recalling memories* are only means of inquest into the characters present condition. In almost every enterprise of the beckettian character there is an illustration of **factualness** coupled with an exploration of wild and desperate attempts of *man's projecting itself into possibilities*. Possibility is a good substitute for 'probability' embodied into the character's *physical limitation /impotency* (presented as *amputation, physical paralysis, blindness* or *space delimitation*) or in the master-servant relationship, as the overt expression of the factualness of existence. However, projection into 'possibilities', suggested to be 'probabilities' is largely *verbal* and takes the form of *story- telling* and *fantasizing*. This implies a *shifting* (because duplicitous) *position*, that of being-in-the-world and that of crossing borderlines in order to *fantasize, to build up stories*. It is not equivocal because 'Dasein' as 'Being-in-the-World' (which is not an additional property to it) is already 'in-the-world' and the ontological definition of Being must include the 'Being-in' as an essential state. Only as *Being-in-the-world* may Beckett's character appear as an *inquirer*, and *'comport' itself towards his own sense of being*, towards the Self.

Resonance with Heidegger's philosophy is also revealed by the *sense of fear* or *Angst* associated with *the sense of temporality*. The character's aim is to reach authentic existence and to fear inauthentic existence. With Heidegger, to reach authentic existence 'Dasein' has to listen to its conscience as conscience is meant to activate the power that calls 'Dasein' out of everyday 'Dasein' which is '*they-self* 'and change it into the Self. The question of authentic existence is bound up with the *question of selfhood,* in Heidegger's philosophy, and with Beckett it appears as *the quest for the Self.* As a consequence Beckett's characters refrain themselves to interpret the call of conscience as the voice of God; if 'Dasein' identifies the call of conscience with God's voice, then it is merely slipping back into the world (or what Heidegger denominates as '*they-self*'), making impossible any attempt to reach the '*authentic - Self*'. It explains the fact that any interpretation on basis of identification of the quest for the Self with the quest for God (Christian or of any other religion), in *Waiting for Godot*, would fail.God does not appear because it cannot possibly appear (as a very definite entity towards which every desire or wish of union is directed). The unidentified entity, whom the beckettian characters are waiting for, is not the omnipotent, omniscient God, but the Modernist vision upon the *possibility of self-*

realization understood as 'man makes himself' or 'man as the measure of all things' as he chooses by himself his own future possibilities. Godot, in its obscurity represents **Beckett's concern with the Western self- its unitary pretensions** and **its capacity for disintegration** (the source of which might as well be Kurz or any other of Conrad's heroes), a touchstone of how we must see the reality of the post-Cartezian, capitalist ego. The orchestrated series of references to 'Godot', as the play progresses towards the end, guide the reader into meeting the mankind's conception of itself and the reality of the Western man which revolves into a collection of hints, suggestions, uncertainties and anxiety. They radically undermine, according to tne Modernist pattern, the notion of *self-coherence* and *self-consistency*. And Yet, Beckett's plays do not assume a total denial of absolute. The beckettian quest is structured on the possibility of attaining the absolute and, although *fulfillment* is the Godot who never comes, and who remains the perpetual possibility of authentication, the character's attitude to fulfillment is a mixture of *fearful dread*, of *hate* and reluctant *fascination* as there is no answer, no meaning or identity connected with Godot. The experience described above is similar to what 'Angst' is described in Hedegger's philosophy, meaning that it is not exactly 'fear' associated with anxiety but fear of a definite entity 'within-the-world' that threatens a person. Anxiety is anxious about no specific entity but about '*Being-in-the-world as such*'. " We are anxious in the face of 'nothing and nowhere', that is the world" assumed one of Samuel Beckett's critics (8). Similarly, 'Dasein' is 'Angst'(anxiety) in the face of the 'nothing' of the world. From this emerges the realization of *anxiety as a fundamental state of mind in the Modernist aestheticizing vision of reality*. And, indeed, Beckett's characters are terrified of 'nothing', they depend on 'nothing', they need 'nothing'; Therefore, '***nothing***', as one of the key words is not just a '*not something*' ("There's *nothing* to show";"*Nothing* to be done";"*Nothing* we can do about it; "In an instant all will vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of *nothingness*", *Waiting for Godot*: 8,16,52). It is nothingness or zero or an enigmatic symbol that Beckett uses " to gather all the voids into an *empty circle* (…), the symbol of the ever - beckoning but never attained essence of knowledge and being in human experience" (9). And this expands the thematization of *nothingness* to that of temporality. The relationship between temporality and 'Dasein' (i.e; Being- in-the-world) is that *temporality reveals itself as the meaning of authentic care* whereas care is only accomplished through temporality (10). 'Dasein' is temporal it is 'Being-there', into the present of choice and of freedom, it is the primary stuff of history and tile as such is present only because of 'Dasein'. This heideggerian concept of time (Zeit) partially coincides with Beckett's treatment of time with a remarkable difference: Beckett's notion of the 'passing of time', similar to the Modernist *fluidity* of 'flow' and 'flux'; time for his characters is not a continuous present but something submitted to change and that is factually and continuously changing. The rhythm of time is also associated with memory or with a sequence of time lost and with the endlessly reiterated moment. These are nevertheless Modernist temporal patterns and they assert for not a divided

but a radically fragmentary self, and at the same time call into question all the terms we can use to constitute the Self as reality.

Between birth and death, similarly to the heideggerian '*Dasein*', Beckett's character is just that condition of authentic temporality stressed by Heidegger in 'Being-towards-death'. It is summoned up in the celebrated outburst, which also mirrors the playwright's anguish at **the condition of man-in-time**: "Have you not done tormenting me with your cursed time! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you?"(*Waiting for Godot*: 57). And this reminds anyone about Beckett's confusion about death, similar to his characters who live in confusion, and, according to his biographer's confession, "the possibility of an after-life is part of it". The self same biographer, Anthony Cronin, quoted Beckett's note in the little book on Proust : "Whatever opinion we may be pleased to hold on the subject of death, we may be sure that it is meaningless and valueless. Death has not required us to keep a day free" and he added" But we cannot deduce anything about Beckett's own beliefs from this. It may be only a 'structural device', a use of Bergsonian ideas about time as neither divisible nor measurable, a scaffolding for works of art. The last words of his last story, '*Oh, all to end*', express, as Christopher Ricks has pointed ou, 'both a hope and a regret: they could mean 'if only the whole thing could be over, or 'how sad that it should stop'"(11) . We wonder whether this could be the skeptical, nihilistic vision of the last Modernist or the visible link one may spot in his work between modernity, secularization and the value of the new that corresponds to Heidegger's attempt to prepare a post-metaphysical kind of thought. It could be the signal of the postmodern experience of art within a modernity that is philosophical and not merely historical. This is associated with the dissolutive tendencies already apparent in the great early-twentieth-century avant-garde movements, such as, Joyce's transition from *Ulysses*(1922) to *Finnegans Wake* (1936) and Samuel Beckett's transition from the plays to the third novel of his *Trilogy* (*The Unnamable*, 1951:the French edition;1955:the English edition).

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THE MYTH OF POWERLESSNESS

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ABSTRACT. "To reign but not rule"is the standard by which the main attribute of the British monarchy is normally defined. Most books and studies on the British monarchy give a quite long list of the royal prerogatives standing, however, that there is no real power behind any of the presented items. The main purpose of the present essay is to analyze whether the myth of the British monarchy's powerlessness has a real foundation or not.

The supreme power of the British monarchy has been challenged in the Middle Ages and it was further limited ever since. As early as 1215 The Magna Carta obliged the King to acknowledged and respect the primacy of the law. The article 61 presents an elaborate scheme for policing royal behavior through a committee of barons and at the end of that very last article stood a royal promise:

"We will procure nothing from anyone, either personally or through another, by which any of these concessions and liberties shall be revoked or diminished, and if any such thing is procured, it shall be null and void, and we will never used it either ourselves or through another"

(Magna Carta, 1994, p174-175)

Even though the committee of barons proved unworkable the King's acknowledgement that his violations of the charter would be legally null and void proved more enduring(cf. Malcolm, 1999, p. 168). However, it was rather difficult to ensure that illegal acts, which should have been pronounced null, were treated that way.

In 1253, Henry II had to re-state that anyone who assisted in a violation of the Magna Carta was threatened with punishment. But the King could not be held

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responsible for any violation. Instead, the subjects carrying out illegal royal orders were accountable and punishable.

The Magna Carta clearly limited the King's prerogatives but at the same time there was no establishment legal process that could hold the King personally accountable for his actions.

