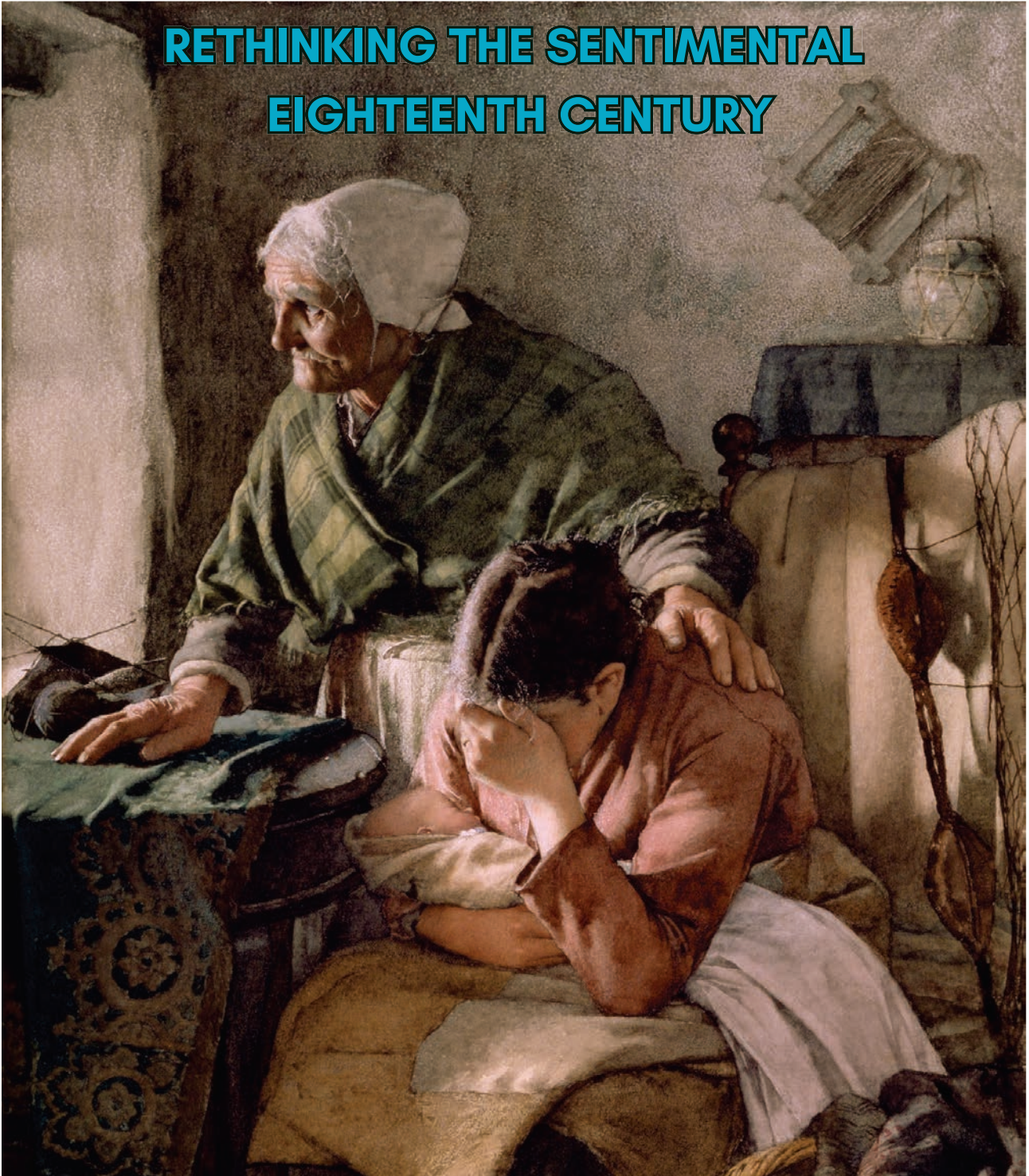


STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS Babeş-Bolyai

RETHINKING THE SENTIMENTAL EIGHTEENTH CENTURY



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INTRODUCTION

Now is an opportune moment to rethink the legacy of sentimentalism so dominant in eighteenth-century Western European literature and culture. Contemporary interest in the “truth of emotions” and the affective basis of “lived experience,” whereby the individual’s somatic and subjective responses to stimuli are held to gainsay objectively verifiable data and recorded events, impels us to turn once more to the period in which arguments about mind-body relations, the hierarchy of passions, the function of reason as a regulator of human affairs and the irreducible force of feeling first entered the realm of debate. It was in the eighteenth century that the term “sentiment” became the broad-spreading umbrella under which clustered the cognates “feelings,” the “heart,” “sensibility,” “emotions,” the “affecting,” “tears,” “faints,” “being moved,” all words that carry within them a suggestion of some irresistible force acting on the rational individual. Henry Mackenzie’s “man of feeling” centres on one protagonist the age’s preoccupation with the idea that sentiments define not just us as people, but our moral compass and whole mode of being in the world. Sentimentality thus emerged as the motive force not only behind the plots of novels, the period’s defining mode of literary production, but the sum of our understanding of what it meant to be alive in the world. It is therefore timely for this special issue of *Studia Philologia* to re-examine the eighteenth-century’s formulations of sentimentality as we question once again the function of emotions in human subjectivity.

For all the animadversions of its critics, sentimentality was seldom thought to be a wholly internalised mode of being, one untethered from moral, philosophical or social considerations. As the essays collected here demonstrate, eighteenth-century sentimentalism bore within itself a complex set of negotiations between the feeling individual and the social realm of the public sphere. Alexander Pope’s sentimentalised Hector was at once a “man of feeling” and a figurehead of heroic action who could, and most probably did, inspire military prowess in an age characterised equally by delicacy of sensibility and military conflict. Mackenzie extolled moral sentiment as a “science of manners” conducive to social cohesion as the result of individuals acting in accordance with the dictates of mutually attuned emotion. Sentimentalism was never intended to be a solo performance, but a harmonious blend of affective relations out of which amicable



social relations might be constructed. Indeed, concerns that began to surface late in the eighteenth century about the socially deleterious impacts of sentiment, never more pointedly expressed than in James Gillray's figure of female "Sensibility" weeping over a dead bird and reading a copy of Rousseau while she treads on the severed head of Louis XVI, were always counterbalanced by more generous notions of what the sentimental life could entail. Towards the earlier part of the century, Francis Hutcheson explicitly connected sentimental ideas with the social sphere in his ideas of "moral" and "publick sense" advanced in *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections* (1742). While sentimentalism could be criticised on the one hand for encouraging excessive displays of emotion and erecting the paramountcy of passion over reason, its defenders placed human feeling at the heart of moral consciousness and the ability to act properly in accordance with sentimental ethics.

Two major themes that emerge in this special issue are, first, the question over whether sentimentalism originates as a pre-rational, turbid, self-centred force against which our rationality must contend, or a benevolent faculty implanted within the human frame with the capacity to inculcate timeless moral truths. This latter point directs us to the second theme, which concerns the historical, geographical and cultural situatedness of sentimentalism. As seen in the essays here, sentimentalism in the eighteenth century was invariably framed as an innate feature of human physiology that could, with sufficient understanding and to greater and lesser degrees according to social development and geographical happenstance, be discerned in all peoples on the face of the earth. This accounts for the seeming paradox of Adam Smith's account of human morality whereby the perceived uniformity of emotions allowed him to posit the "impartial spectator" (Smith 1761, 34) as the "vicegerent" (204) of God within us, a reliable arbiter of our own and other people's actions whether under the influence of emotions or not. Moreover, the pleasurable sensations we experience when we witness an act of goodness were held to be a reliable indicator of the path of virtue with no need for the faculty of reason to adjudicate. Hence the "truth of emotion," according to the eighteenth-century's understanding of the term, was quite the opposite of self-indulgent or egotistical amorality. Sentimentalism was the foundation of morality precisely because it lay deeper than rationality and was less prone to error, albeit it had to be interpreted carefully, hence it provided the plot-stuff of many an eighteenth-century novel.

Set against this, recent advances in the history of emotions encourage us to reconsider sentimentalism as a "biocultural" phenomenon (cf. Boddice, 2020). The hermeneutical challenge sentimentalism poses is that it is at once an embodied experience and a culturally situated one; the wise student of eighteenth-century culture will weigh sentimentalism's frequent claims to innate universality with its particular moment in place and history. Moreover,

just as it has proved constructive among historians to speak of plural “enlightenments” rather than a single monolithic “enlightenment” to take into account local variations and multiple perspectives, so the essays here approach sentimentalism as a multifaceted historical and cultural entity, both in terms of how it was understood in the period and how we analyse it today. The very dominance of sentimentalism meant that it spanned virtually all aspects of eighteenth-century culture, from books, poems and plays to medical, philosophical and scientific discourse, from literary salons to gardens and expeditions of discovery. Sentimentality was a gendered phenomenon as well as one that drew upon differing pre-existing traditions; although, as we shall see, there was a remarkable traffic of ideas in shared sentimental discourse between neighbours Britain and France. As the eighteenth century wore on, sentimentalism came under pressure from, on the one hand, more “Romantic” tastes that held regulated and socially grounded emotions to be mawkish, and on the other, the school of “sense” that increasingly disfavoured powerful displays of feeling – the latter most famously expressed in the novels of Jane Austen.

The articles included in the present volume aim to provide new and emerging critical contexts that unravel the multi-faceted concept of sentimentalism outlined above. The volume opens with Jessica Glueck’s essay on Homer’s Hector as man of feeling. She sheds a new light on Alexander Pope’s translation of the scene of the parting of Hector from Andromache, arguing that the eighteenth-century ideal of sensibility – which created an ambiguous model of masculinity – was employed by Pope in order to transform Hector into a more attractive masculine archetype for modern readers. Ellen Dangel-Janic zooms in on Susanna Centlivre’s use of humour in *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, a play in which the comic acquires both an ethical and an empathetic dimension which strengthens the virtuous nature of the female heroines who are at loggerheads with vicious figures such as parents and guardians. Elena Butoescu offers a fresh analysis of eighteenth-century affective theory in tandem with translation studies. She devotes attention to the English translation of Crébillon *fil’s* novel *Le Sopha, couleur de roze*, one of the well-known erotic books that promotes a new discourse meant to popularize virtue through eroticism, satire and decadence. Amelia Precup interprets Eliza Haywood’s novel *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* as a story of suffering, aggression and, ultimately, emotional development of the heroine from an imprudent coquette to a reflective wife whereas Rodolphe Olcèse theorizes on Rousseau’s concept of self-love as an expansion of feeling which can be related to contemporary climatic questions. At the opposite end lies the wrong practice of sympathy and benevolence explored by Alexandra Bacalu in conjunction with the fragmentary structure of Henry Mackenzie’s novel *The Man of Feeling*. Rebecca J. Squires argues that Claude-Henri Watelet’s *Essay on Gardens* may be viewed as a telling example of

the relationship between affections and the mid-eighteenth-century picturesque landscape embodied by the French painter's garden isle, *The Moulin July*. Madame de Tourvel, the sentimental and idealized heroine of Pierre Choderlos de Laclos's novel *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, enables Yuqin Gong to raise moral questions about the contemporary world driven by competition and self-interest. Andreea Bugiac re-reads Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* and Laclos's *Liaisons dangereuses* so as to show how sensibility propels into action new fictional forms and norms of emotional behaviour meant to question the limits between the human, the non-human and the inhuman. Éva Antal's insight into Mary Wollstonecraft's travel-letters lays stress on the concept of intellectual mobility and escapism, which the author connects with Rousseau's ideas on exercise and movement, on the one hand, and with Burke's theory of the sublime, on the other. Finally, Emese Kunkli treats Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* as a parody of sentimental and Gothic novels, claiming that the novel should also be read as a *Bildungsroman* in which Austen rewrites romantic literature as well as the conventions of the female Gothic novel ending.

The eleven articles included in the volume are chronologically ordered and have the merit of opening up new vistas for research on eighteenth-century sensibility tackled with the help of recent theories of emotions. We would like to express our special thanks to the contributors, to the article peer-reviewers, and to the *Studia Philologia* executive editors for kindly accepting a theme that continues to be of utmost relevance today.

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“MY SOUL’S FAR BETTER PART”: HOMER’S HECTOR AS MAN OF FEELING¹

Jessica GLUECK²

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ABSTRACT. *“My Soul’s Far Better Part”*: *Homer’s Hector as Man of Feeling*. Eighteenth-century sentimentalism may seem foreign to the brutal world of Homer’s *Iliad*. Yet the parting of Hector and Andromache as depicted in the ancient Greek epic was a key symbol of sensibility in British culture at this time. Translations of the scene became staples of poetic anthologies and were quoted in periodicals, conduct books, and novels. The same passage was a popular theme for neoclassical art. This article will explore what attracted readers so persistently to the Homeric farewell scene. In contrast with previous scholarship, which maintains that eighteenth-century thinkers saw this episode primarily as an affirmation of separate, gendered spheres, I argue that interpretations of Hector and Andromache in this period blur the lines between traditionally masculine and feminine traits, transforming Hector into a “man of feeling.” This article begins by outlining how the ideals of sensibility created ambiguities in the construction of masculinity. In the second section, a close reading of Alexander Pope’s translation of the parting scene reveals that he deployed these ambiguities to make Hector a more appealing masculine archetype for a modern audience. Finally, I explore two important eighteenth-century artistic works directly inspired by Pope’s translation, demonstrating how the artists

¹ This article represents a shortened version of part of a chapter of Jessica Glueck’s unpublished PhD thesis for the University of Cambridge, ‘Traditions of Tenderness: Sensibility and the Classics in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain.’

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Angelica Kauffman and Gavin Hamilton used the parting scene to challenge traditional notions of manly heroism and to highlight themes of love and sympathy within the *Iliad*.

Keywords: *Hector, "man of feeling," sentimentalism, Homer, epic, gender, Alexander Pope.*

REZUMAT. „*Jumătatea desăvârșită a sufletului meu*”: *Hector, personajul lui Homer, ca om sentimental.* Sentimentalismul secolului al XVIII-lea poate părea cu totul și cu totul străin de lumea violentă și brutală a *Iliadei* lui Homer. Însă, despărțirea dintre Hector și Andromaca, așa cum este reprezentată în textul antic grec, devine în cultura britanică de mai târziu un simbol foarte puternic al sensibilității. Traduceri ale acestei scene se găsesc pretutindeni în antologii de poezie publicate la acea vreme, dar și în reviste, manuale de conduită și romane. Același pasaj devine o temă recurentă în arta neoclasică. În acest articol, îmi propun să explorez ceea ce i-a atras atât de mult pe cititorii secolului al XVIII-lea la această scenă homerică de rămas bun. Spre deosebire de alte studii critice, care susțin faptul că gânditorii secolului al XVIII-lea au văzut în această scenă o demarcare clară între cele două sfere ale masculinității și feminității, doresc să demonstrez că Hector și Andromaca sunt înțeleși în această perioadă într-un mod care confundă, de fapt, trăsăturile masculine cu cele feminine și îl transformă pe Hector într-un vrednic om sentimental. În prima parte a acestui articol, explic faptul că idealul sensibilității aduce cu sine o reprezentare ambiguă a masculinității. În a doua parte, propun o analiză atentă a traducerii lui Alexander Pope care arată cum acesta se folosește de astfel de ambiguități pentru a-l transforma pe Hector într-un arhetip masculin care să fie cu adevărat atractiv pentru un public modern. În cele din urmă, analizez două opere de artă vizuală care aparțin secolului al XVIII-lea și care se inspiră direct din traducerea lui Pope cu scopul de a demonstra faptul că artiștii Angelica Kauffman și Gavin Hamilton s-au folosit de această scenă de rămas bun pentru a contesta noțiunile tradiționale despre eroismul masculin și pentru a sublinia tema dragostei și a simpatiei în *Iliada*.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Hector, omul sentimental, sentimentalism, Homer, epopee, identitatea de gen, Alexander Pope.*

Introduction

“[A] tender scene in the *Iliad*, like a cultivated spot in the Alps, derives new beauties, from the horrors, which surround it. Indeed, had he left us but one specimen of the kind, the interview of Hector and Andromache, in the sixth book, this would have been sufficient to show [Homer’s] entire command over our softest feelings.”

Robert Wood, *An Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer* (1769, xlii)

When Wood wrote these lines in 1769, he summed up a renewed fascination with Hector and Andromache in British culture which stretched back to the late seventeenth century. Their parting scene, in particular, appealed to the widespread literary, philosophical, and artistic interest in what Wood called "our softest feelings," becoming a kind of "touchstone" of sensibility (Clingham 2000, 54). It was ubiquitous in both literary criticism and visual art, and was translated separately for the first time, as a kind of Homeric set piece. As the century progressed, such translations became staples of popular poetic anthologies and were quoted in a dizzying array of periodical essays, conduct books, and novels. Alexander Pope's 1713 version was reprinted separately as a school text as late as 1880 (Homer; Pope 1880 ed.).

Critics including Morgan Strawn (2012), Claudia Thomas (1994), and Carolyn D. Williams (1993) have briefly discussed Pope's translation of the parting scene to illustrate the importance of tender themes in eighteenth-century readings of Homer or to comment on Pope's portrayals of women. The only full exploration of the scene's broader cultural significance in the literature and art of the period is Jonathan Taylor's (2020). Taylor concludes that the contrast between stalwart hero and weepy wife in Homer's text served as a justification for the doctrine of separate masculine and feminine spheres (Taylor 2020, 101). While this is certainly one aspect of the scene's appeal, such an interpretation ignores the importance of sensibility in eighteenth-century thought and the ambiguities it created in the construction of gender. This chapter will first establish those ambiguities through a discussion of some key sources for early eighteenth-century sentimentalism.³ In the second section, a close reading of Alexander Pope's translation of the parting scene reveals that he rejected medieval and Renaissance depictions of Hector as an implacable, hypermasculine warrior, deploying androgynous portrayals of sympathy and grief to create an icon of sentimental masculinity. Finally, I explore two important eighteenth-century artistic works directly inspired by Pope's translation, demonstrating how the artists Angelica Kauffman and Gavin Hamilton used the parting scene to challenge traditional notions of manly heroism and to highlight themes of love and sympathy within the *Iliad*.

"A kind of Simpathy in Souls": Sensibility and the Complexities of Gender

As Taylor acknowledges, modern scholarship has challenged the idea that rigidly gendered "separate spheres" dominated eighteenth-century British

³ Following John Mullan (1988) *passim* and Thomas Dixon (2015, 69), I use "sentimentalism" and "sensibility" interchangeably.

culture (Taylor 2020, 102).⁴ Although the need for segregation between the feminine and masculine worlds was an important literary trope, other models were emerging, shaped by the ambivalently gendered discourse of sensibility. There is a vast bibliography on sensibility and gender, and I can only discuss a few examples here.⁵ But these widely read philosophical works and periodical articles will reveal evolving ideas of masculinity at the turn of the eighteenth century and help to explain why the love story of Hector and Andromache became a site of engagement with complex notions of gendered ethics.

The discourse of sentimentalism is older than scholars usually acknowledge: the “age of sensibility” is often thought to begin in the 1740s or later (Mullan 1988; Ellis 1996). Yet in the later seventeenth century, theologians were already praising spontaneous outbursts of emotion as signs of a generous human nature designed by a benevolent God. These thinkers included the influential group known as Cambridge Platonists. They believed “that human nature was instinctively sympathetic and that their passions naturally inclined them to virtuous actions” (Barker-Benfield 1992, 67). To have sympathy for those in distress and to exhibit sorrow oneself were both signs of “natural” humanity, even of divinity. For instance, the clergyman Robert South pointed out in 1662 that Christ wept and that his capacity for tender feeling placed him above the Stoics (Barker-Benfield 1992, 68). The Platonist Henry More explained how our “softer” feelings allow us to experience compassion and invite others to have compassion on us: “Nature [...] bestowed on so many of the Creatures when they are oppressed, for the drawing of Compassion toward them [...] a lamenting tone of Voice, the dejection of the Eyes and Countenances, Groaning, Howling, Sighs and Tears.” These expressions would “incline the Mind to Compassion” (qtd. in Barker-Benfield 1992, 67).

The ideas of the Cambridge Platonists shaped the thinking of Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, one of the most prominent British philosophers of the early eighteenth century (Barker-Benfield 1992, 105). Shaftesbury was the first to develop the notion of an innate “moral sense,” an idea which would inspire later sentimental philosophers such as Adam Smith, Francis Hutcheson, and David Hume. This “sense” was “an intuitive [...] emotional response distinguishing good from evil and oriented toward social affection” (Barker-Benfield 1992, 105). Though Shaftesbury was anxious about effeminacy, the idea of a moral sense common to all human beings “by definition could be read

⁴ Vickery (1993) and Klein (1995) were important early challengers to the supposed dominance of “separate spheres” in the eighteenth century. Since then, scholars have discussed women’s involvement in a variety of supposedly masculine worlds: Schellenberg (2007) summarises this scholarship. On men in the domestic sphere, see Maurer (1998) and Harvey (2012).

⁵ Studies of sensibility and gender include Barker-Benfield (1992), Maurer (1998), Ellison (1999), and Harvey (2012).

as something all 'humanity' shared, including women" (Barker-Benfield 1992, 119). By the time Pope was translating the *Iliad*, between 1715 and 1720, the works of both Shaftesbury and the Cambridge Platonists had suggested that the virtuous, instinctive passions which underlie our morality may transcend distinctions of gender.

Such ideas were not limited to the realms of theology and philosophy. Popular periodicals, too, explored the complexities of gendered emotions.⁶ A prominent theme of these discussions, as of the Platonists' writings, was the expression of grief. Tears have been associated with weakness and femininity since at least the days of Plato (e.g., *Republic* 3.395e). The classical humanism of the Renaissance had entailed a particular crackdown on male emotional displays (Capp 2014, 80-82). But during the eighteenth century, male tears became a symbol of virtue for many thinkers (Crane 1934, 206). The moral importance of male tears is demonstrated by the weepy heroes of mid- and late-century sentimental novels (Brissenden 1974, 252-58). But as early as 1709, Richard Steele wrote in the *Tatler*: "To be apt to shed Tears, is a Sign of a great as well as little Spirit" (Steele 1987 ed., I, 471). He suggests that the sources of tears differ for men and women: women weep out of pity for abject suffering, while men, who give greater thought to the "dignity" of behaviour, are more moved by the sight of people trying to control their grief. This distinction affirms a traditional divide between masculine rationality and feminine emotionalism. However, for both genders, weeping may denote "pity" and "reconciliation", symbolising "that Sympathy which is given us for our mutual Good-will and Service" (Steele 1987 ed., I, 471). In suggesting that it was natural to display one's own sorrows and humane to be moved by the grief of others, sensibility challenged models of masculinity predicated on strength and self-control.

The *Tatler* and its even more famous cousin, the *Spectator*, also promoted a conception of marriage in which differences between men and women might be temporarily elided through love and emotional openness. Though historians such as Lawrence Stone (1977) and Rudolph Trumbach (1978) once argued that the eighteenth century saw the invention of companionate marriage, most scholars now agree that mutual affection had always been important in married life.⁷ But the periodicals' language of "sympathy" between husband and wife presented such affection through the newer lens of sensibility. "There is a kind of Simpathy in Souls that fits them for each other," writes Steele of ideal married love, "and we may be assured, when we see Two Persons engaged in the Warmths of a mutual Affection, that there are certain Qualities in both their

⁶ On the ways in which medical discourse shaped conceptions of both emotion and gender, see Barker-Benfield (1992, 8-9).

⁷ The historians who have disagreed with Stone and Trumbach are legion, but see for instance Okin (1982), Vickery (1993), and Shoemaker (1998).

Minds which bear a Resemblance to one another” (Steele, 1987 ed., III, 9). Within a loving relationship, Steele wrote in the *Spectator*, men could freely express their vulnerability: “I need not dissemble the Sorrow of my Heart to be agreeable there, that very Sorrow quickens her Affection. This Passion towards each other...enters into the very Constitution, and the Kindness flows as easily and silently as the Blood in the Veins” (Addison and Steele, 1987 ed., IV, 237). This image suggests the commonalities between husband and wife: their passions are as similar, as natural, and as fundamentally human as their blood.

Those who embraced the notion of a moral sense common to all human beings did not necessarily reject the doctrine of “separate spheres.” Indeed, women’s sentimental “delicacy” was often the very reason alleged for their unfitness to participate in public life – including by Shaftesbury himself (Barker-Benfield 1992, 118). But the popularity of ideas like Steele’s suggests that a Homeric scene involving the sorrows of a husband and wife could, for eighteenth-century readers, bring out the similarities between them just as much as the differences; could serve as a testament to the emotional responses human beings share across gender divides and across millennia.

Tender-hearted Hector

This eighteenth-century reading of the *Iliad*’s parting scene as a moment of sympathy and shared sorrow constitutes a significant departure from medieval and Renaissance interpretations. Since the Middle Ages, this Homeric farewell had been celebrated as an example of “lion-hearted” manliness, in which an indomitable Hector resists the temptations posed by his wife, castigates her foolishness, and rushes back to battle (Burrow 1993, 205; Marzec 2008, 59-63). Hector’s name had even entered the English language in the fourteenth century as a term for a valiant soldier (OED s.v. ‘hector, n.’). In his famous 1616 translation of the *Iliad*, George Chapman perpetuated the image of Hector as a tough masculine ideal, but with a Renaissance twist: he transformed the Trojan warrior into a Stoic paragon who warns his wife to avoid “extremes of thought” and expresses his own “contempt of death” (Chapman 1956 ed., I, 151, 150; Wilcox 1982, 166). There is some support for this single-minded, hypermasculine vision of Hector in the *Iliad*’s text, especially in the moment when he sends Andromache back into the house: “Go back to the house now, attend to your proper tasks, the loom and the distaff [...] [W]arfare shall be the business of men: all those — and myself above all — who are native to Ilion.” (*Iliad* 6.490-93, trans. Green 2015).

By the late seventeenth century, this inflexible, quasi-Stoic vision of masculinity was beginning to pall. The first stand-alone translations of the parting scene tend to critique and satirise, rather than exalting, Hector’s martial

virtue. Knightley Chetwood lampoons Hector's desire not to appear cowardly before his fellow Trojans: "But I not half so much those Grecians fear, // As Carpet-Knights, State-Dames, and Flatterers here. // For they, if ever I decline the Fight, // Miscall wise Conduct Cowardise and Flight" (Chetwood 1693, 110). Here, Hector admits that his decision to return to battle is motivated primarily by subservience to popular prejudice. The great hero is at the mercy of "carpet-knights, state-dames, and flatterers," who prevent him from pursuing the more peaceful course he knows to be "wise conduct." John Dryden, who included his translation of the scene in the 1693 *Examem Poeticum* anthology which he edited, introduced the piece with a bitter indictment of Homeric heroism generally:

[Homer] stirs up the irascible appetite...he provokes to Murther, and the destruction of God's Images; he forms and equips those ungodly Man-killers; a race of men who can never enjoy quiet in themselves, 'till they have taken it from all the World. This is Homer's commendation, and such as it is, the Lovers of Peace, or at least of more moderate Heroism, will never envy him. (Dryden 1693, 23-24)

Dryden alludes here to the generation of civil conflict – including iconoclasm, a true "destruction of God's images" – which preceded the Restoration. Homeric heroes become symbolic of the violence that had characterized English society throughout much of Dryden's adult life. Hector's martial prowess, so admired by medieval and Renaissance commentators, is implicitly condemned as one more instance of this destructive "appetite." In parallel with translations which undermined the moral significance of Hector's heroism, the noun derived from his name changed its meaning. Members of an infamous drinking society founded in the 1650s called themselves "Hectors," and the word became a term for "a swaggering fellow; a ... bully" (Barker-Benfield 1992 49-50; OED s.v. 'hector, n.'). In a society riven with violence, from the terrors of the Revolution and its aftermath to the riotous tavern culture under Charles II, Hector's martial toughness could too easily become synonymous with gratuitous bloodshed.⁸

If Hector was to survive into the eighteenth century as an ideal rather than a tired classical trope, he would have to transform from a ruthless warrior into a gentler archetype which would appeal more fully to the modern, war-weary man. Alexander Pope's famous translation of the *Iliad* accomplished that transformation. It is, in some ways, surprising to find Pope at the forefront of a movement to infuse Homer with tenderness. As Strawn points out, Pope is seldom cited as a sentimental author and has been presented by some scholars

⁸ On the violence of society and tavern culture during the Restoration, see Barker-Benfield (1992, 49-54).

as an opponent of sensibility (Strawn 2012, 586).⁹ Janet Todd asserts that Pope viewed sensibility as “a breakdown of traditional aesthetic standards[...] an unfortunate feminisation of culture” (1986, 47); Barker-Benfield vividly describes Pope’s supposed fears of “liquefying the Stoic male[...] and making women the moral focus” (1992, 298). Pope’s views on gender and emotion were complex: at times, he satirized sentiment and wrote condescendingly about women. His portrayal of Andromache is one example. He makes the princess a dependent sufferer who “hung on [Hector’s] hand” while “the big Tear stood trembling in her Eye” (Pope 1967 ed., VII, 351). Hector, meanwhile, appears in some of Pope’s footnotes as a pious patriot who subordinates private emotions to national affairs: “This Hero, tho’ doubtful if he should ever see *Troy* again, yet goes not to his Wife and Child, till after he has[...] discharg’d every Duty to the Gods, and to his Country; his Love of which[...] makes his chief Character” (Pope 1967 ed., VII, 349).

Yet despite such portrayals of helpless femininity and stalwart, emotionally controlled manliness, Pope could also praise both manly and womanly passions. His “Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady” and the Ovidian verse epistle, “Eloisa to Abelard,” both composed while he was translating the *Iliad*, express an acme of despairing love which drew praise from sentimental readers throughout the century (Mullan 1997, 426). Pope’s *Essay on Man* presents passion not as “unmanly,” but as central to the human being:

In lazy apathy let Stoics boast
 Their virtue fix’d, ’tis fix’d as in a frost;
 Contracted all, retiring to the breast;
 But strength of mind is exercise, not rest:
 The rising tempest puts in act the soul [...]
 These [passions] mix’d with art, and to due bounds confin’d,
 Make and maintain the balance of the mind:
 The lights and shades, whose well accorded strife
 Gives all the strength and colour of our life.
 (Pope 1996 ed., 519-20)

Though Pope stressed the important role of reason in confining the passions to “due bounds,” he also felt that the “strife” of “light and shade” in the human soul gave it “strength and colour.” The beauty and meaning of life consisted precisely in a “liquefying of the Stoic male,” a rejection of the frozen peace of neoclassical masculinity in favour of a tempestuous sea where, Pope wrote, “[God] mounts the storm, and walks upon the wind” (Pope 1996 ed., 519). Steven Shankman’s

⁹ Exceptions exist: Ferguson (1986) focuses on passion in Pope’s verse, and Eustace (2008) sees Pope’s poetry at the heart of American sentimentalism.

readings of Pope's *Iliad* have shown how Pope refused to moralize about the need to suppress unruly passions as Chapman had often done, reveling in the rage of Achilles (1983, *passim*). For Pope, then, the passions are not merely signs of effeminate weakness. Instead, they provide an androgynous form of virtue which can be productively synthesized with reason but also admired in its own right.

In his translation of the parting of Hector and Andromache, Pope created a Homeric hero whose emotions were akin those of his distressed wife. In addition to emphasizing Hector's "Love of his country," Pope makes the Trojan prince a loving husband. Twice, Andromache is described as part of his own soul: first when he sets off to seek her after his visit to Paris' chamber and subsequently when he comforts her in her grief. In the first example, it is the epic narrator who voices this sentiment:

He said, and past with sad presaging Heart
To seek his Spouse, his Soul's far dearer Part.
(Pope 1967 ed., VII, 349)

The second time, Hector uses the phrase himself:

Andromache! My Soul's far better Part,
Why with untimely Sorrows heaves thy Heart?
(Pope 1967 ed., VII, 357)

Thomas (1994, 29) points out that these lines resonate with a growing eighteenth-century conception of marriage as "passionate friendship," and would appeal to those interested in more exalted roles for wives. Such language also suggests that a certain kind of loving dependence might be admirable in husbands. The great warrior is not whole and self-sufficient, but needs his wife, conceiving her as an integral element of his own being.

In the second example, Homer uses the word *δαίμων*, which Chapman had rendered simply as "wife" (1956 ed., I, 149), Dryden as "my wife and mistress" (1693, 467) and Chetwood as the chilly "madam" (1693, 110). But Pope grafts onto Homer a Platonic image of love as a sharing of souls. This image may have more immediate origins in Dryden's Restoration tragedy, *The Conquest of Granada* (1672). There, it is invoked by Queen Almahide when she is forced to banish her heroic lover Almanzor because of her prior commitment to a fiancé she does not love: "Adieu, then, O my soul's far better part! Your image sticks so close, // That the blood follows from my rending heart" (1978 ed., 96). Especially because Pope reuses the rhyme of "part" and "heart," early eighteenth-century readers may have heard the echo of Dryden's famous tragedy. That echo of a tragic woman's voice comes, in Pope's *Iliad*, through the

speech of an epic hero. These passages, then, undermine the rigid distinction Pope maintains elsewhere between masculine duty and womanly tenderness.

Pope's Hector does not, however, merely exhibit tenderness in the parting scene. He also displays an impassioned, uncontrollable grief. The emotional climax of Pope's portrayal comes when Hector imagines the destruction of Troy and the enslavement of his wife. In Homer, Hector laments:

ἀλλ' οὐ μοι Τρώων τόσσον μέλει ἄλγος ὀπίσσω,
οὔτ' αὐτῆς Ἑκάβης οὔτε Πριάμοιο ἄνακτος
οὔτε κασιγνήτων, οἳ κεν πολέες τε καὶ ἔσθλοι
ἐν κονίησι πέσοιεν ὑπ' ἀνδράσι δυσμενέεσσιν,
ὅσσον σεῦ, ὅτε κέν τις Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων
δακρυόεσσαν ἄγηται ἐλεύθερον ἦμαρ ἀπούρας.
(*Iliad* 6.450-55)

Yet it's not the Trojans' coming miseries that so concern me
not what Hekabē will endure, or our sovereign Priam,
or my brothers, so many, so valiant, who all may end up
trodden into the dust by their hate-filled enemies— no,
it's your grief I think of, when some bronze-corseleted Achaian
will lead you away, weeping, your day of freedom gone...
(trans. Green, 2015)

There is deep pathos in these lines, both in the ruin Hector imagines for his society and in the way he subordinates all other sorrow to his grief for Andromache. The lines echo the famous passage in which Andromache calls Hector “my father, my lady mother, my brother” (*Iliad* 6.428-30, trans. Green 2015). While Hector has not, like Andromache, lost all his other loved ones, he does claim that for him, too, conjugal love is more significant than any other relationship in his life.

Translators before Pope render this passage in a tone of controlled, elegiac sadness. Dryden (1693, 445) writes that the projected loss of his family members and ruin of Troy create not “half of the concern I have for thee,” using the moderate and reasonable-sounding word “concern” to describe Hector's grief. This is in fact a fairly literal translation of Homer's μέλει. Chetwood writes, “But all compar'd with you does scarce appear // When I presage your case, I learn to fear” (1693, 107). The intensity of Hector's “fear” is dampened by the language of rational contemplation that surrounds it: “learn,” “compar'd,” “case.” Only Pope transforms this speech into a cry of anguish:

Yet come it will, the day decreed by fates;
(How my Heart trembles while my Tongue relates!)
The day when thou, imperial Troy, must bend...
And yet no dire Presage so wounds my Mind,

My Mother's Death, the Ruin of my Kind,
Not *Priam's* hoary Hairs defil'd with Gore,
Nor all my Brothers gasping on the shore;
As thine, *Andromache!* Thy Griefs I dread;
I see thee trembling, weeping, captive led!
(Pope, 1967 ed., VII, 355)

Pope adds a series of horrific images to the Greek: where Homer's Hector envisions only ἄλγος [...] Πριάμοιο ἄνακτος[...] κασιγνήτων, "the pain of lord Priam [and] of my brothers," Pope's imagines Priam's "hoary Hairs defil'd with Gore" and the brothers' "gasping." He combines this list of miseries with a prophecy of utter destruction nowhere to be found in the original: "The Ruin of my Kind." Playing on the similarity between the words "kin" and "kind," this line evokes not only Hector's family or even the city of Troy but the entire human race – "mankind." This language conveys the despair he associates with such defeat. After this long build-up, the short phrase by which Hector designates the one grief that trumps all others – "As thine, *Andromache!*" – takes on a special poignance. *Andromache's* long, resonant, foreign name takes up nearly half the syllables in its line and underscores her position as the single most important figure in this long catalogue of woes. It disrupts the smooth, end-stopped flow of Pope's heroic couplets, where sentences almost never finish in the middle of lines, as if Hector's sorrow had broken the rhythm of his speech. Rather than simply describing Hector's grief, Pope vividly represents his uneven syntax. The monosyllabic simplicity of the following statement, "Thy Griefs I dread," enhances the sense of an unaffected expression of fear and sorrow, while the internal caesuras after "trembling" and "weeping" lend a similarly halting quality to line 579. Pope's Hector also admits to his own trembling here: "How my heart trembles while my tongue relates!" This line, alongside Hector's vision of the "trembling, weeping" *Andromache*, presages the images of sensitive male and female bodies which would become so prominent in sentimental fiction.¹⁰ Husband and wife are united by their shared physical responses to grief.

A final intimation of Hector's overwhelming sorrow appears in Pope's footnote to his prayer for *Astyanax* (ll. 604-615 of the translation). Pope comments on the discrepancy between the hopes Hector expresses here for his son's future welfare and his later predictions of the dire fate of Troy. He suggests that these predictions are not prophecies, but rather the tragic visions of a mind plunged in misery: "These Forebodings of his Fate were only the Apprehensions and Misgivings of a Soul dejected with Sorrow and Compassion, by considering the great Dangers to which he saw all that was dear to him expos'd" (Pope 1967 ed., VII, 356). Hector's "soul" is laid low by his "sorrow" and

¹⁰ On sentimental bodies, see Mullan (1988) 201-40.

love for those around him. He is subject to “Apprehensions” and “Misgivings.” The contrast with the single-minded, “lion-hearted” warrior of medieval interpretations and with the controlled Stoicism of Chapman’s Hector is stark.

This grief-stricken loss of control brings Hector’s emotional state close to that of his wife. If she “hangs on his hand,” physically incapacitated by sorrow, he too is “dejected,” a word which etymologically evokes a man “thrown down” in the face of misfortune. Andromache’s speech, like Hector’s, is punctuated by frequent exclamation marks and interjections: “Too daring Prince!” “Oh grant me Gods! [...] All I can ask of Heav’n, an early Tomb!” (Pope 1967 ed., VII, 351). These examples do not negate the fact that Andromache’s weakness provides a foil for Hector’s strength. But they do complicate such binaries, suggesting that Hector, too, possesses a tender soul capable of being overwhelmed by sorrow. Even his ultimate dismissal of Andromache is in Pope’s version a matter of hesitation:

No Force can then resist, no Flight can save,
 All sink alike, the Fearful and the Brave.
No more – but hasten to thy Tasks at home,
 There guide the Spindle, and direct the Loom:
 Me Glory summons to the martial Scene
 The field of Combate is the Sphere for Men.
 (Pope 1967 ed., VII, 358)

Though Hector unambiguously affirms the doctrine of separate spheres in line 635, Pope implies Hector’s reluctance to end the conversation in the phrase, “No more – .” The dash creates a pause in which one can almost hear Hector marshalling his strength, becoming with an effort the glorious warrior once again. Adeline Johns-Putra writes, and Taylor repeats, that “the true warrior easily forgets or dismisses the seductive or weeping woman” (Johns-Putra 2001, 64; Taylor 2020, 106). But parting is not easy for Pope’s Hector, who fully shares in Andromache’s sorrow.

This portrayal of Hector represents a turning point in the reception of Homeric masculinity. In places, Pope’s translation and notes uphold the binary opposition between stalwart men and trembling, passionate women. But the hero’s farewell to his wife brims with a newly sentimental pathos. These outbursts of “Sorrow and Compassion” ushered in a new fashion for finding in the Homeric hero a modern man of feeling.

Pope’s version of this Homeric farewell became canonical as few other English translations of Homeric passages have done. Its appearances in anthologies and other literary collections during the eighteenth century support the idea that readers at this time valued the scene not primarily for its assertion of separate gendered spheres, but rather, as Pope wrote, for its representation of

"Love, Grief and Compassion" (Pope 1967 ed., VII, 349). Two popular anthologies glossed over or suppressed the moment when Hector sends Andromache back into the house. John Newbery, "the founding father of children's literature" (Brown 2006, 352) included excerpts of Pope's translation in his book *Poetry Made Familiar and Easy to Young Gentlemen and Ladies* (1769). He quotes some of Andromache's speech, Hector's prayer for his son, and the tearful parting as Hector assumes his helmet, but passes by Hector's actual dismissal of his wife with a summary: "Another short Speech, wherein Hector endeavours to allay his Wife's affliction, and advises her to mind her domestic employments, while he obeys the call of honour, and acts in the proper Character of a Hero" (Newbery 1769, 207). Despite the fact that Newbery calls Hector's actions "the proper Character of a Hero," it is significant that he does not quote the passage in question, which means that more of the reader's attention is devoted to scenes of mutual pity and sorrow than to Hector's assertion of man's place in the world of combat and woman's necessary domestic confinement. The novelist and playwright Oliver Goldsmith's anthology of verse for women, *Poems for Young Ladies* (1785), is cited by Taylor (2020, 110) as an instance of the parting scene's utility as a bulwark for the concept of separate spheres because other poems included in the book praise women's retreat from the world. But Goldsmith only quotes Andromache's speech to Hector and Hector's initial, grief-stricken reply, excising their final separation (Goldsmith 1785, 125-30). While not incompatible with the ideology of feminine retirement expressed in other parts of the anthology, this scene represents love and suffering; it is not deployed by Goldsmith for its portrayal of a hero sending his wife into the house. The scene served as evidence that Homer shared the ideals of mutual tenderness which flourished in the age of sensibility.

After the publication of Pope's translation, such sentimental interpretations of the parting scene proliferated in English literary criticism. Canonical monographs like Thomas Blackwell's *Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735, 332-3) or Robert Wood's *Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer* (1769, 165-7) discussed its portrayal of sympathy and love at length, while a rash of periodical articles ensured that the scene was a topic for polite conversation as well as scholarly exegesis.¹¹ In these sources, the parting is typically hailed as "tender" and "pathetic," and Pope's translation of it is often quoted. Pope's interpretation of the scene as a depiction of intense love and compassion thus became integral to eighteenth-century audiences' appreciation of the *Iliad* as a whole.

¹¹ E.g.: [Anon.] "Essay on Epic Poetry." *British Magazine* 8 (1767): 485-88; [Anon.] "A Summary of the Trojan War." *New Lady's Magazine* 2.24 (1787): 21-23; [Anon.] "On the Pathos of HOMER and the Characters of the ILIAD." *The Town and Country Magazine* 24 (1792) 134-36.

Seeing Sensibility: Hector and Andromache in Eighteenth-Century Art

This reading of the parting scene reflects a prominent strand of its representation in visual art, where it was a highly popular subject; there were more individual illustrations of this scene than of any other derived from Homer's poems throughout Europe in this period (Wiebenson 1964, 25). The fact that "feminine" sensibility of the kind we saw in Pope's translation pervades many artistic portrayals of the parting is no coincidence, since artists were often directly inspired by Pope.

Angelica Kauffman, the century's most famous female artist and one of two female founding members of the Royal Academy, produced several paintings of Homeric subjects.¹² She was also a great reader of Pope, frequently depicting his "Eloisa to Abelard."¹³ On a visit to Kauffman's studio in 1768, the author Helfrich Peter Sturz found the artist with Pope's Homer lying nearby (Rosenthal 2006, 20). Given her sustained engagement with his works, Kauffman's paintings on epic subjects should be interpreted not simply as depictions of Homeric myth but also as artistic responses to Pope's translations.¹⁴

Kauffman's *Hector Taking Leave of Andromache* (1768; fig. 1), featured in the Royal academy's first exhibition in 1769, catapulted her to fame. Modern critics have remarked on Hector's androgynous physique and uncertain stance in the image. For Albert Boime (1987, 113), he is a "wistful juvenile, who wears his helmet uneasily"; for Angelica Goodden (2006, 124), he is "alarmingly feminine for a man about to go to war." Taylor (2020, 116) even suggests that Kauffman offers "a partial rewriting of Homer, in which Andromache wins the argument and Hector (whom Kauffman has incline his head towards Andromache as if he is indeed heeding her advice) succumbs to the temptation to surrender himself to domesticity." What has been less discussed is the way the painting stresses the shared nature of the couple's grief. While Andromache leans on Hector, he also seems to lean on her, inclining not just his head but also his body towards hers as he gazes down toward their son. The scene around them is dark; yet a clear light illuminates Hector's face, Andromache's neck and shoulder, and the embrace of baby and nurse in one field of vision as they stand on the same level plane. Taylor (2020, 116) argues that viewers knew this experience of unity was only a brief deviation from the gender-segregated conventions of epic, and thus downplays its subversive qualities. But the painting itself glorifies the

¹² On Kauffman's portrayals of Homer's *Odyssey*, see Rosenthal (2006) 15-41.

¹³ One example is the *Farewell of Abelard and Héloïse*, 1780. Oil on canvas, the Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.

¹⁴ Rosenthal (2006, 35) notes how closely Kauffman's paintings of Penelope follow Pope's translations.

loving interaction before Hector's return to battle, asserting its beauty, significance, and worthiness to be represented on a large canvas in the Royal Academy (it is 157.5 x 201 cm). By painting this phase of Hector and Andromache's conversation, as opposed to his dismissal of Andromache or one of the battle sequences involving Hector in the *Iliad's* next book, Kauffman tells viewers which parts of the story to value. The moment she chose was one of mutual passion, mutual grief, and even mutual weakness between a loving husband and wife. Like the anthologies that skimmed over objectionable or less compelling passages within the parting scene, paintings could isolate and celebrate particular moments while suppressing the broader epic trajectory.

Kauffman's painting not only elides the distinctions of gender; it also complicates distinctions of class. Hector and Andromache are placed in close proximity to their servant, and her loving interaction with Astyanax mirrors their own. The nurse and baby gaze affectionately at one another just as Hector and Andromache do, and the infant reaches out his hand to caress her, as Hector joins hands with his wife. In typical portrayals of this scene, such as that of Gavin Hamilton which is examined below (fig. 2), nurse, baby, or both look toward Hector and Andromache, drawing the viewer's eye away from them and back to heroic couple. But here, baby and nurse become their own self-contained pair, their shared affection as worthy of depiction as the scene of romantic love. Through her sympathetic, detailed depiction of the nurse, Kauffman further de-emphasizes the heroic narrative of battle and highlights the beauties of domestic life. Her painting opens up the radical possibility that serving woman, princess, and hero all possess the same capacity for tenderness and love.

This ideal of tender-hearted heroism appears even in the parting scene painted by the Scottish artist Gavin Hamilton (fig. 2), which at first glance seems to construct a rigid dichotomy between strong hero and weak wife. In contrast with the feminine Hector depicted by Kauffman, Hamilton highlights the masculine power of Hector's body: the muscles of his chest, right arm, and leg are clearly defined, and his spear appears poised for action. With his left hand, he makes what could be seen as a firm gesture of denial while Andromache melts into a posture of supplication. Hector's "towering" physique led Anne K. Mellor to assert that Hamilton's painting "clearly suggests that the emotional bonds of family love must be given up for the good of the state" (Mellor 1995, 132). Yet Hamilton's Hector gazes down at his wife, in sharp contrast with other versions of the scene like Jean Restout's (1727, fig. 3) and John Flaxman's (1793, fig. 4), where Hector looks away from his family to invoke the aid of the gods and to symbolize his unshakeable focus on his heroic destiny. Despite his manly body, the face of Hamilton's Hector painted in soft, almost feminine curves. Astyanax reaches toward him – a revision of Homer's text, where the baby is afraid to look at his helmet-clad father – and in this context, Hector's left arm might also be

stretching out as he prepares to carry or caress his son. Given these details, is not so clear that the Trojan hero renounces “the emotional bonds of domestic love.”

Hamilton’s painting, unlike Kauffman’s, is crowded with figures – warriors, suppliants, and Hector’s charioteer – which are not mentioned in Homer’s parting scene. This crowd was a convention in paintings of Hector’s farewell, visible in Antoine Coypel’s 1708 version (*Hector’s Farewell*, oil on canvas, Musée des Troyes) and Restout’s 1727 one. These figures may suggest a panoramic vision of Troy under siege, with soldiers heading out to battle and women praying at the temple of Athena, as they do in *Iliad* 6.289-310. Whatever the reason for their presence, Hamilton’s chaotic group of spear-brandishing warriors makes the battle feel frighteningly close both to the supplicating women and to Hector and Andromache themselves. The boundaries between domestic and military worlds appear highly permeable. This portrayal suggests that Hector is not renouncing the affections of home for the glories of war, but rather facing a rising tide of conflict which has already enveloped both himself and his wife. War is not a heroic choice but a terrifying inevitability, and Hector must fight to protect those he loves.

As the nurse adds nuance to Kauffman’s painting, so the other figures in Hamilton’s tableau heighten the scene’s pathos and further undermine the sense of separate masculine and feminine spheres. To the left, one warrior leans on another, perhaps in fatigue. His posture, though not as abject as Andromache’s, does mirror hers, especially as he lacks a helmet and the soldier on whom he leans wears a crested plume like Hector’s. This helmeted figure is holding a shield before his friend’s chest to protect him. Tenderness and dependence on others, then, appear in warriors as well as in delicate female characters. To the right, a little boy huddles near a weary or wounded man. The boy’s position, with his arm outstretched before the older man’s body, might be simply fearful, but it also suggests a pitifully futile attempt to shield him from danger. This pair could thus be interpreted as an ironic mirror image of the warrior shielding his friend on the other side of the painting. So although Hamilton does present the predictable contrast between the overwhelming sorrow of Andromache and the manly resolution of Hector, that contrast is complicated by Hector’s own pained, sympathetic expression and by the images of other wounded or demoralized men. War, the painting reminds us, makes victims of all kinds of human beings, and its crises throw into sharp relief many forms of self-sacrificing love.

This painting was part of an influential series of six enormous depictions of the *Iliad* which Hamilton completed in Rome from the late 1750s through the 1770s. Hamilton, like Kauffman, was likely inspired by Pope: as Lindsey Errington (1978, 12) remarks, “the emotional content [of Hamilton’s paintings] is purely of the eighteenth century, and the suffering of a kind not [...] recognisable in the Greek [...] It is almost certain[...] that this extraneous element crept into the

paintings as a direct result of Hamilton's too faithful rendering of his chosen text – not Homer's original, but Alexander Pope's free and sometimes inaccurate paraphrases" (Errington 1978, 12). Of the six paintings, one represents the parting scene and one shows Andromache mourning Hector's death. As Duncan Macmillan (1999, 48) explains, "[Hamilton] took the violent, heroic story of the *Iliad* [...] but he modified it significantly, creating from the story of Hector and Andromache an equal, parallel plot to the story of Achilles and Patroclus. Thus, he contrasts their gentle, domestic love with the violence of Achilles' anger which destroys it." This feature of Hamilton's compositions was shaped by his own exposure to the philosophy of "moral sense" alongside Adam Smith at Glasgow University, learning "that morality itself depends on feeling" (Macmillan 1999, 51). Though Macmillan correctly argues that femininity is a key source of "feeling" in Hamilton's works, the figures in the foreground of his parting scene suggest that compassion can, in the interstices of battle, transcend distinctions of gender and age.

Conclusion: Becoming A Tender-Hearted Hero

Eighteenth-century reinventions of the parting of Hector and Andromache, then, are more ambivalent and complex than Taylor allows. They represent not solely a reification of gendered divisions but also an exploration of the permeability of those divisions, of the crises which bring men and women into the same emotional world. As the century progressed, some thinkers began to see Hector's supposed domesticity and tenderness as a model for masculinity in everyday life. A 1779 article in the *Hibernian Magazine*, one of Ireland's most popular eighteenth-century literary publications, urges the pleasures of domesticity for modern men. The authors take Hector as an exemplar of "the happiness of domestic life":

Among the great variety of pictures which the vivid imagination of Homer has displayed throughout the *Iliad*, there is not one more pleasing than the family-piece which presents the parting interview of Hector and Andromache [...] We are refreshed with the tender scene of domestic love, while all around breathes rage and discord [...] A professed critic would attribute the pleasing effect entirely to contrast, but the heart has declared [...] that it is chiefly derived from the satisfaction that we naturally take in beholding great characters engaged in domestic and amiable employments. ([Anon.] 1779, 504)

In an extraordinary reversal, the scene that had so clearly indicated the separation of male and female worlds to medieval and Renaissance readers becomes here an instance of how those worlds might be beneficially united. The author does

not suggest that men should give up employments in the public sphere, and he acknowledges Hector's status as a great warrior ("we are pleased to see that arm, which is shortly to be employed in dealing death...employed in caressing an infant son") ([Anon.] 1779, 503; 505). Yet he implies that the moral center of life lies in domestic pursuits: "To partake with children in their little pleasures is by no means unmanly. It is one of the purest sources of mirth. It has an influence in amending the heart [...] The duties called forth by the relations of husband and father are of that tender kind which inspire goodness and humanity" ([Anon.] 1779, 503). The Homeric hero may belong on the battlefield and the eighteenth-century gentleman in the "senate-house or at the bar" ([Anon.] 1779, 503) but both also belong in the home. Moved by Pope's translation of the parting scene and by the art and literary criticism it helped to inspire, eighteenth-century readers sought to become tender-hearted heroes.

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Figure 2. *Hector's Farewell to Andromache*, oil on canvas. 1775. © The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.



Figure 3. *Hector Taking Leave of Andromache.* Oil on canvas. Private collection (Sotheby's New York).



Figure 4. After John Flaxman, *The Meeting of Hector and Andromache.* Etching by James Parker. 1805. In *The Iliad of Homer engraved from the Compositions of John Flaxman R.A., sculptor.* Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, Robert Harding Evans, and John and Arthur Arch: London, 1805. ©Royal Academy of Arts, London

HUMOUR AS AFFECT IN SUSANNA CENTLIVRE'S PLAY *A BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE*

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ABSTRACT. *Humour as Affect in Susanna Centlivre's Play A Bold Stroke for a Wife.* Susanna Centlivre's plays are conceived in a cultural climate of moral debate and ideological reconsideration of values such as virtue, goodness and liberty. Centlivre's use of humour becomes an ethical instrument and shows eighteenth-century audiences how liberty and freedom triumph over the excesses and follies of opposing figures such as parents and guardians. On the one hand, Centlivre's comic playwriting creates an empathetic drama in which the female heroines are virtuous and elicit edifying responses from the audience and, on the other, the comic experience, following Bakhtin's notion of laughter and the comic, enables freedom from the socially conventional notion of selfhood, thus making space for a re-orientation of values and norms.

Keywords: *eighteenth-century drama, comedy, affect theory, empathy, ethics.*

REZUMAT. *Umorul ca afect în piesa A Bold Stroke for a Wife de Susanna Centlivre.* Piese de Susannei Centlivre sunt concepute într-un climat cultural al dezbaterilor morale și al reevaluării ideologice a valorilor precum virtutea, bunătatea și libertatea. Umorul lui Centlivre devine un instrument etic, arătându-i publicului de secol XVIII cum triumfă libertatea și eliberarea asupra exceselor și viciilor unor figuri antitetice, precum părinții și protectorii. Pe de o parte, piesele comice ale lui Centlivre creează un tip de teatru empatic, în care eroinele sunt virtuoză și primesc răspunsuri edificatoare din partea publicului. Pe de altă parte, folosind teoria lui Bahtin despre râs și comic, experiența comică permite

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eliberarea de noțiunea convențională, din punct de vedere social, de individualitate, făcând astfel loc unei reorientări a valorilor și normelor.

Cuvinte-cheie: teatrul secolului al XVIII-lea, comedie, teoria afectelor, empatie, etică.

Introduction

Susanna Centlivre's plays are conceived in a cultural climate of moral debate and ideological reconsideration of values such as virtue, goodness, and liberty. Centlivre's use of humour becomes an ethical instrument and shows eighteenth-century audiences how liberty and freedom triumph over the excesses and follies of opposing figures such as parents and guardians. Instead of merely providing classical comedy which is, according to Philip Sidney, "an imitation of the common errors of our life" (1595, 53), Centlivre creates an empathetic drama in which the female heroines are virtuous and elicit edifying responses from the audience. The playwright induces empathy for the protagonists of her plays and thus encourages the audience to identify with the characters. From this identification, ethical sensitivity to the characters' problems and dilemmas seems only natural. In contemporary discourses on sensibility, such sensitivity to characters is hailed as a moral and ethical tool. As Konigsberg and Combe, amongst others, have argued, empathetic and moral responses to the literature of sentimentalism necessarily coincide.² Yet, Centlivre does not overuse tropes and figures of sentimental drama but modifies her comic writing to utilize empathy and comic pleasure for her own political purpose. Theatrical writing and performance thus offer a more nuanced insight into the eighteenth-century world of affect and its ethical reverberations, as audience members experience comic pleasure as a transformative and very powerful impact on cultural norms and concepts.

In her play *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718), Centlivre employs comic pleasure very effectively in the scenic representation of character. She neatly juxtaposes her morally virtuous characters who embody the values of liberty and moderation with characters who personify not only conformity but also excess and eccentricity. Her conceptualisation of character diverges from previous types and "humours" characters and gives them a realistic quality that activates empathetic as well as ethical considerations. Despite the many comic events and contrived plotting, the characters gain more complexity and multi-

² Csengei (2012), of course, views the discourse on sensibility as one that has drawn critical responses, too.

dimensionality, providing the possibility for the audience to identify with them. Comic pleasure has, however, a variety of effects and implications which need to be explored in depth in order to grasp the complex interactions between the audience and the characters on stage, involving an ethical dimension as well as emotional responses. One effect of comic pleasure, as Bakhtin's theory on laughter suggests, frees the audience from their conventional ideas of who they are. They see themselves as "freed from themselves": "Maybe the Rabelaisian and Bakhtinian notion of full laughter stems, among other things, from the fact that by retrieving and having recourse to the corporeal human beings are 'freed from themselves,' since they do not have to uphold the construction of a single and unified self" (Horlacher 2009, 27). In this sense, laughter, humour and comedy contribute to a briefly felt freedom from social convention, from prescribed roles and identity as well as from the self that is assumed to be stable and unified. Along with their freedom from a unified self, social selves based on gender, class or race are also called into question. This might in fact free a space for a re-orientation or re-formation of social normativity and conventionality.

In this freedom from the self, cultural change can take place. If one is momentarily freed from cultural norms and social conventions, new ideas can have an effect on the self. Performances on stage that induce comic pleasure undoubtedly transmit ideas, concepts and notions of culture and conduct that the audience absorbs. While laughter creates a space for freedom from the self, empathy with the characters might re-connect the audience with the ideas and ideologies presented on stage. Thus, comedy, which employs emotional connection and identification, has transformative power on the members of the audience in the liminal space of the performance where laughter stimulates emancipation from conventional notions of selfhood.

A closer look at the affective side of this experience reveals that comic pleasure as well as empathy enable points of connection between the audience and the social world constructed on stage. Ahmed reflects on this interaction in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* and claims that emotions in general establish a relation between the self and the world. According to Ahmed, emotions are "neither with the I nor the social but it is through the emotions that humans relate to others and to their environment" (Ahmed 2014, 10). In a similar vein, Scheer, Johansen and Fadil declare that emotions are shared, collective and cultural rather than private and interior. Their approach is to investigate the "collective, shared, atmospheric qualities of affect, [and to] question[s] the interiority of emotion and thus the private/public, personal/political divide on which secularism is based." (Scheer, Johansen, and Fadil 2019, 11). What these critics might in fact share is a view of emotions as embedded in the social world – relating to the self, instead of emerging from the self.

In this regard, affects are trans-personal and provide an interesting view on the nature of society in a particular historical period. Reckwitz (2012) draws on this idea when he suggests that emotions are a kind of practice. He therefore takes a “praxeological perspective” on emotions when he examines emotions and their “embedded and embodied” nature:

But of course, 'affect' must not be understood in a one-sided, deterministic fashion as a bodily response to an external stimulus. Quite on the contrary, the *praxeological perspective* offers the advantage of closely tying perceptive/affective processes to actions and activities which always involve limitless amounts of implicit knowledge. There is no such thing as a pre-cultural affect. Affects are always embedded in practices which are, in turn, embedded in tacit schemes of interpretation. (Reckwitz 2012, 250-51; my emphasis.)

Such a “praxeological perspective” entails a detailed analysis of emotional processes and how they are embedded in knowledge and interpretation. The world of the theatre and the characteristics of drama as well as performance are ideal texts and contexts in which to explore such emotional processes as affects. They are implicit in (dramatic) texts, and rather explicit in the performance and in the response from the audience. In my article, I will analyze comic pleasure and empathy as such emotional processes and I will show how they are aroused by the comedic text and its performance.

In early eighteenth-century theatre, the changes and shifts towards different conceptualizations of character have far-reaching effects on the affective experience of performance. The “praxeological perspective” central to my analysis needs to consider theatre culture that emerged from the Restoration in early eighteenth-century Britain and witnessed a shift in theatrical and cultural notions of character. As comic pleasure and empathy circle around the conceptualization of character, Centlivre’s play will be placed within the context of altered notions of character in comedy as well as the changes in the theatrical tradition more generally.

From Restoration to Eighteenth-Century Comedy: Changes and Transformations

Beginning in the first half of the twentieth century, critics have grappled with the changes in theatre at the turn of the eighteenth century.³ As Heard

³ In *English Dramatic Form*, Laura Brown proposes a reading of Restoration drama that is much more complex than the shift from libertine to social reform suggested by other critics. In her examination of Restoration drama, she reveals a multi-layered and multi-faceted form that manifests “the evolution from intrigue to intrigue-like and ‘all in fun’ social satire [and] entails an increasing formal discrimination of individual characters and fates” (Brown 1981, 40). For

documents in her work on experimentation in English drama, there are two strands of criticism, one that assumes that there was a change from Restoration to Sentimentalist drama (cf. Heard 2014, 3) and the other which claims that there is continuity as well as diversity and complexity in the theatre culture of that time. Perhaps it is an oversimplification to chart a development from Restoration to Sentimental drama, but there are shifts in comic playwriting that undeniably altered the nature of Restoration drama.

Bevis examines the cultural aspects of change that impacted the writing of comedy in the transitory period from the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth century: "Encouraged by sovereigns who sporadically issued proclamations against immorality and whose low chamberlains were trying to regulate drama, moralists founded society to suppress vice and reform manners, and attacked the stage as a sink of wit, Hobbism, and Restoration excess" (Bevis 1988, 117). In his view, change is not merely located in a demographic shift that saw the growing middle-class as the most dominant segment of the audience in the theatre of the early eighteenth century. While there is undeniably the playwrights' need to cater to their audience's taste, they still have the opportunity to create characters and plots within a conventional comic genre that adequately takes up discourses on morality and satisfies their audiences' expectations.

Centlivre, aware of these traditions as well as her audience's interest in novelty, aptly draws on existent models to craft a new brand of comedy. The comedy of wit and the comedy of "humours" are certainly the most dominant genres at the time. However, the immense diversity and vast variety of subgenres speak of the impressive creativity of playwrights, theatre managers and a great curiosity of audiences. In this culture of creativity and novelty, playwrights and audiences alike welcomed heterogeneity in comedy. Various traditions blended and merged: Jonsonian "humours characters, those suffering from an imbalance of the four humours that ancient medicine identified as the determinants of personality and behaviour" (Corman 2021, 29) and Fletcherian comedy as a precursor to the comedy of wit and the comedy of manners, with an interest in intrigue and marriage plots. Centlivre, I argue, combines "humours" characters with wit comedy, but provides a more empathetic connection for the audiences to identify with her central heroes and heroines.⁴ Departing from the

Brown, the dominant genre at the time comprises contradictions and conflicts that point out the problematic relationship between morality and social context. For her, Restoration comedy is a social satire that includes a critique of moral and ethical principles rather than merely providing entertainment for the elite classes. While this is certainly a valid and appealing view of Restoration drama, research on the development of the genre needs to identify certain typical characteristics and distinguish specific marks in dramatic form.

⁴ A prominent example of a new type of humours character can be found in Congreve's oeuvre in the character of Sir Willful Witwoud in *The Way of the World*. According to Corman, he exemplifies a new type of character that is "three-dimensional and increasingly seen as embodying British values that valorized native eccentricities, prototypical John Bulls" (Corman 2021, 37).

witty characters of the Restoration era, her characters, despite not being openly moral or virtuous, promote positive values and elicit more empathy from the audience than the prototypical figures of the Restoration stage. In an artfully structured comedy, Centlivre places her new characters alongside “humour” figures so as to guide her audience towards a more empathetic attachment to heroes and heroines.

Scenic Representation of Character and Plot in *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*

As the above changes in the tradition of comedy suggest, the central alteration took place in the conceptualization of character. Centlivre constructs her characters in *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* around the notion of liberty. Both male and female protagonists’ desire for liberty guides their motivation and propels the action in the play. Still, the characters are placed within the normative narratives of marriage which, according to Anderson, is the gendered script of comedy (cf. Anderson, 2002).⁵

Susanna Centlivre produces a theatrical world that needs to protect the individual’s liberty against the threat of extreme ideologies and the chaos of absolutist rule. The hero of her play, the handsome soldier Colonel Fainwell, shines as a paragon of English liberty against the backdrop of four fanatical guardians who stand in his way because he wants to marry the beautiful young heiress Anne Lovely. Despite the fact that liberty, for the female heroine Anne, lies in the conclusion of the plot in marriage, it is a choice that she consciously makes and for which she also considers the right circumstances: she wants to marry Fainwell but, at the same time, she wishes to claim her inheritance and financial security. While the plot is formed according to the traditional marriage narrative and, as such, is aligned with a gendered script (cf. Anderson, 2002), the characters within this conservative script gain more agency. The shift of the genre towards an interest in character and character-building (cf. Heard, 2014) inadvertently challenges the easy plot resolutions and comedic plot twists of Restoration drama.

For her hero and heroine, Susanna Centlivre sets up a world of chaos generated by the disparate and extravagant worldviews of four guardians. Thus, the scenic world is dominated by both characters and plot. The characters and their ascribed values generate tension on the level of the plot. And the plot

⁵ Anderson proposes that “[t]hese playwrights and their heroines measure the disparity between idealized marriage narratives and the real circumstances of characters in history throughout the gendered scripts of comedy. Behn, Centlivre, Cowley, and Inchbald found in comedy a narrative where the economic future, erotic possibility, and public visibility of women merge, and they were able to engage generations of theatergoers in their version of that story” (Anderson 2002, 1).

expresses the chaotic regime of disparate values and ideas. In the four guardians, Centlivre envisions a stark opposition to the harmony of post-1688 England that saw the consequences of the Glorious Revolution epitomised as the Age of Reason which stood in the light of “ideal of providential harmony, of cooperation, and of a political order reflecting that of nature [which] seemed to many to be realized in the triumph of practical reason, liberal religion, and impartial law. Temperate kings would reign over a united nation in which individual liberty would be constitutionally guaranteed” (Sanders 2000, 278). It is particularly the notion of individual liberty that Centlivre represents and places at the centre of her comedic writing.

Demonstrating Centlivre's skill of plotting and intrigue,⁶ the play revolves around the strategy of Colonial Fainwell to gain his beloved's hand in marriage. But instead of representing the courtship and growing love between Fainwell and Anne, the plot is driven by the need to obtain the agreement of Anne's four guardians. As a rule set by her late father, in case the marriage was not in agreement with the four guardians, the money of Anne's inheritance would be lost. Each individual guardian incorporates a different characteristic that needs to be emulated by the protagonist in order to gain their assent to marry Anne.

The humour is used as a clear corrective here and Centlivre shifts her comedic efforts away from the courtship to the acts that are necessary in order to assure the happy outcome for the young lover's desires. The comic is thus repositioned in the play and centres on the protagonists in their struggle with the conservatism and eccentricity of the guardian figures. This positioning in the play enables a focus on the interactions of the young protagonist and their illiberal antagonists, as opposed to the classical comedy of manners where there might be an initial antagonism between the lovers. In *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, Centlivre rewrites the conventional comic script to create a new type of comic hero and heroine who represent a challenge to conservative ideas as well as to the raucous figures of Restoration drama.

As mentioned above, the shift from the aristocratic witticism and sexual comedy of the Restoration to a more virtuous and decorous type of comic entertainment is foremost detectable in the representation of the central couple or couples. In *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, the lovers Anne and Captain Fainwell are hardly ever portrayed in the act of wooing or flirting. They are rather engaged in, and committed to, attaining Anne's freedom. There are parallel scenes in which the audience can identify with the young lovers versus the obstructing characters and their follies. Fainwell is portrayed in a scene with the fop Modelove and Anne is paired with Mrs. Prim in a similar scene. Both scenes revolve

⁶ According to O'Brian, critics have always noted Centlivre's skill for the construction of plot (cf. O'Brian, 2001).

around fashion and manners. Mrs. Prim, the wife of Mr. Prim, one of Anne's guardians, lectures Anne on the appropriateness of dress. And, in both scenes, the extremes of exaggerated attitudes become clear: while the fop Modelove indulges in fashion, Mrs. Prim restricts fashion and dress according to her religious ideology. Thus, Centlivre places her protagonists as ideal and moderate figures in a world of extremes.

While Fainwell deliberately chooses to perform in order to achieve his goals and demands Anne to play along, Anne has already uncovered the hypocrisy of her guardians, even before she meets Fainwell. In dialogic speech, Anne exposes the pretence of her Quaker guardians. In an ongoing dispute about her fashionable mode of dress, Anne defends her position by demonstrating that her antagonist Mrs. Prim's modest dress code is mere facade:

Mrs. Lovely

[...] Are the pinched cap and formal hood the emblems of sanctity? Does your virtue consist in your dress, Mrs. Prim?

Mrs. Prim

It doth not consist in cut hair, spotted face, and bare necks. Oh, the wickedness of this generation! The primitive women knew not the abomination of hooped petticoats. (Act II.ii, 70)

Enter Mrs. Prim and Mrs. Lovely in Quaker's dress, meeting.

Mrs. Prim

So now I like thee, Anne. Art thou not better without thy monstrous hoop coat and patches? If Heaven should make thee so many black spots upon thy face, would it not fright thee, Anne?

Mrs. Lovely

If it should turn your inside outward and show all the spots of your hypocrisy, 'twould fright me worse. (V.i, 117)

Anne Lovely's observations point out the difference between values and appearances. While Mrs. Prim's objections to Anne's desire for a fashionable appearance name the items of fashion such as, for example, hoop coat, patches and black spots on the face, Anne's repartee employs the same term of black spots and assigns a new meaning: spots of hypocrisy. Thus, she makes it clear that the importance lies in values and virtue, rather than in the outward appearance as a sign of decorum and manners. The signification of appearance is of course particularly relevant to the theatrical performance. In this scene, Centlivre dramatizes different concepts in characterization. In contrast to Anne's common

sense and liberal attitude to dress and fashion, her antagonist Mrs. Prim's dishonesty is demonstrated in a visual staging of her character in costume.

Pairing the value systems of her protagonists with the comic pleasure that lies in the audience's attention to the various strategies and tricks, Centlivre's play balances the focus on character and plot. The characters' goal is as much Anne's freedom from the wilfulness of her four guardians as Captain Fainwell's gaining her hand in marriage and her fortune for their safe and comfortable marital future. In this initial scene, the difficulty of achieving this is explained as follows:

Colonel.

She visited a lady who boarded in the same house with me. I liked her person and found an opportunity to tell her so. She replied she had no objection to mine, but if I could not reconcile contradictions, I must not think of her, for that she was condemned to the caprice of four persons who never yet agreed in any one thing, and she was obliged to please them all. (I.i, 55)

Anne is introduced as being "condemned to the caprice of four persons" and by such an introduction the playwright emphasizes two aspects simultaneously. Her heroine's position is entirely determined by her environment in the guise of her guardians. She is "condemned," which carries associations of the inescapable nature of fate or a higher power, but at the same time, it is stated that Anne is victim to the "caprice of four persons," which conjoins the notion of fate to a very "real" personality problem. In her work, Centlivre plays with the different concepts of personality versus character. The eccentricities of the drama's "villains" is balanced by the virtuous and morally superior character of her protagonists. While caprice is clearly employed by the playwright to entertain in a humorous manner, it is also the reason for the heroine's suffering and thus, by implication, a motivation for the audience's empathy towards her.

Betty

Bless me, madam! Why do you fret and tease yourself so? This is giving them the advantage with a witness.

Mrs. Lovely

Must I be confounded all my life to the preposterous humours of other people; and pointed at by every boy in town? –

O! I could tear my flesh, and curse the hour I was born. Is it not monstrously ridiculous that they should desire to impose their Quaking dress upon me at these years? When I was a child, no matter what they made me wear; but now – (I.ii, 59)

Anne makes it clear that it is “the preposterous humors of other people” that is at the root of her plight. Her suffering is made tangible by referring to the Quaker dress that she is forced to wear. For the audience, it is a visible semiotic sign of her submission to a way of life that she does not agree with. Her liberty is thus severely limited by the religious custom of her guardian. But, in the course of the play, the statement that “preposterous humors” rather than sincere religious belief force her to submit to Quaker manners becomes very clear.

What is at stake here is not merely a young woman’s choice of fashion and dress, but the loss of personal liberty and individualism. In the course of the play, Anne’s loss of liberty is emphasized and beyond the comedic situations the protagonist finds herself in, the audience’s empathy is occasioned. The following soliloquy illustrates the loss of liberty and the abuse of power by her guardians:

Mrs. Lovely.

Let me be quiet, I say. Must I be tormented thus forever? Sure no woman’s condition ever equalled mine: foppery, folly, avarice, and hypocrisy are by turns my constant companions, and I must vary shapes as often as a player. I cannot think my father meant this tyranny. No, you use an authority which he ever intended you should take (II.ii, 72)

In this short monologue, Anne, directly appeals to the feelings of the audience by asking, “Must I be tormented thus forever?” With such hopelessness, the heroine’s situation elicits empathy in the audience. She cannot be free as her late father has condemned her to the willful and eccentric judgments of her guardians. But, as she states here, she thinks that her father never intended them to exert as much authority and in the manner they do. Thus, Anne appeals to their reason and exposes the impossibility of her situation. She explicitly calls tyranny the authority under which she suffers. But, for the comic pleasure of the audience, tyranny is different from mere patriarchal authority. It actually derives from the incongruity of her guardians’ ideological/religious or personal convictions. The characters of the guardians, who represent such divergent ideologies, are in their combination the source of her plight and also the cause of much comic delight on the part of the audience.

It is interesting that Anne calls the guardians’ command “tyranny,” thus making her ideological position clearly liberal and moderate. The whole play seems to be structured along the lines of liberty versus tyranny. Both Anne and Fainwell’s actions are motivated by the desire for liberty that will ensure their personal and marital happiness. Within the gendered script of comedy (cf. Anderson, 2002), this liberty can be attained, and the empathy clearly lies with the protagonists who confidently claim their right to liberty and freedom of choice. I would argue, differently from Anderson’s claim, that the gendered

script predictably leads to marriage and that women are free only insofar as they are safely delivered into marital life and do not express their liberty in alternative choices and that Centlivre's play, by employing empathy and humour to strategically position her assertive protagonists versus the absurdity of the guardians; and their tyrannical behaviour, points to a more confident statement on gender roles. Even though the gendered script might still be in place, the empathy of the audience is unquestionably directed at the leading figures of Anne and Fainwell. Susanna Centlivre thus achieves to turn the question of marriage into an ethical question and to implement ethics into the comedic domain, as Anne can gain her liberty through the marital contract and through her joined efforts together with Fainwell to secure it.

Anne must be viewed as a new comic heroine whose fate evokes ethical considerations. The dramatic denouement as well as the conceptualization of her character point to the fact that she is a comic heroine who achieves her goals and claims her right to freedom. Although her liberty is gained by the strategy of her male lover, the denouement in the form of a happy ending can only be achieved by their collaboration, their wit and their talent in acting and disguise. In the final act, Anne and Fainwell playfully convince Prim of Anne's conversion to Quakerism. Prim is eavesdropping on the couple to find out how the disguised Fainwell, who pretends to be a Quaker, convinces Anne of the rightness of his religious doctrine and, by implication, of the rightfulness of a match between Anne and the Quaker:

Prim. (aside)

I would gladly hear what argument the good man useth to bend her.

Mrs. Lovely [unaware of Prim].

Thy words give me new life, methinks.

Prim. (aside)

What do I hear?

Mrs. Lovely [still unaware of Prim]

Thou best of men! Heaven meant to bless me sure, when first I saw thee.

Prim (aside)

He hath mollified her. O wonderful conversion!

Colonel (sees Prim; aside to Mrs. Lovely)

Ha! Prim listening - no more, my love; we are observed; seem to be edified, and give 'em hope that thou wilt turn Quaker, and leave the rest to me. - (Aloud.) I am glad to find that thou art touched with what art I said unto thee, Anne; another time I will explain another article to thee. In the meanwhile be thou dutiful to our friend Prim.

Mrs. Lovely
I shall obey thee in everything. (V.i, 126)

This scene exemplifies that humour is both pleasurable and corrective. The comic pleasure is derived from the audience's awareness of the male lover's true identity and Anne's impossible conversion. Once they notice that they are observed, their pretence and acting enhance the comic impression of their role-playing as religious purists. It is the humour of the scene that enlightens the audience and guides their empathy towards the lover's desire for each other and also the desire for their liberty of choice and agency. Their aptness at play-acting provides comic pleasure as it concurrently directs a critique towards the roles that they are performing. Centlivre's particular humour enables the audience to focus on the ethical aspects of the play: Piety and religious zeal are unmasked as artificial acts in the performance by the two lovers. Religion is thus revealed to be a performance for a particular audience willing to believe in the truthfulness of the performers.

Centlivre's employment of empathy with the protagonist might be more subtle and directed towards a particular audience. Young female theatre-goers will be caught in an empathetic response, once they become aware of Anne's unfair subjection to the whims of the guardians who are all attempting to impose their ideological opinion on her. In one instance, Anne has to wear a Quaker's dress and thus her submission becomes symbolically visible in her physical appearance. The younger audience members will certainly empathize with her having to dress according to strict religious doctrine, instead of taking pleasure in dressing according to fashion. The audience members, themselves being on display in the eighteenth-century theatre auditorium in their fashionable dresses, are undoubtedly affected by the young heroine's fate. The emotion of empathy thus binds the character on stage in her performance to the audience that responds to the ideological restrictions and impositions on the young woman's liberty. In this performative act within the context of the theatre space — the nature of the auditorium as being integrated and in close proximity to the action on stage — the boundary between dramatic action and the audience is blurred through the affective power of empathy.

Affective Power of Empathy: Humour, Comedy and Ethics

Regarding Centlivre's play from a wider perspective, the values of liberty, freedom, and individualism are integrated into the creation of both plot and characters. The apparent changes to the comedic plot, away from the marriage plot to the plot centred on the protagonist's freedom enhance, on the one hand,

more realist elements of the play and complexity in the characters. Centlivre's realism lies in the couple's attempt to attain their goals together and in this they elicit the empathy of the audience who will identify with the young lovers versus the tyrannical imposition of rules by the guardians. The constraints imposed by eccentricity and extremism stand out against the empathetic figures of the young couple, whose desire to be in control of their own fate becomes the driving force of the plot.

Similarly, the play works with different types of humour to evoke a variety of responses from the audience. The tyranny of the guardians lies in the sphere of satire and "humours" comedy while the protagonists are placed in the realm of humane comedy which provokes benevolent laughter and empathy. Therefore, the audiences might laugh *at* the guardians but laugh *with* Anne and Fainwell. Thus comic pleasure consists of a complex response to the blurring and mixing of comedic elements and effects. But, overall, comic pleasure is more liberating than pedagogical, as the humorous treatment of eccentricity is simultaneously shown. The same applies to the desire for freedom and the witty actions of the protagonists to achieve it. The different types of humour thus produce a particular effect and contribute to the liberating experience of comic pleasure.

According to Bakhtin, laughter is emancipatory, not just from social constraints but also from one's own self. But, if empathy binds the audience to the chief characters and provides identification, how can laughter be supportive if it frees one from the restrictions of the self? Following Bakhtin, the construction of a single unified self is dismantled by the immediacy of the bodily response to humour. Laughter thus reveals a rather tenuous relationship between the body and the self. The self might see itself reflected in some of the dramatic characters represented on stage and feel empathy towards them. Furthermore, in the concept of the "carnavalesque," Bakhtin comments on the "positive, life-embracing, and elevating concept of the comic, which does not laugh with someone at something but supposedly functions without comparison, exclusion, or denigration" (Horlacher 2009, 21). In such a carnivalesque comic universe, there is a connection between "the spectator/reader and the actor/protagonist, whereby both are in a full agreement about the setting free of sensuality, bodily needs, and the pleasure principle" (Horlacher 2009, 22). What Horlacher identifies in Bakhtin's work illuminates Centlivre's effective use of comedy and its liberating power. When Anne Lovely points out the black spots that should appear on Mrs. Prim's face, thus betraying her hypocritical nature and provoking laughter from the audience, the distance between the spectators and the actors is overcome. In this context, laughter does not have a condescending quality but establishes equality in the hope of liberty for the young heroine, of a world for Anne to

thrive in and for the Prims to be revealed as the hypocrites that they are. The restriction on the body of the young Anne by the imposition of Quaker dress and manners is doubly eliminated through Bakhtinian laughter. She is thus freed from the hypocrisy that lies behind it, as well as from bodily restrictions and inhibitions in general.⁷

In Defence of Liberty - Centlivre's New Comedy and The Politics of Self-Determination

Susanna Centlivre's play *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* exemplifies the ethical dimension of humour but the playwright, through the empathy for the protagonists, engages her audience to such an extent that they respond to, and judge, the characters, and their place in the action of the play from an ethical perspective. Thus, the ethical implications arise from an empathetic move along with the character's negotiation of values and morality. By neatly juxtaposing the play's morally virtuous characters who embody the values of liberty and moderation with characters who personify conformity as well as excess and eccentricity, Centlivre engages her audience in a reflection on these values. Despite the many comic events and contrived plotting, the characters gain more complexity and multi-dimensionality, thus providing the possibility for the audience to identify with them and, implicitly, with their embodied values.

It is certainly interesting to note that in Douglas Canfield's view, the new types of comedies are not revolutionary in their political subtexts but they are a testimony to the new dominant ideological stance of the middle-classes: "It becomes obvious that, despite their democratic, meritocratic political rhetoric, the plays are exclusionary: they portray the consolidation of power in the hands of a new (male) elite – power based ostensibly on law but really on the sword and the gun" (Canfield 1995, 196). Hence, the new comedies provide a discursive opportunity for the upcoming elite to formulate and disseminate their values and thus support and expand their powerful position in British society.⁸ It is through

⁷ In his insightful work on laughter, Horlacher states that "Bakhtin's laughter abolishes frontiers, is immune to death, spreads everywhere and covers all aspects of life. It is seen as a dynamic link between our body in the sense of its animal and biological aspects, and our culture in the sense of intellect. Moreover, for Bakhtin, laughter entails plurality and ignores interdictions. It is the enemy of censorship and allows mankind to temporarily enter the utopian realm of universality, liberty, equality, and abundance" (Horlacher 2009, 9).

