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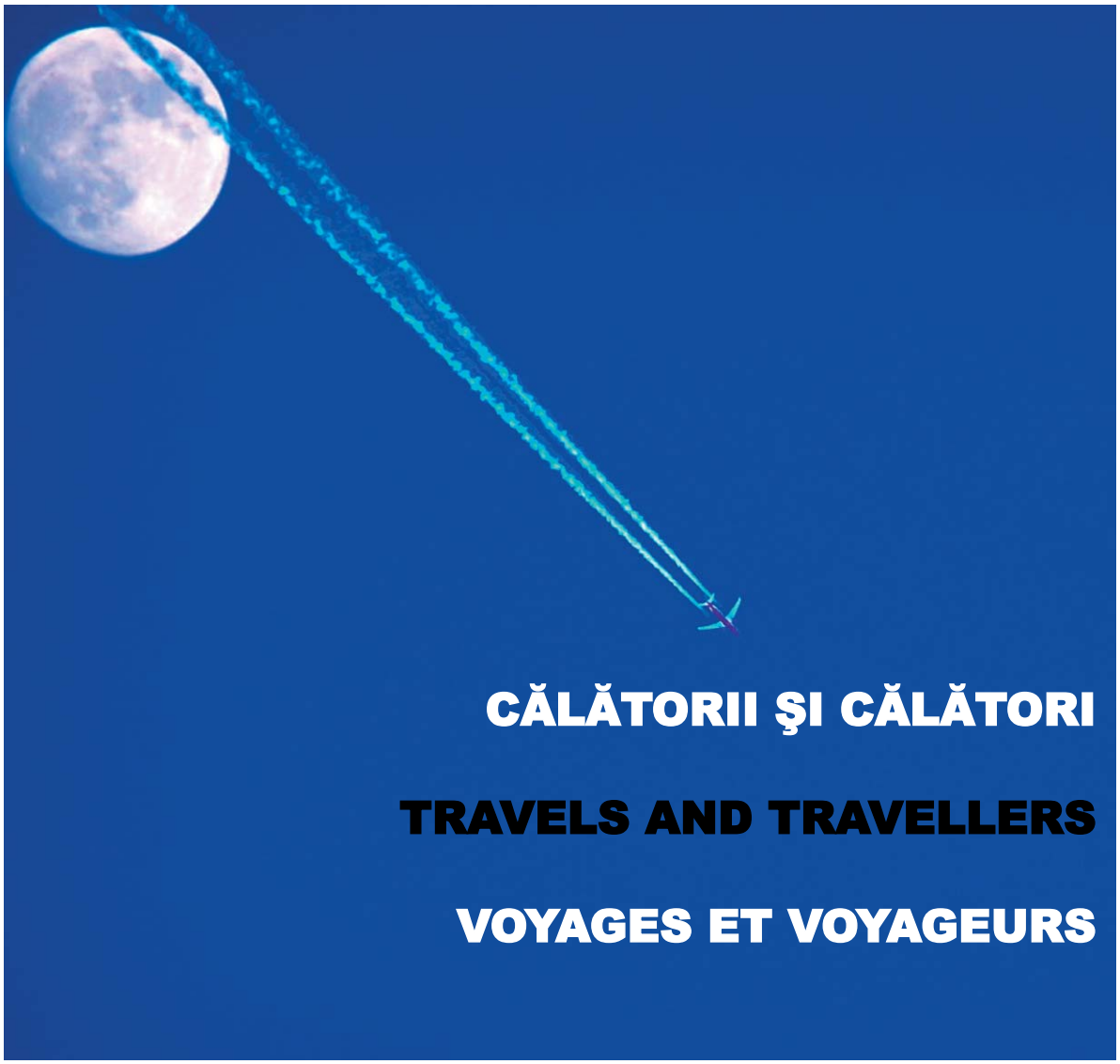

CĂLĂTORII ŞI CĂLĂTORI

TRAVELS AND TRAVELLERS

VOYAGES ET VOYAGEURS

Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iaşi

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Călătorii şi călători
Travels and travellers
Voyages et voygeurs

Numărul 18 al AIC, „Călătorii şi călători", demonstrează încă o dată importanţa acestei mega-teme culturale şi literare, cu rădăcini arhetipale, pentru publicul şi cercetătorul contemporan. Revista reuneşte subiecte precum pelerinajul medieval, expediţiile maritime, migraţia, exilul, turismul, jurnalismul de agenţie, acoperind domenii diverse: critică literară, imagologie, teatrologie, istorie, antropologie, studii culturale şi traductologie. La realizarea volumului de faţă au contribuit specialişti din Europa, Africa şi Statele Unite.

The AIC 18th issue, devoted to "Travels and travellers", shows once more the relevance of this cultural and literary mega-theme, of archetypal origin, to the contemporary world and the contemporary researcher. It draws together topics such as medieval pilgrimage, sea exploration expeditions, wandering, migration, exile, tourism and foreign correspondence journalism, and covers fields as diverse as literary criticism, imagological studies, theatrology, history, anthropology, cultural and translation studies. Scholars from Europe, Africa and the United States have brought their contribution to the current volume.

En rassemblant, dans ses pages, des sujets aussi différents que le pèlerinage médiéval, les expéditions maritimes d'exploration, l'errance, la migration, l'exil, le tourisme et le journalisme d'agence de presse, le numéro 18 d'AIC, consacré aux « Voyages et voyageurs », couvre des domaines variés – critique littéraire, imagologie, théâtrologie, histoire, anthropologie, études culturelles et traductologie – et montre une fois de plus l'importance de ce mégathème culturel et littéraire, d'origine archétypale, au monde et au chercheur contemporain. Le présent volume réunit des articles signés par des spécialistes de l'Europe, de l'Afrique et des Etats-Unis.

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Travels with Herodotus. On Media Ethnocentrism, Otherness and the Mission of the Journalist Working as a Foreign Correspondent

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The present article discusses the multiple facets of foreign correspondence journalism based on reflections on the matter encapsulated by the Polish writer Ryszard Kapuściński in his last book *Travels with Herodotus* (2004). Kapuściński, a worldwide renowned reporter of the 20th century, worked for the Polish Press Agency for decades, and his rich experiences as a foreign correspondent in Asia, Africa or South America constitute a fruitful compendium for aspiring journalists. The topics tackled throughout this paper include Kapuściński's criticism of media ethnocentrism, as opposed to his preference for empathy, the measure for quality reporting, and for otherness, a concept understood here as evaluating your own culture and *modus vivendi* only in relation with other cultures and nations. From this point of view, for Kapuściński, more than a process of discovering the other, travelling is a way of growing better knowledge of and understanding yourself. Having Herodotus and his *Histories* as travelling companions, the Polish reporter builds several analogies between "History's first globalist" and his own persona – "cosmopolish writer" and "citizen of the world" (Michnik, 2008: 14).

***Keywords*: foreign correspondent; travelling; media ethnocentrism; otherness; Ryszard Kapuściński.**

But how could Herodotus, a Greek, know what the faraway Persians or Phoenicians are saying, or the inhabitants of Egypt or Libya? It was because he travelled to where they were, asked, observed, and collected his information from what he himself saw and what others told him. His first act, therefore, was the journey. But is that not the case for all reporters? Is not our first thought to go on the road? The road is our source, our vault of treasures, our wealth. Only on the road does the reporter feel like himself, at home.

(Ryszard Kapuściński, *Travels with Herodotus)*

Introduction

When speaking of the cultural orientation of journalism, and especially of news journalism, American researcher James Watson refers to an old adage saying that a fly in the eye is worse than an earthquake in China, pinpointing, with this example, two major criteria used in the selection of events that are subsequently delivered to the public: ethnocentricity and proximity (2008: 143). The author explains that by using an ethnocentric

filter, journalists select those events that are deemed relevant for the community they are addressing: "What happens to 'us' is considered the prime principle of newsworthiness; and if a number of us are killed in that earthquake in faraway China, reports of those deaths will guarantee that the tragedy will be more fully reported" (143). But what sense do journalists working as foreign correspondents make of the realities they are writing about? How do criteria like ethnocentricity and proximity apply to their core activity of extracting stories from the life of the other (other people, other nation, other culture etc.)? With such powerful gatekeeping factors for media coverage, where should we look for a *raison d'être* for on-the-scene reporters whose activity presuppose a certain distancing from one's own nation, own culture, customs, and realities?

To answer these research questions, we have chosen for a case study the last book written by the worldwide famous Polish author Ryszard Kapuściński. *Travels with Herodotus* (original title *Podróże z Herodotem*) is an autobiographic work on the incursions of a young reporter who was instructed by his employer, the Polish Press Agency, to cover the world and who sent back home dispatches on the realities he was to meet with in Asia, Africa or South America. Kapuściński's final book is a travel book only to the extent that it presupposes implies the constant meeting and dialogue with *the other* – a different culture, a different tradition, a different memory, a different experience, a different biography, a different people, and a different religion (Michnik, 2008: 9). The image of Herodotus, as we will see throughout this paper, is used mainly to enhance the reporter's views on travelling and reporting. But before providing the theoretical framework for ethnocentricity and proximity as core journalistic principles, it is important to underline the approach on travelling in this paper by pointing out from the beginning the distinction between travel journalism and foreign correspondence journalism. Although both involve travelling, these journalism varieties differ not only in objectives, but also in field skills: the first aims more at promotion, while the second is more interested in objectively informing an audience. Generally, travel journalism is associated with tourism, being considered a market driven activity and, at best, a soft variety of journalism, entertainment oriented, while foreign correspondence is assigned to hard news journalism, to in-depth reporting (Hanusch and Fürsich, 2014: 2). Also, when discussing foreign correspondence, we have to differentiate between the traditional type of this activity (in this case, reporters are linked to a media organization and reside more or less permanently in the location where they report from, garner local knowledge, learn if possible the local language and develop the ability to identify cultural nuances), and the freelancing type (in this case, the freelance reporters travel on their own expenses and produce their own stories to sell afterwards to news providers) (Petersen, 2011). We focus here on the traditional type of foreign correspondence, highlighting the skills and approaches used by a journalist to chronicle the world.

Ethnocentricity and proximity

Ethnocentrism in media has been approached by many researchers. In his studies on media discourse, Teun A. van Dijk expressed his worries about increasing attitudes towards ethnocentrism and racism in European and American media, concluding that "wild capitalism (…) combines with wild ethnicism and racism in a frightening mixture of policies and social practices" (1995: 27), talking about "how mainstream Western media have partly followed the movement of elite and popular forms of resentment against the Other, and often even exacerbated it" (37). Basically, ethnocentrism is seen as a tendency to partition the human world into in-groups and out-groups (Kinder and Kam, 2009), following an "us *versus* them" logic, depending on the particular context it is used in: white vs. black, European vs. African, men vs. women, modern vs. tradition, straight vs. gay etc. Everything that does not "fit" inside the in-group is portrayed as alien and as carrying a potential risk for the in-group members. Ethnocentrism can be dormant and can be activated in certain circumstances, especially when the others are perceived or shaped (by the media or other agents involved in determining the public agenda) as a threat. Leaving aside the strictly ideological implications of the concept, "the ritual of news is characterized both by its ethnocentric nature (its 'us-centredness') and what might be called its 'powercentredness'.

Both aspects of the ritual demand a considerable degree of selection, of inclusion and exclusion" (Watson, 2008: 144). In other words, in their reports journalists are primarily interested in the events involving the in-group members and, when covering the out-groups, most often the descriptions are derogatory or devoid of empathy. The growth of ethnocentrism into an essential feature of journalism is strongly linked to technological developments. For centuries, until the introduction of electric telegraphy in the first half of the 19th century, the practice of journalism was limited to geographical areas, small communities whose information needs could be easily covered. In journalistic terms, the restrictions related to time and space are known as temporal (chronological) and spatial (geographical) proximity, authors (Watson, 2008; Túñez and Guevara, 2009; Hyland, 2010) suggesting that the audience is more interested in local topics than in news coming from unfamiliar geographical areas.

Although technological progress solved these time and space related problems, the concept of proximity applied to journalistic content evolved in ways that moved it more towards ethnocentricity. For instance, Spanish authors Armentia Vizuete and Caminos Marcet (2008: 134-135) spoke of emotional proximity – "information that directly affects our feelings, as it is, from an emotional perspective, close to us" – and thematic proximity, based on the degree of familiarity that readers will discover in media topics, associated with their previous knowledge of those topics. An even more sophisticated classification introduced, alongside the classic geographical and chronological types, psycho-emotional proximity (interest in issues like safety, income, children, family, free time, health, sexuality etc.) and social proximity (interest in issues like lifestyle, work, religion, politics, sports, culture etc.) (Agnès, 2002), notions in the vicinity of the so-called "self-centredness", which, generally speaking, favors the public debate of in-group problems than those of the out-groups, even in cases of equal or even deeper gravity. In this respect, a recent example is the media backlash on the lack of international reaction concerning the multiple terrorist attacks in Turkey, compared to the similar situation that France had experienced. *The Guardian* tackled the subject, saying that the Turkish capital has suffered three huge terrorist bombings in five months, but received only a fraction of the sympathy and attention given to Paris. In an article entitled "Where is Ankara's 'Je suis' moment?" – alluding to the slogan and logo "Je suis Charlie", largely adopted by supporters of free speech all around the world after the shooting at the offices of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015 – the author Liz Cookman wrote: "No BBC reporters broke down in tears. No Facebook app was launched to convert profile pictures into Turkish flags."

The foreign correspondent at work: fighting ethnocentricity with empathy

In his travels, Ryszard Kapuściński replaces ethnocentricity with empathy. The reporter considers that this shift from self-centredness to projecting yourself into the life and customs of others is as enriching an experience as necessary for a foreign correspondent: "Trying to understand their life stories, and doing research, the personal experience is fundamental. 'The others' represent the main source for our journalistic knowledge. They guide us, give us their opinions, interpret for us the world we try to understand and describe" (2002: 37). Consequently, "the right way to do our job is to disappear, to forget about our existence. We exist only as individuals that exist for the others, that share with them their problems and try to solve them, or, at least, describe them (38). Kapuściński finds that the encounter with the other is the main reason for travelling seen as a form of knowledge: the farther you go from your own country, from your own culture, the closer you get to the other and what otherness means is easier perceived. But, as he describes in *Travels with Herodotus*, as soon as he crossed the border of Communist Poland and headed towards India, he understood that *the other* will not reveal itself easily, but has to be discovered, that beyond the geographical borders he was so eager to cross laid other borders, more difficult to transcend. On his first experience abroad, where language proved to be a powerful barrier, he concludes: "I returned from this journey embarrassed by my own ignorance, at how ill-read I

was. I realized then what now seems obvious: a culture would not reveal its mysteries to me at a mere wave of my hand; one has to prepare oneself thoroughly and at length for such an encounter" (2008: 62). The young reporter's shallowness and his impossibility to approach a new culture turned Kapuściński prone to meditation:

> The study of English was at the time as rare a thing as that of Hindi or Bengali. So was this Eurocentrism on my part? Did I believe a European language to be more important than those languages of this country in which I was then a guest? Deeming English superior was an offense to the dignity of Hindus, for whom the relationship to their native languages was a delicate and important matter. They were prepared to give up their lives in the defence of their language, to burn on a pyre. This fervour and resolve stemmed from the fact that identity here is determined by the language one speaks. A Bengali, for example, is someone whose mother tongue is Bengali. Language is one's identity card, one's face and soul, even. Which is why conflicts about something else entirely – about social and religious issues, for instance – can assume the form of language wars. (66-67)

In China, the next stop in his travelling as foreign correspondent for the Polish Press Agency, the reporter is confronted with the same linguistic problem, although he pretended to have learnt the lesson: "I understood that every distinct geographic universe has its own mystery and that one can decipher it only by learning the local language. Without it, this universe will remain impenetrable and unknowable, even if one were to spend entire years in it" (45).

Nevertheless, these consecutive failures did not prevent the now international journalist from wanting to fight his self-diagnosed eurocentrism: "I wanted to learn the language, I wanted to read the books, I wanted to penetrate every nook and cranny" (93-94). Acknowledging and accepting cultural diversity allowed him to travel more freely in a hostile environment: the Great Wall of China turned into a "Great Metaphor" for "The Great Wall of Language, composed of conversations, newspapers, radio transmissions, written messages on walls and placards, on the products sold in shops, at the entrance in institutions, everywhere" (86). Kapuściński uses the metaphor of the wall to discuss ethnocentricity from the perspective of divided human universes: "The worst aspect of the wall is to turn so many people into its defenders and produce a mental attitude that sees a wall running through everything, imagines the world as being divided into an evil and inferior part, on the outside, and a good and superior part, on the inside" (92).

The openess and mobility that characterize the 20th century introduced Kapuściński to the concept of *otherness*, understood here as evaluating your own culture and *modus vivendi* only in relation with the other, but a different type of other, as Kapuściński explains: "Until now, when we pondered our relation with the Other, the Other was always from the same culture as us. Now, however, the Other belongs to an altogether foreign culture, an individual formed by and espousing its distinct customs and values" (263). But in order to meet the other, one must travel and, for Kapuściński, travelling is the appanage of journalism and he invokes Herodotus to rest the case:

> But how could Herodotus, a Greek, know what the faraway Persians or Phoenicians are saying, or the inhabitants of Egypt or Libya? It was because he travelled to where they were, asked, observed, and collected his information from what he himself saw and what others told him. His first act, therefore, was the journey. But is that not the case for all reporters? Is not our first thought to go on the road? The road is our source, our vault of treasures, our wealth. Only on the road does the reporter feel like himself, at home. (281)

The idea of perceiving Herodotus more as a journalist than as a historian is not new. It appears in the analyses of historian W. Kendrick Pritchett, who refers to Herodotus of Halicarnassus as to "an observer of customs (…), a reporter of what he had seen even if he did not understand it, and of what he had heard, if it seemed for any reason worth reporting, without his necessarily

believing it" (*apud* Saltzman, 2010: 154). But in Kapuściński's book, Herodotus is more than "an observer" or "a reporter": as a matter of labelling, he is both "the father of journalism" and "the father of history". Moreover, the Pole seems to share the view of other historians such as Justin Marozzi, who looks at Herodotus not only as the world's first historian, but also as "its first foreign correspondent, investigative journalist, anthropologist and travel writer. He is an aspiring geographer, a budding moralist, a skillful dramatist, a high-spirited explorer and an inveterate storyteller. He is part learned scholar, part tabloid hack, but always broad-minded, humorous and generous-hearted, which is why he's so much fun. He examines the world around him… with an unerring eye for thrilling material to inform and amuse, to horrify and entertain" (2010: 7).

The way Kapuściński makes use of (the image of) Herodotus and his *Histories* deserves a closer look and a brief analysis. To a certain extent, through the self-image projected in *Travels with Herodotus*, Kapuściński wants the readers to identify him with the first historian. Or, as Bissell puts it, "writing about Herodotus, Kapuściński is actually writing about himself" (2007), and the portrait he makes for Herodotus is actually meant to be a self-portrait:

> He is profoundly intrigued by this subject; indeed he is preoccupied, absorbed, insatiable. We can imagine a man like him possessed by an idea that gives him no peace. Activated, unable to sit still, moving constantly from one place to another. Wherever he appears there is an atmosphere of agitation and anxiety. People who dislike budging from their homes or walking beyond their own backyards – and they are always and everywhere in the majority – treat Herodotus's sort, fundamentally unconnected to anyone or anything, as freaks, fanatics, lunatics even. (2008: 101).

This is the self-image that the Polish author tries to build up with subtlety throughout his *Travels with Herodotus*, but this is also the portrait Kapuściński tries to depict for an accomplished reporter. Since *The Histories* represent, in his view, the "world literature's first great work of reportage" (282) and their author „a valuable teacher", we can extract – from the descriptions Kapuściński makes of the Greek historiographer and his *modus operandi* in the fifth century BC – the main features that the Polish reporter wants to (re)discover in contemporary journalists (either local reporters or foreign correspondents) and in their work:

(a) *on practice*: "He is a consummate reporter: he wanders, looks, talks, listens, in order that he can later note down what he learned and saw, or simply to remember better" (125);

(b) *on purposeful writing*: "Herodotus's journeys are purposeful – they are the means by which he hopes to learn about the world and its inhabitants, to gather the knowledge he will feel compelled, later, to describe. Above all, what he hopes to describe are the important and remarkable achievements produced by both Greeks and non-Greeks" (102);

(c) *on reader-oriented writing*: "(…) he respects the laws of the narrative marketplace: to sell well, a story must be interesting, must contain of bit of spice, something sensational, something to send a shiver up one's spine. (...) It was important to him to have the largest auditorium possible, to draw a crowd. It would be to his advantage, therefore, to begin with something that would rivet attention, arouse curiosity something a tad sensational. Story plots meant to move, amaze, astonish pop up throughout his entire opus; without such stimuli, his audience would have dispersed early, bored, leaving him with an empty purse" (105);

(d) *on ante hoc fact checking*: "The goal of Herodotus's journeys? To collect new information about a country, its people, and their customs, or to test the reliability of data already gathered. Herodotus is not content with what someone else has told him he tries to verify each thing, to compare and contrast the various versions he has heard, and then to formulate his own" (126);

(e) *on sources management*: "So much of what we write about derives from our relation to other people – I-he, I-they. That relation's quality and temperature, as it were, have their direct bearing on the final text. We depend on others; reportage is perhaps the form of writing most reliant on the collective" (198). (…) Herodotus understands this, and like every reporter or ethnologist he

tries to be in the most direct contact with his interlocutors, not only listening to what they say, but also watching how they say it, how they act as they speak" (200);

(f) *on predocumentation*: "In the world of Herodotus, the only real repository of memory is the individual. In order to find out that which has been remembered, one must reach this person. If he lives far away, one has to go to him, to set out on a journey. And after finally encountering him, one must sit down and listen to what he has to say – to listen, remember, perhaps write it down. That is how reportage begins; of such circumstances it is born" (99).

We can argue that in Kapuściński's book, *The Histories* and their author are revealed as a plea for quality journalism. It can also be a criticism, a lecture or a reflection on contemporary journalism that generally lacks the in-depthness one could discover by reading Kapuściński's books of reportages like *Shah of Shahs* (1982), *Imperium* (1993), *The Shadow of the Sun* (1998): a long-form journalism, expressed through distinguished stylistics, the ability to build local colour, vivid dialogues, and complex descriptions, and through an emotionally charged writing. "The deeper, tacit message in *Travels with Herodotus* is surely that journalism now, with its celebrity roving correspondents who jet in and out of conflicts, misses the point. This new brand of reporting never connects with the subtleties and with the people on whose land trials and tribulations fall" (Shah, 2007).

Finally, the Polish reporter delivers a message that travels on the axis Herodotus – Kapuściński – contemporary foreign correspondents: "In this profession, the pleasure of traveling and the fascination with what one sees is inevitably subordinate to the imperative of maintaining one's ties with headquarters and of transmitting to them what is current and important. That is why we are sent out into the world – and there are no other self-justifications" (197).

Note: For accuracy reasons, in the excerpts from Travels with Herodotus *quoted in this article, we kept the English translation made by Klara Glowczewska with slight alterations, although the page indications refer to the Romanian edition published in 2008.*

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Goran Stefanovski: În căutarea Itacăi pierdute

Goran Stefanovski: In Search of the Lost Ithaca

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A distinguished playwright, a dedicated scriptwriting professor and an artist with a conscience, Goran Stefanovski has apparently been destined to oscillate between his native Macedonia, shaken by the horrors of the 1990s Yugoslav Wars, and England, his adoption country. As a citizen of the Western Europe, he could find solace, security and recognition, but he has never ceased to feel uprooted. Several of his post-war plays – *Euralien* (1998), *Hotel Europa* (2000), *Odiseu* (2012) – approach from different angles themes like *alienation*, *wandering* and *home-longing*, experimenting, at the same time, with the itinerant performance, aimed to explore a labyrinthine space.
A fictional projection of his author, Odysseus is consumed with nostalgia. Born under the sign of ambivalence, he constantly bears in mind the idealized image of his beloved home, while he wanders the world, striving to conquer it in its entirety. The sea, a powerful symbol of life that goes on and on, irrevocably changing everything, eventually succeeds in forever separating Odysseus from his Ithaca: when he returns home, he finds it again in name only. However, the sea cannot prevent "the wise Odysseus" from recovering the lost Ithaca from the depths of his heart, soul, and memory.

***Keywords*: Goran Stefanovski; Odysseus; Ithaca; wandering; nostalgia; memory.**

La începutul anilor 1990, dramaturgul macedonean Goran Stefanovski este nevoit să se refugieze din patria lui zguduită de război și alege să se stabilească în Anglia, patria soției sale, traducătoarea Patricia Marsh Stefanovska. În țara de adopție (prin extensie, în Occident), el dobândește nu doar adăpost, ci și largă recunoaștere, dar sentimentul dezrădăcinării nu îl părăsește nicio clipă. Piesele lui datând din acești ani de război sunt bântuite de spaime atavice și de o durere constantă, fără leac. Devastat de dezastrul de *acasă*, dramaturgul încearcă să înțeleagă atât resorturile tragediei colective trăite de *ai lui*, cât și finalitatea suferinței, în general. După încheierea războiului, scrierile lui se concentrează pe dramele personale ale celor epuizați și dezorientați, pentru care vechile repere ori nu mai există, ori au slăbit, nemaifiind demne de încredere, iar altele noi și solide încă nu s-au definit. *Euralien* (1998), *Hotel Europa* (2000), *Odiseu* (2012) abordează din diferite unghiuri tema *înstrăinării*, a *rătăcirii* și a *dorului de casă*, experimentând, totodată, formula spectacolului itinerant, care explorează un spațiu labirintic.

Euralien gravitează în jurul figurii *străinului*, privit, după caz, cu suspiciune, teamă, dispreț sau repulsie. De la bun început, dramaturgul își anunță fără echivoc intenția de „«etalare» a «străinului universal» care se află în toți oamenii. Spectacolul va dovedi în chip dramatic cât de ușor putem cădea pradă acestui monstru, de vreme ce el nu trăiește în afară, ci înăuntrul nostru"[1] (Stefanovski, 2010a: 33). În piesă, raporturile de putere dintre țări și popoare sunt răsturnate distopic:

[1] Traducerea tuturor citatelor din textele redactate în limba macedoneană ne aparține (N.V.).

defavorizaţii din lumea reală deţin controlul (de pildă, un personaj bosniac este observator din partea Naţiunilor Unite) şi îi supun ritualurilor de intimidare pe cetăţenii *lumii libere*.

Mai degrabă schiţă dramatică (*synopsis*) decât piesă de teatru propriu-zisă, *Euralien* propune, în didascalii foarte ample, mai multe serii de coordonate pentru un spectacol-*happening* (definit ca „atelier multicultural" – v. Stefanovski, 2010a: 35), conceput ca „o experienţă teatrală ce presupune mai degrabă deplasarea prin clădire, şi nu şederea pe un scaun", ca o călătorie care explorează un spaţiu neconvenţional[2], „un spaţiu-labirint de zece încăperi, cărora li se adaugă două săli mari, coridoare, lifturi etc." (34). Spectatorii nu vor fi pasivi, ci *vor participa* la reprezentaţie. Timp de patru ore, în mod consimţit de ei, aceşti cetăţeni privilegiaţi de soartă vor fi trataţi ca nişte „cetăţeni din afara Uniunii Europene, altfel spus, ca «oameni diferiţi», ca «străini». Vor fi opriţi la graniţa «Fortăreţei Europa», vor fi invitaţi să completeze formulare pentru viză şi să guste nemijlocit diferite forme de «alienare». Astfel, publicul va putea să aibă o idee despre cât de trist şi de amuzant este să fii astăzi cetăţean al «celeilalte» Europe" (34). Se mai precizează că spectacolul le va prilejui participanţilor contactul direct cu actorii şi cu recuzita, făcând apel la capacitatea lor de improvizaţie. Spectatorii vor primi „o schiţă de itinerariu în interiorul clădirii, schiţă care le va comunica astfel ideea de «călătorie». La ieşire, li se vor da noi vize în paşaport: pentru intrarea într o Europă nouă, utopică, liberă de prejudecăţi şi de discriminare" (33).

Călătoria este ritmată de semne ale închiderii şi deschiderii. Închiderea este simbolizată de spaţiile-celule strâmte, sufocante, în care se vor desfăşura acţiunile: un autobuz controlat de un vameş; o cameră dintr-un cămin de azilanţi politic; secţia consulară a unei ambasade; o cameră de interogare dintr-un aeroport internaţional; un laborator dintr-un centru de cercetări genetice extreme, menite să detecteze *alien*-ul dintr-un om sau altul; o sală de aşteptare dintr-un aeroport; un post de control într-un oraş din „Ex-Suedia", unde, în câteva zeci de minute, o stradă devine graniţa dintre două spaţii ostile unul celuilalt; o „cuşcă-vitrină" în care doi dansatori, o femeie şi un bărbat, sumar îmbrăcaţi, pe fundalul muzical al *Odei Bucuriei* (imnul european), reconstituie episodul mitologic al răpirii Europei de către Zeus; o cameră de supraveghere, plină de monitoare, din „fortăreaţa Europa"; un observator astronomic, unde se examinează cu telescopul „constelaţii umane"; un stand unde se află obiecte relaţionate cu identitatea naţională: ziare, cărţi de bucate, mâncăruri specifice, hărţi, albume de fotografii, monede, cărţi, benzi/casete cu cântece populare, costume naţionale; o sală de nuntă şi una de priveghi, împărţite de două clanuri rivale.

Închiderea spaţiilor este contrabalansată de prezenţa personajelor itinerante: un muzicant de stradă; o imigrantă „turcoaică sau ţigancă" lucrând ca femeie de serviciu într-o toaletă publică; un contrabandist; „un şovin paşnic"; o prostituată preocupată de boala pruncului ei; o ghicitoare (în globul de cristal, în palmă) şi distribuitoare de „sentinţe" ambigue înscrise pe bileţele închise în plicuri de culori diferite. Aceste personaje aflate în continuă mişcare au misiunea de „nadă", dar şi de „călăuză": „ca păianjenii, trebuie să-i prindă pe spectatori în plasă. Îi duc pe aceştia – câte unul sau în grupuri – către vizuinile şi spaţiile lor ascunse. Acolo le istorisesc diferite lucruri, ori le pun întrebări" (65).

Proiectul *Euralien* intenţionează să dezvăluie publicului faptul că, dincolo de o serie de particularităţi (majore sau minore), oamenii sunt cu toţii la fel şi au „rezerve infinite de energie de pus în slujba binelui sau a răului". Iar dacă împrejurările îi forţează pe unii „să năvălească" în ţări străine, o fac nu pentru a duce o viaţă de parazit, ci pentru că „vor să scape de primejdie şi să-şi găsească fericirea"[3]. Însă fericirea generală pare să nu fie, deocamdată, posibilă decât în „Republica invizibilă a euralienilor", în spaţiul utopic având rol consolator, care cuprinde „naţiunea invizibilă constituită din milioane de imigranţi şi de refugiaţi din Europa de astăzi. Are drapel şi imn. Ambasadorul cultural onorific al euralienilor ar putea fi Charlie Chaplin" (34), „«inadaptatul» tipic al secolului XX"; „el este, deopotrivă, trist şi amuzant şi înduioşător de uman. Aceasta este imaginea cu care am dori ca spectatorii să plece acasă" (84).

[2] Clădirea Riksarkivet (sediul Arhivelor Naţionale) din Stockholm.

[3] Problema aceasta pare să fie şi mai complicată în contextul actualei crize a refugiaţilor în Europa.

Doi ani după *Euralien*, Goran Stefanovski se implică într-un alt proiect teatral multinațional. Reprezentat în premieră pe 23 mai 2000, în cadrul unui turneu european cuprinzând orașele Viena, Bonn, Avignon, Stockholm și Bologna, *Hotel Europa*, „scenariu pentru un eveniment teatral" (după cum menționează subtitlul) desfășurat, de asemenea, în spații neconvenționale, este montat prin colaborarea unor regizori[4] și actori din mai multe țări balcanice și baltice: „Fiecare echipă artistică a folosit limba țării sale. Actorii reprezentând personajele locale (rataţii) au vorbit și ei în limba maternă, aceeași cu limba publicului din fiecare loc în parte" (2008: 148).

Hotel Europa reia, tot într-o formulă teatrală deschisă, tema migrației în spațiul european contemporan, temă care polarizează alte teme, precum: dezrădăcinarea, singurătatea, comunicarea deficitară sau absentă. „Scena" este „lumea mizeră a unui hotel de gară" aflat la răscrucea dintre Estul și Vestul European. Publicul spectator se împarte în șase grupuri și, sub călăuzirea a șase personaje (Hamalul, Asistenta socială, *Maître d'hôtel*, Recepționerul, Fiica și Îngrijitorul), vizitează pe rând camerele în care se petrec varii drame: „Piesa a fost urmărită sub formă peripatetică, spectatorii deplasându-se printr-un labirint de camere, holuri, coridoare și terase. Scenele au fost interpretate sincron, astfel că fiecare grup de spectatori a văzut spectacolul într-o ordine diferită. Aceasta s-a bazat pe o coordonare complexă a producției. Spectatorii s-au aflat cu toții împreună doar în scena centrală, din mijlocul spectacolului – și la sfârșitul piesei" (148).

După vizionarea a trei secvențe dramatice, spectatorii vizionează (ca la muzeu) mai multe „încăperi goale", „instalații speciale": „fiecare dintre ele reprezintă o lume în sine, separată, așa cum a fost lăsată în urmă de foștii oaspeți ai hotelului. [...] În toate sunt împrăștiate diverse resturi (pâine uscată, fructe mucegăite, pete de sânge, prezervative folosite). Într-o cameră se găsește o carte cu visele oaspeților hotelului, prinsă de perete cu un lanț, pe care spectatorii o pot citi. Una are un ecran TV cu imagini video, care arată ce fac oaspeții în camere" (159). După explorarea hotelului, grupurile de spectatori se reunesc în „cantina-restaurant [...], cunoscută și sub numele de «sala de banchet». Aici sunt mese, cu sfeșnice și fețe de masă scumpe, contrastând cu starea mizeră a clădirii." (160). Publicul este poftit să se așeze la masă și este servit cu „răcoritoare, gustări" (160), în vreme ce vizionează secvența „Grand Hotel Casino Europa". După „recepție" se desfășoară (din nou pe grupuri) alte trei secvențe dramatice și apoi cele șase grupuri sunt invitate împreună într-un nou spațiu comunitar de mari dimensiuni: terasa hotelului, unde, într-un final fals apoteotic, se va dansa și se va toasta pentru unitate, solidaritate, înfrățire între popoare (181-182).

Ca și *Euralien*, *Hotel Europa* îi dă publicului ocazia de a se implica efectiv într-un spectacol modular care îl poartă prin întreaga clădire, unde are ocazia să contemple îndeaproape dilemele existențiale și frământările fără soluție ale unor marginali înfrânți de viață și de mizerie materială și morală, oameni adunați în inima Europei de un miraj: pătrunderea într-o lume mai bună, a confortului și a libertății. Dar în lumea aceasta *ideală* nou-veniții se simt mereu străini și, de aceea, (asemenea imigranților din *Suflete tatuate*, 1985) își cultivă „năravurile naționale" (alcoolism, tendințe tiranice, sexism, interes pentru bișniță) și se agață îndârjit de orice le aduce aminte de patria pe care au lăsat-o în urmă și în care, din diferite motive, nu se mai pot întoarce: „Nu plângem și nu ne jelim. Avem suflete oțelite. Ne descurcăm singuri. Ne creștem fructe, ne creștem legume. Ăsta-i pământ de la noi din țară. Anume l-am adus de-acasă, în pungi de plastic" (Stefanovski, 2010b: 91).

Toți imigranții din *Hotel Europa* sunt cetățeni de mâna a doua, sortiți definitiv ratării, de la familia letonă[5] (secvența „Europereta") locuind strâmtorată într-o „cameră îmbâcsită" și de la tinerii

[4] Viesturs Kairišs (Letonia), „Europeretta"; Oskaras Koršunovas (Lituania), „Aventură de o noapte"; Nedialko Delcev (Bulgaria), „Grand Hotel Casino Europa"; Dritëro Kasapi (Republica Macedonia), „Room Service"; Piotr Cieplak (Polonia), „Îngeri de hotel"; Ivan Popovski (Republica Macedonia/Rusia), „Călătorie de nuntă". De secvența „Nu deranjați" s-a ocupat coregraful Matiaž Farić (Slovenia). Coordonatorul artistic al proiectului a fost Chris Torch (v. *Hotel Europa*: Présentation, 2000: s.p. și Stefanovski, 2009: 104-105).

[5] Reprezentată de un colectiv artistic leton în premiera vieneză, secvența „Europereta" are protagoniști letoni. În versiunea macedoneană a textului dramatic, protagoniștii acestei secvențe sunt macedoneni.