> "For if you will consider the attributes to God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a king. God hath power to create and destroy, make or unmake at his pleasure, to give life or send to death, to judge all and to be judged nor accountable to none, to raise low things and to make high things low at his pleasure, and to God are both soul and body due. And the like power have kings: they make and unmake their subjects: they have power of raising and casting down: of life and of death; judges over all their subjects, and in all causes; and yet accountable to none but God only."
>
> (James VI and I, 1994, p.39)

"No earthly power can justly call me, who am your king, in questions as a delinquent"declared Charles I in 1649 in front of his accusers. In his study on the Stuart Constitution John Kenyon remarks that people were "born his subjects and born subjects to those laws, which determined, "that the King can do no wrong"… a maxim that"guards every monarch, even at least deserving. "(Kenyon 1986, p.292).

Many legal studies have been devoted to the maxim that "the king can do no wrong"Malcolm's analyses reveals that "the maxim that apparently freed the King by asserting that he could do no wrong was paradoxically one of the major constraints that kept him within the law"(Malcolm, 1999, p. 162). He goes on stating that above mentioned maxim is based on three principles"

1. The King cannot act himself; he must act through a servant
2. A servant of the King should refuse to execute an unlawful command
3. A servant cannot plead the King's command to justify an illegal act.

These principles tied the King's hands even as they proclaimed the King's being above the law. An even older maxim states that : "the king was under no man, he was under God and the law; for the law maketh the King" (Malcolm, 1999, p.162).

The King's not bearing any responsibility meant that he was protected by the taint of sin, wrongdoing and injustice. He could thus be a protective father to his people. However, he was also subject to indirect criticism when men who carried out royal policy were attacked.

The maxim has probably its origin in the Pope's example, who headed and governed the Catholic Church, being the only mortal worthy of unconditional obedience. Another source could be the Catholic Church's religious teaching on Christian obedience to secular authority. Still, the same church taught that no King was to be obeyed unconditionally. The Church had the power to excommunicate

kings, fact which meant that it had the authority to judge kings and release the subjects, from their obedience to the king.

When Henry VIII proclaimed himself Head of the Church, the office which he created for himself failed to endow him with the sacred characteristics attributed to the Pope. The Protestantism of the Church of England stated that "only godly commands, that is, those prohibited by the God, must be obeyed"(Malcolm, 1999. p.172).

In 1473, Sir John Fortescue points out the fundamental difference between the two main categories of kingdoms, *dominium regale* and *dominium politicum et regale*- the case of England. *Dominium Regale* implied that the king could rule over his people by the laws he made himself and could set upon them "tallages and impositions"without their consent while the *dominium politicum et regale*-involved a king who might not rule his people by laws other than those to which they consented (cf. Fortescue, 1994, p.37).

Even though the King could not make laws in his personal capacity, he could still influence decision making by the powers granted to him by Parliament:

"power of treaties of war and peace, of making peers, of choosing officers and councilors for state, judges for law, commanders for forts and castles, giving commissions for raising men, to make war abroad, or to prevent or provide against invasions or insurrections at home, benefit of confiscation's, power of pardoning, and some more of the like are placed in the King.(Charles I, 1994, p42-43). For example the King's power to relieve judges, that became a common practice during the Restorations, lead to the situation in which "instead of the law being sovereign, it was the sovereign king who was in control of the law"(Malcolm, 1999, p.183). in the case of Henry VIII, too, the decisions to break with Catholicism was in fact taken by the Parliament, but the King's personal role is not to be minimized.

" However, after the Glorious Revolution, a new coronation oath clarifying what lawful was introduced. Unlike previous monarchs, who had to swear to keep the laws and customs granted by their predecessors, William and Mary had to swear to govern according the statutes approved in Parliament. A further change of both Houses of Parliament.

Today, by constitutions, the British monarch is entitled to disband the army, and dismiss all officers, sell off all warships and provisions, sue for peace sacrificing Cornwall, make everyone peer, and establish every parish as a university. (cf. Wilson, 1989, p.80), None of these seem to be really possible or legitimate.

Still, it is a mistake to suppose that three is no real power reserved for the monarch. The King or the Queen can determine events indirectly through advice, force of personality, and prestige attached to the office. As Wilson remarks:

"The presumption that the monarch is politically neutral and anyway really powerless, politically, has been necessary condition for tacit acceptance of the institution by many politicians and the radical parties."

(Wilson, 1989, p. 80)

The royal powers relying in the following offices are dormant but not extinct:

- Head of the Executive
- Chairman of the Privy Council
- Head of Judiciary
- Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces
- Supreme Governor of the Church of England
- Summoning, prorogation and dissolution of Parliament
- The enactment
- Making appointments to offices of the state, the judiciary and the armed forces
- Awarding of honors
- Appoint the Prime Minister
- Refusal of the dissolution of Parliament

A brief analyses of any of responsibilities and powers involved in any of the above-mentioned offices would show that they are not merely honorary titles. For example the fact that the monarch appoints the Prime Minister made it possible for Lloyd George (1916), Ramsay MacDonald(1931) and Winston Churchill(1940), who were not leaders of their own parties and for whom it was unlikely that they would be elected as leader, to become Prime Ministers.

Wilson states that the royal influence is also to be noted in the selection and exclusion of politicians from ministerial office. Because of this influence unrepentant and over-vociferous republicans have little chance of achieving high office. That was the case of Charles Dilke who was obligated to publicly retract his republicanism as a condition of achieving office and of John Burns, who because of his decision to remain unrepentant, became "Labour's Lost Leader". Wilson's conclusion is that:

"It is clear that constitutional powers based in the monarchy are alive today, and more likely that not to be used against radical parties and politicians in order to resist social constitutional change".

(Wilson, 1989, p. 82)

In a crisis situation the monarch assumes under the provisions of the Defence of the Realm Act 1914, and the Emergency Powers Acts 1920 and 1964 important powers:

- Power to issue orders in Council under the authority of Queen and Council
- To arrest and imprison by courts of summary jurisdictions (courts without juries)
- To make proclamations without the consent or even the knowledge of Parliament.

The 1964 Act also stipulated that:

"Her Majesty may by proclamation declare that a state of emergency exists if at any time it appears to her that there have occurred or are about to occur events of such a nature as to be calculated to deprive … any substantial proportions of the community of the essential of life". The accountability to Parliament, as well as the concrete circumstances when emergency regulations should be made are every vaguely defined.

In conclusion, the monarch is endowed with certain latent powers, such as to dismiss ministers and to dissolve Parliament which are not used nowadays as a matter of mere conventions. The nature of royal prerogatives and accountability is very imprecise and even though there seems to be no danger that the monarch would ever make use of them, they would give him or her enough power to overthrow the present situation.

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THE PRAGMATICS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION (II): TOWARDS DEFINING CULTURAL DEIXIS

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ABSTRACT. Recognising the need for a more systematical approach to dealing with cultural encoding in intercultural conversational analysis, this paper is an attempt to conceptualise cultural elements encoded in conversation patterns as ***cultural deixis***. Through analogy with other types of pragmatic deixis emphasis is laid on the importance of defining cultural deixis. Through proper identification and analysis of culturally deictical elements the potential of misinterpretation is reduced thus facilitating the conversational process as to reach the intended pragmatic outcome.

In communication we often encounter situations where an utterance can make sense only by the correct decoding of cultural elements that have been embedded in this utterance. Such utterances may be intended to convey meaning by the pragmatic effect generated, i.e. their correct interpretation depends on the meaning attributed and on their potential to generate an intended reaction in the hearer. Mostly, in every day speech this type of encoding is correctly interpreted as the interlocutors share the same cultural background and the same communication traditions regarding cultural encoding. In such situations cultural encoding may even be overlooked or pass unnoticed as the reaction is spontaneously the awaited one. But, in situations where the participants in conversation are of different cultural backgrounds, the existence of cultural encodings may severely hinder the communication if the good outcome of the conversation is based on the correct decoding of the cultural data. Participants in conversation may speak the same language as mother tongue or foreign language but for the non-native user[1] to cope with cultural encoding even if he copes with the language is still difficult and a correct interpretation is dependant on the knowledge and experience of the non-native user regarding the foreign culture. At times the interlocutors aware of their

[1] Participants in conversation will be regarded as native or non-native users of a language. 'User' is intended to be a general term for the participants regardless of the fact that they are speakers or hearers/perceivers. The term 'speaker' will be used for somebody playing the role of initiator in conversation, the person encoding the utterance to be decoded by the 'hearer'.

shortcomings might request the assistance of a mediator, a professional translator or another non-native user with a higher linguistic and cultural awareness than the initial participants.