⁸ Canfield traces the discursive changes and delineates the socio-cultural alteration as well as the political repercussions around the time of the Glorious Revolution: "It is as if, right up to the Glorious Revolution, an aristocratic force field holds the elements of official discourse together; afterward, we can detect a new bourgeois configuration of discursive elements" (Canfield 1995, 194).

moral reform that the middle-class ranks more highly in the public sphere. For Canfield, this position is not only a class hierarchy but also a racial and gendered one:

[...] their neostoic exemplary morality masks upper middle-class male dominance over gender, class, and even race. Lockean social contract theory, which underlay the bourgeois revolution in England and later in America, actually meant in practice, as these plays despite their inculcation of the new ideology unwittingly reveal, that only a few (good) men are created equal. (Canfield 1995, 196)

The middle-classes' growing importance in British society in terms of politics, moral and cultural norms as well as economic power, according to Canfield, results in an increasing inequality that places white middle-class men at the centre. But, in the work by Susanna Centlivre, while middle-class ideology begins to take a firmer grip on notions of character, the liberty of the female protagonist is undeniably the central aspect of *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*. Centlivre captures the values of her characters in a plot that centers on the personal. Yet, it points to the political, in and around notions of liberty. Liberty, as represented by Anne and Fainwell, has been taken as evidence for Centlivre's Whig politics: "Although the Whigs do not believe in democracy (that would be chaos), they believe that the individual has the right to resist tyranny, to resist any government official or function that would deprive him or her of any of these rights. Individuals must have the power to create their own destinies, to make their existence in society less than miserable" (Butler 1991, 362-63). "Individuals who have the power to create their own destinies" could be seen as a motivation in a large part of the action of *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*. Fainwell and Anne, in a joint effort, outwit Anne's guardians and "free" her from tyranny. Such a resistance to tyranny resonates with the bourgeois members of the audience. Butler suggests that "in one sense, Centlivre's plays are a dramatic fulfilment of Whig philosophy. Sturdy, self-reliant characters win their fortunes and future mates by virtue of their own cleverness – and some good luck. It is the middle-class ethic in operation – work hard, be smart, and success in matters of love and money cannot be too far away [...]" (Butler 1991, 363). There are several aspects of self-reliance and cleverness that the play propagates: Anne's strategies to first survive in a setting that limits and constricts her liberty and her subsequent endeavour to escape from the eccentricities and extremist ideologies of her four guardians shows her as an independent and freedom-loving figure. Her attempt to emulate some of the characteristics only to expose her guardians' hypocrisy demonstrates her wit and smart character. Fainwell, too, displays characteristics that are both intelligent as well as confident, trusting in his ability to liberate Anne and outsmart the guardians.

Both on the level of plot and character, liberal ideas are combined with acts of self-reliance and sharpness. What is highlighted in the play is that the character's goal of liberty must be achieved through actions governed by confidence in one's abilities as well as intelligent decision-making. Anne's conviction that her choice of a husband is right because it will lead to her liberty drives most of the action forward. It is especially her character that incorporates Locke's notion of liberty as the freedom "to choose, to act, to consent" (Edwards 2002, 296).⁹ But for Fainwell, the motivation of liberty is obvious in his ambition to liberate Anne. His position is alluding to contemporary notions of liberty not only as a right but also as an obligation. In some instances, citizens are asked to fight for their freedom.¹⁰

While Anne Lovely defends liberty and self-determination against tyranny, Fainwell uncovers vanity, eccentricity, greed and religious fundamentalism in his encounters with the guardians. The final scene, in which Anne stands up to all her guardians and, in particular, tells Sir Philip to dress according to his age shows the hero's and heroine's common goal of moderation and liberty:

Mrs. Lovely

Don't call me miss, Friend Philip; my name is Anne, thou knowest.

Sir Philip

What, is the girl metamorphosed?

Mrs. Lovely.

I wish thou wert so metamorphosed. Ah, Philip, throw off that gaudy attire and wear the clothes becoming of thy age. (V.i. 136)

In this scene, moderation and liberty are presented as ideal values and vocally defended by the protagonist. It is mainly through the contrast of the young outspoken heroine and the foppish character who belongs to a theatrical tradition slowly fading from the stage that new values are asserted. Anne's liberty starts with her proper name that she claims defiantly and confidently:

⁹ According to Edwards, "[d]escribing metaphorical an original tale of nature ordered by certain natural general laws, Locke conceived of man as born possessed of certain concomitant and inalienable natural rights. There are life, liberty and property" (Edwards 2002, 296).

¹⁰ Edwards discusses this aspect of liberty in eighteenth-century liberal thinkers and, by providing an exemplary text, highlights its implications for a new civil society: "Algernon Sidney's *Discourses Concerning Government* suggested that the rights of a free people rested on the liberty secured by war. Rebellion, in Sidney's account, was a powerful and improving scourge. The citizen not only had an individual right of rebellion, to be claimed *in extremis*, he also had a positive obligation, as a citizen of the republic, to resist tyranny and to restore liberty" (Edwards 2002, 295; emphasis in the original).

“My name is Anne, thou knowest” expresses her unbeaten desire to be recognised for who she is and, furthermore, to be “known,” which means to be acknowledged as her authentic and true self. While Anne asks Philip to refrain from his freakish love for French fashion and his exaggerated vanity, she defends the values of liberty and honesty. This scene also epitomizes a very significant rejection of the theatrical tradition of “humours” characters in favour of realist and sympathetic figures. Anne’s request to “[t]hrow off that gaudy attire” can be viewed as the playwright’s own comment on a previous theatrical tradition that has been succeeded by Centlivre’s ingenious comedic creation of Anne Lovely as a prime example of liberty on the English stage.¹¹

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¹¹ One could certainly argue that Centlivre’s *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* propagates liberty as a value that is associated with Englishness. Pincus, for example, argues that “[c]ontinental Europeans vacillated between the wild extremes of republican and popular government on the one hand and tyrannical royal absolutism on the other. The English, by contrast, were committed to limited monarchy, allowing just the right amount of tempered popular liberty” (Pincus 2009, 5; emphasis in the original).

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THE TRIUMPHS OF AFFECTIONS: CRÉBILLON FILS, TRANSLATION AND THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH NARRATIVES OF MOTION AND EMOTION

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ABSTRACT. *The Triumphs of Affections: Crébillon Fils, Translation and the Eighteenth-Century English Narratives of Motion and Emotion.* The French influence on eighteenth-century English sentimental writing has been a rich topic for criticism ever since translations of French novels were imported into England as early as the first decades of the eighteenth century. In the “long” eighteenth-century history of English literature, there was a great deal of translation from French sources, which clearly indicates a market for fiction and the need to satisfy it (*sources françaises* were often mentioned as tokens of legitimacy). French sources took a stance on English realist fiction by infusing it with emotional narratives of men of feeling that hinged on acts of translation, whereby translation is understood not only as adaptation, but also as resistance against long-standing literary practices that advocated institutionalised moral codes in realistic fiction. Hence, the concerns of this study are threefold: to discuss the ambivalent nature that early modern philosophers granted to emotions, which triggered conflicting motions in an individual or in a specific social context, resulting in a taxonomy of passions; to consider Crébillon *fils*'s novel in English translation in order to epitomize the new type of discourse that intended to popularize virtue through eroticism, satire and decadence; and to re-ground human experience as it was discussed in eighteenth-century

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literary texts from the perspective of natural philosophy. This article aims to rethink eighteenth-century affective theory in relation to translation studies, while reading Thomas Hobbes' concept of motion as a metaphor for the historical and mindset transformations that were fundamental to the writing of the history of literature.

Keywords: *translation, sources françaises, sentimental writing, Crébillon fils, motion, emotion, eighteenth-century affective theory.*

REZUMAT. Triumful emoțiilor: Romanul lui Crébillon Fils în contextul traducerilor și al narațiunilor care pun sentimentele în mișcare. Influența narațiunilor franceze asupra romanului sentimental englez din secolul al XVIII-lea a reprezentat un subiect stufos pentru critica literară din momentul în care traducerile din limba franceză au fost adoptate în Anglia în primele decenii ale secolului al XVIII-lea. În istoria literaturii engleze, traducerile din franceză erau ceva obișnuit, dat fiind că modelul cultural francez era dominant, așadar, legitim. Sursele franceze au influențat romanul realist englez prin traducerea prozei sentimentale, actul de traducere reprezentând nu doar adaptarea unui text într-o altă limbă, ci și împotrivirea față de practicile literare ieșite din uz, care propagau principiile codului etico-moral în romanul realist. Astfel, studiul de față își propune trei obiective: să discute caracterul ambivalent pe care filozofii modernității timpurii îl acordau emoțiilor, ceea ce a declanșat o dinamică interioară și socială și a dus la crearea unei taxonomii a pasiunilor; să analizeze traducerea în limba engleză a textului lui Claude Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon pentru a surprinde noul tip de discurs, care viza afirmarea virtuților prin intermediul expozeurilor erotice, satirice și decadente; și, nu în ultimul rând, să redefinească din perspectiva filosofiei naturale experiența umană descrisă în textele literare. Articolul regândește teoria afectelor în relație cu traducerile din secolul al XVIII-lea englez, expunând conceptul dinamic al mișcării al lui Thomas Hobbes ca pe o metaforă a transformărilor istorice și mentale, fundamentale pentru evoluția istoriei literaturii engleze.

Cuvinte-cheie: *traducere, surse franceze, roman sentimentalist, Crébillon fils, dinamică și mișcare, teoria afectelor în secolul al XVIII-lea.*

Translation as Acculturation. Preliminary Remarks

Forms of cultural transfer between France and Great Britain had existed before the eighteenth century. During the Middle Ages and the early modern period, almost every aspect of quotidian life was dramatically influenced by the interaction between Britain and France. The "Dover boat," along with tools, weapons, and artefacts found in the mouth of the river Dour, testifies to the

French presence in Britain during the Middle Bronze Age.² During the Hundred Years War, the French and the English exchanged manuscripts, chronicles, treatises, manuals, correspondences, artistic and architectural ideas. According to Gesa Stedman (2016), unlike cultural influence, which is the mere trade of products and ideas between self-supporting countries (2), cultural transfer adds a dynamic quality to the exchange, turning it into a long-lasting process that involves social and cultural transformations. Cultural transfer involves, apart from artefacts and material objects, reflections on the specificity of a culture as well as a critical approach to that culture by the other society it is compared to. Whereas cultural influence does not necessarily generate cultural change and resists shifting the static values and principles that define one culture into ones that are more flexible and adaptable, cultural transfer is far from frozen and rigid: “Transfer always entails transformation” (Stockhorst 2010, 7). *Mutatis mutandis*, one shaping force that changed not only perceptions of the English literary canon, but also readers’ mentality regarding the reverence paid to the ancient classics was translation, which served as a constant point of reference and a “reassessment of the native canon” (Gillespie 2005, 10). Translation enabled authors from different cultural backgrounds to connect and asserted their kinship with the authors they translated from, a practice which enhanced their authority by asking readers to compare the new product to the original. The dynamics of translation occurred only in response to the reception of specific mechanisms in the mother culture the primary sources stemmed from. During the first half of the eighteenth century, literary translation was translator-oriented. Around mid-eighteenth century, when notions such as originality, authorship and literary ownership became issues of crucial importance to authors, the role of source authors prevailed and by the end of the century it was considered a duty to respect them:

The norm of literary translation was moving from paraphrase to metaphrase. The original became the ‘source’ on which the style of a translation was centred, and translators sought to capture their author’s tone with the minimum of linguistic and rhetorical intervention. ‘Imitation’ increasingly dropped out of discussion because it was no longer considered to be a kind of translation. (Kelly 2005, 67)

French was the dominant source language for translation in eighteenth-century Britain. In the “long”³ eighteenth-century history of English literature, there

² For other references to the interactions between Britain and France or Britain and other countries of continental Europe, see Steinforth, Coombs, and Rozier (2021): 1-14.

³ Frank O’Gorman identifies this as the period between the Glorious Revolution (1688) and the Great Reform Act (1832). See O’Gorman (1997).

was an ever-growing flood of translations from French into English which comprehensibly explain the explosive consumption of fiction that invaded the literary market and the necessity for printers and commercial booksellers to get involved in it so as to meet its requirements. The relationship of acculturation that developed between England and France at the end of the seventeenth century resulted in a cultural profit that turned all enriching exchanges into a decisive change for the evolution of literature in both countries:

What had begun as cultural contact in the early seventeenth century with the arrival of Henrietta Maria developed into a solid cultural relationship with the return of the English king and his many followers in 1660. By 1700, French culture had become firmly entrenched in England. (Stedman 2016, 255)

Some essential features deserve special mention in relation to the question of translation, with a special focus on the ways in which translators of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries incorporate notions and loanwords from other languages into their own national literature. Firstly, *sources françaises* were sometimes mentioned in order to legitimize a publication in English, even if the text was a fabrication of the author, and not a translation. Secondly, despite censorship and the strict control of print, “translation” paved the way for the circulation of texts of unreliable authorship and textual accuracy. Within the seventeenth and eighteenth-century context of literature as *aemulatio* of classical antiquity, which encouraged writers and translators alike to blend original with spurious texts in an attempt to bolster the increased use of vernacular languages and serve the enlightened paradigm of disseminating general knowledge among the populace, paraphrasing a source text and labelling it a “translation” was not considered a crime of writing, but rather a tribute paid to classical European literature. As John W. Draper remarked in his pioneering essay of 1921, “In the Seventeenth Century, the object of translation was to enrich the vernacular rather than to give an accurate idea of the original. Two types contended for supremacy: imitation and paraphrase” (243).

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were dominated by a campaign initiated by writers to translate classical texts into English. In this particular context, a translation involved inclusion of some paragraphs into the text or adjusting the text according to ideological requirements. As part of the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, commonly referred to as “the Battle of the Books” in England, a debate caused by a crisis of authority and one of representation, imitation was viewed differently by two historical periods of time, divided by the introduction of the first copyright law in 1709, The Statute

of Anne. The Statute of Anne was not extended to Ireland, which allowed Irish booksellers to reprint any London bestseller without permission. Before the enactment of this first official document which implemented the copyright law,⁴ imitation of the ancient writers was not only accepted and encouraged by writers of rhetoric, but it became the literary norm.

In 1751, Samuel Johnson ambiguously declared in *The Rambler* that “as not every instance of similitude can be considered as a proof of imitation, so not every imitation ought to be stigmatized as plagiarism” (401). Some years later, in 1759, Edward Young encouraged writers to imitate the ancients, specifying that the individual, and not the composition should have been imitated, a paradox that he paraphrased as: “The less we copy the renowned ancients, we shall resemble them the more” (277). Latterly, Nick Groom exemplifies his theory of forgery and plagiarism with Longinus’s opinion on imitation: *mimesis*, or the imitation of other writers is one of the characteristics of *noesis*, “or the instinctive intellectual conception of the artist, which is a way of approaching the sublime” (107). Apparently, even after the adoption of the copyright law, when the new theory of originality instituted new regulations on the literary market, the persistence of pseudotranslations⁵ – based on an absent source text and on the skilfulness of the *belles infidèles* – and their ambivalent nature – half translations, half originals – still address the question of authorship and translatorship. Translations into English were from French prose writings, mainly prose fiction, which engaged with different fictional paradigms: the tradition of the surveillance chronicle, the sentimental novel, and courtly and popular romance, a fusion of genres which, according to McMurran, proved that “cross-Channel translating was the most active and fervent arena and, few would argue, the site of the novel’s emergence” (2010, 2). Eighteenth-century narratives of emotion – sentimental fiction, *le roman galant* and *le roman libertin* – were narrative forms inherited from French literature with the purpose of providing the middle class with the necessary education to live a life of virtue and financial success. For instance, Claude-Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, known as Crébillon *fils* to distinguish him from his father, Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon – also called Crébillon *père*, a master of sentimental tragedies – hugely influenced the early novel of sensibility and the libertine novel. His first work translated into English in 1735 was *L’Écumoire* (*The Skimmer*), “a fluent translation of an oriental romance that blended the

⁴ The Statute of Anne, the first ever copyright act was enacted in 1709, and entered into force in 1710, under the name of *An Act of the Encouragement of Learning, by Vesting the Copies of Printed Books in the Authors or Purchasers of such Copies, during the Times therein mentioned*.

⁵ A term coined by Gideon Toury in *Translation, Literary Translation, and Pseudotranslation* in 1984. Toury uses the term “pseudotranslation” or “fictitious translation” for texts which claim to be translations, but do not refer to any source text in any language.

comic, the erotic and the satirical” (Ahern 2005, 334). Crébillon’s narrative is dominated by erotic vocabulary and ornamental language that characterize the process of seduction and the decadence of the age. In a true nationalistic spirit, the English approach to translation predicated augmenting and decorating the vocabulary, paraphrasing the original to “improve” it, and imitating the classics. The theories of translation that go back to John Dryden are of particular interest in outlining the semiotic journey of translation from being considered an art or a craft to becoming susceptible to contamination by transforming it into a skill to deceive readers.

Dryden set an example by stating his three major principles of translation: metaphrase, paraphrase, and imitation.⁶ The main principle of translation that the eighteenth century borrowed was, according to Draper, “to improve the vernacular language and to enrich its literature” (244). A translator borrowed a foreign source text, cleansed it from flaws, anglicized its spirit and presented it to the reader with the purpose of cultivating his or her mind and language. The eighteenth century added a didactic aim to that: “Man must be civilized and society cultivated; propriety and decorum must be upheld” (244). With the emergence of sentimental fiction in the mid-eighteenth century, emotions became a form of embellishment for the characters’ communication in the vernacular. This perspective, which shifted the narrative form from the high literary culture of Pope and Swift to the culture of sentimentality, is wonderfully described by Stephen Ahern (2007):

From midcentury on, writers of literary works, periodical essays, conduct manuals, and philosophical treatises had become increasingly concerned with defining – and their readers with demonstrating – the ethical, aesthetic, and physiological qualities that distinguish a person of sensibility. (11)

The most radical and significant change in the seventeenth-century intellectual paradigm was related to the understanding of how things moved. The implications of such paradigm shift in the structure of the scientific revolution were profound and it opened the way for further reconfigurations and reinterpretations. Geoffrey Sill (2016) considers that “the development of nerve theory brought a new conception of the body, in which feeling was elevated to an epistemological

⁶ For a succinct but lucid exposition of the theory of translation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from George Chapman’s translation of Homer to John Dryden’s translation of Virgil, see Draper, 243-44. Dryden adapted the source text to the chronotope of his contemporary society. He intended “to make Virgil speak such English as he would himself have spoken, if he had been born in England and in this present age” (Dryden, in Draper 1921, 244). His practices of translation were closely followed by Pope, Dunster, Garth, and Tytler.

status not inferior to reason” (428). Thomas Hobbes viewed motion as the single cause by which matter is transformed (McMurran 2016, 8) and since “passions are motions internal to the body” (Hobbes, in McMurran 2016, 8) and “the heat and motion of the limbs proceed from the body” (Descartes 2015, 196), the connection between mind and matter might be mediated by the motion of sensation and feeling. Writing along the same line, David Hume, in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), viewed passion as transformation, defining it as “modification of existence” while observing that

we speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and of reason. Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them. [...] A passion is an original existence, or, if you will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence or modification. (266)

Hume’s statement came in as a counter-argument to the seventeenth-century thinkers and eighteenth-century writers who, in choosing debating on passions as one of their hobby-horses, considered that man’s worst enemies are bodily passions and desires that prevail over rationality. Henry Home, Lord Kames, a central figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, wrote what was believed to be universally accepted and reiterated throughout the century, namely that reason dominates passions: “There is no truth more universally known than that tranquillity and sedateness are the proper state of mind for accurate perception and cool deliberation. [...] Passion [...] hath such influence over us, as to give a false light to all its objects (Home, in Joy 2020, 1).

Passions are emotions that are directed toward an object, a fact that reflects Aristotle’s teleological view on motion as being finite and as having a purposeful destination, which turns change into an idea that has, in Spragens’ words, “a definite beginning and an equally definite end” (1973, 56). In the seventeenth century, Galileo Galilei completely changed the Aristotelian view of motion, demonstrating that “bodies continued to move in a straight line unless deflected by an outside source” (61). Descartes’ dualism deconstructed Aristotle’s theory of motion, while Thomas Hobbes “was a resolute monist who saw motion as comprising the whole of reality” (61). Hobbes grounded his work in Galileo’s findings and constructed a theory of motion which he embedded in natural philosophy: motion holds the key to nature and can be universally applied. He applies it to passions and cognition. The mechanics of life lies in the circulatory system and vitality becomes an automaton while cognition is also motion mediated by sensation. Hobbes’s cosmological configuration defines knowledge and passions as forms of motion.

Unlike Lord Kames, who makes “true” statements, Addison and Steele (1850) make recommendations and then admit to their equivocation: “Reason should govern passion, but instead of that, you see, it is often subservient to it” (10). This controversy/ambiguity may lead to the main research queries: How did affect theory impact literary writing and interpretations of literary works in the light of new theories on pneumatology, materiality and motion, and natural philosophy? What do translations from French into English tell us about the eighteenth-century transmission of knowledge via narratives of emotion, such as those of Crébillon *films*? An analysis of the most important cross-Channel historical and cultural changes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in connection with the expansion of translations demonstrates that these narratives were strongly supported by the intellectual elite and the cultural institutions of the age, such as the Royal Society or the French Academy, in their attempt to formulate a new type of discourse that encouraged the popularisation of knowledge among non-professional readers.

Paradigm Shifts in Motion and Emotions

Emotions are not corporeal, but they are hosted by a body which is chronotopically embedded and determined. There were earlier instances of preoccupations with sensibility before the Age of Sensibility, mainly in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century drama, but these were haphazard and did not congeal into what might be termed a systematic theory of sentiments. The mid-century affective turn in narratives resulted from the seventeenth and eighteenth century-revision of the core concepts of natural philosophy: matter, motion and human nature. This reassessment of cognitive and scientific practices involved a shift away from what McMurrin (2016) defined as “the study of knowledge-making” (3), that is, from the Enlightenment paradigm of rationality; it was – in accordance with the various medical and physiological underpinnings of the discourse of sensibility – a shift towards emphasizing the biological and physiological responses to subjective experiences. Since defining concepts might sometimes be a defective and debatable practice, especially when these are considered outside the discipline that usually accommodates them – in this particular case, “emotion” and “affect” are adapted to the literary framework discussed here – I shall endeavour to explain my terms by attempting a context-based definition.

Along with the emergence of the leading science of physiology in the eighteenth century and the replacement of the early modern conception of the human body as “a receptacle filled with fluids: the well-known humours” (Koschorke 2008, 469) with the newly-discovered life of the nerves and psyche

that generated a rich culture of feeling, a rapid change in lexical development was observed: eighteenth-century philosophers dropped the seventeenth-century term “passion” to give preference to “sentiment,” “feeling,” and “affect.” It was not the mind, but “conceptions of the mind” (Rorty 1982, 159) that changed. In her pioneering essay, Amélie Rorty explains the changes that occur in the taxonomy of emotions, which is predicated on the assumption that conceptions of the passions change. Even the lexical field of emotion has evolved in a dynamic way, acquiring different context-based and discipline-related meanings. This taxonomy is evident in “sermons, scientific treatises, political rhetoric, poetry and trashy fiction, obituaries that praise and editorials that blame [...]” (172). Passions as motivating factors became the major kinaesthetic force behind the process of civilization. They produced “the very activities of the mind, its own motions” (159).

Early in the eighteenth century, passions and affections were not disconnected. In the words of Louise Joy (2020), “passions and affections are usually conjoined whenever they are referenced in seventeenth- and eighteenth-theological treatises on the emotions” (18). From the perspective of theology and moral philosophy, affections are spiritual and immaterial, being defined in contrast with passions, which are material and corporeal. In 1650, William Fenner’s *The Treatise of the Affections; or, the Souls Pulse* suggested affections were superior to passions and should be given a separate place in the study of human behaviour, associating them with “piety, moral rectitude, social utility and psychological orderliness” (Fenner, in Joy 2020, 19). Ordering one’s emotions necessitates ordering different systems of thought and practice that they – as the more abstract intellectual relative of reason – influenced. And according to Hobbes’s theory, it is motion which moves matter and “actions are the motions of willing” (McMurran 2016, 8). This theory represents affections as movements of the soul. One emotional factor can trigger conflicting motions inside the body and the soul of an individual or even within a society. Based on Thomas Aquinas’ theological approach, passions are impulses that overwhelm an individual unconsciously and unwillingly, attributing to the human being the bodily dimension of suffering which, in relation to other beings, points to the superiority of human being and its capacity to endure, whereas in relation to divinity, it emphasizes human imperfection and frailty:

Although, in fact, the root words for both passions (the Latin term “passiones”) and affections (“affectus”) derive originally from the Greek word “pathe”, denoting “suffering”, the bodily dimension to this suffering falls out of the notion of the affections in Aquinas’s scheme. Consequently, in British theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries that draw on the taxonomy he devised, the affections are conceived as positive, aspirational emotions [...]. In contrast, passions retain their original sense of subjugation to the body, and references to the passions continue to be used to emphasize, and even to emblemize, man's distance from the divine. (Joy 2020, 21)

Whereas passions⁷ are motions that stimulate physical senses, causing disarray in both the body and the soul, while predicating a certain dynamism that puts the body in action and emotions in motion, affections are immaterial, involve the will and are closer to spirituality. An opinion that is different from, but does not discredit the Christian overtones of previous metaphysical doctrines, comes from Lord Shaftesbury. Bringing the affections down to earth, Shaftesbury believes in man's innate balance and identifies three types of affection: natural affections, self-affections and unnatural affections (Joy 2020, 34). As long as man is dominated by his natural affections, he is in constant harmony with himself and his social environment. Such secular conception of emotions simplified the category of affections and shifted the concern from the religious lexis to the scientific one: "Concepts such as 'passion' and 'affection of the soul' were biblical and theological, whereas the category 'emotion' came from a scientific lexical field involving conceptions of organisms and nature" (Plamper 2012, 173). In discussing human experience in the context of the libertine novel of Crébillon *filis*, I will use the term "emotion" from the perspectives of natural philosophy and medical science, since emotion was regarded as both physical and spatial change, a term for which "motion was a load-bearing concept" (Landreth 2012, 286). For Enlightenment authors, the term "emotion" was closer in meaning to the scientific Newtonian model of gravitational motion, reflecting fleshy and corporeal associations, than to its metaphysical usage in the field of *belles lettres*. It conveyed "both tectonic disturbance and passionate unrest" (287), connections which mirror the controversy over the body-soul dualism crystallized in the dichotomy between mind and matter.

Crébillon *filis* and the Metaphysics of the Sofa

Following the new discoveries in science, a new discourse of sentimental writing, perceived both as a form of literary representation and as a critique to the realist novel, charted changes in the literary arena by setting in motion a

⁷ Descartes (1649) identifies six primary passions, "principal passions" (219), as he calls them, which he classifies according to the ways objects of sense-perception have a beneficial or a harmful effect on human behaviour: wonderment, hate, love, desire, joy, and sadness. Descartes also establishes the main derivatives of the passions, the physical processes that they trigger, their manifestations in facial expressions and the relationship humans have with them.

taxonomy of passions and sentimental tropes that derived from the newly adopted scientific lexis:

Motion can teach us about theories of reading and writing because for much of the eighteenth century, authors understood *all* change as motion. This included the changes that a reader might undergo when perusing a poem or a novel: improvement or dissolution, entertainment or sentimental transport. For this reason, motion was a foundational concept not only for physics, but also for the arenas of moral philosophy, theology, and rhetoric". (Landreth 2012, 281)

The birth of sentimental fiction as a "transnational genre" (Cohen, in Dow 2019, 93) and the emergence of its complementary part – the libertine novel – represented a necessity and a natural consequence of the new trends in science, which aimed to synchronize philosophical and scientific theories with the interest of the reading public and the new decorative style in literature. As Draper (1921) notes, "decorum is the Orthodoxy of the Eighteenth Century" (241). And it was, indeed.⁸ There was a tendency to associate the Rococo style in furniture with the flamboyant orientalism and exoticism of some literary productions of the Enlightenment, such as those of Crébillon *fils* and Marivaux:

Instead of Montesquieu and Voltaire, Sgard suggests Marivaux and Crébillon fils as exemplars of the Rococo style in literature, and these last two names have been retained in the study of the literary Rococo ever since. (Bloom 2010, 87)

Diderot can join these two writers with his Oriental tale, *Les Bijoux indiscrets* (*The Indiscreet Jewels*, 1748); another French writer who contributed to the libertine novel was Charles-Pinot Duclos (*L'Histoire de Madame de Luz*, 1741); Baron Dominique Vivant Denon penned a voluptuous erotic tale set in rococo interiors, *Point de lendemain* (1777); Jean-François Marmontel caused a scandal in the world of letters when he published his 1767 novel, *Bélisaire* and the list can continue with other less known French writers who had their fictions translated into English and were embraced by the anglophone reading public.

A protean figure, Claude Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon (1707-1777) was an agent of change, marking – at the start of the eighteenth century – the advent of a new aesthetic caused by the fervency for the novel. This new aesthetic

⁸ In 1963, Roger Laufer echoed Draper's association of the literary style with the eighteenth-century decorative arts: he announced the "style rococo" was the "style des lumières" (Bloom 2010, 88), a statement which was doubted by later criticism. For further details on this matter, see Bloom, 2010, *passim*.

stemmed from “the liberal era inaugurated by the Regent and Louis XV” (Bloom 2010, 89).

Being part of the eighteenth-century *Frenchmania* movement, Crébillon *fils* best represents the adornments of the Rococo style by his novel *Le Sopha, couleur de roze*, one of the most popular eighteenth-century erotic books, which was published in French in 1742 and then translated into English as *The Sopha. A Moral Tale*, by Eliza Haywood and William Hatchett (a Grubstreet hack of dubious morality), in an edition put in print by John Nourse and Thomas Cooper (Spedding 2001, 237). The translation was eagerly awaited and enthusiastically received not only by the anglophone reading public, but also by some intellectual figures. Laurence Sterne read it. Horace Walpole was enchanted by its atmosphere. In February 1742,⁹ he was exclaiming: “We have at last got Crébillon’s *Sofa* [...] and it is admirable!” (Spedding 2001, 241). It was Walpole who observed that Lord Chesterfield stockpiled some 300 copies to sell at his club, “effectively republishing the book in London” (241). In this erotic novel, which Stephen Ahern (2005) describes as “a major influence on the early novel of sensibility” (334), which became “a symbol of immorality and decadence” (Spedding 2001, 241), and which echoed *The Arabian Nights*, the spirit of a beau is punished by Brahma to live in a sofa till two virgin *amoureux* consummate their passion on the sofa he occupies. With the proviso that Crébillon’s story is narrated by a piece of feminine furniture, a pink sofa, it would not be indecorous to recognise in the rococo aesthetics a narrative chronotope that reflected the author’s sensible connection with his social environment, the true milieu behind the events and the episodes depicted in the novel: “Calling Crébillon a Rococo writer, a practitioner of a period style, suggests the author’s particular sensitivity to his surroundings, his keen awareness of belonging to a specific place and time (Bloom 2010, 88).

In moving from the *Ancien Régime* to the dawn of the French Revolution, from the collective dream of absolutism to Louis XV’s forbearance and indifference, from the specter of Racine on the Parisian stage to the sensual aesthetic of the libertine novel – as Leo Braudy (1973) states, feelings are represented differently on stage and in narrative form (5) – from Defoe’s straightforward style to licentious hedonism, Crébillon *fils* opened the door of the alternative novel by deviating from the norm of rationality, historical realism and materialism, which he replaced with *petites choses*, libertine liaisons and textual promiscuities. It is stated in the Introduction to the novel that “where there is no frankness there can be no art” (4).

⁹ There is an abundance of suggested dates for the publication of *Le Sopha*, due to the fact that the original edition of this Oriental tale “which was printed clandestinely, bore on its title-page only a fanciful Mohammedan date, ‘L’an de l’hégire MCXX’” (Day 1961, 392). For further details regarding the dating of *Le Sopha*, see D. A. Day (1961): 391-92.

The materiality of a piece of furniture is – in a very corporeal, but also metaphysical way – embodied in the soul of an individual. The former body-soul duality is transformed into a cognitive contact between matter and spirit: the external stimuli caused by the softness of the sofa determine the internal workings of both the soul and the mind of the characters involved in the story told by the *conteur*, which “aim at the perilous balance of sympathy and understanding accompanying physical pleasure, for, while they deal largely with the body, they never forget the soul” (Dobreé 2000, 4).

By 1801, the tale underwent 18 editions and in 1927, Bonamy Dobreé’s translation was considered the standard English version (Hale 2000, 418). The novel is a mixture of Oriental prose, satire, scandalous behaviour, “sophisticated psychological realism” (Ahern 2005, 334), erotic passages, and amorous intrigues.

Both the title and the scope of the novel reflect the interplay of libertine and sentimental discourse, epitomizing the paradox of French preference for Oriental erotica and the English appetite for didactic tales. Crébillon *fils* embodies the marriage between excess and aesthetic conventions. The excess of sensorial power comes from an affective response to the stimuli caused by the material world of opulent objects that surrounds the story, such as the Middle East sofas, or *canapés*, embroidered with silver, which were new and fashionable pieces of furniture in France, China vases, diamonds, beds, chairs, chamber-gowns, etc.:

The array of precious pomatum pots which met her eye, a casket choke-full of diamonds, well-dressed slaves obsequious to serve her, the merchants and artificers who awaited her commands, all these heightened her amazement, and intoxicated her with grandeur. (Crébillon 2000, 39)

The decorative taste of mid-century Europe fully represents what I would call “the Age of Motion” characterized by exploration, European colonial expansion, global trade, and a proliferation of travel writing. The world in motion puts in motion flights of imagination which, in turn, triggers emotions that respond to an eccentric and libertine network of objects and attitudes. In Crébillon’s narrative, the human being turns into a domestic object: a couch.

This is an uncommon example of anthropomorphism, which exemplifies an essential philosophical debate in the eighteenth century: the physical dualism matter/spirit and the anthropological dualism body/soul. This duality is rendered by the two-faced story: an amoral story with an apparent moral lesson attached to it. Despite the incredulity regarding the subtle subtitle to morality, the tale includes a moral lesson in its plot. Due to his misconduct, the Indian Amanzei was punished by Brahma to have his soul separated from his body in a true Platonic/Cartesian manner. His body becomes a sofa, which gives Amanzei the possibility to spy on the intimate lives of women as per the eighteenth-century voyeuristic fashion. He undergoes a series of metamorphoses and is condemned

to journey from one sofa to the next until he encounters true love between a man and a woman. However, as I see it, the moral lesson is just a pretext the writer uses to reflect – consciously or not – the overarching Enlightenment questions regarding nature’s laws and mechanisms.

While Aristotle viewed the law of motion in qualitative and teleological terms, Newton designed it as a “spatial change” (Landreth 2012, 283). Crébillon’s novel mixes up the two theories: in a true Aristotelian logic, Amanzei feels a strong internal desire to break the enchantment and free himself from the spell, but he is also influenced by the Newtonian physics in that he is dominated by the external force of the spell exerted on him by Brahma’s punishment. The sofa is an inanimate object that has no internal impetus towards movement, but Amanzei’s soul, which inhabits the body of the sofa, is an animate principle that agitates its materiality, setting it in motion and thus causing moral changes. There are 33 moments in the novel where the word “emotion” has strong connotations of movement and agitation: “Emotions took possessions of her against her will” (Crébillon 2000, 52); “the tumult of emotion” (58); “lively, transient emotion” (62); “disordered by his emotions” (139), “emotions aroused by his raptures” (196), etc. The sentimental effect of the rhetorical performance is caused by the attitudes and the gestures of the characters as well as the sentiments set into motion by these motrical signals: “The agony she saw in his face” (58); “the deep sighs he fetched” (58); “the tears she saw ready to fall” (58); “the fleeting pulse of desire” (59); “the fear of stirring your passions” (70); “the inner confusion which still dominated” (73), etc.

The Enlightenment debate on the nature of motion is seemingly launched by Amanzei’s statement concerning his metamorphosis: “It would be more humiliating for me to be a sofa than to be a reptile” (Crébillon 2000, 19). Was the soul material? Apparently not, since it was immortal. Amanzei’s affirmation against the background of the Republic of Letters actually shows the century’s preference for vitalism and figuration: natural philosophy played an integral part in eighteenth-century public and intellectual culture and the Linnaean system of classification of plants and living creatures developed consistent and applicable principles of taxonomy, which extended the language of vitality employed in the scientific discourse to more figurative instances. Crébillon measures the literary effects of science: the laws of motion govern the characters’ emotional responses.

Conclusion

To conclude, throughout the eighteenth century, historical and mindset transformations determined the act of literary writing: it led to a shift in public preference from realist fiction to amorous intrigues and fed the public need for various genres and attitudes imported from French translations. The changes

triggered by the new scientific theories on nerves, motion and emotion resulted in refashioning human experience from the perspective of natural philosophy and physiology. Refuting David Hume's 1738 axiom, according to which "reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions" (Hume 2007, 266), and Shaftesbury's advice (1710) to regulate "our governing Fancys, Passions, and Humours as to make us comprehensible to our selves" (125), the discourse of affections that flooded the Republic of Letters reconfigured the canonical theories of the philosophers of rationality. We noticed how the presence of affects in eighteenth-century literature impacted writing and interpretations of literary works in the light of new theories on pneumatology, materiality and motion, and natural philosophy. Crébillon's translations from French into English epitomized the new type of discourse that intended to popularise virtue through eroticism, satire and decadence. Emotions became prisms through which readers perceived human phenomena. Translations from French into English made this possible by mirroring Thomas Hobbes's theory of motion: "Motion is nothing but change of place," which makes the first entry of the definition of *motion* in Johnson's Dictionary as "the act of changing place" (Johnson 1755). Moving the text from French to English language and culture meant repositioning the eighteenth-century French Rococo novel in the context of English didacticism. Affections triumphed and their presence in eighteenth-century literature "provided not only a space for experiment and a platform for social change, but also a way to articulate and understand the early modern individual" (Hultquist 2017, 275). In other words, the act of motion was an act of cultural and social translation from French to English and from reason to sentiment, which resulted in a mindset revolution that was to impact the dominant paradigm of modernity.

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AGGRESSION, SUFFERING, AND AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT IN ELIZA HAYWOOD'S *THE HISTORY OF MISS BETSY THOUGHTLESS*

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ABSTRACT. *Aggression, Suffering, and Affective Development in Eliza Haywood's The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless.* Published during a period of transition from “the epistemological or cognitive” to the “affective dimension of fiction”, to use Catherine Gallagher’s conceptualization of the progress of the mid-eighteenth-century novel, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* is often read as a story of development from “thoughtless coquette” to “thoughtful wife”. With these two social roles in the background, this paper sets forth to examine the affective and emotional development of Betsy Thoughtless through a close reading of her reactions to scenes of suffering and forms of aggression. The claim of the paper is that Miss Betsy’s history progresses as her empathy and capacity to internalize potentially traumatic events grow, which invites sympathetic identification.

Keywords: *Eliza Haywood, The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless, sights of suffering, aggression, affective development, sentimental fiction, the eighteenth-century novel.*

REZUMAT. *Agresiune, suferință și maturizare afectivă în romanul The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless de Eliza Haywood.* Publicat în timpul unei perioade de tranziție de la dimensiunea „epistemologică sau cognitivă” la „dimensiunea afectivă a ficțiunii” – ca să împrumutăm terminologia utilizată de Catherine Gallagher pentru conceptualizarea schimbărilor din evoluția romanului modern la mijlocul secolului al XVIII-lea – *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* este adeseori citit ca roman al devenirii, care urmărește progresul eroinei de la „cochetă necugetată” la „soție grijulie”. Păstrând aceste două roluri în fundal,

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acest articol își propune să examineze dezvoltarea afectivă și emoțională a lui Betsy Thoughtless printr-o citire atentă a reacțiilor acesteia la scene de suferință și diverse forme de agresiune. Lucrarea susține că istoria domnișoarei Betsy avansează o dată cu dezvoltarea empatiei și a capacității sale de a interioriza evenimente cu potențial traumatic, ceea ce invită identificarea afectivă din partea cititorului.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Eliza Haywood, The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless, scene de suferință, agresiune, dezvoltare afectivă, ficțiune sentimentală, romanul secolului al XVIII-lea.*

The middle of the eighteenth century witnessed important transformations in the evolution of the modern novel. John Sitter calls it an “interesting, confusing [...] time of experiments” (Sitter 1982, 9). Michael McKeon locates the rise of the novel as “an abstract field of narrative possibility” around this time (McKeon 2002, xix). After expanding on McKeon’s thesis, which she discussed in relation to Lennard J. Davis’s (1983) view on the novel as resulting from a discursive division of fact and fiction, Catherine Gallagher associates the middle of the eighteenth century with the emergence of “pure fiction, properly speaking” (Gallagher 1999, 28). This category, in Gallagher’s definition, “[carries] a moral charge”, “has no ‘intention to be credited’” (29), and assists in retelling the story of the novel as “nobody’s story” (31). By being about “nobody *in particular*” – a nobody that avoids real-world reference, but is particularized enough to resist being put to allegorical or symbolical use – the novel can easily encourage sympathetic investment on the part of the reader. The escape from the imperative of the truth-claim and the acceptance of verisimilitude as the marker of fiction engender the transition from “the epistemological or cognitive” to “the affective dimension of fiction” and consequently invite the replacement of the “naïve reader” with the “sentimental reader” (39) who tends to indulge, sometimes excessively, in the gratification of sympathetic connection. Therefore, difficult as it might be to trace the beginning of the sentimental trend in the English novel,² the middle of the eighteenth century represents an important period both for the education of reading practices and for the education of moral sentiments in readers.

Mid-eighteenth-century novelists and critics had a similar understanding of the phenomenon. In 1750, Samuel Johnson writes in *The Rambler*:

² Geoffrey Sill points out that “[i]t is difficult to fix a date by which sentimentalism became a dominant element in the English novel; in some ways, it has always been part of the genre.” (Sill 2016, 426)

[...] when an adventurer is levelled with the rest of the world, and acts in such scenes of the universal drama, as may be the lot of any other man; young spectators fix their eyes upon him with closer attention, and hope, by observing his behaviour and success, to regulate their own practices, [...]. These books are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions into life. They are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; [...] (Johnson [1750] 2011, 143)

Given the power of fiction to model behaviour, Johnson continues, "it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature, which are most proper for imitation: greater care is still required in representing life, which is so often discoloured by passion, or deformed by wickedness" (144). Later in the century, Clara Reeve also observed that mid-century novelists had "tempered the *utile* with the *dulce*, and under the disguise of Novels, gave examples of virtue rewarded, and vice punished" (Reeve [1785] 1970, 41). Therefore, the increasing didactic value of novels seems to have started a trend that would push romance plots out of fashion and would consequently impel writers of amatory fiction to consider the reformation of their characters. Such a shift is visible in the career of Eliza Haywood (1693? – 1756), one of the most prolific and popular novelists of the first half of the eighteenth century, who has been nearly erased from literary history for almost two centuries after her death, until the revision of her contribution to the development of the genre in the 1960's. In David H. Richter's words, Haywood "wrote enormously popular erotic/political romances like *Love in Excess* (1719), but broke off work in this genre after the 1720s, turning instead to the Richardsonian novel with *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751)" (Richter 2016, 474). There might have been some market pressure caused by forces meant to shape the novel's respectability that could have influenced Haywood's writing and she can be said to have modulated her writing to tune in to what must have felt as a new trend in prose writing, given the success of Richardson's novels.³ However, while it is true that *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* differs from Haywood's previous amatory fiction, the author does not follow the Johnsonian dictum on selectivity, nor the Richardsonian recipe of an almost ostentatious display of virtue⁴, which would have been impossible

³ John Richetti notes: "Haywood turned with the market in the 1740s and early 1750s in *The Fortunate Foundlings* (1744), *Life's Progress Through the Passions: Or, The Adventures of Natura* (1747), *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), and *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* (1753) to much longer, more thoughtful and moralistic narratives." (Richetti 2005, 189)

⁴ The case can and has been made that Richardson draws much from the tradition of amatory fiction. See, for instance, John Richetti's *The English Novel in History, 1700-1780*, 81-116 or Rebecca Tierney's *Novel Minds*, 141-72.

after her straightforward rejection of the latter in *The Anti-Pamela; or Feign'd Innocence Detected*. Instead, she prefers mixed characters and works toward the respectable educational aim of the novel in more subtle ways.⁵ As Shea Stuart noted, Haywood “attempts to educate her audience through her novels, not in the didactic sense of the way the world should be, but in the sense of the way the world is” (Stuart 2002, 559).

In *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, Haywood employs the theme of the reformed coquette for the didactic end of the novel. She uses the scaffold of the novel of development, upon which she engrafts elements of romance and domestic fiction in order to explore the progress of her heroine and the transformative effect of difficult and dangerous situations. Virtue is important in the novel, but not conspicuously paraded, nor seen as prohibitive of enjoyment. Haywood allows Miss Betsy to make mistakes, to have a hand in her own misfortune, and to mature under the pressure of mistreatment, duress, and sights of suffering. Therefore, the claim of this paper is that even if Miss Betsy is still far from the “woman of sensibility” defined, in Geoffrey Sill’s view, by “moral sentiments” and an “excessively nervous sensibility” (Sill 2016, 433), the story of her development advances with her growing empathy and capacity to internalize potentially traumatic events, thus inviting compassion and sympathetic investment from the reader.

As Ann Jessie Van Sant points out, the eighteenth century seems to have had a particular interest in the exploration of suffering and the understanding of the mechanisms of pity (Van Sant 1993, 45-59). From scientific experiments on animals, to the study of executions at Tyburn, to the development of the rhetorical ability to generate moving representations of scenes of suffering, this interest is implemental in the blooming of the cult of sensibility in the second half of the century and, implicitly, in the education of empathy and charitable feelings. In Van Sant’s words, “[s]cenes of suffering pierce the sensibility, causing pity and leading to sympathetic identification. At the same time the observable sensibility invites curiosity” (56). Ildiko Csengei also noted that “self-interest, cruelty, violence” are “constitutive aspects of the ostensibly benevolent, philanthropist ideology of the eighteenth-century sensibility” (Csengei 2012, 1). Haywood exploits the connection between distressful situations and sympathetic education in *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*; without resorting to the representation of excessively emotional scenes, she uses unpleasant, even direful situations to

⁵ Haywood had already acknowledged the educational value of novels in her 1725 *The Tea-Table, Reflections on the Various Effects of Love*, where she writes: “These kind of Writings are not so trifling as by many People they are thought. — Nor are they design’d, as some imagine, for Amusement only, but Instruction also, most of them containing Morals, which if well observed would be of no small Service to those that read ’em.” (Haywood [1725] 2004, 104-05)

gradually cultivate sympathetic awareness into her heroine, as well as in the reader. Miss Betsy suffers and fortunately gets out of several rape attempts, witnesses the real or feigned suffering of others, and becomes the victim of psychological aggression. All these experiences model and mature her emotional responsiveness and teach her how to own her feelings and manage her behaviour.

Miss Betsy is described by John Richetti as a “technically virtuous heroine narrowly preserved with her honour intact through a series of amorous adventures, some comic and some deeply serious” (Richetti 2005, 193). Such introduction, while valid to some extent, might place her too close to the typical heroine of amatory fiction. Miss Betsy starts off as an orphan teenager, with a good heart, whose impulsiveness, imprudence, and lack of understanding of the etiquette of gender politics place her in potentially ruinous situations. However, she is not looking for amorous adventures, and her encouragement of multiple suitors can be read as a strategy of empowering the powerless stemming from the awareness that courtship is the last period of freedom that a woman can enjoy before “dwindling into a wife” (to borrow William Congreve’s illustrative phrase). As Betsy herself wonders, “what can make the generality of Women so fond of marrying? - It looks to me like an infatuation. - Just as if it were not a greater pleasure to be courted, complimented, admired, and addressed by a number, than be confined to one, who from a slave becomes a master, and perhaps uses his authority in a manner disagreeable enough” (Haywood [1751] 1998, 488). Moreover, such behaviour also signals emotional unavailability and fear of commitment, which could have rather plausibly grown out of the coping mechanism of a young girl, orphaned at an early age, and left to the care of Mr. Goodman, a trustee of the Thoughtless family’s estate, but a stranger to her. As Haywood points out early in the novel, Miss Betsy has little say in what happens to her and had hardly benefitted from any meaningful family connection in the early years of her life. It is no wonder, then, that “[s]he had a great deal of wit, but was too volatile for reflection, and as a ship, without sufficient ballast, is tossed about at the pleasure of every wind that blows, so was she hurried thro’ the ocean of life, just as each predominant passion directed” (31-32). Tempting as it might be to hold this description as a fundamental flaw of the character, acknowledging her background allows more substantial approaches to the character and, consequently, more insights into the novel.

Miss Betsy’s emotional blockage is first signalled upon her father’s death. Kelly McGuire argues that “the text establishes Betsy’s inability to mourn as one of the central defects of her character, with the death of her father” (McGuire 2006, 289). Haywood describes the episode as follows: “On the arrival of this melancholy news, Miss Betsy felt as much grief as it was possible for a heart so young and gay as hers to be capable of; but a little time, for the most part, serves to obliterate the memory of misfortunes of this nature, even in

persons of a riper age” (Haywood [1751] 1998, 33). Living in a boarding school for four years before the event might also indicate that Betsy’s reaction is not necessarily a “defect of her character,” but could have been caused by the lack of paternal connection.

This limitation of emotional investment, empowered by the immediate suppression of any attempts to contemplate the gravity of a situation defines Miss Betsy’s reactions for the most part of the novel. This inhibitive strategy marks her reaction to the first rape attempt she has been subject to and from which she is saved by her brother: “Ask me no questions at present,’ replied she, scarce able to speak, so strangely had her late fright seized on her spirits, but see me safe from this cursed house, and that worst of men.’ Her speaking in this manner, made Mr. Francis apprehend the whole, and perhaps more than the truth” (Haywood [1751] 1998, 73). The emotional harm that this incident seems to have caused her is only conveyed through silence and remains hidden under the constant levity of Betsy’s behaviour. The trope of inexpressibility locks into it and indirectly potentiates a story of suffering.

Miss Betsy is repeatedly subject to various forms of sexual harassment, which progressively shatter her characteristic merriment. It is true that more than half-way through the novel she seems to be only momentarily affected by the danger of these incidents; the protective mechanism that prevents her from acknowledging her feelings allows her to continue to act on impulse, as long as her conscience is clear and her virtue intact. However, rape attempts continue even when Miss Betsy does nothing to expose herself to such behaviour. Repeated exposure to the corruption of the world, the ruin it can bring upon young ladies, and the misery that ensues gradually teaches Miss Betsy prudence. However, the incident involving Sir Frederick occurs after she has already started to show more restraint in her behaviour and is facilitated precisely by her becoming more open to introspective exercises and more attentive to the suffering of others:

Sweet indeed are the reflections, which flow from a consciousness of having done what virtue, and the duty owing to the character we bear in life, exacted from us, but poor Miss Betsy was not to enjoy, for any long time, so happy a tranquillity; — she was roused out of this serenity of mind, by an adventure of a different kind from all she had ever yet experienced, and which, if she were not properly guarded against, it ought to be imputed rather to the unsuspecting goodness of her heart, than to her vanity, or that inadvertency, which had occasioned her former mistakes. (Haywood [1751] 1998, 420)

As the narrator explains, it was the kindness of her heart that made her vulnerable to the sentimental blackmail of Mrs. Modely and, implicitly, to the complex plot

orchestrated against her by the impostor Sir Frederick. At this point in the story, Betsy's emotional responsiveness has increased, but this exercise in benevolence transforms her into a victim. Fortunately, she is saved again, this time by Mr. Truworth, but the affair affects her deeply. Haywood writes:

All her pride, her gaiety, her vanity of attracting admiration; — in fine, all that had composed her former character, seemed now to be lost and swallowed up in the sense of that bitter shame and contempt in which she imagined herself involved, and she wished for nothing but to be unseen, unregarded, and utterly forgotten, by all that had ever known her [...] (Haywood [1751] 1998, 441)

Not even the married status seems to protect her against male predatory behaviour. While it is fairly disturbing to think of the high incidence of rape attempts and sexual harassment episodes in a young woman's life, Andrea Austin proposes an engaging reading of this repetition. After elaborating on the progressively ludicrous, even farcical, quality of each occurrence, Austin points out that "the repetition of the events [functions] as a kind of parodic emphasis" (Austin 2000, 337). However, Austin claims, "Haywood's point is not that rape is funny" (337). On the contrary, rape attempts are used to expose and comment on the behaviour of the aggressor. In Austin's words,

this juxtaposition thus works to fundamentally redirect our notion of the scene's farcical content – to expose [...] that the true sham(e) is belief in Betsy's culpability. In this way, Haywood parodically takes aim at the use of this plot as stock comic theatre and prose farce, suggesting that the spectacle of old men and rakes attempting to ruin vain young girls is by no means a funny one after all. (338)

Miss Betsy's selective sensitivity to the misfortunes and suffering of other characters can be read, for the most part of the novel, in a similarly programmatic manner. The news of the duel between Mr. Staple and Mr. Truworth, for instance, is met with consternation followed by indignation, rather than genuine concern for the health condition of the wounded party. The other characters react much faster: "Lady Mellasin and Miss Flora seemed very much alarmed; but Mr. Goodman was ready to sink from his chair" (Haywood [1751] 1998, 175). Miss Betsy, on the other hand, is more affected and irritated by the discussion generated by the disturbing news, which blamed her behaviour for the two men attempting to kill each other: "She flew out of the room, ready to cry with vexation" (177). Her reaction reflects lack of compassion for those with whom she refuses to identify (at this point in the novel, at least) because they

are perceived as a threat to her liberty. She accepted both Mr. Staple and Mr. Truworth as suitors, but refuses to show preference for either, even if the narrator has already started to suggest that she has begun to develop feelings for the latter. It is not that Betsy refrains from publicly declaring the object of her love, but she represses her feelings altogether. She has already made it clear that she feels too young to get married and seems to cherish the freedom of new experiences – be they mistakes – above emotional gratification by reciprocation. Even when reason dictates that Mr. Truworth’s advice might save her from unpleasant situations, her cutting retort reveals the imperative of her need for self-determination: “‘Farewell, sir,’ said she, as she was going into it, when I want a spy to inspect, or a governor to direct my actions, the choice, perhaps, may fall on you” (234). The fear of commitment, which would endanger her liberty, prevents her from admitting her feelings for Mr. Truworth to herself and even forces her into acting contrary to those feelings. She only admits these feelings to herself when it is too late, when he has convinced himself that she is unworthy of his courtship and has decided to marry someone else. This also causes an unfortunate twist in Miss Betsy’s story, as she no longer resists being pushed into marrying Mr. Munden.

On the other hand, Miss Betsy is capable of considerable sympathetic investment when it comes to the misfortunes of people she can easily identify with, even if acting upon those feelings triggers her own misfortune. She sympathises with her laundress, a “poor creature [...] unhappily married” who “was big with child, and had no support but the labour of her hands” (248). The woman dies soon after birth, and Miss Betsy, together with Miss Mable, decides to take care of the new-born – extending her sympathy to an orphan girl is not at all surprising. But, as the narrator remarks, “[w]ho would imagine, that such a glorious act of benevolence should ever be made a handle to traduce and vilify the author?” (249). Indeed, rumours that the child is Miss Betsy’s tarnish her reputation in the eyes of Mr. Truworth.

Another more complex and more consequential act of sympathetic identification is fuelled by Miss Betsy’s relationship with Miss Forward. Miss Forward, Betsy’s boarding-school companion and coquette, allows herself to follow the passions of her heart, with little regard for expected virtuous behaviour. She falls victim to a seduction-and-abandonment plot and ends up making a living by selling her favours. With her, Betsy can relate: they spent their formative years in similar environments, predisposition to coquetry and need for self-determination characterizes the behaviour of both, and Miss Forward’s fate could have easily been Betsy’s. Therefore, Andrea Austin’s reading of “the profound ambiguity between the concepts of rape and seduction” leading

to the suggestion that "Betsy's avoidance of ruin is due only to fate" (Austin 2000, 339) can be extended to explain this relationship as well.

Miss Forward's story is accompanied by the most lachrymose fragments in the novel, and Miss Betsy shares in the affect:

These last words were accompanied with a second flood of tears, which streamed in such abundance down her cheeks, that Miss Betsy was extremely moved: her good-nature made her pity the distress, though her virtue and understanding taught her to detest and despise the ill conduct which occasioned it: she wept, and sighed, in concert with her afflicted friend, and omitted nothing that she thought might contribute to assuage her sorrows. (Haywood [1751] 1998, 110-11)

The compassionate emotional response reflects Miss Betsy's easiness in understanding the misery of her friend's situation and mirroring her suffering. Miss Forward has sinned against virtue, but Miss Betsy would not turn her back on her; on the contrary, she offers both financial aid and friendship. Spending time with Miss Forward, especially in public places, proves detrimental to Miss Betsy's reputation and, coupled with the above-mentioned rumours about Miss Betsy's ward, sets in motion a series of events that ultimately convince Mr. Truworth that she is not worthy of his courtship. This leads to Miss Betsy's marriage to Mr. Munden, which represents her entrance into a hostile domestic environment. Therefore, Miss Betsy is punished for her reckless allegiance to a fallen woman who, despite Betsy's unarticulated hopes and wishful projections, does not reform.

However, there is more at stake in Miss Forward's tearfully conveyed story than revealing Miss Betsy as capable of emotional responsiveness to others or punishing her for commiserating with the morally undeserving. Even if the narrator makes unflattering allusions to Miss Forward's behaviour, the discourse accompanying her sorrows is meant to subtly cultivate the sympathetic imagination of the reader. The subversive distance between the often-judgemental narratorial reflections and the discourse of sorrow meant to stir sympathetic fellow-feelings even towards the technically undeserving points the satirical underlayer of the text.⁶ This is actually consistent with Haywood's understanding of sensibility as a cure against prejudice, as expressed in *The Female Spectator*:

⁶ In "A Gender of Opposition. Eliza Haywood's Scandal Fiction," Ros Ballaster (2000) points to the satirical treatment that Haywood gives to her masculine narrators in the earlier novels as part of her engagement both with the political scene of the day and with the politics of gender. Therefore, it is not surprising to note a similarly subversive, albeit more discrete approach to the ungendered narrator of *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, whose metanarrative narratorial comments seem to borrow from the respectable moralizing discourse of punishment and reward of the day (see the discussion on Samuel Johnson at the beginning of the paper), only to allow its undermining through the sentimental quality of the novelistic discourse.

If we could be sensible that strong Liking or Disliking we feel within ourselves was Prejudice, that very Sensibility would go a great Way towards curing us of it; but the Mischief, as I have already observed, but cannot too often repeat, is, that we mistake the most blind Partiality for the most quick-ey'd Judgement, and think every Body in the wrong, who does not see as we do. (Haywood 1999, 281)

Of course, Miss Forward's misery and suffering might serve a didactic purpose as a cautionary tale, but Miss Betsy's sharing of affect invites the reader to similar generosity, since exposing the double standard of gender norms seems to be on Haywood's agenda. Mr. Bazil, who used to purchase Miss Forward's favours, is considered a respectable member of society and is rewarded with a happy marriage to Miss Mabel. However, Miss Forward is forever punished for her transgression and has no way out of her miserable condition. Similarly, little to no damage is done to the reputation of Betsy's elder brother, Thomas, by living unmarriedly with Mademoiselle de Roquelair, but his French mistress has no chance of ever regaining her respectability.

Miss Betsy has often been exposed to suffering and distressful situations through the novel, but nothing compares to her first marriage, to Mr. Munden. Betsy's married life begins under the auspices of hostility and deprivation. It develops into the exact opposite of what she would have wanted and reflects precisely the scenario she had feared for the most part of the novel. As Stuart explains, Haywood uses Betsy's marriage to expose an institution in which a tyrant husband "can legally inflict physical and psychological abuse", while the wife can do nothing but obey (Stuart 2002, 566). Mr. Munden "considered a wife no more than an upper servant, bound to study and obey, in all things the will of him to whom she had given her hand" (Haywood [1751] 1998, 507). No wonder then that he sees no problem in mistreating her or cheating on her, and even scolds her for resisting when Lord --- wants to rape her, as this last deed could have benefitted him financially. However, his most impactful action against her is the violent killing of the pet squirrel that Betsy had received as a token of love from Mr. Truworth in the beginning of his courtship. In a domestic quarrel, "almost ready to burst with an inward malice" (507), Mr. Munden smashes the poor animal against the marble chimney. This act of indirect aggression toward her is triggered by the frustration of his own financial impotence, which he unsurprisingly blames on her. In its gratuitousness and brutality, it leaves a deep mark on Betsy:

All this was done in such an instant, that Mrs. Munden had not time to make any attempt for preventing it, but the sight of so disastrous a fate befalling her little favourite, and the brutality of him who inflicted it, raised emotions in her which she neither endeavoured, nor at that instant could have the power to quell.

'Monster!' — cried she, — 'unworthy the name of man; — you needed not have been guilty of this low piece of cruelty, to make me see to what a wretch I am sacrificed.' (Haywood [1751] 1998, 507-08)

John Richetti reads this as "[t]he novel's single most resonant scene", which proves that "Haywood can very effectively descend from the heights of romantic melodrama and conventional conduct book female morality to a startling and significant domestic realism that is much more penetrating than Betsy's merely conventional questioning of male privilege" (Richetti 2000, 321). In his view, it also marks "the climax of Betsy's separation from carefree consumption, of lovers and other toys, and her painful insertion into brutal domestic realism" (322). To this, I would add that killing the squirrel is a site of signification, though it seems to momentarily elude the novelistic discourse. It deeply affects the pattern of Betsy's emotional responses for the rest of the story. When it happened, she could not fully process the event, and her first reaction was an outburst of anger. However, in time, the repeated domestic altercations and psychological abuses that echo this first, climactic, episode of domestic violence corrode her emotional defence mechanism. She allows her inner life and feelings to surface and become the object of her musings. Other characters observe that "she had lost some part of her vivacity, and would frequently fall into very melancholy musings" (Haywood [1751] 1998, 568).⁷ She continues to be socially active, but has become more selective in her associations, more careful to avoid inappropriate situations:

An excess of gaiety when curbed, is apt to degenerate into its contrary extreme: [...] she had lost all relish for the conversation of the Miss Airishes, and those other giddy creatures, which had composed the greatest part of her acquaintance, and too much solitude might have brought on a gloominess of temper equally uneasy to herself and to those about her; but the society of these worthy friends, — the diversions they prepared for her, and the company to which they introduced her, — kept up her native liveliness of mind, and at the same time convinced her that pleasure was no enemy to virtue, or to reputation, when partook with persons of honour and discretion. (Haywood [1751] 1998, 568-69)

By the novel's end, Betsy's affective temperament and powers of reflection have matured. She owns her feelings and allows herself to explore them. She can extend sympathy even to her abusive husband and responds to his death-bed wish to see her:

⁷ Kelly McGuire performs an interesting analysis of Haywood's exploration of female melancholia. See Kelly McGuire, "Mourning and Material Culture in Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*," 299-302.

Not all the indifference she had for the person of Mr. Munden, - not all the resentment his moroseness and ill-nature had excited in her, could hinder her from feeling an extreme shock on hearing his life was in danger; - she sought for no excuses, either to evade, or delay what he desired of her; she went directly to him, equally inclined to do so by her compassion, as she thought herself obliged to do by her duty. (Haywood [1751] 1998, 614)

The solidity of her sentimental structure makes Betsy worthy of reward. The novel has a happy ending, as Betsy marries Mr. Truworth. This union is made possible by the death of their spouses, conveniently distant in time for Mr. Truworth to have completed his work of mourning and be ready to revisit his feelings for Betsy – of course, Haywood deploys a *deus ex machina* strategy, but Betsy seems to have become worthy of such reward.

Miss Betsy's incremental exposure both to the distress of others and to situations harmful to herself help her accrete knowledge of the world, its workings, and the effect it has on the individual. If at the beginning of her story she seems to exhibit a form of emotional blockage that protects her from interiorizing the harshness of the unpleasant situations she finds herself in as a result of her careless behaviour, but also because of the cruelty of the patriarchal society, the repeated confrontation with suffering, distressful personal experiences, and aggression renders her more aware of the importance of correctly navigating the maze of social conventions and expectations. Even so, she can still fall victim to abuse, but her affective responses mature under duress and she gains enough power to explore her mental and emotional processes. Contemplating the landscape of Miss Betsy's affective responses helps understand her journey to emotional maturity and therefore adds important nuances to the previous readings of the novel.

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L'INTELLIGENCE DU SENTIMENT SELON ROUSSEAU

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ABSTRACT. *The intelligence of Sentiment According to Rousseau.* This article aims to consider the reflections that Jean-Jacques Rousseau develops on the feeling of self-affection in the *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité* and in *Émile*. This type of self-affection does not lead everyone to consider themselves as the sole object of their attention. On the contrary, it invites us to apprehend a kind of sensitivity that necessarily overflows into their environment. By insisting on how this feeling articulates us immediately and intimately with nature, the thought of Rousseau makes it possible to formulate the hypothesis of an expansion of feeling, which is likely to encounter contemporary climatic questions. It also leads us to develop a reflection on the necessity and the means of transforming our presence into a damaged nature.

Keywords: *affect, existence, origin, nature, ecology.*

REZUMAT. *Inteligența sentimentului potrivit lui Rousseau.* Acest text își propune să reinterpreteze ideile pe care Jean-Jacques Rousseau le are despre sentimentul de iubire de sine în *Discurs asupra originii și fundamentelor inegalității dintre oameni* și în *Émile*. Această iubire de sine nu îndeamnă să facem din fiecare persoană unicul obiect al propriei atenții ci, dimpotrivă, ne invită să luăm în considerare o sensibilitate care se revarsă neapărat în jurul său. Insistând asupra felului în care acest sentiment ne leagă în mod imediat și intim cu natura, perspectiva lui Rousseau ne permite să formulăm ipoteza unei expansiuni a sentimentului. Această perspectivă ar putea să se confrunte cu problemele climatice, ai căror contemporani suntem și ar putea să educe o gândire asupra necesității și modalităților de transformare a prezenței noastre într-o natură distrusă.

Cuvinte-cheie: *afect, existență, origine, natură, ecologie.*

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Rousseau occupe une place à part dans le tableau complexe de la philosophie des lumières, ce qui tient assurément au rôle central que tient le sentiment dans ses écrits. Penser le sentiment, Rousseau s'y est employé d'un bout à l'autre de son œuvre, au point d'en faire le moment fondateur de toute son anthropologie. L'existence humaine, dans ses succès et dans ses échecs, peut se laisser déchiffrer toute entière à partir de cette passion primitive et fondatrice qu'est l'amour de soi et qui donne sa première assise à la vie affective de l'homme. Le prix – et le poids – de cet amour de soi, qu'il oppose à l'amour propre, tient à ce qu'il ouvre l'espace d'un contact de soi à soi, un lieu où l'existence peut éprouver le sentiment d'elle-même, dans la nudité de sa présence sensible et ce en deçà de toute expérience réflexive ou opération de pensée par quoi le sujet se prendrait lui-même pour objet. Car cet amour de soi est, pour Rousseau, parfaitement cohérent avec le mouvement par lequel nous donnons notre attention au monde, pour y trouver les moyens de notre existence. En ce sens, Rousseau nous invite à penser ensemble sentiment de soi et sentiment du monde, non pas dans le mouvement d'une forme de fusion panthéiste avec le sensible, mais dans la mesure où c'est dans l'environnement sensible, dans l'épreuve des êtres qui nous entourent, que quelque chose comme un soi se développe et s'enrichit. Si le sentiment – sous le signe de l'amour de soi – occupe une place décisive pour Rousseau, c'est que le sujet pensant ne préexiste pas, dans sa structure ou sa constitution, aux expériences qu'il fait du monde, il en est d'une certaine manière le produit. Aussi le sentiment devient le premier opérateur des diverses facultés, qui pourront assurément le détourner de son horizon propre ou le trahir, mais dans lequel elles doivent bien commencer par s'enraciner. C'est bien ce sur quoi repose toute la philosophie des apprentissages que Rousseau développe dans l'*Émile*. Au-delà des questions relatives à l'éducation – et plus précisément à l'éducation des enfants – Rousseau propose, dans ce texte majeur, une compréhension de la sensibilité humaine qui est, si on la considère dans le cadre de la crise écologique que nous traversons, susceptible de répondre à bien des apories contemporaines. C'est l'hypothèse que voudrait explorer le présent texte.

Un amour qui va de soi

Dans le *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, Rousseau distingue les deux passions fondamentales qui suffisent à déterminer les traits principaux de l'homme à l'état de nature et donnent à comprendre l'intelligence spontanée du sensible qui caractérise sa présence au monde. Ces deux sentiments primordiaux sont l'amour de soi d'une part, et la pitié d'autre part, la seconde s'expliquant à partir du premier. L'amour de soi est présenté dans une note annexée au texte du *Discours*, qui vise à le distinguer de l'amour propre. Le sentiment d'amour de soi commence ainsi par faire l'objet

d'une opération critique : il est désigné à partir de l'une de ses formes dérivées, et pour ainsi dire déçue, à même d'en montrer le sens directeur et paradoxal : celui d'être un sentiment qui ne revient précisément pas à lui-même et n'est pas purement et simplement soudé à son objet. L'amour de soi n'est pas un sentiment par quoi l'individu se prendrait lui-même pour objet, même s'il faut bien le comprendre comme l'affection par laquelle il s'éprouve dans l'existence. Il est un mouvement, un élan qui nous envoie à la rencontre du monde sensible dans lequel notre attention s'éveille à elle-même :

Il ne faut pas confondre l'amour propre et l'amour de soi-même ; deux passions très différentes par leur nature et par leurs effets. L'amour de soi-même est un sentiment naturel qui porte tout animal à veiller à sa propre conservation et qui, dirigé dans l'homme par la raison et modifié par la pitié, produit l'humanité et la vertu. L'amour propre n'est qu'un sentiment relatif, factice, et né dans la société, qui porte chaque individu à faire plus de cas de soi que de tout autre, qui inspire aux hommes tous les maux qu'ils se font mutuellement, et qui est la véritable source de l'honneur (Rousseau 1964, 219)².

À la différence de l'amour propre, l'amour de soi n'est pas un sentiment spécifiquement humain. Ce sentiment est en effet l'expression d'un mouvement par lequel tout animal est engagé dans sa conservation. Cette simple indication suffit à montrer qu'il ne s'agit pas, à travers ce sentiment, de s'aimer soi-même mais de désirer vivre dans la durée ce qui suppose d'aimer, non seulement la vie qui est la nôtre, mais tout ce qui, dans le monde qui nous entoure, nous permet de la continuer. Et parce qu'il correspond à une tendance animale, cet amour se manifeste en deçà de toute institution d'un moi ou d'un sujet humain – même si l'homme l'éprouve aussi bien que les bêtes. L'amour de soi dessine ainsi une ligne de vie commune entre de multiples formes du vivant engagées dans un seul et même monde, que Rousseau appelle état de nature, et ce même si, au sein de cet état de nature, comme il le souligne encore dans cette même note, « chaque homme en particulier se [regarde] comme étant le seul spectateur qui l'observe, comme le seul être dans l'univers qui prenne intérêt à lui, comme le seul juge de son propre mérite » (Rousseau 1964, 219). L'amour de soi est le fait d'une existence engagée dans un environnement sans altérité au sens moral du terme, et donc conduite dans une parfaite indifférence de l'existence des autres individualités. Il n'est donc pas *stricto sensu* l'expression d'une préférence pour soi-même, car il précède toute différenciation entre soi et les autres. L'amour de soi ne se retourne pas sur lui-même, il va de soi car rien ne le retient

² Nous modernisons l'orthographe.

dans le monde qui entoure l'existence s'éprouvant à travers lui. Il faudra que, dans cet état de nature, quelqu'un ou quelqu'une fixe une clôture et dise d'un bout de terrain – « ceci est à moi » – pour que le régime des comparaisons et des préférences s'installe et abîme ce sentiment premier en amour propre. Le propre apparaît avec la propriété, origine mythique de la société et premier marqueur d'une humanité qui se sépare d'une nature au moment même où elle en fait un objet sien.

Ce qui caractérise l'état de nature, c'est à l'inverse la parfaite compréhension de l'environnement sensible dont l'homme est capable dans son originelle solitude. L'état de nature induit chez l'homme une compréhension de l'environnement au sens presque littéral du terme, qui est le simple fait de saisir ensemble, et donc aussi en s'y intégrant, les matières d'une nature qui se donne, ce dont Rousseau a livré une expression simple et forte dans les premières pages du *Discours*. Considérant l'homme « tel qu'il a dû sortir des mains de la nature, je vois un animal moins fort que les uns, moins agile que les autres, mais à tout prendre, organisé le plus avantageusement de tous : je le vois se rassasiant sous un chêne, se désaltérant au premier ruisseau, trouvant son lit au pied du même arbre qui lui a fourni son repas, et voilà ses besoins satisfaits » (Rousseau 1964, 134-35). Les besoins humains sont satisfaits aussitôt qu'ils sont éprouvés car il n'y a pas d'obstacles entre les manques qu'ils nous font éprouver et les moyens que la nature apporte de les satisfaire. Mais ce mode de vie simple requiert bien une intelligence efficace et immédiate, une capacité de discernement capable d'accueillir non seulement *ce que* la nature donne, mais aussi *comment* elle donne. Or pour Rousseau, une telle intelligence du sensible qui caractérise l'homme à l'état de nature lui vient assurément de ce sentiment fondamental par lequel son existence s'éprouve elle-même immédiatement, au plus intime de ce qu'elle est. Là encore, dans ce tableau édénique d'une satisfaction sensible vécue sans entraves, et sous le titre de l'amour de soi qui s'y manifeste, il ne s'agit pas d'établir la prégnance d'un sentiment par lequel un sujet serait tourné vers lui-même et crispé sur lui-même, mais de mesurer en quoi un tel sentiment vit de son plein échange et de sa transitivité avec le monde dans lequel il s'éprouve et auquel il s'intègre.

L'interprétation que propose Paul Audi de la « philosophie de l'âme » de Rousseau permet de prolonger ces intuitions en les radicalisant. Paul Audi souligne que l'âme, selon Rousseau, doit se penser à partir d'une passivité originaire, passivité radicale qui n'annule pas sa capacité d'initiative et sa liberté mais signe au contraire son ouverture au réel et plus singulièrement à la vie. Paul Audi rappelle en ce sens que l'âme humaine, pour Rousseau, est « *passible* par essence », mais que cette passibilité est seconde ou dérivée, parce qu'elle est l'expression d'une affection extérieure qui prend fond sur une

« passivité plus fondamentale ». Paul Audi fait ainsi l'hypothèse que la sensibilité dont Rousseau établit les ressorts dans le *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* réside dans une « passivité originelle », « apanage de la seule "nature" » qu'il s'agit dès-lors de comprendre comme « la vie en sa subjectivité absolue » (Audi 2008, 84). L'enjeu d'une telle lecture, c'est qu'elle invite à rapporter toutes les affections de l'âme, quel que soit leur ordre – « les impressions, les sensations, les images, les idées » – à la « structure fondamentale de l'affectivité ». Si le terme n'apparaît pas ici, on voit bien en quoi cette lecture du thème de l'amour de soi dans le second *Discours* de Rousseau permet de faire de ce sentiment, sinon un fondement, du moins l'espace initial et comme le premier acte sur lesquels prennent forme toutes les facultés de l'âme : sentir donc, mais aussi imaginer ou penser. Dès lors qu'il est pensé comme la structure fondamentale de l'affectivité, l'amour de soi devient le mouvement qui ouvre notre âme à toutes ses puissances – celles-ci fussent-elles engagées dans un développement qui occulte et trahit purement et simplement leur origine sentimentale.³

Ce qui se joue derrière cet effort pour souligner l'efficiencia de l'amour de soi dans la moindre expérience sensible, c'est l'idée, simple au demeurant, selon laquelle pour Rousseau la nature est la source même à partir de laquelle il faut considérer toutes les formes du sentiment humain, fut-ce pour établir et mesurer en quoi telle ou telle de ses manifestations, déterminées dans leur fond par le jeu des relations sociales, nous en éloignent décisivement. Car souligner ce caractère initial de l'amour de soi revient à affirmer que c'est en premier lieu la nature qui nous affecte, ce qui est une manière de dire que la nature enseigne et qu'il serait insensé de considérer que l'âme humaine – qui se résout tout entière dans cet amour de soi – puisse se développer droitement sans se mettre à l'écoute de ce que cette nature a à lui donner. Car l'amour de soi, même si on peut bien tenter d'y déchiffrer cette affection de la vie par elle-même dont Paul Audi entreprend, après Michel Henry, de fixer les termes et le sens, est un sentiment qui vit de son articulation à l'extériorité, à un dehors, à la matière du monde lui-même. C'est bien la raison pour laquelle il importe de rappeler, avec Victor Goldschmidt, que l'état de nature est celui d'un apprentissage, « un

³ Cette lecture que propose Paul Audi tend à faire de la philosophie de Rousseau une sorte d'anticipation des thèses de Michel Henry sur l'auto-affection originaria de la vie par elle-même, ce que le philosophe revendique pleinement du reste. Cette interprétation joue sur une approche proversive du texte de Rousseau, en cherchant d'une certaine manière à vérifier dans la pensée de l'écrivain des positions ayant éclo dans un environnement conceptuel et discursif qui lui est parfaitement étranger, raison pour laquelle elle a pu être critiquée. Nanine Charbonnel par exemple souligne que « les nouveaux phénoménologues comme Paul Audi [...] sombrent dans une religion de la Vie qui ne peut qu'exalter, non analyser, l'œuvre de Rousseau » (Charbonnel 2006, 53).

apprentissage borné, lui aussi, et ne différant pas essentiellement de celui dont même les animaux sont capables » (Goldschmidt 2019, 260). Mais ce caractère mesuré et limité de l'expérience à l'état de nature n'est pas le signe d'une incomplétude, d'un manque ou d'une lacune à combler. Il faut plutôt y voir ce qui assure une continuité entre l'existence humaine et les autres formes de vie animale avec lesquelles elle communique directement. Ce que donne la nature, et à travers elle, ce qu'appréhende le sentiment, c'est sans doute cette communauté des vivants.

Expansion du sentiment

Ce contact permanent avec le monde qu'établit le sentiment va devenir le moteur d'une compréhension de l'âme humaine à l'aune de son expansivité. Revenant sur le thème de l'amour de soi dans *l'Émile*, Rousseau montre bien comment le sentiment est le premier moteur de l'exploration du monde environnant et partant, le principal organe d'une intelligence de la nature. Il convient toutefois de rappeler que l'expansion du sentiment sur laquelle Rousseau attire notre attention est d'abord le signe d'une dilution de cette intelligence sensible qui caractérise l'homme à l'état de nature, bientôt perdue dans le jeu des relations sociales qui dénaturent fondamentalement la sensibilité humaine. Au début du livre IV de *l'Émile*, après avoir rappelé que les passions sont les principaux outils de notre conservation, et souligné qu'il serait aussi vain que « ridicule de vouloir les détruire », Rousseau demande en effet :

Mais raisonnerait-on bien si de ce qu'il est dans la nature de l'homme d'avoir des passions on allait conclure que toutes les passions que nous sentons en nous et que nous voyons dans les autres sont naturelles ? Leur source est naturelle, il est vrai ; mais mille ruisseaux étrangers l'ont grossie ; c'est un grand fleuve qui s'accroît sans cesse et dans lequel on retrouverait à peine quelques gouttes de ses premières eaux (Rousseau 1969, 491)

Pour comprendre comment cette source a pu se diluer et disparaître dans des eaux étrangères, Rousseau invite à distinguer l'origine des passions et ce qui les occasionne, l'élan sur lequel elles s'entent et les conditions dans lesquelles elles en viennent à naître et à se développer. Si le premier peut et doit être pensé dans sa naturalité, les secondes supposent toujours déjà une rupture avec cette nature qui nous donne de vivre. Ainsi, des passions peuvent être naturelles et d'autres le signe d'une rupture avec cette nature. C'est là encore le caractère limitatif, mais libre, d'une passion qui devient le critère discriminant : « Nos passions naturelles sont très bornées, elles sont les instruments de nôtre

liberté, elles tendent à nous conserver. Toutes celles qui nous subjuguent et nous détruisent nous viennent d'ailleurs ; la nature ne nous les donne pas, nous nous les approprions à son préjudice » (Rousseau 1969, 491). L'expansion du sentiment, vécue comme la croissance de passions finalement étrangères à la nature, se comprend donc d'abord comme le signe funeste de son interruption prochaine, comme si ce mouvement de croissance était intimement travaillé par sa propre impossibilité et par son échec futur.

Mais en établissant un tel constat, l'enjeu reste de montrer que tout commence par une bonne intelligence de l'ordre de la nature dans lequel le sentiment commence par s'intégrer. Cette intelligence, faut-il le souligner, n'est pas réflexive ou discursive. « L'homme qui médite est un animal dépravé » (Rousseau 1964, 138), comme le formule Rousseau dans une sentence célèbre du *Discours sur l'inégalité* qui vient sanctionner un développement visant à montrer que l'homme est l'artisan de ses propres souffrances et des maladies qui le frappent. L'intelligence du sentiment est plutôt l'expression d'une convenance, une manière de trouver la juste place qui nous échoit dans un monde qui est tel qu'il doit être et qui en cela est nécessairement un bien. Pour le montrer, Rousseau expose à nouveau le sens de l'amour de soi bien compris, dont il rappelle qu'il est « la source de toutes nos passions, l'origine et le principe de toutes les autres, la seule qui naît avec l'homme et ne le quitte jamais tant qu'il vit » (Rousseau 1969, 491). Toutes les passions ne sont que des « modifications » de cette affection primitive et innée, ce qui revient à dire que « toutes si l'on veut sont naturelles » (Rousseau 1969, 491) même si, il faut le redire, elles ont « des causes étrangères », sont « nuisibles », arrachent enfin l'homme à la nature et le mettent « en contradiction avec soi » (Rousseau 1969, 491).

Il faut donc retrouver en deçà de ce qui défigure l'homme et le monde dans lequel il vit les conditions de cette intelligence du sentiment, lequel ne peut prendre appui que sur une bonne compréhension de la nature – ce qui revient à saisir que cette nature est bonne et que l'homme doit s'y embrasser lui-même pour se comprendre pleinement tel qu'il est profondément. « L'amour de soi-même est toujours bon et toujours conforme à l'ordre » (Rousseau 1969, 491). L'enjeu de cette affirmation est double : rappeler d'une part qu'il est bon que nous nous aimions nous-mêmes, car c'est le principe même de notre conservation ; souligner d'autre part que pour nous aimer nous-mêmes, nous devons aimer avec la même intensité l'ordre auquel nous appartenons, qui nous apporte les moyens de cette conservation. « Il faut donc que nous nous aimions pour nous conserver, et par une suite immédiate du même sentiment nous aimons ce qui nous conserve » (Rousseau 1969, 492) écrit Rousseau. Si l'amour de soi ne s'en tenait qu'à ce seul objet qu'il est pour lui-même, il s'évanouirait aussitôt, et avec lui la capacité de se conserver dans l'existence. Ce sentiment primitif ne peut

que déborder sur l'environnement sensible qui le voit naître et dans lequel il tend à se propager. Le caractère dérivé de cet amour de l'ordre et de la nature n'en fait donc pas un sentiment secondaire, puisqu'il s'éprouve avant même que l'amour de soi ne puisse se reconnaître et se comprendre lui-même comme un soi, avant même que l'individu ne soit en mesure de dire moi ou je.