(„Călătorie de nuntă") extaziați de podeaua, patul, perdelele „cu adevărat europene [=occidentale]"[6] (125), până la Odiseul înfrânt şi confuz[7] („Nu deranjați") şi până la Pribeaga „fragilă, obosită şi deprimată" („Îngeri de hotel"), care este consolată de un înger atipic, purtând o uniformă incertă, „de poliţist, soldat şi vameş" (121): „Îngerul ştie cum poate să-i risipească tristeţea. Mai întâi, o face pe Pribeagă să-şi amintească de toate câte le-a trăit. O ia într-o călătorie imaginară, de-a lungul căreia par să zboare amândoi peste oraşe şi sate. Văd case şi oameni. Le fac amândoi cu mâna" (122). „Exerciţiul de zbor" este eficient. Femeia „se însenineză. În schimb, el apare acum ostenit şi abătut. De parcă s-ar fi petrecut un ciudat transfer de energie. E rândul ei să-i sară în ajutor" (123). Cum el vrea să meargă acasă, ea îi promite să-l ajute, la rândul ei. „Ies amândoi în zbor pe fereastră. S-a făcut Îngerul om? S-a făcut femeia Înger? Au zburat în sus sau în jos?" (124)

Pierderea direcţiei, rătăcirea (aparent lipsită de sens) într-o lume în degringoladă epuizează rezervele de răbdare şi de încredere ale oricui. Călătoria devenită incontrolabilă sau care, după toate semnele, nu duce nicăieri se înfăţişează ca o aventură lipsită nu doar de sens, ci şi de însufleţire. Călătorul dezamăgit şi istovit (şi fizic, şi psihic) renunţă la miraj, nu mai este tentat decât de o singură ţintă: acum nu îşi mai doreşte decât să se întoarcă *acasă*.

Reprezentată în premieră pe 20 iulie 2012 pe insula croată Mali Brijun, în aer liber, între măslini şi brazi, piesa *Odisej/Odiseu* este o nouă coproducţie amplă, un nou proiect spectacular realizat prin colaborarea complexă a mai multor teatre de pe teritoriul fostei federaţii iugoslave[8]. Actorii provin din Serbia, Croaţia, Macedonia şi Slovenia, iar regizorul spectacolului este macedoneanul Aleksandar Popovski. Scenografia minimalistă este semnată de grupul Numen (Sven Jonke, Christoph Katzler şi Nikola Radeljković) împreună cu Ivana Radenović, iar Miljenko şi Ana Sekulić au sculptat capul de statuie îngropat pe jumătate în pământ, singurul obiect static, de proporţii monumentale, de pe scena reprezentată de un petic de pământ de pe Mali Brijun-„Itaca". Didascalia preliminară din textul dramatic (Stefanovski, 2015: 9) menţionează posibilitatea ca acelaşi actor/aceeaşi actriţă să interpreteze în spectacol două sau mai multe roluri, iar în spectacol se şi realizează cumulări cum ar fi: Zeus şi Menelaos; Poseidon şi Nestor; Anticleea, Calipso şi Argus, câinele credincios al lui Odiseu; Melantho, Nausicaa, Circe şi Hecuba; Astianax, un cerşetor, Ciclopul şi copilul din Ismara; Tiresias şi Cântăreţul. Trecerile de la un rol la altul (inclusiv schimbările de costum) se fac la vedere, accentuându-se astfel teatralitatea evenimentului la care asistă publicul.

Ca şi la Homer, Odiseu este în piesa lui Stefanovski prototipul războinicului care, dorind să se întoarcă acasă după încheierea războiului, rătăceşte pe mări timp îndelungat:

> De la începutul războiului au trecut douăzeci de ani – puţină vreme pentru poveste, dar multă pentru noi, muritorii. Lumea s-a schimbat: în locul marilor regi, de al căror cuvânt se ţinea seamă, au venit mărunţi şefi de trib de faimă îndoielnică. Soldaţii lăsaţi la vatră au pus stăpânire pe pământurile de odinioară. Trăiesc pe spinarea Troiei, în trufie şi desfrâu. Zeii, care au amestecat de zor tot terciul ăsta, s-au

[6] Mireasa încearcă să nu fie dezamăgită când, mai apoi, apare în aşternutul camerei de hotel „un minunat gândac occidental" (Stefanovski, 2010b: 127).

[7] „ODISEU (*Vorbeşte singur.*): Tovarăşi de suferinţă, prieteni, ascultaţi-mă! Suntem pierduţi. Nu ştim încotro e Răsăritul şi încotro e Apusul, nu ştim de unde se înalţă luminosul soare şi unde coboară el la culcare." (Stefanovski, 2010b: 96). Personajul va reveni ca protagonist în piesa *Odiseu*.

[8] Teatrul Ulysses, înfiinţat în 2001 de Rade Šerbedžija şi Borislav Vujčić în semn de omagiu faţă de James Joyce şi funcţionând în Fort Minor, fortăreaţă construită de austro-ungari pe Mali Brijun, la sfârşitul secolului XIX; Teatrul Gavella din Zagreb, numit după Branko Gavella (1885-1962), faimos om de teatru croat de origine vlahă; Teatrul Naţional Sârb din Novi Sad; Teatrul Naţional Sloven din Maribor; Atelje 212 din Belgrad; Festivalul de Teatru Sterija, numit după dramaturgul sârb Jovan Sterija Popović (1806-1856) şi desfăşurat din 1956 la Novi Sad; Teatrul Pilotului Cvetko (personaj din *Černodrinski se întoarce acasă* de Goran Stefanovski), trupă independentă din Skopje, întemeiată de regizorii Slobodan Unkovski, Aleksandar Popovski şi Ivan Popovski.

> dat deoparte şi au lăsat lumea de izbelişte. Dintre toţi învingătorii Troiei rămaşi în viaţă, numai unul nu a ajuns înapoi acasă. Pe el, zeii l-au osândit să rătăcească întruna şi să fie veşnic măcinat de dor. Pe el, zeii l-au osândit la nostalgie. (12)

Figura mitică în jurul căreia se construieşte cea de-a doua epopee homerică este tratată de Stefanovski în registru parodic şi burlesc, devenind nucleul unei farse satirice. Elementele eroice, solemne, serioase par să se dizolve în derizoriu, în vorbe de duh usturătoare, în jocuri de cuvinte vulgare şi în înjurături, în cântece şi dansuri de mahala. Dar distanţarea ironică de mit, persiflarea cuvintelor şi a atitudinilor pline de morgă, pierderea încrederii în binele instaurat prin forţa armelor şi în curăţenia sufletească a conducătorilor nu anulează tensiunea dramatică. Aparent lejer şi neproblematic, lipsit de repere morale solide, textul lui Stefanovski dezvoltă, pe nesimţite, o forţă de captivare din ce în ce mai puternică, determinând spectatorul să cadă pe gânduri şi, dincolo de faţada de bâlci, să contemple dileme şi tragedii umane perene: războiul înverşunat, monstruos, „motivat" de câte o foarte discutabilă „cauză dreaptă"; cumplita politică de genocid; haosul şi distrugerea civilizaţiei; violenţele inimaginabile comise împotriva populaţiei civile, violarea în masă, ca „represalii", a femeilor duşmanilor; minciuna sistematică, menită „să înnobileze" raţiuni abjecte:

> AEDUL: Oamenii rătăcesc prin lume căutându-şi identitatea, brodând poveşti despre cine sunt şi ce sunt. Folosesc tot felul de trucuri. Ratările şi le prezintă drept realizări. Scornesc hărţi noi, care, chipurile, sunt o dovadă că ei nu s-au rătăcit, ci se află chiar acolo unde trebuie să fie. Găsesc îndreptăţire pentru tot ce fac, născocesc scuze pentru greşeli, se străduiesc să dea un sens vieţii lor, cu orice preţ. Aşa că pribegirea ajunge să fie înfăţişată drept călătorie bine chibzuită, egoismul drept năzuinţă către idealuri înalte, jaful drept luptă pentru libertate, atacul drept apărare, genocidul drept pelerinaj sfânt. (35)

Urcaţi cu toţii pe capul de statuie (care reprezintă corabia) şi ţinând aproape de ei bagaje modeste (valize şi genţi uzate, sacoşe de rafie, boccele) şi instrumente muzicale populare (un acordeon, o chitară), oamenii din prima scenă sunt, cum nu se poate mai clar, nişte marginali, nişte amărâţi care, refugiaţi de cine ştie unde, plutesc acum în derivă pe valurile vieţii, fiecare trăind o mică şi nesemnificativă, probabil, „odisee". Fiecare dintre ei trăieşte o dramă a dezrădăcinării, fiecare dintre ei duce dorul unui loc pe care să-l numească *acasă*, fiecare dintre ei a ajuns să rătăcească fără ţintă prin lume – printr-o lume stăpânită de rătăcire:

> AEDUL: Îţi cânt, o, muză, urmarea acestei istorii, cu noi şi noi peripeţii. Animalele rătăcesc, oamenii rătăcesc, popoare întregi rătăcesc, zeii rătăcesc, iar istoria rătăceşte şi ea. Cei ce rătăcesc ne stârnesc bănuieli. Refugiaţii la fel. De ce nu sunt acasă la ei? Ce i-a alungat, ce i-a aruncat în lume? Acasă e raiul, se zice; dacă-i aşa, ce caută ei la răsărit de Eden? De ce s-au răzvrătit? Rătăcirea poate să fie fizică ori metafizică, voită ori silită, pasionantă ori năucitoare, poate să fie plăcere sau durere, joc sau chin sufletesc, poate să fie petrecere sau năpastă. Pe cei ce rătăcesc îi invidiem pentru libertatea lor, dar, pe de altă parte, îi compătimim pentru chiar această libertate. (29)

Nu doar oamenii de rând, figuranţi ai istoriei, sunt mărunţi şi jalnici în piesa lui Goran Stefanovski, ci înşişi eroii homerici sunt invidioşi, intriganţi, bârfitori, lipsiţi de onoare şi de cinste. Menelau îşi laudă cinic soţia pentru că „niciodată nu a făcut nazuri să se culce cu cine trebuie şi cu cine nu" (19), iar Nestor are discursul imund al unui afacerist profitor de război:

> NESTOR: Auzi, dacă ai nevoie de arme ai ajuns unde trebuie. Oferim afaceri avantajoase. Arcuri care se îndoaie singure, săbii şi cuţite de toate dimensiunile, suliţe, scuturi, măciuci. Sau acest produs nou. Buzdugan T-10. T Troia. 10-zece ani

> de război. Putem aranja şi cu oastea. O închiriem cu ziua. Două cete îi aranjează pe peţitori într-o după amiază. Transportul, mâncarea şi alte cheltuieli sunt incluse. Ascultă-mă pe mine. (*Îşi arată medaliile.*) Servicii aduse naţiunii, medalia muncii, erou al poporului, general de armată, luptător pentru libertate. (*Din cer îi cade ceva în cap.*) Găinaţ de vultur! Ăsta-i semn bun! Dragule, zeii te ocrotesc. (*Către Telemah*) Nici nu poţi să respiri din pricina zeilor. Umflă taxele, îşi iau comisionul şi nu ne mai rămâne nimic nouă, negustorilor cinstiţi. (21-22)

Protagonistul şi toate acţiunile sale suportă, de asemenea, tratamentul acid al demitizării, administrat chiar de către camarazii de odinioară ai lui Odiseu:

> TELEMAH: Dar oare nu Odiseu a făurit calul troian? Şi nu asta a hotărât soarta războiului?
>
> NESTOR: Iaca, asta e propagandă de război. De parcă ăia care n-au văzut Troia nici măcar în cărţi cu poze le ştiu pe toate, iar noi, care ne-am lăsat tinereţea acolo, habar n-avem de nimic.
>
> MENELAU: Calul troian a fost ideea mea. Odiseu n-a avut nicio legătură cu asta.
>
> ELENA: Dar are cu siluirea troienelor. Iar pe tine te-a lăsat de izbelişte de cum te-ai născut. Tatăl tău a fost o cârtiţă. Un informator. Omul nostru în cetatea Troiei. A pătruns ca un cerşetor în cetate şi i-a păcălit pe toţi. Numai eu l-am recunoscut. L-am uns cu ulei şi mi-a povestit totul. A omorât o droaie de troieni şi s-a întors la ahei cu toate informaţiile. (21)

Mai târziu, când apar şi zeii în peisaj, totul (îmbrăcăminte, accesorii etc.) rămâne la fel de banal şi de lipsit de speranţă. Arsenalul mitic este doar recuzită teatrală sărăcăcioasă, improvizată: săbiile sunt de lemn, coifurile şi scuturile de mucava, iar tridentul lui Poseidon este o mătură-perie de plastic. Odiseu poartă izmene şi un pulover tricotat din rămăşiţe de lână de culori diferite, are târlici de plastic şi o şosetă găurită, iar pe cap şi-a pus o batistă înnodată la colţuri. Zeus are o pălărie ponosită, umblă cu pantalonii suflecaţi până la genunchi, să i se vadă şosetele roşii (dintre care una este căzută). Zeii degradaţi, micşoraţi, banalizaţi, deloc temuţi sau respectaţi, deveniţi obiect de batjocură, sunt pe potriva muritorilor copleşiţi de mizerie, de ratare şi cu totul debusolaţi. Discursul final al lui Zeus, o însăilare găunoasă şi penibilă de clişee verbale, este edificator în acest sens:

> ZEUS: Doamnelor şi domnilor, tovarăşe şi tovarăşi, prieteni. Dragul meu popor – adică, dragi muritori. Stimaţi colegi zei. Iată, a venit şi ceasul în care... Permiteţi-mi să vă adresez câteva cuvinte cu ocazia... în legătură cu ... Sunt onorat şi foarte încântat că mi s-a încredinţat sarcina de a declara pacea. Ce este pacea? Deci pacea este... pacea nu e război. Pacea este tinereţe, haz, voie bună. Este o conlucrare paşnică între oameni şi zei în toate domeniile de activitate, pentru a asigura o viaţă mai bună pentru generaţiile viitoare. De aceea, trăiască pacea! Asta e tot ce-am avut de spus. Mai mult sau mai puţin. Vă mulţumesc. (*Aplauze. Zeus se adresează aedului.*) Hai, acum cântă despre asta, să se ducă vestea printre oameni. (66-67)

Pierderea reperelor este sugerată în piesă şi prin comportamentul „împrăştiat" al personajelor, prin caracterul haotic al acţiunilor şi vorbelor lor, ca şi prin toate semnele vizuale, care trimit spre registre diferite sau chiar opuse. Cadrul natural unde are loc spectacolul este marcat de urme ale activităţii omeneşti, cum ar fi restul de statuie dărâmată, fragmentată, pe jumătate scufundată în pământ, trimiţând la o glorie apusă. Obiectele cu care se înconjoară personajele aparţin deopotrivă, spaţiului eroic (arme) şi spaţiului domestic (sacoşe, saci menajeri, găleţi, mături), simbolizând pendularea personajelor între sublim şi ridicol. Vestimentaţia este şi ea amestecată, aparţinând unor epoci şi stiluri diferite. Trupa acompaniatoare (Foltin, din Macedonia) furnizează pe ritmuri con-

temporane comentarii echivalente cu cele ale corului antic. Formula *teatrului sărac* pentru care a optat regizorul este însă intenţionat destabilizată prin aglomerarea sufocantă de mărunţişuri (concrete şi abstracte). În mod programat, acestea ajung să tulbure simbolismul coerent şi austeritatea pe care le presupune modelul grotowskian, ajung să sufoce orice pretenţie de claritate şi de consecvenţă.

Odiseul lui Goran Stefanovski regizat de Aleksandar Popovski este strigătul de frustrare şi de neputinţă al artistului care cade pradă împrejurărilor istoriei, care este îndepărtat de ţelul său, care este purtat, de zei sau de hazard, fără milă, oriunde în lume, numai *acasă* la el nu este lăsat să revină. Odiseu (personajul, dar şi autorul; omul contemporan, în general) nu poate înţelege de ce e astfel pedepsit, nu poate descifra motivul „mâniei zeilor" – zei decăzuţi, meschini şi plini de confuzie ei înşişi. Dar nu renunţă să ţină piept destinului vitreg şi încă mai speră să ajungă la liman cândva, oricât de târziu şi cu oricât de mari eforturi. Ca o *mantra*, el evocă obsesiv locul natal, într-o lumină idilică:

> ODISEU: Itaca e casa mea! Acolo curg râuri de lapte şi miere. Viţa de vie rodeşte de trei ori pe an şi porumbul de cinci ori. Din trei părţi străluceşte soarele, iar dintr-a patra luna. Acolo abia că sunt boli, bătrâneţe şi moarte. Stăpâneşte pacea şi iubirea veşnică. Şi toţi cântă: „Fie toţi oriunde-or vrea, numai noi să fim aici, acasă." (25)

În cele din urmă, (şi acest) Odiseu ajunge în Itaca. Dar rătăcirea lui nu a luat sfârşit, căci Itaca nu mai este *acasă*, a devenit un loc străin, în care călătorul nu mai regăseşte ceea ce ţine minte că a lăsat în urmă:

> ODISEU: Patria mea, căsuţa mea, n-am crezut că mai ajung să te văd, iar acum, uite, cu bucurie mă închin ţie. (*Pauză. Se uită în jurul său.*) Parcă nu-i Itaca.
> ATENA: Nici tu nu pari a fi Odiseu.
> ODISEU: Unde e Itaca de-altădată?
> ATENA: S-a dus cu Odiseu cel de-altădată.
> ODISEU: Am crezut că... o să fie cum a fost.
> ATENA: Nici tu nu mai eşti cum ai fost. (54)

Prins într-un ciclu repetitiv de erori şi rătăciri, de obsesii şi prejudecăţi, de speranţe false şi dezamăgiri, de blesteme şi nenorociri, eroul e nevoit să admită adevărul multă vreme presimţit, dar respins cu obstinaţie: este condamnat la rătăcire veşnică, iar *acasă*, principiul lui călăuzitor, este doar o iluzie, o proiecţie a dorinţelor sale, menită să îi compenseze frustrările. „Isteţul Odiseu", „mai iute decât umbra lui şi decât soarta mai viclean", care „i-a păcălit pe zei, a amăgit timpul şi a tras moartea pe sfoară" (32), accede la adevărata *înţelepciune* doar când acceptă că, după atâta timp, după atâtea câte s-au întâmplat în viaţa lui şi în lume, *acasă* nu mai există sub nicio formă reală, fizică: „S-ajung iar acasă/ N-am să pot nicicând,/ Să plec iar de-acasă/ N-am să pot nicicând" (68). Într-un spaţiu mereu mişcător şi derutant, el se salvează, totuşi, de ispita abandonului. Se adăposteşte la umbra nostalgiei, concentrându-se pe călătoria interioară, pe adevărul sentimentelor şi al amintirilor personale: „Sufletul mă doare/ Unde mi-este casa./ ştiu ce e iubirea/ Unde mi-este casa" (69). Numai memoria, cultivată cu răbdare, îl poate ajuta să îşi regăsească Itaca – şi numai în gând ori în inimă.

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Women and Medieval Travels: *The Book of Margery Kempe*

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For a long time, it was believed that the people of the Middle Ages did not travel too much due to various reasons, but the great variety of travel-connected writings seems to contradict this belief and to suggest that there were many medieval men and women who set on longer or shorter journeys for different purposes. The aim of our paper is to present such a travel writing, more precisely, an account of one of the most popular types of medieval journeys: the pilgrimage. *The Book of Margery Kempe* (c. 1436) describes the various pilgrimages to holy places in England and Germany, to Jerusalem, Rome and Santiago de Compostella undertaken by a medieval middle-class English woman in the first part of the 15th century. The *Book* may not satisfy the curiosity of a modern tourist because it provides little information about the places seen by the protagonist, but it traces the deep personal transformation of a simple woman in search of faith. This travel book/ autobiography/ treatise also greatly contributes to a more complete understanding of the life of medieval woman, of the distribution of roles in a gender-divided society, of the negotiations regarding authority and freedom and ultimately, of a woman's difficult passage towards independence and self-assertion.

***Keywords*: travel writing; pilgrimage; patriarchy; gender; the Middle Ages; mystical writer; Margery Kempe.**

The medieval society did not encourage the mobility of its individuals to the same extent as the modern period does. Class restrictions, economic impediments, difficulties implied by longer trips, wars or other military conflicts, piracy, etc. were just a few of the problems that made travel challenging. Many medieval individuals never left their home towns and the wide world, for them, was populated by real people as well as by dangerous fantastic creatures. On the other hand, though, we should not fall into the trap of believing the idea of a static medieval society and more nuances are needed for a better understanding of the medieval man and of his reasons to leave his home. Thus, recent research has shown that, despite many difficulties and hindrances, various groups of people did move in space for purposes such as: war and crusade, pilgrimage and other religious journeys, trade, political and diplomatic affairs, etc. The proof of this mobility is given by a great number of writings such as: letters, reports, memoirs of places seen and unseen, maps and map legends, compendia of knowledge (Brummett, 2009: 1), clearly suggesting not only that at least some medieval people travelled longer or shorter distances, but also that there was an audience for such writings, revealing an interest in finding out more about exotic places and their inhabitants, about individual exploits or group adventures.

One of the problems that underlie the lack of critical approaches on medieval travel writings is that they were rarely seen as such, being subdued to other genres, and there are at least two important reasons for that: first, the interest in travel writing as a distinct genre is fairly new[1], and,

[1] In the "Introduction" to the 2002 *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, the editors, Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, start by admitting that the study of travel writing "has recently emerged as a key theme for the humanities and social sciences" (1). Carl Thompson also begins his approach to travel writing with the

second, the idea of travel in the medieval period was totally different from our modern perspective. Tourism did not exist at a time when people travelled for very specific purposes and exploration, pleasure and curiosity had little relevance for the medieval traveller. Instead, the researcher needs to be sensitive to the distinctions between the medieval traveller and the modern tourist and to the coexistence between the real and the fantastic, the sacred and the profane in the medieval mind. An overview of the different types of travel writings produced in the Middle Ages reveals an interesting mixture of real and fantastic elements that do not fit our modern understanding of what travelling should imply. Carl Thompson, for instance, points to the fact that, though there was an abundance of travel accounts in the Middle Ages, very few of them were first-person narratives, the majority being compendia of information from classical authorities, contemporary reports, second-hand details and stories from intermediaries, resulting in "a curious blend of the factual and the fabulous, as they combine plausible descriptions of foreign peoples and places with accounts of monstrous or miraculous beings that are clearly projections of European fears and fantasies, such as winged centaurs, dog-headed men and Amazons" (2011: 38). This perspective highlights the very special world in which the medieval people lived and their efforts to understand it, to identify their place in it, to integrate their religious beliefs, to cope with their fears and to overcome their weaknesses. As a result, most of these travel accounts fail in satisfying the curiosity of the reader as they give little reliable information on the places seen and reveal more about individual quests, spiritual journeys, or personal transformations. Stemming from the idea that life itself is a journey, real journeys are coupled with spiritual quests, with adventures meant to prove one's worth, or with trials and tribulations in search for redemption. William H. Sherman identifies two main types of travels specific to the Middle Ages: pilgrimage and war, considering that "the pilgrimage was the dominant medieval framework for long-distance, non-utilitarian travel", while "the chivalric quest was the other major paradigm inherited from medieval travel writers, and it sometimes overlapped with the spiritual quest of the pilgrims" (2002: 23).

The pilgrimage was one of the few types of spatial movements undergone by large groups of people, accepted and even validated by the medieval authorities and, "by the later Middle Ages something akin to a tourist industry had emerged, catering for pilgrims visiting Rome and the Holy Land, and to many local sites of religious significance" (Thompson, 2011: 38). The pilgrimage, however, is more than a simple journey, as it blends the real with the unreal, the profane with the sacred, carrying the pilgrims towards real places, but making them experience visions and revelations as they path the threshold of the sacred space in their search for healing or salvation. In other words, the pilgrimage, as a "form of travel with the stated intention of appreciating, experiencing, and conveying sacred space" (Brummett, 2009: 2), is, at the same time, a physical journey to a known place of pilgrimage and a spiritual journey into a space invested with sacred values. At the end of this journey, the successful pilgrim passes, through a final ritual, into a different form of existence, the sacred, in which he hopes to find spiritual benefits (the salvation of the soul) and physical benefits (healing the body) (Sot, 2002: 605). What differentiates the pilgrimage from the modern view on travel, therefore, is the combination between a real journey and a quest meant to produce, at its end, a renewal or reinvention of the self; and like all quests, it involves the obstacles, hardships and tests that are meant to bring about the penance for past sins and a renovation of faith.

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assertion: "travel writing is currently a flourishing and highly popular literary genre" (2011: 1). These studies and many others, however, mostly refer to the period starting with the 15th century, the writings about the famous travels of the Ancient World and of the Middle Ages being rarely included in the genre of travel writing, because "few of these texts conform closely to our notion of travel book" (Thompson, 2011: 37). It was only in the later Middle Ages, with the writings of Marco Polo and John Mandeville, that we can speak, the researchers argue, of travel writing proper, because these texts "mark the beginnings of a new impulse in the late Middle Ages which would transform the traditional paradigms of pilgrimage and crusade into new forms attentive to observed experience and curiosity towards other lifeways" (Hulme; Youngs, 2002: 3).

A long-neglected but very important place in these journeys is occupied by women. Their presence in pilgrimages has long been dismissed by various authors, but it has gained critical attention in the recent years. Nowadays, contemporary research highlights the importance of the female presence in the medieval pilgrimages and their crucial impact in our understanding not only of the medieval pilgrimages as such, but also of other important aspects of the Middle Ages, such as authority, institutions, gender roles and writing. Thus, though many women[2] undertook pilgrimages or set forth on various journey, "the majority of medieval women were expected to remain enclosed within certain physical spaces most of the time" (Craig, 2009: 2), hence the smaller number of texts belonging to women or describing women's journeys in comparison to those written by men. Added to that, there is also the important issue of authority, since women were not credited to have the same authority as men and hence, their writings were not believed to provide reliable information. This is the reason why many of the women's stories are not rendered directly, but through a mediating male scribe whose presence validated the woman's account.

Other critics try to explain the lack of distinction between male and female pilgrims by asserting that, due to its religious purpose as well as to the difficulty of the journey, the pilgrimage created a sort of camaraderie among the pilgrims that tended to obscure the differences, such as those of class or gender. This belief was supported by a variety of proofs suggesting that both men and women pilgrims had the same legal rights, the same clothes, the same rights of protection from bishops, abbots and other clergymen (Craig, 2009: 138-9). However, more recent studies that paid special attention to the female presence during these pilgrimages suggests the contrary, namely, that

> issues of gender (or of class) did not vanish, or even mute themselves, when a woman took up the scrip and staff and headed for Jerusalem. Instead, the stressful conditions of long-distance travel and cultural displacement replayed and even amplified the social divisions amongst pilgrims, who clung fiercely to their previous identities. In that context, women, who could not as easily find justification for devotional pilgrimage in the caregiving aspect of their quotidian role as they did for miraculous pilgrimage, endured a strong, negative reaction to their presence. (Craig, 2009: 140)

Lacking religious authority, women were more easily accepted in miraculous pilgrimages, namely those involving miraculous healing of the body (their children's or husbands', or their own, to make them apt to be wives and mothers, suggesting that women were further confined to the traditional, domestic role of caretaker) and less welcomed in devotional pilgrimages to holy places, where their role was less clear, overstepping the male-pilgrims' role. Moreover, there are suggestions that "male pilgrims, hostile towards women's participation, only tolerated women *at the price of their silence and invisibility*" (Craig, 2009: 152). Thus, Craig goes on commenting: "whether a woman experienced misogynist resistance, camaraderie and support, or a reaffirmation of her traditional roles as a woman depended both upon the circumstances of her pilgrimage and upon her success in simultaneously performing the roles of woman and of pilgrim to the satisfaction of multiple audiences with conflicting agendas" (Craig, 2009: 4-5).

Margery Kempe's presence in these late medieval pilgrimages that resulted in an account of her experiences is a clear proof of the ambiguity regarding the roles of women in society and in religion, the amount of authority or freedom allowed to them, as well as the willingness of some women to challenge these limitations. On the one hand, Margery Kempe's *Book* is still one of the

[2] Leigh Ann Craig dwells on the importance of the female presence in Christian pilgrimages from the earliest times (2009: "Introduction"). Susan Signe Morrison (2000: "Introduction") also focuses on the significant presence of women in the medieval pilgrimages and the long neglect of their particular experiences and she points out the importance of treating them as a separate group and not together with the male pilgrims.

most famous sources on women pilgrims (Morrison, 2000: 70). On the other hand, Margery Kempe is not the typical woman assuming socially prescribed norms and conforming to the rules. Leigh Anne Craig refers to her ambiguous reception, noticing that "Margery Kempe stood out not because she went on pilgrimage, but because she took an unusual stance in defending her choice: rather than modesty and silence, she justified her travels by means of a public display of the authority lent to her by her visionary experience. She thereby incited a wide array of emphatic responses, from belief in her proto-sanctity to accusations of madness" (2009: 263). Nowadays, Margery Kempe is included in the group of English Medieval mystics, with the provision that her inclusion has been rather controversial and that it is only with the critical re-evaluation of her work in the mid-20th century that her place among the other important English mystics is secured (Watson, 1999: 539)[3]. The result of such controversies is that *The Book of Margery Kempe* lies at the crossroad of genres, being a pilgrimage account, and hence, a *travel book*, because it describes her religious journeys to holy places in England, Rome, Jerusalem and Germany, spanning over many years of her life, an *autobiography*, actually the first autobiography to be composed in English (Larrington, 1995: 35) and a *medieval treatise* in which Margery Kempe "teaches its readers strategies for managing the emotional, and ultimately spiritual, damage brought on by feelings of uncertainty, unworthiness, and despair" (Krug, 2009: 218), suggesting that she envisioned her text as a material to be used.

The complexity of these critical approaches suggests the importance of the *Book* on various levels: an understanding of the religious life in the 15th century, a unique account of the emotional life of a medieval woman, an insight into the private and public life of women in the late Middle Ages. Though we are aware of the richness of possibilities of analysis this text offers, we will approach it from the perspective of travel writings as it describes a typical medieval journey: the pilgrimage. We insist on the fact that, though this form of travelling was very common in the period, with clearly marked routes and rules and resulting in a great number of travel and religious accounts, this particular document is special as it is one of the few such texts composed by a woman and it reveals interesting facts about women on pilgrimages and about the manner in which authority and prescribed gender roles operate in a special situation. So, "Margery Kempe's text is more suggestive about the state of the medieval pilgrimage and woman's place in it beyond the level of how one goes on a pilgrimage" (Morrison, 2000: 71). Thus, the text is both a real journey, with its rules and difficulties, and a spiritual journey through which she tries to understand the visions she repeatedly has and to master her emotional reactions. From this perspective, the places she visits receive a sacred dimension and are "felt" rather than "seen" or "explored" as Margery minutely depicts her reactions and her passage towards the full acceptance of her visions and her social role as a visionary.

A great importance is attached to what this simple, middle-class, medieval woman does, namely walk the dangerous line between the traditional feminine roles (those of wife, mother, caretaker) and the masculine roles defined by authority and freedom of movement or decision (regarding her involvement in business and later in the religious life of the community, as councillor on religious matters). She is not openly rebellious because the religious role of a pilgrim was acceptable at the time both for men and for women, even though it entailed the women's presence in the public sphere. The involvement in religious activities was one of the few public spaces in which the presence of a woman, traditionally associated with domesticity, was tolerated

[3] Nicholas Watson refers to a rather heterogeneous group of writers: "the Middle English Mystics" or "the fourteenth century English mystics" whose works span between 1330 and 1440, in which he includes Margery Kempe together with Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich and the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* (2008: 539). However, he admits the difficulties of considering them together, the great differences among them, the controversies regarding this selection, especially in the case of Margery Kempe, and the suggestions of including other names in the group. All these considered, he concludes that "the canon (...) has undergone no modifications since the eruption of Kempe on to the scene half a century ago" (Watson, 2008: 539).

and Margery Kempe takes advantage of this possibility: "although never fully integrated into the male sphere of activity, the marginal status this occupancy could afford [them] her could allow for a level of participation and acceptance in both spheres, tenuous though it might be" (Herbert McAvoy, 2004: 2). The advantage for the modern readers is that they have the opportunity to gain a meaningful insight into the life, thoughts and emotions of medieval women just because one woman, Margery Kempe, dared to be different and defy many of the rules of her world.

The Book of Margery Kempe was composed in the 1430s[4] (Krug, 2009: 218) and depicts the life and voyages of Margery Kempe, whose work came into the attention of the critics in the 1930's, when the manuscript was discovered in a private library (Bale, 2015: ix). Margery Kempe was born around 1373 in Lynn, a town in East Anglia, a rich port, close to London and Norwich (where, at the time, lived another famous medieval mystic, the anchoress Julian of Norwich) and at the crossroad of various trade routes that connected it to important commercial centres in Europe (mainly in the Netherlands and Germany). She belonged to a rich and influential family of merchants and, during her life, she managed, though unsuccessfully, her own businesses (a brewery and a mill). She had fourteen children and, after twenty years of marriage, she made a vow of chastity consecrated by the Bishop of Lincoln and started a life as a pilgrim. First, she visited different places in England where she sought for proof that her visions of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary and other saints were real and not devilish delusions. Then she went to Jerusalem and Rome, afterwards to Santiago de Compostella, and, around the age of sixty, she set off on another pilgrimage to Germany, to Wilsnack and Aachen.

She had the first vision after the birth of her first child when she fell seriously ill and depressed and confessed that she was burdened by a sin. Her confessor reprimanded her for having hidden that particular sin (which is not revealed to us), but Jesus appeared to her and told her that He knew everything and loved her nevertheless. From that moment onward she had numerous other visions, mainly of Jesus, who required various things from her, such as to give up eating meat, to go to different holy places, to take a vow of chastity and who promises His support in times of trouble. The passage towards acceptance of her calling, as described in her *Book*, is not easy; her own failures and doubts (she is a woman who loves life, good food, rich clothes, who speaks freely about her sexual desires) being doubled by other peoples' aggressive attitudes towards her visions and her emotional outbursts and fits of crying (this being the way in which the visions became manifest), by their disbelief and threats with imprisonment and even death (burning) and by accusations of falsity and heresy.

Though referred to as *The Book of Margery Kempe*, the text is composed by Margery, but not written down by her. She had two scribes who are mentioned in her text (her son and a priest). It is not known whether she was illiterate[5] or not, but it is obvious from her words that she knew the Bible and the important religious writings of her time. This distance from the self as writer and the self as believer/pilgrim is enhanced by the fact that the *Book* is written in the third person, Margery referring to herself as the "creature," creating a distance between the real, middle-class, wealthy women named Margery Kempe, and the pilgrim, a humble creature of God, whose earthly existence, that of a wealthy, married, middle-class woman, is gradually effaced, being re-

[4] On 23 July, 1436, the priest begins to write Book 1 (Bale, 2015: xliii).

[5] As Anthony Bale notices, we should be careful in hurrying to consider Kempe illiterate for the simple reason that she used scribes to convey her experiences in writing. Even though only the women of the upper classes were highly educated, the women of Kempe's class were familiar with religious texts that were probably read to them or they memorized. Some could even read and write (xiv-xv). In fact, "the boundaries between what we now call literacy and illiteracy were not clearly drawn" (Bale, 2015: xv). Kim M. Phillips also argues that our modern understanding of literacy and illiteracy today is totally different from the medieval understanding of these terms. She also points to the fact that using a scribe was a common practice even for literate women because it gave their texts more validity or authority than if they had written them themselves (2004: 21). In the light of these comments, it seems less important to find out whether Kempe was literate or not and more important to highlight the fact that she closely controlled the manner in which her text is written.

placed by a holy life in the service of God.

A crucial aspect in understanding the medieval idea about travel is expressed, by Margery Kempe, in the *Book*. Thus, far from being a personal choice stemming from curiosity or spirit of adventure, Kempe's pilgrimage is seen as a mission given by Jesus Christ to His "creature": "Thys creatur was sent of owyr Lord to divers placys of relygyon" (I, 12: 582)[6] in order to prove to herself if her visions are truthful or deceitful. She also mentions that it was God who put the desire to see these places into her heart (I, 15). Later on, just before the last pilgrimage to Germany to accompany her daughter-in-law, she confesses that she dislikes travelling by sea, but that she would be willing to go only if God requires it of her (II, 2), clearly suggesting that her journeys are necessary steps in her connection to the divinity and in her spiritual transformation. This also explains why there are so few details about the places she sees and so much information about the various difficulties of the journey, seen as necessary steps required by God.

As a result of this calling, Margery Kempe's pilgrimages trace her profound transformations which require her to assume a gradual visibility in the public space with all the dangers that it entails. So, she needs to learn how to carefully handle people's attitudes toward her in order to become accepted as a religious woman and a prophet. On the other hand, Margery also has to cope with a deep personal transformation, from a middle-class woman to a "creature" of God who is forced to free herself of earthly possessions and desires and dedicate her whole existence to God. During these transformations, Margery Kempe gradually detaches herself from the woman's traditional roles (wife, mother, caretaker) only to re-assume them in a new, religious context (wife of God and mother to all those who need her and believe in her).

These transformations come with great challenges and dangers. The moment that she decides to step outside the comfort zone of her class and gender (daughter and, later, wife of wealthy men, businesswoman, matron of the house, mother), Margery Kempe becomes the target of marginalization, disbelief and even violence. One of the reasons for those negative attitudes is her sudden visibility in the public sphere. Women, as wives and mothers, are typically the angels of the house, the caretakers and protectors of the family, but they are less visible[7] in the public sphere. Visibility is considered a transgression of the norms and punished. As far as her middle-class status is concerned, Kempe's transgression consists in refusing to behave as expected of her and the disregard and even violence of the others begin the moment that she starts fasting, she gives up her rich clothes, she is too generous, to the despair of her servants who fear that she became incapable of efficiently running her household, or she has disturbing fits of crying in public. Ready to accept God's calling, Margery Kempe shows the negative impact of women's choice of overstepping the acceptable lines in a gender-divided society, in contrast to the positive response to women who comply with these roles.

