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IMAGINAIRES ENTRE FOI ET JEU. HUMOUR ET IRONIE : LE DOUBLE JEU DE L'IMAGINAIRE

Jean-Jacques WUNENBURGER*

Abstract: *Humor and irony are installed in any enunciation process when the enunciator wants to introduce a second intentionality of distancing with regard to the proper content. Is their use in the field of imaginary productions self-evident? On the one hand, the imaginary, in the aesthetic sense, is supposed to arouse an adhesion, a pleasure, present in the reverie (in the sense of G. Bachelard), which would culminate in religious belief, incompatible with humor and irony. But on the other hand, as regards all fictional narrative, like the myth, it can open up to a "free game", which can go as far as deconstruction or a mise en abyme, as in several contemporary literary schools. The bottom line would not be, in the end, to define a good use of humor and irony, which always risk depoetizing the works of the imagination.*

Keywords: belief; game; myth; new fiction; romanticism.

Pensée et parole produisent des énoncés vrai ou faux, dénotés, comme disent les linguistes, qui se rapportent à des référents physiques ou intellectuels, dont ils qualifient, dans nos langues verbo-nominales, les propriétés par des verbes, noms et attributs. Mais souvent ces énoncés s'enrichissent par des significations supplémentaires, connotées, des métaphores analogiques qui élargissent le contenu en associant des sens figurés ; mais aussi par des écarts rhétoriques performatifs, humour ou ironie, qui dépassent la description ou le jugement propre et introduisent une distanciation dans l'intention déclarative. On peut donc distinguer deux enrichissements de toute formulation langagière : un écart sémantique (métaphore) ou un écart d'intention logico-stylistique (vouloir dire autre chose que le dit littéral). Il convient de distinguer, parmi ces suppléments informatifs, d'une part le rire et le comique qui visent une condition/ situation, un enchaînement de faits immanents au réel, qui dérogent aux normes attendues¹, et d'autre part, l'humour et l'ironie qui sont des tonalités (surtout orales) qui modifient le statut de l'énoncé, le rapport du sujet au réel via la manière de dire, de proférer l'énoncé. Ils se servent moins des mots que de formules stylistiques, un ton, voire un langage corporel (sourire). Ce jeu du métadiscours, s'il enrichit l'expression et les échanges (dans les dialogues de Socrate déjà chez Platon) peut-il aussi se développer, se prolonger dans le langage de l'imaginaire, qui ne se prononce plus sur du réel mais de l'irréel ? L'imaginaire, pour donner un contenu à ce qui n'existe pas, ne va-t-il pas avoir besoin de susciter une adhésion de croyance au moins chez le destinataire qui éloigne de la distanciation par l'humour et l'ironie ? Les choses sont sans doute plus subtiles, voyons de plus près.

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¹ Voir H. Bergson, *Le rire*, PUF.

1. Humour et ironie comme enrichissement du discours

Les procédés de l'humour et de l'ironie sont utilisés pour introduire une distanciation du sujet de l'énonciation et pour charger d'une intention de second degré le message pour le destinataire. Par eux le sujet manifeste une forme de liberté par rapport à l'affirmation factuelle ou dogmatique, pratique une dénivellation de l'expression contre l'instrumentalisation du langage. Ils sont présents dans tous les actes de langage qui énoncent une vérité factuelle ou intellectuelle ; et sont particulièrement développés dans le dialogue, plus que dans le monologue (rhétoriques philosophique, politique, psychanalytique, psychologique). Ces figures ont fait l'objet d'une théorisation philosophique surtout dans la pensée antique, chez Platon, dans le romantisme allemand, chez Kierkegaard ou Hegel¹.

« Par là, l'ironie désigne une technique de l'éphémère que l'on retrouve dans le *Witz* élevé par les romantiques allemands au rang d'art supérieur. Le « souffle divin de l'ironie » dont parle Friedrich Schlegel traverse le « génie » qui se sert du langage pour faire paraître la fragilité des ordres sociaux et se libérer du monde. On perçoit sur cet exemple ce que l'ironie peut avoir de réactif. Le romantisme allemand est une réplique aux Lumières et à la confiance naïve qu'elles placent, selon lui, dans les capacités du langage humain à dire le vrai et le bien. Dans ce cadre, ironiser consiste à miner les croyances qui portent sur la transparence du monde au discours rationnel. En réduisant le réel au paradoxe, l'écrivain ironiste provoque le doute sur les savoirs scientifiques comme sur les certitudes partagées »².

Leur valorisation vient de ce que la position du sujet énonciateur, posé comme une finitude absolutisée, se confronte elle-même à un infini, à un déplacement, qui relativise la vérité énoncée, et accède à une position décentrée, sans point fixe, qui fragilise la position initiale (par un renversement de sens : « quel beau temps ! » pouvant désigner une réalité ou un antonyme). Humour et ironie peuvent s'appliquer à soi, en se dédoublant, ou à l'autre, en le mimant pour en décliner les limites.

« Pour Novalis, l'ironie est la conscience souveraine se plaçant au-dessus de tout contenu. Elle est la réflexion absolument claire, l'attention à soi, « la véritable présence d'esprit ». Très sensible au balancement dialectique des expressions, dépouillement de tout contenu et apparition du soi-libre, Frédéric Schlegel définit l'ironie : « la forme du paradoxe », « une synthèse absolue d'anti-thèses absolues », « le changement continu et qui se produit soi-même de deux pensées en lutte », « une succession continue d'autocréations et d'autodestructions », ou encore « la licence la plus libre, car grâce à elle on peut se dépasser soi-même et aussi la plus légitime, car elle est absolument nécessaire. » Comment comprendre cette succession continue d'autocréations et d'autodestructions ? Cette synthèse absolue d'antithèses absolues ? Pour que la liberté absolue du Moi, l'infinité de l'esprit se manifeste, le moi empirique doit se défaire de ses déterminations en les niant. C'est par la continue négation de soi, comme limité, comme fini, « par une sorte d'anéantissement que l'esprit développe sa puissance de création, qu'il établit sa souveraineté à l'égard de la nature ». C'est pourquoi l'ironie est souvent identifiée à un survol, à une attitude cognitive supérieure, à un dépassement du limité et du conditionné, à une « concentration du moi dans le moi,

¹ Voir S. Kierkegaard, *Le concept d'ironie*, in Oeuvres complètes, vol.2, Ed. de l'Orante, 1984.
Voir aussi A. Béguin, *L'âme romantique et le rêve*, Réed. Le livre de poche, 1993.

² M. Foessel, « Hegel, Kierkegaard et l'ironie contemporaine » in *Esprit*, mai 2013.

pour lequel tous les liens sont rompus et qui ne peut vivre que dans la félicité qui procure la jouissance de soi-même » »¹.

On a donc affaire à une rhétorique, une stylistique, qui permettent de désabsolutiser le référent visé, nommé, montré, non par la négation, le déni ni par l'évitement ou la disparition mais en le visant sur un mode qui empêche l'adhésion, la croyance, devenant ainsi une arme non violente de la critique, une reprise du réel comme non sérieux. Conduits jusqu'au bout, ils peuvent devenir dangereux, agressifs, ravageurs, dénonciateurs, voire nihilistes². A petite dose, homéopathique, ils alertent, déstabilisent les discours pesant, au premier degré, dogmatique. Entre la crédulité naïve et la dérision généralisée, ils ouvrent des espaces d'intelligence distanciée³.

2. Distanciation et œuvre imaginaire

Il s'agit à présent de savoir jusqu'où conduire la pratique de l'humour et de l'ironie ? Ils ont d'abord mauvaise presse dans les champs d'énonciation de vérités fortes, infaillibles : sciences, droit, religions (où leur usage transgressif peut justement être revendiqué au nom de la liberté de penser, comme une distanciation à l'égard de leur présumée vérité⁴). L'humour et l'ironie ne sont pas compatibles avec des énoncés contraignants, ils exigent ce que Hegel appelait un « état de haute culture », où l'esprit peut se sentir assez fort pour ne pas aliéner sa liberté à des contenus nécessaires ou obligatoires. Mais de manière générale humour et ironie trouvent-ils leur place et leur usage dans les œuvres de l'imaginaire⁵ ? L'imagination fictionnelle tout en décrivant des actants dotés d'humour et d'ironie, peut-elle manier elle-même l'humour et l'ironie ?

On doit prendre acte d'emblée qu'il existe deux thèses paradoxales et ambivalentes car humour et ironie ont un statut spécifique et complexe si on considère la textualité de l'imaginaire. D'un côté, l'imaginaire, donnant corps à une irréalité, ne peut entraîner des effets de rêverie, d'enchantement, de divertissement que si cette irréalité est immunisée contre toute distanciation, qui en révélerait la fiction, la mystification. Mythe, roman, cinéma exigent une adhésion de croyance à leurs contenus, au moins le temps de leur visée consciente et du plaisir attenant. Mais ne risque-t-on pas de confondre alors l'intentionnalité de l'imagination avec une conscience hallucinée, fragile, magique, qui éviterait à tout prix de rendre conscient le

¹ Camilla Larouche-Tanguay et Lionel Ponton, « Hegel et Kierkegaard : l'ironie comme thème philosophique », *Laval théologique et philosophique*, Volume 39, numéro 3, octobre 1983. URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/400047arDOI> : <https://doi.org/10.7202/400047ar>

² Cette dimension iconoclaste se retrouve dans l' »humour noir » et dans l'ironie nihiliste, bien présente dans l'esprit viennois de la fin du 19^e siècle en Autriche, marqué par l'humour juif. Voir O. Cavalier, *Vienne, fin de siècle*, Hazan, 2005 ; et S. Freud, *Le mot d'esprit (Witz) et ses rapports avec l'inconscient*, Gallimard, 1992.

³ Voir V. Jankelevitch, *L'ironie*, Garnier-Flammarion, 2011 ; et Ph. Hamon, *L'ironie littéraire*, Hachette Education, 1996.

⁴ Dans le cas des caricatures religieuses qui peuvent être soit considérées comme des blasphèmes portant atteinte au respect de croyances religieuses ou comme des satires libératrices d'une crédulité. Voir en France l'affaire Charlie-Hebdo. Sur l'art et la censure voir Carole Talon-Hugon, *L'art sous contrôle*, PUF, Que sais-je ?, 2019.

⁵ On limitera la question aux œuvres de l'imaginaire, fiction et autofiction, passant par l'écriture et la narration.

