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Section Code: C022

INTRO

ARAD

by Roger Craik¹

At ease on the cracking
splintery bench in the Serbian slums,
with the Old Theatre on the eastern side
flaking down into the street,
I'm savoring the early sun's
clarifying warmth.
In the market round the corner,
the boxy slabbed cafés are serving
rum as well as coffee to the men
who smoke all hours.
There's only me, though, in the square.

The pigeon-throating air. The fountain
puddled, strewn. A concrete arch
with concrete soldiers issuing.

Again I sense
retirement's cajoling
loneliness, and lonelinesses
driven into life.
The lengthening days. The aching streets.
The Moleskine and the dog-eared paperback.
Clichés, facts,
remaining vanities.

Yes, there'll be other waitresses
like the one last night
who offered me a cigarette and said
"I know what it's like."

¹ Kent State University, Ohio

INTRO

The (A)lure of the City

Anemona Alb¹

City as imagology, more specifically imagology laden with ideology is a modern invention. Or is it? The concept of megalopolis *per se* was coined by the ancient Greeks, whose mega-urban configuration of Athens, but not solely, required novel terminology so as to accommodate a wider range of breadth and (administrative) sophistication. The case of city-as-state, all-encompassing and autocratic in terms of political power such as ancient Athens or Renaissance Venice forcefully substantiates the claim that the notion of City has always been, since times of yore, one laden with power, at times hegemonic. Nevertheless, the City as a *locus* for all things decadent and sophisticated is arguably a modern invention. It is indeed the site for great moral fall - as the anonymity the city condones is part and parcel of a broad space for flamboyance, for ethical relativism and thus new taxonomies of human being, indeed ones that are ever so ideologically remote from the canonized typologies. The instantiation of new taxonomies, such as the Angst-ridden individual, the bureaucrat, the prostitute etc. is a case in point. These new types of human being are only possible in the deployment, ideological and topographical, of the City. They are equally portrayed in the arts (see the canvas entitled *The Scream* by Edward Munch, a quintessence of modern Angst and paradoxical isolation in the hustle and bustle of a city) and in literature alike. In terms of the latter, there is indeed an array of literary works that have the City as setting, as the background against which plot and character typology are deployed (see Dickensian and Joycean

¹ University of Oradea

novels, to name but a few).

Equally saliently, the city as ideological battleground has been a preoccupation with writers of the modern age. The impossible speed that the city invites, in its relentless rhythms allows little space for the individual to take his time, to take stock as it were, or as the poet goes, one's dreams - read projects - remain unachieved in the hustle and bustle of the city (or, as he puts it, 'your own designs, peeling and unachieved', one might argue, similar to the peeling walls of derelict buildings in cities).

The City as a plutocratic space and the luxury and decadence thereof - see capitalist takes on the power of money that is more often than not generated in urban contexts - is an equally alluring theme for writers (see Baudelaire's "*calme, luxe et volupte*"); to say nothing of the beauty of the city celebrated by painters and writers alike. Superficial, shallow beauty notwithstanding, or as the adage goes, "a cosmetic mask a fool could penetrate", *i.e.* shallow beauty that is easily discernable because all is frugal and fleeting in the city: love, relationships, the sense of communion. Arguably, the City may fruitfully be personified as a woman, a shallow one at that, luring men into instantaneous and short-lived relationships, as the City devours its human prey after having used and abused it. A Black Widow of sorts with an utilitarian agenda.

Therefore the theme of the City in Literature seemed like an appropriate one to propose for this year's issue of *Confluente Journal* as it allows for various takes on the configurations of human taxonomy set against the urban background and hence the interpretive endeavours can indeed be myriad. This is what our fellow-contributors to the 2017 issue have indeed considered and illustrated eloquently in their respective papers.

CITY IN/AND LITERATURE
Literary-Isms

LA VILLE EN LITTÉRATURE
Études littéraires

De l'écriture de la banlieue à l'émergence de la littérature : le cas de *Boumkœur* de Rachid Djaïdadi

Andreea Bugiac¹

Résumé: *Les contraintes particulières liées à la jeune littérature beur, vue souvent comme l'expression d'une volonté de témoignage sur la marginalité et l'exclusion sociale, semblent soustraire cette littérature à une recherche de nature esthétique. Le travail sur le langage dont atteste un roman comme Boumkœur de Rachid Djaïdani (1999) vient pourtant à l'encontre de cette vision stéréotypée sur la littérature beur, révélant Djaïdani comme un écrivain particulièrement intéressant en quête d'une légitimité littéraire.*

Mots-clés: roman urbain, beur, immigration, banlieue, Rachid Djaïdani

Depuis une trentaine d'années, on assiste en France à l'émergence d'une nouvelle littérature, dite « de l'immigration », provenant d'auteurs appartenant à la culture beur et donnant parfois le sentiment d'un « groupe ». La naissance de cette littérature peut se situer chronologiquement dans les années 80, avec la *Marche des beurs* survenue en octobre-décembre 1983 et la publication, la même année, du roman de Mahdi Charef, *Thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed*. Le nom de Charef va fédérer autour de lui de jeunes écrivains avec des poétiques assez similaires, qui partagent la même volonté de rendre compte de la condition des « immigrants de seconde génération », improprement appelés ainsi car, même si leurs parents proviennent en grand de l'immigration maghrébine ou

¹ Université Babeş-Bolyai de Cluj-Napoca

africaine, leurs enfants ne sont pas à proprement parler des immigrants, étant nés en France. Charef exploite dans son œuvre l'espace des cités HLM que ces jeunes habitent, annonçant par là, comme Laura Reeck l'appelle, les directions majeures d'une littérature dont les étiquettes identificatrices renvoient à une problématique spatiale transformée en interrogation socio-littéraire : on parle de littérature des banlieues, de littérature urbaine ou populaire (Reeck 2012). La banlieue ou le quartier où ces jeunes sont souvent ghettoïsés devient ainsi le lieu d'inscription d'une communauté qui revendique ses droits à l'existence.

La littérature beur est traversée par les mêmes incertitudes et malaises identitaires ressentis par ses représentants. Ni Arabes, ni Français, les jeunes Beurs font office d'étrangers parlant à l'intérieur de la langue française. Ils sont des « intrangers », comme Yassir Benmiloud les appelle dans son roman *Allah superstar*, à travers une invention lexicale qui, selon lui, « semble saisir mieux que d'autres le concept d'une identité interstitielle, qui se bâtit à partir des assonances et des dissonances de deux cultures différentes que l'on s'efforce de mettre au diapason » (Vitali¹ 13).

Par rapport à sa sœur aînée – la littérature maghrébine francophone, désormais pleinement reconnue et largement étudiée –, la littérature beur peine encore à acquérir une légitimité sur la scène littéraire française. Cette situation dérive avant tout de la condition linguistique particulière de tels auteurs écrivant en français mais ayant le sentiment d'une différence fondamentale par rapport aux « Français de souche ». Une autre raison de leur discrédit littéraire réside dans les enjeux sociaux et politiques qu'ils assignent à leurs écrits : leurs récits sont le plus souvent des témoignages venus de l'intérieur sur la vie dans les banlieues parisiennes. Or, selon un préjugé bien établi dans la République des Lettres, la forme même du témoignage refuserait à cette littérature précisément sa valeur littéraire. Son exigence de faire passer un message social de la manière la plus directe et la plus efficace possible met en arrière-plan le travail ou la recherche esthétique. Rapidité de l'écriture, oralité du style, tours familiers ou expressions argotiques servent à esquisser une certaine image de la littérature beur comme une littérature populaire où l'accent tombe sur des thématiques sociales qui se répètent : la marginalité, l'exclusion, la fragilité économique, la violence ou l'insécurité.

Or, dans le contexte d'une écriture visant les effets immédiats ou à court terme, un écrivain comme Rachid Djaïdani fait figure à part. Ex-boxeur, romancier et cinéaste, Rachid Djaïdani se fait remarquer par la qualité de son écriture en dépit de la thématique qu'il exploite. Le monde de son premier roman, *Boumkœur*², paru aux éditions du Seuil au tournant du millénaire, compose un univers bariolé fait de jeunes gens au chômage, de petits délinquants, de trafiquants de drogues, de vendeurs illicites, de sorciers africains, de gitans bohèmes et de prostituées recyclées dans le « minitel rose » (B 66). C'est ce qui fait qu'en dépit du filtre représenté par la conscience et la mémoire du personnage narrateur, le jeune Yaz, ce monde soit un immense réservoir de voix. Oscillant entre différents parlers qui sont autant de sociolectes, l'écriture de Djaïdani mélange français non standard, arabe, anglais, gitan ou verlan, le tout baignant dans une prose poétique qui atteste d'un travail particulièrement soucieux sur la langue.

1. Écrire la banlieue, de l'aventure sociale à l'aventure littéraire

Cette volonté d'affirmation littéraire à l'intérieur d'un genre misant sur le questionnement social révèle Rachid Djaïdani comme un écrivain particulièrement intéressant. Dans ce sens, il convient d'évoquer les noms des cinéastes auxquels Djaïdani se rapporte le plus souvent. Tarkovski, Godard ou Bresson ne sont pas les premiers noms qui nous viendraient à l'esprit en corrélation avec un réalisateur préoccupé surtout par des questions sociales chaudes comme le racisme ou les tensions intercommunautaires. Les raisons de Djaïdani de se rapporter à de tels stylisticiens du cinéma ne concernent pourtant pas, on s'en doutait, des affinités thématiques ; d'ailleurs, ils sont déjà très différents l'un de l'autre de ce point de vue. Ce qui les rapproche, par contre, c'est une obsession identique pour le traitement esthétique des images : ce sont tous, comme Djaïdani le dit, de « grands inventeurs de formes » :

Bien sûr, on trouve toujours des gens pour vous dire : « Mais comment pouvez-vous admirer Debord ou Bresson et faire les films que vous faites ? » Le cinéma de Bresson n'encourage pas à faire du Bresson. Il témoigne simplement qu'un cinéaste

² Rachid Djaïdani, *Boumkœur*, Paris, Seuil, coll. « Points », 1999. Les références ultérieures à ce livre seront indiquées par le sigle B, suivi de la page, et placées entre parenthèses dans le corps du texte.

qui s'appelle Robert Bresson a inventé un système impossible à reproduire qui lui a permis d'atteindre les sommets de l'art contemporain. Après, à chacun de se débrouiller avec ses moyens pour trouver un chemin d'expression à soi. (Djaïdani 2012)

Or la question du style est fondamentale dans la banlieue ; le narrateur de *Boumkœur* nous le rappelle dès le début de son récit : « Le style, c'est important. » (B 31). Pourtant, de quel style s'agit-il ? La simplicité syntaxique de la phrase et sa tournure orale semblent contourner l'idée d'un style au sens esthétique du terme. Nous avons là l'une des phrases toutes faites que Yaz prend sur son compte, la rapportant dans ce cas à son apparence physique : « Mon jean tombe parfaitement sur les virgules, ma démarche s'élanche. Un petit zoomage dans la fente de ma boîte aux lettres, y a que dalle, bonne nouvelle pas de nouvelle. » (B 31). Pour les jeunes de la cité, le style ne signifie donc pas différenciation, mais bien conformité à un code vestimentaire à l'américaine (jean et chaussures Nike) qui expose le désir d'intégration dans une communauté. La légère ironie de l'écrivain qu'on perçoit derrière la fierté innocente de Yaz nous oblige à repenser le sens de cette importance accordée au style. On devrait donc le chercher ailleurs que dans des codes extérieurs qui ne sont, en fait, que des manières stéréotypées de s'identifier à un groupe. Le registre familier employé et le jeu avec les proverbes dans la phrase suivante nous poussent à replacer la question du style plutôt du côté du langage. Ce qui identifie Yaz, ce qui l'individualise, c'est sa voix, cette voix traversée par différentes voix qu'il s'agit d'assimiler et de distiller dans une mixité qui est la sienne tout comme celle du quartier qu'il habite.

Il n'est donc pas un paradoxe de voir Djaïdani qui, dans son grand succès de librairie *Boumkœur*, tourne le dos à Molière et, avec lui, à toute une idéologie de la langue française classique³, invité sur le plateau de télévision de l'un des plus grands puristes et défenseurs du français standard, Bernard Pivot. Dans *Boumkœur*, son premier roman d'une trilogie du quartier dont font partie aussi *Mon nerf* (2004) et *Viscéral* (2007), Djaïdani réussit justement à réaliser ce qu'il admire chez ses maîtres du cinéma – à inventer une forme pour exprimer, au-delà du message social, une subjectivité poétique qui rappelle, dans certains aspects, l'écriture d'un Céline.

³ « C'est pas du Molière mais au moins c'est sincère. » (B 151)

La légitimité littéraire dont jouit un roman comme *Boumkœur* ne réside donc pas dans la thématique abordée, mais dans la manière dont Djaïdani réussit à capter et à transcrire des voix jusque-là anonymes. D'ailleurs, ce sont souvent l'anonymat et l'invisibilité sociale qui conduisent les jeunes écrivains beurs à prendre la plume. C'est aussi une raison pour laquelle leur écriture revêt le plus souvent la forme du récit autobiographique, comme si la trace écrite pourrait porter témoignage d'une existence autrement exclue de l'Histoire. *Boumkœur* est, lui aussi, un récit à la première personne même s'il déclare, au début, qu'à la source de l'écriture il y a l'intention de porter un « témoignage » sur la vie du quartier :

Si ma vie personnelle et familiale avait pu intéresser ne serait-ce qu'une personne, je l'aurais su depuis belle lurette. Le sujet, c'est mon quartier. Faut en profiter, en ce moment c'est à la mode, la banlieue, les jeunes délinquants, le rap et tous les faits divers qui font les gros titres des journaux. (B 13)

Ma seule préoccupation sera de témoigner. (B 17)

Le narrateur de Djaïdani semble donc renouer avec la volonté de témoignage d'autres auteurs beurs, sans manifester pourtant aussi leur urgence. Écrire sera pour lui un acte de négation, négation de son effacement par un système politique qui l'abandonne au secours social et négation d'une filiation qui, pour lui, apparaît comme incertaine. La relation entre le fils et le père synthétise la difficulté d'intégration d'une jeunesse à laquelle on refuse à la fois l'accès dans un système dominant (la « grande ville ») et l'ancrage dans une lignée. Le père, qui apparaît dans le livre à travers l'appellatif arabisé « le Daron », reste enfermé dans un complexe d'infériorité par rapport à l'ancien colonisateur : il accepte les travaux les plus humiliants, cherche par tous les moyens l'intégration dans le pays d'adoption (quitte à renier par cela son fils cadet) et s'humilie devant Napoléon, le Français de souche tenté par l'idéologie de l'extrême droite. Le fossé générationnel entre le père et le fils passe, dans ce cas aussi, par la langue. Loin d'être un moyen de communication, la langue française peut venir un instrument de manipulation et de domination. Napoléon, dont le nom concentre l'impérialisme français, s'en sert comme d'une arme dont le sens compte moins que la force qu'elle possède pour garder l'Étranger

dans un état de minorité. Le rapport à la langue réinvestit les anciennes relations de pouvoir entre le colonisateur et le colonisé : recourir au français du « dictionnaire » devient une stratégie psychologique pour humilier l'immigrant arabe. Perdus dans l'éther culturel, les « beaux » mots restent l'apanage du Français ; ils sont tout aussi normatifs et autoritaires que la police qui fait des rondes dans les rues de la cité. À l'Arabe reviennent seulement l'action, les tâches ingrates du nettoyage aseptique et de l'effacement de tout ce qui pourrait souiller la langue ou la conscience du colonisateur. La relation du père de Yaz avec l'école où son fils apprend le français devient donc symbolique : il y est convoqué pour nettoyer les graffitis, les crachats et les « fromages camembert » qui salissent les plafonds et les murs. La mention du fromage camembert, stéréotype culturel associé avec la France, est donc ironique dans le contexte d'un espace français éducatif tout aussi bien que répressif :

Les rares fois que le Daron a mis ses pieds à l'école, ce fut avec sa société Jan Brinos Frères Associés qui le transforma en Mister Clean des coups d'éponge sur les plafonds saccagés par les graffitis aux jets de karcher pour faire déguerpir les fromages camembert, les crachats, la purée, etc. Face au Daron, Napoléon retrouve une émotion de colonisateur sortant des mots que même le dictionnaire a du mal à saisir. (B 122)

C'est dans ce sens aussi qu'on peut interpréter le geste du père de se moquer du projet littéraire de son fils. Il y a une révérence religieuse du père devant la langue française de Napoléon, dont le pédantisme équivalait pour lui à une supériorité intellectuelle qu'il ne peut qu'admirer de loin. Qu'un Arabe veuille s'approprier cette langue représente un désir dangereux, car un tel geste suppose la confusion d'une hiérarchie préétablie. Le père condamnera donc son fils en arabe, ce qui ne fait qu'exposer davantage son incapacité de comprendre l'écart générationnel, culturel et linguistique qui le sépare de son fils :

Quand il [le père] me trouve avec un stylo, il me traite de bourricot. Il a rigolé quand je lui ai confessé mon projet d'« écrire un livre ». Il a dit des mots dans sa langue que je ne comprends pas. [...] Faudrait que j'apprenne à parler le dialecte de mes ancêtres pour pouvoir lui répliquer qu'il

devrait me soutenir plutôt que toujours m'enfoncer. (B 122-123)

La mise en abîme de la figure de l'écrivain à l'intérieur du livre de Djaïdani est un artifice littéraire censé exposer le rôle de l'écriture pour les jeunes écrivains beurs. Comme Yaz l'affirme, il ne s'agit pour le jeune beur ni de s'intégrer dans un système qui d'ailleurs le refuse, ni de retrouver ses racines, car ses racines ne sont pas celles de ses parents. L'enjeu réside dans *l'invention* de ses propres racines. Et cette invention de soi se fera, dans le récit, par l'intermédiaire de cette langue mélangée, parfois maltraitée, à laquelle le lecteur est exposé dès les premières pages du récit.

On arrive par là à ce qui fait Djaïdani dépasser le côté du simple témoignage social. En effet, juste après avoir affirmé sa volonté de « témoigner », le narrateur mentionne aussi son principe esthétique majeur : le témoignage, genre de la non-fiction, doit être enveloppé par la fiction, donc par l'art. Cette fictionnalisation du vécu permet donc le dépassement du simple discours testimonial et l'entrée dans le discours littéraire. À plus d'une occasion, les souvenirs de Yaz sont distillés par la fiction, comme le prouve la métaphore de la chaise tournante : le malaise provoqué par la chaise tourbillonnante sur laquelle Yaz joue dans la cave de Napoléon évoque les strates de la mémoire, troublées par un passé traumatique qui, à la manière d'une soupape, reste sous pression et risque sans cesse de déborder dans le présent. Le travail littéraire sera donc une stratégie pour filtrer l'agressivité de cette mémoire et sa violence déclinée sous de multiples formes tout au long du récit : la mort du petit frère, Hamel, provoquée par une overdose, la violence du père envers sa femme et son fils cadet, le mystère de la richesse du frère aîné, Aziz, qu'on apprend être un dealer responsable de la toxicomanie de Hamel, la conduite légère de la sœur, Sonia, autrement très « cool » et la seule qui encourage son frère dans son désir de devenir écrivain.

3. Projection spatiale, marginalité et invisibilité sociale

L'incipit du roman place le lecteur dans un monde de tours HLM dont la verticalité, entendue ailleurs de manière positive, n'est ici qu'un synonyme de pauvreté et d'absence de transcendance : « Une galère de plus comme tant d'autres jours dans ce quartier où les tours sont tellement hautes que le ciel semble avoir disparu. Les arbres n'ont plus de feuilles, tout est gris autour de moi. Moi, c'est

Yazad, mais dans le quartier on me surnomme Yaz. » (B 9). C'est à l'intérieur de cet espace dont le gris uniforme refuse l'inscription tout comme l'espoir d'un avenir que s'opère la naissance du sujet, à travers le baptême symbolique de Yazad devenu, pour les habitants de la cité, Yaz.

La position spatiale du narrateur dans la ville traduit un questionnement identitaire qui se reflète dans les jeux pronominaux et les rapports territoriaux délimitant la ségrégation sociale : moi/eux ; haut/bas. Ces positionnements sont évidemment subjectifs, même stéréotypés : si, du point de vue géographique, rien ne justifie la vision haut/bas pour faire référence à la dialectique centre/périphérie, « le bas » renvoie à une manière particulière de se voir et de se placer dans une économie sociale. Rejetée dans le bas, la banlieue devient le réceptacle des déchets, incarnant ce qu'Ilaria Vitali appelle la « disqualification sociale » (Vitali² 31) : « Les poubelles, elles inondent de puanteur tout l'oxygène que le groupe respire [...] » (B 19). La communauté « d'en bas » s'oppose ainsi à la communauté privilégiée, située dans les « hauteurs » de la ville, sorte d'Eldorado à couleurs étincelantes et devenue source d'envie et de mirage :

Dans une résidence pavillonnairement riche des hauteurs de la ville, je m'étais volontairement égaré. La récolte devait être bonne, car sur un bas-côté un vélo tout-terrain traînait. Il était sublime, cadre alu, jantes à bâtons, équipé shimano, la marque prestige du freinage, et une fourche à suspension avant. À toute allure, j'enfourchais le VTT aux vitesses carrément bien huilées. Mais au bout de trois coups de pédale sans élan, la police municipale me stoppa [...]. (B 14)

La prise de conscience de la différence sociale est donc intimement liée à une forme de partage du territoire. Le seul élément qui est présent à la fois dans le centre de la ville et dans la banlieue est la police, prête à réprimer toute tentative de transgression. Les programmes de sécurité sociale sont dénoncés pour leur hypocrisie car ils enferment les jeunes dans une position subordonnée d'éternel enfant, « jeune assisté conditionné à tendre la main et à attendre demain et après-demain... » (B 17).

L'abandon de l'État ne serait-il qu'une nouvelle forme, plus adoucie, des anciennes attitudes impérialistes de l'esprit occidental ? Quand il apparaît, le mot « politique » est le plus souvent associé à l'État. Celui-ci a son propre code discursif, lisse et

poli comme les murs des tours : il y a aussi une « politique du langage » qui sert à masquer la véritable inaction sociale. Par ricochet, le rejet venant de la part de la banlieue s'exprime à travers un langage cru et violent, qui est valorisé positivement pour son authenticité.

À première vue, le discours de Yaz ne se fait pas dénonciateur, à la manière de la violence ravageuse de la musique rap, mais tout simplement constatif, sous le mode du documentaire ou du rapport objectif. On relate les défaillances d'un système, sans que la faute soit clairement attribuée à quelqu'un. Grézi, l'ami de Yaz, propose à celui-ci de réaliser un reportage. C'est un prétexte pour le narrateur de raconter, avec une fine ironie, l'échec d'un cameraman de la TV venu dans la banlieue pour faire un documentaire. Il y a une certaine verve picaresque dans la relation du documentaire échoué et du cameraman chassé du quartier « [à] base de gauche-droite sur la face et de balayages » (B 21), suivie ensuite par l'épisode avec le vendeur cherchant à tromper Yaz et Grézi. Mais, dans cet épisode de veine picaresque, on sous-entend une critique mordante des dysfonctionnements sociaux :

Je l'écoute et il m'apprend : la semaine dernière, un cameraman de la TV est venu demander aux jeunes qui tiennent les murs s'ils pouvaient leur poser des questions. Bien sûr, qu'ils ont répondu, enchantés. Le décor choisi n'était pas très original, l'interrogatoire se déroula dans les entrailles d'une tour. Les jeunes, pour soigner leur image, étaient dissimulés sous des cagoules afin de ne laisser paraître que leur regard, comme s'ils s'étaient métamorphosés en affiche de *La Haine*. La mise en scène ne serait rien sans les oinjs au bec et les gros plans des seringues contaminantes, tous les clichés miséreux rassemblés pour le scoop. (B 20-21)

La cité semble devenir une sorte d'État à l'intérieur du grand État, avec ses propres lois, ses codes et ses valeurs symboliques. Le fait qu'elle est désignée de manière répétitive par le mot « jungle », comme le sera plus tard la prison, n'exclut pas les hiérarchies, une organisation rigoureuse et un système interne d'intégration/rejet qui reproduit celui perpétué, à grande échelle, par l'État. La cité en serait, donc, un possible miroir. Son isolement et ses dimensions réduites nous permettent de mieux l'analyser. Comme dans un laboratoire, on y expérimente et on y observe des comportements humains, des formes communautaires et des conduites en situation

extrême (violence, manque d'argent, dépendances). Son rôle est à la fois sociologique et philosophique, car les diverses hiérarchies qui existent dans la cité ne sont souvent que des formes masquées pour une compréhension pervertie du pouvoir, universellement valable. Rejetés par l'État français dans les banlieues ou dans les prisons, les jeunes Beurs répètent le même scénario d'exclusion par rapport à d'autres jeunes qui partagent leur situation. Ce qui fait briser le cercle de cette répétition absurde, ce sera la lucidité et le fait d'assumer pleinement sa « différence ».

Arrêté pour avoir tenu captif Yaz pour obtenir une rançon, Grézi s'éveille à la réalité de la véritable signification de la cité : « Moi qui croyais faire partir d'une famille dans le quartier, je me suis vite rendu compte je me trompais. Y a pas un mec de la cité qui m'a envoyé un mandat ou ne serait-ce qu'une lettre. » (B 128). Roman de la banlieue, *Boumkœur* est aussi un roman de formation ou des « illusions perdues » : mais ce qui sauve Yaz, comme plus tard, Grézi, ce sera la poésie, la seule à permettre une expression authentique de l'intériorité. Cette poéticité du récit accompagne le lecteur dès le début de sa lecture, malgré la dureté du langage ou la violence des épisodes racontés. Si le sexe, la drogue ou le suicide, thèmes récurrents dans les romans urbains, apparaissent chez Djaïdani également, leur mise en récit leur prête une certaine sensibilité. Cette sensibilité poétique se fait sentir partout, mais elle devient frappante dans les scènes d'amour avec le jeune métisse Satîle ou dans le récit de la mort de Hamel, métaphorisée par la « forme étoilée » (B 37) laissée par le sang sur la vitre de la porte.

Marginalisé par l'État, le monde de la cité intéresse les médias, en l'occurrence la télévision. Mais cette attention s'avère vite intéressée car les problèmes de la cité ne sont médiatisés que dans la mesure où cela rapporte de l'audience, donc de l'argent. Or le spectacle télévisé de la cité, son exposition grossie à la télé équivaut, en fin de compte, à l'invisibilité. Passant à l'écran, les jeunes sont tout aussi décorporalisés que dans les affiches de films ou les slogans politiques. C'est ainsi que, dans le scénario du reportage avorté, les jeunes de la cité sont représentés avec des cagoules qui cachent leurs visages. L'expression libre du corps leur est défendue, et ils se prennent au jeu en s'appropriant l'invisibilité comme marque identitaire.

Au niveau profond, les accents dénonciateurs du récit de Djaïdani sont sensibles. Par ses contraintes, un reportage est censé être un gage d'objectivité et d'authenticité de cette France profonde

enregistrée par la caméra. Or le décor choisi, l'attention portée par les jeunes à leur image extérieure, surtout vestimentaire, la mise en scène insistant sur les drogues laissées à l'abandon reprennent et confirment, en fait, les clichés liés à une « culture du quartier ». Entretenir ces stéréotypes relève d'une sorte de connivence ou de pacte implicite entre les gens de l'intérieur et ceux « du dehors ». Le spectacle qui fait de ces jeunes, autrement anonymes et invisibles, des personnages ou des héros dans leur négativité même finit quand l'intervieweur déplace l'enquête du terrain du mythe vers celui de la réalité. Si posséder des armes ou des drogues sert à appuyer l'image mythique du garçon mauvais, le fait d'avoir ou non le bac ou de prier dans des mosquées clandestines rappelle l'actualité dangereuse ou embarrassante. En enfreignant les règles non écrites du jeu, le caméraman doit prendre la fuite. On voit l'originalité de Djaïdani également dans cette affirmation que les stéréotypes ne sont pas construits seulement par nous, les spectateurs commodes et un peu voyeurs des banlieues, mais aussi par les « banlieusards » eux-mêmes. Leur identité incertaine les conduit à embrasser les identités toutes faites, se conformant à l'image qu'on leur assigne.

4. Parler de la cité et appropriation identitaire

Depuis deux décennies, la mixité linguistique de la banlieue ne cesse d'attirer l'attention des spécialistes, linguistes, littéraires et sociologues y compris. On parle de « français populaire » (Gadet 2003), de langue « du quartier » (Liogier 2006) ou de « français contemporain des cités » (Goudaillier 2002). La langue des cités reste un phénomène tant linguistique que social, la « mosaïque » des langues composant un mélange polyphonique de sociolectes.

Contrairement à d'autres représentants du roman beur, Rachid Djaïdani est devenu un nom consacré de la littérature française récente. Or, il est évident que sa réputation ne dépend pas des thèmes explorés même si l'auteur se plaît à observer à travers la voix de Yaz que la banlieue, l'immigration ou la prison sont des sujets littéraires à la mode, mieux vaut-il en profiter. Une telle affirmation ne doit pas nous leurrer : malgré de tels commentaires métatextuels auto-ironiques, la valeur stylistique de l'écriture de Djaïdani reste incontestable. Misant sur l'oralité et l'argot comme d'autres romans de la banlieue, Djaïdani réussit pourtant à les transformer en littérature, en donnant ainsi une forme littéraire au questionnement identitaire des habitants des cités.

Cette littérarité du récit de Djaïdani passe tout d'abord par le langage. On le voit dès cette création lexicale étrange présente dans le titre, un mot-valise amalgamant *cœur* et *bunker*. Si le titre concentre l'idée d'un enfermement repris dans le récit par les figures de la tour, de la prison, de la cave ou de la toile d'araignée, il mise aussi sur un travail d'invention et de création langagière. Car ces figures spatiales fermées ont aussi la particularité de pouvoir se transformer en source d'engendrement : l'enfermement de Yaz dans la cave correspond, certes, à une descente mythique aux enfers d'où le héros sortira transformé mais aussi à un ré-enfantement littéraire de soi dans une cave devenue ventre matriciel. Filtrée par la mémoire subjective, l'expérience vécue par Yaz deviendra le point de départ pour l'écriture de ce récit qu'il convoite, celui de la vie du quartier. L'écriture de ce récit permettrait à Yaz de sortir de l'obscurité de la non-identité sociale et de se donner une nouvelle identité par la littérature. À la fin, il semble que l'anabase ne soit jamais accomplie : Yaz perd en feu toutes les histoires de quartier racontées par Grézi. C'est un prétexte pour le narrateur d'inviter le lecteur dans une catabase semblable et de connaître la vie de la cité par lui-même, sans préjugés (ni les siens, ni ceux des habitants mêmes des cités) : « Faites l'effort de nous rendre visite. » (B 158). En réalité, la réappropriation de soi est bien achevée. Le récit que nous venons de lire et qui n'est pas celui que Yaz aurait voulu écrire est pourtant exemplaire de la vie des jeunes dans le quartier. De *type* humain, Yaz devient *prototype* : dérisoire ou mythique, son aventure rend compte des difficultés inhérentes de tout habitant d'un quartier populaire dans la France de nos jours.

Le travail sur le langage s'observe tout d'abord dans l'oralité qui sature le récit. Il y a de nombreuses interjections et exclamations, parfois vulgaires, d'autres fois écrites en majuscules comme on en trouve dans les bandes dessinées pour simuler graphiquement la violence ou l'intensité sonore : « Je glisse, je vole, je chute droit devant. BOUMMM !!! » (B 86) ; « PAF !!! À cet endroit précis, notre poids moyen a plié son Mexicanos » (B 97).