In this light, pilgrimage is not a transgression in itself, because it was an accepted cultural practice for men and for women and it is not her choice to go on pilgrimages that makes her "visible" and hence unacceptable. What the others dislike are her religious practices. Though many proofs of doubt and attempts at her marginalization are clear at the beginning of her religious calling, the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and then to Rome is the true test that marks her transformation and that highlights society's violent response to any disturbance. For instance, from the beginning of her journey, Margery is continuously marginalized and punished by her companions because of her refusal to keep silent and conform. What deeply disturbs them is the fact

[6] For references or quotes from *The Book of Margery Kempe*, we provide the number of the book, the chapter and, where there is a direct quote, the line from Lynn Staley's edition (1996). A translation from Anthony Bale's edition (2015) will be provided in a footnote with reference to the author and to the page: "This creature was sent by our Lord to various religious places" (Kempe, 27).

[7] We cannot speak of complete invisibility in the public sphere because medieval women of Kempe's class often had access to the family's business or, if widowed, managed businesses of their own. A very famous literary example is G. Chaucer's Wife of Bath. Kempe tells, in the *Book*, of the failure of her two businesses, a brewery and a mill, which she sets up despite her husband's disapproval.

that her practices are different from theirs: she has fits of crying, she constantly speaks about God, she refuses to eat meat or drink wine. Clearly upsetting is also her emotional response to the visions consisting in heavy, physically exhausting crying and roaring (I, 28). People's reactions to her are among the most various: from astonishment to violence: "For summe seyd it was a wikkyd spiryt vexid hir; sum seyd it was a sekenes; sum seyd sche had dronkyn to mech wyn; sum bannyd hir; sum wisshed sche had ben in the havyn; sum wolde sche had ben in the se in a bottumles boyt; and so ich man as hym thowte"[8] (I, 28. 1599-1602). The types of punishment from the people with whom she travelled were various: they rebuked and chided her, they deserted her in Constance (I, 27) and kept her maid so that she would be forced to travel alone, they forbid her to eat with them and locked her bedding (I, 28), they refused to help her climb Mount Quarantine and to give her water and they tried to prevent her from going to the Jordan River (I, 28).

Though any pilgrim who might have behaved awkwardly could have faced similar forms of marginalization and aggression, at a closer look it becomes clear that much of this violence is accentuated by the fact that our protagonist is a woman. One of the elements to support this idea is the threat of letting her travel alone. Being a woman, she was expected to travel with her husband (as she did, for a while, in England), with her maidservant or with other people. Thus, one form of punishment is to let her travel alone and to take her money. God's help is providential in all these episodes as Margery always finds meeker and more generous companions who believe her visions and help her. Later on, according to the same rule, she is convinced by her confessor to accompany her daughter-in-law to Germany as it was not fit for a young woman to travel alone through a country where she was not known (II, 2). One of dangers of solitude is the sexual abuse from other pilgrims, a danger pointed out to her by Richard, a hunchback who refuses to accompany her, saying that:

> "I wot wel thi cuntremen han forsakyn the, and therfor it wer hard to me to ledyn the. For thy cuntremen han bothyn bowys and arwys, wyth the whech thei myth defendyn bothyn the and hemself, and I have no wepyn save a cloke ful of clowtys. And yet I drede me that myn enmys schul robbyn me and peraventur takyn the awey fro me and defowlyn thy body, and therfor I dar not ledyn the, for I wold not for an hundryd pownd that thu haddyst a vylany in my cumpany"9 (I, 30, 1779-1785).

Margery becomes acceptable to the other pilgrims only when she falls back to the roles expected of her as a woman: when she keeps silent, when she prays and confesses according to the rules established by the Church. The transformation becomes more visible when she starts fulfilling the role of "mother" for those who accept her visions and trust her as a religious councillor. The first one who calls her "mother" is a young priest who looks for her and asks for her guidance (I, 40). Gradually, her religious authority increases and her image as "mother", caretaker and councillor is accepted by more and more people. Thus, Margery has to learn how to make herself accepted without compromising her religious creed and she does this by fulfilling roles that are expected of her, but on her own terms. Isabel Davis aptly explains this transformation asserting that:

> In the passage from real woman to a spiritual existence, Margery gradually leaves her roles as mother and wife as she deserts her home and takes the vow of chastity. (...) Kempe represents her protagonist as shy and reluctant in order that her unique access to God is shown to be a gift rather than something acquisitively

[8] "Because some people said that it was a wicked spirit that vexed her; some said it was a sickness; some said she had drunk too much wine; some cursed her; some wished that she were thrown in the harbour; some wished that she were put out to sea in a boat; and so on each people as he or she thought" (Kempe, 65).

[9] "I know full well that your compatriots have forsaken you, and therefore it would be hard for me to guide you. For your compatriots have both bows and arrows, with which they might defend both you and themselves, and I have no weapon except a cloak full of clouts. And so I fear that my enemies should rob me and perhaps take you away from me and rape you, and therefore I dare not escort you, as I would not, for a hundred pounds, have you suffer some indignity in my company" (Kempe, 71).

> sought and greedily taken. Margery is initially infantilized only to be restored to female adulthood, first as spousal match and then as mother to God himself. Moving sequentially from bride, to wife to mother, Margery attains greater authority by progressing through a figurative life cycle which mirrors that which most secular medieval women have experienced." (Davis, 2004: 42)

Thus, accepting a feminine role is not a failure in Margery's attempts to assert her authority. On the contrary, she seems to have found the most efficient way (we should never forget that from beginning to end Margery Kempe remains a very practical-minded woman) to negotiate her freedom and to impose her religious authority. Thus, though rebellious and gradually gaining authority, Margery does not break the social boundaries of her genre and operates within the culturally sanctioned ideology. Isabel Davis points to the episode in which Margery is accused of preaching, at which she replies: "I preche not, ser, I come in no pulpytt. I use but comownycacyon and good wordys, and that wil I do whil I leve"[10] (I, 52, 2975-2977) and argues that "Margery's challenges to the church and its personnel are matched and balanced by her deference to their authority" (2004: 49), suggesting the fact that she does not want to assume roles that only men fulfil (that of priest and preacher) and she defers to their authority and listens to their council. Her objective is only to expose, on God's guidance and command, the unworthy and sinful among them.

Her authority is also suggested by her independence. If, at the beginning, Margery Kempe submits to the public custom of travelling in a company in which she is actually ill-treated, she later accepts God's urge to travel alone or in a very small company up to the point when she becomes a sort of leader, praying to God to let the ship sail safely across the Channel, through the storm (I, 43). Her authority is even more evident when people start giving her money to pray for them (I, 53) and so, she undertakes the second pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella with the money she received from believers (I, 44).

Margery Kempe's religious authority is never a generally accepted reality, though, and she constantly needs to defend herself from accusations of falsity and heresy and face dangers of marginalization, mockery and even death. What is important to note is the confidence in herself and in God which was weak at the beginning and unfailing in the end. In spite of dangers and accusations, Margery Kempe remains firm in her religious faith, as well as in her duty to listen to God's command and teach the others. She does not keep silent and she does not fail God in spite of people's wrongs.

Margery Kempe's *Book* is an important source of information on medieval pilgrimages, but it becomes more important as it presents a woman's spiritual journey in search of faith, or grace, on the one hand, but also of independence and self-fulfilment, on the other. It is thus an account of medieval customs and rules in a gender-divided society, but it also traces any human private search for salvation, knowledge, independence. Margery courageously fought against the prejudiced and unbelieving society, but she also fought with herself, eliminating her desires, giving up her comforts and trusting her visions that led her towards a more difficult and yet more rewarding path.

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[10] "I don't preach, sir, I enter no pulpit. I use only discussion and good words and I'll do so as long as I live" (Kempe, 115).

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Les écrivains voyageurs ou les voyageurs écrivains de journaux et relations d'un voyage aux Indes Orientales (1690-1691)

Travelers as Writers of Diaries and Accounts of a Voyage to the East Indies (1690-1691)

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Our article focuses on the maritime writing in the form of diaries and accounts of a voyage to the East Indies in 1690 and 1691, by Robert Challe, Claude-Michel Pouchot de Chantassin, P. Lenfant, Fr. Charmot, Fr. Tachard and admiral Abraham Du Quesne-Guitton.
Crucial and hitherto unpublished insider's accounts of the living conditions of seafarers in the late 17th century, the diaries and relations of a voyage to the East Indies in 1690-1691 offer rich information on the subject. Young officer Robert Challe, navy guards Pouchot de Chantassin and Lenfant, Father Charmot – member of the Missions Etrangères – and a Jesuit priest, Father Tachard, provide a realistic description of everyday life on the first French watercraft armed for the East India Company and Louis XIV. Seafaring, battles, storms, political strife and trade wars, together with the approach to an exotic world "discovered" for the first time make up the thread of the narrative. Later, in an account dated 1721, however, the aging Challe's narrative style is found to have evolved into genuine novel-writing. This specific study of maritime writing thus shows once more the ambiguity of any travel narrative.

***Keywords*: travel writing (travel literature); 17th and 18th centuries; Robert Challe; maritime writing; maritime history; Indian Ocean; otherness; religious missions.**

Le 24 février 1690, le premier armement mixte français, comptant trois vaisseaux de guerre, *L'Oiseau*, *Le Lion* et *Le Dragon*, battant pavillon de Louis XIV, et trois bâtiments de fret et de combat, *Le Gaillard*[1], *L'Ecueil*[2] et *Le Florissant*, armés par la Compagnie des Indes orientales, appareille

[1] *Le Gaillard* a été construit au Havre sous la direction d'Étienne Salicon. Il fut mis sur cale en juillet 1683, fut achevé en avril 1684 et armé en 1686. Vaisseau de 4e rang, de 600 tonneaux, de 120,8 mètres de longueur, 32,6 x 15 mètres de largeur et 15 mètres de creux, armé de 44 à 48 canons, son équipage se compose de six officiers majors et de 250 hommes. Après avoir été au Siam en 1687 puis en 1688, en mars 1689, il fut vendu à Brest à la Compagnie des Indes Orientales. Sa vétusté et le mauvais temps le firent couler en mai 1699 à Balassor (Demerliac, 1992).

[2] *L'Ecueil*, ex-*Marin*, mis en chantier au Havre, en 1678, entra en service en 1680. Cédé par le roi à la Com-

de Port-Louis, en Bretagne.

Après seize mois de navigation à travers les océans Atlantique et Indien, ponctuée de haltes au Cap-Vert et aux Comores, l'escadre, commandée par Abraham Du Quesne-Guitton[3], accoste à Pondichéry, aux Indes orientales, le 12 août 1690.

Des témoignages inédits

Exceptionnellement nombreux et riches, plusieurs témoignages des aventures de cette expédition mercantilo-guerrière nous sont parvenus. En effet, malgré les caprices de la navigation, des vents et de la mousson, les combats navals, les épidémies de scorbut et les drames internes affectant les équipages, quelques voyageurs et marins lettrés ont tenu, quotidiennement ou épisodiquement, un journal de voyage, certains par obligation professionnelle, d'autres par goût. Le premier témoignage, certes incomplet et mutilé, dont nous disposons est celui du chef d'escadre, intitulé *Journal des deux voyages à Siam, de Du Quesne-Guitton, 1686-1691*. L'accompagnent les Relations de deux gardes de la Marine, ou élèves officiers, embarqués tous deux sur le navire amiral *Le Gaillard*, celle de Pouchot de Chantassin, *Relation du voyage et retour des Indes Orientales pendant les années 1690 et 1691*[4], et celle de Lenfant, *Relation du voyage fait aux Indes Orientales*[5]. Viennent ensuite les récits de deux passagers religieux : celui du Sociétaire des Missions Etrangères, le père Charmot, *Journal du second voyage de M. Charmot avec M. Guisain*, puis celui d'un Jésuite, le père Tachard, *Relation de voyage aux Indes, 1690-1699*, embarqués réciproquement sur *L'Ecueil* et *Le Gaillard*.

Viennent, enfin, les deux *Journaux de voyage* de l'écrivain du roi naviguant sur *L'Ecueil* : Robert Challe. Ces deux récits, qui dévoilent notamment les conditions de vie des marins à son époque, nous permettent de découvrir un personnage hors du commun, d'une universelle culture, de tempérament à la fois aventurier, bagarreur, querelleur, explorateur, pionnier, philosophe, qui, d'une part, annonce l'écriture de célèbres écrivains à venir et, d'autre part, remet en cause les opinions littéraires, philosophiques et religieuses de son temps.

Enfin, la carte de Jacques Faucher, pilote du *Gaillard*, retraçant point par point l'itinéraire du voyage, complète cet ensemble inédit.

Ces témoins qui n'ont eu, excepté Robert Challe, ni l'honneur, ni le mérite de figurer au panthéon littéraire, ont retranscrit leurs aventures sous forme de journaux ou de relations de voyage. En effet, trois manuscrits inédits connus de certains spécialistes historiens et littéraires, mais jamais publiés, et quatre imprimés, deux contemporains du voyage, un édité une trentaine d'années plus tard, en 1721, et un dernier édité à la fin du XIX^{e} siècle, sous forme d'extraits épars, reconstituent au jour le jour ce périple jusqu'aux Indes orientales à bord du vaisseau amiral *Le Gaillard* et de *L'Ecueil*, vaisseaux de 600 tonneaux embarquant environ 200 hommes.

Les marins-écrivains du premier armement mixte français : Abraham du Quesne-Guitton, chef d'escadre, Pouchot de Chantassin et P. Lenfant, gardes de la marine.

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pagnie des Indes, avec son pilote, le 10 janvier 1689, ce navire de quatrième rang, de 500 tonneaux, mesure 33,05 mètres de longueur de quille, 45,10 mètres de longueur hors tout, de 10,56 mètres de largeur hors tout et d'environ 1272 mètres carrés de voilure. Il pouvait avoir six officiers majors, 45 officiers mariniers, 60 soldats et 95 hommes d'équipages (Challe, 1721 : 562, note n° 19; Lenfant : 16; Sottas, 1906 : 467-470).

[3] Fils de Jacob Duquesne, capitaine de vaisseau entretenu de la Marine du Roi et de Suzanne Guitton, Rochelaise de 27 ans, fille du huguenot Jean Guitton, maire de La Rochelle, Abraham Du Quesne-Guitton naquit à Nantes, aux alentours de 1653-1654. Neveu d'Abraham marquis du Quesne qui est, avec Tourville, le grand marin du règne de Louis XIV. Du Quesne-Guitton est l'un des rares officiers de la Royale à être allé servir dans l'océan Indien.

[4] Désormais Pouchot.

[5] Désormais Lenfant.

Tous les journaux de navigation ou récits rédigés au cours du voyage ou à son occasion ne nous sont probablement pas parvenus. On remarquera en particulier qu'en dehors du récit du chef d'escadre Du Quesne-Guitton, de celui de Claude-Michel Pouchot de Chantassin, de celui de Lenfant et des textes de l'officier de plume – dit aussi écrivain du roi – Robert Challe, aucun journal tenu par l'un des officiers de vaisseau présents à bord des quatre autres navires – *Le Dragon*, *Le Lion*, *Le Florissant* et *L'Oiseau* – n'a été conservé. Ceux-ci ont pourtant existé non seulement parce qu'il est fort possible que l'un de ces marins ait pu tenir par goût personnel un journal sous forme de notes éparses ou de mémoires, mais surtout, nous en avons la certitude, en vertu de la Grande Ordonnance en vigueur à l'époque, qui exigeait que tout officier de marine en campagne devait tenir un journal ! En effet, l'obligation faite aux capitaines et aux officiers de tenir un journal remonte à la grande ordonnance du 15 avril 1689 qui prévoyait dans le livre I[er], titre septième, articles 23 et 24, que le capitaine notamment « tiendra un journal exact de sa route, pointera sa carte, prendra hauteur, estimera son sillage, examinera tous les jours les points des pilotes, écoutera leurs raisons et prendra sur le tout le parti le plus convenable ». De plus, l'Ordonnance de 1689 exigera que les officiers fassent quotidiennement « les observations nécessaires pour leur route, les obligera de tenir eux-mêmes leurs journaux, empeschera les pilotes de leur donner à copier ce qu'ils font ordinairement » (11). Il est donc fort probable que d'autres journaux relatant le périple des hommes de Du Quesne-Guitton en Inde ont existé et subsistent peut-être encore dans des archives publiques ou familiales.

Ensuite, en tant que responsable ministériel et conseiller du roi pour les questions intéressant la marine française et les colonies, instigateur du départ de l'escadre de Du Quesne-Guitton et désireux de développer une marine de guerre digne du royaume, le Secrétaire d'Etat Seignelay souhaitait forcément être informé des moindres événements concernant l'armement des vaisseaux, leur voyage et leur réussite.

Enfin, il ne semble pas que les auteurs de l'escadre aient été soumis à la censure. En effet, si au début du XVII[e] siècle les autorités se sont montrées particulièrement réticentes à la diffusion de toute observation pouvant être utilisée par leurs rivaux et si la plus stricte confidentialité est de règle pour les documents nautiques, ces restrictions ne semblent plus de mise au moment du périple de 1690. En effet, bien que Challe parle souvent de « secret », les marins et les passagers écrivains de l'escadre n'ont pas reçu l'interdiction en vigueur encore à l'époque de tenir un journal personnel et disposent de leur propre matériel d'écriture. A la date du 12 juin, l'officier de plume mentionne que le capitaine de *L'Ecueil*, M. de Porrières, lui a rapporté « des papiers que Monsieur Du Quesne avait emportés de ma chambre samedi dernier sans [l']en avertir l'ayant trouvée ouverte, seulement pour me mettre en peine, et c'était le brouillon de ce journal-ci sur lequel [il écrit] lorsque la mer est trop agitée pour pouvoir écrire une écriture lisible à tout autre qu'à moi » (JPR : 109). Même si Du Quesne arrive à subtiliser les notes de Challe pour peut-être les superviser, il n'a aucun droit sur celles-ci.

Les différents narrateurs de l'escadre ont pu même pour certains les publier à titre privé, comme Pouchot de Chantassin, et pour d'autres les remettre intégralement à leurs supérieurs, tels que les pères Charmot et Tachard. Seul l'un d'entre eux, le *Journal* de 1721 de Challe, est paru anonymement. Cette censure n'altère donc en rien la parution de ces récits qui, sous la forme d'un journal ou celle d'une relation de voyage, mettent en lumière les résultats infructueux et mitigés de cette expérience.

Le premier manuscrit, intitulé *Relation du voyage fait aux Indes Orientales par P. Lenfant garde marine sur un vaisseau du Roy nommé* Le Gaillard *commandé par M. Du Quesne commandant sur toute l'escadre au nombre de six vaisseaux destinés pour faire le voyage des Indes*, est celui d'un élève officier. Jeune homme discret, marin expérimenté malgré sa jeunesse, observateur scrupuleux, intéressé par le monde exotique et fin connaisseur des us et coutumes siamoises, P. Lenfant présente une relation honnête, sans fioriture et méthodique, fort bien documentée, de son voyage de 1690. Ce récit inédit de Lenfant est d'un grand intérêt historique et géographique, car cet élève officier évoque chronologiquement les différents incidents du bord. Il traite aussi bien de la navigation de l'escadre

vers la France via les Antilles, que de l'histoire, des us et coutumes des populations rencontrées … Lenfant donne de longues descriptions de Pondichéry et du royaume de Siam, en décrivant notamment les aspects les plus variés de la vie quotidienne de leurs populations : castes, pêcheries, alimentation, fakirs, temples, mariages, funérailles, bâtiments, bazars, système monétaire, chasse, bateaux, guerre, religion, juridiction et punitions … Ce récit simple, bien documenté et structuré propose donc une lecture instructive. Malgré l'orthographe phonétique et la grammaire approximative, ce récit est d'une utilité historique, géographique et ethnographique indéniable.

Le premier imprimé connu des spécialistes et le seul édité fut celui de l'amiral : *Journal des deux voyages à Siam de Du Quesne-Guitton*[6], *1686-1691*. Peu d'éléments concernent ce texte retraçant deux de ses voyages aux Indes et au Siam. Le premier est le voyage aller et retour de l'expédition de Vaudricourt pour le Siam, en compagnie du père Tachard, de Céberet du Boullay et de La Loubère[7]. Le second est le voyage de 1690 via les Indes orientales du premier armement mixte français. Ces récits furent retranscrits partiellement dans un article rédigé en 1882 par un avocat, Louis Delavaud. L'original du manuscrit de Du Quesne-Guitton n'ayant pu être retrouvé pour l'instant, cet ouvrage présente donc des extraits épars, mutilés, sans grand intérêt, qui ont été publiés dans la revue de la « Société Académique Indo-Chinoise pour l'étude scientifique et économique de l'Inde-Transgangétique et de la Malaisie », à la suite d'une conférence donnée à la Société Académique Indo-Chinoise, datée du 29 novembre 1882. Cet article se constitue de neuf pages pour le voyage de 1687-1688 et de trois pour le périple de 1690-1691. Il ne présente donc que des résumés sur le voyage de 1690 décrivant l'itinéraire, quelques escales et les combats navals d'Amjouan et de Madras effectués par l'escadre.

Le dernier témoignage est une *Relation du voyage et retour des Indes Orientales pendant les années 1690 et 1691 par un garde de la Marine servant sur Le Bord de Monsieur Duquesne, Commandant de l'escadre*. Il s'agit du récit publié dès 1692 de Claude-Michel Pouchot de Chantassin, embarqué sur le navire amiral *Le Gaillard*. Témoin oculaire, expérience personnelle, esprit critique, poussé par sa curiosité, Pouchot se comporte comme un homme en mission : il veut écrire un livre plaisant, agréable qui délasse et cultive à la fois. Il veut surtout que le lecteur trouve dans son récit des thèmes remarquables, choisis avec soin, comme le montre l'exemple plus en avant dans le texte de la présentation des vents alizés : « Voila ce que j'ay pû recuëillir, note-t-il, pour satisfaire la curiosité de ceux qui auroient voulu sçavoir quels sont ces vents allisez ; mais enfin telle que puisse être leur cause phisique, il faut conclure qu'ils sont sans exagerer, les plus doux & les plus agreables qu'on sçauroit souhaitter dans la navigation » (Pouchot : 18). Jeune homme épris de liberté, admiratif de son roi, d'un tempérament aventureux et amateur de plaisirs simples, Pouchot présente une synthèse cohérente, sincère et instructive de son voyage, en mettant en valeur « la beauté de la matière » et en faisant découvrir un écrivain audacieux et compétent qui vaut la peine d'être découvert.

Le cas Robert Challe

Viennent, enfin, les deux textes fondateurs qui ont mis en lumière le voyage de Du Quesne-Guitton, ceux de Robert Challe – l'écrivain du roi, naviguant sur *L'Ecueil*. En effet, ce diariste – homme de tempérament, passionné de belles-lettres, bon vivant et nostalgique, sachant mêler à

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[6] Les graphies alternativement employées par les écrivains de l'escadre sont les suivantes : Du Quesne-Guitton, Du Quesne-Guiton, Duquesne-Guitton et Duquesne-Guiton. En novembre 1705, Duquesne fit changer l'orthographe de son nom sur les contrôles du port. Il fit barrer Duquesne et écrire Du Quesne. Afin d'uniformiser notre commentaire, nous avons choisi celle de Du Quesne-Guitton qui figure dans le titre du récit de l'amiral et qui revient le plus régulièrement dans les études critiques.

[7] Une escadre de cinq navires partie pour le Siam. *Le Gaillard* était commandé par M. de Vaudricourt, *L'Oiseau* par Du Quesne-Guitton, et *La Loire*, ayant pour enseigne M. de Quistillic (lieutenant de vaisseau du Roy, capitaine du *Dragon*, présent à bord de l'escadre de 1690). L'escadre appareilla de Brest le 1er mars 1687 et arriva le 8 octobre au Siam. L'objet essentiel des instructions royales remises à La Loubère, à Ceberet et même à Desfarges, le commandant des Troupes, était l'établissement du commerce, fondement de cette entreprise et la propagande religieuse (Kaeppelin, 1908 : 216).

la fois sensibilité et révolte – a laissé deux versions captivantes à la fois par leur originalité, leur richesse et leur personnalité. La première, intitulée *Journal du Voyage des Indes Orientales à Monsieur Pierre Raymond*[8], fut rédigée à bord en 1690. La seconde version, nommée *Journal d'un voyage fait aux Indes Orientales*[9], retravaillée et enrichie, fut publiée en 1721. Robert Challe[10], personnage à la fois aventurier et baroudeur, philosophe, voyageur et officier de plume responsable de l'intendance et de l'administration à bord de *L'Ecueil*, a laissé donc deux ouvrages fort intéressants, qui touchent à la fois à l'histoire, à la géographie, à la politique, à l'ethnologie, à la littérature, à la religion ainsi qu'à la philosophie. Le récit publié en 1721, dont le titre complet est *Journal d'un voyage fait aux Indes Orientales, Par une escadre de six vaisseaux, commandez par Monsieur du Quesne, depuis le 24 février 1690 jusqu'au 23 août 1691, par ordre de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales, Ouvrage rempli de remarques curieuses sur quantité de sujets, et particulièrement sur la Navigation et sur la Politique de divers Peuples et de différentes Sociétez,* a été réédité en 1978, 1983 et 2002. Ce nombre de publications s'explique tout d'abord par le vif intérêt que suscita ce récit et par la dimension qu'a prise ces dernières années la réputation de l'auteur, sacré le « plus grand écrivain français de la période 1680-1715 » par son découvreur, Frédéric Deloffre. Le texte de 1690 est une version dite « primitive », identifiée à Munich à partir d'un manuscrit olographe édité par Jacques Popin en 1998, et intitulée le *Journal du Voyage des Indes Orientales / A Monsieur Pierre Raymond conseiller secrétaire du Roy, Receveur général des Finances du Bourbonnais,* suivi de la *Relation De ce qui est arrivé dans le royaume de Siam en 1688* (Popin ; Deloffre, 1998 : 476). Ces deux œuvres challiennes relatent donc le même périple : mais, si l'une date de 1690, rédigée à bord par un jeune et fougueux officier de plume découvrant pour la première fois le monde oriental, l'autre fut retravaillée, trente années plus tard, par son auteur, un homme vieilli, ruiné, exilé à Chartres, mais toujours aussi passionné, truculent et bouillonnant.

Si en 1690, le journal du jeune Challe a une perception immédiate et naïve du réel et s'exprime dans un style simple et transparent, indiquant simplement l'itinéraire, les escales, les événements marquants du voyage ou donnant des informations précises sur les missions prévues par ce déplacement, tel un compte rendu, ce n'est plus le cas dans le texte de 1721 du Challe vieillissant. Le récit porte la marque d'un travail stylistique, par le biais de digressions, le ton divertissant ou didactique, le choix des thèmes abordés plus susceptibles d'intéresser le lecteur, tout en continuant à respecter l'ordre chronologique. Devenu un auteur expérimenté, Challe a une vision médiate. S'il met en évidence ses connaissances livresques, il n'y a plus qu'un pas entre la parole rapportée et la manipulation ou le fait de céder à la séduction du discours. Dans son imprimé de 1721, il a fait un travail considérable de reconstitution de son voyage réel de 1690 en texte littéraire.

Écrivain complexe ou simple, jouant du *Journal* aux *Mémoires*, écrivain maritime ou marin écrivain, Challe a un style, ou plutôt des styles, et surpasse largement en qualité d'écriture et d'observation les autres écrivains de l'escadre.

La carte de Jacques Faucher, pilote du *Gaillard*

Les Archives Nationales renferment dans leur fonds une carte manuscrite datée de 1692, mesurant 152,3 cm. de long sur 84,3 cm. de hauteur, d'un dénommé Faucher Jacques.

Pilote du Roi, Faucher embarque à bord de l'escadre de Du Quesne sur *Le Gaillard* en tant qu'enseigne. Il sera nommé plus tard lieutenant des vaisseaux du Roi. Il est l'auteur de plusieurs cartes et de mémoires sur la navigation dans le golfe du Bengale. Cette très belle carte manuscrite retrace le périple de l'amiral en 1687 et 1690. Elle est doublée d'une grosse toile et paraît en relativement bon état, sauf décollement et déchirure du papier sur le bord supérieur et traces de

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[8] Désormais *JPR*.

[9] Désormais *JV79*.

[10] Une grande incertitude a longtemps pesé sur l'orthographe du nom de Challe. L'éditeur Marchand mentionne les noms de « *Challe, Dechalles ou de Challes* ». L'écrivain tenait si fort à son anonymat que, même dans sa correspondance avec le *Journal Littéraire* de La Haye, 1713-1718, il ne se désigne que comme « *l'auteur des Illustres Françaises* ».

colle marron aux pliures. Les pays sont dessinés à l'encre noire et marron. Les noms des villes dans lesquelles ont mouillé les vaisseaux et les îles s'inscrivent à l'encre marron. Les côtes et les bancs de sable sont lavés en vert. Les lignes de rumbs sont fortement marquées. Plusieurs roses des vents avec fleurs de lys marquent le Nord.

La carte est graduée horizontalement en son milieu et verticalement sur sa partie gauche. Elle couvre de Bornéo à l'est jusqu'aux côtes d'Amérique à l'ouest. De petites cartes annotées de légendes sont développées en haut à droite, à plus grande échelle, et montrent l'île de Moely[11], Balassor[12], la grande île de Négraille[13] et Malacca[14].

Deux cartouches, l'un au centre, l'autre en bas à gauche, sont lavés en gris. Les trajets des deux voyages aller et retour forment donc quatre routes, avec des dates et des points. Les variations de l'aiguille aimantée y sont également portées. Le cartouche de gauche est aux armes de Colbert, présentées par deux anges, surmontées d'une couronne et entourées du collier de l'ordre de Saint-Michel, avec des rameaux d'olivier et un dauphin couronné de lauriers tenus par deux sirènes. Y sont mentionnées des remarques et des rectifications géographiques : « Remarques : Pendant les deux voyages on a exactement observé les variations qu'on a marquez le long de la trace du navire. Et corrigé beaucoup d'endroits, comme le banc CR 44 Eguilles qu'on a mis en plus Sud, le bout du Sud Madagascar, Jean de Nove dans le canal de Mozambique, les hauts d'Anjouan et de Moely, le Passage des Maldives, en scitué par 30' de latitude, les Iles aux Cocos, Priparé et Rigraillo ». Le cartouche du centre, aux mêmes armes présentées par Mars et Minerve, montre armes, instruments scientifiques et cornes d'abondance. Il porte le texte suivant : « Carte hidrographique ou est tracée la route des deux derniers voyages que M. Duquesne, Capitaine de vaisseau du Roy, a fait aux Indes Orientalles dans les vaisseaux *L'Oyseau* et *Le Gaillard* aux deux années 1687 et 1688 ; 1690 et 91. La trace du premier voyage est marquée par des points noirs et le retour par des lignes noires. La trace du second par des points rouges et le retour par des lignes rouges. Par J. Faucher, officier sur les vaisseaux de Sa Majesté ».

Disposant du cap et de la vitesse du navire, les pilotes peuvent réaliser 1'estime qui consiste à mettre à plat les indications du journal de bord, puis à tracer sur leur carte marine le point de leur position estimée, afin de tracer l'itinéraire suivi par le navire de la manière la plus précise possible.

Les religieux écrivains, des voyageurs si « particuliers » (Dirk, 2002 : 289) *A la conquête de l'Asie*

Plus encore que le commerce, la religion a fait voyager les hommes. Dès son arrivée aux Indes, Challe observe que les Français de Pondichéry « y vivent fort chrétiennement, du moins ont-ils devant les yeux quantité de bons exemples, y ayant outre les capucins, des missionnaires et des jésuites, et un frère cordelier, enfin, autant ou plus de pasteurs qu'il n'en faut pour un si petit troupeau » (JPR : 157). Pourtant, si l'Orient est le berceau des plus grandes religions du monde – Judaïsme, Christianisme, Islam, Hindouisme et d'autres traditions spirituelles comme le Bouddhisme, le Taoïsme, le Confucianisme, le Zoroastrisme, le Jaïnisme, le Sikhisme et le Shintoïsme – l'Eglise catholique y est minoritaire. Le chemin à parcourir est donc long pour les missionnaires qui s'engagent sur cette route, car le dialogue n'est pas facile et les peuples d'Asie sont

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[11] La légende est : *« Ile de Moely. Obervations. A : Mouillages ; B : où l'on fait l'eau ; C : où l'on met les malades ; D : Ile habitée ; E : Banc de roches qui couvre et découvre ; F : ce que l'on laisse à Droie en rentrant ».*

[12] La légende est : *« Rivière de Balassor. Observations. A : Tamariniers ; B : La touffe d'arbres qu'il faut ; C : Terres par la pointe C pour rentrer dans la rivière ; D : Montagne qui reste au NO ¼ N pour le bon mouillage ».*

[13] La légende est : *« Grande Ile de Negraille. Observations. A : Le mouillage ; B : où l'on met les malades ; C : étang ou est l'eau ; D : savane ou on chasse ; E : ou on fait le bois ; F : ou on peche ».*

[14] La légende est : *« Malaca. Observations. A : le port ; B : la ville ; C : le pont ; D : maison de Chabauda ; E : mouillage ; F : Isle rouge ou les Hollandais dressèrent leur battrie pour prendre Malaca ».*

fiers de leur héritage culturel et religieux. Par le traité de Tordesillas de 1492, l'Asie, domaine réservé des Portugais, demeura un territoire destiné à l'évangélisation catholique.

Au cours du XVII[e] et essentiellement au XVIII[e] siècle, l'activité et le dévouement de ces hommes d'Eglise ont connu une évolution sans précédent. Il suffit pour s'en convaincre de procéder à l'inventaire des religieux présents à bord de l'escadre : jésuites, missionnaires, capucins, dominicains, franciscains, récollets, aumôniers de marine … [15]. Au moment du départ de l'escadre en 1690, Tachard présente les jésuites qui vont l'accompagner dans son périple : « Nous devions partir quatorze Jésuites … Dans l'intervalle ayant appris la funeste révolution de Siam et plusieurs de nos Pères étant tombés malades nous ne nous trouvasmes que huit Jésuites à cet embarquement scavoir le P. Parregaud et le Frère André de la Province de Lion, le P. Papin et le Frère Moriset de la Province de France, le Frère Rhodes de la Province de Tolose, le Père Dieusé, le Frère Cormier et moy de la Province de Bourdeaux » (Tachard : f°138). Le père Charmot confirme la présence des jésuites cités précédemment et informe de celle à bord du *Lyon* de pères capucins (Charmot : f°725, f°2310, f°720). Une telle concentration de religieux ne manque pas de créer quelques tensions, non seulement entre les membres des différentes congrégations, mais aussi entre les marins et eux. En effet, éprouvant un sentiment mal dissimulé de supériorité à l'égard des autres voyageurs, les religieux exigent d'être convenablement traités à bord et ne se soucient guère des problèmes d'intendance ou de rationnement car « tous ces gens-là, selon Challe, n'aiment point à jeûner : tout au contraire, ils se fient tellement à la Providence qu'ils mangeraient volontiers dans un repas ce qui servirait à d'autres pendant une semaine » (JV21 : 140-141). Ainsi, au cours de la navigation, l'officier de plume note que « les Jésuites du *Gaillard* ne sont pas honteux, et se montraient sur le pied de nous demander tous les jours l'aumône » (JV21 : 204). Tous les marins ayant eu un ou plusieurs jésuites à leur bord eurent alors des raisons de s'en plaindre (JV21 : 426). C'est donc sans regret qu'ils assistent au départ de ces religieux de leurs navires dès leur arrivée en Inde. Seul l'amiral semble apprécier leur compagnie car, selon le père Charmot, « M. du Quesne a fort encensé le Révérend Père : il a été comme un coq en pâte, regorgeant de toutes sortes de bonnes choses » (Charmot : f°2311). La présence à bord de l'escadre des pères missionnaires Charmot et Guisain ou du père jésuite Tachard et de ses mandarins siamois nouvellement convertis et baptisés à Brest s'inscrit parfaitement dans une lignée évangélique dont le but ne fut ni littéraire ni artistique.

L'évangélisation de l'Asie commença de très bonne heure, mais d'un zèle inégal et mal dirigé, selon Martino[16]. Si en 1660, les jésuites, après s'être employés à christianiser la Chine, durent fuir le Japon en proie à de violentes représailles fanatiques, seuls les pays de l'Indo-Chine, l'Inde, la Perse et le Levant restaient sous leur contrôle. Une réussite qui suscita d'ailleurs dans les autres congrégations de vives réactions. En effet, si les capucins, les dominicains et les franciscains bien implantés dans cette partie du globe disputaient déjà cette place prépondérante en Asie aux jésuites, les sociétaires des Missions étrangères commencèrent leur œuvre à la même période. Pourtant, le père Charmot mentionne notamment que le père Tachard lui « avoua qu'il n'avait pu obtenir à Rome de son Général qu'il n'y eût que des Jésuites Français qui pussent aller au Tonquin & à la Cochinchine » (Charmot : f°2312). Le père Charmot lui-même « envoyé en Chine [en 1691] … fut reçu à Canton par Mr Basset qui le mena à Mr Maigrot. Il s'instruisit des contestations, son pauvre cœur pâtissait de voir le tort des Jésuites » (Charmot : f°2309). Une coalition générale s'instaura alors contre les jésuites, qui déboucha notamment sur la grande querelle des rites chinois longue de près d'un siècle[17]. La propagande (JV21 : 395) et l'évangélisation ne chômèrent point non plus. Puis ce fut le déclin : les Chinois commencèrent à trouver désagréable l'intérêt que leur

[15] Des « prêtres de la congrégation des Missions étrangères, dont nous avons deux sur le bord », « Il y a des pères Jésuites répandus sur les trois autres gros vaisseaux de l'escadre, entre autres le révérend père Tachard » (JV21: 61).

