# A tűnődések valósága

# The Reality of Ruminations

Írások Sarbu Aladár 70. születésnapjára

Writings for Aladár Sarbu on his 70th birthday

ELTE BTK

Angol-Amerikai Intézet

Anglisztika Tanszék

*A tűnődések valósága*

*The Reality of Ruminations*

**ELTE Papers in English Studies**

*Sorozatszerkesztő*
Friedrich Judit

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# The Reality of Ruminations

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*Szerkesztette*
Borbély Judit és Czigányik Zsolt

Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem
Bölcsészettudományi Kar
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Sarbu Aladin

# Hetven

*Sarbu Aladárnak*

*Ferencz Győző*

A józan ész, a józan ész,
Bár önmagában sem kevés,

Jó, ha a másik oldalon
Társul mellé a szorgalom,

S nem árt, ha van egy szép szelet
Alkotni képes képzelet.

De persze mindez mit sem ér,
Ha nincsen hozzá elmeél,

Vagy függetlenség nincs elég,
Vagy megengedő bölcsesség,

Kellő belátás és fölény,
Hogy gyarló minden földi lény.

S ha minden megvan, jó esetben,
Amikor beköszönt a hetven,

Kitágul a látóhatár.
Isten éltessen, Aladár!

# Köszöntő

*Szeretettel köszöntöm Sarbu Aladár 70. születésnapján az ünneplő kollégákat, tanítványokat, rokonokat és barátokat, és velük együtt sok szeretettel köszöntöm az ünnepeltet!*

*Köszöntöm Sarbu Aladárt, az irodalomtudomány doktorát, az ELTE Angol-Amerikai Intézet Anglisztika Tanszékének professzorát, aki az ELTE BTK Irodalomtudományi Doktori Iskola Modern angol és amerikai irodalom programjának megalakulása óta vezetője. Köszöntöm Sarbu Aladárt, az ELTE Professzori Tanácsának tagját, a Miskolci Egyetem professzorát, a grazi, majd innsbrucki Centre for the International Study of Literatures in English tanácsadó testületének tagját. Köszöntöm Sarbu Aladárt, a Köztársasági Érdemrend Lovagkeresztjének 2009-es kitüntetettjét. Köszöntöm Sarbu Aladárt, a* Modern Filológiai Füzetek *szerkesztőjét, Joseph Conrad és Henry James szakértőjét, számos angolul és magyarul írott tudományos és az irodalmat népszerűsítő könyv szerzőjét és szerkesztőjét, aki 1965 óta 48 tudományos dolgozatot, 74 esszét és cikket, és 9 novellát publikált. Köszöntöm Sarbu Aladárt, négy megjelent regény szerzőjét.*

*Köszöntöm Sarbu Aladárt mint olyan tanszékvezetőt és programvezetőt, akinek hivatala idején a dolgok rendben mentek. Köszöntöm Sarbu Aladárt, aki képes és hajlandó volt saját habitusától különböző fiatal erőket felvenni a tanszékre. Köszöntöm Sarbu Aladár tanár urat és kollégát, aki akkor is korrekten jár el, ha nem ért egyet vitapartnereivel.*

*Köszöntöm az összes szerzőt, aki a kötetben szereplő műveket, verseket, esszéket, tanulmányokat, műfordításokat megírta. Köszöntöm Péter Ágnes professzor asszonyt, akitől a kötet ötlete származott, Dezső Tamást, az Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Karának dékánját, aki a kötet megjelenését lehetővé tette, az ELTE BTK Gazdasági és Üzemeltetési Hivatalának vezetőjét, Dr. Kratochwill Ferencnét, aki tervünket végig támogatta, Gyenes Ádámot, a L'Harmattan Kiadó igazgatóját, aki a nyomdai ügymenetet segítette, Szalay Miklóst, aki a borítót tervezte, Fejérvári Boldizsárt, aki a szerkesztés technikai munkálatait végezte, Dávid Beatrixet, aki az ügyeket intézte, és végül Borbély Juditot és Czigányik Zsoltot, aki a közreműködőket írásra bírta és a kötetet megszerkesztette.*

*Valamennyiük nevében további sok boldog születésnapot, sok sikert és jó egészséget, és további lankadatlan alkotó- és tanítókedvet kívánok!*

*Budapest, 2010. május 30.*

**Friedrich Judit**
*tanszékvezető*

# Laudation

*Let us celebrate on his 70th birthday Aladár Sarbu, professor at the Department of English Studies, School of English and American Studies, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem; also, since the inception of the programme, director of the Modern English and American Literature Programme of the Doctoral School of Literary Studies at the Faculty of Humanities, ELTE. Let us celebrate Aladár Sarbu, member of the Council of Professors at ELTE; professor at the University of Miskolc; member of the Advisory Board for the Centre for the International Study of Literatures in English (first in Graz, then in Innsbruck). Let us celebrate Aladár Sarbu, recipient of the Order of Merit of the Hungarian Republic (Knight) in 2009. Let us celebrate Aladár Sarbu, editor of* Modern Filológiai Füzetek (Papers in Modern Philology)*, expert on the works of Joseph Conrad and Henry James, author and editor of several academic and popular volumes in literature (both in English and in Hungarian), author of 48 shorter pieces in literary studies, 74 essays and reviews and 9 short stories since 1965. Let us celebrate Aladár Sarbu, author of 4 published novels.*

*Let us also celebrate Aladár Sarbu, a head of department and director of doctoral programme under whose guidance work proceeded in order, under whose leadership young talent could enter the ranks of university teaching even when their attitudes were different from that of his own. Let us celebrate a teacher and colleague who acted with meticulous fairness even when he could not agree with his opponents.*

*And let us also celebrate those who made this volume possible: those who wrote the pieces collected here, who created the poems, translations, essays, studies and memoires, as well as those without whose support the publication would never have happened: Professor Ágnes Péter, who offered the initial idea for the book; Tamás Dezső, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, ELTE, Budapest, who made finances available; Dr Márta Kratochwill, director of the Finances Offices of the Faculty of Humanities, ELTE, Budapest, whose continuous support made publication possible; Ádám Gyenes, director of L'Harmattan Publishers, who helped with the printing process; Miklós Szalay for the graphic design; Boldizsár Fejérvári for layout work; Beatrix Dávid, who ran all matters administrative; and Judit Borbély and Zsolt Czigányik, who organised the entire process from inviting contributors to editing the volume.*

*Let us all wish Aladár Sarbu many happy returns, much happiness, good health and many more creative years of writing and teaching!*

*Budapest, 30 May 2010.*

**Judit Friedrich**
*Head of Department*

# Előszó

*Amikor egy ünnepi kötet szerkesztésével bíztak meg, a feladatot rendkívül megtisztelőnek éreztem, de meg is lepődtem. Hogy miért megtiszteltetés, az nem szorul magyarázatra; meglepetésem pedig ugyancsak érthető, hiszen nehéz elhinni, hogy Sarbu tanár úr rövidesen hetven éves lesz.*

*Negyven évvel ezelőtt találkoztam vele először az egyetemi felvételin. Szigorú volt és tudást követelt, de el tudta feledtetni velem, hogy éppen egy nagytudású bizottság előtt feszengek. Ahelyett, hogy bebizonyította volna, mi mindent nem tudok, elgondolkodtató kérdésekkel „provokált", hogy kiderüljön, alkalmazni tudom-e, amit tanultam. Perceken belül izgalmas, akadémikus beszélgetésben találtam magam, és egy szemernyi stresszt sem éreztem.*

*A következő negyven év során angol szakos hallgatóként, majd posztgraduális szinten is dolgoztam Sarbu tanár úrral, és az első benyomásom soha nem változott. Bármilyen kemény munkát is várt el, az ember mindig biztosra vehette, hogy minden szakmai irányítást és bátorítást megkap Tanár Úrtól. Nemcsak arra tanított meg, hogy érzékenyen, nyitott szemmel olvassak, hanem arra is, hogy a témában esetleg kevésbé jártas olvasó számára is érthetően írjak. Tanári munkám során igyekeztem hallgatóimnak átadni mindazt, amit Tanár Úrtól tanultam.*

*Ezen ünnepi kötet létrehozói, barátok, jelenlegi vagy volt kollégák és tanítványok, mind örömmel vettek részt a munkában. Reméljük, hogy erőfeszítésünk eredménye méltó az ünnepelthez. Számunkra a feladat élvezet volt.*

**Borbély Judit**

*Közel húsz éve már, hogy először pillantottam meg Sarbu Aladárt – én nem a felvételin, hanem már hallgatóként, életem első egyetemi előadásán. Természetesen irodalomról beszélt, s megilletődött gólyaként megtanulhattam tőle, hogy ez komoly dolog, legalábbis érdemes komolyan venni. Aztán az is kiderült, hogy ő nem csupán az irodalmat, hanem a hallgatókat is komolyan veszi, így engem is. Diákként és kollégaként is sokat tanultam tőle: nemcsak Walter Paterről és Henry Jamesről, hanem az igényességről és a precizitásról is. Épp ezért társszerkesztőként némi aggodalommal adom ki kezemből ezt a kötetet, de bízom benne, hogy a kigyomlálatlanul maradt apróbb hibák ellenére – melyeket az ünnepelt bizonyosan észrevett volna, s félő, hogy észre is vesz –, örömét leli majd benne.*

*Aladár, boldog születésnapot!*

**Czigányik Zsolt**

# Foreword

*Being asked to work on a special volume compiled for Professor Aladár Sarbu, I felt deeply honoured and surprised. That it is a great privilege needs no explanation; and my surprise is no less obvious, for it is hard to believe that Professor Sarbu is seventy years old.*

*I first met him forty years ago when I took the entrance examination. He was strict and demanded knowledge, but he also made me forget that I was sitting in front of a board of knowledgeable professors. Instead of proving how ignorant I was, he challenged me with thought-provoking questions to see if I could put to use what I had learnt. And within minutes, I found myself in a lively academic conversation, perfectly free from stress.*

*During the next forty years, I worked with him on undergraduate and postgraduate levels as well, and my first impression never changed. However hard he expected you to work, you could take it for granted that he would give you all professional guidance and encouragement. He taught me not only to read literature with a sensitive and open mind, but also to write in a manner that is understandable also for those who happen to be "outsiders" in the topic. Later, as a teacher, I did my best to pass on to my students what I had learnt from him.*

*The contributors to this volume, friends, present and former colleagues and students, were all happy to participate in the work with which we wish to greet Professor Sarbu. We hope the result of our endeavours is worthy of him. For us, it has been a pleasure.*

**Judit Borbély**

*The first time I met Professor Sarbu was almost twenty years ago; not in the entrance examination, but at the first university lecture that I attended as a student. He naturally spoke of literature, and as an affected freshman I could learn from him that it is a serious matter, or at least it is worth taking seriously. Later I also discovered that it is not only literature that he takes seriously, but also students, including myself. I have learned a great deal from him both as a student and as a colleague – not only about Walter Pater and Henry James, but also about reliability and accuracy. This is also the reason why I am somewhat anxious when releasing this volume as a co-editor, but I hope that despite some small mistakes left in the text (which would not have escaped the attention of the Professor), he will be pleased with it.*

*Aladár, many happy returns of the day!*

**Zsolt Czigányik**

# életmű-keresztmetszet
# the man and his work

# A Conrad for the Hungarian Public
## Reflections on Aladár Sarbu's *Joseph Conrad világa*

*Balázs Csizmadia*

Aladár Sarbu,
*Joseph Conrad világa*
(Budapest: Európa, 1974)

To review a book published thirty-six years ago may seem a bold endeavour in itself, but to do so in a volume compiled in honour of the author of that book undoubtedly adds to the challenge facing the reviewer. Yet, it is with pleasure that I cast a fond, if fleeting, backward glance at Professor Aladár Sarbu's *Joseph Conrad világa* [Joseph Conrad's World] on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, as his former student, the beneficiary of his advice and—I shall take the liberty to claim the epithet—fellow Conradian. This book, Professor Sarbu's second and thus belonging to an early phase of his critical output, was published as part of the series *Írók világa* [Writers and their World], which in turn was launched with the obvious intention of providing accessible introductions in Hungarian to the life and work of major figures of world literature. We may assume that contributors to the series were asked to follow specific and uniform guidelines, but *Joseph Conrad világa* is, I believe, as characteristic of its author as *The Great Tradition* is of F. R. Leavis,[1] or indeed as "Heart of Darkness" is of Conrad. Erudition, precision, sobriety, clarity of categorisation and presentation, readability, commitment, but also strong opinions are the hallmarks of this short book, and these are precisely the qualities we have come to associate with the author's academic work in general.

Unlike most present-day introductions to a single author, the book under review here does not treat the writer's life and work in isolation. One gets the sense of reading a comprehensive, if necessarily condensed, narrative account of the phenomenon "Conrad," which includes the man and the writer, his life as well as the fictional world he created. In this, the book resembles a critical biography, except

1. See F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948).

for the fact that here the balance shifts in favour of the works themselves. But also, there is something novelistic about such comprehensiveness of presentation, which I shall return to at a later stage of this paper. The chapters follow the evolvement of Conrad from a Polish child into a seaman of the French and English merchant marines, and eventually (and most importantly), his evolvement into an English novelist. However, before the author embarks on an analysis of the fictional works, he usefully pauses to include a chapter on the different phases of Conrad's career as a writer, in which he addresses the difficulty of providing a convincing categorisation of his oeuvre (46–54). Professor Sarbu carefully avoids the simplistic compartmentalisation to which Conrad's works have at times been subjected, suggesting a more tentative classification that newcomers to Conrad will certainly find helpful: 'Beginnings: the exotic world of the Malay Archipelago' (*Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*); 'The productive years: mainly the sea' (*The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* "Heart of Darkness" and *Lord Jim*); 'The productive years: mainly society' (*Nostromo*, *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*); 'Success' (*Chance* and *Victory*); 'Career's end' (*The Shadow-Line*, *The Rescue* and *The Rover*).[2] It is to the author's credit that he does not give in to the then prevailing but questionable view according to which Conrad's work shows signs of a marked qualitative decline after *Under Western Eyes*, published in 1911. Once the chronicle of Conrad's life reaches his years as a writer, the works (as implied by the chapter headings) take the upper hand, but in between the discussions of individual texts, the author provides us with a summary of the period in Conrad's life which roughly corresponds to the writing and publication of the text under discussion. Also, the reader will find several pictures of Conrad, of the people he knew and the places he visited, the inclusion of which does a lot to bring him closer to us. The well-structured and comprehensive presentation of information and a highly accessible style attest to Professor Sarbu's pedagogical instinct, but I believe they also reveal this study to be the work of a novelist.

Aladár Sarbu is known not only for his academic publications but also as the author of four novels and a number of short stories. The book under review here often reads like a gripping novel, with Conrad as hero and his life and works as distinct but adjacent fictional spaces in a Conradian universe. More importantly, although his book

2. Translations of chapter headings are mine. In parentheses, I indicate which major works of Conrad's individual chapters focus on.

on Conrad predates the publication of his own novels, Aladár Sarbu has a fellow novelist's keen eye for detail. Always alert to aspects of the craft or method of fiction, he not only manages to pinpoint the compositional fortes and deficiencies of Conrad's texts, but also provides plausible explanations of the author's success or failure in each particular case. The famous scene of Marlow's discussion with Stein in *Lord Jim* stands as an example of Conrad's mature art: the writer, Professor Sarbu argues, manages to avoid clumsiness and to keep suspense alive because—although this long discussion centres on abstract ideas—the scene is woven through with the narrative of important events from Stein's life and made more vivid by the use of the light-darkness symbolism (128). As examples of Conrad's failure, we find compositional problems related mainly to the fledgling novelist's inexperience, such as in his first two novels, *Almayer's Folly* (1895) and *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896; see especially 61–74). But Professor Sarbu also calls attention to signs of Conrad's enervation in his later (and, in fact, mainly *late*) fiction—for instance, the intrusion of artistically unmotivated and clumsy elements in the plot of *The Rescue* (1920), the only function of which is to advance the story towards the desired end (234–7). T. S. Eliot once held that "the *only* critics worth reading were the critics who practised, and practised well, the art of which they wrote."[3] Now, this is surely an exaggeration, but judging by Professor Sarbu's book on Conrad, it seems to me that there is an element of truth in Eliot's position.

In *Joseph Conrad világa*, the author is at his best when it comes to close readings of individual texts. Known in university circles for his extensive reading, excellent memory of minute details of literary works as well as his firm judgements, he offers interpretations which usually carry us away with the force of conviction—and, occasionally, may cause us to protest in disbelief. (By "us" I mean "professional readers," shamelessly including myself in such a select group. What matters, however, is that the author himself never gets carried away to such an extent as to lose sight of his main audience, knowing perfectly well what the newcomer to the subject needs to know.) Disagree we may at times, but we are never left unaffected by Professor Sarbu's informed and powerful readings of Conrad's texts. Indeed, this is a quality that inevitably reminds me of F. R. Leavis, another committed and outspoken critic who had, to quote Marlow in "Heart

3. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), p. 31. The quotation is from "The Function of Criticism," where Eliot in fact qualifies this once-held radical view.

of Darkness," "something to say" about Conrad.[4] In today's academic world, dominated by the "publish or perish" principle and the consequent mass-production of critical articles and books of variable quality, there is, regrettably, too little such criticism; criticism that makes, or even attempts to make, an impact on our emotions as well as our intellect. Precisely because it is "only" an introduction and not a monograph, Professor Sarbu's book serves as a sharp reminder that it is always possible in critical writing to strike a chord that will reverberate in the reader's consciousness long after the turning of the last page.

Paradoxically, however, this authorial attitude is at the same time related to the book's greatest imperfection: a merely occasional but unfortunate intrusion of ideologically laden discourse. Today, thirty-six years after the book's publication, the reader accustomed to a high degree of neutrality in academic writing would surely feel baffled by such a persistent and categorical affirmation of one particular (and necessarily questionable) view of history and politics as one finds in *Joseph Conrad világa*. One example will suffice. Speaking of the Russian revolutionaries in *Under Western Eyes*, with whom the character Nathalie Haldin is associated, Professor Sarbu comments that time has proven her right, and that with astonishing accuracy, when she declares early on in the novel: "We Russians shall find some better form of national freedom than an artificial conflict of parties – which is wrong because it is a conflict and contemptible because it is artificial. It is left for us Russians to discover a better way" (204–5).[5] However, Conrad's attitude to Nathalie's prophecy of her country's future is clearly sceptical, and one may well wonder whether time has not, after all, proven *him* right. This and similar examples make Professor Sarbu's book, at least partly, a product of its time and the country where it was written and published. That even the (early) work of such an erudite and serious scholar is marred by an ideological taint is a testimony to the power of the official discourse in the Hungary of the 1970s (times which, it is fair to say, the author of these lines cannot have any first-hand experience of). When one considers the book side by side with John G. Peters's *The Cambridge Introduction to Joseph Conrad* (2006), a study comparable in size and its aims, one realises how much more neutral

4. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Paul B. Armstrong, Norton Critical Edition, 4th ed. (New York: Norton, 2006), p. 70.

5. Joseph Conrad, *Under Western Eyes*, ed. Jeremy Hawthorn, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), p. 79.

and balanced a picture the latter paints of Conrad's historical and political contexts.[6] (Admittedly, the comparison is not quite fair on several grounds.) On a lighter note, but still speaking of imperfections, I shall merely point out that a small number of factual errors slipped into Professor Sarbu's book too: *Chance*, for instance, was not published in book form in 1913 but only a year later (cf. Sarbu 210 and 248), and the collaboration between Ford Madox Ford and Conrad resulted not in two but three works (the author neglects to mention *The Nature of a Crime*, see Sarbu 104 and 249).

However, the book's merits far outweigh its shortcomings. Written before Chinua Achebe's attack on "Heart of Darkness" and the rise of postcolonial studies, long before a critical edition of Conrad's letters came out, and prior to the publication of what is the most comprehensive and scholarly biography of Conrad to date,[7] Professor Sarbu's book must be evaluated in the context of its time. Nevertheless, the author has produced much more than a synthesis of the accomplishments of Conrad scholarship as of 1974, even though that in itself would have been a considerable achievement, given the fact that several sources must have been difficult if not impossible to consult in Hungary. Professor Sarbu's is a well-researched and highly readable introduction, the work of a scholar and teacher, but it also provides strong readings of Conrad's texts that may be of interest to the specialist. What is more, *Joseph Conrad világa* remains the only book-length study of the writer in Hungarian to the present day. The Hungarian public can be grateful to have its own Conrad, and were the book not out of print, this major writer may be better known in our country than he is at present, and known for what he was. In that case, perhaps, one would not come across copies of *The Secret Agent* in the crime fiction section of major Hungarian bookshops but find the best of Conrad's works where they belong, among the classics of world literature.

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6. See John G. Peters, *The Cambridge Introduction to Joseph Conrad*, Cambridge Introductions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), pp. 19–26.

7. See, respectively, Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa," *Massachusetts Review* 18.4 (1977): 782–94; Joseph Conrad, *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, ed. Laurence Davies et al., 9 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983–2008); and Zdzisław Najder, *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle*, trans. Halina Carroll-Najder (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), which has recently been published in a second, extensively revised edition as *Joseph Conrad: A Life*, trans. Halina Najder (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2007).

# A "Literal" "Re-view"
## of Aladár Sarbu's *Henry James világa*

*Ágnes Pokol*

Aladár Sarbu,
*Henry James világa*
(Budapest: Európa, 1979)

> You spoke a little while ago of that fine spirit of choice and delicate instinct of selection by which the artist realises life for us, and gives to it a momentary perfection. Well, that spirit of choice, that subtle tact of omission, is really the critical faculty in one of its most characteristic moods, and no one who does not possess the critical faculty can create anything at all in art.[1]

Book reviews are mostly written upon the publication of the work in question, with the express aim to raise awareness, recommend, and evaluate. This is not exactly one of those cases, as Sarbu's excellent study of Henry James's world was published a good thirty-one years ago. Instead of being a superfluous *tour de force*, however, a literal re-view of the first—and so far only—biography of Henry James to appear in Hungarian has several good reasons to recommend it. Firstly, more than three decades later one may speak with assurance as to the worth of Sarbu's book and recommend it more wholeheartedly than ever; time continues to prove true every word of praise it has received since its publication in 1979. It is still a major point of departure for Hungarian James scholars and despite the proliferation of works written in English on James, *Henry James világa* remains refreshing and instructive for both the layman and the scholar.

The second reason in favor of the timeliness of this article is connected to the fact that James studies in the Anglo-Saxon world had already been in full swing in the 1970s and 80s, but hardly anything as yet had been published in Hungarian. Sarbu's *Henry James világa* had been, therefore, nothing short of pioneering. It was accompanied

1. Oscar Wilde, *The Critic as Artist* (NY: Mondial, 2007), p. 25.

two years later by the more in-depth *Henry James és a lélektani regény*,[2] forming the first few stepping stones of a road the construction of which has, lamentably, not been continued since. In this sense, this review of Sarbu's standard-setting work may be taken as an attempt at raising awareness of the need to continue such scholarly efforts—the transmission of the art of James to Hungarians in Hungarian. Apart from pointing to its merit, this book's uniqueness also points to a lack, the remedying of which seems to be forestalled by the perpetuation of a vicious circle; as long as there are no—or not many—books available by and on James in Hungarian, there is no interest in his works. Yet as long as there is no interest, the Hungarian James scholar eager to have a readership chooses to write in English instead.

The third reason is also a corollary of the first (literary excellence underlined by the passing of years); to write an introductory analysis of a writer's life *and* oeuvre whose works are notoriously difficult even for the native speaker and to remain interesting in the process without becoming too superficial for the scholar or too abstract for the layman is no easy feat. This is especially true if one considers the vastness of James's output and the consequent need for *selection* concerning both the works that should be included and the things that should be said about them. Books in the "Írók világa" [the world of writers] series are usually around two hundred and fifty pages long and illustrations are a crucial part of them, which tend to take up fifty to sixty pages. This does not leave more than two hundred pages for the scholar to do justice to such luminaries as Henry James, James Joyce, Thomas Mann, Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad,[3] to name a few—without ignoring the time and space-consuming task of providing a biographical frame that complements the analyses of the author's works. Bearing in mind Oscar Wilde's equation between selection, (artistic) creation, and criticism in "The Critic as Artist," Sarbu can undoubtedly be regarded as a representative of the critic as artist. Let us now turn to the details of his selection.

To begin with a bird's-eye view on structure and factual details, the book is divided into nine sections headed by Roman numerals, leaving open to interpretation whether they are parts or chapters or other. I propose to call them parts for the sake of clarity and regard as chapters the subsections into which parts IV, V, VII, and VIII are fur-

2. [Henry James and the psychological novel] Budapest: Akadémiai, 1981.

3. Actually, the "scholar doing justice to" Conrad's art was none other than Sarbu himself a few years preceding this study on James (1974).

ther divided. These chapters are not numbered but headed by the titles of the particular novels currently in focus—only ten novels have such a chapter-bearing status—which are often accompanied by biographical events as well as brief discussions of other shorter works. The nine parts usually cover a four to eight-year-period of James's life, except for the significantly longer time-frame of part I and IX, and the single year under scrutiny in part II. Part I relates the first twenty-four years of James's life, part IX depicts the last twelve years before his death, while part II focuses on the young James's first unaccompanied trip to Europe in 1869/70, which lasted a little over one year. Each part concentrates on several works (except for part II), from three literary pieces in part I all the way to thirteen works in part V. The lengthiest part is VII (172–214), while the longest and perhaps finest discussion is that of *The Portrait of a Lady* (104–116).

To look at the parts singly and in their order of appearance, "Gyermekkor, ifjúság: főleg Amerika" [Childhood, Youth: Mainly America] is the title given to part I. Focusing on James's formative years between 1843 and 1867, it is understandably heavily biographical in orientation. The peregrinations of the James family, rich in impressions, and young Henry's first attempts at writing are described in a tone that is warm and friendly without ever becoming overly intimate or speculative. This laudable approach to biographical details is characteristic of the whole of Sarbu's work and, once again, it is increasingly a cause for congratulation with the passing of years and the appearance of biographical works that border on gossip[4] and indecent insinuations.[5] The Jamesian "juvenilia"—"A Tragedy of Errors," "The Story of a Year," and *Poor Richard*—are handled with ironic wit combined with acumen that directs the reader's attention to typical traits of James's art already discernable in these youthful efforts; the endeavor of the narrator to remain "outside" his work and reach objectivity, the psychological interest in the role that experience plays in the maturation of a personality, the shying away from happy endings, the importance of character, and the figure of the attractive independent young American female surrounded by three suitors (32–3). In fact, this is another exemplary trait of Sarbu's treatment: besides James's major works, which are something of a "must" for scholars intent on writing a monograph, he also concen-

4. Lyndall Gordon, *A Private Life of Henry James: Two Women and His Art* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998).

5. Wendy Graham, *Henry James's Thwarted Love* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999).

trates on lesser-known pieces with the precise aim of looking for "hints of things to come."[6]

Part II is tellingly entitled "The Great Journey" [A nagy utazás]. It describes the twenty-four-year-old James's first unaccompanied European visit of 1869/70. The emphasis is on the young man's impressions that will eventually find their way into his writings; Sarbu points to certain details of *The Portrait of a Lady*, "At Isella," and *The Wings of the Dove* by way of demonstration (38, 41, 45, 46, 49, 54). The route is England, Switzerland, Italy, and France, and this time these already familiar places offer him not only their history, art, and beauty, but also the chance to meet several "celebrities"; Leslie Stephen, William Morris, John Ruskin, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, George Eliot and George Henry Lewes make his English sojourn memorable, even if the French artistic circles are to open to him only a few years later.

Part III covers six years and ten works; a period of James's life that was characterized by uncertainty concerning his sense of belonging, hence the apt title "Between Two Worlds" [Két világ között]. He had not yet decided to settle in England and the years between 1870 and 1876 saw him cross the Atlantic several times. Besides the momentous events of meeting the cream of French intellectual life (Gustave Flaubert, Emile Zola, Alphonse Daudet, Guy de Maupassant, and most importantly the Russian Ivan Turgenev, who lived in France) and (partly) Europeanized Americans like William Wetmore Story, Francis and Lizzie Boott, Sarah Butler Wister, and Elena Lowe—who all find their way into his writings in one way or another (as Gloriani, Gilbert and Pansy Osmond, Madame de Mauves, and Christina Light, respectively [64, 67])—James's artistic output is also faithfully recorded by Sarbu. He refers to the mildly successful short stories "Master Eustace" and "A Passionate Pilgrim" (58); he summarizes and puts into context James's first attempt at a novel called *Watch and Ward* (59–60); he draws a parallel between "Madame de Mauves" and the temperamental lady-friend, Mrs. Wister (64, 72); he points to the importance of "The Madonna of the Future" in connection with James's lifelong ruminations concerning the relationship between art, experience, and nationality (69–70); he traces James's love of Roman antiquity so similar to E. M. Forster's when referring to "The Last of the Valerii" and "Adina" (70–1); he glances at *Roderick Hudson* (83); and finally he focuses on *The American* at some length (83–7). In the

6. Adrian Dover, "Introduction" to James's "Georgina's Reasons" (accessed on 19 May 2010) <http://www.henryjames.org.uk/georgr/home.htm>.

latter novel the figure of the American businessman is introduced, which will continue to play an important role throughout James's career: his heroic but mostly rather unsuccessful efforts to portray this very American phenomenon, the verisimilitude of which critical opinion tends to question—Sarbu included (86, 147, 239).

As earlier alluded to, Part IV ("Manhood: Mainly England" [Férfikor: főleg Anglia]) contains the finest and longest analysis: Sarbu examines James's first masterpiece, *The Portrait of a Lady* (104–116), among seven other writings. In fact, this period includes another undoubted success, *Daisy Miller*, and the other works that accompany these two outstanding pieces almost all testify to James's genius. At this point, the previously-mentioned need for selection concerning criticism/art becomes of crucial importance to the reviewer as well; in the course of time, James's output turns into nothing short of staggering, and so it would fall far beyond the scope of any article—especially a review that is supposed to whet readers' appetites instead of exhaustively analyze—to reflect on all the nineteen novels, twenty-nine shorter pieces, two plays, twenty critical writings, two travel writings, four biographical works, and the countless letters that comprise Sarbu's selection. Therefore, with a further narrowing of scope, let us concentrate on the highlights of each part only. One of the noteworthy lines of thought in Sarbu's discussion of *The Portrait* is that the time-hallowed "international theme" is present but only to serve as a background to the testing of a (very American) theory of life: the freedom/independence/self-reliance of the individual, which is proved dangerous when unaccompanied by wisdom/experience. Naïve, idealistic, egotistic Isabel Archer turns out to be the maker of her own unhappiness. Connected to this is another excellent observation: the source of evil/bad is located inside and not outside the individual; it is not so much context-specific as something subjective (115).

The remarkable element of part V ("Excursions" [Kirándulások]), besides its intelligent and sensitive analyses of the "realistic/naturalistic" (136) *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*, is its focus on *The Tragic Muse*. Sarbu cleverly uses this usually (unfairly) ignored novel of James's middle period as a bridge between parts V and VI ("Theatre" [Színház]), with the latter concentrating on the Master's abortive attempts at becoming a celebrated playwright. Sarbu is unbiased but humane when discussing the mediocre dramatized version of *The American*, an insignificant and justly rejected play that followed (162), and the bad melodrama entitled *Guy Domville* (167), the hostile reception of which caused James's physical and spiritual breakdown.

Part VII focuses on James's further *attempts*, this time at regeneration after his shocking theatrical experience, the fruits of which justify the labeling of this period as the "*experimental* phase"—hence the title "Experiments/Attempts" [Kísérletek]. This is the longest part of the study and its highlight is Sarbu's attention to another lesser-discussed novel, *The Spoils of Poynton*, which is supplemented by an apt suggestion of a parallel between Mrs. Gereth's "treasure-house" and the lucky incident of James finally finding his own real-life version of it, namely Lamb House. Life and art, biography and work constitute a happy whole on Sarbu's pages and no frown on any New Critic's/Formalist's brow can convince one of their interlinking being a "crime" a critic should never be guilty of.

As the title once again suggests, Part VIII is about the Master's major phase [A fő korszak]. Sarbu's more appreciative stance towards the writings of this phase takes him closer to Leon Edel and F. O. Matthiessen than to F. R. Leavis and critics highly "critical" of these late works.[7] While Sarbu's rendering of *The Ambassadors* is exhaustive and outstanding, his approach to *The Wings of the Dove* is a matter of interest for yet another reason besides its excellence. The end of the Victorian era and the beginning of what James regarded as the flagrantly vulgar and commercial Edwardian era roughly coincided with the beginnings of his major phase and inevitably influenced even such an apolitical life as his (215–6). Sarbu opines that the dichotomy of spiritual/art–material/commercialism and the question of their synthesis consequently became a decisive element in *The Wings of the Dove*, a novel depicting the vulgar commercialism so typical of the age, the epitome of which is London. However, its supposedly contrasting counterpart, Venice, is then shown as being far from purely spiritual/artistic and untainted by commercialism; already in connection with *The Aspern Papers*, Sarbu has reminded the reader that Venice was one of the mightiest commercial centers and to take it exclusively as the symbol of things more elevated would distort the truth (150).

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7. With reference to Edel's monumental five-volume biography (published in Philadelphia, New York and London between 1953 and 1972, entitled *Henry James. The Untried Years (1843–1870), The Conquest of London (1870–1881), The Middle Years (1881–1895), The Treacherous Years (1895–1901),* and *The Master (1901–1916)*, respectively), Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), and Matthiessen's *Henry James: The Major Phase* (NY: 1944). In fact, the relation between Sarbu's opinion and these three critics is different in the case of *The Bostonians*; he joins Leavis in his praise of this novel and points out that Edel, in contrast, regards it as a rather unsuccessful rendering of a topic not congenial to James (130).

Even so, the dichotomies of good and evil, art/spirituality and commercialism/materialism, Venice and London, Milly Theale and Mrs. Lowder are retained and the possibility of synthesis is brushed aside (not followed through). Sarbu retains his view of Maud Lowder (Lancaster Gate, London) as the negative extreme and locates Milly and Venice—despite her failure to find shelter from the ugliness/evil of the world even in that city—at the other end, with Milly eventually turning out to be too good/pure/spiritual for this life (232–4). Thus, Venice is, at one point, shown as being similarly saturated with the spirit of commercialism. But in the final analysis, it remains the representative of the positive extreme hand-in-hand with Milly against London and Mrs. Lowder, with Kate and Densher being influenced by both and finally redeemed by the former (232–4). The lovers, in fact, raise another important issue: Sarbu signals the modification of James's earlier belief propounded in *The Portrait* that evil resides within and not outside a human being; in *The Wings of the Dove* evil is related to the social context (229).

Part IX is a worthy conclusion to Sarbu's account of James's life and works. "The End of the Career" [A pálya vége] relates the Master's one-year visit to his homeland after so many years of absence, which was characterized by a respectful and enthusiastic public reception somewhat mitigating his surprise, bordering on dismay, at the sight of so much change. *The American Scene* sums up his impressions and "The Jolly Corner" seems to suggest that his youthful decision to uproot himself and spend his life on the old continent was not regarded as a cause for regret by an elderly James taking stock (249). Revisiting old places was followed by the revisiting of older works; the appearance of the New York Edition (1907–1909) of his collected writings prompted him to rewrite many of them, often not to their advantage (253). Although Sarbu regards some of these changes as instances of lamentable meddling, he rates the Prefaces written for each volume very highly (253). He likewise holds that the unfinished *The Ivory Tower* shows the makings of a masterpiece (262), while the result of James's last experiment with drama (*The High Bid*) cannot be said to have surpassed *Guy Domville*. The Master never became a good playwright, which is less regrettable than the increasing disinterest in his fiction even amongst the younger generation surrounding him in his lifetime (255–60).

The bibliography is indeed instructive and user-friendly and the sixty-three illustrations are delightful. In sum, it can only be repeated that Sarbu's study is "a classic on a classic." It is highly recommended both to those in search of an introduction to James's

oeuvre and to those already familiar with it and in need of a reliable reference work. Not only is it worth one's while to follow up the first step that the perusal of this book may constitute within the reader's own intellectual excursion in the field of James's art, but it is also highly interesting to do so by going ahead with Sarbu's line of thought and reading his subsequent *Henry James és a lélektani regény* and *The Reality of Appearances—Vision and Representation in Emerson, Hawthorne, and Melville* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1996). Already in *Henry James világa* there are "hints of things to come" from these two other works; with far less emphasis on biography, their contexts allow for the elaboration of issues that could only be pointed out in passing in *Henry James világa*. The relationship between reality and appearances, life and art, surface and depth, manners and morals, the real and the ideal has already been present in its "embryonic" form in *Henry James világa* (176, 219, 242–3) and *Henry James és a lélektani regény* (39, 180–1), and it becomes the central issue in *The Reality of Appearances* in connection with writers besides James as well. (In fact, Sarbu only devotes a chapter to James at the outset of that discussion and focuses on his predecessors.) Likewise, the characteristics of the psychological novel and James's contribution to it are already repeatedly referred to in *Henry James világa* (32–3, 113–4, 172, 219–20).

# Henry James és a lélektani regény

*Borbély Judit*

Sarbu Aladár:
*Henry James és a lélektani regény*
(Budapest: Akadémiai, 1981)

Sarbu Aladár 1981-ben megjelent monográfiája Henry James életművét a lélektani regény kialakulásában betöltött szerepe szempontjából elemzi. A pályakép megrajzolásán keresztül bemutatja azt a folyamatot, ahogyan a hagyományos realizmus mellett létrejött az angol irodalom egyik legizgalmasabb (ha nem a legizgalmasabb!) irányzata, amelynek képviselőit ma is méltán tekintjük kiemelkedő alkotóknak.

Az első fejezetben képet rajzol a tizenkilencedik század végéig tartó szakaszról, melyben lassanként polarizálódott az angol irodalom. Sarbu számba veszi a különböző jelzőket, melyekkel a kritikusok a kor műveit címkézték, jelezve a két pólust: társadalmi vagy személyes, szubjektív vagy objektív, materialista vagy spirituális. Már itt jelen van az a módszer, amely a monográfiát mindvégig jellemzi: az eltérő kritikai értelmezéseket Sarbu nemcsak lajstromba veszi, hanem rendkívül követhető módon értékeli is, hogy végül kiegészítse saját megállapításaival. Az előzmények áttekintésében különösen figyelemre méltónak tartom az egykorú olvasóközönség bemutatását, az ízlés és az olvasásigény változását, az olvasottság szintjének alakulását, ami érdekes és értékes kultúrtörténeti információval gazdagítja az irodalmi elemzést.

A lélektani regény és a formai kísérletezés szemszögéből az *Egy hölgy arcképé*től a *The Golden Bowl*ig tart a pályaív, melyet Sarbu elemez. Mivel az 1881-ben megjelent *Egy hölgy arcképé*t megelőző művek nem képezik ezen fejlődési folyamat szerves részét, a *Roderick Hudson* (1876), a *The American* (1877), a *The Europeans* (1878), a *Confidence* (1880) és a *Washington Square* (1881) elemzését és értékelését a „Függelék" tartalmazza majd, ahol a szerző jelzi a James későbbi munkáiban uralkodóvá váló tematikai és technikai jegyek első, tapogatózó felbukkanását.

Az életmű részletesen vizsgált íve három nagy korszakra bontható. Az első korszakban, melyben még a realizmus dominált, találjuk az *Egy hölgy arcképe* (1881), a *The Bostonians* (1886), a *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) és a *The Tragic Muse* (1890) című regényeket. A második alkotói korszakot már a kísérletezés jellemezte, ahol a realizmus egyre jobban halványodott. Ide sorolhatjuk a következő műveket: *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897), *What Maisie Knew* (1897), *The Awkward Age* (1899) és a *The Sacred Fount* (1901). A harmadik, Henry James „érett" korszakaként számontartott időszakban születtek meg az író főművei: a *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), a *The Ambassadors* (l903) és a *The Golden Bowl* (1904), amelyek már kiforrott formában mutatják a kísérletezések eredményét.

Mielőtt azonban a felsorolt művek elemzésére térne, Sarbu a második fejezetben sorra veszi azokat a tényeket, amelyek hatással voltak Henry James művészetére, illetve amelyek fényében világosabban értelmezhető Jamesnek az angol irodalomban betöltött szerepe. Mindenekelőtt kiemelendő, hogy Henry James munkássága képzi az átmenetet, melynek végén az angol irodalom lassan letűnő korszakát felváltotta a Joyce és Virginia Woolf fémjelezte, forradalmian új korszak. James angol elődei közül George Eliotot tartotta a legnagyobb-

nak, mert nála találta meg filozófus és művész együttélését, ami az ifjú Jamest is foglalkoztatta, és amit Dickensnél (és Goethénél) hiányolt. Itt kell említeni James óriási világirodalmi tájékozottságát, és kapcsolatát francia és orosz írókkal. A francia irodalomból Flaubert, Zola, Maupassant és Balzac volt számára a legérdekesebb, bár erősen sérelmezte a franciák közönyét a kortárs angol regény iránt. Az orosz írók közül elsősorban Turgenyevet tisztelte, aki élete végéig patrióta tudott maradni anélkül, hogy provinciálissá vált volna, és akinek a művészetében jelen volt a James számára rendkívül fontos morális felelősség, amit viszont a franciáknál hiányolt.

Amikor 1876 decemberében letelepedett Londonban, Henry James véglegesen Európát választotta. A második fejezet 2. alfejezete hosszan foglalkozik James választásának okaival, górcső alá véve nemcsak számos, a kérdéssel foglalkozó tanulmányt, hanem néhány olyan művet is, amelyekben James maga fogalmazta meg aggályait az amerikai közeggel szemben. Hawthorne-ról írott könyve (1879), valamint a „*The Madonna of the Future*" (1873) és az időskori *The American Scene* (1907) egyaránt azt érzékeltetik, hogy James szerint az írói kibontakozásnak az amerikai társadalmi és művészeti légkör nem kedvez. Amerikának nincs éltető múltja, hiányoznak a megtartó hagyományok, csak rohanó jelene van, azt azonban – ahogyan a monográfiában olvashatjuk – magába rántja a jövő, és így megfoghatatlan a művészi kifejezés számára. A James Európához fűződő viszonyát elemző munkák gyakran vádolták az írót sznobizmussal, mondván: feltétlen csodálata az öreg kontinens iránt elhomályosította James látását, nem vette észre az európai, főleg az angol valóság hibáit. Bár e kemény kritikát nem veti el teljesen, Sarbu hangsúlyozza, hogy James nem a valóság pontos mását akarta ábrázolni, hanem egy képzelet szülte világot. Nem volt azonban vak a kor politikai és gazdasági viszonyaival szemben, az esetleg csillogónak tűnő felszín alatt jól látta a szomorú igazságot.

A 3. alfejezet azt a kérdést járja körül, mennyit értett abból, amit látott, és mit ábrázolt Henry James, aki Amerikát elhagyva gyökértelenné vált, ám Európában kívülálló maradt. Sokan és sokféleképpen értékelik James tapasztalatainak mélységét. Nem szabad azonban figyelmen kívül hagynunk, hogy James nem balzaci méretű társadalmi körképet akart rajzolni. Lehet, hogy tapasztalatai és élményvilága korlátozottak voltak, ám amivé az adott élményanyagot feldolgozta, az sokkal hatalmasabb. Utaljunk itt a monográfiában idézett híres tanulmányra („*The Art of Fiction*", 1884), amelyben James maga fogalmazta meg, hogy a tapasztalat soha nem korlátozott, hanem valójában rendkívüli érzékenység.

A 4. alfejezet, melynek címe „Dekadencia?”, azt boncolgatja, hogy a korai realista regényeket fejlődés követi-e, vagy a már elért tökéletesség fokozatos széthullása. Az érvek és ellenérvek felsorakoztatása során jutunk el ahhoz a felismeréshez, hogy James műveiben fokozatosan erősödő szerephez jutott a művészet, a múzeumvilág. A *The Sacred Fount*tól kezdve a regényekben megjelenő műtárgyak kiléptek alárendelt szerepükből, nem pusztán gazdagították az életet, hanem kulcsszerepet játszottak a szereplők motivációjának érzékeltetésében, az összefüggések megvilágításában, sőt akár aktív feladatuk volt a kompozícióban. Mindez jól illusztrálja James fentiekben említett véleményét a tapasztalat mibenlétéről, ugyanakkor jelzi, hogy bár az élményvilág beszűkülése nem jelenti a tisztánlátás elvesztését, az összefüggések közvetítésének képessége esetleg halványulhat. A fő alkotói korszak műveiben sokszor erőltetett szimmetriák, zsúfolt képrendszer, sémák és absztrakciók helyettesítik vagy teszik kérdésessé az élmény hitelét. James képvilága rendkívül erőteljes, különösen ebben a korszakában jellemző a látvány képszerű ábrázolása, elsősorban a festészetre támaszkodva.

Az irodalmi és kultúrtörténeti háttér felvázolása után következik a monográfia középpontját képező fejlődéstörténet, a lélektani regény kialakulásának nyomon követése az említett három alkotói korszak műveinek részletes elemzésén keresztül.

Az első, realistának tekintett korszak két fejezetet kapott, mivel az „Elvek és eszközök: az indulás” című harmadik fejezet egésze az *Egy hölgy arcképé*vel foglalkozik, míg a *The Bostonians,* a *The Princess Casamassima* és a *The Tragic Muse* elemzése a negyedik fejezetben található.

Az *Egy hölgy arcképe* (*The Portrait of a Lady*) előzményének tekinthető „nemzetközi” témájú *Roderick Hudson*, *The American, The Europeans*, és az önállóságra törekvő nő portréját megrajzoló *Washington Square* itt csak említés szintjén szerepel, hiszen a hangsúly Henry James első nagy regényén, az *Egy hölgy arcképé*n van, melyben a két téma összekapcsolódik. Isabel Archer története az első időszakot leszámítva lenyűgözi a kritikusokat és az olvasókat. Ebben a regényben Amerika és Európa szembesítése új szerepet kap, csak háttérül szolgál a központi kérdéshez. Ami Jamest foglalkoztatta, az Isabel életének alakulásán keresztül az egyén felelősségének vizsgálata sorsának alakításában, különös tekintettel a szabad választás és a végzet kérdésére, valamint a választás felelősségére. Sarbu részletesen elemzi az eltérő kritikusi állásfoglalásokat, kezdve az egykorú elutasító kritikával, amely hiányolta a „rendes” történetet és befejezést, és elégedetlen volt Isabel megformálásával. A legjelentősebb kri-

tikusok érvelésének szembeállításán keresztül érthetjük meg, hogyan kezdett James elszakadni a hagyományos regénytől, és kezdte kialakítani a rá jellemző formát és eszköztárat.

A negyedik fejezet a kísérletezést megelőző évtized műveivel foglalkozik röviden. A *The Bostonians* és a *The Princess Casamassima* társadalmi regény, melyekben James az élet sűrűjébe tekintett, míg a *The Tragic Muse* művészregény.

A polgárháború után játszódó *The Bostonians* James legnagyobb „amerikai" regénye, amelyben az amerikai nő helyzetét vizsgálta, illetve művészi és dokumentum értékű képet festett a nőmozgalomról, a feminizmusról. Az író kívül maradt a maga teremtette világon; bár ellenszenve nyilvánvaló volt, nem foglalt állást egyik oldal mellett sem. Amerikai közegről lévén szó, James ebben a regényben személyes tapasztalataira támaszkodhatott, ám már most számos példát találunk arra, hogyan igyekezett néha feleslegesen bonyolultnak tűnő szókapcsolatokat alkalmazni tárgyak, emberek, helyzetek megnevezésére, ami a későbbiekben egyre jellemzőbb lett. A fejezet végén néhány érdekes részlet világítja meg a kialakulóban lévő módszert. Más kritikusok véleményével ellentétben Sarbu úgy véli, mindez nem pusztán a jellemzés eszköze. Az a tendencia van itt alakulófélben, hogy minél távolabbinak látta a világot, amelyről írt, James annál inkább szükségét érezte, hogy – ahogy Sarbu fogalmaz – a szavak manipulációjával gazdagítsa művét.

A *The Princess Casamassimá*ban, egyedülállóan politikus regényében, James számára valóban idegen közegbe merészkedett, hiszen a századvég forradalmi munkásmozgalmát ábrázolta és London kevésbé elegáns negyedeibe kalauzolta az olvasót. A regény megjelenése óta viták kereszttüzében áll, melyek visszatérő kérdése, hogy a politikai szál dominál-e, vagy a főszereplő, Hyacinth Robinson lélektani drámája. A másik vitatott kérdés a londoni élményanyag hitelessége; számos kritikus, köztük F. R. Leavis is úgy véli, hogy James nem ismerhette London sötét oldalát. E kérdés boncolgatása során Sarbu az eltérő kritikai véleményeket James előszavának és jegyzeteinek tükrében értékeli, gondolkodásra késztetve az olvasót is. Vitathatatlan ugyanakkor a regény másik vonala, a lélektani cselekménszál, Hyacinth fejlődése és lelki válsága, a lelkesedéstől a meghasonláson át az öngyilkosságig tartó metamorfózis ábrázolása. Hogy James itt is kívülálló maradt-e, vagy azonosult valamelyik szereplő nézeteivel, vitatott kérdés, melyre Sarbu szintén kitér. Az mindenesetre kétségtelen, hogy James előítéletei és sznobizmusa jól érzékelhetőek a regényben.

Mint művészregény, igen eltérő a korszak utolsó regénye, a *The Tragic Muse,* amelyben megtalálhatóak a kísérletezés előtti szakasz

tipikus jegyei. Itt is a gyakorlati élet ütközik a művészettel, ugyanakkor nagyon erős a mértani szerkesztés, ami már a *Roderick Hudson*ban is megjelent. Nick Dormer és Peter Sheringham történetében párhuzamos cselekményszállal van dolgunk. Ami azonban ténylegesen foglalkoztatta Jamest, az a Miriam Rooth alakjában megformált színészi egyéniség. Ez utóbbi miatt tekinti a kritika a *The Tragic Muse*-t jelentős alkotásnak annak ellenére, hogy a *Notebooks* tanúsága szerint James nem volt maradéktalanul elégedett Miriam megformálásával. A regény előszavának és a *Notebooks* vonatkozó jegyzeteinek összevetésével Sarbu érzékletesen világítja meg James vívódásait, törekvését a drámaiságra és mindenekelőtt az objektivitásra. Ez utóbbi, az objektivitást elősegítő eszközök kidolgozása lesz a következő, kísérletező korszak központi feladata James számára.

Az ötödik fejezet a kilencvenes években született *The Spoils of Poynton, What Maisie Knew* és a *The Awkward Age* elemzésén keresztül ismerteti meg az olvasót James azon törekvésével, hogy minél erősebb objektivitást érjen el az elszemélytelenítés segítségével. E regényeit megelőző színházi próbálkozásai utóhatásaként mindhárom regényben feltűnő a párbeszédes jelleg, valamint a jelenetszerűen egymást követő epizódok. Változik azonban az írói világkép.

A három fejezettel mintegy három felvonásra osztott *The Spoils of Poynton*ban a fentiekben említetteken kívül külön figyelmet érdemel a műkincsek, tárgyak szerepe. Nemcsak a cselekmény kiindulási pontját jelentik, hanem különös jelentőségük van a szereplők jellemzésében, érzékeltetik az emberi kapcsolatok milyenségét, és egyben kézzelfoghatóvá teszik a szépség elvont eszméjét. James múzeumvilágának jelentősége a későbbiekben még erősebbé válik majd.

A *What Maisie Knew* külön értékét az egyetlen nézőpont adja, hiszen az eseményeket Maisie tudatán keresztül követhetjük nyomon. Ugyanakkor James itt nem tudott kívül maradni az általa teremtett világon; mivel a kislány nem tudta volna szavakba önteni a tudatán átszűrt valóságot, szükség volt az író nyelvi kifejezőkészségére. Bár szembetűnő a Maisie valószínűsíthető értelmi színvonala és a nyelvi megfogalmazás közötti különbség, ez nem zavaró, mert James a kislány szellemi fejlődését is ábrázolni kívánta. Maisie azon hősnők sorába tartozik, akik az ártatlanságtól a tapasztalatig vezető fájdalmas utat járták végig. Amikor aztán már átlátott a felnőttek képmutatásán, Maisie is megtanult alakoskodni. Maisie fejlődésének ábrázolása során James kíméletlen képet festett a korabeli angol társadalom álszent, lélekromboló képmutatásáról. S a regény végén egy drámai jelenetben itt is középpontba kerül a választás felelőssége.

James kísérletezésének legszemléletesebb darabja a *The Awkward Age*, Sarbu frappáns megfogalmazásában: kísérleti mintadarab. A technikai újítások mellett azonban azt is látnunk kell, hogy James egyre kritikusabban szemlélte a társadalmat, és fokozatosan vesztette el illúzióit. A *Maisie*-vel ellentétben a *The Awkward Age* nem egyetlen nézőpontból íródott, nincs valódi központi szereplő. A regény szereplői egyformán fontosak, hol az egyik, hol a másik tudatán keresztül látjuk az eseményeket. Ennek érzékeltetésére Sarbu felidézi, hogyan ábrázolta James a regény újszerű felépítését egy központi objektum köré, egyforma távolságra rajzolt körökkel. Sarbu ugyanakkor kristálytiszta okfejtéssel bizonyítja, hogy a lineáris cselekményvezetés hiánya ellenére a látszólagos mozdulatlanság mögött valójában érzékelhető a valahonnan valahova haladás dinamizmusa.

A regény gerincét párbeszédek alkotják, és ezeket csak akkor érthetjük, ha a szereplők jellemét tisztán látjuk. Máskülönben szinte lehetetlen a félig kimondott gondolatokat, halvány utalásokat, emlékfoszlányokat értelmeznünk. Sarbu ezt az érdekes kísérletet James pszichológus bátyja, William James okfejtésével támasztja alá.*

A *The Awkward Age*-ben két világ és két nemzedék ütközik egymással. A cím egyaránt utal a hősnő, Nanda életkorára és a Viktória kor azon szakaszára, amikor az erkölcsi elvárások és a szabados viselkedés messzire szakadtak egymástól. James illúzióvesztése dacára nem rajzolt tisztán fekete-fehér ellentétpárt, Sarbu megfogalmazása szerint az író igyekezett megbékélni az utálatos valósággal.

A hatodik fejezet („Elvek és eszközök: a fő korszak") James utolsó három, legnagyobbnak tartott regényével érkezik el a pályaív csúcspontjához. Előttük azonban a *The Sacred Fount* elemzését olvashatjuk. Bár e regény művészi erényei csekélyek, a cselekmény (ha egyáltalán beszélhetünk ilyenről) meglehetősen kusza, Sarbu fontosnak tartja bemutatását, mivel a forma és a stílus már a nagy regényeket jelzi, és e regény így átmenetet képez a középső és a fő alkotói korszak között. Mint az eddigiekben is, az eltérő kritikai megközelítések értékelésén túl Sarbu azt is elemzi, hol található kapcsolódási pont az adott regény és James többi műve között, melyek azok az elemek, amelyek már korábban is megjelentek, és melyek azok, amelyek az ezután következő fő művekben még nagyobb szerephez jutnak. Ebből a szempontból külön figyelmet érdemelnek a *The Ambassadors* című regénnyel vont párhuzamok: az érzékeny narrátor szerepe, művészet és valóság viszonya. Ugyancsak nagyon érde-

* William James, *The Principles of Psychology II* (New York, 1890).

kes James szóválasztásának elemzése, ami a nehezen érthető mű megértését nagyban segíti.

A *The Ambassadors*re térve az életmű csúcspontjának első állomásához értünk. Jóllehet a regény 1903-ban jelent meg, míg a *The Wings of the Dove* már 1902-ben, a *The Ambassadors* készült el hamarabb, ezért a fejlődési íven ez a mű a következő lépcsőfok. A regény jelentőségéhez méltó, rendkívül részletes elemzést olvashatunk. Sarbu számtalan példán át mutatja be, hogyan lépett tovább James a korábbi, kísérletezve keresett elemek alkalmazásában, miként árnyalta ezek kapcsolatát. A szövegközpontú okfejtés a különböző kritikák tükrében foglalkozik az egyetlen nézőpont (néha megbicsakló) jelenlétével, Amerika és Európa a korábbiaknál árnyaltabb szembeállításával, látszat és valóság ellentétével, annak beismerésével, hogy mindennapi tudásunk véges, és – ami ebből következik – a korlátozott ismeretek megbízhatóságának kérdésességével. Mint már korábban jeleztük, művészet, konkrét és szimbolikus műtárgyak kiemelkedő szerephez jutottak James fő korszakában. A *The Ambassadors* ennek egészen kiemelkedő formáját mutatja, mivel a Lambert Strether tudatán átszűrt világ ábrázolásával James prózája az impresszionizmushoz válik hasonlatossá. Ennek csúcspontja a híres folyóparti jelenet, de Sarbu számos további példával bizonyítja James stílusának különleges értékét. Az említett jelenet értelmezése során különösen érdekes annak elemzése, miért egy Lambinet képet választott James a főhős élményének keretéül a barbizoni iskola valamely ismertebb képviselőjének festménye helyett, amivel a Jamesre oly jellemző, aprólékosan átgondolt igényesség újabb bizonyítékával szembesülünk. A szereplők jellemzése során Sarbu újra és újra utal a korábbi regényekben felbukkant elődeikre, elsősorban Strether fejlődésén keresztül érzékeltetve, hogyan finomodott James korábbi világlátása.

A következő nagy mű, a *The Wings of the Dove* témája hosszú éveken át foglalkoztatta Jamest. Ez a mű is kapcsolatba hozható az író korábbi műveivel, ami azonban még izgalmasabb, az annak nyomon követése, hogyan változtak az író eredeti tervei. Sarbu az előszóra és a *Notebooks*ra támaszkodva ezúttal is részletesen bemutatja a regény megszületésének hátterét, James töprengéseit, az alkotás nehézségeit. James maga aránytalannak érezte a szerkesztést, és önkritikáján felbátorodva sokan kárhoztatták is. E fanyalgók véleményét azonban Sarbu elegánsan cáfolja bebizonyítva, hogy a londoni és a velencei fejezetek, valamint Milly halálnak körülményei tökéletes egységet alkotnak, és a mértani aránytalanság teljesen indokolt. London kiábrándító világának, az elegáns Lancaster Gate-et és a nyomorúságos

Chirk Streetet egyaránt körüllengő kalmárszellemnek, látszat és valóság fájdalmas ellentétének hosszasabb bemutatása elkerülhetetlen, hiszen innen indul a cselekmény, itt kapcsolódik össze Milly, Kate és Densher élete, és ezek határozzák meg a hősök jellemét és vágyait. Ezzel a világgal áll szemben Velence és Milly. A velencei fejezetek rövidebbek ugyan, mint a londoni rész, ám az ábrázolás rendkívüli intenzitása kiegyenlíti a különbséget. Sarbu kimerítően bizonyítja e megállapítás igazságát.

A szereplők részletes jellemzése során világos képet kapunk az általuk képviselt értékekről (értékekről?). Milly különleges alakjának értelmezése mellett kiemelendőnek tartom Sarbu elemzését Mrs. Lowderről, és annak logikus kifejtését, hogyan rendezhetjük ellentétpárokba a kulcsszereplőket.

Hasonlóan izgalmas a festészet ezúttal is rendkívüli szerepe, amivel a Veronese képek és Bronzino Lucrezia Panciatichi portréja kapcsán Sarbu részletesen foglalkozik. Ugyancsak figyelemre érdemes a kritikusok által felvetett keresztény elem, amit Sarbu finom okfejtéssel cáfol.

Az életmű betetőzésének tekintett *The Golden Bowl* című regényt immár a teljes pálya tükrében elemzi Sarbu. Kimutatja a téma, a motívumok, a szereplők előzményeit, ami különösen a szereplők elemzésénél teszi egyértelművé, hogy ez a regény valóban a pálya lezárását jelenti. A korábbi művekre történő utalások, a szereplők összevetése elődeikkel ugyanakkor visszamenőleg is sok mindent érthetőbbé tesznek, az olvasó számára egyre világosabban kirajzolódik az alkotói pályaív és a technika fejlődése mellett James világképének alakulása. Adam Verver és Maggie – Strethertől, Millytől, Isabel Archertől és másoktól eltérően – már távolról sem egyértelműen pozitív amerikai értékek hordozói; a szépség szeretete, a kultúra ápolása mindkettőjüknél szorosan együtt jár az anyagias gondolkodásmóddal és a dehumanizáltsággal, mely a körülöttük lévő embereket a műgyűjtő értékrendje szerint osztályozza. Semmivel sem különbek tehát, mint Mrs. Lowder volt. Sarbu főleg Adam Verver alakján keresztül mutat rá James polgárképének ellentmondásosságára és a polgársággal kapcsolatos illúzióinak megrendülésére. Bizonyságul két későbbi James művet említ, melyekben pozitív értékek már nyomokban sem találhatóak. Úgy tűnik, Amerikát és Európát James Amerigo herceg személyén keresztül kapcsolta össze. A herceg alakját elemezve Sarbu szemléletesen bizonyítja, hogy a regény időhatárain belül a herceg még nem képes a két kultúra között valódi összekötő kapcsot formálni.

A regénnyel kapcsolatban sokan felvetették, hogy James ezúttal nem korát ábrázolta, hanem az állam, az arisztokrácia vagy éppen a

szolgálattévők absztrakcióit. Sarbu azonban a regény egyik, Matchamben játszódó kulcsjelenetével bizonyítja, hogy bár James igyekezett tágítani a regény jelentésének körét, mégiscsak saját korára érvényes, súlyos kritikát fogalmazott meg. A Fawnsban játszódó, ugyancsak rendkívül fontos jelenet kapcsán pedig Sarbu érdekesen elemzi azt a kérdést, vajon Maggie alakján keresztül a megváltás keresztény allegóriájával van-e dolgunk, amint azt számos kritikus felvetette. Sarbu a hangsúlyt a morális tartalomra helyezi, és jól követhetően mutat rá James társadalomábrázolásának alakulására, a *The Spoils of Poynton*tól a *The Golden Bowl*ig húzódó ívre, így bizonyítva, hogy az utolsó regény jelentése messze túlmutat az allegória vagy realista regény dilemmáján.

A monográfia hetedik, utolsó része először két posztumusz munkával foglalkozik, melyekben ismét előbukkant a Jamest mindvégig foglalkoztató kérdés: szembenézzünk-e a rúttal (hiszen nem kétséges, hogy illúziói elvesztésével romlottnak látta a világot), vagy fordítsunk hátat neki. Sarbu rövid elemzésben mutatja be a tíz könyvre tervezett, de csak három könyvben elkészült *The Ivory Tower*t, melyben közvetve James időskori hazalátogatásának tapasztalatai fedezhetőek fel, valamint az ugyancsak töredékes *The Sense of the Past*ot, melyben James hőse egy évszázadnyit visszamenve azzal szembesül, hogy az a kor sem volt ártatlanabb.

Az „Utak Jamestől" című második alfejezet röviden érinti James és Wells, James és Conrad viszonyát, a rokon vonásokat és a különbségeket. Kiemeli továbbá James előfutár szerepét Joyce és Virginia Woolf kísérleti regényeiben, és röviden bemutatja a jamesi elemek továbbélését és továbbfejlesztését Joyce és Woolf munkáiban. Mindezzel a kutatás további irányát jelöli ki.

Végezetül, mint már jeleztük, a monográfiát záró „Függelék" tartalmazza az első alkotói korszak műveinek rövid elemzését, melyek a lélektani regény kialakulásában még nem játszottak jelentős szerepet.

Sarbu Aladár monográfiája minden részletre kiterjedő, átfogó és egyben rendkívül élvezetes módon vezeti végig az olvasót az írói pályán. Henry James jegyzeteinek bemutatásával egészen közel hozza az író gondolatvilágát, vívódásait és dilemmáit, ami nagyban hozzájárul műveinek, az egyes motívumok szerepének, jelentőségének megértéséhez. Különösen értékesnek találom az aprólékos, szövegközpontú elemzéseket, és azt az érzékenységet, ami James szóhasználatának értelmezésében megnyilvánul. Hatalmas ismeretanyag birtokában elemzi a műveket, s a kritikai vélemények összevetése során számos esetben James esszéit is segítségül hívja. James művei nem könnyen érthetőek, Sarbu okfejtése azonban olyan logikus, hogy

a rendkívül gazdag, sőt néha zsúfolt, esetleg kaotikusnak tűnő jamesi világot érthetővé tudja tenni még a művekben járatlan olvasó számára is. Jó tanár módjára újra és újra visszautal korábban tett megállapításaira, párhuzamot von motívumok és szereplők között, aminek eredményeként nem egymást követően írt, elszigetelt műveket látunk, hanem fokozatosan kirajzolódik egy egységes egész, James különleges művészete.

A *Henry James és a lélektani regény* című monográfia értékes olvasmány minden, irodalom iránt érdeklődő laikus számára, és alapmű a James-kutatók könyvtárában.

# Egy csúfondáros regény

*Bakó Krisztián & Székely Péter*

Sarbu Aladár:
*Egyetem: Csúfondáros regény*
(Budapest: Argumentum, 1995)

Az egyetemi regény egy tősgyökeresen angol-amerikai regényforma, amely műfaj-történetileg a tanult ember olyan korai ábrázolásaiból indult ki, mint Geoffrey Chaucer oxfordi tudósai a *The Canterbury Tales*-ből. A korai, terjedelmükben rövid és ábrázolásmódjukban gyakran vulgáris jellemrajzok a regény térhódításával egyre részletesebbé és árnyaltabbá váltak, míg a viktoriánus angol irodalom palettáján feltűnő, az egyetem világával foglalkozó könyvek már kifejezett divatcikknek számítottak. Bár az egyetemi bestsellerek száma mára jelentősen lecsökkent, az egyetemi regény mind a mai napig közkedvelt.

Magyarországon meglehetősen kevés képviselője akad ennek az angol-amerikai kultúrkörben oly népszerű és nagy létszámú regényformának, mely lényegében a magyar felsőoktatás – a brit intézményekhez viszonyítva – kései kialakulása és a társadalmi életben betöltött csekélyebb szerepével magyarázható. A magyar egyetemi élet ihlette irodalom előfutárai között olyan szerzőket tisztelhetünk, mint Kaffka Margit, Babits Mihály és Juhász Gyula. A háború utáni egyetemi hallgatói légkörbe Bóka László *Karfiol Tamás* (1962), Tóth Béla *Mi, janicsárok* (1965), Szalay Károly *Szorgalmas éveink* (1985) és Turczi István *Mennyei egyetem* (1987) című regényei kínálnak bepil-

lantást, míg az egyetemi oktatók életét bemutató regényforma, az ún. *Professorroman* közé sorolható Bíró Mária *Vivant professores* (1986) és a jelen recenzió témáját képező, Sarbu Aladár *Egyetem: Csúfondáros regény* (1995) című műve.

Sarbu Aladár regénye méltó képviselője az 1960-as éveket követően testet öltő angol-amerikai egyetemi regénynek, melyet egyrészről az 1950-es éveket követően tömegesen felbukkanó *Professorroman* szatírák, másrészről pedig az 1950-es évek után dominánssá váló önreflexív regénypoétika jellemez. A világháború utáni egyetemi regény fő ismertetőjegyeit magán hordozva az *Egyetem* főhőse nem az előkelő és befolyásos családból származó egyetemi hallgató, hanem a társadalmi hierarchia alsóbb régióiba tartozó oktató. Ugyancsak a releváns regénykonvenciók közé sorolható a szatirikus látásmód, így a felsőoktatás magasztalása helyett az egyetem és az általa képviselt értékek csődje illetve kritikája kerül célpontba a műben. Az egyetem és egyetemi oktató ilyesfajta ábrázolása kifejlett formában az amerikai vonalon Mary McCarthy *The Groves of Academe* (1952), míg Angliában Kingsley Amis *Lucky Jim* (1954) című regényeiben jelenik meg. McCarthy és Amis művei mindazonáltal az egyetemi regénynek annak a dokumentarista, realista áramvonalába tartoznak, melyet az 1960-as években kezdődő posztmodernizáló folyamatok jelentősen átformáltak. A posztmodern egyetemi regény fő jellemvonásává az irodalmi önreflexió lépett elő. Vladimir Nabokov *Pale Fire* (1962), John Barth *Giles Goat-Boy* (1967) és David Lodge *Nice Work* (1988) című művei azon posztmodern egyetemi regények eminens képviselői, melyek a regényírás, az olvasás, mint befogadó tevékenység, illetve maga az irodalmi szöveg szerkezetének vizsgálatára vállalkoznak.[1]

Sarbu Aladár a világháború utáni angol-amerikai egyetemi regény ezen konvencióiból merít, mely magában a mű címében is hatháto-san megfogalmazódik. A körültekintő olvasóban már a cím láttán tudatosulhat, hogy egy csúfondáros, kritikus képet fog kapni egy olyan egyetemről, mely a címben szereplő „regény" meghatározás alapján – ami a mű realista, dokumentarista mivoltát hivatott előtérbe helyezni – talán nem is egészen kitalált. Bár a szöveg ilyen jellegű műfaji önbeazonosítása már magában metafikciós eszközként értelmezhető, az *Egyetem* a metafickiós kísérletezgetés és önreflexió eszközeit a háttérben tartva elsősorban a műfaj szatirikus, realista hagyományait követi.

1. Kállay Géza „Melyik Erasmus-kávéházban?" (2004) és a „Semmi vérjel" (2009) című egyetemi novellái ugyancsak eme utóbbi, metafikciós kategóriába sorolhatók.

Az *Egyetem* által ábrázolt felsőoktatás világa lehangoló. A regény főszereplője, vagy akár antihőse Pados Ábel, aki a karvaldi (harvardi?) Topcsányi Tamás Tudományegyetem Angol Nyelvű Tanulmányok Tanszékének adjunktusa. Pados falusi származású, albérletben lakik és alacsony tanári fizetése miatt anyagi gondokkal küzd. Sarbu vitriolos kommentárokkal tár az olvasó elé egy minden patinát nélkülöző felsőoktatást; Pados egyetemi kollégáinak szakmai felkészültelenségét jól demonstrálja a tény, hogy maga a tanszékvezető még angolul sem tud. A Topcsányi Tamás Tudományegyetem mikrokozmoszként tükrözi az egyetem zárt körén kívül eső makrokozmosz állapotát: az omladozó falú tanszék egy politikailag rogyadozó Magyarországba illeszkedik, ahol, a szerző szavaival élve, „az MSZMP erjed és bomlik".[2]

A tehetségtelen, döntésképtelen, önző és számító oktatók és a közöttük megbúvó jó szándékú, de alapjában véve tehetetlen Pados az egyetemi szatíra tökéletes kellékei. A sokatmondó nevek – mint például Proff professzor, Beszédes, Vedel, Badari, Feledy, Siketfi, Nyulasdy szakszervezeti bizalmis és Hochtech portás – valamint a kalandos, váratlan fordulatokkal, véletlen egybeesésekkel tarkított és a félreértésekből származó bonyodalmaktól koránt sem mentes cselekményszövés pedig a románc és a manierista dráma konvencióit idézik. Az *Egyetem* összhatása erőteljesen emlékeztetheti az olvasót David Lodge *Nice Work* és *Small World* (1984) című regényeire. A párhuzam megalapozottnak tűnik, hiszen a stiláris hasonlóságokon túl mindkét esetben egy angol irodalmat oktató egyetemi tanár mutat be egy fiktív angol tanszéket. Sőt, Sarbu össze is köti saját és Lodge képzeletbeli egyetemét azáltal, hogy könyvében megjeleníti a Lodge regényiből jól ismert főhősöket, Robin Penrose-t és Philip Swallow-t, valamit a Roomley (Lodge-nál Rummidge) Egyetem angol tanszékét. A mű hátterében meghúzódó intertextualitás a felismerés örömével jutalmazza meg a jártas olvasót. Az irodalom berkeiben szakavatottaknak, mint ahogy az irodalom tanszékeket bemutató egyetemi regényeknél ez megszokott, bőséges irodalmi referenciával szolgál az *Egyetem*. Mindezektől függetlenül Sarbu regénye nem alapoz túlságosan az olvasó irodalmi előképzettségére, így a laikus olvasó nem érezi idegennek, érthetetlennek a szöveget.

Szinte elkerülhetetlen, hogy a magyar felsőoktatás világát ismerő olvasó párhuzamokat vonjon a Sarbu alkotta regényvilág és a valóság között. Bár az *Egyetem* a felsőoktatás sajátságos szabályait és rituá-

2. Sarbu Aladár, *Egyetem: Csúfondáros regény* (Budapest: Argumentum, 1995), p. 242.

léit majdhogynem karikatúra-szerűen ábrázolja, a nyilvánvaló torzítások és túlzások mögött az olvasó a felsőoktatás izolált világában leledző emberi és intézményi tökéletlenségeket pillantja meg. A műben ábrázolt romlott, szinte dekadens fázisát ünneplő felsőoktatás azonban mégsem teljesen kilátástalan. Főhősünk, bár akadályokkal küzdve és lassan, a regény végére mégis eljut egyről a kettőre. Mi más is lehetne egy fiatal egyetemi oktató boldogulása felé vezető rögös út első állomása, mint a doktori tudományos fokozat megszerzése? Megannyi kalandot követően Pados természetesen megvédi *A költői dráma elmélete: Topcsányi és T. S. Eliot* című doktori disszertációját. A regény optimizmusra és bizakodásra okot adó záróakkordja tökéletesen harmonizál Sarbu szatirikus hangnemével. Az összhatás nyilvánvalóvá teszi, hogy az *Egyetem* nem a végső elkeseredés terméke, hanem egy szatírával, kalandokkal, no és némi valósággal fűszerezett képzelet-földje, mely sajátságos humora révén arra int, hogy nem kell mindent mindig véresen komolyan venni.

# Szabálytalan recenzió
## Az olvasó tűnődései

*Pikli Natália*

Sarbu Aladár:
*Tűnődő: Politikai gyermekregény*
(Budapest, Argumentum, 1997)

Sokértelmű, ritkán használt de hangképében gyönyörű szóval indul Sarbu Aladár regénye – Tűnődő. Aki tűnődik, nem egyszerűen gondolkodik, töpreng, elmélkedik, azaz intellektusát használja, hanem egyúttal mereng, ábrándozik, magába mélyed: a képzelet és a magány adta szabadságot felhasználva próbál a dolgok közepéig, mélyéig eljutni. E tűnődés jellemzi ifjabb Cser Flóriánt, a regény főhősét – és ugyanígy az írót és írói módszerét. Nem lineárisan végigvezetett gondolatmenet vagy fejlődéstörténet bontakozik ki előttünk, inkább egy-egy csomópont körül kereng és próbál nyugvópontra jutni részben – tapasztalatai révén – a gyermek Flórián, részben a néha körülményesen filozofikus, néha megértően ironikus narráció. S hogy mi e tűnődések célja? Az első, Eredetmonda című fejezet nemcsak a

Cserek családi genezisére ad magyarázatot, hanem kulcsot ad a mű eredetéhez is: „S mialatt a töredékekből egészet csinált, az egészből újra és újra töredék lett. Töredék család, töredék Magyarország, töredék történelem. [...] Nem, teljesség nincs, Flóriánnak efelől nem voltak kétségei, teljességre legfeljebb törekedhetünk, de el nem érjük, [...] s mert e darabokra hullást szerette volna szerény eszközeivel ellensúlyozni valamelyest, úgy döntött, hogy jobb híján magamagát állítja tűnődései közepébe" (40–41).

Bár a koncentrikus körök középpontja mindig a kicsit magának való, csöndes kisfiú, ifjabb Cser Flórián, akit olvasóként követünk világra való eszmélkedésétől kezdve a 14 éves kori pályaválasztásáig és a szűkebb szülőföldtől való elszakadásig, a szűkebb és tágabb környezethez való viszonyulások hálója legalább ennyire fontos számára – és az olvasó számára is. „Politikai gyermekregényt" olvasunk, tréfásan hangzó de pontos műfajmegjelölésként. A nagyvilág egyértelműen politikai eseményei (háború, választások, munkaverseny, békekölcsön stb.) többnyire csak a fejezeteket megelőző, és idegen szövegtestként tartott újsághírekben, politikai hírekben, szakszervezeti leiratokban jelennek meg. Hatásuk némileg lefékezve, átalakulva jelenik meg Flórián közvetlen környezetében, a szűk völgybe szorított kis bányászfaluban, átszűrve és némileg átalakulva a mindennapi élet eseményein. Persze, megjelenik maga Rákosi Mátyás is a faluban, sőt Cserék házában is, Arany János-i parafrazált próféciát mondva az ifjú Flóriánra, fejét simogatva: „E gyerekből pap lesz, akárki meglássa" (94), mégsem maga az esemény a legjelentősebb Flórián számára, hanem a Cser nagycsalád reakciói, a vasárnapi családi összejövetelek beszélgetései, mindaz, ami hullámverésként körülveszi a „nagy látogatást". A gyermek Flórián szemszögéből nézve a „nagy ember" mindössze érdekes jelenség, a kommunizmus gond nélkül összeköthető a Bibliával: „»A munkásoké a jövő« – Flórián Becsy tisztelendő úr szavaival azonosította a dalt, mely ígéret szerint boldogok a lelki szegények, mert övék a mennyek országa" (87). Rákosi úgy csillapítja le a tömeget egyetlen mozdulattal „ama hegyi beszéd" (91) alkalmával, „mint Jézus a hullámokat" (87). A narráció ironikus perspektívába helyezi a nagypolitikát – sohasem találkozunk direkt értékítéletekkel, az irónia és a humor sokszor ellenpontozza finoman az eseményeket, ez egyik legnagyobb erénye a regénynek. A kelet-közép európai történelem abszurditása pontosan rögzített, objektivitásukban is szatirikus zárvány-epizódokban jelenik meg: Rákosi testőrei kétségbeesetten védelmezik a „nagy embert" az ártatlan merénylőktől, azaz a falu félkegyelműjétől, az árnyékszéken ülő Bebe Jóskától és a nagy fekete kocsira esett döglött siklótól.

A humor leggyakrabban mégis a gyerekek világában jelenik meg: ahogy Flórián elmeséli az általa olvasott szentimentális vadnyugati kalandregényt társainak (öntudatlanul megelőlegezve későbbi hivatását), a stílusok és kontextusok távolsága humorforrásként szolgál, amit a narrátor érzékenyen rögzít: „»Minő kín« – írta együttérzéstől szipogva a szerző, kinek nevére Flórián már akkor sem emlékezett. »Minő kín« – ismételte meg fenn a tisztáson megrökönyödésére hűséges hallgatóinak. »Az anyja keservit« – nálunk így mondják – javította ki Csünt [Flórián barátja] a stílusát, de el is hallgatott, mert csüngött Flórián beszédes ajkán, mint hal a horgon" (109).

Nyilvánvalóan a gyermekvilág és az oda leszűrődő felnőtt problémák kerülnek a középpontba, hiszen „gyermekregényt" olvasunk. Azonban míg a gyerekcsínyek, iskola, első szerelem, „bandázás" tipikus gyermekproblémái körül kering a történet, mindez elválaszthatatlanul összefonódik a szűkebb környezet felnőtt kérdéseivel – Flórián érzékeny gyermek, lenyomatként rögzít mindent elméjében, s a narrátor is láthatóan súlyt helyez a nagyvilág ideszűrődő eseményeire.

A szeretett Gémessy doktor kényszerű politikai menesztése kapcsán kitörő „dalháború" leírása remekül példázza a szerző egyensúlyozását gyermek- és felnőttvilág között: a politikai propagandaként kötelezően felszerelt hangszórókból ömlik az „Egy rózsaszál szebben beszél..." a „száműzött" doktornak dedikálva a falu renitens lakosai kérésére. A közép-európai történelmi abszurd e kis epizódja azonban végül belesüllyed a megszokásba, s a falu végül elfogadja a fentről küldött új doktort – a kiábrándító realitásokat nem titkolja el a szerző, bár a narrációban végig érzékelhető nemcsak együttérzése, hanem a realitásokon túlfutó reménykedése is.

A szerzői hang meghatározása talán a legnehezebb. Nem objektív leírást olvasunk – a narráció egy külső, mindentudó nézőpontból közvetít, amely nem azonosítható a felnőtt Flóriánnal. A külső nézőpont teret ad előre- és hátrautalásoknak, a nagyobb távlatoknak, az ironikus bemutatásnak, azonban sohasem válik teljes mértékben objektívvá – maga a szerzői hang is töpreng, körbejár, néha *A helység kalapácsát* idézően fecsegő bőbeszédűséggel. Szimpátiái az objektivitásra törekvés mellett is jól kivehetőek, s úgy közvetíti felnőtt narrációként a gyermeki érzéseket, hogy egyszerre látjuk a gyermek Flóriánt több idősíkon, mégis jól érzékelhető a szöveg mögött a gyermek is. A falut megrázó események leírásában pontosan rögzít hol groteszk epizódot: Lina néni táncát az asztalon, hol tragikus eseményt: Sirályék egyetlen fiának halálát, mely összekapcsolódik Flórián új ágyának kérdésével.

Flórián lelki és szellemi alakulásának filozofikus, tűnődő követése mellett a regény tagolt és árnyalt képet ad a múlt század 40-es, korai 50-es éveinek világáról egy kis, elzárt bányászfalu, és egy összetartó család közösségén keresztül, sok kitűnően és emlékezetesen megrajzolt figurával. Tragédiák és komikus epizódok követik egymást, még egy gyilkosság is megesik e kis közösségben, mely mikrovilágként pontosan leképezi a nagyvilágban megjelenő problémákat, azonban mindvégig megmarad összetartó ereje – amit a szerzői hang kimondatlanul is legnagyobb erényének tart –, s ezért a kamaszodó Flórián kiszakadása e közösségből nem könnyű.

A *Tűnődő* egyszerre szól egyénről és tömegről – ahogy a Walt Whitmantól választott mottó kitűnően jellemzi: „Az igazi tehetség akkor érzi nagynak és egészségesnek magát, ha részét alkotja a tömegnek". A környezetből nem kiválni és kitűnni kell, hanem magunkba építeni – ez Flórián tapasztalata, mely a gyermekben tudatosan még nem, de a felnőttben már megfogalmazódik. Tömeg és egyén, nagypolitika és megtartó kisközösség viszonya, elvegyülés és kiválás – ezen kérdések visszacsengenek az olvasó tudatában, további tűnődések felé nyitva meg az utat.

# Reálisan

*Takács Ferenc*

Sarbu Aladár:
*A tűnődés vége: Korszakváltó regény*
(Budapest: Argumentum, 2002)

Hasznos olykor eszünkbe idézni, hogy eredetileg bizony az újságírással metszették egy tőről a regényt. A műfaj régi mesterei – Defoe és a többiek – a napihírben is utaztak, a tanulságokban gazdag megtörtént esetekről szóló beszámolókra éhes olvasóikat aznapi reáliákkal lakatták jól. S így van ez mind a mai napig: miközben a regény írója megalkotja a maga mégoly öntörvényű esztétikai tárgyát, valamilyen formában mégiscsak tudósít, mégpedig az életről, s benne persze az emberekről.

Sarbu Aladár regényhősének, Cser Flórián egyetemi docensnek gyakran jut eszébe, hogy őt „nem az irodalom, hanem az emberek

érdeklik". Ebbeli meggyőződését a szerző is osztani látszik: a regény elsősorban tudósítani kíván, és arra hívja fel olvasóját, hogy a mű értékét nyugodtan mérje ennek a híradásnak az érdekességével és fontosságával. Azaz – hogy visszanyúljunk a nemrég elhunyt angol írónő, Iris Murdoch tanulságos megkülönböztetéséhez – *A tűnődés vége* tudatosan választja a regényírás „publicisztikai pólusát", akár az életességgel elkerülhetetlenül vele járó esetlegességnek az árán is, a másik lehetőséggel, a „kristályos forma" pólusával szemben, ahol is a regény a szükségszerűség önmagát igazoló zárt rendje, ám ezért önmaga kényszerű „elélettelenítésével" kénytelen fizetni.

A tudósítás bizonyos Cser Flóriánról szól, az ő társadalmi és erkölcsi tanulságokban bővelkedő életpályáját mutatja be az elbeszélés. Falusi bányász-család sarja, akit egy korábbi rendszerváltás – vagy korszakváltás – emelt-lendített fel értelmiségi sorba (erről szólt egyébként Sarbu előző regénye, az 1997-ben megjelent *Tűnődő*), s most (a regény ideje szerint 1989 táján), egy másik korszakváltás sodrában vet számot a maga életével és ennek az életnek az értelmével. Hosszabb szabadságra megy, és felesége mellől egy vidéki panzióba költözve hozzálát egy „életre vezérlő kalauz" vagy „életfilozófiai szakkönyv" megírásához, mely valójában élete számvetése lesz: pálya- és sorsválasztásának értelmét firtató, világmegváltó világnézetének és pártos szerepvállalásának erkölcsi hasznát-kárát mérlegre vető tanúságtétel.

De Sarbu regényében mégsem csupán az emberek érdekesek, azaz a regényen kívüli életről szóló tudósítás. Végtére is jellegzetesen irodalmias képletre adott variánst olvasunk, *A tűnődés vége* „regényt író regényíróról írott regény" (illetve ennek a konvenciónak a közeli rokona). Cser Flórián így érdekesen megkettőződik, a könyvén dolgozó főhősre és az erről beszámoló harmadik személyű, de a főhőssel közelesen azonos tudatú, lényegében szabad-függő beszédhelyzetbe állított elbeszélőre. Míg az előbbi a maga történetét – érthetően – mitizálni (olykor egyenest szentimentalizálni) igyekszik, az utóbbi a dolgokat reális értékükre lefokozó irónia szellemében teszi helyre ezt az igyekezetet.

De ugyanebből az elbeszélői képletből egy másik érdekes kettősség is adódik a regényben. Az elbeszélő Cser Flórián, a bújtatott szerzői alakmás igen fegyelmezett, az elbeszélés technikája terén jól kiképzett, a regényírás szolgálati szabályzatát töviről-hegyire ismerő és be is tartó narrátor. Viszont e mögül az elbeszélői maszk mögül gyakran villan elő a regényíró arca: Sarbu mintegy a maga személyében, s jórészt a maga életanyagát mozgósítva, tudósít erről-arról, például (a hivatalos tolmácsi minőségben közelről megfigyelt) Mihail Szuszlovról

és Nemes Dezsőről ad közre emlékeket, vagy szatirikus kitérőt kanyarít bizonyos Reich Vilmos Gézáról, aki mostanában William G. Rich néven filantróp amerikai multimilliárdos, ösztöndíjakat osztogat, és a rendszerváltást pénzeli. Közben hosszasan idézteti hősével Cser lecsúszott költő-barátjának, Fülekynek a feljegyzéseit, s persze Cser Flórián készülő könyvéből is közread bő (ugyancsak szatirikus-ironikus hangvételű) szemelvényeket.

Ezek a részek valójában betétek vagy betoldások: szerves közük Cser Flórián önvizsgálatához nem sok van, viszont annál aktuálisabbak és kritikusabbak, s mindenképp találóak és szellemesek. Mindebben viszont a regény, amelynek szerzője Henry Jamesről, az elbeszélői fegyelem és következetesség kora-modernista fanatikusáról írt monográfiát, paradox módon inkább a dickensi elbeszéléstechnika lazaságát-buggyosságát idézi, illetve a különböző beszédmódok egybehabarását elvszerűen űző „posztmodern" hányavetiségnek kacsint oda. Azaz ennek az irodalmiság ügyében megokoltan szkeptikus regénynek a (számosan meglevő) erényei voltaképpen nagyon is irodalmiak.

Sarbu Aladár anglista irodalomtörténész, egyetemi tanár. Első regénye, a *Töredék*, 1983-ban jelent meg, 1995-ben *Egyetem* címmel tett közzé szatirikus „egyetemi regényt", ennek a jellegzetesen aktuálpublicisztikai angol-amerikai műfajnak sikerült magyar példáját. *A tűnődés vége* a szerző negyedik regénye. Talán még ebben a könyvben is jórészt az eltakarítás munkája folyik, a ballaszttól való megszabadulás: azokról a dolgokról szól a regény, amelyeket a szerzőnek le kell írnia, mintegy behajthatatlan tartozásként (azaz veszteségként), vagy amelyeken át kell valahogy írnia magát, hogy továbbléphessen. De ha jól fülelünk, a gazdag betakarítás, a végleges megírás határozott szavú ígéretét is kihalljuk belőle.*

* Eredeti, rövidebb verziója megjelent: *Népszabadság,* 2002. december 14.

# The Introduction of All Orientations

*Boldizsár Fejérvári*

Aladár Sarbu,
*The Study of Literature:*
*An Introduction for Hungarian Students of English*
(Budapest: Akadémiai, 2008)

I still vividly remember the first days, in the late 1990s, of my undergraduate studies at ELTE, and the most feared examination of all. That examination, following Professor Aladár Sarbu's lecture series on the Introduction to English and American Literary Theory and Criticism, was the first, and for many, the last, real watershed during our university career. Also, it had perhaps been the longest-running lecture course in literature until, a few years ago, due to the new arrangements in the wake of university restructuring, it was replaced by one central Hungarian-language course compulsory for students of a wide range of different majors.

It may well be that this change, releasing Professor Sarbu from a demanding, though also rewarding, duty inseparable from his name, has indirectly made the present volume possible. For although much of the material included in *The Study of Literature*, having been accumulated over the years and decades of lecturing experience, will be familiar to any student who took his famous intro course, the structure, comprehensiveness, and lucidity of the volume must have taken painstaking editing, a clear and refined view of organization, and the most time-consuming task of writing up in academic prose what had previously been there in the form of lecture notes and handouts. And this textbook has definitely been worth the time and effort.

What strikes one immediately is the immense scope and variety of the themes discussed in *The Study of Literature*, matched by its compactness. From an overview of the development of English language and literature studies at British and American universities, highly informed by such authorities as Samuel Johnson, Thomas Wharton, Henry Hallam, Hugh Blair, and Matthew Arnold, Sarbu proceeds through technical, generic, critical, and theoretical issues before he discusses the more particular aspects of the study of English in Hungarian academia. Throughout, his approach shows a happy combination of diachronic and synchronic viewpoints, surveying the

history as well as the present state of the different elements and points of analysis.

The point of departure lies in M. H. Abrams's famous "orientation" of critical theories, the epochal introduction to *The Mirror and the Lamp*, which was the pivot of Sarbu's introduction lectures as well. The discussion then diverges in two directions. On the one hand, Sarbu surveys the critical and theoretical essays he considers crucial to the understanding of 20th-century discoveries regarding English and American literature. These partly follow his selection from David Lodge's two important anthologies, *20th Century Literary Criticism* and *Modern Criticism and Theory*, respectively; to these, many other key texts are added, giving an even, balanced, and up-to-date summary of the development of critical and theoretical thought. On the other hand, he enumerates the elements of literature, first in terms of the mechanics of metre, rhyme, and rhetoric (chapters 3 & 4), and then in view of generic considerations (the introduction in chapter 5 followed by chapters 6 through 8 dedicated to lyric poetry, fiction, and drama, respectively). All the way through, he relies on a pertinent and extensive range of primary and secondary sources—perhaps not always the most recent, but definitely representative of what has been written in these manifold areas up to the present day.

Chapter 3 is a perfect case in point. In treating rhythm and metre, Sarbu provides both a historic overview of how the concepts of poetic rhythm developed over the centuries and a comparative reading of individual passages according to different schemes. What is more, he does so with clear reference to recent studies in the area (such as Derek Attridge's *Poetic Rhythm*, 1995). He discusses not only the most conventional metrical forms of syllable-stress (or accentual-syllabic) verse (57–63) but also such exciting, though apparently isolated, experiments as the Bishop of Lincoln's quantitative rendering of the initial lines of *The Odyssey* or "the rhythmically perhaps most gifted English poet" (64) Lord Tennyson's sceptical attempt at a model quantitative distich. Due space is dedicated to Hopkins' sprung rhythm as well, pointing out its rootedness in historical linguistics and Old English poetic models (71ff.). It is also in this chapter that we find one of the few instances that may perhaps justify the modest disclaimer of the subtitle, "An Introduction for Hungarian Students of English," since apart from a brief comparison of English and Hungarian diction here and a more extended overview of English and American Studies in Hungary in chapter 10, there is not much that should keep foreign students from reading, and learning from, this valuable volume.

For this is a book to learn from, whether one reads it as a set textbook for a course or out of sheer curiosity—which it promises to quench in excellent style, through lucid definitions and a wholly perspicuous structure. To reinforce the basic facts and concepts, all chapters (and some subchapters, too) include a "Summary," which recapitulates, in eminently terse style and boldfaced keywords, all the important terms discussed in the given part. These summaries, as well as the references list for each chapter, provide a perfect starter if one is looking for further information on any given theme mentioned before.

In the winter of 1997/98, I sat the fearful 'Sarbu exam' myself. Thanks to some solid seminar work with Professor János Kenyeres, I got a 4 (roughly equivalent to a B, a decent but imperfect grade), and now I cannot help but think that I would have done much better, had I had access to this excellent book. Even more importantly, though, I will be using *The Study of Literature* in the future, to initiate my own first-graders into literary theory and criticism. After all, it reveals the three most central issues in the study of English: where it comes from, what it has achieved so far, and where its future perspectives lie. And I think no one can expect more than that of a comprehensive introduction like this one.

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# szépirodalom & műfordítás
# literature & translation

# 21st Century Whale

*Judit Nagy*

In all seasons
A temperature of its own
Defying melting icebergs,
Slowing currents,
The chemical krill
Of a spreading oil spill
The whale does swim.

# Privacy, please!

*Ágnes Pokol*

## 1

She could still remember the moment when it had struck her that she may already be dead without any one—including herself—being aware of that rather lamentable fact. As she was looking at her husband across the table during one of their animated dinner parties, he seemed to her more rampant than ever. A giant green shiny thing in full bloom. A monstrous basil plant, with *her* dead brains in the pot to feed on—due to some strange twist of fate, she had in time become both the Isabella and the Lorenzo of their love, the upshot of which was that sturdy herb of a Hugh unchanged by marriage, as virile as ever. He was explaining something to some Daisy or Pansy, or whatever her name was (the daughter of their friends who had brought their little flower along for the first time, bless their soul), flourishing a chunky Cuban between his stubby fingers by way of assisting his lecture with gestures worthy of an Italian—the *vecchio libertino* that he was and would remain till his demise. Hugh was still very handsome. At the ripe age of fifty-five he could still turn heads and demoralize marriages. And she? What about Nora Hilary, the middle-aged Henry James scholar, the egghead, the mother of a freckled pubescent, and the wife of a womanizer? She was fine, thanks, as far as their acquaintances could tell. Neither more nor less beautiful than twenty years ago, she was a fairly attractive female intellectual, who often consoled herself that although she may not be a Sophia Loren, she was certainly more of a looker than George Eliot. Well, that was something.

It was not another episode of adultery promising to be on their marital menu that had shaken her so at that particular moment. It was the realization that the flower with the large cleavage was young and plump while *her* sap was running low due to her passive acquiescence to becoming the nourishment of that botanizing basil of a husband of hers. If Hugh wanted to hover around some more, he was welcome to it; Nora just did not want to be used up in an amorous process which had no promise of amour for her. Dame Nature could give her a break, she had done her duty by that demanding matron; she had been a faithful wife and a conscientious mother. Indeed, she had raised little Henry as well as she could, despite the fact that she had never felt cut out for the maternal role. Her worst crime may have been the ill-suppressed gleam of criticism with which she some-

times caught herself scrutinizing her son; it was the awe-inspiring look of the uncompromising artist sizing up her own work. Whether it was because of this that little Henry had been pleased as punch at the idea of going to boarding school, or it had more to do with the Harry Potter epidemic infamously infecting her own child as well, was a question she preferred to leave unanswered. Anyhow, one offspring was already a proof that she had had her share in populating the globe and she did not have to bother with a little James. It was time she focused on herself—before her time was up, that is. The private life. That's what she wanted. To read, write, lounge and linger at her pleasure, to measure out her tasks with no one to ask why she does what, and why then, and till when. Finally marriage would not be in the way of Art—she had learnt her lesson from the master and it was still not too late.

Hugh had not exactly been devastated by his wife's announcement; "Sure darling, go off and write nice books and practice your Italian." It had gone so smoothly that Nora almost missed having to account for her decision and detail her plan. To lounge and linger seemed to be within her reach there and then, without having to move to Umbria. Had the basil plant so easily uprooted itself and found some other congenial soil? Was it grief or relief that she felt at her dispensability? Well, the die had been cast and so she was to have an Italian private life. The house in the country had been chosen and paid for, the owner had most probably already spent the money she had had to pay in advance, and the old shelves and corners had been freed of dust and cobwebs in her honor.

She had always lived in cities and it was for the first time that she would find herself surrounded by rolling hills and copulating herds instead of the various urban excrescences of some concrete jungle. To have peace and quiet would be the greatest adventure! No buses screeching to a halt in front of the house, no bored neighbors peeking in at the windows, no late-nighters rumbling down the stairs or climbing up in the company of giggling nightcappers. Even the name of the old house was music to her ears: *Il Silenzio*. She had deliberately chosen this one because it was located in a strategic position not too close but not too far from human habitations, either. Not counting the owner's house next door, which she promised to use only at the weekends and with the greatest tact so as not ever to disturb her dear lodger, the closest neighbor was a good four hundred meters away, while the little medieval town where cozy little restaurants and shops could be found was within ten kilometers. She could furthermore enjoy her delicious life of a recluse without having to

fritter away her time on the chores that the upkeep of such a place demanded. Yes, indeed, if one wanted the solitude of a place that was isolated from any kind of disturbance that the human factor always entailed, one needed to own some land around one's house. Accordingly, *Il Silenzio* had a very large garden, an olive grove and a tiny vineyard protecting it from all sides. Apart from sounding very rustic and romantic and whatnot, it all had to be tended, and the happy tenant had two alternatives: he or she either metamorphosed into a gardener or paid a pro to do it. Nora opted for the second choice and felt grateful for the green-thumbed individual in advance.

As soon as she caught sight of the house from a distance she knew her sojourn would be an aesthetic joyride, a great big plunge into the lake of beauty, an inexhaustible source of wondrous impressions. She knew at the same time, however, that she had not come thither in need of experience that was to be turned into another cute crowd-pleaser about yet another lonely individual's Italian sojourn with all the fiascos and romances that it usually entailed. *Under the Tuscan Sun* was not to be followed by "Under the Umbrian Sun," at least not as a result of *her* literary endeavors. If she had come to Italy in search of experience, it was the experience of writing *in* Italy that she was after and not experience to furnish her with material to write *about* Italy. Rolling hills, picturesque peasants, and confused Anglo-Saxons might surround her when she occasionally descended her hilltop hermitage and mingled with her fellow humans, but they were not in the least welcome on her pages. Okay, the Master had done it, too, but to "use" Italy the way James so wonderfully had would be the work of a transparent copycat. To resemble the crowd-pleasers, on the other hand, was against her credo; she was not in the least disposed to compromise her art for the sake of a by-and-large uncultivated readership interested in page-turners, tearjerkers and who-dunits. The mercenary muse did not tempt her; she had enough money to live comfortably, and she did not need lots of it so as to catch herself a husband—the one she had was more than enough. And fame? Well, the popularity that comes with being the author of hotcake-like novels was surely pleasing for any mortal's ego, but it was the fame, so rare and thereby even more precious, of the artist whose uncompromising works become classics in her own lifetime that she thirsted after, if after any fame at all.

Not so much as a source of inspiration, then, but rather as an idyllic surrounding for her project to finally devote time to herself, the spot was equally marvelous. Apart from the tortuous ten kilometers of dirt road leading up to the house, everything was well-tended

without being excessively neat; Nature was more assisted than controlled. The garden had ancient trees shooting upwards for a dozen meters and sprawling comfortably with their leafy boughs, which gave shelter to chatty flocks of birds and shade to overheated humans. Among the grass that was not cut too rigorously, there were flowers and flowering bushes for every season; something was always in bloom, spots of color were never missing. A set of iron chairs with a round table presenting a rather rusty and uneven surface were complimented with white plastic deckchairs also past their prime. But, once again, there was charm in their very shabbiness; they simply seemed to have conformed to their surroundings and blended in with the outdoor world. Instead of standing out as manmade objects, they had begun forming a part of the garden, just like a blade of grass or a stem of a flower.

As human contrivances had become part of the outdoor area, so had nature's sundry creatures invited themselves indoors; Nora had to come to terms with the fact that a country-house would never be free of insects. Spiders in the corners and all kinds of flying and crawling abominations were always present, especially in a dwelling of such a size. Indeed, the place was way too big for one person and the owner had looked puzzled when Nora told her she would be willing to rent this two-storey house with four bedrooms, five bathrooms, and an Olympic-size swimming pool. Even bigger was the old signora's amazement when the crazy American lady declared that she was not in the least planning to have guests visiting her. No, she was to spend some quality time alone and no freebies were welcome.

## 2

"Hugh, dear, is it true that my aunt has up and left for an indefinite period of dolce vita without saying anything to anyone?" Lusciously lounging on her uncle's sofa, Anna suddenly sat up as she caught the sound of his footsteps. He had kept her waiting a good half an hour but they both knew that she did not in the least mind it. Anna loved her aunt's style and sitting around in their living room amidst all the choice *objets d'art* was way too pleasurable to let her resent her uncle's lack of punctuality. Stretching her long arms and then giving her leonine locks a good shake, she was ready for Hugh's answer. Yet no answer came for some time, not until he had nestled himself comfortably on the plush armchair opposite the sofa his niece was sitting on, and lit a Cohiba. The latter occupation was still keeping him busy when impatience finally got the better of her:

"Are you not talking because you don't know what to say or because there is nothing to say? Did she leave because she left you? But I still don't understand why..."

"Would you mind slowing down?"—it was Hugh's turn to burst out—"Your rushing ahead with all these wild conjectures will not bring your aunt back. And it's not that she went to Siberia or that I kicked her out or anything vile of the sort. Look here, Annie,"—he theatrically sighed as he emitted a large puff of smoke—"she is past fifty and it had suddenly dawned on her that there may be things she would like to do while there is time still..."—before he could finish, Anna was on her feet and started pacing up and down like a caged lioness. Her uncle could not help looking admiringly at her fine long legs and the shock of red hair reaching all the way till her slender waist. Deny it as he might for the sake of decency, his love for his niece was strongly tinged with a connoisseur's regard for a beautiful work of art.

"Gosh, you should have been a diplomat, with flowers of speech enough for a big-ass bouquet burgeoning out of your mouth. Why don't you just admit that, at last, she got fed up with your fornicating? Uh, if only you were serious about any of these bimbos, if only you had the excuse that you have fallen in love with one of them and it is out of your control..."

"But it is! It *is* out of my control! Do you think I deliberately hurt my wife? Can't you see that the love of youth and beauty is like an illness, and I cannot help myself? There is such a thin line between passion and mania."