The fact that both in mediated and non-mediated intercultural communication cultural encoding relevant for the outcome of the communication process may be encountered, led us to believe that in translator training and communication training the need for a more systematical approach to the nature of cultural encodings is called for. Utterances containing cultural encoding may prove to be problematic if the translator or non-native user is not capable to acknowledge the importance of cultural encodings and to find a method of dealing with these. Decoding of cultural data is important not only in the case of a translation process- where of course the need for theoretical training is more acute, but also a communication process that does not involve a translator but may involve interlocutors of different cultural backgrounds. Thus, there arises a need to establish a pattern of dealing with cultural issues in communication. For this we propose the introduction of a theoretical concept to aid in the difficult task of tackling intercultural communication elements, thus systematising the efforts of interpreting cultural encodings, i.e. providing an interpretation pattern. Through analogy with other types of deixis, we propose cultural conversational elements to be filtered through the concept of **cultural deixis**.

Cultural deixis may be defined as ***that reality of a conversational context that is relevant to the meaning of the utterance from a cultural point of view***. Cultural deixis concerns the encoding of cultural aspects relative to the culture in which the utterance is made and to the cultures of the participants.

This study outlines the concept of **cultural deixis** in culturally relevant encoded utterances in intercultural communication situations. The concept will be analysed from the point of view of what causes cultural deixis, what are the appropriate contexts where it may appear, who are the participants in such contexts, how it can be dealt with and why it is important as a generalising theoretical concept.

Cultural deictic elements are very important in properly interpreting an utterance. This interpretation requires a complex analysis of the encoding aspects involved. A filtering of a given utterance through the pragmatic and linguistic aspects involved will aid participants in an intercultural conversational situation to interpret culturally deictical elements properly in view of developing successful communicative reactions. Interlocutors, in spotting cultural deixis as that encoded information that is culturally relevant for the communication outcome should make use of these aspects in order to attribute the correct meaning to an utterance in conversation. By acknowledging the importance of developing an acute awareness of such encoding/decoding aspects the translator or non-native hearer will be able to tackle cultural encoding in a more systematic manner thus avoiding misinterpretation or the possibility of a communication breakdown.

In order to tackle cultural encoding elements in conversation the interlocutors must first acknowledge the fact that they are in an intercultural communication situation that requires special decoding devices due to the fact that cultural encodings might differ from one cultural to the other pragmatically and linguistically. The participants must have developed a high awareness regarding the cultural deictic aspects that play an important role in the decoding of the features that raise intercultural communication problems. Cultural deixis must be first identified as such and then a decoding mechanism developed on the basis of the pragmatic aspects concurring to the encoding and also taking into account the decoding difficulties based on linguistic aspects.

1. Intercultural Communication Situations

The concept of **cultural deixis** is relevant in conversational contexts in general even if no code-switching is involved and also in conversational contexts mediated by a translator. Culturally deictic expressions pose a problem when they are generated in contexts where the interlocutors are of different cultural backgrounds or in situations where the interlocutors have the same cultural background but this is different from that of the context of conversation. The participants interacting in a culturally encoded exchange may or may not be native users of the language of the conversation.

We may distinguish five different cultural interaction situations[2] where cultural encoding may play a role in the global communicative outcome and where the decoding of cultural textual elements might be observed to a higher or lower degree as a difficulty hindering the communication process:

(1) two NNUs of English belonging to the same culture, speaking English
(2)two NNUs of English belonging to different cultures, speaking English
(3) one NNU and one native user of English, speaking English
(4) two native users of English, with different cultural backgrounds: English and American
(5) two native users of English, with the same cultural background, speaking English

1.1. In a conversation between two NNUs of English belonging to the same culture that are forced due to circumstances to speak English the encoding of cultural data will not be that difficult to deal with. In this situation we encounter two cultures in interaction: the culture of the NNU and the English[3] culture. The fact that the interlocutors have the same cultural background means that even if

[2]For argument's sake we will consider Romanian and English as the two cultures.
[3] For argument's sake we will consider the English culture as being the British culture, although it might very well be seen as the American, Australian, etc culture. But such a differenciating process would complicate the argument as too many variables would interact.

they transpose[4] native cultural inferences into English, both of them will recognise the transposition, they will know what the transposition stands for, will know why and how it came into existence and where to look for decoding references. They will be able to interpret the native cultural data transposed into English with ease. They may also use words belonging to the native language - when no translation is possible due to totally different realities- with no explanation needed. Any transposition from the native tongue, be it a cultural or linguistic one will be properly decoded, the only difficulty that might be encountered concerns the competence of the interlocutors in English culture and language. Generally the language of speech is a clue for the fact that it uses cultural references of that linguistic community, so that if one user is more linguistically competent than the other he may introduce English cultural data that might prove to be a problem for his interlocutor to decode. Otherwise in this situation the level of understanding will be high as the tolerance and acceptability regarding competence of English are also high, as two NNUs employ this language. The fact that they are of the same cultural background will provide them with more means of expressing themselves than is provided by the use of English alone. They may adapt references regarding their common culture to English in order to facilitate communication consciously, knowing that the interlocutor has the ability to interpret.

1.2. A context where two NNUs of English belonging to different cultures are engaged in conversation is the most difficult. Even if their linguistic competence of English is high, if they encode in their utterances cultural knowledge, it will be very difficult to firstly identify correctly the source culture and to afterwards decode the information appropriately. The fact that three cultures are involved in the communication process, leaves one wondering which is the culture of reference used for an encoding: it may be the culture of the language spoken: English, it may be the culture of the speaker transposed into English, or it may be the culture of the hearer if the speaker is familiar with the hearer's culture. In most cases speakers of a second language are not that familiar with cultural aspects of the language they have learned, they merely speak the language in order to be able to communicate on a practical level, so the presence of English cultural encoding in this situation is highly improbable though not impossible. Most likely each will adapt English to his cultural background and it becomes more and more difficult for the interlocutor to interpret such a message unless he is familiar with the culture of the speaker. Otherwise the speaker will probably end up explaining the reality behind his encoding to the interlocutor who misunderstood or misinterpreted.

The degree of language tolerance and acceptability regarding mistake is high. Each is willing to forgive any misplaced comment on the excuse that the

[4] The term **transposition** will be used here to refer to the process where words are treated individually and are simply adapted to the target language phonetically and grammatically, sometimes even lexically using the denotation of the source language.

cultural competitiveness of English and of the interlocutor's culture is not extremely high. The two participants to conversation co-ordinate their efforts, co-operate in order to fulfil their joint aim: communication. Co-operation may include the use of metalanguage in order to help supplement cultural gaps.

1.3. In a conversation between a non-native user and a native user of English, we come back to a situation of two cultures in interaction: English and that of the NNU. In order for the decoding process to succeed it is important to what degree each of them is familiar with the other's culture, how the native user tolerates transposition as well as where the conversation takes place. The placing of the conversation within a culture or other might determine a great deal of the decoding process. If the conversation takes place within the culture of the NNU then it is to be understood that he will adapt cultural data to English inferring that his interlocutor will know how to analyse the utterance as the whole situation is defined by the NNU's culture rather than the English culture although this is the culture of the language of conversation.

1.4. The context where two native users of English are engaged in conversation, but each belongs to a different culture employing English as the language of use is the most tricky. They may be from the UK , Ireland, the USA, Australia or anywhere English is spoken as mother tongue, but the fact that they are from different cultures speaking the same language may give rise to a confusing situation. Speaking the same language they might not even know that they are of different cultures, the assumptions they make may force them to misinterpret culturally determined utterances. Apparently because they are both native users we might be mislead into saying that no cultural discrepancies are present. This is not true, they exist but are more subtle than in the other cases. If each encodes his speech with culture specific data, this may be easily mistaken by the interlocutor to be similar to that of his background. Linguistic expressions might have undergone a shift in meaning, shift that is difficult to perceive unless one knows which culture the speaker is making reference to: is it the culture of the hearer or that of the speaker? Both partial differences and total differences are identifiable in this situation as well, except that acknowledging them might be hard as interlocutors might not be on guard regarding cultural encoding.

1.5. In the case of two native users belonging to the same cultural community there is no possibility of misinterpreting cultural information embedded in the conversation. This is the situation where neither risks being misunderstood if he makes reference to cultural data. Such a conversation might employ usage of cultural colouring with a high percentage as this might enable the interlocutors to better determine the topic under discussion.