Les onomatopées sont, elles aussi, abondantes : « Clic, clac, fait la porte qui se referme [...] » (B 104) ; « Le Daron a foutu 'Mimi le chat' dans un sac étanche et plouff... !!! dans le fleuve qui a comme terminus la mer, il l'a balancé. » (B 124) ; « Atchoum ! Mon éternuement m'a forcé à ouvrir les yeux [...] » (B 71-72). Parfois, on a l'impression d'une redondance, comme dans le dernier exemple, où le nom traduit le son proprement dit : atchoum ! / éternuement.

Ce choix est pourtant intentionné. Il sert à « étoffer » la toile discursive du texte et à produire un effet de « bande dessinée » rappelant d'autres produits de la « sous-culture » urbaine. Le même principe, de « traduction » de différents langages qui se superposent, s'observe aussi dans le geste de Yaz de transcrire fidèlement les paroles en verlan de son ami, Grézi, tout en offrant leur « décodage » en français standard :

- Excuse-moi, Yaz, mais je te parle et tu ne me réponds jamais. Es-tu bien sûr que ton mal de tête s'est dissipé ? Dans le cas contraire, je ne vois aucun problème à ce que tu dormes quelques heures.

La même réplique sans décodeur :

- Scuse ouam. J'te l'épare depuis l'heure touta et tisgra tu me mets dans le enve. T'es sûr que ça va ieuem dans ta chetron Yaz ? Y a pas de blème sinon j'te laisse mirdor. (B 113)

Le lecteur pourrait être frappé aussi par le recours constant à des emprunts à l'anglais, repris souvent sous une forme francisée : « un lieu de deal » (10), « Elle est cool » (11), « Aziz mon grand brother » (12), « Ce sont de vrais boss [...], qui préfèrent kiffer sur un gun [...] » (26), « Il me tend son poing, pour le shake [...] » (32). Dans un système linguistique qui met ensemble français, arabe et anglais, le déséquilibre est évident, et non de la manière dont on s'y attendait. Les mots arabes ne sont pas très fréquents et ils ne sont pas différents de ceux employés dans d'autres romans beurs : *daron*, *casbah*, *bled*, *caïd*, *kiffer*. Or, par rapport à l'arabe, la place accordée à l'anglais est nettement supérieure. Représentant souvent des référents culturels, les emprunts anglais donnent une certaine coloration pittoresque au parler de la cité comme si la culture de la banlieue réclamait une autre langue pour se définir. L'anglais crée une distanciation à la fois par rapport au français, le code de cet Autre de l'extérieur, langue de la domination politique d'un Napoléon et de l'hégémonie linguistique du français classique, et à l'arabe, code d'un Autre de l'intérieur, langue de la violence d'un père et de la soumission de la mère, langue que le fils ne connaît pas.

L'anglais revient parfois dans des expressions figées : « No comment. » (B 63) ; « top secret » (B 156) ; « best of » (B 158). De telles expressions n'exigent pourtant pas une véritable maîtrise de la langue étrangère. Elles sont en fait empruntées à une culture américaine populaire qui fait irruption dans la culture francophone de la cité par l'intermédiaire de la musique ou du cinéma. Leur

présence ajoute une strate de plus au métissage langagier déjà dense du roman et contribue à construire une image de soi formée à l'aune d'une autre sous-culture urbaine qui est celle des rappeurs américains.

Comme nous venons de le dire plus haut, un rôle déterminant dans l'identité beur est joué par le rejet idéologique du français classique. La légitimité et le monopole dont ce dernier s'est réjoui depuis plusieurs siècles sont dénoncés comme les conséquences d'une entreprise politique artificielle, en dehors de la réalité concrète. Malgré sa maladresse, la poésie carcérale qui aide Grézi à survivre dans la prison est plus importante pour lui car plus authentique : « [...] ce Kurtis, il est grandiose dans la poésie du mot, à côté de lui Molière et sa perruque peuvent se rhabiller dans leur tombe de manouche. » (B 156). La perruque de Molière est tout aussi artificielle que le français classique imposé comme la langue standard. Par rapport à elle, la poésie d'un « taulard » pourrait sembler naïve mais elle réussit mieux à exprimer les dissonances comme les espoirs d'une génération jugée trop rapidement comme « perdue » par une société française conformiste. D'ailleurs, cette naïveté n'est pas aussi transparente qu'on pourrait le croire à une première lecture : du coup, l'interprétation orale du poème de Kurtis rend sensible un jeu assez raffiné sur les sonorités et les réseaux métaphoriques. Deux alexandrins se profilent même à l'intérieur d'un pseudo-texte en prose, nouveau clin d'œil à ce français classique dont on entend pourtant se démarquer : « *Un jour sans toi c'est comme un été sans soleil, / et notre soleil c'est toi, oui toi, liberté, / qui dans un sommeil d'éternité nous as abandonnés...* » (B 150, italiques dans le texte).

L'authenticité devient une valeur en soi, à côté de l'esthétique. Vu de cet angle, le sociolecte des quartiers peut acquérir à son tour une valeur, car étant plus authentique dans son accord avec les nouvelles réalités sociales. Croisé par différentes voix qui se superposent, composant une véritable « polyphonie sociale » (Frican et Merendet), le langage de la cité peut se transformer en littérature. L'oralité, la brièveté des phrases, leur enchaînement rapide, la ponctuation réduite à l'essentiel, les structures rythmiques ou les rimes internes, tous ces éléments donnent une certaine dimension musicale au roman.

D'ailleurs, il est intéressant d'observer que la poésie revient à chaque moment où un personnage sort d'un espace pour entrer dans un autre. Elle accompagne donc des rites d'initiation

censés offrir aux personnages de nouvelles identités. Le sortie de Yaz dans la cité, au début du récit, est liée à un acte de baptême (« on me surnomme Yaz », B 9) ; mais cette naissance symbolique va de pair avec une écriture qui accroît les allitérations et le jeu des rythmes pour donner l'impression du *slam*, cette forme d'art urbain placé au carrefour de la musique et de la poésie : « L'air que je respire me fait couler la goutte au nez. / Pas de neige sur le dos de cette saison, le mois de janvier est entamé, / déjà les fêtes sont terminées, / de toute façon, je m'en moque, je n'aime pas les fêtes imposées, / surtout celles de la nouvelle année. » (B 9).

À la fin du livre, la révélation de la poésie vient à Grézi toujours après avoir obligé de quitter un espace, celui du quartier, pour entrer dans une autre, celui de la cellule : « Notre cellule étant celle qu'elle est, nous essayons de trouver des occupations, on écrit des poèmes avec Kurtis. [...] C'est pas du Molière mais au moins c'est sincère. » (B 150-151). Le devenir de l'écrivain beur, mis en abîme par les destins doubles de Yaz et de Grézi, est donc lié à une vacuité spatiale destinée à faire parvenir le sujet à l'appropriation de soi-même : « Écoute, Yaz, ce que moi j'ai écrit sans l'aide de Kurtis : *Plus que me punir, la prison m'a fait réfléchir sur mon avenir...* » (B 151).

C'est aussi dans ce sens qu'on doit comprendre l'insistance de Djaïdani sur la question de la signature, qui renoue avec la problématique du style traitée ci-dessus : « L'invasion des gribouillis sur les murs ne s'atténue pas, partout où une surface peut laisser s'exprimer une mine le tag apparaît. » (B 31). Le tag joue un rôle tout aussi ambigu que le code vestimentaire : anonyme et illisible, il laisse voir un désir d'intégration et de reconnaissance à l'intérieur de la communauté urbaine, à la manière du langage verlanisé. Il sera repris, à la fin du livre, par les initiales gravées par Grézi sur les murs de la prison. Cette obsession pour l'inscription du Moi sur le mur lisse de la tour HLM ou de la prison, symboles de la censure sociale, est une autre forme de vocation mémorielle. Recouverts par des graffitis militants ou simplement gravés, les murs sont toujours présents dans le récit. Mais leur omniprésence dépasse la simple symbolique carcérale. Surface polie et verticale, le mur gris est une figure de l'autorité officielle qui réprime les écritures turbulentes. Cette autorité n'est pas forcément celle de l'État : elle peut prendre la forme d'un détenu qui oblige Grézi d'effacer ses initiales, la vie dans la prison répétant le même scénario violent que la vie au dehors : « Même ici on parle en

quartiers. La prison en possède trois. » (B 133). La prison est le monde de la banlieue en miniature ; dans ce microcosme social, les rapports humains accusent mieux leur férocité : « Plus que dans le quartier les clans sont visibles à fleur de peau, les Noirs avec les Noirs, les Blancs avec les Blancs, les Arabes avec les Arabes [...]. » (B 138). C'est un monde où le racisme et la brutalité réprimés à l'extérieur par la censure du politiquement correct font retour parmi les détenus déchaînés. Les hiérarchies sociales opérant dans la ville sont remplacées en prison par de nouvelles hiérarchies, dans lesquelles le sexe et la drogue règlent le respect des autres. Dans ce contexte, l'inscription du nom sur le mur revient donc à un acte de révolte contre une logique absurde de la violence gratuite. Comme l'acte littéraire, c'est un moyen de laisser une trace, de proclamer une liberté à l'intérieur d'un système qui ne fait que perpétuer les encerclements.

Dans l'univers carcéral, Grézi prendra la place de Yaz dans le monde « libre » de la banlieue : il fait figure de marginal, préférant écrire des poèmes avec son nouveau collègue de cellule. Il y a un parallélisme évident entre la trajectoire de Yaz et celle de Grézi : les deux découvrent une vocation d'écrivain à l'intérieur d'un monde hostile et les deux connaissent une expérience formative qui apparente le récit de Djaïdani à un *Bildungsroman*. De maître destiné à faire apprendre à Yaz les coulisses de la vie dans la cité, Grézi devient à la fin un disciple, suivant un scénario éducatif qui sert à le construire comme personnalité : « Ce soir-là j'ai fait un vœu, malgré l'absence d'étoiles filantes, le vœu d'être un homme. » (B 130). La poésie sera la forme de dissidence de quelqu'un qui a déjà été un marginal, une réplique à la bestialité qui affleure malgré les masques de sociabilité. La leçon de ce récit d'apprentissage reste, en somme, que l'humanité est une chose qui s'apprend.

Conclusion

Jonglant autour de deux polarités spatiales, le quartier populaire et la prison, *Bomkœur* de Rachid Djaïdani inscrit la spatialité comme l'élément identitaire essentiel de personnages vivant en marge d'une société qui les refuse. Le phénomène urbain des tours HLM, monotones dans leur uniformité architecturale, n'empêche pourtant pas les protagonistes d'éprouver le désir de se donner un nom et de se réinventer malgré les étiquettes imposées par les autres. Si elle passe de façon obligée par une certaine manière de relationner avec l'espace, cette réinvention de soi est plus évidente

dans la recherche d'une langue plus authentique, qui exprime mieux une identité en porte-à-faux. Dans le roman de Rachid Djaïdani, cette recherche acquiert des accents poétiques, entendus dans le sens fort du terme, déplaçant l'écriture beur du terrain de la sociologie vers celui de la littérature véritable.

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Le topos urbain fantasmé de Guy Vaes et Julien Gracq : entre specularité et simulacre

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Résumé : *La ville, telle qu'elle est présente dans les écrits de Guy Vaes et de Julien Gracq, est une construction trompeuse perçue dans un miroir qui atténue ou grossit l'image primaire : Singapour en tant qu'image spéculaire de Londres chez Vaes, Londres en tant que ville-ébauche sans cesse peaufinée par un Créateur perfectionniste, le Nantes gracquien reflété par le fleuve... S'y ajoutent les villes imaginaires Orsenna et Maremma, où la specularité est d'autant plus singulière qu'elle entraîne une réalité extradiégétique et un jeu de reflets au niveau intradiégétique. Dans les livres à caractère autobiographique, mais aussi à travers les trajets citadins des personnages fictifs, est restituée l'image d'une ville fantasmée, ce qui n'est qu'une autre modalité d'accéder à ce qui se dérobe et d'illustrer l'aspect énigmatique et désorganisé de la réalité urbaine. Le réel s'imprègne d'un espace second qui porte, mieux peut-être, les couleurs de la vie. Mis en exergue par ce jeu du dédoublement et du redoublement, l'espace urbain inscrit dans l'espace scriptural représente les visions géo-poétiques uniques de ces deux écrivains.*

Mots-clés : *ville, specularité, réflexion, image, imaginaire.*

Guy Vaes et Julien Gracq peuvent être rangés parmi les écrivains de langue française du XX^e siècle qui ont eu une perception des plus intéressantes et troublantes de l'espace urbain contemporain. Ces deux écrivains incarnent le type d'aventurier sujet à l'initiation, voyageant à travers le monde entier en quête d'expériences inédites et de découvertes surprenantes. Les multiples voyages entrepris ont développé chez les deux auteurs le goût pour la description du paysage urbain. Chez Vaes, lorsqu'elles se montrent hospitalières,

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certaines villes se caractérisent d'abord par le simple fait d'être disponibles et de susciter quelques moments de rêverie. Pourtant, Venise et Amsterdam ne lui offrent que des plaisirs éphémères, car ces espaces n'ont pas la force de se livrer à la vue dans un mélange de sensations qui troublent l'esprit. Au contraire, Londres et Singapour constituent les piliers de l'écriture vaesienne parce que l'auteur y découvre l'insolite de la vie quotidienne. Gracq est plutôt fasciné par les petites villes provinciales, tel Saint-Nazaire, situées aux bords de rivières.² Il découvre très tôt Nantes, ville où l'imagination s'enflamme, s'envole et aboutit à la création romanesque. Cette ville fournira plus tard la matière littéraire de *La Forme d'une ville*.

Si le voyage et la promenade sont les moyens par lesquels Vaes et Gracq déchiffrent la ville, la révélation de l'espace citadin coïncide parfois avec une découverte de soi. Chez Vaes, le but des longues errances est celui de trouver sa véritable ville natale, qui pourrait lui offrir simultanément une matière à écrire. Pour Gracq, la ville constitue un des facteurs qui ont développé sa vocation créatrice mais qui l'ont également initié à la vie. Suivre les regards de Vaes et de Gracq amène le lecteur à considérer la ville dans ses détails les plus intimes qui pourraient satisfaire la quête de liberté des personnages. Pour assouvir leurs désirs d'enracinement dans une réalité qui s'avère inhabitable, les écrivains substituent à la ville réelle un espace construit par l'affectivité et l'imagination. Ils choisissent de calquer sur la réalité des fragments travaillés par la mémoire et de quitter le monde concret afin de se retirer dans un univers imaginaire.

La fantaisie fait donc naître chez Guy Vaes et Julien Gracq un espace irréel, elle offre la possibilité d'« inventer » la réalité et de lui attribuer des traits métaphoriques. Ce nouvel univers est le succédané d'un monde en dissolution progressive où la fiction vient remplacer la réalité. Épris d'une image urbaine idéale, le promeneur attribue à la ville des caractéristiques irréelles. Dans ce sens, la cité se pare d'un masque qui reflète une double image, comme un miroir qui déforme, en mêlant vision et illusion. L'espace urbain souffre un dédoublement spéculaire, et l'effet de miroir est un facteur qui modifie l'objet qui s'y projette : la perception de l'image citadine n'est pas seulement déformée, elle est

² D'ailleurs, les ports seront une présence permanente dans ses romans (Kérantec dans *Un beau ténébreux*, Maremma dans *Le Rivage des Syrtes*).

mise à l'envers. D'autres fois, les villes se reflètent les unes dans les autres et leurs images se confondent. Il en résulte une vision hallucinante d'une nouvelle ville, « monstre architectural » qui donne l'impression de non-lieu ou de lieu éclaté.

Dans *La géocritique. Réel, fiction, espace*, Bertrand Westphal propose une pensée de l'espace en tant que construction qui utilise simultanément les données du réel et de la représentation. La géocritique explore « les espaces humains que les arts mimétiques agencent par et dans le texte, par et dans l'image, ainsi que les interactions culturelles qui se nouent sous leur patronage » (Westphal 17). Le référent et sa reconstruction mentale sont interdépendants, voire interactifs ; la réalité et l'imaginaire sont indissociables :

L'espace informe le texte lorsque s'agence la représentation fictionnelle d'un référent spatial. Inversement, [...] l'impact du texte (fictionnel) sur l'espace est patent lorsque se met en place une chaîne intertextuelle qui associe la « réalité » spatiale à la fiction. L'écrivain étant auteur de sa ville, une représentation donnée, même [...] fictionnelle, finit par exercer en retour son action sur le réalisme, dont elle peut contribuer à faire bouger la perception. (Westphal 273)

Westphal propose trois étapes de la spatialité fictionnelle. La représentation véridique révèle du « consensus homotopique » (Westphal 169) : l'espace géographique possède les mêmes propriétés que son double virtuel. Londres et Singapour chez Vaes, Nantes et Rome chez Gracq gardent leurs caractéristiques réalistes dans l'espace scriptural. Mais dans certains textes, le référent et sa représentation entretiennent une relation problématique qui révèle du « brouillage hétérotopique » (Westphal 172) : « [p]ar l'*interpolation*³, on introduit un espace sans référent au sein de l'espace familier » (Westphal 174). Orsenna, Maremma, Sagra sont des villes imaginaires qui « peuplent » les Syrtes gracquiennes, territoire situé géographiquement et historiquement dans la Libye actuelle. La troisième étape est la « *surimpression* » (Westphal 175) qui « provoque le télescopage de deux espaces familiers, qui génèrent un troisième espace privé de véritable référent » (Westphal 175). Par exemple, dans le roman vaesien *Octobre long dimanche*, aucune ville n'est précisée, mais le lecteur reconnaît

³ Dans tous les fragments cités dans cet article, c'est toujours l'auteur qui souligne

certains lieux d'Anvers et de Jambes (ancienne commune devenue partie de la ville de Namur). Parfois Julien Gracq recourt également à un brouillage « où le référent spatial [est] déphasé par rapport à l'étalon de mesure temporel » (Westphal 178-179) ; dans ce cas il s'agit d'un « anachorisme » (Westphal 179). Dans *Le Rivage des Syrtes* l'auteur évoque une république vénitienne déclinante du XIV^e-XV^e siècles où certains symboles discrets de technologie moderne sont présents (l'automobile).

L'image urbaine Orient-Occident : la défiguration spéculaire

La construction en miroir de son image contribue à une sorte de dissolution de la ville. Le miroir renvoie à une image fidèle mais inversée de celui qui se regarde dedans. Souvent associé à la vérité, car il permet de se voir avec ses défauts, le miroir est perçu comme un objet étrange, et cette étrangeté provient du double paradoxe de la perception spéculaire. D'une part, le reflet dans le miroir dédouble l'objet, d'autre part, l'espace du reflet est perçu comme le prolongement de la réalité au-delà du miroir. Dans ce cas, il est le symbole d'une porte vers un autre monde, particulièrement mis en valeur dans *De l'autre côté du miroir* de Lewis Carroll où tout est inversé : pour atteindre le jardin, Alice doit d'abord s'en éloigner, de même qu'elle doit, dans cet univers étrange, courir très vite pour rester sur place. Le miroir possède un pouvoir magique et il marque une ligne de démarcation entre les mondes extérieur et intérieur. Cette idée de la specularité et de l'existence à l'envers est présente chez Guy Vaes, dans le diptyque *Mes villes*.

Une interrogation sur l'organisation générale du texte en deux parties – « Londres ou le labyrinthe brisé » et « Singapour » – oriente vers une interprétation de sa structure (soulignée par une distance de plus de quinze années dans la rédaction) comme un passage d'un univers à un autre. Certains aspects de Londres, obsession de jeunesse pour l'auteur, seront retrouvés plus tard dans l'extrême Orient, lors d'une visite à Singapour. L'Est devient une image spéculaire de l'Ouest, mais la façon dont ces deux espaces si différents sont envisagés renvoie à un miroir déformant.

La situation historique a évidemment contribué à créer cette impression de specularité. Ancienne colonie britannique, Singapour a vu l'ensemble de ses structures traditionnelles profondément bouleversé. La ville a subi un développement pathologique où le moderne était venu envahir l'ancien. La

colonisation, avec ses panoplies de techniques occidentales urbaines, culturelles, administratives, s'est attachée particulièrement à saper les fondations de l'éthos de la société asiatique, tout en déposant en elles des structures matérielles et mentales exogènes. Dans ce coin de l'Asie, les rappels de l'Occident et de l'Amérique sont omniprésents : les bâtiments ressemblent aux tours de Chicago, les quais, les entrepôts, les fourneaux et les rôtissoires, les banques et les administrations en verre et en métal prouvent tous que « [l]e Nouveau Monde empiétait sur une Asie qui se recroquevillait comme un parchemin mordu par les flammes » (*Mes villes* 106). La présence des cimetières victoriens et, dans le temple, d'un Bouddha en plastique, construit par un fabricant occidental, « une monstruosité vaselinée, au faciès laqué par le créateur de Mickey Mouse, breloque géante pouvant servir d'enseigne à une échoppe de souvenirs » (*Mes villes* 107), renforcent la même impression. La construction de buildings, de façades au style néoclassique, de centres commerciaux, a contribué à la « fabrication » d'une autre ville et, implicitement, à la destruction de l'ancien Singapour. Par des reconversions radicales de l'espace, une sorte d'inversion s'applique à la ville. Dans la vision de Guy Vaes, l'Orient n'est qu'une reproduction bon marché du monde occidental. Ce manque d'originalité impose une image caricaturale. Un certain « visage » de l'Asie est fabriqué dans les ateliers parisiens ; sauf les habitants, à Singapour tout est importé d'Europe mais en même temps tout est inversé et renversé. L'espace spéculaire fonctionne comme une « image-écran » derrière laquelle se cache une réalité difficilement saisissable : tout révèle l'artificialité, le stéréotype et le faux. Singapour subit les assauts et la conquête du capitalisme où la copie remplace toute originalité.

On peut même se demander si, à la longue, dans ce Singapour contraint à se verticaliser, aplani par des bouteurs, tout ce qui rappelle encore l'Asie, à l'exception des habitants, n'est pas dû aux stylistes d'outre-Atlantique puisant leurs idées dans les albums de photographies et de reproductions d'estampes. (*Mes villes* 107)

L'ouverture moderne de la ville est souvent perçue par l'indigène comme introduisant la corruption, la souillure et le sacrilège dans l'espace sacré des ancêtres. La forme de la ville préexistante, incorporant une mémoire longue et renvoyant à un mythe des

origines, a été mutilée. Il ne survit de l'ancien univers que quelques demeures, « délabré[es] » et « vétuste[s] » (*Mes villes* 111) :

Plus elle menace [,] ruine, absorbe le parasitisme qui la ramollit du dedans, allant jusqu'à la tapisser d'un velours moite et à la hérissier de barbes rêches, plus la demeure revêt un aspect intemporel, définitif ; aspect qu'en réalité elle aurait dû prendre à l'origine. Le neuf reste accidentel. (*Mes villes* 110)

Les transformations de la ville ont été effectuées dans le but d'« absorber » le « tissu » autochtone, ressenti comme hostile à la culture et à l'image urbaine que les nouveaux occupants voulaient imposer. L'espace moderne s'affirme désormais comme l'instrument le plus efficace de déni et de rejet du monde indigène dans la plus profonde altérité. Ainsi, en examinant les rapports de force de ces deux mondes, nous pouvons les décomposer en deux grandes lignes d'action : d'une part, le transfert de la mentalité et des traditions européennes modernes à la société vaincue, et d'autre part, la résistance indigène et sa volonté farouche de maintenir le savoir de son passé.

Mais Londres, la ville-source de l'image singapourienne, est lui aussi victime de l'imprécision, de l'apparence mensongère et invraisemblable. Les façades des maisons se répètent et l'œil saturé par cette accumulation de plans ne voit que ce que lui dicte un esprit où l'imagination est reine. La raison et le regard sont comblés par cette invasion : « [...] je ne connais pas de ville qui nous oblige à percevoir tant de choses à la fois – à se demander qui, de l'image ou de la réflexion, surgit la première. » (*Mes villes* 29) Dans la posture du spectateur, le narrateur a l'impression de « gant retourné » (*Mes villes* 28), car « [l']œil contraint l'esprit à goûter un confort qui n'est pas tout à fait imaginaire [...] puisque les maisons portent leur tapisserie à l'extérieur et que les jardins ont quelque chose d'un intérieur » (*Mes villes* 89-90). La ville est mise à l'envers dans un mouvement où apparence et réalité se confondent jusqu'à l'identification. L'acte de « retourner le gant » suggère que le verso des images constitue, bien plus que leur côté face, le véritable objet du regard. La visite réitérée à Londres crée une image instable de la ville, sorte de miroir dans lequel la réflexion se trouble et se multiplie :

Insensiblement, au cours d'un dixième ou douzième séjour, on s'apercevra que menace l'instabilité. Aucune ville n'est faite pour durer : la majeure partie du tissu urbain doit être renouvelée comme l'est une garde-robe. C'est alors qu'elle se dédoublera. Désormais il y aura deux villes, celle d'hier et celle d'aujourd'hui. Toutes deux bâties sur pilotis et accusant une fragilité de plus en plus poignante. (*Le Regard romanesque. Quatre conférences* 46)

La ville s'autodétruit et se reconstruit incessamment comme dans un jeu où l'image est envoyée d'un miroir à l'autre et fait naître l'illusion optique du dédoublement/redoublement de l'espace qui s'y reflète. Les images se chevauchent, se croisent, se superposent jusqu'à créer l'impression de pluralité. Subtile, effacée et soudainement à nouveau brillante, se dévoilant seulement aux initiés, la ville impose sa présence évanescence et transitoire. La destruction et la renaissance évoquent l'image de l'ouroboros, symbole de l'anéantissement en tant que serpent qui se mange la queue, mais aussi de l'éternel retour grâce à sa circularité. Il signifie l'union de deux principes opposés et représente le début et la fin de toutes choses :

Seulement Londres secrétait un charme insidieux, plus feutré ; la capitale, et pour m'en convaincre il me suffisait de surprendre autour de moi les propos à son sujet, ne s'adressait qu'au petit nombre. Et cela, force m'était bien de le reconnaître, avec des promesses fragiles, des signes faisant référence à une totalité brumeuse. [...] Il entrait dans la nature de la ville de se consommer elle-même, comme le serpent qui se mord la queue. Favorable aux modes et à l'autodestruction permanente, Londres, sous mon regard déjà consterné, s'abolissait et se recréait comme les mascarets de l'océan. (*Le Regard romanesque. Quatre conférences* 57-58)

Copie, faux-semblant et reflet en ville : le double et la réflexion aquatique

Le miroitement s'enrichit parfois d'accents fabuleux : Vaes raconte dans *Le Regard romanesque* l'anecdote d'un duc qui avait construit à Belgravia, riche quartier de la capitale britannique, deux hôtels identiques se faisant face comme si l'un était la reproduction de l'autre dans un immense miroir. Leur architecture créait une vision hallucinante de la réalité et le visiteur était la victime d'une illusion

optique proche au vertige : « Je repensai à ce duc qui avait fait construire, à Belgravia, deux hôtels se faisant face. Les objets, les tableaux et les meubles de l'un, étaient identiques à ceux de l'autre. Il en allait de même pour les serviteurs, les rabatteurs du duc leur ayant trouvé des sosies. » (*Le Regard romanesque. Quatre conférences* 55) Sauf l'identité des constructions et des objets, il y a aussi un simulacre identitaire des êtres : l'hôtel dédoublé impose ce dédoublement aux locataires qui deviennent des simples marionnettes dans un espace dont le sens leur échappe. La même image des bâtiments qui se font face est reprise dans *L'Envers* : une maison s'oppose à celle où le protagoniste vit le drame d'un événement inconcevable. Le personnage imagine un changement de l'ordre des choses et son regard qui pénètre dans l'habitation voisine comme dans un miroir, revient de l'autre côté de la glace vers l'intérieur de son habitation :

[...] la maison d'en face appartenait à l'oncle, et l'oncle [...] avait dit à Bruno : « Si un jour tu choisis de t'établir à Londres, eh bien, tu pourras commencer par loger dans l'appartement d'en face. Regarde, c'est la fenêtre que frôle ce rameau d'orme, au-delà du jardin où s'ébouriffent ces buissons d'aubépines. [...]. » Un soir, un soir de mars à venir, il se tiendrait donc à la fenêtre d'en face. Il respirerait la grêle odeur de rouille et d'herbe mouillée qu'exhalerait le jardin. De là, il scruterait la fenêtre d'ici [...]. (*L'Envers* 55)

Mais le miroitement se réalise parfois par la réflexion dans l'eau, image instable qui produit l'effet de trompe-l'œil. Dans la représentation qu'il réalise de l'espace urbain et de ses apparences, Guy Vaes recourt également au regard narcissique que la cité pose sur elle-même : la Tamise et le fleuve de Singapour deviennent les miroirs symboliques de ces villes aux contours imprécis et susceptibles à disparaître à tout moment. Dans cette perspective, le promeneur ne peut plus percevoir qui reflète et qui est reflété, quelle est la réalité et quel est le simulacre. Dans l'imaginaire de Guy Vaes et de Julien Gracq, l'élément aquatique en tant que symbole de la réflexion occupe un lieu important, d'autant plus que leurs lieux d'origine sont traversés par des fleuves : l'Escaut à Anvers pour Vaes, la Loire à Saint-Florent-le-Vieil pour Gracq⁴. Comme tout

⁴ Selon Alain-Michel Boyer, chez Gracq tous les éléments sont dissous dans le liquide primordial, purificateur et régénérateur : « Tout le paysage s'immerge

miroir, le fleuve est un seuil entre deux mondes, une frontière qui emporte vers le large celui qui s'y approche trop. Guy Vaes évoque cet appel du large :

[...] si je remonte l'Escaut en aval, dans l'éveilleuse clarté de mars, un phénomène de lévitation se produit. On m'aspire, on m'investit d'une certitude informulable. L'espace, qui reçoit ici son assiette la plus généreuse, est gros de possibles, et ceux-ci n'exigent pas de signes lisibles pour se manifester. Simplement, il y a cette présence où se bat le proche avenir, il y a ce seuil auquel succède un autre seuil, et les franchir encourage une euphorie lucide. [...] Je tourne le dos au panorama d'Anvers [...] et je regarde en direction d'une lointaine embouchure. Au-delà de ce paysage étiré, déjà se laisse pressentir le large ; et l'altitude, elle, a l'ampleur vibrante d'un coup de gong. Cependant, le fleuve conserve sa rusticité : il ne deviendra port que par raccroc, et sans que cela trouble son indifférence. (« Un palimpseste anversois » 98-99)

Le fleuve oriente les pas du promeneur en instituant un certain trajet. Une opposition s'établit entre la ville solide et le fleuve liquide : la cité se redouble dans le fleuve, elle y contemple son image et prend conscience d'elle-même par le miroir qu'il lui offre. En se miroitant, l'espace urbain se purifie dans l'eau baptismale : le fleuve lave toutes les saletés et tous les déchets de la ville. Si l'espace citadin représente par vocation le lieu qui corrompt, empoisonne et souille, le fleuve, en tant que symbole du cours inévitable des choses, assume le rôle de régénérer la ville. L'image du personnage qui erre aux bords de la rivière est aussi présente dans *Bruges-la-Morte* de Georges Rodenbach, où les promenades répétées d'un personnage endeillé se superposent à la géographie circulaire d'une ville grise. En fait, Bruges avec ses canaux est d'abord un miroir dans lequel une femme vivante ressemblant à l'épouse morte va apparaître : « Élan, extase du puits qu'on croyait mort et où

alors et les composantes du réel se ramènent à la substance liquide qui les redéfinit : élément unificateur et englobant, [...] l'eau, qui effleure tout de son signe, abolit les séparations. Projection spatiale de la durée, elle impose un devenir au paysage qu'elle parcourt et, en l'emmenant vers son propre avenir, elle lie des lieux et des temps différents dans le présent de son passage, si bien que le courant de la rivière permet à Gracq d'adhérer par l'imagination à la fuite des choses comme à leur permanence. » (Boyer, 118)

s'enchâsse une présence. L'eau n'est plus nue ; le miroir vit ! » (Rodenbach 40). L'eau des canaux est un miroir déformant qui transforme toutes les couleurs de la ville en une nuance cendrée et triste : « Et cette eau elle-même, malgré tant de reflets : coins de ciel bleu, tuiles des toits, neige des cygnes voguant, verdure des peupliers du bord, s'unifie en chemins de silence incolores. » (Rodenbach 50-51)

