EDITED BY PÁL HEGYI

TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN LITERATURE

FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE PRESENT

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TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN CONTEMPORARY NORTH AMERICAN LITERATURE AND CINEMA

Foreword

The present volume – complemented by its Hungarian counterpart *Hagyomány és innováció a magyar és a világirodalomban* [Tradition and Innovation in Hungarian and World Literature], presenting a different set of studies – should be seen as the final stage of a one-year long project conducted at the Faculty of Humanities, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Twelve literary scholars, experts in their fields ranging from Classics to Comparative Literature Studies, as well as English, American, and Hungarian Studies – came together to form the research group *Tradition and Innovation in Literature*, encompassing diverse topics past and present. The historical-chronological dimension of the investigation inevitably disclosed correlations with theoretical angles, thus inviting explorations into textualities to be showcased in several genres, including poetry, fiction, and cinema. As a result, the ensuing essays on both Hungarian and world literature offer a rich tapestry of topics, an informative vista on the ever-shifting and dynamic interplay between innovation and tradition, which shapes and motivates all cultural practices from antiquity to the contemporary.

Attila Simon's essay "The 'invention of the Muses' in Plato's *Ion*" approaches Plato's short dialogue from a complex set of perspectives. A paper historical, philological, and theoretical in nature, Simon's close reading of the Platonic text on invention unravels an inherently paradoxical conformation of the concept within the context of antiquity. The investigation into *Ion* is centered around such questions as to how agency, a prerequisite necessary but not sufficient for creating masterpieces, can be located in both rationality and irrationality. Duplicity, oscillation, and dynamism concomitant with mutually inclusive and exclusive presences and absences of binary poles are explored to create a mapping of both key terms foundational to this volume.

Antiquity remains the thematic focus for "The Art of Framing – Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* 4.27" by Ábel Tamás. Addressing the multifaceted interpretational consequences of Pliny's citational practice of embedding quotes from various poets (including himself) within the prose of his epistles, the essay demonstrates how the Roman author's innovative art of framing literary texts results in idiosyncratic plays of intertextuality and meaning production. Disrupting the presupposed hierarchy

of source texts and host texts, Tamás corroborates that both of them are affected and reinterpreted by literary mirror games analyzed in his study. The art of framing will also be expounded on as oscillating movements within an intertextual network of references displaying traces of "authorlessness" always already inherent in the incessant regeneration of a tradition belonging to no one and everyone.

Innovation and tradition as central foci are geared at identifying unique genre formations in a series of four poems authored by the 18th-century James Thomson. Shifting the time period from antiquity to the age of enlightenment, Zsolt Komáromy's "Innovation and Tradition in the Genres of Thomson's *The Seasons*" draws on a literary historical approach to highlight a mixture of generic conventions detectable in the poem cycle of the Scottish poet. Here, poetic invention is not only scrutinized to foreground hybridity as a formative structural aspect in arguably the most complex poem of the era, but also to insist that any system of fixed and stable genres is continually and irreversibly challenged by works of art canonized in a taxonomy of generic groupings.

Tibor Bónus in his "Toucher (par) la langue – sur le baiser: Pour lire la *Recherche* de Marcel Proust" interprets the concept of love as an allegory of reading in the de Manian sense. The essay highlights the ramifications that extend from analyzing the multifarious relationship at play between the narrator and Albertine in Marcel Proust's *In Search for Lost Time.* Bónus contends that the intensive, aporetic reading of the Other is both a requirement for and an obstacle to reaching, recognizing and understanding the loved one. For endearment and intimacy not only motivates the interiorization of the Other, but also blinds one from seeing the object of affection as a separate entity. Characterized by a paradoxical admixture of trust and suspicion, such process of reading can never be brought to any conclusion, not even after death will reader and text part.

In "Historical Reconstruction, Rough Book Poetry, and the Dissolution of the Self" Enikő Bollobás approaches Susan Howe's work from three perspectives, connecting the poet to the century-long avant-garde impulse, especially the poetry and poetics of Charles Olson. Howe's *oeuvre* – one that expands traditional notions of genre, poetic language, and poetic material – is being interrogated here along a threefold interpretative structure: the revisionist reconstruction of history, the recreation of a cognitive state preceding scripted modes of expression in what the author calls rough book poetry (for its disregard of both rules of grammar and conventions of typography), and the dissolution of the self, thereby refusing the self-expressive impulse of traditional lyric poetry. Bollobás explores a leading voice in contemporary poetry as one who both adheres to a tradition paradoxically called the tradition of innovation, and constantly renews this legacy of innovation.

Similarly, Tibor Gintli's "The Prose of Benő Karácsony in the Context of the Works of Tersánszky and Kosztolányi" surveys the work of an author whose Hungarian critical reception has been inexplicably scarce and marginal. The study

sets out to bring Karácsony's novels to the fore by way of comparative analyses of his innovative prose poetics against those of two highly canonized contemporaries: Józsi Jenő Tersánszky and Dezső Kosztolányi. From the gradually increasing scope and meticulous progression of Gintli's argumentation unfolds a possibility to partially reconstruct the canon of 20th-century Hungarian literature. This novel interpretative approach to the author's poetics offers an inspiring overview of the tradition and renewal of anecdotal narrative and of the innovative use of narrative voices, which would convince any reader to delve into the fictitious world created by Benő Karácsony.

Innovations in poetics by Dezső Kosztolányi remain a focus in Márta Horváth's "Mentalization and Literary Modernism – A Cognitive Approach to Dezső Kosztolányi's Narratives." As the title already suggests, cognitive narratology is chosen for framing the examination of one particular aspect of Kosztolányi's narrative technique. Horváth argues that, as opposed to the trending mode of stream of consciousness in modernist literature, Kosztolányi – himself skeptical about the accessibility of mental processes – favors 19th-century mimesis, that is, he heavily relies on facial expressions and gestures in presenting characters' mental states. The paper takes it as its premise that incorporating such traditional narrative technique is motivated by the author's intent to step out of the scope of mind-body dualism. Within the framework of cognitive literary poetics Horváth gives account of cognitive operations induced in the reader by implicit narrative techniques, which are deployed in Kosztolányi's short fiction to describe mental states and consciousness.

Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó directs his analyses contextualized in the domain of language critique towards an attempt at delayering various discursive, rhetorical, and stylistic levels that are interpreted as strategies in poetics in the oeuvre of Szilárd Borbély. Unraveling the complex network of intertwining linguistic connections in the poetry of Borbély, Kulcsár-Szabó's exploration concentrates on those dimensions of enunciation that create, through exclusion and inclusion, possibilities and impossibilities delimiting his poetics and language. Eloquence as a mode of linguistic performance is being examined to highlight that rhetoricality – of sentence structures, for instance – shifts from gestures evocative of postmodernist intertextuality to the didacticism of 19th-century Hungarian poetry. The essay explores how traditional premodern sensibilities can become the driving force for poetic innovation in the postmodern era.

Gábor Simon frames his discussion of the poetry of Dénes Krusovszky by some theoretical considerations of cognitive poetics. Simon's analysis of *Elégiazaj/5* [Elegynoise/5] provides new perspectives on pathetic fallacy (personification of objects in nature) in its contrastive treatment of Krusovszky's poem with János Arany's *Balzsamcsepp* [Balm Drop] and Attila József's *Elégia* [Elegy]. Reconstructing a tradition formerly repudiated for being consolatory – an affect in contradiction with modernist, postmodernist tendencies of depoetization – the author contends

that pathetic fallacy should be perceived as the stabilized and figurative symbolization of cognitive processes rather than a formal trope. The study concludes by emphasizing that topoi of pathetic fallacy, instances observed in three distinct periods of Hungarian literature do not only open up for novel theoretical concerns, but provide an impetus for reinvigorating the elegiac tradition.

By comparing three filmic adaptations of Richard Matheson's novel *I Am Legend* with the source text, Vera Benczik concentrates on divergent conformations of monstrosity in science fiction cinematography and literature. Creating a taxonomy of various tropes of the defamiliarized Other within the framework of Darko Suvin's "cognitive estrangement," the paper examines how seemingly essentialist binaries, such as human vs. monster, normativity vs. deviation, self vs. the abject Other are reiterated, destabilized, or deconstructed in the various narratives. Benczik argues that Matheson's 1954 novel could have become an innovative extension and reconstruction of genre conventions for the reason that its poetics is built around ethical deliberations prompted by the immanent aesthetic consequences of its premise of relativizing human/monster relationships.

Interconnectedness of poetics between cinematography and literature remains the focus for Pál Hegyi's "Based on a True Story – Oscillating Tales of the Real Simulacra," addressing issues signaled by a plethora of isms that are in circulation as labels for the present episteme. Relying on a number of illustrative examples from prose written by Paul Auster, Yan Martel, Geoff Ryman, also films directed by Fred Schopis, Wayne Wang, and Tarsem Singh, the paper sets out to explore innovative structures in contemporary narrative poetics. The works discussed display a similar tendency to create an oscillating movement of interpretation between doubly framed set of narratives. Hegyi in his examination attempts at demonstrating that these works, in an effort to maintain truth claims as metanarratives, can be characterized by mutually exclusive and inclusive traits of high modernism and radical postmodernism.

János Kenyeres in "Identity in the Face of History in Tamas Dobozy's Fiction," while interrogating questions of identity in the prose of the Canadian writer, directs his argument at poetological considerations stemming from conflicting conceptualizations between essentialist categories and pluralist perspectives. Carrying out close readings on numerous pieces from the award-winning volume *Siege 13* and other short stories by Dobozy, Kenyeres comes to the conclusion that explorations into traumatic immigrant experience in the works by the author of Hungarian descent are propelled forward by a multiplicity of styles and narrative techniques. The wide variety of genres ranging from gothic, to psychological realism, from pure fiction to journalism and documentary in his interpretation is geared at highlighting subverted identities caused by the trauma of loss and absences in exile.

INNOVATION IN ANTIQUITY

Attila Simon

The "invention of the Muses" in Plato's *Ion*

In the middle part of Plato's Ion, Socrates supports his theory of enthousiasmos ('inspiration,' 'being inspired by the god') with telling the story of Chalcidian Tynnichus, "the most worthless poet" (534d4–535a2).[1] Tynnichus was an unsuccessful poet in his whole life, and no one regarded his banal poesy worthy of being mentioned; except for one of his paeans which was widely sung by everyone since – according to Socrates – it was "almost the most beautiful lyric-poem there is, and simply […] 'an invention of the Muses (εὕρημά τι Μοισᾶν).'"

In my paper, I scrutinize the phrase "an invention of the Muses" with focusing on Plato's *Ion* for the most part, but also considering other works such as *Phaedrus*. The thesis of my interpretation is as follows: when Plato talks about the creative work of poets (and, analogously, the performance of rhapsodes) opposing the states of "being inspired by god" (*enthousiasmos*) and "being possessed by god" (*katokōchē*) with mastery (*technē*) and knowledge (*epistēmē*), he describes the mental state of the possessed poet with a paradox. According to Plato's conception, self-consciousness as a condition of applying *technē* is one and the same time present and absent during the poet's creative work. The work of the poet is understood here not so much as an act, or as conscious work, but rather as an event. For the poet, the condition of successful creative work consists in both losing his self-consciousness – a state of being out of his mind, or right-down madness (*mania*) as addressed in *Phaedrus* – and regaining the vigilant ingenuity of his self-consciousness. This unobjectifiable and unfathomable state, which thus oscillates between conscious action and the state of unconsciousness, receives the metaphor of dancing from Plato. Furthermore, since Proteus's figure is labelled *ungraspable* in Greek mythology, it can also be regarded as a metaphor for the poet's paradoxical state when it appears at the end of the dialogue.

[1] The writing of this paper was funded by the project NKFIH K112253. I would like to thank Sámuel Gábor and András Kárpáti for their comments on an earlier version of this paper. I will refer to passages from the *Ion* using only the Stephanus-numbers in the main text. I use the English translation by Paul Woodruff.

Enthousiasmos, poetry, and invention: the case of Tynnichus

In the middle part of *Ion*, Socrates proves the following thesis: the performance of the rhapsode and the poet – so far as one is a good rhapsode or a good poet – do not stem from mastery (*technē*), but from being inspired by the god (*enthousiasmos*) or being in a state of divine possession (*katechein*, *katokōchē*) (533e3–8).[2] In his line of argument, Socrates repeatedly emphasizes the idea that poets speak mindlessly, which of course does not mean that they speak nonsense, only that they do not possess their *nous*. One time, he highlights this peculiarity with arguing that it is the god himself who has taken the poets' minds and uses them as an instrument that is comparable to a mouthpiece. In this regard, "*they* [i.e., the poets] are not the ones who speak those verses that are of such high value, for their intellect is not in them: the god himself is the one who speaks, and he gives voice through them to us" (534d2–4).

Accordingly, Tynnichus the Chalcidian poet is mentioned as a poet who articulates the voice of the god. And this is the place, where the phenomenon of "invention" (*heuresis*) makes its appearance:

> The best evidence for this account is Tynnichus from Chalcis, who never made a poem anyone would think worth mentioning, *except* for the praise-song everyone sings, almost the most beautiful lyric-poem there is, and simply, as he says himself, "an invention of the Muses" ("εὕρημά τι Μοισᾶν"). In this more than anything, then, I think, the god is showing us, so that we should be in no doubt about it, that these beautiful poems are not human, not even *from* human beings, but are divine and from gods; that poets are nothing but representatives of the gods, possessed by whoever possesses them. To show *that*, the god deliberately sang the most beautiful lyric poem through the most worthless poet. Don't you think I'm right, Ion? (534d4–535a2)

We have no further evidence about the life and works of Tynnichus and his beautiful paean apart from this passage by Plato. Although he is mentioned by a 3rd century AD Neoplatonic author, Prophyry who was a student and biographer of Plotinus, his reference only confirms that supposedly the same paean by Tynnichus was praised by Aeschylus too. Since when the Delphians asked the tragedian to write a paean to Apollo, he simply answered, probably to skip out on the opportunity, that "it had been done best by Tynnichus" (*De abstinentia* II. 18. 6–8). This leaves us only with the information in *Ion*.

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[2] For the historical explanation of the concept of *enthousiasmos*, see Penelope Murray's book and my paper (*Platón* 403–432).

According to Plato's text, Tynnichus could not compose a poem "worth mentioning." In the Greek text, however, the phrase ἀξιώσειεν μνησθῆναι stands for both what is meant by the English translation, namely that no one considered it "worth mentioning," and that no one regarded it as worthy of being recorded or memorized. The mentioning of memory, and even linking a poem's worth to its memorization, conspicuously fits into the media history of orality. It is a well-known fact in the field of cultural memory studies that cultures of orality maintained the transmission of cultural values from generation to generation with preserving them via vivid memorization and oral performances. The trace of this very same system of communicational relations can be observed in the public attitude towards Tynnichus's only successful poem; all the more so, because the public was also a performer in its own right, considering that paeans were songs usually sung by the chorus. Therefore, this well-made poem by the Chalcidian poet, unlike the rest of his works, was sung by everyone (πάντες ᾄδουσι). Using the description by the excellent Hungarian scholar of Homer's works, Károly Marót: Tynnichus's poem became "public poetry" after the public sanctified it as a proper poem through singing them again and again (85; also see Simon, *Forschungen* 276–285; Derrida 1–47).

After that, Socrates uses the expression εὕρημά τι Μοισᾶν, "an invention of the Muses," which is a literal quotation from the paean (it is evident from the Doric form) (Capuccino, *Filosofi* 81). It serves as proof for his theory that beautiful poems – since he only talks about this kind here – are not of human origin and quality (οὐκ ἀνθρώπινά ἐστιν […] οὐδὲ ἀνθρώπων), but divine; in fact, they are products of the gods themselves (ἀλλὰ θεῖα καὶ θεῶν). The Greek word *heurēma* means both discovery and invention. On the one hand, it conveys finding something, also the act of bumping into something accidental with significant consequences, nevertheless. On the other hand, it is the act of inventing something new, unexpected, and previously non-existent (D'Angour 132–133). We know from Hesiod that the Muses not only give the gift of sweet songs to poets, but they themselves sing so that their sweet voices can be heard all over Mount Olympus (*Theogony* 1–115). Hence in this case, too, the Muses not simply "breathed" the "inspired voice" into the poet (*Theogony* 31–32), but breathed their own sweet song into him as a result of their invention.

Of course, Homer himself already stated that poetic performance has its origins in the Muses' work in some way. The whole archaic and early-classical tradition of invocation is based on this idea. The poet evokes a divine power present in the act of the invocation itself. And, as a result, not only do poets request the help of the daughters of Mnemosyne for the authentic (i.e., truthful) recounting of things past, but they also ask the Muses to sweeten their songs, or generally lean on their benevolent presence when writing and performing one. Accordingly, poetry is a divine gift which is brought and taught by the Muses.

Penelope Murray, however, clarifies that while poetic performance depends on the goodwill of the Muses, one cannot find indication in the early tradition of invocation which would exclusively regard the author as an unconscious instrument of divine powers (*Plato* 7–8). Poetry is a gift of the Muses on the one hand, and the poet's own invention on the other. And although its actual origin transcends the understanding of the human mind, it cannot be interpreted as a product of exclusively irrational processes. This observation is further confirmed by the fact that beside the concept of inspiration, the idea of poetry's requirement for skillful knowledge was also present in poetic self-interpretations from the *Odyssey* to Pindar's works. As a result, the poet's knowledge was frequently described with phrases, such as "being knowledgeable in a certain field," "being skilled in something," "being an expert of something" (*oida*, *epistamai*, *sophos*, *sophia*, etc.).[3] In Pindar, one can notice the recurrence of self-assured hints about his own works being products of a highly skilled creator. And by the end of the 5th century, poets referred many times to themselves as *poiētēs* ('author' or 'creator'), while their craftmanship was labelled *technē*. Before Plato, poets presented themselves as *sophoi* ('wise men'), whose talent stems both from the Muses' invention and their own skills.

Hence in Plato's *Ion*, this old idea is preserved – with a massive makeover carried out on it on his part, nonetheless, considering that Plato emphasizes the irrational nature of creative poetic work and the poets' passivity in it. On the one hand, in some passages he even goes beyond this arrangement with supposedly stating that inspiration and *technē* are two mutually exclusive alternatives (e.g., 532c5–9, 533d1–3, 536c1–d3). On the other hand, it was already stated in context of Tynnichus's case that *beautiful* poems are not made by humans but created by gods. Similarly, in Tynnichus's case itself the above-mentioned inspiration vs *technē* opposition seems smoother or even a bit modified since at that passage Socrates did not refer to poems in general, but spoke only about beautiful poems: "[f]or all *good* poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their *beautiful* poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed" (533e5–8, emphasis added; similarly: 534b7–c1, 542a3–6).

So, the exact relation between *technē* and *enthousiasmos* remains a matter of debate in scholarship. The dilemma of whether they are always mutually exclusive, or they are only opposed in the case of beautiful poems – additionally, in the latter case they might construct an opposition only at a certain phase of the poet's creative work – is unsolvable with the reading of *Ion* alone. Counting and multiplying arguments pro and contra is fruitless here. Therefore, I form my own very minimalistic thesis (which will later be revised) about the text of *Ion* with stating that the dialogue does not exclude the possibility that *technē* can become part of the poet's creative

[3] For the discussion of multiple critical approaches towards the idea of the poet as sophos in the late 5th century, see Mark Griffith's contribution (189).

work; it simply but vehemently renounces the idea that beautiful poems can be originated and interpreted from *technē* alone (see Halliwell 163). A passage from Plato's *Phaedrus* supports this claim: "If anyone comes to the gates of poetry and expects to become an adequate poet by acquiring expert knowledge of the subject (ἐκ τέχνης) without the Muses' madness, he will fail, and his self-controlled verses will be eclipsed by the poetry of men who have been driven out of their minds" (245a5–8; translated by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff). In this manner, composing a poem as an act solely on *technē* is possible, but the outstanding quality of poetry cannot be reduced to a merely technical process.

The dance of the awoken soul

We shall assume then that poetry is „given" by the gods.[4] Since the event of the poetic process is way beyond both the poets' and their interpreters' understanding, we cannot have any stable knowledge of the gift. This happens on one side of the artistic work and is a part of that particular *nescio quid*, or *je ne sais quoi* which had appeared in the theory of art from Cicero to Marsilio Ficino's *furor poeticus* and was even present later in the French tradition (Molnár 54–55). The other side of the artistic process, namely, what happens to the poet and the performer of poems when they are "out of their mind," or what goes on in them when they become possessed by the god, is a bit clearer to us, nevertheless. (Yet, as it will be seen, we are still far away from achieving crystal clear and certain knowledge about this part, either – this is also part of the *nescio quid* phenomenon.)

Still, it seems that through the description of the state of being possessed by the god and the state of being inspired we are presented with a certain duplicity, a double-bind, which, in order to become interpretable, shall be divided into two components.

1.

On the one hand, immediately after he identified the effect of the magnet with *enthousiasmos*, Socrates declares that when lyric poets (although it holds true for all the other kinds, see 533e6, 534b7–c5, 536a7–b4) are under the influence of divine

[4] For the ancient conception of poetic creation as a "gift" or simply something that is "given" (and not "chosen"), see Eric Robertson Dodds's book (80–82). Martin Heidegger – with reference to Hölderlin's conception of classical poetry, but also focusing on the linguistic condition of the process – formulated the essence of poetry within the triad of giving-receiving-new giving. The intercepting of hints (Winke) given by Gods "is a receiving, and yet at the same time, a new giving [Dieses Auffangen der Winke ist ein Empfangen und doch zugleich ein neues Geben]" (Heidegger 63).

power (*theia dynamis*), they are not in their right minds (οὐκ ἔμφρονες ὄντες), but are possessed (κατεχόμενοι) (533e8–534a4). Further ahead, he also says that "he [i.e., the poet] is not able to make poetry until he becomes inspired (πρὶν ἂν ἔνθεός τε γένηται) and goes out of his mind (ἔκφρων) and his intellect is no longer in him (ὁ νοῦς μηκέτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνῇ)" (534b4–6). Yet Socrates describes the performance of the rhapsode in this fashion, too: "When you recite epic poetry well and you have the most stunning effect on your spectators […] are you at that time in your right mind, or do you get beside yourself (τότε πότερον ἔμφρων εἶ ἢ ἔξω σαυτοῦ γίγνῃ)? And doesn't your soul, in its enthusiasm (ἐνθουσιάζουσα), believe that it is present at the actions you describe […]?"[5] (535b1–c3 – obviously, Socrates expects an answer from Ion, one which he willingly gives, that would confirm the second component of the alternative.)

Those expressions which describe the mental state or processes of the inspired poet or rhapsode (e.g., οὐκ ἔμφρων, ἔκφρων, ὁ νοῦς μηκέτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνῇ, ἔξω σαυτοῦ γίγνῃ, and the νοῦς μὴ πάρεστιν which comes later in the dialogue [534d3]) all point to the state when someone loses consciousness, when one is "out of his mind", when one is "not in his right mind," so when one is "beside oneself" in a very literal sense. Of course, we do not have to take literally the loss of consciousness here (as in the case of fainting, drunkenness or sleep), these expressions rather mean that someone is incapable of taking sober-minded and attentive action, that is to say, one does not possess his rational self in this state. It is worth noting that Plato frequently uses these expressions in a religious context, for instance, for the initiation that transcends the understanding of humans (e.g., *Phaedrus* 249c6–d3), for the state of participants in ecstatic rites (*Symposium* 215d6–e4; *Phaedrus* 228b6–c1; *Laws* 790d2–e4); or when describing the different forms of *theia mania* (*Phaedrus* 244a6–245a8) (see Murray, *Plato* 115). This also points to the fact that losing one's mind or consciousness is not necessarily a lower state compared to sober-mindedness, it merely allows something to come forth which goes beyond man and his comprehension but can also establish new and perhaps more direct connections with the sphere of the divine (Büttner 111–129).

One thing is certain, however, and it is confirmed by Socrates's choosing of words: the one who is *ekphrōn* (i.e., he lacks his rational self or consciousness) cannot be *technikos* (i.e., the agent of skillful knowledge based on rationality) at the same time.

The link between being conscious and knowledgeable is not a one-way street, but a type of interdependency. If being a poet (and a rhapsode, likewise) is an

[5] The expression ἔξω σαυτοῦ γίγνῃ ("get beside yourself") not only means that Ion is not where he actually, physically is, but it can also allude to him being possessed, i.e., being out of his mind. Yet, since the former also suggests a certain state of "being beside himself," this distinction no longer holds importance from now on (see Collobert 56–57; Murray, *Plato* 118; Woolf 196).

uncoscious state, he cannot be *technikos*, and vice versa: if one does not possess skillful knowledge (*technē*), it has its repercussions in his rational self or identity. With his interpretations of *Ion* and *Menon*, Raphael Woolf showed that selfhood in Plato depends on knowledge. Furthermore, knowledge and agency are interconnected, if we associate "acting" in the full sense of the word with people whose actions stem from knowledge and possess control over their actions through knowledge (as it happens to be, *technē*). As a result, *selfhood in agency* cannot be associated with the "possessed" poet or rhapsode who is out of his right mind (Woolf 194–197). As Murray formulates, "[t]he practice of poetry, whether at the level of performance or of composition, is shown to depend on irrational processes, which are incompatible with the basic requirements of a *technē,* here defined by Socrates as a distinct area of activity embodying rational principles which the practitioner can extrapolate and apply to the field as a whole" (*Poetic* 165; see also Collobert 45–47).

It is also worth mentioning that in this context, Woolf expands the dichotomy of *technē* and inspiration (*enthousiasmos*) – in other words, the opposition between self-identical subjectivity and the loss of the self – to the properties of artistic work as an end-product. He identifies the former with the following of rules and imitation, while he links the latter to originality and innovation including invention. (With this step, however, he overemphasizes the dynamics of "unconsciousness," as we will see.) Contrary to the artistic work embedded in *technē* in such a way that it supposes preliminary knowledge and requires both the following and the application of rules and principles, originality and innovation (or invention) are exclusively linked to the non-*technē*-like aspect or, better put, dynamics of poetry (cf. Woolf 191–197).[6] This however does not exclude even Woolf's example for originality (and unlimited invention), that is the case of Mozart, considering that *technē* still plays some part in the artistic work as a necessary, but not a sufficient condition.

As I have already mentioned, in other works of Plato, as in *Ion* too,[7] *technē* and *enthousiasmos* are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Halliwell 163). It is true, nevertheless, that in *Ion* (and in *Phaedrus* 245a) Plato only mentions *enthousiasmos* (without mentioning *technē*) in relation to *great* poets and *beautiful* poems. Still, while Plato made the state of being possessed or madness the very condition of producing masterpieces, this does not exclude that he latently also suggested *technē* as a constitutive part of the artistic process. We can then suppose that possession or madness is a component or a kind of dynamic that can be preceded or even complemented by the application of *technē*. However, sadly, Plato does not explain

[6] D'Angour argues for the inextricable relation of *heuresis* and *enthousiasmos* in which "the transformation of personal identity" also plays a role that will be discussed in connection with the Proteus-analogy (D'Angour 33, 132).

[7] See esp. the part where Ion talks about his routine of paying attention and making an attempt at controlling his audience during the performance. He would be incapable of such action, if he was captivated by the god to the degree of losing unconsciousness (535e1–6).

such connections between the two in detail. Nevertheless, it would be nearly impossible to imagine that the poet without any skillful knowledge could mediate the divine word. According to Plato, *technē* never yields to masterpieces, since they could not be reduced to the functioning of skillful knowledge. But he never says its inverse either, namely, that *enthousiasmos* alone, without any expertise or skill could produce masterpieces.

Contrary to how poets refer to the presence of the Muse in order to get authority for their knowledge that transcends human understanding, from Plato's perspective poets (at least when they are under the influence) do not possess "true intellectual abilities, responsible knowledge, insight, or even actual know-how" (Kleinschmidt 20). The subject of *enthousiasmos* as described in *Ion* is not a rational and self-identical subject, but a captivated one; a "soul" which is possessed and manipulated by external forces.

The state of being possessed leads to the the loss of the rational self, including the lack of self-consciousness and identity. This is present even on the non-discursive level of Plato's text. It was pointed out by numerous scholars (see e.g., Capuccino, *Plato* 85–86; Haden 172–177) that the name Ion is a charactonym. Most directly, it refers to Ionia, the birthplace of Homer, Ion's source of inspiration. In addition, it alludes to the enthralling divine power represented by the magnet, named after the Ionian city, Magnesia. Furthermore, Heraclitus, the thinker of oppositions and transformations, is also from this land, since like the rhapsode himself, Heraclitus was born in Ephesus. And of course, in the proper name "Ion" there lies a telling semantic component as well. If we follow Heraclitus's disciple, Cratylus's lead, or consider the then contemporary theory of language in general, we may assign meaning to the name. Reading the name Ἴων as the *participium imperfectum* of the verb εἶμι, we can conclude that Ion is the one "who goes," "who is in motion." And thinking of wandering rhapsodes, such a meaning of Ion's name is no superficial attribute but an enlightenment of the true nature of its wearer on Cratylian premises. This true nature is not exhausted, however, in the external act of constant motion, which would be permanent wandering, but it also contains the constant change inherent to the performance of epic poems: the rhapsode never ceases to transform into somebody else, since he takes upon himself the personality of the character, on whose behalf he is speaking. Additionally, in narrative passages Ion can speak in the name of his idol, Homer, himself: with mediating his voice and words, Ion can temporarily become identical to Homer. And this mimetic identification which is carried out on both sides of the aesthetic experience (i.e., on the productive and the receptive side, too) was the cornerstone in the third book of the *Republic* for Plato's critique against poetry.

It might be this lack of identity at which Socrates hints towards the end of the dialogue when he compares Ion to the shape-shifting god, Proteus: "Really, you're just like Proteus, you twist up and down and take many different shapes [the word

ἀτεχνῶς is missing in the English translation – it is part of Plato's untranslatable play on words, which suggests that Proteus takes shapes not only "at once," "suddenly," "for fun," or "without any deeper motivation" to do so, but also "without *technē*"], till finally you've escaped me altogether by turning yourself into a general etc." (541e7–542a1). Proteus, "the old man of the sea" is a prophetic sea-god, which means that unlike Ion he does possess skillful knowledge. But he withholds it at any cost, so he keeps escaping those who ask for his predictions with turning into different forms: "He will turn himself into every kind of creature that goes upon the earth, and will become also both fire and water" (Homer: *Odyssey* IV. 417–418; cf. IV. 456–458).

The figure of Proteus can be viewed as analogous to the rhapsode Ion's and the poet Homer's in this regard. The common ground for all three of them is a lack of personal qualities which enables them to become someone else thus allowing for constant transformation. In other words, all of them are lacking a fixed, constant identity. Their identity is in constant flux which in the case of poets and rhapsodes is related to their lack of stable knowledge (see Woolf 195–196; Collobert 43; Capuccino, *Plato* 86). In this aspect, Plato's *Republic* is once again more than relevant: there Proteus, or better to say, what Homer says about Proteus, becomes the target of Socrates's critique because Proteus is said to act in a way which cannot be true of a god: "Do you think that a god is a sorcerer, able to appear in different forms at different times, sometimes changing himself from his own form into many shapes, sometimes deceiving us by making us think that he has done it? Or do you think he's simple and least of all likely to step out of his own form? […] Is it impossible, then, for gods to want to alter themselves? Since they are the most beautiful and best possible, it seems that each always and unconditionally retains his own shape." (*Republic* 380d–381c; also see 381d5, where Proteus is mentioned by name as an example for the loss of identity).

In this essay, the importance of the description of such a mental state lies in the fact that in the passage quoted above, the *theia dynamis*, the influence of the divine power means the loss of the condition of rational agency. Similarly to the first component of the duplicity (that is, similarly to captivating and stasis; this duplicity will be discussed in detail in part 2 introduced by Socrates with the image of the magnet, the state discussed by Plato suggests a certain numbness, namely the loss of intention or willpower, or even the lack of intentionality. The "author" of a masterpiece "has no say in the matter of what is articulated through him" (Kleinschmidt 19). But this is also the reason why the poet can become a mere physical medium, a transparent mediator:

> That's why the god takes their intellect away from them when he uses them as his servants, as he does prophets and godly diviners, so that we who hear should know that *they* are not the ones who speak those verses that are of such high

> value, for their intellect is not in them: the god himself is the one who speaks, and he gives voice through them to us. (534c7–d4)

As Capuccino argues, "the *hermēneus* at issue is a mere physical medium or transmission channel [emphasis in the original]" (*Plato* 68; see also Collobert 45–46; Gonzalez 94–95; Murray, *Plato* 121[8]). This loss of self-consciousness is a prerequisite for poetic mediation and prediction alike.[9] For another mind to appear, or at least, for the other's (mute) words to be present in poets, the mind or the rational self must be absent from them (νοῦς μὴ πάρεστιν). It is the only way that the god's words can be articulated: „the god himself is the one who speaks, and he gives voice through them to us" (534d3–4). This loss of the rational, conscious self is the condition of a "good" artistic practice, which means that poetry is neither an act, nor a work. It is something that happens to the poet, something which is given as a gift to them. Accordingly, poets are recipients of poetry, rather than agents of it. And so poetic "work" in a paradoxical fashion becomes associated with passivity, occurrence, enduring something, instead of activity, or execution.

2.

Similarly to poets, who cannot create (a masterpiece) unless they lose consciousness, rhapsodes cannot speak (beautifully) about their object (in Ion's case, it is Homer) until they are overcome by *enthousiasmos*. I quote two short passages in relation to this that discuss the first phase of being possessed and contrast the state preceding it. The first one is the description given by Socrates:

> You are one of *them*, Ion, and you are possessed from Homer. And when anyone sings the work of another poet, you're asleep and you're lost about what to say; but when any song of that poet is sounded, you are immediately awake, your soul is dancing, and you have plenty to say. (536b4–c1)

The second one is Ion's account on the same subject matter:

> Then how in the world do you explain what *I* do, Socrates? When someone discusses another poet I pay no attention, and I have no power to contribute

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[8] Murray however rightly argues that while the appearance of the word *hermēneus* signifies the idea of passive mediation here, at 530c3 it referred to active interpretation, i.e. the interpretive mediation of Homer's *dianoia* or intention (see from 530b10).

[9] See beside the previously cited part from *Ion* 534b7; *Phaedrus* 244a–e. For poetic tradition, see: Pindar frg. 150, *Paean* 52f. 6. For the connection between poetry and prophecy, see: Flashar (64), Murray (*Poetry* 120) and Dodds (80–82).

> anything worthwhile: I simply doze off. But let someone mention Homer and right away I'm wide awake and I'm paying attention and I have plenty to say. (532b8–c4)

In these two quotes the formulation of the examined state is substantially different from what we discussed in part 1. Here, the "sober-minded," "self-conscious" state which precedes *enthousiasmos* is described in a way that the attributes of unconsciousness and being beside ourselves are correlated with it. If it is not Homeros who is in the spotlight, Ion is asleep or half-heartedly dozes off (καθεύδεις, νυστάζω; νυστάζει – this expression also returns at 533a2). He can no longer concentrate on what is said (οὔτε προσέχω τὸν νοῦν). If taken literally, he "cannot hold his own attention toward something", or to put it in Latin terms, he is not *intentus*, he loses all kinds of intentionality and intensity. Moreover, in this state of *aporia* Ion is clueless, he has no idea what to say, and thus he lacks agency (ἀπορεῖς ὅτι λέγῃς). In contrast, when Ion hears Homer's works, he starts to come around. Firstly, he is awake, and becomes attentive and sober: recovers his clear state of mind (ἐγρήγορας, ἐγρήγορα). Secondly, because of this attentiveness, he can listen to what is said, in other words, his (newly rediscovered) mind can focus on what is said (προσέχω τὸν νοῦν). Finally, he regains the ability to speak and act, and becomes well-aware of what he must say (εὐπορεῖς ὅτι λέγῃς).[10] Strangely enough, the description of being possessed by the god applies terms such as "awake," "attention," "awareness," and "agency." It is possible that this contamination stems from Bacchic frenzy and the initiation rituals of mysteries, thus constituting Plato's "amalgata" in itself.[11]

In any case, what we can read in the above-quoted passages about the rhapsode, also holds true – *mutatis mutandis* – for the poet. Since the latter's poetic abilities are also awoken at the exact moment when the god possesses them, they are forsaken by their mind and soberness (534b5–6). But before this happens, their poetic ability is dormant due to their "treasure," namely, intellect, hence they cannot create anything (good) in a state that precedes possession. And inasmuch as "each poet is able to compose beautifully only that for which the Muse has aroused him," each of them has his specified genre which he is good at. But "each of them is worthless for the other types of poetry," which means that possession must be triggered by the adequate Muse, just like in Ion's case since he is awoken when he hears (about) Homer's works (534b7–c5). In addition, Bacchantes, who are similar to poets in Plato's eyes, can

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[10] These very same expressions can be found in Socrates's descriptions about painting (532e7–533a5), sculpturing (533a6–b4), and musical and rhapsodic performances (533b5–c3).

[11] This possibility is put forward by Renate Schlesier (58–59). Plato exploits the language of mysteries in other works, too, see e.g.: *Phaedrus* 248a–250c. There he pictures the power and effect of blinking into a "territory that is beyond the sky" with the help of the language of initiative mysteries. (Here, he also talks about *mania* in relation to the effects of beauty: 249d–e.)

only perform their miraculous deeds when they are under the influence of the god, "but not when they are in their right minds" (534a4–7), just like the dancing Corybants who "have plenty of words and movements," whenever they hear the tune "that belongs to whatever god possesses them," "but they are quite lost if the music is different" (536c2–6). Before *enthousiasmos* happens, the invention and skills of the poet are dormant – as in the case of Tynnichus –, and are only awoken if they become possessed by the external forces of the right god. Although it is likely that they could also do without that, their product would be incomparable to those masterpieces which they can create in a possessed state.

Here, Socrates's returning example of the magnet and the iron rings, in which he poses being magnetized – or, in more contemporary words –, being "energized" as analogous to the state of being possessed (533d–e), becomes relevant. On the one hand, his idea seemingly suggests a state that is static and fixed due to the magnetic field's interruption of movement and any dynamics other than itself. The magnet does nothing more than attracts the iron rings. In his comparison, the verbs used by Socrates underline this aspect regarding the god's effect on poets: "grasping" and "withholding" (κατέχειν), or "holding onto something in one's possession" (ἔχειν). This static and fixed state suspends any dynamic motion, whatsoever.

On the other hand, the first verb used by Socrates for the explanation of the effect of the divine *dynamis* is linked to movement: "it's a divine power that moves you (σε κινεῖ)" (533d3). Consequently, the image of connected rings that ultimately make up a chain, displays a dynamic instance. (This, however, disrupts the overall relatability of the comparison because the attracted iron rings can no longer move, let alone make something else move.) The power of the magnet can be interpreted as an ability to make something move; just like in the rhapsode Ion's case, it is the motivation for his work and agency. The verb ὁρμάω ('to set in motion,' 'to motivate,' 'to urge'), which is later brought into the conversation, is semantically connected to this image of motion: "each poet is able to compose beautifully only that for which the Muse has aroused him (ὥρμησεν)" (534c2–3). And of course, Ion's entire performance as a rhapsode is itself both figuratively and literally a movement exerting a strong impact on its listener. Due to the divine dynamics, his affective and intense performance is simultaneously moving and moved.

The divine dynamics is rooted in this duplicity which is also a double-bind. On the one hand, those who enter its field are attracted and put in stasis, or in other words, they are no longer capable of conscious movement and agency. On the other hand, this field puts the rhapsode in motion and makes him follow its rules during any event when a movement or action is taken. This also means that the rhapsode entices his audience the same way he has already been enticed by the god: via captivating them, he will not let them move, or walk away – they are forced to stay and listen. This listening of the audience, however, also diverts intense focus on the

movements that accompany the rhapsode's words (whether they were unintentional gestures or drumming or the rhythmic movement of the head or other body parts, etc.) (see Herington 11–13, 39, 225fn19; Havelock 152, 159–160).

The mental state of the rhapsode when being possessed is compared by Plato to a certain kind of dance: "your soul is dancing (ὀρχεῖταί σου ἡ ψυχὴ: 536b8)" – says Socrates to Ion. With this statement he simultaneously adds another layer of meaning to his magnet-metaphor, thus further uncovering what the dynamic state of being "energized" means, and points to the euphory of the awakening. At the same time, he hints unintentionally at the constant back and forth motion, too, which can be laid out with steps and movements taken by a dancer which are both carefree and regulated – this paradox of the dance is analogous to that of the rhapsode's state of mind.

The loss and retrieval of self-consciousness and the paradox constellation of presence and absence in play is also a significant paradigm for Corybants and Bacchantes (i.e., the ecstatic and frantic dance of the followers of Cybele and Dionysus, respectively) in *Ion*. While the most important trademark of Corybants and Bacchantes is their dance and delirium – more precisely their possession by the god is articulated by how they are made to move in orgiastic dances –, the soul of the possessed rhapsode likewise executes a "dance." Furthermore, in classic-age Athens the Corybantic rite (most importantly its delirious and orgiastic dances) with its homeo- or sympathetic means was believed to possess the power to heal the very madness it exploits (see *Laws* 790d–791b; Murray, *Plato* 115, 125; Dodds 76–79; Wasmuth). This is similar to how the state of being possessed for Ion and the poets brought along the loss of skillful application of a self-transparent mind, but ultimately resulted in an awakening to a newly attentive self-consciousness; instead of *aporia*, possession leads to the *euporia* of agency.

The idea of dancing is further supported textually with the image of the light-winged poet who flies like a bee (534b2–4). This image is brought forth by the word "honey" that is used earlier in connection with the Bacchantes[12] – moreover, Euripides's example shows[13] that the interconnection between honey/bees and Bacchantes is not exclusive to the thoughts of Plato. Regarding the content of the image, the flight of bees can be described as a peculiar or even wobbly oscillation and is labelled "dance" by ethologists. While they also admit that it might seem chaotic and uncoordinated, the dance of bees is regulated and has important semiotic functions. It is not only oscillation in a literal sense, but also an oscillation between conscious and unconscious action. The adjective κοῦφον ('light,' 'airy,' 'vain') which

[12] See 534a4–6: "who draw milk and honey (μέλι) from the rivers when they are under the influence of Dionysus but not when they are in their right mind."

[13] The chorus of Bacchantes sings that "the Earth is flooded with the nectar of bees (μελισσᾶν νέκταρι)" when they are franticly rushing through valleys and hills (*Bacchae* 142; also see *Hypsipyle* frg. 57, 13–15).

Socrates uses here equally highlights the light-stepping and unregulated motion of the divine word that is mediated by poets (which in later times gets labelled "poetic fantasy") and the poets' carefreeness and carelessness, which cannot be adhered to responsible and conscious agency.

Conclusion

To conclude, based on the close examination of the above texts, it can be stated that *enthousiasmos* and *katokōchē* signify the loss of self-consciousness, or at the very least, the loss of one's right mind, which is a necessary, but probably not a sufficient condition of the creation of masterpieces and captivating performances. However, taking action under the influence of the god's possession, as well as the mediation of this state boosts self-consciousness (or, at least a different kind of self-consciousness), or even (or on the whole) regains it: since it is an awakening that brings along attentiveness, the ability to have plenty to say, and agency. Self-consciousness is simultaneously present and absent here, it is both tense and flexible, numb – or somewhat subjected to a higher power – and creative. The state triggered by the *theia dynamis* in this context cannot be fixed on either side: neither in the complete loss of self-consciousness and agency, nor in the wholeness of a rational self that is fully present for itself.

Furthermore, the act of dancing is interpreted as a form of dynamics in which both the quantitative regularity of movements and steps (and to a certain degree, even in the cases of orgiastic, fractious dances) and – due to the iteration of rhythmic moves – a certain trance and thus the uncalculability of erratic movements are in effect. It is the exact epitome of the dynamical duplicity whose components are interconnected in the souls of awoken rhapsodes and poets via the rich and inventious descriptions and metaphors given by Plato.

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Ábel Tamás

The Art of Framing

Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* 4.27[1]

In the last decade or so, the readers of Pliny's epistles became more and more alert to his ambiguous rhetoric concerning his own versifying, and to his sophisticated intertextual maneuvers changing some of his letters (either addressing the questions of poetry or not) into "poems in prose" that easily yield to the reading strategies of those trained on the interpretation of Roman poets such as Catullus, Vergil or Horace. These excellent readings – starting with Ilaria Marchesi's pioneering *The Art of Pliny's Letters*, which had a great impact on subsequent Plinian scholarship – have elucidated not only Pliny's ambitious intertextual art by which he alludes to various poetic texts and makes these allusions operative in the rhetoric of his letters, but also his sophisticated techniques through which he sometimes embeds longer poetic quotations into his letters with significant interpretative consequences.

By the term "the art of framing" in the title, I refer specifically to Pliny's spectacular technique used in some of his letters where he picks up a poem or a passage of a poem (be it his own or someone else's) and places it at an emphatic point – usually in the middle – of his epistle, and, accordingly, changes his epistle into a kind of significant frame. I would like to draw attention to the "parergonal" effects caused by this textual encounter which might include the mutilation of the poem by which Pliny is able to manipulate its meaning in a direct way, the expansion of the poetic and thematic issues of the quotation into the epistle it is framed by, and, last but not least, the "Menippean" effect based on the alternation of verse and prose. According to Jacques Derrida, who famously deconstructed the classic Kantian idea of the frame as an external ornament, frames are "neither simply inside nor simply outside" (Derrida 54), and their "parergonality" can be grasped even in this liminal position. In Pliny's case, parergonality might be identified especially in the way of how frame and framed assimilate each other textually: while the frame (i.e. the framing epistle)

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begins to function as a kind of prosaic extension of the poem framed by itself, it becomes possible to read the framed poem as being an organic part of – or, in a way, homogenous with – the epistle it is framed by.[2]

The majority of the epistles where Pliny's art of framing features as a spectacular literary technique has recently been widely analyzed. The most prominent examples, *Ep.* 3.21 (on Martial's death, quoting a passage of Mart. 10.20[19], a poem written on Pliny himself), 4.14 (on Pliny as a poet, quoting four lines of Catullus 16 as a kind of Plinian *ars poetica*), 7.4 (on Pliny's poetic activity, quoting his own hexametric epigram on Cicero's poetic and erotic deeds), and 7.9 (on recommended literature for a young orator, switching to speaking in verse at a point and then returning to prose) – all being literary *tours de force* in their own way – have deserved distinguished scholarly attention.[3] *Ep.* 4.27 however – the subject of the present paper – has relatively been ignored. This is probably due to the facts that the hendecasyllabic poem it encapsulates is neither the work of a famous Roman poet such as Catullus or Martial nor a document of Pliny's own poetic activity, and that the epistle, at the first glance at least, seems to be quite uninteresting. It praises the recent *recitatio* and the poetic talent of the young Sentius Augurinus – fellow senator of Pliny the Younger and a versifying aristocrat himself –, and quotes one of his poems where he (what a surprise!) praises Pliny's poetic talent in a way that seems to be highly similar to the way of how Pliny praises Sentius in the letter itself. Although this reciprocity – to be discussed below – is exciting in itself, what makes this epistle, in my eyes, revealing is that it seems to be a sophisticated example of Pliny's art of framing, where some aspects of the letters mentioned above – quoting and reframing a poetic praise of himself (cf. 3.21), quoting (allegedly…) by heart (cf., again, 3.21), establishing a poet in the Roman cultural memory in a highly self- (that is Plinio-) -centered way (cf. 3.21 once again), demonstrating the author's own *ars poetica* through a poem written by someone else (cf. 4.14), and, probably, giving us a glimpse at his poetic workshop (cf. 7.4 and 7.9) – will return in an exceedingly peculiar way. First of all, let us see the epistle itself:

C. PLINIUS POMPEIO FALCONI SUO S.
1 Tertius dies est quod audivi recitantem Sentium Augurinum cum summa mea voluptate, immo etiam admiratione. Poematia appellat. Multa tenuiter multa sublimiter, multa venuste multa tenere, multa dulciter multa cum bile. 2 Aliquot

[2] For problems of framing in antiquity – especially in the context of art history –, see Platt and Squire. Obviously, instead of frames, I could use the vocabulary of paratextuality, with the paratext defined by Genette as "an 'undefined zone' between the inside and the outside" (Genette 2), a definition very similar to that of the frame by Jacques Derrida (quoted above). For paratextuality in Roman literature, see Jansen.

[3] On 3.21, see esp. Henderson, Marchesi (*The Art*) 65–67, Marchesi ("Silenced"), Tzounakas ("Martial's Pliny"), and Neger. On 4.14 and 7.4, above all, see Marchesi (*The Art*) 71–78 and 78–88, respectively. Marchesi's ironical reading of 7.4 is developed further by Tzounakas ("Pliny"). On 7.9, quite exhaustively, see Whitton 272–322.

annis puto nihil generis eiusdem absolutius scriptum, nisi forte me fallit aut amor eius aut quod ipsum me laudibus vexit. 3 Nam lemma sibi sumpsit, quod ego interdum versibus ludo. Atque adeo iudicii mei te iudicem faciam, si mihi ex hoc ipso lemmate secundus versus occurrerit; nam ceteros teneo et iam explicui.
4 Canto carmina versibus minutis,
***h**is olim quibus et meus Catullus*
***e**t Calvus veteresque. Sed quid ad me?*
***U**nus Plinius est mihi priores:*
***m**avult versiculos foro relicto*
***e**t quaerit quod amet, putatque amari.*
***I**lle o Plinius, ille quot Catones!*
I nunc, quisquis amas, amare noli.
5 Vides quam acuta omnia quam apta quam expressa. Ad hunc gustum totum librum repromitto, quem tibi ut primum publicaverit exhibebo. Interim ama iuvenem et temporibus nostris gratulare pro ingenio tali, quod ille moribus adornat. Vivit cum Spurinna, vivit cum Antonino, quorum alteri affinis, utrique contubernalis est. 6 Possis ex hoc facere coniecturam, quam sit emendatus adulescens, qui a gravissimis senibus sic amatur. Est enim illud verissimum:
"γινώσκων ὅτι
τοιοῦτὸς ἐστιν, οἷσπερ ἥδεται συνών."
Vale.

To his friend Pompeius Falco
For a third day I have been listening with the utmost pleasure and indeed with admiration to a recitation by Sentius Augurinus. He calls them his short poems. Many are composed with simplicity, many in lofty style; many are elegant, many are tender, many are sweet-tempered, and many are cross. In my view no poetry of this type has been composed more competently for many years, unless perhaps I am beguiled either by my affection for him or by his winning me over with his praises. For he has chosen as one theme the fact that I occasionally make sport with verses. I will go so far as to appoint you arbiter of my judgement, if I can recall the second line of this very epigram, for I remember the rest and have now set the lines down:
My songs I sing in these shortened verses,
In which long ago my Catullus sang his,
As did Calvus and men of old. I don't care!
Pliny alone is for me all earlier poets.
He leaves court behind, prefers to write short verses,
Seeking a love affair. He believes he is loved.
Ho there, Pliny, worth a thousand Catos!
All with love affairs, you must stop your loving.

> You see how sharp and fitting and polished his writing is. I guarantee that the whole book is redolent of this flavour, and I shall send it to you as soon as he brings it out. Meanwhile show affection to the young man, and be thankful to our times for such talent, which he endows with honest manners. He spends time with Spurinna and with Antoninus; he is a kinsman of one, and a close friend of both. From this you can gather how faultless the young man is, since he wins such affection from most dignified elders. That famous saw is undoubtedly true, that "One knows the sort of man he is from those with whom he loves to associate". Farewell.

Like in many other cases, the epistle creates an aristocratic triangle of fellow-senators: Pliny (consul of 100 AD, and – as *Ep*. 4.8 announced – augur from 103 AD onwards) writes to the illustrious Pompeius Falco (consul of 108 [probably], i.e. after the publication of this letter, and addressee of three further Plinian epistles) on the poetic talent of the young Sentius Augurinus (who was going to be proconsul of Macedonia under Hadrian).[4] As Pliny's letters discussing his own and his friends' poetic activity show, these "VIPs" were interested (or Pliny wanted them to be interested) in writing, listening to, and reading poetry in a very specific way. Producing, circulating, and consuming poetry meant for them, on the one hand, an intellectually laden form of aristocratic *otium*,[5] and, on the other hand, an instrument by which they could keep their rhetorical skills in good condition.[6] Especially in case of producing poetry, there was a third significant advantage where the previously mentioned aspects met: to be known – and to be advertised by, say, Pliny's letters – as someone who is writing, reciting, and publishing poetry gave one the chance of increasing his (masculine pronoun intended) cultural capital. Simultaneously, it is also true that not everyone agreed that this kind of activity – especially *reciting* poetry – is in harmony with senatorial *decorum*, and some of Pliny's letters addressing this topic, such as especially *Ep*. 5.3, were written in order to defend his view that it is.[7] In our case, the prestigious Pliny – who is in need of support as a poet – is increasing the cultural capital of the young Sentius Augurinus through advertising his poetic talent while, as every reader will recognize, the whole play serves Pliny's interests in increasing his own prestige as a poet. Considering that this kind of aristocratic versifying is characterized by Pliny as *lusus* ("playful verses" / "writing poetry as a kind of play" / "playing with poetry" etc.), not least here (*interdum versibus ludo*, "I occasionally make sport with

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[4] For the prosopography of this epistle, see Sherwin-White ad loc. (as for Falco, see Gibson and Morello 313 as well). For a timeline of the publication of Pliny's letters, see Bodel 106–108.

[5] For *otium* in the context of Pliny's versifying, see Auhagen 5–8. On the Plinian concept of *otium* in general, see Gibson and Morello 169–199.

[6] Cf. Whitton 272–322.

[7] On Pliny's "Catullan" poetry and its cultural contexts, see, above all, Roller's fine analysis. For a somewhat earlier, different view on Pliny the poet, see Hershkowitz. On *recitatio* and *decorum* in *Ep*. 5.3 – in the context of 4.27 discussed in this article – see Nauta 96.

verses"),[8] the way this epistle is aimed at increasing the cultural capital of Pliny and his friends can be described as a literary play as well.

The *lusus* of this epistle is a "mirror game" to be identified at many levels. The first mirror effect is when Pliny describes Sentius' poetry in a manner which is highly similar to his self-characterizations as a poet. Sentius' phrase for his poetic works – *poematia*, "short poems" – is a term which, as Pliny in *Ep*. 4.14.8 says, could be used to label his own poems, though he, at least in this epistle, prefers the term *hendecasyllabi*, "hendecasyllables". The variety of Sentius' style praised by various adverbs such as *tenuiter*, *sublimiter*, *venuste* etc. mirrors Pliny's *varietas* as presented in 4.14.3,[9] not to mention the permanent nodding at Catullus which is the main feature of both 4.14 which presents Pliny as a "new Catullus" writing his own *nugae*, and 4.27 where Sentius is portrayed as writing his own hendecasyllables seemingly in "Catullan" (or generally in "Neoteric," and thus in "Plinian") manner. This is the point where the second (and more obvious) mirror effect can be observed: Sentius praised Pliny as his great "Catullan" model, and now Pliny is praising Sentius as a wonderful poet who praised him in "Catullan" hendecasyllables.[10] Praise is being offered for being praised, as cultural capital is being offered for cultural capital. At the same time, as it is clear from 9.8 which is addressed to Sentius Augurinus himself, this harmonic reciprocity is a highly vulnerable one, considering that aesthetic judgment is more or less worthless if it comes exclusively from personal preference.[11] This is why he writes to Falco (and not to Sentius himself), asking him to be the judge of his judgment. The seriousness of this request, however, is deeply damaged by the fact that the material Pliny provides is only *one* piece of Sentius' "oeuvre," namely the poem praising Pliny himself. Though Pliny clarifies this by the circumstance that Sentius' volume was not yet published, the ironic effect stemming from the relative absence of the material which could verify Pliny's judgment cannot be eliminated from the epistle, especially considering the fact that Falco is requested to praise Sentius *before* he would be able to read the rest of the poet's works.[12] While Falco, probably, had the chance to familiarize himself with the volume promised to

[8] On *lusus* as a "Catullan" keyword in Pliny's discussions of his own poetic activity, see Roller, Auhagen, and Marchesi (*The Art*) 57–62.

[9] On the adverbs and adjectives used by Pliny for describing Sentius' poetry, see Dahlmann 167, n. 1. On the concept of *varietas* in the context of Pliny's poetry, see Roller 274, Auhagen 6–7.

[10] Beyond Catullus, the figure of Calvus, having been both a Neoteric poet and an "engaged public figure" of the Late Republic, is highly important for Pliny and his potential admirers. It is not an accident that Catullus and Calvus are mentioned together both in *Ep*. 1.16 and in Sentius' poem in 4.27. Cf. Roller, *passim*.

[11] *Ep*. 9.8 is a perfect test for what remains when we take Falco away from the game: "If I begin to praise you after your praise of me, I fear that I may seem not so much to express my considered judgement as to return a compliment. But in spite of such appearances, I do think that all your writings are very fine, and especially those about me. This is attributable to one and the same reason: for your part, you write best when the subject is your friends, and I for my part in reading your works regard those about me to be the best. Farewell."

[12] See "Meanwhile (*interim*) show affection to the young man, and be thankful to our times for such talent" – with *interim* implying "until I can send the volume to you".

him in this letter, Pliny's modern readers find themselves in the ironic position of being requested (as "descendants" of the primary addressee) to judge Pliny's judgment on the basis of one single *poemation*, which can lead and in many cases leads to the conclusion that Pliny had no taste for poetry.[13]

Now, we shall turn to the third mirror effect of this epistle, namely its close relationship with *Ep*. 3.21, the letter written on the occasion of Martial's death. As already A. N. Sherwin-White's commentary emphasized, "the placing of this letter towards the close of IV recalls the placing of Martial's praise of Pliny at the end of III" (Sherwin-White ad loc.). This connection is all the more important if we consider that 3.21 (the last piece and thus possibly the *sphragis* of the collection of Books 1–3 where Pliny did not mention his poetic work at all) can be read as an inauguration of Pliny's own poetic activity becoming important in Book 4,[14] and Book 4 is sort of sealed with 4.27 presenting Sentius' praise mirroring Martial's praise. With all their differences, 3.21 and 4.27 use similar strategies in quoting a poet's praise of Pliny.[15] In both letters, Pliny quotes a passage of a poem in order to draw his addressee's attention to the poetic volume – available as in 3.21 or not yet available as in 4.27 – of his respective *laudator*. In 3.21, Pliny quotes the dead Martial (an established poet of his age) who, in the framework of a patron and client relationship, praised him as his excellent *reader*, reciprocated by Pliny through a highly moderate evaluation of Martial's chances of achieving poetic immortality.[16] In 4.17, Pliny quotes Sentius (a young senator with poetic ambitions) who praised him as being an excellent *poet* and his model in composing "Neoteric" poetry. Ironically, reading these two letters together might call our attention to Pliny's embarrassing system of recognition: if you want your poetic talent to be recognized by Pliny, you have to be *alive* and praise him as a *poet*; being *dead* and praising him as a *reader* is, obviously, not enough. This ironic effect is caused by a comparison which was suggested by the conspicuous similarities of the letters themselves, and this kind of irony is significantly enhanced if we compare his judgments (Martial: "immortal or not, I don't know…"; Sentius: "the great poet") with the respective judgments of the posterity. One could ask: are you serious, *Secunde carissime*?

Beyond the kinship between the two epistles, there are significant ties between the embedded hendecasyllabic praises of Martial and Sentius as well. Ilaria Marchesi's brilliant analysis is worth being quoted:

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[13] Sentius' poem has been described as "embarrassingly banal" (Radice 26), "supremely forgettable" (Walsh 327), "terrible" (Johnson 50), and so on.

[14] Cf. Neger 134. On 3.21 as a *sphragis* of Books 1–3, see Marchesi (*The Art*) 67, n. 22 as well.

[15] For the similarities between 3.21 and 4.27, see, above all, Neger 142–144.

[16] See 3.21.6: *Tametsi, quid homini potest dari maius quam gloria et laus et aeternitas? At non erunt aeterna, quae scripsit; non erunt fortasse, ille tamen scripsit, tamquam essent futura*. ("Yet what greater thing can a man bestow on a person than fame, praise, and immortality? You will respond that his writings will not be immortal. Perhaps they will not be, but he composed them believing that they would be.")

> Sentius' verses divulge that Pliny is not only a consumer but also a producer of polymetric, erotic and personal poetry. In Sentius' flattering verses, Pliny is aligned with Calvus and Catullus as a practitioner – to be sure *foro relicto* – of light neoteric poetry. As in Martial's poem, Sentius associates Pliny with a local and momentary transgression of his public role as a stern Catonian figure. But Sentius is more explicit than Martial in linking Pliny's second nature with his active involvement in poetry: if for Martial Pliny's identity oscillated between diurnal association with the figure of Cato and nocturnal fellowship with erotic poets, for Sentius Pliny's Catonian "I" is overcome by his poetic self. The penultimate line identifies Pliny with Cato, both paradoxically as examples of lovers. Sentius' poem is based on an *a fortiori* argument: if even the combination of Pliny and Cato (the poetic construct of Pliny-the-Cato) can be said to love and want to be loved, this can only mean that there is no escape from love itself. With an Ovidian gesture, Sentius bids farewell to the irremediable lover, stressing the futility of his attempt: "whoever you are who are in love, go now: try and quit!" (Marchesi [*The Art*] 68)

In this intertextual process, Martial's "Pliny, the daytime's Cato and nocturnal *reader* of erotic poetry" is thus changed into "Pliny, the daytime's Cato and nocturnal *writer* of erotic poetry". Marchesi's fine interpretation, however, does not discuss the "framework" in which this intertextual connection emerges. Does Sentius' "Plinian" poem (seriously or ironically) allude to Martial's already known "Plinian" poem, and, consequently, does *Ep.* 4.27 mirror 3.21 in order to mirror the mirror effect existing between Martial's and Sentius' poems? Or does Sentius' poem allude to Martial's poem through the "window" of Pliny's already published epistle on Martial's death, and thus provoking or generating the irony of having to praise Pliny as a poet rather than a reader if you want to be praised by him? As if Sentius would say: "I try to reach the poetic immortality which you, *mi Secunde*, have not ascribed to Martial"? And, consequently, does Pliny's epistle establish a context where this irony can be, to some degree, domesticated? Or, hinting at an idea I would like to introduce below, can "Sentius' poem" be read as written by Pliny in order to make a literary joke?

I think all these – necessarily fictional – scenarios are implied in the configuration of the texts as it is presented in *Ep.* 4.27. In the spirit of his "Catullan" (in fact, highly un-Catullan) community[17] of interacting authors and texts – a specifically Plinian form of "literary interactions" in this age[18] –, 4.27's Pliny invites us to think about

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[17] On the Plinian transformation of the Catullan relationship between poetics and politics (and thus on the both Catullan and unCatullan nature of his poetry and of the cultural function of his poetry), see Roller, and Marchesi (*The Art*) 69–71.

[18] For "literary interactions" as a new model for describing intertextual and -personal relationships in the literary landscape of Pliny's age, see König and Whitton. Interestingly, their model case is Pliny's *Ep.* 9.19, another epistle with an epigram embedded in it (see 16–28).

the possible relations between Martial's and Sentius' "Plinian" poems and between his epistles embedding them, and, simultaneously, he also works on averting its – potentially embarrassing – consequences. This kind of paradoxical effect is in fact very common in the sphere of (poetic) intertextuality: a potentially subversive allusion can either be read as subverting the text's meaning in which it is quoted or as being corrected or domesticated by its new context, or it can be interpreted in both ways simultaneously.[19] The technique of both emphasizing and averting the potentially disturbing consequences of the texts in question, in my view, goes hand in hand with Pliny's art of framing as it is used in 4.27, both inviting the reader and discouraging them from imagining the scenarios mentioned above or detecting the ironies implied in them.[20]

To begin with, it is highly significant that Pliny tells Falco that he was participating in Sentius' *recitatio* and suggests that the book of poems based on the recited material was not yet available. First of all, the custom of reciting poetry assimilates Sentius to Pliny the Reciter (who, according to *Ep.* 5.3, had to defend himself against respective criticism) and makes us think of him as Pliny's follower even in that regard. Furthermore, this situation implies that Pliny was not yet in the position of sending Falco the promised poetic volume in question. This, on the one hand, brings about one of the ironies of the text (how to judge Sentius' work if there is, virtually, no material?), and, on the other hand, associates our epistle with 3.21 once again. In both letters, the addressees are directed to the respective poetic volumes (available or not at the moment), where they can actually encounter the poetic material of which Pliny quoted only a tiny ("Plinian") piece. Unlike in 3.21, Pliny's promise in 4.27 – at least for the modern reader – remains a promise forever.

