

TEXT AND TEXT – TEXT AND PICTURE – TEXT AND MUSIC

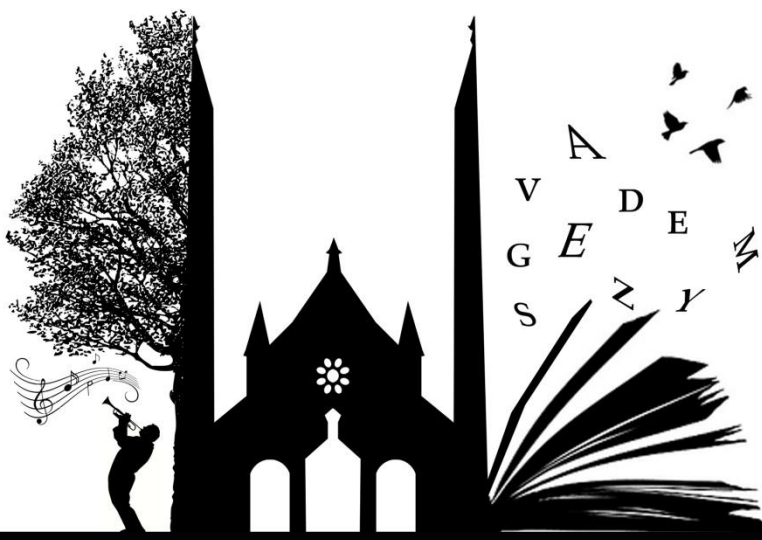
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SZEGED - HUNGARY      SEPTEMBER 19TH AND 20TH, 2014

# TEXT AND TEXT – TEXT AND PICTURE – TEXT AND MUSIC

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## Editor's Preface to the Volume on

### Text and Text/Picture/Music

The following papers offer the ninth volume in a series of studies by doctoral students and their supervisors at the Universities of Brno, Halle and Szeged. Since the beginning of the new millennium, these three universities – sometimes inviting other institutions – have been regularly organizing two-day conferences of Ph. D. students to discuss their research and to provide a forum for exchanging ideas with students and professors of other doctoral schools. These discussions offer students an introduction to international academic cooperation and a possibility to receive feedback about their work from professors at other universities. As a result of the remarks made at the conference, the papers may include other aspects or elaborate on issues already present in them.

The edited and peer-reviewed volumes offer a selection of papers presented at the conference – this collection contains fourteen articles, thirteen of which were read in Szeged on September 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014, where the total number of papers was seventeen. One short essay in the present collection is by a former Ph. D. student of the University of Szeged, dedicated to Professor István Fried on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, as are the other papers. In 2014 we celebrated two core members' birthday – besides Professor Fried, we offered the papers to Professor Thomas Bremer for his upcoming 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. The conference was inviting presentations in a wide range of topics – with special regard to the many-sided academic interests and activities of these two professors. The papers covered several centuries of Western art as well as a big variety in geographical terms and artistic expressions. The Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Szeged as host institution was pleased to welcome students from two other universities – those of Vienna, and Budapest (Eötvös Lóránt University) – together with our constant partners, Masaryk University (Brno, Czech Republic) and Martin-Luther-Universität (Halle-Wittenberg, Germany).

The conferences are organized on a rotating basis – the 10<sup>th</sup>, jubilee event will be hosted by Masaryk University in September 2016.

Katalin Kürtösi  
organizer of the conference, editor

Liminality in Nils-Aslak Valkeapää's play *Ridn'oaivi ja nieguid oaidni*  
(The Frost-Haired One and the Dream-Seer)

Johanna Domokos

Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church, Budapest and Bielefeld University

In commemoration of the 70th birthday of the late Sámi writer Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, the Beavváš Sámi national theatre in Norway staged his poetic play *Ridn'oaivi ja nieguid oaidni* (The Frost-Haired One and the Dream-Seer) and embarked it on a tour of the Nordic countries and Japan. As the Japanese-English playbill informs us, Valkeapää was inspired to write a drama in the Noh style by his Japanese friend Junichiro Okura, who recently authored several introductory books on Japanese culture and language in Finnish. In fact, Valkeapää's connections to Japan extend even further: in 1995, at the Winter Cities Festival in Sapporo, Valkeapää recited this poesikonsearta ("poetry concert," as he himself referred to it) together with a group of Sámi yoik singers and two local Japanese actors. While the text of his play has not yet been published in book form, the play first became accessible to Sámi and Nordic audiences in 2007 and 2009 through an excellent staging by the Beavváš director and theater manager Haukur J. Gunnarson. The play was staged again in 2013, with performances honouring Valkeapää on the 70th anniversary of his birth.<sup>1</sup> In the following I will look into how the phenomenon of liminality manifests itself in the text and in the performance of the play.

#### Liminality in Valkeapää's works

Based on Arnold van Gennep's 1909 work *Rites de Passage*, where van Gennep distinguishes between preliminal (separation), liminal (transition) and postliminal (incorporation) stages of rites, the anthropologist Victor Turner elaborated further the concept of liminality (lat. *limen* means 'threshold') in several of his works (e.g. 1967, 1974)<sup>2</sup>. As a state of being "betwixt and between" (1964, 4), "between two positions"

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Haukur J. Gunnarsson for sharing both the original play and its English translation. Though the author was fortunate to see a performance of the play in Inari in September 2013, the video recording of the play supplied by Gunnarsson was a great help

(1974, 237), Turner describes the major characteristic of liminality as “the analysis of culture into factors and their free recombination in any and every possible pattern” (1974, 255). While blurring the borders between very different (often contradicting) symbolic orders, a liminal experience will result the removal of previously taken-for-granted forms and limits, and will give way to new orders.<sup>2</sup>

In his only play, *Ridn’oaivi ja nieguid oaidni* (The Frost-Haired One and the Dream-Seer), Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (1943-2001) constructs liminality by intertwining Sámi human reality with manifestations of the spiritual world. This marks a departure from other works of Valkeapää’s oeuvre, including his 1971 debut *Terveisiä Lapista* (published in English as „Greetings from Lapland”, 1984) and nine subsequent poetry volumes, which stress the liminal relationship of Nordic and Sámi cultures, as well as the overarching conflict between indigenous people and their colonizers. Throughout history, the relationship between the Sámi and their Nordic colonizers has been characterized by an aggressive hierarchy and the suppression of Sámi cultural expression, but Valkeapää’s work has contributed enormously to the recent, rapid emancipation and revitalisation of Sámi culture. In his poetic play, however, liminality manifests differently, marked by the subtle intertwining of the spiritual and the real, and unburdened by any interfering conflict. The harmonious blending and merging together of these two levels reveals not only the life philosophy of the author, but also an essential aspect of Sámi traditional knowledge. This highly endangered knowledge was intimately familiar to Valkeapää, and it figures prominently in all his artistic work.

#### The structure of the play

In the mid 1990’s, inspired by Japanese culture through his personal contacts and several stays in that country, Valkeapää wrote a poetic drama based on the structure of a Waki-Noh play. He reimagined the role of the Japanese shite (a spiritual figure, or the messenger of God) as the timeless figure of Sámi mythology, Ridn’oaivi (the Frost-Haired One), who acts as a mediator of the wisdom that humans can use to achieve a greater harmony with nature. The role of the waki, the human counterpart of the shite, is figured as a young Sámi boazovácci (reindeer herder), who wanders the tundra alone with his herd on an autumn night. The dramatic tension of Valkeapää’s play arises not through

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Gennep and Turner

cultural conflict, but through the inner turmoil of the reindeer herder. In order to ascend into the realm of higher knowledge, the herder enters a liminal phase, in which his subjective state of mind awakens to the supernatural realm. Once he allows the supernatural wisdom to inspire him with answers, the young herder at last reaches maturity. The Frost-Haired One, a visitor from the spiritual realm, teaches him that maturity demands two main things from a person: first of all, to love himself and others, and secondly, to never forget the deep interconnection of humans and nature. The third voice in the play is a chorus, known as the *jiuati* in Noh theater, which often acts as a commentator. Consisting of one male and two female actors, the chorus (*koarra* in Sámi) acts as a driving force behind the dramatic events of the play. Although the chorus also hails from the spiritual world of *Ridn'oaivi*, it remains invisible to both characters, just as it is absent from the title of the play.

The names of the characters, along with the title of the play itself, convey crucial information about Sámi indigenous knowledge and the intertwining of human and spiritual worlds. Although *Ridn'oaivi*, the Frost-Haired One, carries the same name in both in the primary and secondary texts, his human counterpart goes by various appellations. In the primary text of the play, he is sometimes referred to as *olbmážan* "dear friend," but more often as *unna vieljaš* "little brother", while in the stage directions he always appears as *boazovácci* (reindeer herder). He is only referred to as *nieguid oaidni*, "dream-seer", in the play's original Sámi-language title—moreover, with a lowercase *n*, which suggests a state of mind rather than a unique individual with a proper name. In this way, the play's title also indicates that a play with multiple levels is to be expected. Moreover, as Osgood Dana indicates in her PhD thesis<sup>3</sup>, *Ridn'oaivi* is the Sámi family name of the author Valkeapää (2003, 257), and this opens up further possibilities to interpret the play.

The play consists of short opening and closing acts with a third, more elaborate act in between. The stream-of-consciousness lines of the *boazovácci* (the reindeer herdsman) and the otherworldly messages of *Ridn'oaivi* (the Frost-Haired One) are often introduced and followed by yoiking. Valkeapää was a great promoter of this Sámi spiritual and poetic singing tradition, and the play includes his most popular yoiks, which many Sámi know by heart. The yoiks are performed in all parts of the play, and although in the script they are indicated only by their titles, they comprise nearly half of the performance. They include „*Sámi eanan duoddariidda*” (To the Tundra of Sámiland), the unofficial anthem of the Sámi, as well as „*Ofelaš Luohti*”, a yoik from the internationally renowned 1987 film of the

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<sup>3</sup> <http://herkules.oulu.fi/isbn9514269446/isbn9514269446.pdf>

same name (Ofelaš—Pathfinder) and „Beavi, Áhčážan” (Sun, my Father), a central yoik from Valkeapää’s book and CD project, which won the Nordic Literature Prize in 1991.

### Liminality in the play

In the first act the reindeer herder arrives at his resting place and contemplates the essence of nomadic life: "I need not, I wonder where to go,/ the herd of reindeer decides my path."<sup>4</sup> Already his opening lines—"how strange,/ when I make halt, it is as if I am on the move,/ and as if at home, when I am roaming"— indicate the questioning of ordinary reality, along with the inherent contradictions of mobility and stasis. While the herder dozes off near his fire, Ridn’oaivi returns to the human world to survey its changes. In his monologue, the oxymoronic wordplay of the opening lines is enhanced to include the liminal phase of the natural and transcendental: "this is the time,/ the time which is not time,/ the dream that is life, the life that is dream.../ which is life.../ a dream in life." Following his encounter with Ridn’oaivi, the herder realizes the uniqueness of this dreamlike experience, and laments the missed opportunity. Using past conditional constructions, such as "I should have asked", he invites the Frost-Haired One back again.

In the second act the chorus not only yoiks in between the characters’ monologues, but it takes an active role in the verbal argumentation of Ridn’oaivi. In addition to the refrain of "do not be afraid, little brother," they cite a few lines in translation as well as in the Japanese original of the great haiku master Basho (1644-1694). Ridn’oaivi questions the importance of accumulating worldly knowledge, and emphasizes both the path of the heart ("you do not need that knowledge.../ that you need ... do not ask me what you need,/ love, and dare to love ... /yourself, then you can love others, too... love") and the path of nature ("the man is but part of nature"). In this long, carefully-sculpted poetic monologue, the real intermingles with the transcendental, culminating in the subjective incorporation of both. In the midst of this *communitas*, Ridn’oaivi confirms his position: "...you ask whether I am the Frost-Haired in the old tales,/ I am, but I am you, your thoughts, your dreams/ and when you leave, I move into your dreams,/ if I am."

The short closing act consists of two verbal parts and a yoik by the reindeer herder, leading up to the final chant of the chorus („Áldobiellut”, reindeer bells). The joyous,

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<sup>4</sup> This and all the following English quotes from Valkeapää’s play are available thanks to the efforts of Roy Tommy Eriksen and Harald Gaski.

enthusiastic words of the herder sum up the major motifs of the play, and they also indicate the end of the liminal phase. Thus the drama comes full circle and the audience is taken back to the play's initial scene. This time, however, the human character's mindset is changed, and he is finally attuned to the timeless trekking route of the reindeer, to the circle of life, which recapitulates the "Sun and Moon on the trekking route of heaven." Owing to his encounter with Ridn'oaivi, and Ridn'oaivi's incorporation into the everyday person ("thus Frost-haired flew to the other side of life/ into me, within my very self/into my dreams/ and I am the Frost-haired"), the herder will remain intimately connected to the "world of dreams," the "other side of life."

#### Liminality in the performance

A few days before he passed away, Valkeapää sent a postcard to Beaivváš (the name literally means "dear Sun") expressing his interest in staging *The Frost-Haired One and the Dream-Seer* as a Noh play (the card was postmarked in Japan on the day of his death, November 26, 2001). Valkeapää had worked closely with several artists from Beaivváš even before the group's inception in 1981, and some of the actors performed the play in a 1996 performance. The play's current director, Haukur J. Gunnarsson, who served the Beaivváš group between 1991-1996 and again since 2007, is one of the most successful promoters of Noh Theater in Europe. For this he was awarded the UNESCO Uhcimura prize in 2003. As he explains on the playbill, "To be true to Valkeapää's intentions and his use of the dramaturgy of the Noh theater, we have chosen to present the play in the stylized, stringent form that also characterises Noh theater. But we have sought to create our own form of expression rather than imitating the style and movements of Noh, using Valkeapää's own music together with the movements, to comment on and connect the text sequences."<sup>5</sup> Without going too far into detail about how the Beaivváš performance turned this sparse poetic text into a fascinating meditative event, I will investigate the role of two theatrical devices that made the stage performance more cohesive and the author's message more tangible.

The performance opens with the members of the chorus appearing in slow motion,

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<sup>5</sup> Director: Haukur J. Gunnarsson, Coreography: Indra Lorentzen, Scenography: Aage Gaup, Costumes: Berit Marit Hattta, Musical director: Roger Ludvigsen, Acting: Egil Keskitalo (Ridn'oaivi), Nils Henrik Buljo (Hersman), Chorus: Inga-Máret Gaup-Juuso, I.gor Ántte Áilu Gaup, Mary Sarre, /Musicians: Roger Ludvigsen (guitar), Esa Kotilainen (keyboard), Patrick Shaw Iversen (flutes), Espen Hogmo (percussions)

one after the other. Moving from the back of the stage to the front, they perform in sequence a gesture that can be construed as opening space and time for the "moment" of the performance. While the hand gesture of the first figure opens the horizontal axis for the three-dimensional performance to come, the clapping of the second figure symbolizes the "now," and the hand movements of the third figure bring forth the vertical dimension. These three gestures are performed again in the middle of the performance by the spiritual figure Ridn'oaivi, and at the end by the earthly figure, the reindeer herder. This tripartite gesture, manifesting on all three levels of the story, supports the interconnection of these levels, and in doing so enables liminality to arise.

Additionally, the canes carried by the two major figures play a crucial role in the intermingling of the spiritual and human worlds. Though the canes are not at all mentioned in the poetic text, nor in the author's stage directions, the main characters always carry these objects with them. The straight, life-size cane of the reindeer herder contrasts with Ridn'oaivi's longer and more elaborate shamanic cane, which is topped with a reindeer antler. At the end of the second act, while guiding the herdsman back to sleep, Ridn'oaivi leaves his shamanic cane at the young man's side, and takes the other cane for himself. This event marks the end of the liminal phase, enhancing the feeling of a dream made real, and it also adds a visual dimension to the poetic message.

#### Closing remarks

Valkeapää's poetic play will undoubtedly be inspirational and instructive for future generations. The play has already proven itself to be a classic of the relatively new artistic medium of Sámi theater. Owing to the direction of Haukus J. Gunnarsson, the Beaivváš troupe was able to stage this play in a remarkable way. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the play's harmonious merging of real and supernatural realms reveals not only the life philosophy of the author, but also an essential characteristic of Sámi traditional knowledge. This knowledge is now highly endangered, but it was intimately familiar to Valkeapää, and it was compellingly manifest in all of his artistic works. In reflecting on the metaphysical crises of our time, Valkeapää's works shed light on our heartless exploitation of each other, but also remind us of the forgotten wisdom that comes with being completely subordinate to Nature. By prompting us to recognize our role as an infinitesimal but nonetheless integral part of the universe, Valkeapää's works

simultaneously serve as a poetic meditation and a poignant warning.

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## Double Game – Text as an Artistic Strategy

Barbara Dudás

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This paper aims at analyzing the nature of a complex, interdisciplinary cooperation between two artists: the French conceptual artist and photographer Sophie Calle and the American fiction writer Paul Auster. The research is based on the publication entitled *Double Game* (first published in large format in 1999, then in small hardback edition in 2007 and 2010) which was the first major publication of Calle in English. My personal interest towards the book has aroused when I first saw it in a bookstore in London. Its appearance was more appealing than a simple art catalogue, at first glance it seemed more like an artwork, a one-of-a-kind artist's book tied up with a red satin ribbon.<sup>6</sup>

It would be more than evident to start the analysis here, detailing the physical characteristics of the piece, the quality of the paper and the illustrations, and the style how it merges two basic bodies of work: a monographic selection of Calle's works – mostly photographs and photo documentation of performative, conceptual works – from the late 1970s to the late 1990s and their intersection with Paul Auster's fiction writing – in a form of actual texts. However, my objective is rather to go beyond the simple stylistic interpretation of the book and reveal the complexity of the multi-layered relation and interaction between artists, art forms and media.

In 1992 Auster published his seventh novel, a crime story entitled *Leviathan*, featuring a story told by a writer called Peter Aaron about his mysterious best friend Benjamin Sachs, his disappearance, and the circumstances of his death. Within the plot only few further characters are introduced, of whom one is a photographer called Maria Turner portrayed apparently after Sophie Calle – whom Auster thanks on the copyright page “for permission to mingle fact with fiction.” In return, the first page of *Double Game* Calle thanks Auster “for permission to mingle fiction with fact” followed by the rules of their mingling game:

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<sup>6</sup> An artist's book (also known as *livre d'artiste* or *Künstlerbuch*) is a special type of artwork made in a format of a book, mostly conceived by fine artists, illustrators, typographers or writers. Many of them are self-published in limited editions or even hand-made. For further info visit: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/a/books-artists/>

In his 1992 novel *Leviathan* Paul Auster thanks me for having authorized him to mingle fact with fiction. And indeed, on pages 60 to 67 of his book, he uses a number of episodes from my life to create a fictive character named Maria, who then leaves me to live out her own story. Intrigued by this double, I decided to turn Paul Auster's novel into a game and to make my own particular mixture of reality and fiction. (Calle, *Double Game*, 1.)

After the instructions she includes the said pages from *Leviathan* and corrects the text according to the facts, or to be more precise *her version of the truth*<sup>7</sup>, and adds some margin notes – such as: “over the top,” “excessive!” or “too much imagination” – with a red marker. By doing this, she interferes with the authenticity of the written word and reveals its fictional nature, but at the same time gives away information about her own private life. This personal voice is not uncommon in her works as she usually tells stories about herself – or about others she has chosen as subject – in a very intimate way, as if she was writing a personal journal. And indeed, as in *Double Game*, she often mixes photography with text of her own narrative writing – similarly to the practice of several other female artists, such as the American Mary Kelly in *Post-Partum Document*<sup>8</sup> or Hungarian Orshi Drozdik in *Individual Mythology*.<sup>9</sup> A characteristic illustration from Calle's oeuvre is the project entitled *Appointment with Sigmund Freud* which was realized in 1999 in London at the Freud Museum.<sup>10</sup> Within the framework of this exhibition she used relics from her own life (wedding dress, wig, etc.) and some objects from Freud's home displayed in the rooms of the museum next to pink cards with stories written in the style of a personal journal.

I had always admired him. Silently, since I was a child. On 8 November – I was 30 years old – he allowed me to pay him a visit. He lived several hundred kilometers

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<sup>7</sup> And as Foucault puts it, truth should never be seen as objective: “(...) there is no establishment of the truth without an essential position of otherness; the truth is never the same (...)” Michel Foucault, *The Courage of the Truth (The Government of Self and Others II)*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 340.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.marykellyartist.com/post\\_partum\\_document.html](http://www.marykellyartist.com/post_partum_document.html), accessed February 05, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.gandy-gallery.com/exhib2/orshi\\_drozdik/exhib\\_orshi\\_drozdik.html](http://www.gandy-gallery.com/exhib2/orshi_drozdik/exhib_orshi_drozdik.html), accessed February 05, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Sophie Calle: *Appointment* (February 12 – Aprils 25, 1999), 20 Maresfield Gardens, London <http://www.freud.org.uk/exhibitions/10519/appointment/>, accessed February 05, 2015.

from Paris. I had brought a wedding dress in my bag, white silk with a short train. I wore it on our first night together. (Calle, *Appointment with Sigmund Freud*, 82-83.)

Auster is also known for his writing about identity and personal meaning, for instance in *Leviathan* the narrator Peter Aaron's divorce was portrayed using moments of Auster's own divorce. He was born in New Jersey in 1947, so he is few years older than Calle, who was born in 1953. After graduating from Columbia University in 1970 he lived in France for four years and earned a living as a French translator. During my investigation, after my attempt to reach Auster has failed I found the gallery that is currently representing Sophie Calle in New York – the Paula Cooper Gallery, where she presented the *Double Game* project in 2001<sup>11</sup> – and I received some answers from the Associate Director, Anthony Allen, who has been working with her for the past fifteen years. According to him, Auster and Calle did not know each other in person, he simply heard of a performance artist who was doing art projects for which she followed people in the street or got herself hired as a chambermaid, and he decided to create a character using these elements. In the 1980s, when Auster was most probably working on his novel, Calle was already a successful 30-something-year-old artist exhibiting her sometimes controversial works – for example the *Address Book* project from 1983 which was definitely an often quoted story in newspapers at the time – not only all across France but elsewhere in Europe and in the United States, as well. In *Leviathan* her character is being introduced as follows:

Maria was an artist, but the work she did had nothing to do with creating objects commonly defined as art. Some people called her photographer, others referred to her as a conceptualist, still others considered her a writer, but none of these descriptions was accurate, and in the end I don't think she can be pigeonholed in any way. Her work was too nutty for that, too idiosyncratic, too personal to be thought of as belonging to any particular medium or discipline. (Auster, *Leviathan*, 60.)

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<sup>11</sup> Sophie Calle: *Double Game* (February 24 – March 24, 2001) <http://www.paulacoopergallery.com/exhibitions/378>, accessed February 05, 2015. However the project was exhibited several times before: *Double Game*, Site Gallery, Sheffield (1998), *Doubles-jeux*, Centre de National de la Photographie, Paris (1998), *Double Game*, Gallery Koyanagi, Tokyo (1999), *Doubles-jeux*, Galerie Erna Hécey, Luxembourg (1999), *Double Game*, Camden Arts Centre, London (1999), *Gotham Handbook*, Galerie Arndt & Partner, Berlin (2002).

For Maria's vivid character Auster borrowed eight projects from Calle's practice, but he also made up a few, which influenced the life and practice of Sophie Calle as demonstrated in the first section of *Double Game*. Following Auster's imagination she realized two projects – two daily routines – of Maria, she acted out her character and used it as a material for her art. In these projects she acts as subject and author at the same time, as she not only follows Auster's narrative but also comments and corrects it – visually as well as textually. For example in the project called *The Chromatic Diet* (1997), which in Auster's words reads as follows:

Some weeks, she would indulge in what she called 'the chromatic diet,' restricting herself to foods of a single color on any given day. Monday orange: carrots, cantaloupe, boiled shrimp. Tuesday red: tomatoes, persimmons, steak tartare. Wednesday white: flounder, potatoes, cottage cheese. Thursday green: cucumbers, broccoli, spinach – and so on, all the way through the last meal on Sunday. (Auster, *Leviathan*, 60-61.)

However, there were no colors prescribed for Friday and Saturday, therefore Calle chose yellow and pink, while on Sunday she threw a dinner party using all colors and settings. The other project invented by Auster and executed by Calle is the *Days under the sign of B, C & W* (1998) – in which she spent whole days under the spell of the letter of the alphabet: *B for Big-Time Blonde Bimbo*, *C for Calle & Calle in the Cemetery*, *C for Confession* and *W for Weekend in Wallonia*.

The second – and also the longest – section of the book is a collection of Sophie Calle's previous projects that Auster adapted in *Leviathan*. Every new entry starts with the date the given project was realized and describes the project in a few sentences mostly in first-person narrative (very similarly to the narrative that Auster uses in his novel). In this section of *Double Game* Calle is characterized as a reckless, still hiding artist, whose interest mostly circles around other people's life. As Auster describes her via Maria:

(...) Other works followed, all of them driven by the same spirit of investigation, the same passion for taking risks. Her subject was the eye, the drama of watching and being watched, and her pieces exhibited the same qualities one found in Maria herself (...) (Auster, *Leviathan*, 62-63.)

*To follow...* for instance is a project from 1979 when Calle followed strangers on the street – only for the pleasure of following them. She photographed them without their

knowledge and took detailed notes of their movements in a notebook. This project was a beginning of a series, all based on following someone or being followed by someone. In 1981 she followed another stranger who she later met and talked to at a gallery opening. During their conversation, the man told her that he was going on a trip in Venice, where Calle secretly followed him to as a detective and kept track of every move of his for thirteen days. The same year she also asked her mother to hire a detective, who then later followed Calle herself and reported her daily activities to Calle's mother.

One of her most controversial projects of this period was the *Address book* (1983). A version of the story has a significant role in Auster's novel and it is also one of the most often quoted work from Calle – but exactly because of its sensitive nature the project was only partially included in the *Double Game* publication. In 1983 the French newspaper *Libération* asked Calle to write a series of articles. Not long before that she had found an address book which she photocopied and returned to its owner. Then she proceeded with contacting the people whose name was noted down and asked them to tell her something about the owner of the address book. Later she published these conversations along with illustrative photographs of the man's favorite activities in the said newspaper. Even though she never revealed the name of the man, he was recognizable from the descriptions – as he was a widely known documentary filmmaker – and he of course threatened to sue the artist for invasion of privacy.<sup>12</sup> The unusual aspect of this project was that she actually used episodes of someone else's life and shared it with a general public, without his permission of any kind. It was the first moment in Calle's practice when fact overruled fiction – I believe that is partially the reason she and Auster were so thorough in giving each other permission for playing with the other's life.

The third and last part of the *Double Game* book is called *The Gotham Handbook* (1994), which is based on her proposal to Auster to write a story about a fictitious character named Sophie. Calle's idea was to borrow events from the life of this character, and offer herself for one year to fulfil the obligation. Auster chose to send Calle what he described as a "*Personal instruction for Sophie Calle on how to improve life in New York city (Because she asked ...)*." (Calle, *Double Game*, 238.) It was open enough for her to find her own way through the ideas. In *Double Game* it holds a new feature, since the text

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<sup>12</sup> Finally, Calle agreed not to republish the work until after his death. Following that, in 2012 the project was published in its full length at Siglio Press, which is known for publishing „uncommon books at the intersection of art & literature.“ Sophie Calle, *The Address Book* (New York: Siglio Press, 2012) <http://sigliopress.com/book/the-address-book/>

itself appears as a letter written with typewriter, exactly as Auster sent it to Calle. The text here returns again as a visual feature, as well as a script which Calle could apply as she pleased.

The handbook contained quite simple instructions: to smile at random people in the street at any given time, and be prepared to have small conversations with them if they smile back. Then Auster also instructed Calle to help the miserable ones.

Stock up on bread and cheese. Every time you leave the house, make three or four sandwiches and put them in your pocket. Every time you see a hungry person, give him a sandwich. Stock up on cigarettes as well. Common wisdom says that cigarettes are bad for your health, but what common wisdom neglects to say is that they give great comfort to the people who smoke them. Don't just give one or two. Give away whole packs. (Calle, *Double Game*, 241.)

And finally: "*Pick one spot in the city and think of it as yours.*" She followed the instructions Auster gave her, found her base at a telephone booth, furnished it, brought flowers, orange juice, sandwiches and cigarettes – and tried to smile at people. She even did an overall count at the end, after one week: "*125 smiles given for 72 received, 22 sandwiches accepted for 10 refused, 8 packs of cigarettes accepted for 0 refused, 154 minutes of conversation.*" (Calle, *Double Game*, 293.)

The project is documented and commented the same way Calle structured the previous sections of the book. She used Auster's text as guideline but allowed herself to alter the story if necessary. Throughout their whole cooperation, Auster and Calle were constantly changing the roles of author / narrator and subject, deconstructing and reconstructing textual qualities, which can be analyzed from a postmodern perspective as a form of *intertextuality*.

In Julia Kristeva's understanding – who first interpreted the term for the Western public – every text is a dynamic entity, in which relational processes and practices should be revealed, since, to a certain extent, every text is an intersection of other texts.<sup>13</sup> In Calle's and Auster's case however, intertextuality should be applied with an even wider meaning, since Calle's work not only textually refers to – appropriates – Auster's novel and later on his handbook but also serves as inspiration for Auster as well as gives a visual appearance to the characters he created, which from my point of view is more important

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<sup>13</sup> María Jesús Martínez Alfaro, "Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept," *Atlantis* vol. 18. no. 1/2 (1996)

than only analyzing the text-and-text relation.<sup>14</sup> But as a side-note, it is vital to notice the way how Auster builds the character of his narrator of *Leviathan*. In the story, Peter Aaron describes his friend and their friendship as he is a detective, who tries to rely on facts, but constantly finds himself in a contradictory position and questions not only the memory of others but even his own. This method of investigation aims at describing a missing subject, and the way he maintains a constant uncertainty about the truth can also be intertextually connected to Calle's practice. In her works, the process appears visually as well as in text, while in Auster's novel there are two parallel investigations – besides Peter Aaron's the second one is the police investigation that frames the story – described within the text that recalls the same method.

However, in the review published in the journal called *October*, Rosalind Krauss (59) described Calle's work as follows: "The modernist reflexivity of Calle's art is a matter of what Jacques Derrida calls invagination, by which he means the folding of one story within another through the invention of a character who exactly repeats the opening of the story, thereby setting it off on its narrative course once more." Here she points out the *mise en abyme* (frame-within-a-frame) paradigm in Calle's and Auster's cooperation, namely that the two artists are constantly referring to one another without revealing the foundation of reality or truth in their story. In literary terms this phenomenon could also be called *autofiction*, which appears in other works of Calle as well, for example in the aforementioned *Appointment with Sigmund Freud* exhibition or in her cooperative project with Laurie Anderson entitled *Absent*.<sup>15</sup> In this latter exhibition the visitors were offered an audio-guide – a walkman – which led them through the exhibition with Calle herself talking about the exhibited objects and their personal importance, accompanied by the music composed by Laurie Anderson. This was the same year Calle received *The Gotham Handbook* from Auster, and a similar attempt to communicate with another medium.

In conclusion, I believe, that the essence of Calle's art is that she treats her practice as she was following a written script, no matter whether the actual text was written by her, or by a fiction writer or the piece correlates, intertwines with a different media. Insisting on her strategy serves as the strongest element for her practice and also proves Auster

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<sup>14</sup> As it was analyzed by Anna Khimasia in her essay: "Authorial Turns: Sophie Calle, Paul Auster and the Quest for Identity," *Image & Narrative* issue 19. (November 2007), <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/autofiction/khimasia.htm>, accessed February 05, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Sophie Calle, Laurie Anderson: *Absent*, March 27 – May 29, 1994 (Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam)

right when he was describing her via his character as someone who does not belong to any particular discipline or medium.

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## Musica e pittura nel *Decameron* e ispirate dal *Decameron*

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Dato che la novella in genere rispecchia la società e le abitudini della propria epoca, è interessante osservare i riferimenti alla musica e alla pittura che si trovano nel *Decameron*. Nella cornice della raccolta possiamo trovare alcuni riferimenti alla musica, mentre per quanto riguarda la pittura troviamo qualche accenno in alcune novelle con il personaggio di Buffalmacco e i suoi amici Bruno e Calandrino, che furono appunto pittori contemporanei del Boccaccio.

Come vedremo, la raccolta del *Decameron* non fu soltanto fonte d'ispirazione per numerosi letterati ma lo fu anche per artisti di vario genere. Così come diversi musicisti – tra i quali Domenico Ferrabosco, Girolamo Scotto – hanno messo in musica alcune canzoni che concludono le giornate della raccolta, ci sono stati alcuni pittori – come Sandro Botticelli, Mario Balassi – che si sono ispirati a quest'opera. Visto che su questo tema sono già stati scritti numerosissimi saggi basati sui riferimenti storici contenuti nel *Decameron*, oltre a soffermarmi sull'importanza della musica e della pittura nel *Decameron*, cercherò di mettere in evidenza alcuni punti che sono già stati toccati dalla critica ma con qualche incertezza. Per ragioni di spazio non potrò qui esaurire l'argomento.<sup>1</sup>

Ritengo che lo stesso Boccaccio attribuisse grande importanza alla pittura e alla musica. Per quanto riguarda la pittura, già Vittore Branca ha affermato che Boccaccio, concludendo il *Decameron* con l'espressione «alla... penna non dee essere meno d'autorità concessa che sia al pennello», era convinto che «il narrare per parole e il narrare per immagini si integrassero e si interessassero l'uno con l'altro».<sup>2</sup> In questo senso è significativo ricordare che, oltretutto, il Boccaccio è autore di 18 illustrazioni nel manoscritto Parigino italiano 482 (1360-1365) e di 16 nell'autografo Hamilton 90

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<sup>1</sup> Per più informazioni riguardanti gli usi e le applicazioni della musica profana nel Trecento ricavate dal *Decameron* si può vedere ad esempio Arnaldo Bonaventura, *Il Boccaccio e la musica* (Torino: Bocca, 1914); Franco Piperno, "Boccaccio in musica nel Cinquecento: fortuna e recezione delle ballate del *Decameron*", *Atti e memoria dell'Arcadia 2* (2013): pp. 61-99.

<sup>2</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron. Con le illustrazioni dell'autore e di grandi artisti fra Tre e Quattrocento*, a cura di Vittore Branca (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1999), p. 23.

(1371-1373)<sup>3</sup>. Per quanto riguarda la musica, invece, riporto un'interessante osservazione di Chiara Cappuccio, basata sulle teorie mediche medievali, in cui viene sostenuto che la musica ha la stessa funzione delle novelle, cioè «portare la mente altrove rispetto ai pensieri che generano angoscia».<sup>4</sup> In altre parole le canzoni contenute nella raccolta, destinate a essere cantate e ballate, potrebbero per Boccaccio avere più o meno la stessa funzione delle novelle.

Se si pensa alla cornice del *Decameron*, viene subito in mente la brigata che fugge in campagna dal triste ambiente della Firenze appestata per svagarsi cantando, ballando e raccontando le novelle. Riguardo alla funzione positiva della musica sullo stato psicofisico insiste anche Marco Cerocchi, a cui va il merito di aver messo insieme un elenco completo delle citazioni riguardanti la musica nel *Decameron*.<sup>5</sup> Tra i passi più significativi si può citare un brano dalla introduzione della prima giornata:

E erano alcuni, li quali avisavano che il viver moderatamente e il guardarsi da ogni superfluità avesse molto a così fatto accidente resistere: e fatta lor brigata, da ogni altro separati viveano, e in quelle case ricogliendosi e racchiudendosi, dove niuno infermo fosse e da viver meglio, dilicatissimi cibi e ottimi vini temperatissimamente usando e ogni lussuria fuggendo, senza lasciarsi parlare a alcuno o volere di fuori di morte o d'infermi alcuna novella sentire, con suoni o con quegli piaceri che aver poteano si dimoravano. Altri, in contraria opinion tratti, affermavano il bere assai e il godere e l'andar cantando attorno e sollazzando e il sodisfare d'ogni cosa all'appetito che si potesse e di ciò che avveniva ridersi e beffarsi esser medicina certissima a tanto male. (I, Introduzione, 20-21)<sup>6</sup>

L'osservazione sull'equivalenza della funzione delle novelle e della musica può però essere rafforzata anche dal confronto del numero totale delle novelle con quelle delle canzoni. Il *Decameron* infatti contiene cento novelle, più una novella su Filippo Balducci raccontata dall'autore all'inizio della quarta giornata, e dieci canzoni poste

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<sup>3</sup> I disegni sono stati ascritti alla mano di Boccaccio da Vittore Branca e da Maria Grazia Ciardi Dupré. Cfr. *ivi*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Chiara Cappuccio, "La musica del «Decameron», tra Boccaccio e Pasolini". *Cuadernos de filología Italiana*, Volumen extraordinario 6, (2010): p. 191.

<sup>5</sup> Marco Cerocchi, *Funzioni semantiche e metatestuali della musica in Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2010), p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> I singoli passi del testo del *Decameron* vengono indicati con giornata, novella e comma/i, secondo l'uso invalso (Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, a cura di Vittore Branca. Torino: Einaudi, 1992).

alla fine di ogni giornata, più una intitolata *Muoviti, Amore, e vattene a Messere*, cantata da Mico da Siena nella novella X, VII.<sup>7</sup>

Leggendo il testo del *Decameron*, emerge chiaramente che la musica nella società dell'epoca svolgeva diverse funzioni, oltre a quella già accennata di «portare la mente altrove rispetto ai pensieri che generano angoscia». <sup>8</sup> Dalle parole dei Deputati risulta che le canzoni venivano cantate durante le feste per sollazzarsi.<sup>9</sup> Nel *Decameron* vediamo spesso che le canzoni vengono cantate prima o dopo il convito:

La qual venuta, essendo ogni cosa dal discretissimo siniscalco apparecchiata, poi che alcuna stampita e una ballatetta o due furon cantate, lietamente, secondo che alla reina piacque, si misero a mangiare. (V, Introduzione, 3)

dopo la qual cena, fatti venir gli strumenti, comandò la reina che una danza fosse presa e, quella menando la Lauretta, Emilia cantasse una canzone da' leuto di Dioneo aiutata. Per lo qual comandamento Lauretta prestamente prese una danza e quella menò, cantando Emilia la seguente canzone amorosamente. (I, Conclusione, 16-17)

Si possono riportare altri passi che testimoniano come le messe e i riti religiosi, inclusi i riti funebri, fossero accompagnati dalla musica:

Era usanza, sì come ancora oggi veggiamo usare, che le donne parenti e vicine nella casa del morto si ragunavano e quivi con quelle che più gli appartenevano piangevano; e d'altra parte dinanzi la casa del morto co' suoi prossimi si ragunavano i suoi vicini e altri cittadini assai, e secondo la qualità del morto vi veniva il chericato; ed egli sopra gli omeri de' suoi pari, come funeral pompa di

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<sup>7</sup> Elena Ceva Valla dice in una nota alla novella X, VII: «Non sappiamo nulla di questo Mico, che potrebbe essere di invenzione boccaccesca.» Cfr. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, volume secondo, a cura di Mario Marti (Milano: Rizzoli, 2000), p. 686. Invece Vittore Branca in una nota avverte che si tratta di «nome ignoto alla storia letteraria, ma non si può escludere l'esistenza di un Mico, e anzi un "Minum Mocatum senensem" è nominato fra i poeti duecenteschi nel *De vulgari eloquentia*. Cfr. Boccaccio, *Decameron. Con le illustrazioni dell'autore e di grandi artisti fra Tre e Quattrocento*, a cura di Vittore Branca, cit., p. 696.

<sup>8</sup> Chiara Cappuccio, "La musica del «Decameron», tra Boccaccio e Pasolini", cit., p. 191. Per vedere i brani commentati che riguardano la musica vd. Marco Cerocchi, *Funzioni semantiche e metatestuali della musica in Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio*, cit., pp. 85-128.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. M. Colombo e P. Dal Rio, *Il Decameron con le annotazioni dei Deputati* (Firenze: Passigli, 1841-44), p. 637.

cera e di canti, alla chiesa da lui prima eletta anzi la morte n'era portato. (I, Introduzione, 32)

E per ciò che uomo idiota era e di grossa pasta, diceva suoi paternostri, andava alle prediche, stava alle messe, né mai falliva che alle laude che cantavano i secolari esso non fosse, e digiunava e disciplinavasi, e bucinavasi che egli era di scopatori. (III, IV, 5)

E poi che così detto ebbe, cantando una laude di san Lorenzo, aperse la cassetta e mostrò i carboni. (VI, X, 53)

Nella cornice della raccolta troviamo inoltre riferimenti agli strumenti musicali usati nel Trecento: *leuto/liuto*,<sup>10</sup> *viola* (ossia *viella*),<sup>11</sup> *cembalo*,<sup>12</sup> *ribeba* (ribeca),<sup>13</sup> *cornamusa*<sup>14</sup> o anche altri voci riguardanti la danza come *stampita*,<sup>15</sup> *carola*<sup>16</sup> e la forma della *lauda*<sup>17</sup>.

