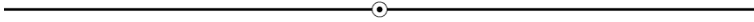


Journal of Humanistic *and* Social Studies



JHSS

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Florica Bodiștean

**EDITORIAL SECRETARY**

Adela Drăucean, Melitta Sava

**EDITORIAL BOARD:**

Călina Paliciuc

Alina-Paula Neamțu

Alina Pădurean

Voica Radu-Călugăru

Simona Stoia

Toma Sava

**ADVISORY BOARD:**

Prof. Emerit G. G. Neamțu, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai”, Cluj-Napoca

Larisa Avram, Universitatea din București

Corin Braga, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai”, Cluj-Napoca

Jacques le Rider, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris

Rodica Hanga Calciu, Université Charles-de-Gaulle Lille 3

Traian Dinorel Stănciulescu, Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași

Acad. Ioan Bolovan, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai”, Cluj-Napoca

Sandu Frunză, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai”, Cluj-Napoca

Elena Prus, Universitatea Liberă Internațională din Moldova, Chișinău

Tatiana Ciocoi, Universitatea de Stat din Moldova, Chișinău

Jacinta A. Opara, Universidad Azteca, Chalco

Simona Constantinovici, Universitatea de Vest, Timișoara

Raphael C. Njoku, University of Louisville

Hanna David, Tel Aviv University, Jerusalem

Maria-Ana Tupan, Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918”, Alba Iulia

Ionel Funeriu, Universitatea „Aurel Vlaicu”, Arad

Florea Lucaci, Universitatea „Aurel Vlaicu”, Arad

Corneliu Pădurean, Universitatea „Aurel Vlaicu”, Arad

Giovanni Rotiroti, L'Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II

Acad. Marco Lucchesi, Academia Brasileira de Letras

Ana Maria Haddad Baptista, Universidade Nove de Julho, São Paulo

Farkas Jenő, ELTE Budapesta

Catalina Iliescu Gheorghiu, Universidad de Alicante

Ko Iwatsu, Kanazawa University

Prof. Emerit Tomás Abraham, Universidad de Buenos Aires

Monica Garoiu, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Luciano Maia, Universidade de Fortaleza (UNIFOR)

Paulo Borges, Universidade de Lisboa

Prof. Emerit Aleksandra Gruzinska, Arizona State University

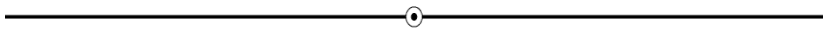
Kazimierz Jurczak, Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków

**Address:** Str. Elena Drăgoi, nr. 2, Arad, Tel. +40-0257-219336  
journalhss@yahoo.com

**ISSN 2067-6557 (Print); ISSN 2247-2371 (Online); ISSN-L 2067-6557**

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of “Aurel Vlaicu”,  
Arad

Journal of Humanistic *and* Social Studies



JHSS

Volume XI, No. 2 (22)/2020

JESS

## CONTENTS

### THEORY, HISTORY AND LITERARY CRITICISM /7

*Stand-up Comedy as Contemporary Live Theatre*, Idowu James Adekunle /9  
*Fiction and Self-Knowledge: Daniel Mendelsohn, **An Odyssey. A Father, a Son and an Epic***, Florica Bodiştean /19

*A Case of Mutilation: Translating Hemingway (and his life) in Communist Romania in the 1960s*, Dan Horaţiu Popescu /31

*Representation of Angel-in-the-House in **Bleak house** by Charles Dickens*, Shaghayegh Moghari /47

*Stylistically Disempowered Masculinity in Shepard's **Buried Child***, Ali Aghaei, Samira Sasani /65

*Acceptions de l'espace dans le discours diurne / nocturne dans l'œuvre de Mircea Eliade*, Nicolae Şera /81

### LINGUISTICS, STYLISTICS AND TRANSLATION STUDIES /99

*L'utilisation des applications Microsoft Teams, Edpuzzle et LearningApps dans l'enseignement du français scientifique et technique*, Cristina Ana Măluţan, Adina-Irina Forna /101

*The Language Community: Traditional Linguistic Communities in the Western Romania*, Voica Radu-Călugăru /109

*Transacted Identities: Language and Self Negotiation in Interaction*, Gabriela Ioana Mocan /117

### SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL STUDIES /127

*Confucius' Philosophy of **Zhengming** (Rectification of Names): Implications for Social Harmony in Africa*, Mark Omorovie Ikeke /129

*Bilingualism – an Exclusive Benefits Package for Children?*, Ana Maria Hopârtean /143

*The Problem of Evil. Part One: Evil in Philosophical Discourse*, Iosif Riviş-Tipei /151

### Review Articles

*Crossing Legal Languages and Systems: Marcela Alina Fărcaşiu, **Language in the Courtroom: A Comparative Study of American and Romanian Criminal Trials***, Andrea Kriston /167

JESS

THEORY, HISTORY AND LITERARY CRITICISM

JESS



# Stand-up Comedy as Contemporary Live Theatre

Idowu James Adekunle\*

## **Abstract:**

Stand-up comedy is a new subgenre of comedy that widely watches across the globe. It is a form of aesthetic performance that elicits laughter and also brings succour and mirth to its audience. Its therapeutic mode, although temporal, gives a thorough and sound approach to life's issues in a mild way. Stand-up comedy show has been proven to be one of the major components of pleasurable shows. However, many scholars viewed stand-up comedy as mere entertainment and humorous show without taking a deeper look at its theatrical performance. Therefore, this paper examines stand-up comedy as a contemporary live theatre. Besides, it investigates the dialoguing conversational techniques of characters, paralinguistic features of the stage play and the use of music, symbolism, caricature, subtle irony, humour, blazer costume, improvisation and interactivity in a bid to show stand-comedy as a contemporary live theatre. Schechner's Performance, Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytic theories were used to analyse the aesthetic unique performances of the stand-up comedians. The purposively selected stand-up comedian for stage show is Klint De Drunk (Ahamefula Igwemba) and supported by Basket Mouth (Bright Okpocha). Live digital discs of performance recordings of Klint De Drunk were used. Data were subjected to performance and literary analyses.

**Keywords:** stand-up comedy, live theatre, humour, aesthetics, comedians

## **Introduction:**

Theatre is seen as a play acted or performed on stage before a live audience. It is a representation of life on stage through the use of action and dialogue (Oripeloye, 2017: 49). In African society, it is a reconstruction and perpetuation into the historic myths of the past to better contemporaneous existence of modern age and ritual continuum (Adekunle, 2017: 50). Jackson (2011: 4) affirms that in a pan-Africa context and in line with true folk meaning it refers to a broad spectrum of cultural acts from religious ritual, to playing mass carnival, to children's circle games. This means that in Africa, theatre is a representation of African historical past, present and future's engagement. Also, theatre is an evolution of Greco-Roman religious

---

\* Lecturer PhD, KolaDaisi University, Ibadan, Nigeria, [jiadekunle@yahoo.com](mailto:jiadekunle@yahoo.com), [adekunle.james98288@gmail.com](mailto:adekunle.james98288@gmail.com)

worship of gods like Dionysus (Dasylva, 2004: 4). In Medieval Europe, it emerges from the annual Feast of Corpus Christi of Medieval Christian mystery circle (Clark, 1947; Britannica, 2010; Adekunle, 2014). Its theatrical displays include a procession, open-air arena setting, episodic, and symbolic actions, an active audience, masking, music, dance, impersonation, songs, dialogue, spectacles and so on (Ogundeji, 2003; Dasylva, 2004; Adekunle, 2014). According to Schnecher (2012: xv), its performances are make-believe in play for entertainment.

On the other hand, Ian Brodie defines stand-up comedy as a form of talk which implies a context that allows for reaction, participation, and engagement on the part of those to whom the stand-up comedian is speaking (2008: 55). In this case, Brodie regards it to be sociological happenings or affairs. Similarly, Nwankwo describes stand-up comedy as a product of a fast globalizing world where there is a profusion of inter-cultural encounters (2014: 1). Other scholars, like Mintz (1985, 1998); Zolten (1993), explain that when the stand-up comedian speaks, the text could be seen as a collection of smaller textual units in which numerous of it are identifiably analogous to classic folkloric genres, such as legends, riddles, tall tales, jokes, toasts, deities, dozen, memorates, blazons populaires, etc. It also appears in a form of rhetoric and polemic. Auslander (1992: 196-197) sees stand-up comedy as a distinctive, perhaps distinctly postmodern performance mode, which may be understood in terms of its relation to other postmodern performance discourses and a specific, culturally and generationally defined audience. The cultural milieus or sociological realities are significant factors in the appraisal of stand-up comedy in any society. Adekunle (2014: 96) opines that stand-up comedy is a comic act and satire on the socio-economic and cultural ills in society. The cultural renewal of stand-up comedy is the transformation that stand-up comedy undergoes over time due to time and space and cultural interaction among countries. This is to say that stand-up comedy is a global phenomenon that is regulated by social discourses that engage the minds of the performers as well as the audience reception. Stand-up comedy's jocular techniques, narratives, mimicry, song enactments, and therapeutic mode are largely informed by the experiential knowledge of the comic actors from their sociological realistic views of happenings that straddle their societies (Adekunle, 2017: 25).

In the above, despite the assertions of the scholars on characteristics and global relevance of stand-up comedy, its theatrical performance has been deeply neglected. Therefore, this paper examines stand-up comedy as a contemporary live theatre. Besides, it investigates the dialoguing conversational techniques of characters, paralinguistic features of the stage play and the use of music, symbolism, caricature,

parody, subtle irony, humour, blazer costume, improvisation and interactivity in a bid to show stand-comedy as a contemporary live theatre.

### **Solo Theatre Performance: Klint De Drunk's Aesthetics with His Audience**

Klint De Drunk (Ahamefula Igwemba), a stand-up performer, adopts the behaviour of a drunkard's lifestyle in his theatrical performance, as a metaphor, on the stage, to portray the lifestyle, of the downtrodden masses, that are in the state of hopelessness, gloominess and disillusionment. Klint De Drunk usually looks haggard and silly. He is a portrayal of the people that take to drinking as a way of drowning their sorrow, however short-lived.

His performances are elements of societal obscurantism that practically characterise the lives of the Nigerian citizenry. These social factors are catalysts of societal irregularities and misdemeanours that make people more prone to errors and ignorance of warning signs. Here, Klint De Drunk's lifestyle can be likened to William Shakespeare's Macbeth's gravedigger and Yoruba court jester who used their comic roles to satirize their societal ills (Adeleke, 2001; Adejumo, 2008; Geddes and Grosset, 2013; Sheehan, 2014).

Klint De Drunk's comic orature is a stream of consciousness comic style through which depressed and emotionally imbalanced people are revealed. The negative effects of the poor economic state of the Nigerian society are practically manifested in the lives of the Nigerian masses. As Klint De Drunk staggers on the stage, the intoxicating spirit of a frustrated life is signified.

Klint De Drunk:

DJ anyhow, no wonder, you are wearing yellow T-shirt, and folding the hands, like short sleeve. You are wearing your cap backward, because you can never think forward. Do play that thing again, I will press something near your family, your generation will hold you responsible. If, even, with the earpiece, it does look like you are wearing earpiece. It is the way your ear is naturally. He has removed the earpiece, now you can see the ear. Play that music again, wearing the same shirt with the cameraman. I done even know you whether you are cameraman? Who is using who? You are using the cameraman or the cameraman is using you? You have snapped picture to the extent that you look, like digital camera. Instead of people beware of them, they snapped; snapped you, they snapped your colour away. You will come turn black and white. No wonder you perfect the photograph. I can really understood [sic] paying school fee for you, you are eating the money [Klint De Drunk, Vol. 22].

Audience: hahaha! [laughter]

Klint De Drunk, in this performance above, satirises the oddity of modernity and civilization that capsizes the well-mannered behaviour

and general sensibility of the society and the global society at large. He sees things from a negative point of view. “DJ anyhow” and “you are wearing your cap backward because you can never think forward.” are metaphorically used to show how disorderliness has taken over orderliness in the society. “DJ anyhow” portrays how music is being played haphazardly without considering the social benefits. The music is devoid of organization, and moral sanity. This shows that music should not only be for entertainment, but also moral and social criticism. It is meant to awaken the souls of the depressed, by releasing them from every bottled up emotion. Not only this, “you are wearing your cap backward, because you can never think forward” reveals changes that occur in the social order. DJ wearing the cap backward instead of wearing it forward shows that people are taking what is wrong to be right. This is Klint De Drunk’s criticism of those that wear their face caps backward. He also queries the logic and concludes that whatever makes the modern youths oddly wear their caps must be responsible for the decay in their lives. This means that there is no sanitary order or moral sense in the way people think about what they put on or do. This provokes laughter from the audience as the comedian draws the audience’s attention to DJ’s caricature. As Robeyns (2009: 17) notes, “a commitment to moral individualism is not incompatible with the recognition of connections between people, their social relations, and their social embedment”.

The use of “earpiece” and “ear” connotes its binary oppositions. “Ear” stands for the natural auditory system, while “earpiece” symbolises an artificial auditory system, that is, naturalism against artificiality. Klint De Drunk intentionally uses these two binary elements, to portray how artificiality has taken over natural order in modern days. This is why he initially says that people think backward instead of thinking forward. The “DJ” and the “cameraman” are also synonyms of social contradictions. “DJ” represents “audio” while “cameraman” signifies “visual”. The DJ’s musicality is, often, done through an electronic configuration that is solely audio. The cameraman stands for visual aid. It is an electronic device that vividly showcases the graphic image of an artistic piece. This is why Klint De Drunk uses a rhetorical device of chiasmus, to question the DJ and the cameraman, on their social role, in the society, by saying: “Who is using who? You are using the cameraman or the cameraman is using you?”. He goes further to ridicule the cameraman on his ability to take and mutilate pictures at will by creating near realities. He stresses that the cameraman looks like a “digital camera” that “snaps” people’s pictures out of social reality. He proves this, by saying that the cameraman snaps people’s colour away, and turning them to black and white. He goes further to say no wonder

the cameraman perfected his “photograph”. This means that society is stripped off of her natural identity and values. Society is no longer living in the world of reality but actual pessimism and illusion.

These social factors are catalysts of societal irregularities and misdemeanours that make people more prone to errors and ignorance of warning signs as further revealed below:

Klint De Drunk:

My friend went and bought fuel in gallon, N120 per litre. I told this man, please, start trekking, is better for you. He say no, fuel is better. He went and brought fuel N120 per gallon. He is in the hospital right now recovering, because he went to put the fuel in the car, suck the fuel from the pipe, put the pipe in inside “pua”, brought out the remain fuel in his mouth. He forgot that what we called residue of fuel is remaining in the mouth, move away from the car, lit cigar, turned to dragon. I thought he was doing a magic show. I was clapping for the man, (talking to the man): “man brother in fact, we are going to the show together” until I saw ambulance [Klint De Drunk Vol. 22].

Audience: hahaha! [Laughter]

In the performance above, Klint De Drunk sarcastically displays how people carelessly endanger their lives through ignorance of warning signs. Fuel, an inflammable product, is often, and, carelessly, used by people in Nigeria. This has led to a loss of lives and property across the nation. Some keep this inflammable product in houses in places where it can easily catch fire.

Klint De Drunk, in the performance under reference, warns the people who use fuel carelessly. He uses his friend as a case study to portray this lackadaisical behaviour of people. He warns his friend, not to buy fuel, as a precautionary signal that foreshadows an impending doom. His friend rejects the warning sign and goes for the inflammable product. After the man has put the fuel in his car, he uses his mouth to suck out the petrol he had bought and once it started flowing, he quickly removes the pipe from his mouth and puts it in his car fuel tank. Shortly after this, he moves to a corner of the car to light a cigar, forgets that there is a residue of fuel in his mouth. His friend’s mouth catches fire. This takes his friend to the hospital. This is why he jocularly mocks his friend by saying that his friend has turned into a “dragon”, and, at the same time, performing a “magic”. Here, the “dragon” symbolically signifies “the agent” and “the victim” of human-induced problems or challenges. Also, “magic” connotatively represents the “trickish role of evils” that man plays on himself through his evil intelligence or foibles. Magic is the opposite of reality. This shows that stand-up theatrical show is an archetype of social reflection that disseminates historical facts.

In the above, what Klint De Drunk is drawing attention to or satirising, is the wacky habit of Nigerians using their mouths to draw

petrol from inside jerry or plastic cans, a very dangerous thing. Smokers who indulge in the habit could get themselves burnt unawares. Besides, magic refers to fire-eating, which some magicians do. A dragon spits fire, and so do fire-eating magicians.

### **Duet Theatre Performance: Klint De Drunk and Basket Mouth's Aesthetics with Their Audience**

From another point of view, the comic persona also uses this comedic orchestration to create moral etiquette, foster unity, and co-existence in the nation. He applies this comic device to purge individuals from social vices and follies. In the excerpt of his comic show below, he reveals how individual members of the society should have mutual respect for one another. Apart from this, he further shows how military and paramilitary personnel should relate to civilians. These are the security agencies that are trained to protect, and, at the same time, expected to treat civilians to civility at all times.

Klint De Drunk:

You know, Police, MOPOL [Mobile Police], and Military's slaps are three different types of slaps. There is nothing relating to all of them. Let me show you an example of what I mean [He called Basket Mouth, another comedian, to assist him on stage to play a duet performance. Klint De Drunk takes a posture of a Civilian, while Basket Mouth takes the position of another Civilian. Both comedians try to show how Civilians relate to one another when having a misunderstanding with one another]. Let me tell you something, I am telling you, I will deal with you. I am going to deal with you.

Basket Mouth: Don't tell me rubbish [he slaps Klint De Drunk on the face].

Klint De Drunk: You slap me? I will deal with you today. You are, in short... [He spits on Basket Mouth. Both Klint De Drunk and Basket Mouth pick a quarrel with each other as civilians].

Basket Mouth: I slapped you.

[Shortly after this first playlet, Klint De Drunk faces the audience, addressing them on the next playlet. Now, he takes a posture of a Civilian, and Basket Mouth, a posture of a Policeman].

Klint De Drunk: Now, Civilian to Police. When police now slap you, the things at this point you recognize is uniform, and his office, and his duties to humanity. Let me show you what I mean. [Both comedians resume the stage playlet] I know your DPO [Divisional Police Officer]. I will deal with you. I will remove this, your, uniform. You are a fool.

Basket Mouth: Don't tell me that? [He gives Klint De Drunk a slap on the face. Suddenly, he becomes sober, and penitently explains his offence to Basket Mouth, the Police Officer].

Klint De Drunk: [Reaction and explanation] Officer, the Police is your friend. I respect you. See; let me show you, the boy came out. You see him there...

Basket Mouth: [Resolution] I am not your friend. If am your friend, you would not talk to me like that. Now, follow me to the station [Police Station]. How much do you have on you?

Audience: hahaha... [Laugh]

[After the end of the second playlet, Klint De Drunk addresses the audience again on the next play, that is, the third playlet yet to unfold. This section of the play shows how the Mobile Police relate with the civilians in an inhumane way, in Nigerian society].

Klint De Drunk: [Talking to the audience] Know Mobile Police, you know Mobile Police do press-up with their fingers. Their slap does not include any explanation, anything to recognize his office, you go straight to explanation. This is not different. Once they slap you, you will explain, that is how they do. Let me show you (Both comedians resume the performance). Let me show you, I will talk to the IG. They will remove you. You are stupid. There is nothing you can do, if you think is a lie try me.

Basket Mouth: *tasalala* [He slaps Klint De Drunk on the face].

Klint De Drunk: [Shivering, and crying before Basket Mouth, the Mobile Police, to recap the incident that leads to his molestation]. The boy came out from here and when he was coming, I did not see him. You should ask me at least two times. [Aftermath this third piece of drama, he resumes his prologue to explain to the audience what to encounter in the fourth play]. That is MOPOL, but the army slap is the very slap. When he slaps you, you don't explain to the army man, you explain to others. And when you are explaining to others, he would now call you back. And when you come back, you would put these letter words called "SIR". So many times in the sentence that even the sentence would lose meaning. Let me show you what I mean. [In this fourth play, Basket Mouth represents a "Soldier Man", while Klint De Drunk serves as a Civilian. The play starts, as Klint De Drunk confronts Basket Mouth, the Soldier man]. [Facing Basket Mouth] I am the brother to the Major-General. I will make sure that you hear it. You are going back to the village. You are going to turn to a farmer because I am going to deal with you (After this hot argument, Basket Mouth, the Soldier, gives him a slap across his face. He bounces up and down over the hot-hit slap given by the Soldier; afterward, he faces the audience and explains what leads to a quarrel between the soldier and himself). Sheebi, you people were here when the boy came out? Did the boy see me? Did I see him? He slapped me here?

Basket Mouth: (The soldier orders Klint De Drunk to come close, and explains the matter to him, why he was unruly) Come here, come here; and stand there. I have been talking to you and asked you where that boy came from. You are the one am talking to. Come, come, come and stand there!

Klint De Drunk: Me!

Basket Mouth: Come and stand here! What do you have to say? Klint De Drunk: Sir, see sir, sir, the boy came, sir, the boy sir, tell me, sir, sir, he was..., I don't know where he was coming from sir, I don't sir, the boy sir [Klint De Drunk Vol. 22].

In the performance above, Klint De Drunk ridiculously demonstrates how the civilians are badly treated by the Nigerian security personnel. The personnel lacks good human relations when dealing with civilians on public matters. Most civilians are molested, brutalised, and, sometimes, killed. These brutalities have left some civilians in pains and woes. In some instances, some females are raped in the molestation. In the second performance, it shows how corruption thrives in the Nigeria Police Force. For example, the policeman takes advantage of the molestation to exploit the civilian, by openly asking the civilian the amount of money that was on him, "How much do you have on you?". This is exactly what some bad eggs in the Nigeria Police Force do. They

exploit the civilians and rob them of their possessions. Some will even threaten to put them in the guardroom when they fail to comply with their desires, as the policeman says it in the excerpt above: “Now, follow me to the station [Police Station]”.

In the same vein, civilians’ interaction with Mobile Police and the army is more severe and deadly. Their relationship is like a cat-rat’s relationship. In the illustration above, one can see how the security personnel maltreated the civilians without giving them a fair hearing. For instance, the soldier ordered Klint De Drunk, the civilian, to come close and explain his unruly behaviour to him. Klint De Drunk comes close as ordered with fear and trembling. He is stammering and, at the same time, applies “sir” to all his loose statements when he talks with the soldier. Here, “sir” is a metaphor used to express “fear”. Besides, “Nigerian military and police uniforms” symbolise “fear” and “respect”. The uniforms symbolise fear because of the force personnel’s mode of operations that sometimes goes with brutality. The uniforms are also a sign of respect because of the force personnel’s national duties as security apparatus to the nation.

On the other hand, civilians are also expected to be polite when dealing with one another in society. They are not supposed to be callous to one another. As shown in the performance above, Klint De Drunk ridicules some members of the society who are always tensed up over trivial issues and fight back against their neighbours over them “You slap me? I will deal with you today. You are, in short... (He spits on Basket Mouth. Both Klint De Drunk and Basket Mouth pick a quarrel with each other as civilians)”. These trivial issues are as a result of the economic hardship that pervades the nation. Here, the comedian is trying to say that everyone should device a means of getting over their societal challenges without wreaking havoc on other people.

Another message to note is that there should be mutual understanding and respect for one another in the society, from civilians to civilians, or security personnel to civilians. The civilians should also learn to respect the “security forces” that are saddled with the responsibility of protecting lives and property. They should be appreciated and well addressed in any public matter. They should be seen as friends, not as enemies. This is why Ekemenah (2012: 8) says that the Nigerian problem goes beyond the issues of poverty, corruption, politics, fuel subsidy, and religion, but disregard for the law of homogeneity that throws the country into the state of disunity, and lack of mutual respect for one another. He states that the law for mutual respect should be upheld, and seen as supreme in the nation.

In conclusion, the stand-up comedians above theatrically and aesthetically used their solo and duet performances to elicit laughter

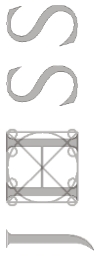


from their live audience and, at the same time, lampoon the social vices of their society. Besides, the performances are also used to create morally sensibility as one of the major functions of theatre and drama.

### REFERENCES:

- Adejumo, T. Adejobi, *Semiotic Interpretation of Efe and Alatipa Performances in Two Yoruba Communities in Nigeria*, Phd. Thesis. Dept. of English, University of Ibadan, Vi +250 p., 2008.
- Adekunle, Idowu. J., *Text and Context in Nigerian, South African and African American Stand-up Comedies*, Dept. of the English University of Ibadan, PhD. Thesis, 2017.
- \*\*\*, *Satiric Performativity of Stand-up Comedy in Nigeria*, Dept. of the English, University of Ibadan, MPhil. Dissertation, 2014.
- Adeleke, D. Adeolu, *Were Ni, Were ko: The Fool in Yoruba Written Plays*, IHAFSA, in "A Journal of African Studies", IV, 2001, p. 1-10.
- Ahamefula, Igwemba, Performer. *Nite of a Thousand Laughs*, Vol. 22 [VCD], Created by Williams, Obaino Music Lagos, 2010.
- Auslander, Philip, *Comedy about the Failure of Comedy: Stand-up Comedy and Postmodern. Critical theory and Performance*, J. G.Reinelt and J. R. Roach. Eds. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 1992, p. 196-207.
- Brodie, Ian, *Stand-up Comedy as a Genre of Intimacy*, in "Ethnologies", vol. 30, 2008, p. 153-180.
- Clark, H. Barrett, *European Theories of the Drama*, New York, Crown Publishers, 1947.
- Dasyuva, O. Ademola, *Studies in Drama*, Ibadan, Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig) Ltd, 2004.
- Ekemeniah, Alexander, *Is Balkanization of Nigeria Imminent?*, Business World Lagos, February 5.12., 2012.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica, 32. Volume Set, www.Amazon.com. 2010.
- Geddes and Grosset, *The Complete works of William Shakespeare*, Scotland, The Gresham Publishing Company Ltd, 2013.
- Jackson, Wayne, *The Biblical Concept of Time in Christian Courier*, www.christiancourier.com/articles/437-biblica-concept-of-time-the, Assessed 8.3.2011.
- Mintz, L.E., *Standup Comedy as Social and Cultural Mediation*, American Quarterly 37.1 (Spring), 1985, p. 71-80.
- \*\*\*, *The 'New Wave' of Stand-up Comedians: An Introduction*, in "American Humor: An Interdisciplinary Newsletter", 4.2 (Fall), 1977, p. 1-3.
- Nwankwo, I. E., *Stand-up Comedy as a New form of Live Theatre in Nigeria*, Thesis. Dpt. Of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan. Vii+211, 2014.
- Ogundeji, P. Adedotun, *Dasyuva's Dapo Adelugba on Theatre Practice in Nigeria (interview)*, Ibadan, Ibadan Cultural Studies Group University of Ibadan, 2003, p. 2003-33.
- Oripeloye, Henri, *Reading Literature: An Introduction*, 2017.

- Robeyns, Ingrid, *An Unworkable idea or a Promising Alternative: Sen's Capability Approach Re-examined*, Discussed Paper, Centre for Economic Studies, University of Leuven, 2016.
- Schechner, R., *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, London and New York, Routledge, 2012.
- Sheehan, Angela, *The Student's Shakespeare Macbeth*, U.K, The Gresham Publishing Company Ltd, 2014.
- Zolten, J. Jerome, *Black Comedians: Forging an Ethnic Image*, Online library, Wiley. doi/10.1111/j.1542-734X.1993.00065.X/abstract., 1993.



## Fiction and Self-Knowledge: Daniel Mendelsohn, *An Odyssey. A Father, a Son and an Epic*

Florica Bodiștean\*

### **Abstract:**

This study analyses Daniel Mendelsohn's recent work *An Odyssey. A Father, a Son and an Epic* through the connection between its two main levels: autofiction, which deals with the father-son psychoanalytic relationship, and the metatext of the *Odyssey* read as a narrative of searching the depths of human relationships. The distribution of the factual material according to this connection illustrates the function of literature to act like a mirror for our confusing and incomprehensible experiences. The pragmatic theory of the narrative formulated by Paul Ricœur in *Temps et récit*, according to which fiction becomes a mediator of self-knowledge, is invoked in relation to how the text handles the evolution of the father-son relationship.

**Key words:** rewriting, autofiction, metatext, identity, self-knowledge, refigure

What is the role of literature in self-knowledge? How do canonical books influence our life? These are the questions that Daniel Mendelsohn's autofiction *An Odyssey. A Father, a Son and an Epic* answers from the perspective of pragmatic reading, reuniting autobiographic experience and literary hermeneutics in an original approach. It is a story that pretends to be "true" and thematises the power of (Homeric) literature to reintegrate itself into the social, in this case the sensitive context of the genealogical relationships anticipated in the subtitle.

Classic examples of the dangerous identity relationships between literature and reality, Quixotism and Bovarism are concepts that reveal the capacity of a text to act upon life, when to grasp the meaning of a text means to go beyond ludic representations. The sociology of literature includes extreme cases indicative of the effects books can have on the reader, from banned books to *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, which triggered the copycat suicide phenomenon among teenagers, or to engaged literature written exclusively on content-related criteria. All these forms of mimeticism or epigonism validate the power of fiction to substitute for reality or at least to influence it.

---

\* Professor PhD, "Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad, bodisteanf@yahoo.com

However, literature can also mirror our confusing, disorganised and incomprehensible experiences. In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, when Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta declare their love for each other, the book about Lancelot and Guinevere speaks on behalf of the two adulterers who are afraid to do it. This is another kind of effect literature can have on life, an effect that, *grosso modo*, is expressed through acknowledgment. "This story is about me", Mendelsohn's story seems to say, as a testimony to the beneficial consequences that understanding literature has on self-understanding, to the literature that reveals the reader's own range of feelings, perceptions and attitudes to conscience and verbalises them.

### **The *Odyssey* in counterpoint to life**

Mendelsohn's book does not belong to a certain genre. It is a hybrid work: autobiography, critical metatext, literary psychoanalysis, an example of literary praxeology. Or, as Dwight Garder says, it is "a classroom drama", "travel writing", "a work of biographical memoir that investigates the circumstances of Jay's life", "a work of literary criticism" (Garner, 2017). The six chapters synthesize the themes of the epic: *Proem (Invocation)*, *Telemachy (Education)*, developed on two levels, *Paideusis* (about fathers and sons) and *Homophrosyunê* (about husbands and wives); then *Apologoi (Adventures)*, *Nostos (Homecoming)*, *Anagorisis (Recognition)* and *Sêma (The Sign)*. The autobiographic material is also structured according to the themes of Homer's epic that classicist Daniel Mendelsohn teaches his students at Bard College, book after book, for sixteen weeks. The closely observed structural parallelism reminds of how Joyce sets the pace of Leopold Bloom's day, following the topoi of Ulysses' homecoming symbolically and naming the chapters in the first edition of his novel after them. In Mendelsohn's work, his own experience is a rewriting of the *Odyssey*, while the *Odyssey* is an inspiration for experience. This highlights the correspondence between "life" and its "commentary", within a system of mutual investitures: the personal event acquires meaning in the father – son dialogue prompted by the epic text, while the impression is that the epic stages, *a priori*, the lives of the two characters.

On the other hand, Mendelsohn's book reproduces the ring composition of the *Odyssey*, expressed by the Greek word *polytropos*, a composition relying on numerous additions that are not digressions, but a way to integrate the past, and sometimes even the future, into the present through associative spirals derived from the narrative thread – analepses, like the story about Ulysses' scar, or prolepses, like those in the proem or the prophecies of Tiresias or Poseidon. Their purpose is to make the history of the characters complete, to create their full

biographies. Mendelsohn's life story advances in a similar digressing manner, which is an exercise of imitative hypertextuality – a subtle homage to Homer and even Virgil, who quotes the former<sup>1</sup> in the first line of *Aeneid's* proem and then borrows his tropes and topoi that characterise the genre.

Interpreting Homer is a close reading and a psychologising hermeneutics that retains the generally valid human meanings of the epic rather than the mentality-related mutations occurring from Homer's time to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, all written in a language that remains critical yet never scholarly, uninhibited yet never vulgar. It is a different approach than that in Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*, which criticizes patriarchy from the perspective of the current values and underlines the devastating consequences of phallogocratic dominance. In Mendelsohn's approach, the *Odyssey* becomes a "fresh" text, a gratifying lesson of contemporary life, with characters seen as real instead of imaginary people. The emphasis laid on its contemporary aspects puts the many traditional scholarly interpretations the *Odyssey* has generated for two millennia on a second place, because the history of understanding Homer's works is included into the story and explained quite naturally. The common reader confronts the professional reader and they both learn from each other, so that in the end the celebrated fictional text is read especially for its non-fictional value. "Life" and "the commentary", the facts and the visions are interwoven imperceptibly, proving that any life is liable to be read according to an archetypal behaviour and that such reading has the advantage of making the axes of a destiny discernible. The myth, says Durand, is the norm for the fullness of the novel (1992: 174). Mendelsohn's book proves that the myth is also the norm for autofiction, for "the story of life" that is, in turn, "a pocket epic". All the mythical scenarios of the family theme are scenarios of the son's search for his father (Jesus and Joseph, Jacob's son) and the mother's search for her son (Mary, Isis). The canonical works of fiction based on the paternity theme, with avatars like Hamlet, Edgar, Stephen Dedalus, Apostol Bologa, Niculae Moromete or Gheorghiuță from Sadoveanu's *The Hatchet* speak about the return of "the prodigal son" and his identification with his father.

### **You do not exist unless you have been recognised**

*An Odyssey* compares the odyssey of a Ulysses with that of the *writer* and Classics professor Dan Mendelsohn based on a common

---

<sup>1</sup> *Arma virumque cano* is a reference both to *The Iliad*, which is about wars, and *The Odyssey*, which praises the clever man who travels the seas and will be given a name only later in the epic.

theme: the father–son relationship. It is an aspect that the Homeric commentary ignored, as the Odyssean myth has two directions of interpretation: a pattern of homesickness and a superlative example of the idea of conjugal love. However, Daniel Mendelsohn demonstrates that this theme is by no means inferior to the others, since the insistence upon it is revealed in the ring composition of the epic. The *Odyssey* begins with the *Telemachy* or the story of the son searching for his father, and ends with another son, Ulysses, who finds his father, old Laerte, after twenty years, withdrawn from public life.

In Mendelsohn’s view, the *Odyssey* is not so much the narrative of the search of a physical place called “home”, but a search within the area of interpersonal relationships: father–son, husband–wife, master–servant, king–competitors. It follows from his book that the “validation” of such relationships creates the feeling of “home” and not just the mere possession of a place or a rank. Therefore, the focus of the hermeneutics he applies to the Homeric text and his own life is the concept of *recognition*, with the tension between anonymity and identity, a concept thy will become his own mandala in his relationship with his father. In the *Odyssey*, Ulysses is recognised by his faithful swineherd, his dog Argos and his nurse Eurycleia as their master; by Telemachus as his father, by Penelope as her husband, by the suitors as their king and by Laerte as his son. Only after he has passed all these tests of fractured identity can he become what he was twenty years back again. We do not truly possess a certain quality if it is certified only externally and formally. We possess it on condition it is confirmed by the feelings and attitudes of the people we relate to, in other words, when the difference between what we are and what the others know about us is reduced to the revelation of an immutable inner “I”. In this way, Mendelsohn develops a idea that is recurrent in the Homeric interpretation, namely that his epics are not focalised on exterior events – the Trojan War or the Greeks’ navigation experience at the beginning of the Mycenaean period –, but they debate on the moral situations that these events produce (Drimba,1998: 58-59, 64). In Mendelsohn’s perspective, Homer’s major theme, both in the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, is that of the interpersonal relationships built during “a man’s journey through life, from birth to death”.

To make a parallel, we can say that Mendelsohn’s character, the Father as a prototype, acquires this quality only toward the end of his life, when his son, a writer and a Classics professor at Bard College, conducts a seminar about Homer’s *Odyssey* for his teenage students, and he, a retired eighty-year-old mathematician once fond of Latin, asks permission to assist. The dialogue between different ages, experiences and mentalities reproduces and stages, in the seminar room, the whole

range of masculine psychological and behavioural types that the Homeric bard expressed within a system of mutual implications: the boy (Telemachus), the man (Ulysses) and the old man (Laerte) or the son, the father and the grandfather. Consequently, the paternity theme opens to the larger theme of masculinity caught in the major moments of its evolution. The pattern of the three ages had already been described in the *Iliad*, where between Achilles and Paris on one side, and Priam and Nestor on the other, stands the long row of middle-aged heroes with an already established status both as brave warriors and wise men – the two areas in which, according to the Greek educational model, a man must be confirmed (Răileanu, 1990: 131-134). The epics are poems of the ages, the young and restless age of Achilles in the *Iliad* and the mature, versatile age of Ulysses in the *Odyssey*.

In Mendelsohn's approach of the Odyssean ideology, the Homeric text appears like a man-centred chronicle of family life. Among man's familial representations, the most interesting subject to analyse, says Mendelsohn, is not the growing young man, but the father as seen by his son: Ulysses viewed from Telemachus' angle, Laerte seen from Ulysses' perspective. This is not because of the motive of "descending generations", which is quite common in the Homeric epic, but because the main assertion about Mendelsohn's personal *quest*a is that, for a son, the father has a complex and mystical aura only because he precedes him, "A father makes his son out of his flesh and out of his mind and then shapes him with his ambitions and dreams, with his cruelties and failures, too. But a son, although he is of his father, cannot know his father totally, because his father precedes him; his father has always already lived so much more than the son has, so that the son can never know everything"<sup>2</sup>. Could this be the reason why Daniel Mendelsohn, in his private life, wished to be a father and had a family, even though he recognised his homosexuality in public? Could one discern, behind the writer's desire to have a family an "archetypal" initiative, an aspiration to paternity that opposes the fatherly model an equivalent force? This is what Lily, the woman for whose children he accepts to be "some kind of father figure" seems to imply, "It's funny [...] that you ended up doing just what your father did", although "it was a lot more complicated for you!" The father's experience-based authority over his son can never be annihilated. This is the reason why, when meeting Laerte – says Mendelsohn – Ulysses relinquishes his usual disguise, his cunning speech (Todorov, 1980: 324-326) that hides the truth under clever lies and declares his true identity.

---

<sup>2</sup> All quotations are from Daniel Mendelsohn, *An Odyssey. A Father, a Son and an Epic*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2017. Kindle edition.

### **A Father's complex and the refractions of the fatherly *imago***

Mendelsohn's biographic novel speaks about the failure to communicate with his father as early as his childhood. The son remembers a difficult, taciturn and incomprehensible father engrossed in his readings on various themes rather than involved in his family's life. Jay Mendelsohn is a positivist not only in his profession, but also in his everyday existence. He likes clarity and has an acute sense of responsibility and duty and he despises sentimentalism, subjectivity and nuances. He is a man of radical opinions, for whom vital matters have the value of axioms. For him, Ulysses cannot be a hero because he cheats on his wife, loses his comrades, always complains and only succeeds with help from the gods. His frequent outbursts will convince Dan to see in Ulysses a version deviated from the classic Achilles-type heroism – that of mature survival.

Having a completely different nature, the son will experience, according to a psychoanalytical model – ambivalent feelings for his father, vacillating between worship – “when I was a child I thought of my father of being all head” – and aversion to the inferiority complex his father's harshness gave him. “My resentment of my father's hardness, of his insistence that difficulty was a hallmark of quality, that pleasure was suspect and toil was worthy, strikes me as ironic now, since I suspect it was those very qualities that attracted me to the study of the Classics”, says Mendelsohn at the age of recollections. Is it just “irony” or the Oedipus complex with its double expression as assimilation and conflict, admiration and competition with his father, rendered in his desire to surpass him in a field in which he was just an amateur? The mathematician in Jay Mendelsohn regretted all his life that because he appreciated science and exactness – Latin grammar has the prestige of science for him – he had quit the study of Virgil and Ovid, which was a model of superior education.

The writer admits that by the age of thirty he was dominated by fear and an inferiority complex, that the shame of failing to be the kind of his father wanted “coloured my dealings with him through much of the early part of my life, making me want to hide from him”. He and his father will become close only later, due to their common passion for the classical languages and their conversations on the *Aeneid*, which the son studies in his first post-university year, and they will reconcile even later, after a quarter of a century, once they have shared the experience of the *Odyssey*. Meanwhile, for Dan, the failed relationship makes him seek adoptive, spiritual fathers such as mentor-professors or “candidates to father me”, his roommates' sport-loving, well-mannered dads. Dan sees his own psychoanalytic status in Telemachus, the “orphan” who, having no male models to follow (his father is missing and his



grandfather has retired to the country), turns to alternative figures like Eumaeus or Mentos/Mentor, which are Athena's representations. In his turn, Jay invests his fatherly feelings in substitute sons like Nino, his colleague from Grumman, which he takes under his protection in an act of self-sabotage. Although he has always been obsessed with education and titles, he gives up defending this doctoral thesis because he can't stand the idea of failing in front of his younger "disciple", for whom he was a model. Dan is intrigued to discover that although Jay has apparently failed in his role as his biological father, he has become a warm, honest and dedicated fatherly figure for his students. At the end of the seminars, Dan realises that his father has been the same all the time, but he has heard only what he wanted to hear and has seen only what he wanted to see, "Étudier *l'Odyssee* en présence de mon père a développé notre intelligence émotionnelle", says Mendelsohn in an interview, underlining the flaw in their communication that affected their relationships (Bloch-Lainé, 2017). The seminar occasioned a change in his motivational system. He has learnt that he must also listen to his father, not only to stand his ground due to *déformation professionnelle*; that he has to listen to the other side of the story and become aware of the vulnerabilities his own father faced in their relationship; that there is a war not only between sons and fathers, but also between fathers and sons, that the sons' success, which reveals the educative side of Jay's "hardness", "must have made him feel all the more poignantly the memory of his own failures, the roads he had not been able to take".