It is also the situation of the *recitatio* which gives some plausibility to Pliny's assertion that he is quoting Sentius' poem by heart. This is again a nod to the epistle on Martial's death where Pliny quotes Martial by heart. It is well known that, in antiquity, the practice of quoting meant, predominantly, quoting by heart, but there is an undeniable irony in the fact that Pliny, in the light of these letters, memorized poems written on himself exclusively. Not independently of the question of availability (Martial's volume is at hand, in contrast to Sentius'), the act of memorization in *Ep.* 4.27, unlike in 3.21, seems to be highly problematic. Namely, Pliny is not able (or pretends not to be able) to recall the second line of Sentius' poem: *si mihi ex hoc ipso lemmate secundus versus occurrerit; nam ceteros teneo et iam explicui* ("if I can recall the second line of this very epigram, for I remember the rest and have now set the lines down"). Obviously, this means that Pliny actually does not quote the

[19] For an excellent example of reading an allusion in both ways (subversion and domestication/correction), see Fowler 25–26.

[20] For the assumption of the permanent presence of self-irony in Pliny's epistles, esp. when it comes to his own versifying, see Tzounakas ("Pliny") 306.

"second" line of Sentius' poem.[21] This way of quoting, reminding us of the intentional "mutilation" of Martial's poem in 3.21 and Catullus' poem in 4.14, seems to be a seemingly "unintentional" version of Pliny's mutilative way of incorporating others' poems into his epistles. This "unintentionality," on the one hand, seems to support the "fiction" of Sentius' *recitatio*, as if Pliny would say: "since I heard the poem only once, I cannot reproduce it in its entirety". Accordingly, this can be read as a kind of reality effect serving the aims of the epistle's narrative frame. On the other hand, the "forgetting" of the second line and the textual absence produced by it make the textual identity of Sentius' poem wholly unstable. Considering this *lacuna*, who is able to guarantee that Pliny recalled the rest of the poem correctly? I am inclined to see this way of introducing the incorporated poetic quotation – "I hereby quote a poem for you which is damaged by my forgetfulness" – as a specific sign of the framing: the framed is significantly influenced by the frame, and this influence can be grasped in a modification which, potentially, goes beyond the line it explicitly concerns. This implies an irony which goes against the reality effect included in the act of forgetting: why would Pliny abstain from modifying Sentius' poem in order to make it more fitting to his own textual interests? To make the frame able to assimilate the framed to itself?

As we are invited to read Sentius' poem as a text filtered through Pliny's mnemotechnical system which (re)produces it in a creative process, it is not difficult to conclude that this kind of quoting, especially in a textual world based on the practices of *imitatio* and *aemulatio*,[22] is not far away from what we call "authorship". However, I assume that we can go one step further. As we have seen, the whole epistle is about mirroring: persons and texts are permanently mirroring each other. Considering how creatively Pliny incorporates Sentius' poem into his epistle – a poem imitating Pliny; praising Pliny as the poet's model; alluding to Martial's poem written on Pliny; listened to by Pliny; memorized and partially forgotten by Pliny; and now framed by Pliny – we could ask: is it not possible, at least in the fictional framework constructed by the epistle, that the author of this poem is, or pretends to be, Pliny himself? Is the whole prosimetrical epistle not a literary joke?

If read so, some features of the text become more conspicuous. First of all, the verb *explicui* ("I […] have now set the lines down") which introduces Sentius' poem is used in *Ep.* 7.4.7 for the *writing* of Pliny's own elegies which implies that quoting others' and producing one's own verses is, at least physically, the same activity. Furthermore, as Roy Gibson and Ruth Morello wittily explain, there are potential name puns alluding to the "merging" of the identities of Pliny, Falco, and Sentius in this letter: "Pliny writes to Pompeius **Falco** about the poetry of Sentius **Augurinus**

[21] For a different (in my eyes highly implausible) interpretation of the sentence which introduces the poem in the epistle – assuming that, after a temporary blackout, Pliny could quote the poem in its entirety –, see Dahlmann 168, n. 3.

[22] On Pliny's art (and world) of imitation, most recently, see Christopher Whitton's gigantic monograph.

– in a book where Pliny has announced his own rise to an augurship (4.8) – and where Augurinus' own poetry is about Pliny himself, but C. Plinius **Secundus** says he has forgotten the ***secundus*** *uersus*, 'second verse.'" (Gibson and Morello 42, n. 15, bold in original – Á.T.[23]) Additionally, I would like to introduce my proposal for recognizing an acrostic in Sentius' poem (vertically bolded above): **HEU ME**, or a bit longer one: **HEU MEI**.[24] Grammatically, both phrases are worded regularly. The literal meaning of the shorter one, HEU ME, is obvious: it is an often used expression, in fact the abbreviated form of the exclamation *heu me miserum / miseram*, 'poor me!', to be found in a number of cases in extant Latin literature, mostly, but not exclusively in dramatic texts.[25] Interestingly, this seems to be a confession that the "author" of the poem is aware of the poor quality of his own text: "oh my God!" Though less obvious and unattested,[26] the longer phrase is meaningful as well: if agreed with *versus* (deduced from *versibus* in line 1 of the quoted poem), HEU MEI – as a peculiar contribution to the tradition of the authorial acrostic in Latin poetry[27] – might refer to the possibility that the verses of Sentius' poem were written by Pliny himself: 'oh, no, they are *mine*!', to be read as an exclamation with a feigned surprise. Combining the two, one could translate them as 'poor me, they are mine!', and regard this combined acrostic as Pliny's "authorial signature," reminding us that Sentius' "terrible" poem is actually Pliny's fake. At this point, it is worth quoting what Irene Peirano writes in her book on Roman fakes:

> Fakes illustrate the phenomenon whereby in the process of literary imitation, a canonical author and his texts are not simply a repository of praiseworthy passages but become a kind of language in which readers learn to express themselves to produce new texts in the style of that author. Literary fakes stand in a continuum with these practices, being extreme manifestations of what is nevertheless a basic component of ancient practices of *imitatio* – the process whereby in writing *like* Cicero or Virgil, students and practitioners were invited to identify and become on some level one with the authorial figure. (Peirano 7)

This connectedness of fake and *imitatio* – for which Peirano's main example is Passenus Paulus in Pliny's *Ep*. 9.22, who was able to "reproduce" (*effingere*[28])

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[23] While the connections between **Augurinus** and ***augur***, and **Secundus** and ***secundus*** are clear, one could ask why it is telling that **Falco** receives a letter on **Augurinus**. The answer lies in the facts that Falco means "falcon", and augurs and auguries had much to do with birds, such as falcons, cf. Serv. ad *Aen*. 10.145 (*sed constat eam a Tuscis conditam viso* ***falconis augurio****, qui Tusca lingua capys dicitur, unde est Campania nominata*).

[24] Acrostics in Latin poetry are widely examined these days. For a recent survey, see Robinson.

[25] *Heu me* can be found both in comedies (Plautus, Terence) and tragedies (Ennius, Pacuvius, Seneca) many times.

[26] While *heu mei* is unattested in extant Latin literature, *heu meus* is to be found in Silius Italicus (*Pun*. 5.154), and there are examples of *heu mea* as well.

[27] See Robinson 4–5 with the authorial acrostics of Ennius, the author of the *Ilias Latina*, and Vergil as the most prominent examples.

[28] Quintilian's term as well, cf. *Inst. or.* 10.2.13 with Peirano 7, n. 20.

Propertius and Horace in a sense – might be a key for our understanding of this epistle.

I do not want to stress that Sentius' poem was actually Pliny's fake. We cannot know. What I want to emphasize is that Pliny's epistolary frame, supplemented by the acrostic of the framed poem itself, makes it possible for us to read 4.27's Pliny as suggesting that Sentius' poem is Pliny's fake, i.e. Pliny's self-praise attributed to Sentius, and ponder on its possible consequences. Sentius' poetry is based on close imitation of Catullus, Calvus, and even older authors of Latin light verse, but, as he says, Pliny means much more for him – Pliny, whose poetry is based on the imitation of those authors as well. As Hellfried Dahlmann and Margot Neger remind us, this is a strong allusion to Martial's *Ep*. 10.78, where the epigrammatist announces that he will be read among the poets of older times, but it is only Catullus whom he accepts as actually better than himself.[29] This implies that these various authors – from the older ones through Catullus and Calvus to Martial, Pliny, and Sentius – are "merging" in this textual world. *Versus minuti* becomes a language, and whoever uses that language, becomes so to speak identical with the earlier and contemporary authors who used and use it as well. If the formula ***Sed quid ad me?*** ("But why should I care?" line 3 of our poem) is read as a reminiscence of Catullus 10.31 ***verum****, utrum illius an mei,* ***quid ad me?*** ("though why should *I* care who is that they [i.e. the litter-bearers the poet is boasting about – Á.T.] belong to?" – i.e. to Catullus or Cinna),[30] the intertextual irony emerging here might confirm that this kind of poetry is, in a sense, "authorless," at least in the framework provided by Sentius' poem and Pliny's epistle. Moreover, as the Catullan intertext might suggest, this "authorlessness" is something that the reader should recognize as the fundament of this kind of poetry, unless they would like to be mocked as "a bore, a walking pest, who won't let pass even slight exaggerations" (*sed tu insulsa male et molesta vivis, / per quam non licet esse neglegentem*, Cat. 10.33–34).

There is a leitmotif of both the poem and its epistolary frame which, in my opinion, deserves attention: *amor*. According to the poem, Pliny "leaves court behind, prefers to write short verses, / Seeking a love affair. He believes he is loved" (*mavult versiculos foro relicto / et quaerit quod* ***amet****, putatque* ***amari***). Obviously, writing love poetry is at stake. On the one hand, *quaerit quod amet* implies that the poem's hero, Pliny, is looking for the issue or addressee of his own erotic poetry, which is, once again, a possible allusion to one of Martial's epigrams in which the poet expresses his need for a *puella* similar to the famous *puellae* of the great Latin love poets through the words *da* ***quod amem*** ("give me something to love," Mart. 8.73.4, cf. Sentius' *quaerit* ***quod amet***, "seeks a love affair").[31] On the other hand, ***putat****que* ***amari*** ("he believes he is loved") might refer – possibly through Martial once

[29] Mart. 10.78.14–16: *Sic inter veteres legar poetas, / Nec multos mihi praeferas* ***priores****, /* ***Uno*** *sed tibi sim* ***minor*** *Catullo*, cf. ***Unus*** *Plinius est mihi* ***priores*** (line 4 of Sentius' poem). See Dahlmann 172 and Neger 143–144.
[30] Cf. Dahlmann 171. The translations of Catullus' poems are taken from Green.
[31] Cf. Dahlmann 174–175.

again[32] – to Pliny's faith that his love poetry is met with applause. This can be confirmed by one of Pliny's later epistles on his own poetic recitations. As he emphasizes, he does not abstain from boring his friends while reciting, since he thinks that "true affection is shown by one who believes that he is held in such affection that he does not fear he is wearying people" (*Amat enim qui se sic* ***amari putat****, ut taedium non pertimescat*, 8.21.5). Accordingly, our poem establishes an interesting encounter of "loving" in the sense of "writing love poetry" on the one hand, and "being loved" in the sense of "amusing one's friends with pieces of love poetry without their resistance being expressed" on the other. This is supplemented by the conclusion addressing everyone: *I nunc, quisquis* ***amas, amare*** *noli* ("All with love affairs, you must stop your loving"). While this exclamation is based on the logic that if even the serious Pliny started to write love poetry, whoever could abstain from doing so,[33] it also necessarily suggests that "loving" in the sense of "writing love poetry" – obviously, in the framework of aristocratic versifying – is an instinct from which no one is able to refrain. And if everyone (*quisquis*) is going to write nugatory poetry of this kind, it, one might argue, will be a common good in the end, marked by a kind of authorlessness.

In the light of this, it is highly revealing that the words *quisquis amas* in the last line can be identified as a "poetic tag," propagating the universal power of love and love poetry, highly common in anonymous Pompeian inscriptions and appearing in all the surviving Augustan elegists as well.[34] However, as Peter E. Knox explains, it is more than a simple stock phrase: *quisquis amat valeat* ("Good luck to whoever loves," known in slightly different forms as well), well known from Pompeian graffiti, is actually the incipit of a once fashionable elegiac poem we know in different variations from Pompeian verse inscriptions. I quote one couplet that has been found – scratched into the plaster wall – in the *triclinium* of the House of L. Caecilius Iucundus in Pompeii. It is, however, identical with the first two verses of a longer poem (*CIL* IV.1173) included in a wall painting (perhaps in the House of Fabius Secundus) that represents writing materials and, with all probability, hints at the owner's literary ambitions:

> ***quis]quis amat*** *valeat, pereat qui nescit amare;*
> *bis tanto pereat* ***quisquis amare vetat.***
> Good luck to whoever loves, damn whoever doesn't know how to love;
> double damnation to whoever forbids love.
> (*CIL* IV.4091, translation from Knox 35)

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[32] Cf. Mart. 9, *praef.* 5–6 *"Ille ego sum nulli nugarum laude secundus / quem non miraris, sed –* ***puto*** *– lector,* ***amas*** *…"* with Dahlmann 175, n. 11.
[33] Cf. Dahlmann 176–177.
[34] See Knox 35–40.

This might bring to mind a peculiar case of intertextuality, where our poem alludes to a poetic discourse rather than to a specific poem. The spirit of this discourse is, however, eloquently expressed by this couplet. If the last line of the poem framed by Pliny's epistle is read as a polemical variation on that theme, we might say that the speaker of the poem, if he tries to be serious in *forbidding* the lovers to love (*I nunc,* ***quisquis amas, amare noli***, "All with love affairs, you must stop your loving"), should prepare himself for a bitter fate. Given that forbidding love and love poetry – advertised in early imperial Italy as everyone's common fate – is strictly prohibited, I am certain he does not want to risk that. The specific form used in our poem, i.e. *quisquis amas* in second person singular, however, is literally paralleled by Ovidian and Propertian examples,[35] all of them addressing a reader who is subject to love as much as the author himself. Consequently, this "tag" can be read as a trace of love poetry, a kind of universal language, learnt from professional poets of Latin love elegy and disseminated by various "lovers" who, while feeling love and reading the elegists, might become – at least potentially – anonymous love elegists themselves. Additionally, as Tom Geue in his recent book on the "power of anonymity" in ancient Rome argues, the spectacular use of *quisquis* in Ovid's *Ibis* – a poem of problematic authorship – might be read as a sign of the power of anonymity, leaving both author and addressee unspecified.[36] Through the use of *amare*, *amor*, and *quisquis*, this power of anonymity seems to be highly present in Sentius' or Pliny's poem, suggesting that instead of asking: "who wrote it?" we should ask: "who didn't"? Or more precisely: "who cares?"

The poem's *amor*, as mentioned, is mirrored by the epistolary frame. First of all, Pliny says that his affection for Sentius (***amor*** *eius*) could lead to unfair preference of Sentius' work, and this is why Falco is requested to judge his judgment. *Amor* is thus something which influences how one is evaluated as a poet, which can be read as a reflection of the poem's words *amari putat*, dealing with Pliny's desire of being tolerated as a poet. This shows that in this textual world, the love of one's friends can guarantee that everyone, who tries to write nugatory poetry and has friends, will be tolerated. But Pliny returns to the topic of love after having quoted the poem as well. Falco is requested to "show affection to the young man" (***ama*** *iuvenem*) – i.e. to provide an amicable context for his poetic ambitions – and is reassured that Sentius "spends time with Spurinna and with Antoninus; he is a kinsman of one, and a close friend of both. From this you can gather how faultless (*emendatus*) the young man is, since he wins such affection (*sic* ***amatur***) from most dignified elders." Ultimately, Pliny quotes Euripides' wisdom – a commonplace in Greek public oratory which

[35] See Prop. 4.5.77 (*quisquis amas*), Ov. *Rem. am*. 579 (*quisquis amas*), Ov. *Trist*. 3.3.75 (*quisquis amasti*), the latter mentioned by Marchesi (*The Art*) 68, n. 24 as well. The "Pompeian" context is entirely missing from the discussions of Sentius' poem.

[36] Geue 74–79.

was an important source for Pliny – in Greek: "One knows the sort of man he is from those with whom he loves to (***ἥδεται***) associate".[37] The epistle's variations of *amor* and *amare*, reflecting on the poem, show Pliny's art of framing at its supreme. The epistolary frame, as I see it, reconfigures the motif of *amor* present in the poem. Instead of emphasizing the writing of love poetry (which is the main emphasis in the poem itself), the epistle speaks exclusively about the sociocultural context of poetic activity: you need your friends' *amor* in order to become a successful, or more precisely a tolerated poet. On the one hand, this affection is necessary for providing tolerance for poets such as Sentius or Pliny. On the other hand, this is also necessary for the process of the formation the senatorial *and* authorial self: the persistent *amor* of Spurinna, Antoninus, Pliny and (hopefully) Falco towards Sentius guarantees that he will be able to become similar to these wise gentlemen. While Sentius' work is called *absolutius*, he himself is labeled as *emendatus*, referring to the quasi-textual process of *emendare*[38] through which, at least in these aristocratic circles, theoretically everyone's (i.e. every young senator's) self is able to be metamorphosed into "Pliny the poet," who personifies, as the poem claims, not only all the serious Catos (*ille quot Catones*), but all the earlier writers of nugatory poetry as well (*unus Plinius est mihi priores*). If Pliny is roughly equivalent with that tradition, and if nearly everyone who likes him and writes nugatory poetry has the chance to be mentioned by him as being equivalent with that tradition, this kind of "authorship" is highly close to what one could call "authorlessness."

Pliny's *Ep*. 4.27 and the poem embedded in it are far from what anybody could call innovative literature. What I would call outstanding and innovative, however, is the art of framing so spectacularly present in this epistle. Due to Pliny's parergonal art, we are presented with an entertaining "prosimetrical"[39] or even "Menippean" epistle which can be read as an ironical reflection of Pliny's poetic ambitions. Having changed from patron (Books 1–3) to a poet of dubious excellence (from Book 4 onwards), Pliny provides an epistolary portrait of his poetic self, a kind of literary mirror game from which we can learn that, while his poetic activity is highly egocentric, this poetic "ego" is more or less a *locus inanis* filled with the common good of nugatory poetry and the cultural practices intertwined with it. Pliny's art of framing can be grasped in the process of how the frame and the framed are

[37] For the context of this quote, see Deane 51–52.

[38] Cf. Johnson 51. ("The connection Pliny draws here between literary pursuits, association with model elders, and good character is, from his point of view, inevitable. Pliny's playful use of *emendatus* for how the young man has been corrected and perfected by his elders shows well how thoroughly literature and character combine in Pliny's worldview. Literature is not, in short, simple entertainment, but rather a critical element in the proper construction of a well-balanced and worthwhile elite life.") On the multiple role – both textual and non-textual – of *emendatio* in Pliny's epistles, see Tamás 54–55.

[39] On the prosimetrical structure of Plin. *Ep*. 3.21 as imitating Martial's prosimetrical prefaces, see Neger 134. On 4.27's similarity to 3.21 in that regard, see 144.

assimilating each other, making the identities of both the framed text and its author unstable, and thus giving way to the power of anonymity. The acrostic I see in the poem – HEU ME and/or HEU MEI – can be thus understood as a trace of authorlessness: if we take this literary play seriously (of course we should not), we could argue that it is an "unauthorial signature" encoded in a poem which belongs to no one, and, of course, to everyone.

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TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN WORLD LITERATURE

Zsolt Komáromy

Innovation and Tradition in the Genres of Thomson's *The Seasons*

A Literary Historical Approach to Generic Mixture

Innovation and tradition are complementary terms; one thing that is clear about their relation is that we cannot speak of innovation without also speaking of the tradition in relation to which something qualifies as an innovation. It is important for the literary historian to identify such innovations because they mark the changes necessary for constructing histories; it is, for the same reason, equally important to identify the continuities in the context of which innovation and change may be conceived. In literary history, the major vehicles of both tradition and innovation are, broadly speaking, forms. To say this is not to argue for an internal morphology of forms or to assume some purely 'inherent' history of literature that is independent of political history or of the history of ideas (or of other non-literary factors that one may care to name) – thinking about literature has thankfully left behind the stage when what smacked of a formal(ist) approach was charged with being ahistorical at best and reactionary at worst. Critical methods loosely labelled "new formalist" contributed to this (a customary procedure in this kind of criticism is to begin by pointing out that 'old' formalism was not ahistorical either and that 'new' historicisms also involve formal concerns), and so did genre theory, which has moved well beyond attempts at perfecting generic categories and ways of fitting works into these. To say that forms are the vehicles of innovation and tradition is, rather, to say simply that generic formations and their functions take shape in the complementary relation of innovation and tradition, they are appropriate objects of study for observing change and constructing literary histories.

When one speaks of genres, the inherited and entrenched idea is that they constitute fixed categories, into which works can be grouped on the basis of a variety of thematic and formal features. As such, they in theory promise the possibility of some totalizing literary system. This, by and large, is why genre criticism based on such an idea has been discredited – claims for the uniqueness of every individual text, or rejections of the idea that genres would be essential, pre-existing categories that can embrace historically determined changes and contingencies have made generic approaches seem outdated and misguided dreams of totality. Or, to mention one more – and for the present discussion the most relevant – of the prevalent objections to generic criticism, the idea of a fixed generic system is constantly belied

by the fact that works could very often be grouped into several categories at the same time because they display the features not of one, but of several genres – generic mixture has for long been seen as a potential stumbling block for generic categorization.

The ways in which genres have come to be thought of in modern theory avoid the objections that were raised against static conceptions of generic categories. Generic systems are no longer seen as made up of ahistorical, essential categories, but as historically specific, changing and open systems; genres themselves have historically variable functions, and are no longer seen as definable internally but only in their relations to other genres and the current generic system, relations that are themselves historically changing and involve the shaping influence of genres on one another, including interactions even between constituents historically distant from one another; and lastly, forms and formal relations are seen as socially and ideologically determined constructions, and even as constructions which do not simply embody or express a particular idea or ideology, but that are sites of the clashes, interactions, conflicts and changes of ideas, and are therefore bound to their social and historical circumstances, which they do not merely "reflect" but rather reflect on through the ways in which they shape the historically specific generic systems they are part of (for such claims as are listed in this sentence, see for instance Cohen, "History and Genre," Duff, Jameson, Wolfson). I phrase all this swiftly and in general terms as this is not the place to detail the observations, approaches and arguments that have reshaped genre theory in the last half century; I do, however, want to recall Ralph Cohen's work, who repeatedly emphasized throughout his theoretical writings on genre and literary history that generic groupings are constructions made by critics with various aims and motivations. The historical pliability of groupings is produced in part by the decisions that writers, critics and historians make, for historically different reasons. I single out this point because I think it helps approach the particular issue that I want to address here, the treatment of one of the generic interactions in James Thomson's *The Seasons*.

I say *one* of the interactions because Thomson's poem involves many – it is one of the most complex poems of its time in this respect, and its notorious generic hybridity offers a variety of opportunities for thinking about the interactions of genres that is at once crucial and problematic for a literary history that sees generic continuities and innovations as a distinguished object of study. It is crucial because recognizing the multifarious generic makeup of works is an inroad for interpretation and historical assessment. But it is also problematic, for a variety of reasons. Generic mixture was a disturbing phenomenon when the ground assumption was that 18th-century critical theory and practice more or less confidently distinguished various genres, studied (and prescribed) their rules, and demanded that decorum in using these be observed. This problem need not worry us much any longer; despite the tendency to distinguish kinds and lay down their rules, it has been shown that the

criticism of the time did not in fact offer a fixed and stable system of genres. According to Rosalie Colie, in Renaissance literature such a system "never existed in practice and barely even in theory" – mixed kinds are far more frequent than realisations of "a specific single kind" (114–115). Margaret Doody has convincingly shown that the case is no different in the practice of the 17th and 18th-centuries: Augustan poetry, says Doody, "exhibits […] a constant search for new and mixed genres" and thus generic mixture is one of its fundamental characteristics (56). And Ralph Cohen has demonstrated that 18th-century critics did not in fact use the rules to specify particular kinds; poetic kinds were rather "identified in terms of a hierarchy" the elements of which were seen as interrelated ("Interrelations," 4). The kind of generic mixture we find in Thomson's poem was therefore not an anomaly at all, and if critics and readers had problems with its sometimes surprising transitions or with squaring some of its seemingly incompatible assertions, this was not because they found the poem chaotic in generic terms.

There is, however, a more persistent problem that generic mixture raises. A generic approach to interpretation and historical assessment requires some prior decision about the basic mode or generic character of the work in order to observe how that is inflected by the introduction of divergent generic traits. Doody, for example, for all her acute attention to generic interrelations and her praise of *The Seasons* as "a bold experiment" is firm in stating that "it is a Georgic" poem (116). We may find a similar instance in a recent essay by Juan Christian Pellicer, who argues that the poem's various generic possibilities are to be entertained provisionally, as parts of a process with no formally defined end, no drive towards unity and "resisting interpretative closure in the process of configuring genre" – yet, at the same time Pellicer squarely states that *The Seasons* is a devotional poem. This, he adds, is not its "basic mode" because devotion can be expressed in many literary forms, and Thomson uses any form that may come to hand for his devotional purposes (119, 120, 127, 133). But even so, while the gist of Pellicer's argument is really the caveats to assuming a determining modal quality, he does view the poem's use of generic variety from the perspective of what he regards to be its dominant modal purpose. In Pellicer's view, Thomson invites us to cross generic boundaries with a hedonistic freedom and suggests that our readings ought to take this to heart, yet, his own discussion reveals just how difficult this is for the critic to do.

Thus, while generic mixture has been embraced by genre theory – it has come to be seen not so much as an anomaly but as belonging to the nature of the generic constitution of works – it has not quite ceased to be a problem. As Kate Parker points out, despite the resistance "to collapse or 'flatten' genres into taxonomic categories" generic approaches "still hesitate to privilege generic mixture." One reason she offers for this hesitation is that our "critical stories about genre" affect the ways in which we treat generic mixtures (100). I understand this observation to mean that prior decisions on a work's generic placing, decisions that derive from critical tradition,

remain determinant of many readings that approach a work from a generic perspective. If we try to build a literary historical narrative on the history of forms, we do need to make decisions about the dominant mode or genre of works for the simple practical reason of deciding where in our narrative individual works are to be fitted. If, however, our critical stories are major factors in such decisions, a literary history will also have to involve a historiographical element, one that observes the aims and motivations at work in the critical tradition that has shaped such decisions. In what follows, I want to briefly observe an example of how such prior decisions may shape readings of generic interrelations, and how a self-reflexive relation to our critical stories may alter those readings.

The Seasons can be related to a variety of traditions. One of its major merits (and part of its innovative character) for contemporary readers was its tendency to depict nature in unusually particular detail (Spacks 206–207), offering instead of allegorized landscapes the sensory pleasures of the beauties of nature and contributing greatly to the tendency of valuing empirical observation and aesthetic experience rather than symbolic uses of the landscape (Fabricant 49–52). Nevertheless, it is just as characteristic of the poem to offer invisible things for empirical experience, as when Thomson "unfolds" to sight a natural scenery complete with the "Embryo" of "the promis'd Fruit" that "Lies […] unperciev'd / Within its crimson Folds" (*Spring* 91–92, 99–101). And we have also learned to read the poem with the knowledge that in 18th-century nature poetry even sensory experiences are subsumed by the ideas governing their depiction (Spacks 210, 214, 216). The very notion of "landscape" implies that it is not the random, phenomenal given that is depicted but a constructed scene, and the techniques of this construction themselves imbue nature with meanings of all kinds (political ideas, historical judgments, ideological motivations, etc.); "nature" is a cultural construct and poets were well aware of this (Turner 9–14; Fairer, *English* 212). This is very conspicuous when of the possible traditions to which we relate the poem, we regard it, as it is most often and consensually done, as a descendent of the kind of "loco-descriptive" or "prospect" poem that is usually seen to have emerged with Sir John Denham's *Cooper's Hill* in the mid-17th century.

Cooper's Hill was acknowledged to be an innovative work and remained to be seen so – over a century after its publication Samuel Johnson wrote of it as an "original" that introduced a new type of poem Johnson calls "local poetry" in which "the fundamental subject is some particular landscape […] with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection, or incidental meditation" (1: 58). But as Ralph Cohen has shown, this origin of the loco-descriptive or topographical kind was seen by its author, as well as some of its critics and imitators, as a modulation of the georgic. This modulation, Cohen argues, amounted to innovation. As a topographical poem, *Cooper's Hill* may have precedents in the country house poem, the model for which is Jonson's "To Penshurst," but it is primarily Virgil's *Georgics* and its didactic aims that inform the poem. Denham,

Cohen argues, uses the features of such models in a new way, for new ends, for expressing new kind of experiences that emerge with the altered historical situation and the religious and scientific discourses of the time. Denham may use conventional features, but while he does so he gives them new functions (which for Cohen is one of the criteria for regarding a work innovative). For instance, in comparison to "To Penshurst," Denham does not so much describe the building he observes as an emblem of natural harmony, but places it in contrastive relation with other buildings and conceives of it as a response to nature's creation of the hill on which it stands, bringing a sense of a hidden force of nature to the foreground of the poem. Denham constructs a perceptual process that brings a new way of treating the relation of man and nature into the georgic. He replaces Virgil's direct or mythic political statements with this perceptual process of surveying nature, and he embraces contrary forces as being "reconciled by God's unknown law" instead of offering them as examples of fate or nature (Cohen "Innovation" 192–194, 210). Cohen offers meticulous analyses of methods to decide if we are dealing here with a variation or an innovation, but what is more important from the perspective of the present discussion is that in Denham's innovation the georgic and what later came to known as the prospect poem emerge together, their interaction is a crucial ingredient of the new poetic type emerging in Denham's work. The generic mix of the prospect poem and the georgic persisted in later tradition; Paul Hunter has pointed out that the prospect poem (along with other related kinds such as descriptive-didactic or loco-descriptive poems) is "nearly indistinguishable in intent and method from those labelled Georgics," and David Fairer calls them "native siblings" (Hunter 195; Fairer "Persistence" 279).

Georgic poetry, after its neglect in the Renaissance (Fowler 223), started to gain prominence in the later 17th century and became a highly regarded and popular genre by the mid-18th century. Thomson's *The Seasons* is often seen as the culmination of this tradition. It is, writes John Chalker, a poem of "fundamentally, […] essentially Georgic character," and "the most thoroughgoing, the most complex, and the most sensitively serious 18th-century imitations of the *Georgics*" (127, 92). But *The Seasons* is not a georgic poem *tout court*, partly because it is many other things (a physico-theological poem, a devotional poem, a didactic poem, according to some even perhaps an epic), and partly because in the English tradition the georgic blends with the topographical or loco-descriptive poem.

Modern criticism of roughly the last half century has tended to approach the prospect views of the topographical poem with an emphasis on the social, political and ideological constructions of landscape. By the beginning of the 19th century we do find poetry, like e. g. John Clare's, that attempts to make the particularities of specific localities felt, but in the 18th-century tradition in which *The Seasons* is an outstanding piece, the viewer characteristically observes the landscape from a distance, usually from some point of eminence so that the eye can oversee the

landscape that is shaped according to the aesthetic conventions derived from painting (Barrel *Idea*). Landlords encountering on their Grand Tours the works of Claude and Poussain "learned new ways of looking at landscapes and came back to create such landscapes as prospects from their own houses," writes Raymond Williams, and these creations for the wealthy landed class entailed "a disposition of 'Nature' to their own point of view"; idealized scenes like Jonson's Penshurst were created on real estates, presenting to the eye "a rural landscape emptied of rural labour and labourers, [prospects] from which the facts of production had been banished […]; and this landscape seen from above, from the new elevated sites [… as] the expressions of control and command" over what was regarded to be, through this "imposing mystification," 'unspoiled' nature (122–125). Here emerges the difficulty in sight of this discussion: a landscape from which the facts of labour are erased is wholly inappropriate for georgic poetry, of which human labour is the central motif. Prospect poems did, however, follow suit, and were constructed in the way Williams describes the constructions of the estates of the rich. Critical tradition, especially ideological and politically inclined criticism, dealt with prospect poems not as a formal feature mixing with the georgic, but rather as a convention of landscape poetry in general, in which descriptions of nature impose ideas on the scenery, are aesthetic "enclosures" that establish an "overseeing" control and shut out actual labour relations, actual people, actual places, the landscape becomes an illusory medium, masking ideological, political and class tensions.

John Barrell's highly influential readings of Thomson approach *The Seasons* as primarily a loco-descriptive poem and focus on its prospect views. That *The Seasons* harbours a variety of contradictions has always been acknowledged; Barrell directs attention to many of these unresolved tensions in the poem to elicit its ideological manoeuvrings. For instance, he discusses how the landowning gentleman who retires to his estate in nature and ascends some elevated vantage point observes a "boundless" prospect, which, however, passes over cities and their dwellers or labourers, and so the gentleman's supposedly comprehensive view of society is not in fact comprehensive; he also shows in detail that because such prospects enable seeing the world in its perfection, the public virtues of the gentleman that enable him to correct the wrongs of society are really superfluous as he should see nothing that is to be corrected in a happy world – and if he does put his public virtues to use, he has to give up his position of retirement and the vantage point of boundless prospects which were the grounds of his authority for correcting the wrongs of the world. The poem has also been celebrated for the wide variety of natural sceneries it depicts, and Barrell points out that if the variety of perspectives is read as questioning the implications of the prospect view and the authority of those who attain it, since the prospect view is boundless like God's, God's view of the world would also have to be questioned. Or, finally, Barrell argues that as the poem's piety involves the acknowledgment that any amount of human knowledge remains ignorant of the transcendent knowledge of

God, Thomson is asking us to believe both that the gentleman's prospect views reveal the world as God sees it, and that such a view is not available to anyone but God. Barrell concludes that such problems, tensions, contradictions are made visible to direct attention to the narrator's insufficiency, and thereby preserve and vindicate the (patriot Whig) landed gentleman's authority (Barrell, *English* 51–79). Such an approach (and the works of Williams or Barrell may be regarded as classics that served as points of departure for much historicist and ideological critique of landscape poetry) sees the conventions and internal tensions of the prospect poem as unmasking the genre's political and ideological agendas.

I have been rehearsing this familiar matter to suggest that this approach was also carried over into our critical stories of the georgic. I am not arguing here for a direct influence of the likes of Williams or Barrell on critics describing the English georgic in a particular way, but I am suggesting that the ways in which we have come to understand the historical and cultural bearings of the relation of landscape and art (be that in landscape gardening or nature poetry), and the related ways in which prospect poems came to be seen in critical tradition have left their marks on interpretations of the georgic as well. This, I think, is to an important degree the result of looking at a tradition that is traced to Denham as a tradition of prospect poetry; doing so is already to make a decision about the poem's generic character that privileges not the mixture of the prospect poem and the georgic but to base the assessment of the mixed form on only one of its constituents. It is in accordance with the assessments of the prospect poem rehearsed above that the English georgic came often to be described as divorcing actual labour from the land and replacing it with conventions of happy labour, creating a false Eden, and presenting an aristocratic and expansionist (colonialist) vision in a way to mask social and historical tensions. "Georgic," writes Alan Liu, "is the supreme mediational form by which to bury history in nature"; discussing Wordsworth, Liu contends that the poet uses the georgic mode "to make the entire under-narrative of the Revolution sink into unbroken invisibility" and that the real purpose of georgic nature is to "hide history" (18–19). Rachel Crawford describes the georgic as an ideological construct involving an authoritarian and "backward-looking vision" that was "the dominant, expansive aesthetic associated with the gentry for most of the 18th century"; finding some factual errors in the practical instructions English georgics provide she speaks of the genre as generally involving "georgic misinformation" and offering instead of instruction "an illusion of instruction" (*Poetry* 103, 171, 154, 157). Or, even more specifically relating the ideological complicity of the georgic to that of the prospect poem, she speaks of the "indifferent gaze over the wide prospect presumed by the aesthetic of the […] open forms of georgic" ("Lyrical" 199–223, 202); "georgic's sublime vistas," Crawford writes elsewhere, "take for granted the primacy in landscape of the ancient seats of landed gentry, a tradition that permeates loco-description" ("Forms" 231). Such examples indicate how views of nature poetry that have governed understandings of the

prospect poem reappear in accounts of the English georgic – and this is understandable not only because we are here dealing with a strong critical strand that appears in readings of all kinds of literature but also because, as we have seen, the georgic and the prospect poem are intertwined in English poetry, they very often appear as elements of generically mixed works.

These of course are not the only perspectives we find in critical literature on the georgic. To mention just two examples, Kevis Goodman has probed ways in which the georgic can "offer a substantial register of history" (3), and reads the georgic element of *The Seasons* not so much as hiding history as displaying signs of an awareness of it; and David Fairer's various treatments of the genre have redirected attention to those elements of the georgic tradition that are concerned with the unmanageable aspects of nature and with the human struggle and energies that confront it. In what follows, I will rely on some of Fairer's arguments, but my aim is not to question the ideological criticism of the prospect poem or the georgic – that is now also part of the critical tradition that bears on how a generic mixture of prospect poetry and georgic poetry may be approached. My aim, rather, is to suggest that the critical story I have been recalling may also be revised by considering not only how assessments of the prospect poem inflect readings of the georgic, but also how georgic features may create contexts for reading Thomson's treatment of the genre of the prospect poem. I have been suggesting that if we make the prior generic decision to read *The Seasons* in the tradition of prospect poetry, this decision is likely to determine perspectives on its georgic aspects. But a generic mixture involves an interaction of genres, their mutual shaping of one another, and this, too, ought to shape our approaches. I think that exploring such interrelations is necessary for us to begin making the generic assessments that a literary history of forms would require. The following brief examples are meant to illustrate considerations that I believe need to be taken on board when we attend to both generic mixtures and to the critical stories that are involved in handling them.

One feature of prospect poems that has been seen as enhancing their tendency to pass over ideologically troublesome details and complications is that they strive to universalize their claims; the characteristic position of viewing large expanses from an elevated point serves just this. This universalizing tendency is certainly palpable throughout *The Seasons*. When Thomson imagines himself in rural retirement meditating with friends on the "boundless Frame" of nature, "Its Life, its Laws, its Progress, and its End," this gradually leads to "larger Prospects of the beauteous Whole" that "open on our opening Minds; / And each diffusive Harmony unite, / In full Perfection, to the astonish'd Eye." (*Winter* 572–582). This is not a scanning of a landscape, and the eye that sees the "Prospects" is not the physical one; it is rather what may be called an "intellectual prospect" but it is just this kind of perception that is at work in the prospect poem's overseeing of landscapes. This is well shown in a sequence in *Summer*; the speaker describes the time of the day when

the sun has "lost its Rage" but still offers "animating warmth" and finds this to be "the soft Hour / Of Walking" (1371–1372, 1379–1380); he then asks his female companion which way they should walk, listing a number of possibilities, the last of which is to "ascend" a hill; the listing of possibilities here stops, but this last option is the one they seem to have taken, because in the next sentence their eyes "sweep / The boundless Landskip" (1397ff), seeing London, the neighbouring hills, as well as Windsor and the Thames. The position of the observer and the objects of observation are here almost identical with those of *Cooper's Hill*, and these lines clearly recall Denham's poem. The passage then moves on and is followed by Thomson's adaptation of Virgil's panegyric on Italy from the *Georgics* (II.138–76), observing (from the hill they have ascended, we must assume from the context) a "goodly prospect" that goes on to include all of Britain (1438ff). Denham's poem introduced the perceptual process of the prospect into his georgic largely to describe the landscape through the idea of *concordia discors*, a world that is seen as one in which conflicting and opposing elements are ultimately in harmony, which also accorded with the political vision of the poem (Wasserman 101–108). The function of what I take to be a reference to Denham here is to suggest that Britain and its heroes whom Thomson goes on to list represent just such an underlying harmony of the world. This sequence, then, moves from a walk up a hill to depicting the sights from it, and through invoking Virgil and Denham, arrives at what is now a mental, or intellectual, as well as political and national prospect of wholeness and universal relevance. These passages thus indicate the intertwining of intellectual and perceptual prospects and their inflection of the georgic by the universalizing tendency of the prospect poem.

However, in the georgic we do not only find a claim to universal relevance; as David Fairer has argued, the universalized in the georgic tends to "cede to the particular context" (*Organising* 263), to the variety of the observed world that may always resist the universality of claims. And however much Thomson is awed by the "larger Prospect of the beauteous Whole," the poem (as critics early and late have stressed) is just as full of a descent to minute details as it is of ascent to heights where boundless prospects open up, and what we typically find in the former is the variety, the energetic tensions and the contrasting movements that has been found the most characteristic feature of Thomson's descriptions of nature. Thomson often insists on the same perfection and order being revealed in both the particular and the universal, but he also he speaks of the present as an Iron Age – as "these iron Times / These dregs of Life!" when "the distemper'd Mind / Has lost that Concord of harmonious Powers" and in which "ever-changing Views of Good and Ill, / Form'd infinitely various, vex the Mind" (*Spring* 274–276, 298–299). If our minds may be opened onto the perfection and harmony of the whole and still be vexed by variety, the universal keeps being vexed by the particular. Overall, marveling at the "whole" is a more tangible drive of the poem than being vexed by the variety of detail; yet, as for Virgil

already, so for later georgic poetry, "the contingencies of time and place" are crucial, and Fairer demonstrates this point by quoting Thomson who sees "a broken world" where "all is off the poise" (*Organising* 263; *Spring* 318, 278). Criticism is increasingly attentive to instances where the poem loses poise and embraces features that unsettle a sense of the harmonious whole. It is often pointed out, for instance, that throughout the many revisions of the poem the destructive aspects of nature, as well as its georgic aspects were given increasingly more emphasis, and however these may be distanced into being elements of a perfect whole, many readers feel that they offer a sense of the incomprehensibility of divine order, and make the sound of the unspoken "why?" of bewilderment persist throughout the work (Gerrard 204–206). The georgic aspect of the poem very much leaves its mark on the universalizing nature of the prospect views. The universality of the prospect poem is "vexed" by particulars, and so if we place the prospect poem in the context of the georgic and not the other way around, its functions may be seen in a different light.

Perhaps this function has to do with the hope that Fairer highlights as an element of the georgic's struggle with nature: the georgic is not "about stability and order, but about struggle and uncertainty, and sustaining hopes for the future" (*Organising* 284). Thomson's scientific and theological optimism sits uneasily with the threatening, destructive aspects of nature, and the critical approach to loco-descriptive poetry I have recalled finds the optimism to be falsely presented in prospect views, to be an ideological drive or a wish-fulfilment. But if we place the prospect view in the context of the georgic, the optimism may be read not just as unwarranted statement, but rather as a result of hope for the future based on wresting, through work and struggle, growth from a nature that is just as destructive as it is munificent. The first prospect view in the poem (if we read it in its final version, beginning with *Spring*) follows closely on the declaration of the georgic intent, telling the rich not to condescend to the theme of work in nature, for "Such themes as these the rural Maro sung," and goes on to instruct the nation: "Ye generous Britons, venerate the Plow" (*Spring* 55, 67). When the speaker soon "ascend[s] / Some Eminence" his "raptur'd Eye" sees "yellow Autumn" "hid beneath / The fair Profusion" (*Spring* 108–113). That is, the first prospect view of the poem, placed emphatically in a georgic context, does not only make claims for an invisible harmony beneath variety – what is seen in Spring is Autumn, and what the speaker thus more specifically reaches out for is the hope that the fruits of venerating the plough will be reaped; this is the promise of the variety of the seasonal cycle, and so the passages are of a georgic hope about the promises that work holds.

Furthermore, it is not only the poet or the landed gentlemen who attain broad prospects. I find it highly significant in the present context that Thomson also uses the prospect technique when describing the frustration of such hopes. In *Autumn*, in a description of a storm that comes "Defeating […] the Labours of the Year" (311) by swelling the rivers into a flood and the "Hopes / And well-earn'd Treasures of the painful Year" (342–343) are destroyed, the husbandman "Fled to some Eminence

[…] / Helpless beholds the miserable Wreck" (344–345). The eminence here is sought in fleeing the flood, not in a leisurely walk to acquire beautiful vistas and boundless views, but I think it is inescapable to think of the passage as a version of the prospect view, one that reveals a miserable world if the hopes placed in labour are disappointed. The passage then leads to admonitions to the rich to "Be mindful of the rough laborious Hand" (351). This instantiates a version of the prospect view into which intrudes the uncertainty, struggle and hope of the georgic, and indicates a generic interaction that may well qualify our sense of the function of the prospect from unwarranted optimism and claims for the authority of one social class into an uncertain hope that is to be wrested from the wreck of a miserable world. We may perhaps regard the passage as an anti-prospect – the labourer ascending an eminence in escape and seeing a wreck, instead of the gentleman's leisurely stroll to a height and seeing the bounty, beauty and boundless goodness of the world – where the georgic context reverses elements we have come to associate with the prospect view.

I want to finish with a similar example, a detail that is perhaps too minute to bear much weight, but which may indicate in yet another way that the generic interrelation of the prospect poem and the georgic is a two-way process, and that it may not only be our sense of the prospect technique that should determine estimations of the georgic, for the harsher aspects of the georgic also haunt the idealizations of the prospect. In *Winter*, before the famous scene of the shepherd lost in s snowstorm and freezing to death, this is how the coming storm is described: "Earth's universal Face, deep-hid, and chill, / Is one wild dazzling Waste, that buries wide / The works of Man" (238–240). As the passage leads up to the scene of the shepherd losing his way, the Swain "sees other Hills ascend, / Of unknown joyless Brow; and other Scenes / Of horrid Prospect, shag the trackless Plain" (279–281). We may sense here an anti-prospect of another kind: we begin with an instance of the hardships of human labour, the face of earth as well as the work of man is hidden, and instead of the bounty of God a waste is surveyed; as the shepherd is losing his way he traverses a "formless Wild" and "wanders on / From Hill to Dale, still more astray" (283–284). It is the hills that "ascend," the shepherd himself is in fact trying to descend, but orientation is lost, and he sometimes ascends, sometimes descends ("From Hill to Dale […] astray"). Although in the overall structure of the poem an *under*lying order may be assumed by Thomson, this view opens merely onto formlessness, and we are given a "horrid Prospect" that is "shagged" with such scenes. James Sambrook's editorial note for "shag" is "make rough" (384); in the Merriam–Webster Dictionary we find that "shag" as a noun means a "tangled mass or covering (as of hair)," as an adjective, shaggy means being covered with long, course hair or with tangled, unkempt vegetation, and as a verb, besides "making rough," it also means "to fall or hang in shaggy masses." Thomson uses several of these senses in the poem; here, when scenes "shag" the horrid prospects, they make the prospect rough by covering it – if we read the word "prospect" in a generic sense of opening up a view of the

harmony of the universe, here such a view is covered over by the roughness, making nature unkempt, unorganized, as well as rough.

The word "shagged" features nine times in the entire poem, and most of the other eight occurrences also indicate wildness, formlessness, danger. There are three other occasions when it appears in descriptions of landscape where the word is associated with scenes that have nothing Edenic about them: first, in a list of places where birds may find shelter, we have the "unfrequented Glooms, or shaggy banks" (*Spring* 645), then in a description of a summer rain, creating a "copious Flood" in which the "tortured waves" find no repose as they rage "amid the shaggy rocks" (*Summer* 600), and last in what may be seen as another anti-prospect view, as the Muse looks down from above and observes North Siberia ("the Tartar's Coast"), where "boundless frost" chains the rage of the ocean's tempest – this prospect shows us "a bleak Expanse / Shagged over with wavy Rocks, cheerless, and void / Of every Life […]" (*Winter* 918). On three occasions, the word is used more literally: we read of the "shaggy breast" of predatory animals that lodges no pity (*Spring* 348), the "shaggy king" (the lion) of the predators in Africa whose arrival is a "coming rage" heard "with horror" (*Summer* 925), then the "shaggy foe" of wolves, the wolfhound, in a scene that follows the condemnation of hunting by mentioning the more violent fight against wild animals than the chase of deer (*Autumn* 465). Although the word in these passages refers simply to the tangled mass of hair covering the bodies of these animals, it is noteworthy that in each case, they are wild, predatory animals.

These instances all associate the word with connotations of danger, wildness, formlessness, and threat – and for this reason it is quite surprising to find that the two other instances when Thomson uses this word are in dedications to patrons who enjoy the boundless prospects of gentlemen. The first of these is in the famous Hagley-Park passage on the estate of Sir George Lyttelton, one that has come to be seen as a quintessential example to the ideological inflections of prospect views. In this "British Tempe" the dale is "shagged with mossy rocks" (*Spring* 909–910). The second such instance is in a rather similar dedication to George Bubb Dodington (another opposition Whig patron), on whose estate in Eastbury a "boundless prospect" is "yonder shagg'd with Wood" (*Autumn* 658). In these cases, the word seems to have no particular association, meaning simply 'covered with rocks and wood.' Nonetheless, it is a word that on all other occasions Thomson uses in unpleasant contexts, having to do with the threats of nature and with desolation, and if we bring these instances to bear on one another, the horrid prospect that "shags" the plains in the *Winter* passage can all the more be read as an anti-prospect: the pleasant wondering becomes a deadly loss of way, the elevation becomes not the reaching of a vista point but a view of rising hills that are unknown and joyless, and the unbounded view from above becomes an endless plain showing horrid prospects. Through the word "shagged," these seem to haunt the boundless prospects which critics most often see as a manipulative revelation of universal order that turns a blind eye to horrid prospects. But Thomson's poem does not, there are plenty of

passages in the poem confronting desolation. What this example indicates is that these latter passages do not just sit beside the boundless views of universal happiness, but also permeate them, blending the anti-prospect into the prospect.

The examples discussed here allude to the prospect technique to indicate the labourer's struggle and hope and establish a verbal interaction between prospects displaying the benevolence and the malevolence of the world that opens up to the eye. This also suggests that the *par excellence* prospect scenes are qualified by bearing the stamps of the georgic context. And these, I believe, are not just various episodes or passages that are ushered into the same textual space at random with other parts of the poem that have opposing implications; they are related through theme, technique, and even verbal echoes, and are thus brought into interaction with the boundless prospects of the beauteous whole. The interrelations working in a generic mix are mutually shaping processes, not just the case of one form or genre inflecting the function of another, but rather of the inflection of both by the other. Our critical stories may be advanced by regarding generic interaction as indeed mutual, which demands that in assessing the work genres do in mixtures, we need to consider two-(or more)-way processes of shaping, rather than approaching interactions through a prior decision about a dominant mode to which we subordinate others.

The emergence of a critical story about the georgic that revises the one which transposed assessments of the prospect poem onto it may be more than just another story, just a different prior decision about the poem's dominant mode only if we acknowledge and reckon with already existing stories. Arguing for the perspective here suggested does not mean an argument for treating *The Seasons* as a "fundamentally" georgic poem, in the manner of Chalker's study cited above. It rather strives to handle generic hybridity by focusing on the mutually shaping interrelation of its elements as well as by involving in the view of this interaction the ways in which these elements have been read in the critical tradition. These readings all offer us understandings of generic functions, which themselves may be brought into interaction, as they form part of the history of our understanding of a work and bear on our prior generic decisions in approaching it. Our current historical understanding places *The Seasons* in the tradition of Denham's *Cooper's Hill* that introduced a perceptual technique into the georgic. What we see it doing in or to that tradition will also depend on understanding how it relates its generic elements to one another, but the understanding of these elements must come not from fixed generic definitions but from our critical inheritance of the sense of the loco-descriptive prospect poem and the georgic. Once we acknowledge that genres are not stable categories and that groupings of kinds are historically determined, generic assessments require both historical and historiographical perspectives on the interaction of generic constituents. If we were to construct a narrative literary history of forms, I speculate that the place of *The Seasons* is not in a chapter on one genre or another, nor in one on devotional poetry or the poetry of Miltonic sublimity (although all these would be legitimate candidates), but in a discussion of poetry that utilizes a particular generic constellation.

The innovations in this tradition become visible through the way elements of that constellation are brought to bear on one another, but in understanding this, the functions of these elements are to be derived not from a pre-established generic system but from our critical stories about them.

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Tibor Bónus

Toucher (par) la langue – sur le baiser

Pour lire la *Recherche* de Marcel Proust[1]

« L'observation compte peu. »

> « Car il faut que ceux-là mêmes qui ont raison, comme Françoise, aient tort aussi, pour faire de la Justice une chose impossible. »
>
> *Marcel Proust*

Que l'amour soit en fin de compte une allégorie de la lecture dans la *Recherche* de Proust, la critique l'a reconnu depuis un certain temps déjà, et plusieurs contributions en ont développé l'idée. (de Man : 1979, Kassel : 1980, Miller : 1998 ; 1999, Bowie : 1998) Pour introduire notre lecture, il serait utile de parcourir rapidement quelques paradoxes de l'amour qui peuvent modeler les difficultés de la lecture non seulement *dans* le roman, mais aussi *du* roman. L'amour, l'être amoureux de quelqu'un rend le sujet tout à la fois défiant et crédule, le retirant de cet état de repos qui est la condition de l'objectivité de toute connaissance. Mais c'est aussi l'amour qui lui donne l'intérêt de connaître l'autre personne, intérêt sans lequel – dans l'indifférence – aucune connaissance ne peut se lancer, qui est donc la condition mais aussi l'obstacle du connaître. Donc, d'une part l'amour est l'origine de la connaissance, faisant jaillir la source du connaître, d'autre part, le même amour ou la même source (c'est-à-dire le désir du connaître) aveuglent le sujet connaissant. (Ce paradoxe est bien connu, développé d'après le *Phèdre* de Platon, qui constitue l'un des plus importants textes de l'arrière-plan du roman proustien). Avec l'amour commence la lecture intense, aporétique de l'autre personne, une expérience dynamique qui chez Proust ne comprend pas le moment de l'accomplissement, la tranquillité ou l'extase de se connaître. Tout d'abord parce qu'il est impossible de finir la lecture de l'autre personne, qui se déroule dans une hésitation permanente entre la méfiance (la jalousie) et la crédulité, entre le soupçon et la confiance. Ensuite parce que la fin de cette lecture apporte également la fin de l'amour qui arrive avec l'indifférence, un état d'âme que le héros n'atteint que des années après la mort d'Albertine. Même au bout d'autant de lecture, même au-delà de sa mort, l'autre personne reste un secret inaccessible,

[1] Petit extrait d'une longue étude.

dont on ne peut que *témoigner*, en disposant d'une connaissance indéfinie, hypothétique, instable, une connaissance qui peut se dissoudre n'importe quand dans la lumière d'une autre constellation de lecture.

Dans l'amoureux se réveille le désir de connaître le monde de l'autre personne, et l'amour n'est autre que le déroulement temporel de cet acte de connaître où ni le sujet, ni l'objet de la connaissance ne peuvent rester tels qu'ils étaient au début, avec leur premier désir de se connaître. Pendant que l'on s'introduit dans le monde de l'autre afin de le connaître, dans l'autre monde dont l'inconnu nous a séduit, nous devenons le participant, la partie de ce monde qui ne reste pas identique avec celui que nous avons commencé à connaître, et entre-temps nous avons changé nous aussi. L'autre s'inscrit en nous et nous nous inscrivons en elle ou en lui – cette relation symétrique est au fond asymétrique et contre-temporelle (la condition de toutes les relations affectives est que l'un va voir mourir l'autre). Le temps de l'amour n'est pas simplement un temps linéaire, son développement ne suit pas un mouvement téléologique, ce qui est valable pour l'interprétation de tout le roman, surtout celle de sa fin, la soi-disant révélation finale de ou par la littérature.[2] Comme figure temporaire *par excellence*, l'amour avance vers sa propre dissolution, puisque s'approprier le monde de l'autre implique de s'y habituer, ce qui élimine sa force d'attraction que lui avait conféré son caractère inconnu, non-familier. Le but de l'amour n'est pas l'accomplissement, mais sa propre fin. Mais une fin qui ne peut pas être définitive, plutôt un recommencement : même une rupture ne nous éloigne pas de la personne inscrite en nous au fil du temps, au contraire elle nous en rapproche. La séparation, de même manière que la jalousie, donne un nouvel élan à l'amour, nous rappelant l'altérité de l'autre, l'aspect inconnu de sa personnalité, tout ce qui nous avait séduit en premier lieu.[3] Le paradoxe de l'amour n'est pas indépendant de celui de l'habitude.

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[2] Comme c'est bien connu, la fin de la *Recherche* est une sorte de recommencement : le commencement de l'écriture à la fin du texte invite à relire le début comme la conséquence de la fin. Cet encerclement ne fait pas un cercle clos, mais plutôt l'unité ou l'identité infiniment différée du contenant et du contenu, une répétition qui implique le moment de l'altération. Lorsqu'à la fin du dernier volume (*Le temps retrouvé*), le héros semble reconnaître la valeur absolue de la littérature, et, faisant son apologie, décide de se mettre à son œuvre jusqu'alors sans cesse reportée, cette apologie et ce geste ne peuvent être simplement considérés comme le télos atteint de sa vie, comme la révélation finale de la littérature (celle qui donne un plus-value à la vie), mais comme l'interruption temporaire d'une hésitation, d'un va-et-vient permanent entre la valeur suprême de la vie et celle de la littérature. Dans la critique proustienne, seules quelques interprétations (entre autres celle de Walter Benjamin [Benjamin : 2000] et de Martin Hägglund [Hägglund : 2012]) ont essayé de déconstruire le mouvement téléologique du roman vers la révélation finale et surtout le statut de cette révélation.

[3] « Vivez tout à fait avec la femme, et vous ne verrez plus rien de ce qui vous l'a fait aimer ; certes les deux éléments désunis, la jalousie peut à nouveau les rejoindre. Si après un long temps de vie commune je devais finir par ne plus voir en Albertine qu'une femme ordinaire, quelques intrigues d'elle avec un être qu'elle eût aimé à Balbec eût peut-être suffi pour réincorporer en elle et amalgamer la plage et le déferlement du flot. Seulement ces mélanges secondaires ne ravissant plus nos yeux, c'est à notre cœur qu'ils sont sensibles et funestes. On ne peut, sous une forme si dangereuse, trouver souhaitable le renouvellement du miracle. Mais j'anticipe les années. Et je dois seulement ici regretter de n'être pas resté assez sage pour avoir eu simplement

Être séparé du monde de l'autre, de l'autrui comme un autre monde, engendre le désir de s'y introduire, de franchir l'obstacle de la séparation, ce qui reste *en fin de compte* impossible même dans un amour partagé. « L'autrui est secret, parce qu'il est autre » – dit Jacques Derrida (Derrida : 2001, 367–398), et ses mots nous révèlent que le secret inaccessible de l'autre n'est pas une substance, quelque chose qui reposerait en lui-même, indépendamment de ses manifestations, mais qu'il fonctionne comme une sorte de résistance qui rend possible – et par là même impossible – toutes les lectures, tous les témoignages sur l'autrui, c'est-à-dire sur cet être qui n'existe pas autrement que dans ou par ses interprétations permanentes. Dans le cas d'Albertine, l'amour et la connaissance ne se rapportent pas seulement dans la lecture, mais aussi dans la philologie, très concrètement dans l'épithète *philologique*. Le passage où ce mot surgit initialement est celui qui introduit la narration du premier baiser (réussi) de Marcel à Albertine, précisément au moment où naît chez le protagoniste (le moi évoqué) l'action d'embrasser la jeune fille. L'amour n'est pas seulement ce qui éveille l'intérêt et la curiosité dans le sujet, mais il est aussi l'allégorie de la lecture ou, ce qui revient au même, de l'illisible : que l'autre réponde ou non à mon amour, qu'elle m'aime ou soit indifférente, il m'est impossible de le savoir, d'en acquérir la certitude, bien que je ne puisse pas différer la décision. Dans cette situation, seul le contact corporel, donc le succès ou l'échec de *l'action physique* permet de décider entre les deux lectures (hypothétiques) opposées : est-ce que Albertine laissera Marcel lui donner le baiser ou bien elle refusera-t-elle ? Afin que cette situation s'établisse, il est nécessaire que la narration prenne la forme d'un témoignage où le narrateur et le héros participant sont fondus dans le même personnage, dont la perspective exclusive offre l'unique récit des événements. Les points de vue des autres personnages ne sont disponibles qu'à travers la perspective du témoin principal, dont la lecture incessamment reconfigurée sur la jeune fille n'a pas d'alternative textuelle. Comme on va le voir, Albertine lui permet de l'embrasser, mais le succès de cette action ne reste pas longtemps le signe d'un amour réellement partagé : plus tard, à la lumière d'une nouvelle lecture, se révèle son instabilité, c'est-à-dire son *éventuelle* impertinence. De plus, l'indécidabilité détermine aussi la lecture de soi-même : selon le témoignage du narrateur, on ne peut pas décider s'il est amoureux de la jeune fille ou bien s'il brûle simplement d'un désir charnel, restant indifférent au personnage moral d'Albertine.[4] Et ce qui est plus inquiétant encore, on ne peut jamais décider entre le

ma collection de femmes comme on en a de lorgnettes anciennes, jamais assez nombreuses derrière la vitrine où toujours une place vide attend une lorgnette nouvelle et plus rare. » (Proust : 1989, II, 647–648). Le narrateur anticipe ici les événements de sa vie tels que racontés dans les volumes intitulés *La prisonnière* et *Albertine disparue*. Le mouvement des flots fonctionne ici (aussi) comme la métaphore ou l'allégorie du va-et-vient de la lecture de l'autre, ce qui montre que dans ce roman n'importe quel phénomène peut avoir de relevance philologique ou méta-textuel.

[4] D'une part le narrateur déclare : « Certes je n'aimais nullement Albertine : fille de la brume du dehors, elle pouvait seulement contenter le désir imaginatif que le temps nouveau avait éveillé en moi et qui était intermédiaire entre les désirs que peuvent satisfaire d'une part les arts de la cuisine et ceux de la sculpture

caractère mensonger ou sincère du témoignage du narrateur, malgré le fait qu'il soit la seule source sur laquelle la lecture peut s'appuyer.[5] Comme le montre le passage suivant, l'amour ou l'intimité que crée le baiser n'apparaissent pas comme une identification ou un échange entre deux personnes, le reflet mutuel de l'un dans l'autre, mais plutôt comme *une interprétation* postérieure de *l'événement* du baiser. D'autant plus que le baiser ne fut pas éprouvé par le narrateur comme une expérience de plaisir permettant l'union de deux personnes, mais au contraire comme l'expérience, par le toucher et l'impénétrabilité de son corps, de l'irréductible altérité de l'autre. L'amour chez Proust n'apparaît pas comme une union, comme une assimilation par le sens matériel du toucher (malgré le fait que ce soit le seul sens

monumentale, car il me faisait rêver à la fois de mêler à ma chair une matière différente et chaude, et d'attacher par quelque point à mon corps étendu un corps divergent » (II, 649). Il s'agit ici d'un désir charnel (faire l'amour c'est manger l'autre) dont la généralité est renforcée par la réflexion esthétique (la sculpture). Dans cette relation, Albertine est le supplément de la femme dont l'homme a besoin, comme elle est si concrètement la femme qui remplace une autre : au moment où Albertine le visite, Marcel attend la réponse de Mme de Stermaria avec laquelle il espère connaître des plaisirs charnels. D'autre part le narrateur dit : « Quelle différence entre posséder une femme sur laquelle notre corps seul s'applique parce qu'elle n'est qu'un morceau de chair, et posséder la jeune fille qu'on apercevait sur la plage avec ses amies, certains jours, sans même savoir pourquoi ces jours-là plutôt que tels autres, ce qui faisait qu'on tremblait de ne pas la revoir. […] baiser, au lieu des joues de la première venue, si fraîches soient-elles, mais anonymes, sans secret, sans prestige, celles auxquelles j'avais si longtemps rêvé, serait connaître le goût, la saveur, d'une couleur bien souvent regardée. […] C'est pour cela que les femmes un peu difficiles, qu'on ne possède pas tout de suite, dont on ne sait même pas tout de suite qu'on pourra jamais les posséder, sont les seules intéressantes. » (II, 657–658). Le désir de la possession corporelle de l'autre et celui de s'introduire dans son monde inconnu sont deux sortes de désir différentes, mais sont en même temps inséparables l'un de l'autre : le monde « spirituel » de l'autre n'est intéressant qu'avec la possibilité de sa possession corporelle. Le désir pour le monde d'Albertine ne survit pas à son refus d'être embrassé par Marcel. « […] et comme si, au lieu d'une jeune fille réelle, j'avais connu une poupée de cire, il arriva que peu à peu se détacha d'elle mon désir de pénétrer dans sa vie, de la suivre dans les pays où elle avait passé son enfance, d'être initié par elle à une vie de sport ; ma curiosité intellectuelle de ce qu'elle pensait sur tel ou tel sujet ne survécut pas à la croyance que je pourrais l'embrasser. Mes rêves l'abandonnèrent dès qu'ils cessèrent d'être alimentés par l'espoir d'une possession dont je les avais crus indépendants. » (II, 286–287).