« comme si » de la littéralité ? Mais d'un autre côté, si imaginer est aussi jouer avec des représentations, au sens de Kant¹, ce jeu d'images peut justement donner prise à une distanciation, et donc à des formes d'humour et d'ironie. Comment donner prise à cette position ?

A cet effet on peut redéfinir les termes d'imaginaire et de jeu :

« L'imaginaire est moins un ensemble de représentations fictives, fausses ou illusoires, qu'on pourrait identifier, maîtriser, combattre ou accepter sous réserves en certaines circonstances, qu'un langage symbolique universel à travers lequel nous donnons forme à des émotions, des images, des idées, des actions, en usant précisément de ses caractéristiques fascinantes et déroutantes : double sens des images, ambivalence des valeurs, non-dissociation du sensible et du sens, correspondances analogiques, unité des sens opposés, continuité de l'information logique et de l'apparence esthétique, compréhension existentielle, interprétation sans fin, etc. L'imaginaire est moins un domaine ou un territoire psychique propre qu'un mode de représentation qui se différencie du rationnel, de l'abstraction, du signe univoque, de l'identité et de la non-contradiction, de la connexion forte, de la démonstration et de la preuve, des classifications stables, etc. Si l'imaginaire s'exprime sans doute massivement dans la rêverie et les arts, il est aussi à l'œuvre dans toute perception spatio-temporelle, dans toute élaboration de souvenirs, dans toute préfiguration d'un àvenir, dans les formes d'adhésion à des idées politiques ou dans les forces d'attraction ou de répulsion sociales, etc. Tissu complexe d'affects et de représentations, l'imaginaire permet de produire et d'exprimer des significations et du sens, au risque certes d'erreurs et d'illusions, mais la raison peut-elle se prévaloir de mettre l'homme à leur abri ?

Nous conviendrons donc d'appeler imaginaire un ensemble dynamique de productions, mentales ou matérialisées dans des œuvres, à base d'images visuelles (tableau, dessin, photographie) et langagières (métaphore, symbole, récit), formant des ensembles cohérents et dynamiques, qui relèvent d'une fonction symbolique au sens d'un emboîtement de sens propres et figurés qui modifient ou enrichissent le réel perçu ou conçu »².

De même on appellera jeu, toute activité mentale, langagière ou matérielle qui transforme les relations entre les mots, entre les choses, entre les mots et les choses, en introduisant une marge de variation interne, productrice d'effets nouveaux, qui détournent la relation fonctionnelle ou conventionnelle initiale³. Le masque modifie mon apparence tout en me permettant de rester le même, le bâton permet à l'enfant de faire comme s'il se tenait sur un cheval, etc....

Comment dès lors le jeu inhérent aux expressions langagières de l'imaginaire comprend-il du jeu qui, à son tour, peut s'ouvrir à l'humour et à l'ironie, sous différentes formes ?

¹ Selon la formule de Kant : « Nous jouons souvent et volontiers avec l'imagination ; mais l'imagination (en tant que fantasmagorie) joue souvent avec nous et parfois bien avec contretemps » (E. Kant, *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique*, n° 31).

² Voir J.J. Wunenburger, *L'imaginaire*, PUF, Que sais-je ?, 6ème ed. 2020.

³ Voir J.J. Wunenburger, *La fête, le jeu et le sacré*, Ed. Universitaires, 1977.

3. Du mythe à la littérature comme distanciation

La forme générique et universelle d'histoires humaines est le mythe. Ce récit, d'abord anonyme et oral, doté de personnages et d'intrigues¹, constitue un support de croyances collectives. L'adepte du récit croit au récit comme vérité et se règle sur lui pour ses actions et pensées. Le mythos religieux –poly- ou monothéiste-, partagé et transmis, se donne comme un récit vrai, pris au sérieux et inspirant des convictions et des modèles². Cette littérature, orale ou écrite, peut cependant, dans une société à régime de pensée mythique, faire place au doute, à des réserves sur la factualité ou la signification, à l'incredulité mais qui n'est pas compatible de droit ou dans l'éthos narratif avec des pratiques d'humour et d'ironie. L'écart verbalisé en établirait la limite, la fragilité, l'incertitude, en associant le récit à un sens défini, relatif et non absolu ou infini. Le mythe religieux, par son origine indécidable, par sa transmission hiératique, exige la soumission, la crédulité, sinon il fait place au blasphème, au sacrilège (transgression du sacré) qui sont condamnés comme impiété³.

Mais dans un second temps, on peut identifier, dans presque toute culture de récits, l'avènement de l'ironie comme un moment et une figure de l'iconoclasme, sous la pression de la désacralisation, la sécularisation, la démythification, etc. La culture occidentale a développé, dès l'époque grecque ancienne, une tradition critique (avec l'ironie socratique qui a démystifié le mythe⁴) en passant du mythos au logos⁵; elle remplace le monologue du récit du conteur par un dialogue entre interlocuteurs qui déstabilise les énoncés, les met en mouvement, en établi chaque fois la fragilité, l'unilatéralité.

On peut reconstituer sommairement plusieurs étapes⁶:

- La démythification grecque. La culture mythique de la Grèce archaïque a fait progressivement l'objet d'une sécularisation, désacralisation, laïcisation qui l'ont transformé en contexte culturel de croyances héritées, destinées à une interprétation (en grec *hermenein*) puis à des recréations libres⁷. Cette démythisation accompagne la naissance de la littérature philosophique et de la littérature théâtrale comme l'a bien souligné F.Nietzsche⁸. Mais l'avènement du christianisme dans l'Europe méditerranéenne restaure une croyance religieuse qui veut remplacer la désacralisation des textes mythiques anciens par une foi nouvelle.
- L'avènement de la littérature romanesque à la fin du Moyen Age (littérature du Graal⁹) illustre une autonomie progressive de textes qui franchissent le pas

¹ Aristote, *La poétique*, Gallimard, TEL, 1997.

² M. Eliade, *Aspects du mythe*, Gallimard, ; J.J. Wunenburger, *La vie des images*, 2eme ed. ELLUG.

³ Sur le texte et le récit sacrés, voir J.J. Wunenburger, *Le sacré*, PUF, Que sais-je ?

⁴ Sur l'ironie de Socrate, voir J. Brun, *Socrate*, PUF, Que sais-je ?, 1998.

⁵ I. Buse, *Du mythos au logos*, L'Harmattan, 2008.

⁶ Nous avons développé cette question dans «Mytho-phorie, formes et transformations du mythe», in *Actualité du mythe*, Religiologiques, Montréal, N° 10, 1995, p 49-70.

⁷ G. Gusdorf, *Les origines de l'herméneutique*, Payot, 1998 ; P. Veyne, *Les Grecs ont-ils cru à leurs mythes ?*, Seuil, 1998.

⁸ F. Nietzsche, *La naissance de la tragédie grecque*, Livre de poche, 2013.

⁹ Voir Ph. Walter, *Le livre du Graal*, Gallimard, tomes 1 à 3, 2001.

entre le sacré et le profane¹? Des auteurs, encore anonymes au début, inventent, en marge des croyances religieuses, subjectivement des histoires, sur le fonds de traditions anciennes, qui deviennent autant de doubles de la vie humaine et sociale, pour élargir les histoires réelles ou fictives (démythologisation)².

- La littérature moderne, qui prend la forme du roman, remplace la vie des dieux par celle des hommes, plongés dans des mondes imaginaires créés de toutes pièces. A une époque récente, elle abandonne même l'intrigue à matrice mythique et invente d'autres exercices narratifs et rhétoriques qui peuvent eux-mêmes passer pour des jeux gratuits³.

A chaque étape, le texte narratif ouvre des étages verticales d'interprétation, vers le haut, comme métatexte, ou vers le bas (significations inconscientes en psychanalyse). On peut même faire du texte un exercice de jeux de vertige en abyme⁴.

4. « La nouvelle fiction »

Au terme de cette histoire, la littérature de fiction, émancipée du modèle de la sacralité mythique et religieuse, peut même intégrer comme moteur d'écriture l'humour et l'ironie. On peut illustrer ce type de créativité par des courants littéraires qui soumettent le mythe à une ré-écriture ludique qui œuvre par le moyen d'inversions ou de trompe-l'œil. Il s'agit alors non d'un retour du mythe archaïque, comme s'il s'agissait seulement d'adapter un mythe ancien aux conditions de sensibilité ou d'intelligibilité actuelles, mais d'un retour distancié au mythe avec une intention fictionnelle⁵. L'écrivain, en adaptant une matrice mythique de référence, remythise ainsi la littérature, au sens où il reconnaît que le mythe offre une charge symbolique inégalée et inégalable par l'imagination individuelle. Mais au lieu de se faire le simple héraut posthume d'un mythe mort, l'écrivain renoue avec l'ensemble des procédures de variation et de différenciation de la narrativité mythique afin de faire apparaître en filigrane une nouvelle histoire, inédite. Le nouveau texte du mythe est alors obtenu par des procédés contrôlés d'emboîtement, de superposition, de métissage interculturel, de croisements intertextuels parodiques ou ludiques (mélange de mythes bibliques et du paganisme, par exemple), qui ne sont souvent pas dénués, à leur tour, d'humour ou d'ironie.

Ainsi Frederick Tristan, défenseur d'un mouvement placé sous l'égide de la “Nouvelle fiction”, veut faire revivre dans de nouvelles histoires la panoplie de l'imaginaire mythique tel que Mircea Eliade le plaçait à l'origine de la vision du monde traditionnel. “ Pour nous, hommes à la mémoire usée, aux sens perturbés, à l'intelligence encombrée, aucun retour à ce stade originel n'est évidemment possible. En revanche, c'est à travers le jeu même de cette mémoire usée, de ces sens perturbés, de cette intelligence encombrée que nous pouvons reprendre le fil de ce *poïein*, portant

¹ Voir D. de Rougemont, *L'amour et l'occident*, La bibliothèque, 2001 ; L. Febvre, *Amour sacré et amour profane*, Folio, 1996.

² P. Zumthor, *La lettre et la voix. De la « littérature » médiévale*, Seuil, 2016.

³ Voir le surréalisme, la pataphysique, le lettrisme..

⁴ Voir J.L., Borges, *Fictions*, Gallimard, 2014. Et Chr. Baron, *La littérature et son autre : utopie et ironie dans les œuvres de Borges, Calvino et Queneau*, l'Harmattan, 2008.

