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THEORY, HISTORY AND LITERARY CRITICISM

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## The Theandric Relationship and Its Aesthetic Metamorphoses in Romanian Metaphysical Poetry Between the Two World Wars

Sorin Ivan\*

### **Abstract:**

The relationship between man and God is a strong and fecund poetic topic, which marks the Romanian poetry between the two world wars. It is a major theme of the poets grouped around the *Gândirea* magazine, on the background of the literary and spiritual current of Orthodoxy, especially for poets as Nichifor Crainic, Vasile Voiculescu, Ion Pillat. A special case is Arghezi, one of the greatest poets of Romanian literature. The theandric relationship is a constant theme of these poets, which lies, at least in certain periods, at the core of their work. In Arghezi's case, it constitutes the very axis of his existence and poetry. The archetypal model of human communication with God are the Psalms of the Old Testament. The Orthodoxist poetry keeps the spirit of the Psalms, in poems which affirm, praise, pray to God, lit from inside by the light of faith and hope. Sometimes, these poems achieve mystic accents (Voiculescu), in outstanding aesthetic objectifications. Arghezi recovers the biblical species of the psalm in the Romanian modernist poetry and consecrates it as a lyrical mode with a great poetic potential. His psalms do not have in common with David's Psalms but the man-God type of addressing, being, in spirit, to their antipodes. Arghezi's Psalms translate poetically the gnoseologic and ontological experience of the man who seeks God, begs for His answer, who wants to believe, but on a rational basis. The Arghezian faith needs certainties, which never come. Arghezi's Psalms are poems of seeking God, of doubt and metaphysical longing, of an unanswered search. The theandric relationship in Arghezi's universe means the loneliness and abandonment, the fear and despair of man in front of death and nothingness, reproach, rebellion, violence, blasphemy, nihilism, extreme moods and attitudes in his relation to divinity. With Arghezi, the tragic intensity of the existential experience generates remarkable effects on the aesthetic level, by a series of masterpieces of Romanian and universal poetry.

**Keywords:** theandric relationship, communication, communion, psalm, mysticism, nihilism, aesthetic metamorphoses

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### Under the Sign of the Psalm

Romanian poetry begins with Dosoftei's *Psalter in Verse* (1673). The first true Romanian poet places our poetry under the rule of the psalm, which is a multi-faceted spiritual fact. When looked back at on a European level, translating the psalms, an initiative of the Reformation, is an action that, beyond its religious significance, will reveal aesthetic values of a theandric dimension to the new culture, and these values will exert direct influence on the world's metaphysical poetry. Dosoftei's work is integrated in a large-scale process of stylization and bringing biblical psalms up to date, a famous process started by Clément Marot, who published a two-volume unparalleled translation of David's psalms in 1541 and 1543 (*Trente Psaumes de David* and *Cinquante Psaumes de David*), followed, in Catholicism, by Polish poet Jan Kochanowski (*David's Psalter*, 1579), who is considered to have inspired the Romanian poet.

The psalm (Greek ψαλμός, a song with chord accompaniment), a hymn species of religious music of Hebrew origin, involves an invariably metaphysical register, focused on the relationship "You, God – me" (Karl Barth). In the psalm, with a pattern established by the Old Testament, communication with God takes place on several emotional levels: apology, penitence, objurgation, rebellion, moral indictment, imploration, and all of these are based on an essential attitude: man's humility before God. The translations of these psalms confirm all these requirements, and the authors' originality stems from lyrical expression and details of perspective. Through the stylized re-editing of the psalms, man's relationship with God is transferred into a new dimension, the *aesthetic* one. The metaphysics of translated psalms is the biblical one, and no original elements can be found here, except sometimes in the lyrical expression of emotions. The artistic metamorphosis, though, is spectacularly original and it is there that the future poetic evolution has its roots.

Dosoftei appears in a barren literary landscape, ruled by texts and religious translations with a pragmatic value. By translating the Psalter, the most poetical religious work, a deep and complex one, the Romanian poetic language is born. The raw material of the language is organised into very musical artistic forms, resonating with fascinating poetic euphony. On a different level, Arghezi will later start a revolution of poetic language. Dosoftei's endeavour is interesting, thus, in its aesthetic essence. The poet-metropolitan takes the same attitude towards God as David the psalmist, showing the essential state of dogmatic humility and mystical fervour, bringing nothing more than nuances to the original,

without transcending the theological framework of the relationship between man and Sacredness.

In time, the concept of *psalm* becomes the object of semantic expansion, within its original creation, acquiring the new meaning of an addressed lyrical discourse, with a metaphysical undertone, which is an important transformation. In the modified poetic genre new highlights will appear, the man will overcome the apologetic and reverent attitude, becoming questioning, anxious, confused, rebellious, fierce etc. The religious poetry claimed from the psalms becomes the territory of new echoes, some of them transfigured from their established source, others non-existing in the Bible. The poetry of Rilke, Fr. Jammes, P. Claudel, or V. Voiculescu, N. Crainic, Ion Pillat and many others in our culture acquires new highlights, albeit in the biblical metaphysical reach.

### **Poetry as a Way to Pursue Divinity**

In Romanian literature, two and a half centuries later, Arghezi recreates the psalm, although other poets had written before him in the same genre, among which Macedonski. The genre of the psalm undergoes an interesting evolution: thus, although it definitely represents the foundation of Romanian poetry, it is lost in the history of literature, as it is not prolific enough from a lyrical point of view, within its formal limits. In another respect, though, Dosoftei's essential revolution, the poetic transfiguration of the language, will create a whole new literature. The man who recovers the psalm in Romanian literature and establishes it as a poetic genre is Tudor Arghezi. In an open and creative hermeneutic act, we could find certain similarities, at least virtual ones, between Dosoftei and the great 20<sup>th</sup> century poet, which show on a lexical, morphological, stylistic and even emotional level. The idea of Arghezi's recovering psalms as a lyrical genre requires certain specifications. There is a long distance, not only in time, but also in spirit, emotion and attitude, between Dosoftei's and Arghezi's psalms. Dosoftei only translates the Gospel text, from Old Church Slavonic, and sets it in poetic metre, rendering it more accessible and more approachable, both with its substance losses and the poetic gains it involves. We do not then talk about substance innovations in the psalms translated by the poet-metropolitan. Dosoftei's contribution to Romanian is important, as it reveals its lexical, semantic and stylistic maturity, through *Psalter in Verse*, as well as its extraordinary literary virtues. Other poets will later exploit these virtues and create aesthetic monuments of universal value. Eminescu and Arghezi are two of them. The poet of the *Fitting Words* recovers the psalm in its essence and

form, but strays away from the *spirit* of the biblical psalm substantially and even radically.

Arghezi's concept of *psalm* is slightly different from the meaning in the Bible, where it refers to a hosanna, an apologetic song. With a few exceptions, of psalms that synchronize with biblical ones semantically, spiritually and expressively, Arghezi's poems form a new category which has nothing to do with praise hymns, except for the way of the discourse, addressed to a transcendent presence, which contains an interrogative *me* and a transcendent *you*. In Arghezi's gnoseology, which translates into the pursuit of God, the process suffers essential transformations. The object of the pursuit is, in Arghezi's case, an iconoclastic spirit that reaches a terrible strength, verging on the pagan. His communication with God, a dramatic soliloquy after all, is an aggressive, disconcerting and tragic one, with collapse and rebellion, on a nihilist and on an affirmative note. In the Old Testament, the Divinity transcends knowledge, being the primordial, universal, incontestable Reality. The biblical monologue takes place on an ontic axis, and the psalmist's rebellion has an external existential justification. The object of Arghezi's gnoseology does not fully coincide with the biblical Divinity. Arghezi understands God in a complex way, from a variety of perspectives: an ontological and gnoseological one, an ethical, an aesthetic and a religious one. The depiction of the Divinity in Arghezi the psalmist is a fascinating one, of unprecedented complexity in Romanian literature, and the relationship between man and God – a truly astounding one, going through every possible stage of the relationship between the human being and the Sacredness.

The psalms are the axis of the poet's communication process with God, but Arghezi's metaphysics, undergoing great fluctuations, is spread in all of the writer's work<sup>1</sup>. For this reason psalms are just a moment in the full consideration of the spiritual drama. The psalm, in Arghezi's new sense, is still a tense spectacular form of addressing the transcendence. Arghezi's lyrical forms with a metaphysical undertone are numerous, and they illustrate the field of lyrical prose, too (the cycle of psalms in the volume entitled *Ce-ai cu mine, vântule?*) and, although it is not part of the psaltic way of communication, we cannot conceive the understanding of the poet's interior process outside them. Such

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<sup>1</sup> As in Arghezi's case, where we consider the prose psalms too (poematic structures), as well as certain aspects from the novels, we critically read the entire poetical work of the other poets. To this end, we integrated in our study the cycle called *Clepsidra (The Hour Glass)* by V. Voiculescu (Minerva, 1983) and a volume of inedited poems, *Șoim peste prăpastie (Falcon over the Precipice)* by N. Crainic (Roza Vânturilor, 1990).

poems are concise, hermetic lyrical discourses, soliloquies of the doubled self. The deep meaning is the metaphysical one, and it explains the crisis that expands with every speech, taking delirious paroxysmal forms and causing negative, staggering revelations. The Divinity, depicted in complex manners, is the explained or implicit obsession of Arghezi's poems. The entire spiritual adventure of the poet develops towards this transcendent notion, hidden in foggy praise or transfigured by the light of revelation in various states.

Romanian interwar poetry is the aesthetic space of a great metaphysical fervour, an unprecedented one in the history of Romanian literature. The second big moment in Arghezi's time, that of objectivising the process of communication with transcendence in an aesthetic way, is *Orthodoxy*, a spiritual direction of religious essence, under the auspices of the cultural movement created by *Gândirea* magazine, which is expressed literary in the works of representative poets. In the context of the Orthodoxy inspired by the magazine, the most important exponents of this literary movement and of the manner of theandric communication promoted by it, in the traditional line of Orthodox spirituality, are V. Voiculescu, N. Crainic and Ion Pillat. Blaga is a special, atypical case, who, although being one of the important collaborators of *Gândirea*, promotes a different type of communication with transcendence that goes beyond the Orthodoxist paradigm, as it is understood by the above-mentioned poets. His metaphysical poems, focused on the relationship between man and transcendence – an abstract transcendence, defined metaphorically by the expression *The Great Anonymous* – requires a special discussion which goes beyond the scope of this study. The metaphysics of Orthodox poets is the biblical one, mostly. Transcendence is depicted in the three states of the Trinity, in an approach that remains within the representation of Orthodox Christianity. Our poets come close to God on the mystical path of prayer and effusion, reaching the union on different stages. In their case, too, the representation of the Divinity is complex, without transcending the religious, dogmatic framework of the vision of the Sacred. On this level, one can compare it to the poetry of Fr. Jammes and Rilke, whom our poets knew, and the comparison would be better justified in their case than in the case of Arghezi, whose voice sounds isolated in metaphysical poetry. From the standpoint of the form of communication, many poems written by Voiculescu or Crainic could be considered *psalms*, because they have a similar structure to biblical psalms and, a very important trait, most of them end on an apologetic note, independently of the content of their discourse. The centrifugal

poems of the dogma, containing rebellion or inflated rebuke, are not too many and they are based mostly on inkhorn contamination, in the Orthodox context.

The two religious moments of the metaphysical poetry between the two wars are contemporary. For instance, V. Voiculescu's volume *Poems with Angels* is published the same year (1927) as Arghezi's debut volume, *Fitting Words*, a launching platform of the evolution of Romanian poetry. From this standpoint we notice mutual contamination, more or less substantial, more or less visible. In Arghezi, they are external and insignificant; mere sparks of the vision influenced by *Gândirea* magazine, which could stem from the literary mentality of the age, against the notable influence of the *Gândirism* movement on certain poems (let us not forget Arghezi was himself a collaborator of *Gândirea*); these influences are not related to the lyrical substance of his poetry, however. Beyond the poetry of the beginning, where literary ascendancies (Eminescu, Baudelaire, symbolist poetry) are clearer, once his poetry was defined aesthetically, one can no longer identify influences on it. Arghezi remains a singular poet who, through his work, exerted a major influence on modern Romanian poetry. We can see his influence on Orthodoxist poets, as well, sometimes significantly, both in the poetry's expression and its essence. Arghezi's influence on N. Crainic, but most importantly, on V. Voiculescu, can be seen throughout the bulk of their work, with its complex manifestations in their vision and their lyrical expression. The poetics inspired by *Gândirea* is influenced by Arghezi in its notable achievements. Voiculescu's cycle of psalms in *The Hour Glass*, the poet's remarkable achievement, bears the unique imprint of Arghezi, both in its style and its attitude.

Arghezi's poetry represents a revolutionary moment in Romanian poetics, on an aesthetic level, which manifests on the level of vision and expression. By promoting – like Baudelaire – the aesthetics of the ugly, Arghezi generates the renewal of poetic language in the Romanian poetry, opening new aesthetic horizons and spaces of expression, which had never been guessed or investigated before. Arghezi creates a new poetic universe, with novel themes, some of which non-poetic, lacking the lyrical halo of traditional poetry, which he regains through remarkable aesthetic transfigurations. In the middle of this universe there is the relationship between the man and the Divinity, which triggers an intense existential drama, since it refers to the very essence of being. One could say that Arghezi renders Romanian poetry spiritual, from the viewpoint of religious spirituality, he humanizes it, placing at its centre the deepest, most troubling theme of man: God, the mystery of

human existence, the purpose of life and death. The poet brings a new vision, a very atypical one – related to the pattern of traditional representations – of the Divinity, going beyond the religious framework *per se*, and that vision has sprung from deep inner struggle. Arghezi provides an aesthetic translation of the dramatic process of searching for God, an endless source of suffering and agony, rendering it in memorable lyrical formulae that mark the evolution of Romanian poetry. This search gives birth to aesthetic masterpieces in the literary world. Such poems are remarkable thanks to the originality of their vision, a truly atypical one in the lyrical universe of theandric communication, to the tension of emotions and the overwhelming intensity of the interior experience, and, on an aesthetic level, thanks to the poetic metamorphosis, to the literary objectification, to the poet's signature stylistics and expressivity, in other words, thanks to Arghezi's imprint pervading his poetry.

When approaching metaphysical poetry, we must distinguish between the aesthetic and the religious, two different areas that do not exclude their overlapping, but they do not require it either. An entire religious literature from the history of spirituality, infused with mystical ardour and effusion, does not develop on an aesthetic axis. Judging in the teleological terms of the relationship between man and God, Orthodoxist poets go further than Arghezi. As a matter of fact, it is not difficult, because the poet of the Psalms does not go anywhere. The lyrical transfiguration in the case of Orthodoxist poets is, however, diluted at times, bookish lost in a strong sense of the discourse; sometimes it pays tribute to traditional patterns as regards its inconsistent vision or is indebted to Arghezi's poetry. In the context of their poetics, V. Voiculescu's later psalms are a remarkable exception, along with a few other poems; here, the poet reconciles the aesthetic with the religious feeling. On the other hand, Arghezi never reaches the communication with God in the terms in which his spirit understands this communication; he never reaches spiritual serenity through the mystical union between man and the Divinity. But his verygnoseological and ontological failure is the source of the exceptional aesthetic metamorphosis of this process of paroxysmal intensity, typical of the dramatic search.

### **Ontological Paradigms and Poetic Experiences**

The Orthodox spirit in search of the Divinity climbs a difficult road, uneven and sinuous accidentally, at the end of which there is always God. The meaning of this spiritual process is restoring the theandric communion or asserting it through the existential and stylistic ways of religious faith and apology, expressed aesthetically. In this case, the process translates the evolution of the spirit towards metaphysical certainty; this evolution is interrupted from time to time by more or less serious existential crises. God is the transcendent and immanent Absolute; He is the Logos, ruling over Universe and man alike. In the centre of the system sketched by Orthodoxist poets, who transfer the representations of Orthodox Christianity to the universe of poetry, there is the biblical Divinity, taking the form of the Trinity, which we discover through the Christly revelation. The new revealed face of God is complete, in relation to the representations of the Old Testament, because aside from cosmomorphic and sociomorphic traits, now we see love, as well, the path of man's rehabilitation before God and of God's rehabilitation before the man, the supreme way of being, the path towards redemption. Thus, the transcendent ideal of the Orthodox poets, lyrical exponents of Eastern faith, is the God of Christian love.

Arghezi's process of looking for the Divinity cannot be reduced to simple trajectories, neither as an ascending evolution with a clear finality, nor as a definite collapse, sacrilegious and nihilistic, into agnostic hell. His search can be considered a perpetual oscillation between contingency as a dimension of limitations, expressed through the symbols of closure, darkness, night and death, and transcendence, an obscure, impenetrable and incognisable, which conceals the Divinity anticipated by the spirit, whom we cannot communicate with. God is a nebulous incomprehensible entity for Arghezi, a concept, not reality. His spiritual adventure between the telluric and the metaphysic evolves in large helixes at the centre of which we find the concept of God and His representation, within a complex yet contradictory gnoseology. The interior process covers all the possible states of human conscience, and, on the way there, it reaches terrible intensities. Arghezi's spirit goes through contradictory states all the time, it goes from one extreme to the other, often resorting to denial and nihilism when he is in the proximity of death and Nothingness, and, less often, to a self-induced state, like self-deceit, out of a desperate need for certainties, almost experiencing mystical beatitude. The poet's epiphanies, going through an entire spectrum of metamorphoses, occur on a vertical axis at the extremes of



which there are the Divinity and the negative Sacred, God and Nothingness, as a metaphysical expression of death.

The revelation is invoked at high temperatures, and when the spirit becomes incandescent with experiencing the Sacred, the epiphany occurs. While gravitating around the divine core, the Divinity's face acquires a progressive alternating light, revealing itself to human conscience in a series of essential states. Arghezi has the ludic revelation of the Divinity, which must not be understood in the infantile, parodical and imitative meaning, but rather as a means of innocent intimacy with the Sacred, through a pantheist revelation, the universal epiphany of the infinite God. The supreme revelation is Jesus Christ, God incarnate, whose nature the poet understands fully after a first nihilistic and sacrilegious perception. Like Arius the heretic (whose name apparently inspired the poet), Arghezi denies Jesus's Divinity, on a deep level, starting with the agony of Crucifixion and Father's abandoning the Son. Through death and suffering, which the poet considers the essence of being in the created universe, in the ontology he produces; the man identifies himself with Jesus in Arghezi's poems, and Jesus becomes the human archetype, thus proclaiming the substantial similarity between man the Divinity incarnate. The revelation of death as a meaning of existence is the cause of a bout of Luciferic apostasy, after which the man wants to be Christ Himself; his ideal is not "Imitatio Christi" (Thomas à Kempis), but rather "Substitutio Christi". Arghezi reaches the extreme point and proclaims the man is a demonic copy of Jesus, the Messiah of the darkness. Understanding Jesus's dual essence is stated on a subsequent stage and it is the supreme degree of revelation.

The series of epiphanies alternates with moments of rebellion, though, of agnostic vehemence and even nihilism. The movements of Arghezi's spirit are unpredictable; his conscience goes through very intense crises and upheavals, whereas the revelations and illuminations, the *signs* from above, are long in coming ("Send me, God, the sign of distance, / A little angel, from time to time" – *Psalm*). In Arghezi's work nothing leaves from under the sign of relativity and uncertainty and his personal relationship with the Divinity is undermined by tension that bursts forth periodically in psalms of reproach or of despair. Sometimes, less often in Arghezi's ontology, this relationship is marked by moments of calmness, hope and even resignation. The rebellion triggered by the lack of communication with God reaches pagan heights and turns into a challenge to the metaphysical presence, a radical negation, even blasphemy.

Essentially, Arghezi's ontology evolves on rational axes. Looking for God through reason can only prompt a state of perpetual, sometimes paroxysmal tension. By looking for the Boundless, the Unknown, the Infinite with the mind's limited resources, the poet compromises from the very beginning his chances of finding the object of this search. His spirit wants to understand the Limitless with the mind's limited powers, to know the Infinite with the finite means of thinking, to communicate with the Absolute from the "tight circle" of human finitude. Hence, his tension and the aggressiveness of his search, the violence of his negation and his rebellion in knowledge. The poet's Cartesianism turns the process of the pursuit into an endless metaphysical offensive, which, however, is doomed to fail from the start. The rational dimension of the process of knowing God could refer to another great religious poet, Paul Claudel, an author of psalms, where reason is natural, as it should be in Catholicism. Arghezi's gnoseological strategy is signally catabatic, desecrating, frightful. The poet is a Jacob fighting not the Angel, but rather God Himself, with an obscure yet overwhelming presence, who lacks faith, humility and hope, however. Aspiring to communion, Arghezi fights God with improper weapons, from the sphere of reason. Since reaching transcendence requires, above all, unconditional faith without reason, the poet's ecstatic irrationality, his inner mystical experience and his access to the Divinity are compromised. The fundamental problem of Arghezi's gnoseology is not fitting the code of knowledge to the nature of the object.

Orthodoxism, in its lyrical transfiguration, has a strong ontological undertone. The spiritual process is not based on cognitive causes, because the Orthodox religious experience transcends knowledge in the Cartesian way. The Orthodox psalmist, like the Davidic one, does not invoke signs of the divine existence, because God is the absolute, immanent and intranscendable Reality, but rather he searches for deep spiritual communion. The Orthodoxist spirit does not look for certainties, because he has them. In his communication and communion with the Divinity, his certainties, his faith and his hope are a priori states, and he builds the process of theandric communication on them. Arghezi's search is looking for certainties, its finality is discovering the signs of divine existence, touching the Divinity through knowledge ("I want to touch you and to scream:/ 'There it is!'", in a rationalist, binary approach, like affirmation-negation, existence-non-existence, life-death. On the other hand, the Orthodoxist poets' search comes from a certainty, from the indisputable truth of the divine reality.

But against the existence of certainty and its enunciation, the interior process may lose its substance and its drama, as it is may become stereotypical and conventional through its translation into an aesthetic language. Once the reality of the Divinity is beyond any doubt or question, there is no longer a high enough stake as it is in the case of Arghezi's search, a true struggle for metaphysical elevation. The spirit, anchored in the paradigm of religious experience, perceives the relationship with transcendence in a passive, sociomorphic way, living the struggle on an ascetic level and the communion on a mystical one. In the Orthodox lyrical landscape, only V. Voiculescu reaches the pure tones of mystical experience, in the last part of his creation. But the essential vision of the Sacred in relation with the human, in the traditional Eastern context, is an organicist and sophianic one, a perspective according to which the transcendent comes down into the apparent world, dissolving within the creation and sanctifying the universe. In Orthodoxist poetry, the Sacred, a concept which includes angels and the Trinity, is represented in a dogmatic or a very original manner; these representations can be biblical, ludic, popular, ingenuous etc. In this poetical objectification, the Sacred usually lacks the transcendental halo and it exists in the same plane as the contingent dimension, having the same substance as creation.

The relationship between man and God in the Orthodox landscape can be defined as communication, which implies reciprocity, the religious elevation of man, as well as the descent of the divine from the metaphysical sphere to the space of creation. In Arghezi's case, the relationship is only one-way, going up, and it is in fact a continuous cognitive offensive towards a mysterious, inscrutable distant transcendence, in a foggy, intangible metaphysical space.

The rebellion of the Orthodox spirit is a biblical one, brought about by living in the limited space of the being, with its inexorable existential dramas and hesitations, and not by gnoseological causes. The Orthodoxist poet does not ask for certainties, but rather for the support of the Divinity, for God's love and closeness to the creation and to humans, who humbly admit they are weak, helpless and meaningless ("O God, please touch my transience...", Voiculescu). The Orthodoxist apostasy occurs on the Davidic axis of being and communication. It does not become sacrilegious, but instead, by reaching its highest intensity, translated by blaming the Divinity most of the time, mellows and transforms gradually into apology, within the same discourse. Orthodox objurgatory poems always end on a serene, even apologetic

note, because man's essential attitude before God is circumscribed to faith, love and hope.

This is where we can locate a fundamental difference between the *Gândirea*-like and the Arghezi-like attitude towards the Divinity. The Orthodoxist rebellion, as well as the biblical one, is a transient state of our conscience, without expressing the essence of man's experience of God. Consequently, it falls apart soon enough, according to the unpredictable evolution of the human soul. In Arghezi's work, rebellion has a deep origin, being ingrained in his inner universe, as a structural element of conscience. The very concept of rebellion is not enough to illustrate the complexity of Arghezi's attitude, which stems from the ontological and gnoseological failure of his relationship with God and turns into pagan vehemence and even blasphemy, proclaiming deicide as an existential solution at one point. Arghezi's man transcends the theological step of experience and, after oscillating between asceticism and mysticism, breaks free from the religious framework of the theandric communion in order to reach the negative pole of his relationship with transcendence, as a result of the apostasy of the spirit that experiences paroxysmally the tragedy of a lack of communication with God.

A consequence of the rebellious attitude, a manifestation of the despair caused by abandonment, Arghezi's vision of the end is earth-shattering: death is the progressive invasion of the nothingness into the space of being and becoming, it is the annihilation of the universe and the final extinction. The spreading of death, felt as an undefined, unknown entity, as a mysterious, threatening presence, is a source of fright and delirious visions, on the territory of a conscience troubled by agnostic impulses, shaken by existential cataclysms. Arghezi's ontology, mined by the gnoseological failure, proclaims death, amplified to cosmic dimensions, as an ultimate principle, which God Himself cannot escape. Nothingness overpowers the universe that God created and then abandoned, and thus the supremacy of Non-being is installed. Arghezi does not consciously appropriate the Christ experience in its essence, because he needs to be solidary with the Divinity; this is a human need, after all, and it is impenetrable before the cognitive feverishness of the questioning spirit. The image of Jesus on the cross, abandoned by his Father and overwhelmed with the presence of death, is an extreme, Nietzschean vision, the consequence of a bout of agnosticism stemming from the lack of communication with the Divinity. Arghezi's nihilism (an episodic attitude, however, reminiscent of Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground*) has its peak, in a stage of *trial* with God, on ontological and gnoseological grounds, in the

revelation of universal failure and Non-being's undermining Creation. After God, death is Arghezi's biggest obsession and perhaps that is why he writes the most unsettling poem about death in the whole of Romanian literature.

In Arghezi's work, man is the being smashed by transcendence, Heidegger's *Dasein*, obedient to limitations and finitude. He only has access to the phenomenal world and any aspiration towards understanding and reaching transcendence is sanctioned oppressively by a nebulous metaphysical presence. The suffocating becoming within the confines of contingency, the interdiction and impossibility of knowledge trigger the degradation of the spirit, which lessens and goes through destructive crises, until it cancels itself and returns to nothingness ("I want to die in darkness and decay", Arghezi). On the other hand, in the case of Orthodoxist poets, and in V. Voiculescu's work in particular, man is the highest projection of the Divinity within the Creation, he is the fourth face of God, recovered through Christianity. The mystical elevation towards God in Voiculescu's poetry is part of the complex process of the metaphysical reintegration of man, with a view to restoring the original unity with the Divinity. For that reason, death is the final step, which opens the way to complete theandric communion, it is a "birth" in the eternal praise of God.

In the Orthodox landscape, N. Crainic's poetry, transposing man's relationship with the Divinity in aesthetic terms, is marked by patristic serenity and it evolves without leaving room for doubt, tense pursuits, drama and rebellion. It is poetry of religious fulfilment, where the dialogue with the Sacred occurs on clear ground, like the apologetic spirit of the biblical Psalms, which praise God's brightness and almightiness. The lack of great tension and inner struggles triggered by the drama of communication, as in Arghezi's poetry, the feeling of fulfilment sometimes waxes bookish in Crainic's poems. However, we still find the elements that express the fervour of faith, the intense aspiration towards illumination and redemption, which sometimes find remarkable reflections in his aesthetics. The communion with God and the mystical ecstasy implied by the poems are perhaps translating the aspirations of the ego into a lyrical language. It is a way of turning the religious experience into an aesthetic one, in the field of poetry, which offers the perfect framework for the sacred experience and the mystical communion transgressing and living within the aesthetic, while still remaining a constant aspiration for the phenomenal existence.

In the context of Romanian metaphysical poetry, regarded globally, V. Voiculescu reveals himself as a great mystical poet, who, by going

beyond the limits of literary Orthodoxy, sublimates his experiences into wonderful aesthetic ones, very intense and purely poetic, some of which are true literary masterpieces. The poet is a Christian Job who lives the miracle of illumination in a hermit-like manner. Going through suffering and asceticism, he finally reaches communion with God. The path to reaching God, like a *via dolorosa* of becoming, a spiritual crucifixion, requires taking the responsibility for the trials and torments of this essential becoming of the being. The poet's evolution is a long road to godly light, described parabolically in the destiny of Zaheï the Blind, the man who lost his sight and is looking for the divine, metaphysical light.

Rilkean at first (we mean Rilke in the *Book of Hours* and the *Duino Elegies*), a visible trait in that the spirit is tense and overwhelmed by anxiety before death, hesitating and pathetic, the poet reaches a serene state in the *Hour Glass* cycle (reminiscent of Fr. Jammes), triggered by the desired communication with the Divinity. V. Voiculescu transfigures his mystical experience of this relationship into the transcendent stage in poems of high lyrical intensity, remarkable osmoses between the mystical and the aesthetic. But once the mystical stage of God's existence is reached, we can feel a certain mellowing of the interior process, which now evolves horizontally and consistently. V. Voiculescu's poetry, although transposed into memorable lyrical creations, seems to lose its initial tension at times, a tension which establishes it as a striking experience from an aesthetic point of view, on the level of metaphysical poetry.

On the other hand, Arghezi's poetry, struck by cataclysms, conveys a certain tension which often reaches terrifying heights, being rarely attenuated. It represents the lyrical examination of the existential collapse of the spirit which looks for the essential answers to his being without finding them, which looks for the Divinity, begs for God's presence, yet always finds nothing but silence. Arghezi's drama is transfigured into aesthetic creations that are inscribed in the great universal poetry. His masterpieces are born from the intensity of his suffering, from the despair of a search without an answer. This suffering and this inexpiable drama are aesthetically fecund, because they give birth to an entire poetic universe which burns at the high temperatures of poetry. Arghezi's search for the Divinity transcends the limits of individual experience and, on the high plane of exemplary meanings; it becomes the symbolic image of human search, of the drama of the spirit in the great adventure of knowledge, of decoding the meanings of existence and the mysteries of Creation. Arghezi's man is the generic Man looking for God, only to be rewarded with silence. In the complex

landscape of Romanian metaphysical poetry, Arghezi is the most complex and overwhelming poet of man, of death and God.

### **The Aesthetic Transfiguration**

The orthodoxist poets from the *Gândirea* magazine and Arghezi develop two different types of reporting themselves to divinity. They are complex ways of experiencing the theandric relationship and of aesthetic transfiguration of it in poetic metamorphoses. The living of the relationship with transcendence has a profound ontological foundation, in life itself and in each poet's conception about existence, about man, about the meaning of life and about the sense of creation (Berdiaev). The poetic transfiguration is the aesthetic sublimation of the inner universe, in which the communication with God takes place or is only an aspiration (Arghezi). On this existential basis, each poet relates himself differently to transcendence. Based on the philosophy of *Gândirea* and of the Orthodoxist current, the poets around this movement have close attitudes in the way of living the relationship with transcendence and close ways to express it aesthetically. Arghezi develops yet a totally specific mode in his relationship with divinity, which is, essentially, at the antipode of the orthodox poets' philosophy and attitude. For the *Gândirea* poets, this relationship means faith, affirmation, love, praise, hope, thanksgiving, prayer. Sometimes, it also means sadness, anxiety, hopelessness, but in transitional states of consciousness. The Orthodox poets' poems are affirmative and full of light. With Arghezi, the relationship with God means seeking, the need for certainty, the desire to believe, to love, anxiety, despair, denial, reproach, blame, blasphemy, nihilism. Arghezi's psalms and the other metaphysical poems are dark and spread around them an oppressive, tragic atmosphere.

The theandric relationship is aesthetically translated in poems that develop on the basis of the biblical psalms. Arghezi, but sometimes other poets too (Voiculescu), call their poems, simply, *psalms*. Arghezi's *Psalms* cycle recovers this poetic species, primordial and archetypal in the relationship between man and God, and reveals its extraordinary poetic potential. With the orthodox poets, the poems are close, if not to the form, then to the substance of the Davidic psalms. With Arghezi instead, the psalms keep nothing but the name from the biblical species. Arghezi's Psalms are a tense mode of communication with the divine, a unilateral communication, by which man claims, demands, begs the answer, the presence, the participation of God. The expected response never comes. Thus, Arghezi's Psalms become ways

of expressing hopelessness, fear, despair, distress, a violent reproach and blasphemy, in which the tension of living tends to paroxysm. Both types of experiences determine effects on the aesthetic level. The Orthodoxist living of the relationship with God generates a positive, ascending tension, sometimes creates bright, pure states, related to mysticism. There are memorable poems in this category, of N. Crainic and V. Voiculescu. But not all are equal, some are threatened by a certain formalism, which is translated in the aesthetic metamorphosis too. The lack of tension and dramatism in the living is transferred to the level of the poetic expression. With Arghezi, the intensity of living, the paroxysmal tension, revolt, despair and the existential tragism remarkably reflect at the aesthetic level, in poems of expressionist essence. Thence we can talk about an Arghezi-type of expressionism. Many of Arghezi's psalms are poetic masterpieces, which translate archetypal human states in the dramatic quest for the meaning of existence and for God.

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## Rewriting Fiction. A Neo-Victorian Approach

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**Abstract:**

The contemporary, multi-dimensional fascination with the Victorian past has been mirrored in a proliferation of so-called neo-Victorian novels. We witness a seemingly-increasing number of authors that participate in, and contribute to, this fascination by recreating the Victorian period in their fiction. The present article focuses on some of the major neo-Victorian rewritings and the ways in which they (re)-explore, (re)-construct or (re)-imagine Victorian fiction.

**Keywords:** Neo-Victorianism, trends, rewritings, novels, Victorianism

Neo-Victorianism has become a major trend in the contemporary world, a movement that tends to explore, recreate, re-imagine or reflect the taste, style or simply, the characteristics of the Victorian Age. Matthew Sweet, in *Inventing the Victorians*, claims that the Victorian age actually gave us the modern twenty-first century world and he aims to expose the Victorianness of the world in which we live, to demonstrate that the nineteenth century is still out there, ready to be explored. His belief is that Victorian culture was as rich and difficult and complex and pleasurable as our own, that “they molded our culture, defined our sensibilities, built a world for us to live in” (Sweet, 2002: 231).

Raymond Williams, in his classic *Culture and Society*, enumerated a list of Victorian words that were either coinages or words that during the Victorian era acquired new meanings:

ideology, intellectual, rationalism, scientist, humanitarian, utilitarian, romanticism, atomistic, bureaucracy, capitalism, collectivism, commercialism, communism, doctrinaire, equalitarian, liberalism, masses, mediaeval and medievalism, operative, primitivism, proletariat, socialism, unemployment, cranks, highbrow, isms, and pretentious (Williams, 1958: xv).

These words offer an unquestionable hint at the contemporary implications of the nineteenth century. Victorian concepts, ideals and ideas, perspectives and values are, and never ceased to be, a shaping force throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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If early twentieth century repudiated, abandoned or rebelled against the heritage of Victorianism, in favor of a more modern approach to life, in stark contrast to this attitude of marginalization, the second half of the same century and the beginnings of the twenty-first century manifested a wide spreading fascination with the period. Neo-Victorianism gradually became an aesthetic movement that spread out and invaded all areas of life: film, media, fashion, interior decoration, moral, advertising, art, but most of all, culture and literature.

An ever-increasing number of authors set their minds to recreate the Victorian period in their fiction, to make the reader revisualise the nineteenth century world by rewriting, stylistically and/or thematically, at either the level of plot, structure or both, the past. Their main challenge was to find the right way to package the Victorian past for the tastes and demands of contemporary readers, to make “retro” accessible and successful (Mitchell, 2010: 3). Growing both in number and popularity throughout the last decades of the twentieth century and the beginnings of the twenty-first, this new trend of rewriting the Victorian past embraced all literary genres, challenged and captured the imagination of writers of many nationalities, African – American, Canadian, Australian and of course English.