[5] Dans les passages qui introduisent la scène du baiser, le narrateur revient sur le reproche de perfidie et de trahison adressé que lui adresse son ami Robert de Saint-Loup, un incident qu'il a laissé sans explication quelques pages plus tôt, au milieu de la narration de l'agonie et de la mort de la grand-mère. Dans ce deuxième passage, le narrateur suppose que derrière le reproche de son ami se cache le témoignage que fait Rachel à Saint-Loup, selon lequel, en son absence, Marcel aurait essayé de séduire son amant. Face au lecteur, le narrateur ne se défend pas contre une telle accusation qui, comme sa propre projection hypothétique, semble renforcer la suspicion que le contenu de ladite accusation n'est pas sans fondement. Ce qui rend la narration curieuse et ainsi exemplaire, c'est qu'elle laisse le témoignage de Rachel suspendu entre vérité et mensonge, entre parjure et sincérité, tandis que la réalité même de ce témoignage reste suspendue par l'hypothèse. Voici le passage : « La lettre de Saint-Loup ne m'avait pas étonné, bien que je n'eusse pas reçu de nouvelles de lui depuis qu'au moment de la maladie de ma grand-mère il m'eut accusé de perfidie et de trahison. J'avais très bien compris alors ce qui s'était passé. Rachel, qui aimait à exciter sa jalousie – elle avait des raisons accessoires aussi de m'en vouloir – avait persuadé à son amant que j'avais fait de sournoises tentatives pour avoir, pendant l'absence de Robert, des relations avec elle. Il est probable qu'il continuait à croire que c'était vrai, mais il avait cessé d'être épris d'elle, de sorte que, vrai ou non, cela lui était devenu parfaitement égal et que notre amitié seule subsistait. Quand, une fois que je l'eus revu, je voulus essayer de lui parler de ses reproches, il eut seulement un bon et tendre sourire par lequel il avait l'air de s'excuser, puis il changea la conversation. » (643–644)

« mutuel » des cinq sens : celui qui touche est toujours touché lui aussi), mais comme un sentiment unilatéral infranchissable qui ne réussit jamais à éliminer, ni à oublier l'altérité de l'autre et la *contiguïté* de ma relation avec elle. La *Recherche* nous rappelle sans cesse – de diverses manières – non seulement la subjectivité (le perspectivisme), mais aussi la temporalité et à la conventionalité de ce que l'on nomme amour, et par là même nous rappelle la matérialité au fond de toute spiritualité, la métonymie irréductible au fond de toute métaphore (la contiguïté et le hasard au fond du naturel et du nécessaire).[6] Nous verrons cependant que cette sorte de matérialité, dont le toucher est le médium principal, n'est pas une matière objectivable et tangible mais plutôt « une matérialité sans matière », avec la « structure » de *la trace* où le sens du toucher contient aussi l'intouchable, un moment ou un composant qui garde dans ce sens matériel une immatérialité ou une spiritualité irréductible. Chez Proust le toucher n'est pas simplement le sens qui garantit la présence pleine de la matière et l'immédiateté absolue, mais il implique aussi *la limite (qui est) intouchable*.[7]

Marcel, dont Albertine quelques mois plus tôt à l'hôtel de Balbec avait déjà refusé le baiser, maintenant que la jeune fille lui rend visite à Paris, conclue qu'elle a changé entre-temps. Il écoute ses paroles en philologue, y remarquant le changement de lexique qu'il attribue à l'influence d'un milieu inconnu : « mais cela est justement le signe d'un changement, et il me semblait qu'entre le vocabulaire d'Albertine que j'avais connu… » (II, 652). Le narrateur, qui se comporte en critique génétique, ne peut avoir que des suppositions sur l'origine de ce vocabulaire transformé. Mais pour apercevoir cette transformation, il lui fallait bien connaître le langage précédent d'Albertine ou sa façon de parler : en racontant la genèse de son amour d'abord pour tout le groupe de jeunes filles, puis plus tard pour la seule Albertine, le narrateur témoigne d'une attention distinguée à la genèse de leur langage. Il considère cette généalogie établie comme naturelle *et* conventionnelle (historique, sociale), nécessaire *et* arbitraire en même temps ; d'une part leur langage vient de leur milieu social, en premier lieu de leur parents, d'autre part il vient de leur province originelle, des lieux naturels géographiques, comme s'il s'agissait, dans le cas des jeunes filles *en fleurs*, *de plantes* qui se nourrissent de la terre. Le narrateur ne cesse de lire la parole des jeunes filles, en établissant d'après leur vocabulaire et leurs intonations des mondes différentes.[8] Il s'intéresse donc à ces mondes individuels qui se trouvent dans le sujet

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[6] Voir pour cela : Genette : 1972, de Man : 1979.

[7] « On ne peut toucher qu'à une surface, c'est-à-dire qu'à la peau ou à la pellicule d'une limite […]. Mais une limite, *la limite elle-même*, par définition, semble privée de corps. Elle ne se touche pas, elle ne se laisse pas toucher, elle se dérobe au toucher qui ou bien ne l'atteint jamais ou bien la transgresse à jamais. » (Derrida : 2000, 16)

[8] La langue, qui est le médium et le garant de l'esprit, de la dimension spirituelle et immatérielle de l'humain, est considérée dans ces pages proustiennes tout d'abord sous son aspect corporel, matériel et organique. Comme les traits d'un visage sont en même temps un héritage généalogique et la trace des répétitions de l'habitude, le langage est organique et conventionnel, naturel et culturel. Et tous les deux, les traits du visage et du langage, sont en même temps immobiles et en mouvement perpétuel. « Les traits de notre visage ne

et en dehors du sujet, et qui ne sont pas autres que ces perspectives ou ces points de vue singuliers ouverts sur le monde, celles ou ceux qui médiatisent d'une manière irremplaçable le monde commun, et dont l'objectivation matérielle (en forme de langage, de lexique, ou bien en forme de corps) nous trompe aussi sur la nature liminale, et dont la lecture fait oublier l'altérité illisible, et au fond intouchable. Ce même travail philologique recommence avec la visite d'Albertine chez Marcel à Paris. Il interprète les nouveaux mots employés par la jeune fille comme des *citations* d'origine inconnue, *inscrites* dans le personnage d'Albertine qui, grâce à elles, a perdu sa chasteté et son innocence. Tout cela encourage Marcel à l'action, dans la mesure où il ne doit plus craindre ni sa résistance ni son innocence, ni – en cas de succès – un sentiment de culpabilité. Paradoxalement, les citations inscrites en elle prêtent au visage d'Albertine une silhouette plus nette ; selon le témoignage du narrateur, la jeune fille est devenue sous l'influence de cette personne, de son milieu inconnu, plus autonome.[9] C'est là un révélateur de plusieurs aspects de la complexité de la langue. Les formules empruntées montrent que toute parole fonctionne comme une sorte de vibration entre des éléments propres et étrangers – la citation et la répétition ne menacent pas simplement le langage « autonome », mais en assurent aussi la condition. Marcel comme philologue essaie d'arrêter cette vibration, en séparant les mots propres des mots empruntés d'Albertine, en essayant d'*objectiver* la langue, opération contraignante et inévitable sans laquelle il serait impossible de venir à bout de la langue, mais ce qui est en même temps une *pure illusion* qui ne peut que

sont guère que des gestes devenus, par l'habitude, définitifs. La nature, comme la catastrophe de Pompéi, comme une métamorphose de nymphe, nous a immobilisés dans le mouvement accoutumé. De même nos intonations contiennent notre philosophie de la vie, ce que la personne se dit à tout moment sur les choses. Sans doute ces traits n'étaient pas qu'à ces jeunes filles. Ils étaient à leur parents. L'individu baigne dans quelque chose de plus général que lui. À ce compte, les parents ne fournissent pas que ce geste habituel que sont les traits du visage et de la voix, mais aussi certaines manières de parler, certaines phrases consacrées, qui presque aussi inconscientes qu'une intonation, presque aussi profondes, indiquent, comme elle, un point de vue sur la vie. Il est vrai que pour les jeunes filles, il y a certaines de ces expressions que leurs parents ne leur donnent pas avant un certain âge, généralement pas avant qu'elles soient des femmes. On les garde en réserve. Ainsi par exemple si on parlait d'un tableau d'un ami d'Elstir, Andrée qui avait encore les cheveux dans le dos ne pouvait encore faire personnellement usage de l'expression dont usait sa mère et sa sœur mariée : « Il paraît que *l'homme* est charmant. » Mais cela viendrait avec la permission d'aller au Palais-Royal. Et déjà depuis sa première communion, Albertine disait comme une amie de sa tante : « Je trouverais cela assez terrible. » On lui avait aussi donné en présent l'habitude de faire répéter ce qu'on lui disait pour avoir l'air de s'intéresser et de chercher à se former une opinion personnelle. Si on disait que la peinture d'un peintre était bien, ou sa maison jolie : « Ah ! c'est bien, sa peinture ? Ah ! c'est joli, sa maison ? » Enfin plus générale encore que n'est le legs familial était la savoureuse matière imposée par la province originelle d'où elles tiraient leur voix et même à laquelle mordaient leurs intonations. […] Entre cette province et le tempérament de la jeune fille qui dictait les inflexions, je percevais un beau dialogue. Dialogue, non pas discorde. Aucune ne saurait diviser la jeune fille et son pays natal. Elle, c'est lui encore. » (II, 262–263)

[9] « Mais maintenant on avait à peine à la reconnaître. Dégagés de la vapeur rose qui les baignait, ses traits avaient sailli comme une statue. Elle avait un autre visage, ou plutôt elle avait enfin un visage ; son corps avait grandi. Il ne restait presque plus rien de la gaine où elle avait été enveloppée et sur la surface de laquelle, à Balbec, sa forme future se dessinait à peine. » (II, 646–647)

manquer l'activité *réelle* du langage, le mouvement, la vie temporelle et événementielle de la parole, de la communication.

En introduisant son témoignage sur le fameux baiser, le narrateur parle de l'activité de *collectionner* – des objets ou des femmes. Il déclare qu'au lieu des objets, il aurait été plus sage de collectionner durant sa vie des femmes, précisément des *souvenirs* de femmes imprimés dans sa mémoire – et non des femmes en chair et en os ; à la façon de ces photographies qui ne font qu'évoquer ou remplacer les images d'une personne, conservées dans l'archive intérieure de la mémoire, que l'on peut ensuite, comme cela arrive dans la *Recherche*, repeindre ou retoucher, l'archive extérieure pouvant être plus effective que l'archive intérieure.

> Je peux le dire ici, bien que je ne susse pas alors ce qui ne devait arriver que dans la suite. Certes, il est plus raisonnable de sacrifier sa vie aux femmes qu'aux timbres-poste, aux vieilles tabatières, même aux tableaux et aux statues. […] Mais j'anticipe les années. Et je dois seulement ici regretter de n'être pas resté assez sage pour avoir eu simplement ma collection de femmes comme on en a de lorgnettes anciennes, jamais assez nombreuses derrière la vitrine où toujours une place vide attend une lorgnette nouvelle et plus rare. (II, 648)

Le narrateur, regardant en arrière, paraît regretter avoir peu de femmes dans sa vie, et par une énumération rétrospective, juxtapose dans *l'espace* les faits de sa vie passée. Sa perspective – à laquelle se surimpose la sagesse de l'être au-delà – est sérieuse et ironique à la fois : d'une part la situation rétrospective, condition de toute narration, est la seule perspective authentique permettant de *représenter*, entre autres par la collection chronologique des faits accomplis, la singularité temporelle d'une existence ; mais d'autre part, cet espacement manque ou falsifie *le temps* de la vie représentée, en faisant abstraction du *présent mouvant et ouvert à l'avenir des moments passés* de cette même vie. Pour une telle collection il faut aussi oublier que la personnalité n'est pas simplement la réserve de ses souvenirs mis en dépôt ou de la collection matérielle de ce qui s'est passé avec lui pendant sa vie. Il est cependant aisé le considérer ainsi, ainsi que le montrent bien ces belles phrases tirées de la fin du roman proustien, dans *Le temps retrouvé*, où le narrateur évoque son propre corps comme le dépôt de sa mémoire et de ses souvenirs.[10] Il est difficile ne pas voir le corps humain comme

[10] « Je savais très bien que mon cerveau était un riche bassin minier, où il y avait une étendue immense et fort diverse de gisements précieux. Mais aurais-je le temps de les exploiter ? J'étais la seule personne capable de le faire. Pour deux raisons : avec ma mort eût disparu non seulement le seul ouvrier mineur capable d'extraire ces minerais, mais encore le gisement lui-même ; or, tout à l'heure quand je rentrerais chez moi, il suffirait de la rencontre de l'auto que je prendrais avec une autre pour que mon corps fût détruit et que mon esprit, d'où la vie se retirerait, fût forcé d'abandonner à tout jamais les idées nouvelles qu'en ce moment même, n'ayant pas eu le temps de les mettre plus en sûreté dans un livre, il enserrait anxieusement de sa pulpe frémissante, protectrice, mais fragile. » (IV, 614)

une sorte de vase fragile fait de matière organique, qui contient l'esprit, mais qui est aussi temporaire que son contenu, tous deux étant condamnés à l'anéantissement. La collection rétrospective est la représentation authentique et pertinente de la temporalité, mais elle devient par là même, et inévitablement, la falsification de cette même temporalité. Ce ne sont pas la collection et la rétrospection finales qui conduisent à l'amour, mais l'idéalisation du monde de l'autre et le désir de le connaître, d'atteindre sa vérité, *en oubliant ainsi la temporalité contingente du monde de cette autre personne*. Même si cet oubli ne peut être jamais total – l'amoureux chez Proust a conscience du caractère passager, temporel de son amour : on ne peut aimer que ce qui est passager, ce qui est mortel. Et même si l'amoureux, malgré son amour infini pour quelqu'un, ne peut pas oublier que son amour n'est pas éternel – et que l'amour est toujours déjà une sorte de travail de deuil (de soi et de l'autre). Sans le dire explicitement, le passage cité peut évoquer la longue série des femmes que le narrateur, au cours de ses voyages et de sa vie, a désirées et dont il a eu envie de connaître le monde inconnu, mais qui sont restées pour lui la promesse de bonheur du moment fugitif. Précisément parce que le monde de l'autre ne peut se donner autrement que *dans le temps*, et le temps d'une vie est singulier et limité. La collection et le collectionneur doivent donc faire abstraction de la temporalité qu'ils expriment néanmoins avec une force particulière. La suite du passage, nous le verrons, met en lumière le fait qu'une vie entière ne suffit pas à connaître ne serait-ce qu'une seule femme, qu'aucune femme ni aucune personne ne peut être pleinement connue, et qu'une femme, la femme aimée, n'existe pas en une forme identique dans notre mémoire, mais en centaine de formes qui varient selon la perspective changeante de la perception. Une variabilité temporaire que l'on ne peut exprimer que par l'espacement du temps, par l'objectivation falsificatrice – par exemple *par la série des photographies*.[11] L'ouverture à l'avenir de la collection des souvenirs, de la série sans fin des objets accumulés – qui, dans le passage cité, peut rappeler le *Dom Juan* de Molière et l'air du catalogue de Leporello dans le *Don Giovanni* de Mozart – se tourne ici en une ouverture différente : le mode d'être inépuisable de l'autre personne. La collection de femmes, contrairement à celle des objets, permet cependant de reconnaître l'absurdité de l'objectivation de l'autre personne, l'impossibilité de sa possession comme objet (*La prisonnière* n'est autre que la narration de cette possession et de son échec nécessaire), même si l'amour – en tant que forme particulière de la connaissance – est poussé par cet instinct d'appropriation.

Les figures de l'optique mettent en scène en même temps la contrainte *et* l'impossibilité, la vérité *et* la tromperie de l'objectivation. La *lorgnette*, appartenant au théâtre, accentue le rôle de l'image en tant que médium théâtral par excellence,

[11] « Les dernières applications de la photographie […] je ne vois que cela qui puisse, autant que le baiser, faire surgir de ce que nous croyions une chose à aspect défini, les cents autres choses qu'elle est tout aussi bien, puisque chacune est relative à une perspective non moins légitime. » (II, 660)

où apparence et réalité sont indécidables. Elle fonctionne aussi comme métaphore d'une perspective singulière et restreinte. Dans la série des lorgnettes différentes derrière la vitrine, une lorgnette singulière signifie l'objectivation du monde d'une femme, mais elle révèle aussitôt les limites de cette objectivation : par sa lentille, elle nous sert de médium vers le monde, mais pour qui regarde le monde par le bout de la lorgnette, par son objectif de verre, la lorgnette en son objectivité disparaît. Ses lentilles ne conservent ni les images vues par la lorgnette, ni le regard de la femme aimée dont elle a été tant de fois le prolongement prothétique ; ainsi c'est exclusivement sa forme d'objet singulier (des lorgnettes rares) – comme la synecdoque de ce monde médiatisé – qui peut nous rappeler et le corps et le monde de la femme du passé (la rareté de la lorgnette vient de la féminité qui veut se distinguer à tout prix dans la parure). L'objet technique n'est pas simplement un outil que l'on utilise, un instrument qui dépendrait de nous, mais plutôt un médium dont nous dépendons nous-même, et dont l'objectivité extérieure, son aspect d'objet, n'a rien à voir avec sa performance de médiatisation. L'analogie entre la collection des lorgnettes et celle des femmes éclaire l'interprétation de l'amour dans le roman proustien : on ne désire pas seulement le corps de l'autre, mais aussi son monde et sa perspective unique, c'est-à-dire son ouverture singulière et irremplaçable sur le monde. Il est vrai que cette perspective reste secrète et inaccessible, mais il est non moins vrai qu'elle est commune et générale (comme le monde qui apparaît dedans), n'étant jamais indépendante de son appropriation, donc de sa lecture incessante et à jamais partielle. Ce n'est pas un hasard si les médiums optiques sont représentés dans la *Recherche* comme des allégories de l'œuvre d'art qui, d'autant plus s'il s'agit d'un chef-d'œuvre, est considérée comme une perspective singulière ouverte au monde, une perspective qui a la force de renouveler notre propre perception, notre façon de voir le monde.

Le passage sur le baiser donné à Albertine s'organise autour de l'analogie entre *le médium optique et le médium langagier*, sur la théâtralité de l'image et du langage qui en eux-mêmes ne permettent pas de distinguer entre la fiction et la réalité de leurs référents. Le sens du toucher est le garant de la vérification, promettant pour tous les deux la possibilité de distinguer. La narration des amours successives de son héros dans la *Recherche* s'attache à toujours mettre en scène le moment où la femme aimée est approchée puis progressivement découverte (Gilberte, la princesse de Guermantes, Albertine), en se reposant très consciemment sur le rôle changeant ou alternant des médiums sensoriels et de leur progression, qui part logiquement de la vue et de l'image, suivie par l'ouïe et la voix, et qui arrive enfin – du moins dans le cas de Gilberte et d'Albertine – au toucher. Ce mouvement qui paraît assez évident, devient dans le texte proustien une mise en scène extrêmement profonde et complexe d'une pratique et d'une théorie de la perception et de la connaissance. Et évidemment du langage, dont les deux sens théoriques (la vue et l'ouïe) participant à sa constitution, restent aussi, comme sens de perception, en dehors du langage. La vue se révèle être le sens le plus impersonnel porteur d'une irréductible distance, même dans le cas de

la plus grande proximité de l'image ; c'est toujours la voix, le sens théorique de l'affect, qui promet de franchir cette distance et d'atteindre l'autre par le s'entendre (parler). Mais l'immatérialité de la voix et du son supporte une distance spatiale aussi grande que la vue, pendant que la matérialité immatérielle de la voix est beaucoup plus proche du toucher que la vue. Pour réussir à aborder Mme de Guermantes qu'il a l'occasion de voir (de très près) tous les jours à Paris, Marcel choisit l'éloignement et le *détour de la voix* en visitant son ami, Robert de Saint-Loup à Doncières pour lui demander de le lier verbalement avec sa tante. Son amour pour Mme de Guermantes reste finalement un amour platonique, sans la possibilité du contact corporel, contrairement à Albertine dont l'attirance n'exclut pas la possibilité du toucher sans laquelle (donc sans celle du plaisir charnel) la jeune fille n'intéresserait plus Marcel. Dans les passages suivants on peut bien reconnaître la distance impliquée dans le mode d'être exclusivement visuel d'Albertine (comme si elle était, comme les lorgnettes, derrière une vitrine, ou bien comme si elle était regardée par une lorgnette), ce qui lui donne un aspect pictural, théâtral et « artificiel », la privant jusqu'à l'idée même de sa réalité vivante, organique, une réalité qu'elle regagne alors par la possibilité revenant d'être touchée.[12]

On vient de voir comment l'exemple de la lorgnette éclaire aussi les limites de l'objectivation du langage : le philologue-narrateur, étudiant le vocabulaire d'Albertine, encadre le langage et énumère longtemps les tournures, suspendant le mouvement, le fonctionnement événementiel du langage, ne s'intéressant ni à la signification, ni au référent ou à la pertinence, ni au vouloir-dire de la parole de la jeune fille. Il l'examine comme une sorte de dépôt en réserve dont les éléments – qui témoignent des états et des milieux successifs de la vie d'Albertine – peuvent s'étendre dans l'espace, exactement comme les objets d'une collection, ainsi les photographies de la jeune fille aux différents moments de sa vie, ou bien sur une bibliothèque les œuvres littéraires écrites aux temps les plus divers. Ou encore les variantes d'un texte dans une édition de critique génétique. Aussi bien dans le cas de l'image que dans celui du langage, l'archive extérieure de la collection en elle-même paraît moins importante pour le narrateur que l'archive intérieure de la mémoire, bien qu'il nous rappelle à de maintes reprises de ne pas oublier la relation complexe qui existe entre l'extérieur et l'intérieur. Dans l'un de ces passages, il expose l'enchevêtrement des

[12] « Je me rappelais Albertine d'abord devant la plage, presque peinte sur le fond de la mer, n'ayant pas pour moi une existence plus réelle que ces visions de théâtre où on ne sait pas si on a affaire à l'actrice qui est censée apparaître, à une figurante qui la double à ce moment-là, ou à une simple projection. Puis la femme vraie s'était détachée du faisceau lumineux, elle était venue à moi, mais simplement pour que je pusse m'apercevoir qu'elle n'avait nullement, dans le monde réel, cette facilité amoureuse qu'on lui supposait dans le tableau magique. J'avais appris qu'il n'était pas possible de la toucher, de l'embrasser, qu'on pouvait seulement causer avec elle, que pour moi elle n'était pas une femme plus que des raisins de jade, décoration incomestible des tables d'autrefois, ne sont des raisins. Et voici que dans un troisième plan elle m'apparaissait réelle, comme dans la seconde connaissance que j'avais eue d'elle, mais facile comme dans la première ; facile, et d'autant plus délicieusement que j'avais cru si longtemps qu'elle ne l'était pas. » (II, 656–657)

impressions, intraduisibles à la dimension des faits extérieurs « objectifs », aux images visibles et au langage commun ou partagé, enchevêtrement constitué par des liens événementiels et changeants des différences et des ressemblances, auquel participent aussi les affects et les intérêts, et qui est en mouvement permanent dans l'espace et le temps. Pour le narrateur, cet enchevêtrement est beaucoup plus important que les référents objectifs ou les circonstances extérieures des faits racontés d'une vie.[13]

Une nouvelle lorgnette, tout comme une nouvelle lecture ou un nouveau livre, ne se met pas *à côté* des autres, mais elle *entre dans une relation complexe* des différences et des ressemblances, des projections et des rétrospections, des convergences et des divergences, elle active et reconfigure cette relation qui constitue l'archive intérieure – sans laquelle aucune archive extérieure, immobile, ne peut fonctionner –, donc une archive instable, ouverte, et ainsi non objectivable. Cela peut expliquer le passage de l'extrait précédent, où l'ouverture infinie de la collection des lorgnettes semble troubler la logique de l'espace clos : non seulement le désir de collectionner est sans fin, mais de même la vitrine ne finit jamais de se remplir des lorgnettes collectées : « où toujours une place vide attend une lorgnette nouvelle et plus rare ». L'image rappelle la description par Freud du bloc magique, cet appareil modelant la psyché humaine, à la fois feuille vierge (la perception) et feuille remplie (la mémoire).

Reprenons le passage dans lequel le narrateur décide d'embrasser Albertine. Il semble déceler chez elle, à l'occasion d'une « dernière » découverte philologique (qui de fait est très loin de former la dernière de cette série infinie qu'il narre tout au long du roman), d'après son langage, qu'elle serait peut-être plus encline qu'autrefois au plaisir charnel. Marcel ne se décide toutefois pas encore à l'embrasser, puisque sa lecture reste hypothétique, et sa pertinence en suspens ; elle n'exclut pas la possibilité d'une mécompréhension et donc d'un refus, tel que celui dont il garde depuis l'hôtel de Balbec un pénible souvenir.[14] Il essaie d'atteindre le succès à l'aide du pouvoir performatif, plus précisément de la force de faire agir du langage. Il évite, tout comme Albertine, les énoncés directs et sans ambiguïté, et tous deux s'expriment au conditionnel, entrant en lutte ou dans un jeu – une lutte ludique et un jeu très sérieux – pour que ce soit *l'autre* qui décide d'agir, de faire le premier geste. Que ce soit l'autre qui interrompe la chaîne infinie des propositions conditionnelles et équivoques,

[13] « Entre la couleur grise et douce d'une campagne matinale et le goût d'une tasse de chocolat, je faisais tenir toute l'originalité de la vie physique, intellectuelle et morale que j'avais apportée environ une année auparavant à Doncières, et qui, blasonnée de la forme oblongue d'une colline pelée – toujours présente même quand elle était invisible – formait en moi une série de plaisirs entièrement distincte de tous autres, indicibles à des amis en ce sens que les impressions richement tissées les unes dans les autres qui les orchestraient, les caractérisaient bien plus pour moi et à mon insu que les faits que j'aurais pu raconter. » (II, 641–642)

[14] La narration du baiser refusé à Balbec montre une analogie avec celle de la scène de Paris : Marcel prend les paroles d'Albertine pour des énoncés métaphoriques ou ironiques, tout contraire à leur vouloir-dire littéral – mais cette opération a résisté à l'épreuve de l'action physique (II, 284–286). Dans la scène parisienne il est beaucoup plus prudent, mais pour décider entre les deux possibilités contraires de la lecture, il ne peut pas échapper, dans ce cas-là non plus, à l'épreuve de l'action physique.

qui mette fin à la collection de mots juxtaposés s'étendant en un espace et un temps illimités et suspendant la référence extérieure de la parole. Que ce soit l'autre qui exprime ce que je veux (dire) moi-même ou qui fasse ce que je voudrais faire moi-même. Cette parole quasi-figurative, flottant dans son illisibilité entre le sens littéral et figural, entre la lecture sérieuse et ironique, est analogue à l'enchevêtrement des mots propres et des mots empruntés que Marcel a essayé de démêler dans la parole d'Albertine. Cette entreprise s'est finalement révélée contradictoire, en montrant que les citations peuvent rendre la parole de quelqu'un plus autonome encore, et qu'il est impossible, dans le langage, de tracer la limite entre le propre et l'emprunté. Dans le jeu où Marcel voudrait pousser Albertine à exprimer ses propres pensées et inversement, tous deux exploitent les ressources de cette impossibilité qui déstabilise du même coup le sujet ou la genèse d'un énoncé. Cette inaccessibilité constitutive de la *référence* et de la *genèse* d'un discours peut éclairer – par la différence sans fin de l'origine et du but dans la chaîne des propositions – la « genèse » commune du trope et de la citation, voire l'identité du caractère figural et citationnel du langage (Kulcsár-Szabó : 2007). Puisqu'il est impossible de rester dans l'illisibilité, une lecture doit toujours se décider sur le « sens » et sur l' « auteur » d'un discours, mais cette décision inévitable, stabilisant l'instable, se trompe nécessairement, et revient vers le lecteur comme une projection ou une hypothèse reflétant ses propres intérêts et ses propres désirs. Cela reste vrai quand bien même cette lecture inévitablement arbitraire serait en même temps prescrite et programmée par les mots à lire, donc même si elle est aussi nécessaire et pertinente que possible. Ces apories sont également valables pour les deux interlocuteurs, cependant celui-ci n'est disponible, on l'a vu, que par le témoignage de l'un des deux, celui qui atteste un lien strict entre sa découverte philologique et sa décision.

> [P]ourtant je crois que ce qui me décida fut une dernière découverte philologique. Comme, continuant à ajouter un nouvel anneau à la chaîne extérieure de propos sous laquelle je cachais mon désir intime, je parlais, tout en ayant maintenant Albertine au coin de mon lit, d'une des filles de la petite bande, plus menue que les autres, mais que je trouvais tout de même assez jolie : « Oui, me répondit Albertine, elle a l'air d'une petite mousmé. » De toute évidence, quand j'avais connu Albertine, le mot de « mousmé » lui était inconnu. Il est vraisemblable que, si les choses eussent suivi leur cours normal, elle ne l'eût jamais appris et je n'y aurais vu pour ma part aucun inconvénient, car nul n'est plus horripilant. À l'entendre on se sent le même mal de dents que si on a mis un trop gros morceau de glace dans sa bouche. Mais chez Albertine, jolie comme elle était, même « mousmé » ne pouvait m'être déplaisant. En revanche il me parut révélateur sinon d'une initiation extérieure, au moins d'une évolution interne. Malheureusement, il était l'heure où il eût fallu que je lui dise au revoir si je voulais qu'elle rentrât à temps pour son dîner et aussi que je me levasse assez tôt pour le mien. C'était

> Françoise qui le préparait, elle n'aimait pas qu'il attendît et devait déjà trouver contraire à un des articles de son code qu'Albertine, en l'absence de mes parents, m'eût fait une visite aussi prolongée et qui allait tout mettre en retard. Mais devant « mousmé » ces raisons tombèrent, et je me hâtai de dire :
>
> « Imaginez-vous que je ne suis pas chatouilleux du tout, vous pourriez me chatouiller pendant une heure que je ne le sentirais même pas.
>
> – Vraiment ?
>
> – Je vous assure. » (II, 652–653)

Dans le va-et-vient Marcel confie à Albertine l'initiative de l'action physique, émettant une assertion sur son propre corps dont elle ne pourra vérifier la véracité autrement qu'en le touchant (ce qu'il exprime en conditionnel). Cependant l'objectif de cette assertion n'est absolument pas d'assurer la jeune fille qu'il n'est pas chatouilleux, mais au contraire de la rendre incertaine et surtout, afin de lui faire gagner en certitude, de la pousser à agir, et par là même supprimer, grâce à cette action de la jeune fille, sa propre incertitude quant au désir d'Albertine. Mais cela ne peut pas être la seule explication possible de la conduite de Marcel : il cède *peut-être* l'initiative d'agir parce que même le consentement de la jeune fille (le baiser réussi) ne peut être interprété comme le signe certain de *son désir* ; et parce que la relation entre l'action physique comme l'accomplissement du désir et le désir de cet accomplissement n'est pas continue : après l'accomplissement on n'est plus identique avec le désir qui nous a mené à cet accomplissement ; on ne comprend pas notre moi précédent. Et de fait, comme on le verra, le sens toucher n'est pas le simple prolongement de la vue ni l'incarnation de l'image – l'événement du baiser révèle plutôt l'hétérogénéité de ces deux sens, éclairant ainsi la différence entre le désir corporel qu'il est possible d'assouvir et le désir spirituel, lui impossible à satisfaire matériellement, par le toucher. L'assertion de Marcel à propos de son corps (« Imaginez-vous que je ne suis pas chatouilleux du tout, vous pourriez me chatouiller pendant une heure que je ne le sentirais même pas. ») arrive brusquement dans le dialogue, sans aucune préparation, comme une sorte d'anacoluthe thématique détournant la chaîne des propositions qui *ne touchent pas* son désir, sa pensée intérieure, mais qui lui sont *infiniment parallèles*.[15] Aussi bien par le thème que par la dimension syntagmatique

[15] « […] les phrases que je lui disais se rattachaient à celles que je lui avais dites pendant les heures précédentes, et ne rejoignaient en rien ce à quoi je pensais, ce que je désirais, lui restaient indéfiniment parallèles » (II, 649). Pour le parallélisme merveilleusement inventé et élaboré par Proust entre le corporel et le verbal, on pourrait citer ici la scène mémorable du *jeu du furet* à Balbec, où le chemin de la bague dans les mains qui se serrent et s'encerclent autour de celui qui joue le furet est analogue à la chaîne des propositions dans la scène commentée du baiser : l'encerclement des corps et des mots cachent et diffèrent également l'expression du désir. De la même manière que le langage peut toucher, le toucher peut aussi fonctionner comme langage (comme la chaîne infinie des propositions), tandis que le toucher (aussi bien par langage que par corps) signifie l'interruption de cette chaîne. Dans la scène du jeu du furet, les mains d'Albertine apparaissent dans cette double perspective pour Marcel : d'une part, toucher ces mains est insignifiant et extérieur, mais d'autre

de son énoncé, Marcel attire l'attention de la jeune fille sur la situation de parole, sur les circonstances extérieures de leur dialogue. Il les *touche* avec des mots qui évoquent ceux du petit texte de *Mimique* de Stéphane Mallarmé, où le poète dresse un curieux tableau du mimodrame – une pantomime qui exclut le langage verbal – intitulé *Pierrot assassin de sa femme*, dont Théophile Gautier résumait ainsi l'histoire : « L'histoire de Pierrot qui chatouilla sa femme, / Et la fit de la sorte, en riant, rendre l'âme. » (Derrida : 1972). Cette évocation renforce les paradoxes de l'amour chez Proust : le mouvement dynamique de la différence irréductible et de l'échange permanent des opposés, le soupçon et la confiance, le mensonge et la sincérité, l'apparence et la vérité, la douleur et la jouissance, voire la vie et la mort. Cette scène rappelle aussi celle, lesbienne et sadique, de Monjouvain, dans laquelle le jeune Marcel devient le témoin de l'acte sexuelle de Mlle Vinteuil avec son amie qui, pour préliminaires, après l'avoir poursuivie, se mit à chatouiller la fille du musicien.[16] L'assertion de Marcel à Albertine (« Imaginez-vous que je ne suis pas chatouilleux du tout, vous pourriez me chatouiller pendant une heure que je ne le sentirais même pas. ») lui est dictée par la sensualité, par son désir charnel, quoiqu'au niveau sémantique il affirme au contraire l'insensibilité de son corps ; cette opposition reproduit aussi l'association des sens : entre la chaleur du désir et le froideur que provoque sur Marcel l'effet du mot « mousmé ».

Dans les passages sur le baiser, le toucher corporel et le toucher par le langage (dont la force de faire agir par les mots) sont mis en œuvre d'une part comme s'excluant dans une opposition diamétrale, d'autre part comme étant deux formes analogues de la communication. Quelques exemples rendent compte du jeu dynamique entre le langage littéral *et* figuratif, entre la langue au sens corporel *et* au sens spirituel, entre le baiser *et* la parole, entre le sens *et* la forme sonore du mot. Le toucher dans ou par le langage rappelle le rôle du nom propre : par une deixis, en se référant à la réalité extérieure, il semble la toucher, suspendant ainsi la chaîne propositionnelle du langage. Ce n'est pas par hasard que *la signature* aura une fonction importante dans ce discours autour du baiser, ou encore que ce soit sur la joue d'Albertine, donc sur *son visage*, que Marcel donne le baiser avec ses lèvres (organe du baiser et du langage), le visage qui est le garant visuel de l'identité et de la singularité d'une personne, tout comme le nom propre est son garant verbal (et philologique). L'empreinte de la signature sur un papier (sur le bon pour un baiser) et l'empreinte du visage dans la séries des photographies (les « photos » dans ou par les yeux de Marcel s'approchant au visage d'Albertine) apparaissent comme deux

part – comme le baiser – cela promet l'entrer dans la profondeur de l'autre personne, dans son monde inconnu. (II, 271–274)

[16] Il est curieux que dans la première description (détaillée) de cette scène de sadisme, le narrateur ne parle pas encore du chatouillement (I, 157-163.), qui apparaît seulement après que Marcel a « découvert » que la petite amie de Mlle Vinteuil et Albertine se connaissaient : « À Mlle Vinteuil maintenant, tandis que son amie la chatouillait avant de s'abattre sur elle […]. » (III, 504)

sortes d'archive analogues dans le texte : la signature et la photo d'identité fonctionnent également comme des médiums institutionnels de l'identité d'une personne, mais deviennent chez Proust les médiums du temps différentiel ou discontinu qui témoignent de l'altération perpétuelle de la personnalité, donc qui travaillent contre la stabilité (morale et matérielle) du sujet. Mais voyons tout d'abord la suite immédiate du passage :

> Elle comprit sans doute que c'était l'expression maladroite d'un désir, car comme quelqu'un qui vous offre une recommandation que vous n'osiez pas solliciter, mais dont vos paroles lui ont prouvé qu'elle pouvait vous êtes utile :
>
> « Voulez-vous que j'essaye ? dit-elle avec l'humilité de la femme.
>
> – Si vous voulez, mais alors ce serait plus commode que vous vous étendiez tout à fait sur mon lit.
>
> – Comme cela ?
>
> – Non, enfoncez-vous.
>
> – Mais je ne suis pas trop lourde ? »
>
> Comme elle finissait cette phrase la porte s'ouvrit, et Françoise portant une lampe entra. Albertine n'eut que le temps de se rasseoir sur la chaise. Peut-être Françoise avait-elle choisi cet instant pour nous confondre, étant à écouter à la porte ou même à regarder par le trou de la serrure. […]
>
> Surpris pourtant par l'entrée inattendue de Françoise, je m'écriai :
>
> « Comment, déjà la lampe ? Mon Dieu que cette lumière est vive ! »
>
> Mon but était sans doute par la seconde de ces phrases de dissimuler mon trouble, par la première d'excuser mon retard. Françoise répondit avec une ambiguïté cruelle :
>
> « Faut-il que j'éteigne ?
>
> – Teigne ? » glissa à mon oreille Albertine, me laissant charmé par la vivacité familière avec laquelle, me prenant à la fois comme maître et son complice, elle insinua cette affirmation psychologique dans le ton interrogatif d'une question grammaticale.
>
> Quand Françoise fut sortie de la chambre et Albertine rassise sur mon lit :
>
> « Savez-vous ce dont j'ai peur, lui dis-je, c'est que si nous continuons comme cela, je ne puisse pas m'empêcher de vous embrasser.
>
> – Ce serait un beau malheur. »
>
> Je n'obéis pas tout de suite à cette invitation. (II, 653–656)

Albertine répond à l'assertion de Marcel par des interrogations qui participent bien au jeu rhétorique des échanges de propositions, ne suspendant jamais l'ambiguïté et le va-et-vient dans lequel l'un veut que ce soit l'autre qui agisse, ou du moins exprime son désir sans équivoque. Pendant ce temps-là la jeune fille satisfait (« avec l'humilité de la femme ») la demande de Marcel de s'étendre sur son lit, une demande qui n'est

pas formellement l'expression directe du désir du narrateur, mais qui cache son consentement à se faire chatouiller (au conditionnel) par Albertine. Celui qui révélerait directement son intention se montrerait à la fois plus faible et plus fort(e) que l'autre : il ou elle serait dépendant de la décision de l'autre, de son consentement ou de son refus, mais aurait ainsi plus d'autorité, puisqu'il ou elle ne ferait pas que réagir aux événements, mais les provoquerait. Inversement, celui qui choisit de rester dans l'ambiguïté du jeu, transmettant la maîtrise de l'initiative à l'autre personne, cède, mais garde en même temps sa souveraineté. Mais est-ce possible de sortir de l'indécidabilité ? Et est-ce possible de ne pas en sortir ? Sur un chemin toujours différent on en revient toujours à la même aporie dans le roman proustien : il est impossible de sortir de l'illisible, mais il est tout aussi impossible d'y rester. Sur ce point il faudrait citer et – si l'on en avait le temps – commenter longuement le petit passage de *La prisonnière* où le narrateur relate l'habitude qu'a Albertine de répondre aux constatations les plus élémentaires sur le monde ou sur l'état actuel des choses, par de petites questions accompagnées d'un air interrogatif : « C'est vrai ? ».[17] Albertine semble incapable de témoigner sur ses propres sens, un témoignage où personne d'autre ne peut la remplacer, et qui n'est autre que la signature ou la certification du travail de ses sens perceptifs. Cette opération assure l'identité, la souveraineté ou l'autorité élémentaire d'une personne, dont Albertine semble pourtant être privée, tant son habitude mécanique révèle que les sens perceptifs – les *médiums* pourtant considérés comme les plus *immédiats* et le plus *fiables* de l'expérience du monde – ne sont que des *témoins douteux* du monde, et prive de son autorité d'évidence toute sorte de constatations, même les plus évidentes sur l'état des choses. Cette habitude de la jeune fille nous rappelle que même les propositions, les constats les plus élémentaires sur le monde ne peuvent être que des témoignages qui demandent la signature ou la contre-signature de l'autre. Ses questions suspendent l'autorité référentielle de n'importe quelle affirmation, et montrent que celle-ci ne peut que flotter à la limite du savoir et

[17] « Mais par instants certaines manières de parler d'Albertine me faisaient supposer – je ne sais pourquoi – qu'elle avait dû recevoir dans sa vie encore si courte beaucoup de compliments, de déclarations, et les recevoir avec plaisir, autant dire avec sensualité. Ainsi elle disait à propos de n'importe quoi : « C'est vrai ? c'est bien vrai ? » Certes, si elle avait dit comme une Odette : « C'est bien vrai ce gros mensonge-là ? » je ne m'en fusse pas inquiété, car le ridicule même de la formule se fut expliqué par une stupide banalité d'esprit de femme. Mais son air interrogateur : « C'est vrai ? » donnait, d'une part, l'étrange impression d'une créature qui ne peut se rendre compte des choses par elle-même, qui en appelle à votre témoignage, comme si elle ne possédait pas les mêmes facultés que vous (on lui disait : « Voilà une heure que nous sommes partis », ou « il pleut », elle demandait : « C'est vrai ? »). Malheureusement, d'autre part, ce manque de facilité à se rendre compte par soi-même des phénomènes extérieurs ne devait pas être la véritable origine de « C'est vrai ? C'est bien vrai ? » Il semblait plutôt que ces mots eussent été, dès sa nubilité précoce, des réponses à des : « Vous savez que je n'ai jamais trouvé personne si jolie que vous », « vous savez que j'ai un grand amour pour vous, que je suis dans un état d'excitation terrible », affirmations auxquelles répondaient, avec une modestie coquettement consentante, ces « C'est vrai ? C'est bien vrai ? », lesquels ne servaient plus à Albertine avec moi qu'à répondre par une question a une affirmation telle que : « Vous avez sommeillé plus d'une heure. – C'est vrai ? » » (III, 530–531)

du non-savoir, dont elles révèlent ainsi l'irréductible textualité et l'illisibilité. Les dialogues à commenter dans le passage sur le baiser mettent en scène des lois générales du langage, de la connaissance et de la communication.

La stratégie de Marcel qui consiste à différer l'action du toucher et d'en rejeter l'initiative sur Albertine semble avoir été – depuis la perspective du narrateur – bien comprise par la jeune fille ; cependant, au lieu d'agir immédiatement, cette dernière repasse la balle au garçon dont elle attend une déclaration sans équivoque : « Voulez-vous que j'essaye ? », mais il la lui repasse à nouveau : « Si vous voulez… ». Tandis que les mots voudraient découvrir l'intention cachée de l'autre, les corps apparaissent comme les signes convergeant vers une fin unique : ils se rapprochent. L'accomplissement de l'action est cependant à nouveau différé, cette fois non plus par la chaîne infinie des propositions, mais par l'entrée inattendue de Françoise. Et vient ici dans le texte une digression de quelques pages sur la gouvernante que – pour épargner de temps et d'espace – nous avons omise dans la citation ci-dessus, mais qui s'intègre nettement dans notre problématique. On y apprend que Françoise n'a pas seulement l'art de lire les autres, mais aussi celui de laisser ses mots et ses actions illisibles pour les autres, surtout pour les membres de la famille. Elle a l'art de rendre impossible qu'on la prenne au mot ou à la chose, ce qui n'est autre qu'une certaine connaissance inconsciente des conditions aporétiques de la connaissance et de la communication – un savoir théorique impliqué dans la praxis. Une praxis dont la lecture par le narrateur hésite entre la supposition du sens naturel (contre le surnaturel, contre une connaissance divinatoire qui ne pourrait être vérifiée par l'expérience, animale et divine à la fois) et celle du savoir obtenu par l'habitude, qui se situerait à mi-chemin entre nature et culture (une seconde nature). Cela qui donne l'occasion au narrateur de développer brièvement une théorie de la connaissance. Ni la connaissance des choses ni celle des sujets n'est simplement un acte d'objectivation, mais contient toujours un composant ou un moment performatif dont dépend toute objectivation, tout constatation, mais qui – de même que la perspective singulière et liminale des jeunes filles – résiste aussi à l'objectivation.[18] Ce moment performatif

[18] « Peut-être Françoise avait-elle choisi cet instant pour nous confondre, étant à écouter à la porte ou même à regarder par le trou de la serrure. Mais je n'avais pas besoin de faire une telle supposition, elle avait pu dédaigner de s'assurer par les yeux de ce que son instinct avait dû suffisamment flairer, car à force de vivre avec moi et mes parents, la crainte, la prudence, l'attention et la ruse avaient fini par lui donner de nous cette sorte de connaissance instinctive et presque divinatoire qu'a de la mer le matelot, du chasseur le gibier, et de la maladie, sinon le médecin, du moins souvent le malade. Tout ce qu'elle arrivait à savoir aurait pu stupéfier à aussi bon droit que l'état avancé de certaines connaissances chez les anciens, vu les moyens presque nuls d'informations qu'ils possédaient (les siens n'étaient pas plus nombreux ; c'était quelques propos, formant à peine le vingtième de notre conversation à dîner, recueillis à la volée par le maître d'hôtel et inexactement transmis à l'office). Encore ses erreurs tenaient-elles plutôt, comme les leurs, comme les fables auxquelles Platon croyait, à une fausse conception du monde et à des idées préconçues qu'à l'insuffisance des ressources matérielles. C'est ainsi que de nos jours encore les plus grandes découvertes dans les mœurs des insectes ont pu être faites par un savant qui ne disposait d'aucun laboratoire, de nul appareil. » (II, 653–654)

n'est situé ni dans le connaissant ni dans la chose à connaître, ni dans le sujet ni dans le monde extérieur, mais il est intérieur et extérieur, « subjectif » et « objectif », temporel et spatiale à la fois. Cela peut expliquer les phrases stupéfiantes de Proust sur le rôle secondaire des ressources matérielles de la connaissance du monde, les appareils techniques de la perception de la réalité extérieure, incluant les machines extériorisant, « objectivant » les appareils organiques des sens humains (la vue et l'ouïe) : la photographie, le stéréoscope, le téléphone, le gramophone ainsi que d'autres inventions de l'époque. D'une part, ces instruments servent à découvrir de nouveaux aspects de la réalité, mais d'autre part, de même que les sens organiques, ils fonctionnent comme des empreintes « aspectuelles » du monde, leur « objectivité » dépendant d'une performativité médiale et « aspectuelle » du médium sensoriel. La mise en scène de la coopération et de la divergence des sens hétérogènes révèle chez Proust que les sens perceptifs ne peuvent être que les témoins de la réalité extérieure qu'ils transforment par leur milieu particulier. Cependant le performatif ne se situe pas seulement dans la dimension matérielle de la perception, mais aussi dans celle, immatérielle, de l'esprit humain : les conceptions et les idées préconçues sur le monde nous montrent que toute connaissance de la réalité, toute constellation de vérité suppose une relation ou une disposition qui les précède et qui conditionne toute sorte de savoirs « vérifiables ». On peut dire que ces moments performatifs, *cette performativité médiale et liminale* fait de toute connaissance un témoignage dont la valeur d'objectivité ou de vérité est inséparable de la possibilité de l'erreur ou du faux savoir. C'est-à-dire que la vérité et l'erreur ne sont pas opposés, mais l'une est la condition de l'autre : la vérité est une erreur possible, mais une erreur avec laquelle il est impossible de confronter une vérité définitive. Il n'existe pas donc une vérité dont la possibilité de devenir une erreur – à la lumière d'une nouvelle vérité – serait complétement exclue.

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Enikő Bollobás

Historical Reconstruction, Rough Book Poetry, and the Dissolution of the Self

Susan Howe and the Tradition

In *21st-Century Modernism: The "New" Poetics*, Marjorie Perloff discusses the tradition of innovative poetics spanning the period from the early 20th century to the early twenty-first. Instead of the more usual modernism/postmodernism formula, dividing this tradition into Pound's generation and Olson's generation, as done, among others, by Donald M. Allen and Warren Tallman (ix), Jerome Rothenberg and George Quasha (xxix), and Allen Ginsberg (*Composed on the Tongue* 12–13; *Allen Verbatim* 162), Perloff posits one continuous trajectory of poetic practice informed by "the notion of *doing something else*" (*21st-Century Modernism* 163).

> [T]he avant-garde momentum of the early decades of the twentieth century has found new channels – channels mediated […] by a succession of avant-gardes from the Objectivists of the 1930s, to the John Cage circle and its intersection with New York poetry/painting and Black Mountain in the 1950s and 1960s, to the performance poetries and ethnopoetics of the 1970s. (Perloff 164)

Perloff's counter-paradigm of a "succession of avant-gardes" does not only allow the radical modernism of Pound, Williams, and Stein to find its continuation in the Objectivists, the Black Mountain poets, the Beats, and the other post-World War II poetic formations, but also to (re)establish its connections with poetries outside the usual box of modernist innovations, among these, with Eliotian "sound/meaning conjunctions" (159) and Khlebnikov's *zaum* (170). More importantly, this synthetic paradigm sets the innovators apart from what Charles Bernstein calls "official verse culture" (*Content's Dream* 246–249), whose discourse, Perloff insists, "is a conventionalized and institutionalized […] mass discourse" (155). Perloff names several widely held tenets held by "official verse culture" yet rejected by the "succession of avant-gardes." Among these, we have the insistence that poetry "involves lineated verbal – and only verbal text"; the lineated text consists of "orderly" "text column[s] with white space around the stanzas"; poetry is always lyric, that is, the "expression of a particular subject […] whose voice provides the cement that keeps individual references and insights together"; its language is "'natural' and colloquial"; and finally "a poem conveys its feelings and ideas only by means of indirection – which is to

say, by metaphor and irony" (158). In such poetry, which is really "most poetry currently written," Perloff continues,

> [a] generic "sensitive" lyric speaker contemplates a facet of his or her world and makes observations about it, compares present to past, divulges some hidden emotion, or comes to a new understanding of the situation. The language is usually concrete and colloquial, ironies and metaphors multiple, the syntax straightforward, the rhythms muted and low-key. Generic and media boundaries are rigorously observed: no readymades or word sculptures here, no *zaum* explorations of etymologies, no Steinian syntactic permutations. (161–162)

Such poetry has taken the "path of least resistance" (163), and approaches the "condition" of journalism – a form of writing as harmless as it is ephemeral," Perloff concludes (164).

I have recapitulated Perloff's points and arguments at such length because the poet I discuss in the present study, Susan Howe (who is actually Perloff's first example), fully exemplifies, in her poetic assertions and rejections alike, the avant-garde impulse running to the early 21st century. I explore some of the most significant traits of Howe's avant-garde practice, reflecting on her ties to the tradition that has involved, as she put it in a discussion, the "breaking of boundaries of all sorts," while echoing an "undervoice […] peculiarly American" ("Encloser" 192).

I identify the following areas where Howe's "breaking of boundaries" ties her not just to the "undervoice" running through the century long avant-garde impulse, but to Olson in particular:

(i) her poetry of historical reconstruction informed by an urge to a return to origins, closely related to the historical interest of "going back" to points before things went wrong;
(ii) her rough book or notebook poetry informed by a return to a cognitive state not governed by habitualized patterns of thinking, manifest in a poetic language that disregards the rules of grammar and a page that resists the conventions of poetic typography, while also allows the inclusion of nonverbal materials;
(iii) her dissolution of the self, whereby the "lyrical I" is suppressed, in particular by two techniques that I discuss as the reversal of topic-comment relations and the use of discursive filters.

The first two areas seem to be informed by the Olsonian idea of *apocatastasis*, while the third by the tenet of objectism. But while I detect Olson's primary influence in these areas, I also emphasize Howe's innovative reworkings of these tenets, whereby she has departed from Olson's "undervoice." Before presenting the two versions of Howe's *apocatastasis* mode, I discuss Olson's original concept briefly.

Olson's *apocatastasis*

Apocatastasis, the idea referring to the reconstitution of an original state in history, knowing, and writing, can be detected in Olson's urge to return to origins as well as to cognitive and linguistic states that precede habitualized patterns of thinking. The poet, he insists, must go back in history, thought, and words, where phenomena show themselves in their actuality and rawness. As he puts it in the short poetic fragment "These days,"

> These days
> whatever you have to say, leave
> the roots on, let them
> dangle
>
> And the dirt
>
> > just to make clear
> > where they come from.

Olson is known for his scholarly interest in history, origin, and firstness. In the poem "On first Looking out through Juan de la Cosa's Eyes" he problematizes the possibility of firstness through the figure of Juan de la Cosa, cartographer and early explorer of the West Indies, captain of the *Niña* in 1493 and Columbus' "Chief Chart Maker." His interest in beginnings figures in the insistence on the distinction between *seeing* and *recognizing*, perceiving and interpreting. Indeed, Olson registers what la Cosa sees and not what he might recognize from existing narratives. Since he did not know he landed in the "New World," he did not recognize a cultural concept, but saw waters of cod and lands surrounded by deep mud banks to be sounded. Not using the abstraction of aerial maps but his own eyes only, he remained part of the scene that captured the viewer in a new circumstance. This implies that he still saw the land not as "other" but simply as "different," with an identity of its own.

Olson celebrates *apocatastasis* in several other poems as well, as process and textuality, the interconnectedness of textuality, or the processional textuality of memory and imagination. This is his topic of "The chain of memory is resurrection," attesting to his fascination with his supposedly Hungarian background.[1]

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[1] There are several other references to his Hungarian background. In a letter to Robert Creeley dated May 27, 1950, he refers to the family name of his grandmother, Lybeck (Lübeck), as being Hungarian (*Correspondence* 1: 51). This supposedly exotic identification appears also in the Berkeley reading: "That's because I am a Hungarian" (*Muthologos* 1: 131). On the same page with this reference in volume one of the *Olson-Creeley Correspondence* he cites the Hungarian mathematician Farkas Bolyai and his famous metaphor of the violet-like coincidence of new thoughts: "It is here again c. 1825 Bolyai Farkas, to Bolyai Janos: "Son, when men are

All that has been
suddenly is: time
is the face
of recognition, Rhoda Straw; or my son
is a Magyar. […]
apocatastasis
how it occurs, that in this instant I seek to speak
as though the species were a weed-seed a grass a barley corn
in the cup of my palm. […]
Resurrection
is. It is the avowal. It is the admission. The renewal
is the restoration […]

The poem ties into the process of remembering, recreating the momentum of the soul's "onslaught," the human capacity for *apocatastasis*, the soul's attack against time and death. It seems that the poet's Hungarian roots also figure in his idea of *apocatastasis*. Even though he could not have known that in Hungarian the words *onslaught* [*támadás*] and *resurrection* [*feltámadás*] have the same root, he connects the two, suggesting no less than the overcoming of death via staying in process.

The pull of the idea of his Hungarian roots seems to be explained by his understanding of Hungarian language as having roots and dirt dangling on words. This is probably why he took such pleasure in having had a grandmother who spoke a non-Indo-European language, a language that was at one time only spoken. As Robert Creeley writes in his "Preface" to the Hungarian collection of Olson's poetry,

> Olson wrote me years ago that he had laid a trap for Ezra Pound, as he put it, "abt my Swedish ancestry (very factual; that the family name Lybeck was Lubeck, was, sd my Grandmother, Hungarian […]" Even so, it is the implicit echoes of "Hungarian" itself, as a language and movement of people, which must have pleased him. It reaches beyond the enclosure of the Indo-European to a world one has only as words spoken, which last would have been his delight. (Olson, *Semmi egyéb a nemzet* 13)

Probably the most important feature of Olson's concept of *apocatasasis* refers to the desire to go back to an original state of perceiving, preceding knowing and

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needed they spring up, on all sides, like violets, come the season" (*Correspondence* 1: 51). The original quote reads: "many things have an epoch, in which they are found at the same time in several places, just as the violets appear on every side in spring" (see the notes to *Olson-Creeley Correspondence* 1:164). He refers to this remark in other poems as well, among them "The Story of an Olson, and Bad Thing" and "Apollonius of Tyana."

understanding. This original state means the state that precedes thinking in given concepts and cultural paradigms (as well as in polished full sentences) with the aim that the poet be able to register the processes of perception and experience without the cognitive ordering and totalizing interpretation of cultural paradigms. The idea of projective verse and field composition served exactly this purpose: to not halt the writing process by the fitting of perception into preexisting cognitive, linguistic, and poetic categories, but retain the energy of the creative moment. For if we imagine the process from perception to conceptual recognition – whereby the poet perceives and interprets the world as well as places this interpretation in the cultural matrix of concepts providing recognition – as a scale, then we see that poetry has predominantly occupied the end domain of this scale, where phenomena gain "meaning." Only very few poets have had the courage to approach the other end of the scale; among these, Emily Dickinson was one to record perceived phenomena in their contingencies, capturing the scene before it became "meaningful" by the interpretive presence of cultural discourse or the eye informed by this discourse. Another such poet was Arthur Rimbaud, Dickinson's close contemporary, whose ideal poetry was capable of slipping out of the shackles of thinking. This is what he demands in the letter written to Paul Demeny on May 15, 1871, and known as the "visionary letter" (*lettre du voyant*), "a long, immense, and calculated derailment of all the senses" whereby "he attains the unknown" (qtd in Adonis, 6).[2] This will make it possible to not just feel and think as language has taught us to. Because language is cognition dependent, the perceived objects and processes must be registered before recognition and interpretation; by evading the schemas mediated by paradigms of thinking, experience can be salvaged in the creative process without mediation. If we don't do this, then, as Goethe told his friend Friedrich von Müller, "we only see what we know and understand" (Müller 31).[3] The only way to escape the trap laid by language and the cognitive and cultural paradigms mediated by language is to go back, in the mode of Olson's *apocatastasis*, to a pre-conceptual, pre-schematic state not regulated by cognitive paradigms – to where dirt still dangles on the roots of words…

Howe's poetic reconstruction of history

Howe has complied with the imperative of *apocatastasis* in several manners, of which I discuss two: historical and linguistic-visual *apocatastasis*, or rough book or notebook poetry. Urged by a sense of historical *apocatastasis*, she would open poetry to history, writing poems that indeed include history, as Pound defined the epic (and later his

[2] "un long, immense et raisonné *dérèglement de tous les sens* […]. Car il arrive à l'inconnu!"
[3] "*Man erblickt nur, was man schon weiß und versteht.*"

cantos) (*Literary Essays* 86); in particular, her poems carry out evidence-based historical investigations, or Herodotus' mode of history writing, *istorin,* defined by Olson as "finding out for oneself" (*A Special View of History* 20). With history as her favorite subject in school, Howe devoured historical novels, and considered history, fiction, and poetry equally important. As she admits in the *Talisman* interview, "[h]istory and fiction have always been united in my mind […] it would be hard to think of poetry apart from history" (*The Birth-mark* 158). One reason why Olson has been so important to her is exactly this fusion of poetry and history, she insists, concluding that it's impossible to "divorce poetry from history and culture" (163). Indeed, Howe is following in Olson's footsteps in including little remembered documents into poetry. However, there is a significant difference here: when Olson creates collages out of Gloucester local historical records, documents on Cabeza de Vaca, Mao Tse-tung's speech in French, or William Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* on Montezuma and Cortez, Howe goes to figures of history who have been made unimportant by the official canonizers. For knowledge, she claims, "involves exclusions and repression. National histories hold ruptures and hierarchies […] literary canons and master narratives" serve "the legitimation of power" ("Encloser" 178).

Howe will write back into history figures who have fallen through the cracks of historiography. She wishes to pursue the kind of revisionist work which she admires in the scholarship of Patricia Caldwell, who, she claims, is "helping to form a fuller reading of American cultural history" ("Encloser" 176). Famously insisting that "[i]f history is a record of survivors, Poetry shelters other voices," (*The Birth-mark* 47), she will give "shelter" to those who have not survived in canonical histories, among them, Anne Hutchinson, Mary Rowlandson, Hope Atherton, Jean de Labadie, and Esther Johnson. In harmony with the spirit of *apocatastasis*, Howe is preoccupied with the issue of originality, whether trying to locate the actual person serving as the model of Melville's Bartleby (*Melville's Marginalia*) or to reconstruct the original manuscript of *Billy Budd* ("Scattering as Behavior Toward Risk"). Defining her own "one voice," her "singularity" as "a search for origins in some sense" ("Encloser" 193), this is how she describes the urge that has propelled her to always go a little further back in history:

> I think there is a continuous peculiar and particular voice in American literature. First I thought it originated with Cotton and Increase Mather, then with early Captivity Narrative, most specifically Mary Rowlandson's, but I kept pulled farther and farther back. Now I see you can trace this voice as far back as 1637 […]. ("Encloser" 189)

Several of her works attest to her conforming to this impetus, whether documenting the history of Buffalo, her own family, or the wilderness state of the English language.

What is common to all is the way Howe uncovers in each the moment that preceded some "crime." As she puts it in *The Difficulties* interview, "[s]ometimes I think my poetry is only a search by an investigator for the point where the crime began" (Beckett 21). Prominent among the crimes searched is colonization; as such, several of her books are devoted to searching the moment preceding colonization, among them, *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* (1987), *Thorow* (1990), and *The Birthmark* (1993). In each case she comes to the conclusion, much like Olson, that no absolute point of origin can be identified, whether in the case of the "discovery" of a continent or the founding of a settlement. It is similarly impossible to reach the state of language preceding certain changes, usually for the worse. In vain does she try to reconstruct in the poem "Scattering as Behavior Toward Risk" the state before deletions and corrections Melville made in the manuscript of *Billy Budd*, the "genetic text" is unreachable, or nonexistent even. The most the poet can do is write backward, reaching earlier and earlier points in the hope of arriving at the brute actuality of being; as she writes in the poem sequence *Arisbe*, "Actuality is something brute / Unspelled Firstness is first" (*Pierce-Arrow* 29).

As is the case with other traits of the Williams-Pound-Olson tradition, Howe follows her predecessors as much as she departs from them. For one, Howe investigates the past in order to understand the present. "The past is the present," she proposes; "We are all part of the background" ("Encloser" 176). She continues,

> Of course I can't *really* bring back a particular time. That's true. Or it's true if you think of time as moving in a particular direction – forward you say. But what if then is now. I hope my work here and elsewhere demonstrates something about the mystery of time. ("Encloser" 176)

"[T]he extensive historical documentation in *Frame Structures*," as Perloff puts it, "thus serves to construct the past that has shaped what Howe takes to be her very palpable present" ("Language Poetry" 428). In other words, the past does not remain past but is understood as one of the forces shaping the present. In other words, when researching the past, Howe actually studies the present. This is why Paul Naylor calls Howe's poetry "investigative," exploring "the linguistic, historical, and political conditions of contemporary culture" (9), and also why Peter Nicholls identifies "temporal reversibility" as one of the main features of her writing, claiming that "poetry is itself a kind of figure for temporal reversibility" ("The Pastness of Landscape" 428).

Ming-Qian Ma summarizes other departures from the Pound–Olson tradition: fusing history and fiction, and erasing the supposedly artificial distinction between the two; taking on a gender-oriented position of being outside hegemonic discourse; and using history with a particular aim, "to subpoena history for an investigation of

its violent crimes against women" ("Poetry as History Revised" 717–718). Ma concludes by saying that "poetry becomes for Howe counterdiscourse to history" (718). This, I believe, is her most profound departure from the manner the Pound-Olson tradition "includes" history: the overall insistence on creating in poetry a counterdiscourse to history. Her poetic counterdiscourse to history consists in the documentary reconstruction of Puritan and 19th century history, on the one hand, and in the reconstruction of gendered history on the other.