2. Aspects in Decoding Cultural Deixis

The most frequent communication difficulties that can be encounter refer to partial intercultural differences and total intercultural differences[5]. It is imperative that these be acknowledged and properly interpreted whether a translator is mediating the communication process or not. Partial differences and total differences between cultures are the source of problems in understanding a culturally determined situation. Lexical and semantic items may have undergone a shift from one culture to the other though in form, appearance and context they might still be similar. Even if no translation is involved in a conversation and even if the participants speak the same language by applying cultural data to their encodings whether through transposition or not the level of comprehension is lowered, a decrease which is determined by the incompatibility between cultures in interaction, incompatibility that may be partial or total.

If in a conversation in English between a Romanian and an Englishman, the Romanian says: *You are my comrade*, he may insult the person whom he actually considers his friend and more. In trying to convey the fact that he considers the Englishman more than just a friend, somebody who stood by him, helped him, whom he respects, etc., he attempts to use another word then the dull, so much used 'friend', but the choice for 'comrade' is ill-advised, as 'comrade' has undergone a relexicalisation in English being used as an equivalent for the Romanian also relexicalised 'tovaras', meaning a fellow communist. The Romanian not knowing this cultural implication when using the word 'comrade' in English will make a terrible blunder. He has chosen 'comrade' as he transposes from Romanian where 'camarad' has suffered no relexicalisation and does not have any connotations attached, meaning 'buddy, close friend'.

Another example of cultural implications regarding a communication situation developing in English is the greeting formula *Hi! How are you?*. In English this utterance is used without requiring an answer. The reactive response to this utterance is mostly reduced to the same: *Hi! How are you?*. An Englishman uttering this greeting does not expect to receive an answer where the interlocutor describes his actual state of welfare or health. A Romanian who does not know this will try to give as elaborate a response as possible, as this is customary in Romania. Romanians usually see this phrase *Servus! Ce mai faci?* as an invitation to conversation. Lets look at the phrase used in the following exchange:

> Englishman: *Hi! How are you?*
> Romanian: *Hi ! How are you?* (intending not to stop with the Englishman)
> Englishman: *I really meant 'How are you?'*

[5] see *The Pragmatics of Intercultural Communication (I): Translating Cultural encoding Using Pragmatic Data* for definition and detailed descriptions of these concepts.

In this exchange it is obvious that the Englishman wanted the Romanian to apply his cultural background to the utterance and react according to a Romanian custom, not to the English. So he actually encoded this utterance not according to his own culture but to that of the interlocutor. He did not expect the hearer to take it as an English culturally encoded utterance and play by the rules of the English culture.

The question *Are you OK?* addressed to a Romanian in an Irish shop, would probably receive the answer *I'm fine , thank you* or *I haven't been feeling very well lately, but I'm OK.* None of these answers suit the question if it is encoded from an Irish point of view. In Ireland you are asked this question meaning: *Do you require assistance?* not regarding your health as it would be asked in Romania. A Romanian who is not aware of this fact will transpose the meaning and pragmatic intention of the Romanian question *Te simti bine?* and will answer accordingly, even though the language of conversation does not change.

Not just speech interactions are governed by difficulties regarding the way a reality should be understood, the way it should be interpreted according to the source culture, also behaviour, non-linguistic acts are subject to this difficulty. As in speech it is not enough to know what an utterance means but to also know when and how to use it, in what context and with what implication, to know the shift in meaning that occurs in a cultural transfer, the same happens for non-linguistic acts. How should we act when in another culture? Should we act like we always do, as we act in our culture or not? It is known that it is safer to stick by the saying "When in Rome, do as the Romans do". But how do the Romans do? One needs extensive experience in the other culture to be able to adapt one's behaviour to that of the other culture.

Incompatibilities occur between non-linguistic acts as well. Take for example kissing as opposed to shaking hands as greetings. In Romania it is customary for a woman to kiss on the cheek if she is well acquainted to that person be it a man or a woman or simply greet verbally without any gesture. A woman would never shake hands with somebody unless she is being presented to that person. Men generally shake hands both when they meet and when they depart. In Germany both men and women shake hands when they meet, but they never kiss unless they are involved in a relationship. It is offensive to make no gesture of greeting at all, to just greet verbally. In the Netherlands on the other hand kissing is used to greet but it is done three times on the cheek as opposed to twice in Romania. Knowing how to greet is important when in another culture, not always does the way you greet in your own culture satisfy the customs of the other culture. Less closeness in Romania -shaking hands- might raise questions regarding your attitude as would more closeness in Germany -kissing. Similarly, dressing for a funeral in black in Romania does not correspond to the mourning colour of Asian countries which is white. Delivering an even number of flowers -as is customary in England- to a Romanian woman would only offend her as even numbers are taken to a dead person.

When cultural encoding occurs in an exchange, the meaning of the actual words will be expanded by cultural elements and in most cases unless one is aware of the cultural implication such utterances convey, the communication process will fail as the interlocutor will perceive the meaning only to a reduced level. Aspects that make up the meaning will be misunderstood or ignored endangering the communication relationship of the interlocutors and the general development and outcome of the conversation.

Not all intercultural interactions are marked by cultural deixis. Like social and discourse deixis (Levinson,1983) cultural deictic expressions may or may not be present in an exchange between participants of different cultural backgrounds. But when present they abide by the rules of deixis: the zero-point of the deictic context will be switched back and forth with the role of speaker and each subsequent utterance, as happens also with time and place deixis (Lyons,1981). The system of referencing involving cultural aspects will move from one participant to the other, so that each utterance will need to be filtered through the cultural realities of its creator, even if it is not uttered in the language of the speaker's culture.

Cultural deixis is a variable, depending on the cultural background of the speaker. Taken out of context, utterances containing cultural deictic data will lead to as much misunderstanding as taking out of the situational context of an utterance that has time and place encoding expressions.

Cultural deictic expressions take their meaning from cultural aspects involved in the context of utterance. These are:

(1) the cultural placing of conversation,
(2) cultural references given within the frame of conversation, and
(3) cultural background of participants.

Other important aspects that play an active role in the intercultural interpretation process are:

(4) the inferences the speaker and the hearer make about their shared knowledge, and
(5) the language of conversation.

2.1. The **cultural placing** of the conversation is relevant in decoding utterances containing cultural implications in the following way. Take for example the following utterance: *Why not eat dog?*. If taken out of context assigning the intended meaning will pose real problems. If on the other hand we contextualise it and say that it was uttered in China, by a Chinese person who takes his English friend out to dinner, then the meaning and the intention conveyed becomes more clear. In China dog is eaten as a very special meal. So in proposing that they have dog, the Chinese is actually showing his friend that he wants to treat him to something special. Important for the Englishman in decoding this utterance is the

fact that he knows that the general placing of the utterance is China, if he didn't know this, he would be faced with an impossible situation.

2.2. By **cultural references** given inside the frame of conversation, the following is to be understood. Consider the same utterance as in the above example. If this utterance is uttered by the same Englishman returning home after his trip to China in narrating his experience there to a fellow countryman, then the utterance will maintain its meaning if and only if both know the context of origin. If the narration begins with *When I was in China*.... the necessary reference will have been provided to enable the interlocutor to place the utterance *Why not have dog?* in its initial context and thus decode the cultural elements if he too possesses some cultural knowledge referring to China. If he does not possess any Chinese cultural knowledge the fact that he was provided with a reference will not help in decoding the message. This cultural reference should be provided when the cultural placing of the conversation does not correspond with the cultural placing of an utterance reported in conversation, otherwise it is not compulsory as the source culture might be inferred from the other elements. Such a reference is mainly provided to enable the hearer to decode a message based on his cultural knowledge regarding the subject of conversation.

2.3. The next element - that is not present in the characterising of other type of deixis as are the above two- that is important in assigning meaning to a culturally encoded utterance is: **the cultural background of participants**. In order for a hearer to be able to decode a culturally encoded utterance, he will have to not only be able to identify the cultural context of the utterance but to possess the necessary information about that specific culture which will enable him to infer the meaning intended. Somebody coming from a European culture who does not know that dog is a dish in China will never be able to assign the correct meaning to this sentence and understand the intention behind it: being hospitable. He may either have to discharge the sentence as being non-sense and pretend not to have heard it or try to attribute some reason for this utterance and find it a plausible meaning in a European context. In trying to do so he might end up totally bewildered or even offended, taking this as an accusation of being an animal-hater. Indeed this utterance taken out of a Chinese context where it has a positive meaning of offering somebody a gourmet dish may be uttered in a European context with a negative implication. Imagine a conversation between two people who meet in a restaurant to have dinner, one of them a firm supporter of Greenpeace while the other, a woman, dressed in a beautiful genuine fur coat. If the former said *Why not have dog?* considering the cultural placing of the situation and the background knowledge of the two interlocutors a plausible meaning that the woman might assign to this utterance concerns her fur-coat and the implication that 'if you are killing animals and wearing their skin why not be completely 'inhuman' and eat dog. Inference which may be highly offensive as in a European culture even

though animal meat is eaten, dogs are considered man's best friend and are most often held as pets. (Notice how 'inhuman' is culturally deictical in the above-statement as in a culture where dog is eaten, it would be unjustified to call someone 'inhuman' for doing what is culturally admissible.)