Symbole de la vie et de son cours, immuable et toujours renouvelé, le fleuve renvoie tantôt au besoin de purification par l'eau, tantôt au changement urbain incontournable. Chez Gracq, une lutte entre Nantes et la Loire transparait dans *La Forme d'une ville*. Le comblement des bras du fleuve est la conséquence du développement urbain mais c'est surtout une mesure contre les inondations fréquentes qui menacent la ville. Suite aux travaux effectués dans les années 30, Nantes n'a plus eu à subir les caprices du fleuve mais a perdu une partie de son âme :

Mais, à Nantes, avec la trop large percée centrale qui a remplacé les bras comblés du fleuve, la ville n'a pas gagné en étrangeté, elle a perdu en équilibre. [...] Je garde toujours en moi la photographie insolite d'un fleuve de sable, [...] abandonnant en vrac sa charge diluviale entre deux rangées de maisons qui semblent avoir reculé d'elles-mêmes devant un cataclysme hydrographique imprévu – cependant que des voitures en quête d'un lieu de stationnement colonisent peu à peu le thalweg ébouleux et mal sûr avec les mêmes précautions que les charrois tâtent la solidité d'un fleuve gelé. Ce qui a pris la place, aujourd'hui, de cette vision [...], est une coulée hybride que le trafic n'arrive pas à remplir entièrement, moitié autoroute, moitié jardin public, courant compliqué de voitures [...] dont le franchissement se révèle plus difficile que celui des anciens bras par les ponts. (*La Forme d'une ville* 828)

Le fleuve qui borde la ville joue le rôle de frontière protectrice et menaçante en même temps. Lorsqu'il traverse Nantes, le fleuve est la ligne qui scinde et qui unit à la fois ses territoires. Une nouvelle dualité de l'espace citadin est mise en évidence : à côté de l'image reflétée dans les eaux du fleuve, la ville réelle se divise en deux parties qui se complètent et se reflètent l'une l'autre. Mais à Nantes, le fleuve a été chassé du décor urbain et, puisqu'il a perdu son attribut d'axe d'orientation, il est traité avec mépris et indifférence :

[...] la Loire n'a pas été seulement chassée du centre de la ville : elle semble avoir été traitée comme une servitude gênante et polluante, comme une de ces *déviations* routières, soigneusement tenues à distance, isolées de la ville qu'elles contournent, qui coupent droit leur chemin à travers des friches banlieusardes, et dont la végétation n'a pas encore eu le temps de cicatriser les écorchures et les éboulis. (*La Forme d'une ville* 833)

Lieu de suicide ou d'accident, le fleuve devient aussi espace des ténèbres. Situé au-dessus du fleuve, le pont découvre le spectacle de la vie urbaine, mais en même temps, il induit un début de vertige qui favorise la chute vers le néant. Tel Narcisse, fils du dieu-fleuve, tombé amoureux de sa propre image et mort dans cette même eau qui lui montrait la figure d'un impossible amour, celui qui se regarde dans l'eau magique du fleuve y est attiré. Gracq raconte un fait divers connu à l'époque comme le « *plongeon du Polonais* » (*La Forme d'une ville* 838) :

[...] un ouvrier immigré qui avait imaginé de gagner quelque argent en plongeant devant la foule du haut du chemin de roulement des transbordeurs. Il avait réussi une première fois à Rouen ; au jour dit, devant des milliers de badauds rameutés sur les quais par la presse, il escalada la charpente de fer, et, après un moment d'hésitation, ayant revêtu [...] une combinaison ignifugée, il s'arrosa d'essence et plongea au milieu des flammes, comme un final wagnérien. Il ne reparut pas. Au bout d'un moment, la foule, assez silencieuse, commença à se disperser avec hésitation, comme incertaine que le spectacle eût réellement pris fin. (*La Forme d'une ville* 838)

Lieu de transition, le pont signifie par son usage même un passage de la vie à la mort. Présent dans les cultures européennes et asiatiques, le pont renvoie à la difficulté du passage vers l'au-delà. Il figure l'inévitable épreuve morale qui place l'homme devant l'obligation de choisir. Signifiant le franchissement, le pont donne la possibilité de mesurer l'écart entre les deux rives qu'il unit et donne l'impression de liberté par la fraîcheur de l'air qui éveille les sens de même que la conscience. En tant qu'image de la liaison, le pont symbolise la volonté humaine de relier ce que la nature a séparé.

Le jeu des miroirs déformants : Création divine et littéraire

La specularité revêt aussi une forme originale dans le roman *L'Envers* de Guy Vaes : l'écrivain lance l'hypothèse de l'existence de plusieurs étapes de la Création divine. L'espace (la ville de Londres) et ses habitants sont soumis à un processus complexe de miroitement où l'image restituée est chaque fois plus claire. Dès son début, le roman s'avère insolite : le retour à la vie d'un homme décédé depuis quatre ans constitue un événement qui marque profondément la vie quotidienne de son groupe d'amis, d'autant plus qu'ils sont des catholiques fervents pour qui un tel miracle touche au scandale. D'ailleurs, le surnaturel et les œuvres divines sont presque ridicules au XX^e siècle. Pourtant, le temps et l'espace choisis par l'auteur – un été torride entre les deux guerres, dans un Londres mystérieux, voire hallucinant – sont favorables à cette « apparition ». Guy Vaes explique sa préférence :

L'action du livre réclamait une grande ville. [...] Londres était le lieu idéal ; les années trente, le moment propice, car [...] le cloisonnement social devait y être encore plus strict qu'aujourd'hui. Le retour de Broderick passerait inaperçu d'une société où n'existait pas la carte d'identité, où les distances vous mettaient à l'abri. Évoquer par la bande un Londres des années trente – je dis bien *un*, car il doit y en avoir mille, dix mille – ne poserait pas de difficultés majeures. [...] On a beau pressentir une réalité commune à tous ces Londres, on ne peut la désigner, seulement la respirer. (*Le Regard romanesque. Quatre conférences* 85)

Une multitude d'images de la ville coexistent dans la vision de l'écrivain, et toutes balisent le bizarre événement qui trouble la banalité et le prosaïsme de la vie ordinaire. C'est au jeune Bruno de découvrir la cause de cette résurrection tellement troublante. Son ami, Broderick, réapparu dans le monde réel, réclame à son chevet Bruno pour lui délivrer un message secret : pour la divinité, tout « s'établit dans ce qui jamais ne peut connaître l'antériorité ; tout éclôt⁵ dans un *Maintenant* absolu que menace uniquement le néant » (*Le Regard romanesque. Quatre conférences* 89). La révélation est singulière : la Création de Dieu est sans cesse

⁵ Nous respectons la transcription exacte appartenant à l'auteur.

retouchée, il y a plusieurs stades de l'existence jusqu'à atteindre la perfection, ce qui signifie implicitement l'existence d'une multitude de mondes simultanés et parallèles à notre monde. La spécularité s'apparente une fois de plus au mythe du double et en même temps à celui du dédoublement. Guy Vaes avance une théorie sur la création dans tous les sens du terme : la Genèse biblique, l'esprit ludique qui débouche sur l'invention, la littérature.

Seulement le Créateur [...] ne peut être infaillible [...], Son travail renvoie à celui de son satellite, l'artiste, qui engendre et *corrige*. Dieu crée donc des ébauches. Il se délivre d'un *premier état* de l'histoire du monde. Simultanément, dans Sa dimension excluant le temps chronologique, Il ébauche le deuxième et le troisième état de cette histoire, la portant ainsi à un degré plus manifeste de maturation. Enfin, toujours simultanément par rapport aux trois états « précédents », Il s'attaque à l'état définitif : le monde arrivé à l'expression de sa plénitude [...]. (*Le Regard romanesque. Quatre conférences* 89)

Le Dieu vaesien n'est pas parfait : il ne donne pas d'un seul coup toute sa création, mais réalise d'abord des esquisses. Ainsi, l'homme est réduit au stade de croquis toujours amélioré⁶. Dans un de ses manuscrits, Vaes offre une « définition » inédite de Dieu : « Dieu : le créateur qui, travaillé par l'horreur du néant, se sachant imparfait comme l'est chaque artiste, est contraint à remettre son œuvre sur le métier, à le retoucher, à en fournir (comme un graveur) divers états s'il ne souhaite pas disparaître. Il est le héros tragique de *L'Envers*. » (« Mots-clés », s.p.) L'espace et le temps bénéficient d'un traitement particulier grâce aux mouvements de dilatation ou de concentration extrêmes. Le Londres où les événements surgissent n'est qu'un brouillon du véritable Londres, celui que le Créateur a déjà achevé. Ces espaces où la ville se « déploie » sont « *simultanés* » (*L'Envers* 245), car pour Dieu, le temps n'existe pas.

Il faut l'imaginer donnant simultanément le branle à la Genèse

⁶ L'idée d'un Dieu qui retravaille Sa Création est analysée par André Sempoux, *Guy Vaes. L'effroi et l'extase* : « Le Dieu vaesien n'est pas infaillible, sinon il aurait donné d'un seul coup son chef-d'œuvre, mais sa vision embrasse simultanément toutes les esquisses. [...] Dans la perspective de l'écrivain, il y a continuité de ce que nous considérons comme séparé, les individus notamment, et mystérieuse coïncidence entre les éléments du monde. » (Sempoux 30)

et à l'Apocalypse, et inversement ; activant l'ébauche originelle tout en parachevant la forme finale. Il occupe ainsi la moindre parcelle de ce qu'on appellera par impuissance un continuum espace-temps, mais qui n'a pas plus de début, de milieu ou de fin que la circonférence du cercle. Et si l'ébauche y subsiste, tout comme elle sous-tend le dernier état d'une gravure, c'est qu'il ne peut exister de perfection obtenue sur-le-champ. (*L'Envers* 253)

Vaes arrive à abolir des cloisons considérées définitives, entre les catégories temporelles, entre l'apparence et la réalité, entre la vie et la mort, entre l'endroit et l'envers. L'espace et le temps sont donc semblables aux estampes de Piranèse ou aux divers états d'une planche, d'un tableau ou d'une gravure.

On peut comparer la Création [,] sa perpétuelle vibration, mais à condition d'en figer la dynamique, aux multiples états d'une gravure ou d'un tableau dont le sujet visible, achevé, recouvre des ébauches déjà très poussées, simple parenthèse. [...] Si Broderick a imposé l'exemple de la gravure, n'est-ce pas à cause des épreuves que l'on tire aux divers stades de son élaboration ; épreuves aidant à mieux concevoir son développement ? (*L'Envers* 252)

Cette intuition métaphysique tire les conclusions ultimes du constat qu'en réalité le temps n'existe pas, puisqu'il n'existe que pour les êtres humains. En même temps, les caractéristiques de la ville convergent pour constituer le « décor final ». Cette théorie crée une appréhension originale de l'espace et du destin de l'homme en tant qu'ébauche vouée tôt ou tard à la destruction, car à la dernière étape de la Création, Bruno est effacé. Dieu n'a pris de lui que le meilleur afin de mener Broderick à un stade plus accompli.

Miroitement urbain intra et extradiégétique

Dans *Le Rivage des Syrtes*, Gracq utilise le miroitement dans un autre registre : les villes se reflètent les unes dans les autres, un peu comme l'Orient et l'Occident vaesiens. Située sur le front des Syrtes, la ville imaginaire Maremma présente une série d'analogies avec son modèle réel, Venise :

[...] Maremma comme Venise s'était retranchée, avait largué ses amarres ; campée sur ses vases tremblantes était devenue

une île flottante, une main enchantée, docile aux effluves qui venaient d'au-delà de la mer. Une brève période de splendeur s'était ouverte pour elle à l'époque de la paix des Syrtes : alors ses marins et ses colons avaient essaimé sur toute la côte, drainant vers la mer les laines et les fruits des oasis éloignées, et ramenant sur leurs galères l'or et les pierreries brutes du Farghestan. Puis la guerre était venue, et la vie s'en était retirée [...]. (*Le Rivage des Syrtes* 624)

L'épisode offre une image riche de Maremma, ville maritime et commerciale importante, qui avait connu une période de prospérité avant la guerre. En même temps, cette image évoque d'autres espaces : Maremma est la ville de Londres, pendant que le Farghestan est l'équivalent des Amériques au temps de la colonisation. Mais dans le roman gracquien il s'agit de la description d'un monde agonisant ; Maremma sent le marécage, les rats sortent des canaux et des palais en ruine. Selon Ariel Denis, Julien Gracq réalise la « description d'un monde qui *figure* toutes les décadences possibles – celle de Rome, de Venise, de la Basse-Egypte ou d'un Empire chinois de l'époque Ming » (Denis 44-45). L'effet spéculaire est d'autant plus fort qu'il engage une réalité extradiégétique : une ville réelle se reflète dans le roman et crée une ville imaginaire. Le jeu des reflets continue au niveau intradiégétique, car Maremma reproduit à une échelle plus réduite la capitale Orsenna : « l'image trop exactement ressemblante [...] montait de ces canaux immobiles, comme un homme qui se sentirait glisser lentement de l'autre côté du miroir » (*Le Rivage des Syrtes* 696). L'humidité et le pourrissement presque normaux à Maremma, car dus aux marécages qui entourent la ville, sont présents à Orsenna également :

Quelque chose de louche et de blessé traînait dans les rues d'Orsenna [...]. On eût dit que les eaux croupies qui baignaient les pilotis de la ville basse se retiraient à leur laisse extrême, et mettaient au jour la forêt tourbeuse et rongée de mauvaises fièvres qui lui servait de support ; je plongeais avec délectation dans ces profondeurs qui fermentaient ; un instinct me dénudait soudain comme à un visionnaire une ville menacée, une croûte rongée croulant par grands pans sous un pas trop lourd dans ces marécages dont elle avait été la suprême fleur. (*Le Rivage des Syrtes* 598)

Orsenna appartient au passé et représente l'immobilité, la fatigue, le sommeil. Sujette d'une lente disparition, animée par une force occulte et destructrice, « Orsenna distille un poison dont elle se nourrit elle-même, et fait naître chez celui qui l'observe une pensée visionnaire qui s'emploie à la défigurer » (Alazet 85). La capitale de la Seigneurie est la ville-fantôme qui, avec son double Maremma, provoque le vertige. Michèle Monballin souligne cette dévitalisation mortifère des villes du *Rivage des Syrtes* :

Gracq développe l'enlèvement putride et mortel de ces deux villes, toutes deux pourrissantes dans leur inertie, à travers les réseaux métaphoriques filés de la sénilité pour l'une et de la morbidité pour l'autre, en quoi Maremma, la ville-marécage, se déchiffre comme l'avenir d'Orsenna, spectacle qui fascine jusqu'au vertige Aldo et Vanessa. (Montballin 147)

Dans un fragment de *Lettrines*, Julien Gracq réalise une image similaire de la Venise réelle :

Venise : le côté nord de la ville – étrange refuge de tous ses aspects *noirs* – où l'on ne va guère [...]. L'ombre froide, nordique, coupante, qui tombe dès le début de l'après-midi sur les *Fondamente Nuove* – leur vue d'eaux gris tourterelle barrées d'un mur de cimetière. Non loin de là, le dépôt des gondoles funèbres dans un froid petit canal, glaçant et grotesque à la fois [...]. (*Lettrines* 163)

Par conséquent, l'image construite en miroir fait naître la question de l'espace citadin objectif et de sa copie. Cette vision renvoie encore une fois à Maremma, la cité boueuse, étouffée par les miasmes des marécages. La ville qui s'enfonce est la source du paysage pourri de toutes les autres cités. En plus, la mort de Maremma est le reflet de l'extinction d'Orsenna et, implicitement de la Seigneurie.

Maremma était la pente d'Orsenna, la vision finale qui figeait le cœur de la ville, l'ostension abominable de son sang pourri et le gargouillement obscène de son dernier râle. Comme on évoque son ennemi couché déjà dans le cercueil, un envoûtement meurtrier courbait Vanessa sur ce cadavre. Sa puanteur était un gage et une promesse. (*Le Rivage des Syrtes* 625)

Orsenna rejoint son image dans le miroir et devient ce cadavre

écoeuré, « ce cimetièrre d'eaux mortes, [...] ce vau-l'eau poignant d'une ville à son suprême échouage » (*Le Rivage des Syrtes* 625). La déchéance des villes symbolise en même temps la dégradation du régime politique : un vaste jeu de miroirs est mis en évidence par ces caractéristiques récurrentes. La capitale de la Seigneurie possède aussi une vertu prémonitoire : le « sang pourri » est celui de la guerre qui va recommencer avec le Farghestan, pendant que le « rôle » est celui de la mort de toute une civilisation.

Conclusions

En raison de leurs visions géo-poétiques sur le réel, l'image de la ville dans l'espace scriptural de Guy Vaes et de Julien Gracq s'avère d'une grande complexité. La flânerie est prétexte pour une transgression non seulement des limites spatiales, mais également des frontières du réel. Les écrivains valorisent l'image spéculaire des villes traversées, visitées ou explorées ; qu'elle soit constituée d'éléments mis face-à-face comme devant un miroir énorme – les hôtels du riche quartier londonien Belgravia – ou devant le double reflété par l'eau du fleuve qui la traverse, la ville telle qu'elle apparaît dans les écrits de ces écrivains, se montre trompeuse, séduisante mais dangereuse, protectrice et menaçante en même temps. Grâce à ses contours imprécis et fuyants, la ville reflétée fait naître des illusions optiques, elle peut ensorceler celui qui s'y regarde en l'attirant vers l'autre côté du miroir. Chez Guy Vaes, Londres et Singapour sont l'image défigurée d'une même ville, ce qui renvoie à l'idée d'une mise à l'envers et d'une ville reflétée dans un miroir déformant qui offre une image invraisemblable. En plus, on ne sait plus discerner l'original de son reflet ; l'image envoyée perpétuellement d'un miroir à l'autre crée une vision déconcertante, où l'espace urbain est soit dédoublé, soit redoublé. Cette transition d'un miroir à l'autre crée chez Vaes l'hypothèse de l'existence de plusieurs étapes de la Création. Dieu crée des ébauches, toujours plus élaborées, de son œuvre ; l'espace citadin est lui aussi de plus en plus abouti ce qui justifie l'existence de plusieurs mondes simultanés. C'est d'ailleurs le travail d'élaboration de l'œuvre de tout écrivain, vu cette fois comme un dieu. Chez Julien Gracq, la ville est une imbrication de réel et de fiction ; la ville réelle est transposée dans l'écriture, mais elle est encore une fois reflétée « à l'intérieur » de la fiction. Il en résulte un « réseau » de villes superposées et miroitées, dont l'image est de plus en plus évanescence, dévitalisée et mortifère.

En guise de conclusion, il faut souligner l'importance du thème de la création chez Guy Vaes et Julien Gracq, celui qui les entraîne à la découverte et la représentation de la ville. Le voyage vers des pays auparavant inconnus (Vaes – Angleterre, Singapour ; Gracq – Italie, Angleterre) et des paysages urbains inexplorés est une rare occasion qui leur permet de gagner un espace qui perd lentement sa consistance pour devenir émanation imaginaire, ville de papier.

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***The Diary of an Ennuyée* (1826) by Anna Jameson: A Dual Vision of the Italian Cities by a Governess Disguised as a Lady**

Elisabetta Marino¹

Abstract: *This essay aims at analyzing The Diary of an Ennuyée, the debut travel account of Anna Jameson, an Irish-born writer who would become a prominent art critic and a strenuous defender of women's rights. Composed when she was working as a governess, narrated from the point of view of a fictional, heartbroken young lady, the travelogue strikingly offers two clashing views of the Italian cities Jameson actually visited in 1821-22.*

Key words: *Anna Jameson, travel literature, Italy, femininity, picturesque*

1. Introduction

At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, all forms of communication between Britain and the Continent were resumed, after more than two decades of forced interruption: as a result, a sudden flood of British travellers poured into the South, especially into Italy. In the late 1810s and throughout the 1820s, therefore, travelogues, diaries, and other kinds of accounts depicting exquisite locations, astonishing archaeological sites, and extraordinary experiences in the Peninsula rapidly multiplied (Brand 16), as a response to the demands of an eager reading public.

As Amanda Gilroy (29) has elucidated, Italy was widely perceived as “the home of emotion, whose luscious vegetation, crumbling ruins, and Catholic exoticism marked its femininity”.

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Hence, travelogues penned by women writers were regarded as particularly perceptive and insightful, thus opening a highly lucrative opportunity for professional female authors, whose daring violation of the doctrine of the separate spheres (performed through the acts of travelling and entering the male-dominated literary arena) was indulgently overlooked.

The Diary of an Ennuyée (first entitled *The Diary of a Lady*) was published anonymously in 1826 by Henry Colburn. Supposedly, it was written by a young lady in distress who, passing through France and Switzerland, had undertaken the customary tour of the major Italian cities to heal her broken heart. Her pangs of love, however, had proved fatal: the young lady had breathed her last in France, on her way back to England, leaving behind her cherished diary (the only companion of her endless sorrows and disappointments) and a booklet of poems, that the unnamed editor of the publication had inserted in the volume, according to their date and subject. *The Diary of an Ennuyée* was highly commended by reviewers², and went through several editions in a short time. Nonetheless, when Anna Jameson (1794-1860) was found out to be the real author of the *Diary*, criticism was quick to follow: in fact, even though she had truly travelled across the country writing notes based on her observations, she had shrewdly cheated her sympathetic readers, since she was perfectly alive, and in the prime of health. Enraged and appalled, Mary Shelley (339) described the text as “a very well written and interesting imposture. Well written and interesting, but still an imposture”³: her respected opinion was outstandingly valuable, given her prolonged stay in Italy, and her profound knowledge of the Italian landscape, customs, and manners. Henry Crabb Robinson deemed “the affected sentimentality of a pretended invalid very disgusting” (Morley 407); when he eventually met the writer, he depicted her as a clever and agreeable woman, but never worthy of his trust. Even Fanny Kemble

² The reviewer of *The New Monthly Magazine* compared the *Diary* to Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey*. He (141) considered “the fair Journalist” as “exceedingly amusing in her sketches of the manners of the people, of the public picture galleries of Paris, Florence, Rome, &c. (of which, indeed she seem[ed] to speak with the knowledge of an artist), and of the absurd and comic superstitions of the Papal church”.

³ As Shelley (339) continued, “having discovered that the sensitive, heart-broken, dying, dead diarist is a fictitious personage, we are angry at the trick of art that excited our real sympathy”.

(127), the famous actress who would become one of Jameson's most intimate friends, recorded her first encounter with the *revived ennuyée*, in 1828, with ill-concealed embarrassment: "it was a little vexatious to behold her sitting on a sofa, in a very becoming state of blooming *plumptitude*". To restore her faltering reputation as a writer, therefore, Anna Jameson decided to insert a heartfelt disclaimer at the end of the Preface to her second literary endeavor (*Memoirs of the Loves of the Poets: Women Celebrated in Ancient and Modern Poetry*), first published in 1829. She (1894, x) claimed she had been "betrayed into authorship" (for which thing, at that point, there was no remedy), and that her "little book [... had not been] written for publication, nor would ever have been printed but for accidental circumstances" (ix); moreover, its title had been chosen by the publisher, who was not aware of the real identity of the author.

The perplexing and complex nature of Anna Jameson's volume, peculiarly joining fact and fiction, has been pointed out by several scholars. To name a few, Amanda Gilroy (30) has noticed that the work "eludes generic fixity, being a guidebook, a diary and a novel rolled into one"; Maurizio Ascari (35) has called it a "hybrid and multifaceted text", an "eccentric travel account"; Judith Johnston (11) has underlined the fragmented, "schizoid tendency" of the narrative, featuring a "wearied, bored traveller" (17), a melancholic and "disempowered figure" (17) who, all of a sudden, inconsistently turns into "an indefatigable and energetic tourist visiting countless churches, galleries, ruins and artists' studios, and taking lessons in Italian in the evening"⁴ (17). After highlighting the numerous *fractures* in *The Diary of an Ennuyée*, Johnston concludes her critique by asserting that, in all her future travel writing⁵, Jameson "never ma[de] the same mistake again" (22).

On the contrary, far from viewing Anna Jameson's debut volume as a relatively defective and immature work, it could be argued that *The Diary of an Ennuyée* was craftily planned *as such* in order to attract a wider readership (armchair travellers as well as sentimental novel readers), thus securing substantial profits to a young and self-supporting woman who, at the time when the

⁴The outstanding vitality of the dying *ennuyée* has also been observed by Maddalena Pennacchia (103), while Kathryn Walchester (174) has noticed the "generic instability of Jameson's travel book".

⁵*Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad* (1834), and *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (1838).

travelogue was composed, worked as a governess, and had no immediate prospects of marriage. The choice of a lady of rank as her literary persona possibly reflected both her aspiration to a comfortable life, and her ambition to gain an authoritative voice, more difficult to attain (also given her gender) had she revealed her real social status. Later on in life, Anna Jameson would become a prominent and groundbreaking art critic (as esteemed and respected as John Ruskin) and, despite the traditional and conservative stance she always adopted, an outspoken advocate of women's rights. As this essay sets out to demonstrate, the account of her Italian journey, and the choice of the items deserving to be inserted in her narrative, reflect and combine the clashing views of both the *proper Lady* she wished to be identified with (and she would eventually turn into), and the spirited, resourceful, pioneering governess who yearned for self-improvement and for a leading part to play on the stage of life. After a brief biographical sketch (necessary to understand the reasons that prompted Jameson to try her hand at writing), this essay will first of all delve into the construction of Jameson's literary persona, as well as showing how the Lady coexists with the lively governess in her travelogue. Then, four areas will be explored in which Jameson's dual vision of Italy is remarkably evident, namely the feminization of the peninsula and its cities, the description of urban and rural spaces, the portrayal of the Italian citizens, and the Italian museums and art galleries.

2. Anna Jameson: the Beginning of her Literary Career

Born in Dublin, Anna Brownell Murphy was the eldest of the five daughters of Denis Brownell Murphy, an Irish miniaturist, and his wife, an Englishwoman. Due to the political turmoil in Ireland, rumoured to be a rebel, in 1798, Denis was forced to move to England with his family, settling first in Newcastle and then in London. Since her family was experiencing severe financial difficulties, Anna began to work as a governess, a career she started when she was sixteen, in 1810, and ended fifteen years later, when she got married. In 1820 she became betrothed to Robert Jameson, a promising lawyer, but they broke off their engagement the following year, because their characters were rather incompatible. She immediately accepted another post as a governess: between the Spring of 1821 and the Summer of 1822, she roamed the Continent (France, Switzerland and, most of all, Italy) with the Rowles family,

whose refinement and wealth allowed her to travel in style. In the Peninsula, she closely followed the beaten track, visiting the most renowned Italian cities, like every other Grand Tourist: Milan, Padua, Venice, Florence, Arezzo, Perugia, Rome, Naples, Lucca, Pisa, Leghorn, Genoa, and Turin. Nevertheless, she also passed through a few unusual places, such as Covigliajo and Radicofani. From her correspondence, one gathers that she kept a notebook (where she wrote down all her activities and movements), and a journal, the treasured repository⁶ of her observations, reflections, anecdotes, and detailed descriptions of works of art, just like the *ennuyée*'s diary⁷. A letter to her sister Camilla reveals that, while abroad, Anna had all the intentions to capitalize on her experience by publishing a travelogue:

I have filled one note book and half another and have quite filled two thick journals, securely locked up, and have just bought a third, so I am not idle. I have collected material which, If I live and Heaven grants me health and that peace to which I have long been a stranger, I will turn to good account. (Erskine 65)⁸

Once returned to England, however, her plans changed: she was employed by Mr. Littleton to care for his children. Meanwhile, she resumed her acquaintance with Mr. Jameson and, in 1825, she eventually agreed to tie the knot with him, in spite of their growing incompatibility bordering on repulsion (at least on her part). As Ruth Brandon (217) has elucidated, “Anna thought women ‘not born in servile classes’ should not have to work, their ‘proper sphere’ being the home”: the prospect of a dull and tiring life as a governess “must have seemed less attractive than a passionless marriage” (Brandon 217). Even though their union was ill-fated and quite miserable, Robert Jameson has to be credited with starting Anna’s

⁶The journal was jealously “secured by lock and key” (Erskine 43).

⁷Given the circumstances, according to Stephanie Russo (204) the languishing and forlorn heroine of Jameson’s *Diary* may be interpreted as “an affectionate piece of self-parody; an exaggeration of her own plight during her travels”. Furthermore, in Russo’s opinion (200), *The Diary of an Ennuyée* can be read as a “parodic exploration of both the growing interest in health tourism and the burgeoning subgenre of invalid travel literature”.

⁸In the words of Caroline Franklin (33), “like her mentor, Staël, Jameson made her travel notes with publication in mind”.

literary career⁹: he mentioned the existence of the diary of her Grand Tour to his friend Thomas who, after listening to a selection of entertaining passages, volunteered to find a publisher. Finally, Thomas sold the manuscript to Colburn, giving Anna £10 out of the £50 he had earned (Franklin 33). In 1829 Robert Jameson accepted a position in the West Indies and, since then, the couple mostly lived happily separated in two different continents. From that moment onward, Anne was free to pursue an independent life and an artistic career (in the same year she published the above-quoted *Memoirs of the Loves of the Poets*), while still benefiting from “the freedoms [and the status, one may be tempted to add] available to a married woman” (Brandon 219). Anna Jameson later specialized in the iconography of Christian art, and wrote several distinguished essays and notable handbooks for English art collections. She also embraced the anti-slavery cause, took an active interest in supporting working-class and single (or *redundant*¹⁰) women, and fought against the inequalities of property laws in Victorian England. Yet, she never failed to voice her conservative views on the social mission assigned to her gender, inextricably connected with the ideal of domesticity. As she (12-13) explained in her lecture entitled “Sisters of Charity”,

domestic life, the acknowledged foundation of all social life, has settled by a natural law the work of the man and the work of the woman. The man governs, sustains, and defends the family; the woman cherishes, regulates, and purifies it [...]. The man becomes on a larger scale, father and brother, sustainer and defender; the woman becomes on a larger scale, mother and sister, nurse and help.

3. The *Ennuyée* and the Governess

The two facets of Anna Jameson’s personality – the would-be lady and the governess, with her entrepreneurial qualities – are clearly evident in *The Diary of an Ennuyée*. To avoid any form of blame, the writer crafted her text as a secret diary – “the confidante of [her]

⁹ He also introduced her to his literate friends: Charles Lamb and Hartley Coleridge.