Documentary counterdiscourse to American history – Puritan and 19th century

Howe looks to documents of history, reaching back to Mary Rowlandson, Hope Atherton, and the New English colonizers in *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time*, to Anne Hutchinson and King Charles I in *Eikon Basilike*, to Jean de Labadie in *Souls of the Labadie Tract*. When discussing the Puritans, her treatment can be considered revisionary in the sense American historiography has recently affirmed that the central experience of Puritan life was not Messianic enthusiasm but loss and mourning, as well as spiritual doubt, allowing ample room for non-conformism (see Cecilia Tichi on this topic). This is the perception conveyed in Howe's poetry too, insisting that the Puritan era was one of depression and anxiety, while their narratives were, as she puts it, "grief-stricken," stemming from the "state of doubt and pain" that not only characterized their disposition before conversion but also after ("Encloser" 190). Puritan doubt and pain find expression in the fragmented prose Howe develops when capturing the warring selves Puritans tried to hold together, as expressed in the first line of George Goodwin's "Auto-Machia," "I sing my SELF; my *Civil Warrs* within," for example. Howe implements various language strategies in line with this Puritan wrestling tradition marked by a sense of spiritual paralysis and powerlessness; among these we have hesitancies, false starts and restarts, as well as "avant-garde doubling and dismemberings of words," as pointed out by Rachel Tsvia Back (19).

Howe has shown a similarly avid interest in 19th century American history and literature. As she claims in a discussion, "[m]y writing has been haunted and inspired by a series of texts, woven in shrouds and cordage of Classic American 19th entury works, they are the buried ones" ("Encloser" 178). She located, for example, the Irish poet James Clarence Mangan, the person Melville supposedly modeled his character Bartleby on (see Megan Williams), and made efforts to reconstruct the "genetic text" of Melville's *Billy Budd* in the poem "Scattering as Behavior Toward Risk" (see Ming-Qian Ma, "Poetry as History Revised"). In all these historical reconstructions the language follows the hesitancies and uncertainties at the heart of her reconstructive work.

"I work in the poetic documentary form," Howe claims ("Sorting Facts" 385), collecting, as she writes elsewhere, "documentary histories, registers, and catalogues" (*Frame Structures* 18). Indeed, she has incorporated various historical documents into her poetry, for example, in the early volume *Secret History of the Dividing Line* (1978) the two accounts of William Byrd, *History of the Dividing Line* (1728) and his personal account not intended for publication, *Secret History of the Dividing Line* (1929), whose title Howe borrowed later; these two texts serve as the frame for the body of the poem in between. The third "foundational text," as Back calls it (23), is the war correspondence and diary of Judge Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Touched with Fire: Civil War Letters and Diary of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, edited by Howe's Harvard law professor father. Her method is twofold here, adopting the scattered, dismembered voice of the personal document, while also incorporating whole passages broken into verse lines or quoted fully. This is the mode of writing employed in the long poem *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* published in *Singularities* (1990), where, by using historical documents, Howe makes visible the forgotten figure of the ill-fated American minister, Hope Atherton.

This is also the mode employed in the other verse cycle of *Singularities*, *Thorow*, in which already the title contains documents of sorts, referring to word history, as it has embedded three non-words: the misspelling of Thoreau's name (as used by Hawthorne) and the archaic forms of *through, and throw*. As the title indicates, the poet has gone to find traces of the wild in language, carried by misspellings and archaisms, all immanently contained in language. This search for what is hidden in language will allow the poet to uncover the physical and spiritual state of wilderness. The adventure is symbolically led by the author of *Walden*, as not only the title indicates but also the many Thoreauvian nouns (among them, *cove, mud, shrub, cusk, cedar, grease, splint, drisk, islet, bateau, arrowhead, Messenger* from *The Maine Woods* and *Walden*) scattered across the pages to form a layered catalogue poem. This "twenty-page poetic sequence," Perloff points out, is not only a poem including history, but by having upstate New York's Lake George as its locale, "also a poem including geography" (*21st Century Modernism* 164), as is, we might add, *Walden,* too. Perloff emphasizes the complex layering of the poem brought about by its collaging of the journal of William Johnson and Thoreau's *Ktaadn* and *Walden*, different speech registers, (mis)spellings, and proper names (166). The complexity of the allusions and the ambiguities evoke Eliot's strategy, were it not for the additional Khlebnikov-like *calligramme* technique, especially as it appears in the "non-linear visual criss-cross composition of the last few pages," with "clashing diagonal lines and spacing," and the "focus on the individual word or, more specifically, the morphemes within the word, and what Khlebnikov called the *letter as such*, both as sound and as visual element" (168).

By using actual documents, Howe grounds her poetry in history, while approaching the referential mode. However, referentiality gets diluted here, as Perloff

notes, by the fragmentariness of the collaged text sometimes appearing "in shards and fragments as if retrieved from a fire or flood," the ambiguous grammar, and the conspicuous deletion of first person reference (*Radical Artifice* 52).

Gendered counterdiscourse to history

A gendered counterdiscourse to history was launched by two early volumes already, *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* (1987) and *The Birth-mark* (1993), in which figures who had all but fallen through the cracks of history were given shelter in poetry. In the former she treats the conquest of the wilderness, both as *genitivus subjectivus* and *genitivus objectivus*, specifically Hope Atherton and Mary Rowlandson, both wanderers in the wilderness, natural and linguistic alike, whose encounter with the Other transformed them. In the latter, a collection of essays, she is following voices, she claims, that "lead […] to the margins," voices that are "barely audible in the scanty second- or thirdhand records" (*The Birth-mark* 4). "Interested," as she puts it, "in getting women in that pantheon and keeping them there" ("Encloser" 193), she treats Rowlandson again, as well as Anne Hutchinson, and Emily Dickinson. Rowlandson, the author of "the first narrative written by an Anglo-American woman" (195), who has been "blamed for stereotypes of native Americans as 'savages'" (196), is presented in *The Birth-mark* as the person about whom critics perpetuated "an equally insulting stereotype," Howe insists, "that of a white woman as passive cipher in a controlled and circulated idea of Progress at whose zenith rides the hero-hunter (Indian or white) who will always rescue her" (196). Howe considers Hutchinson an "enthusiast" of both religion and language, citing Noah Webster's definition of the word *enthusiast* as "one whose imagination is warmed, one whose mind is highly excited with the love or in the pursuit of an object; a person of ardent zeal" (*The Birth-mark* 11). As an antinomian, as Caldwell points out, she posed "a threat to the very foundations of things," primarily with her passionate language; this was a language of rapture, full of "ambiguities and arbitrariness," challenging the rigid authoritarian discourse of Winthrop (359).

Howe's contributions to the critical reinterpretation of Dickinson constitute a special department within her gendered historical revisionist work, this time literary historical. Three publications are especially significant: the book-length poetic essay *My Emily Dickinson* (1985), the Dickinson chapter in *The Birth-mark* (1993), and the facsimile edition of Dickinson's envelope poems, *Gorgeous Nothings* (2003). With these poetically inspired critical pieces Howe reinstates Dickinson's "singularity," which gradually got "edited out" in later narratives ("Encloser" 191). Howe has contributed to a revisionist understanding of Dickinson by assigning significance to such aspects of poetry as her typographic eccentricities and her use of visuality as a signifying system operative on the physical surface of the pages.

In addition to Hutchinson, Rowlandson, and Dickinson, Howe granted central place to Stella, Cordelia, and Mary Magdalene, singular women again, whose "individual voice" "singularities" get "erased by factions" ("Encloser" 191). These women, who had been overshadowed by strong men, emerge here as representatives of some dark, wild, and unknowable Other, who had been pushed to the margins of history and literature for their foreign and untamable nature. This is the "liquidation process" Howe discusses in the first section of the collage poem *The Liberties* (1983), followed by the books devoted to Jonathan Swift's lifelong companion Stella (Esther Johnson) and Lear's daughter Cordelia. These are the women for whom "silence became self," to adopt the phrase she used in a discussion, and whom she urges to speak ("Silence becomes Self. Open your mouth"; "Encloser" 182). These are the figures whom she will "tenderly lift from the dark side of history, voices that are anonymous, slighted – inarticulate," as she puts it in the preface entitled "THERE ARE NOT LEAVES ENOUGH TO CROWN TO COVER TO CROWN TO COVER" (*The Europe of Trusts* 14).

The events of *Book of Stella* take place in Dublin's The Liberties section, where St. Patrick's Cathedral stands and where both Swift and Stella are interred, sharing one epitaph that makes no mention of the woman. Approaching the woman, Howe encounters the clock tower of the cathedral in the initial block poem, then moves further to the construction made of "irish granite" [sic] upon the "poddle" [sic] (*The Europe of Trusts* 159). The poet allows language to lead the lines, to apply Howe's phrase from an interview ("I would want my readers […] to let language lead them"; [Kelley 31]), by such consonance as "cliff or cleft" and "purlieus wall perilous," as well as sound constant (as opposed to spelling difference) as "aisle or isle," alliteration as "walk" and "wall," and thesaurus-like word lists such as "head of tide poddle inlet pool." This obedience to language characterizes the whole poem, as do its shape reconstructions as well. In addition to the block poem recreating the tower in its typography, several of the subsequent pieces are also shape poems refashioning the initial S of Stella's name (161), the movement of the pendulum (163, 165), the lean figure of the young girl (166), and the hesitant broken speech of the woman dominated by a strong man. Howe recreates, in a fragmented voice, the story of the woman whose letters Swift burned after her death, now giving back her voice by citing Irish tales and legends. Freedom and voice are equally granted in the poem "light flickers in the rigging," rewriting, as Back observes, "a famous passage from an earlier Irish text" (74). But while borrowing the bird imagery from Irish myths, as Will Montgomery succinctly presents (7ff), Howe rids it of its metaphorical depth, and uses it as physical image (giving some poems the shape of birds) and as a context to appropriate Swift's name and apply it to Stella in the line "known for the swiftness of her soul." Similarly, the pendulum image, describing the pull of Ireland and England for Swift, is now given shape in the subsequent lines of the poem and applied to Howe herself, who speaks in an interview of a "pull between countries," Ireland

and the US, describing it as "a civil war in the soul" (Falon 37), which is very much in line with the Puritans' profound ambivalence towards selfhood, as often expressed in conversion narratives.

Turning from history to fiction in *Book of Cordelia*, Howe treats a woman known for her silence and passivity byplacing the story in Irish mythology again and identifying King Lear with the Irish ocean God Lir, "whose children turned into swans" (172). This identification is rooted in the identity of sound again, confirming the validity of the knowledge contained by language. While indeed, as Stephen-Paul Martin puts it, the poet gives "a portrait of our repressed feminine awareness trapped in a patriarchal waste land" (168), she assigns the power of language to Cordelia by the encouragement, "words are bullets" (178). Much like Stella, Cordelia is all language, made up of linguistic collusions as alliteration, assonance, consonance, and semantic associations, while also given shape in typographically meaningful poems such as the one taking the form of the initial C of her name (179). Indeed, in the words of Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Cordelia's "muted voice" is now heard (137), and it is heard exactly because of these linguistic techniques.

Female muteness remedied is the topic of the one act play, *God's Spies*, of *The Liberties* volume, with the title referring to the messengers Moses sent to spy out the land (Num. 13:17). This is the mission of Stella and Cordelia as well: to speak, in their own voices, of God's doings. The women become allies, developing a "relationship of mutual familiarity," as Back puts it, whereby they finish each other's sentences, as well as experience a "momentary merging into a single speaking subject" (91). Stella repeats what Cordelia said earlier (184/187), and sentences of earlier dialogues are now said by the two together (185/188). Given Swift's erasures of Stella's voice, the lines that have survived acquire a broader significance as they are reproduced in the text. Stella here is relegated to a humble schoolgirl reciting her two-page long paean, the poem written to Swift on his birthday in 1721, while Swift's Ghost keeps mouthing silently, in an effort to appropriate the authorship of Stella's text. It is no wonder, then, that Stella and Cordelia step out of this landscape, leaving behind "*Darkness. Silence. Gunshot. Silence*," as the last line of the play indicates. After this, in the final section of *The Liberties*, language breaks down, as Douglas Barbour emphasizes, with "words scattered across the page in painterly blocks" (251). Words and letters take the shapes of *S*'s and *C*'s, or fragments of *S*'s and *C*'s, as well as block poems, in which female voices hide as if in the clock tower of a cathedral. Howe herself joins Stella and Cordelia, appearing as she is disappearing into language (disappearing into song, as in Mahler's "Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen"), as the solution of the riddle of nine letters, to which the subsequent lines give no clue whatsoever. As George Butterick succinctly puts it, "it is Howe's remarkable ability to absent herself, to shed herself from her lines, that allows them to stand with such authority" (314). (I will discuss Howe's methods of absenting herself in detail later.)

Rough book or notebook poetry[4]

I turn to the second form of *apocatastasis*, a mode of writing characterized by a disregard for normative grammar and typography, which I call rough book poetry or notebook poetry. Howe's poetry is known for its unusual language use and its equally unusual look on the page, derived from a return to a state before grammar and typography came to regulate the poetic text. In the *apocatastasis* spirit, the poet wishes to return to a poetic condition that precedes the state when words are drawn into sentences and lines are regulated into stanzas and block poems. Perception, ideas, and even perceived objects are presented in their rawness – much like in the rough book schoolchildren were at one time required to keep in which to store their thoughts as they were coming to them. A rough book is a most valuable document, recording thinking in its process and actuality. One would have notes and reminders in a rough book, thoughts taking the shape of mind maps, as well as half sentences or half lines jotted down before they were finished. Moreover, one would have memorabilia in a rough book as well, for example, photographs, ticket stubs, or pages from letters. The objects included in a rough book are not selected by any prior perspective; rather, the attention governing their inclusion is similar to William James's wandering attention, assigned to the genius and the child, who – as opposed to ordinary beings who see the world through selective attention (*Psychology* 37) – have the "faculty of perceiving in an unhabitual way" (195), via wandering attention (95). This is exactly what the rough book poetry of Howe presents: thoughts before they would be fitted into polished sentences; perceptions registered before they would "make sense" in a cultural matrix; lines running haphazardly as if in a mind map; and non-verbal objects as memorabilia. And, indeed, writing out of an interest in every document, document fragment, or seemingly irrelevant detail that comes the way of wandering attention.

As such, Howe's rough book reflects the wilderness condition of language, where words are still unregulated; a comparable state in language and nature precedes cultivation and taming, which constitutes one of the "crimes" the poet desires to uncover. This wilderness text is the theme of the volume *Secret History of the Dividing Line*, in which broken sentences, noun and verb phrase fragments, and unfinished words testify to the absence of language's colonizers (for example, in the poems beginning with "Numerous singularities," "Who / whitewashed epoch," and "green chaste"). As Butterick emphasizes, the poet "lives out on a frontier of the imagination, along with a family of thought in a wood of words" (319), which she desires to leave in its unorganized and heterogeneous state. The poem "Taking the Forest" explores

[4] After completing this study, I noticed that Michael Davidson used the term "notebook poetry" for Howe's poetry in the essay which I read over twenty-five years ago (and which I cite in this paper). I am working with both terms, Davidson's "notebook poetry" and my "rough book poetry," where the latter emphasizes a crudeness and coarseness that has come to characterize some of Howe's poetry of the past decades.

the encounter between the wild forest and the settler, showing the forest to be stronger and the settler to be incapable of "taking" it. As sentences evolve into hesitant sentence fragments, left in half and begun again, with the same uncertainty and diffidence, the wood of words declares its refusal to be curtailed by grammar. The syntactic structures are fragmented, attributes are left off, the subjects are cut off from their predicates, indicating the irony of the situation: it is not the settler who takes the forest, but the other way round, the forest takes the settler.

In her earlier volumes, the preservation of old stories and words provides the primary means for retaining the seemingly disorganized discursive mass that later ages so easily threw out on the scrap-heap of history. This is what she calls the "wilderness of language," formed, as she puts it, "from old legends, precursor poems, archaic words, industrial and literary detritus" (*My Emily Dickinson* 70). Therefore – much like Olson, who insisted, as I quoted earlier, on using words with "the roots on, let them / dangle / And the dirt" – she will embrace a linguistic form of *apocatastasis*, by going back to a yet unregulated "original state." As she claims in "Writing *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time,*"

> During the 1980s I wanted to transplant words onto paper with soil sticking to their roots – to go to meet a narrative's fate by immediate access to its concrete totality of singular interjections, crucified spellings, abbreviations, irrational apprehensions, collective identities, palavers, kicks, cordials, comforts. I wanted jerky and tedious details to oratorically bloom and bear fruit as if they had been set at liberty or ransomed by angels. (201–202)

In this vein, Howe will write with great respect about those who, in the spirit of antinomianism, resisted the colonization of spirit and language, especially Dickinson, whose manuscript pages have been adjusted to the controlling norms of publishing, whereby a very meaningful sign system came to be extinguished in her text. Learning from Dickinson's injuries, Howe retains her poems as broken, fragmented, stuttering. For stutter is meaningful; as she claims in the *Talisman* interview, "It's the stutter in American literature that interests me. I hear the stutter as a sounding of uncertainty. What is silenced or not quite silenced. All the broken dreams" (*The Birth-mark* 180–181).

Howe's poetry is permeated by this antinomian spirit in both its language and look; the colonizers of grammar and typography have been evicted, the discourse liberated. The typical method of this eviction can be described by the marking, in the Jakobsonian sense, of these two traditionally unmarked aspects of the text, normative grammar and conventional verse lineation. Howe subverts both of these sign systems, making visible what was earlier invisible. Meaning evolves not through the transparent medium of language and the equally transparent convention of typography, but within grammar and visual composition taking the foreground for

meanings to show themselves. Subverting the rules of grammar and typography offers a way to take away the transparency of language and turning it into a visible medium. Bernstein calls these visibility spots "typographicities" and "syntaxophonies" (*Content's Dream* 73), as if lumps in wood, places where the material thickens. Everything that is unusual or irregular counts as a lump, making language visible, and depriving it of its medial transparency.

Disregarding the rules of grammar

Resisting the normative control of grammar has a long tradition in American poetry, going back to Dickinson and running through the whole succession of avant-gardes of the past one hundred plus years. As I mentioned earlier, Howe identified it as "detritus" in Dickinson (*My Emily Dickinson* 70), coming in the form of fractured discourse, as she puts it elsewhere,

> a stammering even. Interruption and hesitation used as a force. A recognition that there is an other voice, an attempt to hear and speak it. It's this brokenness that interests me. ("Encloser" 192)

Pound, Stein, Spicer, Olson, Duncan, Bernstein, and Howe, to mention only a few names, have all experimented with creating, out of broken sentences, this sense of fracturing and stammering. As deviations from normative grammar, they will act as lumps in the material of language, defamiliarizing it, making it strange, in the spirit of the Russian Formalists, so that whatever was invisible or unnoticed now becomes visible and noticed.

Much like Mary Magdalene, who submits and subjects to the power of the Word,

> It is the Word to whom she turns
> True submission and subjection.
> (*The Nonconformist's Memorial* 30)

Howe submits to language, allowing language to lead her. The linguistic compass that she allows herself to be directed by is made up of linguistic anomalies. Some of her favorite anomalies are the following: misspellings and typos (*castl* [*Defenestration of Prague* 91], *forgotn, forgetng* [*Debths* 41, 61]); archaic looking spellings (*wilde, realme, inhabitinge, afterwarde,* and *stretching*; *The Europe of Trusts* 94); thesaurus-like semantic lists ("pasture paradise park", "roe buck and wild boar" [*Frame Structures* 46]; "Ceramic, plaster, laquer, newspaper" [*Debths* 28]; "metal, clay, gauche, glass, glue" [*Debths* 30]); lists of words associated by sound ("thimble thumb," "rugged

raggedy," "puppet pattern," "clock lock" [*Debths* 107, 109, 120]); association of commonplaces, proverbs, and other sayings ("Let's let bygones be bygones," "Dust to dust," "to make a / long story short," "knock on wood," [*Debths* 111, 115, 116]); writing separate words as one ("blanksmiling" [*Frame Structures* 53], "Woodslippercounterclatter" [*Debths* 111]). All of these anomalies serve to uncover the knowledge stored in language, and then conveyed by overwhelmingly accidental coincidences convey. The one non-accidental route to knowledge is etymology: it is by a reliance on the etymology of words that historical knowledge stored in words can be brought to the surface. As Butterick points out,

> etymology […] is her true genealogy. Howe favors etymologies in her work perhaps as much as feelings. She instinctively seeks to possess language to its roots, pre-family, pre-historical, even before language semanticizes itself. (Butterick 314)

As a linguistic version of Howe's interest in origins, etymologies will take the poet to an earlier linguistic state that has not been determined by cultural patterns or cognitive paradigms. Interrogated by the poet through puns, non sequiturs, homonyms, and typos, language will yield meanings that cannot be found in polished sentences.

Howe does not accept an authority that has the power to determine what is right and what is wrong in language, making her kinship with two major women predecessors, Dickinson and Stein, unmistakable. For refusing that any person or principle would have the right to legislate over language, Dickinson and Stein similarly disregarded the rules of syntax and morphology, insisting to uncover a different kind of knowledge in an uncontrolled language. It is this normative controlling principle Howe questions in connection with Dickinson, asking,

> Who polices questions of grammar, parts of speech, connection, and connotation? Whose order is shut inside the structure of a sentence? What inner articulation releases the coils and complications of Saying's assertion? (*My Emily Dickinson* 11–12)

Knowledge stored in language and meanings that lie beneath the regulating grid of grammar can only be brought to the surface by using an unregulated language. Not only is it impossible to tell such knowledges and meanings in grammatical sentences, but even to think them. And the poet who wishes to say the unsayable must have recourse to a different language. As Ming Qian puts it,

> To articulate the inarticulate, Howe's poetic praxis pivots on a lyric consciousness upon which impinges a double mission of rescuing and breaking free: rescuing

> the "stutter" that Howe hears in American literature. ("Articulating the Inarticulate" 469)

The stutter coming about by the articulation of the inarticulate characterizes the speech of Mary Magdalene in *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (1993). In the passionate testimony of this "love-impelled figure," "Thought was broken down," "Translat[ing] the secret / in lair idiom havoc" (*The Nonconformist's Memorial* 17). Her acts are described in a similarly passionate language, in broken sentences punctuated by unconnected verb or noun phrases only.

> Came saw went running told
> Came along
> Solution continuous chaos
> Asked told observed
> Caught sight of said said
> (*The Nonconformist's Memorial* 12)

In this manner, Howe will allow ample room for the reader to enter the field of language to "make sense" of the indeterminacy embedded in the "stutter" – broken sentences, non sequiturs, homonym homonyms, misspellings, typos, puns, and other linguistic anomalies that bring about, as Quartermain points out, "polyvalent clusters of associations" abandoning not only normative syntax, but "even intelligibility" (19).

Disregarding the conventions of typography

Howe has developed a fine visual prosodic system relying on both sound and sight by using a diverse regimen of lineation from the more traditional stanzas (or stanza looking units) to lines running in all directions all the way to incorporating non-verbal materials into poetry. I will discuss these three modes of visual prosody below.

It is in *Pythagorean Silence* (1982) that Howe develops and brings to perfection her staple typographic practice within the more traditional lineation mode, informed by the simultaneity of a strong caesura and a strong enjambment. In the overwhelming majority of the poems one can find this counterpointing non-coincidence of grammatical break and line break, creating an eerie sense of syncopation, with grammar and typography struggling to take control. I have in mind lines like the following, in which, after a strong caesura, the last word of the line begins a new sentence or phrase that continues in the subsequent line.

power of vision a vast
zero
(*The Europe of Trusts* 31)

Only the first of fame passing degrees
of wilderness
(*The Europe of Trusts* 32)

a sentence or character
suddenly

steps out to seek for truth fails
falls

into a stream of ink Sequence
trails off
(*The Europe of Trusts* 36)

cataclysmic Pythagoras Things
not as they are

for they are not but as they seem
(as mirror

in mirror to be)
(*The Europe of Trusts* 38)

In all these lines we encounter the wrestling of two forces, grammar and typography: grammar refuses to yield to typography, while typography refuses to yield to grammar, together creating a voice that seems rushing and rushed, driven by the push of the next grammatical or typographic unit, never coming to a resting point, always out of breath.

Howe subverts the horizontal-vertical grid that has been taken for granted in writing. Such subversions have become the most striking marks of Howe's poetry, consisting in the radicalization of typographic layout conventions. Typographical experimentation begins in the volume *Hinge Picture* (1974) already – with words dropped from sentences and sentences getting chopped up, morphological units losing letters or getting randomly cut in half, all for the sake of typographic idiosyncrasies (see, for example, *Frame Structures* 41, 43, 44, 47, 48, 49) – as well as in *Secret History of the Dividing Line* with its mirroring techniques.

While we have regular stanzaic units in *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* in *Singularities*, in *Thorow* of the same volume lines begin to run in all directions, as the wilderness within breaks language boundaries. There is no one way to hold the page – in fact, in order to read the text, the reader must turn it all around, as if walking around a sculpture to fully take it in.

In *The Nonconformist's Memorial* lineation either reflects the events in an iconic way, when, for example, lines form the cross of "Effectual crucifying knowledge" (*The Nonconformist's Memorial* 8), or start ascending to heaven (9), when line spacing varies (11), or when lines push themselves in between other lines (16). We have a similarly unconventional lineation in *Eikon Basilike* (1989), with sections from the documents of the court trial of King Charles I, his own book, and other historical records, with lines – some crossed out, others deleted – running in all directions, capturing, in one visual space, the fiery passions preparing for the impending regicide. The page is at once a visual and linguistic field of force, in which the semantics of the words is multiplied by their visual meanings.

Likewise, we find a complex signification coming about from the interaction of visual and semantic meanings in *The Liberties* (1983). In both the *Book of Stella* and the *Book of Cordelia* we have shape poems performing the initials of Stella and Cordelia, alternating with long, fragile poems made up of just one phrase, one word, or even part of a word to reenact a hesitant, broken language, associative and hallucinatory rather than logical, following the process of the two women coming to speech. Kathleen Fraser sees the realization of Olson's "graphic 'signatures'" (177) here, the visual techniques underlining the silences and voids surrounding the two women, emphasizing especially Stella's "voice in hiding – a literal cry of isolation – choked off, reduced to encoded speech" (188).

As a poet who began her career as a visual artist, Howe has developed a particular sensitivity of what her pages should look like, attentive of the signifying role of the visual interplay of between white space and letters, words, and lines. "In the precinct of Poetry, a word, the space around a word, each letter, every mark, silence or sound volatilizes an inner law of form," she writes (*Birth-mark* 145). Her early installations came about from the combination of linguistic materials and photographs; these combinations remained a staple feature of her poetry as well, with innovations consisting exactly in the incorporation of the image of physical objects in the language material.

Treating the printed page as a physical space provides yet another link to the Olson tradition. Howe acknowledges her debt to Olson with regard to composing on the page in an essay written in 1987, emphasizing the predecessor's "spatial expressiveness," his "feeling for seeing," his treating the page as if it were a canvas.

> The spatial expressiveness of Olson's writing is seldom emphasized enough. […] This feeling for seeing in a poem, is Olson's innovation. […] At his best, Olson

> lets words and groups of words, even letter arrangements and spelling accidentals shoot suggestions at each other, as if each page were a canvas and the motion of words – reality across surface. Optical effects, seemingly chance encounters of letters, are a bridge. Through a screen of juxtaposition one dynamic image may be visible. […] In Olson's poetic diapason, space sounds motion, signs speak vision, and rhythm reads back archaic cries. (*The Quarry* 186–200)

Indeed, refusing to limit the printed page to meaningful verbal clusters (meaningful and verbal only), Howe embraces the mode of writing defined by Olson in the "Projective Verse" essay as "OPEN verse" (239) and "composition by field" (239) or "field composition" (240), allowing the poet to follow the track "the poem under hand declares" (240). This poem will neither be referential to reality, nor allow itself to convey ideas framed by linguistic and cognitive paradigms; instead, it registers an earlier state of seeing and thinking, the state, to quote Butterick again, "before language semanticizes itself" (314).

In such a way, not only will verbal units be meaningful but also the white spaces will contribute to the complex of the "field" of the poem, together creating what Olson calls the "kinetic of the poem" (243). What's more – and here comes a further innovation radicalizing the innovative spirit of Olson's poetics – Howe allows the inclusion of purely visual materials in the text. Among these inclusions we could mention the photocopy of the front page of her New Directions *Eikon Basilike* as superimposed upon Charles I's *The King's Book or Eikon Basilike* (in *Eikon Basilike*); the manuscript pages from Charles Sanders Peirce's "Prescott Book" (in *Pierce-Arrow*); the tissue interleaf between the frontispiece and title page of Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae* (in *The Midnight*); family photographs, such as the daguerreotype of the "four Josiah Quincys" as it appeared on Helen Howe's book cover (in *Chanting at the Crystal Sea*) and the picture of John Manning, and the Irish stamp issued in honor of the suffragette Aunt Louis Bennett (in *The Midnight*). The layering technique used in these volumes incorporating non-verbal materials into language segments employs, as Mandy Bloomfield correctly points out, what Michael Davidson calls "palimtext," retaining the materiality of the text among the layers of the poem (670). According to Davidson,

> palimtext is neither a genre nor an object, but a writing-in-process that may make use of any number of textual sources. As its name implies the palimtext retains vestiges of prior writings out of which it emerges. (78)

Howe has perfected this method of "found language" described in connection of George Oppen by Davidson, showing not just "vestiges of prior writings," multiplying the layers by incorporating images of non-verbal documents, such that have themselves incorporated earlier documents. We can find such a multiplication in

The Midnight (2003), for example, where the image of a Yeats poem shows only lines that are not covered by a bookmark, a worn copy of a Stevenson novel is scribbled over by the brother, and the great aunt's songbook contains etchings done by a youngster decades later.

The latest volumes employ a mixture of visual prosodic techniques. *Pierce-Arrow* (1999), for example, contains loose sonnets in *Rückenfigur*, next to the radical mixture of verbal and non-verbal materials in other parts. This technique is followed in the latest volume, *Debths* (2017), in which the four sections alternate using more conventional and more radical visual typographies. "Titian Air Vent" contains verses written in blocks verging on stanzas and "Periscope" five to eight line stanzas, while "Tom Tit Tot" and "Debths" takes visual typography to the extreme, with typos verging on the unintelligible, font types and sizes changing, foreign texts or parts thereof appear photocopied, serving as the deeper layers of the palimtexts.

Dissolution of the self

The last feature of Howe's poetry that I discuss consists in the particular manner of handling autobiographical or other personal themes. On the one hand, even when writing poems informed by the most personal topics – such as narratives dealing with family history or the long elegiac poem occasioned by her husband's death – the voice is never confessional, not even personal. On the other, although the poems are not written directly from the position of the speaking subject, this subject is still present as the underlying constant of thematic attention. Denying, as Perloff insists, "the very possibilities of the expressivity one wants from lyric," Howe is constantly shifting perspectives, and the subject, "far from being at the center of discourse," is "located only at its interstices" ("Language Poetry" 426, 432). Thus the dimension of the personal is repeatedly overwritten by the curbing of the lyric subject, the withdrawal of the self from the poem. However, while the Self as a narrative entity is being dissolved in Howe's poetry, a distinctive voice still emerges through her topics and choice of words.

This radical reinterpretation of the role of the lyrical subject is yet another thread that ties Howe to Olson's innovative poetics, in particular to the "stance towards reality" he calls "objectism" in the "Projective Verse" essay.

> Objectism is the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego, of the "subject" and his soul, that peculiar presumption by which Western man has interposed himself between what he is as a creature of nature (with certain instructions to carry out) and those other creations of nature which we may, with no derogation, call objects. For a man is himself an object, whatever he may take to be his advantages […]. (247)

Of the two meanings of objectism – "a stance toward reality outside the poem" and a "stance toward the reality of a poem itself" (246) – it is the latter that concerns the role of the lyrical subject, "the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego." In line with Olson, Howe disregards the lyric subject as central perspective and organizing potential, demanding an alternative creative process informed by an attention to the world and language. As such, Howe's poetic discourse is not centered in the lyric I, nor is it self-expressive in the sense of expressing a self preexisting the poetic utterance. Rather, the subject, moved from the center of discourse to its "interstices," to cite Perloff again ("Language Poetry" 432), develops in discourse, as a construct of the discourse in the making, bringing about the authority of the impersonal.

I detect two modes whereby Howe has withdrawn the lyric self in poems with a personal or autobiographical focus, opting instead on an attention to the world and discourse: the reversal of topic-comment relations and the planting of a discursive filter. I begin with the former.

Topic-comment reversal

Howe has introduced a particular method for satisfying the Olsonian demand for "getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego" when reversing the topic-comment relations that characterize confessional or otherwise subjective poetry. Here it is not the I, the self that serves as the topic of the poetic enunciation about which certain personal predications are formulated, but rather the events and characters of the world outside, whether of family or history. Put simply, it is not the poet but these events and characters that take center stage in the stories; the poet herself will only appear – if only by way of their family or local ties – in the comment part. This reversal of topic-comment relations explains why we have so very few first person narrators in Howe's poetry, and why, when the first person grammatical subject does occur, it does not coincide with the speaker but refers to a person in the comment part.

The prose collage sections of *Frame Structures* (1966) offer an illuminative example for topic-comment reversal, with the placement of the subject into the comment part. Here the poet presents her childhood through stories of her ancestors. For example, Fanny Appleton's little blue parasol provides the occasion (the topic) for telling about the American grandfather, grandmother Fanny Quincy, and the Quincy great-grandparents' summer house she visited as a child (14). Here the parasol and the Quincy family serve as topic, while the summer visits as comments involving the child. Or, to take another example, instead of the usual biographical presentation of the ancestors, Howe writes about her grandfather via the topic of the antiquarian movement (17–18) and about her father via the topic of the "hot dogs"

of Felix Frankfurter of Harvard Law School, who went on to establish together the Law School at Buffalo. In each case it is the historical facts that provide the topic part of the enunciation, into whose comment part the narrating I is embedded, thereby eliminating the confessionalism of self-centered narrative.

The poetic presentation of family history thus takes the focus of local history, making visible the ways historical processes are intertwined with personal lives. In this vein, the long poem "Pearl Harbor" uses the historical event as topic to narrate how the child felt when her father had been drafted. The personal loss embedded in the comment part is tied to a larger topic independent of the Self, such as the themes of a parent cut off from child, the child's experience of the parent's absence, the pain and mourning felt after losing a loved one, and the sense of void and irreplaceability felt after the death of a loved one.

Similarly, it is 20th century cultural history that serves as the topic for presenting, in the comment part of the poetic utterance, the life of the Irish mother in *The Midnight*. The complex elegy written after Mary Manning's death is centered on the childhood readings of the girl growing up in early 20th-century Dublin. Here the physical copies become parts of the text, among them the books of Lewis Carroll and W. B. Yeats, sections from the critical commentaries written about the performances of the Dublin actress, and pages taken from the poems and letters of Yeats, the mother's favorite poet. All these details enter into an actual physical dialogue with each other in what Howe calls the "relational space" of the text, "the thing that's alive with something from somewhere else," as she writes (*The Midnight* 58). Such relational space comes about not only between the mother and her Irish past, but also between the person remembered and the one doing the remembering, that is, mother and daughter. This daughter will now foreground, within the comment part, the mother's figure through those lines of a Yeats poem, for example, that are not covered by Mary's bookmarks, thereby reversing back the formerly reversed topic-comment relations (78). Perloff identifies the "cold" writing mode practiced by Yeats in *The Autobiographies* in this approach to a person in *The Midnight* (*Unoriginal Genius* 114). This mode agrees, I believe, with the family historiography brought about by the dissolution of the self; when even the autobiographical works lack a continuous narrative, it is only language, the linguistic surface that remains constant.

Discursive filter

In this volume Howe uses another method as well for the withdrawing the Self: she lets down a curtain of sorts, made of cultural narratives, which serves as a filter through which the experience of the subject can be observed. I call this curtain a discursive filter, allowing the Self to encounter, recognize, and interpret the

experience, while at the same time preventing the experiencing Self from the self-revelation and self-pity of confessional poetry.

The discursive filter is a method Howe has used recurrently for over twenty years, whether writing through the mother's childhood readings or the *Rückenfigur* made famous by Caspar David Friedrich, or adopting the language play in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. And although the term "discursive filter" is a metaphor (prompted by the title *Bed Hangings*), the method itself is not metaphorical: the filter or curtain or "bed hanging" does not stand *for* the experience as an interpretive grid, but rather *before* it, allowing the events to be viewed *through* its narrative (somewhat like Perloff describes the "writing through" method of Cage in *Poetry On and Off the Page*). And although the self-reflexive grammatical I is still not present in Howe's poetry, nor do the poems "express" emotional and mental states, they do serve, as Perloff puts it, a "complex process of negotiation" between private feelings and public evidence (*Unoriginal Genius* 101). According to the paraphrase Perloff has given to the assumed self-image of the poet, the self is merely understood to be a link in a cultural matrix: "I m not only what my subconscious tells me but a link – an unwitting one, perhaps – in a cultural matrix" (101).

Here the method of discursive filter meets Howe's rough book or notebook poetry technique. For not only do childhood readings provide links in the cultural matrix of *The Midnight*, but also other prose documents and visual images that are present as material objects; these are, as Perloff lists them, old family photographs, maps, reproductions of paintings, catalogues, tissue interleaves (*Unoriginal Genius* 99–100). As such, the transparency of language is repeatedly blocked by the visual images retained in their full materiality, still "filtering," so to speak, cultural experience, allowing subjective experiences to run through and between them towards clarification – somewhat in a way pebbles halt the water rushing through, while getting cleansed by it. These are the documents both halting and filtering the experience of the poet who insistently claims that she "work[s] in the poetic documentary form" (*Quarry* 94). The volume *The Midnight*, produced, as Howe puts it, by "scissor work" (60), brings about its complex relational space through the inclusion of multiple discursive and material filters negotiating between public and private. Such negotiation occurs, for example, when the (private) inscription written in Aunt Louis Bennett's (public) 1895 *Irish Songbook* is marked by a (private) duct tape mending the broken spine and a (private) drawing, a stick figure sketched by a later generation of "some anonymous American preschooler" (60), most probably one of Howe's children.

The serial elegy *Rückenfigur*, written upon the death of David von Schlegell, Howe's husband, and published in the volume *Pierce-Arrow*, is a supreme example of how a cultural discourse acts as a filter for private experience. While the emotional tone of the whole poem stems from the experience of loss and the feeling of grief felt over loss, this experience and feeling are not presented as subjective but from a

distance, as parts of the image the wanderer sees when turning his back to us. The Rückenfigur was a familiar feature of 19th century German landscape painting, made widely known by Caspar David Friedrich's *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (*The Wanderer above the Mists*, 1818). The Rückenfigur is the observer, who, although standing outside of the scene he looks at, is from our perspective part of it, allowing us viewers to see through his eyes. What we see in the poem is the past, showing its back to us, while the past presents itself as the landscape held by the gaze of the Rückenfigur. As Nicholls succinctly claims, "the past has, as it were, its back turned towards us" ("The Pastness of Landscape" 457), with the Rückenfigur providing perspective for act of remembering and the space-time evoked, making the piece, as Perloff aptly puts it on the dust jacket of the New Directions paperback edition, "a profound memory poem."

Howe's poetic sequence of short, fourteen-line poems, deals with the intense feelings of love, separation, loss, and pain, presenting the private experience through the common cultural knowledge reflected in the narrative of Tristan and Iseult, Orpheus and Eurydice, Theseus and Aegeus, Antigone and Polyneices, as well as Hamlet and Ophelia. This means that the discursive filter provided by the Rückenfigur, further increased by these classic narratives, turns the personal into public and cultural. Implicitly summoning the "lyrist" Orpheus and acknowledging the futility of his turning back in the final poem, "Day binds the wide Sound," the speaker seeks to come to terms with the "retreating" of the loved one by *theomimesis*, or the attempt to acquire God's point of view when accepting death. Although the fourteen-line verse form recalls the classic sonnet, the dominant mode of love lyric since the renaissance, this mode gets simultaneously resisted by the short lines of varying length (six to eight syllables), the vague referentiality of the lyric I, and most emphatically by the broken syntax made up of sentence fragments and words detached from their contexts. Nicholls draws attention to the "jammed, verbless line[s]," the "subjectless verb[s]," the "abrupt internal divisions that pit emphatic caesuras against the forward drive of enjambment" ("The Pastness of Landscape" 457). That is, we have two opposing forces at work in the poem: on the one hand, a most intense elegiac voice evoking the theme of death and loss in their many contexts, and on the other a recurrent flattening of the lyric attained by a dismembered language. As Montgomery aptly puts it, "[t]he lyric potentialities of *Rückenfigur* repeatedly fold into an implicit questioning of lyric as a mask for the tyrannous imperatives of desire" (152), citing Howe's own reflections from the poem, "Assuredly I see division" and "Two thoughts in strife" (*Pierce-Arrow* 134, 135).

Howe's latest volume, *Debths* uses a discursive filter already in its title. *Debths* is not an existing word but a linguistic anomaly coined by Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*, evoking three English words simultaneously: *debts*, *depths*, and *deaths.* One of Howe's "sparkling *trouvailles*," as Dan Chiasson puts it, "the pun suggests the 'debts' Howe owes to her ancestors and their works, the 'depths' of her engagement with material

traces of ideas […], and the 'deaths' of parents and loved ones that have shaped Howe's elegiac intensities." A "hybrid animal," Chiasson continues, the book is a "composite of autobiographical prose, minimalist verse, collaged (and mainly illegible) clippings of old texts, and lots of white space," as well as the fragments of installations produced by two visual artists, Isabella Stewart Gardner and Paul Thek. Everything has a meaning repeatedly modified by context in this echo chamber of discursive filters, since all these cultural shreds enter into an intensive physical dialogue with each other as well as the surrounding white spaces.

* * *

I have examined three features of Susan Howe's poetry that contribute to the singularity of her poetry: her overriding interest in history, her unregulated grammar and typography, and her practice of absenting herself from the work. These innovations tie her poetry to the succession of avant-gardes running through the past one hundred plus years, in particular to what she terms as the "undervoice" in American poetry. Of these undervoices, Charles Olson seems to have exerted a most enduring influence on Howe's writing, as the contexts of the three features discussed above testify. Howe's revisionist reconstruction of history and her disregard for both grammatical and typographic conventions can be best understood within the context of Olson's idea of *apocatastasis*, or the reconstitution of an original state in history, thought, and writing. The practice of withdrawing the self also has its ties to Olson, in particular to his objectist stance towards reality, which aims at "the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego." Although Howe often treats personal topics, she does so without being subjective or confessional; instead she hides the subjective in the comment part of the utterance or distances it behind a cultural narrative.

Two passages quoted earlier may stand side by side for how similarly the two poets considered this urge to capture early moments in the processes of apperception, before perceptions "make sense" and are fitted into polished sentences and regular looking pages. First, from Charles Olson's "These days":

These days
whatever you have to say, leave
the roots on, let them
dangle

And the dirt

just to make clear
where they come from.

And from Howe's "Writing *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time*": "I wanted to transplant words onto paper with soil sticking to their roots" (201). Indeed, Howe does just that: writes in a wilderness language reflecting the state preceding the "crime" of colonization by grammar and typography. By disregarding the rules of grammar, the poet can better listen to language and unearth knowledge stored beneath the regulating grid of grammar. By the same token, by disregarding the conventions of typography, the poet has a better chance to come to new realizations produced by the unexpected meetings of lines, discharged by never-before crossings and overlappings on the canvas of the poem. Howe's rough book poetry will then allow her – in the spirit of Goethe, Rimbaud, as well as Olson – to write about what she does not know.

It is no wonder, then, that Howe's poetry demands a very different involvement by the reader: one has to comply with her invitation to participate in the creative process. Indeed, in this poetry, as in Bernstein's "imploded sentences," the reader "stays plugged in to the wave-like pulse of the writing" (*Artifice of Absorption*). The reader must resist the search for the lyrical I, as well as some supposedly deeper meaning in poetry. The reader must strip the reading process of the old imperative to make meaning, tolerating not knowing and not understanding. Finally, the reader must learn to disregard referential meaning and recognize instead the voices produced by the visual rhythm of the letters and words.

Howe treats her readers as grown-ups, or "full citizen[s] of the textual terrain," as Back puts it, "with equal rights and obligations in the making of meaning" (6). Moreover, she offers her readers the experience of play and of the encounter with language as a powerful force. As she says in an interview, "I would want my readers to play, to enter the mystery of language, and to follow words where they lead, to let language lead them" (Kelley 31). Ultimately, such submitting to play and language will turn Susan Howe's poetry into a true *texte du plaisir*.

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TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN HUNGARIAN LITERATURE

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The Prose of Benő Karácsony in the Context of the Works of Tersánszky and Kosztolányi

In Hungarian literary history, little interest has been shown in the prose of Benő Karácsony, as witnessed by the fact that only three small monographs have been written about his work (Tót H.; Balogh; Robotos). The reasons for his marginalisation in the literary canon have been discussed in various studies (Cs. Gyimesi; Nagy), and this paper is not intended as yet another contribution on this theme; it is, instead, an attempt to interpret the author's achievements in the context of the history of prose writing. It is my belief that the aesthetic merit of Benő Karácsony's narrative works – and predominantly his novels – is deserving of far more than relative oblivion. Potentially, one of the most effective ways of encouraging an interest in his work may be to place it in the context of contemporary Hungarian prose writing, and to highlight those aspects that connect the narrative *oeuvre* of Benő Karácsony with the work of better-known and more highly respected authors. Indeed, it is not only the parallels, but also the differences that can be instructive in this respect, since they bring to the fore those peculiar features of Karácsony's narrative approach that would justify a special place for him in the history of Hungarian prose. The works of Józsi Jenő Tersánszky and Dezső Kosztolányi can best help us situate this unique narrative world on the map of Hungarian prose writing.

The most obvious parallels are to be found with Tersánszky (Kelemen 7). Firstly, the distinctive and idiosyncratic use of language by autodiegetic narrators and certain characters should be mentioned, which is evocative of the agility of the spoken word while firmly rejecting the demands of elevated literary language in order to entertain the reader with humorous and comic effects. Further similarities include a focus on two character types: one is the cheerful eccentric who deliberately turns their back on social expectations; and the other is naïve, bordering on simple-minded, a person who is almost constitutionally incapable of harming others. Further important parallels between the two prose worlds include the representation of the sheer joy of existence, and – in terms of genre – the narrative tradition of the anecdote and the reference to the picaresque novel.

Among the works of Kosztolányi, it is primarily the two Kornél Esti collections that merit our attention in the attempt to identify parallels. This is partly because, in the interpolated short stories, a decisive role is afforded to ironic, living speech,

an equivalent of which can be found in nearly all of Karácsony's novels. In Kosztolányi's works, Kornél Esti is presented in the role of an autodiegetic secondary narrator who is explicitly seeking to entertain, and for this purpose he employs the accessories of anecdotal narrative tradition. A further parallel is the fact that Benő Karácsony's novels often create an open, dialogical relationship between the voices of the characters, as well as between the voice of the character-narrator and the voices of some of the characters that he narrates, which is reminiscent of the relationship between the primary narrator and the eponymous character in *Esti Kornél* (Tót H. 138). I am not referring primarily here to the peculiar distribution of roles in the first chapter, which establishes dichotomies between the narrator and the main characters, who are represented as one another's alter ego, a significant number of which are subsequently not justified, or often even denied. Far more importantly, the interpolated stories in the volume essentially establish Esti in an equivalent narrative position to that of the primary narrator. Thus, the volume has two narrators, whose narrative modes feature distinct differences, continuously counterpoint one another, and are characterized by diverse literary perceptions, narrative behaviour and points of view. This narrative structure, which gives expression to the relative validity of each narrative mode and viewpoint, remains valid throughout the text of *Esti Kornél*.

In every one of Benő Karácsony's novels there are pairs of characters who are engaged in an almost constant conflict, but who also complement one another (Balogh 92). In two of his novels (*Napos oldal* [Sunny Side] and *A megnyugvás ösvényein* [On the Paths of Resignation]), the dialogue takes place between the present self of the character-narrator and the character-self, a solution that comes even closer to that observed in *Esti Kornél*. These recurrent disagreements, interspersed with many comic elements, are left open by both the heterodiegetic and autodiegetic narrators of certain of the novels, who refrain from taking a definite stand on one side or the other. However, in those novels that feature heterodiegetic narrators, the narrator's sympathy shifts perceptibly towards one specific side as we proceed in the text. Towards the end of the two novels that feature homodiegetic narrators (*Napos oldal, A megnyugvás ösvényein*), the character-narrator declares his altered position more and more assertively. Thus, in terms of their dialogic relationship, an essential difference can be observed between Karácsony's novels and *Esti Kornél*: while the latter maintains ambivalence throughout with respect to the relationship between the two competing voices, Benő Karácsony's works take sides more or less definitively. This is an important difference, despite the fact that Karácsony's narrators rarely express their position or value judgements explicitly. Even in the two retrospective autodiegetic stories, the narrator's comments and judgements are rather sparse. In most of the novel texts, the narration reflects the perspective of the former character-self, and is corrected only rarely – albeit in essential points – by the narrator-self.

In addition to the foregoing, a further justification for considering Kosztolányi's prose alongside that of Tersánszky as an important orientation point when situating Benő Karácsony's prose in its historical context is the fact that an overemphasis on the links with Tersánszky's narrative can lead to a one-sided approach. Despite their intended purpose as entertainment, Benő Karácsony's texts are more intellectual than the works of Tersánszky, while their approach is also more intricate. In this regard, the Transylvanian writer's narrative mode is closer to that of Kosztolányi, whose prose, far from being expressly intellectual, was rather a combination of entertainment with a complexity of approach.

If we observe Karácsony's prose in terms of the interplay between tradition and innovation, several genre traditions deserve particular attention. Among them, the present study focuses primarily on the use and renewal of the anecdotal narrative tradition, addressing other aspects of the issue only tangentially. In literary scholarship, it is commonly held that anecdotal narration had finally become obsolete by the modern period. However, this firmly held preconception is contradicted by the fact that, in several significant works of modern Hungarian prose (Gyula Krúdy: *Boldogult úrfikoromban* [Blessed Days of My Youth]; Dezső Kosztolányi: *Esti Kornél*; Péter Esterházy: *Termelési-regény* [A Novel of Production], *Harmonia caelestis,* etc.), innovative poetic achievements have been realized through the reinterpretation of anecdotal narration. Nor is this exclusively a Hungarian phenomenon: Hašek's world-famous novel, like Bohumil Hrabal's prose, also draws on the anecdotal narrative tradition.

The imitation of orality by the narrative mode adopted in the above-mentioned works is typically interpreted as a variety of *skaz* by those who have a low estimation of anecdotal literature from an aesthetic point of view. This approach is fairly widespread, although a number of arguments can be levelled against it. With respect to *skaz*, interjected stories are among the requirements of the genre, as is the inclusion of a simple-minded secondary narrator whose level of education remains significantly below that of the primary narrator, and whose performance style is clumsy and riddled with grammatical errors. In contrast, a comic plot or comic episodes are not among the requirements of the genre. A classic representative of this particular genre is *The Sealed Angel* by Nikolai Leskov, where the plot is far from comic and the narrative mode is not at all driven by punch lines. Based on the above, anecdotal narrative can scarcely have originated from the genre of the *skaz*, nor can it be considered a variety of it. The roots of presentation that builds on a taste for narrative, imitates living speech, is redolent with humour, and has an episodic plot structure, lie in the anecdote, a genre that can be traced back to Antiquity. The beginnings of anecdotal narrative in Hungary date back far earlier than the classic *skaz* works of the 19th century. Martius Galeotto's apophtegms on King Matthias were written in the 16th century; Kelemen Mikes' chatty, anecdotic letters in the early 18th century; and Dienes József Hemányi's *Nagyenyedi Demokritus* in the middle of the 18th

century. The centuries-old tradition of anecdotalism gave rise to the best-known versions of the anecdotal narrative so far, linked to the names of Mór Jókai and Kálmán Mikszáth in the 19th century. Although there are many who regard this type of anecdotal fiction as the equivalent of anecdotal narration, the tradition of anecdotalism still preserved its capacity for renewal and poetic innovation, as suggested by the far from comprehensive list above.

Based on the foregoing, I do not regard the anecdotal narrative mode as being definitively outdated in the modern era. I would include Benő Karácsony among the 20th-century Hungarian writers who contributed to the renewal of the anecdotal narrative inheritance of the 19th century by means of their important innovations. The relationship between their prose and the anecdotal tradition is most clearly reflected in the preservation of the comically eccentric character, along with the humorous use of language evocative of living speech. This latter trait is the most important aesthetic achievement in the poetics of Benő Karácsony. The distinctive characteristics of this comic stylistic register appear at their most accomplished in those novels that feature an autodiegetic narrator. The oral quality of the character-narrator's language permeates the entire text of these works. In the novels that feature heterodiegetic narrators, this linguistic register is manifested mainly in the voices of the characters in the course of their extensive arguments or lengthy letters, both of which are rich in humorous turns. The narrators' voices in these novels display anecdotal features to varying degrees. In *Új élet kapujában* [Gate to a New Life], for example, during the narration of the protagonist's journey home from a Russian prisoner-of-war camp, such features clearly play a decisive role, while during accounts of events at home, this linguistic register is present only sporadically in the narrative voice. The same can be said of the narration in *Utazás a szürke folyón* [Voyage on the Grey River]. When the language of the narrator becomes more impersonal, the method of presentation draws less attention to itself than would be typical in the case of anecdotal narration. Accessories of the anecdotal narrative, however, such as the use of comic actions or the anecdotal use of "genre figure" characters, are often preserved even when the anecdotal features of the narrator's style are temporarily less pronounced.

The occasional suppression of anecdotal qualities in the narrative voice, such as the imitation of living speech and personalness, are warnings that, in addition to the unquestionably determinative anecdotal narrative mode, it is also important to bear in mind, among the traditions that served to inspire Benő Karácsony's comic effects, the tradition of humorous fiction. In this respect, an examination of the influence of Dickens would be a promising direction to pursue, as the English writer inspired earlier authors writing in the Hungarian anecdotal narrative tradition, such as Kálmán Mikszáth and Gyula Krúdy. In the context of the impact of English literature, it is also worth mentioning another comic genre: satire. The fact that Benő Karácsony's novels often allude to *Gulliver's Travels* is by no means a coincidence, as they combine

an intention to entertain, irony and humour with the moral criticism of laughable social customs.

The ethical point of view is particularly significant in Karácsony's novels. It also explains the frequent references to another literary tradition, the 19th-century Russian novel inspired by the religious thinking. (Németh 531-532) The author's first novel, *Pjotruska*, alludes to this tradition by means of the fact that the protagonist's slightly crazed friend continuously refers to him as Pyotr Kirillovich – that is, he gives him the name of Pierre Bezukhov. The narrator of *Napos oldal* plays with the coincidence that the woman he loves is called Anna, just like Anna Karenina, while on another occasion he refers to his own return to the village environment as Tolstoyan dream. The almost simple-mindedly naive but well-meaning protagonist of *Utazás a szürke folyón* can be seen as a modern, comic version of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. The frequent and striking references to Tolstoy's works can probably be connected with the fact that Karácsony's narrative mode tended far more towards happiness and harmony than the presentation of dramatic and violent scenes.

Another indication of the existence of an ethical-religious perspective is the fact that, in several novels, a priest is found in the role of the interlocutor who sympathizes with the protagonist, but who is often engaged in debate with him. The American prison chaplain in *Utazás a szürke folyón* is one such figure, whose idiosyncratic behaviour also illustrates how Karácsony's poetic narrative modernizes the representation of the religious position. The prison chaplain is particularly fond of beer, and if he happens to be short of money to settle his bill he cleverly manages to slip away from the café, leaving his duped conversation partner to pay. On another occasion, when confronted with a Parisian roughneck who is sponging off his naïve protégé, he tries to instil better moral values in him by punching him in the stomach. This humorous character is a far cry from figures such as the starets Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov,* who, as a holy man, remains entirely untouched by profane comicality. In *Napos oldal* and *A megnyugvás ösvényein*, the mountain priest fulfils a similar function as the American prison chaplain. Although he has a far more peaceful nature than that of his American counterpart, comic traits also play an important role in how he is represented – as also emphasized by the fact that he himself has a great sense of humour. The counterpoint of this kind of religious approach, based on forgiveness and a zest for life, is found in the Catholic chaplain in *A megnyugvás ösvényein,* who despises the futility and vanities of earthly life with ecstatic rapture, and who is entirely without humour in both religious and general matters.

The ethical-religious point of view thus appears in a kind of profane form in Karácsony's novels, and his works ascribe a place the biblical Ten Commandments without making any reference to God as their origin, and as the absolute that secures their validity. Although the protagonists of the novels cannot be called atheists, religious practice does not play a determining role in their lives. They do not attend

church, they do not pray, and although some texts allude to the fact that the protagonist does not deny the existence of God, they do not follow the theological teachings of any particular religion and can only be said to have a peculiar, not specifically formulated notion of god. The novels thus align themselves with the ethics of the biblical Ten Commandments without it leading back to the divine revelation. The foundation of biblical morality is the attitude that life is the greatest value. A variant of this kind of moral foundation is the pragmatic concept of truth, according to which, even though "there are no absolute truths on this Earth, there are truths without which an anarchic herd of swine would occupy our place in society, the fat mangalicas of anarchy" (*Utazás a szürke folyón* 299, my translation).

Among the generic traditions referred to, we should also mention the *Bildungsroman*, which had become somewhat unfashionable by the 20th century. The beginnings of the *Bildungsroman* can be traced back to the Enlightenment notion according to which human beings are naturally good and are destined to develop their inherent capabilities as fully as possible. The *Bildungsroman* saw the intellect-driven evolution of the personality as the meaning of life and cherished an essentially optimistic view of the human subject. In the modern period, this preconception was radically shaken by new phenomena such as the findings of depth psychology and the relativist world view. Without doubt, the tradition of the *Bildungsroman* could not be preserved unchanged amidst the conditions of the turn of the century, determined as they were by the new insights of psychology and a worldview that promulgated the relativity of things and values. Thus, the only re-interpretation of the genre that could be considered modern was one that reflected the new theories of the structure of the personality and confronted the fact that the truth principle had become problematic. The works of Benő Karácsony preserved certain characteristics of the *Bildungsroman*, while retaining an awareness of the significance of unconscious processes within the personality, as well as doubts about the notion of a general, absolute, unquestionable truth. In all novels, the protagonist undergoes personal development in the course of the plot and, as a consequence, their self-knowledge deepens and their worldview becomes more complex, even though they never achieve the condition of consummate harmony. They rely on the power of their intellect, but they are aware that the rule of consciousness is threatened by the strength of the instincts, which are always poised to assume control over the personality as a whole.

The picaresque novel is another of the traditional genres that inspired the work of Karácsony. In the text of *A megnyugvás ösvényein*, the genre is mentioned as many as three times, which can be interpreted as a kind of self-reflexive poetics. However, the term cannot be applied to Karácsony's works in its original sense, just as it cannot be applied to Tersánszky's novel *Kakuk Marci* or Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night*. When the word "picaresque" is applied to modern novels, we no longer expect the inclusion of features that were once indispensable in the heyday of the picaresque.

The narrator of the modern picaresque is not necessarily a repentant villain who, during the narrated plot time, had sought every possible means for his own social advancement. Nor must the story necessarily feature such elements of risk and adventure as murder, robbery, showdowns in an underworld environment, or lovers' revenge. In 20th-century novels, the term picaresque is generally applied to works in which the characters – while not being criminals – stand outside society, and who are therefore generally considered to lead a shady existence. They are homeless figures who cannot, or do not want to, remain for any length of time in any one spot in their lives.

In *A megnyugvás ösvényein*, the term is used in this sense: the protagonist had moved from his native village to Budapest, and from there to Paris, then back to Budapest before returning to his native village at the beginning of the plot. However, after staying there for two years, he sets out into the world once again. At the end of the story we see him in Southern France, although there is no telling how long he will stay there, where he will go, or when he will return home, if at all. In his other novels, Karácsony moves his characters around in a similar manner. In *Pjotruska*, Baltazár sets out from Transylvania, then years later returns to his native town. The protagonist of *Új élet kapujában*, Ádám Tunák, returns home from captivity in Russia but is unable to find his place. The formerly wealthy engineer loses his villa, feels restless in his parents' home, and for a while stays with a friend in his ramshackle cottage. The pharmacist Sebestyén in *Utazás a szürke folyón* is heading home after a year in Paris to take up his old job in the pharmacy. On the way, he stops in the village of Borjúmál, where various events conspire to delay his return home. He has just begun to feel at home and has built himself a hut to live in on the outskirts of the village, on a river island, when events in the village and the flooding of the river carry him off towards the unknown. The hero of each novel lives more or less outside society, or is a socially marginalized figure: an artist, or someone practising a similarly dubious profession from the point of view of the majority, an untrustworthy individual who does not conform to the social order. In Benő Karácsony's works, the picaresque is thus the epic manifestation of existence outside society and the loss of home. Nevertheless, the establishment of a home is a permanent endeavour on the part of Karácsony's protagonists, and while these efforts may be temporarily successful at best, they ultimately fail in every case. At the level of literary genre, the dialectic between homelessness and the establishment of home corresponds to the duality of the picaresque and the Robinsonade (interpreted as the antithesis of the picaresque).

Returning to the object of the present study in its strict sense, in what follows I examine the closer relationships between the narrative modes of Benő Karácsony and Tersánszky. One obvious parallel is the narrative use of language based on individual linguistic inventiveness and imitating living speech, which is equally characteristic of Tersánszky's works that feature both hetero- and homodiegetic

narrators, and primarily those of Benő Karácsony's novels that employ an autodiegetic narrator. Both authors give preference to comic linguistic registers, and the acknowledged aim of their punchline-driven prose is to entertain the reader. Both rhetorical modes are distinguished from earlier versions of the anecdotal narrative primarily by an approach based on idiosyncratic linguistic ingenuity. The fact that they drew primarily on the elements of a collective language variant, of which they offer a personal variety, explains why they often voiced the *communis opinio,* or the point of view of the community. In Mikszáth's narrative language, the frequent appearance of commonly used phrases, worldly wisdom and proverbs can be linked with this collective origin, which remains discernible even though the writer creates his own individual version, building on the basis of collective language. Among the major achievements of anecdotal language in the first half of the 20th century are those that represent an individual, condensed version of the collective discourse. In the works of Áron Tamási, for example, the narrative language is a unique, virtuoso variation on the style of speech that was considered typical among the Transylvanian Szeklers.

By contrast, in the works of Tersánszky and Benő Karácsony, the tendency towards comic language use by the narrator and other characters is essentially individual in nature. Rather than imitating the dialect of a particular social group or region, it builds on individual linguistic inventiveness. It prefers comicality that does not adapt elements considered as being in the public domain through the use of individual invention, but rather attempts to enforce the principle of individuality even in terms of linguistic ingenuity. The styles of speech used by Tersánszky and Benő Karácsony, which imitate spoken language use, resemble one another inasmuch as they both distance themselves from the strongly collective character of 19th-century anecdotalism and attempt to boldly assert their own individual character. Of course, this does not mean that they sever all ties with collective language variants. Tersánszky's narrative language, for example, reflects the influence of the regional dialect of Szatmár, while Karácsony's narrators and characters are both characterized by speech that mirrors a tortuous way of thinking, which is remotely reminiscent of the style of speech and mentality generally attributed by public opinion to the Szekler people. This relationship is revealed in a propensity for teasing and banter, as well as good-natured wordplay built on snappy retorts. However, the speech of both characters and narrators shows no trace of rural qualities: the textual humour is often intellectual or assumes a certain amount of literary erudition. The most important aspect of the shaping of language is nevertheless that it appears in the form of individual ingenuity, which steers clear of commonplace solutions by means of significant invention.

The same unostentatious, almost imperceptible intellectual quality also distinguishes the narrative language of Benő Karácsony from Tersánszky's far less intellectual use of language. Although Tersánszky's best-known narrator, Marci

Kakuk, is a clever enough fellow, his cleverness is more a manifestation of quick wits and common sense than an intellectual performance. In contrast, both Benő Karácsony's characters and his autodiegetic narrators are inclined to self-reflection, although they always approach this in good spirits, while Tersánszky's characters and narrators generally have little propensity for self-interpretation.

The prevailing tendency towards the individual in the narration is clearly related to an approach that emphasizes individuality. As a further consequence, the typical protagonists in the works of Tersánszky and Benő Karácsony are equally eccentric characters. This fact represents yet another connection with the anecdotal narrative tradition. The eccentric is one of the distinctive figures – if not the most distinctive figure – in 19th-century Hungarian anecdotal narrative. They are often people behind the times, Don Quixote-like, or some other kind of solitary, slightly crazy figure. Although the narrators and abstract authors of the works often view such characters with a certain understanding, or even sympathy, the eccentrics are approached from the viewpoint of the collective value system. The narrator may be more sympathetic than the general public, but he never publicly opposes the standpoint of the community. In contrast, in the narrative world of Tersánszky and Benő Karácsony, the viewpoint is determined by the eccentric. While the earlier anecdotal epic regarded the eccentric from the point of view of the common value system, in the works of these two authors, generally accepted social values are seen from the perspective of the eccentric. This perspective is explicitly critical of the community's views of life and is largely presented as entirely misguided. In these novels, it is not the collective but the individual that will act as the reference point. What is important is no longer what the community thinks of the individual, but rather the individual's judgement of the values and morals of the community. These eccentrics are not anachronistic characters, people outside their own times, but marginal figures on the edge of society who do not want to live according to the standards of the majority, which they consider pointless or ridiculous.