On peut en voir le signe dans le fait que l'enfant, selon Rousseau, est nécessairement porté à cette « bienveillance » naturelle dont le *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité* fait l'hypothèse méthodologique et qui a suscité tant de railleries de la part des philosophes. Comme l'homme à l'état de nature, l'enfant laisse émerger un sentiment dont le mouvement le dirige vers un environnement, une extériorité qu'il ne peut qu'accueillir positivement : « Le premier sentiment d'un enfant est de s'aimer lui-même et le second, qui dérive du premier est d'aimer ceux qui l'approchent » (Rousseau 1969, 492). Ce déport du sentiment d'amour de soi au monde est un phénomène qui tient à la nature elle-même, car il s'explique tout entier par la faiblesse constitutive de l'enfant, obligé de s'en remettre intégralement à une extériorité susceptible de lui apporter les moyens de subsister qu'il ne peut se procurer par ses propres efforts.⁴ L'enfant s'attache à sa gouvernante pour le bien qu'elle lui fait et il considère son entourage avec bienveillance, car il trouve partout autour de lui des soutiens et une assistance : « Un enfant est [...] naturellement enclin à la bienveillance, parce qu'il voit que tout ce qui l'approche est porté à l'assister, et qu'il prend de cette observation l'habitude d'un sentiment favorable à son espèce » (Rousseau 1969, 492). Ce n'est qu'à mesure que ses relations avec d'autres s'étoffent et que ses dépendances se multiplient qu'il commence à éprouver des sentiments moraux (des devoirs) ou sociaux (des préférences). On reconnaît, condensé en quelques lignes et scruté dans les comportements de l'enfant, le mécanisme qui, dans le second *Discours*, conduit l'homme à se retourner contre la nature dont il aura commencé par vivre. Car il y a bien évidemment, dans cette description de l'enfant livré au monde, quelque chose qui fait signe vers la figure du bon sauvage, tel que l'hypothèse méthodologique que développe Rousseau dans le *Discours sur l'inégalité* invite à le concevoir : un être dépouillé « de tous les dons surnaturels qu'il a pu recevoir, et de toutes les facultés artificielles, qu'il n'a pu acquérir que par de longs progrès » (Rousseau 1964, 134) et qui, si on le considère dans l'ordre de la nature, est « un animal moins fort que les uns, moins agile que les autres » (Rousseau 1964, 134-135) mais mieux organisé que tous les autres, pour la simple raison que son dépouillement et sa nudité natifs l'obligent à se saisir de ce que la nature lui donne – et partant d'aimer la nature en s'aimant lui-même au sein de cette nature. Et ce jusqu'à ce seuil où la formulation du

⁴ « La nature a fait les enfants pour être aimés et secourus » (Rousseau 1969, 315), écrit Rousseau dans *l'Émile*.

premier acte de propriété – « *ceci est à moi* » (Rousseau 1964, 164) – renverse littéralement l'environnement naturel en y introduisant des logiques comparatives et préférentielles, et de proche en proche, cumulatives, qui introduisent la nécessité de produire par des efforts inconsiderés ce que la nature prodigue pourtant gracieusement.

Ce qui importe, pour Rousseau, c'est d'être attentif au premier moment de cette forme de communion avec la nature, qui se vit aussi, pour l'enfant, comme une communion avec les autres, conduits par la nature à vouloir du bien à l'enfant. C'est ce point d'équilibre fragile de communion avec l'environnement sensible, qu'on ne peut éprouver que pour le perdre bientôt, qui permet d'esquisser ce qu'il en est de l'existence humaine pour Rousseau : non pas une animalité parmi d'autres, non pas une exception irréductible dans le règne du vivant, mais un mouvement duel, dirigé à la fois vers le dedans et vers le dehors, vers soi et vers la nature qui soutient ce soi. Pierre Burgelin a donné de cette dimension intime de la présence de l'homme au monde une expression claire et puissante : « Essentiellement donc l'homme se laisse définir par une tension dans l'existence, par un double mouvement toujours commencé, toujours inachevé, de condensation et de détente, de raréfaction. Ces deux tendances antagonistes apparaissent ensemble et constituent ensemble, par leur valorisation consciente, l'amour de soi » (Burgelin 1973, 152). L'amour de soi se laisse comprendre comme un mouvement conjoint d'expansion et de rencontre, dans une dynamique « de communion avec le monde » (Burgelin 1973, 152), car il est une puissance de débordement.

Un soi aux dimensions du monde

Dans ce débordement du sentiment, si on en considère les premières manifestations, se signale une intelligence de la nature dont la forme idoine est finalement un amour de la nature. Cette leçon de Rousseau vaut aujourd'hui d'être sérieusement étudiée car elle peut éclairer les difficultés auxquelles semble confrontée la rationalité contemporaine, incapable d'établir un type de rapport au monde qui donne à la nature un avenir soutenable. Le ressort de l'amour de la nature, dans la philosophie de Rousseau, tient fondamentalement au fait qu'elle supporte et encourage, en le relançant constamment, le sentiment de notre expansion sensible. Or il est particulièrement net aujourd'hui que l'hubris technique nous a rendu à bien des égards inaccessibles les environnements sensibles dont pourtant nous vivons, car la dynamique du « progrès » technique dans laquelle nous sommes comme pris au piège nous éloigne toujours davantage de la nature. Rousseau a d'ailleurs bien établi les tenants et les aboutissants de cette situation qui veut que le progrès de l'homme se joue finalement comme

une opposition à la nature. Jean Starobinsky souligne en ce sens que « le *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité* est une histoire de la civilisation comme progrès de la négation du donné naturel, progrès auquel correspond une dégradation de l'innocence originelle. L'histoire des techniques est exposée en étroite liaison avec l'histoire morale de l'humanité » (Starobinski 1971, 38). Dans cette perspective, poursuit l'auteur dans la même page, l'enjeu n'est pas de constituer un « savoir anthropologique » mais de « fonder un jugement moral concernant l'histoire » (38). Or l'horizon de cette compréhension conjointe des progrès techniques de l'humanité et de l'incroyable « régrès » (Reclus 1908, 501), comme l'écrivait le géographe Élisée Reclus, de notre attachement au donné naturel semble bien dire la situation indistinctement sensible et sociale dont les crises contemporaines que nous traversons sont l'amplification démesurée. L'attention accordée à l'enfance du sentiment d'amour de soi ne permettrait-il pas, par un renversement sensible, de retrouver quelque chose de ce lien au donné naturel, envisagé dans un autre horizon et à une autre échelle que ceux qui s'ouvrent dans l'environnement immédiat de notre vie spontanée ? La question doit être posée car un tel lien, pour se nouer, en appelle moins à la pensée qu'à une disposition à éprouver le monde par toutes les dimensions de son être, à quoi l'enfant ne peut précisément pas se soustraire. Nous savons mesurer avec précision aujourd'hui de quoi et dans quelle proportion la nature souffre ; la question est plutôt de savoir ce que nous devons changer, dans les modes de notre présence au monde, pour éprouver comme nôtre cette souffrance qui affecte la nature. Toute la difficulté est de pouvoir sentir, au sens strict du terme, cette nature à la hauteur des déséquilibres qui la bouleversent, c'est-à-dire dans une dimension d'ensemble qui échappe à nos facultés de perception immédiate. Comment l'amour de soi pourrait-il embrasser les dimensions du monde dans lequel il s'insère, et nous faire entrevoir quelque chose de ce qui trouble l'ordre de cette nature elle-même qui nous donne encore de vivre ?

Les crises environnementales qui caractérisent notre siècle sont aussi des crises de la représentation. Dans *Les Puissances de l'imagination*, Jean-Philippe Pierron souligne en ce sens que « les méfaits [de la crise environnementale] peuvent être compris comme la perte d'une expérience poétique du monde au profit de sa maîtrise pragmatique abstraite : la manipulation instrumentale » (Pierron 2018, 17). Dans cette logique instrumentale, la simple possibilité de mettre en œuvre des techniques nouvelles d'arraisonement du monde devient le motif suffisant et le moteur principal de leur développement, dans la logique d'un progrès désormais sans limites, car produit indépendamment de toute réflexion sur la nature des besoins qu'il peut satisfaire et sur les usages du monde qu'il est susceptible de générer ou d'encourager. À cette « imagination débridée propre à la civilisation technologique », qui s'éloigne de la nature à

mesure qu'elle apprend à la manipuler, il faut apporter le contrepoint que sont susceptibles de produire « des expériences poétiques originaires donnant d'éprouver fortement la présence fragile de l'être au monde, préparant à la conscience de son caractère précaire et fini, insistant pour dire que personne ne peut "clôturer le ciel", comme le poète de la prairie nord-américaine James Galvin le dit si bien » (Pierron 2018, 17). Au-delà de la conscience de notre finitude, centrale dans la philosophie de Rousseau pour qui une existence menée en accord avec la nature est toujours, comme on l'a vu, bornée et limitée, la question qui se pose est bien de savoir comment éprouver un sentiment pour ce monde lui-même, qui dans sa grande précarité reste plus vaste que le regard sensible que nous pouvons poser sur lui. Comment le soi peut-il se percevoir comme le produit même de cet environnement vers lequel il déborde et comment peut-il conduire toujours un peu plus loin cet accueil d'un environnement dont le propre est de déborder à son tour les limites de l'expérience que nous en faisons ? En écho aux thèses de Paul Ricoeur sur le sens auquel nous ouvre la compréhension d'un texte littéraire, Jean-Philippe Pierron demande : « L'enjeu poétique du sujet qui s'approfondit comme étant de la nature, et qui prépare une éco-éthique, n'est-il pas d'apprendre à se recevoir comme un soi plus vaste » (Pierron 2018, 17) ?

En un sens, Rousseau a rencontré de telles questions, et a montré que pour faire l'expérience de ce « soi plus vaste », il faut commencer par se départir de soi-même, quitter ce « centre du monde » que nous croyons voir s'ouvrir avec notre expérience des autres et des choses. Dans la deuxième promenade des *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, Rousseau restitue cette expérience d'élargissement soudain de sa perception de la réalité. Dans l'épisode raconté, il vient d'être renversé par un gros « chien danois » (Rousseau 1959, 1005), lancé en pleine course au-devant d'un carrosse qui a manqué de peu de l'écraser. Après avoir perdu connaissance, Rousseau revient peu à peu à lui et fait état de ses blessures, au visage notamment, sa mâchoire ayant tapé contre le haut d'un pavé. L'intérêt de cette relation, c'est la description qu'elle offre de l'état d'apathie et de ravissement mêlés dans lequel se réveille Rousseau, qui fait alors l'expérience d'une reconfiguration intégrale du mode de sa présence au monde :

La nuit s'avancait. J'aperçus le ciel, quelques étoiles, et un peu de verdure. Cette première sensation fut un moment délicieux. Je ne me sentais encore que par là. Je naissais dans cet instant à la vie, et il me semblait que je remplissais de ma légère existence tous les objets que j'apercevais. Tout entier au moment présent je ne me souvenais de rien ; je n'avais nulle notion distincte de mon individu, pas la moindre idée de ce qui venait de m'arriver ; je ne savais ni qui j'étais ni où j'étais ; je ne sentais ni mal, ni crainte, ni inquiétude. Je voyais couler mon sang comme j'aurais vu

couler un ruisseau, sans songer seulement que ce sang m'appartint en aucune sorte. Je sentais dans tout mon être un calme ravissant auquel chaque fois que je me le rappelle je ne trouve rien de comparable dans toute l'activité des plaisirs connus (1005).

Ce qui frappe dans cette évocation, c'est d'abord la parfaite continuité du proche et du lointain qu'elle orchestre. Rousseau décrit une situation dans laquelle il n'y a pas de solution de continuité entre les étoiles au-dessus de sa tête et le carré de verdure sur lequel il est allongé. Les sens peuvent glisser de l'un à l'autre sans ruptures ni frictions et selon un investissement égal de la sensibilité. C'est le monde comme monde qui se donne à sentir, le monde en tant qu'il nous déborde et nous invite à un dépassement, qui d'une certaine manière a toujours déjà eu lieu. Mais cette expérience, dans sa singularité rassurante, suppose que la sensibilité ne fasse plus corps avec elle-même, mais puisse se découvrir dans son adhésion immédiate à un environnement indifféremment proche et lointain. Pour sentir ainsi son « existence légère » remplir le monde qui l'entoure, il faut que la conscience soit arrachée à son histoire et à ses quotidiennes inquiétudes, occultées avec la même soudaineté que celle avec laquelle elles ont surgies, lorsqu'un hypothétique premier homme a proclamé le premier acte de propriété – « *ceci est à moi* » (Rousseau 1964, 164) –, fixant de manière irréversible la distinction entre le propre et l'impropre. Ce que donne à penser ce récit en première personne, c'est à l'inverse les vertus irremplaçables d'une indécision entre le propre et l'impropre : dès lors que je cesse de me sentir comme le centre de manifestation de tout ce qui structure mon environnement d'existence, je peux me sentir à travers tous les êtres qui accueillent quelque chose de mon existence fragile en la conditionnant. Le ruisseau que j'entends couler au loin m'est tout aussi intime et personnel que le sang qui coule dans mes veines.

Rousseau esquisse donc une possibilité double : d'une part celle de vivre, dans l'ici et maintenant d'un sentiment d'existence, une perméabilité intégrale au monde extérieure, dans la parfaite abolition des logiques de préférences ; d'autre part celle de se découvrir, à travers cette expérience, un soi plus large, à même d'éprouver les dimensions du monde pourtant donné dans son infinité. Mais comment passer de cette expérience immédiate et éphémère d'un contact retrouvé avec une nature plus grande que nous à une compréhension intime, sensible et immédiate, des menaces que fait peser sur cette nature la dimension industrielle et technique à travers laquelle nous l'appréhendons habituellement ? Comme le souligne Jean-Philippe Pierron dans bien des textes, seule une médiation imageante peut être le ressort d'une action possible. Il faut pouvoir raconter le soi dans ses attachements sensibles, et montrer que ces attachements engagent à la fois le proche et le lointain. La notion d'écobiographie que Jean-Philippe Pierron convoque ici et là permet précisément de nourrir l'idée d'un soi dont

les expériences sont heureusement limitées et dont pourtant les frontières ne cessent de s'élargir et de se prolonger dans le tissu sensible, milieu de toutes nos expériences vivantes. Évoquant conjointement *l'Émile* et *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, Jean-Philippe Pierron remarque ainsi :

Rousseau voyait bien que la réforme de l'homme par l'éducation exigeait elle-même un autre préalable, avançant plus en profondeur encore, une réforme de soi (écologie individuelle et intérieure). Du monde aux autres, à soi et inversement, voilà le trajet qui appelle, sans choisir parmi ces trois écologies, à faire la transition écologique. À cette fin, *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* pourrait se lire comme un manuel de dix exercices d'écobiographie. (Pierron 2021, 144-45)

C'est bien à travers l'élaboration de récits écobiographiques, dans la mesure où ils permettent de « se préciser en ses liens avec le monde » (145) et de se diriger dans un itinéraire qui associe dimension existentielle et condition terrestre, que pourra s'aiguiser un sentiment de soi devenu indissociable du sentiment de la fragilité du monde, un amour de soi qui ne puisse se vivre que sous les traits d'un amour du monde.

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Dans *l'Émile*, Rousseau distingue trois sources dans l'éducation : l'éducation de la nature, l'éducation des hommes et l'éducation des choses (Rousseau 1969, 247). Cette dernière, qui correspond peu ou prou à un moment où l'expérience sensible devient source d'apprentissage, importe particulièrement car elle permet à l'enfant, fortifié par la première éducation par la nature, quoique toujours faible, de se heurter au poids d'une nécessité sur laquelle il ne peut pas agir. Cette forme d'apprentissage doit conduire le précepteur, selon Rousseau, à se tenir en retrait et à s'abstenir de tout volontarisme, au motif que la réalité, finalement, enseigne plus rigoureusement et plus profondément qu'il ne peut lui-même le faire :

Ne lui commandez jamais rien, quoi que ce soit au monde, absolument rien. Ne lui laissez pas même imaginer que vous prétendiez avoir aucune autorité sur lui. Qu'il sache seulement qu'il est faible, et que vous êtes fort, que par son état et le vôtre, il est nécessairement à votre merci ; qu'il le sache, qu'il l'apprenne, qu'il le sente ; qu'il sente de bonne heure sur sa tête altière le dur joug que la nature impose à l'homme, le pesant joug de la nécessité sous lequel il faut que tout être fini ploie (Rousseau 1969, 320).

Sentir le poids de cette nécessité, ce n'est pas tant éprouver notre impuissance, que faire de ce qui nous limite l'objet immédiat, positif et finalement le fil

directeur de notre sentiment d'exister. Une fois posé que ce sentiment peut nous aider à trouver notre place entre ce bout de jardin où nos jambes se détendent et le ciel étoilé qui n'en finit pas de dérouler son immensité au-dessus de notre tête, il reste à inventer les récits qui seront susceptibles de nous faire sentir le joug pesant d'un dérèglement des saisons qui, comme le pavé sur lequel nos dents se brisent quand nous chutons, affecte nos capacités de vivre et nous blesse intimement.

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“NOT A SINGLE SYLLOGISM FROM BEGINNING TO END”: ON FRAGMENTARINESS AND THE CRITIQUE OF THE NOVEL IN HENRY MACKENZIE’S *THE MAN OF FEELING**

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ABSTRACT. *“Not a Single Syllogism from Beginning to End”: On Fragmentariness and the Critique of the Novel in Henry Mackenzie’s The Man of Feeling.* Henry Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* (1771) is known to be particularly striking for its high level of formal and narrative fragmentariness. Formlessness and fragmentariness have long been discussed as key features of the early British novel (see Hunter 1990; see Starr 1998) and are often understood as defining features of mid and late eighteenth-century sentimental novels, which foreground their own materiality (see Wetmore 2013). Indeed, the unfeeling curate-logician who hands the manuscript over to the editor famously opines that its author cannot be found “in one strain for two chapters together” and that the text does not contain “a single syllogism from beginning to end” (Mackenzie 2001, 4). In this article, I explore the highly eclectic and fragmentary generic make-up of *The Man of Feeling* (cf. Benedict 2016) in order to flesh out the specific critique that the text mounts against the emerging genre of the novel and the poetics of moral sentimentalism. Mackenzie does, in fact, disparage the new genre in his essays for *The Mirror* and *The Lounger* and never claims to be writing a novel – whether in his correspondence or in the narrative introduction to *The Man of Feeling* – but rather a “medley” of sorts. By providing a more nuanced account of Mackenzie’s critique that remains sensitive to its inherent tensions, I want to shed light on the manner in which the

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text's fragmentariness stages the unreliability of Harley's perpetually-frustrated acts of sympathy and benevolence, which function as counterexamples to a proposed "art of thinking" (Mackenzie 2001, 32). If properly understood and practiced, such an art would allow a coherent grasp of human nature and potentially provide a suitable moral-affective remedy for the ills of modern commercial society (cf. Harkin 2005c) that Harley witnesses and describes along his journey.

Keywords: *fragmentariness, moral sentimentalism, logic, self-knowledge, art of thinking.*

REZUMAT. *"Nici urmă de silogism de la început până la sfârșit". Despre fragmentaritate și critica romanului în „The Man of Feeling” de Henry Mackenzie.* Cartea „The Man of Feeling” scrisă de Henry Mackenzie în 1771 este bine cunoscută pentru cât de fragmentară este atât la nivel formal, cât și narativ. Fragmentaritatea și lipsa generală de unitate a textului sunt considerate de foarte mult timp trăsături cheie ale romanului britanic timpuriu (vezi Hunter 1990; vezi Starr 1998), dar și ale romanelor sentimentale de la mijlocul și finele secolului al XVIII-lea, care se definesc în primul rând prin accentul pus pe propria lor materialitate (vezi Wetmore 2013). De pildă, parohul impasibil și pasionat de logică care îi înmânează editorului manuscrisul comentează faptul că autorul acestuia nu poate urmări "un singur fir logic mai mult de două capitole la rând" și nu poate găsi "nici urmă de silogism de la început până la sfârșit" (Mackenzie 2001, 4; traducerea mea). Ceea ce îmi propun în acest articol este să investighez alcătuirea generică deosebit de eclectică și fragmentară a romanului „The Man of Feeling” (cf. Benedict 2016) cu scopul de a decela critica pe care Mackenzie o aduce romanului ca gen literar nou, dar și, în sens mai larg, poeticii care sprijină adesea sentimentalismul moral. Într-adevăr, Mackenzie critică noua specie literară în eseurile sale din *The Mirror* și *The Lounger* și nu susține nicăieri că ar scrie un roman, nici în corespondența sa, nici în introducerea narativă cu care pornește „The Man of Feeling”. În schimb, acesta își descrie opera prin termenul de „amestec” (traducerea mea). Cu ajutorul unei perspective mai nuanțate asupra criticii lui Mackenzie, prin care îmi propun să iau în calcul tensiunile sale inerente, vreau să scot în evidență modul în care aspectul fragmentar al textului susține și amplifică inconsecvența actelor de caritate ale lui Harley, care merg împotriva unei vrednice „arte de a gândi” (Mackenzie 2001, 32; traducerea mea). Cu condiția să fie corect înțeleasă și practică, această artă ar putea permite o înțelegere adecvată a naturii umane și ar putea oferi un remediu afectiv și moral potrivit pentru lipsurile unei societăți moderne comerciale (cf. Harkin 2005c), precum cea la care Harley este martor pe parcursul călătoriei sale.

Cuvinte cheie: *fragmentaritate, sentimentalismul moral, logică, cunoașterea de sine, arta de a gândi.*

Introduction

In the exchange between the fictional editor of the found manuscript that Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) pretends to be based on and the rather unfeeling curate in whose possession it had been left, the latter explains that what he is about to give away to the former "is no more a history than it is a sermon" (Mackenzie 2001, 4). He then goes on to describe the exact circumstances in which the manuscript was discovered and relates his own frustration with the text's illegibility and general lack of coherence, at which the soon-to-be editor exclaims that he "should be glad to see this medley" (Mackenzie 2001, 4), embodying rather than making explicit an entirely different – if not downright contrary – readerly attitude (cf. Lilley 2007, 656; cf. Csengei 2008, 955-6). In any case, the curate's attempt at classifying the manuscript in generic terms as well as the editor's brief remark are both repeated with small but significant differences in the correspondence that Mackenzie kept with his cousin, Elisabeth Rose of Kilravock, as he was writing what we now commonly take to be a paradigmatic British sentimental novel of the late eighteenth century. Indeed, Stephen Ahern has referred to it as "the ur-text of the later stages of the sentimental fashion in British fiction" (2007, 120). In his 8 July 1769 letter, Mackenzie qualifies the entire text as "a very odd Medley" (Harkin 2005a, 161), while in 31 July 1769 he writes that it "might as well be called a Sermon as a History" (Harkin 2005a 162). These observations, whether made by the fictional curate, the alleged editor, or the actual author, all point towards the text's underlying generic hybridity or, perhaps, instability (cf. Harkin 1994, 333). Remarking on this sense of indeterminacy, April London writes that

[t]he effect at present of withholding information is to dramatize the uncertainties of the reader's relation to the text. In denying us the regulatory conditions of genre or literary reputation – this is not a history, a sermon, or a novel whose famous authorship underwrites our attention – the editor enforces an awareness of the contingencies of reading when the conventional directive signposts are withheld" (1997, 51-2).

The found manuscript cannot be described as either a private history detailing with great precision all the trivial – and perhaps even indecent – aspects of the protagonist's life, nor as a grave sermon giving out moral precepts and exhortations in a manner that exceedingly observes the principle of *docere* at the expense of *delectare* (cf. Barton 2020, 138). Yet Mackenzie's observations also tell us that the text may be described as *both* a private history and a sermon at the very same time. In addition to this, the manuscript's indeterminacy also

lies in its unprecedented degree of fragmentariness² that has been subject to much debate. It may very well be described as a strange and curious “medley” not only because it emerges, first and foremost, as an assortment of ill-connected sentimental encounters of various kinds, bringing together very different social classes and typologies, but also because it puts together a constantly shifting portrait of its protagonist, Harley – one that lacks any kind of moral-psychological progression (cf. Starr 1998, 29-30, 44) and is often complicated and contradictory.³

This paper explores the fragmentariness of *The Man of Feeling* one step further by connecting its formal and narrative features more comprehensively with the observations that Mackenzie himself makes on novels and novel-reading – whether of the sentimental kind or otherwise – in his correspondence and journalism. I want to suggest that it is precisely on account of its formlessness that the text emerges as both a conventional novel of sentiment steeped in the culture of sensibility and a critique of this specific genre with its corresponding writing and reading practices. Building on John Mullan’s work, Maureen Harkin has argued that *The Man of Feeling* caters to readers who are “free of prejudices against novels as inferior to history, sermons or logic” (Harkin 1994, 333). And yet, perhaps it is more accurate to say that it also caters to readers who are free of prejudices against writings commonly deemed inferior to novels themselves. In any case, the boundaries between the text’s simultaneous avowal and disparagement of novelistic sentimentalism are never easy to make out and it often appears that the two serve to mutually reinforce one another. While this reading is consistent with many scholarly discussions on the ambivalence towards sympathy and sentimentalism that most novels of sensibility and moral philosophical debates on these matters reveal,⁴ I want to unpack Mackenzie’s novelistic poetics more clearly in order to understand at what point the didacticism of novels stops and their dangers begin in his view.

By focusing on the intrinsic incongruities that shape Harley’s character, which may be alternatively accounted for in terms of excessive sensitivity or sentimental hypocrisy,⁵ I want to argue that his failure to fully embody the good-

² For the purposes of this paper, I will use the terms “fragmentariness” and “formlessness” interchangeably throughout.

³ On the generic hybridity of Henry Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling*, as well as the way in which this correlates with a deeply ambiguous sentimental hero, see London (1997) and Benedict (2016).

⁴ See, for instance, Benedict (1994, 118-9), Keymer (2005, 598-9), or Ahern (2007, 120-21). A common and convincing way of approaching this ambivalence is by looking at the continuities between Augustan satire, with its penchant for irony, equivocation, and skepticism, and later eighteenth-century sentimentalism. On this question, see, for instance, Benedict (1995), Starr (1998), and Wetmore (2013).

⁵ On the satirical conflation of sentimental naivety with vanity or hypocrisy, see Benedict (1994, 128-29) and Benedict (1995, 324-27). For an analysis of sentimental hypocrisy in *The Man of Feeling* and its connections to theatricality or performativity, see also Uściński (2019).

natured man demonstrating all the public virtues of benevolence ultimately rests on his inability to coherently and consistently gain knowledge of human nature, whether instantiated in himself or others. This may be understood as a logical failure in the context of the discipline's redefinition during the Enlightenment as a practical art of thinking that crucially informs moral conduct. The hint is provided by the curate himself – described as a “strenuous logician” – who gives the found manuscript to the much more sentimental editor and, in return, receives from the latter what is most likely a logical treatise written by “one of the German Illustringissimi” (Mackenzie 2001, 4). In the context of his particular propensities, the curate famously complains that he “could never find the author in one strain for two chapters together,” nor was he able to encounter “a single syllogism from beginning to end” (Mackenzie 2001, 4). The same suggestion is echoed much later by the misanthropist that Harley is introduced to, who bemoans the larger cultural and political failure of “that art which is necessary for every business, the art of thinking [...]” (Mackenzie 2001, 32). What does this tell us about the nature of Harley's frailty? And how may the well-known tensions and ambiguities that shape the novel's treatment of refined sensibility and moral sentimentalism be further understood in light of this kind of logical error?

Novelistic Fragmentariness and the Double Celebration and Critique of Refined Sensibility

To return to the aforementioned correspondence, it is worth pointing out from the very beginning that, when discussing his composition of *The Man of Feeling*, Mackenzie relies substantially on the language of sentiment and sensibility, despite the fact that he never openly says that he is writing a novel. On the contrary, he frequently claims that he has departed significantly from the genre. Even so, he tells his cousin in the same letter of July 1769 that his narrative foregrounds “a Man of Sensibility” who is placed “into different Scenes where his Feelings might be seen in their Effects, & his Sentiments occasionally delivered” (Harkin 2005a, 161). He makes a similar observation in his 1770-71 correspondence with James Elphinston, the prominent Scottish educator, whom he tells that his narrative “consists of some episodal adventures of a Man of Feeling; where his sentiments are occasionally expressed and the features of his mind developed, as the incidents draw them forth” (Harkin 2005a, 166). This is simply to say that the literary piece he is writing features the chief human and social type commonly found in sentimental fiction with a view to gaining insight into his interiority as it develops after each episodic encounter

and impacts the world around him. An element of epistemic-moral progression together with an implicit didactic impulse⁶ are suggested here, to which I would like to return later on.

Mackenzie's letters also demonstrate the kind of clear-cut dichotomous thinking that is typical of sentimental literature and the modes of writing and reading that it tends to encourage. This type of discourse often frames sentimentalism as the type of sensibility reserved for the exquisitely refined few (cf. Harkin 1994, 333; cf. Csengei 2008, 955) who emerge as sentimental heroes or heroines that are incongruous with the vulgar and their pursuits and often remain marginalised in the corrupt commercial societies rigidly built around them.⁷ A glimpse of this kind of clash may, for instance, be discerned in Mackenzie's June 1771 letter to the same Elphinston. Here, the former sets his legal career, with the dry and tedious style of writing that he is forced to practice in the context of his profession, against the delicacy of feeling that he may only indulge in small increments while penning *The Man of Feeling*: "The self-same pen, which is now giving language to sentiment, has been just turned from drawing an *Information*, or completing a *Record*; and the same head, which is now occupied in tracing the movements of the heart, and unwinding the delicate thread of susceptibility and feeling, has but a moment before laboured, in settling the place of a *Whereas* or an *Aforesaid*" (Harkin 2005a, 168). Apart from the intensity of the language of refined sensibility that is evident in these lines, what is crucial is that the invoked contrast between the sentimental and the vulgar is meant as an apology for the strangeness and fragmentariness of the text since, as Mackenzie explains, this is the only kind of literary writing that his occupation allows. In other words, the pervasive vocabulary and discourse of sentimentalism is used here to frame the fragmentariness of *The Man of Feeling*, according to Mackenzie's own words: "Let it be considered, to what use the bulk of my time is appropriated; amidst what sort of employment, I allowed myself the avocation of writing these fragments [...]" (Harkin 2005a, 168). Finally, in a September 1769 letter to his cousin, Mackenzie also briefly demonstrates his own engagement in typically sentimental reading practices: "Lady Julia Mandeville I have wept over formerly [...]" (Harkin 2005a, 163).

The notion that formlessness and fragmentariness are typical features of eighteenth-century British novels, especially those of the sentimental variety, is

⁶ Regarding Mackenzie's description of his own authorial intent and its generic implications, April London has gestured at the ways in which *The Man of Feeling* engages with traditional history, rewriting it as "interiorized and affective history" (1997, 62) via – among other things – the fragmentariness of his own work.

⁷ For the clash between sentimental heroes and commercial society, see McDaniel (2004) and Harkin (2005c). See also Ahern (2007, 122).

in no way new. Most notably, Paul Hunter has opened a still ongoing conversation about this dimension of early novels when compiling his comprehensive list of features that define the genre. He chiefly associates this trait with the "parenthetical tendency" or digressive structure of novels and exemplifies them in Henry Fielding's specific approach to the new genre (Hunter 1990, 24). Building on G. A. Starr's insights, Harkin discusses more broadly the main features of sentimental novels in her Introduction to the Broadview edition of *The Man of Feeling*. Here, she explains that, while fragmentariness does not define the formal features of sentimental writings alone, it is definitely intensified in novels of sensibility and serves to reinforce the claim to authenticity that all early novels struggle to make:

Linked to this bodily or visual sign as guarantee of authenticity is the resort to a number of formal means, not exclusive to the sentimental novel but characteristic of it, used to assert the truthfulness and artfulness of these texts. Hence the numerous found manuscripts, interruptions to the story, and interpolated fragments which imply the work's status as direct transcripts of the feeling heart. (Harkin 2005c, 11-2)

In her synthesis, Harkin thus lights upon the consensus formed around the fragmentariness of sentimental fiction, according to which it may be explained not only by means of this kind of authenticating impulse, but also by what she calls a "mistrust of language" (Harkin 2005c, 11) and a heightened interest in the bodily dimension of feeling.⁸

This consensus has been expanded upon in recent contributions by Stephen Ahern and Alex Wetmore, who have principally and respectively tackled the last two elements,⁹ fleshing them out even further. Ahern sets out to explore the moments of theatricality or performativity that are laced throughout *The Man of Feeling* in order to investigate the ambivalence that, he argues, is implicit in the novel's "mode of rhetorical and emotional excess" and the "aesthetic of ineffability" (Ahern 2007, 121) that constitutes one of its most crucial ingredients. In other words, Ahern suggests that the fragmentariness of Mackenzie's text

⁸ For further discussions of fragmentariness in *The Man of Feeling* or other eighteenth-century sentimental novels, see Benedict (1994), Harkin (1994), Benedict (1995), Mullan (1996), Starr (1998), Eker (2014).

⁹ David Fairer has also offered an analysis that bridges these two dimensions of sentimental fiction by focusing on the question of "sentimental translation," which makes possible the encounter between matter and mind (1999, 161-6). Thus, in contrast to Ahern and others, Fairer's analysis highlights the translatability (and transferability) of somatic sentimental expression and meaning.

rests on the assumed incommensurability of intense affectivity and mutual sympathy, especially that which is seen in moments of transcendent communion between self, other, and the world, explaining the breaks, silences, and other abrupt interruptions that sentimental novels like Mackenzie's abound in (121-4). Indeed, Ahern explains how the sense of ineffability or incommensurability that defines affective excess involves "a point of intensity beyond which words fail" (122), as well as the manner in which Mackenzie's text "emphasizes scenes of emotional excess, scenes that seem pieced together rather haphazardly in a meandering narrative structure" (123). On the basis of such insights, fragmentariness emerges as the formal expression of sentimentalism – silences and tears produce gaps in the text, while affective intensity or enthusiastic sublimity produce convoluted narrative structures in more general terms. What is also significant here is Ahern's insight that this mode of excess disturbs rational or logical structures and frustrates understanding – it "generates a surplus of meaning, an incomprehensibility that stupefies yet somehow bypasses the circuitry of the rational conscious mind" (122). On the other hand, Wetmore has inquired into the many techniques that produce self-reflexivity in eighteenth-century sentimental works featuring various instantiations of the figure of the man of feeling – techniques that include "typographical play, textual fragmentation, anti-linear narrative structures, visual puns, manipulations of digression and intertextuality, and self-conscious intrusions by narrators, authors, readers and editors" (Wetmore 2013, 1). His proposal is that all these textual strategies serve the broader purpose of what he terms "corporeal defamiliarization" (2) by means of which sentimental novels emphasize their own materiality in a manner that parallels the overwhelming interest in embodied feeling and somatic expression that defines the culture of sensibility as a whole (1-4). In this culture, books emerge as "intimate things to be felt, whose literary value should be approached along physiological lines" (Wetmore 2013, 2). Hence, according to Ahern and Wetmore, the self-conscious fragmentariness of sentimental literature may be explained, first and foremost, by the incommensurability of emotional excess and by the enhanced materiality, if not corporeality, of such texts, respectively.

Yet, if we take into account other observations that Mackenzie makes in his correspondence together with some of the intrusive comments inserted by *The Man of Feeling's* fictional editor, the fragmentariness of this particular manuscript also explains why this is not in fact a novel but a departure from the genre and its deeply sentimental values, if not a rather straightforward critique or more oblique satire directed at these. To go back to the July 1769 letter mentioned earlier, after explaining that his piece may be read as either a sermon

or a history,¹⁰ Mackenzie also describes it as "simple to Excess; for I would have it as different from the Entanglement of a Novel as can be" (Harkin 2005a, 162). Apart from the equivocation captured in this quasi-oxymoronic statement, which is worth pointing out, Mackenzie seems to suggest that what he is writing is not a novel primarily due to the scarcity of its characters and incidents – a form of simplicity that may also be connected to its concise and episodic structure. Interestingly enough, Mackenzie soon clarifies that this remark is not meant as a disparagement of the genre (cf. London 1997, 61), but also uses this opportunity to comment on the small number of well-written novels at the time, particularly in Scotland (Harkin 2005a, 162). This is because the novel stands as a particularly complex species of writing, a fact that is lost on vulgar writers and readers, who are merely content with "a proper Jumble of Incidents" (Harkin 2005a, 162). In his July 1770 letter to Elphinston, he repeats the same description of his work, simply saying that "it is perfectly different from that species of composition" (Harkin 2005a, 166). But, most importantly, in his already-mentioned May 1771 letter to the same Elphinston, Mackenzie also apologizes for the perplexing nature of his text not only by admitting that this is what his profession has allowed him to produce, but that he "was led into it, partly by accident, partly from wanting to shun the common road of novels [...]" (Harkin 2005a, 168).

Very similar observations are made in *The Man of Feeling*. Shortly after the intrusive fragment titled "The Pupil" – another example of fragmentariness – an extensive comment belonging to the fictional editor is inserted in the text (Mackenzie 2001, 93-4). Here, the editor bemoans the damaged condition of the manuscript, which has reached its peak at that exact point, making the text utterly unreadable: "There were so very few connected passages of the subsequent chapters remaining, that even the partiality of an editor could not offer them to the public" (Mackenzie 2001, 93). Thus, he suggests a distinction between sentimental readers like himself who are partial to the manuscript as it presents itself, undeterred by the fractured nature of Harley's narrative, and novel readers who are most likely to come across the text by accident and find little pleasure in its simplicity and strangeness. The latter kind of readers will be disappointed by having "expected the intricacies of a novel" and cannot possibly

¹⁰ London has argued that Mackenzie's reliance on historical and pastoral modes within the larger dialogic generic structure of *The Man of Feeling* is designed, in part, to elevate it from its otherwise low and effeminate novelistic mode and endow it with a more convincing didactic element, while also distancing the text in significant ways from these traditional forms (1997, 44-51). To this, I would like to add that the manuscript's comparison with (and simultaneous separation from) history and sermon also stands as a means of asserting its generic humility in relation to the novel.

be entertained by a story that is, once again, “simple to excess” and only sketches “a few incidents in a life undistinguished, except by some features of the heart” (Mackenzie 2001, 93). As I explore elsewhere, this emerges as a performance of authentic and exquisite sensibility on the part of the editor by means of which he aligns himself with the values embodied by Harley and enhances the manuscript’s status as a marginalized relic that only a small sentimental elite can truly enjoy (Bacalu 2022, 355-56). The editor’s own noticeable discomfort with a manuscript that is difficult to salvage does make some room for critical distance, but his mournful tone and the fact that his own metatextual interventions inevitably cause the text’s further erosion highlight the implacable fate of simple yet genuine feeling in a corrupt commercial world. The editor is reluctantly required to adjust or censure the text to the extent that he provides his own narrative summary of the events taking place in the parts he withholds from the public (Mackenzie 2001, 93-4) so as to make it at least somewhat palatable to the more common sort of reader. In any case, the manuscript’s repetitiveness, the incoherence of its disjointed chapters, and the banality of the events recounted are pitted against the greater complexity and cohesion that defines novels. Yet, unable to convincingly advocate for its intrinsic worth, we can ironically make out the editor’s ambivalence towards the text despite his marked sentimentality: “Some instruction, and some example, I make no doubt they contained” (Mackenzie 2001, 93).

Considering all this, what I would like to propose is a more refined treatment of self-reflexivity in eighteenth-century sentimental novels, which can foster a fuller understanding of specific forms of fragmentariness and distinguish more clearly between those that work in such a way as to support excessive sensibility and those that seek to subvert its values. This is not to say that some of these formal techniques and narrative strategies are not inherently ambivalent, as Ahern rightfully remarks with respect to the aesthetics of excess and ineffability (Ahern 2007, 120), but it is worth examining with a more discriminating eye what separates all the various elements of self-reflexivity and fragmentariness, as well as how they interact and mutually inform one another.¹¹ Significantly, Wetmore explains that the tendency of sentimental fiction towards “corporeal defamiliarization” has been enabled by two significant intellectual-cultural shifts in the eighteenth century: the reframing of the body as a site of virtue rather than vice and the reworking of the satirical tools

¹¹ An example of an account of fragmentariness in *The Man of Feeling* that dedicates attention to various interactions among its constitutive elements may be found in Starr’s discussion of how “Mackenzie seeks to present himself as a genuine man of feeling but also as something of a man of the world: framing devices permit him this necessary combination of oneness with the hero and distance from him” (Starr 1998, 39).

developed by Augustan writers in such a way that they are made to serve the same conflation between heightened corporeal sensibility and proper moral conduct (Wetmore 2013, 2-3). Wetmore's claim is that such literary techniques are not, however, built on the naïve assumption of the corresponding transparency of texts and bodies. In fact, he argues that they foreground the opacity of both, revealing "an underlying strain of *somatic scepticism*" (Wetmore 2013, 3; original emphasis). His point is reminiscent of Jon Mee's similar account of the rehabilitation of enthusiasm throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, according to which the Romantic elevation of this equally religious-medical and social-political passion never sheds accompanying anxieties of its potential for mental distemper and civil unrest (Mee 2003, 3-5), thus inviting a more lucid understanding of the twists and turns suffered by such persistent unease throughout its history. In any case, Wetmore's remarks take us – at least partly – back to the longstanding consensus built around the intrinsic ambiguity of most, if not all sentimental writing, with the qualification that his careful approach to the question recognizes more clearly the distinction between fragmentariness as distance and fragmentariness as corporeality, as well as the tension between transparency and opacity that emerges from the latter.

Quite recently, Bahadır Eker has made the very powerful point that *The Man of Feeling* may be easily read as an undisguised parody of sentimental novels and, thus, a harsh critique of their underlying ideology. He explores the "ironic distance" that is created in the text with the help of its highly fragmentary and convoluted narrative structure, operating on several levels and centering around an intrusive and sardonic narrator (Eker 2014, 100-11; cf. Starr 1998, 39-40). While I agree with Eker's analysis, which does not shy away from directly addressing the text's unmistakable irony, I believe that there is need for a more detailed discussion of the manner in which such elements of ironic fragmentariness converse with those forms of fragmentariness that are meant to enhance empathy and physicality in specific texts, which would allow us to disentangle with greater dexterity the particulars of the points that they make about the vagaries of moral sentimentalism. As I suggest elsewhere (Bacalu 2022, 354-57), Eker's exploration of the ghostly narrator's criticism of Harley, which we must not forget is suspended at times, must be counterbalanced with an account of the editor's own presence in the text, who often performs sensibility and marginality alongside the protagonist. In this regard, I would like to build on Wetmore's simultaneous recognition of and departure from Barbara Benedict's conception of sentimental literature (see Benedict 1994, 121-26) as constantly providing a "check valve on sensibility" (Wetmore 2013, 10) by setting up a dialectical relationship between emotional excess and various distancing and controlling devices (Wetmore 2013, 10-11). As it appears, Wetmore admits this

account all while tipping the scales in favour of a greater emphasis on corporeality and proximity. This could be a starting point for a keener understanding of how *The Man of Feeling's* anti-novelistic formlessness actually works.

Logical Fracture and Human Nature

Given that *The Man of Feeling* is never really dubbed a fully-fledged novel in either Mackenzie's correspondence or in the text itself, the former's criticism of sentimental novels in *The Lounger* no. 20 of 18 June 1785 should not be understood as a radical departure from a genre of writing that he originally celebrated without any reservations, as other scholars have suggested (cf. Harkin 1994, 336-37; see Spencer 1967). Rather, there is little reason to believe that the exact same suspicions that Mackenzie expresses towards novel-writing in his journalism are not also captured – at least to some extent – in his literary works. This means that the comments on novels made in his essays may be scoured even further for keys to understanding *The Man of Feeling*, especially in terms of its generic complexity and instability. Indeed, it is becoming rather clear that this piece of writing does not fall easily into the category of “novels” for a number of reasons, thus articulating Mackenzie's own critique of the genre all while escaping it – even if only partly. This seems to be the case even considering the fact that sentimental novels are traditionally said to resist early novels written in the realist tradition.¹² Thus, in line with Benedict's and Eker's analyses (see Benedict 1994; see Eker 2014), the text's overwhelming formal and narrative fragmentariness – which we know Mackenzie invokes in his correspondence as a key sign that he is not actually writing a novel – produces concentric layers of distance between the protagonist and the reader and introduces a system of checks and balances on the exaggerated emotionality on display. Once again, this makes room for satire and ridicule, as Mackenzie himself explicitly admits at times, such as with respect to the famous episode in which Harley dabbles in physiognomy (see Harkin 2005a, 164). Hence, although we are dealing with a literary work that is steeped in the sentimental tradition and emerges from the ongoing culture of sensibility, its fragmentariness is designed to invite thorough critical reflection on some of their more problematic assumptions.

¹² On the points of divergence between the realist and sentimental traditions (as well as their shared ground), see Starr (1998). For a similar and highly insightful analysis of the way in which the sentimental trope of physiognomy both derives and departs from the bourgeois ethos of early realist novels, while returning to approaches seen in romance and satire, see Benedict (1995, 311-14, 320).

At the same time, we have also seen that Mackenzie understands his rejection of the novel in terms of a specific strand of fragmentariness that is instantiated in the simplicity and banality of *The Man of Feeling*. We recall that the manuscript is presented as a piece of writing that does away with the overwrought complexities of the fashionable sentimental novels of its own time, which mainly appealed to the vulgar. I want to propose that this is because novelistic complexity emerges in Mackenzie's journalism as the corollary of excessively and ridiculously refined feeling that succumbs to vice by staging what Mackenzie calls a "rivalship of virtues and of duties" (Harkin 2005b, 197), which can only lead to the dangerous "separation of conscience from feeling" (198). As Mackenzie explains in his famous *Lounger* essay, novels are not intrinsically depraved, but the nature of this species of writing is such that hack writers may produce successful works just by being endowed with "a heated imagination, or an excursive fancy" (Harkin 2005b, 196). This kind of imaginative and emotional excess produces an absurd yet irresistibly seductive refinement and intensity of feeling that misapplies virtue and overbalances not just logic and rationality but, most importantly, what Mackenzie refers to as practical duty (Harkin 2005b, 197-98). Otherwise put, Mackenzie appears to advocate for none other than moderation and prudence. In his view, the problem with novels, especially of the sentimental kind, is that they heighten and overcomplicate the conflicts around virtuous feeling to the extent that the pursuit of proper moral conduct and good works in the public sphere is irremediably frustrated. It follows that a well-written novel that can offer proper moral guidance and example is one that succeeds in harmoniously coupling fine feeling with practical duty (cf. Benedict 1994, 130-32 and Barton 2020, 140-46). Indeed, Roman Alexander Barton has also remarked that "the true dialectic relation in Mackenzie's novel is that between the *man of feeling* and the *man of philosophy*. [...] Only together, Mackenzie seems to suggest with Shaftesbury, natural affection and reasoning bring about virtuous character, i.e. moral sensibility, the expression of which is the practice of friendship" (Barton 2020, 144). This also calls to mind Burling's similar suggestion that there is a need to distinguish between "the usable, important elements of sentimentalism, as well as the display of excessive affectations" (Burling 1988, 141). I agree with these readings, all while emphasizing the fact that usable sentimentalism is, in Mackenzie's view, prudent and self-reflexive. In the text, Harley is indeed guilty of this kind of mismatch between feeling and virtue, but the complicated structures of ironic fragmentariness keep his behaviour under constant scrutiny and control and his conduct is never fully vicious – perhaps misguided and impotent, at most. Such fragmentariness goes hand in hand with the constant sense of frustration, failing, and ruin that governs Harley's actions and almost all of the sympathetic encounters that take

place, which Harkin in particular has pointed out (see Harkin 1994; see Harkin 2019). This also contributes to the distancing or displacing effect that various mechanisms of ironic fragmentariness produce.

Indeed, the need for this specific type of balance might be allegorized in the sentimental editor's encounter with the logical curate and captured in the manuscript's oscillation from sermon to history and from neither to both. Neither the curate nor the editor embodies the right attitude to pitiful individuals or forgotten manuscripts. The insurmountable distance between the two and the significant difference in the ways in which they care for the found manuscript seems to suggest that their inability to reach any kind of middle ground is exactly where the problem lies. In many ways, Mackenzie's critique of novelistic sentimentalism may simply be summed up in the injunction not to fall into either the extreme of cold rationality or that of overly heated passion. In any case, Mackenzie describes the counterpart of ridiculously refined feeling by appealing to a vocabulary of plainness and ordinariness. For instance, what "refined and subtle feeling" does, according to Mackenzie, is that it "inspires a certain childish pride of our own superior delicacy, and an unfortunate contempt of the plain worth, the ordinary but useful occupations and ideas of those around us" (Harkin 2005b, 198). This is the same vocabulary that both Mackenzie and the fictional editor of *The Man of Feeling* use to apologize for the modest incidents and unremarkable sentiments depicted in the brief and torn manuscript, which is exactly what makes it unpalatable to the common consumer of novels – a detail that now becomes all the more significant. This means that Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* emerges as both a satirical treatment against novels of sensibility and a recipe for containing sentimental excess, the recognition of which rests on distinguishing between different kinds of fragmentariness that either complicate or simplify the text.

But there are further forms of fragmentariness that shape *The Man of Feeling*, the examination of which can help us flesh out its main argument with even greater precision. In his article, Eker (2014, 100) differentiates between the diegetic, metadiegetic, and meta-metadiegetic levels that organize the text's narrative structure, arguing that the first corresponds to the editor's comments on the found manuscript, the second to Charles' narration, and the third with the events themselves and the stories recounted by the many unfortunate men and women that Harley encounters throughout. Building on this three-fold distinction, I want to distinguish more broadly between the inner psychological fractures that define Harley's affective responses and benevolent actions, as narrated by Charles or the Ghost, and the metatextual or paratextual elements of fragmentariness that we know have occurred after the manuscript was found, misused by the curate, and then published by the editor. For the sake of

concision, we may simply refer to the two types as narrative and textual fragmentariness, respectively. It is also worth noting that the latter helps constitute the found manuscript primarily in its capacity as an object. At the level of the first, Harley is seen jumping from one sentimental *tableau* to another and then another, with little connection between all the various encounters. This kind of episodic structure does not only go against the typical structure of a *Bildungsroman* (see Starr 1998, 29-30), but also underlines how little progress Harley makes in between encounters in terms of his ability to read character (cf. Benedict 1995) and produce real effects in the world around him (cf. Starr 1998, 44; cf. Harkin 1994, 319). Indeed, such formal and narrative fragmentation goes hand in hand with the more important and often striking differences seen in the protagonist's subjectivity and moral character throughout, according to which Harley sometimes embodies the voice of common sense and reasonable sensibility and other times behaves like a ridiculously naïve fool who gets duped by virtually all those around him (cf. Bacalu 2022, 355).

A very good example of the array of logical fractures that Harley demonstrates is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the famous Bedlam episode. As we know, the protagonist and a group of friends are invited by an acquaintance to visit the asylum among "several other shows" (Mackenzie 2001, 23). Harley is eventually persuaded to join the curious party of friends, although he initially protests in a clear anti-sentimentalist indictment against this kind of entertainment:

I think it an inhuman practice to expose the greatest misery with which our nature is afflicted, to every idle visitant who can afford a trifling perquisite to the keeper; especially as it is a distress which the humane must see with the painful reflection, that it is not in their power to alleviate it. (Mackenzie 2001, 23)

Harley firmly positions himself against the transformation of human suffering into both spectacle and commodity, while also deploring the absurdity of allowing oneself to witness pain that one is profoundly unable to relieve. In a nutshell, his rebuke contains some of the most typical charges against excessive sensibility: that it amounts to cheap sensationalism, egotistic interest, and irredeemable impotence.¹³ However, Harley quickly exemplifies the exact type of conduct that he berates. With great susceptibility to spectacle, he is immediately taken with the most striking of the female inmates who possesses the most tragic and lachrymose story of personal misfortune and is watched closely by

¹³ These points of criticism are also partly captured in the misanthropist's harangue against fellow feeling, whom Harley and his acquaintance meet in Chapter XXI (Mackenzie 2001, 32-33).

all of the other visitors (Mackenzie 2001, 25-26). Enthralled but incapable of offering genuine help, he listens to the woman's history while shedding increasing amounts of tears before placing a few coins in the keeper's hands and leaving: " 'Be kind to that unfortunate' – He burst into tears, and left them" (Mackenzie 2001, 27). He also flees, however politely, from the delusional but disinterested guide while rewarding the hardened and exploitative keeper whom the inmates dislike, despite the fact that his initial criticism is also directed at the latter social type.

What is more, Harley also participates in the woman's display of intense distress by playing the part of her deceased lover in the larger "performance." They stare at each other fixedly, hold hands, and the distraught woman likens Harley to her long lost lover: "I love you for resembling my Billy; but I shall never love any man like him" (Mackenzie 2001, 27). As such, apart from revealing the exact same faults that he criticizes, whether on account of hypocrisy, naivety, or a mixture of both, Harley also demonstrates lack of rational self-reflexivity by confounding spectator and spectacle (cf. Benedict 1994, 122-24, cf. Bacalu 2022, 357). Throughout the book, Harley listens to the tragic tales of the unfortunate without ever assuming a suitably safe distance, often placing himself on the same footing with them or becoming a chief actor in the spectacles that they create until he himself becomes the ultimate object of pity by dying from unfulfilled love (Mackenzie 2001, 96-8). This problem of the self-involved protagonist and/or narrator who fails to act consistently as the text's moral centre is one of the main charges that anti-modern authors like Pope, Swift, or Fielding,¹⁴ who align themselves with the Augustan satirical tradition, mount against the new genre of the novel. This piece of criticism may be found as early as the 1710s in Lord Shaftesbury's *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author*.¹⁵ In the version of the essay included in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), Shaftesbury writes that "unless the party has been used to play the critic thoroughly upon himself, he will hardly be found proof against the criticisms of others. His thoughts can never appear very correct unless they have been used to sound correction by themselves, and been well formed and disciplined before they are brought into the field" (Shaftesbury 2000, 76). In other words, the subjects of modern fiction, who are often author-characters (Shaftesbury 2000, 75), must split themselves into two selves, the author and the critic, for the sake of self-discipline, as well

¹⁴ Despite being a prolific author of novels, Fielding is well known for the hybridity of his works and his ambivalent engagement with the new genre, which can be explained by his reverence for the classical style, not to mention his alignment with Scriblerian satire. See, for instance, Rawson 2007, 153-72.

¹⁵ On Shaftesbury's significance for moral sentimentalism and novelistic sensibility, see Moore (1916), Tuveson (1953), Greene (1977), Chapin (1983).

as proper moral judgement and conduct. Harley does the reverse, often blurring the boundaries between subjects and objects of sentimental reflection. According to Shaftesbury, this is exactly what impedes moral growth by hindering self-knowledge and a true understanding of human nature: "Wisdom as well as charity may be honestly said 'to begin at home'. There is no way of estimating manners or apprising the different humours, fancies, passions and apprehensions of others without first taking an inventory of the same kind of goods within ourselves and surveying our domestic fund" (Shaftesbury 2000, 85). Finally, the fact that such inner inconsistency on Harley's part occurs in the context of the two harsh condemnations of sentimentalism, voiced not only by Harley but by the misanthropist whom the protagonist meets after visiting Bedlam, is a first sign that we may also read Mackenzie's text as an ironic treatment of the futility of anti-sentimentalist criticism itself.

At the level of the second type of fragmentariness, it is very difficult to ignore the many blanks and gaps found throughout the text, which we know are owing to the curate's negligence, not to mention the editor's many intrusions in the shape of comments and notes on the text that accumulate beyond his introduction. While Eker's analysis successfully reveals the extent to which the narrator's voice satirizes the ideal of the man of feeling, I believe there is more to be said regarding the interaction between this kind of narrative formlessness with the second type of textual fragmentariness, quite apart from the fact that their clash works in such a way as to enhance the text's insurmountable ambivalence (cf. Bacalu 2022, 355-57). If we recognize the fact that the two types of fragmentariness originate from different sources – the first from Harley's own inner lack of coherence and the second from the way in which ordinary men and women respond to this strand of sensibility – we may find that their interaction is key. To return to the editor's most extensive intrusion, he shows that the very reason why he reluctantly chooses to withhold some of the more mutilated passages from a disinterested reading public is because of the curate's own readerly neglect. In other words, the curate's misuse of the manuscript makes the already strange story of Harley completely unreadable (Mackenzie 2001, 93). Thus, at the point where the two forms of fragmentariness conflate, *The Man of Feeling* reveals the fact that, for all of Harley's failings, the common vulgar contempt towards sensibility is what mutilates Harley's character and his journey even further. It is true that the text was already illegible and fractured when it was first handed to the curate, but his own disregard coupled with the editor's constant apologies create further ruptures and inconsistencies. Considering Mackenzie's essayistic observations on novels, this encounter between the two different kinds of fragmentariness shapes *The Man of Feeling* into a critique of *none other* than the dominant critique of sentimentalism.

Neither the curate's criticism, nor the indifference of the editor's imagined reading public do anything to add guidance to misguided benevolence and render it cohesive, whether in moral-psychological, narrative, or textual terms. According to Mackenzie, what is needed is the careful modulation of intense feeling in such a way that it becomes aligned with practical duty and oriented towards good works. Excessive sensibility does indeed frustrate action (Burling 1988, 144), but so does its misguided critique. As other scholars have suggested (see Burling 1988, 143; see Platzner 1976), this would mean that there is no unitary reading of Harley's moral character, but that some of his features are commended while others are censured, or both at the same time.

Conclusion

Offering renewed attention to the striking degree of fragmentariness that shapes Henry Mackenzie's most famous work, *The Man of Feeling*, I have proposed a more nuanced treatment of the different underlying mechanisms behind this formal and narrative feature and the various ways in which they interact. I have insisted that, although fragmentariness is indeed a defining feature of sentimental literature as a whole, Mackenzie's text also reveals elements of formlessness that allow it to depart significantly from the ethos of sentimental novels not just as a means of mounting a critique against these but also by way of proposing a model for containing sentimental excess and giving it an appropriate form. My interest has been in re-reading the critique of novels that Mackenzie articulates in his journalism with the aim of highlighting the generic instability of Mackenzie's text and showing that it cannot, in fact, be easily or fully understood as a novel. In particular, I have emphasized the inner logical fractures that shape Harley's subjectivity and render his values and conduct inconsistent throughout the course of the manuscript. However incoherent Harley's behaviour might be at the level of *The Ghost's* narrative, the further erosion that the manuscript suffers at the hands of both the curate and the editor emerges as an ironic treatment of the usual criticism and indifference shown towards sentimentalism, which – as Mackenzie seems to suggest – can only be rehabilitated if carefully coupled with self-reflexivity and a true consciousness of duty. As such, Mackenzie's text represents not just a typical instance of sentimental ambivalence but a means of resisting sentimental excess *as well as* its often misguided contemporary critique at the level of both style and formal technique.

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THE SENTIMENTAL TRAVERSE OF CLAUDE-HENRI WATELET'S EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PICTURESQUE GARDEN ISLE, THE MOULIN JOLY

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ABSTRACT. *The Sentimental Traverse of Claude-Henri Watelet's Eighteenth-Century Picturesque Garden Isle, the Moulin Joly.* Claude-Henri Watelet's 1774 *Essai sur les jardins* (*Essay on Gardens*) was the first French garden treatise to enter the picturesque garden debate, set into motion in England with the 1748 publication of William Gilpin's *A Dialogue Upon the Gardens [...] at Stow*, a dialogic garden tour which delineated the aesthetic principles of the picturesque, advancing a formalist approach to the visual apprehension of the landscape. Watelet's *Essay on Gardens*, however, exemplified the affective development of the garden treatise in the second half of the eighteenth century, which featured a textual, oftentimes sentimental traverse of the picturesque landscape, evoking a sensation-imbued garden walk, or in this case, ferry crossing. Watelet's *Essay* describes the new domain of landscape architecture as inhabited by artists, poets, and designers, or *décorateurs*, who conceived gardens as pictures, and the garden walk as a series of volatile, shifting tableaux. The picturesque garden ramble, vivified in Watelet's ekphrastic prose, could thereafter be traversed and re-traversed by the reader regardless of their location in space-time. In *Essai sur les jardins*,

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Watelet crosses the Seine by boat, en route to Paris, when he serendipitously discovers his future garden isle, the Moulin Joly. Watelet's gaze errs along the otherworldly pastorale, seizing upon what would become his future *ferme ornée*, or embellished farm, catching sight of its flowing waters and verdant groves, fortuitously up for sale. This fleeting glimpse, or *coup d'œil*, in which the fugitive tableau is instantaneously imprinted onto the retina, enabled the garden visitor an immediate entrée into the terrain of the subconscious, embarking upon an ever-changing traverse of the emotions suggested by the imagery, symbolism, and vocabulary of the landscape garden.

Keywords: *the eighteenth century, picturesque aesthetics, sentiment, Claude-Henri Watelet, Moulin Joli.*

REZUMAT. Traiectoria sentimentală a grădinii pitorești de la Moulin Joly a lui Claude-Henri Watelet. „Essai sur les jardins” („Eseu despre grădini”), publicat în 1774 și semnat de Claude-Henri Watelet, este primul tratat despre grădini scris în limba franceză care ia parte la dezbateră despre grădinile pitorești de la acea vreme, dezbateră care a început în Anglia odată cu apariția în anul 1748, la Stow, a tratatului „A Dialogue Upon the Gardens” („Dialog despre grădini”) semnat de William Gilpin. Textul lui Gilpin poate fi descris ca un tur prin mai multe grădini și ia forma unui dialog în care sunt enunțate principiile estetice ale pitorescului, propunând astfel o abordare formalistă asupra aprecierii estetice a peisajelor. Acesta marchează momentul în care literatura despre grădini începe să se preocupe mai mult de modul în care grădina este percepută vizual de vizitatorii săi, în defavoarea intenției peisagistice. „Eseul despre grădini” al lui Watelet este reprezentativ pentru tratatele despre grădini din cea de-a doua jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea, care propun cititorului o călătorie textuală și adesea sentimentală printr-un peisaj pitoresc bogat în diferite senzații, fie că este vorba de o scurtă plimbare prin grădină sau de traversarea unei ape cu vaporul, ca în textul lui Watelet. El descrie domeniul incipient al peisagisticii și îl reprezintă ca fiind populat de artiști, poeți, arhitecți și proiectanți, care concep grădinile ca pe niște picturi și reprezintă plimbarea prin grădină ca și când ar presupune o înlănțuire de tablouri aflate în perpetuă schimbare și mișcare. Rătăcirea prin grădina pitorească, ilustrată în proza efrastică a lui Watelet, poate fi traversată din nou și din nou, indiferent de constrângerile spațiale sau temporale. În „Eseul despre grădini”, Watelet traversează Sena cu vaporul, în drum spre Paris, unde descoperă cu totul întâmplător insula cu grădini pe care se va întinde viitoarea sa proprietate de la Moulin Joly. Privirea lui Watelet rătăcește prin peisajul pastoral care pare desprins din cu totul altă lume și se apleacă asupra viitoarei sale ferme, surprinzând astfel apele curgătoare și crângurile verzi, care, spre norocul său, erau scoase la vânzare. Un astfel de *coup d'œil*, prin intermediul căruia tabloul volatil se imprimă instantaneu pe retină, îi oferă celui care vizitează grădina acces la propriul său subconștient, unde se întâlnește cu o gamă largă de emoții sugerate de imaginile, simbolismul și limbajul prin care comunică peisajul unei grădini.

Cuvinte-cheie: *secolul al XVIII-lea, estetica pitorescului, sentimentalism, Claude-Henri Watelet, Moulin Joli.*

A Fleeting Glimpse

Bounded by surging waters, sheathed in brume, redolent with vapors, flickering in and out of view, the apparition of a small group of islands in the Seine seemed so incorporeal as to enchant Watelet when crossing the river en route to Paris in 1749. Watelet's reverie was interrupted by this unexpected sighting, writing, "I was [...] calmly preoccupied with thoughts of my friends and of the arts, two subjects so dear to me that, as you know, I have allowed them to dominate all others. I let my gaze wander. The grove I have just described for you attracted my eye", thus setting the tone for an ekphrastic narrative of affect, gentility, and taste on the art of landscape, and the landscape in art (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 60). Watelet's emotional response to this "uncommon site" of "potential beauty" underscored the heady, sensation-inducing intent of the discerned or devised picturesque landscape.²

Watelet outlines the allure of this triune of islands in an almost textbook description of the picturesque principles of variety, irregularity, asymmetry, sinuosity, and diversity; from his ferryboat he espies "the variety of perspectives, the irregularity of the terrain, the windings [*sinuosités*] of the riverbanks, the asymmetrical disposition of the trees, slopes, islands, and of the dikes connecting them, all produce such a charming diversity that you have no desire to leave" (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 60). This process of perceiving the landscape according to aesthetic convention is an example of Alain Roger's *artialisation in visu*, wherein land is transformed to landscape within the eye, according to the aesthetic framing of the time (Roger, 1997).³

The picturesque, a mid-eighteenth- to early-nineteenth-century aesthetic ideal that blurred the lines between landscape and picture, drew upon the awe-inspiring sublime in nature tempered by the domesticated pleasantness of the beautiful. These wilderness islands in the Seine, replete with dilapidated sixteenth-century watermill, dairy, outbuildings, and living quarters, embodied the picturesque intersection of nature and art. Drawing upon both observation and

² Certain key words have been translated literally, or on occasion have been left in the original French. These terms may occasionally differ from Samuel Danon's masterfully translated 2003 edition of Watelet's *Essay on Gardens*.

³ Alain Roger resurrects Montaigne's term "artialisation" [*in visu*] to depict the visual transposition of land into landscape according to the aesthetic conventions of a given period (Roger, 1997). The picturesque fragmentation of the landscape into tableaux, whether due to its picture-like terminology or the expectations surrounding the pictorial representation of the landscape in art, are forms of *artialisation*. Eighteenth-century picturesque theorist Uvedale Price writes that "the English word ['picturesque'] naturally draws the reader's mind toward pictures, and from that partial and confined view of the subject, what in truth is only an illustration of picturesqueness, becomes the foundation of it" (Price, [1794] 1796, 55).

imagination, the island's sighting was an epiphany to Watelet as he arrives at his Arcadia, a forgotten island in the Seine, discovering a *secrete sympathie* [sic] with it that he is powerless to resist (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 141).

This trio of connected islets, eleven kilometers northwest of Paris, accessible by suspended bridge from Colombes, was "far from the bustle of crowds, away from the childish and gloomy anxiety of people who search in vain for happiness while running away from it" (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 60). This landscape of Rousseauian ideals, far from the corruption of society, was a place where Watelet "could taste in tranquillity both the delights of study and beauties of nature" (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 60). Watelet describes the discovery of the island in the final chapter of his 1774 garden treatise *Essai sur les jardins*, "The French Garden—Letter to a Friend":

This unusual site had been long neglected. Its potential beauty was only waiting to be revealed when, one day in spring some twenty years ago, I discovered its charming location. I was crossing the river in a ferryboat on my way to the city, calmly preoccupied with thoughts of my friends and of the arts, two subjects so dear to me that, as you know, I have allowed them to dominate all others. I let my gaze wander. The grove I have just described for you attracted my eye. An eighth of a league in the distance, it presented such a lovely view that I wished I could enjoy it more fully. A meadow, flowing waters, shade! Here, I told myself, far from the tiresome and sterile bustle of crowds, away from the childish and gloomy anxiety of people who search in vain for happiness while running away from it—this is where I could taste in tranquillity both the delights of study and the beauties of nature.

I did not resist this first impression. Hardly had I disembarked when I proceeded toward a place that lured me by some kind of secret affinity. (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 60-66)

Serendipitous Discovery

In succumbing to the "first impression" of the island that would become his future *ferme ornée*, Watelet participated in the experience of serendipitous discovery that epitomized the picturesque traverse (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 60). The "place that lured [him] by some kind of secret affinity" was espied from the deck of a ferryboat, removed from *terra firma*, its Elysian islets giving rise to the evocative, otherworldly sensation that connected the eighteenth-century landscape to the art, poetry, theory, and philosophy of its time (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 60-66). The unforeseen apparition of the island prompted a "sagacious discovery", as defined by Francis Bacon in the late seventeenth century (Bacon, [1609] 1884,

333-41). This joining of perspicacity to accident, now known as “serendipity”, was a term conceived just around the time of Watelet’s discovery by fellow art critic, garden theorist, and gentleman gardener Horace Walpole. In 1754, Walpole coined the term “serendipity” from the title of the sixteenth-century picaresque *The Three Princes of the Serendip* (Walpole, 1851, 34). Walpole explained its inspiration in a letter to longtime friend Horace Mann, writing of *The Three Princes* that “as their Highnesses travelled, they were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things which they were not in quest of” (Walpole, 1851, 26, 34; Silver, 2015, 238).⁴

Horace Walpole, Watelet’s contemporary on the other side of the Channel, visited the Moulin Joly in 1775, one year after the publication of Watelet’s *Essai sur les jardins*, no doubt after having read Watelet’s account, which had given some celebrity to the Moulin Joly all over Europe.⁵ Walpole, who had created his own picturesque garden at Strawberry Hill around the same time as Watelet, was the author of his own garden treatise, *Essay on Modern Gardening*, published privately in 1770, and more widely in 1780. It is of particular interest that Walpole, responsible for coining the word “serendipity”, introducing it into the English language in 1754 (although its widespread adoption took place more than a century later), visited the site that embodied the serendipitous experience. Perhaps Walpole had been intrigued by Watelet’s narrative, where Watelet unexpectedly “discovered this charming location” while having an entirely different objective in mind, that of going to Paris. While one may never know if Walpole and Watelet discussed serendipity, it is certain that they both shared a *secrete sympathie* [sic] for the serendipitous garden experience as well as its rendering in text, while championing their respective nations’ claims to the modern picturesque garden. Walpole writes of his visit to the Moulin Joly to picturesque garden theorist William Mason on September 6, 1775. Despite Walpole’s derisive tone and hyperbolic description of the overgrown state of Watelet’s isle, it is evident that Walpole is taken in by the immense charm of its Edenic setting and the picturesque, outward-looking views that it framed. Walpole writes:

⁴ The recipient of Walpole’s “serendipity” letter was Horace Mann, the British Minister of Florence. Watelet explains a sudden illumination, an unexpected link between families via heraldic devices. He writes, “This discovery, indeed, is almost of that kind which I call *Serendipity*” (Walpole, 1937-1983, vol. 26, 307).

⁵ When referring to Watelet’s island abode, the Moulin Joly (Pretty Mill), I have used Watelet’s original orthography, except when quoting others who have used “Moulin Joli”, which was an alternative spelling at the time, and is the correct spelling in today’s orthography.

I have begun by visiting M. Watelet's Isle, called *le Moulin Joli* [...] M. Watelet has jumped back into Nature, when she was not above five hundred years old: in one word, his *Island* differs in nothing from a French garden into which no mortal has set his foot for the last century. It is an *ate* (I don't know whether I spell well) joined to his terra firma by two bridges, one of which he calls Dutch and the other Chinese, and which are as unlike either as two peas, and which is pierced and divided into straight narrow walks *en berceau* [bowered] and surrounded by a rude path quite round. To give this *étoile*, an air *champêtre* [country air], a plenary indulgence has been granted to every nettle, thistle and bramble *that grew in the garden, and they seem good in his sight*. The receipt [recipe] is as follows, — take an *ate* [ruin, folly] full of willows, cram it full of small elms and poplar pines, strip them into cradles [bowers], and cut them into paths, and leave all the rest as rough as you found it, and you will have a *Moulin Joli*. You must know this effort of genius is the more provoking, as the situation is charming, besides that the isle is in the middle of the Seine, every peephole (though so small that you seem to look through the diminishing end of a spying glass) besides terminating on one real windmill, is bounded by a chateau, a clocher [belltower], a village, a couvent [convent], a villa where Henrietta Maria was educated, or hermitage to which Bossuet retired, not to mortify himself but Fenelon. (Walpole, [1775] 1851, 202-03; emphasis in the original)

Serendipity, inspired by the spirit of the times, was integral to the picturesque experience; the picturesque landscape, designed according to the principles of variety, irregularity, and contrast, was criss-crossed by meandering byways, opening out onto unexpected vistas, which elicited surprise and astonishment. The serendipitous experience, ripe for definition and distinction by the eighteenth century, had, according to Sean Silver, “accompanied empiricism as the name for an essential gap in its epistemology.” According to Silver, “serendipity bears directly on the ‘induction problem’, or what has more recently been called the ‘conceptual leap’”, identifying serendipity as a concept belonging to the epistemological innovations of late seventeenth-century empiricism (Silver, 2015, 235). These empirical notions led to eighteenth-century sensationism, which exalted the human as oculus onto sensation, experience and therefore knowledge.

Locke's Empiricism and Condillac's Sensationism

The elicitation of sensation in the individual through the myriad landscape effects of the picturesque accompanied the burgeoning interest across the arts and sciences in sensory perception, affirming the fundamental role of the senses in

understanding the world around us, placing the human at the center of knowledge creation. This was largely due to John Locke's empiricism, which contended that knowledge is gained through the senses, understood through reflection on that experience (Locke, 1690). Locke's late seventeenth-century epistemology broke with previous notions of knowledge impartation through divine revelation as well as the innate ideas propounded by Descartes, instead, describing the human mind as a blank slate at birth, marked by experience in the form of observable, quantifiable sensory input (Locke, 1690). In the mid-eighteenth century, Étienne Bonnot de Condillac departed from Locke's empiricism, radically excluding all but sensory input in his sensationist epistemology, stating that all knowledge is transformed sensation (Condillac, 1746, 1754).

The picturesque landscape traverse participated in Condillac's sensation-to-knowledge cycle which engaged all of the senses, its contrasting imagery evoking the *frisson* of the unexpected, creating a spontaneous ramble in response to the sensation-educing features of the picturesque garden. In the foreword to *Essai sur les jardins*, Watelet outlines the epistemological process forged by the arts wherein pleasure is delivered to the senses, thereby stimulating the mind, leading to the expansion of the soul. Watelet states:

In other words, we wish not only that both the materials of artistic creations and their uses bring pleasure to the senses, but also that the mind and the soul in turn be touched and stirred by their appeal. That is the natural progress followed by an alert mind when its desires are stimulated, and also by the soul which, if active, strives to grow and flourish. (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 19)

Watelet elevates garden design to the ranks of the liberal arts, its visual stimuli overlapping onto the other senses, extending visual touch over the roughness of the landscape, immersing the garden wanderer in the redolent scents and sounds of nature. This created synaesthetic "modes" or moods which, according to Condillac's sensationism, were amalgamations of sensation in early human development wherein one could hear color, or see sound, all of these sensations perceived together as a mood which was an inseparable part of self (Condillac, 1754). Thus, touch became feeling, and sensation became sentiment, united through synaesthetic modes which would eventually be differentiated through pleasure or pain (Condillac, 1746). These newly-discerned strands of sensation could be re-entwined, if only momentarily, through the experience of the picturesque.

Sensation and Sentiment in the Picturesque

Sensation is considered a precursor to sentiment in the work of eighteenth-century philosophers Condillac, Burke, and Rousseau. However, William Gilpin, artist, picturesque theorist, and author of what is considered the first picturesque garden treatise, the 1748 *A Dialogue Upon the Gardens [...] at Stow*, excluded affect in his formalist approach to picturesque perception. While Gilpin's 1748 *Dialogue* introduced the rudiments of picturesque aesthetics into art and landscape theory, it is his *Three Essays* (1792) which elucidate the visual apprehension of the picturesque; Gilpin asserts that "the artist, who deals in lines, surfaces, and colours, which are an immediate address to the *eye*, conceives the *very truth itself* concerned in his *mode* of representing it" (Gilpin, 1792, 18; emphasis in the original). This "immediate address to the eye" circumvented sentiment and morality, prescribing a purely visual response to the picturesque principles of variety, irregularity, contrast, light and shade, roughness, and ruggedness, affirming that "the province of the picturesque eye is to *survey nature*, not to *anatomize matter*" (Gilpin, 1792, 18, 26; emphasis in the original).

While eighteenth-century aesthetic theorist Archibald Alison affirms that "the Painter addresses himself to the Eye", Alison effectively upends Gilpin's contention that the aesthetic response of the eye excludes emotion in his *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790, 91). To the contrary, Alison insists that visual phenomena cannot be adequately perceived without emotion, as "the language he [the painter] employs is found not only to speak to the eye, but to affect the imagination and the heart" (Alison, 1790, 90). Alison explains:

The Painter can give to the objects of his scenery, only the visible and material qualities which are discerned by the eye, and must leave the interpretation of their expression to the imagination to the spectator [...]. All the sublimity and beauty of the moral and intellectual world are at his disposal; and by bestowing on the inanimate objects of his scenery the characters and affectations of mind, he can produce at once an expression which every capacity may understand, and every heart may feel. (Alison, 1790, 92)

Watelet's 1774 *Essay* also depicted the eye as conveying immediate sensation, while its movement across the landscape engaged sense memory, bringing emotion, and in this case, joy to its possessor. Watelet describes the eye's apprehension of the island tableau:

As the eye embraces the whole establishment and lingers over it, one remembers the sensations already received. That is when it is only natural to say, like the sage: Oh, how happy they would be, those who inhabit the countryside, if they truly knew the value of the benefits they enjoy, or could enjoy! (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 31)

Watelet's roving view of the landscape, as both a catalyst of sensation and traverse of memory, elicits an associative train of thought. These associations, according to Alison, are precipitated by visual phenomena of sublimity or beauty which pique the imagination:

When any object, either of sublimity or beauty, is presented to the mind, I believe every man is conscious of a train of thought being immediately awakened in his imagination, analogous to the character of expression of the original object.

This simple perception of the object, we frequently find, is insufficient to excite these emotions, unless it is accompanied by this operation of the mind, unless, according to common expression, our imagination is seized, and our fancy busied in the pursuit of all those trains of thought, which are allied to this character or expression. (Alison, 1790, 2)

Alison traced the affective and associative responses to visual phenomena against the backdrop of the aesthetic categories of the sublime and the beautiful, joining associationism to eighteenth-century aesthetics, mingling visual stimuli with psychological response, thereby connecting sensation to mood, as did Condillac's sensationism (1746, 1754).

Between the Sublime and the Beautiful

Oscillating between the poles of the awe-striking sublime and her more agreeable, domesticated cousin, the beautiful, was the picturesque aesthetic according to philosopher Edmund Burke, along with garden theorists William Chambers and Uvedale Price. These landscape extremes were meant to arouse instinctual passion through the sublime, contrasted by the more civilized sentiment of the beautiful. Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, published in 1757, shows sublime nature as the stimulus that innervates both sensation and passion:

The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object,

that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that, far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect on the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence, and respect. (Burke, 1757, 73-74; emphasis in the original)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his 1755 *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (*Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality Among Mankind*), describes the passions as anticipating reason, contending that

whatever moralists may hold, the human understanding is greatly indebted to the passions, which, it is universally allowed, are also much indebted to the understanding. It is by the activity of the passions that our reason is improved; for we desire knowledge only because we wish to enjoy; and it is impossible to conceive any reason why a person who has neither fears nor desires should give himself the trouble of reasoning. The passions, again, originate in our wants, and their progress depends on that of our knowledge; for we cannot desire or fear anything, except from the idea we have of it, or from the simple impulse of nature. (Rousseau, [1755] 1920, 185-86)

Amour de Soi and Amour Propre

The contrasting emotional states of passion and sentiment were believed to either passively or actively involve the person; with passion, the individual was considered a passive bystander caught in a maelstrom of raw emotion, while sentiment required active reflection. Burke explains:

Most of the ideas which are capable of making a powerful impression on the mind, whether simply of pain or pleasure, or the modifications of those, may be reduced very nearly to these two heads, *self-preservation* and *society*; to the ends of one or the other of which, all our passions are calculated to answer. The passions which concern self-preservation turn mostly on *pain* or *danger*. The ideas of *pain*, *sickness*, and *death*, fill the mind with strong emotions of horror [...]. (Burke, [1757] 1823, 44; emphasis in the original)

In this passage, Burke refers to the dichotomy revealed in Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* (1755) as *amour de soi*, which signifies a passionate, instinctual feeling of self-love – a primeval impulse of self-preservation, while *amour propre*

was a sentiment tempered by concern for the opinions of others. *Amour propre*, while potentially promoting societal benefit, in excess, led to venality and corruption. Watelet also owes the philosophical foundation of his *Essai* to Rousseau's state of nature, which exalted the uncorrupted passion of *amour de soi*, contrasted by *amour propre*, which Watelet calls the "artificial sentiment, a construct of society." Watelet laments the garden's nascence as not being the result of a "simple feeling emanating from nature," but from the "ostentatious" sentiment of *amour propre*. Watelet traces the advent of the garden according to Rousseau's principles:

Emblematic of personality, the enclosure is a small empire built by a human being who cannot increase his power without also increasing the concerns that threaten it.

We can easily see that in its early development the art of gardens cannot advance rapidly. In order to hasten its course it is important that the idea of shared enjoyment be added to the desire for private pleasure.

But how can this idea be implemented?

Through hospitality, which is a simple feeling emanating from nature [*amour de soi*]; or else through vanity [*amour propre*], which I shall call "ostentatious," for it is an artificial sentiment, a construct of society. To humanity's shame, the first of these feelings is not the one that propels the art of gardens to its most brilliant successes. (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 24)

The true state of nature, or *amour de soi*, according to Rousseau, has been lost to human progress and development; it is now the interaction of these two *amours* that comprise our nature today. Rousseau describes the mitigating action *amour propre* on *amour de soi* as contributing to the preservation of humanity:

It is then certain that compassion is a natural feeling, which, by moderating the violence of love of self [*amour de soi*] in each individual, contributes to the preservation of the whole species. It is this compassion that hurries us without reflection to the relief of those who are in distress: it is this which in a state of nature supplies the place of laws, morals and virtues. (Rousseau, [1755] 1920, 199-200)

All of the laws, morals, and societal benefit arising from *amour de soi*, moderated by *amour propre*, however, can be uprooted by the tempest of romantic love. Romantic love, a threat to both self-preservation and societal welfare, has the capacity to inflame the heart while possessing the potential to devastate humanity. Rousseau concludes, "it is therefore incontestable that love, as well as all other passions, must have acquired in society that glowing impetuosity, which makes

it so often fatal to mankind” (Rousseau, [1755]1920, 202). The passions, in their ability to overwhelm reason, are a danger to the very society which they were “destined to preserve.” Rousseau states:

Of the passions that stir the heart of man, there is one which makes the sexes necessary to each other, and is extremely ardent and impetuous; a terrible passion that braves danger, surmounts all obstacles, and in its transports seems calculated to bring destruction on the human race which it is really destined to preserve. (Rousseau, [1755]1920, 200-01)

It is this love – a sublime, passionate current running headlong toward destruction – that is churned by the Moulin Joly, despite the island’s outward cultivation of refined sentiment and placid picturesqueness.

Romantic Love

Watelet, who has succeeded in charming the reader with the genteel, affectionate tone of his *Essay on Gardens*, invites the reader further into his confidence in the final chapter of his *Essay* entitled “The French Garden—Letter to a Friend”, where he appeals to the reader as a trusted confidant, infusing his account of the island’s founding with romantic love, joining the sentimental provenance and visual narrative of his island to Héloïse’s former abbey across the water at Argenteuil, just within view of his island.⁶ The reader, whom Watelet addresses as “we”, accompanies him on his traverse:

But let us retrace our steps and walk to the tip of the largest island, which we have largely visited in part. By crossing a stand of willows, we come, along tortuous and shaded roads, to the spot where the river forms two canals that surround this section before rejoining the riverbed.

At this farthest point we face an untamed landscape. A barren island rises in the near distance and arrests the eye. Water churns behind a broken dike that resists the current’s efforts to destroy it, and, when the river level rises, a cascade forms that well suits this solitary place. The adjacent island is clear of trees that would obstruct the view; thus, the gaze extends beyond it and comes to rest on a few buildings that are part of a small town not too far away. Among these structures, there is one taller than the others and therefore more imposing. In itself it is not very

⁶ The objective of Watelet’s final chapter entitled “The French Garden—Letter to a Friend”, in addition to consecrating his sentimental garden traverse to posterity, was to establish the Moulin Joly as *le jardin français* [sic], a model of French taste, gentility, culture and progress (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 60-72).

remarkable, but who would not stop to contemplate it, upon learning that Héloïse once lived there! Who, upon hearing this name, would not take a moment to talk about that frail and all-too-unhappy lover! After her tragic adventure, she withdrew to a convent where Abélard—wise, troubled, demanding, and jealous—was abbot. What you see here is that very convent. (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 69-70)

In Watelet's text, the twin souls of Héloïse and Abélard are conjured and carried along two channels divided by Watelet's island, only to be reunited in the river's confluence beyond. Héloïse's spirit is uplifted in the turbulence caused by the broken lock, which "resists the current's effort to destroy it". As her spirit rises, it spills over its obstacle, erupting into "a cascade [...] that well suits this solitary place." Her courageous love has not been destroyed, but elevated as a testament to eternal love in the form of a waterfall.