Highly relevant for paternal frustration is the analysis of the scene in which a disguised Ulysses witnesses the affectionate encounter between Telemachus, recently returned from his futile search of his father, and Eumaeus the swineherd. This is the only time Jay admires Ulysses for his strength to watch the sincere emotional encounter between Telemachus and Eumaeus, although he must have felt sick with jealousy. Dan realises the symbolic patricide he has committed, "It must have been very hard for him to have to sit there watching while his own son acted like the other guy was his real father".

The moment of recognition (*anagorisis*) is "novelistic", because, as Aristotle postulated and the *Odyssey* demonstrates, it involves a twist (*metabasis*) that causes the "plot" to continue with the cruise episode. It is the moment when Jay, usually a very reserved man, finds the strength to disclose his very personal feelings in front of the students, during the lecture about the husband-wife recognition scene in the *Odyssey*. It is the moment when it all clicks into place for Dan and suggests a climax in the dialectics of his relationship with his father or a crisis, according to Brendan's brilliant remark about Telemachus, "Which is the larger

crisis: living out your life without your father, or actually meeting him for the first time twenty years later and having to get to know him?" What does Jay say? That there are small things, little secrets that bring people closer, that couples know and that relate to spending time together, and that these details are more obvious when recognising the other than all the signs that may seem important to an outsider.

Unlike the seminar about the *Odyssey*, that revealed pragmatically unequal positions, the cruise applies the understanding of the archetypal father-son relationships under initiation contexts related to the *common road* both concretely and symbolically. It is a road during which the roles are renegotiated through successive revelations: the father softens, the two discover unexpected personality traits in each other, help each other, confront their fears and become accomplices. Their relationship grows to be flexible and two-sided. The father, who has never travelled before, allows his son to lead him into an unknown world, the son overcomes his claustrophobia in Calypso's cave because his father takes him by the hand and then declares publicly that he was the one who need to be helped. If before this episode Dan, like Telemachus, knew his father only by his exterior features ("If you never knew your father to begin with, then there's actually nothing to recognize"), now comes the true recognition, based on understanding. The Greek middle voice, "a mode in which the subject is also the object, a strange folding over or doubling, the way a person could be a father but also a son", can be the textual metaphor of these mutual doublings of the father and the son that Ulysses, in his double quality, represents in the Homeric text.

Dan's *Nostos* is his belated return to his father; however, it is not so belated, since Jay's last gesture on the hospital bed, in his last day of life, is to recognise their initiatic relationship by recalling the bed he built out of a door for Dan in his childhood and in which he himself slept during the whole duration of the Odyssean seminars. The bed is that symbolic *sêma* that functions as a means of the most difficult recognition in the *Odyssey*, that between Ulysses and Penelope. Practically speaking, building the bed out of a door is perfectly justified, yet the symbolism of this *sêma* is seducing through its suggestions of intimacy and openness at the same. In the concrete acceptation of the Greek word *sêma* – which Mendelsohn comments upon –, that of "grave", a sign that speaks about a man's life and turns his story visible, then the bed implies the idea that the son is the one who testifies about his father's life. He does it through literature, which is more eloquent than biological continuance, "In a way, admits Mendelsohn, *An Odyssey* is a memorial of my father who, in his own way, was a hero – maybe a hero of complexity." (Pătrășconiu, 2020).

Through successive frustrations and compensations, the odyssey of recuperating the Father has an archetypal solution, meaning the son assumes the paternal experience; he assimilates it and continues it. In an anti-mythical key, as Durand shows in his analysis of *Lucien Leuwen* (1997: 186), the return to the father takes the ironical form of “Oedipus’ abdication”, with the father’s victory and the son’s failure.

**The text – the mediation through which we understand ourselves**

Mendelsohn’s book is a plea for *mediation*: between father and son, between the professor and his students – because in the process of learning you never know “who will be listening and, in certain cases, who will be doing the teaching” – between literature and life. The mediation is owed to the Homeric text, the key term in the subtitle and the most important “character” of the autofiction, the one that stages the capacity of the story to influence the field of human action, as Paul Ricœur postulates in his pragmatic theory of the narrative. The post-Odyssean time of the father and the son is refigured (mimesis III) by the *emplotment*/the Homeric narrative configuration (mimesis II) that either of the two reads in their own way, balancing the suggestions of the *Odyssey* with the individual experience. «L’œuvre écrite est une esquisse pour la lecture», and the act of grasping its meaning is «l’opérateur qui conjoint mimésis III à mimésis II» (Ricœur, 1983: 17), the world configured by the poem and the practical field into which the poem is implemented. By understanding the *Odyssey*, the Homeric text returns to the world of experience, to shape it in the light of superior knowledge, of a transformation that the fictional narrative brings about in the live-time: «enjalonnant les confins d’éternité, les expériences-limites dépeintes par la fiction explorent en outre une autre frontière, celle de confins entre le fable et le mythe» (Ricœur, 1985: 388).

Nevertheless, Mendelsohn’s book is more than an illustration of the effect the story-text has on individual life; it is itself an illustration of how the story relates to its precedent, that «fond opaque du vivre, de l’agir et du souffrir» (Ricœur, 1983: 86) or mimesis I, the world of prefiguration. The odyssey of the reconciliation with the father in the seminar room, during the cruise or in the hospital ward is emplotted in Mendelsohn’s autofiction itself, in an articulated manner that follows the logic of the Homeric epic step by step. The heterogeneity, the atypical and uncategorisable elements, the ambiguity, the confusion, the son’s revelations during all these experiences link together, through Mendelsohn’s own narrative act, in an intelligible and significant whole that has a beginning, contents and an end, a whole reinforced by the myth. Therefore, mimesis III, the effect triggered by the Homeric text, is superimposed onto another mimesis I that will trigger, on a superior

level of the possibilities of the narrative, a different story, that of the impact of the Homeric story, which is precisely this autofiction. To rewrite it, Mendelsohn had to have his own Telemachy, to “collect” his own “data” about Jay, to put together and harmonise, like in a puzzle, the disparate fragments of the paternal destiny as they appear in the mirrors of various reflectors: to complete his experience with the testimonies of his close ones – his mother, his uncle Howard and uncle Nino –, to compare the different versions of the same event by consulting his brothers. This process, covering a large part of the end of the narrative, is the laboratory of the book included within the book itself. Through its reflective dimension, *An Odyssey* reproduces the self-reflexivity of Homer’s *Odyssey* that, being a chain of stories told by different characters, prophets, gods, bards, but especially by Ulysses, discloses, within its own discourse, how the *Odyssey* was built – the history of a hero and his posterity (Bodiştean, 2013: 55-69). Consequently, *An Odyssey* reveals itself as an intricate, multi-layered book of cycles triggered by the act of narrating, narcissistic and metatextual, a true masterpiece.

Is Mendelsohn’s book a rewriting of the *Odyssey*? Yes, it is, insofar as the variants of interpretation give the floor to “the non-canonical instances”, the three men’s inner voices that one does not hear in Homer’s epic. Yes, it is, insofar as any rereading is a mental rewriting, especially a “rereading for the sake of the secret”, as Matei Călinescu says, starting from the premise that the text has both “a visible content and a hidden one – like a double-bottom suitcase” that will “guide the reader toward certain structural or strategic aspects of the work” (CĂLINESCU, 2003: 256). It is an atypical rewriting because it does not invest in the space of another fiction, but in that of confessional writing. A more inspired choice of words would be *rewriting–reliving* or *rereading–self-reading*. This time, the theme of identity, which also preoccupied Mendelsohn in his previous books – the gay identity (*The Elusive Embrace: Desire and the Riddle of Identity* - 1999) or the Jewish identity (*The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million* - 2006) – is developed from the perspective of spiritual and biological lineage.

“Well, I need the story [...]. I am trying to make sense of this”, snaps the writer’s mother at the doctor who doesn’t have the patience to listen to the whole story about Jay’s accident. We need the story, – this is what Daniel Mendelsohn’s entire book says, because “the text is the mediation through which we understand ourselves” (Ricoeur, 1995: 106). To add to this line of successive effects, we can ask ourselves how many readers of *An Odyssey* have reconsidered their relationship with their fathers after reading it.

**REFERENCES:**

- Bloch-Lainé, Virginie, «Interview. Daniel Mendelsohn: «Etudier *l'Odyssee* en présence de mon père a développé notre intelligence émotionnelle»», in *Libération*, 13 octobre 2017. [https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/10/13/daniel-mendelsohn-etudier-l-odyssee-en-presence-de-mon-pere-a-developpe-notre-intelligence-emotionne\\_1603003](https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/10/13/daniel-mendelsohn-etudier-l-odyssee-en-presence-de-mon-pere-a-developpe-notre-intelligence-emotionne_1603003)
- Bodiștean, Florica, *Eseuri de literatură universală (de la Cântarea cântărilor la Doris Lessing)*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2013.
- Călinescu, Matei, *A citi, a reciti. Către o poetică a (re)lecturii*, traducere din limba engleză de Virgil Stanciu, Iași, Polirom, 2003.
- Drimba, Ovidiu, *Istoria literaturii universale*, vol. I, ediție definitivă, București, SAECULUM I.O. – VESTALA, 1998.
- Durand, Gilbert, *Figuri mitice și chipuri ale operei – de la mitocritică la mitanaliză*, traducere din limba franceză de Irina Bădescu, București, Editura Nemira, 1998.
- Garner, Dwight, “A father and Son Sail through Homer’s ‘Odyssey’ Together”, in *The New York Times*, 18 September 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/18/books/review/review-an-odyssey-daniel-mendelsohn.html>
- Pătrășconiu, Cristian, „Interviu. Daniel Mendelsohn: «O mare parte din literatura mare este despre împăcarea cu moartea»”, în *România literară*, nr. 3 / 17 ianuarie 2020. <https://romanaliterara.com/2020/02/daniel-mendelsohn-o-mare-parte-din-literatura-mare-este-despre-impacarea-cu-moartea/>
- Răileanu, Petre, *Corabia lui Ghilgameș. Eseuri*, București, Editura Militară, 1990.
- Ricœur, Paul, *Eseuri de hermeneutică*, traducere de Vasile Tonoiu, București, Humanitas, 1995.
- Ricœur, Paul, *Temps et Récit*, vol. I, II, III, Paris, Seuil, 1983, 1984, 1985.
- Todorov, Tzvetan, *Povestirea primitivă*, în *Pentru o teorie a textului. Antologie „Tel Quel” 1960-1971*, introducere, antologie și traducere de Adriana Babeți și Delia Șepețean-Vasiliu, București, Univers, 1980, p. 318-330.

JESS

# A Case of Mutilation: Translating Hemingway (and his life) in Communist Romania in the 1960s

Dan Horațiu Popescu\*

## **Abstract:**

The paper is a case study, part of a larger and older research project on the reception of modernist American literature in the cultural press of communist Romania in the 1960s. If the 1950s were the toughest years, in terms of censorship and physical atrocities, the 1960s could be considered the *milder* ones, while also anticipating the *enlightened* 1970s. We have been analyzing the Romanian cultural press as going beyond the role of an interface between an *écriture* terminal and a network of readers: firstly, via translations, more or less accurate, secondly, through interviews and memories from journalists, fellow-writers, friends, family members, as reproduced from publications belonging mainly to the Eastern / Communist Bloc (Cuba included). Our research is also based on investigations run in the archives of the former secret police, the infamous Securitate. The relation between censorship and ideology, between institutionalized and self-censorship is underlined, as well as their effect in the act of literary translation. Our paper focuses on Hemingway as a result of him being the most popular representative of the Lost Generation at the time, in the countries of the former Soviet Bloc. The main text we had in view was *How Do You Like It Now, Gentlemen?* by Lilian Ross.

**Keywords:** Hemingway's reception, communist Romania, censorship, ideology

## **1. Introduction: the corridors of evil**

When speaking about Romania, probably the first word that comes to one's mind, mainly to people from abroad, is the name of its infamous leader, who was executed on the Christmas night of 1989. In popular culture and, to some extent, in scholarship on countries from the former Soviet Bloc, Nicolae Ceaușescu came to be known as the iconic image of a communist dictator, the embodiment of ultimate ideological evil. What most people from abroad don't know, as well as many younger people from contemporary Romania, is that the worst years in terms of political persecution were those before his coming to power, when Romania was, especially in the early 1950s, in the grip of the Stalinist regime. Unspeakable atrocities were committed, and hundreds

---

\* Associate Professor PhD, Partium Christian University of Oradea, dhpopescu@yahoo.com

of thousands died in forced labor camps and places of detention where horrific experiments<sup>1</sup> were undertaken with the purpose of re-educating the individuals who tried to fight or resist the system.

In schools, Russian replaced French as the main foreign language to be taught to younger generations, whereas carefully selected examples and samples from Russian literature were presented as models/patterns to follow for the readers and writers, be they aspiring or with an established reputation. The French intellectual tradition, so dear to Romanian cultural elite, was abandoned as well as the openings to the English culture and civilization, which had started to be intensely cultivated before WWII. Beyond the Iron Curtain, the geographical and ideological frontier designed in the aftermath of the war with the blessings from Churchill and Roosevelt, new legitimizing grand narratives were pushed forward.

Nevertheless, writers and teachers of literature not once attempted and even succeeded to avoid intellectual annihilation, which was one of the objectives of the corrosive communist propaganda. Very few of the literary magazines remained, their disappearance echoing Lenin's ideas from the essay *Party Organization and Party Literature*, i.e. stating that writers were actually free to write what they liked. Unfortunately, they "could not expect to be published in Party journals unless they were committed to the Party's political line" (Selden, 1989: 27). Affirming the principle of *partinost*, commitment to the cause of the Party, the essay had been published in the first decade of the 20th century, in 1905, when imperial Russia did have its good share of censorship. The real dimension and mind-blowing effects of it were to be achieved only after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. And just like in Soviet Russia, Romania of the 1950s had no publications free of control from the omniscient and omnipresent Party.

So censorship was going to attain an unprecedented degree, following the Soviet models, with a continuous refining of the means, in order to reach the intended targets. The people in charge would control both texts and images, trying to prevent any ideological infection from the capitalist countries, the leader of which was, obviously, the *imperialist* U.S.A. The graphic aspect, i.e. the visual framing played a major role in adjusting the readers' perspective. No pictures at all or just one picture a week from America would suffice, while pictures from the socialist countries were plenty and larger, as well as those from the

---

<sup>1</sup> The most famous of them was The Pitești Experiment, carried out between December 1949 and September 1951. Among those who would later condemn this largest and the most intensive brain-washing torture programme in the Eastern Bloc was Alexander Solzsenitsyn himself.



developing countries. Texts were mainly dedicated to world peace, nuclear disarmament and to the efforts of the African countries to gain their independence.

From the cultural magazines we browsed, we retained the prevalence, in the decade between 1949 and 1959, of the *image*, of the photos and of the political caricatures that accompanied texts. Then followed an intermediate stage, until 1965, when Ceaușescu came to power. Editors were probably searching for the Romanian way, so this might account for the appearance of the first photos from the U.S.A.. They contained a good-solid mix of social protest against injustice, war and, of course, unemployment. Between 1965 and 1971, the most liberal period, one could notice an improvement of the manipulative devices<sup>2</sup>. The period between 1972 and 1978 brought pictures of natural disasters, of marches against unemployment, of illegal immigrants, of the political debates among the members of the US Congress, etc.etc. And the very last decade, until 1989, focused on the cost of arming, and the necessity of disarmament, this time with *texts* prevailing. Still, a future reassessment, based on a more thorough browsing, is worth trying with a view to getting a more profound insight.

## **2. A writer's portrayal according to Lenin's principles**

Definitely, the most important vehicles for conveying the *right* political messages to readers in Romania still interested in fiction and/or similar types of discourse, were the works of writers who seemed to resonate with *leftist* ideology. Lenin's followers adhering to the idea of the superstructure positively influencing the base in the long run, and at the same time practitioners of the well-crafted, during Stalin's regime, Socialist Realism, had realized that readers should be given a cliffhanger in the desert of dull individual creations. Translations acted as such but, in addition, some portals could be opened for authors and translators altogether; authors from until then less accessible cultures and languages, and translators, some of them writers whose activity had been banned and who were happy to try their hand at promoting, in those particular circumstances, either new or well-established reputations. Translations, more or less accurate, interviews and memories, all contributed to instil in Romanian readers an increasingly yet ambiguous sense of spiritual independence, freedom and democracy.

Hemingway was among those authors writing in English whose works looked aligned and positive enough as to be accepted by communist censorship. Besides, his past, i.e. taking part in the Spanish Civil War, and his extremely dynamic, almost legendary, way of life,

---

<sup>2</sup> This is going to be the focus of a separate research.

made him even more appealing and eligible. The articles about him started to be published pretty late, since January 1958, and in this paper we restricted our approach to those circumvoluting his death, in July 1961, but with a major exception from 1964. Out of the 11 articles identified, 3 are by reputed Romanian *translators* from English. Other 4 are *translations*, however *without any translator's name mentioned*, from Russian, German and Spanish. Without access to the originals, our clue to the process is that the American writer needed being introduced while promoters would somehow assume less responsibility, i.e. editors merely taking and adapting from cultural magazines in the Soviet Union, East Germany and Cuba.

*Don Ernesto locuieste lângă Havana / Don Ernesto lives near Havana* by A. Alexeev is such an example, accounting also for the speed the materials used to circulate among *brothers* and *sisters* in the Communist Bloc. As stated in a kind of caption box, on 8 February 1960 the First Deputy Premier of Soviet Union, Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan<sup>3</sup>, while in Cuba, paid a visit to Hemingway, who was living at the time in San Francisco de Paula. The politician had been accompanied by the journalist, who sent his reportage to "Izvestia" by phone, and from the Soviet News Agency the Romanian "Contemporanul/ The Contemporary" managed to produce its own version no later than 19 February 1960.

Hemingway was presented as wearing very casual clothes, behaving modestly and appearing as a truly "quiet American", therefore contrasting the image of his filthy rich compatriots and of the impudent tourists who used to haunt the land of the Pearl of the Antiles before Castro's regime. His accessibility and popularity among neighbours were a perfect illustration of another of Lenin's principles, *narodnost*, i.e. the writers should adapt their style, avoid confusion, and lower their approach in order to reach the masses. Flattered by Mikoyan for all these qualities, Hemingway answered that he was only trying to make himself useful, the understatement here being that the writer was no partisan of the slogan "art for art's sake".

The writer's spacious, well-lighted villa, bought during the Spanish Civil War, was described as surrounded by modest houses, almost shabby, which spoke forth about the working class condition of their inhabitants. Another of Lenin's principles might have been at work in

---

<sup>3</sup> One of the very few Russian leaders who survived purges and fights among different factions of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, and managed to retire peacefully. "Highly intelligent with the driest of wits, he had a gift for languages, understanding English and, in 1931, he taught himself German by translating *Das Kapital*" (Sebag Montefiore 2004: 86).

the rhetoric of the article, i.e. *classovost*, meaning the writer was capable to overcome his middle-class barriers by deciding to live among poorer people. In this respect, *bourgeois* journalists and “other snobs” came under attack, as they used to twist the author’s words and give him a bad name.

Inside the house no extravaganza could be noticed, no bad taste and no “abstract painting on the walls”. The understatement here is that Hemingway was a realist and consequently he opposed non-figurative art. When given, among other presents, the two volumes of his *Selected Works*, from the Russian edition the circulation of which comprised 300000 copies, the writer was deeply impressed by the figures (readers were told nothing nothing about royalties!). The comment that followed was another example of how words by “capitalist” authors would serve the communist propaganda. The Soviet readers, according to Hemingway, were to be praised for being “extremely demanding” and for not “needing *comics*”; the latter mentioned products, iconic for large categories of readers in the U.S.A., were deemed (by the writer or by the journalist?) not *serious* enough.

A few months later, in May 1960, *Întâlnire cu Hemingway / Meeting Hemingway* by Sergo Mikoian<sup>4</sup>, appeared in the Romanian “Gazeta Literară/ Literary Gazette”, apparently a fragment from a larger article published in the Russian “Literaturnaia Gazeta/ Literary Gazette”. Mikoyan’s son, also a journalist, who had accompanied his father in Cuba too, presented the writer as “amazingly spontaneous, lively and cheerful”. Hemingway seemed amused by his being “reputed as a great writer”, and according to Sergo Mikoian, he did not put on airs, something that might be “specific to [only] true greatness.” (Mikoian 1960) New details about the visit at Finca Vigia are given. To the presents mentioned in Alexeev’s article, i.e. a Sputnik model and a bottle of vodka, a Matryoshka was added, but it was the vodka that stirred the conversation around, among other issues, Hemingway’s intended visit to Soviet Union, possibly accompanying President Eisenhower.

The fragment was rounded up with a reference to another article, *Hemingway și revoluția / Hemingway and the Revolution*, published in “The Worker”, the periodical of the Communist Party U.S.A, which Sergo read a few weeks later, in Moscow. It is hard to tell whether the conclusions of the fragment came from this last mentioned article or actually belonged to Sergo, so in this respect it might also be counted as a sample of Romanian editing. Hemingway, although *not* a revolutionary, was labeled as a great realist and a romantic at the same

---

<sup>4</sup> This is the Romanian way of spelling the name.

time, for there was no revolution without romanticism and only true realism could explain the cause of revolutions. His hesitations made him, actually, a *humanist*, but in what our research is concerned, we would retain the triumphalist conclusion, that “authentic humanism is always, ultimately, on the revolution side” (*Ibidem*).

*Scriitorul și marea / The Writer and the Sea* by G. Borowik, was translated, again *without any mention of the translator’s name*, from “Rum and die Welt/Around the World”, 9/1960, an East-German publication, the September issue. Again, as the Romanian translation or adaptation (no one can tell), was published on 15 September 1960, one might ask whether that was not a concerted action, part of a larger plan in countries of the Soviet Bloc, meant to promote/emphasize the image of a certain personality at a given time with a view to attaining obscure political purposes. Borowik’s article, for instance, resumed discussions mentioned at the beginning of the year in Alexeev’s, i.e. Hemingway’s attitude vis-à-vis Castro’s regime, and Hemingway was quoted as being categorical about it in “a conversation with Anastas Ivanovici Micoian”.

In Alexeev’s article, when answering some of Mikoyan’s questions, Hemingway underlined the importance of self-discipline in writing, which is a voluntary type of activity. Sacrifices should be imposed, such as giving up parties and receptions, or paying visits. The writer insisted on his having still so many issues to tackle and on the limited amount of time at his disposal. In Borowik’s article, Hemingway stated, during a fishing expedition, that work was the most important thing in his life, that working set one free from troubles, and, of course, work was like a great love that had to be protected from an intruder’s eyes. What the authors of such articles probably wanted to convey, apart from the writer’s apparent willingness to visit the leading communist country, an issue which Hemingway cunningly avoided, was his creed in a certain *work ethic*, up to the point of becoming “a slave of self-discipline”.

The same work ethic was highlighted indirectly, through the image of the house, by Fernando Campoamor, a Cuban friend of Hemingway, in the article *Hemingway și Cuba / Hemingway and Cuba*, written especially for “Gazeta Literară/ the Literary Gazette”, and published on 23 November 1961, four months after the writer’s death. The East-German G. Borowik had noticed the simplicity of the four-roomed house, with an adjacent (ivory?) tower<sup>5</sup>. And Campoamor quoted Hemingway answering his friend, the gossip columnist Earl Wilson<sup>6</sup>, when the latter asked him about the reason for living in Cuba. “Dear

---

<sup>5</sup> Yet Hemingway worked neither there nor in his study. Actually, the bedroom was the laboratory of creation, stacked with bookshelves, like all the other rooms.

<sup>6</sup> But who had a good reputation for being fair and for double-checking his facts.

Earl, you stayed in my house, didn't you? Didn't it look to you as the best place to work?" (Campoamor, 1961).

And he continued by challenging Wilson to find him a similar place in Ohio, "on a hill, fifteen minutes from Gulfstream", where he could stay with his "own fruits and vegetables, and with [his] fighting cocks and [his] dogs" (ibidem). "Fighting cocks" looked like the destabilizing element of the series meant to induce a paradise like-image of Cuba (the article was extremely politicized), as the perfect place to write, and it was going to resonate with the facts in the 1964 article we felt, and already mentioned, as a major exception from this line of representation.

### 3. Another Hemingway

#### 3.1. *Minor translation's labour's lost*

Published in November that year, in "Secolul 20 / Twentieth Century"<sup>7</sup>, it was a long translation, *this time with the translator's name mentioned*, of Lillian Ross's *How Do You Like It Now, Gentlemen?* And the very first paragraph must have been intriguing for the Romanian readers:

Ernest Hemingway, who may well be the greatest American novelist and short-story writer of our day, rarely came to New York. For many years, he spent most of his time on a farm, the Finca Vigia, nine miles outside Havana, with his wife, *a domestic staff of nine*<sup>8</sup>, fifty-two cats, sixteen dogs, a couple of hundred pigeons, and three cows. (in Weeks, 1962: 17)

"A domestic staff of nine" betrayed not just Hemingway's well-off condition, constantly and skillfully overlooked by the authors of the articles previously discussed, but also the fact that he was a *good employer*. One may say that Lillian Ross was American and that her article had been published in 1950, and that Hemingway perfectly fitted the pattern of the successful writer who used to make it to the tabloids in capitalist America, etc.etc. Moreover, the realities referred to were from the previous decade, when Cuba was not yet benefiting from the blessings of a communist regime. Nevertheless, when playing with such anachronisms, our major focus should be the Romanian readers of the mid 1960s, probably the same with those in the late 1950s, who must have built for themselves a standardized image of the writer and were now faced with some spectacular, in our opinion, adjustments, which they might have hesitated to call *improvements*.

---

<sup>7</sup> The best Romanian cultural magazine in those years, the early sixties and the decades to follow, reputed for its liberal way of promoting theoretical issues and masters of world literature

<sup>8</sup> Italics ours.

According to Lillian Ross, Hemingway had expressed his agreement about meeting her in New York, before departing to Europe. As he was coming from Cuba and it was supposed that not much time could be allotted to the New York interlude, he stated very clearly the places he wanted to visit, among them “the Bronx Zoo, Metropolitan Museum, Museum of Modern Art, ditto of Natural History” (in Weeks, 1962: 17) And he displayed *no interest in non-figurative art* – “Want to see the good Breughel at the Met, the one, no two, fine Goyas and Mr. El Greco’s Toledo” (*Ibidem*).

The sentence that followed – “Don’t want to go to Toots Shor’s.” –, appeared distorted in the Romanian translation Our guess is that the translator, L. Voita, had found the information on Toots Shor’s, a very famous restaurant and lounge in Manhattan, less relevant for Romanian readers, and he omitted the name, so that he wouldn’t have to come up with more details, which might have conveyed an inappropriate image of the writer. Toots Shor’s had a famous list of *ordinary* customers with a *glamorous* life style, starting with Joe DiMaggio, and which included Frank Sinatra, Marilyn Monroe, Judi Garland, Orson Welles and, of course, Hemingway

But a true challenge must have been the title, *How Do You Like it Now, Gentlemen?*, which although occurred for five times in the article, having an intended role as a leitmotif, was totally suppressed in the Romanian translation. We believe that the word *gentlemen/domn* was the cause, as the Romanian standard conversational/social vocabulary of the time allowed no room for *Sir* or *Mister*, also translatable with *domn*. Instead, people would use *tovarăș*, which was the translation for *comrade*. So, the translator’s final decision was that Romanian readers should forget about *gentlemen* and enjoy *O zi cu Hemingway*, which in English would sound *A Day with Hemingway!*

We had two versions of the original text to compare, one published at the already mentioned date, soon after Hemingway’s phone conversation with Ross at the end of 1949, setting the details of his visit and of their encounter. The other version appeared in a volume following the author’s death, a collection of essays, so Lillian Ross had to adjust some of the verb tenses, especially in the introductory paragraph. Therefore, in the 1962 version, the verbs are in the past tense, which is understandable, whereas in the 1950 version, the verbs are in the present tense, which is logical as the author was still alive – “Ernest Hemingway, who may well be the greatest American novelist and short-story writer of our day, rarely *comes* to New York. (...) he *spends* most of his time on a farm, ...”

Nevertheless, both versions continue, for the immense majority of the article, in the past tense; however, the Romanian translation, and this

is the paradox, uses the present tense when rendering it. One can understand the translator's option, i.e. the events presented are added certain freshness and vividness. Other solutions, employing a certain aspect of the past tense in Romanian, would have augmented the text with a kind of nostalgia, but we are not sure whether that would not have been more suitable, given the context of the writer's disappearance three years earlier.

Another intriguing aspect was the translator's decision to divide the text in sections with headings of their own, which are not present in the original. So, the Romanian readers could experience "Nostalgia Europei / Nostalgia of Europe", in which Paris and Italy were remembered, "Despre scris, scriitori și critici/About Writing, Writers and Critics", in which Russian and French models of inspiration were discussed, "Marlene Dietrich apare / Shows Up/" in which the benefits of being a grandparent were emphasized, "Destăinuiri, aduceri aminte / Confessions, Bringing Back Memories", in which the writer spoke about the disadvantages of being self-taught, and "Cezanne, Degas, Bach and Brueghel", the last one speaking for itself. Perhaps the length of the original text had scared the translator and he must have convened with the editor of the cultural magazine that such divisions were necessary and affordable.

### ***3.2. The glasses to be fixed and the glasses to be filled***

The most striking aspect in Lillian Ross's article, and in its avatars in the Romanian translation, remained, in our opinion, the contrast, if any, between the *glasses to be fixed* and the *glasses to be filled*. Both our underlined phrases speak of the writer's nonchalance, even carelessness, in the long run. When talking about her husband's eye-glasses, Mary Hemingway was reported to have said – "He's had that same piece of paper under the nosepiece for weeks. When he really wants to get cleaned up, he changes the paper." (in Weeks, 1962: 20) However, one sentence further, we move from *nonchalance* to *joie de vivre* – "The bartender came up, and Hemingway asked him to bring another round of drinks" (*Ibidem*).

The "round of drinks" might belong to a presumed *drink* series, if we were to apply a Bakhtinian reading of the text, in the spirit the Russian theorist acted when he approached the fictional world of Rabelais. Except that here we are given such series in a non-fictional text, by an external observer. Nevertheless, in Hemingway's case, with so many alleged overlaps of his life with his work, we feel that the approach is sustainable. On the other hand, scholars and readers alike cannot deny that one great item Hemingway and Rabelais had in common was an all-encompassing *joie de vivre*.

The series started right at the beginning, when the young reporter had just met, at the airport, the mature writer and his wife, whose impatience was tamed by Hemingway after having finished to count the luggage – “Let’s not crowd, honey. Order of the day is to have a drink first” (Idem, 19) And when he got his “double bourbons”, after waiting “with impatience”, his *impatience* seemed to have been of a different order and degree than his wife’s, as he “took several large swallows”. Then he continued a kind of peroration against humans in front of the coffee-drinking reporter, and praised animals like the one Montana bear who once “slept with him, got drunk with him, and was a close friend” (*Ibidem*).

With all these details present in the Romanian translation, the Romanian readers were offered, all of a sudden, an image of Hemingway that had been carefully avoided in the previous articles introducing his life and work. As already mentioned, the *work ethic* idea had prevailed, and the only entertainment allowed was going fishing, as a means of not getting obsessed with the writing process, which Hemingway considered much more necessary for him than even eating or drinking (Borowik, 1960). One may object that in Lillian Ross’s article the writer was about to leave on holiday, yet further elements were going to inflame the *drink* series to an extent difficult to imagine for the *still* frozen ideological context of the 1964 Eastern-European country.

At the airport, while projecting their staying in the city, the first things the Hemingway couple thought of ordering, once arrived at the hotel, were caviar and champagne. “I’ve been waiting months for that caviar and champagne.” (in Weeks, 1962: 20) – confessed Mary Hemingway, as if they had been at the end of an extended period of reclusion, possibly related to the book the writer was working at the time, *Across the River and Into the Trees*.<sup>9</sup> So, the *drink* series was reinforced through “champagne”, and the *food* series was added through “caviar”, but the one name present in the context – “First we call Marlene” (*Ibidem*) –, brought Romanian readers to a world they had stopped dreaming at when communists took power after WWII.

The world of Hollywood movie stars, the world of glamour, which had been denied to masses in those years of intense propaganda, started to make their way back through cultural magazines and translations. At the hotel, however, the flamboyant Marlene Dietrich, although wearing a mink coat and gladly accepting a glass from one of the “couple of

---

<sup>9</sup> He was going to complete it while staying at the Ritz hotel in December, so after his November meeting with Lillian Ross (Trogon, 2002: 235).



bottles of Perrier-Jouët, *brut*.” (Idem: 22) the Hispanic<sup>10</sup> waiter had brought, refrained from acting like a diva. After taking a piece of toast with caviar spread on it, which Marry Hemingway had offered, she underlined the reason for her change of attitude – “I have to behave because I am a grandmother” (Idem: 25).

A tamed diva, turned into a careful and protective granny, worked well from the ideological point of view, and that might account for the fragment being preserved in the edited text. Moreover, although while taking a sip of champagne, the actres boasted on her baby-sitting and cleaning maid skills – “As soon as they leave the house, I go around and look in all the corners and straighten the drawers and clean up. I can’t stand a house that isn’t neat and clean” (Idem: 26). The Romanian housewives and would-be readers of the sophisticated cultural magazine must have been delighted.

What was bizarre, though, was the choice for the Romanian translation of the adjective describing the look given by Hemingway at the news of her becoming grandmother for the second time. Although he was going to have a grandchild too, his very first, what Lillian Ross captured was a “bleak look”. There are but limited translation possibilities for *bleak* in Romanian, yet what readers got was *stranie*, which in English would be a perfect *strange*. Could that have another ideological motivation, i.e. the great writer, humanist and friend of ordinary people shouldn’t have been exposed as not being happy at the idea of becoming a grandfather, i.e. a true *patriarch*?<sup>11</sup>.

The communists did encourage a *patriarch* mythology, with any *lider maximus* perceived as the ultimate father of the nation. Answers could be searched for with other translation instances as well in this material, and our attempt at building an ideological frame of reference and interpretation would be better than nothing. Still, the worst, if any, was yet to come.

### 3.3. A case of mutilation

The divisions operated within the text by the translator & editor, apart from fragmenting it, although with the good intention of guiding the readers, revealed certain misconnections that eventually led us to a disconcerting discovery. Large chunks of the original text had been omitted in the Romanian translation, and when doing the maths within the electronic version at our disposal, we realized that 22 % of it, almost

---

<sup>10</sup> Presumed Hispanic as, according to Ross, Hemingway “said something in Spanish to the waiter. They both laughed, and the waiter left” (in Weeks, 1962: 23).

<sup>11</sup> According to one of his sons, as stated in the documentary *Wrestling with Life*, he was not very happy having children around when he was writing.

a quarter, was missing, thus giving the phrase *lost in translation* a weirdly different meaning.

We strived to identify the cast away fragments, which did not take long, but what followed became the real challenge, as we were trying to understand the sound reasons underlying the cuts. Was there simply a lack of space in the magazine issue, although it was regularly edited and published in a book format, once a month, with an average number of pages exceeding 300? Or, once again, was it for political/ideological reasons that such omissions were performed, given the fact that the magazine was in its very early years?<sup>12</sup> But in 1964, the spectre of Stalinism was gone, and the Russian army had left Romania in August 1958.

We started to look for discrepancies in content between what remained and what had been ousted, but we could find no particular difference. All of the missing fragments reflected the same issues, and we could recognize, as in the very short one below, the *drink* and *food* series, if we were to apply the Bakhtinian key of analysis.<sup>13</sup>

Mrs. Hemingway said she *would order lunch* while he got dressed. Still *holding his glass*, he reluctantly got up from the couch. Then he *finished his drink* and went into the bedroom. By the time he came out – wearing the same outfit as the day before, except for a blue shirt with a button-down collar – a waiter had *set the table for our lunch*. We couldn't have lunch without a *bottle of Tavel*, Hemingway said, and we waited until the waiter had brought it before *starting to eat*.<sup>14</sup> (in Weeks, 1962: 29)

And the episode continued in the same note, with Mary Hemingway assigning domestic tasks, one of them being the acquisition of a new coat. That was meant to cover, literally and metaphorically, Papa's nonchalance when "wearing the same outfit as the day before". Another domestic task was fixing his eye-glasses, but the writer, once again, showed more concern for *filling* glasses with a *joie de vivre* the type Bakhtin exposed in Rabelais – "Pantagruelism", said the Russian theorist, "means the ability to be cheerful, wise and kind" (Bakhtin, 1981: 186)

"Papa, please get glasses fixed," Mrs. Hemingway said.

He nodded. Then he nodded a few times at me—a repetition of the sign for attention.

---

<sup>12</sup> The first issue had been published in January 1961.

<sup>13</sup> The full denominations are *drink and drunkenness* and *food and dining*.

<sup>14</sup> All italics ours in the fragment quoted.

“What I want to be when I am old is a wise old man who won’t bore,” he said, then paused while the waiter set a plate of asparagus and an artichoke before him and *poured the Tavel*. Hemingway *tasted the wine* and gave the waiter a nod.<sup>15</sup> (in Weeks, 1962: 29)

Lillian Ross’s pioneering article has all the attributes of a non-fictional novel, with scenes and characters in full swing so, again, our belief in the suitability of her text to being applied the critical apparatus for fiction is beyond doubt. In Rabelais, for instance, “everything of value,” according to Bakhtin, “must achieve its full potential in temporal and spatial terms”, whereas “everything evaluated negatively (...) must be destroyed” (Bakhtin, 1981: 167-168) This extraordinary faith in earthly space and time is typical not only of Rabelais, but also, according to the Russian theorist, of Shakespeare and Cervantes. Shall we add Hemingway’s Ross to this illustrious series? Then what is there to be *fully achieved* or, on the contrary, *destroyed*, could be left for the readers to decide in the following, *missing from translation*, fragment:

Hemingway stood looking sadly at the bottle of champagne, which was not yet empty. Mrs. Hemingway put on her coat, and I put on mine.

“The half bottle of champagne is the enemy of man,” Hemingway said. We all sat down again.

“If I have any money, I can’t think of any better way of spending money than on champagne,” Hemingway said, pouring some.

When the champagne was gone, we left the suite. Downstairs, Mrs. Hemingway told us to remember to get glasses fixed, and scooted away (in Weeks, 1962: 30)

There were other, numerous sequences of the same type omitted, with other series or patterns involved, the epitome of which being placed at the very end of the text, when Hemingway refused to appear in a commercial for a beverage – “I told them I wouldn’t drink the stuff for four thousand dollars,” he said. “I told them I was a champagne man”. A morally unsuitable ending for the Romanian readers, who instead were cut short 772 words earlier, with the writer coming out of the Metropolitan Museum, in the rain.

#### **4. Loose ties or, instead of conclusion**

In order to understand and hopefully decipher the mystery of this slightly distorted, at times, and partly, if not severely, mutilated translation of a text about Hemingway in the mid 1960s Romania, we tried our best at tracking, after so many years, the only people who could have had reasonable answers to our questions. Lillian Ros was still alive in 2013, when we initiated our research on writers of the Lost Generation and their reception in communist Romania. But it took a

---

<sup>15</sup> All italics ours in the fragment quoted. The waiter, just like in other similar situations, seems to be more like an accomplice than an employee performing regular duties.

good amount of time for the people at the “New Yorker” to put us in touch with the reputed journalist, yet not before trying to tempt us with discounts, reduced subscriptions, and all that.

One of our major questions for Lillian Ross was if anybody from Romania had contacted her, in 1964 or earlier, asking for the permission to translate the article, or whether she had ever been aware of the existence of that translation. From her relatively quick answer, we found out that we could get *Portrait of Hemingway* by Lillian Ross from Amazon, which she recommended as being “fast and inexpensive.” And that we could also watch the video *JFK Library hour with Lillian Ross and Susan Morrison* with no charge. Envisaging a scary cul-de-sac, we reiterated the previous message, this time with more specific questions, while letting her know about how strictly we adhered to her instructions. Which she reiterated in turn – well, this time the Amazon services were “quickly and inexpensively” – and with the same “Best wishes”. There was though, an encouraging part – “These should tell what you want to know.”

We were still left the translation portal, however the one thing we came to learn, after extensive coverage of the articles in the cultural press of those years, was that almost everybody was under surveillance. Therefore we resorted to files in the archives of the former and infamous Securitate, open to public after 1990, in order to find out more about this L. Voita, who eventually proved to be a Leopold or a Leonard.<sup>16</sup> His files bore the labels *Informer* and *Network*, which meant that he was not an ordinary person and that he was collaborating with the system. In this respect he had to have a code name *and* a pen-name.

He had been a war correspondent during WWII, and after that he wanted to continue as a journalist, but he abandoned as he was suspected of Nazi sympathies. He tried to lose his track, working as an electrician, but he was once again suspected, this time of sympathy for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. In the 1960s, he was back in the business of writing for the cultural press, where he signed as Leonid Voita. He either agreed or was persuaded to collaborate. They had copies of his war articles and a relative of his, a woman, who left for Italy and came back, was suspected of having been recruited by the Italian Service 4.

His father had been of Czech origin, and his mother of German and Hungarian origins, so one can understand why in a note in one of the files he specified that he knew well German and Hungarian. To which

---

<sup>16</sup> This may sound confusing, but it was not often that, although it was obvious that the accounts related to the same person, the name had been changed. If that was simple negligence or it was on purpose, it is very difficult to assess.

French and Italian were added, but we could find no reference to English. Moreover, the only book bearing his name on it was a *Gauguin His life and Work* album, with him being responsible for the section translated from German. Still, on a list of his connections that might “present an interest for our operations”, there are the names of a few reputed Romanian translators from English.