In Tersánszky's prose, the typical representative of this marginalized position is the vagrant, as best personified by Marci Kakuk. In three of Benő Karácsony's novels (*Pjotruska, Napos oldal, A megnyugvás ösvényein*), it is the artist who appears in this role, which brings them closer rather to Kornél Esti, although they have nothing in common with Esti's bohemianism. In the other two novels by Karácsony, characters in existential crisis move away from their formerly stable positions. In connection with the type of the eccentric, the most obvious parallel is between Kázmér Felméri and Marci Kakuk. Both are happy fellows who regard social conventions as ridiculous. They love thumbing their noses at those with power and authority, and they steer clear of the social struggle to acquire wealth, which means that conventional people see them as irresponsible troublemakers. Felméri, however, has a broader outlook than Marci Kakuk. He spends time in Paris, lives in Budapest for several years, where he achieves moderate success as a sculptor, reads regularly, and is better educated

than average, as indicated by the way he drops the names of writers and artists into his narration. His intellectual horizon is therefore broader than that of Marci Kakuk, whose position is that of some kind of unsophisticate in Tersánszky's series of novels.

The other major difference between the two figures and the two narrative worlds is that while Marci Kakuk is a static figure, Kázmér Felméri undergoes significant changes in both novels in which he features as the character-narrator. Marci Kakuk's true counterpart is the young Kázmér Felméri, who, like the heroes in Tersánszky's novels, is grounded in natural law, as most aptly expressed by the formula: Do good to yourself by doing the least harm to others. By contrast, as a narrator in his forties, Felméri is grounded in biblical morality. He experiences happiness not in teasing and cocky impudence, but through a sense of responsibility, tolerance for the failings of others, and self-irony. Although in the above-mentioned novels by Tersánszky and Karácsony, retrospection never becomes a key element in the narration, this trait is realized in different ways by the two authors. In fact, in the *Kakuk Marci* novels, there is no significant difference between the narrator's and the characters' points of view. In the course of the plot and narrative time, Marci's attitude to the characters and events of the narrated world, like his values and his world view, remain unchanged. Kázmér Felméri is a far less static figure: he relates differently as a character and as a narrator to the characters and events in the story he narrates (Balogh 101), and even if his world view and value system are not radically transformed, they still undergo a major alteration. Nevertheless, retrospective narration does not dominate, because the narration emphasizes the character's point of view in the majority of the text, thus reinforcing a focus that is concurrent with events. There are only a few passages in which the subsequent viewpoint that is connected to the narrative time clearly overrides the contemporary character's perspective. However, in these textual locations, short retrospective self-interpretations and micro-commentaries perceptibly demarcate the horizon between character and narrator. Since such passages occur only sporadically in the text, and since the world view, mentality and values of the two egos does not differ radically from one another, the retrospective perspective does not come to dominate the continuously conspicuous viewpoint of the narrative. Both Felméri novels thematize from the very beginning the relative distance between the characters and the narrating self, yet despite this, apart from the sporadic passages mentioned above, the novels generally represent the characters' points of view, while in the conclusion, the transforming character's self finally meets with the narrating self. The advantage of this solution is that, when voicing moral principles, the narrator does not become didactic, which would hinder the quality of the text as entertainment.

The essentially comic mode of narration, however, cannot be explained simply by the intention to entertain in either Tersánszky's or Benő Karácsony's novels. A dominant feature in the narrative world of both authors is a focus on the joy of

living. (Angyalosi 64–65) Almost without exception, their protagonists are characters whose mindset and attitudes are characterized by the sheer joy of being alive. Even the protagonists of *Új élet kapujában* and *Utazás a szürke folyón* suffer only a temporary loss of their good spirits, despite their existential crisis. This joyful approach to life in both *oeuvre*s is related to the anecdotal narrative tradition, the tone and approach of which, in its 19th-century Hungarian variant, was defined by good humour. However, this register, in which every effort was made to create pleasure for the reader, showed little inclination for reflection on being. The general mood expressed did not regard existing relationships as problematic, did not formulate any criticism of the values of the social context, and did not question the ready-made, community-sanctioned foundations of its approach to life. It was filled with a self-evident sense of familiarity, a belief that there was no point disrupting things, since any change to the existing established order would lead only to upheaval, with no improvement.

This feeling of familiarity also plays a decisive role in Benő Karácsony's novels, not as a condition that exists inevitably, but rather as a problem. In each one of the author's novels, the narrative of homecoming plays an important function. In *Pjotruska*, Baltazár leaves his native town in Transylvania, where he returns many years later as a renowned writer, after realising that nothing of what he has achieved really matters to him. Ádám Tunák, the protagonist of *Új élet kapujában*, returns home from Siberia with his fellow prisoners of war to find that his wife has left him, his daughter views him as a stranger, and he no longer has a close relationship with his sisters. Although he loses his livelihood as an engineer, he does not give up hope of starting a new life. At the beginning of *Napos oldal*, Kázmér Felméri returns to the village mill following his father's death and makes his home there, but eventually leaves as the result of a love affair, travels to Budapest and later to Paris, returning after more than 10 years to the village mill accompanied by his son. The novel's posthumously published sequel, *A megnyugvás ösvényein,* describes the time spent at the mill, when his longing to find a permanent home appears to become reality. By the end of the novel, however, this apparently idyllic state unravels; Felméri again travels abroad, and it is not clear when he will come home, if he returns at all.

Probably the novel entitled *Utazás a szürke folyón* presents the desire of creating home the most expressively. After an absence of a year, the novel's protagonist initially pictures his homecoming as a return to the pharmacy where he used to work. He later realizes that his friends are no longer expecting him to return, but he believes that, in the village where he stays on his journey, he may have an opportunity to create at least a temporary home for himself. However, some of the locals stigmatize him as a stranger, and those with whom he feels an emotional connection fail to reciprocate his feelings, so he moves on, without abandoning the desire to find himself a home once again, at least temporarily. Clearly, none of the novels present the experience of feeling at home as a permanent state: instead, they present the

harmony that is discovered, or that is believed to be discovered, as something temporary. Thus feeling at home is not an immediate possibility, but rather a task that demands effort, without there being any certainty of lasting results.

As has doubtless become evident from the above, the convivial tone of the anecdotal tradition has been significantly transformed in both Tersánszky's and Benő Karácsony's writing practice. In their works, humorous and ironic overtones are not the upshot of an unproblematic worldview, but of a considered delight in sheer existence, which is critical of socially sanctioned norms and behaviour in the spirit of *joie de vivre,* since such norms and behaviour screen the wonder of everyday existence. The emphasis on this considered happiness – which is one of the most characteristic features of the works of Benő Karácsony – is achieved by recourse to the genre of the humorous novel. The formulation of moral messages was nothing alien to the Dickensian version of the humorous novel, which may have served as direct inspiration for Karácsony's novels, with their emphasis on the profession of a life principle that combined happiness and biblical morality.

In the prose of Tersánszky and Benő Karácsony, the joy of existence is understood as the natural relationship towards life shared by all human beings – and in fact all living things. In this approach, references to nature, and the concept of nature, fulfil a key function. In this respect, the two authors are drawing on a tradition that modernity largely considered to have lost its validity. Nature as a point of reference was characteristic primarily of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, while Modernity elevated the constructed and artificial as aesthetic standards. Argumentation that refers to human nature establishes a principle, in opposition to general relativism, that it ultimately regards as a solid basis upon which it is possible to distinguish between right and wrong attitudes to life. This is fundamentally unaltered by the fact that this nature-oriented approach is not interpreted in the texts as an undeniable and indisputable truth, but as an opinion. However, it is worth emphasizing that Benő Karácsony's texts are free from the kind of nostalgia in which nature is regarded as some kind of primeval home, nor can they be accused of promoting a kind of naïve Rousseau-ism. Although in three out of the five novels, the protagonist spends some of the plot time in environments that are close to nature, none of the narration idealizes the natural environment, nor is the village way of life elevated above urban life. The reason for the choice of location has far more to do with the fact that a lifestyle that seeks independence from social norms is simply easier to achieve in this relative spatial isolation.

The emphasis on the value of simplicity also derives from the principle of naturalness, which likewise does not coincide with the dominant characteristics of Modernity. The pursuit of simplicity should be understood, on the one hand, as an aesthetic principle, and on the other as a life view. Aesthetically, it is given shape partly through the imitation of orality by the narrative language, and partly by the characters' voices that are likewise emphatically evocative of living speech. Another

consequence is the relatively transparent semantic structure of the texts, and the fact that the narrative does not confront the reader with complex issues of interpretation, but openly acknowledges its intention to entertain. This simplicity, however, is not presented in the works of Benő Karácsony as a self-evident capacity, but rather as the recognition to be gained behind the complexity of unimportant things, which lies at the end of an arduous journey. More specifically, a need for simplicity exists in the human personality, but social values conceal this longing, which can be brought to consciousness only by means of experience and reflection.

Alongside his self-aware eccentrics, the characters that people Benő Karácsony's novels also include several examples of almost simple-minded naivety. Approached from the principles of biblical morality and naturalness, however, such simple-mindedness, rather than being a negative trait, is a manifestation of the joy of existence and benevolence towards other living beings. This character type is embodied in its purest form by János Csermely in *Pjotruska*, the closest friend, and a kind of alter ego, of the quick-witted and satirical Baltazár. While Csermely is presented as a man of moderate intellect, a foolish, almost half-witted character, Károly Jakab Hektor Sebestyén, the protagonist of *Utazás a szürke folyón,* represents a more complex version of simple-mindedness. A trained pharmacist, he has also lived in Paris and is of average erudition, but, lacking life experience, his naive goodwill often makes him appear dim-witted. His personality, however, undergoes a major transformation in the course of the novel's plot time, from naive goodwill to critical thinking and a conscious commitment to act with compassion: having abandoned his fantasy of living a comfortable, petty-bourgeois lifestyle, he chooses to live a simple unpretentious life. This affinity with natural simplicity explains why simple-mindedly naïve characters are also to be found in the work of Tersánszky. Gazsi, the protagonist of the novella *Legenda a nyúlpaprikásról* [Legend of the Paprika Rabbit] – one of the author's most successful creations – is the village idiot, who is nevertheless regarded by the novel's heterodiegetic narrator as an example to be followed. Because of his modest intellectual abilities, his values are not distorted by the ambitions that appeal to a society driven by the pursuit of material possessions. He experiences the sheer joy of existence with an almost animal instinct.

Despite the undoubted parallels between Benő Karácsony's prose and the Kornél Esti stories, the intertextual relationships should rather be perceived as a kind of latent dispute between the novels of Karácsony and the works of Kosztolányi. Particularly worth highlighting among the potential parallels are playful irony, language that imitates living speech, the picaresque-style representation of the figure of the artist, the questioning of the truth principle, and, in relation to this, the realisation of dialogicity through the presentation of characters that illustrate different points of view and different approaches to the world. However, these similarities are scarcely able to obscure the fact that in Benő Karácsony's novels, the components in question are placed in contexts that differ significantly from those found in the works

of Kosztolányi, which can be explained by the marked differences between the value systems and world views attributable to the two textual worlds.

Although the works of both Kosztolányi and Benő Karácsony suggest that truth as an absolute category is apparently no longer substantiated, in Karácsony's writings, unlike the works of Kosztolányi, the response to this discovery is not complete relativism. While Kornél Esti professes the equality of the most diverse points of view and has at least two opinions about everything due to his belief in the irrational nature of being (*Esti Kornél*, 112-113), Benő Karácsony's heroes are typically seeking a fixed point that will serve as a foundation for their view of life. The attitude attributable to the abstract authors of certain novels typically ascribes this foundation not to some metaphysical truth or irrevocable principle, but rather approaches it pragmatically. The protagonists of the novels construct their own attitudes to the world on the basic principle that, in their judgement, allows the greatest opportunity for experiencing the joy of existence; they do not consider it to be of vital importance whether or not the truth of the chosen principle is philosophically or logically justifiable.

In Kosztolányi's works, relativism is often coupled with resignation, which can be traced back to a turn-of-the-century approach that arrived at the all-encompassing notion of relativity having confronted the awareness of finitude. For Kornél Esti, the irrationality of life is reflected primarily in unfathomable and incomprehensible finitude. Approaching the fact of death from this perspective levels out differences and inequalities, since, due to their transient, ephemeral nature, they can be seen as purely superficial phenomena compared to the eternity of non-existence. Looking at life from the perspective of death, however, is entirely foreign to the novels of Benő Karácsony, where awareness of finitude is of no compelling significance. In one scene in *A megnyugvás ösvényein*, the son of the character-narrator asks whether people perish entirely after death. The narrator answers with unperturbed cheerfulness that a person's memory can survive for decades, or, in exceptional cases, even for centuries (171). The narrator's cheerful outlook on life is thus not threatened by his awareness of finiteness, and this attitude generally permeates the narration of the novels.

Similar differences characterize the works of the two authors in relation to the issue of morality. In one of his well-known writings, *Önmagamról* [About myself], Kosztolányi contrasted the types of the *homo moralis* and the *homo aestheticus*, placing himself firmly in the latter category. There is little question that the reception history of Kosztolányi's *oeuvre* was significantly influenced by this statement, which left a tangible impression on the literary public's image of Kosztolányi. Although the *homo aestheticus* is by no means amoral, the contrasting of the two types inevitably results in the marginalisation of the ethical dimension, in a certain sense. A focus on moral issues is not a characteristic of Kosztolányi's works, which in this respect sharply contrast with the novels of Benő Karácsony. Although didactic moralising is alien to the Transylvanian writer's style, his works are strongly aligned with the

biblical ethics promoted by the concept of the Ten Commandments. Most of his heroes eventually arrive at the combined life principles of a cheerful outlook on life and Christian morality, which they emphasize as the foundation of their attitude. In the case of both authors, the concept of compassion, which appears on several occasions in their works, presumably derives from the Christian tradition. However, while Benő Karácsony's characters tend to arrive at active compassion in relation to the Christian tradition in the course of their own personal development, Kosztolányi's works are rather characterized by "related indifference", a redefined version of compassion that is given its most tangible expression in the sonnet cycle *Számadás* [The Final Account].

In terms of the management of the narrative voices established in the dialogical relationship, there is also a significant difference between the narrative practices of the two authors. While the *Esti Kornél* texts maintain a permanent indecision between the conflicting voices of the characters, Benő Karácsony's novels typically apply this solution only temporarily. Although individual novels take advantage of it to varying degrees, none of them employs the openness of this contingency throughout the text. It is not necessarily the case that one voice gains complete mastery over a rival voice: instead, slowly, almost imperceptibly, it gains the upper hand, while at the same time embracing some of the other's insights. In novels that present the story of the transformation of personality, this partial integration of the other's point of view is regarded as an aspect of personal development. Whimsical fluctuations between points of view, and the consolidation of relativism, is something with which neither the protagonists nor the narrators, nor the abstract authors of Benő Karácsony's novels, can identify.

One characteristic voice in the novel *A megnyugvás ösvényein* is that of Kanut Ihari, the increasingly alcoholic, witty and intelligent district physician. His comments are largely sceptical, although they are inconsistent even in this respect: "His religious system was based on the idea that a person should annoy others as often as possible by 'crushing pepper under their nose', as the saying goes. The pepper changed from person to person. When faced with a sceptic, they might resort to the gentle spice of piety, but when faced with a believer, they should have recourse to the hottest cayenne pepper of doubt or perfect denial" (167, my translation).

This permanent oppositional role corresponds to the function fulfilled by the eponymous hero's voice in *Esti Kornél*: the most important function of the protagonist's interpolated narrative is to provide a constant counterpoint and to relativize the primary narrator, as well as the value system and conceptual assumptions that can be attributed to his narration. The characterization of Endre Nagy in Kosztolányi's travelogue *Göcsej* can also be connected to the role fulfilled by Esti's voice:

> This inspired artist of the spoken word adapts to conversation with the flexibility of a distinguished mind. He sees the front and the back of all things equally, he

> generally adopts [the very] role that the other party demands, like a good musician who is equally at home in a duet playing either the violin or the double bass. If I make a statement, he denies it; and if I deny it, he'll claim it to be true […]. (*Én, te, ő* [I, You, They] 458, my translation)

In the feuilleton and the *Esti Kornél* story cycle, this dramaturgy, in which denial follows statement and statement immediately follows denial, is seen as an opportunity to set on the stage a temporality that extends to the whole of human existence. In contrast, Benő Karácsony's novels interpret all-embracing relativity not as the natural medium of human existence, but as a condition to be transcended. Without assuming any principle that might prove to be an absolute or irrefutable truth, there is a need, arising from the very nature of human beings, to discover a principle for themselves that can help them feel at home.

A different reflection on the experience of relativity can be observed in the relationship of the two authors' narrative styles with wordplay and paradox. In *Esti Kornél* – as in a great many of his feuilletons and short stories – Kosztolányi tends to use both. Paradox forges a connection between two conflicting statements, while wordplay is likewise based on ingenuity and has been popular among writers of short stories from the beginning of the century as a technique for avoiding the most intractable problems by means of wit. Despite the humorous tone of Benő Karácsony's novels, neither of the above techniques is typically employed.

In *Utazás a szürke folyón*, the problem of paradox, wit and wordplay is even thematized. While in Paris, the main character, the pharmacist Sebestyén, meets Ferdinánd, a witty but immoral figure, who cheats him out of his savings. During the events in Paris, Sebestyén remains a very naïve figure, while Ferdinánd keenly observes the ridiculously hypocritical habits of individuals and society. This pervasive satirical attitude, as expressed in the voice of Sebestyén in his dialogic relationship with Ferdinánd, can be termed irony. The attitude of Ferdinánd, who approaches everything from a negative perspective, apparently corresponds to Kierkegaard's formula, according to which irony is defined as infinite and absolute negativity. Sebestyén regards such mentality as immoral, but the reader accepts this judgement with reservation, since the pharmacist comes across as a comic figure at this stage in the story as a result of his unbelievable naivety. The narrator does not judge Ferdinand explicitly: there is only one place in the entire novel in which the narrator's value judgment is expressed. In this textual location, the narrator informs the reader that, in the course of his conversation with Sebestyén, Ferdinánd is about to use "tainted paradoxes" (159, my translation). At this point, the heterodiegetic narrator is judging not only Ferdinánd, but also the rhetorical figure of the paradox, suggesting a rejection of the approach that he considers as lying at the root of the paradox. The nature of this mentality is defined by the comments made by Sebestyén that mention wordplay and wit. One such typical statement is as follows: "Ferdinánd combines

his words very cleverly, but I'm afraid that this skill of his is very much like the resourcefulness of the card sharper" (106, my translation). In this case, there is probably little discrepancy between the judgements made by the narrator and the character, since, only a few pages earlier, the narrative describes the scene in which Ferdinánd initiates Sebestyén into the simple mechanism of coming out with a witticism. The lesson learned from this initiation is that witticism is in fact skillful manipulation, the embellishment of a not particularly original idea or even a mere commonplace. A simple piece of worldly wisdom such as "Ignorance is hapiness" seems to acquire an original intellectual sparkle when slightly polished: "There is a more sophisticated form of ignorance, which we call happiness" (80, my translation).

At similar textual places in the novel, where Ferdinánd comes out with one witty paradox and pun after another, the reader might easily draw the conclusion that the novel is engaged in some kind of latent dispute with the prose of Kosztolányi. This might even be reinforced by the fact that, in the cited passage, Ferdinánd attempts to discredit the concept of happiness, rejecting people's desire for happiness as being without meaning. The topic is also approached in the novel *A megnyugvás ösvényein*, in which Felméri lectures the parish priest about the "bacteria of happiness" (20). At another textual place, answering to his lover's question of whether he had ever been unhappy, Felméri says that happiness is a mere fiction: "Happiness is the unknown element which nobody will ever discover unless poets do to sell more copies of their books" (209, my translation). The narrator-self however perceives this in a different way from his retrospective position. He considers his previous lecture rather shallow: "One is always unhappy, I explained some of my undistinguished, ready-made theory, except for those three-four moments when one believes to be happy" (209, my translation).

One story in Kosztolányi's cycle *Esti Kornél kalandjai* [The Adventures of Kornél Esti] was given the title *Boldogság* [Happiness]. Here, Esti describes the nature of happiness using a short parable. He comes to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a happy life, because people are only able to be happy for a few moments at most. He also tells the primary narrator about the time in his life when he was happiest. However, what he describes is not some life-defining event, as we might expect, but rather a train journey, which began extremely uncomfortably. In the morning, when he saw the falling snow and the romantic snow-covered landscape from the sleeping-car window, Esti experienced a feeling of unforgettable happiness. At the end of the parable, the narrator specifically states that happiness "does not last for long, otherwise we would get used to it. It's only transitory, a kind of interlude" (*Elbeszélései* 910, my translation). In this interpretation, the moment of happiness is understood as a fleeting mood, which is in fact nothing more than a matter of chance. By contrast, the approach adopted in Benő Karácsony's novels, with their attempt to vindicate happiness and biblical morality at the same time, involves a

quest for the possibility of achieving a happy life, as the narrator puts it at the end of *Utazás a szürke folyón* with unusual explicitness. "Beauty and truth are there for everyone. One just has to look for them, to voyage further along the grey river, if one has moored at the wrong bank. It would be rash to lose heart just because some unchivalrous interludes have toppled our Robinson hut and forced us back on board" (370, my translation).

Another stratum in the latent debate is the divergent interpretations of the relationship between seriousness and laughter. In Benő Karácsony's novels, the main characters are usually directed in such a way that, from laughter that lacks any seriousness, they reach a more profound version of cheerfulness and joy in life. In another passage from the dialogue quoted above, Felméri is asked by his lover if he takes anything seriously at all. The answer is categorical: "I take care not to! Nothing is as fake as seriousness" (*A megnyugvás ösvényein* 210, my translation). Although in this textual location the narrator-self makes no comment on the response of the character-self, the subsequent rewriting of the character's viewpoint is typical of the novel's narrative, such that any attitude attributable to the abstract author is distanced from the character's point of view. The theme of serious-mindedness and playfulness also appears in one of Kosztolányi's well-known ars poetica poems, *Esti Kornél éneke* [The Song of Kornél Esti], in which the author adopts the voice of Kornél Esti. As above, the oxymoronic "grave gaiety" here suggests no incompatibility between the two terms. The poem interprets cheerfulness as a mask, the purpose of which is to cover the elegiac-tragic worldview, the sorrow aroused by finiteness. The two terms in the oxymoron are not in fact balanced or equivalent, since the fundamental experience of existence is fear that stems from an awareness of finitude. In Benő Karácsony's novels, cheerfulness is the essence of the approach to existence, while seriousness, rather than being a component that jeopardizes this attitude, instead expresses a sense of responsibility and an understanding of human fallibility. This seriousness deepens the instinctive or slightly conscious joy of life into considered happiness in existence.

The latent debate discussed above, and the differences in narrative style between Kosztolányi and Benő Karácsony, can be summarized in the difference between the categories of irony and humor. Although in one of the most recent analyses of his works by Andrea Balogh, the approach adopted in Benő Karácsony's novels is described as being definable by the concept of irony, this opinion is not particularly convincing in light of the foregoing. While the attitude adopted in Kosztolányi's works can indeed be characterized by the category of irony, in Benő Karácsony's novels the ironic viewpoint is a condition to be transcended, a condition from which merely an inclination for critical reflection should be preserved. The plots of the novels shape the stories of their ironically inclined young heroes in such a way that they ultimately achieve a state of happiness in which they recognize their own fallibility and are thus forgiving of the faults of others. In the evaluation of Benő

Karácsony's novels, irony is not exempt from facile superficiality, which chooses the easier option. It is a refusal to accept responsibility for others, a superiority based on a lack of self-criticism and self-irony. Humor, by contrast, according to this concept, contains an awareness of the fallibility of human nature, which it observes with wisdom, cheerfulness and forbearance, while it does not spare those who seek to eliminate the inner joy of human existence with their aggressive notions and lust for power. The representation of this attitude to humor further connects Benő Karácsony's works with the 19th-century Hungarian anecdotal tradition, of which humor was the keynote. At the same time, however, this humor is far more complex and more considered than its 19th-century predecessors, and it is in this manner that it simultaneously continues and renews the tradition.

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Márta Horváth

Mentalization and Literary Modernism

A Cognitive Approach to Dezső Kosztolányi's Narratives

It is a well-known phenomenon that narratives at the beginning of the 20th century invented new ways of presenting consciousness and preferred different modes of first person monologue, since stream of consciousness techniques seemed to be in accordance with the way psychological knowledge of the epoch imagined a realistic presentation of unsaid thoughts. By contrast, Dezső Kosztolányi, one of the most important Hungarian authors of this period, poorly applied the new narrative methods of modernism for presenting consciousness. Instead, he returned to performative ways characteristic of literary narratives up to the 19th century (Cohn 21). Making great demands on the mentalizing capacities of the reader, he dwelt on manifest behavior, gestures, and facial expressions to depict the mental processes of his characters. In my study, I would like to argue that this reluctance to experiment with the new ways of artistic expression does not arise from Kosztolányi's conservatism as an author, but rather is the way he expresses his skepticism about his era's naive belief in the availability of the consciousness. His texts can be linked to two big paradoxes of presenting and reading other people's minds: on the one hand, the paradoxical "mutual dependence of realistic intent and imaginary psychology" (Cohn 7), and, on the other, the surprising fact that despite our observations about the body being an unreliable source of information about the mind, it still remains the only access to it (Zunshine 121). In my study, I will present these two paradoxes in relation to Kosztolányi's work, and demonstrate in some of his narratives how he uses narrative modes of presenting consciousness.

Dorrit Cohn's work *Transparent Minds* is basically a narratological approach to the possibilities of presenting consciousness in literary narratives – even though it contains important remarks concerning their historical aspects, too. Discussing six modes for rendering consciousness in narratives, she identifies some correlations between certain techniques and related historical developments. Although she emphasizes that sharp divisions lack any historical validity, she still outlines some tendencies for using typical narrative techniques in certain historical periods. She notices, for example, that *psycho-narration*, the typical technique in third-person novels, dominates the prose of the 19th century (21), narrated monologue, or *erlebte Rede* in German, has been the prevailing narrative style of fiction since the turn of

the 20th century (13) and autonomous monologue, first appearing in Dujardin's *Les lauriers sont coupés*, is applied consistently in the first part of the 20th century (16).

The difference between these narrative techniques lies primarily in the degree of their directness. Psycho-narration is fully tied to a mediator, namely, to the omniscient narrator, as it presents consciousness in third person singular from an exterior perspective, in past tense. By contrast, narrated monologue, though it maintains the third-person voice and the past tense, increases the impression of directness by reproducing a character's mental language and taking his or her point of view. Finally, autonomous monologue completely imitates direct speech, as it is narrated in the first person from an interior perspective and is based on an absolute correspondence between the time of narration and the narrated time.

This tendency demonstrates the paradox status of prose in presenting consciousness. On the one hand, writers endeavor to represent life more and more authentically, including rendering their characters' inner world. On the other hand, epic has a peculiar, non-realistic way to do this: it is the only literary genre, "in which the unspoken thoughts, feelings, perceptions of a person other than the speaker can be portrayed" (Cohn 7). Neither in non-fictional narrative, nor in non-narrative fiction, such as drama and film is it possible to gain insight into the mind of a character without breaking realistic illusion. However, in spite of the general reliability of the third person narrator, this form of presenting consciousness remains far from being realistic. The evaluative commentaries of the authorial narrator, the past tense of the narration and the well articulated language usage are all aspects that fail to reflect the associative, contradictory stream of thoughts of the characters. Therefore, writers have no choice but to make the narrator inaudible, or fully disappear from the narrative world. At the same time, going toward a more and more authentic form of rendering consciousness means breaking out of the boundaries of the genre and being faced with a paradoxical situation, in which experimental prose completely loses its narrative quality and creates a drama like discourse.

Kosztolányi has a special status in this historical process. He returns to the narrative discourse of the 19th century, described by Cohn as a technique of "early avoidance" (21), where writers only sparingly refer explicitly to the characters' thoughts or feelings and, instead, restrict themselves to the description of their behavior, spoken language, and bodily expressions as signs for the characters' mental processes. Since, according to Cohn, this type of discourse lacks an interest for the character's inner life, she excludes it from her typology (22). My claim that Kosztolányi's works fall into this category may sound strange, because Kosztolányi is generally considered to be one of the most heavily psychologizing writers of the first part of the 20th century,[1] who has an outstanding interest in his characters' mental

[1] Katalin Bucsics claims in her study that all of Kosztolányi's major works were connected to Freud's doctrines (98).

life. His short story collection, *Esti Kornél* [Kornél Esti, 1932], is built on the Freudian principle of the mind splitting into different aspects, his novel *Édes Anna* [Anna Édes, 1926] and also some of his short stories present fictional minds in their complexity, including unconscious processes as well. Bafflingly, he shows considerable interest in the psychology of his characters without depicting their consciousness explicitly. I am going to demonstrate how Kosztolányi applies the early technique of avoidance in his short story, "A kulcs" [The Key, 1932] in such a way that the story is understood by the reader as a psychological one.

The story portrays the very complex relationship between a little boy and his father through a seemingly trivial event, namely, when the boy first visits his father's workplace, the highly respected office. The text does not contain direct presentations of the boy's thoughts and feelings, and neither does it describe or evaluate them in the narrator's commentaries. However, the characters' gestures and facial expressions as well as their behavior are presented in a very detailed manner. The boy arranges his hair, cleans his dusty shoes and fixes his socks before entering the father's office, in the office he bows low, and he lowers his eyes while his father is scolding him. The father bows "to the ground" [*földig bókolt*] (27),[2] when his boss enters the room, he hurries to obey the boss's orders without putting on his hat and runs back breathlessly. The father ignores his son when he enters the office, then he scolds the boy and snaps at him angrily, but after his boss praises the boy, he embraces and kisses him.

Kosztolányi's prose is thus paradoxically psychologizing prose that does not describe explicitly the characters' consciousness, thoughts, or feelings and gives no explanation for their behavior. It applies another, performative, tool with regards to rendering consciousness, which engages readers in the sense-making process. Descriptions of the characters' behavior, their gesticulation and facial expressions invite readers to make intentional attributions, and make them draw inferences about the characters' feelings and motivations. The text appeals to a high degree to readers' theory of mind ability (mentalizing), a skill to attribute mental states to other people and to thereby interpret their behavior. As theory of mind is a cognitive capacity that is part of our evolved cognitive architecture, it works automatically and effortlessly (Zunshine 13–16). It does not make a difference if we are confronted with a specific behavior in real or fictional surroundings. We read body language in both cases as indicatives of mental states. Authors do not necessarily have to give special instructions to readers for them to assign specific states of mind to characters' behavior, because describing behavior is sufficient stimulus for readers to interpret it automatically in terms of their beliefs, desires, feelings and thoughts.

This phenomenon challenges some of Cohn's observations – first and foremost, the restriction that only the six narrative techniques she discusses in her book give

[2] All translations from "The Key" are my translations.

evidence of interest in representing consciousness, and that depicting behavior shows disinterest and avoidance of rendering characters' feelings and thoughts (21). Cognitive narratology, however, has a different approach. It claims that literary narratives do not contain all information necessary for interpreting them and, they have a lot of gaps that are filled by readers by dint of their cognitive abilities. As causal relations do not have to be explicated in a narrative for the reader to understand it as a coherent story, neither should the characters' states of mind be discussed explicitly in a narrative to make it psychologizing prose. It is enough to give some cues that activate certain cognitive mechanisms, and readers will interpret them to fill the gaps. Rendering characters' behavior is just the type of cue that triggers mentalizing.

It has to be mentioned at this point that writers build on readers' theory of mind ability to different degrees. Some of them make characters' motivations and feelings transparent by explicit descriptions and leave less room for individual interpretations. Others let readers construct inferences about their character's mental states and support this process with detailed descriptions of their behavior. Finally, there are narratives that consciously resist readers' mentalizing and make it impossible them to construct a coherent character with a well-formed psyche.

The above descriptions cited from the short story are examples of a technique that supports readers' instinctive mentalizing and gives them firm clues for making inferences about the characters' current mental state. Body language signs like "bowing low" and "lowered eyes" or "kissing" and "embracing" have clear meanings not only for Hungarian people, but also for any reader in Western culture. These gestures and patterns of behavior function as relatively reliable signs of certain mental states as well as the nature of relationships within the story. Readers can effortlessly infer from these descriptions the strong hierarchic relation between father and son, the boy's awe of his father, his disappointment about the father's position in the office after seeing him at his workplace, but also about the relationship between the father and his boss, about the father's subservience, and the boss's open-mindedness.

The text provides another possibility for the reader to have an insight into the boy's thoughts and feelings, too: some descriptions of the location and the characters of the story function as sources of the boy's mental state. The office building is pictured as huge and grim, ramshackle and dusty, the father's desk as small and decrepit, and the boss looks like an "odd bird" [*furcsa madár*] (27). All these descriptions can be interpreted by readers as indicators of the boy's emotional relation to the office and his attitude to the other characters.

Why, we may ask, do readers interpret such descriptions as projections of the boy's thoughts and feelings? Why do they attribute these thoughts and feelings to the boy and why do they interpret the descriptions as the sources of his consciousness? From the very beginning, the story is narrated in third person and the text gives no

clue that some of its passages should be interpreted as descriptions from the boy's inner perspective because it has expressions like "he saw that" and "the building seemed to him being huge and grim." One may ask which textual cues meet which cognitive mechanisms of the reader lead to such an inference?

Psychologists think that "theory of mind" is a complex cognitive ability consisting of many separate components. Simon Baron-Cohen, who first unfolded systematically the relation between theory of mind and autism, distinguishes four mechanisms underlying the ability in his study *Mindblindness* (31–59). The first one is the "intentionality detector", which interprets motion stimuli in terms of primitive mental states like goal and desire. It is a very basic mechanism that works through all senses and interprets almost any motion as intentional. Whenever there is perceptual information that can be identified as an agent, people automatically interpret this movement as approach or avoidance. Therefore, it attributes intention to motion, even if it is not self-caused, and interpret it as goal and desire.

The second mechanism is the "eye-direction detector", which is responsible for attributing a perceptional state to another person. Whenever it detects eye-like stimuli, is starts to monitor what the eyes do and to which object or living being they are directed. Furthermore, it interprets "gaze" as "seeing" thus making it possible to recognize that the agent is seeing A or B. The third mechanism is called Shared-Attention Mechanism and, as opposed to the first two that build dyadic representations, this function builds triadic representations, which specifies that the agent and the self are both attending to the same object. It is the key ability to emphasize.

The most complex mechanism is the "theory of mind mechanism", which is responsible for inferring a full range of mental states from behavior. It represents a wide spectrum of epistemic mental states like pretending, thinking, knowing, believing, etc., and ties them to the afore-mentioned volitional mental states (goal and desire) and perceptual mental states (seeing), and turns all this mentalistic knowledge into a coherent picture about the relation between mental states and behavior. The key aspect of theory of mind mechanism is its referential opacity, which means that people can separate facts from what others believe. For example, I know that the marble is in the basket, but I also know that Sam thinks it is in the box because he didn't see that I had replaced it. We need all these mechanisms working automatically and effortlessly for being able to interpret social behavior rapidly and flexibly.

These cognitive mechanisms can be divided into two big categories, as Baron-Cohen and his colleagues suggest in a later study (Howlin et al.). The first one has to do with visual perspective-taking, that is, the ability to take the perspective of another person and to know that different persons see things differently. The second one comprises mechanisms that involve conceptual perspective-taking, that is, the ability to understand that seeing leads to knowing, as well as to distinct what we know and don't know and to identify the source of that knowledge.

However, these evolutionary cognitive mechanisms are so deeply wired in the human cognitive system (they work like reflexes) that they are often activated erroneously when they detect fitting stimuli. The term "mechanisms" implies that they are not conscious and precise cognitive operations, but rather cognitive bias or fallacies (cognitive traps) that often result in incorrect conclusions in a scientific sense. Even so, they are essential in everyday actions because they make rapid reactions to the challenges of everyday life possible. Similarly, they have a dual effect in literary responses, too. On the one hand, they are always activated erroneously in a certain sense when we read fiction, because they are triggered not by real but by fictional stimuli. In literary reading, readers do not respond to real situations, but to mental images they construct based on some textual information. On the other hand, these cognitive mechanisms are essential for the esthetic experience. Despite the fact that the presented events and characters are fictional, readers automatically react to the textual stimuli with adequate cognitive mechanisms and emotions without which they would not understand the story let alone be emotionally moved by it.

The cognitive mechanisms underlying theory of mind are seen as the most crucial abilities for comprehending narratives. Even the very idea of the "character" and the "narrator" is only possible thanks to a basic cognitive mechanism, the intentional detector. However, in literary narratives, the main stimuli that allows us to detect a person is not motion but perceptual data. Sentences containing "perceptual salient descriptions," that is, descriptions that "could be interpreted as sense perceptions, arising from a spatial location" (Bortolussi and Dixon 185) support intentional attribution. This mechanism is also responsible for the construction of the mental imagery of an omniscient narrator. In passages where the narrator presents perceptual knowledge, readers tend to imagine a person with a local position from where they are able to perceive the scene. In these cases, readers typically imagine the narrator being a real (albeit fictional) person even if there is no textual information about the presence of such a character. For example, the deictic phrase "out there" is sufficient information for the reader to imagine a narrating person embedded in the fictional world even if there is a heterodiegetic narrator, i.e., a mere narrating voice in the passage. For example, the first sentence in Kosztolányi's novel *The Bloody Poet. A Novel about Nero* [Néro, a véres költő, 1922], "A single drowsy voice was all that was audible" (11) can be related to none of the characters of the novel, but because the sentence presents a perceptual information, readers probably construct the mental representation of a narrating character occupying a particular location in the scene. The first sentence of the second chapter, "High on the Palatine Hill the imperial palace shone in the gleam of the setting sun" (13) the narrator is in a completely different local position that is not compatible with their position in the first chapter. That is why Bortolussi and Dixon claim that the idea of the omniscient narrator is not "caused by the narrator's

ubiquitous presence, […] but rather by the difficulty in localizing or constraining the narrator's position in a consistent manner" (190).

The second cognitive ability, perception attribution, is responsible for identifying the perceiver with a character of the fictional world whenever the text makes it possible. If there is a character in the scene who is physically able to perceive a given object or phenomenon, readers tend to attribute the perception to them. In Kosztolányi's novel, when he writes, "High on the Palatine Hill the imperial palace shone in the gleam of the setting sun. The old Emperor Claudius was lying down in his bedroom. […] That was a good nap, he said, and looked about him. Not a soul in the room." (13), readers tend to attribute the perception "nobody was in the room" to Claudius, although the sentence is not said by him but by the third-person narrator. Only the presence of the perceptual verb "looked around" suggests that Claudius could be the perceiver and it is a sufficient cue for the reader to attribute that perception to him.

As theory of mind ability includes conceptual perspective-taking, that is, an understanding that seeing and knowing are in a tight relationship, readers typically make inferences from the perceptions of a character about their thoughts. Therefore, if readers read in Kosztolányi's short story, "The Key", that "he walked slowly through this long, dusty, pounding passage" [*s ezen a hosszú, poros, döngő átjárón bandukolt sokáig*] (23), they not only think that this sentence is narrated by the boy because he is in a spatial position that makes him able to perceive the aisle, but they also interpret this perception as signs of the boy's thoughts. They may think, for example, that the building is overwhelmingly big and possibly scary for the boy.

However, the whole story is not constructed like this passage. According to the characteristics of the genre, a short story's structure is organized in a way that it presents an unexpected event that functions as a turning point. Of course, the unexpected event can be defined only as related to an "ordinary" state of affairs, and short stories masterfully capture just the moment when an unpredictable event disturbs everyday order. Kosztolányi's "The Key" contains such an unexpected event, too: after the boss praises the boy, the father's behavior changes completely and he does not scold his son anymore, but kisses and embraces him. The scene is presented from the boy's point of view, who is baffled by the changed behavior of his father. He does not know why his father calls him "Pistukám", an affectionate nickname never used before in the family, and he also cannot decide what to think of his father: whether he is an esteemed man, and worthy of respect or an insignificant member of the office who has a small desk in a distant corner of a room. His father's office is a mysterious labyrinth, which is clearly shown in one of the final scenes when he is unable to leave because he does not find the right door to the street. The unexpected event confuses him and completely muddles his world.

It is not only the boy who is confused. In the ending passage, Kosztolányi depicts a set of body language signs that readers find difficult to attribute to one particular

emotional state: The boy blushes up to his ears, his face is burning, his hands are sweating and, at the end, he even bursts into tears. The interpretation of this behavior is a challenge for the mentalizing capacity of the reader, as these bodily reactions are ambiguous, allowing for contradictory meanings such as happiness, sadness, shame, disappointment, or frustration. The discourse of the narrator does not provide any clues as to what is going on in the boy's mind, either. Although some emotions are expressed explicitly, namely, happiness, embarrassment, and anxiety, it is impossible for readers to make a coherent picture of the boy's state of mind.

Kosztolányi's short story has an ambiguous relation to psychological narrative. Although the story tells the change of the main character's inner world, it fails to present explicitly the psychological process itself.[3] The author does not unfold the causal chain that leads to the boy's confusion; instead, he applies implicit narrative techniques to present the changes of his inner world. The text invites readers to mentalize, but, after the turning point, it confronts the reader with the impossibility of mindreading. Kosztolányi's short story thus exemplifies the paradox regarding our theory of mind ability pointed out by Lisa Zunshine in her study "Lying bodies," namely, that people's observable behavior is both a highly informative and, at the same time, quite unreliable source of information about their minds (119). Kosztolányi does this on two distinct levels of the narrative text. First, he exploits readers' insuppressible urge to mentalize whenever they meet perceivable behavior and incites them to attribute mental states to characters of the fictional world. At the same time, he also forces readers to realize that mentalizing often fails to lead to the exact interpretation of the character's inner world, and instead of making it possible to build a coherent mental image, it confuses the picture constructed about their thoughts and feelings. However, not only readers mentalize while reading literary narratives but characters are also presented as mindreaders. The boy tries to understand his father's feelings through interpreting his bodily expressions, too, and, like the readers, he is confronted with the unreadability of the body and the inaccessibility of the mind when he cannot understand his father's embracing and kisses. Therefore, readers are faced with the unreliability of the ability of mentalizing on two narrative levels: on the level of the discourse and on the level of the story. These contradictory aspects of mindreading are intertwisted in Kosztolányi's short story. It activates readers' mentalizing capacity, but also calls its reliability into question. In the end, it makes readers realize that people's consciousness is not transparent and interpreting their body language often causes more confusion than clarity. It makes them confront the fact that the common and familiar way of our thinking often leads to mistakes.

[3] Similar to the novel *Anna Édes* [*Édes Anna*], as Tibor Bónus claims (480).

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Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó

Sprachkritik und lyrische Tradition bei Szilárd Borbély

Schon Szilárd Borbélys erste lyrische Arbeiten, die in den 1990er Jahren erschienen, waren deutlich sprachkritisch geprägt: Sie unternahmen den Versuch herauszustellen, auf welche Weise die Schaffung einer poetischen Sprache von der Kartographierung der grammatischen Funktionsweise der Sprache (inklusive der gebrauchsunabhängigen Mechanismen der Grammatik ebenso wie der möglichen Formen der Kennzeichnung von Subjektivität) beeinflusst wird – und wie, umgekehrt, die Dichtung zur Aufdeckung der überindividuellen Souveränität und der Grenzen der Sprache beiträgt. Borbélys bemerkenswerter Band *Mint. Minden. Alkalom* [Wie. Jeder. Anlass; 1995] steigerte diese poetische Unternehmung ins Extreme und schuf eine Stimme, die unablässig die grammatischen Bedingungen ihres eigenen Erklingens aufdeckt und analysiert und auf diese Weise mit der Komplexität des Beziehungssystems konfrontiert, das es einem Gedichttext ermöglicht (manchmal auch verunmöglicht), sich als Manifestation irgendeiner Subjektivität zu verhalten. Diese extrem reflexive Sprache wies schon in den Gedichten des erwähnten Bandes eine spezielle sentenziöse Diktion auf, die teils postmoderne Gesten einbettet, anderenorts aber auch die Last einer Art archaischer Didaktizität auf sich nimmt, sich gewissermaßen prämodernen, aber zumindest in eine Zeit vor dem 19. Jahrhundert verweisenden Konventionen der Dichtung zuwendet. Diese eigentümliche Rückwendung zeigt, dass Borbélys sprachkritische Poetik zugleich die Revision der lyrischen Tradition bedeutet. Eigentlich ließ sich das schon an der Aufnahme seiner frühesten Werke ablesen, an den Meinungsverschiedenheiten um die „dramatischen Jamben" des Bandes *Hosszú nap el* [Langer Tag vorüber; 1993]. Die extremen Ausschläge des kritischen Echos bezeugen, dass diese Gedichte die Belastbarkeit der sprachlichen und Genrekonventionen, von denen die sich in den Jahren der politischen Wende gerade neu formierenden Lesererwartungen bestimmt waren, nicht unwesentlich strapazierten: Dass der Band vom Verlag zurückgewiesen wurde, erklärten angesehene Vertreter der ungarischen Literatur damit, dass er die Grenzen der Literatur aufzubrechen drohe.[1] In Borbélys derzeit letztem publizierten Gedichtband *A Testhez*

[1] „Intelligente Herausgeber gehen nur so weit, wie die Literatur sie lässt", stellte Ottó Orbán fest, und Miklós Mészöly empfand die Gedichte als „beinahe außerliterarisch" (Nádas 26–27).

[An den Körper; 2010], der – so die architextuelle Instruktion im Untertitel – „Oden" und „Legenden" versammelt, kehrt (in der Textgruppe „Oden) die in *Mint. Minden. Alkalom.* ausgearbeitete Poetik – vielleicht etwas überraschend – zurück, wobei sie sich hier noch offener auf prämoderne (bzw. im heutigen Sinn nur eingeschränkt als *lyrisch* zu bezeichnende) poetische Konventionen stützt. Nicht ohne Vorläufer, natürlich, denn schon die gesamte Konzeption von *Halotti Pompa* [*Leichenprunk*; 2004/2006] war von Zitaten barocker und mittelalterlicher (am ehesten durch die Sprache der barocken Dichtung gefilterter mittelalterlicher) poetischer Traditionen charakterisiert. Borbély aktiviert hier die *Sequenz,* eine in den Konventionen der modernen Literatur fehlende Genrekategorie, die auf einer liturgisch definierten, antistrophischen Struktur basiert. Mit dieser Genrebezeichnung konfrontiert er mehrere lyrische Werkformen, unter anderem das Sonett, das Grundmuster der zweiten Einheit des Bandes, der *Sequenzen von Amor und Psyche.* Die Belastbarkeit dieser Versform, die die Konventionen der modernen Lyrik vielleicht am facettenreichsten in Erscheinung treten lässt, lotet Borbély hier auch in formalem Sinn aus, indem er das Sonett beispielsweise reimlos, mit Binnen- statt mit Endreimen, mit reduzierter Silbenzahl oder vermischt mit anderen Versformen in Szene setzt.

Der Aufbau sowie die thematische und strukturelle Anordnung von *Leichenprunk*, die von einem „Schaubild" am Ende des Bandes zusammengefasst werden, verweisen nach der Instruktion ihrer Genre-Selbstbezeichnung auf die Praxis des gemeinschaftlichen (Lieder-) Textgebrauchs zurück, näher betrachtet vielleicht am ehesten auf die Verwendung der frühneuzeitlichen Liedersammlungen (Fazakas; Száz „Örökké Valóság"). Der Ausdruck *pompa funebris* definiert weniger Genremerkmale, er enthält vielmehr einen Hinweis auf den Textgebrauch, denn er bezeichnet eine Sammlung von Gedichten oder Prosatexten, die für Begräbniszeremonien angefertigt oder bei ihnen verwendet werden. Ihre Funktion und Überlieferung sorgt dafür, dass das einheitsschaffende Prinzip anstatt oder neben der in modernem Sinn verstandenen Verfasserautorität in der Art und den Kontexten des Gebrauchs liegt, worauf bei Borbélys Werk der tragische und in den Anmerkungen zu den Gedichten dokumentierte Umstand reflektiert, dass er die Gedichte von *Leichenprunk* seinen Eltern widmet, die einem Raubüberfall zum Opfer gefallen waren, dass er diese Gedichte also, obwohl dies kaum der elaborierteste referentielle Rahmen ist, tatsächlich als Requisiten einer Art Trauerzeremonie präsentiert. Die Todes- und Körperdarstellung von *Leichenprunk* zitiert mehrere unterschiedliche kulturgeschichtliche und theologische Muster, nach der oben bezeichneten Tradition und der diesbezüglichen Fachliteratur konnten diese Traditionen vor allem durch die Höllen- und Leidensbeschreibungen der Gedichtsammlung *Tintinnabulum tripudiantium* (1636), die zuerst Mátyás Nyéki Vörös und später Zsigmond Kornis zugeschrieben wurde, in Borbélys Poetik Fuß

fassen.[2] Die Textwelt von *Leichenprunk* konfrontiert sie mit Zitaten von Angelus Silesius, denen Borbély ungarische Übersetzungen mit archaisierender Orthographie beigibt. Am ehesten über diese Zitate des Angelus Silesius wird die Textwelt aus der christlichen sakralen Tradition und der alten ungarischen Erbauungsliteratur in den zweiten Teil vermittelt, der die Geschichte von Amor und Psyche bzw. die antike (und über die Renaissance vermittelte) Mythologie behandelt und in dessen sonettförmigen „Sequenzen" die Bestandteile moderner (politischer, wissenschaftlicher, von der Massenkommunikation geformter) Diskurse, die die Begriffe von Leben und Tod bestimmen, erheblich größeren Raum bekommen. In der zweiten Ausgabe des Bandes erweiterte Borbély diese Struktur um einen dritten Zyklus, der sich aus einer weiteren mythologischen Region speist, der Texttradition der chassidischen jüdischen Legenden (Száz „A Szó halála: az Olvasás"). Die Legende selbst als Form im Sinn einer Gattung stellt der Band *A Testhez* [An den Körper] in den Fokus und auf die Probe, z. B. dadurch, dass er sie, indem er auch hagiographische Erzählungen zitiert, de- (bzw. in gewissem Sinne vielleicht zugleich re-)sakralisiert in dem Versuch, teilweise anonym belassene Zeugnisse weiblicher Ich-Erzählerinnen, sozusagen Traumanarrative, aus verschiedenen außerliterarischen Quellen des 20. oder 21. Jahrhunderts zu behandeln.

Diese Geste bzw. die Beschwörung von Gebrauchsweisen poetischer Texte, die die Regeln einer separaten ästhetischen Kommunikation noch nicht geltend machen konnten und die gemeinsame Erfahrung und natürlich die religiösen Praktiken in der lyrischen Kommunikation stärker betonten, bzw. überhaupt die Anwendung von Genres, die den modernen Gattungskonventionen der Lyrik vorausgingen, schafft natürlich auch eine spezielle Umgebung für Borbélys sprachkritische Reflexionen, die sich in vielen Fällen auf den Wortschatz und Argumentationsstil des poststrukturalistischen Theoriediskurses stützen (der allerdings selten konsequent angewandt wird; oftmals handelt es sich eher um ein Banalitäten produzierendes, pastiche-artiges Recycling – unabhängig von der schwer zu beurteilenden Intention bzw. davon, wie Borbély es gemeint hat). Häufig kommt er beispielsweise der Redeweise von Lehrgedichten nahe, so in den (im Gattungssinne wiederum deformierten) didaktischen, philosophierenden „Oden" von *A Testhez*, aber auch in zahlreichen Stücken von *Leichenprunk*. Diese spezielle Konstellation birgt natürlich Risiken nicht nur stilistischer Art, dessen war sich jedoch Borbély, der sein poetisches Programm gern mit verständlichen Erklärungen versah, durchaus bewusst. In einem Interview sprach er über die „klapprigen Reime" in den Gedichten von *Leichenprunk* oder ihre Vergleichbarkeit mit der „Drehorgel" (Borbély „Valamiféle mintázat" 144–145), mit der diese Texte die moderne (mit Borbély gesprochen:

[2] Die Frage der Verfasserschaft des *Tintinnabulum tripudiantium* wurde zur Zeit der Arbeit Borbélys an seinem Band in der Forschung neu diskutiert (vgl. Vadai; Pap); Borbély als Hochschullehrer für alte ungarische Literatur war natürlich mit dieser Diskussion vertraut.

nachaufklärerische) Denkweise und das ästhetische Erwartungssystem provozieren, denen der vormoderne poetische Sprachgebrauch in gewissem Sinne fremd ist und auf die er vielleicht gerade nur über diese Fremdheit „mythisch" wirkt. Dadurch, dass diese sprachlichen Welten und poetischen Praktiken, die als mythisch, rituell, von Glaubenssystemen durchzogen bzw. von ihnen untrennbar wahrgenommen werden, sich mit den Termini und Argumenten moderner (und postmoderner) Welterklärungen oder kritischer Sprachen aufladen, treten auch letztere als eine Art Mythos („Aberglaube", „Irrglaube") hervor und setzen damit zugleich eine kulturelle Praxis um, deren grundlegende Voraussetzungen (z. B. dass zentrale Kategorien wie „Körper", „Seele", „Sprache" u.ä. allegorisch verallgemeinerbar seien) sie theoretisch ablehnen oder einer kritischen Analyse unterziehen. Es ist, als ob diese Dichtung das Auftreten jenes „letzten Mythos" simulierte, der sich – zumindest nach Auffassung Hans Blumenbergs (Blumenberg 319) – in den Bemühungen der Abrechnung mit den Mythen notwendig manifestiert.

In diesem Programm – das übrigens entfernt den von Borbély nicht erwähnten Adorno zitiert[3] – gewinnt auch die Aktualisierung der Gattungskonventionen ihren Sinn:

> Als ich versucht habe, mit der Verwendung bestimmter Genrecodes zu experimentieren, begann das sprachliche Material andere Zusammenhänge anzunehmen. Wir haben hier also einen Genrecode, den aktualisieren wir, d. h. wir stülpen ihn einem Text über. Dann ist da noch eine moderne, fragmentarische, sehr wirre Sprache und eine Genretradition, und nun begegnen sie sich. Aus dieser Verbindung von etwas zeitlich sehr Fernem und etwas weniger Fernem entsteht dann auf eigenartige Weise etwas, von dem ich nicht wusste. Überraschenderweise beginnen Zusammenhänge zu erscheinen, an die ich nicht dachte. Energien ferner, schon tot geglaubter Bedeutungen, Symbole und Allegorien erwachen wieder zum Leben und rufen aus der Sprache, aus unserem Bewusstsein, etwas hervor, das wir gar nicht mehr zu wissen glaubten. (140)

Symbole und Allegorien erwachen in einer ihnen gegenüber resistenten bzw. argwöhnischen Sprache zum Leben, sogald diese in einen Kontext gerät, in dem deren Gebrauch vielleicht nicht natürlich, aber doch auf irgendeine Weise reguliert war. Das andere Ergebnis des Prozesses zeigt sich, wie oben schon erwähnt, offensichtlich in den Formationen der Subjektivität, in den (ebenfalls mehrfach erklärten) Bestrebungen Borbélys, die moderne poetische Sprache für eine Erfahrung oder einen Textgebrauch durchlässig zu machen, in dem die Lyrik nicht unbedingt

[3] „Aber die Mythen, die der Aufklärung zum Opfer fallen, waren selbst schon deren eigenes Produkt." (Adorno und Horkheimer 14).

oder zumindest nicht ausschließlich das kulturelle Medium der Schaffung und/oder des aneignenden Verstehens irgendeiner Subjektivität ist. Der Tradition der religiösen Lieder die Konventionen der modernen Lyrik aufzupfropfen, bietet eine Alternative zu einer (laut Borbély vom „Rechtsbewusstsein" definierten) Subjektkonstruktion, in der ausschließlich das Sein des Individuums (nicht aber etwas anderes jenseits seiner selbst) und damit z. B. die Erwartung der Selbstenthüllung als Ausgangspunkt für das Verständnis des Individuums bzw. des Individuellen dient. In einem anderen Interview erklärt Borbély die Entstehung von *Leichenprunk* so:

> Mich hat immer sehr interessiert, auf welche Weise die religiösen, die Gemeindelieder des Mittelalters und des Barock als Lyrik funktionieren konnten. Das Ich, das sich seit einer Zeit kraftvoll in den Vordergrund drängt, weist die lyrischen Texte immer als Ereignis der Begegnung mit einem Anderen aus. Aber dieses Ich ist nicht austauschbar, für denjenigen, der Gedichte liest, wird es im Aussprechen nicht zum Ich, es verbleibt immer in seiner Fremdheit. Das ist spannend, denn es versetzt den Leser immer in den Zwang des Verstehens und treibt ihn dergestalt an, eine Entfernung zu schaffen zwischen dem eigenen Ich, dem Ich des Gedichts und dem eigenen Ich, das das Ich des Gedichts spricht. Die persönliche Tragödie war, das ergab sich aus der Natur und Spezialität der Sache, von weiteren erniedrigenden Details begleitet, sie ließ nicht mit Pathos erleben und trug bzw. trägt nicht die Möglichkeit der Entspannung in sich. Deshalb gab es keinen anderen Ausweg als die Schaffung einer Entfernung und die Besinnung auf das Unpersönliche, das sich aus dem Persönlichen gewinnen ließ. Das habe ich versucht. Und ich habe die Redeweise gesucht, die mir die Tradition dafür anbot. Mich selbst in Klammern zu setzen, war von befreiender Kraft, und das Lesen barocker oder mittelalterlicher Texte bahnte den Weg zur Besinnung auf zuvor nicht erahnte Tiefen. […] Überraschend war dabei, dass auch die Subjekte dieser Texte immer über das Andere auf sich selbst blicken: Sie betrachten sich selbst über den Erlöser, den Messias, Christus. Und sie besitzen ein Wissen über den Körper, das im Zeitalter der Moderne verloren ging. (Borbély „A jelentés sem a szövegben van" 41–42)

Diese Äußerungen bezeugen, dass nach Borbélys Auffassung das Experiment, das die lyrische Redeweise in irgendeiner Weise in ein nach modernen Kategorien nicht vollständig als lyrisch bezeichenbares System von Gattungskonventionen verpflanzt oder es zumindest mit diesem kreuzt, Erfahrungen zugänglich macht, die aus dem modernen Begriff der Lyrik verdrängt wurden. Fraglich ist natürlich, was derweil mit den heraufbeschworenen Traditionen in Borbélys Dichtung geschieht. Bleibt er ihnen gegenüber in einem Verhältnis der Kontinuität oder Abstammung, in welcher Weise verhält er sich gegenüber den zeitlich ferneren oder näheren Vorgängern?

Da Borbélys intertextuelles Verweissystem sich oft mehr oder weniger explizit in Form sprachkritischer Gesten äußert, darf man davon ausgehen, dass die Tradition in einer selbstreflexiven Untersuchung der Sprache zu Wort kommt, die durch diese Operation, also sinngemäß durch die Kreuzung von Sprachen, geschaffen wurde. Dies wird beispielsweise in einer „Legende" von *A Testhez* mit dem Titel *A Dunába* [In die Donau] so umgesetzt, dass eine anonyme Erzählung, in der eine weibliche Stimme vom Verlust ihrer Neugeborenen bzw. von ihrem Zusammenleben mit ihrem schwer behinderten Kind erzählt, mit Fragmenten aus dem Gedicht *A Dunánál* [*An der Donau*] von Attila József gekreuzt wird. Dem letzteren Gedicht entnimmt der Text in dieser Konstellation Hinweise auf die Gedankenfiguren der Kontinuität, der Abstammung, die das Gedicht von Attila József nicht nur im Sinn der Geschichte oder Generation, sondern im engeren biologischen Sinn zum Gegenstand der Reflexion macht, wobei hier im Hinblick auf das Verhältnis der beiden Gedichte durchaus auch an literaturgeschichtliche Kontinuität zu denken ist. Indem Borbélys Legende zeigt, inwiefern die Mutter fähig (oder unfähig) ist, das verlorene oder nicht zum Sprechen fähige Kind zur Sprache gelangen zu lassen, wendet sie eigentlich das Erbschaftsmuster, das *An der Donau* in den Mittelpunkt stellt (im Nachkommen sprechen die Ahnen: „Sie fassen meinen Stift – so schreiben wir Gedichte"), um bzw. hebt einen dort unbehandelt gebliebenen Aspekt davon heraus. Durch diese Figuration wird der Text von *An der Donau* mit der Vielzahl der Gedichte in Attila Józsefs Lebenswerk verknüpft, die den Verlust der Mutter aufarbeiten, während Borbélys Legende einen Kontext für ihn bildet, der sich der Unterbrechung der Abstammungskontinuität von der anderen Seite her nähert, als eine Art *Degeneration:* Hier reißt die Kontinuität durch die Vernichtung des Nachkommen ab, was dem Vorfahren die Last der Vertretung des anderen auferlegt, in Form eines Verstehens, das (im Gegensatz zu den toten Eltern des Verfassers von *An der Donau,* die den Stift ergreifen) das Fehlen oder die Eingeschränktheit der Sprache voraussetzen muss („Er spricht nicht, aber trotzdem", sagt die Mutter bei Borbély über ihren Sohn). Diese Relation bildet sich in gewissem Sinn auch in dem Verhältnis von Borbélys Text zu *An der Donau* ab: Der schadhafte, umgangssprachliche, agrammatische Text der Legende, ihre lückenhafte, stellenweise inkohärente „rhetorische" Struktur, impfen der poetischen Sprache von Attila József in gewissem Sinn das ein, was in ihr ansonsten nicht erscheinen kann (in der Sprache des Sohnes, der den Verlust der Mutter beklagt, kommt diejenige der Mutter zum Vorschein, die ihr Kind verliert) und was so gesehen kaum als organische Fortsetzung irgendeines Erbes vertretbar erscheint.

In den meisten Stücken des zweiten Teils von *Leichenprunk*, den *Sequenzen von Amor und Psyche,* lässt sich eine Vergrößerung der drohenden Aspekte des antiken Mythos beobachten. Gleich zwei Sonette hier tragen den Titel *Die Grenzen der Bukolik* (diese Titelgebung kann als charakteristisch für den Band bezeichnet werden, auch der Titel *Az ideatan nehézségei* [Die Schwierigkeiten der Ideenlehre] kommt

zweimal vor). Die Art und Weise, wie das Mythologem von Amor und Psyche verwendet wird, sowie die (in gewissem Sinne selbstreflexiven) Gattungsverweise auf die Kategorie der Idylle (dass die Tradition, die diese letztere ausarbeitete, Borbély dauerhaft beschäftigte, wird durch den Entwurf zu dem aus Borbélys spätesten Gedichten zusammengestellten und zur Herausgabe vorbereiteten, jedoch bis heute nicht publizierten Band *Bukolikatáj* [Bukolische Gegend] belegt [Valastyán]) richten den historischen Fokus dieses Zyklus offenkundig auf die zweite Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts bzw. die Jahrhundertwende vom 18. zum 19. Jahrhundert. Den Mythos, der in den *Metamorphoses* des Apuleius überliefert ist, zitiert Borbélys Zyklus auch in seinen früheren Varianten der christianisierten Uminterpretation (dies vertreten die Angelus-Silesius-Einschübe, die auch den Übergang zur Thematik der *Sequenzen zur Karwoche* schaffen), am ehesten legt er jedoch die Betonung auf die (neo)-klassizistischen Bearbeitungen und das sich in ihnen äußernde ästhetische Dogma (vgl. dazu Pál 110–120). In mehreren Sonetten finden sich Verweise auf die berühmte Skulptur von Canova, *Das kalte Herz* lässt sich sogar als eine Art Ekphrasis betrachten, die die Aufmerksamkeit auf die sinnliche Materialität der Skulptur lenkt („der marmorkalte Kuss")[4]: Amors Kuss, der Psyche in diesem ästhetischen Codesystem nachgerade durch das Versprechen des Todes und nicht durch das der Unsterblichkeit erlöst, hat hier eigentlich das Entstehen der Skulptur zum Ergebnis, Psyches Tod wird also von der ästhetischen Idealisierung kompensiert. Nicht ganz nebensächlich ist dabei, dass Borbélys Ekphrasis annähernd den halben Umfang des Sonetts darauf verwendet hervorzuheben, dass die Skulptur nicht den Kuss selbst darstelle, dass die Skulpturenmünder einander nicht berühren, das heißt, dass das gewalttätige Moment selbst in der Repräsentation nicht enthalten ist, sondern dass nur „die Vorstellung in den Körper eindringt". Die natürlich auch von der Semantik des griechischen Wortes *psyche* bestätigte Interpretation der mythologischen Figur der Psyche als „zum ewigen Leben geküsster Seele" bestimmt – unter anderem durch Gessners Vermittlung – auch bei Csokonai[5] die Unsterblichkeit im nichtsakralen Sinn bzw. die Vorstellung des Verhältnisses zur Schönheit der so aufgefassten Unsterblichkeit, wie das Gedicht *A' Pillangóhoz* [An den Schmetterling] bezeugen kann, insbesondere in seinem (eigentlich den Abschluss des *Lilla*-Zyklus' bildenden) Dialog mit *An die Hoffnung* (Debreczeni 26, 56–60, 283–268). Sándor Weöres hat in *Psyché* (1972) eine teils parodistische Neuschreibung dieser Mytheninterpretation vorgelegt, die unter anderem mit der Vertauschung sexueller Zuordnungen spielt und die Attraktion der unwiderstehlichen Schönheit durch eine von Krankheit bedrohte Körperlichkeit ersetzt (Bartal 357–369), während Borbély explizit die Momente der Gewalt sichtbar macht, sie wieder in den Mythos zurückschreibt. In den Sonetten der *Sequenzen von*

[4] Die in diesem Aufsatz zitierten Gedichte *Die Grenzen der Bukolik (2), Der Rechner am Abend, Auf den Flügeln der Freiheit* und *Der Virus Killer Amor* sind auf Deutsch erschienen in *Berlin Hamlet.*
[5] Mihály Csokonai Vitéz (1773–1805).