Héloïse's enduring love, which Watelet visualizes in the swirling waters of the Seine, echoes his own illicit love affair with longtime lover Marguerite Le Comte. She, too, resided with Watelet on this island paradise. However, the two were not alone; they were accompanied by Monsieur Le Comte, Marguerite's husband. One can assume that Watelet's generosity abated any qualms that Marguerite's husband might have had with this arrangement; Watelet purchased the island domain and paid for its upkeep, while giving legal ownership to Marguerite and her husband. Watelet's friend and fellow artist, Madame Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Le Brun, remarked on their unusual relationship:

[Watelet] gracefully received a small but very well-chosen company. A friend (Marguerite Le Comte), to whom he had been attached over thirty years, was established in his house, time having, so to speak, sanctified their relationship, so that they were received in the best society, together with the lady's husband who, strange to say, never left her. (Vigée-Le Brun, [1835] 1927, 108)

Watelet's unconventional love affair, seen through Héloïse and Abélard's tale of forbidden love, lent wistful sentiment to the traverse of Watelet's garden isle, incising imagined inscriptions into his text which "would no doubt be carved into the bark of a myrtle" (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 70). Watelet celebrates the immortality of Héloïse's love in one such inscription:

These roofs that rise high in the air
Protect Héloïse's unhappy place.
Sigh, tender hearts, and remember my praise.
She honored love; Love grants her life forever.
(Watelet, [1774] 2003, 70)

Watelet's homage to romantic love, inscribed into the body of his *Essai*, transmitted the sentimental meanderings of his intensely personal garden experience.⁷ Watelet undoubtedly intended his *Essay on Gardens* to be an enduring legacy – a personalized walking tour of his endangered island habitat, as fantastical as it was fragile. In the manner of the modern garden treatises of the latter half of the eighteenth century, Watelet textually evoked the sensations and sentiment suggested by the landscape features along the promenade. Now the reader could partake in the picturesque garden experience regardless of their location in space-time. The garden's byways could be traversed and re-traversed, experienced emotionally, framed aesthetically, yet envisioned anew, despite the impermanence of nature and vagaries of human emotion.

Watelet's final passage seems almost a premonition of the devastation of his island idyll. He entreats the reader, an invited guest and vital presence in this shared narrative, to “come join us in our Laurentine and with your presence restore what it is lacking and what nothing can replace” (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 72). Therefore, it is up to the reader to summon the *genius loci*, to restore, if only in memory, the spirit of the place, re-conjuring Watelet's Laurentine, tracing the *sinuosités* of his sentimental roadmap, locating it in a space-time wherein discovery, ruin, and regeneration can coexist.

Ephemerality

The temporality of the garden, exemplified by Watelet's Moulin Joly, was captured in epistolary form by Benjamin Franklin, then seventy-two, on his 1778 visit to Watelet's embellished farm, writing to the object of his admiration, thirty-seven-year-old Madame Brillon (Franklin, [1778] 1988, 430-35).⁸ During their garden stroll, Franklin examined the *éphémère*, or mayfly, joining its short-lived earthly transit to the fleetingness of nature and his own life, which he felt could not but last “7 or 8 Minutes longer”, while the Moulin Joly, Franklin wrote, “could not itself subsist more than 18 Hours”. He writes: “But what will fame be

⁷ While these inscriptions were intended for the reader of Watelet's *Essay*, actual physical inscriptions also graced the lanes of the Moulin Joly according to F.M. Grimm, a reviewer of Watelet's just-published 1774 work. Grimm wrote of his garden visit that “we only noticed that the poetic inscriptions—which one comes upon with pleasure in the garden for which they were made—had lost much for being put into print, and are like fruit that is only pleasing if it is picked on the tree that produced it” (F.M. Grimm, 1877-1882, vol. 10, December 1774, 522), cited by Joseph Dispozio (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 83).

⁸ Benjamin Franklin's visit to the Moulin Joly is thought to have transpired on August 13, 1778.

to an *Éphémère* who no longer exists? And what will become of all History in the 18th Hour, when the World itself, even the whole *Moulin Joly*, shall come to its End and be buried in universal Ruin?" (Franklin, [1778] 1988, 430-35).

Universal ruin came a mere eight years after Franklin's visit, when Watelet died in 1786, and his beloved Moulin Joly was sold off by his mistress, Marguerite Le Comte, abandoning the dream-like vision that drew queens, kings, princes, and personages to its gentle shores. Marie Antoinette, who had visited the island on multiple occasions, brought along King Louis XVI in 1774, presumably to draw inspiration for her Hamlet, or *Hameau* at Versailles, constructed nine years later, in 1783.⁹ Prince Charles-Joseph de Ligne, one of Marie Antoinette's confidants, wrote an account of his own visit to the Moulin Joly, along with walk-throughs of his own and other picturesque gardens:¹⁰

One day, abandoning the vain whirl of the capital and following my own whimsy, I lost sight of Paris at Moulin Joli and found myself (possible only in Nature). Whoever you may be, unless your heart is hardened, sit down in a fork of a willow by the riverside at Moulin Joli. Read, look around, and weep—not from sadness but from a delicious feeling of sensibility. The panorama of your soul will appear before you. Past happiness (should you have known it), happiness to come, and the desire to be happy—a thousand thoughts revolving around this one thought, regrets, joys, desires, all will rush upon you at once. Struggles [...] your indignation [...] the heart [...] memories [...] the present [...] Go away, unbelievers! Reflect upon the inscriptions that Taste has placed there. Meditate with the wise man, sigh with the lover, and bless M. Watelet. (de Ligne, [1786] 1991, 188-89)

Other visitors to the Moulin Joly were Jean le Rond d'Alembert, François Boucher, Abbé Jacques Delille, Denis Diderot, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Hubert Robert, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Abbé de Saint-Non, Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Le Brun, George Sand, and Horace Walpole, which testified not only to Watelet's artistic and social standing, but to the rustic hospitality and charm of his *ferme ornée*, considered the first French picturesque garden exemplar.

⁹ In 1777, Marie Antoinette began the construction of her English garden, followed by her 1783 *Hameau de la Reine* (The Queen's Hamlet), replete with watermill, dairy and assorted farm buildings by architect Richard Mique and artist Hubert Robert. While not even a trace of Watelet's garden island remains today, Marie Antoinette's *Hameau* at Versailles may be considered the Moulin Joly's living legacy, inspired by her visits to Watelet's *jardin français* [sic], immortalized in his *Essai*.

¹⁰ I have borrowed Jennifer Carter's term "walk-through" to describe the virtual garden tours found in the mid-eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century garden literature (Carter, 2007, 205, 293).

Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Le Brun, like friend and fellow artist Watelet, invites the reader of her memoirs to roam the no-longer-extant Arcadian paradise, the Moulin Joly, remembering it with both joy and longing:

Ah! how I would have loved to go for walks with you in the wood at Moulin Joli! It was one of those places one never forgets, so beautiful, so varied, picturesque, Elysian, wild, ravishing! Imagine a large island covered with woods, gardens and orchards, cut through the middle by the Seine. The shores were connected by a bridge of boats, decorated along the sides with boxes of flowers, while seats placed at intervals allowed one to enjoy the balmy air and wonderful views a long while. The bridge, seen from afar with enormous poplars and weeping-willows, whose tender green branches reached down to the water like bowers. One of these willows formed a large vault beneath which one could rest or dream delightfully. Words fail to express the happiness I felt in that delightful spot, with which I have never seen anything to be compared. (Vigée-Le Brun, [1835] 1927, 107)

Within a few decades of Watelet's death, the Moulin Joly's twining rivulets were filled in, its stately trees downed, its eponymous mill demolished, and its whimsical bridges dismantled (Quénéhen, [1937] 2004; Conservatoire, 2007).¹¹ The view of Héloïse's former abbey across the water at Argenteuil, whose history Watelet joined to the romantic provenance and visual narrative of his island, was no longer reflected in the island's sentimental glow. The garden's arteries had been severed and its stolid mass anchored to the mainland. Nowadays a sports complex and gas station sprawl where its lanes once meandered. Not a stone of it remains; however, the picturesque garden ramble continues its traverse of history through text, image, and the evocation of sentiment.

¹¹ The Moulin Joly was put up for sale by Watelet's mistress Marguerite Le Comte only months after Watelet's death; however, due to its inflated asking price, it was purchased two years later, in 1788, by a Monsieur Gaudran, "a rich business man [...] who understood nothing of the picturesque", according to painter Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, who had wished to buy the Moulin Joly herself (Vigée-Le Brun, 1835, Lettre IX, 150; my translation). Madame de Sabran had also offered to buy the Moulin Joly, but was deterred by Marguerite Le Comte's exorbitant asking price. Sabran writes: "Madame Le Comte, who spent there many a happy day in the arms of love, considers it priceless, and would have me pay for all her pleasures!" (Watelet, [1774] 2003, 84). The demise of Watelet's Laurentine began soon after it was sold; its rivers were filled in in 1800, its trees felled in 1806, its mill dismantled in 1811, and the property divided and sold off in 1830 (Quénéhen [1937] 2004).

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LA FEMME SENTIMENTALE ET IDEALISÉE : MME DE TOURVEL DANS LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES

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ABSTRACT. *The Sentimental and Idealized Woman: Madame de Tourvel in Les Liaisons Dangereuses.* Madame de Tourvel, penned by Laclos, is created as a sentimental and idealized woman in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, a renowned libertine novel in the 18th century. Similar to other women in the high society of that time, she accepts an arranged marriage without love, does everything possible to follow her duty, and struggles against her love for Valmont. With much sensitivity for others, she does charity to the poor and respects religious principles and moral values. Between Valmont's life and her own misfortune, she surrenders to him so as to save his life and to guide him on the right path. After being abandoned by Valmont, she cloisters herself to repent and indulge in self-punishment. In this frenetically materialistic world, Mme de Tourvel embodies a female model who is sentimental and disinterested, and knows how to sympathize and give. In addition, the image of the president of Tourvel has edifying meanings to our current world, with her sensitivity, her sense of duty and her sincerity. After reading this novel, we wonder whether it is essential to focus on the moral level while pursuing material facilities and modern techniques. Shall we pay some interest in others and bring them sensitivity, tenderness and good grace while focusing on competition and self-interest?

Keywords : *Mme de Tourvel, sensitivity, libertine, Les Liaisons Dangereuses, love.*

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REZUMAT. Femeia sentimentală și idealizată: Doamna de Tourvel din Legături primejdioase. Doamna de Tourvel, sub condeii lui de Laclos, este înfățișată ca o femeie sentimentală și idealizată în *Legături primejdioase*, romanul libertin apărut în secolul al XVIII-lea. Ca toate celelalte femei din frumoasa lume apusă, ea acceptă o căsătorie de formă, lipsită de iubire, face tot ce poate pentru a-și îndeplini datoria și se luptă împotriva iubirii pe care i-o poartă lui Valmont. Având multă empatie pentru semenii ei, face opere de caritate pentru cei săraci și respectă principiile religioase și valorile morale. Între viața lui Valmont și propria nefericire, hotărăște că scopul ei va fi să îi salveze viața și să îl îndrume pe calea cea bună. Abandonată de Valmont, se izolează pentru a se căi și se autopedepsește. În această lume extrem de materialistă, doamna de Tourvel încarnează un model feminin care știe să împartă și să ofere, fiind în același timp sentimentală și lipsită de orice interes. În plus, imaginea președintei de Tourvel conține semnificații grăitoare pentru modelul nostru actual, cu sensibilitatea ei, cu sentimentul datoriei pe care îl are și cu sinceritatea sa. După ce am citit acest roman, ne întrebăm dacă trebuie să ne îndreptăm atenția către nivelul moral, urmărind beneficiile materiale și tehnice moderne? Sau trebuie să fim atenți la semenii noștri și să le arătăm înțelegere, compasiune și mulțumire, concentrând-ne pe sentimentul de competiție și pe propriul ego?

Cuvinte-cheie: *Doamna de Tourvel, sensibilitate, libertin, legături primejdioase, iubire.*

Introduction

Le roman *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782) de Laclos narre les aventures des deux libertins : Valmont et la marquise de Merteuil, qui ne croient pas à l'amour et entretiennent les liaisons plutôt pour les plaisirs charnels, au lieu du vrai amour. Autour d'eux, se reproduisent le libertinage, la noirceur, la manipulation et l'hypocrisie sans fin. À l'antipode de ces deux personnages, Mme de Tourvel, femme sentimentale et idéalisée, symbolise la vertu et les lumières qui éclairent les ténèbres provoquées par eux, procure l'effet pathétique au roman et joue un rôle éducatif dans l'œuvre. Au début, en faisant face aux poursuites de Valmont, elle le repousse et paraît déterminée à être fidèle à son devoir. Les bienfaits feints de Valmont l'ont beaucoup touchée, et les lettres de Valmont, quoique fausses, l'ont émue enfin, puisqu'elle est de nature sensible et bonne et croit à l'existence du vrai amour même d'un libertin. Ne pouvant pas se livrer à lui et l'accepter, elle fuit du château de Mme de Rosemonde en vue de rompre leur relation. Après, Valmont lui écrit des lettres qu'elle n'ouvre pas, cependant la seule présence des lettres devant elle peut la

rend perplexe et sensible. En feignant d'être malade et de vouloir retourner à la voie correcte, Valmont se rapproche d'elle sous prétexte de rendre ses lettres. En faisant face au chantage au suicide de Valmont, elle se livre à lui, en espérant ainsi le ramener dans la bonne voie et le rend heureux. Mais, Valmont, après l'avoir possédée, l'abandonne sous l'impulsion de Mme de Merteuil, femme libertine et hypocrite. Mme de Tourvel, désespérée, se ferme dans le couvent, tombe dans l'hallucination et attend la mort pour racheter les fautes. Valmont reconnaît ses erreurs, meurt après son duel avec Danceny et démasque l'hypocrisie de Mme de Merteuil en dénonçant ses lettres. À la fin, Mme de Tourvel meurt, en apprenant le décès de Valmont et avec leur mort, la marquise de Merteuil se démasque et perd la réputation devant le public et ces liaisons dangereuses sont ensevelies à l'aide de Mme de Rosemonde. Mme de Tourvel peut être considérée comme l'antagoniste de la marquise de Merteuil qui ne se soucie que d'elle-même, et qui agit, seulement en faisant référence à ses principes libertins. De nos jours, leur histoire peut nous procurer des instructions morales importantes et chez Mme de Tourvel, il y a des choses qu'on peut récupérer pour aujourd'hui.

La sensibilité et la bienveillance de Mme de Tourvel

Pour l'image de Mme de Tourvel, nous pouvons faire référence aux propos des autres personnages du roman dont la plupart lui portent le jugement favorable. Dans la lettre 4, Valmont parle des activités de Mme de Tourvel à la marquise de Merteuil : « Une messe chaque jour, quelques visites aux Pauvres du canton, des prières du matin au et du soir, des promenades solitaires, de pieux entretiens avec ma vieille tante, et quelquefois un triste Whist, devaient être ses seules distractions. » (Choderlos de Laclos 1979, I^{re} partie, L. 4, 17) ; Mme de Merteuil dépeint son personnage avec satire non sans jalousie dans la lettre 5 à Valmont : « Rappelez-vous donc ce jour où elle quêta à Saint-Roch, et où vous me remerciâtes tant de vous avoir procuré ce spectacle. Je crois la voir encore, donnant la main à ce grand échelas en cheveux longs, prête à tomber à chaque pas, ayant toujours son panier de quatre aunes sur la tête de quelqu'un, en rougissant à chaque révérence » (I^{re} partie, L. 5, 19) ; dans la lettre 103, Mme de Rosemonde écrit ainsi pour encourager Mme de Tourvel et la consoler : « Cependant ne vous découragez pas. Rien ne doit être impossible à votre belle âme ; et quand vous devriez un jour avoir le malheur de succomber (ce qu'à Dieu ne plaise !), croyez-moi, ma chère Belle, réservez-vous au moins la consolation d'avoir combattu de toute votre puissance. » (III^e partie, L. 103, 233) Leurs jugements nous esquissent une image sensible, bienveillante et sincère de Mme de Tourvel qui reçoit l'éducation dans le couvent comme les autres filles d'alors, se marie avec le président de Tourvel

selon l'arrangement de sa famille, et s'évertue à suivre les devoirs du mariage. Elle possède beaucoup de sensibilité pour les autres, prête souvent l'assistance aux défavorisés et gagne une bonne réputation avec les comportements admirables et affables dans le public. Baudelaire l'a qualifiée d' « une Ève touchante » ou de « type simple, grandiose, attendrissant » (Baudelaire 1939, 334). Peut-être, c'est en raisons de ces bonnes qualités qu'elle peut attirer l'attention de Valmont et le fait tomber amoureux d'elle, et c'est aussi à cause de ces « éloges » que Valmont la choisit comme « proie » et se met à la conquérir (il aime les obstacles dans la séduction qui peuvent prouver sa supériorité sur les autres libertins).

Pendant que le président de Tourvel est à Dijon pour un procès, Mme de Tourvel passe un certain temps dans le château de Mme de Rosemonde à la campagne, comme neveu de la dernière, Valmont rend visite à sa tante et rencontre Mme de Tourvel par hasard, sa beauté, sa gaieté, sa dévotion et sa sensibilité l'attirent et touchent son cœur longtemps blasé, dans la lettre 6, il révèle son amour pour Mme de Tourvel à Mme de Merteuil : « Mme de Tourvel m'a rendu les charmantes illusions de la jeunesse. Auprès d'elle, je n'ai pas besoin de jouir pour être heureux. » (1^{re} partie, L. 6, 22) Sachant que Mme de Tourvel est une femme vertueuse et dévote et n'est pas facile à vaincre, Valmont utilise tous les moyens pour la séduire. D'abord, il prend des mesures préventives : avouer sa vie de débauche devant Mme de Tourvel pour gagner de la sympathie avant que sa mauvaise réputation de libertin ne lui nuise auprès d'elle, et la prie de l'aider à retourner sur la bonne voie. Dans la lettre 21, Valmont raconte à la marquise ses bienfaits dans un village : payer les dettes d'une famille pauvre pour faire attendrir Mme de Tourvel et lui prouver qu'il n'est pas un homme irrémédiablement perdu, nous savons que les bienfaits, du côté de Valmont, sont la méthode de séduire sa proie, mais, du côté de l'héroïne, ils sont les preuves des actes d'un bon homme, ce qui accélère sa chute, ici, Mme de Tourvel, comme Clarisse de Richardson, semble beaucoup touchée de l'action de Valmont, ce qui est écrit par Mme de Tourvel à son amie Mme de Volanges dans la lettre 22 : « [...] c'est le projet formé de faire du bien ; c'est la sollicitude de la bienfaisance ; c'est la plus belle vertu des plus belles âmes : mais, soit hasard ou projet, c'est toujours une action honnête et louable, et dont le seul récit m'a attendrie jusqu'aux larmes. » (1^{re} partie, L. 22, 48) Ici, la sensibilité, la bonté et la bienveillance de Mme de Tourvel sont présentées de manière évidente, elle croit à l'action vertueuse de Valmont, même si Mme de Volanges lui dit beaucoup de mal de cet homme, elle loue cette belle conduite et raconte ce fait à Mme de Rosemonde. Il est à noter qu'elle est profondément compatissante envers les gens défavorisés, et propose de secourir cette famille pauvre ensemble après. De plus, elle trouve que Valmont fait la charité sans se

vanter et qu'il fait preuve de modestie dans cette affaire, sans savoir qu'il aide les pauvres par ruse dans le but de la conquérir, elle doit commencer à regarder avec les yeux différents cet homme qu'elle considérait comme dangereux auparavant.

La liaison de Mme de Tourvel avec Valmont et son décès pathétique

Après les bienfaits feints, Valmont déclare son amour à Mme de Tourvel et la prie de l'accepter, mais il est rejeté fortement par elle et la met en fuite dans sa chambre. Mais, à travers la serrure, Valmont peut épier ses moindres faits et gestes : « J'eus l'heureuse et simple idée de tenter de voir à travers la serrure, et je vis en effet cette femme adorable à genoux, baignée de larmes, et priant avec ferveur. Quel Dieu osait-elle invoquer ? en est-il d'assez puissant contre l'amour ? » (1^{re} partie, L. 23, 52) Mme de Tourvel ne connaît pas l'amour, la déclaration de l'amour de Valmont cause sa panique et la fait pleurer, sa grande sensibilité ne peut supporter les sentiments de Valmont, peut-être, elle l'aime déjà, mais déjà mariée, elle n'a pas le droit de l'aimer ni de lui répondre. Dès lors, elle évite des rencontres privées avec lui, tandis que Valmont commence à lui écrire des lettres pour la fléchir. Laurent Versini a révélé la virtuosité de Valmont pour séduire la présidente par les lettres :

Valmont sait bien que lorsqu'il s'agit d'une honnête femme, le temps, la réflexion, la relecture des lettres qui demeurent, jouent en faveur du libertin : contre des entreprises, elle est trop bien armée ; mais les mots des lettres, dans la solitude, pénètrent lentement sa conscience, et ses scrupules eux-mêmes, les tourments dont un mendiant d'amour alarme sa charité, l'orgueil de faire son bonheur succédant à l'illusion glorieuse de le convertir, désarment une femme réfléchie et loyale qui pèse les arguments de la mauvaise foi aux balances de la bonne. (Versini 1979, 156-57)

Valmont doit savoir qu'elle est de nature sensible et bonne, et les lettres d'amour sont plus efficaces pour la séduire que sa présence devant elle, puisque dans sa solitude, elle médite certainement sur les mots et les propos de ses lettres, nous pouvons en conclure que c'est à travers les lettres que Valmont la fait tomber amoureuse de lui. En plus, la marquise de M***, dans les *Lettres d'une Marquise de M*** au comte de R**** de Crébillon fils, écrit à son amant, comte de R***, que : « [...] à force de vous écrire que je ne vous aimais pas, je vins enfin à vous écrire que je vous aimais » (Crébillon fils 2010, L. 40, 133), le sort de Mme de Tourvel est semblable à la marquise de M***, elle finit aussi par aimer son séducteur Valmont et avoue ses sentiments pour lui dans la lettre 90 : « Ne craignez pas que mon absence altère jamais mes sentiments pour vous :

comment parviendrais-je à les vaincre, quand je n'ai plus le courage de les combattre ? » (III^e partie, L. 90, 200) Peut-être, c'est également en lui écrivant des lettres que la présidente est tombée amoureuse de Valmont, à proprement parler, c'est le temps qu'elle passe pour cet homme qui la fait désarmer. Pour éviter de rencontrer Valmont, la présidente fuit du château de Mme de Rosemonde et retourne dans sa maison à Paris, Valmont continue de lui écrire des lettres, tandis que Mme de Tourvel refuse d'ouvrir ses lettres et les fait retourner dans le dessein d'arrêter leur correspondance, mais, elle semble beaucoup bouleversée devant les lettres de Valmont, car c'est déjà difficile de renoncer aux nouvelles de son amoureux, dans sa lettre à Mme de Rosemonde, elle lui raconte ses tourments et sa peine de refuser ses lettres : « Hier encore, je l'ai bien vivement senti. Dans les lettres qu'on m'a remises, il y en avait une de lui ; on était encore à deux pas de moi, que je l'avais reconnue entre les autres. Je me suis levée involontairement ; je tremblais, j'avais peine à cacher mon émotion ; et cet état n'était pas sans plaisir. » (III^e partie, L. 108, 250) Elle n'ose lire les lettres de Valmont, mais la présence des lettres de Valmont devant elle peut l'agiter fort, elle ne peut contrôler ses émotions et devient la proie de la passion, face à ses lettres, elle semble faire face à leur émetteur, cela signifie que l'influence de Valmont sur elle atteint un tel niveau qu'elle ne peut plus se contenir. Dans le château de Mme de Rosemonde, Valmont feint d'être malade de sorte que sa tante fasse part de son état de santé à la présidente afin de lui causer de l'inquiétude et de continuer à la persuader de son grand amour pour elle, en réalité, il veut lui transmettre un message qu'il tombe malade pour elle ou il vit douloureusement sans elle. Puis, sous l'intervention du père Anselme, il se rapproche de Mme de Tourvel sous prétexte de remettre ses lettres et de renoncer à elle. Mme de Tourvel accepte de le voir, mais, en profitant de cette occasion, Valmont lui laisse faire un choix entre sa mort et sa vie. La présidente lui cède, en pensant que sa sacrifice lui procure du bonheur et fait revenir ce libertin dangereux vers la voie bonne et croyant à sa sincérité et à son amour pour elle, mais, cela n'empêche pas qu'il la trahit et l'abandonne sous l'impulsion de Mme de Merteuil, ce qui démontre vivement la grandeur de la présidente : elle agit de manière désintéressée et altruiste, et met les besoins des autres avant les siens.

Les combats de Mme de Tourvel contre l'amour pour Valmont dans les lettres

Dans ses lettres à Valmont, elle ne cesse de refuser Valmont, nous pouvons constater qu'elle refuse de recevoir ses lettres, de lui répondre et surtout d'accepter son amour. Au début, pour défendre son honneur et sa vertu,

elle dissimule sa faiblesse sous un air agressif devant lui. Dans la lettre 26, elle écrit que « je m'en tiens, Monsieur, à vous déclarer que vos sentiments m'offensent, que leur aveu m'outrage, et surtout que, loin d'en venir un jour à les partager, vous me forceriez à ne vous revoir jamais, si vous ne vous imposiez sur cet objet un silence qu'il me semble avoir droit d'attendre, et même d'exiger de vous » (I^{re} partie, L. 26, 57), dans cette lettre, elle se montre ferme dans sa position, son mariage avec M. de Tourvel lui est cher, elle ne veut pas le détruire pour poursuivre les plaisirs éphémères et dangereux de l'amour que Valmont veut lui faire partager. Dans la lettre 41, elle sollicite le départ de Valmont et craint que la présence de Valmont dans le château de Mme de Rosemonde ne nuise à sa réputation et au calme de son cœur : « Je désire donc que vous ayez la complaisance de vous éloigner de moi ; de quitter ce Château, où un plus long séjour de votre part ne pourrait que m'exposer davantage au jugement d'un public toujours prompt à mal penser d'autrui, et que vous n'avez que trop accoutumé à fixer les yeux sur les femmes qui vous admettent dans leur société. » (I^{re} partie, L. 41, 83) La mauvaise réputation de Valmont lui fait craindre sa sécurité et les opinions du public sur elle, Valmont, en tant que libertin reconnu, attire les attentions du public sur les femmes qu'il fréquente, ce qui lui est fort insupportable. Valmont accepte de quitter la maison de Mme de Rosemonde et obtient d'elle l'accord de la correspondance avec les lettres. Dans la lettre 43, nous pouvons trouver que Mme de Tourvel relâche la sévérité envers Valmont et éprouve de la pitié pour lui :

Encore si j'étais assurée que vos Lettres fussent telles que je n'eusse jamais à m'en plaindre, que je pusse toujours me justifier à mes yeux de les avoir reçues ! peut-être alors le désir de vous prouver que c'est la raison et non la haine qui me guide, me ferait passer par-dessus ces considérations puissantes, et faire beaucoup plus que je ne devrais, en vous permettant de m'écrire quelquefois. (I^{re} partie, L. 43, 88)

Dans la lettre 50, elle essaie de convaincre Valmont du danger du libertinage et lui réitère ses craintes sur l'amour et sa dévotion du mariage pour qu'il renonce à elle et arrête de lui écrire :

Vous-même, chez qui l'habitude de ce délire dangereux doit en diminuer l'effet, n'êtes-vous pas cependant obligé de convenir qu'il devient souvent plus fort que vous, et n'êtes-vous pas le premier à vous plaindre du trouble involontaire qu'il vous cause ? Quel ravage effrayant ne ferait-il donc pas sur un cœur neuf et sensible, qui ajouterait encore à son empire par la grandeur des sacrifices qu'il serait obligé de lui faire ? (I^{re} partie, L. 50, 102)

Dans ses lettres suivantes adressées à Valmont, nous pouvons constater que Mme de Tourvel commence à exprimer ses tortures intérieures envers la poursuite de Valmont et à ébranler la résolution de rester insensible aux sentiments de Valmont : « Pourquoi vous attacher à mes pas ? pourquoi vous obstiner à me suivre ? Vos Lettres, qui devaient être rares, se succèdent avec rapidité. Elles devaient être sages, et vous ne m’y parlez que de votre fol amour. Vous m’entourez de votre idée, plus que vous ne le faisiez de votre personne. Ecarté sous une forme, vous vous reproduisez sous une autre. » (II^e partie, L. 56, 114) Dans la lettre 67, elle semble sentir son grand amour pour Valmont et lui offrir l’amitié au lieu de l’amour, mais, c’est plutôt une forme de dissimulation émotionnelle, son amour pour Valmont augmentant de jour en jour : « En vous offrant mon amitié, Monsieur, je vous donne tout ce qui est à moi, tout ce dont je puis disposer. Que pouvez-vous désirer davantage ? Pour me livrer à ce sentiment si doux, si bien fait pour mon cœur, je n’attends que votre aveu ; et la parole, que j’exige de vous, que cette amitié suffira à votre bonheur. » (II^e partie, L. 67, 134) La lettre 78 démontre la tension intérieure de Mme de Tourvel qui est tiraillée douloureusement entre l’amour et la morale, toutefois, sa raison empêche sa chute et la protège du danger du libertinage : « Non, je n’oublie point, je n’oublierai jamais ce que je me dois, ce que je dois à des nœuds que j’ai formés, que je respecte et que je chéris. » (II^e partie, L. 78, 159) Dans la lettre 90, elle supplie son séducteur méchant Valmont de l’aider à interrompre cette liaison dangereuse, selon l’écriture de cette lettre, se révèle son état d’esprit trouble et désordonné, elle n’est pas capable d’arrêter d’aimer cet homme et de retrouver le calme de son cœur et la tranquillité de sa vie ancienne, ne connaissant pas le pouvoir de l’amour, elle s’y abandonne et en souffre beaucoup : « Ne vaut-il pas mieux pour tous deux faire cesser cet état de trouble et d’anxiété ? O vous, dont l’âme toujours sensible, même au milieu de ses erreurs, est restée amie de la vertu, vous aurez égard à ma situation douloureuse, vous ne rejetterez pas ma prière ! » (III^e partie, L. 90, 201) Ces lettres de Mme de Tourvel à Valmont illustrent une image complexe de l’héroïne qui ne pouvant pas aimer librement un homme et enfermant dans un mariage morne et ennuyeux, se débat contre elle-même, son propre amour et son amoureux, c’est pourquoi ces lettres qui semblent s’adresser à l’autre, possèdent les caractères innés de clôture sur elles-mêmes. En réitérant qu’elle ne l’aime pas, elle finit par avouer son amour et ne plus repousser Valmont volontairement, elle ne peut que s’éloigner de Valmont ainsi que limiter leur correspondance et leur rencontre. Nous savons qu’elle rentre même dans sa maison de Paris pour fuir cet homme, mais, à travers la ruse, Valmont se rapproche d’elle et l’obtient. Après s’être lui donnée, Mme de Tourvel surprend l’infidélité de Valmont et écrit la lettre 136 pour terminer leur aventure, toutefois, Valmont, en libertin virtuose, donne toute sorte d’alibis pour s’excuser et obtient son pardon. En

réalité, si nous analysons bien ses lettres, nous pouvons remarquer qu'elles, à l'exemple des lettres de Mariane dans *Lettres portugaises* de Guilleragues, sont écrites plutôt à soi-même, et ne tendent pas à créer les liens avec l'amant, mais plutôt visent à se persuader de l'impossible de son amour. Après être abandonnée par Valmont, elle écrit sa lettre dernière 161 qui semble être adressée à plusieurs personnages qu'elle fréquente : Mme de Volanges, Valmont, son mari, Mme de Rosemondes et elle-même. Alors, qui est vraiment le destinataire de cette lettre ? Cette question hante les chercheurs et nous ne pouvons pas lui donner une réponse définie, mais il y a lieu de croire que Mme de Tourvel qui s'adonne dans le délire ne sait plus à qui parler et en réalité se parle et s'écrit, ce qui démontre également sa grande sensibilité, c'est seulement dans son délire, elle ose porter ses plaintes sur ses amies, son mari et son amant, est-ce que uniquement de sa faute si elle pratique le libertinage ? Bien sûr que non. Après avoir dicté cette lettre, sa servante Julie lui demande le nom du destinataire de cette lettre, elle ne répond plus, elle doit savoir que cette lettre est une catharsis, mais pas une accusation vraie. Elle est si sentimentale qu'elle ne veut blâmer les autres même pas Valmont qui cause son grand malheur. En plus, la persécution de Mme de Tourvel par le libertin malveillant rapproche ce personnage de Clarisse de Richardson et rend ce roman de libertinage autant émouvant que le roman sentimental. Colette Cazenobe a pensé que Mme de Tourvel est créée en suivant l'image sentimentale de Mme de Clèves, elle a écrit que : « À la suite de Mme de Clèves, qui est, non la première, mais la plus prestigieuse, elles sont légion les héroïnes que l'amour rend malades, jusqu'à en mourir parfois. Mme de Tourvel perd la raison avant de perdre la vie... » (Cazenobe 1991, 402), dans les romans de l'époque, il existe la marquise de M*** de Crébillon fils, Mme de Sénanges de Dorat, Mistriss Fanni Butlerd de Mme Riccoboni, Julie de Rousseau etc. qui comme Mme de Tourvel sont toutes tombées follement amoureuses d'un homme sans pouvoir à la fois arrêter de l'aimer et l'obtenir sans obstacle et finissent par mourir de cet amour interdit.

Selon les combats de Mme de Tourvel avec son amour pour Valmont, nous pouvons constater qu'elle est à la fois sentimentale et raisonnable, et qu'elle possède ses propres jugements sur l'amour et les autres personnages, n'est pas crédule et naïve, veut le bien d'autrui et tend à guider les gens vers la voie correcte, cependant, très éprise de Valmont, elle sousévalue l'influence de l'amour, se livre à lui et cause son propre malheur. Mme de Tourvel symbolise une femme sentimentale et idéalisée du XVIII^e siècle dans la littérature française, car bien qu'elle soit de nature sensible, elle sait se protéger avec force et aider les autres avec raison. À la fin du roman, elle est morte pour son amour pour Valmont, mais avec ses propres efforts, elle expose les méfaits des libertins, en guidant les gens vers le bien et les avertissant du danger des liaisons dangereuses.

Un modèle idéalisé dans *Les Liaisons dangereuses*

Comme le titre de ce roman indique, ce roman relate les liaisons dangereuses des personnages, comme ce que Laurent Versini a écrit : « Quelle meilleure introduction au roman que de s'interroger sur son titre, qui en engage tout le contenu et tout le sens ? » (Versini 1998, 32) Ce monde plein de noirceur et de libertinage est mené par les libertins malveillants Mme de Merteuil et Valmont qui ne croient pas à l'amour, s'abandonnent dans la débauche et se jouent de la société pudibonde. Les gens qui ont des liaisons avec eux soit meurent de chagrin d'amour, comme Mme de Tourvel, soit ne portent plus de confiance à la vie mondaine et s'en enfuient, par exemple, Cécile qui se cloître dans le couvent et Danceny qui reprend son devoir religieux à Malte, ce qui signifie que les gens qui ont des relations avec eux courent un grand risque et n'obtiennent pas de bon résultat. Laclos, à travers les liaisons dangereuses de ces personnages veut prouver une vérité dans ce roman : contrairement au libertinage, c'est la vie conjugale qui importe le plus pour l'homme. De plus, Laclos dénonce la déchéance de l'aristocratie qui ne contribue plus au développement de la société et qui s'abandonne plutôt dans les loisirs et le libertinage pour dissiper l'ennui, et qui par conséquent, devient déjà le superflu du pays, Madeleine Therrien a révélé les rapports de la débauche des nobles et du déclin de l'aristocratie d'alors dans son œuvre *Les Liaisons dangereuses. Une interprétation psychologique* :

Sous Louis XVI, l'aristocrate a perdu sa raison d'être et parce que, par sa seule naissance, il ne peut plus affirmer sa supériorité, le libertin, qui ne représente, précisons-le, qu'une fraction de la noblesse, trouve un nouveau moyen de se signaler. Il entreprend une 'carrière' de séduction grâce à laquelle il pourra maintenir sa supériorité, qui va résider dans l'exercice du pouvoir de la volonté, au détriment de l'affectivité. (Therrien 1973, 9)

Nous savons que le dénouement tragique de ce livre prévoit la déchéance de l'aristocratie, et il est vrai qu'après la Révolution française en 1789, la bourgeoisie se substitue à l'aristocratie, c'est pourquoi Roger Vailland a qualifié ce livre de « peinture réaliste d'une classe sociale à la veille de sa chute. » (Vailland 1965, 138) Baudelaire a avancé que Mme de Tourvel incarne la bourgeoisie qui comme les nouvelles forces vainc finalement le vieux monde de l'aristocratie représentée par le vicomte de Valmont et la marquise de Merteuil. Michel Delon, dans *Le Savoir-vivre libertin*, a comparé les deux héroïnes du roman : Mme de Merteuil et Mme de Tourvel. Il a écrit que : « L'une revendique les privilèges masculins, elle se définit dans la similitude, l'autre croit à la différence et à la complémentarité

entre le sexe qui jouit et celui qui jouit de la jouissance de l'autre » (Delon 2000, 295). En effet, les deux femmes sont de milieux différents, noblesse d'épée pour la marquise, noblesse de robe pour Mme de Tourvel dont le mari est Président, la première est de noblesse supérieure plus ancienne et plus riche, le roman est dirigé par l'influence des deux femmes sur Valmont, Mme de Tourvel apprend à Valmont l'amour, la sensibilité et la charité, tandis que Mme de Merteuil le guide dans le libertinage, l'insensibilité et la tromperie. Valmont, tiraillé entre les deux personnages, doit beaucoup souffrir. Sous les conseils de Mme de Merteuil, il abandonne son amoureuse Mme de Tourvel, cependant, il trouve qu'il n'obtient pas de récompense promise par la marquise de Merteuil et est en réalité joué par elle. En conséquence, il est conscient finalement de l'importance de Mme de Tourvel pour lui. Nous savons qu'à la fin du roman, Valmont se tue pendant son duel avec Danceny et révèle le vrai visage libertin de Mme de Merteuil et cause sa chute, en livrant ses lettres à Danceny, puisqu'il sait qu'il ne peut se renouer avec la présidente qui se ferme dans le couvent, s'abandonne dans le délire et attend sa mort et qu'il perd déjà le désir de vivre. Nous pouvons conclure que dans le roman, Mme de Tourvel symbolise une image sentimentale et idéalisée qui avec sa sensibilité et sa bienveillance, apporte des lumières dans ces liaisons dangereuses et chasse la noirceur provoquée par les deux libertins.

La figure de Mme de Tourvel possède une grande valeur moderne, puisque dans la société actuelle où les désirs matériels prédominent, nous avons besoin de personnages altruistes, sentimentaux et sincères dotés d'empathie comme elle pour nous rappeler que le véritable bonheur se trouve dans le service aux autres. Elle est prête à renoncer à ses propres intérêts ou besoins pour aider les autres et prendre soin d'eux, c'est une vertu très valorisée dans de nombreuses cultures et religions, et souvent associée à des actes de courage, de générosité et d'altruisme. Dans un monde où la compétition et l'individualisme sont souvent valorisés, l'attention, la sensibilité et la bienveillance envers les autres personnes peuvent contribuer à constituer un environnement plus positif et harmonieux. Ses actions qui reflètent des valeurs telles que l'altruisme, la compassion, le respect, la tolérance, la justice, l'égalité et la paix dans le roman ont une portée universelle et peuvent être considérées comme des exemples positifs pour l'ensemble de l'humanité. Elles peuvent être inspirantes et capables de transcender les différences culturelles et géographiques, et peuvent encourager les autres à adopter des comportements similaires, contribuant ainsi à faire progresser l'humanité dans une direction durable.

Bien que Mme de Tourvel soit un personnage du XVIII^e siècle créé et idéalisé par Laclos dans une œuvre littéraire, ses qualités sont également applicables dans le contexte actuel plus complexe et embrouillé de la société.

Laclos, à travers elle, nous enseigne à l'entraide et à la collaboration et nous inspire à adopter les comportements meilleurs pour créer un monde plus humain.

Conclusion

Mme de Tourvel de Laclos, sentimentale et idéalisée dans *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, pousse la voix pathétique et élégiaque dans ses lettres qui ne disparaît plus dans le monde, qui existe encore et existera jusqu'à l'avenir, jusqu'au bout du monde et jusqu'au fond le plus doux du cœur de l'homme. Les femmes de son type sont nombreuses, comme la religieuse portugaise Mariane de Guilleragues, Paméla et Clarisse de Richardson, la princesse péruvienne Zilia de Mme de Graffigny et Julie de Rousseau... Elles, comme femmes, sont courageuses, sentimentales et désintéressées. Quoiqu'elles soient les images fictionnelles littéraires, elles peuvent servir d'exemple au lectorat dans la vie quotidienne et méritent d'être appréciées. À propos, à travers l'analyse de Mme de Tourvel de Laclos, nous pouvons conclure que quelle que soit l'époque, nous ne pouvons pas négliger le rôle du sentiment qui possède un grand pouvoir édifiant sur l'homme. Le XVIII^e siècle est considéré comme une époque des Lumières où la raison est mise en avant, cette période est marquée par un mouvement intellectuel qui met l'accent sur la science, la raison, la tolérance et la liberté. Néanmoins, cela ne veut pas dire que le sentiment perd sa valeur et est complètement ignoré ou négligé. Le sentiment, en qualité de contrepoint de la raison, traverse des milliers d'années, perdue dans le temps et peut toucher les lecteurs jusqu'au fond le plus doux de leur cœur.

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LA FABRIQUE DE L'HUMAIN. SENSIBILITÉ ET ÉPISTÉMOLOGIE DE L'HUMAIN DANS DEUX ROMANS FRANÇAIS DU XVIII^e SIÈCLE

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ABSTRACT. *Producing Humanity: Sensibility and Human Epistemology in Two Eighteenth-Century French Novels.* The eighteenth century is not only the Age of Reason but also a great age of feeling, in which sensations, emotions, feelings and affects redefine both the relationship between the human and the natural environment and the relationship between the self and the social, or the self and itself. If the “sensitive soul” shapes a new moral ideal, it also points out the importance of a human faculty which does not oppose reason, but complements it. In this paper I wish to explore the questions posed by the “rise of feeling” in the eighteenth-century French novel and the way in which it impacts upon a general understanding of the “human machine” and human nature. In this respect, I intend to propose a re-reading of two famous novels of the time, i.e. Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes* and Choderlos de Laclos’s *Liaisons dangereuses*. Based upon recent research on the history of sensibility and emotions, our study examines the way in which sensibility promotes new fictional forms and norms of emotional behavior intended to open a debate on human nature. The conclusion that I will draw is that the French novelists of the time, even those who seemed less “sentimental” (such as Montesquieu) or less “philosophical” (such as Prévost or Laclos), did not ignore the then contemporary philosophical debates on sensibility and human nature, but tackled them from a more experimental

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angle by imagining fictional characters whose disturbed sensibility served to question the limits between the human, the non-human and the inhuman.

Keywords: *sensibility, senses, feelings, human nature, Enlightenment, Montesquieu, Laclos.*

REZUMAT. *Fabrica umanului. Sensibilitate și epistemologie a umanului în două romane franceze din secolul al XVIII-lea.* Secolul Luminilor este, în egală măsură, o epocă a rațiunii și una a sensibilității, în care senzațiile, emoțiile, sentimentele și afectele ajung să redefinească nu numai relațiile dintre om și lumea înconjurătoare, dar și cele dintre om și grupul social sau dintre om și sine. „Sufletul sensibil” dictează principiile generale ale unui nou ideal uman și moral, iar sensibilitatea trimite la o facultate umană fundamentală care nu numai că nu se opune rațiunii, ci îi este complementară. Studiul de față intenționează să exploreze o serie de întrebări legate de „ascensiunea sentimentului” în romanul francez al veacului al optsprezecelea și modul în care ea își pune amprenta pe reflecția filosofică cu privire la „mașinăria” și natura umană. Pornind de la această idee, îmi doresc să propun o relectură a două romane celebre din epocă (*Lettres persanes* de Montesquieu, respectiv *Liaisons dangereuses* de Choderlos de Laclos). Luând drept punct de plecare cercetări recente în istoria emoțiilor și a sensibilității, voi examina modul în care sensibilitatea ajunge să modeleze noi forme și norme de comportament afectiv, precum și să inițieze o polemică cu privire la moralitatea și natura umană. Concluzia studiului este că majoritatea romancierilor francezi din epocă, chiar și aceia care par mai puțin „sentimentali” (precum Montesquieu) sau, dimpotrivă, mai puțin „filosofici” (precum Prévost sau Laclos), nu au ignorat dezbaterea contemporană cu privire la natura umană și raporturile ei cu sensibilitatea, însă au preferat să le atace dintr-un unghi experimental, prin intermediul unor personaje a căror sensibilitate „perturbată” servește la o interogație cu privire la limitele dintre uman, non-uman și inuman.

Cuvinte-cheie: *sensibilitate, simțuri, sentimente, natură umană, Secolul Luminilor, Montesquieu, Laclos.*

Introduction

Au dix-huitième siècle, la sensibilité est l'un de ces termes à la mode qui circulent, infusent les discours, marquent la pensée, bouleversent les attitudes et réforment les comportements, sans que le mot reçoive, pour autant, de signification trop précise². Héritant de tout un ensemble de discours, allant de

² Dans le premier volume de l'impressionnante *Histoire des passions*, on évoque le même flou conceptuel et notionnel lié à l'évolution historique du vocabulaire de la vie affective, en général, et aux distinctions entre émotions, sentiments et passions, en particulier (voir Corbin, Courtine et Vigarello 2016, 22-24, 28-30, 218). À partir de l'âge moderne, avec la révolution

la théorie antique des passions, du stoïcisme et du galénisme jusqu'aux nouvelles cartes mentales qui se dessinent à la fin du dix-septième siècle et qui assimilent cartésianisme, empirisme lockien, sensualisme philosophique, discours moral, réflexion médicale, physiologique ou psychologique³, le mot arrive à marquer un siècle qui est, en égale mesure, un âge de la raison et un âge de la sensibilité (Delon 2016 ; Launay, Mailhos 1984, 111 ; Darmon 2006, 471 ; Sauder 2007 ; Viala 2015, 375 ; Vila 2014, 1).

Dans la présente étude, nous nous proposons de reprendre les questions toujours épineuses de la sensibilité et de la « révolution sentimentale » du dix-huitième siècle⁴ pour les prolonger dans une nouvelle direction, celle d'une réflexion plus générale sur l'humain, la « machine » humaine, la moralité et la nature de l'homme (Ehrard 1994 ; Mauzi 1960). À lire les romans qui s'écrivent à l'époque, il est intéressant de voir combien la fiction de la sensibilité s'articule sur une réflexion plus ou moins évidente sur le fonctionnement de l'être humain, son comportement et même sa nature. Quelque désintéressée qu'elle puisse paraître à l'égard du débat philosophique alors en vogue, l'écriture de Prévost trahit une curiosité immense, de facture post-classique et presque clinique, à l'égard de l'être humain et de sa nature insondable. Le traducteur de Richardson en français a beau reprendre, dans l'« Avis de l'auteur » de son *Histoire du Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*, le topos si usité de l'utilité didactique du roman, ce que le lecteur retiendra, à la fin de sa lecture, ce ne sera pas « l'exemple terrible de la force des passions », comme l'auteur se plaît à dire, mais une sorte de moralité ambiguë des passions lesquelles, dans certaines conditions, arrivent à transfigurer l'être humain et à illuminer le morne prosaïsme de la vie.

Sous cet aspect, il nous semble essentiel que, pour arriver à comprendre en profondeur l'aventure du roman de l'époque, on évite des distinctions nettes du type « roman sentimental » ou « roman philosophique ». Quelques utiles que ces catégories puissent s'avérer dans une approche historique de la littérature française des Lumières, il n'en reste pas moins que leur réductionnisme est contraire à l'esprit de l'époque. Cela ne veut pas dire que nous refusons d'emblée de telles catégories. Cela veut simplement dire qu'au lieu de réduire la création

lexicale de l'« émotion », le vocabulaire affectif s'affine et se précise, sans nécessairement établir de frontières précises entre les contenus sémantiques de ces mots (Delon 2016, 16). Dans son *Traité des passions de l'âme* (1649), Descartes parle de passions comme des « émotions de l'âme » (Launay, Mailhos 1984, 112).

³ C'est au dix-huitième siècle que le mot *psychologie* commence à être utilisé dans l'étude des phénomènes mentaux et en rapport avec une « science de l'esprit ». Voir Vila 2014, 1.

⁴ « Des niveaux d'affect aussi se profilent, de l'émotion au sentiment, du sentiment à la passion. Rien d'autre en définitive, alors, qu'une inflexion nouvelle de l'espace intérieur conduisant à la 'révolution sentimentale' dont le XVIII^e siècle sera véritablement l'inventeur. » (Corbin, Courtine et Vigarello 2016, 218)

romanesque à une seule dimension, il serait plus prudent de ne pas l'amputer de sa complexité et que, si un romancier semble privilégier la dimension affective de l'aventure romanesque au détriment de l'aventure de la pensée, un tel parti-pris ne s'opère jamais de manière exclusive. Il l'est d'autant moins exclusif dans la fiction romanesque du XVIII^e siècle qui, même dans les moments les plus tendres et les plus palpitants de la vie affective, considère ces moments d'un double œil, à la fois pathique et analytique. On le voit même chez Prévost, l'un des romanciers les moins impliqués dans les polémiques philosophiques de l'époque et, pourtant, l'un des plus « philosophiques » par le questionnement brûlant qu'il ouvre sur la nature de l'homme, la liberté ou le bonheur. Nous avons déjà analysé ailleurs ses contradictions⁵.

En adoptant la même grille d'analyse pour aborder d'autres œuvres de ce siècle, nous aimerions poursuivre une hypothèse personnelle concernant la fiction romanesque française du XVIII^e siècle et la manière dont elle entend se positionner par rapport aux idées qui infusent l'imaginaire culturel et philosophique de l'époque. Dans quelle mesure la sensibilité participe-t-elle d'une réflexion philosophique plus générale sur l'humain, telle qu'elle se développe au dix-huitième siècle et, plus particulièrement, à l'époque des Lumières ? Y a-t-il des différences dans la manière dont les philosophes et les hommes de lettres voient le rôle de la sensibilité dans ce que j'appellerais la « fabrique de l'humain » ? Et, enfin, y a-t-il des stratégies et des méthodes propres à la fiction pour penser l'humain dans ses rapports à soi et à autrui, toujours à partir de cette question centrale de la sensibilité ? Voici une série de questions auxquelles, si l'on ne peut pas répondre ici en totalité, nous voudrions apporter une réponse en nous appuyant sur les deux romans évoqués.

Vie intérieure et forme épistolaire

Si nous avons favorisé, dans cette étude, Montesquieu et Laclos (avec *Lettres persanes*, d'un côté et *Liaisons dangereuses*, de l'autre), plusieurs raisons se trouvent derrière ce rapprochement au premier abord surprenant, car excluant d'emblée d'autres noms qui pourraient sembler plus évidents (Rousseau, certes, mais aussi Marivaux, Prévost, Madame de Graffigny, Isabelle de Charrière ou Madame de Genlis). Deux de ces raisons restent, pourtant, essentielles.

⁵ « Dans l'esprit philosophique du siècle, mais sans faire de Prévost ce qu'il n'est pas [...], on peut traduire le destin de Manon comme celui d'une interrogation sur la liberté et les contraintes, sur le désir individuel du bonheur et les conditionnements sociaux [...]. » (Bugiac 2022, 177) Les considérations d'Henri Coulet vont plus loin encore : « Les romans de Prévost sont une interrogation métaphysique sur la nature et sur le bonheur. » (Coulet 2003, 323)

La première raison concerne l'appartenance commune de ces deux romans à un genre qui connaîtra un essor exceptionnel à l'époque. Il s'agit du roman épistolaire polyphonique. Si les deux romans marquent définitivement l'histoire du genre, l'un pour l'avoir inauguré, l'autre pour l'avoir porté à son triomphe (Seylaz 1958, 15) (quitte à l'épuiser, selon certains critiques ; Lasco-Pop 1997, 50), ce n'est pas la valeur symbolique remplie par les deux romans dans l'approche historique du genre qui nous intéressera, mais une capacité singulière à refléter l'évolution des représentations littéraires du sensible et de la vie intérieure pendant plus d'un demi-siècle. Selon Jean-Luc Seylaz, c'est de cette capacité à dévoiler une intimité normalement cachée à l'époque que la forme épistolaire tire sa force et son pouvoir : « on comprend pourquoi le succès de la forme épistolaire est parallèle à celui du roman du sentiment : elle est un excellent moyen d'exprimer la sensibilité et la vie lyrique du personnage » (Seylaz 1958, 16). Roman du moi, de l'actualité et du vécu, le roman épistolaire fictionnalise une pratique discursive qui est alors omniprésente, celle de la correspondance véritable. Au XVIII^e siècle, l'art épistolaire se diversifie et se complexifie, en contribuant, à sa façon, à la construction du dispositif collectif des interactions sociales ; Benoît Melançon parle même d'une « Europe des lettres » (Melançon 2006, 824-825).

L'enjeu de la fictionnalisation de ce procédé mondain est, certes, celui d'obtenir la caution de la réalité, si convoitée par un genre en mal de reconnaissance tel que le roman se présente tout au long du XVIII^e siècle ; le prétexte de la correspondance trouvée permettrait au romancier de minimiser son rôle et de le convertir dans celui, plus acceptable, du rédacteur ou d'un simple éditeur. Néanmoins, l'effet d'authenticité mis à part, le succès foudroyant du roman épistolaire est redevable surtout à l'accès qu'il nous facilite à l'intériorité des personnages : non seulement les épistoliers rendent compte eux-mêmes de leur situation présente, mais aussi ils partagent avec leurs interlocuteurs des impressions, des jugements personnels, des confidences et, surtout, des émotions et des sentiments – le régime épistolaire est, par définition, un régime de la subjectivité mise à nu.

On sait combien les personnages libertins de Laclos joueront avec l'illusion d'authenticité promue par le discours épistolaire. Mais, jusque-là, rappelons le contenu thématique le plus souvent associé avec la forme de la lettre, en le résumant par le biais d'une triple formule : les lettres condensent, en général, des choses vues, des choses entendues (ou lues) et, surtout, des choses ressenties. Sans partager vraiment les mêmes intérêts ni donner le même poids à l'expression des sentiments, tant Montesquieu que Laclos font usage dans leurs romans de cette dimension affective et émotive de la lettre, qui sert à communiquer non seulement des pensées, des observations et des jugements, mais aussi des croyances, des sentiments, des émotions ou des perceptions.

Insistons aussi sur le fait que la communicabilité émotionnelle ne signifie pas nécessairement discursivité. Normalement duratifs, les sentiments reçoivent plus facilement une forme lexicalisée, tandis que les émotions, normalement de courte durée, plus intenses et désordonnées, œuvrant par le choc ou la « commotion »⁶, débordent souvent leur expression linguistique – lorsqu’elles ne l’annulent pas carrément, dans les plaintes, les exclamations ou les protestations de l’épistolier à l’égard de l’incapacité du langage d’exprimer le trop-plein affectif. De telles protestations font partie de l’arsenal convenu de la rhétorique des sentiments et des émotions alors en usage. On le voit dans les premières lettres des épouses d’Usbek, se lamentant sur l’impuissance des mots à témoigner de la souffrance provoquée par l’absence du mari : « Tu ne le croirais pas, Usbek ; il est impossible de vivre dans cet état ; le feu coule dans mes veines. Que ne puis-je t’exprimer ce que je sens si bien ! et comment sens-je si bien ce que je ne puis t’exprimer ! » (Lettre VII, p. 59).

Souffrance, accablement, abattement, irritation, adoration, malheur, désespoir, les lettres III (de Zachi), IV (de Zéphis) et VII (de Fatmé) jouent toutes sur le clavier et la gamme hautement colorée des passions violentes. Rien de simple, ni de pondéré dans la vie affective de ces femmes dont les « désirs » (le mot apparaît quatre fois dans les trois lettres, et trois fois uniquement dans la lettre de Fatmé) renaissent « tous les jours [...] avec une nouvelle violence » (Lettre III, p. 53). Tout est excessif et varié, dans le comble du bonheur ou dans les gouffres du malheur ; l’esthétique rococo (Laufer 1961) de Montesquieu prend plaisir à varier les courbes délicieuses des sentiments, à imaginer les arabesques affectives les plus surprenantes et à jouer avec les hauts et les bas du carrousel des émotions, quitte à nous élever jusqu’aux nues pour mieux nous plonger, ensuite, dans les affres du désespoir.

On le voit surtout chez Laclos qui, au lieu de décrire tout le tumulte intérieur vécu par la Présidente assiégée par Valmont ou par la même Présidente accablée et humiliée par la prétendue infidélité de Valmont, préfère laisser parler à sa place la syntaxe et la ponctuation des phrases : syntaxe brisée, désordonnée, outragée, à l’image du déchirement ressenti par la Présidente :

J’essaie de vous écrire, sans savoir encore si je le pourrai. Ah, Dieu ! quand je songe qu’à ma dernière lettre c’était l’excès de mon bonheur qui m’empêchait de la continuer ! C’est celui de mon désespoir qui m’accable à présent ; qui ne me laisse de force que pour sentir mes douleurs, et m’ôte celle de les exprimer.

⁶ Guillaume de Machaut parle d’un trouble de « machine », avec des manifestations corporelles ou physiques. Voir Vigarello 2016, 222.

Valmont... Valmont ne m'aime plus, il ne m'a jamais aimée. [...] Je n'ai pas le bonheur de pouvoir douter. Je l'ai vu : que pourrait-il me dire pour se justifier ?... Mais que lui importe ! il ne le tentera seulement pas... Malheureuse ! [...] (Lettre CXXXV, p. 532)

La rhétorique traditionnelle des sentiments mise en cause et abâtardie par son mésusage des libertins, c'est à la forme visuelle de la phrase qu'il revient de transposer l'authenticité affective. Amour, peur, tristesse, joie, colère, honte, toutes les formes primaires des sentiments et des émotions sont présentes dans les deux romans, déclinées ensuite par un éventail quasiment inépuisable de nuances et de variations. Or, si Laclos excelle en virtuose dans cette représentation infiniment nuancée de la vie affective, les personnages de Montesquieu possèdent, eux aussi, une complexité qui nous interdit de les concevoir comme de simples existences de papier dépourvues de vie intérieure, des personnages à thèse, à l'usage de leur créateur (Volpilhac-Auger 2017, 106).

Si l'on voit l'intérêt de la relecture de ces œuvres sous l'angle nouveau des passions et des émotions, il y aussi une deuxième raison pour notre choix du corpus. C'est qu'au-delà des particularités adoptées par les deux romanciers dans la représentation de la vie intérieure, il existe un dénominateur commun qui nous semble du plus grand intérêt : les deux romans imaginent des protagonistes avec des sensibilités perturbées.

Usbek, le protagoniste des *Lettres persanes*, évoque à plusieurs occasions sa « froideur » affective et même son « insensibilité » (Lettre VI, p. 57). Le lecteur peut passer aisément de vue de telles autoscopies affectives (d'ailleurs plutôt rares), concentré comme il devrait l'être sur les considérations sociétales, politiques et philosophiques dans lesquelles Usbek est plongé. La question qui se pose serait, pourtant, de voir dans quelle mesure cette pathologie affective arrive à marquer le personnage et même à expliquer, en partie, son échec final.

De son côté, la marquise de Merteuil, la protagoniste des *Liaisons dangereuses*, se fait le sujet et l'objet d'une dangereuse, éclatante et d'abord triomphante expérience physiologique et psychologique. À la manière d'une chirurgienne-pathologiste, elle se dissèque elle-même, examine ses perceptions et ses réactions physiques, afin de les diriger par la suite dans la direction voulue par elle. Par des exercices répétés, elle réussit à extirper ou, du moins, à dominer sa sensibilité par une rationalité exacerbée. Au-delà de la complexité psychologique extrêmement convaincante du personnage, on peut voir dans cette reconstruction artificielle de soi une fiction expérimentale dans le goût du siècle. Il s'agit pour Laclos de réfléchir, par le biais de la fiction, dans quelle mesure l'être humain peut (ou non) se définir par une rationalité transformée en « faculté maîtresse ».

La sensibilité, objet de discours et mode de vie

Au XVIII^e siècle, la sensibilité n'est pas uniquement un objet de discours. Elle est aussi un mode de vie, qui établit de nouveaux codes comportementaux et gère les interactions sociales. Même si elle prépare la voie pour cette autonomie du sujet qui constitue l'idéal humain des Lumières, elle reste inséparable d'une dimension sociale qui infléchit cette autonomie et représente son facteur de « régulation » (Nazar 2012).

Quant au mot, les fluctuations de son contenu (Delon 2016, 16) sont inséparables de la double approche qu'on a de la sensibilité à l'époque. Cette dualité devient évidente dès qu'on cherche le mot dans l'*Encyclopédie* de Diderot. De son côté, l'*Encyclopédie* n'ignore pas le nouvel objet de discours qui enflamme tant d'esprits et anime les âmes *déliçates* ; en effet, l'entrée *sensibilité* est bien présente dans l'*Encyclopédie*, plus précisément dans le quinzième tome. La surprise ménagée par le traitement encyclopédique de la sensibilité ne réside pas dans sa présence, à laquelle on s'attendait ; cette surprise est ailleurs, dans sa présence dédoublée. Il y a non seulement un, mais deux articles sur la sensibilité, en fonction du domaine de référence : médical, dans le cas du premier, celui de la philosophie morale, dans le cas du second.

Intitulé « Sensibilité, Sentiment (*Médecine*) », le premier article est rédigé de la main de « M. Fouquet, docteur en médecine de la faculté de Montpellier ». Bien documenté, avançant des hypothèses prudentes et regorgeant de références et d'exemples savants dans le goût empiriste de l'époque, l'article d'Henri Fouquet, médecin de profession, commence par définir la sensibilité comme la « faculté de sentir, le principe sensitif, [...] la base et l'agent conservateur de la vie, l'animalité par excellence » (Fouquet 1765, 38b). Les allusions à Descartes et à ses « esprits animaux » y sont évidentes, relancées, d'ailleurs, par un deuxième paragraphe où cette définition générale se trouve complétée par l'une proprement biologique : « La *sensibilité* est dans le corps vivant, une propriété qu'ont certaines parties de percevoir les impressions des objets externes, et de produire en conséquence des mouvements proportionnés au degré d'intensité de cette perception » (*ibid.*). Cette définition révisée donne le ton à tout l'article : désormais, il s'agira d'une faculté qu'a tout « corps vivant » de réagir aux impressions qui lui viennent de l'extérieur. La structure générale de l'entrée, divisée en deux volets inégaux, relève de ce positionnement du rédacteur en faveur d'une approche naturelle (c'est-à-dire, biologique) de la sensibilité : s'il est vrai que le premier volet, de nature plutôt spéculative, aborde les possibles distinctions entre la sensibilité (ou « l'animalité ») de l'être humain et l'instinct des « brutes » (ou des animaux), il est tout aussi évident que l'approche privilégiée est celle avancée par le deuxième volet, particulièrement « médical »,

dans lequel Fouquet se penche sur l'évolution de la sensibilité chez l'organisme humain selon différents stades de vie (y compris celui du fœtus) et sur les influences du climat, des conditions atmosphériques ou du mouvement des astres sur celle-ci.

Sans déconsidérer la dimension morale de la sensibilité, Fouquet préfère, pourtant, l'examiner d'un œil de clinicien. Son cas n'est pas singulier ; par là, il ne fait que suivre une tendance plus générale de son époque, qui tire profit à la fois des évolutions les plus récentes de l'épistémologie biomédicale et de cet engouement qu'on développe pour les expériences « de laboratoire » sur les organes corporels, les muscles et les systèmes anatomiques, en particulier sur les systèmes digestif et nerveux. Facilitées par la découverte de la circulation sanguine par William Harvey un siècle avant (*De Motu Cordis*, 1628), par le perfectionnement des techniques et de l'instrumentaire qui permet de multiplier les dissections (Salme 2021), par les expériences cliniques sur le fonctionnement des nerfs et, surtout, par ce tournant véritablement copernicien en matière de médecine (allant d'une médecine médiévale des essences vers une médecine moderne des symptômes, de souche anatomoclinique ; v. Durand *et al.* 2000, 137-179), ces évolutions sont redevables, elles aussi, de la coloration physique et corporelle reçue par la sensibilité au XVIII^e siècle.

Mais, déjà au milieu du siècle, l'enrichissement de cette connotation sensorielle par l'une morale est déjà de mise, signe qu'une conversion culturelle s'est opérée entre temps et que la sensibilité arrive à être perçue, en égale mesure, comme une propriété des corps vivants (y compris animaux et végétaux) de réagir à des stimuli extérieurs, et comme une faculté de l'âme, donc proprement humaine, une disposition intérieure à s'émouvoir et se laisser toucher. Rédigée par l'infatigable chevalier de Jaucourt, la deuxième entrée du mot *sensibilité* dans l'*Encyclopédie* retient précisément cette dimension morale de la sensibilité, vue comme une « disposition tendre et délicate de l'âme, qui la rend facile à être émue, à être touchée » (Jaucourt 1765b, 52a).

Il est curieux de voir que, si le mot *sentiment* est donné comme synonyme pour la sensibilité, ce n'est pas dans la définition morale de celle-ci, mais dans celle médicale. Le contenu sémantique du *sentiment* est, d'ailleurs, beaucoup plus indéfini que celui de la sensibilité : synonyme d'*avis* ou d'*opinion*, il devient une « règle de vérité » dans le cas du « sentiment intime » retenu par l'*Encyclopédie*, tandis que l'abbé Dubos parle d'un « sentiment intérieur » qui permet à l'homme de goûter aux œuvres d'art et de les apprécier. Quant au mot *passion*, proche du *sentiment* sans s'y confondre et plus en vogue au cours du siècle classique, il continue à circuler aussi pendant le XVIII^e siècle, progressivement concurrencé par l'*émotion* qui renvoie à une disposition douce et délicate de l'âme, donc plus conforme au goût du siècle. Pour revenir à Prévost, il a beau mentionner dans la préface de *Manon Lescaut* que le lecteur trouvera, dans le récit des aventures du chevalier, un « exemple terrible de la force des passions » : force est de

constater qu'il utilise un vocabulaire légèrement désuet (emprunté au registre de la tragédie classique) pour traiter d'une psychologie humaine moderne dont l'ambiguïté réclame non seulement des instruments d'analyse nouveaux, mais aussi un langage nouveau.

Si ce langage nouveau se cherche tout au long du siècle, oscillant entre un triple vocabulaire des passions, de la sensibilité et des émotions, une chose reste, toutefois, évidente. Au cours du XVIII^e siècle, le discours classique sur les passions (excessives, violentes et disruptives, donc négatives et dangereuses) se convertit progressivement en discours positif sur la sensibilité et l'émotion. Cette conversion modifie non seulement les discours, mais aussi les pratiques sociales. Dans son essai sur les larmes au XVIII^e siècle, Anne Coudreuse parle d'une véritable « épidémie affective » qui contamine le beau monde de l'époque et dont les manifestations visibles (et socialement acceptables) sont, le plus souvent, les « torrents des larmes » (Coudreuse 1999, 1). Si les larmes semblent privilégiées parmi les modes de manifestation de la sensibilité, c'est qu'elles constituent l'indicateur le plus immédiat et infaillible d'une authenticité de la vie affective qui n'entre plus en collision avec celle cognitive (comme les neurosciences et, en particulier, les recherches innovantes de Damasio (Damasio 2006) l'ont prouvé) et qui arrive même à se confondre avec la vie morale. Non seulement elles servent à faire déborder au dehors une sensibilité qu'on ne cherche plus à cacher, mais aussi elles deviennent un gage des « vertueuses qualités de son âme » (Coudreuse 1999, 1).

La rage de penser : entre excès et défaut de sensibilité

Lorsqu'on parle de sensibilité dans la littérature française du dix-huitième siècle, le nom de Montesquieu n'est, certainement, pas le premier à venir à l'esprit. La voix grave et réflexive de Montesquieu s'accorde mal avec le pathétisme délicat de Marivaux et encore moins avec les inflexions passionnées de Prévost ou les déchirements intérieurs de Rousseau. De Marivaux à Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, en passant par Prévost, Rousseau, Laclos et même Diderot, la sensibilité écrite, prescrite et transcrite se décline tout au cours du siècle, dans une exubérance affective et des ruisseaux de larmes qui nous font oublier, dans leur véhémence, quelques absences discrètes, mais importantes. Le nom de Montesquieu en fait partie.

Il y a, pourtant, plusieurs Montesquieu à découvrir dans ses œuvres, si on les prend dans leur ensemble et qu'on omette, pour une fois, de séparer chez lui œuvre littéraire, réflexion politique, écriture historique, essais scientifiques, pensées morales et lettres intimes. Convoqués ensemble et enfin réunis, tous ces avatars au premier abord distincts s'avèrent convergents, redéfinissant les

contours plutôt stables d'une conscience inquiète et réflexive, passionnée de lois, de structures, de principes, de raisons et de « causes »⁷, tout en évitant le dogmatisme et la rigidité du système explicatif au prix de ne pas pouvoir (ou vouloir) éviter les ambiguïtés, ni les incohérences. Il ne sera pas question ici de débattre ici la possibilité d'un Montesquieu sensible : elle existe, même si la sensibilité reçoit en association avec son nom une tout autre valeur que celle qu'on lui associe le plus communément aujourd'hui. À l'époque, le mot revient comme un synonyme de jugement : Montesquieu se montre *sensible* à l'injustice, à l'influence du climat ou, bien, aux leçons de l'histoire. La sensibilité de Montesquieu serait, ainsi, « masculine » dans le sens le plus traditionnel du terme, engageant philosophie morale, réflexion sociale ou analyse politique, en aucun cas des délicatesses du cœur, des épanchements émotionnels et – comble de l'horreur ! – certainement pas de larmes.

Il y a, pourtant, un Montesquieu passionné qu'on oublie parfois, un Montesquieu épris de sciences naturelles et d'histoire, passionné d'idées nouvelles et de débat, curieux et actif, « salonard » et fusionnant avec la vie intellectuelle et mondaine de son temps. Sa tempérance presque stoïcienne avec laquelle on est arrivé, parfois, à l'associer serait-elle une philosophie assumée avec conviction dans sa vie ou plutôt un effet de ses écrits – ou du moins, d'une partie de ceux-ci ? Le stoïcisme, les *Pensées* l'évoquent bien par leur modèle cicéronien, leurs réflexions sur la vertu, la justice ou les devoirs publics et par une nature fragmentaire qui rappelle des « exercices spirituels » réguliers. *De l'Esprit des lois* et la correspondance de Montesquieu sont encore plus explicites de ce point de vue : dans le Livre XXIV, comme dans une lettre adressée à Mgr Fitz-James le 8 octobre 1750, il arrive à Montesquieu de s'exprimer sur les Stoïciens et d'avouer son admiration pour les réflexions morales de l'empereur Marc Aurèle. Toutefois, comme Catherine Larrère le montre (Larrère 2003, 59-60), les rapports de Montesquieu avec le stoïcisme ne sont pas toujours transparents. Si la pensée de Montesquieu s'y ressourcement régulièrement, le stoïcisme reste un objet d'étude, faisant, donc, partie d'une « époque révolue ».

Dans ses réflexions postérieures sur le personnage imaginé dans ses *Lettres persanes*, Montesquieu avance une remarque qui a fait couler beaucoup d'encre et qui infléchit, de nos jours encore, le discours critique sur le personnage d'Usbek. Montesquieu avoue s'être plu à imaginer son personnage comme une projection de lui-même, comme un masque ou un alter ego qui lui permettait d'externaliser des convictions personnelles et, de cette façon, de mieux les analyser. Tout rationnel qu'il puisse paraître dans ses jugements sur la société occidentale,

⁷ Je pense, certes, à son célèbre essai de philosophie politique, *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* (1734).

Usbek n'est pas moins un personnage passionnel, comme un « Oriental » devrait l'être selon l'image qu'on s'en fait à l'époque ; il déclare lui-même être possédé par « une jalousie secrète » qu'il constate parfois sur un ton déceptif (« de ma froideur même, il sort une jalousie secrète qui me dévore », Lettre VI, p. 57 ; « la violente jalousie dont je suis tourmenté », Lettre XX, p. 84 ; « mon bonheur, mon amour, ma jalousie même ont besoin de votre bassesse », Lettre XXI, p. 87). Cette jalousie lui est reprochée aussi par ses épouses, comme dans la lettre LXII de Zélis, l'épouse la plus « philosophique », qui s'intéresse moins à la vie parisienne de son époux qu'à l'éducation de leur fille ou à la condition des eunuques : « tes soupçons, ta jalousie, tes chagrins, sont autant de marques de ta dépendance » (Lettre LXII, p. 161). La jalousie devient aussi l'agent thématique et narratif de l'histoire enchâssée d'Ibrahim et d'Anaïs (Lettre CXXI) qui, sous la forme parabolique d'un conte persan raconté à Rica par une « dame de la Cour », présente les dangers du despotisme politique. Rien ne nous empêche d'y voir une fiction où le sérail est une métaphore politique, un double imaginaire du sérail d'Usbek (lui-même un double en miniature de la Cour de Perse). Dans ce jeu de miroirs, une constante passionnelle : la présence de la jalousie.

Passion mâle ou virile, comme la vengeance ou la colère, la jalousie est normalement associée avec le désir de possession ou de jouissance égoïste de ses biens ; elle est aussi l'une des plus anciennes. Sa présence est constante dans les listes des passions établies par l'Antiquité ; Aristote et Cicéron la recensent tous les deux (Corbin, Courtine et Vigarello 2016, 19 et 67). Elle frappe tous les humains, rois et esclaves confondus, mais, bien maîtrisée, elle n'est pas forcément négative et donne une certaine grandeur aux chefs d'État ou de famille : « C'est pourquoi la jalousie (*zelum, aemulatio, invidi*), la colère (*ira*) et la vengeance sont parfois considérées comme des émotions positives quand elles servent à défendre et à laver l'honneur familial » (Corbin, Courtine et Vigarello 2016, 191). À partir de la Renaissance, on la retrouve dans le discours théologique, moral et médical, envisagée comme une pathologie spirituelle : sœur de l'envie, avec laquelle elle se confond parfois à l'époque, elle est envisagée comme une maladie dangereuse de l'âme. Dans son article de *l'Encyclopédie* consacré à celle-ci, Jaucourt la prend pour une passion morale et l'associe « avec des régions brûlées par les influences du soleil, et qui n'est pas inconnue dans nos climats tempérés » (Jaucourt 1765a, 439a), ce qui ne contrevient point à la vision même de Montesquieu liée au conditionnement climatique sur les « typologies » nationales.

Le problème, c'est qu'Usbek, normalement si pénétrant, est inconscient de l'emprise qu'ont sur lui ses propres passions. Sur cet aspect, Zélis se montre beaucoup plus perspicace : celle qui se pose des questions sur le sort que son esclave, Zélide, pourrait connaître auprès de Cosrou, l'eunuque blanc (Lettre LIII) est aussi celle qui va exposer à Usbek sa servitude provoquée par la jalousie. Or,

tout en étant le contraire de l'amour comme Usbek le constate avec lucidité (« Mais ce qui afflige le plus mon cœur, ce sont mes femmes. Je ne puis penser à elles, que je ne sois dévoré de chagrins. Ce n'est pas, Nessir, que je les aime [...]. », Lettre VI, p. 57), la jalousie d'Usbek est tout aussi « insupportable » que celle d'Ibrahim (« un homme, nommé Ibrahim, était d'une jalousie insupportable », Lettre CXLI, p. 311), car source de despotisme.

Si libre dans ses mouvements et si lucide à l'égard des courtisans persans ou français, de la marche du monde et même, dans certains cas, sur lui-même, Usbek semble étonnamment aveugle quant à son incapacité à maîtriser ses passions. L'irréfléchie Zachi le constate bien, elle qui plaint Usbek pour ne pas savoir être heureux : « il semble que l'amour respire dans le sérail, et ton insensibilité t'en éloigne sans cesse ! Ah ! mon cher Usbek, si tu savais être heureux ! » (Lettre III, p. 55). Au lieu de donner au protagoniste une grandeur « ataraxique » au sens stoïcien du mot, l'insensibilité dont parle Zachi le rend pitoyable et, paradoxalement, tragique. Celui qui franchit les frontières de son pays pour élargir « celles de nos connaissances » (Lettre I, p. 51) reste ignorant sur le fait que le bonheur est, lui aussi, une chose qui s'apprend.

Cette cécité fait partie de la complexité du personnage et « densifie » sa présence, tout en la rendant plus authentique et plus pathétique. Avant Des Grieux et certainement moins touchant, Usbek est un autre « exemple de la force terrible des passions ».

Dans le même article, Jaucourt qualifie la jalousie de « passion cruelle » et de « disposition ombrageuse » (Jaucourt 1765a, 439a). En effet, rien ne définit mieux le personnage d'Usbek que son caractère ombrageux ; Starobinski avait déjà remarqué le rapport presque psychanalytique qui s'établit entre les résonnances sombres du nom d'Usbek et le caractère du personnage⁸, construit sur le modèle du tempérament mélancolique, sans s'y conformer en tout point. Déjà à l'époque de la Renaissance, la mélancolie est associée à la jalousie, de même qu'aux manifestations exacerbées de la tristesse et de la peur, comme la crainte, l'anxiété, l'angoisse ou la terreur. Il est surprenant de voir Usbek, en apparence maître de soi-même, en réalité dominé par tout le spectre de la peur, depuis la crainte (le premier élément du champ lexical des sentiments qui apparaît dans le discours d'Usbek) jusqu'à la mélancolie noire dans laquelle il sombre à la fin du roman et qui lui fit perdre la raison : « Votre âme se dégrade, et vous devenez cruel. Soyez sûr que vous n'êtes point heureux. » (Lettre CLVIII, p. 348 ; v. aussi Stewart 2013, 38).

⁸ « Rien qu'au son des deux voyelles du nom d'Usbek [...] nous savons, par le jeu du contraste, qu'Usbek est l'homme sombre et méditatif. Quant à la lettre *k* par où s'achève son nom, elle augure mal de la fin de son histoire [...]. » (Starobinski 1973, 19)

Et, comme pour sceller définitivement la chute du personnage et sa descente aux enfers, l'évocation du bonheur revient sous la forme d'une absence. L'involition du personnage se voit aussi à un niveau moral et, par un effet curieux, la source de la dégradation se trouve dans un trop-plein cérébral. Plus Usbek accroît en savoir, plus son âme se dégrade et la cruauté s'expose avec force. Amputé de sa sensibilité, Usbek se transforme en monstre ; personnage « clivé », comme Starobinski le définit (Starobinski 1973, 28), il finit par ressembler à ces sultans qu'il compare à des monstres (« La puissance illimitée de nos sublimes sultans, qui n'a d'autre règle qu'elle-même, ne produit pas plus de monstres », Lettre XCIV, p. 221) ou à ces eunuques, qu'il se plaît à appeler de « vils instruments » (Lettre XXI, p. 87). Le refus de la sensibilité est une forme curieuse de castration et même d'émasculatation. L'être humain ne se réduit ni à sa ni raison, ni à sa sensibilité : il est l'une et l'autre, non l'une aux dépens de l'autre. Somme toute, la rage de penser est, elle aussi, une forme de folie.

Sur la table de dissection : la castration de la sensibilité

L'examen du personnage d'Usbek nous a conduit à une constatation paradoxale concernant la vision des passions au début des Lumières. Malgré un possible intertexte racinien, la chute de ce personnage insensible et incapable d'amour (car aimer signifie une perte du pouvoir à laquelle Usbek n'est ni préparé ni disposé) n'a plus les mêmes connotations que les chutes des grands rois et des grandes reines des tragédies raciniennes. S'il partage leur sort, Usbek est tout le contraire d'un personnage tragique racinien. Or c'est ici qu'on peut voir, déjà, l'aube d'une révolution en matière de passions et d'émotions : l'excès de rationalité peut conduire, lui aussi, à une catastrophe.

Dans cette dernière partie de notre étude, il nous revient de réfléchir brièvement sur un autre personnage romanesque de l'époque, plus tardif, il est vrai, et très différent d'Usbek, mais combien proche par une insensibilité commune de l'âme, associée avec une palette large de manifestations de la jalousie. Il est devenu un cliché critique que d'aborder la construction du personnage de la marquise de Merteuil, car c'est d'elle qu'il s'agit, par le biais d'une étude pragmatique de son discours épistolaire dont la complexité est doublée par une dimension métatextuelle. Mais, avant de devenir un être de parole, la marquise est un corps assujéti à une éducation exceptionnelle, qui donne au personnage une coloration curieuse.

Dans sa fameuse lettre autobiographique placée au bon milieu d'un roman qu'elle tranche en deux comme pour annoncer une expérience de séparation ou de dissection (lettre 81 dans un roman comptant 175 lettres), la marquise, d'habitude prudente et réservée sur elle-même, fait à Valmont un récit de son

passé. Les moments forts de ce récit sont ceux conventionnels pour une jeune fille de son époque, du moins jusqu'au mariage : les premiers moments de la révélation de soi (associée au double principe qui allait marquer sa vie, le plaisir et le secret), l'entrée dans l'adolescence, l'éducation, le mariage (la nuit de noces), le veuvage et l'initiation au libertinage.

Tout dans cette lettre se construit sur le principe du double. D'abord, c'est une lettre autoréflexive, où la marquise revient sur son passé, réfléchit à la manière dont elle est devenue ce qu'elle est et se regarde avec complaisance. Être narcissique et scopique, la marquise se définit le mieux par l'image du miroir : le réalisateur de cinéma Stephen Frears l'aurait parfaitement compris, lui qui place son film adapté du roman sous le triple signe du miroir, du plaisir et du calcul, surpris dans une coïncidence parfaite. Ainsi, la scène d'ouverture du film nous présente la marquise un matin, au moment de parfaire sa toilette et juste avant de faire son entrée sur la grande « scène du monde » ; elle se contemple longuement dans son miroir et les jeux de plans surprennent son regard transformé en source d'auto-jouissance érotique. Le film ne pourra, donc, s'achever que par le retour à l'image symbolique du miroir, cette fois-ci brisé par la même marquise qui, comprenant que le jeu a pris fin et que tout a été perdu, renonce à son maquillage et à son sang-froid ordinaire et se laisse transporter par un accès impulsif de rage.

On ne peut pas avoir de vision plus cohérente avec celle de Laclos. C'est, en effet, entre ces deux pôles, celui de la figuration de soi, du masque et du maquillage, et celui de la défiguration finale, entendue au sens propre de même que figuré (« Elle en est revenue, il est vrai, mais affreusement défigurée », Lettre CLXXV, p. 657), que le destin de la marquise se joue. Sans prétendre de faire de Laclos ce qu'il n'est pas, c'est-à-dire un philosophe, ne pourrait-on voir dans cette figuration-défiguration de la marquise un questionnement de l'écrivain sur la nature de la Nature ? L'échec final de la marquise serait-il l'échec d'une Culture qui, à trop s'imposer, finit par être rejetée comme une greffe étrangère ? Toute violence entraîne, comme par riposte, une violence nouvelle. La marquise échoue-t-elle à cause de son caractère d'anti-nature, de l'amputation par la force d'une sensibilité naturelle ? À refuser la sensibilité, devient-on un monstre ?