"Sorry if I'm not sorry. Your pseudo-sentimental crap does not change the fact that you've been a terrible husband and it is only too true, in fact, that it was the highest of times aunt Nora had upped and started to do what she would like to, instead of wasting herself on you!"—now that she had expressed her most violent emotions, she felt better; relieved and ready to look at the funny side of it. Yes, her uncle was an incorrigible Peter Pan, just like her own William. The reluctance to accept other than youth and beauty as the focal point of one's life, and to accept any kind of responsibility in human relationships, both Hugh and Will shared, along with arch-Pan Vincent, of course. The difference was that her uncle had got married and made a bad job of it, while the others had always slipped out of the marital noose and consequently felt less trapped and so more likely to behave themselves with their girlfriends. Will and Vince were devoted boyfriends as long as they were not pressured to tie the knot. No, really, even Vince was faithful to his current ladies; the longevity

of bliss was always only jeopardized by the girls' unavoidable wish "to get serious" in time. And Will? They had been together for twelve years by now; other people got married and divorced three times within such interval. The crux with him was that he could simply not tie that bloody knot. But hey, Anna, with youth and beauty still on her side, could afford not to care about the paper. In any case, look where it had got poor aunt Nora.

"Uncle, uncle, your Peter Pan spots are showing more than ever. Gosh, it's impossible to remain angry with you for long. Maybe that's why my aunt had to do things so quickly so as not to change her mind. She had probably had many such urges before but she had always waited too long to act upon them and her determination evaporated."

"It's damn unpleasant to assist at your letting off steam but it is worth one's while, I have to say: you look positively more radiant than before your outburst, if that is humanly possible. Anyway, before you forgive me for my trespasses and put me down as a hopelessly unserious amoroso, I have news for you. This time I am serious. So serious, in fact, that I want to tie the knot again. The problem is I have already tied it once, and without untying it first I cannot do it for the second time. You see, I want you to realize that it is not that marriage is not for me but that marriage with Nora is not. Don't get me wrong, your aunt is fabulous, but we are just not a match made in heaven."

"And you say this now? After eighteen years of marriage with her? It sounds a bit retarded, literally. Yes, yes, you don't even have to open your mouth, I know what you are going to say, so just keep all that puff of smoke in, at your leisure. To have stuck around while Henry was growing up sounds like a noble deed. It *is*, really. But it is also the more convenient way, too. Being married already, it gave you the perfect excuse not to have to get serious with any of your lady friends. And this is why the idea of your second marriage does not contradict your uncontrollable urge to hunt for youth and beauty: I bet my shorts you are marrying nothing short of a babe, but as soon as you get tired of her, you can safely continue your headhunting in the comfy shelter of this second wedlock."

"Annie, sweetheart, please don't overanalyze me. I am not worth your breath. And you don't even have to believe in my intention to marry the love of my life. The important thing is that it will not only make me and her happy, but your aunt will also be relieved. In fact, her decision to go off alone and realize her potential, whatever those may be, gives me carte blanche, don't you see? She has amply

proved that she wants to be free. And Henry is all grown up. We've done our bit."

"Well, I can't agree with you more about my aunt being fabulous but not being exactly your kind of woman. You have no idea how many times I've wondered why on earth you two ever got married in the first place. No, I go further: what made you choose her even for an affair at all. Let's be honest: you guys are almost the same age, which is right away a no-no in your books. Secondly, she is no beauty, never has been. There is no insolence on my part when I'm saying this, so don't try to protest. I'm the first one to declare that she is actually more than beautiful: she is irregular, interesting, attractive, unique. No symmetry to bore you, no perfection to take for granted; instead, an accidental turn of the head may transform her profile into something dazzling all of a sudden, even more so because it is unexpected. Or the way she smoothes her hair back, what elegance is in that movement of hers! But all such nuances are lost on you as long as they are not the accompanying graces of superficial perfection. A graceful movement does not turn you on, uncle Hugh, to put it crudely."

He good-humoredly snorted and stood up. Instead of being offended, he liked the girl for being so candid. Because she was right: he had also often wondered why the hell he had married Nora, of all women, and although he knew the answer perfectly well, he still had trouble accepting the fact that such a reason had sufficed. The prosaic explanation was that he had met Nora when he was going through a short but violent phase of satiety. It was the most frightening thing he had ever experienced. Having a single passion in life, he had up till then considered himself the happiest of mortals; to squeeze the utmost out of the little he had been given, to live as intensely as he could in order to make the best of the brief interval allotted to a human being on earth—that was the motto he made his own after having read a bit of Pater. Paintings and sculptures as embodiments of youth and beauty were all fuel to his passion, but it was Woman—or better to say "Young Lady"—that constituted his main interest. And then, one day, he felt that he had got to a point where he could not, for the life of him, imagine any new combination of graces that he had not already encountered. The variations that constituted an attractive female form seemed to him limited and exhausted all of a sudden. He felt that mere physical beauty did not suffice any longer; a harmonious balance of body and soul appeared to be the only satisfactory solution to appease his desire. And along came Nora Gordon, intelligent and surprisingly "fresh;" she had been

endowed with a physique that, even in her thirties, had managed to be attractive. Maybe there had never been harmony between Nora's body and soul; she had always been more fascinating intellectually than otherwise, but to a Hugh Hilary temporarily exhausted by scores of round firm buttocks and bouncy bosoms of all shapes and sizes, such an exceptional inside in a tolerably attractive wrapping was a godsend. Just what he wanted. Impulsive as always, his momentary craze, his periodic passion soon had its outcome in the shape of wedlock. After a few months of monogamy, he woke up parched; once again, he felt that terrible, unquenchable thirst for amorous expeditions in the land of the young and lovely. His sexual stomach was rumbling, his appetite was that of the starved beast ready to inflict any kind of pain in order to get his fill. The pain inflicted was not on his next victim but on the one who was supposed to have been his one and only victim of sorts—his wife.

"I haven't offended you, uncle, have I?" Anna fearfully asked after a few minutes of silence. Hugh had walked to the window and stared out onto the park; the grass seemed unrealistically green and silky and the ball-shaped bushes did not help to mitigate the impression of artificiality. Nora had never liked that park; she had always found unnatural nature more offensive than straightforward fakeness. What was the house she had rented in Italy like, he wondered.

"No, no, sweetheart, I was just musing about something. Sorry if I have seemed a bit aloof."

"That is not very reassuring, you know; me talking and your thoughts rambling away somewhere. I must be a real bore to listen to."

"Although I would like to agree with your statement just to tease you, I have to say that it is, on the contrary, very stimulating to listen to your frank flow. I was, in fact, thinking back on the days when I met your aunt and reminded myself yet again why I fell in love with her in the first place and what made me propose to her. I will tell you some other time. Now I want you to promise me that you will not be upset when I tell you something else; namely the name of my intended."

"I have the terrible foreboding that you have hit on one of my undergrad schoolmates, or downright friends. Let's see who I can imagine in your clutches. Is it that big-breasted Russian girl who laughs all the time because her profile is more becoming that way? Nika, right?"—Her uncle shook his head.—"Well, then Megan Taylor, perhaps. She is the youngest in our class and wears glasses only because she wants to look intelligent. Which she is not, I assure you. But, silly me, that is not a prerequisite in your case."—She eyed him curiously but he was still shaking his head.—"Okay, who else? Uhm,

then it *has* to be Lilian. She has been more than usually silent lately. Starry-eyed and empty-headed, quite a combo."

"Is there any good-looking girl in your acquaintance who is allowed to have brains in her head?"

"Of course, uncle, they are more than welcome to have some grey matter up there, it is just that they don't happen to. I am not being catty, you know. Anyway, your rushing out to defend Lilian's intellectual capacity makes me suspect I have finally hit home. It *is* her, isn't it? And I mean no disrespect with the 'it' standing for the alleged love of your life."

"No, wrong as usual. You are not even close."

"I should have started with Denise Logan, but I am even afraid to think I might have to come to terms with the fact that you have no taste, after all."—Her uncle was still silent, but with a different kind of silence this time. He wasn't exactly offended but undoubtedly surprised a bit. Not only had he considered Denise beautiful, but he thought her the most exquisite creature he had ever been involved with. There had never been anyone with a more perfect figure, a more feminine yet unselfconscious way of carrying herself, and such originality in dress.

"What you probably refer to is her inimitable style. Instead of tasteless, she is taste incarnate. There is no one who would dare to be as original as she is."

"And with good reason. Anyhow, I won't pass judgment on your judgment; the latter just testifies to your being far gone. And to see you really in love, no matter with whom and for how long, is a delightful spectacle for me to enjoy. Lately you have resembled more of a penis on legs than a susceptible man capable of valuing women beyond their measurements."

"Praise cannot get more mixed than yours. But I take it that you don't mind, then. I mean my bringing a schoolmate of yours into the family."

"Well, no, it is a kind of relief; the fact that your girlfriend is twenty-six and not sixteen—one of the older undergrads, actually. If you had hit on a classmate of mine in high-school, I would not be so understanding, not that I would have any say in the matter either way. But at least I can still go on not despising you. That's a comfort."

"The severe judge that you are! No comfort in that for me. I guess it's my turn to be relieved about not having fallen out of grace with you."

"Are you going to bring her with you on our next family gathering? Will's birthday is next Thursday, you know."

"Absolutely. Denise will be more than happy to meet my relatives."

# 3

Denise was indeed more than happy to meet dear Hugh's dear relatives. But this wasn't saying much, as Denise was almost always happy to do almost anything. Far from stupid or silly, she was a young woman in whom an extraordinary amount of élan vital was coupled up with the inability to remain persistently enthusiastic about anything. This combination resulted in her being an adorable flake, a butterfly who flitted from one thing to another, who took up this and dropped that, be it French, or a cooking class, or a course in graphology, in tai-chi, in flower arranging—just to name a handful of her recent exploits. If ever there was someone with a broad horizon, it was Denise Logan. The endless vista of her interests usually made a very favorable impression on whoever got acquainted with her and it was not for a few months till the enchanted individual had to realize that Miss Logan's mind was so open that nothing remained in it for long.

Hugh had known her for four months at the time of his talk with Anna, and his urge to tie her to him had a lot to do with the fact that he had recently started to have a pretty clear vision of Denise's true colors; he would not for the world have admitted to anybody but he could not help feeling like one of the hobbies his lover enthusiastically took up and light-heartedly abandoned for the sake of the next short-lived but passionate project on her list. This was shocking to him for several reasons. For one, he had always been faithful to the one and only passion of his life, even if that was what made him ultimately unfaithful to his fellow humans. To have someone pick up and drop an interest in such a whirlwind manner was totally alien to his character. Secondly, the fact that by different roads they both ended up with the same result, namely fickleness in relationships, put Hugh in the uncomfortable situation where *his* victims had hitherto found themselves, but *he* never. To suffer Denise dropping him was insufferable, and the only way to (at least relatively) ensure that she would not leave him before he tired of her was to marry her. Especially because marriage was an adventure she had never embarked on; a new project she was sure to get excited about.

Nora's departure came as a windfall, although even now the timing might be rather bad: Denise had already started talking about her great new idea to take a few months off and travel a bit; she had been reading way too much nineteenth-century literature and the concept of the "grand tour" that Americans used to take so as to "experience the Old Continent" had proved to be contagious. On top of

her flagging interest in her current lover, there was the problem of the indelicacy of taking her to a reunion of family and friends where he would have to break the news of Nora's departure simultaneously with his marital plans concerning a schoolmate of his niece. Yet there was a bright side, too: he might kill two birds with one stone, so to say, by offering a charming trip to Italy to Denise—a mini grand tour of sorts—and thereby surprise Nora with a visit, during which he could convince her to enjoy her liberty to such an extent as to dissolve the tie that had been binding her to him for the last two decades. Yes, a trip to Orvieto was the ideal solution, for yet another reason: William's birthday was coming up, and to blunt the edge of the whole uncomfortable scene that Hugh's double revelation at that reunion was to produce, it would be just the thing to invite Will along with them as a birthday gift. Of course the invitation would include Annie, too, who could act as a mediator between Nora and Denise.

## 4

After the sweeping generalizations—lovely, picturesque, ideal—of the day of her arrival, it was the turn of some nasty little particulars to crop up as soon as she awoke from a sleep that was far from refreshing. A rock-hard bed, the size of which would have failed to satisfy even a midget, was followed by a bathroom equipped with a minuscule tub and devoid of a shower-curtain. Ablutions in a half-crouching position had to be performed with a very thin trickle of water that was first ice cold, then suddenly piping hot, and finally lukewarm without the hope to attain a more abundant and hotter version of itself. Yes, there were four bathrooms but it turned out that all of them put together would have yielded one of a normal size. Like some crazed Snow-white, she tried all the beds in all the bedrooms and was forced to come to the same conclusion concerning sleeping quarters: numerous but diminutive.

The fact that the house had no air-conditioning had been known to her in advance, and the explanation of the agent had seemed perfectly plausible at the time: the hill on top of which the house was positioned was one of the breeziest in the whole area, ensuring freshness throughout the long hot Italian summer. One either opened the windows or resorted to the fans that adorned the ceilings of all the bedrooms. Half asleep, she was already feeling rather hot, so she hit the switch by her bedside that turned the fan on. Noise resembling that of a helicopter shook her out of her dreamy slumber and she hastily hit the other switch in order to turn the light back on. The whole fan,

like a humongous rusty spider surrounded by deep black cracks resembling giant cobwebs, was frantically shaking. At any second it could get detached from the ceiling and fall on the bed, decapitating the sweaty sleeper in search of some harmless cooling breeze. Quickly turning it off, she had opted for the window. It had seemed the more natural way, anyway; why bother with conjuring up some breeze if there was so much of it outside? A few hours had elapsed when she was awakened by the creepy feeling of something crawling on her. Frightened out of her wits, she hit the light-switch again, only to behold a dozen different kinds of insects having a jolly time on and around her bed. The windows had no screens and the bugs had been attracted by the chink of light issuing from the corridor; Nora hated complete darkness.

Moving into the adjacent bedroom to flee from her arthropodous bedfellows, she passed an airless night on another hard and tiny bed. It was an unpleasant itchy feeling that finally woke her up; sure as hell, the room was infested with mosquitoes. Stepping out of the bed she almost tripped on the cover she had thrown off during the night. Putting it back on top of the bed she was expecting to find her slippers by the bedside, but they seemed to have got under the bed, so she bent down to check. Probing her hands deeper under it she found them at last, but they were almost unrecognizable from a thick layer of dust and cobwebs. The place was obviously in the hands of a surface cleaner. Walking down the stairs she entered the living room, the sight of which made her immediately forget the disagreeableness of her first night.

Once again because of the position of the house—no neighbors as far as (or further than) the eye could see—there did not seem to be any need to bother about curtains, and so the sunlight came in unobstructed. It lit up the numerous mirrors and made their golden frames twinkle. It reflected the graceful forms of various antique vases and choice objects on the strips of polished parquet that were left uncovered by the old Persians adorning the floor. Everything was old and faded but the morning sunshine made the colors live again—it reminded one of the smiley faces of elderly people basking in the sun. The whole living room, in a word, was reawakened and emanated cheer and ease, which filled Nora to such an extent that she started clapping her hands like a little girl. She turned round and round, trying to take it all in; the colors, the shapes, even the scent of some flower in one of the vases administered to the pleasurable impression.

As she moved a few steps further towards the adjoining kitchen, she happened to glance outside the window closest to her and caught

the eye of somebody watching her. It was a surprise bordering on shock; to believe yourself to be totally alone in the middle of beautiful nowhere and suddenly meeting a pair of eyes observing your movements would have outraged even those less ardently in search of "the private life." For Nora, who had come all the way from the other side of the Atlantic to get away from it all and had purposely chosen a place priding itself of its silence and isolation, it seemed like a bad joke—not even in the midst of urban living is one exposed to others looking into one's rooms. And here she was, like some goldfish in a giant aquarium: the whole downstairs area with its open concept and windows for walls without any curtains had all of a sudden metamorphosed into the worst of her nightmares. As for the peeping Tom, it was undoubtedly the green-thumbed individual originally destined to make her life more instead of less agreeable. In any case, he had seen that she had seen him, but instead of making himself known by, say, a wave or a knock on the glass or something, he ducked his head into the bushes he had been trimming. To confront him or to simply introduce herself to him was the question; after a momentary hesitation, Nora decided to take action and walked to one of the French windows leading onto the garden.

Signor Massimo Cesare was still crouching in the flowering bush when she stepped to his side and, with her best Italian, wished him a very *buon giorno*. At the sound of her voice he jumped up as if roused from some deep meditation and exclaimed what a great surprise it was to see her up so early, shaking her jovially by the hand. He had big rough hands and a strong handshake, which would have inspired trust in his interlocutress, had it not been for the pair of shifty eyes that never looked the other in the face for longer than a few seconds. He was a man in his sixties, and although he was ruddy, robust, and grey-haired, there still wasn't very much of the picturesque peasant about him; in blue jeans, sneakers, and a T-shirt advertising McDonald's, of all things, he could just as well have been from any other country both in an urban and rural setting, with any other job besides that of a gardener. In fact, it soon transpired that he had, for a short while, worked in the first Mickey D's that had opened its doors to the Roman public just a few steps from the Spanish steps. He was, in a word, difficult to place, and seemed to Nora more like some twenty-first century Everyman than an Italian *paesano*. If someone desperately wanted to resort to clichés about national characteristics, his only really "redeeming" Italian feature was his oily smile—there was the obsequiousness in him of the greasy Gino who works as a porter at a hotel when he is not breaking hearts elsewhere.

Having discussed every particular of the weather and emphasized over and over again the excessive joy that they both felt due to her arrival, Massimo proceeded to the business side of their relationship by slipping the remark, as if it had been the most unimportant little detail, that he expected to be paid four hundred and fifty dollars at the beginning of every month for his botanical labors. Nora thought she had not heard correctly; Massimo's speech had speeded up as soon as he started talking about money matters. She had to apologize and ask him to repeat what he had said, reminding him that her poor knowledge of Italian required patience from her interlocutors. After a long-winded praise of the American signora's exemplary command of his humble tongue, he repeated the sum with a surprised expression on his wrinkly face; he sincerely hoped it did not come as something unexpected or bothersome. He would not, for the world, want to pain her. But it was his whole livelihood. And he had a sick mother and a wife and a young daughter, and a blind dog who had just had six puppies. Oh, and by the way—his eyes had an extra twinkle in them as he said this—if the *carissima signora* needed someone to come and do the cleaning, his wife was a first-rate maid, and his little daughter could also help her.

It would have been difficult to say no to such an offer for several reasons. Nora felt the same way about cleaning as about gardening; she had not come all the way to Italy to waste her time scrubbing floors and battling with bugs, either. Secondly, exactly because Massimo did not inspire too much confidence in her, she wanted to meet his family. Maybe she had judged too hastily, based on that single peeping incident. Maybe the old man was just shy—had not dared make the initiative. Or bored—in need of something to see or do. Or both. In any case, it would have been rather difficult to find a cleaning lady without Massimo's help; she did not know anybody, or more precisely, there was nobody around anyway. For a "mere" fifty dollars *la signora* Cesare and *piccola* Celestina would come for three hours every Monday and do their sanitary magic. Deal.

# Képek a folyóban
## (Tűnődés)

*Wiesenmayer Teodóra*

Úgy tűnik, semmi sem változott. A szélcsendben mozdulatlan, hajlott fűzfaágak szomorúságát a kanyargó szakaszon felgyorsuló folyó próbálja enyhíteni – ugyanolyan sikertelenül, mint harminc évvel ezelőtt. Akkoriban még a pancsoló gyermekek zsivaja is a folyó segítségére sietett, de a fűzfák hangulatán ez mit sem változtatott – szemlélődésük során/folytán egyre bölcsebbé, ugyanakkor egyre komorabbá váltak. Azóta a folyó is fáradtabban folydogál – zárkózott lett, partját facsemeték és bokrok szegélyezik. Csak régi ismerőseit fogadja be, azokat, akik a fák között megtalálják a hozzá vezető utat. A fűzfák barátként fogadnak, nyájasan irányítanak a folyóhoz vezető ösvényhez. Leülök a fűre, előttem a kavicsos part és a folyó, és a mögöttem álló öreg, hajlott fűzfák társaságában a víztükörben felbukkanó emlékképeket nézegetem.

... Az alkonyt váró töltésen szerelmespárok andalognak. A virágba borult folyóparti fák bódító illatot árasztanak, az énekesmadarak vidám élet-melódiát zengnek/dalolnak. A gyerekek irigykedve nézik a párokat. „Szerintem Sanyi elveszi Julit – jegyzi meg Laura. – Hallottam, amikor Anna néni mondta anyukámnak, hogy ritka rendes lány ez a Juli, jó családanya lesz. Azt is mondta, hogy jó lenne, ha a fia már végre elköltözné magát, vagy valami ilyesmi...” „Nem azt mondta, hogy elkötelezné?” – kérdi Flóra, aki már iskolába járt. „Annak nincs értelme” – zárja rövidre a vitát Laura. „Léna, ott a cicád!” – vág közbe a kis Hanna, csak hogy ő is kivegye a részét a társalgásból. „Cilu, cicc!” Gyurinak felcsillan a szeme a macska láttán, kergetni kezdi. „Hagyd békén!” – kiált rá Léna olyan erélyesen, hogy Gyuri csak nehezen jut szóhoz a meglepetéstől: „Csak játszani akartam vele.” „Nem hiszem, a múltkor is meghúztad a farkát.” A civódás kezdett volna elfajulni, de szerencsére Flóra igen bölcs, „Ebből házasság lesz!” megjegyzése ezt megakadályozta. „Tényleg, ha férjhez megyek, öt gyerekem lesz” – ábrándozott a kis Hanna. „Azt te nem tudhatod előre, hány gyereked lesz, csak a Jóisten” – szakítja félbe a kislány álmodozását Laura. – „Anyukám is mindig azt mondja, azért vagyunk hatan testvérek, mert ennyi gyereket adott nekik a Jóisten. Lehet, hogy neked ötöt ad, de az is lehet, hogy csak kettőt.” Hát, ezen már a többiek is felháborodtak. Sorra záporoztak a méltatlankodó kérdések: „És

mitől függ az, hogy hány gyereket kapok?" „Mi van akkor, ha egyet sem szeretnék, aztán nekem hat is jut." Gyurit nem hagyta cserben az üzleti érzéke: „Elcseréled őket valamire olyanokkal, akik egyet sem kaptak." „És ha nem akarok férjhez menni, akkor nem is kapok?" – kérdi Hanna. „Szerintem kaphatsz... Mancinak is van gyereke, pedig nincs is férje. Biztos attól függ, hogy viselkedsz. Ha szereted a Jóistent, akkor sok gyerekkel ajándékoz meg, ha nem, egyet sem kapsz" – bölcselkedik Laura. „Akkor nem fogom szeretni a Jóistent" – jelenti ki határozottan Gyuri. „Akkor a pokolra jutsz" – ijeszt rá Léna, és úgy tűnik, Gyuri ezen nagyon komolyan elgondolkodik...

... Az alkony fényeiben tündöklő töltésen gyermekek bicikliznek, egyre lassabban tekernek – már nincs kedvük versenyezni, a sok mozgás/fürdőzés, a forróság elbágyasztotta őket. Így hát inkább megállnak kamillát szedni. „Felmehetünk hozzád? A múltkor megígérted, hogy zongorázhatunk egy kicsit!" – emlékezteti Lénát ígéretére Laura. Az egész gyerekcsapat szeme felcsillan az ötlet hallatán, fáradtságról, éhségről teljesen megfeledkezve. Lénának válaszolni sincs ideje, a többiek már felpattantak biciklijükre, és a folyóparti villa felé vették az irányt... Egy IGAZI, nagy, fekete zongora – az egész környéken csak egy ilyen volt, a Lénáé. A gyerekek nem értették, nekik miért nem lehet. Pedig a kis Hanna még azt is megígérte a szüleinek, hogy soha többé nem köpi ki a tökfőzeléket, ha ő is kap egy zongorát. Nagyon elkeseredett, amikor rájött, ehhez még a tőle telhető legnagyobb áldozat sem elégséges. A szülei mindig a pénzt emlegetik, amin a boltból ételt vesznek, vagy nagy ritkán ruhákat. De miért ne lehetne egyszer spenót helyett zongorát venni? Mindenesetre megfogadta, ha majd saját pénze lesz, zongorát fog venni rajta (korábban azt fogadta meg, csak csokoládét fog vásárolni, ezért ez most egy újabb hatalmas áldozat volt a kis Hanna részéről).

Az ötlettől erőre kapó játszótársak versenyt bicikliznek Lénáék házáig. Szinte köszönés nélkül rontanak be a nappaliba – az játszhat először, aki hamarabb ér oda. Léna aggódva nézi, hogyan tépi-cibálja kedves hangszerét a sok gyerek, de nem szól rájuk. Nagypapája elmagyarázta neki, hogy a társainak nem tudnak a szüleik zongorát venni, ezért engedje meg nekik, hogy néha játsszanak rajta. „De hát ez nem zongorázás!" – méltatlankodik magában Léna. Flóra és Gyuri lökdösődése a billentyűknél verekedésbe torkoll, egymás kezére csapkodják a zongora fedelét. Ez már a gyermekbarát nagyapát is kihozza béketűréséből, a szomszéd szobából siet oda helyreállítani a harmóniát. Végül felveszi a koncertszervező szerepét, mindenki elénekelhet egy dalt, amit Léna zongorán kísér. „Legközelebb a szülő-

ket is meghívjuk, hadd hallják, milyen ügyesek vagytok" – mondja a jóságos nagypapa. Sosem fegyelmezett, tiltani sem tudott. Mégis mindig sikerült neki a gyerekek szétáradó energiáit helyes mederbe terelnie…

… A lassan alkonyba boruló töltésen három öregúr sétál, fáradt szemüket az ősz színeiben pompázó lombokon pihentetik. A szembejövő ismerős arcok előtt megemelik kalapjukat, esetenként érdeklődnek: „Hogy szolgál az egészsége?" Velük van egy kislány is, szótlanul hallgatja nagypapája beszélgetését a barátaival. Az öregurak járása lassú, bizonytalan, hátrakulcsolt kezük feszesebb tartást kölcsönöz hajlott hátuknak. Beszélgetés közben megtört arcvonásaik megelevenednek, egy-egy komolyabb mondatnál megállnak, ezzel hangsúlyozva mondandójuk fontosságát. Már maguk sem tudják, hogyan jutottak el a parkban figyelemmel kísért sakkparti megvitatásától a tudás- és a tapasztalatszerzés – a sakknál jóval bonyolultabb – lépéseihez. „Nem árt, ha az embernek szakmája is van, ha megtanulja megbecsülni a munkát. Sosem bántam meg, hogy lakatosként kezdtem. Igaz, mindig is tanulni szerettem volna… de hát akkor még nem volt rá lehetőségem. Már érett fejjel jártam az orvosi egyetemre… viszont akkor úgy belelendültem a tanulásba, hogy rögtön a filozófiát is elvégeztem – ha már úgyis tanul az ember…" Léna meglepetten vágott nagypapája szavába: „Te tényleg lakatos voltál? Ezt még sosem mondtad." „Úgy bizony! De ez nagyon rég volt, más világot éltünk…" A nagyapa gondolatainak elkalandozását kihasználva most a hegedűművész vette át a szót: „Látja, míg maga a betegségekből próbálta kigyógyítani az embereket, addig én a lelki bánatukat próbáltam orvosolni. Sajnos nincsen oltás lelki nyavalyák ellen. Higgye el, nekem nehezebb dolgom volt." „De nem is volt olyan sikeres, mint az orvos barátunk!" – élcelődött a főmérnök. A művész úr úgy folytatta monológját, mintha meg sem hallotta volna barátja megjegyzését: „Lelki bánatra a muzsika a legjobb gyógyszer, csak a lélek sebei nehezebben gyógyulnak… nem rajtam múlott." „Vagy hamisan hegedült – kötekedett tovább a nyugdíjas főmérnök – most már tudom, miért olyan sok a bánatos ember." Az idős orvos gyorsan közbevágott, mielőtt az élcelődés elfajult volna: „Az viszont valóban érthetetlen, miért olyan komorak az emberek. Sokkal jobban élnek, mint mi annak idején, mégis állandóan elégedetlenkednek." „Tudják, hogy valami hiányzik az életükből, de azt hiszik, mindezt pénzzel lehet pótolni. Állandóan rohannak, nem figyelnek egymásra – egyre többet dolgoznak, hogy egyre több pénzük legyen, közben a gyerekeik úgy nőnek fel, hogy nem is ismerik őket…" – lendült bele a társalgásba a főmérnök.

Úgy tűnik, az orvosnak sikerült jó irányba terelnie a társalgást, mert a mostanában egyre érzékenyebb művész úrnak megsértődni sem volt ideje – véleményével továbbszőtte a társalgás fonalát. „Hát igen, megváltoztak az értékek... sajnos az emberek kezdik elfelejteni, hogy milyen jó dolog egy könyvbe belemerülni, vagy csak ülni a fotelban, meghallgatni egy szimfóniát..."

... A hófödte töltésen még meg-megcsillannak a bágyadt napsugarak. A töltésről leszánkázó gyermekeket a szülők kezdik szép szóval hazahívni, vagy – mindenféle trükköt bevetve – hazacsalni. De olyan is akad, aki a szigort célravezetőbbnek tartja, sőt, egyesek a fenyegetéstől várják a gyors eredményt. Lénának sikerül nagypapájával egyezséget kötni, miszerint a nagyapa még elhúzza a töltésen levő második villanyoszlopig, utána pedig vissza, hazáig. A nagyapa akár a folyó forrásáig vagy a tengerig is elhúzta volna unokáját, ha a gyermek úgy kívánja. „Gyorsabban, nagypapa!" – kiált a gyermek, mire az idős ember futni kezd. Léna megörül, még nem látta futni nagyapját, egyre hangosabban kacag. Unokája nevetése újabb erőt ad az akkor már nagyon beteg embernek, egyre gyorsabban fut... Talán az ereje hagyta el, talán csak megcsúszott... Léna összeszorult szívvel hajol nagypapája fölé, öleli, puszilja... „Ugye nem fáj?" – kérdi bizakodón. A nagyapa nyugtatgatja unokáját, nem történt semmi. Szótlanul bandukolnak hazafelé a sötét folyóparton, a gyerek az idős ember erőtlen kezét fogja... Otthon az ágyban fekvő nagyapa mosolygó szívvel hallgatja, hogyan játssza unokája a múló élet melódiáját azon a bizonyos bolond hangszeren...

Besötétedett. A képek eltűntek a folyóból... továbbvitte őket a víz. A sok-sok képtől elfáradó víztömeg egyre lassabban bandukol, magába fogadva más folyók képeit, hogy végül átadja őket a tengernek. A képeket elvitte a víz, de dallamuk, melynek zengését átvették a fűzfák, megmaradt bennem... a dallam, melyet azóta is féltve őrzök...

# G. K. Chesterton és Walter Pater
## Bevezetés

*Péter Ágnes*

Az ünnepeltnek nehéz olyan szellemi ajándékkal kedveskedni, amivel az ő saját passzióihoz kapcsolódhatna az, aki ünnepelni szeretné. Olyan sok témában mélyedt el, s olyan sokféle korszakról írt fontos tanulmányokat az angol és az amerikai irodalomtörténet területén, olyan átfogó rálátással tájékozódik irodalomelméleti kérdésekben, s végül kutatói pályájával párhuzamosan szépírói tevékenysége is olyan sokféle regényhagyományt hasznosított, hogy közvetlenül kapcsolódni valamely gondolatmenetéhez hosszas előtanulmányokat igényelne, ilyesmit pedig egy Festschrift összeállítása nem szokott megengedni.

Kutatói pályája ezen kerek évfordulót követően feltehetően új irányt fog venni, amennyiben valóban felszabadul annyi ideje, hogy megírja a régóta tervezett Walter Pater monográfiát. Már a terv is ünnepi tósztot érdemel: ha az ember a Google segítségével körülnéz a magyar tradícióban, Babits Mihályon és Szerb Antalon kívül egyetlen nevet sem talál magyar nyelvű szövegben, amelyben Walter Paterről lenne szó: hiánypótló gesztus volna részéről, ha ennek a témának szentelné a következő korszakát.

Babits számára „Walter Pater görög és reneszánsz tanulmányai tartalomban alig mondtak újat; de stílusuk szinte mondatról mondatra remekmű. Sűrű és puha stílus ez, bársony és brokát, gazdag ornamenssel, s minden ízében zenei. E műveknek már a témájuk is csak a művészet: a művészetek művészete ez."[1]

Szerb Antal pedig így összegzi véleményét Walter Paterről: „A művészi szépség benne válik öncélú kultusz tárgyává [...] Szíve a pogány világ szabad szépségvallása felé húzta [...] Főműve *The Renaissance* c. esszé-gyűjteménye, a reneszánsz pogány életöröméről szóló legendának egyik alappillére. [...] a következő nemzedék esztétáinak ő a legfőbb mestere."[2]

Babits és Szerb Antal köztudomásúlag igen nagyra értékelte G. K. Chesterton különböző műfajokban megjelenő szellemiségét. További

1. Babits Mihály, *Az európai irodalom története* (Budapest: Nyugat. Az AUKTOR Könyvkiadó hasonmás kiadása, 1991), pp. 662–663.

2. Szerb Antal, *A világirodalom története* (Budapest: Révai, 1941), 2. kötet, p. 366.

kutatások tárgyát képezné a kérdés, vajon mennyiben hatott rájuk Chesterton kis könyve a viktoriánus kor irodalmáról, amelyben Chesterton – szokásosan aforisztikus stílusában – nagy elismeréssel beszél a korszak irodalmi figurái között Walter Paterről, s többek között összefoglalóan kijelenti: *„I may be wrong, but I cannot recall at this moment a single passage in which Pater's style takes a holiday or in which his wisdom plays the fool."*[3] Annak ellenére, hogy Chesterton számára minden végletekig hajszolt gondolat, s főleg a jó és a szép elválasztása végzetes tévedés, Walter Patert kiemelkedően következetes gondolkodónak tartja, bár – jellemző módon – csakis egy paradoxikus állításon belül érvényes értelemben: *„Pater cannot let himself go for the excellent reason that he wants to stay: to stay at the point where all the keenest emotions meet, as he explains in the splendid peroration of* The Renaissance. *The only objection to being where all the keenest emotions meet is that you feel none of them."*[4]

Hogy Sarbu Aladár megerősíti Chesterton véleményét, vagy éppenséggel megcáfolja azt, az a jövő évek eredményeként fog kiderülni. Chesterton véleménynek számbavételére való ösztönzésként hadd adjak itt közre egy Chesterton-elbeszélést, a *The Innocence of Father Brown* egyik darabját; a kötetet az Új Ember Kiadó megbízásából fordítgatom mostanában, s a kötet egyik legjobb írásának vélem az itt következőt.[5]

*G. K. Chesterton*

# Israel Gow tisztessége

*Péter Ágnes fordítása*

Olajzöld és ezüst csíkokat húzva a viharos este már teljesen ráborult a tájra, amikor Brown atya szürke skót gyapjúkabátba burkolózva egy szürke skót hegyszoros végéhez ért, és megpillantotta Glengyle különös várát. A vár úgy torlaszolta le a szurdokot vagy mélyedést ezen a végén, mintha egy zsákutca ért volna véget, s az ember úgy érezte, a világ végére ért. Az ősi francia-skót chateau-k mintájára

3. G. K. Chesterton, *The Victorian Age in Literature* (London: William and Norgate, 1923), pp. 69–70.

4. Chesterton, *The Victorian Age*, p. 70.

5. A fordítás a következő kiadás alapján készült: G. K. Chesterton, *The Innocence of Father Brown* (New York: John Lane, 1911), 147–171.

tengerzöld palával fedett tetőivel és tornyaival a vár meredeken tört a magasba, egy angol képzeletében a tündérmesék gonosz boszorkányának hátborzongató csúcsos kalapját idézve fel, s a zöld lőtornyok körül a ringó fenyőerdők, mint megszámlálhatatlan hollócsapat, olyan feketén sötétlettek. Ezt az álomszerű, majdhogynem álmosan lidércnyomásos hangulatot nem csupán a táj különlegessége árasztotta magából. A helyet ugyanis súlyosan megülték a kevélységnek és az őrületnek és a titokzatos bánatnak azok a nyomasztó felhői, melyek a skót nemesi házakat sokkal jobban megfekszik, mint az emberiség bármely más fajtájának gyermekeiét. Mert Skóciának az öröklés nevű méreg dupla dózisban jutott, egyrészt mint a vér szava hagyományozódik az arisztokráciában, másrészt mint a végzeté a kálvinizmus hatására.

Az atya egy napra felfüggesztette glasgow-i teendőit, hogy találkozhassék barátjával, Flambeau-val, az amatőr detektívvel, aki a megboldogult Glengyle gróf életének és halálának körülményeit kivizsgálandó épp Glengyle várában tartózkodott egy nálánál hivatásosabb nyomozó társaságában. A rejtélyes gróf az utolsó leszármazottja volt egy olyan fajtának, mely vakmerőségével, bomlott elméjével és gátlástalan akcióival e nemzet ugyancsak sötét lelkületű tizenhatodik századi nobilitásának praktikáihoz mérten is utolérhetetlennek bizonyult. Az átláthatatlan becsvágyakból Mária, skót királynő köré emelt hazugságpalota legmélyebb termeibe senki olyan mélyen be nem hatolt, mint a Glengyle-ok.

A környéken fennmaradt mondás tömören és nyersen kimondja indítékaikat és machinációik következményét:

> Az Ogilvie-k a véraranyt oly igen áhítják,
> Mint tikkadt nyárban a fák az esőt szomjúzzák.

Évszázadok óta nem volt egyetlen tisztességes ura sem Glengyle várának, s az ember azt gondolná, a viktoriánus korra minden excentrikus ötletükből kifogytak. Az utolsó Glengyle-nak azonban sikerült minden törzsi hagyományt túlszárnyalnia, mégpedig egy olyan akcióval, amilyen addig nem fordult elő: eltűnt. Nem arról volt szó, hogy külföldre távozott volna: minden jel szerint, ha bárhol, ott volt a várban. Benne volt az egyházi nyilvántartásban és a nagy piros nemesi almanachban, de látni soha nem látta személyesen senki.

Ha valaki mégis látta, az az egyetlen szolgája volt, olyan inas és kertészféle egy személyben. Annyira nagyot hallott, hogy a gyors eszű megfigyelők némának, a finomabb distinkciókra képesek meg félesznűnek vélték. Ösztövér, vörös hajú, kétkezi munkásember volt konok szájjal és állal, kék szeme pedig üresen bámult maga elé. Israel

Gow-ként ismerték a környéken, s ő volt, e néma szolga az egyetlen emberi lény az elhagyatott birtokon. Látván azonban a szorgalmat, amivel a krumplit kiásta, és a rendszerességet, amivel időnként elvonult a konyhába, mindenki úgy vélte, hogy valahol mégiscsak ott kell lennie az urának is, akire főz, hogy a különös gróf tényleg ott van valahol elrejtőzve a várban. Ha a világ további bizonyítékot kívánt arra nézve, hogy a gróf ott van valahol, a szolga mindig kijelentette, hogy épp nincs otthon. Egyik reggel hívatták a várba a polgármestert és a lelkészt (a Glengyle-ok ugyanis presbiteriánusok voltak). S akkor kiderült, hogy a kertész, az inas és a szakács korábbi feladatai mellé még egy további hivatalt is felvállalt: temetkezési vállalkozóként is működött. Nemes urára szakszerűen rázárta a koporsó fedelét. Minthogy jogi lépések nem történtek, mindaddig nem derült ki, hogy ezt a különös tényt követte-e bármilyen, komoly vagy komolytalan oknyomozás, amíg két-három napja Flambeau fel nem utazott ide északra. Addigra Lord Glengyle teste (ha tényleg az ő teste volt) már egy ideje a hegyen a kis temetőben nyugodott.

Ahogy Brown atya átment az elsötétült kerten és a chateau árnyékába lépett, a felhők összesűrűsödtek és a levegő megtelt zivataros nedvességgel. A lenyugvó nap utolsó zöldes arany sávjában Brown atya előtt egy férfi fekete sziluettje tűnt fel: egy férfié, akin keménykalap volt, a vállán meg egy nagy ásó. A körvonala úgy hatott, mintha egy sírásó lett volna, de mikor Brown atyának eszébe jutott a néma szolga, aki krumplit szokott kiásni a földből, teljesen normálisnak gondolta a látványt. Tudott egyet s mást a skót parasztokról, például, hogy a szemükben a tisztesség azt kívánja, hogy hivatalos kihallgatáson feketében jelenjenek meg, ugyanakkor ismerte beosztásos életmódjukat: egyetlen órát nem szalasztottak volna el a krumpliföldön csak egy tárgyalás miatt. Ahogy a férfi megtorpant és gyanakvóan nézett rá, mikor a pap elhaladt mellette, szintén jellemző volt ennek az emberfajtának az éberségére és ellenséges beállítottságára.

A nagy kaput maga Flambeau nyitotta ki, s mellette ott állt egy szikár, acélszürke hajú férfi papírokkal a kezében: Craven felügyelő a Scotland Yardtól. Az előcsarnokot nagyrészt lecsupaszították és kiürítették, de egy-két gonosz Ogilvie a füstös parókája alól a befüstölődött vászonról még mindig dölyfösen nézett le a falról.

Ahogy a két nyomozó után belépett egy belső terembe, Brown atya megállapította, hogy a munkatársak egy hosszú tölgyfaasztalnál ültek, melynek azon a végén, ahol dolgozhattak, jegyzetekkel teleírt papírok feküdtek whiskys poharak és szivarok között. Az asztalon végig kisebb kupacokban egymástól független tárgyak voltak felhalmozva, s a tárgyak jelentősége még annál is titokzatosabb volt, mint

általában a tárgyaké. Az egyik kupac, úgy tűnt, magasra feltornyozott törött üvegcserepekből áll. Egy másik, mintha barna por lett volna halomba gyűjtve. A harmadik feltehetően egy egyszerű bot volt fából.

– Úgy látom, valóságos geológiai múzeumot rendeztek be – mondta az atya, és ahogy leült, a barna por és az üvegdarabok felé fordult.

– Nem geológiai múzeumot – válaszolt Flambeau –, inkább pszichológiai múzeumot.

– Az ég szerelmére! – tiltakozott nevetve a detektív. – Ne kezdjük ilyen hosszú szavakkal.

– Nem tudja, mi az a pszichológia? – kérdezte jóindulatú megrökönyödéssel Flambeau. – Ha valaki meggárgyul, akkor szoktak beszélni róla.

– Én akkor se értem – válaszolt a felügyelő.

– Nos – mondta Flambeau határozottan –, arra céloztam, hogy csak egyvalamit sikerült kiderítenünk Lord Glengyle-ról. Azt, hogy nem volt normális.

Most halványan kirajzolódva az elsötétült ég előtt az ablak előtt elhaladt Gow fekete sziluettje a keménykalappal és az ásóval. Brown közönyösen rápislantott, és így válaszolt:

– Elhiszem, hogy volt valami meghökkentő a grófban, különben nem temettette volna élve el magát, vagy nem sietett volna ennyire, hogy holtan eltemessék. De mért gondolják, hogy egyenesen őrült volt?

– Hát csak hallgassa végig a listát – mondta Flambeau –, hogy mi mindent talált Craven a házban.

– Ide kéne hozni egy gyertyát – szólt váratlanul Craven. – Vihar közeleg, és máris túl sötét van a felolvasáshoz.

– Volt gyertya is a sok furcsa tárgy között? – kérdezte somolyogva Brown atya.

Flambeau sötét szemét komoran barátjára függesztette.

– Ez is meglehetősen különös – mondta. – Huszonöt gyertyát találtunk, de gyertyatartónak nyoma sincs sehol.

A gyorsan sötétedő szobában és a gyorsan erősödő szélben Brown odament, ahol a mindenféle kiállított tárgyak között egy köteg viaszgyertya volt. Menet közben véletlenül túl közel került a vörös-barna porkupachoz, és egy hatalmas tüsszentés verte fel a csendet.

– Hohó – mondta –, tubák!

Fogta az egyik gyertyát, óvatosan meggyújtotta, visszament a helyére és beleállította az egyik whiskys üvegbe. Az ütött-kopott ablakokon át beáramló nyugtalan éjszakai lég úgy lengette a hosszú lángnyelvet, mint egy zászlót. És hallatszott, hogy, mint a fekete tenger sziklának csapódó hullámai, körben a vár körül mély zúgással háborgott a sokmérföldnyi fenyőerdő.

– Felolvasom a leltárt – kezdte Craven komoran, s felemelte az egyik papírlapot. – Íme, a jegyzéke azoknak a szabadon szerteszét heverő, megfejthetetlen célra összegyűjtött tárgyaknak, melyeket a várban találtunk. Elöljáróban annyit, hogy a vár általában lepusztult és elhanyagolt állapotban volt, de egy-két szobában egyszerű, de nem elvadult körülmények között, nyilvánvalóan lakott valaki, aki nem Gow volt, a szolga. Nos, íme, a lista:

1. Jelentős mennyiségű drágakő, majdnem mind gyémánt, és mind szabadon, foglalat nélkül. Az természetes, hogy az Ogilvie-knek voltak családi ékszereik, de épp olyan ékkövekről van szó, amelyeket általában valami speciális célból keretbe szokás helyeztetni. Úgy tűnik, az Ogilvie-k szabadon jöttek-mentek a drágakövekkel a zsebükben, mintha aprópénzről lett volna szó.

2. Nagy mennyiségű szabadon tartott tubák, nem volt hozzá se szarudoboz, még csak egy zacskó sem, hanem a kandallóra, a komódra, a zongorára vagy más felületre volt leszórva. Az ember arra gondol, az öregúr nem vállalta a fáradságot, hogy benyúljon egy zsebbe vagy felkattintson egy fedelet.

3. Szerte a házban felhalmozódott apró fémdarabok, némelyik, mint apró acélrugó, mások, mint mikroszkopikus kerekek. Mintha valami mechanikai játék szerkezetét szedték volna szét.

4. Viaszgyertyák, amiket üvegpalackok torkába kell beleállítani, mert semmi nincs, amibe bele lehetne tenni őket.

Be kell látnia, hogy mindez sokkal különösebb, mint amire számítani lehetett. A legfontosabb rejtélyre fel vagyunk készülve, egy pillanat alatt mindnyájan konstatálhattuk, hogy valami nem volt rendben az utolsó gróffal. Azért jöttünk ide, hogy megállapítsuk, vajon valóban itt élt-e, vajon valóban itt halt-e meg, vajon a vörös hajú madárijesztőnek, aki eltemette, volt-e valami köze a halálához. De képzeljük el a legvadabb és legmelodramatikusabb lehetőségeket. Mondjuk, hogy a szolga tényleg megölte az urát, vagy az ura nem is halt meg, vagy hogy az úr öltözött fel szolgának, vagy hogy a szolgát temették az úr sírjába, képzeljünk el bármi, Wilkie Collins tollára illő tragédiát, és akkor se fog sikerülni megmagyarázni, miért a sok gyertya, ha nincs egy gyertyatartó sem, vagy hogy egy jó családból való úriember miért szórt rendszeresen tubákot a zongorára. A történet belső magvát el tudja képzelni az ember, de a látható jelenségek felfoghatatlanok. Az emberi képzelet határát meghaladja, hogy kapcsolatot találjon a tubák és a gyémántok és a viaszgyertyák és a szétszedett óramű között.

– Én azt hiszem, látom a kapcsolatot – szólt a pap. – Ez a Glengyle megszállottan gyűlölte a francia forradalmat. Rajongott viszont az ancien régime-ért, és próbálta szó szerint feleleveníteni az utolsó

Bourbonok életmódját. Volt tubákja, mert a tubák jelentette a luxust a tizennyolcadik században, viaszgyertyát tartott, mert a tizennyolcadik században azzal világítottak, a mechanikus szerkezet darabkái a lakatos mesterségre utalnak, az volt ugyanis XVI. Lajos hobbija, s a gyémántok pedig Marie Antoinette gyémánt nyakláncának emlékét idézik meg.

A két nyomozó döbbenten bámult rá.

– Milyen rendkívüli elképzelés! – mondta Flambeau. – Tényleg azt gondolja, hogy ez a magyarázat?

– Biztos vagyok benne, hogy nem – válaszolt Brown atya –, csak azt mondta, hogy senki se volna képes rá, hogy összekapcsolja a tubákot a gyémántokkal és az óraművel és a gyertyákkal. Én meg rögtönöztem egy logikus kapcsolatot. Az igazság azonban, biztos vagyok benne, valahol jóval mélyebben van.

Elhallgatott, és egy percig figyelte, ahogy a tornyokon jajong a szél. Majd így folytatta:

– A megboldogult Grengyle gróf tolvaj volt. Volt egy másik és sötétebb élete is, melyben vakmerő betörőként működött. Nem volt gyertyatartója, mert a gyertyát rövid darabokra vágva egy apró lámpásban használta, melyet mindig magánál tartott. A tubákot arra használta, mint a legfélelmetesebb francia bűnözők a borsot: nagy mennyiségben az arcába vágta annak, aki el akarta kapni, vagy aki üldözőbe vette. De a végső bizonyíték a gyémántok és az apró acél kerekek együttesében rejlik. Nyilván ez önök számára is világos? Egy üvegtáblát csak gyémánttal vagy apró acélkerékkel lehet kivágni.

Az erős szélviharban egy fa letört ága hozzácsapódott az ablaktáblához mögöttük, mintha a betörőt parodizálná, de a két nyomozó nem fordult hátra. Döbbenten bámulták Brown atyát.

– Gyémánttal és apró kerekekkel? – ismételte Craven elgondolkodva. – Ebből az egy tényből levezetve magyarázza az egészet?

– Nem, eszemben sincs – válaszolt csöndesen Brown atya. – Csak azt állította, hogy senki se tudhatja összekapcsolni a négy dolgot. A történet valójában valószínűleg sokkal banálisabb. Glengyle gyémántot talált, vagy azt hitte, hogy talált a birtokán. Valaki esetleg felültette azokkal a gyémántokkal: azt mondta neki, hogy a vár alatti kazamatákban találta. A kis kerekek gyémántcsiszolásra valók. Elnagyolva és kis mennyiségben csinálhatta néhány pásztor és egyszerű hegyi lakó segítségével. A tubák az ilyen skót pásztorok szemében a legnagyobb érték, az egyetlen luxuscikk, amivel meg lehetett őket vesztegetni. Gyertyatartó meg nem volt, mert nem volt rá szükség: egyszerűen marokra fogták a gyertyát, mikor kikutatták a föld alatti üregeket.

– Ez minden? – kérdezte Flambeau hosszú csönd után. – Eljutottunk a szimpla magyarázatig?

– Ó, dehogy – válaszolt Brown atya.

Ahogy a szél egyszer csak egy utolsó sivítással, mintha gúnyolódna, elült a legtávolabbi fenyőerdőkben, Brown atya teljesen mozdulatlan arccal folytatta:

– Csak azért adtam elő, mert azt állították, senki nem tudja meggyőzően összekapcsolni a tubákot az óraművel vagy a gyertyákat a fényes kövekkel. Tíz hamis magyarázatot lehet ráaggatni a világegyetemre, tíz hamis elméletet lehet ráaggatni Glengyle várára. De nekünk a valódi magyarázat kell a világegyetemről is, és Glengyle váráról is. Na de nincs több kiállítási tárgy?

Craven felnevetett, Flambeau meg felállt és végigment az asztal mentén.

– Dehogy nincs, van még az ötödik, a hatodik, a hetedik és így tovább. Egy furcsa gyűjtemény nem grafitceruzákból, hanem ceruzákból kivett grafit rudacskákból. Egy értelmetlen bambusz bot, amelynek a teteje durván le van törve. Talán azt használták a bűntény végrehajtásához. Csak hát nincs semmi bűntény. S van még néhány régi misekönyv és kis katolikus kép, melyet az Ogilvie-k megőriztek, gondolom a középkorból – a családi kevélység erősebb volt bennük, mint puritanizmusuk. Csak azért tettük be a múzeumba, mert különös módon össze-vissza vannak rongálva és szaggatva.

A féktelen vihar egy sűrű felhőréteget görgetett Glengyle fölé, és teljes sötétségbe borította a hosszú termet, mikor Brown atya felemelte az iniciálékkal díszes kis lapokat, hogy megvizsgálja őket. Még mielőtt a felhőtömeg továbbvonult volna, megszólalt, de a hangja egy teljesen más ember hangja volt.

– Mr. Craven – mondta és úgy beszélt, mintha tíz évvel fiatalabb lett volna. – Magának ugyebár van hivatalos felhatalmazása, hogy kimenjen és megvizsgálja a sírt? Minél előbb indulunk, annál jobb, s annál előbb érünk ennek a szörnyű ügynek a végére. Én a maga helyében máris indulnék.

– Máris? – kérdezte elképedve a detektív. – Mért olyan sürgős?

– Mert ez viszont nagyon komoly – válaszolt Brown atya. – Most már nem kiszóródott tubákról meg szerteszét heverő kavicsokról van szó, amik százféle okból lehettek ott, ahol voltak. Arra nézve viszont, hogy ezt miért művelték, csak egyetlen okot tudok elképzelni, s ez az ok a világ legmélyebb gyökeréig nyúlik vissza. Ezeken a vallásos képeken nem csak némi szennyeződés gyűlt fel, nemcsak elszakadtak vagy nemcsak összefirkálta őket valaki, amit unalmában vagy bigott hitétől indíttatva is megtehetett bárki, egy gyerek

vagy egy protestáns hívő. Ezek az elváltoztatások nagy körültekintésre – és igen csak gyanús indítékra vallanak. Minden szövegrész, ahol Isten nagy, díszesen megrajzolt neve volt a régi iniciáléval, gondosan el lett távolítva. S ezen túl semmi mást nem vágtak ki, csak a glóriát a gyermek Jézus feje körül. Épp ezért azt tanácsolom, vegyük elő a meghatalmazást, az ásót és a fejszét, és induljunk, nyissuk ki a koporsót.

– Mégis mire gondol? – kérdezte a londoni detektív.

– Arra – válaszolt a kis pap, s mintha megemelte volna a hangját az ordító szélviharral szemben –, arra, hogy a világmindenség nagy ördöge ül talán a vár legmagasabb tornyán. Akkora, mint tíz elefánt, s hangja úgy robajlik, mint a mennydörgés az Apokalipszisban. A dolog mögött fekete mágia húzódhat meg.

– Fekete mágia? – ismételte halkan Flambeau, aki olyan felvilágosult volt, hogy ilyesmiről nem is tudott. – És a többi dolog, ezek vajon mit jelentenek?

– Ó, valami kárhozatost, gondolom – válaszolt Brown türelmetlenül. – Honnan tudhatnám? Hogyan is lehetne fogalmam a mélységben húzódó szövevényes útjaikról? Talán a kínzás valami módszerét lehet összeállítani a tubákból és a bambuszból. Talán az őrültek vonzódnak a viaszhoz és az acélreszelékhez. Talán a grafitceruzákból valami őrületet indukáló drogot lehet készíteni! Legrövidebb út a rejtély megoldásához a hegyen fel a sír felé vezet.

A másik kettő szinte észre se vette, hogy engedelmeskedik, és megindul utána, mígnem egy széllökés a sötét kertben majdnem felborította őket. Mégis mentek utána, úgy engedelmeskedtek, mint az automaták, mert Craven egyszer csak észrevette, hogy egy fejsze van a kezében, és hogy a felhatalmazás meg ott van a zsebében. Flambeau a különös kertész súlyos ásóját cipelte, Brown atya pedig a kis aranyozott könyvecskét, amelyből Isten neve ki volt szakítva.

Az ösvény fel a hegyre a sírhoz kanyargós volt, de rövid, a szél erejével szemben azonban nehéznek és hosszúnak tűnt. Amerre csak néztek, s egyre távolabb láttak, ahogy egyre feljebb jutottak a meredélyen, mindenütt fenyőerdőtengert láttak mögöttük újabb fenyőerdőtengerrel, s a szél erejétől mind rézsút meghajolt. S ez a mindent átható mozgás épp oly céltalan volt, amennyire határtalan, oly céltalan, mintha a szél egy ember által lakatlan és ok nélküli planétán fütyülne. A szürkéskék erdők végeláthatatlan tengerén át hallatszott, ahogy metsző hangon, élesen szól az ősi fájdalom, amely minden pogány dolgok legmélyén megtalálható. Az ember hajlamos volt arra gondolni, hogy a hang, amit hall, a felmérhetetlen tömegű lombozat alatti világban bolyongó elveszett pogány istenek kiáltása, a pogány

isteneké, akik ebben az irracionális erdőrengetegben csatangolnak, és akik sose találják már meg az utat vissza a mennybe.

– Az a helyzet – mondta Brown atya halkan és könnyedén –, hogy a skótok Skócia létrejötte előtt fura egy népség voltak. Ami azt illeti, ma is elég különösek. De a történelem előtti időkben, azt hiszem démonokat imádtak. Épp ezért – tette hozzá derűsen –, épp ezért fogadták el olyan lelkesen a puritán teológiát.

– Na de mi köze ehhez a tubáknak, kedves barátom? – fordult felé kissé ingerülten Flambeau.

– Kedves barátom – válaszolt Brown, és ő is komolyra váltott –, az igazi vallásoknak egy közös jellemzőjük van, a materializmus. Épp ezért az ördögimádás igazi vallás.

Közben felértek a hegy fűvel benőtt tetejére, az egyik kopasz foltra, amely jól láthatóan kivált a recsegő és süvöltő fenyőerdőből. Egy félig fából, félig drótból összetákolt ócska kerítés a szélviharban csikorgva jelezte, hogy eljutottak a temetőhöz. De amikor Craven felügyelő elért a sír egyik sarkához, és Flambeau beleszúrta az ásót a földbe és ránehezedett, mindketten úgy megrázkódtak, ahogy a szél rázkódtatta az erdőt és a drótkerítést. A sír lábánál hatalmas, magas, szürkén ezüstös, már hervadásnak indult bogáncsok nőttek. A vihar le-letépte egyik-másik fejét, belekapott és elrepítette mellettük, mire Craven odébb ugrott, mintha nyíl süvített volna el mellette.

Flambeau az ásó pengéjét belenyomta a surrogó füvön keresztül a puha agyagba. Aztán mintha abba akarná hagyni, mint egy botra, rátámaszkodott az ásóra.

– Folytassa, kérem! – mondta szelíden a pap. – Csak az igazságot akarjuk megtalálni. Mitől fél?

– Attól, hogy megtaláljuk – válaszolt Flambeau.

A londoni detektív hirtelen magas, sipító hangon megszólalt, mintha valami vidám beszélgetést akart volna folytatni.

– El nem tudom képzelni, miért rejtőzött így el a világ elől. Biztos megvolt az oka, szerintem, nyilván valami szörnyűség. Talán leprás volt?

– Még annál is rosszabb – mondta Flambeau.

– Mit tud elképzelni, ami rosszabb a lepránál? – kérdezte a társa.

– Inkább nem képzelem el – mondta Flambeau.

Nyomasztó csöndben ásott egy darabig, majd fojtott hangon azt mondta:

– Attól félek, meg lesz csonkítva.

– Az a papír is meg volt, nemde? – mondta nyugodt hangon Brown –, s még abba a darab papírba se pusztultunk bele.

Flambeau nagy erővel, vakon ásott tovább. De akkor a szélvihar vállára vette, és tovább gördítette a hegy csúcsa körül füstként keringő súlyos felhőket, és halványszürke csillagfény mezők tűntek elő, mikor Flambeau épp eljutott egy durva fakoporsó fedeléig, s valahogy sikerült neki kibillentenie a gyepre. Craven közelebb lépett a fejszével a kezében, egy bogáncs megérintette és összerándult. Majd összeszedte magát, odament a koporsóhoz, s olyan erővel, ahogy Flambeau kiásta, addig csapkodta és feszítette a fedelét, míg végre leszakadt, s a láda belseje felderengett a szürke csillagfényben.

– Csontok – mondta Craven, majd hozzátette –, de emberi csontok.

Mintha valami másra lehetett volna számítani.

– Tényleg? – kérdezte Flambeau, és a hangja furcsán vibrált. – És ép az egész?

– Úgy tűnik – válaszolt a felügyelő rekedten, és közelebb hajolt a sötét és szétesett csontvázhoz. – Várjanak csak!

Flambeau hatalmas teste megremegett.

– Ha belegondolok – szólt –, miféle őrület ez, hogy eszünkbe jut, vajon ép-e? Miért fogja el az embert ez az őrület ezek között az átkozott hegyek között? Azt hiszem, a fekete, esztelen egyformaság; ez a rengeteg erdő itt, és főleg az a tudatunk mélyén megbújó ősi iszonyat. Olyan, mint egy ateista álma. Fenyőfák és egyre újabb fenyőfák, és millió fenyőfa köröskörül…

– Te jó ég! – kiáltotta a felügyelő a koporsó mellett. – A feje hiányzik!

A két detektív megmerevedett, a pap meg meghökkenve, hirtelen aggodalommal odaugrott.

– A feje? – ismételte. – A feje hiányzik?

Mintha arra számított volna, hogy valami más fog hiányozni.

Lelki szemeik előtt képtelen víziók vonultak el: Glengyle-nak fejnélküli gyereke születik, egy fej nélküli fiatalember rejtőzködik a vár mélyén, egy fej nélküli férfi jön-megy az ősi csarnokokban és a pompás kertben. De tudatuk még abban a lemerevedett pillanatban is tiltakozott a képzelgés ellen, és tudták, hogy észtelenség az egész. Egy helyben álltak, mint a kimerült állatok, ostobán hallgatták a fák zúgását és az ég sivítását. A gondolkodás roppant erőfeszítésnek tűnt: mintha teljesen elvesztették volna a képességét.

– Három fejetlen ember áll a nyitott sír körül – mondta Brown atya.

A sápadt londoni detektív kinyitotta a száját, hogy mondjon valamit, de csak állt tovább tátott szájjal, mint egy féleszű, épp mikor a szél hosszú sikolya kettétépte az eget, mire Craven észrevette a kezében a fejszét, s mintha semmi köze nem lett volna hozzá, ledobta a földre.

– Atyám – kezdte Flambeau olyan együgyű és bizonytalan hangon, amilyet igen ritkán lehetett hallani tőle –, mit tegyünk?

Barátja válasza olyan gyorsan jött, ahogy az ágyú torkába szorult golyó, ha végre kilövik.

– Menjünk aludni! – válaszolta határozottan. – Menjünk aludni. Eljutottunk az utak végére. Tudják, mi az alvás? Tudják, hogy mindenki, aki alszik, hisz Istenben? Egyike a szentségeknek, mert a hitből ered és táplálék. És szükségünk van valami szentségre, ha csak ilyen természet adta szentségre is. Valami feltárult előttünk, ami ritkán tárul fel ember előtt, talán a legrosszabb, ami ember előtt feltárulhat.

Craven tátott szája megmozdult.

– Mire gondol?

A tisztelendő az arcát a vár felé fordította, ahogy válaszolt:

– Rábukkantunk az igazságra, és az igazságnak nincs semmi értelme.

Előre indult az ösvényen, mégpedig lefelé, erőteljes és határozott léptekkel, ami nem volt rá igazán jellemző, és amikor visszaértek a várba, olyan egyszerűen adta át magát az alvásnak, mint egy kutya.

A szender misztikus magasztalása ellenére másnap Brown atya mindenkinél előbb talpon volt, kivéve a csöndes kertészt, s a többiek már úgy találtak rá, amint nagy pipájával a szájában figyeli a szakember szótlan munkálkodását a konyhakertben. Napkelte tájt a földrengésszerű vihar mennydörgéssel kísért esőben ért véget, s a reggel egész különös frissességet hozott. Úgy tűnt, a kertész még beszélgetni is hajlandó volt, de mikor meglátta a két detektívet, mogorván belevágta az ásóját az egyik ágyásba, s valamit mormogva a reggelijéről, végigcsoszogott a káposztáik mentén és elzárkózott a konyhában.

– Nagy érték ez az ember – szólt Brown atya. – Ugyancsak tudja, hogy kell a krumplival bánni. Persze ő sem tökéletes – tette hozzá elfogulatlan jóindulattal –, neki is megvannak a maga hibái, na de kinek nincsenek? Nem egyenletesen kapálta végig ezt az oldalt. Ott például – s hirtelen odalépett az egyik krumplibokor mellé –, ezzel a tővel kapcsolatban megvannak a fenntartásaim.

– És ugyan miért? – kérdezte Craven s jót mosolygott magában a kis pap szenvedélyes érdeklődésén.

– Azért – válaszolt az atya –, mert Gow-nak magának is fenntartásai lehetnek. Ugyanis egyenletesen végigásózta az egész sort, de ezt az egyet kihagyta. Valami nagyon különös krumpli kell, hogy legyen ez itt.

Flambeau kihúzta az ásót és hirtelen mozdulattal belevágta a földbe a mellett a gyanús krumplibokor mellett. Felfordította, s a kiborított talajjal együtt előgördült valami, ami egyáltalán nem hatott

krumplinak, inkább olyan volt, mint egy túlméretezett, nagy kalapú gomba. De hideg koccanással az ásó fejéhez csapódott, majd tovább gurult, mint egy labda, és rájuk vigyorgott.

– Glengyle gróf – mondta szomorúan Brown, s dermedten bámulta a koponyát.

Aztán némi gondolkodás után kivette Flambeau kezéből az ásót, és azt mondta:

– Legjobb lesz újra elásni.

S visszatemette a földbe. Akkor apró testét és nagy fejét a földből mereven kiemelkedő ásó jókora nyeléhez támasztotta, üres tekintettel nézett maga elé, homloka csupa ránc volt.

– Csak felérné az ember ésszel ezt az utolsó borzalmat – motyogta maga elé. És az ásó hatalmas nyelére támaszkodva, arcát két tenyerébe temette, ahogy a templomban szokás.

Az ég mind a négy sarka kezdett feltisztulni, kék és ezüst sugarakban minden irányban egyszer csak felderült az ég, és a madarak a csöppnyi kerti fákon olyan hangosan kezdtek csivitelni, mintha maguk a fák cseverésznének. A három férfi azonban némán állt a helyén.

– Én feladom – szólt végül Flambeau ingerülten. – A gondolkodásom képtelen ehhez a világhoz alkalmazkodni, és kész. Tubák, megrongált imakönyvek és kibelezett zenélődobozok... hát...

Brown felemelte gondolattól barázdált arcát és tőle ugyancsak szokatlan módon vadul megragadta az ásó nyelét.

– Ugyan dehogy, dehogy, dehogy! – kiáltotta. – Az egész olyan egyszerű, mint egy pofon. Ma, mikor felébredtem, rájöttem a tubák és az óraszerkezet értelmére. S azóta meg is beszéltem az öreg Gow-val, a kertésszel, aki se nem olyan süket, sem nem olyan ostoba, mint amilyennek tetteti magát. Az össze nem illő darabok tökéletesen illeszkednek. Tévedtem a megrongált misekönyvekkel kapcsolatban is: semmi különös baljós jelentésük nincs. De ez az utolsó ügy! Sírgyalázás és halott emberek fejének eltűntetése azért már tényleg nem olyan ártatlan dolog, nemde? Ez már tényleg a fekete mágia műve kell, hogy legyen. Nem illeszthető bele a tubák és a gyertyák egyszerű történetébe.

S újra nekiindult, körbe-körbejárkált, és kedvetlenül szívta a pipáját.

– Barátom – mondta Flambeau akasztófahumorral –, jobb, ha megpróbál tekintettel lenni rám, s nem felejti el, hogy valaha magam is bűnöző voltam. Annak az életmódnak nagy előnye az volt, hogy magam találtam ki a sztorit, s oly gyorsan le is játszottam, ahogy akartam. Ez a detektív tempó a sok várakozással szinte elviselhetetlen az én francia türelmetlenségemnek. Életemben soha semmit nem halo-

gattam, se jót, se rosszat. Ha párbajról volt szó, másnap elintéztem, a számláimat prompt befizettem, még a fogorvosnál is mindig a megadott időben jelentem meg...

Brown atya kiejtette a szájából pipáját, és az három darabra tört a kavicsos úton. A tisztelendő megmerevedett, szeme kidülledt, úgy nézett ki, mint egy félkegyelmű.

– Úristen, milyen ostoba vagyok, uramisten, milyen ostoba – ismételgette. Aztán, mintha részeg lenne, elkezdett hahotázni.

– Hát a fogorvos, persze – ismételte. – Hat óra a szellemi nihilben, csak mert a fogorvos nem jutott eszembe! Egy ilyen egyszerű, ilyen szép és békés gondolat! Barátaim, egy éjszakát töltöttünk a pokolban, de most felkelt a nap, énekelnek a madarak, és a fogorvos sugárzó alakja elhozta a vigaszt a világnak.

– Majd rájövök, mi az értelme mindennek – mondta Flambeau előrelépve –, ha az inkvizíció kínvallatásával látok neki.

Brown atya mintha elnyomta volna a pillanatnyi vágyat magában, hogy táncra perdüljön a most már napfényben fürdő pázsiton, és szánni való hangon, mint egy gyerek, úgy kiabált.

– Engedjék meg, hogy egy percre úgy viselkedjek, mint egy csacsi gyerek. Nem tudják elképzelni, milyen boldogtalan voltam. Most meg már tudom, hogy nincs a dolog mögött semmi bűn. Talán némi őrület – de azzal ki törődik?

Még egyszer megperdült, aztán elkomolyodva nézett a két nyomozóra.

– A történet nem valami bűntényről szól – mondta –, inkább valami furcsa és torz tisztességről. Egy olyan emberrel van dolgunk, s talán ő az egyetlen ilyen ember a világon, aki csak azt fogadta el, ami járt neki. Arról a vad gondolkodásbeli hagyományról van szó, ami ennek a fajtának a vallására oly jellemző.

Az a régi rigmus a Glengyle-okról:

> Az Ogilvie-k a véraranyt oly igen áhítják,
> Mint tikkadt nyárban a fák az esőt szomjúzzák,

szó szerint is igaz, nemcsak átvitt értelemben. Nem csak arról van szó, hogy a Glengyle-oknak a gazdagság volt a mindene, szó szerint arról is, hogy gyűjtötték az aranyat; óriási gyűjteményük volt: díszek, edények aranyból. Fukar emberek voltak, akiknek ez volt a mániája. Ennek a ténynek az ismeretében végiggondolhatjuk újra, mi mindent találtunk a várban. Gyémántot az aranygyűrűk nélkül, gyertyákat az arany gyertyatartók nélkül, tubákot az arany szelencék nélkül, grafitpálcákat az arany ceruzatokok nélkül, egy sétapálcát az arany feje nélkül. Óraszerkezeteket az aranyórák, pontosabban karórák

nélkül. És bármilyen őrültségnek hangzik is, minthogy a glóriák és Isten neve a régi imakönyvekben is aranyból volt, ezeket is eltávolították.

A kert mintha kivilágosodott volna, és vidámabban csillogott a fű az erősödő napfényben, ahogy az elmebeteg igazság elhangzott. Flambeau rágyújtott egy cigarettára, miközben barátja folytatta.

– Eltávolították – ismételte Brown atya –, eltávolították, de nem ellopták. Egy tolvaj sose hagyott volna ilyen rejtélyt maga után. Egy tolvaj az arany tubákszelencével a tubákot is ellopta volna, és a ceruzákat, a grafitot a tokkal együtt. Egy olyan emberrel állunk szemben, akinek a lelkiismerete egészen különösen működik, de működik. Reggel itt találtam ezt a furcsa moralistát a kertben, és hallottam tőle az egész történetet.

A megboldogult Archibald Ogilvie volt a legjobb ember, aki valaha is Glengyle várában született. De makacs erénye mizantrópiába hajlott, nagyon fájlalta ősei becstelenségét, s végül valamiért arra a meggyőződésre jutott, hogy minden ember becstelen. Leginkább a filantrópiában nem hitt, az önkéntes adakozásban, és megesküdött, ha talál egyetlen embert, aki pontosan azt veszi el, amihez joga van, azé lesz Glengyle minden aranya. Miután ezt a fogadalmat tette az emberi természetet kihívva maga ellen, bezárkózott, s egyáltalán nem hitte volna, hogy a feltételnek bárki meg tudna felelni. Egy nap azonban, egy süket és látszólag félkegyelmű falusi legény a környékről kézbesített neki egy eltévedt táviratot, és Glengyle, fanyar nagylelkűséggel adott neki egy újonnan nyomott penny-t. Legalábbis azt hitte, de mikor kiürítette a zsebeit, az aprópénz között megtalálta az új penny-t, nem találta viszont az arany fontját. Ez az eset aztán az embergyűlölő gondolatok széles horizontját nyitotta meg lelki szemei előtt. Akárhogy is, a fiú az emberi faj mohó pénzéhségét bizonyította számára. Vagy eltűnik, s akkor tolvaj, aki magához vett egy aranyat, vagy becsületesen visszahozza, de csak álszentségből, a jutalom reményében. Aznap éjjel a grófot álmából vad dörömbölés verte fel, s minthogy egyedül élt a várban, kénytelen volt maga menni kinyitni a kaput, ami mögött ott állt a süket idióta. Az idióta nem az aranyat hozta vissza, hanem pontosan tizenkilenc shillinget és tizenegy penny-t apróban.

A számtani precizitás az őrült akcióban őlordságának teljesen megzavarta a fejét. Esküdözött, hogy ő Diogenész, aki oly igen régóta keres egy igaz embert, és most végre megtalálta. Új végrendeletet íratott, amit én láttam is. Az együgyű legényt magához vette és kinevelte egyetlen szolgájává, s enyhén szólva bizarr módon megtette örököséül. És ha ez a fura alak bármit ért is, két dolgot biztos: urának két fixa

ideáját; először, hogy a jog betű szerinti értelme mindennél előrébbvaló, másodszor, hogy az övé lesz Glengyle minden aranya. Eddig minden logikus és egyszerű. Összeszedett mindent a házban, ami aranyból volt, abból, ami nem volt aranyból viszont semmit nem vett magához. Még egy csipet tubákot sem. Kiemelte az arany iniciálékat a régi imakönyvből, s teljesen elégedett volt azzal, hogy a könyvet amúgy épségben hagyta. Mindezt felfogtam magam is, de a koponya rejtélyéhez sehogy sem tudtam közelebb jutni. Nagyon zavarba ejtett az az emberi fej, amely a krumpliföldbe lett eltemetve. Kétségbe ejtett, míg csak Flambeau ki nem mondta a fogorvos szót.

Minden rendben lesz. Vissza fogja tenni a fejet a sírba, amint kihúzta belőle az aranyfogakat.

És tényleg, amikor Flambeau aznap reggel felment a hegyre, látta a fura alakot, a becsületes fösvényt, amint bontja a meggyalázott sírt, nyaka körül a gyapjúsálat lengette a szél, s a józan keménykalap ott ült a fején.

*Don Paterson*

# Aforizmák*

*Dósa Attila fordítása*

A költői tautológiák – a látszólag öncélú szonettecskék és dalok – mindössze azon líraiatlan egyének számára fölöslegesek, akik nem képesek észrevenni a függőleges tengelyt: látják ugyan, amint visszatérünk ugyanahhoz a ponthoz, de nem érzékelik a *hangszín* váltakozását.

* * *

Az olvasó lehet a csoda szemtanúja, de a részese soha; a költészetnek az író és az Isten közötti privát tranzakciónak kell maradnia. Az igazi vers nem más, mint szellemi udvariasság – úgy, mint amikor visszaadunk egy kölcsönkért könyvet.

* * *

Mindig azon kapom magam, hogy vastag fekete vonalat húzok a lapok közötti hézagba a jegyzetfüzetem közepén… Legyen az bármenynyire jelképes, a szakadék talán jó ürügy a boldogság hiányára – és a szörnyek jelenlétére, melyek olykor felkúsznak a papírra…

* * *

A kertész esztelen buzgalma, amikor jóval a virágzás előtt, sőt már rügyfakadás idején megmetszi rózsáit… A csupasz ág és tövis kegyetlen esztétikája… Maga a gondolat, hogy micsoda gonosz és tökéletes virágot hajtana nyomban az erőfeszítés, ha *egyszerűen csak hagynánk!*

* * *

Ha azt szeretnéd, hogy műved akár egyetlen nappal is túlélje halálod, jobb, ha máris abbahagyod az oltalmazását – szokjon csak minél előbb önállóságot!

* * *

*Egyetlen mondattal* előidézni az olvasóban az unalom irtózatos bénultságát…

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*A fordítás alapjául szolgáló mű: W. N. Herbert and Matthew Hollis, eds., *Strong Words: Modern Poets on Modern Poetry* (Tarset: Bloodaxe Books, 2000), pp. 282–86.

Az írónak minden reggel oda kellene mennie az ablakhoz, hogy kinézzen, és emlékezetébe vésse a következő tényt: saját fajtársaitól eltekintve egyetlen szeme elé kerülő dolog – egyetlen madár, fa vagy kő sincs birtokában a névnek, amit az ember ad neki.

* * *

Ha van egyáltalán valami költői ambícióm, akkor az az, hogy *pontosan* semmit írjak; ezt csak úgy lehet elérni, ha addig finomítjuk a tevékenység értelmezését, amíg az mindenestül elkülöníthető nem lesz attól, ha *egyáltalán* semmit sem írok, illetve annak ellentététől, ha *többé-kevésbé* semmit sem írok. Teleírni a papírt, és érintetlenül hagyni a csendet... Majd a vers időtartamára *érvényre juttatni* ezt a csendet az olvasó életében...

* * *

Ha lefekszel saját múzsáddal, az szinte megbocsáthatatlan vétség a hímnemű irodalmi protokollal szemben; de ha lefekszel egy barátod múzsájával és utána el is mondod neki, az a legnagyobb szívesség, amit egy művésznek megtehetsz. Megrendül, de szíve mélyén máris köszönetet mond neked.

* * *

A piciny életmű udvariasság az olvasóval és megvesztegetés az utókorral szemben. Aki volt annyira szerény, hogy *ennyit* írjon és nem többet, legalább a tapintatossága révén halhatatlanná válhat...

* * *

Minden szabatosan megfogalmazott tautológiában található egy fölös aranyrög. Ez az alapvető alkímia vonatkozik mindenfajta művészetre, amely a krizometria szabályait követi. Abból a művészetből pedig, amelyik az izometria elvének engedelmeskedik, egy szemernyi mindig hiányozni fog – mivel lejjebb ereszkedik egy oktávot, ahelyett, hogy fölfelé emelkedne. Az igazi vers felfejt egy valóságos szálat az eltávozó lélek köntöséből, és ragyogó vezérfonalat húz a sötét erdőben, amely egy nap majd visszavezet bennünket a fényre. Az igazi filozófia saját hiányosságának precíz természetét vázolja fel; így a *deus absconditus* valódi alakjának tudatában esetleg felismerhetjük az istentelen ösvényt, ha véletlenül ráakadunk.

* * *

Az angyalok és a boldogok nyelve egyetlen, végtelen számú igeidővel, móddal és raggal rendelkező igéből áll. Az ördögök és a kárhozottak

nyelvében nincs semmilyen összefüggés, és ezt a nyelvet kell tanulmányozniuk azoknak a nyomorultaknak, akik a pokolbéli nyelvtanászok ostorcsapásai alatt hatalmas és végtelen szöveggyűjtemények örökkévalóságig tartó magolására kárhoztattak. A két nyelv természetesen egy és ugyanaz – csak éppen ez az utóbbiak előtt rejtve marad.

* * *

Nem szabad elfelejtenünk, hogy az etimológia lényeges része örökre eltemetve marad a szemlélő számára. A szavak lezárt koporsók, melyekben még mindig lélegző holttestek fekszenek.

* * *

A költő számára az egyik legnagyobb vigaszt az jelenti, ha naponta – sőt, egyfolytában – arra gondolhat, hogy valahol, éppen akkor, egy nála mérhetetlenül szellemesebb és értelmesebb személy egyetlen rímpár megformálásán munkálkodva tiszta bohócot csinál magából.

* * *

A költészet a tudat zenéje.

* * *

A jó stílushoz vezető első lépés a forma megfordítása, amiben a gondolat megszületett.

* * *

Mind közül a zene a legtökéletesebb és legigényesebb művészeti ág; nem enged meg semmiféle hibalehetőséget. Ha meghallunk egy zenei hangot a fejünkben, és megpróbáljuk énekhangon vagy zongorán visszaadni, a legkisebb pontatlanság is katasztrofális; odajön valaki más, és sokkal kevésbé diszharmonikus következményekkel leüt egy hangot egy egész kvinttel arrébb. A lírában a pontatlan szinonima vagy a fals rím csak azoknak fogja sérteni a fülét, akik megfelelően rá vannak hangolva a közegre, és akik talán eleve zenei formaként fogják fel a költészetet.

* * *

Mindegyik kritikus azzal az őszinte hittel írja recenzióját, hogy a szerző el is fogja olvasni. Micsoda boldogság megtagadni tőlük ezt a gyönyört! Képzeld csak el: a kritikától független stílusban írhatsz egyszerűen csak azért, mert *sohasem törődtél azzal, hogy egyet is elolvass*... Ettől a gondolattól persze csak a gyenge kritikákat kapott szerzők fognak vérszemet kapni...

Minden dicséret vagy kritika csak arra szolgál, hogy újfent a mű és annak forrása közé iktassa az író személyét, és csupán megbolygatja azt az elvont és kifürkészhetetlen mechanizmust, ami a mű létrejöttéhez vezet. Akik úgy találják, hogy a dicséret ösztönzi őket az alkotásban, semmi értékeset nem fognak létrehozni; a forrás, amit a hiúság zavarossá tesz, eleve szennyezett. Égesd el kritikáidat, és figyelmeztesd barátaidat, hogy ne is tegyenek róluk említést.

* * *

A legfőbb különbség az aforizma és a vers között az, hogy az aforizma először a tanulságot állapítja meg. Olyan forma ez, amely híján van a feszültségnek, és ezért egyszerre tökéletes és tökéletesen nélkülözhető. Hiányzik belőle az út, a történet, a vágy.

* * *

Miért feltételezik oly gyakran az olvasók, hogy a költő tele van érzelmekkel, amikor verset ír? Szerintük vajon ki fogna bele egy hegedűverseny előadásába vagy egy szobor megformázásába, miközben remeg a keze a félelemtől, vagy elhomályosítja szemét a szerelem vagy a gyötrelem?

* * *

Azt, aki semmit sem hallgatott még Mozart zenéjén kívül, minden, amit utána hall, egy kicsit Mozartra fogja emlékeztetni... A gyenge kritikusok gyakran olyan párhuzamokat ötlenek ki, amelyeknek semmi közük sincs magához a műhöz, hanem csak a rendelkezésükre álló csekély számú példákból táplálkoznak.

* * *

A zene mint kompozíciós készség könnyedén meghaladja a költészetet, mivel *lehet készakarva gyakorolni*. A komponálás gyakran csak egyetlen hatalmas és kifinomult számítás elvégzésén múlik – magát a befogadóban felidézett érzelmet valójában az alkotói folyamat egyetlen szakaszában sem *érezték*. Ugyanez elképzelhetetlen a költészetben, ahol Frost törvénye, mely szerint „ha az író nem könnyezett, az olvasó sem fog," még mindig abszolút befolyással bír; viszont annál gyakrabban fordul elő az, hogy bármekkora kínt vagy gyönyört érzett is a költő, az olvasónak bizony száraz marad a szeme. *Semmit sem érezni* és ennek ellenére *érzelmeket fakasztani* a közönségben... Valószínűleg ez áll a legközelebb az isteni hatalomhoz.

Jobb, ha a művészet mindig a vágyakozást testesíti meg; a versnek fel kell öltenie a nő, a férfi, az isten vagy a szellem alakját, különben nem is lesz belőle vers.

* * *

Micsoda megkönnyebbülésre leltem egy rossz aforizmaszerző olvasása közben! Már kezdtem azt hinni, hogy a tömörség önmagában kikezdhetetlen erénynek számít. Bár lehet, hogy az egyszavas vers tényleg mindig ragyogó.

* * *

A vers önmagára emlékező gép.

* * *

A költészet a dolgok egyszeri kimondásának művészete – pontosabban, a kijelentésben foglalt valódi gondolat felfogásának művészete.

* * *

A műfordítás rendszerint a versbeszéd erőltetett fesztelenségével árulja el magát. Mint amikor valaki bemutatja az útlevelét, mielőtt bárki is kérte volna: az ilyen viselkedés csakis gyanakvásra adhat okot.

* * *

Az elveszett mű elhomályosíthatatlan fényessége... Még mindig emlékszem arra a vidám versciklusra, amit tízévesen írtam, és rendkívül nagyra tartottam... Azután a rémületre, amikor egy évvel később rájöttem, hogy elveszett. Még ma is úgy érzem, hogy megalapozhatta volna a hírnevemet!

* * *

A költői igazság a szavak állandó csiszolásának azon a pontján testesül meg, amikor azokat már nem lehet más szavakkal körülírni, de még nem váltak kinyilatkoztatásszerűvé. Talán ugyanez az aforizma definíciója is, ami a vers tehetségtelen, botfülű fivére.

# Köszönjük, Tanár Úr!

*Lénárt Levente*

Sarbu tanár úr igen jelentős szerepet vállalt a Miskolci Egyetem angol tanszékei bolognai rendszerű oktatásra történő átállását jelentő programok kidolgozásában és akkreditálásában. A BA (BSc) keretében az amerikanisztika specializáció keretében popkultúrát is oktatunk. Egyik alkalommal a közös irodánkban szorgoskodva szóba került, hogy éppen mivel foglalkozom, és mondtam, hogy fordítok, mégpedig az egyik kurzushoz igencsak passzoló témát, Elvis Presley életrajzi regényét, Peter Guralnick feldolgozásában. Tanár Urat érdekelte, hogy lehet úgy fordítani, hogy se a könyv, se szótár nincs a kezem ügyében. Lelkesen kezdtem magyarázni, hogy az eredeti szöveget beszkeneltem a számítógépbe, amelyben a megfelelő szótárprogram is rendelkezésre áll, így az asztalon navigálva az angol és a magyar szöveg között kényelmesen lehet dolgozni, ráadásul, ha valamelyik szó, kifejezés, név vagy bármilyen adat nem világos, ott az internet, és azonnal utánanézhet a tájékozatlan érdeklődő. A szavak szintjén minden tökéletesen működött, amikor azonban az elmondottak gyakorlati bemutatójára került volna sor – természetesen – semmi sem.

Szerencsére a fordítás ettől függetlenül elkészült, sőt azóta már a Paul McCartney életrajz is megjelent. Születésnapi jókívánságaim mellett ebből a könyvből szeretném átnyújtani a „Köszönetnyilvánítás" fejezetet, amely a magyar fordításból kimaradt, viszont úgy érzem – érezzük itt Miskolcon –, hogy az egyetem nagyon sokat köszönhet Tanár Úrnak a megfontolt, bölcs útmutatásáért és tanácsaiért, ezért – bár a szöveg eredetileg nem neki íródott – a köszönet mindenképpen neki is kijár.

## Köszönetnyilvánítás[1]

A Beatles nevéhez az idők során annyi mítosz és fantázia szülte spekuláció tapadt, hogy az életüket érintő legalapvetőbb tényeken kívül semmit sem lehet biztonsággal velük kapcsolatban meghatározni. A nagyközönség számára a híres emberek sohasem a maguk természetes mivoltában jelennek meg, hanem a média által kiszínezett, szte-

1. Barry Miles, *Paul McCartney Many Years From Now* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997), pp. 9–14.

reotípiákkal teletűzdelt, átpolitizált változatában, annak megfelelően, hogy a hírt adó újságíró, illetve lap szerkesztője milyen álláspontot képvisel. Különösen igaz ez a popsztárok esetében, mivel a média – tévé show-k és a könnyűzenei sajtó – ellentétben a hivatalos, az eseményeket dokumentáló igényességgel feltárni hívatott sajtóorgánumokkal, a szórakoztatóipar részei, és – hogy még bonyolultabb legyen a helyzet – maguk a muzsikusok sem a tényeket közlik, mivel általában azért nyilatkoznak, hogy az éppen aktuális terméket népszerűsítsék. A popzenéről komolyan vehető tudósítások csak a hatvanas évek második felétől kezdtek megjelenni, amikor az underground sajtó – az *East Village Other, Berkeley Barb, IT* – első sajtótermékei napvilágot láttak, illetve az évtized végén, a *Rolling Stone* magazin beindulásával, ami odavezetett, hogy a Beatles fénykorából származó, megbízható hitelességű interjú igen csekély számban maradt fenn.

A „Fab Four"-ról – a mesés négyes fogatról – a köztudatban élő információk igen zavaros képet mutatnak. A négy gombafejű, a Pszichedelia Lordjai, a szellemes, a szépfiú és – John esetében – a Béke Hercegének sztereotípiái keverednek az *A Hard Day's Night* sziporkázóan szellemes aranyköpéseket ontó, a *Strawberry Fields Foreve'* promóciós film szétnarkózott agyú, a *Yellow Submarine* vidám papírmasé figurái, vagy Richard Avedon kábítószer hatása alatt készült portréinak a képeivel, amelyek számos hálószoba falát ékesítették annak idején. A Beatlesre zúduló stressz sohasem az egyénre, hanem a csapatra irányult. Úgy lettek a pop ikonográfia részei, hogy azzal együtt a hatvanas évek Nagy-Britanniájának is szimbólumává váltak. Ahogy az Eiffel torony láttán azonnal Párizsra asszociál minden, az európai kultúrában kicsit is tájékozott ember, úgy határozza meg a Beatles, Harold Wilson és Christine Keeler szellemisége a maguk korszakát.

A rajongók mindig kiválasztották a saját kedvenc Beatle-jüket, és ez a részrehajlás a modernkor pop krónikásai körében teljes elevenséggel él tovább. Amikor a zene négy ember közös szerzeménye, lehetetlen hangjegyről hangjegyre, ütemről ütemre megállapítani, hogy melyik köthető konkrétan melyikükhöz, így általában a krónikás szubjektív ítélete lesz a mérvadó. Így történhetett meg, hogy Sinatra a „Something"-et, George Harrison dalát rendszeresen Lennon–McCartney dalként konferálta be. Bármi, ami az avantgárddal, vagy az experimentálissal kapcsolatba hozható automatikusan John Lennon szerzeményként aposztrofálódott függetlenül attól, hogy esetleg Paul kreatív kísérletező kedvét csodálhatjuk a végtelenített hangszalagokon, vagy az „A Day in the Life" nagyzenekari betétjátékában. A helyzet az, hogy John egyáltalán nem rejtette véka alá az előítéleteit

az avantgárddal szemben, keresetlenül szókimondó véleménye szerint ugyanis „franciául mindenre, ami szar, azt mondják, hogy avantgárd." Lekicsinylő nézetein csak Yoko Onóval 1969-ben bekövetkezett megismerkedése hatására kezdett tudatosan vállalt, nem kevés erőfeszítéssel járó ön-agymosással változtatni.

A könyvben megkíséreljük nevesíteni, hogy ki mivel járult hozzá egy-egy dal létrejöttéhez, megpróbáljuk kiküszöbölni az életrajzról életrajzra magukat makacsul átörökítő pontatlanságokat, valamint Paul és közvetlen környezetére fókuszálva megrajzoljuk a művész és a hatvanas évek Londonjának portréját. Paul volt az egyetlen városlakó Beatle, ő nem volt – hivatalosan legalábbis – házas, rendszeres premier és tárlatmegnyitó látogató volt, gyakran megfordult a klubokban és az éjszakai bárokban, a Happeningeken és a hatvanas évek derekán oly jellemző experimentális rendezvényeken. Maga is szívesen kísérletezgetett a végtelenített hangszalagokkal és a különféle, egymásra montírozós filmezési technikákkal, amelyek azonban – miután beépültek a közösen létrehozott művek sorába – mind John alkotásaiként rögzültek a köztudatban. Mivel Paul az ilyen irányú kísérletezgetéseit nem verte nagydobra, művészetének ez az oldala kevésbé ismert, de bízunk benne, hogy ez a könyv pótolni fogja ezt a hiányosságot, így általa még teljesebb és hitelesebb kép alakul ki Paul McCartney-ról az olvasóban.

John halálát követően az általa a Beatlesben betöltött hiteles kép megrajzolására tett bármiféle kísérlet magától értetődően szentségtörésnek minősül. Alakja az idők során Szent Johnná lényegült, ami Lennont ismerve legalább annyira zavarná, mint amennyire szórakoztatná is, ha megérte volna. Nincs ugyan már közöttünk, hogy elmondhassa, ő hogyan emlékszik a dolgokra, de volt rá módja korábban, a Lennon interjúkat tartalmazó kötetben.[2] 1968-at – a John és Yoko által kezdeményezett békekampányt – követően napi tíz interjút is adtak, míg a többi Beatle alig volt jelen a sajtóban, így – szerencsére – ismerjük Johnnak a legfontosabb kérdésekkel kapcsolatos nézeteit, köztük számos Lennon–McCartney szerzemény keletkezésének a körülményeit is.

A könyv írása során minden egyes Lennon–McCartney szerzeményt megbeszéltünk, még azokról sem felejtkeztünk el, amelyeket nem a Beatles vett lemezre. Paul szándékosan nem olvasta el előre John kommentárjait, de a nyolcvan szóban forgó dalból csak két esetben

2. Barry Miles itt minden bizonnyal a John Lennon and Jann Wenner, *Lennon Remembers: The Complete Rolling Stone Interviews from 1970* (Straight Arrow Books, 1971) című kötetre céloz *(L. L.)*.

volt komoly ellenvetése a dal szerzőjének személyét illetően. (John szerint ő írta az „Eleanor Rigby" szövegének a 70%-át, Paul emlékezete szerint pedig az „In My Life" zenéje az ő szerzeménye.)

> PAUL: Én így emlékszem, és ez így van akkor is, ha valakinek, vagy valaki családjának nem tetszik, mert ő máshogy emlékszik. Szeretném kijelenteni itt mindjárt a könyv elején, hogy igen nagyra becsülöm Johnt. Semmiképpen sem szeretném, hogy úgy tűnjön, mintha én most itt utólag meg akarnám mondani a frankót, mindent, ami sikeres volt magamnak vindikálnék, ezért itt és most ünnepélyesen kijelentem, hogy John csodálatos ember volt, és én őszintén szerettem. Boldog vagyok, hogy együtt dolgozhattam vele, és a mai napig szívesen idézem föl azokat az időket. Összességében az én véleményem sem több, mint egy vélemény a sok közül. Távol áll tőlem, hogy bármit is el akarnék venni tőle. Se többet, se kevesebbet nem akarok mondani csak azt, hogy nekem is vannak emlékeim a történtekről, ez adja ennek a könyvnek az apropóját. *I Me Mine* című életrajzában George Harrison alig említi Johnt. Én semmiképpen sem szeretnék megfeledkezni róla. Mi voltunk a huszadik század legszerencsésebb szerzőpárosa, leginkább azért, mert megtaláltuk egymást. A partneri kapcsolat, a kettőnk közt tökéletesen működő egymás kiegészítése maga volt a csoda. Mindketten láttuk és értettük a másikban látensen rejtőzködő, kiaknázásra váró értékeket. Nem lehettem mindig én a gyönyörű melódiákat kitaláló jófiú, időnként vad dolgokat is művelnem kellett, ahogy John is kénytelen volt szeretetreméltóan viselkedni velem, hogy el tudjam viselni. Ha egydimenziós figurák lettünk volna, nem bírjuk ki egymást olyan hosszú ideig.

A Lennon–McCartney szerzőpáros messze a korabeli rock 'n' roll bandák fölé emelte a Beatlest, és a könyvünkben kísérletet teszünk mind az alkotói kapcsolat titkának, mind pedig a dalok születési körülményeinek a feltárására. Kezdődő barátságuk azonnal kiváltotta Paul édesapjának és John Mimi nagynénjének a rosszallását, ami kellő nyomatékkal bírhatott volna ahhoz, hogy egyáltalán ne is barátkozzanak.

> PAUL: Míg én a neveltetésem eredményeként meglehetősen magabiztos, angyalarcú kissráccá cseperedtem, John esetében nem így történt. Velem ellentétben félszeg, sasorrú, szögletes arcú, a világgal állandó haragban állást sejtető arckife-

jezésű kamasszá vált, ami persze tökéletesen érthető, ha a dolgok mögé nézünk. Ötéves volt, mikor az apja magukra hagyta őket, és nem is találkoztak, csak mikor John híres lett, akkor fedezte fel az esheri Bear Innben mosogatás közben egy újságíró. Johnnak bizony mindezzel meg kellett birkóznia. Neveltetéséből adódóan rengeteg gátlást kellett leküzdenie.

Eltérő családi hátterük ellenére a rock 'n' roll iránti szeretet mégiscsak összehozta a két srácot, a középosztálybeli csonkacsaládból származó Johnt és a munkáscsalád meleg, szeretetteljes légköréből származó Pault. Barátságuk a közös bandában, a the Quarry Menben folytatott közös zenélés kapcsán kezdett alakulni, majd a félelmetesen nagyszerű Lennon–McCartney szerzőpáros megalakulásával vált eltéphetetlenül szoros kötelékké. Meghitt, egymást évtizedeken át óvó-védő szeretettel körülvevő barátságuk újra a régi intenzitással lángolt fel John 1980-ban bekövetkezett tragikus halálát megelőzően.

A beatle-mánia kezdetén elképesztő nyomás nehezedett a zenekarra. Az állandóan a nyomukban lihegő, interjúkat követelő sajtó miatt magánéletről szó sem lehetett. A nagyközönség által Beatles sztoriként ismert történet nagyrészt ennek az időszaknak a kiforgatott, félremagyarázott, féligazságokat tartalmazó idézeteiből, csúsztatásaiból, hazugságaiból és kitalációiból táplálkozik.

PAUL: Gyakran megesett, hogy mi magunk mondtuk az újságírónak, hogy „figyelj, nincs időm nyilatkozni, találj ki valamit". Több se kellett nekik [...] tudod, hogy van ez, a jól kitalált és megírt sztori kitörölhetetlenül megragad az emberek emlékezetében. De az is megesett, hogy aznap éppen vicces kedvünkben voltunk. Nyár van, a pubban iszogatsz, és akkor jön egy fazon a jegyzetfüzetével és lyukat dumál a hasadba. Hát, hogy csökkenjen a feszültség, elkezdtük hinteni a rizsát a sajtónak. Még házi pontversenyt is vezettünk, hogy ki tudja legjobban megetetni őket. Az egyik legmeredekebb George fejéből pattant ki, azt állította, hogy ő Tommy Steele[3] unokatestvére. Nagyon ügyes dobás volt, meg kell adni. Ráadásul kiderült, hogy az újságírók sem szívják túlságosan mellre a dolgot, így a hazudozás segítségével sikerült a ránk nehezedő

3. Eredeti nevén Thomas William Hicks, 1936. december 17-én született Londonban. Ő volt Nagy-Britannia első tinédzserbálványa és rock and roll sztárja.

nyomást csökkentenünk. Ettől kezdve jelentősen javult a kapcsolatunk a sajtóval, ők is tudták, mi is tudtuk, és nagyon kellemesen elszórakoztattuk egymást. Tök mindegy volt, hogy mit mondunk, csak teljenek az oldalak. Emlékszem, John az egyik alkalommal azt mondta nekem: „öreg, valami koktélos fogadáson épp arra ténferegtem, ahol az újságírók gyűrűjében éppen nyomtad nekik a sódert. Apám, annyi baromságot, amit te ott összehordtál nekik! Egy szó sem volt igaz az egészből!" Aztán még elismerőleg hozzátette: „de meg kell adni kurva jó volt, nagyon tetszett!" Hát így ment ez akkoriban. Természetes, hogy egyik, másik megragadt a köztudatban.

Hunter Davies 1968-ban íródott Beatles biográfiáján és George Harrison 1980-as önéletrajzán kívül nem készült hiteles tanulmány erről a korszakról, a fennmaradt Paul McCartney biográfiák jelentős mértékben a fent leírt módon készült sajtódokumentumokra támaszkodnak. A popzene esetében a legtöbb hivatalosnak tekinthető forrás – folyóiratok, levelek – általában hiányzik. Rendelkezésre állnak viszont filmhíradó részletek, filmek, nyomtatásban megjelent forrás értékű anyagok és a résztvevők visszaemlékezései. Az itt leírt események több mint harminc évvel ezelőtt történtek, és az emlékek vagy kiszíneződtek, vagy elhomályosultak. Próbáltam ellenőrizni a tények valóságtartalmát, de nem minden esetben jártam sikerrel.

PAUL: A hatvanas évekből származó emlékeim között elevenen él bennem egy lány, az egyik rajongónk. Az utcán pillantottam meg, odarohantam hozzá, és lehúztam róla a dzsekijét mondván, hogy „add vissza a dzsekimet", mert nem sokkal azelőtt betörtek hozzánk, és azt hittem az enyém van rajta. Persze szó sem volt ilyesmiről, csak ugyanabban a boltban vette, ahol én. Mondta is, hogy „nem lehet a tied, hisz nem is jó rád". Csak hebegtem-habogtam, hogy „Úristen, bocsánat, bocsánat!" Tévedés volt. Évekkel később meséltem az esetet Neil Aspinallnak, hogy „kiugrottunk a taxiból, és én megragadtam a lányt". „Szóról szóra így volt" – helyeselt Neil. „A Savile Row előtt történt" – mondtam. „Nemnem. Az eset a Piccadillyn volt". Úgy vagyok vele, hogy amikor az esemény az emlékezetemben kikristályosodott, bekattan, hogy „baszd meg, ezt el kéne mesélni valakinek!", és akkor el is mondom úgy, ahogy én emlékszem, de elismerem, hogy a memóriám nem statikusan működik, ide-oda csapong, soha meg nem áll. Azzal vígasztalom magam, hogy

> nem szükséges a történelmi hűséghez ragaszkodnom, mert a dolgok lényege nem a történelmi hűségben áll. Sokkal fontosabb az adott korszakon belüli események összefüggéseinek a feltárása. Ez a könyv az én szubjektív visszaemlékezéseimet tartalmazza [...]

A könyv magját a Paul McCartneyval az 1991 és 1996 között eltelt hat év során harmincöt hangszalagra vett interjú anyaga, valamint a legkülönfélébb alkalmakkor, próbákon, koncerteken és egyéb összejöveteleken folytatott beszélgetéseink alkalmával elhangzottak képezik.

Első találkozásomra Paullal 1965 nyarán került sor, az első alkalmat aztán a hatvanas évek második felében rengeteg további követte. John Dunbarral és Peter Asherrel együtt indítottuk a Mason's Yardban az Indica Books and Galleryt, amiből Paul is igen aktívan kivette a részét, válogatás nélkül hol a falat mázolta, hol polcokat szerelt. Ő tervezte a könyvesbolt egyedi díszítésű csomagolópapírját, a nyomtatásáról is ő gondoskodott, és a reklám szóróanyagok dizájnjának a tervezésénél is közreműködött.