Dal testo del *Decameron* possiamo ricavare anche i nomi delle canzoni popolari che venivano cantate in quel periodo: *Monna Aldruda, levate la coda, Ché buone novelle vi reco; Alzatevi i panni, monna Lapa; Sotto l'ulivello è l'erba; L'onda del mare mi fa sì gran male; Esci fuor che sie tagliato; Com'un mio in su la campagna; Monna Simona imbotta imbotta; E' non è del mese d'ottobre; Questo mio nicchio s'io nol picchio; Deh fa pian, marito mio; Io mi comperai un gallo delle lire cento*.<sup>18</sup>

Non abbiamo delle prove sicure sull'esistenza di tutte le canzoni citate. I Deputati che lavoravano sul *Decameron* a distanza di due secoli osservavano:

Le canzonette qui tocche da Dioneo, son di quelle che a que' tempi si cantavano in su le feste e veglie a ballo, come ancor oggi si usa per sollazzo, e se ne ritroverebbe forse qualcuna;<sup>19</sup>

<sup>10</sup> I, Introduzione, 106; I, Conclusione 16. Il liuto viene nominato due volte, sempre come strumento suonato da Dioneo.

<sup>11</sup> I, Introduzione, 106.

<sup>12</sup> V, Conclusione, 9; VIII, II, 9.

<sup>13</sup> IX, V, 31; IX, V, 36; IX, V, 39; IX, V, 58.

<sup>14</sup> VI, Conclusione, 48; VII, Conclusione, 8.

<sup>15</sup> V, Introduzione, 3.

<sup>16</sup> I, Introduzione, 107; II, Conclusione, 11; VI, Conclusione, 37.

<sup>17</sup> III, IV, 5; VI, X, 53.

<sup>18</sup> V, Conclusione, 7-13.

<sup>19</sup> M. Colombo e P. Dal Rio, *Il Decameron con le annotazioni dei Deputati*, cit., p. 637.

Tuttavia sappiamo che alcune di queste canzoni continuavano a circolare tra il popolo anche più tardi. Ad esempio la canzone *Questo mio nicchio s'io nol picchio* è conosciuta in due versioni: una versione che proviene da un non meglio precisato manoscritto Magliabechiano e un'altra dal manoscritto Ricc. 1118.<sup>20</sup> Inoltre la canzone *Monna Aldruda, levate la coda* viene citata da Giovanni della Casa in *Galateo ovvero de' Costumi*, XX:<sup>21</sup> ma siccome Della Casa si riferisce esplicitamente ai modi di Dioneo, questa citazione non può essere considerata una testimonianza forte.

Vittore Branca, oltre alle canzoni citate ha individuato una somiglianza sia tra la canzone *Monna Simona* e quella citata dal Doni nella *Zucca*, sia tra la canzone *L'onda del mare mi fa sì gran male* e quella che si trova in un Canzoniere portoghese (Vaticano Lat. 488).<sup>22</sup> Rimane tuttavia il fatto che di alcune canzoni non si è ancora trovata nessuna traccia o perché non sono state conservate, o perché si tratta di una invenzione boccacciana.

Tramite i riferimenti ai personaggi delle canzoni che Dioneo canta insieme a Fiammetta e Lauretta – Messer Guglielmo e la Dama del Vergiù, Arcita e Palemone, Troilo e Criseida – il *Decameron* è collegato con la *Teseida* (opera che presenta una lettera dedicatoria indirizzata a Fiammetta) e, ovviamente, anche con la letteratura greca e francese. A questo punto, pertanto, per interpretare correttamente il ruolo degli elementi realistici dovremmo prendere in considerazione anche l'intertestualità.

Secondo Marco Cerocchi, i riferimenti essenziali alla musica, vale a dire in particolare i titoli delle canzoni o i nomi dei personaggi realmente vissuti, non sono stati utilizzati da Boccaccio a caso: «il solo riferimento musicale letto nel testo determinava [nei lettori trecenteschi] lo stato d'animo consono alla ricezione "realistica" del testo».<sup>23</sup> Secondo Cerocchi al lettore Trecentesco bastava leggere il titolo di una canzone per immaginarsi l'intonazione della canzone. Questa teoria, come vedremo più avanti, credo, si potrebbe estendere anche ai riferimenti riguardanti la pittura.

Infatti in alcune novelle appaiono personaggi che Vasari nelle sue *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori* individua tra i pittori fiorentini dell'epoca. Ad

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<sup>20</sup> Cfr. *Cantilene e ballate, strambotti e madrigali nei secoli XIII e XIV*, a cura di Giosuè Carducci (Pisa: Nistri, 1871), pp. 62-64.

<sup>21</sup> *Opere di Monsig. Giovanni Della Casa con una copiosa giunta di scritture...*(Firenze: Manni, 1707), p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, volume secondo, a cura di Vittore Branca, cit., p. 707.

<sup>23</sup> Marco Cerocchi, *Funzioni semantiche e metatestuali della musica in Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio*, cit., p. 81.

esempio: Buffalmacco corrisponderebbe a Buonamico di Cristofano e i suoi amici Bruno e Calandrino corrisponderebbero rispettivamente a Bruno di Giovanni e Calandrino Giovanozzo di Pierino.<sup>24</sup> Poi Nello (IX, III), amico di Bruno, corrisponderebbe a Nello di Dino (detto anche Bandino). Giotto (VI, V), è il famoso pittore fiorentino, mentre Lippo Topo (VI, X) è probabilmente un personaggio di fantasia.<sup>25</sup> Giotto e Buffalmacco<sup>26</sup> figurano anche nel *Trecentonovelle* di Franco Sacchetti.

Per ragioni di brevità, mi limiterò a trattare soltanto le novelle che trattano dei personaggi menzionati. Mentre sull'esistenza di alcuni personaggi, come ad esempio Lippo Topo, ci sono rimaste alcune incertezze, la veridicità di altri personaggi, come ad esempio di Calandrino, è documentata. L'esistenza di un «Nozzus vocatus Calandrinus Pictor quondam Perini Populi Sancti Laurentii testis»<sup>27</sup> è testimoniata da un documento notarile vergato da Ser Grimaldo di Ser Compagno da Pesciola del 20 luglio 1301, conservato presso l'Archivio di Stato di Firenze (G 676). Da un documento del notaio Ser Lando d'Ubaldo da Pesciola, conservato presso l'Archivio di Stato di Firenze (L 38-39), è testimoniata anche la sua morte.<sup>28</sup>

Anticipo che dai brani seguenti che illustrano la probabile veridicità storica del personaggio di Calandrino, emergerà che, così come è stato notato nel caso della musica, anche per quanto riguarda i riferimenti alla pittura, Boccaccio fa allusione a artisti e opere contemporanei senza entrare nei dettagli.

Boccaccio all'inizio della novella VIII, III presenta Calandrino e i suoi amici, ma dall'introduzione dei personaggi veniamo a sapere ben poco:

Nella nostra città, la qual sempre di varie maniere e di nuove genti è stata abondevole, fu, ancora non è gran tempo, un dipintore chiamato Calandrino, uom semplice e di nuovi costumi. Il quale il più del tempo con altri due dipintori

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<sup>24</sup> Cfr. Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori, Di nuovo dal Medesimo riviste, et ampliate. Con i ritratti loro et con l'aggiunta delle Vite de' vivi, & de' morti dall'anno 1550 infino al 1567. Prima e seconda parte* (Firenze: Giunti, 1568), pp. 154 -163. Boccaccio, *Decameron*, volume secondo, a cura di Mario Marti, cit.; Franco Sacchetti, *Il Trecentonovelle*, a cura di E. Faccioli (Torino: Einaudi, 1970), pp. 474-476.

<sup>25</sup> Secondo Branca si tratti probabilmente di un personaggio di fantasia. Cfr. Boccaccio, *Decameron*, volume secondo, a cura di Vittore Branca, p. 763.

<sup>26</sup> Giotto è protagonista della novella XIII e Buffalmacco appare nelle novelle CLXI, CLXIX, CXCI, CXCII. Cfr. Franco Sacchetti, *Il Trecentonovelle*, a cura di E. Faccioli, cit.

<sup>27</sup> Filippo Baldinucci e Ferdinando Gregori, *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, tomo I, (Firenze: Gio. Battista Stecchi, e Anton Giuseppe Pagani, 1767), p. 173.

<sup>28</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, volume secondo, a cura di Vittore Branca, cit., p. 906.

usava, chiamati l'un Bruno e l'altro Buffalmacco, uomini sollazzevoli molto ma per altro avveduti e sagaci, li quali con Calandrino usavan per ciò che de' modi suoi e della sua simplicità sovente gran festa prendevano. (VIII, III, 4)

Subito dopo segue un riferimento a un altro personaggio che si ritiene storicamente esistito, cioè Maso del Saggio, un sensale fiorentino che insieme a Bruno e Buffalmacco beffa Calandrino. Leggendo il passo in cui Maso del Saggio incontra Calandrino, capiamo che Calandrino frequentava la chiesa di San Giovanni nella quale osservava le pitture e gli intagli, ma di nuovo Boccaccio non descrive i dettagli:

E per ventura trovandolo [Calandrino] un dì nella chiesa di San Giovanni e vedendolo stare attento a riguardare le dipinture e gl'intagli del tabernaculo il quale è sopra l'altare della detta chiesa, non molto tempo davanti postovi, pensò essergli dato luogo e tempo alla sua intenzione. (VIII, III, 6)

Nella novella VIII, III, Boccaccio fornisce informazioni su dove Calandrino viveva:

Buffalmacco, recatosi in mano uno de' codoli che raccolti avea, disse a Bruno: «Deh vedi bel codolo: così giugnese egli testé nelle reni a Calandrino!» e lasciato andare, gli diè con esso nelle reni una gran percossa; e in brieve in cotal guisa, or con una parola e or con un'altra, su per lo Mugnone infino alla porta a San Gallo il vennero lapidando. Quindi, [...], alquanto con le guardie de' gabellieri si ristettero; le quali, [...] lasciarono andar Calandrino con le maggior risa del mondo. Il quale senza arrestarsi se ne venne a casa sua, la quale era vicina al Canto alla Macina; e in tanto fu la fortuna piacevole alla beffa, che, mentre Calandrino per lo fiume ne venne e poi per la città, niuna persona gli fece motto. (VIII, III, 48-50)

Il percorso di Calandrino, descritto da Boccaccio, è abbastanza fedele alla realtà urbanistica di Firenze. Il Mugnone prima di essere incanalato da piazza della Libertà verso via San Gallo, si trovava nelle vicinanze delle mura e passava anche vicino alla chiesa di San Lorenzo, vicina al Canto alla Macina dove dovrebbe essere la casa di Calandrino.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Giovanni Fanelli, *Firenze* (Bari: Laterza, 1981), pp. 17, 36 e passim.

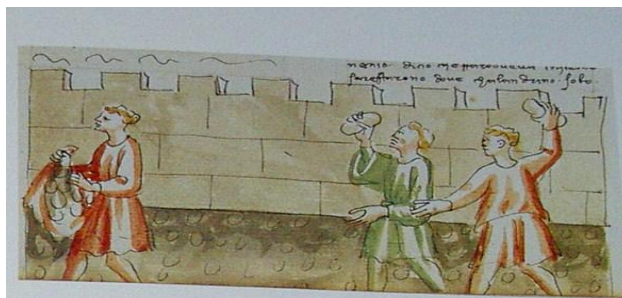


Immagine della miniatura di un artista fiorentino rappresenta i due personaggi che stanno lapidando Calandrino. (B.N.F., Parigi)

Anche nella novella VIII, IX che fa sempre parte della tetralogia su Calandrino, troviamo un breve riferimento a uno dei luoghi sopra citati; quando il medico chiede a Bruno che cosa voglia dire l'espressione "andare in corso", Bruno risponde con queste parole:

Egli è troppo gran segreto quello che voi volete sapere, e è cosa da disfarmi e da cacciarmi del mondo, anzi da farmi mettere in bocca del lucifero da San Gallo, se altri il risapesse.

(VIII, IX, 15)

La citazione non richiede soltanto la conoscenza del luogo ma anche la conoscenza dell'arte dell'epoca: perché risulta che sulla facciata dell'ospedale di San Gallo fosse dipinto un lucifero con più bocche.<sup>30</sup> Buffalmacco invece nella stessa novella usa l'espressione «lo fo boto all'alto Dio da Passignano» che si riferisce a una pittura che si trova sulla facciata della chiesa a Passignano.<sup>31</sup>

Nella tetralogia troviamo anche accenni all'attività artistica dei pittori, con una certa ironia sulla semplicità e cattivo gusto loro e dei committenti o fruitori:

Bruno, parendogli star bene, acciò che ingrato non paresse di questo onor fattogli dal medico, gli aveva dipinta nella sala sua la Quaresima ed uno *agnusdei* all'entrar della camera e sopra l'uscio della via uno orinale, acciò che coloro che avessero del suo consiglio bisogno il sapessero riconoscer dagli altri; ed in una sua loggetta gli aveva dipinta la battaglia de' topi e delle gatte, la quale troppo bella cosa pareva al medico. (VIII, IX, 34-35)

<sup>30</sup> Cfr. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, volume secondo, a cura di Vittore Branca, cit., p. 986, nota 6.

<sup>31</sup> Ivi, p. 997, nota 3.

Il passo seguente parla della collaborazione tra i tre amici e Nello:

Niccolò Cornacchini fu nostro cittadino e ricco uomo: e tra l'altre sue possessioni una bella n'ebbe in Camerata, sopra la quale fece uno orrevole e bello casamento, e con Bruno e Buffalmacco che tutto gli ele dipignessero si convenne; li quali, per ciò che il lavoro era molto, seco aggiunsero e Nello e Calandrino e cominciarono a lavorare. (IX, V, 6)

Sia da parte della critica letteraria sia da parte degli storici viene molto discusso il personaggio di Buffalmacco e il suo rapporto con gli affreschi del *Trionfo della Morte* che si trovano nel Camposanto di Pisa. Nonostante l'incertezza sulla datazione e sulla attribuzione degli affreschi (Vittore Branca li attribuisce a Buffalmacco con una datazione 1360-1380,<sup>32</sup> altri invece propendono per una data intorno al 1360 e li attribuiscono a un pittore bolognese,<sup>33</sup> altri ancora li attribuiscono a un pittore pisano, Francesco Traini, con datazione intorno al 1350, e altri infine affermano che gli affreschi sono stati dipinti prima della composizione del *Decameron*, cioè tra il 1330 e il 1340),<sup>34</sup> Lucia Battaglia Ricci li attribuisce a Buffalmacco ed è della opinione che il *Trionfo della Morte* possa aver ispirato alcuni passi della cornice boccacciana.<sup>35</sup>

Anche se sappiamo che alcune canzoni di Boccaccio sono state messe in musica nel Trecento – *Come sul fonte fu preso Narciso* o *Non so qual io mi Voglia* ad esempio sono state musicate da Lorenzo da Firenze – le poesie del *Decameron* vengono musicate di norma soltanto tra Cinquecento e inizio del Seicento.<sup>36</sup> La prima intonazione di *Vien dunque amor cagion d'ogni mio bene* (vv. 3-9 della ballata *Qual donna canterà, s'ì non cant'io*, *Decameron* II, Conclusione, 13), è apparsa a Lione nel 1540 in una raccolta intitolata *Venticinque canzoni a 5* di Franco de Layolle.<sup>37</sup> Il fatto che Layolle abbia scelto soltanto alcuni versi da intonare non sorprende in quanto per l'epoca un procedimento simile era in uso. Considerando che nel Cinquecento in Europa le pubblicazioni di polifonie profane erano in voga la fortuna delle poesie

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<sup>32</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron. Con le illustrazioni dell'autore e di grandi artisti fra Tre e Quattrocento*, a cura di Vittore Branca, cit., p. 62.

<sup>33</sup> Luciano Bellosi, *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo della Morte*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1974), p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Lucia Battaglia Ricci, *Ragionare nel giardino. Boccaccio e i cicli pittorici del «Trionfo della Morte»*, (Roma: Salerno editrice, 1987), p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Ivi.

<sup>36</sup> Arnaldo Bonaventura, *Il Boccaccio e la musica*, cit., pp. 14-15.

<sup>37</sup> Cfr. la tabella cronologica (*I testi musicati*), fornita da F. Piperno in "Boccaccio in musica nel Cinquecento: fortuna e recezione delle ballate del Decameron", cit., pp. 92-99.

boccacciane non era poi così grande.<sup>38</sup> Interessante però è il fatto, messo in evidenza da Franco Piperno, che le polifonie continuarono a essere pubblicate anche nel periodo in cui il *Decameron* venne interdetto da parte della censura ecclesiastica, e che proprio nel 1570 a Venezia uscirono i *Madrigali a tre voci* di Girolamo Scotto, che contengono quattordici brani su testo di *Decameron*.<sup>39</sup>

Tra gli autori cinquecenteschi che hanno musicato le poesie boccacciane oltre a Girolamo Scotto possiamo citare: Domenico Ferabosco, Filippo de Monte, Giovanni Ferretti, Sessa d'Aranda, Giovanni Battista Mosto, Sigismondo D'India, Giovanni Pietro Manenti, Girolamo Parabosco, Luzzasco Luzzaschi, Francesco Corteccia, Vincenzo Galilei.<sup>40</sup>

Il successo del madrigale *Io mi son giovinetta* (IX, Conclusione, 8), musicato da Domenico Ferrabosco, viene testimoniato anche dagli affreschi che si trovano in una stanza della Fortezza Orsini di Sorano: su ognuna delle quattro pareti della stanza troviamo una parte vocale del madrigale.<sup>41</sup>

Se si mette a confronto il successo della musica ispirata dal *Decameron* con il successo della pittura, l'impressione è che probabilmente la pittura abbia avuto maggiore fortuna immediata, incominciandosi a diffondere subito attraverso la circolazione manoscritta del testo. Le illustrazioni dei libri continuarono a diffondersi anche con la stampa. Le prime illustrazioni del *Decameron* a stampa compaiono nell'edizione pubblicata nel 1492 a Venezia dai tipografi De Gregori.<sup>42</sup> Le immagini del libro contengono tutti i personaggi delle novelle.

Al periodo del Quattrocento risalgono anche alcuni dipinti murali come ad esempio il ciclo degli affreschi di Rocca Bianca che oggi sono conservati al Castello Sforzesco di Milano. Uno degli dipinti che fa parte degli affreschi di Rocca Bianca sono *Le nozze di Gualtieri e Griselda* che illustrano la novella X, X. Poi ad esempio alla novella V, VIII, intitolata *Novella di Nastagio degli Onesti*, si è ispirato Sandro Botticelli: i suoi disegni risalgono al 1487.

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<sup>38</sup> Franco Piperno, "Boccaccio in musica nel Cinquecento: fortuna e recezione delle ballate del *Decameron*", cit., p. 62.

<sup>39</sup> Ivi, p. 66.

<sup>40</sup> Arnaldo Bonaventura, *Il Boccaccio e la musica*, cit., pp. 15-16; Franco Piperno, *Boccaccio in musica nel Cinquecento: fortuna e recezione delle ballate del Decameron*, cit., pp. 92-99.

<sup>41</sup> Franco Piperno, "Boccaccio in musica nel Cinquecento: fortuna e recezione delle ballate del *Decameron*", cit., p. 73.

<sup>42</sup> Le immagini sono riprodotte nell'edizione del *Decameron*, a cura di Mario Marti. (Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* a cura di Mario Marti. Milano: Rizzoli, 2000.)

Tra i temi preferiti dei pittori seicenteschi era ad esempio la novella IV, I che parla di Ghismonda. Ghismonda è stata dipinta con il cuore di Guiscardo ad esempio da Mario Balassi, Francesco Furini, Bernardino Mei, William Hogarth. Uno dei dipinti più recenti con la tematica del *Decameron* è il quadro di William Waterhouse (1916), conservato a Liverpool presso la Lady Lever Art Gallery.

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## War of the Arthurian Worlds

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Sir Thomas Malory, a knight who lived in 15<sup>th</sup> century England, was the author of *Le Morte D'Arthur*, a compilation of numerous Arthurian stories stemming from medieval French and English sources. After inheriting his father's office and the family estate, due to an unknown but sudden turn, Malory got involved in different acts of crime. According to the sources, he was charged with assault of property, cattle raids, and extortion of money by threat; he broke into abbeys stealing the money and valuables and he was in prison for several times. He did not seem to lead a life of a decent knight following the examples of great warriors of chivalric stories, still he created a work – while serving his prison sentence – which contributed to the survival of Arthurian stories in an era in which the values of chivalry were about to disappear. He enriched these stories with “elaborate comments on the art of chivalry and the duties of those who belong to the ‘High Order of Knighthood’” (Vinaver, 550) and replenished them with new life and enthusiasm. Critics underline that “with great consistency he tried to disentangle from his sources a series of self-contained stories” even if it was “a hazardous enterprise, because most of the French texts were a delicate and elaborate fabric in which various threads of the narrative were carefully interwoven with one another.” (Vinaver, 545) Malory himself spent years not only selecting, translating and editing these texts, but also “unravelling the threads and placing each of them separately upon the canvas”. (Vinaver, 545) His works were published by William Caxton in 1485 and they circulated in his edition and its adaptations for the forthcoming four and a half centuries. Caxton did not only edit Malory's text and divided it into books and chapters, but also rephrased the text depriving it of “some of its original flavour”.<sup>1</sup> However, in the summer of 1943 W. F. Oakeshott found a more authentic 15<sup>th</sup>-century text in the Fellow's Library of Winchester College. Thanks to the *Winchester MS* it became possible to separate Malory's text from Caxton's.

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<sup>1</sup> “The division into books and chapters would seem to have been prompted by the desire to present the whole matter as a single composition.” Vinaver, “Sir Thomas Malory,” 543-544.

## Worship, combat, wounds

Reading the text of *Le Morte D'Arthur* it becomes apparent that Malory was primarily interested in knightly combat, prowess and worship. Furthermore, he was very much concerned with the question of loyalty and the fellowship of the Knights of the Round Table (Kaeuper, 289). A "somewhat subordinate interest in romantic love and an unswerving belief that God blesses the entire chivalric enterprise" (ibid.) can also be identified among the main themes of *Le Morte D'Arthur* therefore amorous emotions and religious feelings proved to be features that are lingering in the background of his works, since they were taken rather as functions, something that is already given (Brewer, 215). It can be related to the fact that in Malory the most characteristic activity of the knights is "within the physical sphere, in knightly combat".<sup>2</sup> Following Mann's train of thoughts, there are two key concepts that should be taken into consideration when looking at knightly combat as an object of scrutiny: on the one hand, 'aventure', that she prefers to connect with its primary meaning as a Middle English word, 'chance', and on the other hand, the body of the knights. Aventure is related to the macro world of the knights and serves as one of the options for accumulating worship, while the body can be considered as a testing surface which embodies and provides space for the expression of the knights' prowess.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the *Morte*, the reader follows the knights setting out for quests, errands, and different adventures where they have countless opportunities to earn 'worship' (honour, glory). These adventures are often attached to "damosels", who usually function as alibis for Malory to introduce a shorter (sub)narrative. Elizabeth Edwards suggests that damsels are associated with the centrifugal force of adventure that distracts them (and knights, too) from the centralized position of the court.<sup>4</sup> The damsels are either seeking for the knights, encountering them, fleeing from an attacker and asking for help, or are sent to offer, or to turn the knights' attention to new challenges. And since these are of ladies' requests, they should not be turned

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<sup>2</sup> Mann, 331. This work underlines that the critical vocabulary and a way of reading should be worked out which would give a better basis for the examination of Malory's text and would be useful for the study of "the structure and nature of his particular kind of narrative."

<sup>3</sup> In Mann's view the chivalric body is "the medium through which a knight's worship is revealed, and the testing ground of its validity". Mann, "Knightly Combat in *Le Morte D'Arthur*", 338.

<sup>4</sup> From the knights' point of view there is a shift in the "valuation" of these female characters roaming the landscape, since they are "not usually the object of the quest but the means to achievement of it" and often function as "mediators of the trials the knights must face". Edwards, 38-39.

down, in accordance with the ethical code of knights.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the damsels are devices used for continuing the story and play an important role in the heroic image-building, i.e. how different identities are established, formed and become knights of great worship, in Malory's knightly world (Lynch, 1-15). By proving their prowess on the opponent's body, the knights earn honour and it brings a knight reputation and "worship" (Kaeuper, 290). Good name, heroic deeds and memorable stories become attached to the knight's name and therefore his name becomes an index of power and prestige (Lynch, 4). "This 'name' or reputation [...] will accompany him permanently, as long as his name is known." (Lynch, 5) Lynch associates identity with the accumulated worship attached to a knight's name and expressed prowess proved in combat or on the battlefield. The example of Sir Launcelot is obvious in this respect, since all the accumulated worship – even the ones he earned in disguise or without his distinguishing features<sup>6</sup> – is eventually credited to him when he arrives back to the court and recounts his adventures.

When the knights set out on a quest, they put themselves "at the disposal of chance": an adventure, as Jill Mann (333) puts it, is "beyond the knight's control: it is something that comes to him."<sup>7</sup> She also interprets these encounters and events as parts of the process of the knights' self-discovery. During the fights and encounters the knightly subjects and their inter-personal relationships with the other knights are established and confirmed, formed and reformed each time, but these events shall not be considered to serve the creation of them.<sup>8</sup> Mann also takes the example of the judicial combat which gained its significance with jeopardizing the knight's body to prove "his own quality" and his own right against an opponent's body. Thence the body of the knight and that of the opponent were of the same importance in the knightly combat (Mann, 335-336). At the same time, Jill Mann enhances that the

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. the Pentecostal Oath, in Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 115-116.

<sup>6</sup> That is he never worn a lady's token or in some occasions he changed armours or wore different coat-of-arms, which were carefully described by Malory, etc.

<sup>7</sup> To go further: "The importance of knightly combat is that it offers a structure within which 'aventure' can operate, within which the revelatory movements of chance can realize themselves." Mann, 334.

<sup>8</sup> "[T]he knight realizes himself and his destiny, the nature and the events that chance has willed to him, in the long succession of physical engagements with his fellows. [...] The combat, then, is a way of engaging with 'aventure', and this engagement is accomplished through the body. The knight 'puts his body in aventure', or he 'jeopardises' it, or he offers to prove his truth against an accuser 'my body to his body'." (Mann, 334-335)

knightly combat opens up a paradox: with the destruction of the bodily wholeness of a knight the wholeness of their selves is revealed.<sup>9</sup>

Battle scars and wounds given and received during the knightly combat, tournaments and jousts come into one's mind associated with the image of the opened wholeness of a knight's body. They play an important role in raising and testifying worship and contribute to the identity formation of knights. As Kenneth Hodges (14) puts it, the injuries inflicted upon the body of the opponent can create a meaningful and significant encounter of a conflict. The adventures are later reported to the court and the scars that are left more or less visible on the knight's body testify the fierceness of the experienced combat.<sup>10</sup> The visible traces of the fight provide a further meaning in case of the winner of the fight: they can signify the commitment to the undertaken causes of the given knight and his strenuousness in combat and on the battlefield (Hodges, 16) therefore battle scars, besides the deeds recounted in the court, also contribute to the knight's worship accumulated that far (Hodges, 19). According to Hodges (16), wounds are also associated with constructing masculine identities and communities. As he puts it, the ideal of masculinity that is often highlighted and celebrated in chivalric texts also "includes being wounded regularly" . By the same token, knighthood is also "proven through the willingness to bear wounds while continuing to fight" (Hodges, 18)<sup>11</sup>. Above all, Hodges (20) argues that knightly combat and the acquired wounds can be considered "an education, part of the process of creating (not just revealing) young knights." Every time they embark upon a fight with an opponent, the injuries serve to "educate young knights, and the opportunity for healing [which] creates lasting social bonds. Thus injuries are often a key part of becoming a mature knight and a member of a community." (Hodges, 19) They also

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<sup>9</sup> "The destruction of their bodily wholeness paradoxically reveals – and in that sense brings into being – the wholeness of their selves [...], the wholeness of fellowship between them, and the integration with the external world that comes from acceptance of the independence and inexplicability of its operations." (Mann, 338)

<sup>10</sup> "The injuries sustained give weight and worth to the abstract issues being fought about: they visually announce that the issue was so important that it deserved this much suffering, memorializing the conflict in the lasting scars they leave behind". (Hodges, 16)

<sup>11</sup> Kelly (60) also deals with the wounding of the knight's body and presents a more feminist interpretation and the gender-related approach in her article. In her view the wounded body of the knight is feminized since it is penetrated through and through by the opponent's sword. However, Hodges claims that one should take the result of the fight into consideration and if it includes a loss of status, it is accompanied by a loss of masculinity as well. "Loss of status may feminize a knight but often not. Injury may prove a man vulnerable, it may keep him from fighting for a while, but it need not make him less of a man, and if he overcomes his wounds, he can be greater." (Hodges, 18-19)

play a crucial role in promoting bonding between knights and community formation, especially during a healing (Hodges, 23-24).<sup>12</sup>

### War in Malory

Throughout *Le Morte D'Arthur* individual fights, amicable jousts, tournaments of factions or fellowships are among the opportunities in which knights prove themselves and test their combat skills. Malory treats the different forms of fighting similarly: in each case the focus is usually placed upon winning worship (Whetter, 169-174). The only difference that might be conspicuous is what Maurice Keen has also mentioned in connection with the appreciation of the results achieved in jousting, tournaments and war: knights deserved higher praise if they prove themselves in the latter. "The best men of all will be those who have advanced from one honour to the next: who in their childhood have loved to hear stories of deeds of arms, who as soon as they have reached sufficient age have armed themselves for jousts, and at the first chance have entered on 'the great business of war'..." (Keen, 12-13).

However, war itself seems to be considered by Malory as a two-fold phenomenon: on the one hand, it is the place where one can prove his prowess and win worship, on the other hand, a place where they get injured, or, to go further, "a place of slaughter" (Whetter, 178). Whetter (170) claims that Malory follows up the consequences of combat, tournament and war as well, since they are at least as important as earning worship – on the other end there can be weeping, bleeding and wounding. The consequences therefore can be beneficial and destructive: "although war and individual combat are the principal means by which a knight establishes worship, they are also the principal means by which he encounters injury or death." (Whetter, 171)

In Benson's article a similar view and distinguishing can be identified. He refers to D. S. Brewer mentioning the great importance of honour in the *Le Morte D'Arthur* which is "the strongest single motivating force in the society which Malory creates." (Benson,

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<sup>12</sup> A very illuminating example is the well-known scene of the healing of Sir Urry, where the mutual intention of healing the wounded knight does not only bring the knights of the Round Table together, "but it makes Urry a member of Launcelot's affinity" and he joins Launcelot in the wars of the divided loyalties. Hodges (23) also mentions that "wounds do more than symbolize community, they also help to create it. The need of injured knights to be healed invites them to accept hospitality and service from others, and this healing can become the basis for later political and social ties." It may also be worth reflecting on Mann's thoughts on the importance of blood in Malory: it creates wholeness "as the creator of kinship between those of the same blood, and ... as the creator of personal wholeness through its powers of healing." (Mann, 338-339)

225) However, this force opens up a tragic paradox, as well, since the same honour, which “has created the good society” and on which the fellowship of the Round Table was also based, brings about the collapse.<sup>13</sup> In the last book of *Le Morte D’Arthur* we see the fight of divided loyalties. The knights line up behind King Arthur or Sir Launcelot for a series of battles over the remains of the fellowship they previously formed part of. The once closest friends and kins, brothers-in-arms no longer battle each other in disguise but with the full knowledge of who they are facing and attacking; there are no formal challenges any more and no one can hide behind anonymity. (Benson, 230) The most satisfactory explanation for the fall (apart from the adultery of Launcelot and Guinevere which is enhanced as one of the primary reasons by Malory) is that the characters’ actions are dictated by worshipful honour, that is a knight is expected to do what honour demands, even if the consequence of the action results in the destruction of their beloved comrades. (Benson, 230-234) Benson (234) also emphasizes the importance of (a sense of) responsibility: “[a]s they face death, Malory’s principal characters take responsibility for their actions, repent their sins, and forgive their enemies.” A very moving example for this is when Gawain, recognizing his mortal wounds, realizes and admits his faults and blames himself for the war.<sup>14</sup>

‘Mine uncle King Arthur,’ said Sir Gawain, ‘wit you well my death day is come, and all is through mine own hastiness and wilfulness; I am smitten upon the old wound the which Sir Launcelot gave me, on the which I feel well I must die; and had Sir Launcelot been with you as he was, this unhappy war had never begun; and of all this am I causer, for Sir Launcelot and his blood, through their prowess, held all your cankered enemies in subjection and danger. (Malory, 508)

As the story reaches towards the end, it becomes even clearer that “the Arthurian ideal of fellowship is destroyed by the Arthurian ideal of honour” and the story ends as a tragedy of virtue. (Benson, 231)

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<sup>13</sup> “The most satisfactory explanation for the fall, however is the honour or, to use Malory’s word, ‘worship’ that Brewer identified as fundamental to Arthurian society.” Benson, “The Ending of the Morte Darthur” 226, 231.

<sup>14</sup> “Gawain’s [...] willingness to take full responsibility is an advance beyond honour. Honour demands that someone must be attacked to protect or avenge another, whereas Gawain takes all on himself.” (Benson, 234)

## White's War

According to Elisabeth Brewer, one of the points where T. H. White's *The Once and Future King* ceases to agree with and keeps an emphatic distance from Malory's work was the predominance of jousting. In White's view knightly combat proved to be an encouraging basis for the practice of Might over Right that is the use of violence for a determined reason that was not always ethical or morally right. He considered all the tournaments and jousts as opportunities for the knights of the Round Table to win honour for themselves and to earn glory for their fellowship. As Brewer puts it, White was unable to accept Malory's view on the Round Table and the value of chivalry which it represents. (Brewer, 216-219) On the contrary, he was eager to find the antidote of violence and war and his primary interest was to present a story, "an independent, yet imperfect work" which conveyed his views about these themes. (Brewer, 151) That might be the reason why White decided to omit and compress the amount of combat, knightly adventures and encounters, which dominated Malory's works, and focused more on relationships and 'character.' (Brewer, 214) White's primary interest was to decipher Arthur's attitude to warfare and to find a way in which he can be persuaded to turn from the battlefield to peaceful, yet upright solutions.<sup>15</sup>

*The Once and Future King* focuses on the ways in which aggression can be diverted and held in check, on the disruptive and legitimized use of violence, and on the childhood and education of King Arthur and his prominent knights. White looked for the antidote of war from the beginning, and he used the figure of Merlyn as a friendly tutor, who tries to convince and turn Arthur from the appreciation of power and violence. He also put an effort to teaching him to look constantly for the opportunities of keeping peace and to prefer justice over might. All the transformations and adventures with the animals served this purpose. In addition, the ending of *The Once and Future King* can be interpreted as a silent protest against war: White does not even leave any chance for it to begin. Since the four books of his work did not turn out to be satisfactory for putting forth his views, White decided to dedicate another book to the theme of war.

In *The Book of Merlyn* Arthur is taken back to the badger's nest right from the forefront of his last battle to discuss with Merlyn and the animals war "from a naturalist point of view" (Brewer, 151). Through the medium of animals' conversation, different ideologies are presented and discussed – however, there is not much space

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<sup>15</sup> As it was mentioned earlier, and as Kevin Whetter also mentioned in his article, Malory considered war just as disastrous. (Whetter, 179)

left for Arthur to express his opinion. He is taken as a pupil again presented by the different ideas and promises of solutions while he is expected to learn, gain understanding and find the best solution to end war for once and forever. He is sent to live among the ants and the wild geese, just like when he was the Wart in *The Sword in the Stone*, however, this time he remains in possession of his adult mind and attitude for the adventure instead of the openness and susceptibility of a child. Although Arthur experiences a spiritual renewal due to Merlyn's crafts, he still has his former experiences and this way gets a better opportunity for understanding the different forms of animal life and their connection to a political point of view (Brewer, 152).

Among the ants Arthur experienced what it is like to live in a collective, not to possess anything (not even his own body) but being possessed and used as a device. He cannot form part of such a dull, lifeless, yet hardworking community which he sees as a group of monstrous beings lacking any zest for life.<sup>16</sup> However, among the geese where there is no communal but private property and there is no ideology whatsoever forced onto him he finally finds peace. He can finally forget about the world and just be himself – a feeling he has never been allowed to experience. That is also why he is rather disappointed when he is drawn back to his fictional reality and has to return to the problem of finding the antidote of war. The upcoming conversations and scenes in the badger's nest can be interpreted as a sort of war against Arthur's views and the way the animals and the old tutor guide him and try to convince him of the dangerous effects of ideology and politics, and how people can be influenced or dominated by them. Merlyn then continues to argue for individuality and anarchy and claims that the only thing that has to be done to eradicate nationalism, the curse of humanity, is to abolish nations (Brewer, 155).<sup>17</sup> By the same token, it seems that Merlyn "cannot put his arguments without recourse to the language of war [...], it would seem that the concept is so deeply embedded in human consciousness as to be ineradicable, still inadvertently thrusting up in the form of metaphor in White's own arguments against war."<sup>18</sup>

White defines war as an unknown concept in nature,<sup>19</sup> and describes it as a universal human condition. As Brewer (157) puts it, "the point of man's difference

<sup>16</sup> "The ants manifest all the worst features of the totalitarian regime in their utter denial of the rights of the individual." Brewer, *T. H. White's Once and Future King*, 159.

<sup>17</sup> "[I]t is communal property rather than the ownership of private property that leads to war. Nationalism is the curse of man, and for this Merlyn has a simple, easy solution to propose. All you have to do is to abolish nations [...] 'converting mankind into a federation of individuals'." (White, 139)

<sup>18</sup> As Brewer (155) continues: "He has 'waged his little war', he has investigated the causes of 'the battle we are waging', he has engaged in a 'crusade'."

<sup>19</sup> "The gross immorality of warfare is, as I mentioned before, an oddity in nature." (White, 135)

from the animals [is] in habitually making war in his own kind as virtually no other creatures do." But eventually White identifies it (arriving back to the argument trying to articulate throughout *The Once and Future King*) "as an aggressive use of might".<sup>20</sup> Merlyn suggests Arthur

to believe in justice rather than power: and to investigate with mental integrity, [...] for war is force unbridled [...]. But for man, and not on an abstract definition of right and wrong, but on nature's concrete definition that a species must specialise in its own speciality, the committee suggests that might was never right. (White, 161-162).

There are also some points brought up by the old tutor and the animal committee in favour of war to ease the onset of ideas and firm conviction on Arthur, but they belong to the comic mode of White's last book (163-166). Still, what is worth mentioning before moving on to a more serious critique on war, is White's idealistic opinion about the only hope for the future of the human race which lies, as Brewer also highlights in her article, in "that strange, altruistic, rare and obstinate decency which will make writers or scientists maintain their truths at the risk of death." (Brewer, 156)<sup>21</sup>

#### Twain and technical warfare

Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* presents a time-traveller plot which brings together two disparate historic periods in order to measure against each other. The story gives an account of the efforts made by its hero, Hank Morgan to transform Arthurian England and bring it closer to his present, the America of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hank's figure therefore represents the most powerful social forces of his culture that includes industry, technology and entrepreneurial capitalism (Halliday, 416). He invests almost all his wits, skills and enthusiasm to bring out the medieval society and culture he meets from the darkness and ignorance and leads them to the sunlit field of development and technology. At the beginning, Hank does not seem to

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<sup>20</sup> "What is war? War, I take it, may be defined as an aggressive use of might between collections of the same species. It [...] must be between members of the same species." White, *The Book of Merlyn*, 134.

<sup>21</sup> She defines 'decency' as a mixture of courage and generosity, a quality highly valued by the social class and the generation to which White belonged. (Brewer, 133) White also "looks to culture as the only source of hope for the future" and sees it similarly like Freud that cultural development is working against war. (Brewer, 157)

show any kind of compassion or willingness to form part of this society, but as he learns of the people and their culture, he shoves off his preconceptions and the more time he spends among them the more he grows fond of the king and several other people close to him. However, towards the end of Twain's work the recounts of this positive attitude and growing fondness give way to a sudden change and a striking representation of warfare.

After getting back from France and listening to Clarence's report on the rise of the Catholic Church, Hank and his crew have to confront with its faceless, yet unknown power and threat. In Hank's opinion, the Church gained its power from the fear and superstition of the people. Therefore they can be easily manipulated and subjected to the ideology conveyed by it and win them easily for the Church's cause. As it turned out from Hank's experiment, the only option for resisting its influence lied in education which had started from early childhood. Hank established and founded schools and academies for talented and chosen children. During the time he spent in the Arthurian world of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, he managed to raise only fifty-two boys "none younger than fourteen, and none above seventeen years old." (Twain, 256) As it turns out, the low number of the faithful ones is

[b]ecause all the others were born in an atmosphere of superstition and reared in it. It is in their blood and bones. We imagined we educated it out of them; they thought so, too; the Interdict woke them up like a thunderclap! It revealed them to themselves, and it revealed them to me, too. With boys it was different. Such as have been under our training from seven to ten years have had no acquaintance with the Church's terrors, and it was among these that I found fifty-two. (Twain, 256)<sup>22</sup>

Under the leadership of Hank and Clarence the group retreats to Merlin's cave. This move can be considered as a physical countering of the views of the Church that is about to eradicate Hank and the traces of his work and influence.<sup>23</sup> This ambition of the Church turns Hank's resistance a fight for human freedom. It remains a question whether it is really the freedom of people he is fighting for or the kind of freedom he

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<sup>22</sup> The susceptibility of children is just as important as in White's argument. He paid attention to creating space for childhood experience in order to be able to examine the motives of the different characters. (Brewer, 215) On the other hand, by claiming that children are easy to influence and control, one can also realize that they are just as open for Hank's ideology and ideas. Ideology binds again and helps to create subjects for Hank's own framework of ideas.