Critics have established that neo-Victorianism could be largely understood as an endeavor to explore the nineteenth-century past through historiographic (meta)-fictions, processes of remembering and forgetting, spectrality, (em)-plotting, self-reflexivity and/or nostalgia (Boehm-Schnitker, Gruss, 2011: 2). In *Nostalgic Postmodernism: The Victorian Tradition and the Contemporary British Novel*, Christian Gutleben defines retro or neo-Victorianism as “a new literary movement whose very essence consisted in re-thinking and re-writing Victorian myth and stories” (Gutleben, 2001: 5).

Still, there is one question that requires an answer: “Why, when we want to reinvent and revisit the past, do we choose the nineteenth century as the place to get off the train? What is it about the look of this past that appeals to the late twentieth-century passenger?” (Lewis, 1996: 30).

Critics have argued in offering suitable explanations. Some explain this tendency of rewriting the past as a nostalgic attempt to collect its relics and celebrate its virtues, while others argue that it is the result of an acute, present need to think the present historically, to appeal “to a cultural memory, to be re-membered, and imaginatively re-created, not revised or understood” (Mitchell, 2010: 7). As a result, contemporary novelists manifest this tendency of reconstructing, in their writings,

pieces of the Victorian past that they reimagine both in the text and in the reader's imagination. Under these circumstances, the reader him/herself becomes the embodiment of a reimagined past.

Cora Kaplan in *Victoriana: Histories, fictions, criticism*, explains the modern obsession with Victorianism as one sign of a sense of the "historical imagination on the move", "history out of place", "something atemporal and almost spooky in its effects"; as a late twentieth-century desire to know and to "own" the Victorian past through its remains: the physical and written forms that are its material history (Kaplan, 2007: 1–6).

The neo-Victorian writers manifest a quite unique approach to literature and to the past. They find it important to turn to the past, but at the same time to remodel it and make it suitable for present, modern times or, why not, even the future. The past is also seen as a vehicle for influencing the reality. Their aim could easily be understood as an attempt to connect history and present, fiction and reality, to reinsert Victorians into historical narrative and, at the same time, to explore the implications of this type of fiction on the present response to the past.

The neo-Victorian novel has not been referred to as a new genre but as a colonizer of genres, "the novel of all genres, the composite novel of its epoch, which highlights the cannibalizing, ever-broader, all-encompassing and all-assimilating nature of the novel" (Gutleben, 2001: 223). The neo-Victorian novel deals with a hybridist of genres ranging from detective novels to social, industrial and sensation novels, science-fiction, Bildungsroman, historical novels, biographical novels and the list could continue.

Neo-Victorian texts engage with Victorian literary narratives, from writing sequels or responses to individual Victorian texts, to adopting Victorian genre conventions, to engaging with Victorian realism. The purpose is not to simply adopt these Victorian forms, nor to pass as Victorian novels, but to acknowledge the need of transforming Victorian conventions within contemporary narratives (Hadley, 2010: 29).

The similarities shared with Victorian fiction are various. The average length and structure of Victorian novels stood an indicator for neo-Victorian writers. In concordance with the Victorian pattern, neo-Victorian rewritings are also divided into books and chapters often preceded by summaries and epigraphs. The time of action has a dual connotation: it is either anchored in the nineteenth century or spans both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The setting is mainly in England, in London or in the countryside. The narrative design of the Victorian novel is also mirrored. Neo-Victorian fiction

typically employs the same narrative voices used in the nineteenth century texts, that is the first person character narrator or the third person omniscient one (Kirchknopf, 2008: 54).

Famous Victorian writers such as Lord Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Charles Dickens, Robert L. Stevenson, Thomas Hardy and Oscar Wilde have been largely *commemorated* in Neo-Victorian fiction. For example Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* re-imagines Dickens' *Great Expectations* by exploring the character of Magwitch, while Carlo Fruttero and Franco Lucentini's novel *The D Case: The Truth About the Mystery of Edwin Drood* tries to solve the mystery of Dickens' unfinished novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. A. S. Byatt's *The Conjugal Angel* responds to Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly* rewrites Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* from the perspective of a housemaid, and Emma Tennant's *Tess* imagines a lineage for Hardy's *Tess*, from *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. James Wilson's *The Dark Clue* explicitly positions his novel as a sequel to Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* by continuing the account of the lives of Collin's protagonists.

Other neo-Victorians rewrite and reimagine not only Victorian novels and characters but also their writers' lives. Peter Ackroyd's *Dickens* or Colm Toibin's *The Master* are both literary biographies of Charles Dickens, respectively Henry James. Still, this type of narratives mainly abounds in the case of Oscar Wilde. Many neo-Victorian writers largely focused on Oscar Wilde who is seen as a victim of Victorian discrimination, prejudice, and persecution. For example, Giles Brandreth's *Oscar Wilde* mystery series, Stephan Rudnicki's *Wilde*, Clare Elfman's *The Case of the Pederast's Wife*, and Thomas Kiroly's *The Secrete Fall of Constance Wilde*. Oscar's historical and fictionalized character in neo-Victorian texts, fiction or *histoire*, often receives respect for and acceptance of, its complexity, its coherence amidst change, its aesthetic integrity along with its contradictions. He is presented both as the selfish giant and the self-sacrificing genius, characterizations that reflect not only "the actuality of Oscar's existence but also the depth, roundness, and careful verisimilitude these neo-Victorians writers allow him, resisting both the historical and contemporary stereotypes of the man and the myth" (Robinson, 2011: 24).

Written in one period, but evoking another, neo-Victorian fiction adopts a dual approach by combining a concern with the past and one with the present, a desire to recuperate the past and re-establish its connection to the present. Pointing to both the Victorian past and the

contemporary present, neo-Victorian fiction often adopts a dual plot. This is the case of a neo-Victorian category of novels in which the plot is split between a nineteenth century one, and a twentieth century one: Colin Dexter's detective novel *The Wench is Dead*, A. S. Byatt's *Possession*, *Ever After* and Michele Robert's *In the Red Kitchen*. This fact emphasizes the longing of our contemporary world for a relationship with the past.

A. S. Byatt's *Possession* and Graham Swift's *Ever After* were often referred to as "neo-Victorian archive novels" (Hadley, 2010: 123) because they incorporate nineteenth-century documents into their narratives. In both of these novels the twentieth-century characters encounter the textual remains of the nineteenth-century figures. The connection between the past and the present is created through the process of reading old Victorian texts, an attempt "to read the past to life" (Hadley, 2010: 135).

The roots of the detective fiction go back to the nineteenth century Victorian age when Arthur Conan Doyle's creation of Sherlock Holmes has become a landmark for all fictional detective novels that were to come. Neo-Victorian fiction makes no exception. Julian Barnes' detective novel *Arthur & George* uses Sherlock Holmes' creator as one of the protagonist, *Arthur*. As a matter of fact, both protagonist of the novel are verifiable Victorian figures, and the events that bring them together are also true historical facts. Colin Dexter's novel *The Wench is Dead* also has Victorian roots since it is grounded on a real-life nineteenth-century murder. The novel parallels the past and the present by adopting a dual plot in which a twentieth-century detective solves a nineteenth-century crime. Antonia Susan Byatt's *Possessions* offers a different approach to Victorian past. The novel challenges the reader to take on a detective's role in trying, along with the characters in the text, to solve a nineteenth-century mystery. All these neo-Victorian detective novels share a common trait: the reader, the characters and the text itself acquire, at a certain level, the characteristics of a detective.

The nineteenth century's interest for spiritualism is a known fact that could not be overlooked by the neo-Victorian writers. Michele Robert's *In the Red Kitchen*, A. S. Byatt's *The Conjugal Angel* and Sarah Water's *Affinity* reveal a new interest in Victorian spiritualism and spectrality. Byatt's novella positions itself as a response to Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, imagining a new life for Tennyson's character, the grieving widow, Emily Jesse. *In the Red Kitchen* incorporates alternative time – frames spanning three historical periods and two geographical locations. The novel presents the narratives of five different women, who are all

connected, each in a different way, to the nineteenth-century medium Flora Milk, whom Roberts bases on the historical figure of Florence Cook. Walter's novel follows the life of Margaret, the visit and the effects of her encounter with a spiritualist medium.

These three writings also show feminist concerns in their approach towards Victorian era. For neo-Victorian writers, the historical situation of spiritualism in the nineteenth century, practiced as it was by many lower-class women and allowing for the exploration of transgressive desires, became a particularly fertile theme for the exploration of the position of lower-class women in Victorian era (Hadley, 2010: 89).

The Victorian age witnessed the development of an important technological invention, the photograph. No other period in history has left behind such a large abundance of visual material. As a response to this inheritance, a certain category of neo-Victorian novels based their narratives on the idea of exploring the iconic image in Victorian era, or the popularization of photography and the early uses of advertising. Examples of such novels include Lynne Truss' *Tennyson's Gift*, Robert Solé's *The Photographer's Wife*, Ross Gilfillan's *The Edge of the Crowd*, Katie Roiphe's *Still She Haunts Me*, Gail Jones' *Sixty Lights*, and Susan Barrett's *Fixing Shadows*.

In its own unique way, each of the presented neo-Victorian novels highlights diverse aspects of the Victorian period. What is essential to be remembered is that neo-Victorian fiction opens up new ways into the Victorian past and (re)-writes it into our cultural memory. These novels emphasize and respond to an increasingly present need for historical recollection as opposed to the cultural fragmentation that best characterizes our postmodern society. In this light, the return to a period when faith existed, and so did the belief in the human progress, points out to the contemporary desire to recuperate the traditional values.

The literary representations and imaginative recreations of the Victorian era celebrate the potential of the literary text as an act of memory. In an age charged with the inability to think historically, neo-Victorian novel exploits its generic heritage and proves that it is still possible, desirable and necessary to re-present the past (Mitchell, 2010: 183).

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## Failed Masculinity in Jonson's *Epicoene* and *Volpone*

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**Abstract:**

This paper examines Renaissance representations of failed masculinity in Ben Jonson's two plays *Epicoene* and *Volpone*. Jonson employs dark comedy to mock society's most austere and revered gendered subjects. He subverts aspects of the Renaissance ideal image of masculinity, which is shaped by a patriarchal society that constructs masculinity in relation to gender, sexual desire and social status. This paper explores how Jonson subtly utilizes two characteristics of black humor, namely amusement through repulsion and pleasure from wicked pranks, to ridicule falsely imagined ideals of Renaissance manhood.

**Keywords:** Dark Comedy, Ben Jonson, Masculinity, Gender, Renaissance

Ben Jonson employs dark comedy to ridicule failed masculinity in both *Epicoene* and *Volpone*. The two plays uproariously exhibit the impossible task of living up to society's ideal image of masculinity. According to "the logic of Renaissance masculinity," a man is conceived to be a perfect assimilation of heterosexuality, honesty, and a protector of his wife's honor, which are all defined in relation to women as objects of desire: "the figuring of woman as sexuality itself threatens masculine transcendence: sexual desire equalizing hierarchies of gender and social status" (Breitenberg, 1996: 49). The Renaissance conception of manliness is also disrupted when it is set "in opposition to womanliness and manliness in opposition to boyishness" (Low, 2003: 71). This paper argues that, in Jonson's world of dark humor, if one of these aspects of Renaissance masculinity is disrupted, the ideal masculine image dissolves into sheer mockery. In effect, Jonson uses dark humor as a scathing indictment of the artificiality of the socially constructed image of Renaissance masculinity.

Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* and *Volpone* display aspects of black humor to deride masculinity, which is associated with heterosexuality, honesty and female honor. Since these aspects are highly regarded in Renaissance society, Jonson's plays enact a dramatization of dark comedy, which is "a genre of comic irreverence that flippantly

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attacks what are normally society's most sacredly serious subjects" (Gehring, 1996: 1). In effect, these subjects can be society's revered but also whimsical aspects, which are largely related to the pervading dominance over women's sexuality. This paper, therefore, examine that Jonson's two plays, evocative of black humor, explore how failed masculinity often flow from being corrupted by society or from the banal attempt to live up to the unattainable ideals of a patriarchal society, whose very constituent nature is immoral and epicoene.

Black humor is a term coined by Andre Breton, in his *Anthology of Black Humor*, to categorize a certain type of comedy, which deals with taboos or serious subject matters in a humorous manner, which causes the audience to experience laughter with discomfort. To Breton, black humor is "a partly macabre, partly ironic, often absurd turn of spirit that constitutes the 'mortal enemy of sentimentality'" (1935: iv). Dark comedies, therefore, which are derivations of the term black humor, make light of serious subjects. They are "[a] kind of drama in which disturbing or sinister subjects like death, disease, or warfare, are treated with bitter amusement, usually in a manner calculated to offend and shock" (Baldick, 2001: 36). In *Epicoene* and *Volpone*, Jonson deals subtly with two black humor aspects, which are: first, the ambivalent nature of being amusing and yet repulsive and second, the act of seeking pleasure through cruel pranks. The purpose is to ridicule the ideal of manhood in corrupted societies. It must be noted that the act of provoking censure and reform is not strange to Jonson's stylistic ends in writing: "Jonson's strategy in the masque and in plays closely linked to royal policy is often to pit King James against himself, to muster his laudable ideals in defeat of his less exalted practice – enacting the monarch's victory over his own misrule" (Marcus, 1986: 11). Jonson's purpose of sending a reform message to the king is characteristic of these two plays through which he intends to muster the "laudable ideals" of society. Jonson's two plays employ reform through mockery by utilizing the subtle form of dark comedy.

The notion of failed masculinity is vital to examine several male characters in *Epicoene* and *Volpone*. The concept itself is pivotal as it provoked anti-theatricalism and censure at Jonson's time. The issue of men in women's clothing, for instance, was frowned at, to say the least, in Renaissance times. Laura Levine (1994) explains that since 1579 a host of critics expressed anti-theatrical sentiment because of gender ambivalence in theatres: "Stephen Gosson made the curious remark that theatre 'effeminated' the mind... Phillip Stubbes clarified this claim... by insisting that male actors who wore women's clothing could literally

‘degenerate’ male gender... William Prynne described a man whom women’s clothing had literally caused to ‘degenerate’ into a woman” (10). Those critics speak of the danger or more notoriously the horror that the “theatre could structurally transform men into women” (Levine, 1994: 10). In effect, Jonson’s subject choice of men failing to live up to society’s ideal image of masculinity is highly provocative. In this sense, Jonson’s dark comedy of men becoming women, women becoming men or men as pretentious and beastly is hilariously funny but also disturbingly sinister to many contemporaries as Levine suggests.

Essentially, the ambivalent nature of black humor, as amusing but unsettling, correlates with the double sidedness of failed masculinity as both funny and yet sinister. Matthew Winston (1978), in “Black Humor: To Weep With Laughing,” points out the ambivalent nature of black humor: “What is black humor? First and foremost, it is a tone in literature and related arts that combines horror and fun, the unsettling and the amusing, or... pleasure and guilt” (33). What is so unsettling but also amusing about Jonson’s *Epicoene* is, to being with, the very title of the play itself: “epicene means one who partakes of the characteristics of both sexes. As an adjective, it carries this meaning and, by transference, also means ‘adapted to both sexes’... epicene was sometimes used in the seventeenth century to mean ‘effeminate’” (Partridge, 1955: 93). The title of the play itself is amusing but unsettling, which corresponds to the notion that black humor combines “amusement with repulsion” (Winston, 1978: 37). It negates the very notion that there are different genders with different attributes, which is humorous but also disturbing. The title, which is the antonym of masculinity, undermines the male-dominated society as portrayed in the play.

Apart from the significance of the title, Jonson’s *Epicoene* deals with a subject that provokes “amusement with repulsion” as the play’s comic material centers on cross-dressing and the idea of a boy in women’s clothes, which is both funny and considered to be vile: “the taking of female parts by boy players actually occasioned a good deal of contemporary comments, and created considerable moral uneasiness, even amongst those who patronized and supported the theatres” (Jardine, 1991: 57). *Epicoene* also introduces male characters, such as Morose, Captain Otter, Daw and La Foole, who are comically emasculated either by women or by other men. Accordingly, there is this fear of male prostitution. The impersonation of women, whether by boys acting as women or by emasculated men, represents a failure on the part of man to live up to the ideal image of manhood. Hence, there is the

crippling anxiety and fear of castration in a society that is both hegemonic and masculine.

In a similar fashion, black humor feeds on fear and “comedy in black humour helps us overcome our fears” (Winston, 1978: 37). Again the enactment of humor through fear is another dramatization of “amusement with repulsion.” This fear of prostitution, for instance, is accentuated in the way Jonson presents the notion of patronage. As Dutton explains, “In the real world the dalliances of the likes of Truewit, Dauphine and Clerimont (not to mention Daw and La Foole) with aristocratic ladies such as the Collegiates were always likely to shadow negotiations for patronage” (23). Moreover, La Foole describes his cousin as “the rich china-woman that the courtiers visited so often, that gave the rare entertainment” (1.4.27–9). Thus, Mistress Otter, whose wealth is the result of china trade and who wants to join the Collegiates, serves as an outrageous representative figure of patronage:

The rare entertainment might be understood either as Mistress Otter’s sexual favours or as Jonson’s show. Mistress Otter is thus figured as a patron, promiscuously distributing her favours; and Jonson himself (or the work he writes as her client) is figured as a piece of commercial sexual business. The writing of such an entertainment is thus equated with an act of prostitution (Dutton, 1984: 25).

Not only does Jonson disparages the sexually ambivalent nature of the theatre but also that of the act of patronage itself. The implication is that women are emasculating men by assuming the role of man in society; hence, the comedy gets darker.

Very much similar to *Epicoene*, amusing but unsettling moments are redolent in *Volpone*. A good example is the comic effect of the handkerchief “thrown by Celia to the disguised Fox, an act that incenses her husband, who instantly accuses her of harlotry” which fans the flames of anger (Tyson, 1978: 62). Although this incident seems quite amusing, Corvino uses it to assert his own masculine domination over his wife’s sexuality by questioning her fidelity. Corvino’s attitude, however, changes drastically once he is interrupted by Mosca. When Mosca claims that Lupo offered Volpone his virgin daughter, Corvino reduces the importance of women to a sheer object of desire that can be sacrificed in the competition for Volpone’s inheritance. By offering his wife to sleep with Volpone, Corvino emasculates himself by accepting the shame of not upholding his wife’s honor, which constitutes one of the prime ideals of manhood in his society. We are amused and yet perplexed by his obnoxious act as he proclaims that honor does not exist

and asks, “What, is my gold / The worse for touching?” (3.7.40–1). He takes comfort in the idea that no one will know about his wife’s infidelity if she does not tell anyone. He does not react even when Celia retorts, “Are heaven and saints then nothing? / Will they be blind, or stupid?” (3.7.53–4). What triggers black humor here is failed masculinity in the character of Corvino. What is peculiarly amusing but startling is that Corvino willingly accepts the role of the cuckolded husband as he cynically mistakes what his wife calls sin to be an act of charity. The grave subject of cuckoldry, a recurrent literary motif that is usually seriously addressed, slips here into mockery. Mosca himself does not miss the opportunity to harshly ridicule Corvino’s fall into disgrace when Corvino tells him, “Thou... shalt share in all my fortunes” (1.5.80). Mosca replies, “Excepting one... Your gallant wife, sir” (1.5.82). Not only does Mosca here laugh at Corvino’s willingness to be a cuckold but sneers at his wife too by calling her “gallant,” when in reality she is being reduced to a servile position. Corvino succumbs to this infamy, losing face as man and husband, only to succeed in this small circle, gold-worshipping society.

In the fashion of dark comedies mocking taboos, Jonson turns a subject as serious as rape into a laughing matter. Again the play introduces an amusing but unsettling scene saturated in black humor. The attempted seduction of Celia reveals Volpone’s hedonistic, dark side. Although the incident marks him as a target for satire as he sings and tempts her with riches, the rape attempt scene is both funny and disturbing as Celia begs for her honor. The scene is, therefore, comically dark. Not only does this scene strip Volpone of masculinity, in the sense of being an aggressor against female chastity, but actually dehumanizes him as shown in Celia’s strong statements, which put Volpone to shame: “Whither, whither / Is shame fled human breasts? Is that, which ever was a cause for life, / Now placed beneath the basest circumstance? / And modesty an exile made, for money?” (3.7.240–5). The comic impulse in the rape scene heightens the sense of moral dismay.

Apart from the notion of fear of physical harm or moral violation as the cause for repulsion, the second characteristic of black humor, that the plays exhibit, is taking pleasure in someone else’s pain. This attribute is very much part of the renaissance understanding of masculinity in the sense that “one’s manhood was linked to the derogation of another man’s” (Low, 2003: 72). Dark laughter, in this context, is the articulation of someone’s happiness over someone else’s failure:

The pleasure one takes in another's misery, because it is a laugh that also laughs at one's own unhappiness, that of author, character and reader. With its typical ambivalence, black humor reminds us of the pain and misery beneath what we are laughing at, which are not obviated by the laughter. To this extent, it complicates our response to the literature we are reading and to the characters we are reading about (Winston, 1978: 37).

In *Epicoene*, the first scene in Act III carries this comic and yet cruel aspect of comedy through Mistress Otter's usurpation of the male role, which implies that, much to his wife's pleasure, the husband is robbed of masculine agency. Captain Otter begs for respect while Mistress Otter continues her humiliation of her husband: "Do I allow you your half-crown a day, to spend, where you will, among your gamesters, to vex and torment me at such times as these? Who gives you your maintenance, I pray you? Who allows you your horse-meat and man's meat?" (3.1.31-40). Ultimately, in the fourth act, Mistress Otter "falls upon him and beats him" (4.2.100). This scene and the last incident may serve as a good example of black humor in the way Winston refers to what Samuel Beckett calls in his play *Watt* (1953) "the laugh that laughs... at that which is unhappy" (37). Captain Otter's loss of honor by being controlled by his wife accentuates a failure of his duties as man in the eyes of the members of his own society.

The characters themselves in *Epicoene* laugh at each others' misery as certain characters fall outside the socially accepted norms of masculinity. Characters' misfortunes are all related to gender issues through marital problems. Partridge observes how Truewit "prepares us for the comic view of their transposed marital relationship" (1955: 99). The characters themselves laugh mercilessly at Captain Otter's misery. Notable enough is Truewit's derisive remark that Captain Otter "is his wife's subject; he calls her Princess, and at such times as these follows her up and down the house like a page, with his hat off, partly for heat, partly for reverence" (2.6.49-52). This comic view is not the medieval morality play scene of the husband henpecked by the nagging wife but a complete reversal of gender role:

Modern listeners might not appreciate the full reversal implied in 'his wife's subject', but anyone who lived before women achieved the legal right to own property and the possession of great financial power (which is the power to subjugate man) must have been aware that the usual relation of husband and wife is reversed, so that she is Captain Otter and he is 'like a page' (Partridge, 1955: 99).



Clerimont, who observes this comic reversal of gender roles, comments, “Alas, what a tyranny, is this poor fellow married too” (3.2.10–11). Captain Otter is pathetically enslaved by his wife’s tyranny; he is emasculated because his wife has usurped the commonly accepted role of the dominating husband. Jonson subverts the cathartic drive as both audience and characters in the play laugh at someone else’s ill fortune.

Taking pleasure in someone else’s unhappiness comes also through the story of Morose whose misery is also based on a failure to uphold his honor and yet his misery is mocked by the other characters. Immediately following the wedding ceremony, Morose’s suffering starts to the enjoyment of most of the characters on stage. Mistress Epicoene exhibits an outburst of her voice. Moreover, Morose notices Truewit entering with thunderous congratulations, along with a procession of noisy guests. Dauphine and his partners decide to turn the quiet wedding into a boisterous festivity by inviting a group of silly acquaintances for the ceremony. One of the first impressions comes through Truewit, who describes how “her masculine, and loud commanding, and urging the whole family, makes him think he has married a Fury” (4.1.9–11). The epicene nature of the so called bride makes other characters get involved. Haughty, for instance, cynically complicates the gender role of the married couple. When Epicoene changes “from a demure girl to an Amazon,” Haughty gives her a new name: “I’ll call you Morose still now, as I call Centaure, and Mavis; we four will be all one” (4.3.14–15). Until Epicoene is revealed to be a boy, she takes up a masculine name: “It is only just that, since she has taken over the authoritative power of Morose, she should also take over his name” (Partridge, 1955: 100). Morose is being literally stripped off his masculinity by losing his masculine name to his wife, who being a boy in disguise, seems to find joy in being recognized as masculine.

Continuing their prank played on Morose, the guests voice their loud disapproval of the lack of wedding festivities. Clerimont mercilessly brings in a host of musicians, and Captain Otter follows in with a group of drummers and trumpeters. Under the thunderous impact, Morose flees the scene clumsily to the attic with nightcaps to cover his ears. Such incidents firstly highlight the pressure that society exercises on people, and secondly, reduce Morose to a coward, who cannot even exercise control in his own house. His spineless act is reinforced when Morose returns with his sword to drive away the party, but flees again; Sir Dauphine follows him pretending to console him. Black humor here feeds on Morose’s pain by building the comic effect on his agony.

Moreover, Truewit pitilessly gives him advice about marriage even before the arrival of the festive group, thus highlighting black humor by playing on Morose's nerves: "Truewit mockingly cautions Morose that he not rush his bride away (Morose cherishing no such intention), 'and not mount the marriage-bed like a town-bull or a mountain-goat; but stay the due season; and ascend it then with religion and fear'" (3.5.46–48). The mountain goat does not conjure up a chamois but puts on and extends the meaning of the verb mount" (Enck, 1957: 139). In this sense, Truewit ridicules Morose's position as a would-be husband by resembling him to a mounting goat. The play darkly continues to stem its comic effect from one character's pain and seclusion, reducing him into a shadow of a man.

Morose is reduced from being a man of honourable status in his society to sheer clumsiness. He screams, "O, the sea breaks in upon me! Another flood! An inundation! I shall be overwhelm'd with noise. It beats already at my shores. I feel an earthquake in myself, for't" (3.6.2–5). He becomes bitterly ridiculous: "The characters in black humor may be aware of their dilemma, that on some level they are ridiculous, however anguished they may be and whatever terrible things may happen to them. Whether they are aware or ignorant, the simple humanity of a character in a book or the reality of an actor on stage always moves us toward sympathy" (Winston, 1978: 40). Consequently, Morose is willing to be or do anything just to release himself from this marital trap, even if it means becoming an object of humiliation. He would rather sacrifice his honor and reputation rather than be condemned to live in a house of clamouring noise for the rest of his life. However, Dauphine is still not willing to let the moment go with no cruel sarcasm and a tinge of black humor:

Morose. Would I could redeem it with the loss of an eye, nephew, a hand, or any other member.

Dauphine. Marry, God forbid, sir, that you should geld yourself, to anger your wife.

Morose. So it would rid me of her! (4.4.8–12).

What is more, Truewit does not miss the joy of reminding Morose that he told him not to inflict this suffering upon himself: "I told you so, sir, and you would not believe me." And Morose replies that Truewit is aggravating his pain: "Alas, do not rub those wounds, Master Truewit, to blood again; 'twas my negligence. Add no affliction to affliction" (4.4.21–24). Truewit makes Morose think of himself as being less than a

rational human being for falling into this trap of marriage, which now, to Morose, negates any common sense. Thus, Morose considers himself to be less than a man for incurring this affliction upon himself.

Morose's willingness to accept impotence as a reason for divorce is unpleasant and humiliating and yet, in the fashion of black humor, is peculiarly hilarious. He equivocally confesses that he has failed to live like a man and worse, that he is sexually impotent: "I am no man", he tells the ladies who all shout "How!" To which he responds, "Utterly unable in nature, by reason of frigidity, to perform the duties or any the least office of a husband" (5.4.40-42). Partridge observes that Morose is even willing to take the humiliation to the next level even if it is against what his society expects from him or from a real man to do in a similar situation:

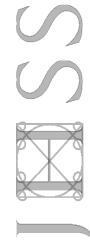
When this ruse of declaring himself 'no man' fails, he welcomes even that reflection on virility which the Elizabethans thought the most comic-being a cuckold. 'let me worship and adore you', he cries to La Foole and Daw after they swear that they have lain with Epicoene (V. iv. 120). Castration, impotence, and being a wittol; all suggest that Morose would even lose his own maleness to get rid of a wife who at first seemed feminine but proved epicene (1955: 100).

This misery of failed masculinity is not totally self-imposed but partly schemed. In effect, Morose is a victim of his own clownish temperament but also of repulsive manipulation by members of his own society, which generates dark comedy in the sense of being amusement with repulsion.

The world of *Volpone* also abounds with people enjoying someone else's pain, which is an assertion of black humor at work. This notion of seeking pleasure by making others suffer starts with Volpone's opening soliloquy, which sets the moral tone of the play. The way Volpone describes his gold, as almost his religion and his family, speaks to what constitutes the image of manhood in his eyes: "Thou being the best of things – and far transcending / All style of joy, in children, in parents, friends / Or any other waking dream of earth" (1.1.16-18). He believes that gold is the driving force that makes men speak and act on its behalf. To Volpone, gold takes the place of masculinity. It is equal to virtue, honor and even fame. Whoever owns it becomes valiant, honest and wise:

That canst do naught, and yet mak'st men do all things;  
The price of souls; even hell, with thee to boot,

Is made worth heaven! Thou art virtue, fame,  
Honour, and all things else! Who can get thee,  
He shall be notable, valiant, honest, wise (1.1.24–27).



In Volpone's world, with gold replacing masculinity, he seems to prefer to have himself called rich rather than honourable and by extension better than living up to any masculine image.

As he says good morning to his gold, we understand the way in which Volpone collects his treasures, which is presumably through cons. Honesty here is the first attribute of masculinity to be sacrificed in favour of gold. He joyfully describes the con he has been recently running. Since he has no heirs, and is extremely wealthy, people are interested in his wealth and whom it will go to when he dies. By pretending to be seriously ill, an act that negates the ideal image of masculinity which is partly based on honesty, Volpone lures three distinguished citizens, who consider themselves potential heirs. He describes how he cons "clients" (1.1.75) out of coins and jewels while they fight for his inheritance. He compares this game to dangling a cherry in front of the inheritance hunters' mouths and letting it "knock against their lips" (1.1.89). This is where black humor intervenes in terms of mocking pleasure gained through pain; in the sense that by enjoying torturing those legacy hunters, Volpone enjoys deceiving others even more than gaining more gold: "Yet I glory / More in the cunning purchase of my wealth / Than in the glad possession; since I gain / No common way, I use no trade, no venture" (1.1.30–33). As the rivalry over his inheritance gets more competitive, the legacy hunters become willing to sacrifice more than just coins. They are willing to lay their own masculinity, whether in terms of their own honor or their wives', on the line.

The idea of pleasure from punishment is not unfamiliar to Volpone himself as he praises Mosca for his mastery of intrigue and mocks Corbaccio's old age, saying "What a rare punishment / Is avarice to itself!" (1.4.143–4). Volpone enjoys the idea that he feeds avarice to make it his punishing tool. Furthermore, when Volpone drafts and names Mosca as his sole heir, he secretly delights in the disappointment of Corbaccio, Corvino, and Voltore. Together, Volpone and Mosca laugh at the pains of these three "clients" and what they have gone through as all three are willing to compromise their image as respectable men in favor of worldly gain.

Volpone and Mosca emerge as relatively better than the legacy hunters in terms of their motivations, however, they all represent a

capricious society. They are not after money for money's sake, but money for the sake of the pleasure of getting it while they also enjoy their schemes. The emergence of the heirs, from different walks of life (lawyer, merchant, nobleman), indicates that greed is characteristic of society in general. In effect, Jonson portrays with black humour a society in which the pursuit of wealth and individual self-interest has become primary. Society in both plays is portrayed as the embodiment of a complicated commercial city, in which trade and aristocracy rule and nearly most of the characters mocked at are shown as corrupt or compromised and, for that reason, emasculated. Through the loss of their masculinity, compromising who they really are in terms of identity and gender, they represent a society that is morally dubious.

Alan C. Dessen (1971), in *Jonson's Moral Comedy*, points out how the legacy hunters represent the fabric of society on the verge of a structural breakdown: "Corvino the merchant, Corbaccio the miser, and Voltore the lawyer function as 'estates'... Celia and Bonario... function as virtuous figures... [and] Volpone and Mosca... victimize both the estates and the virtues" (81). Jonson's humorous depiction of the act of serious victimization marks the plays as dark comedies. The result of these victimizing schemes by Volpone and Mosca is emasculating as Corvino, Corbaccio and Voltore tend to be regarded as lesser men in the eyes of others who are willing to sacrifice a wife, a son and a reputation, if it means they become richer. Also pertinent to black humor is the idea that most of the characters in *Volpone* are rendered lesser men by comparing them to animals. Volpone and Mosca are aware that their game is morally wrong. They are all deceitful and immoral in their pursuit of personal gratification as well as servile to gold. The idea of animalizing those male characters implies their pursuit of pleasure through pain, which is characteristic of parasites too. Over the course of the play, almost everyone tries to live off of the wealth of others. Given that Corvino, Corbaccio and Voltore all try to inherit a fortune from a dying man and Volpone himself has built his fortune on cons, parasitism, thus portrayed, does not become a form of indolence or desperation, but rather that of emasculation. Those who are portrayed in the play as parasites are stripped of the masculine attribute of earning their living by honest toil. Volpone, Mosca and the legacy hunters assume that it is very manly to befool others because it is power-asserting. In this sense, the failure to fool someone is the failure of the masculine power.

The parasite, very much like the rogue character in the picaresque novels, lives by his wits, by manipulating credulity in others. In Act III,

scene i, Mosca acknowledges that what defines him as a parasite is the idea that although he mischievously uses his wits to live on others' wealth, it is this parasitism which makes him most "wise" in the world:

I am so limber. Oh! Your parasite  
Is a most precious thing, dropped from above,  
Not bred 'mongst clods and clot-poles, here on earth.  
I muse, the mystery was not made a science,  
It is so liberally professed! Almost  
All the wise world is little else, in nature,  
But parasites, or sub-parasites (7–13).

The course of the play, in general, proves Mosca to be right in claiming that parasitism is widespread in Venetian society; however, the play's use of black humor intervenes and refutes the claim that this parasitism is wise as all the offenders are harshly punished at the end and are publicly looked at as fools. Moreover, Volpone surrounds himself with three emasculated, freakish servants: Castrone the eunuch, Nano the dwarf, and Anrodogyno the hermaphrodite. Those three characters are more than just servants to Volpone. They are like family to him. He admits that he has "no wife, no parent, no child, no ally" (1.1.73). In other words, Volpone's choice to surround himself with deformed individuals highlights his own lack of productivity in terms of children, making the failure to reproduce seem as a vital part of his character, which is also a reflection on his failed masculinity.

The notion that Jonson's *Epicoene* and *Volpone* display many discomforting scenes in terms of the widespread expectations of masculinity in a morally dubious society restates the play as dark comedy. For instance, in *Epicoene*, the scheme of tricking Morose into making Dauphine his heir does not only involve cruel punishments such as stripping Morose of manliness, but also indirectly causing shame to both Daw and La Foole, who have claimed having an affair with Epicoene. Daw and La Foole are emasculated as their heterosexual identity becomes now in question. Jonson's *Epicoene* becomes darker when, in contrast to the happy ending tradition of comedies that usually ends with the lovers getting married, it ends with a divorce, which is non-comedic and leaves a bitter taste as almost everything does in a dark comedy. Similarly, in *Volpone*, the punishments at the end of the play capture the essence of the crime itself; for instance, Volpone's greed for pleasure at the expense of others makes him a prisoner of his desires, long before he is put into chains. Like *Epicoene*, *Volpone* does not end up happily. The 1st Avocatore himself emphasizes the didactic purpose

of the punishments, which the whole Venetian society (including the audience) should observe:

— Which may not be revoked. Now you begin,  
When crimes are done and past, and to be punished,  
To think what your crimes are: away with them.  
Let all that see these vices thus rewarded,  
Take heart, and love to study 'em. Mischiefs feed  
Like beasts. Till they be fat, and then they bleed (5.12.150).

The penalty ties up the moral of the story in the sense that harshness is mandated by Jonson's play. Whether in *Epicoene* or in *Volpone*, the harsh and yet comic punishments are emasculating as they strip the guilty party from either their heterosexuality or honor. In Jonson's *Epicoene* and *Volpone*, dark comedy serves to ridicule the subject of failed masculinity in a comic manner. Characters who fail to embody the commonly accepted characteristics of masculinity are men who are willing to forfeit their gender, sacrifice honesty or suffer emasculation. Ironically, the two plays suggest that these males attain manhood by following their intuition and their heart instead of attempting to live up to the impossible ideals created by society. In effect, *Epicoene* and *Volpone* employ black humor to connote that the image of failed masculinity internalizes the social dilemma of a failed society whose ideals will always remain unsubstantiated and unattainable.