Később, mikor John Hopkinsszal az *International Times*t, az *IT*-t, Európa első underground magazinját indítottuk, Paul újra aktívan kivette a részét a munkából, plakátot ragasztott, és átmeneti gyorskölcsönökkel segített át a kezdeti nehézségeken. Amikor az *IT* stábja útjára indította az egész éjszaka nyitva tartó underground klubot, az UFO-t, amelyet olyan személyiségek fémjeleztek, mint a Pink Floyd és Arthur Brown, Paul nemegyszer ücsörgött a többi hippi társaságában a helyiség padlóján. Együtt jártunk előadásokra, koncertekre, moziba és színházba. Gyakran volt a vacsoravendégem is. 1968-ban arra kért, hogy lássam el én a Zapple címkével, az Apple Records kísérleti, élőszó diviziójának a címkéjével megjelenő lemezek kiadásával kapcsolatos teendőket, és számos albumot fel is vettem a Zapple-lel, amelyek közül néhányat a Savile Row-n, az Apple Főhadiszállásán szerkesztettem, így a stúdiót is behatóan megismerhettem.

Részben a saját, az újságokban megjelent tudósításokhoz készített jegyzeteimen alapszanak az Asher háztartásnak, a Beatles *Revolver* utáni albumai felvételei helyszíneinek, a legtöbb night club jelenetnek, az Indica Gallery and Bookshopnak, Paul kísérleti hanglemez stúdiójának, Marianne Faithfull és John Dunbar lakosztályának, Robert Fraser otthonának és galériájának a leírásai, bár John Dunbar is segítségemre volt a múlt felidézésében. Ezek az én visszaemlékezéseim, és nem feltétlenül esnek egybe Paulnak az eseményekkel és a helyszínekkel kapcsolatos emlékeivel. Az ő visszaemlékezései minden esetben külön idézetben olvashatók.

A teljesebb kép érdekében számos más, a londoni eseményekhez kapcsolódó személlyel is beszélgettem, engedjék meg, hogy itt mondjak köszönetet az értékes közreműködésükért. [...] Felhasználtam a George Harrisonnal, Mick Jaggerrel, John Lennonnal és Yoko Onóval korábban készített interjúk anyagát is.

Rengeteg segítséget kaptam az *MPL* munkatársaitól. Külön hálás vagyok a londoni irodában dolgozó Mary McCartney-nak és Eddie Kleinnek, és a The Mill munkatársainak. Az ilyen nagyformátumú projekt esetében előfordul, hogy valaki szándéka ellenére, a beszélgetés hevében világít meg kétes dolgokat, vet fel hasznosítható ötleteket, máskor pedig a közös munka igen tudatos előmozdítójának bizonyul. Köszönetet szeretnék mondani [...] a szerkesztőmnek [...] azért a hatalmas és aprólékos munkáért, amelyet a könyv végső formába rendezése során végzett. Köszönet [...] a számtalan zavaró hiba észrevételéért. Millió köszönet [...] a társamnak és ügynökömnek, aki először vetette fel a könyv megírásának a gondolatát. Utoljára, de semmi esetre sem utolsó sorban [...] a feleségemnek és házi szerkesztőmnek felbecsülhetetlen értékű javaslataiért és támogatásáért. No meg – természetesen – Paulnak az egész életéért.

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# Hamlet's Mousetrap of the Imagination

*Géza Kállay*

"He waxes desperate with imagination" (1.4.87), Horatio says about Hamlet, when the young Prince, releasing himself from the grip of Marcellus and Horatio trying to hold him back, resolutely decides to follow the Ghost of his Father, who will soon reveal Claudius's, his brother's hideous crime.[1] Horatio is genuinely worried about Hamlet's mental condition: spirits like the Ghost were believed to be able to produce fantasies in the mind that turned ("waxed") people mad and Horatio obviously shares this view when saying a bit earlier that the Ghost "might deprive [Hamlet's ] sovereignty of reason / And draw [him] into madness" (1.4.73–74). Several characters of Shakespeare—including later Hamlet, talking about one of the actor's recital of Hecuba—echo the then widely accepted Platonic view that both poet and performer, as we read it in the *Ion*-dialogue, are "carried out of [themselves] and [...] [their] soul in ecstasy conceive herself to be engaged in the actions [they] relate" because "each one [is] possessed by the divinity to whom he is in bondage."[2] As a recurring theme in Shakespeare, imagination is not only linked closely to madness but to poetry as well; perhaps the best known example is in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where Theseus—ironically, a persona from a myth, too—not only claims that "The lunatic, the lover, and

1. "Sleeping within my orchard," the Ghost relates to Hamlet, "My custom always in the afternoon, / Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole / With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial, / And in the porches of my ears did pour / The leperous distilment..." (1.5.59–64). All quotations in this paper are from the respective Arden editions, *Hamlet* is referred to according to the Second Arden Series: Harold Jenkins, ed., *William Shakespeare: Hamlet* (London & New York: Methuen, 1982, 1986), but I also took into consideration the edition in the Third Series: Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, eds., *Hamlet* (London: Thomson Learning, 2006).

2. Plato, *Ion*, trans. by Lane Cooper, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 535c and 534e. See further on Plato's *Ion* W. J. Verdenius, "Plato's doctrine of artistic imitation" in Gregory Vlastos, ed., *Plato: a Collection of Critical Essays, II: Ethics, Politics, and Philosophy of Art and Religion* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), pp. 259–273, especially pp. 260–61.

the poet / Are of imagination all compact" (5.1.7–8) but refers to the famous Platonic *furor poeticus* explicitly as "fine frenzy": "The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, / Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven; / And as imagination bodies forth / The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen / Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing / A local habitation and a name" (5.1.12–16).[3]

Madness also plays a role when Hamlet decides, upon the arrival of the "Players," i.e. the actors, to "play *The Murder of Gonzago*" (2.2.532), otherwise known as "*The Mousetrap*" (3.2.231). The latter, alternative title, *The Mousetrap*—most probably Hamlet's improvisation in the heat of the play's performance—is directly addressed to the usurper, Claudius to increase his unease. Yet in Hamlet's case, madness is not pertinent as a factor in terms of poetic composition but rather in terms of play-acting and performance. Hamlet does contribute to *The Murder of Gonzago* in writing, too: he asks the First Player if the troupe "could for a need study [i.e. learn by heart] a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which [he] would set down and insert" (2.2.534–536) into the play. Still, we do not have any evidence that the actual performance, interrupted by the King's sudden "rising" (3.2.259) contains those lines at all,[4] so we cannot judge

3. Plato's ideas on poetry may have come to Shakespeare from Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* (1595), George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), Cicero's *Orator* and several other sources, cf. Harold F. Brooks's Introduction to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in the Second Arden Series, (London and New York: Routledge, 1979), 1990, p. cxl. and Peter G. Platt: "Shakespeare and Rhetorical Culture" in David Scott Kastan, ed., *A Companion to Shakespeare* (Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), pp. 277–296, p. 286. Compare the following passages: Socrates says to Ion: "You are chanting, say, the story of Odysseus, [...] or of Achilles [...] or Hecuba.[...] When you chant these, are you in your senses?" , to which Ion responds: "How vivid, Socrates, you make proof for me! I will tell you frankly that whenever I recite a tale of pity, my eyes are filled with tears, and when it is one in horror or dismay, my hair stands up on end with fear, and my heart goes leaping" (*Ion*, 535c). Hamlet, in his Hecuba-soliloquy famously says: "What's Hecuba to him, or he to her, / That he should weep for her?" (2.2.553–54). The textual parallels suggest to me that Shakespeare here used the *Ion*-dialogue as a direct source; Jenkins, pointing out further parallels in Plutarch's *Lives* and in Montaigne's *Essays*, does not exclude the possibility of an even direct borrowing from the *Ion* on Shakespeare's part, either (cf. Jenkins, p. 481).

4. As it is similarly mysterious that Hamlet, before the performance starts, instructs the actors on play-acting as if he were an experienced playwright, perhaps even the sole author of the play soon to be staged: "Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, tripping on the tongue; but if

them from the point of view of "fine frenzy." Yet madness—and I do not know of any interpretation of this tragedy where madness would not be in focus—also plays a chief role in terms of Hamlet's play-acting within the play.[5] Hamlet, after the encounter with the Ghost of his father, warns Horatio that "perchance hereafter [he will] think meet / To put an antic disposition on" (1.5.179–180), and the word *antic* was "particularly used of an actor with a false head or grotesque mask," meaning "disguised" as well as "strange, odd, wild, fantastic."[6] Madness serves for Hamlet as a disguise, as an actor's costume, which may have seemed to some interpreters as real madness[7] partly because Hamlet is a wonderful actor in the play of his own, and partly because, according to the conventions of the Early Modern English stage, a player's garment (often referred to as "habit"[8]) was impenetrable: the costume was a chief defining factor in the shaping of a character, as well as of gender in an age when female parts were played by young boys.[9] Yet Hamlet, also in line with

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you mouth it as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines" (3.2.1–4). The words "*My* lines" do not seem to refer to the "some dozen or sixteen lines" Hamlet presumably "set down" and inserted into *The Murder of Gonzago* and the First Player probably learnt the day before (cf. 2.2.534–536). Inconsistencies in *Hamlet* are legendary (as with several other Shakespearean plays, too) and we may always attribute them to revisions and rewritings of the play (perhaps not by Shakespeare), but we may also say that in the tragedy of the Danish Prince, time is *really* out of joint.

5. As it has frequently been observed, Ophelia, in a way, goes mad "instead of Hamlet" (with the tragic irony that this is a sacrifice on her part which cannot know itself as a sacrifice precisely because of its own nature: madness). This suggests to me that Ophelia's real madness is a "control point" in the play with respect to which Hamlet is not really mad but only feigns it, so his melancholy is ultimately not as serious as to make him really mad, either.

6. Cf. Jenkins, ed., p. 226 and Thompson-Taylor, eds., p. 225, Jenkins explicitly saying that this is the "famous announcement of [Hamlet's] intention to affect madness."

7. The still valid, classic account of conflicting views on whether Hamlet is only feigning madness or he is really mad is Harry Levin's "The antic disposition" (1959), in John Jump, ed., *Shakespeare: Hamlet, a Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 122–136.

8. Cf. David Crystal and Ben Crystal, *Shakespeare's Words: a Glossary and Language Companion* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), p. 210.

9. This is of course a commonplace in Shakespeare criticism; cf. John H. Astington, "Playhouses, players, and playgoers in Shakespeare's time" in Margareta de Grazia & Stanely Wells, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 99–114, pp. 109–110.

the spirit of the very play to which his name has given the title, makes this convention disturbingly ambiguous, for at least two reasons.

As early as in the first "court"-scene we encounter Hamlet for the first time, the young Prince introduces—not unrelated either to the Platonic analysis of the nature of imagination, or to the question what the theatre is capable of—the problem of *seeming*, and he does that precisely through looking for the meaning of his "inky," i.e. black clothes he is wearing as a sign of mourning. "Seems, madam?"—he asks his mother—"I know no 'seems.' / 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother, / [...] Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath, / No, nor the fruitful river in the eye / [...] Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief, / That can denote me truly. These indeed seem, / For they are actions a man might play; / But I have that within which passes show, / These [and here Hamlet most probably points at the clothes he is wearing] but the trappings and the suits of woe" (1.2.76–86). Hamlet succinctly formulates the problem all accounts have to face accepting the binary opposition of "the inner" and "the outer": how could one ever tell from the "surface," the "show" whether the visible signs "denote," point towards something genuinely present in the "inner," the "hidden," the "invisible"? How could one tell a true feeling from pretence when they may coincide on the surface, making us realise that this coincidence is the very condition of the existence of make-belief? Does "the outer" take us by the hand and lead us to the truth of "the inner," or does it precisely hide "the inner" as a device of deception? How could someone distinguish between an "authentic mourner" and an "inauthentic one" when both do the same: they wear black and they cry, and breathe heavily. Even further, what signs are available to the genuine mourner to avoid the coincidence, to indicate that within himself there is something which is far more serious than any visible sign may show? These questions, as I will try to *show*, will be of primary importance when Hamlet does not so much wish to express something from his "within" but, with the performance of the play *The Murder of Gonzago*, wants to poke out the sense of guilt, or even the crime itself from the "inner" of the alleged murderer of his father, namely Claudius. The combat between Hamlet and Claudius is partly a combat of play against play: Claudius is a master of play-acting, too; he "may smile, and smile, and be a villain" (1.5.108).

Yet the "inky cloak" does not remain unrelated to the second way in which Hamlet connects madness and performance, either, thus destabilising the very conditions under which the imagination may

be a useful, or even a reliable guide to truth. Hamlet is suffering from melancholy, which was a well-recognised, even fashionable sickness of the soul and mind in Shakespeare's time, its symptoms ranging from temporary depression to serious cases that could not be distinguished from "real" madness.[10] We seem to encounter a case somewhat analogous to the previous one: how can one separate the manifestations of extreme melancholy from madness, feigned or real, when they may coincide? And can one separate the two especially in oneself, when one's own subjectivity may further confuse one's clear vision, especially if one tries to act out a kind of madness to hide behind it? Claudius diagnoses Hamlet's odd behaviour as melancholy right after he was witness to the tragic dialogue between Ophelia and Hamlet, which ended in Hamlet's advice to Ophelia to get herself to a nunnery (3.1.151). Claudius comments: "Love? His [Hamlet's] affections do not that way tend. / [...] There is something in his soul / O'er which his melancholy sits on brood, / And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose / Will be some danger" (3.1.64–169). Melancholy was indeed capable of being dangerous both for its victim and for the victim's environment and when Hamlet stabs Polonius, it remains richly ambiguous whether he killed because his illness overwhelmed him (as Hamlet's mother believes it, and Claudius, to save the situation for protocol purposes, pretends to believe it.) or Hamlet could still remain within the domain of his "antic disposition," using his feigned "madness" as a license to kill. The most disturbing factor is that Hamlet himself admits his melancholy, and he does that—as it was mentioned in my opening paragraph—precisely in the moments when he finally makes up his mind to "Play something like the murder of [his] father / Before [his] uncle," Claudius.[11] This time Hamlet

10. Cf. Jenkins, ed., p. 484.

11. Some commentators on *Hamlet* (e.g. Jenkins, p. 273) were puzzled by the question why Hamlet, in his Hecuba-soliloquy, talks about his plan to perform the play in order to "catch the conscience of the King" (Claudius) (2.2.601), as if he was inventing this idea on the spot when he had explicitly told the actors in the previous scene that "tomorrow night" they would have to play *The Murder of Gonzago* (cf. 2.2.541–534). John Dover Wilson, who put a lifetime's speculation about *Hamlet* into his *What Happens in Hamlet?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935) claimed that here Hamlet is merely elaborating on what occurred to him while talking to the actors (cf. p. 142), and this is followed by the commentary of Thompson and Taylor (cf. p. 278). *Hamlet*—as I noted before—is full of inconsistencies (cf. further Jenkins, pp. 122–134). But perhaps we may also see a more "symbolic" meaning here: time being generally "out of joint" in the play, several subtle

uses melancholy to dismantle his belief in the testimony of his father's Ghost, who did not only identify the murderer for his son, but revealed the *way* in which the crime was carried out. Hamlet expresses his doubt before staging *The Murder of Gonzago*: "The spirit that I have seen / May be a devil, and the devil hath power / T'assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps, / Out of my weakness and my melancholy, / As he [i. e. the devil] is very potent with such spirits, / Abuses me to damn me. I'll have ground / More relative [here: "relevant, convincing"[12]] than this" (2.2.694–601). Hamlet echoes Horatio's opinion—and that of the age—that those suffering from melancholy were easier to be deceived because their imagination was more sensitive than that of "normal" people and this sensitivity was a chief gateway for the Devil to seize their soul. Hamlet decides to produce *The Murder of Gonzago* not only to fight the deceptive power of Claudius but the potential capability of his Father's "pleasing shape" to bring about delusion: the Mousetrap is set not only to "catch the conscience of the King" (2.2.601) but to test the illusion, the "ontological status" of the Father, the other King, whom Hamlet loves more than anybody in his life. In the terminology of Plato's *Ion*, the role of the Muse who "first makes men inspired [...], possessed, and thus they utter all those admirable poems"[13] is played for Hamlet by the Ghost. Even further, and at exactly the same stroke, Hamlet, when confessing his melancholy, makes his "antic disposition," his actor's costume vulnerable as well, yet in the opposite direction than the well-known one: he does not say that "in fact" he is *not* mad, but precisely that he might be "*really*" mad in the private play he is continuously acting out; he starts to distrust himself, too, so the mousetrap is set as a test also for the imagination of his own. Thus Hamlet, willy-nilly, also raises one of the most vexed questions of all artistic creation since Plato: is the imagination of the artist (poet, actor, whoever) led by divine or by diabolic forces?

It is unlikely that a play called *The Murder of Gonzago* ever existed,[14] though Hamlet goes out of his way to convince Claudius and us that it did: it is not only on the repertoire of the Players who can easily stage it the next day but Hamlet, precisely in the hottest mo-

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signs suggest that the usual order of "after" and "before" is upset (see also the famous question of Hamlet's age, for instance, or the problem of whether Gertrude had had an affair with Claudius before old Hamlet died) and contradicts "psychological reality."

12. Cf. Thompson and Taylor, eds., p. 279.

13. *Ion,* 533e.

14. Cf. Thompson and Taylor, eds., p. 263 and pp. 61–63.

ment of the performance, right before the appearance of the actor playing the murderer, and right after giving the alternative title of the play—*The Mousetrap*—begins to explain: "This play is the image of a murder in Vienna—Gonzago is the Duke's name, his wife Baptista—you shall see anon" (3.2.232–235). Even the same syntactic structures are used when Hamlet exclaims again, markedly *right after* the murderer on stage poured the poison into his victim's ears: "A [he, the murderer, Lucianus in the play] poisons him i'th'garden for his estate. His name's Gonzago [and here by "him" Hamlet of course must refer, perhaps even point at, the victim]. The story is extant [still in existence], and written in very choice Italian. You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife" (3.2.255–259).

These are of course not the only commentaries ("interpretative footnotes") Hamlet gives on the play but the content, and especially the timing of these two above are of utmost importance, although not without queries. Firstly, Gonzago, properly speaking, never appears in the play-within-the play itself *under this name*, since in the play he is not a duke but his speech-headings in the text are given as "Player King." First the name "Gonzago" is of course mentioned by Hamlet in order to underscore the authenticity of the play called *The Murder of Gonzago*; here the play, although it is well under way, is suddenly retitled, as if it should begin "again," and when we have arrived at the point when Gonzago is actually going to be poisoned through the ear. The proper name "Gonzago" is uttered for the second time precisely when the play, though not on its own accord, comes to an abrupt "ending," because it is *then* that—as Ophelia announces—"the King rises" (3.2.259) and he goes out, asking for "some light" (263) and Polonius cries out: "Give o'er the play" (262), i.e. "give up, abandon"[15] the play. Thus the name "Gonzago" serves as a "frame" (perhaps even as the "magic" frame of the trap itself), within which the play seems to work on the conscience of Claudius.

How "real" is the story that caught the conscience of Claudius? Although we do not know of a piece of literature, a "product of the imagination" which would tell the story of Gonzago, we know of an account in "real history," which is strikingly similar to *The Murder of Gonzago* and which, thus, might have been known to Shakespeare. As Harold Jenkins, the editor of the Second Arden Series explains, there indeed was a Francesco Maria I della Rovere, the Duke of Urbino and he really died in the October of 1538. The barber-surgeon of the Duke confessed under torture that he poisoned the Duke by a

15. Thompson and Taylor, eds., p. 316.

lotion in his ear at the instigation of a kinsman of the Duchess of Urbino; the Duchess's name was not Baptista but Eleonora, yet an earlier Duke of Urbino did marry a Battista Sforza. So the actual murderer was the barber-surgeon of the Duke, not the Duke's brother or nephew, yet the kinsman who prompted the crime was called Luigi Gonzaga.[16] "The Duke [of Urbino who was murdered]"—Jenkins adds—"was a famous soldier, a portrait of him in armour by Titian is in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence."[17] Geoffrey Bullogh, in the seventh volume of his monumental *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* even conjectures that the portrait of the bearded Duke in "complete steel," and helmet behind him with "beaver up," may have—perhaps in the form of an engraving in Shakespeare's hypothetical source—inspired the way Shakespeare represented the Ghost of old Hamlet,[18] who is indeed not the "usual ghost" in white sheets shrieking "Hamlet revenge"[19] but a dignified, respectable—and markedly sad—soldier, addressing his son solemnly and affectionately. Although the unusual way of the assassination—the poison through the ear—makes the borrowing of the story plausible, no direct historical source has been traced down from which Shakespeare may have worked; no real explanation is given why the murder is said to take place in Vienna: that "Vienna" is a misreading of "Urbino" (perhaps on Shakespeare's or the printer's part)[20] looks unlikely to me; and it is also a mystery why Shakespeare gave the name of the original *murderer*, Luigi Gonzaga to the original *victim*, the Duke of Urbino (although "Luigi" may have suggested "Lucianus").[21]

16. Cf. Jenkins, p. 102.

17. Jenkins, p.102.

18. Cf. Geoffrey Bullogh, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), Vol. 7, pp. 28–34.

19. As it is often quoted, Thomas Lodge in his *Wit's Misery* from 1596 has an allusion to the "ghost which cried so miserably at the Theatre [the playhouse in which Shakespeare's company acted before the Globe opened in 1599] like an oyster-wife [a woman selling oysters in the streets] *Hamlet, revenge*" (Jenkins, p. 83). This, unfortunately, does not provide evidence that the *Hamlet* before Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (the so-called *Ur-Hamlet*, written around 1596) was composed by Shakespeare as well; some signs rather point towards the authorship of Thomas Kyd, a problem I cannot go into here. The "typical" ghost on the Early Modern English stage was the one Horatio refers to (with a probable reference to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, too, performed not much before *Hamlet*) in Act I: "the sheeted dead / Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets" (1.1.118–19).

20. Cf. Jenkins, p. 507.

21. Cf. Jenkins, p. 102.

The mixing up of the names suggests to me that Shakespeare only heard the story from someone, or had read it a long time before; he did not have the story in front of him. "Player King" and "Player Queen" as speech-headings for the characters are most probably used instead of Duke and Duchess, respectively, to make the similarity with King Claudius and Queen Gertrude stronger. But then why does Hamlet say: "Gonzago is the *Duke's* name" (3.2.233–34)? He should say: "Gonzago is the *King's* name." And why Gonzag*o* instead of Gonzag*a*? Is it possible that this confusion is created to underscore that not only murderers might become kings, but kings (princes) might become murderers, too?

As we come close to the actual murder-scene of *The Murder of Gonzago*, one of Shakespeare's most favourite questions in his plays—the possibility of interchangeability and the swapping of identities—becomes more and more pertinent. Even on the trivial, syntactic level the very genetive construction—*the murder of Gonzago*– is ambiguous: it can mean that Gonzago is murdered but also that he murders somebody else. Yet—and we have arrived at the most important question concerning Hamlet's mousetrap of the imaginary—why does Claudius rise *only* at the point he does? It is also of vital importance that before the actual *The Murder of Gonzago* takes place, there is the famous "dumb-show," which pre-enacts exactly, and with very simple but all the more potent mime what is to come in the play with dialogue. It is also generally agreed that both the dumb-show and later the play-within-the-play, the "meta-theatre" enacts—in fact twice—and "bring[s] into focus," as Jenkins nicely puts it, "at the centre of the drama [called *Hamlet*] a perfect image of the crime which is the foundation of its plot," thus affecting the "whole [of its] artistic design."[22] Indeed, Hamlet is staging for his enemy something that he heard in the testimony of his Father's Ghost, thus turning a narrative into drama and dramatising, sometime *after* the actual crime, an event that strictly speaking happened *before* the play called *Hamlet* even started, an event outside of the dramatic time of the actual play. Before I try to give an interpretation of the problem of Claudius's rising, and endeavour to show how, somewhat quarrelling with the Platonic account of the imagination, Hamlet conceives of the imaginary, let me note a few aspects of some other answers to this really crucial question. The reading I will come up with is much indebted to an amateur university-production in which I have the privilege of playing Claudius, especially to the interpretation and the in-

22. Jenkins, p. 501.

structions of the director of the play, Balázs Szigeti, a student and friend of mine, who also plays Hamlet.

John Dover Wilson, who spent almost a lifetime with the play, claimed that the so-called "theatre-scene" under our present discussion is the absolute clue to the meaning of the play, especially the question "why Claudius did not respond to the dumb-show which portrayed his crime."[23] Dover Wilson also ingeniously realised that the answer is either utterly simple or terribly complicated: his answer is of the simple type; he thinks that Claudius does not physically see the dumb-show; while the actors are acting it out, he is talking to—in some productions today (not in ours), he is even making love to—Gertrude, Hamlet's mother. I think the real problem is not why Claudius does not react to the dumb-show but—as I indicated above—why he reacts *when* he actually does.[24] Several other answers have been suggested: he does witness even to the dumb-show but he does not recognise what he can see, because he takes Hamlet's theatre-making casually, and thus for a long time he does not have the foggiest idea that either the dumb-show or the play would be about him; he simply does not make the connection between his actual crime and what he can see on the stage for a long time.[25] A special and highly original variety of this theory was put forward by James Calderwood, who claimed that although we have no doubt that Claudius murdered his brother (he confesses this when he tries to pray, too, cf. 3.3.38), he did not do it the *way* the

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23. Rex Gibson, *Shakespeare Student Guide: Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 90. Cf. John Dover Wilson, *What Happens in* Hamlet? (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), see especially pp. 64–68.

24. It is a further puzzle, in this respect, why the dumb-show, which in Shakespeare's time, and as Ophelia also observes, "import[ed] the argument [the plot] of the play" (3.2.136), here even "exactly rehears[ing] without dialogue what is then repeated with it" (Jenkins, p. 501) ends with "*The Poisoner woos the Queen with gifts. She seems harsh awhile, but in the end accepts his love*" (3.2.134). This is the only incident which is *not* acted out with dialogue in the play proper; it is summed up by Hamlet's "You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife" (257–8), and *then* Claudius rises. Was the play supposed to be so short anyway? It is as if, as early as the dumb-show, the actors (and/or Hamlet) knew when the King would stand up and leave the show. Or had Claudius remained seated and unmoved even then, would it have been Hamlet who interrupts the play, acknowledging that he has failed? Or did Hamlet expect Claudius to react much earlier?

25. Cf. Jenkins, pp. 506–508.

dumb-show and the play enact it; the poison through-the-ear method is only known, both for Hamlet and for us, from the testimony of the Ghost and the Ghost is an unreliable source. For Calderwood, it is implausible that Hamlet would so suddenly remember a play "in very choice Italian" (3.2.256–7) and with so many similarities (both in terms of the way of the murder, and the Claudius-Gertrude-old Hamlet love-triangle) to the actual situation in the Danish court and it is even more implausible that a group of Players would be ready-to-hand to act it out. The logic is rather reversed: the story exists in Hamlet's imagination (perhaps even in the form of the play he remembers) and that is projected into the Ghost-figure. For Calderwood, Claudius stands up not because the play struck home with respect to his crime (then he would indeed react to the dumb-show already) but because Hamlet, in the course of his running commentary on the play, identified the murderer, Lucianus as "nephew to the King" (3.2.238). Of course, Hamlet should identify the assassin, to strengthen the analogy between the killer and Claudius, as *brother* to the King but this slip of the tongue may prompt Claudius that the play is not about the past (how he murdered his brother) but about the future (how Hamlet is going to kill him), since if the King is Claudius and not old Hamlet, then Claudius's nephew is precisely Hamlet.[26] This theory sounds nice, but unfortunately the King does not rise when he hears "nephew" but only twenty lines later, in the first place; secondly, and more importantly, one gets the impression that then a so much experienced dramaturg as Shakespeare would have emphasised the "nephew-aspect" more. Yet Shakespeare rather seems to emphasise the parallel between the plot of the *Murder of Gonzago* and the testimony of the Ghost in the sense that the terms in which the Ghost depicts the way he was murdered are highly vivid, picturesque, even physical, for example: "The leperous distilment, whose effect / Holds such enmity with blood of man / That swift as quicksilver it courses through / The natural gates and alleys of the body, / And with a sudden vigour it doth posset / And curd, like eager droppings into milk, / The thin and wholesome blood" (1.5.64–70). It must be remembered that on the Early Modern English stage truth was conceived of as primarily rhetorical truth: the communication of a reliable piece of information was signalled primarily through the rich poetic language applied; the more vigorous the metaphors were, the more convincing and "truthful" a text

26. Cf. James L. Calderwood, *To Be and Not To Be: Negation and Metadrama in* Hamlet (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 42–47.

was—at least potentially—taken.[27] Although it is of course never certain whether a playwright was not playing a trick on the audience by precisely abusing this convention, the "sudden vigour" of the Ghost's language suggests that what he says, though of course not to be taken at face value, is not entirely a figment of Hamlet's imagination.[28] Further explanations of Claudius's behaviour include, based on the supposition that Claudius is a master of pretence, the theory that it takes Hamlet a pretty long time to break his opponent: Claudius recognises himself from the start but he is able to control himself (possibly with clenched teeth), and he gets up from his seat because he is primarily worried about the offence Hamlet commits against Gertrude with the play rather than about himself, and so on. Jenkins, after giving an inventory of about a dozen theories[29] concludes that the actor playing Claudius fares best if he remains as inscrutable and enigmatic as Shakespeare's text is.[30] Yet this is hardly helpful for the actor playing Claudius because every performance must be (and inevitably is) an interpretation of the play, and the non-commitment advertised by Jenkins may make the audience get the impression that one of the indeed most crucial questions of *Hamlet* has not been interpreted in any way.

In our production the director argued that all previous theories are based on the presupposition that Claudius does not wish to see what is going on the stage.[31] It was not suggested that Claudius *likes* what he can see there but it was pointed out that he might be

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27. Cf. Stephen Orgel, *The Authentic Shakespeare and Other Problems of the Early Modern Stage* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 103–109.

28. The role of the Ghost is rather close to that of the Weïrd Sisters in *Macbeth* who are—according to Balázs Szigeti—sufficiently external to Macbeth to allow him a choice, yet are "inside" of him enough to serve as the projections of his inner and hidden desires, cf. Balázs Szigeti: "The Dialectic of Sin in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and in Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* Trilogy" in *The Anachronist* 14 (2009), pp. 24–46, especially pp. 26–29.

29. Cf. Jenkins, pp. 501–505.

30. Cf. Jenkins, p. 505.

31. This is somewhat analogous to the case of Othello; interpreters almost always assume that one of the most vexed and fundamental questions of the play "why Othello believes Iago?" should be answered with the presupposition that Othello does *not* want to hear what Iago says about Desdemona and Cassio, and Iago, with skilful devices, should break through his resistance. But what if we suppose that Othello even indulges in what Iago reports on his wife? See further Stanley Cavell, "Othello and the Stake of the Other" in Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays by Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 125–242, especially p. 136.

imagined as being totally taken in, thoroughly absorbed in the spectacle and it is precisely seeing himself, and twice, as the murderer, now from the outside, that draws his eyes to the stage like a magnet. Not because he is so narcissistic that it would not matter for him *what* is shown on the stage about him but because he is deeply impressed by the accuracy of how he is represented, as well as by the brilliant manner in which he and his crime are acted out. He of course does not have the foggiest idea that Hamlet was visited by his Father's Ghost; he is first stunned by the fact that somebody somehow knows about the incident which he thought had not left any traces of external evidence, apart from the "picture" of the event in his mind. This surprise and awe melt into a kind of aesthetic pleasure over the very spectacle; in other words he is nailed to his chair by the artistic mastery of the re-enactment in which he is capable not only of re-living a morally most repulsive deed in an aesthetically cathartic manner but he is also able to see his *inside* from the *outside*, to relate to himself as if he were relating to a stranger. It is not an exaggeration to suppose, I think, that Claudius, in a certain sense, understands what he did to his brother during the performance. This understanding is only possible if he has precisely kept his *distance* from the actual, "real-life" crime[32] *through his identification with the actor playing his, the real-life murderer's role,* but strictly as a role and in an imaginary world, as "one Lucianus," nephew or not to the King (3.2.239). Claudius, as it were, "escapes" into the role called Lucianus from being the actual, physical murderer of his brother only to get, through the aesthetic window of the imagination, an insight, the Aristotelian *anagnorisis* into his true self. So, in the first place, the performance in Hamlet's theatre-in-the theatre must not only be good, but excellent, absolutely captivating, feeding and fuelling Claudius's imagination at the same time, and all the time. Claudius stands up not because "all of a sudden" he has "recognised himself," no: he recognised himself from the very first moment, and he rises precisely because he can *no longer recognise himself* in the imaginary character playing the murderer's role. But he can no longer recognise himself not because the production is not historically accurate, i.e. Claudius detects some smaller or bigger factual differences between how the murderer behaves on the stage and how he, Claudius actually committed the crime a few months before, then and there, in the orchard. He can

32. "Real-life" here of course means "real" with respect to the (otherwise of course fictitious) world of the play called *Hamlet.*

no longer recognise himself because all of a sudden the magic of the theatre is broken; Claudius falls out of the aesthetic circle of the imagination and he realises where he actually is: in a hall in the Danish court, *watching a performance*, whereas he hitherto was, through his imagination, neither in the Danish court, nor in the orchard but with, in a way: *in* Lucianus, in the very scene enacted on stage. And the person responsible for breaking the magic is Hamlet, who comments on the play from the outside too much, he comments especially too much directly addressing his uncle (and his mother) and—in our production—he, foolishly and impatiently, perhaps even madly in the Platonic sense of the *furor poeticus*, jumps into the scene enacted on the stage of *The Murder of Gonzago*, with his "inky cloak" in scandalous contrast with the Players so far acting out their respective roles superbly, just in the way Hamlet had famously instructed them before the performance: "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action" (3.2.17–8). In our production, Hamlet even grabs the hands of the Player Queen and Lucianus, and joins them forcefully: he becomes an eye-sore in a great production, waking the mesmerised Claudius up for moral reflection.

That after the poetic-aesthetic participation, after the partaking in the imaginary Claudius staggers out, now with a heavy burden on his shoulders in our production, starting a moral reflection is, I think, very much in line with Paul Ricoeur's important insight that in all representations of evil, the symbolic-metaphorical precedes the ability of moral reflection: the red or black stain on a white surface, for example, is always there, and in front of the eye, to give rise to reflection, which much later becomes *moral* reflection for the self capable of identifying an incident as sinful and to give an obscure and uncertain felling—perhaps in the stomach—the name of *guilt*.[33]

So is Hamlet successful? Hamlet set out on the road to "catch the conscience of the King" with a play later on nicknamed as *The Mousetrap* after reminding himself that an actor is capable of showing emotion without actually *having* that emotion in himself; he can have "Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect" "All for nothing! /

33. From among the several works of Ricouer dealing with the problem of the relationship between metaphor, symbol and concept, cf. "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection" in Charles E. Reagan and David Stewart, eds., *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: an Anthology of His Work* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), pp. 36–48, especially pp. 44–51.

For Hecuba" (2.2.549–552), who is of course a "nothing" because she is an imaginary persona in mythology. Yet Hamlet added: "What would he [the actor] do / Had he the motive and the cue for passion / That I have?" (554–56) meaning that he, Hamlet is mourning a father and thus he should be capable of even more passion than an actor can display. Thus, it seems that Hamlet does not wish to *oppose* the imaginary passion, the *furor poeticus* of the performer with the passion of "real life." Hamlet is reprimanding himself in the Hecuba-soliloquy because he realises that the imaginary, far from being in opposition with reality, is a royal road to a special kind of reality, a reality one may call *personal reality*: one will realise what he feels, who he is if he has seen himself from the outside *as represented*,: the road to the first person, the "I" leads through the third person, the "he" or "she." Hamlet, at this point imagines this relationship in the following way: "I have heard / That guilty creatures sitting at a play / Have, by the very cunning of the scene, / Been struck so to the soul that presently / They have proclaim'd their malefactions," i.e. their crimes, for example "murder" (2.2.584–89) Where Hamlet makes a mistake during the performance of *The Mousetrap*, where he succumbs to the *furor poeticus*, perhaps even to his melancholy, is when he thinks that he is catching, or should be catching "the conscience of the King" (2.2.601) directly, while he in fact catches this conscience through his and Claudius's *imagination*, both imaginations taking the shape of a fictive story, *The Murder of Gonzago*; it is the *distance* from the actual event, the real crime of Claudius through a character moving in the aesthetic realm of the imaginary in a play that leads Claudius to his real self as real murderer. Yet the imagination is not opposed to reality not only in the sense that the imaginary may serve as a royal road to our human, personal reality (to who we are and may become), but the other way round as well: it is only through the physical reality of the actors on the stage that the imagination can start working; that the actors have a physical body as a condition of functioning as signs is equally important; the physical enactment of pouring poison into an ear is an absolute criterion for the imaginary to set itself into motion. Since the real, as far as I can see it, is just as much dependent on the imaginary as the imaginary is on the real, the actual "ontological status" of either is of secondary importance if the aim is to realise what I have done and who I am: if the aim is to understand my personal reality, the crucial factor is that I should accept that what I see is *me*. What matters is my willingness to participate, in order to, as it were, "leave" my self, in a real or in an imagined situation, only to get

back to myself. We should be far less worried about the ontological status of anything than about the effect something, real or imaginary, has on us. The "very cunning" of each scene I happen to be in, whether real or imaginary, is nothing else but my ability, my openness to be "struck [...] to the soul."

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# Images of Storm in Melville's *Moby-Dick*

*Judit Nagy*

Reading Melville's *Moby-Dick*, one is intrigued by its cornucopia of storm images, which seem to cluster around seven centres in the novel: the tempestuous winds of the Euroclydon, ekphrastic storms, Father Mapple's moral storms, the theoretical storms of "The Lee Shore," storms occurring during the Pequod's voyage, Ahab's stormy character, and finally, the antagonism of storm and calm. These centres are not disjunct ones, they intersect, which poses some technical difficulty in the discussion of such intersections: the reader is thrown into a "web of relations."

## 1 The tempestuous winds of the Euroclydon

The first primary storm image is found in the second chapter ("The Carpet-Bag"):

> In judging of that tempestuous wind called Euroclydon [...] it maketh a marvellous difference, whether thou lookest out at it from a glass window where the frost is all on the outside, or whether thou observest it from that sashless window, where the frost is on both sides, and of which the wight Death is the only glazier.[1]

This sentence in its immediate context refers to the poverty and homelessness Ishmael experiences: in his cosy abode the wealthy Dives finds the frosty night beautiful, while the miserably poor Lazarus-Ishmael is shivering with the cold outside. In the further context of the novel, however, this sentence may acquire a more philosophical meaning: it makes a difference whether you watch the storm from the shore or from the sea.[2]

Another reference to the Euroclydon is found upon sighting the Jeroboam—Ahab asks for St. Paul's tempestuous winds "to be brought to his breezelessness."[3] Here the tempestuous winds

1. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*. (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1983), p. 803.

2. The significance of this will be pointed out later, in terms of "The Lee Shore" chapter.

3. Melville, p. 1127.

represent action as opposed to its lack characterized by breezelessness, especially in the context of Ahab being so much intent on facing Moby Dick. Also, one must not ignore the fact that this sentence is preceded by Ishmael's making mention of "whole thunder clouds [that] swept aside from Ahab's brow"[4] by a cheer "upon the deadly calm,"[5] where calm represents distressing passivity as opposed to the vital forces of action symbolised by the storm. This passage is followed by the invocative "O Nature, O soul of man! how far beyond all utterance are your linked analogies! not the smallest atom stirs or lives in matter, but has its cunning duplicate in mind,"[6] transcendentalist in its essence, suggesting that every single natural phenomenon has a counterpart in the human mind. So does the storm of the "mighty alphabet."

## 2 Ekhprastic storms

Upon entering the Spouter Inn, Ishmael catches a glimpse of a romantic style painting, depicting a tumultuous turmoil of "unaccountable masses of shades and shadows."[7] The main features emphasized are obscurity and darkness, Melville thus placing the sublime side of Nature into focus.[8] Inviting the observer to decipher its indefinite, murky components, the picture reads in various ways: "It's the Black Sea in a midnight gale," "it's the unnatural combat of the four primal elements," "it's a blasted heath," "it's a Hyperborean winter scene" and, to carry the generalization further, "It's the breaking-up of the ice-bound stream of time"[9]—all images involve the violent forces operating in nature. The final conclusion renders "a Cape Horner in a great hurricane; the half-foundered ship weltering there with its three dismantled masts alone visible; and an exasperated whale, purposing to spring clean over the craft, is in the enormous act of impaling himself upon the mast heads,"[10] an addition to the anticipation of the opening interpretative image. Mingled with the storm, the vague outlines of a three-master and a whalish mass are pregnant with the course the Pequod will follow.

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4. Melville, p. 1127.
5. Melville, p. 1127.
6. Melville, p. 1127.
7. Melville, p. 805.
8. Melville himself uses the word *sublime* here: the picture has an "indefinite, half-attained, unimaginable sublimity" (Melville, p. 805).
9. All quotations: Melville, p. 805.
10. Melville, p. 806.

The second painting of a storm is displayed in the Whaleman's Chapel. It is of a "gallant ship beating against a terrible storm off a lee coast of black rocks and snowy breakers," with "flying scud and dark rolling clouds"[11] in the lower regions, and a ray of hope, "a little isle of sunlight, from which beamed forth an angel's face"[12] in the right upper corner. A "distinct spot of radiance" is shed upon "the ship's tossed deck"[13] by the angel, which is interpreted as divine encouragement for the ship to continue her justified and hopeful battle against the evil forces[14] embodied by the storm.[15]

## 3 Father Mapple's moral storms

The latter painting mentioned is part of a series of storms affecting Father Mapple: icy sleet and howling winds outside the chapel, an emotional turmoil inside the preacher concerning his quest, the battle of benevolent and malevolent forces on the painting, and Jonah's punishment for the denial of his mission. How do all these storm symbols come together? What is their implication?

The church has a rather special interior decoration as demonstrated by the ladder, the pulpit and the painting. It symbolizes a ship that is as battered by the tempestuous sleet as the vessel on the painting. This parallel is granted full meaning in the last lines of the chapter titled "The Chapel": "The world's a ship on its passage out, and not a voyage complete."[16] Life is a never-ending quest with many storms—trials, conflicts, tribulations.

During the service, Father Mapple cites Jonah's story from the Old Testament. The storm therein is the token of God's wrath falling upon Jonah for defying the mission God assigned to him.[17] The reason for Jonah's defiance is that he finds such a mission uncomfortable and does not want to be highly unpopular with the people of his homeland.

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11. Melville, p. 836.

12. Melville, p. 836. The same imagery is exploited in "The Lee Shore" to illustrate a different point.

13. Melville, p. 836.

14. Either of Nature or of supernatural elements.

15. This interpretation of Ishmael's offers an optimistic view: "The angel seemed to say, 'beat on, beat on noble ship, and bear a hardy helm; for lo! the sun is breaking through; the clouds are rolling off—serenest azure is at hand.' " (Melville, p. 836). Another example of an ekphrastic storm is the Turneresque scene in "The Lee Shore," which will be discussed in detail under point 4.

16. Melville, p. 836.

17. "[W]ilful disobedince of the command of God" (Melville, p. 838).

A twofold moral follows from Jonah's story. Firstly, and this is a lesson "to all sinful men,"[18] man cannot abandon himself to his fallen nature, which he has to overcome. One should focus on the spiritual journey to God because the material one is futile.[19] Secondly, one may have to act against one's own will in the fulfilment of a mission. To obey God may mean to disobey oneself: "But all the things that God would have us do are hard for us to do [...] it is in disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists."[20] This is the moral Father Mapple draws for himself, to settle the inner storm he has as "a pilot of the living God" who, when "describing Jonah's sea-storm, seemed tossed by a storm himself."[21] As "the pulpit is the ship's prow,"[22] Father Mapple has to take a leading part in guiding others, and he is bent under the heavy burden of this responsibility, just like the figure of the Biblical Jonah. Yet, the only way for him is "to preach the Truth to the Face of Falsehood,"[23] even if it may not be well-received.

Thus, the image of the storm carries several layers of meaning in this scene: punishment from God (Jonah), trials and tribulations of life, Father Mapple's emotional upheaval reflected in the sleet battering the church-ship of life, all to be joined in the final generalization: human fate is that of whalemen sailing the stormy seas of life.[24]

## 4 Theoretical turmoils of "The Lee Shore"[25]

The storm of "The Lee Shore" chapter is termed a theoretical one because it does not really befall the Pequod—it exists only in Ishmael's musings upon Bulkington. Three different interpretative projections—a philosophical, a religious and a psychological—will be put forward.

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18. Melville, p. 838.

19. This latter thought can be connected to the religious interpretations of "The Lee Shore" chapter.

20. Melville, p. 838.

21. Melville, p. 843. "His deep chest heaved as with a ground-swell; his tossed arms seemed the warring elements at work; and the thunders that rolled away from off his swarthy brow, and the light leaping from his eye, made all his simple hearers look on him with a quick fear that was strange to them" (Melville, pp 843–4).

22. Melville, p. 843.

23. Melville, p. 845.

24. Father Mapple's insight that one has to do things against his or her own will is a possibility offering in the symbolic interpretation of "The Lee Shore."

25. Two ideas are carried over from the previous points. Firstly, the premise that it makes a difference where one watches the storm from. Secondly, the general human condition equated with life at sea.

Let us consider the philosophical reading first, which has epistemological questions at its centre. The ultimate aim of philosophical thinking is to get to know the world. Those who wish to gain deep knowledge sail seaward. The depths of knowledge, as the depths of the ocean, hide many dangers, the "boisterous Atlantic," or the "stormy Capes"[26] emerge along the perilous, tempestuous sea voyage. Also, the stormy winds—the main philosophical or ideological currents in the world—push the daring voyager back towards the shore.[27]

Land poses the most terrible threat to a ship tossed by high winds. "But in the gale, the port, the land is that ship's direst jeopardy."[28] For landspeople, land is associated with harbour, peace and safety, a stormproof shelter from the challenges and calamities of the world. However, those thriving on deep knowledge cannot attain bliss on shore, either: they find the solid ground shallow and superficial.[29] For them, the shore embodies saving dullness, it is "slavish" and "treacherous," it has many restrictions and limits in its approach to life for those who desire "great depths of knowledge."[30] For the recondite thinker it is better "to perish in that howling infinite, than be gloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety!"[31] And here comes the relevance of the Euroclydon point: it makes a difference from whence one watches the storm! As for the proportion of the two types, the stormwatchers on shore outnumber those who thrive on living through storms at sea. Again, Starbuck's "to leeward—homeward"[32] may be interpreted along these lines as the comprehension of the fact that the quest for deep knowledge is futile.[33]

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26. Melville, p. 903.

27. "[A]ll deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous and slavish shore" (Melville, p. 906).

28. Melville, p. 906.

29. The *lee shore* is the shore toward which the wind blows from the sea. "It fared with him [Bulkington] as with the storm-tossed ship, that miserably drives along the leeward land" [land located on the side sheltered from the wind]. "The port would fain give succor [help given in need of danger]; the port is pitiful; in the port is the safety, comfort, hearthstone, supper, warm blankets, friends, all that is kind to our mortalities" (Melville, p. 906).

30. Melville, p. 906.

31. Melville, p. 906.

32. Melville, p. 1331.

33. Or, choosing the shore is the human response to Heideggerian *Nothingness*, which one essays to flee by indulging in everyday activities.

In a more general way, the storm blowing leeward can be interpreted as a current, movement or approach that results in the small-timer philosopher's going astray in his examinations, it is the embodiment of constraining norms and laws of conformity as a consequence of which one is cast upon the shore fallen into the trap of overpragmatization or Mammon-worship: "The ocean is the bondless truth and land is the threatening reef of human error."[34]

In the religious reading, the image of storm may represent currents of religious thought resulting in a dogmatic approach. The land and the sea symbolise two different kinds of faith: those who inhabit the land possess a "bucolic, non-thinking faith," whereas the sea symbolises "the tree of knowledge which is fraught with dangers to the peace of the soul"[35]—a conscious, "questioning" faith, that of Father Mapple, which may bring about the denunciation and defiance of dogmatic religion and its terrestrial representatives at a point: another gust of foul wind blowing leeward. Another possibility to consider here is the land versus sea symbolism standing for one's will opposing predestination.[36]

Displaying the psychological aspect of thinking, the analogy may imply the juxtaposition of what is sensible, rational and what is instinctual, irrational. Or, a related, Freudian interpretation of the mind has its subconscious component of deep waters (Id) while the land can be envisaged as the conscious (Ego)—the subconscious dominating over the conscious. The stormy wind embodies the superego in this sense, by providing the controlling force to enhance the rule of the Ego.[37]

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34. Percy H. Boynton, "The Allegory of Moby Dick," in *Moby-Dick as Doubloon*, eds H. Parker & H. Hayford (New York: Norton, 1982), 160–178, p.171.

35. Sophie Hollis, "The Main Theme of Moby Dick," in *Moby-Dick as Doubloon*, ed. H. Parker & H. Hayford (New York: Norton, 1982), 179–191, p. 187.

36. This is very similar to Father Mapple's spiritual discovery confessed in his sermon.

37. In the Jungean reading, however, the same storm would be triggered by the subconscious, and the wind would blow seaward enabling us to comprehend why Ahab, stuck in a typhoon ("The Candles"), chooses to seek out and fight Moby Dick instead of turning back and sailing home with favourable winds in the Pequod's stern: the very essence of his madness lies in his subconscious taking over his conscious, which anticipates the climax at this point in the story.

# 5 Storms of the Pequod's voyage

Three major storms break out during the sea voyage of the Pequod: the storm that is raging in the chapter titled "Midnight, Forecastle," the one following the first lowering, and the climactic storm of "The Candles."[38] All can be explained both as having and anaphoric or a cataphoric significance. That is, whether they bear the mark of God's anger for human wrongdoing or rather, they carry the sinister germs of the Pequod's ill-starred fate.

The first storm breaks out after the doubloon is nailed to the mast and Ahab openly declares his mission: the annihilation of the white whale. A heavy drinking session that follows is the celebration of the ratification of Ahab's pact with the crew to join him on his mission.[39] In the three preceding chapters Ahab's, Starbuck's and Stubb's respective point of view is put down with regard to the issue, so the chapter entitled "Midnight, Forecastle" can be interpreted as God's view upon the same subject: the punishment of the crew. Sneakily, with a storm wrapped in it, the night encroahes upon the crew, while people are dancing in an ecstatic rave—like the sinful inhabitants of Nineveh. The dancing gradually ceases as the storm unfolds and "The sky darkens—the wind rises."[40] Each sailor adds his own perception to the observation of the storm. The Lascar sailor's "By

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38. In fact, two additional storms appear: a minor one when the Pequod sails around the Cape, famous for its stormy weather. Accordingly, water and wind rise, and "the ivory-tusked Pequod sharply bowed to the blast, and gored the dark waves in her madness." The "swift madness and gladness of the demoniac waves" helps create a link between Ahab's state of mind and Nature raging (Melville, p. 1043). The reason why the Cape storm is not included in the above discussion is to be found in the lack of evidence for either its punishing or its foretelling function. Rather, it relates to Ahab's madness: the sea rocks the Pequod in the same mad way as Ahab is rocking in his hammock in the gale. The second storm excluded precedes the current journey of the Pequod, it comes to life in the reminiscences of Bildad and Peleg. However, it is not completely irrelevant to the outcome of Ahab's current quest for Moby Dick: the terrible typhoon recalled may have an anticipatory function, and indeed, the Pequod will finally sink near Japan, following the occurrence of a typhoon! At the same time, the tropical storm is associated with Judgement Day, which gives it a touch of divine punishment.

39. Presumably with the intention of anticipation, even later reference is made to this pact: "Had you followed Captain Ahab down into his cabin after the squall that took place on the night succeeding that wild ratification of his purpose with his crew" (Melville, p. 1003).

40. Melville, p. 978.

Brahma! boys, it'll be douse sail soon. The sky-born, high-tide Ganges turned to wind! Thou showest thy black brow, Seeva!"[41] links Ahab with the storm, too, as he has been marked previously for his brow accommodating gathering clouds. Other members of the crew equally connect the two events. The 4th Nantucket sailor remarks, "I heard old Ahab tell him [the mate] he must always kill a squall, something as they burst a waterspout with a pistol—fire your ship right into it,"[42] to which the English sailor responds, "We are the lads to hunt him up his whale."[43] The oldest one on board, familiar with the indispensable armoury of wisdom-supertitions of a whalemen's life, the Manx sailor utters the following remark: "This is the sort of weather when brave hearts snap ashore and keeled hulls split at sea. [...] Our captain has a birthmark [...] there is another in the sky—lurid like [...] all else pitch black."[44] He also associates Ahab's character with the storm. Moreover, his words prophecize the Pequod in the climactic "The Candles"-scene with the corpusant-lit masts of the ship, bright and glaring, set against the stormy night![45]

Another potential interpretation offers taking the fact into consideration that the night is the time when the subconscious emerges. Can the storm be interpreted as a message from the subconscious? In this sense, the storm may imply two things: the attack and hypnotic enchantment of the crew's subconscious by the power of Ahab's personality, or, a sinister subconscious warning casting a shadow on the happiness of the conscious mind of the crew.

The next big storm appears at the first lowering. As the crew are out hunting for whales, a storm is sneaking upon them. The signs of the approaching storm are scattered in dribs and drabs within the text of the chapter.[46] "The dancing white water made by the

41. Melville, p. 978.
42. Melville, p. 980.
43. Melville, p. 980.
44. Melville, p. 980.
45. The word play on *squall* is interesting to note: "What a *squall*" [strong stormy wind] is carried on to the next sentence as "They are your white *squalls*" [surprised, painful cries belonging to white people bearing the marks of physical whiteness], which image will then be transformed into "White *squalls*? White whale" [spiritual whiteness], where the whale is equated with God: "Thou big white God somewhere in yon darkness" (Melville, pp. 981–2). Therefore, the image of storm is linked with spiritual whiteness through a chain of equations.
46. In a sense, the whole scene is anticipated by the squall following Ahab's devilish pact with the crew.

chase was now becoming more and more visible, owing to the increasing darkness of the dun cloud-shadows flung upon the sea. [...] [T]he boat going with [...] madness through the water."[47] The image of the storm depicted here evokes evil associations: "meanwhile the boat was still booming through the mist, the waves curling and hissing around us like the erected crests of enraged serpents." The crew falls into "the white, curdling cream of the squall,"[48] which squall "roared, forked, and crackled around us like a white fire upon the prairie."[49] The forked flames again have devilish overtones, moreover, their hellish-snakish image will reappear in "The Candles," with extended meaning. The Old Testament imagery suggests that, in this case, it is more reasonable to interpret the storm as punishment for chasing whales thus upsetting the natural order. However, the interpretation of the storm being a forewarning cannot be excluded completely.[50]

The climactic storm of Ahab's drama sweeps through "The Candles" chapter. As a preparation, the reader is told that "Warmest climes but nurse the cruellest fangs [...], basket the deadliest thunders,"[51] that the area near Japan is "home to the direst of storms, the Typhoon."[52] Inevitably, the Pequod gets into a typhoon. The storm-leashed sea smahes Ahab's boat, which incident can be interpreted both as portent or punishment.[53] There is lightning around, the rods should be dropped overboard but, out of defiance—the right worship of his fire-God –, Ahab keeps them on the deck crying "Let's have fair play here."[54] The lightning also

47. Melville, pp 1031–2.

48. Melville, p. 1032. It is interesting to note that the image of storm and whale tend to co-occur, which is reinforced in the following sentence by Melville-Ishmael himself: "Squall, whale and harpoon blended together" (Melville, p. 1032).

49. Melville, p. 1033.

50. As the whale escaped with a few scrapes, there is no need to punish but to warn so that the crew avoids touching Moby Dick. As an additional observation, it needs to be mentioned that anacondas are said to charm those who look into their eyes, so the storm may be the source of a spell cast upon the crew this way.

51. Melville, p. 1329

52. Melville, p. 1329. It is typical of Melville to prepare the ground for imminent, pending incidents this way.

53. Just like the case was with the man who fell into the sea in the chapter entitled "The Lifebuoy," which was commented upon as either "the fulfilment of an evil already presaged" or as "foreshadowing evil" (Melville, p. 1347).

54. Melville, p. 1331.

serves as a guide to Ahab—it is the lightning-sparked fire that appoints Ahab's way to his place on the deck: "Suddenly finding his path made plain to him by elbowed lances of fire."[55] He holds that the very light is going to lead him to the white whale.[56] However, the chapter is full of warning images that can be connected to the storm. As the corpusants light the three masts, they glow like "three gigantic wax tapers before an altar [...] burning in that sulphurous air,"[57] sulphur being an essential element of hell. "God's burning finger" is "laid on the ship,"[58] and "His Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" [... are] "woven into the shrouds and the cordage"[59] of the Pequod. The Biblical reference—Daniel interpreting the writing for Belshazzar as God's warning words—rather suggests a forewarning function here than a sense of punishment for the storm to fulfil. Moreover, as for warning signs, there are some more. The storm comes from the very direction the Pequod's crew is heading to chase Moby Dick, to which realization Starbuck's sinister "to windward, all is blackness of doom [...] but to leeward, homeward"[60] is sounded. Also, Ahab's harpoon is hellishly-snakishly baptized by "a levelled flame of pale, forked fire"[61] and it "burned there like a serpent's tongue,"[62] which Starbuck interprets as a sinister sign of God opposing Ahab's will.[63] In response, Ahab waves the burning harpoon among the crew and reminds them to act according to their oaths. As a result, he is fled as a lone tree on the prairie that is thunderbolt prone.[64]

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55. Melville, p. 1331.

56. Stubb also misinterprets the corpusants as a sign of an auspicious hunt: "I take that mast-head flame we saw for a sign of good luck. [...] Yes, our three masts will yet be as three spermaceti candles—that's the good promise we saw" (Melville, p. 1333).

57. Melville, p. 1332.

58. Melville, p. 1332.

59. Melville, p. 1332.

60. Melville, p. 1331.

61. Melville, p. 1331.

62. Melville, p. 1331.

63. Melville, p. 925. "God is against thee, old man; forbear! 'tis an ill voyage! ill begun, ill continued" (Melville, p. 1335).

64. The storm of "The Candles" continues for the next couple of chapters. One of them, "Midnight Aloft—Thunder and Lightning" consists of three lines only, wherein Tashtego communicates that he is tired of thunder and needs rum. Moreover, the storm results in transpointed needles, which awake "evil portents in the crew"—another forewarning, placed in the aftermath of the storm (Melville, p. 1341).

Another aspect of the climactic storm, namely, how it highlights the relationship between Ahab and the supernatural forces, will be discussed under the next point.[65]

## 6 Ahab's figure carrying the storm in himself

The next important employment of primary storm images concerns Ahab's character. Firstly, Ahab's "slender, rod-like mark, lividly whitish"[66] is burnt into him by lightning.[67] The connection of his mark with natural forces lends him a touch of divinity. Moreover, it reflects how vitally the element of fire has become part of his soul.[68] This fire seems to be a slowly consuming one. A later reference to the "same fiery emotion accumulated in the Leyden jar of his own magnetic life"[69] adds another aspect to the nature of the lightning-sparked fire associated with Ahab: its magnetism, which is the source of "spiritual terror."[70] Thus Ahab can be the compass needle essentially bent by his own stormy electricity.[71] And, he is a magnet bending his crew's will, and, at the same time, he is being bent by the lightning that has branded him.[72]

Another feature of Ahab's lightning mark is that it splits his body—and perhaps his personality—into two. Upon approaching tropical seas, Ahab is characterised as a "thunder-cloven old oak."[73] The

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65. Melville, pp. 956–7. The role of the gales to be faced as punishment is also reinforced by the Biblical story of Jonah and the comparison made between old masts and modern masts, from which it turns out that the storms mankind has to face as a result of God's wrath are as old as mankind itself.

66. Melville, p. 928. "[Ahab's mark] resembled that perpendicular seam sometimes made in the straight, lofty trunk of a great tree, when the upper lightning tearingly darts down it, and without wrenching a single twig, peels and grooves out the bark from top to bottom, ere running off into the soil, leaving the tree still greenly alive but branded" (Melville, p. 924).

67. Melville, p. 1127. The reader learns quite late in the story ("The Candles") that Ahab was struck by lightning on an earlier voyage. How he got his mark is not to be known up to the climax, apart from the mysterious "elementary strife at sea" and the odd wound "which was not caused by a mortal being" (Melville, p. 924). This sits well with Melville's predisposition towards mystery and suspense in forming plot and character in his later novels.

68. Also, the white flash imprinted in Ahab's skin may be read in relation to the whiteness of the whale.

69. Melville, p. 969.

70. Melville, p. 915.

71. Melville, p. 1345.

72. He is a magnetiser and he is being magnetised at the same time.

73. Melville, p. 926.

word "*cleave*" may convey two meanings: firstly, to *break, split esp. along a natural line*, secondly, to *remain attached or faithful to something*, for example, to the fork-flamed fire of the lightning Ahab openly allies with in "The Candles."[74]

An important indicator of Ahab's state of mind that can be connected with the image of storms is his brow: "the clouds [...] layer upon layer were piled upon his brow."[75] Similarly to Ahab's mark, whiteness and lightning are joined in the image of Ahab's brow as well. Stubb utters upon being "mentally" kicked by Ahab: "I was so taken all aback with his brow somehow. It flashed like a bleached bone,"[76] as the watchman on the Pequod's mast-head glimpses another ship in the distance and cries out, "whole thunder-clouds swept aside from his brow,"[77] firstly because Ahab hopes to hear some news from Moby Dick, secondly, because he wishes to act rather than to wait around. At the first lowering, Ahab goes after his prey "with tornado brow."[78]

Another storm-like character trait worth mentioning is Ahab's voice characterised as "such was the thunder of his voice."[79] Also, Ahab is referred to as Old Thunder on two occasions: when he is first gossipped about in "The Prophet" by Elijah[80] and in the climactic "The Candles" chapter he calls himself the same name.[81] Even though it was customary to address somebody as Old Thunder in those times, this address has peculiar overtones in the light of Ahab's strange mark and brow.[82]

Ahab's character carries the storm in itself even in his way of entry: he is sneaking upon the scene in clouds of myth-like gossip, then we see him in the flesh/flash of lightning, then we hear him speak in thunders. The tension preceding his appearance is just like the electricity that accumulates in the charged storm clouds.

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74. It is in this latter chapter where he openly turns out to be a fire-worshipper just like the Parsee.

75. Melville, p. 926.

76. Melville, p. 929.

77. Melville, p. 1127.

78. Melville, p. 1031.

79. Melville, p. 1024.

80. Melville, pp. 890–1.

81. Melville, p. 1333.

82. I suspect this was another word play of Melville's as with *cleave* ['split' and "being faithful"], to playfully exploit the ambiguity of meaning and thereby elicit certain associations.

It goes in line with Ahab's stormy image that shortly before announcing the ultimate aim of the Pequod's voyage "[Ahab] looked not unlike the weather horizon when a storm is coming up" and he was "rapidly glancing over the bulwarks, then darting his eyes among the crew,"[83] each glance a flash of lightning.

Apart from the question of forewarning versus punishment, the storm of "The Candles" also sheds light upon Ahab's multi-layered relationship with his God. Firstly, Ahab shows respect to the power embodied by lightning: he "put his foot upon the Parsee; and with fixed upward eye, and high-flung right arm, he stood erect before the lofty tri-pointed trinity of flames,"[84] which implies that Ahab is a fire-worshipper, though he lacks the Parsee's humility and submission in his worship. Second, the transcendentalist relationship is reflected between the individual and his God in the text: the individual has God in himself through the Oversoul, therefore, in a way, humans are Gods in a finite form. The parallel of Ahab and pallidness can be informative in this respect: the corpusants envelope the deck into "pallid fire," which pallidness enchants the crew just like Ahab's invincible will magically rules their souls when they make their pact with Ahab for the chase of Moby Dick. This pallidness is all-pervasive, it "finally covers everything."[85] Also, Ahab owns the "speechless, placeless power"[86] of this force, the fire of which he claims to be made of.[87] Finally, hints appear in the text at man claiming a superior footing, in which case the only way of God-worship is defiance without any humility or subordination to divine forces: "Thy right worship is defiance."[88] Ahab's worshipping the power as represented by the corpusants means that he is well-aware of the supernatural pact of doom he has made and he is not backing out. This scene is the final declaration of the fact that he has resigned himself to his fate.[89]

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83. Melville, p. 964.

84. It is also here that it turns out where Ahab got his mark from (Melville, p. 1334).

85. Melville, p. 1334. Pallidness finally covering everything can also function as a portent foreshadowing the Pequod's fate thus being suggestive of death.

86. Melville, p. 1335.

87. This all presupposes an equal footing between individual and God.

88. Melville, p. 1335.

89. Charles Olson, "Ahab and His Fool," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Moby-Dick,* ed. M. T. Gilmore (London: Prentice Hall International, 1977), 49–72, p. 51.

Ahab is also prone to throw "spiritual throes,"[90] which may link anger, another human quality with the image of the storm. As the carpenter puts it in "The Deck," "He goes aft. That was sudden, now; but squalls come sudden in hot latitudes."[91] There is a more general meaning beyond the "hurricane" of Ahab's fury against which one feels compelled to stand up in the name of common sense:[92] his monomaniac ragings. The image of the storm befits the expression of the maniac raging of a lunatic. And indeed, the parallel is drawn: "In a straitjacket, he swung to the mad rockings of the gales."[93]

Ahab is focused on Moby Dick. He keeps looking up at the compass even in his slumber in order not to miss the course he is to follow: "Terrible old man! [...] sleeping in this gale, still thou steadfastly eyest thy purpose."[94] Dreams may bring forth Ahab's storm-germed subconscious, which is likened to hell, "a chasm" containing "forked flames and lightnings":[95] the hell of madness. Along the course of the voyage, the subconscious gradually takes over the ego. Continuing this train of thought we may arrive at the conclusion that Ahab chooses to ride the storm instead of turning homeward because his subconscious is no longer controlled. This is hinted at in a remark of Ishmael's in the chapter entitled "Moby Dick":

> His special lunacy stormed his general sanity, and carried it, and turned all its concentrated cannon upon its own mad mark; so that far from having lost his strength, Ahab, to that one end, did now possess a thousand fold more potency than ever he had sanely brought to bear upon any one reasonable object.[96]

Finally, towards the very end of the book Ahab admits to be ruled by emotions, a truly human trait of his character: "But Ahab never thinks; he only feels, feels, feels."[97] In this sense, emotional turmoils can be interpreted as storms followed by calm periods like ebb and tide just as the teardrop may be interpreted as the fruit of Ahab's "for-

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90. Melville, p. 1124.
91. Melville, p. 1359.
92. Richard B. Sewal, "Moby-Dick," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Moby-Dick,* ed. M. T. Gilmore (London: Prentice Hall International Ltd., 1977), 24–48, p. 47.
93. Melville, p. 990.
94. Melville, p. 1044.
95. Melville, p. 1007.
96. Melville, p. 990.
97. Melville, p. 1396.

ty years of privation, and peril, and storm-time."[98] Ahab likens himself to a "rope towing dismantled frigates in a gale," strained, spent, yet, saving his remaining strength and energy for the final combat: "ere I break, ye'll hear me crack; and till ye hear that, know that Ahab's hawser [a large rope used when towing] tows his purpose yet."[99]

## 7 Lack of storms—the supernatural calm

Some significant events in the story are preceded by "a calm before the storm." Examples include the calm preceding the climactic three-day chase that ends the story or a similar occurence before the first lowering.[100] In the chapter titled "The Line," an even more explicit philosophical remark is made on the issue: "the profound calm which only apparently precedes [...] the storm, is perhaps more awful than the storm itself; for, indeed, the calm is but the wrapper and envelope of the storm."[101] In the images following, a parallel is drawn between the coating of calm and the potentials of the line to limit life by posing a threat with its sublime presence. Further generalization using the image of the umbilical chord suggests that every human being has this potentially fatal halter around his neck by birth, which, in part, converges to the existentialist stance: dancing eternally in the jaws of death, one has to live one's life burdened by the knowledge that life is limited. The image of a storm is brought into the picture by Melville's using the phrase "all the horrible contortions put in play like ringed lightnings."[102] Why is the calm more awful than the storm then? Because the fear of death is worse that death itself: it induces the genuine angst that makes one face Nothingness.

In a number of scenes,[103] the surface of the sea is depicted as calm whereas the depths display stormy, turbulent violence. Philosophi-

98. Melville, p. 1373.

99. Melville, p. 1395. On storm and calm in Ahab's character, see Section 7.

100. Ahab caught his first whale on the same bright and calm day as the one preceding the final chase; and "[T]hese temporary apprehensions, so vague but so awful, derived a wondrous potency from the contrasting serenity of the weather, in which, beneath all its blue blandness, some thought there lurked a devilish charm, as for days and days we voyaged along, through seas so wearily, lonesomely mild, that all space, in repugnance to our vengeful errand, seemed vacating itself of life before our urn-like prow" (Melville, pp. 1042–43).

101. Melville, p. 1094.

102. Melville, p. 1094. The image of the line around the neck also indicated the way Ahab will meet his end.

103. Cf. "The Guilder," "The Dying Whale."

cally, the superficial calm and the storms manifested in the violence of murky depths may represent a stance similar to that of the epistemological symbology of "The Lee Shore." Or, it may simply state that appearances are deceptive. The same deceptiveness characterises Moby Dick's nature, he may seem all calmness on the surface, but only to cover his tornado essence: It "allured" by its "serenity" and many "had fatally found that quietude but the vesture of tornadoes. Yet calm, enticing calm, oh, whale!"[104] This way it "juggles and destroys many."[105]

Storm is a frequently recurring condition of Ahab's life: he sails through "life's howling gale,"[106] his being is likened to the "tornadoed Atlantic,"[107] and he characterizes his life as "forty years of privation, peril and storm-time."[108] Yet, there are peaceful moments within this stormy existence: "But even so, amid the tornadoed Atlantic of my being, do I myself still for ever centrally disport in mute calm; and while ponderous planets of unwaning woe revolve round me, deep down and deep inland there I still bathe me in eternal mildness of joy,"[109] where this joy is associated with "that enchanted calm which they say lurks at the heart of every commotion."[110] Moreover, the image of the Typhoon—a hurricane in the Pacific ocean—suggests that in fact calm may not only precede storms but also, each storm essentially contains calm in it. This implies that calm and storm have grown together vitally, they cannot be separated.

The image of the storm is an expressive symbol to demonstrate Ahab's acceptance of his fate that urges him to hunt Moby Dick: "Methinks now that this coined sun wears a ruddy face; but see! aye, he enters the sign of storms, the equinox! [...] From storm to storm! So be it then. Born in throes, 'tis fit that man should live in pains and die in pangs. So be it, then!"[111] Yet, this defiant acceptance fu-

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104. Melville, p. 1378.
105. Melville, pp. 1378–9.
106. Melville, p. 1309.
107. Melville, p. 1232.
108. Melville, p. 1386.
109. Melville, p. 1210.
110. Melville, p. 1209. Also, Ishmael keeps "a peaceful center." (Note: the center of the hurricane is always calm.)
111. Melville, p. 1254. It is interesting to note that almost every significant character on board of the Pequod reads a "stormy" future from the doubloon, which may serve the purpose of showing the objectivity of Ahab's observations in this very case. Or, it may intensify the reader's misgivings about the Pequod's future.

elled by pride is broken by the teardrop Ahab sheds marking "forty years of privation, peril and storm-time."[112]

Another implication of storm and calm alternating is the illustration of the point that there is no progress in life, that there is no ultimate goal to be achieved: "Would to God this blessed calms would last. But the mingled, mingling threads of life are woven by warp and woof: calms crossed by storms, a storm for every calm. There is no steady unretracing progress in this life; we do not advance through fixed gradations."[113] This cyclical world view is connected with the futility of existence here.

From all the above, it shows unequivocally that the storm images of *Moby-Dick* display a rich variety of functions within the novel. This perhaps also indicates that any attempt at the establishment of a singular, allegorical role assigned to storms is certain to fail. More so, because a certain symbol may function as a multiple carrier of meanings. (As an example, consider the possible interpretations of "The Lee Shore.") Also, different storm images of the novel belong to different consciousnesses (that of Ishmael-Melville, Ahab, Father Mapple, Starbuck, and others).

112. Melville, p. 1386.

113. Melville, p. 1318. Also, referring to Nature as having a dark, "Hindoo half" supports this premise as Hinduism is a cyclical faith.

# The Limits of Artistic Inspiration in Melville's *Pierre* and Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*

*Márta Pellérdi*

> "Ideals, of whatever parentage, are indispensable, as without them there would be no scale by which to judge the value and quality of human achievements."[1]

While Nathaniel Hawthorne was serving as consul to Liverpool between 1853 and 1857, he was visited by Herman Melville, a former close friend. Melville at the time was on his way from New York to the Holy Land, and he was not in good spirits. Hawthorne was embarrassed at first because a few years before there had been a misunderstanding between them: he had failed to secure Melville a consular appointment from President Franklin Pierce, a former college friend, and was luckier in obtaining one for himself. Melville at the time of his visit was still thirty-seven years old, relatively young compared to the middle-aged, fifty-two year-old Hawthorne. Both were at the height of their creative powers: Hawthorne had not yet written his last completed romance *The Marble Faun*, while Melville had already published most of the novels for which he is best known today.[2] The lack of literary appreciation for his novels and short prose, however, contributed to Melville's disillusionment. Hawthorne noticed that Melville was also physically unwell, full of "neuralgic complaints" possibly suffering from "too constant literary occupation" which were "pursued without much success" and drew the conclusion that this was also reflected in "his writings, [which] for a long while past have indicated a morbid state of mind."[3] On November 20, 1856, Hawthorne made an entry in his journal in which he described his friend's singular mental state:

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1. Aladár Sarbu, *The Reality of Appearances: Vision and Representation in Emerson, Hawthorne, and Melville* (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1996), p. 9.

2. The *Confidence-Man* was published the next year, in 1857.

3. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The English Notebooks*, ed. Randall Stewart (New York: Russel and Russel, 1962), p. 432.

> Melville, as he always does, began to reason of Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken, and informed me that he had "pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated"; but still he does not seem to rest in that anticipation; and, I think, will never rest until he gets hold of a definite belief. It is strange how he persists—and has persisted ever since I knew him, and probably long before—in wandering to-and-fro over these deserts, as dismal and monotonous as the sand hills amid which we were sitting. He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other. If he were a religious man, he would be one of the most truly religious and reverential; he has a very high and noble nature, and better worth immortality than most of us.[4]

From all his works which were published by 1856, Melville's romance entitled *Pierre, or the Ambiguities*,[5] the work which he referred to as a "rural bowl of milk," was the one which received the most devastating reviews after its publication in 1852.[6] But *Pierre* must have made an impact on Hawthorne, because there are some themes which can be found in *The Marble Faun*[7] as well, although this romance was published much later in 1860. In this paper I will argue that Melville's *Pierre* and Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* share certain themes and that the latter is, in a sense, a response to the former, both works investigating the consequences of sin, the complete rejection of which, however, leads to an artistic vacuum. *Pierre*'s hero is suffering from a moral dilemma over the ambiguous nature of "ideas celestial" and "things terrestrial" in Life (*Pierre* XIV, 214) which is counteracted by Hawthorne's characters in *The Marble Faun* by their dilemma over the ambiguous nature of Art. The moral conflict of the characters can be seen through the characters' different reactions to works of art, especially Beatrice Cenci's portrait by Guido Reni,

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4. Hawthorne, *English Notebooks*, pp.432–433.

5. All parenthesized references are to this edition: Herman Melville, *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*, *The Writings of Herman Melville*, eds. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker and G. Thomas Tanselle, vol.7 (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1971).

6. Leon Howard and Hershel Parker, "Historical Note," in *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*, 365–410, p. 366.

7. All parenthesized references are to this edition: Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, ed. Susan Manning, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

which is of peripheral yet symbolic significance in *Pierre*, and which gains increasing importance in *The Marble Faun*.[8]

Hawthorne had identified his four longer works as romances rather than novels. He attempted to define "the romance" in several prefaces to his works.[9] Richard Chase, Joel Porte and many others had adopted Hawthorne's definition in seeking to define the essential characteristics of the genre. Chase emphasized the special American features and tradition of the romance as opposed to its European version.[10] According to Porte, Hawthorne's

> attempts to describe this special fictional entity center not only in discussions about a particular kind of treatment but also in a persistent association of the romance with certain themes. Chief among these...is the notion of the continuing force of past experience, especially guilty or sinful experience, in the life of the present.[11]

What makes a given work a romance, then, is the theme itself, not just the way the theme is handled. Taking this into consideration, both *Pierre* and *The Marble Faun* can be called romances. After the indifferent reception of Melville's major work *Moby-Dick*, the writer intended to come up with something different, a work more appealing to popular tastes. Melville consciously refrained from calling *Pierre* a novel.[12] Instead, he emphasized the romantic features of the book "turning toward the feminine audience which formed the largest novel-reading public in his time."[13] The light hearted tone of the romance at

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8. This famous portrait is no longer attributed to Guido Reni, and the fact that it portrays Beatrice Cenci has also been contested lately. Susan Manning, "Introduction," in *The Marble Faun*, ix-xxxix, p.xxi.

9. In the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, for instance, Hawthorne makes the following distinction: the novel is "presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience." The romance is different, for "while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart—has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation" (Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables* [Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1894], p. v).

10. See Richard Chase, *The American Novel and its Tradition* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

11. Joel Porte, *The Romance in America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), p. 96.

12. Howard and Parker, p. 370.

13. Howard and Parker, p. 366.

the beginning which depicted Pierre's idyllic childhood, his favorable social and economic situation as a landowner, the description of his cheerful disposition and literary talents, misled contemporary readers into thinking that they were reading a typical domestic or sentimental novel popular at the time. While some readers may have sensed the book's initial, almost parodistic tone, Melville's treatment of his hero later becomes "cynical," and "sardonic," which many readers failed to appreciate.[14] Although incest appeared as an interesting, albeit abhorrent topic in Romantic literature of the period, readers took an ambiguous stance towards *Pierre*, not only because it treated the taboo topic of sibling incest, but because of the ambiguity in the intentions of the writer, in its tone and in its several "discursive registers: the Sentimental, the Gothic, and the Romantic,"[15] not to mention the unsettling views the book conveyed on "the 'impracticability' of Christian Virtue."[16]

In *Pierre* Melville places his hero into an ambiguous relationship with a mysterious, dark-haired, dark-eyed young woman, Isabel Banford, who calls herself his half-sister. Pierre, however, has a fiancé called Lucy, who is virtuous and naive, completely devoted to Pierre. The Arcadian description of Saddle Meadows (the Glendinning family estate), the domestic felicity he enjoys at home with his mother is disrupted when he finds out that he has a half-sister. Isabel's position is ambiguous throughout the story. Pierre cannot be completely sure if she is truly the illegitimate daughter of his dead father, whose memory he had worshipped up till that point, or a mad woman who has no substantial evidence of her origin. Eventually, Pierre has to choose between the material, domestic happiness represented by his home, his mother and his bride Lucy, and doing what he initially believes to be godly and noble. In order to save his father's honor, he chooses virtue, his half-sister instead of Lucy. He lives with her and pretends to be married to her, concealing to the world that they are close relatives." In Aladár Sarbu's words, "[b]y letting the world believe that Isabel is his wife, he creates an appearance—that is, an illusion; by keeping the truth from his mother, he preserves an appearance—that of the virtuous father."[17] Pierre is dismayed to realize his attraction to his

14. Howard and Parker, p. 373.

15. Samuel Otter, *Melville's Anatomies* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999), p. 209.

16. Christopher Sten, *The Weaver-God, he Weaves: Melville and the Poetics of the Novel* (Kent, Ohio and London: Kent State University Press, 1996), p. 217.

17. Sarbu, p. 195.

half-sister may have influenced him in making this perhaps not so unselfish, but fatal decision for his future. Melville chooses the female "standard figures in the domestic novel of this period," two opposites, to confront the "attractions of the dark lady and the light."[18] Isabel's counterpart in *Pierre*, the "moral center" is Lucy, who represents earthly values.[19] Christopher Sten describes Pierre's divided self, the ambiguity of *Pierre* lying in the dilemma that

> Melville's hero comes to feel, at the major turning point of his life, that his choice is not between two women, Lucy or Isabel, but between the two sides of himself, two versions of his identity –the earthly side that wants only the happiness of a life of love with Lucy and the spiritual side that wants only the blessedness of a life of godlike virtue.[20]

Pierre is tormented by the realization that he made the wrong choice and the second half of the book is devoted to his struggle in trying to move away from this decision.[21] On his way from the country to the city to begin a new life with Isabel, Pierre reads the philosophical tract on "Chronometricals and Horologicals" written by the philosopher Plotinus Plinlimmon. Reading Plinlimmon's skeptical essay is the first step towards realizing that his sacrifice might have been a foolish one. The rather blasphemous philosophical text on "virtuous expediency," which "seems the highest desirable or attainable earthly excellence for the mass of men," also contributed to the disapproval that *Pierre* received after its publication (*Pierre* XIV, 214). The essay uses two time related terms that illustrate for Melville two different kinds of world views: the so-called "chronometrical" and "horological" attitude to the world. Plinlimmon's text explains the difference between the two:

> In short, this chronometrical and horological conceit, in sum, seems to teach this:—That in things terrestrial (horological) a man must not be governed by ideas celestial (chronometrical); that certain minor self-renunciations in this life his own mere instinct for his own every-day general well-being will teach him to make, but he must by no means make a complete unconditional sacrifice of himself in behalf of any other being, or any cause, or any conceit. (*Pierre* XIV, 214)

18. Sten, p. 225.
19. Sten, p. 223.
20. Sten, p. 236.
21. Sten, p. 236.

Thus Pierre, "governed by ideas celestial" with his intention of choosing supposed Virtue and making a "complete unconditional sacrifice of himself" for Isabel proves to be chronometrical and unreasonable. After reading the pamphlet, it is painful and tragic for Pierre to contemplate the future lying ahead. The consequences of his initial, fatal choice, however, make it impossible for him to choose the other path. He has lost the opportunity to act horologically. Although formerly he was successful as a young poet with a promising future before him, he can no longer write according to the demands of his publishers and general readers and thus cannot support himself, or the women, Lucy and Isabel, who have attached their lives to his. To make the contrast clear between the way contemporary literary circles expect Pierre to write and the way he would write if he could, "a "scathingly ironic account" is offered in *Pierre*, a "picture of the literary life in which—despite the caricature-like excesses and distortions—the contours of a literature dominated by genteel values are easily detectable."[22] Lucy's choice of living together with Pierre and Isabel finally results in Pierre's downfall. Charles Watts suggests that "by her decision to join Pierre and Isabel, hoping to serve them as a 'good angel,' she draws her vengeance-seeking brother and cousin down on them"; thus becoming an "exterminating angel—a final irony."[23] Thus Pierre becomes a murderer by killing his cousin, the last member of the Glendinning family and ends up in prison, awaiting his execution. Just before this fatal meeting, however, Pierre enters an art gallery with the two young women by his side. One of the portraits entitled "The Stranger's Head," makes a strong impression only on Isabel and Pierre. While Isabel recognizes in it the picture of their father, Pierre has his doubts, thinking finally that the portrait was "of a complete stranger—a European" (*Pierre* XXVI, 353). Lucy, however, is drawn to the portrait that Shelley was inspired by in 1819 when he wrote *The Cenci*, the historical tragedy on the taboo topic of how innocence combats the tyranny of incest and evil. The picture attributed at the time to Guido Reni portrays Beatrice Cenci just before she was executed for having plotted the murder of her abusive father. The portrait of Beatrice appears to foreshadow Pierre's fate. Melville

22. Sarbu, p. 198.

23. Charles Watts, "Energy and Gentleness Double-Hooded: The Figure of Beatrice Cenci in Shelley, Hawthorne, and Melville," in *Melville: "Among the Nations": Proceedings of an International Conference*, Volos, Greece, July 2–6, 1997, ed. Sanford E. Marovitz, (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2001), 440–454, p. 447.

saw the same portrait in the original in Rome in 1857, several years after describing it in *Pierre*:[24]

> that sweetest, most touching, but most awful of all feminine heads—The Cenci of Guido. The wonderfulness of which head consists chiefly, perhaps, in a striking, suggested contrast, half-identical with, and half-analogous to, that almost supernatural one—sometimes visible in the maidens of tropical nations—namely, soft and light blue eyes, with an extremely fair complexion, veiled by funereally jetty hair. But with blue eyes and fair complexion, the Cenci's hair is golden—physically, therefore, all is in strict, natural keeping; which, nevertheless, still the more intensifies the suggested fanciful anomaly of so sweetly and seraphically *blonde* a being, being doubled-hooded, as it were, by the black crape of the two most horrible crimes (of one of which she is the object, and of the other the agent) possible to civilized humanity—incest and parricide. (*Pierre*, XXVI 351)

The two portraits, one depicting a parricide, the other "exposing a man who had fathered a child out of wedlock,"[25] are hanging opposite one another and seem to be ironically conducting a silent discussion of their own:

> Now, this Cenci and "the Stranger" were hung at a good elevation in one of the upper tiers; and, from the opposite walls, exactly faced each other; so that in secret they seemed pantomimically talking over and across the heads of the living spectators below. (*Pierre* XXVI, 351)

The ambiguity of Beatrice who is innocent and guilty at the same time, affects the innocent and culpable Lucy who unwittingly brings doom upon Pierre, Isabel and herself. Watts draws attention to the secret that both portraits conceal and yet ambiguously reveal through the expressions on their faces: "So it is the image of the father, an image inflected by mystery and sexual transgression, and yet with an "unequivocal aspect of foreignness, of Europeanism," and of impossible ambiguity about it, which seems to hold secret parley with

24. Melville's description of the portrait that he saw seven years after having described it is quite terse in his journal: "Expression of suffering about the mouth, appealing look of innocence, not caught in any copy or engraving" (quoted in Watts, p. 441).

25. Sarbu, p. 195.

the portrait of Beatrice.[26] When Pierre realizes that both young women had an equal share in bringing about his tragedy he rejects both: "Ye two pale ghosts, were this the other world, ye were not welcome. Away!—Good Angel and Bad Angel both!—For Pierre is neuter now!" (*Pierre* XXVI, 361).

Melville, however, as it gradually becomes clear to readers, uses the theme of incest to illustrate several ideas. Pierre's attempt to choose the "chronometrical" over the "horological" destroys his whole life, and leads him to make the wrong moral choice by choosing the sister over the lover. In *Pierre* the catnip and the amaranth represent life and the sterility of incest and death. The two plants are associated with the two women and the two opposite ideals in Pierre's life. The former would ensure "earthly household peace," the latter, however, is a "bane" with an "ever-encroaching appetite for God" that destroys other plants (*Pierre* XXV, 345). The amaranth underscores Pierre's intellectual sterility as a young writer which is caused by "the leagued spiritual inveteracies and malices, combined with general bodily exhaustion" he has to contend with (*Pierre* XXV 340). His lack of artistic inspiration and intellectual sterility stems from realizing "the everlasting elusiveness of Truth; the universal lurking insincerity of even the greatest and purest written thought" (*Pierre* XXV, 339). Pierre receives the last stab from his publishers in the form of a letter which informs him that the philosophical rather than popular "deep book," he had written with so much exertion has been indignantly rejected (*Pierre* XXI, 292). Pierre, like his creator Melville, is spiritually crushed, artistically exhausted by his choice of adhering to his ideals and preferring not to write according to the popular, genteel tastes of the time.[27]

In *The Marble Faun*, however, Hawthorne stresses the ambiguous nature of Art, and the distinct, separate spheres of Art and Life. It seems that the characters must consciously choose between the two "realities." The "dark lady" of the romance, the beautiful artist of English-Jewish background, Miriam, is persistently followed all over Rome by a mysterious older man whose past is guiltily intertwined with hers. Thus the 'father' figure in this romance is the mysterious model, or Father Antonio from whom Miriam tries to flee until the innocent Donatello murders him. When Miriam finally reveals some details about her shadowy past to Kenyon, the American sculptor, she also speculates about the possible reason for her pursuer's unnatural behavior:

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26. Watts, p. 449.
27. Howard and Parker, p. 377.

> Looking back upon what had happened, Miriam observed, she now considered him a madman. Insanity must have been mixed up with his original composition, and developed by those very acts of depravity which it suggested, and still more intensified by the remorse that ultimately followed them. (*MF* 335)

"Depravity" refers to "insanity which often develops itself in old, close-kept breeds of men, when long unmixed with newer blood," which is a euphemistic way of referring to incest (*MF* 334). Miriam, unlike Hilda, the other American artist in the story, is not a completely innocent nymph. There is the shadow of suspicion cast upon her for having been involved in a gruesome crime in the past and she becomes an accomplice, an inciter, as it were, to Donatello, the faun come-to-life, who throws her mysterious pursuer off a precipice when he sees the desire unintentionally expressed by her eyes. Both the nymph and the faun of Hawthorne's romance have to repent, but much of the book is about Donatello's suffering and transformation into a human being. Thus, the story of the innocent faun and the morally ambiguous nymph becomes a "developmental narrative of the Fall of Man."[28] Graham Clarke, in summing up the main characteristics of *The Marble Faun*, concludes the following: "To put it at its most obvious the book is almost wholly concerned with the nature of art and the art-making process."[29] The marble statue of the Faun comes to life in Hawthorne's romance only to find that "[l]ife has grown so sadly serious, that such men must change their nature, or else perish" (*MF* 356). According to Susan Manning, in *The Marble Faun* "Life and Art are elaborately parallel worlds...but neither provides a key to 'solve' the mysteries of the other."[30]

Donatello, the Count of Monte Beni, a descendent of half-human, half-beast mythical creatures, resembles the ancient statue of the Faun of Praxiteles to a striking degree:

> The whole statue—unlike anything else that ever was wrought in that severe material of marble—conveys the idea of an amiable and sensual creature, easy, mirthful, apt for jollity, yet not incapable of being touched by pathos. [...] Perhaps it

28. Manning, p. xi.

29. Graham Clarke, "To Transform and Transfigure: The Aesthetic Play of Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*," in *Nathaniel Hawthorne: New Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Lee (Totowa, N.J: Barnes and Noble, 1982), p. 132.

30. Manning, p. xxiii.

> is the very lack of moral severity of any high and heroic ingredient in the character of the Faun, that makes it so delightful an object to the human eye and to the frailty of the human heart. (*MF* 10)

From the many works of art described by the narrator of *The Marble Faun* in his story about artists in Rome, there is another one, besides the Faun of Praxiteles, that is particularly detailed and seems central to the main theme of innocence and corruption in the romance. Hawthorne, like Melville, was intrigued by the portrait of Beatrice Cenci, just as his expatriate artists in the romance. After witnessing the murder, both Miriam and Hilda assume the expression of Beatrice Cenci in Hilda's copy of Guido Reni's picture. When Hilda sits next to the copy, and looks in the mirror, she sees that "Beatrice's expression, seen aside and vanishing in a moment, had been depicted in her own face," and "[i]t was the knowledge of Miriam's guilt that lent the same expression to Hilda's face" (*MF* 160). Beatrice is described by Hilda as being a "fallen angel" fallen, and yet sinless" (*MF* 53). But when Miriam reminds Puritan Hilda of the crime that Beatrice committed, Hilda passes a severe judgment on her by stating firmly that "[h]er doom is just" (*MF* 53).

With the knowledge of her friend's guilt and with the assumption that by witnessing the murder, she may also have become an accomplice, Hilda, who has unreservedly admired the works of the Old Masters until then, becomes fatigued by museums and galleries and the works of the great masters. She used to be a talented copyist before, but after the murder she loses her talent and "it is questionable whether she was ever so perfect a copyist, thenceforth" (*MF* 291). According to Clarke, "she is not only initiated into a knowledge of sin, she is forced to acknowledge its existence as a primary element in the aesthetic and artistic process."[31] Hawthorne also makes it clear that as a consequence of such knowledge, Hilda acquires a refined critical taste in art, becoming capable of distinguishing the fake from the real:

> [she] saw into the picture as profoundly as ever, and perhaps more so, but not with the devout sympathy that had formerly given her entire possession of the Old Master's idea. She had known such a reality, that it taught her to distinguish inevitably the large portion that is unreal, in every work of art. (*MF* 291)

31. Clarke, p. 134.

But by "acknowledging" the role of sin in artistic creation Hilda also turns away from it. From this point onwards she is incapable of losing herself in art. She cannot "understand... how two mortal foes—as Right and Wrong surely are—can work together in the same deed" (*MF* 298). Nor can she accept that "a mixture of good there may be in things evil" (*MF* 298). Kenyon, however, reacts differently. Although he seems to agree with Hilda, his art seems to have benefited from the close contact with sin. He tries repeatedly to model Donatello's bust and capture the expression on the Count of Monte Beni's face after the Fall. He fails after several attempts, but finally succeeds. The result is a work of art which to "[m]ost spectators," is

> an unsuccessful attempt towards copying the features of the Faun of Praxiteles. One observer in a thousand is conscious of something more, and lingers long over this mysterious face, departing from it, reluctantly, and with many a glance thrown backward. What perplexes him is the riddle that he sees propounded there; the riddle of the Soul's growth, taking its first impulse amid remorse and pain, and struggling through the incrustations of the senses. (*MF* 296)

Hilda, however, vehemently rejects Miriam's views on the role of experience and sin as a "blessing in strange disguise," "a means of education" in the history of mankind, which Kenyon himself half-believes (*MF* 337). The sculptor at the end of the romance attempts to summarize the "moral of his [Donatello's] story" (*MF* 356):

> Sin has educated Donatello, and elevated him. Is Sin, then—which we deem such a dreadful blackness in the Universe—is it, like Sorrow, merely an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and purer state than we could otherwise have attained. Did Adam fall, that we might ultimately rise to a far loftier Paradise than his?
> (*MF* 356–57)

Hilda is "shocked [...] beyond words" and reminds Kenyon of the "mockery [his] creed makes, not only of religious sentiment, but of moral law" (*MF* 357). Kenyon chooses to agree with Hilda rather than lose her. However, that does not dispel the ambiguity of the ending. In his contemplation of the key role played by sin in the artistic process and in the education of mankind the author himself appears to be perplexed. By describing Donatello's act of murder and illustrating his extreme suffering and remorse, Hawthorne is also aesthe-

ticizing it, adopting an attitude to art the inflexible Puritan, Hilda, would never accept.[32]

Thus Hilda and Kenyon, the Protestant-American artists, turn away from Miriam and Donatello. Hilda and Kenyon choose life and each other, moral reality instead of art, on the basis of religious convictions that exclude the possibility of aestheticizing sin. Miriam as nymph and Donatello as faun (the European characters of the story) also end up choosing life through penitence, so all the four friends leave the picture galleries of Rome. The fact that Miriam and Donatello are dressed as a peasant and contadina the last time they appear together before readers demonstrates that there is no longer any difference between them and the ordinary citizens of Rome. Donatello has, through contrition and penitence, undergone a complete transformation from an innocent creature into a moral being. Miriam will have to dedicate herself to repentance and praying for Donatello. Hawthorne's American artists, Kenyon and the Puritan Hilda, have to make the choice of acknowledging the role of sin in the artistic process or rejecting it. The author leaves the question of the role of art in the future lives of his artists, Miriam, Hilda and Kenyon, unanswered, but it seems that they turn to Life instead. This is reflected in Kenyon and Hilda's decision to leave Rome at the end of the story. While for Hawthorne's characters the choice of the reality of Life over Art remains the better option, for Melville's Pierre the dilemma consists in choosing between "chronometrical" ideals and what "terrestrial" reality has to offer. But because he is morally intransigent the words that describe Donatello cannot be applied to unfortunate Pierre, nor to his disillusioned creator, Melville: "He has travelled in a circle, as all things heavenly and earthly do, and now comes back to his original self, with an inestimable treasure of improvement won from an experience of pain" (*MF* 337).

32. Hawthorne seems to be battling here with the demonic attractions of Catholicism (which handles sin differently by accepting its role in the artistic process), but ends up conscientiously choosing Calvinism instead. See Agnes McNeill Donohue's work on Hawthorne's religious confusion, "his disturbed and distressed response to Calvinism vs. Roman Catholicism" (*Hawthorne: Calvin's Ironic Step-child* [The Kent State University Press, 1985], p. 268).

# Hunt and Sing a-Down

## A Reading of Charles Dickens' "Hunted Down" (1859) and Eudora Welty's "Where Is the Voice Coming From?" (1963)

*Katalin G. Kállay*

In this paper, I wish to compare two stories,[1] focusing on (1) voices, (2) paths, (3) the question of trespassing and transgression, (4) the topic of murder, (5) the idea of friendship and finally (6) the method of hunting and singing as metaphors for reading. All the words of these items are taken from the examined texts, and all of them can be related to the art (or the uneasy pleasure) of reading literature.

The first text is a story from 1859 that recently got more critical attention, partly due to the fact that it lent its title to collections of Dickens' detective stories.[2] Mr. Sampson, the narrator is the retired "Chief Manager of a Life Assurance Office"—and he excels in hunting down a case of fraud and murder. A certain Mr. Slinkton, whom the narrator dislikes at first sight while observing him through the glass partition of his office (having an instinctive objection against the gentleman's neat way of parting his hair), proves to be a criminal who tries to obtain fortunes through the poisoning of his insured nieces and a friend. Slinkton succeeds in killing his first victim, but the narrator, through the information gained from a former colleague, Meltham (who, in fact, had been deeply in love with the victim) sets up an elaborate trap for the culprit, follows Slinkton and his second niece to Scarborough and finally manages to hunt him down. The

1. Throughout this paper, I will refer to the following editions of the texts: *The Works of Charles Dickens. The Life of Charles Dickens and Favourite Stories* (New York and Boston: Books, Inc., 1943), 209–231. The text first appeared in *The New York Ledger* in three instalments, 20 and 27August and 3 September, 1859. Dickens was offered £1000—so this must have been one of his most profitable short stories. Eudora Welty, *The Collected Stories of E. W.* (Orlando, Austin, New York, San Diego, Toronto, London: A Harvest Book, Harcourt Inc., 1980), 603–607. The text first appeared in *The New Yorker*, 6 July, 1963.

2. *Hunted Down: The Detective Stories of Charles Dickens*, ed. Peter Haining (Peter Owen Publishers, 2005, 2008); *Hunted Down* by Charles Dickens (Peter Haining, Dufour Editions, 2006).

trap comes as a surprise for the reader of the story, at the end: it turns out that under a pseudonym (Beckwith), Meltham himself pretended to be the drunkard friend of Slinkton's, and the whole trap had been pre-planned before Slinkton actually ever spoke to Sampson in his office. When Slinkton is confronted with these details in his premises, he dishevels his famously parted hair, poisons himself and dies on the spot. Thus Sampson, Meltham and a faithful servant (with iron-grey hair) manage to save the victim's sister, Margaret, who, in turn, will get married to the narrator's nephew and becomes a happy wife and mother, to give the story a hopeful and "life-assuring" ending, in spite of the fact that soon after Slinkton's death, Meltham, too, passes away, broken hearted. The sources of this tale are said to have been taken from a famous scandal in Dickens' own time: either the case of Thomas Griffiths Wainewright,[3] the infamous artist, writer and poisoner, or that of William Palmer,[4] medical doctor and murderer, both being gallant gentlemen in manner.

The second text, Welty's story is a first person narrative of a murderer, based on a true event as well. In 1963, Medgar Evers, African American civil rights leader was killed by a white supremacist in Jackson, Mississippi. It is a sheer coincidence that the name of the murderer in this case also happened to be Beckwith. Eudora Welty reflects on the impulse to write the story the following way:

> That hot August night when Medgar Evers, the local civil rights leader, was shot down from behind in Jackson, I thought, with overwhelming directness: Whoever the murderer is, I know him: not his identity, but his coming about, in this time and place. That is, I ought to have learned by now, from here, what such a man, intent on such a deed, had going on in his mind. I wrote his story—my fiction—in the first person: about that character's point of view, I felt, through my shock and revolt, I could make no mistake. (Welty, xi)

The narrative is like the recording of a voice, authentic in its so to say, "redneck" phrases of demagoguery and its straightforward directness. The murderer gives account of his deed, how he got the

3. Cf. "Thomas Griffiths Wainwright: Poet, Painter... and Poisoner?" *Electronic Medical Curriculum at The University of Edinburgh Faculty of Medicine*, accessed 1 May 2010 <http://www.portfolio.mvm.ed.ac.uk/studentwebs/session2/group12/thomaswa.htm>.

4. Cf. "William Palmer," *Staffordshire Past-Track*, accessed 1 May 2010 <http://www.staffspasttrack.org.uk/exhibit/palmer/>.

idea because the face irritated him on TV, how he found out where his victim lived, how he waited in the garden a little after 3:45 AM for him to come home, how the man finally got out of his car on the paved driveway, how he shot him in the back, how little time had passed (it was only 4:35 on the way back), how he went home and told his wife, how hot it was all through, and how annoyed he was about the fact that the victim's photos still occupied the TV screen. He says all these without making a hero of himself but with a self-assured and contented attitude: he did it all for his "pure-D satisfaction."[5] Then he takes his old guitar off the nail in the wall and starts playing: the text ends with the phrase "sing a-down, down, down, down. Down."

It is obvious that both Welty and Dickens were deeply interested in the mindset of criminals, and in this respect, distant reverberations of Edgar Allan Poe might be heard in their voices. But while Poe managed (in "The Tell-Tale Heart," for example) to combine the direct recording of a madman murderer's voice with the contemplative and hypersensitive voice of the aesthetically refined contemplative connoisseur—in these stories, it seems, either one or the other of the two distinct voices gets the real emphasis. Still, all the three authors authentically succeed in proving words to be matters of life and death.

# 1 Voices

Dickens' narrator starts by stating that he is about to relate a "romance," being "retired," observing his experiences after the "Play" of life, when the curtains are down.[6] Thus he positions himself in the first paragraph as the "spectator," the "reader," an "outsider" of the events of his own life—speaking from a safe place (his occupation at the "Life Assurance Office" also seems to stress this aspect: his job is to "assure" life, therefore he must secure a point of observation for himself). When he begins to tell the story, he lists the advantages of the glass partition that divides his desk from the rest of his office: by looking at his clients without hearing them, he can judge them better at first sight, on the basis of physiognomy, before they could "explain themselves away." This suggests that he might be disturbed by the *voices* of others, in spite of the fact that, in the course of telling the story, he dramatically recalls exact conversations, verbatim. All the

5. "Pure-D" meaning sheer, absolute, complete satisfaction.

6. Interestingly, the story itself is quite dramatic and has five chapters, which could be seen as corresponding to the five acts of a classical play.

more remarkable it is, that upon seeing Julius Slinkton's strange way of parting his hair, he immediately perceives it as a message, and gives voice to this as follows:

> His hair, which was elaborately brushed and oiled, was parted straight up the middle; and he presented this parting to the clerk, exactly (to my thinking) as if he had said, in so many words: "You must take me, if you please, my friend, just as I show myself. Come straight up here, follow the gravel path, keep off the grass, I allow no trespassing." (210–211)

This imaginary voice is heard repeatedly in the text, as if the parting in Slinkton's hair suggested that there is only one acceptable way of approaching him. This approach is indignantly rejected by Sampson, when he makes a remark in brackets: "('Humph!' thought I, as I looked at him. 'But I WON'T go up the track, and I WILL go on the grass.')" (213) The narrator's own voice can also be heard as slightly deceptive, since he keeps back much of the information he seems to have known all along both from Slinkton and from the reader. Of course, there are some hints at a late night visitor (who must have been Meltham) and at something in his pocket on the seashore in Scarborough (which must have been the evidence, Slinkton's deciphered diary)—but the reader only learns about these at the very end of the story. Sampson presents himself as a detached and rather passive observer, and in the end, he proves to have been very active in plotting behind Slinkton's and the reader's back.