[16] Voir sur la question : Henrion, 1847 ; Launay, 1894 ; Bertrand, 1862 ; Cordier, 1901 ; Conches, 1862 ; Bonnichon, 1987.

[17] La querelle des Rites chinois est une très longue affaire qui n'a été terminée que dans les années 1930.

portaient les missionnaires et ils leur témoignèrent par des mesures assez efficaces le changement de leurs dispositions. Les autres nations d'Asie n'agirent pas autrement. Challe, tout au long de sa description du comptoir de Pondichéry, ne peut s'empêcher de faire allusion à la querelle des cérémonies chinoises, qui empoisonna les relations entre les missionnaires « ennemis mortels de Confucius et des cérémonies chinoises » (JV21 : 61), et les jésuites, véritables soldats du pape, aux méthodes évangéliques discutables, selon Challe notamment (JV21 : 61, 245, 392). Le père Charmot, dans une lettre adressée à ses supérieurs, se plaint d'ailleurs de la suprématie des jésuites à Pondichéry et du non respect des religieux entre eux :

> Je ne sais pas comme l'entendent Mr de Lionne et Pin : tous les Pères Jésuites qui sont ici ont demandé la permission au Vicaire de St Thomé pour confesser, et ces Messieurs ont cru que le Supérieur de cette maison pouvait confesser tous les Missionnaires et domestiques et donner pouvoir à un missionnaire pour le confesser lui-même, sans autre pouvoir que celui de Mrs les Vicaires Apostoliques et des Capucins. Pour moi, avec le respect que je dois à ces Messieurs, quoique je sois de leur sentiment en ce que, n'étant pas ici dans notre Mission, nous ne devions faire aucune fonction au dehors, il me semble néanmoins que, pour plus grande sûreté et pour faire connaître aux Portugais que nous ne sommes pas gens à empiéter sur l'autorité d'autrui et que nous voulons reconnaître les Supérieurs ecclésiastiques dans tous les lieux qui ne sont pas de nos Missions, quoique eux ne le veulent pas faire ; il me semble, dis-je, qu'il serait plus sûr et plus édifiant de demander la permission que de faire ce que l'on fait ici. (Charmot : Lettre…)

Challe semble par ailleurs être assez bien informé pour tout ce qui concerne l'implantation des congrégations religieuses en Inde même si parfois il fait dire ses propres opinions par le Directeur du comptoir français de Pondichéry, François Martin. La présence des pères Tachard et Charmot qui effectuent ce voyage dans le but d'essayer d'améliorer les relations entre les deux congrégations en Inde définit parfaitement l'état d'esprit dans lequel sont rédigés les témoignages de ces deux religieux. Les descriptions fournies touchant au Siam par le père Tachard ne sont pas tout à fait celles présentes dans le récit de Lenfant. Ce qui est normal lorsque l'on sait que le jésuite fréquentait le roi siamois et ses conseillers, alors que le garde de la marine a dû rester confiné dans sa caserne ou à bord de son navire, ne voyant du Siam que son port d'attache.

Contrairement aux marins, aux soldats et aux commerçants, les missionnaires constituent une catégorie à part et fort particulière. Friedrich Wolfzettel a eu raison d'écrire dans son *Discours du voyageur* : « S'il fallait indiquer le phénomène le plus caractéristique dans le contexte du récit de voyage français au XVII^{e} siècle, il n'y aurait probablement qu'une seule réponse : les voyages de Missionnaires » (1996 : 165) !

Edifier, informer, obtenir des adhésions, stimuler la générosité des bienfaiteurs : telles sont donc les missions de récits des Missionnaires et des Jésuites

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Le fond de la querelle est ceci : des chrétiens peuvent-ils accomplir les cérémonies rituelles en l'honneur de Confucius ? Elles étaient pratiquées partout en Chine. Les jésuites qui étaient mathématiciens au service de l'Empereur à Pékin disaient que ces cérémonies signifiaient le respect dû aux ancêtres et à l'Empereur sans réelle signification religieuse. Les autres missionnaires, notamment les franciscains et les Messieurs des Missions étrangères qui travaillaient surtout parmi les gens du peuple, disaient que ces rites étaient en fait pratiqués comme des rites religieux, donc inacceptables. Seul le Christ est Sauveur des hommes … Il y eut beaucoup de maladresses de part et d'autre et de violentes oppositions de personnes, souvent avec des liens politiques. En Inde, à la même époque, il y eut aussi une affaire avec les jésuites sur les Rites Malabars. Pouvait-on être chrétien, en acceptant certains rites liés à la caste ? … Remerciements au père Joseph Ruellen, sociétaire des Missions étrangères pour ces précisions. (Vongsuravatana, 1992 : 291; Launay, 2000 : 122-123).

Un sociétaire des Missions étrangères : le père Charmot

Le premier récit rédigé par un religieux est celui des pères Charmot et Guisian, sociétaires des Missions étrangères : le *Journal du second voyage de M. Charmot avec M. Guisain*[18].

Parmi les différents auteurs de l'escadre, seul Robert Challe, partageant le quotidien de ces religieux à bord de *L'Ecueil*, dresse un portrait élogieux du père Charmot dont il admire la ferveur et la piété. En effet, l'écrivain du roi éprouve même une certaine estime pour ce « pieux et savant » missionnaire qui, lors de la messe donnée en l'honneur du capitaine Hurtain mourant, fit « preuve de beaucoup de sainteté … d'éloquence, de zèle vraiment apostolique ». L'auteur a vivement apprécié et approuvé son exhortation « tournée en peu de mots, justes & pathétiques, sur le néant & le mépris qu'un chrétien doit faire des grandeurs du monde ; sur le peu de fonds qu'il doit faire sur la vie ; sur la nécessité de la perdre ; & sur l'usage qu'on devait faire de cette vie, pour se préparer à une mort inévitable … tout y a été énergique & bien placé, et à la portée de tous les auditeurs » (JV21 : 172). L'officier de plume respecte l'honnêteté et l'ardeur qui émanent de la personne et du discours de Charmot qui réussit même à faire pleurer les matelots. Si Challe méprise l'attitude des jésuites en Orient, il se montre fort compréhensif et conciliant envers les sociétaires des Missions étrangères, plus proches et plus respectueux, à son avis, de leurs missions apostoliques.

Embarqués, à l'aller seulement, sur *L'Ecueil*, le père Nicolas Charmot rédige son récit dès le début du voyage. Malheureusement, vers la fin du voyage et jusqu'à l'arrivée à Pondichéry, gravement malade, le religieux s'est vu dans l'incapacité de rédiger la fin de son périple. C'est alors au père Guisain, son secrétaire et ami de longue date, qu'incombe cette charge. Cette collaboration est d'ailleurs précisée dès le titre.

Composé de feuillets épars et de divers documents, la transcription, loupe en main, de ce texte fut rude et laborieuse[19]. Mais l'authenticité de ce manuscrit lui confère une valeur historique exceptionnelle.

Un jésuite-mathématicien aux Indes & à la Chine : Guy Tachard

> Il y a des Pères Jésuites répandus sur les trois autres gros vaisseaux de l'escadre, entre autres le révérend Père Tachard, qui a déjà fait bien du bruit dans le monde et qui, suivant toutes les apparences, en fera encore bien davantage dans la suite du temps, s'il continue ses ambassades pour les têtes couronnées. Il est sur *Le Gaillard* avec M. du Quesne notre amiral, et avec lui plusieurs Siamois, mandarins et autres, qui repassent dans leur patrie. (Challe, JV21 : 61)

Vient enfin la *Relation de voyage aux Indes, 1690-1699* du Révérend père Tachard, artisan de l'envoi de cet armement mixte en Inde et au Siam et voyageant à l'aller uniquement à bord du *Gaillard*. Plus célèbre pour ses journaux de 1686 et 1689[20], ce récit de Tachard est pourtant lu par Pouchot dès 1691. Le garde de la Marine ne manque pas de donner dans son récit son opinion sur ce texte qu'il semble avoir lu avec intérêt :

> Le public luy doit être obligé d'une relation de son voyage, qu'il mit en sortant entre les mains de Monsieur Duquesne, pour la rendre aux RR. PP. Jesuites, qui la doivent faire imprimer, quoy qu'elle ne contienne point le retour : Je n'y ay rien lû,

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[18] Nicolas Charmot, 1655-1714, sociétaire des Missions étrangères. Le *Journal du second voyage* se trouve page 2310 et suivantes du *Journal du second voyage de Monsieur Charmot avec Monsieur Guisain* (v. la section bibliographique).

[19] Remerciements au père Joseph Ruellen, sociétaire des Missions étrangères, pour son aide précieuse.

[20] *Voyage de Siam des Pères Jésuites envoyés par le Roi aux Indes et à la Chine* (Paris, 1686 ; Amsterdam, 1687) et *Second voyage du P. Tachard et des Jésuites envoyés par le Roi au royaume de Siam* (Paris, 1689 ; Amsterdam, 1689) – Récit officiel du voyage.

> que je n'aye vû moy même, & que je n'aye inseré dans celle-cy, excepté une lettre d'un de leurs Peres presentement à la Chine, où sont marquées au long toutes les particularitez de la revolution qui est arrivée à Siam, dont il a fort grossi sa *Relation*. (Pouchot, 1692 : 266-267)

Le jugement de l'élève officier est fort intéressant, car il souligne que si le manuscrit du jésuite est conforme à la réalité qu'il a lui-même perçue et rapportée dans son témoignage, il remarque néanmoins les amplifications et les embellissements apportés par le jésuite. Une attitude que lui reproche d'ailleurs Challe dès le début de ses propres *Journaux*. Bien que le texte du père Tachard soit complet, il manque cependant la lettre à laquelle Pouchot fait allusion.

Ce manuscrit titré *Relation de voyage aux Indes, 1690-1699* est un original de 195 feuillets recto-verso. Il fait partie de la collection de la Bibliothèque Nationale et est référencé sous la cote 19030. Il est de format in-8. L'écriture fine est très lisible et l'orthographe correcte. Le contenu se compose d'un feuillet servant de page de garde et de 195 feuillets, bien numérotés. Au cours du texte, des corrections et certains mots sont griffés par l'auteur. Quelques passages, signalés en appel de notes, sont même barrés. Mais, aucune addition manuscrite d'une autre main n'est observée. Ces rectificatifs ont été vraisemblablement apposés par l'auteur lui-même au moment de la relecture ou d'un recopiage.

Ce récit se présente en plusieurs parties : la première, proposée dans cet ouvrage, retrace l'itinéraire de deux voyages dont celui de 1690-1691, avec quelques remarques sur la navigation. La seconde répertorie les us et coutumes religieuses des peuples rencontrés. Enfin, la troisième propose une idée générale de la mission de Maduré.

Ce manuscrit inédit est d'un intérêt historique et religieux indiscutable. Tachard relate au jour le jour la vie du bord, mais n'en retient que les faits essentiels et les escales. Il fait notamment de nombreuses allusions au royaume de Siam. L'ensemble est intéressant, mais dévoile un ton hautain, voire parfois assez dédaigneux.

Des récits à la frontière de deux époques et des genres

A la frontière de deux époques et de deux sensibilités, l'esprit de la Fronde et le libertinage de la Régence, le récit de ce voyage aux Indes orientales se présente également comme un texte de transition. En effet, la date de sa composition, 1690, marque le commencement du déclin de la monarchie absolue de Louis XIV et l'édition du texte de Challe en 1721 est au cœur même de la Régence. La pensée et les réflexions présentes dans cet imprimé favorisent d'ailleurs cette rencontre entre le siècle du Roi-Soleil et l'avènement des Lumières.

La période 1690-1721 constitue donc une époque de gestation mêlée d'espoirs et de rêves, mais aussi d'échecs. Alors que l'historien Jean Merrien considère que les journaux de voyage du XVII^{e} siècle ne fournissent que des renseignements sur les conditions de vie des marins « d'une sécheresse squelettique » et que « de Challes, il n'y a rien à savoir » (Merrien, 1964 : 9-10), F. Deloffre, au contraire, reconnaît que « Challe est le seul grand écrivain français, en attendant Bernardin de Saint-Pierre et Loti, à avoir une connaissance réelle de la mer – il a servi vingt-quatre ans dans la marine – et à avoir parcouru la plus grande partie du monde connu de son temps » (JV21 : 10).

Témoins privilégiés de ces scènes de vie en mer, les narrateurs de l'escadre offrent une source inépuisable de renseignements, en usant de toute la palette de la sensibilité humaine. Ainsi s'entremêlent chez chacun, mais plus particulièrement chez Challe, non seulement une émotivité et une humanité évidentes, mais aussi l'humour le plus vif et la cruauté la plus fine (JV21 : 72, 74, 84, 357, 139, 152, 183, 204, 209, 236, 351, 77, 320, 328), en passant par une compassion des plus touchantes (JV21 : 1082, 173, 175, 266, 340, 321, 356). Ces écrivains décrivent d'une manière très réaliste la vie quotidienne à bord du *Gaillard* et de *L'Ecueil*, en retraçant les aventures de l'escadre de Du Quesne-Guitton, ses batailles navales, les tempêtes, les conflits diplomatiques, politiques et commerciaux et les escales, à travers des témoignages à la fois plaisants et piquants. Mais ce

sont les scènes comiques et dramatiques de la vie quotidienne des hommes de la Marine de guerre de Louis XIV qui retiennent tout particulièrement l'attention de Challe, qu'il dépeint tantôt à traits acérés, tantôt avec sensibilité. Il faut tout de même dissocier l'existence privilégiée des narrateurs membres de l'État-major, partageant la table bien garnie du capitaine, de celle des équipages confinés sur l'entre-deux ponts, en proie à la promiscuité et à l'humidité permanente. Si Challe ne livre que peu de détails sur la vie des hommes de la maistrance, il fournit, en revanche, un texte exhaustif et turbulent sur celle que mènent les officiers majors de Du Quesne-Guitton. Des ravitaillements aux pénuries de vivres, en passant par les épidémies de scorbut et les escales, rien n'échappe aux écrivains de l'escadre, qui se font un devoir de tout révéler avec ponctualité et fidélité.

Si le *Journal d'un voyage fait aux Indes orientales* de 1721 a connu et connaît encore un grand succès de librairie et d'innombrables rééditions, il n'en est pas de même des autres documents issus de cette même expédition. Pourtant, d'étroits rapports unissent toutes ces œuvres, tant du point de vue de la qualité du témoignage à la fois exalté, enthousiaste et frappant de vérité, que de la formulation ou des thèmes maritimes, coloniaux, militaires, religieux et commerciaux abordés.

Le 20 août 1691, soit un an et demi après son appareillage de France, l'escadre de Duquesne-Guitton mouille au large de l'île de Groix. C'est donc avec soulagement et enthousiasme que les marins retrouvent leur port d'attache et leur terre natale. Ce voyage de 1690-1691 aux Indes orientales ne fut pas un événement fortuit et isolé, mais exceptionnel par les écrits qu'il a provoqués. Il s'inscrit, au contraire, parfaitement dans la longue suite des expéditions militaires et commerciales qui, avec des alternances de temps forts et de périodes insignifiantes, se sont poursuivies jusqu'au milieu du XIX^{e} siècle, avec les voyages de découvertes.

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Returning to the Continent – British Travelers to France, 1814

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Denied access to most of the European continent for over a generation because of the French Revolution and Napoleonic regime, Britons were eager to flood to France with the newly established peace in 1814. This was a new type of traveler as a jaunt to Paris was now affordable to the shopkeeper, preacher and writers as well as members of the upper class. Both men and women took this opportunity to see the changes in France. Though influenced by previous travel accounts, this group was surprisingly willing to see the French as dupes of Napoleon and, therefore, possible future allies. This presented a small window of opportunity to readjust the British public's thinking regarding one of its closest neighbors. Yet previously held prejudices ultimately triumphed and were validated with the French acceptance of Napoleon upon his return for the Hundred Days.

***Keywords*: John Scott; Lady Charlotte Bury; Louvre; Louis XVIII; Lady Sydney Morgan; Morris Birkbeck; Reverend William Shepherd.**

Barely had the ink dried on the first Treaty of Paris ending the Napoleonic Wars (30 May 1814) and a provisional government been established in Paris when hordes of British travelers began descending on France. Denied access to the European continent for over twenty years except for the short end of hostilities due to the peace following the Treaty of Amiens (1803), many British citizens desired to observe firsthand the result of the French Revolution and to see the treasures accumulated and the monuments built during Napoleon Bonaparte's reign. With peace restored, members of the British upper class along with a new group of travelers such as shopkeepers, independent writers, preachers and their spouses flocked to France, united in their common desire to view the new world order on the continent. Both men and women left accounts of their trips to France. Their published diaries, letters and books provided the British public with a unique insight into Restoration France. The political ideologies, as well as religious and moral outlooks varied among the numerous travelers yet they all shared the desire to see the world to which they had been denied access, except for a brief period, for over a generation. Ignorant of the French culture, language, and history some visitors found France overwhelming. Their reports are full of observations colored by their ignorance of French society, the Catholic faith and the French government and influenced by their preconceptions of the French. Most were excited by this opportunity to visit France in 1814 and the early months of 1815 and appeared ready to embrace the French citizen. This willingness offered an opportunity to break down previously established barriers and establish the foundations of understanding and friendship between the two nations. As travel books were widely read by the British public, their accounts, regardless of their accuracy, helped mold British perceptions of France and its people and thus influenced British and French relations for the next generation.

Numerous scholars have examined this period and the impact of the French Revolution and Napoleon on shaping European national identity. The English have a tradition of using travel literature to not only learn about the world but also to understand their global position and their own societal norms (Suranyi, 2009: 242). Recently scholars have examined the role of the traveler following the tumultuous events in France on fostering national pride and on a personal level

creating the perceptions of self (Thompson, 2011: 244). This work looks at the brief period from Napoleon's first downfall until his return and the impact of the British travelers had on shaping and, perhaps, reshaping public opinion and policy; as it appeared, many welcomed the opportunity to establish a new relationship with the French nation. Following Napoleon's loss at Waterloo, Britons arrived back in France to collect artifacts and walk on the historical ground of the battle, as they attempted to understand the recent past and put it into historical perspective (Semmel, 2000: 15). With Napoleon's return and acceptance by the French nation an opportunity was lost to reshape British perceptions of their neighbor.

Prior to the turmoil caused by the French Revolution, British trips to the continent were limited to either young men who could afford the cost of a Grand Tour to complete their education, the merchant or sailor whose experiences were confined to port cities or business centers or small groups of privileged men and women who had the means to afford such a trip. Capitalizing on the mystique and allure of the Grand Tour, a few travelers managed to make the trip across the Channel and then return home to publish their perceptions. Accounts by travelers such as Arthur Young and Hester Lynch Piozzi found a large, receptive audience. The public and private descriptions of French society, nobility and the French court by these early wealthy British tourists shaped the eighteenth-century British public's image of France. These earlier travel writers described the French peasants as ignorant and servile while the French nobility were depicted as vain and crafty and the French court decadent. These images were perpetuated into the 19th century.

In contrast to their predecessors, British visitors to the European continent in 1814 varied widely in economic, educational and social backgrounds. They were primarily middle and upper-middle class who found a brief trip from the British Isles as not only desirable but affordable. Despite the variety of their socio-economic backgrounds, there is a surprising consensus in their observations of the French nation. These early travelers who preceded Napoleon's return during the Hundred Days believed that the new French King Louis XVIII embodied traditional "British" values developed during his exile at Hartwell in Great Britain, thus fostering in him an understanding of and commitment to a constitutional monarchy. Such a combination of attributes ensured to the British public that the new French monarch would return home and enact these values while strengthening France's friendship with Great Britain. While believing they understood Louis XVIII, the British travelers were uncertain of the French people, but they were willing to entertain the idea that Napoleon alone and not the French people had been responsible for the war. The French nation had been caught in his "despotic and remorseless sway" (Belsham, 1814: 3). Portrayed as dupes of the evil emperor, the French could be forgiven and even welcomed back into the brotherhood of Christian nations. Britons in 1814 carried with them these sentiments of hope. The reports of this first wave of visitors would both bolster and temper the initial enthusiasm for a perpetual brotherhood or alliance.

On the average, most visits lasted approximately a month as British travelers limited their itinerary to one or two specific destinations, such as Paris, northern France or, after June 1815, the battle sight of Waterloo. For some of these unseasoned visitors the thrill of their trip began at Dover, where many saw the sea for the first time (*Memorandums of a Residence in France*, 1816: 5). Although their trips were modest in scope, the nineteenth-century travelers continued the tradition of writing and publishing accounts of their experiences. The *Quarterly Review* from 1814-1818 listed twenty-two new publications recounting travels in France – a modest sampling of the many works that circulated during that period. Many of the accounts went through several editions during their first years in print. The popular accounts enabled those who remained at home to experience the adventures of their more fortunate countrymen.

Through these books, travelers influenced all levels of British society. Yet these publications were not the only means of disseminating information about France throughout Great Britain. Letters home and the stories told and retold by travelers reinforced the accounts in print. As one writer noted:

> Where is the family that has not sent out its traveler, or travelers to the capital of France? Minute oral accounts of its wonders have been rendered at every tea table. Criticisms of its arts, and manners, have found their way, in soft whispers, across shop-counters (…) How many letters have been dispatched, from the very spot of observation, to "dear papas," and "dear mammas," (…) Where is the newspaper weekly or daily, that has not to boast of its special series of articles on Paris? (Scott, 1815: 1-2)

Information from the visitors' experiences on the continent spread throughout the British Isles through a variety of mediums.

The half dozen female writers who intended to publish their commentaries on France upon their return home were, from the beginning of their journey, avid political spectators. Their works opened a new literary genre for the female writer (Adickes, 1991: 3). Assuming and maintaining the illusion of the amateur status of its author, the text was written in narrative and focused on the daily occurrences of travel, stressing personal encounters with the natives, from which readers could gleam generalities about the French people. Feeding a curious public's interests in the exotic, these works soon became a mainstay in bookshops and circulating libraries (Fay, 2015: 73-74). In order to retain their feminine modesty, the authors usually denied in their preface any initial intention of making public their writings. Instead, they cited the pressure of family and friends in their decision to publish their personal accounts. The majority of women writers adopted the literary format of either a diary or letters addressed to a family member or friend – a style used by only a few men (Foster, 1990: 23-24). This choice helped maintain the illusion that the women had not initially intended to publish their accounts, but had simply collected together personal observations that they had sent home to relatives and acquaintances. These works offer an insightful perspective on French life. Surprisingly, though women often had access to areas denied men, such as the private family quarters, their accounts from this period focus primarily on the political changes brought about by the French Revolution, Napoleon and the Bourbon Restoration, in order to quell British hunger for information on the changes of the past generation. Under the guise of a disinterested traveler, they were able to penetrate the male world of politics. Their comments on contemporary France and on French foreign policy were avidly read and discussed, garnering both respect and criticism from their male counterparts and the public, as they stayed within the conventions of femininity.

British men who in 1814 wrote about Restoration France provided the British public a perspective that complimented and expanded on the women's accounts. Whereas the women's works focused on politics and personal encounters, it was the male travelers who offered general observations on social changes and customs, such as costume, the role of women, manners, domestic life, children, and religion. Their gender occasionally provided them experiences and opportunities denied their female counterparts. Some traveling to the continent for the first time journeyed farther into France, as they had less concern about personal safety. Interests also varied as male visitors were fascinated by French agriculture methods, religious practices and French women. Their focused accounts provide a valuable perspective on Restoration France.

An overnight stay at the Ship Inn and departure from Dover were the common route of many travelers both before and after the Hundred Days. Arriving in France, usually in Calais, the visitors eagerly searched the sites for "foreign curiosities". Most were disappointed as the port town was full of British sightseers. They were more likely to hear English spoken on the streets of Calais than French. Some British patriots journeyed to the location near Calais from which Napoleon was rumored to have assembled his forces to invade England. As every British man knew, England alone had remained invincible to the Napoleonic threat. Their patriotism and sense of superiority is evidenced, as one woman noted, "I saw the hill where Bonaparte had organized the army with which he threatened to invade Britain, and which he afterwards led to more easy conquest of Germany" (Bury, 1900: 245). From the port city most journeyed on to

the capital of Paris.

The acquisitions of fine arts taken by Napoleon from other countries during his conquests and such projects as the *Arc de Triomphe* and the *Temple des Victoires* – the future Church of Madeleine – initiated by Napoleon to improve the capital were a tremendous draw for Britons on a limited budget. "To an Englishman who can avail himself of periods of only moderate leisure, Paris is easily accessible", noted one such visitor and scholar (Shepherd, 1814: 17). The greatest attraction in the capital was the Louvre. It was the reason why British shopkeepers, ministers and parliamentarians left their country for the first time. As admission was free and open to the public, many individuals, such as Reverend William Shepherd, visited the museum daily and spent hours slowly examining the collections. These treasures produced strong emotions in those who had traveled so far to gaze at them. One visitor, on seeing the statue of Apollo Belvedere, wrote: "my heart palpitated – my eyes filled with tears – I was dumb with emotion" (Campbell, 1855: 28). The popular travel guides written by British travelers such as Lady Sydney Morgan, John Scott and Edward Planta devoted long chapters to the Louvre, cataloging its statues and portraits. These descriptions added to the popularity of the travel books. For many Englishmen, those publications were as close as they would ever be to Paris and its treasures. Planta's guide went through almost thirty editions and its descriptions of Paris influenced a generation of British travelers and would-be visitors to the Continent.

As for many this was their first journey off of British soil, not all visitors found their trips rewarding – a circumstance Reverend Shepherd attributed to the visitor's unrealistic and unfulfilled expectations. He faulted English visitors who journeyed to France with the intention of enjoying there all of the comforts of home. Looking for beef steak and finding unknown dishes, they complained of French cuisine. Since few of England's middle and lower classes spoke French, many of these travelers were reduced to hiring a *valet de place* who only knew a little English to escort them around the capital. These tourists returned home and complained that Paris furnished no good company (Shepherd, 1814: 269-72; Birkbeck, 1815: 2-3). In a conversation one Englishman had with three countrymen, he voiced the following complaints: the wine was like acid, the beds too small, the soup too thin, everything was overpriced, and the women wore too much makeup (Langton, 1836: 125-27). For the first time traveler it was easy to criticize the French.

Another prolific traveler, John Scott, shared a carriage with a young English shopkeeper who journeyed to Paris for a one-week visit. The young man spoke no French and knew no one in the capital. He carried with him only British bank notes and was without a passport. His only goal was to see the Louvre. Unfortunately, the Louvre was closed to the public during the duration of his stay. He attributed all of his problems to the ignorance of the French people he met and not to his own lack of preparedness (Scott, 1815: 42-43). Aware that the tourists often paid more in shops than their French counterparts, many of the visiting Britons also complained of French duplicity and dishonesty (Granville, 1894: 60; Langton, 1836: 127-129; Shepherd, 1814: 32-33). Wealth and the ability to speak French played a key role in this assessment; Lady Morgan could find little wrong with the French even when being overcharged. Fluent in French Lady Morgan eavesdropped on an exchange between two venders as one seller commented to the other that she was charging too much for the roses Lady Morgan was purchasing. Rather than using this conversation and personal encounter as an example of the French taking advantage of the British public, she instead focused on what she saw as the refined use of French among the lower classes (Morgan, 1817: 53). In her privileged position, Lady Morgan found that the French could do no wrong.

After having been denied access to France for so long, many Britons had misconceptions about the French and their religious traditions. Unfamiliar with Catholic religious practices and influenced by generations of British Protestant misconceptions of the popish religion, some travelers were surprised to find many of their long-held beliefs untrue. Lady Charlotte Bury is a case in point. Attending a high mass in Montreuil, she discovered that the congregation was not muttering their prayers in an unknown mystical tongue. On borrowing a poor girl's missal she found

to her surprise that it was printed only in French and Latin. Nonetheless as was true of many other travelers, she remained unsympathetic to Catholicism. Her prejudices surfaced as she witnessed a procession of key town officials to the church to sing a *Te Deum* for peace. She found the military formality of the ceremony "an awful sight" which brought memories of the Reign of Terror (Bury, 1900: 247-48). Reverend William Shepherd's personal and professional interest in religion led him during his travels to pay particular attention to French religious practices. He often stopped in local churches to admire the architecture and congregation. He found the services well-attended, primarily by women. Yet Shepherd was convinced that few frequented mass for religious reasons. He noticed that many women spent most of their time during the services laughing and talking. Elaborate religious processions which horrified Lady Bury, he found only drew a crowd because the onlookers were curious. He believed that devotion in France was more mechanical than sincere (Shepherd, 1814: 127). Like many of his countrymen, Shepherd believed that the French were basically an immoral people and nothing in his travels changed this fundamental perception. According to one English female visitor, the wrath of God was brought down upon the French, which led to their defeat because of their failure to observe properly the Sabbath (*A Letter Addressed*…, 1815: 27-28).

Not all were so highly critical of French morality; not surprisingly, Irish Catholic Lady Sidney Morgan found the population sincere in their devotion and related the story told to her of how the French Catholic peasantry even went to the church to practice their faith during the French Revolution, although there were no priests to minister to their needs. She placed the decline of the faith firmly on the priests and the Catholic hierarchy whose return the public feared (Morgan, 1817: 39). Another traveler, the Reverend John Eustace, in his quest to trace the effect of the French Revolution on religion, also disagreed that the devotion of the congregation was insincere. He argued to the contrary, claiming that in a country like France, where religion was held in such low esteem, there would be nothing to gain from attending mass other than personal edification. He attributed the preponderance of women to their more tender hearts and to the fact that on Sunday the men were called away to levees and reviews (Eustace, 1814: 73-74).

Yet, despite this defense of the French personal devotion, Eustace believed the future of France was bleak as the power of church had been broken by the French Revolution. A quarter of a century of military campaigns which glorified violence, looting, and rape had corrupted a generation. The hope of France, its young men, had been lost to vice and ferocity. Bred on revolution and acclimated to violence, this new generation would never be content with peace (Eustace, 1814: 73-74). He believed that the French propensity towards sinfulness and debauchery that had plagued them throughout the 18th century would continue. Eustace's work went through eight editions in its first year. His basic distrust of the French found a wide audience in Great Britain, as stereotypes, instead of being corrected or modified, were reinforced.

The British traveler was concerned that the French were unable to learn from the excesses of the French Revolution and Napoleon's tenure. Englishmen found French upper-class society dominated by the newly returned émigrés and royalists. Intrigued by the new French leaders in society, Lady Bury questioned whether those who had been humbled by the Revolution had truly learned anything since upon their return they sought restoration of their former privileges (1900: 454, 456). Other British travelers echoed her doubts about the humility and wisdom of the returning émigrés (Langton, 1836: 188-91; Underwood, 1828: 198). Unwilling to mingle with British society in exile, the émigrés had failed to win many friends among the British. They remained unchanged by the events of the past twenty years, retaining eighteenth-century ideas on government and privilege. Upon their return home, the émigrés' desire for personal revenge and the reestablishment of the power of the church cost them the sympathy of British visitors who were outspoken in their criticism of this group (Hudson, 1973: 55). Travelers also blamed the émigré clergy for the moral decline of the nation, as they had failed to remain in France and offer an alternative to revolution. British writers often referred to the émigrés, royalists and priests as relics of the past, out of touch and in conflict with the new demands of the French nation and the re-

stored King Louis XVIII (Morgan, 1817: 152; Bury, 1900: 256). Many Britons were naturally skeptical as to whether this archaic group could successfully govern France. Echoed in their publications, the travelers' skepticism spread quickly across the Channel, to the British Isles.

At least initially this distrust of the returning nobility did not extend to the king. During his exile in England, Louis XVIII had won the sympathy of many of the British at home. This support continued into the first year of his reign, as his British supporters perceived the king as enlightened. Although aware of the struggles of the newly established French government, British contemporaries remained quietly committed to the Bourbons, as they appeared to support an approximation of the British form of government and offered the greatest chance for peace in Europe. On May 5, 1814, Louis promised to give France a constitution. Many travelers believed that through the enactment of a new constitution Louis XVIII would create within France the British tradition of government. Sharing a common form of government, these visitors shared with those at home their belief that the two countries would initiate a long friendship as a new France with its constitutional monarchy returned to the fold of peaceful nations. No longer would France suffer from the decadence and misrule of the past. Despite its faults, the Revolution had indeed ushered in a new age. "The revolutionary story had rolled in tremendous retribution over the scenes where luxury and pleasure had misruled. Providence has once more restored them to their rightful possessors, after having humbled them to the dust" (Bury, 1900: 254), commented one visitor. Britons hoped that Louis XVIII had returned a wiser man than his older brother, the former king. Despite these aspirations, the British public in France reported home that although the king's return was met with large crowds, he, personally, had been received with little enthusiasm (Berry, 1865: 12). Generally, the travelers discovered that the French peasant greeted the initial return of the Bourbons with great indifference (Bury, 1900: 246). Yet the British visitor believed that the future of France, the popularity of its government, and its friendship with England depended on the conduct of Louis XVIII (Shepherd, 1814: 273-76; Ward, 1904: 253); however, from the lack of public support this possible outcome was called into question.

Letters from an Anonymous English Lady to her Sister during a Tour of Paris in April and May 1814 captured the spirit in Paris during the first months of peace and the return of the king. Miss Anne Carter, who had her work published anonymously, was able to get tickets to Louis XVIII's coronation at Notre Dame and provided her readers a glimpse in the pageantry of the event as well as the optimism that initially prevailed in the capital (Fay, 2015: 84). The prestigious *Quarterly Review* reviewed this lady's descriptions of Louis XVIII's entry into Paris. It praised the *Letters* for being "just what they ought to be, lively and rapid tittle-tattle for use of the fair sex" (*Quarterly Review* 51). Yet its optimistic appeal went beyond just women, as this anonymous work was widely read in England and used for royalist propaganda in France (Moraud 35). Like many of her fellow travelers, including Lady Bury, this anonymous visitor had expected to find France in ruins. Instead, they found the stories which had circulated in England about bad road, dangers, and the general devastation of the countryside to be false. The harvests appeared plentiful, the soil good, and the people happy to have peace (Moraud 36-37; Bury, 1900: 263; Birkbeck, 1815: 11; Ward, 1904: 253). The future looked bright.

Leaving England in July 1814, Morris Birkbeck and his companions claimed to be the first Englishmen to travel south of Montpellier since the Treaty of Amiens (1815: 100). Interested in agriculture, Birkbeck provided a detailed account of soil conditions, crops, livestock and wages. He found farming conditions in northern France comparable to England, while the south was clearly inferior. He concluded that the Revolution had greatly benefited the majority of French by the national sale of lands, the ending of tithes, game laws and other restrictive laws and taxes, and the introduction of new crops and grasses (Birkbeck, 1815: 30, 53). Birkbeck observed the women throughout France employed in occupations considered unsuitable by English standards. Regardless of their class, French women undertook any task they were capable of performing that was essential to the maintenance of their stations. He provided the example of a woman loading a dung cart. Though the labor was hard, her work was a sign of wealth, as her family

owned the property and the cart with which she worked. Birkbeck believed that this employment provided the French women with an independence of action and character which few women in England had achieved (1815: 41-42). French women also demonstrated a greater comfort with their own sexuality. A woman adjusting her garter as she stepped out of a carriage inspired the observation "that a French lady's knee is as modest as the elbow of an English lady" (Birkbeck, 1815: 49). Birkbeck found the French woman's freedom of action one area in which the French excelled their British neighbors. Women did not necessarily agree with his assessment. A female visitor noted that British women should continue to follow the ideals of the proper British maiden – humility, modesty and virtuousness – and not to mimic decadent French traits (*A Letter Addressed…*, 1815: 31). Responding to an editorial in a large periodical, *Antigallicus* went even further. Describing the British woman as timid, delicate and family-oriented, this writer believed that British women traveling in France would fall prey to French ridicule and adopt French dress and manners. This would lead to the destruction of British home life and domestic comfort (*Gentleman's Magazine* 6-7). Except for a few positive comments, the French woman faced a great deal of criticism from the British.

There were other areas where Birkbeck believed that the British could learn from the French: their temperance, neatness in dress, good manners, treatment of their horses and the overall condition of the laboring class. At the same time he noted that the French engaged in habits that were hardly tolerable to the Englishman, such as their habit of spitting. Nor could he stand the stench of their populous towns, which resulted from the frequent emptying of chamber pots from the windows. He found their long meals and many dishes an excessive waste of time while also criticizing the French love of playing of cards and billiards as a form of recreation. Their large standing army he considered an excuse for a latent militarism while the growing number of priests was indicative of an anti-intellectual superstition. Finally he criticized the French for their excessive greetings and farewells (Birkbeck, 1815:104-06). Nothing escaped his gaze. Notwithstanding their difference, Birkbeck was convinced that the French and English were not natural enemies, but the victims of the bad policy of their respective governments which indulged in pointless rivalry and war. He shared the enthusiasm of many of the 1814 travelers who foresaw initially a long, prosperous, and close friendship between the nations. His and other accounts stressed the low cost and high quality of life in France and encouraged some of the British on fixed or limited incomes to migrate across the Channel (Ward, 1904: 255-56). This trend would be attacked in the British press the following year, as the attitude towards the French had changed significantly with the French acceptance of the return of Napoleon.