Amor und Psyche erscheint Amor mehrmals als Mörder, als Gewalttäter, er wird zum Agens der Schönheit, der Liebeslust und der Brutalität zugleich (Beispiele bei Krupp 125–126). Diese Amor-Darstellung zitiert an mehreren Stellen die Straftat, die der Entstehung von *Leichenprunk* zugrunde liegt, was Borbélys Vorstellung über die Kontaminierung der mythenvermittelnden sprachlich-kulturellen Traditionen mit zeitgenössischen, profanen, sogar für den institutionellen Gebrauch vorgesehenen Texten veranschaulicht. *Die Grenzen der Bukolik (2),* das XXXVI. Stück des Zyklus, ist nämlich in gewissem Sinne nichts anderes als eine Neuschreibung der im Anmerkungsmaterial des Bandes mitgeteilten Zeitungsartikel über den Raubüberfall auf die Eltern des Dichters, jedenfalls einiger ihrer Elemente, unter Mitwirkung des Mythos von Amor und Psyche („Der eine Amor hatte ein / Beil. Die anderen Eisenstange und / Stock"). Infolgedessen lädt sich der Mythos mit demjenigen Moment der Gewalt auf, das die Bearbeitungen aus der Zeit des Klassizismus durch ästhetische Sublimation aus ihm eliminiert hatten, und damit wiederholt bzw. vervielfacht er auch die Gewalt an den Opfern, deren Tragödie er erzählt. Das ist dort am offensichtlichsten, wo das Gedicht den Raubüberfall mit dem Schweineschlachten vergleicht:

> […] Ihr Blut war da schon verronnen,
> auch die Schreie verstummt. „Grässlich war
> das anzuhören." So sagte es der jüngste Amor.
>
> „Ich bin weggerannt…" „Wie die Schweine
> quiekten sie", erzählten sie später […].

Der Vergleich mit dem Tierkörper wird zudem vom Mythos selbst motiviert, denn in der Geschichte des Apuleius führt zu Amors Verletzung, dass Psyche von ihren Schwestern in Schrecken versetzt, dass ihr jede Nacht eine Schlange beiwohne, und ihrem unsichtbaren Liebhaber daraufhin ins Gesicht leuchtet.[6] Der Mythos setzt der Idylle tatsächlich Grenzen.

Die Grenzen der Bukolik (1) (XXII.) verweist nicht vollkommen offen auf den Mythos von Amor und Psyche, sondern deutet nur über den „Todeskuss", der an der „lebend'gen Seele" eine Spur hinterlässt, seine Anwesenheit im Hintergrund an. In

[6] „Wir haben nämlich als wahr herausgefunden und können es dir, da wir doch an deinem Schmerz und Leid teilnehmen, nicht verhehlen: ein ungeheurer Drache, der sich in Schlangenwindungen ringelt, mit Todesgift seinen Hals begeifert und einen Höllenrachen aufreißt, – er ruht insgeheim nächtens an deiner Seite! Jetzt ruf dir Apollos Orakel in Erinnerung: du seist zur Hochzeit mit einem wüsten Ungeheuer bestimmt, ließ es sich laut vernehmen" (Apuleius *Der goldene Esel* 189); „Pro vero namque comperimus nec te, sociae scilicet doloris casusque tui, celare possumus immanem colubrum multinodis voluminibus serpentem, veneno noxio colla sanguinantem hiantemque ingluvie profunda, tecum noctibus latenter adquiescere. Nunc recordare sortis Pythicae, quae te trucis bestiae nuptiis destinatam esse clamavit." (Apuleius *The Golden Ass / Metamorphoses* 227).

gewissem Sinne erhebt er jedoch eines der zentralen Motive des Mythos zum Gegenstand der in didaktischer Manier vorgetragenen Reflexionsreihe: die Vereinigung und Trennung von Körper und Seele. Borbély schließt auch hier eigentlich an den Ende des 18. Jahrhundert populären Interpretationsrahmen des Mythos an, denn eigentlich zitiert er ein Szenarium der oben erwähnten Verse von Csokonai: „Auf zum Himmel will / meine Seel, der Leib will / ruhn im Grabe still" (*An die Hoffnung*[7]); „Wann wird es sein, dass meine Seele / Den hinfälligen Leib ablegt, / Zum holden *Schmetterling* geworden / zu des *Olympos*' Gärten schwebt?" (*A Pillangóhoz*). Vielleicht ist es nicht uninteressant, hier auch eine frühere Strophe des letzteren Gedichts heranzuziehen: Die noch an den Körper gefesselte, mit einer Raupe verglichene Seele bereitet eigentlich durch das Gedicht ihre Verwandlung in den Schmetterling bzw. in Psyche vor, denn diese wird, nachdem sie entstanden ist, durch ihren „Gedichtssarg" vom Tod des Leibes künden: „Doch nun kriecht sie auf herbem Kummer / Wie eine *Raupe* träg' dahin / Während sie zum Ergötzen andrer / Sich selbst einen Gedichtssarg spinnt." Das Verb „spinnen" am Ende der Strophe verrät, dass der Gedichtssarg hier eigentlich eine Metapher für die Puppe ist, die der Text später unmittelbar mit dem Vorstellungsbereich der Beerdigung verbindet („Wann schlafe ich in des Bahrtuchs Hülle / endlich meine Leiden aus?"). Es entsteht also eine Parallele zwischen dem Raupendasein, das Psyche im Körper einschließt, und der Entstehung des Gedichts, womit der ästhetischen Sublimierung des Vergehens in der Tat eine zweideutige Leistung zugewiesen wird, denn diese errichtet dem einstmals lebendigen Körper ein Denkmal und lässt ihn zugleich durch eine ästhetische Kompensation zurück, die das Versprechen der Verwandlung in den Schmetterling trägt.[8]

All dies ist hier nur insofern von Bedeutung, als es eine der Traditionen sichtbar macht, die hinter dieser Geste von *Die Grenzen der Bukolik (1)* stehen: Das Gedicht referiert die Trennung von Körper und Seele im Rahmen einer sprachphilosophischen Reflexion, die auch die moderne theoretische Begrifflichkeit aufruft; die Dualität von Körper und Seele scheint also auch hier unverzichtbar für die Modellierung der Leistung der Sprache – oder umgekehrt. Die vielleicht expliziteste sprachkritische Geste des Gedichts konzentriert sich in Übereinstimmung mit Borbélys oben zitierten Überlegungen auf die Diagnose der Sprachlosigkeit des Körpers. Sowohl die Eröffnungssequenz des Sonetts („Der Körper ist so schwächlich ohne Seele / einem Gedanken gleich, von ihm bleibt nur / zierlich und zu bezeichnend, ohne

[7] Deutsch von Annemarie Bostroem.

[8] Im XXXI. Stück der *Sequenzen von Amor und Psyche* (*Auf den Flügeln der Freiheit*) plaziert Borbély die Gestalt der aus ihrer Larve geschlüpften Seele/Psyche im Vorstellungsbereich der sexuellen Gewalt bzw. des von der Gewalt untrennbaren Verlangens, zugegeben so, dass er die Positionen des Täters und des Opfers, Amors und Psyches, grammatisch ununterscheidbar macht. Das körperliche Verlangen ist hier ein „Netz des Schmetterlingsfängers": „[…] Sie genoss, / dass ein Unbekannter sie vergewaltigen konnte, / denn in dem Moment war ihr Körper ein Objekt. Sie / litt wie ein Tier. Doch ihre Seele war frei. Sie spürte, / dem Körper war es förmlich ein Genuss zu sterben, / wenn ihre Seele wie die Puppe war. […]"

jeden / Klangkörper, ohne Sprache eine Spur.“) als auch das abschließende Terzett („Bedeuten kann / der Körper nicht mehr viel. Und redet nicht. / Gleich einem Blatt vom Baum, so löst er sich.“) lassen die Reihe von Ablösungsvorstellungen, die das gesamte Gedicht durchzieht, beinahe sentenzenhaft auf diese Erkenntnis hinauslaufen. Deshalb – oder von da an – verliert der Körper seine spezifisch sprachliche Dimension (oder die Fähigkeit, sich auf irgendeine Weise als Sprache zu manifestieren), um als Element eines dualen Systems (Zeichensystems) in eine untrennbare, zugleich aber fragile (*schwächlich*) Relation mit etwas anderem zu geraten, zum Glied eines Gegensatzpaares zu werden. Die Fragilität der binären Relation dieses Gegensatzpaares wird vielleicht gerade von seiner eigenen Struktur getragen oder hervorgebracht: Wenn der Körper dazu, dass er bezeichnen, bedeuten oder sprechen kann, darauf angewiesen ist, in eine derartige Paarstruktur mit einer ihm fremden Instanz zu treten, dann impliziert diese Struktur immer schon auch die Möglichkeit der Auflösung, der Unterscheidung zwischen Bedeutung oder Äußerung und dem, was sie bedeutet oder sagt. So gesehen ist der Körper nichts anderes als das, was sich aus einer – bei Borbély nicht unbedingt organisch gedachten – Einheit löst. Die Rolle des anderen Gliedes der binären Opposition nimmt zunächst die „Seele“ ein, und dieses Begriffspaar bzw. der „Todeskuss“ im ersten Terzett, der eine Spur an der „lebend'gen Seele“ hinterlässt, bereiten dann dem auf die oben erwähnte Weise eingeführten Verweis auf Amor und Psyche den Weg.

Der Text schreitet durch eine Serie von sich oft wiederholenden, auch in grammatischem oder syntaktischem Sinn ziemlich desorientierenden, ineinander verschränkten Vergleichen voran bis zu seinem Abschluss. Schon die erste Strophe deutet an, dass die Gegensatzpaare von Körper und Seele bzw. Amor und Psyche auf irgendeine Weise auch mit der binären Struktur der Sprache in Zusammenhang gebracht werden. Der Körper, genauer der sich von der Seele lösende Körper wird hier mit einem Gedanken verglichen, der von der Sprache, die seinen Ausdruck ermöglicht, gleichsam abgetrennt zu sein scheint, zugegeben mit einem etwas paradoxen Ergebnis: Er hinterlässt eine „Spur“, aber diese Spur selbst ist „zu bezeichnend“ – wenn man so will, ist das Borbély höchstpersönliche Version von Jacques Derridas Begriff der „Ur-Spur“[9] (dass hier diese Kategorie mit ihren konzentrierten semiologischen Bezügen herangezogen wird, ist, wie sich gleich erweisen wird, ganz und gar kein Zufall). Die Parallele, die die Vergleichsgrundlage bildet, wendet sich zugleich in gewissem Sinne gegen sich selbst: Die Sprachlosigkeit der (vorsprachlichen, weil „zu bezeichnenden“) Gedankenspur, der Ur-Spur, ist nämlich unter anderem die Spur des Fehlens des „Klangkörpers“. Formalisierend

[9] „Folglich muß man, um den Begriff der Spur dem klassischen Schema zu entreißen, welches ihn aus einer Präsenz oder einer ursprünglichen Nicht-Spur ableitete und ihn zu einem empirischen Datum abstempelte, von einer ursprünglichen Spur oder Ur-Spur sprechen. Und doch ist uns bewußt, daß dieser Begriff seinen eigenen Namen zerstört und daß es, selbst wenn alles mit der Spur beginnt, eine ursprüngliche Spur nicht geben kann.“ (Derrida 108)

vereinfacht zeichnet sich ein Begriffsparadox ab (das in Borbélys Dichtung zahllose Parallelen findet): Der Körper (zumindest der ohne Seele) ist wie ein Gedanke ohne Körper. In der ersten Strophe fügt sich dieses Paradox in die chiastische Form ein, die im Gedicht durchgehend präsent ist (die Opposition Körper/Seele wird von dem Paar Gedanke/Körper widergespiegelt), dennoch lässt sich das Paradox auflösen, wenn diese Auflösung sich auch zweifellos nicht in die Tradition einfügt, die Gegensatzpaare Seele/Körper und Gedanke/Sprache parallel zu setzen. Wenn der Körper ohne Seele ist wie der vom (Klang-) Körper, also von der Sprache getrennte Gedanke, dann vermittelt letzterer – auf negativem Wege – die Annahme, dass die Sprache nur durch den Körper, durch das zum-Körper-Kommen zur Sprache gemacht, mit der Fähigkeit der Bezeichnung ausgestattet wird, und weil der Körper ohne den anderen Teil seines Gegensatzpaars ist wie eine Spur ohne Sprache, wie eine Spur, die aber kein Zeichen ist, ist er nur mit der Seele zusammen fähig, sich als Sprache zu verhalten, über Sprache zu verfügen. Eine Sprache, die erst von ihrer Kehrseite, ihrem Anderen zur Sprache gemacht wird, also ausschließlich von dem, was nicht sie ist. Deshalb impliziert die Sprache die Auf- bzw. Ablösung, die das Grundmotiv des Gedichts bildet.

Dieses Motiv kehrt in der zweiten Strophe im Verhältnis von sprachlichem Zeichen und bildlicher Darstellung[10] wieder, obendrein mit einem ganz offenen Verweis auf das vielleicht wichtigste Beispiel der modernen Semiologie: „Der Baum auf dem Papierblatt ist so zierlich, / löst sich von dem, was er heraufbeschwor, / wie der Körper von der Seele, flüchtig / Bezeichnendes des Baumes wie *arbor*." Diese Strophe trägt drei lexikalische Elemente aus der ersten Strophe weiter. Das Attribut *dünn* bezog sich dort entweder auf den klingenden Körper oder auf die Spur zierlich und dadurch auf die Körperlosigkeit, hier bezieht es sich auf eine grafische Darstellung, die als zierlich bzw. dünn natürlich vor allem wegen ihrer zweidimensionalen Erscheinung (Papierblatt!) und in Gegenüberstellung mit dem zu bezeichnen ist, was sie darstellt (dem wirklichen Baum). Wiederholt wird außerdem die Vorstellung der Trennung von Körper und Seele, obendrein diesmal in einem neuen Vergleich, der sich auf das Verhältnis zwischen der Zeichnung von dem Baum und dem dargestellten Baum bezieht. Die ikonische Zeichnung trennt sich als (dünner) Abdruck, in Wirklichkeit als ein Blatt Papier, vom Baum (dies erscheint hier – beim Gedanken an eine bekannte Technologie der Papierherstellung – als ein Prozess, der gleichsam auf einer unmittelbaren materiellen Berührung, einer Art *Metonymie* beruht, was – wie wir gleich sehen werden – auch von einem

[10] Auch hier mag die Kritik Adornos und Horkheimers am Mythos der Aufklärung interessant sein, vor allem in Bezug auf die „Trennung von Zeichen und Bild": „Als Zeichen soll Sprache zur Kalkulation resignieren, um Natur zu erkennen, den Anspruch ablegen, ihr ähnlich zu sein. Als Bild soll sie zum Abbild resignieren, um ganz Natur zu sein, den Anspruch ablegen, sie zu erkennen. Mit fortschreitender Aufklärung haben es nur die authentischen Kunstwerke vermocht, der bloßen Imitation dessen, was ohnehin schon ist, sich zu entziehen." (Adorno und Horkheimer 24)

anderen Zusammenhang in der Strophe unterstrichen wird) und bezeichnet dadurch die eigentliche Bedeutung des Vergleichs in der organischen Zusammengehörigkeit von Körper und Seele bzw. in deren Aufhebung. Die Darstellung selbst scheint also dem Körper seine Lebendigkeit zu nehmen. Bestätigt wird dies durch den nächsten Vergleich am Strophenende, der mit dem Ausdruck *Bezeichnendes* auf das erste Quartett zurückverweist („zierlich und zu bezeichnend, ohne jeden / Klangkörper, ohne Sprache"). Der Text nennt den Körper ein *vergängliches* Bezeichnendes – das heißt, er führt die Vorstellung von der Mortalität des abgelösten Körpers, die im vorigen Vergleich bereits aufschien, weiter und vergleicht sie dann mit dem lateinischen Ausdruck *arbor,* obwohl die Konjunktion hier vielleicht nicht für einen markierenden Vergleich steht, sondern sich eher auf ein Element einer Aufzählung bezieht, deren weitere Glieder – *tree, Baum* usw. – zwar unerwähnt bleiben, aber hinzugedacht werden können. Jedes Bezeichnende ist vergänglich, denn es kann – unter gegebenen Umständen – durch ein anderes ersetzt werden.

Noch vielsagender ist es natürlich, dass der *arbor* ins Spiel kommt, insbesondere in einem Text, der derart offen mit semiotischen Begriffen operiert. Borbély verweist hier ganz offensichtlich auf das Beispiel von Ferdinand de Saussure, das dieser in seinen *Grundfragen der allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft* im Zusammenhang mit der Definition des Zeichenbegriffs vorstellt (de Saussure, *Grundfragen* 76–77*; Cours* 97–99). Hier veranschaulicht Saussure bekanntlich mit einer schematischen Zeichnung eines Baumes, was er als den Begriff (concept) von ‚Baum' (im französischen Original ‚arbre') bezeichnet, wobei die ihm willkürlich angefügte lateinische Bezeichnung das sog. Lautbild (image acoustique) illustriert, wobei diese beiden erst gemeinsam das Zeichen ergeben (was bei der Verwendung der Begriffe Zeichen und Bezeichnendes auch in der Literaturwissenschaft oft missverstanden wird). Die Lautreihe oder das Lautbild *arbor* lässt sich ausschließlich in dieser Konstellation ein *Bezeichnendes* nennen (Saussure schlägt aus Gründen der Eindeutigkeit dieses Kunstwort anstelle des Lautbildes vor), das heißt, das Lautbild wird von dem Umstand zum Bezeichnenden gemacht, das der Begriff ‚Baum' zu ihm gehört, also das *Bezeichnete,* das in den *Grundfragen* jedoch nichts anderes ist als ein auf ein Blatt Papier gezeichneter Baum, eine ikonische Darstellung. Mehr noch, obwohl hier nicht die Möglichkeit besteht, detaillierter auf den einigermaßen verwickelten Kontext von Saussures Definition einzugehen, ist auch beim Terminus des Lautbildes wichtig, dass es sich um ein Bild handelt. „Dieses letztere ist nicht der tatsächliche Laut, der lediglich etwas Physikalisches ist, sondern der psychische *Eindruck* (empreinte) dieses Lautes, die Vergegenwärtigung desselben aufgrund unserer Empfindungswahrnehmungen; es ist sensorisch, und wenn wir es etwa gelegentlich ‚materiell' nennen, so ist damit eben das Sensorische gemeint im Gegensatz zu dem andern Glied der assoziativen Verbindung, der Vorstellung, die im Allgemeinen mehr abstrakt ist." (Hervorh. Z. K.-Sz.) Bei beiden Bestandteilen des Zeichens (das auch selbst wieder „zwei Seiten hat") handelt es sich also um Bilder, um psychische Bilder,

die in der Seele einen Abdruck hinterlassen haben; Saussure, der dezidiert davon ausgeht, dass seine in den *Grundfragen* gedachte – beziehungsweise eher in Aussicht gestellte – Semiologie unter der Oberhoheit der „Psychologie" auszuarbeiten sei (*Grundfragen* 19–20), macht klar, dass das sprachliche Zeichen – auf der Seite der Psyche zu lokalisieren ist. Bei alledem nehmen seine Beispiele, darauf weist auch Borbélys Gedicht auf die ihm eigene Weise hin, den Verweis auf externe materielle Träger, z.B. das Blatt Papier, in Anspruch.

Das ist auch bei einem etwas später vorgestellten, ebenfalls sehr berühmten Beispiel nicht anders, wo Saussure versucht, die Untrennbarkeit von Bezeichnendem und Bezeichnetem unter einem anderen Aspekt zu erklären (134; *Cours* 156–157). Hier nähert er sich dieser Untrennbarkeit aus dem Blickwinkel der sprachlichen Artikulation (vielleicht sollte man sie besser als die Artikulation der Sprache bezeichnen), wobei er sich zuerst auf die Luft beruft, die die Wasseroberfläche berührt, und auf die dabei entstehenden Muster, und gleich danach auf ein – Blatt Papier (feuille de papier)! Die Sprache ist wie ein Blatt Papier mit dem Gedanken (pensée) auf der einen und dem Laut (son) auf der anderen Seite, keinen von ihnen kann man zerschneiden oder ablösen, ohne dass der Schnitt die andere Seite ebenso zerstückelt, das heißt, sie können sich nicht voneinander trennen (es ist beachtenswert, dass dieses Beispiel auch die Autorität der „Psychologie" ins Wanken zu bringen scheint![11]). Saussures Argumente für die Unauflösbarkeit des Zeichens betonen also unter anderem wieder, dass das Bezeichnende als solches nicht unabhängig vom Bezeichneten sein könne, denn es wird ja nur dadurch zum Bezeichnenden, dass es mit dem Bezeichneten in einer unauflösbaren Beziehung steht: Wenn der gezeichnete Baum auf der einen Seite des Papiers zerstückelt wird, zerbröckelt auch das Wort *arbor* auf der anderen. Es ist allgemein bekannt, dass die Semiologen nach Saussure genau diese Annahme in Zweifel zogen und selbst von der Möglichkeit des Unabhängigwerdens des Bezeichnenden ausgingen (Paul de Man nannte dies „semiological euphoria": de Man 188). Ebenso bekannt ist auch, dass Saussure selbst unter anderem diese Möglichkeit, dass sich also das Bezeichnende anderen Bezeichnenden anschließen kann, bei seinen Forschungen zu den Anagrammen bereits ahnte, die vielleicht als Erklärung dafür dienen können, weshalb er die Struktur des Zeichens mit einem lateinischen Beispiel veranschaulichte und weshalb er die Ergebnisse dieser seiner Untersuchungen in den *Grundfragen* in gewissem Sinne „unterdrückte" (Lotringer 7). Es ist außerordentlich interessant, dass schon die frühe Rezeption von Saussures Sprachtheorie in den Künsten (in erster Linie im Surrealismus) die Rahmen dieser Zeichenbegriffe als zu eng empfand. Magritte

[11] „Die Sprache ist ferner vergleichbar mit einen Blatt Papier: das Denken ist die Vorderseite und der Laut die Rückseite; man kann die Vorderseite nicht zerschneiden, ohne zugleich die Rückseite zu zerschneiden; ebenso könnte man in der Sprache weder den Laut vom Gedanken noch den Gedanken vom Laut trennen; oder es gelänge wenigstens nur durch eine Abstraktion, die dazu führte, entweder reine Psychologie oder reine Phonetik zu treiben."

ordnete in seinem Bildtext-Werk *Die Worte und die Bilder* von 1929, das also zur selben Zeit entstand wie das von Michel Foucault untersuchte Bild *Der Verrat der Bilder (Dies ist keine Pfeife)* und das man vielleicht als bildliche Anmerkung bezeichnen kann, Zeichnungen (darunter Blätter und einen Wald!) in Begleitung handgeschriebener Wörter an und versah sie mit Bildunterschriften, die auf zahllose Abweichungen in der Verbindung von Worten und Bildern hinweisen (Magritte „Les mots et les images“[12]). Borbély hingegen scheint Saussures Beispiel eher mit der Hervorrufung der sich hinter den Bezeichnenden verbergenden Bezeichnenden zu konfrontieren, wo er *arbor* in einen anagrammatischen Reim gerade mit dem ungarischen Verb *ábrázol* [darstellen, in der deutschen Übersetzung „heraufbeschwören“] setzt, in welchem sich *arbor* beinahe vollständig verbirgt. Das Bezeichnende sprengt die Darstellung selbst, und dies lässt sich auch auf das Agens zurückbeziehen, zu dem das Wort *ábrázol* im Gedicht gehört, also auf den auf das Blatt Papier gezeichneten Baum und durch ihn auf die Ablösung der Darstellung von dem dargestellten Baum.

Die Schlusssequenz des Sonetts weist gewisse formale Ambivalenzen auf. Sie ist in zwei Terzette geteilt, aber ihre Reimstruktur – Paarreim in den beiden Schlusszeilen, die zudem mit einem Enjambement eingeleitet werden – zitiert eher die Struktur der Shakespeare'schen Sonette: Die beiden Schlusszeilen *lösen sich* also schon von der dreizeiligen Einheit ab, deren Teil sie bilden. Nicht nur die Vorstellung der Ablösung (beziehungsweise die Rückkehr des Verbs in der letzten Zeile: „Gleich einem Blatt vom Baum, so löst er sich.“) verleiht dem engen Zusammenhang mit den philosophierenden Zeilen der Quartette Nachdruck, sondern auch die Wiederholung der bereits zuvor verwendeten Wörter (außer dem zitierten Verb: *lelken* [an der Seele], *gondolat* [Gedanke], *múlandó* [vergehend], *jelent* [bedeutet]). Der auffälligste, wenn auch kaum unerwartet erscheinende neue Vorstellungsbereich ist derjenige von Lebendigkeit und Tod. Außer der bereits erwähnten Allusion, die auf die Opposition von Leben und Tod und mithin auf den Mythos von Amor und Psyche verweist („Todeskuss […] an lebend'ger Seele“) wird das am deutlichsten durch den Wechsel von *múlékony* [vergänglich/flüchtig] zu *múlandó* [vergehend] betont. In diesen Zusammenhang stellt der vorletzte Vergleich die hier vorgestellte sprachphilosophische Argumentation, zudem durch die Herstellung einer ganz speziellen Bedeutungsschichtung. Dadurch nämlich, dass der Schluss des Gedichts die Ablösung offen als Verletzung oder Unterbrechung eines Pflanzenorganismus darstellt, zieht er retrospektiv auch das vorherige Bild der Ablösung in diesen Zusammenhang: Die Ablösung der Baumdarstellung von dem dargestellten Baum lässt sich damit ebenfalls als Zerstörung einer organischen Einheit interpretieren. So ist der Baum das Leben, die Instanz der Lebendigkeit, der Baum des Lebens. Dieses natürlich äußerst allgemeine Symbol verweist in der biblischen Tradition,

[12] Magritte kann die grundlegenden Thesen von Saussures Semiologie gekannt haben, vgl. David 126–127.

vor allem in der Schöpfungsgeschichte, nicht nur auf den Baum der Erkenntnis, der mit dem Wissen um Gut und Böse lockt und die zum Sündenfall des Menschen führende Frucht hervorbringt, sondern außerdem noch auf den anderen Baum, der ihm beigesellt ist, der das ewige Leben verheißt und von dem das erste Menschenpaar *nicht* gegessen hat (Gen 2.9; 3.22), der dem Menschen also gleichsam in anthropologischem Sinn verweigert wurde (beziehungsweise in die Perspektive der Seligwerdung geriet, vgl. Offb 2.7; 22.19). Auf seine weitverzweigte Ikonographie kann hier nicht genauer eingegangen werden: Vom Mittelalter an ist er mit dem Baum des Todes Christi identifizierbar geworden (das Opfer am Kreuz bringt dem Menschen das ewige Leben), zeitweise kam er in Zusammenhang mit dem Baum (oder Zweig) Jesse, der Jesu Stammbaum darstellt (bekanntere Beispiele finden sich an der bemalten Holzdecke von St. Michael in Hildesheim oder am Altar der Kisboldogasszony-Kirche in Gyöngyöspata), und in dem oft das Motiv des *arbor vitae* steckt (vgl. dazu mit Beispielen für volkstümliche Gebete Erdélyi 479–480, 518–520; Lukács 320–321; Labriola 192). Im Hintergrund von Borbélys Gedicht kann allerdings die anatomische Bedeutung des *arbor vitae* mindestens ebenso bestimmend sein. So lautet nämlich auch der Fachbegriff für einen wichtigen Teil des Kleinhirns, der diese Bezeichnung deshalb erhalten hat, weil die Form seines Längsschnitts an einen Baum erinnert. Das heißt, er folgt einem ganz ähnlichem Muster wie der auf ein Blatt Papier gezeichnete Baum in Borbélys Gedicht, der sich als zweidimensionale, auf eine einzige Ebene gezwungene Darstellung *von dem ablöst,* das er darstellt und dessen Teil er bildet (im Fall der Zeichnung ikonisch, im Fall des menschlichen Organs tatsächlich). Der Vergleich im ersten Terzett des Sonetts erweitert dieses Muster auf die Schichten zwischen dem tödlichen Kuss des Amor, der eine Spur an der Seele hinterlässt, und dem Gedanken, der dasselbe am *Hirngewebe* tut. Vor allem verweist er auf die Gewalt, die das Leben des Menschen bedroht und unter anderem Verletzungen des Schädels hervorruft, auf das nichtsprachliche Ereignis, das die referentielle Grundlage für die besondere Trauerarbeit von *Leichenprunk* bildet und das Borbélys Gedichte – so morbid das auch klingen mag – als traumatische Spur (vielleicht als *zu bezeichnende* Spur) an sich tragen. Dieses Muster, das im Gedicht *Abdruck* genannt wird, ist (ebenso wie Saussures „empreinte") natürlich nicht „lediglich etwas Physikalisches". Im semantischen Netz des Gedichts entfaltet sich weiterhin der Zusammenhang zwischen der Bezeichnung (Darstellung) und dem Leben, der gewalttätigen Bedrohung der Lebendigkeit. Der tödliche Kuss ist vielleicht nichts anderes als der Kuss des Bezeichnens, und der Vergleich, der sich auf die Eröffnung des Gedichts zurückbezieht (zuerst also: der Körper ohne Seele ist wie der Gedanke, der ohne Körper und Sprache eine Spur hinterlässt; und nun: der Gedanke ist wie ein tödlicher Kuss auf der lebendigen Seele – dieser tödliche Kuss ist also die Spur) kommt im Wesentlichen in dieser Identifizierung zur eigentlichen Bedeutung seiner Grundlage.

Der Tod ist hier natürlich gewissermaßen in spezifischem Sinn zu nehmen. „[…] Etwas bleibt bestehen, / doch nichts Vergehendes. […]" – so erklärt das Gedicht den Abdruck, den der Gedanke am Hirngewebe zurückgelassen hat, was ganz offensichtlich bedeutet: gerade die Vergänglichkeit vergeht! Etwas bleibt, aber das ist nicht (ganz) der tote Körper, denn diese Formulierung schließt gerade die Vorstellung vom Tod im biologischen Sinn, den Bedeutungsbereich des natürlichen Kreislaufs von Leben und Tod, aus. Was bleibt, die Darstellung, die Spur der Bezeichnung, ist jenseits des biologischen Lebens, denn auch dessen Vergänglichkeit wird ja geleugnet und also eine davon verschiedenartige Unbelebtheit (oder Leblosigkeit) repräsentiert. Gerade deshalb bedeutet der Körper nicht mehr (viel) und spricht nicht, zwar könnte er in seiner Vernichtung, im Tod, vielleicht zu Wort kommen oder etwas bedeuten, aber gerade das, was dies einzig ermöglichte, seine – hier als gewalttätig dargestellte – Berührung mit der Sprache, entzieht ihm die Fähigkeit der Äußerung.

In der Schlusszeile des Sonetts kehrt die Semantik der Ablösung in einem neuen, letzten Vergleich wieder („Gleich einem Blatt vom Baum, so löst er sich."), der abermals auf die Symbolik des lebendigen und seiner Lebendigkeit beraubten Baumes und sogar auf Saussures zitiertes Beispiel mit dem Blatt Papier (feuille de papier) zurückverweist: *feuille* bedeutet auch das Blatt am Baum! Außerdem bedient er sich einer sehr klaren literarischen Allusion, denn Borbély zitiert hier die bekannteste Ablöseszene der ungarischen Literaturgeschichte, zumindest aber das berühmteste Blatt, das sich von einem Baum löst, nämlich aus Sándor Petőfis *Held János*[13], in dessen unmittelbarem Kontext auch das Organ erwähnt wird, das die Bedingungen des Lebens an sich trägt und natürlich eine weit verzweigte kulturelle Symbolik begründet, in Borbély Gedicht aber augenfällig fehlt: das Herz. „So schieden / sie nun voneinander wie das / Blatt vom Zweige. Beider Herz / es wurde leer und kalt wie Winter." (4. Teil). Der Abschied von Jancsi und Iluska wird oft als Höhepunkt oder Konsequenz der Unterbrechung oder Störung der *Idylle* interpretiert, mit der *Held János* beginnt (Ferenc Pulszky charakterisierte den epischen Bogen des Gedichts 1847 unter Anwendung von Schillers Kategorien als Wendung von der Idylle zur Elegie: [Pulszky 280]), die – in einer Quasi-Rahmenstruktur – von einer nicht vollkommenen, weil markiert fiktiven Wiederherstellung am Ende dieses epischen Gedichts kompensiert wird[14], wo die Liebenden – in den Kulissen des Feenlandes – wieder zueinander finden, nachdem Iluska auferweckt wurde, und zwar durch eine

[13] Deutsch von Karl Maria Kertbeny.

[14] Schillers Ansicht nach wird der angemessene Begriff der Idylle durch die Anwendung des Ideals der Schönheit auf das „wirkliche Leben" definiert. „Ihr [der Idylle, Z. K.-Sz.] Charakter besteht also darin, daß *aller Gegensatz der Wirklichkeit mit dem Ideale,* der den Stoff zu der satirischen und elegischen Dichtung hergegeben hatte, vollkommen aufgehoben sei und mit demselben auch aller Streit der Empfindungen aufhöre." (Schiller 751). János Horváth schrieb dazu, im Feenland hingegen „konnte der brave Held János mit einem glücklichen Lächeln über alle irdischen Tendenzen hinweg und zur Tagesordnung übergehen" (Horváth 115).

auf ihrem Grab wachsende („Aus Iluskas Asche wuchs mir diese Rose" – 27. Teil), „ins Wasser des Lebens" geworfene Rose (die also von dem Organismus, der ihre Lebendigkeit garantiert, abgelöst wurde!). Den Abschied, der mit dem Ablösen vom Zweig verglichen wird, drücken auch die Liebenden mit den konventionellen Metaphern von der abgerissenen Pflanze aus, die ihre Lebendigkeit verloren hat, Jancsi vergleicht sich selbst dabei mit einer vom Wind fortgetriebenen Distel und nennt Iluska – das märchenhafte Ritual der Auferstehung gleichsam vorwegnehmend – eine Rose, deren Abreißen und Verwelken das Mädchen sofort auf ihr eigenes Schicksal bezieht:

„Jetzt denn, liebliche Iluska,
jetzt denn, süße schöne Rose!
Möge Gott dich ferner segnen,
Und gedenke manchmal meiner.
Siehst du einen trocknen Strauch vom
Wind gerüttelt, komm dir in den
Sinn dein wandernder Geliebter."

„Jetzt denn, gute Jancsi-Seele,
Gehe, wenn du schon mußt gehen!
Sei der gute Gott mit jedem
Deiner Schritte. Siehst inmitten
Weg's du ne gebrochne Blume,
Komme dann dein welkend Liebchen
dir zu Sinne. […]" (4. Teil)

Borbélys Gedicht zitiert nicht den weiteren epischen Kontext der Ablösungsszene und so auch nicht die Idylle und ihre fiktive Wiederherstellung. Die Schlusszeile enthält sogar eine gewisse syntaktische Lücke, denn der Vergleich lässt unbenannt, wovon sich der Körper löst. Das Ab- oder Loslösen selbst ist die letzte Aussage des Gedichts, und das ist auch konsequent, denn wenn es der Körper ist, der nicht bedeutet und nicht spricht, dann löst er sich in diesem Sinne von der Repräsentation, sogar von seiner eigenen Repräsentation, und legt gerade dadurch die gewaltsame Natur der letzteren offen. Da der Schluss mit einer derartig offenen Geste auf die literaturgeschichtliche Tradition verweist (wobei er allerdings keine lyrische Form zitiert), lässt es sich kaum vermeiden, die Ab- oder Loslösung auf die Verknüpfung mit der Tradition selbst zu beziehen. Das Zitat ist auch selbstreflexiv: Das Gedicht scheint auch sein Verhältnis zur Tradition bzw. das Hinterlassen von Spuren oder *Abdrücken* durch die Tradition mit dem Bild vom sich lösenden Ast zu beschreiben: Indem die Spur zum Bezeichneten wird, unterbricht sie die Berührung, die sie erschafft.

Wie kann man also die literarische Tradition überhaupt auf affirmative Weise darstellen, zitieren oder bewahren, in erster Linie als Texttradition? Auf diese Frage bieten die Gedichte von *Leichenprunk* mehrere Antworten an. Das Sonett *Der Rechner am Abend* (XXXV.), das in unmittelbarer Nähe zu *Die Grenzen der Bukolik (2)* steht, stellt eine zeitlich näher stehende Schicht der poetischen Tradition in den Mittelpunkt. Dieses Sonett (oder diese „Sequenz") beginnt mit einem Genrebild des Alltags, es beschwört die alltäglichen (abendlichen) „Augenblicke" herauf, die von einer Atmosphäre der Untätigkeit, eher des Nicht-Handelns als des Handelns, umgeben sind. Dieses Gedicht nimmt in den *Sequenzen von Amor und Psyche* gewissermaßen eine Sonderstellung ein: Folgt man der Entwicklung des Zyklus linear, scheint dieses Gedicht eine Art Innehalten einzuschieben in der Abfolge der Gedichte, die im Bannkreis der Themen Körper, Seele, Gewalt, Brutalität, Mord oder eben sprachphilosophischer und theologischer Fragen gleichsam gefangen sind und verweilen und deren thematische und lexikalische Schwerpunkte auch hier nicht vollkommen fehlen. Auffällig, dass in diesem Gedicht die Stimme der ersten Person Singular, des „ich", das in dem an der impersonalen Erzählsituation festhaltenden Zyklus beinahe vollkommen fehlt, bezeichnet ist,[15] wenn auch nur für einen kurzen Satz, der dem früheren allgemeinen Subjekt des Textes („man") für einen Augenblick konkrete Form zu geben scheint, um sich dann wieder aufzulösen in einer allgemeinen, hier jedoch eher von einem Indefinitpronomen umrissenen Position („jemand"). Auch dieser Satz ist nicht übermäßig genau, wörtlich übersetzt lautet er: „Ich weiß gar nicht."[16]

Der „jemand", der gleich danach, im Abschluss der 9. Zeile des Gedichts (hier wie an fast allen Zeilenenden als Beginn eines Enjambements), den Platz des Subjekts einnimmt, ist auch in poetischem bzw. intertextuellem Sinn begründet, denn nicht wenige Elemente des Gedichts bauen auf Texten von Dezső Kosztolányi auf bzw. lassen sich mindestens zwei lyrischen Stimmen zuordnen. Das passive Genrebild der erwähnten Eröffnungsszene lenkt sofort die Aufmerksamkeit darauf, denn es handelt sich um eine Leseszene, zudem werden Verse bzw. Zeilen von Kosztolányi gelesen:

> Es gibt diese Augenblicke am Abend,
> wenn man zu müde ist für alles.
> Nur dasitzt. Noch nicht schläfrig, doch
> auch nicht mehr frisch. Man liest Kosztolányi,
> einige Zeilen von der Seele, vom Herbst, von obskuren
> Haltestellen und der Zeit, die vergeht. […]

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[15] „Ein Gedicht, in dem hinter dem Gesang, dem Psalm, dem Gebet, das Ich hervorzutreten scheint", schreibt János Bányai (Bányai 70).

[16] „Nem is tudom", in der deutschen Übersetzung des Gedichts: „Keine Ahnung".

Es fällt auf, dass das Sonett zwar innerhalb der Zeilen mehrere reimende Wortverbindungen verwendet, die Zeilenenden aber beinahe völlig reimlos sind. Der einzige Gleichklang in dieser Position wird gerade durch Kosztolányis Namen realisiert, doch Borbély entfernt seinen eigenen Text sofort wieder von der durch Kosztolányi in beinahe unvergleichlichem Reichtum ausgebeuteten, manchmal auch übertriebenen poetischen Technik des Namensreims: Er zerbricht – im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes, also bezüglich der Situierung des Syntagmas im Gedicht – *Kosztolányis Zeile* und inszeniert den Zeilenbruch damit sozusagen selbstreflexiv, wobei er seine eigene Aussage zugleich in Frage stellt. Wie kann man Kosztolányis Zeilen lesen, wenn das Lesen selbst diese Zeilen zerbricht? Diese Technik ist jedenfalls in gewissem Sinne auch charakteristisch für das Verfahren, mit dem Kosztolányi hier zitiert wird, denn wo der Text, an einzelnen Punkten, nahe daran kommt, den Text des Vorgängers pastiche-artig zu verwenden, beinahe die Möglichkeit einer Art von Kosztolányi-*cento* zu skizzieren, übernimmt er ziemlich fragmentarisch Details, Zeilen oder Wörter, zerbrochene Zeilen aus der Dichtung des großen Vorgängers. Die Eröffnung der zweiten Strophe („einige Zeilen von der Seele, vom Herbst, von obskuren / Haltestellen und der Zeit, die vergeht") verweist konkret auf das Gedicht *Halottak* [Tote] von 1934:

> Gewesene.
> Wunder. Sie sind nicht, doch es gibt sie noch.
> Sie tun nichts und sie wollen nichts
> und wirken doch.
> Inmitten Gehender sonderbar Stehende.
> In tiefe, dunkle Wasser stumm und langsam
> Untergehende.
> Bilder,
> erstarrt schon, und doch anmutig für
> immer.

Wie man sieht, tritt der unmittelbare Kontext der zitierten Halbzeile mit mehreren Bereichen von Borbélys Sonett in Berührung: mit dem Genre- oder, um einen Ausdruck Kosztolányis zu verwenden, *Augenblicksbild* („wenn man zu müde ist für alles" – „Sie tun nichts und sie wollen nichts") am Anfang, das sich damit auch auf die Kosztolányi-Lektüre selbst erstreckt und so eine Modalität des Verhältnisses zu dem Dichtervorfahren enthält („und wirken doch"), sowie mit dem Zusammenhang zwischen Vergänglichkeit und Ästhetischem, der bei Kosztolányi in zahllosen Formen bekannt ist. Der Schluss von Kosztolányis Gedicht führt diese offenbar auch für Borbély relevanten Knotenpunkte aus, er verbindet also Untätigkeit, Vergänglichkeit und die gespenstische Gegenwart der heraufbeschworenen, ja sogar ganz wörtlich zitierten Vergangenheit, wobei Borbélys Band in diesen Zusammenhang auch noch

das Motiv des (diesmal zum Leben erweckenden) Amor-Kusses einbezieht: „Sie sind Fantasien, die *wirklich werden* / durch *Küsse*, durch Andacht und durch Gebete, / *Zitate sind sie aus uralten Werken,* / erloschnes Gewebe." (Hervorh. Z. K.-Sz.) Borbély verzichtet auch hier nicht auf eine belehrend klingende Reflexion über das „Beziehungssystem" von Zeit, Körper und Sprache, also über die größten Geheimnisse des Menschen,[17] sie wird von der Formulierung „Zeit, die vergeht" ausgelöst und von der bereits zitierten, etwas metaleptischen Redewendung („Keine Ahnung") aufgehoben und fokussiert auch hier auf die Vorstellung des Hinterlassens von Spuren: Zeit und Leben sind nur anhand der Spuren fassbar, die sie hinterlassen („[…] Denn auch die Zeit / ist wie das Leben: Nur auf dem Körper hinterlässt sie Spuren. / Im Bewusstsein, in der Seele. Im Beziehungsgeflecht vielleicht / der Sprache. Keine Ahnung […]").

Dieses „[k]eine Ahnung" leitet in den Terzetten des Sonetts ein ganzes Gefüge von Kosztolányi-Allusionen ein, in dessen Mittelpunkt die Gedichte *Hajnali részegség* [*Rausch in der Frühe*, 1933][18] und *Ha negyvenéves…* [Wenn du einst über vierzig, 1929] stehen. Die zitierte Aussage selbst, also die einzige Äußerung in dem Sonett in der ersten Person Singular, lässt sich auf ähnliche selbstbezeugende Gesten von *Rausch in der Frühe* beziehen, wo es heißt „ich weiß nicht" bzw. „ich weiß": auf den Bericht von der Vision über den himmlischen Ball bzw. die Heraufbeschwörung der Kinderzeit („Ich weiß nicht, was damals mit mir geschah") bzw. auf den zusammenfassenden Schluss des Gedichts, in dem Kosztolányi die Erfahrung, die sich ihm während des frühmorgendlichen Wachens eröffnet, mit den endlichen Koordinaten des irdischen Seins konfrontiert („Ich weiß genau, für mich gibt es keinen Glauben, / dieses Dasein ist kurz, man wird es mir rauben"). Der „jemand", der das Subjekt vom Ich übernimmt, erlebt die Grundsituation der genannten Gedichte (erneut): „[…] Jemand schaut / aus dem Fenster, was die Sterne in der Ferne / wohl machen. Er denkt daran, dass er / zwischen Erde und Sternen lebte […]". Während das Ich in *Hajnali részegség* selbst an der Erweiterung der Perspektive Anteil hat, die es aus dem in der Schlaflosigkeit sich als beengt erweisenden Zimmer zum Fenster und beim Hinaussehen bis zum himmlischen Ball führt, ist es in Borbélys Gedicht ein „jemand", der sich in der abendlichen Untätigkeit („wenn man zu müde ist für alles") mit der Bewegtheit des Kosmos („[…] was die Sterne in der Ferne / wohl machen. […]") konfrontiert sieht. Auf denselben „jemand" bezieht der Text das Wachen des sich selbst anredenden Ichs von *Ha negyvenéves…*, im Rahmen einer grammatischen Transformation, des Tausches der Pronomina, bei dem die Stimme von Borbélys Gedicht Kosztolányi frei (halb in der Form der „mention",

[17] „Zwei Geheimnisse gibt es im Menschen: den Körper und die Sprache. Und beide sind der Zeit unterworfen. Die Erfahrung der Zeit zeigt sich uns über diese beiden Dinge. Die Zeit ist die Auslöschung des Daseins, durch seine Zerstörung erfährt der Körper sich selbst, ebenso wie die Sprache." (Borbély, „Nincs semmi remény")

[18] Deutsch von Wilhelm Droste.

halb in der des „use“) zitiert („Du wunderst dich, dass zwischen Erd und Sternen / du lebtest. […]“ – „[…] Er denkt daran, dass er / zwischen Erde und Sternen lebte. […]“), was es dem Gedicht natürlich ermöglicht, auch weiterhin im Rahmen der in der Eröffnung aufgerufenen Leseszene voranzuschreiten, das heißt, dass der müde, aber noch schlafunfähige Leser paraphrasiert, was er liest (den Bericht eines anderen Schlaflosen). Über dieses Gedicht Kosztolányis, das in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten für immer bedeutender gehalten wurde (der Kosztolányi-Experte G. Béla Németh charakterisierte es Ende der 1990er Jahre anlässlich eines Vortrags in Pécs angeblich mit den Worten: „Ein unheimlich großes Gedicht […] man weiß es nur noch nicht.“ [Halmai 162]), veröffentlichte auch Borbély 1998 eine kleine Interpretation, aus der hervorgeht, dass sein Interesse einerseits von dem Verzicht auf Reime, andererseits durch die Eignung des Gedichtes geweckt wurde, paraphrasiert weitererzählt zu werden, was auch für sein eigenes Zitatverfahren charakteristisch ist:

> Was geschieht, ist unendlich einfach: Was es erzählen könnte, dessen Platz lässt es offen. Der Leser muss weiter denken, *du* musst weiterdenken, an den sich das Gedicht richtet. Denn es sagt nicht, *was es bedeutet.* […] *„Die Leute sagen,* […]“ – so beginnt das nächste Gedicht im Buch.[19] Dann fährt es in indirekter Rede fort, es hört auf die Straße, die Gesellschaft, auf andere, auf die Rede. (Borbély, „Ha Kosztolányi…“ 106–107)

Der Schluss des Gedichts *Der Rechner am Abend* („[…] Er hat Angst / vor dem Einschlafen. Sucht wie das Kind am Abend / eine Ausrede. Während der Bildschirmschoner tanzt.“) weicht jedenfalls von dieser Paraphrase ab: Kosztolányi antizipiert zwar im Wachen das Bild seines eigenen Todes bzw. seines Leichnams („[…] Mit offnen Augen liegst du / wie später dann im Grab. […]“), er „findet nicht in den Schlaf“, aber er fürchtet sich nicht, und der Schluss des Gedichts bringt auch sinngemäß den unterbrochenen Schlaf wieder („Drehst dich zur Wand. Schläfst wieder ein.“). Borbély vergleicht die Angst mit der eines Kindes, das sich vor dem Einschlafen fürchtet und mit Hilfe von Kosztolányis Zeilen um das Wachsein kämpft, ein Vergleich, der auf ein markantes literarisches Vorbild verweist, nämlich auf die Anfangszeilen von Attila Józsefs Gedicht *Thomas Mann zum Gruß* (1937): „Dem Kinde gleich, das sich nach Ruhe sehnt / Und sich schon müde in den Kissen dehnt / Und bettelt: Ach erzähl mir was, bleib da – / (Dann ist das böse Dunkel nicht so nah.)“.[20] So wie Attila József Thomas Mann gegen das Einschlafen in Anspruch nimmt, so tut es Borbélys lyrisches Ich mit Kosztolányi, als eine Art Antischlafmittel; wichtiger als die reine Parallele ist jedoch, was das drohende Einschlafen verbergen kann. Das

[19] Die Rede ist von dem Gedicht *A szavak a társaságban* [Die Wörter in der Gesellschaft] von Dezső Kosztolányi.
[20] Deutsch von Stefan Hermlin.

Ich in *Wenn du einst über vierzig…* wird durch das nächtliche Hochschrecken damit konfrontiert, dass irgendwann unausweichlich sein Tod eintreten wird und dass es seinem späteren Leichnam ähnelt; das Einschlafen bzw. Wieder-Einschlafen ist in diesem Gedicht gerade nicht Metapher des Todes, wie auch Borbély in seinem Kommentar anmerkt: „Doch das ist das Leben, dass man einschläft, man lebt, während man schläft. Was kann er machen? Er lebt weiter. Er schläft (ein)." (107) Das Gedicht von Attila József hingegen verrichtet eine andere Art von Trauerarbeit, es ist ja kaum zwei Monate nach Kosztolányis Tod entstanden, was im Text auch angesprochen wird („Erzähl, was schön ist und was Tränen bringt. / Laß nach der Trauer endlich Hoffnung haben / Uns, die wir Kosztolányi grad begraben…")! Der verstorbene Kosztolányi ist es, der nichts tut und doch weiterwirkt, und von hier gesehen behütet Borbélys Wachender, der nicht zu schlafen bereit ist, auch dessen Andenken.

Der Schluss des Gedichts gestattet auch zu erahnen, dass das Medium, das in der Leseszene die Zeilen Kosztolányis trägt, vielleicht kein Buch ist, sondern der Bildschirm eines Computers – aber wie es auch sein mag, der Bildschirm ist in der Szene jedenfalls präsent, zugegeben in einer passiven Betriebsweise wie der Leser, der „zu müde ist für alles". Das Schlussbild enthält einen sehr komplexen Verweis auf *Rausch in der Frühe.* Der Bildschirmschoner ist ein Programm, das – zu der Zeit, in der Borbélys Gedicht entstand – dazu bestimmt war, bei längerer Inaktivität des Monitors das sogenannte Einbrennen zu verhindern, indem sich auf dem Bildschirm meist Figuren oder Darstellungen bewegten. Diesen *Tanz* vollführte auf den Rechnern der damaligen Zeit häufig das Windows-Logo. Borbély verweist also auch hier – wie in *Die Grenzen der Bukolik (1)* – auf eine ikonische Abbildung, die bekanntlich *Fenster* darstellen soll. Fenster und Tanz: diese Verbindung ist auch in der Bildwelt von *Rausch in der Frühe* bestimmend, denn der himmlische Ball der dort festgehaltenen Vision („Der Himmel feiert, feiert jede Abendstunde") breitet sich vor dem durchs Fenster sehenden Ich aus! Der Vergleich von Bildschirm und Himmel steht in den *Sequenzen von Amor und Psyche* nicht allein, er findet sich beispielsweise auch im X. Sonett *Der Virus Killer Amor*: „Dunkel war der Himmelsschirm / Und die Gestirne schliefen. / Winzige Lichter und kopierte, / Programme, die auf Wärme reagierten." Es ist außerdem nicht ganz nebensächlich, dass sich der Phonembestand des ungarischen Wortes für den Bildschirmschoner, *képernyőkímélő,* ganz augenfällig in die Passage der groß angelegten Ballbeschreibung bei Kosztolányi einfügt, wo die Phoneme *k, é* und *ő* häufig verwendet werden; zwei ihrer durch den Reim verbundenen Wörter (*kéklő* bzw. *ékkő*) werden eigentlich als ihre eigene anagrammatische Abkürzung zitiert:

Egy csipkefátyol
látszott, amint a távol
homályból
gyémántosan aláfoly,

egy messze kéklő,
pazar belépő,
melyet magára ölt egy drága, szép nő
és rajt egy ékkő
behintve fénnyel ezt a néma békét,
a halovány ég túlvilági kékét,
vagy tán egy angyal, aki szűzi
szép mozdulattal csillogó fejékét
hajába tűzi

[Da erschien ein Spitzenschleier / Auf dieser fernen Feier, /Diamantenfluss durchbricht / Das dumpfe, graue Dämmerlicht, / Ein blauer Glanz, / Prächtiger Tanz, / Vollführt von einer schönen Frau / Funkelnd verziert sie der Morgentau, / Den reinen Frieden bestrahlt ihr Licht / Die hellblaue, jenseitige Schicht / oder steckt eine Fee sich Kopfschmuck ins Haar, / Mit leichter Geste, sie müht sich nicht / Ist anmutig klar.]

Nur dass die Fenster in Borbélys Bildschirmschoner gerade keinen Anblick eröffnen, ihre Funktion liegt eher im Verdecken, auch im Verdecken geschriebener Texte. Diese ihre Eigenheit verbirgt auch eine Reaktion auf Kosztolányis Gedicht, insbesondere kann sie auf das Schriftwerk zurückverweisen, das in der Schlaflosigkeit der Eröffnungsszene aufgezählt wurde und dessen Beschreibung sich auch auf die auf Zeile anwenden ließe, die auf einem Bildschirm blinkt: „Fiebrig starrte mich an, was ich geschrieben" – in einer solchen Situation ist ein Bildschirmschoner wirklich hilfreich. Im komplexen Spiel von Ver- und Aufdecken erwähnt Kosztolányis Gedicht auch an anderer Stelle Texte, die die Aufmerksamkeit von der himmlischen Abendgesellschaft ablenken („[…] Was war denn nur dein Ziel / Auf dieser Welt, langweilige Geschichten, / […] / Bist blind gewesen beim Schreiben von Gedichten / Dass soviel Sommer, soviel Zeit verfiel, / Winterabende hast träge du verbracht, / Erst jetzt siehst du das Wunder dieser Nacht?"). Das Geschriebene kann verdeckt werden, und es kann auch verdecken. So gesehen kann Borbélys Bildschirmschoner auch den Text des Gedichtes bezeichnen, der zugleich ein Fenster öffnet und Kosztolányis Texte dadurch verdeckt, dass er sie zitiert.

Die Schonung kann also auch die bestimmende Modalität des Verhältnisses zur Tradition sein, eine eher passive Kenntnisnahme, die sich scheut, den zitierten Text in einem gegenwärtigen Kontext zu verwerten, ihn als Prämisse in eine Kontinuität zu integrieren, die der gerade entstehenden Gegenwart die Grundlage liefert, die sich überhaupt scheut, diesen zitierten Text zur ständigen Präsenz zu zwingen. Dass Borbély diese Attitüde nicht fremd ist, zeigt eine Kritik von 2005 anlässlich des 100. Geburtstages von Attila József, in der er Anthologien inspiziert, die unterschiedliche Auswahlen aus Józsefs Lebenswerk bieten. Für die erklärungsbedürftige Entscheidung

von János Marno, in seiner Auswahl Gedichte wie *Ode* oder *An der Donau* wegzulassen, zeigt Borbély Verständnis mit der Bemerkung „durch manierierte Schauspieler-Rezitationen und die mit ihnen verbundenen Schwärmereien sind diese beiden Gedichte über Attila Józsefs Dichtung hinausgewachsen; durch ihre Kanonisierung sind fremde Bedeutungen in Attila Józsefs Dichtung eingedrungen, gegen die man sich nur mit einer längeren Stille wehren kann." (Borbély, „Például három József Attila-válogatott" 1198). Der schonungsvollen Verteidigung, der präventiven, protektiven oder eher präservativen Annäherung an die Klassiker der Vergangenheit fehlt es natürlich nicht an kritischem Potential, das sich hier vielleicht eher auf die Überlieferung oder das Erbe bzw. die kulturellen und literarischen Gesten der Bildung dieses Erbes konzentrieren kann, vielleicht einfach unter Verweis darauf, dass diese eine Art von Aneignung implizieren, die für das Bedeutungspotential und die Mitteilungsfähigkeit der in ihrer kanonischen Position scheinbar gefestigten Texte nachgerade eine Bedrohung darstellen kann. Manchmal schützt die Stille die Klassiker. Ein theoretisches Vorbild für diese Überlegungen bietet Walter Benjamin, mit dessen Präsenz im Umfeld von Borbélys Werken – dafür zeugt am ehesten der Gedichtband *Berlin–Hamlet* – immer gerechnet werden sollte. Die Vorstellung von der Kritik als Rettung bzw. die Idee von der „rettenden" Kritik, der Jürgen Habermas' ausführlich rezipierte Interpretation (Habermas) nicht ganz treffend versucht, eine gewisse Art von Konservativismus zu unterstellen, ist schon in der „Ideenlehre" der *Erkenntniskritischen Vorrede* zum *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* präsent (Benjamin Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels 203–204, 220) und gewinnt ihre hier relevanten Formulierungen in den *Passagen,* wo Benjamin sie immer wieder dem „epischen Element" der Geschichte entgegenstellt (Benjamin Passagen, N 9a, 6; 593–593). Die rettende Kritik greift Elemente der Vergangenheit aus der Kontinuität der Geschichte heraus, die Überlieferung selbst ist nämlich gegebenenfalls die „Katastrophe":

> Wovor werden die Phänomene gerettet? Nicht nur, und nicht sowohl vor dem Verruf und der Mißachtung in die sie geraten sind als vor der Katastrophe wie eine bestimmte Art ihrer Überlieferung, ihre „Würdigung als Erbe" sie sehr oft darstellt. – Sie werden durch die Aufweisung des Sprungs in ihnen gerettet. – Es gibt eine Überlieferung, die Katastrophe ist. (N 9, 4; 591)

Die „Würdigung" der Vorgänger bringt eine Kontinuität hervor und beschränkt die Werke damit auf deren „Nachwirkung".

> Die Würdigung oder Apologie ist bestrebt, die revolutionären Momente des Geschichtsverlaufes zu überdecken. Ihr liegt die Herstellung einer Kontinuität am Herzen. Sie legt nur auf diejenigen Elemente des Werkes wert, die schon in seine Nachwirkung eingegangen sind. Ihr entgehen die Stellen, an denen die

> Überlieferung abbricht und damit ihre Schroffen und Zacken, die dem einen Halt bieten, der über sie hinausgelangen will. (N 9a, 5; 592)

Borbélys Dichtung widmet, wie zu sehen war, dem so verstandenen Bruch der Überlieferung große Aufmerksamkeit, was ihn, eigentlich konsequent, dazu motiviert, *schonungsvolle* „Dialoge" mit den Vorgängern auf eine Weise zu initiieren, die darauf verzichtet, sie in die Position eines Absenders von für die Nachwelt verwertbaren Botschaften zu zwingen – und die auch zu Zurückhaltung in der Frage mahnt, worin denn die Bedeutung dieser Botschaften bestehe. *Keine Ahnung*.

Übersetzung von Christina Kunze

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Gábor Simon

Pathetic Fallacy as a Cognitive Fossil

Modelling Modern Elegiac Scenes in the Framework of 4E Cognition

Introduction

The device of pathetic fallacy (to put it simply: attributing human characteristics, mainly emotions, to objects in the natural world) is one of the oldest figurative conventions of elegiac poetry (Kennedy 12–13). Although the term is introduced by John Ruskin in 1856, the device itself has a long tradition going back to ancient poetry, thriving from Theocritus up to 19th century English elegies. However, some authors working in modern elegiac poetry proposed that its use should be avoided: for instance, Wilfried Owen rejected the empathic figuration of nature as a consolatory space in the name of being truthful and honest (Kennedy 70), and it was also repudiated in the poetry of Wallace Stevens (Ramazani 577). There are essential changes affecting the notion of elegy in the background of these tendencies: in the age of mass deaths "the uniqueness of a single death is delusional" (Kennedy 58); in the state of a constant loss (generated by wars, crimes and serious diseases) consolation becomes much harder or even impossible; and the general depoetization of modern lyrical poetry is also responsible for the fact that pathetic fallacy is increasingly falling out of favor – to borrow David Kennedy's words, "modern elegists have often opted to simplify where their predecessors chose to trope" (59).

Despite these intentional efforts to banish the device from the land of elegies, pathetic fallacy has continued to thrive as a reinvigorated convention of modern elegiac poetry. It "survives" the "blatantly antipathetic flourishes" (Ramazani 577) through changing its function: natural objects are not personified as participants of the mourning process in modern elegies, but referring to the environment of an elegiac discourse can "represent nature in harmonious accord with the mind" of the lyric I (Ramazani 579).

In the present paper I aim at exploring the functions of this convention in modern elegies from the perspective of cognitive poetics. The main argument is the following: pathetic fallacy is not a mere formal trope but a stabilized and figurative symbolization of cognitive processes, which is essential in representing the world by a human mind.

The figure provides a way of symbolizing the fundamental relationship between the cognizing individual and her environment in contemporary poetry too, and this is the reason why ecopoetry is abundant in gestures of pathetic fallacy. As Timothy Morton puts it, "[e]legy appears to be a quintessential mode of ecological writing" (251). Although in traditional elegies nature "provides figures through which the lost beloved is mourned" (Ronda 9), this substitutive strategy is no longer maintainable in ecological elegies (for it is nature itself that becomes lost and mourned). Nevertheless, the natural world serves as a companion in mourning, and its cyclical renewal can repair the broken process of human life. In the words of Bonnie Costello, the ecological cooperation of nature frees the mourner from a perpetual grief as she "reenters nature's rhythms of renewal" (Costello 325).

Even leaving aside the specific function of pathetic fallacy in ecopoetry, the all-pervading presence of the figure in modern elegies is noticeable. As an example from Hungarian poetry one can mention the founder of the genre, János Arany: in his lesser-known but remarkable poem *Balzsamcsepp* [Balm Drop, 1857], "blessed beautiful nature"[1] invites the personified and addressed heart of the lyric I (being full of sorrow) to continue his life. The spring season with its "bright sky" and "green leaves" serves as a vantage point for consolation. The natural environment, thus, is not merely scenery of a self-addressing discourse; rather, it actively prompts the addressee to stop mourning. (It is fascinating from this perspective that the closure of the poem does not offer any consolation though: "fresh leaves" can hide the graves but they cannot make them disappear, as suggested by the expression "dark graves" at the end of the poem.)