Welty's narrator has a marked voice and his diction has a definite rhythm: on the one hand, it is the vigor of the flow of vernacular speech, on the other hand, it sounds as if, at times, it were constructed on the pattern of folk songs (to which the repeated occurrence of "I says to my wife" could be an example). Expressions and full sentences are frequently repeated—for the sake of emphasis, but perhaps also for the sake of a lyrical effect. The musicality is further emphasized by the guitar and singing in the end. This narrator is by no means a "reader" of his life story, he might as well be illiterate in that respect. He fully participates in his actions, he is rather an agent than an observer. He seems to feel safe not as an outsider but as an "insider," placing himself at home: this is emphasized by his intimate knowledge of the streets, the stores and signs in the imaginary town of Thermopylae.[7] The choice of this name for the town is

7. Eudora Welty's careful choice of place names is pointed out in Sharon Deykin Baris' analysis of *The Ponder Heart*, "Judgments of *The Ponder*

both indicative of the extreme heat (the Greek meaning of the word is "hot gates"), and of an ironic symbol of patriotic loyalty and courage—as Simonides' famous epigram has passed it on to further generations.[8] The "faithful keeping of the laws" in this case could only refer to the irrational, visceral racial hatred, since the narrator blatantly refuses any social concern:

> I says, "Themopylae never done nothing for me. And I don't owe nothing to Thermopylae. Didn't do it for you. Hell, any more'n I'd do something or other for them Kennedys! I done it for my own pure-D satisfaction." (605)

Although he sounds selfishly and brutally resistant to human feelings, his skin is not insensitive: the repeated allusions to the heat reveal his special delicacy and exposure. When his wife scolds him about having left the gun on the spot, he defends himself this way:

> And I told her, "because I'm so tired of ever'thing in the world being just that hot to the touch! The keys to the truck, the doorknob, the bedsheet, ever'thing, it's all like a stove lid. There's just ain't much going that's worth holding onto it no more," I says, "when it's a hundred and two in the shade by day and by night not too much difference. I wish *you*'d laid *your* finger to that gun." (606)

One cannot help remembering the "over-acuteness of the senses" that Poe's narrators suffered from, and in both cases, this special sensitivity makes the speakers vulnerable.

Both Dickens' and Welty's narrator address the reader directly. In "Where is the Voice Coming From," right at the beginning, before describing where his victim lives, the narrator says: "The other hand, there could be reasons you might have yourself for knowing how to get there in the dark. It's where you all go for the thing you want when you want it the most. Ain't that right?"(603) This way, the narrator insinuates that the addressee of his monologue is a neighbor, with a somewhat similar mindset, who would enter into a conversation with him, and give some reassurance. To what extent do we—

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*Heart*. Welty's Trials of the 1950s," in: *Eudora Welty and Politics. Did the Writer Crusade?* Ed. Harriet Pollack and Suzanne Marrs (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 179–203. For references to place names, see pp. 188–189.

8. Simonides (*c.* 556–468 BC): "Stranger, report this word, we pray, to the Spartans, that lying Here in this spot we remain, faithfully keeping their laws" (translated by George Campbell Macaulay).

unintentionally—accept such a role when reading the story? In this case, at least, the reader is not deliberately deceived by the narrator, but being touched by the direct and sincere-sounding voice might also result in an uneasy feeling.

In "Hunted Down," already in the introduction, Sampson says "that You, for instance, give a great deal of time and attention to the reading of music, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Hebrew, if you please, and do not qualify yourself to read the face of the master or mistress looking over your shoulder teaching it to you,—I assume to be five hundred times more probable than improbable" (209). Is there a natural resistance in us to such assumptions? Or does the tone imply that we have already entered into a dialogue, regardless of how we take these remarks? Dickens alludes to reading several times in his text—to ways of approaching another person. In connection with physiognomy, the narrator says, "The art of reading that book of which Eternal Wisdom obliges every human creature to present his or her own page with the individual character written on it, is a difficult one, perhaps, and is little studied" (209). He, Sampson, sets out to show us an example—basically through the observation of Slinkton's appearance—and manages to "explain himself away," i.e. he succeeds in deceiving both Slinkton and the reader.

## 2 Paths

The most obvious image Sampson uses for the interpretation of the other's character is that of the already quoted "gravel path" in Slinkton's hair. Since the image is mentioned as many as twelve times in the text, it has a comic effect—at the same time, it becomes a powerful metaphor for the process of reading. If there is a prepared pathway, a smooth walk for the reader, one might easily be misled in the interpretation. Walking off the path, that is, challenging other possible ways of approach seems to be necessary for a more complex and subtle understanding. When Meltham reveals the situation and Slinkton is hunted down, he himself destroys the "path" by disheveling his hair: it failed to defend him from intruders. From that point on, the reader of Dickens' text might step aside and start putting the story together, without leading or misleading paths.

In Welty's story, the "paved driveway," where the victim is murdered, is less exaggerated but equally important. The fact that the "street has been paved" is mentioned already when the narrator speaks of the exact location, and, after killing Roland Summers and making sure he had died, the speaker emphasizes: "He was down. He

was down, and a ton load of bricks on his back wouldn't have laid any heavier. There on his paved driveway, yes sir" (604). In this case, the path leads the criminal to his purpose and the victim to his destiny. The narrator first hides behind a tree, and after shooting, walks up this path to the victim. He stays there for a short while, to address the dead man: "Now I'm alive and you ain't. We ain't never now, never going to be equals and you know why? One of us is dead. What about that, Roland?" (604) But after this, he "skint over the yard, getting back" (605).[9] By stepping on the grass, he no longer uses the "path" during his escape (he even throws his "scorching" rifle in the "rank weeds" to cool down). The path is not so much in the focus of the narrator but rather of the writer: "What path does the murderer follow?" "What leads a man to such a deed?" could be different variations of the question "Where is the Voice Coming From?"

In both stories, the path loses its function as soon as the victim is "hunted down"—but the parallel is dangerous, since it makes a victim out of Slinkton, the murderer and, in turn, it shows Sampson to be more of a criminal than a victim. In Dickens' text, uneasiness is generated precisely from the ambiguity of the narrator's character. If not directly dishonest, he is, to say the least, quite unreliable. As Philip V. Allingham observes, "the narrator of 'Hunted Down' [...] transcends the usual limitations of this narrative stance (bias and memory) in actively misleading and mystifying his reader/auditor. [...] Dickens challenges his reader to construct meaning out of apparent unmeaning and to usurp the role of the narrator."[10] Indeed, the reconstruction of the story largely depends on the reader. In my reading of the story, the narrator's mindset is closer to a criminal's—Slinkton is doing his job in a professional way but, by outwitting him, the narrator becomes the expert. Leaving a path has Biblical and ethical connotations, and at this point the examination of the words "trespassing" and "transgression" seems to be inviting.

## 3 Trespassing and transgression

Trespassing is more of a legal term—but in the context of literature, it might be seen as a typically uneasy form of pleasure. In Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," for example, one could ar-

9. Skint: past tense of SKIN v.t. [slang] "to escape," "get away."

10. Philip V. Allingham, "Dickens's 'Hunted Down' (1859): A First-Person Narrative of Poisoning and Life-Insurance Fraud Influenced by Wilkie Collins," *Victorian Web*, accessed 1 May 2010 <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/pva/pva19.html>.

gue that the experience of snowfall is "stolen" from the owner of the property and this makes it all even more exciting for the speaker. "Whose woods these are I think I know. / His house is in the village, though, / He will not see me stopping here / To watch his woods fill up with snow."[11] I think the stance of Frost's contemplative speaker could express the position of a reader: one often feels like a trespasser when confronted with texts (and might say, echoing Frost, "Whose texts these are I think I know"). There are two equally disturbing questions about this statement: (1) To what extent *must* one step off a "paved" or "graveled" path in order to have a "good encounter" (Stanley Cavell's term for the ideal reading experience) with a text? (2) Where is the limit: where *must* one stop and go no further in digressions, when does trespassing turn into a more serious transgression? "Trespass" and "transgress" may be seen as synonyms, both having the Latin *trans* "over," "across" at their bases; *passare* for "pass" and *gradi* for "step" are also relatively close to each other in meaning. Still, according to Webster's English Dictionary, "trespass" is also defined as "to go on another's land or property unlawfully," whereas "transgress" is "to overstep or break a law or commandment." In the King James version of the English Bible, the two words are alternately used for "sin," but the translation invariably uses "trespass" for "trespass offerings"[12] and "transgress" for the breaking of the commandments or the Covenant. Can a reader posit himself in between these two meanings? And, fascinated by the mind of criminals, can an author find a way of going along with the protagonists only to a carefully measured degree? In this respect, the two stories again have something in common with Poe's fiction: if we take "The Philosophy of Composition" to be a confessional text, the diction of the essay written about the writing of Poe's most famous poem, "The Raven," bears similarities with the short stories of first person murderer-narrators. Poe is just as proud of writing a perfect poem as the narrators of his stories are of committing the perfect crime (in "The Imp of the Perverse," for example), and it is the irresistible "imp" of boasting with their perfection that finally gives them away. Denying and concealing any sign of poetic inspiration, he is as careful as his protagonists are when they conceal the bodies of

11. Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, ed. Nina Baym, Fifth Edition, (New York & London: Norton, 1998), Vol. 2, p. 1133.

12. As I learned from Professor Sanford Budick, the Hebrew word for "trespass offerings" is *ashamo*, "blame"; and for "transgression" in the sense of breaking the commandments, it is *ovrim,* literally "to step over the mouth of God."

their victims in the wall (in "The Black Cat") or under the wooden planks of the floor (in "The Tell-Tale Heart"). From this it follows that the art of writing may as well be considered as some sort of a crime. I would go so far as to suggest that Dickens' Mr. Sampson likewise conceals his own perfection in hunting Slinkton down, until the very end of the story (the name of the narrator reminds one of Samson, and indeed, is of the same origin: son of the Sun, indicating almost superhuman powers) and he is as proud of the trap he had constructed as he might be proud of having perfectly confused his readers. Welty's narrator does boast about being a professional thug, but he places this in brackets in a sentence about the misconceptions of the media: "Then the first thing I heard them say was the N. double A. C. P. done it themselves, killed Roland Summers, and proved it by saying the shooting was done by a expert (I hope to tell you it was!) and at just the right hour and minute to get the whites in trouble" (606). In his case, the telling of the story is not a conscious form of either trespassing or transgressing. The fact that he had gone too far is evident in the sensation of heat, which Joyce Carol Oates beautifully pointed out in an interview with *The New Yorker* to be a sign of his unconscious sensation of hell.[13]

# 4 Murder

In both stories, the topic of murder, one of the gravest forms of transgression is in the foreground, but whereas Welty's narrator speaks about it openly and directly, in Dickens' text, the exact method of poisoning is only explained by Meltham in the final scene of the story. However, Slinkton's suicide might also be seen as an indirect case of murder. Both texts put a special emphasis on the word "down" in describing downward movements and gestures—so many physical symptoms of violence.

Although "Hunted Down" sounds more like a discreetly composed Victorian text, the reader becomes a witness of verbal violence in the scene of encircling Slinkton, before his final surrender. What is interpreted by the narrator as a sudden heroic showdown, can also be seen as a slow and cruel process of spiritual torture conducted by Meltham: under his verbal attack, Slinkton gradually collapses. He first "staggers" when he sees the abrupt change in the behavior of the person he had thought to be Beckwith. The violence starts with

13. "Fiction Podcast, Joyce Carol Oates on Eudora Welty," *The New Yorker Online*, accessed 1 May 2010 <http://www.newyorker.com/online/2009/03/16/090316on_audio_oates>.

Meltham throwing a glass of brandy at Slinkton's face. "Slinkton put his hands up, half blinded with the spirit, and cut with the glass across the forehead" (226). Putting his hands up, foreshadowing surrender, is the last upward gesture performed by Slinkton. This is the moment when Sampson's "faithful servant" enters the room and the criminal is surrounded. " 'Listen to me, you villain,' said Beckwith, 'and let every word you hear me say be a stab in your wicked heart!' " (227). When Slinkton learns that his foul play had been discovered, he takes a pinch of snuff and laughs. But upon hearing that Meltham had taken samples from his poisons, "He had had another pinch of snuff in his hand, but had gradually let it drop from between his fingers to the floor; where he now smoothed it out with his foot, looking down at it the while" (228). As Meltham goes on revealing the trap, Slinkton "put his hand to his head, tore out some hair and flung it to the ground" (229). Beside destroying the neat "path" parting his hair, this gesture might also remind one of a pagan rite of mourning: the man is truly desperate. When Sampson's role is identified, the criminal "glanced about him in a very curious way—as one of the meaner reptiles might, looking for a hole to hide in" (229). Though the "mean reptile" might be a viper, the helplessness can also be sensed in this glance. His figure also changes "as if it collapsed within its clothes." When Meltham finally reveals his identity before him and the reader, Slinkton has a hard time breathing, "his nostrils rise and fall convulsively." The torture scene ends when "the miscreant suddenly turned away his face and seemed to strike his mouth with his open hand. At the same instant, the room was filled with a new and powerful odour, and, almost at the same instant, he broke into a crooked run, leap, start,—I have no name for the spasm,—and fell, with a dull weight that shook the heavy old doors and windows in their frames" (231). It is not easy to agree with Sampson saying "That was the fitting end for him" (231), after which he abandons the corpse and leaves the premises. The reader might feel like having become an accessory in a special kind of murder, in spite of the anecdotic style of the half-happy ending.

Welty's killer spends some time waiting for his victim—meanwhile he complains again: "it was so hot, all I did was hope and pray one or the other of us wouldn't melt before it was all over" (603). He identifies Roland Summers repeating the words "I knowed," which might indicate a peculiar kind of intimacy between them. "I knowed him then as I know me now. I knowed him even by his still, listening back" (604). He seems to project his own fears to the sensitive back of the victim: "his back was fixed, fixed on me like a preacher's eye-

balls when he is yelling: 'Are you saved?' " (604). In Welty's story, the actual murder takes place so quickly that the narrative cannot keep pace with it in the simple past tense; it is all related in past perfect: "I'd already brought up my rifle, I'd already taken my sights. And I'd already got him, because it was too late then for him or me to turn by one hair" (604). And immediately after the shooting, he perceives the following:

> Something darker than him, like the wings of a bird, spread on his back and pulled him down. He climbed up once, like a man under bad claws, and like just blood could weigh a ton, he walked with it on his back to better light. (604)

Wings can be associated with birds or angels—but the image of heavy wings of blood that allow no flight but pull one down, might recall E. A. Poe once again, this time perhaps the black shadow of the raven, "floating on the floor." And the emphasis on the downward direction might bring into mind what Dieter Meindl says about a new "downward metaphysics" in Poe's fiction. "Poe's stories [...] are texts delving into the psyche and anticipating psychoanalysis or deep psychology—veritable case studies apt to expand into "downward" metaphysics. They do not proclaim a supernatural or transcendent sphere to which the mind might aspire but provide early examinations of psychic phenomena subsequently identified and named."[14] If we take "The Tell-Tale Heart" as an example of this "downward" metaphysics, its narrator seems to have something in common with Dickens' and Welty's speakers in a very physical sense as well: all the three of them single out a spot on their victim's bodies that irritate them. For Poe's murderer, it is the "vulture *eye*," for Sampson, it is the neat parting of the *hair*, and for Welty's killer, it is the listening *back*. With the exposure of these physical details, not only the victims become vulnerable but the narrators as well, since all the three of them project special qualities, metaphors of their own fears to the selected parts of the victims' bodies. This vulnerability might enable the reader to accept them as human beings, in spite of all the repulsion one might feel against their behavior. Still, one must try to keep a delicate balance between embracing them too close, or rejecting them too sharply in order not to become either victims or murderers of the texts.

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14. Dieter Meindl, *American Fiction and the Metaphysics of the Grotesque* (Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 1996), p. 50.

# 5 Friendship

Wayne C. Booth, in *The Company We Keep*, investigates the possible relationships between texts and readers, and in Chapter 6. he uses the metaphor of friendship to illustrate the possibilities and dangers one might meet in literary encounters. The possibility of friendship with the texts I have examined sounds challenging and inviting. In what way can one "befriend" these stories?

In *The Company We Keep*, Booth argues:

> All the art then, in this kind of metaphorical criticism, will lie in our power to discriminate among the values of moments of friendship that we ourselves have in a sense created. We judge ourselves as we judge the offer. Here is circularity with a vengeance. But we need not fear it as a vicious circle, so long as we do not pursue hard final judgments of "wicked" or "blessed" but rather ways of testing and improving our re-creations. (178)[15]

"Friend" is one of the most frequent words in "Hunted Down," and it does not occur even once in "Where Is the Voice Coming From?" In Dickens' usage, it has a great variety of tones and connotations: Sampson first utters the word in connection with deception, in the first part of the text: "I have been taken in by acquaintances, and I have been taken in (of course) by friends; far oftener by friends than by any other class of persons" (210). Slinkton said to the clerk that he had been recommended to the office by a friend of Sampson's. They first meet at a friend's party, and "my friend" is a frequently used term in their conversations. One could think that the word "friend" for Sampson is relatively empty and overused, however, when he starts explaining the situation to Margaret, he gains her confidence by saying: "As I am, before Heaven and the Judge of all mankind, your friend, and your dead sister's friend, I solemnly entreat you, Miss Niner, without one moment's loss of time to come to this gentleman with me!" (222). It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate Dickens' use of the word—but it can already be seen from such a short text that "friend" is one of his favorite words in relation to other persons and the world. The narrator in "Hunted Down" seems to assume that the reader would be a friend, and as he "explains himself away," he is also on the verge of betraying this friend-

15. Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988).

ship. Our friendship with Dickens, however, remains intact—not only because it is based on (mutual) trust, but also because it is based on well-written words.

The fact that the word "friend" is absent from the vocabulary of Welty's narrator might indicate that he has none—but in this case, the reader's responsibility is greater: we are the narrator's confidants, beside his wife, it is only the reader who hears his confession. As I mentioned above, this degree of intimacy is embarrassing: it is quite impossible to relate to this murderer with a friendly feeling. There is nothing friendly about him—but his tone of directness makes him vulnerable, so through the voice, he can become to some extent familiar. His relations seem to be stronger within the family: with his wife and his brother-in-law (whose truck he borrows for the occasion); he also mentions his mother and his father—obviously having strong emotional ties to both. He comes closest to the idea of trusting and faithful friendship when he talks about his guitar: " 'Cause I've got my guitar, what I've held on to from way back when, and I never dropped that, never lost or forgot it, never hocked it but to get it again, never give it away, and I set in my chair, with nobody home but me, and I start to play, and sing a-Down. And sing a-down, down, down, down. Sing-a down, down, down, down. Down" (607). The uneasy relationship with the narrator does not extend to the implied author in this case, either: Welty's brilliant recording of the voice can only strengthen the literary friendship.

Let me quote another passage from Booth:

> Authors of murder mysteries often testify to immense labor designed to deceive us: weeks and months spent building a puzzle that we will never spend more than a few hours on, as we follow, more or less energetically while the knots are tied and untied. It is as if they were our servants, hired to entertain us for an hour, with no expectation that we would ever invite them to come live with us and be our loves.
>
> In contrast, our fullest friendships on this scale are with those who seem wholly engaged in the same kind of significant activity that they expect of us. (186–187)

I only want to challenge this argument at one point: according to Booth's logic, Welty and Dickens would probably not count as "authors of murder mysteries." They are far more than "faithful servants" (although such a role can, as we have seen in "Hunted Down" be extremely significant as well). The basis of the friendship between these texts and their readers seems to lie in the exact arrangements

of the well-chosen words, and, through these words, a special intimacy is created, which leaves no uneasy feeling in the reader. In order to achieve this state, one has to *hunt* for words in the texts that might enter into meaningful conversations. The word "hunt" is already one of them.

## 6 Metaphors for reading

The importance of "hunt" in "Hunted Down" is obvious—but its connotations are at least twofold. Although at times it seems to become a synonym of "murder," it can also refer to the search for meaning, so it can serve as a metaphor for reading as well.

In Welty's story the word "hunt" comes up in connection with the murderer's childhood and past: when he once ran away from home, his mother put an ad in the local paper: "SON: You are not being hunted for anything but to find you." As the narrator remembers with a touch of nostalgia, "That time, I come on back home." The mother's sentence can become emblematic if applied to the reading process: hunting can be an excellent method for reading as long as its purpose is to find and not to destroy something. One could even say that a positive hunting can be achieved simply by changing the gesture's direction: instead of hunting "down," there is an option of hunting "up" as many subtleties of the text as possible, in order to find a "good encounter." In the entry "hunt up," Webster's English Dictionary says the following: 1. to hunt for, search for. 2. to find by searching. The search can be extended from words to gestures, to signs of humanity through exposure, to ways of communication between different texts and to possibilities of conversation between readers. As soon as one finds a "link," a strange thrill of harmony is created that might lead to the second possible metaphor: that of "singing."

In Welty's text, beside the obvious singing in the end, there is a mocking bird singing on the sassafras tree behind which the murderer is hiding. This music is the only sign the narrator can aesthetically interpret, to the extent of identification:

> He'd been singing up my sassafras tree. Either he was up early, or he hadn't never gone to bed, he was like me. And the mocker he'd stayed right with me, filling the air till come the crack, till I turned loose of my load. I was like him. I was on top of the world myself. For once. (604)

Although Webster's never lists an option of "singing up" in the English language, in the quoted passage the upward direction is evident. And although the narrator's thrill is "mocked" precisely by this type of a bird, the experience of elevation cannot be denied.

Dickens' narrator never mentions singing, but he, too, has a refined musical sensitivity when he quotes and repeats rhythmical utterances, like "Dear, dear, dear!" or "Sad, sad, sad!" (224), as well as refrain-like phrases: "The world is a grave!" (214, 224)

I think it is first and foremost the music of the exact arrangement of words with which a reader might find harmony in texts otherwise thought of as "dangerous." Through music, intimacy with the works can become so strong that one is inclined to learn some parts of the texts by heart. And, having internalized the words, one may start singing: giving voice to the reading experience. The success of such a performance depends not only on the vocal chords, but also on the heart-strings of the reader. E. A. Poe's "Israfel" might come to mind at this last point, the angel of the Koran, "whose heart-strings are a lute" and who is able to sing "so wildly well" that he can always be in accordance with the heavenly music of the spheres. For Poe, the "elevation of the soul" to the realm of supernal beauty can only be reached by poetry, it is indeed, poetry alone that might alter his "downward" metaphysics.

Playing on one's own heart-strings is a painful activity (since it implies some sort of vivisection)—but I feel that this gesture is necessary for any reader. I would go so far as to say that it might be impossible to create a lasting friendship with texts without such a degree of personal involvement.

# Wragg's Example, or the Stakes of Disinterestedness

## Matthew Arnold as against Kant's *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*

*Andrea Timár*

## Arnold

In *The Politics of Aesthetics,* Marc Redfield claims that "in Victorian middle-class discussions on acculturation, to acculturate [...] means to produce a subject capable of transcending class identity by identifying with what Arnold famously called 'our best self'; which is to say 'the idea of the whole community, *the State.*' "[1]

Redfield's argument points to the ideological and political implications of culture or, properly speaking, cultivation. It has the task to produce subjects who are able to "transcend [their] class interests in a moment of contact with a formal identity—the transcendental body, as it were—of humanity [...] the State."[2] The State is therefore an abstraction and ideal that unites the diversity of historical men into a transcendental, harmonious whole, which serves as a realm of imaginary reconciliation for a highly fragmented Victorian social order.

While producing subjects who are supposed to transcend their class interests, cultivation also has to originate from those, who equally transcend any interest whatsoever. This is, in fact, the reason why the tutors of humanity can cultivate the individuals into subjects, and produce good subjects for the State.[3]

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1. Marc Redfield, *The Politics of Aesthetics: Nationalism, Gender, Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 76. In *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829), Coleridge already calls for the necessity of "cultivation," a process that he defines as "the harmonious development of those qualities and faculties that characterise our *humanity.*" And, influentially linking the individual's degree of cultivation to his capacity to be a good subject of the State, he concludes: "We must be men in order to be citizens" (S. T. Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. John Colmer [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976], Vol. 10, p. 43).

2. Redfield, p. 12.

3. See also: David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, *Culture and the State* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

In "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," the eminent Victorian, Matthew Arnold singles out the figure of the critic as the one who is able to perform this acculturating role:[4] it is the critic—rather than the artist or the genius—who has both the opportunity and the capacity to become disinterested enough.

As against the Romantic exaltation of the literary genius as the purveyor of universal truths, Arnold argues that the quality of literature itself is something contingent, always depending on "the spiritual atmosphere" of a given time—Wordsworth, for instance, would have been a greater poet, if he had read more books. And since critical power makes "an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself,"[5] good criticism has to be elevated above particular works of genius, as the "*disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.*" This, in its turn, results from the "disinterested love of a free play of the mind on *all subjects*, for its own sake" (38).

As it is well established, disinterestedness, for Arnold, means both the critic's transcendence of his own political, social and personal interests, and his freedom from the opinion of authorities (18). As he comments on Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, which he considers to be one of the "finest things in English literature":[6]

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4. Coleridge's cultivating order, preoccupied with and propagating these eternal truths, is the "*clerisy*"—as *On the Constitution of the Church and State* makes it clear.

5. Matthew Arnold, *Lectures and Essays in Criticism,* ed. R. H. Supper (The University of Michigan Press, 1962), p. 6. This idea is already anticipated by Coleridge, who writes in the second "Lay Sermon" that whereas the "*Living* of former ages," such as the Sidneys, Milton or Barrow, "communed gladly with a life-breathing philosophy," "all the men of genius, with whom it has been my [Coleridge's] fortune to converse, either profess to know nothing of the present [philosophical] systems, or to despise them" (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, ed. R. J. White; Vol. 6. of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972], p. 173). The result of this, as he says, is "an excess in our attachment to temporal and personal objects" (i.e. the lack of disinterestedness), which, according to Coleridge, can be "counteracted only by a preoccupation of the intellect and the affections with permanent, universal, and eternal truths" (Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, p. 173).

6. All further parenthesised references are to this edition: Matthew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," In *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. II., ed. M. H. Abrams (New York: Norton, 1993). Arnold is considered to have taken the idea of disinterestedness from Sainte-Beuve. See the editor's note in Arnold, *Lectures and Essays,* p. 473.

"That is what I call living by ideas: [...] when all your feelings are engaged, [...] when your party talks this language like a steam engine—still to be able to think, still to be irresistibly carried, if so it be, by the current of thought to the opposite side of the question, and, like Balaam, to be unable to speak anything but *what the Lord has put into your mouth*" (1520–21).[7]

To face up the stakes of this disinterestedness that keeps the critic "aloof from what is called 'the practical view of things' " (1522), one may look at the way in which Arnold attacks those who claim that "the Anglo-Saxon breed [is] the best in the whole world" (1524), by making reference to a paragraph he recently read in a newspaper:

"A shocking child murder has just been committed at Nottingham. A girl named Wragg left the workhouse there on Sunday morning with her young illegitimate child. The child was soon afterwards found dead on Mapperly Hills, having been strangled. Wragg is in custody" (1524).

Although the existence of such "things" as Wragg ("The sex lost in the confusion of our unrivalled happiness" [i.e. for Wragg being in custody]) proves, for Arnold, that the Anglo-Saxon is not "the best race" in the world, the critic, in order to become the tutor of humanity, must elevate himself above these materialities and concentrate on those "wider and more perfect conceptions to which all duty is really owed" (1525). The necessity of this shift of interest from the material to the transcendental, however, should *not*, according to Arnold, persuade us that the Anglo-Saxon breed is not the best, since if one does not have to take into consideration the existence of Wragg's materiality, then the Anglo-Saxon breed can just as well be the best as the worse. Yet, according to Arnold, we do not even have to think about the value of a breed, for what we have to concentrate

7. This eulogy of Burke on the basis of his disinterestedness is equally anticipated by Coleridge, who argues in *Biographia Literaria*, that Burke "referred habitually to *principles*," and that, *therefore*, he was a "*scientific* statesman; and therefore a *seer*" (S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*. Ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols. Vol. 7 of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983], Vol. I, p. 191). In this sense, Burke is exemplary in his disinterestedness, in his seeking for the transcendental "laws" that determine "all things" (Coleridge, *BL*, p. 191). However, for Coleridge, it is still first and foremost the good and proper criticism of the Bible, rather than history or principles in themselves, which characterises the exemplary, disinterested educator who trains up good citizens for the State (cf.: *On the Constitution of the Church and State*).

on are universal truths, and these truths will, in their turn, better (not the world but) the nation itself.

Yet, Wragg's example cannot be so easily dismissed. For Arnold does undoubtedly engage with her—despite his endeavours to imaginary dissolve differences in the transcendental body of the cultivated state. Furthermore, his stance is disturbingly unclear: his comments do not make it evident whether he considers Wragg herself, as an individual, a blemish, per se, on the body of the nation, or blames the general social circumstances that produce such impurities as Wragg.

On the one hand, he reflects upon the "hideousness" of the truly Anglo-Saxon (rather than Christian) name, Wragg:

> has anyone reflected what a touch of grossness in our race, what an original shortcoming in the more delicate spiritual perceptions, is shown by the natural growth amongst us of such hideous names—Higginbottom, Stiggins, Bugg [...] what an element of grimness, bareness, and hideousness mixes with it and blurs it? (1524)

The reference to her name renders Wragg herself an always already impure figure, material and gross "by nature," because of the non-melodious, non-Christian sounding of her name.

On the other hand, Arnold seems to sympathise with Wragg, as a figure embedded in those historical social circumstances that have rendered her so hideous in the first place: "the workhouse, the dismal Mapperly Hills—how dismal those who have seen them will remember—the gloom, the smoke, the cold, the strangled illegitimate child" (1524–25).

This tension between the "always already" (Wragg is corrupted "by nature") and Arnold's historical consciousness pointing to the responsibility of the given society is not resolved. In fact, not even taken account of. Arnold considers the whole case unimportant, not worthy of lengthy discussion, since the true task of the critic is, indeed, to be disinterested, that is, to concentrate on transcendental truths. As he further argues:

> I say, the critic must keep out of the region of immediate practice in the political, social, humanitarian sphere if he wants to make a beginning for that more speculative treatment of things, which may perhaps one day make its benefits felt even in this sphere, but in a natural, and thence irresistible manner. (1526)

However, Wragg's equivocal case undeniably found its way into "The Function of Criticism," and made its disinterested author perplexed, not to say, momentarily interested in worldly matters. Yet, Arnold's transcendental approach clearly shows the stakes of his own disinterestedness, not to say indifference: the critic should investigate an aesthetic realm severed from the material world, and thereby endlessly defer, in the name of culture, any attempt to resolve, in the present, existing social antagonisms or to care for the singularity of the individual.

## Kant

Although Arnold's emphasis on the autonomy of the intelligentsia owes something to Kant's idea of the Enlightenment, the term "disinterestedness" itself has clearly run a long course since Kant. Yet, the fact that Arnold explicitly links the institution of cultivation to some version of disinterestedness, allows one to track down the way in which Kant's disinterested "aesthetic judgment" has been used and abused by the advocates of cultivation.

First of all, as opposed to Arnold's disinterest in social or political matters, and his interest in some transcendental truth, for Kant, disinterestedness has nothing to do with actual political and social interests, and the investigation of truth is not related to truth itself.

As is well established, in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant investigates *the possibility conditions* of metaphysics, that is, the possibility conditions of those true propositions about the phenomenal world (i.e. about the world as we experience it) that are themselves not based on experience.[8] Its main scope is the understanding that, as Kant claims, is the only cognitive power that contributes "from its own roots to the cognition that we actually possess" (168), and that, through its a priori concepts, prescribes the laws to nature, as it appears to us. This, however, does not mean that the concepts of the understanding can also circumscribe "the area within which all things in general are possible" (168).

In the *Critique of Practical Judgement,* from the possibility conditions of true propositions which are determined by necessity, Kant turns to what transcends the domain of our theoretical power, namely, to the investigation of the possibility conditions of morality, of what ought to be done (xlii–xlv). His main scope is reason, the faculty that contains

8. All further parenthesised references are to this edition: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. and introd. Werner S. Pluhar (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987).

the concept of freedom. The premise of Kant's position is that we have a consciousness of the moral law as a fact of reason revealed to us a priori (xliii). This law commands us absolutely, or "categorically," against our inclinations or circumstances. It is reason that gives laws to the higher power of desire (178), the will (220), which, as opposed to the lower power of desire related to inclinations, has as its object the final purpose, the highest good in the world (xliv). The moral law, as a fact of reason, presupposes thus another, namely, that we have a will that is free (xliv). The freedom of the will means both the "ability of the will to give laws to itself (to be autonomous) and to obey or disobey these laws independently of nature" (xliv). The law free will gives to itself is thus the moral law (that commands us to act only on universalisable maxims), and it is the consciousness of this law which is revealed to us as a fact of Reason: it is not derived from experience, yet it applies to all experience as we can discover through our own acts as manifested in experience (xliii–xliv).

In the third *Critique*, Kant sets himself the task to bridge the gap between the true, as the realm of necessity, or law-bound nature, and the good, as the realm of freedom, through the power of judgement. As Andrew Bowie outlines the problem: the "separation of the sphere of freedom [i.e. that of reason] from a wholly deterministic nature [i.e. the domain of pure reason] leaves no way of understanding how it is that we can gain an objective perspective on law-bound nature and at the same time can be self-legislating."[9] Kant himself thus asks: "Does judgement, which is in the order of our [specific] cognitive powers a mediating link between understanding and reason, also have a priori principles of its own?" (168).

The outline of Kant's whole architectonic is far beyond my present scope, I will only focus on the role the *disinterestedness* of aesthetic judgements about the beautiful plays in this transition.

Aesthetic judgements broadly mean judgements of taste, and in the "Analytic of the Beautiful," Kant defines "taste" as "the ability to judge the beautiful" (203). Judgement itself is a "talent" that cannot be acquired by rules,[10] and it has to do largely with the relationship we establish between a concept, or rule, and the particulars.[11] This relationship can be either determinative or reflective. What distin-

9. Andrew Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy from Kant to Habermas* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), p. 36.

10. Bowie, p. 25.

11. See also Eva Schaper, *Studies in Kant's Aesthetics* (Edinburgh University Press, 1979), p. 369.

guishes both practical judgements about the good and theoretical judgements about the true from aesthetic judgements about the beautiful is that while both theoretical and practical judgements are, ultimately, determinative, aesthetic judgements are reflective. In determinative judgements, the concepts of reason or those of the understanding are given, and judgement subsumes the particular will or the sensible intuitions under these givens. In reflective judgement, "the particular is given and judgement has to find the universal for it" (179). In practical judgements, when "we are to call the object good, and hence an object of the will," we must, as Kant argues, "first bring it under principles of reason, using the concept of purpose" (208). Likewise, when we make a theoretical judgement about an object, we must have a determinate concept of it (207). As opposed to both, aesthetic judgement about the beautiful is reflective: "it is neither *based* on concepts, nor directed to them as *purposes*" (209).

The distinction between determinative and reflective judgement is of prime importance, because Kant connects the notion of interest, on the one hand, to the object's being determined by a concept, and disinterestedness to the judgment's freedom from any determination by concepts. As Paul Guyer also argues: we can classify "as an interest any pleasure in an object dependent on the subsumption of that object under a determinate concept."[12] What Kant himself says is that the practical judgement that something is "good always contains the concept of purpose, consequently a relation of reason to a volition (that is at least possible), and hence a liking for the existence of an object or action. In other words, it contains some interest or other" (207). Thus, the fact that we care for the existence of an object is entirely beyond the boundaries of aesthetic judgements. On the other hand, pure aesthetic judgement's "dependence on reflection also distinguishes the liking for the beautiful from [that] for the agreeable, which rests entirely on sensation" (207). Sensations arouse a desire, an inclination for the *existence* of the object, and the liking for the agreeable is, therefore, not devoid of all interests (207). In other words, when our judgement is disinterested, we do not care for the object's existence, be it out of an interest aroused by the lower or by the higher power of desire. As Guyer argues, our judgement is determined neither by a desire for the object aroused by sensory gratification, nor by the object's purpose—be it what the object is

12. Paul Guyer, "Disinterestedness and Desire in Kant's Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 36.4 (Summer, 1978), p. 245.

good for, or the object's purpose in itself.[13] In Kant's words: "[i]n order to play the judge in matters of taste, we must not be in the least biased in favour of the thing's existence but must be wholly indifferent about it" (205).

Thus, Arnold, by excluding Wragg's example from the realm of universal truths, turns truth itself into an object of aesthetic judgement, which, at least in Kant, is exempt from all care for the object's existence. Given that Kant never says that truth must be judged aesthetically (only that truth *can* also be judged aesthetically), one may consider Arnold's imperative to dismiss Wragg's example a clear instance of the aestheticisation of politics.

Meanwhile, this misreading of the indifference of our judgement in matters of taste (i.e. in "our ability to judge the beautiful") towards the object's existence already and equally points towards the stakes of aestheticism. Oscar Wilde's famous stance, for instance, aptly illustrates the extreme stakes of this aesthetic indifference: "When Benvenuto Cellini crucified a living man to study the play of muscles in his death agony, the pope was right to grant him absolution. What is the death of a vague individual if it enables an immortal work to blossom, and to create, in Keats's words, an eternal source of ecstasy?"[14] Once the disinterestedness of art is not only understood as art's freedom from practical moral considerations, but as the elevation of art *above* any practical moral considerations (including the care for the object's existence), it is easy to arrive at the suspect aesthetic pleasure taken in another body's actual suffering.

Thus, it must be underlined that Kant, as opposed to Arnold and Wilde, does not *confuse* aesthetic with moral and theoretical judgements. He is eager to point out that one (i.e. the aesthetic) is reflective while the others (the moral and the theoretical) are determinative. In other words, for Kant, these two kinds of judgements are simply incommensurable: when we judge something aesthetically, moral or theoretical considerations are not important, and when we make moral or theoretical judgements, it is the beauty of the object that remains beyond our interest. As Guyer says: "what pleasure in the beautiful must be separated from is not existence itself, but the kinds of judgements we typically make about the existence of ob-

13. Guyer, pp. 244–45.

14. Quoted in Paul Jay, "The Aesthetic Ideology." In *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Criticism.* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 71–83, p. 76. Jay does *not* make reference to Kant.

jects... [these latter] require the application of determinate concepts to their objects."[15]

Yet, according to Kant, the pleasure taken in the beautiful still has "an inner causality (which is purposive)," "namely, to keep us in the state of having the presentation itself, and to keep the cognitive powers engaged without any further aim" (Kant, 222). Guyer remarks that this "desire for the continued existence of an object [...] is certainly one thing we could mean by an *interest* in the beautiful."[16] However, the pleasure of this *lingering upon* the beautiful, "is not practical in any way" (Kant, 222), and has, therefore, nothing to do either with morality, or with the actual existence of the object.

To sum up, in contrast to practical and theoretical judgements, aesthetic judgements do not depend on any determinate concept (not even on that of purpose), but on a reflection that, while leading to a concept, leaves undetermined to which concept. This also means, as Kant underlines, that a judgement of taste (as distinguished from a cognitive judgement) "is wholly independent of the concept of perfection" (227).

Meanwhile, the fact that aesthetic judgement is neither directed to concepts as purposes, nor can it be subsumed under concepts, does not mean that the liking that determines the judgement of taste is entirely devoid of purposiveness. In fact, as Kant argues, this liking is "the subjective purposiveness in the presentation of an object" (221). According to Bowie, when Kant talks of the "subjective purposiveness of nature for the power of judgement," he means that "[a]esthetic judgements look at nature *as though* nature *aimed* at being appropriate to our cognition."[17] Yet, in this case, "we move from particular to general via *assumptions* about the systematic coherence of things which do not have the status of knowledge [...]. This gives us pleasure."[18]

Most obviously, the pleasure nature gives us, is merely subjective, and merely attests to the harmony of our *own* cognitive powers: to the free harmony between imagination and understanding. For whereas in determinative theoretical judgements, the imagination apprehends what is given in sensible intuitions, and combines this diversity so that it matches the concept of the understanding (Kant, xxxv), in reflective aesthetic judgement, the imagination *in its free-*

15. Guyer, p. 245.
16. Guyer, p. 243.
17. Bowie, p. 37 (first italics added).
18. Bowie, p. 36 (italics added).

*dom* harmonises with the lawfulness of the understanding *as such*, apart from any specific concept (cf. lvii, italics added). Yet, by attesting to nature's purposiveness precisely for our own cognitive powers, aesthetic judgment, which has nothing to do with concepts, and, therefore, it does not constitute a knowledge of the object, still attests to a harmony between us and nature as it appears to us. Meanwhile, as Bowie argues, by saying that imagination, not being determined by existing concepts, is free, Kant "also introduces a notion, freedom, which for him belongs to the realm of the supersensuous, into our sensuous relations to the world."[19]

Meanwhile, the "*possibility*" (232) that aesthetic judgements have a universal validity, that is, the possibility of the famous "sensus communis," which is not determined by any object, concerning the pleasure we *all* take in the free play of our faculties, can easily yield the misreading of that "*deeply hidden basis*, common to all human beings, underlying their agreement in judging" (232, italics added). For Kant, the universality of judgement attests to people's social connectedness, to some version of equality, since the "pleasure that taste declares valid for mankind as such" (356) makes us discover "the art of reciprocal communication of ideas between [society's] most educated and cruder segments" (356).

However, even if Kant never says *what* is to be judged beautiful ("there is no rule of taste that determines what is beautiful," 232), and, therefore, he only gives examples to explain *how* we judge the beautiful, his "postulation" of the "universal voice" (or the "idea" of it, 216), and his subsequent claim that aesthetic judgment "*requires* agreement" from everyone (216) will serve as the basis of the aesthetic ideology of high culture. For it is precisely the famous *sensus communis* regarding matters of taste that turns into an actual prescription in the hands of the élite, instructed minority, such as Matthew Arnold's: vindicating the right to represent Kant's universal voice, it imposes its own voice as universal.

## Beauty as the Symbol of Morality

In what sense is, then, beauty "the symbol of morality"? In other words, how is it possible that the beautiful, which we like without interest, can be the *symbol* of the morally good, which is "connected necessarily with an interest" (Kant, 354)? Or, in yet other words, why does Arnold's dismissal of Wragg's "hideous" example from the realm of universal truth and morality, and therefore, from the (idea

19. Bowie, p. 34.

of the) State, constitutes another serious and ethically suspect misreading of Kant?

Kant argues that symbols contain "indirect exhibitions of the concept," and "symbolic exhibitions use an analogy" (352). Kant's example for the symbol that exhibits this concept analogically is the "animate body" that symbolically exhibits "a monarchy ruled according to its own constitutional laws" (352). Since there is no similarity between the symbol and what it symbolises (i.e. between the animate body and monarchy), "there is certainly one between *the rules by which we reflect on the two* and on how they operate" (352, italics added). In other words, we reflect by the same rules on the operation of the body as on monarchy. The similarity between these reflections is that of the relationship between the subject and the objects of its presentation, which, in both cases, is "free." As Kant argues, taste (i.e. the ability to judge the beautiful) "legislates to itself, just as reason does regarding the power of desire" (229). Both our judgment about the beautiful and our judgement about the good contain the element of freedom. Yet, aesthetic judgement, which is supposed to offer a bridge from truth to morality, is only *similar* to moral judgement while remaining *distinct* from it (one is determinative while the other is reflective), and it is only an analogy, the fact that aesthetic judgments are *as if* they were moral judgments, that allows for beauty to become the symbol of morality. As Kant puts it later, while "judging the beautiful, we present the *freedom* of the imagination (and hence of our power of sensibility) as harmonising with the lawfulness of the understanding," "[i]n a moral judgement, we think the *freedom* of the will as the will's harmony with itself according to universal laws of reason" (354). Thus, the sensible object (the animate body) exhibits the concept of freedom "not by means of direct [sensible] intuition but only according to an analogy with one, i.e. a transfer of our reflection on an object of intuition to an entirely different concept, to which perhaps no intuition can ever directly correspond" (353). Thus, the analogy seems to lie between the two mental acts: between that of judging the beautiful and that of judging the good. In the first case, judgement is autonomous in the sense of being free from all interest, in the second case, reason legislates for itself, it gives itself its own laws.

As Alexander Rueger and Sahan Evren equally explain:

> In the case of beauty and the morally good the probably most significant parallel between the judgement of taste and moral judgements lies in the role freedom plays in both in-

> stances. In judgements of taste the imagination is able to unify a manifold intuition without a (determinate) concept and hence its operation is free [...]. In the moral case, by analogy, the will is free in the sense that it determines itself "in accordance with the laws of reason." In this way an analogy is established w*ithout* the claim that there is a further underlying principle or concept that would unify.[20]

Yet, the question arises, in what sense we can judge, according to Kant, the animate body as beautiful? What are the implications of the disinterested contemplation of the body, what would it mean that we do not care for the body's actual existence?

Arkady Plotnitsky explains Kant's conception of the *natural* body as it emerges from the First *Critique* as follows:

> [w]hen we think of our bodies as having a certain shape or organization, defined by such features as the head, the arms and the legs, and so forth, we think of it on the basis of (phenomenal) appearances. The very concept of the body is defined by this way of looking at it, possibly with inner organs, such as the heart, the liver, the brain, and so forth, added on. When, however, we think of the body as constituted by atoms or elementary particles, even if we think of the latter classically (in terms of physics or epistemology), we think of the body as a (material) thing in itself.[21]

In contrast, what applies to the "sublime and the beautiful in the human figure," Kant describes as follows:

> we must not have in mind, as bases determining our judgement, concepts or purposes *for which* man has all his limbs, letting the limbs' harmony with these purposes *influence* our aesthetic judgement (which would then cease to be pure), even though it is certainly a necessary condition of aesthetic liking as well that the limbs not conflict with those purposes. Aesthetic purposiveness is the lawfulness of the power of judgement in its *freedom*. Whether we then like the object

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20. Alexander Rueger and Sahan Evren, "The Role of Symbolic Presentation in Kant's Theory of Taste," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 45.3 (2005): p. 232.

21. Arkady Plotnitsky, "Thinking Singularity with Immanuel Kant and Paul de Man: Aesthetics, Epistemology, History and Politics," *Legacies of Paul de Man, Praxis Series, Romantic Circles, University of Maryland*, accessed 1 May 2010 <http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/deman/plotnitsky/plotnitsky.html>.

> depends on how we suppose the imagination to relate to it, but for this liking to occur the imagination must on its own sustain the mind in a free activity. If, on the one hand, the judgement is determined by anything else, whether a sensation proper or a concept of the understanding, then the judgement is indeed lawful, but it is not one made by a *free* power of judgement.
>
> ("General Comment on the Exposition," 270)

This passage immediately follows the passage about the ocean (i.e. "we must be able to view the ocean as poets do"), which Paul de Man analyses in his discussion of the sublime,[22] even though Kant speaks not only about the sublime, but also about the beautiful. Although de Man uses this specific passage in order to point to the disarticulation of Kant's system, one can apply his argument about the "pure aesthetic vision" of the ocean to Kant's pure aesthetic judgement of the human figure. Following de Man's reading, the fact that aesthetic judgement is "pure" or else, *disinterested*, should disrupt the "aesthetic ideology," such as Arnold's, positing a metaphorical (rather than analogical) relationship between the natural body, the body judged beautiful, and the morally good. As Geoffrey Harpham puts it, in de Man's version, Kant insists that " 'the faculties should maintain their internal system of differentiated powers and prerogatives, and not be tempted into various forms of illusory, premature synthesis' (Norris) of, for example, phenomenal perception and ethical categories, or theoretical reason."[23] Indeed, this is precisely what Kant claims in the above passage: when we aesthetically judge the human figure, we contemplate it without interest, without subsuming our presentation of it either under the concepts of the understanding, or under the concepts of reason. We do not care whether it is good, or what it is good for, we do not consider what its meaning is, or how "we *think* it" (Kant, 270). Instead, we base our judgement merely on "how we see it" (270), and find pleasure in the free play of our own faculties during its presentation. Thus, Arnold, by reminding us to forget Wragg's "hideousness" (related to the *disharmonious sound* of her name) when we think about cultivation, and concentrate on the idea of the State, constitutes another instance of the misreading of Kantian "disinteresdeness," since Arnold posits a metaphorical rela-

22. Paul de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* (University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 82.

23. Geoffrey Harpham, *Shadows of Ethics: Criticism and the Just Society* (Duke University Press, 1999), p. 52.

tionship between the realm of the beautiful and the realm of the good, which he, as a rhetorician of the aesthetic state, posits as an object of beauty.

## The Human Figure

Yet, Kant's use of the term "human figure," in the above passage, is, at the same time, deeply problematic indeed: as if contradicting the passage quoted above, §17 claims that "the ideal of the beautiful [...] must be expected solely in the *human figure*" (235), and that, therefore, man *cannot* be the object of a pure aesthetic judgement that has nothing to do with "ideals." As Derrida puts it in *The Truth in Painting*: although "the ideal of the beautiful can be found only in the human form," man "cannot be the object of a pure judgement of taste."[24] Thus one encounters two paradoxes: the one analysed by Derrida lies within §17 itself, while the other lies between §17, which ultimately points to the *impossibility* of pure aesthetic judgment about the human figure on the one hand, and Kant's argument in the "General Comment on the Exposition" quoted above, which concerns precisely *the possibility conditions* of pure aesthetic judgement about the human figure on the other. Let us consider the paradox involved in §17 first.

In §16, Kant argues that there are two kinds of beauty: free beauty, which "does not presuppose a concept of what the object is meant to be" (229), and accessory beauty, which "does presuppose such a concept, as well as the object's perfection in terms of that concept" (229). Hence, pure judgements of taste only occur when we judge "free beauty." Since the "beauty of the human being" does "presuppose the concept of the purpose that the thing is meant to be" (230), and man "has the purpose of its existence within himself" (§17, 233), his beauty cannot be but adherent beauty, and, therefore, the human being cannot be the object of a pure aesthetic judgement of taste. Redfield calls this an "empirical event"[25] by which he means that, contradicting Kant's whole endeavour to investigate the subjective *possibility conditions* of judgements, it is the object itself that decides whether our judgement upon it can or cannot be pure.

In §17, Kant further claims that since there is a deeply hidden basis, common to all human beings, underlying their agreement in

24. Derrida, Jacques, *The Truth in Painting* trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

25. Marc Redfield, *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the Bildungsroman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 16.

judging, there must be an *idea of taste* by which everybody judges any object of taste (232). This idea, according to Kant, is the ideal of the beautiful. Since this is an ideal, it "must be fixed by a concept of objective purposiveness," that is, "there must be some underling idea of reason, governed by determinate concepts, that determines a priori the purpose on which the object's inner possibility rests" (233). Since only man has the purpose of its existence within himself, it is equally "*man,* alone among all objects in the world, who admits of an ideal of *beauty*, just as the humanity in his person [...] is the only thing in the world that admits of the ideal of *perfection*" (233). As was mentioned above, pure aesthetic judgements, because they are reflective, are "wholly independent of the concept of perfection" (227). In contrast, the human being is utterly defined by a purpose and does admit of the ideal of perfection. Meanwhile, "the ideal in this figure consists in the expression of *moral*" (235). Thus, the ideal of the beautiful is a rational idea, which, according to Kant, "makes the purpose of humanity, insofar as they cannot be presented in sensibility, the principle of judging his figure, which reveals these purposes as their effect in appearance" (233). Consequently, the judgement about man can only be determinative (i.e. *not* reflective or disinterested as would be proper to aesthetic judgements), and, also, the human figure *cannot* be the symbol of morality: it *expresses* the moral, or else, it reveals the purposes of humanity "as their effect in appearance." Hence, we simply cannot judge the human figure aesthetically, as the poets do it: "apart from the moral, the object would not be liked universally" (235). As was discussed above, pure, disinterested aesthetic judgements presuppose universal consent, and here, Kant says that there is one object (man), the universal liking of which is predicated precisely upon our judgement's being impure. According to Derrida, Kant's argument suggests that "there is no place for an aesthetic of man, who escapes the pure judgement of taste to the very extent that he is the bearer of the ideal of the beautiful and himself represents, in his form, ideal beauty."[26] This would mean that there is simply no place for what there *is* a place in the "General Comment on the Exposition," that is, for the disinterested judgement of the human figure, which we quoted above.

Marc Redfield, drawing on Derrida, summarises Kant's position as follows:

26. Derrida, p. 112.

> a bifurcation occurs in the Third *Critique* between the pure and the ideal: as the ideal of beauty, "man" is also strictly speaking the only entity *in*capable of serving as an object of pure judgement of taste. Man is the "impurity" necessary to provide taste with its ideal, even though the purity of the judgement of taste is what provides the system with its guarantee of internal and external harmony.[27]

The bridge between the First and the Second *Critiques*, the pure (reflective/disinterested) judgement of taste, is predicated upon an ideal that already belongs to the realm of (moral) interests. What is problematic with both Redfield's and Derrida's analysis of Kant's bifurcation is, in fact, Kant's further bifurcation, discussed above, concerning the use of the term "human figure." This bifurcation suggests that at this point, what Redfield calls an "empirical event" does not seem to be truly empirical: as the "General Comment on the Exposition" suggests, there is a case when we can judge the human figure as beautiful.

However, the stakes of this argument can be found in the fact that Kant, despite this ambivalence, does problematise the relationship between trope of the human body and the sphere of morality, and does everything to separate (and only posit by analogy) the aesthetic and the moral judgement upon the human figure. And it is precisely this reflectivity, which also leads to a certain ambiguity, that is missing from those thinkers, such as Arnold, who, by positing a metaphorical relationship between beauty and morality (i.e. between the beautiful and the moral as well as the political and the natural body), importantly contribute to the nationalist discourse of the aesthetic state.

27. Redfield, *Phantom Formations,* p. 17.

# A drámai hős és világa
## W. B. Yeats *A kócsagtojás* című művében

*Bődy Edit*

Keresés, újraírás: William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) egész pályáját jellemezhetik ezek a fogalmak. Egyfajta hullámzás vonul végig az életművén: a lázas alkotói periódusokat a válság, a csüggedés követi, azután valaki, vagy valamilyen (olvasmány)élmény hatására ismét fellelkesedik. Azt azonban nem állíthatjuk, hogy az új hatására teljesen hátat fordítana a réginek, mert olyan élményeket fogad be, amelyek felé saját kísérletei is irányították. Így van ez a Nō drámák esetében, de a későbbi színpadi darabjainál is. A három utolsó drámájában,[1] ha a tartalmi elemeket, motívumokat, szimbólumokat és a színpadképet tekintjük, ezen elemek többsége az életmű korábbi szakaszaiban is jelen volt. Most azonban mások a hangsúlyok, és ami döntő fontosságú, más az ábrázolt világ, és ez nagyon meghatározó. A korai darabjaiban Yeats megformál egy jellegzetes hőstípust, és megpróbál kialakítani egy megfelelő drámai formát, ezzel együtt egy megfelelő színpadot. A jelen tanulmány azt tételezi fel, hogy a hős (mint főszereplő és mint hérosz) nem sokat változik, de azáltal, hogy a szerző más közegbe helyezi át, a hős is új színezetet nyer, úgyszólván önmaga karikatúrájává is válhat – mindezt Yeats egyik utolsó drámája, az 1938-as *A kócsagtojás* alapján szeretném bemutatni.[2]

A hős mibenlétének meghatározása nem egyszerű Yeats esetében, bár a szerző elméleti írásai, kommentárjai is segíthetnek ebben. Egyik fő forrása Nietzsche tragikus hős-koncepciója lehetett, bár ez még más vonásokkal[3] is kiegészül. Yeats már a korai *A zöld sisak*ban (*The Green Helmet*, 1910) meghatározza, hogy mi teszi a hőst igazán azzá: nemcsak a puszta bátorság, hanem a vidámság is szerepet játszik benne, a halál árnyékában is mosolygó hős az ideális, a cél, amelyet az ifjú Cuchulainnek el kell érnie, és ő el is éri: részben erről

1. *A kócsagtojás* (*The Herne's Egg*, 1938); a *Purgatórium* (*Purgatory*, 1938) és a *Cuchulain halála* (*The Death of Cuchulain*, 1939).

2. A jelen tanulmány alapja a 2006-ban befejezett, *Változatok egy hősre: Az abszurd felé mutató jellegzetességek W. B. Yeats néhány drámájában* című PhD disszertációm egyik alfejezete.

3. A disszertációmban a lehetséges hatások közül Nietzschére, a romantika hőskultuszára és Castiglionéra szorítkoztam.

szól a jóval későbbi *Cuchulain halála*, amelynek ilyen értelemben *A zöld sisak* közvetlen előzménye.

*A kócsagtojás* hőse is ehhez az alap-hőstípushoz tartozik, viszont műfaját tekintve a dráma bohózat, így lehetőséget kínál a szerzőnek, hogy hősképét torz, paródiaszerű változatban mutassa meg.

A mű értelmezői közül David Rickman a drámát *A zöld sisak* brutális bohózati hangneméhez köti, valamint Brechtet, Haseket és Hellert említi mint olyan szerzőket, akik hasonlóan groteszk műveikkel kétféle hatást értek el. Egyrészt távolságot képeztek a közönség és a mű világa között, másrészt olyan komplex víziót alkottak, amelynek az erőszak is szerves része.[4] Knowland is lát kapcsolatot ezek között a művek között, mégpedig a „csúfolódó tónus" miatt, másrészt *A színészkirálynő*t és *A kócsagtojás*t az is összeköti, hogy ezekben a drámákban Yeats „felhagy a színpadi mértékletességgel és kidolgozottsággal".[5]

Sok elemzésben olvashatók a következő jelzők: „brutális", „groteszk", „ironikus", „abszurd", de nem mindenki jut arra a következtetésre, hogy ez a darab (és a másik két utolsó színmű) valamiképpen a későbbi abszurd drámákat előlegezi meg. Knowland például felhívja a figyelmünket *A kócsagtojás* rituális jellegére, a stilizáltságára, a szerkesztésbeli szimmetriára, de nem fogadja el abszurd voltát.[6]

Ha átnézzük Yeats leveleit, amelyek *A kócsagtojás*sal egy időben keletkeztek, találunk egypár érdekes sort, amelyekben maga Yeats jellemzi kissé ezt a művét. Ilyen például a Dorothy Wellesleyhez írt, 1935. november 28-i levél,[7] amelyben Yeats összeköti a még befejezetlen drámát egy korábbi művével, *A színészkirálynő*vel (*Player Queen*, 1922), amely hős-ábrázolását tekintve *A kócsagtojás* előzménye:

> Egy három felvonásos tragikomédián töprengek, amelyet majd Mallorcán írok meg, nem rímtelen jambusos vers lesz, hanem olyan rövid sor[ok]ból áll, mint a „Fire", csak éppen több lesz benne a négy hangsúlyos sor – ugyanolyan *vad*, mint *A színészkirálynő*, ugyan olyan mulatságos, de tragikusabb és filozofikusabb.[8]

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4. David Rickman, *Passionate Action: Yeats's Mastery of Drama* (London: Associated University Press, 2000), p. 174.

5. A. S. Knowland, *W. B. Yeats: Dramatist of Vision* (Gerrard Cross: Colin Smythe, 1983), pp. 44, 62.

6. Knowland, pp. 214–217.

7. Dorothy Violet Wellesley, (1885–1956), Wellington herceg felesége, író, költő, szerkesztő a Hogarth Pressnél, az 1930-as években Yeats jó barátja.

8. W. B. Yeats, *Letters* (a továbbiakban: L), szerk. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 843. Yeats eredetileg három felvonásos drámát

Valamivel később, egy 1935. december 19-i keltezésű, Ethel Manninnek[9] címzett levélben Yeats így ír a készülő darabról: „Holnap fejezem be egy dráma részletes szövegkönyvét, amely a legkülönösebb, *legvadabb* dolog, amelyet valaha is írtam. Tulajdonképpen vagy három hónapja stílusom olyan erőteljes, amilyen évek óta nem volt."[10] Armstrong egy másik, Margaret Ruddocknak[11] címzett levélre (1935, karácsony) is hivatkozik, amelyben Yeats nagyon hasonlóan fogalmaz: „*vadul* fantasztikus-humoros, félig-meddig komoly színmű"-ként[12] jellemzi a darabot.

Érdemes talán Yeats szavaiból kiindulni. „Vad"-nak nevezi, és összehasonlítja *A színészkirálynő*vel abból a szempontból, hogy itt is, ott is keveredik a komikum a tragikummal – mint mindig, ha a kései drámákat tekintjük. Yeats vadságon a zavarba ejtő cselekményelemek mellett, a műfajok keveréséből eredő erőteljes hatást értheti, bár a szót más értelemben is használja. Másrészt ő maga hívja fel a figyelmünket arra, hogy milyen „erőteljes" a stílusa, amely úgy tűnik, megváltozott, megújult, mintha egy kevésbé termékeny korszak után ismét hangjára talált volna. Ez a dráma valóban más, mint a Nō drámák, de látszólag még a szintén 1935-ös *A nagy óratorony királya* (*The King of the Great Clock Tower*) és a *Márciusi telihold* (*A Full Moon in March*) címűekre sem emlékeztet. Látszólag, mert Yeatsnél nem árt óvatosan bánni azzal a szóval, hogy „változás". Erre az utolsó drámák jó példák, mert olyan gondolatokkal is találkozunk bennük, amelyek már évtizedek óta jelen vannak Yeats műveiben. Ugyanakkor Yeats maga hívja fel a stílusra a figyelmet, a stílusra, amely valóban változik, habár – Yeats erre is utal – ez sem előzmény nélküli.

*A kócsagtojás* valóban nagyon figyelemre méltó stílusjegyeket mutat: még az utolsó drámák közül is leginkább ez tartalmaz az abszurddal rokon vonásokat. Az olvasónak talán Jarry *Übü király*a jut róla eszébe, s ez azért is érdekes, mert Yeats fiatal korában, 1896-ban Párizsban látta a drámát és elszörnyedt rajta; a *Kelta homály*

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tervezett, ebből lett végül hat szín. A „Fire" (Tűz) Dorothy Wellesley egyik, Yeats által is dicsért verse.

9. Ethel Mannin (1900–1985), baloldali érdeklődésű regényíró, Yeats barátja az 1930-as évek második felében.

10. *L*, pp. 844–845.

11. Margaret Ruddock (1907–1951), színész és költő, az 1930-as évek második felében Yeats egyik barátja. Levelezésüket 1970-ben adták ki *Ah, Sweet Dancer* címen.

12. Alison Armstrong, szerk., *The Herne's Egg: Manuscipt Materials* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), p. XXI. Az utóbbi három idézetben a kiemelések tőlem származnak.

Yeatsének az *Übü* túlságosan alpári, durva, *abszurd*, de elképzelhető, hogy hatása valahol mélyen megmaradt Yeatsben, hogy évtizedekkel később egy meglehetősen hasonló darabbal álljon elő. *A fátyol rezdülése* (*The Trembling of the Veil*) című önéletrajzi művében ír így az élményről:

> A szereplőket úgy kell elképzelni, mintha bábuk, játék- és marionettfigurák lennének; egyszer úgy ugrándoznak, mint a békák, máskor meg a saját szememmel látom, hogy a főszereplő, valamiféle király olyan jogart cipel, ami inkább a toalett tisztítására használatos [...] azon az éjszakán a Hôtel Corneille-ben nagyon szomorú voltam, mert a komédia, az objektivitás ismét felszínre tör. Azt mondom: „Stéphan Mallarmé után, Paul Verlaine után, Gustave Moreau után, Puvis de Chavannes után, a saját költészetem után, saját árnyalt színeink és ideges ritmusunk után, Conder pasztell árnyalatai után mi lehet még? Utánunk a Vad Isten."[13]

Az idézet kapcsán érdemes megemlíteni, hogy Yeats a komédia terminust használja, s mellette az objektivitást is, ami az ő rendszere[14] szerint nem éppen dicséret. Később viszont ő maga is a kevert műfajok felé hajlik, éppen az *Übü*-féle komédia, a bohózat felé, mert céljainak már inkább az felel meg. Másrészt azért lehet a mű yeatsi értelemben objektív, mert a világ is az, amelyről szól – és ez a kép egyik Yeats bohózatban sem hízelgő.

A másik érdekesség a szereplők jellemzése: a bábuszerű mozgás, illetve a groteszk elemek említése. A marionett korán, már Gordon Craig hatására feltűnik Yeats írásaiban, az *Übü* szereplőire jellemző maszkviselet úgyszintén. Christopher Innes is ezeket a jellegzetességeket említi, ámbár arra a következtetésre jut, hogy Jarry mindent egyetlen célnak rendel alá, vagyis szatirikus gúnnyal pellengérez ki mindent, ami (kis)polgári, de ennek a szatírának érdekes módon nincsen fókuszpontja, és a szándék mindig negatív: tiltakozás és sokkolás.[15] A maszknak, a bábuszerű figuráknak és mozgásnak mindeb-

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13. W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies: Memories and Reflections* (London: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 348–349. Ure szavaival élve Yeats az „objektív ciklus visszatértét" látta az *Übü király*ban. Peter Ure, "The Plays," in: *An Honoured Guest: New Essays on W. B. Yeats*, eds. D. Donoghue–J. R. Mulryne (London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1965), p. 185.

14. *A Vision*ben (1925, 1937) kifejtett rendszer, *System* – ahogyan Yeats nevezi.

15. Christopher Innes, *Holy Theatre: Ritual and the Avant Garde* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), p. 25.

ben fontos szerep jut: a személyiség helyébe a személytelen maszk és bábu kerül, amely nélkülöz minden pszichológiai mélységet.[16]

Az összhang Yeatsnél is állandó cél, bár a maszk megfosztja egyéniségétől a viselőjét – kettős értelemben is, hiszen a színész jellemének semmi köze az általa színpadra állított figuráihoz, másrészt a yeatsi rendszer alapkategóriája szerint a maszk mögött egy teljesen más akarat él.

*A kócsagtojás* színpadképe sem áll távol Jarry világától:

> Ködös és sziklás vidék, fenn a háttérfüggönyön szikla, amelynek alját már eltakarja a köd, a sziklán nagy kócsag áll. Mindez inkább sejtetően, mint aprólékosan megfestve. Sok ember harcol karddal és pajzzsal, de kard a karddal, kard a pajzzsal sohasem érintkezik. Az emberek ritmikusan mozognak, mintha táncolnának; ha a kardok közelítenek egymáshoz, cintányér, ha kard és pajzs közeledik, dobszó hallatszik. A csata kiszorul a színpad egyik oldalára, a két harcoló király középen küzd, a csata visszahullámzik és kiszorul a színpad másik oldalára. A két király a helyén marad, de most már mozdulatlanul, egymással szemben állnak. Az egyik Congal, Connacht királya, a másik Aedh, Tara királya.[17]

A színpadképpel kapcsolatos instrukciók közül többet is érdemes kiemelni, mert a mű egészét jellemzik majd. Az első ilyen a köd, amely összemossa a körvonalakat, és bizonytalanná teszi az érzékelést. A látás, illetve a nem látás fel-felbukkan az utolsó drámákban, de A zöld sisakban és *A színészkirálynő*ben is, ahol már a darabok elején világossá válik, hogy olyan világról van szó, amelyben az érzékszervek nem adnak megbízható képet és kiderülhet, hogy a dolgok és emberek nem azok, aminek látszanak. *A kócsagtojás*ban is, bár a szereplők nem panaszkodnak emiatt, olyan valóság veszi körül őket, amelyben bizonytalanok, nincs abszolút igazság, minden relatív. A jellegzetes yeatsi sejtetés itt más értelmet is kap, azaz a szerző a realizmust két értelemben is kiküszöböli. Az egyik az, amelyik már a korai drámákra is jellemző: se a dráma, se a színpad ne legyen realista, hanem sejtessen, sugalljon, és idézze fel ugyanazt a közös él-

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16. Innes, pp. 21–28. Esslin ehhez még hozzáteszi, hogy a mű több, mint szatíra: „az ember állatias természetének, durvaságának és kegyetlenségének ijesztő képe." Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (London: Penguin, 1980), p. 357.

17. W. B. Yeats, *A csontok álmodása: Drámák* (a továbbiakban: *CsÁ*), szerk. Mesterházy Márton (Budapest: Nagyvilág, 2003), p. 159. A mű eredeti címe: *The Herne's Egg,* magyarra G. István László fordította.

ményt a nézőkben. A sejtetés új jelentése viszont ennek ellentmond: ennek egyet nem értés az eredménye. A „más, mint aminek tűnik" gondolata a dráma többi szintjén is jellemző: az abszurd drámákhoz hasonlóan, itt is megvannak a műnem formai sajátosságai – párbeszéd, hős, cselekmény, tér és idő – csak éppen némelyik tényező eltér a Yeats drámáinál megszokottól.

A fenti idézet másik, bár az iménti gondolathoz kapcsolódó, figyelemre méltó eleme a mozgás. A szereplők látszólag harcolnak, de ez a harc is csak olyan mintha az lenne, inkább rituális tánc, amelynek szigorú – s mint utóbb kiderül – sokszor kipróbált koreográfiája van, ezt Nényei Judit az inga mozgásához hasonlítja.[18] A szimmetria mellett e koreográfia másik jellegzetessége a tükörkép.

Az első párbeszéd, a két királyé is azt támasztja alá, hogy stilizált csatát láttunk, ahol minden egyformán oszlik meg, a győzelmek és a veszteségek is. Az egyformaság a királyokra is jellemző: Aedh és Congal egymással szemben állnak, Aedh a bal lapockáján, Congal a jobb lapockáján sebesült meg, azaz egymás tükörképei. Egymáshoz tartoznak – ez abból is kiderül, ahogyan beszélnek: végig egymás gondolatát szövik tovább:

AEDH Hajnaltól délig, így
ugrálni sziklák között.
CONGAL Étlen-szomjan, bizony.
AEDH Volt egyszer két dúsgazdag
bolha, vagyis így mesélik...
CONGAL Ugrálhatunk, mi bolhák,
nem gazdagít a harc.[19]

A bolhamotívum példázat, parabola, és szervesen járul hozzá a szereplők, illetve világuk megértéséhez. Látjuk, hogy a királyok harcolnak – ez tart már egy ideje – egyfajta rítus, kötött koreográfia szerint, de ugyanakkor nem értjük az okát, mint ahogyan ők maguk sem. Olyan törvénynek engedelmeskednek, amelynek az értelmét nem látják, de nem is keresik: ez jellemzi viszonyukat a valósághoz, s ez az abszurd drámák szituációja. Ugyanakkor az abszurd dráma szereplői sokszor próbálnak változtatni a helyzetükön, s ez a vágy Yeats két királyában is ott él, ehhez járul hozzá a bolha példázat. Két királyunk van, és a történet két bolháról szól; a párhuzamot az „ugrálás", vagyis a harc hangsúlyozza, a harc, amely csak van, ál-

18. Nényei Judit, *Thought Outdanced: The Motif of Dancing in Yeats and Joyce* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2002), p. 68.
19. *CsÁ*, p. 159.

landó, de nem vezet sehova, nincs vesztes és győztes, a csatának nincs vége, és „nem gazdagít".

Az abszurditáshoz a második jelenetben színen levő kellék ugyancsak hozzájárul: „Belép Corney, egy szamarat vezet. A szamár keréken gurul, mint egy gyerekjáték, de életnagyságú."[20] A darabban végig jelen lévő dilemma jellemzi ezt a leírást:[21] a szamár olyan, mintha igazi lenne, de nem az; és olyan, mintha játék lenne, de ez sem igaz – ugyanaz a bizonytalanság, amelyet Yeats az előző jelenetben már érzékeltetett.

Corney úgy beszél a szamárhoz, mintha az igazi lenne: „Tán előző életedben / Pénzt vagy asszonyszívet raboltál",[22] vagyis a yeatsi örökös inkarnációk rendszerében a szamár ebben az életben esetleg régi tettek miatt bűnhődik; e motívum a darab végén tér vissza. Később a szamár úgy tűnik fel, hogy egy kosár van ráfestve (hogy összeszedhessék a tojásokat). Yeats mindig kerülte a színpadi naturalizmust, helyette a sejtetést, sugalmazást választotta, de *A kócsagtojás*ban más megoldást választ, olyan realizmust, amely abszurd is egyben, a tartalom nélküli üres formát.

A mű címére is magyarázatot kapunk: a régi szentélyek mintegy paródiájára ez a hely a Nagy Kócsagé, s papnője, Attracta őrzi. A Yeatsnél gyakran megjelenő, az utolsó drámáknál pedig uralkodó jellegzetesség, hogy a szereplők nem értik meg egymást, elszigetelt közegekben léteznek, s az a sajátosság, hogy ugyanazt a dolgot teljesen másként érzékelik és értelmezik, itt is nyilvánvaló.

Attracta és Corney párbeszéde is a meg nem értést példázza. Corney teljes lélekkel hisz Attracta nem evilági erejében, és mivel mindenképp meg szeretné őt menteni Congaltól és az embereitől, arra bíztatja, hogy hívja életre a Kócsag hatalmát. Attracta azonban nem Congal iránt lobban haragra, hanem – ironikus módon – a jámbor Corney ellen fordul: „Ki engedte meg neked, / Hogy megparancsold, mit tegyek?"[23]

Attracta másban bízik:

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20. *CsÁ*, p. 160. A kerekes szamár lehetséges forrásaként Alison Armstrong indiai színművekre utal, másrészt a szamárrá való újjászületés lehetséges forrása Alexandra David-Neel, *Mystiques et magiciens du Tibet* című könyvének egyik története. Armstrong, p. XIV.

21. A cselekedeteket és kellékeket végig ez az imitáció jellemzi: úgy tesznek, mintha harcolnának, követ hajítanának, vagy a Bolond úgy tesz, mintha megölné Congalt, Congal, mintha öngyilkosságot követne el.

22. *CsÁ*, p. 160.

23. *CsÁ*, p. 163.

ATTRACTA Az istentől rabolt tojás
Kimondatja az ősi átkot
Nem tudjuk, hogy kitől való
Mert mikor a kócsag féllábra állt,
Már ott függött az oszlopon
CORNEY Minden kócsag féllábon halászik.
Úgy tiszteli azt, akitől ez való.

Ezt az írást oszlopon leltem,
Mikor a lábam elvesztettem,
*Így mondta a vén, féllábú kócsag.*

Aki elveszi a kócsag tojását,
Örökké csak bolondnak lássák!
*Így mondta a vén, féllábú kócsag.*

S hogy kilehelje a lelkét,
Bolond kéztől megölessék.
*Így mondta a vén, féllábú kócsag.*
[...]
CONGAL Hogy élve-halva bolond vagyok,
S hogy bolond kéztől esem el
A harcmezőn, ez nem titok,
Nem kell ehhez átok.[24]

E jelenet a dráma abszurditásának egyik csúcspontja. Attracta és Corney – ők azt az ideális állapotot példázzák, amikor a közeg, a szellemi örökség közös, Yeats terminusával élve fennáll a Unity of Culture állapota – recitálják el a Nagy Kócsag misztériumát, ami, úgy tűnik, szörnyű átokkal sújtja a szentségtörőt. Az ellentmondás, ami Attractával kapcsolatban végig fönnáll, itt is jelentkezik: az imént azt állította, hogy „Az összes tudhatót tudom", később viszont kiderül, hogy „[...] az ősi átkot / Amiről semmit sem tudunk." Ugyanez a ködös bizonytalanság jellemzi Attracta nem evilági hatalmát, illetve a Nagy Kócsag létezését is.

Ami a tudást illeti, Corney is bizonytalan, egészen Congal megszólalásáig az a benyomásunk, hogy itt most egy hatalmas titokról van szó, az istenség olyan megnyilatkozásáról, amelyről még papnője sem tud sokat. Congal azonban ezt a hatást tökéletesen a feje tetejére állítja. Pontosan ő, akitől a lehető legtávolabb áll a misztika, bizonyul a lehető legtöbbet tudónak, az ő szavai nyomán válik látszólag lehetővé a mozaikkép kirakása. A Kócsag versében szereplő két bolond

24. *CsÁ*, p. 164.

ugyanaz a két bolond, akikről Congal szól, esetleg ő maga és Aedh. „Élve-halva bolond vagyok" – e sor különösen érdekes, hiszen azt tételezi fel, hogy Congal bolondsága nem korlátozódik a jelen életére, hanem általában jellemző az inkarnációira.[25]

Érdemes egy pillantást vetni az időskori művek bolondjaira. Yeats ekkor „Életre készül fel. Újfajta életszakaszra. Mind kevésbé intellektuális, mindinkább intuitív költészetre. [...] Arra, hogy nem bölcs öregember lesz, hanem »szenvedélyes bolond«, mindhalálig."[26] Ugyanez az intuitív, ösztönök, érzelmek fontosságát az intellektussal szemben hirdető figura a Szavak, talán zenére versciklus (*A csigalépcső és más versek,* 1933) Bolond Jane-e. A „szenvedélyes bolond" motívuma váltakozik, és ki is egészül az elégedetlenség, elkeseredettség miatt „megveszettel": „És semmi jobbra nincs remény, / Hát hogy is ne veszne meg a vén?"[27] Vagy a Gőzkazánon (On the Boiler, 1938) című pamfletben a dorgáló, kioktató Yeats, aki tételesen sorra veszi a saját kora – Írország és az egész jelen civilizáció hibáit: szélmalomharc a szenátusban, alkalmatlan közoktatás, műveletlen emberek, anyagiasság, a kultúra degradálódása,[28] hogy csak néhányat említsek. Ezek közül néhány a drámákban is feltűnik: legdirektebb formában a *Purgatórium*ban és a *Cuchulain halálá*ban.

Congal bolondsága talán rokonítható egyrészt Bolond Jane-ével, hiszen az érzékeinek élő Congal és Attracta szemben állása a Bolond Jane és a püspök és a Bolond Jane a püspökkel beszél alaphelyzetére hasonlít; másrészt benne is az a fajta displacement érzés: a nem megfelelő világban, közegben, időben létezés érzése tükröződik, mint az idős Cuchulainban, vagy az utolsó drámák öregember figuráiban.

Yeats azonban itt más értelemben is használja a bolond szót (és ez a szamár motívummal is összefügg), és talán úgy lehetne ezt legjobban összefoglalni, hogy a királyok azért bolondok, mert képtelenek egy abszurd szituációból kitörni, mert mechanikusan engedelmes-

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25. A bolondság, a bolond visszatérő motívum, kategória, ami nagyon gyakori az életművében: versekben, prózai művekben és drámákban egyaránt előfordul, ráadásul jelentése sokszor más és más. Yeats az *A Vision*ben egy egész fázist tulajdonít a Bolondnak, a huszonnyolcadikat.

26. Gergely Ágnes, *Nyugat magyarja: Esszénapló William Butler Yeatsről* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1991), p. 138.

27. W. B. Yeats, „Hogy is ne veszne meg a vén?" ford. Somlyó György, in *William Butler Yeats versei*, szerk. Ferencz Győző (Budapest: Európa, 2000), p. 214.

28. W. B. Yeats, *Explorations*, sel. Mrs. W. B. Yeats (London: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 404–453.

kednek valami kényszernek, amiről semmit nem tudnak, csak azt, hogy az ő számukra létezik.

A harc motívumot a negyedik jelenet folytatja és látszólag le is zárja azt. Congal – immár Tarán – úgy érzi, hogy méltánytalanság érte, mert kimaradt a kócsagtojás lakomából: neki közönséges tyúktojást tálaltak fel (Attracta cserélte ki a tojásokat, de Congal ezt csak később tudja meg). A királyok ismét egymásnak esnek: „Aedh felveszi az asztallábat. Connacht és Tara katonái bevonulnak, harcolnak, a harc oda-vissza hullámzik. A fegyverek, asztallábak, gyertyatartók stb. nem érintkeznek. Minden ütést dobszó jelez."[29] E harc az előző, táncszerű rituális csata paródiája, ám az egyensúly felbillen: Aedh meghal. Hogy mi változott, azt Congal foglalja össze:

CONGAL Nem kellett volna így meghalnia.
Jobb lett volna az, ha halhatatlan.
Ötven csatában jó barátok
Lettünk, és vár az ötven
Új fegyverrel, új hadvezérrel –
Kezdődik újra, elölről minden.[30]

Congal csak most, túl későn jön rá, hogy tévedett. Nem Aedh, hanem Attracta cserélte ki a tojásokat, s Congal most már bosszúból is cselekszik, amikor ráuszítja az embereit. Congal győzelme most is relatív: a szereplők ismét csak másképp látják ugyanazt az eseményt: Congal szerint mind a heten erőszakot tettek Attractán, a katonái először tagadják, aztán kérkednek vele, ellenben Attracta teljes lelkével abban hisz, hogy isteni jegyesével töltötte az éjszakát. Corney most is Attracta felé hajlik, s részegséggel, hazugsággal vádolja a katonákat, Congalt pedig azzal, hogy lefizette hat emberét, hogy valótlant állítsanak. Ebben a jelenetben Congal emberei megváltoznak: egyre inkább rettegnek, félnek a Nagy Kócsag lehetséges hatalmától, átkától. Akinél nem teljesen világos, hogy mit is hisz, az maga Congal. Amikor azt mondja, hogy: „De a Kócsag isten, elérhetetlen / Nincs kő, mi megsebezze, kard, mi vágja, / Csak asszonyát és jegyesét bánthatom úgy, mint saját magát",[31] az lehet gúnyos szkepticizmus, s később is, az első mennydörgés hallatán is tartja magát, a másodiknál viszont már kétségei vannak: „Égzengés. Mindnyájan hasra vágódnak Attractát és Congalt kivéve. Congal is félig letérdel, de aztán felegyenesedik."[32]

29. *CsÁ*, p. 170.
30. *CsÁ*, p. 171.
31. *CsÁ*, p. 172.
32. *CsÁ*, p. 177.

Congalt végül a harmadik mennydörgés riasztja meg, és Attracta szavai: „Beavatott, s mindent tudok, / Látok mindent büntetést."[33]

Congal tudja, hogy az ő sorsa is beteljesedik. Nem a halál riasztja, hanem az, hogy következő éltében milyen alakban kell élnie: „Ha bolond kéztől meghalok, / mikor lesz az?"[34]

Ez az a pillanat, mikor úgy tűnik, Attracta és Congal között elmosódnak a különbségek, Congal is elfogadja Attracta hatalmát. Attracta szavaival hatásos végső jelenetet készít elő, felvonultatva a szokásos yeatsi hold szimbólumot is, amely szerint a telihold jelzi a korszak és Congal végét, illetve Attracta egyesülését a Kócsaggal, a fogyó hold alatt pedig Congal lelke új alakba kerül. Hogy a fennkölt szavak miként fordulnak groteszkbe, kiderül a hatodik jelenetben, ahol a szálakat elvarrják, csak nem oly módon, mint ahogyan a szereplők gondolták.

A helyszín most már az Attracta említette Slieve Fuadh, teliholdkor. „Hegytető, épp most kelt fel a hold, a komikai hagyomány szerinti mosolygós kerek holdpofa. A színpad egyik szélén egymás mellett egy üstfedő, egy fazék és egy nyárs. Belép a bolond [...]",[35] a jóslat bolondja, aki Congalhoz idézett első szavaival tisztázza, hogy mire is készül: „Elegyengettem amott a porondot",[36] vagyis a lovagi harc előkészítésének a paródiája, mint ahogyan a nyárs és a fedő a kard és a pajzs megfelelője, a fazék pedig a sisaké. Armstrong szerint a darabban feltűnnek az ősi kelta talizmánok,[37] az üst, a kard, a lándzsa, és a kő,[38] s e jelenetben Yeats ezeket degradálja, annál is inkább, mert eredetileg, a korábbi változatban Yeats a nyárs helyett végig kardot említett: a Bolond karddal sebzi meg Congalt, s Congal is a kardjába dől. Másrészt a madár motívumhoz a nyárs változat áll közelebb: Congal úgy húzza nyársra magát (jelképesen!), mint a madarat szokták sütés előtt.

A jóslat beteljesítése is abszurd: a Bolond, aki inkább a *Cuchulain halála* vak emberére hasonlít, mint a yeatsi bolond figurákra, másoktól hall a jóslatról (úgy tűnik, mindenki tud a tervezett nagy fordulatról a hegyen) és az emberek tréfálkozására határozza el magát:

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33. *CsÁ*, p. 177.
34. *CsÁ*, p. 178.
35. *CsÁ*, p. 179.
36. *CsÁ*, p. 179.
37. Armstrong, p. XIV.
38. Dagda (az isten atya), üstje, Nuada (a Tuatha da Danaan, azaz Danu istennő népének nagykirálya) kardja, Lugh (a napisten) lándzsája és a Végzet Köve.

Valaki így szólt: „Congal királyt az átok
A hegyre hajtja bolond kezétől halni”
Valaki így szólt: „Öld meg, Tamás.”
És mindenki nevetni kezdett,
Hogy teliholdnál kellene megölnöm.
Ma van telihold.[39]

A szín a *Cuchulain halála* ölésjelentét előlegezi, több szempontból is: az áldozat biztos hite abban, hogy a halál elkerülhetetlen, a gyilkos személye (Bolond és Vak hasonlóak), a gyilkosság indítéka és módja. Mindkét esetben degradálja a „hőst” a gyilkos eszköz, a Cuchulainban a kés, itt a nyárs, és a közvetlen ok, hogy miért is kell meghalniuk: Cuchulainnak tizenkét pennyért, *A kócsagtojás*ban pedig így magyarázza a szándékát a Bolond: „Ha Congalt megölöm, enyém a pénz”.[40] Congal most azt, ami rá vár, személyes viadalnak tartja a Nagy Kócsaggal: ha a Bolond öli meg, úgy a Kócsag győzedelmes, ellenben

Ha én sebezném meg magam,
Én nyernék, mikor meghalok.
Azt mondta, bolond kéz fog megölni,
És itt vagy te. Add csak a nyársat
[...]
De nem vagyok-e én is Bolond?
Ha az vagyok, övé a győzelem.[41]

Congal tehát úgy próbálja megkerülni az átkot, hogy öngyilkos lesz – ugyanaz történik, mint az imént a Bolond esetében: nem irányítja a sorsát, hanem eszköz abban, hogy egy átok, amelyről még azt sem tudja biztosan, hogy létezik-e, beteljesedjen, azaz ki akar kerülni valamit, csak azért, hogy beteljesítse. A Nagy Kócsag átka nem a halál maga, hanem a következő élet, ami azért még magát Congalt is aggasztja:

A harcot megnyertem, de félek.
Mit fog velem halálom után
Urad, a Nagy Kócsag csinálni?
A végén még bedug valami
Oktalan állat-alakba.[42]

39. *CsÁ*, p. 179.
40. *CsÁ*, p. 180.
41. *CsÁ*, pp. 182–183.
42. *CsÁ*, p. 184.

Attracta ettől próbálja megmenteni: az a terve, hogy saját maga ad emberi alakot Congal lelkének, de elkésik: Corney odalent hagyott szamara elszabadult és most egy másik szamárral párosodik: „A szamár megfogant. Hiába reméltem, / Hogy emberi formát adhatok / Congalnak, szamár lesz belőle." Corney pedig találóan foglalja össze a mű tanulságát: „A sok-sok zűrből a végén ez maradt / Mutatóba egy szamár."[43]

A dráma összetettségében *A színészkirálynő*re emlékeztet, amelyről szólva John Reese Moore találóan fogalmazta meg, hogy a gondolatok mintegy kaleidoszkópszerűen változnak, torzulnak, s ha magát a kaleidoszkópot elmozdítjuk valamerre, az elemek új mintába állnak össze.[44] Ezért olyan nehéz megérteni e drámákat, mert az olvasó/néző ismerős, tipikusan Yeatsre jellemző gondolatokat, szimbólumokat fedez fel, ám ezeket Yeats ki is fordítja, eltorzítja, parodizálja. Bohózatait ez a tényező mindvégig jellemzi, a korábbi A zöld sisakot és *A színészkirálynő*t ugyanúgy, mint *A kócsagtojás*t, de az utolsó drámáknak általános jellemzője ez. Gyakori technika, hogy a régebben összetartozó elemeket most szétszakítja, és tőlük idegen közegbe helyezi őket. Ez a jelenség legfeltűnőbb, ha a tragikus hőst és világát vizsgáljuk. *A színészkirálynő* esetében Yeats a maszk-teóriát képtelen volt a tragédia adta keretek között kifejteni úgy, hogy a szereplőket szócsövekké ne degradálta volna. Ugyanakkor lehetetlen észre nem venni, hogy az a tendencia, amely az utolsó drámákat jellemzi, vagyis a világ kisszerűségének hangsúlyozása egyre erőteljesebb, ha a mű különböző változatait összehasonlítjuk, bár Yeats itt még nem Írországról beszél. *A színészkirálynő* az egyetlen olyan drámája, amelyben utalás sincs Írországra, a helyszín egyszerűen egy város, a város.

Többször is fejtegette, hogy a világ objektív korát éli, a civilizáció rossz irányba halad, s e hangok felerősödnek, ahogy idősebbé válik. Sokat elmélkedik más, ideálisabb korokról, éppen ezekben az években fedezi fel a XVIII. század angol–ír kultúráját, Swiftet, Berkeleyt olvas, és ha saját korának Írországáról szól, hangja egyre kritikusabb. A *Purgatórium*ban és a *Cuchulain halálá*ban direkt módon bírálja, de *A kócsagtojás*ban is olyan világot jelenít meg, amely nyomasztó a benne élők számára. A tragédiákban még fennállt az az ideális állapot, amelyet Yeats Unity of Culture-nek, a kultúra egységének nevez, amikor a hős és világa között harmónia van és az egyes figurák ugyanazt a közös szellemi örökséget hordozzák, ugyan-

43. *CsÁ*, p. 185.

44. John Reese Moore, *Masks of Love and Death: Yeats as a Dramatist* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1971), p. 173.

azok a gondolataik, vagyis a szó szoros értelmében megértik egymást – ez a kései drámákban is, de *A színészkirálynő*ben is az ellentétébe fordul. E művekben az alaphelyzet az, hogy a szereplők elszigeteltek egymástól, és/vagy maga a világ olyan bizonytalan, ködös, olyan mechanikus törvényszerűségek alapján működik, amelyeket sem a szereplők, sem a közönség nem lát világosan. Az abszolút értékek eltűnnek, s hogy mi irányítja a világot, az nem igazán egyértelmű, mint ahogyan az abszurd drámákban sem. Létezik túlvilág, halál utáni élet – *A kócsagtojás*ban és a *Cuchulain halálá*ban fontos szerepet kap az élet és a halál folytatólagossága és egymáshoz tartozása; a *Purgatórium*ban ugyancsak, bár ott a lélek megreked egy köztes fázisban, az úgy nevezett Visszaálmodásban. A szellemi világ is szerepel, a *Cuchulain*ban a Morrigu, a varjúfejű hadistennő, míg *A kócsagtojás*ban a Nagy Kócsag. Mindezek ellenére sem érezzük azt, hogy ezek az erők irányítanák a halandók életét. *A kócsagtojás*ban eleve vita és kétkedés tárgya a Nagy Kócsag létezése, hatalmának mivolta, és amikor minden szereplő (Congal is) elfogadja a Kócsag létezését, amikor hatalmának meg kellene nyilvánulnia, akkor vall kudarcot, vagyis a kétségek – nem a szereplők, hanem a nézők számára – ugyanúgy fennállnak, mint a darab elején. Ez a világ ugyanis mozdulatlan, egyszerűen csak van. Lehet, hogy jobb volt, erről sokat hallunk a *Purgatórium*ban és a Cuchulainban: mindkét drámában szerepel egy-egy olyan figura, aki legalábbis tud egy tökéletesebb múltról, az előbbi műben az Öreg, utóbbiban a Vénember, Yeats alteregója ugyanolyan kontrasztot állít jelen és múlt között. A statikusságot, az értelmetlenséget leginkább *A kócsagtojás*ban lehet érzékelni. Itt az abszurd, mechanikus törvények uralkodnak a királyok felett is, változtatni rajtuk lehetetlen, ez az olyan, mintha világa. Tükörképek, szimmetria: ez ismét az abszurd drámára jellemző sajátosság. Az első jelenetben Congal és Aedh egymás tükörképei, de az egész drámára jellemző az a sajátosság, mintha világa egyfajta görbe tükör előtt állna: egyszer magát a teóriát látjuk, de utána azt is, amit a torzítás művelt vele. Ilyen Congal harca a Nagy Kócsaggal, vagy reinkarnálódásának groteszk eleme. Az abszurd drámák szereplőire nem jellemző a körülményeik ellen való lázadás, ők általában a világuk adta törvények szerint cselekednek, ilyen értelemben passzívak, mint például Yeats halálra készülődő Cuchulainja. A többi drámában ugyanakkor mindig akad egy-egy szereplő, aki valamit meg akar változtatni: az Öreg anyja lelkét szeretné megmenteni, Congal a Kócsag vélt hatalma ellen lázad, de mindketten kudarcot vallanak, mert valamit nem értenek meg, nem ismernek fel, a lázadás tehát hiábavaló.

A szamár, természetesen, Yeatsnél nem éppen a legvonzóbb alak, amelyet Congal kívánhat magának, mégis egy bolond élet és halál után ez lehet a folytatás. Nietzschénél is gazdag az állatszimbolika, a szamár e szimbólumok egyike. Ő jelképezi a hamis emberfeletti embert, oly módon, hogy a fölmagasló ember egyik ismérve, hogy nem tagad, hanem igent mond, affirmál. A szamár mindig, mindenre „i-á"-t mond, ami nem más, mint a német „ja", azaz „igen", ahogyan például az *Eszméltetés* című parabolában olvashatjuk:

> Ámen! És dicséret legyen és dicsőség és bölcsesség és köszönet és magasztalás és erő a mi istenünknek, mindörökkön örökké!
>
> A szamár pedig igenlően üvöltve vágta rá, hogy: i-a.[45]

Az irónia mindebben pedig az, hogy a szamár mindezek ellenére csak a hamis fölmagasló embert jelképezi, mert a szamár mindenre, válogatás nélkül igent mond, hiszen egyebet képtelen.

Ami Yeatsnél mindebből megvalósul, az a félreismerés, fel nem ismerés – mindenek előtt Congal király esetében. Ráadásul nem az élet-igenlés hatja át ezt a drámát, hanem a bizonytalanság és a félelem.[46] Congal értékrendje teljesen felborul a mű végére, önismerete sem biztos többé. Yeats rendszerének, pontosabban a maszkelméletének egyik sarkalatos pontja az önmegismerés: nem azért van szükség a maszkra, hogy a hős elrejtőzzön mögötte, hanem az igazi maszk segítségére van önmaga megtalálásában – ez az, ami nem valósul meg Congal esetében; éppen emiatt érdemes Congal alakját megvizsgálni. A fő kérdés, amely az egyes értelmezőket is foglalkoztatta, az, hogy hős-e Congal, pontosabban tragikus hős-e? John Reese Moore például egyenesen azt állítja, hogy ez mű a hőssel kapcsolatos dilemma legkomplexebb kifejtése.[47] Congal nagyon emlékeztet Yeats korábbi tragikus hőseire: király, harcos, fékezhetetlen és magabiztos. Ure és Moore is kitérnek arra, hogy milyen Congal viszonya a nem emberi világgal. Ure azt hangsúlyozza, hogy Congal nem tudja, hogy mi ellen harcol,[48] Moore pedig azt emeli ki, hogy Congal azért igazán figyelemre méltó a yeatsi hősök között, az különbözteti meg tőlük,

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45. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Így szólott Zarathustra*, ford. Kurdi Imre (Budapest: Osiris, 2004), p. 371.

46. Otto Bohlmann, *Yeats and Nietzsche: An Exploration of Major Nietzschean Echoes in the Writings of William Butler Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 55.

47. Moore, p. 296.

48. Peter Ure, *Yeats, the Playwright: A Commentary on Character and Design in the Major Plays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 146.

hogy az istenség puszta létét is tagadja.[49] Tulajdonképpen mindkét vélemény elfogadható: az ízig-vérig az érzékeire hallgató,[50] és éppen ezért sokszor tévedő Congal valóban a spirituális Attracta ellentéte, olyannyira, hogy eleinte még a Nagy Kócsag létezését sem fogadja el. Később azonban változik a véleménye, de a tévedéstől akkor sem mentes. Arra is kitérnek, hogy az ő esetében hős és bolond összefonódik. Ure úgy látja, hogy a körülmények miatt az istenséggel harcoló Congal egyszersmind bolond is.[51] Congal azon túl, hogy saját magáról is azt állítja, hogy bolond, Bolond Tamással is remekül kijön, Moore találó összegzése szerint:

> Nehéz megmondani, hogy vajon inkább bolond-e, mint hős, de ahhoz kétség sem fér, hogy a saját szemében megnyeri a harcot, hogy megőrizze emberi méltóságát. A darab azonban azt sugallja, hogy a hős öntudata csupán illúzió; még a Törvény és a Jog is puszta mechanikus elvekké silányul, nem töltik be azt a funkciót, amely miatt valamely isteni szellem életre hívta őket.[52]

Nem feledkezhetünk el viszont arról sem, hogy van valami önámítás abban, ahogyan Congal azt bizonygatja, hogy megnyerte a harcot, és végig tart attól, hogy mi vár rá a halál után. Én úgy gondolom, lehetetlen eldönteni, bolond-e Congal, vagy hős. Ha abból indulunk ki, hogy olyan világban él, ahol az érzékei folyamatosan becsapják, és olyan törvényeknek engedelmeskedik, amelyeket nem ért, akkor a hősi és a bolond oldala teljesen összemosódik, bizonytalan. Nemcsak Congal nem tudja eldönteni, hogy bolond-e, vagy hős, hanem a közönség sem, mert a kaleidoszkóp folyton mozdul egyet.

Yeats még egy érdekes vonással egészíti ki Congalt: megteremti mellé a tükörképét, Aedht. Bár a mű bohózatszerű, nem idegen tőle a drámai jellemek megléte, s Congal inkább jellem, mint viselkedéstípus,[53] karakterében Aedh semmiben sem különbözik tőle, egyszerűen Congal mása – a *Godot-ra várva,* esetleg Stoppard *Rosencrantz és Guildenstern halott* című drámája jut eszünkbe. Noha ezekben a darabokban mégis létezik valami, ami megkülönbözteti a bennük szereplő figurákat: egyik mindig ösztönösebb, a másik intellektuálisabb, mégis nagyon hasonlóak. A *Rosencrantz*ban a humor egyik fő forrása

49. Moore, p. 294.
50. Bohlmann, p. 107.
51. Ure, p. 147.
52. Moore, p. 297.
53. Bertha Csilla kategóriája (*A drámaíró Yeats*).

éppen Guil és Ros összecserélhetősége, amely akkor éri el a tetőpontját, amikor ők is összetévesztik magukat. Yeats ugyan nem játszik el az összecserélhetőségben rejlő lehetőségekkel, ám mégsem véletlen a királyok hasonlatossága: két gondolat fonódik itt össze: az egyik a konfliktussal, a szereplők szembe állításával, a jellegzetes yeatsi kettősségekkel áll kapcsolatban, a másik a szimmetria gondolata, amely áthatja a drámát.

Yeats számára *A színészkirálynő* olyan „terep", ahol kedvére kísérletezhetett azzal, hogy rendszerének egyes elemeit hogyan lehetne drámai formában is kifejezni. Ezek egyike a maszk, az én és anti-én gondolata volt: a főszereplők azzal vannak elfoglalva, hogy megtalálják a nekik megfelelő maszkot és egyesüljenek vele. Ugyanakkor a hangsúly arra esik, hogy a „hősök" vagy sikertelenek e küldetésükben (Septimus), vagy hamis maszkot öltenek (Decima). *A kócsagtojás*ban és általában az utolsó drámákban ezek a gondolatok háttérbe kerülnek, bár éppen *A kócsagtojás*ban Congal és Attracta, illetve Corney és Attracta áll ilyenfajta viszonyban egymással. Congal, a tiszta aktualitásban, érzékek által felfogható világban hisz, és Attracta a spiritualitás és rajta keresztül – legalább is Congal szemében – a Nagy Kócsag képviselője. Az ő egyesülésüknek kellene elhoznia az ideális állapotot (Unity of Being), ám éppen ez az egyesülés az egyik olyan pont a műben, amelyet a szereplők másképp értelmeznek: Congal meg van róla győződve, hogy Attractával hált, Attracta viszont végig „aludt", ahogyan Mike mondja. Ennek az egyesülésnek megvan a szimmetrikus párja: Attracta és a „tökéletlen" Corney között, de ez sem tökéletes, nem váltja be Attracta reményeit.

Ha viszont Attracta és Congal áll egymással szemben, mi a szerepe Aedhnek? Az első pillanatban a harc miatt úgy tűnhet, Congal és ő ellenfelek, viszont Yeats rendszere szerint nem lehetnek igazi ellentétek. Ők összetartoznak, azért harcolnak, mert kell, mert a harc által fenntartanak egy egyensúlyi állapotot, amely Aedh halálával felborul.

Elemzésében Moore, Ellis és Nényei is kitér a darabbeli táncokra. Ellis egyik fő szempontja, hogy vajon a tánc beépül-e jelentésbe, maga a tánc jelentéshordozó-e, illetve helyettesíti-e a dialógust.[54] *A kócsagtojás* ilyen szempontból nem lehet túl izgalmas Ellis számára, bár ő is kiemeli, hogy a harci jelenetek táncos jellegűek.[55] Ezt a kérdést Moore tárgyalja részletesebben, s ezekről a jelenetekről azt álla-

54. Sylvia C. Ellis, *The Plays of W. B. Yeats: Yeats and the Dancer* (Bangor: University of Wales, 1995), p. 251.

55. Ellis, p. 273.

pítja meg, hogy a szereplők táncos mozgása inkább bábukéra emlékeztet egy balettban, s ez Attractára is igaz.[56]

Nényei Judit úgy fogalmaz, hogy Attracta tánca odaadást és örömöt fejez ki, ezen kívül bizonyos eljövendő eseményekre is figyelmeztet.[57] Ez az odaadás és öröm azért kérdéses, mert Attracta mozgásán inkább az isten által való megszállottság látszik, valóban bábuként engedelmeskedik egy fölötte álló hatalomnak.