And there was the end of our investigations. He might have acted as coverage for some of his fellow translators, who had been denied publishing at the time, just like some script-writers did in America of the McCarthy’s years. We have not found any such reference so far. Surely, a good, even substantial, article can be written on Leopold/Leonard/Leonid Voita, based on the information in his relatively modest, in terms of the number of pages, Securitate files. But not on him as translating literary texts from English. Not yet.

## REFERENCES

Alexeev, A., *Don Ernesto locuiește lângă Havana/Don Ernesto Lives near Havana*, in “Contemporanul/The Contemporary”, no. 8, 19 Feb. 1960, p. 8.

Bakhtin, M., *Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel*, in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981.

Borowik, G., *Scritorul și marea. Vizitându-l pe Ernest Hemingway / The Writer and the Sea, Visiting Ernest Hemingway*, “Gazeta Literară / The Literary Gazette”, year 7, no. 38, 15 Sept. 1960, p. 8.

Campoamor, F. *Hemingway și Cuba / Hemingway and Cuba*, “Gazeta Literară / The Literary Gazette”, year 8, no. 48, 23 Nov. 1961, p. 8.

Mikoian, S., *Întâlnire cu Hemingway / Meeting Hemingway*, “Gazeta Literară / The Literary Gazette”, year 7, no. 20, 12 May 1960, p. 8.

Ross, L.

\*\*\*, *A conversation with...*

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/events-and-awards/forums/past-forums/transcripts/a-conversation-with-lillian-ross>

\*\*\*, *How Do You Like it Now, Gentlemen?*, in *Hemingway. A Collection of Critical Essays*, Weeks, Robert (ed.), Prentice Hall, Englewood 1962, p. 17-39.

\*\*\*, *O zi cu Hemingway/ A Day with Hemingway*, (transl. by L. Voita of *How Do You Like it Now, Gentlemen?*), “Secolul 20/Twentieth Century”, 11/November 1964, p. 73-97.

Sebag Montefiore, S. *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, London, Phoenix, 2004.

Selden, R., *Soviet Socialist Realism*, in *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989, p. 26-29.

Trogdon, R. W. (ed.), *Ernest Hemingway. A Literary Reference*, New York, Caroll & Graf Publishers, 2002.

JESS

## Representation of Angel-in-the-House in *Bleak house* by Charles Dickens

Shaghayegh Moghari\*

### **Abstract:**

This article intends to examine the female characters of Esther Summerson and Ada Clare in *Bleak House*, written by Charles Dickens in Victorian period. In fact, the author has tried to revisit this novel as a case in point to discuss how female characters in Victorian society, who were depicted typically in this Victorian novel, were labeled as “angel in the house”. This work will actually analyze the concept of “angel in the house,” hegemonic patriarchy, Esther Summerson, Ada Care, and Lady Dedlock as Esther’s foil. At the end, this article will discuss how in the Victorian male-dominated society women were easily manipulated by their male counterparts both in society and at home under the label of “angel in the house”.

**Keywords:** “angel in the house”, Esther Summerson, Ada Clare, Victorian society, *Bleak house*, patriarchy, women

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Esther Summerson, as a Victorian model of woman, is marvelously perfect in numerous ways. The qualities which she possesses in the novel include prettiness, humbleness, modesty, quietness, assiduousness, and thankfulness. She is a good caretaker, and homemaker who usually has a habit of working only for the benefit of others. These qualities are what the society of her time desired from her as a woman and she did stick to these criteria as a woman. Charles Dickens in his book informs us about Esther. The Victorian society advocated ‘Submission, self-denial, diligent work’ since these qualities were considered as the preparations that the society expected from women in order to regard them as qualified for a marriage. This ideology belongs to the Victorian period concerning women and female personalities.

Ada Clare is another example of ‘angel in the house’. She is under the legal protection of Jarndyce. Ada Clare is a nice, sympathetic, and simple girl. When she meets Esther the two become close friends and share secrets. Their friendship means a lot to each other as they share each other’s secrets. She marries Richard and has a baby. She is all

---

\* Lecturer, Semnan University of Iran, shaghayeghmoghari@gmail.com

goodness, beauty, purity, and decency. She is attractive, decent, and sacrificed to Richard. Ada is exactly what Esther is. She, too, is a selfless character. They are good friends. They are parallel characters – that is, characters who are very much comparable in countless ways. Both are young, pretty, self-effacing, good-natured, sensible, responsible, and delicate; they are both without family who live in the same house under the protection of Mr. Jarndyce; they have analogous principles and prospects of life; young men are fascinated with both of them. Royster and Beum believe they are also intimate friends; they confide in each other, and partly for the reason that they do, they reveal characteristics of their characters to us.

Mariana Valverde in her article “The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse” points out that according to the male-oriented society of Victorian period women loved and admired fashion and this love or admiration was, in fact, their tragic flaw which had led to their going astray and therefore their fall into prostitute and whoredom.

Elisabeth Bronfen, in *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (1992) voices her concern about women. She argues that the highly beautiful description of the death of beautiful women in literature and arts shows that our society wishes and desires the omission and eradication of women from all facets and aspects of social life so that men should be the social choice. She believes that art and aesthetic are united in this omission of women.

Elizabeth Langland in “Nobody’s Angels: Domestic Ideology and Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Novel” (1992) deals with a dominant element of an intricate procedure: the connection of class and gender beliefs in an image of Victorian narrative, the “Angel in the House”, who encompasses and is established by her ideological other, the servant.

Barbara Creed in *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (1993) studies how men considered women as monsters and were afraid of them. She indicates that men did not regard women as sane creatures and did not love them; rather, men hated women and considered them as insane monsters, and were afraid of them as castrators. She criticizes Freud’s model of psychoanalysis. For her Freud is a version of patriarchy.

The researcher uses and applies the theory of feminism to this Victorian novel written by Dickens. Based on this methodology, this article will discuss the representation of women as angel in the house. Feminism is the theory of this article. The feminist critics and theoreticians from whose works the present researcher will benefit include Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, and Elaine Showalter who



had shared objectives of defining, founding, and attaining similar political, economic, cultural, personal, and social privileges for women.

Feminism is consisted of the first-wave and second-wave groups of feminists. Woolf and de Beauvoir belong to the first-wave of feminist theoreticians; and among the second wave of feminists, Elaine Showalter is a renowned literary figure. Woolf is the founding mother of the first wave-feminist (Bressler: 118) who proclaims many of the concerns later feminist critics were to pay attention to and “who herself becomes the terrain over which some debates have struggled” (Bressler: 118). Virginia Woolf’s reputation is basically due to her being a creative woman author, and later feminist critics have examined her novels widely from very diverse viewpoints. However, her being a feminist rests on two key works, *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938) (Bressler: 118). Like Simone de Beauvoir, Woolf is mainly worried about women’s material disadvantages in contrast to men. In *A Room of One’s Own* she examines the history and social background of women’s literary works, and in *Three Guineas* she deals with the relationships between male power and the occupations (Bressler: 118).

Simone de Beauvoir’s revolutionary work, *The Second Sex* (1949) shaped a theoretical base for materialist feminists for decades to come. Beauvoir believes that in a patriarchal society, men are thought to be important subjects, while women are deemed depending beings (Tyson: 96). Tyson sums up the view of de Beauvoir’s work, thus:

Men can act upon the world, change it, give it meaning, while women have meaning only in relation to men. Thus, women are defined not just in terms of their difference from men, but in terms of their inadequacy in comparison to men. The word *woman*, therefore, has the same implications as the word *other*. A woman is not a person in her own right. She is man’s Other: she is less than a man; she is a kind of alien in a man’s world; she is not a fully developed human being the way a man is (Tyson: 96).

Second-wave feminism has in common with the first wave’s struggle for women’s privileges in all areas, it deals with the politics of literary creation, with women’s ‘experience’, with sexual ‘difference’ and with ‘sexuality’, as simultaneously a system of oppression and something to welcome (Bressler: 120). Elaine Showalter is a key feminist figure of the second wave feminism whose work *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) deals with the literary depiction of sexual differences in women’s writing. In this book, Showalter examines a literary history of women writers; generates a history which displays the formation of their material, mental and sociopolitical bases; and stimulates both a feminist evaluation as well as ‘gynocritics’. The word gynocritics refers to female authors (Bressler: 127).

## 2. DISCUSSION

### **Angel in the House**

The expression 'the angel in the house' is, in fact, the title of a poem by Coventry Patmore written in 1854 one year after Charles Dickens wrote his *Bleak House* (1853). But the concept was really common in the literature and fiction of the period. The poem declares:

Man must be pleased; but him to please  
Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf  
Of his condoled necessities  
She casts her best, she flings herself.  
How often flings for nought! and yokes  
Her heart to an icicle or whim,  
Whose each impatient word provokes  
Another, not from her, but him;  
While she, too gentle even to force  
His penitence by kind replies,  
Waits by, expecting his remorse,  
With pardon in her pitying eyes (Patmore 43)

As the poem shows, men need women to please them. It should be the pleasure of women to please men. This poem is how the Victorian society expected a woman to conduct herself. The women, as thought by many Victorian notions, should serve and submit to their husbands as also advocated by Tennyson in his poem *The Princess* (1847), the women should be, in another word, angels in the houses who are moral advisers and guides to their children, and should ensure peace and stability in their home. The characteristics of this angel in the house require that she should be lovely, sweet, inactive, self-sacrificing, and all the other characteristics and qualities by which modest women were defined in Victorian society.

### **Hegemonic Patriarchy**

The Victorian period advocated patriarchy, a kind of patriarchy which made men able to use their ideas and circulate them to women and consequently made women submissive without the use of force. Men cleverly subjugated women without force and military power. This was hegemonic patriarchy which enforced its masculine ideas to female members of society that all members of society naturalized those ideas. The schools, colleges, universities, churches, and other institutes advertised those ideas. That social structure was a structure in which men possessed chief roles, and had active parts in political governance, honorable power, social advantage, and control of property.

The father was the one who ruled the roost in the house and mother was the one who obeyed him. The job of the mother was indoor and the job of the father was outdoor. The phrase ‘angel in the house’ is a hegemonic strategy to keep women submissive, docile, obedient, and humble. It is hegemonic because there is no need for military force. They do it with culture, literature, narrative, and other mediums. This patriarchy circulates the idea of a woman as an angel in the house who should be protecting children and be a moral advisor to them.

### **Esther Summerson**

Esther Summerson is the heroin of the novel *Bleak House*. One point to know is that she is a woman who is the heroin of the novel of Charles Dickens as a man. There is a difference between a novel written by a man who makes a woman the heroin of the novel and a novel written by a woman who makes a woman as the heroin of the novel. Generally Dickens wanted women as submissive and humble and nothing more and this fact finds expression in many of his novels, one of which is *Bleak House* which is the focus of the present researcher in this article. His desire of making women submissive finds expression in the characters of submissive women in the novel. In fact, he wants women to be angels in the house that is to say to be submissive totally to their masters and their husbands.

Charles Dickens in *Bleak House* has in mind the concept of the angle in the house. He presents women and in fact, wishes them to be like this, that is to say, to obey men. His Esther Summerson and Ada in *Bleak House*, are devoted and loyal to family harmony. They are perfect examples of angels in the house.

Esther is certainly and truly a perfect example of the Victorian ideal of the ‘angel in the home’, the lady who keeps her husband’s house serene and tranquil, one who brings peace and tranquility to her husband and her children. Her sustenance is what allows her husband to get the joyful family life he has continuously desired for.

Esther Summerson is an example of a woman who is impeccable as a Victorian type of lady. The qualities which she possesses in the novel include among others: she is pretty, she is an unassuming woman, a very unassertive woman, who is quiet, assiduous, and thankful. She is a virtuous warden and housekeeper who usually has the habit of working only for the benefit of others (Shmoop Editirial Team). These are what the society of her time desired from her as a woman and she did stick to these criteria as a woman. The factors for Esther to be such an example of angel are set in the novel:

She checked me, however, as I was about to depart from her – so frozen as I was! – and added this, “Submission, self-denial, diligent work, are the preparations

for a life begun with such a shadow on it. You are different from other children, Esther, because you were not born, like them, in common sinfulness and wrath. You are set apart. (Dickens: 20-21)

As the passage makes clear, the factors in the above passage are in fact what the dominant ideology of men preached. The Victorian society advocated obedience, self-denial, attentive work as these qualities were considered as the preparations for a life on the part of any woman who wanted to start married life. This is the ideology of the Victorian period concerning women and female personalities.

Elsewhere in the novel, there is a conversation between Ada and Esther the subject of which is Esther:

Ada laughed and put her arm about my neck as I stood looking at the fire, and told me I was a quiet, dear, good creature and had won her heart. “You are so thoughtful, Esther”, she said, “and yet so cheerful! And you do so much, so unpretendingly! You would make a home out of even this house” (Dickens: 46).

Even a woman belonging to the same gender and influenced by the ideas of Victorian period, encourages submission to her friend and thus acts an agent of the Victorian patriarchy. Here, Ada without knowing it is preaching those ideas to her own friend and this is what and how a society expects its members to act and to behave. In fact, Ada was describing herself or seeing herself in Esther. This is shown by Esther as the narrator whose reaction to what Ada has just said resembles an aside telling reader that “She was quite unconscious that she only praised herself and that it was in the goodness of her own heart that she made so much of me!” (Dickens: 46).

In fact, both Esther and Ada are two perfect examples of the angels in the house. Regarding the job and function of Esther, there is a conversation between Mr. Jarndyce and Ada which runs as follows:

“Aye?” said Mr. Jarndyce. “What did Esther do?” “Why, cousin John,” said Ada, clasping her hands upon his arm and shaking her head at me across him – for I wanted her to be quiet – “Esther was their friend directly. Esther nursed them, coaxed them to sleep, washed and dressed them, told them stories, kept them quiet, bought them keepsakes” (Dickens: 67).

The job of a woman regarding children in the Victorian society is summarized in the above text where a woman, here Esther, is a kind friend to children, nurses them, coaxes them to sleep, washes and dresses them, tells them stories, keeps them quiet, and brings them keepsakes. This is what the Victorian period actually expected from a woman, that is to say, to devote herself, her energy, her time, and above all her life to children and to her husband and nothing more.

Victorian era wanted a woman like Esther to make a home out of a disarray house. This is echoed a lot in the novel *Bleak House*. One example of which was mentioned above. Esther is made to be a humble woman in the novel as women were made to be meek in the Victorian society. This novel is a microcosm of that macrocosmic Victorian world. Victorian world made to exist in every corner of the society. In the Victorian time meek women were made to be great mothers, mistresses and protectors of the house and they were happy to do that. If they did abide by, they were considered ‘angels in the house’, and if they did not they were labeled as mad and abnormal. Here many examples of angles in the house can be seen in *Bleak House*. Esther is craving to be such a person.

In fact, it is significant that the novel *Bleak House* is written by a man to tell us how men viewed women not only in their society but also in their home. Dickens, as a man, is a representative of his own society. He does stick to the ideas of angel in the house and propagates and preaches about that idea in this novel and other novels. Because Dickens himself could not get along well with his wife from whom he had ten children, it is highly likely that his wife was revolted against his forceful angle in the house.

So, it is true to say that Dickens is a great preacher of the ideas of his period since he is a great novelist of that time. His fictions unconsciously show the ideology of the time which wanted to unconsciously enslave women hegemonically. That is to say he wanted women to be shy, modest, self-abnegating, and obedient to men. This depiction of such women, whether real or fictional, may be considered as an indication of his desire to have such shy, modest, and self-abnegating women around him at work, at home, and in office. It is likely that he wishes for an angel girl which shows itself in the character of Esther.

When Esther is going to live in Bleak House there are certain conditions that she should observe because her guardian expects her to do so. These conditions are mentioned in a conversation below:

Mr. Jarndyce, “he went on”, makes no condition beyond expressing his expectation that our young friend will not at any time remove herself from the establishment in question without his knowledge and concurrence. That she will faithfully apply herself to the acquisition of those accomplishments, upon the exercise of which she will be ultimately dependent. That she will tread in the paths of virtue and honour, and – the – a – so forth (Dickens: 25).

The above passage shows that Esther is a dutiful girl and obedient. The reason for this is that after Mr. Kenge finishes what Mr. Jarndyce has just said Esther is silent and her silence means acceptance.

When she goes to Bleak House to be a housekeeper, she does her duty very well. Everyone adores Esther, who is self-sacrificing and cultivating, and she becomes the confidante of numerous young ladies. Esther supports everyone around her, and her first predisposition is to be maternal, possibly because she has never had a compassionate mother figure of her own. Mr. Jarndyce takes her in to be a friend to Ada, nevertheless Esther cares for Mr. Jarndyce and Richard just as much as she does for Ada. Many others, including young Caddy and Peepy Jellyby, Charley, and Jo also receive Esther's devotion.

In the case of Charley who is learning writing, Esther is very helpful. She is there to tell us how Charley progresses in her writing:

one evening I went upstairs into my own room to take a peep over Charley's shoulder and see how she was getting on with her copy-book. Writing was a trying business to Charley, who seemed to have no natural power over a pen, but in whose hand every pen appeared to become perversely animated, and to go wrong and crooked, and to stop, and splash, and sidle into corners like a saddle-donkey. It was very odd to see what old letters Charley's young hand had made, they so wrinkled, and shrivelled, and tottering, it so plump and round. Yet Charley was uncommonly expert at other things and had as nimble little fingers as I ever watched. "Well, Charley", said I, looking over a copy of the letter O in which it was represented as square, triangular, pear-shaped, and collapsed in all kinds of ways, "we are improving. If we only get to make it round, we shall be perfect, Charley" (Dickens: 450).

Her caring personality is evident in the above passage. She is kind to Charley and kindly teaches her to correct herself. She identifies with Charley and uses the pronoun 'we' to create an ambience of kindness and love. Martin Danahay in the article entitled "Housekeeping in *Bleak House*" believes that Esther's personality discloses the Victorian cultural structure of "work along gender lines. Esther seems to have many roles in the novel; she cares for children, she organizes households, and she provides companionship for various male figures. All these roles can, however, be grouped under one term: housekeeper" (416).

Esther is so good and so nice that Mr. Jarndyce asks her hand in marriage in a letter. This is in fact after Esther has lived there for many years and her dutifulness and humbleness have been tested, checked, and proved by Mr. Jarndyce who has chosen her. The fact that Mr. Jarndyce uses a letter rather than speaking in person in order to propose to her is because he is afraid that he will be rejected. So, he says to her that there is something that he should tell her but that he prefers to pen it to paper in a letter. He, moreover, says that no matter what occurs, he will never be altered from as he is at present:

“My dear Esther”, said my guardian, “I have long had something in my thoughts that I have wished to say to you.”

“Indeed?”

“I have had some difficulty in approaching it, and I still have. I should wish it to be so deliberately said, and so deliberately considered. Would you object to my writing it? (Dickens: 643).

On the appointed night, Esther sends Charley to bring the letter. Esther isn't astonished that it's a matrimonial proposal. She says that this is a way for her to be grateful to him and make him cheerful, and the letter makes her joyful, but still she cries, sensing as if she has lost something. She tells herself that she must be cheerful from here on out, for the reason that she will be glad for the rest of her life:

‘But I knew it, I knew it well now. It came upon me as the close of the benignant history I had been pursuing, and I felt that I had but one thing to do. To devote my life to his happiness was to thank him poorly, and what had I wished for the other night but some new means of thanking him? Still I cried very much, not only in the fullness of my heart after reading the letter, not only in the strangeness of the prospect – for it was strange though I had expected the contents – but as if something for which there was no name or distinct idea were indefinitely lost to me. I was very happy, very thankful, very hopeful; but I cried very much (Dickens: 647).

This is the most difficult situation for Esther to decide. She is in a predicament. To be the wife of Mr. Jarndye or not to be, that is the question for her to find an answer to. She answered the letter despite all the thinking and mulling over the letter, and declares her consent and agreement with the written marriage proposal. Esther, however, after many days thinking to write him back or not decides to answer him in person. So she verbally and personally shows her acceptance:

I put my two arms round his neck and kissed him, and he said was this the mistress of Bleak House, and I said yes; and it made no difference presently, and we all went out together, and I said nothing to my precious pet about it (Dickens: 649).

The reason for which Dickens does not consent to the marriage of Mr. Jarndyce and Esther is that Dickens believes this marriage, according to the norms of the Victorian period, is wrong. Dickens, indeed, does not consider them as suitable cases who can be happy together as true lovers. Age and suitability for marriage were two major factors in Victorian society. The couple should be at close age when they get married because this will make the family stable and firm. Though it seems that Dickens wants to have a partner in mind for Esther based on love this is not however the case. Because the angle in the house does not need to be lustful and expressive, but rather dutiful to the domestic chores. That is why Mr. Jarndyce understands it that they are

not really matched because they are poles apart in terms of age and this marriage does not succeed when one partner is at the door's death.

Marriage, according to Dickens, should happen according to the norms of the Victorian period, that is to say the two people who want to marry one another should be nearly at the same age, or else they will end up having a miserable life together. This marriage, if it had happened, would have been a shock for the readers of the Victorian period and for the contemporary readers too, simply because age matters in marriage in any time and in any place. So, in order not to shock the readers, Dickens does not let Esther marry Mr. Jarndyce and foregrounds the role of Mr. Jarndyce as a patriarch and as a man when he understands that he is not a suitable person for young Esther and declares his dissatisfaction himself. Dickens even does not let Esther disrespect Mr. Jarndyce by disagreeing with him. This is humbleness on the part of Esther which Dickens wishes it to be so as a patriarch of the Victorian period when she puts her two arms round Mr. Jarndyce's neck and kisses him.

Mr. Jarndyce takes Esther to the house. He sits her down and clarifies that despite the fact he'd always proposed to marry her and was contented that she'd decided to espouse him, he suspected their marriage wouldn't actually make her glad. He declares that he understood this completely when Mr. Woodcourt came back:

Understand me, my dear girl. I had no doubt of your being contented and happy with me, being so dutiful and so devoted; but I saw with whom you would be happier. That I penetrated his secret when Dame Durden was blind to it is no wonder, for I knew the good that could never change in her better far than she did. Well! I have long been in Allan Woodcourt's confidence, although he was not, until yesterday, a few hours before you came here, in mine. But I would not have my Esther's bright example lost; I would not have a jot of my dear girl's virtues unobserved and unhonoured; I would not have her admitted on sufferance into the line of Morgan ap-Kerrig, no, not for the weight in gold of all the mountains in Wales! (Dickens: 910).

He pronounces that he has once again carried on his part as her guardian and father. He says that Woodcourt acknowledged his love for Esther to him, not knowing that Mr. Jarndyce had already proposed. To demonstrate Esther's virtue, Mr. Jarndyce disclosed to Mrs. Woodcourt that he discerned Esther would tie the knot with Mr. Jarndyce anyhow, although she loved Mr. Woodcourt. He'd asked Mrs. Woodcourt to observe Esther to see if this was true. Mr. Jarndyce says that he was certain Mr. Woodcourt would acknowledge his love to Esther and had even decided he should. He was astonished and delighted by Esther's answer to Woodcourt. Woodcourt appears, and Mr. Jarndyce gives Esther to him, telling them never to thank him.



According to Mr. Jarndyce, Eshther is going to spouse him out of duty and will sacrifice her love to a sense of duty and affection, and will sacrifice it so wholly, so completely, and so religiously. Quite in total disagreement with Mr. Jarndyce, The present researcher believes that Esther is doing so because she is made selfless by the Victorian standards and views which have worked with the hegemony of patriarchy. She is the product of this hegemony of patriarchy. Such patriarchy wishes and desires to have women as selfless, self-abnegating, and dutiful. They should be at the service of men without having male privileges of the society. That is why they promoted the idea of ‘angel in the house’ to create women as unselfish and self-sacrificing.

In such a society she is passed from one man to another, here she is passed from Mr. Jarndyce to Mr. Woodcourt. In fact, she marries Mr. Woodcourt simply because she is not younger than him in comparison with Mr. Jarndyce who is too old to espouse a young girl and to have a family, and this is against the ideology of Victorian society’s standards according to which any family to progress should have both partners matching each other and as it was said above against the personal ideology of Dickens, too, who was separated from his wife after living with her for many years.

This is in line with letting Esther espouse Mr. Woodcourt as mentioned above. The marriage of Esther and Woodcourt is in line with the ideology of the Victorian standards. The two can have a good family simply because Esther is a docile, dutiful, and selfless woman who can make a home out of a disordered house. This is what the novel as a Victorian one should preach. Dickens should let her espouse Mr. Woodcourt rather than Mr. Jarndyce because they will not fail as a family and will raise good children who will live up to the standards of Victorian life.

Esther, too, is happy with this ideology simply because she will have a husband-protector who can live longer than a husband-protector who can live shorter. For this reason when Mr. Jarndyce convinces her about the situation that he is not a suitable husband for her and Mr. Woodcourt is a better one, she accepts.

### **Ada Clare**

Ada Clare is another example of ‘angel in the house’. She is under the legal protection of Jarndyce. Ada Clare is a nice, sympathetic, and simple girl. When she meets Esther the two become close friends and share secrets. Their friendship means a lot to each other as they share each other’s secrets. She marries Richard and has a baby. She is all goodness, beauty, purity, and decency. She is attractive, decent, and

sacrificed to Richard. Ada is exactly what Esther is. She, too, is a selfless character. They are good friends. They are parallel characters – that is, characters who are very much comparable in countless ways. Both are young, pretty, self-effacing, good-natured, sensible, responsible, and delicate; they are both without family who live in the same house under the protection of Mr. Jarndyce; they have analogous principles and prospects of life; young men are fascinated with both of them. Royster and Beum believe they are also reciprocated friends; they confide in each other, and partly for the reason that they do, they reveal characteristics of their characters to us.

Because the novel revolves around Esther as a heroin, there is nothing to learn about her. However, since she has conversations with Esther she is a good friend for her. It is natural that one character should be the main and focal point in the novel as heroin. It is certain that she loves to have a family and to be a good mother like Esther. Both Ada and Esther are normal according to the norms of the Victorian ideals. If one is to ask a Victorian man's opinion about women's behavior, he will certainly approve of Ada as good and normal woman according to the norms of patriarchal society of that time. They are two characters who are female in order for Dickens to show that women should be like these two ones to make a family progress and develop. Ada is devoted, dutiful, nice, responsible, caring, and a housekeeper. She, too, is a moralizer for children and from the point of view of a Victorian she makes every man as her husband successful and the house of her husband a place of peace and stability. The strong sense of responsibility and care with which Dickens endows both Ada and Esther gives these young women only domestic position.

Ada Clare is also religious as her friend Esther is, a quality which Victorian society expected from an angel in the house. She devoted herself to Richard. She bore him a child. She is a prototype of a woman that cares for her husband and for her home. But the novel does not revolve around her as much as it does around Esther, the reason for this is because Esther is more successful than Ada since the marriage of Richard and Ada fails due to the fact that Richard is not a prudent man.

Almost every woman in the novel is in a quest to find their love and set up a house to make their husband happy. Women in such a Victorian society were encouraged to do that so much so that to form their own family. This does not mean that they are erotic but it means they are family lovers and care about the family. Ada is one such character. The society of the Victorian era wanted women to be good mothers. In fact, one of the main motifs of the novel is to be a good mother and Esther and Ada are like good mothers.

### **Lady Dedlock as Esther's Foil**

Esther's foil in many respects is her mother, lady Deadlock. Foil is a character in a work who, by sharp dissimilarity, functions to stress and highlight the characteristic temperament of the protagonist (Abrams and Harpham: 265). She is the opposite of Esther and when Esther asks her godmother about her mother she says:

Your mother, Esther, is your disgrace, and you were hers. The time will come – and soon enough – when you will understand this better and will feel it too, as no one save a woman can. I have forgiven her” – but her face did not relent – “the wrong she did to me, and I say no more of it, though it was greater than you will ever know – than any one will ever know but I, the sufferer. For yourself, unfortunate girl, orphaned and degraded from the first of these evil anniversaries, pray daily that the sins of others be not visited upon your head, according to what is written. Forget your mother and leave all other people to forget her who will do her unhappy child that greatest kindness. Now, go!” (Dickens: 19).

The above passage shows that, as we understand later in the novel that Esther's mother is, in fact, Lady Dedlock, one who has not lived up to Victorian standards. She is not a good mother from the point of view of Victorian society. The reason that she is not a normal woman from the point of view of Victorian patriarchal society is that she is very passionate and sensuous, qualities which were not considered well on the part of the women of Victorian. Her mistake was her being in love with a man who was not her match financially and according to class. This leads to her fall. She gives birth to a love child. This is her secret. This secret does not let her communicate with other members of society and the members of society think she is proud and arrogant. Therefore, not to let her secret be exposed to others, she keeps a low profile in the society. This way of leading such a life has bored her to death. Esther describes her as:

Lady Dedlock has been bored to death. Concert, assembly, opera, theatre, drive, nothing is new to my Lady under the worn-out heavens. Only last Sunday, when poor wretches were gay – within the walls playing with children among the clipped trees and the statues in the Palace Garden; walking, a score abreast, in the Elysian Fields, made more Elysian by performing dogs and wooden horses; between whiles filtering (a few) through the gloomy Cathedral of Our Lady to say a word or two at the base of a pillar within flare of a rusty little gridiron-full of gusty little tapers; without the walls encompassing Paris with dancing, love-making, wine-drinking, tobacco-smoking, tomb-visiting, billiard card and domino playing, quack-doctoring, and much murderous refuse, animate and inanimate – only last Sunday, my Lady, in the desolation of Boredom and the clutch of Giant Despair, almost hated her own maid for being in spirits. She cannot, therefore, go too fast from Paris. Weariness of soul lies before her (Dickens: 161-162).

In fact, when we read the novel it is as though she is associated and identified with boredom and tiredness. She is all despair and boredom.

This is also evident from the above passage. Nothing can make her happy. On the other hand, Esther is in sharp contrast to her mother. Esther is happy and full of spirit because she lives according to the norms and standards of the Victorian society; but, lady Dedlock is not happy because she wants to live according to her own norms and standards that actually brings about her death at the end. This shows that Victorian society favors Esther-like women rather than Dedlock. In fact, when we read the novel to discover the hidden ideology of the novel we understand that Dickens, as patriarch, is practicing the same thing here by creating such a character as lady Dedlock. He is unconsciously telling us that this is the fate of those who does not obey the rules, norms, standards of the patriarch society of the Victorian period.

As Azam asserts, “The two major characters, Lady Dedlock and Esther, mark Dickens’s mature conceptions of female personalities. They are extreme opposites of each other” (94). Lady Dedlock had an affair with a man she really loved. They could not marry each other because the man’s profession and social status were disrespected. Such a society does not let her be happy with what she loves. Azam contends that:

As an ambitious self-conscious lady, she felt the need for social acknowledgment to be more important, thus she left her true love. Later, she marries a rich man who is more mature in age and sensibility than her, but she never finds the true taste of conjugal happiness. Therefore, she starts to keep herself busy in social interactions and duties as well as transforms herself as the perfect English beauty of the then England’ (Azam: 94).

When Lady Dedlock finds that her past is causing problems for her, her life changes and she becomes shocking. When her secret is revealed she leaves the house and goes to cemetery where her former lover is buried. By doing that she wants to protect those she cares about. In an article entitled “The Broken Glass: Vision and Comprehension in Bleak House” Ian Ousby writes “Lady Dedlock, as her manner of frozen detachment would suggest, has become an outsider in her own life, merely a passive and help-less observer of her own fate” (384).

She fails to live up to the standards of Victorian period and has a love child born out of wedlock. Such a society does not let a woman be expressive and she wanted to be expressive and death was the result. She is against the norms and the patriarch Dickens has her killed at the end when her secret is about to be known to all. Such a society nips her in the bud. She commits suicide simply because she could not live up with the expectations of the Victorian society. In such a society she is led to kill herself, she seems to be a victim of the circumstances.

Sara Cash believes that the combination of the sweetness, goodness, and sacrificial flexibility of the virgin with the part of the matriarch proves not only a predominant approach in the nineteenth century about a woman's part in the house, but also a concealed terror creeping around this image of an implicit patriarchal awareness where a sexualized mother becomes hazardous and intimidating (1). She contends that in *Bleak House*, Esther Summerson and her mother, Lady Dedlock, exemplify this dichotomy. In the novel, Esther, nevertheless is still single, she is discovered as an embodiment of the good Victorian mother for the reason that she is motherly without the command of her own sexuality, whereas her own mother, Lady Dedlock, becomes surrounded and stationary in a death-like condition owing to her sexual turpitude, done when she gave birth to Esther out of wedlock (Cash: 1). However, Esther is not that much strong as a feminist woman while her mother is and her suicide can be interpreted as an act of heroism who showed her dissatisfaction with such a society and she can be considered as a scapegoat and a victim for other women. Lady Dedlock should be considered as a great challenger of the patriarchal ideas and views of the Victorian society. From a feminist perspective she killed herself so that other women understand that true love is important.

If the novel promotes Esther as an angel in the house, it demotes Lady Dedlock as evil in the house. This, however, is a construction. They both are constructed by the male figures of the society in order to preach their own patriarchal views and ideals. The Victorian society preaches domestic duties on the part of women while keeping them away from politics and other outdoor activities. The women did not have the suffrage in the Victorian times. The patriarchs of the time of Victorian did not let women express themselves.

Esther is a good wife from the point of view of Victorian society, and Dickens was aware of the taste of his patriarchal period and created her according to his time's ideals of women. As far as the issue of identification is concerned readers of Victorian period identified with Esther on the grounds that she has good qualities. But if we resist Dickens and Victorian period and read the novel against the grain and shift our sympathy from the character of Esther to her mother, we are standing against Dickens as a male writer of Victorian period which did not allow women even the right to vote. In that case we have to identify with her mother who gave vent to her feelings and stood against society and defied its rules to show that the rules are after all man-made.

This is in agreement with feminist critics and feminist writers who have had a less positive view of the Angel in the house. Virginia Woolf ridiculed the model of femaleness portrayed in such a woman, saying that she [the perfect wife] was intensely sympathetic. She was

immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed daily. If there was a chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it ... Above all, she was pure. She said additionally that she "bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her (Wikipedia). Virginia Woolf was a great female writer of the time and talked about the pressures of the patriarchy. Nel Noddings considers angle in the house as youthful, feeble and tedious. Correspondingly, Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her short essay entitled "The Extinct Angel" defined the angel in the house as being dead (Wikipedia).

Concerning this duality of the daughter and mother as bad and angel in the novel, Dickens uses name symbolism which can help us understand the characters better. The last name of the heroin-narrator of the novel Esther Summerson suggests imageries of warmth and happiness, which gives her personality of angle in the house great quality. The name of lady Dedlock stands for deadlock, or impasse, in which she is trapped because of the wrongdoings she has committed in the Victorian society.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

#### **Marriage as a Social Ladder**

All the three women examined in this thesis considered marriage as a social ladder. Esther in *Bleak House* regards marriage as a progress and she finds it and enjoys it. She is good enough according to the tastes of the Victorian period. But from the point of feminists she is very passive and inactive. She has accepted the conditions offered to her by the patriarchy and acts according to what society expects. One of the findings of this article is that women in male writers are shown as passive and obedient and kind and good. For example in the novel *bleak house* nearly all women are good, passive, and kind. Esther and Ada Clare are good women who act according to the norms. If they act according to the norms they are shown to have good marriage and marital life. To be good is to a great extent related to be financially well-off by marrying a rich man.

#### **Winning the label Angel in the House**

Victorian criteria and standards of good and evil in regards with women are surrounded over the submission and lack of submission of women. Women who are submissive are good and women who are not submissive are evil. The submissive ones remain in the society and the disobedient ones are omitted from society in order not to affect other women negatively. In this article Esther and Ada are submissive and remain in the respectable society of Victorian period. Victorian society

rewarded submissive women and rejected disobedient ones. Their criteria for good and evil depended on women's obedience and disobedience to men and the quality of how to raise a family.

Consequently that is how women won the label 'angel in the house' by the patriarchy system of Victorian period.

#### REFERENCES:

- Abrams, Meyer Howard and Geoffrey Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 9th ed., Boston, Canage, 2011.
- Azam, Azmi, *Dickens's Perception of Female Personality: Representation of Lady Dedlock and Esther Summerson in **Bleak House***, in "Linguistics and Literature Studies", no. 2, 2014, p. 92-100.
- Bressler, Charles E., *Literary Criticism: an Introduction to Theory and Practice*, 4th edition, New York, Pearson College Div, 2007.
- Cash, Sarah E., *The Broken Mirror: Maternal Agency and Identity in Charles Dickens's Bleak House*, MA thesis, Florida International U, 2013.
- Beauvoir, Simone De, *The Second Sex*, New York, Knopf, 1953.
- Dickens, Charles, *Bleak House*, NewYork, Bantem, 2006.
- Fernald, Anne E., *Virginia Woolf: Feminism and the Reader*, New York, Palgrave Macmilian, 2006.
- Patmore, Coventry, *The Angel In The House*, Boston, Ticknor and Fields, 1856.
- Royster, Salibelle and Robert Beum, *CliffsNotes on Bleak House*, N. pag. 12 Jul 2015 </literature/b/bleak-house/book-summary>.
- Showalter, Elaine, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing*, Princeton, Princeton U P, 1977.
- \*\*\*, *Killing the Angel in the House: The Autonomy of Women Writers*, in "The Antioch Review", 50.1/2 (1992), p. 207-220. *JSTOR*. Web. 19 June 2008.
- Shmoop Editorial Team, *Esther Summerson in Bleak House*, in "Shmoop.com.", Shmoop University, Inc., 11 Nov. 2008. Web. 9 Jul. 2015.
- Tyson, Lois, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, 2nd edition, New York, Routledge, 2006.
- Wikipedia contributors, *The Angel in the House*, in Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 30 Apr. 2015. Web. 26 May. 2015.
- Wikipedia contributors, *Mary Magdalene*, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 20 Jun. 2015. Web. 24 Jun. 2015.

JESS



## Stylistically Disempowered Masculinity in Shepard's *Buried Child*

Ali Aghaei\*

Samira Sasani\*\*

### **Abstract:**

This paper aims to discuss masculinity in Shepard's *Buried Child*. Shepard's plays have often been viewed as geared significantly towards a male audience, and seen to be filled with concepts which reinforce masculine ideology. The aforesaid point provided the motivation for an investigation into Shepard's work based mainly on linguistic factors to draw a conclusion about the workings of masculinity in the aforementioned play. To achieve the said goal, two excerpts were chosen: the first excerpt illustrates the dominance and power of one female character, Halie, over the male characters, and the second portrays Shelly's significant supremacy (who is the only other female character) in comparison to the male characters. Each excerpt consisted of turns which were numbered for ease of reference. Each turn was then analyzed using the stylistic tools of politeness, impoliteness, and speech act theory in conjunction with various masculinity theories. For politeness, Brown and Levinson's model was employed, while for impoliteness, Culpeper's ideas were put to use, and Searle's speech act theory provided the last piece of the stylistic puzzle. The results of the linguistic analysis were utilized to make easier the analysis done through traditional masculinity theories such as Connell's model of gender.

**Keywords:** *Buried Child*, masculinity, politeness, impoliteness, speech act theory

### **Shepard's Predicament**

The researchers believe that the play exposes masculinity and also undermines it to portray the masculine characters in a subordinated manner. Through stylistics, it will be shown how the male characters inhabiting Shepard's play are subordinated and shown to be less powerful. Masculinity and its ramifications have been often present and remain one of the central themes of Shepard's work which characterize his approach. As such, viewing masculinity in *Buried Child* from this

---

\* PhD Candidate of English Literature, Shiraz University, Iran, ali.ghaei.91@gmail.com

\*\* Assistant Prof. PhD of English Literature, Shiraz University, Iran, **corresponding author**, samira.sasani21@yahoo.com

new angle which is a mix of concrete tools such as stylistics and more abstract methods such as masculinity theories could prove to be fruitful.

Whiting states that Shepard has never been praised for the manner through which he has illustrated his female characters, explaining further that the majority of his plays mainly revolve around the male characters with women being portrayed in an “extremely negative” light (494). Bennett (1993) echoes Whiting’s words by saying that Shepard’s works are plays produced by a man for male viewers, explaining that Shepard’s female characters are put into disabled roles (169-170). Such views from critics make further investigation into Shepard’s worlds a necessity, and because of the complex nature of gender relations, a stable tool is needed to concretize the abstract which is why stylistics will be helpful. Even though one foray into Shepard’s dramatic worlds will not provide a definitive answer, but this play is a valid starting point because it has various characters whose power and status shift in the ever-dynamic and complex relationships which often characterize Shepard’s plays.

### **Stylistic Tools: Discussing Power through (Im)Politeness and Speech Act Theory**

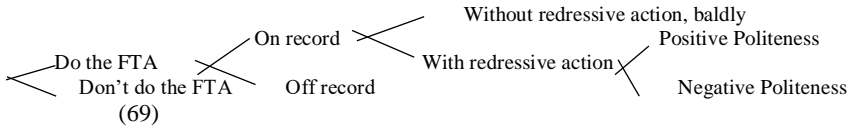
What follows is an explanation of the various stylistic tools which will be employed to discuss the excerpts of the play and power dynamics within those excerpts in detail. Regarding politeness, Brown and Levinson’s model will be used, and Culpeper’s ideas will be relied upon to analyze impoliteness within the play. To talk about speech acts Searle’s notions will be put to use. Politeness helps to identify moments when characters try to mitigate and control the situation which, based on context, could point to a character having greater power. The occurrence of impoliteness could mean that a character has enough power to commit such acts. Finally, speech act theory will help in analyzing the perception of power. It should be noted that stylistics alone does not paint the complete picture which is why it will be mixed with more traditional theories.

#### **Politeness**

Brown and Levinson mention (1987) “Face” as being the “public self-image” that people envision for themselves, which can be separated into “negative” and “positive” face, as such, politeness entails tending to other interactants’ face needs, and negative face consists of “the basic claim to territories, personal reserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e., to freedom of action and freedom from imposition”, and positive face consists of “the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially

including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of claimed by interactants” (61).