¹⁰ The ratio between men and women, as highlighted in the 1851 census, revealed that the overabundance of single women at a marriageable age was a growing social problem.

feelings, and the sole witness of [her] tears” (Jameson 128-29) – not intended for publication. Thus distancing herself from other women travel writers such as Madame de Genlis, who “composed and recomposed” (Jameson 181) the entries in her journal to please her future audience of readers, she expresses the utmost horror at the very thought that the intimacy of her “blotted” pages could be violated by “the eye of any indifferent person” (Jameson 182): “now, if my poor little Diary should ever be seen! I tremble but to think of it! (Jameson 181). The *ennuyée* acts with utter propriety, within the boundaries of the domestic sphere, disdaining commerce and public exposure. Furthermore, the author is at pains to clarify that her ailing, suffering, lovesick persona has undertaken her journey with the exclusive intention to forget¹¹ – albeit momentarily – her inconsolable grief: she is not remotely motivated by curiosity nor is she stirred by a passion for adventure, which would make the character less appealing to her sympathetic readership. At times, as when she arrives in Padua, the *ennuyée* is even “unable to see or to wish to see anything” (Jameson 67), so engrossed she is in her melancholy thoughts. She describes herself as a “*blue devil*” (Jameson 2), a clear reference to her despondent and gloomy condition, after elucidating that she is definitely “not *blue*” (Jameson 2), “a forcible disavowal of her being associated with ‘bluestockings’” (Walchester 177), as Kathryn Walchester has emphasized. What is more, the fictional male editor of the publication adds authority to the text, besides validating its value, as “a real picture of natural and feminine feelings” (Jameson i). The occasional, condescending remarks placed at the bottom of some pages, however, confirm that he actually held the literary worth of the *Diary* in low esteem, given the lack of intellectual consistency and the excessive emotionality it displayed. For example, the editor informs readers that he had been obliged to erase one sentence because it was “so blotted as to be illegible” (Jameson 45); moreover, he reproachfully observes that twenty pages of the Neapolitan journal had been torn out and the rest had “suffered mutilation or [had] been purposely effaced” (Jameson 231). Despite the flaunted modesty of her genteel and ladylike persona, Anna Jameson, the governess who wished to carve for herself a career as a writer, makes her bold appearance in the text when she engages

¹¹ “The only blessing I hope from time is *forgetfulness*; my only prayer to Heaven is—*rest, rest, rest!*” (Jameson 170).

with other celebrated travel authors, mentioned numerous times in her narrative. She treats the likes of Lady Morgan, Forsyth¹² and Rogers (whom she recurrently meets, both in Florence and in Rome) on equal terms, while she takes pleasure in spotting mistakes in popular travel books¹³. She even dares to scorn the illustrious John Chetwode Eustace, and his ludicrous portrayal of Terni:

When we returned to the inn at Terni, and while the horses were putting to, I took up a volume of Eustace's tour, which some traveller had accidentally left on the table; and turning to the description of Terni, read part of it, but quickly threw down the book with indignation, deeming all his verbiage the merest nonsense I have ever met with. (Jameson 137)

Even her more or less explicit, self-flattering association with well-known writers should not pass unnoticed: before her, another heartbroken¹⁴ lady traveller had written an account of her experience in distant lands: Mary Wollstonecraft, with her *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796). Besides, Anna Jameson frequently quotes Lord Byron (Jameson 35, 40, 74, 76-79, 136, 195), and the female *Childe Harold, Corinne*¹⁵ (Jameson 115, 219, 310), “a fashionable vade mecum [*sic*] for sentimental travellers in Italy” (Jameson 115) which, however, proves to be too painful to read, given the startling analogies between the two heroines: both abandoned and dejected, they also share the same age (twenty-six).

4. The Feminization of Italy

As Kathryn Walchester (172) has underlined, the author presents

¹² Anna Jameson audaciously questions his authority when, writing about the character of the Florentines, she observes: “I have not mingled in society; therefore cannot judge of the manners of the people. I trust they are not exactly what Forsyth describes: with all his taste, he sometimes writes like a caustic old bachelor; and on the Florentines he is particularly severe” (Jameson 122).

¹³ “In some books of travels I have met with, Boccaccio, Aretino, and Guicciardini, are mentioned among the illustrious dead of the Santa Croce” (Jameson 1826, 121); conversely, as the writer painstakingly points out, they are all buried in other locations.

¹⁴ Her relationship with Gilbert Imlay was often troublesome and distressing; he eventually deserted her (Marino 23-30).

¹⁵ Madame de Staël is also repeatedly mentioned, on pages 37, 40, 215.

Italy “as a ‘friend’, in whom the narrator seeks help unsuccessfully, to recover from the betrayal of her lover”. The aforementioned trope of the feminization of the peninsula is extensively employed by Jameson. In one of the poems featured in the narrative, she depicts Italy as a prostrated woman who, notwithstanding her “laurel crown/ torn and defaced, and soiled with blood and tears” (Jameson 223), still wears “with a queen-like grace [...] / her garland of bright names” (Jameson 223). The cities of Italy are also regularly compared to female figures: “one leaves Naples as a man parts with an enchanting mistress, and Rome as we would bid adieu to an old and dear-loved friend” (Jameson 324). At the end of her travelogue, she dwells on the highlights of her itinerary as if she was gazing at a gathering of women of various ages and ranks:

Genoa, though fallen, is still “Genoa the proud”. She is like a noble matron, blooming in years, and dignified in decay; while her rival Venice always used to remind me of a beautiful courtesan [*sic*] repenting in sack-cloth and ashes, and mingling the ragged remnants of her former splendor, with the emblems of present misery, degradation, and mourning. Pursue the train of similitude, Florence may be likened to a blooming bride dressed out to meet her lover; Naples to Tasso’s Armida, with all the allurements of the Syren [*sic*], and all the terrors of the Sorceress; Rome sits crowned upon the grave of her power, widowed indeed, and desolate, but still, like the queenly Constance, she maintains the majesty of sorrow— (Jameson 376)

What appears to be an innocent, almost subconscious projection of herself and her womanly world onto the foreign territory, actually allows the writer to discuss political matters, positively forbidden to her sex. Quoting Kathryn Walchester (194), “the sympathy which she evokes between the narrator and female Italy enables Jameson to comment on Italian politics and avoid the censure of critics”. Closely adhering to social conventions, the prim and proper *ennuyée* abhors the subject: “how I detest politics and discord! How I hate the discussions of politics in Italy! And, above all, the discussion of Italian politics, which offer no point upon which the

mind can dwell with pleasure”¹⁶ (Jameson 308). Conversely, the perspective of the sharp and intuitive governess is quite different: she seems to suggest that an excess of femininity (i.e. a submissive, accommodating, self-pitying, and indolent attitude towards life) is to be held responsible for the slavish condition the fragmented country languishes in. Hence, the writer regretfully records the presence of “the Austrian forces in the North of Italy” (Jameson 54) and, in Verona, she contemptuously glances at several battalions exercising in the *Piazza d’arme*: “As I have now been long enough in Italy to sympathize in [*sic*] the national hatred of the Austrians, I turned from the sight, resolved not to be pleased” (Jameson 65). In Venice, she tosses the following caustic remark: “nothing can be more arbitrary than the Austrian government at Venice” (Jameson 83), while the massive presence of tyrannical Austrian troops and their obnoxious behaviour are also noticed – with clear irritation – in Rome (Jameson 144) and in Naples (Jameson 226, 243). Surprisingly enough, the working-class author also expresses a controversial and challenging view of Napoleon with which, just ten years after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, most Englishmen could hardly agree¹⁷: as well as praising “the magnificence and vastness of his public works” (Jameson 46-47), she admires the “rational policy” (Jameson 47) he followed: “depressing the nobles, and providing occupation and amusement for the lower classes” (Jameson 47).

5. Urban and Rural Spaces in Italy

The *ennuyée* presents a somewhat vague and stereotypical depiction of the Italian cities and landscape, tailored to the taste of a wide readership who longed to be entertained with glowing pictures of an earthly paradise. Venice is nothing but “the vision of a dream” (Jameson 68) and “the proper region of the fantastic” (Jameson 69). The “enchanted *south*” (“a land of Faery [*sic*]”) delights her with its “soft, balmy air [...] myrtles, orange groves, palm trees; [...] cloudless skies, [...] bright blue sea, and sunny hills” (Jameson 218). Some remote and obscure towns are seemingly included in the narrative to gratify the lovers of gothic stories: as she

¹⁶ Elsewhere in the travel book she states: “I meddle not with politics, and with all my heart abhor them” (Jameson 227).

¹⁷ Her Irish origins probably constituted an important factor in moulding her political opinions.

informs, the most gruesome assassinations are committed in the inn at Covigliajo, where the invalid lady spends a sleepless night (Jameson 89-92); in Radicofani, “at the top of a dreary black mountain, in a rambling old inn” (Jameson 325), she cannot but think of all the travellers who have been murdered by the local *banditti*, whilst a tempest rages outside. Rome turns into a postcard to be admired by cultivated British readers who, without doubt, will not miss the copious references to Wordsworth’s “Upon Westminster Bridge” embedded in the description:

The city lay at our feet, silent, and clothed with the daylight as with a garment—no smoke, no vapour, no sound, no motion, no sign of life: it looked like a city whose inhabitants had been suddenly petrified, or smitten by a destroying angel; and such was the effect of its strange and solemn beauty, that before I was aware, I felt my eyes fill with tears as I looked upon it. (Jameson 299)

“Picturesque” is the most frequently used adjective to describe the scenery. During Carnival, in Naples, “it is scarce possible to conceive a more fantastic, a more picturesque, a more laughable scene than the Strada di Toledo” (Jameson 227). The Pamphili gardens in Rome are endowed with a “fantastic elegance, and [a] picturesque gaiety” (Jameson 286). As the writer affirms,

in Italy the picturesque is every where [*sic*], in every variety of form; it meets us at every turn, in town and in country, at all times and seasons; the commonest object of every-day life here become [*sic*] picturesque and assumes from a thousand causes a certain character of poetical interest it cannot have elsewhere. (Jameson 357)

“Had I never visited Italy”, she concludes, “I think I should never have understood the word *picturesque*” (357). According to James Buzard (33), “by the 1820s [the word picturesque] had worked its way beyond the landscape studies of its eighteenth-century origins” to include urban spaces and their inhabitants. The latter are regarded by the *ennuyée* as if they were pleasing picture cards or waxwork figures in dazzling dioramas, almost intentionally devised for both her enjoyment and the pleasure of her readers. All along the Arno, in Florence, men stand “in various picturesque attitudes,

fishing, after the Italian fashion” (Jameson 95). In Naples, her “lazzaroni attendants with their shrill shouts and strange dresses” form a scene “so new, so extraordinary, so like romance” (Jameson 240). At the Circus Maximus, in Rome, she observes a superbly costumed woman on an ass, accompanied by a man, leading the animal “with lover-like watchfulness” (Jameson 191); they are followed by two men, singing, dancing, and playing the guitar; a girl with a bouquet of flowers kneels down and prays in front of the nearby chapel: “all this sounds, while I soberly write it down, very sentimental, and picturesque, and poetical. It was exactly what I saw—what I often see: such is the place, the scenery, the people. Every group is a picture” (Jameson 191-92). The British lady cannot refrain from turning the Italian scenes she contemplates into precious commodities, into paintings fit to adorn the most refined English mansions. Watching the peasantry of the Campagna, “with their wild ruffian-like figure and picturesque costumes [...] seated at the bases of pillars, or praying before the altars” (Jameson 158), she exclaims: “how I wished to paint some of the groups I saw! but only Rembrandt could have done them justice” (Jameson 158). Later on, after gazing at the Roman countryside about her, she comments: “I wish I could have painted what I saw to-day as I saw it. Yet no—the reality was perhaps too much like a picture to please in a picture”¹⁸ (Jameson 300). Even Catholicism is perceived as a mere source of entertainment for the tourist. The holy procession she witnesses at St. Peter’s, in Rome, is “so arranged as to produce the most striking theatrical effect” (Jameson 198); the Pope, with his “mild and venerable air” (Jameson 199), performs his part with dexterity: “it was the most admirable acting I ever saw” (Jameson 199). In her brief and shallow sketch, far from being the apostolic successor of Saint Peter, the sacred pontiff is dismissed as a skilled and well-trained actor. The *ennuyée* even wishes to become a Roman Catholic but, as she immediately clarifies, “for one half hour only” (Jameson 198), as a playful form of *ethnomasquerade*¹⁹ which, given its transient nature, does not affect her identity, while

¹⁸ Even nature is considered a valuable property: “how I wish I could transport those skies to England!” (Jameson 274).

¹⁹ In the words of Kader Konuk (393), the *ethnomasquerade* is “the performance of an ethnic identity through the mimicking of clothes, gestures, appearance, language, cultural codes, or other components of identity formation”.

it may grant her the chance to gain a better view of the show.

The solidly Anglo-centric vision that has been exhibited so far is meaningfully disrupted by a few revealing (albeit cursory) comments. First of all, in spite of her protestations of love for her country, for “its fire-side enjoyments, and home felt delights” (Jameson 250), the sickly lady needs the Italian “pure elastic air [...], reviving sunshine and [...] blue skies” (Jameson 250-51) to recover. Health and wellbeing are associated with the foreign land, not with her mother-country. Secondly, the private residences and locations where British expatriates usually gather are stifling and oppressive spaces. The English ambassador’s chapel in Florence is a “hot close crowded room” where Anna Jameson feels “suffocated, feverish, and [her] head ache[s]” (Jameson 98). Likewise, the chapel at the English Ambassador’s in Naples is another “hot room” (Jameson 237), where “a crowd of fine and superfine ladies and gentlemen [are] crushed together” (Jameson 237) with the only purpose of showing off their extravagant dresses to one another. Quite the opposite, the governess seems to be positively struck by the singular freedom enjoyed by the Italians. Women are not confined indoors, they do not live secluded from the world; furthermore, there are no invisible borders that divide males from females, the rich from the poor:

The whole population seems poured into the streets and squares; all business and amusement is carried on in the open air: all those minute details of domestic life, which, in England, are confined within the sacred precincts of *home*, are here displayed to public view. (Jameson 273)

6. The Italians and the British

Towards the end of her travelogue, the *ennuyée* provides her readers with a concise illustration of the national character of the Italians, as well as emphasizing the considerable inferiority of the inhabitants of the peninsula if compared to her compatriots: “the modern Italians [are ...] a dirty, demoralized, degraded, unprincipled race,—centuries behind our thrice blessed, prosperous, and comfort-loving nation in civilization and morals” (Jameson 309). Being a mere “bird of passage” (Jameson 309), however, she does not feel particularly threatened by them; besides, as she snobbishly highlights, she has “no dealings with the lower classes, little intercourse with the higher” (Jameson 300). When

they are not an essential and *picturesque* part of the scene²⁰ (as in the case of pastoral or rural settings), the Italians are ignored, ridiculed, despised, and deliberately kept at a safe distance. Their presence is annoying, as in Venice (“The scene would have been as perfectly delightful, as it was new and beautiful, but for the squalid looks of the peasantry; more especially of the women” [Jameson 86]), or inside San Luigi dei Francesi, in Rome. In fact, the charming atmosphere of the church on Christmas Eve is tainted by the intolerable and repulsive Italian crowd: “the people [were] dirty, and there was such an effluence of strong perfumes, in which garlick [*sic*] predominated, that our physical sensations overcame our curiosity: and we were glad to make our escape” (Jameson 157). The Italians are often degraded to the rank of brutes, assimilated to primates or monkeys. At Pompeii, a “young savage” (Jameson 255) shows her a hidden fresco, scratching away the dirt “much after the manner of an ape” (Jameson 255); hoping for a recompense, he then holds “both his paws” (Jameson 255) out, with a large grin. In Lerici, she encounters a “little spare old man, with a face and form which resembled the anatomy of a baboon” (Jameson 365).

While Jameson’s aristocratic persona travels magnificently, “à la milor Anglais” (Jameson 132), organizes picnic parties “à l’Anglaise” (Jameson 252), enjoys dinners cooked “à l’Anglaise” (Jameson 139) and, during her stay in Naples, eagerly reads the last numbers of the “Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews [as] a great treat so far from home” (Jameson 271), the governess is quite critical towards her country-fellows. Above all, she disapproves of their rude and deplorable behaviour when they are abroad, stemming from the inborn sense of superiority wealthy people often have. She is disgusted with their disregard for holy places (“I found the church as usual crowded with English, who every Sunday convert St. Peter’s into a kind of Hyde Park, where they promenade arm in arm, shew [*sic*] off their finery, laugh and talk aloud” [Jameson 155]), and their disrespect for the Italian

²⁰ Even in this case, they are observed from afar, for fear of spoiling the spectacle. At St. Peter’s, she meets a pilgrim “with a very singular and expressive countenance, whose cape, and looped hat were entirely covered with scallop shells and reliques [*sic*], and his long staff surmounted by a death’s head” (Jameson 321). She decides not to speak to him, “lest by conversing with him, I should diminish the effect his romantic and picturesque figure had made on my imagination” (Jameson 321). According to Tricia Lootens (185), the *ennuyée* “shrinks from full international intimacy”.

artistic heritage, as when she prevents one of her party from breaking off a piece of a statue to take home as a souvenir (“I could not help thinking it a profanation to the place, and stopped his hand calling him a barbarous *Vandyke*” [Jameson 196]). Moreover, she offers a series of humorous caricatures of ignorant and obtuse British tourists, who have the means but not intelligence to travel. In Brescia, she runs into what she calls “a specimen of a new genus of fools” (Jameson 61), an affluent collector of “strange odds and ends of foreign follies” (Jameson 61), who boasted he had covered “sixteen thousand miles in sixteen months” (Jameson 60). In Venice, in the public gardens, she finds “a solitary gentleman who was sauntering up and down with his hands in his pockets, and a look at once stupid and disconsolate” (Jameson 79). As she relates, he had spent the past four days exactly in the same manner: he had never interacted with the Italians since he could not speak their language²¹, he had not bothered to admire the attractions of the city (he was not in the least interested), and he was completely insensitive to the enthralling works of art that, as the narrator enthusiastically announced, he would have the incredible opportunity to appreciate in Florence, Rome, and Naples. As Anna Jameson ironically remarks, “after this specimen, sketched from life, who will say there are such things as caricatures?” (Jameson 81).

7. The Italian Art Galleries and Museums

Propriety and decorum are the lenses through which the *ennuyée* judges the value of the paintings exhibited in the Italian museums and art galleries she visits. At the Manfrini Palace, in Venice, she is captivated by two canvases featuring Lucretia, “one by Guido and one by Giordano” (Jameson 74). Despite their beauty, she finds “an impropriety of conception in both pictures: the figure was too voluptuous—too exposed” (Jameson 74). Among the paintings in the Capitoline Museum, in Rome, “the one most highly valued” (Jameson 149), namely *Europa* by Paul Veronese, pleases her the least, because of “his sins against good taste and propriety” (Jameson 149). As she adds, “one wishes that he had allayed the heat of his fancy with some cooling drops of discretion. Even his colouring, so admired in general, has something florid and

²¹ Conversely, Anna Jameson took Italian classes with “*Signior B*” (Jameson 260), while in Italy .

meretricious to my eye and taste” (Jameson 149). In the chapel of San Lorenzo, in Florence, one of Michelangelo’s renowned canvases is disdainfully rejected as “a hateful picture” (Jameson 107): in her ladylike opinion, the blessed Virgin, an icon of purity and finesse, looks like a coarse washerwoman, due to her “harsh unfeminine features, and muscular, masculine arms” (Jameson 108). Finally, the *Judith and Holophernes* in Palazzo Pitti strikes her attention as “an abomination” (Jameson 335): the very thought that such a violent and hideous subject had been selected by a female artist (probably Artemisia Gentileschi) is an inconceivable aberration to her.

As Caroline Palmer (250) has argued, until the end of the eighteenth century, female art viewers were broadly considered as a “subspecies of unacceptable connoisseur[s]”, and their responses to art and archaeological sites “often associated with those of children, the working classes and even ‘primitive’ people”. On the other hand, from her initial publication, Anna Jameson, “the first professional English art historian” (borrowing the title of Adele Holcomb’s essay on the writer), displays not just an unrestrained passion for art, but also the intention to educate her readers, primarily women. By so acting, the ingenious governess and would-be feminist manages to undermine the male authority in the realm of art and culture, as well as bringing “the world of Italian art to the female home in England” (Krisuk 2015), in the words of Jennifer Krisuk. Even though she claims her diary should never develop into “a mere catalogue of objects, which are to be found in any pocket guide” (Jameson 266), she lingers on the meticulous and repeated descriptions of paintings and statues, while tracing a number of possible itineraries to be followed. What is more, Jameson also demonstrates that a close and reiterated contact with works of art can enhance one’s ability to understand them; hence, she illustrates the development of her own artistic taste. At first, as when she is in Venice, she feels overwhelmed: “I am fatigued, and my head aches; —my imagination is yet dazzled:—my eyes are tired of admiring, my mind is tired of thinking, and my heart with feeling” (Jameson 73). A few weeks later, in Rome, after visiting for the fourth time the Palazzo Borghese, she notices with a tinge of satisfaction that her taste is “becom[ing] more and more fastidious every day” (Jameson 152). During her sojourn in Italy she gains such an expertise that she is able to pass remarks even on the state and the arrangement of paintings: “the Doria Palace contains the largest collection of

pictures in Rome: but they are in a dirty and neglected condition, and many of the best are hung in the worst possible light” (Jameson 160).

8. Conclusions

As this essay has tried to demonstrate, *The Diary of an Ennuyée* offers a dual and contrasting vision of the Italian cities Jameson visited, juxtaposing her own perceptions (the perceptions of a governess with literary ambitions and original views), and the sensitivity of her literary persona, crafted to please her readership (she wished her volume to be financially successful and free from social blame). Far from being an immature, feeble, and unconvincing work, therefore, *The Diary of an Ennuyée* compellingly shows that travel literature can turn into an alternative space for education, communal enhancement, and self-development.

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The American Dream Turned Nightmare in John Updike's *Terrorist*

Teodor Mateoc¹

Abstract: *The novel, published five years after the 9/11 events in New York City, deals with the issue of home-bred terrorism by trying to probe into the mind of a young, exalted Muslim devotee turned terrorist. The article will try to prove that larger issues are at stake and that Updike offers an indirect critique of the state of affairs in contemporary America that, ironically, can justify radicalism of thought and action.*

Key words: *religion, multiculturalism, terrorism, alienation, Islam, ideology*

John Updike's 2006 novel could be read as a study in failure.

Mostly known as the chronicler of New England suburbia and its middle-class hollow values in his *Rabbitt* tetralogy (*Rabbit, Run; Rabbit Redux; Rabbit Is Rich; Rabbit at Rest*) and the novella *Rabbit Remembered*, Updike takes issue here with the most consequential event in recent American history and makes his contribution to what has been called ever since post 9/11 fiction.

However, to say that home-nurtured terrorism or the exploration of an aberrant, young terrorist's psychology are his main concerns may be reductionist and misleading. I submit that what may also be at stake here is a critique of multicultural America which, undoubtedly, does not justify the protagonist's course of action but helps understand the radicalization of a young mind which feels frustrated in its expectations regarding, in the broadest sense, the American dream.

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The result is a severe form of alienation from societal values which leads to isolation and a state of almost insane single-mindedness fueled by a blind belief in the purity of his religion. Ahmad, the protagonist- a few months away from finishing high school- is himself, in a way, a product of multiculturalism: the mother is Teresa Mulloy, of Irish catholic descent who works as a nurse-aid and is infatuated with painting, while the father, Omar, was an Egyptian visiting student who returned to his homeland and was never heard of again.

If one were to read first only the opening and ending sentences of the novel-”These devils seek to take away my God”/”These devils...have taken away my God” (Terrorist, 3; 310)²- , one would be tempted to approach the narrative with certain expectations and start reading it as a (political) thriller. The probable questions lingering on the mind would be: How did it happen? Who are the ‘devils’? What is at stake? Simplistic as such questions may be, the answers are anything but. I propose that the novel deals primarily with the theme of defeat and invites a two-layered reading: firstly, and most obviously, the defeat of the protagonist to carry out his intention and sustain his belief; secondly, the failure of American society in its post-industrial, consumerist stage to live up to self-proclaimed ideas and ideals, or to cultural tensions between various ethnic groups, ideologies and religions.

The setting of the novel is the racially mixed and not too prosperous town of New Prospect, New Jersey, and the narrative foregrounds two voices, two ways of looking at reality, one of hatred and rage, the other one resigned, cynical and deprived of illusions.

The first is that of young Ahmad. The second that of Jack Levy, of whom more later. Intelligent, clean and well-behaved, Ahmad is about to finish high school, but the “new prospect”, i.e. college, is not an option for him. Not since he had fallen under the influence of Shaikh Rashid, the local imam who fuels his hatred of the American values, a feeling that is reinforced daily by what he sees around him at school: insolence, laziness, whorish or violent behavior, as that exhibited by his school mate, the African-American Joryleen and her bullying friend, Tyleneol.

Irrespective of the advice to the contrary that his school counselor gives him and the lack thereof on the part of the mother

² All bracketed references are from the 2007 Penguin Edition of the novel.

who, according to her *laissez-faire* philosophy of life, simply does not interfere with her son's plans, Ahmad sets his mind on becoming a truck driver for a furniture hauling, Muslim (Lebanese)-owned company. Events precipitate while Ahmad's radicalization reaches paroxysm and he is willing to sacrifice his life in the mission of blowing up his truck, laden with "four thousand kilos ammonium nitrate....Twice what Mc Veigh had"³, at the rush hour, in the Lincoln Tunnel under the Hudson River. The ending, it was noticed, is a bit unconvincing: Jack Levy, his school counselor appears out of nowhere, gets on the truck with his ex-student and, at the last moment, Ahmad decides to give up his mission and admits that "these devils have taken away my God".

The novel leaves one with the impression of incompleteness, or the idea that both Ahmad's radicalism and his final change of mind are insufficiently motivated. Also that some episodes are contrived or implausible: the fact that Jack Levy's sister-in-law, Hermione Fogel, works for the Secretary of Homeland Security and finds out about Ahmad from Jack and his wife, Beth; the surprising presence of Levy in the final episode, when he dissuades Ahmad from accomplishing his intention; or the fact that the prostitute who is going to initiate young Ahmad into sex happens to be his ex-schoolmate, Joryleen.

Major and minor characters in the novel are enmeshed into a web of relationships that transcend such barriers as ethnicity, nationality or religion: Ahmad is Muslim and half-Egyptian, his mother is a Catholic of Irish descent, the imam is a Yemenite, Jack Levy is an atheist Jew, Ahmad's employers are Lebanese etc. If the novel's ultimate concerns with terrorism, this sundry gallery of characters may suggest that in order to understand the phenomenon more than one perspective may be necessary. And that this recent form of violence- what George Bush had called a "new kind of evil" (Purdam, 4) - that afflicts the contemporary world is extremely difficult to understand and eradicate, as the Secretary of Homeland Security thinks aloud: "Those people out there... Why do they want to do these horrible things? Why do they hate us? What's to hate?"(48).

In his review of the novel, Kacou asserts that

³ Timothy McVeigh, American terrorist convicted and executed for the death of 168 people in 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.

the narrative loop which binds all the characters together could be interpreted usefully (irrespective of the author's specific intent) as a reflection of how the experience of (and the responsibility for) terrorism cannot be captured by the perspective of either perpetrators or victims alone (exclusively), but instead distributes itself, like a spectrum of different wavelengths, across both groups, as well as bystanders. (Kacou, 2012)

The elusive nature of terrorism, as a form of evil involving both the perpetrators and the victims may be considered against the larger background of a secular, modern and materialistic society which has failed to keep up its promises, here symbolized by the choice of setting: the decaying post-industrial town of New Prospect.

It is possible to discern, in the novel, various types of reactions to the state of affairs in a society afflicted by the threat of terrorism. The first is that of the officials in Washington, here represented by the Chief of Homeland Security and by his submissive and admiring secretary who happens to be Jack Levy's sister-in-law. This self-sufficient, bulky bureaucrat is portrayed in a derisive light; he casually changes the terror warning system, from yellow to orange, and acts as a man more interested in politics than in the public good: "I'll be knocked for this...If nothing happens, I'm a scaremonger. If it does, I'm a lazy leach on the public payroll who allowed the death of thousands". But Hermione, her "spinster skin reddening with sympathetic feeling" promptly reassures him: "No one would say such things. Everyone, even the Democrats, knows you are doing an impossible job that nevertheless must be done, for the sake of our national survival". (48)

Secondly, although first in importance because it is so radical and extreme, is Ahmad's reaction. In order to understand his ultimate act of self-sacrifice, it is useful to consider several factors: personal, familial and social. In this order, the relation with the (absent) father may have been important in his psychological development. Ahmad is not only longing for the absent father, but actually wants to impersonate him literally, as when he contemplates adopting his father's name (Ashmawy, instead of his mother's Mulloy) and spiritually, by becoming an ardent Muslim, although there is no hint that the father was a devout believer. Moreover, it is possible to speculate that, unconsciously, the son wants to avenge the father's cowardice or incapacity to stay and 'fight' the system. Or, perhaps, the injustice of the system which had rejected him.

As for the mother's influence, it manifests itself in his adopting of a general, if unfocused tendency that may be described as countercultural. Terry, is a hard-working single mother but also the symbol of a sexually liberated modern woman. Equally, and in what concerns education, she adopts the current view that children are better off on their own, free to realize their own "potential", without parental guidance. This explains her tolerance or indifference for Ahmad's radical opinions, for his decision of not going to college but become a truck-driver, and, last but not least, for his religious zeal under the guidance of Shaik Rashid.

This Yemeni cleric can be seen as a father-figure, by proxy, a surrogate father who compensates, through Islam, the absence of the father and through careful guidance, the non-involvement of the mother. Although without displaying paternal affection, he gradually prepares him for recruitment in the terrorist plot. The man who had engineered everything is the cynical Lebanese-American Charlie Chehab, who teaches him "the ropes" of his new job as a truck-driver. He can be seen as a sort of brother figure and he does gain Ahmad's self-confidence and reinforces the justice of their cause and the opportunity of his (self) destructive mission. Ahmad has the feeling of having been accepted into a larger frame of things which includes both politics and familial ties, as apparent in conversation he has with Charlie and an "operative" who gives Ahmad the last instructions for activating the mechanism in the truck:

It'll do a ton of damage, minimum. It'll deliver a statement. It'll make deadlines all over the world. They'll be dancing in the streets of Damascus and Karachi...

The older unidentified man adds, "Cairo, too"....and strikes his chest with his fist and tells Ahmad, "Egyptian".

"So was my father! Ahmad exclaims, yet in exploration of the bond can only think to ask, "How do you like Mubarak?"

The smile fades. "Tool of America"

Charlie, as if joining in a game, asks, "The Saudi princes?"

"Tools".

"How about Muammar al- Qadaffi?"

"Now, too. Tool. Very sad".....

Osama bin Laden?"

'Great hero", the man with oil-blackened fingers answers. "Cannot be caught. Like Arafat. A fox". (249)

Shaikh Rashid's Islam is an intolerant ideology that instills into Ahmad's mind a set of ideas that guide terrorists in their campaigns against the Infidels and that Ahmad readily embraces: modernity and secularism are evil; non-Muslims are devils to be destroyed; any good Muslim must reject deep social commitments and instead prepare himself for the purity of Paradise and "the dark-eyed hours" (107).

For a Muslim, to stay away from all of the above, is to stay away from 'evil', in general. The word, repeatedly used by the cleric, was also used by President Bush after the 9/11 attacks and by Updike himself in his "Elusive Evil: An Idea Whose Time Keeps Coming," published in *The New Yorker* in July 22, 1996. Evil is elusive and, as it appears here, can take the form of 'excess' as opposed to moderation: not only the excesses of a consumerist society, excessive behaviour (Joryleen's whorish ways, Tylenol's aggression, Beth's dietary excesses), but also, in opposition, the excesses of religion, in Ahmad's case. In this latter sense, such excesses lead to absolute categorizations and demonization of the other which excludes empathy.

Among the sources of such an evil, Roy Baumeister mentions 'threatened egotism' (i.e., a deficit of self-confidence and, in the extreme, the fear of nothingness, of an existential void) and 'idealism' as the need for utopia (Baumeister, 375-378). Obviously, religion is a suitable arena for enacting such a vision: the vision of an everlasting happiness in Paradise (the myth of pure good), as the ultimate reward for killing the infidels and thus preserving the purity of the faith, somehow justifies excessive actions of shaky egos who assert themselves through violence, for violence's sake (i.e. pure evil).