<sup>23</sup> The fact that they chose Merlin's cave as a place to retreat further enhances the secular side of their cause as opposed to the religious.

envisions for the people for the 6<sup>th</sup> century – since the hybrid golem that he created by giving free way to the growth of modern technical streams in the body of the early medieval culture does not seem to serve the purpose. After having retreated to the cave, Clarence equipped with the devices for modern warfare, Hank proclaims the republic with which they “strike first” and set the war between two eras into motion.

In the Battle of the Sand Belt we are presented with the disruptive force of violence. By using the elements of modern warfare he transmits to the medieval setting,<sup>24</sup> Hank and his crew are able to put an end to the knights and destroy the body of chivalry. They do not only use their technical advantage to stop the oncoming waves of the crusade’s attack, but they choose to declare genocide against chivalry.<sup>25</sup> Their effort is not approved of the Church which makes it an illegitimate use of violence within the frames of medieval warfare. At first a sense of patriotism emerges in his crew’s thoughts<sup>26</sup> but Hank is set to convince the boys that they make their effort and go through all these in the name of “human liberty and equality” (Twain, 262-264).

Hank is aware of his deeds;<sup>27</sup> still he stands emotionless over the mass of dead knights. There are no comments, no emotions among the walls of the cave, only deadly silence as they are on guard and watch the knights walking into their death traps. This scene places modern warfare in the medieval setting and at the same time puts them in an opposition. It becomes clear that no honour results from the deeds of Hank and his crew. There is no real fellowship that binds them and their mutual aim for survival is what brings them together temporarily. Modern warfare is represented as a cold-hearted and inhuman way of mass destruction where the knights cannot face their opponents, cannot address them asking for their names and it is not the trial of prowess or a test for combat skills any more. The overwhelming and faceless power that Hank felt behind the institute of the Church is mirrored in the knights’ march to the unknown where death is awaiting them and it turns the once proud and dauntless

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<sup>24</sup> Clarence “provisioned the cave for a siege.” That is he used landmines, wire fence to make twelve circles for defence, he positioned gatling guns and glass-cylinder dynamite torpedoes. (Twain, 256-258)

<sup>25</sup> “»We are done with the nation; henceforth we deal only with the knights. English knights can be killed, but they cannot be conquered. We know what is before us. While one of these men remains alive, our task is not finished, the war is not ended. We will kill them all. « [Loud and long continued applause.]” (Twain, 265)

<sup>26</sup> “These people are our people, they are bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, we love them – do not ask us to destroy our nation!” (Twain, 262)

<sup>27</sup> “»They won’t have the slightest show in the world.« «Of course they won’t.« »It’s dreadful, Clarence. It seems an awful pity.« The thing disturbed me so, that I couldn’t get any peace of mind for thinking of it and worrying over it. So, at last, to quiet my conscience, I framed this message to the knights”. On a paper which was torn and never given to them, granting Hank’s “mistimed sentimentalities a permanent rest.” (Twain, 265-266)

body of chivalry to an amorphous mass. Warfare, as it is represented in Twain's work, goes far beyond the values of chivalry, even the values of humanity. In the postscript Clarence takes the word from Hank because he "must write it for him." (Twain, 271) The warfare they decided to lead and the technical developments they used turned against them eventually and sentenced them to be locked up in the cave they chose as their headquarters.

We were in a trap, you see – a trap of our own making. If we stayed where we were, our dead would kill us; if we moved out of our defenses, we should no longer be invincible. We had conquered; in turn we were conquered. (Twain, 271-272)

Just as Mark Twain's *The Connecticut Yankee* represents, it is difficult to draw the line where self-defence ends and turns into cruel and merciless bloodshed. Modern warfare focuses more on results and effectiveness, but as opposed to medieval warfare, it mostly deals with data, rates, and calculation. It accounts for collateral damage as well, and results like it strives for cannot always be reached without sacrifice.

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## Textuality of sculptures. Reading György Jovánovics

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The most precious of gifts you can give to any artwork is your undivided attention. And if it succeeds in acquiring it, it will try its best to throw you off and lead you where it wants to. Focused diversion. Because when you are looking, what you're really doing is filtering, interpreting, searching for meaning. Paraphrasing Frank Stella: what you see is what you do not see.

Steering and controlling the gaze of the beholder is the essence of the reliefs by György Jovánovics. The completion of the sculptures depends on discovering and realizing the relationships between its elements in the sweeping and penetrating movement of our gaze. Jovánovics works with a peculiar method, which carries within itself the rhetorical features of his plastics. His plaster mouldings carry the possibility of a double spatial meaning. This is the key to the art of György Jovánovics.

In order to fully comprehend the potentialities and possibilities of the works by György Jovánovics we have to consider two major factors of his art. One is the historical and cultural *local* context, in which it was conceived. Unfortunately in this paper we are not able to consider this aspect – although it would be very fruitful. With this approach we could discern how the function of the art of Jovánovics differs in comparison with other pop artists of the era (both in the West and in the East).

This also leads us to the other productive way to broach his art. We could call this a phenomenological approach – in the Husserlian meaning of the notion – which is primarily concerned with the perception and recognition of the different elements and qualities of the art work, and the beholder's relation to the work of art. The shapes are realized during and by the act of beholding, directly 'on' the perceived objects. Broadly speaking, phenomenology is concerned with the projections of the objects that we can

see, and searches for their constituting elements through the variations of how they appear to us.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of Jovánovics this is crucial: not just the 'how', but the 'where' as well. The reliefs of the artist contain information regarding their locus, therefore a deictic approach is indispensable. Describing the works of Jovánovics is not adequate in itself, one also has to describe its effects. To show something means to emphasize it, but also to isolate it. In the case of an object this means that it points to itself, steering the gaze and creating a new space of cognition (Boehm, 35). This is ultimately what I aim at demonstrating in my paper through the analysis of the relief *99.04.16.* by György Jovánovics.

György Jovánovics started his career in the 1960s. He created classical sculptures, while breaking with traditions (Beke, 6). He exchanged everything to its lesser counterpart: his works are three dimensional, but are composed to be placed as a two dimensional work; marble, bronze and wood to plaster; the touch of creation to a mechanized process; „he was beyond abstract art, when his contemporaries in Hungary were just exploring it.” (Ibid. 6)

He participated in the first IPARTERV exhibition in 1968, which was the first major attempt during the socialist era in Hungary to reconnect with the progressive discussions of contemporary art in the West. He erected a monumental sculpture for the Seoul Olympics in 1988, represented Hungary at the 46th Venice Biennale in 1995, recreating the *Tempest* by Giorgione; (besides, he is the creator of one of the best and most important of Hungarian memorial monuments, remembering the heroes and victims of the revolution in 1956).

Going against tradition means that one must be exceptionally well-versed in it. In my title (*Textuality of sculptures. Reading György Jovánovics*) I tried to refer to the duality of the textual nature of the works by the sculptor. I would like to start with the second part of the title: '*Reading György Jovánovics*'. Although his sculptures seem to be abstract at first sight, I will argue that they are, in fact, quite the contrary. At IPARTERV<sup>2</sup> he exhibited two of his works, the *Man*<sup>3</sup> and the *Detail of the Great Gilles*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Boehm, *Képleírás*, 23. I used the Hungarian translation, see original Gottfried Boehm, *Bildbeschreibungen. Über die Grenzen von Bild und Sprache* In *Beschreibungskunst - Kunstbeschreibung. Die Ekphrasis von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, eds.: Boehm, Stierle, Winter, Munich, 1994, 325-343.

<sup>2</sup> IPARTERV Exhibition, 1968., Budapest. Curator: Péter Sinkovits; exhibiting artists: Imre Bak, Krisztián

Both of these works are concerned with the same problem: a drapery, seemingly soft to the touch, the exact replica of its real counterpart; in the case of the *Man* this is completed with the hands, a leg and a head; they are both composed to a frontal view; but moving closer it becomes clear that these are empty, hard shells, made out of plaster, nothing more than a white box of an unfulfilled promise. The bodyparts of *Man* are covered in a tattoo like pattern of *fleur-de-lis*, but they do not quite fit with the rest of the body, which is covered in robes – or so would it seem. The parallel between *Man* and the ancient greek *kouros* can be easily discovered: the rigid composition and the strict frontal view, although you can walk around both. But while one is an icon of a man, the other is the mocking of the resemblance.

*Detail of the Great Gilles*, on the other hand, is incomplete, and shows us how ridiculed, lonely and hollow *Gilles* the clown is in Jean-Antoine Watteau's painting. What we can see here is the referential nature of the sculptures of Jovánovics: they have a pair in art history – sometimes more than one. They have referential points, which negates their abstract nature, making them readable, from an art historical point of view. The sculptures not only refer to earlier artworks, but represents them, they become the images of the paragons.

This can be observed even more in *The Big Prism. One. I. 1., 1995*.<sup>5</sup> This sculpture forms the centre of my presentation, because it has a direct art historical reference and its textual characteristics can be discovered in its synthax. It is nothing more than a big white box with a very delicately detailed surface. Its length and height corresponds with *The Coffin of the Lord from Garamszentbenedek*.<sup>6</sup> This gothic liturgical coffin, made ca. 1480, was used at Easter: it is closed until the rebirth of Christ, when it is opened to show everybody: the Lord has arisen, and his body is not here anymore. The logic of the *Prism* is similar: it is closed, there is only one hole: you can see through it,

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Frey, Tamás Hencze, György Jovánovics, Ilona Keserü, Gyula Konkoly, László Lakner, László Méhes, István Nádler, Ludmill Siskov, Endre Tót.

<sup>3</sup>Györg Jovánovics,"Man", 1968, plaster, textile, 180cm, Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

<sup>4</sup>Györg Jovánovics,"Detail of the Great Gilles", 1968, plaster, 100 cm, Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

<sup>5</sup>Györg Jovánovics," The Big Prism. One. I. 1., 1995.", 1995, plaster, 163x363x71cm, Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary

<sup>6</sup>"The Coffin of the Lord from Garamszentbenedek", c. 1480, wood, 226x100x325 cm, Christian Museum, Esztergom, Hungary

but not into it. It is the emptiness, the hope that the empty coffin represents. Following this thought, the Prism is not only a container of space, but a space in itself, a relic holder: an invisible space contained in a visible form. The inside of the Prism is what counts, what needs to be made visible: the problem broached here is making visible the invisibility of something that does not appear to the naked eye (Belting, 1996).

This leads us to the textuality of Jovánovics's sculptures. He creates spaces that are infinite in depth – in theory – but are condensed into the surface, which is nearest to the beholder. It is essential to keep and compress the relief into its own surface, in order to confront the viewer with the depth of the space. The space can unravel only in the confrontation with the flatness of the surface: the reliefs react to the penetrating gaze as a picture. Even the work process of Jovánovics forces the viewer's gaze to wander and to continually change perspectives.

The creation of the small plastics begins from the other side, from the side of the beholder, the one we see as surface. The artist places the first layer on the ground and builds each layer on the previous one, and pours plaster on it. Therefore, when finished, the most inner layer of the relief is the nearest to the viewer, while the artist can only track the succession of layers. The flatter and further the layer is from the beholder, the nearer it is to the artist (although he only sees the back of it). After the works are finished, the sculptor frames his works, like a painting, while in truth it is quite the opposite, the inverse of a painting: what is by inception the inside of the moulding, becomes the outside.

Jovánovics builds his reliefs, each layer on the other. The positive shapes turn into negatives and vice versa. What we perceive as deficit, is a surplus from the other side. Each form creates its own absence and carries within itself its own anti-shape, its projection. The plaster mouldings are abstract and exact, closed and open at the same time. The works are based on dialogue: to explore the context of the positive and negative forms, and their joint shadows.

Because shadows are not a given factor, but a well calculated addition to the pictures. Jovánovics says, that creating a relief 'is drawing with shadows'. Shadows can be observed on the 'dark' side of non-transparent objects that is on the opposite of the illuminated side. There are two aspects of shadow. According to Plato, the shadow is only an illusion, the reality of those who are earth-bound; while another

interpretation of the shadow is that only those things, which are reality, which exist, can have a shadow. Following that logic, with the risk of being redundant, that which does not have a shadow does not exist, it is in fact not there. This is only true in the case of the depiction of cast shadow, which is exceptionally rare in Western art. (Gombrich, 29) Shadows, when used as a tool of modelling are widely applied. György Jovánovics is a well versed artist, who has a deep knowledge of artistic tradition, and deliberately avoids modelling shadows in his reliefs, preferring the clear cut shaping properties of cast shadows.

It is worth mentioning with regard to artistic tradition that the origin of art is shadow, so to speak: the first drawing of a young man was made by his lover, tracing his shadow, which was cast on the wall – as Pliny the Elder suggests it in his *Natural History*. Boutades, the father of the girl, a sculptor himself, fills out the silhouette and creates the plaster effigy of the boy. The analogy can not be dismissed – particularly because of the nature of shadow tracing. Jovánovics creates with the shapes and the cast shadow of the shapes on the relief potentiality of space or a potential space. He creates, in theory, an infinite number of potential shapes and forms, which paired up with the surface of the reliefs also results in limitless possibilities. That is, for our gaze: the space of these reliefs is potential, they serve as a kind of active framing system. Our gaze is activated and stimulated by the visual and textural qualities of the sculpture.

Adding to the potentialities of the space of the relief, shadows also mark the *place* of an object. Therefore they serve as a kind of anchor or origo for the beholder. Shadows create a sense of presence and presentness – here shadows are the equivalent of the flies from the paintings of the fifteenth century. This is what Gombrich (37) described as “attached shadow”. While Gombrich asserts that this enhances the impression of solidity, I would argue that in the case of Jovánovics, the artist’s reliefs are only potentially solid.

Shadows are multifunctional in the sculptures of Jovánovics: they are the result of the constellation of light and an object, therefore shadows are the absence of light (which incorporates all the colours); but even more so, they are the indexical signs of an existing object. Shadows implicate the haptic touch and the negativity of detraction at the same time (Fehér, 74). The negative forms and the shadows are signs of the artist's touch. Because of this, from the perspective of the viewer, the shapes on the

reliefs are not created in the order when they were “written in”, but in the context produced by the different parts of the artwork. The shapes are not what they seem to be, the elements are not equal to themselves, unless indicated so and named by the beholder. To this analogy, when indicating a shape, we associate it with its surroundings, we locate and define them on the surface according to their position. The artist depicts the mutually dependent relation of absence and presence, invisibility and visibility. Jovánovics turns the negative doubly to positive in the finished work (Fehér, 74). The reliefs cease to exist primarily as small sculptures in the continuous exchange of the inner and outer layers – instead, they turn into a web of legible pictorial signs, they begin to behave like pictures.

*Relief 99.04.16.*<sup>7</sup> follows a similar strategy. Only a few shapes emerge from the flat surface of the rectangular small plastic, none of which are parallel to the sides of the picture, except one shaped as an irregular letter “U” at the bottom.<sup>8</sup> The position of the forms become unstable and undecided, fostering the movement of the gaze between the elements. The shapes are in movement according to their relative position, and shadows also become part of the equation. It is interesting to note that shadows are always the evidence of the source of light, in the sense that – according to the position of the lightsource – whole new pictures can be created with the same set of shapes and forms; in this case, the number of possibilities is also infinite in theory.

Our gaze is guided back again and again by the seemingly flat surface to the 'stronger', more evident, closer shapes, that stretch out into the space of the beholder. Jovánovics compresses the space apparent in his reliefs into this surface without creating a directly pictorial illusion. As we can see, even this surface is not flat: it is constituted from numerous overlapping layers. The differently patterned layers provide the invisible foundation that steers and highlights the viewers' attention to the positive and directly apparent shapes. It makes them present by creating not only a space, but a *place*, as well. As Hans Belting points it out, “The picture is here, because we are here.” (Belting, “Jót írtál ...”, 33) This implies that whenever we are asked to

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<sup>7</sup> György Jovánovics, “Relief 99.04.16.”, 1999, plaster, 125,8x175,8x11,5 cm, Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Hungary

<sup>8</sup> For an intriguing analysis of an almost identical relief by Jovánovics see the cited essay by Dávid Fehér.

locate any given object, the center, the origo of our answer would always be our own body - or to be more precise: our own place. A good example of this is a painting described by Norman Bryson<sup>9</sup>: the „Fruit basket” by Caravaggio.<sup>10</sup> The perspective of this painting is so extreme, meaning it is exactly leveled with the eye (and this is how it is exhibited at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana) that when asked 'Where is the basket?' we couldn't say anything else, but that 'It is here!', because there is nothing else to relate the location of the basket, only to ourselves.)<sup>11</sup> The reliefs by Jovánovics are the places of beholding; and the place of a spatial system, which is inviting the gaze to pierce into it.

We see what we have learned to see, what we expect to see within the given context. Two things can occur: first, just like in the case of a spatial context, in which we do not perceive consciously the dimensions of the space we are occupying, it feels natural. A badly constructed space feels suffocating, we feel it as a burden – we *know* that we are in a closed space. This is the case with every trivial detail of a work of art. Their presence comes so natural and self-explanatory, that we do not recognize them as an autonomous part of the work; something that has meaning and has a role to play within the whole. Therefore we do not see them at all. We do not perceive them, because they blend in perfectly. Right until they are pointed out to us, in which case their functions also become clear. But this is only true if the aforementioned elements of the art works are presented with quality. For example a badly painted detail can ruin a whole picture; and we will know why it does not work, we can immediately point out the fault and define what its function should be.

Secondly, there are instances when the artist omits something on purpose, but reinforces the function of the eliminated element with other signifiers. Paradoxically, these will only draw our attention to the hiatus. But because we are trained to see things as they appear in the reality of the beholder, we will supersede the blanks with their function. As Gombrich (11) said “we must never assume that artists did not see what they did not paint.”

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<sup>9</sup> See the chapter *Topography* in the cited book by Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*.

<sup>10</sup> Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, "Basket of Fruit", c. 1599, oil on canvas, 31x47 cm, Bibliotheca Ambrosiana, Milan, Italy

<sup>11</sup> For the insightful conclusion see András Rényi, "Az értelmezés tébolya. Hermeneutikai tanulmányok", Budapest: Kijárat Kiadó, 2008., 115-129.

This is closely related to the textual nature of abstract works. The picture could be understood from the context of its elements, within the syntax of these elements. The sign is determined by its signifiers – and even evoked by them.

Jovánovics uses forms and shapes which can not be deciphered with a predetermined vocabulary. His forms are homogenous with their surroundings, their material context. These signs can not be taught, they can only be learned through example. The signs can not be isolated from the rest of the work: its meaning is in constant fluctuation, according to how we look at them. As signs, they are always defined by the context of their surrounding, their signifiers and their signified. But they are not explicit, because of the nature of their connotations – as Norman Bryson (1983: 70-71) put it. Bryson (1983:79) also suggests that – in contrast with Saussure – we should replace the notion of perception with recognition. In this case, "the signifier seeks *another* signifier; it is the relation between the signifiers that forms the sign (Sign= Sr --> Sr). That relation is not vertical, but horizontal or lateral; it is less instantaneous than it is deterred." I am inclined to agree with Bryson both as far as Jovánovics and as pictures in general are concerned. Every minute detail of the reliefs refer us to their surroundings which in turn direct us back to our starting point, and the cycle goes on.

What we must keep in mind, however, is that we should not take the works of Jovánovics as pure information, or 'pure' art. A formal feature must not be regarded more than a means of communication, and not as communication in itself. "The reading of a certain gesture performed in the course of a conversation, or of a certain costume, or of a certain vocal accent, does not need first to route itself towards a central lexicon for an act of decoding; its meaning is embodied in a local circumstance." (Bryson, 1983: 73) Later on Bryson (1983: 74) says, referring to Wittgenstein that the "Absence of explicit articulation is in no way an index of limited knowledge; it is rather an index of the degree to which the rules governing the process are embodied within technique."

Rosalind Krauss in her essay entitled *The Motivation of the Sign*, had presented Picasso turning to linguistic devices. Picasso, as Krauss said, had created depth on a flat surface with its signifiers, on a two dimensional plain paper, from which the illusionistic invocation had been omitted. Only through its signifiers are we able to

perceive the depth of the picture. These signifiers indicate depth or the related notions of obliquity and luminosity.

This matter of motivating the sign, raised by my title does not, then, refer to the import of the semiological turn heralded by collage. Rather, it addresses the specific set of signifieds that Picasso seems most insistently to organize in the opening years of his exploration of collage. Those signifieds—/depth/ and /atmosphere/ or /light/—are in no way random, but are prepared for, motivated if you will, by the experience of the preceding five years. (Krauss, 271-272)

Three-dimensionality had been flattened out and it is only implemented through the effects of three-dimensionality. The mismatched f-holes in the paper collage of Picasso entitled *Violin*<sup>12</sup> are signs of the turning of the object in space, that we see it in transverse. They only resemble the typography of the letter 'f'. What I am trying to emphasize here, is that the f-holes are readable and not legible, and only as visual signs, not as something linguistic. The f-holes are iconic signs, because they remind us of the f-holes of a violin. Because of their difference in size they suggest the transverse nature of a violin, thus becoming arbitrary signs of depth. The f-holes signify space or depth, precisely because they assert their absence, and do not evoke the illusion of depth.

Jovánovics invokes an image of space, but retracts the complete illusion. We are only able to register the difference between the layers of the surface, but not behold it. The goal is to make this visible. The sculptor makes it possible with the aforementioned rhetorical tools, and bestowing the small plastic with pictorial characteristics. He encourages a dialogue between the viewer and the work, through reflecting on details that force us to make distinctions, which only reveal themselves through careful observation. Keeping the different planes in motion, the artist guides our gaze, while we always need to choose points of references in order to move forward. The picture makes itself readable in a productive way, always encouraging the viewer to search for the next shape – but only in case it can acquire the beholder's attention.

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<sup>12</sup> Pablo Picasso, "Violin", c. 1912, cardboard, charcoal, collage, 62x46 cm, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

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# A „king of/black predictions”<sup>1</sup> - Leonard Cohen, the (post)modern bard

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„I followed the course  
From chaos to art”  
„The Book of Longing”, L. Cohen

Not many contemporary poets can claim world fame and hundreds of thousands of people as 'fans' – although we should note right from the start that not all of these fans are familiar with his literary activities: most of them only know him as the singer-song-writer of 'Hallelujah', 'Closing Time', 'The Tower of Song', 'Who By Fire' or 'Bird on the Wire' (and the list goes on). There were periods throughout the history of literature when writing poems and singing them were the norm and not the exception: and interestingly, this tradition was revived by one of the most 'revolutionary', 'anti-tradition' and nonconformist groups of poets in the mid-1950s: the beats, Kerouac in particular, read their poems with Jazz musicians accompanying them. Ginsberg in the sixties chanted his poems while playing a lap accordion, and Bob Dylan has several poetry volumes to his credit (Cohen is often compared to Dylan). Cohen's work can be examined in the context of 'text and music' and of 'text and picture' as well. Here his literary output will be approached from the perspective of Canadian (post)modernism.

Before doing so, however, let us state a few biographical facts: he was born in Montréal into a prosperous Jewish family of Eastern European descent. He studied at McGill University in Montréal in the early 1950s, then went to Columbia University in New York (but did not get a degree there). His first published poem appeared in the student magazine of McGill University – this particular university had been playing a vital role in the formation of Modernist writing in Canada since the mid-1920s. At McGill, Cohen was taking courses from or having close contact with leading English-

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<sup>1</sup>Joan Baez „To Leonard Cohen on his 60th” - in: Fournier, Michael & Ken Norris (eds.) *take this waltz. A Celebration of Leonard Cohen*. The Muses' Company/La Compagnie des Muses, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec, 1994. 11-13.

Canadian poets of the mid-twentieth-century: Louis Dudek, himself a poet, was a follower of Ezra Pound, with whom he was in regular contact<sup>2</sup>, poet and author A. M. Klein, admirer of Joyce, was also teaching at McGill on an occasional basis. „As a thinker Cohen probably learned more from Klein, whose best works are dense with ideas and allusions to rituals, and as a teacher of craft, Cohen had Dudek, who introduced him not only to the history of verse but also to its rules.” (Leibovitz, 59) Irving Layton (another Jewish poet with Central-European ancestry) and the 'founding fathers' of Canadian Modernist poetry, F. R. Scott, and A. J. M. Smith (all Cohen's father's age) also encouraged him.<sup>3</sup> Cohen's literary talents were recognized by these Canadian men of letters before the publication of *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956), his first volume of poetry, published as „the inaugural volume in a university-sponsored series of poetry books, edited by Dudek.” (Leibovitz, 62) Northrop Frye in his annual review of English-Canadian poetic output joined the chorus of appraisals:

the book as a whole is a remarkable production. ... this book has the normal characteristics of a good first volume.

... his chief interest ... is mythopoeic. The mythologies are Jewish, Christian, and Hellenistic. ... The mythical patterns of the Bible provide some of the paradigms of his imagery ... Mr. Cohen's outstanding poetic quality ... is a gift for macabre ballad reminding one of Auden, but thoroughly original ... No other Canadian poet known to me is doing anything like this, and I hope to see more of it ... (68-69)

<sup>2</sup> As N. Frye put it speaking about Dudek's volume, entitled *Europe*, „the influence of Pound is oppressive.” (55)

<sup>3</sup> „Devenu ami avec John Sutherland ou Louis Dudek, il a participé au mouvement d'après-guerre visant à faire émerger un style essentiellement canadien s'éloignant des classiques anglais et reflétant les réalités sociales de l'époque.

Lorsque Leonard fait la connaissance de Layton, plus vieux que lui de vingt-deux ans, celui-ci a déjà plusieurs recueils de poèmes à son actif ... Cette rencontre ... est extrêmement important dans la vie de Leonard, qui la résumera ... „Je lui ai appris à s'habiller, il m'a appris à vivre éternellement.”

De la génération des poètes montréalais contemporains qui se font un nom dans les années 1950, Irving Layton est le plus bouillant, le plus flamboyant, le plus anti-bourgeois, professant que la poésie doit être à la fois intense, subtile et saisissante. ... il utilise dans certaines de ses créations un langage très érotiquement explicite, ce qui, ... encouragera Leonard dans une voie où, jusque-là, il s'engageait peut-être avec une relative réserve.

... Layton lui fait aussi prendre conscience que la versification ne doit pas être un passe-temps dilettante” (Aknin – Loisy, 32-33)

Cohen's first volume foreshadowed all the major preoccupations he would later follow in his poetry, fiction and songs: existential concerns, metaphysical visions, carnal love – often tinted with a shade of irony. The young Cohen is eager for deep knowledge, prophecy and to offer profound insights into spiritual matters. Some of the poems sound like songs, with internal and external rhymes and refrains. In „Prayer for Messiah” (that could be easily sung), for example, he unites religious vision with the idea of abstract love.

his eyes through my eyes shine brighter than love  
O send out the raven ahead of the dove

O send out the raven ahead of the dove  
O sing from your chains where you're chained in a cave  
your eyes through my eyes shine brighter than love  
your blood in my ballad collapses the grave (*Stranger Music*, 7)

In Canadian Modernist poetry it was A. M. Klein who twinned the new trend with religious subject matter from the mid-1920s on: he often chose to call his poems 'songs'<sup>4</sup> or 'psalms'. „Klein was the elder statesman whose ideas Cohen found too intoxicating to ignore.” (Leibovitz, 79) *Let Us Compare Mythologies* manifests Modernist interest and practices not only in its general tone, but also in the conditions of its publication.

Cohen ... masterminded the entire production of the book, taking responsibility for its design, typesetting, production, paper, and printing. His friend Freda Guttman prepared illustrations, and he paid three hundred dollars to have the work hardbound, not softbound as Dudek had originally envisioned. Cohen also took to distributing the book, selling it on campus and in cafés and bookstores, although he also took subscriptions for it, which made printing the approximately four hundred copies possible. (Nadel, 38)

The volume contained forty-four poems, written mainly in the early 1950s – it sold out immediately. As he recalled almost four decades later with his typical self-irony, „My

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<sup>4</sup> „Fill the silver goblet; / Make open the door-way; / Let there be no sob; let / Elijah come our way. // And let him come singing, / Announcing as nigh a / Redemption, and drinking / The health of Messiah!” ('Song' – Klein, 22)

first book sold four hundred copies. ... that was considered a stunning success and it was reviewed in all these mimeographed journals that no one read". (Interview by Vin Scelsa, June 13, 1993 – in: Burger, 343)

With a McGill diploma and the first poetry volume in his hands, Cohen went to study in New York, but did not spend all his time in the classrooms of Columbia University (where Dudek earned his PhD and García Lorca also attended courses in the late 1920s). Instead, he plunged into the turmoils of counter culture represented by artists like Allen Ginsberg, Bob Dylan and Jack Kerouac. Cohen decided to study American country and folk music traditions: „I went down to the Harvard Library of folk music and spent a summer there just listening to all the songs, all these incredible lyrics, and I got really deeply into it." (Interview by Vin Scelsa, June 13, 1993 – in: Burger, 347) He kept on writing – trying his hands at fiction: short stories and a short novel which has not been published. After a year in New York, he returned to Montréal with the new experience of Kerouac reading/chanting his texts to musical accompaniment (jazz) at the Village Vanguard (Nadel, 42).

Cohen was back to the same question that had been haunting him since he first found Lorca: how to be a poet in a world that increasingly expected its poets either to act up on television or languish in obscurity.

His answer was simple but inspired. He would blend truth and artifice until his audiences didn't know which was which. He would entertain, but deliver the sort of punch lines that carried a real and existential punch. To achieve that he needed a public persona, and so he became the Poet. ... Leonard Cohen was reborn as John Keats. At Birdland, a third-floor lounge on top of Dunn's Famous Steak House, he gave midnight readings ... accompanied by a six-piece band. (Leibovitz, 69)

This is how text and music started to go hand in hand for the rest of Cohen's career – continuing the medieval troubadour tradition as well as the practice of some English Renaissance poets<sup>5</sup>. In an interview the already world famous Leonard Cohen confessed that he opted for 'minor' writers like Robert Herrick, the half-forgotten

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<sup>5</sup> „The kind of training I had as a young writer, a young composer, made me very much aware of where I stood in a long line of singers or poets: musicians from the Troubadours; even before that, from Homer; and even before that, from Isaiah and King David; coming all the way down through the various strains into English literature; into poetry; into folk poetry like Robbie Burns ... I've always been aware of that tradition, and to be one of the figures that allows the tradition to continue is very gratifying." (Interview by Jim O'Brien, August/September 1993 – in: Burger, 361)

Metaphysical poet who was very popular in his age as song-writer. „I consider myself a minor writer. That's not just an exercise in modesty, because I love the minor writers, like Robert Herrick. I'm not that kind of writer like Solzhenitsyn, a writer who has a great, great vision.” (Interview by Karl Dallas, *Melody Maker*, May 22, 1976 – in: Burger, 95)

The early poems of Cohen thus can be seen in the context of English-Canadian Modernist poetry, as well as medieval and Renaissance European tradition – but for him it was another poet who served as not only a determining experience but also as a model to follow. And that poet – Federico Garcia Lorca – was a significant figure of Modernism in Europe. At 17, Cohen found a volume of Garcia Lorca's poetry in a used book store and „realized right away that Lorca's central artistic engine was also his own. It was the *duende*.” (Leibovitz, 54). Garcia Lorca became a life-long fascination for Leonard Cohen – he translated a poem by Lorca and adapted one of the Spanish poet's works as a song („Take this Waltz”). As Nadel states it, „The poem as song becomes a metacommentary on the deathly tradition it possesses ... Appropriating conventions, Cohen creates a stylized waltz, exaggerating the musicality of the form, reclaiming, not rejecting, Lorca's original expression.” (Nadel in Fournier – Norris, 129). As Cohen himself admitted, García Lorca „has been a man of extraordinary influence on both my political and personal work. I admire him.” (Interview by Jordi Sierra i Fabra in October 1974 – in: Burger, 77) This admiration became 'part of the family': Cohen's only daughter is called Lorca Cohen. Beside the English-Canadian and international context we should also make mention of the Québec parallels: Félix Leclerc and Gilles Vigneault are not only highly celebrated singers, but also published the texts of their songs as books of poetry.

It took Cohen five years to publish another volume of poetry: he is a notoriously „slow-working” artist, be it poems or songs. He continued working on poems in Montreal in the second part of the 1950s, in 1959 he won a grant to London, but once in the English capital, he realized that the general milieu was not as inspiring as he had hoped, so he decided to join an artists' colony on the Greek island of Hydra. The climate there was far better: not only full of sunshine, but also offering the young writer a company of mainly European 'underground' artists (writers, musicians), and first-hand experiences of sites and motifs of ancient Greek culture. For years to come, Cohen would spend long periods of time on Hydra – and short periods of time in Montreal or the United States.

*The Spice-Box of Earth* was published in May 1961 by McClelland and Stewart, the most prestigious publishing house of English-Canadian writing. Cohen did not leave the appearance of the book to professionals – he insisted that „the poems not be rendered 'in any sort of delicate print. They should be large and black on the page. They should look as though they are meant to be chanted aloud, which is exactly why I wrote them.'” (Cohen quoted in Nadel, 49) The limited edition of the 102-page volume „one of the most impressive books of poetry then published in Canada, sold out in three months.” (Nadel, 49)

In the poems, Cohen adds poetic self-reflection and the experience of European culture to the subject matters appearing in his first volume. Again, some of the poems are called songs – and he experiments with novel forms, like haiku. Love and the female body are recurring themes – like in „Beneath My Hands”:

Beneath my hands  
your small breasts  
are the upturned bellies  
of breathing fallen sparrow

(*Stranger Music*, 16)

In „The Cuckold's Song” he combines irony, self-reflection and the love-motif:

If this looks like a poem  
I might as well warn you at the beginning  
that it's not meant to be one.  
I don't want to turn anything into poetry.  
...  
... you fed her 5 MacKewan Ales,  
took her to your room, put the right records on,  
and in an hour or two it was done.  
...  
... the important thing was to cuckold Leonard Cohen.

(*Stranger Music*, 33)

Poetic consciousness is also present in Cohen's tribute to Klein: he met the master when the latter was already in deteriorating mental state – the experience obviously shocked Cohen. In „To a Teacher”, Cohen – who lost his father at the age of 9 – calls Klein a 'teacher' and a 'father':

Let me cry Help beside you, Teacher.  
I have entered under this dark roof  
as fearlessly as an honoured son  
enters his father's house. (*A Rich Garland*, 15)

In „Song for Abraham Klein” the disintegrating poet-writer-prophet is „the weary psalmist” for whom

Abandoned was the Law,  
Abandoned the King.  
Unaware he took his instrument,  
His habit was to sing.

He sang and nothing changed  
Though many heard the song.  
But soon his face was beautiful  
And soon his limbs were strong.

(*Stranger Music*, 25)

Poetry – its role and use in society – continued to interest Cohen during his whole career: altogether he published thirteen volumes of poems, including two of selected poems, but after *The Spice-Box of Earth* he concentrated on writing prose. *The Favorite Game* first came out in London in 1963, then in New York, and finally in Canada in 1970. As Leibovitz (105) put it, „There's much of Leonard Cohen in Lawrence Breavman, the book's protagonist. ... The book is told in short anecdotal bursts” centred around decisive concerns for the young hero, namely about questions related to religion – and, as a counterpoint, about how to seduce as many girls as possible. Self-reflection is markedly present in Cohen's first published novel – the protagonist tries his hands at writing, and sometimes discusses passages of the written text with his girlfriends.

The act of writing had been completed when he handed her the manuscript. He no longer felt ownership.

„ ... You talk like both characters.”  
„All right I talk like both characters.”

„Please don't get angry. I'm trying to understand why you wrote it.” ...

„I don't care why I wrote it. I just wrote it, that's all.” (*The Favorite Game*, 99)

As Leibovitz (106-7) put it, Cohen „didn't set out to write an odd and beautiful and poetic bildungsroman. He wanted to write about what it was like to be young and try to take flight and realize that life was a terrain made of many plains and very few mountaintops. ... He wanted ... to write a very intimate epic.” He continues by citing Cohen himself who explained in a letter to Layton „That's what I always missed when I heard my first fairy-tales – the small talk of giants ... I longed to hear how they lived away from crises.”

The typically non-conformist and Bohemian Cohen was working frantically<sup>6</sup> on his second novel in the mid-1960s. For him, „a book of prose where there are characters and developments and changes and situations, that's always attracted me, because in a sense it is the heavyweight arena. I like it ... because of the regime that is involved in novel writing. I can't be on the move. It needs a desk, it needs a room and a typewriter, a regime. And I like that very much.” (Interview by Paul Williams for *Crawdaddy*, 1975 – in: Burger, 89). He started to write *Beautiful Losers* in Canada, but completed it in Hydra in 1965. The temporary titles for this „liturgy, a big confessional oration, very crazy, but using all the techniques of the modern novel ... pornographic suspense, humor and conventional plotting” (Cohen's words to Eli Mandel and Phyllis Webb, cited by Nadel, 69) were „Plastic Birchbark” and „The History of Them All, a Pop Gothic Novel” (the first part of the second version finally was kept as title for 'Book One' in the final version of the novel). The plot moves back and forth between the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the Montreal of the mid-1960s, the time of Québec separatism and references to hippy culture: as Sparling (247) puts it, „much of the book segues dizzily back and forth between past and present, with the result that the borderline between the two tends to blur”. It is defined by intertextuality, intratextuality, and a palimpsest of Canadian history and politics (Nadel, 72). The book, published by Viking in 1966, drew extreme reactions from critics and reviewers. The *Boston Globe* celebrated it as a reincarnation of James Joyce, for the *Toronto Globe and Mail* it was a „verbal

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<sup>6</sup> „The book 'was written with blood,' ... 'at the end I was writing 20 hours a day and going only on pep drugs and hashish ... *Beautiful Losers* is a love story, a psalm, a Black Mass, a monument, a satire, a prayer, a shriek, a road map through the wilderness, a joke, a tasteless affront, an hallucination, above, an irrelevant display of diseased virtuosity, a Jesuitical tract, an Orange sneer, a scatological Lutheran extravagance – in short a disagreeable religious epic of incomparable beauty.” (Cohen cited by Nadel, 71-2)

masturbation”, while *Toronto Star*'s critic declared it to be „the most revolting book ever written in Canada” (Leibovitz, 109). Shortly after its first publication, Cohen labelled it as „a redemptive novel, an exercise to redeem the soul” (Interview by Sandra Djwa for *Ubyyssey*, February 3, 1967 – in: Burger, 11). Linda Hutcheon, in her monograph on *The Canadian Postmodern* devotes the first chapter to the early postmodernism of Leonard Cohen stating that *Beautiful Losers* – compared with *The Favorite Game* –

is even more ironically and self-consciously aware of the artist as persona in relation to the process of creation.

The move from the modernism of the first novel to the postmodernism of the second is marked by a shift in the level of self-reference – from the content to the form of the work. *Beautiful Losers* is a relatively early example in Canadian literature of what I would call postmodern metafiction: ironic, historical, and political fiction that is also about fiction, that contains within itself a first critical commentary on its own nature as narrative and as language ... In *Beautiful Losers* we only run into difficulty if we insist on reading it as a realist novel, with the accompanying 'ideology' that ignores or denies the existence of formal literary conventions. (27)

There are plenty of analyses of this particular novel (by, among others, Stephen Scobie, W. Siemerling, M. Ondaatje) so we do not go into further details about Cohen's best-known prose piece. Suffice it to say, that he did not stop writing prose after its publication – short sketches are present in his further volumes, unpublished fragments can be found in the archives of the University of Toronto. He continued to write poetry, as well: eight volumes and two more of selected poems between 1966 and 2012 testify to this.

In the second part of the 1960s, however, he „altered his career by shifting almost exclusively to music” (Nadel, 79) – and indeed, Cohen became world famous thanks to his songs which manifest his concerns (love, human relationships, despair, religion, metaphysical ideas, social problems) in a form accessible for millions of people. Irony and self-reflection, Biblical and intertextual references make his texts rich – very often, Cohen just chants his lines so that the poetry and philosophical context is not overshadowed by the music. He declaredly uses his own personal experiences and

doubts for the songs<sup>7</sup> – still they ring universally, evoking similar situations for their receivers. He is a rare bird among the stars of Beat culture not only because he had been a published poet and writer before becoming a singer, but also because of the elaborate quality of the text in his songs<sup>8</sup> – on top of that, he returns to very traditional rhyme-schemes: speaking about *Various Positions*, an album released in 1984, which contains 'Hallelujah' and 'If It Be Your Will', he mentioned that „I was doing an experiment in Spenserian stanzas, which is an old form of very tight interlocking lines”. (Radio Interview by Vicki Gabereau, May 1984 – in: Burger, 161) Between 1967 and 2014 Cohen had 13 studio albums (the latest one released just one week after his eightieth birthday in September 2014), 3 compilation albums, 5 live albums and 3 concert videos, and sold over 20 millions of records. Considering that Cohen's voice-range is not wide (some critics even say that he has no singing voice<sup>9</sup> – though he ironically claims in 'Tower of Song' that 'I was born with the gift of a golden voice'), and he never produced acrobatic tricks on stage (actually, he usually is almost static, in an elegant suit and Fedora hat, with or without the guitar in his hands)<sup>10</sup>, this sequence is even more impressive.