Ces questions restent et doivent rester ouvertes. En outre, la cruauté du personnage et sa monstruosité exposée à la fin du roman sous-entendent aussi une pathologie de nature : en se recréant « à [s]on gré » (Lettre LXXXI, p. 296), la marquise s'arroge une nature qui ne lui est pas propre. La rationalité et la volonté forte caractériseraient plutôt le comportement masculin, et non pas celui féminin, du moins selon les codes de l'époque (« je dis mes principes, et je le dis à dessein : car ils ne sont pas, comme ceux des autres femmes, donnés au hasard, reçus sans examen et suivis par habitude ; ils sont le fruit de mes profondes réflexions ; je les ai créés, et je puis dire que je suis mon ouvrage », p. 295). Viril et dominateur, l'esprit nietzschéen de la marquise condamne sans merci les

femmes « à sentiments » ou « sensibles » (on entrevoit dans l'usage original des italiques la marque de l'ironie à l'adresse du Vicomte) : « Tremblez surtout pour ces femmes actives dans leur oisiveté, que vous nommez sensibles, et dont l'amour s'empare si facilement [...] : imprudentes, qui dans leur amant actuel ne savent pas voir leur ennemi futur » (*ibid.*).

C'est dans la clé d'un procès monté contre la sensibilité, que la marquise condamne comme une forme d'assujettissement venant contredire la liberté du désir, qu'on doit comprendre la réinvention de soi du personnage. En effet, cette recreation personnelle (« je suis mon ouvrage ») passe par un travail volontaire et anatomique (au sens d'une anatomie métaphysique ; v. Vila 2014, 6) de désensibilisation. Dans la même lettre, la marquise évoque aussi sa double éducation, psychologique et intellectuelle, les deux placées sous le signe de l'expérimentation. Tout se tient dans la vie de la marquise, tout converge de manière nécessaire dans la direction de ce qu'elle est devenue au moment où elle écrit. Il n'empêche que cette impression de cohérence reste un simple artifice, un effet de lecture : c'est l'effet recherché par un scénario de vie que la marquise, être théâtral par excellence, entend écrire tant pour Valmont que pour elle-même et le lecteur.

Comme Usbek, mais d'une manière plus « schizoïde », la marquise est un personnage dissocié ou « clivé ». La singularisation du moi (« Mais moi, qu'ai-je de commun avec ces femmes inconsiderées ? »⁹, Lettre LXXXI, p. 295) et l'acquisition de l'autonomie passent, donc, par la dissection. La marquise est à la fois le sujet et l'objet de son expérimentation, tandis que le support de cette opération sur elle-même est son corps. Nous avons là la signification véritable du récit cumulatif et certainement glorifiant de ces expériences extrêmes de désensibilisation que la marquise, à l'âge de l'adolescence, s'inflige à elle-même : le but évoqué est celui d'une réforme des réactions sensibles conduisant à une dissociation schizoïde entre un moi faible et passif devant les stimuli extérieurs et un surmoi fort, capable de les contrôler : « Ressentais-je quelque chagrin, je m'étudiais à prendre l'air de la sérénité, même celui de la joie ; j'ai porté le zèle jusqu'à me causer des douleurs volontaires, pour chercher pendant ce temps l'expression du plaisir. Je me suis travaillée avec le même soin et plus de peine, pour réprimer les symptômes d'une joie inattendue » (p. 296).

Dans ce projet de reconquête de soi ou, du moins, de réforme de la loi de la nature pour la conformer à celle de la culture, projet en quelque sorte anti-rousseauiste, certains critiques ont pu voir une révolution sexuelle ou féministe avant la lettre. Ils ne sont pas loin de la vérité, si l'on considère les affirmations mêmes de Merteuil :

⁹ Iulia Mateiu a raison d'y voir un « je » qui s'attribue la « position haute » et qui « affirme sa supériorité ». Voir Mateiu, Pastor 2005, 167-168.

Si cependant vous m'avez vue [...] faire de ces hommes si redoutables les jouets de mes caprices ou de mes fantaisies ; ôter aux uns la volonté de me nuire, aux autres la puissance de me nuire ; [...] si j'ai su [...] attacher à ma suite ou rejeter loin de moi *ces tyrans détrônés devenus mes esclaves* ; [...] n'avez-vous pas dû en conclure que, née pour venger mon sexe et maîtriser le vôtre, j'avais su me créer des moyens inconnus jusqu'à moi ?
(Lettre LXXXI, p. 294)

Le martèlement des phrases offre une emphase particulière à la série de verbes se rapportant à la marquise, des verbes d'action et de cognition (« faire », « ôter », « savoir », « attacher », « rejeter »). Être de volonté selon David McCallam qui assimile la marquise à la modalité ontique du *vouloir* (McCallam 2006, 594), la marquise s'approprie une énergie mâle qui sert à absorber les deux dimensions évoquées de la virilité masculine (la volonté forte et le pouvoir) afin de s'extraire de l'état de subordination auquel sa condition de femme dans une société patriarcale la condamne. Proche de Valmont par une maîtrise admirable de l'art de la séduction, elle s'éloigne pourtant de lui par les connotations qu'elle prête à son libertinage. Comme Valmont, la marquise emploie, elle aussi, un discours chargé d'allusions à l'art militaire ; celles-ci se feront toujours plus évidentes dans la dernière partie du roman, où la marquise déclare la guerre à Valmont. Mais, dirigé dans la direction d'une guerre des sexes, le libertinage devient pour elle une arme de combat.

Une deuxième différence concerne les rapports étroits entre libertinage et soif de vengeance. Depuis son projet initial – de nature personnelle – de se venger contre Gercourt jusqu'au projet de vengeance collective qu'elle transforme en programme de vie, c'est un désir sans cesse renouvelé de vengeance qui définit le personnage de Merteuil et lui prête cette énergie qu'on pourrait qualifier de *masculine*. Porté dans l'absolu, le désir de vengeance s'attaque même à la Divinité, qui semble avoir prédestiné la marquise, en tant que femme, à un destin de subordonnée. Le personnage semble récupérer, ainsi, certaines nuances philosophiques et métaphysiques que le libertinage donjuanesque présentait chez Molière : en rivalité avec les hommes dont elle refuse l'autorité, tant sur son corps que sur son esprit, on la retrouve maintenant en rivalité avec le Créateur même de son existence, dont elle conteste les décisions, donc le « système ». *Désir de vengeance*, les deux noms sont à la fois distincts et indissociables chez la marquise : la vengeance a littéralement un goût, pour lequel Merteuil a un appétit presque sensuel.

En assimilant des principes qui rappellent dangereusement ceux de la philosophie des Lumières (rationalité, esprit critique, autonomie de pensée), la marquise a-t-elle vraiment réussi à devenir sa propre création, comme elle le prétend avec orgueil devant Valmont ? Ou plutôt, et cela avant l'expérience de Victor Frankenstein dans une autre fiction expérimentale appartenant à une

époque plus tardive, serait-elle devenue, justement par la castration volontaire de sa sensibilité, non une création, mais une « créature », l'exemplaire unique mais tout aussi monstrueux d'une race nouvelle, inhumaine ou non-humaine ?

Laclos ne tranche pas la question. Il lui suffit de la poser. L'échec de ce personnage (comme, d'ailleurs, celui, antagoniste, de ce personnage trop sensible qu'est la Présidente de Tourvel) ne signifie pas qu'il y aurait une réponse valide quelque part et qu'il faudra nécessairement la trouver. Il signifie tout simplement que la nature humaine est beaucoup plus complexe et plus mystérieuse que les étiquettes philosophiques, n'importe leur nature, nous invitent à croire. Et que, finalement, l'éveil de la Raison peut, tout aussi bien que son sommeil, engendrer des monstres.

Conclusion

« Interdire les passions aux hommes, c'est leur défendre d'être des hommes », affirmait D'Holbach dans son *Système de la nature* (D'Holbach 1820, 431). Au terme de cet examen commun de deux romans épistolaires du XVIII^e siècle sous l'angle de la sensibilité, quelques conclusions se dégagent. Les deux premières sont d'ordre formel et thématique, tandis que la troisième est proprement philosophique, au sens que l'époque prête à ce terme. Par l'incursion dans l'obscurité de la vie intérieure qu'elle facilite, la forme épistolaire adoptée par les deux romanciers permet au lecteur de mieux saisir les personnages dans leur complexité psychologique, de mieux sonder leur intériorité affective et de percevoir, dans certains cas, leurs contradictions. Même dans le cas de romanciers plus « philosophiques », comme Montesquieu, la sensibilité reste présente dans le récit, décline la gamme des sentiments et des passions et, ce qui est le plus intéressant, constitue le support d'une interrogation philosophique sur la nature de l'humain. D'un autre côté, même dans le cas de romanciers plus « sentimentaux », comme Laclos est perçu, le débat sur la nature de l'humain n'est pas, non plus, complètement absent. D'ailleurs, il reste présent dans les deux cas, tout en étant placé et déplacé à un niveau expérimental où, à travers un imaginaire de la sensibilité perturbée, on explore les limites entre l'humain, le non-humain et l'inhumain.

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SENSIBILITY AND PROGRESS IN MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT'S RATIONALISED "SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY"

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ABSTRACT. *Sensibility and Progress in Mary Wollstonecraft's Rationalised "Sentimental Journey".* Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) was an ardent believer in individual freedom and self-development; consequently, she frequently discussed the possibilities of women's education and self-reliance in her writings. Being rather reckless in her life, she was often *on the move*, not only searching for better life conditions but also following her own impulses in her critical reading. The motif of intellectual mobility features her educational writings, argumentative works, novels, and her last publication, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796) as well. In my paper, I will map the multiplicity of the concept of *mobility* and elaborate on the senses of escapism in Wollstonecraft's travel-letters, *moving beyond* Laurence Sterne's notion of "a sentimental journey" (*A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*, 1768). Moreover, in *Letters*, in her solitary walks and fanciful reveries, not only Wollstonecraft's inclination to the (natural and textual) sublime but also Rousseau's ideas on exercise and movement will be detected (cf. *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, 1782). On the one hand, my interpretation is contextualised by the late-eighteenth-century view on women's limitations of "sensibility", displaying the constraints the age demanded; on the other hand, I intend to place the travelogue in Mary Wollstonecraft's *oeuvre* and highlight the synthesising quality of the writing as a piece of "travail" and/or "a labour of love".

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REZUMAT. *Sensibilitate și progres în călătoria sentimentală raționalizată a lui Mary Wollstonecraft.* Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) credea cu tărie în libertatea individuală și în cultivarea sinelui. Prin urmare, ea vorbește adesea în scrierile sale despre educația și independența femeilor. Nesăbuită de-a lungul vieții sale, Wollstonecraft este adesea surprinsă în mișcare, nu doar în căutarea unei vieți mai bune, ci și în căutarea propriilor sale intuiții, când vine vorba de interpretarea critică a unui text. Motivul mobilității intelectuale apare adesea în scrierile sale despre educație, în lucrările sale filosofice, în romanele sale, dar și în ultima sa publicație, „*Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*” (1796). În acest articol, îmi propun să trasez multiplele înțelesuri ale conceptului de „mobilitate” și să discut în detaliu ideea de evadare prezentă în scrisorile lui Wollstonecraft, în încercarea de „merge mai departe” decât o face Laurence Sterne atunci când propune noțiunea de „călătorie sentimentală” (*A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*, 1768). Mai mult decât atât, vom identifica în plimbările singuratică și reveriile fantastice din „Scrisori” înclinația lui Wollstonecraft către sublim (atât natural, cât și textual), dar și ideile lui Rousseau despre mișcare și exercițiu fizic (cf. *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, 1782). Pe de-o parte, contextul pe care mă axez este cel al ideilor despre limitele impuse de vârstă asupra sensibilității feminine, care se fac cunoscute la finele secolului al XVIII-lea. Pe de altă parte, îmi propun să încadrez jurnalul de călătorie al lui Wollstonecraft în întreaga sa operă și să scot la lumină faptul că, prin prisma calității sale sintetizatoare, acesta poate fi înțeles ca fiind rezultatul unui „travaliu” sau a unei „osteneli a dragostei.”

Cuvinte-cheie: *femei scriitoare, Mary Wollstonecraft, sensibilitate, călătorie, sublim, Sterne, Rousseau, reverie.*

“[...]—and I—will become again a *Solitary Walker*.”
(Mary Wollstonecraft)

Wollstonecraft’s Mobility

In the long eighteenth century (1660s–1830s), “the proliferation of accounts of voyages and travels reflects the fact that this was an era of ever-increasing mobility” (Thompson 2011, 45). In addition to the so-called “Grand Tour” of the previous century, which basically meant an extended visit to young aristocrats who this way completed their education, learning languages and collecting socio-cultural and scientific experiences (sometimes also sensual ones), eighteenth-century middle-class travellers were supposed to follow their own paths and they

frequently recorded their *personal* accounts. Either travelling as tourists for leisure or as entrepreneurs upon business, the visitors were influenced by John Locke's empiricist *credo*; namely, "every step the mind takes in its progress towards knowledge, makes some discovery, which is not only new, but the best too, for the time at least" (Locke 2004, 7). In this case, for such travellers, the journey was also likely to become an inner expedition, being taken "as a metaphor, or a frame" for the formation of the modern identity (Kadushin qtd. in Pettinger and Youngs 2021, 4).²

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) was frequently *on the move* in her whole life. Searching for better life conditions, her middle-class family changed their dwelling several times; they lived in different parts of the outer London, in Yorkshire, and in Carmarthenshire. In 1778, she accompanied a widow as her paid chaperone at Bath and Windsor, and then she returned to assist her dying mother. In 1784, with her sister Eliza and her friend Fanny Blood, they opened a school in the outskirts of London (at Newington Green); in the forthcoming year, she had a short visit in Lisbon, where her married friend and her newborn baby died. In 1786, she moved to Ireland, working as a governess at the Kingsboroughs and she also travelled with the family back to Bristol. Having returned to London, she started to work for the publisher Joseph Johnson from 1788 and after the siege of the Bastille, in 1792, she travelled to Paris and lived there and also in Le Havre.³

Her restlessness can be presented not only on a social level and in her movements, but in the versatility of her writings. She tried her skills in different forms, shifting from genre to genre in her life-work. She wrote pedagogical handbooks to young girls (*Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, 1787 and *Original Stories*, 1788), edited a collection of readings to female readers (*The Female Reader*, 1789), she composed two novels (*Mary*, 1788 and *Maria*, 1798, unfinished) and politico-historical treatises (*A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, 1790; *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792, and *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution*, 1794). To earn her living, she published an immense amount of critical pieces in *The Analytical Review* (1788–90) and translated works to the publisher Joseph Johnson.⁴ The

² In *The Routledge Research Companion to Travel Writing* (2021), reading an abundance of scholarly and highly inspiring chapters, I can find only one reference to Mary Wollstonecraft and her fellow female travellers in the age, Sarah Hazlitt, Helen Maria Williams, and Dorothy Wordsworth. In the chapter on "Nature Writing," Paul Smethurst claims that those women travellers were likely to record "more intimate dealings with nature" (Smethurst 2021, 39).

³ See more about the details of Wollstonecraft's life in Tomalin (2012), Ferguson and Todd (1984); with a focus on her mobility in Favret (2002), Horrocks (2017) and Perkins (2022).

⁴ She translated Jacques Necker's *De l'importance des opinions religieuses* [*Of the Importance of Religious Opinions*], 1788) from French, Mme de Cambon's *Young Grandison. A Series of Letters*

present article focuses on her travelogue, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, written in 1796, when her existential self-realisation had reached its peak so that the work should be taken as a climactic moment in her mental quest. Having experienced the terror in France and been betrayed by her lover Gilbert Imlay, she travelled to Scandinavia to “pull her[self] from the fatal depression” (Favret 2002, 212).

Being a rather eclectic and impulsive thinker, Wollstonecraft’s mobility is also expressed by her flexibility with concepts. She knew and read the influential literary, philosophical and political writings of the age: her life is dedicated to self-development in her self-education. In her lifework, one can trace the influence of the so-called “philosophical fathers,” the empiricist John Locke, the naturalist Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the sensualist Edmund Burke. Their writings provided her with foundations of enlightened thinking she frequently relied on in the textual debates she published. In her political-educational treatises, and also in her reviews, she ardently criticised sensibility and defended common sense—*passionately*. As Mitzi Myers claims about this duality of hers,

pursuing reason with emotional intensity, privileging passion while reining in sensibility, subtending a brisk no-nonsense critical posture with self-referentiality, Wollstonecraft the feminist reader shapes the critic’s task to her own purposes and converts the bland fodder she reviews to nourish her own political aesthetics. [...] As woman critic and model to her readers, Wollstonecraft borrows the best of two discourses; appropriating reason, distinguishing true from false sensibility, she manages a stance and style that blend the languages of *reason and feeling* to her own humanist purposes. (Myers 2002, 94; my italics)

Before *Letters*, she published her Burke attack, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, written in response to a lengthy letter by Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). In 1790, a little-known lady novelist, editor and translator, Wollstonecraft undertook a very bold tone in her writing and, on the one hand, she called upon Burke to account for his earlier radical-liberal political views, and, on the other hand, in her allusions and digressions, the young Burke’s revolutionary aesthetic approach to the sublime and the beautiful was revealed. She mocks his rhetoric, frequently highlighting Burke’s feminine “theatrical attitudes [in] many of [his] sentimental exclamations”, and calling his shallow “pampered sensibility” as “the *manie* of the day” (Wollstonecraft

from Young Persons to Their Friends (1790) from Dutch, and from German Christian Gotthilf Salzmann’s *Moralisches Elementarbuch* (1783) under the title *Elements of Morality for the Use of Children* (1790–91).

1999, 6).⁵ In the name of human rights, she claims that reason should control emotions: "We ought to beware of confounding mechanical instinctive sensations with emotions that reason deepens, and justly terms the feelings of *humanity*. This word discriminates the active exertions of virtue from the vague declamation of sensibility" (Wollstonecraft 1999, 54). However, there are many similarities in the basic vocabulary of the two writings: after all, both authors borrowed a lot from the contemporary Scottish moral philosophers, David Hume, Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and Thomas Reid. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759-90), Adam Smith emphasises the role of imaginative sympathy in the development of sociability and civil society in the century and he labels the ability as the "social passion" of "fellow-feeling" (qtd. in Horrocks 7). O'Neill also discusses what is mostly echoed in the works of Burke and Wollstonecraft; namely that sentiments should work together with common sense, while taste and sensibility should play a role alongside with moral sense and manners in the development of the civilised and enlightened social human (cf. O'Neill 2007 and also Wetmore 2022). Meanwhile, as it has been claimed by O'Neill and G. J. Barker-Benfield, the eighteenth-century philosophical view of women, especially in the Scottish Enlightenment, "was central to the development of what is termed as the 'culture of sensibility'" (O'Neill 2007, 90).⁶

Sentimental Reveries in the Scandinavian *Letters*

I agree with Wendy Gunther-Canada that self-search features all of Wollstonecraft's writings and, as she claims, exactly "the quest of the female reader for wisdom and the power to govern herself that differentiates Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist theory from the works of the canonized forefathers" (Gunther-Canada 2001, 23). In 1795, moving away from her previous historical and political writings and also leaving behind England and the terror in France, Wollstonecraft started another journey, a brand new one: she sailed away to Scandinavia and she decided to publish her account in letter form. In her travel letters, the impact of different travel books can be detected in the mixture of the varied style that is coloured by her typical socio-cultural criticism; while in her strong tone, the questioning of women's public and social status is expressed.

⁵ In *The Analytical Review*, in the issue of August 1789, she published a short comment on a comedy titled *The Sentimental Mother*, in which she referred to "the fashionable cant of sensibility" as "the neglect of tender offices of humanity and important duties proves it to be a sentiment varnish or a present whim" (Wollstonecraft 1989, 152-53).

⁶ Originally, sensibility meant "the receptivity of the senses" and women were likely to have greater (common) *sense of sensibility*, with the capability of responding to stimuli more delicately and susceptibly (O'Neill 2007, 90).

The primary source was provided by Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), as his travelogue "pioneered new techniques for writing about the self, and for expressing the flux of inner thoughts and feelings" (Thompson 2011, 49). In the novel, the narrator Yorick differentiates several types of travellers. He labels them among others as "Idle Travellers, Inquisitive Travellers, Lying Travellers, Proud Travellers, Vain Travellers, Splenetic Travellers", and he himself exemplifies "The Sentimental Traveller" (Sterne 1986, 35). The latter type, instead of paying attention to the novelties he comes across in the visited places, rather focuses on himself, his own observations, reflections and feelings. Meanwhile, the readers are asked to identify their type, which provides "one step towards knowing" themselves; akin to the way how travelling itself can be regarded as a unique way of self-realisation and self-knowledge (Sterne 1986, 35). In Sterne's *Journey*, the sentimental tourist turns out to be the subject of his own travelogue, being "the 'egotic' traveller the century had consistently condemned as being inappropriate in nonfiction travel books" (Batten 1978, 80). Due to Sterne's ingenuity, his semi-fictional travel guide had become highly popular, its style was imitated immensely and his followers claimed that "the tour-writer must have strong feelings" (Combe qtd. in Batten 1986, 79).⁷ In her "Advertisement" of *Letters*, Wollstonecraft straightforwardly refers to Sterne's sentimentalism and Yorick's egoistic narrative:

A person has a right, I have sometimes thought, when amused by a witty or interesting egotist, to talk of himself when he can win on our attention by acquiring our affection. Whether I deserve to rank amongst this privileged number, my readers alone can judge—and I give them leave to shut the book, if they do not wish to become better acquainted with me. (Wollstonecraft 2009, 3)

Although she highlights the generic features of the fashionable guide books of the age⁸ and her introduction indulges in the first person pronoun, "the little hero of each tale" (borrowed from Edward Young),⁹ she promises an authentic book, providing "a just view of the present state of the countries" she has visited

⁷ Batten lists several of Sterne's imitators, such as James Douglas (*Traveling Anecdotes*, 1782), Lord Gardenstone (*Travelling Memorandums*, 1786–88), Samuel Paterson (*An Entertaining Journey to The Netherlands* 1782) and the above quoted William Combe in his "Rules for Tour Writing, in the True Modern Manner" (1803). See Batten (1978, 79–80).

⁸ In addition to Sterne's novel, Wollstonecraft recalls reminiscences of George Forster's and Hester Lynch Piozzi's travelogues she reviewed in the *Analytical*. See more about it in Leask (2019).

⁹ Eve Travor Bennet quotes the phrase in her chapter on letter-travelogues in *The Routledge Companion*, but Wollstonecraft's name appears only in the endnote (Bennet 2021, 119). Actually, the source of the quotation is Edward Young and his satirical work, *The Universal Passion*.

(Wollstonecraft 2009, 3). In contrast with Sterne's fragmentary travel narrative, Wollstonecraft's work is epistolary; she publishes her own letters written to Imlay. That is, while giving voice to "a witty or interesting [Sternian] egotist" in the accounts of sentimental-emotional adventures, she is also promising a thoughtful and thought-provoking travelogue *on her own*.

In 1795, Mary Wollstonecraft started her therapeutic travel after having returned from France in her disillusionment and immediately after her (first) suicide attempt. On the one hand, her journey was a mental cure, having been suggested by Imlay, on the other hand, she was asked by Imlay to enquire about two ships and regain some of his money from his business associates in Norway. Moreover, she sailed away with her new-born baby, Fanny, and a French nanny, Marguerite. Thus, even the reason of her travel and the circumstances were more complicated than the fictitious Yorick's leisure; mainly, she intended to escape from her emotional disturbances. In accordance, also echoing Sterne's sentimentalism, Mary Wollstonecraft gives the account of her emotional reflections while visiting Northern Europe. Her rhetoric is greatly influenced by "Sterne's characteristic dashes, broken statements, interruptions of sentiment, and general focusing on trivialities" (Batten 1978, 79), but she also questions the light-hearted and "saucily" quality of "a sentimental journey". In *Letters*, there is one textual reference to Sterne's work, to the Maria episode which exemplifies Wollstonecraft's overt criticism. In Tonsberg, in Norway, during one of her walks, she has a reverie ("I not gazed—and gazed again, losing my breath through my eyes") and her temperament is highly affected by nature:

With what ineffable pleasure have I not gazed—and gazed again, losing my breath through my eyes—my very soul diffused itself in the scene—and, seeming to become all senses, glided in the scarcely agitated waves, melted in the freshening breeze, or, taking its flight with fairy wing, to the misty mountains which bounded the prospect, [...]. My bosom still glows,—Do not saucily ask, repeating Sterne's question, "Maria, is it still so warm?" (Wollstonecraft 2009, 50)

She recalls Yorick's meeting with Maria, who has such a "warm heart" that she offered to dry the man's wet handkerchief in her bosom, while cooling her passion as well.¹⁰ The Maria episode is slightly misquoted but the overt sentimental (pitiful) and erotic tone of the original is mocked here: Wollstonecraft feels that she has to find her own way to subdue her agitation and control her emotions.

¹⁰ In *Letters*, it goes as "Maria, is it still so warm?", while in the original it reads: "—And where will you dry it, Maria? said I—I'll dry it in my bosom, said she—'twill do me good. And is your heart still so warm, Maria? said I" (Sterne 1986, 139). See more about the Maria episode in Weiss (2006).

The choice of the above mentioned episode is self-revealing, since the traveller admits that her passionate nature is even intensified by the sublimity of the natural surrounding:

You have sometimes wondered, my dear friend, at the extreme affection of my nature—But such is the temperature of my soul—It is not the vivacity of youth, the hey-day of existence. For years have I endeavoured to calm an impetuous tide—labouring to make my feelings take an orderly course.—It was striving against the stream.—I must love and admire with warmth, or I sink into sadness. (Wollstonecraft 2009, 50)

Mary Wollstonecraft emphatically presents the characteristics of the Sternian light-hearted narrative, his dashes and fragmentary statements, but with the help of (t)his rhetoric, she is able to display her inner struggles; this Maria/Mary is to comfort herself in her self-exploration (cf. Horrocks 2017). In her travelogue, Wollstonecraft goes beyond the experience of the Sternian artificial and superficial sentimentalism and, describing her feelings, she genuinely records her thoughts and philosophical meditations. In this practice, she was influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideas on solitude and wandering. In his *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (1782, op. posth.), he highlights the interconnectedness of his walking and thinking—solitude and meditation:

Having therefore decided that I would describe the habitual state of my soul [...], I could conceive of no simpler or surer way of carrying out my plan than by keeping a faithful record of my solitary walks and the reveries that fill them when I let my mind wander quite freely and my ideas follow their own course unhindered and untroubled. These hours of solitude and meditation are the only time of the day when I am completely myself, without distraction and hindrance, and when I can truly say that I am what nature intended me to be. (Rousseau 2011, 11)

From her early age, Wollstonecraft loved wandering in nature as it was commemorated in her first, rather autobiographical novel *Mary*, or even in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, where she refers to the freedom of the boyish girl, “a romp” (Wollstonecraft 1999, 110).¹¹ However, at that time, especially for women, reveries were condemned and solitude was suspicious of being opposed to the social skills, as Barbara Taylor observes (Taylor 2017, 219–21 and Taylor 2009). Wollstonecraft read Rousseau's work that was supposed to be the third part of his philosophical autobiography, *Confessions*. In a review of April 1790, she even evaluated the authentic voice of the second part, pointing out

¹¹ Although the Wollstonecraftian romp is a criticism of Rousseau's ideal lady Sophie, who is trained to be the perfect partner to Emile in his *Emile, or On Education* (1762). See more about it in Reuter 2017.

the struggles of the Swiss thinker and also highlighting the short happy period he spent on the island of St Pierre. There, "in his retreat he tasted again tranquillity", as she says, adding that in his mute admiration of the delightful prospects, in his "delicious reverie," Rousseau was able to find Deity (Wollstonecraft 1989, 234). In his *Reveries*, Rousseau describes his time spent in the island with a focus on his passion for botany since "the more sensitive the observer's soul, the more he delights in the ecstasy aroused in him by this harmony" of plants and flowers and he gladly allows his imagination to roam freely about "the gentle but sweet impressions" in its enjoyment of natural beauties (Rousseau 2011, 71–72).¹²

Similarly, emotional passages can be read in Wollstonecraft's *Letters*, when she allows herself to be lost in nature—like in the continuation of the Maria episode:

[...]— I pause, again breathless, to trace, with renewed delight, sentiments which entranced me, when, turning my humid eyes from the expanse below to the vault above, my sight pierced the fleecy clouds that softened the azure brightness; and, imperceptibly recalling the reveries of childhood, I bowed before the awful throne of my Creator, whilst I rested on its footstool. (Wollstonecraft 2009, 50)

But what makes Wollstonecraft's wandering in Scandinavia different from Rousseau's is that she mainly struggles to control her emotions and she rationalises her passionate impulses. Leaving behind false sentiments and imaginative reveries, even in her wandering of the epistolary form, she makes great efforts to phrase her female experiences and to display her process of self-exploration.

Self-Realisation in Rationalised Reveries and the Natural Sublime

In style and tone, the composition of the Scandinavian *Letters* finitely owes a lot to Sterne's and Rousseau's egoistic travellers but what is radically different is the female traveller's characteristic sensitivity in social and gender observations. However, as Nancy Yousef claims, the female traveller's "self seems protean", since "the narrator herself displays an inconsistent character: sociological observer and tour guide [...] poet of rocks and waterfalls and pines, critic of lives structured by the pursuit of profit, woman acutely aware of her own mortality, rugged traveller, insomniac" (Yousef 1999, 543). Truly, Wollstonecraft shares with the readers her meditations and solitary walks. Meanwhile, her character-forming and soul-searching can be followed in the rationalisation of her emotional outbursts. Being often overwhelmed by her feelings and also by the natural landscapes,

¹² I cannot help "reading" Rousseau's mania of botany as a Sternian hobby-horse, defining his character as being inclined to study small and delicate beauties of nature. In *Letters*, Wollstonecraft refers to the famous Swedish botanist, Carl von Linné (Wollstonecraft 2009, 27). On the naturalness of solitude in Rousseau, see Tánčzos (2018).

she records that her rhetoric fails her—in the Sternian manner but with a Rousseauvian depth: “I cannot write composedly—I am every instant sinking into reveries—my heart flutters, I know not why” (Wollstonecraft 2009, 75).

Regarding the dominant roles the traveller’s self manifests in the work, the socio-critical observer takes a strong part in the discussion of the national characters and gender standards in the Scandinavian countries. Wollstonecraft followed an intensive itinerary, visiting cities and the countryside in Norway, then in Sweden, and finally in Denmark. She provides rather exact and detailed observations—and also some awkward stereotypes—of the Northern European life-style as she visited farmers’ cottages, countryside manors, small and big cities, inns, museums, and palaces. In the conceptualisation of the national character, she is influenced by Rousseau (whose mother country she wishes to see and Scandinavia is said to display some resemblance to Switzerland), Godwin and Montesquieu. On the different national character, recalling Godwin’s ideas, she writes that “the natural, [...] on due consideration, will be found to consist merely in the degree of vivacity or thoughtfulness, pleasure, or pain, inspired by the climate, whilst the varieties which the forms of government, including religion, produce, are much more numerous and unstable” (Wollstonecraft 2009, 33). Accordingly, she pays attention to the political and social structures of the countries she visits, enquiring about the historical events of the Danes, Swedes and Norwegians that assist her to have a greater understanding of the present relations—in the Lockean spirit.

She states that the Norwegians are freedom fighters, “more industrious and more opulent” than the other nations in Scandinavia, also presenting them as “a free community” with “an independent spirit” (Wollstonecraft 2009, 32 and 41). Moreover, she finds some similarities between Norwegian and Irish history, although she also features the Northern character as “sensible, shrewd people with little scientific knowledge, and still less taste for literature” (Wollstonecraft 2009, 43). She even highlights some Utopian elements (in the style of More’s *Utopia*). Hence, in the house of correction in Christiania (Oslo), whipping is humanely abolished and slavery is taken as the greatest punishment. She remarks on their free press and religious tolerance, which makes her utter that “the inhabitants of Denmark and Norway are the least oppressed people of Europe” (Wollstonecraft 2009, 45). In Denmark, she sees that they lack graces but they started to translate German writings to achieve some improvement in “manners” and to acquire “finer moral feelings” (Wollstonecraft 2009, 71). When the oppression of the Irish comes to her mind, she criticises charity since, “acting like a demi-god”, one cannot provide their fellows a real solution in poverty; whereas she radically claims that reforms are needed, meditating upon her “favourite subject [...], the future improvement of the world” (Wollstonecraft 2009, 122). Being influenced by Rousseau’s political views, she attacks “knavery,” “an art of the statesman and swindler” that is

practised in "the adoration of property", which is "the root of all evil" (Wollstonecraft 2009, 106). In contrast with expressing her sympathy towards the Danes and the Norwegians, she condemns the Swedes due to their lack of taste in eating, drinking and entertainment. In addition to forming these stereotypes of the national character, she cannot help commenting on the first-hand sensory experience of hers; namely, the smell of "the putrifying herrings" that linger on during her Swedish days (Wollstonecraft 2009, 27 and 31, "herring effluvia").

Moreover, in her judgment of the national character, the female traveller does not only rely on her historical knowledge and socio-critical observations, but she also highlights the conduct of the two sexes and the treatment of women in the Scandinavian countries. Quite early does she enquire about the socio-economic and political situation when the host at an inn tells her that she is "a woman of observation" for asking him "*men's questions*" (Wollstonecraft 2009, 11; italics in the original). In all the three countries, she pays attention to women's manners, fashion and household duties; that is, the general suppression of the female sex. In Sweden, she is the bitterest when she criticises the values of the Swedish merchants, while she is moralising on such causes of bad marriages as lack of education and taste, early boredom, or too much drinking (Wollstonecraft 2009, 97–8). On the whole, she describes the men as "domestic tyrants" being indulgent in debaucheries and the women being interested in tasteless luxuries. She asks angrily:

I have every where been struck by one characteristic difference in the conduct of the two sexes; women, in general, are seduced by their superiors, and men jilted by their inferiors; rank and manners awe the one, and cunning and wantonness subjugate the other; ambition creeping into the woman's passion, and tyranny giving force to the man's; for most men treat their mistresses as kings do their favourites: *ergo* is not man then the tyrant of the creation? (Wollstonecraft 2009, 107)

She sees that women are only free and have pleasures in the interregnum between the reign of the father and then of the husband, mainly during the days of courtship (Wollstonecraft 2009, 108).¹³

While in her account of politico-historical and socio-cultural concerns, Wollstonecraft presents her rationality, the authentic source of her passionate emotions is provided by the beauties and the sublime of the natural landscape. Leaving behind her companions, she frequently rambles alone in the countryside, in the woods, at the coast and in the rocky mountains. In these poetic accounts, she frequently illustrates the description of the scenery with quotations from her favourite writers—she frequently cites Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Young,

¹³ Wollstonecraft refers to the Danish Queen Matilda's tragic love affair, which probably influenced her daughter, Mary Shelley who had given that name to her struggling heroine in her scandalous novel (cf. *Mathilda* 1819–20; op. posth., 1959).

Thompson, and Cowper. In her vital rock-climbing, she is able to move away from her inner feelings of melancholy and dejection; she is still lonely but she feels to be “part of a mighty whole” (Wollstonecraft 2009, 11-12). In Norway, she enjoys her wild seclusion in the woods as there she can focus on herself; it is like a therapy to gather herself before returning to society:

Whatever excites emotion has charms for me; though I insist that the cultivation of the mind, by warming, nay almost creating the imagination, produces taste, and an immense variety of sensations and emotions, partaking of the exquisite pleasure inspired by beauty and sublimity. (Wollstonecraft 2009, 62)

Listening to “the melody of nature” and “flying from thought to find refuge from sorrow in a strong imagination—the only solace for a feeling heart,” she is likely to conjure her phantoms of bliss (Wollstonecraft 2009, 67). She praises the beauty of the beech trees (though they lack the S curve, the “accepted” line of beauty) and she finds that the erect pine is sublime; the fertile and cultivated lands in the Scandinavian lovely summer with the “wild perfume” of nature even balances the odour of the herrings (Wollstonecraft 2009, 39).

She is also influenced by contemporary writings on the picturesque, the beautiful and sublime. In the *Analytical Review*, she wrote about William Gilpin’s *Observations* that discussed the enjoyment of the natural landscape, placing it mid-way between the sublime and the beautiful while the latter pair was famously contrasted by Edmund Burke (Brekke and Mee 2009, xx). In Wollstonecraft’s poetic reveries, imagination, taste, and emotions are combined, as she writes,

Nature is the nurse of sentiment,—the true source of taste;—yet what misery, as well as rapture, is produced by a quick perception of the beautiful and sublime, when it is exercised in observing animated nature, when every beauteous feeling and emotion excites responsive sympathy, and the harmonized soul sinks into melancholy, or rises to extasy [...]. (Wollstonecraft 2009, 39)

Wollstonecraft is disturbed by Burke’s rather Gothic taste in his aesthetic discourse, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), where the sublime “ought to be dark and gloomy, beauty should be light and delicate”; the great is “vast,” “rugged and negligent,” “solid, and even massive”, and “loves the right line”; while the beautiful is “comparatively small”, “smooth and polished”, and “should shun the right line,” the former providing pain, the latter pleasure (Burke 2004, 157). In her first *Vindication* (1790), she also refers to Edmund Burke’s differentiation of the feminine beauty vs. masculine sublime since he defines the sublime (cf. the great) as respectful and fearful while the beautiful as amiable and vulnerable: “We submit to what we

admire, but we love what submits to us," he says (Burke 2004, 147). According to Burke, to make an impact on the opposite sex, women *naturally* "learn to lisp, and totter in their walk, to counterfeit weakness, even sickness" (Burke 2004, 144 and qtd. in Wollstonecraft 1999, 45). In her second *Vindication* (1792), Wollstonecraft argues that the main problem with this Burkean sensualist or even libertine approach is that the idea of beauty is independent of reason, and reason does not attribute gender to virtue: "That Nature, by making women *little, smooth, delicate, fair* creatures, never designed that they should exercise their reason to acquire the virtues that produce opposite, if not contradictory, feelings" (Wollstonecraft 1999, 46; italics in the original).

Thus, in *Letters*, she deliberately mixes the sensations the scenery provides her, being "delighted with the *rude beauties* of the scene; for the sublime often gave place imperceptibly to the beautiful, dilating the emotions which were painfully concentrated" (Wollstonecraft 2009, 10). Instead of meditating upon the Burkean differences, she rather allows herself to be engulfed in her feelings. In her passionate natural descriptions, Wollstonecraft gets closer to the romantic-natural—the Wordsworthian and Coleridgean—notions of the aesthetics of sublime, moving beyond the Burkean and also being influenced by the dissenter minister, Dr. Price's idea; namely that in nature you can sense the presence of God, as she admits it (Wollstonecraft 2009, 84). In addition to Price's dissenter teaching, at the Radicals' meetings organised by the publisher Joseph Johnson in London, she had discussions with the two poets, which helped her reach a deeper understanding of the moral and divine greatness in nature (Tomalin 2012, 99). Due to her intellectual flexibility, Wollstonecraft was able to combine and fuse the different approaches, and, on her tour in Scandinavia, she reflected on them in her complex and emotional records on sublimity. The two most memorable sublime experiences are her visits to the two cataracts in Letters XV and XVII (which influenced S. T. Coleridge in the composition of his "Kubla Khan").¹⁴ She travels from Christiania by ferry to the cascade near Fredericstadt/Friedrichstadt and the sight makes her express her astonishment in a flow of ideas:

Reaching the cascade, or rather cataract, the roaring of which had a long time announced its vicinity, my soul was hurried by the falls into a new train of reflections. The impetuous dashing of the rebounding torrent from the dark cavities which mocked the exploring eye, produced an equal activity in my mind: my thoughts darted from earth to heaven, and I asked myself why I was chained to life and its misery? Still the *tumultuous emotions this sublime object excited, were pleasurable*; and, viewing it, my soul rose, with renewed dignity, above its cares—grasping at immortality—it seemed as

¹⁴ The young Wordsworth and Coleridge shared some notions with Wollstonecraft, since all of them advertised the great emotional and moral impact of nature on man (Wolfson 2002, 167). Wollstonecraft died before the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1797.

impossible to stop the current of my thoughts, as of the always varying, still the same, torrent before me—I stretched out my hand to eternity, bounding over the dark speck of life to come. (Wollstonecraft 2009, 89; my italics)

In addition to the uniting of pleasurable emotions and excitement, she also admits that the river seems to be peaceful and picturesque, which provides contrast with the “ruggedness of the scenery” in the deep valley. What is more emphatic that the sublime waterfall itself is not really described, since Wollstonecraft is rather immersed in her reflections and ideas on the greatness of the soul.

The other waterfall at Trollhätte near Gothenburg (in Kattegat) is presented more accurately. First, “the grand object” gives her disappointment but she later reaches “the conflux of the various cataracts, rushing from different falls, struggling with the huge masses of rock, and rebounding from the profound cavities” (Wollstonecraft 2009, 95). Here, again, the contrast is presented in the form of a picturesque island with firs so that she should be able to display the most sublime and passionate passages of *Letters*:

[...] one half appearing to issue from a dark cavern, that fancy might easily imagine a vast fountain, throwing up its waters from the very centre of the earth. I gazed I know not how long, stunned with the noise; and growing giddy with only looking at the never-ceasing tumultuous motion, I listened, scarcely conscious where I was, [...] for the huge grey massy rocks which probably had been torn asunder by some dreadful convulsion of nature, had not even their first covering of a little cleaving moss. There were *so many appearances to excite the idea of chaos*, that, instead of admiring the canal [...], I could not help regretting that such a noble scene had not been left in all its *solitary sublimity*. (Wollstonecraft 2009, 96; my italics)

That is the peak moment of her Scandinavian travels: she has experienced the greatest enjoyment a solitary wanderer can long for. In the description of the natural sight, she cannot even rationalise – she is overwhelmed by the power though she feels, she has to state for the sake of control, how unique the experience is.

In her own self-analysis, she admits that trapping the reader in “affectionate reveries, the poetical fictions of sensibility,” she is able to share her meditations and rational thinking on mankind (Wollstonecraft 2009, 90). In her solitary walks and reveries, Wollstonecraft attempts to find not only her own peace but she also wants to find her way back to her humanity. Visiting the simple and tranquil farms, she meditates upon the lost Golden Age of mankind:

The description I received of them carried me back to the fables of the golden age: independence and virtue; affluence without vice; cultivation of mind, without depravity of heart; [...]—I want faith! *My imagination hurries me forward* to seek an asylum in such a retreat from all the disappointments I am threatened with; but *reason drags me back*, whispering

that the world is still the world, and man the same compound of weakness and folly, who must occasionally excite love and disgust, admiration and contempt. (Wollstonecraft 2009, 86; my italics)

I agree with Deborah Weiss that Wollstonecraft has "created a new authorial persona in order to bring out the connections between feeling and thinking, between pain and politics, and between female victimization and the culture of sensibility" (Weiss 2006, 202). The unique quality of *Letters* is given by the "hybridized protagonist's" (Weiss 2006, 205), the narrator's melding of her emotions and her own efforts to understand her feelings in massive self-reflection. In an account with a gentleman, she praises man's ability to rely on his common sense and heart simultaneously, since sentiments are needed to feel sympathy but the combination of feelings and reasoning "has a higher source; call it imagination, genius" (Wollstonecraft 2009, 67). She thinks (and feels) that the latter one characterises her passionate endeavours in life: "[...] yet it is this very delicacy of feeling and thinking which probably has produced most of the performances that have benefited mankind. It might with propriety, perhaps, be termed the malady of genius; the cause of that characteristic melancholy which 'grows with its growth, and strengthens with its strength' [Pope ref.]" (Wollstonecraft 2009, 112).

Conclusion: On the Self-Actualisation of the Solitary Walker

According to Mary A. Favret, in her travelogue, Wollstonecraft frequently and "quietly hints at the *travail*, the work or suffering that lies beneath the word travel, even as it constructs an image of self-possession or independence" (Favret 2002, 213; italics in the original). In a sentimental framework, the letters are written by a woman in love (even her private love-letters sent to Imlay during the tour are appended in the collection), expressing Wollstonecraft's struggles to forgive the man who has betrayed her. After the Scandinavian voyage, the couple was supposed to be united in Hamburg, but they finally met in London, where Imlay turned out to live together with an actress. They ultimately departed and in her despair, Wollstonecraft had her second suicide attempt. Rather soon afterwards she started an intimate relationship with her radical fellow-thinker William Godwin, the future father of her second daughter, Mary. In this new love, she moved on and it meant the continuation of her rationalised emotional-sentimental life-journey, in the progress of her development to gain self-fulfilment with the vague possibilities of becoming "again a *Solitary Walker*" (Wollstonecraft 2003, 349).¹⁵

¹⁵ This statement also taken as my motto is from a letter Wollstonecraft sent to Godwin in the morning on 17th August 1796, expressing her fear of losing his love. Taylor also cites from the letter but she fails to give the correct reference and date of the letter (cf. Taylor 2017, 216–17).

Mary Wollstonecraft as a rebellious solitary walker does not only realise the gravity of her journey but she also reflects on the significance that she is female traveller, claiming that “when most of the struggles of an eventful life have been occasioned by the oppressed state of my sex: we reason deeply, when we forcibly feel” (Wollstonecraft 2009, 107). In their introduction to the Letters, Brekke and Mee sum up the novelties of the work, claiming that “the brilliance of *A Short Residence* lies in its exploitation of the language of sentiment, which marks an important change from the rhetoric of the vindications [cf. Wollstonecraft’s *Vindications*], but also in the way it combines the sense of a self responding to personal and political disappointment with a refusal to abandon her political and intellectual commitments, not least her concern with the condition of women” (Brekke and Mee 2009, xvii).

Nancy Yousef convincingly argues for Wollstonecraft’s enlightened understanding of her emotions, “drawing attention to the paradoxical connection between her dark preoccupation with human vulnerability to doubt and betrayal and her confidence in the possibility of authentic compassion, fellow-feelings, and trust” (Yousef 1999, 540). Truly, Wollstonecraft was influenced by the Scottish moralists’ ideas—particularly, by Hume’s and Adam Smith’s emphasis on empathy and sympathy—but, moving beyond false (Sternian) sentiments and in her rationalising of her own emotions, she displays the romantic struggles of the isolated self. The latter feature owes a lot to Rousseau, while the passionate descriptions of the wild scenery foreshadow Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s notions on the natural sublime. Moreover, in accordance with her intellectual mobility, wandering in nature and being engulfed in her self-reflection on the landscape and on the depth of her own mind, she is able to *sense* the common roots of sense, sensibility and sentiments: the sublimity of divine nature and human morality.¹⁶ As she claims in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*,

[...] for truth, in morals, has ever appeared to me the essence of the sublime; and, in taste, simplicity the only criterion of the beautiful. [...] But that it results from the eternal foundation of right—from immutable truth—who will presume to deny, that pretends to rationality—if reason has led them to build their morality and religion on an everlasting foundation—the attributes of God? (Wollstonecraft 1999, 5–7)

¹⁶ The famous Kantian maxim from his *Critique of Practical Reason*, summing up the sublime quality of human existence, comes to my mind: “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: *the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me*” (Kant 2015, 129; italics in the original). This closure can be an opening of another article dedicated to Wollstonecraft’s Kantian references.

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JANE AUSTEN'S *NORTHANGER ABBEY* AS A PARODY OF SENTIMENTAL AND GOTHIC NOVELS

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ABSTRACT. *Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey as a Parody of Sentimental and Gothic novels.* Jane Austen is one of the most outstanding British literary figures of the early nineteenth-century. In my article, I attempt to interpret her first completed novel, *Northanger Abbey*, regarding moral-philosophical, aesthetic and literary motifs. I would like to emphasize why it is advisable to read the novel both as a *Bildungsroman* and as a parody of sentimental and Gothic novels. In my opinion, in *Northanger Abbey*, Austen shows both the similarities and differences between sentimental and Gothic novels in such a way that she wants to break out of their usual patterns. In Austen's works, the heroines need to get to know new places and people in order to re-evaluate their perspective. In addition, they must learn to face their mistakes and their consequences. What makes the heroine of *Northanger Abbey* even more relevant for the proposed reading is that her personality traits are apparently created by denying the characteristics of the idealized heroines of sentimental and Gothic novels. Furthermore, from the way Jane Austen closes her story, we can conclude that she rejects the conventions of Gothic and sentimental novels and makes explicit the possible psychological reading of female Gothic novels and at the same time she rewrites romantic literature and even the conventions of the female Gothic novel ending.

Keywords: *Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey, sentimental novels, Gothic novels, Bildungsroman, parody, moral philosophy*

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REZUMAT. „*Northanger Abbey*” de Jane Austen: o parodie a romanelor sentimentale și gotice. Jane Austen este una dintre cele mai remarcabile figuri literare de la începutul secolului al XIX-lea britanic. În acest articol, îmi propun să analizez primul său roman adus la bun sfârșit, *Northanger Abbey*, din perspectiva motivelor sale filosofice, estetice și literare. Voi încerca să subliniez de ce acest roman trebuie înțeles atât ca *Bildungsroman*, cât și ca parodie a romanelor sentimentale și gotice. În opinia mea, în *Northanger Abbey*, Austen scoate la iveală similaritățile și diferențele dintre romanele sentimentale și gotice cu scopul de a depăși convențiile acestora. În scrierile lui Austen, eroinele sunt nevoite să întâlnească persoane și să vadă locuri noi pentru a-și interoga propria perspectivă asupra lumii. Mai mult decât atât, sunt forțate de împrejurări să își recunoască greșelile și să suporte consecințele. Ceea ce o face pe eroina romanului *Northanger Abbey* cheia unei astfel de lecturi este faptul că este înzestrată cu trăsături care se opun celor ce aparțin în mod tradițional eroinelor idealizate din romanele sentimentale sau gotice. În plus, din modul în care Jane Austen își aduce la bun sfârșit povestea, putem trage concluzia că ea respinge convențiile romanelor gotice și sentimentale și că face posibilă o lectură psihologică a romanelor gotice scrise de femei, dar și că rescrie literatura romantică împreună cu convențiile legate de modul în care se termină în mod obișnuit romanele gotice scrise de femei.

Cuvinte-cheie: Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, romane sentimentale, romane gotice, *Bildungsroman*, parodie, filosofie morală

Novel Genre Reviewer

Uncertainty surrounds the publication of *Northanger Abbey*. Austen wrote the novel in 1798-1799, and then sold the edition rights in 1803, but it was published posthumously only fifteen years later. Crosby, the publisher who bought the rights, changed their mind about publishing, which Austen complained about and corresponded with Crosby (Shield 2007, 176-78). There are possible reasons why the publisher shied away from editing *Northanger Abbey* after buying the rights. On the one hand, Crosby was the publisher of Ann Radcliffe, whose novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was parodied by Austen in *Northanger Abbey*. Thus, by publishing Austen's work, they would have undermined their market position. On the other hand, Austen openly criticized the neglect of women authors in the nineteenth-century century, which could easily have stirred up a lot of dust (Sélie 2015, 27-29). Austen's efforts eventually paid off, as she managed to buy back the rights to *Northanger Abbey* in 1816. However, not only the publication process of the novel but also its reception history is quite complex. The fact that it is not possible to clearly define its literary genre also makes this

novel a particularly interesting subject of investigation. *Northanger Abbey* can be read as a *Bildungsroman*, romantic literature, a realist novel, a novel of manners, a sentimental or Gothic writing, or a parody of the last two (Séllei 2015, 43). At several points in the plot, the novel's narrator revives what schemes she could use and that she instead creates something new, which is sometimes the opposite. So, it is as if she is constantly in dialogue with contemporary novel types and questions their conventions and clichés, radically rewriting them for herself within certain limits. In this way, a fictional space is created, which will become a habitable, homely space for the heroines of Austen's later novels, and in which the narrator no longer has to create her own novel model in opposition to other types of novels (Séllei 2015, 34). I read the novel as a parody of Gothic and sentimental novels, and also as a (female) *Bildungsroman*. That is why I would like to briefly explore the characteristics of these three novel genres and their relationship with women.

Sentimental literature spread in both poetry and prose in the eighteenth-century. Typically, sentimental novels do not seek to imitate the sense and direct experience but to embody feelings and artistic foresight. These fictions assert the supremacy (Braudy 1973, 5) "of the inarticulate language of the heart" over the ruse of social and literary forms and the articulate mind (6). They are mainly characterized by an emotionally overheated and refined style, often exhausted by mere rhetoric (Séllei 2015, 48). Sentimental novels reject established forms of intellectual self-awareness, as well as the formal literary refinements validated by tradition – just as they often attack socially potent, intelligent women for the benefit of those who do not live in public and who are characterized more by family devotion and spiritual depth (Braudy 1973, 6). Sentimental novels had a great impact on the concept of femininity. These novels, read mainly by women, have been blamed by many for setting ideals for their readers that favour an unhealthy, sensitive, and therefore sick female body, and for providing educational models that predispose women to live out their fantasies (Séllei 2015, 36). We can say that in *Northanger Abbey*, Austen reacts to the artificiality of sentimental novels with the destructive power of the ridicule. With the subversiveness of the ridicule, Austen's narrator gets rid of the inheritance she considers useless, but she carefully preserves some trifles (primarily from female writers) that may be useful to her later (Séllei 2015, 30-32), such as the negative characters typical of sentimental novels (47-48). We can read the following from Albert J. Rivero: "For Austen, the best kind of sentimental novel would be that which inoculates its readers against its potentially toxic effects by teaching them to read critically, with discriminating minds as well as feeling hearts" (Rivero 2019, 208).

Moving on to Gothic novels, not only Jane Austen's novel but also Ann Radcliffe's works can be seen as a bridge between sentimental and Gothic novels, too. As we can read from Nelson C. Smith,

Mrs. Radcliffe's novels: far from being an advocate of sensibility, she, like Jane Austen two decades later, shows its weaknesses and flaws. (...)Mrs. Radcliffe could take the heroines of the sentimental novels, expose them to the conventions of the Gothic novels, and thereby show the defects of the former. In doing so, she manages to have her novels both ways: she can evoke the (for her) pleasurable emotions of fear and terror and then expose the rational causes to show the weaknesses of the sensibility which had given in to those emotions. How she accomplishes these effects may be seen by considering Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines, by specifying her criticisms of sensibility, and finally by discussing her experiments with the Gothic mode, especially in *Udolpho*. Such considerations will show that Mrs. Radcliffe did indeed know and express, like her greater successor, the difference between sense and sensibility. (Smith 1973, 577)

One characteristic of early Gothic novels was that they tried to engage readers in new ways (Hume 1969, 284). According to Robert D. Hume,

In the sentimental literature of the age, one is invited to admire fine feelings; in Gothic writing the reader is held in suspense with the characters, and increasingly there is an effort to shock, alarm, and otherwise rouse him. Inducing a powerful emotional response in the reader (rather than a moral or intellectual one) was the prime object of these novelists. In this endeavour, they prepared the way for the romantic poets who followed them. (Hume 1969, 284)

The Gothic novel is a widespread genre of the eighteenth-century, which is closely related to the new world of taste that emerged in the second half of the century. The new taste can be more closely associated with romanticism than with classicism. The name of the genre comes from the fact that it opens towards the Gothic as an artistic trend. Gothic novels usually remove their action from contemporary England in both space and time. Mainly the haunted castles and abbeys of medieval (or supposed medieval) Italy and France serve as their background. Due to the dark secrets and violence found in them, Gothic novels can be seen as an antitype of today's horror stories (Séliei 2015, 28). Gothic novels also feature supernatural elements but there is only one significant Gothic novelist, the aforementioned Ann Radcliffe, who took pains to explain the apparent supernatural effects. For many readers, however, these explanations were more disturbing than valuable (Hume 1969, 284). Nelson C. Smith suggests that

For she takes the typical heroine of sentimental novels and, using the techniques of the Gothic novel, reveals how such a state of mind brings about many of the terrors which the heroine faces. The cure for such an attitude, Mrs. Radcliffe makes clear, lies in a return to common sense. (Smith 1973, 580)

The distinguishing feature of early Gothic novels was the creation and use of their specific mood and atmosphere. Engaging the reader's imagination is central to Gothic endeavours. This Gothic atmosphere has a mechanical effect even in the best Gothic novels, but it was originally intended to waken and sensitize the imagination of the reader and to give a greater scope than usual. Also, the use of supernatural elements was intended to stimulate the imagination, concurrently trying to elicit a strong emotional reaction from the readers, as Hume suggested (Hume 1969, 284). As we will see, the imagination of the heroine of *Northanger Abbey* is also fuelled by these novels (sometimes too much so). In her novel, Austen shows both the similarities and differences between sentimental and Gothic literature. For example, she emphasizes and mocks the inherited clichés of both genres, according to which a heroine must have a troubled fate, must deal with the cruelty of her father and the loss of her mother, and be radiantly beautiful (Séllei 2015, 36). In the very first chapter of *Northanger Abbey*, Austen makes it clear that none of these is true for Catherine, so we can wonder how she can become a heroine (Austen 1903, 5-7).

Now I would like to reflect on the *Bildungsroman* as a novel genre. From the thematic point of view, we can consider the following as the main characteristics of a *Bildungsroman*: society in a broader sense, self-education, childhood, conflict between generations, alienation, trials of love, the search for a profession and activities that are based on stable principles (Buckley 1974, 18). This genre focuses on the development of individuals, and the stages of development are built on each other in such a way that they all have their self-worth. The last phase is the one in which the given individual is already a responsible, mature person who has found their place and vocation in the world (Dilthey 1985, 390). The characteristic of the *Bildungsroman* is that it shows how certain people learn to control their emotions, instincts and desires so as to become respected and responsible citizens of their community. Initially, these novels had male protagonists, since completely different ideas about the education and development of women and men prevailed in the period under scrutiny: while men had to strive for rationality, women were expected to aspire to spirituality, thus not only redirecting their development but also limiting it. Women could not live a public life, and there were many fields whose gates were open only to men. In order to be successful, they usually had to rely not on their intellect, but on typically feminine qualities such as self-sacrifice or beauty. For a woman, to go through a similar development and upbringing as a man, she had to step out of the general

role assigned to her, which might have seemed a scandalous, rebellious act in the eyes of others (Deczki 2019, 103-04). Jane Austen was one of the nineteenth-century women writers who did not comply with traditional expectations. Her heroines go through stages of character development one by one by the end of their story. That is why we can call Austen's works (female) *Bildungsromans*.

Austen's Distinctive Writing Style

Here, I consider it relevant to note that during Jane Austen's time, issues of the history of the novel came into focus. We can think of the aesthetic debate centred on the sentimental novel associated with Richardson and the picaresque novel associated with Fielding, or the Wollstonecraft debate. In addition, the self-conscious female writers' novels were published in this period, and they received a controversial reception. Jane Austen is regarded by many as one of the translators of the novel literature paradigm. By this I mean that her novels cannot be classified under one genre. As already mentioned, she created her own novel model in opposition to other types of novels (Séleli 2015, 34). The conscious definition of Jane Austen's paradigm shift can already be detected in her first completed novel, *Northanger Abbey*, but her earlier shorter works also differed from the norm (Séleli 2015, 31-32). Mark Schorer claims that

by the end of the 18th Century, the novel had become a tremendously popular literary form without yet having become quite respectable. Like many of Jane Austen's characters, the novel finds a large part of its ancestry in "trade" or something lower, and readers, too, are not without their pride and prejudice. Jane Austen's own novels did much to free the form of the stigma of its humble origins. (Schorer 1956, 73)

He continues as follows:

Literature and a quiet life brought about Jane Austen's earliest literary efforts, composed when she was a girl in her teens for her pleasure and for that of her family. She chose first of all the path of literary burlesque, burlesque of that popular and sentimental fiction with which her whole family was familiar, of literary stereotypes and of irrational but possibly powerful clichés of feeling, of the whole emphasis on the importance of feeling unfettered by reason which was so much the substance of the sentimental novel at the end of the century. (Schorer 1956, 73)

Her best works strike a balance between comedy and sentimentality. It is as if the young Austen strove for her works to be entertaining and moving at the same

time (Shields 2007, 48). Looking at her entire oeuvre, we can say that Austen wrote elliptically and sophisticatedly, which testifies to the keen eye that she was able to observe the world around her and then depict it in a somewhat exaggerated way. Furthermore, we can discover in her writings some kind of mysterious superiority of children over their parents. MacIntyre argues that

her novels are a moral criticism of parents and of guardians quite as much as of young romantics; for the worst parents and guardians – the silly Mrs. Bennet and the irresponsible Mr. Bennet, for example – are what the romantic young may become if they do not learn what they ought to learn on the way to being married. (MacIntyre 2007, 239)

Jane Austen's early short stories differ from the first works of other writers in two important ways. On the one hand, because she always read them to her close family (so in a sense she made them public) and there was no trace of the secrecy and big confessions typical of young girls in any of them. On the other hand, her early works are characterized by a kind of continuity (Shields 2007, 48). However, Austen did not attempt to publish these short stories, unlike *Northanger Abbey*, which can appeal to two types of readers. On the one hand, we have the naive readers of romantic novels who are used to stereotypes related to a novel heroine and do not necessarily realize that the writer is parodying these conventions and them, too. On the other hand, the novel can also attract more sophisticated readers who reject the usual romantic novels and recognize parody when they see it. While the first type of readers may be confused by *Northanger Abbey*, the others may find themselves in a comfortable world based on shared beliefs. Austen not only invites her readers to join in refuting the conventions of sentimental and Gothic novels but also encourages them to establish a new type of novel based on psychological realism and probabilities (Wallace 1988, 262). Tara Ghoshal Wallace has observed that

she mocks and undermines her own chosen method – parodic discourse – so that both narrative and reader are kept off-balance. In working toward her own concept of what constitutes novelistic discourse, Austen makes the reader a participant, now perhaps colluding with, now perhaps resisting the narrator's evaluation of her own novel. The reader thus becomes not only a partner in the unfolding of the narrative, but also an opponent who struggles with the narrator for control over the text. (Wallace 1988, 262)

Due to the collision of genres, *Northanger Abbey* has been the subject of many critical reviews over the past two hundred years, and based on these reviews we can discover an implicit hierarchy of values, according to which parody is superior to romance because it exposes its excesses. The realist novel surpasses

both novels because it takes the events and attitudes of everyday life as its material and deals with human nature itself. This is why in *Northanger Abbey* characters like the Morlands, by not having presentiments of evil and not suffering romantic alarm are above those who act as “conventional” romantic heroines or villains (Wallace 1988, 269-70).

As I have already mentioned, Austen managed to buy back the rights to *Northanger Abbey* in 1816, but the novel was not published until 1818, after the writer's death. Many critics believe that it is most likely that between 1816 and 1817, Austen reworked *Northanger Abbey* somewhat in terms of style, as a significant part of the text is characterized by an indirectness that was a usual narrative device in Austen's writings after 1814 and this method was only used occasionally in her early works (Shaw 1990, 592). This can be one of the reasons why critics cannot reach a consensus on whether *Northanger Abbey* is more of a foreshadowing of Austen's later, more mature writings, or a kind of summary of Austen's oeuvre itself (Sélei 2015, 27). Narelle Shaw puts it as follows:

A form requiring considerable authorial finesse, free indirect speech is characterized by a number of reliable indicators. Syntactical choice of tense and pronouns is dictated by the constituents of ordinary indirect speech – past tense dislodging present, the first person pronoun ceding place to third. A character's idiom is audibly mimicked by the author who retains ultimate control of the operative passage. Jane Austen's use of inverted commas to designate such a passage clarifies her conscious choice of the stylistic form in preference to indirect speech. (Shaw 1990, 592)

This is also the reason why I believe it is important that the genre of the novel cannot be strictly defined. In particular, I would like to emphasize that Austen easily mixes the sentimental comedy of manners and the depiction of Gothic novels in her writing with her already mentioned indirectness. As we can also read from Narelle Shaw about *Northanger Abbey*,

a fundamental incongruity devolves around the uneasy coexistence of the novel's two sections: self-contained Gothic burlesque is grafted unceremoniously upon sentimental comedy of manners, the anomalous characterization of General Tilney throws into contrast the cast of rigidly functional two-dimensional characters, Jane Austen's tentative handling of Henry Tilney counters the adroit deployment of Catherine Morland, the relatively immature narrative point of view is compensated by the stylistic polish, the consistency and assurance of the comic tone. (Shaw 1990, 591)

These aspects clearly show Austen's deviation from the usual patterns. Isabella Thorpe's sentimental vocabulary is an excellent example of the sentimental comedy of manners:

They met by appointment; and Isabella had arrived nearly five minutes before her friend, her first address naturally was: "My dearest creature, what can have made you so late? I have been waiting for you at least this age!" [...] "Oh, these ten ages, at least! I am sure I have been here this half-hour. But now let us go and sit down at the other end of the room and enjoy ourselves. I have a hundred things to say to you." (Austen 1903, 37)

Austen parallels Catherine's two friendships. Isabella Thorpe is artificial and self-righteous, so her relationship with Catherine is mostly determined by these qualities. Elenor Tilney, on the other hand, is an honest, uncomplicated, sophisticated lady, therefore her friendship with Catherine is characterized by simplicity, sincerity and amiability. The narrator mockingly points out that this will make their contact with each other "uncommon" (Austen 1903, 82). Also, when Catherine uses expressions typical of some contemporary heroines, Henry points out how careless her use of words is (128-29). While Catherine's lively imagination is a parody of Gothic novels, since the heroine can easily imagine many things that she would encounter in a Gothic literary work. The divided work is set in different locations, and one can say that the two main locations of the novel not only play topographical roles but also function as semantic spaces. The location of the first half of the novel is Bath, a fashionable spa town, which was one of the authentic environments of British social life at the time and is also a great location for evoking sentimental novels. The second volume takes place in Northanger Abbey, which evokes the haunted cloisters of Gothic novels (Séllei 2015, 43). The two locations, although apparently sharply different from each other, are nevertheless somewhat claustrophobic places for Catherine. The heroine does not really have her own space in either Bath or the Abbey. In the former place the Thorpe siblings, and in the latter General Tilney are the ones who hinder her the most (Séllei 2015, 55). One can feel that the comic tone that the writer strikes in *Northanger Abbey* is both consistent and confident (Shaw 1990, 591-92). In the words of MacIntyre,

Jane Austen's moral point of view and the narrative form of her novels coincide. The form of her novels is that of ironic comedy [...] Her irony resides in the way that she makes her characters, and her readers see and say more and other than they intended to, so that they and we correct ourselves. The virtues and the harms and evils which the virtues alone will overcome provide the structure both of a life in which the *telos* can be achieved and of a narrative in which the story of such a life can be unfolded. (MacIntyre 2007, 243; emphasis in the original).

Austen uses an authorial narrative situation in her novels. The heterodiegetic narratorial voice she strikes is specifically self-reflective and through it she

makes it easier for us, as readers, to perceive the irony inherent in her stories, including the extent to which some of her characters can converse without understanding each other's true intentions.

Austen, the Emphasis on Self-knowledge and the Relevance of Good Novels

In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction, we can find plenty of examples of the refreshing effect a trip could have due to the much more limited circumstances compared to today, and these restrictions were sometimes even more true for young girls. We can also look at Jane Austen's novels as such precedents, especially at her first completed novel, *Northanger Abbey*. In my opinion, Catherine's physical journey and her moral development take place in parallel: both are the consequence of, and criterion for, the other. As MacIntyre points out, the writer attributes a key role in her stories to Christian self-knowledge, which leads to the path of repentant behaviour. A recurring moment in her novels is when the heroines come to recognise themselves. All of this is significant because, apparently, for Austen, self-knowledge is both a moral and an intellectual virtue (MacIntyre 2007, 241). That is why I think it is advisable to read her works, including *Northanger Abbey*, as *Bildungsromans*. In Austen's works, the heroines need to get to know new places and people in order to re-evaluate their perspective. In addition, they must learn to face their mistakes and their consequences. The great character development that her heroines go through is not linked to a specific journey in any of them, as is for the heroine of her first completed novel, *Northanger Abbey*. Nothing could prove this better than the fact that the heroine is away from home for most of the story. Catherine's travel experience, be it real or imaginary, is particularly important. I am thinking of Catherine's actual physical journey, the adventures inspired by her reading of fiction and her subsequent spiritual and moral journey. I believe that "being on the road" is not only a metaphor for the character development of the heroine but also one of the conditions of virtue in Austen's sense. In my interpretation, the fact that Catherine is only in her family home at the very beginning and the very end of the novel frames the physical and mental journey she takes throughout the story. After she comes back, she is no longer the unguarded creature that was let out. What makes the heroine of *Northanger Abbey* even more interesting is that her personality traits are developed by denying the characteristics of the idealized heroines of sentimental and Gothic novels (Séllei 2015, 35). One of the central questions of the novel is what makes a heroine a heroine, and how much Catherine does not meet the expectations that were usually set for a heroine at the beginning of the nineteenth-century. On the one hand, the self-reflective

narrator draws our attention to this point on several occasions and, on the other hand, the male protagonist of the story, Mr. Tilney, also repeatedly points out how a young lady should behave. In addition, the self-reflective voice that Austen uses in the novel constantly reminds the reader that it is all fiction, but it can still reveal truths. She concludes *Northanger Abbey* with the following lines: "I leave it to be settled by whomsoever it may concern, whether the tendency of this work be altogether to recommend parental tyranny, or reward filial disobedience" (Austen 1903, 308). Consequently, she leaves it up to us to determine the moral message of her novel, but neither of the two options can be said to be positive in the traditional sense – that is, she tries to break out of the usual patterns until the very end of her novel. In her work, Austen seems to criticize contemporary novels, their censorship as well as female readers when she writes about Catherine and Isabella reading novels together on a rainy day:

Yes, novels; for I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom, so common with novel-writers, of degrading, by their contemptuous censure, the very performance to the number of which they are themselves adding; joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally takes up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust. Alas! if the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard. (Austen 1903, 35)

She believes that writers should stick together and support each other:

Let us leave it to the reviewers to abuse such effusions of fancy at their leisure, and over every new novel to talk in threadbare strains of the trash with which the press now groans. Let us not desert one another: we are an injured body. Although our productions have afforded more extensive and unaffected pleasure than those of any other literary corporation in the world, no species of composition has been so much decried. From pride, ignorance, or fashion, our foes are almost as many as our readers. (35)

Austen did not perceive novels as a kind of escape from reality. She saw their relevance in the fact that they shed more light on life itself than history (Mathison 1957, 150). This is why she wanted to voice her observation that "there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them" (Austen 1903, 35-36). She emphasizes the importance of fiction by highlighting that even a less good novel has its own value (Mathison 1957, 146). Thanks to the Gothic novels parodied by the narrator, the heroine

of *Northanger Abbey* realizes her own ignorance and how foolish her behaviour is at times. In the past, real-life events also made Catherine allude to a fictional story, and then the fact that she is staying at the Abbey for a month, one of the most common locations in her favourite Gothic novels, blinds her sense of reality even more than before. The period she spent here may suggest the fact that, while the moderate use of our imagination can make our everyday life more colourful, we can easily ignore reality by creating excessive fiction. The fact that she has to spend her first night in the Abbey listening to the storm and that she already finds some documents that seem mysterious sparks the girl's imagination (Austen 1903, 200-06). This is why it is important to mention that Austen does not identify with the narrative of Gothic and sentimental novels, but defines her own heroine and her actions in opposition to these two types of novels. The narrator regularly refers to what schemes she could use and that she acts differently on purpose (Séllei 2015, 33-34). In Bath, Catherine does not identify with Isabella's style of speech and behaviour suitable for sentimental novels. Instead, she is more influenced by the positive impact of Elenor and Henry. And in the Abbey, Catherine imagines many things that a heroine would normally encounter in a Gothic literary work, forgetting that she is not the protagonist of such a novel. As a result of this, one aspect of her character development is that she realizes that even ordinary life can be harsh and torturous enough. She does not have to let her imagination run wild or pick up a novel to see and experience pain. That is why I believe that *Northanger Abbey* can also be read as a (female) *Bildungsroman*.

Northanger Abbey Goes against the Grain of Sentimental and Gothic Novels

In my view, John Thorpe, the male antagonist of the novel, is the prototype of the negative male characters who regularly appear in Austen's later novels, who can only lead the heroines for a short time and ends up with a much worse fate than what they strive for. Therefore, it is not necessarily advisable to state that John is the antitype of the tyrannical suitors in contemporary Gothic and sentimental fiction (Gallon 1968, 802). In such stories, the naive, overly sensitive, weak heroine often becomes a victim, seduced and exploited by the mentioned tyrannical suitor and either dies or is saved from the fall by the "hero." Some critics have also pointed out that this is true mainly for works written by men, since the heroines in female Gothic writings show more independence and initiative and do things to get out of their unfortunate situations. This difference appears intertextually in Austen's novels. Matthew Lewis's novel *The Monk*, which is loved by John Thorpe, is an excellent example of the former, while Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which is appreciated by Catherine, Isabella and Henry, is of the latter (Séllei 2015, 57-58). Catherine is more like Radcliffe's

heroines: when confronted with the fact that John mistakenly believes that they are engaged, she unflinchingly asks his sister Isabella to clear up the misunderstanding (Austen 1903, 170-72). Austen's stories are dominated by a negative view on unmarried women, which MacIntyre explains by saying that from the beginning of the eighteenth-century, unmarried women had to fear being forced into sorage or prostitution. That is why one of the central themes of one of Austen's later novels, *Mansfield Park*, is so relevant: it explores how brave it was of a woman to reject a bad marriage proposal (MacIntyre 2007, 239-40). One can even say that it was a brave act on Austen's part to regularly emphasize such motifs in her novels. This theme already appears here, in the writer's first completed novel, when Catherine refuses to even consider marrying Mr. Thorpe, despite the misunderstanding. In *Northanger Abbey*, the main heroine Isabella, who looks after her interests like her brother, will be the one who naively succumbs to the seduction of the older Tilney brother, and thus loses her good reputation and at the same time her hope of marrying James Morland in the future. And all of this is ironic, since Isabella can be seen as the antitype of the character of Gothic novels who initiates the heroine into the conventions of romance, although she is the one who succeeds in leading a man in this field (Gallon 1968, 802).

John Thorpe exaggerates Catherine's financial situation in front of General Tilney, first in a positive and then in a negative way. Both excesses have consequences. Because of the former, he tries to get his son to marry Catherine and, as a result of the latter, he sends the girl alone at dawn on her one-day trip home, without any explanation. This is why Catherine's last night there is much worse than the very first because, apart from her imagination that is deceiving her, she has a real reason to feel uncomfortable (Austen 1903, 276). Therefore, the girl, who is on the very first trip of her life, fortunately stands up to the task at hand and finally gets home without any problems. The novel begins with the following sentence: "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine" (Austen 1903, 5). Unlike the heroines found in sentimental or Gothic novels, she does not even need a rescuer, but has to get by on her own through the unpleasant journey. Here too, the writer highlights the schemes she could use:

A heroine returning, at the close of her career, to her native village, in all the triumph of recovered reputation, and all the dignity of a countess, with a long train of noble relations in their several phaetons, and three waiting-maids in a travelling chaise-and-four behind her, is an event on which the pen of the contriver may well delight to dwell; it gives credit to every conclusion, and the author must share in the glory she so liberally bestows. (Austen 1903, 283)

The following quote about Catherine's arrival home also emphasizes that Austen wanted to break out of the limitations of the usual sentimental and Gothic heroine's behaviour, too:

But my affair is widely different: I bring back my heroine to her home in solitude and disgrace; and no sweet elation of spirits can lead me into minuteness. A heroine in a back post-chaise is such a blow upon sentiment as no attempt at grandeur or pathos can withstand. Swifty, therefore, shall her post-boy drive through the village, amid the gaze of Sunday groups; and speedy shall be her descent from it" (283).

The financial stories about Catherine, invented by John Thorpe and then thought up by General Tilney, make her the object of the two men's financial targets, as they do not even allow her to reveal her true financial situation. This is where the relevance of the indirect speech act, which is particularly characteristic of the General among the characters, is most evident to me. But John also does not openly ask the girl how much she will inherit, instead he tries to ask her about it indirectly. Thus, Catherine has no idea what kind of misunderstanding has ensued. Yet, unlike sentimental heroines, she still does not need rescuing when both she and Henry are put to the test by the General led by Mr Thorpe. Miss Morland, as already shown, must travel alone for the first time in her life and Henry must prove that he dares to go against his father's objections and stand up for his tender feelings and commitment to Catherine. So the indirectness that characterizes the two men in their communication with Catherine, as well as John's distortions about her, do indeed cause difficulties for Miss Morland and Mr Tilney. However, they also promote the character development of the two protagonists and their confession of their tender feelings for each other.

One can also consider Isabella, Mr. Thorpe and Colonel Tilney as negative characters that Austen "borrowed" from the toolkit of sentimental novels. However, as we move into the parody of Gothic novels in the second volume, they are gradually pushed out of the plot. The first two persons disappear completely, but the General no longer sees the situation only in black and white. He opens up to other points of view, and perhaps that is why he can remain part of the narrative. In *Northanger Abbey*, one can notice how Austen goes against the intertextual unfolding of the plot structure of the sentimental novel based on artificial intrigue by emphasizing the simpler and clearer world of her heroine. In such cases, after an almost unfollowable sentence, there are a few simple, direct statements. Austen often uses the rhetorical device of silence in *Northanger Abbey* and, frequently, the seemingly most important scenes of the story are the ones which she barely says a few words about. The writer is aware of the rhetorical traditions and uses brevity instead. I assume that Austen directly

emphasizes this artificial characteristic of sentimental literature, where it would be unthinkable that certain dramaturgical climaxes would be obscure due to their emotional charge (Séllei 2015, 47-49). However, I believe that, when the writer describes the couple's wedding this way, we can interpret this method differently. The plot of the story moves towards Catherine and Henry getting married, but on the last page of the novel we can only read the following few lines about the wedding itself:

The bells rang, and everybody smiled; and as this took place within a twelvemonth from the first day of their meeting, it will not appear, after all the dreadful delays occasioned by the General's cruelty, that they were essentially hurt by it. To begin perfect happiness at the respective ages of twenty-six and eighteen is to do pretty well; and professing myself, moreover, convinced that the General's unjust interference, so far from being really injurious to their felicity, was perhaps rather conducive to it, by improving their knowledge of each other, and adding strength to their attachment. (Austen 1903, 308)

One can argue that, similar to other Austen novels, although marriage is the goal that the heroine must reach, the emphasis of the novel is on the path she takes to get there in terms of her character development. This is one of the reasons why I believe that *Northanger Abbey* is not only a parody of sentimental and Gothic novels but also a *Bildungsroman*. Furthermore, we can conclude that by the way Jane Austen closes her story, she not only rejects the conventions of Gothic and sentimental novels and makes explicit the possible psychological reading of female Gothic novels – by placing the horror story originally set in an outlying abbey back in England – but also rewrites romantic literature and even the conventions of the female Gothic novel ending. After all, for a happy ending, not only the heroine but also the hero must undergo development (Séllei 2015, 60).

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AUREA MEDIOCRITAS: HEROES AND FAKE HEROES/ANTIHEROES IN ROMANIAN HODONYMY

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ABSTRACT. *Aurea mediocritas: Heroes and Fake Heroes/Antiheroes in Romanian Hodonymy.* Specialised literature has shown that, regardless of geographical space and historical era, authorities have sought to honour heroes and grant them “immortality” by giving their names to various roadways: streets, boulevards, squares. From a socio- and psycholinguistic viewpoint, there is the issue of associating positive or negative values with the given figures depending on the political regime. Those who are seen as heroes at one point in time can be considered war criminals at a different moment in history. Similarly, the heroes of a certain nation can be the sworn enemies of a neighbouring people. Therefore, a theory of values needs to be advanced, a balance in judgement that should be above the circumstantial interests of those in power. This study analyses Romanian hodonymy from the aforementioned perspective. Since the officialization of street nomenclature, Romanian hodonyms have been subjected to several processes of street-name changes, determined by the unification of the country, the world

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wars, the various stages of the institution of the communist regime, and the establishment of democracy after 1989. Names of streets and squares are eloquent markers of all the onomastic changes that have occurred in Romanian space over different historical periods.

Keywords: *hodonymy, landscape changes, heroes/antiheroes/fake heroes, street names.*

REZUMAT. Aurea mediocritas: eroi/falși eroi/antieroi în hodonimia românească. Literatura de specialitate a arătat că, indiferent de spațiul geografic și de epoca istorică, autoritățile au căutat să cinstească eroii și să le acorde „nemurirea,” dându-le numele diferitelor drumuri: străzi, bulevarde, piețe. Din punct de vedere socio- și psiholingvistic, se pune problema asocierii valorilor pozitive sau negative cu percepția oamenilor în funcție de regimul politic. Cei care sunt văzuți ca eroi la un moment dat pot fi considerați criminali de război într-un moment diferit al istoriei. În mod similar, eroii unei anumite națiuni pot fi dușmanii declarați ai unui popor vecin. Prin urmare, trebuie avansată o teorie a valorilor, un echilibru în judecată care să fie deasupra intereselor de moment ale celor de la putere. Acest studiu analizează hodonimia românească din perspectiva menționată mai sus. De la oficializarea nomenclaturii stradale, hodonimele românești au fost supuse mai multor procese de schimbare/transformare, determinate de unirea țării, războaiele mondiale, diferitele etape ale instaurării regimului comunist și redobândirea democrației după 1989. Denumirile străzilor și piețelor sunt repere elocvente ale tuturor schimbărilor onomastice care s-au produs în spațiul românesc în diferite perioade istorice.

Cuvinte-cheie: *hodonimie, schimbări de peisaj urban, eroi/antieroi/falși eroi, nume de străzi.*

Introduction and Methodological Delineations

The dicta preserved until nowadays prove that the Romans were not only wise, but also pragmatic. These traits enabled them to create an empire that remained a paragon throughout historical eras and the model on which the European Union was built.² The Horatian phrase *aurea mediocritas* (*O.*, II, 10,5) needs to be construed as “the golden middle path,” the premise for a peaceful heart and the way to happiness. This fundamental principle of ethical thought can be traced beyond ancient Greece (Pindar, Democritus) and Rome (Syrus,

² “it is certain that Europe was created by the Romans along the exhausting marches of the legions” [“cert este că Europa au creat-o romanii [...] de-a lungul istovitoarelor marșuri ale legiunilor”] (Negrescu 2015, 26). All translations belong to me.

Tacitus), across the ages, in the works of prestigious thinkers (Rousseau) and in folk proverbs in different countries (see Felecan 2018, 39-40). In the context of hodonymy, the above-mentioned Latin dictum can provide the proper judgement, the objective interpretation of one's actions: every judgement of value must be *sine ira et studio* "without anger and bias," objective enough so as to survive political changes, in any geographical space. The positive appraisal of various figures should be supported by clear criteria, so that the hero status could be (almost) irrefutable. There will always be detractors, people who are eager to question unprejudiced decisions, but that must not taint the idea of justice and axiology. "In democratic societies public debates over who is eligible to be commemorated in the public domain articulate a struggle over moral values and ideological orientation" (Azaryahu 2012, 74).

Defining the concepts hero/fake hero in agreement with the dichotomy good/evil

To determine the concept of *hero* we should begin from the definition provided by the *Cambridge Dictionary* (online), according to which the first meaning of the word refers to "a person who is admired for having done something very brave or having achieved something great". Thus, our study will only take into consideration hodonyms that evoke military figures, from army leaders to simple soldiers and civilians, who have stood out in wars and revolutions beginning with the twentieth century. Were we to expand this sphere of reference, we would have to include all the historical and mythological figures from the Antiquity, Middle Ages and other eras, which would increase the area of investigation significantly.