⁵ On peut distinguer l'exercice de la parodie des mythes dans le style des Monty Python. Voir aussi F. Monneyron et J., Thomas, *Mythes et littérature*, PUF, Que sais-je ?, 2012.

au niveau de l'œuvre d'art tout ce que les "bons auteurs" et les "critiques patentés" réprouvent, à savoir : la parodie, l'invraisemblance, le collage, la digression, l'uchronie, les emboîtements successifs, la falsification historique, le mélange des genres, les dialogues controuvés, les énigmes, l'ésotérisme, la manipulation du visible et de l'invisible, du sérieux et du burlesque, du pseudo-scientifique et de l'épopée [...] ¹".

5. Le jeu fictionnel

Dans toutes ces pratiques, propres à la créativité artistique occidentale, le matériau mythique, oral et autochtone, connaît un déplacement à la mesure de l'écart existant entre la créativité permanente d'une civilisation traditionnelle et une recréation artificielle, maintenue par des codes de création littéraire ou plastique. Faut-il cependant se crisper sur une nostalgie primitiviste et ne juger de l'imaginaire mythique qu'en fonction d'une perte, d'une distance, d'un écart par rapport à une forme prototypique ?

Ou bien ne faut-il pas considérer que la richesse du mythe réside peut-être justement dans cette capacité d'anamorphose qui lui permet de survivre lui-même sous d'autres expressions ? Un mythe est peut-être d'autant plus profond et riche qu'il résiste à cette violence scripturaire, à cette torsion des imaginations individuelles et fictionnantes et qu'il continue à susciter une écoute - ou une lecture -, bref, à faire de l'effet, à servir ici et maintenant à des hommes à élaborer du sens ? A cet égard, un mythe qui, quoique profondément noué aux représentations et croyances d'un groupe, ne se laisserait jamais traduire, serait, non plus riche, mais plus pauvre que celui qui accède à une traductibilité universelle, à une translation spatio-temporelle généralisée. L'imagination mythopoïétique gagne donc probablement à être arrachée à une surdétermination romantique de sa singularité, de son "idiotie", et à entrer dans une amplification par tous les moyens, dont l'humour et l'ironie. Ces procédés loin de le mettre en péril, de l'affadir, peuvent en vérifier la consistance herméneutique et rajouter de nouvelles couches de significations mises à jour par la distanciation même².

Comme nous l'avons formulé ailleurs : « Entre un scepticisme distant et une identification sans limites s'étage donc une variété d'attitudes qui confèrent au contenu de l'imaginaire une force et une capacité de modifier notre existence, nos pensées et nos comportements. La plupart du temps cependant, l'imaginaire autocontrôlé donne naissance à une attitude de jeu qui consiste à faire place aux contenus imaginés, mais avec une pensée de derrière qui permet à tout moment de sortir du jeu ou du rêve et de reprendre une conduite adaptée au monde. L'imaginaire rend donc possible une mise en scène du « comme si », mais avec la possibilité de s'en distancer selon les besoins ou les désirs³ ».

Conclusion

Humour et ironie se rapportent à un dédoublement du locuteur, qui dit et pense autre chose et laisse s'établir entre les deux niveaux une distance qui supprime l'immédiateté de la compréhension. Ils constituent ainsi une médiation qui enrichit ce qui est dit mais qui par là même suspend la croyance naïve au contenu du dire. Le jeu peut ainsi enlever à l'imaginaire sa capacité à devenir un monde, à faire rêver. Humour

¹ Voir F. Tristan, in *Jeux de fiction*, Figures, Ed universitaires de Dijon, 1992, N°10, p 77.

² Voir l'œuvre de Michel Tournier.

³ J.J. Wunenburger, *L'imagination*, PUF ? Que sais-je, 1991.

et ironie sont en un sens iconoclastes. Ils sont sans doute des jeux qui enrichissent la littérature mais qui affaiblissent les puissances de l'imagination. Le danger est que le jeu se poursuive gratuitement sans fin, comme chez ceux qui ne cessent d'accumuler humour et ironie au point de rendre dérisoire tout ce qui est dit. Insérer humour et ironie dans l'imaginaire est la marque d'une méfiance de l'imaginaire et de sa puissance, c'est une menace pour le rêve de la fiction. Ils accompagnent une époque où l'imaginaire est devenu un jeu pour la conscience qui ne surcharge plus le réel d'un double, d'une alternative, d'un possible.

Si l'on ne peut en revenir à la crédulité devant l'imaginaire comme la foi religieuse, il reste à régler et à styliser humour et ironie pour éviter de tomber dans les extrêmes : le sérieux qui fige, qui sidère, en anesthésiant l'imagination devant une vérité sérieuse ; et la dérision qui taxe tout texte d'un double sens, parfois en abyme, qui vide l'imaginaire de sa capacité à trouver du plaisir à la fiction. La vraie question esthétique est bien celle du bon usage de l'humour et de l'ironie en des temps de relativisme généralisé.

HUMOUR, RIRE, SERIEUX DANS LA FICTION HYPERMODERNE ITALIENNE LE CAS DE WALTER SITI

Naziha AMARNIA**

Abstract: *What do we mean by humour and to what extent can we talk about humour today? The concept that Luigi Pirandello (1908) defined in modern times as the capacity to know how to express the “feeling of the opposite” appears as a fundamental requirement for the contemporary writer. Recently, Raffaele Donnarumma provided a reading of Italian literature of the last decades through hyper modernity. Indeed, there has been recorded the return to a gravity of tones and a rigour that seem rather evoke modernism: literature and cinema are taken seriously again, if the change to hypermodern, suggests Donnarumma, takes several forms, my proposal is that one of them can be identified in the resumption of humour. It is possible to find all the characteristics that I listed in the story of Walter Siti, a reason that led me to identify it as a case study of this intervention: sense of the opposite, duplication and eccentricity, ambivalence and paradox, impeccable use of irony and techniques of alienation. In this article, through a reading of texts extracted from what I have identified as being the major phase of Siti’s work, the five novels of “autofiction”: Scuola di nudo (1994), Un dolore normale (1997), Troppi paradisi (2006), Resistere non serve a niente (2012), Exit Strategy (2014) - and the comparison with some contemporary writers aims to reason about a possible theorization of a hypermodern humor.*

Keywords: intertextuality; hypermodern; humour.

Introduction

Qu’entendons-nous par humour et dans quelle mesure pouvons-nous parler d’humour aujourd’hui? Le concept que Luigi Pirandello (1908) définissait à l’époque moderne comme la capacité de savoir exprimer le « sentiment du contraire » apparaît comme une exigence fondamentale pour l’écrivain contemporain: un outil nécessaire pour ceux qui s’efforcent de représenter la société du sujet divisé, régie par une idéologie fondée sur l’ambivalence des messages et sur l’incapacité progressive du public moyen à les déchiffrer.

La définition de l’humour proposée par Pirandello souligne la nécessité de distinguer cette catégorie de celle du comique, en introduisant une multiplication des points de vue et la possibilité d’évoquer des lectures simultanées et contrastées. Nous lisons, au-delà de la formulation d’une théorie du rire, une stratégie pour représenter la complexité de la réalité, qui mène à la complexité polyphonique décrite par Michael Bachtin (1979) et rappelle la théorie de l’aliénation de Viktor Šklovskij (1976): par la distance de l’ironie, il est possible d’identifier et de proposer la lecture d’un phénomène qui est le renversement exact de celui qui apparaît plus en surface, et donc de fournir un moyen fondamental de démythifier l’idéologie qui le soutient.

Même Linda Hutcheon n’a pas utilisé le terme humour dans ses théories sur l’ironie et la parodie postmoderne, tout en reprenant des éléments que nous avons associés. Dans le premier cas, Hutcheon s’est concentrée sur la nécessité de reconnaître

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et de représenter la duplicité du réel en élaborant des textes créatifs basés sur un double processus de signification qui affirme et nie simultanément: un mécanisme qui produit les textes qui se auto-déstabilisent, typiques de la poésie postmoderne. Enfin, Hutcheon a souligné l'aspect politique de la parodie et de l'ironie postmoderne: à travers le processus de reproduction/duplication de la réalité, l'approche aliénante et donc démystifiante de la littérature est mise en évidence, ce qui est propre à la définition de « métafiction historiographique » (1989), et que nous identifions dans les romans d'écrivains italien tels que Don DeLillo et Philip Roth.

L'hyper modernité nous mène au-delà de l'épuisement du postmoderne, avec lequel elle ne crée pas de rupture, comme l'avait fait le postmoderne vers le moderne. L'hypermoderne intègre plutôt le postmoderne, en introduisant dans une dimension dans laquelle les caractères de l'époque précédente sont entraînés à l'excès, dans un vortex irrépressible alimenté par un mécanisme compulsif de réitération continue et incontrôlée. Ce phénomène est le produit d'une manipulation des pulsions libidinales laissées libres par l'effondrement des autorités survenu dans les années soixante et soixante-dix, et donc dissoute par toute intervention de surmoi (Žižek 2006). Récemment, Raffaele Donnarumma a fourni une lecture de la littérature italienne des dernières décennies à travers l'hypermodernité. De cette transition de postmoderne à hypermoderne, Donnarumma a spécifié un changement substantiel: la légèreté vient moins.

En effet, a été enregistré le retour à une gravité de tons et à une rigueur qui semblent plutôt évoquer le modernisme, bien que conscient du fait que le modernisme ne puisse être restitué. En conséquence, le malaise hypermoderne introduit une volonté éthique qui dépasse les « catégories insaisissables » du postmodernisme: la littérature et le cinéma sont à nouveau pris au sérieux. Si le changement vers l'hypermoderne, suggère Donnarumma, prend plusieurs formes, ma proposition est que l'une d'elles puisse être identifiée dans la reprise de l'humour: un humour qui, paradoxalement, a préservé les caractéristiques transmises par le modernisme, les plaçant avant la capacité de provoquer le rire, et qui nous conduit donc de Fitzgerald à la phase plus mature de DeLillo et Roth, qui identifient un retour au sérieux que nous pouvons identifier comme hypermoderne.