After a more than twenty-year spell of silence as far as poetry is concerned (*Book of Mercy* came out in 1984, *Stranger Music: Selected Poems and Songs* in 1993), in 2006 Cohen brought out *Book of Longing* and dedicated it to Irving Layton who died in early January of that year. As his interviews reveal, he had been working on the volume containing poems, prose sketches and drawings for several years. As early as five years before the publication itself, the material was mainly completed: as he confessed, „I've got about 250 poems there ... with a lot of work, I can rhyme words. ... I don't have any deep sense of urgency about publishing. I'd like to keep it around for a while.” (in: Burger, 444, 445, 457) When the book finally came out, he included a selection of his

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<sup>7</sup> „My music is a reflection of my personality, and my personality is a reflection of all that surrounds me ... So I treat this world that surrounds me with the integrity and dignity necessary to bring it, through me, to everyone else.” (Interview by Jordi Sierra i Fabra in October 1974 – in: Burger, 76)

<sup>8</sup> „Like Dylan, Simon, and few others, Leonard Cohen has expanded the vocabulary of the popular song into the domain of poetry. And like both Simon and Dylan, Cohen will work and rework his songs until he achieves a kind of impossible perfection.” (Paul Zollo – in: Burger, 262)

<sup>9</sup> Cohen himself does not disagree with these views: „I never thought I had a voice in the sense of a singer's voice. I can hardly carry a tune but I think it's a true voice in the sense that it's not a lie. It presents the singer and the story he's telling.” (Interview by Jon Wilde, December 1987 – in: Burger, 194)

<sup>10</sup> „Rather than abandon his listeners ... Cohen wanted nothing standing between them and his words, removing all distractions” (Leibovitz, 148)

drawings in it. He had been doing sketches for decades before – here the pictures accompany and dialogue with the poems themselves. A great majority of the drawings are portraits of the aging poet, not hiding his wrinkles<sup>11</sup>, another group of the pictures show women, mainly nudes, still others are emblems, objects (often guitars<sup>12</sup>), or birds (like on the cover of the book).



As an early interview reveals, Cohen was making drawings at the beginning of his career, claiming that his „painting and [his] singing are the same thing” (Interview by S. Djwa, February 3, 1967, *Ubysey* – in: Burger, 13). A quarter century later, he started to make pictures on the computer screen (Burger, 358), but he continued to draw pencil sketches in his notebooks, too (Burger, 409).

In *Book of Longing* two poems are tributes to García Lorca, one of Cohen's favourite artists. „Lorca Lives” is illustrated by the drawing of a guitar – the poem itself claims that Lorca does live in New York city, but he does not like it. „The Faithless Wife”, on the other hand, is the translation of Lorca's „La casada infiel” from the latter's

<sup>11</sup> The picture below can be found at <http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=leonard+cohen&id=B1E83714E402FDD70BEAFAD58172F2066044FOAC&FORM=IARRTH>. The most exhaustive internet resource on Cohen's work can be found at <http://leonardcohenfiles.com/>.

<sup>12</sup> Cohen sports his irony even with regard to the drawings: in the picture about his guitar, he adds that „my guitar is so beautiful I wish I could play it” (*Book of Longing*, 195).

*Romancero gitano* volume. Cohen changed the form of Lorca's poem – and illustrated it with the (possibly water-colour) picture of a dancing couple.

Another set of poems discusses his relationship with Zen, his life as a monk, and Roshi, his master. Still other poems show his leading concerns, namely loneliness and the relationship with women. These latter two areas are often present in his songs – *Book of Longing* contains verses of songs, too, including, among others, „A Thousand Kisses Deep”, „Alexandra Leaving” and „Boogie Street”, this last one phrasing for eternity the hardships of taking leave from a beloved one:

A sip of wine, a cigarette,  
and then it's time to go  
I tidied up the kitchenette.  
I tuned the old banjo (64)

Both the poems and prose sketches muse about art and creativity – phrasing again and again his struggle during the process. „I'm still working hard, Robert. I can't seem to bring anything to completion and I'm in real trouble.” he confesses to a long deceased friend. (138) In a poem composed in 1980 he summed up his experiences like

feeling my way  
to a cleaner expression  
of the absolute filth  
I stumbled across. („The Third Invention”, 136)

This strive for the 'cleaner expression' impressed not only millions of readers (*Beautiful Losers* sold over a million in Canada alone, and was translated into dozens of languages) and fans, but other singers, poets and critics alike. Apart from the roughly one dozen biographies, several other tributes have been paid to his achievements in various fields of arts. *I'm Your Fan*, an album featuring sixteen songs by Cohen (and another two by Phil Spector) delivered by celebrated rock artists came out in 1991. *Essays on Canadian Writing* devoted a special issue to his oeuvre for his sixty-fifth anniversary (no. 69, Winter 1999), *take this waltz*, a volume published for his sixtieth birthday, offers him texts (poems, reminiscences, essays) by people like Joan Baez, Allen Ginsberg, Jennifer Warnes, Louis Dudek and his editor Jack McClelland, later Governor General Adrienne Clarkson and many others. For a 'minor writer' this quite an achievement.

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## Mediale Grenzüberquerungen. Collagen in der Literatur

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Das Wort Collage lässt sich etymologisch betrachtet sowohl auf das Verb *coller* zurückführen, das aus dem Französischen stammt und kleben bedeutet, als auch auf das Substantiv *colle*, das auf Französisch Klebstoff und auf Griechisch Leim bedeutet. Die Collage ist eine Technik, die ursprünglich in der bildenden Kunst praktiziert wurde und die durch das Zusammenfügen verschiedener Einzelteile zum Entstehen ein neues Kunstwerkes führt. Bereits Anfang der 1920-er Jahre collagierten Künstler des Kubismus, indem sie die Oberfläche eines Bildes nicht bloß als Abbild von etwas, sondern als Arbeitsfläche betrachteten. Sie hatten ursprünglich zusammengehörige Teile von Bildern auseinandergeschnitten und sie neu zusammengesetzt sowie in entstandene Zwischenräume andere Materialien eingefügt.

So findet man in Picassos Collagen aus der Gitarren-Reihe eingefügte Tapetenstücke, Zeitungsausschnitte, verschiedene Papiermaterialien, Musiknoten und eigene Zeichnungen.

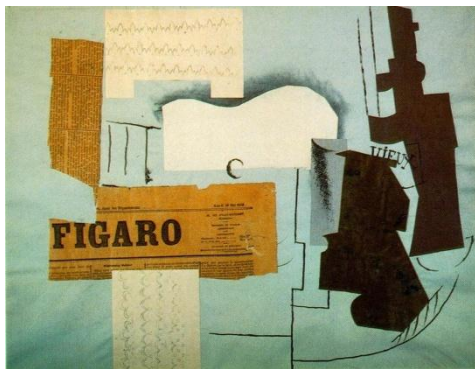


Abb.1: Picasso: Vieux-Marc-Flasche, Glas, Gitarre und Zeitung (1913)



Abb.2: Picasso: Gitarre, Notenblatt und Glas (1912)

Ziel bei der Collagetechnik ist es nicht, ein homogen erscheinendes, neues Bild zu erschaffen. Die zusammengefügt Materialien und deren Schnittflächen werden nicht geglättet, sondern die Nahtstellen dienen dazu, den Konstruktionscharakter des Bildes hervorzuheben.

Dieses Zusammenbringen und Ineinanderkleben scheinbar nicht miteinander vereinbarer Materialien, das ein wesentliches Merkmal einer Collage ist, eroberte seit dem Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts den Kunst- und auch den Literaturbetrieb. Künstler des Kubismus, Dadaismus, Surrealismus und später auch Angehörige der Pop-Art verbanden auf diese Art häufig Bilder und Schrift und überquerten dadurch diese mediale Grenze.

In meinem Beitrag möchte ich mich anhand der Collagen von Pablo Picasso und Wolfgang Hildesheimer den Collagen von Herta Müller annähern und dabei besonders die Verbindung von Schrift und Bild fokussieren.

Herta Müller begann Anfang der 1990er Jahre als Stipendiatin der Villa Massimo<sup>1</sup> Collagen herzustellen. Ihre ersten Collagen erschienen 1991 im Band *Der Teufel sitzt im Spiegel*. Auf die Frage in einem Spiegel-Interview, wie man ihre Collagen definieren solle – ob die „Gedichtbilder, Kürzestgedichte oder Prosagedichte“<sup>2</sup> seien – erklärte sie, dass für sie das Collagieren nichts weiter sei als „eine Art zu schreiben“<sup>3</sup>.

Bezüglich ihrer Motivation für das Collagieren führt sie in dem Band *Der König verneigt sich und tötet* aus, wie ihre Collagearbeit damit begann, dass sie Freunden Karten aus ausgeschnittenen Bildern und Buchstaben fabriziert hat:

[I]ch [fing] an, Zeitungswörter auszuschneiden. [...] Es begann ja nur mit der Absicht, mich auf den vielen Reisen bei Freunden zu melden, etwas Eigenes in den Umschlag zu stecken, keine Ansichtskarte von Orten, wie Fotografen sie mit lokalpatriotischer Linse abgebildet hatten. Beim Zeitungslesen im Zug klebte ich ein Bildfragment und Wörter zusammen auf eine weiße Karte oder ein, zwei Sätze [...]. Erst die Verblüffung, was lose Zeitungswörter alles hergeben, brachte

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<sup>1</sup> siehe Beyer, „Ich habe die Sprache gegessen“. *Die Literaturnobelpreisträgerin Herta Müller über ihre zusammengeklebten Gedichte und über die Macht und das Versagen der Wörter*, 128.

<sup>2</sup> siehe Beyer, „Ich habe die Sprache gegessen“. *Die Literaturnobelpreisträgerin Herta Müller über ihre zusammengeklebten Gedichte und über die Macht und das Versagen der Wörter* und bei Meyer, *Sprachbilder oder Bildsprache? Herta Müllers mediale Miniaturen*, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Beyer, „Ich habe die Sprache gegessen“. *Die Literaturnobelpreisträgerin Herta Müller über ihre zusammengeklebten Gedichte und über die Macht und das Versagen der Wörter*, 128.

das Reimen mit sich. Ich schnitt schon lange auch zu Hause Wörter aus. Wahllos, wie mir schien, lagen sie auf dem Tisch.<sup>4</sup>

In einem Interview von 2012 stellt Müller die Collagen auch mit Flugblättern in Verbindung. In der kontrollbesessenen Diktatur Rumäniens, in der alle Schreibmaschinen registriert waren, war das Collagieren eine Möglichkeit etwas mitzuteilen, ohne eine den Machthabern als Beweis dienende Spur zu hinterlassen.<sup>5</sup> Die Collagen stellten auch eine Alternative zu den wenigen, ästhetisch nicht ansprechenden und ideologisch gefärbten Postkarten im Rumänien der damaligen Zeit dar.

Herta Müller hat bis jetzt insgesamt vier Collagebände auf Deutsch und einen Collageband auf Rumänisch herausgegeben. In den ersten drei Collagebänden (*Der Wächter nimmt seinen Kamm (1993)*, *Im Haarknoten wohnt eine Dame (2000)* und *Die blassen Herren mit den Mokkatassen (2005)*) sowie in dem rumänischen Collageband *Este sau nu este Ion (2005)* sind keine Seitenzahlen vorhanden, wodurch diese Bücher eher als eine Sammlung von Bildern definiert werden können. Der Band *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen (2012)* hat nummerierte Seiten.

Durch den Akt des Collagierens als handwerklich-kreativer künstlerischer Prozess und durch den Entliterarisierungsakt der Collagen eröffnen sich im Bereich der Collageanalyse neue Herangehensweisen.

Schon bei Picassos Collagen ist zu beobachten, dass nicht nur unterschiedliche Materialien miteinander verbunden werden, sondern auch unterschiedliche Medien wie Schrift und Bild. Bei Picassos Collagebeispielen wird durch den Zeitungs- bzw. den Notenausschnitt ein in sich zusammenhängendes (wenn auch gestutztes) Schriftprodukt eingeflochten. Dieser verstümmelte Text wird zwar sprachlich außer Funktion gesetzt, zitiert aber gleichzeitig die Schriftlichkeit, wodurch eine intermediale Verbindung eröffnet wird.

In den Collagen Herta Müllers finden wir eine andere Art von Schrift-Bild-Verbindung.

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<sup>4</sup> siehe Müller, *Der König verneigt sich und tötet*, 56.

<sup>5</sup> siehe Beyer, „*Ich habe die Sprache gegessen*“. *Die Literaturnobelpreisträgerin Herta Müller über ihre zusammengeklebten Gedichte und über die Macht und das Versagen der Wörter*, 128.



Abb.3: Müller, Herta (2012): Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen, S. 201.



Abb.4: Müller, Herta (2014): Nah wie die Zeit. Lumas Galerie. Gedichtbild Nr. 10.

Müllers Collagen werden aus ausgeschnittenen Einzelwörtern, aus Wortteilen oder aus Buchstaben zusammengesetzt und bestehen in der Regel aus mehreren Zeilen und aus einem oder mehreren Bildern.<sup>6</sup> Die einzelnen Buchstaben, Silben oder Wörter stammen aus verschiedenen Printmedien, z.B. aus der Werbung aus dem Ökoladen, aus diversen Frauenzeitschriften oder aus der Zeitschrift *Der Spiegel*.<sup>7</sup> Diese Schrifteile werden aus ihrem Ursprungskontext entnommen und in den Collagen neu kombiniert. Der Hintergrund der neu entstandenen Collagen ist meist einfarbig, darauf werden die Wörter unterschiedlicher Schriftart, Farbe, Musterung und Größe geklebt.

<sup>6</sup> Meyer nennt Müllers Collagen neodadaistisch, da sie sehr viele Wortschöpfungen enthalten. (siehe Meyer, *Sprachbilder oder Bildsprache? Herta Müllers mediale Miniaturen*, 32.)

<sup>7</sup> siehe Beyer, „Ich habe die Sprache gegessen“. *Die Literaturnobelpreisträgerin Herta Müller über ihre zusammengeklebten Gedichte und über die Macht und das Versagen der Wörter*, 130.



Abb.5.

Weil der Schriftteil der Collagen aus einzelnen Bildbuchstaben, Bildsilben oder Bildwörtern besteht, deren Aussehen wie Farbe, Dicke oder Schriftart stark variieren und die zusätzliche Informationen transportieren, fließen bei Müllers Collagen die Bereiche Bild und Schrift ineinander. Die Schrift an sich wird hierbei nicht außer Kraft gesetzt, sondern sie wird auf neuartige Weisen mit dem Bild verbunden.

Wie die Schrift sind auch die Bilder in den Collagen aus Zeitungen und Zeitschriften ausgeschnitten und zusammengefügt<sup>8</sup>, manchmal werden sie zusätzlich mit Zeichnungen<sup>9</sup> ergänzt und weitergeführt.

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<sup>8</sup> Müller, *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen*, 67; 89.

<sup>9</sup> Müller, *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen*, 28; 36.



Abb.6: Müller, Herta (2000): Im Haarknoten wohnt eine Dame, Collage Nr. 26.

Die Motive von Müllers Collagen variieren ebenfalls. Neben abstrakten Mustern kommen Gegenstände, Tiere und viele Menschen vor. Besonders bei den Figurenbildern sind die Proportionen auffallend. Es werden oft betont vergrößerte Körperteile hinzugefügt,<sup>10</sup> so zum Beispiel übergroße Füße oder riesige Köpfe und Beine.

<sup>10</sup> Müller, *Die blassen Herren mit den Mokkatassen*, 32; 41;62; 56; 91.



Abb.7.

Körperteile wie Köpfe, Beine, Füße, Hände oder Nasen werden auch isoliert verwendet.<sup>11</sup> Dieser lupenhafte Blick als Strategie, ein Detail vergrößert zu fokussieren, ist auch für Müllers Schreiben charakteristisch. Ein Ausschnitt wird dabei aus seinem durch das Ganze definierten Kontext entnommen und dadurch als Fragment neu definiert.

In den Collagen werden die Figuren oft zerschnitten<sup>12</sup>, undeutlich oder nur als schwarze Konturen<sup>13</sup> dargestellt. Sie kommen in Form von Schaufensterpuppen<sup>14</sup>, Schatten<sup>15</sup> bzw. Röntgenaufnahmen<sup>16</sup> oder als schematische Konturen eines WC-Zeichens<sup>17</sup> vor. Die Undeutlichkeit und Unkenntlichkeit wird sehr weit getrieben,

<sup>11</sup> Müller, *Die blassen Herren mit den Mokkatassen*, 10; 17; 34 und Müller, *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen*, 17; 18; 21; 99; 102; 103.

<sup>12</sup> Müller, *Die blassen Herren mit den Mokkatassen*, 11; 14; 20; 36; 37; 38; 39; 63; 73; 90 und Müller, *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen*, 16; 59.

<sup>13</sup> Müller, *Die blassen Herren mit den Mokkatassen*, 3; 25; 28; 29; 33; 35; 62 und Müller, *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen*, 7; 23; 25; 63.

<sup>14</sup> Müller, *Die blassen Herren mit den Mokkatassen*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Müller, *Die blassen Herren mit den Mokkatassen*, 8 und Müller, *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen*, 11; 19; 24; 105.

<sup>16</sup> Müller, *Die blassen Herren mit den Mokkatassen*, 27.

<sup>17</sup> Müller, *Die blassen Herren mit den Mokkatassen*, 74.

indem es z.B. auch einen Kopf ohne Gesicht gibt.<sup>18</sup> Die Zerlegung der Körperteile bedeutet gleichzeitig eine Demontage des Ursprünglichen und eine Neumontage, indem ein neuer Gegenstand oder eine neue Figur geschaffen wird.<sup>19</sup>

In den Collagen finden wir auf verschiedenen Ebenen die für Müller so charakteristischen Grenzüberquerungen zwischen Bild und Schrift, aber auch zwischen Menschen, Tieren und Gegenständen. Gegenstände werden belebt, indem z.B. Häuser<sup>20</sup> oder Möbelstücke menschliche Füße bekommen.



Abb.8.

Die Collagen haben eine zusätzliche mediale Funktion. Sie vermitteln Inhalte nicht nur über die Schrift. Die ästhetischen Komponenten des Farbtons, der Größe und des Materials stellen ebenfalls eine wichtige Ausdrucksform der Collage dar. Sie verleihen dem Collagieren einen eigenen Rahmen und heben die manuelle Ebene hervor. Das Collagieren wird dadurch zu so etwas wie einem Handwerk, das Herta Müller mit der Arbeit einer Schneiderin vergleicht.<sup>21</sup>

Durch die Collagetechnik rückt die AutorIn als UrheberIn in den Hintergrund und es wird der Eindruck vermittelt, es werde nach dem Baukastenprinzip gearbeitet. Dieses

<sup>18</sup> Müller, *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen*, 22.

<sup>19</sup> Müller, *Die blassen Herren mit den Mokkatassen*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Müller, *Die blassen Herren mit den Mokkatassen*, 83.

<sup>21</sup> siehe Beyer „*Ich habe die Sprache gegessen*“. *Die Literaturnobelpreisträgerin Herta Müller über ihre zusammengeklebten Gedichte und über die Macht und das Versagen der Wörter*, 130.

Konzept, als Künstler nicht vorrangig eigene Ideen zu produzieren, sondern das bereits Produzierte immer wieder ins neue Licht zu rücken und dadurch neue Aspekte zum Vorschein zu bringen, wurde in der Kunst der Postmoderne zentral.

Wozu noch etwas erfinden? [...] Worte sind genug gewechselt, und die Taten, die ihnen folgen sollen, könnten ja darin bestehen, die bereits „gewechselten“ Worte zu ordnen und zu sortieren. Warum noch weitere hinzufügen? Ist die Liste der Druckwerke und Schriftstücke nicht lang genug? Wozu noch Phantasie und eigene Worte bemühen, wenn die bunte Welt der Massenmedien Stoff genug anspült und die Dinge nicht selten für sich sprechen? Aber ist das vorstellbar: ein Schriftsteller, der nicht mehr selbst formuliert, sondern nur noch Fremdes sammelt und arrangiert?<sup>22</sup>

- fragt Volker Hage in seinem Buch *Literarische Collagen. Texte, Quellen, Theorie* und das ist die Frage, die auch heute noch sehr oft gestellt wird.<sup>23</sup> So hört man Stimmen, die Herta Müllers Collagearbeit skeptisch betrachten und der Meinung sind, dass es eine Art Notbeschäftigung sei, weil ihr keine neuen Ideen zum Schreiben einfielen.

Zweifelsohne empfinden Schriftsteller das Collagieren als eine vom Schreiben verschiedene Arbeit. Wolfgang Hildesheimer, der am Ende seiner Schaffensphase mehrere „schrift-freie“ Collagebildbände hergestellt und diese auf der Metabene kommentiert hat, schreibt, dass die Collage „ein sehr allmählich entstehendes Gebilde reiner aktiver Phantasie [sei]“<sup>24</sup>, bei dem Zeit und die reale Welt vergessen werden.

Hildesheimers Gedanken, dass beim Collagieren die sogenannte Realität, das Vorwissen, die Geschichte und die Zeit außen vor bleiben und der Collagierer seiner Phantasie freien Lauf lässt, sind wesentlich. Das Material und die Farben lenken bei der Collagearbeit vom Denken ab.

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<sup>22</sup> Hage, *Literarische Collagen. Texte, Quellen, Theorie*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Es gibt eine juristische Arbeit von Ilja Czernik, in der er sich aus juristischer Sicht mit dem Begriff der Collage und der Frage des Urheberrechtes auseinandersetzt. (Czernik, Ilja (2008): Die Collage in der urheberrechtlichen Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kunstfreiheit und Schutz des geistigen Eigentums. Berlin: De Gruyter Recht.)

<sup>24</sup> Hildesheimer, *In Erwartung der Nacht*, 9f.



Abb.9.: Hildesheimer, Wolfgang (1986): *In Erwartung der Nacht*.

Während sich aber Hildesheimer, der nach dem Erscheinen seines fiktiven Biographieromans *Marbot*<sup>25</sup> 1981 nur noch Collagebände publizierte,<sup>26</sup> von der Schrift distanziert, indem er sie nur als Formelement einsetzt, bleibt die Schrift bei Müller weiterhin präsent und transportiert verschiedene Dimensionen in einem verändertem Wirkungsareal:

Das Kleben der Wörter ist so sinnlich, die Wörter können und dürfen alles. Ich nehme immer nur ganz gewöhnliche, und wenn ich sie zusammenstelle, dann entsteht etwas, was neu ist, es fängt an zu glitzern. Es ist nicht wie bei einer Prosa, die einem drei, vier Jahre im Nacken sitzt und der ich mich ganz zur Verfügung stellen muss. Die Collagen sind kurz, müssen auf eine Karteikarte passen, und ich weiß, in einer Woche bin ich mit einer fertig. Weil die Wörter schon vorhanden sind, denke ich manchmal, dass ich es gar nicht bin, die schreibt. Das sind sie selbst. Und der Reim katapultiert sie dahin, wo sie sonst nicht hinkämen. Er ist wie ein kleiner Motor. Er schiebt das Ganze an.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Erschienen 1981.

<sup>26</sup> Endlich allein (1984); *In Erwartung der Nacht* (1986); *Landschaft mit Phoenix* (1991.)

<sup>27</sup> Beyer, „*Ich habe die Sprache gegessen*“. *Die Literaturnobelpreisträgerin Herta Müller über ihre zusammengeklebten Gedichte und über die Macht und das Versagen der Wörter*, 130.

- erzählt Müller in einem Interview und hebt in dieser Äußerung das Schöpferische am Collagieren hervor.

Bei Müllers Collagen ist es unmöglich, Schrift und Bild klar voneinander zu trennen, denn sie sind in einem Arbeitsprozess gemeinsam entstanden. Sie werden auf unterschiedliche Arten miteinander verbunden: Mal unterstützt das Bild den Text und verdeutlicht noch einmal das Gesagte, mal eröffnet das Bild eine neue Dimension des Geschriebenen. Es finden sich aber auch Beispiele, in denen das Bild in Opposition zum Text steht.

Das erste Phänomen – der Text wird von dem Bild unterstützt – lässt sich gut am Beispiel der fünften Collage des Bandes *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen* zeigen.



Abb.10.: Müller, Herta (2012): *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen*, S. 11.

Hier geht es um eine Erinnerung an eine Zugfahrt vor 20 Jahren, bei der zwei Menschen sich verabschieden, ohne zeigen zu dürfen, dass sie sich kennen. Hier bildet

das dazugehörige Bild eine laufende Schattengestalt und einen handgezeichneten Zug ab.<sup>28</sup>

Es gibt auch Collagen, in denen der Text allein keinen Zusammenhang ergibt. Der Zusammenhang entsteht erst durch das Zusammenspiel von Text und Bild, wie das in der neunten Collage<sup>29</sup> des Bandes *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen* zu sehen ist. Bild und Text ergänzen sich hier, die Bilder werden in den Text integriert und in Symbiose mit der Schrift gestaltet.



Abb.11.: Müller, Herta (2012): *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen*, S. 15.

So irritiert im ersten Moment das Bild einer weißen Kuh, obwohl im Text von einer roten Kuh die Rede ist. Erst in der nächsten Zeile erfahren wir, dass die rote Kuh einen weißen Umhang angezogen hat.

Dadurch, dass die Bilder in den Collagen die Texte kommentieren oder konterkarieren, bekommen die Werke eine Art multimedialen Charakter.

<sup>28</sup> Müller, *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen*, 11.

<sup>29</sup> Müller, *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen*, 15.

Es lässt sich feststellen, dass in allen dargestellten Fällen – seien es die eingefügten Schrift- und Notenfragmente bei Picasso, sei es die Reduzierung bzw. das Verschwinden der Schrift als Formelement bei Wolfgang Hildesheimer oder die Dekonstruktion und Neumontage einzelner Schriftstücke bei Herta Müller – wird die Schrift durch diese hergestellte Fragmentartigkeit der Uneindeutigkeit der Wirklichkeit angepasst und vermittelt dadurch eine gestörte Schriftlichkeit, die erst durch das Zusammenspiel mit den Bildern kommunikationsfähig wird.

Müller äußert sich wie zu allen Bereichen ihres Schreibens auch zu den Collagen:

Es gibt Collagen, wo das Bild den Text spiegelt, und es gibt Bilder, wo die Relation überhaupt nicht sichtbar wird. Ich weiß nicht warum. Es lässt sich ja nicht alles bebildern, vielleicht das meiste lässt sich nicht bebildern, und wenn man bebildert, dann ist es nur eine Winzigkeit aus dem Ganzen, und nicht das Gesamte. Und ich könnte es gar nicht ertragen, daß sich das Ganze nochmal als Bild wiederholt.<sup>30</sup>

Sehr wichtig ist in Müllers Collagen wie allgemein in ihrem ganzen Werk die Rolle der intertextuellen Bezüge zu den Printmedien, denen die Wörter und Bilder entnommen wurden, sowie die Verbindung der Collagen mit den anderen Werken Müllers.<sup>31</sup>

Indem Müllers Collagen Satzzeichen weitestgehend ignorieren und manche Collagebände eher als Kunstbücher zu sehen sind, stellt sich die Frage, als was Müllers Collagen zu betrachten sind. Auch bei den Collagen streut Müller verschiedene Spuren, die eine eindeutige Zuordnung oder eine eindeutige Greifbarkeit unmöglich machen und die Collagen in den Grenzbereichen verorten lassen.

Dadurch, dass Müller ihre Buchstaben, Wortfragmente und Bilder aus verschiedenen Katalogen und Zeitschriften nimmt, baut sie eine Brücke zwischen Alltag und Kunst und kreiert eine spezielle Realitätsdimension der Collage.

In den Projekten der *Literaturtapeten* kehren die Collagen, deren Materialien bereits aus dem Alltagsbereich entnommen wurden, sogar aus dem elitären Bereich der Kunst und Literatur in den praktischen Alltag zurück: In dem Literaturtapetenprojekt *Dr.Nice*<sup>32</sup> werden 60 Collagen von Müller als Literaturtapete vertrieben. Diese Collagen verlassen durch ihre Größe und durch ihren Preis (40-179

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<sup>30</sup> Eddy, *Die Schule der Angst. Gespräch mit Herta Müller*, 337.

<sup>31</sup> siehe dazu Meyer, *Sprachbilder oder Bildsprache? Herta Müllers mediale Miniaturen*, 31.

<sup>32</sup> siehe <http://www.drnice.net/tapetenmotive/collection/literatur.php>

Euro, Poster bzw. Wandformat) den Bereich der Literatur. Dass am 12. September 2014 in der Lumas Galerie in Berlin eine Ausstellung mit dem Titel *Herta Müller: Gedichtbilder* eröffnete, in der 20 Collagen<sup>33</sup> von Herta Müller ausgestellt und in limitierter Ausgabe (100 Stück) signiert verkauft wurden, liefert ein weiteres Argument dahingehend, die Collagen als Kunstwerke zu betrachten.

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<sup>33</sup> Die Collagen variierten zwischen den Größen 15x11 und 150x110 cm und kosteten zwischen 90 und 740 Euro.

## 'Siete voi qui, ser Brunetto?' - Brunetto Latini, autore e protagonista

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L'incontro tra il protagonista viaggiatore Dante e il suo maestro Brunetto Latini nel celebre canto XV dell'*Inferno* è una scena molto nota e conosciuta.

Nella mia comunicazione prima presento il protagonista Latini: come appare l'anziano intellettuale nel canto e quali intenzioni dantesche si manifestano nella sua figura.

Poi parlo dell'autore Brunetto che, allo stesso tempo, è il viaggiatore protagonista della famosa opera *Il Tesoretto*, un poemetto didascalico-allegorico scritto in volgare. Provo quindi a individuare le diverse voci del poeta nel testo e a categorizzarle secondo i vari contesti.

Purtroppo non ho la possibilità di parlare di ogni aspetto particolare del canto o del poema: così, provo a concentrarmi sulla figura di Brunetto e sulla sua posizione e rappresentazione nelle opere.

Nel terzo girone del settimo cerchio, dove sono puniti i violenti contro Dio, Dante e Virgilio procedono lungo uno degli alti e spessi argini del Flegetonte. I due poeti si sono ormai allontanati dalla selva oscura e raggiungono un sabbione infuocato. I due viaggiatori lo passano mentre il fumo che si leva dal fiume di sangue li protegge dalla pioggia di fiamme. All'improvviso scorge un gruppo di anime, e una di queste si avvicina a Dante e lo tira per il lembo della veste, gridando la sua meraviglia. Il poeta lo guarda bene e, nonostante il viso bruciato dalle fiammelle, lo riconosce come il suo maestro, Brunetto Latini<sup>1</sup>. Il dannato<sup>2</sup> desidera staccarsi per un po' dalla sua schiera e

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<sup>1</sup> Il nome è più spesso registrato nella forma idiomatica '*Burnetto*', anche negli autografi, quanto al cognome, la forma genitivali si alterna con di Latino e con la riduzione a Latino. Cfr. F. Mazzoni, ad vocem „Latini, Brunetto,” in *Enciclopedia dantesca*, III. (Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1971), 579. Vedi anche l'analisi del nome di Rossi: L. Rossi, „Canto XV,” in *Lectura Dantis Turicensis. Inferno*, a cura di G. GÜNTERT e M. PICONE (Firenze: Cesati, 2000), 207-220.

<sup>2</sup> Brunetto Latini fu letterato e uomo politico fiorentino. Fu figlio di Bonaccorso di Latino, nacque probabilmente nel terzo decennio del seolo XIII. Dal padre apprese grammatica e retorica, per poi essere avviato al notariato. Ebbe un fratello, ebbe moglie, avendone tre figli. Fu guelfo militante, notaro, ambasciatore, magistrato: e insieme retore e filosofo e institutore e divulgatore, nella Firenze duecentesca, della nuova cultura retorica, nonché di un rinnovato enciclopedismo di un umanesimo 'civile'. Dopo la battaglia di Montaperti (4 settembre 1260) si fermò in Francia. Dall'esilio francese tornò in patria soltanto dopo la battaglia di Benevento (28 febbraio 1266), ricevendo subito incarichi importanti. Morì nel 1294, e fu sepolto in Santa Maria Maggiore. Per approfondire: T. Sundby, *Della vita e delle opere di Brunetto Latini* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1884).

seguire il suo antico discepolo per parlare con lui. Visto che, se un'anima smette per un istante di camminare, è poi costretta a restar ferma cent'anni sulla sabbia senza potersi riparare dalla pioggia di fuoco, Brunetto invita Dante a camminare insieme. Dante non osa scendere dall'argine ma prosegue il cammino tenendo il capo basso in segno di rispetto („[...]’*l capo chino / tenea com’uom che reverente vada*” – *Inf.* XV. vv. 44-45.<sup>3</sup>). Anche se Brunetto è molto curioso su come e per quale motivo lui compia questo viaggio nell’Aldilà, dove vada e chi sia la sua guida, („*Qual fortuna o destino / anzi l’ultimo di qua giù ti mena? / e chi è questi che mostra ’l cammino?*” – *Inf.* XV. vv. 46-48.), dopo le prime domande il loro discorso si concentra su due punti importanti. Da parte di Brunetto c’è un lusinghiero riconoscimento delle doti del pellegrino, poi formula una critica aspra e dura dei Fiorentini („*ingrato popolo maligno*” – *Inf.* XV. v. 61.; „*gent’è avara, invidiosa e superba*” – v. 68.; „*le bestie fiesolane*” – v. 73.). Alla fine annuncia una profezia sul terribile destino che aspetta Dante. Il canto finisce con una breve rappresentazione degli altri dannati („*Priscian sen va con quella turba grama, / e Francesco d’Accorso anche; e vedervi, / s’avessi avuto di tal tigna brama, / colui potei che dal servo de’ servi / fu trasmutato d’Arno in Bacchiglione, / dove lasciò li mal protesi nervi*” – *Inf.* XV. vv. 109-114.). Ma Latini, vedendo il fumo sollevato da un’altra schiera di sodomiti di cui non può far parte („ [...] *però ch’i’ veggio / là surger nuovo fummo del sabbione*” – *Inf.* XV. vv. 116-117.), interrompe il colloquio e sparisce di corsa nella landa infuocata.

Il canto XV, con i suoi 124 versi, è uno dei canti più brevi dell’*Inferno*. Dal punto di vista strutturale si trova quasi al centro della cantica. Dante lo anticipa bene, perché già nei canti precedenti troviamo varie allusioni alle sue vicende.<sup>4</sup> Diversi elementi strutturali assicurano la continuità tra i canti dell’*Inferno*: come, per esempio, la questione delle profezie<sup>5</sup> o il fiume Flegetonte, che ci appare la prima volta soltanto per una piccola menzione<sup>6</sup>: poi, abbiamo numerosi riferimenti ad esso, che alla fine diventa un elemento molto importante della costruzione del discorso tra Dante e Brunetto.

Il canto comincia con un richiamo preciso al *Tesoretto*<sup>7</sup>: „*Ora cen porta l’un de’ duri margini*” (*Inf.* XV. v. 1.) - „*Or va mastro Burnetto / per un sentiero stretto*” (*Tesoretto*,

<sup>3</sup> Tutte le citazioni relative alla *Commedia* vengono citate dalla seguente edizione: D. Alighieri, *La Commedia secondo l’antica vulgata*, ed. G. Petrocchi (Milano: Mondadori, 1966-1967).

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. S. Sarteschi, „Inferno XV. L’incontro fra Dante e Brunetto,” *Rassegna Europea di Letteratura Italiana* 29-30. (2007): 36.

<sup>5</sup> Vedi il commento di Parodi. E. G. Parodi, „Il canto di Brunetto Latini,” in *Poesia e storia della „Divina Commedia*”, a cura di G. Folena, e P. V. Mengaldo (Venezia: Neri-Pozza, 1965), 163-200.

<sup>6</sup> [...] „*Ma ficca li occhi a valle, ché s’approccia / la riviera del sangue in la qual bolle / qual che per violenza in altrui nocchia.*” (*Inf.* XII. vv. 46-48.).

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. T. Zanato, „Su „Inferno” XV e dintorni,” *Rivista di letteratura italiana* VI. (1988): 185-246.

vv. 1183-1184.<sup>8</sup>), „*Or si ne va il maestro / per lo camino a destro*”. (vv. 2181-2182.), e continua con una vera e propria serie di similitudini che hanno lo scopo di creare il clima più adatto all’incontro. Prima vediamo una dilatazione dello spazio geografico naturalistico con la descrizione delle alte dighe fiamminghe, e subito dopo Dante restringe il campo visivo della fantasia del lettore.<sup>9</sup> Il nostro sguardo si muove sul duplice sfondo di una notte priva di luna e della bottega domestica di un vecchio sarto che aguzza le ciglia per infilare la cruna dell’ago. L’intenzione di Dante è di inserire il nuovo episodio in un’atmosfera il più possibile familiare con un sottofondo lirico.<sup>10</sup>

Può valere la pena di notare che nel ‘suo’ canto Brunetto prende la parola proprio al verso 24 („*Così adocchiato da cotal famiglia, / fui conosciuto da un, che mi prese / per lo lembo e gridò: «Qual meraviglia!»*” – *Inf.* XV. vv. 22-24). Dal verso 24 in poi la fisionomia del canto muta decisamente: non è più diegesi ma mimesi<sup>11</sup>. Monologhi e dialoghi si alternano fino al verso 121, dove l’affermazione di Dante termina il canto.

L’intero colloquio fra Dante e Brunetto avviene mentre il primo è collocato in alto rispetto al dannato, proprio sul ‘*marginè*’ del fiume, e il secondo è costretto a seguirlo dal basso, lungo l’‘*argine*’, invertendo la direzione di marcia della sua schiera. Secondo Sarteschi e Calenda la volontà dantesca è di evidenziare il rovesciamento delle rispettive parti, ‘*maestro*’ e ‘*discepolo*’.<sup>12</sup> La superiorità di Dante è chiara: è un privilegiato *peregrinus* nell’oltretomba rispetto all’eterna inferiorità di Brunetto, che è costretto a un incessante movimento che non lo condurrà mai in un *itinerarium*, esperienza, attività, conoscenza, progresso intellettuale che dia senso compiuto all’umana esistenza.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Tutte le citazioni relative al *Tesoretto* vengono citate dalla seguente edizione: B. Latini, *Il Tesoretto*, introduzione e note di M. Ciccuto (Milano: Rizzoli, 1985).

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. Zanato, „Su „Inferno” XV e dintorni,” 198.

<sup>10</sup> F. Piselli, „Il canto XV dell’Inferno,” in *Lectura Dantis 2002-2009*, a cura di A. Cerbo (Università degli Studi di Napoli L’Orientale, Napoli: Il Torcoliere, 2011), 658-659.

<sup>11</sup> L’origine etimologica di *diegesi* è greca (diègèsis=racconto). Essa è l’insieme delle vicende narrate in un racconto, ovvero la successione degli eventi disposta in un determinato ordine logico e cronologico. La *mimesi* (dal greco mimesis=imitazione) è data, invece, dal racconto recitato dal personaggio, il quale imita e simula una situazione reale di discorso come può essere un dialogo tra due interlocutori. In questo caso il narratore cede la narrazione della storia alle frasi proferite direttamente dai personaggi che, ovviamente, si trovano in una situazione interna alla vicenda. Cfr. G. Palazzo, „Mimesi e Diegesi. Narrazione e azione nel testo,” *Il Sileno/Filosofi(e)Semiotiche* 1 (2014): 58.

<sup>12</sup> Sarteschi, „Inferno XV. L’incontro fra Dante e Brunetto,” 44., C. Calenda, „Reverenza e colpa: ancora sul rapporto fra Dante e Brunetto in Inferno XV,” in *Del nomar parean tutti contenti, Studi offerti a Ruggiero Stefanelli*, a cura di P. Guaragnella, M. B. Pagliara, P. Sabbatino, L. Sebastio (Bari: Progedit, 2011), 8.

<sup>13</sup> Come scrive Brunetto stesso nel *Tesoretto*: „*E io, sol per mirare / lo suo nobile affare / quasi tutto smarriò; / ma tant’era il disio, / ch’io avea, di sapere / tutte le cose vere / di ciò ch’ella dicea, / [...] / anzi m’inginocchiài / e merzé le chiamai / per Dio, che le piacesse / ched ella m’accompiesse / tutta la grande storia / ond’ella fa memoria. / Ella disse esavia: / “Amico, io ben vorria / che ciò che vuoi intendere / tu*

Anche se Dante colloca il suo antico maestro nell'*Inferno*, tra i dannati, parla con lui con tanto rispetto e costruisce tra loro un'atmosfera armoniosa e affettuosa in cui si sente la sua grande reverenza per Latini e il suo rimpianto. Le risposte di Dante si riferiscono alle espressioni di Latini, *'la cara e buona imagine paterna'* (*Inf.* XV. v. 83.) che conserva di lui è una risposta evidente alla parola *'figliuol'* (*Inf.* XV. 31., 37.). Anzi, a Dante dispiace tanto che „*voi non sareste ancora / de l'umana natura posto in bando*” (*Inf.* XV. vv. 79-81.) Fino alla fine del canto, la dignità e il prestigio di Brunetto sono incontestabili.

Dal punto di vista del mio argomento, la questione cardinale non è comprendere perché Dante scelga questo posto (tra i sodomiti) per Brunetto. È più importante analizzare come Dante rappresenta il suo maestro, facendone un personaggio della sua visione poetica. Se non prestiamo tanta attenzione alla questione del peccato commesso da Latini, possiamo osservare la scena dal punto di vista della funzione compiuta nel canto.<sup>14</sup> Attraverso la figura di Latini ci avviciniamo alla figura poeta-Dante, e così vediamo che l'intenzione del poeta è quella di rappresentare se stesso, cioè il suo comportamento e i suoi sentimenti verso il povero dannato. Con una svolta decisiva, Dante diventa il protagonista del canto, mentre Brunetto è soltanto il testimone, il portavoce della sorte e del compito particolare del suo discepolo. Tramite le parole di Latini, conosciamo Dante come il portatore dei valori, il *'dolce fico'*.