Ha ez általában igaz a táncszerű részekre, úgy a két király is olyan törvényeknek engedelmeskedik, amivel szemben tehetetlenek, amelyek szerint az egyensúlyi állapothoz hozzátartozik az összecsapás és kibékülés ciklikus folytonossága. Ugyanakkor a harcból mégis hiányzik a lényeg, a valódi szembenállás, hiányoznak az érzelmek, a szenvedély; s amikor Congal szenvedélyből harcol, megöli Aedht. Ennek eredményeként Congal elveszti, mondhatni, a tükörképét, s az egyensúly felborul. Hogy visszaálljon, Congalnak is meg kell halnia, Yeats azonban ismét csavar egyet a történeten: az egyik bolond páros szétesett, ezért – ismét láthatunk egy példát a szimmetriára – felállít egy másikat: Congal párja ezúttal Bolond Tamás. A szimmetria és a kettősség uralkodó eleme a szerkesztésnek.

Ezenkívül gondolhatunk a táncszerű harci jelenetekre (szimmetrikusak, a második az első groteszk párja) és Yeats törekvésére, hogy a főszereplőknek meglegyen vagy a tükörképe, vagy az ellenpárja.

*A kócsagtojás* elolvasása után ugyanúgy felvetődik a kérdés, mint *A színészkirálynő* esetében: vajon Yeats saját elméletének a paródiáját írta meg? Moore is erre hajlik, sőt az első kritikusok is így látták. Armstrong idézi Austin Clark és Janet Adam Smith egy-egy 1938-ban megjelent recenzióját. Egyik sem túl hízelgő, Clarke például így vélekedik: „Yeats arra vállalkozott, hogy a kelta hagyomány féktelen álhősies meséinek szellemét fölélessze [...]. Synge-nek talán sikerült volna, de nekem úgy tűnik, Mr. Yeatsnek mindössze saját magát sikerül meglehetősen kellemetlenül parodizálnia."[58]

Az ilyen értelemben vett paródia, az öngúny kissé túlzás, bár az kétségkívül igaz, hogy a bohózat keretein belül Yeatsnek lehetősége nyílt arra, hogy hősét, pontosabban a hős közegét eltorzítsa, mindezzel az abszurdan mulatságos és tragikus együttes hatását érte el. A levelekből ítélve jól szórakozhatott írás közben, és élvezte az új stílust. Inkább Moore kaleidoszkóp-képe jut az eszembe: Yeats azzal kísérletezett, hogy összevegyítsen bizonyos dolgokat és lássa a hatásukat.

56. Moore, p. 298.
57. Nényei, pp. 68–69.
58. Armstrong, p. XXV.

Számos motívum ismerős lehet a régebbi próbálkozásaiból, s Yeats annyit tesz, hogy megváltoztat néhány körülményt. *A színészkirálynő*éhez hasonló bizonytalan világba helyezi a hőst, s ezen kívül Congal olyan hatalommal áll szemben, amelyet nem ért meg, így ő és királytársa-ellenfele Aedh már csak marionett bábuként mozognak benne. Nem Congal lesz torz, hanem a valósága törvényszerűségei idegenek, abszurdak, mert nem áll fönn a kultúra egysége a hős és világa között. Nemcsak ez a jelenség mutat az abszurd színház felé. A bohózat maga is abszurd írók kedvelt műfaja, és az a jellegzetesség is figyelemre méltó, amely *A kócsagtojás*ban annyira dominál: a formák mögötti üresség, a forma semmi kedvéért. Ehhez járulnak hozzá a szimmetrikus elrendezések, szerkesztés és mozgások, és az a folyamatosan felkeltett érzés, hogy minden csak olyan mintha valami lenne, ami szintén azt sugallja, hogy a tartalom szerepét a forma vette át.

Mindezek alapján azt a következtetést vonhatjuk le, hogy Yeats – mindenekelőtt az utolsó drámáiban – olyan irányba indult el, amely a későbbi abszurd dráma és színpad felé mutat. *A kócsagtojás* kiemelkedő állomása ennek a folyamatnak, mert Yeats drámái között ez a mű tartalmazza a legtöbb, az abszurd színházat idéző elemet, amelyek közül én a jelen tanulmányban a hős és közegének megváltozott, eltorzított viszonyára koncentráltam.

# John Buchan's Other Great War
## or The Adventures of Richard Hannay
For Aladár, author of thrilling stories

*Harro Grabolle*

This study proposes to discuss the more private writings of the Scottish author John Buchan during the Great War, the books that have made him famous for a wider readership up to the present day, and how they are informed by a life steeped in Calvinist tradition, a love for and knowledge of Scotland, the time he spent in South Africa, and his many official war-time activities.

In 1914 John Buchan was a successful barrister, family man, publisher, Member of Parliament, with 36 books to his credit (eight of them fiction) and more than 800 articles. When war was declared in August, he felt frustrated as, nearly 39, he was considered too old and unfit for active front-line duty. But his services as a writer, journalist, historian, propagandist, would soon be much in demand. Buchan wrote *Nelson's History of the War,* a project which would keep the printing presses running at the Edinburgh publishing house, where he was a director. He took over the monumental task, with a research assistant, but doing all the actual writing himself. From May 1915 he was special correspondent for *The Times* at the Western Front until the battle of Loos in September, winning high praise from colleagues for his dispassionate reports. Before winter he was summoned by the Foreign Office to do secret service work, in 1916 he went out again as a colonel in the Intelligence Corps at GHQ in France, the following year was appointed by Lloyd George to head the new Department of Information (which would become the Ministry of Information in February 1918). Buchan's job was twofold: propaganda to the enemy and to neutral countries and the promotion of national unity at home to counteract the developing "home versus front syndrome." He was successful in both fields, making optimum use of the press, of artists and writers, and the new medium of film.

It was a punishing workload for one man, but he seemed to enjoy it, moving between "his own department, the Foreign Office, Admiralty, War Office, No.10 Downing Street and—occasionally—Buckingham Palace." It was "the most interesting job on the globe for I live at the heart of things here and in France." Looking back at this time many years later, however, he referred to it as "purgatorial,"

> for though I had few of the hardships of the actual trenches, lengthy journeys in the drizzling autumn and winter of 1916, damp billets, and irregular meals reduced me to such a state of physical wretchedness that even today a kind of nausea seizes me when some smell recalls the festering odour of the front line, made up of incinerators, latrines and mud.[1]

A contributing factor to this "wretchedness" was a painful duodenal ulcer that had slowly developed since 1911 caused by constant overwork and family bereavement; it frequently reduced him to a dull diet, an operation in 1917 bringing only temporary relief. When Armistice came in November 1918, Buchan could have been satisfied with his work at the Ministry, but there was also sadness. The year before, his best friend and business partner Thomas Nelson and his own brother Alastair were both killed at the battle of Arras, a year earlier another brilliant Oxford friend, Raymond Asquith, son of the Prime Minister, had fallen at the Somme, and yet another friend, Auberon Herbert, had been shot down behind enemy lines.

We are, however, not so much concerned here with the outstanding (unofficial) historiographer, intelligence officer, propagandist in the service of his country; what interests us more is the other John Buchan in war time, the creator of gripping escapist tales of espionage and courage, in the fight of good versus evil. This brief study will discuss mainly those three (of his five) Richard Hannay novels which have a close or direct connection with the War.[2]

In August 1914 he was laid low with his duodenal ulcer, ordered absolute rest, and to while away the time he started the first of his Hannay stories, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. The dedication to his friend Thomas Nelson reflects their shared love of the genre:

> that elementary type of tale which Americans call the "dime novel" and which we know as the "shocker"—the romance where the incidents defy the probabilities, and march just inside the borders of the possible... (5)

The novel—the original title suggested by Buchan was *The Black Stone*—"by H. de V." appeared serialised in *Blackwood's Magazine*

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1. All three quotations from Janet Adam Smith, *John Buchan and His World* (London, 1979), p. 65.

2. *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, Introduction by Christopher Harvie, OUP (1993) / *Greenmantle*, Introduction by Kate Macdonald, OUP (1993) / *Mr Standfast*, Introduction by William Buchan, OUP (1993). The other two are *The Three Hostages* and *The Island of Sheep*.

from June to September 1915, the book (also by Blackwood's) was published in October 1915 with 25,000 copies sold before the end of the year. And that was despite the unpromising military situation (Gallipoli, Russian retreat in Galicia). Or was it precisely because of it? *The British Weekly*, influential "maker-and–breaker of literary reputations" had to admit that its rival *Blackwood's* had landed a coup:

> We have everything that can be wished—an excellent cipher story, with one or two points of novelty, a murder, a big subterranean business, a flight in a stolen motor-car, a monoplane floating with deadly intent, a Radical candidate, and all the rest. *Not* all the rest, for the woman has not yet appeared on the scene. But nobody must miss the tale.[3]

The woman did not appear at all in the novel, but the "female interest" was provided later by the various film versions based on the book.[4] All of them took great liberties with the original text, but they are proof of the enduring popularity of the subject and have helped keep the novel alive and in print.

The *genre* of the espionage novel was not an invention of Buchan's; important predecessors were the highly popular William Le Queux and particularly E. Phillip Oppenheim, whom he called his "master in fiction" when he wrote his first "shocker" in 1913, *The Power House*. (serialised in *Blackwood's Magazine*, published as a book in 1916). The two writers had produced scores of cheap thrillers between 1890 and 1914, the enemy before being France, now Germany. Buchan's main source of inspiration, however, was Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands*, 1903, which had sold several hundred thousand copies, many issued by Nelson. The two authors had met; their books share several traits, besides the invasion theme:

> The hero—Carruthers in Childers, Hannay in Buchan—is unexpectedly contacted by someone—Davies and Scudder—who has already unearthed most of the conspiracy [...] the action takes place on terrain known in detail to the author; the denouement involves a race against timetables and tidetables, and the highest of high politics. Childers takes twice as long as Buchan to get to the point, but the quality that both books share is above all *atmosphere*, something Le

3. *The British Weekly* ( 1 July 1915) in: Harvie, Introduction, p.viii.

4. 1935 Alfred Hitchcock, 1959 Ralph Thomas, 1978 Don Sharp, 2008 James Hawes.

> Queux and Oppenheim were dreadful at. The bleak summits of Tweedsmuir are as real as the cramped cabin of the *Dulcibella*, or the sandbanks of Borkum.[5]

Dennis Butts identifies recurring features of the popular *genre* of the spy novel: "the use of an amateur agent, the accidental discovery of a mystery, the gradual discovery of the mystery's serious implications, and the hero's ultimate defeat of the conspiracy."[6] He also reminds us that Buchan, like Conan Doyle in his Sherlock Holmes stories, makes unexpected disturbing and threatening events intrude into a seemingly safe and familiar world. Butts points out two more typical Buchan characteristics, the first being the introduction of a coded message (or mystery) early on in the story. The solution of this cryptic message influences the course of the main plot, Hannay usually manages to solve the problem ("by constant chewing" at the words). In the first story the message is: "*Thirty-nine steps—I counted them—High tide*, 10.17 p.m." (38), in *Greenmantle* the words on the dying Harry Bullivant's piece of note-paper read: "*Kasredin*," "*cancer*," "*v.I.*" (15). In the third tale, *Mr Standfast*, the code-words are picked up by Hannay later in the story, in a mountain cave on the Isle of Skye, from an overheard conversation between two Germans, one a spy, the other a naval officer from a submarine: *"Chelius*," "*Bommaerts*," "*Elfenbein*," "*Die Stubenvögel verstehn*," "*Wildvögel*" (110).

In the fourth Hannay novel, *The Three Hostages*, Buchan pokes fun at his use of the device "of introducing three apparently unrelated phrases and then telling a story which shows how they are all closely connected [...] through Dr Greenslade's ironical explanation of how it works..."[7] In what Butts calls "the most brilliant double-bluff on Buchan's part" the author shows that Dr Greenslade's examples were far from arbitrary but sprang from his unconscious memory of a conversation with the villain which Hannay can then investigate later.[8] The second Buchan characteristic mentioned by Butts is the "use of the double-journey structure."[9] Hannay, a kind of amateur detective, sets out to investigate a mystery, is in turn pursued by

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5. Harvie, Introduction, p.xi.

6. Dennis Butts, "The Hunter and the Hunted: The suspense Novels of John Buchan," in *Spy Thrillers: From Buchan to le Carré,* ed. Clive Bloom (New York, 1990), p. 46.

7. Butts, p. 49. Dr. Greenslade's example in *The Three Hostages* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p. 5.

8. Butts, p. 50.

9. Butts, p. 54.

people who try to stop him. Variations of this pattern are applied in *Greenmantle* and *Mr Standfast* (one difference now being that the protagonist is in the service of the British authorities from the start).

We have heard that Buchan and Childers share a number of traits in their spy stories. Both are masters of creating atmosphere, achieving this by operating in familiar settings. According to Graham Greene (who as a boy was a great admirer of Buchan's stories)

> John Buchan was the first to realize the enormous dramatic value of adventure in familiar surroundings happening to unadventurous men, members of Parliament and members of the Athenaeum, lawyers and barristers, business men and minor peers.[10]

In *The Thirty-Nine Steps* Hannay lives at Portland Place, next to Buchan's London house, his flight takes him to Scotland, Galloway and Tweeddale in particular, holiday country of the author as a boy. Trafalgar Lodge on the Ruff in Bradgate is a villa on the cliffs with steps down to the sea in Broadstairs, right beside the Buchans' holiday house there in 1914. The Cotswolds, referred to in *Mr Standfast* as the setting of the garden city of Biggleswick and as ideal post-war location for Mary and Hannay, were a popular hiking and canoeing destination for the Oxford student who acquired a house in the area in 1919, Elsfield Manor, the model for Fosse Manor which Hannay buys for his wife after the war.

Michael Denning points out that the stories of Childers, Buchan and Sapper all begin with a man bored. This is true for Buchan's first two spy stories, not so much for the later Hannay tales. In *The Power-House* the protagonist Leithen leads the fairly uneventful life of a barrister looking out on real life from his stuffy chambers, in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* the boredom of a colonial in the metropolis is very pronounced (a reflection of Buchan's own condition as a patient confined to his bed?):

> Here I was, thirty-seven years old, sound in wind and limbs, with enough money to have a good time, yawning my head off all day... I was the best bored man in the United Kingdom. (7)

There are reminiscences of R. L. Stevenson, such as the chapter headings: "The adventure of..." and the dovecot incident which echoes

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10. Graham Greene, *Collected Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 167, in Michael Denning, *Cover Stories: Narrative and ideology in the British spy thriller* (London, 1987), p. 51.

the situation in *Kidnapped* when Alan Breck and David Balfour are trapped on a rock in Glencoe with the troops searching for them below.

A word about Richard Hannay. When the reader first meets him, he is introduced as a prosperous South African mining engineer of Scottish descent on a holiday in London, thinking about his future. He can speak German and Afrikaans and is familiar with surviving outdoors. We learn about his active service in the Matabele War, his activities as an intelligence officer at Delagoa Bay during the Boer War with a special interest in decoding messages. In the metropolis he is bored, which changes when Scudder, the secret agent, is murdered in his flat. Hannay realizes that he must escape from the killers who are after him and the black book, but also from the police who will pin Scudder's murder on him. He decides to make his way to Galloway, where he is able to pass as an ordinary Scot and where his "veldcraft" will be useful; and he feels bound to carry on Scudder's work:

> You may think this ridiculous for a man in danger of his life, but that was the way I looked at it. I am an ordinary sort of fellow, not braver than other people, but I hate to see a good man downed, and that long knife would not be the end of Scudder if I could play the game in his place. (20)

That he is not an "ordinary sort of fellow" is pretty obvious and on this fact rests the ultimate success of his mission. When, at the final showdown, the German conspirators seem to triumph as one of them has managed to escape, Hannay realizes the grave danger the country has been in:

> The old man was looking at me with blazing eyes. "He is safe," he cried. "You cannot follow in time... He is gone... He has triumphed... *Der schwarze Stein ist in der Siegeskrone.*" There was more in those eyes than any common triumph. They had been hooded like a bird of prey, and now they flamed with a hawk's pride. A white fanatic heat burned in them, and I realized for the first time the terrible thing I had been up against. (111)

In the end, he is successful in thwarting the sinister plot of the Black Stone: the German spies are arrested. Three weeks later war breaks out and Hannay joins the New Army with a captain's commission.

In his autobiography Buchan tells us the circumstances of his creation of Hannay:

> while pinned to my bed during the first months of war and compelled to keep my mind off too tragic realities, I gave myself to stories of adventure. I invented a young South African called Richard Hannay, who had traits copied from my friends, and I amused myself with considering what he would do in various emergencies.[11]

Hannay proved to be such a popular hero that the "various emergencies" eventually filled five full–length novels plus a short story, which makes him Buchan's most frequently employed protagonist. On the part of the author this required some fine-tuning of Hannay's character and of his circumstances after the first tale. One such instance is Hannay's epiphany in *Mr Standfast* when he is struck by the peace and tranquil beauty of the Cotswolds countryside and decides to put down roots there after the war (as did Buchan):

> in that hour England first took hold of me. Before my country had been South Africa, and when I thought of home it had been the wide sun-steeped spaces of the veld or some scented glen of the Berg. But now I realized that I had a new home. (15)

To this may be added David Daniell's observation of "a marked sharpening of detail about ciphers and intelligence" as the Hannay books progress.[12] The question of which of Buchan's friends provided the model for Richard Hannay has been dealt with convincingly by Kate Macdonald.[13] Her favourite candidate is Lieutenant Edmund Ironside, soldier and intelligence officer after the Boer War, (later the youngest general in the British Army), whom Buchan had met in South Africa. He did espionage work in German South-West Africa, posing as a pro-German Boer, was fluent in French, Flemish, Dutch, Afrikaans, so shared many traits with the Boer Cornelis Brandt (alias R. Hannay) who would offer his services to the Prussian military authorities in *Greenmantle*. As to the name of Hannay, Macdonald found several officers of that name in the British army lists of the Boer War, the strongest contender there being Lt. Col. O.C. Hannay of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. His death at Paardeberg

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11. John Buchan, *Memory Hold-The-Door* (1940), p. 195, in Kate Macdonald,"Who Was Richard Hannay?—A Search For The Source," *The John Buchan Journal* 7 (1987), p. 10.

12. David Daniell, "At the Foot of the Thirty-Ninth Step," *The John Buchan Journal* 10 (1991), p. 26n4.

13. Cf. note 11.

on 18th February 1900 was spectacular, with a touch of *The Charge of the Light Brigade*: Ordered by Kitchener to ride directly into enemy fire, he dismissed most of his staff, and with a handful of men was killed. *The Times Official History of the Boer War* (1901) gave a full account of the battle, referring to his death in "its dramatic significance as a protest against Kitchener's indifference to life."[14]

In *The Thirty-Nine Steps* Hannay is alone, depending on his own wits most of the time. At crucial moments, though, the memory of his mentor Peter Pienaar, a Boer scout from South African days, proves helpful. Pienaar, an expert in "veldcraft" has a theory of disguise and impersonation which Hannay remembers to his advantage (and will make use of in all his later adventures):

> the secret of playing a part was to think yourself into it. You could never keep it up, he said, unless you could manage to convince yourself that you were *it*. (52)

> He said, barring absolute certainties like finger-prints, mere physical traits were very little use for identification if the fugitive really knew his business. He laughed at things like dyed hair and false beards and such childish follies. The only thing that mattered was what Peter called "ammosphere." (102)

Christopher Harvie reminds us that "even at the most breathless moments of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, the Free Kirk pulpit is [...] never far away,"[15] meaning that with Buchan's Presbyterian upbringing as son of the manse, religious precepts influence the plot of the story, frequently in connection with one of Buchan's favourite books, John Bunyan's 17th century religious allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress.* In an essay on the first Hannay story, David Daniell points out Calvinist overtones and parallels to Bunyan's text.[16] The 39 books of the Old Testament are seen as 39 steps to the Revelation of God in Christ, needing much deciphering (Scudder's book). According to Daniell, the phrase that may have "triggered the whole thing for JB" was a sentence from *Pilgrim's Progress* when Christian wallows in the Slough of Despond (as did Buchan, in bed, frustrated and ill, while the nation went to war) until a phrase from Help changes the situation: "But why did you not look for the steps?"[17] Hannay, like Chris-

14. Quote in Macdonald, p. 13.
15. Harvie, Introduction, p.ix.
16. Cf. note 12.
17. Daniell, p. 24.

tian, has one-to-one encounters with people, with long stretches of lonely flight in between, in an innocent-looking landscape that is full of terror, reminding the reader that the Borders saw the flight of the Covenanters in the days of religious persecution. And Hannay

> like Christian, starts out as an unregenerate, and moves on his solitary journey through successive encounters towards more and more truth, a recognition of a cosmic pattern hidden before.[18]

It is hardly surprising that in this context Daniell is very critical of Hitchcock's filmed version in which a female ("the delectable Madeleine Carroll") is chained to the fugitive; he thinks the film director, by "turning the whole passage towards a sex-comedy [...] so crashingly misses this point."[19] (This also applies to the later films.) Having finally arrived at the villa in Bradgate, Hannay faces a Calvinist dilemma, the problem of how to be certain of the identity of good and evil. When he plays bridge with those "ridiculously innocent suburbanites," he is in agonies of doubt. Daniell sees the house on the Ruff as a mixture of Bunyan's Castle Doubting, with Giant Despair, and his Interpreter's House. At the final showdown, when Franz, one of the Black Stone, escapes, there is a deep underground explosion making a hole in the cliff, "a cloud of chalky dust pouring out of the shaft of the stairway" (111). For Daniell this is an obvious parallel to Bunyan's text, during Christian's dream of apocalypse and judgement, in the Interpreter's House, when he recognizes good and evil:

> The bottomless pit opened, just whereabout I stood; out of the mouth of which there came in an abundant manner smoke, and coals of fire, with hideous noises...[20]

The reader meets Hannay again, in the second book of the cycle, *Greenmantle*.[21] In late autumn of 1915 Hannay, promoted to major, is convalescing after the Battle of Loos, when a telegram summons him to the Foreign Office. A new mission is waiting for him. Again Hannay tells the story, but this time he is not a lone fighter; he has formidable allies. There is Sandy Arbuthnot, a Scottish Border laird

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18. Daniell, p. 24.

19. Daniell, p. 22.

20. *The Pilgrim's Progress* (London, 1905), pp. 58–59. I am not certain if I agree with Daniell here. As I read Bunyan's text, the dream is somebody else's (the man who trembles) and is related to Christian by him.

21. Published by Hodder & Stoughton in October 1916. Dedication to Caroline Grosvenor, his mother-in-law.

and fellow officer who has travelled the Middle East extensively, a great linguist with many useful contacts, especially among the oriental gypsy communities. The second ally is the aforementioned Peter Pienaar, and finally, there is John S. Blenkiron, an elderly wealthy American industrialist who, behind a plump exterior and a seemingly phlegmatic manner, hides a brilliant mind and considerable organising skills. He is somewhat handicapped by frequent attacks of dyspepsia (Buchan has transferred to him his own affliction).

Peter Pienaar, like Hannay, owes his existence to Buchan's experiences in South Africa between 1901 and 1903, when, as a young lawyer in Lord Milner's "kindergarten," he took part in the post-war reconstruction of the country. Chapters 3 and 4 of our tale echo that experience. Sandy Arbuthnot is a more complex figure, partly based on Buchan's Oxford friend Aubrey Herbert, one of the great Edwardian travellers, partly on T.E. Lawrence, who played a significant role in the fall of Erzerum. With the introduction of the completely fictitious John S. Blenkiron Buchan records his admiration for the USA and its people.

Not only has the author increased the number of *dramatis personae*, but also of the settings:

> In a quest to unravel the mystery of a German secret weapon held somewhere in the Middle East, they each travel through German-held eastern Europe, meeting up in Constantinople, and follow the trail to the Russo-Turkish border. Then comes a climactic finish as the heroes ride with the Cossacks into Erzerum.[22]

At the very front of the cavalcade gallops Sandy, whom the Germans had wanted to make use of as the new prophet, but their clever plan has backfired:

> In the clear morning air I could see that he was not wearing the uniform of the invaders. He was turbaned and rode like one possessed, and against the snow I caught the dark sheen of emerald. As he rode it seemed that the fleeing Turks were stricken still, and sank by the roadside with eyes strained after his unheeding figure [...]. Then I knew that the prophecy had been true, and that their prophet had not failed them. The long-looked for revelation had come. Greenmantle had appeared at last to an awaiting people. (272)

22. K. Macdonald, Introduction, p.x.

Buchan wrote *Greenmantle* between February and June 1916, immediately after the fall of Erzerum. His first Hannay novel had made him famous, and this second one, published in October 1916, was an equally great success,[23] with the critics inclined to overlook the many improbabilities:

> "The madness is ingeniously mixed up with method, the result being a tale that allures all along the line."
>
> "Mr Buchan makes his soldiers and adventurers so confoundedly plausible that you swallow them without any sense of the enormity of the unlikeliness of it all."[24]

For the story Buchan drew on his secret service information, his knowledge of history and his travel experience. In 1910 he had visited Constantinople—"pure Arabian nights"—and stored these impressions for the later book.

The idea of Germany using an Islamic prophet against the British is partly based on the Mahdi riots in the Sudan with the fall of Khartoum, partly on the claim of the Kaiser that he had been converted to Islam and thus had the right to proclaim a Jihad against the British throughout the Muslim world. This is narrated by Buchan in *Nelson's History* and referred to in the first chapter of *Greenmantle*.

Details of the Russian conquest of Erzerum on 16 February 1916 probably reached him via his secret service contacts; one potential source is the Russian delegation which Buchan escorted to Scapa Flow the same year. The date and the place fitted neatly into the plot of his tale and provided the final climax to an exotic spy story.

As regards the description of the enemy, the Germans, *Greenmantle* appears to be fairly free from propaganda and even shows a certain sympathy for members of the Teutonic race. Buchan makes Hannay himself experience a change of heart, after the fugitive has spent a few days in hiding with a poor German family, recovering from a serious bout of malaria:

> When I saw the splintered shell of Ypres and heard hideous tales of German doings I used to want to see the whole land of the Boche given up to fire and sword. I thought we could never end the war properly without giving the Huns some of

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23. Over 30 editions in its first 20 years; it has never been out of print.

24. *The Bookman* (October 1916), p. 16 / *Punch* (November 1916), p. 56. Both quoted in Macdonald, Introd.p.vii.

> their own medicine. But that woodcutter's cottage cured me of such nightmares. I was for punishing the guilty but letting the innocent go free. (99)

In his dealings with German men, he now distinguishes between "cads and gentlemen," von Stumm most certainly belonging to the first category. An efficient bully, he had made a name for himself in German South-West Africa when he cruelly crushed the Herero rebellion. At their first encounter Hannay sums him up:

> Here was the German of caricature, the real German, the fellow we were up against. He was as hideous as a hippopotamus, but effective. Every bristle on his odd head was effective. (50)

On the other hand, there is Gaudian, "one of the biggest railway engineers in the world, the man who had built the Bagdad and Syrian railways [...] about the greatest living authority on tropical construction" (64), who is portrayed as a clean and unquestioning patriot, in a way Hannay's German counterpart, so much so that he can become Hannay's post-war friend and ally in *The Three Hostages*. But he, too, is not free from fanaticism, a very un-British trait of character, according to Miles Donald a sign of inhumanity. For him this is an example of subtle reader manipulation by Buchan:

> Under the guise of sympathetic even-handedness the Germans are revealed as inferior in humanity. The reader is able both to congratulate him/herself on compassion for Germans and to enjoy taking a step on the road to dehumanizing them.[25]

Donald sees the same device in operation when the author describes Hannay's encounter with the Kaiser. Hannay feels attracted, senses the tragedy of this man who "had loosed Hell, and the furies of Hell had got hold of him [...] here was a human being" (76). On the face of it a sympathetic description, but we are reminded that the Kaiser started the war and will be punished: "The reader gets a thrill out of meeting a Royal together with the moral satisfaction of finding that he's damned."[26]

The third Richard Hannay novel, *Mr. Standfast*, was written between 1917 and 1918 (after the German Spring offensive), again pub-

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25. Miles Donald, " John Buchan: The Reader's Trap," in *Spy Thrillers: From Buchan to le Carré,* ed. Clive Bloom (New York, 1990), p. 65.

26. Donald, p. 66.

lished by Hodder & Stoughton, in 1919. It is the summer of 1917. The tale starts off very much like the previous one: Hannay, not yet forty and already a brigadier, wounded several times, highly decorated, is summoned from the front to the Foreign Office. He is not too happy at the prospect of having to give up his military career, as he has become ambitious enough to want to see the war through to the end. His brief is to make contact with the highly efficient German spy network in Britain whose members still manage to pass on vital military secrets to the other side thus wreaking havoc on various fronts. In this context, a particular danger is associated with the activities of German submarines.

The reader already knows two of Hannay's chief allies in this game. There is the American John S. Blenkiron whose physique has improved dramatically and whose dyspepsia has disappeared due to a successful operation (a reflection of Buchan's own temporarily improved duodenal condition). And Peter Pienaar is part of the team again, also somewhat changed. The dedication to *Greenmantle* informed us that after the Erzerum business Peter "has shaved his beard and joined the Flying Corps." That was the only reward he wanted. He has been a huge success, has "developed a perfect genius for air fighting." "He apparently knew how to hide in the empty air as cleverly as in the long grass of the Lebombo Flats" (12). But one day he is shot down, presumably by Lensch, the German air-ace, and is made a prisoner. As a result of the crash Peter has a game leg, which makes the prospect of life after the war rather depressing. Once he has been released by the Germans to neutral Switzerland, he plays an important part, not so obviously in the spy hunt as in the climactic finale.

The most exciting addition to the team is young Mary Lamington who provides the "female interest" so noticeably absent from *The Thirty-Nine Steps*; at the first glimpse of her in the becoming VAD uniform, Hannay is "smitten":

> I looked up to see the very prettiest girl I ever set eyes on. She seemed little more than a child, and before the war would probably have still ranked as a flapper [...]. I thought I had never seen eyes at once so merry and so grave. I stared after her as she walked across the lawn, and I remember noticing that she moved with the free grace of an athletic boy.
>
> (11)

Luckily for Hannay the attraction is mutual, for this is the first time he has come close to a woman and fallen in love; in normal cir-

cumstances he might have made a clumsy suitor, but the shared dangers speed up developments to his advantage; in the Picardy *château* the two lovers "come to complete understanding":

> The fairies had been at work unseen, and the thoughts of each of us had been moving towards the other, till love had germinated like seed in the dark. As I held her in my arms I stroked her hair and murmured things which seemed to spring out of some ancestral memory. Certainly my tongue had never used them before, nor my mind imagined them... (189)

This may be a good moment for a few words about what Miles Donald calls "perhaps the most awkward aspect of Buchan's fiction—the treatment of women,"[27] which Donald sees informed by the author's own uneasiness concerning eroticism. The world of Buchan / Hannay is a man's world (despite the fact that the author was a married family man) and the number of women "with pivotal plot roles" is limited. If they appear at all, they are types, "restrictedly drawn" women:

> Females between puberty and the menopause are either evil sirens like Hilda von Einem in *Greenmantle*, the possessor of a thoroughly and therefore destructive sexuality—or squeaky-clean boy/girls, later permitted a mutation into motherhood, such as Hannay's Mary.[28]

The major admits that he is pretty ignorant about women having lived with men only all his life ("I know as much of their ways as I know about the Chinese language," 170) In his encounter with Hilda von Einem Hannay is at the same time fascinated and repelled, when she is sizing him up as a man. He hates her, but also wants to arouse her sexual interest. Donald points out that Buchan manipulates the reader at this point of the narrative. Life must be kept simple, the erotic must be shifted away from Hannay back to Hilda ("Her bosom rose and fell in a kind of sigh," 173) must be made safe and secure for the reader:

> Since the erotic causes trouble it has been given back to the trouble maker. It has been transferred from Our Hero to the Naughty Lady, to whom it more properly (or improperly!) belongs.[29]

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27. Donald, p. 69.
28. Donald, p. 69.
29. Donald, p. 70.

Manipulation by the author is also at work in the case of Mary Lamington. She is courted by General Hannay (about 20 years her senior) in *Mr Standfast*, by the opening of *The Three Hostages* she has married him and has become the mother of their boy Peter John. Although not usually associated with eroticism, she is asked to behave "like a shameless minx" to ensnare Moxon Ivery, and in the following story to pose as a dance-hall hostess. According to Donald, the more Mary is forced into situations with sexual implications, the less erotic and the less plausible she becomes. Buchan makes her feel shame at her "dance-hall shenanigans," but only feebly explains how she learned "the tricks of the trade":

> Do you know, Dick, I believe I'm really a good actress! I have acquired a metallic voice, and a high silly laugh, and hard eyes, and when I lie in bed at night I blush all over for my shamelessness. I know you hate it, but you can't hate it more than I do. (162)

Like Hannay in the Hilda von Einem episode, Mary must be kept clean, free from sexual involvement: "Buchan wants the reader to feel the illicit excitement of the good girl required to play at being bad while being assured that she couldn't possibly enjoy the same."[30]

At some point in *Mr Standfast* Mary, operating as a decoy, regularly meets Moxon Ivery, now "Capitaine Bommaerts." First they only go for walks in the Bois de Boulogne, then, during a more intimate luncheon, she is confronted with his declaration of love and his "physical attentions," but he is "rebuffed with a hoydenish shyness" (203). Donald's verdict on this scene:

> I think it may be fairly submitted that while no international mastermind is going to be *rebuffed* by a spot of hoydenish shyness, it might well keep him interested and the reader titillated without the least moral blame attaching to the virginal hoyden in question.[31]

The enemy they are up against is a protean character, the cleverest foreign spy the British authorities have ever come across. Hannay first meets him in the Cotswolds village as Moxon Ivery, a pacifist activist of great social standing, but at a later stage remembers having seen him before as a member of the Black Stone and also as the man posing as Lord Alloa (*The Thirty-Nine Steps*):

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30. Donald, p. 71.
31. Donald, p. 71.

> I began to feel about Ivery as I had felt about the three devils of the Black Stone who had hunted me before the war [...] this Ivery was like a poison gas that hung in the air and got into unexpected crannies and that you couldn't fight in an upstanding way. Till then, in spite of Blenkiron's solemnity, I had regarded him simply as a problem. But now he seemed an intimate and omnipresent enemy, intangible, too, as the horror of a haunted house [...]. I got a chill in my spine when I thought of him. (91–92)

The fight with this powerful antagonist assumes for Hannay the quality of a personal duel, even more so after he has learned that Ivery is in love with Mary. Hannay's quest takes him from a sleepy Gloucestershire "garden city" full of "arty" pacifist cranks to Scotland where, on the Isle of Skye, he discovers the enemy's secret "letter-box," then back to France and the front, from there to the Swiss chalet for the final showdown. As a suitable punishment for his many crimes against humanity, Ivery, or, to give him his real name, *Graf Otto von Schwabing,* a disenchanted Bavarian nobleman, is taken back to France to endure front-line bombardment (fear of bombs being the "one fatal chink in his armour") in a British trench, and is killed by his own people. The destiny devised by Hannay for Ivery may appear surprisingly brutal, but is accepted as "entirely appropriate" by William Buchan, the author's son:

> This single outburst of savagery must arise from John Buchan's profound disgust at what he felt the Germans had done to destroy, almost beyond recovery, the kindness and sanity of his world.[32]

A few words about the villains in Buchan's Hannay novels. Dennis Butts sees some kind of dualism in their character. The Black Stone, Hilda von Einem, von Stumm, Graf Otto von Schwabing (alias Moxon Ivery), Dominick Medina (in *The Three Hostages*) are all

> scheming ruthless, murderous fanatics, who would, in their different ways, not only defeat England and its assumed values of democracy and decency, but in many cases are actually trying to bring down the whole edifice of civilization.[33]

32. William Buchan, Introduction, p.xix.
33. Dennis Butts, p. 54. Cf. note 6.

At the same time these villains are highly gifted people, "not only subtle organizers and skilful plotters, but dedicated, heroic, often charismatic personalities."[34] Hilda von Einem may be "a devil incarnate, but she has the soul of a Napoleon," says Sandy (182) and Hannay must admit "Mad and bad she might be, but she was also great" (173), Medina is a talented politician, first-class sportsman, fine classical scholar and poet, whom Hannay is immediately fascinated with and feels drawn to; even the old man of the Black Stone at the end wins Hannay's "grudging admiration": "This man was more than a spy; in his foul way he had been a patriot" (111). In David Daniell's words, they are "false Lucifers," highly gifted people who have gone astray and he "attributes Buchan's awareness of this combination of heavenly and diabolical elements in the human soul to his Calvinist upbringing."[35] In making their characters more complex, Buchan has taken a great step forward from the stereotyped villains of his predecessors, "the figure of the evil, ubiquitous, and brilliant German spy."[36] Now, in Buchan's novels, some of them are not even German, but come from much closer home, are mixed-race British (e.g. Dominick Medina in *The Three Hostages*). To quote Butts:

> This sense that evil is not only present in the very heart of society, but that villainy and virtue are often very close to each other, is a theme that recurs in Buchan's work.[37]

As before in *Greenmantle*, Buchan has neatly interwoven the climax of the story with a momentous military event: there it was the Russian siege and eventual conquest of the Turkish fortified town of Erzerum, here it is Ludendorff's Spring Offensive of 1918, his last big gamble on the western front. The British line of defence is pushed back under the German onslaught, Hannay's troops are placed where the line is extremely thin and vulnerable. It is true that German "spotter-planes" are chased back by their British opponents, but one German appears to dominate the sky; it is Lensch, the air-ace. Before he manages to fly home to report, however, a British plane brings him down by crashing into his Albatross. The pilot, as the reader has already guessed, is Peter Pienaar; with this bold *kamikaze* action he has saved his side and is awarded a post-

34. Butts, p. 54.
35. David Daniell, *The Interpreter's House: A Critical Assessment of the work of John Buchan* (London, 1975), p. 129, in Butts, p. 55.
36. Denning, p. 43.
37. Butts, p. 55.

humous Victoria Cross. (Pienaar's flying career and death are based on that of Buchan's friend Auberon Herbert who, in spite of having lost a leg in the Boer War, had managed to become a pilot.)

The title of Buchan's novel, *Mr Standfast*, and various chapter headings point us once again to John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress,* which serves as a code that comments and interprets the action of the novel. To receive his orders, Hannay arrives at "The Wicket-Gate" ("at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do"[38]) he stays in "The Village of Morality," must traverse "The Valley of Humiliation," till finally "The Summons comes for Mr Standfast." Hannay's (and Mary's) quest is likened to Christian's pilgrimage to the Celestial City, with the Hill Difficulty, and the Slough of Despond. As part of their briefs they have memorized the text, so Bunyan's diction comes naturally to them in their dialogue:

> You look a tremendous warrior, Dick. I have never seen you like this before. I was in Doubting Castle and very much afraid of Giant Despair, till you came. I think I call it the Interpreter's house, I said...

and communications:

> Oh, and I've got a word to ye from a lady that we ken of. She says, the sooner ye're back in Vawnity Fair the better she'll be pleased, always provided ye've got over the Hill Difficulty. (93)

And it serves to characterise one protagonist in particular. In German captivity Peter Pienaar has started reading the Bible and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, drawing comfort from both books and learning patience and fortitude:

> Once, when I said something about his patience, he said he had got to try to live up to Mr Standfast. He had fixed on that character to follow, though he would have preferred Mr Valiant-for-Truth if he had thought himself good enough. (231)

> He thought that he might with luck resemble Mr. Standfast, for like him he had not much trouble in keeping wakeful, and was also as "poor as a howlet," and didn't bother about women. He only hoped that he could imitate him in making a good end. (155)

38. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (London, 1905), p. 31.

He has forebodings of an early death (as he can't see himself leading the life of a cripple after the war) and does indeed, by his sacrifice, succeed in "making a good end." Mary, in a somewhat vaguer premonition, expresses similar sentiments:

> "It's a long road to the Delectable Mountains, and Faithful, you know, has to die first [...] there is a price to be paid." The words sobered me. "Who is our Faithful?" I asked. "I don't know. But he was the best of the Pilgrims." (199)

Thus, it is only befitting that, at Peter's funeral in France, Hannay reads

> the tale of the end, not of Mr Standfast whom he had singled out for his counterpart, but of Mr Valiant-for-Truth whom he had not hoped to emulate. (331)

* * *

Buchan wrote his first espionage novels shortly before and during the war, at a time of personal and international crisis, to keep his mind off "too tragic realities." The war showed him that the wall that separates civilization from barbarism is nothing but "a thread, a pane of glass. A touch here, a push there, and you bring back the reign of Saturn."[39] As an Intelligence Officer he had been actively involved in secret service work, as a historian had chronicled the course of military events, as organizer of propaganda had worked tirelessly for and with men in command of the enormous war machine, as a reporter had witnessed the suffering of the men fighting in the trenches. There is no doubt that his private pastime of writing spy novels was of a therapeutic nature; equally clear is that it benefited from his strenuous official war work: the stories around Richard Hannay could not have been created without his vast and varied background knowledge. Considered too old and too sick for active service at the front, he must have drawn vicarious pleasure from the daring exploits of Richard Hannay, his own invention. His war experience left him a "sadder and a wiser man" and, together with his duodenal troubles, the war would be with him for the rest of his life. There was some satisfaction though: the public were gripped by his escapist tales of spying and adventure, as testified by a subaltern's letter from the trenches:

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39. John Buchan, *The Power House* (London, 1949), pp. 211–212.

> The shocker arrived just before dinner-time and though with an early rising, sleep is very precious to us, I lay awake in my dugout till I had finished the last page. This, I take it, is the supreme test of a "shocker," one should never be able to lay it down. It is just the kind of fiction for here. Longer novels I cannot manage in the trenches. One wants something to engross the attention without tiring the mind, in doses not too large to be assimilated in the brief intervals of spare time [...]. The story is greatly appreciated in the midst of mud and rain and shells, and all that could make trench life depressing.[40]

Thus having been able to provide soldiers at the front with some means of forgetting, at least for a few hours, the dreadful realities of trench life, must have been gratifying for the author who now could tell himself that, in this particular way, he was also "doing his bit" at the front.

It is true that language and many of the social attitudes of his thrillers now appear outdated, were in fact already so in the 1930s, as Graham Greene recalls:

> An early hero of mine was John Buchan, but when I re-opened his books I found I could no longer get the same pleasure from the adventures of Richard Hannay. More than the dialogue and the situation had dated: the moral climate was no longer that of my boyhood. Patriotism had lost its appeal, even for a schoolboy, at Passchendaele, and the Empire brought first to mind the Beaverbrook Crusader, while it was difficult, during the years of the Depression, to believe in the high purposes of the City of London or of the British Constitution.[41]

But as Janet Adam Smith observes, with "his ability to touch deeper concern than the triumph of hero or the fall of villain," his warning "that civilization cannot be taken for granted," Buchan is still very topical. In 1940, during the Second World War, Graham Greene acknowledges this fact:

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40. Harvie, Introduction, p.xx.

41. Graham Greene, *Ways of Escape* (New York, 1980), pp. 54–55, in Denning, pp. 61–62.

> Buchan prepared us in his thrillers better than he knew for the death that may come to any of us [...]. For certainly we can all see now "how thin is the protection of civilization."[42]

The many later editions and reprints of the Richard Hannay novels (including several film versions and a play based on one story) prove that John Buchan's "shockers" are still very much alive and widely read by a great many people (including the German writer of these lines) keen on profound and timeless tales of escape and adventure.

42. All three quotations from J. A. Smith, pp. 78–79.

# Nacheinander – Nebeneinander
## Remarks on the Opening of the "Proteus" Chapter of Joyce's *Ulysses*

*Zsolt Komáromy*

*Az itt következő esszé nem tudós tanulmány, hanem egy műkedvelő munkája. James Joyce* Ulysses*e azonban több is, mint egy mű, amit kedvelek: szinte kiapadhatatlan irodalmi élvezet forrása, mely forrást Sarbu Aladár* Ulysses*-olvasó szemináriuma tárta fel számomra. E kurzusra nagy lelkesedéssel írtam doktori hallgatóként egy szemináriumi dolgozatot, aminek több erénye is kellett, hogy legyen, mint a lelkesedés, hisz Sarbu professzor úr arra buzdított, tegyem közzé valahol. Ez persze igencsak hízelgett a hiúságomnak, de részben mert ezzel meg is elégedtem, részben pedig mert más témákkal voltam akkor már elfoglalva, mégsem szorgalmaztam az esszé megjelenését. Most úgy gondoltam, több értelme van engedni e régi buzdításnak, és közzétenni az akkori (hosszabb, szakszerűbb) dolgozat átiratát, mint egy tudósabb cikket közölni itt a saját (Joyce-tól egyébként távol eső) szakterületemről, mert ez hívebben idézi fel szellemi találkozásomat Sarbu tanár úrral, s így talán – ezen számomra oly emlékezetes kurzust felidézve – találóbban tudom kifejezni szívből jövő köszönetemet azokért az ismeretekért és szellemi élményekért, melyeket Tőled kaptam, Aladár. Boldog születésnapot!*

The third chapter of *Ulysses* is in terms of style the most daring of the first part of the novel, of which it is the concluding episode. As is generally acknowledged, the technical procedures of the novel are far more traditional in the early chapters than in the later ones, yet in the scheme of the novel Stuart Gilbert drew up following Joyce's instructions, "Proteus" is given as the "male" equivalent of the "monologue (female)" of Molly Bloom's internal soliloquy of the last chapter.[1] In this respect, the narrative technique of "Proteus" is close kin to the Joycean text (chapter 18 of *Ulysses*) that serves as the stan-

1. Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's* Ulysses*: a Study* (Faber and Faber, 1930, expanded ed. Vintage, 1952)—I quote Gilbert's table of the structure of the novel as it is reprinted in Declan Kiberd's introduction to the 1992 Penguin edition of *Ulysses* (xxiii); this edition follows the 1960 Bodley Head text, and references to it will henceforth be indicated in the text.

dard example of the stream-of-consciousness technique. This technique, generally speaking, privileges the mental world and processes as the locus of action and of significance as opposed to the external world. The "Proteus" chapter is itself to a great extent about the relation of internal, mental processes and the external world, and I will be arguing here that regardless of its close relation to the stream-of-consciousness technique, it suggests the importance of a pattern deriving from the spatio-temporal order of external reality; thus, in relation to some overall characteristics of the novel, the third chapter appears to harbour a self-critical moment in the technical mechanism of *Ulysses*.

To begin to see this, it is well to first consider the first three chapters (forming the first part of the novel) in relation to Joyce's narrative experiments. Part of these experiments is the breaking down of spatio-temporal sequences. The stream-of-consciousness technique itself turns the space and time of external action into those of the mind, shutting out the binding external circumstances of spatio-temporal structure for the sake of capturing the subjective world of the mind, in which we freely traverse time and space. Joseph Frank's famous remark that *Ulysses* cannot be read, only reread presents very graphically this feature of the work. Despite the fact that the novel's realistic details are over-determined (the plot takes place in one city, in one day, with every chapter being given an exact hour of the day, the routes the characters take can be traced on the map, the progression of the plot—apart from the double opening—is linear through the day), as the details about action, characters, emotions, past and present come to the reader as they come to the consciousness of the characters, for the comprehensive understanding of these details and their connections it is by no means sufficient to follow the spatio-temporal sequence of the novel; if we progress through this work linearly, that is, in the normal way we read novels, and in the way the very nature of language and thus of literary art demand, it is impossible to see all the subtle connections that occur at times hundreds of pages apart. Thus, *Ulysses* can only be comprehended after a number of rereadings, when instead of moving in a sequence we simultaneously have all of the novel before us, in the fashion of having the whole of a painting before the eye.[2] The "spatial form" of the novel that Joseph Frank has identified and that, as it were, transforms the novel into one image or spatial structure that we have to

2. Joseph Frank, *The Idea of Spatial Form* (New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. 21.

have before the eye, is itself a way of getting away from the temporal predicament. Such structures, in Frank's description, depend on the spatialization of objective time: in modernist art in general, and in High Modernist literature in particular, "[p]resent and past are apprehended spatially, locked in a timeless unity that eliminates any feelings of sequence," one of the results of which is "the transformation of the historical imagination into myth."[3] Myth has indeed, as early as T. S. Eliot's 1923 article "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth," been seen as providing a governing principle to the novel that lies beyond organization by temporal progression, for Eliot praised Joyce's "mythic method" as a way of ordering the chaos of time.[4] If we are tempted to assume that the "order" such a method can uphold in lieu of the spatio-temporal structure of the external world is some universal pattern, we will also be encouraged to read the mythic implications of the "Proteus" chapter in terms of the attempt to capture essences beyond accidentals. Within the novel's system of correspondences to Homer's *Odyssey*, this chapter is constructed to follow Telemachus's visit to Menelaus (Canto IV), who relates his adventure with Proteus, the shape-shifting god, whom Menelaus eventually manages to fix, capture, and force to answer his question about how to break the spell captivating Menelaus in Egypt. Henry Blamiers has suggested that the encounter with the shape-shifting god is reproduced in Stephen's confrontation with "the changing face of the world in relation to the reality behind it."[5] The fixing of Proteus in this sense would be the fixing of essentials and universals behind the ever changing accidentals of what we perceive of the world. However, regardless of Stephen's plea to this effect ("Put a pin in that chap, will you?" p. 60), and regardless of the implied promise of spatial form and mythic method to display an atemporal pattern of the real, the "Proteus" chapter seems to raise some questions precisely in connection to the technical enterprise of escaping temporality.

The first three chapters seem to consistently drive towards questions that pertain to the novel's technical experimentation, because these chapters seem to be concerned (amongst many other things) with time and space. In his analysis of the first chapter, "Telemachus," Richard Ellmann argued convincingly for the "authority of

3. Frank, p. 63.

4. T. S. Eliot, "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 175–179.

5. Henry Blamiers, *The Bloomsday Book. A Guide Through Joyce's* Ulysses (London & New York: Methuen, 1966), p. 13.

space over the scene," which for instance can be seen "in the way that whatever is mentioned is quickly embodied"[6]—to which one may add that the Martello tower itself is called the *omphalos* (20), which as the naval of the earth is the centre of spatial expansion. The second chapter, "Nestor," quite evidently focuses on time: Stephen is giving a history lesson, they discuss history with Mr. Deasy, and history for Stephen is a nightmare from which he is trying to awaken (42). As Stephen is shut out from the *omphalos* in the first chapter, in the second he gives voice to his wish of liberating himself from time. These motifs of the first two chapters seem to be directly related to the technical innovations of the novel, which do away with traditional spatio-temporal narrative structures. Mr. Deasy's statement that "All history moves towards one great goal" (42) is the expression of the very principle that organizes traditional realist fiction along the lines of the governing nineteenth-century conception of history, yet this is a conception that Stephen is in opposition to: he does not save money, as Mr Deasy advises, his present is not a preparation for the future, his route is not a teleological advance. As he is waiting for Mr. Deasy in the office to receive his payment, Stephen thinks: "As on the first day he bargained with me here. As it was in the beginning, is now" (35)—he sees no development in the passing of time, the bargaining (which calls to mind Mulligan's attempts to sell Stephen's art to Haines in the first chapter and thus carries overtones of betrayal) has no end, spiritual change only comes with stepping beyond time that endlessly recapitulates betrayal. There is another sentence in "Nestor" that may be very relevant in this respect: as Stephen glances at Mr. Deasy's article on the foot and mouth disease, which Stephen is asked to help to publish through his literary connections, he sees that the first sentence is "May I trespass on your valuable space" (40). The phrase is as it were the written equivalent of the demand on one's time in the sense of begging attention. Interestingly, the phrase is only apt if addressed to the journal publishing the article, but not quite so apt if addressed to the readers of the journal, in whose case the article demands not space, but time. In other words, as Mr. Deasy represents a view of

6. Richard Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 19. Ellmann's examples are listed on p. 20: the sea becomes the great sweet mother, or a bowl of vomit, the miracle of making wine the actuality of making water, in the "Ballad of Joking Jesus" the timeless becomes spatial by Christ being turned into a flying-machine, Ireland is embodied in the old milkwoman, etc.

history Stephen rejects, and thus a conception also of time that the novel tries to undo, so is he trespassing on the literary space (the Dublin journals his article seems to address) that excludes Stephen. About this exclusion we learn in chapter nine (cf. 245–247) where Stephen is not considered for Russel's collection of the verses of young poets; yet Stephen hands on Mr. Deasy's article to Russel, aiding him in trespassing on a space he has no use for. As *Ulysses* is to restructure the spatio-temporal sequences prevalent among the conventions of fiction through its narrative experiments, so must Stephen recreate time and space for himself. But if the first two chapters call for a resolution of the problems of time and space by setting up Stephen's inner world as the locus of the narrative and as a release from time and space so that his creative potential can restructure the nightmare of history into meaningful order, then "Proteus" continues these motifs of the novel's first part by displaying some reluctance in dissociating this order (or, therefore, the narrative method) from dependence on time and space. This reluctance—to which I now want to attend—makes the chapter appear as a self-critical moment in the novel's evolvement of form.

"Ineluctable modality of the visible" (45), the chapter begins. Stephen's opening speculations concern Aristotelian theses about the relation of the substance and the form and colour of things, according to which substance is not present in form or colour, and colour being at the extremity of bodies, it is also the limit of the Translucent ("diaphane") that is at the bounding extreme of bodies.[7] The importance of the opening sentence, however, has more to do with the previous two chapters than with Aristotle. In "Telemachus" and "Nestor" the narration has been slipping in and out of Stephen's mind, but on the whole it is the narrator who exercises control over the narrative. In "Proteus" the narrator does not disappear totally, but the chapter is almost wholly given over to the flow of Stephen's thoughts: the external world becomes a barely visible background to "events" in Stephen's consciousness, we enter the inner world of the character, we move in the inner time and space of the mind. Maintaining that the first two chapters present external space and time as circumstances Stephen wishes to liberate himself from, the move in "Proteus" towards the exclusion of external time and space from the nar-

7. Aristotle's *De Sensu* and *De Anima* are quoted in Don Gifford, with R. J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated. Notes for James Joyce's* Ulysses (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1988, second, revised and enlarged edition), pp. 44–45.

rative seems a logical consequence. Yet the monologue begins by stating the "ineluctable modality of the visible," that is, the inescapable dependence of the mind upon the external world the mind perceives. The sentence "Limits of the diaphane" may well refer to Aristotle, but it is more important that it reveals that Stephen is speculating on the very limits of his attempt to break free from external circumstances.

From the point of view of narrative technique, it is also of importance that though Stephen begins to meditate on the visible, already in the second sentence he mentions reading: "Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawreck, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: coloured signs." That Stephen "reads" the visible because he perceives objects as signs reflects on his attempt to free himself from time. The problem embedded in this procedure concerns the whole novel, which is made manifest by its "spatial form": while the "modality of the visible" allows for simultaneity, reading cannot but be sequential. Stephen thus is not only probing the independence of his mind from the external world, but also pondering the limits of the novel's narrative experiment. We may need to have the whole of the novel before us as one vast spatial construction, but we cannot be liberated from the temporality of process imposed by language. However modernist fiction may be bent on spatializing time, Stephen here seems to be aware of the "ineluctable" temporalization of space in language. The word "snotgreen" in the above passage deserves further comment, as it reveals the extent to which the signs through which Stephen confronts the visible are embedded in time. In "Telemachus" Mulligan calls the sea "snotgreen" (3), and the word picks up a number of connotations: it is a variation on Homer's set expression of "winedark" sea, and because of the colour green, it is not only a derogatory, but also an Irish variation. "A new art colour for our Irish poets: snotgreen," says Mulligan before connecting the colour with the sea and with Homer. The word for Stephen thus echoes the debasing of Irish art by Mulligan, but it also connects to the Homeric parallels of the novel and thus to the epic venture of redeeming Irish art of its debasement in both present and past. As the bay they look down on from the tower connects in Stephen's mind to the shaving bowl paraded as the chalice of the mock mass, and the sea itself connects to the vomit in the bowl beside Mrs. Dedalus's deathbed (4), the snotgreen sea in Stephen's mind is also in associative relation with his mother's death and his own sense of guilt and self-assertion implicit in his denial to kneel at the deathbed. Through these associations, the word "snotgreen" sig-

nals far more than a colour—it has implications embedded in political, literary and personal history, which are thus all parts of the "limit of the diaphane." The visible is never neutral, we make sense of what we see by reading things as signs, and what these signs signify is determined by the mind's "ineluctable" entanglement with the external world and with personal and historical time. The reader cannot make sense of the novel, nor Stephen of the world by simultaneous vision only: we cannot but proceed through the world of signs and conceive of vision in language.

Stephen, nonetheless, does experiment with shutting out the spatio-temporal world: in the next paragraph he closes his eyes and walks along the beach blindfolded, to see beyond the limits of the diaphane. The concluding sentence of the first paragraph is ambiguous: "Shut your eyes and see" does not only mean "shut your eyes and try," but also "shut your eyes and perceive what is beyond the limits of the diaphane." Yet as space is shut out from Stephen's vision he finds that he is still not free from the world of time and space: "You are walking through it howsomeever" (45). The complete turn within the mind, which, as indicated above, may be seen as the formal response to issues pursued in the first part of the novel, and which Stephen here acts out, fails to liberate him from the external world: as the next sentence reveals, there *is* something he is walking through, and the space he has blocked out is structured by the time which he experiences through the progression of his footsteps: "I am, a stride at a time." Furthermore, the time he experiences not only structures the space he has made invisible, but is still walking through, but the sentence suggests that it structures his self as well: at the moment of the creative experiment of turning fully inwards, Stephen recognizes that his being is being in time.

The sense of time remains in Stephen's mind through experiencing the audible. He hears his boots "crush crackling wreck and shells" (note how the alliteration onomatopoeically recaptures the audibility of Stephen's steps), and the progression of his steps through the audible maintains time: "Five, six: the *nacheinander*. Exactly: and that is the ineluctable modality of the audible." That the narrative experiment as well as Stephen's spiritual pursuits would demand the stripping away of time, the losing of oneself in simultaneity instead of sequentiality becomes clear in the sentence that now follows: "If I fell over a cliff that beetles o'er his base, fell through the *nebeneinander* ineluctably." The phrase "that beetles o'er his base" is an allusion to *Hamlet*, more specifically to the lines already quoted in the first chapter (21), when the Martello tower is likened to Elsinore, and

which feature in Horatio's warning of Hamlet that following the Ghost may lead to Hamlet's death. Thus, through the word "nebeneinander" (meaning "one thing next to another"), simultaneity is connected to Stephen's metaphorical search for a father (Hamlet following the Ghost of his father), but it is at the same time connected also to the danger of getting lost in immaterial void. Stephen in fact seems to mock his own spiritual pursuit and the novel's attempt at creating the simultaneity of spatial form by likening it to his falling over a cliff in his blindfolded walk. But then Stephen adds: "I am getting on nicely in the dark." In the present reading, this sentence, too, may be a self-reflexive gesture of the narrative, claiming that it is getting along fine through its own method of internal monologue. The reason for this self-assurance, however, seems to be that Stephen structures the darkness through the sense of time: he has his ash-plant stick with him, with which he can tap, and he has his audible steps to help him—both of these create a rhythm, which saves him from falling ineluctably into the ghost-world of the "nebeneinander" by maintaining time. "Rhythm begins, you see. I hear" (46), says Stephen, and it is this intrusion of time into the self-enclosed world of his mind that structures the internal world.

To justify my concentration upon simultaneity and temporality, and to substantiate my reading, at this point it is worthwhile to comment on two references to William Blake in the first part of *Ulysses*. The first one of these is in the opening paragraph of "Nestor," where Stephen begins to ponder the nature of history: "Fabled by the daughters of memory. And yet it was in some way if not as memory fabled it. A phrase, then, of impatience, thud of Blake's wings of excess. I hear the ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry, and time one livid final flame. What's left us then?" (28). Blake, a poet Joyce admired,[8] can perhaps be seen as the first author to have relentlessly pursued the creation of spatial form, even if not precisely in terms of Joseph Frank's conception. Blake's insistence on the end of poetry being Vision in itself marks his attempt at pushing literary art beyond its temporal determination into visually perceptible form (and of course much of Blake's poetry coexists with his illustrations). As I understand Blake's work, it operates on the view that a vision of eternity, the liberation from the confines of the spa-

8. For a detailed study of Blake's influence on and treatment by Joyce, see Timothy Webb, " 'Planetary Music': James Joyce and the Romantic Example," in *James Joyce and Modern Literature*, ed. W. J. McCormac and A. Stead (London, etc.: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 43–56.

tio-temporal (and thus fallen) world, depends on the capability of the simultaneous comprehension and presentation of all the different perspectives a work can offer—just like *Ulysses* is a novel that cannot be read but only re-read, so the understanding of Blake's poetry demands the knowledge and simultaneous comprehension of all his works, which together provide the totality of perspectives on the recurring and intertwining themes of his poems. In this respect at least, Blake's work is kin to those modernist experiments of which *Ulysses* is the supreme achievement. Blake, the poet and painter who created "composite" works of art, was eager to break down the distinction Lessing set up between the literary and the visual arts in his treatise on the *Laocoön*, to which Joyce alludes in the opening of "Proteus": the literary is temporal because it cannot escape putting its elements after one another ("nacheinander"), while the visual arts are spatial as they present the elements of the work simultaneously, side by side, one next to another ("nebeneinander").

In the reference to Blake in the opening of "Nestor," however, Stephen does not seem to be willing to go all the way with Blake in suggesting that because all time is always present for the visionary imagination, history is merely make-believe, and the past unreal (for Blake both the "daughters of memory" and "fable" are derogatory terms, forms of mind characterizing the fallen imagination, bound by time Blake regards unreal). For Stephen, all time going out in a flame leaves the ruins of space behind, leaving us not in eternity, but a void. The spatial structure of the simultaneity of events that the novel demands the reader to grasp is not, for Joyce, as was for the most radical precursor of this artistic form, a demand for the elimination of time, even if Joyce's "epic" defies narrative sequence as does Blake's. Regardless of views saving Blake from the charge of having completely left the world of time and space behind, Joyce certainly saw him as having gone to this extreme. "Blake killed the dragon of experience," writes Joyce in his lecture on Blake, delivered in 1912 in Trieste, "and by minimizing space and time and denying the existence of memory and the senses, he tried to paint his works on the divine bosom."[9] This description of Blake is very much consonant with Stephen's idea of falling "through the nebeneinander" as he goes in pursuit of a father in Hamlet's manner of following a Ghost. It also establishes Joyce's caution in minimizing time and space, which otherwise is what Stephen is experimenting with in the

9. James Joyce, "William Blake," in *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, eds. R. Ellmann and E. Mason (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 222.

opening of "Proteus" as a next step in the drift of the first part of the novel.

The second reference to Blake, which we find in the second paragraph of "Proteus," creates, I think, a complex structure of irony which Stephen directs both against himself and Blake. Walking with his eyes closed and listening to the sound of his steps and the tapping of his ashplant, Stephen thinks this: "My two feet in his boots are at the end of his legs, *nebeneinander*. Sounds solid: made by the mallet of *Los Demiurgos*. Am I walking into eternity along Sandymount strand?" (45). The passage alludes to Blake's *Milton*, where Milton, returning to the mortal world, enters Blake's left foot—Blake stoops to put on a sandal "formed immortal" and pictures himself as walking "forward thro' Eternity." The symbolic significance of the event is Blake's inheritance of the visionary tradition of poetry, and also his claim of correcting Milton's shortcomings in his own poetry. "Los Demiurgos" also contains a reference to Blake, in whose poetry Los is a poet-figure, a creator and artist, who in the opening of *The Book of Los* is surrounded by darkness, just as Stephen is at this moment, with his eyes closed. Just as Los embodies creative imagination, so is the Demiurge a creating figure, the creator of the material world in Plato's *Timaeus*.[10] Stephen thus on the one hand thinks of himself as a creator, creating the external world from within the recesses of his mind (again a notion that applies to the internalized narratives of the whole novel), freed from time and space into the primal darkness of his own creative potential. On the other hand, the "nebeneinander" form (or spatial form) that on the scale of the whole work such interiorization effects, is here mentioned not only as his two legs being next to one another, but because Stephen is wearing shoes and trousers Mulligan has thrown away, "nebeneinander" also becomes the merging of him and Mulligan in the way Blake and Milton merge, with Blake putting the immortally formed sandal on. (That the reference is not simply to legs next to each other but to Stephen wearing Buck Mulligan's shoes is enforced by a passage near the end of the chapter, where Stephen gazes at his shoes, "a buck's castoffs *nebeneinander*." [p. 62]). It is thus that the whole passage, by bringing Blake's walk through eternity down to Stephen's blindfolded walk on Sandymount Strand, mocks on the one hand the "nebeneinander" form (and thus mocks also Blake's

10. For Blake, see *Milton* I.21, and *The Book of Los*, 1.10 in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David Erdman (New York, etc.: Doubleday, 1988). For a discussion of these allusions, see Gifford, p. 45.

striding through eternity), while, on the other hand, by replacing Blake's immortally formed sandal with Mulligan's discarded shoes, and the co-presence of Milton and Blake in poetic vision with the co-presence of Stephen and Mulligan in Stephen's creative experiment on the strand, he is also mocking his own situation and attempt at visionary writing, which in Blake is the extreme form of "nebeneinander." Thus, the complex joke Joyce is cracking here seems to accomplish three related aims: 1) it is a rare instance of modesty on Stephen's part, for when he connects himself with Blake, he finds himself relating to the great poet in the proportion that Mulligan relates to Milton; 2) Stephen reiterates his earlier critique of Blake's excess—I suggested above how Stephen makes sense of the world through time and the temporality of language even in Los's darkness of primal creation with which he is experimenting: if he has said earlier that history "was in some way if not as memory fabled it" to reject Blake's sense of the unreality of the past, he now senses time through sound to reject independence from time and space; and thus, finally, 3) he implicitly also mocks the "nebeneinander" form in which *Ulysses* follows Blake, but follows him, as we learn here, not without a reservation feeding from Joyce's awareness of the limits the temporality of language imposes upon the diaphanous reality, upon the atemporal eternity of spirit.

The opening of "Proteus" thus appears to be a partly cautious, partly ironic self-reflection of the narrative on the grand design of the novel, a partly critical, partly meditative reflection on "spatial form" and its spiritual implications concerning eternal forms behind the accidental external, spatio-temporal order—in other words, on the "nebeneinander" form in literature that attempts to free the narrative from time and Stephen from the nightmare of history. All of which of course does not mean to say that Joyce would have given up either on exploring the narrative possibilities of internal processes, or on pursuing the "nebeneinander" form further. In fact, as Walton Litz observed in studying the evolution of the manuscripts of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, both novels are "characterized by a growing conflict between [Joyce's] aesthetic ideal of 'simultaneity' and the consecutive nature of language," until finally Joyce fully "abandoned consecutive narration in favour of a 'pictorial' or spatial method."[11] As is often commented, the later chapters of *Ulysses* are more and more about language itself, and Joyce's critique of language can itself be seen as

11. Walton Litz, *The Art of James Joyce. Method and Design in* Ulysses *and* Finnegans Wake. (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 56.

part of his attempt to replace the "nacheinander" with the "nebeneinander." The reservation as to the possible success of this process is, however, not something Joyce would have later put aside—the opening of "Proteus" seems to me to be an important moment in the realization that the nature of language is inimical to the "nebeneinander" form, which will propel the novel towards exposing not only the confines, but also the imperatives of language.

Indeed, some further characteristics of the chapter also suggest that pinning down Proteus to grasp an image of reality beyond the changing shapes of the world is forfeited. One such feature is what may be an apparent contradiction between the episode's narrative form and the critical realization that I suggest the opening of the chapter sounds. After having sensed the emergence of rhythm, Stephen considers opening his eyes, asking himself if the external world has any objective existence, or has also vanished with the closing of his eyes ("Open your eyes. I will. One moment. Has all vanished since?" p. 46). The next, elliptical sentence may be read as an answer to this. "If I open and am for ever in the black adiaphane"—"adiaphane" is the blackness behind his closed eyes, as opposed to which the translucent diaphanous world is the external world, which in spite of all its flux is more inviting than the darkness of the adiaphane. The external world, Stephen learns, does exist without him ("See now. There all the time without you: and ever shall be, world without end," p. 46), and the retreat into complete subjectivity leaves the world unaffected. The narration, however, replies to this concession by pressing on with its subjectivist perspective, describing the external world through Stephen's mind and language. Throughout the chapter there are occasional intrusions of the narrator, but even these tend to modulate into the representation of Stephen's mind. (For instance, the opening of the second paragraph, "Stephen closed his eyes to hear his boots crush crackling wreck and shells," begins with clear narratorial presence, but the sentence ends by recapitulating the sounds Stephen hears in the darkness; or, after the opening of his eyes we read "They came down the steps from Leahey's terrace prudently ...," as if the narrator took over from an external point of vantage, but the heavy alliteration of the second part of the sentence—"and down the shelving shore flabbily their splayed feet sinking in the silted sand"—suggests rather that this is the voice of the young poet, and indeed, in the next sentence Stephen's reference to himself—"Like me"—makes clear that what may for a moment appear to be an external narratorial viewpoint is really still the character's soliloquy.) Thus, despite the implicit criticism of the "nebeneinander"

form, and thus of narration as the associative expansion of a purely subjective consciousness liberated from the temporality of language, the narration remains to dissociate itself from temporal sequence, at least inasmuch as it presents an internal monologue that follows the fluctuation of Stephen's thoughts.

This narrative technique may be at odds in its implication with what I suggest is the chapter's critical point about the "nebeneinander" form, but the internal monologue of the "Proteus" episode seems to have a feature that may well resolve the apparent contradiction of these impulses. This feature is the dialogical nature of the internal monologue of the episode. Stephen keeps addressing himself as "you," at one point even referring to himself by name, as if he were another person ("Talk that to someone else, Stevie," p. 61). This, I believe, is not unconnected to the self-critical moment embodying the realization that the "real" Stephen sets out to capture beyond the protean surface of the external world is not without but within time and space. We can posit such a connection because Stephen does not only realize that his being is a being in time ("I am, a stride at a time"), and that the linguistic condition of the world ("These heavy sands are language tide and wind have silted here" [p. 55]) also ties him to temporality, but parallel to this, his self is also split in time: the "I" and the "you," though the roles alternate, are parts split between his past and present selves. Indeed, besides much meditation about birth and fatherhood and family and death, much of the chapter is devoted to Stephen's reviewing of his own past: his early priestliness, his early literary ambitions, his days in Paris. Understanding and critical towards his past self, Stephen's revaluation of himself is not so much based on fixing his changing nature, but is much rather the exposition of the protean character of the self itself. Indeed, as he mocks his youthful plan of writing novels titled by the letters of the alphabet, and imagines his admirers after his death, the idea of a unified self comes under attack: "Have you read his F? Oh yes, but I prefer Q. Yes, but W is wonderful. O yes, W [double you?] ... When one reads these strange pages of one long gone one feels that one is at one with one who once ..." (50). But the self is not "one" (again: "Other fellow did it: other me. [...] *Lui, c'est moi* [p. 51]), as the dialogical nature of the monologue itself reveals. The recognition that even the primal darkness of his creative mind (shutting out the spatio-temporal world) is structured by the temporality of his existence, makes Stephen submit himself to the flux of time, and this is shown when he conceives not only of the external world as protean, but even of his own self. The narration for this rea-

son is not simply a journey inward (though it is that, too), away from the chaos of external time and space—it is no less Stephen's self-exposure to change, to the protean external world, to his temporal being.

The world of language and the world of time come finally to be intertwined as Stephen's "speech" takes a bodily form with the liquid words of his urination—"Listen: a fourworded wavespeach" (62). The phrase not only returns language to protean flux through its association with the tide and the waves, but also binds the world of signs to the body. Through the chapter, Stephen moves from the closing off of external space and time in the darkness behind his closed eyes, to the temporality of his being, and finally to the fittest emblem of this temporality, his bodily being. It is to this exit from the subjectivist and spiritualized universe of the opening that we can connect, as Ellmann pointed out, Stephen's concern about anybody seeing him when picking his nose, and to the backward glance he casts at the closure of the chapter.[12] Stephen's return to external time and space, however, also means a return to the world of change: Proteus will not be fixed, and the work will thus have to accept the temporality of its linguistic medium rather than spatializing this into changelessness. Even if a pattern is imposed upon the protean flux of the world, this is not a mythic pattern that reveals timeless order, but one that asserts change as the principle of order. This is the principle that makes Stephen's home the space of continuous self-creation in the world of language, a home that the ensuing chapters of *Ulysses* work to establish.

12. Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey*, p. 26.

# Astronomical Joyce

*Judit Nényei*

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It is our common experience that academic fields sometimes overlap; enough to think of the late Professor Péter Egri of ELTE University, Hungary, who described parallel motives in romantic and modern literary works, music and painting.[1] But what can we do with such an exact science as astronomy? How is it possible to trace the connection between a modernist novel, such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* and distant galaxies, supernovae and red giants? As for *Finnegans Wake*, HCE's identification with the Sun provides an obvious link with the study of celestial bodies.

## I

It is a well-known fact for Joycean scholars that Leopold Bloom is an all-round character, a Mr. Knowall, a "disciple" of many different sciences, such as astronomy (using the word in its purely scientific sense on the following pages, with no inclusion of astrology, not to include horoscopes, as Peter Costello does in *The Years of Growth*).[2] Bloom is often "misinformed," his omniscience is defective and his "mistakes" and "half-truths" have been a "lucky dip" for several Joycean papers and studies. This game of mistakes and misinterpretations is especially interesting in a field hardly ever considered in literary works,[3] therefore in a brief study of certain paragraphs of the *Ithaca* chapter[4] I wish to introduce this "unliterary" aspect to exam-

1. Enough to think of Péter Egri's book, *Value and Form. Comparative Literature, Painting and Music.* (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1993).

2. Peter Costello, *James Joyce: The Years of Growth (1882–1915)*, Appendix (New York: Pantheon, 1992).

3. An excellent exception is Donald W. Olson and Marilynn Olson, "The June Lyrids and James Joyce's *Ulysses*." *Sky and Telescope* (July 2004), 76–77.

4. James Joyce, "Ithaca," *Ulysses* (London: Minerva, 1992), 684–690.

ine some Bloomean (Joycean?) statements and thoughts. For a layman Bloom knows a lot about astronomy, but he often brags about it, culminating in *Circe* when he "eclipses the sun by extending his little finger"[5] and knows the parallax of the star Aldebaran by heart. His observations on the secrets of the sky, scientists and scientific discoveries, however, are not necessarily true or valid.

Parallax is a good example to discredit his unreliable knowledge. This word haunts Bloom throughout *Ulysses*. It implies an apparent change in the position of an object, seen against a remote background, when the viewpoint is changed. The parallax of a star is the angle subtended at the star by the mean radius of the Earth's orbit (one astronomical unit); the smaller the angle, the more distant the star. The German astronomer Bessel used "parallactic drift" in 1838 to measure the first star parallax and to determine the first distance from earth to a star. Bloom's way of thinking can be considered as analogous to the law of parallax; his abrupt changes in the train of thoughts and his often-ridiculed habit of seeing things from surprisingly different angles or aspects showing them in a different way prove that. Joyce even replaces the word "God" with "parallax" in his citation[6] of Yeats's famous poem, "The Wanderings of Oisin,"[7] after all, God is the "Great Juxtaposer," or "Viewpoint-changer," often placing seemingly distant items in each other's neighbourhood.

> The years like great black *oxen* tread the world,
> And *God, the herdsman goads them on behind*,
> And I am broken by their passing feet.

In the *Oxen of the Sun*: "Parallax stalks behind and goads them [...] the bulls of Bashan and of Babylon, mammoth and mastodon, they come trooping to the sunken sea, *Lacus Mortis*."

Though these lines float suggestively in the reader's mind, a curious application of the "law of parallax" for astronomers and scientists famous for astronomic discoveries appears in *Ithaca*: "[...] the independent synchronous discoveries of Galileo, Simon Marius, Piazzi, Le Verrier, Herschel, Galle."[8] They lived in different historical eras, made discoveries of which only the first two can be labelled synchronous: Galileo Galilei, with the help of his home-made tele-

5. Joyce, "Circe," *Ulysses*, p. 504.
6. Joyce, "The Oxen of the Sun," *Ulysses*, p. 438.
7. William Butler Yeats, *The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems* (London: K. Paul, 1889). Book III, l. 211 (ll. 946–8, my italics)
8. Joyce, "Ithaca," *Ulysses*, p. 687.

scope, discovered and named the four greatest moons of Jupiter: Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto in 1610. Almost at the same time (in 1612) Simon Marius discovered them as well as the nebula Andromeda. At the beginning of the 19th century Le Verrier, a French astronomer, calculated and proved the existence of a planet beyond the orbit of Uranus, on the basis of the disturbances observed in the revolution of Uranus. This new planet was later called Neptune. The others made subsequent discoveries: G. Piazzi discovered a planet between Mars and Jupiter on 31 December 1800, which he named after Ceres. It is the largest in the asteroid belt. William Herschel observed Uranus in 1781 and made a catalogue of nebulae and double stars, and Galle discovered Neptune in Berlin on 23 September 1846. The "systematisations attempted by Bode and Kepler of cubes of distances and squares of times of revolution" refer to German astronomer Johann Bode, who worked out a law to calculate the mean distances of the planets from the sun (which, unfortunately, does not work for Neptune or Pluto) at the end of the 18th century; and Johannes Kepler, who was the first to claim that the planets move along elliptic orbits.

For the sake of better understanding, we have to make it clear that Joyce himself was far from being correct regarding the mass of data he squeezed into *Ulysses*, including astronomical facts. Therefore, the mistakes might be the result of Joyce's imperfect knowledge of contemporaneous theories and discoveries in the field of astronomy, or due to the fact that no satisfactory theory or proof was available at the time of his writing *Ulysses*.[9] Joyce's knowledge of astronomy derived probably from his school years at the Jesuits, since there was no such book in his library, according to Richard Ellmann.[10] However, Joyce mentions Sir Robert Ball's *The Story of the Heavens* (1885) among Bloom's books in his library (which does not exclude any other source). There is, of course, a lot of valid and accurate information on these pages about astronomy, not only fallacies.

In the catechism of *Ithaca* the first question that deals with astronomy in effect is "With what meditations did Bloom accompany his demonstration to his companion of various constellations?" The answer provides brief information about the moon, the visibility of the Milky Way or Walsingham way (uncondensed, of course) by daylight,

9. Even though it is often difficult to tell his own mistakes from those made by his characters.

10. Don Gifford, "Appendix: Joyce's Library in 1920," *The Consciousness of Joyce* (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1977).

then moves on to the constellation of Sirius (Alpha in Canis Major, or Big Dog), which is the most luminous star of the sky (its luminosity is -1.42 magnitude, and it is 2.65 par sec from the Earth, i.e. 8.57 light-years). Measuring their distance in par sec was and still is a more practical way for astronomers than expressing it in light-years or miles; however, Bloom is more or less correct; Sirius is not 10, but 8.6 light-years from us. Don Gifford's *Ulysses Annotated*, although it needs correction in many of its "facts," provides the same information. What Bloom does not mention is that Sirius was already known as a double star (Sirius A and B, where B is a white dwarf)—maybe he does not know it, although the famous discovery regarding Sirius B was made in 1844 (by Bessel, who measured the parallax of 61 Cygni first). It is all the more interesting since Bloom does talk about double suns ("the interdependent gyrations of double suns") and the Sirius system was considered a double sun already at the turn of the 19th century! There is no mention of that in *Finnegans Wake* either, even though Sirius appears on its pages relatively often.[11] However, at the time of writing *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* not even Joyce himself dreamed of the possibility that Sirius, in fact, contains a third body in the system—the triplicity of Sirius is 90 per cent proved by now; that is a discovery of the late 1990s.

The next astronomic item Bloom mentions is Arcturus (Alpha in the Bootes constellation; its name means "the hunter who guards the eyes of the bears," referring to the neighbouring constellation of Ursa Major). It is a red giant close to nova status, and as that of the previously mentioned Sirius, its own movement is measurable (that is, it is not a "fixed star"): it moves 10 degrees in 14 000 years. Arcturus appears in *Finnegans Wake* as well reminding us (and the characters) of the approaching dawn.[12]

Arcturus is then followed by "Orion with belt and sextuple sun theta and nebula in which 100 of our solar systems could be contained": all these data are valid and correct (except the size of the nebulae, because Bloom's estimate is a gross understatement, something that even contemporary astronomers knew),[13] but it is worth mentioning that the Alpha Orionis is also called Betelgeuze, a red giant of about 1000 times the size of the Sun, 430 light-years from our system.

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11. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 14, 426, *et passim*.

12. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, pp. 594, 621, et passim.

13. Don Gifford & Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated*: *Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses* (University of California Press, 1989), p. 582.

Bloom's thoughts gradually move towards the famous novae and supernovae recorded in history.

He talks "of moribund and of nascent new stars such as Nova in 1901": it was indeed a very famous nova, which was first seen on 21 February 1901, in the Perseus constellation. It was known as Nova Persei, and it was at its peak as luminous as the Vega, of 0.2 magnitude, which is very high. Nova Persei was originally a star of only 13 magnitude, which meant that it was not visible without a telescope. It reached its luminosity peak within 4 days, quickly growing 160,000 times as luminous as originally, but it dimmed back to 13 magnitude within a few months. It was not a moribund or nascent star, nor was it new, as it was already known in the first years of the 20th century—Joyce did not know, nor does Gifford mention, however, that it was a double star, one of which was a white dwarf, as it was discovered only in 1954.[14] What Bloom says about "our system plunging towards Hercules" is a valid statement: William Herschel (mentioned on the following page) discovered that our galaxy is steadily moving towards that constellation.

With "the annual recurrence of meteoric showers about the period of the feast of S. Lawrence (martyr, 10 August)" Bloom refers to the well-known Perseides of August, the peak of which is on 11. As for

> the appearance of a star (1st magnitude) of exceeding brilliancy dominating by night and day (a new luminous sun generated by the collision and amalgamation in incandescence of two nonluminous exsuns) about the period of the birth of William Shakespeare over delta in the recumbent neversetting constellation of Cassiopeia,

Bloom is wrong in many ways: the "star" was a supernova not of 1st but of -4th magnitude (it was categorised as 1st because the contemporary astronomers did not have a wider scale to measure it), which is why it was visible in daylight. Its explosion was observed by Tycho Brahe in 1572, whereas Shakespeare was born in 1564, and a star becomes a supernova in a completely different way; even in 1904 Bloom could have known that it is not the collision or fusion of two suns. Since March 1574 the remnants of this supernova are "lost" for visual observation, only the emission of radio waves shows its presence. Its distance is 10,000 light-years.

14. *Ulysses Annotated* was revised and reedited in 1989!

Stephen also mentions this "star" in his lecture about Shakespeare.[15]

> A star, a daystar, a firedrake rose at his birth. It shone by day in the heavens alone, brighter than Venus in the night, and by night it shone over delta in Cassiopeia, the recumbent constellation, which is the signature of his initial among the stars [...]. Don't tell them he was nine years old when it was quenched.

Both Stephen and Bloom claim that it was visible by day and night, thus excluding any other star but Tycho Brahe's nova of 1572. Stephen, however, must have been aware of the difference of 8 years, as his final remark reveals: Shakespeare was indeed nine years old when the supernova disappeared. It is, then, a falsification of data, a piece of fabulation! Stephen deliberately misleads his audience—and it seems that Bloom repeats the same act of fabulation, or mistake, in his conversation with Stephen.[16] Tycho Brahe's name was familiar to Joyce, since he included it in *Finnegans Wake*, therefore he should have been aware of the famous supernova observed by him.[17]

Bloom was born in 1866 and his claim that a star of 2nd magnitude appeared at *about* the period of his birth in the constellation of Corona Septentrionalis (that is, Corona Borealis) is *about* right.[18] In May 1866 a returning nova, T Coronae Borealis, reached maximum luminosity of 2nd magnitude; it reached another maximum in 1946, 80 years later. So this fictitious character *has* an actual nova that marks his birth, *suggesting* that Bloom will be a great man, a hero, someone special—yet it is mentioned only in *Ithaca* when Great Bloomusalem of the *Circe* episode is already over. Or does the superhero label prove justified? It might as well be proposed that this returning nova could be called Bloom's nova or Nova Bloomensis!

Stephen meditates: "Read the skies [...]. Where's your configuration?"[19] The answer is given in the *Ithaca* chapter: about the period of the birth of Stephen Dedalus (which is on 2 February 1882) "a star of similar origin [a very vague description] which had appeared in

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15. Joyce, "Scylla and Charybdis," *Ulysses*, p. 221.

16. This particular instance of romanticizing Shakespeare's biography is not Joyce's own but was part and parcel of the Shakespeare-folklore that he drew on.

17. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 262: "Tycho Brahe's Crescent."

18. Both variations are correct and widely used (-1.4 magnitude, 1st magnitude, and so forth).

19. Joyce, "Scylla and Charybdis," *Ulysses*, p. 221.

and disappeared from the constellation of Andromeda." *Ulysses Annotated* offers no detail about this nova so I have collected information in the astronomic annals. In fact, this "star" was observed only on 20 August 1885, called S Andromedae, and disappeared in March 1886. Its luminosity was of 7.2 magnitude even at its peak, so it was very dim. But the discovery of the S Andromedae, which was significant for astronomers, proved eventually that Andromeda was not a nascent system of planets, as it was generally thought, but an incredibly distant galaxy, with many novae.

At about the period of the birth and death of Rudolph Bloom, although not in 1893, as Leopold claims, the Nova Aurigae of magnitude 5 (Gifford claims it was of 4!) was observed in the constellation of Auriga, in 1891, by an amateur astronomer, T. D. Anderson. Gifford is uncertain at that point and seems to offer two alternatives: either the star Capella in the constellation Auriga (the Charioteer) or the constellation Charles's Wain (Wagon), the Great Bear or Big Dipper. In my opinion, the "waggoner's star" could also be a reference to that nova, since Auriga is waggoner in Latin.

16 (or, rather, 17) June 1904 happened to be a special day not only for Joyce himself, but for "celestial signs" as well.[20] Both Bloom and Stephen observed simultaneously "[...] a star precipitated with great apparent velocity across the firmament from Vega in the Lyre above the zenith beyond the stargroup of the Tress of Berenice towards the zodiacal sign of Leo" while they were urinating.[21] Obviously, even the sky "honoured" the day that Joyce chose for his book. This "star" must have belonged to a group of meteors generally known as the Lyrids of June. They return at this time of the year annually, there is nothing unusual about that. However, it seems a somewhat strange coincidence that one hundred years after the first "Bloomsday" the maximum luminosity of a comet was observed in Ursa Major, 30 degrees from Leo, in the neighbourhood of Vega in the Lyre and the Tress of Berenice.[22] What is more, this comet was so luminous (a NEAT—near-earth asteroid tracking), that it was visible from Dublin without a telescope—a commemoration most fitting of that memorable day.[23]

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20. The *Sky and Telescope* article mentioned on p. 1 of this paper also identifies the meteor with a June Lyrid.

21. Joyce, "Ithaca," *Ulysses*, p. 690.

22. It is recorded as C/2001 Q4, discovered on 24 August 2001.

23. Unfortunately, this phenomenon, though the forecast had promised a peak luminosity exactly for June 16, happened earlier: at the end of April and the beginning of May. Although the comet *was* visible on June 16, the

## II

The Ithaca chapter in *Ulysses* offers astronomy in a more or less clear and condensed manner which cannot be said about *Finnegans Wake*. If we consider the *Wake* literally a—literary—universe, we soon learn that the astronomical references are distributed in it just like galaxy clusters in the physical one—densely concentrated on a couple of pages. The Book of the Children seems to offer some interesting astronomical enigma, especially in the "Study" section,[24] the "art" of which is cosmology anyway, but there is a lot more than that in the later chapters. Trying to understand the role of heavenly bodies in this fictitious universe is a strenuous job, especially because one is far too often baffled by finding certain astronomical items either simply non-existent (such as the mysterious Nereids) or moving on different orbits.

When HCE, as man of the present age, supplants the giant Finnegan at the beginning of the book, he appears as a creator: "Creator he has created for his creatured ones a creation."[25] Then we are allowed to zoom ("Artsa zoom") in on this "creation"—and the first types of stars we encounter are a white dwarf and a red giant, in this order ("White monothoid? Red theatrocrat?").[26] These types require aeons of years to develop, and the white dwarf or red giant phase (which precedes it) is the sign of the fast approaching end of a star's existence. So HCE's creation begins with obvious signs pointing to its end—his world ends at the beginning, or begins at the end, like *Finnegans Wake*. Although "dear old grumpapar"—HCE—just like Bloom, is "gazing and crazing and blazing at the stars,"[27] the information we get is not only half-reliable or defective as in *Ulysses*, but inventive and often mythically ingenious, to say the least.

The astronomical inventions in the *Wake* are manifested in two main fields: (mythical) names of stars, novae, planets, and other celestial bodies (although the invention is not only Joyce's own in many cases, but Assyrian, Arabic or Irish) and their rotations and orbits—he was rearranging rather than recreating the universe.

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strong city lights disturbed the observation, so it was not, in fact, a naked-eye object.

24. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake,* 260–308.
25. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 29.14–15.
26. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake,* p. 29.15.
27. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 65.13.

Some of these names are more or less well-known, such as "Ulerin's dogstar"[28] for Sirius or "steerner among stars, trust touthena" (Ton-thena)[29] for the Pole Star, from MacPherson's *Temora* and *Cathlin of Clutha*, but some are so specific that only the adepts of astronomy are able to identify them, for example "Ooridiminy!!!!!!!"[30] the Assyrian UR.IDIM, the Wolf (Lupus) constellation (*c.* 8–5 BC), that Roland McHugh took for "Mad Dog" in his *Annotations*.

The following pages will focus on the arranged-rearranged orbits and apparent places of stars, constellations and planets in this universe. The first example is an enigmatic part of the Triv and Quad—the Study Period. "Vetus may be occluded behind the mou in Veto but Nova will be nearing as their radient among the Nereids."[31] (Venus, the ancient governing planet in Book II may hide herself behind the moon in protest [which was the governing planet of Book I.5–8], but the Nova—the new era [that of the Children] is coming, shining.)

Although it is tempting to jump to the conclusion that Joyce referred to an actual "nova" (particularly because it is spelt with a capital "N"), that is approaching from the "Nereids" (which sounds very much like a constellation, or rather, a group of meteors that start annually from that constellation, like the Lyrids of June, or the Perseids of August, for instance), but the truth is that Nereid, the outermost of Neptune's known satellites and the third largest, observable only in a photographic way, was discovered only in 1949 by Gerard Kuiper, therefore Joyce could not have possibly referred to that.[32] Roland McHugh offers another explanation for Nereids: Nereus was the former name for the constellation Eridanus (the mysterious river). Suppose, that "Nereids" simply refers to the children of Nereus as this is the Children's Chapter, and the descending shining new spirit among them is the Nova. Still, if we accept that the Nova is coming from the direction of the constellation Nereus/Eridanus, then it must be from the opposite direction to Venus, which cannot be occluded by the Moon; there is always a difference of 3 or 4 degrees observed from the Earth.

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28. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 194.14.
29. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 602.30.
30. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 475.2; 475.16.
31. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 267.22–24.
32. Interestingly, the orbit of the Nereid is the most highly eccentric of any planet or satellite in the solar system; its distance from Neptune varies from 1,353,600 to 9,623,700 kilometres. Its odd orbit indicates that it may be a captured asteroid or Kuiper Belt (region of transneptunian) object.

And next: "*The Big Bear bit the Sailor's Only. Trouble, trouble, trouble.*"[33] This marginal remark is Shem's, and in my interpretation it refers to the Sin committed by the father (of Scandinavian origin—remember the Norwegian Captain!) against the mother (who has some Russian blood in her—hence the reference to the Big Bear). But the Big Bear is also Ursa Major, as Una Unica, the old temptress and mother-figure, who is replaced by the young female but still remains the same character. The Sailor's Only... is missing, because it is bitten (off) and it is now a taboo ("Trouble"), hence it cannot be named.

The second group of celestial bodies worth mentioning is in Book III, Chapter 3, Yawn under Inquest, Stage II: Words of ALP. ALP, speaking forth with the voice of Ireland, describes the scene in the Park in terms of the heavenly constellations spread vast for the whole world to see:

> I hear from your strawnummical modesty!
>
> Ophiuchus being visible above thorizon, muliercula occluded by Satarn's serpent ring system, the pisciolinnies Nova Ardonis and Prisca Parthenopea, are a bonnies feature in the northern sky. Ers, Mores and Merkery are surgents below the rim of the Zenith Part while Arctura, Anatolia, Hesper and Mesembria weep in their mansions over Noth, Haste, Soot and Waste.[34]

HCE (Ophiucus above the horizon; but he is also the "giant sun in his emanence,"[35] being visible, his little woman (Vulpecula) is occluded by the rings of Saturn, the Two Temptresses (Pisces) feature in the northern sky, while the Three Soldiers (Earth, Mars and Mercury of the Inner Solar System) lurk, and the Four Old Men (Arcturus, Anatolia, Venus, (also in the Inner Solar System) and Mesembria) in their four quarters weep.[36]

Let us now see how these constellations appear on the astronomical map. The problem is that this grandiose picture of heavenly bodies and constellations proves to be a "bloomism," if this word may be used in relation to *Finnegans Wake*. Vulpecula cannot be occluded

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33. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 267.23–4.
34. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 494.9–14.
35. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 494.27.
36. As Roland McHugh points out, Anatole, Dusis, Arcis and Mesimbria are mythical stars spelling ADAM. Greek: Anatolios: the East, Mesembria: noon; the South, Hesperus: Venus; the West.

by the rings of Saturn, or Saturn itself.[37] Pisces is never seen in the northern sky, only northwest or northeast, and even then it is hardly visible above the horizon. There is no trace of a Nova Ardonis, or even Adonis from the direction of the Pisces constellation—interestingly, Nova signifies the—fishy—temptresses in HCE's life—the new women. As for the four weepers, Arcturus rises in the east, sets in the west, and its visible peak is in the south. "Arctura" contains a reference to the Arctic, and only in *that* respect is it connected to the North. Arcturus also appears in the *Ricorso* as "Arcthuris comeing!"[38] and "Send Arctur guiddus!"[39] reminding the reader of the approaching dawn (strangely enough the actual Arcturus has nothing to do with the coming of the morning, it is Joyce's invention).[40]

The third pick is the ball at the Tailors' Hall in the III. Stage of the Inquest theme, the Exagmination.

> I have remassed me, my travellingself, as from Magellanic clouds,[41]
>
> [...] brustall to the bear, the Megalomagellan of our winevatswaterway,[42] sqeezing the life out of the liffey. Crestofer Carambas! Such is zodisfaction.[43]
>
> [...] are you solarly salemly sure, beyond the shatter of the canicular year? Siriusly and selenely sure behind the shutter.[44]

The party is enlarged into a universal image; in fact, this is the point where we go beyond the Equator, to the southern hemisphere of our planet. The Megalomagellan, the grand traveller and discoverer, is HCE (and Joyce includes many other great travellers here, such as Columbus, who astronomically reinforces the dove—Columbo and raven theme, or Cabot and Herrera) and the Bear as well as the waterway (the River Liffey) represent ALP. But the bear

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37. This and other observations are based on my research using an online computer programme called www.starrynight.com that contains data of the positions of any given constellation at any given point of time.

38. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 594.

39. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 621.

40. I do not wish to discuss the Arthurian cycle here as my topic is the astronomical links.

41. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 358.14.

42. In Russian "vinovat" means criminal, a sinful person—a reference to HCE.

43. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 512.5–7

44. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, pp. 512.35–513.2.

is also Ursa Major and the Megalomagellan is a reference to the Magellanic Clouds, obvious naked-eye objects deep in the southern skies. The problem with the Large Magellanic Cloud, together with its apparent neighbour and relative, the Small Magellanic Cloud, is that they are only visible from the Southern hemisphere (just like the constellation of the Southern Cross [471.12]), where Magellan and his discovery expedition brought them to our knowledge in 1519. Therefore we cannot see Ursa Major and the Magellanic Clouds simultaneously from the same place. Both Magellanic Clouds are irregular dwarf galaxies orbiting our Milky Way galaxy, and thus are members of our local group of galaxies. The Large Magellanic Cloud, at its distance of 179,000 light-years, was long considered the nearest external galaxy. It was from observations in the Magellanic Clouds that Henrietta Leavitt discovered (1912) the relation between pulsation period and average luminosity for Cepheid variable stars. These stars are intrinsically very bright so we can see them in distant galaxies; in fact, it was by identifying these in small dwarf galaxies and eventually the great spiral in Andromeda that Edwin Hubble (in a series of projects in the 1920s) went on to demonstrate the existence of other galaxies *well* beyond the Milky Way. The telescope bearing his name has been used to extend this technique beyond 70 million light-years distance, and the Cepheids in the Magellanic Clouds are still the zero point for these distance measurements. These were great contemporary discoveries; no wonder Joyce mentioned the Magellanic Clouds in the *Wake*. But let us get back to the Ball, behind the shutters of the inn, but also beyond the shatter of the ancient Egyptian canicular year, which was based on the rotation of Sirius-Alpha in Canis Major. Sirius, the most luminous star of the sky (but only after our Moon—Selene), rose at the beginning of the sacred year in Egypt. The wide romping at the ball goes beyond the canicular year, beyond the animal constellations of the zodiac, beyond the solar system, to involve other galaxies.

So far Earth, Mars, Mercury, and Venus have figured in our "solar-systemized, seriolcosmically [...] expanding universe under one [...] original sun," with a brief reference to Saturn.[45] Yet the giant planets of the Outer Solar System and their satellites repeatedly appear in the *Wake*, therefore they also deserve a short passage here.

HCE and ALP, after comforting one of the twins, Jerry, in the upstairs bedroom, who cried in his nightmare, return to their bed of

45. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 263.24–27.

trial and copulate.[46] Their activity is enlarged into astronomical magnitude: Urania, the muse of astronomy completes the Outer Solar System which is all drawn into the couple's sexual activity: the husband is now Jupiter (HCE—the "galleonman jovial," "juniper arx," and others; these epithets reinforce the reference), his wife is Europa—and now *she has to bear* a bull, not vice versa, as in the Greek myth—and again, she *is* a bear—first Callisto and then Ursa Major. Their daughter (Io) is asleep, and the sons (Ganymede and garrymore, or "one more Jerry," referring to the twins) turn in their dream. Thus all the Galilean giant moons figure in the show. Jupiter has often been referred to as a mini Solar System because of the thousands of small bodies it directly controls through its gravity. Since Jupiter is the largest planet in our Solar System it has influenced our neighbourhood second only to the Sun. Uranus (I have found no Uranian moon in the text so far), Saturn with its satellites Titan, Rhea, Iapetus and Phoebe, will all spread the rumour in the Solar System that the couple made love (more or less successfully), down to Neptune and its satellite, Triton, which has the widest circulation round the whole galaxy. Pluto is *not* mentioned in this section. Maybe Joyce also shared or at least had a premonition of the astronomers' doubts about the origin of Pluto?[47]

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46. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 583.

47. At the end of the twentieth century Pluto (Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, pp. 262.16, 267.09, 269.27, 292.30) was considered a *plomet*, like Nereids and its moon, Charon; the name coming from the combination of the words "planetesimal" and "comet" because these objects showed characteristics of both. "Since the discovery of Pluto in 1930 astronomers had considered the solar system to have nine planets and assorted other bodies. However, since 2000 the discovery of at least three bodies (Quaoar, Sedna and 2003 UB313), all comparable to Pluto in terms of size and orbit, had led to a situation where either the minor bodies would have to be added to the list of officially recognized planets or older ones would need to be removed in order to ensure consistency in definition. There were also concerns surrounding the classification of planets in other solar systems. In 2006 the matter came to a head with the need to categorize and name the recently-discovered TNO 2003 UB313, which, being larger than Pluto, was thought to be at least equally deserving of the status of "planet." Debate within the International Astronomical Union led scientists to suggest proposals to redefine that term so as to include other objects beyond the traditional nine planets that had been historically considered part of the solar system. Members of the IAU's *General Assembly* voted on the proposal on August 24, 2006 in Prague, Czech Republic, with the vote removing Pluto's status as a planet and reclassifying it as a "dwarf planet" ("Redefinition of planet").

The night—if this is a night—is almost over. The distance between ALP and her "astronomically fabulafigured" husband is growing.[48] The sidereal railway (the Milky Way) and the Wagon (Ursa Major) sent from the stars (sidereal) will soon disappear among the endlessly rotating galaxies as a new beginning is bound to start.

> The greek Sideral Reulthway, as it havvents, will soon be starting a smooth with its first single hastencraft. Danny Buzzers instead of the vialact coloured milk train on the fartykket plan run with its endless gallaxion of rotatorattlers and the smooltroon our elderens rememberem as the scream of the service, Strubry Bess. Also the waggonwobblers are still yet everdue to precipitate after night's combustion. Aspect, Shamus Rogua or![49]

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# The Image of Britain in Antal Szerb's Works

*Zsuzsa Fülöp*

My paper is a part of a comprehensive study in which I analyse some important aspects of British and Hungarian cultural connections, in which Britain is viewed as a model and Hungarian literature as a recipient: it aims to demonstrate how British culture influenced the Hungarian literary thought and practice in the twentieth century.

The objective of the present segment of the work examines the impact of British culture on the literary and scholarly output of Antal Szerb, who in a compilation about Hungarian writers by Géza Hegedűs, *A magyar irodalom arcképcsarnoka* (*The Portrait Gallery of Hungarian Literature*) is described as "one of the most accomplished and likeable figures of Hungarian literature between the two wars." Further on the essay emphasises Szerb's "refined and typically Central European intellect."[1]

Antal Szerb is a member of a brilliant generation of Hungarian authors between the two World Wars who collaborated in spreading the English spirit in Hungary. They clustered around the periodical *Nyugat*, which represented the most influential intellectual current of the age. It was Mihály Babits "the Hungarian Swinburne" who coordinated the vast undertaking of the periodical in the field of the popularisation of British culture in Hungary. In *Nyugat* a new column was established for English literature. Apart from the essays of Babits, the endeavours of the so-called essayist-generation should be emphasised (Gábor Halász, László Németh, Béla Hamvas, Antal Szerb and Miklós Szentkuthy). Besides their essays included in books like *Hétköznapok és csodák* (*The Quotidian and Miracles*) or *A varázsló eltöri pálcáját* (*The Magician Breaks His Staff*) (both by Antal Szerb), they published their evaluations of British authors in comprehensive works e.g. Babits: *Az európai irodalom története* (*The History of European Literature*), Antal Szerb: *A világirodalom története* (*The History of World Literature*). The most effective way of the introduction of British literature to a wider audience was translation. In their anthologies English literature had an overwhelming predominance over French or German literature. As poets, novelists, drama-

1. Géza Hegedűs, *A magyar irodalom arcképcsarnoka* (Budapest: Móra, 1976), pp. 333–343.

tists they frequently assimilated English characteristics to their works. As essayists they adopted a subjective form of literary criticism representing the English vogue.