From a national perspective, one can consider as heroes the Romanians and foreigners who fought alongside Romania to reach several ideals, such as independence, unity, freedom and democracy. From outside Romanian borders or from the viewpoint of foreign armies, the aforementioned figures are antiheroes, as they fulfilled divergent, antagonistic roles. A delicate topic refers to Romania's position in World War II. In June 1941, Romania joined Germany and its allies opposite the USSR to achieve the country's unification, but in August 1944 Romania turned against the Axis. Changing sides to fight on the side of the United Nations led to a shift in the perception of certain military leaders, who from heroes became antiheroes (Marshal Ion Antonescu). *Mutatis mutandis*, the situation is similar to what is happening nowadays, when we are witnessing a war waged in Europe. Ukrainian soldiers, led by president Zelensky, and the National Guard of Ukraine are the heroes of the country targeted by the aggression of Russia. Thus, the wish to use names related to these Ukrainian

figures to “baptise” roadways has been expressed by many democratic countries that firmly condemn Putin’s imperialistic decision: e.g., the Baltic countries. For the Russians, the Ukrainian patriots, especially the Azov Regiment, are right-wing extremists, “Nazis”. If for the Ukrainians the mercenaries of the Wagner Group and Kadyrov’s Chechens are antiheroes par excellence, immoral hoards ready to commit atrocities and war crimes, for the Russians the heroes might be the generals killed on the battlefield. In other words, the perspective changes 180 degrees the positive/negative perception of fighters on opposite sides, and public space records examples of this kind in urban nomenclature.

Ideologically, we can consider a hero to be anyone who sacrifices their life for freedom and democracy. The situation is different depending on the time frame under investigation. In the interwar period, communist militants, most of whom pertained to an ethnic group different from the Romanians, were seen as antiheroes and treated as such by the state authorities and the people. After the Soviet occupation, they were glorified. In the attempt to account for the change of the political regime and the creation of a “mythology of a new order,” their names were given to roadways. Such examples may be considered to refer to fake heroes, as the glorified deeds were pure inventions, without any objective grounds for honour and homage. The most eloquent proof was that the above-mentioned names did not enjoy a long life in Romanian hodonymy, as most of them were changed during the 1960s. It was believed that the communist regime was already well rooted, and heroic examples “fabricated” in state offices were no longer necessary. To become established, any form of power needs heroes, it needs characters that can be turned into myths to support the new order. Romania was not an exception, so many names of proletarians, labourers (*Vasile Roaită*) and partisans – in reality delinquents, petty criminals (*Max Goldstein*) – were honoured, immortalised in autochthonous hodonymy alongside the names of similar comrades from the Socialist International (*Zoia Kosmodemianskaia*). Upon an objective look, these are instances of fake heroes, aggrandised by means of efficient propaganda promoted by the Soviet press, literature and cinema, as well as the like institutions in satellite states.

Those who did not accept the communist yoke organised themselves in partisan groups and tried to oppose the new foreign regime, which was established by force. From the viewpoint of the regime, the partisans were the antiheroes, the “subversive and antipopular elements” that had to be eliminated by any means. The correct perception of anti-communist fighters was achieved only after the totalitarian regime was eliminated and the names of the insurgents began to appear in street nomenclature (*Elisabeta Rizea*). From antiheroes they became heroes, symbols of human dignity and moral integrity who put the principles of freedom above their life.

All the previous examples prove the variability of the concept of hero and its fluidity depending on political, ideological and social factors, to name but a few. The list of heroes investigated in this paper does not include ancient and medieval voivodes and rulers. Some of them (Decebalus, Mircea cel Bătrân/Mircea the Elder, Ștefan cel Mare/Stephen the Great, Vlad Țepeș/Vlad the Impaler, Mihai Viteazu/Michael the Brave, Constantin Brâncoveanu) are considered national heroes according to history books and appear in street nomenclature in almost every settlement in Romania.³ There are figures who sacrificed their life in battle or to defend their faith, but medieval values have parameters of investigation that are different from those in the modern era, and Romania can only be considered as a state after it gained its independence (1877).⁴ The establishment of a state also relies on the cult of heroes whose valiant deeds were rewarded with the admiration of their descendants. To commemorate one of the officers who lost their lives during the War of Independence (1877-1878), Prince Carol of Romania decided to immortalise captain Valter Mărăcineanu's name in the hodonymy of Bucharest (see Ionescu 2013, 58-59). This is the first historical record in Romanian modern space of the fact that dying on the battlefield, for a noble reason, entails public immortality. The emergence of this kind of hodonyms is arbitrary and honorific, and leads to the loss of certain historically, as well as geographically motivated names: "The carousel of giving streets the names of people and historical or political events begins in Bucharest at the end of the nineteenth century and continues throughout the twentieth century."⁵

Heroes in Hodonymy – A Diachronic Overview of the Last Century

After World War I and the unification of the country (1918), politicians felt the need to immortalise these events in Romanian street nomenclature either by replacing old names with contemporary ones (*Bulevardul Unirii* 'Union Boulevard',

³ "In the context of national rebirth and political changes after 1848, the giving of honorific street names re-emerged, and the first such names were borrowed from rulers: Prince Știrbei Street (1856), Prince Bibescu Street (1856), Charles I Street (1866), Prince Cuza Street (1868)" ["În contextul renașterii naționale și al schimbărilor politice de după 1848, au reapărut atribuirile de nume de străzi cu caracter onorific, primii vizați fiind domnitorii: ulița Știrbei Vodă (1856), ulița Bibescu Vodă (1856), str. Carol I (1866), str. Cuza Vodă (1868)"] (Ionescu 2013, 54).

⁴ Romania is an autonomous state through the union of 1859 (with the name Romania since 1862).

⁵ "Caruselul atribuirii străzilor de nume de persoane și evenimente cu conținut istoric și politic care începe în București la sfârșitul sec. al XIX-lea va continua în tot secolul XX" (Ionescu 2013, 60).

Bulevardul Victoriei ‘Victory Boulevard’), or by giving new thoroughfares the names of military figures who had made a strong impression on the public opinion as a result of their supreme sacrifice or leadership skills in battle. Thus, numerous names of this kind were among the onymic proposals for street nomenclature in the interwar period:

In the 1930s and 1940s, giving the names of military figures who had died in the war of unification was achieved based on a table of proposals advanced by the General Staff with the individuals whose sacrifice was of a special, remarkable nature. From 1916 to 1942, of the more than 80 streets that received names of military figures, a third bore names of soldiers and non-commissioned officers, whereas most hodonyms consisted of names of superior officers.⁶

Although the intention was to find a connection between the heroes and the thoroughfares that were going to bear their names, this relationship was difficult to establish and can rarely be noticed in Romanian public space.

After the communists seized power through the direct intervention of the Red Army, “the baptism of streets using names of military figures changed radically. Until 1958 more than 200 names of military figures were given (130 in 1948 alone), 80 per cent of whom were ‘men-at-arms’ (privates, corporals and non-commissioned officers), and only one was a general – not from the last war,”⁷ but from the nineteenth century (*Gheorghe Magheru*). This testifies to the “folk” nature of post-war hodonyms, in agreement with the policy to promote symbols and names of people “meant to legitimate the new power and its connections with the ‘working class’ and to consolidate the ‘unshakeable bonds of friendship’ with the Soviet Union.”⁸ The privates and non-commissioned officers’ *heroism* was filtered and censored through the ideological frameworks of the new power. For instance, only the names of those who had fallen on the Western Front (after 23 August 1944, when Romania turned against Nazi Germany) were chosen, to the detriment of the names of those fallen on the Eastern Front

⁶ “În deceniile trei și patru, atribuirile de nume de militari căzuți în războiul de întregire se făceau pe baza unui tabel de propuneri primit de la Marele Stat Major cu cei a căror jertfă a avut un caracter deosebit, memorabil. Între 1916 și 1942, inclusiv, din totalul de peste 80 de străzi care au primit nume de militari, cam o treime au primit nume de soldați și subofițeri, accentul punându-se pe ofițerii superiori” (Ionescu 2013, 75).

⁷ “Maniera de botezare a străzilor cu nume de militari s-a schimbat în mod radical. Până în 1958 s-au atribuit peste 200 de nume de militari (130 numai în 1948), din care peste patru cincimi au fost ‘ostași’ (soldați, gradați și subofițeri), cu un singur general, dar nu din ultimul război” (Ionescu 2013, 75).

⁸ “menite să legitimizeze noua putere și legăturile ei cu ‘clasa muncitoare’ și să consolideze ‘prietenia de nezdruccinat’ cu Uniunea Sovietică” (Ionescu 2013, 76).

(between June 1941 and August 1944), who were far more numerous. The politicisation of heroism is also obvious in the association of names of military figures with names of “socialist fighters,” who were “made up” to legitimise the new power. While the latter can be considered fake heroes, the same cannot be stated about Spartacus, the ancient gladiator. His bravery is undeniable, but the association of his name with that of *politruks* (*Ion Şulea*) confirms the ideologization of street nomenclature in Bucharest.

Every administration wanted to promote its values and rewrite history. For instance, after King Charles II of Romania abdicated in September 1940, all the hodonyms consisting of his name were eliminated. After Romania adhered to the Tripartite Pact (November 1940) and the legionnaires were overthrown (January 1941), important squares in the Romanian capital city were given the names of *Adolf Hitler*, *Benito Mussolini* and *Ion Antonescu*, the military leader of Romania during World War II. In the autumn of 1944, it became clear that these names no longer mirrored reality and thus were replaced with *Lenin*, *Generalisimul Stalin* (‘Generalissimo Stalin’), as well as the names of other Soviet leaders and “dozens of names of ‘working-class heroes’, who had fallen for the ‘socialist cause’ in the country or in foreign lands and who were unknown to the public opinion,”⁹ but were nonetheless necessary for official propaganda and out of the desire to legitimise the new regime imposed by Moscow as the rightful continuator of “olden-day traditions”. Anthroponymic changes in street landscape are parallel to toponymic modifications: street names like *Londra* (‘London’) and *Washington* reappear, while hodonyms like *Berlin* are eliminated.¹⁰ The new *Regulament pentru numerotarea și nomenclatura străzilor din Municipiul București* [Regulation for the numbering and nomenclature of streets in the municipality of Bucharest] of 1945 sought to “revise names of streets, establishments, public squares etc. which did not agree with the spirit of the age” (Ionescu 2013, 81).¹¹ The assessment of the Nomenclature Commission was carried out by a delegate appointed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, led by a communist minister. Thus, the process of politicisation becomes more and more pronounced. The biographies of the so-called “fighters for the labourers’ cause” (*Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, *Ștefan Gheorghiu*, *Ilie Pintilie*, *I.C. Frimu*, *Alexandru Sahia*, *Elena Pavel*, *Vasile Roaită*, *Haia Lifschitz*, *Donca Simo* and

⁹ “zeci de nume de ‘eroi ai clasei muncitoare’, căzuți pentru ‘cauza socialistă’, în țară sau pe meleaguri străine, necunoscuți de opinia publică” (Ionescu 2013, 80).

¹⁰ Along the same lines, there appear the names of the three leaders of the United Nations: *Stalin*, *Churchill*, *Roosevelt*. Nevertheless, names of western figures are ephemeral in Romanian street nomenclature, due to the Iron Curtain which rose after the year 1946.

¹¹ “revizuirea denumirilor de străzi, localuri, piețe publice etc. care nu concordă cu spiritul vremurilor de azi” (Ionescu 2013, 81).

others) are embellished and underlie the revision of Romanian street names. The supererogation of communist authorities is obvious in the simultaneous use of certain names in several places. The “amendment” was made gradually, as some of the names proved to be disagreeable.

Along with the aforementioned autochthonous fake heroes, the second largest category of names artificially introduced in Romanian public space, and in Bucharest implicitly, refers to Soviet leaders: *Zhdanov*, *Kuybyshev*, *Tolbukhin*, *Kalinin*, *Kirov*. As they were antiheroes,¹² most of them were erased from collective memory/public space in the 50s and 60s (see Ionescu 2013, 82), after the retreat of the Red Army from Romania (1958) and the de-Stalinization of the country.¹³ Such names imposed by Moscow replaced the anthroponyms of actual heroes, Romanian or foreign politicians, military figures and philanthropists (*Ion C. Brătianu*, *Titu Maiorescu*, *Tache Ionescu*, *Bonaparte*, *General Berthelot* and others), who did credit to the human condition. The ephemerality of hodonyms related to the names of fake heroes reinforces the conviction that political interference is not beneficial to the accurate appreciation of various figures and their role in ensuring national interest. The commemoration of genuine heroes is commendable in any regime, but the criteria according to which heroes are established are subjective and depend on the political and ideological orientation at a specific time. The most eloquent example is the change of the political regime in 1989. Compromised names are steadily eliminated from public space and leave room for actual personalities in different fields of science and culture. Among these the real heroes of December 1989 are commemorated, individuals who had the courage to rise against the communist regime and contribute to the fall of the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu. Thus, paying homage to such figures by including their names in street nomenclature after 1990 was a moral obligation of the new national or local authorities.

According to research carried out by the Institute of the Romanian Revolution, “during the events of December 1989, 1,166 people died” in the following cities and towns which were declared *martyr settlements*: Alba Iulia,

¹² The Red Army stood out due to countless murders, robberies and rapes, recorded by Aurel Sergiu Marinescu (2010) in a historical reference book: *1944-1958, Armata Roșie în România, jafuri, violuri, crime, furturi, tâlhării, confiscări, devastări, rechiziții, secheștrări de persoane* [1944-1958, the Red Army in Romania, pillage, rape, murder, theft, robbery, confiscation, vandalism, requisition, forcible confinement]. Uneducated and disrespectful towards military hierarchy, Soviet soldiers and non-commissioned officers could not be restrained and committed numerous atrocities, especially against private persons, who were defenceless.

¹³ Between the years 1950 and 1960, Brașov was called *Orașul Stalin* (‘Stalin City’), just like other settlements in Eastern Europe: Varna (Bulgaria), Katowice (Poland), Kuçovë (Albania), Eisenhüttenstadt (GDR), Dunaújváros (Hungary), Donetsk (Ukraine), Volgograd (USSR) (cf. Felecan 2017, 78-80).

Arad, Braşov, Brăila, Bucharest, Buzău, Caransebeş, Cluj-Napoca, Constanţa, Craiova, Cugir, Hunedoara, Lugoj, Reşiţa, Sibiu, Târgovişte, Târgu Mureş, Timişoara. It is interesting to note the distribution of the victims in the pre-Revolutionary period (17-22 December 1989: 271 deaths), in the days following Ceauşescu's flight (22-25 December 1989: 715 deaths) and after the dictator's death (after 25 December 1989: 113 deaths) (see Ghiţă 2014). If we take into consideration the Romanian capital city, only 23 streets bear the names of heroes who sacrificed their life in 1989¹⁴, although records show 543 were shot during those days. As Aurel Ionescu (2013, 98) points out, "most of these streets are modest, hidden among blocks of flats, just as the heroes were modest, selfless people."¹⁵ Moreover, the name-giving was not made in connection with the martyrs' residence or the place where they lost their life. It is worth noting that most names of streets and lanes also include the appellative *erou* ('hero'), the military rank or the profession in addition to the deceased's names: *Astafei Petre, erou*; *Bărbulescu Marius, erou*; *Buteică Marius Emanoil, erou*; *Butiri Florin, erou*; *Calderon Jean Louis, ziarist* ('journalist'); *Cârstea Adrian, sublocotenent* ('second lieutenant'); *Cioran Gabriel*; *Ciungan Florin, erou*; *Creţu Nicolae Florin, căpitan* ('captain'); *Donea Diana Alexandra, erou*; *Durbac Dumitru Răducu, locotenent-colonel* ('lieutenant colonel'); *Fulga Adrian, erou*; *Huwe Danny, ziarist* ('journalist'); *Marcu Mihaela Ruxandra, erou*; *Mateescu Nicolae*; *Mirea Mioara Luiza, erou*; *Mladinovici Dragoş, erou*; *Neagoe Teodor, sublocotenent* ('second lieutenant'); *Orleanu Paul, doctor* ('doctor'); *Pătru Adrian, sublocotenent* ('second lieutenant'); *Radu Dragoş, căpitan* ('captain'); *Stan Bogdan Şerban, erou*; *Stanciu George Cristian*; *Tudor Gheorghe Bogdan, erou*; *Urucu Adrian Dan, erou* (see Ionescu 2014, 186-200). In the cases in which the name appears alone, there is the risk that the connection between the name and the quality of hero of the 1989 Revolution be lost, as collective memory will not be able to restore the link between the two aspects.

Methodologically, the main framework of the paper is the capital city of Romania, because it records the most numerous streets (1,500 of which bear the name of various figures) and offers a complex perspective on present-day Romanian hodonymy. While for Bucharest there are books containing detailed studies of street nomenclature, for the other towns and cities our main research tool consisted of websites. Historical information was obtained from objectively written books and from the internet.

¹⁴ "At the same time, also used were the names of two foreign journalists who had come to Bucharest specifically to report on the events and who died (following 22 December) on the streets of the city" ["De asemenea, s-au mai atribuit numele a doi ziaristi străini, veniţi special la Bucureşti pentru a relata evenimentele şi care au murit (tot după 22 decembrie) pe străzile oraşului"] (Ionescu 2014, 186).

¹⁵ "mai toate sunt străzi modeste, ascunse printre blocuri, așa cum și eroii au fost persoane modeste și dezinteresate".

Hodonymic controversies related to (fake) heroes/antiheroes

The most controversial name linked to the events of the year 1989 is that of general Vasile Milea, a former head of the General Staff of the Romanian Army (1980-1985) and minister of Defence (from 1985 until 22 December 1989). The debate surrounding this name – which extended to public space, in hodonymy – has to do with the bearer’s death: several members of Milea’s family claimed that he was killed on the morning of 22 December on Ceaușescu’s order, but the forensic investigation proved that he had committed suicide. His “heroism” and the immortalisation of his name in street nomenclature in several settlements throughout Romania are based on his execution, as a result of his refusal to respond with a bloody repression of the people’s protest against the communist regime. This led to the use of the general’s name to designate boulevards, streets and squares in cities, towns and communes all over the country (Arad, Bârlad, Brad, Brăila, Câmpulung, Cluj, Constanța, Murfatlar, Petroșani, Pitești, Ploiești, Sibiu, Târgoviște, Vaslui), including in Bucharest (from March 1990 to June 2021). However, after objective investigation into the role he played in the events of December 1989, it was concluded that he had given or confirmed all the orders to repress the Revolution issued between 17 and 22 December (in Timișoara, Sibiu, Bucharest etc.); thus, there existed every reason for him to be considered an antihero. This determined the gradual removal of the name *Vasile Milea* from present-day Romanian street nomenclature. In Bucharest the change occurred in 2021: *Bulevardul Vasile Milea* (‘Vasile Milea boulevard’) was divided in two, and one half received the name *Doina Cornea* (a university professor of Cluj, a symbol of dignity and of the anticommunist fight of the 1980s), whereas the other half was called *Paul Teodorescu* (general and minister of Aviation and Navy in the interwar period, a victim of the post-1945 communist regime) (see Toma 2021). In this way, a moral restoration was achieved in Bucharest hodonymy, as the name of a fake martyr was replaced with names of genuine heroes whose credits could only be acknowledged by a democratic regime which holds meritocracy in high regard. Merits must be clarified and, implicitly, recognised *sine ira et studio*, according to Tacitus’ Latin phrase, by objective historians and, should it be the case, by justice. Politicians are solely meant to apply, to put into practice what unbiased researchers investigate. This is the only way in which one can reach good measure (*aurea mediocritas*), as well as the clarification and accurate apprehension of the part played by the actors of the troubled events of December 1989.



Street sign of *Bulevardul G-ral Vasile Milea* ('General Vasile Milea boulevard') in Sector (district) 6 of Bucharest

The most important sign which marked the end of the commemoration of general Vasile Milea in Romanian public space was given by the capital city of Romania, followed by several important cities (Cluj, Pitești). Worth noting in this respect is the request addressed by the prefect of Argeș county to the mayor's office of the municipality of Pitești:

The current name is considered inappropriate, as it uses the name of a former minister of the communist regime, who was involved in the bloody repression of December 1989. By changing the name to 'Piața Revoluției 22 Decembrie 1989' [Revolution Square 22 December 1989] a strong message will be sent to future generations as well, who must learn about the events that happened 31 years ago and avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.¹⁶

Nevertheless, the cult of the memory of general Milea was not extinguished. A proof in this respect is the unveiling of his bust in his place of birth – Lerești, Argeș county – in the presence of a guard of honour and archbishop Calinic of Argeș and Muscel. The attendance of a hierarch should not come as a surprise, because the Romanian Orthodox Church has always supported the dominant regime and acted so as to obtain the most significant benefits¹⁷ from those in

¹⁶ "Denumirea actuală este considerată neadecvată, folosindu-se numele unui fost ministru al regimului comunist, implicat în represiunea sângeroasă din decembrie 1989. Prin schimbarea denumirii în 'Piața Revoluției 22 Decembrie 1989' se va transmite un mesaj puternic și pentru generațiile viitoare, care trebuie să cunoască evenimentele din urmă cu 31 de ani și să nu repete greșelile trecutului" (*apud* Ilie, Alexe 2021).

¹⁷ "The interplay between religion, on the one hand, and elections and party politics, on the other, is best illustrated by several interrelated areas [...]:1) the direct involvement of priests and prelates in politics as members of parties and as electoral candidates running for local and/or central governmental office; 2) the support religious leaders and clergy give electoral

power¹⁸. However, the presence of the guard of honour is debatable, as it tallies with the image promoted in the first years after 1990 by the transition regime: general Milea was a brave officer who opposed Ceaușescu's regime, i.e. he was a hero. The historical reality alters the perspective:

Colonel-General Vasile Milea gave the order which led to the use of war ammunition by the army against the protesters in Timișoara on 17 December, the bloodiest day of the revolution in this city. After the rebellion began in Bucharest on 21 December, Milea had all the soldiers in the military units in Bucharest on the streets, and on the night from 21 to 22 December he personally supervised the destruction of the barricade that had been erected by the protesters in the Intercontinental Hotel area.¹⁹

Another controversial example in Romanian public space and reflected as such in toponymy is that of Marshal Ion Antonescu, the *de facto* leader of Romania during World War II. The first attempt to "immortalise" his name in Romanian public landscape was made in the autumn of the year 1940. The subjective change of the name of a commune in the vicinity of Bucharest was sought. Thus, the local authorities chose "the illustrious name of general Ion Antonescu," and even issued documents with a header containing the new name, but the general "categorically refused, and the commune received the name of Tudor Vladimirescu 'on historical grounds'."²⁰ As World War II developed, the fashion of the age was above the leader's will, and in the autumn of the year 1941 there appeared in Bucharest a *bulevard Mareșal Ion Antonescu* ('Marshal Ion Antonescu

candidates in exchange for promises to support legislation favourable to the church; and 3) the electoral candidates' use of religious symbols to win additional votes." (Stan, Turcescu 2005, 348).

¹⁸ "The Romanian Orthodox Church has always known to negotiate its privileges and has successfully obtained everything it desired, as it has been, by definition, on the side of the political power. The Church is considered the ideal electoral factor due to the influence it has on voters. Thus, no party has stood in its way and, in complicity, the Romanian Orthodox Church consolidated its superior position in democratic Romania" (Felecan 2020, 1). The same situation can be noticed in other eastern churches, and the most telling example is that of the Russian Orthodox Church, which, through patriarch Kirill, blessed and supported the war started by Putin against Ukraine, thereby showing its complete obedience to the "sponsor".

¹⁹ "Generalul-colonel Vasile Milea a dat ordinul prin care s-a trecut la folosirea muniției de război de către armată împotriva manifestanților de la Timișoara pe 17 decembrie, cea mai sângeroasă zi a revoltei din acest oraș. După izbucnirea revoltei la București, pe 21 decembrie, Milea a dispus ca soldații din unitățile militare din București să iasă pe străzi, iar în noaptea de 21 spre 22 decembrie a coordonat personal distrugerea baricadei care fusese ridicată de revoluționari în zona hotelului Intercontinental" (Ilie, Alexe 2021).

²⁰ "a refuzat categoric, iar comuna a primit pe 'considerente istorice', numele lui Tudor Vladimirescu" (Ionescu 2013, 78).

boulevard', previously known as *Șoseaua Jianu* 'Jianu road' and currently called *Bd. Aviatorilor* 'Aviators' boulevard'), in addition to *Piața Adolf Hitler* ('Adolf Hitler square') and *Piața Benito Mussolini* ('Benito Mussolini square') (see Ionescu 2013, 78-79). The association with the leaders of the Axis was not only political and military – with the professed aim to restore the unity of Romania, a victim of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact –, but also on the level of street nomenclature throughout the country.²¹ The commemoration in public space of living leaders had previously been practised especially in connection with members of the royal family, but in the case of Hitler, Mussolini and Antonescu this was a proof of power, of the determinative influence on Romanian urban landscape. *Quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi!*

Along with the armed insurrection of 23 August 1944, when Romania joined the United Nations in the fight against the powers of the Axis, the names of the three leaders were removed²² from public landscape. From a paragon of patriotism, Antonescu became a war criminal and was given the capital punishment in 1946. His name was stigmatised until the fall of communism, since Antonescu was perceived as a negative hero, the one who had driven Romania into battle against the Soviet Union and "had ordered the assassination and deportation to Transnistria of some ten thousand Jews."²³ It was only after 1989 that the position and role of the Romanian general in World War II were revalued, which resulted in the polarisation of society. On the one hand, he was considered an excellent officer with a meteoric rise to the top of his profession, the perfect patriot who preferred to die than to betray his nation and go back on his word. He defended Romanian traditions and values, "was an honest man [...], loved his country,"²⁴ and the trial of his condemnation "was conducted in the purest Soviet style,"²⁵ leading to his martyrial death. On the other hand, "Antonescu initially carried out a bloody racial policy up to a point. In 1941 he seemed determined

²¹ These names were present in all the larger settlements of the country (see Felecan 2015, 232), as well as in other territories/countries under the fascist rule. "The Reichskanzlerplatz in Charlottenburg was renamed Adolf-Hitler-Platz. In September of 1933 the Friedrich-Ebert-Straße was renamed Hermann-Göring-Straße" (Azaryahu 2011, 484). "During the interwar period [...] two more squares and two streets were named after Mussolini. [...] In contrast to the plethora of places named after Horthy, only one street throughout Budapest was named after Adolf Hitler" (Palonen 2018, 105).

²² Discussions about replacing the name of Benito Mussolini occurred just a month after the fascist dictator's demise, but the authorities' undetermined attitude led to its preservation until the autumn of the year 1944 (see Ionescu 2013, 79-80).

²³ "a ordonat asasinarea și deportarea în Transnistria a zeci de mii de evrei" (http://enciclopediaromaniei.ro/wiki/Ion_Antonescu).

²⁴ "a fost un om cinstit [...], și-a iubit țara" (Cioroianu).

²⁵ "s-a desfășurat în cel mai pur stil sovietic" (Cioroianu).

to apply the ‘model’ of the final solution” (Cioroianu),²⁶ although after 1942 his attitude towards Jews and Roma was lenient.²⁷

As regards Marshal Antonescu’s ambivalent image, historian Lucian Boia offers an interpretation illustrative of the equivocal condition of Romanian culture, mentalities and outlooks: “Yes, Marshal Antonescu saved Jews, and yes, Marshal Antonescu sent Jews to their death,” that is,

the anti-Semitic measures – applied somewhat chaotically – were not aimed at the extermination of the Jewish population. The Jews were humiliated and spoliated and for many years lived with the threat above their head, but at the same time they were allowed to carry out specific cultural activities and fund educational institutions.²⁸

Neagu Djuvara expressed the same opinion:



Between 1942 and 1943, despite the German government’s repeated demands to turn in our Jews, Antonescu always refused to do so, and moreover favoured the rescue of Jews from the West or from Northern Transylvania, which was occupied by the Hungarians. [...] What Antonescu did in 1943 is little known in the West, and even when it is known, it does not erase his behaviour in 1941.²⁹

Marshal Antonescu’s statue (Sultănoiu 2002, <https://www.curentul.info/politic/maresalul-dezonorat/>)

²⁶ “Antonescu s-a lansat inițial într-o politică rasială până la un moment dat criminală. În 1941, el părea decis să pună în practică ‘modelul’ soluției finale”.

²⁷ “In Romania the Star of David was not worn” [În România nu s-a purtat steaua lui David] (Cioroianu) and the deportation of Jews to the extermination camps in Poland was not approved (https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/pdf-drupal/en/report/romanian/1.9_Role_of_Antonescu_revazut_gina.pdf). Shimon Peres, former President of Israel, stated that Romania helped save 400,000 Jews during World War II.

²⁸ “Da, mareșalul Antonescu a salvat evrei, și da, mareșalul Antonescu a trimis evrei la moarte,” adică „măsurile antisemite – aplicate de altfel destul de confuz – n-au vizat exterminarea populației evreiești. Evreii au fost umiliți și spoliați și au stat ani de zile cu amenințarea deasupra capului, dar în același timp li s-a permis să desfășoare activități culturale proprii și să întrețină instituții de învățământ” (2012, 62).

²⁹ “în anii 1942-1943, cu toate insistențele repetate ale guvernului german de a-i preda pe evreii noștri, a refuzat permanent, ba a și favorizat salvarea unor evrei din Occident sau din Transilvania

These controversies were mirrored in public space both in collective mentality and hodonimically. Several monuments (statues, paintings, busts) dedicated to the marshal were created in different settlements in Romania or in heroes' cemeteries (Lețcani, Iași county). At the opposers' urging, some of these monuments were discreetly taken down (Călărași, Jilava, Lețcani, Piatra Neamț, Sărmaș), others were obscured (Bucharest – the portrait at Victoria Palace) or moved to private spaces (Bucharest,³⁰ Cluj). Only a few remained (Bacău, Slobozia) in museums or the gardens of certain institutions, away from the public eye. In the year 2012, in urban nomenclature “there were in total 25 streets throughout the country bearing the name of the marshal,”³¹ both in Bucharest and in some of the main cities, such as Cluj-Napoca, Craiova, Iași, Sibiu, Târgu Mureș, Timișoara. After the protest of certain Jewish organisations – the Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania –, headed by Elie Wiesel himself, the government issued an ordinance (31/2002) by means of which, “with the exception of museums, it is forbidden to erect or keep in public spaces statues, sculptural groups, commemorative plaques related to individuals guilty of committing genocide crimes against humanity and war crimes” and to give the names of such individuals to “streets, boulevards, squares, markets, parks or other public places”.³² Certain street names endured until recently (Constanța – 2021) despite the protests of the Elie Wiesel Institute, as “Ion Antonescu enjoys ‘diverse, even contradicting appreciations, polemics and controversies’.”³³ Even nowadays, various websites (<https://moovitapp.com>, <http://orasul.biz>, <https://www.streetdir.online> etc.) mention the marshal's name in the hodonymy of less important settlements (1 Decembrie, Bechet, Brad, Chiajna, Mărășești, Mintia, Râmnicu Sărat, Șiria), with a total of 9 records in the year 2019 (cf. Raețchi 2019 and Zamfirescu 2021). Therefore, the hero/fake hero or antihero status keeps generating controversies, especially in the case of complex personalities such as Marshal Antonescu.

de Nord ocupată de unguri. [...] Gestul lui Antonescu din 1943 e însă puțin cunoscut în Occident, și, chiar când e cunoscut, nu șterge fapta din 1941” (2013, 330-31).

³⁰ The monument was erected in the Church of the Holy Sovereigns Constantine and Helen, founded by the Antonescu family between the years 1942 and 1943.

³¹ “erau în total 25 de străzi care purtau numele mareșalului în toată țara” (Țene 2012).

³² “se interzice ridicarea sau menținerea în locuri publice, cu excepția muzeelor, a unor statui, grupuri statuare, plăci comemorative referitoare la persoanele vinovate de săvârșirea infracțiunilor de genocid contra umanității și de crime de război” “unor străzi, bulevarde, scuaruri, piețe, parcuri sau altor locuri publice” (<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/34759>).

³³ “Ion Antonescu are parte de ‘evaluări diverse, chiar contradictorii, polemici și controversate’” (Pecheanu 2021).

The last ambiguous example of heroism to which this study draws attention is that of general Leonard Mociulschi (1889-1979). His name does not occur in the hodonymy of Bucharest, but it appears in the nomenclature of several cities and towns in Romania: Beiuș, Brașov, Călărași, Oradea, Sighetu Marmăției.



Street sign consisting of general Mociulschi's name and a statue depicting the general.
Source: <https://www.general.mociulschi.ro>

Leonard Mociulschi was of Polish descent. He participated in several wars, and was decorated in both world wars in Romania (by kings Ferdinand and Michael)³⁴ and abroad (by the French government in World War I, the German army³⁵ – on several occasions in the period between 1941 and 1944 – and the Marshal of Finland). His bravery and heroism were noticed on the Eastern and Western Fronts alike, where he contributed to the liberation of

³⁴ In October 1941 he was awarded the Order of Michael the Brave “for the industriousness and energy with which he led the detachments of the Brigade across the border, in the Vicovul Cindei area, in conquering the region of Storozhynets and especially in the hasty crossing of the Nistru on 17 and 18 July, when facing the baneful attack of the enemy in the blockhouses, he set a personal example and encouraged the efforts of the Brigade” (Royal Decree 1,652 of 7 August 1947 regarding discharges, published in *Monitorul Oficial* (‘the Official Gazette’), year CXV, issue 191 of 20 August 1947, part I, p. 7,499) [“pentru destoinicia și energia cu care a condus detașamentele Brigadei la trecerea frontierei, în zona Vicovul Cindei, la cucerirea regiunii Storojineț și în special la forțarea Nistrului, în zilele de 17 și 18 Iulie, unde sub focul ucigător al inamicului din cazemate a impulsionat prin exemplul personal pe direcția de efort a Brigadei”] (<https://www.general.mociulschi.ro>).

³⁵ “In 1942, Leonard Mociulschi was elevated to the rank of brigadier general and awarded the German ‘Kriegsorden des Deutschen Kreuzes in Gold’ for his bravery on the battlefield” (<https://www.tracesofwar.com/persons/34674/>).

Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. After the end of the war, he was blamed unjustifiably of being a “reactionary entity, hostile to the People’s Republic of Romania,” so he was arrested and “subjected to a regime of physical and moral extermination (including by means of hard labour on the Danube – Black Sea Canal) until the autumn of the year 1955,”³⁶ and then he was placed under house arrest. The very communist regime that deemed him a “criminal” and an “enemy of the people” rehabilitated him upon the intervention of President Charles de Gaulle, who made a visit to Romania in 1966. The saga of his being considered a hero – antihero – hero in Romanian public space continued even *post mortem*: thus, in 2007, the year when Romania became a member of the European Union, the 21st Battalion of Army Rangers of Predeal received the honorific name *General Leonard Mociulschi* in the presence of king Michael I of Romania, who decorated general Mociulschi with the highest military order of Romania, *Mihai Viteazul în grad de Cavaler* (‘a knight of the Order of Michael the Brave’), on three occasions. Therefore, the hero/antihero status can even be found in the same geographical space (Romania) and historical era (the age of communist totalitarianism) within the span of a few years. This proves that people need heroes, and their commemoration is a duty of the heart and of honour for the descendants.

Military Heroes

If the heroic status of certain military leaders was contested, others’ credits did not engender controversy, and as a result, their names occur in Romanian hodonymic landscape. “After World War I, giving the names of fallen heroes was only achieved on the basis of recommendations or investigations made by the General Staff in the Ministry of War”.³⁷ Thus, the Nomenclature Commission was safe from errors and “could choose the bravest of men, whose sacrifice had been decisive of a certain battle or had served as an example to their companion-in-arms”.³⁸ Officers, especially generals, enjoyed major visibility in battle and issued orders. Therefore, their names were prevalent among the choices for the designation of various roadways. Beginning with the year 1948, under the influence of communist politics and *classist* thought, the

³⁶ “element reacționar și ostil RPR” “și supus unui regim de exterminare fizică și morală (inclusiv prin muncă silnică la Canalul Dunăre-Marea Neagră), până în toamna anului 1955”.

³⁷ “După Primul Război Mondial atribuirea de nume de eroi căzuți se făcea pe baza unor recomandări sau verificări trimise de Marele Stat-Major din Ministerul de Război” (Ionescu 2014, 9).

³⁸ “îi putea alege pe cei mai bravi, pe cei a căror jertfă fusese decisivă pentru soarta unei bătălii sau servise drept pildă camarazilor” (*Ibidem*).

perspective altered, and names of simple soldiers were the most appreciated options. Aurel Ionescu provides compelling data for the hodonymy of Bucharest in a diachronic depiction, using as reference points three distinct years: one at the end of World War II, another during the Stalinist era and the last after democracy was restored:

a) 1946: 17 (privates + corporals + non-commissioned officers) + 128 officers, including 44 generals = 145; b) 1954: 287 (privates + corporals + non-commissioned officers) + 166 officers, including 38 generals = 453; c) 2001: 198 (privates + corporals + non-commissioned officers) + 116 officers, including 36 generals = 314.³⁹

Most lost their life in the War of Independence (1877-1878) and in the two world wars. Not only Romanian military figures are commemorated in the hodonyms of the Romanian capital city, but also foreign ones, who fought alongside the Romanians or are remembered for the memorable deeds they achieved for the nation: *Gen. Berthelot*,⁴⁰ *Blaremburg Constantin*,⁴¹ *Borroczy*,⁴² *Kiseleff*.⁴³

Although army life is pursued almost exclusively by men, the hodonymy of Bucharest records several names of heroines. Ecaterina Teodoroiu⁴⁴ has a

³⁹ "a) 1946: 17 (soldați + gradați + subofițeri) + 128 ofițeri, din care 44 generali = 145; b) 1954: 287 (soldați + gradați + subofițeri) + 166 ofițeri, din care 38 generali = 453; c) 2001: 198 (soldați + gradați + subofițeri) + 116 ofițeri, din care 36 generali = 314" (2014, 9).

⁴⁰ As the Head of the French Military Mission in Romania during World War I, he played an essential part in the reorganisation of the Romanian army in 1917 and supported the establishment of the unitary national state. His assistance was rewarded superlatively: he was awarded honorary citizenship of Romania (1922), became an honorary member of the Romanian Academy (1926) and received a donation in the form of an estate in Hunedoara County. The village was given his name in 1923, "as a token of gratitude for the contribution of the French army to the liberation of Romania in World War I. After his death (in 1927), the general donated his property to the Romanian Academy" (Felecan 2017, 86).

⁴¹ A colonel of Dutch and Russian origin, "he was an adjutant to prince Al. I. Cuza, then of king Charles I of Romania, on whom he attended during the War of Independence" ["a fost adjutant al domnitorului A.I. Cuza, apoi al regelui Carol I, însoțindu-l în Războiul de Independență"] (Ionescu 2014, 24).

⁴² A Russian officer of German descent, he drew the city plan of Bucharest in 1844 and 1852, which was fundamental to the systematisation of the capital.

⁴³ The oldest road in Bucharest (1843) bears the name of a Russian general, a liberally-minded politician, who adopted many measures for the development of the Romanian principalities (e.g., drawing up the Organic Regulation, the first quasi-constitutional law in the Danubian principalities).

⁴⁴ A second lieutenant in the Romanian army, she stood out due to her brave actions and heroic death at only 23 years of age, in 1917. Her name appears in street nomenclature throughout the country, in the names of educational institutions, literary creations and musical pieces, as well as in the name of a film. Numerous "statues of the *Heroine of Jiu* can be found in several cities and towns in the country" ["statui ale *Eroinei de la Jiu* se află în mai multe orașe din țară"] (Ionescu 2014, 151).

homonymous street (since 1920), as well as another one called *Eroina de la Jiu* ('the heroine of Jiu') dating since 1941. Since 1948 a street in Bucharest bears the name *Măriuca*, in the memory of a girl who in 1917 'fell alongside the Romanian soldiers in the battle to defend the country.'⁴⁵ There are some heroines from Bucharest who, at an early age, gave their life for freedom on 21 December 1989; they are commemorated in present-day local homonymy: *Diana Alexandra Donea* (student), *Mioara Luiza Mirea* (student), both of whom were shot in the head, and *Ruxandra Mihaela Marcu* (student), who was run over by an amphibious armoured vehicle and received a blow to the head with a buttstock (see Ionescu 2014, 192-95). Heroes do not have a specific age and do not observe any kind of discrimination. Sacrificing for an ideal is worth eternal homage, and the easiest way to do this is not only by means of memorial services, but also by the perpetuation of their names in hodonyms.

Conclusion

This study uses the capital city of Romania as a reference point, as it contains the most numerous streets and offers a complex image of contemporary Romanian hodonymy. Of the 1,500 thoroughfares that bear the names of various figures, more than 20 per cent commemorate heroes. The importance of paying homage to heroes is not only ideological, but also a testimony of the respect of the society, political decision makers and administrative authorities towards those who have sacrificed their life for the national ideal, for the country and for freedom. There exists a National Office for the Cult of Heroes (<https://www.once.ro>) operating under the Ministry of National Security, and "Queen Marie" National Association for the Cult of Heroes, founded in 1919 (<http://www.cultuleroilor.ro>). However, the most visible way to commemorate heroes, the way which has the best impact on people, is by means of hodonyms. Metaphorically, their sacrifice, on which the Romanian national state and present-day democracy were built, is parallel to that of Christian martyrs in the early centuries, whose blood allowed for the increasingly wider dissemination of Christianity.

From the viewpoint of onomastics, the value of such hodonyms is exclusively historical, as geographical, linguistic or social references are mostly absent. The only linguistic motivation is found in the heroes' birthplaces or in the settlements where they achieved valiant deeds/lost their life. In agreement with the words of Louis-Jean Calvet, "*in vitro* language policy,"⁴⁶ names of public

⁴⁵ "a căzut alături de ostașii români în luptele pentru apărarea patriei" (Ionescu 2014, 179).

⁴⁶ "la politique linguistique *in vitro*" (1994, 175).

squares and roadways are established in the authorities' offices, and the decisions are political.⁴⁷ In an authoritarian regime, state ideology is taken into account, whereas in democracy the electoral advantage is borne in mind, by considering the impact of the new names on the public opinion.

Nevertheless, the hero status is worthy of all attention. Psycholinguistically, there arises the matter of positive or negative valorisation of figures depending on the authoritarian or democratic political regime. Those who are seen as heroes in one period, can be recorded as war criminals at another point in time or upon a foreign, biased intervention. Similarly, the heroes of a people can be the sworn enemies of a neighbouring people. Without a balance in judgement (*aurea mediocritas*), which should be above the circumstantial interests of those in power, the hero status cannot be assessed/interpreted correctly.

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⁴⁷ "This process of reshaping Romania's political geography of memory in the broader context of postcommunist transformations was generally decided by central governmental structures and implemented accordingly by local authorities" (Rusu, Croitoru 2021, 11-12).

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HIZYA DE MAÏSSA BEY : LECTURES BOVARYQUES DE LA SOCIÉTÉ ALGÉRIENNE

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ABSTRACT. *Hizya by Maïssa Bey: Bovaristic Readings of Algerian Society.*

The novel *Hizya* by Maïssa Bey, published in 2015, allows us to revisit the theme of Bovarism. In this article we aim to investigate the causes and forms that would justify the use of this term by the female and male characters of this novel, who live in an Algerian society whose landmarks are ancestral. Analyses according to the Bovaristic grid (Gautier) lead us to highlight the discrepancy between exterior and interior, real and literary imagination, individual and family, individual and society. Different forms of bovarism are investigated: *literary*, which will allow us to study the relationship between the hypotext of the Algerian poet Mohamed Ben Guittoun (where the eponymous heroine lives a love story suspended by death) and the hypertext in prose by Maïssa Bey (where the young woman investigates possible or impossible love); *sentimental*, based on the gap between love (desire and pleasure) and freedom or conformity (to archaic rules); *social*, which will consider the relationship between love-marriage-family-society; *history*, which will draw a parallel between the ideals of the Independence with the disappointing decades that followed it. By extrapolating the Flaubertian concept, we wanted to design a tool capable of seeing both the complexity of characters and situations, as well as textual and ideational coherence.

Keywords: *Hizya, Maïssa Bey, Bovarism, intertextuality, Algerian society.*

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REZUMAT. *Hizya de Maïssa Bey: lecturi bovarice ale societății algeriene.*

Romanul *Hizya* de Maïssa Bey, publicat în 2015, ne permite să revizităm tema bovarismului. În acest articol ne propunem să investigăm cauzele și formele care ar justifica folosirea acestui termen de către personajele feminine și masculine ale acestui roman, care trăiesc într-o societate algeriană ale cărei repere sunt ancestrale. Analizele după grila bovarică (Gautier) ne conduc la evidențierea discrepanței dintre exterior și interior, real și imaginar literar, individ și familie, individ și societate. Sunt investigate diferite forme de bovarism: *literar*, care ne va permite să studiem relația dintre hipotextul poetului algerian Mohamed Ben Guittoun (unde eroina omonimă trăiește o poveste de dragoste suspendată de moarte) și hipertextul în proză de Maïssa Bey (unde tânăra investighează iubirea posibilă sau imposibilă); *sentimental*, bazat pe decalajul dintre dragoste (dorință și plăcere) și libertate sau conformare (la reguli arhaice); *social*, care va avea în vedere relația dintre dragoste-căsătorie-familie-societate; *istoric*, care va pune în paralel idealurile Independenței cu deceniile dezamăgitoare care i-au urmat. Prin extrapolarea conceptului flaubertian, am dorit să proiectăm un instrument capabil să țină seama atât de complexitatea personajelor și a situațiilor, cât și de coerența textuală și ideatică.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Hizya, Maïssa Bey, bovarism, intertextualitate, societate algeriană*

1. Bio-graphie du terme « bovarysme ». Petit rappel pour le plaisir des classiques

Madame Bovary, que Gustave Flaubert faisait paraître en volume en 1857, est une lecture qui change d'interprétation en fonction de l'âge, de l'endroit et de l'expérience littéraire du lecteur. Ce qui nous permet d'invoquer cette notion, un siècle et demi plus tard et en rapport avec un roman actuel, *Hizya* de Maïssa Bey, est aussi le passage du terme bovarysme dans d'autres domaines des sciences sociales où il a reçu d'autres connotations.

En 1977, dans la préface à l'édition du roman *La Femme de trente ans* (1842), Pierre Barbéris plaçait l'attestation de cette typologie féminine chez Honoré de Balzac qui y décrit un trouble similaire au bovarysme. D'autres y incluent aussi Véronique Graslin du *Curé de village* (1841) ou Graziella du roman éponyme de Lamartine (1852). Le critique tente donc de trouver une a-temporalité du concept, un contexte psychologique propice à l'apparition de cette typologie de personnages.

Ainsi, le romantisme est le courant littéraire qui institue une distance entre la réalité et le monde idéal, imaginé ou rêvé. La célèbre Emma Bovary est nourrie des *Méditations poétiques* de Lamartine et des romans de Walter Scott, qui ont semé en elle le désir de vivre de grandes passions. La modernité

flaubertienne se place à distance des idéaux romantiques et vient comme une critique lucide du décalage entre la réalité et la fiction. Chez Flaubert, le bovarysme est vécu comme une version dégradée du romantisme, dont il illustre ainsi la faillite par la critique des clichés. Le héros exceptionnel vivant dans des situations exceptionnelles est remplacé par un anti-héros (ou, plus exactement, une anti-héroïne), ce qui ouvre la voie vers l'homme/la femme banal(e), « sans qualités », qui est un topos de la littérature, particulièrement présent dans la littérature contemporaine.

En même temps, le roman de 1857 parle au lecteur d'aujourd'hui de la condition de la femme au XIX^e siècle : éducation fragile et impropre pour la vie ultérieure, mariage qui signifie clôture, maternité comme seule distraction, absence de vie professionnelle (donc dépendance financière du mari) et, si l'amour n'existe pas, l'ennui et la recherche désespérée de le combattre. La vie à la campagne décrit un milieu qui surveille et juge le comportement d'autrui. Au XXI^e siècle, dans certains endroits du monde, ces données sont encore valables. C'est le cas du milieu social construit par l'écrivaine algérienne Maïssa Bey dans *Hizya*, roman paru en 2015. Il met en scène une habitante d'Alger qui, malgré le fait d'être diplômée de l'enseignement supérieur, ne réussit pas à trouver d'emploi selon ses compétences. Elle travaille comme coiffeuse et a la chance d'avoir une patronne et des collègues agréables qui représentent autant de destins possibles de la femme algérienne de différents âges. Sa famille exerce sur Hizya une certaine pression, car respectueuse du mode de vie traditionnel, selon lequel une jeune femme est censée se marier convenablement et mener une existence soumise à une forme d'autorité avant tout masculine. Hizya est courtisée par plusieurs hommes, mais elle se trouve toujours rapportée à l'héroïne du XIX^e siècle qui porte le même nom et qui a vécu un amour exceptionnel, sujet d'un poème de Ben Guittoun. Comme Madame Bovary, l'*Hizya* du XXI^e siècle vit un décalage entre la réalité et l'imaginaire, mais le contexte est autre et, entre raison et passion, le premier terme prédomine dans son cas.

Mais essayons d'abord de bâtir un pont entre les siècles littéraires, grâce justement à un élargissement du champ sémantique du concept de « bovarysme »².

Le premier à formuler le néologisme de « bovarysme » est le philosophe français Jules de Gaultier dans son ouvrage *Le Bovarysme, la psychologie dans l'œuvre de Flaubert*, paru en 1892. Selon lui, un être bovaryque se conçoit « tel qu'il voudrait être, et non pas tel qu'il est » (Gaultier 1892, 19). Le bovarysme n'est donc rien d'autre qu'un état d'insatisfaction permanent, dû au déséquilibre entre la vie fantasmée, forgée par les romans et plus généralement par l'univers

² Nous optons pour orthographe « bovarysme » (que nous préférons à « bovarisme ») et de l'adjectif « bovaryque » (rencontré aussi sous la forme « bovariique »).

de la fiction, et la médiocrité de la vie réelle du quotidien. L'intertexte littéraire dans le cas du roman de Maïssa Bey est fourni par le poème homonyme du XIX^e siècle (reproduit à la fin du livre) qui raconte l'histoire de la perspective d'un jeune homme marié par amour avec la belle Hizya, qui partage ses sentiments, mais dont le bonheur est tragiquement interrompu par la mort de la femme. Quant à la « réalité », elle est offerte par la vie d'Hizya, le personnage principal du roman de Maïssa Bey, qui en fait notre contemporaine dans une Algérie où la femme est (encore) soumise à des traditions ancestrales qui entravent sa liberté de choix, pays qui lutte avec des préjugés et des mentalités dans tous les domaines de la vie : familial, social, culturel, politique.

La diachronie sémantique nous aide à justifier la possibilité d'élargir les sens du bovarysme. Remontant les siècles, on observe que la psychologie s'est rapidement emparée de ce terme pour définir une maladie. La thèse de doctorat d'Anne-Marie Milet³ retrace le cheminement psychiatrique du terme avec des variables. Elle retrouve le terme médical en 1907, pour désigner une dégénérée hystérique caractérisée par son impuissance de s'adapter à la réalité ; en 1926, ce sera une forme atténuée de paranoïa ; en 1930, une mythomanie ; en 1952 un type de névrose. Jacques Lacan s'intéresse au concept en 1966⁴ en essayant de le dé-pathologiser, puis Michel Foucault le mentionne dans *Les anormaux*⁵. À remarquer aussi que la médecine actuelle ne considère plus que cette « maladie » est exclusivement féminine.

Dans *Comme un roman*, essai sur l'éducation paru en 1992, l'écrivain Daniel Pennac établit, parmi les droits imprescriptibles (et légèrement amusants) du lecteur, le « droit au bovarysme », une « maladie textuellement transmissible », qui suppose la « satisfaction immédiate et exclusive de nos sensations ». Il crée aussi le dérivé « bovaryen », celui qui prend « les vessies du quotidien pour les lanternes du romanesque » (Pennac 1992, 186). Pour Pennac, la phase « bovaryque » est normale, faisant partie de l'évolution du goût du lecteur et de la psychologie humaine qui apprend à dire que « madame Bovary c'est l'autre » (Pennac 1992, 186). De ce point de vue, *Hizya* peut être envisagé comme le *Bildungsroman* d'une jeune femme aux prises avec les exigences de son âge (23 ans), qui se termine là où l'histoire d'Emma commence : le mariage. Mais, chez Maïssa Bey, nous identifierons les marques du bovarysme dans le cas des autres personnages du roman aussi, féminins ou masculins.

³ En plus de la thèse d'Anne-Marie Milet, *Étude critique du concept de bovarysme dans le champ psychiatrique*, voir aussi l'étude de 2004 d'Yvan Leclerc, « Bovarysme, histoire d'une notion ».

⁴ Il s'agit, entre autres, de l'étude intitulée « Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse ». Le bovarysme résulterait d'une sorte d'énergie vitale de l'être humain qui cherche à améliorer son sort.

⁵ Michel Foucault en parle en 1974-1975 dans ses cours au Collège de France, publiés plus tard, en 1999 dans *Les anormaux*.

Le philosophe roumain Gabriel Liiceanu⁶, ne s'éloigne pas trop de la vision traditionnelle sur l'être bovaryque qui est, selon lui, la personne qui se soustrait à l'accomplissement de sa propre limite, fasciné par une limite-fantasme, mais qui ne peut pas être touchée à cause de ses ressources faibles, fragiles, malades. Cette limite représente, dans le roman qui nous intéresse, à la fois les contraintes venues de l'extérieur, renvoyant aux mentalités ancestrales algériennes, mais aussi à des contraintes intérieures, issues de la psychologie individualisante de chaque personnage.

Plus récemment, en 2013, le terme « bovaryser » a fait son entrée dans le dictionnaire. Selon la définition que lui donne *Le Grand Robert de la langue française*, il s'agit de « rêver à un autre destin, plus satisfaisant ». Suivant cette direction, Georges Lewi, dans *Les nouveaux Bovary : Génération Facebook, l'illusion de vivre autrement ?* revient à un sens positif du bovarysme comme mécanisme qui pousse la jeune génération à se faire un destin meilleur, mécontente de la situation actuelle. L'insatisfaction dont parlait Gaultier est vue ici comme moteur du dépassement de soi, et cette génération a, selon l'auteur, trois grandes illusions : « la volonté de transparence, l'affirmation d'un féminin actif et l'obsession de la rencontre, de "faire pluriel" » (Lewi 2012, 25). Les jeunes ont l'illusion de vivre autrement, et rêvent de se créer une autre vie. Évidemment, le profil de la France n'est pas le même que celui de l'Algérie, mais dans le contexte de la mondialisation, certains principes se retrouvent au niveau général dans tous les coins du monde. Et les trois principes énumérés peuvent être identifiés chez Maïssa Bey qui s'intéresse, dans ses textes, prioritairement à la jeunesse et à la condition de la femme.

En tenant compte de toutes ces connotations, le sens que nous donnons au concept atemporel de *bovarysme* dans notre article est celui de *décalage entre la réalité (médiocre) et l'imagination (qui surévalue les faits, les gens et le moi), vécu intensément du point de vue émotionnel et soldé par un échec*.

En ce qui suit, nous nous proposons d'analyser différentes formes de bovarysme. Nous nous servons du destin (littéraire) d'Emma Bovary pour réfléchir sur la condition des femmes et des hommes algériens à notre époque à partir de leurs rapports sentimentaux, mais aussi en les projetant dans leur milieu familial et social. Nous déplacerons l'accent de leurs histoires personnelles vers l'Histoire de l'Algérie, ayant comme objectif de saisir la dynamiques des mentalités.

2. Le bovarysme littéraire

La critique a coutume de définir le bovarysme comme une « pathologie littéraire ».

⁶ Voir surtout le chapitre « Maladiile de destin. Lenea, ratarea și bovarismul » [Les maladies de destin. La paresse, l'échec et le bovarysme] in Gabriel Liiceanu, *Despre limită [De la limite]*.

Ce qui saute aux yeux dès la première page du texte de Maïssa Bey est le rapport intertextuel entre le roman et le poème éponyme, chacun ayant comme titre le nom du personnage principal. Ainsi l'écrivaine algérienne nous propose au fond quatre Hizya : elle part de la réalité historique d'une femme ayant vécu au XIX^e siècle, passe par l'hypotexte représenté par le poème du poète algérien Mohamed Ben Guittoun qui célèbre sa beauté et commémore sa mort, devient personnage de roman et, en dernier lieu, donne le nom du livre (l'hypertexte) qui inclut les autres hypostases d'Hizya :

Hizya la réelle → (*Hizya poétique* → *Hizya fictive*) → *Hizya romanesque*

La mise en abyme se voit donc redoublée, ce qui complexifie davantage la structure romanesque, chaque « miroir » permettant l'accès à d'autres nuances.

Ainsi, dans la grille de Gérard Genette sur la *transtextualité* (1982), le roman signé par Maïssa Bey est une transposition *sérieuse* qui, du point de vue formel est une *transmodalisation* (les vers deviennent prose) et, du point de vu thématique, est *hétérodiégétique* (le temps et l'espace sont changés : l'époque est contemporaine, le topos est la casbah de la ville d'Alger), reflétant une *transvalorisation* (la focalisation interne est assumée par la protagoniste, dédoublée en celle qui vit et celle qui réfléchit), tandis que la *transmotivation* (la modification des mobiles des personnages) en souffre à cause de tous les arguments que nous venons d'énumérer. Mais, au-delà de cette rigueur formelle avec laquelle Gérard Genette nous a habitués, Hizya Al Hilalia, « réelle » à l'origine, poétisée par Ben Guittoun et devenue entre-temps une Hizya « fictive », est un repère incontournable dans l'imaginaire algérien, et son histoire peut être lue de plusieurs points de vue. Ainsi, Rania Hassan Ahmed la voit comme un personnage tridimensionnel, expliquant cette multistratification par le fait que

elle est à la fois le symbole de la femme amoureuse fidèle à son amant pour lequel elle est prête à tout sacrifier, de la femme rebelle qui se révolte contre son sort et les traditions de sa tribu, et enfin de la beauté féminine vu qu'elle possède des traits de charme exceptionnel qui font d'elle une figure mythique. (Hassan Ahmed, 2020, 221)

Il est à retenir aussi que ceux qui ont donné le nom d'Hizya à la protagoniste, imagine Maïssa Bey, l'ont fait non pas en hommage à la femme légendaire du XIX^e siècle, mais pour respecter une tradition qui veut que la fille aînée du fils aîné porte le nom de la grand-mère paternelle. En fin de compte, la loi ancestrale qui assure l'héritage (nominal) a une fonction « intertextuelle » : le nom de l'une rappellera la personne de l'autre et les deux seront mises en abyme pour mieux identifier le caractère de chacune. La grand-mère devrait constituer pour la petite-fille un modèle à suivre dans une société traditionnelle circulaire qui ne permet pas de sortir de son cadre. Mais comme le cercle rend

prisonnier, Hizya cherche des modalités pour s'évader et son évasion consiste dans ce que représente le poème : la littérature où l'imaginaire et l'imagination ne peuvent pas être entravés.

Flaubert est un précurseur de ce que nous appelons aujourd'hui « modernité », que beaucoup de ses contemporains ne comprenaient pas (vu le procès qui lui a été intenté à cause de *Madame Bovary* pour « outrage à la morale publique et religieuse et aux bonnes mœurs »). L'esthétique flaubertienne illustre une impasse du roman romantique, produite par son épuisement formel et expressif, ce qui a engendré une « critique » du courant et son remplacement par une forme plus adéquate, caractérisée aussi par un effet de distanciation, réalisé, entre autres, par l'ironie. Maïssa Bey met dans un seul personnage l'être romantique incarné par Emma Bovary et la tonalité ironique moderne de la narratrice qui sanctionne, avec ses moyens, le bovarysme de la femme. L'écrivaine algérienne dédouble Hizya, dont on entend une sorte de voix lucide de la conscience, un Sur-moi ironique et critique qui met en doute sa résolution de vivre un grand amour. Au niveau formel, le texte est écrit en alternance avec des caractères romains et italiques⁷, renforçant l'écriture et la pensée dialogiques.

L'existence du poème et l'amour passionnel des deux protagonistes légendaires révèlent le besoin de compensation devant une réalité a-poétique :

Je sais en mon for intérieur, je sais bien que la légende d'Hizya n'est qu'un prétexte. Et lorsque je me demande pourquoi elle me hante, pourquoi le simple fait de découvrir ce poème, d'écouter ce chant m'ont donné envie de me projeter au-delà des frontières qui me sont assignées, je n'ai d'autre réponse que celle qui me force à voir l'étendue du vide qui m'entoure. L'aridité de la vie qui m'attend. (Bey 2015, 55)

Il n'y a pas qu'Hizya qui soit obsédée par le poème de Ben Guittoun. Djemal, son ancien camarade de faculté, l'encadre dans sa stratégie de conquête. Mais la fille, grande lectrice de poésie, sentira rapidement la différence de valeur : « quand il évoque Hizya, quand il reprend les métaphores du poème, je n'y vois qu'une tentative grotesque de m'émouvoir en même temps qu'un aveu de son incapacité à se hisser au niveau du poète. » (Bey 2015, 225) Ainsi, en revenant au schéma genettien, Djemal ne réalise qu'une simple *imitation*, il n'arrive pas au niveau des véritables *transformations*⁸.

Hizya (porte-parole de l'autrice) s'interroge sur le rôle de la littérature sentimentale en se demandant si « les déclarations enflammées, les descriptions

⁷ Cette dualité typographique fait penser entre autres aux choix dialogiques faits par Calixthe Beyala (*Maman a un amant*) ou Nathalie Sarraute (*Enfance*).

⁸ Genette considère que l'hypertextualité peut se réaliser soit par une simple « imitation », soit par une forme plus complexe et enrichissante qu'il nomme « transformation ». Voir son œuvre *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré* (Genette 1982, 14-16).

louangeuses, les envolées lyriques, les serments et les larmes des poètes ne [sont] que le travestissement ou embellissement d'une réalité tout autre, trop prosaïque pour être restituée dans sa vérité » (Bey 2015, 305-306). Ainsi établit-elle une nouvelle fonction du poétique et complète le bovarysme littéraire avec un sens supplémentaire, mélioratif : « Pour magnifier. Pour célébrer. Pour exalter. Pour mentir. Pour effacer d'un trait de plume les laideurs du monde. » (Bey 2015, 306)

D'autres textes et légendes sont conviés par Maïssa Bey à parler de l'amour véritable ou passionnel ou de la femme libre et puissante (au moins pour une période). Ces femmes sont les héroïnes auxquelles voudraient ressembler les personnages féminins du roman : la reine guerrière Dihya, dite la Kahina (nom de sa sœur cadette) ; N'fissa et Fatma, les deux filles du dey Hassan Pacha, amoureuses du même homme, et qui se laissent mourir pour ne pas s'affronter ; K'h'diouedj el Âmia, amoureuse d'un reflet dans le miroir. Elles nourrissent l'imagination, tout en restant, par leur fin tragique, un avertissement contre les dangers de la passion. Pour Sonia, la collègue de travail d'Hizya, la vie et les œuvres de la femme peintre mexicaine Frida Khalo sont l'équivalent de ce que représente le poème « Hizya » pour la protagoniste. Les figures féminines des tableaux du peintre Étienne Dinet, qu'Hizya découvre chez une de ses clientes, la fascinent et lui font découvrir un autre mode d'être.

La fin du livre est écrite au futur simple et imagine la vie ensemble d'Hizya et Riyad, les « héros » du XXI^e siècle. Cette enquête sur l'amour possible ou impossible est mise sous le signe du doute quant à l'avenir, avec la possibilité aussi d'oublier le poème qui a marqué le destin d'Hizya.

3. Le bovarysme sentimental

Hizya annonce, dès le début du livre, son désir de vivre une histoire d'amour, comme son double littéraire. Deux possibilités lui sont offertes au long du texte : celle romantique de Djemal et celle pragmatique de Riyad.

Des éléments bovaryques peuvent être identifiés dans le cas de Djamel, son collègue de faculté, mais il applique une stratégie de conquête « poétique » qui n'est pas au goût d'Hizya. Connaissant et aimant lui aussi le célèbre poème de Ben Guittoun, il donne à la jeune femme l'impression qu'il joue un rôle décalé par rapport à la réalité, adepte d'une forme d'expression qui plutôt inquiète sa bien-aimée que ne la séduit. On peut constituer un corpus de ses « poèmes » fragmentaires en prose, envoyés comme des messages par téléphone – sorte de journal poétique, qui donnerait :

- Une rose est apparue au cœur de ma solitude. Elle a coloré mes rêves.
- Le jour s'illumine de ton sourire.
- Je ferme les yeux pour te garder sous mes paupières toute la nuit.

- Des fleurs ont surgi dans ton sillage. Je les ai cueillies pour en faire un bouquet de mots d'amour.
- Elle est apparue tel un souffle de printemps, vêtue d'un bleu plus bleu que le ciel. (Bey 2015, 135-137)

Ces phrases d'un romantisme désuet, mais auquel il croit, paraissent ridicules à Hizya. Les messages parviennent à la jeune fille la nuit, topos romantique, mais ils ne sont pas convaincants : « Je trouve les mots de ces messages trop fleuris, trop apprêtés. Ils ont le poids, l'accent et la disgrâce des mots insincères. » (Bey 2015, 138) Il est vrai que son double intérieur voudrait que ces mots viennent de la part de Riyad. Djamel est fasciné par le poème au point de se demander s'il veut connaître et aimer la jeune fille ou s'il est amoureux de l'amour (tout comme Madame Bovary). Dans les lettres qu'il lui adresse, la jeune fille se sent l'objet d'une obsession compulsive (il le poursuit aussi dans la rue) :

Il me propose de me faire écouter la chanson. Me cite des vers. Me dit que je suis une princesse des sables. Une antilope du désert. Sa princesse. Son antilope. Il me raconte qu'il est récemment allé au lieu-dit Sidi Khaled pour se recueillir sur le tombeau de « la belle qui brillait, telle *l'étoile du matin* ». Qu'il en a rapporté une photo qu'il voudrait me montrer. M'informe qu'il est originaire lui aussi des hauts plateaux, mais qu'il habite à Alger. Me dit qu'il aurait bien aimé s'appeler Sayed. (Bey 2015, 222)

Ces lettres le montrent « bovaryque », il y évoque sa vie, sa solitude, ses ambitions, ses difficultés sentimentales et ses espérances, mais Hizya le soupçonne, à cause de certaines exagérations pathétiques, d'être mené plus par le plaisir de s'entendre parler ou de se voir écrire que par un vrai sentiment d'amour pour elle. Il fait des reproches à sa bien-aimée comme un mal-aimé des temps légendaires : « Il me dit qu'il ne peut pas supporter l'idée que j'appartienne à un autre. Il jure qu'il serait prêt à mourir pour moi. [...] Il me reproche d'être cruelle, insensible [...], dure et indifférente » (Bey 2015, 224-225). Ainsi, il creuse un décalage encore plus grand entre la forme d'expression de ses désirs et ce que la réalité algérienne lui offre, de telle façon que son point de mire (Hizya) a peur et rompt de la manière la plus insensible tout contact avec lui. Esprit de philologue, Djamel n'a pourtant pas appris comment se conduire dans la vie, et il prend la littérature, tout comme Madame Bovary, pour guide de conduite. S'il se croit meilleur qu'en réalité, Hizya reconnaît ce trait bovaryque et le rejette : « Je n'ai pas envie de me mirer dans les yeux de cet homme qui se dit poète. [...] Un homme qui s'obstine à croire qu'il peut réussir à obtenir ce qu'il attend, ce qu'il espère ou dit espérer en dépit des apparences » (Bey 2015, 225). Peut-être qu'Hizya voit ce bovarysme comme une autre forme de l'homme de s'imposer devant la femme et de lui imposer des sentiments qu'elle ne partage pas.

Elle fait aussi une comparaison entre Sayed, le mari amoureux d'Hisya du poème, et Riyad, qui n'a pas le courage de se présenter devant les parents de la fille qu'il courtise ; le jeune homme cache cette amitié à sa mère aussi, qui nourrit d'autres plans pour lui. D'autre part, Hizya non plus n'a pas le courage de le présenter à ses parents. On peut se demander s'il y a du vrai amour entre eux, vu qu'aucun ne fait ce pas : « les moments que nous passons ensemble, les mots que nous échangeons, les affinités autour desquelles nous construisons notre relation et les silences que nous partageons me semblent dépourvus de toute fantaisie, et peut-être un peu trop... un peu trop ancré dans le quotidien, dans la réalité qui est la nôtre. » (Bey 2015, 188) Hizya craint peut-être de ne pas ressentir une déception si elle épouse Riyad, comme autrefois Emma après avoir épousé Charles Bovary, trop provincial et ennuyeux pour la femme passionnelle et sensuelle qu'elle était.

Faute d'avoir trouvé d'emploi pendant cinq ans, sa collègue Sonia se sert de ses connaissances pour dénicher, sur les sites de rencontres et d'annonces matrimoniales, une personne « qui fera basculer son destin » (Bey 2015, 100). Comme chez Flaubert, l'ironie tendre de l'autrice envers ce personnage ne fait que mieux mettre en évidence le décalage entre les mensonges que véhiculent ces sites et la réalité. La simple énumération du nom des sites (In-challah.com, Meetarabic.com, Rencontres musulmanes, Mektoub.com – comme si le destin pouvait être numérisé) ou la formulation de l'annonce : « Homme musulman, algérien, 40 ans, résidant principalement à l'Étranger, cherche à rencontrer jeune femme 20 à 30 ans, musulmane pratiquante sérieuse pour relation hallal. » (Bey 2015, 100) donnent l'impression d'une surévaluation, au-delà de l'humour subissant. Pourtant Sonia s'est investie dans cette relation potentielle avec ce double du libertin flaubertien Rodolphe Boulanger, propriétaire du château de la Huchette et premier amant d'Emma Bovary. La police lui fera découvrir que « son pseudo spécialiste en neurochirurgie, exerçant dans des cliniques de France et en Algérie et recherchant une jeune femme musulmane et sérieuse pour partager sa vie et un appartement à Alger afin d'y séjourner occasionnellement, n'est en réalité qu'un repris de justice, père de famille, déjà condamné pour escroquerie au mariage. » (Bey 2015, 103)

La mère d'Hisya dévoile elle aussi ses rêves bien enfouis lorsqu'elle raconte avoir vu, à l'âge de dix ans, un film avec le chanteur Abdel Halim Hafez. Malgré son indignation pour le comportement « abominable » des femmes, elle a été émue par l'histoire d'amour, et le chanteur est devenu son préféré : « Il faut la voir quand l'une de ses chansons est programmée sur la radio nationale ! Elle se précipite dans la cuisine, toutes affaires cessantes. Elle déplace une chaise et s'assoit près du poste. Accoudée sur la table, une main sur la joue, les yeux fermés, le visage soudain rajeuni, traversé par une sorte de douceur inaccoutumée, elle écoute, presque religieusement. » (Bey 2015, 132)

Ainsi, la conclusion qu'offre la voix off du texte est que « L'amour [...] ne peut s'épanouir que dans l'interdit, dans la transgression. » (Bey 2015, 269) C'est un topos pour la poésie et les chansons, mais non pour la vie réelle.

4. Le bovarysme social

Deux aspects nous semblent signaler sans conteste le bovarysme au niveau social : la vie professionnelle et l'espace domestique. Les trois employées du salon de coiffure (Hizya, Fatiha et Nejma) ont fait des études universitaires, mais elles n'ont pas trouvé de boulot et ont été obligées à une reconversion professionnelle. Hizya (devenue Liza, pour avoir un nom moins vieillot) a un diplôme en traductologie, Fatiha (alias Sonia), spécialiste en maquillage libanais, est licenciée en informatique ; Nedjma (baptisée Nej par la patronne) est titulaire d'un master en sciences économiques et sociales, mais elle ne s'occupe que du budget de sa famille et de la comptabilité du salon. Le nom du salon de coiffure, « Belles, belles, belles » renvoie à la chanson de Claude François et au cliché de la beauté associée à l'amour. Ainsi sont dénoncées les lois de la publicité et leur fonction bovaryque de décalage entre les désirs et la réalité. L'avantage pour elles est que le salon de coiffure a remplacé, à l'époque moderne, l'ancien hammam, où les femmes discutaient librement leurs problèmes familiaux et sentimentaux. Espace de la liberté, il est la mise en abyme du livre par la fresque de la société algérienne dépeinte de la perspective féminine. C'est l'espace idéal de la parole sincère et libérée.

Un autre espace qui montre que la femme peut s'imposer est celui de l'appartement de Madame M., une cliente du salon, professeure de médecine. Cette visite équivaut, comme découverte d'un autre monde et d'autres vies possibles, au bal de Vaubyessard du marquis d'Andervilliers dans *Madame Bovary*. Mais l'Hizya de Maïssa Bey y apprend une leçon de simplicité, de distinction, d'élégance et d'art, ou, comme dit sa voix intérieure : « *La découverte de ce monde parallèle auquel tu n'as pas accès. [...] Ça te fait prendre davantage conscience du reste. À te donner encore plus envie de fuir cette réalité qui te semble d'autant plus sordide.* » (Bey 2015, 180)

D'ailleurs, tous les personnages se créent des espaces de refuge ou de compensation. Il n'y a pas seulement la femme qui doit se cacher, mais aussi l'homme. Hizya et Riyad choisissent pour leurs rencontres des endroits où ils ont peu de chance d'être vus. Ils agissent comme des amants occidentaux, tels ceux de Madame Bovary (Léon, Rodolphe). Les hommes sont eux aussi victimes des règles qui leur sont inculquées, et Abdelkader, le frère aîné d'Hizya avoue le poids des coutumes familiales : « La responsabilité du grand frère, la confiance des parents, la réputation de la famille... tout ce qu'on te met dans la tête depuis que tu es tout petit » (Bey 2015, 296). Leur rencontre imprévue à Tipaza où

Hizya se promenait en cachette avec Riyad est révélatrice pour montrer le mal d'être des hommes, eux aussi prisonniers du contexte social imposé, eux aussi devant cacher leurs amitiés féminines : « Je découvrais un jeune homme fragile et tourmenté, travaillé par un vif sentiment d'échec et surtout honteux d'une précarité qu'il vit très mal et à laquelle il tente désespérément d'échapper. » (Bey 2015, 297)

Le risque le plus important dans le rapport de domination entre le masculin et le féminin, est que celle-ci ne se convertisse en violence (verbale ou physique, domestique ou harcèlement de rue). Les femmes-victimes ont une explication pour recourir à l'imagination : « C'est pour fuir cette réalité-là que tu te retranches dans tes rêves. » (Bey 2015, 221)

Mais le bovarysme masculin réside aussi dans le désir de préserver une forme ancestrale du statut du père, illusion entretenue par les membres de la famille : « Le plus difficile pour nous dans la maisonnée est de continuer à lui donner l'illusion que toutes les décisions émanent de lui. » (Bey 2015, 57) Pourtant la narratrice énumère les traits physiques et de caractère qu'il assume pour incarner le *pater familias* :

Moustache sévère et regard tranchant sous des sourcils très fournis. Bourru et austère. Incapable de transiger sur son rôle et sa position de chef de famille. En principe. [...] Bien sûr, nous sursautons tous quand il tape du poing sur la table pour imposer le silence. Nous baissions la tête et esquissons prudemment un mouvement de recul quand il crie. (Bey 2015, 57)

Le visage se veut terrible, mais le jeu de dissimulation utile à entretenir l'illusion dénote une ironie proche de celle flaubertienne. Ce père n'a d'autorité que parce que les autres se prêtent au jeu ; aux yeux de sa femme et de sa fille, il ne possède pas les valeurs attendues d'un homme : « il faut beaucoup de souplesse, de diplomatie, de simulacres et de ténacité pour l'amener exactement là où on veut, et lui faire croire que nous nous plions à ses seules exigences. Ma mère surtout excelle dans ce rôle » (Bey 2015, 57). Voulant incarner et actualiser les archétypes de l'homme dur et autoritaire, il apparaît ridicule, détrôné par sa femme dont la sagesse est de savoir garder les apparences pour être celle qui décide tout pour la famille. La mère remplace donc le père dans la prise de toutes les décisions. Pourtant, la fille revalorise le père par quelques gestes plus « modernes », car il n'oblige pas ses filles à porter le voile et veut que tous ses enfants fassent des études. En échange, la mère est virilisée, elle a des attributs physiques et des traits caractériels masculins. La force physique, qui est une marque de la masculinité, est à associer au poids de la mère (quatre-vingts kilos).

Ce changement discret mais subversif de l'autorité, censée être uniquement l'apanage du masculin, mine de l'intérieur une société et ses assises traditionnelles.

Pour Riyad et sa génération, vivre et travailler à l'étranger de façon légale est resté un rêve « bovaryque », car il ne peut pas le réaliser ni même après la mort de son père. Les liens familiaux et surtout le sacrifice de sa mère comptaient davantage, il avait renoncé à quitter le pays et s'était résigné à ouvrir un petit commerce à Alger. En tant qu'être pratique, il a choisi de perpétuer ces rêves d'émigration au lieu de les réaliser, s'apparentant plutôt à Charles Bovary qu'à la folie d'Emma.

5. Le bovarysme historique

Le bovarysme historique est imputable au père de la protagoniste. Cette forme nouvelle consisterait dans une nostalgie, à la limite de la pathologie, pour l'époque de l'Indépendance où le père situe le moment de gloire du peuple algérien : « Nous avons tenu tête à l'une des plus grandes armées du monde ! » (Bey 2015, 58) Né le jour du déclenchement de la guerre, il se voit comme un enfant de l'Indépendance, marqué d'une mission, celle de préserver la mémoire de ces événements. Il place les photos des martyrs algériens à côté de celles des membres de sa famille, pour élever ces derniers au niveau des héros d'autrefois. À retenir en ce sens le commentaire de la narratrice à propos de la confusion entre l'histoire personnelle et l'histoire nationale : « J'ai d'ailleurs longtemps cru – puisque les photos de deux de mes grands-oncles morts pendant le siège de la Casbah en 1957 figurent dans ce panthéon paternel – qu'ils faisaient tous partie de notre famille. » (Bey 2015, 58) Pour le père, l'équivalent des héros des romans lus par la jeune Emma Bovary sont les héros de la guerre pour la libération du pays ; ce moment zéro de la naissance de l'état algérien s'apparente aux temps légendaires, mythiques, originaires, pleins d'espoir en une vie meilleure. Comme il ne peut pas être le héros des temps actuels, il se réfugie dans cet imaginaire historique : « il peste sur la situation actuelle de l'Algérie, [...] il déclare que le pays est en faillite (depuis le 27 décembre 1978, date de la disparition du président Boumediene, précise-t-il), que la violence physique ou politique des Algériens contre d'autres Algériens est la blessure ultime infligée aux martyrs » (Bey 2015, 58). Il se caractérise, contrairement au principe actif collé à l'homme, par une certaine passivité – sauf au niveau verbal –, qui dénote aussi une sorte de culpabilité intérieure et un sens du dramatisme, tel celui des grandes légendes nationales :

Parfois, les yeux levés au ciel, les bras tendus et mains ouvertes comme pour une prière, il leur demande pardon au nom de tous ses contemporains. Pardon de n'être pas digne de leur sacrifice. Pardon de n'avoir pas su accomplir leurs rêves. Pardon d'avoir laissé des hommes assoiffés de pouvoir reprendre leurs slogans et les vider de toute espérance. (Bey 2015, 59)

Mais il y a une différence nette entre pathétisme et héroïsme (comme partie composante des valeurs masculines). Et marquer ses enfants de prénoms des révolutionnaires, tels Boumediene et Abdelkader, ne suffit pas pour les destiner à une vie exceptionnelle, car finalement, ces noms ne correspondent pas à leur caractère, ni aux vies qu'ils mènent. C'est sa femme qui le sanctionne le plus, car il est « *Manipulable et manipulé. Surtout par ta mère, qui ne lui épargne jamais l'aigreur ou l'ironie à peine voilée d'une remarque sur le courage des vrais hommes.* » (Bey 2015, 61)

La narratrice atteste elle aussi le décalage entre les dires et les faits des autres hommes de son âge, étendant la réflexion au pays entier souffrant de ce bovarysme défini comme surinvestissement dans le passé et désinvestissement du présent vécu comme un écart décevant :

J'ai souvent l'impression que son addiction au passé, ses discours vindicatifs, cette façon de s'entourer de fantômes ne constituent qu'un exutoire, une façon de faire diversion. [...] Le seul moyen à sa portée, le seul moyen qu'il a de justifier sa passivité, l'anonymat et la vie étriquée, ordinaire, tristement ordinaire qu'il mène entre la maison, le magasin et le café voisin où il a ses habitudes. (Bey 2015, 59)

Le père n'adhère pas à l'époque contemporaine, ce qui révèle aussi le choix de son métier. Fils de cordonnier de génération en génération, il devient, après la mort de son père, bricoleur et brocanteur (pour remonter la valeur de la profession, sa fille parle d'antiquaire), « receleur de la mémoire des temps anciens » (Bey 2015, 245). Le père est donc « gardien du passé » (Bey 2015, 247) et le nouveau lui fait peur à lui aussi, vu que la question de sa fille sur l'égalité et la liberté des femmes bute contre une réponse nette : « la révolution s'arrête là où commence le droit des hommes, c'est-à-dire des individus de sexe masculin, à préserver leurs droits immémoriaux et inaliénables. » (Bey 2015, 60) Sa « Hizya » à lui n'est pas littéraire, mais historique, et lui non plus, tout comme sa fille, ne peut se défaire du rapport perpétuel qui l'y attache.

En fin de notre réflexion sur ce type de bovarysme nous nous demandons si l'islamisme extrémiste actuel n'est pas une forme nouvelle et inattendue de bovarysme. Cette interrogation nous a été soulevée par le fait que, chez ces personnes radicalisées, il est à percevoir un décalage nostalgique entre un passé cerné de règles et un présent caractérisé par la remise en discussion de ces normes ancestrales, un présent qui n'apporte plus une confirmation de leurs points de repère, mais qui est une quête perpétuelle et métamorphosante des mutations au niveau des mentalités.

6. Conclusion

La critique littéraire s'est focalisée surtout sur l'analyse de la condition de la femme algérienne dans ce roman⁹, Maïssa Bey étant reconnue comme autrice de succès, porte-parole de la voix des femmes soumises aux autorités patriarcales dans des sociétés traditionnelles (voir ses romans, parmi lesquels nous énumérons *Au commencement était la mer*, *Cette fille-là*, *Surtout ne te retourne pas*, *Nulle autre voix*). Par notre démarche, nous avons voulu mélanger le bovarysme aux problèmes liés à la condition de l'homme et de la femme dans l'Algérie contemporaine avec l'espoir de voir au-delà des apparences, de trouver non seulement les formes de manifestation, mais aussi les causes de ces conduites. Nous ne nous attendions pas à retrouver le concept tel que Flaubert l'a conçu, mais nous pouvons dire que le personnage d'Hizya dé-bovaryse, le plus souvent, toute situation qui peut porter vers une survalorisation de la réalité, que ce soit au niveau littéraire, sentimental, social ou historique. Ainsi, entrer bovaryser et dé-bovaryser, il y a ce décalage entre la réalité (médiocre) et l'imagination (qui surévalue les faits, les gens et le moi), que nous avons établi, dans la partie introductive, comme facteur essentiel pour envisager la démarche littéraire de Maïssa Bey. Nous avons insisté sur le vécu émotionnel intense des personnages malgré l'échec de leur recherche d'amour, de bonheur et d'affirmation personnelle. Car qu'est-ce qui arrête le personnage contemporain de se jeter dans la folie qui a conduit Emma Bovary vers le suicide ? C'est peut-être ce dédoublement lucide, entre l'Inconscient et le Sur-moi, qui finit par une suspension textuelle – la fin du livre. Ce qu'elle n'arrive pas à trouver ou à créer est la possibilité d'un dépassement par rapport au quotidien morne et prévisible. Elle souffre à cet égard d'une forme d'impuissance qui conduit à la résignation finale à une vie « ordinaire », une Emma bien trop sage.

Les réflexions que l'écrivaine nous a permises en marge de ce texte nous font dire que, chez Maïssa Bey, le bovarysme est dé-pathologisé comme « maladie » individuelle et hissé, finalement, au rang de problématique nationale. En plus, il n'est pas une cause, mais une conséquence socio-politique.