Nella *Commedia* dantesca, dunque, il docente-*auctor* (Brunetto) viene rappresentato dal discente-*auctor* (Dante) in qualità di personaggio attante (*actor*). Ma già Brunetto si era auto-rappresentato, più di una volta, nelle sue opere. Nel *Tesoretto*, poemetto didascalico incompiuto in coppie di settenari a rima baciata (alla maniera francese), Latini stesso si auto-rappresenta come *'mastro Burnetto Latino'*, protagonista di una visione allegorica narrata in prima persona dall'autore, che intraprende un lungo viaggio, nel corso del quale incontra la Natura, un cavaliere (ammaestrato dalle quattro Virtù cardinali) e infine il Dio dell'Amore e Ovidio.

È molto importante e rilevante che le ultime parole che Dante poneva in bocca a ser Brunetto erano: „*Sieti raccomandato il mio Tesoro / nel qual io vivo ancora, e più non cheggio.*” (*Inf.* XV. vv. 119-120.). La questione anche oggi è aperta: il *'Tesoro'* designa l'opera allegorica in versi (cioè il *Tesoretto*) o l'opera enciclopedica in prosa (*Trésor*) o si riferisce ad ambedue, le cui parti sono in stretto rapporto e formano un'unità.

Una gran parte della critica ancora oggi ritiene *Il Tesoretto* un preludeo, un commento poetico o un compendio del *Trésor*<sup>15</sup>, e Latini è giudicato più volte uno

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*lo potessi imprendere, / e sì sottile ingegno / e tanto buon ritegno / avessi, che certanza / d'ognuna sottiglianza / ch'io volessi ritrare, / tu potessi aparare / e ritenere a mente / a tutto 'l tuo vivente.*” (*Tesoretto*, vv. 519-546.).

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. Parodi, „Il canto di Brunetto Latini,” 163-200.

<sup>15</sup> Così ne scrive nella sua introduzione Carmody. F. J. Carmody, *Li livres dou Tresor de Brunetto Latini* (Berkeley: Los-Angeles, 1948).

spirito non creativo e originale<sup>16</sup>. L'opera appare come una semplice imitazione<sup>17</sup>, poiché prende in prestito i modelli dalla grande tradizione allegorica (Boezio, Alano di Lilla, Guillaume de Lorris) e li mescola con le sue esperienze personali e politiche cancellando ogni differenza fra arte e scienza, poesia e prosa. Jauss suggerisce di osservare il poema in un altro modo: non cercandovi la purezza di stile, l'unità della materia, la chiara motivazione del racconto o l'armonia e la misura nella rappresentazione, ma soprattutto l'unità di forma e contenuto, di figura e significato.<sup>18</sup>

Il luogo e lo scenario dell'opera sono allegorici: infatti non ci sono dei riferimenti topografici chiari né sappiamo come si articola il paesaggio dell'aldilà, poiché nel poema si alternano luoghi reali e irreali. Solo la figura del viandante è immutata nel cangiare caleidoscopico delle scene. Così questo non è un viaggio alla pari di quello della *Divina Commedia*. Il protagonista compie il suo viaggio da solo, e non ha nessuna guida o appoggio (soltanto dalle figure allegoriche riceve degli insegnamenti e delle indicazioni). L'esperienza visionaria ha lo scopo di trasmettere conoscenze enciclopediche verso il lettore. Il poeta come sognatore-protagonista sperimenta un'educazione che condivide con il suo lettore. Attraverso le parti dai caratteri contrastanti del poema getta lo sguardo su diversi ambiti e aspetti del cosmo.

Il *Tesoretto* di Latini è un viaggio immaginato. Nel testo Brunetto è il nome dell'autore, del protagonista e del narratore. Quando Brunetto dà il proprio nome anche al narratore e al protagonista del *Tesoretto*, lui introduce il lettore a una complessa rappresentazione di se stesso, che investe sia la realtà all'interno del poema che quella all'esterno. Lo conosciamo da aspetti vari come figura storica e anche poeta.<sup>19</sup>

Questa costruzione tende a presentare al lettore un alter-ego fittizio e multistrato. Il processo della rappresentazione è sotto controllo, ed è ben manipolato dall'autore. L'auto-rappresentazione programmata nel testo determina più aspetti della sua strategia letteraria e mette al centro l'intenzione artistica e lo sforzo poetico dell'autore.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> La critica più dura nei confronti del mediocre poeta si trova nell'opera di Vossler. K. Vossler, *Medieval Culture: An Introduction to Dante and His Times*, trans. W. C. LAWTON (New York: Ungar, 1958).

<sup>17</sup> L. F. Benedetto, *Il Roman de la Rose e la letteratura italiana* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1910), 100.

<sup>18</sup> H. R. Jauss, „Brunetto Latini, poeta allegorico,” in *Alterità e modernità della letteratura medievale*, ed. H. R. Jauss (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1989).

<sup>19</sup> Vedi l'introduzione di Holloway. J. B. Holloway, *Twice-Told Tales. Brunetto Latino and Dante Alighieri* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> Per certi aspetti e punti di vista vedi: E. Sayiner, „Brunetto in the Tesoretto” (conferenza: La città e il libro, il manoscritto e la miniatura, Firenze e Spagna, Accademia delle arti del disegno, 4-7 settembre 2002.) <http://www.florin.ms/beth2a.html#sayiner> 13.02.2015.

Nelle varie parti del poema la voce del narratore cambia. Prima, nella dedica al Valente Signore (*Tesoretto*, vv. 1-114.), la voce di Brunetto chiede sostegno per il poeta e raccomanda al Signore il poema. Poi, all'inizio della narrazione, il narratore introduce le circostanze politiche e storiche dell'esilio di Brunetto (*Tesoretto*, vv. 114-185.). Tuttavia, quando il viaggio allegorico comincia, la centralità del narratore diventa sempre più debole, poi costui scompare e la voce dell'autore si identifica con quella delle personificazioni che Brunetto incontra. Il protagonista cede il suo ruolo dominante a una serie di insegnanti che svelano al protagonista Brunetto la sapienza che Brunetto l'autore vuole rivelare ai lettori. Così la voce dell'autore è identificata con uno scopo didattico con quella dei suoi maestri.<sup>21</sup> La voce individuale di Brunetto appare di nuovo nel giardino dell'Amore, dove l'esperienza emozionale del poeta diviene esemplare. Sia la tradizione lirica che quella didattica usa l' 'io' per rappresentare l'amore. L'identità del poeta si trova di nuovo al centro dell'attenzione perché l'esperienza personale è essenziale per la rappresentazione e per la spiegazione degli avvenimenti dell'amore.

Anche quando la voce di Brunetto è più costante, troviamo notevoli variazioni. Nella dedica del poema, la voce del poeta è molto vicina al personaggio storico. La dedica può essere divisa in due parti: i versi 1-69 lodano il Signore mentre i versi 71-112 gli raccomandano il poema. Chiaramente la dedica è un omaggio che ha l'intento di chiedere supporto finanziario. Ma se osserviamo attentamente questa prefazione, possiamo vedere che Brunetto sovverte il rapporto tradizionale di autorità e potere all'interno del testo. Questo cambio di prospettiva è presente dal verso 70, dove l'autore si nomina: „Come oro fino / Io brunetto latino” (*Tesoretto*, vv. 69-70). Nel primo verso la parola 'fino' descrive il signore, che è identificato con l'oro per il suo valore morale e anche per la sua ricchezza. Il secondo verso introduce l'identità del poeta con grande forza, occupando l'intero verso e creando un radicale contrasto o un'alternativa a quella del Signore. La ricchezza del poeta deriva dallo straordinario valore intellettuale e morale del poema, visto che ha un prestigio particolare per la sua utilità didattica: in questo senso il poema è un „tesoretto”. È vero che il Signore ha una ricchezza terrena, ma il poeta possiede la ricchezza intellettuale e morale della sapienza e della conoscenza che lo rende capace di accedere al Signore, condividendo con lui il suo piccolo tesoro.

L'autore rafforza anche la sua posizione usando dei riferimenti biblici. Quando parla dell'opposizione tra tesori terrestri e tesori celesti, fa riferimento ad un passo del Vangelo (Matteo 6,19-20<sup>22</sup>) in cui Gesù ammonisce di cercare le ricchezze celesti e non quelle terrestri, che sono caduche. In questo passo del suo poema, Brunetto modifica il

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<sup>21</sup> Cfr. R. Librandi, „La didattica fondante di Brunetto Latini: una lettura del *Tesoretto*,” *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales et Humanistes, Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 23 (2012): 155-172.

<sup>22</sup> La Sacra Bibbia, <http://www.laparola.net/> 03.02.2015.

significato del passo di Matteo. Infatti Matteo parla della fede mentre Brunetto intende l'incorruttibile ricchezza del sapere, cioè l'incorruttibile ricchezza di ciò che è presentato nel *Tesoretto*.

Un secondo esempio in cui Brunetto usa il testo evangelico per avvalorare il suo testo poetico si trova nei versi 93-98. Nel passo di Matteo, Gesù descrive una luce sotto un moggio (Matteo 5,15-16<sup>23</sup>). Gesù dice che la fede dovrebbe esser chiara ed evidente come una candela e non nascosta come una candela sotto un moggio. Anche qui, Brunetto manipola il significato del testo biblico. Per lui la luce della candela non è la fede, ma la conoscenza offerta nel *Tesoretto*. Questa sovrapposizione tra la fede e la conoscenza di Brunetto, e fra il Vangelo e il poema, investe di nuovo il testo di una autorità superiore e ne indica il valore particolare.

Dopo la conclusione della dedica, l' 'lo' di Brunetto cambia di nuovo quando comincia a narrare il viaggio. Nei versi 114-162, il poeta racconta i fatti di Firenze e della Toscana: dal panorama storico e politico raggiungiamo la sua storia personale, e parla anche del suo esilio. La voce del narratore diventa con forza una prima persona autobiografica, atipica in questa forma nelle narrative poetiche delle opere allegorico-didattiche. Anche se le informazioni su Firenze sono storicamente abbastanza corrette, la maggior parte dei dati storici e autobiografici appartiene alla dimensione narrativa. Anzi, la narrazione del viaggio e gli incontri allegorici di Brunetto nascono direttamente dall'episodio dell'esilio.

Secondo la bibliografia specialistica, di solito nei viaggi allegorico-didattici medievali il materiale autobiografico dà un senso di autenticità e universalità alla narrazione. Segre parla addirittura di pseudoautobiografia, perché tradizionalmente il materiale è minimo e spesso fittizio.<sup>24</sup> Nel caso di Brunetto, invece, il materiale è corretto e relativamente esteso. Questo rende il suo testo meno convenzionale e più pragmatico, da un lato dà al poema un senso di autenticità e così si ricollega alla tradizione allegorico-didattica; dall'altro, lo investe di una dimensione storica, politica e personale molto forte. Questo aspetto ridefinisce la figura storica dell'autore nella percezione del lettore.

Il riferimento a Roncisvalle è un chiaro esempio di come Brunetto manipoli la percezione del lettore.<sup>25</sup> Brunetto racconta che il suo protagonista è a Roncisvalle quando viene a sapere del suo esilio (*Tesoretto*, vv. 145-147; 155-162). Gli storici non sanno precisamente neanche adesso come Brunetto abbia saputo del suo esilio. Il *Tesoretto*, invece, dice al lettore che ha ricevuto la notizia da uno scolaro di Bologna. I biografi possiedono invece una lettera scritta dal padre di Brunetto che lo informa del

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<sup>23</sup> La Sacra Bibbia, <http://www.laparola.net/> 03.02.2015.

<sup>24</sup> C. Segre, *La prosa del Duecento* (Milano-Napoli: Ricciardi, 1959).

<sup>25</sup> Cfr. E. Costa, „Il Tesoretto di Brunetto Latini e la tradizione allegorica medievale,” in *Dante e le forme dell'allegoresi*, a cura di M. Picone (Ravenna 1987), 52.

fatto.<sup>26</sup> Questa scena raccontata nel poema allora ha un significato molto importante. Il lettore medievale, sentendo di Roncisvalle, pensa subito alla storia di Rolando e della sua morte eroica. Quindi, Brunetto costituisce un parallelo tra i paladini a Roncisvalle e i guelfi a Montaperti. Presenta i guelfi traditi come paladini, e la lotta tra i guelfi e i ghibellini non è più una guerra civile per il controllo della città ma una crociata per difendere la cristianità e la Chiesa. Questo passo così diventa un'interpretazione politica, un'affermazione quasi propagandistica con cui si riscrive anche la storia personale di Brunetto. Lui diventa un eroe tradito e ingiustamente punito. Da questa rappresentazione risulta che il lettore, accettando l'autorappresentazione che Brunetto dà di sé, debba unirsi a Brunetto nella sua lotta e sostenerlo nella sua disgrazia.<sup>27</sup>

Dopo aver analizzato come Brunetto rappresenta se stesso nella dedica e nei passi autobiografici, è indispensabile osservare anche la sua autorappresentazione nel contesto letterario e allegorico. Dopo il passo autobiografico cambia il modo narrativo, che diviene più strettamente letterario. Quando Brunetto apprende del suo esilio, sente un profondo dolore e perde la via. Durante il suo vagare incontra la Natura (*Tesoretto*, vv.180-187). Questa parte del poema è marcata dall'influenza della *De consolatione philosophiae* di Boezio.<sup>28</sup> Brunetto rappresenta l'esperienza del suo protagonista in maniera simile a quella del personaggio di Boezio. Entrambi sono ingiustamente puniti per motivi politici, pur essendo uomini virtuosi. Entrambi sono descritti come politici di professione e filosofi che si dedicano alla produzione didattica. All'interno del testo, i protagonisti sperimentano vari incontri allegorici che esplorano fra l'altro i temi della Fortuna e della Virtù. Latini rappresenta la sua disgrazia personale come il punto di partenza della sua esperienza didattica. L'esilio è un'esperienza rilevante che gli offre una comprensione della realtà filosofica e morale che poi può condividere con il lettore nel poema. A questo punto, dobbiamo sottolineare l'importanza del concetto di 'comunità'. Brunetto, come Dante, ha un continuo bisogno di essere in relazione con la città che ha abbandonato. Attraverso il poema, l'esiliato ritorna nella propria città. Ciò è molto importante per lui, perché la città rimane per sempre il centro morale, politico e intellettuale per il poeta.

Brunetto ha più scopi con la scrittura del poema. Prima di tutto, vuole presentarsi ai lettori come un maestro di grande prestigio, come una figura intellettuale europea; inoltre, vuole che i lettori lo vedano come un martire e d'un uomo ingiustamente perseguitato; forse spera che qualcuno tra questi sosterrà lo sfortunato poeta e

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<sup>26</sup> Vedi: R. Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze*, II. trans. G. B. Klein (Firenze: Sansoni, 1957). 2. Holloway, invece, ha dubbi sull'autenticità della lettera. J. B. Holloway, *Brunetto Latini. An analytic bibliography* (London 1986), 67.

<sup>27</sup> Cfr. Benedetto, *Il Roman de la Rose e la letteratura italiana*, 91.

<sup>28</sup> Jauss, *Brunetto Latini, poeta allegorico*, 152-154.

vendicherà in qualche modo questa ingiustizia. Così, il povero intellettuale potrebbe ritornare nella sua patria.

In realtà, noi conosciamo anche la fine della sua storia: Brunetto l'autore, grazie alla sua autorità letteraria e filosofica, entrerà a far parte della corte di Carlo D'Angiò<sup>29</sup> e, grazie a lui, pochi anni dopo la composizione del *Tesoretto*, Brunetto, ammirato, rispettato e potente, ritornerà a Firenze.

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<sup>29</sup> Sul rapporto fra loro vedi: Davidson, *Storia di Firenze*, 103.

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## Texte et image : L'imagination et images matérielles, dynamiques dans les écrits de Rina Lasnier

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L'origine de l'univers fait partie intégrante et constante de la pensée humaine. Il y a un assez grand nombre de théories diverses concernant la cosmogonie du Monde. Dans le cadre de la philosophie naturelle, la théorie des quatre éléments présente une façon traditionnelle de décrire et d'analyser le monde. Les philosophes présocratiques ont imaginé une essence première en toute chose. Empédocle, au début du V<sup>e</sup> siècle avant notre ère, admit que les quatre éléments réunis composaient l'univers. Ainsi, ce sont les quatre éléments primordiaux (Air, Eau, Feu, Terre) qui naissent et s'animent après le chaos primordial inerte. Leur rencontre et mélange donnent la vie. Tout l'univers ainsi que l'être est composé, créé, fait à partir et avec ce quatuor créateur. C'est pourquoi il faut tenir compte de leur emprise ineffaçable, archétypale qui est, croyons-nous, enracinée constamment dans la psyché humaine.

En fait, leurs traces se retrouvent partout, surtout dans le domaine de l'art: peinture, sculpture, musique, littérature. Comme s'ils menaient, dirigeaient, éveillaient l'esprit créateur d'une force étonnante. Ainsi, nous allons analyser les images dynamiques des éléments de Rina Lasnier, poétesse canadienne. Effectivement, la production littéraire poétique lasnienne est abondante en images des éléments. Nous n'hésitons pas à affirmer que sa création semble être « pluri-élémentaire ». Ce qui nous intéresse dans ce travail, ce sont leur constitution et leur mobilité grâce auxquelles ces images fonctionnent et persistent dans la création artistique.

### Poésie et arts

La place de la poésie parmi les arts est éminente. Selon Maritain, la poésie est une connaissance, sans parallèle, dans la raison logique, par laquelle les choses et le soi sont saisis ensemble. La connaissance par connaturalité poétique est spécifiquement affective : le poète dit la transparence de l'âme par les aspirations de son propre cœur qui fluent dans l'allongée des syllabes. Tout comme saint Jean de la Croix invite à se rendre : « *au mont où l'eau plus pure sourd, au bois plus épais et plus sourd* »<sup>1</sup>. C'est dans l'essence que la poésie jouxte l'expérience mystique. Dans celle-ci l'amour

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<sup>1</sup>Barthes, Claude, *Poésie et mystique* (St. Jules : Éditions de Paris, 2006), 11.

devient le moyen de la saisie objective de la réalité dévoilée et contemplée, cependant que l'émotion joue un rôle analogue dans l'expérience poétique. D'ailleurs, l'une et l'autre expérience supposent une espèce de sommeil de l'âme, une sorte de rêve qui rend plus aigu la sensibilité de l'état de veille, et qui n'a rien d'une brumeuse léthargie de l'intelligence chez l'artiste, chez l'auditeur ou le lecteur: l'émotion esthétique ébranle la sensibilité souverainement intellectuelle et suprêmement active, mémorielle, critique, comparative, réflexive. Une telle esthétique coopère avec la source archétypale inhérente à l'inconscience collective qui se déploie par l'intermédiaire des images matérielles et dynamiques.

#### Poésie de Rina Lasnier

Abordons plus en détail l'esthétique de la poésie de Rina Lasnier. Celle-ci prend naissance dans l'image ; tout à fait comme « *un diamant que l'on fait pivoter chaudement jusqu'à la lumière de l'éclair* »<sup>2</sup>. La poésie lasniéenne livre la lumière à la contemplation et à la musique que le rythme des images dégage. Du souple vers des *Escapes* à l'ampleur des versets du *Chant de la montée*, la prosodie de Lasnier s'astreint à épouser le souffle créateur. Enfin, l'un des facteurs premiers de l'art du poète : langue. L'auteure sait manier avec adresse un vocabulaire aussi vaste que précis ; il a l'éclat des cuivres et la discrétion de l'eau. Le mot vient toujours à propos, et le plus grand naturel préside au déliement de la parole, lié au déliement de l'imagination matérielle qui s'abreuve des archétypes collectifs.

L'œuvre de la poétesse, éblouissante par la diversité de ses thèmes et de ses tons, des plus limpides aux plus heurtés, ouvre effectivement d'abord l'espace du cosmos et retrouve le temps des origines et les mythes du commencement. D'où la présence des éléments primordiaux dans l'imaginaire sacré de l'auteure. Sa poésie libère l'espace du Moi, le mystère du cœur de l'homme communiquant aux sources vivantes des images vitales.

Essayons maintenant de définir l'univers poétique des *Escapes* dont « *le choix du poète veut que tout ce qui n'est pas essentiel soit mensonge.* »<sup>3</sup> Comment une telle exigence essentialiste se reflète-t-elle à travers les images matérielles, dynamiques?

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<sup>2</sup> Marcel, Jean, *Rina Lasnier. Textes choisis et présentés par Jean Marcel* (Ottawa : Fides, 1964), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Lasnier, Rina, *Poèmes I* (Montréal: Fides, 1972), 18.

### Images littéraires poétiques

Quant aux images matérielles, soulignons les données générales. En effet, les forces imaginantes de notre esprit se développent sur deux axes particuliers. Les unes travaillent le pittoresque, la variété, l'inattendu. C'est le cas de l'imagination formelle qui donne vie à la forme simple. Le vocable principal qui correspond à ce type de l'imagination est la perception, en tant que souvenir d'une perception des couleurs et des formes. Ces images perdent leur poids imaginaire.

Par contre, les vraies forces imaginantes creusent le fond de l'être ; « *elles veulent trouver dans l'être, à la fois, le primitif et l'éternel.* »<sup>4</sup> Ces forces produisent des germes dont la forme est déjà interne dans sa substance. Elles donnent vie à la matière profonde. Il s'agit donc de l'imagination matérielle qui crée des images directes de la matière, que la vue et la main perçoivent. En plus de la constitution de telles images, il faut s'occuper en même temps de leur dynamique. Effectivement, l'imagination est le type de la mobilité spirituelle la plus grande, la plus vive. Il est nécessaire donc d'ajouter systématiquement à l'étude d'une image particulière l'étude de sa mobilité, de sa productivité.

### Escales

L'œuvre de Lasnier est riche en ces productions poétiques matérielles et dynamiques. Or, quelle est la nature du recueil *Escales*?

De tous les recueils de Rina Lasnier, *Escales* est le seul dont le titre comporte un seul mot. Cette absence de déterminatif pourrait nous inciter à le lire comme une sorte de « signe » indicatif dans le cheminement de l'œuvre, ou encore comme une sommation « *de l'arrêt, l'annonce d'une descente à terre.* »<sup>5</sup> En outre, le champ sémantique du mot « escales » recèle l'idée de passage, de séjour temporaire, de nomadisme. On a voulu voir dans ce recueil le thème nouveau de la création de Lasnier. Or ce thème qui en fait l'unité n'a vraiment jamais cessé d'être présent chez l'auteure, à savoir « *la difficulté de lier la terre au ciel, de consentir au poids de la chair, alors que l'âme aspire au voyage radieux.* »<sup>6</sup> Parmi les symboles préférés et les plus fréquents de Lasnier mentionnons l'oiseau, l'arbre, la neige, qui de diverses manières, expriment la tension entre l'azuréen du ciel et le terrestre, l'ordre du rêve et de la

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<sup>4</sup> Bachelard, Gaston, *L'eau et les rêves* (Paris : José Corti, 1942), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Malenfant Chanel. « Le figuier maudit, Escales : l'arbre dans le paysage thématique de Rina Lasnier ». *Voix et Images du pays*. no1, vol. 9 (1975) : 114. <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/600299ar>.

<sup>6</sup> Makward Christiane et Cottenet-Hage Madelaine, *Dictionnaire littéraire des femmes de langue française* (Paris : Karthala-ACCT, 1996), 358.

pureté et l'ordre de l'incarnation et de l'enracinement. Il n'est pas donc surprenant que les éléments occupent une place importante dans cet espace poétique élémentaire s'étendant entre le ciel et la terre.

Abordons la composition du recueil qui témoigne d'une préférence thématique. En fait, *Escapes* contient une centaine de poèmes de longueur diverse. Selon les titres poétiques nous proposons de ranger les unités poétiques en groupes thématiques suivants: le plus vaste groupe naturel lié à l'invocation de la nature (de la faune, de la flore, des phénomènes naturels) est celui où les éléments occupent une position assez importante: *L'Arbre, L'Ange de la mer, Au bord de l'eau, Les Fleurs marines...terriennes...et aériennes, La mer, Marées, Pétales blanches... Lilas, Le Palmier, Le Vent, La Citrouille, La Pluie, La Forêt brûle..., Mer et ... fleuves, Îles, Limon, etc.* Ensuite il y a un groupe émotif, décrivant les sentiments, voire les qualités humaines : *Baiser, Jalousie, Remous, Passion, La Pitié, ...Effroi, Si tu sais..., Innocence, etc.* Un autre groupe, « visuel », évoque les instances de la lumière, de la nuit : *Nocturne, Le Voile noir, Aube, Ombre du nu, Intérieur, Soleil...Aveugle, Nuit...et jour, Les Deux aveugles, Les Oiseaux, le soir, Regards, La Fenêtre déchirée.* Il ne faut pas non plus omettre un groupe « intertextuel » lié à l'invocation des personnages clés – *Ève, Psyché.* Enfin, tout le recueil est introduit par le poème, dont la position est éminente dans l'ensemble du recueil, « *Escapes* ».

Imagination dynamique et « *Escapes* »

Analysons maintenant le poème qui manifeste le mieux l'essence poétique. « *Escapes* », un assez long poème, est composé de deux sous-unités poétiques écrites en vers libre, ou en alexandrin, qui décrivent les étapes de l'ascension onirique de la poétesse – l'abandon, la résignation, la quête, la découverte des « îles » célestes. Ce poème incarne la thématique de la tension du passage de la Terre aux hauteurs du royaume divin des Cieux, d'où les étapes en question. De plus, ce poème donne une leçon de l'onirisme dynamique – le rêve de vol qui laisse, dans la pensée de veille, des traces profondes. Ces traces « *expliquent le destin de certains poétiques.* »<sup>7</sup> Par exemple, les séries très longues d'images se révéleront dans leur propre prolifération exacte et régulière si nous découvrons le rêve de vol qui leur donne l'impulsion première. En fait, l'étude de l'imagination aérienne du rêve de vol permet de déceler ce qu'il y a de concret et d'universel dans les poèmes obscurs et évasifs, tels qu'« *Escapes* ». De plus, ce poème travaille l'image préférée de l'imagination aérienne, l'oiseau qui assume le rôle principal.

Les images, travaillées par les forces dynamiques, suggèrent le thème principal du poème – la montée imaginaire qui incarne la synthèse des impressions dynamiques des images. Analysons ainsi une impression dynamique et aérienne qui travaille la

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<sup>7</sup> Bachelard Gaston, *L'air et les songes* (Paris : José Corti, 1994), 22.

notion nocturne, le règne des divinités, des vents ainsi que l'harmonie du rêve de vol et la poétique des ailes :

Le cœur angélicisé par les aubes natales A  
 Et les vents mêlés aux gémissements des dieux, B  
 - O dieux ! toutes vos solitudes musicales C  
 Soupirées au cœur de l'oiseau cimé de bleu ! D  
 J'ai cherché l'île [...] E  
 Et le murmure d'amour dont frémit la mer nuptiale F  
 Autour de Vénus plus parfaite que le jour...<sup>8</sup> G

Cette impression du moi volant décrit l'effet angélisant du vol onirique qui fait ressusciter, avec chaque aube, le cœur de l'être en état de veille (cf. « le cœur angélicisé par les aubes natales »). Or, c'est avant tout la puissance des vents mêlés aux gémissements des dieux qui font renaître l'être. C'est donc vers les dieux, vers leur royaume, vers leur île divine, que le double vole dans son rêve. L'aptitude de l'être éveillé aux dieux, à toutes leurs solitudes musicales, touche au principe de l'harmonie du rêve de vol, tout comme à la symbolique de l'oiseau. En fait, le mouvement qu'on vit totalement par l'imagination s'accompagne aisément d'une musique imaginaire. Le grand mouvement céleste rend « *une harmonie divine*. »<sup>9</sup> L'extrait donc rappelle cette harmonie directe qui surgit d'une animation de l'imagination dynamique, de l'ascension verticale. Rina Lasnier associe l'harmonie à la nuit onirique, à son représentant préféré, l'oiseau. Ce messager divin est apte à exprimer l'harmonie des Dieux absents.

En général, l'oiseau est recherché par l'imagination dynamique, non pour ses couleurs brillantes, mais pour le vol, qui est pour cette imagination « *une beauté première* »<sup>10</sup>. En fait, on ne voit pas la beauté du plumage que lorsque l'oiseau se pose sur terre. Il y a ainsi une dialectique imaginaire qui sépare le vol et la couleur, le mouvement et la parure. Dans le règne de l'imagination, le vol doit créer sa propre couleur. Le plus souvent, « *il est bleu ou il est noir, il monte ou il descend* ». <sup>11</sup> D'où l'oiseau « cimé » de bleu qui évoque l'ascension onirique. Quant à la forme adjectivale néologique du mot « cime » - « cimé », nous proposons de souligner le caractère divin, la divinisation. Effectivement, « cimes » au pluriel désignent les divinités habitant l'île flottante des cieux.

<sup>8</sup> Lasnier, *Poèmes I*, 157.

<sup>9</sup> Bachelard, *L'Air et les songes*, 61.

<sup>10</sup> Bachelard, *L'Air et les songes*, 80.

<sup>11</sup> Bachelard, *L'Air et les songes*, 80.

Quant à la destination du vol, l'être rêvant est porté vers cette île qui réunit symboliquement les Dieux, les Vents tout comme la beauté divine. Rappelons l'histoire des Vents mythologiques. En fait, leur maître Éole règne sur ses tumultueux sujets, enfermés dans une caverne de l'île d'Éolia dont la répercussion se reflète dans le vers E. Ce sont de telles îles que l'être rêvant cherche. C'est dans ces îles que les Vents apportent l'harmonie, le murmure des amours divins (cf. le vers F- « et le murmure d'amour »). L'idée de l'amour céleste est développée dans la vision imaginaire de « *la mer nuptiale* » frémissant du murmure amoureux. La mer nuptiale est située autour de Vénus, autour de l'incarnation de la beauté et de la grâce universelles, autour de la Fille du Ciel et de la Mer (cf. Vénus), ce qui a pour l'effet l'amplification de la force de l'amour, de la beauté divine. Vénus donc représente la liaison du Ciel et de la Mer, des Dieux et du terrestre. De plus, la perfection de l'instance de la beauté est encore amplifiée, elle est « *plus parfaite que le jour* ». Une telle qualité donne l'impression d'une beauté idéale et suprême.

Or, sous cette image dynamique des îles aériennes se cache en même temps l'image des îles suspendues. Le pays de l'élection, pour la poétique de Lasnier, est une île suspendue entre le Ciel, la Terre et la Mer, bercée dans la limpide beauté divine. Dans l'infini des hauteurs, des altitudes « *plus aiguës que la flèche* », l'être rêvant, habite des îles. C'est la nuit qui berce l'homme et l'emporte vers ces îles divines qui sont au ciel. Ce sont les îles qui partagent les idées idéales platoniciennes dont la réalité et la vie sont plus réelles que les terrestres. D'où l'idéalité des images aériennes. Effectivement, la vie aérienne est la vie réelle; au contraire la vie terrestre est pour l'être rêvant une vie imaginaire, une vie fugitive et lointaine. La terre, à nouveau réduite à l'état de veille, n'est ainsi « *plus qu'une liesse lointaine et sans parole.* »<sup>12</sup> La véritable patrie de la vie est le ciel avec ses îles, car selon Bachelard « *les nourritures du monde sont les souffles et les parfums* »<sup>13</sup>. De telles nourritures sont recherchées par le moi en rêve dans les vers suivants :

J'ai cherché le chanteur des îles ; toi seul, Olen  
Dont la narine enflée d'arômes diffus  
Leur imposait le divin contour du chant  
Comme à mes désirs le cri d'amour absolu!<sup>14</sup>

L'extrait décrit la quête des vraies nourritures de l'être du monde qui cherche l'harmonie du chant de l'amour divin, transmise par le chanteur qui touche à la perfection suprême. D'où sa capacité surnaturelle d'imposer aux parfums diffus le

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<sup>12</sup> Lasnier, *Poèmes I*, 159.

<sup>13</sup> Bachelard, *L'air et les songes*, 57.

<sup>14</sup> Lasnier, *Poèmes I*, 159.

contour du chant absolu. La qualité diffuse des arômes laisse deviner le jaillissement aromatique qui reçoit le contour divin. Ainsi, les parfums deviennent les composantes idéales, plus vraies, des îles célestes. Ce passage poétique, travaillant les impressions auditives et olfactives, souligne l'idéalisation de la réalité aérienne.

La surévaluation aérienne est illustrée dans un autre extrait décrivant d'autres qualités extraordinaires des îles des rêves :

Olen, chanteur des îles et des battures fécondes,  
J'ai entendu le cri de mon Goéland Noir,  
C'est vers cette île à la dérive des mondes  
Que j'ai élargirai mon âme jusqu'au soir!<sup>15</sup>

Cet extrait achève la première partie de ce poème aérien. L'être rêvant s'adresse au chanteur du divin (Olen), il chante les battures fécondes. Cette épithète évoque la fécondité, la prolifération des îles des cieux. La reprise du complément du nom (cf. « chanteur des ») devant « battures » lie les îles aux battures. De plus, « battures » évoque la liaison de l'élément de la terre et de l'eau. Ainsi, la présence des battures dans ce poème représente les battures de l'île des cieux, « à la dérive des mondes », vers laquelle l'âme de l'être rêvant « s'élargira jusqu'au soir ». La rêverie nocturne donc envahit la vie diurne. C'est pourquoi la mémoire de l'âme à l'état de veille reste toujours liée à la vraie réalité des îles aux cieux jusqu'au prochain voyage onirique du soir suivant. N'oublions pas que l'oiseau noir traduit pour l'imagination dynamique la descente onirique vers la terre. C'est donc le cri de l'oiseau noir, Goéland, qui annonce le réveil, la descente dans la réalité précaire. De plus, les majuscules de « Noir » et de « Goéland » mettent accent sur la personnification de cette instance poétique.

#### Achèvement de l'ascension onirique

Les derniers vers de la seconde partie du cycle poétique atteint le point culminant de l'histoire de l'ascension onirique. L'âme du moi rêvant résume son destin ambivalent de la vie diurne/nocturne.

Je m'étais couché sous les océans du vent A  
[...] Pourquoi m'as-tu apprivoisée sous ta prunelle B  
Conjuguant en moi les angoisses antérieures C  
Et les effrois des nuits dissoutes sous mes ailes; D  
Pourquoi m'as-tu rendue vivante à mon cœur ?<sup>16</sup> E

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<sup>15</sup> Lasnier, *Poèmes I*, 158.

L'âme regrette, éprouve de la peine, du déplaisir profond au souvenir de la perte du royaume onirique, situé « sous les océans du vent ». Le premier vers (cf. A) témoigne de la continuité de l'imagination dynamique de l'eau et de l'air. Ainsi, l'activité onirique – « se coucher sous les océans du vent » - traduit la maternité des eaux berçantes. Dans l'imagination aquatique l'eau symbolise l'élément maternel qui enlève, berce l'être en le portant vers sa mère. L'imagination aérienne reprend ce motif. Elle rend les océans aériens du vent aptes à bercer l'âme en la portant vers son principe créateur - « Dieu/mère » ancré dans l'île des cieux oniriques. L'être rêvant se trouve déchiré, entre l'état illusoire du jour et l'état réel de la nuit. L'âme en veut à son Goéland noir qui l'a apprivoisée, séduite, familiarisée, sous sa prunelle, avec toutes les souffrances dues à la vie ambivalente des « jour/nuit ». Le regard, lié à la prunelle de Goéland, incarne en soi les angoisses antérieures des jours qui précèdent un autre voyage nocturne ; ainsi que les effrois des nuits oniriques. L'âme ressent les effrois des nuits parce que les aventures du vol nocturne ne sont qu'éphémères.

De plus, l'image poétique « des nuits dissoutes » marque la matérialisation aquatique de la nuit qui devient une matière nocturne dont le caractère dissous évoque un liquide nocturne. De toute façon, l'âme sait que l'aube met fin à tout. Elle se lamente sur son destin précaire. C'est pourquoi elle accuse Goéland noir : « Pourquoi m'as-tu rendue vivante à mon cœur ? ». Ainsi, le poème atteint son point culminant. L'âme ne veut pas être rendue vivante à son être, à son cœur. Elle veut rester dans son royaume des îles des cieux. Or, l'aube arrive :

Reprenons le voyage icarien et radieux  
Toujours puni de gloire et comblé de douleur  
Que notre aile brûlée de nouvelles profondeurs  
Referme sur soi la blessure des dieux ...<sup>17</sup>

Ce dernier passage, qui fait allusion à la matière mythologique d'Icare, apporte la paix et le réconfort final à l'âme. Celle-ci invite, dans l'espoir d'une autre aventure nocturne, à reprendre « *le voyage icarien et radieux* ». Les épithètes « *icarien* » et « *radieux* », ainsi que les unités poétiques « *aile brûlée* », « *blessure des dieux* » touchent à l'histoire mythologique d'Icare qui est connu principalement pour être mort après avoir volé trop près du Soleil. L'âme est ainsi consciente de tous les dangers qu'un tel voyage radieux et icarien apporte, d'où l'épithète du voyage « *puni de gloire et comblé de douleur*. » En fait, même le vol a apporté à Icare la gloire et la douleur de la mort.

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<sup>16</sup> Lasnier, *Poèmes I*, 159.

<sup>17</sup> Lasnier, *Poèmes I*, 160.

Or, en dépit des dangers, l'âme souhaite reprendre une nouvelle aventure du vol onirique, d'où les nouvelles profondeurs de l'aile brûlée de blessures que les Dieux adressent aux hommes. En fait, elle se rend compte des effets salutaires du vol onirique. Comme si les voyages vers les îles divines renfermaient en eux toutes les souffrances, les blessures que les Dieux adressent aux hommes. Finalement, nous croyons que l'ascension directe du rêve de vol purifie l'âme de toutes les blessures des profondeurs terrestres.

### Conclusion

Le texte analysé offre une belle leçon de l'imagination dynamique et matérielle de Rina Lasnier. L'analyse a tenté de montrer qu'une montée imaginaire, telle que dans le poème « Escales », est une synthèse d'impressions dynamiques des images. Le poème invite à suivre un rêve de vol céleste, un voyage imaginaire. Par cette invitation, le lecteur reçoit en lui, en son intime, une douce poussée qui ébranle et qui met en marche une rêverie salutaire, dynamique. En fait, si l'image initiale est bien choisie, elle se révèle comme une impulsion à un rêve poétique bien défini, à une vue imaginante. Les images du recueil *Escales* mises en série par l'invitation au voyage acquièrent dans leur ordre bien choisi une vivacité spéciale qui nous permet de retracer le mouvement de l'imagination. Le lecteur éprouve ce mouvement en lui-même, le plus souvent comme un allègement, comme une aisance à imaginer des images annexes, comme une ardeur à poursuivre le rêve enchanteur du recueil. « Escales », ce beau poème, produit une induction dynamique. Un tel voyage de l'imagination est un voyage au pays de l'imaginaire lasniéen, dont nous avons analysé l'immanence et l'homogénéité.

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## Metaphors in the Narrator's Speech in Novels by Michel Noël

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The literature written by members of some minorities is recently popular not only in the countries proud of their policy of multiculturalism like Canada but all over the world. Michel Noël fits perfectly in this category as he is partly a native American. He treats the topic of mixed identity in his novels for teenage readers where a half-blood child character connects an aboriginal and non-aboriginal world vision. The following text will focus on one of the differences between these two worlds which is a figurativeness of the language spoken by a native narrator. The basic statement that the Indian language is poetic, comes directly from the novel *Nipishish* by Michel Noël. Is this premise relevant? Despite the fact that the novel is written in French, is it possible to find some traces of Algonquian language in the narrator's speech?

Pictures in the text...

It is a white man who comes up with the idea that the „Indian language“ is poetic. The narrator, called Nipishish, travels with a lawyer by bus and they discuss Indian names. Due to that discussion, the lawyer says that the Indian language is figurative and poetic. Let us explain where that idea of poetic language comes from. The white man and the narrator start their communication by introducing each other and the white man asks Nipishish what his name means in his language. The narrator answers that it means “small water”. And here comes the misunderstanding. The lawyer supposes that the name is composed of two words Nipi and Chiche as his own name Michel Létourneau. He thinks that one word means “water” and the other “small”. In this case, it sounds really poetic. But the reality is much more complicated. Algonquin is a polysynthetic language, which means that it is based on the composition of several morphemes in complex units. The basic morpheme is in reality “nipi” (written also as “nibi”) which means the water. The joined morpheme “shish” specifies the quality of the basic morpheme. The point is that it is not a metaphor with the purpose of creating an ambiance of poetry. It is a common type of word formation. Let us prove it on the current word “a telephone” which is giigaadoobii’aapikonhs in Algonquin. The basis of the word is the morpheme “giigaadoo” which means “to speak”. The second part “bii’aapik” stands for metallic things, for example a wire. “Onhs” is a common diminutive ending that indicates a small size. So literally said giigaadoobii’aapikonhs

means a small speaking wire. In English and in French this translation appears poetic or even naively cute. However, it is a common way of creating a neologism in Algonquin. In conclusion, the Indian language is not poetic in the way the lawyer Michel Létourneau understands it because its imaginary poetry consists in its polysynthetic character.