Approche originale de l'humour dans le récit de Walter Siti

Il est possible de retrouver toutes les caractéristiques que j'ai énumérées dans le récit de Walter Siti, raison qui m'a amené à l'identifier comme étude de cas de cette intervention: sens du contraire, dédoublement et excentricité, ambivalence et paradoxe, utilisation impeccable de l'ironie et des techniques d'aliénation. Dans cet article, à travers une lecture des textes extraits de ce que j'ai identifié comme étant la phase majeure de l'œuvre de Siti - les cinq romans de « autofiction »: *Scuola di nudo* (1994), *Un dolore normale* (1997), *Troppi paradisi* (2006), *Resistere non serve a niente* (2012), *Exit Strategy* (2014) - et la comparaison avec certains écrivains contemporains a pour but de raisonner sur une possible théorisation d'un humour hypermoderne. De ce modèle d'humour, j'entends aussi mettre l'accent sur l'aspect politique, en identifiant la clé d'une nouvelle forme d'engagement de l'écrivain: une nouvelle dimension de l'écriture en tant qu'engagement offert au monde qui a survécu à l'effondrement des autorités et en a apposé la distance postmoderne, habitué au nihilisme et à la passivité qui sont le produit des idéologies qui l'ont caractérisé. Nous verrons cela dans le monde contemporain « sans traumatisme », comme l'a défini Daniele Giglioli (2011), dans

laquelle notre conscience « appauvrie » a perdu la capacité de rire comme une forme extrême de grâce pour ceux qui se sentent complices de la victime, mais irremplaçables, pour lui transmettre le message. L'engagement implique d'éduquer le lecteur à la complexité de l'humour: enseigner la lecture par l'ambivalence. La racine de ce « autre » engagement réside dans la restauration de la capacité à se concentrer sur des concepts opposés et pourtant valables, sans imposer de vérité hégémonique, et identifie donc une dimension de l'engagement post-idéologique et post-hégémonique, selon la définition de Pierpaolo Antonello (2013).

Le jeu qui se chevauche et que Siti construit dans son récit souligne la nécessité de réécrire la figure de l'écrivain qui concerne une histoire de cas plus étendue que celle de l'individu et ne se limite pas à l'Italie. En fait, le besoin de faire revivre l'humour et d'éduquer à l'humour n'est pas une qualité ressentie exclusivement par les écrivains italiens ou par Siti. De même, la perte du sens de l'humour est un phénomène qui dépasse le contexte occidental et concerne tout le monde néo-capitaliste. Dans la littérature contemporaine, Siti s'est placé au point de convergence d'une tradition humoristique nationale allant de Pirandello à nos jours, en passant par l'exemple particulier de Pasolini - une référence incontestable pour l'écriture de Siti, également parce qu'il fait l'objet d'une étude prépondérante de son activité critique¹ - et une véritable tradition humoristique anglo-américaine, qui rencontre quelques exemples contemporains majeurs dans les romans de DeLillo et Roth, dont Siti reprend quelques caractéristiques.

L'Italie des vingt ans circonscrit par les romans de Siti, qui a survécue à Berlusconi, mais pas à Berlusconisme, c'est une nation qui ne peut être décrite et contenue dans ses multiples paradoxes que par le prisme déformant de l'humour: de sorte qu'à travers l'ambivalence sous-tendant les messages transmis, aucun détail ne reste à l'écart. Voyons donc comment l'humour de Siti tient la leçon de Pasolini et Roth, dialoguant également avec DeLillo et Coe, sans toutefois exclure le comique du sérieux hypermoderne et parce que j'ai défini cette attitude comme une forme d'engagement nouveau. La réflexion sur l'humour que j'ai menée depuis Pirandello jusqu'à Coe environ un siècle plus tard identifie donc chez Walter Siti un exemple efficace d'humour hypermoderne. Dans Siti, l'écrivain et l'engagement sont définis de manière humoristique, c'est-à-dire par contradiction, contradiction qui est en même temps la contradiction de celle de Pasolini et Roth. - aussi dans ce cas, une «figure multistable» - en respectant leur diversité et en identifiant un récit axé sur l'ambivalence, l'ironie, l'éloignement et le paradoxe, en maintenant un sérieux constant d'intention, néanmoins, et en contradiction avec la possibilité que j'ai mit en hypothèse un humour hypermoderne qui puisse se dérouler sans contempler le rire, Siti identifie une position originale, car elle ne renonce pas complètement à l'aspect profané du rire, même dans la dimension de son rire amer.

Le cas Siti: la médiocrité de l'écrivain contemporain

En première analyse, l'humour de Siti investit l'écrivain, ou plutôt sa conscience d'écrivain, lorsqu'il se décrit lui-même dans ses alter-égos. Comme à Roth par l'intermédiaire de son alter ego Nathan Zuckerman, à Siti, la figure de l'écrivain se

¹ Il convient de mentionner au moins l'édition en dix volumes du l'œuvres complète de Pasolini, éditée par Siti pour Meridiani Mondadori avec Gabriella Chiarcossi (1998-2003).

dénonce à travers une opération de auto profanation, de véritable parodie de soi, selon les termes décrits par Hutcheon: à un moment où les autorités sont tombées, l'opération la plus intelligente pour se proposer en tant qu'auteur est de se décrire par son auto-déstabilisation. Seulement de cette façon, à travers une procédure véritablement humoristique, Siti peut proposer des contenus de très grande profondeur intellectuelle et morale qu'il soulève - par éloignement, et donc, de façon humoristique - à travers sa poétique reconnue du scandale, cela atteint des niveaux d'obscénité qui dépassent à la fois Roth et Pasolini, qui avaient également beaucoup investi dans la faculté du scandale. Dans l'arc des cinq livres d'« autofiction », Siti se présente comme un porte-parole médiocre, sexuellement indiscipliné et immature, pour une « théorie de la littérature comme un gémissement» (Siti 2014b: 516). De plus, il dévalue la même tradition littéraire qu'un engagement évoquant, au titre de son roman le plus abouti, le désengagement qui caractérise l'Italie contemporaine en utilisant un mot qui a une valeur sacrée pour la tradition intellectuelle nationale: *Resistere non serve a niente*. Le chef-d'œuvre de cette opération d'abaissement de la figure de l'auteur est l'incipit de *Troppi paradisi*, sur lequel on a longtemps débattu dans le centre critique ces dernières années (Giglioli 2011.), l'auteur se présente de la manière suivante:

Mi chiamo walter siti, come tutti. Campione di mediocrità. Le mie reazioni sono standard, la mia diversità è di massa. Più intelligente della media ma di un'intelligenza che serve per evadere. anche questa civetteria di mediocrità è mediocre, come i ragazzi di borgata che indossano a migliaia le t-shirts con scritto "original"; notano la contraddizione e gli sembra spiritosa. L'eccezionalità occupa i primi cinque centimetri, tutto il resto è comune. Se non fossi medio troverei l'angolatura per criticare questo mondo e inventerei qualcosa che lo cambia. (Siti 2014b: 689).

Au moment où il se décrit comme un écrivain, Siti-personnage s'oppose résolument au portrait de Pasolini comme « antimédiocre par excellence ». La déclaration de mediocrité est toutefois ambivalente et prend en compte la complexité de la relation développée par Siti avec le travail de Pasolini: dénonce d'un côté le fait que l'écrivain est médiocre parce que c'est le produit d'une société médiocre - on y retrouve les réflexions de Coe - qu'elle soit réduite à la mediocrité dépersonnalisante de la masse par la société elle-même, puisqu'il s'agit d'une société qui ne reconnaît pas sa fonction spécifique aux écrivains. Cette mutation de l'écrivain procède donc parallèlement à la description d'une transformation de l'individu. De cet auteur, dans *Troppi paradisi*, Siti décrit la brutalisation - le fond - pour ensuite commencer l'ascension vers la surface, à partir de ces cinq centimètres qui le poussent plus haut, où il peut voir les choses avec un point de vue avantageux, et qui l'empêchent en même temps de se reconnaître pleinement dans la société qui l'entoure, malgré l'amour déclaré pour la télévision et sa capacité à produire des mythes, malgré la sexualité compulsive et objectivée qui la lie à ses compatriotes. Dans cet aspect, nous lisons surtout le chemin emprunté par Siti dans ses romans, que nous pouvons reconnaître dans l'opposition entre *Scuola di nudo* et *Troppi paradisi* soulignée par Giglioli, comme un passage de la «recherche d'une fente à la certitude d'une réalité retrouvée» (2011: 81).

Troppi paradisi (2014) constitue un roman important et mature, dans la production de Siti, et complète la trilogie que l'auteur a republiée, après la conclusion du cycle de « l'autofiction », avec le titre de *Il dio impossibile* (2014). La profession de mediocrité que nous identifions est le troisième moment d'un processus d'acceptation que Siti a donné à son personnage, et implique la transition du désir de la perfection

physique des bodybuilders la théorisée dans *Scuola di nudo*, à la tentative de résigner à la nécessité de se contenter de vrais partenaires, décrite dans *Un dolore normale*, qui dans ce troisième volume est renversé dans le délire de la toute-puissance nihiliste qui accompagne la prise de conscience de l'impossibilité de posséder l'idéal¹. Ici Siti nous soumet la contradiction - le vrai paradoxe - du monde contemporain: à la normalité des visites fréquentes, son alter-ego préfère acheter ses mythes et les fréquenter physiquement jusqu'à ce qu'il ait de l'argent pour le faire - ne pas être riche, c'est un moment de transition - même si il ne peut pas les posséder de manière réaliste, en établissant les liens. Le point culminant du paradoxe est la fin de *Troppi paradisi*, gardés silencieux dans *Resistere non serve a niente* afin de ne pas compromettre le registre réaliste et repris dans *Exit strategy*: le stratagème de la prothèse pénienne, dont le protagoniste est doté dans la vieillesse pour compléter l'acte sexuel. L'obsession phallique sur laquelle l'idéologie hypermoderne s'est construite - ainsi que celui de Berlusconi - il est transposé dans un mécanisme qui provoque le ridicule, symbole d'une sexualité compulsive qui ne s'arrête pas même face aux limites physiques. Ainsi, un écrivain peut agir en tant que figure morale, proposant une éthique à une nation qui ne l'a pas, en se décrivant comme un homme et un objet des mêmes compulsions de la société dont il parle? En réalité, le problème de la société hypermoderne, qui a tiré les leçons de la société postmoderne, est de prévoir que l'auteur peut le faire exclusivement de cette manière. Dans ce cas également, Siti reprend la procédure que Roth a appliquée à Roth dans les « Zuckerman Books »: s'offre à la société comme la victime des mêmes maux qui l'afflagent (Giglioli 2013).