By FTA, Brown and Levinson mean face threatening acts which are described as actions that attack the hearer’s face needs. Brown and Levinson offer the below strategies:



On record is when an actor overtly shows his intention to commit an act aimed at the hearer; an example being the act of promising to do something (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 68-69). Off record is when the intension of the actor could be construed in different manners (*Ibidem*: 69). Brown and Levinson describe committing an action baldly as carrying it out “in the most direct, clear, and concise way possible (i.e. for a request, saying ‘Do X!’)” (69). Brown and Levinson (1987) state that:

By redressive action we mean action that ‘gives face’ to the addressee, that is, that attempts to counteract the potential face damage of the FTA by doing it in such a way, or with such modifications or additions, that indicate clearly that no such face threat is intended or desired, and that S in general recognizes H’s face wants and himself wants them to be achieved. (69-70)

Redressive action is categorized into the two subdivisions of negative and positive politeness. Positive politeness is connected to the hearer’s positive face where the speaker’s desires are in line with the hearer’s wants; negative politeness goes hand in hand with the hearer’s negative face and it happens when the utterer wants the hearer’s negative-face wants, and will not restrict the addressee’s freedom in performing different acts (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 70).

### **Impoliteness**

Culpeper (1996) developed Brown and Levinson’s concepts by putting forth “Impoliteness” which discusses those acts that are quite opposite to politeness acts because they result in “social disruption” by employing FTAs (350). His strategies are as follows:

- I. Bald on record impoliteness – the FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimized.
- II. Positive impoliteness – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s positive face wants.

- III. Negative impoliteness – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants.
- IV. Sarcasm or mock politeness – the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realizations.
- V. Withhold politeness – the absence of politeness work where it would be expected.

(356-357)

Culpeper (1996) also suggests some output strategies to do with positive and negative impoliteness:

***Positive impoliteness:***

Ignore, snub the other – fail to acknowledge the other's presence.

Exclude the other from an activity

Disassociate from the other – for example, deny association or common ground with the other; avoid sitting together.

Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic

Use inappropriate identity markers – for example, use title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.

Use obscure or secretive language – for example, mystify the other with jargon, or use a code known to others in the group, but not the target.

Seek disagreement – select a sensitive topic.

Make the other feel uncomfortable – for example, do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk.

Use taboo words – swear, or use abusive or profane language.

Call the other names – use derogatory nominations.

***Negative impoliteness:***

Frighten – instill a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur.

Condescend, scorn or ridicule – emphasize your relative power.

Be contemptuous.

Do not treat the other seriously.

Belittle the other (e.g. use diminutives).

Invade the other's space – literally (e.g. position yourself closer to the other than the relationship permits) or metaphorically (e.g. ask for or speak about information which is too intimate given the relationship).

Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect – personalize, use the pronouns 'I' and 'you'.

Put the other's indebtedness on record.

(357-358)

**Speech Act Theory**

Searle (1975) categorizes speech acts into five classes: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives (354-358). Using these taxonomies one can hope to analyze power; for example, in particular situations directives can be taken as a sign of power. Searle (1990) also puts forward the class of assertives (410). Representatives show the utterer's beliefs (Bousfield, 2014: 121) whereas assertives “commit the speaker... to the truth of the expressed proposition”; directives are employed to force the hearer to perform a

particular act, and commissives “commit the speaker... to some future course of action”, while an expressive portrays the speaker’s approach regarding the main proposition, and declaratives alter reality so that “propositional content corresponds to the world” (Searle, 1979: 12-17). Searle mentions a number of felicity conditions which need to be carried out so that a speech act can be considered valid and felicitous; “Propositional act” is that which the speaker proposes to do, “Preparatory condition” consists of the circumstances that need to come about for the speech act to have an effect, “Sincerity condition” states that the speaker should “mean the proposition”, and “Essential condition” is that the speaker should make sure the proposition happens (qtd. in Bousfield, 2014: 127).

### Excerpt One

This excerpt consists of dialogue between Halie, Dodge, and Tilden. Its importance lies in the fact that it is the first time Halie is conversing face to face with the men, so essentially the reader is experiencing her character for the first time. Furthermore, her words are quite implicative as a result of being harsh and biting towards Dodge and Tilden. In this part of the play, Halie comes across as the one in control and power, in addition to being the voice of authority.

1-HALIE: What’s the meaning of this corn, Tilden!

2-TILDEN: It’s a mystery to me. I was out in back there [...] I looked up. And I saw this stand of corn. In fact, I was standing in it. Surrounded. It was over my head.

3-HALIE: There isn’t any corn outside, Tilden! There’s no corn! It’s not the season for corn. Now, you must’ve either stolen this corn or you bought it.

4-DODGE: He doesn’t have a red cent to his name. He’s totally dependent.

5-HALIE: (*To Tilden.*) So, you stole it!

6-TILDEN: I didn’t steal it. I don’t want to get kicked out of Illinois. I was kicked out of New Mexico and I don’t want to get kicked out of Illinois.

7-HALIE: You’re going to get kicked out of this house, Tilden, if you don’t tell me where you got that corn! (*Tilden starts crying softly to himself but keeps husking corn. Pause.*)

8-DODGE: (*To Halie.*) Why’d you have to tell him that? Who cares where he got the corn? Why’d you have to go and threaten him with expulsion?

9-HALIE: (*To Dodge.*) It’s your fault you know! You’re the one that’s behind all of this! I suppose you thought it’d be funny! Some joke! Cover the house with corn husks. You better get this cleaned up before Bradley sees it.

10-DODGE: Bradley’s not getting in the front door!

11-HALIE: (*Kicking husks, striding back and forth.*) Bradley’s going to be very upset when he sees this. He doesn’t like to see the house in disarray. He can’t stand it when one thing is out of place. The slightest thing. You know how he gets.

12-DODGE: Bradley doesn’t even live here.

13-HALIE: It’s his home as much as ours. He was born in this house!

14-DODGE: He was born in a hog wallow.

15-HALIE: Don't you ever say that!

16-DODGE: He was born in a goddamn hog wallow! That's where he was born and that's where he belongs! He doesn't belong in this house! (*Halie stops.*)

17-HALIE: I don't know what's come over you, Dodge. I don't know what in the world's come over you. You've become an evil, spiteful, vengeful man. You used to be to be a good man.

18-DODGE: Six of one, a half-dozen of another.

19-HALIE: You sit here day and night, festering away! Decomposing! Smelling up the house with your putrid body! Hacking your head off 'til all hours of the morning! Thinking up mean, evil, stupid things to say about your own flesh and blood!

20-DODGE: He's not my flesh and blood! My flesh and blood's out there in the backyard! (*They freeze. Long pause. The men stare at her.*)

21-HALIE: (*Quietly.*) That's enough, Dodge. That's quite enough. You've become confused. [...]

(Shepard , 2006: Act One)

### Analysis of Excerpt One

In turn 1, Halie commits positive and negative impoliteness by asking Tilden (indirectly) how he came across the large amount of corn occupying their living room; her act can be considered impoliteness as she is saying that she does not approve of Tilden bringing corn of unknown origin into the house (positive), and also because she is indicating that he is not to do it again or he will be reprimanded (negative), much like what he is experiencing in this turn. Connell (2005) introduces a three-tiered model for discussing masculinity consisting of power relations, production relations, and cathexis; she explains power relations as being “the overall subordination of women and dominance of men”, while production relations are described as the “gender divisions of labour”, and cathexis comprises of “emotional energy attached to an object” which is gendered (73-75). In this turn, even though Tilden has actually committed an act which has produced a tangible result one would think that he might have fulfilled his masculine role; however, Halie, by reprimanding Tilden, brings Tilden's role in production relations into question, and by doing so threatens his masculinity. Her impoliteness acts also indicate that she has a higher standing where power relations are concerned, and thus, in a single turn Tilden is subordinated. As such, Tilden's response becomes important because it will be indicative of whether or not he is able to regain a foothold in power and production relations.

Tilden then proceeds to show his powerlessness compared to Halie by using a representative speech act when he says that he is unsure of the corn's origin (turn 2); because Tilden portrays himself as powerless, it becomes clear that he has not been able to undo the damage done to his masculinity by Halie in the first turn, and thus, he remains subordinated in power and production relations. Tilden, by using

expressions such as “Surrounded” and “over my head,” shows that he is unable to keep his emotions in check, and is therefore guilty of not abiding by “Restrictive emotionality” which Levant et al. (1992) mentioned as a “traditional male norm” (329); it is in this manner that Tilden further shows his lack of masculinity. By using an assertive speech act in turn 3, Halie is guilty of positive impoliteness when she contradicts Tilden’s belief that there is corn in the backyard, and she drives her point home by repeating her assertive speech act to leave no doubt as to who is in a position of power. She explains that “it’s not the season for corn” which is yet another assertive, and therefore, she has successfully attacked Tilden’s positive face once again. Halie does not let up, and her face threatening acts keep coming when she says Tilden probably stole the corn which is positive impoliteness because she insinuates, she is skeptical of Tilden’s methods of obtaining the corn. Not only does Halie question Tilden’s standing in production relations with her insinuations, but the fact that he has no response for her shows his inferior standing compared to Halie when it comes to production, and he is therefore emasculated.

In turn 4, Dodge uses a representative speech act to explain that Tilden does not have any money, and in doing so (by going on the defensive), he shows that he fears for Tilden, all the while indicating that both of them have less power than Halie. Dodge’s speech act does not carry the same force as Halie’s, and therefore, Dodge shows that he is subordinated in power relations; to further complicate matters for the two men, because Dodge answers for Tilden and because his answer emasculates himself, by extension it can be said that Tilden is also emasculated as he could not defend himself and the person that did was also less powerful than Halie. Another male norm which Levant et al. (1992) mention is “Self-Reliance” (329), and both Tilden and Dodge lack this trait so they cannot be considered masculine. Turn 5 sees Halie use yet another assertive which shows that she is completely dominating the two men in these exchanges. Additionally, she partially disregards Dodge’s explanation when she uses it as incriminating evidence against Tilden, which can be said damages Dodge’s positive face needs.

Tilden replies using an assertive himself (turn 6), but that does not place him in the role of the powerful speaker because he proceeds to over explain, which leads to the conclusion that he is quite afraid. Furthermore, in the next turn, as though she is trying to dispel notions of losing power, Halie uses a directive speech act (conditional threat) to force Tilden to tell the truth. It can be said that Halie’s speech act meets the required felicity conditions because Tilden does not argue anymore and is reduced to tears which indicates that he has lost the battle to Halie and her scathing verbal attack. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005)

explain that “hegemonic masculinity” is seen as “the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (832); taking the aforementioned into account, it becomes clear that Tilden and Dodge have not managed to establish such a pattern, whereas Halie continuously dominates them which points to their being emasculated. Additionally, it is quite ironic and highly suggestive that a female character has managed to step into a male role by establishing a “pattern of practice” which subordinates the men. Dodge tries to wrestle some power back from Halie by attacking her positive face needs (turn 8), but Halie responds with her own FTAs (placing blame on Dodge which is positive impoliteness), in addition to a directive speech act (ordering him to clean up in the form of a conditional threat) to fully cement herself as the powerful speaker. Halie, by doing so, shows her elevated status in power relations which is clear because she freely attacks the two men with absolutely no fear; also, her production of FTAs and forceful speech acts points to her greater stature with regards to production relations.

In turn 10, Dodge tries to illustrate dominance by using an assertive (saying Bradley is not coming in), however, because Bradley does eventually get into the house, Dodge’s speech act does not satisfy the essential condition, and is therefore not felicitous which means that he has failed in gaining any power. This failed speech act also shows how Dodge has been subordinated in production relations, and thus, his masculinity is brought into question. In Turn 11, Halie completely snubs Dodge which, according to Culpeper, is positive impoliteness, but it also attacks Dodge’s negative face needs because Halie allowing Bradley in appears to be an imposition on Dodge. The fact that Halie uses impoliteness nullifies any loss of power she might have experienced from using representative speech acts when talking about how Bradley might react. Paechter (2006) explains that the “problem of shifting definitions is exacerbated by our inability to define either masculinity or femininity except in relation to each other and to men and women” (254); Paechter’s words suggest a fluidity about masculinity and perhaps gender relations as a whole, but even when it appears that the tide might be turning against Halie, she responds with considerable force much like her words in turn 11.

Dodge tries to show his forcefulness through an assertive speech act (turn 12), but Halie responds in kind and uses two assertives of her own (turn 13) to signify that she is not willing to back down. The mere fact that Halie uses a greater number of assertives points to her stature being more comprehensive in production relations compared to her husband who is therefore once again subordinated. Dodge, having seen



that he cannot compete with Halie, starts attacking Bradley's positive face needs (turn 14) which goes to prove that he has given up trying to wrestle power from Halie. Even these FTAs by Dodge committed against Bradley do not go unanswered by Halie, and in turn 15, she uses a directive when ordering Dodge to refrain from repeating his remarks about Bradley. Bird explains that "competition" is a characteristic of hegemonic masculinity (1996, 122), and Dodge seems to be competing with the absent Bradley. However, Halie's reply nullifies Dodge's rather pointless competitive nature towards Bradley to further emasculate him. Turn 16 sees Dodge repeat his remarks regarding Bradley, seemingly illustrating his power by using assertives. However, Halie, once again, completely disregards Dodge's words which is an instance of a positive-face attack; to put her power beyond any reasonable doubt, Halie also commits bald on record impoliteness when she simply insults Dodge by saying he has become an "evil, spiteful, vengeful, man", and lastly, she commits yet another instance of positive impoliteness when saying Dodge used to be good (turn 17). Halie's bald on record impoliteness exalts her status in power relations because she simply insults Dodge with brazen bravado, never for a second fearing any kind of retribution from him.

In turn 18, Dodge tries to lessen the impact of Halie's words with his sarcastic comment. However, in the following turn, Halie continues with her face attacks to nullify Dodge's attempts. By using the words "festering" and "decomposing", Halie might be stating her beliefs (representative speech acts), yet this does not prove her powerless because they are, at the same time, examples of positive impoliteness meant to belittle Dodge. Halie says that Dodge is 'smelling up the house' which is negative impoliteness as Dodge is not really capable of taking care of himself, and perhaps checking his hygiene too often would be an imposition on someone who is shown to be quite handicapped. Also, by describing Dodge's words about his family as "mean, evil, stupid", she is attacking his negative face needs (critical of his freedom of speech) as well as committing bald on record impoliteness, which all prove her dominance over Dodge. Cashman (2008) believes that "impoliteness may serve as resources for more powerful interactants to maintain or recapture their position and for less powerful interactants to resist and renegotiate their position" (278); however, every time Dodge tries to renegotiate his powerless position Halie responds with more force to ensure her own dominance over her feeble husband. In turn 20, Dodge's attempt to grasp at some semblance of power through an assertive is negated by Halie in the next turn. Halie uses a directive speech act to order Dodge to speak no more on the matter, and she also attacks his positive face needs when she calls him

‘confused’ indicating that he can no longer think coherently or rely on his mental faculties to speak cogently. This last turn portrays Cashman’s ideas best because Halie uses impoliteness numerous times to maintain her powerful position, and whenever Dodge tries to renegotiate, she simply compounds her effort by increasing the number of impoliteness acts.

### Excerpt Two

This excerpt finds its importance in that it is the rise to power of Shelly; in this part of the play, Shelly starts to hit out at any and everyone who tries to silence her or diminish her feelings. In showing that this second and last female character has risen to verbal power, it will become clear that masculinity is subordinated in the play. The less vital parts of the dialogue are omitted and marked by ellipses.

1-BRADLEY: (*Sitting up on sofa.*) We don’t have to tell you anything, girl. [...] You’re not the police, are you? You’re not the government. You’re just some prostitute that Tilden brought in here.

2-HALIE: Language! I won’t have that language in my house! Father I’m –

3-SHELLY: (*To Bradley.*) You stuck your hand in my mouth and you call me a prostitute! What kind of a weird fucked-up yo-yo are you?

4-HALIE: Bradley! Did you put your hand in this girl’s mouth? You have no idea what kind of diseases she might be carrying.

5-BRADLEY: I never did. She’s lying. She’s lying through her teeth.

6-DEWIS: Halie, I think I’ll be running along now. [...] (*Dewis moves toward L. Halie stops him.*)

7-HALIE: Don’t go now, father! Not now. Please – I’m not sure I can stay afloat.

8-BRADLEY: I never did anything, Mom! I never touched her! She propositioned me! And I turned her down. I turned her down flat! She’s not my type. You know that Mom. (*Shelly suddenly grabs her coat off the wooden leg and takes both the leg and coat D., away from Bradley.*) Mom! Mom! She’s got my leg! She’s taken my leg! I never did anything to her! She’s stolen my leg! She’s a devil Mom. How did she get in our house? (*Bradley reaches pathetically in the air for his leg. Shelly sets it down for a second, puts on her coat fast and picks up the leg again. Dodge starts coughing again softly.*)

9-HALIE: (*To Shelly.*) I think we’ve had about enough of you young lady. Just about enough. I don’t know where you came from or what you’re doing here but you’re no longer welcome in this house.

10-SHELLY: (*Laughs, holds leg.*) No longer welcome!

11-BRADLEY: Mom! That’s my leg! Get my leg back! I can’t do anything without my leg! She’s trying to torture me. (*Bradley keeps on making whimpering sounds and reaching for his leg.*)

12-HALIE: Give my son back his leg. Right this very minute! Dodge, where did this girl come from? (*Dodge starts laughing softly to himself in between coughs.*)

[...]

13-HALIE: (*To Dewis.*) Father, do something about this would you! I’m not about to be terrorized in my own house!

14-DEWIS: This is out of my domain.

15-BRADLEY: Gimme back my leg!

16-HALIE: Oh, shut up Bradley! Just shut up! You don't need your leg now!! Just lay down and shut up! I've never heard such whining. (*Bradley whimpers, [...] reaching out toward his wooden leg. Dewis cautiously approaches Shelly [...]. Shelly clutches the wooden leg to her chest as though she's kidnapped it.*)

17-DEWIS: (*To Shelly.*) Now, honestly, dear, wouldn't it be better to talk things out? To try to use some reason? No point in going off the deep end. [...]

18-SHELLY: There isn't any reason here! I can't find a reason for anything.

19-DEWIS: There's nothing to be afraid of. These are all good people. [...]

20-SHELLY: I'm not afraid!

21-DEWIS: But this is not your house. You have to have some respect.

22-SHELLY: You're the strangers here, not me.

[...]

23-DEWIS: Halie, please. Let me handle this. [...]

24-SHELLY: Don't come near me! Don't anyone come near me. I don't need any words from you. [...] Maybe it's Vince that's crazy. Maybe he's made this whole family thing up. I don't even care anymore. [...] He made all of you sound familiar to me. [...] Real people. People with faces. But I don't recognize any of you. Not one. Not even the slightest resemblance.

[...]

25-HALIE: [...] We're just going to have to call the police.

26-BRADLEY: No! Don't get the police in here. We don't want the police in here. This is our home.

27-SHELLY: That's right, Bradley's right. Don't you usually settle your affairs in private? Don't you usually take them out in the dark? Out in the back?

28-BRADLEY: You stay out of our lives! You have no business interfering!

29-SHELLY: I don't have any business period. I got nothing to lose. I'm a free agent. (*She moves around, staring at each of them.*)

[...]

30-BRADLEY: I'm not telling her anything! [...] Nothing's ever been wrong! Everything's the way it's supposed to be! [...] Everything is all right here! [...] We've always been good people.

(Shepard, 2006: Act Three)

### **Analysis of Excerpt Two**

In turn 1, Bradley commits positive impoliteness because he is indicating that he does not believe Shelly to have the same kind of authority or power as institutions of power such as the government or the police; he also calls Shelly a “prostitute” which is bald on record impoliteness because he straightforwardly insults Shelly. However, Bradley's words do not indicate that he has gained any power or cemented his masculinity through impoliteness acts because Halie, in turn 2, reprimand's Bradley by committing negative impoliteness when she insinuates that Bradley is not to use bad language. To further push Bradley down in power relations, Shelly in turn 3 uses bald on record impoliteness when she calls Bradley a “fucked-up yo-yo”, and in this manner, Bradley is subordinated in power as well as production relations because Halie stops him from talking how he desires. Therefore, Bradley's attempt at brandishing his masculinity has failed as

he is attacked by two women. Mills (2002) states that in ‘engaging in interaction, we are also at the same time mapping out for ourselves a position in relation to the power relations within the group and within the society as a whole’ (74), and all Bradley has managed to do is map out an inferior standing in power relations thereby damaging his masculinity.

In turn 4, Halie commits positive and negative impoliteness towards Bradley by showing that she does not approve of him putting his fingers in her mouth and also prohibiting him from doing it again. Even though Bradley is guilty of positive impoliteness in relation to Shelley (turn 5), he does not show any power because he seems to have been knocked off balance by Halie. Dewis’ words in turn 6 as well as Bradley’s in the previous suggest that these two male figures lack masculine traits as they are both portrayed as vulnerable. While Halie’s words in turn 7 might suggest some vulnerability on her part, Bradley’s words in turn 8 cement Halie’s power. Antony (2015) proposes a category of assertive speech acts called “acknowledgment”, and says that words such as “know” show responsibility, further explaining that the powerful interactant “is able to acknowledge anything under his surveillance” (25). As such, even though Bradley commits positive impoliteness toward Shelly by saying she is not his type, he immediately uses an assertive speech act of acknowledgement (“You know that mom”) to put Halie in a position of power thereby emasculating himself. Furthermore, even though Bradley commits positive impoliteness by calling Shelly a “devil”, he does not prove that he has attained any power because Shelly then takes his leg and Bradley proceeds to revert to a childlike state by asking his “Mom” for help which shows he occupies the lowest status when it comes to power and production relations which proves just how emasculated he is. In turn 10, Shelly laughs while holding Bradley’s leg which is negative impoliteness towards him because it limits his freedom of movement. Garcia-Pastor states that, at times, the essence of power is “based on those attributions of power individuals make without necessarily communicating these in discourse” (105), which is another reason why Shelly holding Bradley’s leg is negative impoliteness, and this illustrates her power.

Bradley’s words in turn 11 are reminiscent of a powerless male because he is indicating that he is useless without his leg which a female, Shelly, currently has control of. Bennett (2007) explains that some masculinity theories suggest that “men maintain a ‘stiff upper lip’ at times of emotional stress” (347), and because it is mentioned that Bradley “whimpers”, it can be said that he has no signs of the aforementioned “stiff upper lip”, and is therefore emasculated by the aforesaid description. Also, because of the above-mentioned, Bradley’s

assertive speech act does not grant him any power. Turn 14 illustrates the powerlessness and emasculation of another male, Father Dewis, because he uses an assertive speech act which instead of granting him power emasculates him because it states that he is powerless to stop Shelly. Additionally, Bradley's directive speech act in turn 15 does not show his power because Halie, in the following turn, uses a directive of her own to get Bradley to stop talking; Halie's negative impoliteness, therefore, negates Bradley's speech act and emasculates him because it limits his production in verbal terms. In turn 18, Shelly proceeds to show her power by employing positive impoliteness against pretty much the whole household. In turn 20, Shelly's forceful answer (assertive speech act) to Dewis' milder words (representative speech act) shows how much more powerful she is compared to the male interactant whom she emasculates. Turn 22 turns out in much the same way as turn 20.

To fully show her power, Shelly first uses a directive speech act twice in turn 24 to order everyone to stay away from her. She then proceeds to commit positive impoliteness by indicating that she does not believe anyone has any useful words to offer her. Furthermore, Shelly uses bald on record impoliteness calling Vince "crazy", and then commits positive impoliteness when she says she does not recognize anyone of them because they differ so wildly from what Vince had told her indicating how far they've all fallen. Hence, not only does Shelly illustrate her power in relation to all the group, but by attacking Vince she also attacks one of the masculine forces. Malamuth and Thornhill (1994) state a feminist idea saying that "feminists argue that men are uniquely socialized to dominate and be aggressive toward women in a manner that differs from their socialization vis-à-vis other men" (191); taking the aforesaid idea into account, not only does Shelly dominate the men but also the other woman in the world of the play, and this proves her power as well as the fact that she subordinates the masculine forces by manipulating masculine ideology for her own gain.

In turn 26, Bradley illustrates his inferior position in power relations as he shows that he is afraid of authority figures. Moller (2007) explains that Connell's views on hegemonic masculinity may convince a critic to seek out "particularly nefarious instances of masculinist abuses of power," which can then result in not taking notice of "more mundane practices of masculinity" (265). Bradley's words in turn 26 seem reminiscent of Moller's ideas because one might not necessarily see rebellion against authority as a masculine trait, yet here, Bradley's lack of rebellion portrays him as weak and thus, emasculated. Shelly's first words in turn 27 are mock politeness as she is pretending to agree with Bradley, but she then starts to insinuate that the family have a secret and make a habit of burying their past which is positive impoliteness as well

as a much clearer attack on the family. Thus, once again, Shelly first emasculates Bradley by attacking his face needs showing that she is more powerful, and then proceeds to attack the family. Bradley uses a directive to gain a foothold in power relations which is also negative impoliteness because he is limiting her freedom to act as she pleases (turn 28). Culpeper (2005) believes that impoliteness is, first and foremost, about “how offense is communicated and taken” (36), so when Shelly, in turn 29, completely snubs Bradley’s speech act she has committed negative impoliteness and her face attack negates Bradley’s words not least because she has taken no offense from Bradley’s impoliteness. To round things off, Bradley completely breaks down in turn 30, and his actions embody cathexis which shows that he has been completely emasculated because he is clinging to a non-existent image of a perfect family. Bradley is particularly guilty of cathexis because he constantly seeks his mother’s help, but even she does not come to his aid in the end to definitively emasculate him.

### **Conclusion**

In the first excerpt, it was shown that Halie subordinates the two male characters, Tilden and Dodge, to illustrate how Shepard has emasculated two of his male creations. Through linguistic analysis coupled with more traditional theories in the form of gender studies, it was proven that the playwright has used dialogue to place the male personas in precarious situations in order to illustrate their gradual emasculation. In the second excerpt, the process of Shelly becoming more powerful was mapped out much in the same way as Halie’s power was shown in the first. Shelly managed to subordinate and consequently emasculate Bradley in a number of ways to prove that she was more powerful, even though, earlier in the play, Bradley had suggestively put his finger in her mouth and taken her coat; the second excerpt was employed to portray Shelly’s revenge and her consequent rise to power. By the end of the second excerpt Bradley’s emasculation becomes abundantly clear as he breaks down and enters a state of denial. The analysis done shows that not only does Shepard shun masculine viewpoints, but that he actually glorifies feminine power in more ways than one (at the very least in this play). Further analysis of this and Shepard’s other plays may prove fruitful in coming to a more general conclusion about Shepard’s plays.

**REFERENCES:**

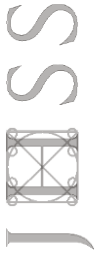
- Antony, F., *Language and Power: An Enquiry on Speech Acts in President Obama's Speech at West Point*, in "Nehru E-Journal", 2015, Web. 27 Feb. 2020.
- Bennett, K. M., 'No Sissy Stuff': *Towards a Theory of Masculinity and Emotional Expression in Older Widowed Men*, in "Journal of Aging Studies", 21.4, 2007, p. 347-356.
- Bennett, S., *When a Woman Looks: The 'Other' Audience of Shepard's Plays*, in *Rereading Shepard*, Ed. L. Wilcox, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1993, p. 168-179.
- Bird, S. R., *Welcome to The Men's Club*, in "Gender & Society", 10, 2, 1996, p. 120-132.
- Bousfield, D., *Stylistics, Speech Acts and Im/Politeness Theory*, in *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics*, Ed. Michael Burke, Abingdon, Routledge, 2014, p. 118-135.
- Brown, P.; S. C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Vol. 4, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Cashman, H., R., 'You're Screwed Either Way': *An Exploration of Code-Switching, Impoliteness and Power*, in *Impoliteness in Language: Studies on Its Interplay with Power in Theory and Practice*, Ed. Derek Bousfield and Miriam A. Locher, Mouton De Gruyter, New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 2008, p. 225-280.
- Connell, R. W., *Masculinities*, 2nd ed., Oakland, University of California Press, 2005.
- Connell, R. W.; James W., *Messerschmidt. Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept*, in "Gender & Society", 19, 6, 2005, p. 829-859.
- Culpeper, J., *Impoliteness and Entertainment in the Television Quiz Show: The Weakest Link*, in "Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture", 1, 1, 2005, p. 35-72.
- Culpeper, J., *Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness*, in "Journal of Pragmatics", 25, 3, 1996, p. 349-367.
- Levant, R. F., et al, *The Male Role: An Investigation of Contemporary Norms*, in "Journal of Mental Health Counseling", 14, 3, 1992, p. 325-337.
- Malamuth, N. M.; N. W. Thornhill, *Hostile Masculinity, Sexual Aggression, and Gender-Biased Domineeringness in Conversations*, in "Aggressive Behavior", 20,3, 1994, p. 185-193.
- Mills, S., *Rethinking Politeness, Impoliteness and Gender Identity*, in *Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis*, Ed. Lia Litosseliti and Jane Sunderland. Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 2002, p. 69-90.
- Moller, M., *Exploiting Patterns: A Critique of Hegemonic Masculinity*, in "Journal of Gender Studies", 16, 3, 2007, p. 263-276.
- Paechter, C., *Masculine Femininities/Feminine Masculinities: Power, Identities and Gender*, in "Gender and Education", 18, 3, 2006, p. 253-263.
- Searle, J. R., *Epilogue to the Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts*, in *Cultural Communication and Intercultural Contact*, Ed. Donal A. Carbaugh, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1990, p. 409-417.

Searle, J. R., *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Searle, J. R., *A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts*, in “*Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*”, 7, 1975, p. 344-369.

Shepard, S., *Buried Child: A Play*, New York, Vintage Books, 2006.

Whiting, C. G., *Images of Women in Shepard's Theatre*, in “*Modern Drama*”, 33, 4, 1990, p. 494-506.





## Acceptions de l'espace dans le discours diurne / nocturne dans l'œuvre de Mircea Eliade

Nicolae Șera\*

### Acceptions of the space in the diurnal/nocturnal discourse in Mircea Eliade's works

#### Abstract:

The present study investigates the manifestations of the sacred and the profane in Mircea Eliade's work. More precisely it analyses the ways in which space is depicted, focusing on various spatial variants, such as the concepts of *house, center, limits*, etc., in light of the sacred / profane duality that is specific to Eliade's work. Mimetism, camouflage and disguise are some features of Eliade's fantastic literature, as well as the subtle game of simultaneously showing and hiding something. At the level of discourse, these aspects are translated by coding the information so that later it can be decoded partly by the author, partly by the reader.

**Keywords:** discourse, sacred, profane, space, center, limit

Je vais te dire ce qui se passe tard, après minuit, l'interrompt le vieillard. Tu ne peux plus penser, tu ne peux plus « penser la mathématique » et tu reviens à ton premier amour, tu reviens à la poésie. (Eliade, 1991 : 70)

Eliade est un des auteurs du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle qui met en juxtaposition les modes d'écriture critique – l'essai polémique, théorique ou scientifique – et romanesque. Le *paratexte*, qui affirme ou subvertit le pacte textuel qui implique que nous lisons un roman plutôt qu'un essai, nous sert à distinguer dans le texte éliadesque la « chose littéraire » de ce qu'il n'est pas. Il est un des auteurs qui présentent des thèmes tantôt dans un essai critique, tantôt dans une écriture dite imaginaire. Le paratexte, à la « marge » de la fiction, comprend les autres textes du même auteur – des textes critiques ou autobiographiques – qui font écho à la fiction. L'essai critique est parfois une fiction, la fiction un miroir d'une réalité historique. Nous placerons les textes hybrides – qui se situent dans le « *no man's land* » entre fiction et récit historique, entre roman et autobiographie – au cœur de nos interrogations de ce chapitre.

---

\* Associated Professor PhD, "Babes-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca, nicolae.sera@econ.ubbcluj.ro

Pour établir des « frontières » qui séparent l'écriture critique de la fiction, selon Aristote, l'historien « dit ce qui s'est passé » alors que le poète « dit ce qui pourrait se passer » :

C'est pourquoi la poésie est quelque chose de plus philosophique et qui a plus de valeur que l'histoire : la poésie exprime plutôt le général, l'histoire le particulier. (Aristote, 1997 : 35)

Si l'on acceptait la notion aristotélicienne de « général » et extrapolait à partir de cette tradition binaire dont nous avons hérité un système de valeurs pour les codes de la poétique, on dirait que la fiction (un art d'imitation, de *mimésis*) vise une expression plus universelle que celle que l'on trouve dans des textes critiques et historiques. Une distinction aussi manichéenne entre les historiens et les poètes n'a peut-être jamais existé, mais la tradition maintient deux façons de se référer à la « réalité » : avec fidélité (le cas de l'honnête historien qui rapporte ce qui s'est passé), ou en extrapolant, en divagant (le poète).

Mais qu'en est-il des textes hybrides où l'on trouve, par exemple, une fiction en plein milieu d'un récit historique ? Est-ce qu'un auteur moderne s'occupe des paramètres qui qualifient son écriture comme étant « scientifique » ou « littéraire » ? Certainement. Gérard Genette souligne les « frontières » – ou « seuils » – du texte qui font partie d'une lecture et l'« accompagnent » ; il détaille les formes différentes du paratexte, « défini par une intention et une responsabilité de l'auteur » (Genette, 1987 : 9). Chaque partie du paratexte – le « *péritexte* » (titre, préface, notes dans l'espace du même volume) et « *l'épitéxte* » (interviews, correspondance, journaux intimes) – enrichit la lecture ou porte une clé, un enrichissement à sa compréhension. Le paratexte peut aider à établir une distinction binaire entre une fiction et un récit historique, tout comme il peut subvertir une catégorisation suggérée par le texte même.

En lisant les textes scientifiques en parallèle avec des textes de fiction, on voit qu'il y a différence entre ces modes d'écriture, que l'on pourrait schématiser dans une hiérarchie subjective ou codifiée. En effet, chaque lecture est plurielle et le paratexte multiplie les implications référentielles de cette lecture.

Pour Maurice Blanchot, l'activité littéraire est liée à un « autre » monde, le lien entre le moi qui écrit et l'espace décrit est brisé. Si le texte n'est qu'une étude de structure ou de style, complet en soi, la poésie comme l'art sont des recherches purement formelles ; l'espace littéraire est « hors » du monde réel (Blanchot, 1955 : 86).

En fait, toutes les cultures tendent vers une multiculture où se rencontrent des cultures plurielles ; c'est une mise en relation ouverte

aux conséquences imprévisibles. On peut donc affirmer qu'il n'y a pas de textes « *marginiaux* » puisqu'il n'y a ni centre ni frontières à l'espace de la fiction éliadesque hybride et plurielle.

Ces considérations sur la distinction entre la littérature fictive et l'essai critique ne servent qu'à confirmer l'impossibilité et sans doute l'inutilité d'établir de pareilles distinctions binaires.

### **Le sacré et le profane**

La définition qu'Eliade donne dans son livre *Le Sacré et le profane* à ces deux invariants des côtés diurne et nocturne de l'esprit – le sacré et le profane –, est la continuation de la conception de Roger Caillois dans son livre *L'homme est le sacré*. Caillois affirme dès le départ que :

Toute conception religieuse du monde implique la distinction du sacré du profane, oppose au monde où le fidèle vaque librement à ses occupations, exerce une activité sans conséquence pour son salut, un domaine où la crainte et l'espoir le paralysent tour à tour, où, comme au bord d'un abîme, le moindre écart dans le moindre geste peut irrémédiablement le perdre. [...] l'homme religieux est avant tout celui pour lequel existent deux milieux complémentaires : l'un où il peut agir sans angoisse ni tremblement, mais où son action n'engage que sa personne superficielle, l'autre où un sentiment de dépendance intime retient, contient, dirige chacun de ses élans et où il se voit compromis sans réserve. Ces deux mondes, celui du sacré et celui du profane, ne se définissent rigoureusement que l'un par l'autre. Ils s'excluent et ils se supposent. (Caillois, 1950 : 23-24)

Eliade à son tour, continue cette conception tout en affirmant que la première des caractéristiques s'imposant à la définition du sacré est qu'il s'oppose au profane.

*Je me rends compte combien il est différent l'espace de l'expérience profane de l'espace des autres manières de connaissance humaine* (Eliade, 1992 : 41) affirme un des personnages d'Eliade.

C'est ainsi que la disparité qui se produit dans le monde entre ce qui a du sens et ce qui n'en a pas, entre ce qui est réel et l'irréel, entre le diurne et le nocturne correspond au clivage sacré / profane. D'autre part, l'irruption du sacré assure le passage du chaos au cosmos, elle fonde également au niveau ontologique la transition temporelle du non-être vers l'être et maintient entre eux une clôture spatiale. Définie de cette manière, l'opposition du sacré et du profane semble englober les couples antithétiques que nous avons relevés, à savoir la transcendance / l'immanence, le diurne / le nocturne, l'Autre / le Même, etc. Mais de pareilles distinctions tranchantes introduisent une certaine ambiguïté, car elles placent vis-à-vis le processus dissipateur de l'identité qui est le propre du devenir et le processus de focalisation sur l'identité qui est le propre de l'archétype. Avec tous ces risques, on doit soutenir ces affirmations paradoxales, car le sacré est en effet consubstantiel au

profane et en son commencement – même, il est marqué par celui-ci. Les fragments que nous avons relevés dans la prose d'Eliade vont démontrer justement cette complémentarité, cette consubstantialité du diurne et du nocturne, du sacré et du profane.

Chaque événement historique constitue une nouvelle manifestation de l'Esprit Universel; mais cela ne veut pas dire qu'il faut uniquement le comprendre et le justifier. Il faut aller plus loin : déchiffrer sa signification symbolique. Car tout événement, toute situation quotidienne comporte une signification symbolique, illustre un symbolisme primordial, trans-historique, universel ... [...] Déchiffrer les significations symboliques secrètes des événements historiques, peut constituer une révélation, dans le sens religieux du mot. D'ailleurs, cela est le but de tous les arts. (Eliade, 1991 : 84-85)

On peut constater que la hiérophanie suppose en elle la cohabitation des contraires à travers le sens symbolique qui se donne à être déchiffré ; c'est toujours la hiérophanie qui occulte en quelque sorte l'archétype dans l'histoire, parce qu'une part d'elle appartient à l'histoire (au profane, donc) mais aussi une part d'elle appartient à la transcendance (au sacré, ou « *la révélation* » dans notre fragment).

Il est important de noter que la transition ou plus précisément l'irruption du sacré au cœur du profane s'effectue le plus souvent par le biais de certains « *véhicules* » : nous pensons à des voitures, trains, autobus, camions, mais aussi ascenseurs, échelles, escaliers. La valeur symbolique de ces derniers a été longuement analysée par Eliade, tout d'abord, mais aussi par d'autres anthropologues et critiques ; ce qui est plus intéressant de notre point de vue, ce sont les « *véhicules* » proprement dits de la première catégorie, à savoir les voitures de toute catégorie. Ils apparaissent également dans les fragments choisis par nous afin d'illustrer le passage entre le sacré et le profane à travers le camouflage<sup>1</sup> : *L'énigme des voitures qui deviennent invisibles à un point*

---

<sup>1</sup> Le terme de *camouflage* provient des sciences de la vie (la biologie en spécial) et évoque généralement tous les phénomènes de mimétisme que de nombreux animaux présentent naturellement et grâce auxquels ils échappent aux regards de l'homme. Homochromie et homotypie, déguisements et mimétisme au sens strict sont les quatre mécanismes fondamentaux qui permettent aux animaux de se dissimuler. *L'homochromie* est si la teinte prise par l'animal est uniforme et correspond à la couleur du milieu qu'il fréquente habituellement. On a remarqué aussi que l'ombre d'un objet quelconque a une grande importance dans l'appréciation de sa forme et de son volume. Si donc la partie située dans l'ombre est blanche, alors que la partie éclairée est colorée, la différence est moins sensible et l'objet semble plus plat et devient moins visible. On appelle ce phénomène *l'ombre inversée*. Une complication plus efficace encore du camouflage est fournie par le bariolage (dessins disruptifs) dont l'effet est de rompre la forme, de dissocier en quelque sorte l'animal qui n'est plus visible dans son ensemble, mais paraît formé de plusieurs parties indépendantes. En plus de la couleur, l'animal a

*précis dans l'espace et à un moment donné dans le temps, cette énigme va préoccuper les autres* (Eliade, 1991 : 132).

Préoccupation majeure de l'auteur, le camouflage est explicité mieux dans le fragment qui suit :

Il n'y a que certaines voitures qui disparaissent. [...] Iliescu a eu raison : on prépare une nouvelle Arche de Noé. Ces mystérieux camions transportent des personnes sélectionnées de tous les coins du monde. Les camions ne disparaissent pas, mais ils passent dans un espace à d'autres dimensions que celles de notre espace. [...] En effet, il s'agit d'un camouflage, ayant la même fonction que tout camouflage : à savoir, cacher mais en même temps de montrer et d'attirer l'attention des avisés. [...] La route vers la nouvelle Arche de Noé, c'est-à-dire vers l'espace à d'autres dimensions, peut être parcourue instantanément et d'une manière invisible, mais, pour notre confort, elle est camouflée dans un transport en camions. [...] On nous fait depuis longtemps des signes, depuis des siècles. Seulement le camouflage change, selon l'époque où l'on vit. Aujourd'hui, de nos jours dominés par la technologie ... On nous fait des signes et l'on passe à côté d'eux sans les voir ... (Eliade, 1991 : 135-136)

Les deux verbes – *cacher* et *montrer* – sont employés simultanément justement pour mettre en évidence le côté paradoxal de l'événement, mais aussi afin de souligner une caractéristique typique de l'écriture éliadique : l'auteur explique beaucoup afin de mieux comprendre, lui et les lecteurs, mais en même temps, le vrai sens reste caché et on a l'impression que c'est le but même d'Eliade de nous égarer dans le labyrinthe du sens. Ceci arrive aussi aux différents personnages de sa prose, non pas seulement au lecteur. Lié à ce sujet, nous semble-t-il, est la fréquence des mots *chiffre* et *déchiffrer* qu'on rencontre très

---

pris la forme d'un objet sur lequel il se tient habituellement ; on appelle ce phénomène *homotypie*. On dit qu'il y a *mimétisme* lorsqu'une espèce animale inoffensive imite la forme, la couleur ou l'allure d'une espèce naturellement défendue par son venin, par sa mauvaise odeur ou par toute autre cause susceptible d'éloigner les prédateurs. Au lieu de se dissimuler, l'espèce mimétique a donc intérêt à être vue pour échapper à ses ennemis. Dans tous les cas précédents, c'est le corps même de l'animal qui prend une couleur ou une forme donnée et assure le camouflage. Mais il est des cas où l'animal emprunte au milieu des éléments dont il se couvre, semblant ainsi s'habiller. Il s'agit là non pas de faits d'intelligence, mais de faits de comportement. Ce cas, le moins fréquent dans la nature, bien que le plus varié, est celui qui se rapproche le plus des réalisations humaines et il est appelé *déguisement*.