2.4. Another aspect that is very important if one is to assign the correct meaning to an utterance containing cultural-specific elements in the process of decoding is: **the inferences the speaker and the hearer make about their shared knowledge** regarding the subject under discussion. Considering the situation when both the speaker and the hearer abide by the maxims of conversation and both think about the other that he also abides, it means that each thinks of the other as co-operative. Under these circumstances the hearer can infer that the speaker uttered the sentence supposing that he, the hearer will understand the meaning and the intention the speaker was trying to convey. This means that the hearer going on this assumption will believe that he possesses the necessary knowledge to decode the utterance-or so the speaker thinks. This is why he, the hearer will try to come up with a valid interpretation. If the shared knowledge does not include the cultural aspect that has been encoded, and the speaker was wrong in his inference that the hearer will be able to decode, the hearer will most probably come up with an erroneous interpretation.

2.5. For the identification and interpretation of elements with a cultural deictic value **the language of conversation** must also be taken into consideration. The language spoken in conversation may be a strong clue in establishing the source culture of an encoding. If the sentence *The Queen left for Bahamas, yesterday* is spoken by an Englishman in English the inference may be made about the sentence that *the queen* is actually the *Queen of England.* If the sentence is spoken by a Spaniard also in English, we might conclude the same thing if we consider that the language is a token of the source culture, but it may also be viewed as *the Queen of Spain* considering the cultural background of the speaker. We are still more justified to consider the reference as the *Queen of Spain* if the sentence were uttered in Spain although still in English.

The aspects detailed concur in completely determining the nature of a culturally encoded utterance. Without any cultural references or clues regarding the source culture some semantic units may be totally misunderstood, especially if some determining aspects are omitted opening the door for ambiguity. Utterances like *It is 30 degrees, I was there in spring, Meet me on New Year's day* may be completely misinterpreted if no cultural reference is provided as *30 degrees* may be degrees Celsius or Fahrenheit, *spring* does not last over the same months in Romania and New Zealand, the *New Year* is not on the same day for Europeans and for Chinese, as the Chinese calendar differs greatly to ours. Similarly, if somebody in Romania receives a fax *I will arrive on 10.11.1999. Please meet me at the airport* signed *Frances Michael,* unless he knows that the fax was written in

the USA, he will surely not meet the person in the fax and even if he does he will not know how to address him or her with the first name. In America compared to Europe the date is written beginning with the month. So he should meet this person on the 11th of October 1999 not the 10th of November 1999 as would be interpreted by a Romanian. The name of a person appears in the order first name, last name compared to the Romanian version last name, first name. So he should address the person by Ms. Michael as Frances is a woman's name compared to Francis which is a man's. But this last detail if not known will not hinder the meeting nor will it hinder the proper identification of the last name, so whether its Mrs. Michael or Mr. Michael does not matter that much as when they meet this will immediately be clarified and he may say *Welcome to Romania, Ms. Michael.*

Cultural aspects encoded in an exchange can greatly influence communication patterns and the communication outcomes. Two people coming in contact who are of different cultural backgrounds will encounter difficulties in understanding each other fully in conversation even if they are using a common language, that may or may not correspond to the language of their culture. Those who learn a foreign language which they afterwards employ in speech cannot know all cultural aspects of the culture of that language, unless they have vast experience in the community of the foreign language. If on the contrary they do not, then they will find themselves in difficulty when cultural data are encoded within a conversation exchange.

Sometimes this type of encoding does not determine the course of conversation or the development of the situation, it may be used just as a colouring device for the situation but at other times interpreting correctly the cultural dimension of an utterance may be fundamental in determining the meaning of the whole course of conversation, misunderstanding of such information may lead to misinterpretation of the whole situation if the cultural information proves vital.

In everyday speech, people tend to use cultural encoding to provide better referencing for their interlocutors. In situations where cultures interact such encodings may prove to hinder the communication process rather than to enhance it. Even if the cultural competence of the interlocutors is high regarding the cultures in interaction it is still highly improbable for no problems to arise from cultural encoding as it is always difficult in such cases to identify the source culture of the encoding in order to be able to apply a decoding system based on the source culture not on the other cultures in interaction. One should not take for granted that a speaker is always making reference to his cultural background and that he always encodes cultural aspects of his culture; he might just as well have extensive knowledge of the interlocutor's culture and use this knowledge thinking that he facilitates the interlocutor's understanding of the conversation thus enabling a smoother communication process. So if cultures interact the source culture may be any of the participants' cultures. Clues regarding the source culture might be found in the placing of the conversation, the language of conversation

and mainly in the speaker's culture. But as stated it is not a rule that the speaker will use aspects from his cultural background in his utterance.

The problems to be dealt with are basically the same for non-native users (NNU) as well as translators except that in the case of NNUs who are directly involved in conversation the translation process is cut off sooner than if a third party were involved. A non-native hearer will not have to actually come up with a translation variant in his mother tongue, it will have been enough if the intention of an utterance in the second language is interpreted correctly, if he manages to decode the contextual - linguistic and non-linguistic- implications of that specific utterance. The translator has to close up the process of comprehension by supplying a linguistically and contextually similar text that will fulfil all reference to implication. The non-native hearer (NNH) has the advantage over the translator that he does not have to supply a text in his mother tongue and the disadvantage that he might not be as well equipped as the translator in dealing with situations of cultural encoding, the translator seemingly having more experience and possibly training in dealing with situations of all types involving the two languages. So for the non-native hearer finding appropriate variants does not prove to be the problem, but identifying and comprehending the nature of a culturally embedded structure might be problematic, as equal cultural knowldege is required from him.

Normally a speaker will encode in an utterance such information which he believes on the basis of the inferences made on the shared knowledge that his interlocutor will be able to decode (unless the aim is manipulation). But the message will not always be comprehended properly as the shared knowledge might be misjudged. It might happen that a native speaker inferring about his non-native interlocutor that he may not be so well equipped with cultural knowledge might refrain from using information that requires for decoding knowledge of cultural data. But this is mainly an exception as generally participants in conversation do not even notice that they have used cultural encoding unless their attention is drawn to this by the interlocutor's puzzled, inappropriate or even inquisitive reaction. On the other hand if the conversation is mediated by a translator the speaker will not refrain from using cultural knowledge as it is expected of the translator to be able to deal with such situations. Easing the translator's job, usually does not cross the speaker's mind as might happen when a non-native user is interlocutor, without the presence of a translator.

Such situations determined culturally may give rise to misunderstandings mainly if identification of the source culture is difficult. Any situation of interaction whether verbal or non-verbal may contain cultural data that influence the good development of that situation. Failure to acknowledge and correctly interpret such data may lead to misunderstandings and ultimately to a total communication breakdown. The interpretation of such data will quite often depend on the awareness regarding the cultures in interaction.

Sum-up

This paper aimed at proving that cultural data in a conversation are extremely important to correctly revealing the message. In fact if cultural knowledge is lacking the communication might fail, it might never reach the intended outcome. The participants in conversation who are not familiarised with the cultural determinants of the conversational situation risk misinterpreting information conveyed to them. They ultimately risk being misled or even manipulated.

The fact that cultural elements play an important part in the comprehension of exchanges containing such encoding, the fact that we cannot ignore this reality in conversation because if we do so we may fail to understand the fullness of an utterance, the implications and the intentions behind it, the fact that cultural elements are dependent on and determined by the context of utterance, on the cultures of the participants and the culture of the language used is proof enough to justify the introduction of a new pragmatic concept: cultural deixis.

It is proposed in this paper that cultural encoding be dealt with on the same level as other types of encoding contained in a conversation. The situations where the decoding of cultural elements is relevant have been enumerated thus proving that any type of communication situation may pose problems from a cultural point of view. In these situations applying the notion of cultural deixis seems important for a better grasping of the decoding mechanism. Cultural deixis thus provides a systematic approach to tackling culturally encoded data in situations where there appears the need to properly interpret the interaction of cultures. For this purpose the term of cultural deixis was introduced to enable proper treatment and determination of the problems involving cultural aspects in communication. As shown, cultural deixis is fully justified as a concept being in perfect symmetry with other types of deixis employed by communication, but also involving specific aspects that are not present in the definition of the characteristics of other types of deixis. This complexity of the concept is due to the fact that when cultural implications are present there are a number of factors that enter in an analysis to decode cultural data. These factors concur to provide the hearer with the tools to come up with an optimal meaning by a culturally pragmatic analysis meant to assist the decoding process. This analysis is to be triggered by the concurring elements of the notion of cultural deixis in view of grasping that meaning, that will be in tune with the pragmatic intention of the speaker, thus generating the expected pragmatic effect in the hearer. The need to operate with cultural deictic features is fostered by the need to apply an analysis relevant to the communication outcome. Once these features have been pinpointed the chances for the communication act to succeed are increased.