Une des manières par laquelle Siti propose un « autre » engagement c'est par cette opération d'autodégradation et d'auto-parodie², ainsi que la démystification de la littérature en tant qu'institution, par opposition à l'immédiateté de la télévision. En effet, ce n'est pas un hasard si le même mécanisme d'ambivalence - mais dans le sens opposé - décrit la relation avec la télévision et, à travers elle, l'Italie de Berlusconi: «la tivù mi affascina già: dove lo trovi un altro misuratore così preciso della trasformazione degli uomini (e delle donne) in proiezioni immaginarie?» (Siti 2014b: 712). Selon la même ambivalence qui a été soulignée à propos de l'Occident, le sacré de la religion et celui de l'appareil cathodique se confondent et échangent des rôles : «Il nostro uomo politico più rappresentativo è anche il capo della televisione, è un pastore spirituale» (2014b: 709). Les transferts de ce type contrastent avec d'autres de signes opposés, qui expriment une vision plus critique du support de télévision:

Il segreto, per offrire al pubblico un surrogato inoffensivo della realtà, è usare uno strumento collettivo di comunicazione per eludere le vere domande che ci strazierebbero individualmente. Ogni trasmissione è il minimo comune denominatore di ciò che lo staff di quella trasmissione può esprimere senza traumi, il luogo geometrico delle linee su cui ciascuno rinuncia alle proprie crisi. (Siti 2014b: 747)

À travers l'opposition de ces deux visions de la télévision - la première qui se pose comme naïve, et la seconde, qui révèle plutôt la capacité d'analyse, celui de l'écrivain par ses cinq centimètres de plus -Sites fournit une description de la télévision

¹ En termes lacaniens, ces trois phases coïncident avec l'identification de l'imaginaire, la comparaison avec la réalité et la subversion de la dynamique de confrontation au réel introduite par l'ère hypermoderne, déjà soulignée par Giglioli (2011). Voir aussi Žižek (2002).

² Également dans ce cas, pour la définition d'un «État minoritaire» de l'écrivain et de la littérature que Donnarumma définit comme hypermoderne, nous renvoyons à Giglioli (2015).

et de la réalité qu'elle a créée au nom d'un humour complètement hypermoderne. La conscience de la vérité se manifeste d'abord par le sourire, puis il révèle les mécanismes profonds de l'idéologie qui agit comme une programmation pour la contemporanéité télévisuelle. La duplicité ambivalente du support de télévision est révélée dans divers passages, comme par exemple dans la description de l'hypocrisie profonde avec laquelle les représentations sont exposées sans filtres, et vendues comme s'elles étaient la réalité: «la televisione non ti fa evadere, può permettersi di essere una ‘finestra spalancata sul reale perché nel frattempo il reale gli si è ‘evaporato’, diventando tivù-compatibile» (2014b: 769). La télévision produit un paradoxe qui rend la lutte contre elle inutile. C'est: «Vita e antivita, avvinghiate insieme in un nodo inestricabile [...]. Mai, nella storia, gli esseri umani sono stati esposti così a lungo all'indistinzione tra ideale e reale: una mimesi avvolgente» (2014b: 769). De la mythopée du bodybuilder *Scuola di nudo*, nous passons ici à la mythopée du personnage de télévision qui est indiqué par les initiales «PT»:

Il PT è solo per metà uomo, o donna: per l'altra metà è un effetto ottico un'Immagine che lui stesso non padroneggi – quindi non capisce mai bene se a essere invitato e lui o l'Immagine, e chi dei due debba eventualmente reagire. (Siti 2014b: 759)

Et pourtant, ces cinq centimètres de l'écrivain comptent, de même que l'addition « a sentir lui » dans la description de Pasolini. À partir de ces cinq centimètres, Siti peut se permettre d'identifier Pasolini comme son ennemi «È lui il mio antagonista» (2014b: 277) admettant aussi: «potrei essere un romanziere migliore di lui, se riuscissi ad afferrare i connotati tutt'altro che ignobili della decadenza occidentale (forse anche italiana in particolare) raccontandola da dentro, microbo tra i microbi» (2014b: 722). La supériorité de Siti serait dans la capacité de s'abaisser au niveau des subordonnés, quelque chose qui s'avère incapable de communiquer avec les parents, mais au lieu de cela, il est parfaitement capable de s'accoupler avec des bodybuilders, une évolution de l'attraction de Pasolini pour les adolescents des beaux lieux. Les corps artificiellement excessifs des bodybuilders, comme dans le cas des «PT», sont décrits- avec humour - comme une forme d'absolu, avec lequel Siti peut être réuni avec la classe dont il a refusé le comportement au moment de l'ascension sociale. Mais même dans ce cas, il suit le retournement dû aux cinq centimètres: «Non è la realtà che fa schifo [...] faccio schifo io» (2014b: 516). Et encore: «Sono diverso tra i diversi, oggettivamente schifoso» (2014b: 937). En conclusion, l'admission – «Non sono riuscito nemmeno ad essere mediocre» (2014b: 949) - qui endommage également le chevauchement avec l'Occident:

Ho smesso di ipotizzare una qualunque omologia tra la mia esperienza e l'Occidente: è un dolore talmente privato quello che provo, e deriva da un'infermità così poco condivisibile... L'occidente è tutt'altro che impotente, anzi, è potentissimo: rischia di morire per eccesso di potenza, o di prepotenza. (Siti 2014b: 949)

Cependant, les exemples qui peuvent être tirés de tout le parcours composé des cinq romans sont innombrables, et concernent différents domaines dans lesquels l'opposition de déclarations contradictoires crée ce jeu d'ambivalence sur lequel s'appuie la vérité de l'écriture de Siti, et dans lequel on lit son engagement d'écrivain: cette « figure multistable » qui est le seul moyen acceptable de décrire la réalité

contemporaine, c'est-à-dire l'identification de sa dimension en tant qu'humoriste hypermoderne.

Conclusion

L'exemple de Siti et son succès en tant qu'écrivain confirme que le moyen le plus efficace de redonner de la valeur à l'écrivain et à l'intellectuel engagé aujourd'hui est précisément d'en parler à l'inverse et de décrire son ridicule: une ambivalence qui reflète la nature du paradoxe sur lequel la culture hypermoderne s'est construite et a évolué. Le message du caractère autobiographique de Siti, soit quand il est abaissé vers la médiocrité, comme dans les premiers romans et surtout dans *Troppi paradisi*, soit quand il a élevé le niveau pour maintenir un ton élevé et sérieux dans *Resistere non serve a niente*, est le même, dont le recto est représenté le premier volume et l'autre dans le verso: encore une fois, deux faces du même « personnage multistable ». L'opération d'engagement et de dénonciation la plus originale identifiée par Siti réside donc dans la prise de conscience que le fait de savoir rire et comment provoquer le rire fait partie de l'engagement intellectuel et constitue un aspect complémentaire du sérieux de l'écrivain hypermoderne. Cependant, il est nécessaire de veiller à ce que le rire laisse un arrière-goût amer qui oblige la personne qui rit à garder les yeux ouverts, qui lui fait prendre conscience de l'importance des problèmes identifiés. Le personnage autobiographique de Siti est un personnage qui rit bien parce qu'il rit toujours le dernier: dans la (non) conclusion de ses histoires, il réserve toujours le dernier rire.

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LA « PRÉTENDUE » IRONIE DE MARCEL AYMÉ

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Abstract: It has become quite obvious to talk about irony when dealing with Marcel Aymé's literary work. Almost every critical approach to Marcel Aymé's work reminds its irony, as we can see, for example, in the obituary published in 1967 by the "Revue des Deux Mondes" or as we can see nowadays on the page dedicated to Marcel Aymé on the Gallimard website. Yet, nor the author's reticence to any preestablished classification whatsoever, nor the multi-layered aspect of his work allow easy etiquettes. The aim of the present paper is to (re)analyze some fragments of Marcel Aymé's tales and short-stories having in mind the subjective meaning he gave to irony in the context of his denying a so-called irony towards foreign countries, in two letters addressed to Mrs. Dorothy R. Brodin in 1962. In the few tales and short-stories we deal with in the present paper, such as "L'âne et le cheval", "Légende poldève", "Deux victimes", "La clé sous le paillasson", we have found examples of texts that could be interpreted as mere verbal irony, while other lines might result ironical only by their contradiction to the fictional scenery that render them ridiculous. Yet, as Marcel Aymé himself invites us, we insist on the pleasure of reading that arises from the polyphonic games: the game with the literary codes, the polyphonic game of intertextuality and, most of all, the game with the language itself as a depositary of the fictional germ.

Keywords: irony; Marcel Aymé; game; pleasure of reading.

Apanage des critiques, le travail d'étiquetage porte tant sur l'écrivain Marcel Aymé que sur son œuvre et tous les deux, écrivain et œuvre, réussissent, selon nous, à échapper à cette obsession de la classification, non pas par manque de verve classificatoire de la part des critiques contemporains de l'auteur et de la critique littéraire et universitaire ultérieure, mais par une réticence (à lire aussi comme silence et comme limitation des interprétations) et une « polyvalence » (Brodin, D., 2014 : 12) manifestées par l'auteur et par son œuvre.

En novembre 1967, la *Revue des Deux Mondes* publiait l'article « Les lettres françaises en deuil », un hommage à André Maurois (mort le 9 octobre) et à Marcel Aymé (mort le 14 octobre) où l'on parlait de la langue de l'écrivain Marcel Aymé, une « langue solide, naturelle, pleine d'une belle santé » et de l'ironie et de la tendresse de l'œuvre : « L'ironie et la tendresse se partagent son œuvre. Tendresse pour les enfants, pour les paysans (les siens sont les seuls vrais, peut-être, de notre littérature). Son ironie est plus célèbre » (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, novembre 1967).

Sur le site Gallimard, la page dédiée à Marcel Aymé parle de « son ironie, son humour caustique et sa truculence », traits qui l'ont rendu populaire.