Let us go back to the name “Nipishish”. When the narrator had been taken to a boarding school, the director of this school changed his name. He was called Pierre Larivière, which corresponds with his Algonquian name in the meaning of the water but it looks more “white”. Its meaning was more or less, however the name Larivière is not exceptional in French and nobody would claim that it is poetic. So why is the name Nipishish poetic and Larivière not? Is the white man able to make a relevant opinion on the language if he knows only one name? The lawyer Létourneau says that he likes Indians but at the same time he admits that he has never seen any real Indian and that his idea of the Indians comes from one single TV series. It is an exceptional experience for him to see a “real” Indian. He is amazed by his own naive idea of Indians so the Indian language also sounds probably poetic to him under the influence of that idealistic vision. However, the narrator accepts that particular statement a little bit later when he meets an unknown woman. He listens to her speech and he comes to a conclusion that she must be Indian because her speech is poetic. So the narrator uses this linguistic poetic element to define the difference between himself and white people. Why even the narrator agrees with his statement? Obviously, his mother tongue is not exotic to him. We will look for the answer in the imagery of the language, particularly in metaphors and comparisons.

Sapir and Whorf propose that the language we speak influences the way of our thinking. According to that theory, we should be able to find some traces of the narrator's mother tongue in his speech. We already described how the Algonquian language puts the morphemes one after another, which is typical of that language. We can find a corresponding procedure in the narrator's speech when he accumulates metaphors one after the other making complex pictures, describing the situation. For example when the narrator is arrested because he was drunk and he fought, he compares his behavior to the common animals' behavior:

Je suis ébloui par les lumières qui clignotent, projeté de tout mon long sur le plancher arrière de la voiture de police. Je me sens comme un chien dans une cage. J'essaie de me redresser, de m'asseoir, mais sans mes mains, je ne le peux pas. [...] Je rassemble toutes mes forces et, le cou tordu comme une bête enragée, je crie pour les écœurer [...] Qu'est-ce que j'ai fait? J'ai gueulé, hurlé comme une meute de loups. J'ai donné des coups de pied. [...] Là, je me suis déchaîné comme un ours pris au piège. (Noël, 140 and 141, highlights mine)

The dog, the wolf and the bear. The narrator creates a picture of himself as a cornered beast which fights for its own life. Another example of the complex picture is presented when the narrator thinks about freedom:

Moi qui veux être un homme autonome, un Indien fier, libre comme l'air, un homme qui ne dépend de personne d'autre que de lui même, je suis piégé. [...] Je me sens prisonnier d'une toile d'araignée. Serais-je un jour réduit, pour survivre, à attendre ce chèque maudit [...] L'argent qu'on nous donne ne fait que nous avilir davantage, nous asservir. Nous sommes comme des animaux domestiques sur une ferme. Nous dépendons du fermier qui chaque jour vient nous nourrir. Cette pensée me bouleverse. J'ai le cœur ratatiné, pris dans les griffes d'un aigle. [...] notre orgueil n'est pas éteint. Il couve dans notre sang comme la braise sous la taïga. Il suffirait qu'un bon matin le vent sec se lève pour que les tisons rougissent et que la nature s'embrasse. Et moi, je jure qu'à la première occasion, je serai ce vent. (Noël, 191, 192, highlights mine)

The Indians receive money from the Canadian government. Despite the fact that this money limits them in some way like a spider's web, they will not break it because it is still more comfortable to live from the government's money than to risk the traditional lifestyle, which means a risk of death from hunger every single winter. They feel like domestic animals that are used to farmer's everyday care. Wind and the air, however, are free, so they can get wherever they want and nothing can stop them. These can be a force which makes things move.

In both examples, the narrator uses many metaphors and comparisons together and he creates a complex picture illustrating reality. The specificity of that point of view lies in the fact that a human being is represented as a part of nature and not as somebody who is supposed to dominate it. This message corresponds to the Indian traditional world vision that assumes a human being to be equal with the other creatures, including stones, for example.

... make some system ...

As we already mentioned, the narrator's speech is rich in different kinds of metaphors and comparisons. We can find some examples typical of common French: «*Léger comme un chevreuil*» (Noël, 126). Other are frequently used in Indian culture: «*Nous sommes tenaces comme la tortue. Nous avançons lentement, mais nous irons loin.*»<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is a typical picture. The turtle can represent different functions in Native mythology. According to

(Noël, 168). The last part represents the original narrator's metaphors which reflect the Indian lifestyle. We are going to look for the traces of the narrator's mother tongue so we put aside the first group – the typical French comparisons, because we obviously cannot find the Indian language in it. We are going to treat the comparisons concerning native lifestyle and the original narrator's comparisons. Let us try to find some categories in it.

The following categorization seems to be appropriate:

- A) animals
- B) plants
- C) nature in general
  - 1) water
  - 2) wind/air
  - 3) stones

The biggest amount of examples falls into the first group - animals. The narrator uses comparisons involving either hunting or hunted animals: *«Ils me cernent comme une meute de loups dans un ravage d'original.»* (Noël, 109) ; *«Ils nous ont tendu un piège et nous sommes maintenant pris au collet comme des lièvres et plus nous tirons, plus nous étouffons.»* (Noël, 30). We can also find the imagery of relaxed or highly alerted animals: *«Elle s'est enfermée dans un profond silence, comme une marmotte qui somnole les yeux mi-clos.»* (Noël, 154); *«[...] le regard fixé au sol comme un renard qui a peur de se faire enlever la proie qu'il tient dans sa gueule.»* (Noël, 191). The narrator observes different degrees of relationship between the animals and people. It can be an accidental contact: *«[...] la tête basse et le regard fuyant comme celui des chiens qui se sentent coupables d'avoir volé un morceau de viande pendant que les chasseurs dépècent un original.»* (Noël, 29) – or a total dependence: *«Nous sommes comme des animaux domestiques sur une ferme. Nous dépendons du fermier qui chaque jour vient nous nourrir.»* (Noël, 191). The Canadian government is compared to the most evil animal of the Indian mythology – wolverine: *«le gouvernement est pareil au carcajou: on reconnaît ses traces, on sent son odeur, on est victime de ses méfaits, mais il est invisible, insaisissable. De plus, il a le pouvoir d'éviter tous les pièges.»* (Noël, 18).

The second group of is the category of plants. To be more precise, not plants in general, but trees. The narrator compares Indians to trees: *«Leurs corps sont comme les troncs des grandes épinettes noires profondément enracinés dans le sol et collés les uns aux autres.»* (Noël, 47). “Épinette noire” or the black spruce is the most typical

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some myths, it was a turtle who brought the grain of seed to a Great Spirit from the bottom of the water. The Great Spirit created the whole world out of that grain. Another myth says that the Great Spirit put the world on the back of the giant turtle. This animal is a symbol of a wisdom and serenity.

tree used in the comparisons. It is an extremely tough tree, typical of the Canadian climate. Thanks to its weatherproof character, this tree is particularly suitable to represent an analogy to the Indian capacity of resisting enemies. Similarly to the trees in the forest that are protected if they grow one close to another, the Indians can resist only if they stay together. This analogy can be observed in the scene where the Algonquins protect their sacred wood. For them, it is a cemetery in a way, but for the white people it is only a group of trees that they can sell. So the Algonquins protect the trees with their own bodies and Nipishish claims the following: «*Couper un arbre vivant, c'est tuer un Indien.*» (Noël, 233). We can interpret this statement in different ways. First, metaphorically speaking, it means a big loss. If we consider the spiritual function of small woods which play the same role in Indian culture as a cemetery in our culture, every single tree represents one dead ancestor as a tombstone in European culture. Consequently, to cut one tree means to destroy the memory of one particular ancestor. This is a really big loss for the Indians because their identity is based on the stories about their ancestors. Secondly, we can understand it literally: as the Algonquins protect the trees with their own bodies, there is a possibility that it will be possible to cut one tree only if the white people kill the Indian who protects it. Another parallel between the trees and Indians are roots because the Indians are joined to the land like trees. This is an advantage because it is almost impossible to deracinate them. On the other hand, it is a sort of limitation because like two trees standing on the opposite river banks that are unable to join their branches, Nipishish who is only half-blood Indian cannot exceed his possibilities and marry an Indian girl.

The metaphors including stones and rocks represent the stability and the elders or ancestors. The ground is a part of nature that is related to mother Earth, so the idea of ancestors is logical. The rough lips of an old lady are compared to stone destroyed by the weather. The old Indian people's curved backs remind the narrator of old mountains formed by the wind.

As for the wind itself, it represents a power or energy that makes things move. It is an analogy to the native feeling of pride about their particular Indian identity. That identity is described as: «[...] *la braise sous la taïga. Il suffirait qu'un bon matin le vent sec se lève pour que les tisons rougissent et que la nature s'embrasse. Et moi, je jure qu'à la première occasion, je serai ce vent.*» (Noël, 192) But the wind can also be a harmful kind of energy, it can bend and even break the trees. We already said that the trees are like the Indians, while the wind represents the white people. One Indian character in the novel calls white people "coups de vent" that means something like a gust of wind because, in her opinion, white people are exactly like this. When they come to the reservation, everybody goes quickly up and down, everything moves, like when the wind moves the trees in a storm. But as the calm comes after each storm, the reservation is quickly quiet again when the white invaders leave.

Water has a special significance in the novel. We already explained that the narrator's name Nipishish means water and that he received a new name Larrivière at the boarding school. His father's name was Shipu, which means 'river'. We would like to underline that the Indian approach to names is different from ours. The desemantization is typical of our family names. Normally we do not see the name's real meaning. Nipishish, however, explains that his name means something like the small water with the potential of becoming big. And he wishes to become as wise and respected as his father was and then he will accept his father's name "Shipu". The role of the father is important in the novel – it is strongly related to death. «*La frontière est tellement mince entre la vie et la mort. Comme une glace trompeuse d'automne, elle paraît solide, on s'avance, on fait un pas, deux pas, en se faisant léger pour vérifier. Tout va bien. On s'aventure. On se fait plus lourd, et tout à coup elle cède sans crier gare, et on disparaît dans les ténèbres de l'eau glacée.*» (Noël, 155) Shipu, Nipishish's father, died in water. The plot itself culminates in the scene where Nipishish's worst enemy risks to die in the cold water of the frozen lake and the hero saves his life, which is the proof of his moral superiority. Besides, the water illustrates the narrator's feelings. For example his idea of a suicide is a kind of quiet cat nap at the bottom of the river, which can help him be separated from the rush and noises of the world. Another example is when he is desperate: he feels like a big cloud full of water which can produce a violent storm and strong rain. Water sometimes is an invisible kind of force which is almost omnipotent at the same time. «*Elle se fait cependant insistante comme une goutte d'eau qui filtre à travers un barrage et finit par creuser le lit d'une rivière.*» (Noël, 12)

... and another system from the Indian point of view.

The previous system that we have just presented reflects our non-aboriginal world vision, but if we consider the Algonquian language, our present system falls apart. One of the basic traits of that language is the distinction between the animate and inanimate gender. The fact that some entity is conceptualized as animate or inanimate influences the morphology of noun, for example the plural forms, but it has an impact even on the verb conjugation as there are different verb endings for animate subjects and for inanimate ones. Although the polarity animate – inanimate characterizes this language, there is a surprisingly vague border between the animate and the inanimate entities, and it even varies according to local dialects. A good example is the Algonquian word for money "zhooniyaa" which can be animate or not. It is also common that the inanimate words become animate according to the situation. Some verbs need an animate subject, for instance "to speak" because logically only live

subjects can speak. For that reason, we can see, especially in myths, that the inanimate things become animate. It means that when the inanimate mirror speaks to the hero, it must become animate. Last but not least, the change of the gender is also a common word creation process. If the inanimate „gichi-mookomaan“ means a kind of long knife, its animate form denominates “white man”. That was probably inspired by the weapons used by Canadian soldiers.

Now it seems that there is absolutely no system in what is actually animate and what is inanimate. So are there any rules? There are, more or less. Many linguists or native speakers tried to make a list of rules but no theory fits perfectly. People and animals are obviously animate without any exception. There are many other animate entities but it is important for our categorization that even the trees and stones are animate in Algonquian language. The wind as a meteorological phenomenon is supposed to be inanimate. But its function in the novel is to make things move, as we mentioned. It is a power which is a source of some movement. According to the theory by Straus and Brightman, everything that has a special power, is animate. If we consider the fluid borderline between animate and inanimate things, we can afford to consider the wind as a power close to the animate category, kind of a bridge between animate and inanimate entities. The last group of metaphors was related to water. In Algonquian, water is always inanimate, but we already pointed out that the topic of the water has a specific position in the novel as it is related to the narrator. To sum up, the previous classification falls apart and we are tempted to create another classification based on the correlation animate - inanimate, which is:

- a) animate nouns
- b) wind
- c) water

That classification reflects much better the novel's fictional world. The Indians as trees are an inseparable part of nature. The novel's conflict results from the competition between two forces: one of them is the wind and the white people, the other one is water, representing the narrator with his mixed identity.

In conclusion, we wanted to answer the question whether the narrator's French is influenced by his mother tongue Algonquin following the Sapir Whorf thesis. We find this influence in the original metaphors and comparisons reflecting the way the narrator perceives the world. They help the narrator to create a specific fictional world, different from the worlds made by white narrators. He emphasizes the idea that man is a part of nature and that he does not have any specific position among all the creatures made by Kitchi Manito. He proves it by comparing people's behavior to the common animals' behavior. Despite their active role, even water and the wind are the same part of nature as passive trees. This concept of human as an equal partner of the other creatures is in sharp contrast with the white man's belief that they are superior to nature and particularly to Native people.

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## ¿Intelectuales latinoamericanos perdidos en el desierto académico estadounidense?

Tres textos, dos interpretaciones, una imagen.

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*Ciudades desiertas* (1982) de José Agustín y *Donde van a morir los elefantes* (1995) de José Donoso resultan a primera vista dos textos muy parecidos.<sup>1</sup> Ambos parten del mismo esquema: un/a intelectual (o alguien que pretende serlo) viaja becado a los Estados Unidos, y allí, cuando se encuentra con el «Otro», redescubre sus propias raíces e incapaz de soportar el peso de la cultura –sobre todo académica– norteamericana vuelve a su país de origen (México, Chile). Sin embargo, una lectura atenta nos lleva al descubrimiento de otros niveles narrativos. Con frecuencia hallamos en estos dos textos alusiones y referencias al pensamiento que se formó a base del ensayo *Ariel* (1900) de José Enrique Rodó. Somos testigos de un triángulo textual con dos vías interpretativas creando una única imagen del ambiente académico estadounidense.

En lo que concierne a los argumentos de las dos obras, resultan sorprendentemente parecidos. El guión de *Ciudades desiertas* lo podríamos resumir de la siguiente manera: A Susana, una joven escritora mexicana, le ofrecen una beca para poder participar en un taller literario en los EE.UU. Ella, sin rodeos, acepta y sale de México inmediatamente, sin dejar noticia a su marido Eligio. Cuando llega a la ciudad de Arcadia choca plenamente contra su desarraigamiento identitario. En cuanto su marido descubre donde está, decide buscarla y recuperarla. Los acontecimientos que suceden en los EE.UU. a los dos sarcásticamente desnudan no solo el Medioeste estadounidense sino simbólicamente también a los dos protagonistas mexicanos Susana y Eligio. Trece años más tarde José Donoso basó su novela en un esquema argumental muy parecido: el profesor de literatura chileno, Gustavo Zuleta, viaja a los EE.UU. para dar clases de narrativa hispanoamericana en una «pequeña universidad

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<sup>1</sup> Quizá sea porque los autores conocían perfectamente el ambiente académico.

norteamericana, perdida en las praderas del Medioeste».<sup>2</sup> Gustavo deja a su mujer Nina en Santiago de Chile con sus familiares porque está a punto de dar a luz y se va a San José. Mientras Gustavo espera a su mujer y a su hijo recién nacido, está absorbido por el caos académico estadounidense. La situación se complica aún más cuando vienen ellos dos para formar familia en San José. La familia chilena de Gustavo Zuleta sin exagerar huye de los EE.UU. para salvarse y lo mismo les ocurre a Susana y Eligio en *Ciudades desiertas*. De ahí vemos que las dos novelas tienden al mismo modelo: SALIDA (curiosidad, entusiasmo, sorpresa, ganarse la vida...) – EXPERIENCIA (choque cultural, el «Otro», crítica, estereotipos, superficialidad...) – VUELTA (agotamiento, abatimiento...).<sup>3</sup>

Sin exagerar se puede decir que las dos novelas están construidas a base de varios (micro)choques con el «Otro». Esta fricción de dos sistemas culturales (el latinoamericano / el estadounidense) se atiene en ambas novelas casi exclusivamente a un esquema: el de Ariel y Calibán. Evidencias textuales de los dos sistemas litigantes expongo a continuación. El presente acercamiento a estas dos novelas pretende acentuar algunos rasgos que tienen ambas en común creando así una imagen del roce de la cultura mexicana (latinoamericana) y la cultura estadounidense. A pesar de disponer de un material abundante recogido para mi futura tesis doctoral quiero recalcar en este lugar solo algunos puntos clave que serviesen de inspiración en el debate. En resumidas cuentas, las cuestiones aquí tratadas rondan sobre los siguientes problemas: la visión arielista del mundo y el caos identitario de los latinoamericanos, los estereotipos propios y ajenos y el espacio como el rasgo constituyente identitario.

En los textos que nos ocupan encontramos los cambios tempestuosos en la vida de los protagonistas justo cuando empiezan a vivir en los EE.UU. Están repentinamente involucrados en un mundo que no es el suyo, se confrontan con el «Otro» para poder reconocerse a sí mismos. El antropólogo Roger Bartra en su estudio sobre la formación de la identidad mexicana apunta: «Es interesante destacar que en el proceso de construcción e invención de la nación —y, por tanto, del carácter nacional— nos tropezamos siempre con una paradójica confrontación con “lo otro”. En esta confrontación el espacio de la conciencia propia se va poblando de estereotipos e

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<sup>2</sup> Donoso, José. *Donde van a morir los elefantes*. Madrid: Alfaguara, 1995, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Un esquema inspirado en: Villegas, Juan. *La estructura mítica del héroe en la novela del siglo XX*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1973.

ideas-fuerza que, a su vez, ejercen una relativa influencia en el comportamiento de los habitantes de una determinada nación.»<sup>4</sup>

Como es de esperar, la mexicanidad de Susana y Eligio emana de los personajes con toda suntuosidad cuando están en los Estados Unidos. Están confrontados con una doble estereotipización: la suya propia y la estadounidense. Esto se pone de manifiesto claramente en *Donde van a morir los elefantes* cuando leemos sobre los misteriosos personajes chinos Duo y Er: «Era lo que, evidentemente, deseaban: ser otros, sin dejar de ser ellos mismos».<sup>5</sup> La necesidad de esconderse detrás de una máscara cuando llegan a las tierras académicas estadounidenses para proteger su cultura y su identidad la tienen no solamente los latinoamericanos, la sienten en mayor o menor medida todos los personajes extranjeros; «bajo el sarcasmo y la ironía de estas novelas antiacadémicas, se confirman en definitiva las viejas apresiones ante el Otro anglosajón».<sup>6</sup> Tanto Donoso como Agustín dotan a este panorama del ambiente académico norteamericano de cierta universalidad que se podría resumir de manera siguiente: los EE.UU. ofrecen solo una mirada a la vida, así que nosotros escondidos detrás de una máscara podemos mantener solo una mirada a los EE.UU. En este sentido los personajes latinoamericanos decididos a mantener esta mirada no quedan inmunes. Un ejemplo excelente nos lo ofrece la atmósfera del sumergimiento de Susana de *Ciudades desiertas* en el caos identitario que tarda mucho tiempo en resolver. En Estados Unidos parcialmente –aunque burlándose de ellos– adopta los valores de aquel lugar, se comporta como una mujer libre e independiente lo que confirma «materialmente» con tener relaciones sexuales extramatrimoniales. Como si Susana a la hora de llegar a la ciudad de Arcadia probase el sentimiento de la emancipación de los años 60: «Mira, Eligio, ni creas que ahora vas a llegar a ordenarme lo que tengo que hacer y a exigir cosas, entiende que tú ya te quedaste atrás, y tienes que respetarme como soy, si me fui de México no fue para que llegaras a tronarme el látigo. Óyeme yo no estoy tronando ningún látigo. Por el amor de Marx, nada más te estoy preguntando por qué me abandonaste sin decirme nada. *Porque me dio la gana*, replicó Susana [...]».<sup>7</sup> Eligio se siente —en palabras de Octavio Paz— «rajado», lo

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<sup>4</sup> Bartra, Roger. *La jaula de la melancolía*. México: Grijalbo, 2007, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> Donoso, José. *Op. cit.*, p. 151.

<sup>6</sup> Reati, Fernando – Gómez Ocampo, Gilberto. «Académicos y Gringos Malos: La universidad norteamericana y la barbarie cultural en la novela latinoamericana reciente». In *Revista Iberoamericana*, Vol. LXIV, Núms. 184-185, Julio-Diciembre 1998, p. 607.

<sup>7</sup> Agustín, José. *Ciudades desiertas*. México: Edivisión, 1982, p. 31.

raja una mujer que encima es *su* mujer.<sup>8</sup> Al mismo tiempo Susana no es capaz de abandonar por completo la vida anterior, se siente muy mexicana. El estereotipo de los conceptos de un hombre mexicano fuerte, penetrante, cerrado y la mujer sumisa, fiel y abierta queda desmoronado casi por completo en *Ciudades desiertas*: en Estados Unidos tanto Eligio como Susana están obligados a quitarse sus «máscaras mexicanas» y tienen que nadar en un mar identitario sin fondo. Sin embargo, todas estas posturas y sentimientos están ligados estrictamente al espacio<sup>9</sup>: cuando al final de la novela Susana vuelve definitivamente con Eligio y se asientan en México, de nuevo caen (ahora poco a poco) en el modelo del macho mexicano quien manda y de la mujer mexicana sumisa, abierta y «rajada»:

Susana había retrocedido hasta la puerta, y palideció porque en fracciones de segundo Eligio había tomado el cuchillo cebollero y lo lanzó violentamente a la puerta, a centímetros de la cabeza de Susana, mientras decía ¡quieta ahí!, y después, para sí mismo ¡qué tino me traigo!, y se acercaba calmosamente a ella, con una sonrisa gozosa y ojos fulgurantes, ¡por la fuerza no, Eligio, eso es lo que más detesto!, [...]. ¡Vete al demonio! Susana, no olvides que las nalgadas van a ser porque te sigues negando, a estas alturas, a responder lo que te pregunto, ¡dime porque regresaste!, ¡estás *mal*, Eligio, quítate de aquí o empiezo a dar de gritos!, grita todo lo que quieras, avisó Eligio prendiéndola del brazo.<sup>10</sup>

Eligio, en Estados Unidos un hombre extramadamente frágil, en esta última escena de la novela, cuando su mujer embarazada vuelve con él, ejerce el poder sobre ella. Sigue el rumbo emprendido pero aún con mayor fuerza, con mayor estrictez y rudeza. Como si sintiera que su machismo había sido manchado en los EE.UU. y la exageración forma parte lógica de su comportamiento actual. A mi modo de ver, Eligio confrontado con el hecho de ser un futuro padre y de estar profundamente enamorado de su mujer no es capaz de asumirlo: «Si por el camino de la mentira podemos llegar a la autenticidad, un exceso de sinceridad puede conducirnos a formas refinadas de la mentira. Cuando nos enamoramos nos “abrimos”, mostramos nuestra intimidad [...]»<sup>11</sup>. Así poéticamente

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<sup>8</sup> Paz, Octavio. *El laberinto de la soledad*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2010, p. 165.

<sup>9</sup> Fernando Aínsa emplea el término «geopoética» para recalcar que la narrativa hispanoamericana pone un énfasis especial en el elemento espacial-geográfico. Véase Aínsa, Fernando. *Del topos al logos: propuestas de geopoética*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2006, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Agustín, José. *Op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>11</sup> Paz, Octavio. *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

indaga Octavio Paz en el problema del mexicano de abrirse al otro elemento. Los procesos psíquicos de Eligio –un macho aparentemente fuerte pero en realidad frágil– se rigen con una lógica muy parecida: en la cita anterior Eligio se siente tan profundamente intimidado que rehuye a la violencia histórica. No es capaz de sobrellevar la situación cuando está confrontado con su propia ternura y emocionalidad.

Tanto *Ciudades desiertas* como *Donde van a morir los elefantes* permanecen ligados estrechamente al pensamiento arielista. El protagonista de la segunda novela, Gustavo Zuleta, ejerce en la universidad estadounidense solo una actividad académica estéril, como si fuera un obrero académico que no es capaz de escribir. Cuando aparecen en la novela alusiones al pasado (o futuro) latinoamericano, de pronto se convierte en autor, escritor, en un elemento creativo. Lo espiritual se potencia en Gustavo cuando éste decide volver a Chile y abandona su carrera de profesor-crítico literario en Estados Unidos. De repente recobra fuerzas para atravesar la frontera de lo académico hacia lo artístico.<sup>12</sup> El espacio de cada uno de los dos sistemas culturales simboliza los valores encarnados por Ariel (espíritu, creatividad, arte...) y Calibán (materialismo, producción, bienestar material...) en el ensayo de Rodó. No obstante, en *Donde van a morir los elefantes* las ideas del arielismo quedan a medio camino, o en otras palabras, no se expresa la segunda parte de la archiconocida frase: «[...] aunque no les amo, les admiro».<sup>13</sup> Esta admiración y respeto por el progreso material y el desarrollo técnico la encontramos en *Ciudades desiertas*. José Enrique Rodó en su ensayo —como a veces podría malinterpretarse— no lanza solo una crítica feroz y unilateral hacia los EE.UU. sino que también indaga en el porqué de la (in)comprensión de las dos culturas. Leyendo el ensayo a uno le da la impresión de que la posible integración dialogativa de los dos sistemas culturales<sup>14</sup> será la única vía aceptable para el autor. En este sentido *Ciudades desiertas* se atienen a las ideas expuestas por Rodó más que la novela de Donoso. El estilo directo y desenfadado de Agustín pinta de manera sarcástica y de forma plástica los caracteres de todos sus personajes. Analicemos un fragmento:

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<sup>12</sup> Kerr, Lucille. «Academic Relations and Latin American Fictions». In *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Theorizing Modern Hispanic Fiction (Winter 1997), p. 45s.

<sup>13</sup> Rodó, José Enrique. *Ariel*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1971, p. 111.

<sup>14</sup> En *Donde van a morir los elefantes*, Ruby simboliza el porqué de la difícil comprensión mutua de dos culturas diferentes. Para la cultura de la belleza contemporánea (p. ej. Hollywood) sería una mujer gorda, sin embargo, en la época barroca Ruby encarnaría el ideal de bellaza femenina.

De allí fueron al gran centro comercial de la ciudad, el afamado *the Mall*, porque no estaba lejos, y porque de una vez por todas tenemos que pagar el tributo a la región, ¿a qué se viene al Gabacho? ¿A comprar, no? ¡Pues compraremos! ¡Si París era una fiesta, recitó Susana, Estados Unidos era una tienda! [...] Estas tiendas son las más caras, pero la gente viene aquí porque ya sabes: no importa lo que compras sino el hecho de comprar. Están locos. Eso también lo sabe todo mundo. Al pobre Eligio se le quemaban las ansias por ver las cámaras fotográficas y los equipos de sonido, ay mi amor, mira nomás qué chulada de aparatos, y nosotros con el modular de a peso que tenemos allá, a como dé lugar tenemos que llevarnos algo bueno, ¿no crees? ¿Sí? ¿Y cómo lo vas a pasar? Pues a ver cómo, porque de que la gente pasa las cosas eso que ni qué. Quieren que la gente no le llegue al contrabando pero te dan pura basura. Y carísimo. La industria en México es la más subdesarrollado. En cambio aquí mira, carajo, agregó Eligio y puso a funcionar su calculadora, ¡Susana, no es posible, este amplificador padrisísimo cuesta quince mil maracas *a la nueva paridad*, échate ese trompo a la uña! A mí me gustan los equipos chiquitos. Sí, están efectivísimos, y dicen que suenan increíble, incluso mejor que muchos grandes. Éste sale en veinte mil, tú, el equipo completo. Se asombraron también al ver que desconocían tantas cosas, aparatos deslumbrantes con todo tipo de luces, botones, palancas y memorias [...] <sup>15</sup>

Ahora bien, en su primera parte la cita concentra todo tipo de reproches por parte de Susana y Eligio hacia la cultura estadounidense de consumo. En su segunda parte, sin embargo, de repente Eligio cambia sus comentarios por pura admiración y se queda deslumbrado por los avances tecnológicos que tiene a su alcance. La postura de Eligio representa una imagen ejemplar de las relaciones México-EE.UU. oscilantes entre el amor y el odio. Resulta de interés constatar que en la novela de Donoso a menudo falta esta paradójica dicotomía, EE.UU. están visto como una potencia despreciable que a la vez desprecia a los demás. Documentémoslo con un fragmento en el que se describe a Ruby:

Y sin embargo, una chiquilla como ésta, tan inmensa, tan conmovedora, de dimensiones norteamericanamente superlativas, bueno, a pesar de que uno la ame con locura, no puede dejar de darse cuenta: ella encarna el exceso, la avidez, el *surplus* yanqui del que nosotros, hambrientos, nos apoderamos de todo lo que nos ofrecen aunque sepamos que no es más que la cuerda con la que

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<sup>15</sup> Agustín, José. *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

nos estamos colgando. Es la patética nostalgia por tener lo que no está a nuestro alcance...esa envidia... y venimos a este país a ganar dólares.<sup>16</sup>

Observemos que en esta característica pronunciada por el supuesto escritor Marcelo Chiriboga, encarna la rubia obesa los «valores» (estereo)típicos para los EE.UU. como el exceso, la avidez, la inmensidad etc. Los académicos latinoamericanos (Marcelo Chiriboga y Gustavo Zuleta) locamente desean poseer a la Ruby físicamente pero nunca lo consiguen. A Esta caza de la rubia la acompaña cierta tensión y siempre cuando parece que Marcelo o Gustavo van a tener éxito, alguna fuerza extraña los aleja de Ruby. Es obvio que este juego es una metáfora –quizás la más explícita– de la incomunicación de la América Latina y los EE.UU. La Ruby no se deja penetrar por un latinoamericano.<sup>17</sup> Asimismo en este fragmento aparecen alusiones al complejo de inferioridad que sienten los latinoamericanos rechazados por la mujer (por la cultura) estadounidense – envidian a los norteamericanos. Es otro aspecto que une este fragmento con la novela de Agustín e indirectamente enlaza con la problemática de la identidad. Los protagonistas de las dos novelas (pre)disponen del sentimiento de inferioridad. Eligio constata en la cita anterior que *deben pagar tributo a la región* con lo que está explícitamente admitiendo cierta inferioridad; «él mismo establece una (sumisión y sujeción) su diferencia frente al otro (dominación y autonomía)».<sup>18</sup> Gustavo Zuleta durante su presentación a la comunidad académica de la universidad de San José se dice a sí mismo en un monólogo interior: «Él no pretendía ser gran cosa. No era más que un profesorcito chileno. Y, como buen chileno, no se proponía sobrevalorar ni su ciencia, ni su carrera, ni sus orígenes en una modesta familia, pasablemente ilustrada, del barrio oriente de Santiago.»<sup>19</sup> La crítica en su mayoría<sup>20</sup> dirigía sus estudios de las dos novelas al ambiente académico estadounidense cuya imagen negativa indudablemente inunda las dos novelas. Fernando Reati y Gilberto Gómez-Ocampo hablan de «personajes intelectuales, gente del espíritu, que huyen del

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<sup>16</sup> Donoso, José. *Op. cit.*, 98.

<sup>17</sup> Véase también Kerr, Lucille. *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> Eudave, Cecilia. *Las batallas desiertas del pensamiento del 68. Un acercamiento analítico a Ciudades desiertas, de José Agustín*. Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 2006, p. 157.

<sup>19</sup> Donoso, José. *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>20</sup> Kerr, Lucille. *Op. cit.* Reati, Fernando – Gómez Ocampo, Gilberto. *Op. cit.* Santí, Enrico M. «Latinamericanism and restitution». In *Latin American Literary Review*, Vol. 20, No. 40 (Jul. – Dec., 1992).

craso materialismo y solipsismo de la vida norteamericana». <sup>21</sup> *Ciudades desiertas y Donde van a morir los elefantes* incluyen sin embargo una crítica interna de la postura de los latinoamericanos ante el imperio estadounidense que se podría resumir así: si vamos a sentirnos inferiores, seremos inferiores. En cierto sentido —y por supuesto indirectamente— se anuncian aquí las bases de lo que llamamos «nueva izquierda». A finales del siglo XX se empezaron a lo largo de toda América Latina a formar gobiernos izquierdistas <sup>22</sup> cuyos programas incluían al unisono una América Latina unida, segura de sí misma y libre de la hegemonía estadounidense. Dentro de la «nueva izquierda» por un lado destacaba la figura de Hugo Chávez en Venezuela y por el otro la política keynesiana del gobierno brasileño de Inácio Lula da Silva. Dejando aparte el análisis político, lo cierto es que todos los líderes nuevoizquierdistas coincidían y coinciden en eso de que excluían completamente a los EE.UU. de sus planes. <sup>23</sup> Esta «nueva izquierda» hoy en día da la impresión de que quiere abrirse un camino propio, independiente, orgullo de sí mismo. ¿Se esconden en *Ciudades desiertas y Donde van a morir los elefantes* indicios del principio de tal cambio? Aquí las novelas realmente dialogan entre sí.

Si bien las dos novelas en muchos aspectos coinciden casi totalmente aun así hay que verlos como dos enfoques o dos acercamientos separados a la misma problemática. Alegamos que este tipo de lectura nos parece más objetivo. Ver cierta

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<sup>21</sup> Reati, Fernando – Gómez Ocampo, Gilberto. *Op. cit.*, p. 607.

<sup>22</sup> «The term 'new left' governments refers to the wave of left-wing parties and leaders that have been elected to government in most South American countries since the election of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela in 1998. They are taken to comprise the Lula governments in Brazil from 2003 to 2010 succeeded by Dilma Rousseff in January 2011, the Kirchner governments in Argentina since 2003, the Frente Amplio governments in Uruguay since 2004, the Morales government in Bolivia since 2005, the Bachelet government in Chile from 2005 to 2010, the Ortega government in Nicaragua, the Correa government in Ecuador since 2006, the Lugo government in Paraguay since 2008, the government of Mauricio Funes in El Salvador in 2009 as the first president of the FMLN party, and the election of Ollanta Humala in Peru in 2011 who took office in July of that year. The success of Lopez Obrador in Mexico and of Solis in Costa Rica in presidential elections in those countries in 2006 also warrants their inclusion in the wider phenomenon of the emergence of the 'new left' although they did not win the presidency.» Kirby, Peadar. «Bolívar's Dream of Spanish American Unity: Is the 'New Left' Finally Realizing It?». In Bill Richardson and Lorraine Kelly (eds.). *Power, Place and Representation. Contested Sites of Dependence and Independence in Latin America*. Oxford – Bern – Berlin – Bruxelles – Frankfurt am Main – New York – Wien: Peter Lang 2012, pp. 40-41.

<sup>23</sup> «What distinguishes them from previous regional initiatives since the late nineteenth century is their exclusion of the United States and their ability to develop stnaces and structures that promote the interests of the countries of the region in competition weith the interests of the US that have been dominant for more than a century.» Kirby, Peadar. *Op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

intención de Donoso en reaccionar o completar a Agustín no sería más que mera especulación que no pertenecería a una investigación literaria.<sup>24</sup> Una prueba excelente de la autonomía de los dos textos localizamos ya al principio de cada una de las obras. Mientras que *Ciudades desiertas* reivindica la cultura norteamericana popular, la novela de Donoso se identifica con la cultura clásica. Una prueba de eso encontramos ya en el epígrafe: *Ciudades desiertas* abre una cita de la famosa canción «Deserted Cities of the Heart» del grupo rock *Cream*. Por otra parte en la cubierta de *Donde van a morir los elefantes* observamos un detalle de un cuadro de Tintoretto y en el epígrafe se cita a William Faulkner.<sup>25</sup>

Las dos novelas tienen cierta carga de arbitrariedad y no cumplen del todo con la imagen que a veces emerge de las críticas. Ambas novelas no ofrecen solamente una metáfora del utilitarismo absurdo llevado al ambiente académico (ad absurdum) sino que también se fijan en el comportamiento de los latinoamericanos en tal ambiente. Éstos, turbados por el cambio y del contacto con el «Otro», revelan una parte hasta ahora oculta de sus caracteres. Surge así una imagen muy plástica no solo de las fundaciones y universidades del Medioeste estadounidense sino también una imagen universal del difícil y doloroso acercamiento de tradiciones culturales tan distintas.

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<sup>24</sup> Lucille Kerr en su estudio contempla esta problemática de la interdependencia de estas dos novelas desde un ángulo muy abarcador. Véase Kerr, Lucille. *Op. cit.*, p. 27ss.

<sup>25</sup> Kerr, Lucille. *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

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## Transformation of Text into Image? (Paul Celan's *Tenebrae* as Poetry Film)

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No matter if the verse-based films of Russian Formalism<sup>1</sup> or the Avantgarde films of Marcel Duchamp, Hans Richter and Luis Buñuel in the 1920s<sup>2</sup> mark the beginning of the genre – poetry films have been around for more than one hundred years. Nevertheless, they have so far never been more than an intellectually challenging entertainment for a rather small number of educated viewers and therefore remained on the margins of public perception. Even the growing number of poetry film festivals<sup>3</sup> cannot hide the fact that poetry films are, despite their potential, still not overly present in the public sphere. One reason for that might be their combination of poetry and short film – both formats are less known to reach a big audience; another obstacle might be the hybriditiy of the genre itself.<sup>4</sup>

In the academic world though, the subject recently received a growing amount of attention and a couple of publications have been released on the topic within the last two years.<sup>5</sup> Since the research of poetry films is still relatively new, the basic question, What is a poetry film and how can it be characterised?, is still most relevant.

With *poetry film*, *cinematic electronic poetry*, *videopoem* or *Cin(e)poem*<sup>6</sup>, different names and labels have been introduced to describe an audiovisual piece of art, which is based on a poem. Different researchers have introduced a whole range of different typologies describing all possible types of poetry films. Depending on their corpus and their definition of poetry film they naturally came to different results. It is valid for

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Novikova 2013: 34ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Pfeiler 2010: 149.

<sup>3</sup> For an updated overview of poetry festivals see <http://www.george.aguilar.com> (last accessed: January 7, 2015). The *Zebra Poetry Film Festival* organised since 2002 by *LiteraturWerkstatt Berlin* is certainly one of the best-known, see <http://www.literaturwerkstatt.org/en/zebra-poetry-film-festival/home-zebra-poetry-film-festival/> (last accessed: January 7, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Orphal 2014: 5f.

<sup>5</sup> The topic has received greater attention in the anglophone academic world so far and has only recently been discovered by German-speaking researchers, cf. Novikova 2013 and Orphal 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Pfeiler 2010: 157, see also <http://www.george.aguilar.com> (last accessed: January 7, 2015). For an even bigger variety of terms see Orphal 2014: 30.

most poetry films that they are not simply inspired by a poem, but reproduce it as a whole or in parts either visually or acoustically within the film. Therefore, poetry films are prime examples for intermediality in the sense of a "symbiotic relationship of images, words, and sound/music" – they can basically "integrate all the arts – drama, dance, music, graphics and documentary elements. Some of the best poetry films [...] use stills, animation, documentary clips as well as abstract computer-generated graphics, and narrative."<sup>7</sup>

The cardinal point of the discussion is represented by the question how poem and film as two independent pieces of art correlate with each other. Some researchers hold the view that a film based on literature is first of all a film and is therefore characterised by its own cinematographic quality which again is best analysed within the terminology and the context of film science. The aesthetical significant medium, Ralf Schnell for instance argues, is the one in whose structure the transformational process is resulting.<sup>8</sup> This perspective strengthens the autonomy of the film, as Martina Pfeiler does in describing poetry film as an "update of the poem".<sup>9</sup> Another group of researchers focusses less on the poetry film as a result, but rather on the transformation process of poetry into film and how this process can be described in detail. Here, poetry film is understood as a subjective and visual interpretation of the poem.<sup>10</sup> In this case, the terminology is orientated towards the analysis of poetry and phenomena of intermediality.

In my example, I do not want to analyse poetry film as cinematographic piece of art, but I am rather interested in discussing which elements of the poem can be transformed into film, how this transformation works and to what extent the impact of both, poem and poetry film, on the audience is comparable.

The poetry film I want to analyse is called *Tenebrae* and is part of the 2003 released collection *Poem* by the German director Ralf Schmerberg.<sup>11</sup> The film is based on the poem *Tenebrae* by Paul Celan, which was written in March 1957 and first published in

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<sup>7</sup> Quotation by George Aguilar, cited after Pfeiler 2010: 157. Interestingly, the same quotation is cited by Orphal as part of a speech manuscript by Bob Holman, see Orphal 2014: 30, footnote 3.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Schnell 2000: 159f.

<sup>9</sup> Martina Pfeiler on poetry film, interview with Dave Bonta, October 19, 2014 during the Zebra Poetry Film Festival, Berlin, online available <http://vimeo.com/110682621> (last accessed: January 7, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> „Die Lyrikverfilmung wird von einem Gedicht nicht nur „inspiriert“, sie ist vielmehr seine subjektiv interpretierende Veranschaulichung.“ (Novikova 2013: 87)

<sup>11</sup> *Tenebrae*, aus: *Poem*. Film von Ralf Schmerberg (D, 2003), DVD, Lingua Video Medien GmbH 2004.