Antal Szerb was one of these versatile and erudite propagators of English literature. He grew up among a great number of books in a family of Jewish origin, who had been converted to Catholicism. They had an openly liberal and cosmopolitan attitude and the young man became so cultured at an early age that his contemporaries were amazed at his inexhaustible knowledge. His brilliant wit and charming colloquial style captivated both his peers and his readers. He was simultaneously an enthusiastic scholar researching with unremitting zeal, a virtuoso in writing, a conscientious teacher, as well as an easy-going and charming social man. He studied at one of the most prestigious grammar-schools (Piarista Gimnázium), where his form master was Sándor Sík, a priest, religious poet and educator of high respectability, whose guidance proved to be rather important for him. Then he studied classical philology in Graz, read Hungarian and German at Loránd Eötvös University in Budapest, to which he later took up English, as well. One of his tuitors was Arthur Yolland, another great propagator of British culture in Hungary. In 1924 he obtained his PhD and with various grants spent some time in Paris and Italy, then in 1929–30 he lived and studied in London. Consequently, he was fully armed when he came to Hungarian literature. Barely at the age of twenty when his firstlings (some poems) appeared in *Nyugat*, then he strengthened his reputation further as a scholar of extensive knowledge with the publication of a scholarly work on the history of Hungarian literature. Even in this he studies Hungarian authors in the context of European culture.

His contribution to British culture includes both scholarly and literary achievements. In the first category the most significant publication is probably *Az angol irodalom kis tükre* (*A Brief History of English Literature*). This work represents a logical stage in Szerb's career, for his affinity to British literature had been rather obvious since as a student he first read the work of the French critic and historian, Hyppolite Adolphe Taine entitled *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (*The History of English Literature)*. In this Taine emphasises the importance of the exploration of one dominant characteristic feature in the scrutinised author, which can be determined by three factors: milieu, moment and race (or nation). Taine's socio-historical method of analysis had considerable impact on philosophy, aesthetics, literary criticism and the social sciences. It also spread the idea of history as being concerned with the whole social life of any nation. The

young Szerb was receptive to the new spirit and he followed in Taine's footsteps even in the basic concept of the work, which is built on the principle of the continuity of the socio-historical interrelation, in which context both the writers and their works are presented. Another factor that suggests a kinship with Taine's concept is the subjective tone of the study. Szerb's perceptions and interpretations are individualistic and the mark of subjective impressionism and criticism is revealed also in the language. Thus he succeeds in avoiding a dry compilation of facts and data and the work is easy to understand, though never monotonous or boresome. However, it would be hard to label him because the influence of the new findings of psychology (Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung) is equally important in the study, not to mention Wilhelm Dilthey and the German *Geistesgeschichte* school.

Another field in which Szerb contributed to the propagation of British culture was short story writing. A recently published anthology of Hungarian short stories set in London is entitled *Londoni eső (Rain in London)*, which includes three pieces by Antal Szerb: *Századvég (Fin de Siècle), Cynthia,* and *Madelon, az eb (The Dog Named Madelon).* The first one is probably the most important story in the collection presenting semi-fictitious and real characters, the members of the famous group of intellectuals, the Rhymers' Club, who attended the legendary Cheshire Cheese Pub in London. The best representatives of Aestheticism and Decadence met there e.g. W.B. Yeats, Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, John Davidson and Oscar Wilde. The story depicts the Decadent artists who rejected traditional moral values and refused a social role; thus the changing aesthetic approach was accompanied by the changing role of the artist in *Fin-de-Siècle* England and as a result the brightest intellectuals of the time were doomed to passivity and inertia. The atmospheric story is all the more important for the so-called *maladie fin-the-siècle* haunted not only French or English artists, but also European intelligentsia, as a whole. The reason for Szerb's sensitivity to the problems of Aestheticism in Britain must have been rooted in his appreciation of Walter Pater's works (*Studies in the History of the Renaissance,* in particular), which made the author the proponent of the doctrine of art for art's sake. The interest in Aestheticism is present in one of Szerb's firstlings, the novel-fragment entitled *Szent fiúság (Holy Boyhood)*, in which the influence of Oscar Wilde is detectable. His protagonist, Hjorth Völundár is richly elegant and decadently cultured, extravagant and eccentric. He has a disastrous and fatal passion, just like the hero of *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Hjorth with his aristocratic

aestheticism and dandy attitude rebels against the system of ideals that the young Antal Szerb was taught to follow as a boy scout.

The fictitious narrative in which Szerb's indebtedness to British culture appears in the most complex and conspicuous manner is a novel entitled *A Pendragon legenda* (*The Legend of Pendragon*). In this highly entertaining prose work Antal Szerb managed to find the ideal artistic form for his vast reading of literary history, for it is a combination of various genres of Western prose literature representing mainly characteristic English novel types, but it is hard to draw sharp borderlines between the various genres and influences. First, this is an ironic self-portrait and a series of English and Welsh character sketches depicted in the dickensean manner, second, a "miracle novel" written in the spirit of the English miracle novel of the 30s, third, a mysterious legend based on Celtic and medieval mythology, fourth, a cultural-historical essay-novel presenting popular science, fifth, a detective story, a follower of the tradition of English detective fiction, sixth, a witty parody of all these genres. Let us now examine these categories one by one:

The central character of the novel is Dr. Phil. János Bátky, a Hungarian student of the Humanities, whose main subject is English. He is mild-mannered, highly cultured, amicable and shy. This philanthropic literary alter-ego of the writer is not a new creation: he appears in various short stories written in the early 30s. In these stories set in Paris or London he is a scholar waiting for some miracle to happen while idly or happily floating between reality and dream. In the novel, however, he is literally taken to another world. From the world of ordinary life to the land of dreams and miracles, from the library of the British Museum to the library of a Welsh castle, from an imagined world inspired by dusty medieval writings to a transcendent milieu. Dr Bátky, the clumsy, near-sighted philologist enchanted by long-gone times is a "spiritual adventure seeker" whose intellectual curiosity gets him involved in the most unbelievable affairs. Szerb describes himself as one "born with spectacles," who feels most comfortable among the walls of a library and who easily gets impassioned by "cosmic nonsense."[2] Bátky is doing research on the English mystics of the 17th century in the British Museum. Szerb himself knew the atmosphere of the British Museum since he carried on research there on the image of Hungary in early English literature. István Csák, at that time a fellow student on grant in London recalls the following: "He was a nice, amicable, modest person,

2. Antal Szerb, "Könyvek és ijfúságok elégiája," *Nyugat* (1938), 273–281.

maybe with some awkwardness, but with a capacity to disarm and win over the sympathy of the always reserved English."[3] Thence, Dr. Bátky cannot be anyone else but Antal Szerb himself, presented through an ironic mirror. With his eccentricity he ideally fits in the gallery of the equally whimsical English and Welsh characters or rather caricatures with various habits and hobby-horses. The novel with its sharp-cut characters obviously owes much to Sterne's *Tristam Shandy*, Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* or some of the novelists Szerb refers to in *Hétköznapok és csodák*, H. G. Wells, John Priestley, or even P. G. Wodehouse.

The miraculous events that the hero encounters are in accordance with Szerb's theory in which relying on György Lukács's and Károly Kerényi's findings he concludes that unlike the reader of classical epics the modern reader of novels is a sceptic person unwilling to take miracles as true stories for granted. Thus the task of the modern novelist is to use the spell and magic of writing to make the reader accept the miraculous element of the book. (Consequently the novel is an epic concerned with fictitious miracles. With this theory Szerb follows in the footsteps of great British antecedents. In his essay where he stresses the hegemony of modern English literature he names David Garnett and John Collier as the prompters of a new turn in the history of the novel.)[4] He says that Garnett's novel *Lady into Fox* liberated playful miracle in English literature.[5] The hero in this novel takes a walk with his wife in a meadow. For a moment she falls behind and when the husband turns round he finds nothing but a little fox. Since he has no doubts that this little creature is his beloved wife, he takes her home and takes care of her just as he would treat his wife until the tragic end comes. Antal Szerb saw the artistic value not in the style or the message, but in the absurdity of the story. The matter-of-factness of its irrational element reflects on something deep and true, something that could not be formulated with the methods of realism. From this the next question is evident: what is the miraculous element in Szerb's story? This question, however, leads us to the next category of influences to be discussed.

The story is also a mysterious tale set in the legendary country of the Welsh. Dr Bátky gets invited to the wonderful Pendragon library

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3. Tibor Wágner, ed., *Tört Pálcák. Kritikák Szerb Antalról (1926–1948)* (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1999), p. 137.

4. Antal Szerb, *Hétköznapok és csodák: Összegyűjtött esszék, tanulmányok, kritikák* (Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 2002), p. 9.

5. Szerb, p.107.

by the Earl of Gwynedd, a new acquaintance of his, who is the descendant of the famous Pendragon family. The castle is haunted by ghosts. Apparitions of a mysterious midnight rider with a torch in his hand are noticed at nights. A local legend has it that this ghost turns up whenever something threatens the Pendragon house. Dr Bátky learns that the midnight rider is Asaph Christian, the Sixth Earl of Gwynedd, an eighteenth century member of the mysterious confraternity of the Rosicrucians. Bátky learns more and more about the late Earl of Gwynedd, and through some adventures finds his grave and identifies him as the famous Rosecrux. Later he also stumbles upon a mysterious death of Maloney, the Connemara mountain climber. Adventures upon adventures follow until the finale when everybody chases everybody else. The philologist gets lost in a forest and has a nightmare of a strange building where he has to assist in the ceremony of black magic. The human being sacrificed for the sake of the Great Work is a certain Mr Roscoe, who actually ignites the "detective story" that concerns inheritance. The threads are immensely difficult to untangle. The model for Antal Szerb's mysterious tale must have been John Cowper Powys's masterpiece entitled *A Glastonbury Romance*, first published in 1932. In it the writer probes the mystical and spiritual ethos of the small village of Glastonbury and the effect of a mythical tradition upon its inhabitants, a tradition from the remotest past of human history—the legend of the Grail. Powys's iconography interweaves the ancient with the modern, the historical with the legendary to create a book of astonishing scope and beauty. It contains in its pages the Holy Grail, the haunts of King Arthur and Merlin, the Druids, the blood of Christ and the tomb of the man who carried the blood to Glastonbury, Joseph of Arimathea. These elements are mingled with scenes from modern life e.g. the establishment of a Glastonbury commune by a capitalist, a communist and an anarchist. Powys shows the interconnection of all life and life processes: a step down from the 5:10 train reverberates with movements in the farthermost galaxies. Antal Szerb included the portrait of Powys in his *The History of World Literature* saying that he is "an excellent synthetist of all currents of the modern novel. He learnt much from Gide, Proust, Freud—he is one of the best representatives of psychoanalysis in English literature."[6] The same statement is more or less applicable to *The Legend of Pendragon*, but the most important element of the kinship is definitely the presence

6. Antal Szerb, *A világirodalom története* (Budapest: Bibliotheca Kiadó, 1958), p. 820.

and the creative use of the Grail motif. A detailed survey of the literary adaptations of the Grail legend would exceed the scope of the present essay. Although it varies from author to author certain aspects are consistent. The Grail was said to be the cup of the Last Supper and the vessel used to catch the last drops of Jesus's blood at the Crucifixion. It was taken to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea. The search for the vessel became the principal quest of the knights of King Arthur. It was believed to be kept in a mysterious castle surrounded by a wasteland and guarded by a custodian called the Fisher King, who suffered from a wound that would not heal. His recovery and the renewal of the blighted lands depended upon the successful completion of the quest. Equally, the self-realisation of the questing knight was assured by finding the Grail. Ultimately, the quest became a search for mystical union with God. The magical properties of the Holy Grail have been plausibly traced to the magic vessel of Celtic myths that produced food and never ran out of it (cf. the Hungarian folk-tale *Terülj, terülj asztalkám*). The symbol of the Grail as a mysterious object of search and as the source of ultimate mystical experience survived in the twentieth-century novels (e.g. by Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis and J. C. Powys, just to name a few). There are various powers associated with the Grail, such as healing and restorative ability, immortality, knowledge of god, invisibility to evil or unworthy eyes, ability to feed those present, and so on. In the various adaptations of the legend the Grail exists in various forms. It is described as a cup, chalice, vessel, dish or platter and even a stone, which is elusively but profoundly connected to the alchemists' tradition, or it is often associated with other objects, e.g. the lance or the sword; but no matter which shape it takes it is a symbolic object that can impart profound lessons upon the manner in which to live one's life, and it represents a true Mystery in the classical sense.

In Antal Szerb's novel the Grail is equivalent to (or at least associated with) the Philosophers' Stone. The basis of the pseudo-science of alchemy was to turn all base metals to gold. Gold in alchemy is presented as something providing enlightenment or spiritual oneness with God. This explains the metaphorical connection between the Grail and the Stone. According to the Grail sagas, when Lucifer was cast from heaven by Archangel Michael during the war between God and Satan a stone fell from his crown, becoming the Philosophers' Stone or the *lapsit excillit*. It indicates an exiled quality—and this is how it can be associated with spiritual teachings that were considered heretical. However, one might ask: how is the Grail mysticism—and within that the Philosophers' Stone—connected to Szerb's narrative?

The answer is given by the next layer of the narrative, for it is also a cultural-historical essay-novel, which is concerned with the activity of an occult fellowship originated from the Middle Ages, the mysterious Rosicrucian Brotherhood. In the *New Encyclopaedia Britannica* the origins of the Rosicrucian confraternity are described as follows: "members of a worldwide brotherhood claiming to possess esoteric wisdom handed down from ancient times. The name derives from the order's symbol, a combination of a rose and a cross. The teachings of Rosicrucianism combine elements of occultism reminiscent of a variety of religious beliefs and practices."[7] The historical existence as an organisation has never been satisfactorily established, yet the belief in their existence was enough to ignite a wave of hysteria throughout Europe, and, as a matter of fact, it played a vital role in seventeenth century culture. Antal Szerb was always interested in the mysterious, he even wrote a short essay on the theme, in which he gives a brief outline of the secret organisation. Presumably this is the inspiration of the essay-fragments included in the novel. Embedded in the story the reader gets to know the entire history of the Brotherhood. The first reference to the secret society in the novel appears on the second page, where Dr Bátky makes acquaintance with Osborn Pendragon, an elegant young aristocrat. Through their conversation it becomes obvious that both of them are attracted to mysticism and the philosophy of Robert Fludd, whose name was remembered as a scientist dealing with occult theories. Robert Fludd was a real historical person in the sixteenth and seventeenth century England. He was a writer, physician and mystical philosopher devoted to the Rosicrucian Fraternity. In the nineteenth century the British essayist, Thomas de Quincey saw in his works a principal source of freemasonry. Some, however, saw Rosicrucianism as a complete hoax. One of the documents of the Brotherhood, *Fama Fraternitatis,* written anonymously in German, recounts the journeys of Christian Rosenkreuz, the founder, who was allegedly born in 1378 and lived for 106 years. His tomb was opened up 120 years later and according to the legend "although the sun never shone in this vault, it was illuminated by another sun" and his tombstone was replaced by an altar.[8] Exactly the same events take place in the novel, but the characters are different. Asaph Pendragon, a member of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood is supposed to lie dead in his tomb, but as Bátky and others

7. *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Volume 10, 1986 (14th edition), p. 188.

8. Antal Szerb, *A Pendragon legenda* (Budapest: Magvető, 1977), pp. 208–223.

discover he is not there. However, they find mysterious writings next to the tomb similar to the ones that are by the altar in *Fama Fraternitatis*. Only when all the mysteries are unveiled can the restless spirit lie in peace in his grave. And only the worthy are given the chance to see the truth. This provides the cultural-historical frame for the novel. There are not too many references to the Grail-legend, though. The name Pendragon, however, refers to King Arthur's father, Uther Pendragon and the setting of the story (a Welsh castle), as well as the quest motif make the connection retraceable.

The fifth layer of the narrative is the detective story, which concerns inheritance. A case of contested will results in a murder, which leads to an investigation. A certain Mr Roscoe left a will saying in case he died a violent death, the Earl of Gwynedd would be entitled to his legacy. Since there is proof in the earl's hands, Mrs Roscoe and her group hire an assassin, Maloney, the Munchausen-like figure from Connemara. Maloney, who has joined the unsuspecting Bátky in London, mysteriously dies one night. Dr Bátky spontaneously and unwittingly becomes the person who, by the end of the story, untangles the threads and reveals the truth behind the murderous attempts and apparitions, whether genuine or feigned. His detective persona bears a close resemblance to G. K. Chesterton's *Father Brown Stories*. Chesterton's first collection of *Father Brown Stories* appeared in 1911, and was referred to as the miracle book of the year. Chesterton did something revolutionary in the field of detective fiction, which at that time was dominated by the Sherlock Holmes stories. Chesterton's figure, Father Brown , clumsily finds himself in the midst of a web of crimes –similarly to Szerb's Bátky—and with naivety he follows the threads instinctively and with a lunatic-like ability to get down to the gist of the matter. During the investigations of the humble and modest friar the atmosphere of the past is established through the unveiling of an ancient secret. The same applies to *The Legend of Pendragon*, in which the mysticism of Wales is gradually deteriorated to be replaced by a commonplace crime story in the end. Another similarity is the Pendragon motif, though in different contexts. In Szerb's work even the title refers to King Arthur's legend. The word "pendragon," however, has a connotation of "sovereign," meaning "a ruler in Wales," in the first place. *The Father Brown Stories* have something to do with this meaning, because most of them take the reader back to the historical past of the Elisabethan era filled with secrets of families under a curse, murderous attempts around ancient legacies, and so forth. The end of Szerb's crime story

brings along the mystery as well: the ancient earl is found in his grave with a dagger in his heart.

For individually mixing literary genres not only does György Poszler call *The Legend of Pendragon* an experimental novel, but he also believes that this kind of combination adds a significant flavour to the narrative. He argues that the various genres are reflected in one another, as a result, "all the elements are questioned, as well as elevated."[9] Endre Illés calls it "the detective novel of the cultured."[10] Another critic concluded that Szerb created "an English type intellectual novel," but its humour cannot be disregarded, either.[11] The ironic, rather than satiric parodies highlight the paradoxical nature of situations. Thus, it can be safely stated that Antal Szerb is a true follower to a master, who, for his paradoxical aphorisms, will always be remembered as one of the most quoted men in English—G.K. Chesterton.

The three examined works represent separate influences and models from the British Isles. The half-scholarly, half-literary handbook is an all-time favourite pocket book on the theme; the short story is a marvellous atmospheric sketch; the skilful combination of literary genres, history and legend, reality and dream in the novel created a highly enjoyable literary gem. All these pieces present Antal Szerb as a scholar amongst writers and a writer amongst scholar, which made him both a better writer and a better scholar. He had his "visions and revisions" like Eliot's Prufrock: he believed in literature, but treated it with mild irony, believed in scholarship, humanism and culture, but was rather sceptical about civilisation in the end. His scepticism was tragically justified when he was taken to a labour camp in Balf almost at the end of the war, where he perished as a stigmatised and outcast man.

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9. György Poszler, "The Writer Who Believed in Miracles: Antal Szerb 1901–1945," *Hungarian Quarterly* Volume XLII. No. 167. Autumn (2002) p.167.

10. Wágner, p. 245.

11. Wágner, p. 467.

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# A zajos elhallgatástól a csendes önreflexióig
## A magyar Huxley-recepció hetven éve

*Farkas Ákos*

*Inter arma silent Musae*. Az ismert latin szólás egy-két megszorítással ugyan, de meglehetős pontossággal írja le Aldous Huxley magyarországi fogadtatásának helyzetét az 1941–45 közötti, háborús években. A korábban Kelet-Közép-Európa egészében és így nálunk is igen komoly olvasói tábort magáénak tudható és hivatásos irodalmáraink körében ugyancsak széles körben elismert angol írótól egyetlen új könyv sem jelent meg magyarul a második világháború alatt, és a korszak kulturális periodikumai sem tüntették ki figyelmükkel a korábban némelyek szerint érdemén felül is méltatott írót.

A fegyverek elhallgatását követő esztendők Huxley-recepciója azonban már jóval összetettebb képet mutat, mint ami akár a harmincas évek kultuszt sejtetően lázas fordítói és kritikai ügybuzgalma, akár a háborús esztendők szinte teljes hallgatása alapján feltételezhető lenne. Ami az immár hetven évre nyúlt időszakon belül írt Huxley-könyvek honi kiadását összességében illeti, a lefordított címek számaránya ugyan kiállja az összehasonlítást a korábbiakkal, az eredeti megjelenéshez képest vett késés időtartamát tekintve azonban semmiképp sem hasonlítható a helyzet a háború előtti évtizedek pezsgéséhez (lásd „Függelék"). Míg a harmincas években az angol író gyakorlatilag minden korai regényét meglehetősen rövid, átlagosan hétesztendős késéssel vehette kezébe a magyar nyelven olvasó Huxley-rajongó, addig a második világháborútól máig tartó hét évtizedben esetenként átlag huszonhét (!) évet kellett várnia egy-egy „új" Huxley-kötet magyar fordításának kézhezvételéig. A statisztikai adatok keltette összbenyomás azonban így is kedvezőnek mondható. Bár Huxley jelentős értekezőprózai munkássága máig csak töredékében érhető el magyarul, és a nagy európai nyelvekre – elsősorban franciára és németre – jóval több Huxley-címet fordítottak, mint magyarra, az angol szerző regényei végül is mind megjelentek magyarul. Ennek köszönhetően a magyar olvasó valamivel több Huxley-művet vehet kézbe anyanyelvén, mint például hasonló ízlésű cseh társa.

Ezt a kedvező összképet némileg árnyalja a vizsgált időszakban megjelent Huxley- fordítások feltűnően egyenetlen időbeli eloszlása. A

negyvenes, majd a hatvanas évek nekibuzdulásai után a közelmúltban gyakorlatilag egyetlen könyves műhely – a Cartaphilus – ügyszeretetének köszönhetően élénkült meg ismét a magyar Huxley-kiadás. Ha a holtidőnek tekinthető ötvenes, hetvenes és – részben – nyolcvanas éveket is figyelembe vesszük, és ha nem feledkezünk meg az értekezőprózai írásokról, akkor a mellékelt táblázatra tekintve meg kell állapítsuk: a vizsgált időszakban a frissen lefordított Huxley-címek számaránya mind a háborút megelőző időszak magyar, mind pedig a háború utáni korszak nemzetközi Huxley-kiadásának reprezentatív – vezető nyugat-európai és leginkább releváns térségünkbeli – mutatóitól jelentősen elmarad.

Mindennek természetesen köze lehet az ötvenes években a kelet- és kelet-közép-európai térség egészére jellemző nyugat- és modernizmusellenes kultúrpolitikához is. Szembeszökő tény, hogy ebben a szűk levegőjű évtizedben egyetlen egy Huxley-mű sem jelent meg magyarul – mint ahogy ekkoriban Joyce, Kafka vagy Camus magyarra fordított műveit is hiába kereste volna Magyarországon a naiv irodalombarát. Az 1941-től máig tartó időszak *egészét* tekintve azonban a kedvezőtlen ideológiai és aktuálpolitikai körülményeken túlmutató okokat kell keresnünk a honi Huxley-fordítások számbeli visszaesése mögött. Aligha tagadható ugyanis, hogy a szóban forgó évtizedek során Huxley kritikai megítélése világszerte enyhén szólva ellentmondásossá vált, kanonikus státusza a legutóbbi időkben érzékelhető pozitív, de egyelőre meglehetősen bizonytalan elmozdulásokat megelőzően határozottan megrendült, és az író fenomenális népszerűsége az „egyszerű" olvasók körében is észrevehetően megkopott. A helyzet borúlátó megítélésében én mindazonáltal nem mennék olyan messze, mint egy, az utópia-irodalom feltérképezését célul tűző, megjelenés előtt álló tanulmánykötet Huxley-fejezetének szerzője, Pintér Károly. A téma tudós kutatójával ellentétben én távolról sem vagyok biztos benne ugyanis, hogy Huxley nevét igazából csak két munkája – az amerikai ellenkultúra drogos hívei körében népszerű kései nagyesszé, *Az érzékelés kapui* és a középiskolai dolgozatírók és -íratók kedvence, a *Szép új világ* – tartaná csak elevenen a huszonegyedik század elején. Hasonlóképpen azt sem gondolom, hogy Huxley mai ázsiójának megítélése tekintetében a hetvenes évek közkézen forgó angol irodalomtörténeteinek – a Pelican-sorozat köteteinek – lesújtó vélekedéseit kéne irányadónak tekintenünk. Ugyanakkor egyet kell értenem Pintér általános helyzetértékelésével, mely szerint „Huxley-t az angolszász irodalomkritikai konszenzus nem sorolja az angol irodalomtörténet első vonalába" – legalábbis a több Huxley-konferenciát megihlető és életmű-sorozatokat útjára indító, centenáriumi 1994-es év-

vel tőlünk nyugatra kibontakozó, kisebb Huxley-reneszánsz előtti viszonyok megítélését illetően.[1]

Kétségtelen, hogy a realista regény poétikáját Huxley cselekményességben és jellemábrázolásban egyre erőtlenebb regényein számon kérő, konzervatívabb kritikusok és a kiadók számára „előkóstoló", ugyancsak a hagyományok fenntartásában érdekelt lektorok még kevesebb dicsérnivalót fedeztek fel az író későbbi műveiben, mint korai szatíráiban. A könyvítészek és irodalmi piackutatók következő – és nálunk máig hangadónak tekinthető – nemzedéke se talált sokkal több okot rá, hogy a kiadók figyelmébe ajánlja az egykor oly divatos mester késői műveit.[2] Az öregedő Huxley elsődlegesen tartalomorientált írásai, melyek szellemiségét határozott és helyenként a miszticizmusba hajló metafizikai esszencializmus jellemzi, nem számíthatott különösebben kedvező fogadtatásra a közelmúlt és napjaink szövegközpontú, metafizika- és esszencializmus-ellenes filozófiai irányzatai által meghatározott kulturális közegében sem.

Ami a konkrét, magyarországi viszonyokat illeti, a fentiekben vázlatosan áttekintett, globális kritika- és mentalitástörténeti tendenciák Huxley befogadásának szempontjából nem éppen kedvező körülményeihez bizonyos lokális hatások is hozzáadódtak, a nemzetközi tendenciákat hol felerősítve, hol pedig – jóval ritkábban – mérsékelve. A Huxley-recepció honi alakulását meghatározó helyi tényezők feltérképezéséhez röviden át kell tekinteni a magyarországi Huxley-kritika utolsó hetven évének főbb dokumentumait, legalábbis a különböző folyóiratokban, gyűjteményes esszékötetekben és irodalomtörténeti áttekintésekben megjelent, az angol író munkásságának egészét vagy annak egyes részeit értékelő írásokat.

Az első releváns dokumentum szinte közvetlenül a háború utánra datálódik. Sós Júlia, az inkább társadalomtudományi irányú folyóirat, a baloldali *Valóság* egy 1946-os számában, „Huxley harmadik útja" címmel megjelent tanulmánya új és máig lezáratlan korszakot nyitott meg az író magyar fogadtatásának immár nyolc évtizedes történetében. Az írás legfontosabb és utóbb gyakran visszhangzott megállapításai közül az első a szemléző „irodalmon kívüli" megközelítésmódját igyekszik legitimálni. A kritikus „irodalmiatlan" hozzáállásához Sós szerint

1. Kroó Katalin és Bényei Tamás, eds., „A számkivetett Kalibán: Huxley *Szép új világ*a Shakespeare *Vihar*ának fényében" *Utópiák és ellenutópiák,* Párbeszéd-kötetek, 4. (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2010), 187–208. p. 187.

2. Az Európa kiadó archivált lektori jelentéseit, melyeket a Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum őrzi, kollégám, Czigányik Zsolt tekintette át. A hivatásos könyvajánlók Huxley-val kapcsolatos fenntartásaira vonatkozó észrevételemet az ő szíves szóbeli közlésére alapozom.

az író maga mutatott példát azzal, hogy műveiben lebecsülte az irodalmiság sajátosan esztétikai szempontjait.[3] Sós ennek konstatálását követően a korszakra jellemző magabiztossággal ítélkezik Huxley önfeladó pacifizmusa és az „ideális paraszti életforma" iránt az *És múlnak az évek* (*After Many a Summer*, 1939, ford. Schöpflin György, 1941) című regényben megnyilatkozó naivitása fölött, amit a recenzens a szerző „nagypolgári" származásából eredeztet.[4] Meg kell állapítani, a kritikusnak az elmarasztalt írónál sokkal kevésbé eshetett nehezére, hogy átlépje saját osztálymeghatározottságának és családi hátterének korlátait. Az utóbb Oleg Kosevoj-ösztöndíjjal kitüntetett publicista alig néhány évvel korábban még a tudós édesapa, Sós Aladár személye köré szerveződő „georgista" társaság lelkeként lopta be magát a – mellesleg Huxley-ra is nagy hatást gyakorló – Henry George eszméit a magyar viszonyokra alkalmazni kívánó polgári értelmiségi ifjak szívébe, tudjuk meg Vitányi Iván egy visszaemlékezéséből.[5] A korra jellemző csőlátás másik tünete lehet, hogy bár egy odavetett megjegyzésből kiderül, az egykori georgisták „Jucija" társadalomtudományi ismereteit nyilván nem valami gyorstalpaló kádertanfolyamon sajátította el, a harmadikutas utópizmus nemzetközi szakirodalmát a cikkben felvillantó nevek – [Wilhelm] Roepke, [Franz] Oppenheimer – mellől nemcsak a mesteré, Henry George-é hiányzik. Nehéz lenne megmondani, hogy tájékozatlanságból vagy valamiféle igazodási kényszer hatására, de tény, hogy a Sós család körül szerveződött georgista kör amerikai névadóján túl a cikkben az elemzett Huxley-regényben megjelenő kommunális reformeszmék közvetlen ihletője, a georgista ideák gyakorlati megvalósításán munkálkodó, a maga korában széles körben ismert magyar-amerikai tudós, Ralph Borsodi neve is említetlenül marad. Sós Júlia ezzel az elhallgatással is precedenst teremtett a magyar Huxley-kritikában. A Babits Mihály „Kossuth, Deák és Aldous Huxley" című, 1937-es írása, majd pedig Cs. Szabó László Gábor Dénest – és vele kapcsolatban Szerb Antalt – megidéző, utolsó Huxley-esszéjének 1966-os megjelenése közti időszakban honi kritikusaink döntő többsége nem találta említésre méltónak az angol író életművének legszembeötlőbb magyar vonatkozásait sem.[6]

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3. Sós Júlia, „Huxley harmadik útja," *Valóság* 2 (1946). sz. 62–65, p. 62.

4. Sós, pp. 64–65

5. Vitányi Iván felszólalása a Bibó István Közéleti Társaság „Egy férfi útja a XX. században" címmel Göncz Árpád tiszteletére 2002. március 28-án megrendezett beszélgetésen, letöltve 2010. május 1. <http://www.bibotarsasag.hu/Bibo%20Web%20Folder/bibo/eloadasok/egy_ferfi.html>.

6. Babits Mihály, „Kossuth, Deák és Aldous Huxley," *Nyugat* XXX.12. (1937) 475–476., Cs. Szabó László, „A vak Sámson Kaliforniában," in *Őrzők*

Sós Júlia tartalomközpontú – azaz a Huxley-írások konceptuális „lényegét" a formai megjelentéstől elválasztva tárgyaló – megközelítése nemcsak a vizsgált korszak legkorábbi szakaszára jellemző a honi Huxley-recepció háború utáni történetében. A budapesti georgisták között korábban ugyancsak prominens helyet elfoglaló, a háborút követő éra ideológiai elvárásainak megfelelő következtetéseket szintén példás gyorsasággal levonó Márkus István Huxley-t politikailag nem kevésbé elmarasztaló, 1963-as értékelésétől kezdve Halász László 2006-ban megjelent, a *Szép új világ*ban felvázolt jövőkép aktualitását vizsgáló írásáig féltucatnyi Huxley-tárgyú cikk, tanulmány és esszé feszegeti ugyanazt a típusú a kérdést.[7] Igaza van-e, volt-e – vizsgálódnak évtizedeken át tartó kitartással a kor ideológiailag túldeterminált esszéi és tanulmányai – az angol írónak ebben vagy abban a politikai, történelmi, valláselméleti, fejlődés- vagy társadalomlélektani, netán mentálhigiénés kérdésben. Ördögök és angyalok, vagy inkább avantgárd műalkotásokra emlékeztető alakzatok jelennek-e meg a modern kísérleti alanyok kábítószer generálta vízióiban? – faggatja Huxley meszkalin tárgyú írásait az önmagát még inkább az irodalom laboratóriumi kutatójaként, mint az ország első médiaprofesszoraként pozicionáló Abody Béla 1961-ben keletkezett (bár csak 1973-ban megjelent) tanulmányában.[8] Járható-e az erőszakmentes ellenállás – a „Gandhi-féle »szatjágraha«"– az öregedő Huxley által ajánlott útja, illetve megvalósítható-e az eszményi társadalom nem-kommunista típusú utópiája Huxley némi lekezeléssel emlegetett „szövetkezeti szocializmusa" jegyében? – kérdezi Kristó Nagy István 1963-ban.[9] Kell-e félnünk a civilizációnkat elpusztító, a „*Majom és lényeg*-ben vízionált atompusztulás" bekövetkeztétől? – fürkészi a jövőt az élet és az irodalom dolgaiban kétségkívül imponálóan tájékozott Sükösd Mihály.[10] Vajon a politikai

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(Budapest: Magvető, 1985) 575–592. (Eredeti megjelenés: *Új Látóhatár*, 1966.) További, érdekes kivétel Abody Béla, aki Huxley állítólagos biológiai determinizmusának merevségével Szondi Lipót genotípus-elméletének rugalmasságát állítja szembe. Vö. Abody Béla, „Egy legenda nyomában," in *Félidő* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1973) 155–172, p. 165. (Abody érdemeit növeli, hogy a cikk utalásai a megjelenésnél sokkal korábbi keletkezési dátumot – minden bizonnyal 1961-et – valószínűsítenek.)

7. Vö. Márkus István, „Egy borúlátó a túloldalon," *Valóság* 5 (1963) 25–32., Halász László, „A manipulálhatóság képei" *Alföld* 7 (2006) 71–78.

8. Vö. Abody végig.

9. Kristó Nagy István, „Huxley három utópiája," *Nagyvilág* 11 (1963) 1701–1704, pp. 1701, 1703.

10. Sükösd Mihály, „Huxley," in *Kilátó* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1974), 81–101, p. 100.

hatalmat gyakorló személyek és struktúrák a szándék mellett rendelkeznek-e a sötét céljaik eléréséhez szükséges eszközökkel is a tömegek tökéletes, mindenre kiterjedő manipulálásához? – firtatja az irodalom mellett a politikai pszichológia dolgaiban is járatos Halász László.[11] A válaszok eltérőek – igaz, a tudós recenzorok többnyire inkább vitatják, mint megerősítik az írónak tulajdonított vélekedések helytálló voltát –, ám egy dolog végig összekapcsolja ezeket az ideológiai tekintetben az idő előrehaladtával egyre inkább széttartó elemzéseket. Huxley prózájának tartalmi megállapításait azok regénybeli beágyazottságától, retorikai megformáltságától vagy teljesen, vagy legalábbis lényegileg elkülönítve kezelhető összetevőkként vizsgálják.

Nem így a nyugatos hagyományokból táplálkozó, „formalista" irodalomszemléletük miatt a korszak első évtizedeiben marginalizált kritikusok és esszéisták. Weöres Sándor, Cs. Szabó László és – a rövid színikritikájával a honi Huxley-recepció szempontjából nem éppen központi jelentőségű – Ottlik Géza elsősorban esztétikai szempontok alapján igyekezett a Huxley-életmű egészét vagy annak egy-egy szeletét felbecsülni, vagy – elsősorban Cs. Szabó esetében – újraértékelni. Weöres a kiadói gyakorlatában az *Új Magyar Irodalmi Lexikon* szerint „az irodalmat egyre inkább a politika fölé" helyező, dunántúli *Sorsunk*ban tesz kísérletet Huxley irodalomtörténeti besorolására, még 1946-ban. A költő-kritikus Németh László korábbi írásainak megállapításait visszhangozva az angol írót a „megszelídített" modernizmus népszerűsítőjeként a Joyce—Lawrence—Powis—Huxley—Woolf sorozat legkevésbé „avant gard-ista" képviselőjeként mutatja be.[12] Az *És megáll az idő* (*Time Must Have a Stop*, 1944) című regény friss, 1946-os fordítását kommentálva a költő-esszéista a profetikus hangú elődökkel és kortársakkal – például Dosztojevszkijjel és Sartre-ral – párhuzamba állított Huxley-t inkább „moralizáló hajlamú" íróként jellemzi.[13] Huxley regénytörténeti besorolása mellett Weöres Huxley nemzetkarakterológiai jellemzésére is vállalkozik, kiemelve az író játékos hangvétele mögött már a kezdetekben is érzékelhető, „gúnyolt angol puritán skrupulozitás"-t.[14]

A nemzeti jellegként azonosított vonásokat, kiváltképp pedig a felszín frivolitása mögötti, angolszász puritanizmust kiemelő Cs. Szabó László eredetileg 1966-os, nagylélegzetű tanulmányának egy pontján mintha Weöresnek a moralizáló Huxley nehézkességét illető megálla-

11. Vö. Halász, pp. 71–75.
12. Weöres Sándor, „Aldous Huxley," *Sorsunk* 5 (1947) 304–306, p. 304.
13. Weöres, p. 305.
14. *Ibid.*

pításaihoz kapcsolódna. Mi több, ami Weöresnél még csak tapintatosan megfogalmazott fenntartás – a Huxley-regényekben egyre inkább felerősödő „erkölcsi tendencia nem mindig vált a művek javára”[15] –, az a korábbi önmagát Huxley vonatkozásában felülbíráló Cs. Szabó cikkében már egyértelmű elutasítás. *A vak Sámson* első magyar kiadásához évekkel korábban írt, „lelkes”előszavában – és tegyük hozzá, egy sor másik, még a *Nyugat*ban megjelent írásában – foglaltakat visszavonva Cs. Szabó kijelenti: „a regény rossz”.[16] Csakúgy, mint az író lényegében valamennyi Amerikában írt könyve – kivéve a William Golding antropológiai pesszimizmusát megelőlegező, „úttörő” regényfantázia, a *Majom és lényeg* (586), illetve a Huxley regényírói erényeit paradox módon leginkább érvényre juttató történelmi életrajz, a – magyarra máig lefordítatlan – *The Grey Eminence* (1941, A szürke eminenciás) (591). A tényirodalmi műfajokban rejlő szépirodalmi lehetőségeket felvető észrevétel akár irodalomtörténeti próféciának is tekinthető. Mintha Cs. Szabó vonatkozó megjegyzései a historiográfiai metafikció, illetve a narrativizált történetírás fogalmaival operáló, a műfajok és diszciplínák határainak ellégiesedését konstatáló és az efféle liminalitást valorizáló irodalomkritikai diskurzusok két évtizeddel későbbi világát vetítenék előre – ezek szándékosan elidegenítő dikciójának bevezetése nélkül.[17]

Az elsődlegesen esztétikai szempontokat érvényesítő Huxley-kritika mindazonáltal nem volt a polgárinak mondott irodalmáraink privilégiuma. A kulturális *detante* jegyében 1985-ben kiadott Cs. Szabó-kötet majd’ húsz évvel korábban keletkezett Huxley-darabjában a szerző név szerint is említi Kristó Nagy Istvánt azok között a marxista-leninista kritikusok között, kiknek „dogmatikus páncélzatán” valahogy mégiscsak átütött a „burzsoá” író műveinek esztétikai értékeiben megnyilatkozni képes „jó szándék”.[18]

Kristó Nagy nevének kiemelése Cs. Szabó részéről nem lehetett egészen véletlen. Kétségtelen, a Cs. Szabó által idézett, s még a *Nagyvilág* egy 1963-as számában megjelent Kristó Nagy-írás rendre elősorolja a korabeli marxista Huxley-recepció jól bejáratott ideológiai toposzait. A cikk így kötelességtudóan diagnosztizálja az íróra jellemző „burzsoá gondolkodás zűrzavarának” különféle szimptómáit a „szövetkezeti szo-

15. *Ibid.*

16. Cs. Szabó, p. 583.

17. Hasonló megérzések ihlethették Egri Péter egy korabeli, az Európa kiadó számára készített, publikálatlan lektori jelentésének a *The Grey Eminence* párdarabjának, a *The Devils of Loudun* (1952, A loudoni ördögök) lefordíttatását javalló kitételeit is.

18. Cs. Szabó, p. 590.

cializmus" délibábjától az „egzisztencialista tanok"-on át a biológiai determinizmusig.[19] Ugyanakkor Kristó Nagy nem marad érzéketlen a Huxley késői műveiben megnyilatkozó, sajátosan regényirodalmi értékek iránt sem. Külön figyelmet érdemel, hogy a szerző ráadásul ugyanott, vagy majdnem ugyanott fedezi fel ezeket, ahol Cs. Szabó is dicsérnivalót talál. Igaz, Angliába emigrált írónkkal ellentétben Kristó Nagy nem nevezi néven a Cs. Szabó cikkében Huxley-val összefüggésbe hozott világhírű „Huxley-követő"-t, William Goldingot.[20] Ugyanakkor a Kristó Nagy elemzésében külön figyelemre méltatott Huxley-passzus – a *Sziget* (*Island*, 1962, magyarul 2008) című regény „expozíciós része" – nemcsak Huxley „útkereső elődei és kortársai" – megint csak a gyakran visszatérő nevek: Joyce, Powys, Lawrence, Woolf –, hanem a Nobel-díjas utód gyakorlatát is az olvasó emlékezetébe idézheti.[21] A kiemelkedő modernisták újításainak tökéletes regénybeli integrálását példázó szakasz leírása kis változtatásokkal ugyanúgy illenék Golding *Ripacs Martin*jára (*Pincher Martin*, 1954, magyarul 1968), mint a *Sziget* nyitó epizódjára. Kristó Nagy jól ragadja meg a hajótörést szenvedett és kábulatából lassan ébredő hős tudattartalmait leíró rész lényegét. „A legkülönfélébb érzések, benyomások és emlékképek kusza forgatagából bontakozik ki közelmúltjának, sőt egész életének néhány döntő emléke" – írja.[22] Más kérdés, hogy az egybevágó szituációk és az alkalmazott technikák minden bizonnyal homológ szerkezete ellenére Golding jóval messzebb megy Huxley-nál. A *Sziget* írója ugyanis a modernista elődöktől átvett módszert Kristó Nagy helyes meglátása szerint csupán az „olvasó érdeklődésének felkeltésére, a hős jellemzésére és a cselekmény izgalmas indítására" használja (Kristó Nagy 1703).[23] Ezzel szemben Golding *Ripacs Martin*jában a hajótörött hallucinációja a regénycselekmény egészét meghatározó és az adott epizód – sőt, azon keresztül az egész *situation humaine* – radikális átértékelésére sarkalló narratív elem.[24]

A „polgári" Cs. Szabó és az általa marxistaként azonosított Kristó Nagy Huxley-n keresztül Goldingra vonatkoztatható meglátásai kö-

19. Kristó Nagy, p. 1702.
20. Vö. Cs. Szabó, p. 586
21. Kristó Nagy, p. 1703.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. A *Ripacs Martin*ra vonatkozó kiegészítő észrevételeimért a köszönet Sarbu Aladárt illeti, akinek egy másfél évtizeddel ezelőtt elhangzott előadásában megfogalmazott néhány sarkalatos kitételét felelevenítve jutottam ezekre a következtetésekre (melyeknek esetleg téves voltáért kizárólag engem terhel bárminemű felelősség).

zött van azonban egy lényegi különbség. A klasszikus modernistáktól Huxley-n át Goldingig húzódó láncolat második kapcsolódási pontját kiemelő Cs. Szabóval szemben Kristó Nagy ugyanis az elsőre irányítja a figyelmet, s így időben inkább hátra, mint előre tekint. A marxista kritikusnak a *Sziget* kétségkívül jól eltalált nyitó epizódját méltató megállapításai mögött felsejlő értékszempontok mégis fontos adalékkal szolgálnak a hatvanas évtized honi kritikai diskurzusainak megítéléséhez. Kristó Nagy Huxley-val kapcsolatban itt megnyilatkozó fogékonysága is arra utal, hogy Cs. Szabónak a létező szocializmus értékbefogadó és értékteremtő potenciáljára vonatkozó, a Huxley-tanulmányt is befogadó kötet előszavában vallomásos formába öntött, óvatos optimizmusa nem volt megalapozatlan.[25] Nemhogy a Cs. Szabó-kötet megjelenésének történeti hátterét adó nyolcvanas, de már a két, itt számba vett tanulmány eredeti közlését datáló hatvanas évek elkötelezett marxista irodalmárai is képesek és hajlandóak voltak az általuk vizsgált művek – esetünkben egy magyarra akkor még le sem fordított Huxley-regény – sajátosan irodalomtörténeti és esztétikai jelentőségének felismerésére.

Mindez fokozottan érvényes a néhai Egri Péter professzornak a Huxley-életmű egészét megítélni hivatott, terjedelmesebb tanulmányára, mely az angol író kisprózájának magyarra fordított válogatásához írt utószó formájában látott napvilágot 1964-ben. Ha a korszak e talán legsokoldalúbban művelt anglistája finomabban fogalmaz is, mint világnézeti felsőbbrendűségében megingathatatlan kortársainak egyik-másika, a Lukács-tanítvány Egri sem tekint el Huxley ideológiai alapú megítélésétől. Elismeri ugyan, hogy mint legtöbb regényében, úgy az utószóban legfontosabbnak talált *Pont és ellenpontban* is Huxley a „modern munkamegosztás társadalmi-lélektani következményeit éles ésszel és szellemesen bírálja", de ehhez nyomban hozzáteszi, hogy az író „ennek végső megítélésében sokszorosan téved."[26] A társadalmi munkamegosztásból eredő elidegenedés Egri szerint is a huszadik század egyik legfőbb rákfenéje, de Huxley úgymond elköveti a hibát, hogy a modern élet elsivárosodásáért a regényben okolt „technikai színvonalat" a marxizmus tanításait félremagyarázva „társadalmi rendszerektől függetlenül vizsgálja."[27]

Ha Egri nem menne tovább a kommunizmus jövőképének magasabbrendűségét felismerni képtelen és egyáltalán, minden emberi

25. Cs. Szabó, [Előszó], in *Őrzők*, p. 5.

26. Egri Péter, „Aldous Huxleyről," in Aldous Huxley, *Lángész és az istennő* (Budapest: Európa, 1964), 415–437, p. 421.

27. Egri, p. 421.

érték iránt szkeptikus, „polgári" Huxley ostorozásánál, akkor tanulmánya aligha érdemelne több figyelmet, mint az a félmondat, ami Márkus István vagy Katona Anna helyenként tárgyi és nyelvi tévedésektől sem mentes, kétes érvényességű és őszinteségű ideológiai közhelyeket mozgató tanulmányaival kapcsolatban e cikk terjedelmébe belefér.[28] Egri azonban túllép a tartalomcentrikus elemzés könnyen megjósolható következtetéseinek levonásán. Miután a zeneileg megkomponált, ellenpontos meseszövésben, a filmes montázstechnika ügyes alkalmazásában és a vezérmotívumok szerepeltetésében azonosítja a *Pont és ellenpont* innovatív regényszerkezetének főbb elemeit, Egri arra is vállalkozik, hogy a lukácsi realizmus-elmélet önmaga által továbbfejlesztett változatának keretei közt kijelölje a szerinte legfontosabb Huxley-regény irodalomtörténeti helyét. A *Pont és ellenpont* pozicionálását Egri a műnek „a XX. századi regénytípusok között elfoglalt sajátságosan átmeneti helyzete" alapján végzi el.[29] A regény irodalomtörténeti helye ilyenformán az Egri történeti regénypoétikájában köztes pozíciót elfoglaló ideáltípust megtestesítő, későbbi Thomas Mann-regények közvetlen szomszédságában keresendő. Mint *A varázshegy*, a József-tetralógia és a *Doktor Faustus*, úgy Huxley legfontosabb „regénye [is] a folytonosságot őrző hagyo-

28. Vö. Márkus István, „Egy borúlátó a túloldalon." *Valóság* 5 (1963) 25–32, Katona Anna „A nagy kísérletezés korszaka," in Szenczi M., Szobotka T., Katona A., *Az angol irodalom története* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1972), 575–613, H. Szász Anna Mária, *Aldous Huxley világa* (Budapest: Európa, 1984). Az egykori georgista Márkus miután megállapította, hogy „a földgolyó [...] legalább 30 milliárd ember eltartására képes" (28), s hogy „a társadalmi munkamegosztás nagy folyamatát [...] visszafordítani nem lehet" (31), levonja a nyilvánvaló végkövetkeztetést: „a szabadságot nem az autonóm kisközösségek szigetei teremtik vagy őrzik meg, hanem az emberiség egésze küzdheti ki magának, a köztulajdon és a tervszerűen épített világgazdaság egysége alapján" (32). A „moshka [sic!] nevű kábítószer"-t és Huxley *The Ape and the Essence* [sic!] címre átkeresztelt művét (604) emlegető Katona Annától megtudjuk, hogy „Huxley, akit cinizmusa egész életében visszatartott attól, hogy bármilyen ügy mellett elkötelezze magát [...] nem vállalkozott rá, hogy a fasizmus zsidóüldözésével szemben felemelje a szavát" (*ibid.*). Hogy a Huxley-házaspár zsidómentő akcióiról (lásd H. Szász Anna Mária, p. 148) Katonának nem volt tudomása, arra még adódhat elfogadható magyarázat, de hogy az *Angol irodalom történetén*ek tudós társszerzője előtt ismeretlenek maradhattak azok a jelentős Huxley-művek (kiváltképp *A vak Sámson*, a *Célok és eszközök* és a *Visszatérés a szép új világhoz*), melyekben az író nagyon egyértelműen és ismételten kifejezésre juttatja határozott antifasiszta nézeteit, az már nehezebben érthető.

29. Egri, p. 426.

mányos és a szélsőségesen romboló avantgardista regénytípus között helyezkedik el."[30] Igaz, az egyfelől a Dickens—Thackeray-féle klasszikus, realista nagyregény, másfelől pedig a Joyce és Woolf nevével fémjelzett kísérleti regények jegyeit középúton egyesítő Thomas Mann-művekkel ellentétben Huxley a „régi és az új ábrázolásmódot [...] nem emeli szintézisbe, hanem mechanikusan keveri".[31] Azonban a félsiker is siker, kiváltképp, hogy a Huxley-regényt annak sajátos stílusjegyei, például az eredeti módon a konkrétat az általánoshoz hasonlító – és tegyük hozzá: a metafizikus költők gyakorlatát követő T. S. Eliot képalkotását idéző[32] – metaforái is a korabeli angol regény színvonala fölé emelik. Talán ez a rövid, kényszerűségből felületes és Egri példamutatóan szabatos előadásmódjához minden bizonnyal méltatlan összefoglaló is érzékelteti, hogy nemcsak a vizsgált Huxley-regények, hanem a vizsgálódó kritikus személyének kvalitásai is koruk nívójának átlaga fölé magasodnak.

A hatvanas-hetvenes évek honi Huxley-kritikájának másik kiemelkedő fontosságú reprezentánsa az angol író életművéhez többször is visszatérő Sükösd Mihály. *Az angol irodalom a huszadik században* című enciklopédikus áttekintés összeállításánál nem ok nélkül esett a Huxley-fejezet elkészítéséhez Sükösdre a szerkesztői választás. A szépíróként is jelentős irodalomtörténész-publicista már egy 1962-es, a *Nagyvilág*ban közölt Huxley-tanulmányával demonstrálta, hogy széleskörű tárgyismeretéhez eredeti látásmód és a téma iránti affinitás társul. Mint már címe is elárulja, a „Huxley, az esszéíró" az angol író munkásságának egy olyan szeletét tekinti át, melynek – mint azt Sükösd maga is megállapítja –, Huxley már-már gyanús, harmincas-évekbeli népszerűségéhez nem sok köze lehetett.[33] Ugyan a *Collected Essays* darabjainak számbavétele alkalmat ad Sükösd számára a korszak honi Huxley-kritikáját uraló bírálatok újrafogalmazására, a szerző figyelme kiterjed az esszéíró Huxley valóban jelentős, és korábban nem, vagy alig méltatott erényeire is. Ilyenformán a honi olvasó nemcsak Huxley fiatalkori szemléletének kárhoztatandó biológiai determinizmusáról, vagy idősebb korának megmosolyogtató profetikus hevületéről értesülhetett. Sükösd ismertetéséből a recenzensnél szükségszerűen tájékozatlanabb olvasó így arról is tudomást szerezhetett, hogy a szerző az érdekesebbnél érdekesebb kérdéseket

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. E kapcsolódási pont felismeréséhez Ferencz Győző szóban tett megjegyzései segítettek hozzá.

33. Sükösd Mihály, „Huxley, az esszéíró." *Nagyvilág* 8 (1962) 1218–1221.

felvető esszék – például a Foucault-t megelőlegező és Sükösd érdeklődését is felkeltő börtön-tárgyú írás – témái, a gyűjteményes kötet egészének diagnosztikai ereje és az író Egri által is méltatott, rokonszenves személyiségjegyei miatt is joggal tarthatna számot érdeklődésére. Már ha a gyűjtemény darabjai együtt vagy külön-külön akár magyar fordításban, akár angol eredetiben elérhetők lennének számára.

A szemleíró természetesen nem tehető felelőssé azoknak a történelmi körülményeknek a kialakulásáért, melyek olvasói számára hozzáférhetetlenné teszik a figyelmükbe ajánlott művet. Az pedig nemcsak menti, de kifejezetten dicséretessé is teszi a felemás ismeretterjesztés feladatát magára vállaló Sükösd ma némileg különösnek ható eljárását, hogy az *Az angol irodalom a huszadik században* Huxley-fejezetébe integrálva a nyolc évvel korábbi, *Nagyvilág*-beli cikk összegző megállapításai máig használható fogódzókat adnak az írói életmű egészének értékeléséhez. Eszerint a *Pont és ellenpont* egésze, a „*Szép új világ* híres jelenetei, közmondásossá lett bölcselmei" mellett az utókor nevében mérleget vonó Sükösd értékelésében éppenséggel az „esszéíró válogatott gyűjteményei" biztosíthatják Huxley nevének hosszabb távú továbbélését.[34]

A többszerzős, kétkötetes irodalomtörténeti öszefoglalás terjedelmes Huxley-fejezetének – melyet néhány kisebb, bár nem éppen tanulságok nélkül való változtatással Sükösd négy évvel későbbi esszékötetébe is felvesz majd, ezzel triptichonná bővítve Huxley-tárgyú írásait[35] – az író értekezőprózai teljesítményének méltatása mellett legérdekesebb passzusai a *Pont és ellenpont* korábbi elemzéseit újabb szempontokkal kiegészítő kommentárok. Ezek közül a legérdekesebb, a közelmúlt irodalomelméleti megközelítéseit mintegy megelőlegező észrevételek a Sükösd szerint legrangosabb Huxley-regény innovatív elbeszélői helyzetére vonatkoznak. A Henry Jamesre hivatkozó, de a bahtyini „polifon regény" elméletét is felidéző okfejtést érdemes hosszabban idézni:

> A *Pont és ellenpont* egyebek között azért rangos regény, mert módszertana szakít a regényíró mindenhatóságának gyakorlatával. Mintha belátná Huxley [...] Henry Jamesnek igazát: a regényben az ábrázolt dolgoknak és személyeknek kell meg-

34. Sükösd Mihály, „Aldous Huxley," in *Az angol irodalom a huszadik században I.*, ed. Báti László, Kristó-Nagy István (Budapest: Gondolat, 1970), 359–377, p. 377.

35. Sükösd Mihály, „Huxley." *Kilátó.* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1974) 81 – 101.

szólalniuk, az író maradjon néma. Kár, hogy ezt a tanácsot csak elvileg, érezhetően önmaga hajlamai ellenére fogadta meg. A *point of view*, a sokszempontúság követelményeit hideg tudatossággal alkalmazza ugyan, de önmaga esze, számítása mindegyre figuráinak valós dimenziói fölé kerekedik.[36]

Érdekes, és két nagyjából azonos korú, hasonló kvalitásokkal felvértezett, kiváló irodalmár szemléletmódjának eltéréseire rávilágító körülmény, hogy amit Sükösd sokall, azt Egri kifejezetten hiányolja. Így ami Sükösd olvasatában a következetesen alkalmazott sokszempontúság gátja – nevezetesen a túlzott szerzői kontrollban megnyilatkozó narratív „központosítás" –, annak éppenséggel a hiánya volna az, ami Egri szerint a „külső cselekmény elszegényedésének" s így a *Pont és ellenpont* harmonikus műegésszé szervesülésének legfőbb akadálya. Ebben Egri elemzésében Huxley legfontosabb esztétikai alapelve a ludas, nevezetesen az, „hogy a regénynek annyi nézőpontja [kell] legyen, ahány szereplője van". Ezért aztán „hiányzik az a művészi archimedesi pont, amely felé a különböző regényalakok törekedhetnének".[37] Lehet, hogy a magyarországi Huxley recepció ezen évtizedekkel ezelőtt keletkezett dokumentumában a modernizmus és a posztmodern regénypoétikájának két igen magas színvonalú megfogalmazása ütközik össze?

Ha a hatvanas-hetvenes évek Huxley-recepciójának legfontosabb honi dokumentumai Egri Péter és Sükösd Mihály nevéhez kapcsolhatók – eredetileg külföldön megjelent Huxley-dolgozatának késedelmes magyarországi megjelenése Cs. Szabó hozzájárulását oly mértékben rekontextualizálja, hogy nehéz lenne pontos kronológiai helyet találni a számára –, akkor a következő évtized legjelentősebb hozzájárulását egyértelműen H. Szász Annamáriának kell tulajdonítanunk. Az Európa kiadó legendás életrajzi sorozatának természetéből adódó, ám az utóbbi évtizedekben sokat – bár meglehet, méltatlanul – kárhoztatott „pozitivista" megközelítés többé-kevésbé kötelező jellege miatt az *Aldous Huxley világa* kötet szemléletmódjában sok újat nem hozhatott. Ugyanakkor a szerző meggyőző tárgyismerete, filológiai alapossága, problémaérzékenysége és a kötet minden korábbi magyar Huxley-elemzést többszörösen meghaladó – tizenegy ívnyi – terjedelme okán H. Szász Annamária könyve máig megkerülhetetlen alapmű az angol író munkásságáról magyar nyelven megnyilatkozni kívánó anglista, vagy éppen a spontán impressziókat lexikális ismeretekkel kiegészí-

36. Sükösd, 1970, p. 365.
37. Egri, p. 422.

teni kívánó „laikus” olvasó számára. A kismonográfia érdemei közül külön említést érdemel, hogy miközben a szerző eloszlatja a honi Huxley-recepció egynémely közkeletű tévedését – erre lásd a Huxley második világháborús hozzáállását ért méltatlan támadásokra vonatkozó, fenti jegyzetet –, és pótolja annak egynémely mulasztását is – példa erre a H. Szász szerint Huxley „egyik legsikerültebb regénye”-t, az *És múlnak az évek*et (*After Many a Summer*, 1939, magyarul 1941) övező, hosszú hallgatást megtörő, alapos elemzés[38] –, a kötet szinte hiánytalan bibliográfiával szolgál a Huxley magyarországi fogadtatása iránt érdeklődő kutató számára is. H. Szász Annamária kismonográfiáját forgatva csak sajnálni lehet, hogy az Európa egyik legszerencsésebb vállalkozásának tekinthető sorozatnak a jelek szerint egyszer s mindenkorra vége szakadt.

A tematikus vonatkozású elemzések hagyományait továbbvivő, a fentiekben már utalt megnyilatkozásai mellett a legutóbbi idők magyar Huxley-recepciójának legszembeszökőbb vonása a fogadtatástörténet kérdéseit középpontba állító, „metakritikai” megközelítésmód felerősödése. A húszas-harmincas évek Huxley-kultuszát önkritikusan felidéző Cs. Szabó, a saját „neofrivol” elődeit is lekezelő Ungvári Tamás,[39] még korábban pedig a szellemtörténet kérdésfeltevéseivel operáló Weöres Sándor cikkeiben már a korábbi évtizedek Huxley-tárgyú írásaiban is fel-felbukkan a kritikai önreflexió, de a nyolcvanas évek előtt önálló tanulmány nem vizsgálja a magyar nyelvű Huxley-recepció történetét. A legutóbbi negyedszázadban azonban ezt az írást is beleértve négy ilyen tárgyú munka is napvilágot látott. Ezek közül az elsőt egy – akkor még – jugoszláviai illetőségű magyar kutató, Mák Ferenc jegyzi. Mák a Nyugatosok mellett elsősorban a vizsgált korszak polgári radikális és baloldali íróinak Huxley-kritikáit veszi számba általában igényes, bár – az újvidéki megjelenés körülményeivel is indokolható – néhány kellemetlen elírást és tévesztést is tartalmazó tanulmányában.[40] Az „Aldous Huxley műveinek fogadtatása Magyarországon a harmincas években” párdarabjaként is tekinthető

38. Vö. H. Szász

39. „Huxley-ról lesz szó, Aldous Huxley-ról, akit a harmincas években a legokosabb embernek tartottak a legokosabb emberek. Huxley olyan okos volt, hogy az már nem is illik” – szellemeskedik Ungvári Huxley és Huxley korábbi elemzői rovására írása tárgya és annak értelmezői magadiagnosztizálta „neofrivol” stílusában. Ungvári Tamás, „Aldous Huxley: A lángész és a novellái.” *Az eltűnt személyiség nyomában*, (Budapest: Szépirodalomi, 1966) 378 – 388, pp. 378, 379.

40. Mák Ferenc, „Aldous Huxley műveinek fogadtatása Magyarországon a harmincas években,” *Hungarológiai Közlemények*, 57 (1983) 615–622.

saját, „Fehérek között egy másik európai" című írásom.[41] Ebben a korábban – így Máknál – is sokat idézett Nyugatosok és szocialisták mellett a határokon túli magyarság folyóirataiban és a keresztény-konzervatív kurzus honi fórumaiban is publikáló szerzők Huxley-tárgyú írásait is igyekszem számba venni, valamennyi „oldal" fontosabbnak vélt meglátásait a nemzetközi Huxley-kritika korabeli és kortárs kontextusában helyezve el. A Huxley-recepció egy sajátos vetületét vizsgálja tudományos alapossággal Szalontai Judit, aki a Debreceni Egyetemen megvédett, komparatisztikai tárgyú doktori értekezésének főbb téziseit tárja a tudományos közösség elé Sarkadi Imre és Huxley releváns műveinek néhány fontos tematikus párhuzamát kiemelő, 2005-ös tanulmányában.[42]

Érdekes, hogy ezt az áttekintést két női kritikus neve keretezi, és a tárgyául szolgáló Huxley-recepció legnagyobb lélegzetű dokumentuma ugyancsak egy hölgy munkája. Ez a szimbolikusnak is nevezhető körülmény egy viszonylag új fejleményt takar. Mint azt Mák Ferenc és az én korábbi fogadtatástörténeti tanulmányom filológiai apparátusát áttekintve megállapíthatjuk: a honi Huxley-kritika háború előtti művelői között egyetlen női név sem bukkan fel. Valami azonban már akkoriban is készülődhetett. Legalábbis erre utal egy, a huszadik század első felében a Magyar Királyi Pázmány Péter Tudományegyetem angol tanszékét évtizedekig vezető Arthur Yolland professzor emlékét időző kötet egyik tanulmányának fontos kitétele. Az önmagát az angol származású professzor egykori tanítványaként azonosító, névtelen visszaemlékező – „An Old Pupil" – ekként vall a két nem és a modern angol irodalom viszonyáról: „a férfi hallgatók Lawrence-t és Joyce-ot, a női diákok pedig Huxley-t részesítik előnyben".[43] Ez a körülmény önmagában persze se nem cáfolja, se nem támasztja alá azt az ugyancsak Sarbu professzor úr által idézett közvélekedést, mely szerint már Yolland alatt is „a [budapesti] Angol Tanszék [a korábbiaknál] nagyobb mértékben igazodott az [angol nyelvű] irodalmak anyaországaiban uralkodó kritikai konszenzushoz" (346). A legutóbbi időszak fejleményeit – például a Cartaphilus kiadó gondozásában újraindított Huxley-sorozat sikerét – ismerve annyit mindenképp elmondhatunk azonban, hogy a „küldő" és a „befogadó" ország recepciójának

41. Farkas, Ákos, „Fehérek között egy másik európai: Aldous Huxley fogadtatása a két háború közti Magyarországon," megjelenés előtt.

42. Szalontai Judit, „Sarkadi Imre drámáinak és Aldous Huxley korai regényeinek párhuzamai," *Irodalomtudományi Közlemények* 109 (2005) 22–33.

43. „[M]en students prefer Lawrence and Joyce and girls Huxley [...]." Idézi Sarbu Aladár in *The Study of Literature* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2008), p. 346 (ford. Farkas Á.).

minősége közötti különbségekkel kapcsolatban Sarbu Aladár *The Study of Literature* című kötete recepciótörténeti fejezetének egy fontos megállapítása Huxley vonatkozásában mindenképp helytállónak bizonyult. Igen, e téren is „az 1989–90-es rendszerváltozás nyomán lényegében bezárult ez a szakadék, mivel egy-egy új könyv beszerzése immár csupán a vásárlóerő kérdése lehet”.[44] Bízzunk benne, hogy a *The Study of Literature* szerzője hamarosan megállapíthatja: immár *minden* tekintetben versenyképessé váltunk angol-amerikai kollégáinkkal – a Huxley-recepció terén csakúgy, mint tudományos erőfeszítéseink valamennyi fontosabb területén.

# Függelék

## *Huxley-fordítások összehasonlító táblázata*[45]

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1. Time Must Have a Stop* 1944 | *És megáll az idő* 1946 | *L'Éternité retrouvée* 1949 | *Zeit muss enden* 1950 | *Zastaví se čas* 1946 |
| *2. The Crows of Pearblossom* 1944 | — | *Les corbeaux de Pearblossom* 2005 | *Die Krähen von Birnblüte* 1976 | *Vrány z Hruškovic* 2006 |
| *3. The Perennial Philosophy* 1945 | — | *La Philosophie éternelle* 1948 | *Die ewige Philosophie* 1949 | *Věčná filozofie* 2002 |
| *4. Science, Liberty and Peace* 1946 | *Tudomány, szabadság, béke* 1947 | *La science, la paix, la liberté* 1947 | *Wissenschaft, Freiheit und Frieden 1947* | — |

44. „The regime change of 1989–90 virtually eliminated the gap by reducing the acquisition of new books to a mere question of purchasing power” (Sarbu, p. 344; ford. Farkas Á.).

45. Forrás: Magyar Országos Közös Katalógus (MOKKA): <http://www.mokka.hu/>; Bibliothèque nationale de France: <http://www.bnf.fr/>; Deutsche Nationalbibliothek: <http://www.d-nb.de/>; Národní knihovna České republiky: <http://www.nkp.cz/_en/index.php3>.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *5. Ape and Essence* 1949 | *Majom és lényeg; Majmok bombája* 1966; 2008 | *Temps futurs* 1980 | *Affe und Wesen* 1951 | — |
| *6. The Doors of Perception* 1954 | *Az észlelés kapui* 1997 | *Les Portes de la perception* 1954 | *Die Pforten der Wahrnehmung* 1954 | *Brány vnímání* 1996 |
| *7. The Genius and the Goddess* 1955 | *A lángész és az istennő* 1964 | *Le Génie et la déesse* 1963 | *Das Genie und die Göttin* 1956 | — |
| *8. Heaven and Hell* 1956 | *Menny és pokol* 2002 | *Le Ciel et l'Enfer* 1956 | *Himmel und Hölle* 1957 | *Nebe a peklo* 1999 |
| *9. Brave New World Revisited* 1956 | *Visszatérés a Szép új világhoz* 2000 | *Retour au meilleur des mondes* 1959 | *Wiedersehen mit der schönen neuen Welt* 1987 | — |
| *10. Collected Essays* 1959 | *Divatok a szerelemben* 1984 | *Dieu et moi: essais sur la mystique, la religion et la spiritualité* 1993 | *Essays: in drei Bänden* 1994 | — |
| *11. Moksha: Aldous Huxley's Classic Writings…* 1982 | *Moksha: a tudat határai* 2007 | *Moksha: expériences visionnaires et psychédéliques…* 1982 | *Moksha. Auf der Suche nach der Wunderdroge* 1983 | *Mókša: klasické spisy Aldouse Huxleyho…* 2002 |
| *12. Island* 1962 | *Sziget* 2008 | *Île* 1963 | *Eiland* 1973 | *Ostrov* 2001 |
| *Összes lefordított cím az időszakban (1941-ig: 6 kötet)* | 10 (/többi átl.=0,55) | 20 | 26 | 8 |
| *Átlagos késés évben (1941-ig: 7 év)* | 27 (/többi átl.=1,3) | 11 | 11 | 40 |

# Cenzúra és irodalom
## George Orwell az Európa Kiadó lektori jelentéseinek tükrében

*Czigányik Zsolt*

*Szeretném kifejezni nagyrabecsülésemet Sarbu Aladár iránt, akinek hálával tartozom doktori tanulmányaim során nyújtott sokrétű segítségéért. Különösen emlékezetesek számomra azok az alkalmak, amikor Orwellről vitáztunk, főleg mivel ritkán értettünk egyet.*

Egy pszeudolektori jelentés látott napvilágot Takács Ferenc tollából 1984. január 6-án, az Orwell könyve nyomán szimbolikussá vált év első *Élet és Irodalom* számában a bűnösnek kikiáltott könyvről, az *1984*-ről.[1] Takács ebben az írásban kifejti, hogy szerinte eljött az idő a könyv magyarországi kiadására. Az olvasóközönségnek azonban további öt évet kellett várnia, hogy napvilágot láthasson Szíjgyártó László szamizdatban már régóta terjedő fordítása.[2] Készültek az Európa Könyvkiadó megbízásából valódi lektori jelentések is az akkor még legálisan magyarul nem olvasható szerzővel kapcsolatban – ezek áttekintését tartalmazza az alábbi írás.[3]

Az Európa Kiadó lektori jelentéseinek gyűjteménye hatalmas anyag: két teherautóra volt szükség jelenlegi helyükre, a Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeumba szállításukhoz, s a kiadónak egykor otthont adó Kossuth téri épület szűk kis liftje egy álló napon keresztül szállította a dossziékat tartalmazó ládákat. Felbecsülhetetlen értéket sikerült a

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1. Takács Ferenc: „Ezerkilencszáznyolcvannégy – ezerkilencszáznyolcvannégyben (lektori jelentés)" in *Élet és Irodalom*, XXVIII. évf., 1. szám (1984. január 6.).

2. Orwell egyéb szamizdatkiadásairól lásd: Nóvé Béla: „Széljegyzetek egy belügyi jelentéshez" in *Orwell-olvasó* (Budapest: Krónika Nova, 2003).

3. E tanulmány ötlete Ferencz Győzőtől származik, akinek ezúton is szeretnék köszönetet mondani. Szintén köszönet illeti Barna Imrét, az Európa Kiadó igazgatóját, aki engedélyezte, hogy kutassam a kiadó tulajdonát képező lektori jelentéseket, s munkámat tanácsaival is segítette. Köszönöm Varga Katalin és Komáromi Csaba, a Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum munkatársainak segítségét is. Az alábbiakban a lektori jelentések szerzőinek nevét – az Európa Kiadóval egyetértésben – csak abban az esetben közlöm, ha a szerző erre felhatalmazott. A jelentések értékelésénél mindenkor figyelembe kell venni, hogy szűk szakmai közönség részére, nem publikációs céllal készültek, így a szokásos szerzői jogokon felül a szerzők személyiségi jogai is védik őket.

kiadó és a múzeum munkatársainak megmenteniük – az anyag mennyisége annak ellenére is imponáló, hogy a legtöbb jelentés három példányban is megtalálható (igaz, vékony papíron, tekintettel az indigós másolásra). Az Orwell nevét viselő dosszié vékonyka, de nem a legvékonyabb – nem ennek az írásnak a feladata kideríteni, hogy például Aldous Huxley könyveiről miért készült még Orwellnél is kevesebb jelentés. Az Orwell-lel foglalkozó jelentések száma (öt önálló jelentés és három egyéb említés) tulajdonképpen meglepetésként ért – fel voltam ugyanis készülve arra, hogy a nyolcvanas évek vége előttről egyetlen jelentést sem találok. Azt feltételeztem, hogy Orwell könyveinek kiadása politikailag annyira irreálisnak tűnhetett, hogy felelősen gondolkodó kiadói vezetők nem vágtak volna bele olyan munkába, aminek belátható időn belül nem lehet eredménye. Kiderült viszont: nem a kiadó szándékán múlt, hogy a Kádár-korszakban nem jelent meg Orwelltől még egy esszé sem.

## Csavargások és esszék

Pedig lehetett volna rá esély. A lektori jelentések között Orwell neve 1963. március 19-én tűnik fel először. E jelentés szerzője egy angol esszégyűjteményre tesz javaslatot, s a sok felsorolt név között megbújik az *1984* írója is. A később megjelent kötetbe azonban Orwell mégsem került bele.[4] Angol esszék címmel szerepel egy szerkesztési javaslat, név és dátum nélkül, mely a következő részletet tartalmazza: „Orwell-t végigtanulmányoztam. Összegyűjtött esszéinek kötetében sem találtam egyetlen olyat sem, amely megfelelne. Nemcsak politikailag, de művészileg is kár volna közlésük." Utolsó kijelentésével a javaslat szerzője valószínűleg egyedül van a kritikusok között,[5] s figyelembe véve, hogy ugyanebben a javaslatban más szerzőkkel kapcsolatban milyen értő kritikát fogalmaz meg, azt kell gondolnom, hogy más körülmények között nem tett volna ilyen kijelentést. Orwell mellőzésének politikai oka volt, s ezt kívánta elkendőzni a művészi szempont felvetésével.

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4. Minden bizonnyal az Európa Kiadónál 1967-ben *Hagyomány és egyéniség* címmel megjelent gyűjtemény előzményeiről van szó. Erre a dossziéra („Angol esszé") Gombár Zsófia hívta fel a figyelmemet, amit ezúton is köszönök.

5. A mai kutatók közül Peter Firchow (2007, 97) például így nyilatkozik a szerzőről: „Orwell is one of the great essayists of the period". Crick (1987, 18) összegzően így fogalmaz: „Much critical opinion now locates his genius in his essays". A korábbi kritikában is konszenzus figyelhető meg Orwell esszéírói teljesítményének pozitív értékelésében.

Az első jelentés, amely kimondottan Orwell-lel foglalkozik, a hetvenes évekből származik, egészen pontosan 1975. szeptember 17-én kelt. Tárgya azonban nem a híres negatív utópia, hanem a szerző elsőként megjelent műve, a *Down and Out in Paris and London* (magyarul végül nem az Európa Kiadó, hanem a Cartaphilus adta ki 2001-ben, Kőrös László fordításában, *Csavargóként Párizsban, Londonban* címmel). A lektori jelentés szerzője láthatóan igen komolyan vette a feladatát, és három oldalon gondosan és szellemesen elemzi mind a művet, mind pedig kiadásának lehetőségeit. Bár az írást nem tartja rossznak, rögtön az elemzés legelején kijelenti, hogy a könyv legfontosabb jellegzetessége, hogy szerzője nem más, mint a „híres-hírhedt" Orwell. A lektor nem téved: bár jelen sorok írója kedves olvasmányai között tartja számon ezt a könyvet, kétség nem férhet hozzá, hogy az *1984* nélkül Orwellnek ez a műve ma már csak néhány igazán elszánt filológus érdeklődését keltené fel. Korai, kiforratlan műről van szó, s ha egyes fejezetei kifejezetten jól sikerültek is, a könyv inkább csak az Orwell-életmű részeként maradandó. A lektori jelentés szerzője ennél többre értékeli ezt a művet, szerinte „[h]a megkíséreljük elfelejteni a nevezetes szerző nevét: akkor is bizonyos, hogy jó könyvet, jó írót olvasunk. A fiatal Orwell sokat és remekül lát, mindent megjegyez és kitűnően szerkeszt" (a legtöbb kritikus – magamat is beleértve – főleg ez utóbbi megállapítással szállna vitába).

Van a könyvnek egy jellegzetessége, ami minden hibája ellenére érdekes művé teszi, ahogy az 1975-ös jelentés szerzője is felhívja rá a figyelmet. Egy olyan különleges útirajzról van szó, ami nem ismeretlen tájakra kalauzolja el az olvasót, mégis egzotikus vidéket mutat be: két európai nagyváros nyomornegyedeit; nem távoli szigetek barbár őslakóival foglalkozik, hanem olyan emberek életével, akikkel talán nap mint nap találkozik az olvasó is, körülményeikről azonban csak a közhelyek hamis képe él benne. Mindez a mű keletkezésekor, a harmincas évek elején újszerűnek hatott – ha nem is volt előzmény nélküli.[6] Később azonban, ahogy a lektori jelentés szerzője rámutat, a műfaj elterjedt (elsősorban Isherwood *Isten veled, Berlin*jét emeli ki, valamint a *Vándorünnep*et Hemingwaytől, melyek témájukban, sőt az ábrázolt időszak és helyszínek tekintetében is igen közel állnak Orwell könyvéhez): a magyar olvasó számára a hetvenes évek derekán a *Down and Out...* nem jelenthetett nóvumot, sőt, kiadása paradox

6. Bernard Crick (1987, 184) kimutatja, hogy Orwell nemcsak olvasta Jack London művét, az 1903-ban megjelent *The People of the Abyss*t, de közvetlen, szövegszerű összefüggések is fellelhetők a két mű között.

módon növelte volna az olvasók hiányérzetét – ők ugyanis Orwelltől más könyvre vártak.

A lektor ezt a művet– minden erénye ellenére – nem ajánlja kiadásra. Véleménye szerint fontos, hogy Orwelltől végre magyarul is megjelenjék valami, de nem csupán azért, hogy a hazai könyvkiadás „letudhasson" egy kínos kötelességet. „A »kipipálás« szükségletének a *Down and Out in Paris and London* zavartalanul eleget tenne." Később – korábbi kijelentéseit némiképp finomítva – pontosít a szerző: a tárgyalt mű „fügefalevélnek túl nyilvánvaló". S hogy mit kellene a fügefalevélnek elfednie, azt precízen közli: „Orwell, mint tudjuk, egyike a nagyon kevés újkori prózaíróknak, akik máig nem szólaltak meg – méltó műben[7] – magyarul. Minden szakértő tudja, miért nem. Az *Animal Farm* és az *1984* túlságosan nagy szerepet játszott a hidegháborús korszakban, a szerző neve túlságosan összeforrt a nyílt antikommunizmussal." Figyelemreméltó a lektor távolságtartó megfogalmazása: véleménye értelmezhető úgy, hogy a szerző ideológiai elutasítottsága nem művei önértékéből fakad, inkább a korábbi politikai helyzetből; sőt, a múlt idő használata már egy lezárt korszakot feltételez, egy új kezdet lehetőségével.

Néhány sorral később mindezt explicitebb módon is kifejti: „Az *Animal Farm* és az *1984* – azt hisszük – függetlenültek a szerzői szándéktól: Orwell nem épp antikommunista kiáltványnak szánta őket. Ténykérdés azonban, hogy hírük-címük ma még túlságosan penetráns ahhoz, semhogy a magyar kiadás reális lehetőségén érdemes lenne a fejünket törni." Az idézet első mondatának óvatos közbevetése („azt hisszük") ellenére a vélemény nagyon határozott és a körülményeket figyelembe véve egyszerre bátor és bölcs: a szerzőt eltávolítja a könyvek hatásától (pláne hírétől), így próbálva meg elhárítani az ideológiai akadályokat valamilyen Orwell-mű megjelenése elől. S konkrét javaslatot is tesz, ami nem csupán politikai értelemben realista, de Orwell életművének alapos ismeretéről is tanúskodik: a lektor esszé- és riportválogatást javasol, amely irodalmi értékét és jelentőségét tekintve is méltó lehet mind a szerzőhöz, mind pedig a kiadóhoz, ráadásul a válogatás révén politikai szempontból is elfogadható (a lektor szóhasználata szerint „ideológiailag vitathatatlan")

7. Ez a beszúrt megjegyzés is mutatja, hogy a lektor kiváló ismerője nemcsak Orwell munkásságának, de a magyar könyvkiadás történetének is. Orwelltől ugyanis a korai *Burmese Days* magyarul *Burmai napok* címmel Máthé Elek fordításában jelent meg először 1948-ban Budapesten a Káldor Kiadónál. A könyvet a szegedi Terebess Kiadó 1998-ban újra kiadta, a Cartaphilus Orwell sorozatában pedig új fordításban (Lázár Júlia), *Tragédia Burmában* címmel 2006-ban jelent meg.

kötetet lehet összeállítani. Ha csupán egy könyv kiadásáról lehetett szó, Orwelltől tényleg nem lett volna érdemes mást, mint esszégyűjteményt megjelentetni: a két „penetráns" művén túl igazán maradandó irodalmi értéket elsősorban ezek a kisprózai írások hordoznak. Az ötlet kiváló volt, s valóban nem egészen irreális – kár, hogy (miként 1967-ben a *Hagyomány és egyéniség*ből is kimaradt Orwell), ez sem valósult meg.

A fenti lektori jelentés párja 1976. január 7-i dátumot visel, s szerzője az előző lektorhoz hasonlóan kiváló műnek tartja Orwell elsőként kiadott könyvét: „Orwell kitűnő író, a könyv lebilincselő olvasmány. A világ, amelyről ír él, lélegzik, íze van." A másik lektorhoz hasonlóan megemlíti, hogy olyan útirajzról van szó, ami az ismert helyszínek ellenére ismeretlen világba, „sosem látott bennszülöttek" közé kalauzolja az olvasót, s kiemeli a mű egyik legfontosabb jellemzőjét, hogy teljesen mentes a szentimentalizmustól, ami egyébként a szegénységgel foglalkozó szépirodalmi művek gyakori kockázata.

Jellemző a lektor egy apró megjegyzése a jelentés első oldaláról, melyben elismeri, hogy nem szakértője a szerző életrajzának. Az már csak a sajátos politikai viszonyok ismeretében tehető hozzá, hogy a hetvenes évek közepén nem is lett volna egyszerű Magyarországon utánanéznie a szükséges adatoknak. Mindettől függetlenül – az előző lektorral ellentétben – kiadásra ajánlja a *Down and Out in Paris and London*t, röviden azonban ő is kitér a korábbi lektor által részletesen tárgyalt problémára, amikor a kiadást „csak mint valamilyen tényirodalmi sorozat" részeként javasolja. „[H]a a magyar olvasónak enélkül adjuk ezt, valószínűleg hitelcsalásnak véli, hogy az egészen más hírből ismert Orwellnek ilyen művével állunk elő."

Láthatjuk, hogy a lektorok a hetvenes évek közepén valamilyen csomagolásban már lehetségesnek tartották, hogy az Orwell név nyomtatásban megjelenjen Magyarországon legálisan is – a kultúrpolitika ezt mégsem tette lehetővé.

Időrendi sorrendben a következő lektori jelentés tárgya nem Orwell alkotása, hanem egy Orwellről szóló könyv: a William West szerkesztésében a BBC által 1985-ben kiadott *Orwell – The War Broadcasts* című kötet. Még megjelenése évében, 1985. október 19-én készült róla egy jelentés – párja vagy nem készült el, vagy elveszett. A lektor – Takács Ferenc – méltatja a kötetet, elsősorban a benne szereplő eredeti műfaj, a rádióesszé miatt, illetve más újszerű műfajok kapcsán, mint például a képzeletbeli interjú Jonathan Swifttel. A kísérőtanulmányból Takács kiemeli, hogy a BBC-nél eltöltött időszak váltást jelentett Orwell számára: megismerte egy nagy intézmény bürokratikus működésmódját, a cenzúra gyakorlatát, illet-

ve a modern tömegbefolyásolás módszertanát. Mindennek fontos irodalmi következményei is vannak: egyrészt a BBC-nél szerzett tapasztalatok többrétűen tükröződnek a szerző leghíresebb műveiben, másrészt a médiában eltöltött időszak után irodalmilag is újfajta könyvtípusokkal jelentkezett Orwell. A kötetben található művek ezen felül filológiailag is érdekesek: a bennük felvetett témák megismétlik a korábbi esszékben megjelent eszmefuttatásokat, vagy későbbi művekben jelennek meg valamilyen formában – Orwell írásait át- és átjárja az önreflexió. A lektor végkövetkeztetésében mégsem ajánlja a gyűjteményt kiadásra: „A könyv minden tekintetben jeles szakmunka. Ez egyben magyar kiadásának a természetes korláta illetve akadálya is: Orwell életrajzírói, kritikusai, szakértői és irodalomtörténészei számára elsődleges forrásmű, de az ennél szélesebb olvasóközönség érdeklődésére aligha tarthat számot". Finom irónia rejlik az utolsó mondat részletes felsorolásában: 1985-ben Orwell műveinek legális kiadása híján ilyen szakemberek nem lehettek Magyarországon. Ha valakit mégis érdekelt a téma, illegálisan megpróbálhatta beszerezni a kötet angol nyelvű kiadását, s betehette Orwell angol nyelvű művei, esetleg szamizdatkiadásai mellé.

## *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – csak 1988-ban

A szerző leghíresebb műve címének szimbolikus évszámától még három évnek kellett eltelnie, hogy a mű kiadása komolyan felmerülhessen, s újabb kettőnek, hogy tényleg megjelenjék. Erről a műről 1988 januárjából származik két lektori jelentés, az elsőt mindjárt január 1-re datálta szerzője, de józan elemzésén nem érződik semmiféle szilveszteri mámor. A jelentés Orwell rövid életrajzával kezdődik, melyben – a valóságot némileg eltúlozva – kommunista szimpatizánsként állítja be a szerzőt, aki később kiábrándult meggyőződéséből; Orwell fiatalkori szegénységének kiemelése pedig szinte József Attilához tenné hasonlóvá a valójában a társadalom középrétegéből származó írót. Magát a regényt meglehetősen alaposan és pontosan elemzi a lektor, és ennek az elemzésnek a legszembetűnőbb jellemzője, hogy magától értődő természetességgel ismeri fel a fiktív részletekben a közelmúltnak nemcsak a szovjet, de magyar valóságát is. Ezt tartja a kiadás fő akadályának is: hogy az ábrázolt (s ezek szerint a sok párhuzam és hasonlóság miatt a valós) rendszer emberellenes. A kiadást nem a szerző trockizmusa vagy antikommunizmusa teszi lehetetlenné (melyből egyébként is csak a második igaz, s az sem elméleti alapon, hanem a kommunizmus antidemokratikus jellege miatt); a könyv a lektor szerint azért nem kiadható, mert a köznapi részletek

alapján, mint mikor a „lelkes párttagok egymást kémlelik", a magyar olvasó nem fiktív negatív utópiát, hanem realista valóságleírást ismerne fel.[8]

Az előző, újévi elutasító jelentés után tíz nappal pozitív kicsengésű írás is született, melynek szerzője azonos a *Down and Out...* 1975. szeptember 17-én kelt lektori jelentésének írójával. A regényt kiválóan szerkesztett remekműnek tartja (legalábbis esztétikai szempontból), zárt történettel, hibátlan szerkezettel és pergő cselekménnyel, de tisztában van vele, hogy rossz a híre: politikai pamfletregénynek tartják. A jelentés legfőbb célja, hogy ezt a vélekedést cáfolja, s ehhez gondos műfajelemzést hív segítségül. Az *1984* a lektor olvasatában sem nem antikommunista, sem nem pamfletregény. Pozitív véleményének alátámasztására részletesen elemzi a könyvet mind irodalomtudományi, mind politikai szempontból. Negatív regényutópiaként határozza meg, amely műfajnak őse Swift *Gulliver*e, s Orwell művét a műfaj másik csúcspontjának tartja, szerinte a nagy ír elődóta ez a könyv a legmaradandóbb negatív utópia. Ebben az elemzésben hangsúlyozza a könyv fikciós jellegét. A regényesztétikai elemzéssel a lektor eltávolítja a művet annak közvetett politikai hatásától.

Ami a politikai töltetet illeti, a könyv célpontja a lektor szerint a diktatúra, nem pedig a kommunizmus; a megíráshoz felhasznált tapasztalati anyag nem csupán a sztálini Szovjetunió, hanem a hitleri Németország, sőt, az amerikai New Deal. Ha pedig jóslatként tekintünk a könyvre (ami a mai irodalomkritikában nem elfogadott értelmezés, de a lektori jelentés megenged magának ilyen kitételt), akkor nem vált valóra, „történelmi tendenciájában sem, ha a mai Szovjetunióra és a létező szocializmus néhány más országára gondolunk". Ideiglenesen azonban a könyvben leírthoz hasonló rendszer jött létre néhány földrajzilag elzártabb területen, mint Pol Pot Kambodzsája, Enver Hodzsa Albániája, „vagy – elnézést – a mai Románia" – írta a lektor 1988 elején. Az *1984* tehát „nem célzatos politikai pamflet, hanem öntörvényű regény. Egyszerre elvont és érzékletes látomás egy lehetséges, totális diktatúráról, az elnyomás mechanizmusáról és a személyiség alapvető szabadságvágyáról, szabadság szükségletéről." A kimondott végkövetkeztetés tehát az,

8. Ez a szemlélet megfelel annak az értelmezésnek, amit Gintli és Schein (2007, 491) az *1984* nyugat-európai fogadtatásával kapcsolatban így ír le: „a Nagy Testvér Óceániáját a náci és a szovjet rendszerekkel azonosították, vagyis a címben foglalt dátumot érvénytelenítve és a mű utópizmusát megszüntetve a múlt és a jelen allegóriájává változtatták a regényt."

hogy a mű megjelenhet magyarul is, a kimondatlan pedig szintén egyértelmű: ha nem diktatúrában élünk, meg is jelenik. Nos, a következő évben – az *Állatfarm*mal[9] együtt – megjelent.

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9. Az *Állatfarm*ról önálló lektori jelentés nem található a gyűjteményben, csupán egy kiadói feljegyzés 1988. október 10-i keltezéssel, mely ennek a műnek a kiadását is javasolja.

# "Jamesian Meanderings"
## in Vladimir Nabokov's Fiction

*Rudolf Sárdi*

> "I really dislike him [Henry James] intensely but now and then the figure in the phrase, the turn of the epithet, the screw of an absurd adverb, cause me a kind of electric tingle, as if some current of his was also passing through my own blood."[1]

Unsympathetic as Nabokov was to such pre-eminent figures, literary or otherwise, as Dostoyevsky, Freud or T. S. Eliot, it is indeed the least remarkable fact that the Russo-American novelist, that outwardly most callous opponent of his despised luminaries, also passed strictures upon the work of Henry James. As a young man, Nabokov had been an avid reader of William James's works and had thought highly of him, but "never grew to like the novels of Williams's brother Henry."[2] In a letter to Edmund Wilson, with whom Nabokov maintained an almost lifelong correspondence, he disparaged James, though his critical remarks, harsh as they appeared, were still far from beng as razor-sharp as in the majority of other cases:

> Maybe you are just pulling my leg when you advise me to read [...] *impotent Henry James*, or the Rev. Eliot.[3]

> I have not read a book (save for a collection of Henry James's short stories—miserable stuff, *a complete fake*, you ought to debunk the pale porpoise and his plush vulgarities some day) nor written a word since I left Cambridge.[4]

Considered as a stylist *extraordinaire* himself, with a propensity for verbal pyrotechnics and the cultivation of the English language that

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1. Alfred Appel Jr., "An Interview with Vladimir Nabokov," in *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature* 8.2, A Special Number Devoted to Vladimir Nabokov (Spring 1967), 127–152, p. 129.
2. Brian Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 91.
3. Vladimir Nabokov and Edmund Wilson, *Dear Bunny, Dear Volodya: The Nabokov–Wilson Letters, 1940–1971*, ed. Simon Karlinsky (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 240 (emphasis added).
4. Nabokov and Wilson, *Dear Bunny*, p. 308 (emphasis added).

was, for an emigrant writer, a major accomplishment, Nabokov was noted for the lexical virtuosity which calls for active readerly involvement in no smaller measure than James's brilliantly effective prose. It may then sound somewhat bizarre that the target of Nabokov's ridicule was, much more so than anything else, James's distinctive style. Instead of a through-going analysis of a choice of debatable allusions and the even more speculative excavation of the plausible impact of James on Nabokov, the present paper aims to establish a perceptible link between the two authors as regards their techniques of literary composition, particularly James's indirect method and Nabokov's "cosmic synchronization."[5]

Although Nabokov's prevailing techniques—such as his duplicitous narrative devices, his inclination for verbal punning and a cobweb of allusions to various works of literature—are *not at all* a case in point when James's novels are subjected to discussion, one cannot but conclude that both authors consciously designed their

5. See Neil Cornwell, "Paintings, Governesses and 'Publishing Scoundrels': Nabokov and Henry James," in *Nabokov's World, Vol. 2: Reading Nabokov*, ed. Jane Grayson, Arnold McMillin and Priscilla Meyer (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002), 96–116, where Cornwell demonstrates the complexity of the literary relationship between the two authors by taking into account the possibility of James's influence on Nabokov. He briefly outlines a handful of ideas according to which Nabokov's fiction both alludes to James and his works and shares a number of common features with them. Of especial importance are: the presence of tutors and governesses (in *Ada* and *The Turn of the Screw*), the importance of pictorial arts ("La Veneziana" being the most emblematically Jamesian tale), the relationship between the Old World and the New World (James's "international theme" and Nabokov's "two-world cosmology"), secrets and structural patterns which allow for communication with the dead, artists and sculptors as protagonists, etc. Cornwell rightly states that Nabokov was in the position to draw inspiration from—in addition to James—other literary sources, though he is inclined to assign a disproportionately dominant role to James and claims his presence to be pervasive in Nabokov's works. Irena Auerbach Smith discusses the issue of James's "international theme" and its reversal in Nabokov's fiction to some extent, claiming that the "confluence of exile and narrative" ("A Garden and a Twilight, and a Palace Gate: Plotting the Intersection of Europe and American in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*," *Pacific Coast Philology* 34.1 [1999], p. 81) is a common modernist aspect of their works. Critics dealing with Nabokov's "two-world cosmology" have as yet overlooked the topic of the Old World vs. New World dichotomy, as treated by James and Nabokov. I shall attempt to provide a full account of the issue in my dissertation, which revisits the question of the "otherworld" in the Nabokovian *oeuvre*.

works in a way that would, to borrow from Barthes's theory of the *lisible* and the *scriptible*, oblige readers to part with their role as passive consumers of the text. The claim that James's style "makes demands, but it confers rewards; and the style has far greater variety than is generally believed" also applies to Nabokov's fiction, which readers have often viewed to be impregnable on account of their lexical idiosyncrasies and convolutions of plot (consider, for example, *Ada* as the *locus classicus* of Nabokov's most audacious verbal performances).[6] James was often repudiated for writing novels whose very essence lies in their *mannerisms* and that his reliance on highly figurative and ornamental language can be ascribed to the author's "mere loquaciousness."[7] It comes as no surprise that James's critics have taken immense pleasure in mocking the most conspicuous attributes of his style, which often conflicted with their overlooking the underlying semantic content of his works. "The Mote in the Middle Distance" (1912) by Max Beerbohm offers an excellent parody of James's style:

> It was in the sense of a, for him, very memorable something that he peered now into the immediate future, and tried, not without compunction, to take that period up where he had, prospectively, left it. But just where the deuce *had* he left it?[8]

In *Ada* (Part One, Chapter Four), Nabokov opens Van Veen's biography by making a subtle, yet all the more recognisable reference to James's prose.[9] Brian Boyd believes that the passage itself derides, as it were, the meditations on the art of fiction in James's prefaces,

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6. Bruce R. McElderry, Jr., *Henry James*, Twayne's United States Authors Series (New Haven: College & University Press, 1965), p. 164.

7. McElderry, *Henry James*, p. 164.

8. Max Beerbohm, "The Mote in the Middle Distance," in *The Portable Henry James*, ed. John Auchard (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 588 (emphasis in the original).

9. Paul H. Fry is among the first critics to identify Mlle Larivière as a parody of "a long line of writing governesses that stretches from Lucy Snow in *Villette* to the narrator of *The Turn of the Screw*," and Miss Prism in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (quoted in Boyd, *Ada Online*, URL: www.ada.auckland.ac.nz). Boyd also quotes D. Barton Johnson, who considers "Giorgio Vanvitelli's arias" to be suggestive of Mr Giovanelli in *Daisy Miller*. Allusions to Henry James are far from being abundant in Nabokov's novels. Nabokov's short story "The Vane Sisters" (1951) includes an unambiguous reference to James by mentioning in short the "Jamesian meanderings that exasperated [the] French mind" (in *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov*, [New York: Vintage International, 1997], p. 625).

and reminds one of James at his ungainly worst with exaggerated parenthetical insertions, repetitions, intimations, qualifications and an unnatural rhythmical pattern:

> When, in the middle of the twentieth century, Van started to reconstruct his deepest past, he soon noticed that such details of his infancy as really mattered (for the special purpose the reconstruction pursued) could be best treated, could not seldom be *only* treated, when reappearing at various later stages of his boyhood and youth, as sudden juxtapositions that revived the past while vivifying the whole.[10]

Akin to the false impressions that James's works engendered, Nabokov too was, for long decades before his death, mistakenly considered as a writer of metafiction, who cared passionately for aesthetics—form and rhetoric, that is—but had little concern about questions of moral dimensions, ethics and metaphysics. Over-preoccupation with the stylistic and structural experimentation and invention, for which both authors are widely acknowledged, may adumbrate the importance of the fact that both James and Nabokov strove to make sense of "a universe which contains no enduring and fundamental truth."[11]

In spite of Nabokov's castigation of James, he professes in an interview that his "feelings to James are rather complicated," which makes his initial aversion appear somewhat less conclusive: "I really dislike him intensely but now and then the figure in the phrase, the turn of the epithet, the screw of an absurd adverb, cause me a kind of electric tingle, as if some current of his was also passing through my own blood."[12] It is plausible that the nature of Nabokov's inconsistent attitude to James and his works suggests an inchoate analogy between the writing methods of the two authors, both of whom attribute particular importance to the pictorial arts in the process of literary composition.[13] "Literature is not a pattern of ideas but a pattern of images," writes Nabokov, and his *modus operandi* in writing bears witness to the pertinence of the

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10. Vladimir Nabokov, *Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 31 (emphasis in the original).

11. Irena Auerbach Smith, "A Garden and a Twilight, and a Palace Gate: Plotting the Intersection of Europe and American in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*," *Pacific Coast Philology* 34.1 (1999), p. 80.

12. Appel, "An Interview with Vladimir Nabokov," p. 129.

13. Cornwell, "Paintings, Governesses," pp. 102–3.

statement.[14] In "Good Readers and Good Writers" he draws parallel between the act of reading a text and looking at a painting: "[w]e have no physical organ (as we have the eye in regards to a painting) that takes in the whole picture and then can enjoy its details. But at a second, or third, or fourth reading we do, in a sense, behave towards a book as we do towards a painting."[15] The visual approach to reading a book is similarly commended by James in his essay "The Art of Fiction" (1884), in which he notes that "[i]t is not expected of the picture that it will make itself humble in order to be forgiven; and the analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist is, so far as I am able to see, complete. Their inspiration is the same, their process [...] is the same, their success is the same."[16]

It can be argued that for James one desideratum a writer should fulfil was to possess a special faculty with which he can inspect the world around him with utmost perspicacity. Both Nabokov and James seem to contend that the creation of a fictional universe is largely governed by the confluence of *details*, though each novelist has a different means of illustrating how the details flow together, and eventually result in an effect that gravitates towards the understanding of an organic whole. The way Nabokov aspires for the comprehension of the universe in its entirety is performed through his well-known method of what he calls "cosmic synchronization" in *Speak, Memory*, expressing a state of simultaneous perception of the personal mental world by coalescing ostensibly disjointed details. J. B. Sisson, who has offered the most systematic treatment of the subject to date, claims that "[t]his process ideally occurs so rapidly as to create an effect of instantaneity," as if the text were transformed into a painting, which would then give rise to a wholly different, visually induced cognitive process on the part of the reader.[17] James, especially during his third, mature period, developed a narrative technique with a similar effect in mind: he radically increased the length of his sentences by punctuating them with insertions, prepositional clauses and a plethora of adjectives, compressed into single paragraphs. The motive for him to resort to this cumbersome literary method was to keep suspense as drawn-out as imaginable; conse-

14. Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Literature*, ed. Fredson Bowers (San Diego: Harvest Book, 1982), p. 166.

15. Nabokov, *Lectures*, p. 3

16. Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," in *Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. F. R. Leavis (London: Heinemann, 1964), p. 51.

17. J. B. Sisson, "Nabokov's Cosmic Synchronization and 'Something Else,'" in *Nabokov Studies* 1 (1994), 155–177, p. 155.

quently, the reader, after working his way through seemingly superfluous lexical items, clouds of adjectives and insertions, would find himself searching for the idea of wholeness instead of focusing on the minute fragments which constitute the sentence. It is interesting to note that Nabokov's "cosmically synchronised" sentences, which function as a depository of a multiplicity of unrelated items in vertiginous succession, enjoy a certain degree of affinity with the equally protracted passages of James. In both cases the desired effect was not to impede readerly understanding of whatever message was being transmitted, but to *build up suspense*: "[t]he care with which the qualifications are made creates confidence that a line of direction is being established. Suspense is created as to where it will lead. Thus the heavy reliance on abstract terms is dictated by the aim; it is not a mere stylistic blemish."[18] James's goal, however, is attainable only on condition that the paragraphs are examined thoroughly by an attentive reader, who may, as Nabokov's ideal reader ("A good reader, a major reader, an active and creative reader is a rereader"), give a second or even third perusal to a specific passage, very much akin to the examination of a painting.[19] It is worth observing how the two novelists build up the suspense through the application of weighty sentence structures in the passages below. The first passage is the resolution of Nabokov's short story, "Perfection," which recounts the discovery of the corpse of Ivanov, who had drowned in the sea, while the second passage is the introduction of *The Turn of the Screw*, in which the mention of the visitation is preceded by a long, laborious description.

The dull mist immediately broke, blossomed with marvellous colors, all kinds of sounds burst forth—the rote of the sea, the clapping of the wind, human cries—and there was David standing, up to his ankles in bright water, not knowing what to do, shaking with fear, not daring to explain that he had not been drowning, that he had struggled in jest—and farther out people were diving, groping through the water, then looking at each other with bulging eyes, and diving anew, and returning empty-handed [...] and a fisherman, squinting in the sun, was solemnly predicting that *not until the ninth day would the waves surrender the corpse.*[20]

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18. McElderry, *Henry James*, p. 163.

19. Nabokov, *Lectures*, p. 3.

20. Vladimir Nabokov, "Perfection," in *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov* (New York: Vintage International, 1997), 338–348, p. 347 (emphasis added).