Speaking of the uses and abuses of religion, Kimball identifies several "warning signs of human corruption of religion." [Kimball, 6]: a tendency to absolute truth claims which excludes any relativism of interpretation; the replacement of the missionary activity by the drive to impose a unique viewpoint; obedience; the desire to set up a utopia; the belief that the end justifies any means, including holy war, or Jihad.

Ahmad's case illustrates most of these signs. Moreover, they can be linked, again, to his personal history and background: the indifference of the mother, the longing for the biological father and the adoption of a spiritual father, his inner disposition towards stereotypes and categorization. The interplay of these factors

situates him halfway between a condition of utter loneliness assuaged only by the intimate company of his God and a kind of social paranoia induced by “these devils”. They are, for example, his school peers: boys who are only interested in money and material power, “indicating with their edgy killer gestures and careless laughs that this world is all there is” (Terrorist, 3); girls who advertise their carnal promises, “their bare bellies, adorned with shining metal studs and low-down purple tattoos, ask, *What else is there to see?*” (ibidem); the teachers at his school, “weak Christians and nonobservant Jews” who “make a show of teaching virtue and righteous self-restraint, but their shifty eyes and hollow voices betray their lack of belief...Some get divorces; some live with others unmarried. Their lives away from school are disorderly and wanton and self-indulgent”, prisoners in the atmosphere of urban decay of New Prospect (idem,4); the New Jersey state government “down in Trenton” who pays the teachers; and, last but not least, “the Satanic government farther down in Washington” whose values are “Godless”(ibidem), represented in the novel by the Secretary of Homeland Security).

Young Ahmad takes these avatars of the “devils” literally and their effect accumulates and reaches a climax as he is about to become an adult, albeit an idealist and nihilist one. In this mindset, his deepest wish is to definitely reject the fallen secular world he has to live in. In performing the assigned task he both vanishes from it and affirms his existence and difference to others. And by performing this act of war and justice against the devils, he feels entitled to the immediate reward of paradise. What can be questioned though is the idea whether it is not presumptuous and maybe illogical for any religion-inspired terrorist to pretend to speak and act for an ineffable God “once and for all”.

If Ahmad rejects all the advances of a materialist and faithless society, he is, nevertheless vulnerable to the positive influence of one of its representatives, his school counselor, Jack Levy. This sixty-three year old teacher lives an ordinary, unspectacular life, together with his wife, Beth, “a whale of a woman” (,20) and although he is aware of the evils and injustices in society, he prefers cynicism and resignation to addressing them.

However, he is both directly and indirectly involved in Ahmad’s evolution: firstly, by leaking information about his him to authorities, i.e., his sister-in-law, Hermione’; secondly, by getting personally involved with him and offering him an alternative model.

In a way, Jack can be seen as the mirror reflection of Ahmad: both share many metaphysical frustrations, both resent the American system of education, or the excessive materialism of modern American way of life, both speak of the absurdity of life in general. Finally, both believe that people “stink”(28), although the conclusion has religious roots in Ahmad’s case, while Jack’s is the result of personal experience. He wakes up early in the morning “with the taste of dread in his mouth” and “his dreams are sinister, soaked through with the misery of the world” (idem, 19). Yet, in his quiet, unassuming way, Jack, the cynical atheist has transcended both ideology and religion and adopted a new existential model: that of life as a burden, an infinite and pointless rock-pushing uphill:

Sisyphus. The rock uphill. Down it must roll. He stands there no longer seeing but pressing with his consciousness back against the certainty that all these will some day cease for him. The screen in his head will go totally blank, and yet it will all go on without him, dawn breaking and cars starting up and wild creatures continuing to feed in a terrain poisoned by Man (29)

If this Camus inspired existential condition is absurd, it has to be accepted out of human pride, dignity and revolt. This very struggle with meaning in a modern, chaotic and indifferent world is the alternative model to ideologies, religions or any essentialist positions.

It is this kind of heroism that Updike upholds: Jack is flawed in many ways, but he is authentic and credible; cynical, adulterer, uncertain and anxious, he perseveres in his effort to dissuade Ahmad from his destructive plan. He succeeds in the end, although the success may be temporary or uncertain because there may be no definite solution for terrorism and “evil”. But, again, by accepting his own flaws and impurities, Jack Levy does display a pure, obstinate heroism, while Ahmad is very close to commit “evil” by mistaking (religious) purity for heroism.

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CITY IN/AND LITERATURE
Cultural-Isms

LA VILLE EN LITTÉRATURE
Études culturelles

Reading People and Places: the Dynamics of Cities

Magda Danciu¹

Abstract. *The present paper is meant to provide a demonstration of how a particular place can shape people's cultural identity in terms of beliefs, attitudes, interactions, values, and of how cities influence individuals culturally and intellectually by their inventive, imaginative, innovative components. The Scottish urban site stimulates their inhabitants' creativity and desire for social interaction, artistic expressiveness and potential for self-exploration developing one's territorial identity, as demonstrated by the selection of texts authored by Ian Rankin and James Kelman.*

Key words: *urban landscape, cultural practices, leisure sites, public spaces, territoriality, territorial identity*

Of Cities

A city is, according to the *Chambers English Dictionary*, a large town that has/had a cathedral, that has been conferred dignity, that is of a higher rank due to its financial, cultural, historical importance. A town is an enclosure, a populous place bigger or less rural than a village. the principal town of a district, an urban community, a business or shopping centre, with urban communities, that is, more civilised, refined smooth-mannered.

Electronic dictionaries can add some elements to this definition of the city such as being "A center of population, commerce, and culture; a town of significant size and importance"(*Thesaurus*); "a large human settlement, generally having extensive systems for housing, transportation, sanitation,

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utilities, land use, and communication." (*Wikipedia*); "the city is a concentration of people with a similar way of life based on job type, cultural preferences, political views and lifestyle" (*Urban Geography*). Urban geographers focus on socio-cultural and institutional analyses of cities amongst which are social changes and their consequences especially in shaping place identities and determining cultural practices that we find essential to consider in the present condition of postmodern cities within expanding globalizing forces. The changes associated with the urban society after 1970s have been charted by Stephen J. Page and Joanne Connell (2010) as follows: the postmodern/post-industrial/post-Fordist city focuses on differences, diversity, discontinuity and fragmentation and shows a particular interest in pastiche and the spectacle, such as events and carnivals; it displays a "niche marketing and a focus on the consumer to identify differentiated markets to understand the differences between people and groups, illustrating a shift from mass consumption in all areas of life for some groups, a trend that can be traced to the 1970s" (Page, Connell, 2010: 306). This type of city submits to the power of the individual and enterprise and is constantly ready to discover a particular meaning through "the way people consume goods, services and experiences and how they attain their desires through the consumption process"(306), and to observe and understand how "individual identity is increasingly constructed by the individuals through the way they consume, especially in the field of leisure"(306).

The city is above all a place, that is, a geographic entity, inhabited by people, being the space of events, current or historical, presently or traditionally associated with it. David Storey states that "place can be invoked in terms of generic landscapes and in the significance seen to attach to specific places"(Storey, 2012: 108), because "particular sites and landscapes (spaces, places) become imbued with meaning"(108) that individuals, in no matter what capacity, are seeking to discover in a joint effort to grasp the sense of a particular places. They are usually places of personal or collective interest such as "the place we grew up in, places we have spent some time in, places with fond memories, places associated with positive experiences", as "places are the focus of personal sentiments, with the feelings for place permeating day-to-day life and experience"(27). Fouberg, Murphy, and de Blij operate with the term of *urban* when referring to the built up spaces of the city itself

or of its surrounding environs (suburbs) which are connected to it, stating that "an urban place is distinctively non-rural and non-agricultural. The agglomeration of people, services, goods in centres affords people the luxury of time to innovate"(Fouberg et al.,2012: 291). In their view, "cities are centres of political power, of industrial might, higher education, technological innovation, artistic achievement, medical advances" on the one hand, and on the other one, they are "the great markets, centres of specialization and interaction, sources of news and information, suppliers of services, providers of sports and entertainment", symbolizing "the anchors and instigators of modern culture, structural skeletons of a society, agglomerations of people and buildings clustered together to serve as a centre of politics, culture, economics"(291).

Territorial Identities

It is a fact nowadays that people make places and create cultures, values, aesthetics, politics, economics, etc, that affect and shape places and that places are constantly changing due to people who can "develop a sense of place by infusing a place with meaning and emotion, by remembering important events that occurred in a place, by labelling a place with a certain character"(Fouberg et al., 2012: 12). The Scottish urban environment, seen as a social organization, can be visualised by foregrounding a specific confined territory in Edinburgh, as the one Rankin's protagonist of *The Complaints*(2009) opted for:

The area around Ocean terminal was an odd amalgam of dockside, warehouse conversions and new buildings, Ocean Terminal itself was a shopping centre and cinema complex, with the royal yacht *Britannia* berthed permanently as a tourist attraction in a marina to the far side of the building. Nearby a vast, shiny construction housed the city's army of civil servants - or at least a few battalions of them. A handful of lauded restaurants had opened up, perhaps with one eye on the cruise ships that occasionally docked in Leith. The Oliver was rotunda-shaped, and liked to think that it had been the harbourmaster's residence at some time. (Rankin, 2009: 86).

One can easily realize the importance of territories in rendering identities, individual, group or national ones, as they are imagined to be essential components in the formation of a self-identity by the way they can generate one's sense of the place, one's belonging to a specific geographical space, one's particular territorial identity,

expressed in attitudes and behaviours emerging from how individuals reflect and conceive their territoriality; the latter is described by David Storey as representing "a culturally derived and transmitted answer to particular human problems", having "rules, mechanisms, and symbols that are developed gradually over time and are passed from one generation to the next by the process of socialization" (Storey, 2012:17); it also reflects "the relationship between people and place", signifying "a distinction and a separation from adjacent territories that are under different jurisdictions" (18), conferring security, and being embedded in social relations because "territories emerge as a consequence of social practices and processes"(19); "they are human creations, produced under particular circumstances, designed to serve specific ends"(20).

One of Rankin's characters, Norquay (who ends up by committing suicide) tries to build a territory for his own, a place to belong to:

He had overstretched himself financially, buying up one of the ugliest pieces of real estate around, a hotchpotch of 1960s high-rise blocks on the city's periphery (...) The buildings were stuffed with asbestos, which made them expensive to demolish. The old mine-workings were discovered, meaning half the land was unsuitable for construction without spending a fortune on underpinning. (Rankin, 2009: 285).

Kelman's Glasgow is mapped by the eponymous character of *Kieron Smith, Boy* (2008) through a number of smaller portions of individual nature, so important in constructing one's sense of belonging to a particular space and place:

My Grannie's house was nearer school than ours. They stayed across the back. But it was not far too school from my house. It was at the top of my street and then along. Except ye could not go that way. Papes would get ye. Their school was at the top of our street. Ye had to pass theirs to get to get to ours. The Chapel was beside theirs. (...) But the Church was not beside our school. (Kelman, 2008: 29).

As if realizing how one's home, life, everyday practices can shape the heart of the nation, the Glaswegian Kieron Smith seems to have been constructed by the intricate process of infusing the city with

meanings attached to his memories and experiences:

Climbing was the best thing so if ye saw a good tree or what. If it was a different building. The Church down the hill was great-looking and had wee different roofs for jumping right up to the Cross at the top. (...) Even going someplace with my maw and da I still looked for the best building, and if the roof looked good, what was the best way up? If there was not a way ye got a funny feeling, so the building was not friendly. Some buildings had a face and were friendly. (...) But then the Chapel too, it was friendly. (...) The Chapel only had one roof but it did not have a pointed part, it was complete flat but with a wee slope. (...) But ye could run down and do a jump, except there was not a place to jump to. (190).

The sense of the place has two dimensions: it changes us gradually, as the place changes and it changes the place as we change, because "the sense of place becomes part of our identity, and our identity affects the ways we define and experience place." (Fouberg et al., 2012:155). It has been noticed that "we infuse places with meaning and emotions based on our experiences in those places." (466), as seen in Rankin's protagonist's, Malcolm Fox's recollection of a historical place of the city of Edinburgh:

Portobello had been quite the place at one time. It was where you'd go at the summer. You'd play on the beach, or walk along the promenade. There'd be ice-cream cones and one-armed bandits and fish and chips. Sandcastles down near the water, where the sand was sticky and pliable. People would be flying kites or tossing sticks into the surf for their dogs to retrieve. The water was so cold you'd lose the ability to breathe for the first few seconds, but after that you didn't want to come out. Parents seated on their stripy deckchairs, maybe with a windbreak hammered into the sand. (Rankin, 2009:7).

Creative Cities

This rather recently coined term used in connection to urban studies implies the "inventive, imaginative and innovative nature of the creative cultural sector" of a city initiated by the belief that "creativity is a concept based on the creative industries idea, with their exploitable intellectual property (i.e. ideas, creative goods and knowledge)" that reflects "the new emphasis on creative leisure industries and the creativity in leisure experiences provided by innovative organisations." (Page, Connell, 2010: 356); it is certainly

an essential dimension of the postmodern society and the current everyday life that so typically hinges upon consumption and changes in the visual form of the city (see p. 308). Kevin Lynch enlarges the same idea of making use of different vital elements of cities in a teaching, informative way: "The real remains of a city, in conjunction with print, film, recording, might consciously be used to retain and teach what we think to be instructive for the future." (Lynch, 1972: 66) so that journeys in modern cities should be "measured as time consumed.", thus turning the city into a "medium through which we make our way by spending time" (54).

If we consider the selected list of leisure resources and facilities in the UK that Page and Connell provide us with, that is, "leisure centres, parks and open spaces, golf courses, the home, the street, gardens and allotments, playgrounds, open sporting contexts." (Page, Connell, 2010: 314), then Rankin's characters' choice for a well-known spot, key landmarks and icons in Edinburgh, is justified:

Their route took them to around the periphery of the Botanic Gardens and uphill towards the city centre. (...) soon they were crossing the top of Leith Walk. Royal Terrace, then Abbeyhill, and down past the Parliament building and the Palace of Holyrood, before entering Holyrood Park itself. Past St. Margaret's Loch and entering the one-way section that snaked around the immensity of Arthur's Seat. It felt like the middle of nowhere. There were stretches where no signs of habitation could be glimpsed; just heath and hill. (...) A bad place to leave us. (Rankin, 2009: 306)

Likewise, if we are to trust the observation that " parks and open spaces are probably the ultimate sustainable urban leisure resources, because they can accommodate multiple uses, engage with the local communities and enhance the built environment." (Page, Connell, 2010: 321), then Kieron's preference for them in a formerly drab city like Glasgow is worth mentioning:

Parks were on the other side of the river. One was one way and the other was the other and they were both good. I like them. Usually we went to the other. It was a big walk and ye went different roads and there were closes to go through and sometimes there were good jumps out the back. (...) The park where the big boys went did not have a pond but it had a river, just a wee river and no boats went on it. It had smells too but different ones. (...) Ye could not

swim in the water. It was too slimy and was all soapy. (...) There were railings to keep ye out. (...) Bushes and trees were there and it was good for games. (...) In one place a big wall was there and went right across and under the river. The water gushed over the top of it and fell down, and it was a waterfall."(Kelman, 2008: 20-1).

There is a general contention that cities host the production and exercise of creativity in its manifold forms, particularly in its materiality through activities and mundane practices, thus contributing to the permanent change of the cityscape and stimulating people and their cultures to create and recreate themselves in a permanent dynamics of changing humans and their geography, as in the case of traditional Glasgow:

In the old place the river was not far from our street. There was a park and all different things in between. The park had a great pond with paddleboats and people sailed model yachts. Ye caught fish in it too. Ye caught them with poles that had nets tied at the end. (Kelman, 2008: 1).

The image of Glasgow in Kelman's description is a site combining territoriality as "the attempt by an individual or by a group to affect, influence, control people, phenomena, relationships by delimiting or asserting control over a geographic area"(Fouberg et al., 2012: 252) and the very physical presence of the city or the nearby environment that "exerts a significant influence on us. The form, shape, morphology of the city is the tangible outcome of a complex mix of socio-economic forces and of the ideas and intentions of groups or individuals acting within or outside a city."(Hall,2012: 30), in a general picture of the Scottish world and lifestyle:

Wee boats went on the canal, cabin cruisers and barges. They sailed across Scotland and came out the other side. At these locks the water changed, it was high and low. (...) The sailors let ye help to wind the handle that set the height of the water. (Kelman, 2008:119)

Theorists conclude that cities are made both by people and institutions that shape them in such a way that neighbourhoods with their houses, stores, churches, libraries, schools, sporting fields, are those that can personalize the cities and "reflect the

values of their culture" (Fouberg et al., 2012:314) ; they turn them into those creative cities that are ready to illustrate "the processes of change" that "were coalescing to create a number of elements in cities structured around the concept of creativity" (Page, Connell, 2010: 356), in the way Edinburgh or Glasgow are, at least in the eyes of their artists. They are all aware of the fact that "culture and creativity have become the new saviour of cities," and that "the creative city is a unique form of culture-led regeneration"(356), meant to strengthen their inhabitants: "When ye walked to the subway from my grannie's street there was good shops for clothes and I was seeing them for I got a job" (Kelman, 2008: 350).

The city as a well defined geographical space, occupied by people and institutions as we have already stated, can generate a specific territorial behaviour as a product of various circumstances, either cultural, economic, or political, demonstrating that "territoriality has a constructed nature" (Storey, 2012: 215), and grants a particular identity to both the places and their inhabitants, as in the description of the Cowgate street situated in the Old Town of Edinburgh:

An inconspicuous brick building you'd drive past without guessing what went on there. Traffic was hellish slow; there seemed to be roadworks and diversions everywhere. It wasn't just the trams - there was gas mains being replaced, and resurfacing at the Grassmarket. It seemed to Fox that he passed more traffic cones than pedestrians. (Rankin, 2009:37-8).

"The sense of common identity", as David Storey referred to the spirit of a nation consisting of a people bound together "by some sense of solidarity, common culture and shared history"(Storey, 2012: 31), is best illustrated in the attachment of Scottish people to their country and to their cities, even if this feeling is sometimes expressed with a certain sadness: " City's a deathtrap, the whole of Scotland's in melt-down, and for all I know the rest of the world's about to follow."(Rankin, 2009: 381).

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The Mysterious London of Arthur Conan Doyle

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Abstract: *This abstract represents a short study about the image of London at the turn of the nineteenth century. This literary theme of London is mainly focused on the writings of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. This study will present three major aspects about London. The first is related to the physical structure of the capital and it analyses the labyrinth of streets. It also emphasizes the image of a well-organized trap which attracts the colonized people and plays with its British citizens, keeping them between borders. The second aspect of London reveals the physical ugly face of the British capital. Conan Doyle depicted the striking contrast between a civilized capital and its misery and dirt in the streets. The third aspect is represented by the means of the development which overwhelm the British capital. The innovative elements of the City such as advertising, science, telegraph, means of transport and photography will also be discussed in the writings of Conan Doyle.*

Key words: London, labyrinth, ugliness, development.

Among the most famous authors who dedicated their time and talent to depict the complex face of London, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is emblematic for such type of literary work. Doyle goes to some lengths when he draws his descriptions of London. Therefore, the great city of nations turns into a complex being overcoming its geographical status and because London is more than a city, in this chapter the reader will find out three major features of the great city, the physical aspect of the British capital, its striking appearance, and its power. With this being said, in the following we will discover

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the complex physical aspect of the great London in the works of Arthur Conan Doyle.

1. The Structure of Streets and Districts

From the colonial point of view, London was always seen from the outside as being the ideal city. On the one hand, this statement is strongly based on the foreigners' perspective that the British capital was the land of dreams, as some people today seek the United States for the American dream. On the other hand, London was seen by colonialists as being the supreme place of order and uniformity, since it had power on different continents. In one way or another, London possesses these features. However, things are different in Doyle's and other authors' works and from their perspective. Thus, while turning the pages, a fan of Arthur Conan Doyle will be certainly be taken by surprise to see a somewhat different London from what he has known so far and topographically speaking, the structure of London is very complex.

Historical facts have shown us that the general view of London was actually the image of a labyrinth. Starting from this point of view, crime writers of the late-nineteenth century, including Arthur Conan Doyle, explored the complex dimensions of London. Therefore, they searched for imaginative possibilities of a bewilderingly large city which could not be controlled or policed. In fact, the whole writings of Doyle will express the feeling of getting lost, insecurity and danger. In his works, Doyle plays with crimes and entwines social facts with the mystery of London. The reader will discover in *The Sherlock Holmes*, the image of Doyle's Professor Moriarty lurking like a spider in his own web of London's urban crime (Moore 64). Sherlock Holmes, together with Dr. Watson, becomes famous travelers throughout London, as police and crime investigations take place. Even though Dr. Watson considers himself a London-knower, this test of knowledge fails him in 'The Adventure of the Empty House'. As they travel to a specific destination, Watson realizes and even confesses that he has no idea about those "hidden" streets and places through which they passed: "he (Holmes) passed rapidly and with an assured step through a network of mews and stables, the very existence of which I had never known" (Doyle 16).

Interestingly, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are a perfect match with regards to exploring the London atmosphere. At one point Dr. Watson is at a loss when he discovers unknown or

unrecognized locations in London, Sherlock Holmes however is very relaxed as he has built a complex mind map of the labyrinth of the British capital. Holmes is the perfect guide for reaching the desired destinations they require and even becomes trustworthy to the other characters in the stories. Furthermore, Dr. Watson is the image of the lost citizen in his own city! Conan Doyle emphasizes again the impact of such a complex city structure upon a simple passenger who does not care about others, but focuses on his own goal to reach the destination.

It seems like London turns into a being that mocks its own inhabitants. The City itself is a well-organized trap and all who are captured will remain local slaves between the walls of the city. From this perspective, Watson could be called a victim of the London trap. Generally, a trap represents the attractiveness of a specific object/element which is for a purpose, but the story ends only with an illusion. Therefore, in 'The Sign of Four', Dr. Watson admits that he has lost the game of travelling as follows: "At first I had some idea as to the direction in which we were driving; but soon, what with our pace, the fog, and my own limited knowledge of London, I lost my bearings, and knew nothing, save that we seemed to be going a very long way" (Doyle 43).

To some extent, London becomes the micro-cosmos of the British Empire. As nations are colonized and are promised good infrastructure, economic development, and civilization, they are attracted to believe that Great Britain is the promoter of order and peace. This idea can become relevant up to a point, for every nation longs to become powerful in one way or another, or, at least, to have prosperity. But the British trap is very effective, as nations come to realize that their freedom is gone. They become the official slaves of a politically controllable institution. In order to get out and rescue themselves from these dangers, victims will have to study the enemy so well that the labyrinth will become their saving friend! The same idea is valid also for Doyle's London. The labyrinth is so dense that only a brilliant mind will know how to re-establish order or simply to escape. Having a deeper look into Doyle's works, characters such as Irene Adler, who is involved in a way or another in murders, are simply trapped in London. Therefore, London becomes their curse until they receive enough help in order to leave the city.

The image of London as a labyrinth is emphasized in 'The Sign of Four'. Doyle again plays with the geographical elements in this instance water. Somehow the Thames becomes the centre of the

labyrinth. While Dr. Watson passes by with Sherlock Holmes near the Thames, recognizing the surroundings, this is the turning point from normal to abnormal, when they suddenly enter into a different world, according to the doctor's perspective: "We did indeed get a fleeting view of a stretch of the Thames, with the lamps shining upon the broad, silent water; but our cab dashed on, and was soon involved in a labyrinth of streets upon the other side" (Doyle 44). One could notice that there is a special boundary, which consists of London's streets. In other words, Dr. Watson said to himself: this is it, from now on we will be equipped with introspective eyes for we are in the mysterious wonderland of London!

As if it would not be enough, in Dr. Watson's attempt to track the smell of creosote, together with a borrowed dog, in 'The Sign of Four', he is witness to the grandeur of the British capital. The overcrowded streets and infernal traffic upon the streets slowed down the process of investigations: "I confess that I had my doubts myself when I reflected upon the great traffic which had passed along the London road in the interval" (Doyle 125). Here Watson, as a part of the investigations, realizes his duty will soon come to an end, for the crowded structure of the city will get him no further, as he is soon stopped. The physical nature of the London of Arthur Conan Doyle is very integral to the stories.

The image of London is also observed in the artistic field. It is not clear if Doyle has been inspired by works from Victorian art or vice versa. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars were focused on Victorian depictions of London. Michel de Certeau has emphasized two approaches to the urban environment which we can encounter also in Doyle's works. The first one is related to the rational, ordered topographical city from a panoramic view. By contrast, the other one is related to the image of city as it is experienced at street level, which is ambiguous, even dangerous, and unsettled. Therefore, Michel de Certeau considers that the first approach represents a geography that can be ordered, controlled, and even described, while the other one is experiential and, obviously, impervious to rational construction (West 164-165).

Obviously, the entire work of Conan Doyle has the special character Sherlock Holmes in the centre. In regard to the complex structure of London, the object of Holmes' detective activity is rather a means of transgressing the boundaries of London. Furthermore, he goes beyond the docks of the Thames and much more deeply into the capitalism and colonialism of the late

nineteenth-century. Thus, in ‘The Sign of Four’, he starts searching for a boat called “Aurora” (Jones 123). Again, here we have another type of labyrinth: a labyrinth on water!

Sherlock Holmes is smart enough to admit that the search for the “Aurora” on the Thames’ docks will be a waste of time and energy, and also a good time for the enemy to escape. He makes a remark to Dr. Watson: “My dear fellow, it would be a colossal task. She (Aurora) may have touched at any wharf on either side of the stream between here and Greenwich. Below the bridge there is a perfect labyrinth of landing-places for miles. It would take you days and days to exhaust them if you set about it alone” (Doyle 146). Whether we speak about water or streets, they are all part of London. The argument of Holmes is very logical: the capital of the British Empire has so many landing-places that, while trying to find the boat, it will disappear easily among the other vessels. In “The Sign of Four”, normal methods of searching would be inefficient unless a newspaper advertisement can save the situation and help to the finding of “Aurora”.

Furthermore, Arthur Conan Doyle points out another important type of labyrinth in his works. To some extent, murders lead to a labyrinth of facts and actions. All the stories of Sherlock Holmes are full of suspense, while at the same time characters experience different things at the same time, so the reader cannot guess from the beginning who’s the criminal. According to Joseph McLaughlin, London is the special place for encountering. Having a look in the fin de siècle literature, for instance, one could lose oneself (as Dr. Watson did), or, by contrast, find one’s true self (as Mary Morstan did), or even lead double lives like Dr. Jekyll, Neville St. Clair, or Dorian Gray. London could mean two major things, depending on the view’s angle. Firstly, London was a utopia in which one could turn over a new leaf and refashion oneself. Secondly, London was a dystopia in which the political body (and we would add also the social body) was suffering and undergoing change (McLaughlin 26). In the following paragraphs, one will find out what exactly does it mean for London to undergo changes.

2. The Ugly Face of London

So far, the reader has experienced the great complex image of London. Arthur Conan Doyle will move forward in depicting the appearance of London with strange and dark colours. A Study in Scarlet presents a morning which is normal for all the Londoners:

“It was a foggy, cloudy morning, and a dun-coloured veil hung over the house-tops, looking like the reflection of the mud-coloured streets beneath” (Doyle 38).

However, let’s take into consideration the adjectives: foggy, cloudy, dun, and muddy. Morning is always considered to be the symbol for a new beginning, for hope and for optimism. It seems like all the adjectives which are described above wear a tone of pessimism. Dr. Watson’s walks with Sherlock Holmes are hand in hand with the strange, scary cases of investigation. In this way, the weather of London will emphasize the gravity of the murder cases on which Sherlock Holmes will make efforts to reveal the underlying mystery. Of course, taken separately, a simple cloudy morning is not so abnormal in a country where it rains a lot. One could wonder why Conan Doyle included all these weather elements into his works. Well, from the beginning we have discovered that the writer has an affinity for what is strange and what is not in its’ place.

Every cloud in the sky, every stain of fog appears at the perfect moment in the scene. The unusual morning will work hand in hand with social atrocities. Thus, while crimes are happening in the London, the weather will become an omniscient element of the story in order to make characters, and even readers, aware of what is actually happening in a city which is called “the mother of order”. Again, the reader will experience a feeling of fear and insecurity, which will generate suspense in the chaotic situation of murder.

The motif of the fog, as a part of London, can be also found in the works of Charles Dickens. In the historical novel ‘Barnaby Rudge’, Dickens describes the spectacular fog using an artistic metaphor: “a mere dark mist—a giant phantom in the air” (Dickens 246). This metaphor is more than just a group of common words. The key-words giant and phantom are intentionally used to depict power and fear. In the same paragraph of the novel, one will notice army terms as: officer, military gentlemen, corporal. These characters are about to leave London for serving the army abroad. In the detective fiction of Arthur Conan Doyle, the reader travels in a foggy London which is overwhelmed by uncertainty, crimes and fear. By contrast, the above perspective of Dickens is slightly different as the fog warns the brave soldiers about the danger of overestimation. The military party is a sign that the soldiers try to hide all their insecurities, fears of unknown and even of death. Interestingly, the glorious vision of a brave hero is shaken as the army people “were under a cloud so dense that it only left three

shoes, a boot, and a coat and a half visible among them” (Dickens 246). Dickens tries to highlight the fact that the striking image of the fog is a life lesson for the brave soldiers that even the greatest dreams can vanish in a second. Furthermore, their respected status in the army disappears in the face of the powerful fog.

With regards to the fog as a special literary motif in Conan Doyle’s works, Jamieson Ridenhour (21) highlights some historical and economic facts. In the late-nineteenth century, pollution was a serious problem, especially for London as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, flourishing trade and the sheer number of household fires burning coal, Great Britain encountered the issue of vast harmful substances which were mostly vented into the atmosphere and even into the water. It is said that the smoke from coal-burning factories and chimneys were successfully combined with London’s natural predilection for mist. In this way, there were created the famous “London particulars”, the fogs which had the power to turn mid-day into twilight. It seemed like these harmful fogs caused chronic health problems and even deaths among the population. Moreover, fog could easily make travellers losing their way. Interestingly, the fog’s colour could vary from yellow to brown and black.

The strange image of fogs appears also in ‘The Sign of Four’, where Dr. Watson is again the one responsible for showing the reader the true face of London. He starts to recount a specific evening in which he found out about a new murder case:

It was a September evening, and not yet seven o’clock, but the day had been a dreary one, and a dense drizzly fog lay low upon the great city. Mud-coloured clouds dropped sadly over the muddy streets. Down the Strand the lamps were but misty splotches of diffused light which threw a feeble circular glimmer upon the slimy pavement. The yellow glare from the shop-windows streamed out into the steamy, vaporous air, and threw a murky, shifting radiance across the crowded thoroughfare. (Doyle 39-40)

This description makes the reader think of a place where light and darkness are at home. Let’s not forget that a 24-hour day consists of day and night. Even the shiniest part of the day is defeated by the monstrous night. The complex day could also suggest the real double face of London, with the mention that London tries to show the world only its best side. Good and evil, day and night, beauty and ugliness, all this characterize a powerful

London. Strictly related to this view, even the elements that normally should adorn the city receive a pessimistic tone: muddy streets in a civilized city (which could suggest an infrastructure's indifference), day time street lights (the intensity of light is decreased by the overwhelming fog).