*Sprachgitter* ("Speechwicket") two years later. *Sprachgitter* was Celan's fourth published collection of poems in which he reached an abstractness that was discussed widely, but has not been too much appreciated by contemporary literary criticism.<sup>12</sup> It is especially amazing that such an abstract, complex and supposedly hermetic poem like *Tenebrae* inspired even a couple of cinematic implementations.

In many cases, including the poetry film *Tenebrae*, the poem is acoustically reproduced within the film. In *Tenebrae* a voice-over of Celan's own reading of the poem was used.<sup>13</sup> Referring to the procedures of a Pythagorean school, where the pupils only heard their teacher speaking from behind a curtain to not be distracted by his sight, Anastasia Novikova describes the use of a bodyless voice in the film as "akusmatic voice". She explains that the voice that can be heard in the film belongs to none of the actors or visible persons and therefore remains abstract for the audience.<sup>14</sup> The question, why the directors of *Tenebrae*, Jo Molitoris and Ralf Schmerberg, chose to use an "akusmatic voice" in the film will be answered at a later point based on the interpretation of the poem. The other question that comes to mind is why they used the recording of a reading by the author himself, this film being the only example in the whole collection.

The whole 3:55 minutes of the film are accompanied by music, a piece called *Mare Crisium* by the British electronic music artist Andrew Lagowski, which joins industrial sounds and recordings of a male choir into a rather gloomy ensemble.<sup>15</sup> Whereas the music sets in from the first image on, the reading of the poem only starts at 1:47 and finishes at 3:26 minutes. The title of the poem is not read out and the performance starts directly with the first line of the poem. The music being more or less equally loud to the recorded reading, is applied in order to have a maximum effect on the listener, but at the same time at no point disturbs the understanding of the poem. Still, this causes the interesting effect that Celan's voice seems to compete with the music and is in constant danger to be overtaken by it.

There are a couple of remarkable characteristics in Celan's voice as well as in the way he intonates the poem. Voice can be perceived, as Stefanie Orphal describes, as an

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Janz 1984: 63.

<sup>13</sup> According to John Felstiner, two recordings of *Tenebrae* by Paul Celan have been preserved. I have not been successful in finding out which one has been used for the film and in which way they potentially differ. Cf. Felstiner 2000: 144.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Novikova 2013: 110f.

<sup>15</sup> The original piece is 8:28 minutes long and can be heard at: <http://lagowski.bandcamp.com/track/mare-crisium> (last accessed: January 7, 2015).

event, which stimulates affections within the listener that go beyond linguistic communication.<sup>16</sup> Without being able to go too deep into the terminology of speech communication, Celan's voice can be described as rather high-pitched and mature. It seems not entirely articulate, at times even slightly throaty. His intonation bears a singing quality, whereas he clearly uses sound volume, pace and breaks to structure the text and intensify its meaning at certain points. The repetitive character of the text is supported by his adjutory intonation of the addressing formula „Herr“. Other passages of the text are intonated very distinctly and clearly stressed by putting an accent on certain syllables. Some articulatory peculiarities can be found, for instance the realisation of [klingən] instead of [kliŋən], that make his German sound somewhat foreign. John Felstiner points out that the reading alters the written poem in line 16 „Es glänzte.“, which Celan reads out as „Es glänzt.“,<sup>17</sup> putting this central image of the poem into present tense and therefore detaching it from the temporal frame of the poem. Furthermore noticeable in the film are extended breaks between the second and the third and the eighth and ninth stanza, which are introduced by the film directors. This certainly applies a cinematographic logic on the performance of the text.

Returning to the question, why the original recording of Celan's voice has been used, there are two plausible answers. As Novikova claims, the use of an "akusmatic voice" can either express the distance of the speaker towards the shown images, as it happens for instance in documentaries, or, on the contrary, offer a blank screen for a potential identification with the speaker's position.<sup>18</sup>

In this case though, another effect might be generated. As Celan's voice as well as his specific intonation is quite unique and very well known, it will be recognised by a certain part of the audience immediately. This activates knowledge about the author and his context, which is actually not represented by the imagery of the film. A voice is in every case strongly linked to a body, that is producing it. Hearing the voice of a Jewish author, who survived a Romanian Labour Camp, but lost both his parents in a concentration camp in Transnistria and struggled all his life with this loss, a life finally ending in suicide, carries a special implication: it brings a dead survivor back to presence, whose life and poetry had been threatened throughout his lifetime. It also

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Orphal 2014: 161.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Felstiner 2000: 144.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Novikova 2013: 110f.

brings a voice to hearing, that Celan himself has named to be the most important function of his poetry writing.<sup>19</sup>

After so far describing the audible part of the poetry film I now want to discuss the relation of voice, sound and imagery of the film. The imagery of the poetry film consists of a documentary shot of a penance procession during the Holy Week in Andalusia, Spain in 2000. This type of procession is typical especially for the Southern parts of Spain, and takes place during the week before Easter to commemorate the Passion of Jesus Christ. The first shot of the film shows a group of *hermanos*, members of Catholic brotherhoods or fraternities, in their traditional outfits, consisting of a penitential robe called *nazareno* and a hood called *capirote*, lining up outside a church building.<sup>20</sup> The *hermanos* usually perform a type of penitential march, some of them carrying crosses. Being black-and-white, the film reduces the colourful spectacle to a rather geometrical aesthetics. A great range of shots have obviously been taken by a hand-held camera, that produces an agitated effect and facilitates the effect of immersing into the crowd. Twice within the first 15 seconds, the camera moves into a low-angle perspective, which lets the strange and identically dressed figures seemingly grow bigger and increases their frightening charisma – naturally also by evoking associations towards the members of the Ku Klux Klan, who wore similar dresses. A perception of aggression and violence is furthermore generated by some long sticks that are carried upright in the air by two rows of *hermanos*, the viewer being positioned in the middle of this corridor. The rather strong, scary impact of the first seconds is disrupted by the full shot of an *hermano* sitting in a wheelchair (0:19 – 0:21 minutes), which retracts the imagery into present times.

The following shots show *hermanos* either in medium long shots of groups or as shoulder close-ups of single persons, very often portraying lower parts of their bodies instead of their faces, which are masked and identical. The scenes change relatively fast and follow the marching movement of the procession with different camera distances and from different perspectives, preferably from a low angle. An especially astounding view is a high-angle shot at 0:30 minutes, that only shows the moving hoods of the marching *hermanos*, giving the impression of a field of moving black thorns. Details of religious items leap into view, for instance people touching the lower

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<sup>19</sup> „In dieser Sprache habe ich, in jenen Jahren und in den Jahren nachher, Gedichte zu schreiben versucht: um zu sprechen [...]“ (Celan 1983: 185f.)

<sup>20</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy\\_Week\\_in\\_Spain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Week_in_Spain) (last accessed: January 7, 2015)

decorational part of one of the enormous *pasos*. These "real walking chapels of over 5,000 kilos [...] are physically carried on the neck of *costaleros*, hidden inside the platform of the *paso*, so it seems to walk alone." At different times it is shown how the floats are lifted in a jumping and trembling movement. The *pasos* are crowned by "lifelike painted wooden sculptures of individual scenes of the events that happened between Jesus' entry in Jerusalem and his burial, or images of the Virgin Mary showing restrained grief for the torture and killing of her son". The *pasos* are accompanied by marching bands "performing *Marchas procesionales*, a specific type of compositions, devoted to the images and fraternities."<sup>21</sup> At different times, spectating women, dressed in black with headdresses and veils of black lace, come into view. Again they are shot as shoulder close-ups that spare their faces and instead show their hands making the sign of a cross. Hands play an important role in the first one and a half minutes of the film, being shown in holding and carrying sticks, swinging a vessel of frankincense, touching a float, making the sign of a cross, drumming, and even holding the beautifully ornamented end of a stick with the inscription „Maria madre de la iglesia“ straight into the camera (1:30 minutes). All these actions express religiousness and believe, they show rituals and in stressing the hands that execute them, they symbolise an active and living expression of faith.

The first part of the film prior to the acoustical implementation of the poem has undoubtedly a very strong impact on the observer. The imagery of the Holy Week in its natural state is already quite overwhelming and exotic, let alone the way it is presented in this film. Frequent changes of the scene as well as camera perspective offer a diversity of impressions to the observer that make it difficult to focus on details. The way the film is shot actually turns the simple march into a complex action that stimulates a whole set of different emotions. This type of poetry film has been described as *etude* by Anastasia Novikova, a film without plot that strives solely through the power of its images.<sup>22</sup>

The music has quite a dominating influence on the perception, supporting a sinister and solemn atmosphere. The elements of choir certainly blend very well into the religious context of the imagery. Different, mainly industrial noises like a metallic buzzing create a scary atmosphere, as they do not have any connection with the

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<sup>21</sup> All the quotations in this paragraph are taken from the article "Holy Week in Spain" on Wikipedia. Terms which have been marked in quotation marks in the original have been italicised by me. Cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy\\_Week\\_in\\_Spain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Week_in_Spain) (last accessed: January 7, 2015).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Novikova 2013: 171.

imagery and therefore appear as something alien, that might anticipate a later catastrophe. When Celan's voice sets in at 1:47 minutes reciting the first line of the poem, the viewer is already rather challenged and irritated, as the aesthetics of the film actually work against its coherent perception.

To embrace the fact that poetry film is a format joining verbal expression and image into the expression of a common message<sup>23</sup>, I want to try and oppose a description of the film image with the passage of the poem being audible in the very same moment.

1



**Nah sind wir, Herr,  
nahe und greifbar.**

The first close-up of the film, a nun's face showing upwards, her head shifting slowly along while her eyes follow something that moves past her. Her expression is deeply touched and devotional, her lips are slowly moving, probably in prayer, whereas her eyes are filled with tears.

1:46  
min

In a counter-shot a float crowned by Virgin Mary is shown, apparently the object of the nun's sight. The float is carried alongside the front of a house, surrounded by spectators which turn their backs towards the viewer.

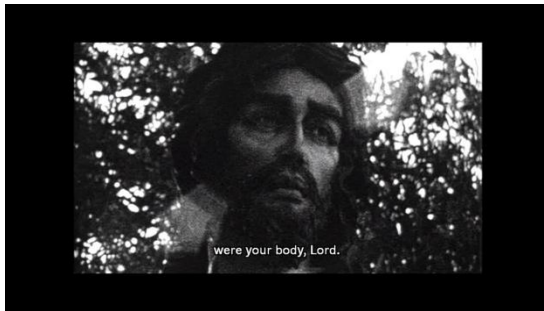
1:50  
min

**2 Gegriffen schon, Herr,  
ineinander verkrallt, als wär  
der Leib eines jeden von uns  
dein Leib, Herr.**

The view remains the same for the first line of the second stanza and is taken back into the crowd for the second line, highlighting a woman, dressed in black, smoking.

1:52  
min

<sup>23</sup> Novikova accurately relates to it as *Wort-Bild-Form*, cf. Novikova 2013: 87.



1:58 min Following, a close-up of the head of a wooden Jesus statue comes into view, in the background greenery, shot from a low-angle perspective.



2:02 min With the first stanza ending, another shoulder close-up of a woman comes into sight. Again, her face is deeply touched while she sings along or prays, sobbing and wiping her tears away. She seems surrounded by younger women and a girl, who critically watches her from aside.

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3 **Bete, Herr,  
bete zu uns,  
wir sind nah.**

2:14 min The third stanza sets in with the corridor of *hermanos*, holding their sticks upright in the air and brandishing them, whereas their leader walks through the middle of the corridor towards the camera.

The image is followed by the down part of a *paso* in swinging movement, the feet of the *costaleros* being visible.

## 4 Windschief gingen wir hin,



The fourth stanza sets in with a shoulder close-up of the statue of Virgin Mary, partly hidden behind lace curtains and in the swinging movement of the carried *paso*.

gingen wir hin, uns zu bücken  
nach Mulde und Maar.



With the second line of the fourth stanza, the first bird's eye view of the film shows spectators slowly marching along in a rocking movement.

## 5 Zur Tränke gingen wir, Herr.

The fifth stanza, just consisting of one line, shows a metall cross, being carried through a standing group of people ("Zur Tränke gingen,"), after that again the float with Jesus ("wir, Herr").

6 Es war Blut, es war,  
was du vergossen, Herr.

The sixth stanza is setting in with the close-up of a young woman wearing a black headdress. The image concentrates on her eyes and upper part of her head, switches to other close-ups of young

women, their facial expressions being grave and rather disclosed.

With "Herr" the view switches from the close-up of a young woman's face to the wooden face of a Jesus statue with a crown of thorns.

7 **Es glänzte.**



2:44  
min

With the seventh stanza, the camera moves up towards some elements of the metal halo ("Es glänzt.").

8 **Es warf uns dein Bild in die Augen, Herr.**

2:47  
min

The eighth stanza follows without break showing the image of two lines of *hermanos* with long candle sticks, dressed in white and striding out of a church building.

**Augen und Mund stehn so offen und leer, Herr.**



3:04  
min

With the second line, there follows a cut towards one of the religious leaders of the procession, his face being shown as a close-up.

In the following break, there are relatively fast cuts from the back view of a crowd towards two old people sitting on a bench, a small girl dressed as an angel walking around the corner

of a house and finally another child's face covered by a hood.

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9 **Wir haben getrunken, Herr.**

3:10 min The ninth stanza sets in with a procession of *hermanos* in white striding out of a church, carrying crosses as well as a procession in black marching down a street ("Herr.").

**Das Blut und das Bild, das im Blut war, Herr.**

The second line corresponds with the image of a *paso*, presenting a coffin with a skeleton on top. The shot is followed by shoulder close-ups of applauding spectators.

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10 **Bete, Herr.**



**Wir sind nah.**

The last stanza sets in with the same scene from bird's eye perspective, showing the *paso* and the surrounding crowd.

3:21 min The last line of the poem ends with a close-up of drummers.

The remaining 25 seconds of the film portray the drummers in lockstep and show details of their uniforms, their faces, their hands and bags with embroidered skulls.

Comparing the sequence of images with the recitation of the poem, it becomes obvious that the structure of the film follows the text structure of the poem quite closely. The change of scenes happens in analogy with the changes between the lines and stanzas. Novikova describes this type of reference as synchronical reference,

which means that one film image more or less correlates with an expression, line or stanza in the poem.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, some verbal images or expressions of the poem are almost literally illustrated by film images, as for instance the close-up of the wooden Jesus correlating with the verbal expression of "Herr" ("Lord") in the sixth stanza and the metal rays of a halo correlating with the expression „Es glänzt.“ ("It gleams.") in the seventh stanza. Of course these illustrational moments remain only few, the main relation of poetic and cinematographic has been found on a different level. The repetitive structure of the text is reflected in the film by the repetition of film images which nevertheless do not stand in an illustrational connection with the poetic images. The structural pattern of the poem has therefore been mirrored in a mere formal way.

It is noticeable that not only the imagery of the film supports the effect of the poem, but also the recitation of the poem has been slightly altered to support the effect of the cinematographic imagery. As mentioned earlier, extended breaks have been introduced into the recitation twice, between the second and the third stanza as well as between the eighth and ninth stanza. The first break (2:02 – 2:14 minutes) is entirely filled with the shot of the sobbing woman, into which the camera is zooming in and out, nevertheless remaining relatively static. The second extended break (2:56 – 3:09 minutes) in the opposite is filled with at least four different shots in a great variety of perspectives. It is certainly noticeable, that there is an increase in the frequency of changing scenes and perspectives towards the end of the poem. This might be seen in correlation with the lines in the eighth and ninth stanza, which are the longest within the poem.

The relation of voice, sound and imagery of the film as integral relation of the acoustic and visual dimension<sup>25</sup> that has been so far described, is understood as the first of two steps of transforming the poem into a poetry film by Novikova. In this first step, the poem is transformed in the same verbal code either visually or acoustically in the film. The voice of the speaker as well as the camera were important parameters of analysis here, as seen so far. In order to understand the convergence or contradiction of the cinematographic images towards the poetic images, we now have to go deeper into the relation of verbal poetic expression and cinematographic imagery. In the second transformational step additional elements of the poem's form

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Novikova 2013: 166f.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Novikova 2013: 113, footnote 299.

and content are transformed into the cinematographic sign system.<sup>26</sup> Understanding how this transformation works in detail will help us figure out how the relation of poem and film can be described and entitle where the poetry film supports readings that can be found within the poem and where it actually adds independent levels of interpretation.

The interpretation of the poem should start with its title, which nevertheless does appear neither acoustically nor visually at any point within the film.<sup>27</sup> The Latin word *tenebrae* generally stands for "darkness" or "shadow", but especially refers to the darkness after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. *Tenebrae factae sunt* (Matthew 27,459) reads the corresponding passage in the Bible that finds its expression in the liturgic ceremonies of the Catholic Church in the Holy Week before Easter: "The distinctive ceremony of Tenebrae is the gradual extinguishing of candles while a series of readings and psalms is chanted or recited."<sup>28</sup> Barbara Wiedemann suggests, that *Tenebrae* is a Catholic Liturgy with very distinct Jewish character, due to the chanted psalms.<sup>29</sup> The evocation of darkness also once more retrieves the darkness, through which German language according to Celan's understanding in his famous *Bremer Rede* had to evolve ("die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede") in order to still or again function as instrument of poetic expression.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, the title links the poetic content to the Holy Week and therefore to the same liturgic period that is represented in the film.

₁Nah sind wir, Herr,  
nahe und greifbar.

₁We are near, Lord,  
near and at hand.<sup>31</sup>

The first stanza, consisting of just two lines, sets in with the adjective "nah", which in biblical psalms frequently stands in correlation with the mercy of God, as Felstiner

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Novikova 2013: 114f.

<sup>27</sup> It is mentioned in the credits at the end of the whole collection though and respectively appears when directly accessing the chapter within the collection.

<sup>28</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tenebrae> (last accessed: January 10, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Celan 2005: 649.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Celan 1983: 185f.

<sup>31</sup> The English translation I used is the same one used for the English subtitles of the film.

describes in great detail.<sup>32</sup> The following subject "wir" refers to an undefined group as the actor of the poem. In being undefined, the group seems potentially open and could possibly include the reader. Regarding the Jewish layer of meaning in the poem, it has been expressed, that "[t]he use of the pronoun "we" flows naturally in Jewish thought and practice, in which regulations strictly mandate communal prayer."<sup>33</sup> At the same time, the first line resembles the hymn *Patmos* (1802) by Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin, which begins with the lines "Nah ist/ Und schwer zu fassen der Gott/ Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst/ Das Rettende auch." Celan's adaption inverses these lines: instead of God, it is "us", an indetermined group of people, who are close and furthermore, instead of being difficult to grasp, they are actually "at hand" and graspable, which seems to anticipate a certain vulnerability.

₃ Gegriffen schon, Herr,  
ineinander verkrallt, als wär  
₅ der Leib eines jeden von uns  
dein Leib, Herr.

₇Bete, Herr,  
bete zu uns,  
₉ wir sind nah.<sup>34</sup>

The second stanza connects to this description in the past participle "gegriffen", suggesting an act that already took place and accordingly turning the focus into passive. The following line seems to specify the result of this process as "clawed and clawing". Therefore, in a few brief lines the description cumulates from being "at hand" to having been "handled" to hands "clawing", a phrase that in itself refers to descriptions of victims of the Holocaust in the gas chambers<sup>35</sup> and additionally carries

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Felstiner 2000: 142.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.enotes.com/topics/tenebrae> (last accessed: January 10, 2015).

<sup>34</sup>     ₃ *Handled already, Lord,*  
      *clawed and clawing as though*  
      ₅ *he body of each of us were*  
      *your body, Lord.*  
      ₇ *Pray, Lord,*  
      *pray to us,*  
      ₉ *we are near.*

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Felstiner 2000: 142.

a strong moment of animalistic aggressivity. What is described with the semantical string "at hand" – "handled" – "clawing" is the result of a fatal mistreatment of the group of "us". The second part of the stanza compares the experience of every single one of this group, who was exposed to the unnamed experience, to the experience of God, more specifically towards the crucifixion. This context is pretty much evoked by the use of the phrase "Leib", which also remembers the sacrament that sets in with the words "das ist mein Leib".<sup>36</sup> Hence, the poem describes a scene in which every single one suffers in the same way as the crucified Jesus Christ. But whereas in biblical history, the death of Jesus Christ happened in the name of mankind, there is no such salvational sense available for the victims that died "clawed and clawing" in the gas chambers. As they did not even die in the name of Jesus Christ, let alone in the name of mankind, this analogy has to remain hypothetical, "as though".

As a result, the direction of worshipping has to be inverted and the roles are reversed. God is now called upon to direct his prayers "to us". It was basically this inversion which was perceived as blasphemous and therefore criticised by contemporary readers.<sup>37</sup> The verb "pray" occurs only as imperative form in the whole poem, which stresses its evident structural prayer character.<sup>38</sup> The last line of the third stanza "we are near" could be read sarcastically as "us" being dead and therefore being near to God.

How do these poetical images link in with the cinematic imagery of the poetry film so far? Certainly, the poem's high level of abstractness, its lack of concrete localisation and timelessness complicate a cinematic adaption and apart from brief, coincidental illustrational moments there is certainly no illustrational realisation of the poem imaginable. The transformation has to therefore rely on certain structural analogies as well as semantical ways of transforming the poetic images.

The strong, but indefinite group "we" in the poem finds its equivalent in the collectives that are portrayed in the film: the performing *hermanos* as well as spectators. In reenacting the scenes of the Via Dolorosa, an "as if" is created, which nevertheless functions in the opposite direction of the one expressed by the poem. Whereas "we" in the poem suffered in the same way, but not because of Jesus Christ, the spectacle of reenactment portrayed in the film serves the objectification of biblical

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Celan 2005: 650.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Felstiner 2000: 143.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Orosz 1995: 9.

history. The purpose of performing penitential marches is first of all to remember the biblical incidents and commiserate, which is then supposed to have a renewing effect on faith. It can therefore be considered as a positive form of worship, that demonstrates a deep and unbroken belief as most intensely visible in the two shoulder close-ups of the weeping women. In the poem, on the other hand, faith is not possible anymore, nor is any potential form of its renewal.

Windschief gingen wir hin,  
<sub>11</sub>gingen wir hin, uns zu bücken  
 nach Mulde und Maar.

<sub>13</sub> Zur Tränke gingen wir, Herr.<sup>39</sup>

The fourth stanza of the poem explicates the state of being harmed further in the expression "windschief", which in its associational layers is only partly covered by its translation as "askew". The composition of "Wind" and "schief" localises the occurrence in an outside, void and deserted territory, exposed to harsh weather. From here, it is not difficult to think of the prisoners in the concentration camps, who were forced to undergo endlessly long roll calls outside their barracks. In consequence, it is not the barracks, but the group of "us" being "askew" as a result of exposure to these circumstances. At the same time it expresses a reification of human beings. The group of damaged humans is moving, the German expression "gingen wir hin" in its repetition suggesting an ongoing, steady movement. At the same time it reminds us of Goethe's famous poem *Gefunden*: "Ich ging im Walde/ So vor mich hin,/ Und nichts zu suchen,/ Das war mein Sinn.". There is a moment of flier in interfering the limping, damaged group and the unburdened walk of a young man in the famous German forest. The walk of the group seems aiming towards bending down, but it is no sweet flower that is found here, but a trough and and volcanic crates.<sup>40</sup> Both geological terms "Mulde" and "Maar" appear as twin structure, doubling the emphasis of cavity, of

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<sup>39</sup> *Askew we went there,*

<sub>11</sub>*went there to bend  
 over hollow and ditch.*

<sub>13</sub>*To be watered we went there, Lord.*

<sup>40</sup> See Celan's geological notes: "durch Gletscherwirkung entstandene Mulde im Gebirge", "Gasvulkane: die explodierenden Gase blasen kraterförmige Vertiefungen (Maare) aus", Cf. Celan 2005: 650.

something missing. The alliteration on m- imitates a humming sound, that blends in with the description of Goethe's innocent walk. Celan's preference of geological terms and the meaning of stone in his poetics has to be seen in the perspective of his essential concept of involution.<sup>41</sup>

The act of bending anticipates the drinking trough in the fifth stanza. Interestingly, the English translation links the stone trough and the act of being watered closer than the German original, which does not express, that the watering happens "there". The stone cavities being understood as the watering troughs bear a moment of futility – no life-giving water can be found in a stone desert. The motif of the water trough brings in another animalistic, reificational moment and has again to be seen as a bitter remembrance of the death camps where human beings were treated like cattle. At the same time it refers to the belief of God as the merciful shepherd as well as towards *Agnus Dei*, Jesus, the Lamb of God, who was sacrificed to release the world from its sins (Joh 1,29-36). Again, the religious sense has been inverted in the poem: the group is not guided by a merciful shepherd, but moves on its own in the absence of any guidance or protection. Adding another, controversial layer of meaning, the sacrifice, especially of the lamb, is an essential part of the biblical narrative of the Exodus of the Israelites, where marking the "doorposts of their homes with the blood of a slaughtered spring lamb" saved the Israelite's first-borns. Lamb is therefore still one of the traditional dishes eaten during the Jewish Pesach that symbolise "God's strong hand" which had once saved their children.<sup>42</sup>

Es war Blut, es war,  
 15 was du vergossen, Herr.

Es glänzte.<sup>43</sup>

Consequentially in this string of images, the stone trough in the sixth stanza is not filled with water, but with blood. God is blamed, not only for allowing for blood to be shed, but for actually shedding it himself. Once more, the biblical context is inverted, because instead of mankind shedding the blood of Jesus Christ and therefore being guilty, God

<sup>41</sup> For an elaboration of the concept of involution, see Sturm 2008.

<sup>42</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover> (last accessed: January 10, 2015).

<sup>43</sup> *It was blood, it was*  
 15 *what you shed, Lord.*  
*It gleamed.*

himself is accused of having shed blood. In this accusation, the big question that arose after the Holocaust is reflected: If an almighty God existed, how could he have allowed the Holocaust to happen?<sup>44</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Es warf uns dein Bild in die Augen, Herr.  
Augen und Mund stehn so offen und leer, Herr.<sup>45</sup>

The gleaming quality of the blood that is expressed in the seventh stanza has to be seen in relation to its mirroring effect in the first line of the eighth stanza. Here, blood is described as reflector, that reflects the image of God. Interestingly, the ones who bend down to drink, do not see themselves in the mirroring surface, but instead they perceive the image of God. This expresses the result of an equalisation of God and mankind: God, who became guilty of shedding the blood of his flock has become one or better, all of them. It could also be read as a hint towards the constructional character of religion and faith as invented by mankind; religion as a promise that was challenged after the Holocaust and has failed. As Magdolna Orosz comments, "image" and "eyes", although semantically not very close, get linked through their common semantical implications of seeing and perceiving, whereas "blood" functions as a "mediator", reflecting an "image", i.e. something external to the human being, into the "eyes", i.e. into something internal to him.<sup>46</sup> It is not explicit, whose "eyes" and "mouth" are referred to in the next stanza. Understood as a reference towards the reflected image of God, it could be suggested that it were God's "eyes" and "mouth" that were "open" and "empty", although once again the English translation defines the "eyes" and "mouth" as "our". From the lecture notes, this expression can be linked back to the film *Nacht und Nebel* (1955) by Alain Resnais and Jean Cayrol, one of the most important and widely known documentaries about Auschwitz.<sup>47</sup> Celan was translating the comment by Cayrol into German in 1956, a couple of months prior to the composition of *Tenebrae*.<sup>48</sup> In this translation, we come across a line that describes the perception of the dead victims: "Zuletzt haben alle das gleiche Gesicht. Es sind

<sup>44</sup> <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust-Theologie> (last accessed: January 10, 2015).

<sup>45</sup> <sup>17</sup> *It cast your image into our eyes, Lord.*

*Our eyes and our mouths are open and empty, Lord.*

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Orosz 1995: 8.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/kultur/filmbildung/filmkanon/43569/nacht-und-nebel> (last accessed: January 10, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Knaap: 190.

alterslose Wesen, die mit offenen Augen sterben."<sup>49</sup> Firstly, it is the description of all the victims having the same face, that is echoed in the poem's equivalence of God's face and the face of the drinking individuals. Secondly, it is the observation of the dead's eyes standing open, which reappears in the poem's expression "Our eyes and our mouths are open and empty, Lord." Taken all these references into account, the stanza again seems to reflect on the question how the Holocaust could have possibly happened in the presence of a merciful God.

<sup>19</sup> Wir haben getrunken, Herr.  
Das Blut und das Bild, das im Blut war, Herr.<sup>50</sup>

The ninth stanza concludes the image of the trough in resuming the act of drinking, that is described in a perfect tense-form in the poem. The second line specifies the act of drinking: they drank "the blood and the image that was in the blood". The act of drinking blood of course first of all evokes associations towards the holy sacrament, indeed transforming the chalice into a stone trough and "subversing this way the emblematical meaning of the "sacrament" into that of "sacrileg".<sup>51</sup> Whereas in Christianity, the wine of the sacrament, symbolising the blood of Christ, serves as act of receiving Christ, in Judaism the consumption of blood is strictly forbidden: "Thus, in a Jewish context, to drink blood at the crater means to violate one of God's commandments."<sup>52</sup> Above all, "we" drink not only the blood itself, but also "the image that was in the blood", which is "our" own image as well as God's image. On a simple level, whenever emptying a cup filled with a reflecting fluid, it has the effect that the reflected image disappears while drinking. It implicates, that "we" drank up the trough, which adds a certain intentionality to the act of drinking. This rebounds to the line "It gleamed.", which contains a moment of attraction. Although the blood in the trough has obviously been shed by God, it attracts "us", so that we start to drink and do not stop unless the trough is emptied. The act of extended drinking has appeared in Celan's best-known poem *Deathfugue*, which repeats the lines "Black milk of daybreak we drink it at evening/ we drink it at midday and morning we drink it at night/ we drink

<sup>49</sup> "In the end, they all have the same face. They are ageless creatures, who die with open eyes." (translation: A.S.) Cf. Celan 2005: 650.

<sup>50</sup> <sup>19</sup> *We have drunk, Lord.*

*The blood and the image that was in the blood, Lord.*

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Orosz 1995: 183.

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.enotes.com/topics/tenebrae> (last accessed: January 10, 2015).

and we drink".<sup>53</sup> Another aspect of the metaphor of drinking is added by Emery George:

One detail no one to my knowledge has yet noted: true to Celan's uncompromising poetics, the blood image in the poem is no mere metaphor. The victims in the gas chambers did bleed and taste one another's blood, the blood that flowed from eyes, ears, nose, and mouth as the poison gas burst the lungs.<sup>54</sup>

On another level, drinking up the shed blood could be understood as a moment of trying and taking in the remains of those whose blood was shed. This should be understood less as a cannibalistic act, but rather as an act of preservation and even further, as possibility of bringing the dead ones back into life in the sense of pagan beliefs. As Marlies Janz summarises, the main topic in *Speechwicket* is the question, if the survivors of Auschwitz can revive from the dead. Their active achievement has to be seen in regaining liveliness.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Bete, Herr.

Wir sind nah.<sup>56</sup>

It is noticeable that the addressing of God intensifies towards the end of the poem, which in the logic of the poem does not have any cumulative, but rather emptying effect.<sup>57</sup> On a formal level, it strengthens the prayer character of the text, whereas this character is at the same time eliminated by the poem's meaning. The last stanza repeats the third stanza. In the German original, its second line repeats the first line of the poem in a reversed order: "Nah sind wir, Herr," - "Wir sind nah." This chiasm, which embraces the whole poem, is remarkable. First of all, the chiasm is the rhetoric figure of inversion, what means, that the poem carries out on a formal level, what can also be understood as its major expressional principle. Secondly, the chiasm symbolically represents the cross, again highlighting the (reversed) prayer character of the poem.<sup>58</sup> It could also be argued, that the last stanza, after an intensification of the direct address

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.celan-projekt.de/todesfuge-englisch.html> (last accessed: January 10, 2015).

<sup>54</sup> George 1997.

<sup>55</sup> Janz 1984: 94.

<sup>56</sup> <sup>21</sup> *Pray, Lord.*

*We are near.*

<sup>57</sup> Felstiner 2000: 145.

<sup>58</sup> "Im Chiasmus, der rhetorischen Figur der Inversion, ist das Kreuz näher als im Thema Kreuz.", Cf. Felstiner 2000: 389.

of God, finally turns the annunciation of "us" "being close" into a threat – Pray Lord, because we are close.

The question that needs to be answered in conclusion is, if and how the cinematic adaption of *Tenebrae* can be described as a transformation of text into image. In my analysis of the imagery of the film with regard to the poetic images, it became obvious, that the multiple meanings of Celan's metaphors have not and probably cannot be implemented with cinematic instruments. The film, although complex in its own terms, concentrates on the Christian, and in a broader sense, religious imagery of the text whereas it spares Jewish and especially Holocaust-related aspects of its meaning. Nevertheless, a number of structural equalities have been pointed out, such as the repetitional elements in both pieces, in which the film adapts some genuine characteristics of Celan's poetry. In the end, both artworks seem most comparable in the effect they have on their audience: their unsettling, haunting quality that balks at their incorporating and appreciative perception.

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*La contrainte à l'oeuvre, le trompe-l'oeil en traduction – la réception de Georges Perec à la lumière des traductions et des adaptations de ses textes*

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Georges Perec compte parmi les auteurs postmodernes les mieux étudiés et son oeuvre continue à susciter l'intérêt aussi bien des chercheurs en littérature qu'en matière d'art.

Loin d'être limité à un public français ou francophone, cet auteur a trouvé, grâce au travail de ses traducteurs, un grand nombre de lecteurs, d'auditeurs (pour ses pièces radiophoniques) et de spectateurs (pour ses pièces de théâtre et ses films) dans le monde entier.

Ce travail mériterait de faire l'objet d'une recherche approfondie, car la pratique littéraire de Perec représente à bien des égards un défi pour tout traducteur. Il s'agit, pour ne rappeler que quelques aspects de cette oeuvre extraordinaire, d'une écriture sous contrainte, écriture fortement intertextuelle et qui joue souvent avec les codes esthétiques de la littérature et de l'art.

La traduction littéraire fait pourtant rarement l'objet de recherches approfondies. Elle occupe une place secondaire aussi bien en traductologie qu'en études littéraires. Or, si cela est vrai pour les textes littéraires classiques, c'est d'autant plus vrai pour les traductions extraordinaires, les traductions de textes littéraires expérimentaux. Les ouvrages de l'Oulipo n'en font pas exception. Bien qu'il y ait quelques études concernant certains aspects de la traduction des ouvrages de Raymond Queneau<sup>1</sup> et un nombre croissant d'études portant sur les textes de Perec en traduction, ceux-ci sont loin d'avoir été systématiquement explorés. Cela est d'autant plus étonnant que les traducteurs des textes perecquiens ont souvent commenté leur travail, dans des préfaces, des articles, des interviews ou des tables rondes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Par exemple la thèse de Bruno Rauch, *Sprachliche Spiele – Spielerische Sprache. Sammlung, Erklärung und Vergleich der Wortspiele in vier ausgewählten Romanen von Raymond Queneau und in den entsprechenden Übersetzungen von Eugen Helmlé* (Zürich: Zentralstelle der Studentenschaft, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> Voir par exemple « Traduire la disparition de Georges Perec. Table ronde animée par Camille

Il me semble donc intéressant d'entreprendre une analyse plus vaste des traductions des principaux ouvrages de Perec. Cet article cherche à en esquisser quelques lignes directrices. L'objectif principal de mes recherches (qui seront centrées sur les versions allemandes, mais qui examineront aussi, dans la mesure du possible, les versions anglaises, italiennes et espagnoles de quelques textes perecquiens) est de trouver une nouvelle approche à l'écriture de cet auteur à travers l'étude des traductions en examinant de plus près les conditions de réception de l'écriture perecquienne. Il s'agira de porter un regard indirect sur les textes, de tenter de les comprendre par le biais des traductions et des adaptations dont ils ont fait l'objet.

Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction peut nous apprendre sur le texte? Traduire est – Umberto Eco nous le rappelle<sup>3</sup> – un travail de médiation, de négociation entre langues et cultures différentes, mais c'est aussi un travail de compréhension. Tout traducteur est d'abord lecteur. Si, comme l'affirme une branche de la traductologie, la traduction est une herméneutique poétique de l'original,<sup>4</sup> on peut alors se demander quelles sont les interprétations ou lectures possibles du texte qui se manifestent aussi dans la traduction et quelles pistes de lecture sont au contraire évincées par la traduction. Mais on peut également se demander si le rapport entre traduction et herméneutique change quand il s'agit de l'écriture sous contrainte.

La traduction d'un texte oblige le traducteur à un travail d'analyse, à une lecture précise, à une réflexion sur sa structure poétique, à l'explication des messages implicites, à un travail d'interprétation toute individuelle. Elle l'oblige aussi à l'analyse de la langue-cible, à une exploration de ses pouvoirs et limites d'exprimer ce que le texte original exprime. La traduction nous force ainsi à prendre conscience des obstacles linguistiques qui, normalement, passent inaperçus.<sup>5</sup> Evidemment, cette lutte contre sa propre langue s'impose davantage à mesure que l'oeuvre originale est elle-même le fruit d'une lutte contre la langue, à mesure que le texte laisse deviner une réflexion sur les moyens linguistiques d'expression. Puisque l'écriture sous contrainte représente un cas extrême de la conscience linguistique, elle est à mon avis un

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Bloomfield, avec Valéri Kislov, John Lee, Vanda Mikšić, Marc Parayre et Shuichiro Shiotsuka », in *Vingt-huitièmes assises de la traduction littéraire*, éd. Hélène Henry and Laurence Kiefé (Arles: Coéditions Actes sud, 2012), 129-156.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Umberto Eco, *Dire quasi la stessa cosa. Esperienze di traduzione* (Milano: Bompiani, 2003). Eco soutient une conception de la traduction comme « negoziazione ».

<sup>4</sup> Voir par exemple Radegundis Stolze, *Hermeneutik und Translation* (Tübingen: Narr, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. pour cette idée l'article de Jörn Albrecht, « Schriftsteller als Übersetzer », in *Ästhetik und Kulturwandel in der Übersetzung*, éd. Maria Krystofiak (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 2008), 50.

excellent objet pour observer de plus près, comme à travers une loupe, certains problèmes classiques de la traduction littéraire.

Quant à la réception de l'oeuvre de Perec en France et à l'étranger, il faudra pour chaque pays examiner l'accueil que lui avaient réservé les lecteurs et la critique littéraire en tenant compte des cultures et traditions littéraires respectives. Il faudra également tenir compte des choix des éditeurs et des différentes manières dont ils avaient présenté les ouvrages au public. Par exemple: *Les Choses*, le premier roman de Perec et qui a remporté le prix Renaudot en 1965, a connu immédiatement un succès international, tandis que *La Vie mode d'emploi*, qui est incontestablement son chef-d'oeuvre et qui a été couronné du prix Médicis en 1978, n'a pratiquement pas trouvé d'éditeurs dans les ex-pays communistes – à l'exception de la Bulgarie, qui peut revendiquer d'avoir été le tout premier pays à accueillir ce roman. Cet écart est d'autant plus révélateur, si on compare les publications des livres de Perec en RFA à celles en RDA. Réception continue d'un côté du mur, réception très sélective de l'autre. Après *Les choses* et *Quel petit vélo*, tous deux parus en 1967, il faut attendre jusqu'en 1978 pour voir – avec *W ou le souvenir d'enfance* – un nouveau livre de la plume de Perec dans les librairies est-allemandes. La sélectivité de cette réception s'étend jusqu'au texte même, *Quel petit vélo* ayant été privé de son «Index des fleurs et ornements rhétoriques, et, plus précisément, des métaboles et des parataxes que l'auteur croit avoir identifiées dans le texte qu'on vient de lire»<sup>6</sup>. Aux yeux du traducteur (ou de l'éditeur ?) le caractère ludique de cette partie autoréférentielle du livre se trouvait apparemment en contradiction avec l'image de l'auteur engagé qu'on s'était faite de Perec. Pour sauvegarder cette image, on s'autorisait à amputer le texte. En Hongrie, d'ailleurs, la réception semble avoir suivi à peu près la même logique, puisque Krisztina Horvath nous indique que « après *Un homme qui dort* [...], il y eut autour de Perec presque trente ans de silence absolu en Hongrie ».<sup>7</sup>

En ce qui concerne la réception en France, il faut signaler, pour beaucoup de textes perecquiens, un clivage entre l'importance que la critique universitaire leur accorde et les chiffres de vente relativement modestes.<sup>8</sup> *La Disparition*, premier roman oulipien

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<sup>6</sup> Georges Perec, « Quel petit vélo à guidon chromé au fond de la cour », in *Georges Perec. Romans et récits*, éd. Bernard Magné (Paris : Le Livre de Poche, 2002), 209-210.