The fact that cultural encoding can be a characterising feature in a multitude of communicative situations led us to sustain the need to theoretise the cultural conversational reality and filter it through the notion of pragmatic deixis, thus

applying the term cultural deixis in order to enhance an exhaustive analysis of conversational reality and communicative situations for an appropriate reactive interpretation.

For translators and non-native users alike a good understanding of cultural deixis and the aspects that concur to the encoding process of cultural data can facilitate a mechanism of identifying and dealing with cultural deictic elements in view of a decoding process resulting in an accurate interpretation and appropriate reaction as expected by the interlocutor. In translator training and communicative training contexts cultural deixis may prove an important tool in conversational analysis. Knowledge regarding cultural deixis can help solve translation and intercultural communication difficulties[6]. The trainees should be made aware of the importance of encoded cultural elements and they should acquire the skill of tackling cultural deictical elements through a minute comparative intercultural analysis of the pragmatic and linguistic encoding/decoding aspects involved, thus reducing the risk of misinterpretation or even total communication failure.

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THE BRITISH MASS MEDIA AND THE COVERAGE OF VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this paper is twofold: to address the role of the mass media in Britain in the context of their relationship with the Establishment and to examine the way in which this is reflected in and influenced by their coverage of violent events, a case in point here being Northern Irish violence.

The paper will include general considerations of the role of the press in contemporary society according to different approaches used in media research. The way in which the audience is acted upon will be considered briefly (as well as the degree to which this happens), together with some of the criteria that determine the selection of news used to influence the public.

The analysis of the relationship between the mass media and the Establishment focuses on the degree to which there can be talk of interference from the government as to what issues can or cannot be discussed by journalists, in particular those related to violence against the state.

Moving on from theory to specific examples, the coverage of violence (the Northern Irish conflict) in the British media is addressed, as well as the consequences it has had upon the media – state relationship.

Violent actions are some of the most mediated topics and the study of the methods used in the process offers an insight into the 'biases' of British journalism.

The media in contemporary society

The mass media are perhaps the most powerful force to contribute to the formation of public opinion in a liberal democratic society. In a perfect world, they would be completely independent from the power structures of the state and they would be objective to the highest degree. As this is far from a perfect world, the

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media are subject to more or less covert manipulation by the establishment in order to preserve the status quo in the name of national security. As to complete objectivity, this is practically an unattainable goal, since media coverage of issues and events in the world are not perfectly neutral reflections of reality. All stories are told from a certain point of view, dictated by several factors that will be dealt with in this paper.

The mass media are for most people the main source of information and the main contributor to their opinion formation. They participate in the 'social construction of reality'[1]. The news transmitted in the media are used by readers, listeners and viewers in order to make sense of the world they live in, draw ' cognitive maps of reality'[2]. The world is divided into categories to which labels are attached, making them easier to grasp. Stereotypes make the figuring out of the world easier.

All social groupings, irrespective of the grounds they are based on, tend to see the world in terms of 'us' and 'them' in order to create and preserve a sense of identity for their members through comparison with other groups. All members of a given community subscribe to a certain set of values and beliefs that define them as 'community'. This is used by journalists in targeting their public. The use of what Fowler (1991) calls 'consensual *we*' reinforces the readers' feeling that his view of things is correct. People choose to read a certain newspaper or watch a certain TV channel because these confirm their opinions and their choice signals to others that they belong to this or that group.

The media are said by many to support or to be in the service of only one such group, namely the ruling class, the élite minority. This approach suggests that the media serve as a means of reproducing the ideology of this class thus reinforcing the status quo.

From another perspective the media are seen as serving the whole society. Their role is to 'set the agenda' of a given community, to point out its most important issues and to encourage it to consider its priorities.

However, the main social role of the media in a state like the UK is to help preserve democracy. They are the providers of information that helps the citizens of a democratic state to make their choices.

Whatever the role of the media may be, one thing is certain: they act upon their audiences to a greater or lesser extent, shaping what most people see as 'reality'. This acting upon also works the other way around. In a way the public asks for the things it wants to be told about. The criteria for the selection of newsworthy events have been taking shape in the course of time based on the preferences of the public. Some of them are, according to media researchers,

[1] see Fowler, R. (1991) *Language in the News. Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. London: Routledgde.

[2] see McNair, B. (1994) *News and Journalism in the UK. A Textbook*. London: Routledge.

frequency, intensity, unambiguity, unexpectedness, continuity, cultural proximity, reference to something negative. The more criteria a potential story satisfies the more newsworthy it is.

Cultural proximity and negativity are the news values which will be considered here. The former is related to the 'consensual *we*'. We are more interested in things happening close to home (be it geographically or spiritually), concerning us in some way, things related to groups or individuals similar to us, which clearly place a demarcation line between Us and the Other[3]. A case in point is the relationship between Britain and Ulster – they are at the same time close and far apart.

Negativity seems to be a very powerful news value. It is very much a part of 'human interest' stories, covering crime, natural catastrophies, all kinds of conflicts from personal to international, from industrial to military. Even when entertainment is the goal, not information, it is often about some kind of drama. The scale varies according to the status and the policy of the newspaper, going all the way to what has been called 'yuck journalism' of the tabloid press.

Even though the criteria are basically the same for all media, the reports of the selected issues are obviously different. News reports are special constructions produced by journalists influenced by their environment, subjected to the requirements and regulations of the institutions they belong to. Total objectivity is striven for but sides are invariably taken. As Fowler says, "because the institutions of news reporting and presentation are socially, economically and politically situated, all news is always reported from some particular angle"[4]. What the mass media do in fact is present versions of reality; their truth-value is variable. However, the majority of the public perceives media reports as fact, as 100% true and unbiased. But bias in the media, particularly the one determined by the state, will be dealt with in the second section.

The media and the Establishment

In a liberal democratic state the press is supposed to be independent of the power structures. It is accepted that each newspaper or broadcaster has its own agenda to follow. However, there are some dominant values and interests of the society at the top of all the agendas. And who dictates these interests? It is usually the government, as the representative of the people, of the *we* at a national level. The media have to follow its lead if they do not want to be labeled 'deviants'. However, on the other hand there is room for dissent and for alternative views, which goes to prove that the media are neither fully independent of nor fully obedient to the state. Some examples will be given later on in the paper.

[3] see Fowler, op. cit.
[4] Fowler, op. cit., p. 10.

Analysts of the mass media have found several reasons for the bias. One explanation would be that the media have to abide by the political and economic interests of the organisations they are part of; they have to obey the interests of their owners. Interventions from people like Rupert Murdoch or Robert Maxwell have been known to happen in order to prevent reports of their own employees to interfere with their interests, but it is impossible to say that the media are totally subservient.

Another explanation of the fact that news reports are not always what they should be is based on organisational factors. That is to say that journalists are limited in their activity by things like deadlines, limited resources, newspaper layout, the expectations of their public, etc.

A third explanation would be based on the culturalist approach. According to this, the media are a forum or some kind of arena where the competition between opposed ideologies takes place. The bias here is related to which ideology has the upper hand as far as easier access to the 'arena' is concerned[5].

Television news reports are perceived by the public as the least biased source of information. The Glasgow University Media Group's research in 1975 showed, however, that what dominated the news reports in the six months the project took to be complete was the presentation of the ruling class. But not all programmes are alike. As researchers have pointed out, news reports voice the official views on subjects like, for instance, Northern Irish terrorism. On the other hand there are current affairs programmes and documentaries which offer some space for more in-depth discussion as to the motivation of the participants in the conflict, its causes, etc.

The main reason for the almost unconditional agreement of the media with the views of the government is 'national security' – all the more so in the case of the coverage of violent actions. In order to preserve this security, not only British but all "western ideological institutions" (the media among the first) "falsify, obscure and reinterpret the facts in the interest of those who dominate the economy and political system"[6]. The ruling class is the guardian of this security. Anything against them is deviant, abnormal, threatening the law and order. In case of any radical action taken against the state (a perfect illustration of which is the Ulster conflict) the media treat it as marginal and do not consider the causes at its root, but its surface manifestations. In this respect, starting from an analysis of US media, Chomsky and Herman argue that 'terror' and 'terrorism' are two of the most important "symbols used to frighten and manipulate the populaces of democratic states"[7].