In other words, this is the image of a civilized city which tries to civilize the others. We are all aware of the British Empire's decline with regards to its economic and political power. Coming back to the text, Conan Doyle presents the image of the harsh reality which Londoners experienced. During the short journey to a specific location, in 'The Sign of Four' Dr. Watson describes the unusual evening atmosphere which overwhelmed him and his friends in the cab. Not only that he confesses his intimate thoughts, but he also tries to make the reader aware of the Gothic image: "There was, to my mind, something eerie and ghost-like in the endless procession of faces which flitted across these narrow bars of light-sad faces and glad, haggard and merry" (Doyle 40). Dr. Watson's reaction is unexpected, because he was also taken by surprise together with the reader. The image of evening makes him nervous and somehow depressed. Furthermore, the image of people is very frightening; at that late hour one doesn't know who is a bad or a good person. With the ghost-like appearance, only fear could have a place in someone's heart, because nobody is trustworthy.

Let's move further among the streets and locations. From the aspect of dark London, Dr. Watson is surely the best guide in providing the real and an honest image of the city. Even if the weather had an important role in the depicting of London, the image of streets was horrible: "This conversation had occurred while our cab had been threading its way through a long succession of dingy streets and dreary byways" (Doyle 59). A simple reader could be horrified to discover this rejecting image of a global power. In simple words, streets are part of a different world, perhaps the image of the actual colonized cities from the entire world. The suggestion of the decay is quite obvious.

This physical decay of London is easily associated with its social chaos. In the late-nineteenth century, London's East End came into the centre of attention as an underworld of degradation, poverty, crime, and political threat. This region of London was characterized by a majority of journalists, sociologists, and the middle-class as being 'darkest London'. Therefore, this image was often associated

to a savage colony which sits right next to you, or to a labyrinth that a West-End cabbie would refuse to enter (Bodenheimer 153).

As Dr. Watson and Sherlock Holmes reach their destination in 'A Study in Scarlet' the location for investigation reveals a piece of land forgotten by civilization. Dr. Watson insists to make a remark on Audley Court, the place where the constable lives. It appeared like it was not the expected appearance at all: "Audley Court was not an attractive locality. The narrow passage led us into a quadrangle paved with flags and lined by sordid dwellings. We picked our way among groups of dirty children, and through lines of discoloured linen, until we came to Number 46..." (Doyle 59). Let's notice the word "attractive". What was actually London in the colonialists' eyes was the image of luxury and attractiveness. Discoloured linen suggests poverty, needs, shortcomings, exactly the opposite to wealth. Let's not forget about the dirty children, who are guessed to be part of the low, working class. The sordid dwellings don't need any other explanations, for they are gently presented as places of misery in which respectable people would not live.

'The Sign of Four' also captures honest remarks of Dr. Watson who, being taken by surprise admits: "Our quest does not appear to take us to very fashionable regions" (Doyle 44). Those unfashionable regions are actually considered to be part of the East End, that region of London in which poverty was at its most explicit. However, when depicting London, Arthur Conan Doyle does not focus only on poor locations and neighbourhoods. In fact, he is also interested in other types of questionable places:

We had indeed reached a questionable and forbidding neighbourhood. Long lines of dull brick houses were only relieved by the coarse glare and tawdry brilliancy of public-houses at the corner. Then came rows of two-storied villas, each with a fronting of miniature garden, and then again interminable lines of new, staring brick-buildings – the monster tentacles which the giant city was throwing out into the country. (Doyle 44)

Apparently, the sight of the place looks normal. But without Watson's mention of "forbidding", no one would ask questions. In fact, the reader finds out that in this region lives Thaddeus Sholto, whose brother is responsible for the financial unhappiness of Miss Mary Morstan. Interestingly, from this place will start the investigations related to the murder of Captain Morstan. Watson continues his remarks by mentioning the fact that none of those

houses were occupied by anybody. Furthermore, Conan Doyle also mentions the word “monster”, for evil will start from this street.

According to Jamieson Ridenhour (23), it is not surprising the fact that, under these conditions, crime of all kinds flourished in London, for the great city is mainly consisted of inadequate and crowded housing, darkness, poverty, and disease. No wonder that rookeries hosted a large number of thieves and criminals. In other words, this is the world of Sherlock Holmes, having a dark view of London. A world in which crime is intriguing, is not necessary an ugly social problem.

In Conan’s works, evil is a common topic which finds its place next to generous and good acts. In fact, this is the world in which the standard urban misery makes a striking contrast to the elegance of London cabs or gas street lights, which were praised among the nations, in the uncivilized countries which longed for prosperity (Thompson 77).

3. The Means of the Development

When we speak about the London depicted by Arthur Conan Doyle, it is mandatory to mention the fact that the great city experienced major developments at the turn of the nineteenth century. Moreover, all the economic and political changes will be also noticed in Sherlock Holmes’ stories in a fascinating way. The 19th century was a flourishing period, for many landmarks were constructed, including Big Ben, the House of Parliament, Trafalgar Square, and the Tower Bridge. In other words, London witnessed another great opportunity to attract people to itself. This development took place hand in hand with one of the biggest revolutionary inventions. The introduction of the railroad in London was welcomed; its first line opened in 1836 connecting Greenwich and London Bridge, and later other rail stations appeared that connected the city with the entire British Empire. Another means of transport facilitated long distance travels for Londoners: the London Underground, which was opened in 1850 and permitted the outflux of those who could afford to move to the open spaces of the periphery (Vowles 550).

In Arthur Conan Doyle’s works, the reader will discover some specific innovative elements of the nineteenth century which belong to the fields of communication, media, science, transport, art, and thinking. Therefore, the detective stories will reflect the historical London of the late 19th century, as follows. Doyle considered these

elements as being the pillars of British society which, being transposed in his stories, will have a strong impact upon the characters, upon the action, and also upon the reader.

As a first element, Doyle uses the motif of advertisement in some of his writings: 'A Study in Scarlet', 'The Sign of Four', 'The Red-Headed League'. Therefore, the late-Victorian social media mainly consisted of newspapers. It seems like Doyle enjoys playing with newspapers' names. From the stories, one will discover a wide range of this social media tool, which will transform itself into a vital part of the actions. In Sherlock Holmes' stories, newspapers appear more frequently than any other form of writing.

In 'A Study in Scarlet', in the middle of investigations, because of the murder of an American named Mr. Drebber, the writer will mention some important titles of newspapers which were fashionable in the late-19th century. Starting from this murder, these media directions will focus their writings in catching the public's attention. Being very captivating at first sight, the reader will uncover the exaggerated critics and rumours which are related to this case. Interestingly, false information will be spread by the local detectives, who, in their naivety, cannot wait to reveal the progress of their search for truth. Thus, the statement that the crime had political roots gained trust from the local press.

Apparently, the death of Mr. Drebber was related to the Liberal Administration or the Socialists. Giving the fact that at the place of murder was found the word "RACHE" drawn on the wall, Sherlock Holmes led the detectives on the wrong path, stating that the word comes from German and it means "revenge". In this way, the Daily Telegraph newspaper will start commenting that the same "RACHE" from the wall has allusions to Socialists and threats from foreigners (namely, Germans). The Standard newspaper has also a word to say about the murder: in regard to an American's death, the lawless outrages of the sort usually occurred under a Liberal Administration. Moreover, Daily News labels the murder of Mr. Drebber as being a political crime, which implies a hatred of liberalism.

Now, one could wonder: why did Sherlock Holmes set up a trap for the social population? Why would he induce people in error? In fact, Doyle has a special way of using the social media tool. On the one hand, Sherlock takes advantage of the fact that people really read newspapers. Even the criminal! That's fascinating! Sherlock Holmes does not want to reveal the tracks for

investigations because he fears that the information will reach in the wrong hand, and the criminal will escape with his unwanted help. In other words, Sherlock Holmes somehow mocks the credibility of Londoners when it comes to fake information.

Furthermore, Doyle reveals another title of newspaper in 'The Sign of Four': the Times. Sherlock Holmes will play with newspapers in two ways. On the one hand, he will use advertisements in order to get the criminal closer to him. On the other hand, as one has already seen, newspaper is the means by which Sherlock Holmes will secure his investigations and will lead the unwanted people to a different path. This happens not only because he wants to be the best, but because a single wrong move could generate a huge disaster in his investigation or it could even destroy it.

Taking the first perspective, the idea of advertisement from 'A Study in Scarlet' is of great importance for Sherlock Holmes. This is the chance of Holmes to capture the criminal or, at least, a person involved in the case. Thus, the missing gold wedding ring will be announced in the local newspaper in the hope that the wanted person will arrive just in time on the crime stage! As readers have already guessed, the man who is responsible for the murder appears to Sherlock Holmes' house disguised in an old woman. The interesting part of this story is the fact that the advertisement was published on Watson's name in order to avoid any suspicion. The same phenomenon happens also in 'The Sign of Four'. The missing of Aurora will be announced in the newspaper with the mention that both Mr. Mordecai Smith and his son have disappeared, and the proper person who should be contacted is Mrs. Smith from 221B Baker Street.

In 'The Red-Headed League', Spaulding uses his tricks in order to lead his boss in the wrong direction. Therefore, he writes a false advertisement in the newspaper which searches for a red-headed man who can fill a vacancy in the club named "Red-Headed League". The reason why Spaulding does this is because he wants to keep Mr. Wilson away from his home enough time so that he can continue digging in the underground for a future bank robbery. This time the reader will discover a different function of the advertisement: cheating for self purpose.

Another means of development is related to science, and it actually covers the scientific discoveries and the ones yet to come. The chemical laboratory of Sherlock Holmes is definitely the symbol

for the fin de siècle literature. Mainly in 'A Study in Scarlet', Holmes is presented creating an infallible test for blood stains. In this way, Holmes demonstrated how it worked and why it was even much better than the older tests. Again, Arthur Conan Doyle inserts the science in the middle of crime investigations. Therefore, science has the function to help defeating the evil. Even Sherlock Holmes was sure that the criminals who were free would have been jailed if this test applied to them.

To some extent, Sherlock Holmes is also interested in the study of tobacco ashes, dust and dirt particles. Sherlock will analyze all the dead bodies through the eyes of science and deductible elements. According to this type of science, he was able to label the social status of a person without knowing anything about him. Referring to science and the powerful knowledge of Sherlock Holmes, the reader will find the art of deduction in a different way.

In 'A Study in Scarlet', Watson notices an article in the newspaper about Sherlock's deduction theory. Thus, Doyle will entwine the art of writing with the art of science. In the same novel is mentioned the Copernican theory, which is also strongly linked to science. The fascinating details related to Sherlock Holmes's interest in science is that he doesn't even know anything about the composition of solar system and the fact that earth travels around the sun. Sherlock will give a significant answer to these accusations, emphasizing that things which truly matter are the useful ones, namely those things which can help him revealing the crime mysteries: "It is of the highest importance, therefore, not to have useless facts elbowing out the useful ones" (Doyle 20).

This special thinking of Sherlock Holmes is taken from the Enlightenment theories of those times. Therefore, all the values and methodologies of this era provided propitious conditions (both conceptual and material) for organizing the structure of capitalism and, later, the British Empire. So, the concrete, precise, and effective thinking is the one that really counts. In this way, knowledge was the element which created the form of power. Obviously, the knowledge of Sherlock Holmes together with his ability to complete the most strange and frightening puzzles of crime will give him the power to dissolve the mysteries of London (Thompson 76).

Arthur Conan Doyle will add to the mentioned means of development another important element: the letter. The function of letter is to inform the characters about some specific aspects. Let's

take into consideration the fact that the majority of this kind of letters is either addressed to the dead victims or they are linked to the deceased's relatives / friends, or they reveal important information about the investigations.

Therefore, in 'A Study in Scarlet', Sherlock Holmes receives a note brought by a commissionaire. The message is delivered for announcing that a man was found in an empty house in Lauriston Gardens. In fact, these notes, telegram or letters, are meant to insert, in one way or another, any bad news. The use of telegraph is actually very effective, giving the fact that the local detective Gregson will use it for getting in touch with authorities from Cleveland, Ohio (USA). From this context, the investigation has much to win under a developed society, for the information can reach just in time and can allow a further progress in the case. Interestingly, as the dead body was raised, two letters are found: one is addressed to the deceased, and the other one to Joseph Stangerson at the American Exchange in the Strand. In this strange case, the local detective will place an advertisement in the newspaper in Cleveland, in search for any significant information. It appears like both letters and telegrams are very important tools for the British police.

The means of transport is another tool which Conan Doyle uses for the writing of his stories. Reading his works, the reader will notice some important elements of the late-Victorian development: four wheelers, the use of Underground for reaching different destinations of London (as we find it in 'The Red-Headed League'). In 'The Return of Sherlock Holmes' volume, Sherlock Holmes will also use the Express train in order to get out of London in time and to solve murder issues. We also find a colonial element which will be brought in London: the use of Oriental paper. In 'The Sign of Four', the secret document of Major Sholto, which is related to the agreement between the possessors of the treasure, is considered to be very precious and of quality paper: "It is paper of native Indian manufacturer" (Doyle 38). In 'A Scandal in Bohemia', Sherlock Holmes also receives a letter on Bohemian paper, which has something to do with a case. So, the influence of immigrants is also important, for they will give value to the actual empire which attracts nations. Therefore, the importance of trade is highly taken into consideration in Doyle's works, for it reflects the economic and political power of London as the head of the British Empire.

The last element which will be discussed on this topic is the art of photography. In 'A Scandal in Bohemia', the reader will meet Irene Adler who had an affair with the king of Bohemia, Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein. A photography which can destroy the king's reputation and also a future marriage becomes the center of the investigations. Thus, the society of late-Victorian century praised the art of photography. In 'The Red-Headed League', Mr. Vincent Spaulding is the young employee of Mr. Wilson who loves photography. His passion is to go to the basement in order to develop photographs. Taking this element to some extent, we are aware of the fact that photography will become the perfect means by which detectives will capture precise evidences for their cases.

In conclusion, the image of London in Arthur Conan Doyle's works cannot be discussed without mentioning the most important elements: the labyrinth of the streets, the dirt being in contrast with the international image of the British capital, and the social developments. All these concepts are modeled by Arthur Conan Doyle in depicting a powerful London of the late-nineteenth century, the pure image of the dreamed land, but also the place of fear and insecurity.

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DIVERSITY-ISMS

Drugs according to Aldous Huxley: Politically Correct or Incorrect?

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Abstract: *After elucidating the issue of political (in)correctness, in the present context generally consistent with the Realpolitik of a given state, it shall be indicated how relative this issue may appear to be with reference to drugs (Cocteau's idea of opium as rebellion, differences between narcotics and psychedelics, often confusingly put into the same category). Then, with reference mainly to selected works by A. Huxley, two political functions of drugs shall be identified: the one of authoritarian control (Brave New World), and the one of liberating illumination (Island). The latter is, in fact, part of a utopian reality that inescapably meets a dystopian, or rather real-life end. As a result, the positive, illuminating aspect of drug consumption becomes reduced to individual choices, usually seen as politically incorrect: considering not only Cocteau's aforementioned concept, but, even more important in this reference, Huxley's The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell, with the „subversive” idea of individual consciousness change and its global consequences. This idea was definitely controversial by itself, as became clearly exemplified by its numerous applications during the Psychedelic (Hippie) Revolution that exaggeratedly elevated Huxley to the position of a spiritual father.*

Key words: psychedelics drugs politics correctness control revolution utopia dystopia

At the first glance, the issue of the politically correct status of drugs – taking the notion of „political correctness” not in its currently best-known meaning of respecting minority rights, but in the sense of being acceptable (requested?) from the perspective of *Realpolitik*

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of any state - may justifiably appear to be just ridiculous. The earliest classics of drug-inspired literature, such as Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821), unambiguously suggest that the habitual consumption of narcotic substances necessarily implies a radically individualistic perspective upon the reality presented in a literary work, as well as upon the writer himself. As a result, the literature in question found itself in significant accordance with the ontological foundations of Romanticism: the period in which it virtually originated. Typical works from this thematic realm showed a regular user of drugs as increasingly concentrated on his burgeoning addiction, which automatically bred anti-social, politically unrequested attitudes ranging from aesthetic, occasionally self-mocking ego contemplation to undisguised dissent.

The former became most adequately exemplified by Edgar Allan Poe, another famous literary "opium-eater" from the Romantic period, who stated that "My whole nature revolts at the idea that there is any being in the universe superior to myself" (Matthiessen 8). The latter was just as adequately articulated by Jean Cocteau, a renowned French "opium eater," associated with the surrealist "postscript" to Romanticism, who observed that "opium equals rebellion" (34). Also, one should not forget the ultimate consequences of opium addiction: hinted at, in the individual aspect, both by De Quincey and Cocteau, and graphically depicted, in a wider social perspective, by Oscar Wilde (himself quite familiar with drug consumption in a more general sense) in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where he showed psychophysically degraded outcasts in the opium dens of London (151-152).

At the same time, it ought to be remembered that not all substances, commonly referred to as „drugs,“ have similarly disastrous effects, being divided e.g. between „Energetikum“: stimulants of energy, including heroin, cocaine, or amphetamine, and „Fantastikum“: stimulants of imagination, such as LSD, marijuana, mescaline, psilocybin, or hashish (Hofmann 50). This classification, proposed by Albert Hofmann, a Swiss chemist who accomplished the historic task of synthesizing LSD (informally known as „acid“), roughly corresponds to the better known juxtaposition of body-stimulating narcotics that produce physical dependence, and mind-expanding psychedelics that are not habit-forming: with aforementioned opium, both habit-forming and

mind-stimulating, somewhere in between. The drugs of the second category may be reasonably seen as much less politically incorrect, possibly even acceptable: if we recall LSD being used for psychiatric treatment by Stanislav Grof, one of the biggest world authorities in this field, in the communist Czechoslovakia and democratic USA in the 1960s².

Still, the relative nature of drugs in the thematic context of this discourse may be exemplified further to a virtually paradoxical effect: remembering that there are circumstances in which physically and mentally devastating narcotics may also appear to be politically acceptable. Generous distribution of strong alcohol³ among North-American Indians was undoubtedly „correct” from the perspective of the political and economic interests of European colonists and, consequently, the burgeoning American state. The same can be observed about the policy of white capitalists, preventing the subversive moods among the lowest-paid workers in the pre-communist China by systematically supplying them with opium: at least according to the poem „Opium” (1932) by Edward Szymański, a Polish pre-WWII poet of socialist convictions.

In Anglo-American literature, better known and, arguably, more relevant examples are to be found in selected fictional works by Aldous Huxley, whose career rather surprisingly bridged Great Britain and its former transatlantic colonies. Born into an English family of illustrious intellectual traditions⁴ and initially associated with the Bloomsbury Set, an elite literary/artistic/philosophical group encompassing e. g. Virginia Woolf or Bertrand Russell, in 1937 he relocated to the USA, to become an icon of the Psychedelic (Hippie) Generation on the strength of his essays *The Doors of Perception* (1954) and *Heaven and Hell* (1956), as well as the novel *Island* (1962). It was also in the latter work that he presented drug consumption as politically correct: with perverse reference to *Brave New World* (1932), his probably best known work of fiction, where he tackled this issue for the first time.

The perversity in question is due, first of all, to the difference between the political systems presented in the respective novels.

² Before it was made illegal in the USA due to the excessive use during the Hippie Revolution of the late 1960.

³ Classified by Hofmann as an example of „Energetikum” (50).

⁴ His grandfather, Thomas Henry Huxley, was an eminent biologist and a follower of Darwin, while his mother was a niece of Matthew Arnold, a highly revered Victorian poet and cultural critic.

The difference that may be most adequately described in terms of dialectical opposition.

In the earlier one, we find ourselves in London that happens to be the capital of the technocratic, authoritarian World State, in the year 632 AF⁵ or 2540 AD. Here any ambitious literature or scientific research are banned, and spending time on them – highly suspect. The lower classes, constituting the major part of the society, are conditioned for thoughtless, or even animal-like existence: considering the official promotion of recreational sex, understood as a group activity. Last but not least, they are kept in the state of permanent euphoria by generally available and centrally administered hallucinogenic drug called soma.

Even though Huxley's spiritual grandchildren, i. e. the Hippies, would probably welcome certain aspects of living in the Brave New World as a legitimate part of their real-life communal utopia – see at least group love-making - the reality presented in the novel under discussion definitely corresponds to the one of dystopia, earlier exemplified by H. G. Wells's *A Modern Utopia* (1905), *Men Like Gods* (1923) or, first of all, *The Sleeper Awakes* (1910), with its idea of behavioural conditioning. Let it be recalled here that literary utopia usually presents the world as conceived in a direct opposition to the empirical, highly imperfect one – while its just mentioned negative counterpart generally tends to extrapolate the evil traits of the existing world to construct a horrifying vision of the future and, consequently, make the readers aware of the dire consequences of the status quo being mindlessly continued.⁶

The society of the future, as shown in *Brave New World*, perfectly conforms to this description: largely due to the idea of effectively pacifying the citizens with the use of soma. Thus, from the perspective of the ruling elite of the totalitarian World State, the status of this substance appears to be as politically correct, as in the 19th and 20th century AD, in democratic Euro-American states or their colonies, opium and alcohol occasionally happened to be. As has already been observed, the reality presented in *Island* stands

⁵ „A F” stands for „After Ford,” obviously referring to the automobile industry mogul, whose surname in the World State has effectively replaced „Lord.”

⁶ As in William S. Burroughs's so called “*Nova* trilogy,” consisting of *The Soft Machine* (1961), *The Ticket That Exploded* (1962) and *Nova Express* (1964): a classic example of postmodern science-fiction dystopia, where the human race is shown as both literally and metaphorically drugged into dependence on those who determine the shape of the world's past and present, rewriting them with the help of modern recording techniques.

in significant opposition to the one of *Brave New World*. The society of Pala, as the “island” is called, seems to combine the most worthwhile elements of Western scientific rationalism and Mahayana Buddhism (even though Dr Andrew, the founder of the Palanese state, was raised in the spirit of severe Calvinist orthodoxy). Thus, in line with Buddhist philosophy, the members of this society enjoy life as it actually happens, accept death and suffering as its integral elements, and, consequently, regularly engage themselves in meditation. As for economic activities, they give priority to satisfaction and self-fulfillment over the efficiency of production.

Simultaneously, they are by no means alien to free-love practices, which invites an obvious analogy with *Brave New World*. Another, even more striking one, may be seen in *mokša*, a medicine tentatively classifiable as a drug, being centrally administered to the citizens. However, the substantial difference is that, as has already been observed, group sexual activities in the World State are basically animal-like, while free love, as practised in Pala, seems to be inclined towards sexual continence and thus more sublime. Likewise, *mokša* - obtained from mushrooms, which suggests obvious analogies with psilocybin, one of typical stimulants of imagination or “mind-expanders” - is not applied to the citizens to keep them in the state of euphoric stupefaction, but to advance their spiritual powers towards realizing the true nature of reality. Though Murugan Mallendra, touched by Western decay, considers this substance “a narcotic,” it is, in fact, “a pill of truth and beauty” (193), which automatically determines the understanding of the aforementioned nature of reality. Such a concept seems to be in perfect accordance with the very idea of Pala as a rather typical utopian state.

Still, being well aware of the “dystopian” nature of the modern world at large (if we think back at least to *Brave New World*), Huxley could hardly delude himself with the idea of the Palanese social, political and cultural experiment being actually implemented on a wider scale, with mind-expanding substances in the politically correct function. For this reason, he provided for the experiment in question a more immediate dialectical opposition than the one of “Brave New World.” Literally speaking, he showed the “Buddhist” island in a long-time conflict with the state of Rendang-Lobo: a military dictatorship that represents Western technocratic expansionism, disguised by easily adaptable

“democratic” slogans.

The outcome of this confrontation is easily predictable, considering the peaceful attitudes dominating in the Palanese society and the policy of military aggression effectively pursued by the authorities of Rendang-Lobo, eager to appropriate the island's rich petroleum resources. Within the Anglo-American literary spectrum, a rather obvious precedent may be found in Nathaniel Hawthorne's story “The Maypole of Merry Mount” (1836), describing the conflict between the carefree, fun-loving members of the colony of Merry-Mount, for its virtually pagan lifestyle an exceptional one in the 17th century America, and the far more powerful community of severe, God-fearing Puritans. Both the “happy” colony and the peacefully emphatic society of Pala come to be brutally oppressed and ultimately crushed; still, in neither case is Adorno's pessimistic scenario of negative dialectics exemplified. Instead, both in Huxley's novel and in Hawthorne's story, there is a possibility of positive dialectical synthesis in the classic Heglian sense obviously hinted at.

In “The Maypole of Merry Mount,” a young couple of Edgar and Edith, relatively unspoilt by the colony's pagan decadence, become incorporated into the Puritan community, which quite clearly suggests the possibility of enriching the gloomily restrictive Calvinist ethos with some distinct elements of *joie de vivre*. In *Island*, Will Farnaby, an English journalist raised in the spirit of Western fake values that breed cynicism and skepticism, becomes gradually converted to Pala's genuine ones. His spiritual transformation is effected mainly through *mokša*-stimulated psychedelic experience (sometimes controversially identified with the narcotic one), abundant in significant visions and illuminations, such as a burning bush revealing *tathata*, i. e. the deepest essence of existence (398-399). Seen in the aforementioned Heglian perspective, Farnaby's transformation clearly implies that, despite the collapse of the state of Pala, its basic values are likely to exist as long as individual converts live: possibly to regain wider significance later on.

From the thematic perspective of the present discourse, the transformation in question clearly suggests that, in the “dystopian” sociopolitical reality of the 20th century, mind-expanding illumination may be effectively achieved only on an individual basis. This conclusion brings us back to the aforementioned statement by

Cocteau about opium⁷ that equals rebellion: the statement that, let it be restated here at a greater length, rather obviously implies the political incorrectness of narcotic/mind-expanding consumption. Literally speaking, if one decides to take psychedelics or narcotics, then one resolves to step into the areas of experience that “mostpeople” (as e. e. cummings would have put it) usually would not dare enter, and, consequently, positions oneself on the fringes of the society, generally inclined towards being politically correct in the sense identified at the very beginning. Furthermore, if one's mental or even political disposition becomes fundamentally changed owing to the experience in question, then one's position in the eyes of establishment may become correspondingly more dubious (if we additionally recall the words of the greatest Polish Romantic poet about the power of human thought).

Huxley must have been aware of risks awaiting any volunteers for psychedelic/narcotic voyages in the world of the 20th century civilization. Nevertheless, encouraged by his experiment with mescaline (to which he was allegedly introduced in 1953), he insisted upon the importance of individual access to drugs or mind-expanding substances. In his renowned essay *The Doors of Perception* (1954), inspired by the aforementioned experiment, he even seems to suggest that, in contemporary democratic societies, various “doors” (e. g. social, religious, technological, or, last but not least, mind-expanding) ought to be opened for any number of individuals willing to escape from the stupefying routine of everyday existence into an “artificial paradise” that humanity has always needed. In 1963, at the annual conference of the World Academy of Arts and Sciences in Stockholm, he remarkably developed this idea, speaking about the necessity of exploiting the hitherto unknown potential of human consciousness (Hofmann 198-199).

Slightly later, the 1960s saw the Western world being swept by the Psychedelic (Hippie) Revolution under the spiritual guidance of Timothy Leary. This psychologist, who had just lost his Harvard professorship because of introducing the students to mind-expanding substances in his classes, considered Huxley's mescaline experiment and its aforementioned literary harvest as a historic

⁷As has already been mentioned, also known for psychedelic effects that are usually associated with substances from the „Fantastikum” category; apart from the aforementioned works by De Quincey and Baudelaire, see the short story „W palarni opium” („In an Opium Den,” 1894) by the Polish writer, W. S. Reymont.

achievement (248): possibly even a signpost for future generations.

The inevitable question to what extent the Hippie Revolution actually implemented Huxley's idea is rather difficult to answer, mainly because the writer's psychedelic signpost appears to be obviously misleading. Let it be stressed here that, calling for the development of the human mind by activating its latent powers at the WAAS conference, in *The Doors of Perception* he firmly states that humanity can hardly exist without the idea of "artificial paradise" (38): the idea that, as may be logically inferred, should define the ultimate destination of the development in question. Unfortunately, the concept of "artificial paradise," as originally formulated by Charles Baudelaire in his eponymous essay almost one hundred years earlier, hardly corresponds to any notion of intellectual progress or emancipation. For the famous representative of French Romanticism in its "decadent" variety, entering "artificial paradise" equals "buying genius and happiness for a handful of dimes" (54). The inferior status of this unique "transaction" comes to be determined by human nature itself: as Baudelaire argues further, "man, first and foremost, appreciates temporary delights" (23), and thus attempts to escape "from the muddy vale of tears even for a few hours, in order to... 'reach paradise by a single leap' (August Barbier)" (23).

It might be supposed, then, that while for Huxley the need to enter "artificial paradise" seems to be determined by the noble side of human nature, i.e. the man's need to develop his/her mental or spiritual powers, for his distinguished French predecessor it appears to be remarkably more complex. Admitting that the need in question "proves... the existence of the profound longing for infinity within the human soul" (23), Baudelaire regularly stresses that this longing ultimately leads into a cul-de-sac (23), by which he apparently understands indulging in colourful phantasmagorias: far from any idea of mental emancipation (mind-expansion) that, in the proper sense, assumes going beyond the scope of one's spiritual/intellectual habits due to some concrete effort (inherent e.g. in transcendental meditation).

As may have been expected, the aforementioned ambivalence of the idea of "artificial paradise" became significantly reduced in the Psychedelic Revolution era, when Leary, following in Huxley's footsteps (Hofmann 185), promoted the mind-expanding initiation on the mass scale. From the sociopolitical perspective, passive resistance against the establishment soon emerged as,

arguably, the most relevant feature of this turbulent, though rather short-lived phenomenon in the history of the USA (as well as such European countries as the UK, Holland or West Germany). The obvious historical model for this kind of political attitude was H. D. Thoreau's concept of "civil disobedience," in the case under discussion generously supplemented by the effects of LSD: the substance that soon became one of the most readily recognizable emblems of the Hippie Generation.

"Acid," one of most powerful psychedelics, substantially inspired, at the time, a significant number of highly innovative musical masterpieces, to mention only The Jimi Hendrix Experience's first album *Are You Experienced* (1967) – having contributed earlier e. g. to the works of Ernst Jünger, a German writer who was well-familiar with Huxley's views on psychedelic/narcotic consumption and disagreed with them, to some extent (Hofmann 185). Simultaneously, the substance in question proved to have a destructive influence upon the lives and psychological condition of some eminent artists associated with the Hippie movement: see at least John Lennon (Turner 62). With respect to our main concern, i. e. the sociopolitical activity, it ought to be stressed that LSD was identified by Eldridge Cleaver, a prominent activist of The Black Panther Party (most visible Afro-American counter-cultural organization of the time) as "a counter-revolutionary drug, sapping the will to change the world by replacing it with a false new one" (Cope 70).

Even though Cleaver does not use here the term "artificial paradise," coined on the strength of Baudelaire's opium and hashish experiences, it is rather obvious that, as a result of his own LSD "trips," he locates this substance in the aforementioned context of psychedelic/narcotic escapism. The escapism that, as has already been suggested, came to define the majority of sociopolitical attitudes of the Hippie Revolution era.

What remains to be added is that, even though the latter proved to be rather ephemeral, its heritage, defined by the growing scale of psychedelic/narcotic consumption and relatively easy access to the pertinent substances, has become an integral part of the contemporary social conduct. The best example here would be provided, arguably, by the cradle of the Psychedelic Revolution, i. e. the USA, where – according to Eric Burdon, a famous English blues-rock vocalist, who settled down in California in the late 1960s – "everybody takes drugs" (press conference, Warsaw, Polish Radio

III, 7 May, 1998).

Similarly bold statements are not to be understood literally, of course. If we assume, however, that the majority of contemporary Americans more or less regularly indulge in drugs, it is rather unlikely that they do it mainly for the noble purpose of advancing their spiritual powers. Consequently, under the conditions of psychedelic/narcotic consumption on a wide social scale, it becomes virtually pointless to still raise the issue of drugs being politically correct or vice versa. The question remains, though, whether Aldous Huxley – a model English gentleman and old-school intellectual, who nevertheless insisted on psychedelics being commonly accessible as the keys to “artificial paradise” in the positive sense – would be satisfied with this state of affairs.