Dans deux lettres envoyées en mars et en mai 1962 à Mme Dorothy R. Brodin (Brodin, D., *Ibidem* : 192, 193) qui rédigeait une thèse sur Marcel Aymé, s'intéressant à l'ironie dans son œuvre, Marcel Aymé rejette plus ou moins ouvertement cette étiquette accolée à son nom et explique en quoi parler de « l'ironie de Marcel Aymé » à l'égard des pays étrangers serait faux. D'ailleurs, suite aux entretiens avec Marcel Aymé, l'ironie ne figurera ni dans le titre de l'ouvrage de Dorothy R. Brodin, ni dans les titres des chapitres ou des sous-chapitres et Dorothy R. Brodin retiendra l'aspect multi-facettes de l'œuvre ayméenne qui relève tantôt ou simultanément de l'amertume, du

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rire, de l'individualisme, de la douceur, du franc-parler, de la fantaisie, de l'esprit mordant, de l'absurde. Mais, dans la matière des chapitres de l'ouvrage en question, l'ironie est analysée sous diverses formes : « imitation ou adoption du point de vue de quelqu'un d'autre généralement dans le but de le ridiculiser », « ironie du sort », renversement des schémas préétablis ou attendus, le surnaturel d'un monde « fantastico-ironique » gaulois, etc. Parmi les conclusions de l'étude, il y a également celle qui place « l'ironie grinçante » de Marcel Aymé devant certains événements de l'histoire dans une prise de conscience de « l'ironie cosmique » que Marcel Aymé montre du doigt tout simplement en choisissant de présenter des événements qui ont vraiment eu lieu mais qu'il situe dans un contexte qui relève plutôt du fantastique ou des contes d'autrefois. Cela a pour effet d'en accentuer l'absurde.

Quelles sont donc les réponses de Marcel Aymé dans les deux lettres mentionnées ci-dessus en ce qui concerne l'ironie ?

1. Dans la lettre du 30 mars 1962, la mention sur l'ironie revêt la forme suivante :

Chère Madame,

Je vous suis très reconnaissant de vous intéresser à mes livres et d'avoir choisi pour sujet de thèse « l'ironie de M.A ». (Brodin, D., *op.cit.* : 192)

Et Marcel Aymé continue avec deux réponses, l'une sur des chansons qu'il a inventées lui-même, l'autre sur l'absence de toute intention de parodie ou de pastiche des écrivains américains ou encore de quelque influence de Dos Passos et de la perspective de la caméra dans la « Jument Verte ».¹

Cette lettre n'est pas riche en observations sur le sujet qui nous occupe, elle donne seulement des renseignements précis et sans équivoque sur les questions ponctuelles posées par Dorothy R. Brodin. Cependant, les guillemets et l'emploi des initiales au lieu du prénom personnel de la première personne créent bien un îlot textuel, marquant une certaine distanciation voire une non-prise en charge de cette formule (qui traduit finalement un point de vue).

2. Dans la lettre du 15 mai 1962, les choses sont beaucoup plus claires et cette non-prise en charge de « l'ironie de M.A » suggérée (inférée) dans la lettre antérieure est ici explicite. Nous citons ci-dessous la lettre dans son intégralité² :

Chère Madame,

Il me semble que vous n'êtes pas tout à fait dans le vrai en parlant de mon ironie. Le mot impliquerait de ma part un sentiment de mépris ou de malveillance à l'égard des pays étrangers, que je n'éprouve absolument pas.

¹ Il faut noter que Marcel Aymé y dénonce également les erreurs commises par Jean Cathelin dans son essai, notamment : il attribue à M. A le Prix Populiste, qu'il n'a pas eu, et « déplore » son antisémitisme, aspect que M. A n'hésite point à nier : « Il déplore aussi chez moi un antisémitisme que je n'ai jamais eu – Il m'a cru antisémite probablement parce que j'étais un ami de Céline ». Ibidem, 192

² Nous tenons à remercier M. Jean-Pierre Belleville, secrétaire de la Société des amis de Marcel Aymé, pour tout l'effort, le travail, le sérieux, la passion qu'il met, entre autres, dans la publication des *Cahiers Marcel Aymé* et dans la communication avec les membres de la S.A.M.A. C'est grâce à lui que nous avons pu consulter l'ouvrage de Dorothy R. Brodin, dont il est également le traducteur.

Rien ne m'a choqué de ce que j'ai vu en Amérique, si ce n'est dans les Etats du Sud et vous devinez pourquoi. Sans doute suis-je éloigné de certain mode de vie (qui commence à être celui des Français) ; mais si je devais en avoir de l'ironie, ce serait plutôt à mon endroit. Je pense en effet que si j'avais trente ou quarante ans de moins, je m'en accommoderais fort bien. J'ai admiré beaucoup de choses en Amérique et j'y ai rencontré des gens très cordiaux et très sympathiques.

Je vous remercie de m'avoir envoyé la coupure du N.Y. Times, qui m'a fait naturellement grand plaisir.

Veuillez ne pas trop penser à ma prévue ironie.
Et recevez mes sentiments les meilleurs.

Marcel Aymé

Bien qu'il s'agisse d'un contexte précis de l'ironie – notamment l'ironie à l'égard des Etats-Unis – (on rappelle le fait que Marcel Aymé fait un voyage aux Etats-Unis en avril-mai 1949, une visite de 6 semaines, où il est invité par le magazine Collier's avec l'organisation de Pierre Tissreyre, éditeur de Montréal), les précisions que Marcel Aymé fait en ce qui concerne « son » ironie sont importantes pour les connotations qu'a cette notion pour Marcel Aymé.

« Son » ironie, celle sur laquelle l'interroge Dorothy R. Brodin, n'est pas tout à fait ironique, puisque, dit-il, cela impliquerait de sa part « un sentiment de mépris ou de malveillance à l'égard des pays étrangers » qu'il « n'éprouve absolument pas ».

On remarque deux aspects de l'ironie dans cette acceptation ponctuelle de Marcel Aymé : distance [*Sans doute suis-je éloigné de certain mode de vie (qui commence à être celui des Français)*] et jugement de valeur plutôt négatif (*mépris, malveillance*). Un troisième élément pourrait y être intégré : le choc (*Rien ne m'a choqué de ce que j'ai vu en Amérique*), que l'on peut également appeler contradiction, déstabilisation des attentes projetées, comme il arrive dans les définitions générales de l'ironie.

Ici, l'élément central sur lequel insiste Marcel Aymé est cette composante axiologique négative de l'ironie. Cette connotation négative n'est pas nouvelle, l'ironie jouit d'un statut ambivalent déjà dans les emplois les plus anciens, l'ironie socratique étant vue tantôt comme positive, tantôt comme négative (« la feinte ignorance ») (Schoentjes, P., 2001 : 33-34).

Si être ironique c'est avoir un sentiment de mépris envers la personne sur laquelle porte l'ironie, le rejet de ce type d'ironie pourrait être mieux compris à la lumière de ces mots que Marcel Aymé écrit en 1947 à Jean Paulhan : « J'ai toujours pensé que les écrivains avaient, moins que tous autres, le droit de mépriser personne, puisque mépriser, c'est cesser de comprendre »¹. Mépriser quelqu'un c'est estimer quelqu'un indigne d'attention ou d'intérêt et c'est peut-être dans cette perspective que Marcel Aymé infère que mépriser c'est cesser de comprendre. Mépriser implique

¹ Information fournie dans la biographie de Marcel Aymé présentée sur le site de la Société des amis de Marcel Aymé, dont nous sommes membre.

SAMA, Biographie de Marcel Aymé :

05-juil-47 : Marcel Aymé écrit à Jean Paulhan : « Les textes que vous citez dans votre Troisième lettre sont attristants. J'ai toujours pensé que les écrivains avaient, moins que tous autres, le droit de mépriser personne, puisque mépriser, c'est cesser de comprendre ». En p.s. il relève une faute de syntaxe du C.N.E.

Il s'agit de la dispute de Jean Paulhan avec le Comité national des écrivains (C.N.E), son opposition à la liste noire et le refus du rôle de juge ou de policier des écrivains.

http://marcelayme1.free.fr/marcel_ayme/biographie/periodes/1940_1949.html (dernière consultation 15 juillet 2019)

également une composante morale, selon la définition du dictionnaire, plus précisément « considérer (qqn.) comme indigne d'estime, comme moralement condamnable » (Le Petit Robert, 2006). D'autre part, l'autre connotation de l'ironie dans les propos de Marcel Aymé, la malveillance, représente « le mauvais vouloir (à l'égard de qqn.) ; la tendance à blâmer autrui, à lui vouloir du mal » (Le Petit Robert, 2006).

Mais il faut prendre les mots de Marcel Aymé dans leurs contexte et cotexte bien précis : il s'agit du mépris envers des personnes, non pas des choses, des situations, tout comme, dans le cas de l'ironie mentionnée auparavant, il s'agissait de l'ironie envers les pays étrangers et non pas de l'ironie en général.

Notre intérêt au terme « ironie » dans cette acceptation ponctuelle qu'en donne Marcel Aymé vient, d'un côté, du fait qu'il nous semble intéressant de mettre en regard l'entendement critique de l'ironie de Marcel Aymé et la réticence de celui-ci quant aux étiquettes en général et, de l'autre côté, du fait que cette prise en compte subjective de l'ironie est, à notre sens, une invitation à une lecture des nuances (subjectives), voire à un jeu de lecture qui n'ait pas pour seul but la recherche et la reconnaissance des cases toutes prêtes, mais également le plaisir du jeu. Cela ne veut pas dire que le jeu soit dépourvu de contenu (moral, historique ou autre).

Les *Contes du chat perché* (publiés à partir des années trente) sont illustratifs en ce sens, puisque ces contes ne sont pas des contes pour les enfants, mais des contes pour l'auteur-même, comme l'affirme Marcel Aymé et, ajoute-t-il dans la préface à l'édition de 1939, pour « les enfants de quatre à soixantequinze ans ». Le jeu est au centre de ces contes : le jeu des enfants et des animaux, avec la dimension moraliste du genre, au premier degré de lecture, et le jeu avec la tradition du genre et avec le code des contes, au second degré, où il y a également un regard biaisé qui attire l'attention sur le « ridicule » (selon le mot de Michel Lécureur¹) de la sévérité des parents, de certaines de leurs répliques ou de certaines de leurs exigences.