N'oublions pas qu'Eliade a été passionné dès son adolescence par le monde végétal et animal et qu'en 1921-1922 il a même publié des articles *d'entomologie* dans la presse : *L'entomologie appliquée, Les moyens de défense des insectes, Du monde des animaux*, etc., articles publiés ultérieurement sous la direction de Mircea Handoca dans le volume Mircea Eliade, *Cum am descoperit piatra filozofala. Scrieri de tinerete 1921-1925*, Bucuresti, Editura Humanitas, 1996. De notre point de vue ce n'est pas étonnant qu'Eliade utilise si fréquemment le terme de camouflage autant dans son œuvre scientifique que dans la littérature.

souvent dans le corpus de textes éliadesques. Il faut mentionner qu'Eliade a été longtemps préoccupé par l'alchimie ; ses livres en témoignent<sup>2</sup>. Il est intéressant d'analyser ces deux termes – chiffre et son contraire, déchiffrer – du point de vue de l'alchimie.

Maria Voda Capusan cite et offre une analyse pertinente d'un passage intéressant et révélateur de Mircea Eliade que l'auteur de *l'Histoire des croyances et idées religieuses* a inséré à la fin du deuxième tome de ce livre. Vu son importance, nous le reproduisons intégralement :

Dans l'une des arrêts d'autobus entre Athènes et Corinthe, monta une vieille maigre et décharnée, mais aux grands yeux, très vifs. Comme elle n'avait pas d'argent pour se payer le billet, le contrôleur la fit descendre à l'arrêt suivant; c'était justement l'arrêt d'Eleusis. Mais le chauffeur ne réussit plus à démarrer l'autobus; à la fin, les voyageurs se sont décidés de cotiser pour payer le billet de la vieille. Elle monta de nouveau dans l'autobus qui, cette fois-ci démarra. Alors la vieille leur dit : « Vous devriez le faire avant, mais vous êtes des égoïstes et parce que je me trouve parmi vous je vais vous dire encore quelque chose : Vous allez être punis pour la manière dont vous vivez ; vous allez manquer d'eau voire d'herbe. » Elle n'a même pas fini ses menaces, continue l'auteur de l'article publié dans Hestia, qu'elle disparut [...]. Personne ne l'a vu descendre. Et les gens se regardaient, regardaient de nouveau la pile de billets afin de se convaincre qu'on lui a donné effectivement un billet. » (Eliade, 1978 : 395)

Eliade trouve cette information dans la presse grecque en 1940 et, apparemment il s'agit d'un événement réel qui se serait passé. Dans son commentaire, Eliade traite cet événement avec prudence, sa démarche garde la neutralité scientifique du traité avec les références exactes, témoignant d'érudition ; mais entre les lignes, comme un palimpseste, se dessine aussi un autre discours qui n'est pas celui de la précision, mais plutôt celui de l'art de la litote en disant moins qu'il ne laisse la liberté de sous-entendre. Son texte nocturne inséré dans l'espace scientifique du volume se caractérise plutôt par la fausse clarté de la littérature. On se demande donc et à juste titre, qu'est-ce qui s'est passé effectivement dans cet autobus vers Eleusis ? On peut formuler éventuellement d'autres questions afin de répondre à cette première : était-ce une hiérophanie ? un spectacle ? Et comme conclut Maria Voda Capusan dans son étude, *Réel ... mythe ... théâtre ... miracle ... on ne nous le dit pas explicitement ... et peut-être il ne faut même pas le dire ...* (Voda Capusan, 1987 : 208)

---

<sup>2</sup> *L'Alchimie asiatique* (1934), *Cosmologie et alchimie babyloniennes* (1937), *Forgerons et alchimistes* (1977), ou des articles comme *Note sur l'alchimie indienne* (1955), *Le mythe de l'alchimie* (1978)

### **L'espace sacré**

Intuitivement, l'espace apparaît différencié (haut et bas, droite et gauche), plus étendu horizontalement que verticalement, hétérogène et discontinu. Physique, il est homogène, continu et illimité; géométrique, c'est une représentation abstraite en trois dimensions (chez Euclide) ou à  $n$  dimensions (comme dans les géométries non-euclidiennes). Enfin, considéré du point de vue de son infinité, de son immatérialité et de son ouverture au temps, il est métaphysique.

La perception directe que nous avons de l'espace, perception sensorielle tout d'abord, nous autorise de parler d'un espace physique, homogène, illimité et continu, caractérisé surtout par sa dimension horizontale, et moins par celle verticale. Tout être humain est capable, par ses propres sensations, de saisir *l'espace* et d'en déchiffrer ses sens, en y opérant une structuration propre, ou même une déstructuration. L'espace devient ainsi un amalgame d'éléments qui seront arrangés et combinés de façon personnelle, suivant une logique individuelle et répondant à une structure intime particulière : le résultat en sera un univers unificateur, fruit de l'imagination créatrice, et qu'on pourra saisir par nos sensations. La représentation de la spatialité est en fait l'appréhension sensorielle que l'être humain a de l'espace : les deux, dedans du percevant et dehors du perçu, se trouvent confondus pour en faire générer un espace nouveau, ouvert à toutes les interprétations.

Dans la littérature, tout comme dans la philosophie, tout objet ne prend forme et dimension, que par le pouvoir du sujet parlant, qui l'investit de sa personnalité. On peut procéder à la distinction entre *l'espace topologique*, qui cerne et délimite les rapports de voisinage et *l'espace euclidien*, espace à dimension infinie, à valeur positive et sans transcendance, qu'on parcourt dans toutes ses dimensions ; cette différenciation prouve qu'au lieu d'être uniquement déployé et horizontal, *l'espace* se révèle aussi comme ayant du relief, de la verticalité, de même que de la profondeur.

« L'expérience religieuse de la non-homogénéité de l'espace est une expérience primordiale, comparable à la création du monde. » (Eliade, 1978 : 34).

Selon cette définition donnée par Mircea Eliade, le temps et l'espace ne sont pas isotropes : c'est-à-dire, imprégnés par la vie humaine, cadastrés par les enjeux de la vie, ces deux coordonnées essentielles n'ont pas les propriétés partout et pour tout le monde. Autrement dit, il y a des ruptures, des temps et des lieux de passage qui séparent les divers sites existentiels ; la position verticale de l'homme, par exemple, détermine des lignes de force dans sa perception de l'espace : « Du fait de son corps dans l'espace, l'homme s'oriente vers

les quatre horizons et il se tient entre haut et bas. Il est naturellement le centre » (Eliade, 1978 : 156).

Aux yeux d'Eliade, cette expérience est celle d'une hiérophanie ; cet événement est toujours au cœur des ruptures qualitatives qui organisent le temps et l'espace. Il n'y aurait pas une frontière rectiligne qui couperait l'étendue en deux domaines égaux et antithétiques (d'une part le Sacré et d'autre le profane), mais un point plutôt où l'esprit saisit que quelque chose vaut et qui s'oppose à l'espace environnant. Il y a rupture de l'homogénéité parce qu'il y a dans cette hiérophanie institution d'un Centre. Comme l'auteur l'affirme dans le *Sacré et le profane*,

La manifestation du Sacré fonde ontologiquement le Monde. Dans l'étendue homogène et infinie, où aucun point de repère n'est possible, dans laquelle aucune orientation ne peut s'effectuer, la hiérophanie révèle un point fixe absolu. (Eliade, 1972 : 22)

La hiérophanie donnant sens et assise ontologique au monde, l'espace va donc s'organiser en référence à et autour de celle-ci.

Comme on le constatera à travers les fragments choisis, la spatialité fonctionne de la même façon que l'ontologie. On y dénombre en effet deux niveaux de modèle :

- le premier expliquant *l'organisation de l'espace sacré* et les possibilités de trajectoire à travers celui-ci (le centre, la limite / la sortie et l'étendue);
- le deuxième rendant compte de *la genèse et de la résorption de cet espace dans un point singulier* et de tous les phénomènes de paradoxe qui interviennent à partir du moment où la transcendance interfère directement avec le profane (l'atopie positive et négative).

### **Le centre**

La manifestation du Sacré, affirme Eliade, provoque dans l'expérience immédiate, quotidienne, une discontinuité dont la singularité, captant et organisant l'espace autour d'elle, détermine un Centre dans l'étendue de l'espace. En tant que discontinuité, le centre fonde une possibilité d'une orientation et d'un cadastre de l'espace. Etant au surplus lieu d'irruption du Sacré dans le monde, il est garant des valeurs qui y circulent ; il est aussi lieu du désirable. Une des premières manifestations de l'idée de centre est sous la forme de *la chambre* – chambre d'hôtel ou la mystérieuse chambre Sambô – présente dans plusieurs nouvelles de Mircea Eliade.

Une des isotopies est donc la chambre d'hôtel, telle qu'elle apparaît dans le fragment ci-dessous :



La chambre que Stefan a louée était tenue en secret. [...] C'était comme la chambre interdite du conte de Barbe Bleu. [...] quand j'entre dans la chambre secrète, les rideaux sont toujours tirés. Dans cette chambre, il fait toujours nuit, car les volets sont tirés. [...] Il y a peut-être quelque part une possibilité ouverte aux miracles, un mystère irréductible, un secret qu'on ne réussit pas à déchiffrer. (Eliade, 1991 : 12-14)

Lieu profane par excellence, la chambre d'hôtel acquiert dans la prose d'Eliade des attributs hors du sens commun : elle est secrète, interdite aux autres – que les initiés – il y fait toujours nuit, endroit nocturne par excellence pour que l'esprit puise s'y manifester, elle est aussi ouverte aux miracles mais qu'on est incapable de déchiffrer. C'est un endroit épiphanique de premier ordre.

Ailleurs, Eliade présente une autre chambre, isotopie de cette première :

Tout comme dans la chambre Sambô, dans cette chambre secrète toutes les fonctions physiologiques sont en quelque sorte annulées. [...] Je dois vous raconter l'histoire de la chambre Sambô. Je la vois comme si c'était maintenant. Les stores étaient fermés et dans la chambre il y avait une pénombre mystérieuse, une fraîcheur d'autre sorte que celle des autres chambres dans lesquelles je suis entré jusqu'alors. Je ne sais pas pourquoi, il me semblait que là tout flotte dans une lumière verte ; peut-être que les rideaux étaient verts. Car, autrement, la chambre était pleine de toute sorte de meubles et caisses, de poubelles et de journaux anciens. Mais pour moi elle était verte. Et alors, en ce moment, j'ai compris ce que c'était Sambô. J'ai compris qu'il y a ici sur la terre, à côté de nous, à notre portée, et cependant invisible pour les autres, inaccessible aux non-initiés – il y a donc un espace privilégié, un endroit paradisiaque que, si on a eu la chance de le connaître, on ne peut l'oublier jamais. Dans la chambre Sambô je sentais que je vivais autrement que jusqu'alors ; je vivais autrement, dans un continuél bonheur inexprimable. Je ne sais pas d'où jaillissait cette béatitude sans nom. Plus tard, en me rappelant la chambre Sambô, j'ai été sûr que là m'attendait Dieu et qu'il m'embrasait dès que je franchissais le seuil. Après, je n'ai éprouvé nulle part et jamais un pareil bonheur, ni dans l'église, ni dans le musée, jamais, nulle part. (Eliade, 1991 : 91)

Cet espace privilégié, baigné dans une pénombre mystérieuse, a encore un autre attribut essentiel : la chambre Sambô la lumière est verte. On se demande pour quel motif Eliade « voit » cette chambre justement en vert, quand on connaît la « couleur » de la lumière. On sait qu'Eliade s'intéressait aux phénomènes produits par la lumière et qu'il a consulté les études des savants dans ce domaine. Lors de ses séjours annuels à Paris, nous avons de motifs à croire qu'Eliade a consulté certainement les travaux de Newton à ce sujet. Dans son grand *Traité d'optique sur les réflexions, réfractions, inflexions et les couleurs* (1660) Newton s'attache à l'étude des phénomènes de la lumière et des couleurs en annotant les livres de Robert Hooke et de Robert Boyle et les thèses aristotéliennes : la lumière est pure et homogène ; les

couleurs, caractérisées par leur éclat ou leur force, naissent d'une modification (atténuation ou obscurcissement) de la lumière incidente. Une telle conception, dénuée de tout support quantitatif pouvant contribuer à préciser le sens des concepts de force et de faiblesse, d'obscurité et de luminosité, ne trouve son intelligibilité qu'en se référant directement aux *impressions des sens*, à la manière dont subjectivement nous nous sentons affectés par telle ou telle couleur.

En effet, *Tout dépend du langage dans lequel on peut comprendre et traduire l'histoire de la chambre à la porte entrouverte...* (Eliade, 1991 : 76).

Une première interprétation de la couleur verte vient de son sens symbolique, à savoir :

Equidistant du bleu céleste et du rouge infernal, tous deux absolus et inaccessibles, le vert, valeur moyenne, médiatrice entre le chaud et le froid, le haut et le bas, est une couleur rassurante, rafraîchissante, humaine. (Chevalier, 1982 : 1002)

Ces qualités merveilleuses du vert nous amènent à penser que cette couleur cache un secret, qu'elle symbolise une connaissance profonde, voire occulte des choses et de la destinée. Accéder donc à la chambre Sambô est équivalent à l'initiation, c'est l'accès au savoir. D'ailleurs, Eliade multiplie cette image de la chambre dans d'autres textes, sous d'autres formes : le fragment suivant ressemble à une référence livresque de Balzac (auteur apprécié et très bien connu / lu par Eliade) :

Il connaissait rue Vaneau avant d'être venu pour la première fois à Paris, il y a 25 ans, il la connaissait de la Cousine Bette. Et lorsque en février il passa la première nuit dans cette chambre d'hôtel au quatrième étage, il lui parut que par un incompréhensible retour dans le temps, il se retrouve dans la « chambre secrète ». D'une part et d'autre il y avait des portes minces en bois et comme si les chambres n'avaient plus de murs, elles étaient séparées seulement par des paravents. On y entendait les moindres bruits et les pas des voisins et leurs conversations, que Stefan écoutait au début sans y comprendre quelque chose car son esprit galopait 12- 13 ans dans le passé, dans sa chambre secrète à Bucarest, en écoutant les discussions entre Vadastra et Arethia. (Eliade, 1991 : 344)

Gaston Bachelard apprécie que la rêverie, l'état de méditation, détache l'imagination créatrice de l'univers immédiat, pour la situer dans un autre, plus vaste, un *ailleurs* qui est le fruit de sa création : ainsi, par la rêverie toutes les formes gagnent des valeurs d'intimité et s'orientent vers l'avenir : « *L'imagination nous détache à la fois du passé et de la réalité. Elle ouvre sur l'avenir* » (Bachelard, 1989 : 16).

L'espace saisi par l'imagination et par le souvenir, se trouve investi de subjectivité, de sorte qu'on ne peut plus parler d'un seul espace, car il y en a une pluralité, fragiles et soumis à l'érosion du temps. Le retour dans le temps dont parle Eliade est aussi une entrée dans un labyrinthe

spatial et temporel à la fois, dont le centre reste la « chambre secrète » où l'on entend des voix.

Un autre invariant du centre est certes la *maison*. L'habitat, la maison est une architecture, avant tout ; et comme procédée, l'architecture est l'ancêtre de tous les arts de l'espace, car elle organise les volumes, elle est aussi l'art de tracer les limites à travers lesquelles s'articule l'existence humaine. Un plan de construction opère le partage entre l'espace habité et tous les autres espaces et par là donne parole aux symboles. Nous reproduisons une des conceptions de la maison telle qu'elle est présente dans la prose d'Eliade :

La maison de Iancu Antim se trouvait au bout d'une ruelle derrière le Foisor de Foc. C'était un bâtiment construit vers 1900, massif et suffisamment laid, mais dans la lumière cruelle du mois de mars, quand Stefan était venu pour la première fois la voir, la maison a eu une noblesse rude ; elle paraissait décrochée d'une estampe. Lui ouvrit une servante et le fit entrer dans un salon énorme. Les murs étaient couverts entièrement de tableaux ; dans un coin se trouvaient quelques bibliothèques à glace, et dans un autre coin, plusieurs vitrines, certaines couvertes de toile. [...] Tout ceci formait un mélange étrange de musée, entrepôt, et chambre de vieille fille. Les deux grandes fenêtres qui donnaient vers le jardin, rétrécies par les rideaux verts de velours, ne réussissaient pas de baigner en lumière les coins de cette pièce si pleine. Bien que le feu brûlât encore dans la cheminée, il y faisait plus froid que dehors. (Eliade, 1991 : 161-162)

Comme dans tout rituel d'initiation, la chambre se présente comme une épreuve à passer ; c'est le lieu éloigné de tout curieux et, en même temps elle est interdite à tout curieux. Seuls les initiés peuvent y entrer, parfois pour y passer la nuit. A ce moment, l'initié est censé recevoir dans le sommeil ou à l'état de veille la révélation de la divinité. Comme toute initiation, l'expérience de la chambre secrète comporte une part de secret et de retraite aussi, et la vie nouvelle qu'elle inaugure, se fonde sur une certaine mort, sur une part d'abandon. L'expérience de la chambre secrète ayant la lumière verte correspond à une progression vers le sacré, de plus en plus intériorisé, comme une marche spirituelle allant du parvis à l'intérieur du temple jusqu'au tabernacle où réside le divin (Chevalier, 1982 : 204).

Quant à la maison, tout comme la cité ou comme le temple, elle est au centre du monde et, à la fois, l'image de l'univers. Etant à la fois image du cosmos plus ou moins chaotique – musée, entrepôt et chambre de vieille fille à la fois, dans le fragment d'Eliade – la maison est aussi le reflet du ciel sur la terre.

Du point de vue du procès, le centre est aussi le point de départ et d'arrivée de toute mobilité spatiale : la création du monde a eu lieu à partir d'un centre et se résorbera en son centre. Dans le mythe, Ulysse est parti d'Ithaque et y reviendra. Tout sujet est donc initialement en

conjonction avec le centre ; et du point de vue ontologique, le centre est aussi le site du sacré.

### **La limite / la sortie**

La limite est le non-lieu par où transite le personnage qui du Centre s'avance vers l'étendue. Il y a toujours le lieu neutre du seuil à la fois intérieur et extérieur, simultanément centre et l'étendue, une sorte d'espace sacré a-dimensionnel qui n'a pas d'épaisseur géométrique. C'est le site incommensurable de l'événement, car le seuil est à la fois ponctuel et infini : ponctuel du point de vue du sens et infini selon l'événement. Le fragment suivant présente ce type d'espace qui peut aussi prendre la forme de l'espace – labyrinthe :

Farima se doutait que c'était à cause de son écriture illisible qu'il était appelé si souvent à l'interrogatoire. Parfois on lui demandait de raconter la nuit ce qu'il avait écrit pendant la journée. Le gardien venait et l'emmenait et ils partaient tous les deux, jamais sur le même chemin, car ils passaient toujours dans d'autres couloirs, ils descendaient et montaient d'autres escaliers, ils traversaient de grandes salles ténébreuses ou trop illuminées, dans lesquelles on ne pouvait apercevoir qu'un policier luttant avec le sommeil sur un banc. Soudain, le gardien l'arrêtait à côté d'un mur pour appuyer un bouton. Tout d'un coup, derrière eux s'arrêtait un ascenseur et ils descendaient ou montaient plusieurs niveaux. Puis le gardien frappait contre une porte et l'introduisait dans un bureau trop illuminé. Derrière le bureau, jouant avec le crayon, l'attendait souriant Dumitrescu. (Eliade, 1991 : 99)

D'un point de vue strictement formel l'écriture secrète que constitue le labyrinthe, dont le tracé, caractérisé par un degré plus ou moins grand de complexité, répond toujours à une intention d'initiation, sur un registre dont la sacralité ne semble jamais totalement absente. On pourrait définir le labyrinthe comme le contraire de la ligne droite ; qu'il s'inscrive dans un espace bi- ou tridimensionnel, qu'il se définisse par un périmètre circulaire, anguleux ou tentaculaire, qu'il possède une surface compacte ou diffuse et un dessin symétrique ou irrégulier, le labyrinthe est orienté le plus souvent du point de départ à un point central qui constitue le lieu d'épreuve ultime de l'homme labyrinthe. Entre ces deux points, la voie peut être une ou multiple et l'obscurité constitue parfois la principale embûche.

Aussi bien le parcours labyrinthe ne se comprend-il que sous la fascination d'un signe apotropaïque : de quoi le labyrinthe nous détourne-t-il à travers les corridors et les galeries qui dérobent aux regards du profane non seulement les dangers qui menacent l'aventurier mais l'enjeu même de sa pérégrination. D'ailleurs, nous allons traiter l'image du labyrinthe dans le chapitre suivant, telle qu'elle se présente plus clairement dans les pièces de théâtre de Mircea Eliade, en insistant sur d'éventuelles parallélismes avec l'œuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar.

## L'étendue

L'étendue constitue pour elle-même l'objet d'une quête. L'étendue étant la substance que le centre n'a pas dans sa forme singulière, elle est premièrement séduction, appel de l'indifférencié, en un mot, manifestation du Sacré comme cosmogénèse. Le fragment que nous reproduisons, montre clairement comment le labyrinthe se transforme en caverne et à la fin en salle et scène de théâtre, un espace protéiforme où les personnages effectuent un voyage initiatique, une quête :

« Je ne me suis pas rendu compte de la vastitude de la ruine qu'après y être entré. On aurait dit qu'on pénétrait dans une caverne dont les murs on les devinait tantôt très près de nous, à notre droite et aussi à gauche, tantôt très loin, et dont la voûte devenait toujours plus haute à mesure que l'on avançait. Je me suis rendu compte que j'avançais entre deux lignes de bancs, la plupart vides, mais je devinais que, derrière nous, les bancs se remplissaient, presque sans bruit, de spectateurs restés jusqu'alors dans les ténèbres, collés contre les murs. Et soudain quelqu'un s'approcha de nous et murmura :

- Ici, maître, je vous ai réservé deux fauteuils ...

J'ai souris en m'asseyant ; c'étaient des chaises de jardin avec des coussins. Bien que nos fauteuils se soient trouvés au deuxième rang, on était cependant loin de la scène. Il nous en séparaient une dizaine, peut-être une douzaine de mètres d'un podium faiblement éclairé qui paraissait former la scène. Ou, au moins une partie de la scène, car je devinais au fond, entre deux rideaux improvisés, les premières marches d'un amphithéâtre. A certains moments il me semblait qu'au-dessus de nous j'aperçois scintiller les étoiles. Et d'autres fois, je sentais un souffle de vent comme si les murs commençaient à trembler de haut en bas, comme les plis d'un rideau. Quand mes yeux s'habituerent aux espaces des ténèbres, j'ai découvert à droite de la scène un groupe compact d'ombres. Si je n'avais pas été tellement fatigué, j'aurais essayé de déchiffrer aussi les autres formes mystérieuses qui, me semblait-il, s'animaient à tour de rôle dans plusieurs endroits de la scène. (Eliade, 1991 : 65)

Il s'agit d'un espace multi-dimensionnel où toutes les directions sont possibles ; et les personnages qui s'y trouvent perdent leur identité comme dans un rituel initiatique. Cette mobilité extrême de l'espace et dans l'espace est une des manifestations hiérophaniques par lesquels le sacré surgit à la surface en direction du large.

Un autre invariant de ce type d'espace est présenté dans le fragment qui suit et dans lequel l'auteur annule les directions : le haut coïncide avec le bas, l'escalier n'est qu'un objet qui trompe :

Maintenant qu'il se fait nuit, on commence à descendre.

- On descend ? demanda surpris Orobete regardant autour de lui. On dirait par contre ...

Bien qu'ils se soient trouvés presque dans les ténèbres, il lui semblait qu'ils commençaient à monter une pente douce, légèrement penchée vers la droite.

- Fais attention ! cria le vieillard en lui serrant le bras avec force. Encore deux pas et on arrive à l'escalier et les marches, bien qu'elles soient en pierre, sont rongées par le temps ... (Eliade, 1991 : 69)

### L'atopie positive / négative

L'étape inaugurale du devenir voit la coïncidence des pôles antithétiques, c'est-à-dire la fusion du centre et de l'étendue. Dieu y est, selon la définition de Nicolas de Cuse, un cercle dont le centre est partout et la circonférence nulle part. *L'axis mundi* qui traverse l'univers est ainsi une *imago mundi*, une représentation totalisante du monde où le singulier coïncide avec la totalité. Cette saturation ontologique de l'espace s'appelle atopie, à savoir des lieux où quelque chose de l'éternité advient. C'est comme une anticipation mystique de l'espace absolu qui prévalait avant le commencement du monde. Le fragment choisi par nous rend compte d'une pareille atopie, étant à la fois un excellent intertexte scientifique :

Si mon intuition est juste, les deux – Einstein et Heisenberg – ont découvert l'équation qui permette d'intégrer le système Matière – Energie dans l'autre ensemble : l'Espace – Temps. Ceci est l'équation ultime outre laquelle on ne peut plus avancer. Ce qu'on peut faire, malheureusement, c'est de reculer. [...] les deux ont compris que le temps peut être comprimé dans les deux directions, à savoir : en avant vers l'avenir et en arrière, vers le passé.

- Alors tout est possible. [...] Essayez de former un groupe choisi, une élite, non seulement de mathématiciens et physiciens mais aussi de poètes et de mystiques, qui sache comment déclencher le processus d'anamnèse, c'est-à-dire de refaire la civilisation. (Eliade, 1991 : 85-86)

On voit que l'intention d'Eliade pour « refaire la civilisation » ne devient possible qu'en formant une équipe de savants et de poètes afin de déclencher le processus d'anamnèse. Encore une fois, le diurne et le nocturne se trouvent en relation de complémentarité, tout comme l'espace-temps. La référence directe à deux grands savants, Einstein et Heisenberg, nous amène à reconsidérer la vision qu'on a de l'espace.

Si pour Isaac Newton l'espace était la réalité absolue, permettant la manifestation de tout phénomène, Albert Einstein ne considère l'espace qu'une simple illusion, la perception qu'on en a. Pour Newton, l'espace est une réalité absolue où sont donnés les phénomènes. La relativité d'Einstein, excluant toute représentation, réduit l'implication de l'espace et du temps comme coordonnées des événements observables à un système d'équations. L'espace serait-il alors, comme dit Kant, non pas représentable, mais condition subjective de toute représentation, « forme *a priori* de la sensibilité » ?

Se situant dans la lignée du physicien Einstein sur l'essence de l'espace en général, Jean Weisgerber note dans l'ouvrage consacré à *L'espace romanesque* que l'espace est l'expression de la tentative personnelle d'agir sur le monde : « *En somme, l'espace n'est jamais que le reflet, le produit d'une expérience individuelle et, dans bien des cas, d'une tentative d'agir sur le monde* » (Weisgerber, 1978 : 11).

Le rôle que joue ici *l'imagination* créatrice est considérable, car elle augmente les valeurs de la réalité : cette disposition propre aux âmes sensibles est appelée à faciliter le *voyage* à travers les nouveaux mondes ; il faut considérer également son caractère inattendu, singulier et soudain remarqué par G. Bachelard.

L'imagination découpe dans l'espace des lieux bien délimités, qui révèlent leur importance dès qu'on les perçoit à travers la conscience poétique génératrice : ces espaces ainsi découpés et délimités ont chacun sa réalité sensible, définie par des caractéristiques concrètes, mais, comme le remarque encore G. Bachelard, ils acquièrent graduellement des valeurs symboliques qui en font un univers à part :

Les centres de rêverie bien déterminés sont des moyens de communication entre les hommes du songe avec la même sûreté que les concepts bien définis sont des moyens de communication entre les hommes de la pensée. (Bachelard, 1989 : 52)

On constate donc qu'Eliade n'est pas un homme à compartiments ; tout chez lui communique, et c'est même un des aspects les plus attachants de son génie que l'extrême cohérence qui unit toujours en lui l'expérience intérieure, l'expérience concrète et l'expression métaphorique. Contempler l'espace, suivre son rythme, c'est en un certain sens vivre la courbe de ma propre existence. Dans cet espace « *cubiste* », au rythme syncopé, le monde change et tourne en un clin d'oeil vers son contraire. Il emprunte au mythe sa clarté narrative en même temps que son obscurité interprétative, le mythe étant figuré comme symbole et comme forme de prose. Le regard balise l'espace et le quadrille à l'instant de son devenir sous le jeu de la lumière. Les détours topographiques sont structurés dans l'instant précis où s'échangent la visibilité et l'obscurité.

Comme les déchirures du tissu textuel, à la fois une coupure et une ouverture, les fragments choisis instituent un contrepoint de la narration. Si cette division – la bifurcation entre le descriptif et le narratif – demeure d'ailleurs toujours un des traits majeurs de la conscience littéraire en se montrant souvent efficace et fructueuse, elle est pourtant très subtile. Il n'est pas étonnant qu'elle soit brouillée par une nouvelle aventure d'écriture. En aucun cas, il ne faut oublier que cette frontière, délicatement tracée, sert à reconnaître l'identité d'un texte. Nous ne devons pas négliger l'infiltration mutuelle et continue entre le descriptif et le narratif et ni la force narrative émergeant de cette projection interne. Le descriptif régularise la progression dramatique par deux moyens particuliers : anticipation et répercussion. Suivant l'ordre des idées genetiennes, nous appellerons ces fonctions *prolepse* et *analepse*. Par *prolepse*, Genette entend : « *toute manoeuvre narrative*

*consistant à raconter ou évoquer d'avance un événement ultérieur, et par analepse toute évocation après coup d'un événement antérieur au point de l'histoire où l'on se trouve [...] » (Genette, 1983 : 108).*

L'espace est encombré des images énigmatiques qui font converger les stimulus analeptiques et proleptiques. Si la description dans un roman de Balzac marque un temps d'arrêt dans le cours de l'action, chez d'autres écrivains, les passages descriptifs se tournent facilement vers une direction autre que le circuit actuel du discours. C'est là où s'inscrivent facilement les empreintes d'une digression de la part du narrateur. La contemplation éliadesque est loin d'être une fulguration instantanée ni un moment d'évasion pure, elle est une activité intense, destinée à une fonction narrative. Le spatial devient de cette manière le contrepoint du narratif.

On pourrait distinguer deux étapes essentielles qui balisent le cheminement de cette écriture, disons, une étape d'expansion et une étape de condensation. Suite à des recherches préparatoires obsédées par une méticulosité érudite, l'étape d'expansion se caractérise principalement par la quête frénétique des signes référentiels et par la voracité des détails *véridiques*. Les pages descriptives puisent dans la jubilation d'étaler la documentation et dans le vertige de copier le savoir du monde.

La deuxième étape se développe à rebours de l'investissement précurseur, en réfutant l'écrasante exigence de la véracité au sens courant. Dorénavant, les éléments hétéroclites et parsemés de la documentation seront rassemblés et condensés sous forme d'écriture, sans appel à la vérité. La distinction de ces deux étapes justifie une écriture mobile et évanescence, incessamment remaniée sur son propre reflet. Les désirs brûlants de l'abstraction, d'une forme capable d'en revêtir mille, règnent dans l'aventure d'une écriture qui tourne vers le diurne et le nocturne à la fois. Exerçant une influence première, les lieux finissent par être les supports d'action, à savoir le déploiement même de l'histoire. Cette espèce de « transsubstance » ne se réaliserait jamais sans une vision stratégique : d'une part, il faut donner les choses pour ce qu'elles sont, en tant qu'elles nous concernent ; d'autre part, il faut qu'elles se laissent pénétrer au fond par la narrativité et qu'elles la participent et qu'elles suggèrent l'histoire. Le résultat est qu'elles sont gonflées et encombrées d'informations plurielles et polysémiques.

## **RÉFÉRENCES :**

Aristote, *La Poétique*, traduction et notes de Barbara Gernez, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1997.



- Bachelard, Gaston, *La Poétique de la rêverie*, Paris, éd. P.U.F., 1989.
- Blanchot, Maurice, *L'Espace littéraire*, Paris, Gallimard (coll. « idées »), 1955.
- Caillois, Roger, *L'homme et le sacré*, Paris, Gallimard, 1950.
- Chevalier, Jean, *Dictionnaire des symboles*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1982.
- Eliade, Mircea, *Dayan*, in *Nuvele inedite*, Ed. Rum-Irina, Bucuresti, 1991.
- Eliade, Mircea, *Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses*, II, Paris, Payot, 1978.
- Eliade, Mircea, *L'épreuve du labyrinthe*, Paris, Belfond, 1978.
- Eliade, Mircea, *La umbra unui crin...* [A l'ombre d'un lys..., notre traduction], Editura Rum-Irina, Bucuresti, 1991.
- Eliade, Mircea, *Le sacré et le profane*, Paris, Gallimard, 1972.
- Eliade, Mircea, *Noaptea de Sinziene*, [La forêt interdite], Editura Minerva, col. Biblioteca pentru toti, Bucuresti, 1991.
- Eliade, Mircea, *Occultisme, sorcellerie et modes culturels*, Paris, Gallimard, 1978.
- Eliade, Mircea, *Pe starda Mintuleasa* [Dans la rue Mintuleasa – notre traduction], *Proza Fantastica III*, Editura Fundatiei Culturale Romane, Bucuresti, 1991.
- Eliade, Mircea, *Secretul doctorului Honigberger*, [Le secret du docteur Honigberger], 1992.
- Eliade, Mircea, *Nouasprezece trandafiri* [Dix-neuf roses - notre traduction], Editura Romanul, Bucuresti, 1991.
- Genette, Gérard, *Nouveau discours du récit*, Paris, Seuil, coll. Poétique, 1983
- Genette, Gérard, *Seuils*, Paris, Seuil, 1987.
- Handoca, Mircea, *Pe urmele lui Mircea Eliade*, Editura Peru Maior, Tirgu-Mures, 1996.
- Voda Capusan, Maria, *Pragmatica teatrului*, Bucuresti, Editura Eminescu, col. Masca, 1987.
- Weisgerber, Jean, *L'espace romanesque*, Lausanne, éd. L'Âge de l'Homme, 1978.

JESS

LINGUISTICS, STYLISTICS AND  
TRANSLATION STUDIES

JESS

# L'utilisation des applications Microsoft Teams, Edpuzzle et LearningApps dans l'enseignement du français scientifique et technique

Cristina Ana Măluțan\*, Adina-Irina Forna\*\*

## Using Microsoft Teams, Edpuzzle and LearningApps in Teaching Scientific and Technical French

### Abstract:

Lately, more and more learning applications and online learning tools are being used for teaching French as a foreign language. Moreover, today's pandemic context somehow forces us to use these online teaching tools to keep contact with our students. This article will focus on three online learning tools that provide the teachers of French as a foreign language the necessary tools to create learning activities for their students. The example we used is the subject of *Social Media* which is a very appealing topic for the 1st year students of Computer Science Faculty within the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca. The learning apps we will use for exemplifying are Microsoft Teams, Edpuzzle and LearningApps. The learning objectives established at the beginning of the course were understanding the vocabulary related to the social media, the grammar structures such as *l'impératif* for the technical vocabulary or the specific language used in science, and the status of the social media nowadays. In order to attain these objectives, we will show how to create teaching activities related to the subject of *social media* using these learning apps. With the interactive activities on these online platforms we will facilitate the development of the CEFR language competences (listening and reading, understanding, spoken and written production) and we will offer examples of playful and interactive activities to make the acquisition of these language structures more attractive and include them in the technical and scientific language.

**Keywords:** on-line apps, teaching, French for Specific Purposes, social media, Microsoft Teams, Edpuzzle, LearningApps

---

\* Senior Lecturer PhD, Department of Modern Languages and Communication, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Cristina.Malutan@lang.utcluj.ro

\*\* Senior Lecturer PhD, Department of Modern Languages and Communication, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Adina.Forna@lang.utcluj.ro

## Introduction

Le contexte pandémique actuel a dénaturisé dans une grande mesure l'ordre originnaire des activités humaines dans tous les domaines de travail. Le domaine de l'enseignement ne s'y échappe non plus. Les professeurs et les enseignants du monde entier se sont heurtés à une situation sans précédent. Ils ont été forcés de s'adapter à la situation donnée et créer toutes sortes de scénarios didactiques pour attirer leurs apprenants dans les activités d'enseignement/apprentissage en ligne. Avant la crise provoquée par le virus détesté, l'enseignement en ligne, utilisant des projets et des pratiques numériques était représenté, dans une certaine mesure, par des activités désirables, probablement rencontrées loin dans l'avenir, mais pour le moment la situation est totalement renversée. Le numérique décrit une constante évidente dans l'environnement quotidien, mais aussi dans l'enseignement actuel. Les actants de l'enseignement universitaire roumain ont utilisé le numérique dans la classe de langue étrangère avec un intérêt élevé. Désormais, nous pouvons fortement constater qu'à l'aide des outils numériques et des applications, l'enseignement en ligne figure une omniprésence dans nos démarches didactiques.

Pour illustrer l'utilisation du numérique dans les cours de français sur objectifs spécifiques nous avons choisi de traiter le sujet des *réseaux sociaux* et les applications utilisées dans ce domaine. Pour le parcours didactique on utilise la plateforme Microsoft Teams, une plateforme disponible et utilisée par l'Université Technique de Cluj-Napoca. Le contenu du cours est adressé aux étudiants de la première année, Faculté de Génie Informatique, d'ailleurs, il peut servir comme support pour tout apprenant qui désire enrichir ses savoirs liés au lexique des réseaux sociaux. Pour diversifier le numérique dans l'enseignement/apprentissage du FOS, certaines activités didactiques seront offertes aux étudiants par l'intermédiaire de LearningApps et Edpuzzle. Parmi les objectifs pédagogiques établis au début du cours, nous devons mentionner que les étudiants doivent comprendre et assimiler les expressions et les mots liés aux réseaux sociaux ; ils doivent connaître la description de certaines applications utilisées pour communiquer en ligne ; ils doivent savoir utiliser correctement les verbes à l'impératif pour

donner des instructions, consignes, ordres, etc. et parallèlement, les étudiants doivent identifier et connaître les étapes à suivre pour installer et utiliser une application pour les réseaux sociaux.

### **Le déroulement didactique en ligne**

Le déroulement pédagogique du cours *Réseaux sociaux* aura lieu en ligne à l'aide de la plateforme Microsoft Teams mise (gratuitement) à la disposition de tous les professeurs et les étudiants de l'Université Technique de Cluj-Napoca. Même si cette plateforme a été conçue pour permettre aux différentes équipes de travail ou entreprises de collaborer en ligne, elle commence à gagner du terrain même dans le domaine de l'enseignement/apprentissage. Microsoft Teams fait partie de la suite Office 365, peut être utilisée par les petites et grandes entreprises et permet aussi de communiquer et interagir sur des contenus didactiques en temps réel, sur des ordinateurs, tablettes ou portables. Elle a été lancée sur le marché en 2017, pour remplacer Skype for Business Online, mais les dernières années, Microsoft « a mis en œuvre des fonctionnalités de Skype for Business Online dans Teams, en particulier celles de messagerie, de réunion et d'appel. De nouvelles fonctionnalités sont fréquemment ajoutées à Teams » (<https://www.lemagit.fr/definition/Microsoft-Teams>, site consulté le 20 mars 2020). Cette plateforme est

essentiellement un espace de travail à base de tchat qui comprend une messagerie de groupe et privée, et prend en charge les fils de discussion et les conversations permanentes. Au sein de chaque équipe [ou groupe d'étudiants<sup>1</sup>], les utilisateurs peuvent créer différents canaux afin de classer leurs communications par thème. Chaque canal peut être utilisé par quelques utilisateurs ou plusieurs milliers. Les membres d'une équipe qui ont ouvert un fil de discussion peuvent programmer des réunions audio et vidéo. Ce flux de travail facilite les communications contextuelles. Les utilisateurs peuvent également modifier des fichiers PowerPoint à partir de Teams. Comme dans les autres messageries, il est possible d'intégrer des émojis et des fichiers GIF dans les messages de Teams (*Ibidem*).

En plus, les étudiants peuvent travailler dans les documents Word envoyés par le professeur, en partageant l'écran de leurs ordinateurs. Ainsi, le professeur peut vérifier l'acquisition des quatre compétences stipulées dans le Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues.