<sup>7</sup> Krisztina Horvath, « La réception de Georges Perec dans les républiques populaires d'Europe de l'Est », in *L'œuvre de Georges Perec: réception et mythisation*, éd. Jean-Luc Joly (Rabat : Publications de l'Université Mohammed-V, 2002), 188.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. l'article d'Eric Lavallade, « Le phénomène Perec. Réflexion autour de quelques chiffres

de Perec, est peut-être l'ouvrage représentant le plus grand écart entre l'intérêt que les chercheurs manifestent pour ce texte et l'accueil du grand public. Bien que très connu, c'est un roman peu lu. Perec regrettait que beaucoup de lecteurs se soient intéressés surtout à son statut de lipogramme en « e », à la bravoure d'écrire un texte cohérent de 300 pages sans utiliser une lettre aussi essentielle que le « e », constatant à propos d'un autre ouvrage : « L'ennui, quand on voit la contrainte, c'est qu'on ne voit plus *que* la contrainte». <sup>9</sup>

L'édition anglaise, traduite par le romancier Gilbert Adair, favorise davantage cette réception réductrice – tout d'abord par des choix paratextuels. L'image bien explicite d'un « e » barrée sur la couverture et la citation d'une critique parue dans le New York Times disant „There is not a single E in this novel. That's right: no here, there, where, when; no yes, no love, no sex!” mettent en évidence la particularité linguistique du livre. Sur la quatrième de couverture, on trouve un extrait d'une autre critique, elle-même lipogrammatique, qualifiant la traduction de « astounding Anglicisation of Francophonic mania. » Mais si ce roman n'était qu'une acrobatie linguistique, comme le suggère le paratexte de sa traduction anglaise, comment expliquer l'intérêt persistant des chercheurs et des traducteurs accordé à *La Disparition* ?

Bien qu'inlassablement taxé d'intraduisible, c'est un des livres les plus souvent traduits de Perec. Il y a, à ma connaissance, au moins 17 traductions complètes du texte, dont à peu près les deux tiers sont publiées. Autant de raisons de le regarder de plus près. Quels sont alors les enjeux de la traduction d'un texte généré par une contrainte formelle? Et dans quelle mesure son analyse peut-elle contribuer à comprendre l'accueil du texte par la critique et par le public?

Si toute traduction est une sorte d'écriture sous contrainte, la traduction d'un texte oulipien peut être qualifiée d'écriture sous contrainte *au carré*. Dans son travail d'écriture, l'auteur oulipien doit respecter la contrainte qu'il s'est lui-même imposée, mais en toute liberté de création. Le traducteur, au contraire, doit chercher à reproduire le texte dans sa propre langue tout en s'en tenant aux règles d'autrui. Umberto Eco, l'auteur de la version italienne d'un ouvrage « pré-oulipien » important, les *Exercices de style* de Raymond Queneau, souligne que pour la traduction d'un tel texte la fidélité consiste à tenter de respecter les règles du jeu : « avendo Queneau

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concernant le lectorat et la vente des livres de Georges Perec », in *L'œuvre de Georges Perec: réception et mythisation*, éd. Jean-Luc Joly (Rabat : Publications de l'Université Mohammed-V, 2002), 67-77.

<sup>9</sup> Georges Perec et Claudette Oriol-Boyer, « Ce qui stimule ma racontouze... », in *Georges Perec: Entretiens et conférences II*, éd. Dominique Bertelli et Mireille Ribière (Nantes : Joseph K., 2003), 171.

giocato una certa partita in tante mosse, io tentavo di emularlo risolvendola in eguale numero di mosse, anche se cambiavo il testo. »<sup>10</sup>

Quelles sont alors les principales difficultés que le traducteur d'un lipogramme doit affronter? Pour répondre à cette question, la linguiste Miorița Ulrich a analysé la traduction italienne des *Exercices de style*, qui racontent la même histoire infime en 99 versions différentes, dont 5 versions lipogrammatiques – une pour chaque voyelle. Elle en déduit trois étapes dans le travail du traducteur:<sup>11</sup>

Dans un premier temps, on reconstruit, comme pour un palimpseste, le texte original sous le texte lipogrammatique; puis, on fait une traduction „normale“ non-lipogrammatique du texte; dans un troisième temps, enfin, on remplace tous les mots et morphèmes qui contiennent la lettre défendue par des mots et morphèmes lipogrammatiques et, si nécessaire, on adapte le contexte à ces éléments nouveaux.

La comparaison des différentes versions fait clairement apparaître leur base textuelle commune et montre que presque toujours Eco n'y avait introduit que les changements nécessaires pour obtenir le lipogramme (Ulrich 2009: 228f.).

Si cette approche peut servir de stratégie générale pour la traduction d'un texte lipogrammatique, elle sera cependant vouée à l'échec face à un texte comme *La Disparition*, car il ne faut pas oublier une différence fondamentale entre les deux ouvrages. Dans les *Exercices de style* il y a une histoire de base, un noyau sémantique exprimé sous diverses formes, tandis que dans *La Disparition* la contrainte ne se limite pas à la forme, mais touche aussi le fond de l'histoire, la lettre disparue désignant le noyau sémantique du roman. La voyelle absente y est présente à la fois comme sujet et comme métatexte du roman et la contrainte devient ainsi partie intégrante et de l'histoire et du discours – pour parler avec l'auteur:<sup>12</sup>

Petit à petit, à travers cette espèce d'interdiction formelle, et formaliste disons, va naître un circuit de production du récit qui, d'une certaine manière – en fait, c'est en tout cas l'impression que j'ai ressentie en écrivant *La Disparition* – mine

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<sup>10</sup> Umberto Eco, *Dire quasi la stessa cosa*, 306.

<sup>11</sup> Miorița Ulrich, « Sprachspiel und Übersetzung. Das Lipogramm », in *Revue Internationale d'Études en Langues Modernes Appliquées 2* (2009) : 227 [ma traduction].

<sup>12</sup> Georges Perec, « Création et contraintes dans la production littéraire », in *Georges Perec: Entretiens et conférences II*, éd. Dominique Bertelli et Mireille Ribière (Nantes: Joseph K., 2003), 310.

complètement tout le travail d'écriture. C'est-à-dire que la disparition du « e » va prendre en charge entièrement le roman.

Je me limite ici à indiquer seulement quelques traits caractéristiques de ce procédé. D'un côté, le lipogramme se reflète dans la structure du roman. Celui-ci est divisé en vingt-six chapitres regroupés en six parties, qui représentent chacune une voyelle de l'alphabet français en comptant l' « y » parmi les voyelles. La deuxième partie n'a pas de titre et le chapitre cinq manque à l'appel. De l'autre côté, le texte ne cesse d'évoquer le manque linguistique qui s'y inscrit, construisant petit à petit tout un réseau de symboles qui le désignent. Le protagoniste, par exemple, s'appelle Anton Voyl, nom qui renvoie à la lettre « e », l'unique « voyelle atone » du français. Nous apprenons ensuite que son meilleur ami s'appelle Amaury Conson et qu'il a six fils: Adam, Aignan, Ivan, Odilon, Urbain et Yvon.

Il y a aussi de nombreux jeux de mots, des symboles ou signes graphiques qui évoquent le lipogramme, par exemple les images qu'Anton Voyl croit apercevoir dans son tapis:<sup>13</sup>

Ainsi, parfois, un rond, pas tout à fait clos, finissant par un trait horizontal: on aurait dit un grand G vu dans un miroir.

Ou, blanc sur blanc, surgissant d'un brouillard cristallin, l'hautain portrait d'un roi brandissant un harpon. [...]

Ou, s'imposant soudain, la figuration d'un bourdon au vol lourd, portant sur son thorax noir trois articulations d'un blanc quasi lilial.

Ainsi, en évoquant sans cesse la lettre défendue au moyen d'images, de symboles et d'allusions, *La Disparition* met en scène la matérialité du texte, obéissant de cette manière au principe d'écriture sous contrainte formulé dans *l'Atlas de littérature potentielle*: « Un texte écrit suivant une contrainte parle de cette contrainte »<sup>14</sup>. Vu que la contrainte consiste en un tabou, en une lettre défendue, la manière d'en parler ne peut qu'être une manière indirecte, car on ne peut désigner la contrainte

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<sup>13</sup> Georges Perec, « La Disparition », in *Georges Perec. Romans et récits*, éd. Bernard Magné (Paris : Le livre de Poche, 2002), 320.

<sup>14</sup> Jacques Roubaud, « Deux principes parfois respectés par les travaux oulipiens », in *Atlas de littérature potentielle*, éd. Oulipo (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 90.

directement sans utiliser la lettre en question. Le texte doit alors, comme l'indique son *postscriptum*, « divulguer, sans jamais la trahir tout à fait, la Loi qui l'inspirait »<sup>15</sup>.

Toutefois le roman est beaucoup plus qu'une simple devinette, même si Gérard Genette (faisant preuve d'une ignorance tout à fait étonnante au sujet de l'écriture oulipienne) affirme que « [t]out ce à quoi invite ce texte, non pas certes explicitement mais structurellement c'est en induire la contrainte lipogrammatique, c'est-à-dire simplement y percevoir l'absence de e. »<sup>16</sup>

Le texte invite, bien au contraire, presque partout à une double lecture, lecture qui tient compte à la fois de la matérialité du texte et de ses dimensions sémantiques. Ce n'est pas seulement l'histoire de la disparition d'Anton Voyl, c'est n'est pas seulement l'histoire de l'absence d'une lettre et ce n'est surtout pas seulement une autobiographie oblique, c'est-à-dire l'histoire de la disparition des parents de Perec. C'est aussi en quelque sorte une réflexion sur la condition postmoderne, puisque la lettre absente transcende l'horizon des personnages et par cela elle devient pour eux le symbole d'un savoir total, d'une compréhension globale du monde toujours désiré mais toujours impossible. Pour ce dernier aspect, je renvoie à l'excellente étude de Uwe Schleypen *Schreiben aus dem Nichts*.<sup>17</sup>

Le lien extrêmement étroit entre le fond et la forme, tel que nous l'avons pu constater pour *La Disparition*, distingue l'écriture sous contrainte des textes normaux et la rapproche de la poésie. Pour revenir à notre question principale, on peut constater que la traduction d'un texte qui est structuré à un tel niveau - car que non seulement la forme affecte la sémantique, mais cette sémantisation de la forme devient le principe même du texte - représente un défi extraordinaire pour tout traducteur. Pour être fidèle au texte, il faut qu'il aille au-delà de la transposition d'une certaine forme linguistique et d'un certain fond sémantique dans un autre système linguistique. Au lieu de traduire le fond et la forme, on doit tenter de traduire *le fond de la forme*. Une comparaison des différentes traductions de *La Disparition* pourrait alors analyser comment les traducteurs ont traité la contrainte centrale du texte et dans quelle mesure ils ont tenu compte de la dimension métatextuelle du lipogramme.

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<sup>15</sup> Perec, « La Disparition », 556.

<sup>16</sup> Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré* (Paris : Seuil, 1982), 60.

<sup>17</sup> Uwe Schleypen, *Schreiben aus dem Nichts* (München : Meidenbauer, 2004).

Puisque la traduction – qu'elle soit « normale » ou « oulipienne » – n'arrive jamais à conserver tous les traits caractéristiques de l'original, le traducteur devra dans un premier temps identifier et ensuite hiérarchiser les éléments textuels indispensables pour une traduction qui respecte l'esprit de l'original.

La plupart des traducteurs de *La Disparition* ont rendu compte de leurs préférences concernant leur « hiérarchie des équivalences » dans le texte à traduire.<sup>18</sup> Ces choix, fruits d'une interprétation individuelle, expliquent en partie les stratégies traductives parfois très différentes pour lesquelles les traducteurs ont opté. Par exemple, pour Eugen Helmlé, auteur de la traduction allemande, les traits les plus importants du texte et qu'il faut conserver à tout prix sont le lipogramme, la cohérence du contenu et le style de l'original, mais aussi la traduction adéquate des références intertextuelles.<sup>19</sup> En ce qui concerne les références intertextuelles, il s'agit pour le traducteur non seulement de faire entendre la voix d'autrui dans le texte traduit, mais aussi de repérer la voix d'autrui dans le texte à traduire. Vue la pratique citationnelle de Perec, qui aime à masquer les citations et à jouer avec une fausse érudition, c'est une tâche tout autre que facile.

Dans toutes les traductions dont je me suis occupée, le lipogramme se trouve au sommet de la « hiérarchie des équivalences », c'est pour ainsi parler quelque chose comme le « degré zéro » de la traduction. Mais puisque les moyens d'expression, les pouvoirs et limites d'expressivité varient de langue en langue, le travail de traduction est profondément différent du travail d'écriture. Même si à la fin l'original et la traduction se ressemblent parfaitement, l'auteur et le traducteur n'ont pas été soumis aux mêmes contraintes en écrivant. Ceci implique, pour les textes oulipiens, qu'une même contrainte peut agir sur la traduction de manière différente de celle de l'original. Si le traducteur veut rester fidèle aux règles du jeu, il aura donc à se demander en quoi consistent exactement ces règles. S'agit-il de se priver de la voyelle « e », ou bien de se priver de la lettre la plus indispensable – sur le plan lexical et morphématique – de la langue cible?

Cette dernière interprétation de la contrainte à respecter a amené l'équipe de chercheurs qui a entrepris la traduction espagnole du roman à changer la voyelle

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<sup>18</sup> Voir aussi Christian Schmitt, « Das sprachliche Experiment als Übersetzungsproblem », in *Übersetzungswissenschaft im Umbruch*, éd. Angelika Lauter (Tübingen: Narr, 1996), 95-106.

<sup>19</sup> Voir la postface d'Eugen Helmlé à sa traduction de *La Disparition* (Eugen Helmlé, « Nachwort des Übersetzers », in Georges Perec, *Anton Voyls Fortgang*, trad. Eugen Helmlé [Zürich: Diaphanes, 2013], 367-387) et Christian Schmitt, « Das sprachliche Experiment, » 100.

interdite. Au lieu d'être un lipogramme en « e », leur traduction est un lipogramme en « a ». Cette décision entraîne bien sûr une série de changements aussi bien au niveau microtextuel que macrotextuel. Il fallait par exemple changer la division du récit en chapitres en fonction de l'amputation opérée sur l'alphabet espagnol.<sup>20</sup>

Il aurait été contradictoire de préserver cette structuration du péri-texte dans la version espagnole alors que la lettre supprimée n'était plus la cinquième mais la première d'un alphabet qui de surcroît ne comprend pas vingt-six signes, mais vingt-sept ou vingt-huit suivant les écoles, et qui ne dispose que de cinq voyelles. [...] Toutefois, comme le numérotage des chapitres devait correspondre au nombre de signes de l'alphabet, on a adopté une solution de compromis consistant à diviser le chapitre quatorze en deux et à considérer le « Y » espagnol comme une semi-voyelle.

Nous touchons ici à la frontière entre traduction et adaptation. Michael Schreiber, qui a consacré sa thèse de doctorat à la distinction des deux notions, affirme que la traduction dépasse ses limites et devient adaptation, si les changements apportés au texte ne s'expliquent pas par la nécessité interne du texte, mais résultent uniquement de la volonté du traducteur/éditeur.<sup>21</sup> Dans cette perspective, toutes les traductions considérées ici sont de vraies traductions de *La Disparition*, même si à la surface elles ressemblent souvent plus à une réécriture créatrice qu'à une traduction fidèle.

Les écarts parfois très sensibles par rapport à l'histoire originale s'expliquent presque toujours par les exigences de la contrainte et par la volonté des traducteurs d'imiter tel ou tel jeu avec la langue. Dans plusieurs traductions, on peut observer une tendance, plus ou moins marquée, à compenser les pertes que toute traduction entraîne - jeux de mots ou double sens intraduisibles, allusions ou références intertextuelles que le lecteur de la langue cible ne saisira pas - par le rajout de jeux de mots, allusions etc. ailleurs dans le texte. Cette stratégie de compensation, toute problématique qu'elle puisse être - car en somme, un changement du texte par soustraction et un changement par addition ne se neutralisent pas, mais font toujours deux changements du texte - nous renseignent sur ce que les traducteurs ont identifié comme des éléments essentiels du texte. En outre, ils montrent qu'ils jugent

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<sup>20</sup> Hermes Salceda, « Traduire les contraintes de *La Disparition* en espagnol » in *L'œuvre de Georges Perec: réception et mythisation*, éd. Jean-Luc Joly (Rabat : Publications de l'Université Mohammed-V, 2002), 211. 209-227.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Schreiber, *Übersetzung und Bearbeitung* (Tübingen: Narr, 1993), 353.

essentielle l'imitation du procédé d'écriture, c'est-à-dire l'insertion de jeux de mots, de références intertextuelles, etc., mais pas leur insertion à la même place que dans l'original.

On peut pourtant discerner des cas qui montrent nettement jusqu'à quel point les traducteurs sont prêts à sacrifier la fidélité au niveau de l'histoire pour la fidélité au niveau métatextuel, et où se trouvent les limites de cette volonté d'imiter le jeu.

Par exemple, la phrase « Portons dix bons whiskys à l'avocat goujat qui fumait au zoo »<sup>22</sup>, par laquelle Anton Voyl termine la lettre d'adieu envoyée à ses amis, prend une valeur métalittéraire. Il s'agit d'une version lipogrammatique du célèbre pangramme « Portez ce vieux whisky au juge blond qui fume », d'un énoncé qui contient toutes les lettres de l'alphabet. Bien que tous les traducteurs – à l'exception de Gilbert Adair – conservent le caractère pangrammatique de la phrase, ils renoncent à l'idée de la remplacer par un pangramme plus connu dans la langue cible et par conséquent plus facile à reconnaître comme tel:

Pangrammes connus La Disparition Portons dix bons whiskys à l'avocat goujat qui fumait au zoo. Portez ce vieux whisky au juge blond qui fume Anton Voyls Fortgang (trad. Eugen Helmlé) Bringt Advokat H., wo im Zoo ständig raucht, acht Whisky von 1a Qualität.<sup>23</sup> Franz jagt im komplett verwehrlosten Taxi quer durch Bayern. Vanish'd (trad. John Lee)

Quick! X hot tots of brand whisky for an unjoyful solicitor smoking at Paris zoo! (viz. a quick brown fox jumps at this lazy dog, as any typist will know, but such a translation would play havoc with our story, wouldn't it?)<sup>24</sup> A quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog A Void, (trad. Gilbert Adair) I ask all 10 of you, with a glass of whisky in your hand – and not just any whisky but a top-notch brand – to drink to that solicitor who is so boorish as to light up his cigar in a zoo.<sup>25</sup> A quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog La scomparsa (trad. Piero Falchetta) Ho xilografato l'avvocato jazzista, quando fuma allo zoo: gli portano 10 buon whisky.<sup>26</sup> Quel vituperabile xenofobo zelante assaggia il whisky ed esclama: alleluja! El secuestro (trad. Marisol Arbués et al.) Llevemos urgentemente los diez buenos whiskys pequeños, pedidos por el fullero jurisperito que

<sup>22</sup> Perec, « La Disparition », 347.

<sup>23</sup> Perec, *Anton Voyls Fortgang*, 61.

<sup>24</sup> Perec, *Vanish'd*, trad. John Lee (inédit, 1989), 36-37.

<sup>25</sup> Perec, *A Void*, trad. Gilbert Adair (London: Harvill 1994), 39.

<sup>26</sup> Perec, *La scomparsa*, trad. Piero Falchetta (Napoli, Guida editori, 1995), 45.

consume un exótico puro en el zoo.<sup>27</sup> Benjamín pidió una bebida de kiwi y fresa. Noé, sin vergüenza, la más exquisita champaña del menú. Ce constat n'est pas banal, puisque que la phrase est un des lieux privilégiés où se manifeste le rapport paradoxal entre le signifiant et le signifié dans *La Disparition*. Les amis d'Anton Voyl mécomprennent la phrase, parce qu'ils cherchent seulement à comprendre son contenu et n'ont pas d'yeux pour sa forme linguistique.<sup>28</sup> Mais ce n'est qu'au niveau du signifiant, en s'apercevant qu'il s'agit d'un pangramme, que la phrase obtient un sens. Elle met en évidence « qu'en matière de lecture, deux attitudes opposées sont possibles, selon que l'on fait cas ou non de la dimension matérielle de l'écrit. »<sup>29</sup>

L'interprétation sur le plan fictionnel ne permet pas aux personnages de comprendre la disparition d'Anton Voyl, mais elle donnera lieu à une rencontre des amis au zoo, où chacun s'était rendu dans l'espérance d'y trouver l'avocat qui fume, et fera avancer l'histoire. La dualité du fond et de la forme est donc à la fois un *déclencheur d'écriture*<sup>30</sup> et une réflexion sur le mode de lecture. Les traducteurs, à l'exception de John Lee, renoncent à l'idée de rendre explicite ce caractère double de la phrase en choisissant un pangramme connu dans la langue cible, mais donnent la préférence à la lecture sur le plan fictionnel. Cette petite phrase permet deux observations. D'abord, tout comme les traducteurs, les personnages du roman interprètent sans cesse des signes et des messages, même si leurs conditions de savoir diffèrent. En même temps, les traducteurs sont souvent contraints à adopter l'interprétation des personnages pour éviter de trop grands changements de l'intrigue. L'exemple de John Lee met en évidence ce dilemme du traducteur. Ainsi, comme nous le rappelle Fernand Hörner, le traducteur est « un chercheur qui est à la fois lecteur et auteur, un auteur qui est à la fois lecteur et chercheur, un lecteur qui est à la fois chercheur et auteur. »<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Perec, *El secuestro*, trad. Marisol Arbués et al. (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1997), 54.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Schleypen, *Schreiben aus dem Nichts*, 90 [ma traduction].

<sup>29</sup> Marc Parayre, *Lire La Disparition de Georges Perec* (Toulouse: Univ., Diss., 1992), 20.

<sup>30</sup> Schleypen, *Schreiben aus dem Nichts*, 90.

<sup>31</sup> Fernand Hörner, « L'autre dans l'autre. La traduction des références intertextuelles », in *S'approprier l'autre. La traduction de textes littéraires en tant qu'interprétation et réception créatrice*, éd. Thomas Klinkert (Berlin: ESV, 2011), 88.

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# The Interactive Graphic Novel in the Light of New Technologies and New Media

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## Introduction

In this paper we would like to look at some interesting artistic expressions of the relationship between image and text, represented by the graphic novel. More particularly, we would like to explore how the crucial changes brought about by the new media and hypermedia shape a new image of the well established genre which is the comics book and what important new questions it poses to contemporary literary or artistic criticism. Our aim is also to show how well established paraliterary genres interact with new technologies and hypermedia, thus offering a totally new ground for artistic creativity. Furthermore, we try to show that the author no longer stands as a single creating entity but very often, as is the case of an interactive graphic novel, is a collective masterpiece. Our main concern, though, will be to show and discuss the hybrid character of the genres mixing text and image, and how different influences come to shape the general landscape of what is called an interactive graphic novel. We will deal with examples from the Anglophone and Francophone artistic worlds, which are the best known to us.

Hypermedia is defined as a method of structuring information in different media for a single user whereby related items are connected in the same way as a hypertext. The term "hypertext" was coined in 1965 by Ted Nelson, who defined it as non-sequential writing - a text that branches and allows choices to the reader. Nelson also coined the term "hypermedia" for non-textual information, such as images, movies, and sounds, that is connected in a hypertextual way. It can be said that through hypertext and hypermedia we are witnessing a crucial period not only from the point of view of creating, distributing and sharing information, but also we are witnessing a redefinition of the way we read as readers. This involves not only reading news on the internet but our reading habits of reading fiction and books as well, especially as far as the

relationship between text and image is concerned. A Web 2.0 website may allow users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue, as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community, in contrast to Web sites where people are limited to the passive viewing of the contents. Examples of Web 2.0 include social networking sites, blogs, wikis, folksonomies, video sharing sites, hosted services, Web applications, and mashups. Web 2.0 brings into reading new features that didn't exist before or were rather limited, most importantly linked readers participating in the creative process through aspects of folksonomy<sup>1</sup> and sharing authorship. Thus it is common to have more than one or even many authors of one work of art so that it may even be difficult to determine who the author of a work of art is. An interesting corollary phenomenon is that of real-time writing, whereby a written text reaches its readers in seconds, without even having to reload the webpage, as it was under Web 1.0. Another important ubiquitous feature is customization – the author of a work can choose and target only a segment of very precisely defined readers: be it by their gender, social category, place of origin, interests; he can even supply different information of his work for each subgroup of such readers. In this creative environment, the reader can not only choose their author(s), which has always been quite normal, but he can block the unwanted ones and most importantly, he can also customize the content he wants to see in a sophisticated way.

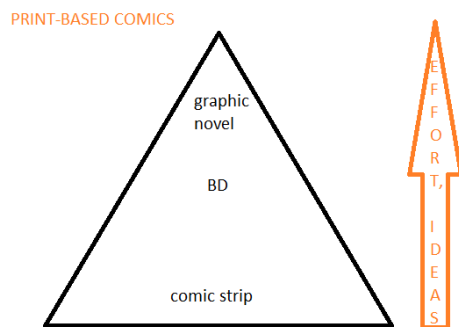
Similarly, the communication between the author and the reader changes too. Authors can get feedback instantly in the form of short comments or likes, and also through various tagging procedures, which are usually subsumed in the group label of folksonomy. To reply, the readers have options that vary from a word to a whole essay (and the collection of such essays can represent the “collective” feedback), which the author can or need not take into consideration for his further creation. The purely textual character of the communication changes too: especially in social networks, it is common to answer with an image, animated image or image mixed with text. A very interesting semiotic process stands behind the usage of memes. Memes are widely accepted (by the community of users) and almost standardized “iconic” images that are intended to carry the speaker's attitude. These may be accompanied by a textual

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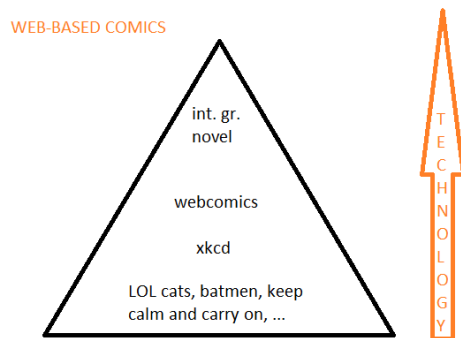
<sup>1</sup> A folksonomy is a system of classification derived from the practice and method of collaboratively creating and translating tags to annotate and categorize content; this practice is also known as collaborative tagging, social classification, social indexing, and social tagging.

message which either intensifies or plays down the semiotic character of the image itself.

In summary, new technologies and new media bring about a redefinition of the paradigms of the ways we create, read and communicate. While it is clear now to almost anybody that things have changed substantially in our daily communication, less attention is paid to the redefinition of this communication process in the arts. We hope that this article might help bridge one of the gaps in this sense. More specifically, to fit in the discussion on text and image, we chose to discuss a contemporary phenomenon, that of interactive graphic novel, originating from what goes broadly under the label of web comics in English or BD in French. We will try to explain how the interactive graphic novel is born as a complex genre by proceeding from the bottom to the top of complexity.



Starting with a demonstration of print-based comics - from comic strips through comics and finally getting to the graphic novel - we will try to demonstrate that hybrid creations mixing images and texts is quite old and universal. On the other hand, there is a new generation of creations that can exist only thanks to the existence of computers: webstrips, animated comics, webcomics and on the top of the sophistication, interactive graphic novels, requiring a high level of cooperation among its creators, as well as a high degree of technology.



### The Web Strip: Text and Image at Its Simplest

It seems to be a practical starting point to claim that images are omnipresent in modern media: they become as easily copied and transmitted as used to be the case for printed text after the Gutenberg invention of the press. Yet, there are some qualitative differences in comparison with the periods before computers. Nowadays, a mixture between text and image becomes more and more common and easy to create, which gives birth to a whole lot of popular computer creations. The combination of images with a short text becomes part of many relatively recent or contemporary internet phenomena (very often linked to Facebook, but not exclusively), including lolcats, grumpy cats, stock images such as “KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON”, Batman slapping Robin etc., but also sophisticated web comics often having science, technology or computers as subject: probably the best known example is *xkcd* comics. Although many of these individual creations are not worth a literary scholar's attention, they are very interesting in their entirety as a phenomenon of what we would call a digital native generation subculture, exemplifying some of the existing

literary categories. We can find not only a strongly viral<sup>2</sup> character in some, but also, with reference to Roman Jakobson, a conative and phatic function, among others, and above all, a strong degree of playfulness and creativity, but also that of immediacy.

To move on to the comics and the graphic novel, we would like to sketch a certain hierarchy from the most simple to the more complex manifestations of this subgenre. Let's start with the strip: it is a sequence of drawings arranged in interrelated panels to display a brief humorous sketch or form of narrative; most often divided in three such panels, it allows the author to comment on some current event, political proclamation or media statement. The strips demonstrate clearly what we have stated above: a natural interaction between image and text, some narrative development and linguistic elements introduced by the text, and very often, concluding in a surprising punchline. What is a rather interesting phenomenon with regard to the above-mentioned customization and semiotic process, there are numerous generators of these stylized strips, the image being fixed and the text created by the folksonomy readers. Very often, the user can become a creator by filling in the three bubbles of a three-pane strip himself.



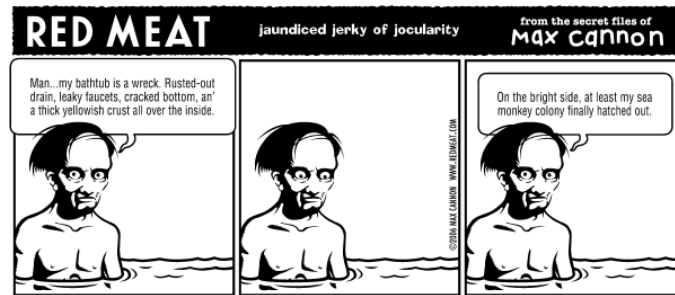
*A customizable Batman Slapping Robin meme generator*

When we see these customizable fixed-image strips, we may think of an analogy with the literary tradition of a *poème à forme fixe*, or to be more concrete, a visual *poème à forme fixe* – although, of course, what we see here is not that sophisticated – it is rather little everyday “popular poetry”. What is interesting, is that this flux of

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<sup>2</sup> It is a nice metaphor from the social networks, meaning that the information spreads as quickly as a virus in population.

popular culture represented by social networks comes together with certain recent tendencies in standard comics books or even some TV series, such as for example parodies of contemporary personalities, commenting on the most recent events (that very often happened on the same day) etc.



*Red Meat represents one of the classics of the genre of the webcomics*

### Toward the Graphic Novel

To continue from a (web) comic strip to the comics, it would be convenient to give a definition of the comics as a genre. But due to space restrictions and the definitional difficulties, we will skip this theoretical part to go on directly to a graphic novel, hoping we may shed some light on the genre of the comics itself through discussions of the graphic novel. What is then a graphic novel? The term graphic novel covers several meanings: it can be used to give to the comics a nobler name, more serious, less infantile, to make it different from the traditional *bande dessinée*. Historically, the graphic novel has been used to single out a subgenre of the *bande dessinée* which is not a classical comic book, ie. the superhero fascicles. In France, the term “*roman graphique*”, a translation from English, is used to differentiate it from the traditional French-Belgian comics albums. For example, the author can enjoy a greater creative freedom: he can free himself from the constraints of the genre, such as the traditional structure of a classical *bande dessinée* and consecrate a greater part to the text or to the image, according to what he intends to show in his work. As a corollary, there is a greater artistic aspiration in a graphic novel, going hand in hand with a narrative ambition. These works of art are not limited by length limitations and very often the authors use black and white images together with the conception of the drawings as a special kind of writing and not as an illustration. The term *graphic novel* itself purports

to extend a literary tradition and general respect for the novel, which goes across all the Occident. Thus, the graphic novel subscribes to the literary ambition rather than a purely graphical one, in the sense of a literary work created by an author who uses his imagination and creative skills to tell a story. Likewise to the novel, it is a very general label, suggesting that the comics can at the same time make part of higher literature while also being a place for graphic experiments.

As for its subjects, the graphic novel attracts not that much adventure or “fun” in general but very often it is an account of somebody's life in the form of (auto)biography, recollections of some important historical events (First and Second World Wars, the revolution years and so on). Thus, typical representatives of a graphic novel are *Persepolis*, *La guerre d'Alan*, *Maus* or *L'ascension du Haut Mal*. Unlike the comics, the graphic novel differs in its narrative perspective by being more intimate or subjective and much less epic. In its form, the graphic novel is often characterized by its format, purposefully trying to get as close as possible to a literary novel. For aesthetic reasons, these works are often in black and white, on a thicker paper and generally presented as an *objet de beauté*, produced with great care.

The aforementioned literary ambition and that of trying to legitimate the comics for the literary institution is best illustrated by *Maus* by Art Spiegelman, the only comics to have received the Pulitzer Prize in 1992. What makes *Maus* a graphic novel rather than a comics, is firstly its form – the length of the book, the artistic depictions of the characters and scenes, but also, and most importantly, its contents and its subject – the extremely serious and horrifying subject of the concentration camps and the narrative perspective of a testimony. Many of the recent graphic novels ascribe to the literary tradition even more directly, by a rewriting or pastiching of a well-known literary text. In this way, *The Guardian* has published the works of the eminent Posy Simmonds, *Gemma Boverly* and *Tamara Drewe*, which stand as rewritings of *Emma Bovary* and *Far from the Madding Crowd* by Gustave Flaubert and Thomas Hardy respectively. For example, *Gemma Boverly* intends to be a modernized version of the French 19<sup>th</sup> century classic. Gemma and her husband Charlie leave London for a romantic farm in Normandy. Soon Gemma gets bored and starts an affair, watched jealously by Joubert, the local baker, who is at the same time the writer/draughtsman of the story. Similar themes are to be found in *Tamara Drewe*, which is also a modern reworking of the novel by Hardy. Both these comics were subsequently shot as movies

by Stephen Frears, another example of the facility of transgeneric passages between graphic novels and movies.

In summary, some of the general tendencies of the graphic novel have to do with serious and rather intimate topics, important historical events or even great literary narratives which are updated and modernize through this new genre (or is it media?).

### Ergodic Possibilities for Digital Comics

In the final part of this paper, we would like to extend these reflections towards a very recent new media genre, by portraying some basic considerations concerning the interactive graphic novel. To do that, we will have to introduce the theoretical concept of an ergodic text by Espen Aarseth. Put simply, an ergodic text is one that requires a nontrivial effort to allow the reader to read it. A nontrivial effort can entail many different physical or mental activities of the reader: putting parts of the text together, looking for some missing elements, finding a way through a labyrinth of stories, combining paradigmatic elements, problem solving etc. Aarseth broke with the basic assumption that the medium was the most important distinction, and argued that the mechanics of texts need not be medium-specific. Ergodic literature is not defined by medium, but by the way in which the text functions. Thus, both paper-based and electronic texts can be ergodic: "The ergodic work of art is one that in a material sense includes the rules for its own use, a work that has certain requirements built in that automatically distinguishes between successful and unsuccessful users." (Aarseth 1997, 179) Despite this distinction, it seems that the field of ergodic literature is greatly boosted by the arrival of new technologies.

The non-trivial interaction offers digital comics the opportunity to re-define the reader-text relationship. Eric Hayot and Edward Wesp clarify what Aarseth means by non-trivial interaction by writing ergodic texts actively encourage the reader to make decisions, and moreover make visible and central that act of decision-making: the active enactment of choice (as opposed to the naturalized "choice" to turn to the next page, or to keep reading left to right) is what makes the ergodic difference stick (Hayot and Wesp 2004, 406). In short, the different, intentional choices that a reader makes should (in some way) affect the outcome, or narrative, of a text. Certainly, one can see how non-trivial effort could be used to describe, discuss, and analyze games,

particularly video/computer games such as *Sim City*, *World of Warcraft* or *Age of Empires*—all games that require intentional, interactive choices that affect the way the game/narrative is played out.

Currently, it is difficult to find a digital comic that perfectly exemplifies Aarseth's notion of "non-trivial" effort. The best example of a digital comic that requires some non-trivial effort on the part of the reader is Stu Campbell's *Nawlz*. Described on the official website as "an interactive comic that combines text, illustration, music, animation, and interactivity to create a never before seen panoramic comic format" (Campbell 2008), *Nawlz* tells the story of Harley Chambers, a cyber-graffiti artist with the power to cast "reals" throughout the city (a *real* is a term describing technological hallucination). Rooted in the surreal and bizarre, *Nawlz* requires several reads to grasp the unique interplay of sound, alphabetic text, and animation.

For example, there is a form of non-trivial interaction in that readers can technically choose how to interact with the text (scrolling or pointing-and-clicking), what is more, the pointing-and-clicking requires an additional element to it: searching for the unlockable content. In addition to non-trivial effort, *Nawlz* makes use of several modes of communication to provide a different, immersive experience for the reader; put another way, it makes use of the tools afforded to digital comics. It also reminds readers of the medium they are consuming the digital comics, emphasizing immediacy and hypermediacy.

Another good and quite sophisticated example of an interactive comics is *Shifter* by Brian Haberlin and Brian Holguin. It is somewhere between interactive fiction and a video game: the graphics, special effects and its overall feel make it look like a video game, the plotline and impossibility to control the character or even "play" a game define it rather as a graphic novel.



*The cover for the Shifter interactive novel*

Let's give a brief summary of the story before we analyze some crucial characteristics of this digital comics. In *Shifter*, we start off with Noah, who is just your average government employee that has a job flying drones to keep an eye on the environment. While getting ready to finish his day and head out to his bachelor party, he notices something unusual. After reporting it to his boss, he heads out for the night, not giving it a second thought. Everything seems normal when he gets up the next day for a nature hike, he even stops to help a couple of guys who are lost on the trail. Following an accident that leaves him half drowned and stuck in an underground cavern, he eventually makes his way to another cave that seems to be the legendary White Lodge that the Native Americans once held sacred. Above him hangs a sphere that abruptly pulls him inside and begins to interact with him in order to repair the damage done to his body.

Calling him the Operator, the entity that inhabits the sphere offers a tutorial on the abilities that it provides. It seems that through the Interface, Noah is able to inhabit the mind and control the movements of several specimens that this Outpost has taken over the millennia, from reptiles to men. The Interface allows him to inhabit these creatures and can even go so far as teleporting the creature to various points around the globe. By using these animals (and a human female), Noah is able to reconstruct what happened to him and determine that he was made to be the scapegoat in a conspiracy to create anarchy and bring chaos to millions of lives. Now it is up to Noah and the avatars of historical creatures to solve the mystery and oppose the threat of a complot inside one of the powerful governmental organizations. We can also observe the omnipresent problem of having to work around the protocols set forth by the Interface and find a *modus vivendi* between man and machine.

In more than one way, *Shifter* represents a breakthrough in the genre of interactive graphic novels. It brings about many innovations - first and foremost, it surprises by its state-of-the-art form and graphical aspect. As far as the form is concerned, it is perfectly professional, the user can see that it required many different technical and artistic professionals to collaborate in a collective project. Furthermore, on the contents level, it plays with the conventions of the traditional genres of the adventure story, the thriller or the spy novel, by recycling their codes and subverting them simultaneously through transmediation, parody and special effects common to computer games (such as changing avatars and teleporting). Also, this interactive graphic novel created for iPads, is autoreferential to the world of computers as well as to that of the Apple

products. For example, computers depicted in the novel are spoofed as coming from the “Pear company”, marked with the appropriate bitten-out logo representing a pear. A very interesting and perhaps revolutionary aspect is the encyclopedic overlap layer of this graphic novel – as we read through it, a transparent blue ball appears in some narrative frames. It represents a hypertextual link to an encyclopedic entry provided by the Interface the main character inhabits and communicates with. If we want to, we can click on this ball and learn more about the First Nations, the prehistoric animals, avatars of the main hero, but also about floods in America. Reading these articles pauses the main story line for a moment to inform the reader about the background “stories” and completes the whole picture. Last but not least, the marketing strategy is also interesting. The first chapter is free for downloading but when the reader gets to a (real) cliffhanger (in fact the story is interrupted when the hero is falling into a waterfall), a “metafictional” page appears where he can buy the rest of the book for a few dollars.

As a whole, this story represents one of the possible developments of the genre of the interactive graphic novel: professional production by a team of experts very close to that of shooting a blockbuster or programming a videogame. At the same time, the technological advances allow these teams experimenting with its new possibilities not only on the formal but also on the contents level.

## Conclusion

In the conclusion, I'd like to sum up some of the theoretical issues concerning the critical aspects of these new genres. The new media represent a new and fascinating field that is constituting itself upon some pre-existing genres. Yet, the electronic media serve not only as a formal background, their form influences in a crucial way the contents and the way the reader interacts. What has to be established, is the status of such works in the overall literary axiology and critical reception. We have seen that the comics is still looked down upon as a paraliterary genre; the authors then try to remedy its rather negative connotation by substituting comic books with a graphic novel. The crucial question is whether this relatively new subgenre could achieve a full status and acclaim a place in the literary field? What kind of art is it anyway? We can ask which activity verb to use when approaching such works: do we read them, do we

watch them, do we look at them or do we explore them in a general meaning of the word? We must also take into consideration that it is not only traditional multimedia elements, be it text, music or pictures, but completely new technologies step in, such as GPS, virtual or augmented reality and so on.

The proportion between the text and the image has to be tackled as well. What we still miss in analyzing such creations is a subtler “toolbox” concerning the interaction between the visual and the textual information. The textual part often being minimal, we as readers have to rely on the image. Yet, can the image cater for what would normally be supplied to the reader by a complex interplay of the text? Can the bubbles of the graphic novel replace the sublime psychology of the characters? And also, we have to establish elements of the semiotics of the graphic novel, perhaps also including the interactive items such as dialogues, buttons, hot spots that can also play a role in the semiotic process.

The adaptation of existing novels into graphic novels is a bit like staging a theatre play: its author has to decide whether the graphic novel is an interpretation or a visual retelling of the same story. Thus, the new author is a real director: he has to select, cut and reduce. And finally, the author has to decide what is the purpose and the target group of such works. Is it a purely aesthetic or a practical one as well? We can imagine creating such works for a museum exhibition, for education purposes or even for children or young people. Above all, and let us finish on this risky statement, we always fear that the technology prevails upon the plot and that the special effects become much cooler than the story itself.

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