While peasant loyalties varied throughout France, one constant was the emotions of the French military. The French army continued to be devoted to the fallen emperor during the first restoration. Napoleon could do no wrong while Louis XVIII could do no right. One female visitor noted that she did not see one smile on the face of any French solider during her entire trip to Paris (Granville, 1894: 6). While upon purchasing a *croix d'honneur*, Reverend Shepherd was confronted by a French soldier who proudly displayed his own medallion and noted that it was awarded for bravery and not bought at a souvenir shop. Exasperated by the ensuing discussion on the merits of Napoleon and the military, Shepherd concluded the encounter: "on my opening my pocket-book to deposit my purchase in it I observed his eye glance with curiosity on a rouleau of Bank of England notes, out of which I selected a most superlatively dirty and ragged one and told him that this was the index of England's prosperity (…) by virtue of which we had withstood all the power of Bonaparte and finally hurled him from the throne" (Shepherd, 1814: 250). The reverend's overreaction to the French veteran's pride in his army and service demonstrated not only his inability to fully appreciate French views, but also served to validate his own prejudices. Shepherd went to France expecting that he would encounter hostility from the French people and his negative attitude helped make that a reality. After his return home, his friends and acquaintances who had not traveled abroad bombarded him with questions and request to read his personal travel log. Interest was so great – or so he said – that he felt compelled to publish his

private journal in order to gain some peace at home (Shepherd, 1814: viii). His popular work went through three London editions and one in America. Although unfavorably reviewed in the Tory *Quarterly Review* (46-60), the book was highly praised in the more liberal *Edinburgh Review* which ran several excerpts from it, thus broadening its audience.

Reacting to the various traveler accounts, many of the Englishmen who remained at home worried about the French influence on those who journeyed to that decadent land. One anonymous female writer who described herself as coming from a humble and religious background was concerned about the moral peril to those who visited France (*A Letter Addressed*…, 1815: 27). She claimed that it was her fears that led to the publication of *A Letter Addressed to an English Lady of Fashion in Paris*. In this tract she expressed concern for the women who traveled to Paris and who were influenced by its lifestyle for "was it not (…) their pride, their vanity, their love of pleasure, their giving way to luxury of every kind, and still more the neglect of very moral and religious duty which led to the downfall and debasement of France?" (6). If these vices were transplanted to England the result could be civil turmoil. The burst of optimism generated by the first peace in 1814 turned to cynicism as Britons returned home with less than favorable reports.

Cultural differences, sharpened by the language barrier, perplexed the British traveler and often led to hostile reactions. Elaborate menus, ornate dress, flowery greetings, and other differences drew criticism and seemed to confirm longstanding British prejudices that the French were effeminate, ostentatious and untrustworthy. Napoleon's triumphant return reinforced these attitudes and made any political alliance difficult. The final proof of the French citizen's innate wickedness was their acceptance of Napoleon during the Hundred Days. John Scott typified many travelers whose initial joy at visiting a new country gave way to growing disapproval and disillusionment following the Hundred Days. Those who had been willing initially to regard France favorably now voiced concerns and a window of opportunity to redress the distrust between the two nations was lost.

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In Search of Lost Cultures: Sándor Márai, a Central European Post-War Traveller in the East

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The change of the Western travel culture in the 1920s and 1930s was influenced by the experiences of the First World War and the succeeding political, social and economic shocks. Sándor Márai (1900-1989) was one of the most important representatives of the post-war generation of Hungarian writers. He travelled to the Middle-East and to both Western and Central Europe, and captured his experiences of foreign lands in his works. *In Search of Gods* was Márai's first travel account (published when he was aged 27), which summarized his memories about a journey across the Mediterranean Sea and the Middle East. In Márai's travelogue, the disillusion of the post-war generation merges with the ironic and sceptical attitude and sensitivity of a Central European traveller. The main focus of my study is the way in which Márai reshapes the relativism of the Spenglerian anti-humanistic theory of crisis as a means of intercultural mediation and understanding of each other. The basis of his philosophy was the refusal of the hegemony of the Western "Faustian" culture, the turn towards foreign cultures and the effort to understand them, setting by this a good example for literates of today's crisis.

***Keywords*: post-war generation; Central Europe; Orientalism; criseology; cultural criticism.**

Post-War Crisis and Travelling Culture in Europe

The change of the Western travel culture in the 1920s and 1930s was deeply influenced by the experiences of the First World War (1914-18) and the succeeding political, social and economic shocks.

The members of the generation which was brought up during the Great War time and the succeeding anxious years in Europe had different outlooks and values from their parents, perceiving a drastically changed World surrounding them. George Orwell, member of the post-war generation recalls a rather deep cleavage between different age-groups of the British society in his book, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937):

> By 1918 everyone under forty was in a bad temper with his elders, and the mood of anti-militarism which followed naturally upon the fighting was extended into a general revolt against orthodoxy and authority. (…) The dominance of "old men" was held to be responsible for every evil known to humanity, and every accepted institution from Scott's novels to the House of Lords was derided merely because "old men" were in favour of it. (…) At that time we all thought of ourselves as enlightened creatures of a new age, casting off the orthodoxy that had been forced upon us by those detested "old men". (Orwell, 1983: 241)

The attitude of the new generation was almost the same in all the European societies which have experienced the shock of the war, although the emotional revolt, which has been rather pre-

cisely described by the British author, had deeper socio-cultural concerns in taste and political values of the young. The viewpoint of Orwell's contemporaries may be characterized by the sharp refusal of the values of the 19th century: optimism about technical and social improvement, romantic-patriotic ideas and pathetic rhetoric, while their outlooks were influenced by such new intellectual experiences like the relativist cultural philosophy of Oswald Spengler or T. S. Eliot's vision of *The Waste Land*. The ironic, caricaturistic reshaping of an anxious, chaotic World plays a key-role in the works of the young authors of the 1920s – among others Jean Cocteau, Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh and George Orwell – as opposed to the tragic pathos and sentimentalism of the Victorian Age. "The tradition of romantic pastoralism died, one might say, on the Western front", as the bon mot of these years is cited by Samuel Hynes (1977: 24).

The views of the young authors were considerably influenced by the new myth of travelling. Contrary to their elders, travelling meant not simply humanist study tours for them, but it became a lifestyle and an important way of self-examination and social analysis, providing experiences of transition in time, space and culture. "From 1928 until 1937 I had no fixed home and no possessions which would not conveniently go on a porter's barrow. I travelled continuously, in England and abroad", as it was written by Evelyn Waugh, remembering the wanderer years of his youth (Waugh, 1959: 7). "These were the years", as he writes, "when Mr Peter Fleming went to the Gobi Desert, Mr Graham Greene to the Liberian hinterland; Robert Byron (…) to the ruins of Persia. We turned our backs on civilization" (1959: 8). The motivation of this attitude was the disillusion and longing to leave the ruined and narrow Europe, filled with the wish for regeneration and intellectual resource in the land of ancient cultures. According to Samuel Hynes, travelling played a significant role as "the basic trope of the generation" both in poetry and prose (1977: 229). It might be not by chance that the travelogue became one of the most popular genres among them. Such books have appeared in the second part of the 1920s: *Labels* (1930) and *Remote People* (1931) by Waugh or *Journey without Maps* (1936) by Graham Greene, showing an often absurd, chaotic and inscrutable vision of the World.

The First World War had, if it might be possible, more tragic consequences for the societies of Central Europe than for other societies from elsewhere, with the gunshots in Sarajevo 1914 that signed the beginning of a long series of tragedies taking place in the region during the 20th century. The defeat of the Austro-Hungarian "K. und K." army was followed by the dissolution of the Empire in 1918, and the succeeding years of one-time subjects of the Habsburgs were framed by changing borders and regimes and continuous political uncertainty. "My generation just began life in the middle of some kind of a terrible novel from Karl May; the golden sun of childhood set off, planes and lighting rockets appeared in the sky, instead of bats. Members of the class were taken from the school desks to the war. (…) My generation has never felt the latent certainty, which filled the soul of our fathers", wrote the Hungarian author Sándor Márai (1900-1989), remembering his youth (2000: 38-40, our tr.).

The remembrance of the early traumas played a huge influence on the thinking of many young Hungarian writers between the wars, arousing their interest in the cultural and philosophical theories of crisis. One of the most important was Sándor Márai, who was born as the eldest son of a middle-class family in a multiethnic city of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Kassa (today Košice in Slovakia), which had native German, Hungarian and Slovakian population and citizen traditions. The place of his birth and childhood, existing as an interactive cultural space this time, played a decisive influence on Márai's way of thinking throughout his life: "we have built the cathedral, for centuries, the native inhabitants of Kassa, Hungarians, Germans and Slovakians" – as he writes, referring to the cathedral of the city as the symbol of multiethnic citizen life and values (35, our tr.). These centres, like Košice/Kaschau/Kassa "have functioned at times as 'liminal cities' and 'magnetic fields' that interface Eastern and Western cultural paradigms in a continuous though not necessarily equal dialogue (the Eastern or 'oriental' input functioning often as the tolerated other)" – as it was written by Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (2002: 27). This is the reason why "such cities encourage a de/reconstruction of national narratives, a hy-

bridization of styles and genres, and alternative social and ethnic relations" (26).

Márai, similarly to the main character of his novel *Válás Budán* [Divorce in Buda] (1935), regarded himself as someone who was born in a "painfully broken moment", taking part as a child in the middle-class idyll of the last peacetime years, but his childhood was already pervaded by the permanent mood of "something is wrong" (Márai: 2000, 39, our tr.). Later, the adult Márai became aware of the contradictions and surviving legacy of his class and spatial region, especially due to the works of Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Joseph Roth. After the dissolution of the Monarchy, Márai left Kassa, which became part of the newly founded Czechoslovakia, although it always remained "The City" for him, representing the symbiosis of Central European ethnic groups and citizen values.

In the free atmosphere and economic consolidation of the 1920s, parallel to their Western contemporaries, several young Hungarian authors and intellectuals started out to get to know Europe and the great World. Sándor Márai was one of the most important representatives of "The Generation of the Wanderer Years", as it was called by one of its members, the novelist and literature historian Antal Szerb (1901-1945) (2002: 499). Between 1919 and 1928 Márai lived in Germany and France, being a student and journalist, and travelled almost continuously inside and outside Europe. The analysis of crisis represents one of the strongest voices in his publicistic works, novels, journals and travelogues. Above all, the cultural relativism of Oswald Spengler and the social and cultural criticism of José Ortega y Gasset and Julien Benda played a huge impact on Márai's point of view in those years. He travelled to the Middle East, but also to Western and Central Europe between the 1920s and 1940s, and captured his travel experiences in his works *Istenek nyomában* [In Search of Gods] (1927), *Napnyugati őrjárat* [Patrol in the West] (1936), *Kassai őrjárat* [Patrol in Kassa] (1941), and *Európa elrablása* [The Kidnapping of Europe] (1947). During his journeys, his Central European roots played all the time a determining and indelible influence on his view of the World.

"The eye-witness of the last insane decade"

In Search of Gods was Márai's first travel book, published at the age of 27, which summarized his memories about a journey across Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Greece. This was his first book, which was accepted later as part of his oeuvre and was written especially for the Hungarian public, before his repatriation to Hungary, in 1928. "Such a route has never been taken by a Hungarian journalist, this is the reason why I may believe that the book would not be without any success", as he wrote to his elder fellow-writer, Jenő Heltai before starting out (Rónay, 1990: 52, our tr.).

Although the young Márai was "inspired to start by the sense of crisis", as it was written by Huba Lőrinczy (1997: 269, our tr.), the narrator of the book dissolves his own sense in the common feeling, giving voice to the frustration of the post-war generation. He declares by the boarding at Marseille, that:

> this protest is not personal, somehow not I am who is offended, but the eye-witness of the last insane decade, who has climbed up yet to the ship, but does not say farewell to Europe, does not wave hands nor wait for anything, and is not angry with anyone, feeling for a while, that he goes home to Asia and detaches himself from Europe, where, ultimately, he was cheated, deceived, robbed and abused. (Márai, 2011: 15-16)

The Cap Polonio, one-time German ship of immigrants (currently owned by the French, with an Alsatian waiter on board, who has changed his nationality after the war, together with the ship), became itself "like a piece of Alsace" (17, our tr.), the symbol of the post-traumatic loss of identity. The events of the preceding years are revealed only indirectly in Márai's work, through hints at traumatic motifs of social remembrance or unexpected comparisons: "These

strange, difficult years" (11, our tr.), as we read in the monologue of the narrator. Later, in Bethlehem, he meditates on recent martyrs of the social ideas, without mentioning their names:

> He died for the humankind… it is a strange word, having a hard taste. Names come to my mind, as I am standing here, names of people who have recently died for the humankind. They were born somewhere in a hole, their fathers were carpenters or something similar, and their mothers were poor women. They were sitting in cafés as exiles, preaching through papers and brochures, and they were crucified at the age of thirty or forty. They were beaten to death. They were struck dead. For the humankind. (Márai, 2011: 130, our tr.)

But the perspective of the "child of the century" is more significant than any words could be, because it is influenced by the memories of historic events. He is confronting his experiences of the personally perceived, but strange East, with his own traumatic European identity, all the time during his journey. His point of view is essentially determined by irony and political realism based on the experiences of recent times, and sceptical attitude about ideologies. "Who are 'we'?": asking himself the question, listening to the tempered argumentation of the referent of the French Foreign Ministry in plural, about the "pacification" of Syria. Later he finds an occasion to dismiss every kind of ideological dogmatism, when he watches the closed life of the Samaritans in Palestine, whose belief in their hereditary chosenness is compared by the narrator to the modern racist theories. Meanwhile, the notorious cruelty of the "barbarian" tribe of Syrian Druses seems to be out of date in the eyes of a European, because they attack their enemies with short swords instead of tanks, planes or chemical weapons. Even though, Márai is not a nihilist traveller: he admires those, who are directed from their own ideas, like the archaeologist Carter, who researches the tombs of Pharaohs in Egypt, "giving the whole energy and passion, knowledge, experience and enthusiasm" (Márai, 2011: 43, our tr.) to achieve his aim, without any respect for the people's opinion about him. Or like the Jewish farmers, who are founding their home with hard work in the desert of Palestine. He has respect just for life itself, for "great passion", and for the fundamental rights and dignity, as the "last necessity" of the human being (102-103).

This is the horizon on which Márai rethinks the old Western "pilgrimage to the Orient" topic, the dreamed-of Oriental world being the object of his escapism. From the Goethe's *West-Eastern Divan* (1814-15), several European poets and prose writers (among others Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Nerval, Flaubert) expressed their admiration for the imagined Orient, looking for regeneration and intellectual resources outside the Western civilization. Márai's travelogue, through its genre, theme and points of view, is connecting with this very rich European tradition which has a serious influence on what and how he writes. "I believe" as Edward Said points out "no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism" (1977: 3). "Every writer on the Orient (…) assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies. Additionally, each work on the Orient affiliates itself with other works, with audiences, with institutions, with the Orient itself" (20). The discourse of Western Orientalism reshapes the real elements of the Eastern world according to the expectations, wishes and interests of the Western people. Said argues that "the Orient" was not a simple geographical reality for European – especially for the British and French – authors, adventurers and travellers, but rather a scene which was suitable for their dreams and intellectual expectations. Flaubert was "seeking a 'homeland', as Jean Bruneau has called it, in the locales of the origin of religions, visions, and classical antiquity" during his Oriental journey, while Nerval was "seeking – or rather following – the traces of his personal sentiments and dreams, like Sterne's Yorick before him" (180). Following this tradition, the "Oriental journey" topic appears in Márai's works as the rediscovery of a dream which has already been dreamed, filling the traveller with an unquenchable thirst: "Show yourself, you mysterious! Let me get closer to you, you calm, you rich, you dirty! Give just a gulp

of that drug, from which the eyes of people are shining here with such a restful light!" (Márai, 2011: 144, our tr.). The Orient is the magic world of the Arabian Nights, where the border between dreams and reality is fading in the moonlight or in the flaming sunshine: "I am in an old tale, which has been told for thousands of years; at dawn, it has never been finished, every night it started again and it has not been ended up to now" (61-62, our tr.).

The efforts of the narrator to reconcile the experienced things with the preceding mythological and fictional narratives about the Orient are very typical. Although his expectations often fail, he takes ironic notes. The first person whom he sees in Alexandria upon his arrival is "Aladdin standing at the doorstep of Africa, being black in a white veil and red tarbush, holding a huge lamp in his hand, the lamp, which illuminates the wonders of the Arabian Nights" (24, our tr.). Later he finds out that 'Aladdin', who steals into the landing ship with his mates, offers for sale a night-table lamp which has been stolen from a hotel. Besides, the roaring Arabian "porters" assaulting the ship remind the narrator of Ali Baba and the Forty Robbers. On the first night of Bajram, the succeeding month of the Mohammedan fast, the magic of Babylon is revived in the streets of Cairo. The magic can often be caught in the scenes of the Oriental landscape: "The car takes me to the citadel at night; some hundreds minarets are in the moonlight, shining domes of mosques, tousled palm oases nodding in the wind, some thousands of houses with flat roofs and a crossing thick silver stream, the Nile" (59, our tr.). Later in Istanbul: "To face the Bosporus spilled with the golden moon in the night, Istanbul with its monumental churches, the Hagia Sophia (…): a city cannot be more beautiful. We simply should not get close to it" (197, our tr.).

However, the myth of the Orient has a further meaning for the disillusioned Hungarian traveller, referring to the Eastern origin of his nation. Travelling to the East appears in Márai's travelogue as a chance of return to the roots, after the failed trial of Western modernization: "to mingle in this infinite crowd of Asia with a tarbush on your head, and not to write to anybody, forget about everything, about war and literature, about the capital and the telephone, and go home under the palms and dream longer with these hundreds of millions the great dream of the Orient – the dream about the native land where once I came from" (16, our tr.). But searching for the alternative is based on the stereotype of the "Orient" as opposite to the West, in the sense given by the Europeans, as it may be seen in Goethe's *Hejira* from his *West-Eastern Divan*: "North and West and South up-breaking! / Thrones are shattering, Empires quaking; / Fly thou to the untroubled East, / There the patriarchs' air to taste! / What with love and wine and song / Chiser's fount will make thee young" (Goethe, 1914: 1). That way the Hungarian traveller's picture of the East mirrors the crisis of the West, following an old European tradition instead of "arriving home" in the Orient. Also "the eye-witness of the maddened last decade" himself is aware of being unable to leave his traumatised European identity:

> one can't run away from people, after all travelling and distance, I can't run away from my passing life either; each of my concerns is coming with me; they are in my pocket, in my luggage: a letter, a promise, a misbelief, a conviction – to travel to the East away from all of these, to leave Europe to see camels, palms and nice and wise Arabians are all in vain, like to go to see the footsteps of old gods, too. (Márai, 2011: 10, our tr.)

This belief is strengthened by his meeting with the Arabian dragoman Ahmed Rumi in Luxor, who calls him in his native Hungarian language: "I have purchased my clothes in Paris, my hat in London, my shoes in Vienna, all in vain; even a blind man could see that I am Hungarian. And I might have lived in Western cities for so long, but the first ragged Arabian in one of Luxor's dark streets can pick me up: I am Hungarian" (48 our tr.).

"Orientalism has been subjected to imperialism, positivism, utopianism, historicism, Darwinism, racism, Freudianism, Marxism, Spenglerism", as it was written by Said (1977: 43). The cultural theory of Spengler, representing the renewed discourse of Western Orientalism in the 1920s,

had a remarkable impact on Márai's view of the Orient. The narrator's selection and interpretation of the scenes are deeply influenced by the morphological view of *The Decline of the West* (I. 1918, II. 1922). Márai met during his journey no less than three of the eight great cultures listed in Spengler's work: the Egyptian, the Ancient and the Arabian. The symbolic representation of the Oriental landscape, relics and peoples shows the aesthetic perception of cultures, for example in the description of the ancient treasures of a past aristocracy in the museum of Cairo, or in the frescos which were brought to light in Pompeii. The narrator finds and shows these relics and artefacts as symbolic objects, which are able to express the spirit of lost cultures. But the "praying people" as an everyday spectacle of the Arabian way of life may also be such a symbol, whose conflict with the "rushing people" of the West seems hardly avoidable, according to the narrator's view (Márai, 2011: 79-81). Spengler argues that the same phases of development are repeated in different cultures: "Does world-history present to the seeing eye certain grand traits, again and again, with sufficient constancy to justify certain conclusions?" – asks the German philosopher in his well-known work (Spengler, 1991: 3). The ruins of Pompeii recall the Spenglerian idea of homology: "You can find ornamental decoration with Fortuna and baskets of flowers in Pompeii, where somehow everything reminds me of the end of the 18th century (…) everything repeats itself and comes back in times, maybe the lava too" (Márai, 2011: 210, our tr.).

In Search of Gods was regarded by many critics as one of the first Spenglerian works in the Hungarian literature, although it is very important to emphasize that the ironic-sceptic outlook of the young Márai – which can be summarized in his words about the closed life of the Samaritans: "It's not worth dying for the letter, Samaritan, because the truth is relative and even if there is any kind of truth, there is only one: you have to live, until and how you can" (127, our tr.) – cannot endure any ideological limits. The Hungarian author, who rejects any kind of authority, similarly to his Western contemporaries, refers ironically to the theory of crisis, when he starts off with Goethe's *Faust* in his pocket, as the son of "the declining West". The only close reference to Spengler may reveal a lot about the author's ironic attitude, comparing lonely camels standing by the Nile at sunset to the German cultural ideologist who augurs "The Decline of the West" (76, our tr.). Márai's attitude continually remains rather autonomous from the Spenglerian theory – and it may not be otherwise, given the German theorist's opinion, who argues that Western culture has been exhausted, and encourages members of the new generation to deal with politics and science topics instead of arts and literature. This case, a literary Spenglerism, may be just an ironic one. We may get closer if we regard Márai's Spenglerism as part of his way of thinking, which was called "iterative", instead of a stabile outlook of the world, by the literary historian János Szávai (2008: 7-19).

Despite his irony and changing viewpoints, there is an aspect in which Márai constantly agrees with the German philosopher. This aspect refers to the historic relativist view of the social phenomenon, which is essentially more consistently asserted by Márai than by Spengler himself. For example, while Spengler regards colonialism and militarism as necessary elements of civilization, representing – despite his declared historic scepticism – the timely discourse of the Western Orientalism of his age, Márai appeals to cultural relativism in order to question the Western-centred viewpoints of the colonizing powers: "it is not possible, after all, to grasp and to understand, what we, Europeans are doing in the World! What is the Legion looking for here?" (Márai, 2011: 167, our tr.) – he exclaims, regarding the military presence of the French Foreign Legion in Syria. The traveller's experiences are not able to confirm the European view of Orientalism. Arriving at Alexandria, he discovers that such words as "East" and "West" convey rather to qualities which mirror or interpenetrate each other, instead of labels for changeable identities: "everything is false or falsified, what is still pure Oriental is chewed by a spiritless civilisation, and what is European is defiled by the East" (29-30, our tr.). For him, the European narrative of the Orient appears as a dream which has been dissolved by the emerging political self-consciousness of the Arabian peasants: "The Orient is a great dream and those who have dreamed it have been woken up. But not entirely so... surely, not around Aswan. But this is the first time in one thousand years,

when the Arabian peasant looks around his own cottage as if he really sees something, and what he sees he does not like" (54, our tr.). As Márai distinguishes the social reality from the homogenizing discourse of Orientalism, the East appears to him as a carrier of time experience, which is fundamentally different from the Western one. History, as a Western narrative, cannot be applied to the life of the Eastern society, so the history of colonization – as the Western presence in the East – can only be reported. However, the motionless Arab society has no history of its own:

> The Fellah, at his work, still looks after the conquerors running across with the lightning train, as he did five thousand years before, in the time of the first pharaoh Menes – he looks today, in the time of Fuad I, as he used to, at the conquerors streaming the Nile Basin, the Hyksos, the Ethiopians, the Assyrians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, Arabs, Turks and Englishmen. They all came here, they robbed, infected blood and killed, they came by the lightning train, in the sleeping-car, like the Britons, or riding elephants, like the Persians – and in the end, they all marched out, and there remained only the Fellah, the Nile, the earth, life and misery. (32-33, our tr.)

The different experience of time is a source of overwhelming strangeness for the European traveller, forcing him to rethink his essential notions, such as life, freedom, work, justice, happiness and morality: "Cairo is the first city in the Orient where much baggage has to be thrown away; you have brought it from Europe, but here you can no longer make use of it with entire Western expertise" (63, our tr.). This is why it is not possible to imagine a simple and seamless fusion between the two worlds such as that symbolized, in Kemal Pasha's Turkey, by the wearing of the hat by the young Turks and the prohibition of the traditional Turkish tarbush. All people are bound by their tradition, but that is why the dialogue between representatives of different cultures is unavoidable.

From the Periphery of the West to the Centre of the East

"We were a generation brought up on adventure stories who had missed the enormous disillusionment of the First War; so we went looking for adventure", as it was written by Graham Greene in the Preface to his travelogue *Journey without Maps* (1936) (1978: ix). In the first travel book of his Hungarian contemporary Sándor Márai, the disillusion of the post-war generation-merges with the ironic, sceptical attitude and sensitivity of a Central European traveller.

Márai believes that there is no other way to freedom and self-expression than the struggle of creation: "You have to sit down somewhere and express yourself completely: through a book, through a duty which you accept, through an act, and I recently realized that life is what so complicated: even through a crime if you have such a terrible fate" (Márai, 2011: 211, our tr.). The spontaneous experience of freedom is only given to the native people living outside of civilization, where "there is no telephone and no railway, no authority and no occupation, there is only life here, the cruel and indifferent order of nature" (52-53). The narrator considers that freedom nostalgically, but he knows that such an experience is not available to Western people, because there is no return to the pre-modern state. However, contrary to the British and French authors, we may see that the Hungarian Márai is travelling to the Eastern alien world whilst having an ambivalent relationship to the "West" itself. The rejection of the colonialist discourses and greater susceptibility to alternative forms of identity may be partly due to this, because his native Central European experiences about cultural heterogeneity help him to understand several phenomena he perceives, especially at the meeting points of Eastern and Western cultures. The "Central European attitude" – as labelled by Czesław Miłosz – is marked by irony, scepticism about the "great narratives", and the sense of cultural heterogeneity and the marginal – ethnic, religious and cultural – identities. "The ways of feeling and thinking of its inhabitants must thus suffice for drawing mental lines which seem to be more durable than the borders of the states" (Miłosz, 1986: 101).

The native experience of ethnic and cultural pluralism encourages the traveller to give up the West-centric view. Márai deals with the Orientalism and Spenglerism topics and approaches them with irony. He chooses as a basis of his philosophy the refusal of the Western "Faustian" culture hegemony, the turn towards foreign cultures and the effort to understand them.

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Travel, Migration and the Redefinition of Home in Two Zimbabwean Novels

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Numerous studies have looked at the literary depiction of the crisis period of the 2000s in Zimbabwe particularly through the lens of the land redistribution programme. Nonetheless, there is little scholarship of how traveling through migration affects the definition of home and homeland. The novels of Brian Chikwava and NoViolet Bulawayo discuss the multi-layered issues that are at play in the intersection of migration, nostalgia and homemaking. Drawing on Svetlana Boym's fascinating work on nostalgia, this paper contends that "nostalgia (from *nostos* – return home, and *algia* – longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy" (2001: xiii). Of particular concern is the manner in which traveling allows for a reconceptualised definition of home, land and homeland and this certainly entails a redefinition of nationality against the contemporary "borderless global neighbourhood which keeps shrinking interminably" (Tsaaior, 2011: 101). Such a reconceptualisation of home, land and homeland will be analysed vis-à-vis current trends that "downplay the national in cultural and postcolonial studies in favour of the trans- or multinational" (Hayes, 1998: 445).

***Keywords*: travel; migration; home; nationality; nostalgia.**

It is not surprising that national awareness comes from
outside the community rather than from within.
It is the romantic traveler who sees from a distance
the wholeness of the vanishing world.
The journey gives him perspective.
Svetlana Boym

Hammar, McGregor and Landau posit that "since early 2000, political violence and dramatic economic contraction have displaced people within and beyond Zimbabwe's borders on an extraordinary scale" (2010: 263). They go on to explain that as a result, "Zimbabwean citizens have created a new regional dynamic both through their physical movement to neighbouring states and by generating new economies and socio-political formations stretching beyond Zimbabwe's borders" (2010: 263). Although I agree with Hammar, McGregor and Landau on how the socio-political crisis of the 2000s incited displacement and how this created new regional dynamics, I hasten to add that this displacement has played an important role in defining and redefining home.

The Zimbabwean crisis has produced a rich body of literary texts that have captured the multifaceted issues that deal with the definition of homeland and citizenship. In this paper, I concentrate on the novels of Brian Chikwava and NoViolet Bulawayo. I will analyse the novels of these two writers individually and then ultimately offer a synthesis of the similarities and differ-

ences that are presented in these novels.

Globalisation has not only facilitated faster transmission of information throughout the world, but it has also made it easier for people to traverse geographical and national boundaries. In post-2000 Zimbabwe, migration has been necessitated by the search for the proverbial pastures in neighbouring countries and overseas, in a bid to escape untenable socioeconomic and political problems.

This article is informed by the neoclassical models of migration, the target income theory and the new economics of labor migration theory and by Abraham Maslow's theorisation of the hierarchy of needs. The neoclassical economic theory views migration as a purposeful endeavour aimed at maximising the economic well-being of the individual or the household after comparing opportunities for income in alternative locations (Harris and Todaro, 1970; Mincer, 1987). This form of labor migration occurs when there is an apparently large disparity in location-specific remuneration or opportunities for employment sufficient to motivate individuals to migrate in order to earn higher wages. The neoclassical approach also assumes that migration constitutes human capital investment whose benefits are achieved in the long-term (Sjaastad, 1962; Todaro, 1969).

Target income theory adapts the neoclassical focus on push-pull factors and cost-benefit analysis for the individual migrant, but places less emphasis on maximising lifetime income (Hill, 1987; Berg, 1961). It assumes that workers prefer not to migrate from their areas of origin, but are obliged to, and engage in temporary labour owing to limited domestic opportunities for income. In other words, migrants opt to live away from their places of origin in order to earn and save sufficient migrant earnings to attain a desired savings target. Such migrants would enter the foreign labour market as earners working towards a particular target. After saving or remitting money equal to their desired target, they return to their homes (Byerlee, 1974; Berg, 1961). Therefore, there is greater incentive to migrate for individuals in low-wage and low income growth areas compared to that of individuals in areas with favorable economic opportunities.

The third theoretical dimension is the new economics of labour migration theory (Stark, 1991; Taylor, 1999; see also review articles by Massey et al., 1993, 1994). It borrows the basic concepts of the neoclassical model yet expanding it to include demand for credit and insurance as additional incentives for temporary labor migration. In less developed countries with poorly developed or virtually absent capital markets, temporary labor migration becomes a source of funds for large expenditures at home. Such expenditures include investments in home construction, family business ventures, fixed property, or in agriculture.

Abraham Maslow proposed in his theorisation of the hierarchy of needs that "self-actualisation", "psychological needs", "safety needs", "love/belonging" as well as "esteem" as the most basic needs necessary for human development. The situation that prevailed as from the year 2000 made it difficult if not impossible for many Zimbabweans to meet these basic needs. Moyo, Gonye and Mdlongwa explain in this respect that: "Many Zimbabweans have come to view their home as suffocating and thus leading them to lose control of actions. (…) The situation in the country had translated into imminent danger for Zimbabweans, with large numbers opting to find solutions in the Diaspora. The Diaspora seemed to offer a panacea for the ills that had befallen them" (2012: 1381).

Given such a situation, the homeland proved to be particularly "unhomely" and compelled many Zimbabwean citizens to not only look for better opportunities elsewhere, but to also attempt to find and forge a new home away from the land of their birth and origin.

However, such migration as shown by the fictional narratives of the previously mentioned writers, relocating to the diaspora is not an easy enterprise. In fact, new challenges and problems await those who migrate to the diaspora. As mentioned before, in this paper, I concentrate on the literary works of Brain Chikwava and NoViolet, both of whom have enjoyed international acclaim for their debut novels. I analyse Chikwava's *Harare North* (2009) and Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013). Both writers are based and write from the diaspora. Chikwava lives in the

United Kingdom whilst Bulawayo is based in the United States of America. Chikwava became the first Zimbabwean writer to win the Caine Prize for African writing in English in 2004 for his short story "Seventh Street Alchemy". Mary Fitzgerald offers a positive review of Chikwava's writing, explaining that its vitality lies "in bringing to life the plight of those often marginalised by mainstream society [and thus opening] up a bleak, yet important social landscape" (2009). Born in 1981, NoViolet Bulawayo moved to the USA to study law. She however opted to pursue creative writing. She has won several awards for her literary work. In 2011, she won the 2011 Caine Prize for her short story "Hitting Budapest", which later became the first chapter of her debut novel. She also won the Etisalat Prize for literature in 2013 and was in the same year short-listed for the prestigious Man Booker Prize. The novels of these two Zimbabwean writers grapple with the manner in which "mobility becomes relevant, mobility enables encounters whereby certain travelling positions become defined as abject" (Toivanen, 2015: 15). Their novels reveal how travelling, mobility and spatiotemporal displacement makes it possible for literary protagonists to reframe and rethink diverse ideas about home, land, homeland and how they attempt to reconstruct these concepts, in a bid to create a sense of belonging and being in a world that borders on precarity.

Brian Chikwava's novel describes the trials of an unnamed protagonist who has moved to Brixtol, in the United Kingdom. The protagonist-narrator explains that he enters the UK after having lied that he had been harassed by state agents for being a member of the opposition party: "Me I tell them I have been harass by them boys in dark glasses because I am youth member of the opposition party"' (4). Although the protagonist attests to the pressing need to come up with money that would be used for his mother's "umbiyiso" or memorial service, it is hard not to acknowledge that he had left Harare in order to escape the violence and trauma that was associated with the farm occupations that took place in the 2000s. The constant reference to "umbuyiso" establishes a spiritual attachment to the homeland. He explains as such the importance of "umbuyiso": "I wake up in the morning thinking of Mother. You die and your spirit goes into the wilderness. One year later, your family have to do *umbuyiso* ceremony to bring your spirit back home so it can leave with other ancestor spirits. … Me I have to go back home and organise *umbuyiso* for she" (16).

The constant fear that the place where his mother has been buried might be confiscated in the on-going land appropriations also reflects the protagonist's attachment not just to the homeland but more importantly to land. The protagonist-narrator explains: "People in the village where Mother is buried have already been telled that they have to prepare to be resettled any time. […] Soon Mother's grave maybe end up being dig up by some machine, get washed by rain and she bones come out in the open and get bleached by the sun just like bones of dead bird and no one is going to care" (74).

This fear of the displacement of the mother's bones however reveals a certain form of hypocrisy on the part of the protagonist, who himself had been involved in forcibly moving people from their land. Noxolo acknowledges this unreliability of the protagonist-narrator and finds that:

> The novel is unflinching in its portrayal of the young narrator's ambivalent agency – even though the narrator was a perpetrator of violence in Zimbabwe and continues to be manipulative and violent now that he is in London, the novel can also be read as an extended meditation on the ways in which this young man (not a child soldier formally, but certainly a young combatant) is nonetheless a victim of his insecurity as an asylum seeker in London and a victim of the violence of Zimbabwean politics. (2014: 301)

As the protagonist undertakes different menial jobs, a thought always comes to the protagonist's mind: the need and will to return home. The title of the novel is fascinating in this respect, given that Harare North is used to refer to London. In clarifying this rechristening of London,

Patricia Noxolo elucidates:

> The novel articulates the perspectives and understandings of spatially diverse audiences locating its characters and settings in a wide global landscape. Indeed, its title Harare North is precisely a reordering of the global landscape, repositioning London in relation to Zimbabwe and its diaspora: London is referred to in Zimbabwe as 'Harare North' and Johannesburg is 'Harare South' because of the large numbers of Zimbabweans who migrate to each city. (2014: 299)

By refusing to refer to London by its proper name, the protagonist unwittingly accomplishes two things. To begin with, the protagonist displaces home to elsewhere. Secondly, the protagonist also rejects to call the foreign land home, electing rather to transpose his ideas of home and homeland to London. This appropriation of the foreign land and inscription of African qualities is also fortified by the language that is used in this novel.

The definition of home in *Harare North* is intricately linked to the physical land. However, what is fascinating is the manner in which the protagonist-narrator is caught in a fault line between the cherished homeland where he cannot return without having earned enough money in an inauspicious foreign land. This leads the protagonist-narrator, as well as other migrants, to become insecure bodies that survive in an elusive third space which is neither homely nor unhomely, an ambivalent third space in which the characters live virtually from hand to mouth and hope for better paying jobs. The nameless protagonist-narrator explains the manner in which he is stuck in this third space, unable to go back home and unable to fit into Harare North: "You tell the right foot to go in one direction and he is being traitor shoe-doctor and tell left foot to go in another direction. You stand there in them mental backstreets and one big battle rage even if you have no more ginger for it" (230).