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## Myth and Tragedy, Fatality and Failure in the Destiny of the Realistic Character – *Ion* by Liviu Rebreanu

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### **Abstract:**

This study proposes a unique interpretation key for a novel considered classic in Romanian literature, a novel which seems to have nothing new to offer concerning significance. However, a valuable work cannot be depleted, on the contrary, it will be open to new interpretations and controversies beyond time. Such a work seems to be “*Ion*” by Liviu Rebreanu, which is not a simple rural novel, and, even if it were so, this “rural novel” offers nowadays many unexploited significances in this direction, too. *Ion* appears in this study in his grandiose mythological dimension, taking part subconsciously to the great cosmic drama; he is a civilizing hero, who copies the sacred gesture of God creating the world, assuring in this way the perpetuation of life in the endless circle of life and death from that moment on until the present time.

**Keywords:** myth, Marduk, sickle, land, civilizing hero, Mother Goddess, circle

### **A Simple “Rural Novel”?**

There are literary works which are emptied, from the point of view of meaning, from the first time you read them, and, there are brilliant ones, which, with the passing of time or even because of that, suscite new interpretations and controvercies. Eugen Lovinescu’s observation about *the mutation of aesthetical values* is in spirit with this remark. A work would, indeed, inevitably reflect the mentalities, ideals, aesthetic conceptions of the time when it was produced and would embed the psychology, knowledge and sensitivity of its author. In time, this work will gain new interpretative openings, if the subject, the epical conflicts and the characters have the complexity to continue suggesting, allowing an analysis from the point of view of modern sciences, such as psychology or psychoanalysis, myth critics, etc. Equally, there are those works which reflect perspectives, behaviours, generally valid in time and space, like the great epics of Antiquity, which evoke facts and

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attitudes, making the individual an archetype, becoming a model in behaviour, psychologically recognizable later in literature and in life. The controversies and reinterpretations, though, do not pass by these “infallible models”. Achilles, the archetypal hero, who searches for immortality through glory, who keeps a distance from the mediocrity of normal life (to regret it later, according to his confession to Ulysses in *Inferno*) shows an unspecific behaviour, denoting sensitivity, respect for his enemy’s pain, his suffering for losing his childhood friend being exceptional. His behaviour is not linear and the symbolic value does not deplete the complexity of the character, because the warrior Achilles separates himself through his individuality from others.

Petru Creția notices the atypical sensitivity of this character, discovering, besides cruelty, wrath and courage, other pure emotional resorts of his personality (Creția, 2009: 114). This perspective infirms Călinescu’s observation of a kind of flattening of the epic hero’s personality, which serves one of the author’s goals: “Achilles and Ulysses have no individuality, they are symbols of two masculine hypostases. Achilles goes through an erotic and a martial crisis, while Ulysses goes through a crisis of mature intrepidity. A simple change of age and the continuation of the facts seem impossible, because they are not characters but attitudes”<sup>1</sup> (Călinescu, 2003: 647).

This is the fate of the literary character: to have no privacy, to be continuously open to a forever critical eye, always an idler, attentive to every apparently insignificant detail, to offer a new perspective and a new future “fate”.

There are such epics in Romanian literature, born from their authors’ wish to reflect on a certain view on the world and on life; they have got some sort of life of their own, their own will, continuously awaking controversies, discussions, interpretations or polemics. These works, just like George Călinescu rightly notes, no longer belong to the author, but to the audiences they have been offered to, and readers ceaseless enrich the work with new visions discovered in the process of its contemplation. George Călinescu refers to the masterpiece built by the master builder Manole in Lucian Blaga’s drama, who, in an access of rage and revolt, wants to destroy the church where he has sacrificed his “better half” he can now no longer live without, because nobody can survive that way, as one incomplete half: “The church, however, is indestructible, and besides, the crowd prevents him from failure. A way of saying that the artistic work, made from a man’s sacrifice, has an

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<sup>1</sup> All translations of the quotations are my own.

independent existence. Manole goes in the steeple and throws himself on the ground. The crowd contemplates the work, which becomes anonymous, needing no author” (Călinescu, 2003: 97).

Such a literary work, apparently round and with an interior (possibly, completely depleted) life, is Liviu Rebreanu’s novel *Ion*, which has been considered the masterpiece of the author’s creation both by contemporary critics and by those from posterity. After analysing the Romanian literary phenomenon, starting with the shy debut of the novel, Alexandru Piru names *Ion* “a monument of Romanian literature, a qualitative leap in the evolution of the genre” (Piru, 1978: 219). Tudor Vianu links Rebreanu’s work to the coordinates of European realism and naturalism, placed at mid point between “the infinite element” and “the lightning vision” – Balzac and Maupassant, Tolstoi and Cehov, or “the universe with closed, well ordered forms of the Flaubertian novel, focused on gradation and the exact outlining of a classical tragedy. In that same middle region is also the extended short story and the short novel, abandoned for some time not only by Romanian literature, but also by the entire European literature” (Vianu, 1973: 314). In *Romanian Writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Tudor Vianu falls back upon the analysis of the novel, naming it “the real poem of Ardeal” (Vianu, 1979: 230), comparing its realistic vision with that of a similar writer, such as Caragiale, in describing the individual, leaving aside the “romantic vision” promoted until then about the Romanian countryman, and, especially about life in the countryside in Ardeal. Commenting on Rebreanu’s work, Aurel Goci notes the writer’s disposition to detail, the obsession of perfectly building the subject: “Rebreanu reinstalls the idea of professional perfection, of construction, of polarized architecture in a literature dominated by encyclopaedism, by Renaissant versatilenesses” (Goci, 2000: 69).

In an unfair way, we would say, George Călinescu places the novels *Ion* and *Răscoala* in the category “herd novels” (“romanul gloatei”), just because they surprise rural life where, seemingly, psychology is not quite comfortable, through the “reduction of spiritual life” (Călinescu, 2003: 647). That is why the great critic calls *Ion* a “rural novel” considering it, from this point of view, a follower of Ioan Slavici’s novel *Mara*, and, “a novel of ambition”, at least apparently, being similar to *Ciocoii vechi și noi* (Călinescu, 2003: 647). *Mara*, however, surveys the life of brotherhoods in the little provincial village in Ardeal parallel to the analysis of interethnic relations looked upon intimately in the couple relationship Persida – Națl, while Filimon’s novel – ironically and somehow romantically – surprises through naive antitheses the way a

new social class appears, a class situated between the Fanariot aristocracy (enriched along the same villainous lines) and the native aristocracy (vulgar and patriotic). Nicolae Filimon's gigman, if he hadn't been somehow urbanised by the influence of Chera Duduca, might have found a corespondent in the villain farmer, venal and unprincipled – seemingly guilty for the cruel oppression of the Romanian peasant impoverished to the limit of the impossible – in Rebreanu's *Răscoala* or in Duiliu Zamfirescu's Comănășteni cycle.

Tudor Vianu notes the two exclusive tendencies highlighted by studies dedicated to the novel *Ion*. On the one hand, the mistake “of believing that Mr. Rebreanu gave us only a social novel, in the strict sense of the word” (Vianu, 1979: 224). And on the other hand, there are “the reviews providing full significance to the simple psychological conflict” (Vianu, 1979: 224). The reductionism of the critical analysis of the novel, in favor of one direction or another, deprives the researcher of the writer's complex vision on epic conflicts. In these strong, downright titanic, conflicts are placed those who face others and the losers. In this regard, the novel has an epic character – as George Călinescu suggests – undeservedly awarding the fortune which stems from the art of this „epic poet” (Rebreanu, in the sense of Călinescu): “*Ion* is a perfect epic” (Călinescu, 2003: 649), and the homonymous character “is only an exponent, a hero of epic running through his home settlement crisis” (Călinescu, 2003: 648).

*Ion* captures rural life but in an almost mythical dimension, considering the archaic age of earth labor, the ritualistic character of life in the traditionalist village, because life flows here like a river in its own course without extraordinary drama between the sacred moments of birth, marriage and death. Rebreanu himself captures this aspect of life that flows patiently in *illo tempore*, by focussing on the symmetries of the initial and final sequences, where he describes, with Balzacian accuracy, the way to and from the village Pripas. In the incipit, the road is described by using epithets with personification value, becoming a character itself, which introduces the reader to the world of the work:

Leaving Jidovița, first the road climbs up painfully making its way through the strained hills, but then cheerfully moves forward, smoothly, hiding among the young beeches of the Domnești Forest, then halting by the Dead Man's Fountain, where fresh spring water is always dripping, then sharply turns under the Devil's Steeps to break into Pripas, hidden in a wrench of the hills.

At the end of the village a crooked cross welcomes you on the left, with the crucified Christ having a pale face washed by the rain and a

wreath of withered flowers hooked on his legs. A slight breeze is blowing, and Christ miserably shudders his rusty tin body on the worm-eaten wood, blackened by time's decay (Rebreanu, 1979: 9).

Nicolae Manolescu surprises the character status of the road “first, in the novel, young, lively and eager to reach its destination” (Manolescu, 2007: 137). The road seems to slide, “cheerful” and detached, crossing an unfriendly space, judging by the suggestive place names – The Devil’s Fountain, The Devil’s Steeps – and the “miserable” Christ which seems to be silent witnesses of the passing, or rather, of the standstill of time in a mythological dimension. This road leads the reader into the world of Romanian fiction, and finally disconnects him to go back into non-fictional reality. The fragility of the border between fiction and reality, overlapping of the two sometimes, the impression that the fictional universe is the real one, can be found easily in postmodern prose, namely in Mario Vargas Llosa’s view on writing. For the South American writer, through fiction, the human being exceeds its limited human condition, living other existences. The novel has a life of its own and the characters have their own destiny. To invent a “story” that the writer scratches on a sheet of paper is actually a silent protest against the reality in which man lives, a reality that no longer satisfies him. Llosa believes that fiction is born precisely from “the abyss between the truth of the life we live and the life we are able to imagine and live in fantasy [...]” (Llosa, 2008: 12). With Rebreanu, fiction and reality intertwine constantly, the writer starts from sources of inspiration found in social and personal reality that he processes, adapting them to fictional situations and characters. If about Caragiale’s characters it is said that “they would compete with the registrar’s office”, about those created by Liviu Rebreanu we can state that they become distinct persons alive.

With the method and applied, studying Rebreanu’s beliefs and work, Ovid Crohmălniceanu identifies the writer’s personality, the one that generates the work, the primary source where the worldview and lifeview flow. From here emerges Rebreanu’s conception about life cycles identified in *Adam and Eve*, the author’s dearest novel – as evidenced by his confessions – but also in *Ion*, by what George Călinescu called “moments from the sempitern calendar of the village” (Călinescu, 2003: 649). The formal symmetry of the novel *Ion* illustrates the cyclical obsession, “but a cyclical obsession of existence in the sense of Poulet’s idea, is not to be sought at this impersonal level, but in the very conduct of individual destinies. Puiu Faranga personally relives *the*

*comeback* of a capital moment in life, the process having here a deeper meaning. Nothing else happens with *Ion*. Actually, the whole novel, as conceived by Rebreanu, alternating *the voice of the earth* with *the voice of love* is an illustration of the inevitable comeback. Ion returns to Florica, driven by a force stronger for the earth than for love and dies because of this last overwhelming passion. At a level of superior self-awareness, time has a circular shape in the hero's inner experience. After the turmoil of his whole existence, he ends up where he left from" (Crohmălniceanu, 1984: 39).

Although the village can be found on a geographical map, being anchored by profane spatial cues, there is a mythological existence, repeated in circular time, not in linear one. As proof are the final descriptions of the road and the village, which close the novel sequence as a circle, a symbol of Romanian archaic village:

Then the road turns, and bends, and then stretches again as a gray ribbon in the cool twilight. Behind, on the left, remains the Dead Man's Fountain, while on the right, on the faded border, the estates climb, split, fall, tangle up until under Vărăra's Forest. Then the Royal Forest swallows the rattling of the carriage, turning it into whirlpools in loud echoes.

The village remained back the same as if nothing had changed. Several people died, others have taken their place. Over the writhing of life, time becomes careless, erasing all traces. Sufferings, passions, aspirations, large or small, are lost in a hard incomprehensible pain, like feeble trembling in a giant hurricane (Rebreanu, 1979: 452).

The author's attention given to symmetry and detail equals that of Flaubert's, being particularly noticeable in these descriptions. Initially, the village is surprised on a Sunday at the time of the round dance, when, old and young, people take part in the great social event. Therefore, the streets are deserted, giving the strong desolate impression of an abandoned community. Finally, the village lies behind eyes, "the same", but the hot torpidity is replaced by the cool of dusk. Even Christ that moves "miserably" in the hot air, anticipates with an air of reprobation the tragic events, at the time of consummation of the drama becomes conciliatory to those who continue their existences: "with the face gilded by a delayed radius like comforting it, slightly trembling his body in the breeze of autumn twilight" (Rebreanu, 1979: 452). The ruthless aggressive heat that conquers the village with the force of a demonic possession at beginning of the novel is replaced by the comforting warmth of retained autumn sun, the sign of life back on the regular track:

Sunday... The village seems to rejuvenate and to renew waiting for the big day. It's clean and cheerful, usefully the priest commanded every man to sweep the lane in front of the house, to clean the farmyards and decorate the gates with green. God Himself mercied to allow fair weather, as if to reward his servant's endeavors. Everyone put on white clothes to celebrate. The temperate and faded autumn sun scattered warm and pleasant light (Rebreanu, 1979: 442).

But for an archaic civilization all these – the suggestive place names, the Christ from entering the village – may be “signs” announcing the tragedy that receives hereby *fatum* character. Fatality is deeply ingrained, according to naturalistic ideas, in the biological data of the being; Ion is destined to be the hero of tragedy, due to exaggerated sensuality, a hot temper, always ready to break out, at any time, but also because he violated some behavior taboos. As this study will show, Ion, as a member of an archaic community, guided by strict laws on a magical ritual plan, exposes himself to the devastating influence from outside the protected space of the village hearth; he temporarily tames the alluring woman-disguised monster who constantly *calls* him, to become a victim due to the reckless attempt of having another erotic fulfillment with Florica.

From the comparative analysis of the beginning and the end, emerges the left-right polarization with a clear distribution of negative-positive connotations, as follows: so the “traveller” that enters the fictional world of *Ion* is greeted suggestively, on the left, by the poor creaking sound of “the tin Christ”, anticipating unfortunate events; at the end, leaving the sacred space of the old village, which has regained its peace along with the unnatural atypical happenings, “the traveller” leaves “behind” on his left the negative mark of the archaic topos, for on the right people's lands appear and disappear, to naturally intersect in a geography of normality. In his study *Mythos & Logos. Studies and Essays of Cultural Anthropology*, Andrei Oișteanu studies how “magical-mythical thinking positively valued the right hand and negatively the left hand following the stability and continuity in time and space of left-right polarity and how rigorously this binomial gained ethical-religious meanings, overlapping the essential binominals good-bad, sacred-profane, heaven-hell, cosmos-chaos etc.” (1998: 270).

The titles of the two parts, *The Voice of the Earth* and *The Voice of Love* are called by Călinescu “manifesto titles” outlining “the allegorical tendencies of the author” (Călinescu, 2003: 649), while Tudor Vianu sees reflected in these “the somehow romantic intention” of the writer.

In other words, Călinescu and Vianu don't find hidden connotations of these phrases beyond highlighting the two "passions" of the main character. Using a real psychoanalytic "key" of interpretation, Aurel Goci captures the existence of "two Ions", which become obvious by way of the two voices, as "underground expressions of the instinct and the collective consciousness: one of the Eros (repressed libido) and another of land possession (voice of power and domination)" (Goci, 2000: 71). Eros and possession are activated by the exuberant sexuality of the character, but also by his ego. The desire to possess land is initially stronger, because the social desideratum is imperative, Ion being "an outsider, always outside the congregation" (*Ibidem*: 70). Split between the two calls and "manipulated by the sub- and super-individualizing ego" (*Ibidem*: 72), Ion seems to deny any moral, which he no longer obeys. The moral is connected, though, to the anonymous code of the archaic community's "unwritten law", which never accepted him and finally expels him. The hero has no mundane social codes, specific to a limited community circle. The hero, in that he felt a different calling, leaves its space feeling the paradoxical need to continuously return, even if it becomes law itself, or at least reporting to other laws, misunderstood by others.

From these significant details emerges a first conclusion: Ion's village has a social dimension, given by the relationship between people, the historical and political landmarks that it is anchored in, but the people live in an archaic mythical space governed by timeless superior regularities, the so-called "unwritten law" that also applies in Vitoria Lipan's case. From this point of view, Oişteanu emphasizes the existence of a relationship between the interior of the village and its boundaries or borders. The border is the line beyond which lurk "not only wild beasts, but also dragons and Fairies, the demons of disease and evil spirits, an undetermined world (literally and figuratively), insecure, unknown, even hostile, a world of all virtualities and latencies" (Oişteanu, 1998: 159–160). The village is built as sacred concentric architecture, starting from from the *hearth*, ground zero, the site of maximum positive charge, where the energies that feed the family spring, an *axis mundi* that unites heaven and earth, celestial and mundane. Next is the *house* itself, which for Romanians means *home*, *porch*, *courtyard*, *village*, *field*. To understand the profound essence of what *home* means to Romanians, one must read Fănuş Neagu's novel, *Dincolo de nisipuri (Beyond the Sands)*, where an old lady can die nowhere else but in the house where she had lived with the loved ones, although the house was confiscated by the communist authorities and



became town hall. For the old lady, home means the place where she has lived, loved, suffered with loved ones, each object having a history of its own. For the one who had been her neighbor, but now was only a mayor subordinated to the communist authorities, home was the town hall, his workplace. The alteration of interpersonal relationships is obvious in the lack of any compassion and understanding of the mayor for the old lady and in forgetting the ancient “moral code”.

The village is a circular concentric site, which arises from the hearth, home and radiates outwards to the field. Inside the village, the man is protected by positive energies that continuously flow from each hearth, while outside the village negative energies lurk trying to sneak through any holes left unattended. From here, Oişteanu believes in magical rites and rituals of protection for those breaches. Inside the village order is governing, Kosmos, outside there is disorder, Chaos. On the other hand, the village is a spiritual reality that develops in concentric circles the road from the center of the parental home, towards its exterior, the earth (the cropfield), which continually calls for some form of possession. Externality frees the hero from the law, releasing just what he always wanted to keep under control. Under the increasingly weak influence of the crumbling and fading center, the eros is released. Hence the change in the perception of the village seen in relation to the vastness of the village boundary:

The village seemed smallish, embracing everything into a fist and putting it in a bag as a toy for children. However, the border stretched so wide that Ion couldn't stop watching it just like a faithful servant watches a towering ruthless master (Rebreanu, 1979: 47).

There, in the center, he does not receive due respect, he feels aggrieved and humbled by those who have land, “rich men” (“bocotanii”) like Vasile Baciú, but here in the outskirts, in the open, he receives the unexpected force waiting to be used. The two “voices” are tyrannically heard, permanently cleaving Ion between the archaic, primitive dimension, requiring him to give in loving the earth, and the social dimension, which tells him that he must start a family, to love a woman and have children. In his village, however, where those who command and are respected are the rich, those who have land, no matter how diligent, helpful, desired by girls, Ion does not receive due respect for his human qualities and therefore his frustration increases proportionally with Vasile Baciú's contempt and fear. Ion can not integrate in social life without land and can not be what he is – authentic

peasant – with no land. Ion differs radically from his father-in-law regarding the relationship with the land: Ion wants the land with a deeply rooted greed in his possessive nature, in his passionate sanguine temperament, while for Vasile Baciú the land – not his daughter he feels like a stranger to - keeps in touch with the woman he loved. Trying to keep the land after his death, Ana's father proves some tendency towards avarice. Through the woman, but by referring to her differently, both men will get the land which will introduce them among the wealthy, but will not fit them there, not being respected.

What is prohibited in the center, is free in the outskirts, the latter becoming the second anchor, or the new omphalos of hero's life, but it doesn't annihilate the first, to which it backtracks and not being able to separate himself from that, it is seen as a permanent split.

In the sense of primitive thinking, the battle between Kosmos and Chaos was not over cosmogonically, for any construction is followed by deconstruction, death follows life, etc. In Assyrian-Babylonian mythology god Marduk defeats the forces of Chaos, concentrated in the female monster Tiamat, using his body to build the universe: "the act of Marduk's positive establishing does not remove the original matrix of the evil, but uses it as building material, world being conceived, as we shall see, from the "evil" body of Tiamat. The matrix Evil thus becomes constitutive of the world, suggesting a cosmogonic functional dualism that is confirmed by all Near Eastern mythologies, from Zoroastrianism (where is seen the best) to the Old Testament" (Borbey, 2004: 20). Marduk is assigned the role of "stimulator of fields and vegetation", which corresponds somewhat to unfortunate Ion's attempt to master the monster, in this case the land. To the primordial chaos correspond the characteristics of a "fluid matrix substance, unorganized, monstrous, usually female (or in some cases bisexual) with double opening: towards birth and towards resorption, which makes chaos appear dual in mythology, germinating on the one hand and terrifying on the other" (Borbely, 2004: 10). Driven by his obsession to work the land, Ion falls into a sort of divine admiration, the village and its border being greatly metamorphosed in the eyes of fascinated being. The location where Ion ventures is that of the primordial Chaos, where Gheea, the one with the round bellies, fertilized, ready to conceive, masters and the order and specific lawfulness of the village and Kosmosa do not govern here.

When he does not possess the land, this appears to Ion as a terrible monster that terrifies him. Beyond the borders of the village, which ensure safety and protection in terms of magic, Ion has been "touched",

he heard “the voice of the earth”. Ion needs the land in the same way that the land needs someone to fertilize it, to ensure its primary function:

The corn fields, the fields of wheat and oats, the hemp fields, the gardens, the houses, the woods, they were all humming, whispering, rustling, speaking a harsh speech, understanding each other, enjoying the light that illuminates more and more victorious and fruitful. The voice of the earth penetrated the lad’s impetuous soul, like a call, overwhelming it. He felt small and weak just like a worm that you trample on, or like a leaf driven by the wind as he likes it. He sighs prolonged, humiliated and terrified in front of the giant:

— How much land, O Lord...” (Rebreanu, 1979: 47).

The land is also what imbues the humbled person with an inner strength, as it has received the offering of humility according to which any deity requires its vassals. Call, attraction, fascination (in the etymological sense of the word), Ion’s relationship with the land is magical and erotic, as the two practices imply the existence of antagonistic elements: female/male. The male reality is always a circular one, caught in the self-preservation rule of their values while the feminine spiral reality is promoting progress. Crossing each circle Ion moves away not only from the hearth of the village, the center, but moves towards the liberty he can not resist, like Adam, who, being able to oppose to the serpent, he gave away to Eve, however. The woman-Earth enhances her vital energies so that Ion will not let himself be worn-out by the fatigue of mowing, but turns it into new potentialities. Nicolae Manolescu assessed the gigantic stature of this man, who in this struggle with the land wanting to pluck its fruit, to conquer it, to subjugate it, overcomes his own limited condition beyond and transforms into a “generic being”. This scene captures how “man here becomes brother with the land in a mystic ritual of possession” (Manolescu, 2007: 147). With obvious erotic connotations, the fragment points out the passive-active report – female-male, bottom-up – which marks the type of relationship Ion has with the lands, which offer themselves to him as deceptive and enticing, virginal and female:

The furrow down watched him helpless, defeated, suddenly filling his heart with a master’s pride. And then he saw it growing larger and larger. The strange humming seemed some worshiping song. Supported by the scythe, his chest swelling, his back straight, and his eyes flashed a gleam of success. He felt it so strongly that he could reign over all this (Rebreanu, 1979: 50).

The narrator's language leaves no room for ambiguity when outlining the type of love that Ion feels for the land. This love is more like a kind of possession, because "loving the land dominated him even as a child". Here in this sentence is the explanation of the title of the first part: Ion becomes a huge receptacle for Tiamat's ancestral calling. Ulysses was also tempted by the deceptive call of the sirens, suffering terribly, being briefly exposed to their voice. Ion listened to the voice of nature even as a child, loving the land like a mother. It's a different kind of report. The land – aspect of the great goddess, symbol of femininity and fertility – seems to have chosen this particularly strong man, unique in his intense and sincere feelings to obey. When Ion becomes the absolute master of the land, he has the behavior of a victorious warrior. On the one hand he enjoys it with all his "prey" senses, on the other hand, he possess it, crushing it with the legs in an erotic and at the same time warrior-like behavior. It is Marduk's victorious gesture, which crushes the monster Tiamat, establishing Kosmos against Chaos. Ion becomes "the stimulator of fields and vegetation" (Borbely, 2004: 18), he tames nature, assuming the role of a civilising hero in the archaic thinking civilization, to which it is tributary. As pointed out by Andrei Oişteanu, the nature-culture report involves a complex analysis, as this relationship "is not consumed (only) outside of man, but (mostly) inside him. Being generated by nature and a generator of culture, the human being is the product of a symbiosis of a cultural and a natural being" (Oişteanu, 1998: 154). Ion is a member of the rural community, obeying to the "unwritten law" that provides order, culture and civilization in the sacred space of the village; in relation to the outside of the village, uncultivated, uncivilized, disordered, Ion subsides chaos, Nature, which obeys to him. This is the mission of the land owner, to subdue, to tame the beast, which he obeys through the civilizing force of his gesture. Another aspect is highlighted, however, in the anachronistic way of Ion's behaviour in the ordered cultural village space. Here, the natural man replaces the cultural one, exceeding limits, transgressing behavior taboos, being exemplarily punished through his symbolic death. The relationship between the village and its borders is stressed again, this time the impressive stature of the almighty hero becoming crushing against the small village helplessly looming in the horizon:

He crossed his arms over his chest and licked his lips continually feeling the cold touch and the bitter sweet taste of the earth. The village in the valley, away, seemed a bird's nest hidden in a cave of the hawk's fear.

He sees himself now big and strong, like a giant in the fairy tales who defeated in hard battles, a bunch of terrible monsters.

His feet sank better into the ground, as if he wanted to ease the final wriggling of a smitten enemy. And the earth looked like shaking, bowing before him (Rebreanu, 1979: 123).

### **Ion – the Civilizing Hero**

Literary criticism pronounced itself unfavorably about *Ion* because his cynical behavior towards Ana is shocking. For George Călinescu, he is a “beast” that mocks at a girl to force her father to give her to him as a wife, then pushes her to commit suicide; greedy and reckless in his desire to have more land; naive because, despite his intelligence, he does not require notified documents for the acquired land – a sum of qualities and defects manifested with the innocence of a predator who rips his prey. Analyzing the features of the Doric novel, highlighting the fact that it “illustrates general through the particular”, Nicolae Manolescu appointed Ion “the land obsessed peasant”, being “the great innocent victim of the biological fatality” (Manolescu, 2007: 142, 148). Although it captures Rebreanu’s wish – even obsession – to anchor Pripas village in mythology and archaic by evocations and replays which suggest the circular, the cyclicity, understanding that in relation to the land Ion is not a simple peasant but a giant, a fabulous character, giving in to another phenomenal one, the great critic refuses Ion the mythological hero status, subjecting it to the fatality of biological data. The critic closely follows the signs of the characters’ “predestination” through the omniscient narrator’s tyranny, who seeks to finally highlight a goal: “The predestination signs are all around the hero, in his biography, his actions or his features. He is not free, he is manipulated. Hazard, accident, exception, and ultimately, singularity, are forbidden to him: for the fulfillment of destiny imposes the law, the necessity, the generality and ultimately the media. He is a victim of fatality. In this novel, where nothing is arbitrary, everything becomes necessary: it is a tyranny of significance” (Manolescu, 2007: 143).

Alexandru Piru predicts that Ion “is not a simple peasant thirsty for land, he is also a Julien Sorel of the rural world, a prudent, ambitious, shrewd, stubborn, roturier, just like Balzac’s peasants” (Piru, 1978: 219). Reading some of Balzac’s stories, the same equation can be seen, an equation where sensuality catalyzes the male character’s report to the woman, on the one hand, and to the land on the other hand. Tudor Vianu has a firm attitude: the land’s call heard by Ion as a child becomes “an obscure vocation for land, rooted to the ground”; Ion is “greedy” and

avaricious, cunning and stubborn, “a concentrated nature, earnest and calculated” (Vianu, 1979: 229). The hero’s approach to land he makes a real obsession of, but also the desire to be with Florica again despite the fact that she is married to George, are explained in terms of biology, too: “Ion has a strong animal life. [...] First of all each feeling opens all sources locked in meat; every feeling is sensuality, opportunity for possession. It is a barbarian Epicureanism. Then, supported by the whole animal life, the feelings root, quickly become obsessive. The sexuality of such a temper is a tyrannical power, exasperated, destructive” (Vianu, 1979: 229). Vianu is right when he highlights Ion’s passionate nature, but he doesn’t want the land out of greed, avarice and for material benefits, but because he fully loves it, his whole being is dedicated to it also to beat and permanently humiliate his father-in-law, in a total rural vendetta. The conflict between the two men is the conflict of two titans, two mountains, which in Romanian fairy tales are contradictory, Ana being caught in the middle of the confrontation. Ion’s passion for the land is total, absolute, for the Earth-Goddess wants that. In *The Art of Romanian Prose Writers*, Tudor Vianu mentions that “the greed for land and strong sensuality, manifested in cunning, unscrupulousness, cruelty” are typical features of the social class of peasantry. Thus Ion becomes an exponent of it, as George Calinescu said that the Pripas village is populated with many other varieties of Ion.

Unconsciously, Ion obeys a higher regularity, the ritual one, which asks him to become master of the ghost land, to tame it and to pluck the fruits by the sweat of his labor. The dance of the village set at the beginning of the novel is a dance of potencies, strong sexual energies that animate the young people in Pripas. Somesana – just like Ciuleandra – seems a ritual game involving boys and girls who, despite obvious exhaustion, defeat fatigue to extend those erotic touches which make them wince with pleasure. The girls care for strong lads, their aggression being a sign of potency. This village promotes strength and a respect for it, regardless of its material aspect, the possession of lands, or its physical aspect. This rural world is split between those strong men who possess, are respected and feared – such as Ion, respected for his strength which is required at any lad; Zenobia, a woman with great qualities, hardworking, strong and wise, “a woman like a man”, and the rich – and the needy, lazy and helpless, like Alexander Glanetasu, illustrating the thoughtless, the indolent and wasteful, who has not proven himself “man” enough to preserve his wife’s dowry. Those who possess are strong and respected, are “men”, regardless of gender, while those who don’t are weak, looked down upon for their failure, for “not

being men". In this context, Ion is a man, but one who doesn't have, being despised for this lack, pressured by the great "to have".

After the scene of the round dance, not only a social, but also a cosmic event (a kind of magical ritual), the Demiurge narrator inserted, not accidentally, the mowing scene, as Ion gets here cosmic dimensions, boosted by the land that he loved and who wants him in return. The circle, symbolized by the round dance and the semicircle suggested by the mowing, subsume the two sides of the same rite of life and death. On the one hand the dance determines through the circular motion the borders of life, set in the village, with the hearth of the village as the center and the land's dimension waiting for the harvest. On the other hand, the mowing, as sum of circular movements, under the protection of the round dance's circle (that catches all the energy of the community), seals the community as the owner of the rich harvest (sign of unaltered blight) of the earth. On the road from the village to Delnita, Ion follows an upward path, positioning himself facing east, for the sun's rays to stroke his face. The climbing itself is a solar symbol, the sign of a victory that looms on the horizon. Because the village world is often perceived as a world of magic, from this perspective we can understand the rise of the character as a real creative one, but not of the world but of himself. The road from matter to light cannot be other than man turning himself into a hero, perhaps even in a god, this after the magic of the round dance boosted and defined at the same time its upward trajectory.

For primitive peoples, the upward movement equals a shaman's road to Father-Heaven, the male symbol of the sun being obvious. For Egyptians, the hill was "the symbol of what first came to the surface of chaos when the air stormy blew over the primordial waters" and for the Celts, "instead of meaning the creation of this world it symbolizes the other world" (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1994: 434). In this sacred geography where landforms are not only that, but also expressions of creation of the world, nothing of what Ion does can be accidental or meaningless.

The scythe, or sickle, through its appearance, is the moon's projection on the earth, the moon that affects vegetation through its phases of increase or decrease, being the "attribute of many agricultural deities, as Saturn and Silvanus" (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1995: 217). The cosmic symbolism appears again, completing what solar symbolism makes. If the dance as a solar symbol gives life, brings blight and ripens crops through the lunar, feminine, all this life energy is enhanced and diminished through a symbolism of the moon's phases. According to

Hans Biedermann, “the sickle remains the attribute of Kronos (Latin Saturnus) that must be considered the god of pre-hellenistical fertility”, the one who uses the sickle as a weapon to castrate his father, to depose him, but – and here it gets interesting – is also “god Marduk’s weapon, the protector patron of the city of Babylon” (2002: 390–391). Cosmogonically, the scythe – sickle is a weapon by which a state is overthrown to establish another, it is a reductionist weapon – from the castration episode – becoming a male symbol. By association with the moon, the sickle gained feminine meanings in the cult of land’s fertilization. The mowing act is itself a dance – almost shamanic – for the person involved in this sacred frenzy forgets about himself, a self that carries with it all the worries and tiredness of the world. Entering the chthonian sacred whose state is maintained by the permanent repetitive semi-circular movement of mowing, a symbol of the magic cone, Ion lives not only as a satisfaction of his labor’s fruit, but more than that, he lets himself being transformed, existentially tasting with every move the being that dedicates to him. Ion is mowing forgetting about the fatigue, strengthened by the vital energies of the earth, and under its transforming action, the dreadful and fierce Gheea–Glia transforms into Demeter. Mircea Eliade paraphrased by Gilbert Durand mentions of this metamorphosis: “Indeed, only later in the imaginative consciousness the primitive matter, whose symbolism is focused on chthonian or abyssal depths of the maternal lap, turns into the Great cyclical Goddess of the agricultural drama and Demeter replaces Gheea” (Durand, 2000: 226). Stefan Borbely shows the sacred genealogy that captures the deities that appeared from Gheea’s generous body, which include Eros, but also the darkness and the light: “In the Greek mythology, the Chaos creates Gheea, the almighty goddess of the Earth, in whose depths engenders the deep and dark Tartar. Also, from the chaos comes Eros, the harmonizing principle of the universe (equivalent to the desire to exist), then Erebus, the infinite darkness, and Nyx, the dark night. From Erebus and Nyx are then spawned the two light lands: the ether (Aither), where the gods dwell, and Hemera, the bright day given to the men” (Borbely, 2004: 12).

This goddess patronizes the mysteries of initiation, which “celebrate the eternal return, the cycle of births and deaths probably in the sense of a progressive spiritualization of the matter” (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1995: 440). That is why Rebreanu chooses for Petrișor, Ana and Ion’s son, to be born on the field from his mother’s womb – symbolically synonymous with the womb of the Great Goddess, who receives him on her lap, reiterating the eternal cycle of life, of its renewal. Ion possesses



Florica directly on the ground, as a reflex of an ancient wedding ritual, according to which the bride and the groom were making love on the ground on their wedding night to have a fertile marriage blessed with many descendants. There are also funeral connotations of this goddess, especially in the passionate kissing of the land scene when the hero's hands covered in blackish oiled clay are associated with "mourning gloves" and his pleasure and happiness are mixed with an indefinite feeling of fear – the knee-bending gestures, the pious bending of the forehead, the fearful kissing, as if they don't come from a passionate lover, but from a passionate believer. The kiss is full of respect and fear: "And in this quick kiss he felt a menacing chill...". Ion seems to know deep inside that he has been "chosen", that what reigns is much stronger than him, boundless and irrepressible. In Ion's murder scene, George seems to be just a tool through which Ion is definitively given back to the Great Goddess: "George flinched as if he had suddenly come to his senses, and quickly entered the porch, safely locking the door and placing the hoe at its place". Justice is not done once with Ion's death, Ion is only punished for his immoral actions on a social level, in terms of the morality of the village because his death closes the magic circle of birth, of life fulfillment and of death; he was born from the Great Mother's generous womb, from the life-giving earth, he fulfilled the destiny of a civilizing hero by transforming the uncontrollable monster, metamorphosing it into the generous fertilized deity offering crops, to eventually return to the uncreated, the primordial chaos and another hero, possibly to take his place. This means the continuous cycle of the universe born from chaos, mastering the chaos to ritual annihilate and rebirth. Therefore, the road from Pripas flows like Time, indifferent to the small and large tragedies of people who do nothing but continually reconstruct a sacred mythical scenario so the universe should not vanish.