Voilà comment dans *L'âne et le cheval*, une nuit au grand clair de lune, les deux fillettes, Delphine et Marinette, ne pouvant pas s'endormir, parlent de l'animal qu'elles voudraient être : l'une, cheval, l'autre, âne. Le lendemain, la mère trouve dans la chambre un cheval, Marinette, et un âne, Delphine. Après les pleurs du choc initial, les parents réfléchissent aux mesures qu'il faut prendre pour la nouvelle condition de leurs filles : elles sont installées à l'écurie avec une litière fraîche et du foin : « Le père, marchant derrière elle, les suivit dans la cour et, regardant le cheval, murmura distraitemen : - C'est tout de même une belle bête » (Aymé, M., 1963 : 108). Bien que les parents éprouvent « un grand chagrin » pour ce qui est arrivé à leurs filles, un mois plus tard, ils sont habitués « très bien à la vue de l'âne et du cheval ». On voit ensuite les parents réduire la nourriture des deux bêtes, les faire travailler dur à tel point que les parents oublient presque la métamorphose et se comportent mal avec les deux animaux. Un jour, le père est tellement mécontent du travail du cheval qu'il se met à jurer et à le frapper du fouet. Après quelques remords, le père reprend l'habitude de frapper « sa bête » et trouve aussitôt des justifications à son comportement : « - On a un cheval ou on n'en a pas. Il faut pourtant bien arriver à se faire obéir. » (*Ibidem* : 113).

La même histoire pour l'âne, lui, en plus, « entêté » (« comme il arrive aux ânes »), que la mère essaie de convaincre à bouger et à être obéissant : « -Allons, ne fais

¹ Dans une émission sur France Culture, *La nuit spéciale Marcel Aymé*, à l'occasion de 50 ans de sa disparition. L'enregistrement de l'émission est disponible ici : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5UFQWa6nZY> (dernière consultation 15 juillet 2019)

pas ta mauvaise tête, tu sais bien que ce n'est pas ton intérêt. Je vais compter jusqu'à dix. Réfléchis. (...) Huit, neuf, dix ! Tu l'auras voulu, sale bête ! (*Ibidem* : 114).

Les parents cèdent même à la grosse somme offerte par un acheteur pour le cheval, mais grâce à l'astuce du chat (ce sont quand même les contes du chat perché), le cheval fait semblant de boiter et l'acheteur y renonce.

Après plusieurs mois de travail dur, Ane et Cheval finissent par oublier ce qu'ils (!) avaient été avant. Ils ne trouvent rien d'étonnant à être frappés par leurs maîtres et l'on entend les mots de leurs parents-maîtres dans leur propre discours : « -Moi, disait lânon, c'est toujours la même chose. Je me suis fait rosser pour avoir été trop têtu. Il faudra pourtant que je me corrige. » (Aymé, M., 1963 : 114) Voilà bien une polyphonie à l'œuvre qui devrait faire penser les parents au poids de leurs mots.

Les deux animaux deviennent dociles et les parents sont contents de leurs bêtes.

Pourtant, un matin, lorsque le père entre dans l'écurie, il y trouve les filles, Delphine et Marinette, et les porte dans leurs lits, non sans penser à « son bon cheval qu'il ne verrait plus ».

Au réveil, elles doivent reprendre leur vie d'enfants et aller à l'école. Comme elles sont encore ahuries, en classe elles ne font « que des bêtises » et répondent « de travers ». La maîtresse déclare « n'avoir jamais vus d'enfants aussi bêtes » et leur met de mauvaises notes. A la maison, on imagine l'humeur des parents et leur mécontentement.

Heureusement, les deux petites filles ne tardent pas à redevenir Delphine et Marinette, à « travailler très bien » et à ne prendre que de bonnes notes. Et la conclusion :

« Les parents étaient maintenant bien heureux d'avoir retrouvé les deux petites filles qu'ils aimaient si tendrement, car c'étaient, au fond, d'excellents parents. » (*Ibidem* : 121).

Au premier degré, cette dernière phrase répond au code de la fin heureuse spécifique aux contes. D'ailleurs, les enfants, surtout les plus petits, ne maîtrisent pas le fonctionnement complexe de la langue et encore moins de l'ironie, laquelle impose « une stratégie de déchiffrement indirect » (Maingueneau, D., 1986 : 81). Cette fin heureuse satisfait l'attente des petits et les réconfortent.

Et les autres enfants-lecteurs de ces contes, ceux de soixante-quinze ans, par exemple ? Pour eux, il y a des signaux tels que : l'adjectif « excellent » (dans « excellents parents »), l'ajout d'intensité (dans la structure « si tendrement »), associée au verbe « aimer », ou encore cet autre mot d'alerte, « au fond », qui signalent la distanciation entre locuteur (le narrateur) et énonciateur (les parents). De plus, cette exagération de la qualité parentale crée, à rebours, un contraste avec les mésaventures d'Ane et de Cheval ou, si vous voulez, des deux filles. Le déchiffrement indirect de l'ironie passe ici par des signaux linguistiques ponctuels, mais également par le contenu diégétique qui s'étend sur le conte entier.

L'ironie, dit Maingueneau, « se donne pour une énonciation *ouvertement déguisée* » (*Idem*). Elle est « déguisée », ce qui fait qu'elle ne soit pas toujours saisie comme telle et que l'énoncé soit parfois interprété comme sérieux, littéralement. Elle est pourtant « *ouvertement déguisée* », le déguisement se laisse entrevoir par des signaux plus ou moins stéréotypés et par une rupture, un contraste, un désaccord entre le propos avancé et le contexte, la situation ou les croyances, le mode de pensée que le lecteur

attribue au locuteur (au narrateur/à l'auteur). En usant de l'ironie dans ce conte, Marcel Aymé crée deux niveaux d'interprétation et de lecture. C'est à ce second niveau de lecture que la louange devient blâme dans la phrase finale et que le conte acquiert une sorte de dimension moralisatrice destinée aux parents, aux grands-parents, aux enseignants, bref, aux lecteurs de plus de « quatre » ans.

Il y a encore, chez Marcel Aymé, le jeu avec la langue, avec les codes, avec l'imagination et le fictionnel. Dans *l'Ane et le cheval*, il joue avec le mécanisme de fonctionnement du figuré et procède à un brouillage des niveaux d'interprétation du figuré. La répétition excessive du mot « bête » saute aux yeux. Alors que les deux filles font le désir de devenir l'une, cheval (blanc, naturellement !), pour la beauté de la crinière et le pouvoir de courir plus fort que personne, l'autre, âne, pour ses yeux doux et le pouvoir de s'amuser à bouger les deux grandes oreilles, les parents, eux, aussitôt que *ce cheval* et *cet âne* prennent la place de leurs filles, n'y voient que deux « bêtes ».

Le début du récit annonce une métamorphose digne des contes merveilleux avec des aventures extraordinaires, transformée aussitôt dans une série de mésaventures pour les filles-cheval et âne. La répétition obsessive du mot « bête » dans les répliques des parents et, vers la fin du conte, dans la réplique de la maîtresse d'école attire l'attention sur la composante fictionnelle des figures, sur le résidu de sens littéral dans toute figure (Genette, G., 2004 : 18). Ce conte nous semble procéder par le développement, au niveau fictionnel, de l'« esquisse de fiction» (Idem) comprise dans le figuré. On infère, par les nombreuses occurrences du mot « bête », tantôt à valeur adjectivale, tantôt à valeur nominale, que le figuré pourrait être ici : « tu es (une) bête », « tu es comme une bête », « tu es tellement bête ». Il n'est pas dépourvu d'importance que l'avant-dernier paragraphe du conte rapporte les propos de la maîtresse - « La maîtresse déclara n'avoir jamais vus d'enfants aussi bêtes » - ouvrant ainsi la voie vers d'autres rêves de « bêtes » faits par d'autres enfants et vers d'autres fictions nées de la littéralisation du figuré.

Outre l'aspect ludique et le plaisir qu'en tire l'auteur, le jeu avec le sens littéral des mots donne naissance, d'un côté, à une l'interprétation innocente, celle des filles, en tant que destinataires des répliques comportant le mot « bête », lesquelles se comparent à des animaux pour leur beauté, leur douceur ou leurs qualités, sans pourtant oublier qu'elles sont deux petites filles en dépit de la métamorphose (ou du jeu du faire semblant) et, de l'autre côté, à une interprétation étonnante, celle des parents, en tant que destinateurs de ces répliques, lesquels prennent au sérieux leurs propres mots, n'arrivent plus à voir le figuré au-delà du littéral, restent donc à un premier niveau d'interprétation. Il y a là un renversement des positions : les enfants sont ceux qui arrivent au second niveau de l'interprétation du figuré, alors que les parents n'en sont pas capables, d'où leur ridicule. Plus encore, les filles sont capables d'user de l'ironie à l'égard de leurs parents. Les propos de la fille-âne sont un exemple canonique d'ironie verbale dont l'essence est « le blâme par la louange » (Schoentjes, P., *op. cit.* : 144).

- Tu l'as fait exprès ! gronda le père. Ah ! la maudite carne, je suis sûr qu'il l'a fait exprès !
- Maudite carne ? fit l'ânon. Je pense que voilà une façon agréable d'appeler la plus jeune de ses filles, et qui fait honneur à des parents ! (Aymé, M., 1963 : 117)

Il y a, dans ce conte de Marcel Aymé, un brouillage des niveaux d'interprétation, un renversement des positions, des clins d'œil signalés par la distanciation polyphonique, de la morale camouflée dans le ridicule, le plaisir de la lecture et, nous supposons, également, le plaisir de l'écriture.

Une autre réplique, de la mère cette fois-ci, fait entendre les voix de tant de parents dans une menace stéréotype dont usaient à l'époque (et usent encore) beaucoup de parents pour « se faire obéir » : « je compte jusqu'à trois ». Parfois, « comme il arrive aux ânes », celui-ci était entêté, occasion pour la mère de le frapper. La mère commence par être douce et elle s'adresse même à l'âne comme si elle y reconnaissait toujours sa « petite Delphine », « une bonne fille, une enfant obéissante », mais plus Delphine – âne se montre entêtée, plus la mère l'associe à la « bête » et perd le contrôle :

- Allons, ne fais pas ta mauvaise tête, tu sais bien que ce n'est pas ton intérêt. Je vais compter jusqu'à dix. Réfléchis.
- C'est tout réfléchi !
- Un, deux, trois, quatre...
- Je ne bougerai pas d'un pas !
- ... Cinq, six, sept ...
- On me couperait plutôt les oreilles.
- ... Huit, neuf, dix ! Tu l'auras voulu, sale bête ! (*L'âne et le cheval*, op.cit., p. 114)

Celui-ci n'est pas un exemple canonique d'ironie verbale. Nous rappelons la définition de l'ironie selon Ducrot : « Parler de façon ironique, cela revient, pour un locuteur L, à présenter l'énonciation comme exprimant la position d'un énonciateur E, position dont on sait par ailleurs que le locuteur L n'en prend pas la responsabilité et, bien plus, qu'il la tient pour absurde » (Ducrot, O., 1984 : 211). Dans notre exemple, ce n'est pas le narrateur qui parle, ce sont directement les répliques du personnage, notamment de la mère de Delphine-âne. Mais, c'est la situation complètement ridicule où ces répliques sont données qui dénonce l'absurde du discours et la distanciation du narrateur (et par là, de l'auteur qui le met en scène).