La première étape du déroulement didactique commence par une conversation préliminaire, une activité qui a pour but de briser la glace et de mettre en train les étudiants. Le professeur partage sur l'écran de la plateforme Microsoft Teams une image qui représente l'impact des réseaux sociaux sur les gens. Il s'agit d'une personne et autour d'elle

---

<sup>1</sup> Notre remarque.

flottent les logos de certaines applications utilisées pour socialiser en ligne. L'enseignant de FOS demande aux étudiants de répondre à ses questions pour pouvoir décrire et interpréter cette photo. Les étudiants déduisent que l'image représente les réseaux sociaux et ils donnent leur avis sur l'impact qu'ils peuvent exercer sur la société et tout particulièrement sur la vie sociale des jeunes. Après avoir interprété l'image, le professeur annonce les étudiants que le sujet sur lequel ils vont s'attarder est représenté par les réseaux sociaux et leur place dans la société de nos jours.

L'assimilation de nouvelles connaissances et le déroulement didactique continuent par le partage d'une fiche de travail, retrouvée sur le site [www.fr.islcollective.com](http://www.fr.islcollective.com) et introduite dans un document Word qui contient l'article *WhatsApp : Pourquoi la France n'est pas fanatique de la messagerie gratuite*, accompagné d'exercices de compréhension écrite. Le professeur lit le texte, ensuite il explique certains mots inconnus. Le site susmentionné offre des exercices de compréhension du texte écrit, du type Vrai ou Faux ; pour retenir certains mots et expressions propres au domaine des réseaux sociaux nous proposons aussi d'autres types d'exercices : le premier exercice – *Faites la correspondance entre les mots extraits de l'article et leur définition du dictionnaire Larousse* et le deuxième exercice – *Trouvez dans l'article les antonymes des mots suivants*. Les étudiants offrent la solution correcte des exercices, ils lisent leurs réponses et le professeur complète (à l'écrit) dans le partage de l'écran du document Word, les variantes correctes.

Pour développer la compétence de compréhension orale, le professeur demande aux étudiants de regarder la vidéo intitulée *Installer instagram ++, spotify ++, Snapchat ++ et d'autres (Sans Jailbreak ni PC)* (la vidéo est empruntée au site [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)), en leur proposant ensuite des exercices. Ces exercices sont réalisés à l'aide du logiciel en ligne Edpuzzle qui offre la possibilité d'exploiter des documents pédagogiques de type vidéo et d'organiser des activités didactiques interactives. Edpuzzle offre comme fonctionnalités principales : les « ciseaux : choisir le passage exploité ; micro : enregistrer une bande audio pour toute la durée de la vidéo ; haut-parleur : insérer des notes audio à un moment particulier ; point d'interrogation : ajouter des quiz (questions à choix multiples, questions ouvertes) ou des commentaires écrits à un moment précis. » (Cordina, Rambert,



Oddou, 2017 : 48). La vidéo adaptée avec les exercices sont offerts aux étudiants par l'intermédiaire d'un lien. En appuyant sur le lien, ils seront dirigés vers l'activité de compréhension orale et ils vont résoudre dans le logiciel en ligne Edpuzzle les exercices : *Regardez la vidéo* « Installer instagram ++, spotify ++, Snapchat ++ et d'autres (Sans Jailbreak ni PC) » <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCRTgVI9Ck8>, *puis répondez, en choisissant la réponse correcte*, parmi les trois proposées et *Regardez de nouveau la vidéo et complétez le texte avec les mots qui manquent*. Edpuzzle offre aux professeurs de langue étrangère la possibilité d'insérer les questions des exercices à l'intérieur du document vidéo. Par exemple, s'il y a un point de langue qui serait susceptible de donner naissance à d'autres activités, le professeur peut arrêter le déroulement de la vidéo à un moment donné, il peut introduire la question dans la vidéo et, après avoir reçu la réponse, il peut insérer d'autres activités à d'autres moments de la vidéo. Les apprenants réalisent sur leurs ordinateurs les exercices en ligne et, si nécessaire, ils peuvent se créer leur propre compte Edpuzzle (s'ils n'ont pas les moyens techniques, le professeur peut partager l'écran avec la vidéo et ils peuvent parcourir ensemble – activité frontale – toutes les activités liées au développement de la compétence de compréhension orale). Pour avoir accès aux exploitations pédagogiques qu'Edpuzzle offre, le professeur doit se créer un compte Edpuzzle et peut encourager ses apprenants de faire le même pour qu'ils puissent accéder facilement à d'autres activités didactiques mises en ligne par leur professeur.

La vidéo susmentionnée n'a pas été choisie par hasard, elle contient des mots qui expriment des instructions, des ordres, des consignes, c'est pourquoi elle offre la possibilité d'enchaîner le déroulement didactique par l'étude de l'impératif et tout particulièrement de l'emploi de l'impératif dans le français scientifique et technique. Par l'intermédiaire d'une conversation avec tout le groupe, les étudiants identifient dans la vidéo les verbes *suivez*, *tapez*, etc., et déduisent qu'il s'agit du mode verbal *impératif* qui, par sa nature, exprime des prières, des consignes, des instructions, des ordres. Pour mettre à jour les savoirs liés à l'impératif, le professeur partage l'écran dans Microsoft Teams pour offrir une présentation orale réalisée par l'intermédiaire de Power Point. Les étudiants font attention à la présentation

théorique sur l'impératif et, pour fixer les connaissances, l'enseignant leur offre une fiche réalisée en Word qui contient des exercices de grammaire : *Mettez les verbes entre parenthèses à l'impératif (II<sup>e</sup> personne du pluriel) et Transformez à l'impératif les verbes des phrases suivantes*. Les étudiants écrivent les verbes à l'impératif sur la fiche, puis ils vérifient leurs réponses, ensuite le professeur note les solutions correctes sur l'écran partagé. Le plus grand inconvénient de ce déroulement pédagogique est représenté par le fait que la majorité des activités écrites ne peuvent pas être réalisées en paires ou en groupe de 3-4 personnes, seulement individuellement. C'est dommage, car nous avons toujours trouvé que le travail en groupe est plus fructueux que celui individuel.

La fixation finale des connaissances peut être effectuée par l'intermédiaire d'un exercice-jeu en ligne, créé à l'aide de l'application LearningApps.org. LearningApps est une application

visant à soutenir les processus d'enseignement et d'apprentissage au moyen d'exercice, nos utilisateurs/triches ayant un compte peuvent créer des applis. L'objectif est de rassembler des exercices de toutes notions et de les mettre à la disposition de tous. C'est pour cela que les modules (appelés applis ou apps) ne s'inscrivent pas dans un cadre particulier ou ne comportent pas de scénario d'apprentissage concret et se limitent exclusivement à la partie interactive. Les modules ne présentent donc en eux-mêmes aucune unité d'apprentissage prédéfinie et doivent être intégrés à une activité ou séquence d'apprentissage (<https://learningapps.org/about.php>, site consulté le 20 mars 2020).

Nous avons créé dans cette application un exercice dans lequel nous avons introduit les logos d'une dizaine de réseaux sociaux (les plus utilisées dans le monde) avec leurs descriptions. La consigne de l'exercice est de faire la correspondance entre l'application (image) et la description correcte. Pour résoudre l'exercice, les étudiants peuvent recevoir le lien avec l'exercice ou le professeur peut partager l'écran dans Microsoft Teams et effectuer ensemble l'exercice donné.

Le développement des compétences de production écrite et de production orale suit le parcours logique des activités didactiques, car les étudiants doivent choisir une application parmi celles rencontrées dans l'exercice précédent, la décrire et la présenter oralement.

L'évaluation du cours comprend deux parties importantes : l'évaluation au cours de la leçon et l'évaluation finale. Pendant le

cours, le professeur peut faire des remarques orales sur la participation à la conversation et Microsoft Teams lui offre la possibilité de contrôler oralement les réponses orales et écrites des étudiants (il faut souligner le fait que les étudiants aussi peuvent interagir, parler et partager l'écran de l'ordinateur avec leurs propres solutions aux exercices proposés par le professeur). Pour ce qui tient de l'évaluation finale, nous suggérons comme modalité, l'autoévaluation. L'autoévaluation représente une étape principale dans le processus d'apprentissage de tout étudiant, même si l'enseignement de la langue étrangère est fait en ligne. Savoir s'autoévaluer permettra à l'étudiant de se positionner à un certain niveau de langue, ainsi l'étudiant sera capable de travailler davantage certaines notions ou points moins forts. Nous proposons comme évaluation finale *La Technique 3-2-1*. Le professeur demande aux étudiants de noter et présenter : trois (3) concepts/notions/mots qu'ils ont retenus au cours de cette leçon ; deux (2) idées qu'ils voudraient développer ou compléter avec de nouvelles informations ; une (1) conclusion concernant l'utilisation actuelle des réseaux sociaux par les jeunes. Le but de cette conversation a le rôle d'offrir au professeur de FOS des pistes pour des nouveaux sujets d'enseignement. Elle lui montre les points de langue à traiter dans l'avenir, le lexique qui a posé des problèmes à ses étudiants et les sujets que ses apprenants trouvent les plus intéressants à discuter et approfondir.

Pour finir le cours sur les réseaux sociaux, le professeur suggère aux étudiants le devoir suivant : *Votre ami(e) aime socialiser en ligne. Il/Elle est toujours connecté(e) à ses proches. Parfois, il/elle oublie même d'étudier pour les examens. Donnez-lui des conseils utiles concernant l'utilisation des réseaux sociaux. Présentez-lui les avantages et les inconvénients de ces applications.* Ils devront utiliser l'impératif pour résoudre cet exercice. Ainsi, l'acquisition du lexique des réseaux sociaux et du point de langue spécifique au français technique et scientifique seront renforcés par un travail supplémentaire réalisé individuellement.

### **Conclusion**

Comme évoqué auparavant, le numérique représente une omniprésence dans la vie quotidienne. Semblablement, désormais, la situation actuelle au niveau mondial ne peut s'en passer des pratiques numériques, des applications et des logiciels susceptibles d'être

utilisés dans l'enseignement/l'apprentissage en ligne des langues étrangères. Les professeurs de français sur objectifs spécifiques doivent créer pendant leurs cours en ligne des environnements numériques divers qui puissent offrir aux étudiants des milieux de communication authentique. La multitude d'applications et de logiciels disponibles pour l'apprentissage des langues enrichit le déroulement pédagogique du cours permettant aux étudiants une autonomie et une individualisation de leur formation dans le domaine du français scientifique et technique. L'intégration du numérique dans les scénarios didactiques de FOS peut être attirante à tel point qu'elle ne provoque pas d'ennuis aux étudiants.

L'idée de l'étudiant seul devant l'écran de son ordinateur en train d'apprendre la langue étrangère peut être acceptée avec certaines limites. L'illusion que les cours de langues peuvent se dérouler constamment en ligne est exagérée. Nous considérons qu'une acquisition correcte d'une langue étrangère est plus fructueuse si l'interaction enseignant – apprenant a lieu dans une salle où les deux actants se trouvent en face à face. Si l'échange didactique ne passe par tous les canaux de communication (verbal, non verbal et paraverbal), les structures enseignées seront mal intériorisées par les apprenants. Donc, l'enseignement et l'apprentissage du français sur objectifs spécifiques en ligne avec des outils numériques est très attirant, mais nous proposons de la modération dans son utilisation. En outre, dans la classe de français scientifique et technique, nous suggérons une approche hybride d'enseignement, un mélange entre les cours face à face et les cours en ligne, à distance, avec l'intégration des outils numériques.

## RÉFÉRENCES :

Cordina, D., Rambert, J., Oddou, M., *Pratiques et projets numériques en classe de FLE*, Paris, CLE International, 2017.

<https://www.lemagit.fr/definition/Microsoft-Teams>, site consulté le 20 mars 2020.

<https://edpuzzle.com/media/5f2be63b0ae28e3f8147e935>, site consulté le 3 février 2020.

<https://fr.islcollective.com/francais-fle-fiches-pedagogiques/vocabulaire/ordinateur-et-linformatique/pourquoi-la-france-nest-pas-fanatisme-de-lamessagerie-gratui/86927>, site consulté le 17 janvier 2020.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCRTgVI9Ck8>, site consulté, le 14 janvier 2020

<https://learningapps.org/about.php>, site consulté le 20 mars 2020.

<https://learningapps.org/display?v=pbmqx858t20>, site consulté le 23 février 2020.

## The Language Community: Traditional Linguistic Communities in the Western Romania

Voica Radu-Călugăru\*

### **Abstract:**

The language community creates a universe defined in terms of social analysis where linguistic phenomena reflect general rules of behavior. Most groups with certain stability – both small groups related through direct contact and modern nations, divided into smaller sub regions or professional associations and small local groups – can be considered as language communities if they present language features that demand a special study. Verbal behavior of such groups always represents a system. Communication of referential information means grammar, while communication of social information implicates a correlative systematic variation in the structure of language and in the social structure. The Western part of our country shows a distinct mosaic of linguistic communities who have contributed in preserving spiritual and cultural identity of ethnic minorities. Spiritual and cultural identity means *language* and *tradition*, preserved in various types of *language communities*.

**Keywords:** language community, bilingualism, acculturation, linguistic influence, linguistic code

Language communities were considered either cultural areas, closely linked to commercial and traffic areas, or as small urban groups, or as immigrant groups.

J.J. Gumperz states that the notion of *linguistic community* defines *any human community which is characterized by regular and frequent interaction between its members, through a common corpus of verbal signs and which is distinguished from similar communities by significant differences in language use*. There are both monolingual and *bi-* or multilingual communities (*apud* Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran, 1975: 16).

*Linguistic variations* can be traced both at the individual level and at the level of language communities. Individuals are distinguished by the way they use language; this mode varies over time. In order to designate the inventory of the verbal skills of an individual in a certain period of his life, the notion of *idiolect* is used. It can be said that in the course of life, an individual uses several *idiolects*. The mobility of

---

\* Associate Professor PhD, “Aurel Vlaicu” University of Arad, voicaradu@yahoo.com

*idiolects* is determined by aspects related to the speaker's biography (education, profession etc.), as well as by the actual process of verbal interaction, which involves contact between *idiolects*. The last aspect led R. Jakobson to state that the notion of *idiolect* represents, to a certain extent, a deceptive fiction: each individual tends to adapt, consciously or not, his own way of expressing himself to that of his interlocutors, so that the interference between *idiolects* is continuous. According to Jakobson, there is *no private property in language, everything is socialized* (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran, 1975: 17).

As stated by E. Haugen (Haugen, 1971: 9-10), the transition from *idiolect* to *sociolect* reflects the transition from psychology to sociology. Unlike the *idiolect*, which has a strictly individual character, the *sociolect* is the basic unit, recognized at the level of the linguistic community. The *sociolect* is a minimal, uniform code, defined by the set of common features of the *idiolects* of the members of a certain community and unrecognized in the speech of the members of other communities.

In many communities, each language is functionally specialized (it is used to discuss certain topics, for certain purposes, and by certain people) (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran, 1975: 21).

Bilinguals are said *to build bridges between verbal communities*. Some researchers have even compared them to *the marginal man* that sociologists talk about.

Bilinguals represent *bridge communities* (Ch. Hockett), with the role of mediating the relationship between the communities themselves (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran, 1975: 22).

Fast-changing societies typically present the gradual transition between speech styles or, when the community is bilingual, a series of intermediate varieties that make the transition between extremes. The concrete effect of bilingualism on a person's speech varies depending on certain factors, some of which can be called extralinguistic, because they are beyond the structural differences between languages or even their lexical deficiencies. The speaker's ease of verbal expression and his ability to maintain two distinct languages, his relative proficiency in each language and his attitude towards them, are just a few extralinguistic factors relevant to the study of interference (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran, 1975: 23).

Europe at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has become an increasingly multilingual continent due to the influence of emigrants and refugees around the world.

According to recent surveys, about half of Europe's population is already multilingual and 44% of European citizens can communicate in a language other than their mother tongue.

In most contacts between groups that speak different mother tongues, the groups constitute, at the same time, distinct ethnic or cultural communities. Such contact produces phenomena of *biculturalism* (participation in two cultures), as well as *bilingualism*, the diffusion of cultural features, as well as linguistic elements.

Situations of concordance of contact between cultures and languages generate *lexical-cultural interferences*.

One type of cultural difference, namely religious difference, often coincides –alone or in combination with other types –with a division into mother tongues. In Switzerland there are bilingual communities in which the distinction between mother tongues does not coincide with any other cultural difference, apart from one of confession (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran, 1975: 96).

The difference in religion acts as a more important obstacle than the linguistic one for the integration of communes, so that, in bilingual communes, but of the same denomination, the contact of the two mother tongue groups is considerably closer. In general, a villager is more aware of his neighbor's confession than of his mother tongue. Mixed marriages are quite rare, and daily activities are separated by confession.

Most groups with a certain stability, be they small groups linked by direct contact, modern nations, divisible into smaller subregions or even professional associations and small local groups – can be considered as *speaking communities*, if they have linguistic features that are suitable a special study. The verbal behavior of such groups is always a system. It must be based on a finite number of grammatical rules, which underlie the production of correctly formed sentences, because otherwise the messages would be unintelligible (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran, 1975: 103).

The communication of referential information presupposes the existence of a grammar, and the communication of social information presupposes the existence of a systematic correlative variation of the language structure and of the social structure.

Where two or more speech communities maintain prolonged contact within a wide field of communication, there are intersecting diffusion currents.

The influence between cultures can also give rise to the change of *linguistic code*: the abandonment of one mother tongue in favor of another. This phenomenon occurs most frequently when two groups are mentioned, as in the case of cultural absorption, or when minority groups take over the culture of the surrounding majority.

The totality of the dialectal variants and of the superimposed ones that are used regularly in a community form the *verbal repertoire* of this community. Whether or not the boundaries of a language may coincide

with those of a social group, verbal repertoires are always specific to certain populations (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran, 1975: 111).

The concept of *linguistic range* refers to the internal linguistic distance between the constituent variations, ie to the total amount of purely linguistic differentiation existing in a community, thus distinguishing *multilingual*, *multidialectal* and *homogeneous communities* (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran, 1975: 112).

When social change destroys social and traditional structures and forms new connections as in the case of urbanization and colonization, language barriers between communities are also destroyed.

Some researchers view language communication within a verbal community as an *interconnected system of subcodes* (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran, 1975: 114).

E. Sapir disregards the effect of the social environment and considers natural evolution (*drift*) as the main factor in determining the structural features of a language.

The *language community* is defined as a social group, monolingual or multilingual, welded due to the frequency of patterns of social interaction and separated from the surrounding areas due to poor communication possibilities. Language communities can be made up of small groups linked by direct contact or they can cover large regions, depending on the level of abstraction we want to achieve.

Social communication within a linguistic community can be considered in terms of functionally linked *roles*, defined, after Nadei, as *modes of action attributed to individuals in a society* (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran, 1975: 115).

The totality of communication roles in a society can be called its *communication matrix*. We define the *code matrix* as the set of codes and subcodes functionally linked to the *communication matrix* (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran, 1975: 116).

The nature of the *code matrix* components varies from community to community. In some, all components are dialects or styles of the same language. We call these *subcodes*. In others, the matrix also includes genetically distinct languages, which cannot be called *codes*. The distinction between *code* and *subcode* is linguistic: it does not necessarily correspond to a difference in social function (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Chițoran, 1975: 117).

Located in the Western part of Romania, Arad was endowed both geographically and historically with a spiritual destiny of confluences, ethnic and religious interferences, meant to harmonize ideas, feelings or beliefs over time. The sometimes sinuous evolution of these "encounters" describes a map of a discreet feeling, with a unique flavor, that of *being together*. This feeling becomes the spiritual coordinate of a



space designed as if for self-knowledge and self-discovery, for the discovery of identity in otherness.

Arad – as a city and as a county – has always been multiethnic and multireligious, and the relationship between the different groups has been cordial. The elders, especially from the smaller localities, tell with tenderness how they eagerly awaited the holidays of the other ethnic groups, to which they were always invited, receiving gifts, tasting specific dishes. However, tense moments were not lacking, whether it is the Second World War, or the more recent events, after the Revolution of '89, when the spirits were heated by the claims, justified or not, of some groups with radical thinking.

Referring strictly to the Arad area, we notice that the status or perception of *being a foreigner* is closely related to a certain era by creating a social, political and economic background. Therefore, *being a foreigner* in interwar Arad is not the same as *being a foreigner* in the Arad of the '80<sup>s</sup> or in Arad from the post-December period. The status of a *foreigner* also implies the alienation of one's own being through the loss of the linguistic, cultural identity, of the roots that always remind you that you feed on the sap of the earth at home.

What did it mean to live in interwar Arad for a Hungarian, a German, a Jew or even an Italian? From the stories of parents and grandparents, there is an Arad with tabiets, with a warm atmosphere, with a rich cultural life in which concerts, theater and opera performances invited personalities belonging to different ethnicities (opera performances by Lia Hubic, concerts of pianists like Schwartz or Körösy). The mundane life of Arad at that time presupposed the traditional Sunday walk, when socialization and good relations were unhindered. Merchandise markets, shopping streets were spaces where both the Romanian merchant and the Hungarian, German, Serbian or Jewish merchant were part of the picturesque place, in a cordial atmosphere. The era is marked by the pulse of the *traditional communities* that make up the linguistic, religious and cultural mosaic of Arad.

The *traditional communities* of Arad from the interwar period until the Revolution of '89 are: the Hungarian community, the Jewish community, the German community and the Serbian community. We can say that precisely this ethnic, religious and cultural variety has fixed the personality of Arad in the landscape of the Western area. The same ethnic groups are found in the mentioned period both in Arad County and in the Western area, with certain accents on regions, which gave uniqueness to each.

These *traditional communities* have evolved over time, have been influenced by various social, political and economic factors, have been effervescent or just resisted, but have not been lost, have not

disintegrated, despite the aging of their members, of the roller coaster of communism, of emigration and, currently, of globalization. So we can speak of certain vitality, of a permanence of these communities, and their continuity was maintained by preserving the *language, customs and traditions*.

The Serbian community, having as its *axis mundi* the *Serbian Church* in the *Serbian Square*, perpetuates the traditions, celebrates Christmas and New Year according to the old calendar, an opportunity for all generations to meet, as the elderly and young enjoy together, the latter taking over and learning customs.

Also interesting are the communities of Slovaks (Nădlac) or the community of Bulgarians from Vinga, the latter being identified by the imposing Catholic Church that watches over the settlement.

The negative experience of the politically generated conflicts deeply marked, unfortunately, the village universe of the county, the elderly there telling sad, sometimes disturbing stories created by the conflict Catholicism *vs.* Orthodoxy, Hungarian language *vs.* Romanian language etc. However, a kind of compensation has always worked by balancing these communities that have managed to balance themselves, to *re-establish that state of being together*.

With the establishment of communism, this local perfume and color began to fade, the distinct individuals of different communities going through an aggressive process of dissolution in favor of imposing *uniformity* and *uniform*. A significant part of the Hungarians and Jews had already left that *at home*, going abroad, experiencing from another perspective the status of *being a foreigner*.

The Germans in the German community of Aradul Nou oriented their destiny towards Germany, some Hungarians and Jews in Hungary, the USA or Israel, but they left indelible memories and traditions. Buildings, holiday customs and culinary customs have all been preserved in this space, in the soul and the spiritual memory of these places.

The post-December period experienced at one point an intense emotion of *coming back home*, of recovery, Hungarians, Germans, and Jews, who left once, waiting for the coagulation of the old communities. Thus, some communities restructured their nucleus, accepting *the new* brought by those who had once left the womb.

Currently, Arad has become *home* to other ethnic groups that bring a new, even exotic note to the patriarchal city. We refer here to the population of Chinese and Arab origin who carry out mainly commercial activities. The children of these families attend the classes of the Arad schools; learn the Romanian language, Romanian customs and traditions. These *new communities* raise the issue of their integration

from a cultural perspective, celebrations, festivities, shows held by members on the occasion of traditional holidays being so discreet that they go unnoticed.

*Traditional communities* meet the *modern communities* of the city and region, the Italian community, the Chinese community or the Arab community being present as a result of the dynamics brought about by the opening after the Revolution of '89, as well as by globalization. The Italian community is not for Arad or for the Western area, an absolutely new presence, the Italians finding a purpose in the city on Mureș river and in other cities or localities in the West during the interwar period, too, when, like other communities, identified with certain guilds, crafts or commercial activities.

From the point of view of the existence of these communities after the Revolution of '89, the county and the city of Arad are in a long process of recovery, of search in which they try to give back to Arad what has always been its: the brilliance of diversity, the joy of being together, of knowing different existential formulas.

Regarding the various cults that are present in Arad, we can speak of a very wide range: Orthodox, Catholic, Greek Catholic, Protestant or Mosaic, most of them being found in a certain linguistic identity, namely: Romanian, Hungarian, German, Serbian, Bulgarian or Hebrew. It is well known that these cults coexisted harmoniously, finding in Arad a generous space for manifestation. Not only the languages and traditions specific to these cults have created a special landscape, but also the architecture of the places of worship is a defining one for Arad. The buildings of the Catholic Church, the Red Church or the New Orthodox Cathedral stand next to that of the Neolog Synagogue or the Serbian Church, all architectural jewels, witnesses of a long tradition. From an architectural point of view, the *Serbian Square* is another hidden treasure of Arad, a rich history reflected in the buildings that make up the old part of the city.

In the interwar period, until the '50s and '60s, the beneficial coexistence of these cults was transposed at all levels of human relations, the neighbors belonging to different denominations giving traditional dishes or practicing certain customs (Catholic boys coming to sprinkle perfume on girls belonged to other denominations, Jewish children brought Easter to Orthodox or Catholic schools). Mixed marriages, Romanian-Hungarian, Romanian-German, Romanian-Slovak etc. were an opportunity to exchange or adopt traditions, customs of all kinds, as well as to increase the number of bilingual or multilingual speakers.

Understanding what is new or different requires, first of all, an effort to accept the other, then knowledge that can be achieved through direct contact with the traditions, the culture of these communities

whose identity seeks a well-deserved place in the Arad landscape. Art performances, exhibitions, book launches, presentation of traditions and customs of these communities, various holidays and events held within the groups, ethnic groups mentioned, but with a wide openness to the outside is a chance to optimize the process of *acceptance, knowledge and understanding*. It is a journey as exciting and complicated as that of self-knowledge, a *sine qua non* condition of knowing the other. However, accepting differences requires an exercise of will and generous love, the renunciation of prejudices and the integration of one's own being into universality.

Communication, regardless of the form worn, is meant to bring the joy of discovering the other, the awareness of the multitude of facets of the local specificity of Arad. This dialogue of self-rediscovery restores to this area of the West the initial dimension of an ethnic, linguistic, spiritual and cultural plurality in a *value-generating* harmony.

#### REFERENCES:

- Bârlea, Gheorghe Petre, *Multilingvism și interculturalitate*, București, Editura „Grai și suflet – Cultura națională”, 2010.
- Bhatia, Tej K.; Ritchie, William C., *Bilingualism and Multilingualism in South Asia. The Handbook of Bilingualism and Multilingualism*, 2nd Edition. Eds. Tej K. Bhatia, William C. Ritchie. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. 2012. Print.
- Bialystok, Ellen, *Bilingualism in development. Language, Literacy and Cognition*, Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Djuric-Milovanovic, Aleksandra, *Serbs in Romania. Relationship between Ethnic and Religious Identity*, Institute for Balkan studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, in “Balcanica”, XLIII, Belgrad, 2012.
- Fishman, J. A., *The new linguistic order*, Foreign Policy, 1998.
- Harriers, J. F., & Blanc, M. H. A., *Bilinguality and bilingualism*, New York, Cambridge University Pres, 1989.
- Haugen, E., *The Analysis of linguistic Borrowing // Language*, vol. 26, 1950.
- Hockett, Ch., *The View from Language*, Athens, The University of Georgia Press, 1977.
- Ionescu-Ruxândoiu, Liliana, Dumitru Chițoran, *Sociolingvistică. Orientări actuale*, București, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1975.
- Sapir, E., *Linguistique*, Paris, 1968.

## Transacted Identities: Language and Self Negotiation in Interaction

Gabriela Ioana Mocan\*

### **Abstract:**

The present article aims to investigate how identity occurs dialogically – and not only – in social interaction, with personal and social identity overlapping and influencing each other, and the social actors transacting themselves based on their external cues. Identity negotiation, concept that stays at the core of our study, looks at the ways in which, starting from a specific agenda and precise goals, individuals engage in the creation of mutual identities, while also attempting to put on a favourable self-presentation for their interlocutors. The theoretical framework underpinning the research is set by the sociolinguistic paradigm, and the major importance attributed to language in the identity negotiation process is demonstrated in the second part of our research. The contribution concludes with some tentative observations and directions for further research.

**Keywords:** language, culture, identity negotiation, social interaction, translation, sociolinguistics, code-switching

Identity negotiation can be quite a challenge, even more so in intercultural contexts. Just like beauty, identity is often a matter of perspective, as it is situated in the eyes of the beholder; thus, a simple meeting between two people can turn the otherwise unquestioned identity into a threatening responsibility. With this in mind, it can be said that people are drawn to partners and group members who validate them, who look at them through the lens of their own self-perception. In this regard, William Swann identified at least two principles that prove to be decisive for the outcome of the identity negotiation process:

(1) The first one, *the investment principle*, focuses on expectations. The higher the expectations during interaction, the more important they will be in the negotiation process: “the extent to which people feel that they know their own minds will determine the extent to which they work to bring the minds of others into harmony with their own views” (Swann, 2005: 79).

---

\* Assistant Lecturer PhD, “Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca, gabriela.mocan@econ.ubbcluj.ro

(2) The second one, *the accessibility principle*, states the importance of possessing the right set of attributes that would help verify external expectations: “for people to strive to verify an expectancy, they must possess the mental resources and motivation required to access that expectancy” (Swann, 2005: 79).

Within the identity negotiation framework, the outcome of social interaction is influenced by both personal and social variables, that is to say one’s own history and objectives manifested in interaction are closely matched by the social roles and conventions. The main advantage granted by this twofold perspective is a more comprehensive understanding of alterity, which could never be reached from a personal or social perspective alone. And this is all the more challenging as identity is not something finite; it can only be understood as a process, as a becoming, and trying to fix it in well-defined frames is like trying to stop the water in a child’s fist. “Not even death can freeze the picture: there is always the possibility of a post mortem revision of identity (and some identities – that of the martyr, for example – can only be achieved beyond the grave)” (Jenkins, 1996: 4).

When engaging in interaction, people shape their social identity by projecting aspects of their personal identity onto it, as if providing the others with a guidebook to navigate their selves. In most cases – but also depending on the context –, they choose to only reveal one side of their personal identity, which is determined by their sensitivity to the society’s cues, as well as by the ability to control their behavior in response to those. Given one’s need to monitor oneself, most often motivated by the desire to preserve face, each individual manages that which can be seen by others according to the environment, thus putting on a performance (social manifestation) during which different faces are revealed to convey different facets of their identity. Such monitoring can manage other people’s perceptions, transmitting the right information at the right time.

Subscribing to the theories of renowned French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, for whom identity is created in dialogue, the internal-external dialectic (the self-image versus the public image) takes shape. Hence, identity springs from self-awareness but this self-revelation flows toward self-recognition channeled by the other. Therefore, it can be said that identity always involves maintaining a dialogue with partners against whom and / or with whom each individual expresses his own individuality:

people form self-views as a means of making sense of the world, predicting the responses of others, and guiding behavior. From this vantage point, self-views represent the ‘lens’ through which people perceive their worlds and organize their

behavior. As such, it is critical that these ‘lenses’ remain stable. This explains why people are motivated to stabilize their self-views through a series of active behavioral and cognitive activities I dubbed ‘self-verification processes’. (Swann, 2005: 70)

In his own right, Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor places identity at the center of modern consciousness, which in his view is the essential condition for an individual’s growth and, consequently, for freedom. For him, identity involves a double process of self-realization. On the one hand we have self-discovery, which equals the individual’s ability to conceive his own subjectivity and, on the other hand, we speak about self-recognition in relation to another, which refers to the individual’s ability to situate himself in the social environment that is given.

With the aim of assessing what is adequate, people are guided by situational and interpersonal cues. By understanding the social implications of contextual cues and the reactions of those around him, the individual receives social feedback to adjust his behaviour in accordance with the given situation, in a hope that the other’s perception will reflect his desired image. As people engage socially, they constantly turn to their own experiences in their perception of otherness and of the environment in which they find themselves, thus presenting facets of their identity that they consider appropriate to the situation. This negotiation, however, takes place with a minimum conscious effort.

During social interaction, individuals ‘write’ themselves while simultaneously ‘reading’ the others; they ‘edit’ their own presentation in accordance with the reactions and presentations of those around them. This type of interaction is, fundamentally, a negotiation that takes place in a given social context, involving only certain aspects of the participants’ identity. It often occurs without too much conscious analysis; people interact with each other naturally, revealing what they consider appropriate while assessing the information provided by the other. Given all this, social identity can be compared to a game – “a game of «playing the vis-à-vis»”, whose rules are constantly negotiated.

Social identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people’s understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us). Social identity is, therefore, no more essential than meaning; it too is the product of agreement and disagreement, it too is negotiable. (Jenkins, 1996: 5)

Referring to what Erving Goffman called the ‘self-presentation’ in interaction, we cannot overlook the uniqueness and variability of human beings. In the process of social interaction, individuals define and redefine themselves and others throughout their whole lives. And although we have some control over the signals we send out about ourselves, there is no way we can ensure their correct reception or

interpretation. Social identity, therefore, has a performative nature, being incorporated in social practice and language is seen “as a material and historical force which acts as the means by which individuals construct their personal, local, transnational and spiritual identities” (Gallardo, 2019: vii).

Further to this, one of the central ideas in Barth’s studies is that it is not enough to convey a message about identity; that message must be accepted by others – people to whom we attribute greater importance (‘significant others’) – before an identity can be endorsed. As a consequence, identities are to be found and negotiated at the borderline between internal and external. So here is the answer to questions such as these: What would the relationship between the multiple components of such a polynomial identity be? Can there be a hierarchy among them? Can any of them be dominant? Does this polynomial identity have a face on which all these identity-bearing signs are engraved, or is it just a matrix devoid of substance?

By belonging simultaneously and/ or successively to several groups (of affiliation) or by relating to them as benchmarks (reference groups), individuals accumulate a multitude of roles and social identities. In this interactional game with otherness and with various social situations, the social actor resorts to this pool of multiple identities, bringing forward the identity he considers fit for that particular context and effective in obtaining the desired result. This phenomenon could be called situational or contextual identity, distinguished from that which, in specialist literature, is referred to as ‘situated identity’. The latter refers to the fact that there is a tendency for an individual’s self to be perceived by others in terms of the current social role he plays.

Therefore, we believe in the objectivity of this multiple identity framework but consider that a distinction based on the origin of identity could be made between ‘artificial (constructed) identities’, ‘natural (native) identities’ and ‘supernatural (gifted) identities’. These can be expressed and endorsed, and can either be interconnected in a prioritized manner – by ordering them hierarchically – or be on a possible collision course with each other, leading to the exclusion or obliteration of some of these. We can distinguish between core identities (face, actor, ontology) and assumed identities (mask, roles, phenomenology); we often refer to a rational identity, an emotional identity and a volitional identity; to individual identities and collective identities; to community identities and statutory identities; to local, regional, continental, planetary identities; to national, transnational, supranational identities, etc.



### **Cultural Negotiation – The Sociolinguistic Paradigm**

“In the beginning was the Word.” This is how St. John the Apostle begins his Gospel, thus emphasizing the place and role of the word in human history. Words give life and their utterance shapes our being. They throb in the language and transpose us into a space of common existence, just as, after the flood, humanity was still united despite the subsequent diversity of people: “Now the whole world had one language and a common form of speech” (Genesis, 11: 1). And, given that a common language ensured unity and facilitated communication, an unexpected ambition sprang to people’s minds: to build a tower that will reach the sky. Babel, an attempt to recreate paradise, aroused the wrath of the Creator who, feeling threatened by such a plan, dispersed peoples across many different lands and entangled their speech: “Come, let Us go down and confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another’s speech” (Genesis, 11: 7).

Languages reflect people’s thinking and describe the world around them; they weld communities together, facilitating communication among their members. This was to end soon, as differences between people eventually deepened with the spread of so many languages. With the collapse of the Tower of Babel and the emergence of so many linguistic options, people now have the opportunity to inhabit different worlds and to adapt their speech to each particular situation. For instance, legend has it that Charles V, Roman emperor of the sixteenth century, distributed his foreign language fluencies by speaking Spanish to God, Italian to women, French to men and German to horses. But, beyond this openness to the worlds that hide behind the languages that envisage them, there have always been attempts at uniformity or feverish undertakings to reach the original language. Thus, historian Salimbene of Parma tells the story of the experiment through which, in the 13th century, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II tried to discover the primordial language spoken in Paradise. Frequently referred to as ‘stupor mundi’ due to his intellectual abilities and especially to his knowledge of so many languages (Italian, French, Latin, Greek, German and Arabic), the emperor

wanted to discover which language and idiom children would use, on reaching adolescence, if they had never had the opportunity to speak to anyone. So he gave orders to the wet nurses and to the feeders to give the infants milk, prohibiting their talking to them. He wanted to find out whether the children would speak Hebrew, which was the first language, or else Greek or Latin or Arabic, or indeed if they did not always speak the language of their natural parents. But the experiment came to nothing, because all the babies or infants died. (Eco, 1995: ix)

### A. Translation

Prior to being a linguistic exchange, translation presupposes a cultural transfer which requires that meta-point of view without which the translation process would be an amputated attempt to put the message of alterity into words. A form of cultural-linguistic globalization, it is “the enchanted utopia thanks to which we all have access to the great texts of mankind, it is the utopia in which we live and which we maintain by continuing to translate” (Vazaca, 2008: 3). To take this further:

translation functions as a way of establishing transnational networks which are expansive in their ambition and reach. [...] Translation can contribute to movements of linguistic or cultural independence but only on condition that the state of independence is one of interdependence. As translation by definition involves a form of dependency on the source language and culture, the translational relationship is an interdependent one but is a form of dependency which is potentially enabling rather than confining or disabling. (Cronin, 2006: 36)

A puzzle that can only be deciphered through translation, globalization is the land of complexity, arousing disputes and anchoring language matters in a perpetual topicality. Without cultural sensitivity and a keen awareness of subtleties, no translation can ever be fully effective and critical errors can occur. For instance, if we are to turn to taboos and value differences between cultures, there are numerous examples of severe blunders that occur due to a poor translation. In one instance, “when Nikita Khrushchev at the United Nations uttered the famous phrase *we will bury you* it was a culturally insensitive mistranslation from the Russian which really meant *we will outlast you*” (Ulatius, 14 Sept.).

Regardless of which language or languages (more or less) unanimously recognized to receive the attribute of sovereignty, by being the mediating language(s) used to translate between literatures, we believe, just like Umberto Eco, that this matter should be approached by means of negotiation. Such an approach will always be needed when translating, that is to say when transferring the signifier and the signified from one language, and implicitly from one culture, to another. Umberto Eco believes that this art of negotiation, inherent to the phenomenon of translation, must be linked to the phenomena of globalization, which bring together people of various cultures and languages.

Thus, what we mean by ‘translating’ in the light of negotiation is the “inner mechanism of a language and the structure of a certain text in that language”, followed by the construction of a “copy of the textual mechanism, which, from a certain perspective, will be able to exert similar effects on the reader, both in a semantic and a syntactic field but

also in the stylistic, metric and phonosymbolic one, as well as the sentimental effects the source text tended to” (Eco, 2008: 17).

We have hereby reached the much debated dichotomy of fidelity vs. betrayal as, through translation, we will negotiate how the original text will be translated into the target text. And just as textual translations are a “form of representation in which parts or aspects of the source text come to stand for the whole” (Tymoczko, 1999: 55), we negotiate our own identities by choosing that side of our selves which best serve our purpose. Exiled from language and alienated in a new culture, we must, however, learn to translate ourselves in interpretation, by building a common world of understanding.

### *B. Code-switching*

In the European space, multilingualism is an unquestionable reality and knowledge of several foreign languages is a necessity in the era of globalization. In order to face the challenges presented by the new realities, it was necessary to develop an intercultural dialogue as this has an important linguistic component, language being the most relevant expression of each culture. We can thus say that linguistic integration is at the core of social and cultural integration, this being a complicated process which often requires a series of compromises. Language constructs our realities so that, when exposed to a different culture, it is the first aspect that facilitates or hinders our communication; it is also here that those power relations that bear witness to the eternal struggles for the demarcation of national borders make their presence felt. But, beyond an immature linguistic protectionism in the current context, the interaction of languages is more and more frequent.

Studies regarding the interaction of languages date back to the 17th and 18th centuries, when foreign influences were considered to be undeniable acts of language corruption and foreign words ‘barbarisms’ that had to be eliminated at all costs. Unlike those times when the idea of linguistic segregation was welcomed by the majority, the current context attests to the increasingly frequent contacts between languages. Beyond the existence of a multitude of languages and cultures, a phenomenon that stands out above all is that of increasingly frequent commutations in the speech of bilinguals, resulted from their familiarity with several languages.

Code-switching is a form of manifestation of the interaction between languages and it can frequently be found in bilingualism and multilingualism, when speakers alternately choose words or phrases belonging to the languages they speak, especially in informal situations. In Romanian linguistics, the term ‘code-switching’ has been translated in several ways: ‘linguistic exchange’, ‘code change’ or ‘code alternation’, while in the English-speaking world, the term was first conceptualized by Gumperz, who described this phenomenon as a

discursive exchange that forms an interactive whole: “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” (Gumperz, 1982: 59). By ‘systems’ and ‘subsystems’ we do not only think of different languages, but also of other aspects of language, such as the phonological component, elements of prosody, lexical options and syntactic constructions.