By means of his transforming action, by repeating a gesture dating from the world's creation, Ion loses his social dimension, becoming a civilizing hero-savior, because he tamed the monster, acts upon it transforming it, temporarily destroys its aggressiveness, becoming his master. He shows his fellow the strong connection between man and nature, the man's role to transform raw uncontrollable nature, the unspiritualized matter, into an element obedient to his civilizing wish. The natural and the cultural man – Marduk and Ion – are molded into one, for "the civilizing hero is often identified with the supreme deity and with the creator of the world" (Gulian, 1983: 244); they alternate, just like Gheea and Demeter, Tiamat and the fertile land. Paraphrasing A. Van Deursen, C. I. Gulian identifies four types of heroes: "A. The

sequencer of the world, or the second creator; B. The civilizing hero, who gives people various cultural goods, including institutions and customs; C. The heaven-sent hero; D. The mediator, go-between God and man” (Gulian, 1983: 246). The dualistic nature of the civilizing hero, sum of strengths and weaknesses, is found in Ion: he is sensitive and compassionate, but also fierce, cruel and uncaring in relationship to Ana; helpful, hardworking, respectful, but also arrogant, angry and intemperate in relationships with others.

Ana and Florica are two women who love Ion, but neither of them can have him. Ana serves as a means to obtain Vasile Baciú’s land; Florica, as a means to reach that last and final “hug of the land” – for the true wedding of the hero with this Mother Goddess, Virgin Goddess, a cosmic hierogamy. Like seeds that germinate in the warm and generous womb of the earth, which must die to be reborn in a higher stance, Ion must cross the threshold of this world, to progress from the “created” into the “uncreated”. His physical death is also ritual, because all civilizing heroes descended into the underworld to obtain the permission of the coordinating spirits. Like Odysseus, the wanderer, struggling to overcome the passions of the body so as to reach the family home, that center of the universe; or Aeneas, the founder, Father of a nation and an empire; or Orpheus, the creator passionately in love with his work; or Harap-Alb, immature but honest hero, open-hearted to his friends; etc. In the same way, Ion Pop of Glanetasu, who loves the land more than he loves his mother or even himself, crosses the Inferno for springing into a new light. From a human perspective, by descending into the womb of the Great Goddess, the hero must be reborn in his immortal state. In *The History of Religious Beliefs and Ideas*, Mircea Eliade captures an ancient Babylonian rite of the land, of refertilization of the field, which goes in parallel with the cosmological Resacralization of the king, who, after being symbolically humiliated, regains his sacred prerogatives, “generally through a spectacular hierogamy that implies the intercourse of the king with a priestess (or the queen) in front of the entire assembly” (Borbely, 2004: 17).

Ion’s true union is neither with Ana nor with Florica, but with the Earth, which wants him just for itself. An interesting female triangle is shaped hereby (which requires a careful analysis in a separate study) consisting of the virginal naive female, placed in the position of victim – Ana; the erotic Aphrodite-like female, an exceptional beauty – Florica; and the eternal female, both Aphrodite-like and maternal – the land. If the *Odyssey* was considered an “epic of victory over the perils of femininity” (Durand, 2000: 99), the novel *Ion* becomes the tattered

masculine expression, sacrificed in a fatal female triangle; the ethereal and the human, sensuality and eroticism, the split between “having” and “being” rip him apart, claiming him successively, until the hero fulfills his destiny. The Earth–Gheea gives birth to life and induces death, as darkness induces light, or Eros comes together with Thanatos; Ion experiences them all, for he is the hero, he is the Chosen One.

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## “Third Culture” Critical Tools

Cornelia Coșer\*

### **Abstract:**

The applicability of technical instruments to literary texts in view of their critical appreciation has already been demonstrated. Nevertheless this article is the first attempt to use such instruments outside the domain of science fiction, for an approach to mainstream literature. The ENV Model and the STC Operator, both developed within a theory of inventive problem solving, are used here to study literary genres, to construct and deconstruct previously applied critical labels. They are proved to be efficient tools in a less biased way than traditional criticism.

**Keywords:** TRIZ, OTSM, ENV, STC, literary genres

### **Introduction**

Statements about the necessity of a “Third Culture” (Snow, 1963) to close the communication gap between the men of letter and the men of science and the impossibility of the sciences to any longer “deny the pertinence” (Prigogine, 1984: 86) of the points of view expressed by the humanities have been around for the last five decades. “Poetry is the sister of astronomy” the ancient Greeks believed, moreover “The two concepts will join”, a character says in Altshuller’s story “The Ballad of the Stars” and therefore. “The individual of the future will be both poet and scientist” (2005: 207 and 23). Nevertheless, in spite of the elapsed time, no important steps have been taken in this direction, as if carefully preserving group identity would serve humanity better than being able to acquire new perspectives on reality or handle new aspects of it.

While sf literature can be seen as a bridge between the sciences and at least one aspect of the humanities – literature – its long sojourn in the ghetto and away from the mainstream lessened its impact and diminished its qualities as a path opener in the direction of a common, enriched outlook on life and the universe. SF’s labelling as paraliterature and its rejection as an intertextual field may have been caused, as several writers suggest, by the absence of appropriate critical tools and by approaches based on criticism developed for other types of literature. TRIZ – the Theory of Inventive Problem Solving – in other words the

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science of inventions and its development OTSM – the General Theory of Powerful Thinking – a development of TRIZ for the non-engineering field appeared to offer relevant instruments for a pertinent approach to this type of literature. The decision to embark on this kind of venture, once taken, extensively validated the assumption, as proved in (Coşer, 2011). Moreover, during the very process, two potentially interesting points emerged:

– First that the same tools can successfully be applied to non-sf literature. A first attempt in this direction, though to a somewhat different purpose, was made by Darrell and Melissa Mann (2006) who, in attempting to find the “emotional context” that is able to produce “wow moments” in readers, surveyed multiple readers’ response to sixty-three books and attached examples of conflict resolution to several of the 40 Principles of TRIZ.

– Second that such an approach can be used as a holistic critical tool. On the one hand, it transgresses the historically successive and often conflicting “fashions of the time” in criticism (the structuralists, formalists, new criticism, etc.) and is able to address all their different points of view and make them its own in a much more objective way by help of different tools while, at the same time, offering unique and complex revelations about the literary text, which are exclusively its own. To bring forth one example: one of the TRIZ tools, the Multiscreen is made of nine screens that help the observer perceive each Element of the world (which may be any object/idea connected with the surrounding world or included in any artistic work) in its past, present and future evolution. It also has in view the supersystem it belongs to and the subsystem it is made of. As such it can be successfully applied to the literary period that creates one certain author, to the author himself, to the structure of the work as an object of art, or to objects within the work itself, the result being a unique and complex perception of the period, artist and work as a whole or of whichever individual aspect desired.

### **Technical Tools for Literary Criticism**

This article, wishing to carry on along the lines mentioned above, concentrates on the possibilities offered by two other tools, the ENV model, which is an OTSM tool and the Size Time Cost Operator, which is a TRIZ instrument, as valuable critical instruments in approaching the mainstream literary text.

*The ENV Model* is used to solve complex technological or interdisciplinary problems. Its purpose is to formalize the description of

the elements of a problem which has to be solved. ENV stands for Element – Name of the parameter which describes the Element (i.e. Parameter) – Value of the describing parameter. Normally each Parameter has several Values. The Model simplifies the researcher’s work, makes it more logical and helps distinguish between many nuances of the description. As a classification tool the ENV Model helps see the common points and distinguish the differences between the Elements under discussion.

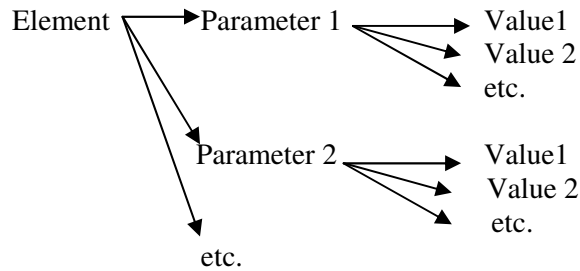


Fig.1 Description of the ENV Model

The definition of an Element is extremely large: it may be a substantial object or something unsubstantial which we experience through our senses, an imaginary thing in a novel or in any other type of art. It is important to mention that each Parameter may become an Element in its turn. This makes the Model appropriate for literary investigation. A very simple example for the sake of understanding: if we take Man as an element, then his Age, Weight, Height, Race, etc. can be describing parameters; obviously each of these have different values, e.g. Race can have the values Caucasian, Hispanic, Mongoloid, Afro-American, etc.

*The Size Time Cost Operator* consists of a series of mental experiments used within ARIZ (the algorithm that TRIZ put forward as a methodology for facilitating the production of inventions) which help researchers who are in search of an ideal solution for a technical problem or an invention. Its purpose is to change the conventional images the brain builds around different objects. Therefore it increases the efficiency of thinking by improving imagination and creativity. Using this tool may not lead to the solution directly but it exercises the mind towards breaking down psychological barriers and built-in stereotypes that prevent the researcher from reaching innovatory solutions. In time mental inertia is defeated, the way of thinking undergoes changes, the fear of what is unconventional or inconceivable

or straightforward rubbish disappears and the path to new ideas is levelled.

The Operator as devised by Altshuller (2000: 176) contains six steps (mental operations):

- increasing the SIZE of an object to infinity vs. reducing it to zero
- increasing the TIME of object movement (process) to infinity vs. reducing it to zero
- increasing the COST of an object to infinity vs. reducing it to zero

In our fast speeding world, the general demand tends to be for objects that are as small as possible, completely efficient in the shortest time possible and costing as little as possible (if zero cost is impossible). Therefore some of the technical solutions the Operator points to will easily be discarded. By way of demonstration Salamatov's (1999: 86–87) example as to the way SIZE can be manipulated in order to solve a problem is given here: the problem that needs to be solved is finding the best way to anchor a modern huge ship. In agreement with TRIZ procedures the anchor is defined as “an object to hold a vessel”. While increasing the size of a ship to 10 km gives birth to the idea of anchoring it to an iceberg (an idea which can be further exploited until a practical solution is reached), reducing its size to 1cm will be easily abandoned for several reasons: not only does the ship become uncontrollable and will probably sink but it also loses its basic function, that of transporting people and merchandise. Meanwhile, as already mentioned, the purpose is not that of chancing upon the correct innovatory solution but that of exercising the mind and defeating mental inertia.

Since a literary work is a product of the imagination rather than of technical experiments, two adjustments can be operated on the original model. On the one hand, other parameters may be taken into consideration. They are obtained by applying the ENV Model and will include Elements such as “space”, “time”, “plot” etc. and their Values. While Parameter “cost” could be included with Values such as “publication costs” or “screening of novels”, in this context it is considered irrelevant. On the other hand, while in this article the original categories “increasing to infinity vs. reducing to zero” are kept for the sake of simplicity however, when referring to literature, quite a few more distinctive nuances can be applied.

### **New Tools for Old Classifications**

When it comes to establishing genre characteristics the ENV Model and the Size Time Cost Operator, besides offering the possibility of



clear parameters for classification, bring little novelty. Since no complete lists exist they can only be built along the experiment. But it is interesting to see how Aristotle's descriptions of tragedy, going as far back as 355 B.C., could be organized in the following list of Parameters and Values.

Element	Parameter	Value/ Parameter	Value	Increasing towards $\infty$	Decreasing towards 0
imitation of action	unity of form	complete/ singular		✓	
		whole		✓	
	intricacy	complex	reversal	✓	
			recognition	✓	
		simple		✓	
	quality	artistic	terrible	✓	
			pitiful	✓	
		trivial		✓	
				✓	
	unity of time	one day		✓	
				✓	
	unity of space	one place		✓	

Fig.1 List of Parameters and Values for the “plot” of a tragedy in the Aristotelian meaning of the word

The list should continue with the other elements of the tragedy: Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, and Song and their respective Values. Being just an exercise the parameters and values were selected following the original text, therefore they all fall in the “Increasing towards  $\infty$ ” category. For the same reason no further attention was given to other possible descriptors of contemporary dramatic works.

The great dramatic works of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, such as Moliere’s comedies and Shakespeare’s tragedies when analysed from the point of view of the Parameter “character/personage” will all grade “Increasing towards  $\infty$ ” for the Values “Trait” further subdivided into “uniqueness” and “intensity”, and respectively “unique” and “maximum”, as well as for the Value “Complexity” with the subdivision “flat”. At the same time they will grade “Decreasing towards 0” with all other Parameters and Values that can be involved when building a list for dramatic characters. The reason is that these traits are so strong that nowadays a *tartuffe* means a “hypocrite”, a *harpagon* – a greedy person. In Shakespeare’s great tragedies the whole action is centred around

Macbeth’s ambition, Hamlet’s desire for revenge, Othello’s jealousy or King Lear’s madness. Interestingly enough some of the same descriptors could be applied to characters in the plays of Pinter or Beckett, representatives of the theatre of the absurd in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Element	Parameter	Value/ Parameter	Value	Increasing towards $\infty$	Decreasing towards 0
Characte/ Personage	trait	uniqueness	unique	✓	
		intensity of trait	maximum	✓	
	complexity	flat		✓	
	...	...	...		✓

Fig.2 Exemplification of the ENV Model for the Element “character” in the French comedy and the Elizabethan Theatre

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, works such as Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* or Fielding’s *Tom Jones*, got the label *picaresque* which designated novels characterised by a great number of secondary characters (Parameter “number of characters” of Element “character/personage” increasing towards  $\infty$ ) which accompany a few main characters in their numerous adventures (Parameter “number of adventures” of Element “plot” increasing towards  $\infty$ ). Thus in the light of a most superficial inspection, the picaresque form actually means “number increasing towards  $\infty$ ”, with reference to quite a few other Parameter such as “social anchors” of Element “Space”, that is different social environments are inhabited by characters belonging to all social layers who undergo episodic adventures under the supervision of an intruding author (Value “authorial interventions” of Parameter “omniscient” of Element “point of view” increasing towards  $\infty$ ). Going further, one finds the same “increasing towards  $\infty$ ” for Value “low class” of Parameter “social type” of Element “Main Character”, and so on. To be mentioned here is the fact that when it comes to Element “quality of writing”, while the Value “humorous” of Parameter “comic”, can be clearly assigned to the “Increasing towards  $\infty$ ” category, Values “satiric”, “romantic”, “dramatic” would belong to a subcategory in a complex analysis since they are less straightforwardly expressed in the novel. Again it should be mentioned that the following diagram is incomplete but constructing it brings a lot of clarification and organization in one’s ideas when it comes to defining the picaresque novel.

Element	Parameter	Value	Increasing towards $\infty$	Decreasing towards 0
Character/ Personage	number		✓	
	complexity	flat	✓	
Main character	social type	low class	✓	
Plot	number of adventures		✓	
	episodic		✓	
Space	social anchors		✓	
Point of view	omniscient	authorial intervention	✓	
		third person	✓	
Type of writing	epic		✓	
Quality of writing	comic	humorous	✓	
		satiric	✓	
		romantic	✓	
		dramatic	✓	
...	...	...		✓

Fig.3 Exemplification of the ENV Model for the picaresque novel

While the above mentioned works have long been assigned their specific place in the history of literature, the recognition of specific traits helps identify future tendencies in the modern fictional landscape where the great number of literary productions sometimes makes categorization difficult. Fashions in literature and even within different genres change today faster than they used to even if remarkably slower than technological innovations. In the 70s and 80s more than seven sub-genres appeared in SF literature only, all labelled with different names (cyberpunk, slipstream, biopunk, ribofunk, etc.). The moment may be foreseen when individual writers will create their own trends which will die together with them. This is the reason why a diagram such as the one above can be functional from two perspectives:

– one the one hand, authors could work within its frame to create unique novels, in much the same way as Altshuller's Fantogram (1971) could be used by SF writers to devise their unique worlds and the objects in it. This would mean that certain values of different parameters making up a literary text would be Increased towards  $\infty$  or Decreased towards 0 in an exercise of the imagination, the result being unique creations of the authorial imagination;

– on the other hand, by applying it to a literary work, the critic could identify its defining elements that would assign it a certain place in the historical development of literature (literary trends or fashions of the time) and would label it as a more or less representative example of the genre or a path opener – a first or unique example of a new genre. Different degrees in between the Increasing towards  $\infty$  – Decreasing towards 0 categories could be predetermined.

So far I have shown how reference to a set of parameters and values helps construct a clearer image of the literary work. But it may also deconstruct an accepted but deceiving or straightforwardly erroneous interpretation and this can prove to be a much more challenging endeavour. The following example may be edifying. David Lodge's novel *Ginger, You're Barmy* (1982) got the label "comic novel" in Wikipedia (a reliable though popular source of research). *The Spectator*, on the blurb of the Romanian translation refers to the horrors of soldierly routine being converted into the most amusing situations under the writer's pen. The tag attached to Lodge's other novels and to the author himself – comic – might have led to such recognition. However, readers will surely notice the inadvertence of such a classification and the general replacement of humour by bitterness. This becomes obvious once the Operator is applied. The whole novel, the characters and situations presented in it, would grade as "decreasing towards 0" with such Values as "funny", "amusing", "entertaining", "hilarious", and actually to all others that could be mentioned under Parameter "comic" of Element "quality of writing". The same with Element "quality of character/personage". On the other hand, Element "quality of writing" would grade Increasing towards  $\infty$  with others values, such as "mordant", "cynical", "dreary" or maybe "politically indicting". Not even the absurdity of certain situations makes the novel laughable.

And how could it be any different in a book describing not only the humiliations of the instruction, the endless drills, the permanent controls, the dull cleaning of the kits and the useless rebukes on behalf of narrow-minded, sadistic sergeant-majors, but also the dreariness and squalor, the bad food and the coarse language, the latter apparently the absolutely necessary accompanying ingredient of the previous elements? It's true that the English National Military Service, when compulsory, was not different from what was going on in other countries in the same period and even later. The common plight often created lasting friendships and memories that were a source of amusement later on. But this is not the situation in the present novel. On the contrary the main character gives the most unflattering account of himself as he admits in

the Prologue. The way he solved the moral dilemmas he was faced with is more than questionable even in his eyes: while he cannot be accused of being the cause of his best friend's ending up with a prison sentence, he can be accused of refusing to help him avoid it while, at the same time, pinching off his girlfriend. During the two years he spends in the Service he formulates his own life philosophy:

All human activity was useless, but some kinds were more pleasant than others. ... If you were forced to inhabit an unpleasant box for a time, then you could make it as comfortable as possible until you could get out. Luck or cunning were the most effective attributes in this world and cunning, though it worked more slowly, was the more reliable (186).

To the article he reads in the newspaper about the military service's contribution to the modelling of character, his own replica is that nothing can "inculcate bad habits, bad language, idleness, slothfulness, drunkenness" (190) as successfully as the National Service. The rebellious character, Mike Brady, ends up in prison, the sensitive one, Percy Higgins, is harassed until he commits suicide. The main character, Jonathan Browne, seems to have come up with the only acceptable decision, making the necessary accommodations in order to survive, which Lodge conveys as being his own in the afterword. However, at the end of the novel, his character is trapped in an unhappy marriage, a family he doesn't love and a job he finds "no more than tolerable" (210). There is no detail or incident which is not an exact copy of reality, no suspension of disbelief is necessary.

The Operator proves the novel's labelling as a "comic novel" to be a hasty decision.

### **Conclusion**

If one undertook the experiment of building complete charts including all Elements as well as Parameters and Values that could be used with reference to a literary work, he/she would have to start with a systematisation of the critical trends along the years, emphasising their specificities, common points and their differences in approach. Complete charts would take years of strenuous work to build and would contain thousands of pages. But, as show above, even drawing up partial charts can prove efficient.

When reading a novel or any other literary achievement, it is not so important to see it through the eyes of the structuralist or formalist or feminist, or any other critical voice which sometimes becomes louder

than the very voice of the author. It is important to have the background that is necessary to form your own response to it. The way of approaching the text which was described above as one way of using technical tools for literary purposes adds to the creation of an enriched background. The Parameters can be developed by each researcher for each work through an exercise of the mind and for individual purposes of the analysis. The important thing is that once this has been done a few times, it becomes a habit of the mind which enriches imagination and develops creativity. Therefore this way of approaching literature has to do more with practical criticism than with observance of the rules of previous critical theories. In this respect it is much more convenient and profitable for the reader whom Umberto Eco (1997: 15) called the “model reader” who grows with the text, identifying the author’s signals and, to a certain extent, even for the “empirical reader” who enjoys a text without consciously bothering about its elements but brings to it his/her own particular perspective. In this way the possibility of a “series of virtually infinite possible readings”, and interpretations is achieved (Eco, 2005: 71). The tools presented and the multiple variations of the way they can be used have the role of enlarging the readers’ perspective making him think about the work and implicitly about the reality it presents. Thus his way of acquiring information is turned into an attentive and conscious method. Hence his way of relating to the world is changed and his responses to it are documented.

It becomes obvious that the model used in this article can be further developed by the introduction of more and more parameters and values to increase the complexity of the approach and the purposes it is used for. Imagination is the limit. While working with the method itself, it went far beyond initial expectations and the number of tools borrowed from the theory of inventions and applied to approaching the literary text increased. Therefore it is not far fetched to emphasize the fact that TRIZ/OTSM tools, initially devised for technological improvements and inventions, could be appropriated by literary criticism in an attempt to find a common platform between the two.

A methodology of critical analysis based on TRIZ/OTSM tools still expects to be put together and it is the more difficult to achieve as it is hard to appreciate how much of what is gained is based on ingenious, genuinely new ideas and how much is based on being knowledgeable in previous critical trends. In other words to what extent narrow specialization and versatility in the domain obstruct the fresh outlook – but then, overcoming impediments is what TRIZ is about.

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LINGUISTICS, STYLISTICS AND TRANSLATION STUDIES

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## The Electronic Pronunciation Dictionary. A Help to the Foreign Learner?

Rodica Hanga Calciu\*

### **Abstract:**

The pronunciation dictionary of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (whether EPD or LPD) covers both British and American English, includes main pronunciation and variants and an accompanying CD-Rom. The investigation of 76 words taken from Longman Pronunciation Dictionary (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) has shown that there is quite often a mismatch between the pronunciation recorded and the IPA transcription. The richness of information seems to have complicated things for the language learner.

**Keywords:** electronic dictionary, pronunciation, IPA transcription, variants, mismatch, foreign learner, empirical study, opinion poll

### **Introduction**

Anybody involved in the teaching or learning of English in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would admit that the electronic pronunciation dictionary on CD-ROM is a remarkable achievement.

And I am thinking of the Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary (hence CEPD) in general, and Longman Pronunciation Dictionary (LPD) in particular, which both display accurate and clear IPA transcription (of both British and American pronunciation) and good quality audio recordings of the headwords and phrases. Besides, LPD (2008) displays the results of the latest pronunciation preference polls of particular words conducted by the editor, professor J. C. Wells. Deeply committed to reflect the actual speech of real people, the editors of these dictionaries (P. Roach and J. C. Wells, respectively) with a wide experience with variants, have represented a modernized RP version used by BBC newsreaders, a change from the simple and straightforward phonemic transcription of RP English found for half a century in D. Jones's English Pronouncing Dictionary.

The presentation of the wider and richer reality in terms of pronunciation must have an impact on the foreign learner of English. If up to now the foreign learner was used to a neater transcriptional system, often taken for the truth, nowadays he/she is confronted with a variety of transcriptional offerings. To this the availability of

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accompanying recordings of the headwords should be added. Two legitimate questions arise from these changes: does this wealth of information help the foreign learner of English and is the information presented coherently?

In the preface to LPD (p. XVII) we are told that the main pronunciation, printed in bold, is the recommended model for learners of English. A similar remark is made by P. Roach who says (introduction VI) “When more than one pronunciation of a word is given, the order of the alternative is important. The first pronunciation is believed to be the most usual one although the distance between the alternatives may vary, with some alternant forms rivalling the first-given in perceived frequency while the others may be a more distant second”.

But in cases where two or more transcriptions appear to represent the existing variants, and recoding is also provided, only one recording seems available. Is there consistency in deciding which variant to use? The users are not informed in any way about the order. But generally it is taken for granted that recording has to match the first transcription, the rule-of-thumb.

Quite often a mismatch between transcription and recording has been mentioned in literature on e-dictionaries (Sobkowiak: 2003 and 2005).

The fact of trying to capture both BrE and AmE variants increases even more the potential inconsistency.

The present paper aims at analysing whether a mismatch exists in modern pronunciation English dictionaries focusing on LPD which could be seen as a hindrance rather than a gain for the learner of English. It also looks at the wealth of information and its usefulness for the learner of English.

### **Method and Procedure**

This is an empirical study based on data extracted from LPD (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) by hand on the following criteria:

- a) words that have at least one variant in one or both accents (BrE and AmE)
- b) place names and personal/family names with variants have not been considered
- c) words with a frequency of under 10 in British National Corpus (BNC) have been discarded.

The following procedure was used:

- a) pre- search of items and check for mismatch between first transcription and recording

b) 76 words to be found in Table 1 in the Appendix were retained and analysed (words with two recordings for one accent such as *route* with two recordings in American English are considered editorial accidents and are discarded).

## Results

### 1. Accent of English

The results of mismatch between the main transcription and the recording were considered in terms of the accent of English involved. The mismatch is given in Fig.1 in the form of a histogram:

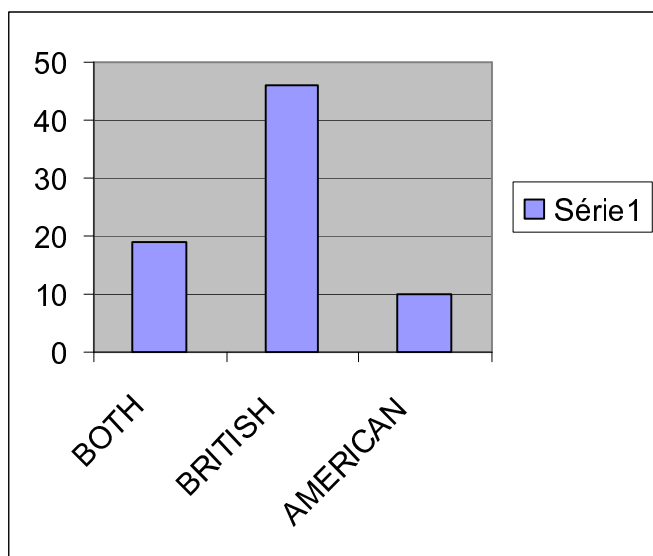


Fig. 1 Accents of English

Most mismatch was found in examples of British English (46), then in both accents (9) and least mismatch was found in American English (10).

### 2. Opinion Poll

The mismatch was considered in terms of preference poll, a new feature of this modern dictionary which concerns many words of uncertain pronunciation. 27 headwords that were given the preference poll were analysed and the results show that in half the cases the recordings did not reflect preference poll given in the dictionary and that

in one case the preference poll was only partly taken into account in the recording.

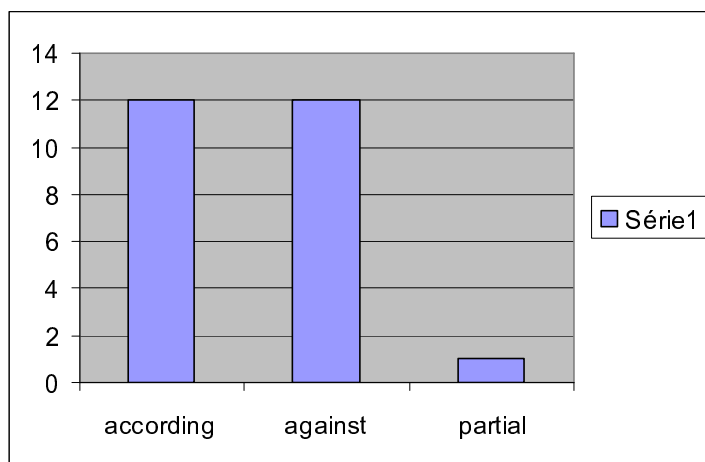


Fig. 2 Opinion poll

It is rather disturbing to notice the mismatch, what is the learner going to do and how is the teacher going to give an explanation for this mismatch.

### ***3. Choice of Recording***

Results show that in cases where there is mismatch between transcription and recording most often the pronunciation of the second variant is recorded on the CD-ROM, but it can be the third and the fourth. The histogram in Fig. 3 shows that there is inconsistency in the variant used in the recording in both accents. From results we notice that obviously American English has fewer variants than British English.

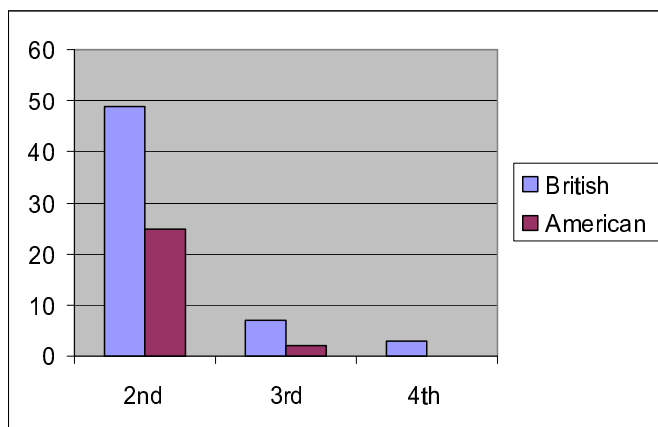


Fig. 3 Choice of recording

#### ***4. Changes***

The mismatch between the transcription and the recording concerns: vowels, consonants, stress patters and sometimes a combination of 2 in the proportion shown in Fig. 4.

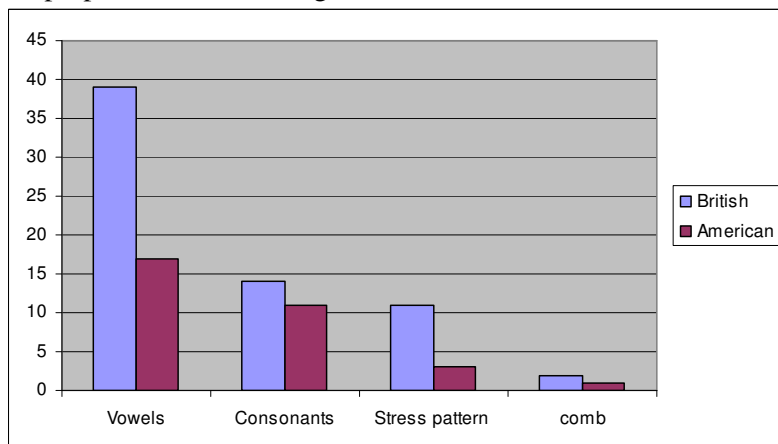


Fig. 4 Changes

In four words the recording did not correspond to the given transcription. Certainly a proof of sloppy proofreading or rather prooflistening.

#### 4.1. Vowels

As far as vowels are concerned the mismatched is due to the following phenomena: elision, the *Kit/schwa* drift and transfer of CURE set from /ʊə/ →/ɔ:/ a characteristic of BrE (J. C. Wells 1982: 301).

Elision (the omission of a vowel in our case) in our corpus seems to affect mainly BrE and again with inconsistency either elision was found in the transcription or in the recording.

As to the *Kit/schwa* drift Wells (1997: 18) mentions that this drift initiated in the second half of the 20th century and the assumption today is that /ə/ is more frequent than the more conservative /ɪ/. These changes are not absolute, though.

The presence of the schwa variant after the Kit variants has been considered in the literature as reflecting the conservatism of dictionary representations. In our data there are 5 words in which the first transcription contains ɪ but the recording contains ə and 4 examples of words where the transcription contains ə and the recording ɪ. No relevant conclusion can be drawn on these examples.

The distinction between the two weak vowels in the corpus was done auditorily by one person only. An acoustic analysis of the 2 weak vowels is required here but this is not an easy task given that the acoustic properties of schwa vary a lot according to the context, it is actually considered as the most unstable vowels of all.

A small scale study investigated the *Kit/Schwa* variation in the speech of young RP speakers in the realization of the past tense –ed suffix and present tense suffix –es and concluded that there is a tendency to retain the KIT vowel.

The conclusion is that the *Kit/schwa* drift seems to have become sluggish. Maybe there are some external factors that account for the maintenance of KIT like vowels in British English.

As to American English, we are told by the editor of LPD that most native speakers do not distinguish between the weak vowels: /ɪ/ and /ə/.

Nevertheless in the preface of LPD (p. XXI) we are told that the rule of representation for AmE in the dictionary favours /ɪ/ in front of palato-alveolars and velars and /ə/ elsewhere. “Where no separate indication is given for AmE, but both /ɪ/ and /ə/ are shown for an entry, it may be assumed that AmE prefers /ɪ/ and /ə/ according to this rule”. This means that the reader has to bear this in mind everytime the two variants are shown for an entry. We can hardly expect this to be the



case for the learner of English who does not have the knowledge of articulatory phonetics.

In the corpus the following examples of the drift are found:

<b>British English</b>	<b>American English</b>
adequate	adequate
aquifer	aquifer
baronet	
cavetous	

Fig. 5 Kit /Schwa drift

But the recordings also contain examples of the reverse drift:

<b>British English</b>	<b>American English</b>
foreign	allegation
miniature	
surplice	

Fig. 6 Kit /Schwa reverse drift

As to the transfer of CURE set from /ʊə/ →/ɔ:/ found in Present day BrE which is considered as a ongoing sound change, we have found an equal number of mismatch so we conclude that either the transcription is conservative or the recording.

<b>ʊə → ɔ:</b>	<b>ɔ: → ʊə</b>
boorish	assurance
bourgeoisie	assure
fluoride	poor

Fig. 7 CURE transfer

#### 4.2. Consonants

As to consonants, the main phenomenon seen in the mismatch is assimilation (mainly yod coalescence).

Fig. 8 below shows the examples of assimilation in the recordings (found in transcription as well but not in the first one) according to the accent of English:

<b>British English</b>	<b>American English</b>
Caucasian	coercion
cranberry	mature
euthanasia	premature
spatula	

Fig. 8 Assimilation

Yod coalescence is considered as one of the phonetic characteristics of Estuary English which is according to J. C. Wells a new name for a variety of modified regional speech noticeable in Britain today because of the erosion of the English class system.

At the same time examples of dissimilation are found in the recording as shown in Fig. 9:

British English	American English
dissociation	Cartesian
during	dissociation
graduate	situate (adj)
situate (adj)	Species
species	

Fig. 9 Dissimilation

### 4.3. Stress Pattern

The last cause of mismatch concerns the stress pattern.

Fig. 10 shows the mismatch between the recording and the first transcription in terms of stress, more examples are to be found in our data in Br.E than in Am.E

word	British English		American English	
	transcription	recording	transcription	recording
applicable			0100	1000
clandestine	010	102		
collage	21	12		
communal	100	010		
contribute	012	102	010	012
controversy	1020	0100		
eczema	100	10	010	100
formidable	100	010		
legate	10	01		
pecan	01	10		
primarily	0100	100		
submarine	102	201		
voluntarily	20100	1000		

Fig. 10 Stress pattern

Change in stress patterns of certain polysyllabic words was mentioned by Daniel Jones already in 1952 and a general trend to stress such words on the second or third syllable was underlined by the phonetician. He gives the example of *formidable*, *controversy* among others. The instability of stress patterns of words due to analogical or rhythmic changes is also mentioned by Gimson (1980: 231).

The analysis of the variants found in the recordings does not allow us to draw any conclusion as to the mismatch. In a few examples the change in the stress pattern brought about a change in the vowel sound.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

The aim of the present study was to see to what extent the new updated pronunciation e-dictionaries, with special reference to LPD, are a help to the foreign learner.

Some limitations of the study have to be mentioned. The selection of data was done manually so the corpus is not exhaustive and it is based on the auditory judgements of one listener only. What is needed in the future is more judges and acoustic analysis of the recordings. Proofreading and prooflistening require a good ear, a lot of patience and concentration.

What is obvious in the analysis of the data is that the information contained is much richer, and the number of variants in different varieties of British English may reach as many as 10 variants. This could be of help to the foreign learner who finds it hard to understand native speakers whose speech falls outside RP. But the more complex and richer information is more demanding for the user of the dictionary. To this one should add the inconsistencies found in presentation of the information.

As in other e-dictionaries that have both modes of phonetic representation, examples of mismatch between transcription and recording have been found and the number is not negligible.