[5] see McNair, op. cit.

[6] Chomsky, N. and E. Herman (1979) *The Political Economy of Human Rights*, vol. 1. Boston: South End Press, quoted in McNair, op. cit., p.71

[7] ibid.

Ultimately, the media have to keep in line with the established ideas in order to keep functioning. The way in which they choose to present these ideas to the general public is in accordance with their own specific needs. Sometimes though the opinions expressed in the media are in conflict with those of the state apparatus. There have been cases in the history of the British media when state censorship of the BBC's activity was manifest, causing a few scandals. The treatment of conflict in the media demonstrates clearly the relationship between journalism and the power structure as dominated by the 'national security' principle. Overt disputes may surface and in this respect the Northern Irish issue has been a real 'hot potato'.

Media coverage of violence

Violence has a special place in news reports, be they written or broadcast. The more intense it is, the more injured and corpses there are, the higher up the newsworthiness scale it climbs. The appropriateness of its coverage in the mass media has been questioned by some on the basis of the belief that if publicised it may result in contagious antisocial behaviour[8]. In other words, there is no such thing as bad publicity for the people provoking the violence – on the contrary, it might incite others. As Mrs Thatcher put it, terrorists (the embodiment of violence par excellence) should be denied 'the oxygen of publicity'.

However, violence here has two sides: one is "unofficial violence" resulting in "retail terror" on the part of the likes of the IRA and the other is "official violence" resulting in "wholesale terror" on the part of the state[9]. The second is either hushed or justified as a defence of civil liberties endangered by the enemies of the state, in this particular case the IRA. There is such a thing as 'state terrorism' but this concept is never used in the media because the terms 'terror' and 'terrorism' have been assigned to the use of violence by marginal individuals or groups. The state's use of violence is represented in the media as legitimate and as a 'regrettable necessity'[10].

When this legitimacy happens to be brought into the spotlight as happened with the *Death on the Rock* documentary broadcast by Thames Television in 1988, when the killing of three IRA members by British soldiers in Gibraltar was investigated, the state does everything possible to protect its position.

In Britain this incident as well as a few others provoked by the BBC in the 1970s and the 1980s, like interviews with IRA or INLA prominent members, almost led to the broadcasters being brought to court. Under the 1974 Prevention of Terrorism Act the media may be considered an accessory to the crimes the self-declared perpetrator talks to them about. What this led to in fact was the ban placed

[8] see Schlessinger, P. (1991) *Media, State and Nation. Political Violence and Collective Identities*. London: SAGE Publications.
[9] Chomsky & Herman, op. cit., p. 72.
[10] see Schlessinger, P. (1978) *Putting 'Reality' Together: BBC News*. London: Constable.

in 1988 on broadcasting direct statements by members of extremist Northern Irish organisations, including Sinn Fein, which is a legal political party with legally elected MPs. The way around the ban was found in using actors, subtitles and paraphrasing in order to get the statements across.

Margaret Thatcher was particularly intent on controlling the mass media and she took a variety of measures, most of them successful ones, in order to 'muzzle' them, especially the broadcasters. She is said to have thought of journalism as the 'haunt of the brittle, the cynical and the unreliable'[11]. She declared that where television (particularly broadcasts related to violence) was concerned she was a 'regulator'[12]. The incidents mentioned above, and several other instances in which the media (specifically the BBC) fell short of Mrs Thatcher's 'expectations' caused an open conflict between them.

As the IRA and their supporters' political issues were never taken into account because this would have questioned the British presence in Ulster, they were deemed unworthy of direct confrontation and negotiation. Thus it is clear who got privileged access to the 'arena' mentioned earlier. They lacked legality – they were 'subversive elements', 'bandits', 'mad dogs', 'monsters', 'savages', 'wicked assassins', 'psychopathic thugs', 'diseased minds'. The names they were and still are called vary in intensity depending on the newspaper – the strongest ones are those used by the tabloid press, whose reaction to and coverage of violent events is extremely emotional.

Now, following the Good Friday Agreement, both sides are covered, but the treatment varies according to the developments in the peace process, to the stalemates reached or the progress achieved and who is to blame or who deserves to be praised.

The irrationality of the terrorist acts has been reinforced by the British press in the minds of its consumers by stressing the 'pacific' nature of the British people. It is a matter of civilisation versus savagery – this was again used to justify the increasing use of force by the state. "Assumptions about the essentially pacific nature of the British nation" and reminiscences of the "pre-war idyll of tranquility and good behaviour"[13] were launched by the government in the media. As John Taylor put it, "since the main framework for the stories is the common sense of British law and peace, it seems that havoc is wrought only by Irish hardhearts and madmen"[14].

Conclusions

[11] Ingham quoted in O'Malley, T. (1994*), Closedown? The BBC and Government Broadcasting Policy 1979-92*. London: Pluto Press, p. 66. In Williams, K. (1998) *Get Me a Murder a Day! A History of Mass Communication in Britain*, London: Arnold, p. 176.

[12] ibid.

[13] Schlessinger,1991, p. 13.

[14] Taylor, J. (1991) *War Photography. Realism in the British Press*. London: Routledge, p. 144.

There are many factors involved in the making of media reports and it is impossible to present them all in such a short space and such was not the main purpose of this paper, but a summary presentation of the forces which influence the mass media in general and the British ones in particular, especially in relation to violence as a media issue.

It appears that nothing is clear-cut in relation to this subject, there are many grey areas here, even though at times they are made to appear either black or white by the parties involved. It cannot be said that the media are completely at the mercy of those in power, though some would say that they are too easily manipulated. Nor can it be said that they are independent of any higher power, as the case of the coverage of Northern Ireland clearly shows.

Objectivity is prone to sacrifice when the media are placed in the service of the government in the name of national safety and if one biased approach is maintained long enough, as has been the case of Northern Irish violence, powerful stereotypes are created which may prevent dialogue and comprehension even when the conflict shows signs of coming to an end.

The mass media facilitate our understanding of the world around us by dividing this world into categories to which stereotypes are attached. In its shaping of public opinion the press or the broadcaster reinforces these stereotypes. One of the consequences of the treatment of the conflict in Ulster in the mainland press has been the enlargement of the gap between 'us, the British' and 'them, the Irish'.

This is only one of the limitations imposed by the media on the public, limitations due to which

> (...) people experience a much more restricted range of mental models than their society affords in potential. They project on to their reading and listening a relatively narrow range of schemata, and because their experience is limited, it is the same small set of schemata that is constantly confirmed in the papers they read. This situation can only lead to complacency and intolerance, and must favour the economic and social status quo[15].

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TO BE OR NOT TO BE…AN IMMIGRANT??!

COCIUBEI GIULIA♦

ABSTRACT. A lot of ink has been used on this topic and yet there are many things left unsaid. Of course no one can claim to have an exhaustive approach to this topic and I will make no exception. The first part of this article will deal with the issue of national minority groups in general, followed by the issue of minority groups in he U.K., containing some statistics on race in the U.K. The third part will focus on one minority group in the U.K. i.e. the Pakistani community, presenting some characteristics and facts related to them. The last part will analyse the incidence of racially motivated crimes, quite common with these minority groups.

I. National Minority Groups

The issue of national minority groups remains a very controversial one. At the most basic level a *"national minority group*" must encompass less than half of the population (i.e. be a "minority) and members of the group must be nationals of the State (i.e. a national minority) sharing some ethnic, linguistic, cultural factor which distinguishes them from the majority.

The Council of Europe has adopted several measures in response to the perceived problem of national minority groups, underlining the rights of national minority groups to non-discrimination and positive rights in the field of culture, education and language. The Council of Europe has recognised that the "*upheavals of European history have shown that the protection of national minorities is essential to stability, democratic security and peace"* and considered that " *a pluralist and genuinely democratic society should not only respect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of each person belonging to a national minority but also create appropriate conditions enabling them to express, preserve and develop this identity in a climate of tolerance and dialogue"* (Preamble, framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities).

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The Council of Europe, in particular the European Convention on Human Rights focuses on the human rights of national minority groups, perceiving a national minority as a group which differs from the majority in race, language and/or religion and desires the possibility of living peaceably alongside the population and co-operating amicably with it, while at the same time preserving the characteristics which distinguish them from the majority.

Of particular significance to national minority groups are provisions on the rights to freedom of thought and conscience, freedom of expression (Art.10), of assembly and association (Art.11) and the right to education (Art.2 of Protocol 1). Moreover the European Commission on Human Rights has concluded that a minority group is, in principle, entitled to claim the right to respect for the particular lifestyle it may lead as being private life, family life or home.