The novel *Harare North* thus articulates the multifaceted emotions and issues that play out when migrants find existence in the places of their origin and birth untenable and find existence in the diaspora equally ruthless and difficult. Stagnation, despair and hopelessness come to characterise the lives of migrants such as those portrayed in Chikwava's novel.

NoViolet Bulawayo's debut novel *We Need New Names* received interesting media attention when it was published in 2013. The novel offers a story told by a young narrator called Darling Nonkululeko Nkalawho who grows up in an unnamed African country which resembles, in more ways than one, Zimbabwe during the crisis period. The story is divided into two parts based on the geographical location of the narrator. In the first part, the narrator is based in the ironically named shanty town called Paradise in Zimbabwe and in the second she has relocated to "Destroyedmichygen" (Detroit, Michigan) in the USA. These two parts offer interesting insights and perspectives not just of the narrator's relationship to and perception of homeland, but also of how migration and spatiotemporal displacement affects her identity and how she relates to herself and others.

In the first part, Darling recounts growing up in a tumultuous shanty town in which she and other children are reduced to scavengers as they move around looking for food. In naming Paradise the shanty town in which Darling and her friends live after their homes are destroyed, Bulawayo beckons the reader to perceive of this space as a utopic home in spite of all the horrors and sadness that abound there. Darling describes in such a manner this Paradise that she calls home: "Paradise is all tin and stretches out in the sun like a wet sheepskin nailed on the ground to dry; (…). The shacks themselves are terrible but from up here, they seem much better, almost beautiful even, it's like I'm looking at a painting" (36).

Darling sees beyond the tin and the sheepskin that makes up the shanty town of Paradise. In fact, her description gives Paradise an idyllic sense of home, in spite of the harshness and crudeness of quotidian life there. By comparing Paradise to a painting, Darling shows her attachment to her home and how it is not only dear to her, but also how she finds it beautiful despite its imperfections.

In their infantile discussion, Darling and her friends are cognisant of the misery they have to contend with in their homeland. Darling recounts, for example, the trauma she and others experience when their homes are destroyed during Operation Murambatsvina. She remembers through the unfocused and candid vision of a child: "Then the lorries come carrying the police… and we run and hide inside the houses, but it's no use hiding because the bulldozers start bulldozing and bulldozing and we are screaming and screaming" (67).

In spite of the nonchalant peace that the children exhibit in the first half of the novel, it is worth noting that this semblance of peace does not suffice to take away from the children the desire to want more than their squalid existences. In the games that they play, the children all dream and long to leave the shanty town of Paradise and find better lives in other countries: "Well, I don't care, I'm blazing out of this kaka country myself. Then I'll make lots of money and come back and get a house in this very Budapest. Or even better, many houses: on in Budapest, one in Los Angeles, one in Paris. Wherever I feel like" (14).

Although the children cherish their home, in their own childish ways, they are aware that numerous possibilities and hopes can certainly be found outside the familiar surroundings of home.

However, when Darling moves to Michigan to live with her aunt Fostalina, she comes to experience other forms of harshness. To begin with, she has to contend with stereotypes that Americans have of Africans:

> And when they asked us where we were from, we exchanged glances and smiled with the shyness of child brides. They said, Africa? We nodded yes. What part of Africa? We smiled. Is it the part where vultures wait for famished children to die? We smiled. Where the life expectancy is thirty-five years? We smiled. Is it there where dissidents shove AK-47s between women's legs? We smiled. Where people run about naked? We smiled. That part where they massacred each other? We smiled. (151)

Although exaggerated and orientalist, such a description of her homeland makes Darling realise the bleakness of the reality that she had experienced. She explains: "And when these words tumbled from their lips like crushed bricks, we exchanged glances again and the water in our eyes broke. Our smiles melted like dying shadows and we wept, wept for our blessed, wretched country" (151).

When she initially arrives in the USA, Darling is excited at the many things that she is able to easily find, such as food:

> We ate like pigs, like wolves, like dignitaries, we ate like vultures, like stray dogs, like monsters; we ate like kings. We ate for all our past hunger, for our parents and brothers and sisters and relatives and friends who were still back there. We uttered their names between mouthfuls, conjured up their hungry faces and chapped lips – eating for those who could not be with us to eat for themselves. And when we were full we carried our dense bodies with the dignity of elephants – if only our country could see us in America, see us eat like kings in a land that was not ours. (152)

Darling is initially astounded by what she views to be good living that is found in America. She compares this with the squalid conditions that she has experienced in her native county. However, this honeymoon stage is followed by the crude reality of being an illegal migrant in the USA. This is also followed by the degrading jobs that they have to take/accept in order to earn a living and make ends meet:

> And the jobs we worked, Jesus – Jesus –Jesus, the jobs we worked. Low-paying jobs. Backbreaking jobs. Jobs that gnawed at the bones of our dignity, devoured the meat, tongued the marrow. We took scalding irons and ironed our pride flat.

> We cleaned toilets. We picked tobacco and fruit under the boiling sun until we hung our tongues and panted like lost hounds. (…) We swallowed every pain like a bitter pill, drank every fear like a love portion, and we worked and worked. (155)

The initial euphoria subsides and leaves behind the ungarnished reality of the migrant's existence in the diaspora. In spite of the difficulties she faces in the USA, Darling is aware that she cannot return to her homeland because she is not a documented migrant. Once she visits her homeland, even for a short time, she is assured that returning will be a daunting task if not an impossible one.

The main difference between *Harare North* and *We Need New Names* is the nature of the protagonist-narrators that the writers employ. Chikwava's nameless protagonist-narrator is caught up in his own imaginations to such an extent that he does not recognise the wrongs he did before fleeing Zimbabwe. Quite uncharacteristic of main characters, Chikwava's protagonist remains by and large unchanged right through the action of the novel. The move to the UK does not necessarily alter the way in which he views the world. Although there are fleeting moments in which he shows some sort of humanity, especially in his relationship with a Zimbabwean migrant called Vimbai and her infant child, Chikwava's narrator does not change. He continues to see the UK as a place where he has to make money and thereafter return to his native land to conduct his mother's memorial service. For him, home is where his mother is buried.

On the other hand, for Bulawayo's Darling, we notice the way in which the journey to the diaspora transforms the manner in which the protagonist-narrator views the world and especially the way she perceives and defines home. Darling, unlike Chikwava's protagonist, makes friends in America and soon begins to feel at home in Michigan. Although she constantly thinks of her childhood in Paradise, Darling is not pressed to return to her homeland. Given her youth, it seems as though what is important to her at that moment is to know herself and to make the most of what life has to offer her.

The two novelists effectively handle irony in their novels in depicting the role of migration in subjectification of their protagonist-narrators. For Chikwava, the irony resides in the blindness of the protagonist in the face of his past actions and how they lead him to flee his home country. For Bulawayo, irony is found in the candid and often naïve descriptions of the narrator who dreams of a better life away from squalid conditions of her country of origin. As pointed out by Polo Moji: "The novel's use of satirical irony is used as a narrative mode that frames Darling's subjectification in terms of the psychic and social (dis)location brought about by these displacements. This reflects the semantic and cognitive dissonance created by shifts in ways of experiencing and naming the world" (2015: 182).

An analysis of Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* has shown that migration allows for a reconceptualised definition of home, land and homeland. Such an undertaking has entailed a redefinition of nationality against the contemporary "borderless global neighbourhood which keeps shrinking interminably" (Tsaaior, 2011: 101). I have argued, in line with Homi Bhabha, that homelands that we have come to call as "nations" ought to be viewed as "narrative" constructions, which are products of multifaceted interfaces of often opposing cultural and national constituencies and contestations. According to Bhabha, "it is in the emergence of the interstice – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated" (1994: 2). Ultimately, such reconceptualisation of home, land and homeland destabilises long-held beliefs of what these notions are or ought to be.

I have contended, as argued by Brubaker, that spatiotemporal travelling and movement allows for a rethinking of beliefs that "often informed by a strikingly idealist, teleological understanding of the nation-state, which is seen as the unfolding of an idea, the idea of nationalising and homogenising the population. The conceptual antithesis between nation-state and diaspora obscures more than it reveals, occluding the persisting significance (and great empirical variety) of nation-

states" (2005: 10). The novels that I have analysed essentially reveal that home is not a fixed phenomenon but one that is perpetually reconstructed through interactions with different spaces, cultures and times.

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Amurgul trăirii, începutul amăgirii (Jurnalul intim: *O promisiune de sinceritate*)

The Twilight of Living, the Dawn of Delusion (The Personal Diary: *A Promise of Sincerity*)

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The present paper attempts to identify the contiguities and the differences between Eugen Simion's diary, *Timpul trăirii, timpul mărturisirii* (written after three years of living in Paris as lecturer of Romanian language and literature at Sorbona, between 1970 and 1973), and the autobiographical annotations of Emil Cioran (permanently settled in the capital of France since 1941). I present the Romanian cultural background, as well as the European political circumstances at the middle of the last century (especially the events related to the World War II, together with Emil Cioran's attitude in regard to the contemporary ideologies). I also put forward the affiliation of the diary to the memoir genre – in as far as it ought to render the objective truth, the diary either delineates a perspectivist view (the subjective judgement passes for a matter of course) or it takes on a fictional quality, according to the author's aims. The latter one is a hallmark for both Eugen Simion's *Jurnalul parizian* and Emil Cioran's autobiographical texts.

***Keywords*: the memoir genre; World War II; the complex of a small culture; exile; Paris.**

Compatrioții noștri au luat din nou
cu asalt drumul Parisului,
ceea ce mă deranjează enorm.
(Emil Cioran, *Scrisori către cei de acasă*)

Orice jurnal intim
este o ficțiune a nonficțiunii.
(Paul Valéry)

Jurnalul de călătorie ca specie a genului autobiografic

Începând cu finalul secolului nouăsprezece, odată cu apariţia cărţilor lui Nietzsche, perspectivismul devine un concept central, o grilă axiologică nu doar în etică şi filosofie, ci şi în teoria literară. Începe să fie tot mai mult acceptată judecata că orice ideologie îşi are sorgintea în viziuni particulare, devenind posibile simultan scheme conceptuale diferite care determină concepțiile cu privire la adevăr.

Ce altceva poate fi un jurnal de călătorie, dacă nu perspectiva unui emigrant – fie el şi pentru o perioadă scurtă de timp – asupra unei lumi noi, asupra unui oraş pe care (acesta fiind de cele mai multe ori, în cazul românilor din cea de-a doua jumătate a secolului trecut, Parisul) îl cunoşteau doar din cărți? Comună unei mari majorități a autorilor de jurnale de călătorie este, poate, tocmai această discrepanţă dintre aşteptări şi concret: deziluzia. Într-o scrisoare din 6 februarie 1979 către

fratele său, Aurel Cioran, Emil Cioran întreabă retoric „La ce bun am părăsit Coasta Boacii?! Parisul nu e altceva decât un garaj apocaliptic. Un infern poleit" (1995: 345). Trecuseră treizeci şi patru de ani din momentul în care se stabilise în capitala Franţei. Însă decepţia se manifestă din primele săptămâni. Şi nu doar în cazul lui Cioran. Totuşi, în pofida acestui numitor comun, nu putem vorbi despre evaluări obiective care să transcendă prejudecăţile culturale şi etichetele subiective.

Din punct de vedere formal, avem de-a face cu o a doua stereotipie (fără a considera termenul în sensul său peiorativ): complexul unei culturi mici. Într-un interviu din 1994 luat celei pe care Emil Cioran obişnuia să o numească *mon amie*, Gabriel Liiceanu o întreabă: „Avea orgoliul rănit al cuiva care vine dintr-o cultură mică, cum singur spune?" Simone Boué: „Fără îndoială." Acelaşi factor mental, mai mult sau mai puţin conştientizat, influenţează viziunea multor autori de *jurnal de călătorie* (Titu Maiorescu, *Limba română în jurnalele din Austria*, Eugen Ionescu, *Jurnal în fărâme*, Monica Lovinescu, *Jurnal*).

În continuare, mă voi opri asupra jurnalului lui Eugen Simion, *Timpul trăirii, timpul mărturisirii* (2006), încercând totodată să surprind eventualele similitudini şi discrepanţele dintre viziunea lui asupra lumii culturale franceze şi cea a lui Emil Cioran, stabilit definitiv la Paris începând cu 1941. Cioran nu a ţinut niciodată un jurnal în sensul strict al cuvântului: nu a scris sistematic, zi de zi, povestind episoade din viaţa lui; însă corespondenţa cu cei de acasă şi *Caietele* – acestea din urmă conţinând pagini datate în ordine cronologică şi care consemnează, în special, impresii şi idei care nu erau destinate publicării – oferă o imagine de ansamblu asupra relaţiei lui cu oraşul, asupra modului în care priveşte cultura franceză şi oamenii de cultură din Franţa, în raport cu românii de acasă şi cu cei care aleseseră, de asemenea, exilul. Va fi interesant de văzut şi modul în care se va exercita impactul pe care îl are contactul direct cu civilizaţia occidentală asupra celor doi, în ceea ce priveşte expresia textului – stilul.

În primele pagini ale volumului I din *Ficţiunea jurnalului intim* (2001), Eugen Simion afirmă explicit că, deşi „există negreşit o retorică a sincerităţii", ea nu e eminamente necesară într-un jurnal. Indispensabilă, însă, e forţa persuasivă. De la o primă citire, pe diagonală, a cărţii lui, *Timpul trăirii, timpul mărturisirii*, devine evident că nu avem de-a face cu un jurnal clasic – însemnări zilnice. Textul este conceput ca unitate monolitică. De altfel, Simion se întoarce la Bucureşti în 1973, iar *jurnalul* său apare abia patru ani mai târziu, în '77. Preocuparea pentru stil este indiscutabilă, iar volumul – elaborat ca proiect în ansamblul său încă de la început.

Protagonistul-narator-autor trece, de-a lungul celor trei ani petrecuţi la Paris în calitate de lector de limba şi literatura română la Sorbona, prin mai multe etape: *Jurnalul* său se deschide prin cuvintele: „Ajung la Paris ducând cu mine, ca toţi oamenii din estul Europei, un mare mit, luat din cărţi", pentru ca, doar patru pagini mai târziu, să afirme: „Parisul este un mit pe care trebuie să-l meriţi. Un mit pe care trebuie să-l cucereşti. De aceea, oraşul te sileşte să laşi deoparte toate prejudecăţile învăţate în afara zidurilor lui."

Eugen Simion străbate marile bulevarde ale Parisului, hoinăreşte pe stăzile lui lăturalnice, intră în cafenele de mahala, frecventează cursurile lui Jean-Pierre Richard şi Roland Barthes, se împrieteneşte cu portăreasa şi cu băcanul, merge la filme, la petreceri, întocmai ca Horacio Oliveira, protagonistul *Şotron*-ului lui Julio Cortázar. E nemulţumit de „vecinii îndrăgostiţi până la fanatism de câini" şi de rahatul lăsat de „animalul curat şi inteligent" la tot pasul, de dezbaterile grupului *Tel Quel* cu privire la literatură şi critică literară, pentru ca, pe 3 martie 2006, invitat la *Zilele francofoniei*, în Ungaria, să afirme „îmi plac francezii, îmi place enorm bucătăria lor, îmi place modul lor de a fi, îmi place Parisul…".

Cu patru ani înainte ca Eugen Simion să ajungă în Franţa, Emil Cioran pleca în vacanţă pe insula Ibiza, deşi „vara, Parisul e suportabil: nu vezi decât nordici şi negri" (2010: 114). De la fereastra casei în care locuia, putea urmări ce se întâmplă în camera de hotel în care era cazată o familie de americani. Notează: „De când mă ştiu, mi-am urât toţi vecinii. De câteva zile, văd la hotelul din faţă, la ultimul etaj, pe cineva, un american, care bate la maşină fără încetare. De unde-i vin cuvintele? Ce are el de spus? În vecinătate, un cocoş cântă aproape tot timpul. E prietenul

meu. E singurul meu prieten" (114).

Sunt perspective divergente nu doar asupra exilului sau a Parisului, ci şi asupra relaţiei dintre sine şi *lumea* ca exterioritate. Însă trecerea de la nivelul cognitiv la cel discursiv este un proces figurativ. Ambele *jurnale* se depărtează de ceea ce autorii lor au trăit, pentru a reda ceea ce ţineau să afirme că au trăit. Nu spun că Eugen Simion nu a hoinărit prin mahalalele pariziene, ori că Emil Cioran nu auzea, în nopţile de insomnie, cocoşi cântând prin curţile vecine, ci doar că fiecare dintre ei – într-un mod cât se poate de diferit – recurge la un stil romanesc pentru a-şi descrie experienţele, trăirile, impresiile.

Ceea ce *prinde*, însă, la cartea lui Eugen Simion şi ceea ce fascinează, probabil, pe mulţi dintre cititorii săi, este contactul dintre un Paris livresc şi imaginea reală, văzută de la faţa locului, cu surprizele, dezamăgirile şi complexele unui intelectual venit din Est. Circumspecţia şi chiar ironia iniţială la adresa francezilor devine, în unele fragmente ulterioare, autoironie. Pare de la sine înţeles că nu poţi cunoaşte o metropolă europeană în câteva zile, cu ghidul în mână şi vizitând locurile celebre despre care auzisei doar din cărţi. Totuşi, acest pas atrage cu sine o primă reprezentare cu privire la oraş văzut ca întreg. Eugen Simion distinge (ca într-un articol de epistemologie) între două tipuri de cunoaştere: *cunoaşterea în zbor de pasăre* şi *cunoaşterea prin identificare cu destinul oraşului*. Semantica sintagmelor este edificatoare. Însă, în debutul volumului *Timpul trăirii, timpul mărturisirii* ne este revelat un Paris cunoscut *în zbor de pasăre*, de către cineva care, la momentul povestirii, ajunsese deja să îl cunoască – cel puţin parţial – şi *prin identificare cu destinul oraşului*.

Şi totuşi, poate că nu ar fi cu totul nejustificată întrebarea: *Care destin?* „Indiferent de destinul personal al fiecăruia, laolaltă am alcătuit o generaţie în fond tragică", avea să-i scrie Cioran prietenului său, ziaristul Arşavin Acterian, într-o epistolă datată pe 6 ianuarie 1972. Pentru că, dacă e să vorbim despre *destinul* Parisului, acesta este unul pentru francezi, altul pentru germanii deceniului cinci şi altul pentru *generaţia tragică* a românilor care au emigrat în Vest. Destinul întregii Europe şi istoria în sine ar părea că se reduce la o serie de intrepretări perspectiviste, dacă ar fi să o recompunem pe baza mărturiilor şi impresiilor personale ale celor care au trăit-o.

Între perspectivism şi istorie

E atâta voluptate muzicală în dorul de moarte,
c-ai vrea nemurirea numai pentru a n-o întrerupe.
(Emil Cioran)

După cum se ştie, la 1 septembrie 1939, trupele generalului von Brauchitsch invadau Polonia, ca urmare a refuzului acesteia de a ceda oraşul Gdansk – Coridorul polonez. Asediaţii organizau o linie de apărare formată din treisprezece divizii de-a lungul Vistulei, Narewului şi Somului, însă nemţilor le-au fost suficiente două zile pentru a înainta până în apropierea Varşoviei, în care intrau, conduşi de von Rundstaed, pe 17 septembrie, la nici trei săptămâni de la începutul campaniei. În urma atacului trupelor ruseşti asupra oraşului Lvov, din 19 septembrie, guvernul polonez se retrage în România, împreună cu alţi o sută de mii de refugiaţi, ceva mai mult de jumătate dintre ei militari. Polonia capitula după douăzeci şi nouă de zile de rezistenţă iluzorie, iar Germania şi Rusia stalinistă hotărăsc – încă înainte cu o zi – să împartă pe din două teritoriul şi resursele cucerite.

Emil Cioran, pe atunci doar pasager la Paris, presimţea, din ianuarie al acelui fatidic an 1940, dezastrul ce avea să destabilizeze întreaga Europă. Mai mult decât atât, se aştepta la victorii în lanţ ale celui pe care nu va înceta nici multă vreme după să îl venereze, şi la o Germanie cu toate graniţele scăldate în mare şi în ocean, acolo unde continentul se opreşte pentru a păstra distanţa cuvenită faţă de ţinuturile negre, de la sud-vest, şi de cele galbene, din sud-est. Drept mărturie stă epistola sa din ianuarie, către Mircea Eliade: „ ... Acum, când mă năpădesc presimţiri triste, îmi dau seama cât ţin la România, ce nefericit m-ar face dispariţia ei. […] Astăzi m-am dus la biserica română de aici."

La 30 noiembrie 1939, Rusia atacă Finlanda, război – la care Europa rămâne un neverosimil

şi inexplicabil spectator – încheiat pe 13 martie 1940, prin Tratatul de la Moscova, ce consfinţea victoria sovieticilor, care primeau istmul Careliei, cu Viborg şi baza navală de la Hango, în schimbul a cincizeci de mii de cadavre şi de trei ori mai mulţi răniţi. Mult mai eficienţi, germanii cuceresc Oslo în doar trei zile, iar regele Christian al X-lea al Danemarcei capitulează practic fără luptă, pe 9 aprilie 1940. Nici trupele aliate ale englezilor şi ale francezilor nu fac altceva decât să prelungească agonia Norvegiei, care, la rându-i, se recunoaşte înfrântă pe 10 iunie, acceptând prin Tratatul de la Trondheim toate condiţiile nemţilor, care, în chiar aceeaşi zi, lansează ofensiva asupra Olandei, Belgiei şi Luxemburgului. Olandezii rezistă cinci zile, iar belgienii, cu tot sprijinul anglo-francez, şapte.

Pe fundalul evenimentelor din Europa, Emil Cioran îi scria, în februarie 1940, lui Mircea Eliade: „Dacă niciodată n-ai pierdut vremea într-un neant infinit plăcut, atunci nu mă înţelegi. Numai în soarele Mediteranei se poate uita existenţa. Eu am ajuns la limitele inutilităţi." Însă soarele Mediteranei intrase şi în vederea italienilor, care, împinşi de dorinţe de expansiune înscrise în codul lor genetic de mai bine de două mii de ani, atacă Franţa – aflată deja în război cu Germania – pe 10 iunie 1940, pentru ca douăsprezece zile mai târziu, Petain să cedeze nemţilor Alsacia şi Lorena, acceptând, în plus, un regim de ocupaţie militară a capitalei.

În lunile în care Anglia rezista atacurilor aeriene germane, situaţia aliaţilor din sud devenea tot mai sumbră. Grecia şi Iugoslavia rămân izolate, iar România cedează ruşilor Basarabia şi nordul Bucovinei, iar maghiarilor Transilvania. La 6 septembrie 1940, regele Carol abdică, iar mareşalul Antonescu îl numeşte (simbolic) în funcţie pe Mihai I. O săptămână mai târziu, România devine stat-naţional-legionar, iar pe 23 noiembrie, aliat al Germaniei. Grecia rezistă atacurilor italiene, dar este cucerită de armatele lui Hitler, iar Iugoslavia nu are nicio şansă în faţa unei triple ofensive italo-germano-maghiare. În vara anului următor începe atacul împotriva Uniunii Sovietice, la care ia parte şi România. Cu câteva luni înainte, dar tot în plin război, Horia Sima îi înlesneşte lui Emil Cioran plecarea în Franţa, ca ataşat cultural al României într-un Paris controlat de fascişti.

La începutul lui decembrie, generalul Hoppner ajunge la 35 de km de Moscova; însă aici, în data de 6, pe o temperatură de -38 de grade Celsius, ruşii încep contraofensiva. Armata Roşie este oprită de generalul Paulus, care, în iulie, încearcă să cucerească Stalingradul, dar nu poate intra în oraş. În toamnă, asediul se transformă într-o rezistenţă prelungită a Armatei a Şasea, încercuită de trupele sovietice, iar Luftwaffe paraşutează zilnic oameni şi alimente, însă în ianuarie '42 Paulus este luat prizonier.

Pe o temperatură cu aproape o sută de grade mai ridicată decât la Moscova, englezii şi americanii rezistă trupelor italiene şi celor nemţeşti conduse de generalul Rommel în Africa.

În noiembrie '43 germanii atacă sudul Franţei (Operaţiunea Atilla) rămas încă liber, însă eşuează din cauza lipsei de cooperare a flotei franceze de la Toulon. Între timp, Aliaţii încep contraofensiva şi recuceresc Tunisia şi marea majoritate a oraşelor pierdute din Africa, generalul Montgomery debarcând chiar în sudul Siciliei şi cucerind Siragusa, apoi Racusa, Palermo şi Messina.

În Asia, japonezii iau pe rând Indochina, Tailanda, Malaya, Indonezia, Birmania, Filipine, Hong Kong şi pătrund până în sudul Chinei, iar trupele terestre, înaintând, ca într-o veritabilă comedie neagră, pe biciclete, cuceresc Singapore apărat subnumeric de oamenii generalului britanic Percival.

Abia în primăvara lui '41 va fi încheiat Pactul de ajutor reciproc dintre SUA şi Marea Britanie (*Lend-Lease* – 11 martie 1941) – pentru ca în iulie să fie semnat acordul anglo-sovietic de către Stalin şi Churchill, prin care nu s-au împărţit, aşa cum se crede în general, sferele de influenţă; mai târziu, spre finalul războiului, prim-ministrul englez intenţiona să intre cu armata în Europa Centrală şi de Est pentru a o elibera de fascişti, dar şi pentru a nu permite comunismului să acapareze mai bine de jumătate din continent, însă pasivitatea lui Roosvelt se dovedeşte, a doua oară, fatidică atâtor popoare: englezii nu riscă – de unii singuri – un nou conflict militar, de această dată împotriva fostului aliat, Rusia comunistă.

Cele patru portavioane ale lui Nagumo păstrează iluzia invincibilităţii până în vara lui 1942,

când se înfruntă cu omologii săi americani, Fletcher şi Spruance.

Superioritatea economică a Aliaţilor s-a dovedit decisivă începând cu cel de-al patrulea an de război. Germanii sunt nevoiţi să se retragă din Caucaz, pierd Kievul, reeliberat chiar de locuitorii lui de drept, Smolenskul, Odessa şi Sevastopol. Dacă Hitler bombardase, în ofensiva sa asupra Angliei, porturile, aeroporturile, centrele industriale şi sistemele de comunicaţie, Churchill se orientează cu precădere asupra distrugerii mijloacelor de producţie nemţeşti. Întreaga industrie a oraşului Wuppertal, aproape două sute de uzine din Hamburg, cele din Rostok, Essen, Dortmund şi Köln sunt complet anihilate de aviaţia anglo-americană. Din toamna lui '43 până în primăvara lui '44, Berlinul a înghiţit patruzeci şi cinci de mii de tone de bombe şi de rachete. Iar de-a lungul întregului război au fost lansate peste un milion două sute de mii de tone şi aproape şapte sute de mii de civili au murit numai din rândurile germanilor (în Iugoslavia, numărul se ridică la un milion patru sute – fără a-i pune la socoteală pe soldaţi).

Oraşul Darmstadt cade pe 11 septembrie – cu exact cincizeci şi nouă de ani înaintea Turnurilor Gemene din New York – lăsând în urmă patruzeci de mii de cadavre (aproximativ populaţia Sibiului de acum), dintre care mare parte civili, iar Braunschweig-ul avea să aibă aceeaşi soartă pe 14 octombrie.

Armata fascistă e nevoită să se retragă din Napoli şi Roma, refugiindu-se în nordul Italiei. Mareşalul Badoglio e numit şef al guvernului, Mussolini arestat vreme de patruzeci şi nouă de zile, până când e răpit, eliberat şi, din ordinul lui Hitler, adus în Germania.

Abia în august 1944, România întoarce armele şi se alătură Aliaţilor, printr-o decizie de ultimă oră a Regelui Mihai I, însă mult prea târziu pentru a lua parte la privilegiile statelor învingătoare. Ruşii nu aveau de gând să renunţe la Basarabia (fuseseră recuperate doar Transilvania şi Bucovina de Nord), iar marile puteri vest-europene aveau toate motivele să privească cu scepticism o ţară care le-a fost duşman mai bine de trei ani jumătate, chiar dacă armatele române au contribuit, sprijinindu-le pe cele sovietice, la eliberarea Ungariei, Cehoslovaciei şi au ajuns până în apropiere de Viena. Date fiind condiţiile, armistiţiul dintre România şi Aliaţi e semnat cu o întârziere de aproape trei săptămâni, pe 12 septembrie, la Moscova.

Emil Cioran, întors de curând în ţară, reuşeşte să evite ca prin miracol soarta tinerilor mobilizaţi şi trimişi pe front, iar în toamna lui 1944 emigrează pentru a se stabili definitiv la Paris.

Viena cade în aprile 1945. Praga este eliberată în mai, iar Parisul în iunie. La 2 mai 1945, trupele sovietice intră în Berlin şi Germania capitulează cinci zile mai târziu (deşi Hitler se sinucisese, împuşcându-se, încă din 30 aprilie).

Împăratul Japoniei, Hiroshito, capitulează, la rându-i, necondiţionat, – în dezacord cu toţi amiralii şi generalii săi care supravieţuiseră – patru luni mai târziu, pe 2 septembrie 1945.

Parisul, între Eugen Simion şi Emil Cioran

În '73, apărea, la editura Gallimard, *Despre neajunsul de a te fi născut*. „Nimic nu dovedeşte mai bine cât de mult a decăzut omenirea ca imposibilitatea de a găsi fie şi un singur popor, un singur trib la care naşterea să mai provoace doliu şi bocet." Acestea sunt cuvinte de pe chiar prima pagină a cărţii pe care Emil Cioran o considera ca fiind cea mai bună dintre cărţile lui.

„Inconvenientul de a te naşte?" – se întreabă retoric Eugen Simion, spre finalul jurnalului său parizian. „De ce nu inconvenientul de a nu fi etern? Grandoarea omului începe în clipa în care, înţelegându-şi condiţia, încearcă s-o depăşească. Disperarea nu este un act de curaj. Pesimismul este filozofia indivizilor comozi. A fi este mai greu (şi, prin aceasta, mai nobil) decât a nu fi. *A face* este verbul cel mai demn din vocabularul nostru" (2006: 407). Totuşi, acest dezacord în modul de a se raporta la viaţă, la cultură, la oameni, nu va avea ca rezultat o perspectivă asupra oraşului de adopţie chiar atât de diferită pe cât ar fi, poate, de aşteptat. După primii ani la Paris, când Cioran încearcă să intre în atenţia criticii literare franceze, se retrage din viaţa socială, deseori refuzând să primească vizite şi ieşind din mansarda lui, din Cartierul Latin, mai mult noaptea: „Pentru mine viaţa la Paris e din ce în ce mai grea: prea multe vizite. Nu ştiu ce e de făcut în problema asta. Ar trebui să am o casă la ţară" (1995: 82), îi scria fratelui său, Aurel Cioran, pe 9 septembrie

1967.

Poate că aceeași schimbare de atitudine am fi constatat-o și în cazul lui Eugen Simion, dacă ar fi rămas la Paris mai mult decât a făcut-o. Greu de crezut. Cert e, însă, că Simion încearcă să cunoască orașul asemenea unui antropolog – singurul mod autentic, afirmă el – colindând centrul și mahalalele, frecventând cafenelele și întrunirile grupurilor literare. În 1970, undeva la est de *Saint Germain des Prés* și de *Jardin de Luxembourg*, nu departe de mansarda din care Cioran îi scria fratelui său că, *văzut de aici, Sibiul pare un paradis*, Eugen Simion vedea un afiș: era anunțată o dezbatere organizată și prezidată de fondatorul grupului *Tel Quel*, Philippe Sollers. Ironia cu care descrie episodul din *La Bibliothèque Saint-Michel* (conferința *La masturbation de l'esprit*) nu e câtuși de puțin disimulată. Dar ceea ce îl frapează e lipsa de inovație în critica literară, prin relație cu manifestările excentrice și pretențiile de reformă ale membrilor grupului. E destul de probabil ca această ultimă observație să fie, în mare măsură, obiectivă; însă nu și singura motivație a reticenței lui față de Sollers și de colegii săi de la grupul *Tel Quel*: „Și aici, ca peste tot, e vorba de tineri și de libertate. Remarc la mulți intelectuali pe care îi cunosc o adevărată voluptate de a specula în jurul acestei noțiuni. Există o retorică a libertății, dar ce înseamnă libertatea când nu există riscul de a o pierde?" (2006: 88). Dacă, în debutul jurnalului, Simion vorbea explicit despre complexul de inferioritate al celor care provin din estul Europei, aici el se manifestă ca o consecință neintenționată a cuvintelor lui.

Periodic, șirul întâmplărilor e întrerupt pentru a lăsa loc unor reflecții pe marginea justificării și utilității jurnalului intim, ca gen literar. Întâlnim, de asemenea, portrete ale unor figuri marcante din lumea literară franceză: Jean-Paul Sartre și Jean-Pierre Richard, ale conaționalilor săi de acasă: Marin Sorescu, Marin Preda, Zaharia Stancu, ori expatriații: Eugen Ionesco, Mircea Eliade și Emil Cioran.

„Am o inimă în mi minor. Tot ce este îmi pare a fi hrană pentru o tristețe nemăsurată. Mă gândesc cu multă simpatie la matale și regret că în viața mea te-am văzut atât de rar" – îi scria, din Sibiu, Strada Tribunei, Nr. 21, Emil Cioran lui Eliade, în anul în care Eugen Simion se năștea. Iar în '78, către prietenul său, Arșavir: „Mircea e plin de elanuri și mai tânăr ca niciodată. Nu același lucru se poate spune despre Eugen [Ionesco] și despre mine, amândoi obosiți, excedați, disperați" (1995: 253). Despre Sartre, pe care, deși cu anumite rezerve, Eugen Simion îl admiră, Cioran scrie: „Sartre e un naiv care n-a priceput nimic. Intelectualii sunt dintr-o lume cu adevărat apusă" (278).

Intelectualul contestatar parizian îl surprinde negativ pe Eugen Simion, cel puțin la început, prin felul în care „înțelege să împace rigoarea revoluției cu bucuriile vieții [...] Tânărul agitator poartă plete, pantaloni unisex, bluzon în culori țipătoare, brățări mari la mâini, un lanț subțire la gât pe care zornăie mai multe figurine de metal; uneori, pentru a da o notă de pitoresc, își atârnă un cercel în ureche" (2006: 65). Simion identifică într-un mod inoportun intelectualii cu grupurile *hippie*. În orice caz, surpriza lui este oarecum neașteptată, ținând cont că la sfârșitul anilor '60, primii ai regimului Ceaușescu, în București se putea citi *la cald* presa din Franța, în care mișcarea *hippie* a ținut capul de afiș săptămâni la rând.

Cu totul altă impresie îi lasă lui Simion întâlnirea de la *Școala Normală Superioară*, unde Jean Ricardou, Jean Rousset, Doubrovsky, Barthes, Deleuze și Jean-Pierre Richard discută pe tema *Proust și noua critică*: dezbaterile îi par serioase, cu multe idei noi și fără divagații inutile. Însă, pentru a reda o imagine mai relevantă decât cea pe care o poate obține cel care trece *în zbor de pasăre* și pentru că – mai mult sau mai puțin convențional, *Timpul trăirii, timpul mărturisirii* este un *jurnal parizian* – Simion nu se rezumă la a vorbi despre viața culturală franceză. Descrie vestimentația tinerilor și comportamentul lor pe stradă sau în metrou, zidurile inscripționate cu lozinci revoluționare, nonșalanța afișată de vârstnici. Tradiția și modernitatea se contopesc, totul este o perpetuă devenire, adaptare, iar „turiștii au năpădit acest flagel al lumii moderne" (66).

Tot Simion: „Paris, orașul despuiat, cu sexul în armonie cu palpitarea perdelei [...] o imensă metaforă, o mare iubire nevăzută. [...] La Paris suntem ca ciupercile, creștem pe balustrada scărilor, prin încăperi întunecoase unde miroase a untură, unde oamenii fac tot timpul dragoste și apoi prăjesc niște ouă și pun discuri de Vivaldi și își aprind țigări Gauloise" (71) – apropierea stilistică

şi chiar la nivel de imagini de *Şotron*-ul lui Cortázar nu poate fi, o dată în plus, întâmplătoare.

În artă totul este permis. Trivialul, sexualitatea, pornografia îşi revendică autonomia în proză şi în poezie. „Nu există teme interzise, există numai teme ratate. Însă violenţa şi mârlănia nu sunt scuzate de nicio ideologie" (89) – notează Simion după ce descrie un conflict finalizat cu încăierare, la care asistase pe strada Bouchardon. E simplu de observat că *Jurnal*-ul *parizian* vrea să surprindă oraşul în toate aspectele lui. Poate că de la Paris tot ceea ce depăşeşte graniţele oraşelor Lyon, Marseille sau Bordeaux poate părea mit ori literatură. Din interior însă – pare a încerca să ne transmită Simion – transpar mizeria, violenţa, nimicnicia.