If up till now dictionaries were considered constitutionally conservative and always representing an archaic form of the language this is not the case of LPD. Then how are we to interpret the mismatch, if the transcription is not conservative could the recordings be? Could the mismatch be due to the different age of the speakers?

I asked the editor, professor J. C. Wells, these questions and here is his answer:

“Not all the voice clips were recorded especially for LPD. Some came from the Longman database and had originally been recorded for LDOCE or other dictionaries.

I spent 25 full working days in the studio monitoring those that were specially recorded. But I did not have a chance to monitor the remainder, nor to check whether they agreed with my choice of first pronunciation. For those mismatches that have been brought to my attention, I will try to ensure that for the next edition (whenever that is) we sort it out. But I doubt whether I will be able to listen to the entire set of 200,000 voice clips to check each of them against the transcription.

I hope that at least in every case the pronunciation accords with one of the variants given in LPD, even if not the first choice.

The speakers that I monitored were a dozen or more professional actors or voice artists engaged by the publishers, Pearson Education (Longman). Some were British, some American, as appropriate; but since the recordings were made in Harlow, Essex, all, including the Americans, were currently living in the London area. I do not have any biographical data on them. I would estimate that all were aged between 25 and 65. They were all supposed to be conversant with IPA, but in practice not all could fluently read a phonetic transcription, which is one reason why I was present throughout and had to intervene from time to time” J. C. Wells (personal email).

We only hope that one day there will be more consistency between the transcription and the recording in LPD and that the foreign learner will be warned as to which variant is recorded on the CD-ROM.

One thing is sure, that ever since Wells’ dictionary arrived to the market (in 1990) with its higher phonetic faithfulness to reality the phonetic transcription in LPD and EPD has become a less attractive pedagogical tool not only for the foreign learner but also for the more advanced.

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## APPENDIX

Table 1 Mismatch between first IPA transcription and recording in LPD

Word	N° variants	Mismatch due to vowel sound, consonant, stress or combination	Recorded variant	Mismatch-accent	Opinion Poll
acceleration	3	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE and BrE	
adaptation	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE and BrE	
adequate	3	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE and BrE	
allegation	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE	
almond	4	C	3 <sup>rd</sup>	AmE	Against
aquifer	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE and BrE	
applicable	2	S	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE	According
Asia	2	C	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	According
associate (vb)	2	C	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
association	2	C	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
assurance	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
assure	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
assurer	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE	
baronet	4	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE and BrE	
battery	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
boorish	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE and BrE	
bourgeoisie	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
cadaver	3	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
caesarean	3	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	

Cartesian	2	C	0	AmE	
Caucasian	3	C	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
chiropracist	4	C	3 <sup>rd</sup>	BrE	
clandestine	5	Comb	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	Against
coercion	2	C	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE	
colander	3	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE and BrE	
collage	3	S	3 <sup>rd</sup>	BrE	
communal	3	S	3 <sup>rd</sup>	BrE	Against
compote	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
countess	4	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
contribute	2 AmE 4 BrE	S	2 <sup>nd</sup> AmE 3 <sup>rd</sup> BrE	AmE and BrE	Against
controversy	4	S	3 <sup>rd</sup>	BrE	According
covetous	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
cranberry	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
cursed (adj)	3	Comb	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE and BrE	
diphthong	2	C	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE	Against
direct (vb, n, adj, adv)	3	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	According
dissociation	2	C	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE and BrE	
diversion	4	C	4 <sup>th</sup>	BrE	
dividend	4	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
during	3 AmE 5 BrE	C V	3 <sup>rd</sup> Am 2 <sup>nd</sup> BrE	AmE and BrE	Against
economic	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	Against
economist	4	V	0	BrE	
eczema	3 AmE 3 BrE	V	2 <sup>nd</sup> BrE 2 <sup>nd</sup> AmE	AmE and BrE	
equinox	3	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE	According
euthanasia	3	C	3 <sup>rd</sup>	BrE	
evolution	3	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	Against
exquisite	4	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE and BrE	According
fluoride	3 AmE 3 BrE	V	2 <sup>nd</sup> AmE 2 <sup>nd</sup> BrE	AmE and BrE	
foreign	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
formidable	3 AmE 4 BrE	S	3 <sup>rd</sup>	BrE	According
geodesic	2 AmE 3 BrE	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
graduate(n)	4	C	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
guffaw	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
Handkerchief	3	V	3 <sup>rd</sup>	BrE	According
jackal	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	

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legate(n)	3	S	0	BrE	
mature	3 AmE 4 BrE	C	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE	
miniature	3 BrE, 3AmE	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
object (n)	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
omega	3 AmE 5 BrE	V V	2 <sup>nd</sup> AmE 2 <sup>nd</sup> BrE	AmE and BrE	According
pecan	3	S	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
poem	2AmE 4 BrE	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE	Against
poor	2 BrE	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	Against
premature	3 AmE 10 BrE	C AmE S BrE	2 <sup>nd</sup> Am 4 <sup>th</sup> Br	AmE and BrE	According
primarily	5	S	4 <sup>th</sup>	BrE	Against
scallop	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	According
seamstress	3	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
situate (adj)	3	C	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE and BrE	
spatula	2	C	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
species	3	C	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AmE and BrE	
submarine	2	S	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	According
surplice	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
turbine	3	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	
vacation	2	V	2 <sup>nd</sup>	BrE	Partial
voluntarily	5	S	4 <sup>th</sup>	BrE	Against
voluptuous	2	C	0	AmE and BrE	

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## The New Language of the Tower of Babel English – Openings and Challenges in Communication and Knowledge

Sorin Ivan\*

### **Abstract:**

Today's globalized world is the New Tower of Babel of humanity. It updates in the collective consciousness the memory of the unity of civilization before the collapse. This unity was expressed essentially by a common language and was destroyed with the confusion of tongues as divine sanction. The memory of the unity is also manifested in the actual civilization's tendency to recover the linguistic unity of humanity. The first step towards this unity was made: English became an international language, spoken across the globe. English is now the language of the entire planet, a *lingua franca*, that transcends the linguistic diversity and makes the linguistic unity and unity in diversity possible. It is the language of the globalized world, the language of the New Tower of Babel. Knowledge of English language, the communication skills in English at a proficient level represent today a necessity not only subjective, but objective as well. English is the language of universal communication, the global communication instrument, therefore its knowledge becomes an obligation for the communication among people, institutions, organizations, nationally and internationally. Given that most of the knowledge of the world is expressed in English, that it is the language of ICT, English is an open door to the world of knowledge, a vast universe, in continuous expansion. Knowledge of English, therefore, offers essential benefits and openings in communication and knowledge. Study of English in terms of efficiency, pragmatism and performance remains a fundamental challenge for the education systems, for the higher education institutions in Europe and in the world. It is a major challenge in the process of achievement of the Knowledge Society in the globalized world.

**Keywords:** Tower of Babel, globalized world, linguistic diversity and unity, common language, English, communication, knowledge

### **The Old and the New Tower of Babel**

The present-day world is a vast Tower of Babel, inhabited by a great diversity of civilizations, languages and cultures. This global setting

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comprises languages, dialects, idioms, spiritualities, customs, traditions, beliefs, religions, mentalities, cultures, subcultures, trends, options, orientations, tastes, ideologies, political systems, etc. in an immeasurable variety. Through its dimension and impressive diversity, the Tower of Babel of contemporary world leaves the Tower of Babel of the Old Testament in the shadow of history.

The old Tower of Babel, built on the land of Shinar, is both the result of a powerful civilization which had reached maturity and self-awareness, and the effect of its terrible pride in its insensate aspiration to confront and defy divinity. What had been intended as a unique unexampled Tower, a work ready to signify human force and civilization, came to represent man's failure, his vanity and weakness when ambition is no longer controlled by reason and it follows only the anarchic and dark impulses of instinct. The bold ambition of people and the impetuous erection of the Tower are sanctioned by God not with violence or cruelty, but with a subtle punishment: the confusion of tongues. People, who until that moment had been speaking a common language – maybe the primordial language –, discovered that from that moment on they wouldn't be able to understand each other. Unable to understand each other and to communicate to one another, their construction plan, meant to show the human force in relation with the transcendence, is deterred. The magnificent Tower is abandoned and the human beings, ever more alienated, spread across the earth. Besides biblical meanings, focused on man-God relationship, the Tower of Babel myth may represent the genesis of the diversity of cultures and civilizations and the inception of pandemic linguistic variety.

From this parabolic event we can draw at least two conclusions. The first will be that human civilization as we know it today in its great diversity is built upon the rebellious attitude of the human being, upon his ambition to transcend his limitations and to state proudly his ontological force, ready to risk losing everything for it. The second one concerns the fact that human solidarity and communication, based on a common language, are the condition and the premise for success in a common project. Undoubtedly, a common language for the entire human community or for the entire mankind is a huge advantage. "Speaking the same language" is an expression that in its figurative meaning – solidarity and unity in vision and action – is based on its proper meaning: communicating in the same idiom.

The present-day world, in its configuration, diversity and evolution, is the result of the biblical event that took place millennia ago. The Tower of Babel of the contemporary world is a huge mosaic of

languages, civilizations and cultures, each of them with its own aspirations and projects. Diversity is the definition of human civilization and this may as well be the locus of its beauty and greatness. But diversity doesn't have to mean the isolation of each language or civilization and culture within the borders of their own identity. Isolation presents the risk of developing closed entities, linguistic and cultural enclaves, with no bridges between them; hence the impossibility of communicating, of exchanging cultural meanings and of cooperating on the multiple layers of existence. Isolation and identity autism give rise almost inevitably to potential conflicts, due to lack of closeness between civilizations and lack of appropriation of the other, ultimately due to lack of culture of diversity. Moreover, that could explain many conflicts between nations with different civilizations and cultures, between majorities and minorities, different groups, ethnicities and enclaves, but also between communities with similar languages and cultures, but with different, even opposed mentalities. Diversity doesn't have to mean limitation, but openness, acceptance of differences and otherness, the culture of tolerance, participation in the universal concerto of identities and specificities. The ideal of "unity in diversity", the founding principle of the European Union, can be achieved only in the spirit and within the sphere of this philosophy. This is the condition for diversity to be beautiful and to exert its specific valences, bringing its contribution to the enormous richness of human civilization. Actually, this is the only way in which we can speak about human civilization, as a whole, yet multi-faceted, and not about different civilizations, fragmented and truncated, with no connection between them. The first condition to achieve unity in diversity is to develop a mentality of tolerance and a culture of acceptance. This is the essential step towards rebuilding humanity's primordial unity before the Tower of Babel. The return to this unity is the indispensable state which gives humanity the force in its common aspirations, in developing great projects, but also in facing the great still unknown future challenges.

#### **English – the Common Language of the Globalized World**

Today's world goes through an accelerated globalization process. Generally, globalization aims at complex collaboration in all fields between all nations, sharing plans, projects and programs, sharing values and ideals. Essentially, globalization tends to unify all civilizations in one planetary civilization, identities and differences of the present diversity into one great comprehensive identity. Of course, such unity doesn't exclude or doesn't have to exclude the preservation and

affirmation of identities peculiar to different civilizations, languages and cultures. In this paradigm, necessary for the preservation of humanity's spiritual patrimony, globalization represents a supra-identity of human civilization, built upon the structure of global diversity based on specific identities and elements. This is the desirable scenario, the optimistic perspective over globalization within the frame of Unity in Diversity, New Humanism and Civilization Alliance philosophy – basic concepts on which contemporary civilization is building its becoming nowadays. From a different perspective, usually applied to this process and infusing fears of all sorts as well as a skeptical approach, globalization leads to massification and uniformity of nations, populations, individuals but also civilizations, cultures, languages. In other words, instead of respect for the world's diversity, the globalization process tends to melt it in the amorphous mass of massified uniform population, consisting of individuals who are unwittingly losing their national, cultural and spiritual identity, their personality, values, landmarks and ideals. Such a scenario leads, slowly but surely, to the dissolution of specific differences between countries, nations, civilizations, cultures and even languages. Therefore, only the first part of the desideratum expressed by the principle of “unity in diversity” will be accomplished, and it would become: “unity in abolishing diversity and identity”. It is a dark scenario that would practically mean the end of human civilization as we know it, the result of millennia of evolution.

We embrace though the optimistic scenario and perceive globalization as a process by means of which diversity is brought within a comprehensive planetary framework of communication and collaboration. Following this hypothesis, the scenario sounds like a utopia, one belonging to the plethora of mankind's utopias. In this hermeneutical approach, globalization would be the way to rebuild the original human civilization, the unity before the Tower of Babel. Moreover, this rebuilt unity of mankind would be a fundamental step forward to a stage of existence and power, to a superior level of human civilization in its continual becoming. Unity of mankind means force, progress, better opportunities and perspectives for the human being and his development in terms of existence and knowledge.

But what happens to the language? Till the Tower of Babel, mankind had been speaking a single language, most probably the original language, used by the first humans and their descendants in order to communicate. Once the erection of the Tower failed, this language was fragmented into other languages and further into many others, up to the present-day linguistic variety which amounts to around

seven thousand languages, without considering the fact that various languages have been lost along the way, together with their speakers. Instinctually, by virtue of historical memory, humankind tends towards a common language. Shall it be the historical memory of the primordial language? What language should the globalized world speak? Like in the biblical episode of the Tower, communication is the basic condition for the accomplishment of this process of planetary span. Symbolically, we could perceive the globalization process as mankind's new project to remake the original unity and to build a new Tower of Babel, from where it was stopped and abandoned. How can humanity arrive again at a common language, since the primordial one has long been lost?

In the quest for an answer to that question, people have tried different solutions. One of them has been, at different epochs, to adopt different languages as communication tools. By turns, ancient Greek, Latin, French, English have been such widely or less widely spoken languages, yet they have reduced diversity to a common denominator, satisfying the communication and collaboration needs of empires, states, nations and cultures. Dead languages have failed to perform their function of expressing a lively, dynamic and multi-cultural communication. They have remained only cultural, ritual and academic languages. Modern languages have taken turns in international communication arena, being in direct relation with the amplitude of power and influence of the empire, civilization and culture of origin. Some of them, like French, have known moments of great expansion and glory, followed by historical decline. Others, like English, have known a continuous expansion to the point of planetary supremacy. The English language is a special case. There have been historical situations when imposing a language has come as a consequence of the political and ideological domination in the international fight for power and supremacy, resulting in the division of spheres of influence. It is the case of the Russian language, imposed by the Soviet regime in communist countries – a large part of the world after all – in the wake of the World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, as the language of political ideology and administration and even of the Soviet cultural model; it was also for a while the only foreign language taught in schools. Another more fanciful and creative solution has been the invention of artificial languages that could be “perfect” communication tools, the sum of all expressive and stylistic necessities, based on the communication pragmatics of simplicity and efficiency. It is the case of esperanto, volapük, interlingua, ido, latino and many others. Being artificial languages, based on lexical creativity and mathematical

algorithms, none of these linguistic constructs has ever managed to perform their common language role, to efficiently solve the problems generated by language diversity and to satisfy the need for communication. They have remained in the museum of linguistic experiments, as object of the passion of some club-member speakers, and even topic for international contests.

The issue of finding a language for the globalized world, a symbolical reconstruction of the Tower of Babel, is not so difficult because the answer was already offered long time ago: the English language. The English language has imposed itself almost naturally as an international communication language concurrently with the expansion of the British Empire and the model of civilization it exported all over the world. Together with this model, the British have offered a communication means – the best in order to express the forms and the spirit of their civilization. For all the conquered territories, for the colonies under the British crown authority, the English language became a second mother tongue and often the most important language in education, administration and daily life. Along with the territorial expansion of the British Empire, the English language also conquered new territories. So, together with the territorial, political and economical imperialism we can also speak of the English language imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). This linguistic and cultural imperialism continued in the XX<sup>th</sup> century, especially in its second half, in the aftermath of the American civilization ascension in the political, military and economic arena, but also in culture and technology. It is the second wave of English language worldwide expansion that continues and enhances the first one. The media, culture and art industry, especially film and music industry, as well as the progress of information technology have imposed the English language globally.

The English language is the language of today's globalized world, a reiteration of the Tower of Babel. Searching for a common language, humanity has opted for the simplest solution that has imposed itself almost naturally: English. It is a solution based on the solid ground of a great civilization, of planetary span; it is the language that has actually built the British and American civilization and culture, in all their forms of expression at global level. Therefore, the present-day world is in the phase of building the New Tower of Babel – the globalized world – where the entire human race is speaking, along with the languages of linguistic diversity and identity, a common language: English. This linguistic unity, still in development and consolidation, is the basis of

the force of today's human civilization, essential for the projects that mankind is about to develop.

**The Language of Universal Communication, an Open Gate to the Universe of Knowledge**

The new common language of today's Tower of Babel is the English language. It is spoken everywhere, officially and unofficially, as a mother tongue or as an international communication language, all over the world, in different countries, in organizations, institutions, multinational corporations, in public and private life, in everyday life. Obviously, in some countries it is more spoken while in others it is less spoken. It is the official language of international organizations and affairs, of global policies and strategies, of treaties, reunions, negotiations, conferences and congresses, of all kinds of international exchange and cooperation, of travelling, and inter-human communications beyond the limits of diversity and personal identity boundaries. In the European Union, it is one of the conference languages, together with French and German, but it is by far the one we most readily use, officially and unofficially. In a different sphere of communication and especially in higher education, English is the language of academic education and scientific research, of creativity and innovation. English is the language of technology, information and communication, of new technologies and new media. From this perspective, but also from the one of civilizations expressing themselves through it, the English language is a vector of progress and knowledge. English language imperialism, manifested today especially in ICT, has led to the global extension of this language that has become the common language of mankind, the language of communication and knowledge.

As language of communication, English is part of our everyday life. We speak English, we communicate in English in multiple stances and situations of our existence. Digital technology is offering us a virtual medium, a space whose prevalent communication tool is the English language. The explanation is simple: English is the language of the culture and civilization that created digital technology. In a globalized world, human existence, professional activity, public and private life are transcending national and political borders and, with the support of technology, the space and time borders. In the globalized world, communications knows neither limitations nor obstacles. The language of communication in international cooperation, in various commercial, economical, cultural trades, the language of international meetings and events is the English language. This doesn't mean that the English

language substitutes or must substitute the mother tongue. As previously mentioned, the optimistic scenario of globalization assumes the conservation of linguistic, cultural and national identity in the middle of this great polyphonic concerto of unity in diversity. Still, the English language is the one that transcends the individual or national linguistic identity, the limitations and difficulties that could arise in international communication. Therefore, the present-day communication formula in the globalized world requires the coexistence of two languages: a mother tongue and a foreign language which is generally English. As a matter of fact, it requires at least two languages, because the European and the international multi-linguistic policies sustain the formula “mother tongue plus two”. So, worldwide, from the first steps in the education process till the last ones in the higher education, the English language is taught as a foreign language. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is a compulsory discipline in all educational systems in the world.

It is interesting to notice that in this global expansion, the English language is subjected to a series of transformations. Thus, one may speak, at the level of specialized literature, about many English forms, about “World Englishes” (Malchers, Swan, 2003). First, English is the *lingua franca* (ELF) of the present time, a language spoken at planetary scale (Jenkins, 2007). Because of its global extension (Crystal, 2003), the English language has developed an international form, the International English (McKay, 2002), influenced by the structures, constructs and paradigms of other languages. It is an English open to all those influences, liberated from the strictness of British English in terms of lexis, semantics, phonetics, morphology, syntax and style, an English language more accessible to different categories of speakers from all over the world. In this globalization process, we could speak about a language of globalization, Globalization English that tends to have its own formula and identity, based on simplification. This concept of World English also includes various forms, versions and idioms of the English language developed in the British colonies and ex-colonies, colonial or post-colonial English, as well as the English from British or American influence areas (McArthur, 1998). Finally, they all participate, one way or another, in the configuration and development of what we call Globalization English – the new common language of humanity.

The English language is used to such degree that it is legitimate to ask ourselves: do we still have to think of it as a foreign language? (Luján-García, 2012). Of course, the question is addressed to countries, regions, communities that speak it more intensively. Yet the English language is in expansion and it will probably conquer new territories



and categories of speakers, extensively and intensively. Therefore, in this global expansion process of the English language, based on the globalization and the planetary impact of digital technology and new media, the English language tends to become a second mother tongue for many people, for an increasing number of people in the world.

Globally, the English language is not only a communication tool, but also the language of information, culture and knowledge. The phenomenon must be perceived from two perspectives. On the one hand, English is the language of two great cultures and civilizations, the British and the American, with the addition of those of British Crown ex-territories. On the other hand, English is the language of artificial intelligence technology, of the virtual universe that encompasses much of the human knowledge.

From the first perspective, the civilizations speaking English as their mother tongue or as adopted language have produced knowledge in all its forms of manifestation: science, technique, technology, culture, art, etc. British and American civilizations are right in the center of knowledge and scientific research *avant-garde*, in fundamental fields but also in new fields – *avant-gardist* or *borderline*. Moreover, the level they have reached compared to that reached by others is, sometimes, substantial. The knowledge produced by these civilizations is expressed in English. Benefiting from the global spatial extension of language, knowledge expressed in English represents the contemporary paradigm of knowledge. As such, research is universally and prevalently expressed in English, even outside the language borders or its influence areas which are, nevertheless, considerable. One must also take into account the fact that the most relevant works, research and knowledge-related achievements of human civilization, in all their forms of manifestation, are translated into English. Their way of entering the universal circuit is through the English language, so their translation or direct writing in English is an objective necessity. Currently, global human knowledge is being expressed, to an overwhelming degree, in English. Therefore, learning English is the way to enter the comprehensive space of knowledge, to open the gate to this fabulous ever expanding universe.

From the second perspective of the virtual universe, created by digital technology, this is the space where our existence unfolds more and more in terms of time and intensity. The contemporary man's existence is closely connected to information and communication technology (ICT). The Internet is part of our everyday life to such an extent that it has become an indispensable medium, one we cannot conceive our existence without. Moreover, as a result of the impact and

importance of the Internet on the contemporary man, the individual existence tends to be transferred from the real into the virtual. The present-day man uses the Internet both in his professional activity, as working tool for information or communication, and in his private life for information, communication, but also for socialization and relaxation. The communication through artificial intelligence technology in the virtual world has no space and time boundaries. Using the Internet, the man is connected to reality, to the swing of the whole planet. Digital media are placing man in contact with what is happening in the world in real-time. By using the Internet, the present-day man – who is becoming more and more a *digital man* – is connected to knowledge. The virtual universe created by artificial intelligence technology and the Internet is a vast multi-dimensional space of information and knowledge. Information from all knowledge fields is posted online and accumulates as an enormous reservoir of data, some kind of world library of human knowledge. The vast borgesian library finds today its objectification in the “Internet library”. Let’s take for example the application *Google Books* that is aimed at offering its readers the worlds’ books – initiative disputed internationally. Today, we speak about Google as the “worldwide brain” that stores the world’s knowledge in its fabulous memory. Therefore, learning English opens the contemporary man’s access to this vast space and it is the gate to this ever expanding universe of knowledge. Per a contrario, linguistic ignorance of the English language is an obstacle impossible to overcome in man’s path towards knowledge, towards its vast, universal space.

### **The Challenge of English: the Scientific Perspective versus the Empirical Approach**

For today’s man, citizen of the Knowledge Society in the Digital Era, to be proficient in English is a must. We may add *at least* in English, given the multi-linguistic policies promoted at European and international level that sustain, as we have seen, the acquisition of two languages. Due to its status, the English language is on top of options. Furthermore, proficiency in foreign languages must represent the society’s interest and priority. In such a context, a special emphasis must be placed, once more, on the English language as a communication vector and means of knowledge. A nation’s evolution depends on its degree of openness to the outside world, on its ability to complexly relate and collaborate, in all aspects, with other nations. Therefore, at individual level, we can talk about a subjective need built on objective basis, and at society level about an objective need.

Generally, the English language is approached from two perspectives: empirically and scientifically. The empirical perspective – the most extended one – sustains the idea that the access to the English language is an easy one and English is well known by everybody and there is no need for special efforts in its learning. This perspective – of popular nature and shared by the unqualified public opinion – is “guilty” of this kind of reception of foreign languages by the public consciousness but also of their level of knowledge, rather low at society level. Based on the scientific perspective, the English language is studied at every education cycle, from early grades until PhD level. Nevertheless, in the educational process, the first perspective is sometimes reflected in the second one when it comes to the content and the quality of classes. The first perspective is obviously based on public ignorance. Therefore, it must be countered by every educational means. The low level of proficiency, minimum or even inexistent English competences are the result of this extended vision in people’s mind. Following this vision, the educational system – high school and especially universities, except for philology and foreign languages – treats foreign languages as secondary, complementary, peripheral disciplines, therefore less important than the ones considered fundamental. It is a profoundly erroneous approach that must be strongly countered because it is still a great obstacle to approaching foreign languages taking into account their top importance in the students’ education. When speaking about the English language (but this is also true for all foreign languages), one must be concerned with acquiring proficiency level and not superficial knowledge like film, music, club or travel English. In the scientific approach to foreign languages, it is very important that these languages should have a compulsory status in school and academic curricula. That attests to the importance, assumed at official level, of the educational policies for studying and learning foreign languages. Talking about foreign languages in above-outlined context, a special attention must be paid, one must underscore, to the English language.

As far as the official status of foreign languages as compulsory subjects within the educational system is concerned, one must take responsibility for the importance of studying and acquiring them at the level of the process *per se* of teaching-learning. In other words, one must transcend the formal stage of the process (very common) through solid consideration of the discipline. Foreign languages as compulsory subjects must become a priority of fundamental importance for the students’ personal growth. From this perspective, a reform must take

place in the mentality regarding the foreign languages study. In parallel, within the reception horizon of the targeted public, the educational process must provide all the conditions required by the study of foreign languages: to make use of modern methods for teaching-learning, to synchronize with the methods and approaches used in European Union countries, to launch new challenges, to be placed in the actualities of the Knowledge Society and to take into account the necessities of the latter.

Such a change in perspective is also necessary at societal level and public opinion. It is possible and even probable that the change in the approach to the educational system may trigger changes in the public consciousness. Such a change of mentality focuses on the idea that mastering foreign languages is a priority for each and every individual in the present world. Knowledge is achieved through education and studying. As opposed to the original rapport, the empirical perspective must be replaced with the scientific one in the public opinion and the collective consciousness. Otherwise, as far as the foreign languages are concerned, we will remain to the minimum knowledge stage, within hailing distance to ignorance.

Therefore, we are facing two challenges in the field of foreign language acquisition: one addressed to the educational system which regards the responsibility for the importance, not only at formal level, of studying foreign languages; the other one, addressed to the public mentality regards the change in perspective over the field: from a superficial approach to the proper one, based on understanding the importance and priority of studying foreign languages, especially English, but also on the difficulty of the process. These challenges also refer or especially refer to the English language. Proficiency in English, communication skills in this language must be a priority for every individual in the contemporary world, for every citizen in the Knowledge Society of the globalized world.

#### **Conclusions: English – a *Complementary*, not a *Substitutive* Role in the World's Diversity**

The Tower of Babel of the nowadays world, a globalizing world, is going to achieve the linguistic unity by the universal access to a common language. Although it is not the original language of the world, lost, probably, through the divine punishment, which led to the confusion of tongues and the end of the Tower of Babel, English successfully fulfills the function of a common language, the *lingua franca* of today's civilization and humanity. Adoption of English globally does not mean the cancellation of linguistic diversity and

identity on the planet. It just means that diversity and, with it, individuals and civilizations have a common means of expressing themselves. The role of English in global communication is *complementary*, not *substitutive*.

Globally, the English language has two major functions: communication instrument and means of knowledge. In this context, of paramount importance, knowledge of English is a necessity for the individual and society. Teaching and learning English for acquiring communication skills should be a priority of education systems. For higher education institutions, the process of teaching and learning of English – and of languages in general – is a challenge of fundamental importance. Today, universities produce international graduates for the labor market and the Knowledge Society, citizens of the globalized world. Knowledge of English, communication skills in English are the condition for them to get into the network with infinite wires of global existence and, in their turn, to make synapses, to consume and produce knowledge, to develop into a world without borders, which, although different, tends to be the same, although linguistically diverse, tends to speak the same language, English. English is a challenge and a priority of the individual and of the contemporary world.

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SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

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# A Potential Theory-Based Approach to the Rehabilitation Strategy of the Historic Centre of Sibiu in a Postmodern Perspective

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## **Abstract:**

The historic centre of Sibiu is an obvious example of the complexity and generosity of the mediaeval urban space, well preserved until nowadays. Beyond “statements” and nice “thoughts” regarding the knowledge of the inherited space, documentations and the urban renewal projects received in Sibiu a deadline – 2007. The “action” of testing and applying the complex renewal strategy makes the historic centre of Sibiu the first postmodern model in Romania.

Patrick Geddes’s diagrams regarding the theories of urbanism and real life can be an efficient working tool, even in the urban renewal area, to check the proposed strategies, respectively for the actual successes accomplished in this field. Geddes’s diagram shows the evolution of the built frame in the circle of life, ACTS through FACTS and THOUGHTS to DEEDS. Therefore, we propose a theoretical overview of the renewal methods of the Spirit of the Place (Genius Loci) in Sibiu.

**Keywords:** urbanism, Patrick Geddes’s diagrams, the Spirit of the Place, postmodern perspective, interdisciplnarity

## **The Historic Centre of Sibiu in the Postmodern Age in the Light of Patrick Geddes’s Diagram**

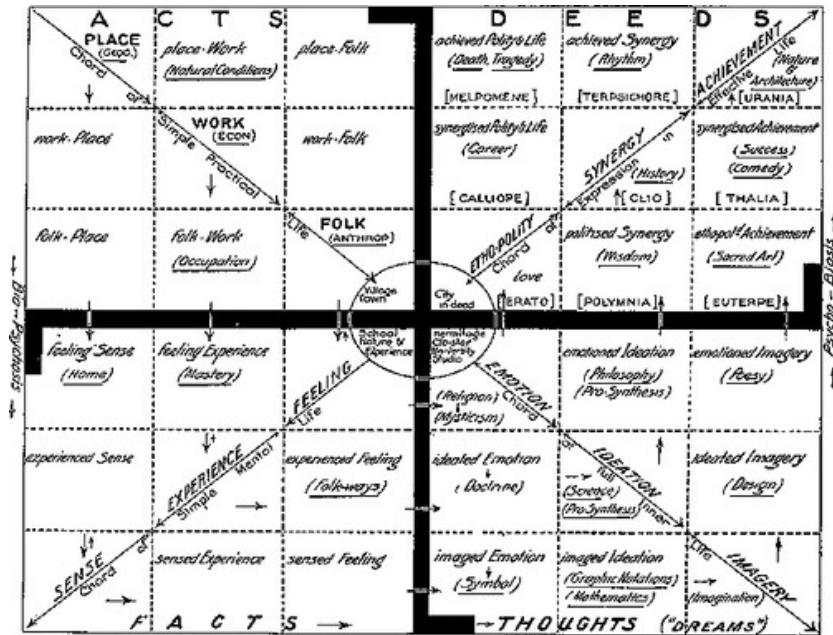
As early as 1910, the Scottish botanist Patrick Geddes<sup>1</sup> managed to synthesize, in a diagram entitled “Notation of Life”, the essential framework conditions of the interactions between man/folk, work and place. It is, however, true that because of the radical urban planning conceptions of modernism, these ideas had not reached professional consciousness before the 1970s. He took as a landmark the work of Frédéric Le Play “Les ouvriers Européens”, published in Paris in 1864, in which place, work and family are presented as basic elements of society. Patrick Geddes is one of those who, through their work, built bridges between the past and the present, between matter and life,

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Geddes’s theory illustrated by the diagram has been translated into Hungarian in the collection of urban planning studies edited by Ferenc Vidor published by *Gondolat* in Budapest in 1979, p. 110–115.

between science and art, being one of the few specialists who tried to comprehend the whole in a synthesizing vision. In 1920 he founded a town planning department in Bombay (India), understanding in equal measure the structure of settlements in India, Europe or America. Geddes's diagram shows the evolution of the built environment in the spiral of life, passing from ACTS through FACTS and THOUGHTS to DEEDS.



1. image: Patrick Geddes's diagram

“Normal Sibiu. Young since 1191” was the slogan of 2007, when the historical centre of Sibiu was the main scene of the events of the European Cultural Capital. The revival of urban life in this area became a reality. Through a new infrastructure, with facilities placed underground and the rearrangement of the urban area by marking the sites of archaeological value, a balance of “facts” and “deeds” has been established in the public domain. By rethinking the traffic system and restoring buildings serving mixed functions, private and public, representative for this area – cultural, administrative, commercial and of services – “thoughts” have become real “acts”. In the future this cycle from “facts to acts” through “deeds” and wise “thoughts” about the

appreciation and balanced use of inherited areas only has to be perpetuated.

The year 2007 of Sibiu as the European Capital of Culture may stand for that part of Patrick Geddes's "charting of life" which presents "real life" with nine theoretical segments, each one having its own ancient patron muse. Through the revival of these European mythological/artistic roots, Geddes's ideas receive an additional historical endorsement. The three basic elements: people–anthropology, work–economy, geographical location–geography, derived at the level of "real life", may be found in the people who constitute the "ethics of the universal order" of love (in ancient times the muse *Erato*, in Sibiu – *ecumenical multiconfessionalism*), in interdisciplinary scientific work, meaning "synergy" (the ancient muse *Clio*, in Sibiu – the *values of multiculturalism*), and in urbanized geographical location, meaning the "perfection of created space" (in antiquity the muse *Urania*, in Sibiu – the *resurrected historic centre*). The combination of the three pairs of elements leads to six more muses, thus establishing an ancient logic of balance in the presence of the nine Muses, who may watch over the "acts" of urban actors in the present, too.

*Euterpe*, resulting from the combination of Erato and Urania, sanctifies creation, protects the fulfilment of the ethics of universal order, birth, population conditioned by place (*the opening of the events*).

*Melpomene*, resulting from the combination of Urania and Erato, symbolizes perfect universal order, death and personal tragedy (*the close up of the events*).

*Polyhymnia*, resulting from the combination of Erato with Clio, ensure universal order based on synergy, wisdom (*the celebration of the cultural events*).

*Calliope*, resulting from the combination of Clio and Erato, keeps her eye on universal order and individual life, the road of life (*the celebration of the sacred events*).

*Terpsichore*, resulting from the combination of Urania and Clio, symbolizes perfect synergy, rhythm as a source of revitalizing the built environment (*the search for the Genius Loci*).

*Thalia*, resulting from the combination of Clio and Urania, sanctifies synergy of perfection and success, as the aim of rehabilitation (*retrieval of the Genius Loci*).

It is possible to analyze through this concept the whole city or just one representative area at once. The complexity of the historical centre of Sibiu lets us extrapolate these ideas to smaller urban islands, squares or streets. The presence of the nine Muses symbolizing wholeness is

easy to observe even in the case of the first enclosure of the fortress: the Huet Square. *Erato* materializes in the Lutheran Cathedral, formerly Saint Mary Church, *Euterpe* and *Melpemone* sanctify this place through the baptistry in the sanctuary and through the tombstones in the church ferula. *Clio* is present in the school building, *Polyhymnia* and *Calliope* mark the school itself and the acquired knowledge through which the germ of public space becomes the head of the line on the journey of life (the natives of Sibiu started generally from here and return here, up to this day, for rememoration). *Urania* is the line of fortification that gave concrete form to this urban space. *Terpsychore* and *Thalia* are the catalysts of rehabilitation, revival and reproduction of creative energy in the context created by the seven muses before them.

### **Interventions in Public Spaces and on Public Buildings in the Historical Centre of Sibiu**

*Why here? How? For whom?*

We should seek for multiple answers to these questions conditioned by place (*Urania*), synergistic effort (*Clio*) and the inheritors of the place (*Erato*) in the light of postmodern ideas to revive the Spirit of the Place, more exactly the raising of awareness about relocation or revival of this Spirit? Can this built context blend the Spirit of Contemporary Time with the Holy Historic Spirit, which has generated an urban texture subordinated to the accents of the places of worship? What did the cultural tourist understand of the efforts of self-representation in 2007? Let us consider from this angle the urban spaces, together with the public institutions of reference in the service of contemporary life in the historical centre of Sibiu.