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BOOK REVIEWS

COMPTES RENDUS DE LIVRES

Narrative and Pace in Ismail Kadare's "*The Nook of Shame*"

Ismail Kadare, *Firida rusinii*, Editura Humanitas Bucuresti, 2016 (Trad. de Marius Dobrescu) 216 pagini; Ismail Kadare, *The Nook of Shame*, Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House, 2016 (Transl. by Marius Dobrescu) 216 pages

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It is one of Ismail Kadare's constant preoccupations to engage in the intricacies of myth and history and, to some extent, de/mythologized history. In "*The Nook of Shame*", published by Humanitas Publishing House in Romanian (originally published in 1984 in French under the title "*La niche de la honte*"), he recreates the imagology of the Ottoman the Empire in its agonizing stage, right before the Fall. It is in times of dissolution that a quasi-rebellious figure emerges, that of Ali Pasha of Ioannina, who sets up an independent kingdom within the Empire, a sacrilegious act that The Sultan shall not tolerate. Not quite incidentally, Ali is Albanian, thus a minority aiming at overcoming marginality, hence the *niche* alluded to in the title, be it taxonomic or historical. All is ideological with Kadare, a master of ambivalence and therefore this incipient conflict of power, hegemony, marginality and dissent does not go unnoticed as regards Kadare's agenda. Indeed he creatively speculates on fact and fiction and, ultimately fictionalized fact. The intermingling of macro-history (the predicament of the Empire) and micro-history (personal, domestic instantiations) is part and parcel of this play upon the grandiose and the grotesque. All this is placed under scrutiny in explicit terms, i.e. there is an insistence on all things visual. Indeed, verbs of sight and angles of vision, more or less distorted, are used here in a Dickensian manner - see Dickens's obsession with verbs of sight - albeit the narrative result is not one redolent of realism, but on the contrary, of abundant phantasm.

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The First Chapter is a case in point:

Ochii lui intalneau privirile trecatorilor si turistilor, care se imbulzeau din toate partile spre piata. Plimbaretii, ca orice grup in miscare, erau absenti si imprastiati, dar, imediat ce-l vedeau, deveneau brusc atenti. In primul moment ai fi zis ca globii ochilor lor, luati prin surprindere, incercau sa se afunde in adancul craniului si, abia cand se convingeau ca lucrul acesta este imposibil, se resemnau sa ramana la locul lor si sa infrunte realitatea. Majoritatea paleau, unora le venea sa vomite si doar cativa continuau sa-l priveasca linistiti. El ii privea sfidator cu ochii aceia de care n-ai fi putut spune ca sunt albastri, cenusii atat, niste ochi greu de definit, pentru ca in locul culorii aveau un reflex indepartat si straniu. (Kadare 2016: 5)

His eyes would meet the eyes of passers-by and tourists from time to time, who would hustle towards the square. The passers-by, like any group in motion, were haggard and scattered around the place, however, once they set eyes on him, would suddenly become attentive. At first, one could think that their eye-balls, ever so suprised, were striving to get deep down to the recesses of the skull si, only after convincing themselves that this was an impossible feat, would resign to the fact that they should stay in their place and face reality. Most of them would grow pale, others felt like throwing up and only a few would keep on watching him quietly. He would look at them defyingly with those eyes eluded chromatics, you could not tell whether they were blue, not in the least grey, eyes that were hard to define, as instead of a definite color, they had a remote and bizarre sparkle. (Kadare 2016: 5)

It is arguably in a predatory manner that the onlookers watch the rebellious prince-cum-prisoner being paraded as a cautionary tale around the public market. Indeed such instances of pilloried self yield a two -fold ideology, as Ali's lot is not only that of being legally punished for dissent, but also that of having public shame inflicted upon him. Equally saliently, this apparent motricity, the to and fro in the hustle and bustle of the city that, paradoxically does not actually get the crowd moved significantly to another location, suggests that the crowd is a captive one, more specifically captured within autocratic ideology. Indeed, the people watching this parading of power, submission and humiliation later try to move on, but apparently they cannot:

Intre timp, intorcandu-si privirea, grupurile de plimbareti se grabeau sa intrebe cum se ajunge la Catedrala Sfanta Sofia, la mormintele sultanilor,

la Banca, la vechile bai, la Palatul Viselor. Si, desi intrebau si se agitau haotic, ca loviti de streche, cei mai multi ramaneau pe loc, se invarteau prin piata ca prinsi intr-o capcana." (Kadare 2016: 5-6)

In the meantime, averting their look, the crowd would hasten to ask around for directions as to where the Saint Sophia Cathedral was, where the sultans' tombs, the Bank, the old baths, the Palace of Dreams. And, although they would ask around and get restless in a chaotic manner, most of them would stand still, would just revolve around the square as if trapped." (Kadare 2016: 5-6)

It is precisely this manipulation of space - the ambivalence of space, i.e. what is space of unbridled freedom and what is captivity - that informs Kadare's style. The free population here is in fact a captive one, i.e. it is indissolubly chained by autocratic ideology, by the clout of the Sultan. Equally relevantly, it is pace, i.e. rhythm that also informs these configurations of power: here, the crowd seeming to move about, to be in a rush, but at the same time asking their time to watch the prisoner-of-war. It is as if the relentless pace of history were overriding tacking stock of events, pondering on the wrongdoing of history.

Space and history, in the sense of the story of the past are the staples of Kadare's writing. Micro-history, in the sense of daily, mundane instantiations get intertwined with the grand and at times grandiose landmarks of history. A salient case is that of Abdullah, who is part of the mechanism of power in the land, i.e. of surveillance, and who relishes his brief moments of respite (here, watching the coffee house at a distance). This is perhaps one of the few instances whereby Abdullah is allowed to be humane. Indeed his aura of power dwindles in the light of this newly-acquired humanity, in the sense of indulging in fleeting hedonism:

Dimineata, inainte ca piata sa se insufleteasca, supraveghetorul Abdullah ii placea sa priveasca indelung spre terasa cafenelei. Chiar si lui, dupa orele de program, ii facea mare placere sa ia loc la una dintre masute, cee ace se intampla rar, ce-i drept, caci medicul il sfatuse sa se abtina de la cafea. (Kadare 2016: 7)

In the morning, right before the square would engage in the daily hustle and bustle, Abdullah, the Supervisor enjoyed looking at the cafe terrace. Even he, after a long day's work, would relish taking a seat at one of the little tables, which only happened on occasion, as it was doctor's orders that he should refrain from drinking coffee, definitely stay off the coffee.

(Kadare 2016: 7)

Note also how the insidious medical discourse here - doctor's orders - is meant to undermine the solidity of (political) power, by the frailty of the human body.

In other instances, it is food as communion that instantiates the juxtaposition of macro and micro history. The gastronomic experience, indeed has always been a staple of power - see the feasts of kings and emperors, the convict's last meal before execution etc., yielding abundance and hence power. Here, all this is doubly emphasized by the feminine presence who facilitates the culinary experience, in the sense that women as well connote marginality in terms of political power at the time:

Lala Shahin trase din nou cu urechea la discutia din jur si observa ca ea se mutase de la vechii stapanitori la cei prezenti. (Kadare 2016: 160)

Lala Shahin was eavesdropping again on the talk that the people around her were having and noticed that the latter had moved on from the old to the new rulers. (Kadare 2016: 160)

All in all, myth (blurred, speculative information, here informed by the personal and the mundane) overriding history and the travesty thereof is, *inter alia*, what makes Kadare's book a good read.

Who Is Afraid of ... Advertising?! On Giulia Suciu, *Advertising Gender*

Casa Cărții de Știință, Publishing – House, Cluj-Napoca, 2016

Ioana Cistelecan¹

Advertising, its ups and downs, its pros and cons – all these constitute the very core of Giulia Suciu's recent study, *Advertising Gender* (Casa Cărții de Știință, Publishing – House, Cluj-Napoca, 2016, ISBN 978-606-17-0919-9), released on an e-book format; nevertheless, Giulia Suciu's enterprising is much more than all these already mentioned, since it also covers and exposes taboo topics, such as sex in the advertisement industry, or women discrimination both as targets and as subjects of advertising, disassembling distant or still current prejudices implied by the ads dynamics. Moreover, the book constructs and then de-constructs various common issues related to the specific topic, thus wittingly demystifying them.

Giulia Suciu's study proves to be loyal to a whole research intrinsic apparatus, quite necessary for any devoted professional scholar devoted to any field of expertise: she accurately structures her book, from clearly stating her intention in the very beginning (“The present book will focus on commercial consumer advertising (as opposed to non-commercial advertising or industrial/trade advertising), where the advertiser is a firm appealing to an individual rather than to other firms, therefore the relationship between advertiser and consumer being an unequal one, both in what knowledge and interest are concerned. Another distinction seems to be necessary at this point: the thesis will deal with display advertising (as opposed to classified advertising) placed in prominent places among the editorial material in order to attract the reader's attention.”) to persuasively exploring all facets connected to the particular thematic: “print ads, therefore the methods and techniques analyzed (...). Written texts (...) normally characterized by heavy pre-modification, metalingual markers and logical connectors like: when, while, moreover, therefore etc. The texts are highly organized since the writer has time to plan his/her sentences, the vocabulary is rich, and the sentences are complex with intricate subordination. Spoken texts on the other hand display a much

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looser organization, less densely packed information. There is little subordination in spoken texts, many incomplete sentences, frequent interruptions and pauses etc. Written ads however do not display the same characteristics as written texts. It is true that the information has to be concentrated in a few lines, but otherwise, the language of advertising tries to imitate spoken language in order to convey more immediacy and have a more powerful impact on the audience.” Consequently, the study would somehow x-ray, step by step, a brief history of advertising, from the ancient Egypt, to medieval period and ending with our modern and post-modern temporal frame, the latter being also subdivided according to Greg Myers into: the 1890s and the period before the World War I; the 1920s and the period between wars and, respectively, the period from the 1960s to the present; each temporal frame introduced by the researcher bears some significant labels that are meant to concentrate their inner specific. (For instance, “*The 1890’s: the making brand and getting attention* or *The 1920’s: creating an image for consumption* or *The 1960’s to the present: addressing the jaded consumer*). The author would clarify as well the typology of ads based on various criteria, such as: product, consumer, medium, technique; she would differentiate the ads according to factors such as: linguistic elements, text, context and discourse, respectively discourse typology, image, offering along the study a convincing statistical analysis of the phenomenon. The most challenging part of her book refers to advertising gender. Giulia Suci is now attempting to amend some classic “-isms” in the industry of advertising, drawing the reader’s attention upon sex and women in their progression as far as their use within adds is in question. A whole range of inner components of both sex and women in adds is to be revealed, explored and penalized to some extent: nudity, sexual behavior, physical attractiveness, sexual referents, sexual embeds; the study would ultimately utter the issue of women discrimination in the practice of advertising, articulating pertinent opinions on the matter: “As in other areas of public life where gender is an issue, advertising emphasizes the traditional view that women’s place is in the home (most often in the kitchen and in the bathroom) as wife and mother, thereby upholding a feminine ideal of domesticity.”; “The use of sex in advertising can be highly overt, (displaying images of almost naked women and men engaged in erotic liaisons) or extremely subtle (cosmetic ads, focusing on the physical aspect of the person using the product, hints of sexual suggestion, innuendoes, puns).”; “Advertising has made its contribution in keeping women in their place. Ads have featured women for a long, long time, but the image of women that has predominated in these advertisements is that of fragile, irrational, weak, domestic, dependent human being.”; “Nevertheless, in the world of manufacturing and advertising, controlled by men, women’s bodies and female sexuality in particular, become marketable commodities. While women’s bodies have been used as sex

objects in the selling of a variety of products, starting from cars, furniture to chocolate bars and wooden floors, men's bodies have been off limits.”; “It has been noticed that women are under more pressure than men to be thin, because it is believed that their opportunities in life are affected by the way they look. Therefore, it is society that puts an emphasis on women being thin and beautiful.” Giulia Suciu is definitely not afraid of articulating some relevant concluding judgments on the topic she has chosen to research: “Advertising exploits and reinforces the myths of woman's place, glorifying a male supremacist society. (...) It is true that advertising did not create these images of women, but it does reinforce them, making it all the more difficult to challenge the stereotyped messages it sends to its target readers/viewers. (...) As I see it, at this stage, advertisements convey women conflicting images about who they are and what sort of behaviour is expected of them: some depict the modern, independent, self-confident woman while others still contain vestiges of sexism, thus transmitting an antagonistic message. Something needs to be done so that such tensions between what we are and what we are told we should be would not exist anymore.”

For what is worth, Giulia Suciu's *Advertising Gender* proves to be a professional endeavor, a devoted to sources argument, an accurately and persuasively written study, a generous and detailed case inspection, quite appealing for the modern and post-modern reader who is about to find out all the secret ingredients of such a fashionable industry: the advertising industry.

The Novel and the Modern World. *The 21st-Century Novel. Notes from the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference*

Eds. Jonathan Bastable and Hannah McGill, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Magda Danciu¹

The future of the novel, the bias of literature (political, national, commercial), the focus on style or content - here are some queries that the contributors of the anthology edited by Jonathan Bastable and Hannah McGill and published in 2014 by the Edinburgh University Press try to answer and cover in their discussions hosted by several literary festivals and academic meetings. *The 21st-Century Novel* is a comprehensive collection of the best accounts resulted from this one-year-long conversation between the participants to the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference 2012-2013, a joint event of the British Council and the Edinburgh International Book Festival, which started in August 2012 in Edinburgh and continued with the above mentioned festivals around the world, culminating in a final event at the Melbourne Writers' Festival in August 2013 (2012-2013).

One of the major tasks of the novel is, in the view of all the participants, to face the present condition of “the ascendance of the globalized market that has been turbocharged by the arrival of a digital age in which communication and trade can zip across the world at the touch of a button”(Foreword, p.8), a condition that generates “a different kind of reading” (Hannah McGill, 2014:35). The electronic world influences the depth, the content, the technique of novel writing stimulating a new attitude towards novel reading and “novels' private mode of consumption”(38) yet it cannot alter the fact that novels and novel reading are “more viable than ever” as they are “bastions against the colonisation of the self”(38).

The digital age can be turned into the very extension of prose writing as seen in the case of the Twitter, scrutinized by Teju Cole who considers that “the Twitter is one of the futures of the novel”(Cole,2014: 53) and “the Twittersphere can be the expression of a kind of a global

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mind”(53) of a perpetual present. Under the present circumstances, the challenge of the novel and its author is to find a way to turn “shards and offcuts of life into a new kind of story, a sort of narrative mosaic”(Klein, 2014: 65) and to invent a literature that can engulf the multiple flows of the contemporary world.

It is a fact that in a medium of communication as the Internet, that “caters specifically to our individual needs, the citizen (a.k.a. the reader) is replaced by the consumer”(Stille, 2008:765) who shows their eagerness and curiosity to access the literary products in their different way, by accepting, even enjoying the “marriage between narratives and the image” (El Mougy, 2014: 95), understanding and appreciating the way in which the language and the tools of the Internet have been “adopted and adapted within the narration” and how the formatting of “emails, chats, fragmented conversations, have inspired some novels”(95).

As we are a story-telling species and storytelling is the very essence of any novel, the novelists' duty is to make use of this particular feature by keeping the readers' interest for the literary texts that show them a world they can imagine it is theirs, where they “recognise their own questions and longings, where they can find characters who become their friends and where they feel such powerful empathy that they want to reach through the print, to help and comfort them.”(Soueif, 2014: 105). The novelist's strife should be towards good fiction which makes us aware of “identities outside our own”, brings to life complex characters who “resemble real people”, and provides new points of reference while reclaiming “old territories” and inventing “new territories”; it is the kind of fiction that magnifies “familiar moments into epiphanies” and threatens “the sanctity of the establishment” by questioning the voice of “the privilege and tradition” and foregrounds the meaning of being a “member of the community and the nation” (Toews, 2014: 245).

Many theorists state that it is structure that conditions action and that “the structure of the novel is the one that demonstrates the horizontality of time and can deliver the complete temporal consciousness that is sometimes felt to be missing in contemporary life, governed by short-term goals and ephemeral cultural forms”(Head, 2002: 2). Indeed, the shape in which a novel is conceived, the idea it dwells on, its form is its *raison d'etre*, sitting behind the style while generating it, informing the “presentation of content”, making “sense of it” and giving it “context” (Gunn, 2014: 310). One may say that content is the 'what' of the novel, whereas form is its 'how', that is the “plan for its very being”, the “modus operandi” of its author, it is the component that make books have “unity and wholeness”, and authority. (311).

The writers' reflections on the past, present and future of the novel is a thought-provoking enterprise underlying the undoubted significance of literature in the present world being a strong voice in the conflicting site of diversity and novelty, since literature, novels included, emerge “in all

haste”, speaking of “the vanity of power” and foregrounding “the sleepy utopia of the most biting freedoms”: literature/ fiction teaches us that there never is any absolute power”, that “hierarchies are acts of violence” and that writers/artists at work know one single obvious thing, namely that “the absolute closeness of humans with their fragility, their struggles, their lack of knowledge at the heart of their lives” are to be explored through the infinite nuances. (Haddad, 2014: 320).

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Fawzia Zouari : *Le corps de ma mère*

Editions Joëlle Losfeld, 2016

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Fawzia Zouari est une écrivaine et journaliste franco-tunisienne qui vit en France depuis 1979. Après avoir fait des études en Tunisie, elle vient à Paris pour faire une thèse de doctorat en littérature française et comparée, à la Sorbonne. Après avoir travaillé pendant dix ans à l'Institut du monde arabe, elle devient journaliste à l'hebdomadaire panafricain « Jeune Afrique ». Fawzia Zouari publie en 1998 son premier livre, *La caravane des chimères* et enchaîne avec d'autres, qu'elle fait paraître avec une périodicité remarquable. Dans ce roman, elle raconte la vie de la petite-nièce de Lamartine qui s'est installée au Caire et s'est convertie à l'islam. C'est exactement la condition inverse de l'écrivaine qui l'a abandonné, après avoir choisi la France comme pays adoptif. D'ailleurs, la majorité de ses écrits, dont certains inspirés du fait divers, ont comme sujet commun la condition de la femme maghrébine installée en Occident.

En 2016, Fawzia Zouari reçoit le « Prix des cinq continents de la francophonie » pour le roman *Le corps de ma mère*. C'est son dixième livre, un roman de forte inspiration autobiographique où elle raconte l'histoire de sa famille, mettant au premier plan la figure complexe de sa mère. En même temps, l'écrivaine dresse un tableau de la société arabe ancestrale par la présentation de la vie dans un petit village situé au nord-ouest de la Tunisie, à la frontière avec l'Algérie. Fawzia Zouari provient d'une famille nombreuse comptant six sœurs et quatre garçons, dont elle est la première ayant eu la permission de faire des études.

Le corps de ma mère a paru le même an, en France et en Tunisie, sous le même titre mais avec un sous-titre différent : « récit » en France et « roman » en Tunisie. Pourquoi cette différence ? C'est parce qu'en Tunisie, selon la tradition, il serait trop dur de faire des témoignages sur la famille. Il faut donc les mêler à la fiction pour alléger leur possible effet sur ceux qui s'y retrouvent. En effet, Fawzia Zouari présente une suite de faits réels et fictifs qui s'imbriquent, dans son intention de dévoiler un monde arabe révolu où sa mère occupe une place centrale. La structure en

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est très appropriée : trois chapitres précédés d'un *Prologue* et suivis d'un *Épilogue* qui clôt le livre. Les titres des chapitres, très suggestifs d'ailleurs, contiennent le mot-clé « mère » : *Le corps de ma mère* (Livre I), *Le conte de ma mère* (Livre II) et *L'exil de ma mère* (Livre III). Le *Prologue* dévoile les états d'âme de l'écrivaine de même que ses épreuves pour en démarrer l'écriture. Elle annonce discrètement le lecteur que ce sera un livre à caractère autobiographique qui risquerait de ne pas être lu. En outre, elle invoque les vraies difficultés qui la retiennent dans son projet. C'est d'abord l'impossibilité d'écrire sur sa mère morte, c'est le tabou de la mort : « son corps étendu sur une civière passe juste en dessous de chez moi et je vois les mots fondre sur lui comme des charognards ». (p. 11). Il vient ensuite les contraintes religieuses qui interdisent de dévoiler l'intimité de la famille et surtout des femmes. Mais la plus grande difficulté réside dans le choix du français comme langue d'écriture. La suite d'interrogations rhétoriques en est la preuve : « Peut-on vraiment mettre le français au service d'une bédouine tatouée qui n'a jamais frayed avec la tribu gauloise ? Et restituer une rythmique de vie arabe sur une partition latine ?...Ne serait-ce pas exhiber deux fois sa vie que de la donner à lire dans la langue des Infidèles pour recourir à ses propres termes ? Jamais la langue française ne pourrait dire ma mère. Ni la faire chanter. Ni essuyer ses larmes. Je n'écrirai pas ? » (p. 12).

Ces obstacles allaient être franchis car le déclic s'est produit en janvier 2011, lors de l'éclat de la Révolution de Jasmin en Tunisie. Le vent du renouveau, qui allait abolir les vieilles mentalités, lui donne le courage et l'enthousiasme de se mettre au travail. Sa mère est mourante, dans le coma, hospitalisée à Tunis. Comme l'écrivaine veut sauver à tout prix sa mémoire et ses propres souvenirs, elle rentre dans le pays natal. Pendant le voyage, elle essaie de se rappeler la maman, telle qu'elle l'a connue dans diverses circonstances de sa petite enfance. Une femme mystérieuse qui vivait en communion avec la nature et avec les ancêtres, une femme discrète qui n'exprimait jamais ses sentiments et ne disait mot sur sa vie privée. Se trouvant à son chevet, elle nourrit l'espoir d'apprendre le plus de choses sur sa vie.

Dans la première partie, (*Livre I*) l'écrivaine devient le narrateur du récit qui raconte de sa voix la rencontre de sa grande famille, venue à l'hôpital, pour rendre visite à la mère : sont évoquées les sœurs, Jamila, Noura et Souad, la belle-sœur Soraya et Naïma, sa domestique. Celle-ci avait renoncé à sa vie pour vivre à côté de sa mère, devenant sa confidente. S'y rejoignent des cousins et des cousines, des tantes, des voisines et des connaissances du village de sorte que l'hôpital se transforme dans une sorte de réunion de la tribu où l'on raconte des histoires du village. Leur parler, leurs vêtements et leurs bijoux éveillent la curiosité des citadins. Les sœurs se relayent au chevet de leur mère et, au lieu d'essayer un dialogue avec elle pour l'aider à sortir du coma, elles racontent leurs ennuis de famille. La narratrice en fait exception, se demandant : « le

meilleur remède pour la retenir en vie, ne serait-ce pas, non de parler à maman comme disent les médecins, mais de parler d'elle ? » (p. 54) Mais elle a, en plus, d'autres raisons pour ne pas lui parler. C'est que, dans ses yeux, elle a commis deux péchés impardonnables : elle a souillé l'honneur tribal, en épousant un étranger et en choisissant le métier d'écrivain.

Il faut souligner que le récit de cette première partie n'est pas linéaire, les plans du présent alternent avec ceux du passé lorsque la narratrice remonte dans la période éloignée de son enfance ou de celle récente qui correspond à l'exil de sa mère dans la capitale. La narratrice évoque des épisodes où elle se voit l'enfant soumis au rituel de protection contre le sexe des hommes. Ou bien la séquence où elle accompagne sa mère au mausolée, en pleine nuit, afin de prier pour le retour de la ville de son frère. Mais l'on peut apprendre aussi une vérité triste de la société tunisienne d'avant l'Indépendance, sur la condition des femmes. A partir de l'âge de huit ans, les filles n'avaient plus le droit de sortir, de crainte de ne pas éveiller l'envie des hommes. C'est pourquoi, ses deux sœurs, Jamila et Noura ont été prisonnières de cette tradition. L'interdiction d'aller à l'école les a rendues analphabètes, malheureuses et jalouses du statut des sœurs qui ont eu la chance de l'éducation. On retient aussi les épisodes comiques sur sa mère à Tunis, tombée amoureuse à 90 ans du concierge de l'immeuble.

Toutes ces histoires de vie alternent avec l'expression de l'obsédante pensée de la narratrice de raconter sa mère : « que j'essaie, au moyen des mots, de retisser l'existence de maman, à mesure qu'elle se défait sous mes yeux ». (p. 55). Elle réussit de le faire à l'aide de Naïma, sa bonne qui lui raconte toute la vie de sa mère et de sa famille. L'écrivaine la transcrit dans les moindres détails. C'est le contenu de la deuxième partie du récit (*Livre II*) où elle n'intervient que rarement, pour confirmer ou pour rendre plus véridiques les histoires. Le parcours de Yamna, sa mère, est plutôt linéaire car il commence avec sa naissance et continue avec son enfance et sa vie adulte. On connaît la généalogie de ses parents, sa mère Tounès, discrète et soumise, morte assez jeune et son père Gadour, un aventurier malade du sexe et surnommé par les villageois « Le Lion de la Vallée ». D'autres membres de la famille sont présentés, comme la concubine du père, Aljia, devenue l'ennemie de sa mère jusqu'à la fin de la vie, et son fils Habib, un jeune homme étrange, aux yeux vairons. Il vient ensuite la famille élargie, du côté de son mari, Farès : les Chérif avec Amor l'Invisible, une espèce de saint, l'oncle Farksi, le savant et le beau-frère Béchir, arrogant et rebelle, grand ami des colons.

Comparé à la première partie, le cadre s'élargit sur tout le village d'Ebba avec son mode de vie, ses rituels et ses traditions, la venue des colons français avec le changement des mentalités, la guerre d'Algérie, Tunis et le monde citadin et l'Indépendance. Cet énorme espace est peuplé d'un grand nombre de personnages réels ou imaginaires comme l'imam fantasque, l'accoucheuse Kabla, la gitane Esméralda, une espèce de

sorcière, le Français Joiffre, sanctifié et devenu marabout, des prostitués, le soldat infirme Klaus et d'autres moins visibles. Un monde bigarré, impliqué dans des aventures fabuleuses où se mêlent des scènes comiques et dramatiques, réelles et imaginaires. A un certain moment, on a l'impression d'une grande confusion car les relations entre les gens et les segments temporels sont brouillés. Tout cela nous fait penser au réalisme magique. L'écrivaine y fait d'ailleurs allusion lorsqu'elle affirme : « *Je me suis permis de reconstituer son récit sans chercher à en dater les étapes ni à rendre crédibles les événements. Et je me dois d'avertir le lecteur : accepter l'authenticité de ce qui suit engage à entrer dans un autre temps. Et à croire l'incroyable.* » (p.80)

Toutefois, elle ne lâche pas les rênes et ne perd pas de vue sa mère qui demeure la figure centrale du récit, la figure mythique qui savait invoquer les esprits, qui croyait aveuglément dans son ancêtre, le saint Sidi-Askar auquel elle demandait l'aide mais contre lequel elle avait le courage de se révolter si c'était le cas. Yamna est la matriarche qui joue très bien tous les rôles qu'elle assume. Celui d'épouse parfaite, discrète et soumise au début mais très courageuse par la suite, lorsqu'elle repousse par tous les moyens la tentation de son mari de prendre une deuxième épouse. La scène où elle sort « dénudée » (sans voile) et armée d'un couteau, pour s'opposer aux hommes qui étaient venus soutenir la cause de son mari, reste mémorable. Celui de mère qui élève ses enfants dans l'esprit de la tradition, prie pour eux, les aimant à sa façon quoiqu'elle ne leur montre jamais son affection. « La dame Modernité », comme elle était surnommée dans le village éveille l'admiration de tous par son élégance. Très ancrée dans la réalité, elle devient une sorte de conseillère de tous les villageois dans toute sorte de problèmes. Ainsi croit-elle à l'utilité de l'école et soutient sa construction à Ebba, après l'Indépendance.

A la fin de la deuxième partie, l'écrivaine revient en guise de narratrice et, au chevet de sa mère, elle lui demande pardon pour avoir dévoilé sa vie, en concluant : « Dans ces veines asséchées, je sais que coule l'histoire de mon village ». (p. 190). C'est dans la troisième partie qu'on apprend mieux la cause de son mutisme, une fois transférée dans la capitale. Yamna s'est imposé ce silence comme signe d'une grande souffrance provoquée par son exil, loin de son village. Elle ne souffrait pas d'Alzheimer comme supposaient les médecins dans lesquels elle ne croyait pas, d'ailleurs. Elle a adopté cette attitude et ce nouveau mode de vie comme un remède contre les ruptures et les douleurs de l'exil. Dans son appartement de Tunis, elle n'a pas pu se créer un autre chez-soi ni regagner le rôle de reine qu'elle avait joué à Ebba. C'est pourquoi, elle tyrannisait ses enfants et n'avait pas besoin de leur visite, « pour les punir du chagrin qu'ils lui avaient infligé en la jetant dans la ville comme un vulgaire objet inutilisé. » (p. 223).

L'épilogue transfère le lecteur à Tunis, à l'enterrement de la mère. On voit l'écrivaine suivre la tradition au milieu des pleureuses, battant la

cadence, se griffant le visage et déclamant des vers en arabe. Son récit se veut un geste thérapeutique pour se faire absoudre les péchés commis envers sa mère. A l'aide de l'écriture, elle a pu lui rendre hommage et la rendre immortelle à l'aide des mots, comme elle le dit d'ailleurs dans l'épilogue : « ...aujourd'hui, pour moi, maman n'est pas morte. Je peux toujours l'invoquer...quand je me concentre bien, elle m'apparaît toute entière. Et je me vois en train de lui demander pardon pour avoir transporté sa mémoire jusque sous les toits de France et l'avoir couchée dans la langue étrangère. » (p. 232).

The Maps of Literary Bucharest

Andreea Răsuceanu, *Literary Bucharest. Six possible readings of the city*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2016, 352 pag.

Marius Mihet¹

For literary geographers, a city like Bucharest may hold out a series of unprecedented connections. The idea is that the city teaches the one reading it how to understand literature and not vice-versa. Researchers like Michel Collot, J. Hillis Miller or Bertrand Westphal often proposed true maps of cities through space analysis. These maps have something special: the grow in the readers' mind while reading, and this type of imaginary unveils a type of mentality and space organization. Thus, the architecture of a certain city, for example, will reveal a particular perception of the world in a particular moment of its history. But topography produces something else too: a sort of communication with the characters' psychology, which the reader may anticipate. Or, as Hillis Miller puts it, the novel may be the transposition of a real space into a realm of literature and imagination; an interior and a literary space at the same time.

Andreea Răsuceanu uses all these theoretical openings to present to us an atypical Bucharest; the city which – in the case of the Romanian literary space – is so much more than a capital or an urban clutter. The researcher is fascinated by the secret liaisons that appear when literature proposes interior spaces that make up a different map of the city. Perhaps more than anything else, literature – especially the novel – shows the way in which the map of a city imagined by the reader may differ completely from the real model by means of fictional transfer. The city recomposed by literature has a poetics of its own, which goes beyond concrete history in a person's consciousness.

At the same time, the novel multiplies and creates urban myths, which the reader assimilates as being true, without exception. Andreea Răsuceanu introduces the reader to a series of theoretical systems with a view to ensure an unprecedented setting, which the reader will not be able to ignore: fictional cities demonstrate how a real city becomes interior landscape for the writer, and eventually, a mental image for the reader. The discourse of the city, according to the writer, can be but

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heterogeneous nowadays.