> The story had held us, round the fire, sufficiently breathless, but except the obvious remark that it was gruesome, as, on Christmas eve in an old house, a strange tale should essentially be, I remember no comment uttered till somebody happened to say that it was the only case he had met in which *such a visitation had fallen on a child.*[21]

In his analysis of the sentence structures of Henry James, an early commentator concludes, as I believe somewhat misguidedly, that "such effects as [the elaborate syntactical structures] contribute a heightened tension to a prose, which, for all its own peculiar artifice, forever threatens to become devitalized by preciosity."[22] Of particular significance to the shaping of the two novelists' fictional worlds is the fact that neither can resist the appeal of cataloguing details. "Truth of detail" is doubtless *the* attribute with which most readers tend to label James's prose.[23] It should be clarified, however, that James's method is closer to being impressionistic than simply realistic, though, as he himself remarked, the "supreme virtue of a novel" for him is "the air of reality."[24] It has been noted, in relation to James's advanced fiction, that it is not the emphasis on the simple accumulation of details that matters, but rather "an incessant shower of innumerable atoms," that is, as Woolf suggests, myriad impressions that the mind receives.[25] McElderry quotes a passage from *The Ambassadors*, which recounts Strether's much sought-for encounter with Waymarsh, which appositely exemplifies James's favoured indirect method:

> Strether's first *question*, when he reached his hotel, was about his friend; yet on his *learning* that Waymarsh was apparently not to arrive till evening he was not wholly disconcerted. A telegram from him bespeaking of a room "only if not too noisy," reply paid, was produced for the enquirer at the office, so that the *understanding* they should meet at Chester rather than at Liverpool remained to that extent sound. The same secret *principle*, however, that had prompt-

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21. Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (London: Penguin Classics, 1994), p. 7 (emphasis added).

22. R.W Short, "The Sentence Structure of Henry James," in *American Literature* 18.2 (1946), 71–88, p. 88.

23. James, "The Art of Fiction," p. 57.

24. James, "The Art of Fiction," p. 57.

25. Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," in *20th Century Literary Criticism*, ed. David Lodge (Burnt Mill: Longman, 1972), p. 88.

> ed Strether not absolutely to desire Waymarsh's presence at the dock, that had led him thus to postpone for a few hours his *enjoyment* of it, now operated to make him feel he could still wait without *disappointment*.[26]

The paragraph itself is rendered impressionistic on account of the piling up of abstract words, reflecting how the protagonist feels about the meeting. "How he feels cannot be directly stated: it has to be hinted. The reader, in turn, must see the implications of the hints given, and he must hold them in suspension so that succeeding paragraphs can fill them out."[27] Instead of the straightforward narration of the event itself, James "dramatises" his novels in a manner that helps him convey the impressions of his characters by laying an emphasis on "showing" rather than "telling." He replaces *diegesis*, as used in the Aristotelian sense, with *mimesis*, that is, the imitative, visual representation of the events.[28]

The predominance of "cosmically synchronised" scenes in Nabokov's fiction is a hallmark of all those works which strive to explore the minds, the interior lives and the personal worlds of his characters. His fiction is often noted for operating with a large number of details, as has been illustrated in the previous passage, describing the relentless rescue search for the boy, who is later found dead in the sea. One must approach the Nabokovian text with a fair amount of alertness as the details buried within it are waiting to be pieced together by the attentive reader. Nonetheless, it is not the individual solution of single details that brings the reader closer to a longed-for revelation, a moment of *epiphany* (in the Joycean sense), or the understanding of the characters' impressions, faiths and psychological mechanisms, but, as the protagonist of *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* posits: "it is their combination" and not the parts that matter.[29] Nabokov's method thus enables the reader to see the events and personal worlds as organic wholes, exposing both the conscious and subconscious of his characters through descriptions which suggest not only a literal and a metaphorical reading, but also betray a suprasensual ability that the writer possesses. This essential trait of the Nabokovian text is especially relevant in, for example, *Camera*

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26. Quoted in McElderry, *Henry James*, p. 55.

27. McElderry, *Henry James*, p. 163.

28. Enikő Bollobás, *Az amerikai irodalom története* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2005), p. 248.

29. Vladimir Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (New York: New Directors, 1959), p. 179.

*Obscura*, in which a dirigible pilot observes two villages visible from his aeroplane, but, as he gradually ascends, the scope of the reader's vision begins to expand and allows him to reach to a vantage point from where to see "this Provençal scene and Berlin—where at this very moment Anneliese senses something about to happen."[30]

James's later style of writing has yielded itself to diverse critical assessment, the reason for which has been his unique way of exposing human sensibility in a gradual and roundabout manner. Michael Kellogg considers James's later style as the most marked trait of his fiction (culminating in *The Golden Bowl*), which helps the reader discover the mind little by little, or, to be more precise, functions as a means that "brings us round to things by novel routes and presents them from striking angles."[31] If listening, seeing and taking account, as Kellogg claims, are indeed the things that the text forces upon the reader as a consequence of James's stylistic peculiarities, his postulation that "we may lose our bearings and be unable to decide, for example, whether Lambert Strether is reaching towards insight or fumbling into obscurity" may appear somewhat spurious.[32] Occasional uncertainties in the text, gravitating towards the reader's obfuscation, are indeed inescapable, yet James—similarly to Nabokov—was conscious of the fact that in fiction "*no complete or exact account* of things can be acquired or tendered."[33] In his "Preface to *The Ambassadors*" he writes that "art deals with what we see," and, by this reversal of Wilde's idea that Life is imitative of Art, he thinks that the proper stuff of fiction can be plucked in the "garden of life."[34] James was known to have garnered material for his novels by closely inspecting the world around him, at social gatherings or while sauntering in the city, which supplied him with a moment of *inspiration* in the process of writing. Although Nabokov's advanced postmodernist fiction is often described as being stripped of reality, it is probably correct to conjecture that he also derived his initial inspirations from the world ex-

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30. Brian Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 368.

31. Michael Kellogg, "The Squirrel's Heartbeat: Some Thoughts on the Later Style of Henry James," in *The Hudson Review* 40.3 (Autumn, 1987), 432–436, p. 434.

32. Kellogg, "The Squirrel's Heartbeat," p. 434.

33. Myra Jehlen, *Five Fictions in Search of Truth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 7–8 (emphasis added).

34. Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (London: Penguin Classics, 1986), p. 37.

isting outside him (for example, it was a newspaper cutting, featuring a caged gorilla, that captured Nabokov's interest, who regarded the event as "the first little throb of *Lolita*").[35] Although Nabokov wrote fiction whose "levels of meaning" are allegedly inconsistent with the "post-Jamesian requisites for the 'realistic' or 'impressionistic' novel," he was also inclined to borrow ideas from the real world, which is aptly exemplified in the pervasiveness of the autobiographical references he scatters throughout his *oeuvre*.[36] Instead of holding fast to the "traditional patterns of fiction," Nabokov was mindful not to label a story a true story—he categorically expressed that literature for him was invention, yet many of the themes, situations and characters constituting his fictional universe bear a striking resemblance to the private experiences he encountered throughout his life.[37] It has been correctly said of James that he "analyses the hero's *consciousness*, and the novel's universe—which has thus been enriched by subtle perceptions, merging into one focal point—has in store a more intensive and artistic experience for the reader."[38] On account of his application of the indirect method, James managed to remain neutral so much so that he chose to present everything through the consciousness of his characters; consequently, all the interpretations belong to them, which enables the reader to make moral judgements and assess reliability. While James is viewed even today as a writer of *realistic fiction*, critics seem to disagree with the label, because the confines of James's fictional world are mostly too narrow to account for a realistic depiction of life. Considered to be "the historian of fine consciousness," James was resolute to provide for the faithful rendition of his characters—with special emphasis on individual consciousness—instead of depicting all aspects of life. Truth is elusive and so can reality wear many different masks: James and Nabokov knew well that the primacy of *form*—structure, patterning and style—would allow them to bequeath to their works a greater amount of accuracy, but neither was bent on presenting a singular route per se towards a specific, incontestable truth.

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35. Vladimir Nabokov, *The Annotated Lolita*, ed. Alfred Appel, Jr. (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), p. 311.

36. Alfred Appel, Jr., "Introduction," in *The Annotated Lolita* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), xvii–lxxiii, p. xix.

37. Nabokov, *Lectures*, p. 5.

38. Aladár Sarbu, *Henry James és a lélektani regény* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1981), p. 30 (my translation, emphasis added).

In spite of Nabokov's critique of James, the juxtaposition of the two novelists as regards their distinctive ways of experimenting with language and form, reveals subtle analogies. James's convoluted syntax, which is an essential trait of the indirect method of his later fiction, and Nabokov's technique of "cosmic synchronization," as has been demonstrated earlier, are copiously employed with the aim of portraying the consciousness as well as the internal, personal worlds of their characters. The most manifest analogy between the two novelists does not merely rest on a meagre amount of slightly convincing "Jamesian meanderings" and the parodic imitations of James's style, but there seems to be a similitude in techniques, the result of which is to involve the reader in the act of reading by allowing him to *see* rather than *read about* the events and impressions of the characters.

# The Well of New Tammany College
## The Question of Authorship in John Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy*

*Péter Székely*

> "Frankly, what we hope and risk in publishing *Giles Goat-Boy* is that the question of its authorship will be a literary and not a legal one."[1]

In his seminal essay entitled "The Literature of Exhaustion" (1967) John Barth observes with some dissatisfaction a conspicuous tendency in contemporary art to eliminate

> the most traditional notion of the artist: the Aristotelian conscious agent who achieves with technique and cunning the artistic effect; in other words, one endowed with uncommon talent, who has moreover developed and disciplined that endowment with virtuosity. It's an aristocratic notion on the face of it, which the democratic West seems eager to have done with it; not only the "omniscient" author of older fiction, but the very idea of the controlling artist, has been condemned as politically reactionary, even fascist.[2]

It is the phrase "conspicuous tendency" that Barth employs to identify that particular strain of post-structuralist literary criticism, which did not merely reason against the Aristotelian notion of the artist, but explicitly passed a death sentence on the concept of authorship, *per se*. That Barth did not share the critical convictions arguing for the authorial depersonalization of literature becomes evident from the same essay when he declares to believe that art is *done* by people, and when he expresses his preference for art "that requires expertise and artistry as well as bright aesthetic ideas and/or inspiration."[3] Barth's own opposition to the theoretical explaining away of the concept of the controlling author is apparent not only in his critical writings but also in his fiction.

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1. John Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy, or The Revised New Syllabus* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 7.
2. John Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion," in *Metafiction*, ed. Mark Currie (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 162–163.
3. Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion," p. 163.

Barth's academic novel entitled *Giles Goat-Boy or, The Revised New Syllabus* (1967) appeared simultaneously with his essay titled "The Literature of Exhaustion." The argument that I propose in this paper is that *Giles Goat-Boy* offers a metafictional[4] interpretation which harmonizes with Barth's own critical convictions concerning the concept of the author.

It is the explicit engagement of the novel in the issue of authorship which allows it to be classified as a case of writerly metafiction, a term describing a type of self-conscious fiction which deals with, comments on or is specifically about various aspects of writing fiction. Barth prefixes *Giles Goat-Boy* with a "Publisher's Disclaimer"[5] and a "Cover-Letter to the Editors and Publisher"[6] which are the parts that provide most of the novel's writerly metafictional content. The former, patently *not* written by any editor, succinctly recapitulates those aspects of writerly metafiction which the succeeding cover-letter addresses:

> The professor and quondam novelist whose name appears on the title-page (*our* title-page, not the one following his prefatory letter) denies that the work is his, but "suspects" it to be fictional [...] His own candidate for authorship is one Stoker Giles or Giles Stoker—whereabouts unknown, existence questionable—who appears to have claimed in turn 1) that he too was but a dedicated editor, the text proper having been written by a certain automatic computer, and 2) that excepting a few "necessary basic artifices"* the book is neither fable nor fictionalized history, but literal truth. And the computer, the mighty "WESCAC"—does it not too disclaim authorship? It does.[7]

The metafictional issue that is mooted in the above excerpt concerns authorship and authorial identity. Authorship is generally considered as an unproblematic notion: conventionally a novel is written by the person identified on the title page, which, as a piece of fact, is normally accentuated rather than denied. The possibility that a non-

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4. That is, fiction, which self-consciously reflects on the art of fiction, on its own status as fiction.

5. Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy*, pp. 7–14.

6. Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy*, pp. 17–33.

*The computer's assumption of a first-person narrative viewpoint, we are told, is one such "basic artifice." The reader will add others, perhaps challenging their "necessity" as well.

7. Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy*, p. 7.

existent person or a machine wrote *Giles-Goat Boy* makes sense only as playful speculation; the explicit discussion of this possibility in the novel, however, is clearly a metafiction technique intended to make readers consider the creational aspect of fiction. The three disclaimers of authorship, especially the baffling question-answer pair which ends the quote, generate a sense of metafiction-induced inappropriateness in the reader. "Why do I need to read editorial notes and authorial letters addressed to a publishing house? Why can't I get to the story?" we could ask with good reason. Yet, the assertion that it was not really the title page author who wrote the book we are intending to read may interest us. The disclaimers that aim at prompting the reader to consider how *Giles-Goat Boy* actually came to be, is shortly followed by the "Cover-Letter to the Editors and Publisher," and in the letter a story unfolds which further stretches the issue of authorship, this time, by purely fictional means. For a better understanding of how Barth goes about serving his metafictional theme a brief plot-summary of the letter is helpful.

Quite unconventionally, it is John Barth in person who appears in *Giles Goat-Boy* as the writer of the "Cover-Letter to the Editors and Publisher." Barth identifies himself as J. B., a burnt-out novelist and university professor of creative writing, who intends the letter as an apology for his publisher, admitting his failure to deliver the novel he was contractually obliged to complete due to his conclusive writer's block. *Giles Goat-Boy, or the Revised New Syllabus*—originally entitled *R. N. S.* or *The Revised New Syllabus of George Giles our Grand Tutor* –, Barth argues, is a surrogate text, a surrogate novel substituting for the one he was unable to write. John Barth, the author identified on the title page, claims, in a manner of speaking, merely to host the novel for the purposes of publication and to have contributed to it only as an editor. The real author, Barth insists, is a man named Giles Stoker, who came to ask for his help with the publication of the book while he—i.e. Barth—was in his university office, brooding over the loss of his muse.

The reader might have patiently followed the story so far with the expectation that they will soon reveal how this playful speculation about authorship ends. But as it turns out, Giles Stoker is the son of the protagonist of *Giles-Goat Boy* itself, and unless the novel is of biographical nature there is a major contradiction in Barth's story. Of course, the prefatory texts make it clear that their content is fraudulent: Giles Stoker turns out to be the fictional son of the fictional protagonist of the novel and thus in no way is he accountable for having written the novel. The prefatory text is overt concern-

ing Stoker's existential status, who, in a self-referential gesture, points out his own immaterial nature by confessing: "I'm not from this campus [i.e. country] (you've guessed already). My alma mater is New Tammany College [the imaginary city where much of the action in the novel takes place]—you couldn't have heard of it, it's in a different university entirely [meaning universe]." [8] The cover-letter, therefore, presents an improbable situation in which John Barth is asked to publish his own novel by someone who is the product of his own imagination.

Barth, however, also suggests that the fictional character named Giles Stoker is his younger self. This relationship is strongly insinuated in the text when J. B., Barth's own fictional surrogate author, ponders during his encounter with Stoker as follows:

> I was taken aback by a number of things. Not simply his [i.e. Giles Stoker's] presumption—I rather admired that, it recalled an assurance I once had myself and could wish for again; indeed he was so like a certain old memory of myself, and yet so *foreign*, even wild I was put in mind of three dozen old stories wherein the hero meets his own reflection or is negotiated with by a personage from nether realms.[9]

The discussion between John Barth and Giles Stoker, therefore, can be grasped as Barth's own inner monologue conceived on the ontological plane of fantasy. In this light, Giles Stoker's imaginary visit to Barth can be interpreted as follows: the artistically infertile author is visited by the personification of his own creative self; and the act of Giles' handing over the book's manuscript to Barth stands for the traditional genesis of art, according to which it is the craft and imagination of the artist which brings about the work of art. It is this artist notion, the Aristotelian notion of the creative, controlling artist, that Barth alluded to in his essay titled "The Literature of Exhaustion."

According to the interpretation that I have outlined, *Giles Goat-Boy* makes the point that artistic creation cannot take place without the artist and the imaginative capacity that resides in the author. Adjusting our senses to the ontological plane (time and place) of the narrative reproduced in the cover-letter, Stoker hands the so far unwritten *Giles-Goat Boy* to Barth, analogously to how inspiration and imagination yield the novelist's artistic product, i.e. fiction. The terri-

8. Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy*, p. 27.
9. Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy*, p. 22.

tory where this artistic exchange takes place is presented to be a mixture of the real—represented by the living novelist and university teacher John Barth—and the imaginary—represented by Giles Stoker. Likewise, the cover-letter is physically arranged in between the prefatory disclaimer, the content of which assumes the ontological plane of our everyday reality, and the novel—which, being an allegorical tale about a half-goat/half-man, assumes the ontological plane of imagination. The transitory nature of the cover-letter between fact and fiction is further reinforced by linguistic means: it introduces a world in which university lingo is used in its conventional sense along with new meanings allocated to it by the author for the purposes of fiction. This semantic plurality is maintained all through the novel: classmates will stand for people, university for universe, college for country, syllabus for Bible, Grand Tutor for Saviour / Jesus, the Dean o Flunks for the Devil, semesters for years, etc. The ambiguity deriving from this semantic plurality, the way I perceive it at least, gives way to playful entertainment rather than a burdensome reading experience. In the following excerpt it is the double meaning of the verb "graduate"—i.e. completing one's university studies vs. becoming enlightened (in a quasi theological sense)—that occasions the following conversation piece between Giles Stoker and J. B.

> I [J. B.] asked him whether he was a graduate student.
> "Well, at least I'm a Graduate. [...] I wonder if you are."
> I think no one may accuse me of hauteur or superciliousness. [...] But the man was impudent! I supposed he was referring to the doctoral degree; very well, I'd abandoned my efforts in the line years since, when I eloped with the muse.[10]

As I have already implied, the artist type that emerges from the metafictional episodes embedded in *Giles-Goat Boy* coincides with the Aristotelian controlling artist, which Barth furthers in his "The Literature of Exhaustion" essay. The author concept that Barth thus summons up in both his critical and fictional texts stands for a notion that has had a wide acceptance in the European critical consciousness; after Aristotle it was to re-emerge, and solidify later in the eighteenth century into what is commonly referred to as the romantic notion of the author, and is the author model of the realist novel tradition: the author who is identified as the sole source and originator of the literary artefact, the author who begets and controls the world of his creation, the so-called Author-God.

10. Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy*, p. 21.

In "The Literature of Exhaustion," however, Barth brings two existing artist models into conflict with each other: one that is fashioned after the romantic image of the poet, and the other that considers the artist *dead*. The notion of the death of the author is equally well-represented in *Giles Goat-Boy*. As will be demonstrated, Barth urges to reinforce his preference for the controlling artist model even in this particular novel. The question of why Barth might have felt the urge to take a stand regarding the question of authorship at that particular moment in time may be answered by pointing out that a certain critical current in literary theory arguing for the depersonalization of literature was on a prominent rise around the publication of both *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966) and "The Literature of Exhaustion" (1967).

It was also in 1967 that Roland Barthes' essay "The Death of the Author"—perhaps the most influential piece of criticism concerning the propagation and the wholesale acceptance of the so-called "death of the author" movement in deconstructionist literary criticism—was published. Nonetheless, the emergence of the critical current aiming to denounce the author as begetter and controller of their fiction cannot be credited to Barthes. In his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" T. S. Eliot proposed as early as 1919 that the role of the author in the creation of literature was of catalytic rather than generative in nature. For a number of modernist novelists, counting among them such outstanding figures as Henry James, Gustave Flaubert, Virginia Woolf, Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos and James Joyce, it was a prime ambition to produce fiction which would show no sign of a manipulating artist in the background, which would remove all traces of authorial presence from the surface of the text. The most common strategies to produce ostensibly depersonalised texts include direct dialogue exchanges, free indirect speech, ekphrastic prose, first person singular narratives and interior monologues. In the wake of modernist depersonalized literature, much in agreement with Eliot's findings, the school of New Criticism—especially W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley's 1946 essay entitled "The Intentional Fallacy"—fully anticipated such exceedingly sophisticated theoretical expositions aiming at the eradication of the author as Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" and Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1968).

This brief overview concerning the history of the perhaps not so ill-named "death of the author movement" is intended to illuminate all those characteristics that can be discerned in Barth's fictional representation of depersonalized literature. Continuing our reading of J. B.'s cover-letter, Giles Stoker makes the admission that, similarly

to Barth, he too is merely an editor of the manuscript which was produced by WESCAC, an intelligent mainframe computer.

> This remarkable computer [narrates J. B.], I was told (a gadget called WESCAC) [...] on its own hook, or by some prior instruction, [...] volunteered [...] that there was in its Storage "considerable original matter" read in fragmentarily by George Giles [the elder] himself in the years of his flourishing: taped lecture-notes, recorded conferences with protégés, and the like. Moreover, the machine declared itself able and ready [...] to assemble, collate, and edit this material, interpolate all verifiable data from other sources such as the memoirs then in hand, recompose the whole into a coherent narrative from the Grand Tutor's point of view, and "read it out" in an elegant form on its automatic printers.[11]

I see a number of reasons why Barth's fictional master computer, WESCAC, may be seen as an adequate representation of the impersonal creative cause of the novel. First of all, WESCAC is an object, an inanimate entity which has no personality, no biases or opinions, and therefore it is capable of approximating the ideal concept of objective representation. WESCAC leaves no traces of an author behind in the narrative it creates because there is none; and, as the cover-letter suggests, it is capable of producing texts from already existing ones. Just as Eliot proposed in his "Tradition and the Individual Talent," WESCAC represents "a continual extinction of personality";[12] its "emotion of art is impersonal";[13] its own storage device is presented as a medium in which "special, or varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations."[14] In fact, WESCAC's storage device is an apt technological equivalent not of the romantic "well" metaphor of the poet, but of the Eliotian "receptacle" image of the artist—the novel is adequately divided into reels, rather than chapters. As Barthes would have it in "The Death of the Author," the text that WESCAC prints out is made and read in such a way that at all its levels the author is absent. The WESCAC-generated *Giles Goat-Boy* is no longer "a line or words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which

11. Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy*, pp. 28–29.
12. T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *20th Century Literary Criticism*, ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1972), p. 73.
13. Eliot, p. 76.
14. Eliot, p. 74.

a variety of writings, none of the original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture."[15]

The two prefatory parts of Barth's novel outline and contrast two genealogical alternatives for the creation of *Giles Goat-Boy*: the book-proffering authorial imagination, and WESCAC, the soulless automatic machine. Applying this scheme on a more universal plane, Barth's novel epitomizes two schools of thought concerning the genesis of fiction: one that is based on the romantic notion of art, and one that is based on the depersonalized concept of art. Barth, as he does in his critical writings, takes sides in the argument and, harmonizing with his conviction expounded in "The Literature of Exhaustion," opts for the Aristotelian controlling artist in his fiction. It is J. B.'s following admission in the concluding part of the cover-letter that provides irrefutable evidence concerning Barth's choice: "Acknowledge with me, then, the likelihood that *The Revised New Syllabus* is the work not of 'WESCAC' but of an obscure, erratic wizard whose *nom de plume*, at least, is *Stoker, Giles*."[16] "Who could be that erratic wizard with a pen-name like Giles Stoker?"[17] poses J. B. the question to himself. It is this particular question, the author's own rhetorical question to himself, that prompts Barth to bring home his argument and suggest his identity with Giles Stoker. The conclusion that can be drawn from this equation is that the erratic wizard who can be regarded as the begetter of the novel—far from being dead—is none but Barth himself.

What I wish to end my investigation of Barth's novel with is the distillation of a new layer of meaning from the writerly metafictional aspect of *Giles Goat-Boy*. The novel, confessedly, is a "standard painful history of reformers and innovators,"[18] a heavily allegorical *Bildungsroman* about a half-man/half-goat. Yet, if the reader focuses on the metafictional framing of the *Bildungsroman*, a different idea begins to unfold. The alternative plot summary would go somewhat as follows. One day John Barth is brooding over his loss of inspiration and becomes utterly dissatisfied with how aimless and mundane his novels have become.[19] As Barth formulates it in the novel,

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15. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Modern Criticism and Theory*, ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988), p. 170.
16. Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy*, p. 32.
17. Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy*, p. 32.
18. Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy*, p. 28.
19. Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy*, pp. 17–18.

> to move folks about, to give them locales and dispositions, past histories and crossed paths—it bored me. I hadn't taste or gumption for it. Especially was I surfeited with *movement*, the without-which-not of story. One novel ago I'd hatched a plot as mattersome as any in the books, and drove a hundred characters through eight times that many pages of it; now the merest sophomore apprentice, how callow soever his art, outdid me in that particular.[20]

In the midst of his bitterness Barth realizes that it is the outworn conventions of the realist novel that cripple his art, and in order to revitalize his writings he needs to subvert the standards by recourse to the mythical, the absurd, the obscene, the imaginary and the theologically subversive. Barth transforms his epiphany into a narrative vision in which, while working on a novel he has lost his faith in, he is visited by Giles Stoker who hands over to him the manuscript of *Giles Goat-Boy*, a novel which is written in eighteenth-century eloquent realist prose and has merited critics' attention exactly for being subversive, mythical, absurd, obscene, imaginative and iconoclast. Of course, it is Barth's own departure from the well-trodden path of the realist novel that results in his completion of *Giles Goat-Boy*. The author, nevertheless, is clear about the uncommon nature of his new product and writes a letter of apology, only ostensibly addressed to his publisher, explaining to the reader that the original novel he wanted to submit, a novel of exhausted possibilities along the lines of traditional realist fiction, was of far more inferior quality.

What Barth's novel ultimately proclaims is that the Author is still God of his fiction; he still controls, manipulates and, contrary to all the hearsay, is very much alive. Although Barth's novel is generally tagged as a truly postmodern novel, it evokes a rather traditional concept: the romantic notion of the poet, the poet who is the unique source and origin of their fictional world. Therefore, irrespective of how radical or unconventional techniques of writerly metafiction may be, the new layer of meaning they generate is essentially an old one. In *Literary Disruptions* Jerome Klinkowitz aptly observes that "a figure in most of Barth's work is the writer seeking immortality."[21] I believe, Klinkowitz' statement is applicable to all writerly metafictional novels. Writerly metafiction, I propose, is the paramount literary device in the author's quest for immortality. What

20. Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy*, p. 20.

21. Jerome Klinkowitz, *Literary Disruptions: The Making of a Postcontemporary American Fiction* (London: University of Illinois Press, 1980), p. 8.

follows from the analysis is that, contrary to the deconstructionist theoretical insistence on the "death of the author," the author remains to have an undisputedly central role in postmodern fiction.

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# A narrátori tudat mint kultúra és narratíva találkozása

## (A példa: Toni Morrison *Dzsessz* c. regénye)

*Abádi-Nagy Zoltán*

Horgonyvetés – nem általában az irodalmi elbeszélést illetően, mindössze saját elméleti-kritikai hajózási lehetőségeimet tekintve.

A posztmodern nézet elveti a klasszikus narratológia és némely posztklasszikus narratívaelmélet által is alkalmazott elemzési módszert, mely elbeszélés-szerkezeti rétegekre bontja a széppprózai narratívát.[1] A hierarchikus közelítésmód mégis eredményeket hozhat, jelen esetben éppen a narratíva kulturalizációjának kutatásában.[2] Jó kiindulási pontként szolgálhat, például, a narrátor azonosításában, természetének vizsgálatában. Legyen bár az elbeszélő könnyen vagy nehezen fellelhető, legyen maga is szereplője a történetnek, vagy annak külső szemlélője csupán, határozottan ő az a fikcionáltvilág-lakó, aki megalkotja a szöveget a befogadó számára. A széppprózai elbeszélésben pedig narrálás (a szöveg megképzése) nélkül nincs narratíva.

A narrált szöveg, annak elő(össze)állási módja és miértjei az előadott történethez képest más tartományban illetve szinten keresendők a narratívában, akkor is, ha a szöveget produkáló mesélő maga is része a történetnek. Vagyis a történetet előadó ágens – itt hívom segítségül a hierarchizáló narratológiát – abban az elbeszéléstartományban lakozik, melyet Mieke Bal háromszintes rendszere „narratív [értsd: narrált] szöveg"-nek nevez. A magyar nyelv lehetővé teszi, hogy pontosabban elhatárolhassunk: az elbeszélésben ez az *elbeszélő* szöveg. Voltaképpen szöveg*aspektus*, hiszen az elbeszélés éppúgy hordozza a történetet, mint annak mesélőjét (a narrátort), utóbbi elbeszélői/kulturális habitusával együtt.

Teljes értelemben vett (narrato-kulturalizációs) narratívaelméleti érdeklődésem szempontjából a narrátori tudat („narratorial con-

1. Toni Morrison *Dzsessz* c. regényének posztmodern narratológiai vizsgálatára másutt térek ki.

2. A „narratíva kulturalizáció"-jának meghatározását illetően lásd a bibliográfia Abádi Nagy Zoltán neve alatt található tételeit.

sciousness") – melynek kulturalizációs vonatkozású elméleti és esettanulmányi vizsgálata képezi jelen esszé szűkebb témáját[3] – a kultúra beáramlásának hatalmas forrása a narratívában. A narrátori tudat viszont olyan nyilvánvaló módokon áramoltatja a kultúrát a szövegbe – hangozhat az ellenvetés –, hogy a jelenség szisztematikus tanulmányozása öncélú, értelmetlen lenne. És nem hiányzik az elbeszélőszöveg-szint ágense, az elbeszélői tudatműködés ott sem, ahol, a narrátori jelenlét szövegjeleinek hiányában, a beleértett („implikált") szerzőt tekintjük narrátornak.[4] Ahogyan akkor is jelen van, amikor nem antropomorf a mese előadója: „a narráció, a narratív előadás akkor is cselekvőt feltételez, amikor a cselekvő nem visel magán emberiszemélyiség-jegyeket".[5] Ami a kognitív narratívaelmélet nemzetközi kategóriahasználatában a „narratorial mind" vagyis a narrátori értelem/intelligencia/álláspont/nézet/szándék/akarat/szellem/gondolkodásmód – a továbbiakban, mindezen tartalommal, de használható rövidséggel: narrátori gondolkodás – pedig nem egyszerűen jelen van a narratív szövegben, hanem a szöveg *maga a narrátori gondolkodás,* mivel amit a szöveg tartalmaz, az a narrátori (vagy beleértett szerzői) tudat terméke. Az elbeszélői szinten a narrátor által közvetített tudás és információ révén áramlik a kultúra a narratívába; a narrátor maga is kulturális termék, nem is tud mást továbbítani az olvasónak, mint kultúrát. Mindez annyira egyértelmű, hogy bizonyítása nem igényel egy egész tanulmányt.

Narrátor és kultúra viszonya mégis jóval összetettebb jelenség ennél. Kétségkívül indokolt lenne annak kutatása, milyen kulturális meghatározottságú, miféle narrátori gondolkodásmód produkál és ural milyen (típusú) szövege(ke)t; és, konkrét esetekben, adott kulturális tartalom milyen módokon alakítja az adott narratívát? Az olyan könyvben, amilyen Toni Morrison *Dzsessz* c. regénye, ebben az összefüggésben szembe tűnik, hogy a narrátor afro-amerikai és nő – meglehet az efféle evidencia megfogalmazása sem képzelhető el könnyed kijelentésként, megállapítása alapos megfontolást igényel. An-

3. Arról, hogy milyen mértékben és módokon hatol be a kultúra a narratívába a fabulaszinten, illetve formálja a történetet, lásd erre vonatkozó korábbi tanulmányaimat.

4. Megjegyzendő, hogy vannak elméletalkotók, akik (pl. Monika Fludernik) szerint ilyenkor semmilyen értelemben nem beszélhetünk narrátorról, hanem a tényleges (aktuális) szerző maga a szövegjel közvetlen küldője, ő az, aki rövidre zárja viszonyát a befogadóval.

5. Seymour Chatman, idézi Marisa Bortolussi és Peter Dixon, *Psychonarratology: Foundations for the Empirical Study of Literary Response* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), p. 62.

nak dokumentálása, hogy ki is (mi is) a narrátor, gyakorta komoly próbatételt jelenthet. Különösen áll ez az olyan elbeszélőre, amilyen a Morrisoné. A *Dzsessz* szövegszintű cselekvője ugyanis teljességgel előtérbe állított, rendkívül öntudatos (abban az értelemben is, hogy narrátori szerepének tudatában lévő), ámde narratológiai bújócskát játszó, mindenütt jelen lévő de folyton kisikló, folyton ítélkező mégis önhitelét is tépázó, nehezen megfogható narrátor.

Miközben ennek az elbeszélőnek az afro-amerikai és női mivolta fogja meghatározni annak jellegét, amit a *Dzsesszben* előad nekünk, és azt is, ahogyan ezt tenni fogja, egy nem kevésbé magától értetődő (szub)kulturális rendszer is uralja a regény fikcionált világát. Átfogó tartószerkezet, mely mintegy aládúcolja a műegész boltíveit, egyszersmind kulturális koefficiens, melynek együttható-átható köze van a *Dzsessz*-történetvilág minden zegéhez-zugához. A dzsesszzenéről van szó. Nem csoda, hogy a dzsessz foglalja el a könyv legprivilegizáltabb helyét: vagyis a regény címe lett.[6] A dzsesszzene igazán uralja a művet, hiszen téma, eszközrendszer és történet is egyszerre; ehhez még ez a zene a történet „Teremtő"-je, azáltal, hogy a mesélő egyéni kultúrájának meghatározó szubsztanciája, azaz a narrátori tudatnak is „Teremtő"-je. Ez a kulturális determináns, azzal a koncentráló erővel, melyet a címben is betöltött kiváltságos helye kölcsönöz neki, a harmadik hierarchikus szint, a narratívszöveg-szint, ha szabad így mondani: a nagy narratológiai „sztori" a Morrison-könyvben (vagy az első szinté, ha a szinthierarchiát – narratív szöveg, történetmondás, fabula – az olvasói közelítés és hozzáférés szempontjából nézzük). A narrálás szintjén lép ugyanis elénk a dzsesszzene, kulturalizációs vezértényezőként, mindhárom – általam generatív, performatív és retorikai/stratégiai kulturalizációs funkciónak nevezett – kulturalizációs szerepet betöltve ebben a narratívában. Mindez egy rendkívül sajátos elbeszélői „dzsesszbemutató" igencsak lenyűgöző aspektusa: hiszen maga a könyv is úgy tekinthető, mintha maga a dzsessz lenne; mi több, a narrátor úgyszintén, ahogy azt néhány kritikus már megfogalmazta.

De a többszörös szerep, melyet a dzsesszzene visz a regényben, önmagában is hatalmas téma. Annak tüzetes taglalása, hogy milyen szerepeket játszik a dzsessz a *Dzsesszben* narrato-kulturalizációs

6. A narratíván belüli „figyelemfelkeltés szabályai" között az „elhelyezés szabályai"-t taglalva, Peter J. Rabinowitz arról beszél, hogy „a cím összpontosítja az olvasás folyamatát", és „nem csupán eligazít bennünket az olvasás során, azáltal, hogy megmondja, mire koncentráljunk, hanem magot is képez, mely köré az interpretáció szerveződhet" (60–61).

vonatkozásban – a dzsesszzene mint elbeszélt kultúra, mint elbeszélő kultúra és a narrátor mint a dzsessz megszemélyesítése – eltorzítaná a jelen tanulmány arányait, felborítaná az egyensúlyt. Ezért hát, jóllehet önmagát érvénytelenítené ez az esszé, ha nem venné – legalább érintőlegesen – figyelembe a dzsesszt az alábbiakban, a legszükségesebb pontokon, most félre kell tennem a kérdéskör egészét, másutt fogok részletesebben visszatérni rá.

Az, hogy a dzsessz jószerivel átveszi a terepet a regényben, a Morrison-szöveg unikális elbeszélésművészeti sajátossága. Másfelől, ez a jelenség olyan viszony (a kultúra/narratíva kapcsolat) kiterjesztése és variáció is arra, mely ősi, mint maga az elbeszélés. Máig vitatott kérdés, beszélhetünk-e kultúráról a fabulaszinten. Az viszont általánosan elfogadott, hogy a fabula alaplogikája és interperszonális alapmintázata kulturálisan és ideológiailag beírttá válik a történetmondás szintjén. (A fabulakulturalizációról és a történeti szint kulturális beírásáról korábbi tanulmányaimban szóltam.) A szövegszint azonban mindig is a legegyértelműbb terepet kínálta a kultúra beáramlásához, lett legyen az bármely irodalmi korszak bármely irodalmi szövege – mindig annak mértékében, amekkorára a narrátori vagy beleértett szerzői elhatározás nyitotta a kulturális duzzasztógát zsilipjeit. A *Dzsessz* narrátora úgy döntött, hogy teljesen felhúzza a zsilipeket – nemcsak a dzsesszzene, hanem a legszélesebb értelemben vett („jelöletlen") kultúra számára is.[7]

Az utóbbi évtizedekben különösen fontos feladattá vált a narratológiai közbeszédben a kultúra rejtett fonalainak és kevésbé nyilvánvaló működésmódjainak bogozása az irodalmi elbeszélés szöveteiben. A kultúra mindig is tanulmányozás tárgya volt ebben a vonatkozásban is: az, ahogyan a narrátori kognitív vagy emocionális funkciókban, hangban, fokalizációban megnyilvánul illetve feltárható – ideértve a narratív és nem narratív kommentárokat, valamint a narratív szövegbe beleszőtt leírásokat (lásd pl. Balt). Van, aki szerint az irodalmi elbeszélés öt kódjának egyike a kultúra (Barthes). Mások a mimetikus és diegetikus beszédreprezentációban igyekeznek a nyomába eredni (Gérard Genette, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan), vagy az egyenes, a függő meg az átélt (vagy szabad függő) beszédű diszkurzusban (az előbbiek valamennyien és Monika Fludernik, többek között). Ilyen vizsgálódások általános elméleti síkon is folytak (narratológia majd narratívaelmélet), ahogyan egyes művekre vonatkozóan is – és ez alól a *Dzsessz* sem kivétel (Morrison regényét tekintve Justine Tally végezte a legszisztematikusabb – kötetnyi –

7. A „jelölt" és „jelöletlen" kultúráról lásd Wagner, p. 22.

munkát). Mindez tehát jó ideje foglalkoztatja a narratológusokat, és e vizsgált jelenségekre is bőven születtek strukturalista vagy posztklasszikus narratológiai formulák.

Mindazonáltal, a kultúra/narratíva interfészre irányuló kutatásnak célszerűtlen volna a fenti ösvények mentén vagy bármely más tradicionális, de akár sok más újabb keletű irányvonalat követve haladnia. Igaz, megnőtt az elméleti forgalom az irodalmi elbeszélés kulturális vonatkozásainak vidékén a kontextuális, kognitív és kulturális narratológia megjelenése óta, hiszen itt már többről beszélünk a kulturális tartalmat elemző, hagyományos, tematikus közelítésnél, és lehetőség nyílt „igazán integratív" és „interdiszciplináris" elemzési módszerek alkalmazására.[8] A társadalmi aspektus volt már Bahtyin szociológiai poétikájának is a lelke, és a szociokulturalitást helyezték előtérbe a bahtyini elmélet által ösztönzött más narratológiai vizsgálódások. Döntő jelentőségű a kulturális kód Roland Barthes számára. Seymour Chatman szerint sem vonatkoztathatunk el attól, hogy a történet, úgymond, „a szerző kulturális kódjai által előfeldolgozott" állapotban jut el az olvasóhoz.[9] Bal minduntalan hangsúlyozza, hogy a narratíva „kulturális jelenség, kulturális folyamatok része".[10] Ross Chambers, a strukturalista narratológia viszonylagos kulturális sterilitástól elhatárolódva (és Chatmant tulajdonképpen meg is leckéztetve, amiért elméletéből hiányzik a narratíva társadalmi, mediáló szerepe[11]), meg van győződve arról (kulturális antropológiai hatásra), hogy „a narratív tranzakció tanulmányozásának végső soron nyitnia kell az ideológiai és kulturális elemzés irányába".[12] És ahogyan a narratívakutatás áthalad a dekonstrukció és a rekontextualizáció fázisain, a kulturális narratológia és a posztmodern narratológia felé,[13] sok minden beúszik a kultúra/narratíva tranzakció kérdésköre-

8. Herman, p. 11.

9. In Bortolussi, Dixon, p. 26.

10. Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative,* 2nd ed. (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1997), p. 9.

11. Ross Chambers, *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction.*Theory and History of Literature 12 (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984), p. 4.

12. Chambers, p. 9.

13. Különös tekintettel a következőkre: Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, Jonathan Culler (dekonstrukció). A rekontextualizációval kapcsolatban Susan Sniader Langer a feminista narratológia; Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak a poszkoloniális elmélet; J. M. Lotman, Frederic Jameson, Michel de Certeau, Manuel Castells a kultúrakutatás, kultúrkritika, társadalomelmélet; Thomas Pavel, Lubomir Doležel, Marie-Laure

ből a kortárs narratívaelmélet látóterébe – de eddig senki nem szentelt szisztematikus figyelmet a narrato-kulturalizációs érintkezési felületeknek (interfésznek), az interaktivitás módozatainak.

## A narrátor helyzete és a narrato-kulturális felület

Ha nem állnak rendelkezésünkre elődeink által kitaposott ösvények, felhasználható elméleti keretek, alkalmazható terminológia, magunknak kell rátalálnunk azokra az utakra és módokra, melyek segítségével megkereshetjük és vallatóra foghatjuk a narrato-kulturalizációs interfészt a narrátori tudatban. Az alábbiakban tehát a narrátori pozíció és a narrátori funkciók kérdésköreit kívánom szemügyre venni, narrato-kulturalizációs szempontból.

A széppprózai narratívához szükségünk van történetre és történetmondó narrátorra. Vagy inkább fordítva, hiszen narrátor nélkül nincs történet.[14] A *Dzsessz* esetében – Gérard Genette általánosan használatos terminológiájával élve [15] – olyan narrátorunk van, akinek a narrált eseményekhez való viszonya mind extradiegetikus, mind heterodiegetikus. Extradiegetikus abban az értelemben, hogy a narráló cselekvő az előadott történet fölött áll, vagyis őt magát nem narrálja senki a szövegben; és heterodiegetikus, amennyiben nem része a történetnek, nem szereplője az általa elbeszélt eseményeknek, nincs a történetszint cselekvői közt.

Ilyenformán Morrison különös mesélője, strukturalista narratológiai fogalmak szerint megfelel annak, amit Luc Herman és Bart Vervaeck a „legklasszikusabb”[16] narrátortípusnak nevezne.[17] És a kultu-

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Ryan a lehetséges világok elmélete; Martha Nussbaum, J. Hillis Miller, Zachary Newton a narratív etika képviseletében. James Phelan és Ansgar Nünning a kulturális narratológia tájékozódási pontjai, s ugyanezt a szerepet a posztmodern narratológiában Mark Currie és Andrew Gibson tölti be.

14. A jelen összefüggésben tökéletesen függetleníthetjük magunkat attól, hogy mi történik a „történet”-tel a modern és posztmodern prózában. Ha a narrátor azt adja elő, hogy nincs előadható történet, akkor az a „történet”.

15. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: Narrative Structures in Fiction and Film.* 1972, ford. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1987), p. 228 és pp. 244–245.

16. Luc Herman & Bart Vervaeck, *Handbook of Narrative Analysis,* 2001, ford. Luc Herman & Bart Vervaeck (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2005), p. 85.

17. Luc Herman és Bart Vervaeck az extradiegetikus-heterodiegetikust tekinti „vélhetően a legklasszikusabbnak” narratívaelemzési általános, elméleti szinten. Morrison elbeszélőjére én alkalmazom a kifejezést.

rális narratológiai nézet ad magyarázatot arra, miért nem pusztán tautologikus a látszólagos nyilvánvalóság megállapítása, tehát annak leszögezése, hogy az extra- és heterodiegetikus *Dzsessz*-narrátor a „vélhetően legklasszikusabb" típust képviseli. Nevezetesen, míg a strukturalista kategóriák csakugyan hasznos segítséget jelentenek narrátorunk elemzéséhez, a narrato-kulturálisinterfész-módszer állíthatja igazán élesebbre az elméleti fókuszt és finomíthatja mind az extra- mind a heterodiegetikus statuszt „igen-is-nem-is"-re. Ami ebben a kontextusban a különbséget jelenti, és ami ezt a különbséget teoretizálhatóvá teszi, az a kognitív közelítésmód: annak a lehetősége, hogy a narrátor szövegét a narrátor mentális tevékenységének fogjuk fel, hogy a narrátorban gondolkodó tudatot, fikcionált tudatot lássunk. Uri Margolin vélekedése szerint „a széppróza narratíva egyénített narrátora ugyanúgy egyén a fikcióban, mint annak a történetvilágnak a résztvevői, akiknek a cselekedeteit a narrátor leírja és kommentálja".[18] Én ennél továbbmegyek, és – ebben a vonatkozásban most már Margolinnal szemben – azt állítom, hogy olyan esetekben *sem* „nehéz [Margolin azt sugallja, hogy *igenis nehéz*] [...] egyénített kognitív mentális működésről beszélni", amikor „az elbeszélő hang vagy a beszédpozíció" „rejtve marad".[19] Végletes esetekben is, amilyen Alain Robbe-Grillet *Féltkénysége* (saját példám, nem Margoliné), ahol „nincs [narrátori jelenlét] artikulálását jelentő szövegindikáció",[20] a szöveg mentális tevékenységet fokalizál, fikcionált elmét (olyan típust, melynek aktuális-világbeli változata ismerős lehet az aktuális olvasó tapasztalati repertoárjából) – és ez az elmeműködés ad tulajdonképpen kulcsot az olvasó kezébe (a rajta átveresztett szöveg révén) annak megértéséhez, hogy valójában *van* (bár voltaképp, igen, tökéletesen elrejtett) narrátor, és hogy amire a szöveg mögé rejtett narrátor mentális tevékenysége rádöbbenti az olvasót, az az, amit a mű egésze tematizál.

Elvégre a *Dzsessz* narrátora a legszenvedélyesebb részese annak a kultúrának, melynek narratív gobelinjébe Joe-t, Violetet, Dorcast meg a többi figurát beleszövi. És ezúttal is jelöletlen értelemben használom a „kultúrá"-t. A kultúra jelöletlen teljességében is megkülönböztetetten előtérben áll az afro-amerikai kultúra, a rasszista amerikai kultúra, a dzsesszkultúra, az 1920-as évek amerikai kultú-

18. Uri Margolin, „Cognitive Science, the Thinking Mind, and Literary Narrative," in *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Science,* szerk. David Herman (Stanford, CA: CSLI, 2003), 271–94, p. 279.

19. Margolin, p. 278.

20. Margolin, p. 278.

rája, a Harlemi Reneszánsz („as lived", vagyis ahogyan az emberek *élték* akkor Harlemben az életet[21] – Morrison, idézi Matus[22]), a történelmileg felhalmozódott (főleg kelet-afrikai) narratív kultúra, az elbeszélés mikéntjeire vonatkozó kulturális elvárási horizont. És ezen a ponton meglepetés ér bennünket. Nem nehéz észrevenni egy elméleti furcsaságot, kétségkívül újdonságot, olyan jelenséget, melyet csak a narrato-kulturalizációs közelítés képes megvilágítani és teoretizálni. A jelenség a narrátori pozicionáltság kérdését viszi radikálisan új irányokba.

Ha egy narrátor maga a megszemélyesített kultúra (őt magát is, oly sok értelemben, formálja és elbeszéli a kultúra), akkor, valahol a kultúra/narratíva érintkezési felületben az a narrátor legalább annyira intradiegetikus, mint extra. Arról van szó, hogy a narrátor „az elbeszélt világhoz [is] tartozik [kontextusunkban a kultúra narrált világához], és ezért fölötte álló ágens [esetünkben, megint, a kultúra] beszéli el". Ezek pedig – saját szögletes zárójeles, *Dzsesszre* kontextualizáló beszúrásaimat leszámítva – Herman és Vervaeck szavai, melyek a strukturális narratológia intradiegetikusnarrátor-fogalmának elméleti definícióját adják.[23] Minthogy a Morrison narrátora fölött álló narratív ágens az őt alkotó és elbeszélő kultúra, az beszéli őt el, bizton tételezhető, hogy az ilyen narrátor legalább annyira homodiegetikus, mint hetero-, tehát egy és ugyanakkor homo- és heterodiegetikus.

Jelentheti-e ez azt, hogy az intradiegetikus (az elbeszélt elbeszélői) helyzet közel hozza a narrátort a szereplőkhöz, akiket történetmondóként ő teremt? A rendkívüli ítélkezési hajlam, mellyel fel van ruházva és szokatlanul tudatos viszonyulása általában ezekhez a kulturális kérdésekhez, különösen pedig tulajdon szerepéhez, melyet a történet elbeszélőjeként betölt, kiemelik a kollektív személytelenségből, a személyesség irányába tolják, szinte „szereplő"-szintre emelik (vagy szállítják le a történet fölött álló pozícióból) Morrison narrátorát, metaforikus értelemben. Határozottan nem tartozik a történetszint jellemei közé, mégis kétségkívül velük egy szinten levőnek érzi őt az olvasó a mimetikusan és diegetikusan (elbeszélő módban) prezentált kultúra szövegszintjén.

Az ilyen állítás azonban mintha összekeverné a kategóriákat meg a szinteket, melyekhez a kategóriák tartoznak (a szövegszinten elbeszé-

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21. Lásd Abádi-Nagy Zoltán, „Fabula and Culture" 16; vagy „A széppróza narratíva kulturalizációja II" 58.

22. Jill Matus, *Toni Morrison* (Machester: Manchester UP, 1998), p. 128.

23. Herman, Vervaeck, p. 81.

lő cselekvőt a történetvilágban cselekvő „szereplő”-vel). Láthatóan zárlatossá teszi a narratíva-szerkezeti hierarchia történeti és elbeszélő szintjét is. Igen, valóban ez következik be – de csak akkor, ha a narrátort a klasszikus (strukturalista) narratológia hierarchikus rendszerébe beszorítva teoretizáljuk. Bármennyire célszerű is tehát (sőt, bármennyire szükséges) a hierarchikus (rétegesen elemző) módszer – mert lehetővé teszi, hogy az elbeszélt történethez képest szemléletesen elhelyezhető legyen az elbeszélő (a történetszinttel szemben a szövegszintre helyezi a narrátort, ezzel világos választóvonalat húzva a történetbeli cselekvők [regényjellemek] és a narrátor ágensszerepe közé) –, az épp most észlelt „konfúzió”-t olyan narratológiai útjelzőnek és elméleti körülménynek érzékelem, mely túlmutat a strukturalista narratológián, a kontextuális, kognitív, kulturális és posztmodern narratológia irányába. És ezzel ez a körülmény arra hívja fel a figyelmet, hogy a strukturalista narratológiai diszkurzus, mint egyedüli és kizárólagos narratológiai eszköztár, nem elégséges Morrison *Dzsessz* narratívájának megfelelő elemzéséhez.

Az elbeszélő „mimézis” és „diegézis” narratológiai fogalmának metaforikus kiterjesztését javaslom tehát.[24] Abból indulok ki, hogy a kultúra egyik bevezetési módja a narrativába mimetikus (szó szerinti): tényleges dzsesszzenészek és dzsesszzene-számok lépnek be mimetikus dramatizálásokba, azaz válnak az elmesélt történet szereplőinek életében bizonyos epizódok részévé (találkozunk lemezmániákus szereplőkkel,[25] a „Harsona blues”-zal [34] és így tovább). És diegetikus közléssel van dolgunk, amikor a narrátor nem dramatizálja a kultúrát, hanem összefoglaló leírást ad róla, elbeszélő módban szól róla vagy valamely aspektusáról (a Városról/Harlemről, például – „Megőrülök ezért a városért” [14]). Ha Morrison narrátorát a kultúra/narratíva-találkozás helyeként fogjuk fel, és amit találunk egyszerre engedelmeskedik és mégis ellenáll a klasszikus narratológiai leírásnak, akkor viszont a narrátori pozíció mimetikus és diegetikus metaforicitása kétszeres metaforicitás, akár homogén, akár heterogén metaforikus átvitel révén. Hogy értendő ez?

**1.** Azt állítom ezzel, hogy a könyv dzsessznarrátora (a „dzsessznarrátor” önmagában megképezi az első metaforikus szintet) szöveget produkál (az elbeszélt történet és a megélt/dramatizált/elbeszélt kultúra szövegét), mely, többféle módon, a dzsesszzene építkezéséhez hasonló szerkezeti vonásokat mutat, ahhoz hasonló szerkesztési el-

24. Az alapdefiníciókat lásd Genette, „Az elbeszélő diszkurzus” 65.

25. Új szenvedélyről van szó, dzsesszfelvételek ekkor még csak néhány éve készülnek Amerikában.

vek szervezik (itt a második metaforikus szint). Az efféle narratológiai megállapítás két eltérő, mégis homogén metaforikus szintet rétegez egymásra, és az így keletkező tropológiai jelenség vertikális relációjú homogén metaforicitás (azaz két egynemű metafora vagy fogalmi átvitel egymás fölött: dzsesszlényegű narrátor hoz létre dzsessz-szerű szöveget).

**2.** Másrészt, ahogyan a narrátor-mint-dzsessz már önmagában a dzsesszzene metaforikus kiterjesztése, úgy a narratíva szövegszintjén elbeszélt kultúra mimetikusként illetve diegetikusként való kezelése is metaforikus ugrás a történetszint ágensfunkciójától a narrátori text(úra) szintjére. Amikor pedig összekapcsolom a kettőt, és arról beszélek, hogy narrátorunk mimetikusan vagy diegetikusan dolgozza fel számunkra a kultúrát, akkor két metaforát ötvözök, melyek két különböző (méghozzá heterogén) irányból tartanak egymás felé. Ez is vertikális metaforatársítás, ha a kettős metaforát hierarchikus szemlélettel nézzük, és az egymás fölötti elbeszélésszintekben való elhelyezkedését tekintjük; ám határozottan horizontális, ha magát a metaforaszerekezetet vesszük figyelembe.

A *Dzsessz* talán nem tartalmaz annyi, a *személyesülő* narrátorra (szöveg*személyre*) utaló szövegjelet, amennyit Marisa Bartoloussi és Peter Dixon elmélete erre az elbeszélőtípusra vonatkozóan elősorol,[26] de épp elég információhoz jutunk Morrison regényében ahhoz, hogy ez a „szereplő"-szerű narrátor közel kerüljön hozzánk. Emellett szól az elbeszélő etnikai hovatartozása, osztály-hovatartozása, faji alapú politikai kötődése, neme, indítékrendszere, nézetrendszere, másokhoz való viszonya, valamint verbális viselkedése. Igaz, hogy ennél tovább nem is terjed ezen körülmények elméleti használhatósága. A narrátor hangja ugyan meglehetősen személyes, „személyes *hang*"-ról mégsem beszélhetünk, hiszen ez a fogalom már foglalt, Susan Sniader Lanser narratológiájában, arra az elbeszélőre, aki tudatosan adja elő tulajdon (autodiegetikus) történetét.[27] A „közösségi hang" viszont, mely Lanser szerint „valamely meghatározható közösség által felruházott [...] narratív autoritás", analógfogalom-alkotás lehetőségét kínálja.[28] Minthogy a narrátorunkat megképző szövegjelek többsége kulturális természetű, a kultúra hangjaként foghatjuk fel elbeszélőnket, és hozzáadhatjuk a „kulturális hang"-ot Lanser szerzői, szemé-

26. Bertoloussi és Dixon, p. 64–65.

27. David H. Richter, szerk., *Narrative/Theory* (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1996), p. 190. ANZ kiemelése.

28. Susan Sniader Lanser, „Toward a Feminist Poetics of Narrative Voice," in Richter p. 192.

lyes és közösségi hangjához. Hiszen, még egyszer, a narrátor kultúraként olvasható narratív képződmény, a kultúra szövege; narratívakulturalizációs fogalmazásban: a kultúra generálja és performálja a narrátort.

## Narrato-kulturális felület és narrátori funkciók

Kultúra és narratíva érintkezési felületein kitapintható narrátori funkciók, melyeknek megvannak a szövegindikátorai a *Dzsesszben*: 1) a történetmondó, 2) a reflexív és 3) az önreflexív funkciók. Az elbeszélő nem egyszerűen 1) elbeszéli a történetet; a szöveg 2) szüntelenül árasztja a narrátor saját, gyakran igen szubjektív és ítélkező gondolatait a történetbeli cselekvőkre és eseményekre vonatkozóan. Nem titkolja előlünk a figurákkal és indítékaikkal kapcsolatos előítéleteit (mondjuk, arra vonatkozóan, amit a félőrült Violetről gondol azt követően, hogy Violet férje, Joe, megölte Dorcast; vagy a Vadóccal találkozó Golden Gray alakjának és motívumainak megragadhatóságát netán megragadhatatlanságát illető véleményét). De a mesemondó és elmélkedő (reflexív) narrátor 3) *narrátori szerepét tekintve* önreflexív is. Beavatja az olvasót a történet előadásának mikéntjére vonatkozó narrátori dilemmába (hogyan jeleníthető meg a hiány – a Vadócé, például). Meglepő mértékben képezik tudatos önvizsgálat tárgyát narrátori döntései, képessége, megbízhatósága vagy megbízhatatlansága is. Mi több, olvasóját a szöveguniverzumon belüli intratextuális (virtuális) hallgatójának („narratee"-jának) megtéve, ezáltal társként, sőt bizalmasaként maga mellé emelve – mintegy a küldő és a befogadó (a fikcionált világ és az elképzelt befogadói oldal) szövegplatformjai közt terpesztő magatartással –, egyszerre konstruálja és interpretálja a szövegi (lehetséges világbeli) kultúrát, ezáltal közvetíti és olvassa az aktuális világbeli kultúrát, egyszerre betöltve és kommentálva narrátori szerepét. Úgy is mondhatjuk, hogy egyszerre bizalmasunk és narrátorunk, aki az első (történetmondói) funkciót a második (az elmélkedő/reflexív funkció) előtérbe állításával tölti be, egyszersmind dramatizálva/tematizálva a harmadikat. Utóbbi pedig nem más, mint a narrátor tudatos bajlódása a történettel, fokalizátori[29] és elbeszélő-ágensi önreflexivitás. Metanarrátorrá válik tőle: az elbeszélő, aki igen erősen elbeszélői feladataival van elfoglalva.

29. Amennyiben ő a szövegszint fokalizátora, és amennyiben ő a történetvilágon belüli fokalizáció ágense.

Értelmetlen lenne mindezen elméleti belátások szövegbeli példáit kimerítően lajstromozni. Fejtegetéseimet mellékvágányra is futtatnám a talán nem annyira számos, de szisztematikus példák felvonultatásával. A dokumentáló hitelesítés (ha nem is kimerítő) gesztusa azonban elengedhetetlen valamely ponton. Legyen akkor ez az a pont.

Elemzési kötelességemnek úgy teszek eleget, hogy csatlakozom azok hosszú sorához, akik – ezer eltérő okból – a regény rendkívül izgalmas indító mondatát idézik: „Ó hogyne, ismerem azt az asszonyt" (9). Azért idézem, hogy megmutassam benne a morrisoni sűrítés zsenialitását, azt a ritka képességet, mely teleszkópszerűen öszetolja mindhárom narrátori funkciót – a történetmondóit, a reflexívet és az önreflexívet – egyetlen, rendkívül rövid nyitó mondattá. Ez a mondat, ráadásul, közösségi hangként lépteti fel a narrátort (etnikai identitását is érzékeltetve), nemi identitását a leghatározottabban felmutatva, diegetikus hangot megütve, valamint az elbeszélő extra- és heterodiegetikus pozícióját is sejtetve. Hogyan?

Az „Ó hogyne, ismerem azt az asszonyt" mindjárt belevág (diegetikusan) az elbeszélésbe (történetmondó narrátori funkció). Elvégre *Violet* az az asszony, az egyik főszereplő. Méghozzá nem is egyszerűen *in medias res* ugrunk fejest a történetbe, hanem a tragikus végkifejletet követően (annak az asszonynak a férje, Joe, megölte titkos szeretőjét, Dorcast, mielőtt a regény elkezdődik). Amikor az elbeszélő ezekkel a szavakkal belefog a mesélésbe, feltételezhető, hogy az adott afro-amerikai közösségről fest képet a könyv, hogy *ők* a szemantikai tér jelöltjei (a vélhetően női narrátor *ismeretségi köre*); ez a körülmény viszont nagy valószínűséggel magát a narrátort is azok sorába utalja, akiket „ismer", azok egyikét látjuk benne, vagyis afro-amerikait. Ha ismeri „azt az asszonyt" (Violetet, aki megjelenik Dorcas temetésén, hogy a ravatalon fekvő lány arcát összekaszabolja), narrátorunk *belül* van azon a közösségen, amelyikben mindez zajlik, ezáltal kétségkívül közösségi hang/kultúra szólal meg benne. A mondat pletykálkodó tónusánál még inkább a magyar fordító által feladott indító (indulat)szó ("ó hogyne" lett belőle), a „sth" az, ami *nőre* vall, amit csak nők mondanak. A magyar nyelvben a „figyelemfelkeltő pisszenésként" szolgáló „sz" áll hozzá a legközelebb,[30] esetleg az azonos jelentésű „pszt",[31] abban az értelemben, hogy „Sz [vagy: pszt], gyere csak ide", mondani akarok neked valamit. És ez a kezdő

30. Pusztai Ferenc, főszerkesztő, *Magyar értelmező kéziszótár*. 2. kiad. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2003), p. 1209.

31. Eőry Vilma, főszerkesztő, *Értelmező szótár* +. II. (Budapest: Tinta Kiadó, 2007), p. 1292.

narrátori beszédaktus mindjárt kettős töltetű. Egyrészt az olvasói figyelem megragadására szolgál: a minket bizalmába vonó illetve bizalmasunkként fellépő narrátor tüstént és direkt módon a mesét hallgató virtuális partnerként („narratee"), bizalmas útitársaként tart igényt az olvasóra (némileg a narrátori önreflexivitást is megelőlegezve), az elbeszélés világába belerántva és izgalmas történetet meg kulturális panorámát ígérő utazásra invitálva az olvasót. Ám a „sth" („sz")[32] helytelenítés kifejezésére is szolgálhat, leintő jellegű is lehet, mintegy a reflexív és ítélkező narrátor megnyilvánulásaként. A rövid kezdőmondat a mimetikus (dramatizáló) helyett diegetikus (elbeszélő) módban indít. Az elbeszélés aztán váltogatni fogja a kettőt, különféleképpen kombinálja, még a David Lodge által „pszeudodiegézis"-nek nevezett fogást is használja („nem jellem, hanem diszkurzus mimézise" – idézi Tally).[33] Az „Ó hogyne, ismerem azt a nőt" mintha azonnal extradiegetikus helyet jelölne ki az elbeszélő számára (a törénetvilág fölé helyezi), és talán heterodiegetikusat (nem tartozik a történet szereplői közé). „Mintha", merthogy, a narráció előrehaladásával mindkét elbeszélői pozíció változhat. Mellesleg, egyik sem fog, legfeljebb átdefiniálódnak a narrato-kulturális interszekció terében, amint arról már szóltam.

Úgy tetszik, elbeszélőnk egyenesen ugratja az olvasót – most már a regény egészére visszatérve – azzal, ahogyan az elbeszélői önreflexiót dramatizálja. A kultúravezérlésű meghatározó szempont, melyből a mesélőnek tulajdon meséjéhez való ambivalens viszonya (vagyis történetmondói szerepéhez való viszonya) ered: a kulturális valóság,[34] melyet meg kell jelenítenie. Utóbbinak lényege pedig az afro-amerikai létezés; mely viszont egyenlő a szétszórtsággal, hézagokkal, hiányokkal és diszkontinuitással. Kora huszadik századi afro-amerikai történetet elbeszélni, mely ráadásul annak a kultúrának is története, melynek közegében a szereplők élete zajlik, annyi, mint a hiány jelenlétét előadni, totalizálhatatlan komponensekből értelmet facsarni. Elbeszélőnkre az a feladat hárul, hogy felbecsülje, mi vezérli a fikcionált jellem egyéni gondolkodását, motivációs rendszerét és cselekedeteit, *ilyen társadalmi és kulturális környezetben.* A legnagyobb

32. Még inkább: „sz-sz" (rendszerint ereszkedő intonációval). A „pszt" erre már nem jó. Egyébként az egyforma hangerővel (és nem ereszkedően) ejtett „sz-sz" az oda hívó, oda hajlást kérő jelzésre is tökéletes – vagyis ez lett volna a fordító megoldása.

33. Justine Tally, *The Story of Jazz: Toni Morrison's Dialogic Imagination*, FORECAST 7. (Hamburg: LIT, 2001). p. 92.

34. A fikcionált jellemek számára az a fikcionált univerzum a valóság, amelyben léteznek.

kihívás az ilyen narrátori feladatban annak paradox jellege, akár kifejezett képtelensége. Nem csoda, ha az efféle mesélő legnagyobb gondja: hogyan is lássa el feladatát.

Ilyenképpen a fajgyűlölő világbeli afro-amerikai élet lesz az a kulturális (történelmi) adottság, mely a narrált szöveg szintjén az alapvető narrato-kulturális teret generálja. Az elbeszélés boltozatának ez a kulturális tartószerkezete sokkal meghatározóbb, mint az, hogy tartalmi szinten hányféle és miféle kulturális tartomány vagy kulturális részlettömeg tölti meg a regényt közvetve vagy közvetlenül. Ha a textus/kontextus interfészt a kulturális tartomány uralja, a fenti afro-amerikai sajátosság lesz e tartomány domináns régiója a *Dzsessz* narrato-kulturális terében. Ennek az interfésznek az összefüggésrendszere determinálja a szereplők karakteresített (internalizált) vagy közegesített kultúra által alakított sorsát.[35]

Generatív kulturalizációt érünk itt tetten. Ebben az interfészben generálódik ugyanis a „szövegben megképzett fikcionált világ" (ahogy Marie-Laure Ryannek a lehetséges-világok elméletét és a kognitív pszichológiát kombináló, „Cognitive Maps" c. írása nevezi),[36] vagy, jobban kibontó fogalmazással, a bizonytalanságok és hiányok, az emocionális instabilitás és pusztulás fikcionált szöveguniverzuma („textual/fictional universe"),[37] és abban megannyi sikeres és kudarcra ítélt túlélési stratégia.

Következésképpen, a kultúra az, ami több értelemben is, előadja (performálja) a történetet, a történet végsősoron a kultúra önnarráló performanciájának fogható fel: a narrátor közvetlenül közvetíti a kultúrát leírásokban, elbeszélői véleményekben és kiszólásokban; és közvetve is, a történetbe és a szereplőkbe zsúfolva. Mondhatni, a kultúra *írja*, *adja elő* a történetet, az elbeszélő ágensen keresztül. Sőt, a kultúra írja, állítja színpadra és adja elő (performálja) magát a narrátort – vagyis, performatív módon, maga lesz a narrátor. A narratíva kulturalizációjának performatív funkciója rejlik ebben, azaz, a kultúra performatív szerepet játszik a narratívában.

A dzsessz-mint-kultúra (a dzsesszben megnyilvánuló kultúra illetve a dzsessz-sajátosságok kultúrája) – hogy még egy futó pillantást vessünk a dzsessz-zenei kapcsolatra, anélkül, hogy elmerülnénk a rész-

35. A „karakteresített" és „közegesített kultúra"-ról lásd másik esszémet: „A trópus mint kulturalizációs narrativitás".

36. Marie-Laure Ryan, „Cognitive Maps and the Construction of Narrative Space," in Herman pp. 237–38.

37. Marie-Laure Ryan, „Possible Worlds and Accessibility Relations: A Semantic Typology of Fiction," *Poetics Today* 12.3 (1991), pp. 553–76.

letekben – az, aminek performatív funckiójához köthető a regényben a narratív polifónia, riff és improvizáció; a blues-szerű és gyors narratív ritmus, a legato és staccato narratív stílus. A dzsessz-zene nyilvánvalóan csak az egyik kulturális tartomány, melynek produkciója a *Dzsessz* című regény, de kétséget kizáróan a legfontosabb. James Lincoln Collier *Inside Jazz* („A dzsessz világán belül") sorraveszi a dzsessz-zene alaptulajdonságait. Nem hiszem, hogy tévedek, ha azt állítom, hogy a morrisoni narratíva ezen általános ismertetőjegyek mindegyikét magán viseli: a ritmust „maguk a hangok hozzák létre"; „az alapütem" mindig tisztán lüktet; „a dalritmust a dallam tulajdonképpen belülre zárja"; de a hangok beugranak a „taktusok közé" (szinkopálás), kicsit az ütem elé vagy mögé; és a dallam könnyen „megcsúszik vagy csúszkál az alatta lüktető ritmus fölött, ahelyett, hogy szilárdan együtt lenne vele"[38] (Erre és általában a dzsessz *Dzsessz*beli szerepére másutt fogok részletesen kitérni, mint azt fentebb említettem.)

Összességében véve narratívakulturalizációs belátások teszik számunkra lehetővé annak megértését, hogy Morrison narrátorának vacillációja (pl. milyennek ábrázoljam Goldan Grayt, ilyennek vagy olyannak?), ezek szerint, 1) maga az üzenet (a tabukkal megvert világ definiálhatatlansága: utóvégre Golden Gray fehér bőrű fekete ember a könyvben); 2) ugyanakkor – a fenti logikából eredő képletességgel szólva – az elbeszélői improvizációs ösztön megnyilvánulása is a narratív „dzsesszelőadásban" (dzsesszperformanciában). Tegyünk hozzá valamit, aminek legalább ennyire szerves köze van a narrátori tehetetlenséghez, egyben pedig a legközvetlenebbül „meta"-szempont az elbeszélői gondot illetően: az idők, melyekben az afro-amerikaiak élnek, és az élet, amelyet élnek, frusztrálják az elbeszélői próbálkozásokat, összezavarják vagy félresöprik az örökölt narrátori reflexeket. Destabilizálják az elbeszélői önbizalmat, problematizáltatják a narrátorral tulajdon narrátori szerepét, és megkérdőjelezik megbízhatóságát.

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38. James Lincoln Collier, *Inside Jazz* (New York: Four Winds, 1973), pp. 16–19.

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# The Order of Chaos
## in Cormac McCarthy, *No Country for Old Men*

*Gabriella Vő́ő*

> What but design of darkness to appall?
> If design govern in a thing so small.
> —Robert Frost, "Design" (1936)[1]

Fugitive from police, in pursuit of his next victim and a satchel of money, the killer Anton Chigurh stops at a filling station near Sheffield, South Texas. He makes a phone call, pays his bill, buys a packet of cashew nuts and, while chewing at it, engages in an ominous conversation with the proprietor. The scene occurs in the second of the novel's thirteen chapters: by this time the reader has become sufficiently familiar with the ways and methods of the killer to envisage a bleak future for the store keeper. Chigurh murdered the deputy sheriff at Sonora as well as the owner of the white Ford pickup he is now driving, so one expects him to turn the filling station into another scene of murder and havoc. The killer, however, offers an alternative, one that allows chance to determine the outcome. He tosses a quarter-dollar coin and invites the uneasy store keeper to call head or tail, the stake being the latter's "whole life" (56).[2] The call—head—is correct. The store keeper lives, Chigurh hands the "lucky coin" over to him, and sums up the ominous logic of the incident that has just come to pass: "Well, you say. It's just a coin. For instance. Nothing special there. What could [the coin] be an instrument of? You see the problem. To separate the act from the thing" (57). Indeed, what power is acting through the randomness of the coin toss? The quandary recalls the open-ended sestet of Robert Frost's "Design," a sonnet exploring the dark principles and powers underlying the contingencies of nature. The pervading concern, throughout the novel, with the rules of randomness, with understanding the incomprehensible, and foresight of the unforeseeable suggests that the novel explores the principles of order underlying both the natural and the human processes.

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1. Robert Frost, *Collected Poems, Prose, and Plays* (New York: The Library of America, 1995), p. 275.

2. All parenthesized references are to this edition: Cormac McCarthy, *No Country for Old Men* (New York: Vintage, 2005).

The plot of *No Country for Old Men* (2005), a masterly blend of the western novel, the thriller and the cautionary tale, unfolds with the inevitability of ancient Greek tragedy. Terrible events and forces are unleashed when a drug transaction goes wrong on the US-Mexican border in South Texas. A shooting affray leaves all the participants dead, drug and drug money momentarily unclaimed. A pastime hunter, Llewelyn Moss accidentally discovers the spot, finds the satchel with the two million dollars and decides to keep it. Soon a host of pursuers are trailing him: two rival drug trafficking organizations, the killer Anton Chigurh, and Ed Tom Bell, the Sheriff of Terrell County, Texas. These three, sheriff, killer and fugitive, are interlocked in a pattern of mutual dependence. Moss carries the money and runs for his life; Chigurh is after the money and Moss; Sheriff Bell sets out to save Moss and catch the criminal. These three individuals, as they rapidly move around in the border area, constantly reconstruct and predict the course and actions of one another, and adjust their own plans accordingly. The book's evident preoccupation with the logic underlying randomness and contingency, as well as Cormac McCarthy's own note of appreciation to the Santa Fé Institute—an independent research center devoted to the study of complex systems—invites the application of chaos theory for an interpretation of the novel.[3] My essay proposes a reading of *No Country for Old Men* that takes into account some of chaos theory's key concepts to address issues of randomness, order and predictability.

Although the dictionary definition of chaos is "complete disorder and confusion,"[4] modern science applies the term to describe the principles and operations at work in complex systems. The latter are described in different words in different disciplines: as dynamical structures and non-linear systems in physics, mathematics and biology,[5] or as "living systems in process" in psychology.[6] The term "chaos" in modern science is applied to denote indeterminacy, and

3. Aaron Gwyn, "Review of *No Country for Old Men* by Cormac McCarthy," *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 25.3 (Fall 2005), p. 138.

4. *New Oxford American Dictionary* Second edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

5. Sally Goerner, "Chaos, Evolution, and Deep Ecology," in *Chaos Theory in Psychology and the Life Sciences*, ed. Robin Robertson (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), 17–38, p. 22; Garnett P. Williams, *Chaos Theory Tamed* (Washington, D.C.: Joseph Henry, 1997), p. 9.

6. Bud A. McClure, *Putting a New Spin on Groups: The Science of Chaos* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005), p. 27.

the impossibility to make long-term predictions.[7] Also, chaos is defined as a "sustained and disorderly-looking long-term evolution [...] that occurs in a deterministic non-linear system."[8] Chaos theory goes beyond the paradigms of the Newtonian universe and accounts for the functioning of systems with a degree of complexity that apparently preclude order and predictability. Such is the world we face in Cormac McCarthy's novel, where seemingly insignificant incidents have unpredictable consequences, processes lead to bifurcations that provoke decisions. We see erratic-looking events slowly develop into trends, but we cannot be sure where these trends lead to.

*No Country for Old Men* is a novel about a world in disarray: escalation in drug-related crime and the surge of extreme violence in the US-Mexico border area, in the summer of 1980. In this troubled region the networks of civil society, the drug business and law enforcement are intertwined in a dynamical system that functions according to laws and principles not immediately discernible. Change happens very slowly, and new patterns are becoming visible only after long-term observation. Such patterns are illuminated by the interpolated monologues of Sheriff Bell, the reflective consciousness in the novel, although not the mouthpiece of the author. His italicized stream-of-consciousness commentaries[9] introducing the novel's chapters create structural order in the narrative and also dramatize the quest for the principles or order underlying the apparent randomness of events. The elderly sheriff keeps evidence of the lives of ordinary people in his district. He confronts on a daily basis the drug business that has become part of everyday life by infiltrating and corrupting it. Finally, he faces criminals and tries to read their minds and motivations. However, the visible surface of daily life offers few, if any, clues to make out the governing laws of the deep. The sheriff has a painful sense of failure and powerlessness when facing an evil he cannot comprehend, much less emend: "Well, all of that is signs and wonders but it don't tell you how it got that way. And it don't tell you nothing about how it's fixin to get, neither" (295–96). What he does know, though, is that the world around him changed radically during his lifetime. Trying to make sense of the ordinariness of once

7. Trinh Xuan Thuan, *Chaos and Harmony: Perspective on Scientific Revolutions of the Twentieth Century*, Trans. Axel Reisinger (New York: Oxford UP, 2004), p. 66.

8. Williams, p. 9.

9. Sheriff Bell's stream-of-consciousness passages are italicized in the novel. However, his words are not italicized in the dialogues. Quotations from the novel follow the original typography.

inconceivable brutality—a young boy killing his fourteen-year-old girlfriend on an impulse (3), a mother putting her baby in the trash contractor (40), a couple making old people wear dog collars and then torturing them to death (124) –, Sheriff Bell wonders whether the very essence of crime has changed, and criminals now belong to an entirely new "kind." "Who the hell are these people?" he asks, and then admits he has no clue: "I don't know. I used to say they were the same ones my granddaddy had to deal with. Back then they was rustling cattle. Now they're running dope. But I don't know as that's true no more. Their kind. I don't know what to do about them even. If you killed them all they'd have to build an annex to hell" (79). Sheriff Bell perceives that changes for the worse do not simply add up to make the world even more flawed and dysfunctional, but have caused it to transform into an entirely different entity.

The sense of the ordinariness and constancy of life comes from its repetitive character. Time is measured by repetitive patterns, and it is to repetition, or iteration, that we owe the notion of time. Iteration is the dynamic process that lies at the heart of chaos and, according to the theorist, "produces sequence and gives rise to the complexity of pattern that forms the world we perceive."[10] Systems of high complexity can function for a long period of time in an orderly way, according to deterministic laws that make subsequent changes predictable. The recurrence of motions and patterns in a complex system can be the basis of a delicate equilibrium that is, however, easily unsettled by the least significant incident. Henri Poincaré, the father of chaos theory, pointed out in a study in 1908: "A cause so small as to escape us can have a considerable effect which we cannot see; we then declare that the effect is due to chance. [...] There are situations when small differences in the initial conditions can produce very large ones in the final result [...]. In those cases, predictions become impossible."[11] Thus, a small change in one of the variables of the system overruns predictability, triggers chaos, and finally produces a different system. Characters in *No Country for Old Men* keep inquiring when and how their orderly routines have become derailed. It is Llewelyn Moss who best captures the strange logic of things gone awry: "Three weeks ago I was a law abiding citizen. Workin a nine to five job. Eight to four, anyways. Things happen to you they happen. They don't ask first. They don't require your

10. Richard J. Bird, *Chaos and Life: Complexity and Order in Evolution and Thought* (New York: Columbia UP, 2003), p. 236.

11. Quoted in Thuan, p. 66.

permission" (220). One may wonder which was the moment when the iterative life of Moss offered itself to chance and change. Was it when he picked up the satchel full of money at the shooting scene in the caldera? Or later, when he went back to the scene to give water to a dying man, and was seen by gang members? Or earlier, when he was seen by the antelope, shot and missed, and then set out in its trail? The possibility of first causes is endless and impossible to pin down. What we do know is that the effect of chance, or error, in Moss's life results in an accelerated, erratic course of events. In an attempt to escape with the money he tries, and for a time succeeds in outwitting two criminal organizations and the killer Anton Chigurh.

The study of predictability in modern chaos theory began with the study of repetitions and regularities. Part of Poincaré's work addressed the predictability of the cyclical movement of bodies, the monitoring of recurrence with the help of the "section," and making predictions of alterations in their course on the "return map." The Poincaré section is an imaginary plane, like a sheet of paper, transverse to the individual trajectories of bodies in motion. The plane cuts through the paths of the trajectories of bodies which leave a mark on the plane each time they return.[12] The map is the representation of these marks in a chronological order that shows the tendency of changes in the bodies' trajectories.[13] Some of the key scenes in *No Country for Old Men* resemble these sections and maps. Sparse and minimalistic in style, the novel includes several matter-of-fact descriptions of landscapes, city scenes and rooms, all crime scenes which the major characters have visited and left their marks on. Such are the shooting scenes in the caldera where the drug transaction goes wrong and leaves all the participants dead; the hotel and the street in Del Rio where Moss and Chigurh fire at each other, and finally the motel at El Paso where Chigurh kills Moss. In these scenes Llewelyn Moss, Anton Chigurh and Sheriff Bell make their successive appearances, survey and observe the details, and process information in order to reconstruct past occurrences and predict future probabilities. But these scenes acquire real relevance as Poincaré maps when, in each of them, one of the characters returns and makes his second mark. By analyzing their successive traces one can draw conclusions and make predictions about their trajectories. The motivation that brings them back to the spot for the second time elucidates the repetitive patterns in their lives and attitudes, in plain

12. Williams, pp. 248–249.
13. Williams, p. 257.

words, their character. Moss returns to the caldera massacre scene to bring water to a dying man. His act of mercy shows that he is not beyond redemption, but his recklessness foreshadows his vulnerability. Chigurh turns up at the Del Rio scene twice, the second time when he corners and murders another hired killer, Carson Wells. His calculated ruthlessness is already familiar to the reader. Here, however, in the conversation with Wells, he drops an important clue about himself: "You think I'm like you. That it's just greed. But I'm not like you. I live a simple life" (177). Chigurh has no ordinary weak points, no mundane goals, he is the quintessential killer, his motivation to kill being an end in itself. Sheriff Bell returns to the El Paso motel shooting motivated by a sense of duty and concern for Moss, whom he was not able to protect. Earlier, speaking to Moss's wife Carla Jean, he summed up his reason for being in one of his characteristic understatements: "The people of Terrell County hired me to look after them. That's my job. I get paid to be the first one hurt. Killed, for that matter. I'd better care" (133). The key scenes help the reader to assess the characters, and elucidate their place in the larger perspective of the novel: how a decision can make one the plaything of hazard, the steady persistence of evil, and the powerlessness of good in a world thrown off course.

At a plain level, the three major characters of the novel may be regarded as constants that repeat themselves in time like the movement of the planets. In order to model and address essential characteristics of chaos, McCarthy all but flattens Moss, Chigurh and Bell into representative types to the extent that Lydia R. Cooper, for example, sees them as folktale figures, entities emerging from a Pandora's box.[14] Indeed, throughout the narrative the characters' initially established functions and traits will be reinforced and amplified, not developed. As the plot progresses, readers will achieve a greater understanding of the types they represent. Llewelyn Moss and Anton Chigurh, fugitive and pursuer, will not evolve psychologically, and the camera-eye narration does not permit any insight into their consciousness anyway. Sheriff Bell, the novel's reflecting character, does not change in his essence either, although his awareness and ability to articulate his view of life will grow progressively. McCarthy's interest lies in something other than character psychology. The intricacy of the world gradually unfolding before us suggests that his ambition

14. Lydia R. Cooper, " 'He's a Psychopathic Killer, but So What?': Folklore and Morality in Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*," *Papers on Language and Literature* 45.1 (Winter 2009) 37–59, p. 44.

is to make revelations about the awesome powers at work beneath visible surfaces. The sheer immensity of this objective effectively transforms the characters from allegorical representations of abstract entities into symbols, which places the novel in the tradition of English and American Romanticism. Cormac McCarthy shares the Romantic interest in how "God manifests itself to sense through symbolic forms."[15] *Moby-Dick*, an obvious intertext for many of McCarthy's novels, dramatizes such an epistemological and ontological exploration in Pip's immersion into "wondrous depths" where he takes a glimpse of "God's foot upon the treadle of the loom."[16] Such a vision of the world as the manifestation of a holistic order, a system constantly in motion, governed by forces temporarily or permanently hidden from the observing human eye, is a definition of chaos by means of literary expression.

The distillation of characters into symbol, however, does not mean that in the perspective of *No Country for Old Men* free will is ruled out. If we have in view the definition of chaos as a dynamic system generated by iteration,[17] free will functions as the small variable which overturns the initial order and pushes the system toward chaos. This, in turn, is not to be imagined as complete disorder, but as a system that follows an order that is radically different from the one operating in its previous phase. Moss's choice, governed by free will, to pick up the two and a half million dollars of drug money, turned him, an ordinary working man, into a fugitive. His eight-to-four routine was transformed into one of watching, hiding, and running. Although he is not a reflecting character—we have no access to his consciousness—we have reason to intimate that the motivation behind his choice was to take control over his life. What is the essence of human aspiration if not to acknowledge the processes of this world, yet to wish we were able to transcend them? Acting as if we were not subordinated to its regularities, but could become agents able to bring about change? These are desires we can recognize as our own, which may win our sympathy for this humane but pathetic character. Yet the death of Moss, well before the novel comes to an end, has a sobering effect. We may even share the prescience of his wife Carla Jean's grandmother: "I knowed this is what it would come to. [...] Three years ago, she said. You didn't have to have no dream about it.

15. Aladár Sarbu, *The Study of Literature* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2008), p. 99.

16. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick, or, the Whale* (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1988), p. 414.

17. Bird, p. 5.

No revelation nor nothing. [...] Anybody could of told you the same thing" (201–2). But the quandaries tackled in the novel do not end here. McCarthy proposes a more complex and rigorous approach to the problem of order, free will or choice and predictability dramatized by the two remaining major characters, Anton Chigurh and Sheriff Bell. Both of them inquire into the nature of the world they live in, have a distinctive vision of it, and articulate the principles they live by.

McCarthy acknowledges the greatness of those writers only who "deal with issues of life and death."[18] This gives us enough reason to look for the significance of the man of the law and the killer as characters associated with life and death as existential opposites. In their perseverance, meticulous care for order and high degree of awareness Chigurh and Bell are counterparts, mirror images, opposite and complementary figures, almost inviting to be labeled as the man of Satan and the man of God. The two entities, God and Satan, frequently turn up in the novel that foregrounds, in the characters' speech, the religious register of the Southwest. We can easily imagine an interpretation that explains the figures of Chigurh and Bell as diabolic and angelic, or rather damned and redeemable characters, metaphysical and moral opposites. An equally valid interpretation, however, offers itself if we choose to see the two characters as symbolic representations of two essentially different epistemologies, two different interpretations of order: one that perceives order as a mechanism, and another that recognizes it as chaos.

In order to put forth a hypothesis about the place of Chigurh in the perspective of the novel I will focus on the last murder scene, the one in which he kills Llewelyn Moss's wife. Coming home from her grandmother's funeral in Odessa, Texas, Carla Jean finds the killer waiting in her bedroom. A sense of inevitability and strict determinism pervades the scene from the beginning. "I knowed this wasn't done with," the young woman remarks. "Smart girl" (254), comes the reply. Predictability and rules are important to Anton Chigurh who sees the lives of others and his own as a process governed by strict, linear causality. He finds pleasure in making it clear to Carla Jean that the events of her life have inevitably led to her death right here and now: "When I came into your life your life was over. It had a middle, a beginning, and an end. This is the end. You can say that things [...] could have been some other way. But what does that

18. Quoted in Richard B. Woodward, "Cormac McCarthy's Venomous Fiction," *The New York Times on the Web* (19 Apr. 1992). Access: 12 Apr, 2010. Web.

mean? They are not some other way. They are this way. You're asking that I second say the world" (260). Chigurh has a perverse penchant to lecture his victims: he did so with Moss through the phone, with Wells at the hotel in Del Rio, and with the CEO of one of the drug businesses in Houston. Now he tells Carla Jean that he will shoot her to honor the promise he made to her husband. The fact that Moss is dead is irrelevant: "But my word is not dead. Nothing can change that" (255). The killer cannot resist making an ironic comment on the transcendental power of his word, and adds: "Even a nonbeliever might find it useful to model himself after God" (256). Perverse as the reasoning may be, it has a chilling logic and a Platonic context. Anton Chigurh seeks to embody a primal form. He entirely identifies with the notion of the ideal killer, one that is not just the name of an occupation, but the embodiment of an essence. With this, however, he reduces the complexity of reality to its clockwork model.

Carla Jean recognizes this reductionism and interprets it in her own terms, quite accurately, as heartlessness. To be the embodiment of the perfect killer does not leave room for mercy. Chigurh rejects the young woman's plea to spare her life on the grounds that this would not be consistent with his performed identity: "I have only one way to live. It doesn't allow for special cases." The only allowance he makes is to the principle of chance: "A coin toss perhaps" (259). Carla Jean calls the coin, loses, and is shot without further ceremony. The killer's simple life, lack of ambition or interest in money, as well as his reduction of the world's—and human beings'—complexities to an either-or mechanism are elements of his strategy to keep his life low-key, manageable, and predictable. Chigurh is careful to keep his world within the range of Newtonian determinism, under full control. However, he disregards the possibility that there may be other forces, mighty or insignificant, operating in the world. The butterfly-wings of randomness are unsettling, nay, second-saying his system's equilibrium, and he himself is subject to the whim of life's variables. Right after the murder of Carla Jean, at an intersection, young Mexican men high on dope crash into the killer's car, injuring him gravely though not fatally.

The ambitions of Sheriff Bell are much more humble than those of Anton Chigurh. He does not pretend to be fully in control of the situations he finds himself in, or even imagine the logic governing them. Sheriff Bell is aware that even a lifetime is too short to discern the structures that define lived experience: "I tried to put things in perspective but sometimes you're just too close to it. It's a life's work

to see yourself for what you really are and even then you might be wrong" (295). Acknowledging that his powers are limited and his understanding only approximate, perhaps inaccurate, leads Bell towards the recognition and acceptance of chaos. First he perceives chaos as disarray and disorder, but later he learns to see it as complexity. First, he arrives at a deeper awareness of principles of order within chaos. By this he restores, on the one hand, his identity and inner balance and, on the other hand, clarifies his perception of good and evil.

Bell's identity is modeled on that of his grandfather, uncle, and father: he is a person who takes care of the people of Terrell County. This self-image is marred by a memory of a failure which the Sheriff nevertheless has come to terms and learnt to live with. The experience concerns his Second World War medal he feels to be undeserved. During the war, somewhere in the European theater, after holding a position for a whole day alone, Bell left his squad of dead and mortally wounded men behind and ran for safety. The memory of his inadequacy and sense of guilt have haunted him since: "If I was supposed to die over there doin what I'd give my word to do then that's what I should of done [...] I should of done it and I didn't" (278). And yet Bell, unlike Chigurh, does not see the incidents of life as a chain of events bound by rigid determinism. However much he suffers from the memory of his inadequacy—he confesses he "didn't know you could steal your own life" (278)—he has learned to live with the burden of it. Rather than applying his rational mind to build sequences of linear causality, he uses his imagination to restore the wholeness of his inner world. The Sheriff makes an effort to relieve his long-time anxieties, his troubling memories from the war and his present encounters with violent crime by visiting his uncle and talking things over with him. The regenerative power of his love for Loretta, his wife helps him rise above his sense of failure both in the past and in the present. Finally, he mentally transcends the boundaries of time: he frequently evokes the memory of his father, his role model and guide in ambiguous situations—"I know what he would of done" (279)—and in his imagination he talks to his daughter who "would be thirty now" (285), and who died long ago.

His bafflement at the intensity of evil in human beings pushes Sheriff Bell towards the acceptance, although not yet a personal experience, of spirituality. "The world I've seen has not made me a spiritual person. Not like [Loretta]. She worries about me, too" (303), he contends. And yet, as we progress with the novel we see the emergence, in Bell's mind, of a perspective that Peter Ainslie defines as "a

theology of the imagination [that] encapsules chaos, takes it into itself, and emerges with a creative and almost flexible approach to God."[19] It is easy to miss the signs of a growing spiritual awareness because the Sheriff tends to express himself in concise understatements. He avoids, for instance, the word "faith," but manages to approach it in a roundabout way through the notion of "truth": "I think that when the lies are all told and forgot the truth will be there yet." Then he adds: "I've heard it compared to a rock—maybe in the bible—and I wouldn't disagree with that" (123). Bell's cautious groping for some kind of spiritual order is articulated in the register of his childhood memories related to formal religion, which he applies only half-seriously: "I always thought when I got older that God would sort of come into my life in some way" (267), and "I feel I need to familiarize myself with [the devil's] habits" (299).The Sheriff perceives the duality of good and evil but accepts both without much fuss, realizing that both pertain to life's infinite complexity. He comes to terms with perennial fluctuation between disarray and balance, that is, he accepts world as chaos.

Bell acknowledges that evil is a palpable presence in the world. Although he never meets Chigurh and thinks of him as "a ghost" (299), he recognizes him as a living manifestation of the principle of evil which he refuses to confront. Soon after Chigurh kills Carla Jean, Bell decides to quit his job as sheriff. One may wonder whether the decision to step down is the acknowledgment of his failure. After all, he has always seen his life as a mission to take care of the people in his county. Bell himself definitely feels stepping down to be a "defeat," and "being beaten" (305). However, another reason behind the decision to quit may be the Sheriff's awareness, expressed very early in the novel, that by standing up to evil face to face "a man would have to put his soul at hazard. And I wont do that. I think now that maybe I never would" (4). Bell recognizes he must set a limit to how far he goes in battling crime that has become so violent he cannot even comprehend. Standing up successfully against evil may require waging the battle on evil's own terms, and the Sheriff refuses to do that. Instead, he reaches out for a point of orientation in the world he now accepts as chaos. He evokes this point of orientation in his imagination. The episode occurs in the novel's last, thirteenth stream-of-consciousness passage. In a dream Bell sees his father

19. Peter Ainslie, "Chaos, Psychology, and Spirituality," in *Chaos Theory in Psychology and the Life Sciences*, ed. Robin Robertson (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), 309–317, p. 311.

riding in the mountains, carrying fire in a horn: "And in the dream I knew that he was goin ahead and that he was fixin to make afire somewhere out there in all that dark and all that cold and I knew that whenever I got there he would be there" (309). The experience can be interpreted either as personal and psychological, or as transcendental. One may, if this is consistent with one's individual world view, see Bell's "father" as a symbol of God the Father, and interpret the fire in the horn as the mystical fire that leads the way out of the darkness of one's soul. Another interpretation, equally valid, would read the dream vision as the transportation of memory into the present, an effacement of the laws of linear temporality in Bell's experience of the world as chaos. In both readings, the past is not only a source of failure and frustration for Bell, but one of hope, which is not quite triumph, but for Ed Tom Bell it will do.

The title of the novel, *No Country for Old Men*, comes from the first line of William Butler Yeats's poem "Sailing to Byzantium." The wish the poet-speaker makes at the end of the poem—to speak in the voice of pure art of "What is past, passing, or to come"[20]—sums up the ambition of the novel. By means of art, Cormac McCarthy managed to frame chaos. His powerful novel opens a window on the dynamic and holistic order governing the universe and our existence. It asks questions about what logic and what powers bring forth unexpected events which nevertheless appear to be orchestrated by major forces not only beyond human control, but outside the human ken. The novel suggests that coming to terms with this mystery means accepting chaos in the sense of the unstable combinations of indefiniteness, uncertainty, and unpredictability implicit in human life.

20. William Butler Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium," *The Collected Works*. Vol. 1: *The Poems* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 193–194, p. 194.

# "Listening for the Sound of Faraway"

## Displacement in Recent Hungarian-Canadian Literature

*János Kenyeres*

Commenting on the Hungarian-Canadian author John Marlyn's novel, *Under the Ribs of Death*, Neil Bissoondath accurately observes: "Displacement, the absence of belonging and the search for it, is a major feature of the twentieth century. And Canada, haven to so many, is a major part of that story."[1] It is no wonder, therefore, that Canadian ethnic literatures often reveal aspects of displacement and the desire to belong while they also aspire to portray individuality stemming from some sense of difference, which, in an ideal case, is accepted and even welcomed by the receiving society. Hungarian-Canadian literature is no exception in this regard, one of its distinctive features being the particular individual experiences rooted in collective history.

Though there is no way to know precisely when the first Hungarian literary work was written in Canada, it can be assumed with some certainty that Hungarian-Canadian literature dates back to the late-19th century, the first Hungarian farming communities in Saskatchewan. The first specific date available is 1902, the year when János Szatmári finished his biographical epic in Whitewood, Saskatchewan, whose abridged version, entitled "A préri éneke" [The Song of the Prairie], was published in 1989.[2] The first collection of Hungarian poems written in Canada was published in 1919 under the title *Mezei virágok* [*Prairie Flowers*]. There is general agreement, however, that literature as an art form with aesthetic value essentially emerged only after the Second World War, especially following the massive influx of immigrants to Canada in the aftermath of the 1956 revolution.[3]

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1. Neil Bissoondath, "Afterword," in John Marlin, *Under the Ribs of Death* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), 261–263, p. 262.

2. Cf. John Miska, *Magyar irodalom Kanadában*, 5 May 2010 <http://www.johnmiska.com/magyar-irodalom-kanadaban.htm>.

3. Cf. George Bisztray, "Introduction," in *Blessed Harbours: An Anthology of Hungarian-Canadian Authors*, ed. John Miska (Toronto, Buffalo, Chicago, Lancaster: Guernica, 2002), 15–17, p. 15.

The first comprehensive book on Hungarian-Canadian literature was published by George Bisztray in 1987, offering a survey of its history and focussing on the socio-psychological profile of the Hungarian-Canadian writer. John Miska's book-length study, *Literature of Hungarian Canadians,* published in 1992, discusses 750 literary entries, works by almost 100 authors who had put out individual volumes. This is a remarkable quantity compared to the other ethnic literatures of Canada or of other countries for that matter.[4] Impressive as these numbers are, the quality of literature always ranks above quantity. In a multinational country with over 150 different nationalities, a considerable number of them with their own literature, it is only quality that truly matters. The literary merits of certain Hungarian-Canadian authors, whose works have been written in or translated into English or French, made their literary output accessible to a wider Canadian readership, such as poet George Faludy, and fiction writers John Marlyn and Stephen Vizinczey, whose novels, *Under the Ribs of Death* (1957) and *In Praise of Older Women* (1965), respectively, became bestsellers in the new homeland, the latter also serving as the basis for the screenplay of a blockbuster film made in 1978, and recently enjoying a renaissance, with translations into French, Italian and Spanish, among other languages.[5] The *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*, published in 2002, contains individual entries for ten Hungarian-Canadian writers: Tamas Dobozy, George Faludy, John Hirsch, George Jonas, John Marlyn, Bela Szabados, George H. Szanto, Eva Tihanyi, Stephen Vizinczey, and Robert Zend. The past decades have witnessed the emergence of a number of literary anthologies, potentially reaching a wider circle of readers. In Canada two English language anthologies were published, *The Sound of Time* in 1972 and *Blessed Harbours* in 2002, both edited by John Miska. In Hungary, *Üzen az ág. Kanadai magyar irók antológiája [The Message of the Branch. An Anthology of Hungarian-Canadian Writers]* was published in Hungarian in 1989, whereas the bilingual volume, *Crystal Garden/Kristálykert,* containing poems by English-Canadian poets and three Hungarian-Canadian poets, appeared in 2001.

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4. Cf. John Miska, *Magyar irodalom Kanadában*, 7 May 2010 <http://www.johnmiska.com/magyar-irodalom-kanadaban.htm >

5. Cf. Katalin Kürtösi, "Revisiting 1956—Canada the 'Blessed Harbour' for Hungarian Writers," in *Imaginative Spaces: Canada in the European Mind, Europe in the Canadian Mind*, ed. Judit Molnár (Brno: Masaryk University, 2009), 153–158, p. 153.

In addition to the above anthologies, individual volumes of prose and poetry have also been published in the past few years, such as Tamás Dobozy's novel, *Doggone* (1998), focussing on the theme of first generation Hungarian immigrant experience in Canada, and *Last Notes* (2005), a collection of short stories. Anna Porter, founder of Key Porter Books, published the fictional work *The Storyteller* in 2007 and the non-fictional *Kaszner's Train* in 2008, both concerning Hungary's past. Joseph Kertes's novel *Gratitude*, drawing its plot from the holocaust of Hungarian Jews, was also published in 2008.

The past, as reflected in memory and created by the imagination, explicitly appears in the work of a number of Hungarian-Canadian authors. The two decisive historical events still haunting the minds of these authors is the Second World War and the 1956 revolution, these cataclysms often intermingling with the representation of the immigrant's lot. In what follows I will focus on some representative works of the recent past as examples to show the ways in which Hungarian-Canadian literature mirrors the social, historical and psychological aspects of immigrant experience as appearing in the evocation of the old or new homeland.

Tamás Dobozy is a second-generation Hungarian-Canadian who was born and raised in British Columbia. His prose engages in a wide-variety of styles, from pop culture through metafiction to absurdity. Known as the writer of the novel *Doggone*, in recent years he has been primarily interested in the short story form, his themes often revolving around immigrant experience, loneliness and dislocation. As J. Russel Perkin notes, "His best stories have an imaginative richness that makes them seem like compressed novels, evoking complex worlds."[6] 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 the first person narrator. In these short stories Dobozy's speaker is trying to explore his family's past. This past is obscure, laden with impenetrable mystery, which the narrator nevertheless persistently tries to unravel and understand.

In "Tales of Hungarian Resistance," the narrator is desperately trying to piece together his grandfather's role in a group of Hungarian resistance fighters, the Secret Hungarian Union, formed in 1944—but which, as he puts it, was "a group of partisans either invented by

6. J. Russell Perkin, "Problematic Relations," in *Canadian Literature* 189 (Summer 2006) 155–157, p. 156.

my grandfather or imagined by the Nazis."[7] The outset of the story contains additional disconcerting statements; the grandfather is arrested by agents of the fascist Arrow Cross Party at a butcher shop which is known only to "an extremely exclusive, violent and black-shirted clientele."[8] If the grandfather is a partisan, how come he was arrested there, the reader may ask. This uncertainty is further complicated by the comments of the narrator's grandmother, constantly negating the grandfather's self-proclaimed heroism:

> For instance when he [grandfather] described the Andrássy út prison—his wasted body, his bare and bleeding feet, his shaved head—she would say, "You were as fat and pampered as a pig for slaughter." When he recalled how he'd talked and talked, feeding the Nazis long strings of misinformation, she'd turn and say, "You gave them everything they wanted, and so they gave you clean carpet slippers and roast turkey and all the potatoes you could stuff into your gullet." And when he repeated, for the two hundredth time, how he had beaten the most skilled interrogator in the history of Hungary, she would turn away, shaking her head: "You became his best friend."[9]

Dobozy uses a multi-faceted style, combining elements of romanticism, realism and absurdity, saturated with an acute sense of humour. The investigation by the narrator into what actually happened gives rise to the supposition that his grandfather was in fact a traitor, betraying the resistance group and ultimately responsible for the death of the narrator's parents. But neither the narrator nor the reader can be sure. We do not have definite answers—history cannot be assembled with certainty from the broken pieces gathered during the recollections. It is only the ambiguity that remains.

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 or 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

7. Tamas Dobozy, "Tales of Hungarian Resistance," in *Last Notes and Other Stories* (Toronto: Harper Perennial 2005), 1–15, p. 1.