The Huet Square with the Lutheran Cathedral, the Brukenthal High School, the Lutheran Parish House, the workshops and dormitories of travelling journeymen are the most important testimonies about the core of the medieval “Holy Spirit” of the place<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The core of the city of Sibiu is still to be found in the buildings and public or semipublic spaces of the Huet Square. Hermann’s village, in the early Middle Ages, set along the line of the current street May 9, survived sieges thanks to its fortified church built on top of the hill. This area, consisting of the Romanesque church, the parsonage, the school and the village cemetery, was then the spiritual space and last refuge of the village. Similar variants of this functional configuration have been preserved up to this day in many Saxon villages with fortified churches in the area, such as the villages Biertan, Bazna, Agârbiciu, Hosmann or Alțâna. The examples are more numerous, but what is important for understanding the motives that led to the development of the Sibiu ensemble is the presence of the large plateau to the south-east of the church, where the surface of an entire early mediaeval town with spacious streets, squares and spaces for

The Small Square lined with porched houses along the two enclosures of fortifications – in convex shape in the first enclosure and in concave shape in the second one – gives place to certain representative institutions as regards “Renaissance Spirit”, that is social life. The Luxembourg House – no. 16 – the catalyst of events in 2007, the Museum of Universal Ethnography “Franz Binder” together with the Documentation Center “Cornel Irimie” and the film studio of the Centre for Documentary, Anthropological Research, ASTRA – under nr. 11 and 12 – bring to the foreground anthropological cultural values. The “Emil Sigherus” Museum, – no. 20 and 21 – after derestoring the interventions of the 1970s (when it served as the House of Arts), in 2006 its ground floor level was restored, hosting now representational workshops of traditional crafts. The Museum of Pharmacy – no. 26 – offering insight in the history of healing human disease, was refurbished in the 70’s, and displays an authentic interior. Since 2003, the Sibiu Branch of the University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest – no. 22 – (moved in 2012) has represented this idea of “pharmacy” in the field of architecture, through its restoration department. This “Renaissance spirit” is supported by many exceptional restaurants and cafés in the area.

The Large Square, with an area of about 15,000 square meters, highlights the “Spirit of the Time” by monumental architectural creations, the expression of Counter-Reformation and Baroque pomp together with urban interventions dating from the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. The north side of the Large Square bears the imprint of the forms of representation of these powers. The Council Tower, the symbol of civil jurisdiction in the Middle Ages, is the centre of reception and representation of the city today with seven levels of exhibition spaces and the last, belvedere level. The Jesuit Church and School are representative monuments of religious restoration, since the new wave of Austrian Roman Catholic domination left behind a new fingerprint of cultural evolution. This was the place where Gheorghe Lazăr, the

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public activities could be surrounded by fortified walls. The first fortified enclosure has remained the urban expression of the germ of spiritual life, with the accent of the church bell tower, surrounded by the “protective shell” of perimetral fortifications composed of walls and the first tower gate to the West, the parsonage to the north, the row of dwelling houses from eastern direction and the ensemble of the mediaeval school, currently the Brukenthal school to the south. The volume of the tower and church are located at a decentered position with respect to the enclosure, pulled slightly to the northwest. So this urban mini-ensemble represents the synthesis of organic architectural compositions with multiple spatial meanings.

founder of the first Romanian language school was also educated. He is commemorated with a new bronze statue in front of the building. The church masses are held in four languages: Latin, German, Hungarian and Romanian. A multifunctional cultural space called “Habitus” was inaugurated in 2008 under the above mentioned church (in the former mortuary chapel of about 450 m<sup>2</sup>), funded inclusively by private donations, and it is dedicated to events that keep lit the flame of the “Holy Spirit” blended with the “Spirit of the Time”, immortalizing the “Spirit of the Place”.

The journey of the location of the City Hall starting in the postwar period until its return to this square in august 2006 is worth mentioning. The building was constructed in 1906 as the headquarters of the Land Bank, after 1944 it was nationalized, and the City Hall, together with the leading party organization came to be the new beneficiaries. In the 70s, the building was abandoned by these institutions because of the new status of the city, which as a county capital city claimed for larger offices. There have been several attempts at building a new city hall, or a new administrative center. One of these projects proposed the demolition of the Hecht house in the Large Square, the present headquarters of the Democratic Forum of the Germans in Romania. Another more determined idea supported the construction of a new centre with a fifteen-storey administrative building instead of the Barracks 90. This project was carried out only partially by demolishing the Baroque building located on the former Cismădie Gate Bastion in 1986. After 1990 these ideas were reviewed and each institution started its own lobbying. The new city hall was constructed until 2000 to the unfinished “gray stage”, in the current location of the Ramada Hotel. In 2001, in accordance with the newly outlined strategy of the local government, which proposed the sale of the unfinished construction and the investment of the profit obtained in the restoration and reconversion of the former Land Bank, the building was meant to be turned into a representative City Hall. In 2002 the transaction was carried out, so that between 2003 and 2006 restoration was also successfully completed. In the present, the ground floor of the building hosts the Tourist Information Centre as well as the Information Centre for Citizens coupled with the new multifunctional space of the atrium built in the place of the interior service courtyard. Each floor has now a meeting/conference room in order to facilitate the organization of events, inclusively the extra-administrative programs. The opening of an interior restaurant in a basement was proposed, but it has not yet been finalized. It seems that through these measures and new functions served

successfully the rehabilitation of the presence of local government in the historic center. The “Spirit of the Place” thus has a new representative space in a historic public building, in an exceptional location linked intimately to the Large Square, the Small Square and the Brukenthal street, actually located on the former alignment of the fortification walls of the second enclosure. The link between the two squares is ensured in fact by this rehabilitated building. Instead of the fortification wall, the new skylight of the central atrium produces that polarizing public space, which provides the institution with its current meaning. As regards volumetry and architectural decoration, the building is the youngest “intruder” in the environment of the historic urban core. The bank façades overloaded with stucco decorations, criticised in 1906, especially in comparison with the more sober neighbourhood, are “used” today as a common good, an architectural accent that attracts visitors into the building. Basically, the building may be seen as a public information pocket of the Large Square between the Brukenthal Palace and the Roman Catholic Church.

The Brukenthal Museum is the Baroque palace that served as the residence of the governor of Transylvania, Samuel von Brukenthal, in 1787, and then became the first private museum open to the public at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This public function has saved the building from transformation and devastation at the time of nationalization. The presence of this significant museum collection catalyzed the cultural life of the city, and it has been functioning as an exceptional museum complex from as early as the difficult period of the 1950–1980s.

### **Proposal for the World Heritage Listing versus European Capital of Culture 2007**

Preparations for the status of European Capital of Culture 2007 focused primarily on the revitalization of nodal points in the the historic centre. The arguments supporting urban values in the nomination documentation proposing the inclusion of this ensemble on the World Heritage list referred to the whole medieval stronghold, together with an area of similar size around the protected area to be placed under protection. Although, at first sight, the two strategies have much in common as regards the promotion of the historic centre in an international context, the actual results being in favor of 2007. The exceptionality of Sibiu, in both cases, derived from the outstanding local capacity to support these efforts financially and logistically.

In the process of obtaining the title of European Capital of Culture 2007, Sibiu had a special history in comparison with its predecessors, being the first city elected in this partnership from beyond the borders of the EU. The documents required for argumentation concerning effective capacity, in February 2004, were submitted solely through the efforts of a local association, the founding members coming from the local government and the cultural institutions and associations of the city, called “Association Sibiu European Cultural Capital 2007”. The most important element of this endeavour was the possibility of accessing a strategy by deviating from the rule, but in a well-grounded manner, in the light of the new unionist vision formulated by the management team in Luxembourg. Without this “spark” of logistics, through which the entire region of Luxembourg together with Sibiu was promoted as extended European Cultural Capital in 2007, in a positivist vision of multiethnicism, multiculturalism and multiconfessionalism. Sibiu not only did not have the chance to promote these values on an international scene, but had no political and social justification for arguing for these necessary rehabilitation efforts locally. Co-optation in the interest of all inhabitants, despite major social changes from an ethnical and numerical point of view, transformed the historic centre not only into a protected zone but also into a representative area. Historical central squares became again the catalyst spaces of urban life, the “living room and guest room” of the whole city.

The documentation submitted to UNESCO in September 2005, asking for the inclusion of the historical centre of Sibiu on the World Heritage list, was also carried out through local effort, funded by the municipality and elaborated by the Sibiu branch of the Romanian Academy, under the direction of the Academician Doctor in Architecture Paul Niedermaier. The outcome of the undertaking is, however, still uncertain, due to new regulations of UNESCO in the new millennium regarding the “balance” of nominations accepted according to continents. As it is well known, sites and cultural testimonies from Europe are prevalent in this respect, therefore there is little chance to introduce the historic centre of Sibiu among distinguished sites. In conclusion, we may state that a similar lobbying approach as in the case of European Capital of Culture project is necessary, either opting for a novel, exceptional form of nominating this valuable site individually or rather as an exceptional emanation of a group of values, together with such a group, in a way similar to that of the association of the multicultural values of the Luxembourg region and Sibiu. Despite these logistical inconsistencies, we could notice undeniable benefits of the



elaboration of this documentation as regards the raising of awareness and promotion of this segment of cultural heritage both locally and on an international level. It still serves as a testimony, a medium- and long-term framework document of the efforts aimed at the conservation and reintegration of the historical centre into the contemporary city.

If we refer back to Geddes's diagram, we can argue that the evolution of the built environment in the spiral of life, from through ACTS through FACTS and THOUGHTS to DEEDS, in the historical centre of Sibiu was accompanied on both levels by a remarkable effort, "deeds" having been actually transposed into synthetic "thoughts" at the highest level of the international nomination documentation, and "facts" have become "acts" at European level thanks to the events in 2007.

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## Religious Tradition and Human Behaviour

Mihai Handaric\*

**Abstract:**

This article presents the close relationship between the religious tradition and the community of faiths who practice it. Starting with a definition of tradition, we intend to show that it influences the behaviour of the community. In this sense, the model used by Alasdair MacIntyre in his book, *Three Rival Versions of a Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Nôtre Dame Ind.: University of Nôtre Dame Press, 1990) was taken into account. However, our approach was different, trying to show that *tradition* has the main role in influencing human actions, along with other factors, such as: *reason* – called by MacIntyre “the encyclopaedic method”, and *the use of force* in influencing human behaviour – called by him “the Genealogical approach.”

**Keywords:** tradition, influence, community, MacIntyre, encyclopaedic method, genealogical approach

Tradition means values shared by a certain human community. We do not have to forget that a tradition is preserved by the community sharing it. In this article we are speaking about the Judeo-Christian religious tradition. Concerning the values transmitted by this tradition, history has already proved its importance, and scholars assert that it must be seriously considered.

Speaking about the importance of the Christian tradition preserved into the Old Testament text, Reventlow observed the main role the Church had in transmitting the Scripture throughout the time, and in cultivating the respect for the Holy Book.

He called the attention to the community which preserved it and to the content of this tradition. Concerning the role the people who preserved it, Reventlow noticed the importance of the Church’s Fathers, in the process of transmitting this tradition, and in keeping alive the memory that the Bible, in general, and the Old Testament, in particular, represents the Holy Scripture of the Church. He said that this claim of the specialized demarche, called “the Old Testament research” must be taken into consideration (see Reventlow, 1979: 4).

In this article we want to highlight the close relationship between the religious tradition and the community who practices it. Starting with a

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definition of tradition, we intend to show how the tradition influences the behaviour of the community.

Taking the model from Alasdair MacIntyre's book, *The Three Rival Versions of the Moral Inquiry*, but using a different approach<sup>1</sup> we will show that *tradition* has the main role in influencing the human actions, along with other factors, such as: *the reason* – called by MacIntyre, “the encyclopaedic method”, and *the use of force* in modelling human behaviour – called by him, “the Genealogical approach”.

### A. The Definition of Tradition

We want to see if there is a relationship between tradition and human behaviour. And if there is a relationship between the two, we are interested to find out to what degree the tradition motivates the actions performed by the human community who adopted it. In order to understand this subject, we have to define the term “tradition”.

The Greek word used in the New Testament is παράδοσις, *parádosis*, which means “a giving over which is done, that which is delivered, something transmitted,” either verbally or in writing. It refers to the teaching that was transmitted from one person to another. This term is found thirteen times in the New Testament (Matthews 15: 2,3,6; Mark 7: 3,5,8,9,13; 1 Corinthians 11: 2; Galatians 1: 14; Colossians 2: 8; 2 Thesalonians 2: 15; 3: 6). The term thus referring in these texts bears the meaning of an orally teaching of the elders of the Jewish community. This teaching was placed on an equal level with the teaching of the Old Testament, as far as faith and behaviour were concerned. Actually, there were three categories of verbal teachings: a) *laws* which were verbally given by Moses himself to Israel, b) *decisions* of various judges who were invested with authority in the community of Israel, and c) *interpretations* which were performed by the main Rabbies, and were venerated on the same level with the text of the Old Testament<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> MacIntyre tries to demonstrate in his book that out of the three methods used by the human community to influence human behaviour, such as: the method used in the Modern Period (*Encyclopaedic*), Postmodern Period (*Genealogical*), and Pre-modern Period (called *Tradition Method*), only the last one is the proper method of moulding the moral actions of an individual. (See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of a Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealog, and Tradition*, Notre Dame Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> See the article about “Tradition” from *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*.

From the passages given in the New Testament, we observe that there were important people, responsible for making the tradition, namely, Moses who gave the laws, Judges who had a certain authority in the community, and at a moment in time, took certain decisions important for the community, and a third category of people responsible for Old Testament tradition represents the Rabbies, whose teachings were included into the Hebrew tradition.

The term “tradition” comes from two Latin words, namely: *tradio*, that refers to the processes by which the information was transmitted, and the other word: *traditum* refers to the material sources in which information was collected from generation to generation. The role of the community in transmitting the tradition is described by the first word (*tradio*), which refers to the processes that generated the tradition. And the processes were generated by the people who form the community of that tradition.

The process we are referring at, is very complex (Knight, 1992: 634). From this perspective, tradition refers to the information itself, and to the material sources which contain the information shared by a human community, and thus passed from one generation to another. We do observe that in understanding the tradition, we have to analyze the role of the human community who generated the tradition, in our case: Israel and the Church.

### **B. The Relationship Between Tradition and Human Behaviour**

Based on the definition of the *Romanian Language Explanatory Dictionary (DEX)*, tradition has to do with the customs and observances which a certain community does practice. These elements have to do with the human behaviour. So, there is a close relationship between tradition and the way of life of the community. From this perspective we may assert that *tradition is a set of information that shapes the behaviour of a human community*. Based on this definition we may say that tradition, practiced by a certain group of people, expands to all areas of activity, performed by that group.

Consequently, tradition is closed related to ethics. The term “ethics” comes from the Greek, word *ηθος*, *ethos*, which can be translated by “custom”. A custom supposes a repeated action performed by an individual or by a community. From this perspective tradition may be defined as the totality of customs performed by a certain community. Ethics speaks about the way in which a tradition is practiced by the community.

Viewing tradition from this perspective, we would like to ask the next question: “What lays behind human customs?” or “What stays behind human actions, which supposedly, become customs?”

MacIntyre (1990)<sup>3</sup> helps us answer these questions. He was strictly interested in identifying the appropriate context in which we may discuss about morals. In our specific case, we have adapted his observations in order to make a classification of the motifs which lay down behind human behaviour. MacIntyre affirmed that morals, as an integrated part of the human behaviour, must be analyzed in the context of the tradition that generated it.

He has also affirmed that there are three different ways (methods) of discussing about morals, which are antagonistic among them. They are being represented by three written sources which were composed towards the end of the nineteenth century: 1) *The Rationalistic Method* called by him *Encyclopaedy*, that is represented by the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, published in 1873, 2) *The Postmodernist Method* called by him *Genealogy*, represented by Nietzsche’s book *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, published in 1887, and 3) *The Method of Tradition*, represented by the Papal Letter issued by Pope Leone XIII, called *Aeterni Patris*, published in 1879<sup>4</sup>.

Based upon MacIntyre’s conclusions, we may affirm that there are at least three factors that motivate people to act. There we have: 1) using *the logic of creation* as a way to evaluate behaviour; 2) *use of force* as a standard of evaluating human actions, and 3) *using of tradition* that dictates and establishes the limits of human behaviour within a certain community.

Further, we shall present those three factors that may motivate our course of actions, seeing in this way the importance of tradition in motivating the human behaviour.

### **1. The Logic of Creation Determines Our Actions**

The first proposal we are referring at, is to see the way in which the logic of creation influences human actions. The representatives of this approach consider that the mind is the standard on which we can rely in taking the right decisions. As a result, the world of ideas, the universals, are those things that should govern human behaviour. This perspective

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<sup>3</sup> About this book, Richard Rorty said that the author offered the most convincing recent formulation of the thomistic view concerning the relationship between metaphysics and morality.

<sup>4</sup> MacIntyre, *op. cit.*, p. 3. See also M. Handaric, *Tratat de istoria interpretării Teologiei Vechiului Testament*, Arad, Editura Universităţii „Aurel Vlaicu”, ediţia a II-a, 2009, p. 414–415.

was specific to the period of Enlightenment – known as the Rationalism, which dominated the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This approach was called Encyclopaedic.

During the so called Modern period, the representatives of this approach affirmed that logic helped us discover the universal truths laying behind the human behaviour. They reached at this understanding influenced by the mentality which governed the western world during the Enlightenment. The authority was given by those who were considered enlightened, by the logical minds. Speaking about the educational system towards the end of the nineteenth century, MacIntyre asserts that by contrast with the Medieval Period, *the lecturer himself was considered as the authority* in the process. He was selfimposed as the normative voice. The lecturer was representing the point of view shared by the community – *weltanschauung*. During this period, the authority resided in both the lecturer and the lecture itself.

It was expected that the audience should learn, without comments, from the authoritative and encyclopaedic official statements. The special respect of the audience towards the teacher represented one of the distinct signs of the university in the last part of the nineteenth century. The lecturer had the duty of transmitting “real” knowledge in such a way that it laid down the foundation of any welfare (MacIntyre: 33).

During this time, the rationalistic mentality has been extrapolated also to the authors of the Scripture. For instance, Paul was considered as having preeminence by comparison with other authors of the New Testament. From this perspective, it is considered that such biblical authors belong to the Puline school.

However, the representatives of the so called “Encyclopedia” have made the following mistakes:

1) They have invented a new word: “morality”. There is no such word, neither in the Antiquity, nor in Medieval speech, that might be translated with the meaning this modern term has.

2) Then, they have arbitrarily separated morality from the context to which it belonged – which is the tradition. Up to the medieval period, we may talk about a close relationship between the human behaviour and the context in which the human actions took place – the tradition shared by the human community (*Ibidem*: 191).

The word “morality” creates the possibility of discussing about human behaviour as an independent value of an individual. Some important relationships the individual has with the others were ignored. It is an atomistic approach.

As a conclusion to the role the rationality has in influencing human actions, we may say that it has to be controlled by the context of that community, namely by the tradition. The separation of human behaviour from the tradition shared by the community is dangerous.

## 2. Force Dictates Our Actions

The second solution, supposed of motivating the human behaviour, is *power*. This mentality is widespread in the Postmodernism, where Nietzsche's philosophy (see Nietzsche, 1968) is promoted. From the title of Nietzsche's book, it was given the name of the method, called the *genealogical approach*. Those who adopt this standpoint affirm that *truth* is relative. There are no universal truths. Thus, they impugn the existence of universals, backed up by rationalists. In this case we assist to a process of relativization of the so called generally valid truths affirmed up to that moment.

Speaking of a religious community, we have to admit from the beginning the existence of a divinity. From the Modernist perspective, the truth of the community is issued by the God of Christianity. He reveals to the human community certain universal truths, which have to be respected. From the Postmodern perspective, the truth is seen through the eyes of each individual of the community. God does not speak a general valid truth for all members of the community. As a result, the tradition is dictated by all the particular voices of the community.

The Postmodern approach observes a weakness into the process of the formation of, namely, that the official version of the tradition is imposed by force by the most powerful.

From the genealogical perspective, the tradition of a community is moulded by those who imposed their proper will upon the community. The term "force" is specific for describing this approach. In this case, the members of a community were forced to adopt certain values, in spite of their personal desires.

This means that human actions can be imposed by force. We have to be aware that force is a real way to influence human actions into a certain community.

But the shortcoming of this way of influencing behaviour is that it ignored the fact that someone's liberty may limit somebody else's liberty. The conflict appears at the level of the shared values among



different traditions<sup>5</sup>. The question is: How can we solve conflicts between rival values among the individuals, or the communities?

Speaking about the merging of two different traditions, from the Genealogical perspective, the proper solution for avoiding the conflict is that the candidate tradition to integration should renounce at some specific values shared by its community. It is about those values which generate conflict with the values of other communities to which it wants to accommodate. But if we choose to proceed likewise, we have to be careful not to compromise the tradition. Therefore it is important to define properly the religious tradition<sup>6</sup>.

The postmodern approach proposes that the communities would renounce to the normative aspect of the tradition they embraced. Thus, they impose the compromise in order to avoid possible conflicts between traditions. But acting this way, they may renounce in fact at the essentials of that tradition.

The genealogical method is peculiar to Nietzsche, who tried to break it with the conventional way of thinking. But he failed. By using this approach, Nietzsche sustains that not logic, but power has priority in influencing human actions. The rationality is secondary, power imposes itself over logic in determining actions. In this case, the genealogical method considers that the logic of the individual from the community has to be taken into consideration, not the logic of the powerful who imposes his voice. However, logic does not have the capacity to impose over power.

There are some unsolved problems if we accept the genealogical approach. If we consider force as the sole explanation for human behaviour, we will have problems in classifying human actions as good or bad. Postmodernist mentality hopes to free man, to give him the absolute liberty regarding behaviour. Man is no longer compelled to think in terms like: antithesis–synthesis. His actions are no longer

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<sup>5</sup> We shall assert in this article that at the foundation of the religious traditions lays revelation, which targets the relationship between the human community and the Divinity. Especially the religious tradition involves the will of Divinity, which has been made known by way of revelation. The conflict between different communities who want to accommodate to other traditions appears at the revelation level, which, in many situations, differs from one community to another. However, this subject will be treated with another occasion.

<sup>6</sup> See the below debate referring to the relationship between tradition and revelation. We assert that revelation lays at the foundation of the religious tradition – in whose center the Divinity is, who, through His Will, dictates and structures the community's actions. The Divinity is free to accept or refuse the community's actions. In this way, the process of framing the customs of a religious community is understood.

classified in good and bad, but are simply considered being just actions. In this manner, man obtains his liberty at the price of renunciation for searching a logical sense for life (Schaeffer, 2002: 250).

In conclusion, the genealogical method as the only motivation for human actions cannot be satisfying. There are limits to this approach. For this reason we would like to analyze another proposal that would compensate the shortcomings of the encyclopaedical and genealogical methods. This proposal is called “tradition”.

### 3. Tradition Moulds Our Actions

The third proposed solution that tries to explain the motivations behind human actions is *tradition*. It is true that both solutions discussed above influence to a certain degree human behaviour. Logic has an important role in taking the decisions for actions. A person uses his thinking for filtering the actions that he wants to perform. In the same way, authority (genealogy) has an important role in making a person to perform some actions.

As far as tradition is concerned, we consider it to have an important role in motivating the action by way of shaping or modelling. A member of a community will try to imitate the right behaviour, drawing the example of those who belong to that community.

Tradition is the proper modality a man can use to discover reality. The truth is discovered within the frame of tradition. The individual learns the correct behaviour from a “master”. An individual will discover the appropriate actions he is expected to perform by learning from those who belong to that community. Within the frame of a tradition functions the so called principle of a *craft*. The master will teach his disciple the way of doing something – *the craft*. Aristotle, and then Thomas d’Aquino, promotes this approach to life.

From this perspective, tradition represents the appropriate context to interpret the actions of an individual. It represents what Pânzaru calls *interpretatum* (Pânzaru, 1999: 20). This term is used to describe the context into which something or somebody is placed. This means that we may properly understand the behaviour of an individual if we will interpret it into the context to which he belongs – in our case the community.

From Aristotle’s perspective, motion (human action – in our case) always targets a certain purpose (Oliver, 2001). The process of investigation always requires a context, a tradition that helps to understanding the objective which lies behind every action of an individual. The objective lies behind every action which is taking place.

Aristotle claims that activity without a purpose is chaotic. Aquinas follows Aristotle and insists that any motion comes from somewhere and goes toward somewhere (*Ibidem*: 167). Keeping in mind this process, we may explain the progress which takes place into a community. The progress is stimulated within the frame of a tradition.

That is why the rational type of motivation, based upon the logic of creation, supported by the modern approach, was not sufficiently persuasive in explaining the motifs behind a certain objective performed by an individual.

In this paradigm called “tradition”, we may explain the process followed by an individual, who is part of a community in respecting the moral principles. That community complies with a certain tradition, which will motivate the individual to act in a specific manner. It has been proved that only the rational motivation has not enough authority in motivating an individual to act in a proper way, as tradition would have (McIntyre: 48–49).

As far as the use of force – *the genealogy*, it ignores the influence the free will of an individual has in determining the moral actions. Man is not a machine, he can choose freely to act in a certain way. Sometimes he will choose to act contrary to what it is expected from him.

On the other hand, genealogy leads to dictatorship. And as far as the religious tradition is concerned, it requires even more respect for the free will of the individual in practicing certain religious actions.

Concerning the third method called “tradition”, we may recall a biblical example referring to the tradition’s capacity of moulding the actions of the human community, namely the Jerusalem Council, from Acts 15: 1–35, where the Church decided differently to what is backed up by the Law of the Old Testament regarding practicing the morals of the Christian Community from Jerusalem, in the New Testament times. The tradition of the Early Church has modified the practices used by the Jewish Community, which up to that time observed the tradition of the Old Testament. And as we can see, the Church complied with the rules established by this council.

Another example we may give, is the decision stipulated into the Tradition of the Fourth Century Church, concerning the framing the Christian Canon of the Bible<sup>7</sup>. The Church had decided that a number of

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<sup>7</sup> We mean the *Eastern Letter* written by Bishop Athanasius, in the year 367 A.D., which is taken as the official document for certifying the New Testament canon of the Christian Scripture. See *The History of Christianity: A Lion Handbook*, organizing editor Tim Dowley, rev. ed., 1990, Lion Publishing House, p. 108.

twenty seven extra books should be added to the Jewish Canon. And the community operated in line with this stipulations. As we see, the tradition represents the framework in which the moral actions, or beliefs, of an individual are regulated, in conformity with the decisions of that community.

Tradition is characterized by coherence. In this way, tradition is able to judge the moral actions of one of its members. Therefore, we may verify the authenticity of a certain action or belief, by the way it is accepted as part of the values of that tradition. When we find out that there is an opposition to that action or belief, we will question its authenticity.

Tradition has the role of selecting only certain candidate traditions, which aspire to merge into the core tradition. We may also give some examples concerning the rival versions to the biblical tradition, which are to be accepted into the main core of tradition. There were voices along the history of Scripture interpretation questioning the historical credibility of the core tradition. New discoveries of some of the written sources of the Christian tradition, as well as new archeological discoveries, try to contest the credibility of the core tradition. We may recall books like *The Gospel according to Judas*<sup>8</sup> or the discovery of the coffins containing the supposed bodies of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and the so called “their child” called Judah<sup>9</sup>, which try to impugn the historical liability of the main core of the Christian Tradition. This literature presents an opposite perspective to the New Testament tradition, affirming that Judas the Iscariot is the positive character while the other disciples were the negative characters.

A new version of the history of the New Testament characters is promoted by the volumes of fiction literature such as *The da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown (2003). Within this context they raise the next question:

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<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.CopticChurch.net>, retrieved on 7.04.2006, and <http://www.salesians.org/pdf/news/gspjudas.pdf>. For opinions concerning the credibility of this gospel, see <http://www.cgiphils.org/literature/pdf/gospeljudas.pdf>, retrieved on 02.08.2011.

<sup>9</sup> Concerning the identification of the coffins with the personages from the New Testament, there are strong doubts. “Dr. Evans, PhD, author of *Jesus and the Ossuaries*, indicates that approximately 100 tombs have been discovered in Jerusalem with the name “Jesus” and 200 with the name “Joseph”. The name “Mary” is on one out of every four ossuaries discovered. Other experts have stated that Mary occurs in one out of three ossuaries. A brief look at the New Testament reveals that there were many Marys”. See <http://www.neverthirsty.org/pp/feature-articles/200703/the-lost-tomb-of-jesus.html>, <http://www.straightdope.com/columns/read/1282/were-jesus-and-mary-magdalene-lovers>, retrieved on 02.08.2011.

If, and in what measure, the Jewish-Christian tradition is rooted in history? Here, it is not the place to discuss the right of these opposite voices of the Christian tradition. However, we shall say that the core tradition will have the authority to select the candidate versions to its tradition.

On the basis of the analysis previously made, we affirm that tradition is the holistic way to investigate the actions of an individual, because likewise the inquiries within the religious community, as well as the heresies, may be detected. The tradition requires a close relationship between the actions performed by a person who belongs to it, and the logical argument that lies behind that action.

MacIntyre asserts that not any explanation of an action or of a doctrine is more suitable than the explanation formulated by its adherents; any thesis, argument and doctrine, is the thesis, argument, and doctrine of somebody, who shares the convictions of the group to whom it belongs (1900: 201). On the basis of the above mentioned things, we may say that the right modality of discovering the sense of life, for an individual, is found in the cradle of the tradition to which he belongs.

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## The Expressiveness of the Human Hand and Body

Liana-Cecilia Bărbos\*

### **Abstract:**

Along the times, the human body has been intensely signified, socio-culturally shaped and governed each time, whenever a new episteme was installed. In relation to a given historical moment and in accordance with its worldview, each society undergoes a long process of understanding and assuming corporality. In this research, we intend to draw some of the force lines of the body – art – reality relationship in terms of its settlement into a coherent, integrating system. Emphasis will shift from the whole to the part, i.e. whole body to hand – as one of the centres of a strong composition, since in visual arts terms it is able to develop a constellation of gestures and behaviours, which represent genuine reading keys.

**Keywords:** hand, human body, phenomenology, visual centres

A discussion about the human body can start from anywhere because of the constellation of relationships which it establishes with most areas of knowledge and because it remains in any context, “a pivot of human rooting into the structure of the world” (Breton, 2002: 58). Although at first sight research on the human body seems to be an easy undertaking due to its very “naturalness”, it becomes quite disconcerting if we attempt to define ways of access, territories to explore and work methods.

Out of the different ways of systemizing the amount of information which originally comes from distinct areas and are, most of the times, contradictory, a possible way out is provided by Aurel Codoban who, in an effort to provide an epistemic sketch of Western history of philosophy, appeals to Gorgias’ trilemma<sup>1</sup> which, in his opinion, is able to anticipate “the succession of the great thematisations in the history of philosophy” (Codoban, 2001: 5). According to the Greek sophist, the relation with the world is summarized in the form of a generalized, successive negation of what this is, of knowledge and communication. Since Western philosophy seems to respond “adversatively to the trilemma alternatives: either something exists or we are able to know it

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<sup>1</sup> The Trilemma can be formulated as such: at first nothing exists; then, even if it does, we are not able to know it; at last, even if we are able to know it, we are not able to communicate it.

or we are able to communicate” (*Ibidem*: 5), we believe that this systemising grid can be also applied in the case of an attempt to understand the human body. Out of the adversative overlapping of the alternatives of the trilemma with the perception history of the human body, there result three kinds of thematisations, stated as follows: the body exists, we are able to know it, and we are able to communicate through the body.

Combining the three stages – the three epistemic pedestals of Western philosophy, corresponding, according to Codoban’s theory, to the three supreme conceptual aspects: thing, idea, and symbol – with the ways of knowing the body allows the structuring on three levels of the analytical approach to circumscribing corporality.

The first philosophical thematisation, ontological in the proper sense of the word sustains the idea of consistency and persistence in the real world of a reason, in our case a corporal archetype. The second thematisation that of knowledge reduces reality to what is known, thus the statement: to be is to be known, is converted into: being body is knowing the body. The thematisation of communication reduces reality to what can be communicated or symbolized, and thus, “there exists only what is expressed, communicated, symbolized” (Codoban, 2001: 7), the body itself turning into an instrument of meaning.

As the first thematisation, that of existence requires an opening of the size the present research cannot allow, we will focus on the last two thematisations.

Given that “consciousness is projected into the physical world and has a body” (Merleau-Ponty, 1999: 68) man’s relation to the reality of the body in order to understand is closely connected to the way he creates his body.

In *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty proposes a relocation of Cartesianism from the perspective of the duality body – knowing subject. Considered to be a “vehicle of human being” (*Ibidem*: 176), the body and not consciousness conditions the subject’s presence into the world because it activates the cognoscible in an act of incorporation. The new view on the relation subject – object aims at cancelling the apparently irreducible distance between nature, body and intellect, turning it into an area of interconnection, of permanent exchange of meaning. Possessing the ability to establish a link between visibility and awareness, the body is geometric meeting point of all visible forms enabling the outbreak of meaning in the midst of a “constellations of given elements”(Merleau-Ponty, 1999: 47).



Within body analysis, the phenomenology of perception starts from the premise of the interconnection of the objective world, in other words each object is “the mirror of all the others” (*Ibidem*: 101), its visibility is depending on the reflection system built around it. Therefore the body is the instrument of a double awareness: on the one hand, we become aware of relativism of perspectives in which objects of surrounding world are captured, and on the other hand we gain an awareness of our own corporality. To underline the ambiguity of knowledge, Merleau-Ponty puts forth the double layering of the body: the first layer corresponding thus to *usual body* as a result of experience, of sedimentation over time, and the second, the *present body*, the way it manifests at present beyond time conditionings.

Launched into a critique of both empiricism and intellectualism to which he reproaches their unilateralism either in the direction of independence from the structures of subjectivity or in the direction of analysis founding exclusively on proof of mathematical truth, Merleau-Ponty insists on defining perception as synthesis between instinctive infrastructure and intelligence superstructures, able to overcome any doubt to impose itself as the “full truth” (Merleau-Ponty, 1999: 68). The concept of corporal scheme understood either as a summary of human experience or as a form of global awareness of the subject’s situation in the inter – sensitive world, and that of “structure: point – horizon” (*Ibidem*: 68) prove themselves to be extremely useful in explaining the corporal space in terms of the relationship with the objective, outer space, and especially from the perspective of relation part-whole (body-hand).

Present among other objects, the body does not confound with them, it remains in their proximity as a receptacle of seeing which opens itself to the objective world, “the world and the self are together, inhabit each other without arbitrarily *fusing*, but manifesting their existence by being together” (Pop, 2005: 170). The presence in the field of visibility corresponds to the opening of a two-way act of knowledge, conditioned either by the outward orientation, the body symbolising in this case beyond itself, or by isolating from the world and slipping into the solitude of sensations. In either case, it is clear that it remains continuously driven by an *active nothingness*.

The visual work of art by its ability to transfer the flesh of an *invisible* to *visible* gives us now the opportunity to leave the area of philosophical inquiry in order to anchor ourselves to the aesthetic reality.

We will stop to the surrealist model of a body found in the area of interference of metamorphic vectors crossing the world of objects and the world of consciousness, whose incongruity may have the strange effects captured by Dali, master of dislocations, of abnormal proliferations which allow an assumed sliding into the unconscious. In this respect, the *Anthropomorphic Cabinet* (1936), *The Burning Giraffe* (1936–1937) and *Venus de Milo with Drawers* (1936) are illustrations of the famous Freudian theory on the drawers of the unconscious. Such moments of man falling into object and of object falling into man bring to our minds the image of undefined organism which ghostly overlap under the white light of beaches in some of his other paintings.

We depict as follows one of the representations of hand, recurrent in Salvador Dali's painting, justifying the thematic selection since, the hands may be called the most expressive nodes of dynamic action available to the artist" (Arnheim, 1982: 164). An outstanding example of the effort to materialize, "with the most unbridled fury of precision, the images of concrete irrationality" (Dali, 1971: 20) is the *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (1937) where, besides the unique reinterpretation of the myth, we witness a shift of emphasis from whole to part, in the paranoiac – critical manner characteristic of his genius. The metamorphosis also mentioned by Alain Bosquet in a dialogue with Dali is more precisely "the erotic metamorphosis of an object turning little by little into another object, and of a human being becoming a different human being." (Bosquet, 2000: 13) Spatial representation is also subject to metamorphosis and the actual result of the full – empty game, in other words it constitutes an effect of positive usage of interstices, propelling the onlooker in the not at all comfortable area of the unsure and ambiguity, characteristic feature of the surrealist movement.