En quoi le « bovarysme algérien » consisterait-il ? D'abord, il doit être rapporté au contexte imaginé par Maïssa Bey dans ce roman. Il serait l'impossibilité de vivre concrètement selon ses propres aspirations, car on se retrouve étouffé par un nœud de règles de conduite. Paradoxalement, chaque génération réclame, à corps, à cris ou en silence leur injustice, mais sans pour autant avoir le courage de

⁹ Voir, par exemple, Badreddine Khelkhal, « L'écriture du corps féminin violenté. Cas des romans de Maïssa Bey » ou Mohammed Rachid Beneddra. « Sexisme et sexualisation de la femme dans *Hizya* de Maïssa Bey » ou Sabrina Yebdri, « Voix féminine et image de la femme algérienne à travers le thème de l'enfermement dans *Surtout ne te retourne pas* et dans *Hizya* de Maïssa Bey entre deux voies : tradition et modernité ».

mettre en pratique ces rôles. Aussi longtemps que ce décalage existera, il y aura des formes plurielles de « bovarysme ». Ensuite, il faudra réfléchir si ce clivage entre être et paraître, dire et faire, appartient à une classe sociale ou à un peuple, comme une sorte de « maladie » nationale ou s'il est personnalisé pour chaque individu. Quant à nous, littéraires, le concept de « bovarysme » nous a aidé à mieux examiner la société de notre époque, à distinguer les points de fluctuation des mentalités, à mieux cerner les rôles du masculin et du féminin.

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(RE)CONSTRUCTING THE SELF IN WOMEN'S AUTOFICTION: THE CASE OF SAȘA ZARE'S *DEZRĂDĂCINARE*

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ABSTRACT. *(Re)constructing the Self in Women's Autofiction: The Case of Sașa Zare's Dezrădăcinare.* This paper aims to examine the (re)construction of the female subject in contemporary autobiographical fiction by looking into Sașa Zare's debut novel, *Dezrădăcinare*. Drawing on feminist and postfeminist theory as well as research on self-writing centred on women's inscription of personhood in their works, this study attempts to investigate the relationship between the narrator and the narrated self, focusing on the negotiated distance between the two fictional constructs. This analysis will build on concepts such as metatextuality, autotheory, performativity, and on Lacanian and post-Lacanian feminist means of understanding the self as a product of societal and cultural discourse (as opposed to the idea of a unified self), by centring on the narrative techniques that show the narrator's perception of herself, and struggle to represent different parts of her identity (the writer, the daughter, the girlfriend, the student and the therapy patient). As language plays an important part in rendering the feminine subject's fragmented vision of her identity, this paper will highlight the role of personal and societal narratives in constructing an idea of the self.

Keywords: *Sașa Zare, Romanian literature, autofiction, women's writing, autotheory, metatextuality.*

REZUMAT. *(Re)construcția sinelui în autoficțiunea feminină: cazul romanului Dezrădăcinare de Sașa Zare.* Această lucrare își propune o analiză a (re)construcției subiectului feminin în literatura contemporană de factură

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autobiografică, aplecându-se asupra romanului de debut al autoarei Sașa Zare, "Dezrădăcinare". Pornind de la teorii feministe și postfeministe, precum și de la studii concentrate asupra inscripționării subiectului feminin în literatură, acest eseu va încerca să examineze relația dintre naratoare și sinele narat, accentul fiind plasat asupra distanței dintre cele două constructe ficționale. Studiul de caz propus pornește de la noțiuni precum metatextualitate, autoteorie, performativitate, dar și de la o paradigmă feministă și postfeministă care valorizează tradiția psihanalitică (în special cea lacaniană și post-lacaniană). O astfel de poziționare critică deschide lucrarea spre o înțelegere a subiectului drept produs al practicilor discursive socio-culturale (perspectivă poziționată în opoziția tradiției care postulează unitatea absolută a sinelui). Analiza se va axa pe dificultatea naratoarei de a unifica diferite părți ale identității sale prin scris (autoarea, fiica, iubita, pacienta), subiectul feminin oferind o percepție fragmentată asupra propriului sine. Un rol important în redarea acestei viziuni este îndeplinit de către limbaj, motiv pentru care lucrarea de față va sublinia contribuția narațiunilor personale și societale în procesul formării sinelui ficțional.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Sașa Zare, literatură română, autoficțiune, scriitură feminină, autoteorie, metatextualitate.*

Theoretical framework

Autofiction and (auto)biographical writing has benefited from renewed attention after the poststructuralist turn in the 1960s and 1970s, which emphasised the fragmentary nature of the self and human subjectivity as opposed to the possibility of imparting and ascertaining objective truths. Sașa Zare is a contemporary Romanian award-winning author whose debut novel works in the vein of self-writing.

Her novel might best be described using the word "autofiction," a term that has gained considerable attention since its coinage in 1970s France. As Johannie Gratton points out, this French term appeared during a period of disbelief in "the power of memory and language to access definitive truths about the past or the self" (2001, 86). Serge Dubrovsky's coinage and initial definition of the term "autofiction," as cited by Johannie Gratton in the *Encyclopedia of Life Writing*, states that the genre relies on a blending of fiction with reality, achieved by entrusting "the language of an adventure to the adventure of language" (86). Furthermore, Gratton points to the subversive nature of this term when it comes to its relationship to truth and fiction. By rejecting a "referentialist paradigm sustaining conventional auto/biographical discourse" (86), autofiction places itself in between the mimetic and purely fictional impulse. Further in the

Encyclopedia of Life Writing, Michael Sheringham anchors autofiction's impact beyond a solipsist understanding of the world: even though this genre works by blurring the lines between fiction and reality and centring on self-exploration, it is especially effective when this "exploration of identity occurs in a wider socio-political context" (2001, 340). This is also the case for Sașa Zare's novel, as it is not only a work that seeks to explore the narrator's self, but more precisely the narrator's self and her relationship with others as a queer woman who has immigrated from Moldavia to Romania.

I opt for autofiction instead of merely using the term "autobiografiction" to describe Zare's narrative, even though both point towards the relationship between one's lived experiences and fiction. The distinction between these two concepts relates to autobiografiction's investigation into "a self's autobiography" and fiction, as compared to autofiction which is centred on "fiction and a self" (Saunders 2010, 7). I find autofiction to be the more fitting term as it is a notion directly related to the ability of fiction and language to convey truths outside of a mimetic understanding of reality, but still valid in a fictional attempt to explore the self.

Building on concepts such as *Postfeminism*, *metatextuality*, *text as productivity* (Kristeva), and *autotheory* (Fournier), as well as the understanding of the subject from a Lacanian and post-Lacanian frame, this paper aims to explore how the *writing subject* (Kristeva) and the narrated self are depicted and reconstructed in Sașa Zare's novel. Before diving into the analysis, I will attempt to justify my methodological choices. The relationship between feminism and Postfeminism is a sinuous one. Misha Kavka credits Toril Moi with coining the term "Postfeminism" in her book *Sexual/Textual Politics* (2002, 29), but Moi will only dedicate herself to discussing the implications of this notion in her 1988 article "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Style: Recent Feminist Criticism in the United States". In this article she responds to criticism aimed at her earlier work, *Sexual/Textual Politics* and tries to imagine a future trajectory for the feminist movement. Moi opens a discussion regarding Postfeminism's underlying paradox: how can one be a Postfeminist (postmodern feminist) if postmodernity, according to Lyotard, means disbelief in "all metanarratives," thus including feminism? (4) Even though she holds a critical stance towards Postfeminism's attempt to combine both poststructuralist and postmodernist thought, often resulting in a discourse that centres itself on abstract notions such as the "ontological feminization of Otherness" (19), she recognises that Postfeminism's attempt to escape definitions and categories might be a way to undermine the "patriarchal paradigms of Western thought" (5). Moi is therefore not rejecting Postfeminism altogether, but recognises its importance to the feminist project as long as one manages to push "past the political impasse of postfeminism" (19).

What Toril Moi sought to remedy were both the dichotomy between liberal and radical feminists, as well as academics' approach to feminist theory. The latter was to be achieved by reevaluating the importance of political efficacy in lieu of convoluted academic jargon. Even though this term meant to be a critique of the sometimes essentialist perspective of second-wave feminism, it is important to note that the prefix "post" has made it so that this idea could easily be corrupted and appropriated by antifeminists. As Misha Kavka notes, the "post" in Postfeminism was originally meant as a methodological and theoretical shift (2002, 29), however the fact that it has been rendered as a historical break from feminism (30) has given rise to the dispute surrounding its meaning. The problem lies, as Kavka further points out, with situating feminism in a linear history – an argument that she supports with Kristeva's notion of the inherent link between the feminine and "cyclical temporality" (29). While not entirely dependent on it, Postfeminism does draw some of its theoretical roots from Poststructuralism, namely from the poststructuralist critique of stable identities, essentialism, and its reliance on discourse analysis in examining power relations. The versatility of working with a poststructuralist lens gives greater flexibility to postfeminists' investigation of power and sexuality.

In spite of tendentious readings of Postfeminism, which understand its prefix "post" as a marker denoting the irrelevance of the feminist movement,² I believe the applicability of the term, understood here as a line of thought which borrows from postmodernism and poststructuralism (Moi *Feminism*, 19), but more specifically from poststructuralism's "notion of the dispersed unstable subject" as Wright stresses (2000, 5), stands in the case of studies that intertwine a poststructuralist and a psychoanalytic view of a text. Taking the idea of the non-stable identity of the subject as my starting point, anchoring my essay in these three paradigms (Postfeminism, Poststructuralism, and Lacanian psychoanalysis) provides ample ground for an investigation, but also for the possibility of a positive resemantisation of Postfeminism by combining it with other non-essentialist frameworks. Theories circumscribed in an anti-essentialist worldview are

² For further reading, see Angela McRobbie's *The Aftermath of Feminism. Gender, Culture and Social Change* (2009) or *Interrogating Postfeminism. Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (2007) edited by Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra. The essays in the anthology edited by Tasker and Negra (which also includes an essay by McRobbie) start from the definition of Postfeminism as "a set of assumptions, widely disseminated within popular media forms, having to do with the "pastness" of feminism, whether that supposed pastness is merely noted, mourned or celebrated" (1), as well as the link between Postfeminism and neoliberal feminism, by emphasising "emphatic individualism" and the "figure of woman as empowered consumer" (2). These sociological studies differ from Moi's view of Postfeminism not only by aligning it with neoliberalism, but also by stating that Postfeminism is clearly political (5), whereas Moi was especially critical of its refusal to commit to a political position.

particularly operable in the case of (auto)biographical writing, as this type of genre allows for a fluid exploration of the subject. Before moving further with my investigation, I find it necessary to stress out that I am not labelling Zare's novel as nonfictional, but as a blend between autotheory and fiction. This is reflected on the structural level of Zare's writing, as her work is built on at least two levels. One of them can be described using autotheory as a methodological tool because it relies on a subversive attitude towards "dominant epistemologies" (Fournier 2021, 13), and uses metatextual strategies to extend the scope of the novel by theorising the writing practice. Autotheory is therefore a level added to the fictional world; it is a strategy employed by the narrator in order to extend novelistic discussion. The other textual level contains the plot, the events that move the narrative forward.

Language and "real literature" as space and practice

Dezrădăcinare paves the way for an important conversation regarding the idea of "real literature" (Bâlici and Iovănel 2022) as well as the means by which a female writer can integrate herself in a patriarchal literary system. Sașa Zare suggests that while attempting to conform to literary norms imposed by male writers, women might experience a schism at a personal level, resulting from the fact that established writing patterns cannot adequately be used to give meaning to their own experiences (2022, 330). Asserting her style as going against the grain set by the canon, the discourse of the female writer can be interpreted as belonging to one of the four fundamental types of Lacanian discourses, namely to the hysteric. In her 2020 study concerning Lacan and feminist theory, Rahna Mckey Carusi looks back on the French psychoanalyst's main concepts to evaluate their place in today's feminist tradition and use them as tools to investigate how women have repositioned themselves in male-centred narratives. According to Carusi, the Lacanian hysteric is always identified with the feminine as her status is determined by her exclusion from patriarchal discourse (2020, 29). For Lacan, reality is generated by discourse, one of the key concepts associated with one's positioning in the symbolic order of language and culture being that of gender (or in Lacan's terms *sexuation* – a concept which does not resume itself to biological sex but also entails the idea of a position generated by social constructs).

Gender plays an important role even in literary discourse, especially in the reception of literary works throughout the ages. When it comes to the way that criticism has approached the question of gender in literary texts, Anna Livia discerns between two of them: one which sees "gender as cultural property" and subsumes categories such as feminine/masculine writing style and one that

sees “gender as morphological property” to analyse how the linguistic gender system of different languages has been implemented in literary works (2003, 142). She denounces the search for the “female sentence,” attesting that there is no correlation between being a woman and a specific style of writing (145). From Livia’s perspective, it would seem that the only differences attributed to a feminine and a masculine stylistics stem from preconceived notions regarding how men and women convey emotion and information through their writing. Still, Sașa Zare’s writing persona cannot help but feel as if the text she is immersing herself in while writing is a “borrowed land” (2022, 43), a metaphor that clearly illustrates women writers’ peripheral position in the literary world, not related to a lower quality of text production, but to the wider issue of gaining intellectual credibility. The uncertainty that characterises the narrator’s relationship with the text is further exemplified by her inability to choose between tenses, as she borders between writing her novel using a combination of past tenses or sticking to the present tense. The reader gets to see extracts of the text written in the past before the narrator decides to continue writing in the present, a sign that she is consciously attempting to reverse her hesitancy towards the actions she is describing.

The text also feels like borrowed terrain because of the impossibility of authentically constructing oneself through language. From a Lacanian perspective, the subject feels alienated by its very entry into language, something that Zare also depicts in her novel. The feeling of estrangement does not only occur because the narrating self attempts to (re)write herself without employing previous conventions, but also because of her indecisiveness concerning her approach to language: is it necessary to use formal, standard language in order to write well or would a writing style that retains influences from the Moldavian dialect give way to more authenticity? (Zare 2022, 135-6). When meditating on her view of the text as unstable she turns to ask herself: “Is this how I’m feeling in relation to Moldova?”³ Throughout the novel, the narrator tries to make a clear distinction between her life in Moldova and her life in Romania. Not only does Romania occupy a more central position in relationship to Moldova (reason for which the narrator opts to go to a Romanian university), but it also guarantees enough distance between herself and her mother, who is depicted as emotionally suffocating. Although Moldova is the place where she gets to spend time with her friend, Xenia, it is also a place where she regresses into her old way of living, having to once again assume the role of being the emotional caretaker of her mother. However, in the process of writing the novel, the narrating self maintains an affectionate view towards her homeland, inserting not only formative, but

³ Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. The original Romanian reads: “Oare așa mă simt acum în relație cu Moldova?” (Zare 2022, 43)

also humorous moments from her childhood (for example her time spent with "tanti"⁴ Liuba, even though one of the key moments associated with the story of tanti Liuba [the devil episode] is described as profoundly frightening).

In contrast to Moldova, Romania is also seen as a cultural hub, a place of literary festivals and poetry readings, whereas the narrator's home country is one marked by creative inactivity: "*nothing ever happens here.*"⁵ This explains the reason for everyone's fascination with Alice, the narrator's ex-girlfriend, who had completed her Bachelor's degree in Cluj and had integrated herself in the Romanian literary circle. She is perceived by both the narrator and Xenia as an intruder: not only had she already received validation from the literary world, but she proceeds to criticise Xenia's poems based on the norms of the Romanian language. The reason she tries to impose Romanian grammar as the golden standard relates to the deeper issue of centre vs. periphery. If one writes in the Moldavian dialect one risks "not to be taken seriously," which will in turn have a disastrous effect according to Alice: "*We will be stuck in this country forever.*"⁶ Writing in Romanian is therefore not only a marker of seriousness and maturity, but also an element that guarantees the circulation of the literary product and social mobility in terms of a limited cosmopolitanism.

The way in which the protagonist perceives language as something to be performed rather than as a mechanism for self-expression ties into the novel's overarching theme of displacement, of experiencing a sense of dislocation both at home (Republic of Moldova) and abroad (in this case Romania) which translates into an ambivalent relationship with discourse itself. In matters of discourse analysis, Foucault's work has informed much of feminist scholarship and has provided a useful framework with which to examine discursive power dynamics. Nevertheless, as Carusi points out, the limitations of a Foucauldian investigation lie within too close a focus on identity politics, whereas a turn towards an understanding of discourse in the Lacanian sense (as both transindividual and transsubjective) would shift the emphasis towards how certain desires that inform traditional narratives relate to repressions at a societal level (2020, 6). Gaining a better understanding of how these traditional narratives are formed is something that can be aided by fiction, as literary texts engage with broader social and political structures, sometimes questioning said structures. The narrating self in Sașa Zare's novel scrutinises traditional institutions such as marriage, the nuclear family built upon heteronormativity,

⁴ A Romanian term used for older women in the community, comparable to "auntie".

⁵ Italics are to be found in the original as well. "La noi niciodată nu se întâmplă nimic." (Zare 2022, 260)

⁶ Italics are to be found in the original as well. "O să rămânem blocați în țara asta forever" (Zare 2022, 259)

and the conservative nature of the literary world. By challenging her own relationship with setting boundaries, the narrating self peers into deeper issues related to being a woman.

One of the prominent issues tackled relates to the constraining nature of expectations placed on mothers in a traditional environment. Required to abandon their ambitions and focus their entire attention on raising their children, these demands are in turn perpetuated by the same mothers on the younger generations, turning into a cycle that can only be broken by casting a critical look on commonplace tropes. The narrator's relationship with her own mother is of a complicated nature, making it so that the novel allocates plenty of narrative space to explore its construction. Although the mother is presented as suffocating and emotionally dependent on her daughter, this is in part explained by the traditional gender roles that mothers are expected to fulfil. The narrating self recognises the constraints imposed by "familial systems" (Zare 2022, 107) and the normative nature of such structures. Using the metaphor of the "matryoshka" (107), the narrator peers into the limits that have been set by her mother's socio-political and familial environment. Nevertheless, the novel does not imply a reductionist view of selfhood, one that erases the agency of the individual, but rather acknowledges the elements that may have hindered further personal development. Therefore, while Sașa does at times show herself to be sympathetic towards her mother's over-controlling behaviour, she also acknowledges the importance of gaining distance from her. The very efficacy of this distance is however questioned in the beginning of the novel when uncertainty concerning the very possibility of detaching from one's mother is brought into discussion: "You separate from your mother, yes, but do you ever really separate from your mother?"⁷ The answer to this question will unfold throughout the entire story. While literal estrangement and setting firm boundaries are possible, the narrator will continue to carry the image of her mother into her adult life.

Following Zare's narrative one can observe how the narrator tries to highlight different discursive practices at work. This is achieved through the double layer of the text (mentioned in the section discussing the theoretical framework employed in this analysis) which works by having the narrator use autotheory in the fictional world through metatextual insertions. Metafiction is famously defined by Patricia Waugh as a type of writing "which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (1984, 2), a "tendency" as opposed to a genre which operates based on a process of "frame and frame-break" (14). This tendency is implemented in the novel as a way to shatter the

⁷ "Te desparti de mama, da, dar te desparti vreodata cu adevărat de mama?" (Zare 2022, 20)

illusion of a seamless process of writing, but also as a way to offer explanations related to certain novelistic choices or character portrayals (Zare 2022, 330-34). These clarifications constitute a revolutionary act in themselves, sustaining the idea that it is impossible for someone to have enough authority to decide what does and does not belong in the category of so-called "real literature". Julia Kristeva's view on the power of text places it in the proximity of a political revolution. In her definition, the text is seen as "productive violence" owing to its hybridising the unconscious, subjective, and social relations into one mechanism that both constructs and makes itself subject to its own deconstruction (1984, 16), but also because of how it "brings about in the subject what the other [political revolution] introduces into society" (17). By acknowledging the revolutionary aspect of the text, Kristeva underlines how the narrative signifying system manages to deconstruct the very discourse that makes up the fabric (or textuality, in a poststructuralist view) of society itself by engaging with it through a double-aimed practice; one that provides a space where structuring (especially visible in mimetic logic) and destructuring tendencies (confronting unconscious, subjective and societally internalised narratives) can co-exist. Only as this dual practice can the text be "jouissance and revolution" (17).

The narrator's reworking of societal narratives through therapy and writing (which constitutes a therapeutic act in itself) is revolutionary both at an individual level (allowing Zare the necessary space for processing) and on a literary one. *Dezrădăcinare* situates itself in the contemporary debate concerning "real" literature, more specifically in a network of writers who produce politically powerful texts but still have a difficult time justifying the aesthetic value of their work. Zare attempts to surpass the distance between politics and aesthetics through the way in which she intertwines statements regarding literature with powerful political messages. When the narrating self finds out that Răzvan (Alice's boyfriend because of whom she had split up with the narrator) has written a book about his relationship with Alice which distorts the narrator's involvement and paints her out to be a "predatory, crazy"⁸ lesbian she points to the possibility for manipulative narratives to be turned into literature. Such writing operates on a system of marginalisation, which "can erase people from humanity."⁹ Răzvan is depicted as holding discursive power because of his destructive use of fiction, something that points not only to his reductionist view concerning the narrator's and Alice's relationship, but also to his privilege as a white heterosexual writer with credit in the literary world. The narrating self's choice of words, "*He writes me,*"¹⁰

⁸ "prădătoare, nebună" (Zare 2022, 385)

⁹ "poate șterge oameni afară din umanitate" (Zare 2022, 387)

¹⁰ "mă scrie" (Zare 2022, 385)

clearly indicates the violence that accompanies misrepresentation and the implicit power imbalance to be read in a misconstrued narrative.

Intertextuality and the marginalising tactics of literature

Returning to matters of aesthetics, poststructuralist critics such as Kristeva, who understand the text as emerging from the textuality of society, from “the social text” (Allen 2000, 36) refuse to define it in simple terms of aesthetic autonomy. Understood instead as a heterogenous practice, writing assimilates and recodes culturally constructed textuality. This is Kristeva’s justification for considering the novel as constituted through “*ideologemes*”. This concept refers to the study of text as intertextuality, meaning an understanding of “novelistic practices” as being “linked with the totality of novelistic production” (1980, 37), as influenced by the extra-novelistic (society, culture, history) in its creation. In Graham Allen’s interpretation of Kristeva’s notion of “intertextuality,” the concept is to be perceived as a reworking of the Bakhtinian “dialogic,” the reason for a text’s inability to convey clear-cut meanings being its embodiment of “society’s dialogic conflict over the meaning of words” (2000, 36). Even though Bakhtin focuses on human language and Kristeva’s “intertext” glides into a more general territory of textuality, both theorists understand the inseparability of the written text and the place and moment in time that it occupies (36).

If intertext, as understood in Kristevan logic and as explained by Allen, means that a “text is not an isolated object, but a compilation of cultural textuality” (36), emerging from the “social text” while continuing to exist “within society and history” (37), then *Dezrădăcinare* assumes its intertextual position consciously. Sașa Zare states that her intentions lie in opening up a common space that makes healing and processing trauma possible, that sheds light on the societal fabric (the “social text”) defined by the differences it imposes through its systems of exclusion.¹¹ Through the act of claiming the text’s origins as coming from a background determined by society’s treatment of marginalised groups – women, queer people – the novel seeks to build bridges between itself and its readers. In this way it tries to alleviate the effects of what have often been the discriminatory practices of literature that integrated into itself the same categories and hierarchies that stood at the basis of societal oppression. The novel thus is consciously opposed to literature written out of blissful ignorance, rooted in the “central” position occupied by its authors (Zare 2022, 387).

¹¹ See the dedication page.

Autotheory and performativity

The fact that *Dezrădăcinare* contains so many passages where the author theorises upon the state of literature and her writing process offers one the possibility to read Zare's work through the theoretical framework provided by Fournier, namely that of autotheory (the suggestion for such an analysis has also been provided by Mihnea Bâlici (see Bâlici and Iovănel 2022). What autotheory does is to provide authors with a unique chance of dismantling dominant narratives and analysing their own lives through theory (Fournier 2021, 13). The necessity of such a term as "*autotheory*," as opposed to memoir, manifesto or autobiography, ties into a wider debate concerning the splitting of literature into categories such as women's and men's writing. Furthermore, the term *theory* works as a token of intellectual credibility (26-7) in an academic environment that tends to value theory for the cultural capital that its incorporation implies. Autotheory fits perfectly within a feminist understanding of the world since it takes the experience of the subject as its starting point, asserting the personal as a fertile source from whence to commence theorising. The autotheoretical tendency is inherently connected to metatextuality since it expands on postmodernism's metatextual techniques (269), providing thus both ground for self-reflectivity (as exemplified in the novel through the narrating self's constant self-examining of her identity as daughter, writer, girlfriend) and glimpses into an author's perception of her work.

As a liminal genre, autotheory brings out what Kristeva considers to be the essential dimension of the text, that of being a "practice calling into question (symbolic and social) finitudes by proposing new signifying devices" (1984, 210). What such a practice accomplishes is to suggest a new angle from which to approach theory and practice, fusing these two categories often thought of as separate as in the tradition posed by the separation of mind and body in the logic of Cartesian dualism.¹² The success of Sașa Zare's novel must also be considered in light of the fluidity with which it connects the personal and the political, the two being understood as synergistic and interchangeable in the context of this narrative. The narrator transposes what she experiences at home into her writing. Personal and political aspects become clear analogues: the narrator's feelings of not being in control of her own body or life, describing them both as a "playground" (Zare, 2022, 174), as recipients for her mother's vision get translated into moments of uncertainty regarding her literary force. The implicit marginalisation that comes with non-conformation to heterosexual norms are morphed into the sense of not belonging to the centre of the literary

¹² For an elaboration on the discussion of Cartesian dualism see Fournier 2021, 50.

world due to stylistic unorthodoxy. Wanting to have a say in other people's perception of her, the narrator takes control of the reader's perception of the text; personal explanations are turned into metatextual gestures deemed as necessary for female writers who have to reinvent language in order to properly describe their experiences (330). Insofar as the political and the personal construe themselves as mutually generative, the self manages to escape the limits of the private and the domestic, boundaries stereotypically associated with women's writing, engaging in broader discussions that extend to the extra-literary. These discussions are, nonetheless, reflected in the creative process of an author, in a way that Fournier finds similar to the "postconfessional" mode and the idea of performativity (2021, 27).

Going past the autotheoretical level of the fictional world, autofiction itself can be linked with the notion of performativity. As Gratton points out, performativity is inherent to autofiction, since this is a genre that fulfils the double role of being both a "mirror" and a "scene" for writing. This effect is achieved by promoting "act-value at the expense of truth value" (2001, 86). What Gratton means by this is that, as opposed to autobiography, which is a genre that places value on a direct rapport between truth and writing, autofiction comes closer to being a performance. Abandoning the rigid distinction between the categories of truth and fiction, it opts for a view of fiction that places it neither "as the other [n]or the outside of truth" (86).

Performativity has been at the centre of debates surrounding the fragmentary nature of the self within feminist theory inspired by Judith Butler's explanation of gender-as-performance. The narrating self's relationship with writing in Zare's prose broaches the topic of performativity but refuses the description of writing as a performative act, understood here in the negative light of a mask that one puts up for an easier labelling of one's occupation. The preferred analogy for writing as an activity is that of a tiny/wild/scared animal (Zare 2022, 108, 402) that visits the author and makes the production of text possible. At first glance, such a metaphor appears as a rephrasing of an already dated description of the writer receiving inspiration (either from external sources- nature, a Muse, or spontaneously, without the intervention of any element from the outside world). However, Zare is careful to formulate this metaphor clearly to convey a tense relationship between the writer and this animal, one that requires patience, willingness to welcome it and to accommodate one's habits to fit its caprices rather than as a transaction through which an author benefits from inspiration without putting in much effort. The analogy of text as a snail (26) further supports this argument. The image aims to reveal the tediousness and meticulous nature of self-writing explicit. These non-anthropocentric images illustrating the writing process serve to dismantle the

image of the writer as sole master over his own text, as well as the preconception of inspiration as a marker of literary genius. The writing process is also described as a unifying act, connecting disparate facets of the self (250) which would otherwise be understood as separate realities (queerness and the narrating self's life). The only other element which provides a sense of unity is corporeal experience, described as a vessel through which one gets to "understand the world."¹³ The materiality of the body and the text provide ground for exploration and for trying to reconcile a disjointed self.

A non-essentialist view on the subject

Denying the existence of a proper unified self because the contemporary world only allows for fragmentariness and a "chaotic blend"¹⁴ relates to Postfeminism's attempts to consider what the existence of an unstable self-identity might entail. Postfeminism offers a critique of traditional feminism for failing to consider the possibility of another mode of existence outside the one provided by a positive view of the self, according to Elizabeth Wright (2000, 3-5). Wright investigates the notion of the destabilised, dispersed subject by shifting her attention towards the tradition of Lacanian psychoanalysis, but also by looking into the work of certain poststructuralist thinkers. Wright does not categorise these thinkers (such as Kristeva or Cixous) as being Postfeminist, but rather inquires the works of French theorists to shed light on the close connection between certain strands of French feminisms and psychoanalysis, namely its affinity to the notion of the unconscious. This seems opposed to Anglophone feminism, which had adopted a more reductive stance towards psychoanalytic works (8). Wright's understanding of Postfeminism will borrow its non-essentialist view of the subject from the writings of such poststructuralist thinkers.

It is important to further discuss Kristeva's notion of the "writing subject," as this poststructuralist concept transcribes a non-essentialist view of the subject onto the realm of text, specifically onto the authorial figure. In the introduction to Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Leon S. Roudiez explains the theorist's choice to identify the writer with the notion of a "writing subject" as opposed to an "author". The latter "emphasises the conscious intent of a writer who has author-ity over the meaning of his work" (1984, 7), while the term "writing subject" also acknowledges the role that the unconscious plays in the process of text production (1984, 7). This concept goes against a rationalist understanding of writer as demiurgic creator in favour of one that emphasises the workings of the unconscious on writing. For Kristeva, the practice of

¹³ "să înțeleg lumea" (Zare 2022, 374)

¹⁴ "melanj dezordonat" (Zare 2022, 93)

significance involves destabilising dominant systems of signification, the text as “productive violence” (16) being able to accomplish such a task because it refutes any theory of the subject as entirely knowable. Owing to this explanation, Graham Allen points out that in Kristeva’s work “it is not only the text that is in process but also the subject, author, reader, analyst” (2000, 34). That *Dezrădăcinare* exploits and integrates into its very structure a similar perception on the text is what makes it, as some commentary already points out, impossible to exhaustively analyse from a single point of view (Crețu 2022).

This impossibility for an exhaustive interpretation can also be traced to the fragmentary way in which the writing subject presents herself. The disjointed view on her own existence adds to the ambiguity of the text and brings out the existence of limits in the investigation of subjecthood. Max Saunders also refers to the subject in (auto)biographical writing as one that does not necessarily constitute an object of knowledge in the classical sense, for it is involved in a process of “re-construction” more so than one of construction. Such an effect is a result of the way the self is represented in mediated fashion to the reader (Saunders 2010, 502). This “incommensurability of self and text” points in the direction of a complete failure of this type of writing to deliver the very selfhood that it bases its narrative upon (505). This being the reason, Saunders suggests the usage of phrases such as the “autobiographic-” or the “fictional effect” (526) when referring to writing inspired by (auto)biographical experiences. Zare’s novel contains two levels (which retain both effects): that of the diary, dedicated towards trauma-processing and reflections on the act of writing, and that of the written text, which is still a work in progress. The two levels of writing contained by the prose create a feeling of simultaneity and authenticity regarding the text’s very production. The first level of the text relies on autotheory to justify creative choices, while the second level forms the novel proper. As readers, we get a clarification regarding the choice for an omniscient narrator implemented at written-text level. The use of the third person allows for enough distance between the narrating self and her past experiences in her homeland (Zare 2022, 23). Furthermore, there is also a level of introspection on the part of the narrator regarding the writing of Sașa’s narrative: “I often examine myself in the process of writing Sașa (...) I ask myself if I want to construct a likeable character, one that will be considered a good person at the end (...)”¹⁵ The question pertaining to means of construction remains- the narrative becomes a vessel for a performance, which implies an audience that will react to the moral or immoral actions of the protagonist. Zare’s choice is therefore not limited to the bounds of good fiction-writing, but actively considers how writing the protagonist

¹⁵ “Mă examinez des în procesul scrierii Sașei (...) Mă întreb dacă îmi doresc să fac un personaj care să placă, să fie considerată la final un om bun (...)” (Zare 2022, 332)

will seep into perceptions of her own life. The act of examining one's life from afar gives the text a sense of constructed objectivity, an impression of controlling one's narrative, as well as a better understanding of what Saunders deems as the Rimbaudian effect of auto/biographical writing (*I think therefore I am another*). This also tends to be emphasised by the time-gap between the narrating and narrated selves (Saunders 2010, 503).

The novel attempts to depict corporeal experiences through a narrative that fuses artificial objectivity (consciously opting for third person narration, contingency generated by seeing the writing process unfold) and passages dedicated to theorising on the fragmentary nature of the self. Such a blend contributes to the merge of somatic and semantic categories, which Josephine Machon sees as an important aspect of female practice. This has in turn added to what Machon terms the (*syn*)*aesthetic* inheritance, which is constructed by the mutual contamination of "corporeal and cerebral experiences" (2009, 4). Two of the examples offered by Machon as to how women writers have added to the (*syn*)*aesthetic* are the construction of transgressive narratives that actively explore a "hybridised practice" and the creation of space for theory to be firmly rooted in artistic practice (26). These instances of the (*syn*)*aesthetic* are carried out by Zare's novel in passages discussed formerly, namely those in which her prose moves further away from the canonically imposed novelistic form by alternating between narrative perspectives and reflections on the writing process itself.

The many deaths of female authors

The narrating self-approaches certain discussions aware of future criticism directed towards her tendency to clarify certain novelistic choices. "You will tell me that real literature does not explain itself. Or, alternatively: if you write well, your book speaks for itself."¹⁶ If "good" or "real" literature does not need to make its construction process explicit, then extra-literary elements have no place in actual writing according to canonical norms. Condemning the writing subject's choice to explain herself opens up the discussion related to the postmodern decree of Death of the Author. In her book *Autobiography*, Linda Anderson quotes certain feminist critics' stances on this poststructuralist idea, such as Nancy Miller and Nicole Ward Jouve. What feminist scholarship points out is the poststructuralist tendency to "universalize and fetishize difference," since the concept of the "dead" author, far from having the same impact on the writings of men and women, still follows a gendered pattern (Anderson 2001, 88).

¹⁶ "O să zici că literatura adevărată nu se explică. Sau: dacă scrii bine, cartea ta vorbește de la sine." (Zare 2022, 330)

According to these feminist critics' the-so-called Death of the Author would not necessarily come to the benefit of women writers who do not have the same institutional ties to the literary world as men do, nor could such authors afford to deconstruct a self that has not fully been constructed yet (88). The novel's writing subject is revived in the process of producing a text that tries to be both aesthetically and politically coherent. The narrator identifies three ways for women to approach the practice of writing: give up on the self, give up on writing altogether or refuse to inscribe the text in hegemonic and "legitimate" ways of writing literature (Zare 2022, 331). If every time and every place has its own literary norms, the most radical act for the female writer becomes to refuse such norms altogether and (re)write herself authentically, even if such writing flouts common-held beliefs like the erasure of the author from her own text. The writing subject's metafictional incursions in *Dezrădăcinare* thus also seem to retrace the lines rendered by a feminist re-examining of conventional postmodern, poststructuralist tropes.

Conclusions

What Sașa Zare's novel accomplishes through its intriguing reworking of traditional expectations placed on novelistic form and content is exactly what the writing subject has set out to do in the book dedication: create a space where healing and connection becomes possible. My study has focused on some of the novel's metafictional strategies and passages that integrate it into a wider discussion regarding societal and literary structures. Through looking back on poststructuralism's insight into matters of textuality, openings offered by a Lacanian and post-Lacanian framework, as well as newer concepts such as "autotheory" and (*syn*)*aesthetics*, I have tried to cast a critical look on the way the self is engaged with and translated into Zare's autofictional and novelistic project. I have also attempted to put the controversial concept of Postfeminism to use, by connecting it with a poststructuralist and psychoanalytic appreciation of the self. While taking the heated debates that surround Postfeminism into account, my analysis has endeavoured to test whether such a concept could offer valid interpretative angles. As problematised when motivating these frameworks, analysing the self in (auto)biographical writing requires multiple points of view because of the variety of strategies used to inscribe the self into text. Such a practice implies both writing and rewriting, the dual practice of constructing and reconstructing one's personhood in order to unite its fragmentariness through literary creation.

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INTERVIEW WITH THE NORWEGIAN WRITER NILS-ØIVIND HAAGENSEN

RALUCA-DANIELA DUINEA¹



Nils-Øivind Haagensen
Photo copyright: Heidi Furre

Nils-Øivind Haagensen (b. 1971) is a Norwegian journalist, poet, writer and the head of Flamme Publishing House. He was born in Ålesund and at present he lives in Oslo, Norway. He made his literary debut in 1998

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with the volume of poems *Hender og hukommelse (Hands and Memories)*. In 2001 he published his first novel, *Det radioaktive (The Radioactive)*. In 2004 he was awarded *Sultprisen (Hunger Prize)* for his literary work, and in 2013 he was nominated for *Nordisk råds litteraturpris (Nordic Council Literature Prize)* with the volume of poems *God morgen og god natt (Good Morning and Good Night, 2012)*. He was also awarded the *Stiftelsen Kjell Holms kulturpris (Stiftelsen Kjell Holm Culture Prize, 2017)*. In 2019 he published the novel *Dette norske livet (This Norwegian Life)*, and in 2013 he published the novel *Liten (Little)*. *Sangria i parken (Sangria in the Park, 2021)* is his most recent novel published by Oktober Publishing House. He also published a series of volumes of poems *Det uregjerlige (Hard to Control, 2020)*, *Stor (Big, 2018)* and *Spredning (Spreading, 2014)*.

Raluca-Daniela Duinea: You made your literary debut as a poet, but you are also a novelist. How and when did you start writing?

Nils-Øivind Haagenen: I guess I started at the time I began university. In Bergen. At around nineteen, twenty. Literature didn't seem like a feasible way of life, really, I was studying politics to become a teacher, when a friend of mine asked me why I didn't study literature, "it's all you ever talk about". And in a sense, he gave me permission. Because when you grow up poor, working class, becoming an author seems irresponsible. You got an education to make sure you got a job to make sure you got a place to live and pay the bills etc. That's the way of thinking I grew up with. And had to break with it in order to make literature a way of life. It wasn't easy.

R.D.D.: I have written a PhD thesis about Jan Erik Vold's literary work, published in 2018, in book format as *The Poetry of Jan Erik Vold and the Norwegian Lyric Modernism in the 1960s*. In *Varmestafetten: 15 essays om Jan Erik Vold (The Heat Relay: 15 Essays About Jan Erik Vold)* you wrote an interesting essay entitled "Jan Erik Vold i kloster. Munkens levereregler vs. poetens skrivereregler" ("Jan Erik Vold at the Monastery. The Monk's Living Rules vs. the Poet's Writing Rules"). How did you become interested in Jan Erik Vold's literary work? What is the article about?

N.Ø.H.: In that essay I write about the chastity in Jan Erik Vold's poetry. Simply put, JEV has always struck me as a very chaste poet, and I thought comparing

the monk and the poet's way of life, in his poems in particular, could be interesting. And it was. I rather like that essay.

R.D.D.: I have recently translated into Romanian your novel *Er hun din?* (*Is She Yours?*, 2016). Why this title? If you had to choose another title, what would it be?

N.Ø.H.: Choose another title? Hm. Surprising. First let me say that the title is a simple phrase, one you use when you want to locate a kid's parent, is she yours? Suggesting that whatever the kid is up to, is the parents' responsibility. The first working title I used was *The little girl discovers a funny adult*. Like a book for children might've used. It was a good working title. The simplicity, but also mystery in it kept me going for a long time.

R.D.D.: How did you come up with the idea of creating such a beautiful and interesting novel and who is Elvira the person to whom you dedicated this novel?

N.Ø.H.: Elvira is the daughter of a friend of mine, and the girl in the book is very much based on my first meeting with her, which was at her mother's, my friend's, birthday party. We became fast friends, and like the kid in the book she simply bombarded me with questions. About every little thing. And that's how the book came about, really. I got home from the party, it was a sleepover, and just started writing down our many conversations. It chooses you, as Miranda July puts it.

R.D.D.: The complexity of the novel *Is She Yours?* is centred around two major themes, abortion and the image of the unborn child. Are's attitude towards Janne's unexpected decision regarding her pregnancy is repulsion, disagreement, regret and disapproval. Why this controversial and delicate subject? Is the image of the unborn child, as it is described by Are, an invitation to think twice before taking a reckless decision?

N.Ø.H.: That might be a little bit of a leading question. I wouldn't call the decision to end the pregnancy reckless. Are's disgust is more centred on the parents who see the baby as a hindrance in their daughter's life. Are disagrees but feels overlooked and marginalised by his parents-in-law. Abortion is a major theme in the book, yes; in the sense: what happens when the baby father disagrees and wants to keep the child? Are feels powerless and robbed of future happiness, and that feeling becomes all encompassing.

R.D.D.: What about the names of the main characters, Eira, a six-year-old girl, and Are who is forty-three? It seems to be a specific assonance between their names. Did you choose their names on purpose?

N.Ø.H.: Yes. Names are always difficult. There are so few that fit the vision of the character. And I liked that his name is jumbled into hers, so there's that connection between them as well. Also, that his name, in Norwegian, rhymes with funny/weird. And that hers is like an abbreviation of Elvira. The real-life version.

R.D.D.: Are is heartbroken and he is longing for his unborn child. When he opens the manuscript entitled *Cordelia*, its content reflects his inner thoughts and philosophical reflections mostly based on how the unborn child would have looked like, the precious time they would have spent together, the type of education he would have given to his child, making reference to Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* and Harold Bloom's *The Anatomy of Influence: Literature as a Way of Life*. What is the role of this frame story? Is literature a way to escape life's problems?

N.Ø.H.: Not to escape, I think, but reshape. Understanding literature is also understanding the story of your own life. And the story of your life can be, and is, told in many different ways by the many people around you. Stories that can and will influence your own. Are wants rid of this, if possible. Meaning: he doesn't want to be weighed down by prejudice and presupposition. His parents-in-law are not opposed to their daughter becoming a mother, they just think it's too soon and she should finish her education first, get a job, visit Paris, live a year abroad, those kinds of things. Things affixed to "the good life". However, Are opposes any such pre-programmed idea of the good life. If all he wants is to make his girl happy, and her life a joy, how can having their child be wrong? Or bad timing? He struggles to understand this and finds help with his struggles, perhaps surprisingly, in literary theory.

R.D.D.: *Is She Yours?* is an interesting novel about love, family and children, career, existential problems, literature and philosophy. What role do children play in an adult's life?

N.Ø.H.: Oh, that's a big question. I'm always tempted to answer big questions with "I don't know", because I really don't. But I guess, in regards to the novel, this novel, I'd say the role of the child is to let the adult know that he's more

than one thing. That he is endless potential. Same as her, same as the child. He thinks he's stale, she knows he's fresh. And funny. And remarkable.

R.D.D.: It is worth mentioning that the dialogues in this novel are built up on a series of *invisible* replies which seems to be part of the plot, sometimes becoming even a part of it. To put it differently, there is no boundary between the direct speech and the narration itself, since the replies are not marked. In addition, the beginning of the main paragraphs is always written in capital letters. I consider that these special features make your writing style unique. Is that true?

N.Ø.H.: Unique? I certainly like that description. The dialogues I wanted to make as life-like or alive as possible, and sometimes in a conversation a person might answer him- or herself, or continue with a different kind of retort altogether before the other person has had his or her say. Which happens quite a bit with Are and Eira.

R.D.D.: Why did you choose to call Are either "the adult man" ("den voksne mannen") or simply "the man" ("mannen")? Are there any differences between these syntagms?

N.Ø.H.: It has a little bit to do with the child's viewpoint. The same way we look at children as children, they look at grown-ups as adults. He's just another adult, like she's just another kid. And then they become the opposite of just another version of their age, and then they become friends. Not just friendly and goody with each other, but real friends. That was part of the point or the plot, that friendship like that is possible. Between two people in wildly different parts of life.

R.D.D.: Another interesting thing regarding this novel is the special way in which you switch from the everyday colloquial language to a poetic one in the same paragraph, in order to create concrete images. Is this another special feature regarding your writing style?

N.Ø.H.: Yes, I'm sure it is. Although, for me it just happens. This is just how I see the world in writing.

R.D.D.: In this novel you have also made reference to well-known writers, literary critics, philosophers, singers, such as William Shakespeare, Harold Bloom, John Keats, Jacques Derrida, Søren Kierkegaard, Harry Nilsson, Wenche Myhre, Jahn Teigen and others. This intertextuality makes the novel even more

interesting and more vivid. Why did you choose to make reference to these scholars, writers and singers?

N.Ø.H.: Mostly for the reason you've implied in the question: to try to make it more life-like, more real and present as possible. And singers and authors and scholars and critics, along with so many others, play natural and regular parts in our lives. We quote them as we connect with others. We sing their songs when we celebrate each other. And so on.

R.D.D.: You have mentioned William Shakespeare many times with his *Twelve Nights, King Lear, Much Ado about Nothing*). What is the reason for making so many references to Shakespeare?

N.Ø.H.: Because it's Shakespeare. And the fact that his work represents all the hardship and all the silliness of life.

R.D.D.: Is there a connection between the video game Pac-Man and everyday life? Do you think that people around us tend to direct our life towards a *game over*, according to Even, a character from this novel?

N.Ø.H.: It was something that struck me at the time of writing: why do the ghosts flee Pac-Man when they are vulnerable? They'll just respawn, right? It shouldn't matter to them. In fact, the sooner he eats them, the sooner they'll respawn and be able to pick up the chase again. The only reason to flee would be to make his life difficult at the expense of their own. Which is how many people act in real life. Is the theory. And the world-view of Even. Who's a little bit like the villain of the piece.

R.D.D.: What does *aledyn* mean in the novel? The word is used first by Are when he is talking to Eira, when she eats oatmeal with milk.

N.Ø.H.: It's what I used to call Havregryn when I was a child. So, it's made up. And Havregryn is oatmeal. I used to eat it for breakfast.

R.D.D.: Another aspect of this novel is the fact that it is built upon different narrative writing plans. There are presented at least two different worlds. One seen through the innocent child's eyes, a world based on fruitful and funny discussions between Eira and Are and the other one seen through an adult's life perspective with its never-ending problems and challenges. What can you tell us about the structure of the novel?

N.Ø.H.: Yeah, that sounds about right. One of my goals was to comment on adult depression in this novel. And how people who suffer from this might be viewed, unfairly, as uninterested and disconnected. They might in fact be quite the opposite. And Eira doesn't allow prejudice surrounding this to influence her impression of Are, as she can't, as she's not aware. And that's not just a question of innocence, but joy and trust and acceptance and ... receptivity, I guess.

R.D.D.: Have your novels been translated into other languages. Do you have other novels or poems translated into Romanian or the novel *Is She Yours?* is the first one?

N.Ø.H.: It's the first one. And that's very exciting. I can only hope the people who read it, enjoy it.

R.D.D.: Did you publish other novels which are similar to *Is She Yours?* What about the novel *Liten (Little)*?

N.Ø.H.: Well ... that's a bit hard to say. They are similar insofar as they're written by me, but might have a different feel to them. *Is She Yours?* is more dialogue-driven than *Liten (Little)*, for instance. *Liten* does involve a little girl as well. My kid-sister who died when I was just a little boy. Before I got a chance to know – and remember her. So, the novel is simply my way of remembering something I can't. *This Norwegian Life* might have a bit more of the feel from *Is She Yours?* I'd say. Whereas *Sangria in the park* has more to do with unwanted sexual attention and what is and what isn't sexual abuse.

R.D.D.: You are a poet and a novelist. Jan Erik Vold in one of the interviews which I conducted, stated that "Prose is line, poetry is point" ("Prosa er linje, poesi er punkt"). What do poetry and prose mean to you? Which one reflects better your feelings and thoughts?

N.Ø.H.: Another big question. Vold's answer is fine. Although I might not want my poetry too pointy. I think they both mean a lot of the same things to me. Two different but similar ways to contain, but not restrain, life. Present singularity in ways that transcend it. To ease, for just a moment, the weight of just about everything.

R.D.D.: You are also the head of Flamme Publishing House. What kind of literature and what writers do you promote? What is the new wave in Norwegian literature?

N.Ø.H.: Yes, I am. And we promote all kinds, I'd say. Or rather: I hope. It's not always easy to look at yourself from outside, so to speak. New wave? Not sure. The way I see it there's lots of waves. Or constant choppy waters, more like.

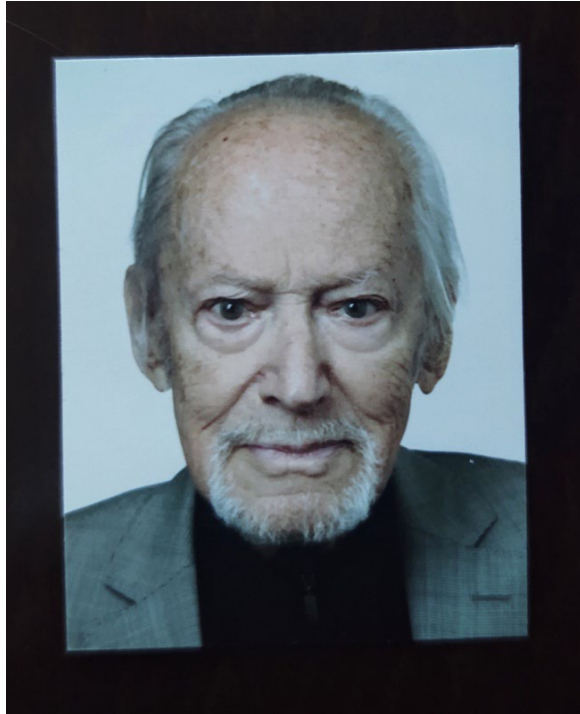
R.D.D.: I would like to thank you for your patience and invite you to write a few lines for the Romanian readers who will read your novel *Is She Yours?* translated into Romanian. Thank you!

N.Ø.H.: Dear readers, firstly I'd like to say, to any who might pick up and read *Is She Yours?*, thank you. I once lived these few summer days, and they were some of the best days of my life. And writing the book was possibly my best writing experience. I felt briefly connected to something, or possibly everything, and I hope for you to experience the same. That would be simply amazing. Thanks again.

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DAS FASZINOSUM DES ERZÄHLENS - IN MEMORIAM HANS BERGEL

ANITA-ANDREEA SZÉLL¹



Hans Bergel

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Das folgende Interview mit dem siebenbürgisch-sächsischen Schriftsteller **Hans Bergel** (1925-2022), das im Zeitraum 2014-2015 geführt wurde, ist Teil einer Interviewreihe in deutscher Sprache, die etwa zweihundertfünfzig Seiten umfasst. Die Reihe ist das Ergebnis eines langen Briefwechsels (2011-2022) der Verfasserin des Interviews mit dem 1968 nach Deutschland emigrierten Autor und behandelt mit literaturwissenschaftlichen und interdisziplinären Methoden Aspekte seines umfangreichen Werks. Ziel dieser Untersuchung ist es, die Impulse zu erforschen, die zu der oft und unterschiedlich gepriesenen Vielfalt von Hans Bergels Schriften geführt haben und noch heute führen. Der im Alter von 97 Jahren verstorbene Bergel hat in seinem rund fünfzig Bücher umfassenden Werk fast alle literarischen Gattungen vertreten: Lyrik und erzählende Prosa, Kurzgeschichten und historische Romane, thematisch schwierig kategorisierbare Essays, wissenschaftliche Texte, Reiseberichte und sogar politische Kommentare. Das folgende Interview bietet neben seinem informativen Inhalt einen geistvollen und abwechslungsreichen Dialog über das Verhältnis von Lyrik und Prosa im Werk des Autors. Hans Bergel hat die Verfasserin der Interviewreihe sowohl beim Korrekturlesen als auch bei der endgültigen Formulierung des Textes geholfen, folglich ist dieser Text als ein gemeinsames Werk der Verfasserin und des Befragten zu betrachten.

Anita-Andreea Széll: Der Literaturhistoriker Peter Motzan schrieb 1995 über Sie, dass Sie sämtliche „Textsorten“ beherrschen. Es gibt Erzähler, die kaum einen überzeugenden Essay zu schreiben imstande sind, Essayisten, die nicht erzählen, geschweige denn ein akzeptables Gedicht schreiben können, Lyriker, deren Prosa stolpert. Sie haben einen Abriss der deutschsprachigen Literaturgeschichte in Siebenbürgen seit dem Mittelalter mit den Termini des Wissenschaftlers verfasst. Sie haben Novellen – so Andreas Birkner und andere – von kleistischem Format geschrieben, Gedichte, deren Formschönheit hervorgehoben wurde, Romane, die Sie als meisterhaften Romancier auszeichnen. Dies alles lässt sich in Rezensionen und in wissenschaftlichen Untersuchungen Ihrer Schriften nachlesen. Wie erklären Sie selber die Beherrschung dieser ungewöhnlich reichen Tastatur?

Hans Bergel: Ich kann sie nicht erklären, ich finde auch kaum Bemerkenswertes daran. Wenn ich eine Geschichte erzähle, dann – so simpel das klingt – erzähle ich eben eine Geschichte. Ein Stoff wie die Geschichte einer

Literatur hingegen lässt mich a priori zum wissenschaftlichen Vokabular greifen. Und so weiter. Wir sprachen bereits darüber.

A.A.Sz.: Das Publikum kennt vor allem den Prosaautor Hans Bergel. Doch Sie schreiben, wie gesagt, auch zahlreiche – und m. E. sehr gute – Gedichte. Sind Sie nun ein Schriftsteller oder ein Dichter?

H.B.: Ich hoffe, dass ich zu denjenigen Prosaautoren gehöre, in deren Erzähltexten das Dichterische lebendig ist. Ich kenne keinen guten Erzähler in der Weltliteratur, in dessen Arbeiten das Poetische fehlt. Ein Kritiker schrieb über mich, meine Lyrik sei in meiner Prosa enthalten. Nun, ich halte mich für einen Erzähler. Meine Gedichte sind Experimente des Umgangs mit der Sprache – der Pianist würde sagen: Sie sind Fingerübungen. Nicht mehr. Sollte dieser oder jener Vers, den ich schrieb, für gut befunden werden, nehme ich es dankbar zur Kenntnis. Wenn diese oder jene meiner Erzählungen als Dichtung empfunden wird, stimmt mich das ebenso dankbar.

A.A. Sz.: Wie sieht die Wechselbeziehung Schriftsteller-Dichter innerhalb derselben Person aus? Welche Kräfte aktivieren sich beim Schreiben von Prosawerken, welche beim Verfassen von Dichtungen?

H.B.: Das ist eine Frage für Literaturpsychologen. Was mich angeht – ich sagte es schon – : Ich trenne die beiden nicht. Kleists Novellen z. B. sind dank ihres sprachlichen Genius zugleich Prosawerke *und* Dichtungen. Ist „Der kleine Prinz“ von Saint-Exupéry Prosa oder Dichtung? Er ist beides zugleich. Und Tschingis Aimatows Erzählung „Dshamilja“? Ebenso. Wie viel Dichtung lebt doch in Tolstojs Prosaepos „Krieg und Frieden“! Etc. Dabei meine ich „Dichtung“ nicht zuerst als Erdichtetes im Sinne von frei Erfundenem. Sondern als Verdichtung: als Intensivierung im Ausdruck, im Vortrag, im Gestus der Darlegung. Ein in Reime und Strophen gefasstes Sprachgebilde ist noch nicht Dichtung. Während eine sprachlich vollendet gestaltete Prosa Dichtung sein kann. Der Unterschied zwischen „Schriftstellerei“ und „Dichtung“ liegt in diesem Zusammenhang, nicht in der äußeren Form.

A.A. Sz.: Stimmungen, Gefühle, Denkprozesse beim Schreiben – wie lassen sie sich unterscheiden?

H.B.: Darüber habe ich niemals nachgedacht. Schreiben – so wie ich es von meiner Persönlichkeitsanlage her „betreibe“ – ist, so meine ich, ein zu komplexer Vorgang, als dass er sich in Kategorien wie Stimmung, Gefühl, Denken auffächern ließe. Es handelt sich vielmehr um ein Zusammenspiel und Zusammenwirken rationaler und emotionaler Kräfte, die zum literarischen, zum dichterischen

Schreiben führen, sei dies epischer oder lyrischer Art. Wir sprachen eingangs darüber.

A.A.Sz.: In der Sekundärliteratur ist die Rede davon, dass das lyrische Kunstwerk eher eine Beziehung zwischen Leser und Autor herstellt als das Prosawerk. Stimmt das so?

H.B.: Fest steht m. E., dass die lyrische Aussage unmittelbarer gemeint ist als die epische. Sie sucht den direkten Zugang zum Leser, während die epische Aussage, grob gesagt, in der Regel zunächst den Weg der Sachmitteilung geht. Doch taugen solche Reduzierungen der Definition nach meinem Dafürhalten nicht viel. Der Reichtum der literarischen Annäherung an den Leser ist unbegrenzt. Dies alles hängt von Temperament und Intention des Schreibenden, von seiner besonderen persönlichen Art und spezifischen Begabung ab.

A.A.Sz.: Dennoch: Ist das Gedicht vor allem gefühlorientiert? Aus Stimmungen heraus spontan?

H.B.: Die Schulauffassung sagt „Ja“. Aber ich könnte aus dem Stegreif Dutzende Beispiele dafür anführen, dass das Gedicht von Pablo Neruda bis Bertold Brecht, von Goethe und Heine bis Ana Blandiana und Karl Lubomirski auch ganz andere Wege einschlug und immer einschlagen wird.

A.A.Sz.: Wie entstand Ihr Gedichtband „Im Spiegellicht des Horizonts“? Aufgrund eines Plans? Spontan?

H.B.: Ich sagte bereits, dass ich mich nicht für einen Gedichteschreiber halte. Allgemein entstanden meine Gedichte in Situationen, in denen ich weder Bleistift noch Papier zur Hand hatte, es mich aber drängte, ein Gefühl, eine Erkenntnis, einen Momentaneindruck, ein Bild sprachlich festzuhalten. Das war vor allem auf Reisen, Wanderungen, Autofahrten und jedesmal unter Umständen der Fall, in denen mir der Luxus einer Niederschrift am Schreibtisch nicht zur Verfügung stand. Ein Gedicht konnte ich mir im Unterschied zu einer Prosapassage merken – mit Hilfe des Reims; daher die Anzahl meiner Reimgedichte. Die Gedichte des oben genannten Bandes wählte ich auf Drängen von Freunden aus einer Fülle wie geschildert entstandener Gedichte aus, legte die Auswahl einem ausgewiesenen Lyrikkenner vor und bat um eine letzte Sichtung. Das Ergebnis war der 1996 veröffentlichte Band. Mittlerweile liegt ein zweiter, umfangreicherer Band vor, „Der schwarze Tänzer“, 2012.

A.A.Sz.: Dabei immer wieder Griechenland, zumindest das Mediterrane als Motiv. Welches war das Faszinosum? Die Natur? Die Kultur?

H.B.: Das Faszinosum war die sinnenhafte Begegnung mit den geistigen Wurzeln, aus denen wir Europäer, wenn auch nicht immer unmittelbar, kommen: das hellenische Universum, dem ja, nicht zu übersehen, das altägyptische vorausging. Aus Büchern kannte ich fast alles, nein, vieles. Aber bis zur Emigration aus der Isolation des kommunistischen Staates 1968 blieb auch die griechische Antike ein Abstraktum. Von Kind an jedoch mit der Welt des historischen, kulturellen, künstlerischen Phänomens „Hellas“ durch meinen Vater bekannt gemacht, galt meine erste Auslandsreise nach der Ankunft im Westen Griechenland. Ich sah, ich roch, ich fühlte, ich umarmte im Geiste all das, was ich aus Büchern kannte. Es war das Erlebnis einer inneren Inbesitznahme, wie ich es in dieser Totalität kein zweites Mal hatte. Bei dieser und den folgenden Griechenlandreisen entstanden dann die Gedichte.

A.A.Sz.: Ihre „Ballade vom Wiedersehen am Gardasee“?

H.B.: ... ist so gemeint, wie sie in dem Band steht. Wir besaßen einen Bungalow am Gardasee, den meine Frau vor vielen Jahren erwarb. Altersbedingt veräußerten wir ihn vor Kurzem. Jedes Wiedersehen mit dem Ort und der Landschaft berührte und beglückte mich.

A.A.Sz.: Ihre Gedichte zum Thema Siebenbürgen – sprechen sie von Schmerz, Traurigkeit, Einsamkeit?

H.B.: Vor allem vom Bewußtsein und der daraus erwachsenden Stimmung im Rückblick auf das Finale einer historischen Landschaft europäischer Hochkultur, der ich entstamme. Jemand beschrieb ihr historisches Schicksal als europäisches Menetekel.

A.A.Sz.: Im Gedicht „Siebenbürgische Passion“ sprechen Sie vom „Leid und Zeit“, von „Sinn und Ewigkeit“.

H.B.: Die ganze Strophe lautet: „Erst wenn die Wunden je vergessen sind / und sich ein künftiges Geschlecht befreit / auf einen neuen Stundenschlag besinnt, / wird Leid und Zeit zu Sinn und Ewigkeit.“ Darin ist alles enthalten, was ich mit „Rückblick“ meinte. Und es ist nicht allein auf die Kulturlandschaft meiner Herkunft anwendbar.

A.A.Sz.: Der Band enthält auch Nachdichtungen aus dem Rumänischen. Warum „Nachdichtungen“ und nicht „Übersetzungen“?

H.B.: Meine Absicht war nicht philologischer, sondern künstlerischer Natur. Das gilt ebenso für den Band Lyrik von Ana Blandiana, „Versteigerung der Ideen“, mit rund 150 Gedichten, der im Jahr 2009, und den Band Übersetzungen aus der rumänischen Lyrik „Verlorener Horizont“, der 2012 erschien. In Absprache mit den – lebenden – Autoren galt meine Arbeit nicht der Wort-für-Wort-Übersetzung, sondern dem Bemühen, im Deutschen ein dem Original künstlerisch ebenbürtiges Gedicht zu schaffen – natürlich nicht um den Preis des „Verrats“ am Original. Bei der Auswahl entschied ich mich nach Gesichtspunkten der „Sympathie“ für das jeweilige Gedicht, wobei mir, am Rande bemerkt, Lucian Blaga und Ana Blandiana von der geistigen Tonart und der Handhabung der Sprache her am meisten lagen. Seltsamerweise, wie bereits moniert, in Deutschland so gut wie kaum bekannte Namen.

A.A.Sz.: Sie erwähnten den Lyrikband „Der schwarze Tänzer“ (2012). Der Band enthält kein Gedicht dieses Titels. Ist das Gedicht „Hererotänzer“ damit gemeint, das Eröffnungsgedicht? Wer ist diese Figur, die uns „vor der Tiefe rettet“, wie es im Gedicht heißt?

H.B.: Das Gedicht endet mit den Zeilen „Der schwarze Tänzer/im stürzenden Licht der Nacht/am Rande des Himmels/über dem Abgrund.“ Während einer meiner Afrikareisen stieß ich im Nordosten Namibias auf eine Hererosiedlung. Die Bewohner bereiteten sich für ein nächtliches Fest vor. Sie luden mich zur Teilnahme ein. Den Tanz eines jungen Mannes vor dem offenen Feuer im Kreis seiner Gemeinde begriff ich als ein Ritual des Niederringens der „bösen Geister“ nicht allein in der Welt, sondern in uns selber. In diesem Sinne tanzte der Herero im Namen aller.

A.A.Sz.: Der Tanz spielt in Ihren literarischen Überlegungen wiederholte Male eine Rolle. Ich erinnere an Ihren tiefgründigen Essay „Das Spiel und die Aggression des Chaos“, an Ihre ausführlichen Betrachtungen in „Die Zerrissenheit und Einheit Südosteuropas“, nicht zuletzt an die Heiduckengestalt des herkulischen Hirten Gordan im Epos „Der Tanz in Ketten“. Sie lassen den wegen Aufbegehrens gegen die Diktatur für „lebenslang“ eingekerkerten Gordan in einer 130-Mann-Zelle des berühmten unterirdischen Kerkers „Fort 13 Jilava“ in Momenten großer Not tanzen. Da er drei Mal aus schwerbewachten Gefängnissen ausbrach, trägt er Ketten an den Füßen. Er hat sich der Häftlingskleidung entledigt und tanzt in seinem eigenen Blut um Mitternacht im dröhnenden Widerhall der Steingewölbe. Ein gespenstisches wie überwältigendes Ereignis. Es gab dem Roman den Namen. Realität? Symbol? Oder beides?

H.B.: So wie der Tanz in Ländern des Südostens heute noch getanzt wird, enthält er als literarisches Motiv wie kaum ein anderes den „doppelten Sinn“. Es ist nicht der nach choreografischer Vorgabe ausgeführte Bewegungsablauf, dessen exakte Ausführung maschinell wirkt, so wie es bei westlichen „Tanzturnieren“ zu sehen ist. Natürlich kennen die Landschaften des Südostens altüberlieferte Gemeinschaftstänze mit festgelegten Rhythmen, Schrittfolgen etc., vom LKW-Fahrer bis zum Minister werden sie ohne Aufhebens gemeinsam getanzt. Doch ich meine hier den Tanz des Einzelnen – den Tanz als Improvisation des vulkanisch zu körperlichem Ausdruck drängenden Gefühls der Lust und des Schmerzens, des Jubels und der Trauer. Er „entspringt“ explosiv überbordendem Empfinden des Moments, das sich in körperlicher Gestik entlädt. Melancholie wie Extase, seliges Wohlbefinden wie tragische Verzweiflung können seine Auslöser sein. Jedes Mal sucht er die Katharsis, wie die Griechen die innere Selbstbefreiung nannten. Auch um den Triumph über den Augenblick geht es dabei... So tanzt der Makedonier Alexis Sorbas auf Kreta in Kasantzakis' Roman, so tanzt der Karpathenhirte Gordan im Roman „Der Tanz in Ketten“, so tanzt der Herero in meinem Gedicht „Der schwarze Tänzer“ ...

A.A.Sz.: Wer die etwas über hundert Gedichte dieses Bandes liest, kann den Eindruck gewinnen, dass sie geschrieben wurden, um ihren Autor „vor der Tiefe“ zu retten.

H.B.: Ich denke, dass wir uns mit allem, was wir gestalterisch tun, instinktiv „vor der Tiefe“ retten – vor dem Nichts, vor der Sinnlosigkeit, vor der Leere, vor der Gefahr der Lebensvergeudung. Und deren Folgen.

A.A.Sz.: Können Gedichte im 21. Jahrhundert im Menschen etwas bewirken?

H.B.: Das kann ich nicht beurteilen. Doch es wird immer, zu allen Zeiten, Menschen geben, die durch ein Gedicht erreichbar sind. Ich halte nichts von den pseudointellektuellen Totsagungen der Kunst, der Dichtung, es hat sie immer schon gegeben. Aber Kunst, Dichtung, Musik bestehen nach wie vor. Gerade der sogenannte „Mensch der Moderne“ oder der „Postmoderne“, der sich in zunehmendem Maße von Technisierungsvorgängen vereinnahmt sieht, die er selber vorantreibt, wird als Gegengewicht die Antwort der Kunst brauchen. Und suchen. Solange er sucht, ist er nicht verloren.

A.A.Sz.: Sie sagten, Ihre Gedichte seien das Ergebnis eines Gefühls, beziehungsweise eines Erlebnisses, das Gefühle oder die Inspiration auslöste. Das gilt für den Band „Im Spiegellicht des Horizonts“ wie für den Band „Der schwarze Tänzer“. Im zweiten Band taucht dann ein Thema auf, das dem Bereich des Religiösen angehört. „Gebet“, „Christus“, „Anrufung“ o. a. sind Beispiele dafür. Und Sie

sprechen Negierungen aus wie „Behalte deinen Segen für dich“ (Gebet) oder „Das Unerbittliche an Dir/ist alles an dir/ist das Nichts./Du bist das Nichts“ (Anrufung). Sagen Sie, bitte, dazu etwas.

H.B.: Der profunde Zweifel ist – zumindest in meinem Fall – nicht nur eine legitime Frage der Ratio. Er ist der cartesianische Teil meines Denkens. Er ist ebenso eine Frage der äußersten Emotion. Gedichte wie die von Ihnen genannten sind der Ausdruck davon.

A.A.Sz.: Das Gedicht „Siebenbürgische Passion“ – in beiden Bänden vorhanden – wird im zweiten Band, „Der schwarze Tänzer“, thematisch ergänzt durch das Gedicht „Mutterland“.

H.B.: Die „Passion“ ist mein Blick ins Vergangene im Südosten Europas, das „Mutterland“-Gedicht mein Blick in die Gegenwart in Mitteleuropa. In meine Gegenwart. Rilke schrieb, dass der Mensch „mit vierzig sein letztes Gesicht“ habe. Gemeint ist, dass wir – ungefähr – bis zum 40. Lebensjahr jung genug sind, uns innerlich zu ändern, fähig sind, in einer neuen Umgebung Wurzel zu schlagen, noch wandlungsbereit genug, um Heimat zu erleben. Ich war 43, als ich das Land meiner Herkunft verließ. Nach Rilke hatte ich bereits mein „letztes Gesicht“. Ich kam also zu spät ins Neuland Mittel-/Westeuropa. Selbstverständlich vollzog ich den Wandel auf intelligibler Ebene. Doch mich von emotionalen Ebenen des bis dahin gelebten Lebens loszureißen, zögerte ich und wollte ich schließlich auch nicht, je näher ich mein neues Umfeld kennenlernte. Übrigens verlangte dies auch keiner meiner neuen Bekannten, je mehr sie von mir und meinem Leben erfuhren. Doch das berührt, um wieder Fontane heranzuziehen, ein zu „weites Feld“, um mich hier darüber auszulassen.

A.A.Sz.: Trotzdem drängt es mich zu einer weiteren Frage: Hatten Sie, als Sie 1968 in Deutschland eintrafen, Ihren – sagen wir – persönlichen kategorischen Imperativ endgültig formuliert?

H.B.: Ich erfuhr im Laufe der Jahre seit 1968 beglückende Horizonterweiterungen, wenn Sie wollen: auch Belehrungen, die ich gierig aufnahm. Ich lernte quer durch Europa und in anderen Kontinenten Landschaften, Kulturen und vorzügliche Menschen kennen, die manche Erhellungen – wie Bestätigungen – in mein Selbst- und Weltbild brachten. Im Grundsätzlichen aber hatte ich nicht mehr als Retuschen an Erkenntnissen vorzunehmen, seien es Positiva, seien es Negativa, die ich in der Härte der zurückliegenden Jahrzehnte im Griff der Diktatur als Fundus meiner moralischen Ausstattung erkannt oder mir erarbeitet hatte. Ergänzungen, Hinzufügungen, Abstriche? O ja, nach meinem Schicksalsjahr 1968 –

sofern es etwas derartiges gibt – wirkten neben den immer offensichtlicher werdenden Ernüchterungen und Vereinsamungen natürlich freundliche und geistig bereichernde Einflüsse auf mich ein, denen ich dankbar blieb. Lassen Sie mich dazu anmerken, dass der Großteil meiner von Ost nach West „verpflanzten“ Landleute – es blieb ihnen bei den gewaltsamen historischen Umbrüchen nichts anderes übrig – psychische Probleme haben. Die meisten schweigen darüber. Ich bin Schriftsteller und sehe mich demnach in der Pflicht, darüber zu schreiben und zu sprechen.

A.A.Sz.: Viele Künstler, darunter Schriftsteller und Dichter, befanden sich während der letzten Epochen in der Lage, ihr „angeborenes“ Heimatland verlassen zu müssen. Auch Ihr Freund Winkler in Israel musste es tun. Im Band „Der schwarze Tänzer“ widmeten Sie ihm das Gedicht „Der mit den Blumen spricht“; es ist eine eindrucksvolle Aussage, sie endet mit den Zeilen „Hast du's bemerkt?/Ich sitze neben dir ...“ Das erscheint mir vieldeutig.

H.B.: Es ist ein Gedicht des Alterns. Aber auch über die Weisheit des Alterns. Manfred Winkler besaß sie. Ich kenne seine Lyrik gut: Für die vier letzten Lyrik-Bände in deutscher Sprache verfaßte ich jeweils das Nachwort. Auch für den letzten Band, „Wo das All beginnen soll“ (2014), das vielleicht tiefgreifendste. Winkler war die letzte stark empfundene Freundschaft meines Lebens. Wie ich ihn in dem von Ihnen genannten Gedicht in der Herbstsonne sitzend „zeichne“ – alt, gebeugt, weißhaarig –, wollte ich ihn in meinem Gedicht nicht einsam, nicht allein dort sitzen lassen. Daher der tröstliche Schluss des Gedichtes: „Ich sitze neben dir ...“ Er war mir, wie er sagte, für diese Schlusszeile „sehr dankbar“.

A.A.Sz.: In unserem Jahrhundert wird viel Natur zerstört. Ist Ihr Gedicht „Corrida de toros“ ein Protest? Hier ein Protest gegen die kreatürliche Zerstörung, die sowohl zu Wasser als auch zu Lande in erschreckendem Ausmaß vor sich geht?

H.B.: Es war nicht in diesem Sinne gemeint. Doch darf es im Nachhinein so verstanden werden. Als ich vor fast fünf Jahrzehnten in einer Arena in Zentralspanien die Tiere unter dem Degenstich der Toreadore nach dem von Anfang an verzweifelt aussichtslosen Kampf niederstürzen sah – eines von ihnen keine zehn Meter vor mir –, wurde mir das Spektakel plötzlich als Tragödie nicht allein des vor mir sterbenden Tieres bewußt.

A.A.Sz.: Sie nannten Ihre Lyrik „lediglich Fingerübungen“ und lehnen es ab, als Lyriker zu gelten. Zugegeben, Ihre Gedichte bedienen sich nicht heute geübter Ausdruckregister. Doch ist ihnen weder Substanz noch ästhetische Schönheit abzusprechen.

H.B.: Das Schreiben von Gedichten – so wie ich es betreibe – ist für mich Training für den Umgang mit und der Handhabung der Sprache. Ich bleibe dabei.

A.A.Sz.: Einige hochgeachtete Autoren, wie z.B. die Österreicherin Friederike Mayröcker, vertreten die Ansicht, dass die Erzählung als literarischer Ausdrucksmodus überholt ist und uns nichts mehr geben kann.

H.B.: Ich lasse Frau Mayröcker gerne ihre Ansicht. Doch nehme ich an, dass sie da etwas missverstanden hat. Nämlich dass die Erzählung nicht nur ein uraltes, sondern vor allem ein elementares Kommunikationsmittel des Menschen ist und bleiben wird. Im Essay „Der Tod des Hirten“ (1985, 2018) vergleiche ich die Erzählung dem Wind, dem Rauschen des Flusses, dem „Atem der Erde“, ja, ich gehe so weit, sie zu den platonischen Ideen – zu den Urbildern also der menschlichen Verständnisswelt – zu zählen. Ich gebe mir durchaus Rechenschaft darüber, wo das Missverständnis der Frau Mayröcker liegt, die ja nicht als einzige diese Auffassung vertritt, Gottfried Benn z. B. tat es ebenfalls. Das Wunder der Erzählung, so wie es uns am Beispiel der klugen Königstochter Scheherezade in der arabischen Dichtung „Tausendundeine Nacht“ anschaulich gemacht wird, hat nichts an Wirkung verloren. Doch die Ausführung dazu führte hier zu weit. Nur soviel: Malen Sie sich aus, wir hätten in der Weltliteratur keinen Homer, keinen Vergil, keine Kleist-Novelle, keine Hemingway-Erzählung, keinen Balzac- oder Hamsun-Roman, keinen Tolstoj, keinen Pasternak usw. Ganz abgesehen von der therapeutischen Bedeutung der Erzählung, die der moderne Psychologe und Psychotherapeut nicht hoch genug veranschlagen kann, ist die gute Erzählung immer auch ein unverzichtbares Dokument.

A.A.Sz.: Literatur bedeutete schon bei Seneca, bei Molière oder Schiller zugleich auch Erziehung des Menschen. Wie stehen Sie dazu?

H.B.: Das gilt für alle Künste. Das Ideal ist mit Sicherheit die Vorstellung, dass der Mensch, der in ein Konzert mit Mozart-Musik geht, den Saal nach anderthalb Stunden „geläutert“ verlässt, das heißt innerlich befreit vom Ballast des Nebensächlichen, des Verzichtbaren, des Verwirrenden. Ich habe diese Lage in einem besonderen Moment durchlebt: Als ich nach musiklosen Gefängnisjahren völlig unvorbereitet eine Flötensonate von Händel hörte, machte ich, nach einem Schock, innerhalb von Minuten einen inneren Reinigungsprozess mit: Mir war, als werde alle Verzweiflung, alle Trostlosigkeit und aller Dreck vergangener Jahre in wenigen Minuten durch die Musik Händels aus mir hinausgewaschen. Kleist weist in der Novelle „Die heilige Cäcilie“ auf diese Wirkung der Musik hin. Sie ist ungezählte Male bezeugt worden. Eine

vergleichbare Wirkung kann von einem makellosem Gedicht – denken Sie an Petrarca, Hölderlin oder Goethe – oder einem Prosatext, ebenso aber auch von geglückter Architektur ausgehen. Ich erlebte Derartiges über die Musik hinaus. Im antiken Rom erhob sich die Masse von den Sitzen, wenn Verse von Vergil vorgetragen wurden, und verharrte in andächtigem Schweigen. Das war Kunsterlebnis und zugleich auch Psychotherapie. Wir kennen die Musiktherapie als modernes Studienfach usw. Ob der Mensch jedoch ausschließlich mit dem Mittel der Kunst erziehbar sei? Ich weiß es nicht.

A.A.Sz.: Welches ist Ihr „pädagogisches“ Erlebnis im Umgang mit der Kunst?

H.B.: Ich bin Schriftsteller. Das heißt, mein „Umgang mit der Kunst“ ist aktiver Natur. Ich nehme Kunst nicht als „Verbraucher“ auf. Ich schaffe und gestalte künstlerisch, ohne pädagogische oder andere Nebengedanken. Ich habe es, wenn Sie wollen, mit dem Wort als Stromschnelle im Fluss zu tun, deren Makellosigkeit und Wildheit gleichermaßen mein Anliegen sind. Dies aktive Verhältnis erzog im Laufe von Jahrzehnten mein Denken und mein Gefühl für das Wesentliche, es zwang mich zur Disziplin und kultivierte im Erzähler Hans Bergel gewollt ungewollt nicht zuletzt die Fähigkeit des Vorausbedenkens. Als substanzieller Erziehungsfaktor in mehr als nur diesem Sinn kam die Musik hinzu, die mich seit der Kindheit „begleitet“. Vom Gregorianischen Choral über die frühen Italiener und Bach bis Messiaen. All dies entwickelte von früh an meinen Blick für Struktur und mein Gefühl für Form. Ein pädagogischer Vorgang, den ich nicht anstrebe, der aber, ist das Kunstwerk geglückt, eben dadurch zugleich das erzieherische Element in sich trägt. Oder?

A.A.Sz.: Lassen Sie uns zu einigen Fragen Ihrer Lyrik zurückkehren. Wohl nicht zufällig genau in der Mitte Ihres Gedichtebandes „Der schwarze Tänzer“ finden sich die vier „Israelischen Trilogien“. Sie „durchschreiten“ von Moses bis Jesus, von Judith und Holofernes bis Hiob die biblische Welt. Jerusalem und Massada, Nazareth und Hebron sind Stationen Ihrer lyrischen Äußerungen. Wie kam es zur Niederschrift dieser Gedichte?

H.B.: Nach meiner Emigration 1968 erging es mir mit der seit der Kindheit durch die Lektüre vertrauten Welt des Alten und Neuen Testaments nicht anders als mit der Welt der mediterranen Kulturen bis in die Antike zurück: Ich kannte sie aus Büchern, doch bis zum 43. Lebensjahr in einem kommunistischen Staat „eingesperrt“, drei Mal davon realiter in Gefängnissen, hatte ich davon nichts mit eigenen Augen sehen dürfen. Das heißt, die Grundlagen unserer vor allem aus Antike und Christentum hervorgegangenen europäischen Geisteswelt

und deren Landschaften waren mir lediglich als Abstrakta bekannt. Und so, wie ich nach 1968 auf Reisen die Zeugnisse des griechisch-römischen Altertums geradezu gierig aufsuchte und so etwas wie ein Identifikationserlebnis hatte, erging es mir später mit den biblischen Stätten. Neben mehrfachen Reiseaufzeichnungen schlug sich das Erlebnis unter anderem in den vier „Israelischen Trilogien“ nieder.

A.A.Sz.: In den zwölf Gedichten dieser Trilogien finden sich widersprüchliche „confessiones“. Im Gedicht „Christus“ (IV. Tril.) lassen Sie Christus über Gott sagen: „... Er gab euch das Leben/und mich als das Maß.“ Im Gedicht „Anrufung“ aber (III. Tril.) nennen Sie Gott – der im „Christus“-Gedicht „das Leben gab“ – das Nichts: „... Du bist das Nichts./Das Nichts./Das Nichts.“ Als Leserin der Trilogien deroutierte mich das.

H.B.: Das „Buch der Bücher“, die Bibel, ist nicht zuletzt auch ein Buch der Widersprüche, und ich bin – mit Conrad Ferdinand Meyer – wie wir alle „ein Mensch mit seinem Widerspruch“. Es gibt in dem Band das Gedicht „Gebet“, in dem ich mit Gott hadere. „Behalte deinen Segen für dich, /die Unerbittlichkeit deiner Güte/tut mir Gewalt an“, lauten die Schlusszeilen. Ich hatte und habe als ein – nicht im kirchlichen Sinn – gläubiger Mensch meine, ich sagte es, cartesianischen Zweifel. Ich stehe zu ihnen und weiß, dass ich ohne sie nichts bin. Niemals aber habe ich den Fehler gemacht, den Zweifel als Dominator meines Lebensverständnisses mich leiten zu lassen.

A.A.Sz.: Ein Vergleich zwischen Ihren biblisch suggerierten Gedichten und den Gedichten, die in Italien oder Griechenland entstanden?

H.B.: Ich meine, dass einer der Unterschiede in der Blickrichtung liegt; das fällt mir beim Wiederlesen nach Jahren auf. Die Gedichte der mediterranen, der hellenischen Welt blicken, summarisch formuliert, vor allem *nach außen*, die der biblischen vor allem *nach innen*. Besuchen Sie Delphi unter dem Parnass in Mittelgriechenland und gleich danach das nicht weit entfernte Ossios Lukas: In der hellenischen Anlage mit Sportstadien, Apollon-Tempel, Theater etc. die Freude der Hellenen am Tageslicht, an der weithin sichtbaren Nacktheit des Leibes und dessen Kultivierung. In den nahen Klöstern der griechisch-orthodoxen Christen das Dunkel der Räume, bestenfalls im Kerzenschein, die Verhüllung der Menschengestalt ... Dort der Blick nach außen, hier der Blick nach innen. Die reine Dialektik.

A.A.Sz.: War das beim Schreiben Ihre Absicht?

H.B.: Nein. Es ergab sich aus dem Anblick, der Kenntnis und dem Meditieren über das Wesen der beiden Kultur- und Geistesuniversen. Hier der geniale leibfreudige Mensch der ägäisch – mediterranen Antike. Dort der geniale leibabgewandte der Bibel. Beide faszinieren mich in ihrer auf uns gekommenen klassischen Ausprägung. Können die beiden nicht auch als Ausdruck der zu allen Zeiten janusköpfigen Natur des Menschen verstanden werden? Ich neige dazu.