„Parisul este pentru mine simbolul decăderii occidentale. Înţelegi ce vreau să spun?" – îi scria, la 11 septembrie 1972, Emil Cioran, prietenului său, Arşavir. „Dar ceea ce nu poţi nici să înţelegi, nici măcar să-ţi imaginezi, este gradul de tembelism la care au ajuns aici oamenii. Se cred nefericiţi, oprimaţi, exploataţi, când de fapt majoritatea suferă de supraalimentaţie. Aici devine mai clar decât oriunde că toate dramele din istorie au la origine o interpretare greşită. Într-un anume sens, bunăstarea provoacă mai mult rău decât mizeria, mai ales dacă această bunăstare te apasă şi îţi vine să te lepezi de ea. Sătul de bine! Iată o formulă de un adevăr admirabil şi definitiv" (1995: 443).

La Paris, observă Simion, totul este o permanentă revoluţie. *Contracultura* e un concept confuz. „O *intruziune barbară* în câmpul cultural tradiţional, cu intenţia de a-l distruge" (2006: 126). Ajuns, într-o seară, la *Café-théatre* este martorul unui amalgam intercultural, în care se încearcă îmbinarea teatrului cu o ceaşcă de cafea, iar în pauză, o expoziţie de pictură. Lipsa de timp a celor cărora li se adresează arta duce la ceea ce, în anii '70, un intelectual de formaţie tradiţionalistă, ar fi numit *surogat artistic*. Însă astfel de manifestări culturale nu vor mai fi mult timp considerate *avant-garde*.

Simion ţinea cursuri în calitate de lector de limba şi literatura română la Sorbona şi frecventa seminariile lui Roland Barthes.

Cioran purta pălărie şi un pardesiu gros, din stofă, pe care i-l făcuse cadou un prieten. Mergea la cursuri de literatură engleză. Simone Boué îl remarcase pentru că nu arăta deloc a francez. Mai degrabă a rus. Asta se întâmpla în 1944. În '74, Cioran îi scria lui Arşavin: „Am fost invitat la o universitate americană, nu ca să ţin cursuri (nu m-aş simţi în stare), ci ca să stau câteva luni şi să mă întâlnesc din când în când cu studenţii. Am refuzat, în ciuda avantajelor materiale. Nu ştii ce groază am de-a întâlni oameni noi" (1995: 453).

Ca orice specie a genului memorialistic, jurnalul este, în mare parte, autobiografic. Însă graniţa dintre ficţiune şi realitate rămâne greu de stabilit. Contrar convingerilor sale din *Pour l'autobiographie*, în care sinceritatea autorului este indispensabilă oricărei autobiografii (în caz contrar, nefiind vorba de ficţiune ci de minciună) Philippe Lejeune afirmă (în *Les brouillons de soi*) că *pactul* nu este altceva decât o promisiune de sinceritate, iar autobiograful nu trebuie să fie neapărat cel care spune adevărul despre el însuşi, ci doar acela care promite că va spune adevărul. Chiar Simion scrie, în *Caiete Critice* (1986) că „orice jurnal intim este o pendulare între două imagini: una ce ni se oferă şi alta pe care o deducem, iar lectura jurnalului nu e, în fapt, decât încercarea de a pune în acord aceste două fantasme care se ascund una după alta".

În 1973, Eugen Simion se întoarce în România cu o imagine a Parisului formată de-a lungul a trei ani – trei ani în care a locuit în capitala Franţei, a predat, a asistat la cursuri. În acelaşi an 1973, Emil Cioran publica, la Editura Gallimard, cea de-a paisprezecea sa carte, a şaptea în limba franceză, *Ispita de a exista*. La pagina 164, notează: „Învinuirea cea mai gravă care se poate aduce regimurilor poliţieneşti e că obligă, ca măsură de prevedere, la distrugerea scrisorilor şi jurnalelor intime, adică a ceea ce e mai puţin fals în literatură".

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În pas cu Vladimir Nabokov: călătorie metanarativă în *Lolita*

Abreast of Vladimir Nabokov: A Metanarrative Journey into *Lolita*

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The American postmodernist novel draws mostly on re-reading and re-writing the grand narratives of literature; and subsequently, the traditional theme of travel – either as an initiatory journey, or as a conceptual theme – enters a new paradigm, by assuming a strong self-referential value and becoming, as a matter of fact, a structural motif debunking or playing on its traditional approach. Our study aims to demonstrate that Vladimir Nabokov's travel theme, as configured in his most controversial novel, *Lolita*, part II, draws on the postmodernist literary paradigm, envisaging the voyage as an extended framework juxtaposing both autobiographical references and intertextual structures. We seek to deconstruct the particularly complex configuration of a metanarrative travel by addressing its autobiographical, transmodal and intertextual connections, while exposing the critical tensions (particularly those prompted by Nabokov's lepidopteral pursuits) which contribute to this exemplary structure. Our approach engages in the identification and analysis of allegorical devices employed in the construction of a journey into corporeality, as well as of those building an intertextual network of pictorial and cinematic descriptions of the American landscape.

***Keywords*: metanarrative travel; Nabokov; Lepidoptera; postmodernism; imagology; initiatory journey.**

Literatura nu s-a născut în ziua în care un tânăr a venit țipând «lupul, lupul» din valea Neanderthalului cu un lup mare și cenușiu pe urmele lui; literatura s-a născut în ziua în care un tânăr a venit țipând «lupul, lupul», iar în urma lui nu era nici un lup.
(NABOKOV, V., & BOWERS, F., 1980: 5, t.n.)

Călătoria metanarativă: observații preliminare

Odată depășită paradigma lessingiană ce plasa literatura în rândul artelor temporale (spre deosebire de artele spațiale, precum sculptura și pictura), structuralismul a deschis o nouă perspectivă de studiu, și anume pe aceea a spațialității caracteristice atât limbajului, cât și literaturii înseși. Extrapolând teoriile genettiene (Genette, 1966: 101-108; Genette, 1969: 43-48), cea mai importantă achiziție conceptuală a acestei schimbări de paradigmă are în vedere analiza textului și chiar a procesului de scriere, în valoarea sa implicită de călătorie lingvistică, discursivă, ficțională. Textul ca o călătorie, așadar. Gilles Fauconnier lansa în 1985 conceptele lingvistice de „spațiu mintal" și „spațialitatea cognitivă", al căror ecou a fost rapid receptat în studiile literare. În aceeași sferă de influență, Umberto Eco se juca în 1994, de această dată și în tradiție borgesiană, cu valențele prozei ca „pădure narativă", așadar, grădină ale cărei poteci – sau potențialități hermeneutice – se bifurcă în conformitate cu posibilitățile de înțelegere ale citi-

torului. Devine, aşadar, lesne de observat faptul că schimbarea de paradigmă survenită în studiile literare din a doua jumătate a secolului XX face astăzi posibilă jalonarea conceptuală a unei analize orientate către spaţialitatea intrinsec lingvistică, cât şi de natură proiectivă (având aşadar, în vedere scriitura ca proces de configurare a unui spaţiu ficţional) şi receptivă (cu referire la ceea ce Umberto Eco a numit „plimbare prin pădurea narativă", citirea şi receptarea – bineînţeles, din perspectiva lectorului) a textului: pe scurt, literatura sub semnul călătoriei într-un discurs literar. Sub incidenţa postmodernismului romanesc, chestiunea voiajului a fost dezbătută cu scepticism: Jean-François Lyotard, printre alţii, ridică mari semne de întrebare în ceea ce priveşte capacitatea unei naraţiuni golite de vigoare epică sau de conceptul clasic de erou de a susţine tema călătoriei, îndeosebi în termenii tradiţionali ai acesteia.

Prezentul studiu propune o examinare a celui mai popular, şi – deopotrivă – a celui mai controversat roman nabokovian; un roman redactat în limba engleză de către un vorbitor nativ de rusă; un roman ce redă la nivel diegetic şi, de asemenea, imagologic, călătoria soţilor Nabokov pe coasta de vest a Statelor Unite ale Americii, în căutarea femelei de *Lycaeides sublivens*. Cum autorul notează în volumul cvasi-autobiografic din 1973, reunind interviuri şi eseuri, că „nu există nimic autobiografic în *Lolita*" (Nabokov, 1973: 26, t.n.), ne propunem să acordăm mai mult spaţiu de analiză textuală acestei ipoteze şi nenumăratelor contraargumente ce o însoţesc în critica nabokoviană de actualitate, în încercarea de a evidenţia complexitatea metanarativă a călătoriei din *Lolita*.

Verina Lolita[1] sau călătoriile soţilor Nabokov

Se mai poate spune însă ceva nou despre *Lolita*?[2] La şase decenii după publicarea romanului în Paris, de către Olympia Press[3], textul pare să nu poată ieşi de sub eticheta controversată a unui roman erotic şi imoral. Cu toate acestea, excepţii de actualitate în studiul prozei nabokoviene continuă tradiţia unei exegeze filologice, cât şi ştiinţifice – dată fiind contribuţia ştiinţifică a lepidopterologului Vladimir Nabokov ce o completează pe cea literară. În prim plan, studiile lui Alfred Appel şi Brian Boyd propun noi ipoteze şi direcţii de cercetare asupra prozei lui Nabokov – deopotrivă profund autoreflexivă şi reiterativă, după cum demonstrează publicaţiile postume editate de Dmitri Nabokov[4]. În paralel, Zsolt Bálint şi Kurt Johnson, printre alţii, au contribuit în cea mai mare măsură la revendicarea şi reactualizarea teoriilor lepidopteriale emise de Nabokov, adăugând un nou centru de referinţă demersurilor critice de natură literară.

Cu un corpus de texte deopotrivă ficţionale, cât şi ştiinţifice, Vladimir Nabokov a devenit o sursă exemplară de ecouri critice legate de transmedialitate. Ba mai mult, în extrapolarea acestor direcţii de cercetare, *Lolita* s-a remarcat ca cea mai prolifică sursă primară, iar motivul principal

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[1] Fiecare copie din biblioteca autorului este semnată şi dedicată pe prima pagină fie soţiei, fie lui Dmitri. Vladimir Nabokov a dedicat Verei prima sa copie din *Lolita*, ediţia americană din 1958, alăturând textului un desen ce reprezintă o specie fictivă de fluture: *Verina Lolita*. Pentru copia din scenariul realizat de Nabokov la cererea lui Stanley Kubrick (din care regizorul va păstra mai puţin de un sfert în producţia finală), dedicaţia era însoţită de o nouă subspecie fictivă, de această dată *Verinia Lolita cinemathoides*, indicând natura adiacentă a adaptării cinematografice.

[2] Aceeaşi întrebare revine în recenzia realizată de Daphne Merkin (New York Times, 10 noiembrie 2015): „Cine ar fi crezut că mai este ceva de spus despre Vladimir Nabokov?" (t.n.)

[3] Editură cu o reputaţie discutabilă, al cărei specific viza ficţiunea avangardistă şi erotică. Recunoscută pentru publicarea lucrărilor în engleză ce nu primeau acceptul caselor editoriale din SUA, aflate încă sub incidenţa legislaţiei OPB-1857/ Hicklin ce prevedea cenzurarea materialelor considerate obscene indiferent de valoarea literară a acestora. De asemenea, prima editură care a acceptat să publice romanul lui William S. Burroughs, *Prânzul dezgolit* în 1959.

[4] Lui Dmitri Nabokov, unicul fiu al soţilor Nabokov, i se datorează publicarea, traducerea (din rusă în engleză şi viceversa) şi editarea lucrărilor postume, printre care *The Enchanter* (*Волшебник*) din 1986: ultimul text scris de Vladimir Nabokov în limba rusă, circa 1939, şi primul crochiu pentru *Lolita*. Contribuţia lui Dmitri poartă o deosebită semnificaţie şi în palier critic, prin numeroasele prefeţe, postfeţe, observaţii de natură biografică ce au însoţit ediţiile critice ale romanelor lui Vladimir Nabokov.

este următorul: 1948-1953, intervalul în care Nabokov lucrează la roman, coincide cu cea mai productivă perioadă în contribuţiile sale şi ale Verei la studiul subspeciilor de fluturi Neotropical "Blue" şi Nearctic *Lycaeides*, implicit, cu un voiaj extensiv prin America. Soţii au petrecut fiecare vară, din 1949 până în 1959 (cu excepţia 1950, 1955 şi 1957), pe coasta de vest a Statelor Unite, iar 1951 i-a surprins în căutarea femelei de *Lycaeides sublivens*:

> În fiecare vară soţia mea şi eu plecam la vânătoare de fluturi. Exemplarele sunt depuse la instituţii ştiinţifice ca, de pildă, Muzeul de Zoologie Comparată de la Harvard sau în Colecţia de la Cornell University. Etichetele fixate sub fluturi vor fi un adevărat dar pentru cercetătorul din secolul douăzeci şi unu pasionat de biografiile ascunse. Şi astfel, la taberele noastre – Telluride, Colorado; Afton, Wyoming; Portal, Arizona; Ashland, Oregon – am reluat energic *Lolita*, lucrând seara sau în zilele norocoase. (Nabokov, 2003: 380)

Propunem în continuarea acestui paratext al *Lolitei*, din 2 noiembrie 1956 (aşadar, la un an după publicarea romanului în Paris; de la publicare, eseul este inclus în majoritatea ediţiilor critice din *Lolita*), un alt fragment, de această dată aparţinând registrului ştiinţific, prefigurând conexiunile care au suscitat imaginaţia criticilor: „Vara trecută (1951), am decis să vizitez Telluride, districtul San Miguel, Colorado, în căutarea femelei necunoscute din ceea ce am descris în 1949 ca *Lycaeides argyrognomon sublivens* […]. Am distrus vacanţa familiei mele, însă am obţinut ce căutam" (Nabokov, 1952: 35, t.n.).

Anacronismul celor două fragmente este doar de natură publicistică, întrucât anul la care fac referire în biografia familiei Nabokov este acelaşi în ambele situaţii: 1951. Însă ceea ce i-a intrigat pe cercetători este permeabilitatea a două registre stilistice eminamente diferite: trecerea atât de naturală de la literar la ştiinţific păstrând, totuşi, dimensiunea autobiografică şi autoreflexivă. Călătoriile pe coasta de vest a Americii au servit în aceeaşi măsură lepidopterologului, cât şi romancierului, iar posibilitatea de a urmări un fir cvasi-narativ, cvasi-autobiografic ce străbate oblic cele două tipuri de scriitură a fost preluată ca demers analitic de către numeroşi cercetători ai prozei nabokoviene. Polisemantismul termenului *nimfă* – desemnând, în biologie, unul dintre stadiile metamorfozei la insecte (anume cel de pupă), în context mitologic o divinitate feminină, în limbajul curent o tânără fermecătoare, în roman, derivat în *nimfetă*, adolescenta seducătoare – susţine, de asemenea, această juxtapunere de registre, alături de nenumărate alte aluzii textuale ce par să indice că goana după iubita „ultravioletă" *Lycaeides sublivens* coincide cu goana naratorului din *Lolita* (Nabokov, 2003: 267). Însă abordarea *Lolitei* ca punct de plecare în reconstituirea unui episod biografic din existenţa autorului a ridicat, în acelaşi timp, numeroase controverse şi a fost vehement criticată ca o chestiune de cochetărie critică. Primul cercetător care a semnalat potenţialul non-ficţional al romanului este Diana Butler, cu un eseu publicat în 1960, „Lolita Lepidoptera", în care îşi propunea să apropie preocupările lepidopteriale ale lui Vladimir Nabokov de cele literare. Răspunsul a venit mai degrabă din partea cercetătorului, decât din aceea a scriitorului Nabokov (Zimmer, 1996: 207), semnalând faptul că extravaganţa de a aduce alături vânătoarea femelei din subspecia *Lycaeides sublivens* în Telluride, San Miguel, Colorado, din vara anului 1951, cu primele „zvâcniri"[5] ale *Lolitei* – atingea un subiect delicat. Alfred Appel s-a confruntat cu aceeaşi reacţie din partea lui Nabokov pe parcursul adnotării romanului: „Autorul a implorat adnotatorul laic să omită referinţele la *Lepidoptera*, « un subiect delicat »" (Nabokov, 1995: 327, t.n.).

Dimensiunea autobiografică a celor trei capitole incipiente din a doua parte a romanului –

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[5] „Throbs", tradus alternativ de către Horia-Florian Popescu în ediţia Polirom, 2003, ca *fior*, *pulsiune*, *trepidaţie,* este utilizat intradiegetic, cât şi paratextual în *Lolita*. Substantivul revine şi în paginile de jurnal, oferind astfel, încă un exemplu de permeabilitate între proza ficţională şi cea autobiografică: „Am simţit prima *pulsaţie* firavă a *Lolitei* spre sfârşitul lui 1939 sau începutul lui 1940 în Paris, într-o perioada când eram ţintuit la pat de un atac sever de nevralgie intercostală. După câte îmi amintesc, *pulsaţia* originară a inspiraţiei a fost produsă. . ." (Nabokov, 2003: 378).

singurele dezvoltând exhaustiv tema călătoriei – rezidă în faptul că *dreamscape*-ul corespunde traseului parcurs de soții Nabokov timp de șapte ani, în vânătoare de fluturi; trădând, așadar, actuala sursă de inspirație a romanului. Ba mai mult, călătoria europeanului Humbert Humbert pe coasta de vest conține o dimensiune imagologică dublată, la nivel biografic, de perspectiva *dehors* a autorului însuși. Soții Nabokov ajunseseră în Statele Unite în 1940, după un alt deceniu petrecut în cea mai mare parte în Germania și Franța, iar continentul nou-descoperit era pentru ei o ecuație între reprezentarea europeană, clișeistică și stereotipică, și realitatea peisagistică a tânărului continent. „Printr-un paradox al gândirii picturale, am receptat priveliștea regiunii depresionare nord-americane cu un șoc – șocul recunoașterii amuzate – datorită mușamalelor pictate ce se importau odinioară din America, pentru a fi atârnate deasupra lavoarelor în grădinițele de copii din Europa Centrală" (Nabokov, 2003: 185), notează naratorul *Lolitei*. Dimensiunea metapicturală nu îi este străină romanului, celebrul capitol 30 din prima parte a textului configurează din nou, în registru dublu-referențial, falsa narațiune a primei nopți petrecute împreună cu Dolores Haze, ca pictură murală în sala de mese a hotelului Vânătorii Vrăjiți. Pe același palier imagologic al romanului, America își întâmpină emigrantul cu „dealuri de guașă verzuie", cu „norii Claude-Lorrain [ce] păreau gravați în depărtare în azurul pâclos" și „un orizont El Greco sever" (186), carevasăzică îl întâmpină cu o reprezentare cvasi-picturală inspirată de arta europeană. Sub incidența aceleiași orientări imagologice stau referințele cinematice: jurnalul de călătorie încropit retrospectiv de către naratorul intradiegetic al romanului prezintă un peisaj natural american contrafăcut de mitologia hollywoodiană. În acest sens, Vladimir Nabokov reconstituie celebra rută a coloniștilor, așa-numita *Old Oregon Trail* (sau într-o traducere aproximativă, *calea spre Oregon*), aducând diegeza într-un spațiu deopotrivă istoric și mitic în cultura și civilizația americană: cel al frontierei vestice, al Vestului sălbatic și, bineînțeles, al primelor mari succese cinematografice din anii 1940.

„Atunci au început călătoriile noastre dezlănțuite care ne-au purtat pe întreg cuprinsul Statelor Unite"[6] sau călătorie în corporealitate

Structura tematică adiacentă călătoriei subsumează în *Lolita* doar primele trei capitole din a doua parte a romanului; așadar, o secvență relativ restrânsă în economia textuală. Paradoxal, perioada la care face referire este de circa un an, prin urmare, un interval important în economia temporalității romanului: din 16 august 1947 – luând în considerare mențiunea din capitolul 26, și anume: „Calendarul meu se zăpăcește. Asta trebuie sa se fi petrecut în jurul lui 25 (sic!)[7] august 1947. Nici gând să pot continua." (Nabokov, 2003: 134) – până în august 1948, și călătoria se desfășoară pe cuprinsul a douăzeci și șapte de state menționate în text. A doua zi după episodul „Vânătorii vrăjiți" (datat intradiegetic la 15 august), Humbert Humbert și Dolores pornesc în voiajul „pe întreg cuprinsul Statelor Unite". Călătoriei celor doi protagoniști îi parvine o funcție narativă complementară valorii arcadiene a descrierilor ce însoțesc structural această secvență a romanului; concret, „avocatul mi-a propus să fac o relatare limpede, cinstită, a itinerarului urmat și presupun că aici am ajuns la momentul când sunt obligat să mă achit de aceasta îndatorire neplăcută", notează naratorul în primul capitol. Din nou, un exemplu tipic de *captatio benevolentiae*, a cărui funcție autoreflexivă face parte dintr-un efect mai amplu de intruziune a paratextului în diegeză, întrucât frecvența acestor referințe crește de la un capitol la altul, odată cu destrămarea mirajului ficțional. Revenind, sub pretextul acestei relatări judiciare, călătoria devine în sine o subramificație a intrigii. Anul petrecut de Dolores Haze și tutorele său legal în drumeție prin zonele americane sălbatice, cât și înnoptând în pleiada alcătuită din „Motelurile Asfințitului, Vilele U-Beam, Conacele din Pisc, Palatele în Decor de Pini, Palatele cu Priveliști Montane, Palatele Profilate pe Cer, Palatele cu Parcuri, Conacele Verzi, Hanurile lui Mac" (177), îmbină descrierea cinematică a voiajului cu micro-structuri narative de o temporalitate extrem de concentrată.

[6] Nabokov, 2003: 175.

[7] Versiunea originală menționează data de 15 august; cu toate acestea, toate edițiile Polirom au păstrat data de 25 august.

Melissa Lam observă, în lista mai sus citată, melanjul semnificanților din decorul natural al Americii cu tropul motelului – atât de comun, de altfel, în romanul postmodern –, semnalând o corupere a spațiului natural. „Peisajul semnificat cinematic al lui Humbert transformă America reală într-un colaj cultural", notează Lam (2009: 16, t.n.) în adiacența analitică a efectului de defamiliarizare ce persistă îndeosebi în secvența narativă subsumată voiajul prin cele douăzeci și șapte de state americane. Astfel, pe de o parte, descrierea cinematică mimează drumul protagonistului și metoda de înregistrare a realității:

> Munți îndepărtați. Munți apropiați. Alți și alți munți; frumuseți albăstrui de neatins sau care se transformă necontenit în șiruri de dealuri populate; lanțuri muntoase sud-estice, zigzaguri ale altitudinii pe parcursul munților înalți. Coloși de piatra cenușii cu vine de zăpadă, care sfâșie inima si cerul, piscuri aprige apărând ca din senin la o cotitură a șoselei; imensități acoperite cu păduri de brad întunecate, dese, bine aliniate, întrerupte pe alocuri de norișori palizi de plopi de munte; formațiuni roz și liliachii. Faraonice, falice, „prea preistorice pentru cuvinte" (blazata Lo!); munți tabulari de lava neagră; munți la început de primăvară, ca niște elefanți nou-născuți păroși pe spinare; ghebele munților la sfârșit de vara, cu membrele lor masive, egiptene, strânse sub falduri de pluș roșiatic, mâncat de molii; coline albicioase pistruiate cu stejari verzi și rotunzi; o ultimă culme muntoasă brun-roșcată și un covor des de lucernă la poale. (Nabokov , 2003: 190)

Incipitul pasajului are un caracter eminamente cinematic; succesiunea metonimică de imagini ce urmează, precum și efectul de amplificare a atenției și implicării vocii narative (prin intensificarea detaliilor) imită, la nivel tematic, progresul spațial și vizibilitatea unui călător de pe una dintre autostrăzile americane. Secvența a alimentat și ipotezele propuse, printre alții, de Melissa Lam (2009), în legătură cu potențialul alegoric al romanului. Conform acestei chei de lectură și interpretare, tânăra Lolita este reprezentarea postmodernă a Americii; ținutul sălbatic intrat sub posesia avidă și tiranică a unui european; o reinterpretarea literară a unui transfer sesizabil în istoria sociologică a artei transatlantice. Mai precis, de la *America* reprezentată alegoric ca o femeie indigenă, cu pielea cafenie, vânzând cafea și piei de bursuci colonizatorilor europeni (vezi detaliile din legenda hărții realizate de Henry Popple, "A Map of the British Empire in America with the French and Spanish Settlements Adjacent Thereto", 1733 și gravura lui Matthew Darly, "The Commissioners", 1778) – la brandul configurat prin Statuia Libertății, 1886, continentul a trecut prin multiple forme de reprezentare până la imaginea de secol XX , caustic redată de scriitorul imigrant de origine rusă, a *nimfetei* americane. Structura verbală a fragmentului citat mai sus susține, într-adevăr, posibilitatea unei identificări alegorice, în sensul în care ambiguitatea intenționată a prozei narative din *Lolita* a creat, până la acest punct din dezvoltarea romanului, numeroase antecedente de acest tip. Sistemul descriptiv dublu-referențial (invităm cititorul la relecturarea celei de-a patra fraze din citatul paginii anterioare, reconsiderând indicii cromatici, spre exemplu) încurajează această hermeneutică a călătoriei deopotrivă prin peisajul natural american, cât și prin corporealitate.

Pe de cealaltă parte, deci, în completarea secvențelor configurate cinematic după exemplul discutat mai sus, ne parvin micro-structuri narative de o temporalitate condensată; celule ficționale (în termenii lui Jean Ricardou), a căror funcție este de a reda analogic relația dintre Humbert și Dolores: „Am avut certuri – minore și majore. Cele mai mari s-au petrecut: la Lacework Cabins, în Virginia; pe Park Avenue, Little Rock, în apropierea unei școli; în Trecătoarea Milner, la trei mii trei sute metri altitudine, în Colorado; la intersecția din Seventh Street și Central Avenue în Phoenix, statul Arizona; pe Third Street, Los Angeles […]" (Nabokov, 2003: 193). Lista continuă, subsumând nu mai puțin de unsprezece locații listate în acest registru. Călătoria devine, așadar, o călătorie jalonată conflictual; o călătorie a regăsirii sau mai degrabă a păstrării integrității de sine, în structura unui cuplu.

Tensiunea structurală dintre aceste două tipuri de proză adiacente tematic motivului călătoriei

– cea cinematică şi cea temporal condensată în micro-structuri textuale ce fac faţă cu greu amplitudinii diegetice – este de natură auto-reflexivă. Deşi chestiunea captivităţii şi a conştientizării gravităţii actului de abducţie nu este explicit redată în diegeză decât relativ târziu în desfăşurarea poveştii, proza poartă intrinsec, prin astfel de tensiuni de registru sau stil, marca structurală a temelor dezvoltate.

Robert Ropert subliniază descendenţa *Lolitei* dintr-o autentică tradiţie literară a captivităţii – aşadar, plasând romanului într-o contiguitatea tematică iniţiată de Salinger cu *De veghe în lanul de secară* şi Melville cu *Moby Dick*. În lumina acestei ipoteze, tema călătoriei şi, implicit, secvenţa textuală care dezvoltă parcursul prin America al celor doi protagonişti, devine o pauză narativă, o falsă subramificaţie structurală, a cărei finalitate deschide, de fapt, o nouă arie ficţională (anul şcolar la Beardsley). Să urmărim pentru moment, plurivalenţa intertextuală a romanului din perspectiva basmului fantastic şi a posibilelor repercusiuni impuse asupra temei călătoriei.

Valenţele unei călătorii iniţiatice: despre *Lolita* şi basmul european

Călătoria nabokoviană nu are deschiderea simbolului tradiţional; pe scurt, nu este o călătorie spirituală, ci concretă, pe „întreg cuprinsul Statelor Unite"; după cum nu comportă caracteristicile unei călătorii simbolice, deşi are o valoare alegorică.

Similitudinile de structură dintre *Lolita* şi basmul european au fost amplu analizate de către Alfred Appel (*The Annotated "Lolita"*, 1970), Carl Proffer (*Keys to "Lolita"*, 1968) şi Steven Swan Jones (*The Enchanted Hunters: Nabokov's Use of Folk Characterization in "Lolita"*, 1980), avansând o cheie de lectură pe cât de excentrică la prima abordare, pe atât de uşor de urmărit în structura tematică a romanului. Personajele supranaturale de sorginte folclorică (prinţi, prinţese, căpcăuni, dubluri), poţiunile magice, oazele fantastice, castelele; conflictul mamă-fiică (identificat de Steven Swan Jones ca o reinterpretare a Albei-ca-Zăpada), alături de menţiunile unor basme sau poveşti precum *Veştmintele noi ale împăratului* (Nabokov, 2003: 242), contribuie la configurarea unui fantastic subversiv şi parodiat. Fără a detalia aici foarte mult argumentele aduse în favoarea acestui intertext, ne propunem să revendicăm dimensiunea tematică a călătoriei din romanul nabokovian, prin comparaţie cu motivul echivalent din basmul tradiţional.

În lista celor treizeci şi unu de motive identificate de Vladimir Propp (1970), călătoria – deşi nemenţionată explicit – poate fi identificată în succesiunea altor trei motive, şi anume plecarea, călăuzirea, întoarcerea. Călătoria protagonistului de basm formează o buclă deopotrivă temporală şi spaţială, întrucât destinaţia va coincide cu punctul de plecare (cel puţin la nivel simbolic), iar scopul în sine este acela de a reveni la un timp rotund, perfect, la o vârstă de aur a comunităţii, cât şi a individului. Dimpotrivă, aventura „călătorului vrăjit" (Nabokov, 2003: 199) din *Lolita* este un „refuz de sine", pentru a utiliza definiţia propusă în *Dicţionarul de simboluri* coordonat de Jean Chevalier şi Alain Gheerbrant; o încercare de neutralizare a ororii, printr-un truc de distragere a atenţiei cititorului. Călătoria pubescentei Dolores este o formă de voiaj în toate conotaţiile sexuale avansate de Alice în *Povestirile din Canterbury*[8], o călătorie iniţiatică şi decisivă în dezvoltarea ei emoţională.

Întrucât discursul performativ atât de drag postmodernismului o permite, să deschidem şi subiectul celeilalte Alice din literatura universală, anume protagonista lui Lewis Carroll. James Joyce (1974: 339-348) este primul cercetător care subliniază preponderenţa acestui intertext în romanul nabokovian, însă fără a dezvolta comparativ valenţele fantastice ale călătoriilor din cele două texte. Acceptând cheia de lectură a romanului nabokovian în descendenţa carrolliană, fantasticul pictural, alegoric ce configurează voiajului Lolitei devine la nivel intertextual un exerciţiu de re-prezentare şi re-scriere în oglindă a călătoriei tinerei Alice Liddell (considerând interesul lui Nabokov pentru valenţele biografice ale ambelor texte carrolliene şi traducerea în limba rusă a primului).

[8] Vezi sensul verbului *a hoinări* faţă de originalul *to wander* în „Povestea târgoveţei din Bath", utilizat dublu referenţial pentru a denota plimbare, peregrinaj, cât şi instabilitate sexuală.

Concluzii

Dificultatea trasării unei grile analitice exhaustive inhibă încă – chiar după şase decenii – studiul celui mai controversat roman nabokovian. Tratamentul plurivalent al călătoriei – ca deturnare a motivului de basm tradiţional european sau parodie a călătoriei iniţiatice ori simbolice, susţinând totodată configuraţia unei călătorii metanarative ce înglobează valorile unui veritabil studiu imagologic – reprezintă o chestiune parţial ignorată în critica nabokoviană. Cu excepţia unui capitol din studiul Melissei Lam (*Disenfranchised from America: Reinventing Language and Love in Nabokov and Pynchon*, 2009) şi a volumului recent publicat de Robert Ropert (*Nabokov in America: On the Road to "Lolita"*, 2015) – cu menţiunea că scopul ambelor analize citate diferă considerabil faţă de prezentul studiu, focalizându-se, mai degrabă, pe perspectiva imagologică a imigrantului ce rescrie povestea visului american –, chestiunea voiajului metanarativ a trecut aproape ignorată.

„După ce Olympia Press, din Paris, a publicat cartea, un critic american a emis părerea că Lolita ar reprezenta monumentul pasiunii mele pentru romanul romantic. Dacă am înlocui 'romanul romantic' cu 'limba engleză', formula aceasta elegantă ar fi mai corectă", notează Vladimir Nabokov la 12 noiembrie 1956 (Nabokov, 2003: 385). Călătoria lingvistică în opera lui Lewis Carroll şi a lui James Joyce (alt prozator anglofon a cărui influenţă asupra lui Nabokov – fie ea *anxioasă*, în termenii lui Harold Bloom, sau nu – este identificată de Alfred Appel) a întregit corolarul valenţelor pe care tema voiajului nabokovian le îmbină atât de natural diegetic şi autobiografic, literar şi ştiinţific, realist şi fantastic. Îndrăznim, cu toate acestea, să concluzionăm că adevărata călătorie din *Lolita* se ascunde în însăşi povestea „manuscrisului": un roman care a fost scris pe vederi[9] şi foi de notiţe, pe scaunul din dreapta maşinii conduse de Vera, în camere de hotel sau în zile ploioase, când vânătoarea de fluturi era imposibilă.

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[9] O parte dintre acestea se află în colecţia dedicată autorului din cadrul Library of Congress, din Washington, D.C. În cazul ultimului roman scris de Vladimir Nabokov, disponibil şi în traducere românească (*Originalul Laurei*, traducere de Veronica D. Niculescu, Polirom, 2010), 138 de astfel de foi de notiţe cuprind integral textul

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Back in Time Travel(s): Translating Mircea Cărtărescu's *Nostalgia*

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Considering translation as a widely intercultural phenomenon and starting from the assumption that "every story is a travel story" (Certeau, 1984), this paper aims to explore how Julian Semilian's English version of Mircea Cărtărescu's *Nostalgia* responds to the great challenge of rendering the elusive atmosphere of a Bucharest which is recreated – almost alchemically generated – by memory. Therefore, by analysing translation as both a spatial and a socio-cultural phenomenon, this paper investigates the process of translating a city from a twofold perspective. On the one hand, it reveals the author's perspective – it explores the time and place of the novel's production, since Mircea Cărtărescu succeeds in "providing us with the clearest approximation of the interior lives of those living in that city through the darkest days of the Ceauşescu regime" (McGonigle, 2005). On the other hand, it is a means of reactivating the translator's socio-cultural background – *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1986) – as Semilian recovers, through translation, the Bucharest of his own childhood, magically transformed by the book's author and modulated by the passage of time.

***Keywords*: translation; travel; identity; habitus; migration; mobility; globalization.**

Since "every story is a travel story" (Certeau, 1984), *translation* and *travel* share a number of similarities, both being spatial and socio-cultural phenomena that facilitate communication across cultures. Thus, James Clifford, a specialist in cultural ethnography, assimilates the notion of travel to a 'translation term', pointing to the overlap between the geographical and linguistic movements involved (1997: 39). Furthermore, Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman bring together the terms 'translation' and 'travel', arguing that translation has come to serve as the perfect example of the human condition in the context of globalisation and positing that in the present-day 'centreless' society, translation illustrates "the human search of self and belonging in a puzzling world full of change and difference" (Deleabastita & Grutman, 2009: 111). Or, as Papastergiadis (2000) points out, all these phenomena have led to the reconsideration of notions connected to identity and belonging, and have brought to the fore the existence and importance of asymmetrical power relationships.

Following the same line of argument, and discussing about the relationship established between translation and travel, Susan Bassnett reveals the fact that both disciplines have been concerned with the way in which the images of the foreign are constructed (1993: 2002). As Loredana Polezzi also argues, translation is conceived as a way in which the foreign is configured and illustrated in the receptor culture, while travel is seen as a "movement across languages" (Polezzi, 2009: 173). From this stance, Bassnett points out that increased attention has been shown to the way in which the images of the foreign/ difference are reflected within the Western cultures, although this is not an exclusive direction. Nevertheless, the present paper will focus particularly on the way in which the image of Romania is constructed for the Western audience, through the

translation of *Nostalgia* into English. More precisely, the link between translation and travel will be analysed here as an expression of the subjective, personal experience of the translator, an identity quest, a journey through the mind. Consequently, this link between translation and travel will be discussed as a means of tracing back memory and recreating the atmosphere of a Bucharest which is transformed alchemically by the author himself and by the translator also, both of them partially sharing the same socio-cultural background, the same *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1995). This sort of travelling through the mind is not necessarily associated with the translation of 'the other', but rather with the translation of 'the self'.

Moreover, discussing translation as an intercultural phenomenon, the practice is conceived as a tool that facilitates communication and is closely connected to notions of place, mobility and migration. From this perspective, Susan Bassnett (1993) shows that, by means of translation, a threefold link is drawn at linguistic, spatial and temporal level, a threefold perspective that will be explored in the present paper. Therefore, it can be argued that, in the context of globalization, both travel and translation have acquired increased importance, and have led to the ever-growing strengthening of the international position occupied by the English language. Within this context, various forms of mobility have emerged, and, as such, growing attention has been relegated to the notion of 'travel', adapted to include a variety of different perspectives, from economic migration to mass tourism, diaspora, exile, or even "gendered and class-related perspectives" (Bassnett, 2002: 237).

Therefore, in the most developed countries, starting with the second half of the 20th century, migration and cross-border mobility were accompanied by an increase in the number of books translated, especially from English. For small countries and peripheral language groups, international communication thus became very much one-way traffic, and this was also the case of Romania, perceived as a minor country, occupying a peripheral position within the literary polysystem – which, it can be argued, very much influenced the translations from Romanian into other languages. Before the 1990s, and especially during the communist years, most Romanian authors (such as Mihail Sadoveanu, Zaharia Stancu, Marin Preda, Marin Sorescu, Nichita Stănescu and others) took advantage of the contacts established with the countries sharing the same political system, and their works were published in the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and other states of the socialist camp, while much fewer Romanian writers were published in the West. However, starting with the second half of the 20th century, and particularly after the fall of the communist regime, the direction of the translations has somehow changed from the East to the West. This was also the case of Mircea Cărtărescu, as "[l]ike most of his literary contemporaries of the avant-garde Eighties Generation, his major work has been translated into several European languages, with the notable exception, until 2005, of English" (Codrescu, 2005: ix).