8. Dobozy, "Tales," p. 1.

9. Dobozy, "Tales," p. 5.

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. We learn that Gyöngyi, the daughter of one of the uncles, Gyuri, starts dating with an exchange student from China, provoking absolute shock from Gyuri:

> Within months, Gyöngyi and Li Peng were married at the Vancouver Hungarian Cultural Centre, the whole thing paid for by Gyuri, who walked among the milling crowds of confused Asians and Hungarians as a holy man might along a path of nails, the difference being that Gyuri's coolness was the result of such self-control it was not coolness at all but rather a kind of psychological fascism.[10]

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 narrator comments on the uncles:

> 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.[11]

All this culminates in the uncle's complete isolation from the outside world, the narrator, who is in fact the fourth uncle in the story, being the only one who, through a self-admitted act of crime, is unable to break away from them emotionally, or more accurately, from their image in his memory as a "light" during his arduous escape from Hungary.

Dobozy's story, "The Inert Landscapes of György Ferenc," is a powerfully written narrative about a Hungarian immigrant painter who is incapable of finding inspiration in Canadian landscapes and forces himself to create art by giving his Canadian paintings Hungarian geographical names. For him Canada is a big void, which can be most

10. Tamas Dobozy, "Four Uncles," in *Last Notes*, 28–48, p. 35.
11. Dobozy, "Four Uncles," pp. 37–38.

faithfully represented in the form of a white canvass, a painting he eventually completes and which, quite paradoxically, brings him some success. His alienation and estrangement from Canadian landscapes and the whole country for that matter speaks of his inner pain and loneliness, and spreads to his sons (one of them the narrator), who also become permeated by a sense of loss and isolation. The story ends with an existential gaze into an abyss, the narrator's realization that both Canada and Hungary are places of "infinite distance,"[12] the nothing and emptiness being the only true realities to face.

The homeland is represented in a more idealized way in Rose Dancs's work, despite the painful memories portrayed in her fiction. Dancs, born in Transylvania, Romania, emigrated to Canada in 1988 and published a collection of stories and essays in Hungarian in 2000 under the title *Vaddisznók törték a törökbúzát [Wild Boars Were Plundering the Corn]*, which also is the title of one of the short stories in the collection. The plot of the short story—available in English translation—takes place in Transylvania during the 1956 revolution, as recalled by the narrator, who was a child at the time. The partly surrealistic, partly realistic sequence of events is told in the tradition of renowned Transylvanian Hungarian writers, Áron Tamási and András Sütő, and this idiomatic Transylvanian style is felt throughout the narrative. The plot is filtered through the veil of childhood recollection: Hungarian men in the narrator's Transylvanian village in Romania decide to help and participate in the Hungarian revolution in neighbouring Hungary, leaving the children and women behind. The men's absence is filled with fear, excitement and hope in the village. The kids lay down and flatten their ears to the ground, virtually merging with the life-giving mother-earth, the homeland, "listening for the sound of faraway."[13] And they hear the "rumbling of the earth."[14] However, when the men finally return, shattered and downcast, it turns out that their emotional and physical wounds do not derive from fighting in the streets of Budapest as they did not even manage to cross the border. The border guards turned them back and some of them got beaten up by the secret police on their way home. The story reflects a sense of paralysis, the impossibility of action, the deprivation of the chance to participate even in an unsuccessful revolution. It is

12. Tamas Dobozy, "The Inert Landscapes of György Ferenc," in *Last Notes*, 80–103, p. 101.

13. Rose Dancs, "Wild Boars Were Plundering the Corn," trans. Paul Gottlieb, in Miska, *Blessed Harbours*, 24–32, p. 30.

14. Dancs, p. 30.

interesting to note that the depiction of this paralysis (instead of that of heroic deeds) is what brings Dancs's short story surprisingly close to other contemporary representations of the revolution by well-known writers in Hungary: The protagonist of György Konrád's short story, "Álmerénylő hosszú kabátban" ("Bogus Assassin in a Long Coat") (1992) is roaming about the streets of Budapest on 4th November 1956 with a machine gun on his side, incapable of using it. In Péter Nádas's novel, *Párhuzamos történetek (Parallel Stories)* (2005), the narrator chooses not to participate in the street-fighting, although, in theory, he supports the armed resistance. Dancs's story narrated in a Transylvanian-Hungarian register shows another aspect of the incapacity inherent in its counterparts written in Hungary.

David Staines has described George Jonas as "a student of modern man's bleak and lonely existence" and his poetry as one in which "An ironic wit offers the only relief from the monotonous vacuum depicted in his sparse and spare verse."[15] Indeed, Jonas's wit and sardonic humour permeating his poems is undeniable, while at the same time memories of the old homeland surface from time to time with a striking power in his work. "Bridges on the Danube," published in his collection *The East Wind Blows West* (1993), is a perfect example of the kind of Central-Eastern European humour which has made history bearable for a whole generation. Only the first sentence of the poem is serious and grave, the rest of the verse being dissolved in a light jauntiness:

> 1.
> It takes much time to gain a little ground.
>
> For instance, at the gateway to the Chain Bridge
> the stone lions and I
> have tried to out-stare each other for years
> and now I may be winning.
>
> 2.
> The Margaret Bridge
> looks as it did a few seconds before
> a German demolition crew (by accident)
> blew it sky-high
> some years ago.

15. David Staines, "George Jonas," in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, eds. Eugene Benson and William Toye, 2nd ed. (Toronto, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 583.

At the time
a yellow streetcar took off gracefully
achieved an altitude of forty feet
circled the river gently
then it made
a spectacular landing.

Now I'm waiting hopefully again
as a new yellow streetcar crawls across
the reconstructed bridge, but it doesn't
repeat the performance.
Maybe next time.[16]

Jonas's poem does not imply that we should take the horrors of the Second World War and other bloody events of the past century lightly, but that it is through humour that we can survive them. His poetry is open to a healthy protection mechanism fulfilling the objective that art should not only instruct but also entertain.

Jonas's poem entitled "Six Stanzas on Homesickness," also from the collection *The East Wind Blows West*, sounds more serious with its melancholic tone, while the personification of the imaginary Tower turns the poem into something like a fairy tale. The narrator converses with a Tower emerging from his past, and the Tower, while sitting down next to the narrator, demands that he tell his "new friends" about him. The narrator is "embarrassed for who would care / to bore his new friends with an old Tower," but then decides to tell the story:

"His first stones were laid in the tenth century,
He really is an interesting old tower,
I saw him every day, going to school.
Maybe he has something important to tell."

But my apologies were all in vain
My friend's eyes grew cold and seemed to turn inward
And I thought Towers must mean more than friends
But then he left quietly, I never saw him once.[17]

This seemingly light poem evokes the fond memories of childhood, with the home country and its rich historical past now left behind, and asserts the impossibility of communicating the true relevance of these

16. George Jonas, "Bridges on the Danube," in Miska, *Blessed Harbours*, 84.
17. George Jonas, "Six Stanzas on Homesickness," in Miska, *Blessed Harbours*, 86–87.

cherished memories to the new friends in the new country, who turn indifferent and bored when confronted by the narrator's recollection. The paradox of the concluding statement "I never saw him once," and the old homeland's evocation by the poem itself, ironically abates the tension of the poem into a sense of sad resignation.

In the literary works discussed above, immigration experience is represented in a direct, straightforward manner. Whether it is the individual leaving the old homeland behind and finding a new home in Canada or a recollection of childhood memories from the past, these texts are placed within the larger context of 20th century Hungarian history, looming up behind them. The trauma caused by a sense of being uprooted makes its presence strongly felt in the above works, albeit mitigated by irony, humour, the representation of absurdity, or merely by the evocation of the old homeland and its regional dialect.

There is, however, an important segment of Hungarian literature in Canada which resists falling under the category of historical reflection. As Béládi, Pomogáts and Rónay assert about Hungarian-Canadian poet Tamás Tűz:

> One type of poetry created by Hungarian emigrants is characterised by enclosure and introversion; the poet finds the world to be expressed in the depth of the soul as opposed to the world outside. [...] "I perpetually enter the inside of matter," writes Tamás Tűz in his poem "Öldöklő metafora" ["Slaughtering Metaphor"], and this gesture is not simply the stereotypical position of the lyricist inclined to escape from the world but the natural reaction of the poet choosing the fate of emigrants, the only possible act for him to preserve his tradition.[18]

This literature, turning away from the external world and direct historical allusions, is present in the work of other Hungarian-Canadian poets as well, such as Eva Tihanyi and Ágnes Simándi. Robert Zend also belongs to this group, whose playful, graphic, and absolutely indescribable poetry was highly and enthusiastically praised by Northrop Frye: "He was a notably free and unfettered spirit who was among us for a while, and who, now that he is gone, is irreplaceable. All we can do is read and admire what he has left us."[19]

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18. Miklós Béládi, Béla Pomogáts and László Rónay, *A nyugati magyar irodalom 1945 után* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1986), p. 197. (My translation.)

19. Northrop Frye gave a tribute to Robert Zend on 16 July, 1985 in a ceremony at Harbourfront. Frye used the text with a few minor changes for his

Frye's above words are not only surprising on account of the fact that admiration was generally outside his critical vocabulary but also because they reveal that he had an insightful knowledge of the works of an otherwise lesser known Hungarian-Canadian poet.

Frye has been described as a critic with a systematic knowledge of everything he had ever read. It is through a systematic exploration of Hungarian-Canadian literature that other significant aspects of this literature, as well as other significant authors and works, may be brought to light.

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"Afterword" to *Robert Zend's Daymares: Selected Fictions on Dreams and Time*, ed. Brian Wyatt (Vancouver, B.C.: Cacanadada Press, 1991), p. 184. Cf. Northrop Frye, *Northrop Frye on Canada,* eds. Jean O'Grady and David Staines (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 629.

# "Imperfections and Reflections"
## Allegories of Reading the Past in A. S. Byatt's *Possession*

*Tamás Bényei*

The reading of *Possession* is determined by an essential (poetical and cultural) ambiguity, and myth has a very important role to play in this ambiguity. On the one hand, *Possession* is a thoroughly postmodern text in that myth is an essential part of the strategy—or predicament—as a result of which everything that appears in the novel comes from other texts, and the omnipresence of myth functions as an index of this intertextual saturation. Myth invariably appears as always already interpreted, reworked (thus, desacralised): myth is a *text* that has proliferated in endless, culturally specific and contingent variations, evincing considerable stamina in preserving a core identity through all the vicissitudes of rewriting, interpretation and appropriation.[1] In this sense, the relevance or *truth* of myth is at best allegorical (for instance, psychological).[2] On the other hand, however—and this is its central ambiguity—Byatt's novel can also be read as a text that conceives of myth in an essentially romantic (and/or Modernist) fashion, staging a romantic or Modernist "superseding" of the postmodern impasse. From this perspective, myths are active, conditioning *pre-texts* (also in the sense of coming *before* texts) which replay themselves endlessly in textual versions, and which, as it were, grow into poetry; or rather, it is *poetry* in a broader romantic sense that has the power of being replayed in this way, and myth can be seen—as both Vico and Schelling saw it—as a primal and primary kind of poetry.

The novel might be said to be structured by or along the consequences of this fundamental ambiguity; occasionally even the very

1. For instance, we read the poststructuralist and feminist interpretations of the Melusina myth before we encounter Christabel LaMotte's poetic rendering. Cf. A. S. Byatt, *Possession: A Romance* (London: Vintage, 1991 [1990]), pp. 138, 139, 244–5. All further parenthetical references are to this edition.

2. About the truth claims of myth in modernity, cf. Éva Kocziszky's excellent account of the changing role of myth in German romanticism: *Pán, a gondolkodók istene* [*Pan, God of the Thinkers*] (Budapest: Osiris, 1999).

same character wavers between the two contrasting views of the past and its role in the self-knowledge of the present. In the first view, the past becomes a textual palimpsest, causing a predicament that might lead to a nostalgic view of a non-linguistic Ur-past, formulated by Ash:

> The truth is—he says in one of his letters to Christabel LaMotte—that we live in a tired world—a world that has gone on piling up speculation and observations until truths that might have been graspable in the bright Dayspring of human morning—by the young Plotinus or the ecstatic John on Patmos—are now obscured by palimpsest on palimpsest, by thick horny growths over that clear vision—as moulting serpents, before they burst forth with their new flexible-brilliant skins, are blinded by the crusts of their old one—or, we might say, as the lovely lines of *faith* that sprung up in the aspiring towers of the ancient minsters and abbeys are both worn away by time and grime, softly shrouded by the smutty accretions of our industrial cities, our wealth, our discoveries themselves, our Progress. (164)

For the Ash of this letter, truth (which is here not historical but transhistorical, the *vero* kind) is pre-textual, it is there, or rather, *had been* there, before it was obscured by too much knowledge and speculation, and, as the images of the moulting serpent and the layers of grime suggest, it might still be recuperated. Thus, the more distant we are from the original copy or transcription of the world, the more fully smothered we are in a textuality that screens the world from us. Such a view would take as its premise the ontological superiority of a primeval and pristine past, and dismiss history as an unnecessary encrustation that ought to be scraped off. This passage, however, represents only one pole of the many attitudes in the novel towards the past as a process of accretion.

The opposing, hermeneutic attitude is present, for instance, in Sabine de Kercoz's remarks about the hangings on her dead mother's bed. They are heavy with dust, and are regularly beaten by the servant Gode. "And then, when they were beaten, they were nothing, all their substance was gone with their encrustation, so that huge rents and ragged tatters appeared everywhere" (338). This is a metaphor of the hermeneutic principle of the essential non-identity of both the past and the present: just as the present is nothing without the often unacknowledged accretions of the past, the primal originality of the past text is irretrievable, and the text (the past) turns out to be the

aggregate of encrustations that are impossible to distinguish from the original fabric.

In the first case, the contemporary world of Roland Michell, Maud Bailey and Mortimer Cropper is at least one degree less "real" or less close to reality than the Victorian world (which is the "reality" they all try to capture in their different ways); the subsequent ages, in this sense, are comparable to ever paler copies of an original that is endlessly deferred. If, however, we read the novel as an embodiment of the latter view (and its concomitant poetics of myth), *Possession* can be seen to "go beyond" the postmodern poetics of claustrophobic and disempowering textuality. Although the playful postmodern recycling of myth is ubiquitous (for instance, in the carefully planned and executed deployment of displaced versions of mythological archetypes[3]), myth here works not only, or not so much, as an always already textualised phenomenon but as an extratextual core that generates texts as well as human actions. In this sense, the late 20th-century plot, rather than being a paler repetition of the more "real" Victorian plot, becomes yet another manifestation of some more primal core that generates both: something larger than either insists on replaying itself in both ages. Thus, although the knowledgeable contemporary characters are sometimes aware that they are inevitably replaying certain recurrent mythical or romance patterns (occasionally complaining that they find themselves in the wrong plot),[4] there are instances of another kind of quasi-mythological motivation, or rather a remotivation of myth. The presence of this logic is most clearly signalled by the fact that it is precisely when they want to escape from

3. Of the numerous examples, one should suffice here. The all-powerful mythological primal Goddess is present in the form of the oracular Sybil and other powerful but monstrous female creatures, including Melusina, the witch of folk and fairy tale tradition (for instance, Gode in the Bretagne chapters), and then turning into the metaphor of the witch, when the lonely LaMotte refers to herself in these terms, and through the figure of Beatrice Nest, likened half-jestingly to Medusa or a white spider (112), both multiply overdetermined creatures in the novel. The novel contains a large number of similar chains of Fryesque displacement.

4. "Roland thought, partly with precise postmodernist pleasure, and partly with a real element of superstitious dread, that he and Maud were being driven by a plot or fate that seemed, at least possibly, to be not their plot or fate but that of those others" (p. 421; cf. p. 425). In this sense, they simply reenact the plight of the characters in LaMotte's tale "The Glass Coffin," in which the characters, one after the other, resign to the fact that they inhabit a fairy-tale plot that is larger than any of them (p. 64, 66).

Ash and LaMotte's story and have a day off that Roland and Maud repeat the similar escapade of the elusive objects of their quest. In the second view, myth functions archetypally, generating a limited number of possible stories—echoing what Alexander Pope said in relation with human faces: "Those who say our thoughts are not our own because they resemble the Ancients, may just as well say our faces are not our own, because they are like our fathers."[5]

Accordingly, the events that make up the plot of *Possession* can be read in two ways: as conscious textual reworkings of (displaced, already textualised) myths or as reports of the activities of characters who, more or less unwittingly, reenact certain mythical patterns. A few lines close to the beginning of the Ash poem ("The Garden of Proserpina") that serves as an epigraph to the very first chapter convey this fundamental ambiguity:

> These things are there. The Garden and the tree
> The serpent at its root, the fruit of gold
> The woman in the shadow of the boughs
> The running water and the grassy space.
> They are and were there. At the old world's rim,
> In the Hesperidean grove, the fruit
> Glowed golden on eternal boughs...
> (1, also in the complete poem, 463)

The poem is explicitly concerned with the mode of existence, the "thereness" of mythological entities through the repetition and modification of the expression "these things are there." In the opening line, the "there," rather than referring to any specific location, seems to indicate the fact and mode of the being of these entities (it is an affirmation of "these things are"), and the "thereness," echoing the formal subject of constructions like "there is a tree in the garden," is the universal place or non-place of myth. The repetition, although it seems to reinforce the claim by adding the past tense form ("they are and were there"), in fact has the opposite effect, for the present "are" is revalued as indeed referring to the present rather than to the timelessness of myth (this formulation implicitly suggests the uncertainty of the absent "will be there"). Similarly, the "there" loses its non-referential and non-deictic universality through the introduction of the specific (Greek) mythological location. The garden's "thereness" is now a particular, even though metaphorical, place: the edge of the world.

5. Alexander Pope, "Preface to his Works" (1717), qtd. in Ian Gordon, *Preface to Pope* (London: Longman, 1993), p. 109.

The rest of the poem is the exploration and mapping of this "place to which all Poets come" (463). The speaker of Ash's poem, well versed in comparative mythology (and Vico), wonders whether the elements and places (tree, fruit, garden) that appear in several mythologies are archetypal "shadows of one Place" and "of one Tree" (464), goes on to suggest a Feuerbachian origin ("did our minds frame him to name ourselves") and concludes with a Vico-like genealogy of myth as metaphor:

> These things *were* what they named and made them.
> Next
> They mixed the names and made a metaphor
> Or truth, or visible truth, apples of gold... (464)

Multiplying the metaphors of this "place" ("centre of a maze," "desert," 465), the poem, like the novel itself, does not resolve the fundamental ambiguity concerning the "thereness" of mythological entities. Although the textual nature of this "thereness" is never denied, the timelessness of mythical entities ends up merged in the timelessness of a particular kind of language, that of poetry: "All these are true and none. The place is there / Is what we name it, and is not. It *is*" (465, emphasis in the original).

This ambiguous "thereness" is what supplies the basis of the treatment of myth in Byatt's novel, and it is in the context of this "thereness" that the novel explores the role of myth in the self-knowledge of the subject. In order to see the later more clearly, it might be expedient to look at a paragraph in the opening section of Plato's *Phaedrus*, where Socrates speculates about the literal truth of mythological fables and about the point of interpreting myths and rationalising their contents. His attitude towards both is sceptical:

> For my, part, Phaedrus, I regard such theories as no doubt attractive, but as the invention of clever, industrious people who are not exactly to be envied, for the simple reason that they must then go on and tell us the real truth about the appearance of centaurs and the Chimaera, not to mention a whole host of such creatures, Gorgons and Pegasuses and countless other remarkable monsters of legend flocking in on them. If our skeptic, with his somewhat crude science, means to reduce every one of them to the standard of probability, he'll need a deal of time for it. I myself have certainly no time for the business, and I'll tell you why, my friend. I can't as yet "know myself," as the inscription at Delphi en-

> joins, and so long as that ignorance remains it seems to me ridiculous to inquire into extraneous matters. Consequently I don't bother about such things, but accept the current beliefs about them, and direct my inquiries, as I have just said, rather to myself, to discover whether I really am a more complex creature and more puffed up with pride than Typhon, or a simpler, gentler being whom heaven has blessed with a quiet, un-Typhonic nature.[6]

What is remarkable about Socrates's argument is its apparently self-defeating trajectory. First, he claims that to interpret (rationalise and allegorise) myths is only a waste of time until one does not have a sound knowledge of oneself. Here, self-knowledge is implicitly defined as a self-contained achievement that can, and should, dispense with the frivolous interpretation of mythological fables. In the closing sentence, however, when he gives examples of the process of self-cognition he has in mind, he implies that myth (and the interpretation of myth), after all, is an ineluctable part of any kind of self-knowledge; the self-definitions he offers define the self in comparison with *mythological* creatures and attributes. Thus, although his initial argument seems to run counter to the logic of hermeneutics, the conclusion of his argument is implicitly hermeneutic (the self can only be thought and known in comparison with the other), and, what is more, the other that is necessary for self-knowledge is defined as myth.

In A. S. Byatt's *Possession*, the role of myth in the hermeneutic process of self-knowledge is fairly similar to what we find in the above passage of *Phaedrus*. Myth and its interpretation are presented not only as a set of stories, characters and images that should be studied and interpreted by a mythographer subject but also as the very structure of self-cognition and therefore of the subject itself. The interpretation of myth is, thus, not something that one indulges in *after* one is certain about one's identity, but provides the structure of self-knowledge as such.

Byatt's novel dramatizes this doubleness in a historical context, complicating the non-historical relationship between self-knowledge and myth by placing it in the context of historical relationships between the late 20th-century period and the Victorian age. One could argue that the reason why it is the Victorian age (rather than, say, the early modern period or the Enlightenment) that provides the his-

6. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 229d–230a, trans. R. Hackforth, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994 [1961]), p. 478.

torical counterpoint of the late-twentieth-century period in *Possession* is precisely that it was an age in which the relationship to the past was undergoing a radical shift.[7] The Victorian age evoked in Byatt's novel is not simply the "past" but a past that is itself busy reading and constructing its own past in its effort to understand itself: most of its 19th-century characters are obsessed with exploring the geological, biological, historical and mythical past, discovering that knowing the past or interpreting myth is inextricable intertwined with and inseparable from self-cognition.

Byatt's novel indicates the importance of this division by making Giambattista Vico's *Scienza Nuova* the book that becomes the Pandora's Box from which the past, as it were, springs out (2). It was Vico who, criticising Descartes, made a radical distinction between the knowledge of *il vero*, timeless and universal rules (which apply in terms of natural laws, for instance) and the knowledge of *il certo*, the specific historical facts that help explain why the things of the human world are the way they are. Vico's distinction paved the way for the hermeneutics of history, more precisely for Dilthey's famous distinction between *Erklären* and *Verstehen*.[8] For Dilthey, the historical world (as an object of knowledge) is already a world that has been shaped by the human spirit:[9] when we examine historical documents or actions we are dealing with objectivisations of human emotions and thought-processes, thus, we are inevitably part of that which we examine. Therefore, historical knowledge is not only impossible without an effort at a renewed self-understanding but is in fact part of the structure of the self that then turns towards history and myth as if they were external to it. The hermeneutic aspect of knowing the past also entails a linguistic turn: the language of the past is, in a sense, also our language, the language that has made as subjects, or at least provided the means of subjectification.

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7. Cf. Robin Gilmour, *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature* 1830–1890 (London: Longman, 1996), p. 25, 118–124, 128–132; Suzy Anger, "Introduction: Knowing the Victorians," in Suzy Anger, ed., *Knowing the Past: Victorian Literature and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001), pp. 1–22, 3–5, 14–18.

8. Dilthey, Wilhelm, "Gondolatok egy leíró és taglaló pszichológiáról" [*Ideen über eine beschriebende und zergliedernde Psychologie*, 1894]), Trans. Ágnes Erdélyi, *A történelmi világ felépítése a szellemtudományokban* (Budapest: Gondolat), 1974, p. 330, 335–6.

9. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr - Paul Siebeck, 1990), p. 226.

It could be argued that, in *Possession*, myth is that part of "the past" which is always already "present" before the interpreter of the past actually turns towards what he/she believes to be the past. Myth, in Byatt's novel, is that part or aspect of the past which makes any knowledge of the past inextricably intertwined with and inseparable from self-knowledge.

The character who is most clearly aware of the linguistic (and hermeneutic) predicament of those involved in any kind of evocation of the past is the 19th-century poet Randolph Henry Ash. Although he likens the Historian to the Man of Science, claiming that both are "trafficking with the dead" (104), he also distinguishes between them by suggesting that historiography, unlike the natural sciences, works with and through the trope of prosopopoeia: "the living ears of MM Michelet and Renan, of Mr Carlyle and the Brothers Grimm, have heard the bloodless cries of the vanished and given them voices" (104). Ash goes on to define his own poetic project as a version of historiography understood as prosopopoeia: "I myself, with the aid of the imagination, have worked a little in that line, have ventriloquised, have lent my voice to, and mixt my life with, those past voices and lives whose resuscitation in our own lives as warnings, as examples, as the life of the past persisting in us, is the business of every thinking man and woman" (104). Ash is clearly aware of the historical version of the hermeneutic circle: when we approach historical otherness, we might in fact be lending our own voices to the dead, discovering in history only what we have put into it. This awareness is shared by Byatt's novel, which, conceiving the historical relationship in fundamentally hermeneutic terms, can be read, among other things, as an encyclopaedia of the "mixt," hybrid formations emerging from the hermeneutic encounter between the present and the past.[10]

Before glancing at one brief episode and its repetition, yet another brief digression about myth in the spirit of the passage from *Phaedrus* seems necessary: Byatt's novel treats the dilemma of the hermeneutics of historiography as inseparable from the role of myth which, in the novel, is a linguistic issue as much as anything else. If, as Jean Grondin suggests, the cultural *practice* of allegory is the adjustment of the ideas of bygone ages to the intellectual milieu of later periods,[11]

10. The other episode equally crucial in the hermeneutics of historical understanding is the one where Roland and Maud visit the jetshop in Whitby (257–61). The analysis of this scene, however, would require a whole essay.

11. Jean Grondin, *Bevezetés a filozófiai hermeneutikába* [*Einführung in die phil. Hermeneutik*], trans. Miklós Nyírő (Budapest: Osiris, 2002), p. 47.

then the clearest example of this process of adjustment is precisely the ongoing reinterpretation of myth. *Possession* offers itself as a huge textual machinery that both explores and practises this work of cultural appropriation that Grondin calls allegory: in the novel, myth appears in a profoundly hermeneutic context, connecting (through the frequently invisible mythical structures and patterns) the different (scientific, academic, historical, poetic) discourses. To borrow Robert Mackay's 1851 remark that has been recycled by Gillian Beer, Byatt works with that "remnant of the mythical [which] lurks in the very sanctuary of science. Forms or theories ever fall short of nature, though they are ever tending to reach a position above nature."[12] Myth, however, is not simply one of the discourses that produce worlds of their own, parallel to science and art;[13] in Byatt's novel, it is imagined as that ever-changing *verbal* repertoire that provides the basic strategies and structures of self-understanding. Myth is not simply a storehouse of possible identities but, more interestingly, and in a truly hermeneutic fashion, also of structures in which the process of self-understanding may occur. One could argue that, in *Possession*, myth is that aspect of language that makes language the terrain of self-understanding; that aspect which makes language both of the self and of the other.

In the Gibbon chapter of his *Historical Representation*, Frank Ankersmit offers an analogy that indicates the two extreme positions that historiographers—or literary historians, or, for that matter, ventriloquising historical poets of Ash's stamp—can adopt vis-á-vis the past. On the one hand, the historian (literary critic, poet) may find her/himself an Echo figure, "condemned to repetition and inaction,"[14] and lacking a voice of her or his own. At the other extreme, the historian or the antiquarian poet might become Narcissus figures, "fascinated by their own image as it is reflected by the past."[15] Ankersmit's mythological allegory of the historian's job resonates throughout Byatt's novel, and there is one scene in particular where it is inseparable from the way the novel imagines the role of myth in self-cognition.

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12. Robert Mackay, *The Progress of the Intellect* (1851), qtd. in Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1983), p. 4.

13. This is Cassirer's Neo-Kantian conception of myth; see Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover, n. d.), pp. 8–9, passim.

14. F. R. Ankersmit, *Historical Representation* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001), p. 109.

15. Ankersmit, p. 110.

During their winter enclosure in Seal Court, while Maud and Roland are reading the correspondance between Ash and LaMotte, Maud wants to see the small pool "where Christabel had seen the frozen gold and silver fish, put there to provide flashes of colour in the gloom—*the darting genii of the place*, Christable had said" (141). The motivation of the act, then, is once again both textual and personal: it is both the paradoxical desire to see the "original" of LaMotte's poem and to pay tribute to the poet by occupying her position (the position "from" which the writing of the poem would become possible). Maud reciting LaMotte's poem looks like the historian as Echo, relegated to the position of repeating both the text and the gesture, and, again like Echo, trying to occupy a position in which LaMotte's words would become her own, in which her echoing of the Other's words would become remotivated (this is what happens in Ovid's tale in the dialogue between Narcissus and Echo). In a sense, her repetition of the gesture is superfluous, as the poem to which the act led already exists, and the most she can do is to repeat it *as her own*.

> The quiet was absolute. It was beginning to snow again. Maud bowed her head with the self-consciousness of such a gesture, and thought of Christabel, standing there, looking at this frozen surface, darkly glowing under blown traces of snow.
>
> And in the pool two fishes play
> Argent and gules they shine alway
> Against the green against the grey
> They flash upon a summer's day
>
> And in the depth of wintry night
> They slumber open-eyed and bright
> Silver and red, a shadowed light
> Ice-veiled and steadily upright
>
> A paradox of chilly fire
> Of life in death, of quenched desire
> That has no force, e'en to respire
> Suspended until frost retire—
>
> Were there fish? Maud crouched on the rim of the pool, her briefcase standing in snow beside her, and scraped with an elegant gloved hand at the snow on the ice. The ice was ridged and bubbly and impure. Whatever was beneath it

> could not be seen. She moved her hand in little circles, polishing, and saw, ghostly and pale in the metal-dark surface a woman's face, her own, barred like the moon under mackerel clouds, wavering up at her. Were there fish? She leaned forward. A figure loomed black on the white, a hand touched her arm with a huge banging, an unexpected electric shock. It was meek Roland. Maud screamed. And screamed a second time, and scrumbled to her feet, furious.
>
> They glared at each other.
> "I'm sorry—"
> "I'm sorry—"
> [...]
> "It doesn't matter—"
> "It doesn't matter—"
>
> (141–2)

In this scene, the Maud who is trying to gain "first-hand" knowledge of the past is a combination of Narcissus and Echo. The scene that evokes the solitary setting of Narcissus's end begins with a Narcissistic gesture of "self-consciousness." Her attempt to see the fish (in a sense, the *same* fish that Christabel had seen so many years ago), that is, to see the other in its own element (the past, frozen water) beneath the layer of ice and snow duly becomes a Narcissistic scene in which thoughts of the other (Christabel) are replaced by moments of intense self-absorption. Thus, instead of the fish she wishes to glimpse, Maud is confronted with the ridged, bubbly and impure surface of the ice: the past resists this voyeuristic attempt ("whatever was beneath it could not be seen"). From a transparent window that allows access to the past, the sheet of ice becomes a mirror that imperfectly reflects the face of the voyeur-historian, but a face that is different, other (the encounter with the past changes, alienates the subject from itself): barred like a moon under mackerel clouds. "Barred" also suggests the alienness of the mirror image, and the adjective "mackerel" echoes another poem by LaMotte, quoted a few pages earlier ("mackerel sails," 134). Thus, the ghostly face waving up at Maud (her own face) is not only barred in the sense of streaked but also barred from her by LaMotte's clouds. The poem which provides the occasion and frame for the entire scene, as the reader comes to realise, is also "about" Maud, who is herself a paradox of chilly fire, suspended in a death-in-life state of quenched desire (the element of Maud is glass, or rather ice, that is, water which

might melt at any moment).[16] Thus, in a scene that is throughout mediated to Maud through a text as well as being experienced by her, what she sees is not only irretrievably alien (invisible under the sheet of ice) but also the same as herself: a sheet of ice that bars a hidden glow and does not allow the figure of the woman to take shape. The poem, by inspiring Maud to reenact the putative moment of its genesis, does offer her the chance to productively misrecognise herself as the other ("iste ego sum," as Ovid's Narcissus admits), but the moment of self-alienation that is also a self-recognition is immediately interrupted by Roland's timid intrusion.

Displacing the scene of Maud's troubled communion with the past, Roland and Maud become each other's mirror images above the pool ("they glared at each other"), and the Narcissistic scene, dominated by vision, is supplanted by a parodistic double Echo scene, in which they become each other's Echoes. At this stage, their utterances, instead of arising from an originating subjectivity, echo each other in a reverberating and hollow circularity without origin: the voice of neither can be identified as the "original" Narcissistic voice that is then echoed by the other. There is, however, a crucial difference between the two characters which reasserts Maud as a female Narcissus figure and Roland as an Echo (represented on many paintings as the observer of Narcissus's passion). Instead of looking into the frozen water himself, he asks Maud about it: "Are there fish?" (142). Maud reports her experience: "All you can se is imperfections and reflections" (142). In a moment of non-recognition, which is also an oblique self-recognition, it is precisely by failing to see what is beneath or behind the imperfections and reflections that Maud glimpses something of her own plight. By asking her about this experience rather than trying to share it, Roland intuitively acknowledges it as belonging to Maud. His own "Narcissistic" moment comes later, on their shared day off, by the Thomason Foss, a pool in a cavern-like hollow that probably served as the model of Melusina's fountain in LaMotte's poem. "Roland looked at the greenish-goldish-white rush of the fall for a time and then transferred his gaze to the outer edges of the troubled and turning pool. As he looked, the sun came out, and hit the pool, showing both the mirror-glitter from the surface, and various live and dead leaves and plants moving under it, caught as it were in a net of fat links of dappled light" (265). In a scene that, as it were, combines the pool of Narcissus and Plato's

16. See, for instance, the multitude of glass containers in her apartment, the motif of stained glass that is related to her (p. 133), or p. 147.

cave, he experiences a moment of trance, mesmerized and absorbed by the the dancing "phantom flames" which become "the conscious centre" (265). For him, this is not a moment of encountering the past but decidedly one of timelessness ("he lost his sense of time and space and his own precise location"). Maud's Echo-like question ("What's absorbing you?" 265) shatters this moment and places it back in time by quoting a passage from LaMotte's *Melusina* that seems to echo the visual experience.

While in the first scene Maud is actually trying to recreate and re-experience something the textual record of which she knows by heart, Roland finds himself sharing his moment or experience with LaMotte without having preliminary knowledge of the relevant poem, and certainly without consciously seking the repetition. Thus, the fact that the experience is a repetition of what their Victorian quarries also experienced (and transmuted into poetry) has different consequences in this episode from those in the former scene. Here, the motivation behind the repetition is, as it were, "beyond" the textual. This is one of the romantic or Modernist moments of the novel, in which the mythological pattern is recuperated for that which is outside the intertextual prisonhouse of language. Roland is allowed this moment of grace (before Maud's quote restores the moment to its proper place in their textual and historical quest) precisely because, by the end of the novel, he might become an authentic Echo figure, a romantic or Modernist poet: his work will reside precisely in the transformation of language, which is not his own, into words that are in fact his: be repeating them, he appropriates them as genuine correlatives of his experience.

In these scenes—as in so many other scenes of Byatt's novel—the mythological pattern is not simply a kind of archetypal identity that determines both the characters's experience and our reading if it, but also a prefiguration of the very pattern of constructing identity in its relationship to the past. Myth is that part of the past that is already present, looking back at itself and seeing only "imperfections and reflections."

# Appropriating Freedom
## Choice, Instinct and Human Nature in Modern American Psychotherapy

*Orsolya Frank*

## Introduction

In an article entitled "Appropriating Freedom,"[1] Zoltán Endreffy proposes a concept about freedom of choice where he defines freedom not as something that is or isn't but something that is appropriated. As opposed to external liberty, such as the freedom of speech and opinion, inner freedom is a predicament which individuals may or may not possess, which comes in degrees and this degree may be influenced. "The freedom of the will ... is something we have to work for over and over again. It is an ideal which guides us when we work on our will. [...] approaching this ideal is the appropriation of free will" (29). Endreffy illustrates the concept through real-life situations where limitations and frustrations of personal liberty are experienced, for instance under hypnosis, brainwashing, addiction, loss of self-control or when acting under coercion. He also seems to take for granted, but, oddly, does not state outright, that the psychotherapeutic process may well be the *par excellence* framework in which individual liberty may be increased; where the bounds of unfreedom may be loosened. He puts his finger sensitively on the notion that psychotherapy, as a very unique type of human experience and encounter, may be seen as a focal point where servitude and freedom, suffering and relief, confusion and understanding, ignorance and consciousness, determination and responsibility, judgement and acceptance intersect.

Indeed, the concept that Endreffy proposes lies at the base, in some sense, of all psychotherapy. Insofar as therapy is a helping relationship, it must encompass a horizon of hope, of change and alleviation. However, therapy has gone through dramatic evolution over the past century and there have been significant shifts in proportion and emphasis. One such change concerns precisely the degree of

1. All parenthesised references are to this edition: Zoltán Endreffy, "Elsajátítani a szabadságot" [Appropriating Freedom], *Kétezer*, December 2004, 25–31.

optimism as regards the possible scope of behavioural change and, somewhat independently of this, the degree of the client's own responsibility and participation in the change process as an active and increasingly autonomous agent.

The last two aspects—the scope of behavioural change and the individual's own competence—were particularly emphasised by a broad strand of American psychotherapy at the time when it broke away from the Freudian tradition. (We must at this point acknowledge that to this day all psychotherapy rests on the discovery of certain key psychological mechanisms by Freud, which had probably been in possession of various healing activities of mankind, but which Freud made accessible to modern Europe by articulating them through its dominant, scientific paradigm. All later developments are in one way mere refinements on these key moments.) The broad range of schools I am referring to constitute the most important and extensive movement after Freud in the field of therapy—having started up in the United States from the 1950's onwards, they are customarily termed as client-centred or humanistic therapies, hallmarked by names such as Carl Rogers' non-directive therapy and educational work, Eric Berne's transactional analysis, Thomas Gordon's Parent Effectiveness model, or Irving Yalom's existential therapy, each of which represented separate sub-trends within the overall attitude. My claim is that at the base of this kind of therapy there lies a concept of appropriating freedom very similar to that which Endreffy proposes. Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to identify and shed a clear light on the concept of freedom in human action which is implied, used and sometimes explicitly expounded by this broad strand of modern psychotherapy, and reflect on it from a general theoretical philosophical plane, using as a frame of reference certain relevant concepts of human freedom from the European philosophical tradition. I wish to show that the concept of freedom is tied in with the kind of philosophical anthropology explicitly or implicitly utilised by the theory. Some are comfortable with man's continuity with the natural world, others are not. The texts which serve as philosophical cornerstones here were chosen to exemplify these two strands as they manifest themselves at the outset of the early modern period and among the forerunners in antiquity. Epicure's attitude to man within nature is seen as foreshadowing that of Spinoza while in some ways Cartesian rationalist ethics finds its antecedent in Socrates.

I intend to show that humanistic therapies rely on an intellectual tradition here illustrated through Epicure and Spinoza which is willing to take on board man's embeddedness in the natural system, and

which utilises a complex, nuanced, ethologically sound understanding of human nature. Thus their anthropology seems more soundly substantiated than that of the Freudian approach.

I use Endreffy's article as a point of departure firstly because its central concept, the *appropriation of freedom*, is an extremely valuable and potent theoretical construct, and secondly because it is exemplary from another point of view. I see it as an instance where the traditionally difficult, even tense methodological question of how psychology and philosophy relate to each other in the reflexive field was handled in an adequate and fruitful fashion.

## I. The appropriation of freedom as proposed by Endreffy

First, therefore, let me briefly reproduce here Endreffy's line of argumentation and his concept. The freedom of action is, he claims, a clear issue. External circumstances either permit one to move, speak or travel freely or they do not. The freedom of the will, however, is a far more controversial issue. It is hard to decide whether such freedom exists at all, or whether it is entirely imaginary since our inherited and external determinants circumscribe our behaviour. Endreffy makes brief reference to Spinoza's contention that the freedom of the will is an illusion; that we go wrong because "men think themselves free on account of this alone, that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes of them."[2] Christianity, claims Endreffy, offers a conceptual field which is inherently contradictory: while on the one hand, particularly in the protestant frame of reference, mankind is a *massa damnata*, if God is good, it must also be within our power to choose what is good. This is one of the issues, which Christian theology has struggled with throughout its existence. Next, Endreffy analyses the five instances of lack of freedom mentioned earlier, and then goes on to offer a detailed description of willed action. He describes it as an act of which I am aware, which I experience and of which I perceive myself to be author. It is a moment when I transfer my determination into realised behaviour. To act freely and to will freely mean that I have the freedom to decide for or against something. First I influence my will with my thoughts. I work on my will, I define what it ought to be like. In so far as I manage to transfer

2. Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics and De Intellectus Emendatione* (London: Dent and Sons, 1955), p. 89.

this into my actions, I am free in the sense of the freedom of action. One must make substantial decisions as to what it is one wants. This depends on who I perceive myself to be. "The freedom of the will consists in my will being determined in a very specific fashion: through my thinking and judgement. [...] The freedom of my will consists in being able to will what I consider to be right" (29). Appropriating freedom is an ideal. The precision and depth of articulating our will prepares a more subtle understanding of one's own self. Our self develops through appropriating our free will.

Endreffy defines very precisely and as though under a microscope the nature of the problem—the difficulty arises when the individual experiences that he or she lacks the *ability* to influence his or her own *will* to conjure up the *determination* needed to influence *action*.

Therapeutic practice shows something very similar happening at the root of inner conflicts that make people seek professional help. The self that I perceive as I is unable to influence the behaviour which is executed by the person whom I also perceive as I. I am not author of my action. This is what happens in one of the frequently recurring problems that young women in actuality often bring into therapy. They say, "I scream at my child. I don't want to do that. Who or what is it inside me that screams at my child? What makes me do it? How can I stop doing it? Is it possible at all?" This means that people go into therapy in pursuit of the freedom of choice and of the resulting inner cohesiveness, seeking relief from the tension of this disharmony. Indeed, the instances of servitude listed by Endreffy each appear as psychological problems also. He repeatedly indicates that the kind of emotional literacy which enables us to exercise our power of choice may be appropriated through normal socialisation, or imparted, in a distilled and condensed form, by psychotherapy in an effort to aid persons suffering from impasses in the developmental path.

## II. Spinoza: determinism, freedom, adequate ideas of the self

It is no accident that Endreffy makes recourse to Spinoza. At the outset of modern philosophy, in the mid-17th century Spinoza created a concept, in polemics with Descartes, which sees man as an organic and inseparable part of the natural tissue (which in his concept constitutes God), and in this vast natural system his actions are prescribed by the workings of necessity within his psyche. It is a matter of course that the passions, affects and desires that move human beings

are functions of nature, in other words, the natural order is at work inside us as much as in any other participant of the natural universe. "It cannot happen that a man should not be a part of nature, and that he should be able not to suffer changes, save those which can be understood through his nature alone" (146).[3] Thus man is in a condition of servitude. "There is no mind absolute or free will, but the mind is determined for willing this or that by a cause which is determined in its turn by another cause, and this one again by another, and so on to infinity" (74). "In the nature of things nothing contingent is granted, but all things are determined by the necessity of divine nature for existing and working in a certain way" (23). Man is also determined and moved by the passions, affects and desires. But man does not know the causes of these desires. Spinoza also emphasises that the passions, emotions and desires are linked up with man's place in the natural tissue, and thus have a strong hold on human behaviour. Reason's efforts to gain conscious understanding of these, and thus acquire some degree of freedom are rather partisan, and their success is subject to doubt. What freedom is possible from servitude depends on our intellectual capabilities. In his notion of cognition Spinoza differentiates adequate and inadequate ideas. Inadequate ideas are dictated by the senses, passions, affects. Man has very inadequate ideas about the body and he mind. Adequate ideas are true ideas. Ideas that follow from adequate ideas are also adequate, and it is through acquiring adequate ideas about the mind, about the causes of our desires and the nature of our choices that we may gain some freedom in choosing what course of action to take. "An emotion which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it" (203). The extent of such room for freedom depends on the extent to which we can come to understand the nature and causes of our desires. This means that we form "adequate ideas" of the conflicting inner forces, voices, motivations that move us, including instinct-based motivations, and transpose them into the field of consciousness to assist the conscious organisation of behaviour—this is the path prescribed by Spinoza along which, to use Endreffy's term, freedom may be appropriated. "He who understands himself and his emotions loves God [the total natural universe], and the more so, the more he understands himself and his emotions. [...] God is free from passions" (209–10).

3. All parenthesised references in this chapter are to this edition: [Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics and De Intellectus Emendatione* (London: Dent and Sons, 1955)].

The implicit anthropology behind Spinoza's concept is easy to capture. Man is continuous with nature, the monistic determinism of the natural system affects man no less than any other creature. This is an idea which annuls the radical ontological divide that is traditionally posited in much of Western metaphysics between humans and other animals, and also posits no ontological boundary between the body and the mind. Nor does Spinoza make recourse to any essentialist metaphysical anchorage when defining humans as a genus—perhaps his most provocative view was precisely man's continuity with the natural universe. In this sense he is neither critical nor laudatory about instinct in humans—his attitude is descriptive of a fact which he never thought to question. His philosophy is practical in orientation in the sense that it places an emphasis on offering guidelines for the pursuit of happiness, and is in this sense reminiscent of the ethical pursuits of antiquity as opposed to the speculative approach of other rationalists. What is intriguing from our point of view is that the possibility of the good life lies in the direction of a relative emancipation from emotions attained through the conscious elaboration upon the contents of the psyche, and the psyche is conceived as a natural and neutral fact continuous with the rest of the natural universe. The way to the good life is tied in with embracing and refining rather than stamping out our natural determination.

## III. Descartes's rationalist ethics

Spinoza formulated his attitude in reaction to what was the most weighty philosophical influence in his age, more closely in his direct milieu, as well as in his personal philosophical formation: the teachings of Descartes. The latter assumes no continuity between man and the rest of the natural universe, indeed his entire vision is rationalistic, besides the broader sense, also in that the very scene of the speculative vision that he charts is the solipsistic centre or seat of the thinking, reflecting and judging mind. The integration of the human mind in the natural order is taken little cognisance of in this work, since the very point of departure is set in a narrative where the mind is on a distinct plane from the natural. The natural makes its voice heard, to be sure, in our wishes and desires. The point of collision is, as in most ethical models, the moment of ethical choice. Desire is distrusted and represented as in most cases harmful, reason as the sole adequate guide of human action.

The moment of ethical choice is described in No. IV. of the *Meditations on First Philosophy*.[4] Having understood that by virtue of experiencing himself as a thinking and a doubting mind, his existence is proven; and that from his own imperfection the idea of the perfect and infinite being on whom he depends may be deduced without doubt, Descartes here proceeds to consider the origin of his errors. Our capacity for understanding was given to us by God. This understanding, if used according to the proper method, in clear steps of pure intuition and consequent deduction, enables us to attain a perfect understanding of any subject. Seeking to answer "what are my errors," he defines the nature of erroneous actions by claiming that "they depend on the combination of two causes, to wit, on the faculty of knowledge that rests in me, and on the power of choice or of free will—that is to say, of the understanding and at the same time of the will" (85). The analysis continues as follows.

> I recognise that the power of will which I have received from God is not of itself the source of my errors [...] any more than is the power of understanding [...] Whence then come my errors? They come from the sole fact that since the will is much wider in its range and compass than the understanding, I do not restrain it within the same bounds, but extend it also to things which I do not understand: and as the will is of itself indifferent to these, it easily falls into error and sin, and chooses the evil for the good, or the false for the true.
>
> (87)

He proposes that in order to avoid error and sin we must remain neutral and indifferent "to matters as to which the understanding has no knowledge, [and] also in general to all those which are not apprehended with perfect clearness at the moment when the will is deliberating upon them" (87). The conclusion is that "the light of nature teaches us that the knowledge of the understanding should always precede the determination of the will" (88). "If He has not given me the power of never going astray by the first means pointed out above [...] He has at least left it within my power [...] to adhere to the resolution never to give judgement on matters whose truth is not clearly known to me. [...] It is in this that the greatest and principal perfection of man consists" (89). This way one can both "learn what I

4. All parenthesised references in this chapter are to this edition: [René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* (Yale University Press, 1996)].

should avoid in order that I may not err, [and] also how I should act in order to arrive at a knowledge of the truth" (90). The relation between the understanding and the will is seen as one where as soon as reason fully comprehends the nature of the act deliberated, the will is sure to follow: "from great clearness in my mind there followed a great inclination of my will" (87). The position of such full-fledged ethical intellectualism is a pivotal point of rationalist ethics.

Descartes's position is an extreme and highly abstract formulation of ethical rationalism. Where Spinoza assumes a moderate power of the understanding to discharge the power of the passions, he assumes a clear ontological difference between the will and the understanding.

Descartes's implicit anthropology relies on the fiction of an ontologically distinct controlling faculty of the human personality, the freedom of the will, which has it in its power to halt or permit action at will and in an unproblematic fashion, depending whether the prior complete understanding and approval has been attained or not. This is only possible by cutting the human mind off its natural determination and thus misunderstanding the natural embeddedness of the human animal altogether. It is distrustful of instinct and is in denial regarding the possibility of understanding, embracing or possibly harnessing or refining the natural driving forces of human nature.

## IV. Ancient antecedents to the above dichotomy: Socratic ethics

It has often been claimed, most famously by Nietzsche, that the ethical approach where reason alone must be master over human action, while human nature itself is suspect and virtue has a penal quality, had its seeds sown in European culture by Socratic ethics. According to Socrates of the *Gorgias*,[5] one of the early dialogues, essentially all humans want what is good. No one deliberately does what they believe to be bad, but most people are seriously misguided as to what is good for their soul.[6] The Socratic ideal states that each of us is responsible for tending his soul, meaning that we must keep it clear of sin and pure in virtue. Committing injustice is the worst thing that can befall a soul, far more so than suffering injustice. In the *Phaedo* Plato complements this with the idea that

5. Plato, *Gorgias* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979).
6. Cf. Plato, pp. 36–38.

what is good and what is true are writ large in the soul of every human being in the language of ideals which the souls of all of us had glimpsed before we were born; however, in this worldly life we forget much of this. Under the right type of guidance (such as the dialectic method of the Socratic dialogues), man can trace the way back to the ideals and come to see clearly as to what is good for the well-being of his soul. In this case, according to the teaching of Socrates, which Plato seems not to share, the sheer force of the recognition will compel man to choose the morally good. The position here advanced is again one of ethical intellectualism where it is sufficient to be conscious of the full implications of what is seen as right and wrong, and the very insight automatically compels us to act upon it.

Here, Socrates uses a concept which is in many ways similar to the later Christian ideal, when he teaches that the well-being of the soul is defined through its approximation to a transcendental ideal (as opposed to, say, a hedonistic stance or a communal normative morality), and that this ideal has ascetic overtones (as opposed to Dionysian art or the all-embracing vigour of Homeric epic). Ethical behaviour is the pursuit of an ideal which is of a transcendental nature and distinct from all things bodily and material. Such a transcendental element of the human soul is a crucial part of the anthropological concept here demonstrated—this type of virtue is followed at the cost of countering the body. The well-being of the soul is directly dependent on the inner struggle of the transcendental and the carnal principles inside the human soul.

It is easy to see the parallels with Descartes. The position of the two thinkers was akin to each other in that Socrates, too, seems to have believed that the truth inscribed in the human mind can only be teased out if we use our reason according to the correct method. Both thinkers believe that error and sin come where the correct use of reason, guaranteed by a transcendent fountainhead, strays into the imperfection which is its own as human and partial. Were we able to follow the golden thread of understanding placed inside us by the transcendent source, under the full control of reason the will would not go astray. The artificial separation of the material from the spiritual aspect of human life goes hand in hand with the conviction that the two must be in conflict, causing a vision of permanent internal tension.

## V. Ancient antecedents to the above dichotomy: Epicure

If Spinoza was counterpoint to Descartes in offering a position where man's natural embeddedness is taken on board along with the question of self-determination in the resulting full complexity, instead of resorting to a transcendental construct, then a similar counterpoint to Socratic ethics may be found in Epicurean philosophy. Epicure, who was something of a hippy and set up a commune in a large house and garden on the outskirts of Athens, had as strong a grounding in Plato as Spinoza had had in Descartes, nor was he less ardent in opposing his master.

His highly subtle and modulated version of hedonism is essentially a mental hygiene based approach. Approaching the question of the good life from a very different angle than does Descartes or Socrates, the ideal he posits is the careful and conscious maintenance of a state of dynamic inner peace, freedom from suffering and fear, a serene and balanced inner equilibrium. At the same time this individual has rich and fulfilling social ties; Epicure's is very much a social vision. Not an academic philosopher, he lived among a community of followers, was a known philanthropist, held friendship to be the chief value in life and, a prolific author, though most of his works are lost to us, wrote extensively to geographically distant friends about his views.

He shuns abstraction—the aim of philosophy is in his view to show the way to happiness. Virtue, too, must have the function of a golden thread leading us to the ideal state to be. As to the method of attaining the desired state of inner equilibrium, what he describes amounts to a highly elaborate spirit of self-management and self-awareness. Pleasure is but a guide to the desirable state of the soul. Epicure teaches that we must constantly be examining ourselves, that we must understand and befriend our inner motivations, desires, the rich polyphony of the self. His ideal assumes a high degree of self-awareness and conscious self-management in that he prescribes that we weigh and select the possible ways to pleasure or pain, choose some and shun others, based on a careful cost/benefit assessment.

> We must reckon that some desires are natural and others empty, and of the natural some are necessary, others natural only; and of the necessary some are necessary for happiness, other for the body's freedom from stress, and others for

> life itself. For the steady observation of these things makes it possible to refer every choice and avoidance to the health of the body and the soul's freedom from disturbance, since this is the end belong to the blessed life. For this is what we aim at in all our actions—to be free from pain and anxiety.[7]

Wealth, excess, orgiastic pleasures or luxury are all wrong, they take a toll on the soul, which is in the final balance certainly not good for it. Natural foods, the pleasures of the countryside, friendship, society, the pursuit of philosophy, intellectual discussions and the very pursuit through self-management are the optimal state a human being can strive for.

Epicure, as we learn from his excellent commentator, A. A. Long, was blamed by contemporaries for making no clear distinction between body and soul.[8] In fact, this absence was one of his most important statements and a direct consequence of his overall concept. The continuity of body and soul is a source of the attitude of self-regulation, which he posits as an ideal. There are physical considerations behind this—Epicure was an atomist and used a concept similar to that of homeostasis to speak of the health and well-being of the body and the soul. Thus the concept of happiness is, in the first instance, a bodily fact. This is then transposed to other levels of human existence where body and soul remain closely conjoined and penetrate each other. The self-management of the individual caters for a healthy community, which means that human nature is such that, if properly tended, it produces a healthy community, as man is by nature social. The entire spirit of the work is based on the principle of regulating, embracing and elaborating the natural tendencies, rather than penalising or eradicating them.

Spinoza and Epicure share an emphasis on informed judgement, not where reason allied with virtue police the inner drives and stamp out their voice, but on befriending and accepting the inner drives and choosing what is healthiest in the long run. Even if the end result may be something vaguely similar, the path of attaining makes a qualitative difference to the entire process. Instead of inner conflict and a rejection of a part of the self, the Epicurean model is based on

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7. A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*: Volume 1, Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary (Cambridge UP, 1987), p. 113.

8. A. A. Long, *Hellenisztikus filozófia* [Hellenistic Philosophy] (Budapest: Osiris, 1998), p. 93.

accepting the totality of the self, and making choices for its greater good in a nurturing, patient spirit.

The essential difference between Socrates and Descartes on the one side, and Epicure and Spinoza on the other, is to do with the way in which they view human nature, the way in which the relate to instinct. They mark out the two main strands as regards the relation of the Western intellect to the uncomfortable fact that it is set inside a body.

It appears that ever since its outset, Western culture has been in two minds about the status of humans *vis a vis* the rest of the natural universe. One strand feels quite willing to accept man's continuity with the rest of the natural universe, and attempts to formulate in a sensitive, descriptive, detailed fashion the complex interplay of distance and closeness, similarity and dissimilarity, determinism and freedom entailed by this relationship.

This requires a fundamentally descriptive, rather than prescriptive philosophical attitude, an acceptance of what is, instead of a value-driven, aestheticised or speculative staging of what ought to be, or might have been. The approach which embraces human nature in its totality, and forms a relatively accurate view of it, tends to posit the regulative principle of human behaviour as part and parcel of that human nature, while the other tries to handle it by isolating and struggling to extinguish a certain aspect of it. Were we to use a psychoanalytic vocabulary, we could label one broad strand as the *sublimating*, the other as the *denying* approach. Accepting the idea and the manifestations of instinct, and regulating them through elaboration, refining and harnessing instinct in the service of what is more elevated and human about us, as creative individuals and members of our community, is what characterises the former. To accept all of our drives and transform their energy into higher standard functions is seen as a healthier, more advanced functioning of the personality which affords a more resilient state of balance, and a more broadly based and holistic achievement. The opposing approach is uncomfortable with certain elements of human nature in general, and in its struggle against it uses means such as denying them, splitting them off and stigmatising them as evil, and generally placing the regulative principle outside of the sphere of the individual, projecting it onto God or on morality in general. This strand is not comfortable with instinct, the body, with pleasure, with worldliness and the flesh, and feels the need to honour man with an exceptional ontological status, and invest his functioning with a distinctive halo, believing that only by suppressing, dominating, struggling with or denying this segment of the personality can we rise to greater glory.

## VI. Freedom in American humanistic therapy and the implicit anthropology

Accepting human instinct and natural determination becomes considerably easier if we have a correct understanding of the nature of the human animal. In the first phase of its history, psychotherapy relied on an implicit anthropology, which was quite close to the strand that I designated above as the denying approach. Freud himself based his theories of instinct on a very imperfect understanding of the biological behavioural legacy of human beings, and his resulting anthropology was semi-mythical, highly symbolic and literary. To today's reader, Eros and Thanatos appear as an all but arbitrarily designated, or hollow bipolarity, where Thanatos contributes to a mythology of humans as inherently repulsive, destructive and egotistical. Animality or instinct is often equated with brutality. Each of the negative concepts in the classic Freudian repertoire, such as the menacing contents of the subconscious, the brutality of crowds, the destructive charge of the death instinct, the one-dimensional pleasure principle add up to a vision whereby man is essentially destructive, and the forces of civilisation are but barely sufficient to keep this horrific beast at bay.

This interpretation is itself a cultural construct, a summation, to put it very crudely, of Judeo-Christian prudery and 19th century repression. The difficulty from a therapy point of view is that it is difficult to offer perspectives of hope, progress or resources for improvement through such a vision of human nature. Fortunately, some of the later data regarding the actual instinctual programming of the human animal have worked to improve the picture. Jane Goodall's study of chimpanzees, the extensive study of various cultures by human ethologists, and generations of anthropologists have drawn a nuanced image, where man is seen as primarily a social animal. Yet even today it seems necessary to point out again and again certain crucial lines in this image, to correct a profoundly embedded notion. It is known that human evolution took place not by selection of individuals, but through the selection of groups. Close knit, highly cohesive groups brought along a need for a high degree of internal social differentiation and adaptation.[9] The internal structuring of the group, interwoven with a dominance hierarchy and complex kinship ties, has necessarily led to the development of the

9. Vilmos Csányi, *Az emberi természet* [On Human Nature] (Budapest: Vince, 1999), pp. 144–223.

genetically coded capability of blocking aggression and subjugating the self to the group, resulting in the emergence of a highly developed skill to read bodily, facial and other communication, to sense and understand the mood of others through empathy, to mirror their internal states, to reduce tension by closeness, and create emotional harmony.

Jane Goodall's description of mothering among chimpanzees shows the high degree of sensitivity to the needs of the infant which automatically "produces" a successful individual.[10] Love and care are crucial evolutionary advantages among chimpanzees and humans alike. The higher the sensitivity, empathy and social intelligence is, the more successful the adaptation of the resulting individual becomes. The ability to perform complex mental operations means that the primate and the human being have to be able to defer the gratification of desires. This is what we experience as self-discipline. Deferring gratification, respecting the dominance hierarchy, subjugating self to group all mean that *rule-following* and *being socialised* are as inherent parts of human nature, genetically transmitted in potential and confirmed by early socialisation, as is the drive to meet basic needs.

Social intelligence among chimpanzees and humans is an essential factor. In a standard sized group of chimpanzees the females know which baby belongs to which mother, and should the baby be threatened, they not only protect it but alert the mother to the danger by the right noises, gestures and eye contact. Aggression is rarely practiced, mainly in defence of territory, resources, on occasional hunts for meat, or when the alpha or beta position becomes vacant and questions of succession arise. In primitive societies the same breaking points are enshrined into ritual, and the regulation of aggression is even more cushioned through cultural practice.

A differentiated understanding of human nature is likely to serve as a better basis for psychological help, as it offers a range of positive inclinations that may be mobilised in order to aid cure. It also helps recognise that it is not the aim of the healthy individual to expand self beyond all boundaries, but to attain a state where social integration is satisfactory, where relationships function, where the internal modulation of the self is satisfactory and tension is reduced. Emotional well-being, as Epicure described, is the inherent, biologically given aim of individuals and most of them are aware that this takes

10. Jane Goodall, *Az ember árnyékában* [In the Shadow of Man] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1975), pp. 125–137.

pace through the proper regulation of the inner processes and outer relationships of the personality.

The first therapist to create a school which seriously diverged from a Freudian protocol was Carl Rogers. In *On Becoming a Person*[11] he teaches that granted the most optimal conditions for the normal course of unfolding, the human personality produces what he calls a "Fully Functioning Person"—one who is optimally adapted to his social environment and successfully unfolds the potentials of the human life course. These potentials range from forming a self and an identity through developing mutually satisfactory relationships, the choice of a self-fulfilling occupation, finding and keeping a partner and bringing up children who are able to do the same. Maintaining relatively tension-free interaction with the social setting and contributing, through the practice of the occupation and the upbringing of the offspring, to the general well-being of the social group also form part of this programme. Conditions are never ideal, but can be *good enough*. However, trauma or sustained stress diverts the individual from the optimal unfolding of these potentials which the individual experiences as tension and suffering and seeks help in the community. The therapeutic relationship is a very special type of human interaction, where one individual helps the other in overcoming impasses in the optimal course of development through the instinctual capabilities of empathy and emotional transfer combined with consciously developed mechanism. Therapy provides an "incubator" where the individual can revisit (through the techniques identified by Freud) the points of halted development and release the psychic energy clotted around the trauma, experience the corrective experience and thus re-engage in a corrected, repaired path of development. The natural self-healing potential of the psyche is of the same nature as its original driving force, which compels it on the path of development. Were there no inner resources for healthy growth, therapy would be a hopeless enterprise. The motivation to attain intimacy in relationships or achieve well professionally, all spring from that side of the human animal which we emphasised as a corrective to the pessimistic anthropology of Freud and of philosophical schools which implied an anthropology that is questionable from our stance today. Rogers claims that the natural inclinations of the human individual are the only propelling force of the process, either in therapy or education, of the movement toward psychological health along the individual and social dimensions alike.

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11. Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy* (New York: Mifflin, 1995).

An important symbolic gesture illustrative of Rogers' approach, also regarding questions of personal autonomy and responsibility, is that he replaces the phrase *patient* used by the Freudian school by the word *client*, entailing a fundamental correction in the ontological relationship between the helper and the helped. The term *patient* implies that the person seeking help is sick, while Rogers argues that the forms of adaptation which get in the way of the person today were probably the healthiest, optimal, life-saving forms of adaptation to the circumstances amongst which they developed, on the level of development where the individual was at the time. In an abusive family a four-year-old boy learns that one either dominates and intimidates as many people around as possible, or gets intimidated, bullied or destroyed. Perfecting this strategy is key to survival. At a later stage, e.g. at the workplace, the same strategy may become prohibitive of further growth. Nevertheless, the person is healthy, acceptable and understandable, and capable of change.

Rogers also emphasises that the client is the *best expert* of his or her own life, meaning that it is by tracing the fine and complex web of emotional determination that client and therapist together can find the way which leads back to the inner resources of the personality. In this sense it is the client's ability to think, feel and self-manage that the therapist works with. "The power is in the client," as is often repeated, and it is their natural potential to grow, to change, to heal that the therapist can harness. By being *together with* the client as a significant other at crucial existential moments of gaining clarity about destiny, choice, pain, love, freedom or the meaning of personal existence, and mirroring their emotions, the therapist merely accompanies the client on their path to health. In a deeper sense, the therapist is a living testimony to the fact that the individual is *not alone* at times when existence becomes threatening. The therapist cannot do anything or even make anything happen—he or she can make way for the healthy self-propelled healing and growth of the personality in a direction of successful adaptation. This is guided by human nature itself, a human nature, which seeks an optimal level of internal tension through balanced social interaction. The therapist's knowledge about that particular client never exceeds the client's knowledge. In the therapy process, the client learns a regime of self-understanding and self-management from the therapist ("knowing the causes of our passions"), which will stay with them in later life, enhancing their freedom of choice.

The central tenet of Rogerian therapy is *unconditional acceptance*. Every person is acceptable, has full human dignity, while faulty

paths of development are the consequence of complex adaptation patterns of the healthy young individual to unhealthy circumstances. As long as the person had no choice in the deep psychological sense of natural determination, the category of moral judgement is only applicable in a very limited sense. It may be regrettable that a person does something that is harmful to others, but judgement is the wrong tool for dealing with the problem. Far from being a sentimental precept, this tenet has two significant levels. Firstly, it arises from a profound understanding of natural determination highlighted above. Secondly, it is a technical norm which prescribes that it is only in the light of full acceptance that the individual has full access to emotions and manifestations of self, and it is only through such total self-acceptance that they can re-access healthy inner resources. The unconditional acceptance experienced in the therapy process re-enacts that of the ideal mother in early childhood and creates the optimal setting for what Spinoza called understanding the causes of our passions. This means that any rejection of a part of the self by the therapist or the client is undesirable—instinct is to be accepted, refined, harnessed, given a positive vent if it is to be correctly employed in the service of the individual and, what is the same, the community.

Freedom of choice and its relation with conscious awareness and responsibility is given a more explicit emphasis in the therapeutic theory of Eric Berne.[12] He makes autonomy the objective of all therapeutic change. However, there is meaning in the choice of word—*autonomy* is not quite the same as freedom. Berne also puts a greater stress than Rogers on the client's personal responsibility. In his concept, therapy is a contractual relationship where the healthy thinking capacity (the Adult ego state) of the client is mobilised in attaining a bilateral agreement about a course of action which the client volunteers to go through in order to attain personal autonomy—this is called the therapeutic contract. The progress made in the therapy is the client's responsibility as much as the therapist's, and the aim of the procedure is to increase conscious awareness, and with it responsibility. When the client enters the process, they bear little responsibility and are seen to be in a state of determinism. Their upbringing, their traumas, their natural responses hold them in what Spinoza would call servitude. As their understanding of the inner contents of the self unfolds, as they gain insight into their earlier

12. Eric Berne, *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy. A Systematic Individual and Social Psychiatry* (Souvenir, 2003).

determined condition, "their passions cease to be passions" and a wider range of behavioural options become available to them. According to Berne, their responsibility also increases to the same measure. The contract is permanently reviewed and evolves throughout the process.

In Berne's case it is easy to identify the connection to the idea of freedom—the express aim of the therapeutic procedure is that the client attain the highest possible level of autonomy. The concept of autonomy is described in a very exact and specified sense in Eric Berne's transactional analysis: he means by it a state where the person is able to access freely any of his *ego states* and "pump" energy into each at will, and also where the person is capable, as Berne's definition runs, of awareness, spontaneity and intimacy. The ideal is a life lived in constant maintenance of individual autonomy, harnessing and granting priority to the constructive propelling forces of human nature, rather than artificially suppressing its destructive aspects. Thus Berne sees the individual as a being whose central function is the capability to think and by practicing this capability and engaging in other actions contractually agreed with the therapist, is able to come to a condition of appropriating a relatively great degree of autonomy.

This brings us right back to the initial concept of appropriating freedom. We have seen that there is much to substantiate Endreffy's idea that inner freedom is a learnable ability within certain limits, and that psychotherapy as a domain where gradual appropriation of a broader and healthier horizon of possible paths of action may be accessed through a profound understanding of the soul and its determinations in its natural context. Therapy is one of those activities which humanity has, in all probability, repeatedly developed and forgotten in the ebb and flow of cultures, where one individual offers accompaniment to the other in order to enhance human health and autonomy through the transfer of positive, healthy and supportive influences through the empathic interpersonal channels. Combined with the modern scientific paradigm and a wealth of distilled and condensed techniques, as well as a personal experience based transmission of the profession, it promises to be a potent tool to counter suffering. It can help broaden the range of human autonomy by empowering the individual, offering guidance, direction, orientation and a sense of communal alliance to the individual when making existential choices. As regards the question of freedom, indeed, overcoming maladaptive patterns of behaviour is the appropriation of choice—but it is more accurate to say that it makes the way for dif-

ferent, more fulfilling paths of determination. Choice takes place not in the kind of solipsistic vacuum or by the pure light of reason that Descartes's philosophical fiction projects, but is exercised in a complex web of determinations where psychological learning results in the ability to manipulate the contents of consciousness in such a way as will enable the individual to re-channel energies from one track of determination to another, which is likely to prove more fulfilling in the long run.

# Teaching Long Fiction
## Doubts and Strategies

*Tamás Juhász*

Hanif Kureishi writes about his college-associated hero and heroine in *The Black Album*:

> Last night, when he told her about [...] *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, she said she'd recently got through *The Sentimental Education*. It contained brilliant scenes, she said; she could imagine them being filmed. But a lot of it she'd had to force herself through, as she drove herself in the gym. *Little Dorrit*, too, she'd tried over Christmas. Serious reading required dedication. Who, now, believed it did them good? And how many people knew a book as they knew *Blonde on Blonde*, *Annie Hall* or Prince, even? Could literature connect a generation in the same way? Some exceptional students would read hard books; most wouldn't, and they weren't fools.[1]

This diagnosis is from 1995, and the situation is very likely to be familiar for anyone facing the challenge of teaching long fiction today (This, of course, is not to say that the problem emerged as late as the end of the previous century. Though we never discussed his related experience in details, I am positive that professor Sarbu had, during his several-decade-long teaching career and with his particular scholarly interest in authors such as Melville, Conrad and Joyce, a plethora of students who just wouldn't read what they found on their reading lists. Yet the tendency towards not even to try challenging and lengthy books indeed appears to have gained impetus over the recent years). If moderating a conversation about a complex novel is difficult enough in itself, it may become an even harder task to accommodate all persons present in a seminar, and maintain a sense of more or less equal involvement. To have a few voluble and generally articulate individuals dominating the discussion is a frequent

1. Hanif Kureishi, *The Black Album* (London: Faber and Faber), p. 134. Looking back at this novel with a distance now, one can sense that at least one of its examples of popular culture, *Annie Hall*, is in fact becoming something of academic material itself, and is visible on film course descriptions with some frequency. In my experience, most students in their early twenties are unfamiliar with this particular, and so complex, Woody Allen film.

enough case, but to have only a select few who can contribute at all is a situation that lecturers face these days more often than—to take Kureishi's suggested divide—before the 1990s.

Rather than exploring the sociological, and other, causes of this phenomenon, I will now consider possible responses to this kind of class-room challenges. As it follows from the historical-geographical-cultural roots of the present collection of papers, the examined academic field is current higher education in Hungary, more specifically the B.A. program in English. My own position of writing is one of involvement. Holding a teaching job at the English department of a Budapest university, I usually put—as a combined gesture of pleasure, academic convention and consideration—two or three novels on the readings list that I give, at the beginning of each semester, to whoever takes my survey course in British or American literature. Perhaps this last point should be restated: my present topic is academic communication with B.A. students who, in contemporary higher education, represent a colorful, large pool of people with varied, and not necessarily literary, intellectual interests. Thus, graduate courses (or elective, special courses performing the close reading of but a few texts) are beyond the purvey of this essay.

Also, let it be stated explicitly that now I proceed on the assumption that long (or anything beyond, say, fifty-pages), and complex, both linguistically and aesthetically challenging fiction constitutes a part of the survey courses designed for B.A. programs in English. This is evident in the sense that without this assumption the problem that Kureishi and, I venture to claim, many instructors at various English Departments perceive, just does not exist. It is not evident, however, in the sense that this particular problem is a consequence of the very decision to place such reputedly difficult materials on the reading list, and today not everybody makes this choice. Without doubt, it is quite possible to offer excellent survey, not to mention introductory, courses in English or American literature focusing, deliberately, on relatively short and relatively easy-to-read texts. The educational idea of not intimidating students at an early stage of their literary studies is certainly a praiseworthy one that individual instructors, or departmental policy-makers, need to consider. In fact, this is such a sound idea that it appears to be hardly challengeable from a purely educational corner. The position from which one can feel, nevertheless, uneasy about the decision not to read longer fiction at all is a scholarly one. It seems that for most academics in this field the appreciation, the consumption, or the mere presence of novels in the literary histories of English-speaking

countries are so prominent that without considering them, however briefly, in related courses, the very idea of introduction, and especially of surveying, remains unfulfilled.

And, to recognize the local aspect of the topic under discussion, it should be added, perhaps again evidently but not entirely pointlessly, that the vast majority of the students to appear in these situations are native Hungarian speakers, with a competence in English ranging, quite unpredictably, somewhere between mid-level and high-level knowledges of the language (whatever these general tags can mean). At the same time, there is a limited, but perceptibly growing international dimension to our work. Students on various grants—from usually European countries—mark a welcome addition to cultural diversity in the class-rooms, and we frequently have—much to the benefit of the Englishness of the British or American program—US visitors as well. We are far from the situation that Kureishi describes in his earlier-quoted text by reference to a North-London dormitory where "many rooms [...] were filled with Africans, Irish people, Pakistanis and *even* a group of English students,"[2] nevertheless, it seems clear that with globalization, membership in the European Union, and the admission of a large number of students to university, one is likely to encounter a sociologically, culturally, and sometimes even linguistically mixed group in classrooms. In this respect, and in the context of the international teaching experience that I was privileged to acquire, I believe that the concerns I will detail are, to a certain extent at least, valid for the B.A. programs of many non-Hungarian universities as well, including the ones where the majority of students are native English speakers.

To begin, there is the conventional option of assigning, say, the entire *Jane Eyre* for one particular occasion during the course of a semester that is, in practical terms, somewhere between twelve and fourteen weeks. Ideally, this procedure enables both instructors and students to indeed survey, as they are supposed to do, a relatively large range of literary works besides Brontë's story, moving from one piece to another on a steady and predictable, weekly basis. Still ideally, this may be a source of pleasure, eye-opening and general intellectual stimulation in that it is bound to accommodate essentially all participants' individually different preference for poetry or narrative, realism or the lack of it, older or more recent literature, and so forth—in other words, sampling a new piece on every occasion is more or less guaranteed to meet, at least once or twice during the

2. Kureishi, p. 1. Italics added.

course, the liking of each student (assuming s/he has both some minimum interest in literature, and the [foreign] language competence to make sense of the assigned text).[3]

Practical experience shows, however, that with long fiction this time-honored way of scheduling readings hardly ever secures the desirable cooperation between students and instructors. Unless the seminar group consists of particularly driven individuals, one will find that many participants—after admitting or not admitting their not doing their homework—just avoid eye-contact and retreat into silence (or into brave, if questionable, guesswork about an unfamiliar text). The dialogue, which in theory is the very essence of the seminar format, is suddenly limited to about one-third, or even less, of the group.

Who or what is to blame? Is this only the consequence of simple laziness? In many individual cases, it is, yet at the same time, parts of the problem seem to lie not so much in the lack of motivation or work ethic, but in the very academic context in which it arises. The present system of B.A. training is one that admits, as indicated earlier, a larger number of students, and the minimum competence that is necessary for mere admission just does not always match the competence that is necessary for the completion of a long and complex narrative within a few weeks (it should be noted that in such programs survey courses in literary history start only after at least one semester of various introductory courses. Theoretically, then, the average B.A. student has the time and the opportunity to develop academically and linguistically. In practice, however, only very few individuals take that major, and indeed praiseworthy because so rare, leap from solid high-school graduate competence to something more sophisticated, more efficient).

Beyond this fundamental problem of a rift between planned and actual growth in language and knowledge in general, there is the issue of quantity. I have had the good fortune of being both a student and an instructor at excellent, medium and poor universities, but I cannot remember, in any of these places or capacities, any departmental (not to mention faculty-level) efforts to coordinate readings to make sure students are not expected to read, say, 80 pages a day to

3. This article does not consider the possibility that students read English-language literature in translation for several reasons. For example, while reading a translation may be an illuminating supplementary activity (in fact, I encourage my students to look at the available translations), being confined to Hungarian texts only is clearly in conflict with the convention of having the related discussions in English. What is then the primary text you refer to, and how do you cite from this text?

fully meet their examination requirements. When preparing their respective reading lists, lecturers sometimes purposefully try to avoid assigning what a colleague has assigned before in a different, yet thematically similar course, but in my experience, hardly anyone thinks about coordination in terms of avoiding the assignment of what is simply too much.

Yet such an endeavor would be desirable. In its absence, students may be easily frustrated, and they may obtain all sorts of false impressions about their respective departments. One such dangerous idea may be that their professors do not consider them to be fully human with a right to adequate sleeping time and a minimum of leisure; another that these professors are the stereotypical humanities enthusiasts without the ability to count properly. A third, and even worse, possibility is that their lecturers *can* count and therefore they know very well that the assigned quantity is hardly manageable, yet they prefer, for a variety of reasons, to ignore this fact and encourage, thereby, their students to lie about their actual performance. In this sense, unrealistic expectations generate mutual hypocrisy and eventual demoralization. Thus, instead of some sort of instinctive reliance on academic conventions (which may contain the reflex of "This is perhaps quite a lot, but when I had Professor B thirty years ago, it was much worse and still I survived it"), internal departmental guidelines might recommend, after relatively simple calculations, an optimum page per day reading load.

To enable students to better cope, instructors may also decide to assign only a few chapters, or even less, from a novel. The benefits of this approach are considerable. The requirement will not demoralize anybody, most students are likely to actually read the selected parts. Furthermore, instead of progressing on the sometimes too broad track that a one novel-on-one discussion model may mean, the classroom conversation will have a clear focus and be conducive to a thorough, textual-detail oriented approach.

But covering extracts only will generate its own difficulties. Perhaps the most obvious of these is the absence of the context of the given novel as a whole. Focusing on selected parts only prevents the class from considering meanings that reside primarily not in a given narrative element "in itself," but in its position within the entire story.[4] Whether we assign a section from the beginning, the middle,

4. What I have in mind is, of course, the lack of the rest of the text, the condition of being textually disembedded. Beyond this, there is no such thing as meaning in itself, as meaning can only be relational.

or perhaps the ending of a narrative, this sample may reveal much about style, perspective, themes and imagery, but just how this given element functions in the overall design will remain unclear even for the most perceptive students. This limitation holds true for all narrative components. A minimum, but well-chosen, typical enough textual unit can serve as an informative, usable cross-section of the entire text by reference to such categories of language, narration and symbolism manifesting themselves at a particular point of the story, yet it is quite possible that, say, a given image endowed with rich and interesting meanings in Chapter 3 undergoes various changes in its figural capacity during the progression of the novel, and it not only carries additional, or even radically different meanings by the time it appears in Chapter 33, but its repeated deployment substantially modifies its first meanings for the reader in retrospection. How should the instructor moderate the seminar discussions in this case? Should s/he indicate to the group that the sculptor's chisel, with its implications of art, dedication and delicate work in Chapter 5 will in fact transform—through its repeated appearance in situations of conflict and aggression—into a murderous weapon by Chapter 25?

If the difference between isolated meaning and contextual meaning presents difficulties, the literary category of plotting becomes, in the case of covering extracts only, an even bigger problem. With all its twists and intricacies, a given plot structure just cannot be adequately exemplified through shorter sections.[5] As the contributions of theoreticians such as Frank Kermode, Walter Benjamin, Tzvetan Todorov, Roland Barthes or Peter Brooks emphasize, processing a narrative is a matter of shifting relationships between metonymically interrelated, linearly progressing individual images, and the eventually metaphorical equations or correspondences between the same figures that only retrospection, only a sense of comprehensible wholeness, can effect. However significant a particular image or motif appears to be on the first occasion we encounter it, its full significance can only unfold over prolonged time. Experienced readers are aware of this. In Peter Brooks words, reading long fiction involves, perhaps as the most crucial phase in the process of understanding, the "*anticipation of retrospection.*"[6]

5. This is not to say that basic patterns of plotting cannot be exemplified at all. Even within the range of a page or two, various changes in perspective, temporal or spatial directions can be traced down and found, to a limited extent, suggestive of at least certain dynamics in the larger plot structure.

6. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard UP, 1984), p. 23.

When reading something for the first time, we progress under the assumption that once we reach the ending—once we can look back on the entire texture—all the confusing bits we have just left behind will somehow click into their place, and their real meaning becomes apparent. But this requires a rough knowledge of our distance from the ending, of our position within the story as a whole. We cannot anticipate something that we do not know to exist, if only by its sheer physical presence, by the weight and tangibility of numerous, untouched pages.

This may be yet another reason why assigning but a short segment of a long novel may produce a not exactly desirable reading experience. Looking at a cross-section will not only exclude the perception of transformation of meaning in imagery and symbolism, will not only impede the comprehension of the relevance of this or that episode in the overall plot structure, but it will also eliminate one of the many modes in which reading narratives is a fundamentally temporal experience. To understand one's position within the entire piece, the reader is required to repeatedly bump into boundaries, as they are set forth by starting and end points, chapter divisions, digressions or any other internal units. As the word "plot" itself is semantically as well as conceptually connected to the concept of delimiting and demarcating, one can have the feeling that in looking at a few chapters only, the original, and appropriate, *limits* of a complete novel—its beginning, its middle part and its ending where its author has placed them—have somehow been violated. To cite Brooks again: "The very possibility of meaning plotted through sequence and through time depends on the anticipated structuring force of the ending: the interminable would be the meaningless, and the lack of ending would jeopardize the beginning."[7] Thus, even if an extract is appealingly manageable precisely because it is limited in its size, it can also turn—in the absence of inherent spatial-temporal limits—into its opposite, the "interminable" and the "meaningless."

Beyond these two, quite standard practices of either trying to cope with an entire novel on a given occasion (which may, as a variant, mean a seminar discussion extending into one or two subsequent, additional sessions), or the handling of but an extract, there seem to be further, less frequently deployed strategies as well.

A seminar leader can, for example, decide to combine the benefits of the two main approaches, and spend a certain amount of time each week on subsequent parts of the assigned novel, enabling

7. Brooks, p. 93.

thereby students to actually complete the story and yet avoid a concentrated, therefore potentially unmanageable, reading load falling on one single occasion. By this means, a larger segment of the class is likely to complete the entire text, a sense of variety and tighter time-management may even enliven discussions, and more detailed textual analysis can be performed than in the traditional one week–one text model. Furthermore, to return to some of the earlier outlined scholarly concerns, spreading a novel over an entire semester may, in fact, bring students closer not only to the given text, but to the vanished experience of reading something long in separate phases and over an extended period of time. Whereas modes of reception are inevitably subject to historical change and the early twenty-first century may be producing its own models of literary consumption, the very category of "long fiction" in a contemporary survey course in English literature will necessitate some minimum information on the instructor's part about earlier, especially nineteenth-century, trends in reading, literacy and publishing. Students may not feel so, but from a professorial angle, the discussion of such canonical texts as *Wuthering Heights* or *Great Expectations* remains strangely incomplete without at least the mention of such phenomena as serialization or triple-deckers. In other words, to read in ways that bear a resemblance to the way contemporary readers progressed through their, say, monthly installments may be a sound educational device to demonstrate (if only by way of a very rough analogy) a no longer existing sociology of reading, and to show how "the time in the representing is felt to be [...] a necessary analogue of time represented."[8]

But as with any other model, there are negatives to be considered. Most of them are of a practical nature. Having to concentrate on two texts each week, students may forget to bring both volumes or copies to class, or skip preparation for two discussions under the conscious or unconscious assumption that through packing and/or reading one of the two texts some minimum, or partial preparation has been done anyhow, and this should be sufficient. Also, time management may become a greater-than-expected challenge. Whatever the exact length of the class is, the instructor is likely to experience undesirable stress through having to watch the limits within which the assigned section of a given novel is ideally treated. If, for example, this part of the discussion goes very well, there is the inevitable temptation to continue it, and because this additional time can only be used at the expense of another text, the original (and official) idea of sur-

8. Brooks, p. 91.

veying a long and diverse literary historical period is being, undesirably, resisted. Conversely, one may have uneasy feelings about having to spend less time on a, say, group of poems that are predictably popular with students and elicit strong responses when less captivating chapters from our chosen novel become, for that week at least, something of a drag.

Finally, I would like to propose a divided-class model. In it, the course description makes it explicit that students can choose to read an entire required novel for a given date, or that they can read only a particular segment for the same occasion. Motivated students will select the former, less motivated ones the latter. With this division, the instructor must consider either choice to be the basic frame for the upcoming conversation, and make the best possible attempt to accommodate the other group, too. So in a situation where the professor thinks it is more educational to adjust the discussion primarily to the needs of those who worked themselves through the whole text, the following concrete steps might be taken. Ideally, the discussion remains united for the entire group as long as possible. For this reason, a close reading of the first (few) chapter(s) may constitute an extended first segment of the class. During this, the instructor should feel at liberty to point out, if only briefly, issues of anticipation and overall plot design in communication with the more motivated, better prepared bunch of the participants—their peers may just listen and find these remarks above their heads ultimately stimulating. And when the discussion can no longer be kept on the same track, the group with less familiarity with the text may be given some sort of assignment in reference, of course, to the novel under discussion. For instance, whoever teaches *Jane Eyre* and just moderated a conversation about the opening, highly anticipatory Gateshead section (first five chapters) may ask this, less prepared part of the class to conceptualize (individually or in small groups) the function of a profuse imagery of books and story-telling that punctuates the opening of Brontë's text. This task—which is purposefully not raised in the preceding part of the seminar—will keep these participants appropriately busy while a relatively hushed conversation about the rest of the novel is being conducted.

Conversely, an instructor may find it that the competence of the group is such that it enables its members to read only a few chapters, therefore it is a highly motivated few who requires adjustment. In this case, and perhaps regrettably, the larger, less driven part of the class should be privileged. To this end, the earlier suggested close-

reading techniques can take up most of the available time, and those who completed the entire text might handle a project on their own.

Needless to say, any such group management should entail a final phase of reunification. During this time, students with a special assignment share the results of their findings with everybody else present in the form of a quickly prepared presentation or simply through a conversation. In other words, it seems appropriate that those who may feel, if only temporarily, left out join again the main course of the discussion, and have both their say and the experience of contribution.

While this model may be attractive for its flexibility (in theory at least, there is no reason why the class could not be further divided into three, or even four, competence-defined units), its disadvantages are also quite apparent. To begin, there is the question of time-management again. The elasticity of the structure may easily yield a rigid, uncomfortable, and possibly hurried, conversation if the professor who adopts this model experiences too much stress about having to watch, more carefully than usual, the originally planned time-limits for each phase of the seminar. For instance, of the three phases of having a united class, then a divided one, and then again a united group the last can be missed only at the expense of unwisely frustrating some, or all, students from the segregated, smaller group. Clearly, in this model the question of just how much time one spends on each section calls for more careful deliberation than in other, conventional forms of conducting a seminar. Then there is, as another possible drawback, the issue of asymmetry. Taking the situation where the less prepared readers are temporarily separated from those who are familiar with the entire text, their reintegration into the whole class through their sharing their findings for an independent project is feasible because the full-text readers know the chapters that their less informed peers worked on. However, when the full-text readers are segregated, it seems to be quite difficult to find for them such a project that counts on their familiarity with the entire text, and yet can be comfortably shared in the final, reintegrating phase with those who read only, say, the first six chapters.

The main objective of the present essay was not to endorse one single model, but to insist that teaching lengthy narratives requires more than "part luck, part osmosis."[9] It demands careful planning.

9. Christine Farris and Mary Favret, "Teaching the Teaching of Literature," *Peer Review* 6.3 (2004): 16–18. "Teaching literature, the structure seem[s] to

As a first step, it needs to address the rift that is there between the extended, culminative process of reading fiction, and the somewhat instantaneous, fast-paced, and by definition superficial dimension of any survey course (or, for that matter, any B.A. program). Those who decide to put novels on their reading lists need to consider this tension and create a feasible strategy to accommodate students of so diverse backgrounds, competence and interest levels.

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say, [is] part luck, part osmosis: having been an undergraduate, having taken graduate seminars [...] you should be able just to figure it out."

# Declining English?
## Further Anxieties

*Judit Borbély*

Nine years have passed since Professor Sarbu analysed the *condition of English*, expressing the worries of academics on both sides of the Atlantic concerning the difficulties that humanities with literary studies in the focus were facing.[1] He mentioned several shocking examples which sadly illustrated the undeniable fact that the anxieties were to be taken seriously. If more and more students pursuing literary studies bravely declared that they did not read because they did not like to read and if the kind of books the general public read, provided they read at all, was of dubious quality, then the situation *was* serious. What seems even more distressing is that there has been no change for the better.

With the introduction of the BA/MA system in Hungary, the situation became even less promising: the period of three years in the BA is too short for a thorough overview of English and American literature (let alone literature written in English by authors of other nationalities such as J. M. Coetzee and others), whereas the two years in the MA seem equally short even for students with a genuine interest in literature; especially if we consider that anyone with a degree (be it in science) can follow English or American studies provided they have a rather limited number of credits in English/American related courses. On the one hand, the door has been opened wide for people to study; on the other hand, however, without a sound basis the result is questionable. As far as I can judge it, whether English and American graduates manage to master an acceptable knowledge, depends on their teachers' stubborn enthusiasm to an even greater extent than earlier. To make matters worse, the present social climate is far from encouraging genuine quality and dedicated work (with due respect to everybody who still follows these "outdated" principles). And it is at this point that I am going to turn to a related field to give yet another angle to the above anxieties. For I am convinced that the medium of literature being language, it is of the same significance what is happening to language itself. All the more so because, as the linguist David Crystal puts it, language is always a

1. Aladár Sarbu, "Declining English? Some Recent Anxieties," *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* (2001) 135–148.

reflection of cultural change, in which case there is reason for worry.[2] The situation is probably similar all over the world. However, in this paper I would like to concentrate on the condition of English.

Looking at the history of English, we can see a continuous change from the arrival of the Germanic tribes in 449, which added a new hue to the dialects already in use in Britain, up to the present time. It took a long time for English to become the generally accepted official language by the 18th century, when the urge to create a standard also reached its peak. Needless to say, men of letters, sensitive to phenomena considered "impolite and indecent," had expressed their likes, dislikes, and worries earlier as well. It is enough to mention John Dryden and John Evelyn, who as early as in 1664 enthusiastically advocated the foundation of an English Academy to improve the English language, or Daniel Defoe, who, among other things, found the use of bad language, namely swearing, most humiliating for the nation and in 1697 wrote an article "Of Academies," also emphasising the need to make English pure and proper. It comes as no surprise therefore that in the 18th century, which Jonathan Swift regarded as the age of learning and politeness, scholars found it of uttermost significance to put an end to inappropriate language, unfortunately including regional varieties as well, and to create a standard language, which they wanted everybody to follow as "the" norm. Of the numerous works of the period let me mention but a few: Dr Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language* (1747), Lindley Murray, *English Grammar, adapted to the different classes of learners; With an Appendix, containing Rules and Observations for Promoting Perspicuity in Speaking and Writing* (1795), John Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language: to which are prefixed, Principles of English Pronunciation: Rules to be Observed by the Natives of Scotland, Ireland, and London, for Avoiding their Respective Peculiarities; and Directions to Foreigners for Acquiring a Knowledge of the Use of this Dictionary. The Whole Interspersed with Observations Etymological, Critical, and Grammatical* (1791).

Despite these honourable efforts and even the appearance of Received Pronunciation in the 19th century, it is obvious that keeping a language in a fixed form, no matter what perfection has been achieved, is unthinkable. Language change is impossible to stop, it goes hand in hand with social change. If we study language, we can

2. David Crystal, *The Fight for English: How Language Pundits Ate, Shot, and Left* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

get a clear image of the age, for language offers a wealth of information to supplement and illuminate historical facts with. Nevertheless, I feel that at present the mere study of some recent phenomena may not be enough, we have to take a further step. In my view, if linguistic change is interconnected with social change, and there is no denying this, and if change is almost by definition taken for progress, then there must be two options, for the next phase in a process is not necessarily a step to a higher point. I agree with Thomas Carlyle, in whose opinion the process of unstoppable progress does not guarantee changes for the better as we move in history. It is true that he formulated these views when writing about 19th century civilisation; yet, his thoughts are to be considered in the present setting as well.[3]

English has become the "lingua franca," a global language. This, of course, has resulted in endless varieties, depending on the speakers' mother tongue and cultural background. As for Britain, the number of immigrants has been steadily increasing, and they all have their influence on the language. All this brings diversity to English besides giving additional information about the given speaker and their linguistic community. However, you are not necessarily a language pundit, as Professor Crystal chooses to call linguistic pedants (not a flattering word either!), if you feel more and more pressed to call the attention to linguistic changes of debatable quality. Quite the contrary. I find the present laissez-faire attitude rather disappointing and hope that the pendulum will swing back, the sooner the better.

Language is not a l'art pour l'art affair but the means of communication, written and oral, and a form of social behaviour. We do not mumble to ourselves (well, in a happy case) but communicate with others. And it can be seen as a question of politeness and morals to do it in a form that is understandable and acceptable for the partner or the audience. As David Crystal formulates it, if users of the language let everyone down "by genuine examples of laziness, carelessness, lack of training, lack of thought, or a deliberate attempt to obfuscate," their behaviour is not appropriate or acceptable.[4] "Language is the dress of thought," Samuel Johnson wrote in *Lives of the English Poets.*[5] It is, indeed; and under normal circumstances you would not like to wear dirty rags, would you? Language is the re-

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3. Thomas Carlyle, *Selected Writings*, ed. Alan Shelston (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

4. Crystal, *The Fight for English*, p. 216.

5. David Crystal & Hilary Crystal, *Words on Words* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 13.

sponsibility of everybody: schools, parents, writers, journalists, politicians, and anybody else who might have an influence on the man in the street.

It is common knowledge that language varies depending on both who is speaking, that is the user, and the situation. An utterance, spoken and written alike, has to be appropriate to the context. It is determined by several factors such as the *field* (topic and purpose), the *mode* (spoken versus written), and the *tenor* (the type of social relationship, politeness, degrees of formality). All this, however, is based on the presumption that the user is in command of the necessary knowledge to identify the very variety that suits the situation best. In other words, returning to Samuel Johnson's metaphor, the speaker or writer has several outfits and is not condemned to making do with the same shabby dress on different occasions. It is at this point that professionals and institutions have a highly important role. They have to illustrate the indispensable connection between the setting and the appropriate language variety.

The centre of linguistic education is the school, whose influence on the way we use language is the greatest of all; provided the school finds it important. But for a long time, longer than necessary, the stress was on fluency and content with accuracy neglected. It was true not only in foreign language teaching but also, at least in Britain, in the area of the mother tongue. What causes the problem, however, is the fact that unless you have a sound knowledge in grammar, punctuation, spelling, have an extensive vocabulary, and are aware of the significance of discourse markers (add to this pronunciation in oral communication), your written or oral performance will lack clarity. This is what I find problematic, not change itself. Several linguists argue that it is no problem if there is some flexibility in punctuation and grammar, while insist that incorrect spelling can never be tolerated; to which I would add that "flexible" punctuation and grammar can only be tolerated if the writer or speaker is consistent at least within the same piece of work. Unfortunately, I have seen a lot of examples of the opposite. Furthermore, the right punctuation is crucial in that it makes sentences and thus your train of thought easy (easier) to follow. In other words, it is punctuation that makes sense of the sentences; in the absence of the correct punctuation, you risk ambiguity (think of defining and non-defining clauses). It is all right for Molly Bloom to meander while on the borderland between sleep and wakefulness, but it needs a Joyce to communicate her thoughts in a fascinating and understandable style even in such extreme circumstances. The technique of stream of consciousness is

the privilege of writers of exceptional talent. Outside the realm of literature, however, I do not think it is effective to challenge the reader of a text by expecting him to decipher the message (of course, I am not speaking about informal situations).

After a long period of being considered to be of marginal (or no) significance, grammar made a comeback in British schools in 1990s. The National Curriculum was reintroducing the formal study of English in a highly useful manner: students were not simply expected to learn the rules and follow them rigidly but were asked to explain differences in grammatical variations. Students had to think, which is the best way to realise the consequences of making linguistic choices. Moreover, the new curriculum for English focussed not only on grammar, but combined grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, and discourse, striking a healthy balance between structure and use. Generally speaking, the goal of teaching has to be a standard (be it the mother tongue or a foreign language), not denying the existence of non-standard variations, regional and ethnic differences, or slang. What is important, however, is to develop the ability of the language user to make the right choices for the sake of meaningful communication.

Although the aim is clear, it takes a long time for this approach to show results. So much so that in 2004 the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority sent guidelines to schools on "oracy" because they realised a dismal decline in students' speaking skill. It was (and still is) especially worrying in the case of children from inarticulate families who live untended, watch television or spend their time in front of the computer instead of talking to their parents, and who tend to stick to a small group of likeminded youngsters, where street or group slang is the norm. Moreover, to be accepted as a real member, let alone gaining the respect of the other gang members, kids often do their best to acquire a "high" level of the gang's patois, gradually losing their normal communication skills. This is a serious problem, for they do not even realise that it is a certain debilitated form of language that controls them, whereas it is always the user who should be in control of language. A good command of language is a powerful force for social mobility. But young people who can only communicate in slang or a small community's patois, however colourful it may be, will be at a disadvantage outside that small linguistic community.

A year later, in 2005, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority launched a programme named "English 21" because they found the situation of English and the teaching of English a hot issue. The aim of the given programme is to generate the discussion of professionals

and interested laypersons concerning the future of English. The organisers would like to receive as many comments and views as possible about what the teaching of English will (should) be like in 2015. Which only shows that judging by what we have been experiencing, the situation is far from satisfactory.

Finally, let me mention some recent phenomena which, when taken to the extreme, might seem worrying: emails, text-messages, and blogs. That media technology develops linguistic variety is natural, there is no problem with that. It is equally obvious that the development of information technology results in an abundance of new terms and concepts, which then come to be used outside the technical domain as well. The appearance of the Internet made this process extremely fast. Together with emails, which came into use in the mid 1990s, there are further possibilities of electronic communication, such as chat-rooms, asynchronous discussion groups, and various other types of Web-based devices. In this age of acceleration, fast communication is a most useful achievement. Time is money, the old saying goes. Unfortunately, this fascinatingly fast communication has developed its dark side as well, which David Crystal calls "Netspeak" (reminding you of Orwell's "Newspeak") in his book on language and the Internet.[6] Online language has developed a lot of non-standard features a limited list of which is as follows:

- no capital letters in sentences and the use of *i* for "I";
- no punctuation, with the occasional presence of question marks and exclamation marks;
- abbreviations (*imnsho* for "in my not so humble opinion," *cul8r* for "see you later," *lol* for "laugh out loud," *btw* for "by the way," etc.);
- deliberate misspellings (*teh* for "the," *comptuer* for "computer" etc.);
- other (informal) spellings (*seemz* for "seems," *cee ya* for "see you," *outta* for "out of" etc.);
- incomplete sentence structure (e.g. the predicate dropped).

As long as these usages remain within the area of informal communication, they can be seen as interesting new phenomena giving a special taste to language. However, when they appear in other settings as well, they may cause problems. To mention but one example, people working in business often complain about the frequency of

6. David Crystal, *Language and the Internet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

abbreviations in online correspondence, which usually puzzle them. It might be true that time is money but it is counter-productive if the "economical" use of words results in communication difficulties or misunderstandings.

The above characteristics are typical of emails and text messages as well, and in the latter they are combined with emoticons: smileys :-), frowns :-( or winks ;-), leading to the gradual simplification of the users' language. Their vocabulary, or a considerable part of it, is slowly turning passive, and in a relatively short time it falls out completely. As for sentence structure, it is violated to an even greater extent in text messages. Of course, it is understandable since the space provided on mobiles is much smaller than on computers. But if communication is restricted to this limited format, the users' language will inevitably deteriorate. In the end, such communicators will lose the ability of using the right language in a given setting because they will not have the store of varieties to choose from. It is not only muscles that suffer from atrophy through the lack of exercise but also language and, consequently, culture. Text messages are extremely popular with teenagers, which was the reason for the QCA's guidelines on oracy in 2004. Unfortunately, the underlying anxieties still seem valid.

Blogs may have an even more devastating effect. In an article published in February 2008, Sarah Boxer gave the shocking number of more than 100 million blogs worldwide, and two years have passed since that count.[7] Blogs, that is, Web journals, can be regarded as a valuable source of cultural information since they illustrate what people consider the hot issues of the time. Since anyone with an Internet connection is free to comment, the reactions and remarks are a wealth of further information. The language of blogs, however, is frequently sloppy; sometimes the reader has the impression that the writer made serious efforts to sound as easy-going as possible in order to follow the trend. Incomplete sentences, shaky punctuation and spelling are also characteristic. In vocabulary we can find a lot of new coinages, some of which are genuinely funny and very much to the point, while others may seem obscure (e.g. YouTube-ization, SAHM meaning stay-at-home-mother, Nero-crazy, vomit-y, fretbryo, therapised, bitchitude, troll, bejesus, grapetastically, and others). So far blogs might be regarded as the interesting works of a new subculture. But there is a feature that is real reason for worry: blogs can be

7. Sarah Boxer, "Blogs," *The New York Review of Books* Volume 55, Number 2 (2008).

anonymous. You can hide behind an invented personality, and then there are no scruples about what and how you are writing. As a matter of fact, the more provocative the topic and outrageous the language, the more popular the blog turns out to be. You can lie, start false allegations, ruin reputations, and do all this in foul language. It is terrifying to see what some people are capable of writing if they do not have to fear consequences (and it is even more terrifying if it is only consequences that can prevent them from doing so). I know this is the darkest possible side of blogs but, unfortunately, it does exist and there are a lot of people, including children in their formative years, for whom this is a regular way of entertainment. I do not deny the possibilities offered by online communication. It is fast, it fosters variety, brings different cultures closer, enables the scattered members of a community to keep in touch, which is especially useful in the case of minorities, to mention but a few positive aspects. But it is exactly the undeniably positive side that justifies the control of any abuse.

People expressing their worries about certain aspects of language change might be regarded as language pundits. Nevertheless, I feel that it is crucial to draw the attention of the public, especially children and students, to the very features of language that, though seemingly trendy, are actually the result of the speakers' laziness or carelessness, cause misunderstandings, and in the long run push speakers into a disadvantageous position. People should be aware that, seen from another angle, the extreme simplification and violation of the language is not a measure of modernity but a sign of potential ignorance, and as such it could result in embarrassing situations and a loss of chances. We must bear in mind what George Steiner, an American scholar wrote already in 1967:

*Language seeks vengeance on those who cripple it.*[8]

8. Crystal & Crystal, p. 7.

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