As the framework Convention requires States promote such conditions as are necessary for national minorities to "maintain and develop their culture and to preserve the essential element of their identity, namely their religion, language and cultural heritage" (Art.5)

It is suggested that a national minority group be defined in accordance with the definition proposed by Deshenes (Deshenes 1985 – p.30) of a

> *"group of citizens of a State, consisting of a numerical minority and in non-dominant position in that State, endowed with ethnic, religious, linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the majority of the population, having a sense of solidarity with one another, motivated by a collective will to survive and whose aim is to achieve equality with the majority in fact and law".*

II. National Minority Groups in the U.K.

The U.K. contains a variety of people from Eastern nations who have settled there at some point in history. Most of these groups have been somewhat absorbed culturally and linguistically into the lifestyles of those native to the U.K. Some have immigrated there to escape the harsh conditions of their countries , while others have come in search of better educational and economical opportunities. Others have come as a result of the past colonial rule of the U.K. over their countries. One thing these groups have in common is their desire for a different or better life and their willingness to obtain it.

The groups' traditional cultures differ greatly but they have been influenced by the English so much that few of their original cultural traits still exist. They have taken on western dress, speak the English language and strive for the western level of

success. Yet most have retained their traditional religion: the Burmese are Buddhist, the Bengali are Hindu and the other groups are Muslims.

Most of the immigrants to the U.K. are concentrated in large cities such as East London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Glasgow where they face problems such as crime and drug abuse. As minorities they also struggle with prejudice, discrimination and violence.

Many of us automatically equate "immigrants" with "coloured" people who trace their origins to South Asia or the Caribbean. "Skin colour is obviously of great significance in determining how migrants are treated in England, Scotland and Wales; but …it must not be assumed that White minorities are "absorbed" or "assimilated" without a trace. For non-Europeans, on the other hand, assimilation is rarely a matter of choice. Racism is the single most important fact in life for large numbers of South Asian and Caribbean peoples in Britain." (James L.Watson – "Between Two Cultures", 1977, pp.1-2)

We should not overlook the fears of white Britons that they might be "swamped by people with a different culture", thus making the integration of these national minority groups even more difficult since integration is difficult in a hostile climate.

Statistics on race in the U.K.

(Monday February 21, 2000)

- ethnic minorities account for approximately 5.6% of the U.K. population (Office for National Statistics)
- Unemployement stands at 6% for whites, 8% for Indians, 19% among the black community and 21% among Bangladeshis and Pakistanis (Labour Force Survey)
- 23% of those studying medicine are from ethnic minorities (HESA Students in Higher Education)
- an African graduate is seven times more likely to be unemployed than a white graduate (Institute for social and economic research)
- on average Pakistani/Bangladeshi men earn just over half the salary of their white peers (Institute for social and economic research)
- 47% of Britain's ethnic minorities live in London (Office of National Statistics)
- mare than 40% of the 16-17 year olds from ethnic minority groups are unemployed compared with 18% of their white peers (Labour Force Survey)
- ethnic minorities make up 1% of the Armed forces
- Black people are nearly eight times more likely to be stopped and searched, four times more likely to be arrested than white people (Statewatch –police research group)

III. The Pakistani Community in the U.K.

Islam plays a very important role in the lives of Pakistanis. Pakistani culture is a mixture of Islam brought to the subcontinent by Persians and Hinduism.

Every week the Pakistani men attend the Friday congregational prayers which take place after lunch. The mosque is packed on this day. The sermon lasts about an hour, the subject of which will vary depending on the sect. Just before the prayer a collection for donations is held, which represents the main source of income for the mosque.

Alcohol is strictly forbidden but many young Pakistani have had a tipple now and then. Smoking on the other hand is perfectly acceptable. Pork is never consumed, it is a rare sight indeed to witness a Pakistani eating any pork.

The more religious the Pakistani family, the greater the restrictions on the woman in the household. But the iron fisted grip on Pakistani women is loosening and an increasing number of Pakistani Women are going to college for further studies. However few will complete their studies as they will be married off before their course ends.

There are three main celebrations held each year amongst the Pakistani community. Pakistanis celebrate by starting the day with a visit to the mosque for congregational prayers and then visits to relatives and friends.

- *Eid ul Fitr* celebrated to mark the end of the fasting month of Ramazan
- *Eid ul Azo* celebrates the occasion when Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son for Allah
- *Millad un Nabi* celebrates the birth of the prophet of Islam. A procession is held through the town which ends in the mosque. At the mosque religious odes called *nasheeds* are sung to honour the prophet. Some sects consider the celebration of birthdays unIslamic and do not celebrate this day.

A woman must not go out for a period of forty days after giving birth. If a boy, then circumcision takes place within a few weeks. Meat and sweets are distributed to celebrate the birth. This may be skipped if a girl is born. Boys are preferred over girls. Some sects will wrap amulets containing verses of the Quaran around the child's neck to ward off evil spirits. Their names are very long, with several middle names. *Syed Jilani Ahmad Chaudry Ishfaq Muhamed* is typical of the length of a Pakistani name.

The name may contain some useful information about the Pakistani (the tribe for instance). For practical purposes, middle names are omitted in day to day use.

It is still common for the body of the deceased to be flown to Pakistan for burial. The number of Muslim graveyards however is increasing and consequently fewer Pakistanis are sent to Pakistan for burial. The family of the deceased will hold a Katan. This involves participants reading chapters from the Quaran and praying for the individual who has passed away.

There are several Islamic sects and organisations in the U.K. but I shall present here only the main ones:

- *Al Muajiroon* is popular amongst young Muslim students. This group is banned from many Universities, accused of stirring up anti-semitism. In London and the South East you'll find lots of stickers and posters illegally flyposted on road signs and traffic lights advertising their activities. They are disliked by older generations of Muslims, particularly mosque committees who feel threatened by them. Consequently they are banned from carrying out any activity in many mosques.
- *Brelvi* – the overwhelming majority of Pakistanis belong to this sect. Their mosques are brightly decorated with tinsel and coloured lights. They believe that the prophet of Islam is immortal and made of divine light.
- *Muslim Parliament* established by the late controversial U.K. Muslim Dr. Kaleem Sidiqee. It claims to represent the Muslim community in the U.K. The organisation has set up a Muslim parliament consisting of MMP's (Members of the Muslim Parliament). It is more popular in the London area.
- *Tableegh Jamaat* is the second most popular sect after Brelvi. They wear distinctive Pakistani clothing, ties and trousers are forbidden. They wear a headgear at all times and grow beards. Women are banned from their mosques.
- *U.K.Islamic Mission* is made up of mainly first generation Pakistanis who speak Urdu as a first language.

IV. The Incidence of Racially Motivated Crimes

Racist incidents have been counted by the police since 1986 and are defined quite broadly. They can range from verbal abuse (name calling) and threatening behaviour to damage to property and serious violence. The definition includes racially aggravated crimes.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 defines a "racially aggravated crime" as one that has been motivated wholly or partly by malice or ill will towards members of a racial group based on their membership of that group. "Racial group" is defined by reference to race, colour, nationality or ethnic origins.

The British Crime Survey (BCS) is a large-sample survey that estimates the extent of crime and serious threats committed against individuals and their households in England and Wales. The 1996 survey specifically looked at ethnic minorities' experience of crimes.This survey estimates that there were 143,000 racist crimes against ethnic minorities. Police-reported racist incidents for the same year were

12,222. The police figures for subsequent years were 13,151 (1996/1997), 13,878 (1997/1998), 23,049 (1998/1999).

Reporting crimes to the police is less common among ethnic minorities than among white people. The survey estimates that only 29% of perceived racist crimes were reported to the police if the victim was a member of an ethnic minority, compared with 50% if the victim was white.

Pakistanis are markedly less likely to report threats. Only 15% of Pakistani victims reported serious threats to the police compared to 34% of white and 50% of Indian victims.

Even though people may never have been a victim themselves, the environment in which they live can create an anxiety that inhibits their ability to live a normal life. According to the BCS, ethnic minorities tend to feel less safe than white people.

Instead of a conclusion

Situated somewhere in the middle , "torn" between the "push' of economic necessity in their home society and the "pull" of opportunity from abroad, all these immigrants to the U.K. take their chances, struggling with prejudice, discrimination and violence. But although they are battling with being minorities in the U.K. they also have a sense of pride in their new country which enables them to survive and, to a lesser extent, succeed. So, who knows, after all it may seem worthwhile taking all those chances…

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