A.A.Sz.: Bei fast allen Ihren Gedichte fällt die geografische Titelgebung auf. Zum Beispiel „Steppe am Schwarzen Meer“, „Herbstabend am Trasimenischen See“, „Berlin“, „Bukarest im Sommer 2000“, „Kanadischer Sommer“. Und so weiter. Eine Weltgeografie in Gedichten?

H.B.: Nein, sondern vielmehr Niederschlag meiner Begegnung mit den unterschiedlichen Geo-Gesichtern auf unserem Globus, die zu sehen ich das Glück hatte und die ich mit dem Ort des Ereignisses konkret verbunden wissen will. Wenn mich in der Namib-Wüste der Anblick des von den Bodenwinden ununterbrochen und kaum sichtbar über meine Schuhe getriebenen Sandes fesselt, gebe ich dem Gedicht, zu dem mich der Vorgang anregt, den konkreten Namen – ich gab dem Gedicht den Titel „Morgen in der Namibwüste“. Gleiches gilt für die „Nacht in Malcesine“ am östlichen Garda-See-Ufer, für den „Sonnenuntergang bei den Lofoten“ vor der Küste Norwegens, den „Sommermittag in Delphi“ in Phokis oder für die „Algonquinwanderung“ in Kanada. Die Titel ergeben sich von selbst. Ich mache daraus kein System. Es ist, wenn Sie wollen, meine private lyrische Geografie.

A.A.Sz.: Ihre Gedichte leben von Bildern. Sind Sie ein Augenmensch?

H.B.: Oscar Walter Cisek, der deutschsprachige Bukarester Erzähler vor allem der ersten Hälfte des vorigen Jahrhunderts und hochkarätige Intellekt, der mir das Schreiben als handwerklichen Vorgang bewußt machte – Onkel des oben erwähnten Alexandru Cizek –, notierte in einem Brief, den ich lange Zeit für verloren hielt, ihn dann aber zufällig unter alten Papieren entdeckte, das Wort von der „Augengier“, die mich beim Schreiben bestimme. Cisek meinte damit meine Prosa. Eine zutreffende Beobachtung: Ich sehe, was ich schreibe, als Bild. Ich schreibe also vor allem in Bildern. Das gilt, denke ich, sowohl für die Prosa, als auch für meine – sehr reduzierte – lyrische „Produktion“. Doch sehe ich die Welt natürlich nicht allein als Bild, ich begreife sie gleichermaßen als Idee im Bild.

A.A.Sz.: Kommt dabei – sowohl in der Erzählung als auch im Gedicht – das Moment des Psychologischen nicht zu kurz?

H.B.: Weder als Erzähler noch als Gedichteschreiber rede ich psychologisierend über den Gegenstand, über den ich schreibe – über Abläufe, Situationen, Menschen. Das ist meines Erachtens die Aufgabe des Psychologen, der sich theoretisch über seinen Gegenstand – in diesem Fall mein literarisches Erzeugnis – ausläßt. In der neuen Literatur wurde verschiedentlich in der psychologisierenden Ausbreitung die legitime moderne künstlerische Herangehensweise an den Gegenstand gesehen. Ich halte davon nicht viel, weil ein Kunstwerk etwas anderes sein muss als der psychologische Blick auf die Welt, es muss mehr sein. In meiner erzählenden Prosa führe ich die Handlungsstränge und die Personen in einer Weise, aus der sich für den Leser der psychische Vorgang oder das psychische Ereignis quasi organisch *ergibt*. Wenn ich in einem Gedicht Bilderfolgen biete, dann freilich nicht zuletzt mit der Absicht des psychologisch denkenden Autors, aus ihnen heraus oder mit ihrer Hilfe die Atmosphäre und den Erlebnisraum zu schaffen, die ich beabsichtigte, um zur erwünschten künstlerischen Wirkung zu kommen. Das Moment des Psychischen muß m. E. in der Situation liegen, die ich gestalte, auch im Bild, das ich verwende. Ich *rede* also nicht über mein Thema. Ich *gestalte* es. Der psychologisierende Kommentar dazu ist dann eventuell die Aufgabe des wissenschaftlichen Interpreten.

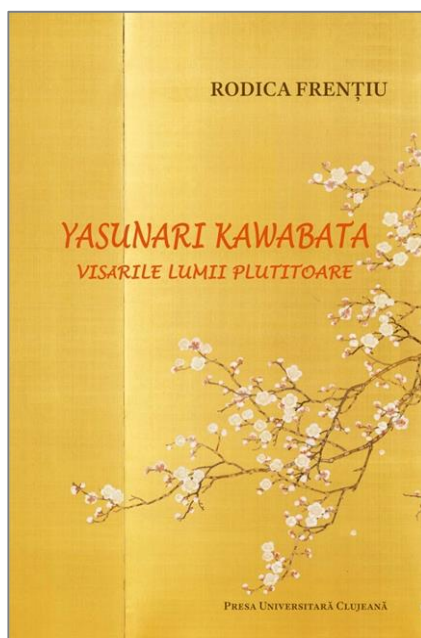
A.A.Sz.: Eine letzte Frage zu Ihrer „lyrischen Produktion“: Ich kann mir vorstellen, dass Sie eine Erzählung, eine Novelle, einen Roman von langer Hand planen. Frage: Planen Sie Ihre Gedichte?

H.B.: Nein. Schon deshalb nicht, weil sie ein „Nebenschauplatz“ meiner schriftstellerischen Arbeit sind. Meine Gedichte entstehen, im Unterschied zur Prosa, ausschließlich spontan. Das gilt freilich nur für den ersten Entwurf. Ihm folgt die Arbeit an jeder Zeile, vielleicht an jedem Wort. Diese Arbeit nannte ich sprachliche „Fingerübungen“ – und dachte dabei an die „Fingerübungen“ genannten Exerzitien des Instrumentalmusikers. Oft beschränkt sich der spontane Einfall nur auf zwei Zeilen oder einen Vers. Wenn er mir geglückt erscheint, lasse ich mich auf das Wagnis ein, daraus ein Gedicht zu machen.

BOOKS

Rodica Frentiu, *Yasunari Kawabata: Dreams of the Floating World*, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2023, 324 p.

Literary interpretation is a complex art which always involves more than the work being analysed and can never be reduced to a decoding of the author's thoughts. As obviously important as those two aspects are, delving into them exclusively would mean ignoring the author as a person, both in the sense of ignoring the influence of one's life on one's writing style and thematic choices, but also in the sense of ignoring the societal trends in thinking that inevitably affect all people within that context. This explanation was necessary as avoiding that mentality is one of the qualities of Rodica Frentiu's book, *Yasunari Kawabata: Dreams of the Floating World* (2023). The work becomes almost as much about Japanese history, society, culture and the language as about the renowned Japanese author himself, all



in an effort to make it more accessible to a European reader, while keeping it a thorough interpretation that does justice to the alterity of Kawabata by not trying to naturalise and explain his thinking using Western concepts.

A perspective that is aware of the readership is made apparent right from the beginning with Florina Ilis' preface to Frentiu's book-length study. It almost serves as a warning to the reader that Kawabata presents a particularly challenging collection of works considering

both the literary and cultural contexts within which he wrote (p. 8). Ilis does go on to state, however, that "Rodica Frentiu approached the Japanese writer's works without ignoring any of the difficulties that this author poses for foreign readers, but, at the same time, overcoming them with elegance and passion, she brings Kawabata closer to the Romanian reader" (p. 9).



This proves to be true throughout, considering that the volume's arguments are backed up thoroughly with examples and explanations from cultural, linguistic, societal, and literary points of view.

From a structural point of view, the book has six chapters that each undertake a different work from Kawabata. On top of that, there are three more chapters in the form of addenda which shift the perspective from an analysis of the Japanese author, to using him as an example to highlight aspects to be discussed later. Each of the initial six provide a comprehensive examination of their respective work, even repeating explanations from previous chapters where necessary to ensure that each chapter can indeed be read in isolation from the others. However, as the preface mentions, "[a]lthough every chapter can also be read separately, readers that will, in spite of that, read the entire volume, will have, in the end, a unitary overview of Kawabata's literary universe, being able to reconstitute the poetic thread that ties all of these works together" (p. 16). As such, this work is to be seen as a unit in its entirety, each chapter further showcasing the author's range and evolution of thought throughout his career. This view holds true in many different aspects of the book, the most obvious of which being the fact that his works were taken in chronological order, creating a narrative of evolution and shifting methodologies with time, as is the case with most authors. Moreover, as is the nature of any such study, all of an author's works become relevant to understanding their artistic vision, so one chapter might focus on a particular work, while sometimes using another one as a point of comparison in order to properly showcase the overarching theme or the shifting of perspective.

Moving on to a closer look at the chapters themselves, the book begins with a section on *The Dancing Girl from Izu* (1926). This chapter establishes a methodology in analysis that will continue throughout the book, that of beginning with the background information one would expect from such a volume: the ideological background of the period, the literary movement Kawabata is ascribed to, the biographical details that are relevant to the interpretation, and perhaps some of his other works that are relevant. This is followed, however, by something which "makes it unique in the landscape of our Japanology", as Ilis shows (p. 15). There is nothing radically different from other works of this kind, the uniqueness comes in the form of nuance. Namely, that the author's perspective itself seems to shift from that of an outside scholar looking in and coldly analysing the works, looking for known tropes and recognisable literary devices, to someone trying to immerse themselves and the reader into the author's mentality. What follows the more general aspects that serve as introductory explanations to each chapter is an analysis of the main themes, images and concepts that were used, but, while still maintaining the quality of literary analysis, has the undertone of a psychological analysis of the author's mentality which generated the work in the first place. This two-faceted approach that looks at both author and work at the same time creates deeper meaning as it avoids the typical cause-effect relationship to highlight a neo-sensualist exploration of the world, whose findings are completely unique to Kawabata's worldview. Thus, the book shows the ways in which Kawabata transcends the imagery he puts forward with the familiar motif of water, for example, and turns it into a literary device to further his goal of looking

for a “pure” form of beauty within a “floating world” characterised by evanescence (pp. 34-35).

The next chapter focuses on Kawabata’s *Snow Country* (1935-1937) which becomes an opportunity to showcase some of the other particularities representative of Kawabata’s works. First of all, the novel being analysed is similar to this book in that each chapter can be read somewhat independently, but reading it in its entirety is what provides the reader with the grander picture. While it partly has to do with the way the work was published, in multiple parts throughout 13 years (p. 57), the author uses this opportunity to also explain that Kawabata’s novels are much less focused on a plot and its usual way of unfolding, choosing to focus on specific moments and ideas in a series of encounters instead, which gives the impression of “essays in prose” (p. 57). Moreover, beyond looking for the “pure” beauty as a general concept, the author argues that here Kawabata tries to find it in the more specific instance of a conceptualised Japanese beauty. It takes the form of a “Snow Country”, which sits outside of history and outside the perception of Western thinkers who only “project the Occident’s self-consciousness on a...constructed representation” (pp. 57-58).

The third chapter looks at the novel *Thousand Cranes* (1949-1951) and leans very heavily on the author’s knowledge regarding Japanese culture. If the previous novel tried to find beauty in the classical image of Japan, this one shifts to contemporaneity in an analysis of the role of art in the alienation of the modern individual (p. 87). The author uses a combination of elements such as the *mono no aware* concept, representing the sadness

inherent to ephemeral things (p. 86), the analysis of the names in the novel, and explanations regarding the philosophy and traditions which constitute the backbone of different forms of Japanese art, in this case mainly the renowned tea ceremony which takes centre-stage in the novel, but also the Noh theatre to find all of the subtleties in a novel filled with symbolism.

The next step in constructing Kawabata’s literary universe is the novel *The Sound of the Mountain* (1949-1954). The author points out the heavy influence of Western and modern thought on this particular work, emphasizing right from the beginning the psychoanalytical direction that commanded the attention of many Japanese writers (pp. 118-120). Although it can be deduced that Kawabata did not take Western thought in its pristine condition, rather using it to reevaluate Japanese culture (p. 119), this still demands a noticeably different approach to interpretation, seeing as the focus is even less focused on the action and plot, and more on the concepts being utilised to meditate on life and death in the background of Japanese society and its expectations. Thus, the author notices Kawabata’s use of a central character whose limited, yet insightful perspective becomes the focal point of the novel (p. 121). This also becomes the moment when the intratextuality and intertextuality of the book comes into play as the author notices a particular relationship between Kawabata’s works that she calls the “sequenced novel”, referring to the fact that *The Mountain’s Noise* can be read as a continuation of sorts of *The Dancing Girl of Izu* and *Snow Country*, and an ideological prequel to the next novel to be discussed, *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* (1961) (p. 159). Considering she

identifies the main character of *The Mountain's Noise*, like many of Kawabata's characters, with the author himself in some regards, the musings and conceptualisations that come of the situations in the books become more and more intertwined, in the form of a continuous evolution of thought as Kawabata keeps exploring his own subconsciousness (p. 158).

As has just been established, the next novel, *The House of the Sleeping Beauties*, is a continuation of the train of thought started with *The Dancing Girl of Izu* and continued with all of the other works that have already been mentioned in the search for pure beauty in the different aspects perceived throughout Kawabata's life. In this novel, Rodica Frențiu notices another one of these ways to look for beauty, the *Matsugo no me* concept, meaning "the last look" (p. 165). She highlights that Kawabata was very intrigued by the concept and used it in conjunction with the *mono no aware* concept to associate the feelings of sadness which come with the evanescence of everything and the last look back upon life at the end of it to generate the purest form of beauty within the scope of a "floating world" which, again, is characterised by its lack of permanence (pp. 165-167).

The last novel written by Kawabata, and the last this book looks at, is *Beauty and Sadness* (1961-1963). As the author herself admits early on in the chapter, this one will be treated completely differently from the other works she has looked at, choosing to focus on the title itself and its meaning (p. 197). Thus, the chapter begins with a linguistic analysis of the title in an attempt to deduce the author's intent behind its suggestiveness as a culmination of all of the themes and ideas expounded upon in the previous parts of the book (p. 195). Only after extracting as

much meaning from the title as possible, does the volume return to the novel itself in order to draw the final conclusions of a search for beauty and an acceptance of its relation to sadness.

After what could be called the core chapters of the book, there are three chapters in the form of addenda. The first one deals very eloquently with the problem of translation, posing the problem of some of the inadequacies and difficulties regarding term choice in Romanian translations, and the loss of subtler meaning that comes with the great difference between the two languages and literary traditions. This chapter is in a way anticipated throughout the previous chapters with the discussions regarding the translation of the title of *The Sound of the Mountain*, the analysis of the first sentence of *Snow Country* which is repeated here, and many other such instances. The penultimate chapter takes another, completely different direction, choosing to focus on one of the biggest cultural phenomena related to Japan, manga comics. This very insightful chapter provides a history of the term and literary mode, expanding upon its importance and significance in modern times. Lastly, the third chapter comes back to Yasunari Kawabata's work, proposing another possible interpretation to *Snow Country*, one that does not contradict the previous one, however, managing instead to complement it by tying together the previous concepts and the Japanese way to see the passing of time and the alternation of seasons to find even deeper meaning to the symbolism of the novel.

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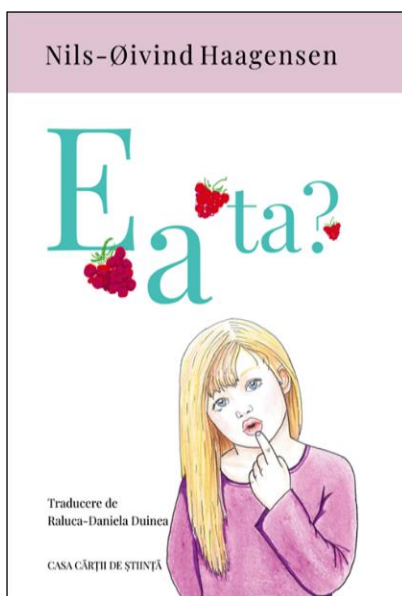
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BOOKS

**Nils-Øivind Haagenen, *E a ta?* (*Er hun din? / Is She Yours?*),
translated from Norwegian by Raluca-Daniela Duinea,
Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2023, 232 p.**

Nils-Øivind Haagenen is a Norwegian poet, writer, journalist and the head of Flamme Publishing House. He debuted as a poet in 1998 with the volume *Hender og hukommelse* (*Hands and Memories*) and as a novelist in 2001 with *Det radioaktive* (*The Radioactive*). In 2013 he was nominated for Nordisk råds litteraturpris (Nordic Council Literature Prize) for the volume of poetry *God morgen og god natt* (*Good Morning and Good Night*, 2012). Among his latest publications are the novels *Dette norske livet* (*This Norwegian Life*, 2019) and *Sangria i parken* (*Sangria in the Park*, 2021).

The novel *Er hun din?* (*Is She Yours?*) was published in 2016 at Oktober Publishing House in Norway and in 2023 it was translated into Romanian by Raluca-



Daniela Duinea, being Haagenen's first translation published in Romania at Casa Cărții de Știință Publishing House, the *Nordica* Collection, in Cluj-Napoca, with financial support from NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad).

This novel is built upon two different worlds. One is represented by the six-year-old girl, Eira, her attitude and her funny dialogues, while the other is represented by Are, a forty-three-year-old adult invited to Malin's birthday party, an old friend, who is also Eira's mother. The party takes place on an island in a summer house, by the sea. Although this setting suggests a rather relaxed atmosphere and although the story seems simple at a first sight, the novel presents two major and actual themes: abortion and the concept of reshaping of



the human body and soul through literary theory and philosophy. The idea of abortion is presented here, in the sense that Janne's parents constrained her to abort Are's child. His parents-in-law see the child as an obstacle in Janne's life who cannot concentrate on her career and on her future plans. Thus, in spite of Are's disapproval regarding the abortion of his own baby, Janne follows the advice of her parents and aborts the child.

Nils-Øivind Haagensen's writing style is unique in the sense that most of the time there are no writing borders between the dialogues and the narration in the book. Moreover, it is worth noting that the replies are not marked by the traditional lines of dialogues, thus giving the impression of a set of *invisible* replies, which in some cases became indirectly part of the narration. Thus, the direct speech often seems to be intertwined with the narration in a very subtle manner. The dialogue alternates with Are's reflections, the narrator using a poetic and descriptive language. The surrounding nature, including the fiord, the birch trees, the grass, the sky, the birds, the mountains, the sand, all seem to understand and accept his inner torment and struggle. Nature is sometimes personified as a witness or a reliable friend to whom you can confess: "he envies the grass because it concentrates on one thing: to grow and become grass" (p. 76).

Another important aspect is the fact that the novel presents Are's existential life problems and struggles mirrored through his dialogues with Eira, his own thoughts and his conversations with the other adults. Eira's funny replies and her simple and naive attitude seem to release the tension from the adult's life, which is why they become good friends.

The novel is structured in three chapters. The first part of the novel presents in a unique way the funny and sincere conversation between Are, often called the man or the adult man, and Eira, the little girl. Questions like: "Are you funny?", "Are you a man of active sympathies?", "Do you like spinach?", "Are you a childish adult?", "How many hairs do you have on your head?", together with the narrator's reference to the video game Pac-Man and its association with everyday life, as well as life seen as a *game over* are only a few aspects debated and presented in the first part of the novel.

The second section opens with the morning after Malin's birthday party. The action from this part takes place both on the beach where Are and Eira with her towel with raspberry print take a bath in the fiord and in the summer house. The second part ends with Harry Nilsson's *The Moonbeam Song* sung by Are to Eira before she goes to sleep.

The third part is built upon two narrative perspectives which seem to be two different narrative worlds, one of Are and the other one of Eira. They both have their own story to tell: Are, with his heart full of suffering, doubts and unanswered questions and Eira, the sincere little girl who seems to resonate more with Are than with Olivia, a girl of the same age as her. Are is the only adult at the party who fully understands Eira's curiosity and her funny questions. Suddenly, things take a completely different direction when Gunn, a friend of Are, finds out that his boyfriend Ove has been hospitalised and found to have suffered a stroke. She tells Are about it and they go directly to the hospital. In the meantime, Eira is looking after Are, wondering if he left without saying

goodbye to her. While Are is at the hospital with Gunn, old and unpleasant memories come into his mind, regarding Janne, his ex-fiancée, about when she came and aborted their child. Among the special features of the novel, the permanent remembering of the past is often emphasised by the narrator. Are is strongly anchored in the past. Almost everything makes him recall past events related to Janne and his feelings for her and for their unborn baby girl. When Are returns from the hospital to the summer house, Eira keeps asking him funny and sometimes personal things, for instance if he has any children. To this question Are's answer is that he does have a child and an entire life story to tell. Another important aspect regarding the structure of the novel is that the narrator uses the frame story technique from the moment Are opens a word document entitled "Cordelia", which is a manuscript of his untold life story. In this manuscript he makes various references to philosophers and theoreticians, thus trying to reshape his past the way he wanted to look by using literary theory and deep philosophical thoughts. Thus, he mentions Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, Harold Bloom's *The Anatomy of Influence: Literature as a Way of Life*, Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction, the American writer John Rawls and many references to William Shakespeare and his plays *Twelfth Night*, *King Lear*. Meanwhile, Eira wants to continue her dialogue with Are and asks him other funny and at the same time interesting questions: "Have you ever had long hair?", "Do you like the lightning and the thunder?". At the same time, he receives messages from Gunn who announces him that Ove's health condition has worsened and they will spend

the summer at the hospital. It is interesting to observe the manner in which the third-person narrator builds up the events, in the sense that he generally uses the dialogues with Eira as a way of escaping from everyday struggles, from Are's existential problems, from his compunction about his unborn child. Eira is seen as a hope, her questions being as a breath of fresh air which fill the empty spaces among the other events and sometimes unwanted life situations described in each of these three parts of the novel. In the end, Eira is very sad because Are has to go home, but she knows he will come back one day.

Written in a modern and at the same time poetic style, Nils-Øivind Haagen's novel, *Is She Yours?* sets the emphasis on a series of themes and existential questions, such as: abortion, love, suffering, the loss and the longing for the unborn child, the role of the parents in a child's life, making right decisions, the role of a child in an adult's life, and many others. In addition, the Norwegian author uses intertextuality, making references to different philosophers, writers, journalists, musicians and artist, such as: Søren Kierkegaard, Walt Whitman, James Joyce, Stieg Larsson, a Swedish journalist and writer, Helena Bonham Carter, a British actress, Carlos Garaicoa, a contemporary Cuban artist, Jahn Teigen, a Norwegian singer and actor, Wenche Myhre, a Norwegian singer.

The little girl from the front cover of the Romanian edition is illustrated with great talent by Mihaela Maria Coman who captures the most important features of Eira, her curiosity, sincerity and intelligence. Raluca-Daniela Duinea, the translator of this novel, is lecturer at the Fac-

ulty of Letters, Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature, Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. She is specialised in Norwegian concrete poetry, with a special focus on Jan Erik Vold's literary work. In 2018 she published her PhD thesis in a book format, entitled *The Poetry of Jan Erik Vold and the Norwegian Lyric Modernism in the 1960s*, and in 2023 the translation of Vold's selected poems, collected in the first Norwegian-Romanian bilingual anthology, *Briskeby blues*.

Therefore, right from the beginning, in the *Translator's Note*, Raluca Duinea provided the Romanian readers a few important details regarding the aspect of the novel and the specific writing style of the Norwegian writer. In addition, she also explained and translated specific words and phrases from English, Danish and

Swedish in order to make clear the message of the novel. Raluca Duinea stayed true to Haagensen's unique writing style, skilfully rendering the visual images, the various figures of speech, as well as Eira's language and attitude typical for a six-year-old child and Are's philosophical thoughts which form the poetic and descriptive parts of the novel. Thanks to Duinea's translation, Romanian readers now have the chance to get a glimpse of Norwegian life, as illustrated by Haagensen's memorable characters.

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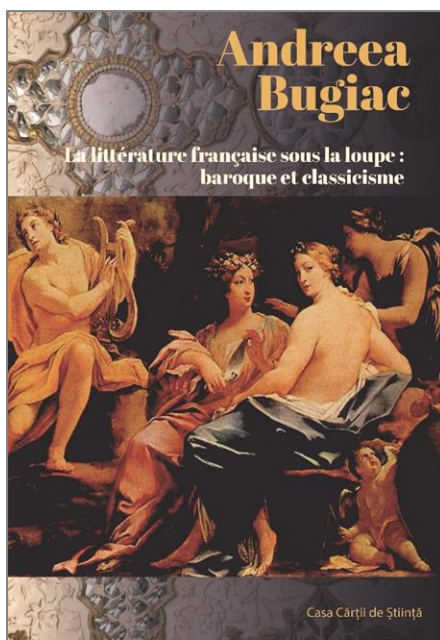
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BOOKS

Andreea Bugiac, *La littérature française sous la loupe : baroque et classicisme*, Cluj-Napoca : Casa Cărții de Știință, 2021, 161 p.

Destiné à des lecteurs encore peu familiarisés avec le dix-septième siècle français, l'ouvrage d'Andreea Bugiac, *La littérature française sous la loupe : baroque et classicisme*, propose une analyse inédite des évolutions culturelles, esthétiques et littéraires qui marquent le Grand Siècle. L'auteure envisage une interprétation minutieuse, « sous la loupe », de ces évolutions en se focalisant sur quelques événements importants de leur histoire qui sont discutés avec pertinence en privilégiant une triple approche, historique, littéraire et même didactique.

Par rapport aux nombreuses histoires littéraires qui explorent cette même époque culturelle, l'enjeu du présent ouvrage n'est pas de réaliser une ample étude qui couvre de manière exhaustive tous les aspects



culturels de ce siècle, mais plutôt celui de mettre en lumière sa complexité à travers des examens ponctuels de quelques moments représentatifs. Par conséquent, comme Andreea Bugiac le mentionne dans l'argument du livre, celui-ci privilégie « certains aspects culturels au détriment d'autres dimensions » (p. 6). Même si elle n'envisage pas de retracer en détail l'effervescence intellectuelle et littéraire qui définit le XVII^e siècle,

une telle démarche favorise une assimilation plus approfondie des faits observés.

L'ouvrage est composé de six modules précédés d'un argument dans lequel l'auteure expose sa méthode, ainsi que son choix de traiter certains sujets considérés comme significatifs pour l'enjeu poursuivi. Chaque module est consacré

à une problématique générale de nature historique ou littéraire liée à cette époque, en offrant en égale mesure des repères d'analyse pour plusieurs auteurs et textes majeurs de la littérature française de ce siècle. Ces repères sont utiles pour les lecteurs parce qu'ils leur permettent d'avancer de manière guidée dans la découverte du Grand Siècle, tout en évitant, en même temps, de les priver de leur liberté interprétative ou de l'exercice de la réflexion personnelle. À la fin de chaque module, dans la section « Pour synthétiser », les notions abordées sont reprises sous une forme concise, tandis que plusieurs fiches de suivi proposent de brefs exercices didactiques censés favoriser l'appropriation des notions théoriques discutées.

Intitulé « 'Le Grand Siècle' : considérations générales », le premier module est divisé en trois volets : « Aspects historiques », « Aspects culturels » et « Périodisation littéraire ». Ce module met en lumière les événements historiques, politiques et culturels majeurs de cette époque en décrivant la construction d'une « société de cour » (Norbert Elias) et la manière dont Versailles devient « l'épicentre artistique de toute l'Europe » (p. 10).

L'examen des évolutions esthétiques et surtout littéraires constitue l'enjeu des cinq modules suivants, à commencer par le deuxième module qui s'attache à retracer la sensibilité baroque du début du siècle. Un point fort du module est la manière dont Andreea Bugiac dépeint l'influence des épisodes historiques de l'époque sur le développement du baroque et la relation étroite qui les unit. Les manifestations littéraires de cette nouvelle sensibilité esthétique qui est, en égale mesure, une nouvelle manière de voir le monde ne sont pas oubliées, elles non plus. L'auteure élabore plusieurs

grilles de lecture de la littérature baroque, avec un accent mis sur la poésie. Une brève anthologie de poèmes baroques clôt le module.

Le troisième module explore les raisons du déclin de la fortune baroque en France, les changements des modèles à suivre dans les arts, avec l'imposition progressive du classicisme définissant les années 1630-1640. Plus court que les précédents, le module « Du baroque au classicisme » retrace ce changement de paradigme culturel et esthétique, tout en insistant sur les « ruptures et [les] continuités » (p. 54) entre les deux mouvements.

Le quatrième module, « La tragédie classique : considérations générales », met en lumière le genre littéraire qui a joui du plus grand succès pendant la seconde moitié du siècle. Vu ses rapports étroits avec la tragédie antique grecque, l'auteure commence son examen par une brève analyse de celle-ci, suivi d'une présentation de la spécificité de la tragédie classique par rapport à ses modèles antiques. Pour illustrer cette spécificité, Andreea Bugiac se sert d'un examen contextuel de deux textes majeurs du genre, à savoir *Le Cid* de Pierre Corneille et *Andromaque* de Jean Racine. L'interprétation de ces deux pièces révèle le caractère innovant de la tragédie classique française par rapport à celle grecque ancienne.

Le théâtre classique français est associé notamment avec trois grands noms : Pierre Corneille, Jean Racine et Molière, examinés au cours du cinquième module. En s'appuyant sur des présentations amples, mais aussi sur des analyses ponctuelles de quelques textes célèbres, la démarche critique met en lumière la singularité de chaque univers dramatique et expose ce qui le rend unique. La focalisation sur ces trois dramaturges s'explique par

l'effort de l'auteure de surprendre la manière dont chacun entend se positionner à l'intérieur du genre dramatique privilégié, le marquer et même le réinventer.

Le dernier module, « Le roman au XVII^e siècle », fait connaître une tendance qui atteint son apogée au XVIII^e siècle, celle romanesque. L'auteure retrace l'évolution du roman au dix-septième siècle, allant de ses formes pastorales et héroïques du début du siècle vers une sobriété et un réalisme toujours plus accrus, manifestés par le roman classique de la fin du siècle. Son interprétation prend en considération les vifs débats qui engagent les théoriciens de l'époque autour de l'utilité du genre. Un accent particulier est mis sur le roman de Madame de La Fayette, *La Princesse de Clèves*. Sa complexité est donnée par sa double dimension, traditionnelle et moderne et, de cette façon, il entend assimiler et renouveler les codes des romans antérieurs.

Au bout du compte, l'ouvrage d'Andreea Bugiac se constitue comme un point de repère pour tous les lecteurs qui veulent se familiariser avec les aspects culturels majeurs d'un siècle fascinant de culture et de littérature française. Sans prétendre ni à l'exhaustivité ni à des analyses définitives, *La littérature française sous la loupe : baroque et classicisme* a le grand mérite d'exposer de manière claire ce que la littérature française du Grand Siècle a de plus singulier, en s'appuyant sur un discours convaincant et adapté à son destinataire.

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BOOKS

Linda Boström Knausgård, *Copil de octombrie* (Oktoberbarn/ October Child), translated from Swedish by Roxana-Ema Dreve, București: Pandora, coll. "Anansi Contemporan", 2023, 168 p.

After the micro-novel *Bine ai venit în America* (*Velkommen till Amerika/Welcome to America*), this year saw the publication of a new translation of a text by Linda Boström Knausgård, *Copil de octombrie* (*Oktoberbarn/October Child*). Both titles were translated from Swedish into Romanian by Roxana-Ema Dreve, at Pandora Press.

Copil de octombrie deals with themes such as isolation, loneliness, mental health, but perhaps the most important aspect Knausgård's novel touches is the relationship with the people around her, with her own family and with those closest to her.

As noted in other reviews, the main thrust of the book concerns the traumatic experience lived by the protagonist,



Linda, in a psychiatric asylum. Linda is subjected to electroshock therapy, a brutal treatment that is still being applied in Sweden today. The whole asylum is portrayed as “a factory”, where people suffering from mental illness are brought to be “cured” and reintegrated into society. It is important to consider the term “factory” used throughout the novel to describe the institution, as it shows the dehumanising nature of what happens there.

In fact, the doctors, the nurses and almost the entire medical staff are acting precisely at the opposite pole of empathy, a necessary quality in the doctor-patient relationship.

It is a nightmarish picture that unfolds through Linda's memories, in which patients are subjected to a treatment they do not choose, out of a belief in "the good imposed by force". Linda's recollection of her time in the asylum actually makes room for the denunciation of a clinical industry, where the results of studying patients' minds are used for selfish and mercantile purposes: "For those working with the unexplored parts of the human mind, it was a rewarding feeling to finally reach a result and thus be invited to the most select events" (p. 10). Moreover, it is not only the doctors' lack of empathy for patients or the brutal nature of dealing with the problems of those confined to psychiatric wards that are highlighted in Linda Boström Knausgård's novel, but also the harmful view of healing. People can only gain their freedom through dehumanisation, through forgetfulness, through indifference to their own lives: "No one cared that there were so many events that I would never remember. Memory loss was a small price to pay for the effects of therapy. And how much do memories weigh? How do we measure them? How do we know how precious they are? Memories were frowned upon in the factory" (p. 10). Operating the human mind according to a computer-like model is the only accepted solution and the only way to overcome mental illness. In this sense, what is being configured in the novel is a miniature world – a copy of the real world – which operates based on power relations (between the superior – or the so-called "normal" people – and the inferior – those who cannot overcome their own fears). Non-reason is expelled and seen as a destabilising factor in society: hence, the confinement of

all people who do not conform to society's norms to an exclusion zone – the psychiatric asylum.

Linda Boström Knausgård formulates in *Copil de octombrie* a very pertinent response to psychiatric therapy practices in the Nordic area. The novel can thus also be read in a political key, as it exposes the limits and pitfalls of a certain way of looking at the world. People are denied any form of healing that is not in accordance with the principles of institutional organisation and that does not follow a strict protocol. The author enters a subtle dialogue with the Scandinavian society, making this kind of human interaction possible. The book is not only a lexicon of mental suffering, but also a harsh indictment of the world in which Linda lives, as it speaks of the cruelty with which mental illness is addressed and the repulsion with which those who cannot function "normally" are regarded.

An important aspect to note, related to the conventions of autofiction (even docufiction), is Linda's relationships with those around her, and in particular with family members. Linda Boström Knausgård is thus part of an already established tradition in Scandinavian literature of dealing with themes describing interpersonal relationships within family, friendship, or love. Following electroshock therapy, Linda attempts to recover her memories through the exercise of writing, encouraged by Maria, one of the only caregivers not completely taken over by the inhuman system of the clinic. In this way, the novel is constructed by overlapping the present time (the time spent in the clinic) and forays into Linda's past (from childhood to adulthood, from interactions with her mother to the birth of her last child).

The shaping of these family relationships is important not only to recreate a certain climate and to show the dysfunctionality of human behaviour, but also to mark moments of transformation. Interactions with male instances are particularly used to formulate certain attitudes and stances. The image of the father is at odds with the image of the mother's boyfriend, to whom the protagonist is attached and in whom she imagines a safe space (the mother's boyfriend being the only one who did not treat her as a child, but encouraged her autonomous thinking). Another transformative moment is the breakup with her first boyfriend from high school, when Linda recognises some sort of inner strength and feels she is gaining independence. Finally, there is a subtle portrait of her husband, whom she addresses in a confessional tone, attempting an imagined dialogue – to convey all the otherwise unspoken things. This interaction in the key of reminiscence marks a vulnerability assumed and directly displayed. It seems that the cruelty of society, which feeds on ignorance and the maintenance of distance, is mirrored in a fleeting image that Linda makes of her husband: "You woke up from your nap, got out, saw what I did, lay back on the bed and fell asleep. That sleep. A second after you put your head on the pillow, you fell asleep. That total

break from self. I think all presidents, all high-ranking heads of state can sleep. I think it is a precondition. I think mankind can be divided into those who can sleep and those who can't" (pp. 163-164)

Finally, for Linda, writing remains the only healing and escape from the sordidness of a life she cannot fit into. Writing is one of the constants in her life. There is an image of Linda as a student for whom the only happy moment in school is the moment when she can write essays – compulsory homework. Over the years, writing inside the psychiatric ward remains the only connection with the loved ones.

The action of remembering the names of her children ends her time in the clinic. However, there is no actual healing of the protagonist. "Calm down. You are on the right side of reality" is just an ironic retort to the society she lives in. Linda does not rejoin the world, the great healing does not take place, but the route is reversed: the novel denounces a sick society in which everyone pretends to be functional.

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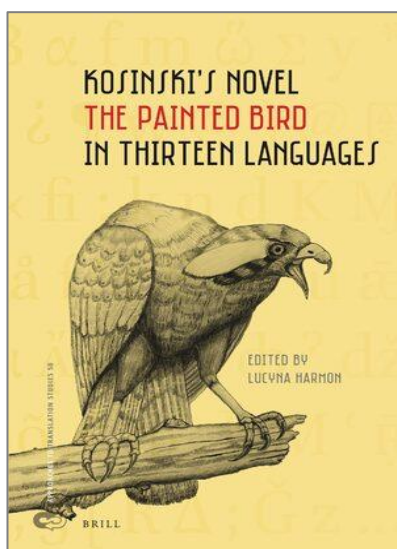
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BOOKS

Lucyna Harmon (ed.), *Kosinski's Novel The Painted Bird in Thirteen Languages*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2022, 229 p.

Set in an unidentified country but ostensibly charting his own experiences during the time of the Holocaust, Jerzy Kosinski's harrowing 1965 novel *The Painted Bird* has been translated and disseminated across the world. Of the over two dozen tongues that Kosinski's best-known work has appeared in (aside from its original English), Kosinski's Novel *The Painted Bird in Thirteen Languages* presents detailed scholarly analyses of the translations into selected Slavic (Polish, Russian, Serbian/Croatian, Ukrainian), Germanic (German, Norwegian), and Romance (French, Romanian, Spanish) languages, as well as Greek and Persian.

Edited by Lucyna Harmon, literary and translation studies scholar and head of Translation Studies at the University of Rzeszów (Poland), and published by Brill in



its prestigious 'Approaches to Translation Studies' series, the volume contains chapters authored by international scholars affiliated to institutions located in a dozen countries. Each contribution approaches various aspects relating to *The Painted Bird* and its translation from a unique angle, yet cohesion is provided by the common threads which are outlined in Harmon's introductory chapter. In addition to providing necessary information about the genesis and purview of the project, Harmon centres the scope of the book through the creation of two innovative concepts. The first relates to discussing notions of an "involved" culture (i.e. one suggested in the novel's events) and how it is portrayed in the various translations of a given work; this is contrasted with "uninvolved" or "detached" (pp. 2-3). The

second revolves around Harmon's concept of "the universe of the opus", defined here as something that "encompasses all the available versions/facets of a given literary work that circulate in the world, establishing and maintaining the position of this work on a large (world literature) or small scale (within particular target cultures)" (p. 3). Accordingly, this introductory section sets out both of these novel ideas and situates them with reference to the necessary theoretical literature.

The requisite sociocultural and historical context behind Kosinski and his most famous work is outlined and discussed in Chapter 2. Here, in tracing the author's biography from his birth to Jewish parents in Poland, through his wartime experience, and subsequent emigration to the United States, Elżbieta Rokosz presents the numerous controversies that surrounded Kosinski and his literary production. These include longstanding debates relating to the veracity of the events depicted in *The Painted Bird*, uncertainty regarding its authorship and the original language of the manuscript, as well as questions of how the novel was received in the author's native land. Accordingly, Kosinski's stratospheric rise to literary celebrity in a new country and in a new language is analysed through the seemingly fluid boundary he maintained between fiction and reality.

The next three chapters present the findings of translations into the languages of "involved" cultures. Chapter 3, by Łukasz Barciński, scrutinises the Polish translation by first contextualising the translator and possible influences on his decision-making processes, before undertaking a comprehensive analysis of

how certain onomastic, folkloristic, historical, religious, and ethnographical details are presented in the translated text. The contribution by volume editor Lucyna Harmon (Chapter 4) profiles the interesting divergences that the German translation of *The Painted Bird* displays in comparison to the original English text, drawing attention not only to relevant paratextual and semantic aspects but also highlighting several important omissions which appear in the German version. Subsequently, Valentyna Savchyn's study (Chapter 5) examines the Ukrainian and Russian translations of the book through the prism of corrective translation, which is where the translator appears to attempt to rectify certain potentially problematic aspects of a given source text.

The two Spanish-language translations of *The Painted Bird* are detailed in Chapter 6. Against the backdrop of literary censorship in Spain under Franco's dictatorship, Jordi Jané-Lligé charts their convoluted journey to publication (which eventually took place in Latin America), before embarking on a detailed comparative analysis of the two versions, highlighting the notably different strategies used by the two translators. Svetlana Jakimovska's contribution (Chapter 7) foregrounds how ethnic and cultural aspects are translated in the first French version of the book, which displays pronounced deviations from the source text. Additions, omissions, and semantic changes relating to the Norwegian translation are highlighted in Oleksandr Kapranov's analysis (Chapter 8), where he interprets these factors through the lens of the translator's self-censorship as it pertains to potentially sensitive issues relating to ethnicity and religion.

As detailed by Paschalis Nikolaou in Chapter 9, the Greek translation of *The Painted Bird* came out comparatively recently, in 2007. Before offering some remarks on how the translation was received in the Greek literary press, Nikolaou presents and discusses relevant semantic, narrative, and evaluative changes in that version as compared to the English source text. In a similar vein, Raluca Sinu (Chapter 10) performs an in-depth analysis of the Romanian version of the novel, mentioning additionally the translator's apparent decisions to attenuate some of the more explicit elements featured in the original. The two translations of Kosinski's novel into Serbo-Croatian/Serbian are the subject of Borislava Eraković's analysis (Chapter 11), which includes paratextual analysis relating to the book's cover and bibliographic information as a way of contextualising some of the changes that these translations display vis-à-vis the source text. The study and analysis of paratextual features additionally forms part of the last study of the volume (Chapter 12) by Fatemeh Parham, who also profiles textual aspects relating to the Persian translation of *The Painted Bird*, noting the existence of specific legal directives on what type of content can appear in works published in Iran.

The book closes with a Coda (Chapter 13), where volume editor Lucyna Harmon contrasts and discusses the diverse findings presented by the book's contributors through the prism of the two common threads mentioned in her introductory chapter. With regard to the "involved"

cultures, she compares and evaluates the German, Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian renditions of *The Painted Bird*, subsequently moving on to broader discussion of how Kosinski's most famous works can be situated with the concept of "universe of the opus", before proffering suggested avenues for additional research.

In summary, *Kosinski's Novel The Painted Bird in Thirteen Languages* is an important read for researchers in translation studies seeking new perspectives on the multiplicity of interpretations that the various translations of a common source text can provide. As such, the reviewed work highlights points of synergy and divergence between the different translations of *The Painted Bird*, acknowledging the diversity of perspectives assumed by the individual contributors. In addition to giving unity to the work as a whole, Harmon's notions of an "involved culture" and "the universe of the opus" are innovative theoretical concepts which will surely be applied to other scholarly analyses in the future. As recent publications on the translations of Kosinski's novel into other languages (e.g. Mandarin Chinese, Dutch) illustrate, the concepts and analysis contained in this volume represent an excellent foundation for further scholarly enquiry worldwide.

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BOOKS

Flavia Teoc, *Perspectiva sofianică în Saga regelui Harald. Studiu privind articularea sensului din unghiul textemelor kenning*, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2020, 211 pp.

Perspectiva sofianică în Saga regelui Harald. Studiu privind articularea sensului din unghiul textemelor kenning (The Sophian Perspective in Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar), by PhD Flavia Teoc, proposes an in-depth analysis of the kenning metaphors from a linguistic perspective. Applying the integralist concepts of language theoretician Eugen Coșeriu and the literary Sophian perspective of the author, philologist and philosopher Lucian Blaga, the work offers an alternative interpretation of the meaning and creative process of the skaldic poetry, acquainting the reader with medieval Scandinavian mythology, history, literature, and culture – each



component essential for the understanding of the old poetic metaphors. The first chapter begins with an introduction to Coșeriu's five principles for linguistics as a science of cultures: the principle of objectivity, of humanism, of tradition, of anti-dogmatism and of response/ public utility.

The principle of objectivity proposes a straightforward analysis of the subject, that things would be simply defined as what they are, by their given name. However, as Coșeriu adds, a subject cannot be fully observed without interpretation. Therefore, the second principle introduces the human factor of liberty of expression and creativity, which



supposes an inherent intuitive understanding of language, followed by the principle of (linguistic) tradition. The anti-dogmatism implies that tradition should be mitigated in its completeness, staying true to its origins, and that it should be integrated into a common vision. And the final principle, that ties all the others together, is the understanding of language as an intuitive, human process, that is a creative activity and an instrument for communicating not only within the original language, but with other cultures as well. The following subchapter, "Eugeniu Coşeriu and the Scandinavian linguistic school" presents integralist linguistic theories of different Scandinavian philologists, such as: Louis Hjelmslev, Svend Johansen, Leiv Flydal, and many others.

The second chapter, "The Role of the Kenning Metaphor in the Medieval North", begins with a short description of *The Prose Edda*, written by Snorri Sturluson to serve as a guide for young skalds (Norse poets that composed according to skaldic rules). Written after the christening of Scandinavia, *The Prose Edda* is fascinating not only in what it comprises, being the sole Medieval guide to skaldic poetry, but also through its context: Norse mythology retold through a Christian perspective. Trying to demythologise the origins of the gods, Snorri argued that the name of the Æsir gods was derived from Asia, and that they were the old rulers of Troy. He defined paganism as the unawareness of God's existence and the worship of more perceivable, yet misunderstood elements, such as the sun. According to his theory, the great foreign rulers which came to Scandinavia became deified through the same process. The work is divided into three chapters:

Gylfaginning, *Skáldskaparmál*, and *Háttatal*. *Gylfaginning* (The Beguiling of Gylfi) is much like a Christian's first encounter with the pagan world. The king Gylfi seeks out the palace of the gods, which is an illusion, and instead of finding Óðinn, he finds three men, that will engage with him in a competition where Gylfi can ask any question about the world until one of them would not know the answer. In this manner he finds out about the creation of the world and the exploits of the gods. *Skáldskaparmál* recounts the origins of the mead of poetry and defines what a kenning and a heiti represent. A kenning is a metaphor, composed of two or more corelated words, such as [Óðins mjǫð] (Óðin's mead), which refers to skaldic poetry. A heiti is a poetical synonym, a word that would replace the original term (attributing different names to words), such as 'ask' (ash-tree) for man (objects often denote living beings in skaldic poetry, and vice-versa). *Háttatal*, on the other hand, provides examples of skaldic poetry and its metrics. Therefore, the introduction into Norse mythology from the first chapter and the terminology presented in *Skáldskaparmál* are essential for decrypting the metaphors of skaldic poetry. Yet the kennings and heitis are not limited only to mythology, but also cover cultural aspects, traditions, historical facts, and a glimpse into the Norse way of perceiving life. The chapter continues with presenting the thesis of the work: *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, its hagiographical nature, the historical context, and linguistic analysis of the poetry that is recalled during the narration. It further explains the purpose and formation of the kenning metaphors through the research of Wilhelm Bode, Rudolf Meissner, Turville Petre, Roberta

Frank, Edith Marold, Sanda Tomescu Baciu, Gary Holland, and Stefan Einarsson.

Chapter three, "The Analysis of the Kenning Metaphors in Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar, from the perspective of integralist linguistics" spans over most of the book, covering five "macro-frameworks" of the saga, presenting the protagonist, Haraldr Sigurðarson, in unique circumstances, and how the kennings used in each poem belonging to these scenes have been detrimental to defining the context and revealing the text's hagiographical inclination. Each kenning is analysed from a semantic and cultural perspective, offering mythological, historical, and philological guidance (as needed) for the reader to understand the creation, and meaning of every metaphor used. One such kenning is [tandrauðs ormtorgs] (translated as "the flame-red dragon-hearth" by Flavia Teoc). To understand the kenning from a cultural perspective, the reader (or listener, as was the case for skaldic poetry) must be familiar with *Völsunga saga*, which contains a scene that influenced modern fantasy: the defeat of the dragon Fáfni, who was resting upon a heap of gold. Therefore, a kenning like [dragon's bed] would suggest gold, in the same manner as [dragon-hearth] does, being additionally attributed the visual image of "flame-red," easily interpretable for the glitter of gold. Moreover, the mention of the mythical dragon is not only for dramatic effect but anticipates Harald's own encounter with a serpent while imprisoned in Byzantium. Another example would be the analysis of the lexeme 'drifa' (meaning snowfall or hail) which is used to compose many kennings. The skald Einarr Helgason uses the kenning [Hárs drifu] (Óðin's hailstorm, 'Hárr' being a heiti for Óðinn) with the meaning of battle. He also names battle simply as 'hailstorm,'

or [the hailstorm of the woman of sharp blades (valkyrie)]. Flavia Teoc argues that, while hailstorm can mean battle, the image of snowfall, as recounted in the kenning [King Kraki's snowfall], signifies gold, which is understood only by those familiar with the stories of the semi-legendary king Kraki. A simple kenning as hailstorm can offer a glimpse into the way skaldic poetry was perceived. The struggle with the elements of the north, such as the rough climate, can easily bend one's imagination into comparing a snowstorm with a battle, an unavoidable struggle for life.

Chapter four begins with a definition of the Sophian concept, originally described by the theology philosopher Vladimir Solovyov by merging the two terms of "Ain-Soph" (terminology used in the interpretation of the Old Testament) and "Jah" (from the Jewish name of God, Yahweh). Thus, the name of Sophia becomes a bridge between God and His Creation. Moreover, Lucian Blaga defines a Sophian work as a transcendental creation descended from the Divine into the mortal plain through a revelatory receiver, in this case being Haraldr Sigurðarson. One such moment is recalled in the macro-framework of Harald's imprisonment in Byzantium, the defeat of the serpent, the marriage with Ellisif and his return to Scandinavia. The encounter with the serpent is a commemoration of the mythological past and Fáfni's defeat, contrasted with the scene of the marriage, symbolising the ever-changing world of the present, in which the saga takes place. The kenning mentioned above becomes complete only through the introduction of a Christian value: "the young man that hates [the flame-red dragon-hearth] (gold)." It is a metaphor that reshapes the pagan nature of skaldic poetry, perpetuating the tradition within a Christianised society.

To sum up, Flavia Teoc's *Perspectiva sofianică în Saga regelui Harald. Studiu privind articularea sensului din unghiul textemelor kenning* delves into the complicated nature of the saga narrative and its skaldic poetry. A saga in which Snorri Sturluson purposefully avoided any sources other than Scandinavian ones, in order to reshape the story of Haraldr Sigurðarson as that of a truly Christian king, who fought against a pagan past and promoted Christian values as related through the skaldic poems, semantically analysed by Flavia Teoc, who generously described the context and meaning of every kenning necessary for the decryption of the verses. Even though unique and provoking, Teoc's proposal that Haraldr was depicted as a

saintly figure could have been more thoroughly explored, since many other *heilagra manna sögur* (sagas of saints) do not only highlight, but purposefully radicalise the Christian character of the protagonists. However, Harald's Christian personality remains ambiguous, and it could still be discussed whether the telling of his deeds belongs to the hagiographical genre.

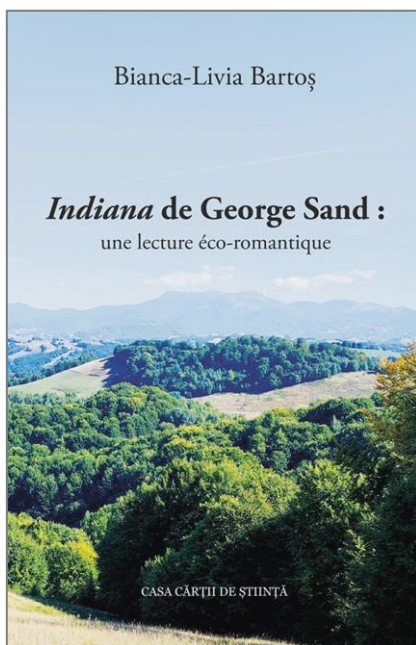
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Bianca-Livia Bartoș, *Indiana de George Sand : une lecture éco-romantique*, Cluj-Napoca : Casa Cărții de Știință, 2022, 216 p.

Les discours de plus en plus alarmants sur l'anthropocène et la crise climatique structurent désormais notre quotidien. Le climat nous épouvante, le destin du vivant est remis en cause, tout cela dans une atmosphère d'*écophobie* (Jean-Cristophe Cavallin). Ce nouveau pressentiment d'une fin, d'une perte, d'un sort tragique de l'humain commence à dépasser l'humain. Les sciences exactes ainsi que les humanités essaient d'appivoiser ce nouvel état de lieux et de l'acclimater au grand souci écologique. Pour ce qui

est des études littéraires, on parle d'un tournant écocritique qui se donne pour objet de revisiter les rapports entre l'humain et l'environnement au vu des nouvelles alarmes données par les scientifiques quant à cette crise écologique globalisée. D'autre part, l'image sartrienne d'une littérature au service d'une cause reprend du terrain ; l'écrivain s'engage à son



tour, sacrifie son art pur au nom des questions les plus ardues de la société contemporaine.

Si, dans la plupart des cas, l'écocritique étudie des textes de l'extrême contemporain, considérés comme beaucoup plus représentatifs de la crise actuelle, il y a également de nombreux textes critiques qui analysent et promeuvent un corpus moins récent. L'enjeu d'une telle approche serait de prouver l'existence d'une veine écologique avant la lettre qui soulève des problématiques toutes aussi importantes quant aux relations

de l'humain à son *oikos*. C'est dans cette lignée que s'inscrit l'étude de Bianca-Livia Bartoș, *Indiana de George Sand : une lecture éco-romantique*, parue en 2022 chez Casa Cărții de Știință. Dans sa démarche, l'auteure se propose d'« épouser deux siècles tellement distincts et créer des ponts à travers le temps pour ainsi prouver l'esprit innovatif de l'écrivaine [George Sand]. » (p.

8) Si le choix de l'écocritique comme grille herméneutique s'impose de soi-même à l'heure actuelle, elle va permettre à Bianca-Livia Bartoş de « revenir sur les liens de l'être humain avec son environnement pour en reconstruire un rapport harmonieux » (*idem*). En plus, un des mérites de cette étude serait la méthodologie intersectionnelle qui met en rapport la lecture écocritique du roman sandien avec une critique féministe d'un XIX^e « défini[e] par la domination du masculin et la disparité flagrante entre l'homme et la femme » (p. 9).

Le corpus se résume à un seul texte signé par George Sand, *Indiana*, choix qui offre à Bianca-Livia Bartoş la possibilité d'une lecture approfondie du roman ; en ce sens, l'auteure conçoit sa démarche comme une « initiation du lecteur contemporain à l'inédit de l'œuvre sandienne » (p. 21) à partir de nouveaux angles de la recherche littéraire. Quant à loupe (éco)-herméneutique de l'étude, l'auteure s'appuie sur les ouvrages critiques signés par Stephanie Posthumus, Lawrence Buell, Ursula Heise, Pascale d'Erm, Catherine Larrère et Pierre Schoentjes « afin de déceler les traces d'un sentiment (pré-) écologique chez George Sand. » (p. 23) En ce qui concerne la structure de cette recherche, elle est divisée en deux parties unitaires reprenant les deux notions clés annoncés dans le titre : le romantisme et l'écologie. Dans un premier temps, Bianca-Livia Bartoş focalise son analyse sur l'encadrement de l'*Indiana* au courant romantique soulignant les symptômes d'une écriture en plein mal du siècle, et, dans un deuxième temps, elle enchaîne avec un examen inédit du penchant écologique de George Sand ainsi que de sa protagoniste, rapprochant l'écrivaine de l'époque moderne.

La première partie, intitulée « *Ecce homo* : pour un romantisme po(i)étique », analyse de près « le goût du personnage

pour la solitude, le mal du siècle et le penchant pour la nature vierge, couronnés par le recours au passé historique et à la mythologique. » (p. 25). Ainsi, afin de souligner l'appartenance au romantisme, Bianca-Livia Bartoş utilise le *close-reading* comme stratégie d'approche du texte sandien. Dans la première sous-partie, elle passe au peigne fin l'*incipit* du roman ce qui lui permet de mettre en lumière le portrait des personnages « sous le signe de l'antithèse » (p. 26) et de signaler la possibilité d'une interprétation mythologique de la construction des protagonistes (M. Delmare serait l'incarnation de Zeus, Indiana de la nymphe dormante, Rodolphe du Prométhée rédempteur, tandis que Raymon serait vu comme un Apollon à multiples facettes). Cette mythanalyse est continuée dans la deuxième sous-partie, « Réécriture des mythes », où la protagoniste de Sand est associée à la figure de l'Amazone donnant voix au désir de liberté et d'indépendance si spécifique à l'écriture sandienne. Les sous-parties suivantes, « Le mal du siècle et le suicide », « Les intrigues amoureuses », « Possession et jalousies », reviennent sur des traits définisseurs du courant romantique. Le thème du spleen s'infiltré dans la représentation des sentiments amoureux et domine la construction de l'intrigue jusqu'à la fin du roman. Pourtant, Bianca-Livia Bartoş n'oublie pas de souligner dans une sixième sous-partie intitulée « Politique et passé historique » que George Sand réussit à dépasser cette histoire d'amour peignant une fresque sociale de son époque et mettant en rapport le sort ses protagonistes avec leur contexte historique.

Enfin, la première partie de cette étude ne pourrait se clore qu'avec un examen minutieux de l'image de la nature dans *Indiana* que l'auteure aborde dans la septième sous-partie intitulée « Les couches protectrices de la nature ». Le courant romantique a été étroitement lié

à la représentation du cadre naturel. Leitmotiv des écritures de l'époque, il a souvent fait l'objet des reproches des écocritiques qui y décelaient une manière anthropocentrique de se rapporter à l'environnement ; source de solitude, d'inspiration ou d'une expérience mystique, la nature était plutôt considérée dans sa valeur symbolique qu'intrinsèque. Si cette dimension métaphorique et allégorique reste présente chez Sand, Bianca-Livia Bartoş réussit à mettre également en relief une veine écologique authentique chez Sand puisant son origine dans la biographie de l'écrivaine.

La deuxième partie, « *Ecce natura* : un penchant écologique », se propose justement d'étudier point pour point cette dimension visionnaire de Sand quant au sort du vivant. La première sous-partie, « Pour une définition du concept », retrace l'historique de la notion d'écologie et de son rapport de plus en plus important aux études littéraires en passant par une mise en revue des ouvrages critiques ante-mentionnés. Ainsi, selon l'auteure, l'écocritique serait conçue comme « un désir de reconfiguration de l'environnement par le biais du monde littéraire » (p. 93). La dimension concrète d'une pratique écologique est également évoquée dans la deuxième sous-partie, « Être écologique ? », qui renvoie « à une prise de conscience d'un besoin inhérent de changement, mais en même temps à une implication active dans cette démarche par la mise en alerte de la population » (p. 99).

Dans la troisième sous-partie, « George Sand, écoféministe », Bianca-Livia Bartoş revient sur ces deux facettes de l'engagement sandien, féministe et écologique, tout en passant en revue les contributions dans le domaine : la communication de Martine Watrelot lors du colloque *Savantes et Pionnières*, « George Sand, pionnière de l'écologie moderne » (2017), le chapitre dédié à Sand dans *Sœurs en écologie. Des femmes, de la nature et du réenchantement du monde* (2017) signé par Pascale d'Erm et l'article « George Sand,

lanceuse d'alerte écolo et sauveuse de Fontainebleau » d'Elsa Mourgues sur *France Culture* (2021). Dans la quatrième sous-partie, « Un ouvrage écologiste », l'auteure insiste sur l'intérêt de plus en plus important de la critique littéraire pour une lecture écocritique des œuvres sandiennes, citant le volume dirigé par Martine Watrelot, *George Sand et les sciences de la Vie et de la Terre* (2020) et l'article de Katia Hayek, « Fantastique et sentiment pré-écologique au XIXe siècle : trois récits de George Sand » (2021). Selon Bianca-Livia Bartoş, cet intérêt croissant pour la portée écologique de l'œuvre et de la vie de l'écrivaine montre à quel point le tournant écocritique a su développer une sensibilité plus importante des lecteurs quant au destin de l'humain.

Si la dimension écologique chez Sand est presque toujours mise en relation avec le mouvement de protestation contre l'abattage des forêts de Fontainebleau, l'enjeu de l'étude signée par Bianca-Livia Bartoş est celui d'entamer une analyse écocritique de ce premier roman de l'écrivaine où le penchant écologique ne se révèle que de manière sporadique. Ainsi, la cinquième sous-partie, « *Indiana*, une lecture écocritique », est dédiée à l'analyse proprement dite du roman à partir du paradigme écocritique. *L'incipit d'Indiana* est étudié cette fois-ci à la lumière du rapport de l'individu à l'espace et aux quatre éléments primordiaux. Le refus d'anthropisation sera aussi analysé au regard de l'antithèse entre, « le sublime dans les espaces vierges utopiques et [...] le grotesque dans les endroits remaniés par la présence déstabilisante de l'être humain. » (p. 126). La fin du roman tranche sur le sujet par une idéalisation d'une nature originelle, sauvage, encore non-corrompue par l'humain : « le décor vierge et sauvage, un abri simple construit en accord et en collaboration avec la nature, tel est le tableau d'une vie simple, en harmonie avec l'environnement. » (p. 128). Cette vision d'une vie modeste et en accord

avec la nature envisagée par les protagonistes pousse Bianca-Livia Bartoș à évoquer une éthique contre le gaspillage chez Sand doublée d'une condamnation de la chasse. Pourtant, l'auteure remarque que l'engagement écologique d'Indiana est dépourvu de portée politique, la plaçant du côté d'un « romantisme écologique », notion qu'elle emprunte à Jonathan Bate (*Romantic Ecology. Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*, 1991) et qui donne le titre de cette étude. De plus, l'engagement sandien s'enrichit d'une troisième couche, celle contre l'esclavage, que l'auteure souligne par la prise de position de Sand contre « l'oppression de l'esclave, touchée par la tyrannie et l'injustice des puissants » (p. 139). Enfin, cette analyse ne sera complète sans évoquer la dimension viagique de l'œuvre sandienne dont l'importance est mise en valeur par Bianca-Livia Bartoș à travers l'analyse de l'intérêt sandien « d'inventorier les différentes espèces de plantes et d'animaux qui l'entourent, ainsi transformant son ouvrage dans une source inépuisable de recherches pour les exégètes de l'écriture du voyage. » (p. 144).

Dans la sixième sous-partie, « *Indiana*, une (éco)écriture moderne », l'auteure concentre son analyse sur la modernité de l'écriture sandienne en faisant valoir ses techniques innovatives quant au geste scriptural. Ainsi, le premier roman signé par Sand est relu à la lumière des débats les plus récents de la critique littéraire française, ceux de l'écriture autobiographique et/ou autofictionnelle. Dans sa démonstration, elle enchaîne avec une analyse des choix onomastiques et toponymiques du roman sandien qui « trouvent des motivations morphologiques ou acoustiques et relèvent à la fois

d'un travail ponctuel, réfléchi et délibéré de l'auteure. » (p. 167). Une attention particulière est aussi portée au style ironique d'*Indiana* dans lequel Bianca-Livia Bartoș voit une prise de position féministe de la part de l'écrivaine, qui en fait un outil d'attaque contre le discours de la domination masculine. Enfin, une dernière posture contestataire est relevée au niveau du rapport de la protagoniste quant à la religion et à la foi qui corrobore encore une fois la modernité du roman. L'étude finit soulignant l'urgence de relire George Sand en partant de tous ces nouvelles grilles de lecture, car cela représenterait « une revaccination de la société de consommation contre la déshumanisation, autrement dit, tirer un signal d'alarme qui est censé engendrer, mieux tard que jamais, une prise de conscience face à un avertissement apocalyptique » (p. 186).

Pour conclure, l'étude de Bianca-Livia Bartoș apporte une contribution importante aux recherches sandiennes par les multiples couches d'interprétation proposées ainsi que par son approche originale d'*Indiana*, texte assez peu étudié de point de vue écocritique. Le mérite de ce volume est aussi celui de rapprocher de manière inédite et transversale deux paradigmes moins analysés ensemble, d'où le caractère innovant de cette recherche. Si la perspective éco-romantique a fait déjà l'objet d'études dans le monde anglophone, cette approche critique est moins présente dans les études francophones. En ce cas, *Indiana de George Sand : une lecture éco-romantique* met les bases de nouveaux outils critiques et ouvre la voie à des perspectives originales dans la recherche littéraire tout en confrontant les problématiques les plus récents du monde littéraire actuel.

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Élise Hugueny-Léger, *Projections de soi. Identités et images en mouvement dans l'autofiction*, Lyon : Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2022, 324 p.

Depuis plusieurs décennies déjà, l'autofiction domine les chantiers les plus productifs de la littérature française contemporaine et de la critique littéraire. Le terme a suscité au fil des années tant des refus de la part des écrivains que de nouvelles manières d'enrichir des pratiques littéraires par des extensions multiples. Quant à l'approche critique, l'autofiction a été fortement théorisée en France, résistant à la fois aux encadrements génériques et aux attaques plus ou moins subtiles de la part des théoriciens. L'autofiction fascine parce qu'elle fait vaciller les notions de réalité, de transparence, de référentialité et de fiction, tout en mettant en crise le pouvoir des mots de dire les choses. Les frontières, jusque-là opaques entre la fiction et la réalité, brouillent maintenant



les pistes de lecture et remettent en question le célèbre pacte autobiographique classique. Ce n'est pas anodin le fait que l'autofiction devient un sujet des débats critiques dans le dernier quart du XX^e siècle, car elle relève d'une esthétique véritablement postmoderne par ses jeux de dédoublement, de miroir, de substitution, de copie.

À l'heure actuelle, l'autofiction déjoue ses limites par sa réorientation vers d'autres médiums comme la photographie, la bande-dessinée, la télévision ou le cinéma. L'enjeu d'une approche théorique prenant en compte la dimension transmédiatique du phénomène autofictionnel serait celui d'une mise à jour de tous ces débats cantonnés au niveau de l'ancienne « querelle » autobiographie – autofiction – roman. C'est dans cette lignée



théorique que s'inscrit le volume signé par Élise Hugueny-Léger, *Projections de soi. Identités et images en mouvement dans l'autofiction*. L'hypothèse de l'auteure est celle d'une prise en compte de l'impact du numérique, inévitable de nos jours, quant aux représentations du sujet. Une telle approche permet « non seulement de mettre en lumière la complexité des textes, leur fabrication, leur proximité avec l'imaginaire visuel, mais aussi d'encourager une réflexion sur la construction du sujet et sur ses possibilités de représentation. » (p. 6)

Dans l'introduction, Hugueny-Léger retrace l'historique des débats théoriques quant à l'autofiction et passe en revue les positionnements les plus importants sur la question (Philippe Lejeune, Georges Gusdorf, Philippe Gasparini, Vincent Colonna, Régine Robin, Madelaine Ouellette-Michalska etc.). Elle insiste sur le bouleversement produit par l'ère numérique et sur l'urgence d'une réévaluation de l'état actuel de l'autofiction. Pour Hugueny-Léger, ce ne serait pas vraiment Doubrovsky à l'origine de ce tournant autofictionnel, mais la culture de masse, l'apparition des médias, le développement des moyens de communication modernes et la démocratisation du genre autobiographique et de la diffusion de la parole de soi. Cette prise en compte des transformations socio-culturelles définit la méthodologie de l'autrice qui propose justement l'intégration de nouveaux espaces d'expression et de promotion de l'investissement auctorial. En l'espace de quelques décennies, l'autofiction a fortement côtoyé d'autres médiums comme la photographie (chez Barthes, Ernaux, Duras, Guibert) ainsi que le cinéma qui semblait parfois détrôner le domaine livresque ; dernièrement, ce sont la télévision et les réseaux sociaux qui prennent de l'ampleur quant

à la visibilité publique de l'écrivain. Dans ce cas, la notion de « projection », concept clé autour duquel gravitent les analyses d'Hugueny-Léger, semble s'imposer tout seul. Le premier sens qu'elle accorde au terme est celui technique, de projection cinématographique renvoyant au fait de restituer des images ou des vidéos à l'écran. La deuxième signification est tirée du domaine psychologique où la projection désigne tant le fait de concevoir des images mentales, de fantasmer, de visualiser, que celui de rejeter au-dehors ce qu'on ne reconnaît pas porter en soi. Jouant tant avec le pluri-sémantisme de la notion qu'avec ses ambiguïtés, l'autrice va placer sa démarche herméneutique aux confluences des textes, des images et des représentations psychologiques. Ce va-et-vient entre les trois couches de représentations de soi va rendre compte d'une nouvelle manière de concevoir l'autofiction, non pas comme genre littéraire, mais comme « pratique, voire mode de vie. » (35) Cette hybridité du terme sera mise au profit d'un corpus assez élargi ; il s'agira de textes signés par Doubrovsky, Robbe-Grillet, Duras, Ernaux, Angot, Perec, Carrère, Nothomb, de Vigan, Delaume, Laetitia Masson, Sophie Calle et d'autres, afin de voir « dans quelle mesure la présence de pratiques intermédiaires au sein de l'autofiction mène au renouvellement de problématiques centrales de l'écriture de soi. » (p. 45)

Le premier chapitre, « L'autofiction des Nouveaux Romanciers. Duras et Robbe-Grillet, sur papier et sur écran », tourne autour du rôle joué par les nouveaux romanciers dans le tournant autofictionnel à partir de deux cas de figure, Duras et Robbe-Grillet. Le courant se démarque par le rejet de la définition lejeunienne de l'autobiographie prétextant l'impossibilité d'un portrait objectif de soi. Le sujet

autofictionnel correspond beaucoup plus à cette ère du soupçon qui remet profondément en cause les notions de référentialité et de fiction. Hugueny-Léger va focaliser son analyse tant sur l'imaginaire visuel et cinématographique chez Robbe-Grillet que sur l'impact des médias chez Duras. L'autrice expose à quel point la consécration de Duras passe par sa présence dans l'émission *Apostrophes* où l'écrivaine joue avec les frontières flues entre la réalité et le texte. On y découvre une Duras qui maîtrise les outils de la presse et de la communication audio-visuelle et qui sait en tirer profit. Que ce soit à travers leurs œuvres cinématographiques ou à travers leur présence médiatique, Hugueny-Léger insiste sur la large importance que les nouveaux romanciers ont accordé à la multiplication des projections de soi, à la construction des postures diverses tout en brouillant les pistes d'interprétation.

Dans le deuxième chapitre, « Filer, filmer. Le sujet autofictionnel chez Calle, Laurens et Perec », l'autrice joue avec les sens multiples du mot « filer » pour exposer le rapport entre les productions autofictionnelles et la quête de soi, des origines, ainsi que des filiations sous la forme de « filature ». Les œuvres de Calle, Laurens et Perec permettent à Hugueny-Léger d'aborder la question de la projection de soi par la relation à l'Autre appelant une réflexion sur la disparition et le deuil. Chez Laurens, c'est la perte de son fils qui déclenche le geste littéraire, tandis que Calle entreprend son film *No Sex Last Night* après la mort d'Hervé Guibert dont la disparition imprègne le tissu du récit. Enfin, avec Perec, le terme « filer » gagne le sens de disparition, de fugue, exposant la fragilité du sujet et l'immanence sa disparition. En associant ces trois auteurs, Hugueny-Léger révèle un

des thèmes les plus importants de la démarche autofictionnelle, l'absence de l'Autre, marquée par les jeux de fractures, de discontinuités et de dissolutions.

Le motif de la quête sera repris également dans le troisième chapitre intitulé « Disparition et quête des origines. L'empreinte des formes cinématographiques et romanesques chez Carrère » afin d'analyser deux œuvres signées par Emmanuel Carrère, *Retour à Kotelnitch* (2003) et *Un roman russe* (2007). L'autrice focalise sa démonstration sur le souci de Carrère de se tenir au plus près du réel car, pour lui, la fiction ne fait que travestir la réalité. Pourtant, dans ce chapitre, Hugueny-Léger montre à quel point c'est difficile d'éviter le piège du romanesque quant au montage du film, qui se révèle le plus souvent un travail élaboré de construction. Le montage devient la signature de l'auteur qui s'infiltré dans la représentation des choses, tiraillé entre le désir de montrer le réel et les méandres de l'imaginaire.

La question de la transposition inter-médiale se posera dans le quatrième chapitre, « Adaptations et altérité. Allers-retours entre écrits et écrans chez Ernaux et Angot », où Hugueny-Léger aborde la notion de projection tant à travers la confluence entre le livre et l'écran que par l'intermédiaire des projections psychiques adaptées à l'écran. L'autofiction dépasse alors son sens narratif devenant « manière de vivre sa vie comme un film » (181). Cela se voit dans l'adaptation au film du texte signé par Ernaux, *L'Occupation*, où le thème de la jalousie est exploré de manière visuelle et bascule dans la fiction et l'imaginaire à travers les fantasmes, les projections et les représentations de l'Autre. Quant au cas d'Angot, l'adaptation de *Pourquoi le Brésil ?* appelle une réflexion

sur le transfert inter-médium comme dé-
 possession et dissimulation. La particu-
 larité des deux écrivaines étudiées dans ce
 chapitre tient à leur statut d'autrices-nar-
 ratrices qui jouent avec le pacte autobio-
 graphique ; l'adaptation autofictionnelle
 au cinéma va pousser même plus loin ces
 stratégies de brouillage de la représenta-
 tion de soi de l'Autre à l'écran.

Le dernier chapitre, « Sujets média-
 tiques, figures publiques. Autofiction et
 télévision, de Doubrovsky à Delaume »,
 permet à Hugueny-Léger d'explorer une
 autre facette des médias, celle de la pos-
 sibilité créative offerte par l'écran. Prenant
 comme cas de figure les exemples de Dou-
 brovsky et Delaume, l'autrice relève l'ur-
 gence actuelle pour chaque écrivain de
 faire sentir sa présence sur le petit écran.
 Le passage à la télé est devenu un rite à
 l'époque de l'ère du spectacle qui impose
 la maîtrise des outils. La représentation
 en chair et en os sur les plateaux de télé-
 vision permet à chaque auteur de mieux
 contrôler l'image qu'on veut donner à voir
 mais aussi de créer l'illusion d'une proxi-
 mité. Si certains écrivains sont devenus
 l'emblème de cette ère médiatique (voir
 le cas Nothomb), le texte de Doubrovsky,
Le Livre brisé, présente une certaine résis-
 tance au discours médiatique, le récit se
 plaçant à contre-courant des présences
 télévisées. Les cas de Chloé Delaume et de
 Jean-Philippe Toussaint témoignent éga-
 lement de cette condamnation des abus du
 passage à l'écran.

Pourtant, selon Hugueny-Léger, cela
 n'empêche que, malgré les tensions, le
 centre de gravité de la représentation de
 soi soit déplacé dans le recours à l'audio-
 visuel.

Terrain de contradictions, l'autofic-
 tion est l'espace du reflet des mutations
 socio-culturelles nourri par les représen-
 tations les plus variées du sujet. Le grand
 mérite du volume signé par Hugueny-Léger
 est celui d'avoir mis en évidence, à travers
 de multiples exemples, l'émergence de nou-
 velles formes de prise de parole ainsi que
 les tensions qui surgissent lors du trans-
 fert d'un médium à un autre. La longévi-
 té de l'autofiction est due à sa capacité de
 renouveler les modes de représentation,
 s'adaptant vite à l'audio-visuel. Que ce soit
 la télévision ou le cinéma, la démarche
 autofictionnelle garde sa fertilité servant
 d'impulsion créative et novatrice. Ainsi,
 le volume *Projections de soi. Identités et
 images en mouvement dans l'autofiction*
 jette de nouvelles bases quant à l'approche
 de l'autofiction, valorisant sa dimension
 intermédiaire et propose de nouveaux ou-
 tils critiques afin de mieux élaborer une
 théorie globale de ce que c'est le phéno-
 mène autofictionnel à l'heure actuelle.

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**Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Lumi de ficțiune, lumi de realitate*,
București: Editura Tracus Arte, 2022, 354 p.**

What do the relation between C. S. Lewis and T. S. Eliot, the horrifying serial murders described in Roberto Bolaño's *2666* and Ion D. Sîrbu's dystopic novel have to do with each other? Apparently, nothing, yet Ruxandra Cesereanu's latest work, entitled *Fictional Worlds, Real Worlds* and published in 2022, brings them together in a meaningful and thought-provoking manner.

A collection of fourteen of the author's previously published studies, now revised and augmented, the volume centers around the idea of fictional and real worlds. The gravitational force holding these seemingly disparate elements together is a primordial human fascination with story-telling, and a passionate desire to look into the depths of art in order to see the world reflected through it. This inquisitive glance approaches its object through the perspective of comparative



world literature, unearthing sometimes surprising but well-founded associations, while examining and speaking to acute contemporary problems. As already suggested by the title, the fourteen chapters are divided into two parts along the opposition between fiction and reality. However, as the author indicates in the foreword, they in fact represent three categories: works dominated by fiction and imagination (C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien,

Marie Darrieusecq, Will Self, Leonid Dimov, Mircea Cărtărescu) or by an interest in reality and descriptive realism (Sei Shonagon, Franz Werfel, Ion D. Sîrbu, Patrick Modiano, Herta Müller, Elfriede Jelinek, Lyudmila Ulitskaya), while the rest are located in transition, in between the two opposites (T. S. Eliot, Antonio Lobo Antunes, Roberto Bolaño and Andrei Codrescu).

Nonetheless, wherever the objects of the present studies might be found on

the imaginary spectrum ranging from fiction to reality, they never fail to show and contend with something of the inherently (non)human in us.

The first part of the book, dedicated to fictional worlds, opens with two chapters on pioneering works of fantasy literature by fellow scholars and friends, C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien respectively. Yet, instead of approaching *The Chronicles of Narnia* in a more-or-less conventional manner, Ruxandra Cesereanu offers a reading of the series, especially of the first volume *The Magician's Nephew*, through the curious mirror of T. S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*. She presents the two works as dialectical opposites, the former being permeated by a hope of regeneration and fertility, a *vegetal Christianity* as coined herself, while the latter is dominated by the sterility of hopelessness and the demystification of Antiquity. This sterility and desolation of the real-world experience could be the reason behind the rise of a so-called *fantasy complex*, discussed in relation with J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* in the second chapter. This concept is developed by the writer herself from the original Jungian idea, arguing for a positive interpretation of its effect, since for the majority of readers fantasy literature proved to be "therapeutic, healing and constructive" (p. 41).

Moving away from the reinvigorating force of fantasy literature, we turn back to the desolation once again in the third chapter, resounding from António Lobo Antunes' powerful *fado* over the political history of his native country. Ruxandra Cesereanu identifies the writer's obsession with decomposition and corpses as a literary diagnosis of Portugal and through the dissection of six of his novels arrives at the characteristic

elements (be they thematic or stylistic) of the ex-psychiatrist's fiction. The following chapter, focusing on Roberto Bolaño's *2666*, allows no respite from cruel or gruesome sights. While the first part of the chapter is dedicated to the way Bolaño reconfigures what belongs to the center of the periphery in literature, everything that is or seems unimportant or secondary becoming essential and primordial (p. 98), the second is dedicated to the minute analysis of the topic of femicide in the light of several historical events, theories and ideologies of the last century.

The fourth chapter of the volume brings together the theories of Jean-Jacques Wunenburger and Tzvetan Todorov in order to talk about alterity and metamorphosis in the books *Cock and Bull* by British novelist Will Self and *Pig Story* (or *Truismes* in the original language) by French writer Marie Darrieussecq. Both novels deal with fantastical sexual transformations, which the author of the present volume brings in context with Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* in an enlightening manner.

The last three chapters of the first part all bring Romanian authors into the spotlight: Leonid Dimov, Mircea Cărtărescu and Andrei Codrescu. In the first of these, Ruxandra Cesereanu gives a concise and well-documented overview of Leonid Dimov's oeuvre and its reception, emphasizing not only his poetical creation, but comparing his practice with his oneirist theory.

Moreover, starting from Corin Braga's classification of Dimov's poems as "neogothic tales" (p. 160), she explores this aspect of Dimov's work through the analysis of numerous poems. The following chapter is devoted to Mircea Cărtărescu's trilogy *Blinding* and his standalone novel *Solenoid*, the interpretation of his writings being aided by concepts Cărtărescu himself has used

to describe his novels or his ideas of creation during the *Phantasma* debates in 2006.

Therefore, geometrical and structural concepts such as the matryoshka doll, the spiral, fractals, mandalas, holons and holarchies (as defined by Arthur Koestler) abound, the most prominent of these metaphors being none other than the cranial map, which seems to permeate and create everything. The closing chapter of this sequence focuses on Andrei Codrescu, a multifaceted Romanian-born writer living in America. To be more specific, the emphasis falls on his essayistic works, which clearly reflect Codrescu's fascination with Dadaism and its influence on his thinking. Throughout her analysis, Ruxandra Cesereanu holds him up as an example of the *anarchetypal* author, a concept which has been theorized by Corin Braga.

An eleventh-century Japanese author and court lady, Sei Shonagon opens the second part of the volume, *Real Worlds*, though *The Pillow Book* written by her represents a space which strikes the modern-day reader rather as heavenly than real. This aestheticizing lens converting the Japanese imperial court into paradise is the subject of study in this chapter, as Ruxandra Cesereanu examines in detail what exactly is considered beautiful and worthy to be admired by the Japanese court lady. Yet the chapter ends on a tragical note, recording the destruction of the Edenic garden. The following chapter builds on biblical allusions as well, centering around Franz Werfel's novel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, which chronicles the Armenian genocide of 1915. Ruxandra Cesereanu explores the relation to and parallels between the fate of the Armenian and of the Jewish people, while investigating the problem of individual and collective identity, and its ethical and historical significance in Werfel's novel.

The following two chapters also commemorate traumatic periods in the lives of other nations, though in a very different style and genre. Ion D. Sîrbu's novel *Goodbye, Europe!*, discussed in the first of them, paints a dark and painful picture of the communist regime in Romania. The author of the present volume, based on the classification outlined by Corin Braga, identifies this novel as a Balkan dystopia where the repressive power is structured similarly to a Turkish sultanate. She also offers a thought-provoking comparative reading of Sîrbu's novel and Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* in relation to the problem of justice. The following chapter approaches the cruelty of repressive totalitarian systems from a different angle, delving into the question whether literature can or cannot restore lost lives and identities, erecting a tombstone, a memorial made out of words for those who fell victim to them. Patrick Modiano's acclaimed novel *Dora Bruder* and three of Herta Müller's works, *The Appointment*, *The Land of the Green Plums* and *The King Bows and Kills* respectively, serve as the basis of this inquiry.

The penultimate chapter tackles Austrian Nobel-prize winner Elfriede Jelinek's controversial novel, *The Piano Teacher*, analyzing from a socio-sexual and psychological viewpoint the sadomasochist relational triangle constituted by the main character, her controlling mother and her male student. As a result, the sickness and degeneration of humanity is uncovered, which proves to be beyond the saving power of music (p. 334).

Last but not least, the final chapter of the volume is dedicated to the novels *Imago* and *Yakov's Ladder* by Russian author Lyudmila Ulitskaya, both preoccupied by generational tales in the context of the last century. Ruxandra Cesereanu sees

Ulitskaya as an heir of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, in consequence of her specific talents as writer, a comparison the author supports through the commentary of the aforementioned novels.

Overall, the volume *Fictional Worlds, Real Worlds* gives ample proof not only of its author's scholarly expertise, but also of her skill as a writer. Ruxandra Cesereanu manages to sublimate the essence of her extensive research and her own contemplations in an accessible style, operating with a well-defined and clearly expressed conceptual toolkit. Her studies enter into

dialogue with both Romanian and international criticism, all the while not abandoning aspirations to didacticism and informativeness, mainly manifest in the ample footnotes throughout the book. Be it a veteran scholar or a novice in the study of comparative literature, this volume can offer new questions to ponder to any reader.

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