The alternation of elements belonging to different languages has been criticized countless times, accusing speakers of corrupting the language and its grammar use, but also seeing this as a cultural agony or linguistic confusion caused by bilingualism and/or multilingualism. In a sociolinguistic framework, discussions related to code switching are characterized by a certain terminological confusion and by a tension between the different types of approaches to this phenomenon. At a macro level, linguistic variations are directly linked to social variables, thing that can be observed, for instance, in the research that analyzes the correlation between language options (code choices) and types of activity. On the other hand, micro-level approaches start from the idea that social factors do not fully regulate language choices, but rather consider this phenomenon to be a strategic tool that speakers use to create the desired social reality. While both approaches have strengths and weaknesses, we would say that a strictly macro approach to code switching analysis is too deterministic and often lacking in explanatory power, while a conversational analysis approach is too isolated from the wider context, which could provide an important framework for interpretation. We therefore consider that a more objective approach should aim to reflect the connection between social norms and personal options, since we already know that the individual is always at the crossroads between collective and personal determinations.

One of the most conclusive studies that provides a fundamental interface between micro and macro approaches, particularly relevant for our demonstration, is the one proposed by Ben Rampton, who refers to the phenomenon of ‘crossing’. Rampton describes the term ‘crossing’ as a discursive practice of switching to another language/ dialect that does not belong to the speaker. While this act of transition may not always be a clear claim for another ethnic identity, these cultural boundary crossings require negotiation skills: “this kind of switching, in which there is a distinct sense of movement across social or ethnic boundaries, raises issues of legitimacy which participants need to negotiate in the course of their encounter” (Rampton, 1995: 280). What emerges from this study is that, through these linguistic crossings, speakers are able to abandon their own ethnicity for a while and to forge not only new affiliations, but even different identities. From a poststructuralist angle,

Rampton argues that identities (including ethnicity, class, gender, and other layers) are negotiated rather than fixed. These ‘situated identities’ become relevant at different times throughout the interaction, according to the objectives and communication needs, which is to say that the identities acquire meaning through the specific interactions in which they are activated.

The best-known sociolinguistic model for negotiating identities through code switching is the markedness model proposed by Myers-Scotton: “codeswitching patterns may be indicative of how speakers view themselves in relation to the socio-political values attached to the linguistic varieties used in codeswitching” (Myers Scotton, 1998: 99). This framework considers speech to be a negotiation of rights and obligations between the speaker and his interlocutor, and suggests that speakers have implicit knowledge of indexicality, that is to say knowledge of language and language options that are manifested or not during a given interaction. According to Myers-Scotton, speakers opt for a language that can epitomize the rights and obligations they want to apply in the given exchange and that can present the appropriate identities. In choosing the unmarked option, speakers recognize the status quo as the basis for the speech act. Conversely, the choice of a marked option indicates the attempt to negotiate a different balance of rights and obligations, even a different identity.

An extremely illustrative classification of the languages when it comes to code-switching is put forth by Carol Myers Scotton: the ‘matrix language’ and the ‘embedded language’ (Myers Scotton, 1998: 61), the alternating languages in communication reflecting the identity of the speakers. Language shapes our reality in different ways and, with it, thinking changes too. “We live a new life with every new language we speak”, as the Czech proverb goes, and this code switching can indeed point to a dual identity in some cases. For example, a person born to Indian parents in England, who settled in Germany, will experience this split identity with every word. However, in many other contexts, code switching can be explained by something totally different, namely the speakers’ language skills. It is, therefore, natural – even when a certain situation requires the use of a foreign language – to seek the safety of the ‘soil’ into which we are solidly rooted, namely our mother tongue. And this is because, just as the environments of our existence differ, their content, detailed through language, will be expressed in various ways.

All this being said, we can conclude that identity is an interactional product, negotiated and produced in and through discourse. This discursive approach sees the relationship between language and identity as mutually constitutive in at least two different ways. On the one hand, languages – or rather certain discourses within them – provide the terms

and other linguistic means by which identities are constructed and negotiated. On the other hand, linguistic and identity-laden ideologies guide the ways in which individuals use language resources to index their own identities and to assess the language resources used by the others. To speak in a certain language means to belong to a certain linguistic community; to speak several languages can be a sign of identity and loyalty switch, occurring within the same person.

## REFERENCES:

- Cronin, M., *Translation and Identity*, Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2006.
- Eco, U., *The Search for the Perfect Language*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1995.
- Eco, U., *A spune cam același lucru. Experiențe de traducere (Experiences in Translation)*, Iași, Polirom, 2008.
- Gallardo, M. (ed), *Negotiating Identity in Modern Foreign Language Teaching*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Gumperz, J., *Discourse Strategies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, L. & Chițoran, D. (eds.), *Sociolingvistica: orientări actuale (Sociolinguistics: Current Guidelines)*, Bucharest, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1975
- Malmkjær, K. (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies and Linguistics*, London, Routledge, 2018.
- Myers-Scotton, C., *Codes and Consequences: Choosing Linguistic Varieties*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Rampton, B., *Crossing: Language and Ethnicity Among Adolescents*, London & New York, Longman, 1995.
- Stoica, G., *Împrumut și schimbare de cod într-un grai aromân din Grecia (Loan and Code-switching in the Case of the Aromanian Language in Greece)* in “Fonetică și dialectologie” (“Phonetics and Dialectology”), XXII-XXIII, Bucharest, Editura Academiei, 2003-2004.
- Tymoczko, M., *Translation in a Postcolonial Context*, Manchester, St Jerome, 1999.
- Vazaca, M., *Prețul dorinței de a traduce (The Price of the Desire to Translate)*, in “România Literară” (“Literary Romania”), no. 8/29, Feb. 2008.  
<https://biblehub.com/genesis/11-1.htm> (27 July 2019).  
<https://www.biblehub.com/genesis/11-7.htm> (27 July 2020).  
<https://www.ulatus.com/translation-blog/the-importance-of-culture-in-translation/> (16 September 2020).

**SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL STUDIES**

JESS



# Confucius' Philosophy of *Zhengming* ("Rectification of Names"): Implications for Social Harmony in Africa

Mark Omorovie Ikeke<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract:**

Social harmony is an imperative for the development of society. Without social harmony there is bound to be conflicts, violence, and social turmoil that impede the wellbeing of society. A key factor that can promote social harmony is when people live out the meaning of their names. This is what Confucius called *Zhengming* ("rectification of names"). For him the rectification of names implies every citizen living out the full import and meaning of their names and roles. Without rectification of names society will continue to be bedeviled by disharmony. Like many other societies the African continent is bedeviled with social disharmonies caused by poor leadership, bad governance, corruption and embezzlement of public funds, kidnapping and hostage taking, youth restiveness, illegal migration, environmental degradation, etc. It is difficult for there to be social harmony when citizens are experiencing social deprivations. The paper will use critical analytic and hermeneutic methods to examine the doctrine of rectification of names as proposed by Confucius. The paper will also apply this doctrine to the situation of social disharmony in Africa. The paper finds and concludes that there is need to use the ideas of *Zhengming* to mitigate social disharmonies in Africa.

**Keywords:** Confucius, *Zhengming*, "rectification of names", ethics, social harmony, Africa

## **Introduction**

Social harmony is vital and necessary for a harmonious and ordered society. Without social harmony a society cannot function to full capacity and fulfils her purpose for being in existence. Social harmony is bedrock for peaceful living and creates the environment for people to live the optimal life, the purpose for which government is ordained. A look at the African continent reveals a continent that is in disarray and embroiled in social problems and disharmony. Disharmony in the African continent is caused by wars and violence, terrorism, xenophobia, environmental degradation, resource conflicts, etc. It is

---

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor PhD, Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria, ikeke7@yahoo.com

important to understand what social harmony is. Henry Hexmoor in his *Computational Network Science* writes that social harmony is “freedom from contention” in relationships and networks (Science Direct, 2019). Whatever leads to contention such as wars, terrorism, violence, riots, protests, all lead to social disharmony.

In the midst of social disharmony in Africa, there is need to propagate philosophies of social harmonies. One of such philosophies is that of *Zhengming* (rectification of names), proposed by the Chinese philosopher, Confucius. It is a fact that his philosophy was proposed in a different context from that in which Africa finds herself. In spite of this, his ideas can be adapted and applied to the African situation. And so the cardinal thesis of this paper is: can a practice of “rectification of names” foster social harmony in Africa? *Zhengming* has some nuances and some scholars have argued “rectification of names” is not an adequate translation (Mattice, 2010: 247), though this is how it is generally translated into English by many scholars.

### **Literature Review**

The paper will review literature on “rectification of names”, social harmony and social harmony in Africa. It should be understood that there are thousands of works on all these areas and they cannot be examined in this work. Only some key works will be reviewed. The goal is to understand what social harmony is and the ingredients that promote it. It is also to see if “rectification of names” can help to abate social disharmony in Africa and boost social harmony.

The teaching on rectification of names called, “cheng-ming” is a central one in the *Analects of Confucius* where it is the “basis of the establishment of social harmony and political order” (Chinese Studies in Philosophy, 2014). It is also important to note that when Hsün Tzu (3rd century BC) developed this teaching further it was to strengthen his government and equally repudiate this doctrine (Chinese Studies in Philosophy, 2014). *Zhengming* was not primarily a concern for linguistic analysis in terms of logic but rather moral cultivation. Mattice (2010) argues against seeing *zhengming* as *fagu* which is a mere recurring of historical meaning; and notes that “rectification of names” is not an accurate translation of *zhengming*; and it is central to Confucian role ethics (Mattice, 2010). The “rectification of names” as applied to job titles in the work place and management of human resource is the concern of another author who affirms that leaders in the work place should fulfill their duties and carry out their tasks if not there will be strife and chaos in the workplace (Low, 2012).

The factors that enhance social harmony are the subject of discussion in Sharma (2015: 1). Central to the promotion of social harmony, Sharma argues that: “the key to attain Social Harmony lies in being truly social. It can be done by not only understanding one’s own needs and priorities but also respecting the same of others too. Then we can construct a progressive nation which can work on the path of sustainable development” (2015:7). She notes that cooperation and virtuous living among persons or also at institutional levels contributes to social harmony. The paper does not contextualize any particular society and so does not take into cognizance that peculiar challenges of each society. Social harmony obtains when the various sectors or units of society are in alliance and interrelate without wars and contentions.

Taking the instance of a society like Iraq, ethno-sectarian violent conflicts are common because the three basic pillars of society, the state, culture and religion are not working in cohesion (Faily, 2016). The point is that collaboration, cooperation, tolerance, and recognition of the rights of both minorities and majority will promote an environment that promotes social harmony. Without smooth working between all the arms and organs of society, what results is intolerance and tensions. The paper of Faily argues for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of these fundamental pillars of the Iraqi society and how to make them work in line with one another. This paper is only concerned with the Iraqi situation but it has revealed the fact that all aspects of society need to be in alliance for social harmony to pervade. Key ingredients such as peace, love, justice, equality, brotherhood, nonviolence, etc can enhance social harmony; and all these can be promoted through social education (Sharma, 2014). The weakness of this author just mentioned is that rights are seen as something to be let go of as they can be contentious. Human rights and respect for them are necessary to promoting social harmony. They are to be guaranteed not forgotten. The concept of social harmony as understood in African traditional metaphysical and epistemological ontology can also be contrasted with the western emphasis on individualism and materialism (Osimiri, 2016). The paper just cited also discusses how social capital deficit impedes social harmony in Africa. Social harmony can be fostered through works of arts such as masquerades etc for they are used to promote order and prosperity (Sullivan, 2019).

With regard to factors that enhance social harmony and peace, another author devotes his work to examining the role that music and musicians can play in creating social harmony (Lajunen, 2017). He also shows that “the term social harmony seems less common than other terms such as social integration, social development, or social cohesion”

(Lajunen, 2017, 17). With regard to harmony it could be described in various ways and that is why Ip examines it in relationship to the concept of happiness or wellbeing in two Chinese societies (Ip, 2013). This author shows that harmony (*he xie*) is a core value in Chinese tradition but it is a difficult concept to define. In ancient Greece there was a goddess in charge of social harmony called Concordia and shrines were built to her at the end of every strife or war (Sanchez, 2011). By implication, social harmony is the presence of concord among people. He also discusses various philosophies in history that promotes strife and advocates for upholding the values of liberal capitalism. Social harmony prevails when the welfare and wellbeing of the people are taken care of and social discriminations are conquered, and socially challenged are helped to access life (Modi, 2016).

A society in which there is social harmony is a harmonious society fostered by good governance, good economy, social solidarity and respect, social tolerance, family and work wellbeing, etc (Ho and Chan, 2009). Through interview Ho and Chan show in their paper that people affirmed that government should in her policies attend to: “(1) A Justice Government with Sincerity on Communication, (2) Mutual Support and Respect with Integrity and Dedication, (3) Dedication to One’s Job and Community by Helping the Needy and, (4) Creativity and Progressiveness with Tolerance and Implications for policy making are discussed.” (Ho and Chang, 2009: 37). The focus of Marsh in his paper on social harmony in public relations is that the social instinct in humans is created though natural selection process of evolution. Drawing upon the research of other authors, the article presents evidence that the evolutionary processes of natural selection created the social instinct that provides both positive and normative status for the social harmony paradigms within public relations (Marsh, 2013). While devoting attention to critiquing Confucius acceptance of feudalism, Nolt emphasis the need to clearness and clarity in speech (Nolt, 2016). Arguing from a Confucian tradition Ho argues for moving to educational policies that make students develop communal trust with social cohesion (Ho, 2017). The findings from this study suggest that a focus on harmony as an educational goal may help facilitate a move away from programs that emphasize the development of individual students’ social and political competencies towards programs and policies designed to promote communal trust and social cohesion. Finally, this study illustrates some of the challenges teachers face when balancing the goals of building trust and harmony within society and interrogating entrenched interests, institutional inequality, and unequal power relations.

The literatures reviewed above show the importance of the Confucius' doctrine of "rectification of names." The literature also shows some of the things that impede social harmony. The contribution of this paper is to apply the Confucius doctrine of "rectification of names" to the African situation which none of the literature above deals with.

### **Research Methodology**

Research methodology here implies the systematic ways and techniques to gain knowledge on the issues at hand (Ebigbo, 2009: 43). This work uses a critical hermeneutic method to dissect and analyze the issues raised. It will define and interpret the notion of "rectification of names" and social harmony. It will break open the meaning of the concepts to understand them. It dissects and deciphers. It relies on secondary data available in books, journals, and internet sources. Social disharmony pervades the African continent even though there seem to be relative peace. Many of the amenities and infrastructures that make life worth living are lacking and many persons are dissatisfied. The teaching of Confucius will also be presented. Data will be drawn from the *Analects* and other works on "the rectification of names". Data on social harmony or disharmony in Africa will also be looked at. This data will be presented as the result and discussed.

### **Results and Discussion**

K'ung Fu-Tzu Latinized as Confucius lived from 551 BC to 479 BC. He was born in Lu state in Ch'u-fu when the Zhou dynasty was in control (DeAngelis, 2007: 267). He was born to Kung Shu-lian Ho a man of lesser nobility who married a 15 year old girl at the age of 70 years and they gave birth to their only child, Kung Fu-Tzu (Cantoir, 1985: 121-122). He is a great Chinese thinker, and Socio-political philosopher. It is important to state that he: "was a social reformer, teacher, and philosopher who lived during a period of social chaos in China and sought restore order and harmony in society" (DeAngelis, 2007: 267). He like Socrates was greatly concerned about ethics, morality, social order, and right relationships. The central concern and quest of Confucius and the Ju Chia School was righteousness and human heartedness, man and his moral improvement on earth (Osborne and Loon, 2006: 106). He is seen as the school's nominal founder (DeAngelis, 2007: 267). His teachings were gathered together by his followers in the *Analects* (*Lun Yu*). He was born into poverty and after he was exiled from public office he journeyed through neighboring states teaching on ethics and morality (Angle, 2013: 1005).

Confucius states that:

When names are not correct, what is said will not sound reasonable; when what is said does not sound reasonable, affairs will not culminate in success; when affairs do not culminate in success, rites and music will not flourish; when rites and music do not flourish, punishments will not fit the crimes; when punishment do not fit the crimes, the common people will not know where to put hand and foot. Thus when the gentleman names something, the name is sure to be useable in speech, and when he says something, this is sure to be practicable. The thing about the gentleman is that he is anything but casual where speech is concerned.

(Analects, XIII, 3)

Let the ruler be ruler, the subject a subject, the father a father and the son a son.

(Analects XII, 11)

The two quotes just mentioned refer to what is called “rectification of names” in Confucius. The first was opined by him when he was asked the first thing he will do in government. He said, in speech people should behave like a “gentleman” or “superior man” by ensuring that they are practical, clear, and accurate” and this will inspire others to follow (Burns, 2006: 131). There should be no confusion, lack of clarity or disorderliness in speech. While clarity and clearness in speech is required of everyone, all the more those in authority or leadership position should be ethically responsible in their speech. There are two vital dimensions of the doctrine of “rectification of names” that should not be glossed over. In speech making all are called to uprightness to ensure that what they say corresponds to what they intend so that words will match action. Then there is the fact that names need to correspond to what the name implicates or implies, or what the name contains.

The rectification of names mean the names that people bear in their jobs, career or the role they have in life should be carried out dutifully. The father or son, or minster should truly live as their names indicate. The father should truly be a father and not fail in his duty as father. The minster should truly live as a minster and not live in falsehood. He should carry out the duties for which he was appointed a minster. He should not corruptly enrich himself through his office. Following Confucius, “every name contains certain implications which constitute the essence of that class of things to which this name implies. When everyone acts according to its essence, things will be smooth, and there will be order” (Low, 2014). For Sun in 2008, “Names, in Confucianism, signify roles and responsibilities” (Low, 2014: 663). It should be understood that: “Confucians take it that social disorder results from failure to perceive, understand, and deal with reality, which is in turn is the result of failing to address matters by their proper names. If leaders commit such sins, they are lesser leaders or technically speaking, non-leaders. A person’s (leader’s) abilities and skills must thus match with the title, role and responsibilities (s) he carries. And a service

leader/person, in another example, must really care and serve, having a serving heart (Low, 2014: 663). Holt writes that: “I borrow the title of today’s blog from the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius, though I use the term differently. For Confucius, rectification of names (*zhèngmíng* in Chinese) meant that people’s titles and offices should correspond to their actual behavior. It is what the American people mean today when they wish presidential candidates would act presidential” (Holt, 2016: 1). It can be said that a person who is living a rectified life will do what is appropriate (*yi*) and not act for profit (*li*) (Angle, 2013: 1006).

Burns has noted the following with regard to “rectification of names”: (1) it is a difficult area of Confucius philosophy, (2) it is easy to be followed as a governmental principle, (3) it is complex when it comes to matching word to deed, knowledge to action, and name to actuality (2006: 131). On this issue of how to interpret the “rectification of names”, Cao Feng asserts that the “rectification of names” is not centered on an idea of “social status” and “names and actuality” but the original meaning of the rectification of names is simple pointing out the significance of language in the realm of politics insisting that arbitrariness, indeterminacy, and ambiguity (Feng, 2016). Confucius also was concerned about names helping to clarify what is right and wrong and helps to establish ethical norms to guide society (Feng, 2016). On what “rectification of names” means, it is “using the words to denominate the social roles that constituted a social reality”. Confucius was concerned with the “rectification of names” by which he meant using the right words to denominate the social roles that constituted a social identity: who one was dependent on, what one was named-for example, father, husband, ruler. One had to live up the meanings embedded in these names (which in turn got their meaning from a larger system of discourse) and one had to relate to others on the basis of their appropriate names” (Madsen, 2007: 120). “Indicatively, each name – policeman, soldier, priest, president, lawyer, tailor, servant etc. – contains moral implications which constitute the essence of that class of profession to which the name applies. The essence of the leader perhaps is what the leader truly ought to be or the way of the leader” (Odeh and Aghalino, 2011: 179). On the idea of “rectification of names”, “It lies in the rectification of names when the leader is truly a leader, the minister truly minister, the teacher truly teacher, the father truly father, the son truly son, the student, student, then-only-then shall, society, be restored” (Obi, 1987: 72).

Now that the data on Confucius’ doctrine of “rectification of names” has been presented; it is imperative to present the facts on social

harmony in Africa. Africa is the second largest continent. Note that social disharmony does not mean that things are totally broken down in society or the state has totally failed. A state or society can be functioning but not to the optimal level. In many African nations many persons are living degrading lives and deprived of the amenities of life. Persons may not have openly revolted or rebelled against the state, but they are internally dissatisfied and living under pain. It is cardinal to understand what social harmony is. As an author defines it: “Social Harmony could be defined as, the experience of living in a society where people of different races, faith, and nationality live peacefully, in mutual trust, in spite of their differences” (Lajunen, 2017: 17). The purpose of “rectification of names” is so that there will be social harmony. Relationships in society are aimed at harmony, humaneness and ability to live with others (Funke, 2009: 213). Social disharmonies in Africa and elsewhere are precipitated by persons who have no value for healthy relationships in society and are interested only in themselves.

It should to be noted that:

Social Harmony is defined as a process of valuing, expressing, and promoting love, trust, admiration, peace, harmony, respect, generosity and equity upon other people in any particular society regardless of their national origin, weight, marital status, ethnicity, color, gender, race, age and occupation etc. The importance of social harmony is indispensable. It promotes equitable and rapid economic development. Secondly, social harmony improves peace and cohesion among the nation. Lastly, social harmony helps the citizens to abide by the law and respect rights and freedom of others as well as the Constitution. (Baker, 2019:1)

Social harmony is not an endpoint but a continuous process of making life peaceful and good for all. Social harmony could also be defined as: “absence of conflict and people cooperating with each other. One of the components of social harmony is “democracy and rule of law” and “fairness and justice” (Sharma, 2014: 153). Other factors that have impeded social harmony in Africa include the effects of colonialism, mutual distrust, antagonism, violent conflicts, cultivation of parochial identities, etc. (Osimiri, 2006: 35). Sincerity and justice which Confucius emphasized in his doctrine (Stanford, 2010: 158) will help to foster social harmony.

How can the issue of rectification of names relate to the challenge of social harmony in Africa? Social harmony was at the heart of Confucius’ thought and doctrine. The whole notion of the rectification of names is for social cohesion, harmony and order. The welfare and wellbeing of society, social harmony, respectful and orderly relationships were paramount in the mind of Confucius (Jaico Publishing House, 1958). Some of the problems that African countries



have suffered from include: poor and bad leadership, embezzlement and corruption, ethnicism, human trafficking and terrorism.

It is clear that inept and bad leaders have failed to live up to their responsibilities in government. When leaders live up to their duties and responsibilities they make abundant life available to the people. They create conditions that make the people happy. Many African politicians make empty promises just to get votes during elections, but when in power they don't keep many of their promises. In a country like Nigeria, as in many other African countries elections are marked by violence, kidnapping, looting, stealing of ballot boxes, etc. All these create social disaffections. In some African countries some persons and groups have often turned to protests and agitations against the state thus impeding social cohesion and harmony because of failure of leaders. Countries like Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, and Cameroon have all experienced protests as a result of bad governance. If the leaders had truly lived as leaders in carrying out their duties and performing their job assignments they will enhance social harmony. All through the African continent corruption and embezzlement of public funds is rampant (Areo, 2014:189). Note that:

Corruption in African countries is hindering economic, political and social development. It is a major barrier to economic growth, good governance and basic freedoms, such as freedom of speech or citizens' right to hold governments to account. More than this, corruption affects the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities (Transparency International, 2019).

All through the continent, corruption is rife not only among politicians but also among policemen and women, workers in public forces, etc. "Unsurprisingly, police also consistently earn the highest bribery rate across Africa. Other public services like utilities, including electricity and water, and identification documents, including licenses and passports, also have high bribery rates" (Transparency International, 2019). Corruption makes the lives of citizen painful and difficult. Money that should have been spent in providing the good life for citizens is stolen by politicians. Life is insecure in many African countries as a result of corruption. In places like the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Niger Delta of Nigeria, the countries in the Horn of Africa, etc there are constant resource or environmental wars.

The fact is that social harmony has to be created. It does not just happen. Negative factors like corruption causes social disharmony. Social harmony should not simply be understood as the absence of war, violence, contentions, etc. Bad governance and poor public service affect the state of harmony and happiness of citizens. In all these there is

need for “rectification of names”. The notion of the “rectification of names” cannot be separated from the concept of character in Africa. In Yoruba traditional philosophy there is the noble concept of *Omoluwabi* which means that a person should act responsibly towards himself and foster the wellbeing of the society or community (Omojeje, 2009: 113). “Rectification of names” implies humanness and people living with right character. A person who fails to live out his/her name in society, and match her words with good actions is an unworthy person that lacks character. The African concept of *Umunthu* that speaks of humanity, humanness, and resisting anti-social behaviors and fostering justice and cosmic order is helpful here (Sindima, 2016: 30-32). *Umunthu* focuses on right living in relationship to others. This helps the individual to live out his name. Just as Confucius emphasized rectification of names for right living so also African people emphasize character formation and living for social order.

In a state of social harmony people from various religions, ethnic groups and political affiliations live peaceably together. Ethnicity and ethnic discrimination are threats to social harmony and cause social disharmony. There are places in South Africa where there have been xenophobic attacks. People have lost their lives and properties. There is no gainsaying the fact that in situations like these those who perpetuate these attacks have failed to live out the name that they bear as human beings. Those who perpetuate these attacks often use hate speech to demonize the other. There is need to speak language that affirms the common humanity of all. The quintessential for the “rectification of names” in an African society troubled by social vices cannot be overemphasized. To use the term that Confucius uses, “Junzi” (gentleman or superior person), is what society needs. This is a person who acts for the wellbeing of society and for social excellence. Gentlemen in the African society will act to end all the factors and forces that create social vices and evils that accelerate social disharmony.

It must not be forgotten that Confucius proposed his teaching within the context of a feudal society and he never called for transformation from a feudal society. He lived within a Chinese patriarchal society. He believed strongly in tradition, respect for authority and revival of feudalism (Cantoir, 1985: 122). Though feudalism has been rejected by much of human society, the wisdom of Confucius is still necessary for human survival as 75 Nobel Prize recipients opined in 1988 in Paris (Stoutzenberger, 2011: 219). There is strong emphasis on filial duties to the rulers (Feuchtwang, 2001: 125), but this paper notes that in a modern African societies the citizens can

protest against dictatorial and bad governments to promote social harmony. As noted in Mencius IB: 8, politicians who fail to act for the wellbeing and welfare of the people are tyrants and can be overthrown (Nosco, 2002: 343). Society is rooted in relationships and responsibilities which should be lived in harmony and mutual wellbeing (Madsen, 2007: 119). When relationships are disordered and people don't fulfill their responsibilities there will be social disharmony. There is great emphasis on social life which should not be separated from family life for all of society is an integral whole. On this point, "Confucianism thus represents a holistic moral perspective that is at variance with modern Western philosophies, especially the liberal tradition, which sees society as made up of individuals, rather than the other way around, and which posits a sharp distinction between public and private life" (Madsen 2007, 120). This concern with the social is in line with the African spirit of community. The contributions of Confucius in highlighting the importance of "rectification of names" in society and politics clearly implies "the identification of ethics with politics" for "he believed that government was primarily a matter of moral responsibility and was not simply the manipulation of power" (Hinnells, 1995: 116).

### **Conclusion**

The paper has examined the notion of *Zhengming* (rectification of names) in Confucius. While it is true that the doctrine of rectification of names has had different interpretation among various scholars, the fact remains that the doctrine of "rectification of names" implies political leaders, and indeed all in society living out the full meaning and import in the names that they bear. Ethical living should not be separated from governance and leadership as Nicollo Machiavelli did in *The Prince*. Good leadership and authenticity is people living out their duties and responsibilities to promote social harmony. The paper revealed that social disharmony is produced by poor governance, bad leadership, corrupt practices, and the failure of people to live out their names. When names are rectified people will live a life of honor, character, excellence, and act for the wellbeing of others and society and not out of selfishness. Rectification of names is necessary for creating a society rooted in social harmony.

## REFERENCES:

- Angle, Stephen C., *Confucius*, in *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, Volume II, eds. Hugh Lafollette, Malden, MA, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, p. 1004-1009.
- Areo, Paul Adewuyi, *Corruption and Governance in Africa*, in *Politics and Law in Africa: Current and Emerging Issues*, eds. Aloysius-Michaels Okolie, Onyemaechi A Eke and Paul A Areo, Abakaliki, Willyrose and Appleaseed Publishers, 2014, p. 181-199.
- Baker, Michael Damian Brooke, *What is Social Harmony?*, 2019, <https://www.quora.com/What-is-social-harmony> (accessed 10 November 2019).
- Burns, Kevin, *Eastern Philosophy*, London, Arcturus, 2006.
- Cantoir, John T., *World Religions: Beliefs behind Today's Headlines*, Peoria, Illinois, Guildhall Publications, 1985.
- Chinese Studies in Philosophy, Rectifying Names [Cheng-Ming] in Classical Confucianism, "Chinese Studies in Philosophy", 8 (3), 2014, p. 67-81, DOI: 10.2753/CSP1097-1467080367, (accessed 10 November 2019).
- Confucius, *The Analects (Lun-Yu)*, in *A Sourcebook of Asian Philosophy*, eds. John M Koller and Patricia Koller, Upper Saddle, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1991, p. 409-443.
- DeAngelis, G.D., *Confucius, 551-479 BCE*, in *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies*, eds. Orlando O Espin and James B Nickoloff, Collegeville, Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 2007, p. 267.
- Ebigbo, Peter Onyekwere, Publication Culture, Review of Relevant Theories and Literature, in *Readings in Research Methodology and Grant Writing*, eds. P C Nnabude, Anayo D Nkamnebe and M Ok Ezenwa, Nimo, Anambra State, Rex Charles and Patrick Limited, 2009, p. 40-56.
- Faily, Lukman, Social Harmony: An Iraqi Perspective, 2016, [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/68498/2/Social\\_Harmony\\_an\\_Iraqi\\_perspective\\_english.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/68498/2/Social_Harmony_an_Iraqi_perspective_english.pdf), (accessed 10 November 2019).
- Feng, Cao, *A New Examination of Confucius' Rectification of Names*, in "Journal of Chinese Humanities" 2(2), 2016, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/23521341-12340032>, (accessed 11 November 2019).
- Feuchtwang, Stephan, *Chinese Religions*, in *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transitions*, eds. Linda Woodhead, Hiroko Kawanami, and Christopher Patridge, New York, Routledge, 2001, p. 121-146.
- Funke, Michael, *Against Reconstructing Confucian Environmental Ethics as Dominion Over Nature*, in *Comparative Philosophy Today and Tomorrow: Proceedings from the 2007 Uehiro CrossCurrent Philosophy Conference*, eds. Sarah A Mattice, Geoff Ashton and John P Kimber, New Castle Upon Tyne, UK, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, p. 201-214.
- Hinnells, John R., *The Penguin Dictionary of Religions*. London, Penguin Books, 1995.



- Nolt, James H., *The Rectification of Names*, in “World Policy Journal”, 2016, <https://worldpolicy.org/2016/10/13/the-rectification-of-names/>, (accessed 10 November 2019).
- Ip, Po-Keung, *Harmony as Happiness? Social Harmony in Two Chinese Societies*, in “Social Indicators Research” 117(3), 2014, p. 719-741, [www.jstor.org/stable/24720967](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24720967) (accessed 20 November 2019).
- Jaico Publishing House, *Glimpses of World Religions*, Mumbai, Jaico Publishing House, 1958.
- Ho, Simon S.M. and Chan, Raymond S.Y., *Social Harmony in Hong Kong: Level, Determinants and Policy Implications* in “Soc Indic Res” 91 (1), 2009, p. 37-58, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-007-9152-0>, (accessed 10 November 2019).
- Lajunen, Dylan Wade, *Music, Inner Peace and Social Harmony: How Music and the Popular Musician Assist in the Cultivation of Inner Peace and Social harmony*, 2017, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/3a62/5e6385dc031b569a08e46273a9697a953dad.pdf>, (accessed 10 May 2019).
- Ho, L., *Social Harmony and Diversity: The Affordances and Constraints of Harmony as an Educational Goal*, in “Teachers College Record”, 119 (4), 2017, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1119424>, (accessed 10 November 2019).
- Low, Kim Cheng Patrick, *The Confucian Rectification of Names and People/Human Resource Management*, in “Educational Research”, 3(8), 2012, p. 662-668, <https://www.interestjournals.org/articles/the-confucian-rectification-of-names-and-peoplehuman-resource-management.pdf>, (accessed 15 November 2019).
- Madsen, Richard, *Confucianism: Ethical Uniformity and Diversity*, in *The Globalization of Ethics*, eds. William M Sullivan, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 117-133.
- Marsh, Charles, *Social Harmony Paradigms and Natural Selection: Darwin, Kropotkin and the Metatheory of Mutual Aid*, in “Journal of Public Relations Research”, 25(5), 2017, p. 426-441, DOI: 10.1080/1062726X.2013.795861, (accessed 10 November 2019).
- Mattice, Sarah A., *On ‘Rectifying’ Rectification: Reconsidering Zhengming in Light of Confucian Role Ethics*, “Asian Philosophy”, 20(3), 2010, p. 247-260, DOI: 10.1080/09552367.2010.511025, (accessed 10 November 2019).
- Modi, Narendra, *PM Modi’s Independence Day Speech Focuses on Social Harmony*, 2016, <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/m0bLzG2dDe5Jn44KybfdLJ/PM-Narendra-Modis-Independence-Day-speech-Its-our-duty-to.html> (accessed 10 November 2019).
- Nosco, Peter, *Confucian Perspective on Civil Society and Government*, in *Civil Society and Government*, eds. Nancy L Rosenblum and Robert C Post, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 343-344.
- Obi, N., *This Odd World*, Lagos, Joe en Jude Prints, 1987.

- Odeh, Lemuel Ekedegwa and Aghalino, Sam O., *The Moral Precepts of Chinese Confucianism and their relevance to the Nigerian Society*, in "Ilorin Journal of Sociology", 3(1), 2011, p. 177-183.
- Omojeje, Ajishola V., Omoluwabi, A *Perception of Yoruba Concept of the Reality and Belief in the Dignity of a Child*. in *Oral Traditions in Black and African Culture*, eds. Adegboyega Ajayi and S Idowu Fabarebo, Lagos, Concepts Publications Limited, 2009, p. 109-121.
- Osborne, R. and Loon, Borin Van, *Introducing Eastern Philosophy*, Thriplow, Cambridge, Icon Books Limited, 2001.
- Osimiri, Peter, *Holistic Ontology, Social Capital and the Quest for Social Harmony in Africa, Ihafa*, in "A Journal of African Studies", 8(1), 2016, p. 35-53.
- Science Direct, Learn more about social harmony, 2019, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/computer-science/social-harmony>, (accessed 20 November 2019).
- Sharma, Manisha, *Social Harmony for Being Social*, in "Global Journal of Human-Social Science: C Sociology & Culture", 15 (6. 1.0). [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Manisha\\_Sharma56/publication/321913604\\_Social\\_Harmony\\_for\\_Being\\_Social/links/5a39284a4585150353fd8b38/Social-Harmony-for-Being-Social.pdf?origin=publication\\_detail](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Manisha_Sharma56/publication/321913604_Social_Harmony_for_Being_Social/links/5a39284a4585150353fd8b38/Social-Harmony-for-Being-Social.pdf?origin=publication_detail), (10 November 2019).
- Sharma, R.N., Peace, *Development and Social Harmony*, in "Horizons of Holistic Education", 1, 2014, p. 151-157, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.678.1071&rep=rep1&type=pdf>, (accessed 10 November 2019).
- Sanchez, Dan, *The Profound Significance of Social Harmony*, 2011, <https://mises.org/library/profound-significance-social-harmony>, (accessed 20 November 2019).
- Sindima, Harvey J., *Umunthu: The Ontology of African Ethics*, in *Exploring the Ethics of Individualism and Communitarianism: Multidisciplinary Essays in Honor of Professor Segun Gbadegesin*, eds. Enoch Olujide Gbadegesin, Yunusa Kehinde Salami and Kola Abimbola, Mitchellville, Maryland: Harvest Day Publications, 2016, p. 21-54.
- Stanford, Peter, *50 Ideas You really need to Know: Religion*, London, Quercus Publishing Plc, 2010.
- Stoutzenberger, Joseph, *The Human Quest for God: An Overview of World Religions*, New London, CT, Twenty-Third Publications, 2011.
- Sullivan, Pat, *Protection and Social Harmony in the Art of West and Central Africa*, 2015, <https://agnes.queensu.ca/exhibition/protection-and-social-harmony-in-the-art-of-west-and-central-africa/>, (accessed 10 November 2019).
- Transparency International, *Citizens speak out about corruption in Africa*, 2019, [https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/citizens\\_speak\\_out\\_about\\_corruption\\_in\\_africa](https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/citizens_speak_out_about_corruption_in_africa), (accessed 10 November 2019).

## Bilingualism – an Exclusive Benefits Package for Children?

Ana Maria Hopârtean\*

**Abstract:**

The present paper debates whether bilingualism is an exclusive advantage that children have when it comes to learning languages. After a theoretical overview of bilingualism, we discuss how age impacts language acquisition through the perspective of the critical period hypothesis. Adults and children are inherently different when it comes to acquisition and control of foreign languages. While adults have access to metacognitive resources, it is debatable whether these constitute an advantage in terms of language acquisition.

**Keywords:** bilingualism, adults, children, language acquisition, metacognition

The present article investigates the extent to which bilingualism can be regarded as an advantage that mainly children can aspire to. In a world in which half of the world population is bilingual (Grosjean, 2013), bilingualism has many forms, which makes it difficult to categorize. Usually defined in dichotomous terms, bilingualism can be natural or primary, in which case it refers to those people whose bilingual competence is the result of a natural learning process, such as growing up in a bilingual family. In this case, neither of the two languages has been perceived as foreign. In contrast, secondary bilingualism refers to formal learning of one of the two languages (Malmkjaer, 1991: 58), which would imply that adults can become bilingual as well.

Looking at bilingualism from a sociopsychological viewpoint, we can distinguish between additive and subtractive bilingualism. In the case of the former, the bilingual person feels socially and cognitively enriched through the new language, while in the second case there is a feeling of loss caused by learning the foreign language (Malmkjaer, 1991: 58). Furthermore, one can also talk about receptive and productive

---

\* Lecturer PhD, “Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca, Department of Modern Languages and Business Communication, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, [anca.hoparteana@econ.ubbcluj.ro](mailto:anca.hoparteana@econ.ubbcluj.ro)

bilingualism, depending on the skills that are highlighted in each case (reading and listening in the case of receptive skills, and writing and speaking as productive skills).

The problem with the difficulty of establishing whether someone is truly bilingual or just highly in control of a language other than their native language has resulted in bilingualism being considered to be a continuum rather than a distinct stage of linguistic competency.

At the very permissive end, Haugen (1973) argues that there is a case of bilingualism when the speaker of a certain language can produce meaningful utterances in another language. On the same note, Diebold (1961) gives a minimalistic definition of bilingualism using the term “incipient bilingualism” to describe the first stages of contact between two languages. In this case there needs to be minimal linguistic competence of the two languages so that one can talk about bilingualism. Romaine (1995) believes that some people can be bilingual only in terms of receptive skills, which is a case of receptive bilingualism. Similarly, Hockett uses the term “semi-bilingualism” (in Romaine, 1995).

In stricter terms, Weinrich (1953) distinguishes between compound, coordinated and subordinated bilingualism. He argues that bilingual acquisition of native languages, i.e. compound bilingualism implies two languages being learned in parallel. This is possible because any two languages, however different, have certain particular aspects in common. For example, they can have the same morphological structure, or the same grammatical categories such as gender, number, person, etc. Therefore, it can be argued that the bilingual individual has acquired a system with a variable number of components belonging to two languages that they can juggle. Klein (1986) explains this through an example: the French learner knows that “chair” has two phonological versions, for example [tʃɛə] and [ʃɛzə], and when they speak, they can choose between the two options.

We can talk of coordinated bilingualism when somebody acquires a second language in addition to their native language and first develops a linguistic system to which they later add a second linguistic system that can be operated in parallel with the first. The first linguistic system may not be totally assimilated when contact with the second occurs. When the speaker first uses a language and then another one, they make a switch between the two systems. In the case of compound bilingualism, the switch happens within the same system. With subordinated bilingualism, bilinguals interpret the words of the language they do not know so well through the perspective of the words in the language they know better. Subordinated bilingualism has a primary set of concepts



established in the dominant language and another set attached to the other language.

Paradis (2004) explains the way in which the linguistic systems of a bilingual are stored and related: there is one space in which world-knowledge is stored and two spaces in which the two languages are stored, each of them being connected to the former. The ability of bilinguals to switch and combine the two languages is of interest to psycholinguists, especially since this is an ability that aphasic patients do not have.

Very rarely are two languages learned at the same time and at the same pace, which is called relative dominance. One of the two languages is used more often or in certain circumstances, with certain people (Klein, 1986: 13). The secondary language is mainly used for certain purposes. The rarer the symmetry between learning two languages, the less frequent the situation in which one of the languages is seen as “the second language” or “the foreign language”. It is widely known that English in particular is predominantly spoken as a foreign language throughout the world.

But is bilingualism an advantage that only children have? It is almost common knowledge that children learn foreign languages very easily. The critical period hypothesis, which was formulated by Lenneberg in 1967, maintains that there is a tendency for children between 2 and 12 to learn a foreign language more easily (Lenneberg, 1967). Before Lenneberg, researchers such as Penfield and Roberts (1959) argued that the best period for learning a foreign language is in the first ten years of life, stating that in this period the brain has a certain plasticity which it then loses after puberty. This is due to the lateralization of language in the left hemisphere of the brain. The difficulty that adults have in learning languages is caused by this neurological change.

Basing his argument on neurological evidence supporting that adults do not regain the language function after left side brain surgery, while children recovered more easily, Lenneberg reaches the conclusion that adults find it more difficult to learn a language. Ellis (1985) rejects Lenneberg’s argument as he starts from the premise that language acquisition is easier for children. In Ellis’s view, the only aspect of language learning that becomes more difficult as we age is pronunciation. Newport (1993: 545) also rejects Lenneberg’s theory as it does not present proof of the effects of age on learning the native language, this type of evidence being more difficult to gather.