Taking another canonical poem from modern Hungarian poetry, *Elégia* [Elegy, 1933] by Attila József, we can witness a series of pathetic fallacies. The "silence of anguish" dissolves "foreboding[ly], pleading[ly]" the "thickness / of gloom". The "crippled borders" "keep vigil over a priggish order", the moral order with "creak and groan". The "plots dreaming tall houses" are "weaving the noise of life". The poem can be interpreted as a discourse about self-knowledge: the addressee (the soul) is asked whether the described land is her own home, and the last line of the poem supplies the answer: "This is my home." Being faced with suburban landscape as a home is an elegiac experience on the one hand, and on the other it is pathetic fallacy that supports the emergence of this self-reflection.

Finally, consider a contemporary Hungarian elegy, *Elégiazaj/5* [Elegynoise/5, 2015] by Dénes Krusovszky, one piece from the same-titled volume. The central

[1] Translations from the Hungarian original poems of János Arany and Dénes Krusovszky are by the author of the present paper, Gábor Simon. (Two other pieces from the cycle *Elegynoise* are available in English translated by Dénes Krusovszky and Genevieve Arlie: http://brooklynquarterly.org/elegynoise/ and http://brooklynquarterly.org/elegynoise-2/ Accessed 07 Febr. 2020). Passages from Attila József's poem are cited in Peter Hargitai's translation.

activity of the poem is remembrance ("I wanted to tell you this even then", "I remember"), therefore the main source of the elegiac voice is that the recalled events and impressions are situated in the past once and for all. Thus, there is no elegiac scene in a traditional sense in this poem; however, the environment plays an important role in expressing the recollected sensations and feelings. According to the poem, the relationship between the lyric I and the addressee is like grasping the rough handle of a basket (of potatoes); the "song of the granary suppressed every other voice", and "the taste of the water was different drinking it from the top of the canister". The involvement of the natural and physical environment (to be more precise, the experience of this environment) has a crucial importance in understanding the experience of loss in Krusokvszky's poem.

It is clear from the examples above that pathetic fallacy (whose scope extends beyond the personification of natural objects) has a heterogeneous pattern in modern elegiac poetry. This supports the view that pathetic fallacy is a "cognitive fossil": an artistic device that is motivated by a cognitive demand or problem along with mental processes and structures that provide a solution to that problem (Tsur 2).

In order to shed light on what cognitive processes fossilized into the figurative convention of pathetic fallacy it is necessary to abandon the perspective of standard (Cartesian) cognitive science and replace it with the theory of 4E cognition highlighting the concept of an embodied, extended, embedded and enacted mind. Thus, beside the poetic level of investigation, the paper has a metatheoretical interest too: how can we elaborate a new approach to pathetic fallacy based on the theoretical framework of 4E cognition, and how can we initiate a productive interdisciplinary collaboration between poetics and cognitive sciences in the field of lyric theory. As we will see, this endeavor emphasizes those aspects of both pathetic fallacy and elegy that are rooted in the ontological and epistemological principles of Ruskin but has been backgrounded in the subsequent aesthetic discourse. Consequently, it is the concept of pathetic fallacy that must be explored first.

The notion and interpretation(s) of pathetic fallacy

Citing a passage from one of Alton Locke's poems ("They rowed her in across the rolling foam – / The cruel, crawling foam."), John M. Ruskin argues (in *Modern Painters*, 1856) that regarding material objects as living entities is a general pattern of pathetic fallacy. "The foam is not cruel – he claims –, neither does it crawl. The state of mind which attributes to it these characters of a living creature is one in which the reason is unhinged by grief. All violent feelings have the same effect. They produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things, which I would generally characterize as the 'Pathetic fallacy'" (Ruskin 159). The figuration of nature

as a "living creature" is pathetic: it is "eminently poetical, because passionate" (Ruskin 160). But it is also a fallacy: the mind and the body of the poet is "in some sort too weak to deal fully with what is before them or upon them; borne away, or over-clouded, or over-dazzled by emotion" (Ruskin 160). This weakness is used frequently by those "who feel strongly, think weakly, and see untruly (second order of poets)" (Ruskin 163), whereas those who can get their emotions under control with intellect belong to the first order of poets.

Thus, Ruskin does not reject the use of pathetic fallacy, for it can be the expression of true feelings as well as the source of great readerly pleasure (Kriesel 1). What is condemned by him is "projective fallacy" – expressing false impressions without emotional motivations, i.e. without true or authentic feelings (Kriesel 2).

Unfortunately, however, the interpretation of the notion of pathetic fallacy has become over-simplified in literary studies: it signifies only the personification or anthropomorphization of inanimate natural objects (Abrams and Harpham 241, Kriesel 2), though the term refers originally to the attribution of any quality of animate entities to natural objects. In other words, the scope of the figure has narrowed down to human capabilities. Moreover, the reception of the term only highlights a derogatory attitude towards pathetic fallacy (see e.g., Abrams and Harpham 242, Kriesel 1) regardless of the complexity with which Ruskin described the phenomenon.

The "neutralization" of the term to simple personification may be the result of the broad (and hence vague) definition given by Ruskin. Also, the negative evaluation of the figure results partly from the imprecise description of an "acceptable" pathetic fallacy: since "[t]he difference between the pathetic fallacy proper and other attributions of false properties does not reside in the literary device itself, but in the poet", the question arises as to "how are we to know which instances of the fallacy are due to strong emotion on the part of the poet and which are due to artistic manipulation?" (Kriesel 2).

Yet, there is another, deeply rooted ontological principle in the background of the critical attitude towards pathetic fallacy (which presents itself in the rejection of the figure in modern elegiac poetry): it is the objectivizing view of nature, its separation from the cognizing mind, i.e. the Cartesian idea of subject–object dualism. As Schiller defines the realm of nature in his essay *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* (1795), "nature is for us nothing but existence in all its freedom; it is the constitution of things taken in themselves; it is existence itself according to its proper and immutable laws" (Schiller 151). In this approach a natural object is independent from the mind and its products, and elegiac poetry "opposes nature to art, and the ideal to the real, so that nature and the ideal form the principle object of his [the poet's – G.S.] pictures, and that the pleasure we take in them is the dominant impression" (Schiller 169). Consequently, in elegies the real aesthetic pleasure comes from an authentic or true description of nature, and it is self-evident from this

perspective that any kind of pathetic fallacy counts as a false picture of the natural environment, which cannot cause any pleasure.[2]

At first sight Ruskin's theory of pathetic fallacy (especially its careful rejection) can be considered a legacy of Schiller's aesthetics as well as its dualistic ontology, and it is beyond dispute that the simplifying reception of the notion in literary studies is motivated by this philosophical perspective. For this very reason, it is essential to note that Ruskin's ontological assumptions were far from a dualistic view of cognition and living in the world in general. As Branka Arsić explored it through a meticulous examination of the original chapter on pathetic fallacy, the division of living entities into subjects and objects is "a mere metaphysical bluff" (123) that is rooted in the philosophical system of Kant's idealism.

Without going into the details of ontological premises, it is worth emphasizing that Ruskin disagrees with Kant on the nature of perceptions. The German philosopher claims that the perceiver cannot be emancipated from her perspective, thus we cannot reach the objects of the world in themselves; consequently, perception is a subjective and hence a purely mental act. "The word 'Blue,' say certain philosophers, means the sensation of color which the human eye receives in looking at the open sky, or at a bell gentian" (Ruskin 156). But Ruskin repudiates this view of perception, claiming that "the word 'Blue' does *not* mean the *sensation* caused by a gentian on the human eye; but it means the *power* of producing that sensation; and this power is always there, in the thing, whether we are there to experience it or not" (Ruskin 157, emphasis in the original).

There is an important parallel between the Ruskinian theory of perception and the ecological theory of visual perception elaborated by James J. Gibson. For the latter, "perception is not a mental act. Neither is it a bodily act. Perceiving is a psychosomatic act, not of the mind or of the body but of a living observer" (Gibson 239–240). Moreover, Gibson assumes an interaction between the observer and the environment: the objects provide affordances (potential activities to be done with the objects, "possibilities or opportunities") based on their characteristics. Gibson describes the role of objects in perception as follows. "Inanimate detached objects, rigid or nonrigid, natural or manufactured, can be said to have features that distinguish them. The features are probably not denumerable, unlike the objects themselves. But […] they are compounded to specify affordances" (Gibson 241). Put simply, the interaction between the observer and her environment, and the notion of affordances have the same role in Gibson's theory as the power of objects to produce sensations under Ruskin's assumptions: "it suggests that the absolute duality of 'objective' and 'subjective' is false. When we consider the affordances of things, we escape this philosophical dichotomy" (Gibson 41).

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[2] It is not by chance that Ruskin warns the readers against enjoying pathetic fallacy: "I sincerely hope the reader finds no pleasure here, either in the nimbleness of the sail, or the laziness of the wind" (Ruskin 161).

Although Gibson's theory does not go so far as Ruskin, since the latter proposes a new taxonomy with "doers" and "nondoers", equating human interactions with interactions among nonhuman beings (and attributing activity to objects in the process of perception in the same way as to animate participants, see Arsić 125–126), his view of the human–environment relationship as a mutual interaction gives evidence of shared philosophical foundations. Moreover, recognizing the similar points in a non-dualistic ontology and an interactive model of perception in Ruskin' essay on the one hand, as well as in the ecological theory of visual perception and the notion of affordances on the other makes it evident that (i) modern and contemporary cognitive science serves as a productive vantage point for the reinterpretation of canonical concepts and principles in literary studies; (ii) this promising endeavor is in accordance with the beliefs and philosophy of the theorists of modernism; (iii) the simplistic approach to pathetic fallacy as a "false" way of cognition and rejecting it as a device of elegiac poetry is no longer tenable.

How can it be that the man who provides a new and radical perspective on perception goes on to consider the animation of objects as a weakness of description? One argument goes that Ruskin's negative attitude towards pathetic fallacy "is itself a conceptual artifact generated by the metaphysics of Immanuel Kant's speculative idealism" (Arsić 123). In other words, whereas the philosopher Ruskin proposes the radicalism of a new taxonomy of entities, the aesthete cannot endorse the ontological system's adaptation to the evaluation of arts. However, we can assume that he condemns some cases in which the environment is personified because they maintain the subjective character of perception implying the dualistic division of subject and object.[3]

Finding an answer to the question above is beyond the scope of the present paper. But the presumptions about cognition underlying the notion of pathetic fallacy motivate the aim of refining it and elaborating a new model of the device on the grounds of an alternative view of cognition.

[3] David Klugman criticizes the psychoanalytic approach to pathetic fallacy as a "mode of representation characterized by the mechanism of *projection*" (Klugman 662, emphasis in the original), since the term projection presupposes an external reality and its subjective representation (hence a Cartesian ontology). I cannot go into the details of Klugman's proposal in this paper, but it is worth mentioning that he regards pathetic fallacy as a way of "figuration": a process of "marking" the world through perceiving it, which claims a "vital" relationship between the observer and the observed. This approach is compatible with the rejection of "projective fallacy" in Ruskin's theory (Kriesel 2).

The framework of 4E cognition: embodied, extended, embedded and enacted mind

New theoretical directions in cognitive science (grouped together and labelled as 4E cognition) share a common criticism against traditional cognitivism.[4] The source of this criticism is that classical cognitive science has a Cartesian legacy. It locates cognition exclusively inside the brain, describes cognitive operations as processing and manipulating information-carrying structures (mental representations), and attributes cognition first and foremost to the individual organism (Rowlands 51). This traditional theory of representing the world can be traced back to the same ontological dualism as Schiller's aesthetics, and it has left its mark on the majority of literary theories.

What differences come from the perspective of 4E cognition? To put it briefly, while cognizing the world our mind "exploits aspects of the body and physical environment to support and, indeed, to structure thought and action" (Moses 309). Thus, 4E cognition rejects both the subject-object division and the view of cognition as a purely mental process.

The human mind is embodied: its representational operations are rooted in and exploit the physiological organization and capacities of the human body. In order to appreciate the embodiment of our mind, one may try to imagine perceiving the world from the perspective of another organism without for example color vision or with an extremely wide range of hearing. Mental processes are dependent partly on bodily structures (Rowlands 55), thus we do not project our perceptions to the objects in the environment, and rather we are in an active relationship with them through our organs. As elaborated by James J. Gibson as a central conception of his ecological theory of vision, perception is "a keeping-in-touch with the world, an experiencing of things rather than a having of experiences" (239). In sum, perceiving the world in one form or another means that the perceiver is involved actively in that world and is affected by the environment.

Moreover, our mind is extended in the sense that it manipulates its environment in order to gain as much information from the world as it can. Locomotion, grasping, turning and moving objects, or intensively rearranging the environment serve the process of information pickup from the world: they are actions "performed by a cognizing organism […] to transform information that is merely *present* in the structures into information that is *available* to the organism and/or its subsequent processing operations" (Rowlands 58, emphasis in the original). One interesting and commonplace example of the extendedness of the human mind is looking for red objects in order to find cheese in the fridge instead of analyzing and decoding all

[4] According to Richard Menary, it is only this "shared enemy" (460) that keeps together the otherwise diverging and heterogeneous branches of contemporary cognitive science.

objects in the visual field (Moses 312–313). The extension of cognition from the mental and internal to the physical and external is accomplished not only through radically changing the environment but also in the processes of motion or actively scanning the landscape, i.e. the imaginative transformation of environmental structures. The notion of extended mind is therefore a process-oriented account of cognition.

The third thesis of 4E cognition is that our mind not only transforms and manipulates its environment but also utilizes it with the aim of reducing costs of representations and information retrieving tasks (Rowlands 68–69). In other words, human cognitive processes are embedded in the environment: the mind relies on environmental structures in order to obtain a better arrangement of information (which is easier to process). Though the thesis of embeddedness can be interpreted as a weaker version of the extended mind (and hence it has received some criticism from anti-Cartesian theorists of cognition, see e.g., Rowlands 70), it is worth emphasizing that an embedded mind directly changes its environment. For example, it rearranges the objects in a diagram or in a map in order to obtain a more fine-grained and deeper representation of them.

Finally, akin to the claim of extendedness, the thesis of enacted mind directs our attention to the capability of performing actions on the world with the purpose of representing it in a detailed and efficient way. On the one hand, this means that in order to recognize an entity the observer relies on her sensorimotor knowledge, either as real motion (the observer walks around the entity) or as an imagined (or simulated) motion (Rowlands 72). On the other, the notion of enactment extends to the ability to act on the world: for instance, one can put a book on the desk in order not to forget about giving it to a friend (for a similar example see Moses 312). Leaving reminders in the environment (a familiar object on the pathway to home, or a broken branch directed towards the destination) belongs to the active processes of an enacted mind. There is no room for discussing the relationship between extendedness and enactment in this paper (for a detailed explanation see Rowlands 72–82); the main argument here is that the perceiving mind is neither a passive receiver of external stimuli nor an isolated or self-contained information processing machine. The interactive relationship between the cognizer and the environment based on the capacities of an active involvement in events, processes and operations is required to represent the world outside us.

To summarize the main theses of 4E cognition, it is important to highlight the refusal of Cartesian dualism as a core tenet of the contemporary philosophy of cognitive sciences. If the mind is embodied, it has a direct and tight connection with the physical objects it represents. Moreover, being embedded in the environment, the human mind actively hunts information-gathering structures in the world to find effective economical solutions to representational problems. Thus, there is no reason to assume a rigid boundary between internal mental structures and external

sources of knowledge of the world. And finally, considering the mind extended and enacted means that it utilizes the physiological capacity of movement and higher order activities to obtain an authentic picture of the world. The process of cognition is intertwined with other actions in the environment. Or to put it differently: the objects of the environment provide affordances, possible actions for the human cognitive system.

This kind of embeddedness is especially elaborated in the ecological theory of visual perception: it can be regarded as one of the early models of 4E cognition, since it is also based on the rejection of a subject–object dichotomy. In fact, however, one of the earliest precursors of anti-Cartesian cognitivism was Ruskin with his new taxonomy of "doers and nondoers", as well as by acknowledging and emphasizing the active role of the environment in the process of perception. It seems therefore a reasonable endeavor to reinterpret traditional aesthetic and poetic devices from the perspectives of ecological and 4E theories of cognition, which follows directly from the original theoretical foundations of such devices in modern thinking. Omri Moses directs our attention to the relationship between the philosophical basis of modernism and the new theses of cognitive sciences as follows: "Modernists, too, viewed the embodied and locationally attuned mind in ways that are strikingly congruent with these theories" (313).

On the basis of this congruence, the next section of the paper attempts to extend and reinterpret the notion of pathetic fallacy as the figurative representation of an interactive relationship between the mind and its environment in the process of cognition.

Back to the elegy: pathetic fallacy as a cognitive fossil

In *Balzsamcsepp* [Balm Drop], a poem by János Arany, the lyrical situation is a self-addressing discourse, in which the lyric I speaks to his soul arguing that it is time to close the past and go on in life ("Come! Do not bother on the present / With the cool frost of the past"). The natural environment contributes to the process of persuasion in various ways: on the one hand, it provides a sunny and renewing landscape ("Look at the sprouting spring: its sky is bright, its leaves are green"); on the other, it invites the lyric I into himself ("Come! The mild bosom of the / Blessed and beauty Nature calls"). Though conventionally it is only the latter trope that counts as pathetic fallacy, the personification of Nature follows partly from its previous description: since it is restored to life, it can be characterized with the features of a living thing. Thus, the landscape of the natural scene introduces the well-known metaphor of Nature as a woman.

What is interesting here is not the metaphor itself, but that it is the observation of the environment that prepares us for processing the personified representation.

Active motion ("Come!") is the prerequisite for perceiving the world as a source of calming down and cheering up, and this process of perception is the precondition for anthropomorphizing Nature. The mental representation of the environment is embedded in the environment: moving in the world and observing it from a particular point of view results in recognizing the possibility of consolation, i.e. the scene affords the change of a mental state.

The passages quoted from the poem illustrate both the embeddedness and the enactment of the mind, which becomes especially foregrounded in the complex closure of the poem. The last lines describe the landscape in more detail: the discourse is situated in a cemetery, in which the "fresh leaves hide the dark graves." We can infer from these words that the lyric I is aware of being in a symbolic place of grief, and although the graves cannot be perceived, the simulation of a movement behind the leaves makes it possible to observe them. In the closure, the lyric I relies on his sensorimotor knowledge to explore details of the environment, and this cognitive act converts the personified participation of Nature into an intentional act of providing calmness and joy despite the irreversibility of death. In other words, the closure of the poem does not eliminate the role of Nature as a potential source of information, but it makes this role more foregrounded by portraying the leaves as affordances of oblivion, and increasing the effect of personification. On the other hand, the description of the graves as being hidden by the leaves casts doubt on the possibility of calming down, and this simulative and figurative turn at the end of the poem evokes an ironic reading of the whole process of persuasion.

The analysis of poetic figures in this early modern Hungarian elegy sheds new light on the essential function of environmental objects in the unfolding of mental states of the Lyric I, i.e. in the process of self-reflection. As Moses claims, "Lyric reading and writing are socially cooperative practices that require the scaffolding structures of the environment to organize and support our thinking" (311). By defining the notion of pathetic fallacy as being broader than simple personification, subsuming the figurative representations of sensations and perceptions obtained through an active engagement in the observation and exploration of the world, it becomes possible to grasp the scaffolding function of the environment. From this perspective, pathetic fallacy can be considered the poetic representation of distributed (embodied, extended, embedded, enacted) processes of cognition that enable the emergence of self-reflection.

The late modern poem *Elégia* [Elegy] by Attila József illustrates new aspects of pathetic fallacy as an environmentally grounded figurative representation of cognition. The opening simile ("Under bloated leaden skies / smoke floats above the landscape / as my soul") creates a particular perspective from which the lyric I can represent himself as a physical component of his environment. Therefore, the poem begins with the figuration of a specific realization of embodiment: the mind/soul is directed towards the world through its peculiar physiology. It becomes clear from

the second verse that this viewpoint serves a process of self-reflection ("Hardened spirit […] follow the truth of the ages, / footprints toward the self").

During this process, inanimate things become agents of human actions, feeling emotions and having minds. As I cited above, the "[apathetic] silence of abolish" dissolves "the thickness / of gloom" with the feeling of "foreboding" and "pleading". The "crippled borders creak and groan" and "keep vigil", the empty plots "dream tall houses" musingly and gloomily. The final image in the environment is that the blessed Mother Earth has set a table for her creatures.

The ruined suburb (the foundry yard, the broken shards) becomes animated on the one hand, and on the other it motivates a "fierce [and gloomy] longing" of the lyric I. The personifications of environmental objects thus play an essential role in scaffolding the emergence of self-knowledge. The description of the suburban habitat foregrounds feelings that come not directly from the self (hence they are not projected mental states) – the figurative representation of the scenery serves as a vantage point for identifying and naming the emotions accompanying the realization of a self in his homeland. The source of similes and personifications is the environment itself, consequently a figurative description of the land leads us to the recognition of human feelings. The mind of the lyric I is not only embodied but also extended (it manipulates imaginatively the environment in order to obtain information from it) and enacted (it descends from above to observe the land, and accompany the daylight into the sodden darkness of the buildings and it rests for a moment of self-reflection). The feeling of belongingness to the suburban area of life, which is an elegiac experience in modern poetry (since it demonstrates the absence of freedom for changing life) is the result of exploring and representing the landscape, i.e. a distributed cognitive process.

At this point it is worth quoting the notion of landscape from the phenomenology of Jean-Luc Nancy: landscape as the description of a country "represents the order of meaning that is posited selfsame with earth, equally separated from the order of language and from that of nature. It is an order of the body, of embodied extension, disposed and exposed" (56). In other words, a landscape is both a meaningful scene of the environment (being represented and understood by an embodied and extended mind) and a representation of "estrangement and uncanniness" (Nancy 57). When we observe the land as it is, we get out of the known and arranged world of our life and begin to reshape and rearrange the objects around us in order to gain a better and more authentic representation of us in that world. This duality motivates the semi-paradoxical view of landscape as simultaneously uncanny and full of meaning. Nancy explains this with the following words: "Landscape contains no presence: it is itself the entire presence. But that is also why it is not a view of nature distinguished from culture but is presented together with culture in a given relationship" (58). Thus, the notion of landscape cannot be based on the subject–object division or on the concept of nature as an external world outside our mind: it presupposes the

extension of our mind into the environment. Observing a landscape is not a mere mental act coming from the internal (mental) and being directed towards the external (the world): it is "a view, not as the perspective of a gaze upon an object (or as vision) but as a springing up or a surging forth, the opening and presentation of a sense that refers to nothing but this representation" (Nancy 58). That is why describing the scene as a landscape is not imitating it (which assumes the internal and isolated modelling of the observed entities) but creating its representation through enacting in it. As Nancy puts it,

> […] landscape is not a view that »opens onto« some perspective. It is, on the contrary, a perspective that comes to us, that rises from the picture and in the picture in order to form it, that is, in order to *con*form it in relation to an absolute distance and according to the spacing and distancing from which, rather, an unknown light »opens onto« us, placing us not before it but within it. (59)

Pathetic fallacy is the figurative formation of a landscape in which the lyric I as a cognizing mind can reflect on her own place in the world taking also the role and the significance of Nature in human life into consideration. This is the reason that has preserved the figure's popularity and variability in modern elegiac poetry, with new forms of it being produced in ecopoetry as well. And that is exactly why pathetic fallacy as a poetic convention seems to be one of the cognitive fossils of poetry.

In Reuven Tsur's approach, the term cognitive fossil refers to those conventional devices of poetry that are "originated in solutions to problems posed by cognitive constraints and may convey, to a considerable extent, perceptions and experiences related to the cognitive processes involved" (Tsur 2). From the perspective of Tsurean cognitive poetics, it is important to identify the cognitive problem that leads the human mind to a creative–productive way of dealing with it. Once the problem is solved by an extended and embedded process of the mind, the processes as effective solutions are transferred from generation to generation, and through this they become not only widespread but also sanctioned by common practice. Social transmission repeats the cognitive processes, detaches them from the original problematic situation, and endows them with a particular aesthetic function or quality. The theory of fossilization claims that "the generation of cultural forms has to do with the deployment of devices that adapt to the individual's physical and social environment, whereas the response to poetry, a literary form involves adaptation devices turned toward aesthetic ends" (Tsur 6).

As the argumentation of the present paper goes, it is distributed cognition, i.e. the cognitive processes of an embodied, extended, embedded and enacted mind that fossilized into the device of pathetic fallacy. Facing with the loss of values (first and foremost our loved ones) is a challenging situation that removes us from the familiar world of life. To overcome it we need a new view, an authentic representation of our

environment, which motivates reflections on the self. Because of this ambivalent relationship to the world (as both well-known and unusual), overcoming requires mental effort. Although distributed cognition is assumed to offer a natural way of representing the world, reflecting to it or implementing it at the level of consciousness makes for a difficult cognitive task.

Recognizing the organic unity of the self and the world, as well as the inherent relation between them can lead us to consolation, as in the closure of classical elegies. But precisely this recognition can result in the ambivalent experience of accepting the final loss, since it makes us realize that humans as natural creatures cannot be free from death individually, represented in the ironic attitude towards consolation or self-reflection in modern elegies. Consolation or the impossibility of comfort is the new meaning that emerges from the representation of landscape. This has made pathetic fallacy a good candidate for social and cultural transmission: the cognitive motivation of the device has supported its repeated realization, while the practice of subsequent generations has transformed and sanctioned its use. The definition of the term by Ruskin and his prescriptive attitude can be considered an explicit sanctioning act in the fossilization of the figure.

The contemporary Hungarian elegy-cycle by Dénes Krusovszky (*Elégiazaj* [Elegynoise]) provides clear evidence of the essential role of the environment in self-reflection. The phenomenon of pathetic fallacy as the figuration of a landscape through perceiving and observing it remains an important convention of Hungarian elegiac discourse in the postmodern era too. The cycle thematizes the efforts of the lyric I to get over the end of a relationship of love. In the fifth poem of the cycle (*Elégiazaj/5* [Elegynoise/5]), the figurative representation of the relationship relies on the physical, physiological experience of the human body as the source of a simile: "we didn't hold one another in a different way / than grasping the potato basket's / rough handle". The passage illustrates not only the embodiment of the mind (since trusting each other can be metaphorically described as the physical act of holding an object only from the perspective of a human being who has arms for grasping something) but also its enacted nature: the lyric I refers to her sensorimotor knowledge in the act of representing emotions. The environment has an essential scaffolding function in bringing the feelings belonging to a bygone love to mind; nevertheless, the opening simile cannot be described as a conventional pathetic fallacy.

In the second verse of the poem, however, the "song of the granary / suppressed all other voices", making it impossible for the lyric I to tell the real power of their love. On the one hand, through personification of the environment, the simile above is elaborated into a scenario of a harvest, providing the agricultural metaphor of love. (The present situation of the end of love is described in the second verse as a period of harvesting without a preceding sowing.) But on the other hand, the

personified object in the scene did not facilitate any honest talk on love; on the contrary, it hindered the act of confession.

There is no landscape in this poem, still the attitude towards the cultivated land (a culturally manipulated piece of Nature) is ambivalent: the land carrying the possibility of representing love, but it also estranges the lyric I from her beloved. In addition, the situation recalled in the text is not only a natural scene: it is a social world too. The last verse of the poem reveals that the lyric I was one of the harvesters: he drank water from the top of the canister, into which the other men had taken it from the well and from which they were offering it for each other to taste. Consequently, the environment as the representation of a cultivated land (referring to the cycle of sowing and harvesting) and the social scenario of doing agricultural work affords the reconceptualization of love both as a process of natural life and as the manipulation of nature to obtain new experiences.

In *Elegynoise/5* by Krusovszky, the self-reflective acts of cognition (imagination, remembering, and rearranging the memories) rely on bodily experiences, the sensorimotor knowledge of the mind and performing social actions in the natural world, i.e. on the joint manipulation of the objects in a scene. Thus, the poem represents the embodied, extended, embedded, and enacted processes of a human mind, for which the environment is not an external source of stimuli or the target of projecting internal mental states but a land that affords a new order of meanings and knowledge through actively interacting with it. The low-key nature of personification and the overall presence of a natural and physical environment give rise to a complex attitude towards the scenario, in which there is a tension between the natural cycle and the end of a relationship in the social world. This tension contributes to the "noisiness" of the elegy. But even in this contemporary non-prototypical elegy, pathetic fallacy as a fossilized solution to the problem of facing the difficult situation of a split seems to be a powerful way of aestheticizing the experience of loss.

Conclusions

The cognitive poetic approach to literature "offers models of cognitive analysis that presents humanists with a fresh entry-point for productive cross-disciplinary engagement with scientists" (Moses 309). The aim of the present paper was to support this thesis about the benefits of a cognitivist view of poetic devices through proposing a new definition of pathetic fallacy as a cognitive fossil of distributed processes of cognition. Describing the landscape of the poem's world as being composed of directly experienced and animated or personified entities is motivated by active interaction between the mind and the environment, grounded in bodily experiences.

The natural and social world around us scaffolds the processes of cognition (information-pickup and forming representations), therefore modelling these processes in the figurative instantiations of pathetic fallacy makes it possible to obtain new meaning about both the world and us. This is the reason why the device became one of the most widespread conventions of elegy, which is the lyrical genre of self-reflection. And despite some repudiating tendencies in modern poetry, pathetic fallacy has remained a vital and variable figure of the genre, sanctioned by the ambivalent and frequently ironic attitude and composing practice of modern and postmodern authors.

The reinterpretation of the notion as a cognitively motivated (and fossilized) solution to the problem of obtaining authentic knowledge about the world is based on the theory of 4E cognition in contemporary cognitive sciences. However, my proposal is completely in accordance with the original ontological and epistemological theses of Ruskin, who defined pathetic fallacy in modernist aesthetics, evaluating it as a weak but acceptable figure in poetry. A careful consideration of the theoretical background of Ruskin's description cast light on common points of his theory and the Gibsonian ecological approach to vision as well as 4E cognition. These common points include the anti-Cartesian conception of the human mind, the rejection of subject–object division and the model of cognition grounded in active interactions with the world. Pathetic fallacy as the figuration of distributed cognition also has its counterpart in Jean-Luc Nancy's philosophy: the phenomenological notion of landscape is the representation of a scene not from an external point of view but from a perspective within the land itself; consequently, viewing a landscape is the presence of a new meaning and an absence of a familiar order (hence it is the experience of uncanniness).

The cognitive poetic approach to pathetic fallacy was applied to the analysis of three modern Hungarian elegies, a traditional poem from the 19th century with an unexpected ironic closure, a late-modern canonical poem about the description of a suburban landscape and the recognition of identity, and a postmodern example of the genre with an ambivalent and complex attitude towards nature and culture. It became clear from the poems that though pathetic fallacy is far from being a homogeneous and simple convention, it remained in the center of the poetization of elegiac self-reflection in modern poetry too.

If we try to understand modern developments in the field of poetry, we must understand first the modern mind and its complex relationship to the world. Cognitive poetic investigations of modern literature aim at understanding the function of literature in the development of the human mind. Since traditional concepts of literary criticism have a cognitive underpinning, and since contemporary cognitive sciences offer new perspectives on traditional issues, this seems to be a promising endeavor.

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TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN CONTEMPORARY NORTH AMERICAN LITERATURE AND CINEMA

Vera Benczik

Monsters Old and New

The Changing Faces of Otherness and in Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* and Its Film Adaptations

> „Normalcy was a majority concept, the standard of the many and not the standard of just one man."
>
> *Matheson 158*

It is the summer of 2012, Manhattan, New York. The island is deserted, inhabited only by a single man, Dr. Robert Neville, portrayed by Will Smith, then at the height of his acting career. Neville spends his days as a modern Robinson with hunting, gathering and farming in the pastoral landscape of the desolate city, with his trusty companion, Sam, the German shepherd. The setting exudes an air of utopia, but even in during the first twenty-five minute of the film – which introduces us to the daily routines in the protagonist's life – the viewer gathers that something is off, that the pastoral surface is only an illusion with something hideous lurking underneath, and that once the thin veneer of summer perfection is scraped away, chaos will erupt. And erupt it does, since *I Am Legend* (2007) is a Hollywood movie which opts for following generic convention rather than forging new paths, and Robert Neville spends the bulk of his remaining screen time enacting the well-known template of the zombie horror, putting up a heroic fight right until the end when he sacrifices himself, taking the zombie horde with him, and saving humanity, as well. Or stays alive, parting on friendly terms with the monsters of Manhattan, while still saving humanity. The seeming contradiction is caused by the fact that the film has two alternative endings: one, which retrospectively reassigns the roles of perpetrator and victim, and another, which upholds the conventional dichotomy of human vs. monster.

As so many science fiction films, *I Am Legend* is an adaptation, the basis of which is Richard Matheson's eponymous novel published in 1954. The 2007 film is not the first rendition of the novel, as it was preceded by two other films, one of them being *The Last Man on Earth*, starring Vincent Price, which premiered in 1964, and the other *The Omega Man*, in 1971, with Charlton Heston playing Robert Neville. The present study concentrates on the configurations of monstrosity in the novel, and their transformations in the subsequent film versions. Some space needs to be devoted to the position of the monster, specifically the vampire, within the genre of

science fiction (henceforth SF), which has traditionally relied on what Darko Suvin refers to as "cognitive estrangement" (Suvin 3ff), that is, the rational disassociation of the narrative from experiential or consensus reality – thus monsters like the vampire or the zombie need certain alterations in order to successfully navigate the generic conventions of SF. The study will argue that the mechanisms employed by Matheson's novel construct the vampirical creature as the ultimate abject Other in order to exploit the human-monster dichotomy to its fullest and lay the foundations for a subversive exploration of the ethical dilemmas involved. To complete the arc, the study will conclude with an analysis of the two later film versions, and how they relate to the relativization of monstrosity, how they tackle the construction of normativity vs. deviation, and finally, how viewer expectations induced by the historical context as well as the financial concerns of the film industry favor genre conventions over ethical deliberations.

Otherness, and its presentation as monstrous has been frequently employed by SF narratives since the earliest examples of the genre.[1, 2] The Creature from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1819) pioneers artificial monstrosity, a template which will see iterations in the chimeras of Dr. Moreau, and arguably continue in the malevolent mechanical entities – androids, AIs and the like – that have pervaded the genre since the Second World War. Extraterrestrial threats hark back to the invading Martians from H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1897), which have become the basis for conventional depiction of alien invasion narratives. SF monsters can be marked by their fundamental difference, their correspondence to common human phobia-inducing wildlife such as insects or reptiles, or their uncanny similarity to humans, as the body snatcher template that became commonplace after the second world war, illustrates. As Barbara Creed notes, SF monsters often align with the abject, and the example she brings is the xenomorph's strong visual connection to bodily fluids

[1] One of the ongoing debates within SF theory concerns the origins of the genre, a point that largely depends upon the definition followed by the author in question. Certain scholars – especially those who favor a wide interpretation of generic boundaries – will include the Epic of Gilgamesh as an example or forerunner of SF narratives, while other theoreticians whose interpretation of SF is narrow set the start for genre texts in the pulp era of the 1920s, when Hugo Gernsback, editor of *Amazing Stories* coined the term (Cheng 17). The former approach arguably expands genre boundaries beyond relevance, the latter excludes all 19th century texts which arguably function according to genre conventions unchanged since, for example Mary Shelley's work, or most of H. G. Wells' *oeuvre*. The present author opts for a median approach and positions the advent of the genre into the 19th century, irrespective of narratives that prefigured it earlier: this is the period during which genre conventions are established, which sees the publication of a large number of texts operating according these conventions, and also marks the advent of intertextual discourse within the tradition.

[2] This study only focuses on comprehensible Otherness, that is, monsters that can be decoded and interpreted in a pragmatic framework, irrespective of whether the narrative reflects on the approximative and appropriative quality inherent to all attempted apprehension of Otherness. Kim Stanley Robinson's short story "The Translator," for example, repeatedly comments on the analogical mechanisms all descriptions of alien life necessarily involve. The genre does feature a number of examples which focus on radical, incomprehensible Otherness, like Stanislav Lem's *Solaris* or Ursula K. Le Guin's "Vaster than Empires and More Slow," both of which confront difference that cannot be decoded, even by approximation or analogy, and explore the effects such an encounter has.

in the *Alien* franchise (Creed 17–25). The 20th century sees the arrival of monsters into SF which were traditionally part of folklore or fantasy, like the vampire, originally a resident of gothic narratives, and zombies have also become favored agents of the post-apocalyptic SF narratives of the second half of the 20th century.

Most of these creatures mark some counterpoint to the familiarity of humanity and depending on text and (historical) context encode various fields of meaning and can be decoded as the projections of diverse individual and collective fears. Artificial beings, for example, mark the anxieties induced by the processes of industrialization and technological innovation, and today express technophobia in a society that is increasingly dependent upon machines and sophisticated technology for its everyday practices. Androids and artificial intelligence thus often appear as agents of destruction, bringing about the downfall of humanity in narratives like Harlan Ellison's "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream," or all instalments of the *Terminator* franchise. Yet robots may also signal social inequalities and present criticism aimed at racist practices within U.S. history: the uprising of the docile servant class may easily be interpreted as reflecting on conflicts arising from power and class struggles within American society, and robot narratives may in certain instances be decoded as either the struggle for independence, or even slaves fighting for their freedom and emancipation. The most cited classic SF example for this is probably Isaac Asimov's novelette "The Bicentennial Man" (1976), which similarly to many other robot stories explores the existential framework of humanness and identity construction, themes that are more recently explored in Alex Garland's *Ex Machina* (2014) or the HBO series *Westworld* (2016–).

Extraterrestrial beings very effectively represent visual and cultural Otherness, which can manifest itself as an aggressive invading force, destructive difference, and hence many narratives of this kind will encapsulate the template of survival narratives, where humanity fights for its existence against the alien encroachment. Such texts have relied on the affectively potent representation of the monstrous in terms common phobia-inducing configurations, and the aliens are more often than not depicted as reptilian or insectoid beings, often – as noted previously – bearing strong connections to notions of abjection. This formula has been used since Wells' novel, where the Martians were hideous, blood-sucking apparitions, despite the fact that *The War of the Worlds* points well beyond the simple human-alien dichotomy. The novel, written at the height of the power of the British Empire, strikes a critical tone when it comes to the colonial system, condemns the invasive practices of the British, and draws a direct comparison between the British colonizers and the invading Martian forces, effectively encoding English colonial practices into the monstrous alien creatures, and enabling a postcolonial reading to the novel, as well. Relying on this template, Neil Blomkamp's film *District 9* (2009) – a Kafkaesque tale of metamorphosis – uses the trope of aliens stranded in Johannesburg to reflect openly on the aggressive segregation practices of the racist Apartheid system, but the

metaphor may also be extended to include migration-induced tensions in modern society in general. Other works use extraterrestrial beings to encode cultural difference, and the pitfalls and possibilities of intercultural communication, like Kim Stanley Robinson's "The Translator," which explores the possibilities and limits to mediate between cultures.

Then there are texts which seem to reiterate the conventional alien invasion template, but upset it drastically at some point. Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* (1985) for example features ant-like aliens in a hive culture, which launch an invasion against humans, who heroically fight back and win in the end with the help of the titular child hero. After vanquishing the threat Ender suddenly has to face not only the fact that he singlehandedly annihilated a complete species, but also has to live with the knowledge that after their initial attack – carried out mistakenly since the aliens did not think humanity an intelligent species due to cultural differences – the aliens were on the defensive. What starts out as a heroic war against invaders retrospectively becomes a ruthless genocidal campaign.

As the above short overview shows, the role of monsters in SF has undergone various iterations and transformations. When scrutinizing the mechanisms according to which SF works, John Rieder points out "[i]n order for a text to be recognized as having generic features, it must allude to a set of strategies, images, or themes that has already emerged into the visibility of a conventional or at least repeatable gesture" (196). Rieder also contends that texts within a group are "aware" of each other and of the trends, motifs and templates emerged during the history of the genre. Although there are clichés and patterns which become almost sacred tenets of a genre – think about the requirement of detective fiction that the mystery is resolved at the end – conventions necessarily also engender subversive strategies in due course. Without Wells' explicit analogy drawing attention to the similarity between British colonial attitudes and the invading Martians, the aliens are nothing more than what generic convention calls "bug-eyed monsters" (Clute and Nicholls 105). Card's novel, on the other hand, published almost a century later, and already building on a well-established iconography of the monstrous alien, uses the insectile monsters not only to trick the intranarrative characters, but also to deceive the readers who invoke the well-known formula while reading the text. It is the process of cultural misconstruction that results in genocide, and the shock of the protagonist will be mirrored by the surprise of the audience when the act of misreading is discovered. It is along the historical arc between Wells and Card that trope of the alien undergoes the transformation and diversification that enables its multiple encoding.

The figure of the vampire – usually linked to the metaphorical representation of sexual anxieties and power struggles (Limpár 267) – has undergone a similar arc of development and diversification. The monster thriving on human blood went through several iterations in folklore and mythology, and has been a part of European culture for centuries, making its way into mainstream literature and the domains of popular and mass culture through the mode of the Gothic in the 19th century,

becoming the epitome of horror until its transformation in the second half of the 20th century. The conventions of the representation of the modern, romantic vampire narrative had their base in John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), and the popularity of the character relied to a greater extent on Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*, constructing the countless versions of the creature as the abject Other well until the 1960s in texts that were largely affiliated with fantasy as a genre. In the early 20th century the formula found its way onto the silver screen, and 1922 marked the beginning of the vampire's film career in Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's silent film, *Nosferatu*. While Murnau's version visualized the monster as gnome-like grotesque creature, the vampire soon transformed into the figure of the exotic foreign aristocrat, whose Otherness was marked by his accent, pale skin and a penchant for dinner jackets, while monstrosity was signaled by prominent canines and an occasional blood-rimmed mouth. The 1970s saw a radical shift in the metaphorical domain of the vampire, largely due to Anne Rice's novels, which endowed the figure with the traits of the Byronic hero, both object of desire and tragic character.

Ildikó Limpár in her study on Taika Waititi's vampire mockumentary *What We Do in the Shadows* (2014) contends that the change runs parallel to the adoption of the figure into female gothic literature, and that the reinterpretation of the vampire's indisputable masculinity resulted in inscribing new modes of signification into the template (271). Rice's vampires, easily lending themselves to a queer reading, for example, became icons of social marginalization and isolation for the LGBTQ community in the 1970s, and the 1980s and 1990s saw a recurrence of the figure in books, films and series aimed at a teenage audience, from Joss Whedon's *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003) to Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series. Their role in the coming-of-age stories of young adult fiction transformed into objects of desire rather than monstrous threat. Parallel to the figure's transformation parodies start appearing, which usually foregrounded the vampire's atavistic features: Mel Brooks' *Dracula: Dead and Loving It* (1994) presents a satirical, metatextual look at generic conventions, and in Taika Waititi's vampires in *What We Do in the Shadows* presents the audience with four vampires who are hopelessly out of place in 21st century New Zealand, but try to adjust to the changes and face the challenges as they attempt to find their place in modern society.

While aliens have always resided in the domain of SF, the vampire, due to its magical-mystical-transcendental characteristics rarely transgressed from the realms of fantasy into SF narratives, since the figure of the vampire denies cognitive justification, its fearfulness emanating in large part from its abjection and incomprehensibility. The vampire is not alone, several other monstrous constructions – dragons, werewolves, ghosts or witches, just to name a few – permeate the realm of folklore which appear only sporadically in SF texts. Being "imported monsters," they have to conform to genre conventions, and this entails rationalization, a reconstruction of the fantasy figures in a scientifically credible way. In the case of the vampire this means that explanations are needed for longevity, for its dietary

needs, and its susceptibility to sunlight. The transformation is easily explained by infection or mutation, as the proliferation of the zombie apocalypse following a viral catastrophe clearly shows, and mutations or the changes in the body's biological processes on a cellular level may account for longevity, and also the resulting being's light allergy.

One of the more interesting hybrids which places the gothic vampire into a modern SF environment is Richard Matheson's 1954 novel *I Am Legend*. The novel is the product of the McCarthy era in the United States, a decade that is marked by cold war paranoia and apocalyptic anxieties, following the deployment of nuclear weapons in 1945, collective fears that left a strong imprint on the SF texts of the era as well. The novel is set in Los Angeles, between 1976 and 1979, and belongs to the group of so-called "last man" narratives. Humanity has succumbed to a pandemic, either dying of it or transforming into vampire-like creatures who spend the daytime in a catatonic state and come out during the night to hunt for food. Some of the vampires are undead, some of them have still retained their higher cognitive functions, but both need blood as a sustenance, and exhibit traits well-known from vampire lore: they abhor garlic and are vulnerable to sunlight. The protagonist lives a solitary life in suburban Los Angeles, immune to infection due to a previous bat bite. Having had to endure the death of his family – his wife and his daughter – left him in deep grief, and he spends his days fighting for survival, and methodically hunting down and killing the vampire population in the area. At night he retreats to his house and has to endure the verbal and physical onslaught of his erstwhile neighbours, now transformed into monsters, as they beleaguer him, waiting for an opportunity to bring about his destruction. Having become an alcoholic due to the trauma of loss and isolation, he turns back from the brink of suicide, and finds new meaning in researching the disease, and possible ways to cure it. After three years he meets Ruth, seemingly also a human survivor, and for a short time it seems that they will re-generate humanity as the new Adam and Eve of the post-cataclysmic world. It soon transpires, however, that Ruth belongs to a third group of the infected, whose members have learned to coexist with the illness, and have begun to build a new, vampire-based society. Neville is wounded and apprehended, and the novel ends with him committing suicide awaiting his execution, after he realizes that in this new society he is the monster that needs to be destroyed.

The novel seems like a conventional post-apocalyptic narrative at first, a subgenre which by the 1950s looked back upon a long tradition within SF.[3] The last person – who according to the heteronormative patriarchal cultural conventions of the age has to be white, middle-class and male – fights for survival amid the ruins of civilization, against monsters or monstrous forces set on the destruction of humanity. The moral configuration underlying such plots is most often a straightforward

[3] For a detailed study on the history of the post-apocalyptic tradition see Warren Wagar and I. F. Clarke's theoretical works, among others.

dichotomy: Good – represented by humanity, in this case the last human being – is pitted against Evil – the forces that irrupt into the American idyll and wreak havoc on the utopian way of life. At stake in this clash between the two forces is the survival of our species, and the post-apocalyptic narratives of the era usually paint a desolate picture of the possibilities of human endurance. More often than not these narratives end with the (imminent) death of the last human, and by extension, the annihilation of humanity as a species.

I Am Legend seems to be a typical representative of this category: Robert Neville embodies the lone white male hero – a well-known archetype that manifests itself in the frontier hero in American culture – fighting in the suburban milieu as the last bastion of humanity. Suburban life had become the epitome of utopian existence by the 1950s (Wilt 480–481),[4] with the ideal American nuclear family – white, middle-class father, mother and two or three children – living the American dream in detached houses in idyllic residential communities. The post-apocalyptic texts of the era often implace their narratives within this utopian spatial construct, pointing beyond physical destruction into the realm of total ideological and cultural annihilation.[5] The novel, like many other post-apocalyptic narratives, is also a Robinsonade, chronicling the challenges a lonely male hero has to face in total isolation,[6] and like other narratives of this type, besides its clear dystopian content also features overtones of nostalgic longing for a simpler life in the past.

As Neville is the focal character of the novel, the audience's perceptions are naturally influenced by how he decodes his surroundings. The construction of the character as the archetypal American hero marred by the trauma of loss, and the shared humanity between reader and character heightens the affective proximity and the degree of identification with the protagonist and helps configuring the moral dichotomy of human vs. monster in the novel. The dichotomy remains intact despite the fact that Neville's research successfully rationalizes the figure of the vampire, and science-fictionalizes the character: the cause is a bacterial infection, the aversion to garlic is an allergic reaction, and the light sensitivity helps produce an environment in which the bacteria thrive. By the process of naturalization – the supernatural becomes a disease – the occult figure of the monster is ultimately humanized, and constructed as a victim rather than a perpetrator, yet the irrational affective reaction on Neville's part does not diminish, humanization does not result in empathy and compassion, and this cognitive dissonance produces a tension within the narrative. Irrespective of cause, Neville views the diseased as monsters to be destroyed, foregoing

[4] The suburbs as the symbol of the American pastoral idyll and the embodiment of the American dream in the 1950s are exemplified by sitcoms like *Father Knows Best* or *Leave It to Beaver* (Haralovich 69).

[5] Ray Bradbury's short story "There Will Come Soft Rains," for example, features a mechanized house which continues its rituals and processes after a nuclear cataclysm, oblivious to the destruction of its inhabitants. The meaningless mechanical repetition transforms the utopian site of the suburb into a dystopian construct.

[6] See also Conrad's study entitled "Beginning at the End: Romantic Visions of the Last Man in Post-Apocalyptic Robinsonades."

any degree of relativization, and denies all attempts at communication even with former neighbors or friends, completely cutting the emotional ties linking him to these people in their pre-pandemic life.

The question of (frustrated) white masculinity produces an additionally interesting angle for analysis, as among the nightly vampire visitors to his house there are women who – again according to Neville's narrative – try to get hold of him by impersonating a monstrous version of the femme fatale, erotic allure incarnate. They function as a site for the projection of sexual fantasies, and simultaneously function as objects of abjection and desire. Neville lusts after them but perceives his sexual craving as a transgressive aberration, a feeling that is inspired on the surface by his rejection of the women's Otherness but could also well be decoded as a fear of not being able to exercise control, a fear of the loss of his patriarchal position. One of the recurring daytime episodes is Neville impaling the catatonic vampires, mainly women, with homemade stakes. It is not difficult to interpret this act as sexual in nature, where the man enters the female body – lying motionless and helpless – in a violent and nonconsensual manner, inflicting pain on the other. An act of rape is easily linked to control and the ultimate objectification of the female body, and the conjunction of woman and vampire also means that female otherness is projected upon monstrous otherness and vice versa.

The novel, despite the formulaic plot, is not a simple reiteration of the generic conventions, and manages to subtly undermine the dichotomies of human-vampire = good-evil, presenting a critical reflection on the moral framework such a template usually represents. Neville himself is far from the archetypal hero, and is rather constructed as a deeply flawed antihero, a deviant personality according to the normative constructions of the age, he is an alcoholic, given to self-destruction, tormented by a fetishistic desire for the monstrous female body, and a killer who does not commit his murders in open combat, but rather when his victims are helpless and inert. But the most obvious subversion of the moral architecture of the novel comes at the end, when Neville – partially due to his affective response to Ruth, and the undeniable communication between them – has to reevaluate the ethical positions of his narrative, and suddenly realizes that he is the monstrous Other in the new vampire society, the bogeyman with which vampire mothers scare their children into bed in the morning, asserting that he will come for them silently and invisibly during the day if they do not behave.

Accepting his Othering, Neville simultaneously comes to accept the humanity of his captors, and finally sees them as the next step in human evolution, and while they present the ability to adapt to the changed circumstances, he himself remains an atavistic remnant of the past. Re-constructing the monstrous as the familiar also reconfigures the moral framework of objectifying and destroying the monstrous body and inverses the dichotomy: Neville is no longer the hero, but a mass murderer who commits genocide in the name of a past and cultural norms that are gone forever.

Recognizing this he utters the phrase "I am legend" (Matheson 159) before his death, inscribing himself into the mythology of the new vampire-human culture as the monstrous Other. Neville's white masculinity, which in its normativity also entails a certain invisibility (Limpár 267) – with every deviation constructed as visible difference – is suddenly rendered as discernible, and Neville's position is not only delineated as a minority position within the post-apocalyptic world but is also defined as monstrous. This in turn denies the character its identifiability, and presents the audience with inconvenient ethical choices, while by the end of the novel Matheson succeeds in deconstructing the traditional hero archetype of American culture by turning Neville into an emasculated atavism. The dating of the plot also gains new significance retrospectively: the starting year is 1976, two hundred years after the Declaration of Independence, and this resonates interestingly with the genesis of the new race and the new culture.

As mentioned previously, the novel engendered several film adaptations, and the following pages will present a look at how the figure of the monster, and the interchangeability of the human-monster positions is reflected in two films, the 1971 *Omega Man*, and *I Am Legend*, released in 2007. Beyond the dichotomy the topics of racial constructs, power relations, and the films' relationship to their own historical and political context will be examined in the light of the theme of monstrous Otherness. As to the figure of the monster, *Omega Man* still relies on the vampire template, while *I Am Legend* utilizes zombies as the embodiment of the monstrous, a demonstration of the process commented upon earlier, which resulted in the change of meaning and iconography of the vampire: while *Omega Man* still embedded itself into a tradition with clearly encoded meanings, the makers of *I Am Legend* had to face a complex and multifarious discourse after the paradigm change of the 1970s – enriched by the vampire romances, the young adult oriented films and series like *Twilight* and *Buffy* – and thus resorted to the figure of the zombie, whose cultural presence echoed the dichotomous encoding of the pre-1970s vampire paradigm.[7]

[7] The figure of the zombie comes from Caribbean folklore, where it "was a thing of mythology and folkloristic ritual, a much maligned and little understood voodoo practice primarily from the West Indian nation of Haiti" (Bishop 37). The figure of the modern zombie goes back to George Romero's 1968 horror classic, *The Night of the Living Dead*, which created the archetype of the figure in modern Western popular culture – and is often referred to as the 'Romero.' Romero kept the post-death state of the body, the lack of intelligence, agency and identity, but divested the folklore monster of its connection to Caribbean mythology and voodoo and added traits of a group appearance and the habit of consuming flesh, with a special taste for the brain of living beings. He also added a feature that would make the figure well-suited to science fiction narratives: the condition of the zombie is contagious, and those bitten will often turn into a monster themselves. It 'character development arc' is remarkably similar to that of the vampire but lags a few decades behind. The Romero zombie was often decoded by critics as the reflection on 'brainless' capitalist consumer society, and the figure's conceptual field changed little over the first few decades. In 2007, when *I Am Legend* was released, the figure was still mostly encoded as the brainless, lumbering monster, and it is only in the 2010s that a paradigm shift within the subgenre started. The last two decades saw the continuation of the Romero zombie in series like *The Walking Dead* (2010) or films like *28 Days Later* (2002) and *Zombieland* (2009) or *World War Z* (2013), but alongside these more nuanced approaches to the subgenre also started to appear, with films like *Warm Bodies* (2013) – which, while being a straightforward adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and*

Omega Man was directed by Boris Sagal and cast Charlton Heston as Robert Neville. Heston by that time had established himself as one of the most prominent male leads in the American film industry, having played iconic characters like Ben Hur or Moses in the previous decades, but he had already made a rather famous venture into the SF genre by playing the male protagonist of Planet of the Apes in 1968. The film follows the novel's concept of the lonely white male hero stranded in post-apocalyptic Los Angeles, and the first third of the film puts Neville's isolation into focus: we follow the virologist on his solitary cruise through the city, as he ritually re-watches a film on Woodstock, or has one-sided conversations with the mummified corpse of a car salesman, all the while emphasizing the mechanic repetitiveness in all his actions. The film completely disregards Neville's personal trauma, there is no mention of a dead wife or child, nor family friends coming back to haunt him post mortem, and thus the story dismisses the struggle with private loss and grief. Nonetheless, there are signs of traumatization and fragmentation throughout the plot: Neville's apathetic daily routine, the nuclear explosions which irrupt as cataclysmic flashbacks into the linear narrative of the film, the irrationally aggressive responses he has to pin-up portraits of women, an excessive consumption of alcohol, and Neville's manic ordering of his supply closet may all be decoded as marks of an attempted approximation of the novel's deeply traumatized protagonist.

Despite these pointers towards a non-normative personality, the film seemingly disavows the complex approach to Otherness embraced by the book. The normative whiteness – "it's genuine 160-proof old Anglo-Saxon, baby," Neville remarks at a point about his blood (*Omega Man*) – and masculinity of Heston's hero remain unquestionable until the end, as does his reliability and moral superiority; in contrast, the technophobic, vampiric members of the infected post-humans, who call themselves the "Family," are indisputably relegated to the status of monster within the plot. They are not only visually othered into abject monstrosity by their unnaturally pale skin, and white irises, but by their antagonism towards modernity they are constructed as the counterpoint to progressive, Western capitalist society, as their "restorative nostalgia" (Boym 13) enforces a turning away from a possible future. Neither is Neville's virility questioned, as his – explicitly sexual – relationship with Lisa (Rosalind Cash) reinforces the heteronormative script of romantic love, as she is not one of the Others, but a human survivor, like himself. The wound, which at the end of the novel symbolically marks the body of the emasculated monster, here transcends the flesh and transforms into the stigmata of Christ, the Savior: Neville's death at the end of *Omega Man* is tragic and heroic, as his self-sacrifice not

Juliet, is also a metaphor for isolation in modern society – or *The Girl with All the Gifts* (2016), which complexly addresses issues like visual otherness and marginalization, intergenerational conflicts and ecocritical reflections on humanity as a destructive force in the Anthropocene. Series like *iZombie* (2015-2019) or *Santa Clarita Diet* (2017-2019) explore these issues within the boundaries of the comedy series.

only enables the surviving humans to escape, but by the serum extracted from his blood the promise of humanity's future existence is upheld.

While the human-monster dichotomy is addressed unambiguously and non-subversively, and thus Neville's monstrosity is suppressed, there are moments when the film comments on his potentially fundamental Otherness: Dutch, one of the young human survivors calls him "the mad scientist" and somewhat later an "exterminator" (*Omega Man*); Mathias – the leader of the quasi-Vampiric Family – tells him upon his capture: "You are the angel of death, Doctor, not us" (*Omega Man*), which aside from its Biblical overtones also evokes Josef Mengele through his epithet *Todesengel* (angel of death), almost unnoticeably aligning Neville with the horrors of the Holocaust medical experiments during the Holocaust. Richie, another survivor, an African-American boy, remarks to Neville, "There's times you scare me more than Matthias does" (*Omega Man*), seeing the virologist's total aversion to any attempt at entering into a discourse with the Family, whom Richie wants to cure rather than kill.

Although the film does not reassign the human/monster labels, it presents an interesting social commentary on race relations and racial discrimination. One of the unusual choices of the casting director at the time was to cast an African American actress – Rosalind Cash – in the role Lisa, the female lead, and romantic interest of Neville. 1971 still marked a time when interracial romance and intimacy, although not a taboo, but was still deemed risky on film. Although the figure of Lisa in many ways conforms to the cultural stereotypes of the Jezebel – the eroticized black woman – and the Sapphire – the angry black woman – and evokes the stock African American female characters from the blaxploitation movies [REF], the role is still an important milestone, as the film contains one of the early examples of an interracial kiss on film. Makers of the film were inspired by the Black Pride movement to reflect on issues of segregation and racism. The utmost whiteness of the vampires is set off by their black robes which conjure up the iconography of the Ku Klux Klan, but their leaders include African American Zachary (Lincoln Kilpatrick), bleached to a monstrous whiteness. Similarly, the survivors include white and black characters, but racial diversity does not go beyond that; there are no Asian American, Hispanic or Native American characters in the film, which given the ethnic composition of Los Angeles at the time, is emphatically fictitious. The black-white dichotomy is dismantled and transcended by the posthuman monstrous Otherness in favor of unite humanity, and the ending reinforces this union by presenting a new white Adam (Dutch, played by Paul Koslo) and black Eve (Lisa) as the embodiment of humanity's future, built on the sacrifice of Neville.

The 2007 version of the novel, *I Am Legend* (henceforth *Legend*), features Will Smith as military virologist Robert Neville, casting an African American actor in the role of the hero, fighting against the deadly pale zombie-like Darkseekers. The film visually echoes the first part of *Omega Man* to a great extent, and the first 25

minutes of *I Am Legend*, which present the day-to-day life of the lonely hero, contain several visual references to the 1971 film: Neville's cruise through empty Manhattan, the video rental shop reminiscent of the movie theater Charlton Heston visits, the store mannequins – Heston encounters Lisa in a department store where she disguises herself as a mannequin, also pointing to the ultimate objectification of women in the film – Neville's conversations with non-existent entities, the cupboard shelfs which display the same obsessive-compulsive order Heston's kitchen has in *Omega Man*, the use of pre-cataclysmic news footage all point to *Legend* paying homage to its predecessor. Despite the strong visual kinship *Legend* presents a very different take on Robert Neville's character, bringing it much closer to the original concept of the deeply traumatized anti-hero, who has not been able to process the loss of his wife and daughter – killed in a helicopter crash during the evacuation of Manhattan three years prior to the events of the film – and suffers from PTSD, delusions and paranoia, and thus showcases the unreliability of Neville as viewpoint character much more successfully.

The film contains several obvious instances which point towards Neville's flawed perception and biased interpretation of the mutants, one of the most distinctive examples being the episode when the Darkseekers set a trap for him by moving one of the mannequins into a different part of the city along Neville's daily route, and capture him when he approaches the doll incredulously. Neville – who dehumanizes the Darkseekers into monstrous creatures who lack intelligence and are solely driven by instinct – is unable to accept that the posthuman mutants could be capable of strategic planning and this blindness nearly proves fatal. Rather than correcting his mistaken views, he overwrites the obvious with his own version of the narrative. Neville meanwhile embodies the archetypal mad scientist, as he hunts down and captures Darkseekers to haul them back to his underground laboratory for experimentation, very much like the rats he keeps in the cages. The tableau of his victims – who all succumbed to the medical experiments – adorns the wall of the lab and evokes the image of the tableaus of people who fell victim to Nazi medical experimentation during the Holocaust and builds a visual parallel between deep collective trauma and the fate of the Darkseekers, using the dehumanized and othered Jews as analogy. The correlation between the fate of Neville's rats and the Darkseekers also underlines the parallel, as Jews were referred to as rats by Nazi propaganda during the 1930s and 1940s. This episode also harks back to *Omega Man*, and Neville's epithet "angel of death," directly referencing Josef Mengele, and thus the whole film subtly undermines Neville's status as hero while re-configuring him as monstrous Other towards the end of the film.

Legend's original ending also mirrored the conclusion of the novel: the Darkseekers attack Neville's house, and the final showdown takes place in the laboratory, where Neville has retreated to with the woman and child survivors he has meanwhile encountered and taken in. With him is also a Darkseeker woman he had captured earlier, lying prone, bound and sedated on a lab table, the first successful antidote to

the virus dripping into her veins from an IV. The helpless position of the inert, naked female body draws attention to the objectification of the Darkseekers, with the composition also signifying the possibility of rape. Neville, the woman, and the boy sequester themselves behind a strong glass wall and await their fate. The leader of the Darkseeker group, the "Alpha" – another term constructing the mutants as subhuman – tries to break into the isolated space, seemingly to destroy the last remnants of humanity, cracking the glass in the peculiar pattern of butterfly wings. This marks the climax in the butterfly motif which permeates the film at different points: the butterfly flapping its wings over the idyllic cornfield Neville as a modern Robinson has planted in Central Park, and his daughter playfully making a butterfly from her hands before she dies in the crash. Both go unnoticed by Neville, the former flying behind his back, the latter because he hushes his daughter, preoccupied with trying to get them out of the City before the lockdown takes effect. It is the final instance, the butterfly pattern of the cracked glass superimposed upon the silhouette of the Alpha, which suddenly makes Neville realize the significance of the analogy: just as the butterfly marks the final stage of metamorphosis, the mutants are nothing but humans who have changed. Awakening from his blind hatred he also comprehends that the attack on his house is not only a counterstrike to avenge violence done against them, but also a rescue mission to recover the Alpha's Darkseeker mate, whom Neville is curing against her will. As in the novel, Neville realizes the (post)humanity of those he thought monsters, with their own societal and cultural system. Looking over his laboratory, suddenly transformed from the hall of sacred science into a torture chamber, the human-monster dichotomy is inverted, as Neville realizes that the experiments conducted for the good of humanity were in reality brutal murders, and the Darkseekers' attacks were only justified self-defense, and finally, that the monster in this new world is nobody other than him. With his newfound insight Neville releases the Darkseeker woman, and leaves Manhattan with the human woman and the boy, surrendering the island to its posthuman inhabitants. The film ends on a positive note, with a drive into the sunrise, the hope of finding other human survivors, and the possibility that in the new world humans and posthumans may coexist peacefully, and that intercultural communication is feasible.