The 2005 translation of Cărtărescu's *Nostalgia*, published in the United States, was carried out by Julian Semilian and published by New Directions. And yet, in the case of *Nostalgia*, the direction is rather from West to East. The translator is a poet, a novelist and a filmmaker, born in Romania and presently teaching film editing and serving as the Chair of the Editing and Sound Department at the North Carolina School of Filmmaking; he is a member of PEN America and translator of several other Romanian authors besides Mircea Cărtărescu.

Claiming that "*Nostalgia* called out to be translated", Julian Semilian first started translating Cărtărescu out of whim, beginning with a short fragment of *Orbitor*, but this was in fact a sort of coming back to his Romanian origins and discovering the strange easiness of swinging between the two languages. "I felt that the very words were trying to say themselves into English, and it was strange and delightful to help them along", says Semilian in the Afterword to *Nostalgia*, "as if they were benefiting from an opening when the linguistic border guards were absent" (Semilian, 2005: 317).

The relationship between translation and travel points to another important issue, namely the fact that both practices have contributed to the creation and preservation of stereotypes. Thus, as Cronin (1995) points out, this phenomenon occurs in particular in the case of "minor cultures"

attempting to assert themselves in the linguistic domains of much more prestigious cultures. Cronin also explains that these stereotypes can even end up taking the form of "auto-stereotypes", that is self-representations of a particular cultural group. This is why studies on travel and translation both bring to the fore the prominent role that translators and travellers play in constructing images of the foreign in the receptor culture.

Similarly to the traveller's account of a particular place, story or culture, the translator's account contributes to the creation of a certain image, and, hence, it is likely to function as a marketing tool, which can be used to promote the image of the source culture. Therefore, from this point of view, the representation phenomenon can no longer be illustrated as a mere system of binary oppositions (self vs. other, subject vs. object, source vs. target, or observed vs. observee), but as part of a "more complex web of travelling images and multiple refractions which often involve several layers of writing, rewriting and translation" (Polezzi, 2009: 174).

Commenting upon *Nostalgia* and Mircea Cărtărescu's writing within the international landscape, Thomas McGonigle also highlights the power literature has in shaping cultural identities:

> Dublin did not really exist until the publication of Joyce's Ulysses, Norway was a dim country assigned to the Vikings until Knut Hamsun published Hunger and Portugal was finally revealed to readers with Fernando Pessoa's Book of Disquietude. Similarly, Nostalgia gives the clearest approximation of the interior lives of those living in Bucharest through the darkest days of Ceaușescu's regime. (2007)

On the other hand, since this identity is described through the eyes of the traveller, of the translator, in this case, the translation could give rise to biased cultural representations, to a stereotypical image of what the reader is expected to see, or read.

Similarly, Christian Moraru (2006) sees another facet of this cultural dimension, warning about the danger of the new post-colonialism; he argues that, before stepping the borders into a vaster ensemble, one should first do away with the inherited national self-representations and the traditional paradigms lasting long after the official fall of communism. He states that

> (…) in the postcommunist era, the ongoing hegemony of the nationalist model and East-European ethnic strife, in particular, have consolidated in the West a set of assumptions about what the East-European writer should be like. [...] East-European lands and people are seen as completely determined by past and present history, hence spatially and culturally outside "true", forward-moving Europe, expected as they are to convey their "uniqueness" form a position of radical alterity, necessarily "bearing witness" to communist-era unspeakable pain and so forth. (Moraru 2006: 42)

These assumptions can create clichés and presumptions that distort the Western representations of Eastern Europe; additionally, the East European identity and, more precisely, the Romanian identity still continues to be weighted in terms of touristic expectations. Moraru claims that "Eastern Europe and East-Europeans are one big freak show", further referring to "former communist countries' literatures as a cultural safari" (43).

American writer and translator Jean Harris (2008) describes Romanians as open and friendly in social situations, remarking the Romanians' marked tendency "both to make [themselves] known and to say to whom [they] belong (down to grandparents and even before that), and this predilection combines with a tendency to recollect, out loud, a lot". She goes on explaining that "you can learn all about somebody in the first five minutes, and routine disclosures are also expected of you. Tale telling is a prominent feature of social life, and this is true in the domain of Senator, cab driver and peasant". Finally, Harris proclaims Romania as the world capital of stories.

Without being ascribed to the category of stories as such, or to that of travel writing, the literary work chosen as a case in point for the present analysis tells the story of an important period

in the history of Romania. Published in 1989[1] (the last year of the Communist Regime in Romania), *Nostalgia* bears witness to the realities of the time and place of its production. According to Codrescu,

> Cărtărescu wrote this book during the censorious days of Ceausescu's dictatorship and, to an ideologically conscientious reader, some of the outlandish images could pass for political outrage. I sensed, here and there, the literal dankness of basements and Kafkaesques torture chambers of the regime, and there is definitely enough dust and mud to put one in the mind of the endless socialist construction projects that made life so dreary and cold for adults. (2005: xii)

As Codrescu argues in the excerpt above, the text is full of hints and allusions to the Romanian life in the late 1980s. It is a journey through time to the dark ages of communist Romania, a journey likely to stir the interest of both the 'conscientious' Romanian reader – sensitive to a common past full of memories –, as well as of a foreign audience, curious at least to learn more about a nation still hovering in Ceausescu's shadow. The action is set in Bucharest, "a Bucharest transformed alchemically", as translator Julian Semilian (2005: 317) explains, a Bucharest evoked

> (…) with its mists of ancient homes with tiles and transoms, with skylights and massive oak doors, and further in the distance large and ashen buildings teeming with windows, the downtown skyscraper with the Gallus billboard like a bluish globe above it, the Victoria department store, the fire watchtower to the left, the arching buildings on Stefan cel Mare Boulevard, and off in the beyond, the hydroelectric plant, with its immense chimneys splitting out twisted stands of steam. (Cărtărescu, 2005: 36)

Thomas McGonigle argues that "though it is unlikely that one could rebuild the physical reality of Bucharest based on Mircea Cărtărescu's *Nostalgia* [...] Cărtărescu has provided us with the clearest approximation of the interior lives of those living in that city through the darkest days of the Ceaușescu regime". Moreover, McGonigle notices that, "composed during that time and finally published in 1989, the novel is a timeless invitation to dream and embrace the comforting power of personal memory, the only sure bulwark against the effects of totalitarian control" (McGonigle, 2005).

We could thus argue that this (quasi)coincidence between the time and place of production and the setting of the novel results in a novel incorporating (explicitly or in a rather covert way) various aspects of the Romanian lifestyle during the last years of the regime, which may have constituted other challenges for the translator. Cărtărescu does not aim to describe the external reality, but reality as perceived through his own eyes. He becomes thus a sort of "structural wizard, who builds his stories with the innate skill of a medieval puppeteer, with deft lingering in foreplay, in digression, in excuses to the reader for what's to follow, in delighted and perverse apologia, all of which serve to bring interest to a pitch" (Codrescu, 2005: xii). This makes, most definitely, the task for the translator even more difficult.

Since the translator himself bears the legacy of the same past, vacillating between 'domesticating' or 'foreignizing' the source text is even more prominent. The strategies of 'domestication' and 'foregnization' are defined by Venuti as two distinct tools that enable the translator either to bring the foreign text to the readers and give them the illusion of reading an original text (domestication), or to preserve the difference (foreignization) and show the foreign reader the specificities of the source culture (see Venuti, 1995: 204). A case in point is the above excerpt of "Mentardy", which provides the image of the Bucharest of the communist days, as seen through

[5] A first edition of this book, censured and entitled *Visul* (The Dream) was published in 1989 by Cartea Românească publishing house.

the eyes of the writer, who recalls "panorama Bucureştiului, încremenită sub nori, cu pîlcul de case vechi, cu olane şi oberlichturi, cu luminatoare şi uşi de stejar masiv, iar mai încolo nişte *construcţii mari şi cenuşii, cu multe geamuri*, blocul din centru cu *reclama Gallus* ca un glob albastru deasupra, magazinul Victoria, spre stînga Foişorul de Foc" (Cărtărescu, 1993: 70; our italics). In the example above, the structure "construcţii mari şi cenuşii, cu multe geamuri", which is full of meaning for the Romanian reader, is skilfully rendered by "ashen buildings teeming with windows" in an attempt to render the nuances intended by the author. On the other hand, the structure "reclama Gallus" is rendered without any explicitation by the "Gallus billboard" which almost remains covert even to a contemporary Romanian reader. On the other hand, in a more domesticating vein, Foişorul de Foc, a symbol of the Bucharest of those days, is plainly rendered by the "fire watchtower", and even spelled in lowercase, accompanying the foreign reader in his/her imaginary journey through Bucharest. Moreover, it is worth remarking at this point that, through the topic of the novel itself, the translation constructs an image of Romania that is likely to fuel the stereotypes already engraved in the western mind. The book creates an image of difference which meets the expectancies of the foreign reader.

Therefore, if we were to situate the idea of travel on a temporal axis, translating *Nostalgia* reactivated for Semilian a socio-cultural background, Bourdieu's *habitus*, recovering through translation the Bucharest of his childhood, transformed alchemically on the one hand by Cărtărescu himself, and, on the other, by time. Bourdieu describes habitus as "a durable transposable system of definitions" (1977: 134) which are acquired by the young child within his family, environment, and it is the result of the practices (be them conscious or unconscious) experienced therein. As shown by Bourdieu, *habitus* emerges from a dialogue established between the family legacy, ethnic, class-based and collective habitus, and it shapes the individual within society. "Translating *Nostalgia*, I felt that I recovered Bucharest, which I'd left in adolescence, but it was a Bucharest transformed alchemically by Mircea: 'I found myself,' he wrote in a recent book of essays, *Forever Young, Swaddled in Pixels*, "the writer who generated it... a plastic, proteiform city which my imagination shaped according to its will..." (Semilian, 2007: 13).

It is clearly a journey through the mind, through the past, an identity quest underwent both by the author and by the translator. Furthermore, in "Notes on Translating *Nostalgia* by Mircea Cărtărescu", Julian Semilian – the translator traveller – speaks about his personal experience in translating this book

> When *Nostalgia* [...] called out to be translated, there were messengers, certainly, and they informed me I was chosen to smuggle it, *Nostalgia*, into the future, across borders, through languages. Granted asylum within the book's territory, word by word, word-by-word exchanges take place. [...] I know that the book crossed through me: thinking about it now, two years later, I feel trepidation, a pleasant invasion, thrilling in shape-shifting words, in mutual agreements and invisible nods. The memory of the book still stirs in me, and I in it, and my being a participant in the book, it alive within me. (2007: 13)

The translator's *habitus*, his bilingual background greatly facilitated the translation of some children's rhymes. Children's language is filled with phrases and idioms which are skilfully dealt with and rendered by corresponding phrases: *îi căra în cap un număr cuvenit de "castane"* (*she knuckle-cuffed his head an agreed-upon number of times*), *se dădea mare* (*acted above his station*), *şi-a dat arama pe faţă* (*the cat was out of the bag*), *nu-l putea duce mintea* (*he couldn't come up with anything more imaginative*), *să-l caftim* (*Let's rough him up*), *nu e de nasul vostru* (*off-limits to snot-face kids like you*), *ne-am pomenit cu ele în coastă* (*we found ourselves looking at them*).

Moreover, since this part of the story – "Mentardy" – is sometimes told through the eyes of the child-author, the very act of translation is no longer associated with the process of translating the 'other'. It is rather a way of translating the 'self', as Semilian himself puts together pieces of a puzzle of his own past and recollections of the old Bucharest.

> Era o lume nouă şi plină de ascunzişuri, murdară şi ciudată, pe care noi, vreo şapte-opt băieţi între cinci şi doisprezece ani, o luam în fiecare dimineaţă în stăpînire şi cercetare, înarmaţi cu pistoale cu apă, de doi lei, pe care le cumpăram, albastre şi roze, de la „Scufiţa Roşie", magazinul de jucării care exista pe atunci la Obor, Oborul vechi, adevărat, şi în care mirosea întotdeauna a petrosin. (Cărtărescu, 1993: 60)

> It was a new world, strange and dirty, full of places to hide; and we, seven or eight boys, aged between five and twelve, armed with blue and pink water pistols we bought for two lei at Little Red Riding Hood, the toy store at that time in the Obor district, became every morning its masters and explorers. That was the old Obor, the true one, where it always smelled of turpentine. (Cărtărescu, 2005: 31-32).

Under the same factor of time travelling, we could also include allusions and references to the communist regime in Romania, which, although transparent, in Codrescu's words, "to the ideologically conscientious reader" (i.e. most of the times Romanian), can remain covert to the target language reader: *balcoanele cu murături* (*pickle-jar-filled balconies*), *steguleţe roşii şi tricolore de hîrtie de la defilare* (*tiny red and tricolor paper flags from the parade*) or the already mentioned *reclama Gallus* (*the Gallus billboard*). Moreover, the occasionally ironic tone of the narrator (signalled, for instance, by the inverted commas used for: *emisiunile de 'popularizare ştiinţifică' Roza vînturilor la radio şi Teleenciclopedia la televizor*) is sometimes lost in translation (*popular science programs, such as the Rose of the Wind on the radio and Tele-Encyclopedia on television*).

This points out once again the close connection between translation and travel, both being ways through which images of the foreign can be constructed – in a more or less faithful way – in the receptor culture. It is a subjective view of the teller, who internalizes the source culture and provides a more or less objective account of it.

Instead of a conclusion, I would like to emphasise, once again, the power translation and travel have in creating and preserving stereotypes and, more importantly, the extent to which stereotypes are preserved in translation. Clearly, the translation on Cărtărescu's *Nostalgia* contributes to depicting the image of Romania as it used to be in the dark ages of the communist regime. Moreover, a somehow stereotypical view can be perceived even in the translator's own words regarding his recovered Romanian experience:

> The summer of 2004 I returned to the United States from a two-week trip to my childhood city, Bucharest. The suspicious customs man inquired: "What could anyone be doing in a country like Romania for two weeks?" I stared blankly at him. It was a good question.
>
> The customs man must have thought I didn't hear him, so he tried again: "What could anyone be doing in a country like Romania for two weeks?" "Nostalgia," I answered and smiled. "Nostalgia". It must have been the right answer, because he waved me through." (Semilian, 2005: 317)

In addition, the translator's afterword illustrates, somehow consonant with Delabastita & Grutman's view (2005: 111), the very essence of the common ground reached by translation and travel, namely the human quest for self and a sense of belonging, the search for one's roots.

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British Travellers Stick Together – Olivia Manning's Gulliver in the Balkans

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This paper involves discovering how Olivia Manning's Balkan Trilogy has mapped the image of Romania and mostly draws upon the sections of the trilogy in which pre-war Bucharest was memorialized as a blend of Orient and Occident, where the native population coexists with an amalgam of various other nations. Upon the examination of Harriet Pringle, the central figure of the sequence, it becomes clear that there is a connection to Swift's Gulliver in that both characters embark on a process of "literary colonisation". This focus establishes Manning's place among the British travel writers by reviewing the main ideas that stem from the substantial body of work concerned with her trilogy. The article makes frequent reference back to Olivia Manning's biography, since her narrative is admittedly based on the writer's personal odyssey in Bucharest. Through identifying the crossover character of Manning's prose, this research highlights its relevance for the fictional construct.

***Keywords*: centre; margin; alterity; literary colonization; Gulliver syndrome.**

Introduction

Olivia Manning's most notorious works, *The Balkan Trilogy*[1] and *The Levant Trilogy*[2], known collectively as *Fortunes of War*, are, paradoxically, at the same time much discussed and quasi-unread. Although the collection was made famous by the 1987 BBC television adaptation *Fortunes of War*, a series that followed the original works relatively faithfully, Manning's novels themselves (the trilogies included) have never enjoyed from the readership the enthusiastic reception their author felt they deserved[3]. The six novels making up *Fortunes of War* are overtly based on the writer's personal odyssey in Bucharest, Athens, Cairo, Damascus, Beirut, and Jerusalem. Manning's Balkan and Middle East journey started just before the outbreak of WWII and continued into its early years, but the actual trilogies were written between mid-1950s and mid-1970s. This time lag (during which the writer must have decanted her experiences and impressions and reached some conclusions relative to them) can hardly explain why the scarcity of imagination[4] that characterizes

[1] *The Balkan Trilogy*, made up of *The Great Fortune* (1960), *The Spoilt City* (1962) and *Friends and Heroes* (1965), was published in one volume in 1981.

[2] *The Levant Trilogy*, consisting of *The Danger Tree* (1977), *The Battle Lost and Won* (1978) and *The Sum of Things* (1980), was published in one volume in 1982

[3] "Manning craved much more critical attention and money than she got for her writing, but with her 'permanently discontented' manner and 'great angry eyes', she was clearly a very hard person to please or praise. The saddest parts of this biography are where friends struggle to convey her personal qualities: tales of kindness and sympathy tend to get outnumbered very quickly by tales of 'Ollie Beak's recurrent gloom'. It's a terrible fate to be pretty much always unhappy, and to feel as jealous of everyone as Olivia Manning did, but perhaps she needed that stimulus, however miserable it made her. The books remain as a vindication" (Harman, 2013).

[4] "As she openly confided to friends and fellow-writers, she felt happiest and most confident when writing

a prose whose author is often judgmental and self-righteous[5] is only at times counterbalanced by the literary merits of the abundant descriptions[6] of the places and characters in *Fortunes of War*.

Discussion

The literature generally sees *The Balkan Trilogy* as more accomplished than *The Levant Trilogy*, but this alone does not explain the multitude of the Romanian studies and commentaries (Boia 1997; Gavriliu 1998; Machedon & Scoffham 1999; Andras 2003, 2010; Ivancu 2010; Damian 2013; Bardulete 2014; Pelehatăi 2016) concerned mainly with *The Great Fortune* and *The Spoilt City*, the first two parts of *The Balkan Trilogy*. The substantial body of work concerning an author who "fell into the category of novelists whose name is somehow familiar but whose novels are not familiar at all" (Hensher, 2004) has to do with the fact that Bucharest is at the same time the setting for the above-mentioned novels and its most powerful character, the target of Manning's analysis and judgment. As Goldsworthy puts it, "Manning's Bucharest, exuberant and lavish, is similarly a melancholy presence in spite, or perhaps because of, its enormous luxury" (1998: 193). Going beyond the picturesque descriptions of a Bucharest in which Orient and Occident blend, most of the British, American and Romanian academics[7] have approached *The Balkan Trilogy* from a broader perspective which, instead of simply seeing it as a roman-fleuve concerned with travels and wartime, has raised issues such as margin vs. centre, alterity and otherness, and "narrative/imaginative colonization"[8]. Understandably and more or less overtly, they identify in Manning's view on the Balkan countries and their inhabitants the embodiment of Ruritania, although, geographically speaking, Ruritania's original location is closer to central Europe.

However, as Goldsworthy (1998) notes, real geography and history are of secondary importance during "[t]he imaginative colonisation of the Balkans by British writers" (2), a process of reshaping that can range

> from the comparatively insignificant attempts of the "imagine" to create and present a recognisable face to the "imaginer" for economic benefit – as in the transformation of Castle Bran in Romania into "Dracula's Castle" in spite of its tenuous historical link with the historic Count Dracula – to the more important impact of preconceived ideas on the processes of decision-making which determine the extent of foreign loans and investment, the level of military and humanitarian aid, and the speed at which individual Balkan countries are allowed to join "Europe", NATO or any other international organisation or club. (2)

When Olivia Manning arrived in Bucharest in 1939, she had already had a taste of London's literary world to which she felt she rightfully belonged, and the time spent abroad (until 1946) was going to provide her with the material she would exploit for the purpose of securing her

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of things she had known first-hand. Ruefully declaring that she possessed neither a capacious imagination nor a feel for fantasy, she insisted she wrote completely 'out of experience' (…)" (David, 2012: 5).

[5] "While she was alive, she didn't inspire much affection; her enemies thought her 'carping and vindictive', 'narrow-minded and spiteful', and even her chums called her 'Olivia Moaning' behind her back" (Harman, 2013).

[6] "The Bucharest sequences are the best, but subsequent volumes sink into a mess of vague characterisation, obtrusive and unappealing research (the battle scenes in the second trilogy are, as many people have said, very implausible), and difficulties with emphasis. Moments which should stand out, like the unbelieving parents spooning gruel into a hole in a dead boy's cheek at the beginning of *The Danger Tree*, or the Cairo brothel scenes, just become a morass of one damn thing after another" (Hensher, 2004: 71).

[7] Gavriliu, 1998; Goldsworthy, 1998; Steinberg, 2005; Hammond, 2010; Ivancu 2010; Drace-Francis, 2013, etc.

[8] In her book *Inventing Ruritania: the Imperialism of the Imagination* (1998), Vesna Goldsworthy identifies the stories and movies about Ruritania as forms of imaginative/narrative colonization of the peoples of the Balkans that are highly effective in shaping international perceptions of the Balkans (Goldsworthy, 1998: x, 2).

place as an acknowledged writer. The resulting narrative "was not history reimagined but rather history experienced and remembered" (Moorehead, 2013), only the image she creates by writing what she remembered shows, once again, "[l]ack of familiarity with the Balkan world and a corresponding sense of its exoticism and extraordinary complexity (reiterated by almost every British writer who has ever written anything about the region)" (Goldsworthy, 1998: 208) which have "enabled British authors to use the Balkans as a suitable location for a variety of popular genres. The cultural identities of the countries themselves are largely disregarded, and they remain in thrall to the imperialist advance of the expanding industry of the imagination, eager to chart its maps of intellectual property rights (Goldsworthy, 1998: 208).

That much can be said about the way Manning's pre-war and wartime experiences in the Balkans are reflected in her alter ego, Harriet Pringle, an intentional self-insertion of the writer whose behaviour, disposition, family and social life are often indistinguishable from that of its creator. Thus, in *The Great Fortune* and *The Spoilt City*, the reader follows Harriet and Guy Pringle to Bucharest, where everything that happens to them and the group of English expats there is seen through Harriet's eyes on the background of the events that shake the Romanian society. The two novels considered in the present study can be recognized then as pieces of fictionalized personal experiences, the outcome of Manning's travel to Romania. Gavriliu's observation, that "[t]he fictionalized versions of Eastern Europe created by contemporary British writers combine the features of travel literature with utopia or dystopia, thus revealing the authors in a dual role: that of creators of fiction and of cultural historians for the two nations; they remain engaged in a paradoxical play of reality and fiction" (1998: 123), can be applied to Manning's treatment of her Romanian experience. In *The Balkan Trilogy*, the duality identified by Gavriliu appears to have fuelled the discrepancies in Manning's rationale and cast a shadow of doubt on the reliability of the roles she assumes.

The same Gavriliu aptly named such attitudes the "Gulliver syndrome", a concept that lumps, under the umbrella of the complicated insular superiority complex attributed to the British ethnic self-image, a subtle array of relationships generated by the encounter with an alien cultural environment (1998: 11). Indeed, Swift's character perceives cultural differences from a quadruple perspective[9]: 1. a feeling of superiority that makes the rest of the world look ridiculous and mean; 2. the perception of alterity as abnormal and thus grotesque and oversized; 3. the interpretation of differences as lack of reason and common sense; 4. an awareness of the self that makes the world look like a conglomerate of base animal instincts (Olos, 2003: 155). Such standpoints tend to bounce back and, as Gavriliu notes, Gulliver, "as a hypothesis of otherness disturbed by the value system of his cultural code evolves from the compatible to the incompatible, from the inclusion to the exclusion in order to end up as an alien in his own culture" (Gavriliu in Mudure, 2005: 270).

One can recognize this pattern in Harriet Pringle's odyssey, from the moment she takes her headlong plunge into the Romanian world as the wife of a man she barely knows[10] to her return to London at the end of the war. Even before arriving in Bucharest, Harriet feels displaced and excluded from her husband's bachelor life habits that tend to continue in marriage, as well as from the social duties she understands to assume, and that makes her look at things around her through malicious eyes. Her world back home, the British capital and its literary circles, has also been changed by WWII, and Bucharest has thus become the point of no return for her. Harriet's realization resembles the one Manning expresses in October 1939 in a letter to a friend in which she is "bemoaning the 'stupidity' of their generation and ruing the loss of her 'old life': when she left London it had 'ceased almost at once to be the London I knew and seems to have become

[9] These standpoints were outlined by Paul Turner in his Introduction to the 1994 OUP edition of *Gulliver's Travels*.

[10] Like Manning herself, who married Reginald Donald "Reggie" Smith very soon after Walter Allen introduced them, Harriet married Guy Pringle after only a three weeks' relation.

a blacked-out wilderness . . . it is dreadful to feel that my old life is no longer there to be returned to'" (David, 2012: 77).

Understandably, the Romanian women, whose language and behaviour codes Harriet does not understand, are depicted with harsh strokes from the first pages of the trilogy: "Stout, little Rumanian women, not noticeable before, pushed their way through the wagon-lit chattering in French" (Manning, 1981: 18). The impression of this first encounter on the train taking her and Guy to Romania carries on, and the women the English couple see strolling on the Chaussée are described as "implacable as steam-rollers. Short and strong, they remained bland-faced while wielding buttocks and breasts as heavy as bladders of lard" (Manning, 1981: 48). In contrast with the "the pigeon-shaped women on the pavement", a gypsy flower-girl looks "long, lean and flashy, like a flamingo or a crane" (Manning, 1981: 122).

Sophie Oreşanu's portrait stands out from among the few portraits of the Romanian women detached from this collective image. Harriet's antipathy for her husband's protégée is completely explicable, as the Romanian girl is everything she is not, and Sophie's attitude toward Guy's spouse does not help much:

> As Sophie looked at Harriet, her expression suggested she was at a loss to understand not only how he had acquired a wife, but how he had acquired such a wife. She eventually gave a nod and looked away. She was a pretty enough girl, dark like most Rumanians, too full in the cheeks. Her chief beauty was her figure. Looking at Sophie's well developed bosom, Harriet felt at a disadvantage. Perhaps Sophie's shape would not last, but it was enviable while it lasted. (Manning, 1981: 76)

But if the jealousy the insecure Harriet felt of her husband's student is justifiable, her reaction to the Romanian music cannot simply be explained by culture shock. As a manifestation of an exacerbated perception of alterity, for Harriet's British ears, "the Rumanian *hora*" is a "persistent, nerve-racking music" (Manning, 1981: 41). Furthermore, the episode of Florica's performance[11] at Pavel's open air restaurant acquires epic proportions and is probably the most telling account of Harriet' feelings about Romania:

> Florica, in her long black and white skirts, was posed like a bird, a magpie, in the orchestra cage. When the applause died out, she jerked forward in a bow, then, opening her mouth, gave a high, violent gypsy howl. (…) Harriet felt the sound pass like a shock down her spine. The first howl was followed by a second, sustained at a pitch that must within a few years (so Inchcape later assured the table) destroy her vocal chords. (…) Florica, working herself into a fury in the cage, seemed to be made of copper wire. She had the usual gypsy thinness and was as dark as an Indian. When she threw back her head, the sinews moved in her throat: the muscles moved as her lean arms swept the air. The light flashed over her hair, that was strained back, glossy, from her round, glossy brow. Singing there among the plump women of the audience, she was like a starved wild kitten spitting at cream-fed cats. The music sank and her voice dropped to a snarl. It rose and, twisting her body as in rage, clenching her fists and striking back her skirts, she finished on an elemental screech that was sustained above the tremendous outburst of applause. (Manning, 1981: 71-72).

The response of the natives in the audience who "[w]hen it was over, (…) blinked as though they had survived a tornado (Manning, 1981: 72) is natural for Manning: through Harriet's eyes, she "sees the citizens of Bucharest as a sort of peasants, some of them authentic peasants and others more evolved peasants, dressed up in city clothes explained by the fact that they were peasants themselves (Boia, 2001: 185). Romanian peasants, Harriet had read in "books written by travellers

[11] It has been argued (Damian, 2013) that Florica is an alias for Maria Tănase.

in Rumania (…) were (…) mad about music. Music was their only outlet. They made themselves drunk on it" (Manning, 1981: 256). The association of Sophie and Florica in their love for *horă* is yet another belittling addition to the portrait of the former as the most detestable representative of the Romanian women: "Fitzsimon was still at the pianoforte attempting to produce *horă* music while Sophie, beside him, sang shrill and sharp in imitation of Florica" (Manning, 1981: 599).

Harriet's profound unhappiness and discontent appears to be fuelled by everything she saw or felt in a land which, in Boia's words, "presents itself as a country only partially integrated in European civilization, a country of the margins, characterized by a still pronounced store of primitivism, a strange amalgam of modern urban life and rustic survivals" (2001: 185). Like Swift's Gulliver, the central character of the trilogies sets out on a journey from the center of the British Empire to the margins of Europe, where the western luxury goods[12] and commodities available do not comfort her anguish in front of a landscape she perceives as menacing only because it is unknown: '"Oh!' said Harriet. She (…) gazed out at the dark reaches of the Muntenia plain, on which the city stood like a bride-cake on a plate. 'A barbarous country', she said (Manning, 1981: 55).

Even the Romanian continental climate manages to give the Englishwoman cause for complaint, though this is somehow ironical for somebody coming from a country that is not exactly famous for its pleasant weather. For Harriet, summers are too hot and aggress her physically ("Harriet could smell her hair toasted by the sun. The heat was a burden on her head" (Manning, 1981: 615).), while winters evoke Bram Stoker's "wolf country":

> Driving now down the long, deserted Calea Victoriei, it seemed to her she could smell in the wind those not so distant regions of mountain and fir-forest where wolves and bears, driven by hunger, haunted the villages in the winter snow-light. And the wind was harsher than any wind she had ever known. She shivered, feeling isolated in a country that was to her not only foreign but alien. (Manning, 1981: 256)

The synonymic pair *foreign* and *alien* is so effective in blurring real geography that Manning does not need to invent imaginary realms for Harriet's travels or to mention Ruritania and Count Dracula explicitly. The capital of an actual Balkan country perceived "in an ambivalent oscillation between 'Europeanness' and 'Oriental difference'" (Goldsworthy, 1998: 2) will do as the natural setting for its amalgamated inhabitants, of which the beggars of Bucharest are reminding of Swift's Yahoos:

> These were professional beggars, blinded or maimed by beggar parents in infancy. Guy, during his apprentice year, had grown accustomed, if not inured, to the sight of white eyeballs and running sores, to have stumps and withered arms and the breasts of nursing mothers thrust into his face. (…) All the beggars set upon the Pringles together. One hid half a loaf behind his back to join in the age old cry of: '*Mi-e foame, foame, foame.*' They were hemmed in by a stench of sweat, garlic and putrid wounds. (…) A man on the ground, attempting to bar their way, stretched out a naked leg bone-thin, on which the skin was mottled purple and rosetted with yellow scabs. (Manning, 1981: 46)

The image of the population of Bucharest, for all its national diversity, makes it impossible for Harriet to identify any Houyhnhnms, not even in the group of British expats, although "[i]n the first trilogy, the British virtually all assume the legitimacy of British sovereignty" (Steinberg, 2005: 104). At least some of Harriet's contempt towards everyone non-British can be explained by the fact that Manning has "grown up in the belief that Britain was supreme in the world and

[12] "Within the brilliant windows were French gloves and trinkets, English cashmere garments and Italian leatherwork, tagged with exotic words like 'pulloverul', 'chic', 'golful' and 'five-o'clockul'" (Manning, 1981: 239).

the British the most fortunate of people" (Steinberg, 2005: 105). Consequently, when in an episode in *The Levant Trilogy* she is equated with a native of a marginal country she feels insulted and defends the status she takes for granted[13].

For rendering local colour and exoticism, Manning, unlike Swift, did not resort to inventing a weird-sounding language for the inhabitants of Romania; she simply picked several Romanian words and phrases and placed them in the English text. If Gulliver learns the languages of the countries he travels to besides those he already spoke (Dutch, Latin, French, Spanish, Italian, and Lingua Franca), Harriet has no such intention even if, as one of the characters in *The Great Fortune* notes, the language resembles Italian a lot. The fact that she speaks and comprehends practically no Romanian and French enhances her alienation among the people she holds in contempt, but who, unlike her, are polyglots[14]:

> Harriet said: 'The trouble is, I do not speak Rumanian.'
> 'But the landlord will speak French. I am sure you speak very well French?'
> 'I hardly speak it at all.'
> 'That is extraordinary, sure-ly?' Sophie's voice soared in amazement. 'A girl of good family who cannot speak very well French!'
> 'Not in England.' Harriet stood up. (Manning, 1981: 231)

An effective technique designed to render the linguistic isolation experienced by Harriet is Manning's use of Romanian and French words and phrases in the English text. Thus, the culturally significant *Chaussée* has 26 occurrences, *crivăț* – 4, the appellatives *Doamnă/a* – > 100, *Domn/-ule* – 33 and *Dragă* – 2, *horă* – 6, *friptură* – 24, *trăsură* – 24, *țuică* – 21, *leu/lei* – 34, *lux* – 1, *nebun* – 1, *liniște* – 2, *grădină* – 2, etc. Several Romanian phrases and words, such as *Hey, hey, hey, domnule!, Frumosă. Foarte frumosă* (122), *Santajul etajul* (298), *Snagov. Frumosa.* (351), *Bună dimineață, domnule* (457), *bacalaureat*, *printul*, *regeul* (618), *Capitanul, Capitanu* (701), *Nu voi abdică niciodată* (823), *Politeul* (897), *O să-le taie gâtul* (970), *Present* (984), *No, no, cornița* (1019), *dupa răsboiul* (1181), *Hey, Hey, Hey, Ionesculi* (1192), though useful in the transfer of the local colour to the British readership, contain mistakes related to either spelling or morphology. As it seems, the British writer/historian can afford to reinvent not only the geography and history of the colonies, but also the language of their inhabitants.

The Romanian food and restaurant-related words inserted in Manning's narrative (*friptură*, *țuică*, *fleică de Brașov*, *rezervat*, *lux nebun*, *Poftiți la masă*, *Restaurantul and Cafea*, *Let's go to Cina's*, *Polișinel, a restaurant dating back to boyar days*, etc.) are accompanied by strikingly detailed descriptions of gargantuan meals and the gut reactions they triggered in the foreigners that attend them:

> He saw a row of roasted turkeys with breasts ready sliced, two gammons baked with brown sugar and pineapple, crayfish, salmon coated with mayonnaise, several sorts of paté, three sorts of caviare, many aspic dishes, candied fruits, elaborate puddings, bunches of hot-house grapes, pineapples and autumn raspberries, all set on silver plates and decorated with white cattleyas. Trembling like a man in dire hunger, Yakimov darted forward. (Manning, 1981: 111)

Goldsworthy mentions the explanation Manning gives in an interview for this enthusiasm for food that may account for the mixed feelings of gluttony and self-indulgence her characters

[13] In Egypt Harriet was "shocked to find that to the Americans she was an alien (…). Her line, "I'm not an alien – I'm British", is wonderful in its assertive obtuseness. (…) What she means, of course, is that she is not only British but lightskinned. As a white British woman, she belongs everywhere, an assumption that sounds very much like an argument for imperialism. She is not a "native", with all the negative connotations of that word (Steinberg, 2005: 104-105).

[14] Sophie and Bella Niculescu, for example, speak, besides Romanian and English, French, German, Spanish and Italian.

display in the meal, restaurant and shopping scenes: "I think it is because I was so terribly hungry. Once when I was working in London, I fainted in the street through lack of food. And when we reached Rumania, the food was so rich, so fantastic" (1998: 193).

This suggests a rather unfair undertone of Manning's belief that the British are entitled to enjoy the culinary richness and any other Romanian asset in exchange for their civilizing presence and the questionable protection against the Germans and Russians they ensured, much like the Spanish conquistadors were to the gold of the New World. In Steinberg's view, "most of the British in Bucharest display an attitude toward the Rumanians that can most nicely be described as condescending. This attitude is reinforced by the Rumanians, who, as long as they believe the British will protect them, behave ingratiatingly. (…) On a deeper, if not more practical level, the British have never taken a real interest in Rumania (2005: 102).

Conclusions

Because it is "flawed by self-indulgence and a lack of self-judgment" (Hensher, 2004), as well as by its length and conventional narrative, the Balkan trilogy has never had the power other British works had to create "brand-names" (like Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, for example), yet this kind of literature "continues to scar thinking about the Balkans as surely as British irrigation programmes have salinated the fertile lands of the Punjab" (Goldsworthy, 1998: 208).

In the good old Swiftian tradition, Manning actually appears to look at the world through a monstrous magnifying glass. Like Swift's hero, she cannot truly return home, because home no longer is the safe familiar place it used to be. Much like Manning herself, Harriet Pringle has a complicated relationship with her husband and with Bucharest, the capital of a country whose people she either dislikes or envies profoundly. Lonely, insecure and disappointed with her new life, Harriet exhibits the behaviours and reactions of a female Gulliver. During the process of the "literary colonisation" of the Balkans she goes through, she takes the journey not as a quest for authenticity, but as an assertion of her own self against the scary otherness.

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