Other researchers believe that there are several critical periods in learning a foreign language, thus explaining why teenagers excel at

grammar, while children do not. Halliday (1978), for example, argues that metacognition is a key factor and since it is present mainly in teenagers and adults, these groups are at an advantage when learning a foreign language, as they can learn *about* the language, while learning the language. This would imply that children do not have an exclusive advantage when it comes to becoming bilingual.

On the other hand, Rosansky (1975) believes that it is precisely the lack of metacognition that helps children in learning foreign languages, as they are not so aware of the learning process. Therefore, children are more cognitively open when it comes to learning a foreign language. Abstract thinking, which becomes present around the age of 12, facilitates the recognition of similarities and differences, thus making learners more cognitively flexible. Moreover, as learners age, they become culturally and socially attached to the native or the foreign language, which makes the learning process more difficult, argues Rosansky.

This stance does not explain however why teenagers are better speakers of a foreign language than children or adults and it does not prove that metacognition is an impediment and not a tool in foreign language learning.

Newport (1993) also studied the effects of age on language learning, her conclusions partly supporting the critical period hypothesis, even though the researcher does not agree with Lenneberg's methodology. Newport studied the relationship between foreign language competency and the age when learning started, testing subjects whose native language is Chinese or Korean (both languages being structurally different from English). The study was done on 46 subjects who each arrived in the US at different ages, plus 23 native English speakers. The test consisted of 276 simple sentences in English, half of them being grammatically incorrect (12 rules were tested, both morphology and syntax). The correct sentences were randomly alternated with the incorrect ones. The subjects were required to say whether each sentence was acceptable or not. The subjects' performance in English was inversely proportional to the age when they were first exposed to it.

Moreover, Newport tried to explain the fact that children learn a foreign language more easily, even though they are less cognitively advanced than adults, thus supporting Rosansky's argument and opposing Ellis's.

If the relation between cognition and linguistic performance was considered arbitrary by Chomsky, Newport's "less is more" hypothesis maintains that it is precisely the increase of cognitive ability that comes

with age that leads to the loss of one's ability to learn a foreign language.

Newport starts her analysis by looking at the errors that adults make when learning English as a foreign language and the ones that American children make when they learn English as a native language. The adults' mistakes are either frozen structures, in which morphemes are used incorrectly (which proves that they were acquired as a whole), or very variable structures that are used inconsistently. These types of mistakes show either that adults have not analyzed the complex structures of languages, or that they have processed more than one analysis for the same structure.

The mistakes of children learning English as a native language are quite different from those of adults. Whole morphemes are omitted, and structures are only partly uttered. In time, children learn and add more morphemes, while adults keep their holistic models and generalize them even when new structures are necessary.

Newport argues that these differences come from the way in which the linguistic input is perceived and stored and not from the different abilities to make linguistic analyses once the input has been stored.

The hypothesis maintains that the children's advantage consists of their capacity to perceive and store only some components of the complex linguistic stimuli they come in contact with, while adults, having a better working memory than children, perceive and remember the entire complex stimulus. For example, in the case of morphology, learning involves storing the words, the morphemes that the words are made up of, plus the meaning which can vary depending on the morphemes. Thus, if the adult stores the word plus the number of formal components plus the number of semantic components attributed to each component, their task becomes quite complex. A more limited speaker, such as a child, will perceive and store a restricted number of associations between form and meaning, which leads to a more focused type of learning.

Another theoretical perspective worth investigating is the acculturation model, developed by Schumann in 1978. This theoretical model distinguishes between foreign languages and second languages. The foreign language, by definition, is not so relevant from the point of view of the speaker's community, because it is not used in parallel with the native language as often as the second language, which implies the idea of acculturation, of belonging to a culture.

Schumann believes that learning a second language is just a matter of cultural belonging. The more a speaker becomes culturally attached to a language, the better they will learn it. Children are more likely to

become culturally attached to languages, as they learn them without any prejudices about the culture or the country that they live in.

The factors that influence acculturation, and therefore language learning, can be social or psychological. The greater the social and psychological distance, the lower the feeling of belonging to the respective culture. Social factors are of utmost importance in Schumann's view, while psychological factors are important only when social distance cannot be clearly defined.

Social factors that are perceived as positive lead to situations in which learning the second language is encouraged. Schumann presents some such situations: when the two groups (the one that speaks the language and the one that learns it) view each other as socially equal; when both groups are willing to cooperate so that the second group learns the language; when the learning group is very small and united; when the two cultures are congruent; when both groups have positive attitudes towards each other; when the learning group is willing to stay in contact with the group for a longer period of time. Conversely, negative social factors would lead to the opposite scenarios.

A further model based on Schumann's acculturation theory is the nativization model, proposed by Andersen (1983). The foundation of this model is that language learning is subject to two phenomena: nativization and denativization. Nativization appears in the first stages of learning a language and it consists of assimilating input to the learner's own vision of the language. The speaker simplifies the learning task by creating hypotheses based on the knowledge they already have. Denativization, conversely, applies mainly to the higher stages of language learning, whereby the speaker adapts their own linguistic system to the data they encounter. Both the acculturation and the nativization model only explain the learning situations that arise in natural settings, not in formal instruction.

Finally, we look at the accommodation theory proposed by Giles (1991). This theory aims to investigate the way in which using the foreign language in an inter-group setting mirrors social and psychological attitudes in inter-group communication. This theory, like Schumann's acculturation model, sets out to determine the circumstances in which successful language learning takes place. If Schumann connected language learning with social distance, Giles refers to perceived social distance. In his view, the subjective way in which the learning group defines the relationships with the native group influences the learning process. If Schumann viewed social distance as static, absolute, Giles sees it as dynamic and relative and it clearly places children at an advantage, as the younger they are, they less likely

it is for them to perceive social distance as a negative factor that might affect language learning.

Motivation plays a key role in Giles's theory, as it impacts the level of linguistic competence in the foreign language. Motivation results from how individuals define themselves in terms of ethnicity, and it is influenced by several factors, such as the degree to which the learner identifies themselves with the ethnic group that they are part of. When motivation is low due to any of these factors, it is necessary to compensate learning with other skills. At this level, it is highly likely for children to inherit their parents' assets and liabilities in terms of language learning. The more motivated parents are to learn a new language in order to integrate into a group, the more likely it is that children will share their motivation. Again, this direct correlation is expected to be highest in the case of children of young ages.

One of the merits of this theory is that it offers an explanation of the learner's variable competence. Giles distinguishes two situations in which linguistic characteristics that mark the learner's belonging to their ethnic group. Low use of these characteristics happens when the speaker is motivated to integrate into the new community, while frequent use shows low motivation. These characteristics may fluctuate, according to the way in which the learner defines their relationships with the community. Progress in learning a language is directly proportional to the learner's infrequent use of the characteristics that mark their belonging to their ethnic group.

In sum, adults and children have different advantages and often interdependent when approaching a foreign language and therefore when attempting to become bilingual. Bilingualism is not exclusively attainable in childhood. Without continuously learning and using a foreign language, even a primary bilingual individual may lose control of one of the two languages they speak.

#### REFERENCES:

- Andersen, R., *Pidginization and Creolization as Language Acquisition*, Rowley, Mass., Newbury House, 1983.
- Diebold, A. R., *Incipient Bilingualism*, in Hymes, D. ed. *Language in "Culture and Society"*, 37, No. 1, Linguistic Society of America, Washington, DC, 1961, p. 97-112.
- Ellis, R., *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Giles, H., Coupland, J., Coupland, N., *Accommodation Theory: Communication, Context, and Consequence*, in Giles, Howard; Coupland,

- Justine; Coupland, N. (eds.). *Contexts of Accommodation*, New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Grosjean, F., Ping Li (eds.), *The Psycholinguistics of Bilingualism*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
- Haugen, E., *Bilingualism, language contact, and immigrant languages in the United States. A research report 1956–1970*, in Sebeok 1973. [Reprinted in Fishman 1978, p. 1–111].
- Klein, W., *Second Language Learning*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Lenneberg, E., *Biological Foundations of Language*, New York, Wiley, 1967.
- Malmkjaer, K. (ed.), *The Linguistics Encyclopedia*, London – New York, Routledge, 1991.
- Newport, E., *Maturational Constraints on Language Learning*. In *Language Acquisition: Core Readings*, ed. P. Bloom, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.
- Penfield, W., Roberts, L., *Speech and Brain Mechanisms*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1959.
- Romaine, S., *Bilingualism*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishers, 1995.
- Rosansky, E. J., *The Critical Period for the Acquisition of Language Some Cognitive Developmental Considerations*, in *Working Papers on Bilingualism*, No. 6, 1975.
- Schumann, J. H., *The acculturation model for second language acquisition*, in R. C. Gingras (ed.), *Second language acquisition and foreign language teaching (27-50)*, Washington, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1978.
- Weinreich, U., *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems*, New York, Linguistic Circle of New York, 1953.

# The Problem of *Evil*

## Part One: *Evil* in Philosophical Discourse

Iosif Riviş-Tipei\*

### **Abstract:**

This article is the first in a series of three articles that endeavor to provide a short survey of answers to, and interpretations of, the problem of evil in philosophical, mythopoetic and religious discourses. The present article tackles the philosophical framework, tracing with broad strokes significant reflections on evil in the western world, from ancient Greek thought to the modern times. Interpreters discussed in the survey include such names as: Socrates, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche.

**Keywords:** problem of *evil*, philosophical interpretations of *evil*, theodicy

### **Introduction**

The urge to make sense of evil – its origins, nature and indiscriminate presence – challenges our thinking about the divine, about the meaning of life, and about the scope of history. Numerous and varied explanations regarding the existence of evil are available and the researcher entering the debate unavoidably faces a rich history of interpreters and interpretations, one that could make the subject of a multi-volume work. The present work is the first of three articles planned for publication in the *Journal of Humanistic and Social Studies* that have this history in view. Evidently, much more modest in scope, our objective here is to survey some of the approaches and answers to the problem of evil in three interrelated discourses: philosophy, mythology and Christian religion. It is our hope that, although due to the lack of space much of what would have deserved to be included in this survey will be left unsaid, these articles will at least provide a beginning point for anyone wishing to study this history further. Below we begin this discussion with the philosophical framework, starting in the classical antiquity and subsequently introducing other significant contributions to the debate, chronologically, up until the modern era.

---

\* Lecturer PhD, “Aurel Vlaicu” University of Arad, iosif.tipei@gmail.com

### Interpretations of Evil in Classical Antiquity

From time immemorial humans have assigned both evil and good to the agency of the divine. This mythical interpretation of reality, which we will address in more detail in the forthcoming second article, begun to change in the Greek antiquity with the rise of a more rationalistic approach to divinity, which required the delimitation of divine action and consequently a justification of evil that would explain its existence in an universe created by a being that is both good and intelligent. At the most basic level, Epicurus (in David Hume's words<sup>1</sup>) has posed the questions that describe the problem as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC:

Is [God] willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?

Typically, ancient Greek religion understood evil as a consequence of the unpredictable nature of the divine. Thus, given evil's varied manifestations, Greek religious mythology posited several sources for it in the person of different gods such as Zeus, Athena, Ares, and Poseidon, and in other quasi-divine entities such as Moira, Themis, Dike, and Nemesis (Cornford, 1957: 20-21). Within this context, there raised the need to also establish and assess human responsibility. In fact, as early as Homer, the notion appeared that one's *fatum*, working hand in hand with one's guilt, bear responsibility for the evil in one's life<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, these proved insufficient, for neither the religious system nor the philosophical framework could integrate the reality of innocent suffering. Attempts for a solution to this dilemma can be found as early as Aeschylus, who advances the idea of inherited guilt<sup>3</sup>, but the first time the issue is addressed more consistently is in the ethical intellectualist tradition of Socrates and Plato.

For Socrates, both moral evil and the physical evil are consequences of lack of knowledge. "No one errs voluntarily" – this is one of the best-known maxims attributed to Socrates. It is, at the same time, a good summary of the ethical conception of Socrates, respectively of the Socratic dialogues attributed to Plato. From this intellectual point of view, it would seem that evil "cannot even exist, because no one does something evil wilfully, but only because of ignorance". Furthermore,

---

<sup>1</sup> See David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. by Norman Kemp Smith, New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1947, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Homer, *Il.* 1,5; *Od.* 1,17.60. Cf. A.W.H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1960, p. 10-29.

<sup>3</sup> Consider for instance, Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 764-773.



ignorance of divine ways may cause one to conceive as evil that which is not evil.

On the other hand, Socrates argues in the dialogues against Protagoras that virtue is a science. In the words of Jean Brun, it is “a science of interiority”. It involves a labour of inner conversion, through which each one must pass for himself. The philosopher, through his philosophical method (gr. *maieutike*) can only help make one aware of this need (Brun, 1996: 96).

The life that Socrates proposes to his interlocutors is one of intellectual asceticism. During it, man renounces ready-made opinions and egocentrism, and places himself in the universality of the moral law. This is why Plato and Socrates, respectively, are viewed sympathetically by many Christian authors. Contemporary Russian Orthodox theologian Pavel Florenski notes, for example, that “the best of the Greeks already knew the self-destructive nature of evil”. By its very nature, evil is “the kingdom divided against itself”. This notion of dismembering the action of evil is expressed in great depth by Plato in the myth of the Androgyne” (Florenski, 1999: 114). Thus, generally speaking, it is evident that Socratic intellectualism can be very easily connected with the moralization of the problem of evil present in Christian theology. Florenski also writes: “There is no reality in man that is evil; but the misuse of powers and faculties, that is, the breaking of the order of reality, is evil ... Evil is nothing but a spiritual deformation, and sin – all that leads to it”. On the other hand, virtue is a science because it presupposes the knowledge of the essence (Brun, 1996: 97). The ideal to which Socrates looks is *arete* (Bres: 33-34), an ancient concept of Greek spirituality, which is now being reinterpreted in an ethical sense. There is an *eidos* of *arete* and *eide* of different species of *aretai* (Peters, 1993: 46).

Continuing on the same path of Socratic moral intellectualism, Plato links in his later dialogues the idea of evil as ignorance to the gnoseological problem of the possibility of false judgment. From the gnoseological point of view, this consolidates the idea of knowledge as a spiritual ascension in the world of Ideas, an ascension whose appropriate instrument is the dialectical method. Good, *agathon*, is the end of the dialectical process.

When we approach Plato’s philosophy from the perspective of the problem of evil, an important aspect is the body-soul dualism. Ioan Petru Culianu speaks of a “strong anthropological dualism” (1994: 153). Researchers generally see in this dualism Plato’s indebtedness to the Orphic-Pythagorean conception of the soul. Plato adopts the Pythagorean view that the body is a tomb/prison for the soul and the

Orphic view that the body is a prison for the soul<sup>4</sup>. As Stere puts it, “the soul, a spiritual principle, would dwell in the body as in a prison” (Stere, 1998: 83). Nevertheless, in spite of such a pessimistic anthropology, Plato maintains that the world has been formed in the best possible way (*Phaedo* 99b-c) and that the divinity can only be good (*Timaeus* 29a), even if he ponders on the possibility of the opposite view.

This complex of ideas is connected to the theory of remembrance or recollection. The concept of *anamnesis* moves to the level of philosophical knowledge, because what we remember is a knowledge of Forms. The purpose of life then and the definition of philosophy are related to a purification that represents the preparation for death and for the return of the soul to its natural habitat. Only the knowledge of the absolute Good can restore to the soul the freedom to which it aspires. Purification, that *catharsis* of which Plato speaks, is meant to restore what is divine in man, freeing his soul from any deformation suffered during earthly life, from all the “infirmities” of knowledge, resulting from interest and attachment to the realities of the sensitive world.

There is, however, a partial overcoming of Socratic intellectualism in the late dialogues. Plato comes to admit that the soul can cause both good and evil. At the same time, the process of hypostasis that led him to convert Socratic definitions into ontological realities suggests, at least in one instance, the existence of an *eidōs* of evil. This “announces the rise of ethical dualism, which in Plato’s early writings is present at the level of body and soul, on the cosmic plane, probably as a result of the amplification of contacts with the Iranian tradition” (Peters, 1993: 139).

### **Evil in Modern Rationalism**

Under this heading we will refer to the thought of the three great representatives of modern rationalism – René Descartes, Benedict Spinoza, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz – particularly at aspects that are of interest from the perspective of the theme of this paper, i.e. the problem of evil. As a general characterization we can say that modern rationalism is not an atheistic philosophy. In rationalist thought, God, as the primary and absolute cause, plays an essential role, since only the effects produced by an omnipotent being are strictly and absolutely necessary (Cottingham, 1988: 109-114). Descartes, as pointed out by Kolakowski, blocks “the path from Nature to God, breaking the link between the essence of God and His effective law”. The separation of God’s will from His essence meant His separation from creatures. God

---

<sup>4</sup> E.g. *Phaedo* (109b-c); *Republic* (514a-517). On these, see J.N. Bremmer, *Rise and Fall of the Afterlife*, London and New York, 2002, p. 11-26.

is absolutely free, but this means “that God enjoys the freedom of indifference” (Kolakowski, 1993: 23). Spinoza carries on this conception. His philosophy deprives God of a number of qualities that the Christian tradition has ascribed to him and which are necessary in order to be identified as a person. Spinoza’s conception, writes the same Kolakowski, “is undoubtedly incompatible with the Christian tradition” (*Ibidem*: 27). Leibnitz also conceives of God’s intellect as independent of His will.

We may say, then, that modern rationalism takes the intellectualism of Western philosophy to its limits. In this context, Descartes is confronted with something that can be related to the Christian conception of evil. The problem of error, writes John Cottingham, “poses a problem for the Cartesian meditator that is closely parallel to the traditional theological puzzle of the existence of evil” (Cottingham, 1988: 158). If God is good and the source of all truth, the explanation for the existence of error acquires a special significance. Descartes raises the issue that error has its source outside of human reason. Thus, he considers the possibility that a negative court, with divine attributes and external to man, “particularly strong and skilful”, may have given all its effort to deceive us. Once considered, however, Descartes completely rejects the alleged existence of this “evil genius” (Deac, 2004: 27) (As Michel Foucault pointed out, during his meditations Descartes also rejected the hypothesis of madness). Descartes’ solution is to place the error entirely on the weakness of the human intellect and free will. Although trustworthy, the intellect has limited power. There are things it does not perceive clearly. Will, on the other hand, extends far beyond the intellect. In cases where he does not perceive something clearly, man should suspend his judgment. This does not happen often. Therefore, “in the exercise of our free will lies both the source of our error and the means of its avoidance” (Cottingham, 1988: 159). To summarise, in a well-known passage from his *Meditations*, Descartes uses language that is close to the traditional description of sin:

From all this, I perceive that the cause of my errors is neither the God-given power of willing, considered in itself, for it is extremely extensive and perfect of its kind; nor the power of understanding, for whatever I understand, since my understanding is a gift of God, most certainly I understand it correctly, nor is there any possibility of my being deceived in this. So what is the origin of my errors? It can only be this: that, since the range of the will is greater than that of the intellect, I do not confine it within the same limits, but extend it even to matters I do not understand; and since it is indifferent to these, it easily falls away from the true and the good, and this is both how I come to be deceived and how I come to sin. (Descartes, 2008: 42).

One of the aims of Spinoza's philosophy was to critique the idea of finalism. The notion of purpose cannot benefit from a rational justification. It is only a creation of the imagination, a "fiction of consciousness" (Stere, 1998: 236). Spinoza's philosophy is first and foremost a philosophy of necessity. In the context of this philosophy, good and evil are relative notions, devoid of rational meaning. They can only exist by reference to a purpose. Good and evil are defined by their relation to the exigencies of reason. Good is what promotes knowledge. It is a superior form of knowledge, the philosophical one, the knowledge of substance, identical with God or Nature. In Spinoza's system, evil is an "illusion" that results from ignorance (Ricoeur, 1974: 311-312). In particular, Spinoza completely abandons the "suspect argumentation of theodicy" (*Ibidem*: 312). Benefits and catastrophes, he points out, happen without discrimination to both the good and the bad, both believers and unbelievers.

Leibniz is the one who introduces in 1696 the term "theodicy" (1951), a neologism he creates (Râmbu, 1997: 5). Of course, however, the problem implied in the term has long been raised in the biblical writings. Thus, before Leibniz, there were theories and arguments that could be categorised as theodicy. The theodicy of Irenaeus of Lyons, for example, starts from the idea that one could not attain moral good or love for God without the evil and suffering in the world. Evil can "sculpt" the soul and eventually cause someone to become truly moral and close to God. God creates an epistemic distance so that we are forced to put in a lot of effort and energy to get to know him and thus become truly good. As such, evil is but an instrument of knowledge and a creator of character.

Leibniz tries to prove otherwise. Generally speaking, the presuppositions of theodicy are both the belief in divinity and a certain emancipation from religion. It is human reason assuming the role of God's advocate. However, Leibniz's demonstration remains a "justification of the intimate belief that the world is the creation of God, and for the evil of the world he bears no guilt" (*Ibidem*: 8) a "theoretical defence of faith in the victory of good in the world" (*Ibidem*: 7)<sup>5</sup>

Leibniz's main thesis in *Theodicy* is that the universe we live in is the best of all possible worlds. This is so because it is the creation of a perfect God. The philosophical foundation of theodicy, however, is the

---

<sup>5</sup> Bertrand Russell, for example, drew opposite conclusions from the same premises: here, in this world, there is a great deal of injustice, and as long as it continues, it becomes a reason to assume that justice is not the governing law of this world; this state of affairs fuels a moral argument against divinity, not one in its favor.

theory of pre-established harmony. The impossibility of *monads* to influence each other requires the conception of a pre-established harmony, whose creator is God” (Râmbu, 1997: 13). Then, only certain combinations of monads are “aggregable”, i.e. they can exist together logically. There are thus purely logical constraints as to what even the most benevolent creator can accomplish (Cottingham, 1988: 175-185). The social and moral order can only be understood from the perspective of the universal and eternal. Man, and his world, are parts of the universal order. Leibniz uses various comparisons from the world of the arts. Just as touching the keys of a piano does not have to produce the same sound to give birth to the harmony of a musical composition or just as a beautiful painting contains dark nuances, the “black spots” in society and life belong to the same harmonies of the cosmos (Râmbu, 1997: 15).

God does not want evil, Leibniz believes, but He allows it. He distinguishes between three forms of evil: metaphysical, moral and physical. The first of these is fundamental, for metaphysical evil consists in the imperfection of the created universe. Metaphysical evil – imperfection – was necessary because creation cannot be on the same plane as the creator. Moral evil is identical with sin. It results from the imperfection of the created beings, that is, from metaphysical evil. Finally, moral evil results in physical evil, which consists in suffering. This would normally be the punishment for sin. Yet, when those who have not sinned suffer, the remedy, Leibnitz admits, can only be found in a future life. Ultimately, however, evil is almost nothing – *presque néant* – in comparison with the good contained in the universe as a whole. Evil is but the absence of good. Nothing is bad in itself, absolutely (*Ibidem*: 17).

### **Evil in Kant and Hegel**

Among the modern philosophers, Immanuel Kant is the one who gives evil a role that brings it closer to the Christian concept of original sin. The concept of radical evil appears in Kant’s *Religion within the limits of reason alone* (1960). The issue of radical evil, with which this work opens, differs from that of original sin, insofar as the principle of evil is not correlated with an origin, in the temporal sense of the term. It represents only “the supreme maxim which serves as the ultimate subjective foundation for all the evil maxims of our free will”. In this sense, Kantian ethics can be located within Augustinian thought-world. According to Ricoeur, however, Kant elaborates on this tradition, providing a conceptual framework that Augustin lacks. He pursues all the way the

specific “practical” concepts of: *Wille*, *Willkur*, *Maxim*, will, arbiter (free will or free choice), maximum of the will (Ricoeur, 1974: 302).

Radical evil appears as a disturbing possibility in the heart of Kantian ethics. He refers to the possibility that, beyond the various wrong choices, there may be “a moral disposition” which pushes man to “adopt evil to its fullest, as evil as a solution”. This would mean that “man ... is evil only because he overturns the moral order”. Man “thus overthrows the order of solutions, acting by his maxim against the moral order”. This is not just a theoretical possibility. If “within human nature” there were a “inclination” in this regard, it would mean that we have a natural inclination toward evil. There would be in the whole human species, Ricoeur shows, a “tendency” (*Hang*) towards evil, as opposed to the “predisposition” (*Anlage*) towards good, constitutive of good will. This evil must be called radical because it “corrupts the basis of all maxims”. The parallel with the concept of original sin thus seems justified. Kant does use terms of Christian origin to describe this situation. Evil reason, and ill-will, he writes, would “elevate the conflict with the law itself to the rank of possibility ... and thus the subject would be transformed into a diabolical being”. Simply put, “such a disposition is evil” (Kant, 2011: 50-51) and “this evil is the rotten stain of our species” (*Ibidem*: 53).

Referring to Hegel<sup>6</sup>, Paul Ricoeur shows that evil is reduced to a moment in the dialectical process and acquires significance from the perspective of totality. To the extent that the concept of sin finds its place in the Hegelian system, the forgiveness of sins becomes the process of “passage of one contrary into the other, of singularity into universality, of the judged conscience into the judging conscience and reciprocally”. Forgiveness is therefore the “destruction” of judgment, the latter being a category of evil, not salvation (Ricoeur, 1974: 313). The same is true of the concept of tragedy: insofar as it finds its meaning in the Hegelian system, it is radically re-signified. The tragic emphasis shifts from moral evil to the externalizing movement of the absolute spirit.

In Hegel, dialectics makes the tragic coincide with the logic: “something must die for something else, superior, to be born”. From this point of view, misery is present everywhere, but everywhere it is also overcome, in so far as reconciliation always triumphs over destruction and suffering. Thus, in Hegel, evil is illusory. Thanks to the concepts of

---

<sup>6</sup> See, G.W.F. Hegel, *Conscience – the ‘Beautiful Soul’: Evil and the Forgiveness of It*, in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. with an introduction and notes by J.B. Baillie, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, London: Allen & Unwin / New York, Macmillan, 1949, p. 642-679.

dialectics and the “cunning of reason”<sup>7</sup>, Hegel therefore seems to revisit the problem of theodicy.

### **Phenomenological Ethics and Existentialism**

With Friedrich Nietzsche<sup>8</sup>, a profound change of vision in ethics takes place. If in Hegel and Kant we can speak of ethical intellectualism, Nietzsche’s theory brings the end of this history. That, at least, was Nietzsche’s intention. Here we make reference in particular to Nietzsche’s “immoralism”, respectively his project of “reinterpretation of all values”, by which he means that the whole of traditional ethics falls on the side of evil, at least from the perspective of the new values that are to be created by the *Übermensch*. Much of phenomenological ethics, and virtually all existentialism, inherits from Nietzsche this suspicion toward traditional ethics. This is one of the reasons why in reality none of the great philosophers of the twentieth century developed an “ethics”.

Referring explicitly to Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Scheler seeks to highlight the “value delusion of *ressentiment*” (Scheler, 1994: 40) which stands right at the heart of our moral conceptions. Scheler defines resentment as a “self-poisoning of the mind” in which the most important starting point is the “thirst for revenge” (*Ibidem*: 29). Scheler’s approach is, at the first level, phenomenological, so he defines *ressentiment* as “having to do entirely with the soul,” e.g., with negative feelings, such as the desire for revenge, hatred, envy, jealousy (Zamfirescu, 1998: 8). *Ressentiment* arises from the tension between desire and helplessness, which then leads, in the conditions of maintaining helplessness, to the falsification of reality (*Ibidem*: 9-11).

Scheler differs from Nietzsche in that he is interested not so much in the momentary resentment of Christian morality as is in modern morality, particularly bourgeois morality. Thus, he complements phenomenology with a sociology of resentment. Its main idea is that regardless of individual qualities and feelings, the very structure of modern society “is rooted in *ressentiment*”. As such, in the modern

---

<sup>7</sup> The “cunning of reason” consists of the fact that the spirit of the world uses the passions which animate “the great actors in history,” unfolding, without their knowledge, a second intention, disguised in the first intention of the selfish ends they are caused to pursue by their passions (see Paul Ricoeur, *Evil, a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology*, *JAAR*, 53.3, 1985, p. 642-644).

<sup>8</sup> For Nietzsche’s thought on the problem of evil, see, Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals & Ecce Homo*, trans. W. Kaufmann & R.J. Hollingdale, New York: Vintage Books, 1989; and Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

society “*ressentiment* has become an important determinant and has increasingly modified established morality” (Scheler, 1994: 61). Modern society replaces personal acts of love, from person to person, with impersonal mechanisms (*Ibidem*: 97). The main feature of the modern world is the overemphasizing the value of utility over the values of life. Scheler analyses the ethical principles of the modern world: the recognition as value only of that which is acquired through one’s own work; the subjectivization of values; the elevation of the value of utility above the value of life in general. The very idea of the moral equality of all people, so important in modern morality, results from resentment. Thus, the Schelerian theory of resentment also has an axiological opening.

French existentialism continues this “hermeneutics of suspicion” applied to bourgeois morality. Albert Camus’s “stranger” (1971) – the notion has Gnostic nuances, as showed by I.P. Culianu – is a stranger because he lives the drama of lucidity, the drama of one who “woke up” and, by this very virtue, he is in strong contrast with the many who “adjust” (Stere, 1998: 446). Jean-Paul Sartre introduces the famous concept of “stinkers” – *les salauds* – to label all those who are characterized by a tendency to take refuge in the “crowd,” in “anonymity”, those who mitigate their responsibility and disregard the fact that this is the primary imperative of freedom (Stere, 1998: 438; Sartre, 1972). These are the conformists, the slaves of tradition, the Pharisees, for whom current prejudices are an instrument of defence against responsibility. Adherents of traditional morality, these believe in a system of moral and intellectual values drawn up by universal reason or by divine wisdom that stifles the voice of conscience. The “stinkers” are then cowards who, being incapable to face the obstacles of reality, find their escape in a dream-world. In the end, to these Sartre adds other categories: the believer, the lover, the bourgeois, and the man of bad faith who lies to himself by oscillating between lucidity and self-delusion. All of these are opposed by the “champions of freedom”, that is, by those who have the courage and ability to assume the “sentence of freedom”.

Finally, we ought to turn to the work of Martin Heidegger. In discussing his thought, one must take into account the famous *Kehre*, which divides Heidegger’s creation into two distinct epochs, that of existentialist ontology and that of the radical overcoming of existentialism. Regarding the issue of evil, we are more interested in the first period of creation, the one marked by his treatise *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1953). There is something in this work that “resembles” the concept of original sin. It is Heidegger’s concept of inauthenticity or, as Ernest Stere translates it, the state of “decay” of *Dasein*. Man’s “fallen being” is characterized by temptation, apparent silence, alienation,



stumbling, hollow talk, curiosity, and ambiguity. To be fallen means to be tempted to live a facile existence as *man* (a term that indicates anonymity), in the sense of giving up oneself. This is, in fact, what gives an existentialist nuance to the ontology and phenomenological anthropology practiced by Heidegger in his *Sein und Zeit*.

Originally fallen, man however can save himself if gaining a lucid consciousness of his condition. Inauthenticity thus includes in itself a nuance of possible authenticity. What conditions though one's liberating reawakening is not the work of intelligence, but of a specific "existentialist" sentiment, the tragic feeling of anxiety. Anxiety is the feeling that disturbs deeply and the only sentiment that can free us from the tyranny of anonymous conformity, platitude, and the banality of everyday life. Through anxiety, then, *Dasein* rediscovers its lost authenticity.

In Heidegger, anxiety has an ontological value; it has the gift of revealing Nothingness to us in its original way of being. *Dasein* is not a fixed structure, an essence, but rather it is always its own possibility. *Dasein* is defined as a project (*Entwurf*), it projects itself in its own possibilities. And the extreme possibility of *Dasein* is death. The imminence of death persists in the heart of each human being as an inevitable appeal, although imperceptible during ordinary life. Thus, to live authentically means to live in full accordance with this direction of life which, for man, is death. Self-projection and self-anticipation, which according to Heidegger are structural elements of worry, find their concrete, original form in what the German philosopher calls *Sein zum Tode*. The being is thrown into the world to die (Stere, 1998: 429-431).

### **Conclusion**

This short history of philosophical thought on the problem of evil within the western tradition has provided several provocative takes on the question at hand: Socrates' moral intellectualism and Plato's philosophy, in which we discover the elements necessary for ontologizing evil and the significance of a body-soul dualism; Descartes' gnoseology, Leibniz's theodicy, and the impossibility of theodicy in Spinoza's philosophy, veritable analytical landmarks; the concept of radical evil asserted by Kant and Hegel's "return" to theodicy; and Nietzsche's "immorality" coupled with ideas from Max Scheler, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Martin Heidegger. We have seen within this survey that ethics tends to become a rationalization of the problem of evil, i.e. a reduction of the problem of evil to wrong choice, while axiology tends to reduce evil to a particular case of polarity of values. Such phenomenological discourse evidences the rationality specific to religious discourse, leaving out, however its

“irrationality”, that is, the language of symbol and myth. Thus, a continuation of this discussion on evil will necessarily take into account such language – a project we propose to address in a forthcoming article in this journal.

#### REFERENCES:

- Adkins, A.W.H. *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1960.
- Bremmer, J.N., *Rise and Fall of the Afterlife*, London & New York, Routledge, 2002.
- Bres, Yvon, *La psychologie de Platon*, Publications de la Sorbonne – Recherches 41, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2nd Edition, 1968.
- Brun, Jean, *Socrate*, Bucharest, Editura Humanitas, 1996.
- Camus, Albert, *L'étranger*, Collection Folio 2, revised edition, Paris, Gallimard, 1971.
- Cornford, F.M. *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation*, in *The Library of Religion and Culture*, New York, Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1957.
- Cottingham, John, *The Rationalists*, in *A History of Western Philosophy 4*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Culianu, Ioan Petru, *Călătorii în lumea de dincolo*, București, Editura Nemira, 1994.
- Deac, Ioan, *Principiile metafizicii carteziene*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2004.
- Descartes, René, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, Trans. & Notes by Michael Moriarty, Oxford World's Classics, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Florenski, Pavel, *Stâlpul și Temelia Adevărului: Încercare de teodicee ortodoxă în douăsprezece scrisori*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 1999.
- Hegel, G.W.F., *Conscience – the 'Beautiful Soul': Evil and the Forgiveness of It*, in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. with an Introduction and Notes by J.B. Baillie, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London, Allen & Unwin – New York, Macmillan, 1949, p. 642-679.
- Heidegger, Martin, *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953.
- Hume, David, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Edited by Norman Kemp Smith, New York, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1947.
- Kant, Immanuel, *Religia în limitele rațiunii pure*, Bucharest, Editura Humanitas, 2011.
- Kant, Immanuel, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Trans. & Notes by T.M. Greene and H.H. Hudson, New York, Evanston & London, Harper & Row Publishers, 1960.
- Kolakowski, Leszek, *Religia*, București, Editura Humanitas, 1993.
- Leibniz, G.W., *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, trans. E.M. Huggard, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1951.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals & Ecce Homo*, trans. W. Kaufmann & R.J. Hollingdale, New York, Vintage Books, 1989.
- Peters, Francis E., *Termenii filozofiei grecești*, București, Editura Humanitas, 1993.
- Râmbu, Nicolae, *Studiu introductiv*, in G.W. Leibniz, *Eseuri de teodicee*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 1997.
- Ricoeur, Paul, *Evil, a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology*, in "JAAR", 53.3, 1985, p. 642-644.
- Ricoeur, Paul, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, trans. Don Ihde, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1974.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, *La nausée*, Paris, Gallimard, 1972.
- Scheler, Max, *Ressentiment*, trans. Louis A. Coser, *Marquette Studies in Philosophy 4*, Milwaukee, WI, Marquette University Press, 1994.
- Stere, Ernest, *Din istoria doctinelor morale*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 1998.
- Zamfirescu, Vasile D., *Studiu introductiv*, in Max Scheler, *Omul resentimentului*, București, Editura Trei, 1998.



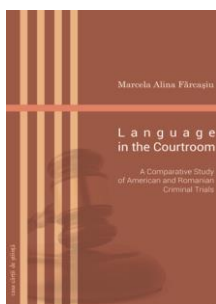


## REVIEW ARTICLES

JESS

## Crossing Legal Languages and Systems: Marcela Alina Fărcașiu, *Language in the Courtroom: A Comparative Study of American and Romanian Criminal Trials*

Andrea Kriston\*



The courtroom is an austere place. It rests on the main pillar, justice, and is surrounded by trial, sentence, crime, conviction, guilt, innocence, etc. Its language, on the contrary, is powerful and many court terms raise fear in the participants to trial. Legal language has long been considered an important field of study that is shared by both legal and lay participants. In the present book, Fărcașiu states that ‘the courtroom is the arena for the study of spoken legal language, which depends on special rules of language use, very different from ordinary conversation’. (35)

Marcela Alina Fărcașiu’s book aims at studying two opposing justice systems (American, called *adversarial* and Romanian, called *inquisitorial*) from the perspective of speech acts, also known as witness examination. The interrogation of witnesses is an elementary aspect of court proceedings carried out by the counsel who performs the cross-examination. The examination of witnesses has been discussed a lot under many aspects, including the linguistic one; still, the importance of the book consists in its approach from the Romanian angle, a lot less scrutinised. Despite many possible directions, the main focus is drawn to the study and comparison of the language pairs from formal, functional, and positional points of view in the two opposing systems of justice.

The book contains six well-structured chapters (including the introduction) that follow a logical sequence. The book also comprises conclusions, a bibliography and two annexes that make up the corpora.

---

\* Assistant Lecturer PhD, Department of Communication and Foreign Languages, Faculty of Communication Sciences, Politehnica University of Timisoara, andrea.kriston@upt.ro

The content of the book is developed from the author's interest in the area of courtroom and specialised languages (legal language). The study is well-explained and well-balanced; it has a clear progression and coherence, and it comprises numerous real-life examples from both languages (American criminal trials for the American corpus, and studies of spoken discourse for the Romanian corpus).

Chapter 2 presents an ethnography of the courtroom by placing in opposition the legal procedures between the Anglo-American and European jurisdictions from the perspective of the criminal justice system and trial. It mainly focuses on the extra-linguistic factors that are essential in the witness examination. They are supported by legal literature in order to make the reader understand the relations between language and the legal field. It also presents the actual setting, the constraints imposed by the setting, the courtroom, with its rule- and power-governed behaviour.

Chapter 3 deals with the terminology of the field and language of law, 'an overwhelmingly linguistic institution' (Gibbons, 2003: 1). Many scholars (Philbrick, Millinkoff, Maley) state that the core element of those who work in this area is undeniably language. The chapter makes reference to some of the first insights on law and language as an academic field and discusses the wide range of English studies compared to the few Romanian ones. The interest in this field of study is then moved to a very important aspect, language in the courtroom, where Fărcașiu minutely analyses the two systems by concretely concentrating on numerous perspectives: linguistic (with their subdivisions: lexical, narrative, forensic linguistics), socio-linguistic, pragmatic and cultural. Such an overview is very comprehensive and also relevant for a comparative study, as the reader can observe the relevant differences between the systems of justice. The importance of the chapter is enhanced also with many examples taken from the Romanian spoken discourse in the courtroom, as it is uttered by laypeople, thus Fărcașiu exploring an almost unfathomed territory.

Chapter 4 discusses the methodological approaches based upon the ethnography of communication and conversation analysis. The former functions at the macro-level of discourse, while the latter at the micro-level. The ethnography of communication is thoroughly observed from different units of analysis, while conversation analysis examines the notion that language should be primarily regarded as a form of social action. Being a comparative study, the second half of the chapter introduces the reader to the two corpora that make up the practical part of the study. The American corpus is based on transcripts found on a website, while the Romanian corpus was collected by the author herself, by audio-recording the trials and then transcribing them.



Chapter 5 analyses the question-answer pairs in the court. This chapter delves deeply into the question-answer adjacency pairs. First, a theoretical background is provided to present what a question and answer stand for in jurisdiction from different points of view, i.e. structural, semantic, pragmatic and discoursal. They are then completed by a study from a syntactic and a functional perspective. After having provided the corpora, the author provides several question types in the courtroom for both opposing systems, studying them as the micro-discourse in the witness interrogation.

Finally, chapter 6 is divided into two parts. The first part considers the sequential organisation of question-answer speech events, that is, the organisation of basic sequences, as well as the positioning of questions and answers so as to form patterns. Every pattern is described in detail with its corresponding sub-pattern according to the communicative acts in the effort to offer a better view of the speech event of witness examination, from a linguistic and a conversational point of view. There is an utmost balance between the theoretical approach and courtroom evidence based on real trials and facts. The second part of the same chapter offers a closer insight at the sequence patterns found, by revealing some features characteristic of the participants in the trial, namely lawyers and witnesses (in the American trial) and judges and witnesses (in the Romanian trial), in terms of questions and answers. These features make reference to the questioning techniques used by lawyers/judge (in American/Romanian justice system) and to the answering techniques used by witnesses in both courtrooms.

Fărcașiu's comparative study about the American (adversarial system) and the Romanian (inquisitorial system) is thoroughly documented and comprehensive in accordance with its purpose. The research contains an important number of parallels between the two languages studied, presented from former times until the modern days of the courtroom. The two systems of justice are presented from a linguistic, pragmatic and conversational point of view.

*Language in the Courtroom: A Comparative Study of American and Romanian Criminal Trials* is very well written, very logically organised, user-friendly and highly readable and it undoubtedly provides a lot of useful information for any student, teacher, researcher or scholar who would like to improve their skills in legal language both in the American and European systems. I would highlight the importance of this comparative study as it provides us with a lot of interesting insights into peoples' cultures, especially in the field of institutional interaction and intercultural communication.

EDITURA UNIVERSITĂȚII  
AUREL VLAICU



A R A D