If this ending is not familiar, it is not a coincidence. Prior to the release of the film during test screenings audiences completely rejected this ending. Viewers were seemingly nonplussed by the fact that the film dismantled and inverted the Self/Other, human/monster dichotomy, and expressed their preference for a more conventional ending. Fearing financial loss the film was released with a second ending, which is reminiscent of the conclusion of *Omega Man*: protecting the woman and the child, Neville dies a heroic death, sacrificing himself by blowing up the lab and taking the Darkseekers – now simple monsters instead of complex posthuman entities – with him. This allows the woman and the child to escape with the serum manufactured from Neville's blood, which they carry to a compound inhabited by other survivors as a beacon of hope. The Christ symbolism asserts itself: Neville's

sacrifice saves humanity, and his blood becomes the sacred agent of salvation. The destabilization of the traditional human-monster dichotomy, Neville's character development and self-critical turn all fall prey to audience expectations. The symbolism of the butterfly motif, the laboratory as subterranean site of horror, the strategic planning of the mutants all remain as bothersome traces of another intended narrative arc. The reasons for such a rewiring of the plot arc are complex, among them surely factoring that films using the zombie paradigm at the time were not yet the site for displaying and reflecting on the intricate social mechanisms that govern intercultural interactions. A film – intended for mainstream audiences who expected the conventional formula to be upheld – too subversive to cater to the wide public would have risked bombing at the box office, causing significant financial loss to the production company. Another possible reason, in my opinion, may have been the film's temporal proximity to the terror attacks on September 11, 2001: the movie contains several visual and verbal clues to 9/11 – the location of Neville's house, his repeated reference to Manhattan as his "ground zero," his "site" – which may have led test audiences to form a linkage between the attacks six years prior and the zombie apocalypse. In this nexus Neville indisputably embodies the traumatized American nation, while it is not difficult to equate the Darkseekers = Others to the terrorists, locking the constellation into a human-monster dichotomy where the monster is not allowed to transcend its abjected status.

Interesting conclusions can be drawn if we analyze the role and symbolism of the monstrous from the point of view of personal trauma, in light of the two alternative endings. Throughout the film Neville lives with the unprocessed trauma of his family's tragic loss, which manifests itself in the form of symptoms of PTSD. Neville's obsessive-compulsive behavior could still be interpreted as the rigorous scientific methods of the virologist, especially when this attitude concerns his studies in the laboratory, his meticulous surveying of the island or his attitude to survival techniques. But it spills over into other areas of his life, guides activities like watching the films from the video rental store in strict alphabetical order, or the fanatical ordering of his food cabinet, and he becomes agitated when his daily routines – like his video-store ritual – are upset. Further pointers are the nightmares which irrupt into the seeming idyll of the Robinsonade, and his at times irrational paranoid behavior, just as his inability to remember and through remembering, narrate the fate of his family until towards the end of the movie. Neville watching taped news programs from before the pandemic – about Christmas in Manhattan – is his daily attempt to re-inscribe himself into the world before the cataclysm. The unprocessed personal trauma is projected onto the plot of the film, as well, and the monsters lurking beneath the seemingly peaceful surface of pastoral summer Manhattan day, their coming out at night to destroy Neville may well be decoded by the unprocessed trauma slowly destroying the protagonist. Neville's denial to humanize the Darkseekers, his refusal to enter into communication with them symbolizes his inability to face the monsters of his past, acknowledge them as part of his life, and

through processing letting go of the world that is past. The original ending is much more positive in this respect, as well, as it contains confronting and making peace with the monsters and realizing that through his experiments Neville himself became the main source of pain. Peace brings absolution and processing, and the possibility to disengage from a past that is gone and move on into the future from the island where he was held captive by his own inability to let go. The second, theatrical ending maps the unsuccessful coping process: Neville is unable to reflect on his actions and incapable to face his own trauma, which in due course remains unprocessed, and with his death he remains trapped in the pain of grief. Projecting this back onto audience reactions and the proximity of 9/11, the rejection of the first ending may be seen as a litmus test of where the public in 2007 is in processing the trauma of the terror attacks. The audience's unwillingness to accept a narrative which humanizes the monsters may be taken as a sign that collective processing is not yet possible.

* * *

In conclusion we can say that Matheson's novel – in stark contrast to contemporary science fiction narratives which reflect on the Self/Other or human/monster dichotomy – endorses the humanization of the monstrous and provides a subversive approach to the formulaic template. The last human is unmasked as an atavistic remnant of an outdated world order, and posthuman society establishes itself as the normative cultural template by the end of the novel. The old system is not condemned, and the new order is not glorified, thus while there is a transposition of the human/monster dichotomy, it is not a mere reproduction of Manichean power relations. Instead, with considerable self-reflexive awareness, the narrative draws attention to the incorrectness of the dichotomy, the complexity of the Self-Other relationship – which withstands a construction into polar opposites – and the interchangeability of the positions. The novel formulated a strong critique of American society within the contemporary paranoid internal and foreign political culture, which saw communist infiltrators everywhere, but its agenda transcends the political climate of the 1950s through its posthuman sensibilities by addressing issues like marginalization and dehumanization, isolation and trauma, addiction and unreliability.

It is interesting to note that both film versions discussed in this study opt to uphold the heteronormative heroic script which the novel undermines. *Omega Man* relies more heavily on the template than *I Am Legend*, leaving no doubt as to the righteousness, humanity and masculinity of its hero, while *Legend*'s theatrical ending erases all vestiges of subversion and doubt. While both films contain traces that point to the mental instability and unreliability of the protagonist, and also certain signs that mark them as monsters, these only conflate into a distinct pattern in *Legend*, signaling that the filmmaker's intent was to adhere to the novel's denouement, evidenced by the first ending, as well. Personal trauma – a central element of the novel – is addressed differently in the two films: *Omega Man* erases the family tragedy

from its narrative, largely subtextualizing the traumatic effect of the events; *Legend* keeps the family tragedy as a driving force in the background and aligns the disruption of the heteronormative family model with the deterioration of both the protagonist's psyche, and the degradation of the urban environment into a ruined landscape. The political and historical overtones are very strong in all three narratives: Matheson's novel can be read as a reflection on political paranoia of the McCarthy era, while *Omega Man* can be decoded as a commentary on racial politics in the late 1960s. *Legend*, while it does not overtly address contemporary issues, anchors closely in post-9/11 USA, through its transfer of the plot from Los Angeles to Manhattan, its appropriation of 9/11 terminology, and the audience reactions which forced the makers to re-model the plot to make it conform to the conventional monster narrative.

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Pál Hegyi

Based on a True Story

Oscillating Tales of the Real Simulacra

Introduction

In the prolonged aftermath of postmodernism an ever-growing demand for 'true stories' along with a domineering interest in biographical narratives seem discernable in both cinematography and literature ("'Based on a True Story': the fine line"). 'Faction-creep' encapsulated in the tagline 'based on a true story' refers any investigation into the nature of a narrative claiming for truth value to the domain of adaptation theories at first glance (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*). However, the paradox at hand has also been incessantly addressed in literary criticism since the paradigm shift between pre-critical response and formalism occurred. Expression, or rather, self-expression theory located the source of meaning production within the author as origin and final referent. What ensued in critical thinking after this theoretical turn with the emergence of new criticism, structuralism, myth, psychoanalytical, and reader response criticism, and multifarious post-structural theories might partially be interpreted as an endeavor against seeking fidelity outside the work of art. After all, as Neil Gaiman famously stated, "[f]iction is the lie that tells the truth" (24). Yet, no matter how deeply instilled the tenets of "The Intentional Fallacy" and "The Death of the Author" in scholarly practices of exegesis may seem, the marketing value of labelling a movie as a 'true story' seems an impetus against theory. However, those contemporaneous films and works of fiction valued as innovative answers to the conundrum created by an exhausted capacity for self-referentiality in postmodernism display similarly metaleptical and *mise-en-abymic* narrative structures, for which the interactive TV episode of *Bandersnatch* (2018) is one ostentatious example. After attempting at negotiating the efficacy of deploying the controversial rhetoric of authentication, this paper will showcase innovative narrative strategies to resuscitate "the buried metanarratives" (Lyotard xii).

Context-transcending truth claim as a narrative drive in reception is the primary concern of theorems such as Lyotard's "master narrative" (xxiv), Derrida's concept of "totalization" (236), Bakhtin's "authorial word" (301), or Barthes distinction between work and text (155–164). Representational conventions created fixed

bookends for canonized pieces of literature by categorizing them as works of either fiction or non-fiction. This reassuring dichotomy is what was upset by the post-structuralist claim that historiography is but an archive of narratives whose meanings lie in the way events are represented, and by no means in historical fact (Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*). Such theoretical take on the nature of documenting reality still leaves intact, for instance, Marco Polo's *The Travels* as the single most important historical document recounting the encounter of medieval Eastern and Western cultures, yet, it also discloses the inherently fictitious genre attributes of the same work as a travelogue in palimpsestuous and atemporal dialogue with the likes of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. The fact that any narrative referencing, even documenting reality is always already made fictitious by its own discursive strategies constrains all representational truth claims within the domain of language and context. How the opposing poles of realism and Barthesian simulacrum overlap may well be exemplified by works within the postmodern canon. Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy*, for instance, was both praised for, or accused of "sufficient realism" (Barone 6), yet his stories (e.g., *True Tales of American Life*) and movies (e.g., *Lulu on the Bridge*) are centered around indeterminacy and undecidability. In *City of Glass* the elaborate enumeration of mutually exclusive options for identifying the 'true' author of the text is prompted by a quotation from *The Travels* by Marco Polo. "We will set down things seen as seen, things heard as heard, so that our book may be an accurate record, free from any sort of fabrication. And all who read this book or hear it may do so with full confidence, because it contains nothing but the truth" (12). This intertextual prefiguration is fulfilled in the concluding paragraph with the following words: "I have followed the red notebook as closely as I could […] I have done my best with it and have refrained from any interpretation" (202). Despite the authentication that frames the novel, authorial identity is lost in a circular chain of signifieds. The protagonist pulp fiction writer, Daniel Quinn, who reads Marco Polo's introduction, publishes his crime stories under the pseudonym William Wilson, while Wilson, in turn, identifies with his hard-boiled detective hero, the witty, bare-knuckle juggernaut in Max Work. Quinn, a compendium of identities at this point, pretends to be a 'real life' private detective named Paul Auster, who encounters a paper version of Paul Auster, the biographical person in the novel. Yet, in the final lines, it is an unnamed narrator appearing out of nowhere, who, by assuring the reader that his story is true without doubt, undermines the existence of any final referent or transcendental signifier (for which see: Hegyi 98–104). These "paradoxical assignations and cross-references" (Eshelman 20) highlight the impossibility and indeterminacy of locating the source of authenticity outside of the text.

The breach

In his Adaptation *Theory and Criticism – Postmodern Literature and Cinema in the USA*, Gordon E. Slethaug, while interpreting Auster's *Auggie Wren's Christmas Story* in relation to its filmic adaptation *Smoke*, comes to the conclusion that Auster's works, as postmodernism in general, "interrogates master narratives, undermining their cultural authority and highlighting indeterminacy in their artistic and cultural representations" (167). Thus, a major work in adaptation theory, Slethaug's book interprets and refutes master narratives in the context of fidelity studies (20). His argument built around Joseph Natoli's assertion on how any reference to truth inevitably results in contestable and catachrestic representations is also an eloquent defense against accusations levelled at postmodernist amorality and paralysis. For the overwhelming desire and "the persistence of buried master narratives" (Lyotard xii) in the present episteme is concomitant with repercussions of theoretical considerations derived from the preceding era. As Natoli assert in *A Primer to Postmodernity*:

> The absence of a foundation of absolute and universal truth troubles the "self" grounded in reality as well as the word and world connection, that is, our capacity to validate a precise correspondence between what we say is going on in reality and what may actually be going on in reality. And it is the indeterminacy of our saying in reference to reality that converts fundamental truths – and all modified variations thereof – into challengeable narratives of truth. Selves are brought up within a clash of such narratives. So in the end, it is not some postmodern perversity that simply chooses to ignore fundamental truths of all stripes, from scientific to moral, but a recognition of the unreliability of our representing capacities, a pointing out of the distance between words and world. This breach is, for postmodernity, foundational. (70–71)

One of Slethaug's most arresting examples for this breach is the movie entitled *Six Degrees of Separation* adapted to the big screen by John Guare from his own play that he had based on newspaper accounts of real-life events. (The title is inspired by the famous conjecture in Frigyes Karinthy's "Láncszemek" [Links] that all people on an ever-shrinking globe are removed from one another by merely six steps, handshakes, or acquaintances.) The movie's plotline revolves around affluent upper class couples who are taken for a ride by a conman, yet whose separate lives become interconnected when realizing they are the victims of the same culprit. Examining the interrelations among fact, fiction, and adaptation, Slethaug contends that

> [T]he historical incident, play adaptation, and film adaptation each has a different focus on the characters and "take" on the uncertainty that besets their lives and

> that the play and film as supplement questions the authoritative and transcendental word, destabilizes meaning, and denies totalization across all of these. (37)

The above argumentation is undergirded by the Foucauldian premise that history as essence and truth cannot be derived from or located outside of discursive practices and strategies (37). Slethaug also draws on Leitch's affirmation that a source text defined as a 'true story' is both text in its discursive conformation and not text (38), inasmuch as its being authorless generates a simulacrum of infinite truth claims. Yet, the surplus value that is added to the work through stages of adaptation is the value of totalizing narrative force in *Six Degrees of Separation*. As opposed to the newspaper anecdote, the multilayered narrative of both the play and the movie – besides offering insights into alienation a racial bias in a cosmopolitan social milieu – finds its denouement in successful feminist bildung. In the final scenes, Quisa, who is the spouse of a prosperous art-dealer, brakes free from the unjust, disconnected, parasitic reality of upper-class existence by choosing to be separated from her husband. The disruptive, random intrusion of the conman's text prompts Quisa to totalize her disparate experience into a collage of empowerment and agency, that is, a unity of her previous subjectivities.

The author of the book includes a vast array of perspectives to analyze the Derridean "supplementation and surplus" (6) that add excess value to the interweaving texts in the Barthesian sense while transforming anecdote to play, and finally, to filmic adaptation, the case in point. What this elaborate and instructive analysis fails to underscore is the fact that the final link (feminist bildung) sutures these respective transitions back to the question of truth and essence by commenting on its own immanent aesthetic premises. However, the embedded, hypodiegetic metapoetics creates a second plane of narration, where "anecdote" does not refer to the news article accounts of one conman named David Hampton (the character of Paul in the movie), but anecdotes, 'true stories' about Paul as the protagonist and MacGuffin in the film.

> QUISA. And we become these human jukeboxes spilling out these anecdotes, but it was an experience. How do we keep the experience? (1:40:37–1:40:47)
> […]
> FLAN. Cézanne would leave blank spaces in his canvases if he couldn't account for the brush stroke… Couldn't give a reason for the color.
> QUISA. Then I am a collage of unaccounted-for brush strokes. I am all random. (1:41:12–1:41:30)

A postmodernist deliberation of absence, disorder, and random coincidences is put in opposition and parallel with an effort to churn out meaning from lived experience,

one that is rooted in a reality transcending language. These seemingly mutually exclusive epistemological dimensions may supplement the final adaptation for the very reason that the process of transforming a 'true story' from anecdote to play and then to film has already been completed. It is the cinematographic end-product that the audience is watching, thus, any reproduction, any meta-reference to 'true stories' will be played out on a hypodiegetic level – even extradiegetic references will connect to their antecedents within the discourse. These doubled planes of signification generate a discursive, yet transcendent simulacrum, the opposing poles between which oscillation makes it possible to "keep the experience" (*Six Degrees of Separation* 1:40:47). The metapoetic effect is corroborated when, in a flashback, Quisa touches god's hand for a second time in the movie (1:43:21). During her visit to The Sistine Chapel, Quisa is kindly offered to step on a stool and slap God's hand (1:28:39). This extraordinary experience is made possible by a most fortunate coincidence. At the time Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam* is being restored, the artefact depicting a direct, deictic connection between creation and creator is made "brand new" for a second time (1:07:34). Quisa construes, creates her brand new identity and reenacts Michelangelo's scene by supplementing herself with Adam on the fresco.

Good old storytelling

One another compelling illustration of a doubled plane of signification Slethaug offers is, as mentioned above, Auster's *Auggie Wren's Christmas Story.* The plot centers on a blurring borderline between what is false and what is true. At Christmas Eve, Auggie, who runs a shop, visits an elderly lady unknown to him with the good intention to return a billfold wallet dropped by the thieving grandson of blind Granny Ethel. Obviously mistaken for the grandson, Auggie plays along pretending he is Robert Goodwin, the grandson, who in actuality tried to rob him. He is invited in, offered food and wine, and while the two of them are having a most intimate, warm-hearted conversation as if they were kin, Auggie, an amateur photographer, picks up a supposedly stolen camera on impulse. Just as it is indeterminate whether the African-American lady earnestly mistook the Caucasian Auggie for her grandson, the narrator, who happens to go by the name of Paul Auster, is also at a loss to decide what to believe. But all this seems beside the point: "I was about to ask him (Auggie) if he'd been putting me on, but then I realized he would never tell. I had been tricked into believing him, and that was the only thing that mattered. As long as there's one person to believe it, there's no story that can't be true" (156). The story sets out with the dilemma whether telling a Christmas story, a narrative about the birth and origin of god is feasible at all (153). Yet, in the utter hesitation between what is real and what is simulacral, Auggie's stealing is transformed into an affectionate gesture of giving, his lie speaks volumes of the truth about human relationships.

In Auster's story – as in his entire *oeuvre* – the radical disjuncture between reality and language, indeterminacy and self-reflexivity does not mark so-called postmodern inertia or the free play of signifiers. In its stead, by creating dual domains of signification, these narratives lay focus on questions, that is, inquiries on identity, interrogations into the nature of reality, and examinations of the 'true story'. An incessant, oscillating movement as departure from and return to the opposing poles of reality and fiction renders these counterparts interchangeable, thus staking out the territory within which meaning creation, the true story is made possible.

In his volume, Slethaug goes on to analyze Auster's movie *Smoke* (1993) as an adaptation based on *Auggie Wren's Christmas Story* to highlight the surplus value that has been gained in the process of genre transformation. For the purposes of this paper, Auster's next movie shot five years later seems a more appropriate choice to delineate the aesthetic potential in embedding the disjuncture between reality and fiction within a narrative. As already emphasized, in these instances for parallel, simulacral, representational modes of signification, it is not a postmodern play on textuality that is being negotiated. On the contrary, these cinematic and literary narratives are interrogated and interpreted as returns to 'good old storytelling' to satisfy an unquenchable desire for 'true stories'.

It seems adequate that when probing into theories on 'true stories', Slethaug, who limits his research to modernist and postmodernist pieces, dwells on Auster's works throughout the better half of his book (125–256). For Auster's handling of postmodern tropes and metaleptic, intertextual configurations, as Jeffrey T. Nealon observes, "constitutes a privileged site for understanding a slightly different impulse within postmodern American fiction" (95). The author of this paper identified such poetics in the reinvention of premodern moral casuality and humanism (Hegyi 8), 'good old storytelling' as it were that overarches canonized works by American authors from 19th-century fiction to present day literary achievements.

Lulu on the Bridge (1998), which has been praised for its "touching moments in depicting the transformative and redemptive power of love" ("Lulu on the Bridge"), attests to identical aspirations by evoking the main narrative arc of Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (1890). Jazz saxophonist Izzy Maurer falls flat on the floor at a night club when he is wounded by a stray bullet during one of his concerts. The story about missed and random encounters, isolation and true love, self-sacrifice and devotion is played out in the interval while a piece of rubble falling from the ceiling hits the floor signaling the death of the protagonist. The very same piece of stone is utilized as the metaphor for the healing power of love in the tangent plot that commences after the fatal accident. In a simulacrum, Izzy finds a glowing magic stone that ties his fate to Celia's, who later becomes the love of his life. The structure builds up in a similar vein to the short story by the proto-modernist Bierce. At the end of "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge", the inner narrative frame of the escape collapses into the outer frame of execution when the extended metaphor of

time unifies both in the pendulum-like swinging of the hanged protagonist. The execution of Payton Farquhar would lose its depth and significance without the parallel story of his escape to his beloved wife. However, in *Lulu on the Bridge* this doubled narrative structure is further complicated by postmodern *mise-en-abymes* and metalepses, intermedial allusions, cinematographic references, and ultimately, by a movie within the movie.

In the initial scene of the film, the camera zooms in on photographs of movie stars stickytaped to the wall above the urinal Izzy is relieving himself in. Corporeality and imagination is juxtaposed here to signal the disruption of reality and language. Among the photos is a portrait of Louis Brooks, an iconic symbol of the flapper during the roaring twenties, who bears a striking semblance to the female lead of the movie (Celia). Louise Brooks' autobiography was published in 1982 under the title of *Lulu in Hollywood* centering on her rebellion against the Hollywood system and her sweeping triumph in *Pandora's Box* (1929). The movie, thus, is 'based on a true story', no wonder that in a typical Auster touch, Celia is offered the leading role in the remake of *Pandora's Box*. As the plot propels forward in the consciousness of an agonizing Izzy, it is on the narrative plane stretching between autobiography and the embedded Chinese box of a film-within-a film that the empowering story of true love and compassion is being told. It is not revealed until the final scene, where Celia's unknowing gaze follows the ambulance car taking Izzy's corpse to the morgue, that their romance never had taken place: theirs is but a missed encounter. The narrative gains its power and aesthetic effect from the very fact that it renounces any claim of referencing reality – including the fictitious possible world of its own creation. Yet, the story that never happened did take place in its continuous displacement, in an oscillation between metaleptic planes of signification.

Performatist punchlines – main text and embedded text

The circular reiteration between inner and outer frames of signification in *Lulu on the Bridge* is terminated in the concluding scenes by the revelation that the falling piece of rubble and the magical redemptive stone were one and the same all along. In the final section of this paper, a few other examples will be enlisted for similar narrative punchlines.

'After theory', a multitude of contenders struggle to evolve into the generally accepted label for the present episteme: metamodernism, digimodernism, supermodernity, hypermodernity, altermodernism, remodernism, new puritanism, new spirituality, reconstructivism, new sincerity, new aestheticism, new realism, renewalism, automodernity are still in circulation among many others. All these movements attack postmodernism on grounds of it being ironical to the point of cynicism, debunk its enervated world-weariness and post-sixties hangover. For lack

of any viable option to returning to a never-existing age of innocence and naiveté, in its manifesto, metamodernism, for instance, opts for "a constant oscillation between sincerity and irony, deconstruction and construction, apathy and affect attempting to attain a transcendental position" (Ha "A very Brief History of Metamodernism"). Although none of these self-proclaimed 'isms' has become dominant, the common denominator they share seems to be a need for spirituality, sincerity, all-inclusive unity, being 'true' and 'real' (buzzwords in popular culture), in other words, an overwhelming desire for Lyotard's totalizing master narratives. Similarly to metamodernism, Raoul Eshelman's suggestion for yet another label in "performatism" is also defined in terms of an oscillation between two planes of signification. What makes Eshelman's project particularly appealing from the perspective of this research is that – instead of supplementing "modernism" with just another prefix – his newly coined term refers to a narrative strategy. In *Performatism, or the End of Postmodernism* he describes the strategy of "double framing" the following way:

> The aesthetic device specific to performatism is double framing. The *double frame* is based on a lock or fit between an *outer frame* (the work construct itself) and an *inner one* (an ostensive scene or scenes of some kind). The work is constructed in such a way that its main argumentative premise *shifts back and forth between these two venues;* the logic of one augments the other in a circular, closed way. The result is a performative tautology that allows the endless circulation of cognitively dubious, but formally irrefutable metaphysical figures within its boundaries. These metaphysical figures are in turn valid only within the frame of a particular work […]. Performatist works of art attempt to make viewers or readers *believe* rather than convince them with cognitive arguments. This, in turn, may enable them to assume *moral* or *ideological* positions that they otherwise would not have. In terms of *reader reception*, a *performance* is successful when a reader's belief pattern is changed in some particular way, and when he or she begins to *project that new belief pattern back onto reality*. (emphases added) (Eshelman 36–37)

The above statements seem to be built around a shifting focus from narratology to reception theory since it contends to describe the circular patterns of a performance making the reader believe in make-believe. Eshelman explicates his theory relying on the example of Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, which is also illustrative of Slethaug's three stages of adaptation, that is, a true story turned into a narrative to be later adapted to film. In Martel's complex tale of survival where a traumatic story not to be told is substituted by a fantastical tale of fancy and imagination, it is a simulacral sense of authenticity that ensures the reader of the faithfulness and truth value of the narrative.

> The Robertson family survived *thirty-eight* days at sea. Captain Bligh of the celebrated mutinous Bounty and his fellow castaways survived *forty-seven* days. Steven Callahan survived *seventy-six*. Owen Chase, whose account of the sinking of the whaling ship Essex by a whale inspired Herman Melville, survived *eighty-three* days at sea with two mates, interrupted by a one-week stay on an inhospitable island. The Bailey family survived *118* days. I have heard of a Korean merchant sailor named Poon, I believe, who survived the Pacific for *173* days in the 1950s. I survived *227* days. (209, emphases added)

Two distinct strategic maneuver is detectable here that are responsible for tricking the reader into believing that the story is true. The first is simple juxtaposition, placing Pi's narrative among non-fictional stories of survival creates a narrative slippery slope (a sort of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*) that brings about the appearance that his story must be true as well. Obviously there is a *caveat* hidden between the lines here, a warning that one of these narratives is inspired by Herman Melville's work of fiction. The other strategy is lateral decentering. The paragraph does not set out to convince the reader of anything logically, yet, by following the logic of progression in the number of days survived from thirty-eight to two hundred and twenty-seven, it lures the reader into believing that the presupposition according to which the list of items in their succession is homogenous must be valid.

Belief, indeed, is one of the central themes of the novel, but it is not belief or disbelief in something, but belief in its "ostensive" sense, which locates the concept of belief in the category of the inner frame. Eshelman borrows the concept of the ostensive scene from cultural anthropology. Relying on René Girard's theorem of mimetic rivalry (8), Eshelman's commentary on Eric Gans' term might well be interpreted as an analysis of the central scene on Martel's narrative. Pi, who is stranded on a small lifeboat with a wild animal, manages to share food and establish communication with the Bengal tiger by using a training whistle.

> Under normal circumstances a violent struggle would result, with one protohuman asserting himself over the other by means of physical force. In this particular case, however, one of the potential combatants emits a sound intended to represent the desired object. If the second protohuman in turn accepts this sound as a representation or substitute for the desired object, the sound becomes a sign and the conflict may be temporarily deferred. The two antagonists have transcended their animal status by agreeing on a sign representing and temporarily replacing a bone of contention; through their act of spontaneous agreement they also lay the foundations for all future acts of semiosis, and hence for all culture and ritual. At the same time, because of its violence-deferring power, the ostensive sign acquires a supernatural valence. Its co-creators, who are unable to reflect on their own role in its creation, ascribe it a transcendent origin, or what Gans calls the

> name-of-God. The point is not whether the sign is really of divine origin; it's that the sign could be; it marks not only the boundary line between the human and the animal but also between the immanent, real world and an outside, possibly transcendent one. […] Finally, in his hypothetical scenario Gans suggests that the originary sign is also perceived as beautiful because it allows us to oscillate between contemplating the sign standing for the thing and the thing as it is represented by the sign. (4–5)

Indeed, the originary scene as inner frame (4) revolves around faith and belief in the oscillating pulsation to and fro the metaphysical referent in the outer frame of the "work construct itself" (Ibid.). This strategy succeeds in keeping the logocentric final signifier within the narrative. Pi prays to all gods his mantra being "Jesus, Mary, Muhammad and Vishnu" (107, 166). Here the monadic sense of events in the *Life of Pi* is achieved not by reference to the authorial word, the origin of logos outside of the text. The oscillating movement of signification between inner and outer frame makes believing possible for the sake of believing in some things or something, even if it is called atheism. Thus, the dichotomy of faith within the textual universe is not set up by polarities between believing in this god or another god, not even by believing in one true god or not believing in anything at all. Paradoxically, unbelievers cannot escape being religious in this oscillation: the murderous cook sacrifices himself as a scapegoat, and as Pi testifies: "[i]t was my first clue that atheists are my brothers and sisters of a different faith, and every word they speak speaks of faith" (31). Truth and belief is the predicate of this narrative as communication, the success of which can only be undermined by doubting the potential of meaning creation in telling a story. "To choose doubt as a philosophy of life is akin to choosing immobility as a means of transportation" (31). Mr. Chiba and Mr. Okimoto, who come to hear out the sole survivor of the shipwrecked Tsimtsum, as implied readers doubt Pi's fantastic narrative of banana and meerkats islands, toothed fruits, and a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker, and demand a logical, rational explanation, the 'true story'. What they get is an account of traumatic events (336–345), which does not do justice to the truth that 'Life of Pi' is a trope for in the novel. The punchline is that the "two stories match" (345), that in an atemporal plane of signification the oscillation between the monomyth in the traumatic shipwreck story and fantastical tale of awe and wonder is reinforced. As the narrator asks in the concluding paragraph, "Doesn't the telling of something always become a story" (335)? The final twist and punchline in the story, which is not dissimilar to how *Lulu on the Bridge* concludes, makes it possible to retain the postmodern consideration that historiographical meanings lie in the way events are represented while maintaining and extending truth claims.

The novel's filmic adaptation relies heavily on computer generated images to transform and transcend postmodern virtuality into an oscillating simulacra of the Real.

> The narrative is constructed in such a way that the viewer has no choice but to transcend his or her own disbelief and accept the performance represented by the film as a kind of aesthetically mediated apriori. This transformation of the viewing or reading process into an involuntary act of belief stands in direct contrast to the postmodern mode of the virtual where the observer can't believe anything because ontological parameters like author, narrator, and character have been dissolved in an impenetrable web of paradoxical assignations and cross-references (as happens to the hapless private detective Quinn in Paul Auster's *City of Glass*). (Eshelman 19–20)

Performatist punchlines – main text and paratext

The punchline as a narrative strategy is by no means a contemporary innovation, however, to hinge the structure of entire novels on such turn, twist, or punchline creating a dual narrative plane seems a relatively new phenomenon in literature.

Geoff Ryman's *The Unconquered Country* is undoubtedly such narrative. A fantastical novel, Ryman's allegory centers on the violent feud among the Unconquered People, the Big Country and the rebels in a realm scattered with houses alive, where women are forced to grow and give birth to living machinery parts, and sharks attack people from above the sky. That the three warring enemies represent he indigenous inhabitants of Kampuchea, the U.S.A, and the Khmer Rouge respectively in the 1970's and early 1980's is revealed only in the Afterword (131–134) at the end of the book. The story of the heroine called "Third" not only borders on the fine line between fiction and non-fiction, but oscillates between the "true story" and the fantastical one, the reason for which is a claim for truth and justice in an episteme where, according to the writer's testimony, history and fiction needs to be called in dialogue with each other.

> All our words have worn out. Democracy, freedom, socialism, economics. They've all become kitsch. They summon up kitsch images. I saw the courts at work and decided that for a while at least, I can cleave to that word "justice." It can only be maintained in an artificial environment – in a courtroom powerful enough to preserve its independence, or in a history that with accumulating details sets the record straight, or in a history's bastard child, fiction. (134)

The concluding three pages of the fifty-page-long text reiterate the fantastical story and transform it into an allegory. The afterword in this sense is utilized as a meta-instruction to create a sudden shift in the reception of the narrative. If one regards the aesthetics of the work, labelling a fantastical narrative in a paratext, that is, from outside the limits of the discourse, might be interpreted as an authorial gesture that

restricts meaning production. Yet, in this case, the afterword always already functions as a foreword, since the choice of genre is motivated by the endeavor to recount the 'true story' of a nation-wide trauma that is not possible to be told for "our words have worn out" (Ibid.). Again, oscillation between a fictitious story, and here, the historiography of Kampuchea create a doubled plane within which (and not outside of language) truth claims are possible to be made.

When such a narrative strategy is aimed at supplementing the inadmissible trauma of a story not to be told within the story, the above delineated dual mode of representation may effectively generate truth claims contained within popular filmic narratives as well. *The Fall* (2006) – a fantasy adventure tale on the redemptive power of love and blurring line between fantasy and reality – might be seen as a stock example for such a ruse. However, as mentioned above, using the tagline 'based on a true story' is more often than not a marketing strategy that abuses an overwhelming need for metanarratives inmass culture. One can bump into an endless number of lists on the internet about movies, which are tagged as 'true stories', yet far from being documentaries – a fictitious genre itself – they are pure fabrications with a marketing value ("10 'Based on a True Story' Movies That Really Aren't").

The case of the *Intouchables* particularly draws the attention to the manipulative power of truth claims. As one of the most popular international box-office hit in the history of French cinema, the movie covers its strategy of turning the African-American protagonist into an oreo cookie by claiming that the movie was based on a true story.

In conclusion, while the tagline "based on a true story" carry the same contradictions of representation that poststructuralist interrogations called into question, truth claims within a doubled frame of reference seems a compelling innovation in both fiction writing and cinematography. The stratagem of oscillation between two planes of signification to conjure up a simulacrum of unmediated, deictic reference to the ultimate referent in a mirage of self-identical reality can be identified as one of the narrative strategies in contemporary fiction to circumvent the predicament of the so called post-theory period in a post-factual world. As for narrative punchlines, sudden twists rearranging and redirecting the process of reception might not only characterize various forms of short fiction and films, but could become more prevalent in longer forms of narratives as well in the future.

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János Kenyeres

Identity in the Face of History in Tamas Dobozy's Fiction

The concept of identity has been the subject of much debate in the past few decades. The controversy concerning the term extended to literary and cultural studies and involved postcolonial, ethnic and feminist criticism, as well as psychoanalytic, poststructuralist and cultural theories. The traditional view of a stable identity claims that individuals or groups of individuals have a fixed, specific and definable "essence" on the basis of which they can be classified according to a host of categories, including class, race and gender. As Satya P. Mohanty asserts, "Simply put, the essentialist view would be that the identity common to members of a social group is stable and more or less unchanging, since it is based on the experiences they share" (202). This essentialist concept has been severely challenged and substantially undermined by postmodern, especially poststructuralist, critics, pointing out the instability and heterogeneity of identity categories. The multiplicity of these approaches concerning the matter can be illustrated by Paula M. L. Moya's observation that "much of what has been written about identity during this period seeks to delegitimate, and in some cases eliminate, the concept itself by revealing its ontological, epistemological, and political limitations" (1–2). The postmodernist and poststructuralist emphasis on linguistic structures has led to the relativization of identity; as Moya asserts, the "deconstructionist thesis about the arbitrariness and indeed indeterminacy of linguistic reference led many […] theorists and cultural critics to understand concepts like experience and identity […] as similarly indeterminate and hence epistemologically unreliable" (5). In the poststructuralist framework, therefore, identity, the self and subjectivity can only be identified as grammatical structures and, consequently, the notion that they might exist outside language is purely fictitious. In the postmodernist view, conceptions of identity within the prior positivist-essentialist framework, postulating a world which can be known, described and mastered, are not only false but they also result in the preservation of oppressive and reductive ideological practices (6). As opposed to the essentialist view, as Shari Stone-Mediatore observes, postmodernism asserts that it "speaks to our sense of the contingency of seemingly 'universal' truths, our exposure to a plurality of perspectives on ethics and history, and our experience of not quite fitting into any single identity" (126).

In the past few decades, there have been several critics giving voice to their concern and dissatisfaction with the conclusions drawn from postmodernist and poststructuralist interpretations of identity. Whereas other theoreticians have also sought alternatives to both essentialist and postmodernist ideas of identity (Stone-Mediatore 129), scholars following in the footsteps of Satya P. Mohanty's concept of "postpositivist realism" have recognised the need of human beings for ascertainable knowledge, public politics and historically rooted identities. These critics are of the view that "our knowledge-claims, including our claims about experience, memory, and identity, can have truth-value even when they are mediated by socially produced conceptual frameworks" (Stone-Mediatore 126). For all their differences, both essentialists and postmodernists share the idea of "objective knowledge" as "knowledge that is completely free of theory mediated bias," even though they appraise this conception in sharply opposing ways, with essentialists embracing the idea and postmodernists deeming it completely untenable. By contrast, "postpositivist realists assert both that (1) all observation and knowledge are theory mediated and that (2) a theory-mediated objective knowledge is both possible and desirable" (Moya 12).[1] Identity in the postpositivist realist framework has two primary components, the "real" and the "constructed"; the "real" relates to our bodies and our locations in social hierarchies, whereas the "constructed" is the individual's theory-mediated construction of his or her own situation. On this basis, as Stone-Mediatore explains, the postpositive realist position makes three underlying claims: "that our identities are not arbitrary but are regulated by an extra-discursive 'reality' [i.e. our bodies and social position] that makes up our life situation; that our identities are often interpreted in ways that are constraining and misleading," but also as "creative," "empowering," and "reliable guides"; and that "we can evaluate interpretations of our identity according to their effectiveness in helping us to understand and confront the conditions of our lives" (133). It is in this context that Mohanty's claim takes on its gravity: "theory-laden and socially constructed experiences can lead to a knowledge that is accurate and reliable" (Mohanty 209). Hence, in the eyes of postpositivist realists, the notion of identity can be rescued from the disrepute into which it has been thrown in the past few decades.

There is no doubt that the postpositivist realist approach has important implications for disciplines which are concerned with factfinding and a sense of objectivity in order to achieve their goals, including the various branches of the social sciences. When it comes to literature, however, it contains limitations exactly on account of its straightforwardness, which goes against the multiplicity of meaning characterised by most literary works. As much as it might be attractive, the

[1] For an insightful analysis of postpositivist realism concerning questions of identity, see Stone-Mediatore 125–138. For Satya P. Mohanty's conception of the foundations of postpositivist realism, see Mohanty 202–240.

postpositivist realist approach is too restrictive to be productively applied in the interpretation of literary works alone, and while it can identify relevant categories and make relevant assertions about the representation of identity in literature, theories embracing uncertainty, ambiguity and fluidity should continue to be taken into account.

Moreover, in addition to the debates in the field of theory in recent years that have led to various conceptions of identity, including different theories about its social and cultural aspects, identity also has multiple meanings as a lexical item. According to the *MacMillan Dictionary*, for example, the primary meanings of identity include "who you are, or what your name is"; "the qualities that make someone or something what they are and different from other people"; and "the fact of being exactly the same" (*MacMillan Dictionary*). When applied to the human domain, identity means such different concepts as personal identity, characteristics or feelings that distinguish a person or a group of persons from others, and sameness. In other words, the concept of identity relates to individuality as well as belonging to a group, being different as well as being identical, the word having both a centripetal and a centrifugal direction of meaning from the point of view of the individual. Identity as distinctness and as sameness is equally applicable to literary works: disparate and individual as they are, when viewed at the same time, some works form a pattern where they can be seen as essentially identical. This sameness is also true of literary representations of the immigrant experience.

On account of the complexity of experience and the resulting multiplicity of identity layers, the problematisation of identity is a typical feature of recent Canadian literature, including fiction.[2] In addition, literature is not only a medium where questions of identity appear, but it is also an important and reliable source for individual and communal identity structures. Literature is capable of expressing the essence of situations, traumas and crises, and it is exactly literature where such essence is condensed. The Aristotelian view that "[…] poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history; poetry utters universal truths, history particular statements" (Aristotle 28), in other words, that besides the truth that may be reached by objective factfinding concerning particular statements, the realm of literature – by extension – is capable of expressing universal truths, and as such it is a reliable source, is valid to this day.

* * *

Tamas Dobozy is a second-generation Hungarian-Canadian writer who gained national reputation in Canada with the publication of his collection of short stories *Siege 13* in 2012. Dobozy was born and raised in British Columbia and currently teaches literature at Wilfred Laurier University in Ontario. So far, he has published

[2] For an insightful summary of the historical aspects of this phenomenon, see Lipset 83–98.

four volumes: the novel *Doggone* (1998) and three collections of short stories, *When X Equals Marylou* (2002), *Last Notes* (2005) and *Siege 13* (2012). His work displays a range of styles and devices from irony through hyper-realism and metafiction to dark humour and absurdity, often applying themes of loneliness, isolation and dislocation in his prose. His language is exceptionally powerful, and his long and almost never-ending sentences frequently attain the beauty of poetry. His plots tend to use Hungarian characters whose fate is presented in the context of 20th-century Hungarian history, filtered through the eyes and reflections of a first-person narrator. In his stories, the characters often seek to uncover their family's past, which proves to be futile as the search is ultimately lost in incomprehensible mystery.

In the past two decades, Dobozy has been primarily interested in the short story form. *Last Notes* won the Governor General's Literary Award for French translation in 2007, and his next book *Siege 13* received the prestigious Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize. Dobozy's output has been positively received in the press, too. A reviewer of *The Washington Post* praised Dobozy's work with these words: "The sheer variety of Dobozy's approaches to telling stories, and his commitment not only to provoke thought but to entertain, constitute a virtuoso performance" (VanderMeer 2013). Another reviewer went as far as to make this personal remark, "I will never look at an eastern European immigrant the same way again. That's the impact the Writers' Trust Prize-winning *Siege 13* has had on my psyche" (Cole 2012).

In his earlier stories, the immigrant, exile and diasporic experience is a recurring, if not exclusive, theme. Dobozy's short stories "Red Love" (1995), "Tales of Hungarian Resistance," "Four Uncles" and "The Inert Landscapes of György Ferenc" (2005), all draw on 20th-century Hungarian history as filtered through the recollections of a first-person narrator. In these narratives, the characters are often forced to leave their homeland, so their departure and new life in the new country is exile rather than voluntary emigration. As explained in the story "Four Uncles" in *Last Notes*:

> This was their paradox: that, when they left, they did not go for reasons of a better life elsewhere, but because dissent demanded it, because they wanted to strike some kind of blow, even while knowing that exile was a relinquishing not only of a country but also of the only life that mattered. (37–38)

Indeed, being deprived of and severed from their homeland, Dobozy's characters are crushed under the new circumstances and cannot cope with, nor can value, their new lives. Immigration may lead to a happy life, but Dobozy's world of exile is different; his exiles can never come to terms with their new environment, which leads to their loss of identity.

In the short story "Four Uncles" the narrator flees his devastated homeland in 1958, following the failed revolution, taking farewell to his mother who has lost her mind after the trauma of the death of her father, mother, husband and brothers

either at the river Don during the Second World War, in Soviet gulags after the war or during the 1956 revolution. The description of the torn country and the brutality suffered by the family is absurdly exaggerated, but its surrealism is compelling and powerful. The narrator emigrates to Canada where he meets his three uncles, each a victim of old habits, with strange obsessions and prejudices, including a fair amount of racism and greed, thus unable to come to terms with the principles of the new world. The portrayal of the uncles reflects the narrator's intellectual distancing from the characters but only to the extent allowed by irony. The uncles' inability and unwillingness to change their mindset leads to their estrangement from their children and relatives who have been raised and educated in Canada, sharing very different views from theirs, and a very different past shaping their own identity.

"The Inert Landscapes of György Ferenc," is a narrative about a Hungarian painter in Canada who is unable to find inspiration in North America and its landscapes. For him Canada is emptiness, a big void, as it were, which can be most faithfully represented by a white canvass, with multiple layers of white paint on it, nothing more, a painting he ultimately completes and which, quite paradoxically, brings him some success. His alienation and estrangement from Canadian landscapes and the whole country for that matter speak to his inner pain and loneliness. György Ferenc's attachment to Hungary, from which he was forced to leave, is overpowering, his separation from its landscapes and culture tormenting him until his death and his inability to feel at one with Canada as a homeland developing into vast loneliness. His alienation and loss of identity are passed on to his sons, who also become filled with displacement and isolation. The emptiness and sense of in-betweenness articulated in the story are echoed by the protagonist's physical annihilation as well. When György Ferenc dies, his urn, which is supposed to contain his ashes, turns out to be empty. The idea of a physical and emotional loss combined with a lost identity re-emerges at the closing of the story. It is during his visit to Hungary when the narrator fully understands what it was for his father to "lose a country" (Dobozy, *Last Notes* 101). He realises that Hungary is no longer a frame of reference for him, it is neither his home nor homeland any longer, and is forced to recognise that his birthplace has become a place of "infinite distance" (101).

* * *

Siege 13 is a collection of thirteen interconnected short stories that, although closely related and linked together by some essential repetitive elements, do not merge to form a novel. The stories are imbued with Hungarian history, but some of the plots are also interconnected on account of the reappearing fictional characters. Several short stories in the volume are linked by narrative recollections of the same historical events, the siege of Budapest during World War II or the 1956 revolution, and their setting is also often the same geographical locations, such as Budapest and Toronto. Regarding the historical content of the stories, as Smetana claims, "The thirteen

stories are varied in tone and in the strength of their connection to the Siege," adding that "'The Atlas of B. Görbe' and 'The Homemade Doomsday Machine,' for instance, are stories that only have the faintest connection to the Siege and neither story is in any significant way informed by the event or its fallout" (Smetana). Indeed, although the end of World War II is a major theme in some of the narratives, other stories evoke another armed conflict, the 1956 revolution, while still others concentrate on contemporary Canada and Hungary or the recent past. This nevertheless does not reduce the historical bearing of the stories. On the contrary, the relevance of history and historical consciousness is manifest throughout the book; yet, the historical references extend beyond the war theme. Even in these cases, however, the reader witnesses a sense of war, a war going on in the human psyche.

Dobozy's *Siege 13* has been brought into connection with Sándor Márai's journals and novel *Szabadulás* [Getting free] (Kürtösi 99–110), especially regarding the theme of rape, and the author has studied historical accounts of the period, including Krisztián Ungváry's monograph *Battle for Budapest: 100 Days in World War II*. However, the historical elements of the short stories are too loose for the stories to be classified as historical fiction or fictionalised history. Historiographic metafiction is a more appropriate concept to define the genre of these stories in the sense that Linda Hutcheon has given to the term: "fiction that is at once metafictional and historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past" ("Historiographic Metafiction" 3). Dobozy's narratives represent the type of fiction where history is depicted through the filter of memory and recollection, while the act of writing is also evoked. The fictional elaboration of the historical events extends to a number of areas relevant to humans and the human condition, raising ethical, philosophical, psychological and existential issues. As Grubisic observes:

> Throughout *Siege 13*, Dobozy shows a fascination with complex moral tangles and situations that demand actions for which there are few real options for making the "right" choice. In "The Atlas of B. Görbe" and "The Homemade Doomsday Machine," for instance […] the circumstances are so strange and knotty that the loss of footing and certainty (for reader and character alike) looks inevitable. (7)

Besides, in some stories, the theme of history is intertwined with the immigrant experience, while others represent magical realism, where magical and fantastical elements constantly merge with what is thought to be the real world. As Wiersema claims: "The stories are varied in tone: some emphasize the horrors of war, while others […] are darkly humorous. Gripping realism is comfortably juxtaposed with fantasy in stories like 'The Ghosts of Budapest and Toronto'" (23). This involves a sense of hybrid multiple planes or parallel worlds, which can also be described using Foucault's theory of heterotopia. In such interpretation, the siege, serving as a

leitmotif for the stories, represents a space of difference, in the context of which "the highly vulnerable and traumatic experience of dislocation and displacement, loss and grief, transformation and alienation, the mutable nature of identities, together with their strangely oppositional restrictive and creative potentials" are expressed (Szamosi 95). This latter feature is enhanced by the fact that in extraordinary circumstances the real and the unreal often change places and the war theme offers plots verging on the borderline between them.

"The Ghosts of Budapest and Toronto" is one of the stories in *Siege 13* where reflections play a prominent role on the narrative level, even though here the point at issue is similar to what in fantasy literature is called alternative realities or parallel universes. The main question raised by the plot is how a woman and her family can continue living after she is raped in front of her husband by soldiers in the Red Army close to the end of the war; how they react to the trauma and cope with a sense of guilt caused by the situation, the lack of being able to face the fact and make the right choices, and how their identity emerges from this trauma. The historical background or, in other words, the extra-discursive truth, of the underlying situation is asserted on the extradiegetic level by the narrator: Mária suffers the fate of "so many women – *millions of women*, according to historians – who were raped by the Red Army during their 'liberation' of eastern and central Europe" (Dobozy, *Siege 13* 291). The extradiegetic reference to "historians" thus confirms the authenticity of the starting point of the narrative. In contrast, the use of the italicised "*millions of women*" displays a sense of amazement and bewilderment, and maybe even a sense of disbelief, caused by the number of instances in which the crime of rape was or could have been committed. This distancing from the horrors described through overemphasis, powerfully claiming them but also withdrawing from them at the same time, is a feature of Dobozy's narrative style which prevents the text from becoming sentimental, as exemplified in the following sentence: "Of course, there was also the look of those men who *had* tried to do something, but this was even more haunting, for some of them had their brains bashed out with the butt ends of rifles, or were shot five or six times, or received so much in the way of injury that the look they gave you afterwards was, for the women, like gazing into a mirror" (291). The mirror in the above sentence turns out to be an important metaphor and narrative device through which the two different worlds of the plot start to reflect and merge into another.

The Kálmán family is torn apart, Mária is never found and the rest of the family emigrates to Toronto in 1956. They lose contact and have no knowledge of one another. The parallel worlds start to emerge decades after the Kálmán family's arrival in Canada when those in Toronto begin to see Mária on several occasions in Toronto. Similarly, Mária has to grapple with her own visions, visions – in Budapest – of the Kálmán family's everyday life in Toronto, as she watches:

> Adél in her janitor's apron staring after her on the street; and István in his dirty overalls on the way to tending the gardens of those who were as wealthy as he'd hoped to be after leaving Hungary; and Anikó in her Westminster Mall uniform as she went from table to table in the food court clearing away the trays and plastic cutlery and greasy plates left by those too lazy to clean up after themselves. (304)

As opposed to the vision of the hard life of the Hungarian immigrants in Canada, who "settled into low-paying jobs, and raised children who they hoped would do much better than they had" (Dobozy, *Siege 13* 293), Mária has an absolutely privileged position in Communist Hungary, with Béla, her new husband, who turns every stone to please her.

One common feature of these double worlds is the guilt which the characters share; the Kálmáns feel "[t]hey should have looked after Mária, should have made the sacrifice, instead of being so lazy, so eager to escape Hungary, that they convinced themselves that leaving her was the right thing to do" (Dobozy, *Siege 13* 301), whereas, Mária too, feels remorse for things she has failed to do for the Kálmáns (304–305). Their identity is twisted and turned by history and by their personal choices in order to survive in the face of the circumstances. Both emigration to Canada and the lifestyle adopted as the wife of a high-ranking party official subvert the characters' layers of identity, including their identity as a family.

As the two worlds start to merge and the characters from the alternative worlds begin to talk to one another, it also comes to light that Mária and Béla did not "survive the revolution of 1956" (Dobozy, *Siege 13* 306), and, similarly, Mária also finds out that the Kálmán family never made it to the West. The ambiguity of the "real" fate of the characters is not resolved in the text, and at this point, the mirror reflections of the parallel universes ever-increasingly start to haunt the reader. What appears unambiguously real is the subverted identities caused by the trauma and subsequent decisions, the authentic "gothic" atmosphere of this "ghost" story and the moral questions owing to the psychological realism used.

* * *

Since the publication of *Siege 13* in 2012, Dobozy has published over twenty short stories in various literary journals in Canada and the United States, many of them with a focus on Hungarian themes and characters. The exile and immigrant experience and questions relating to identity continue to be dominant topics in these new works, and Dobozy maintains the multiplicity of styles and narrative techniques with the addition of some new experimentations. These latter include elements of documentary fiction, where the authors family or workplace appears, and there is some new emphasis on contemporary issues, often treated with humour.

"Neglected Lands", published in 2017, tells the story of Sándor, an elderly Hungarian who is just about to cross the border between the US and Canada. When asked about his place of origin, he replies, "All the vacant lots in all the cities of the world" and hands over a "sheet of foolscap folded six times with the word "Passport" written in black crayon on the front" (Dobozy, "Neglected"). The setting is telling, a border, a checkpoint between two countries, a no one's land, representing the life of the protagonist deprived of a true homeland. The setting is similar to the one in Atom Egoyan's movie *Ararat* where the customs officer, David, interviews Rafi, the Armenian Canadian young man, and during the interrogation is informed of the Armenian genocide of 1915 (Egoyan). In Dobozy's short story, Herald, the Canadian customs officer, gains knowledge of 20th-century Hungarian history, but more importantly, he learns about Sándor's fate through his personal story. Sándor does not have an official passport but has bits of a map in his suitcase which, once pieced together, provides access to his life-story. The map is completely subjective, showing places of Sándor's personal story, it denotes the cities and regions of his youth and his later wanderings but not necessarily corresponding to real geographical locations as we know them. When looking at and piecing together place names in the United States, Sándor frowns: "It has nothing to do with America, or any other place you'd care to name" (Dobozy "Neglected"). The map represents Sándor's whole life story, and as such it becomes an artwork, condensing everything that has happened to him, with Sándor's essence and all the experiences gained during his life compressed in it.

What happens in the story is a magic of sorts: viewing the bits and snatches of the map, Herald, the customs officer, gains a spiritual insight, as if through an epiphany, into Sándor's life and suffering, and comes to understand and feel the anguish of the other man. He is no longer interested in performing his duty as a customs officer; instead, he enters the map with Sándor who serves as his guide:

> How many places did they flee through that afternoon? Herald would have a hard time remembering. […] It was hard to keep up with the places Sándor guided him through, and Herald felt as if he was running alongside, desperate not to be left behind, at the same time glancing over his shoulder, trying to memorise what had already passed by like some boy keeping track of signposts that would one day lead back to where he'd last seen his parents. (Dobozy, "Neglected")

Through this instance of magic realism, we learn that Sándor has lost his parents, family and homeland at the end of World War II, during the time of the Russian invasion of Hungary. The railway station, which is a recurring motif as a point of departure in holocaust narratives, is an important trope in this non-holocaust fiction,

too. It is at the railway station where Sándor is separated from his parents as a child, and this is the point where his life has a tragic turn and where all his hardships start, with wandering for a never attainable homeland throughout his life. According to Linda Hutcheon, in modernism one can observe a "search for order in the face of moral and social chaos," whereas postmodernism is characterised by an "urge to trouble, to question, to make both problematic and provisional any such desire for order or truth through the powers of the human imagination" (*The Canadian Postmodern* 2). Sándor is fully aware that his continuous journey is completely futile, and his search is ironic, therefore his desire to find a home and homeland falls within Hutcheon's second category.

An essential aspect of this short story is that it has a plotline revealing the customs officer Herald's own problems, as explicitly exposed by his superior, who is frustrated by Herald's inability to act as is expected of a customs officer: "I know Herald. The ex-wife. The alimony. You've told me. How old's your kid now? Five? Does she ever let you go see him? Think she's going to be more inclined that way if you get fired? What else do you have? The crap apartment on the lower east side. The shitbucket Ford you drive. This job's all you've got" (Dobozy, "Neglected").

The portrayal of the existential crisis of a non-immigrant in Dobozy's narrative focused on Sándor extends the message of the story to the human condition. Herald's sympathy for Sándor is driven at least in part by the fact that he finds his own ruined life reflected in Sándor's. Moreover, it is clear from his superior's aforementioned observations that his life also lacks a "place": "You know what, Herald? You remind me of some of the people who get stuck here. You can't go back, you can't go ahead. This ain't a place, Herald. You just pass through it or not, that's all. It's just a job. You need to get that through your head" (Dobozy, "Neglected").

The story can thus be interpreted as a series of mirror images of ruined lives, Harold's life mirrored by Sándor's, and Sándor's reflected by his maps. The use of reflections is not new to Dobozy's fiction: the reflections, mirror images of the different diegetic levels of the stories have been a typical feature of the story sequence in *Siege 13*, opening the interpretive horizon of the texts to *mise en abyme*, in the sense that Lucien Dällenbach attributed to the term as "a means by which a work turns back on itself, appears to be a kind of *reflexion,*" an "essential property that brings out the meaning and form of the work," a "structural device" and, most importantly, "*any aspect enclosed within a work that shows a similarity with the work that contains it*" (8, emphasis in the original). It is clear from the above definitions that *mise en abyme* does not necessarily denote an embedded structure in which a work reveals within itself an element whose status is identical with itself (a painting within a painting, a novel within a novel, a play within a play), even though that is often the case since the analogy between the work and its detail is often purely structural. The term *mise en abyme* derives from heraldry and technically means "placed in the heart of a shield," and in literary theory it was first mentioned by André

Gide in 1893 in the sense of "*the image of a shield containing, in its centre, a miniature replica of itself*" (Dällenbach 8, emphasis in the original). *Mise en abyme* is therefore related to theories of the Droste effect, imitation, mimesis and, to some extent, simulacrum, but can be brought into connection with heterotopia as well.

Dobozy's short story "Pest Control" (2015) was nominated for a Pushcart Prize and it combines elements of comedy, satire and tragedy. The plot of the story is about the narrator's colleague at university, a young history professor called Darryl, who has a rodent problem in his basement, with the squirrels eating up everything they can find and behaving in an extremely threatening way, at least as perceived by Darryl, but shown by the narrator in a comic way. Darryl does not dare go down to the basement, and when the narrator plucks up enough courage and ventures down, he finds that the place is in a terrible state of repair, everything is in ruins and as the light switches do not work, he has to stumble in the dark.

It is obvious that this story has two worlds, one "upstairs" and the other "down" in the basement, which is an underworld of sorts, not decent for human habitation. These parallel worlds reflect one another; however, the two spaces are not so different at all:

> I thought how strange it was that down here, in this ruined space, it still felt the same to me as upstairs, where all the books arranged on the shelves, the chairs carefully angled in front of the TV, Darryl's bedroom with nothing in it but a bed, a nightstand, a closet hung with fine clothes, the guest bedroom with only a cot in it, conveyed the exact same sense of a life barely inhabited, where someone came and went, leaving nothing of himself. Down here it was a mess, upstairs it was neat, but both were empty. (Dobozy, "Pest Control")

The two spaces, therefore, exist simultaneously, both situated in the space represented by the house, which is, in turn, positioned within the larger space of Canada. The narrative seems to move forward for comic effect, but the underlying theme of loneliness and displacement comes to the surface from time to time. To illustrate the "gravity" of the situation and its possible consequences, there is word in the story of a dog, as reported by a fictitious BBC article, which was eaten by black squirrels in Russia. What are the prospects for Darryl then in his house? The comic element of the story, achieved through exaggeration, is obvious:

> He'd borrowed Eve's [a colleague's] dog – not that it would have helped him much, given what had happened to the dog in the BBC article – and went into his basement to discover that several of the wires from the fuse box had been chewed up, as if the squirrels had figured out that he planned to kill them, and were now openly sabotaging the house, getting everything prepared for the night when – with the electricity out, the phone lines cut, the modem cable chewed to shreds

> – Darryl would run from room to room, trying to find a way out, or at least a safe place to hide, only to have the squirrels burst from the walls and finish him off. (Dobozy, "Pest Control")

The narrative has multiple layers and one contains a critique of today's fashionable topics, such as the constant fear of the end of the world and the vogue for dystopian themes:

> I've been in Darryl's basement a number of times. As unbelievable as it sounds, someone once lived down there, long ago, renting the west-facing room, which now, with its dangling ceiling tiles, cracked linoleum, shredded wallpaper, and perpetual twilight, looks like the set for some post-apocalyptic movie where the survivors emerge from underground and wander around marveling at how irresponsible the human race once was. In Darryl's basement they come across human skeletons, tiny designs etched into the bones as a warning from the squirrels, which have mutated into a primitive flesh eating society and taken over the planet. (Dobozy, "Pest Control")

Extreme forms of political correctness are also hinted at and ridiculed. As Darryl complains, "I'm already getting grief from Eve and other members of the department for setting up traps. She thinks I should find a way to get rid of them that won't 'hurt anyone.' That's the word she used. 'Anyone.' Like the squirrels are fucking human beings!" (Dobozy, "Pest Control")

Environmental issues and animal rights clearly diminish when it comes to Darryl's fear for his own life, while, at the same time, the narrator makes sure that the one who makes these comments is also depicted with irony. It is in this world of fear and anxiety where the Hungarian "exterminator" emerges in the plotline. The squirrel problem is solved when the Hungarian-Canadian narrator helps his colleague in contracting a Hungarian, an expert using traditional but all the more efficient methods of getting rid of the rodents. "The Magyar," as the exterminator is called, turns out to have nowhere to live, so he moves into Darryl's house, his basement, until he finishes his job. He is a fifty-sixer, who is intent on not disturbing the university professor; nevertheless, he spends some time with him, the two of them often having dinner together.

The Hungarian exterminator is what in everyday life is called a weirdo, a dinosaur of sorts in today's world, who can nevertheless very successfully (and cruelly) deal with the squirrel problem of the homeowner. The life of the Hungarian exterminator is depicted with much detail and his tragedy in Hungary as a result of 20th-century history is forcefully portrayed.

During the dinners spent together, Darryl, the history professor, is dazzled by The Magyar's vast historical knowledge, and they please each other by cooking their

favourite meals: "The Magyar made *gulyás* and *paprikás csirke* and *rántót* [sic] *hús*, fat meaty meals, while Darryl made Kung Pao chicken and Peking duck and twice cooked" – this is the point where the reader learns of Darryl's Asian background. However, when during an argument The Magyar calls Darryl a "Chinaman," their jovial business relationship is abruptly terminated. As a result, The Magyar is not paid for his services and out of revenge he threatens to move back into the basement, in place of the rodents, as it were. Much as it is unexpected, however, the real punishment for Darryl is The Magyar's final departure. The two men are both extremely lonely, and as the narrator comments:

> […] Darryl had not paid him, and so the old man had made good on his threat, knowing enough about what frightened people to realise it was not his sneaking in, his squatting in the basement, that rattled Darryl, but that he'd go away forever. It was, in fact, why Darryl *hadn't* paid, hoping the old man would stick around, and in that gesture the Magyar had recognised his own loneliness in my friend, a darkness that extended beyond the basement, up the stairs to the main floor, through the ceiling to the bedrooms beyond, a whole life filled with switches that turned nothing on, and where for a few short weeks The Magyar's stories had flared up and died away, burning holes in the night.

Mention has been made of how certain motifs and character types move across Dobozy's short stories, how they reappear in altered, yet similar forms, and there is no doubt that the uncles from "Four Uncles" or the painter from "The Inert Landscapes of György Ferenc" and Sándor from "Neglected Lands" show similar character traits to "The Magyar" in the story "Pest Control." Their physical appearance is also often similar, as exemplified below:

> The Magyar was flawless. He wore a crisp white shirt, a suit of dark woolen material, perfectly clean, meticulously pressed, a nondescript tie, his hair flecked with grey but still mainly black, neatly cut and combed, not one single item of clothing, not one single personal tic betraying any eccentricity […]. (Dobozy, "Pest Control")

In "Ghost Geographies" (2012), which is the first version of "Neglected Lands," discussed above, we have the following description of Sándor: "Often, in disguise, Eszterhazy was carefully dressed, his silvery-gray hair short and neat, his beard likewise, carrying himself with an aristocratic elegance" (Dobozy, "Ghost Geographies" 40). The protagonist of Dobozy's 2016 short story "No. 10" also revolves around an elderly Hungarian exile, Feri, who is unable to regard Canada as his homeland and has heated debates with Canadian veterans in his neighbourhood on Memorial Day each year as a result of their opposing historical memories.

On the basis of the above, however, it would be wrong to interpret Dobozy's prose as merely describing the lives of Hungarians or Hungarian eccentrics – for though he does place such oddballs in the centre of his narratives, his vision is darker than that. The minor characters appearing in the background of the stories also face dead-ends in their lives and their fate is also doomed. Their lot is also filled with bitterness and loss, and they are mired in their own faults, their inability to change, and they too lapse into sadness, a dark pit they cannot escape from.

In the light of Canada's proclaimed multiculturalism policy whose main objective has been to help newcomers in finding a second homeland in Canada, it may be perplexing to see that so much of immigrant fiction is about the hardships the new arrivals face in their chosen country. For this treatment of immigrant experience is not excusive to Dobozy alone. Immigrant, exile or diaspora literatures indicate that being uprooted from one's homeland and finding a new country which may be called home is extremely difficult, and for all of its noble goals, dedication to equality and commitment to acceptance and recognition, multiculturalism as a conscious policy is restricted in assisting those first and second-generation immigrants who are torn between two or more cultures and traditions, battling with their memories. No cultural or societal program is capable of removing problems deeply rooted in the human psyche, and contemporary Canadian literature is often exactly concerned with revealing the turbulent inner world of immigrants.

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The present volume – complemented by its Hungarian counterpart *Hagyomány és innováció a magyar és a világirodalomban* [Tradition and Innovation in Hungarian and World Literature], presenting a different set of studies – should be seen as the final stage of a one-year long project conducted at the Faculty of Humanities, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Twelve literary scholars, experts in their fields ranging from Classics to Comparative Literature Studies, as well as English, American, and Hungarian Studies – came together to form the research group *Tradition and Innovation in Literature,* encompassing diverse topics past and present. The historical-chronological dimension of the investigation inevitably disclosed correlations with theoretical angles, thus inviting explorations into textualities to be showcased in several genres, including poetry, fiction, and cinema. As a result, the ensuing essays on both Hungarian and world literature offer a rich tapestry of topics, an informative vista on the ever-shifting and dynamic interplay between innovation and tradition, which shapes and motivates all cultural practices from antiquity to the contemporary.

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