Things change when the reality of the city meets the reality of the text. The author is interested in the special relationship between space and literary works. Bertrand Westphal prefers the post-modern vision of an unreal reality, which characterizes the world today. The difference between reality and fiction fades away in post-modern times; the cancellation of the difference reality-fiction leads to collisions between worlds of different ontological realities. Following in the footsteps of Westphal, Andreea Răsuceanu pursues the stratigraphic vision of space and the verticalization of space in time will lead to one single possible analysis: geocritics. To which one may add J. M. Besse's notion of psychogeography. The studies do not end here, since the critical discourse in this field continues to attract researchers. They talk about spatial textualities, about space narratologies. One should bear in mind that the production of fictional space – according to M. L. Ryan - is influenced by the interference between a text and a model reader.

Therefore, the author analyses writings centered around the city of Bucharest, starting from a wide range of stories in which she digs and selects what – according to her – defines the city on the literary map. She prefers a confrontation between fictional geography and actual geography in order to discover the images that ideally define the city. If every element on the map of the city holds a symbolic meaning too, then the characters' maps create the image of the city. There are several representative writers who made Bucharest a symbolic center of the whole world: Mircea Cărtărescu, Gabriela Adameșteanu, Stelian Tănase, Simona Sora, Filip Florian și Ioana Pârvulescu. They are Romanian writers of different generations, with contradictory styles, united by the image of a continuously moving Bucharest. The Bucharest depicted by Mircea Cărtărescu is the result of effacing the border between reality and post-modern vision, between text communication and the real world. The narrative shows the imaginary city and the interior one, which meet in a sensorial Bucharest. Andreea Răsuceanu adopts Brian McHale's idea that in post-modern fiction the space is defined as a result of juxtaposing several different and incompatible worlds, which create zones. In the writings of Gabriellei Adameșteanu, the city is rather an emotional landscape, with psycho-geographic elements. Stelian Tănase fictionalizes Bucharest through mythical and fantastic instruments. In Simona Sora's novel, the city is defined starting from the hyper-landscape (the urban landscape). Filip Florian records a part of the city, with a sound and olfactory map, paying great attention to detail. In the case of Ioana Pârvulescu, Bucharest should be analysed from a spatial narrative point of view, because of the author's option for a narrative description.

Andreea Răsuceanu is certain that the pulse of the city is more powerful in literature. She deals with the subject with obvious empathy; it's obvious that she is hopelessly in love with a Bucharest that she studied

from multiple perspectives. The result is a thorough study, charming in its analyses and openings, and last but not least, an instrument and a guide to knowing a city which never seems to run out of possibilities. A book which might take its rightful place next to studies devoted to cities with a well-known literary past.

Room Mates within a Text: Svetlana Cârstean's and Athena Farrokhzad's *Trado*

Nemira Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016

Tamás Mihók¹

As literary translator, before even plunging in transposing a text in another language, one must take note of a few basic and well-known principles. The values for which the work stands for within one's own culture, the works existent in the target language, which would enable, by means of certain hints, the comprehension of the text that is to be translated or the degree of traductibility – are only a few among them. But until reaching them, the translator should know most of the linguistic registers of the target language, but also to display a high degree of comprehension towards the source language.

However, this last prerequisite is not the case for in the volume *Trado*, appeared last year at Nemira Publishing House. The Romanian and Swedish poets - Svetlana Cârstean and Athena Farrokhzad - engage in a literary experiment that pushes the legitimacy boundaries of the translation act, as neither of them does not know the native language of the other. Hence, those who are not accustomed to such literary experiments (and in Romania, it would come as no surprise that such individuals exist, as long as such approaches cannot be found at every turn) might, after the first reading, perceive skeptically this ostentatiously structural volume which invites to controversies.

But which would be the stakes of a such fine intellectual who blasts key-points from the translator's deontology? How could one justify a deviation even with only few degrees from the original message and, after all, should it even be justified for that matter? There is no use in opening the book so as to seek the auctorial intention as the back cover brings certain clarifications to this end: "Translation as pretext to write/ Writing as pretext to love/ Love as pretext to translate"², this is the motto of the two poets. The defining paradigm of translation, according to which this activity is one of mediation between two cultural spheres more or less heterogeneous, is abolished in the favor of the translation crowned with

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² All the quotes included here are extracted from the book in question and have been translated by the author of the article.

the laurels of freestanding creation (“The translation begins with the desire to destroy. The translated text is a body with hidden scars.”). In other words, in *Trado*, the principle of precision towards the text loosens up, it no longer compels the perceptive possibilities of the translator.

This new paradigm is the antipodes of the former perception on the poet, as how the latter holds the supreme control over the created text. In other words, the poets advocate for the autonomy of the literary text.

In the light of the fast interchangeability between the sender and the receiver – as a dialogue-book written at four hands acquires such consequences –, the participation in this literary game comes with several related activities, all in the sphere of knowing the partner. Thus, some of the pillars that resurface and that are at the core of literary translations, of which the most prominent are knowing the biographical background, respectively, the books read by the partner and which left their mark on her writing.

Although a manifesto in its essence, *Trado* cannot (and does not even intend, only within the game parameters) to exceed the experiment level. The common neutral space through which the texts pass, French language, confers however a certainty in mastering the verses possibly even higher than they want to show. From this point of view, the bilingual craft cherished in a third language is placed between translation and interpretation. It is not the case neither for the former, nor for the latter, as the portion of creativity, on which the authors play a great play, leaves both of them behind.

The inter- and intratextual encounter between the two poets is fruit-bearing by its way of generating questions. The three wide cycles of the poetic dialogue (the first one of Svetlana, the second one written at four hands, and the third one of Athena in the translation of Svetlana) are tied by the common theme of the passion for exploring the otherness.

Born in Teheran and living in Sweden, Athena writes a firm and provocative poetry, impregnated with current social valences, as well as consequences of poverty and emigration, the woman’s condition in the modern society, skin color or democracy utopia. The particularity of her poetry rests on the paraphrasation of various persons, aiming to create a voice mosaic of which modulation imposes observations. Assertive and plastic, these retold comebacks overflow with innocence of the observer with an apparently unaltered soul. On the side, they convey certain collective realities through the mere fact that they were pondered empirically.

Concentrating all the lights of descriptivity on the poetic dialogue, Athena draws up a radiography of native topoi of these two protagonists, not necessarily in order to compare them, but to come upon the vital combustion inherent to each one. Perhaps one of the most beautiful fragments are those that the author (or better say, the authors, if one takes into account the fact that Svetlana Cârstea, as she translates, recreates

Athena's verses) introduces by the following phrase: "That place from where I come from", having an evocative role by excellence. Thus, throughout the comebacks, the observations lead to questions from the social sphere, and the questions are diluted with a certain type of mystery, conferred by the proximities of verses.

On the other hand, Svetlana's cycle of verses insists on the feeling of accommodation, of assimilation in another space through poetry, presenting itself with ancestral-like issues. There are many verses borrowed from the most recent volume of the author, *Gravity*, which are harnessed more visibly on the other side of the experiment, that is, within the Swedish *Trado* volume, the correlative of the book in question, published in April 2016 at Albert Bonnier Publishing House in collaboration with Ramus Publishing House. In comparison with Athena, Svetlana adopts a softer tone, preferring the description and narration at the expense of speech – be it direct or indirect. She steadily invites the Swedish poet in the texture of her verses and, implicitly, of told experiences, as someone who refound her twin sister after many years. The plot of this cycle refers to fathoming the mutual knowledge by means of the weaknesses expressed in fine ink ("one who is not caressed is not alive", "my fear has never been softer than your cruelty"). By means of the quasi-biographical survey conveyed, Svetlana seeks a common base of sensibilities (the most prominent to this end is using the pronominal plural at the 1st person: "Our mothers gave us birth chilling./ Shivering / and frozing./ Frowning"), knowing that only in such circumstances there could be an authentic dialogue.

However, the reason of betrayal, of otherness and of ancestrality are best answered at the "core" of the book, in the middle part, there where the two poets insist in unison to trenchantly reveal the program that fuels the concept of the book. The liaison between the poetry of these two authors is illustrated in a personified note, being corroborated with the authors' liaison. Love and innocence, which could hardly be opened to quantifications, flow over the common *Trado*, presenting us Athena and Svetlana in an exceptional symbiosis. The balance of this part comes from the optimal combination between affection and cerebral character, the latter materializing by wording certain definitions, that is, of traductology: "Translation begins with the desire to destroy", "While being translated, a text is an open body on a psychoanalyst's couch", "The untranslatable waits its turn so as to spotlight the translatable", "The original is unfaithful to translation" etc. At the end of this common cycle of verses, the poets give credit to the authors from whose works they cited and paraphrased. In an experimental context, the current one for instance, this academical gesture to draw up a bibliography becomes poetic as well. Consequently, *Trado* would have been poorer if the intertext would have been only biunique.

Therefore, placing itself somewhere between need and caprice, innocence and deliberate thesis, and at the same time, at the limit of interpretation and recreation, *Trado* opens a fairy-like space which, by its nature biased to extend towards universality, gives the chance to its readers to be intratextual room mates with Svetlana Cârstea and Athena Farrokhzad.

“A fully misunderstood author”: Mihaela Prioteasa, *A Study of Edgar Allan Poe’s Imagery*

Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2014

Dan Horațiu Popescu¹

Mihaela Prioteasa’s book, *A Study of Edgar Allan Poe’s Imagery*, invites us to a reading of the American writer’s artistic and theoretical discourses with a view to detecting the multiple sources (biographical, existential, physiological, physiognomic, psychological, metaphysical, etc) of the imagery in his work. The study is also an attempt at accounting for the emergence of such an artist, and of such a creation, of the uniqueness and of the *differance* noticed by the readers who happened to be his contemporaries, as well as by those from other times and geographical areas.

In her introduction, the author discusses the premises for re-evaluating the concept of gothic literature, ‘horror’ being internalized by Poe through items of uncanny subtlety, although his own life seemed to have fueled that particular kind of imagery. In fact, relating to biography proves to be persistent, almost decisive, but this can also be a plus of the book, which is intensely conceptualized. Underlying the vulnerability and the dehumanizing process in Poe has been achieved through resorting to Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida’s theoretical perspectives. Adequately invoked and engaged in the structure of the text, other canonical names could be added, such as Kant, Schlegel, Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud and Jung; or those belonging to feminine/feminist discourse, like Simone de Beauvoir, Barbara Johnson, Linda Hutcheon and Toni Morrison; and also Mihail Bakhtin, Rene Wellek, Paul de Man, John T. Irwin (the last one, employed the most).

The main goals of the book are, according to the author, the analysis of the style –where there is room for improvement, in our opinion –, then the description/decryption of the relation between language and the Self, and the disruption of origins, the nature of the pattern of the imagery, everything subsumed to identifying Poe’s fictional identity. The texts she has in view, although not many, are very significant: short-

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stories like *Berenice*, *Ligeia*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *A Descend into the Maelström*, *The Pit and the Pendulum*, *The Gold-Bug*, *The Purloined Letter*; the poem *The Raven*; the prose-poem *Eureka*; the theoretical essays *The Poetic Principle* and *The Philosophy of Composition*. They all shape up the image of the author and the objects of his imagination, relating to the binary pair identity/ alterity.

The first chapter, “Explicit and Implicit Aesthetics”, locates Poe within the context of his readings from the English representatives of Romanticism, and from the German ones as well, to continue with the very concrete way in which the American author was *stolen* – the inspired author uses the term *purloined* –, by the French writers and theorists, who actually discovered Poe, only to return him, paradoxically, to his compatriots.

What Poe has in common with Coleridge and Wordsworth, and the differences, too, are clearly marked, a Freudian approach being employed when discussing repetition compulsion and the death drive. Poe’s recipe for searching perfection through irony, self-parody and buffoonery with transcendental bonds – grotesque, respectively –, gets him closer to Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Schlegel, Tieck, Jean Paul. Postulating a split and dissociated/disrupted ego is to be found later, as the author rightfully notices, in the writings of authors with different styles, such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Jorge Luis Borges. Mihaela Prioteasa finds the right quote/excerpt every time, which makes reading her text more convincing. Poe’s Americanism is not overlooked, in spite of his European breakthrough and of the lack of resonance from his compatriots during his life time. His Americanism is explained against the background of the turbulent age of expanding Romanticism, of the explosion of the literary market, which laid the premises for mass culture.

Chapter 2, “Transcending Downwards”, draws our attention on the pioneering dimension of Poe’s work, and on the impossibility to ignore his being included in the Science Fiction canon, next to Jules Verne or H. G. Wells, for instance. Although the writer ridiculed science for the claims to sustain itself exclusively on empirical facts, both his short stories and *Eureka*, seen as an epitome of his creation, show his inclination to an intuitive approach based on mathematics and logic. A contradictory attitude may allow sliding into transcendentalism, condemned by Poe, as shown by the author of the book, who captures other paradoxes as well, from Poe’s works or related to his theoretical endeavours. The rigour and unity to which he aspired are highlighted through the way he speculates repetition and dramatism in *The Raven*. His theoretical essays, *The Poetic Principle* and *The Philosophy of Composition*, which make Poe “the fully misunderstood of the American writers” postulate the superiority of the short-story over the poem as a genre; both as a formula for capturing the truth, read *beauty* – echoing Plato here – and also for selling better.

“In the Whirl of Oedipal Marks”, the third chapter, raises the issue

of auctorial identity, of the complex relation between the author and the text, of the particular chronotope. The confusion between author and narrator is maintained by the way the 1st person is made use of. And if one takes into account the persistence of the aggression motif, the Freudian approach can be easily resumed. Poe's aesthetics and epistemology, *marked* by a viewing technique with eyes "half-shut," are brought to the front through carefully elaborated analyses. The topics of incest and of the violence against the other, even if they relate to the ideal of femininity, are discussed within the context of the premature deaths of the women in the writer's life. One route to follow in this respect might be accounting for aggression through *denial*, i.e. Poe's refusal to accept the tragic reality.

Chapter 4, "Physiognomic Imagery", calls for an image of Poe as *flaneur*, in the spirit of Walter Benjamin's interpretation, as a physiognomist of the inner space and of the crowd as well. The opposition claustrophobia/agoraphobia, if detectable in the writer's work, is worth speculating, beyond the already consecrated images like the fear (or the desire) to be buried alive, one of the most frequently tasted horror ingredients. The author even speaks about the flexible relation between the inside and the outside, i.e. the capacity to read from the character's mind in view of external locating, either him or the objects from the world he acts through. Poe's interest for physiognomy, despite exaggerations, is the proof for his huge appetite for knowledge, and also one of the modes of an elaborate fictional strategy, which asks the reader to read carefully, but to decide for him/herself if the information is worth considering. The most successful stances of the *flânerie* are, beyond doubt, the detective stories, a new genre through which Poe marks his territory and his time. The relation biography-work is more attentively monitored in *Berenice* and *Ligeia*, with the intention to prove how the obsession for the image of the dead woman, and implicitly, for an artistic ideal – the most poetic of all, according to Poe –, flows into the writer's identity, into his expanded image. The male narrators thus have the chance to live the reality of transcendence, but not necessarily in an ascending way. The recurrence of a pattern within which Poe reinvents himself every time may be an invitation to an enlarged argument over the distinction between *mimesis* and *fantasy*, or between *fantasy* and *imagination*, while observing the perspective proposed by Benedetto Croce. Poe's chronotope, the idea of space-time unity, is captured in meticulous text analyses of the emotional model promoted in *The Fall of the House of Usher*.

Chapter 5, Internal Labyrinth, starts with the so-called racial allegory from *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, a text that, apart from the association of the hollow earth with the devouring feminine principle of *vagina dentata*, marks the propensity toward Science-Fiction, and is therefore comparable with Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race*, for instance. Such recurring images, like in the other texts analyzed in this chapter, *A Descend into the Maelström* and *The Pit and*

the Pendulum, engage a pathological space-time imagery, having the labyrinth as its center. Actually, the descending into the abyss of any type of labyrinth, no matter how frightening, becomes accessible by its being treated like a decipherable system of signs, as the author pertinently remarks.

The sub-chapter “The Paradox of Self-Inclusion in *The Purloined Letter*”, besides examining the geometric structure of the narrative from Derrida, Lacan and Barbara Johnson’s perspectives, resorts to John T. Irwin’s book, *The Mystery to a Solution*, thus highlighting the representation of the temporal self-inclusion, and reminding us of the Möbius strip.

Last but not least, “The Afterlife of Poe’s Credo” seems to be an overview of the artists who were fascinated by the American writer’s work, painter and directors such as Manet, Redon, Gauguin, Max Ernst, Magritte, Griffith, Hitchcock etc. To their names is added, in the most substantial part of the chapter, the one of Jorge Luis Borges. The two writers are compared through their common propensity to metaphysic projects, even within a less appropriate textual frame, the detective story. In fact, both writers left their imprint on their times, Poe claiming modernism in fiction for himself, whereas Borges took over post-modernism, respectively. The chapter works like Pandora’s box, in a good sense, revealing the possibilities of connecting Poe’s work to all types of artistic discourses, earlier or contemporary ones.

Invented by Art: Ștefan Gaie, *Arta. O introducere, (Art. An introduction)*

Presa Universitară Clujeană 2017

Dana Sala¹

Ștefan Gaie's book on art is modestly called *Art. An introduction*. The book claims to contain mere prolegomena to art theories. The title is appropriate, yet evasive. Appropriate in the sense that contemporary art has changed its way of being and of presenting itself so radically that one can hardly know what to include and what to exclude from art. Therefore, contemporary art should be greeted with maximum of openness.

The title is, at the same time, evasive because the book does not contain a tiny introduction but actually the evolvement of the main ideas on art over many centuries. The author follows thoroughly each of the many theoretical threads interwoven together.

There is a great deal of novelty in Ștefan Gaie's book. It contains not only some of the newest tendencies in art today, but also some open questions launched by the author, a thought-provoking approach on art, careful delimitations from other concepts and pertinent remarks about art's role nowadays. One passes from the idea of not knowing what art is to not knowing it any longer (p. 109), at the beginnings of the 21st century.

In Ștefan Gaie's book, the role of art emerges naturally as a logical outcome of a state of being. As the author says, on page 13, there is a risk of the present-day man, the risk to be deprived of the works of art with which s/he is contemporary, due to the underestimation of the change in the nature of art that has been going on.

Artists are nowadays more isolated than ever, as a result of many convergent factors. But other than that, the contemporary art comprises so many changes that the notion itself is on the verge of losing its meaning.

In order to capture so well the essence of contemporary art, Ștefan Gaie follows art on its backwards road tracing exactly its features in antiquity.

The surprise of our twenty first century is that this century has an art which has nothing to do with beauty, but in our minds art and beauty are still connected. Before Renaissance, as the author points out, it was

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not the case either. We still regard as an anomaly the situation of the present when a form of art is disconnected from beauty. As the author finely remarks on page 11, the only ones who know what art is in contemporaneity are the ones who are not asking themselves this question.

Art could be regarded as an invention of the modern world (p. 10). The artifacts created before the 18th century had other purposes and were used differently than for aesthetic pleasure, they were designed for something else, therefore the idea that they were not 'invented' in the spirit of modernism is true.

The very domain of art was something foreign to man in ancient times, in medieval times and even during Renaissance. We admire the art of an ancient Greek statue, let us say. But we forget that even this "we" refers to Winckelmann. We admire the art after a paradigm invented by him, not exactly how the Greek ancient man used to admire it.

We have expectations towards the contemporary art, but we have forgotten that the concepts art has been using for a century have become somehow anachronical. Hence the isolation of contemporary art, the fact that it cannot reach the same public as in other centuries is a natural phenomena.

The art is on the road of losing its own autonomy. The artists transfer their products to blogs and to internet environment, to multimedia.

Sometimes, as Jeff Koons, they still have the ambition and the longing for a grandiose project, a project to involve society and be admired by the whole society by being posted in a place where it has the most visibility.

The chapter devoted to the avant-garde and its contradictions, along with its share to modernity and to artistic autonomy, is followed by a specific discussion on the opposition private/public with regards to art monuments.

Ştefan Gaie does not limit himself to a discussion on the theories about art. He does not lose sight of the general quest, what is art, how can we prolong or find out way out of this modernist invention, how can we make art last?

The volume uses the never perishable instruments of philosophy as a way to deepen the reflections on a fascinating subjects.

**Gabriela Chiciudean: *Obiectiv/Subiectiv*
(Objective/Subjective)**

TipoMoldova Publishing House, Collection OPERA OMNIA- essay, Iași, 2013

Dana Sala¹

Obiectiv/Subiectiv (Objective/Subjective), Iași, 2013, is a substantial volume published by Gabriela Chiciudean, a collection of essays of literary criticism and of scholarly articles mostly focused on Romanian literature, along with an interactive part of interviews.

There is a subtle dynamism in the act of interpretation which corresponds to the dialectics of this book, of moving permanently from inside out, back and forth, in an attempt to make the limits of interpretation more flexible and more permeable. Actually, the critical act is also about the impossibility to confine to strict bases, to be contained in them.

An editor of the literary magazine, *Discobolul*, Gabriela Chiciudean is actively involved in the contemporary literary phenomenon. The volume *Objective/Subjective* has four parts. The first section of the book contains essays and articles. The second section belongs to the interviews. Here the researcher has also included the surveys initiated by her in the pages of *Discobolul* and the outcomes of these surveys. The third part is devoted to the reception of the Romanian literary phenomenon in its immediacy. The fourth part belongs to critical appreciations about the author, coming from other critics.

For Gabriela Chiciudean, the process of stepping into the zone of the inner self versus stepping out into the reality of an author is very natural and very incorporated into the act of criticism. An emblem for this act would be Escher's hands drawing each other as a metaphor of transgression and circularity.

The critic intervenes as an attempt to stabilize a fluid reality. The subtitle of the book speaks about stabilizing "the fluid" of interpretation. With a tendency to discover a literary zone at the interface of literature and phenomenology, Gabriela Chiciudean is fascinated by processes entering the space of connection between inter-subjectivities. She is not content with clear-cut boundaries, she tries to infer tendencies and

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aspirations from the transgression of these boundaries.

Her essays do attempt to capture a perceptible space between interpretation and intention. They are never content with a mere analysis of a literary work. There is something more to be grasped, and the critic changes the method accordingly, as she would do in a face-to-face dialogue with the modulations of her voice. What interests the critic more is the reflection of some events on interiority, the traces it has left.

Two of the best essays from this section are dedicated to the imaginary of Pavel Dan. The Romanian prose writer who lived between 1907-1937 left an unfinished oeuvre. His volume of short stories placed in rural setting is one of the best achievements of the kind in Romanian literature. Gabriela Chiciudean resorts to a complex analysis of his works, She explores the space and the settings with fabulous patience. A useful method of reading is provided by Gaston Bachelard and by thematist critics. Gabriela Chiciudean does not use this method to stay away from the analyzed texts. On the contrary, she further explore the dialectics of inner/outer spaces and she comes with amazing conclusions. The universe of Pavel Dan is seen in its integrality, not as a fragment disconnected from the whole. The analyses dedicated to Pavel Dan do shed a new light on the writer who died tragically at 30. The critic finds that light which keeps the shadows in their place, avoiding reductionism and enhancing the inner beauty of a fictitious universe, one of the most true-to-life universes in Romanian literature.

The parts of the interview are a way to capture subjectivity from an outside perspective. The questions and the conducted surveys are very inquisitive, as a way to make an interiority reveal itself. They always have an original touch of regarding a new literary issue. Here we can find also the critic's strategies to bypass the limits of interpretation.

The third part of the book exercises the freedom of interpretation. Sometimes the author finds pearls in books unnoticed by others. Here the accent falls on discovery, while in the essay section the accent was on recreating a new world through the act of the critic.

The fourth part of the book restores the unity between the poiesis of a critical act and the poetics assessed by the critic, through others' opinions on her own works. This is in fact the format of the books of criticism contained in this collection, they must contain at the end some external critical references. The critics speaking of Gabriela Chiciudean emphasize the images of the world and of Transylvanian ethos as they can be inferred from the pages of her studies.

Obiectiv/Subiectiv (Objective /Subjective) by Gabriela Chiciudean is a complex book belonging to a researcher with an original vision on the worlds of interpretation, a critic who finds her own strategies of further shifting the limits of interpretation in the attempt to reveal the interiority of the analyzed writer.

Merlin Coverley: *Psychogeography*

Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2010

Éva Székely¹

The word ‘psychogeography’ has been discussed a lot since Guy Debord coined and defined the term in his seminal essay *Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography* (1955). Yet, in spite of Debord’s rigid definition, the term and the concept behind it proved extremely difficult to be pinned down. Merlin Coverley’s *Psychogeography*, a short, well-structured and extremely accessible study of the concept and history of ‘psychogeography’ is a welcome guide to anyone who’d like to get introduced to the field. The book highlights the most significant figures in the history of psychogeography, and the intellectual, political and literary development of the concept. It concentrates on works and writers about London and Paris. Psychogeography is, claims the author, ‘a tale of two cities’ (p. 11).

The study is comprised of an ‘Introduction’, which summarizes the author’s approach and presents the structure of the book, two chapters that present the reader with the first manifestations of psychogeographic concerns in London and in Paris, a chapter which deals with the emergence of the term itself, a chapter that focuses on current concerns and developments in the field, a bibliography that points the reader to studies that Coverley deems useful, and a list of psychogeographical groups, organizations and websites.

The first chapter, ‘London and the Visionary Tradition’ takes us back several centuries before the coining of the word ‘psychogeography’, to the birth of the novel, and to the Londons and literatures of Defoe, Blake and De Quincey. Identifying a range of psychogeographic concerns and themes within these writers’ works, Coverley maps out a ‘Visionary Tradition’ providing us with a brief history of psychogeographic thought that came well before its specific emergence with the Situationists and the 1950s. Progressing chronologically, this chapter also features sections on Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Machen and Alfred Watkins, highlighting the mystical and the otherworldly qualities of these writers. Coverley’s aim in this chapter is to demonstrate that psychogeography’s current

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manifestation owes as much to visionary and poetic writing as to Situationist manifestos.

The second chapter entitled: 'Paris and the Rise of the *Flâneur*' takes up the idea of the wanderer: of the *flâneur* and the figure of Robinson. Coverley briefly addresses how these figures developed through the work of a wide range of writers. Coverley's exploration of the history of the term *flâneur* is helpful and to the point. From its emergence in Poe's 'Man of the Crowd', through to Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, our author explores both the 'composite' (p. 65) nature of the *flâneur*, the 'wanderer in the modern city' (p. 60), and what he defines as his underpinning feature: 'the way in which he makes the street his home' (p. 65). Exploring the relation between wandering—both physical and, in the case of the Robinson figure, mental—and psychogeography, Coverley also draws attention to the political shifts of the early and mid-twentieth century which meant that 'the very act of walking had to become subversive' (p. 77).

The book's third chapter, 'Guy Debord and the Situationist International', deals with the emergence of the term 'psychogeography' from the Lettrist International and the Situationist movement. Coverley provides a clear, concise introduction to the specifically psychogeographic elements of Debord's thought and writing, as he attempts to unravel the Situationist terms *derive*: a specific kind of city-walking, and *détournement*: the stealing of words, images or events via techniques such as plagiarism and their placement into new contexts. Coverley's distinction between the *flâneur* and the *dériveur* is particularly useful to bear in mind when considering the implications and politics of either idea. The *flâneur* strolls, submitting to 'unconscious desire' (p. 96), says Coverley, whereas the wandering of the *dériveur* is always purposeful and explicitly placed in a 'subversive position' (p. 97).

The fourth chapter: 'Psychogeography Today' brings the reader back to London and attempts to deal with the mushrooming of psychogeographical texts and writers of the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st, such as Peter Ackroyd and Iain Sinclair. The chapter brings into focus Patrick Keiller's film *London* as well, departing slightly from Coverley's otherwise literary interest. Despite this last shift into the cinematic, Coverley argues that psychogeography currently 'manifests itself in a primarily literary form with London once again at its centre' (p. 111), and he draws explicit links between these contemporary writers and their literary forebears.

Clearly structured and easily navigable, Merlin Coverley's book is an extremely useful introduction to the field of psychogeography. Due to the work's compactness and at the same time ambitiousness (it tries to cover several centuries of literary work and not only), the analyses often lack in depth. The fact that the author tries to emphasize his points of view by repeating them several times feels dispiriting. Nevertheless, Coverley's

clarity is a real strength, and *Psychogeography* is an ideal book for anyone wanting to get familiar with some of the important authors, ideas, and the basic texts and places associated with the subject.

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Next Issue's Topic:

**Children and Childhood
Applied on Literary and Cultural
Items**

***Thématique du prochain
numéro:***

**L'enfant /L'enfance dans la
littérature**

Confluente, Annals of the University of Oradea, Modern Literature Fascicule is an academic, double blind peer-reviewed journal that appears once a year.

The executive editors and the advisory board shall decide on any change about the frequency of the journal.

TCR specializes in bridging the world of academic literary criticism and theories with the aliveness of everyday literary phenomenon as reflected in the cultural media and book-production.

The topics covered by our journal in its 2 generous sections – **Literary - Isms & Cultural - Isms** are as they follow:

British and Commonwealth Literature
American and Canadian Literature
French Literature
Emmigrants' Literature
Cultural and Gender Studies
Literature and Media

Foundation:

As a research journal, the beginnings can be traced back to the academic year 1966- 1967, when, under the name *Lucrari stiintifice*, the section of academic research emerged at the University of Oradea. In 1991 the research journal changed its name and template, focusing on topics of immediate relevance and on thorough going studies, on cultural studies, research articles on Romanian literature, comparative literature. In 2006 emerged *Confluente*, a Modern Literature Fascicule including academic literary studies in English, French, German and Italian. In 2012 the Ministry of Education and Research (Romania) ranked our journal category C.

Submission:

The details about the submission of papers, instructions for the contributors and on the preparation of the manuscript are published online at:

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The administration of the peer-review process is the attribution of the journal's editors that are selected from the members of the advisory board. The sender of the manuscript does not know the names of the reviewers of his/her particular case, only the complete list of reviewers.

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TCR a le but de réunir le monde de la critique littéraire académique et des théories avec le phénomène vivant de la littérature d'aujourd'hui tel qu'il est reflété dans les médias culturels et dans la production du livre.

Les sujets contenus par notre revue dans ses deux sections généreuses – **Littéarismes** et **Culturalismes** sont les suivants:

Les dynamiques de la littérature, tendances
L'interconnexion de la littérature et de la culture
Identité, altérité, anthropologie et littérature, études culturelles
L'identité et son expression en littérature
Temps et théorie littéraire
Myths et auteurs postmodernes
Littérature comparée et études comparées

Fondation:

Comme revue de recherche, son commencement remonte loin, dans l'année académique 1966/1967, lorsque sous le nom de *Travaux scientifiques*, la section de la recherche académique a démarré à l'Université d'Oradea. En 1991, la revue a changé son nom et sa forme se fixant sur des sujets d'intérêt immédiat et sur des études approfondies, sur la culture, sur la littérature roumaine, sur la littérature comparée. En 2006 a paru *Confluences*, un Fascicule de littérature moderne incluant des recherches académiques littéraires en anglais, en français, en allemand et en italien. L'année 2012 la revue a été classifiée niveau C per le Ministère de l'Education et de la Recherche de Roumanie

Soumission

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Notre revue soutient un système d'évaluation ouverte, considérant que les noms des auteurs des articles ne doivent pas être envoyés comme anonymes aux évaluateurs, parce que cela pourrait avoir un petit impact sur la qualité de l'article soumis. La qualité de l'article de recherche est le seul argument dont on tient compte lorsqu'on fait la sélection des articles.

L'administration du processus d'évaluation est la tâche des éditeurs évaluateurs. L'expéditeur du manuscrit ne connaît pas les noms des évaluateurs de son cas particulier mais seulement la liste complète des évaluateurs.