If we use the concept of frame and that of the framing in the sense Gilles Deleuze understands these notions, in which "framing means delineating a closed system, relatively closed, which includes everything present in the picture" (Deleuze, 2012: 27), the frame being made of a large number of parts organized in ensembles and sub – ensembles, it becomes obvious that the painting we refer to contains several distinct assemblies.

When analysing these ensembles and sub – ensembles of which the whole is made up, we see that they constitute independent and at the same time interconnected units. The independence results from the apparent narrative succession of scenes, thus involving the opening of the image towards the 4th dimension, i.e. time. If we follow the dynamics of Narcissus's figure, its reiteration from the foreground to the

background reconstructing a line of successive mirroring, we are able to decide that the “history” starts in the right upper corner and develops along a diagonal vector descending up to the foreground.

In this metamorphic context, the hand becomes a reading key of the image because the other strong compositional centre, the face, remains obscured.

Narcissus’s image in the foreground shows him looking down, hiding his face introspectively, while in the one on the pedestal, on the background, his back is turned thus “lacking the communicative resources of the face”<sup>2</sup> (Banu, 2008: 24), a function taken over, given the circumstances, by the hand. The multiple hand behaviours such as: the communicative, the functional and even the expressive one are cumulated in the substitutive symbolic behaviour, as the whole body becomes through a game of double reflection, an oversized hand aimed at concentrating the subtle tension between the two poles of the image. Felt through the very distance that separates them, in the interspace which separates the human being from nothingness, the living from its petrified reflection respectively, the previously mentioned tension being subordinated to the surreal syntax which refuses to fulfil the clear distinction between rational and irrational.

Given the strange adventure of total virtualization of the body which we are currently witnessing, or are even subjects to, we can only wonder what else remains from the body which has become a mere tool of manipulation which we have learned to control precisely in view of preventing any weakness, any betrayal. Beyond this dispossession caused by virtualization, we cannot say that it is freed of any symbolization context, but we are rather concerned with properly handling the symbolic investment.

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<sup>2</sup> All translations from Romanian are my own

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Viaje a las entrañas de un pueblo-continente...  
La teoría civilizadora y el pensamiento identitario  
latinoamericano del siglo XIX

Alina Țiței\*

**A Journey into the Depths of a People-Continent...  
The Latin American Civilizing Theory and Identitary Thinking of the  
19<sup>th</sup> Century**

**Abstract:**

The fruit of a commingled essentialist-constructivist process, Latin American identity can only be thought of in terms of the dialectics *I ≠ Other*, geographically and ideologically transposed into the antinomies *Europe ≠ America* and *civilization ≠ barbarism*. In this paper, I aim to demonstrate briefly that, despite the efforts to qualify it as purist, the racial-ethnic identity, in particular, suffers from an equally profound influence of both the indigenous factor and the European one. There is undoubtedly an Indo-Iberian-African substrate at the basis of identity, which certainly cannot be excluded or ignored; nevertheless, I believe that European ethnic and racial elements (other than Hispanic) also had a significant contribution to its crystallization. In this context, I refer to the *civilizing theory* of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a thesis defended by the enlightened positivists, which proposes a reassessment, in the genuine Western spirit, of the Latin American cultural paradigm by eradicating retrograde and barbaric traits from the continent and by incorporating an allogeneous value system of Anglo-French origin.

**Keywords:** Latin American identity, Other, alterity, cultural synthesis, 19<sup>th</sup> century, civilization, barbarism, European, modernity

A fines de la decimoquinta centuria, la cultura hispana no se enorgullecía de ser precisamente moderna y racionalista, sino antes bien seguía estando muy profundamente influida por la religión, los valores morales absolutos y la intolerancia contra todo lo diferente. España era, por lo tanto, todavía un estado semifeudal. Así, dada la obtusidad e

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intransigencia de aquellos tiempos, no es nada sorprendente que los valientes conquistadores quisieran imponer apresurada e irreflexivamente las ideas que trajeron consigo de la Península y que la población autóctona, a través del estrecho prisma cultural de los españoles, fuera considerada inferior en todos los aspectos (cf. Larraín, 1994: 34). En cuanto a las principales razones que llevaron a una derrota relativamente rápida de los indígenas, podrían mencionarse tres:

- las luchas y divergencias intestinas entre los distintos pueblos nativos, que los españoles supieron aprovechar favorablemente;
- la superioridad tecnológica y militar de los ibéricos;
- la visión fatalista y predeterminada de la vida<sup>1</sup> en que se fundaba la religión de los indios (véase Picón-Salas, 1962: 7–12; Todorov, 1998: *passim*).

El encuentro histórico entre españoles (*tesis*) e indígenas (*antítesis*) representa el momento que sienta las bases del primer modelo cultural latinoamericano, cada paradigma aportando sus elementos de originalidad y especificidad a la coagulación de la primera *síntesis cultural*. Ese encuentro originó también el proceso de construcción del «otro», identificado en la persona del indígena inferior, y planteó por primera vez la pregunta acerca de la existencia de una identidad latinoamericana. Hasta el arribo de los conquistadores, las poblaciones de aquellos territorios vivían separadas por barreras geográficas y diferencias de índole étnica, cultural, económica y política que, en cierta medida, hacían imposible pensar en una gran unidad nacional o continental. Pese a que en Mesoamérica y los Andes Centrales existían sociedades centralizadas, como la azteca o la inca, con altos niveles de complejidad socio-política, había igualmente grupos étnicos con una diversidad lingüística e institucional tal (en el plano político, económico y religioso) que dificultaban dicha unidad.

Con respecto a la problemática de la alteridad en el proceso de colonización, Todorov distingue tres planos en los que esta se puede situar:

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<sup>1</sup> La cultura oral, específica de las poblaciones aborígenes, no les brindó las herramientas necesarias para entender a los españoles. Los poemas, las leyendas y su rica mitología reflejaban la historia en términos de destino y catástrofe, como una evolución predestinada de la existencia; por eso, inicialmente pensaron que los españoles eran dioses, lo que no podía menos que abrumarlos y desarmarlos. Tiene especial relevancia el viejo mito del retorno de Quetzalcóatl (antiguo adalid y también deidad que dejó su reino y desapareció en el Atlántico, con la promesa de volver algún día para reclamar su trono), identificado por el líder azteca Moctezuma en la persona del conquistador Hernán Cortés, lo cual explicaría parcialmente la falta de resistencia al ataque español.

1). *Axiológico*, que supone emitir un juicio de valor del tipo inferior vs. superior;

2). *Praxiológico*, que se refiere a la acción de acercamiento o alejamiento en relación con el «otro»: adopto los valores del otro, me identifico con él o, al contrario, asimilo al otro a mí y le impongo mi propia imagen;

3). *Epistémico*, que propone un posicionamiento intermedio –la neutralidad, la indiferencia– en otras palabras, conozco o ignoro la identidad del otro (1998: 195).

El autor señala asimismo que la experiencia de la alteridad reviste dos formas esenciales, resumidas en las antinomias igualdad  $\neq$  desigualdad y semejanza  $\neq$  diferencia: la igualdad establece relaciones a nivel horizontal, lo que desemboca naturalmente en identidad y asimilación, mientras que la diferencia impone una serie de relaciones a nivel vertical, traducidas inmediatamente en términos de superioridad vs. inferioridad (ibídem, 50). Ambas posturas actitudinales descansan en el egocentrismo y la identificación de los valores del poder colonial con los valores universales que han de prevalecer.

El punto de vista español sobre los nativos no ha sido ni monolítico, ni mucho menos uniforme. Por un lado, había voces que exageraban las diferencias al grado de considerar a los indígenas unos homúnculos, criaturas subhumanas que fácilmente podían ser esclavizadas o matadas sin consecuencia alguna. Por otro lado, estaban los que hacían hincapié en la idea de igualdad ante la divinidad, lo cual venía a apoyar la creencia de que las discrepancias culturales no constituían en realidad un inconveniente para su conversión a la religión verdadera: un enfoque algo más razonable por lo que respecta al tratamiento de los indígenas como seres humanos, pero que seguía sin acoplarse a un proyecto de colonización basado en el respeto, la aceptación y la asimilación adecuada de la diversidad cultural.

En este sentido, cabe señalar que el nuevo patrón cultural estaba drásticamente supeditado a la fe católica, íntimamente vinculado al autoritarismo político (germen de la prolongada y nefasta tradición que asolaría al continente en los siglos venideros) y no muy abierto a la razón científica. Dicho modelo, que convivió cómodamente al lado de la esclavitud y el racismo, fue vehementemente respaldado por una Iglesia católica monopolista, que se convirtió rápidamente en una institución rica y poderosa, y especialmente, por su brazo armado, la Inquisición española: esta prohibió todos los textos con carácter científico que había disponibles, excluyendo así de manera deliberada las ciencias experimentales y naturales, y permitió que en las universidades recién

creadas se enseñara solamente la filosofía escolástica. Para resumir, la primera síntesis cultural de América Latina se articuló en torno al catolicismo ritualístico como referente cultural común en la Edad Media y significó la formación de un sustrato racial hispano-indígena con una *conciencia religiosa sincrética*, en que los símbolos cristianos se fundieron con los dioses amerindios.

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Los principales sucesos que ocuparon la escena política y social de las colonias a comienzos del siglo XIX llevaron a la creación de un nuevo patrón cultural en América Latina. Las guerras de independencia y, como corolario, la formación de los Estados nación fueron el catalizador que puso en marcha el segundo proyecto histórico importante para la configuración de la identidad latinoamericana. América Latina se aleja de España, no solo en el plano político, mediante su emancipación efectiva de la Corona española, sino también en el plano intelectual, asumiendo ideas innovadoras procedentes de otras partes de Europa e incorporándolas a su contexto idiosincrásico: la Ilustración francesa, el liberalismo británico y, sobre todo, el positivismo comtiano desempeñaron un papel ideológico destacado en este nuevo proceso que les abre a las naciones latinoamericanas el camino a la modernidad. La edificación de los estados nacionales, en las postrimerías del siglo XIX y las primeras décadas del siguiente, estuvo condicionada, en primer término, por la búsqueda de unos modelos sociales y culturales que sirvieran para el desarrollo de las repúblicas apenas constituidas y, en segundo, por la construcción de unos imaginarios identitarios que dieran coherencia a las estructuras políticas y administrativas. Las tentativas de distanciarse de la tradición hispánica –sinónimo de la dominación colonial retrógrada–, en otras palabras la enajenación de España, vista como un país situado a la periferia de la modernización europea, y el subsecuente acercamiento a Francia, Inglaterra y los Estados Unidos –reunidos bajo la bandera de la razón, la libertad y el progreso– ponen de manifiesto las aspiraciones de los latinoamericanos de fundar sociedades modernas, aspiraciones que eran sin embargo preponderantemente imitativas en relación con los centros de poder occidentales.

El estallido de las guerras de independencia ha permanecido en la mente colectiva como el acontecimiento quizás más importante de la historia latinoamericana. El punto de inflexión, el momento crítico, de ruptura que condujo a la creación de las nuevas repúblicas y la revisión del concepto de identidad tiene un doble significado.



Primero, convertirse en naciones libres e independientes equivale para los pueblos latinoamericanos a afirmar su *conciencia individual*, una conciencia de sí como estados nacionales diferentes; más aún, equivale también a afirmar su *conciencia colectiva* como continente frente a España, al principio y, posteriormente, frente a otros países occidentales (Francia, Inglaterra, Estados Unidos). La afirmación de sí reclama implícitamente el reconocimiento por parte del Otro. Un reconocimiento visto no como la simple constatación de la adhesión que las naciones latinoamericanas profesan a un conjunto de valores comunes específicos y a una misma visión del mundo; es un reconocimiento que significa otorgar la libertad –política y cultural–, pero más todavía, según Pierre Bourdieu, significa la oportunidad de ser reconocidas por el Otro (la Corona española y el núcleo franco-anglo-americano) como «legítimamente diferentes», lo cual consagra la «posibilidad real, garantizada legal y políticamente, de afirmar oficialmente la diferencia» (apud Ferréol/Jucquois, 2005: 331). Mientras que la *identidad continental* se irá construyendo en contraste con una alteridad sajona, norteamericana o francesa, la *identidad nacional* será interpretada por cada país latinoamericano en relación con los demás pueblos hermanos del subcontinente.

Segundo, obtener la independencia conlleva necesariamente una alteración en las relaciones dialécticas *Yo ≠ Otro* y *centro ≠ periferia*. Desde la perspectiva de España, las colonias ocuparon, por tradición, una posición periférica, la posición del «otro». No obstante, la independencia cambia el equilibrio de fuerzas y la monarquía española, considerada hasta entonces el Yo central, pasa a ser el Otro. De este modo, las repúblicas que nacieron durante el siglo XIX dejan de relacionarse social, política, económica y culturalmente con la metrópoli ibérica y van enfocando su atención en otro centro de influencia, formado por Francia, Inglaterra y, más tarde, Estados Unidos. Igualmente, cabe mencionar que esta ruptura con el pasado –política en gran parte y cultural, pero tan solo en apariencia y temporalmente, ya que la veta hispana, aunque fuertemente cuestionada por algunos sectores de la intelectualidad latinoamericana, no podrá ser excluida de lo que acabará siendo el mestizaje biológico y cultural emblemático para el continente– puede ser también entendida como un paso hacia el centro o, para citar a Codrin Liviu Cuțitaru<sup>2</sup>, como una «hazaña» de la periferia latinoamericana en su camino a la centralidad. Aproximarse al

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<sup>2</sup> Anglista y americanista rumano, catedrático en la Universidad «Al. I. Cuza» de Iași

sistema de valores de otros países europeos, para luego intentar adaptar y asimilar ese sistema a su propio contexto, si bien al principio de forma mimética, no discriminatoria, sin tomar en cuenta la peculiaridad sobre múltiples planos de la realidad continental, hace que América Latina abandone en cierta medida su posición marginal y se dirija hacia el centro.

El problema de la identidad latinoamericana puede ser calificado, en esencia, como uno típicamente moderno. ¿Por qué moderno y no de otra manera? Porque con el inicio de la modernidad<sup>3</sup>, el hombre deviene el meollo de las preocupaciones. La modernidad se encarga de colocar en el centro de la existencia, del universo y de su visión del mundo al individuo, que en esta época se vuelve la medida de todas las cosas. Si la cosmovisión medieval era más bien teocrática y todo lo mediaba en relación con la divinidad, la sociedad moderna es humanista y antropocéntrica. Y si, más aún, el individuo llega a ser el punto central, entonces surge legítimamente la pregunta acerca de su identidad y de la lógica por la que se rige. Además, es la modernidad misma la que engendra aquellas categorías sociales e institucionales que más han servido a la formación de la identidad latinoamericana y conforme a las cuales los individuos se han referido por mucho tiempo a su propia persona. Ya en la postmodernidad, las categorías de *nación*, *Estado nación* o *clase* entran en crisis, pero en la Edad Moderna tuvieron un fuerte impacto; es por esto que la cuestión de la modernidad está íntimamente ligada a la de la identidad.

Tal como hemos apuntado, la identidad de una persona, grupo social, nación o país se delimita y se define siempre en relación con una alteridad, con el Otro, y la modernidad quería autodefinirse. Lo que a la sazón fungió como principal criterio en dicho proceso fue la racionalidad: el atributo de las naciones occidentales se convierte así en el catalizador fundamental para la creación de la identidad latinoamericana. Todo cuanto se juzgaba como razonable, era bueno y, por el contrario, todo cuanto podía ser tildado de irracional, salvaje o

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<sup>3</sup> Período histórico (XV–XVIII) asociado en el espacio europeo con las nociones filosóficas de subjetividad, libertad y reflexividad, cuya aparición fue posible gracias a la confluencia de tres acontecimientos: la Reforma religiosa, la Ilustración y la Revolución francesa. Estos sucesos han facilitado el desencadenamiento de los procesos en torno a los cuales se articularán los núcleos organizativos de la modernidad: el capitalismo, la industrialización y la democracia, que han tenido como fundamento la secularización, la concepción sobre un progreso histórico-emancipatorio y el universalismo de la razón y de la estética occidental, todo legitimado a través de los procesos coloniales.

bárbaro estaba automáticamente incluido en la categoría del «otro», de lo que tenía que ser rechazado o eliminado. En ese período se sientan las bases ideológicas de la primera y más importante dicotomía que vertebró la idiosincrasia latinoamericana: la oposición *civilización ≠ barbarie*, traspuesta metafísicamente en el binomio *Yo ≠ Otro*. Francia e Inglaterra, como representantes del «viejo continente», acompañadas por Estados Unidos a partir de la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, en cuanto que portaestandartes de la racionalidad, se definen de manera egocéntrica y etnocéntrica, al considerarse la avanzada de la historia en relación con las «otras» naciones, periféricas e irracionales, en este caso los africanos y los latinoamericanos.

La mentalidad europea se estructura en torno al propio yo, al sujeto único, de ahí la dificultad en reconocer a un «otro sí mismo»; ella se articula alrededor de su propia identidad, bien definida y coherente, una identidad incontestable que existe a priori y que, incluso en los momentos de crisis, se mantiene latente, válida a nivel conceptual, arquetípico. La mentalidad latinoamericana, en cambio, desprovista de esta noción en realidad arbitraria y equívoca debido a su estructura policéntrica, absolutiza al yo occidental, relacionándose con él de forma paradigmática, referencial; por otra parte, en la mentalidad europea predomina la tendencia de imponer relaciones a nivel vertical del tipo sujeto-objeto, este último siendo siempre el «otro», una alteridad inferior.

Junto con la razón, otros puntos criticables importantes, a partir de cuya revalorización la modernidad se da a la tarea de forjar su propia identidad, son la tradición medieval, la aristocracia y la visión religiosa de la vida. El pasado simboliza el tradicionalismo obsoleto, una sociedad feudal vetusta y un sistema de valores arcaico; es la alteridad en oposición con la cual se construye un proyecto nuevo. La ruptura con el Otro se realiza especialmente mediante la asunción de la postura racional y el abandono de la visión tomista dominante hasta ese momento, cuyas reminiscencias harán sin embargo sentir su presencia en las futuras estructuras.

Desde el punto de vista cultural, la modernidad latinoamericana o, mejor dicho, las «modernidades» latinoamericanas, ya que el conjunto de fenómenos reunidos bajo esta denominación ha seguido una evolución diferenciada en cada uno de los países del continente, han impulsado proyectos identitarios y nacionales estrechamente relacionados entre sí, teniendo como directriz al Estado, según el modelo europeo. Los intereses políticos y culturales de este paradigma socio-cultural estaban encaminados, por un lado, hacia la integración de

todos los segmentos sociales en una supuesta identidad cultural común y homogénea y, por otro, hacia la entrada en la cultura occidental. Tal estado de cosas, aunque comprensible en un contexto que requería gobernar unas sociedades multiculturales y plurilingües, realzaba aún más los problemas surgidos en el intento de unificar sistemas culturales tan diversos y contradictorios, que habían atravesado ya largos procesos de hibridación todavía desde la época de la conquista y colonización. Así, desde el punto de vista político, social y cultural, la *heterogeneidad* como rasgo distintivo de la estructura interna del continente ha representado el mayor escollo camino a los proyectos nacionales.

Superado este obstáculo, al menos formalmente, los proyectos identitarios nacionales han logrado materializar los esfuerzos por homogeneizar las identidades, siendo éstas construcciones discursivas que han ido cuajando en el marco de los Estados nación, incluso desde la fundación de los mismos. De esta manera, se ha alcanzado una convergencia exitosa entre cultura, identidad y nación, como símbolos de la pertenencia histórica. Durante la etapa que precedió a la globalización (desde la constitución de las repúblicas hasta los años '80 del siglo XX), el Estado nación y sus peculiares dinámicas de modernización funcionaron como referentes identitarios. Dentro de esos procesos, un papel fundamental desempeñaron los intelectuales ciudadanos por la ayuda que brindaron a la centralización de la autoridad en las colonias americanas:

Para llevar adelante el sistema ordenado de la monarquía absoluta, para facilitar la jerarquización y concentración del poder, para cumplir su misión civilizadora, resultó indispensable que las ciudades, que eran el asiento de la delegación de los poderes, dispusieran de un grupo social especializado, al cual encomendar esos cometidos (Rama, 1998: 31).

Reunidos en lo que Ángel Rama llama la *ciudad letrada*, «anillo protector del poder y ejecutor de sus órdenes» (*Ibídem*: 32), que el autor no restringe únicamente a la época colonial, sino que extiende a todos los contextos de la modernidad latinoamericana, «religiosos, administradores, educadores, profesionales, escritores y múltiples servidores intelectuales, todos esos que manejaban la pluma» (*Idem*), junto con el sistema educativo e institucional hicieron una aportación esencial a la construcción de la identidad latinoamericana y a la creación de unas mitologías identitarias que legitimaron los discursos sobre la identidad cultural. La abrumadora hegemonía de las potencias europeas, así como sus formas de conocimiento rodeadas del aura de prestigio que

ofrece el discurso autorizado, hicieron que en la *ciudad letrada* latinoamericana la *mimesis* se convirtiera en el paradigma socio-político y cultural.

Las guerras de independencia se libraron bajo la bandera teórica de la Ilustración progresista, cuyo extraordinario influjo propulsó a las jóvenes repúblicas a abolir la esclavitud y proclamar la libertad educacional. Además, surgieron nuevos modelos de estratificación y jerarquización social, que ya no dependían de los criterios raciales válidos hasta aquel momento. La racionalidad científica de la Europa decimonónica marcó indeleblemente a las clases dominantes y la élite intelectual de América Latina. Se creía que los nuevos criterios científicos representaban la única esperanza de traer «orden y progreso» a las repúblicas emergentes. La preocupación constante por alcanzar el progreso se perfiló como fundamento de todos los proyectos destinados a la construcción de las naciones políticas y de la identidad nacional, configurada desestimando en cierta medida el legado indígena. Por lo tanto, la primera síntesis cultural simbolizada por el *polo indo-ibérico*, fuertemente influido por la religión y el racismo, deviene en los albores del siglo XIX tesis para una nueva fusión cultural, en que la posición antitética será asumida por la *concepción iluminista-positivista*, teniendo la razón y el liberalismo como pilares ideológicos centrales. La segunda síntesis cultural significó pues la formación de los estados nacionales latinoamericanos y el despertar de la *conciencia nacional* en la mente colectiva de unas sociedades que se fueron construyendo en torno a los conceptos de *nación* y *clase* como referentes culturales comunes y se guiaron por la brújula ideológica del modelo ilustrado europeo.

A finales del siglo XIX, las ideas de Augusto Comte estaban en su apogeo. Para los espíritus liberales, quienes habían pasado con frecuencia a formas bastante radicales de autocrítica, nacidas de su virulento rechazo al patrimonio cultural pre- y posthispánico, el positivismo representó la secularización de la historia. Su carácter providencialista –la historia es por tanto fruto de la voluntad de Dios– es anulado y reemplazado por el carácter científico, según el cual la historia avanza al ritmo del progreso. En opinión del pensador francés, la Humanidad y, a pequeña escala, las estructuras sociales se someten a una ley universal: la ley de los tres estados evolutivos. El primero es el *teológico-militar*, que el segmento criollo de la sociedad latinoamericana, en su acerba crítica al sistema español, equiparaba sin reservas con el período colonial. El segundo, el estado *metafísico-legista*, era identificado con la república, en tanto que el tercero, el que se tenía que alcanzar, era la sociedad *científico-industrial* o el estado *positivo*,

que suponía el divorcio tanto de las especulaciones abstrusas del pensamiento religioso, como también de las abstracciones de la metafísica, igualmente estériles (cf. Rojas Mix, 1991: 89–90).

Ese era, por tanto, el horizonte de expectativas que la teoría de las tres «revoluciones» generó en América Latina a mediados del siglo XIX, con vistas a un cambio societal profundo. Se trataba de un proyecto que insistía más bien en occidentalizar a las antiguas colonias e incorporar un sistema de valores alógeno, de raigambre anglo-francesa, que en perfilar y definir una identidad nacional. El credo de algunos adeptos de la Ilustración y el positivismo, como Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Juan Bautista Alberdi, José Gil Fortoul, Javier Prado o José Ingenieros, era que en América Latina se daba una batalla entre la *civilización* y la *barbarie*: el continente tenía que pasar por un proceso civilizador y sus características culturales retrógradas y bárbaras necesitaban ser erradicadas<sup>4</sup>. La reevaluación del paradigma cultural latinoamericano conforme al espíritu occidental entrañaba tres operaciones intelectuales interrelacionadas:

- la elaboración de una crítica radical de las culturas indígena e hispana, con efecto estigmatizador;
- la idealización de la cultura europea y norteamericana;
- el desarrollo de un programa civilizador que permitiera el tránsito de la «barbarie» a la «civilización».

Entre los primeros partidarios de esta interpretación se encuentra Francisco de Miranda. El estadista venezolano advertía en los españoles unos «extranjeros codiciosos», faltos de la virtud, la humanidad y la humildad del ilustre fray Bartolomé de las Casas, que explotaban despiadadamente al continente. Lo único que debía haber sido conservado de la cultura española era, en su opinión, el catolicismo, pero promoviendo la tolerancia y la separación entre Iglesia y Estado

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<sup>4</sup> Según Sarmiento, los latinoamericanos nacieron de la mezcla de tres razas: blanca, india y negra, las cuales, precisamente por su naturaleza, se oponían al espíritu que había hecho posible la civilización, esto es la pureza racial. La mezcla entre un pueblo «con el cerebro comprimido por la Inquisición» y razas inherentemente serviles, como la africana, o salvajes, como la indígena, tuvo como resultado una degeneración racial; en su opinión, la superioridad innata de la América anglo-sajona ante la América hispana consiste justamente en esta homogeneidad racial. En este sentido, J. Prado afirmaba que el mayor impedimento para el progreso de América Latina radicaba en un factor social primario: la raza, y reconocía la influencia perniciosa de las «razas inferiores». A su vez, G. Fortoul aseguraba que algunas razas, como la blanca (europea), eran más aptas para la civilización que otras, mientras que J. Ingenieros entendía la modernización como la creación de una clase capitalista antifeudal.

(1982: 268). Así, la búsqueda de la identidad en el «progreso» y la «civilización» europea, representada por el núcleo anglo-francés, explica algunas de las políticas destinadas a la modernización de América Latina en el transcurso del siglo XIX: por ejemplo, «mejorar la raza» a través del fomento de la inmigración europea como fuente de componentes raciales nuevos y ampliar la educación pública con carácter científico a todas las categorías sociales. Estados Unidos de América –una nación que combina felizmente los recursos naturales con las libertades políticas y religiosas– era el modelo a seguir. La purificación de la raza significaba pues aniquilar todos los rasgos negativos que constituían una traba para el progreso: el rudimentarismo, la aridez de los sentimientos, la carencia de «afecciones estéticas», pero también de fuerza física, el carácter supersticioso, crédulo e introvertido en el caso de los indígenas; la melancolía y la naturaleza nostálgica de los negros; la incapacidad para la industria, la falta de iniciativa o el instinto bélico en el caso de los españoles (cf. Vergara Estévez/Vergara del Solar, 2002: 83).

La oposición *civilización ≠ barbarie* está sugerentemente ilustrada por la clásica dicotomía *Ariel ≠ Calibán*<sup>5</sup>, analizada de diferentes maneras por los intelectuales latinoamericanos, según el partidismo ideológico de cada uno. Gracias a las características que poseen, los personajes de *La tempestad* de Shakespeare aluden de forma maniquea a los imaginarios culturales en conflicto: el occidental y el latinoamericano. Fruto de la mentalidad europea para designar a toda cultura considerada atrasada, Calibán encarnaba a los ojos de quienes abogaban por la teoría civilizadora la barbarie y la ignorancia, siendo identificado en general con el primitivo pueblo latinoamericano y en especial con su elemento indígena. Por contraste, Ariel personificaba la

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<sup>5</sup> En 1900, el uruguayo José Enrique Rodó, sirviéndose de la obra dramática *La tempestad* como intertexto, publica el ensayo *Ariel*, donde intenta definir la realidad latinoamericana a través de la antinomia *Ariel ≠ Calibán*. Por medio de un trastrueque de los elementos expresivos que las conforman, el autor cambia las imágenes que proyectan los dos héroes de Shakespeare. Calibán deja de ser identificado con la barbarie primitiva postulada por la generación de Sarmiento y se convierte en el símbolo de la «barbarie norteamericana», del «salvajismo de Estados Unidos», del pensamiento irracional y de la incapacidad de ver más allá de las preocupaciones materiales inmediatas; Ariel, en cambio, encarna los valores humanistas y espirituales o lo que Rodó llama «nuestra civilización», remitiendo a América Latina y la «vieja Europa» por igual. Tres décadas más tarde, el escritor cubano Roberto Fernández Retamar, en su trabajo *Calibán. Apuntes sobre la cultura de nuestra América*, hace un análisis de este «concepto-metáfora» o «personaje conceptual», al considerarlo prototípico para los grupos sociales marginados y explotados por la América eurocéntrica (cf. Rodríguez / Salvador, 2005: 151–153).

civilización occidental, el orden y el progreso, la cultura superior. Los defensores de la tesis del mestizaje<sup>6</sup> argumentaban, en cambio, que tal oposición entre civilización y barbarie no existe, que América Latina es mestiza, puesto que todas las marcas culturales se funden en un valor único –*el valor mestizo*–, que elimina los binomios antinómicos del tipo cultura vs. incultura o civilización vs. primitivismo. Ariel y Calibán siguen ostentando los mismos atributos, pero ahora dejan de ocupar posiciones antagónicas y fusionan en una naturaleza compleja: *el americano mestizo*. No obstante, el salvaje Calibán y el civilizado Ariel están al servicio de un tercer personaje salido también de las páginas de la obra shakesperiana: el brujo Próspero. En el análisis metafórico de las relaciones que viven los personajes, este es identificado con el «tirano ilustrado que el Renacimiento ama», una entidad supraestructural, una fuerza superior que puede ser fácilmente asociada con las potencias occidentales, a la que se somete el retrógrada continente mestizo.

El juego especular Yo ≠ Otro continúa y podemos notar que la perspectiva desvalorizante de la élite intelectual autóctona sobre la situación en que se hallaban las naciones latinoamericanas coincidía en muchos aspectos, sorprendentemente, con algunas de las opiniones despectivas que venían justamente de Europa. La impresión general con respecto a la América Latina decimonónica era la de un continente dominado todavía por fuerzas irracionales, conformado por pueblos inferiores, carentes de historia, lo cual hacía que la tutela europea o norteamericana sobre las incipientes repúblicas se viera como algo benéfico, hasta necesario:

La conquista del país señaló la ruina de su cultura, de la cual conservamos noticias; pero se reducen a hacernos saber que se trataba de una cultura natural, que había de perecer tan pronto como el espíritu se acercara a ella. América se ha revelado siempre y sigue revelándose impotente en lo físico como en lo espiritual. Los indígenas, desde el desembarco de los europeos, han ido pereciendo al soplo de la actividad europea [...]. En la América del Sur se ha conservado una mayor capa de población, aunque los indígenas han sido tratados con más dureza y aplicados a servicios más bajos, superiores a veces, a sus fuerzas. De todos modos el indígena está aquí más despreciado. Léense en las descripciones de viajes relatos que demuestran la sumisión, la humildad, el servilismo

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<sup>6</sup> Fruto de los enfoques anteriores –indigenista, hispánico, occidentalista–, la teoría del mestizaje (J. Vasconcelos, M. Picón-Salas, A. Uslar Pietri, P. Morandé) es la más difundida y más ampliamente aceptada. Ella postula la existencia de una identidad cultural específicamente latinoamericana, resultada tras la síntesis de diversos elementos de cultura procedentes de las sociedades indígena, europea y africana.



que estos indígenas manifiestan frente al criollo y aún más frente al europeo. Mucho tiempo ha de transcurrir todavía antes de que los europeos enciendan en el alma de los indígenas un sentimiento de propia estimación. Los hemos visto en Europa, andar sin espíritu y casi sin capacidad de educación. La inferioridad de estos individuos se manifiesta en todo, incluso en la estatura. Solo las tribus meridionales de Patagonia son de fuerte naturaleza; pero se encuentran todavía sumidas en el estado natural del salvajismo y la incultura (Hegel, 2005: 266–267).

Esto testifica que, en gran medida, el consumo de valores europeos por parte de los intelectuales ilustrados latinoamericanos fue uno más bien acrítico, ya que incluso las connotaciones racistas fueron asimiladas sin protestas –una especie de rendición cultural que las palabras de Alberdi ilustran muy bien:

En América todo lo no europeo, es bárbaro: no hay más división que ésta: 1°, el indígena, es decir, el salvaje; 2°, el europeo, es decir, nosotros, los que hemos nacido en América y hablamos español, los que creemos en Jesucristo y no en Pillán (dios de los indígenas) (apud Rojas Mix, 1991: 223).

Sin embargo, hay que mencionar que no toda la recepción del racionalismo y empirismo europeos tuvo implicaciones racistas. En muchos de los sectores intelectuales, el racionalismo no significó sino el deseo de modernizar, el énfasis en la importancia de la ciencia y la fe en el papel primordial de la educación. Esta es, en parte, la razón por la cual la supremacía impuesta por el modelo científico-racional europeo y la capacidad de los latinoamericanos para internalizarlo y aplicarlo no fue seriamente cuestionada hasta principios del siglo XX.

Un último aspecto que habría que destacar es que la modernización real de América Latina no coincidió con la modernidad como período histórico, puesto que hasta la segunda mitad del siglo XX, la élite gobernante, detentora del control político, mantuvo a las masas populares en una posición marginal, sin acceso a la educación y los medios informativos. En este mismo orden de cosas, la modernidad latinoamericana era pensada como una mezcla de tradiciones premodernas y acciones políticas, educativas y comunicacionales modernas, lo que condujo a la aparición de unas formaciones híbridas en todas las clases sociales. Es precisamente esta heterogeneidad la que representa de hecho el componente medular de la cultura latinoamericana, al engendrar imaginarios diversos a menudo contradictorios e intrínsecamente conflictivos. La modernidad latinoamericana posee una idiosincrasia marcada por varios factores,

entre los cuales el sociólogo Jorge Larraín (1996: 247, apud Rodríguez Cascante, 2004: 244) menciona: el clientelismo o personalismo político y cultural; el tradicionalismo ideológico; el autoritarismo; el racismo enmascarado; la falta de autonomía y desarrollo de la sociedad civil; la marginalidad, la economía informal y la fragilidad de las instituciones. Todas estas deficiencias revelan palmariamente el carácter incompleto del proyecto de modernización y construcción de la identidad latinoamericana.

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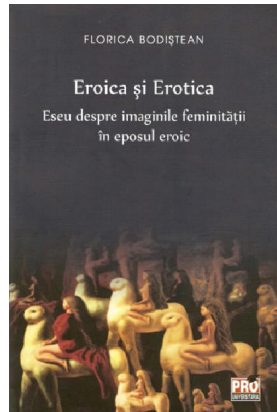
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REVIEW ARTICLES

JESS

## Florica Bodiștean: Despre feminitate și eroism masculin

Anton Ilica\*



Considerațiile ce urmează se referă la cea mai recentă carte a Floricăi Bodiștean, cu titlul *Eroica și Erotica: eseu despre imaginile feminității în eposul eroic* (București, Editura Pro Universitaria, 2013).

**1. Cine este autorul eseului de critică literară comparată?** Conferențiar universitar, doctor în filologie cu o teză despre Marin Preda, Florica Bodiștean a dat, până acum, criticii literare patru volume: *Marin Preda sau despre complexele creației* (2002), *O teorie a literaturii* (2005, ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită 2008), *Poetica genurilor literare* (2006, ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită 2009) și *Literatura pentru copii și tineret dincolo de „story”*. În plus, este redactor-șef al revistei „Journal of Humanistic and Social Studies”, membru al Uniunii Scriitorilor și prodecan al Facultății de Științe Umaniste și Sociale a Universității „Aurel Vlaicu” din Arad. Complementar datelor de mai sus, opinia mea mărturisește opțiunea pentru un coleg, situație în care, sub afișarea unui zâmbet dulceag, se (poate) ascunde o invidie imprudentă, dificil de probat, dar, cred, inautentică. În ceea ce a scris, Florica Bodiștean și-a dezvoltat doar o parte din structura sa sufletească. Temperamentală, dinamică și exigentă, are rigoarea de a da texturii o ținută duminicală, cu grijă pentru expresie și deopotrivă pentru structurare ideatică. Scrie cu convingere și pasiune, având voința de a fi „altfel”, iar evidențele o plasează în rândul profesorilor care fac un altfel de critică literară universitară („aveam nevoie de un critic literar cu spirit academic, înzestrat cu harul lecturilor temeinice și al redactării serioase și atent fasonate”, cum a spus, într-o anumită împrejurare, I. Funeriu, punct de vedere pe care îl împărtășim). Textele sale pun în valoare farmecul admirativ pentru trăirea complexă a actului de scriere, grație „științei” de a îngemăna sintagme expresive, capabile să sugereze mai mult decât conotația hibridă a combinațiilor semantice.

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**2. Eroica și Erotica.** Cititor al celorlalte volume, pot afirma – comparativ – că actualul „eseu despre imaginile feminității în eposul eroic” confirmă un stil unitar de scriitură, caracterizat prin: fidelitate și rigoare tematică, frazarea fără podoabe inutile, coerență structurală și evitarea stereotipiilor ademenitoare. În *Eroica și Erotica*, autoarea urmărește evoluția celor două teme prin intermediul unor personaje cuprinse în evenimentele din *Iliada și Odiseea*, *Eneida*, *Tristan și Isolda*, *Don Quijote*, *Ivanhoe*, *Cei trei muschetari*, *Logodnicii* lui Manzoni, *Război și pace*, *Pădurea spânzuraților*, *Ultima noapte de dragoste, întâia noapte de război*, *Adio, arme*, *Pentru cine bat clopotele*, *Pe frontul de vest nimic nou*. Am înșirat operele literare justificative pentru a identifica selecția autorului (dintr-o literatură imensă) în vederea argumentării relației complementare dintre femeie și bărbat și a schimbării calității raporturilor dintre genuri; „copleșitoarea tradiție istorică și culturală – spune autoarea în *Argument* – afirmă cu tărie că eroismul, în sensul lui propriu, e monopol masculin, dar toată literatura lumii mărturisește că nu poate fi vorba de eroic fără erotic...”. Și continuă: „oricum, femeile sunt cele care răspund de problema echilibrului bărbătesc, ca mod de situare în existență” (p. 11, 12).

Ar mai fi existat, ne întrebăm îmbiind cititorul la reflecție, o epopee iliadică și odiseică fără celebra Elenă, chiar dacă ea, femeia (mă rog, *erotismul*), e doar un pretext („ingredient”, ar spune autoarea) pentru afirmarea *eroismului*? De la eposul de demult până în eposul modernității „nu s-au schimbat prea multe lucruri în agonul sexelor” (p. 225), ci doar contextele sociale care-i dau semnificații comportamentale și atitudini decorative. Eventual, dozele de complementaritate se modifică, sub potențarea relației dintre „a fi” și „a acționa”, dintre orgoliul masculin și amazonismul feminin.

**3. Etape în structurarea mentală a relației.** Sunt patru mari momente care marchează, după referința autoarei, punctele de impact ale schimbării mentalității în relația, la urma urmei, dintre bărbat și femeie (purtători predominanți ai etichetelor *eroic*, respectiv *erotic*):

- **Tradiția greco-latină** e eminentă eroică, dar erotica („femeia demetrică” și „femeia afroditică”) e „un auxiliu obstructionist”. Argumentele derivă din analizele textelor marilor epopei homerice, precum și a *Eneidei* virgiliene. Erotica reprezintă un pretext pentru declanșarea eroicului, iar orgoliul masculin se ecranează prin escamontarea aproape ridicolă a iluziei că femeia e un adjuvant pentru ascuțitul sabiei ucigătoare.

- **Eposul cavaleresc din veacul ipocrit** aduce femeia într-un rol de „prezență prin absență”, specificitate a cavalerului războinic și onest,

care pleacă în armură, animat de dorința de a se reîntoarce la iubirea neconsumată. Bărbatul – spre deosebire de masculul homeric – e posedat de sentiment erotic, plecând la turnir cu sufletul sedus de dorul reîntoarcerii, sau, cum spune autoarea, exaltînd de „dorința trezită de femeia iubită”.

- **Renașterea** aduce, în ecuația raportabilă la eroic și eros, o multiplicare în registrul complementarității. Rațiunea existenței bărbatului intră într-o tulburătoare vanitate cu o pasiune ademenitoare pentru femeie. Aceasta e „înger sau demon”, dominînd, deja, și subjugînd sufletul bărbatului, nerăbdător să redevină umbră de feminitate. Bărbatul devine protectorul frumuseții și gingășiei feminine, în numele onoarei și al sentimentalității.

- **Modernitatea**, după argumentele derivate din analizele critice ale Floricăi Bodiștean, identifică o schimbare majoră în comportamentul tot mai masculinizat al femeii. Aceasta nu mai e „obiect” de recuzită a bărbatului și nici o sursă de generozitate. Modernitatea dă femeii o condiție (uneori mult mai privilegiată) cu miză erotică, din care nu lipsește senzualitatea, sexualitatea și desfătarea. Egalitatea în „agonul sexelor” duce la recuperarea sentimentalității reciproce, la valorificarea complexă a relației dintre eroic și erotic, la pierderea sensului eroismului și la întronarea frumuseții erotismului în care partenerii sunt actorii acelorași privilegii afective și epidermice.

Identificarea istoriei „imaginilor feminității” prin intermediul „eposului eroic” reprezintă un demers tenace, curajos și plin de riscuri. Considerat „eseu”, textul are dreptul la remanieri și completări, inclusiv la acelea referitoare la „bărbații văzuți de femei”, proiect pentru „o altă carte cu un alt eșantion ficțional” (ceea ce ne identifică reversul atitudinii, adică actualul eseu se referă la „femeile văzute de bărbați”).

Pe lângă discursul ideatic și viziunea comparativă, am fost satisfăcut de calitatea și originalitatea analizelor textuale, precum și de spectacolul limbajului utilizat. Cuvinte derivate în neologisme (ex.: *auxiliu*, *femeie afroditică*, *discurs agonistic*, *agonul sexelor* etc.) și o semantică incitantă, plăcută și surprinzător de agreabilă în context („amintirea unei îndelungi necredințe”, „între moral și imoral trebuie să fie loc de toleranță”, „caz tipic de acțiune prin inacțiune”, „vocație ilicită”, „o paranteză în propria ficțiune”, „unde esențele se hibridează” etc.). Sunt ancore de atractivitate, dând întregului text vrednicia admirației, iar autoarei motive temeinice de a-și hrăni în continuare orgoliul de reprezentativ critic literar.

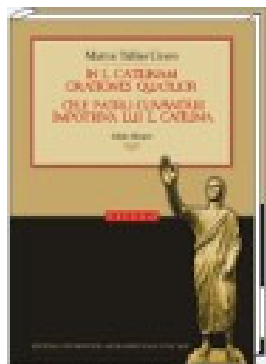
*Eroica și Erotica...* e un text de comparatistică literară originală, care îmbogățește literatura de specialitate și propulsează un autor în marea critică literară de tip universitar. Tradus bine într-o limbă romanică, eseul poate deveni referențial pentru literatura (și cultura) europeană.





## Cicero în actualitate

Emanuela Ilie\*



Fără nicio îndoială, cea mai nouă apariție din colecția *Cicero* propusă de Editura Universității „Al. I. Cuza” din Iași este un adevărat eveniment editorial, pe care nu numai clasiștii, ci și reprezentanții altor ramuri ale filologiei s-ar cuveni să îl salute ca atare. Aceasta pentru că volumul **Marcus Tullius Cicero. In L. Catilinam orationes quatuor/ Cele patru cuvântări împotriva lui L. Catilina** [ediție coordonată de Mihaela Paraschiv. Traducere de Claudia Tărnăuceanu (*Catilinara I*), Constantin Răchită (*Catilinara a II-a*), Constantin Ionuț Mihai (*Catilinara a III-a*), Mihaela Paraschiv (*Catilinara a IV-a*). Indici de Claudia Tărnăuceanu, studiu introductiv de Constantin Sălăvăstru] constituie, practic, o premieră în spațiul nostru cultural, atât de pauper în lucrări de o asemenea anvergură. Demersul e cu atât mai salutar cu cât, în vremea din urmă, statutul filologiei clasice (la fel ca și al altor discipline umaniste) a avut mult de suferit în România. În condițiile cunoscute, asupra cărora nu are rost să insistăm aici (reforma Bologna, scăderea drastică a numărului de studenți, orientarea pieței de carte spre alți vectori de interes public șcl.), puținii clasiști în adevăratul sens al cuvântului din țară au un rol esențial în atragerea publicului larg către acest domeniu atât de vitregit, dar și în fidelizarea celor interesați de studierea disciplinei.

Nimic nu pare mai potrivit, în acest proces anevoios și de durată, decât apariția periodică a unor ediții bilingve bine făcute, care să (re)descopere profilul personalităților de excepție ale Antichității. În cazul de față, strălucitul filosof și om politic Marcus Tullius Cicero – cunoscut, ce-i drept, îndeosebi pentru *Cele patru cuvântări* (*In L. Catilinam orationes quatuor*) împotriva lui Lucius Sergius Catilina, pronunțate în fața senatului (I, IV) sau poporului (II, III), la sfârșitul consulatului său (în anul 63 a.C., lunile noiembrie și decembrie). Dar posteritatea... de

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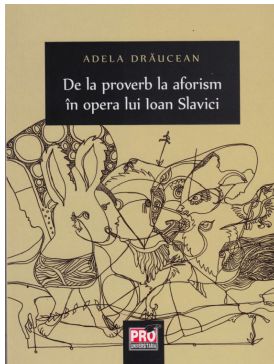
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orientare decis clasică îl reține drept autorul unei opere de o reală complexitate și posesorul unui sistem de gândire cu adevărat provocator. De a căror actualitate poate convinge fie și numai lectura aprofundată a *Celor patru cuvântări...* din cartea de față. În special datorită faptului că cei patru clasiști ieșeni care s-au angajat în laboriosul demers al traducerii și comentării celebrelor discursuri ciceroniene – Mihaela Paraschiv, Claudia Tărnăuceanu, Constantin Răchită și Constantin Ionuț Mihai – au știut să confere produsului finit o înfățișare sobră, dar finalmente atractivă. Fiecare cuvântare este precedată de o cât se poate de utilă *Notă istorică* (în care se fixează *Circumstanțele pronunțării discursului și Structura ideatică a discursului*) și este urmată de alte *Note și comentarii* de lungime variabilă, dar cu miză unitară. Anume, re-crearea contextului istoric, socio-politic și mentalitar în care s-au petrecut evenimentele ce justifică discursurile ori sunt amintite, fie și numai aluziv, în acestea. Ceea ce presupune, între altele: concentrarea unor evenimente relevante, fixarea monogramelor unor figuri istorice de prim rang sau de fundal, comentarea unor strategii discursive specifice etc.

Cititorii specializați în studiul filologiei clasice vor aprecia, de bună seamă, acuratețea traducerii sau relevanța bogatului sistem de note și se vor contagia, mai mult ca sigur, măcar cu o parte din entuziasmul coordonatorului colecției, Constantin Sălăvăstru: „Întâlnirea cu *Catilinarele* este, întotdeauna și peste tot, o plăcere a spiritului și o fericire a sufletului... Avem, în fața *Catilinarelor*, aceleași emoții precum în fața *Giocondei* lui Leonardo sau a *Simfoniei a IX-a* a lui Beethoven”. Ceilalți vor fi cuceriți cel puțin de atractivitatea comentariilor și suplețea reflecției pe teme subsecvente de regulă politicului. Grație cărora își vor aminti că una dintre lecțiile dureroase ale istoriei privește posibilitatea ca marile tragedii să se repete. Dar și că, recitind cărțile sapiențiale ale vremurilor de demult, putem să învățăm, între altele, cum să întârziem astfel de dezastre...

## Adela Drăucean, *De la proverb la aforism în opera lui Ioan Slavici*

Anton Ilica\*



Investigația Adelei Drăucean din volumul *De la proverb la aforism în opera lui Ioan Slavici* (Editura Pro Universitaria, București, 2013) se plasează la frontiera dintre literatură și filosofie: aplică un canon la un text literar, cu intenția anunțată de a oferi o nouă interpretare a creației paremiologice slaviciene. *Proverbul* este o învățătură populară cu tentă moralizatoare, iar *aforismul* e o învățătură cultă, cu reflexii filosofice și sugestii etice. Slavici a fost considerat un scriitor a cărui operă degajă o puternică filosofie a comportamentului. Gura satului, ca instanță morală, susține principiile de bună conviețuire între oameni. Intriga romanelor sau povestirilor (nuvele, schițe, povești) derivă din abaterile de la buna conviețuire, de la încălcarea unui cod etic (nescris) alcătuit prin tradiție și prin perpetuare de obiceiuri comunitare. Filosofia existenței rurale trece dincolo de lege, iar comprimarea unor conduite într-un limbaj paremiologic asigură nu doar semnificația înțelepciunii, ci și protecția de ironia și sancțiunea colectivă.

Volumul are evidente alcătuirii tipic universitare (Adela Drăucean este cadru didactic universitar la Facultatea de Științe Umaniste și Sociale din cadrul Universității „Aurel Vlaicu” din Arad, cu doctoratul susținut într-un domeniu apropiat – *Clasici junimiști și folclorul* – volum tipărit în 2011). Structural, conținutul are două componente: *De la proverb la aforism în opera lui Ioan Slavici* (studiu amplu) și *Corpus gnomice slaviciene* (extrase de texte aforistice din creația lui Slavici).

*Studiul* (p. 9–93) clarifică terminologia, precum și relația noțională dintre sensurile acesteia, dezvoltată într-o serie sinonimică (proverb, aforism, cugetare, maximă, sentință, gnomie). Intenția autorului este de „a propune o nouă lectură a operei lui Ioan Slavici”

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(p. 8) prin prisma rolului (și impactului) gnomiilor în (asupra) textul(ui) slavician. E o propunere interesantă de lectură, dând cititorului trei criterii: poziția gnomică în texte, importanța etică și caracteriologică, precum și semnificația stilistică a acesteia. Toate cele trei sugestii converg spre determinarea funcțiilor epice (moralizatoare, prevestitoare, portretizatoare, caracteriologice) și a funcțiilor stilistice. În fine, demersul autoarei de a schița „nașterea” proverbului în mentalul comunitar și reprezentarea lui verbală este convingătoare și corect argumentată și justificată în schema de la p. 42. În procesul de transsubstanțiere, Ioan Slavici convertește o constatare anonimă, reprezentată printr-o formulă populară, într-un aforism atent generalizat într-o cugetare filosofică, având impregnată ironia și deopotrivă înțelepciunea. Adela Drăucean dispune de știința analitică de a determina impactul dintre semnificația populară a sintagmelor gnomică și conturul semantic nou al filosofiei alcătuirii narațiunii. Atât subiectele acestora, cât și limbajul proverbial al personajelor, cantitatea de vorbire moralizatoare din colocvialitatea lor provin din zona folcloricului. Concluzia autoarei este relevantă: „scriitorul îmbracă proverbele populare în noi veșminte, le înfrumusețează și le conferă un statut aparte, astfel încât prin intermediul lor cititorul este capabil să deducă poziția față de personaje, întâmplări sau situații. În acest fel, gnomia își îmbogățește sensul, păstrându-și totodată sensul original” (p. 85).

Printr-un asemenea stil, Ioan Slavici propune „soluții de viață morală practică”, oferind „un cod moral pentru oamenii timpului său”, după cum se afirmă. Asemenea infuzii de învățături gnomică „îl fac unic în literatura română din toate punctele de vedere”. Ideea este ca omul să ducă o viață cumpătată, fără exagerări, într-un echilibru cu sine și cu alții.

*Corpusul gnostic slavician* (p. 94–239) prezintă o selecție a cea ce autoarea consideră a fi texte aforistice, din întreaga operă a lui Ioan Slavici, având la bază ediția critică, elaborată în 2001, de D. Vatamaniuc. Sunt aproape 150 pagini de extrase, cu menționarea titlului, apoi a paginilor, evident, marcajul fiind realizat prin semnele citării. Unele sunt foarte apropiate de exprimarea populară: „Florea a început dar a bate șaua, ca să priceapă iapa”. Altele sunt prelucrări arhicunoscute în limbajul popular: „Omul să fie mulțumit cu sărăcia sa, căci, dacă e vorba, nu bogăția, ci liniștea colibeii tale te face fericit”. Altele însă nu fac parte din categoria gnomiilor: „... pe de o sută și pe de o mie de ori e însă mai frumoasă Florița, pentru că ea are

fața ca zorile dimineții, ochi ca și câmpul cerului și trup ca raza soarelui” sau, în altă parte, „era mai viu decât a fost cândva!” etc.

Prin acest volum, se îmbogățește literatura critică dedicată scriitorului Ioan Slavici, iar demersul Adelei Drăucean clarifică un aspect important al acesteia: modalitatea de manifestare a virtuților morale al unui text, în care valoarea estetică este susținută de aspectele etice ale narațiunilor și personajelor. Adela Drăucean realizează o prestație de critic literar, analizând cu discernământ textele literare, scormonind în sufletul acestora pentru aflarea unei idei care să-i justifice opțiunile. Volumul *De la proverb la aforism în opera lui Ioan Slavici* evidențiază calitățile de analist literar ale Adelei Drăucean, precum și calitățile sale de sinteză pornind de la sondarea subțirilor subtile ale unui text beletristic în vederea limpezirii unor semnificații insuficient investigate.

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## Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epitome de Caesaribus* / *Epitomă despre împărați*

Claudia Tărnăuceanu\*

Neglijate o îndelungată perioadă de timp, scrierile istorice de la sfârșitul Antichității greco-latine se bucură astăzi de o atenție deosebită din partea cercetătorilor și traducătorilor. Printre lucrările de acest gen, o specie bine cunoscută și exersată în Antichitatea târzie o reprezintă *epitoma*. În secolul al IV-lea, istoria Romei este rezumată într-o serie de lucrări printre care se numără și *Epitome de Caesaribus*, ultima dintre epitomele alcătuite în epoca amintită, atribuită în secolele VIII–XVI lui Sextus Aurelius Victor. Exegeza modernă consideră însă că autorul scrierii este un anonim, menționat astăzi ca Pseudo-Aurelius Victor. Lucrarea a suscitat și interesul specialiștilor de la noi, atât istorici, cât și filologi, cunoscând recent o inspirată tălmăcire în limba română (realizată de prof. univ. dr. Mihaela Paraschiv), însoțită de ample și bine documentate comentarii istorice (alcătuite de prof. univ. dr. Nelu Zugravu). Cei doi universitari ieșeni au publicat de curând ediția Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, *Epitome de Caesaribus* / *Epitomă despre împărați*, editio bilinguis, traducere și considerații lingvistice de Mihaela Paraschiv, ediție îngrijită, abrevieri, studiu introductiv, note și comentarii, indice de Nelu Zugravu, apărută în 2012 la Editura Universității „Al. I. Cuza” din Iași. Cartea este prima dintr-o nouă colecție, „Thesaurus Classicus”, care își propune realizarea unor ediții bilingve ale operelor autorilor greci și latini, nepublicate până acum în cultura română.

Volumul se deschide cu un *Studiu introductiv* detaliat (p. 11–108) (precedat de lista abrevierilor, p. 7–11), semnat de Nelu Zugravu.

În prima secțiune a acestui studiu, *I. Titlul și autorul*, N. Zugravu ia în discuție problema diverselor titluri sub care este cunoscută lucrarea în tradiția manuscrisă și menționează câteva date cu privire la autor, pe baza informațiilor care pot fi extrase din operă. Sunt redate (p. 12–14) opiniile și argumentele unor exegeți (e. g. Friedrich Gruner, în 1757; Michel Festy, în ediția din 1999, care urmează o idee din sec. al XVII-lea a lui Martinus Hankius) în privința titlului real. Cel mai vehiculat dintre *tituli* este cel menționat în 1733 de editorul Johannes Arntzen, *Sex. Aur.*

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*Victoris Epitome de Caesaribus*. Conform lui M. Festy, *titulus* prezent în cel mai vechi manuscris (de la mijlocul veacului al IX-lea) ar putea fi cel autentic. Detalii despre autor sunt cuprinse în paginile următoare (p. 14–18): originea probabilă – „locuitor al Romei” (p. 14); orientare politico-socială – „un apropiat al cercurilor senatoriale” (p. 14); religie – „adept al păgânismului” (p. 15); cultură – „cunoscător al limbii grecești” (p. 17).

În secțiunea următoare, 2. *Data redactării* (p. 18–21), se încearcă stabilirea momentului elaborării lucrării. N. Zugravu înclină să creadă că termenul final al acesteia nu depășește anii 401–402, aducând ca argument lipsa oricărei referiri la campania regelui got Alaricus (391–410) în nordul Italiei (eveniment ale cărui ecouri s-au simțit în operele autorilor epocii) (p. 20–21).

Despre specia literară căreia îi aparține scrierea, despre conținutul și sursele acesteia, ca și despre valoarea istorică a informațiilor oferite, se discută pe larg în secțiunea 3. *Caracterul, izvoarele și conținutul lucrării. Valoarea informațiilor* (p. 21–81).

Respingând, la fel ca și alți cercetători (v. trimiterele în notele 46, 47, 48 de la p. 21), distincția *epitomă / breuiarium* ca neaplicabilă scrierilor din secolul al IV-lea, autorul studiului introductiv este de părere că „e neîndoielnic că termenii sunt sinonimi, desemnând un gen literar foarte popular în Antichitatea târzie, inclusiv în câmpul istoriografic” (p. 21).

Prezentând, sub forma unor „medalioane biografice imperiale” (p. 22) istoria domniilor împăraților Imperiului roman, de la Augustus (începând cu bătălia din 31 î. H. de la Actium) până la Theodosius (până la moartea acestuia în 395 d. H.), autorul epitomei s-a inspirat din opere ale scriitorilor anteriori. Identificarea acestor lucrări reprezintă pentru specialiști, ale căror opinii sunt redade și comentate de istoricul ieșean, un subiect de dezbatere ce rămâne deschis și astăzi. Conform exegeților, scrierea anonimului poate fi împărțită în șase secțiuni. Prima secțiune (cap. I–XI), în care se găsesc cele mai bogate biografii, organizate în stil suetonian, este dedicată împăraților din dinastiile iulio-claudiană și flaviană și intervalului dintre acestea. Asupra conținutului și izvoarelor, de care autorul este cu totul dependent, se discută în paginile 25–34. Conform opiniei cercetătorilor, care au subliniat similitudini cu *Vitae duodecim Caesarum* ale lui Suetonius, *Liber de Caesaribus* al lui Aurelius Victor, *Istoriile* lui Dio Cassius, *Annales* și *Historiae* ale lui Tacitus, scrisorile lui Plinius cel Tânăr, aceste opere n-ar fi fost consultate direct de anonim, ci prin intermediarul unei colecții de biografii imperiale care nu s-a păstrat.



Cea de-a doua secțiune (cap. XII–XXIII) grupează domniile cuprinse între cea a lui Nerva (96–98) și Heliogabalus (218–222). Sursele din care se inspiră sunt parțial diferite de cele folosite pentru prima secvență. Autorul studiului nu consideră exclusă trecerea unui anumit timp între redactările celor două secțiuni (p. 35). Se pare că „izvorul din care s-a folosit din abundență Pseudo-Aurelius Victor pentru această parte îl constituie o colecție de biografii imperiale postsuetoniene întocmită pe la începutul domniei împăratului Severus Alexander (222–235) de către istoricul Marius Maximus – un *novus homo* intrat în ordinul senatorial pe la 180” (p. 35). În pofida reticenței unor exegeți în privința acestei opere, din nefericire pierdute, a lui Marius Maximus și a influenței exercitate de ea, cercetările recente au adus noi argumente pe baza cărora ar putea fi evidențiată înrăurirea sa asupra epitomei lui Pseudo-Aurelius Victor (p. 37–38). O altă sursă de inspirație a constituit-o, fără îndoială, *Breuiarium ab Vrbe condita (Breuiarium historiae Romanae)* a lui Flavius Eutropius (alcătuit în 369). Similitudini, „mergând până la identitate” (p. 39), între lucrarea lui Eutropius și *Epitome de Caesaribus* sunt evidențiate pe coloane la paginile 40–41. Cercetătorul ieșean semnalează (p. 42), de asemenea, și identificarea unor concordanțe cu scrierile grecești din secolul al III-lea (*Istoria romană* a lui Dio Cassius, *Istoria Imperiului roman după Marcus Aurelius* a lui Herodianus), fără ca exegeții să poată aprecia cu certitudine dacă acestea au fost consultate direct de autorul anonim sau prin intermediar latin (posibil Marius Maximus) (p. 43–44). Organizarea, lipsită de „rubricația completă a biografiei de tradiție suetoniană” (p. 44), și inexactitățile acestei părți secunde sunt prezentate la paginile 44–45.

A treia secvență a epitomei (cap. XXIV–XXXVIII) urmărește domniile împăraților de la cea a lui Severus Alexander (222–235) până la cea a lui Carus și a fiilor lui, Numerianus și Carinus (282–285), perioadă pentru care sursele contemporane evenimentelor sunt puține. Sunt trecute în revistă posibilele izvoare din care s-ar fi putut inspira autorul (p. 46–52) (e. g. *Istoria* lui Herodianus), subliniindu-se conexiunile dintre epitoma în discuție și acestea. Din nou sunt remarcate similitudinile cu opera lui Eutropius (autorul studiului exemplificând cu câteva fragmente în limba latină, p. 54) și a lui Aurelius Victor (mult mai numeroase decât în secvența precedentă). În privința conținutului a numeroase capitolele, istoricul ieșean apreciază că acesta „este foarte redus, având forma unor simple enunțuri, fapt explicabil, de altfel, prin complexitatea perioadei istorice și prin dificultatea pe care a întâmpinat-o autorul în a selecta și condensa informațiile care o descriu” (p. 57). Este

semnalată și existența în text, alături de date exacte, a numeroase erori, cărora cercetătorii au încercat să le identifice cauzele („coruperea textului”, „înțelegerea necorespunzătoare a informației”, denaturări, „mistificări” care, „slujind unor interese politice și propagandistice, nu sunt cu totul lipsite de fundament istoric” p. 58).

A patra parte a epitomei, care cuprinde capitolele XXXIX–XLII, (de la domnia lui Diocletianus, 284–305, la victoria din 25 august 357 a *Caesar*-ului Iulianus asupra germanicilor), este analizată, din punctul de vedere al surselor, conținutului și valorii istorice în paginile 59–70. Sunt menționate puncte comune cu Eutropius, Aurelius Victor, concordanțe cu Zosimos / Eunapius, asemănări cu alți autori romano-bizantini și bizantini (Petrus Patricius, Zonaras, Leo Grammaticus etc.), similitudini narative, lexicale cu *De mortibus persecutorum* a lui Lactantius, primele conexiuni cu *Res gestae* ale lui Ammianus Marcellinus. Un aspect aparte îl prezintă compoziția secțiunii, modificată față de cea a părților anterioare prin inserarea în text a unor digresiuni privitoare la alte evenimente și personaje sau prin introducerea unor „descrieri paralele” (p. 69) în interiorul rubricilor obișnuite, fapte ce pot explica apariția inexactităților cronologice, erorile și simplificările realităților istorice. Istoricul ieșean supune atenției cititorului câteva exemple edificatoare în acest sens (p. 69–70).

Capitolele XLII–XLVII (perioada cuprinsă între proclamarea lui Iulianus ca Augustus de către trupele din Gallia în 360 și sfârșitul domniei lui Gratianus – 375–383) sunt considerate ca fiind a cincea parte a epitomei. N. Zugravu insistă asupra unor puncte comune cu opera lui Ammianus Marcellinus, evidente în prezentarea unor fapte, a unor circumstanțe, în specificarea unor date, în alcătuirea portretelor unor personaje. Asemănările dintre capitolul XLV, 2–3 din epitomă și capitolul XXX, 7, 2–4 din *Res gestae* ale lui Ammianus Marcellinus, sesizate de cercetători încă de la finele secolului al XIX-lea, sunt înfățișate prin punerea în paralel a fragmentelor în latină din cele două opere. N. Zugravu subscrie opiniei lui Timothy D. Barnes, considerând plauzibil ca autorul să fi consultat direct istoria lui Ammianus Marcellinus (contrar altor specialiști care sunt de părere că cele două opere ar fi reprodus doar pasaje dintr-o sursă comună) (p. 74). În privința compoziției, se apreciază că „rubricile tradiționale sunt, în general respectate, fiecare suveran beneficiind de o tratare relativ echilibrată în raport cu durata și importanța domniei; sunt însă și omisiuni semnificative...” (p. 78). Ultima parte este capitolul final al lucrării, capitolul al XLVIII-lea, care înfățișează, urmând structura tradițională a biografiei, domnia lui Theodosius I.

În următoarea secvență a studiului introductiv, 4. *Intenția autorului* (p. 81–101), N. Zugravu subliniază faptul că redactarea opusculului viza înfățișarea portretului împăratului model, *optimus princeps*, loc comun al „literaturii encomiastice, istoriografice, biografice, poetice a Antichității târzii” (p. 83), evidențiindu-se ca figuri de *imperatores boni*, ale căror *virtutes*, calități de care aceștia dau dovadă în îndeplinirea responsabilității lor în slujba statului roman, primează în raport cu *vitia*, defecte de care nici unul dintre suverani nu este lipsit: Augustus, Vespasianus, Titus, Nerva, Traianus, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus, Aurelianus și Theodosius (ultimul dintre aceștia pare să fi cumulat toate calitățile necesare unui monarh ideal – p. 90). Este observat, discutat și explicat unul dintre aspectele originale ale concepției politice și istorice a autorului anonim: pacifismul, antimilitarismul (p. 95–101). Epitomatorul apreciază curajul împăraților, dar critică pasiunea pentru obținerea gloriei.

Despre informațiile, puține la număr, pe care epitoma le oferă cu privire la istoria zonei Dunării de Jos aflăm în secțiunea intitulată 5. *Regiunea Dunării de Jos în lucrarea lui Pseudo-Aurelius Victor* (p. 102–103).

A șasea secțiune a studiului introductiv este dedicată posterității epitomei, care s-a bucurat de succes până în cursul Evului Mediu (p. 104–107), cunoscută fiind în Antichitatea târzie de Orosius (416–417), *Historiae (adversus paganos)*, de un autor anonim al unei cronici din Gallia (511), de Q. Aurelius Memmius Symmachus, *Historia Romana* (sec. al VI-lea). Au luat contact indirect, în urma lecturilor din ultimul autor, cu această lucrare Marcellinus Comes (*Chronica*, în prima jumătate a sec. al VI-lea), Iordanes (*Romana și Getica*, 550–551), Ioannes Lydus (*De magistratibus*, cca 555).

Ultima secțiune trece în revistă edițiile pe care le-a cunoscut lucrarea (prima dintre ele fiind publicată la Fani în 1504) (p. 107–108).

Studiul introductiv este urmat, în paginile 109–114, de *Considerații lingvistice*, semnate de traducătorul epitomei, filologul clasic ieșean, Mihaela Paraschiv. După o trecere în revistă a tendințelor lingvistice existente în latina literară a epocii: arhaizantă (care admitea apelul la arhaisme lexico-gramaticale), clasicizantă (postulată de cel de-al treilea clasicism, al renașterii constantiniano-theodosiene, și susținută de gramaticienii perioadei), vulgarizantă (susținută de autorii creștini, interesați în a asigura răspândirea mesajului lor prin apelul la elemente ale limbii vorbite) (p. 109) și menționarea câtorva aprecieri asupra stilului anonimului, pe baza opiniilor exegetului român Eugen Cizek (p. 109), sunt selectate din textul epitomei și comentate

exemple care prezintă amprenta fiecăreia dintre cele trei tendințe lingvistice (p. 110–114). Elementele arhaice, lexicale, dar mai ales gramaticale, folosite cu moderație (filologul ieșean specifică și numărul ocurențelor pentru fiecare în parte), au valoare stilistică. Aceste particularități sunt, de fapt, aceleași care se întâlnesc și la Aurelius Victor, al cărui stil epitomatorului anonim încearcă să-l imite (v. *Studiu introductiv*, 6. *Limba și stilul*, în Aurelius Victor, *Liber de Caesaribus / Carte despre împărați*, editio bilinguis, traducere de Mihaela Paraschiv, ediție îngrijită, studiu introductiv, note și comentarii, apendice și indice de Nelu Zugravu, Iași, Editura Universității „Al. I. Cuza”, 2006, p. 65–66), printre ele numărându-se: folosirea formei de dativ-ablativ plural *quis* în locul lui *quibus*, utilizarea formelor arhaice (pe temă *fu-*) ale conjunctivului imperfect și infinitivului viitor ale lui *esse*; întrebuițarea prezentului istoric și a dativului final etc. M. Paraschiv consideră că numărul mai mic al arhaismelor din *Epitome de Caesaribus*, comparativ cu cel din lucrarea lui Aurelius Victor, face „dovada mai marii prudențe a anonimului în utilizarea mărcilor expresive arhaice” (p. 111).

În ceea ce privește elementele clasice, se constată prezența acestora atât la nivel gramatical, cât, mai ales, în stil. „Raportul între simetria (*concinnitas*) și asimetria (*inconcinnitas*) frastică, între amplitudinea (*amplitudo*) și concizia (*breuitas*) expresiei, este conceput și manevrat de autor în beneficiul informațional scontat, de unde și impresia unei exprimări abrupte, uneori simpliste” (p. 111). Sunt semnalate: abundența participialelor (coniuncte și absolute), lipsa verbului *esse* în formele perifrastice pasive, uzul infinitivelor istorice, al comparativelor eliptice de predicat, toate acestea conferind expresiei *breuitas* (concizie), în concordanță cu însăși intenția de a alcătui o istorie abreviată. Elementele care conduc la o amplificare a expresiei (*amplitudo*), „ca alternativă stilistică a conciziei” (p. 112), sunt mai puțin numeroase: frazele ample (conținând atât subordonate verbale cât și nominale), prezența unor *sententia* și a unor *epiphonema*. Cercetătoarea semnalează ca încercare de imitare a modelelor clasice „retorizarea expresiei”, concretizată prin prezența unor litote, a cuvintelor emfaticе, a expresiilor cu valoare superlativă.

„Vulgarismele” lui Pseudo-Aurelius Victor sunt, după cum constată autoarea acestor considerații, uzanțe ale latinei colocviale care au pătruns în limba literară a epocii imperiale, conferind scriiturii un plus de expresivitate. Printre acestea menționează: forme analitice de comparativ și superlativ, folosirea conjuncției temporale *dum* cu valoarea unui *cum temporale*, introducerea unor construcții participiale prin conjuncții care să le precizeze sensul (comparativ-ipotetic, cauzal,

temporal), oscilații în folosirea demonstrativelor (*iste* pentru *hic*, fără nuanță depreciativă), grecisme gramaticale și lexicale.

Paginile următoare (p. 115–127) sunt consacrate inventarierii *Edițiilor de izvoare literare folosite* de realizatorii acestui volum.

Într-o scurtă *Notă asupra ediției*, cititorul este informat asupra edițiilor folosite ca suport pentru textul latin, semnalându-se lecțiuni diferite existente în acestea, în intenția de a suplini, pe cât posibil, absența aparatului critic al textului latin reprodus în volumul în discuție. Sunt oferite, de asemenea, câteva precizări privitoare la necesitatea dezvoltării traducerii (între paranteze unghiulare sau pătrate), datorată conciziei stilului epitomatorului, la echivalarea lexicului administrativ latin, la respectarea grafiei originare, la păstrarea lexemelor grecești (însoțite de echivalarea în română, redată între paranteze rotunde).

Corpul propriu-zis al epitomei este cuprins între paginile 134–229 și urmat de foarte ample și bine documentate *Note și comentarii* (p. 230–585), semnate de N. Zugravu (în total 831 de note și comentarii).

Echivalarea în limba română, inevitabil mai lungă decât textul latin, nu doar din pricina caracterului sintetic al limbii latine, cât, îndeosebi, stilului epitomatorului în care predomină concizia (*breuitas*), este redată în paralel cu textul lui Pseudo-Aurelius Victor. Dificultățile de traducere ridicate de ariditatea expresiei latine, de stilul autorului și de particularitățile sale expresive au fost depășite de filologul ieșean într-un mod elegant, astfel încât traducerea în limba română oferă o lectură interesantă și plăcută.

Volumul are în încheiere un *Indice* cuprins între paginile 586–595.

Această ediție reprezintă, fără îndoială, o lucrare de referință pentru cercetătorii interesați de studierea Antichității târzii, nu doar din perspectivă istorică, ci chiar și filologică.

JESS

EDITURA UNIVERSITĂȚII  
AUREL VLAICU