Le discours polyphonique que le lecteur décèle dans l'identité de structure entre l'énonciation de la mère et les propos stéréotypés des parents atteint un autre niveau de lecture - l'intertextuel ou plutôt l'intradiscursif – aspect qui nous ramène au jeu de la lecture, un jeu intellectuel, mais aussi un jeu qui procure du plaisir.

Voici donc une réplique du père dans la nouvelle *La clé sous le paillasson* :

- Un bien mal acquis ? Attends un peu, je vais t'apprendre à respecter tes parents. Je compte jusqu'à trois et si tu t'entêtes à me désobéir, je te donne ma malédiction. (*La clé sous le paillasson*, in *Le nain*, Editions Gallimard, 1934, p. 251)

Ici comme là, la situation fictionnelle tourne en ridicule ces phrases toutes faites. Rappelons la situation fictionnelle dans *La clé sous le paillasson* : le père parle ainsi avec son prétendu fils, un cambrioleur mondain, échappé « d'entre les pages d'un roman policier », qui, par les hasards du métier, arrive dans la maison familiale, après 18 ans d'absence, selon les dires du père qui reconnaît dans le cambrioleur mondain son fils Rodolphe. Alors que le cambrioleur décide de renoncer au vice et de prendre les voix de la vie honnête et vertueuse en restituant toute la fortune à ses victimes, le père intervient avec la réplique mentionnée auparavant. Et le narrateur ajoute :

Trop souvent, Rodolphe avait été le héros d'un feuilleton ou d'un grand roman d'amour et de haine, pour ignorer qu'un noble cœur ne se relève jamais d'une malédiction paternelle. (Idem)

Outre ce regard biaisé sur la vertu humaine que Marcel Aymé fait dans beaucoup de ses nouvelles, ce jeu avec l'art, avec les codes, cette maîtrise extraordinaire de son propre

art dévoilent un autre emploi de l'ironie, tourné vers l'art même dans une sorte d'autodérision.

Au début de notre étude, nous soulignions plusieurs aspects de l'ironie dans l'acception subjective qu'en donnait Marcel Aymé dans la lettre adressée à Dorothy R. Brodin, dont le jugement de valeur plutôt négatif : une attitude de « mépris », de « malveillance » de la part de celui qui use de l'ironie à l'égard du destinataire de l'ironie.

Dans l'*Ane et le cheval*, le fragment final, où le narrateur conclut par la louange des parents qui viennent de traiter leurs filles comme si elles n'étaient que des bêtes, c'est du blâme camouflé, voire du mépris.

Si l'ironie a comme composante essentielle le jugement de valeur, alors le mépris dont parle Marcel Aymé pourrait revêtir la forme du *blâme par la louange*, dans lequel Pierre Schoentjes voit l'essence de l'ironie verbale (Schoentjes, P., *op .cit.* : 144). Le blâme par la louange procède généralement par la juxtaposition d'éléments contradictoires qui peuvent être ponctuels ou bien s'étendre sur des épisodes entiers, occupant l'espace de toute une nouvelle à partir de l'incipit jusqu'à la clôture, les deux frontières du récit se révélant alors comme contradictoires.

La nouvelle *Deux victimes* s'ouvre sur un excès de vertu, de bonté, de justice, de droiture des principes d'un père de famille et clôt par ce même père, qui, dans un scrupule d'équité envers les deux victimes de son fils, l'une modiste, l'autre serveuse, les deux enceintes et désespérées, décide de ne point obliger son fils à marier aucune d'elles et punit le vice en laissant son fils, étudiant en médecine, imaginer à toujours les angoisses de ces innocentes et en lui réduisant la somme mensuelle pour les dépenses personnelles.

Voici l'incipit de la nouvelle :

Après avoir marché toute sa vie dans les chemins malaisés de la vertu, M. Vachelin, alors qu'il atteignait sa cinquante-neuvième année, fut tenté par le diable d'une manière habile, et son sens aiguisé de la dialectique le sauva du piège infernal. Il mourut deux ans plus tard d'un transport au cerveau, et l'on s'accorde à penser qu'il est maintenant au paradis. L'art de la dialectique est rarement un moyen de faire son salut, les plus savants docteurs y perdent souvent leurs âmes, et le cas de M. Vachelin est d'autant plus remarquable. En effet, ni le commerce de la quincaillerie, ni la pêche à la ligne à laquelle il se livrait depuis qu'il était retiré des affaires, n'avaient préparé cet honnête homme à une escrime aussi subtile. (Aymé, M., 1934 : 73)

Le ton ironique y est présent dès le début. Même le lecteur qui ne connaît pas la position anticléricale de l'auteur peut apercevoir la distanciation du narrateur par rapport au pathétisme du discours sur la vertu de M. Vachelin, « cet honnête homme » luttant contre le diable, la dialectique à la main. Les phrases procèdent par des contrastes : la thèse posée dans une première phrase est contrastée dans la phrase suivante par des éléments qui, au lieu d'être des arguments de la thèse posée, sont plutôt des contre-arguments qui la rendent ridicule.

Le mépris dont parle Marcel Aymé pourrait également être, selon nous, de l'autodérision, du mépris tourné vers soi-même, issu d'une conscience claire, profonde de l'ironie cosmique, de l'ironie du sort, de l'ironie de l'histoire. D'où l'amertume, « l'ironie grinçante » de certaines de ses nouvelles (Brodin, R., D., *op.cit.*). Dans *Légende poldèvre*, *Le Décret ou La Carte*, trois nouvelles dont nous avons parlé ailleurs (Apostol, S.A., 2017), la guerre est prétexte pour une ironie amère des hasards de l'existence humaine.

Le prétexte ridicule de l'éclatement de la guerre entre deux peuples dans *Légende poldève* souligne, de manière ironique, le mépris de tout conflit. On comprend ainsi les valences multiples de l'emploi de l'ironie : elle permet d'exprimer de manière directe une position absurde que le locuteur (le narrateur) ne prend pas en charge (Ducrot, O., 1984 : 210, 211). Marcel Aymé ne se met pas à faire une critique du prétexte historique du déclenchement de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale ou d'autres guerres, mais il crée, dans *Légende poldève*, une situation où le sérieux attribué aux tenants des guerres et la gravité des causes conflictuelles apparaissent ridicules. L'enfant qui fait pipi sur le territoire de la nation voisine, incident qui devient prétexte de guerre, pourrait également rappeler le motif de la guerre « atroce » dans le *Combat des rats et des grenouilles* (V^e- III^e siècle ? av. J.-C.), ce texte de l'Antiquité, l'un des premiers textes parodiques, qui imite de manière ridicule l'Iliade d'Homère.

La fin de la nouvelle *Légende poldève* est également ironique, puisqu'elle dévoile une ironie du sort dans l'au-delà également (Apostol, S. A., 2017).

Conclusions

Une seule conclusion nous semble pertinente à la fin de cette brève étude dans laquelle nous ne nous sommes arrêtée que sur deux ou trois morceaux de l'œuvre de Marcel Aymé.

La voici : « *Veuillez ne pas trop penser à ma prétendue ironie* »

Pourquoi ? Parce que, au-delà de toute acceptation personnelle de l'ironie (le côté de « mépris » ou de « malveillance », la distanciation, le choc, l'autodérision), au-delà de toute interprétation critique de l'ironie de Marcel Aymé, au-delà de toute théorie sur l'ironie et, finalement, au-delà de toute critique, l'œuvre de Marcel Aymé est celle qui parle le mieux d'elle-même.

Nous y voyons également une invitation au plaisir de la lecture tout simplement, car cette réticence de Marcel Aymé aux étiquettes en général et cette prise en compte subjective de sa « prétendue » ironie dans un contexte ou l'autre se retrouvent également dans l'aspect multi-facettes de son œuvre, aspect qui la rend reconnaissable (ayméenne) : dans le jeu avec l'art de la construction romanesque, dans le jeu avec les codes, dans le jeu avec les textes (le côté intertextuel et intratextuel) et surtout dans le jeu avec la langue qui porte en elle l'embryon fictionnel. Cela ne veut pas dire que le jeu soit dépourvu de contenu (moral, historique, artistique ou autre), il faut tout simplement ouvrir très bien les yeux et regarder autour de soi pour redevenir conscients du fait que le vitrail fait passer la lumière.

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L'EFFET DE LA VARIATION LINGUISTIQUE DANS LA CONSTRUCTION DU SENS A TRAVERS L'HUMOUR DANS LE ONE MAN SHOW L'AUTRE C'EST MOI DE GAD EL MALEH

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Abstract : Since antiquity, humour has been one of the means of relaxation in the conquest of sensation, of release, even of purgation of the pains of a suffering society; indeed, it assures several functions, moral, educational, cultural ... It is a tool among the tools of communication very solicited which can awaken the curiosity of the spectators to appease in addition to their search of pleasure and relaxation, the pleasure of approaching the problems of their society in a less aggressive way through the irony, in this regard we quote Lawrence Durell who says "you have to face reality with a touch of humor, in other words, you fail". The humorist can also through derision exceed the prohibitions, those we cannot say without them to harm us, he staged a show in spokesman, exhausting the dictator, the politician of bad faith, and finally a society tainted with vices and who cannot see itself or judge itself. Our purpose in this contribution is to see to what degree the humorist can through the deliberate use of the effects of variation and certain aspects of the language as a communication method hold the recipient's attention and guarantee this communication. Our choice of the corpus turned towards the monologue whose author is Gad El Maleh in "L'autre c'est moi"; because it targets a new form of speech, that of a blond talk opposed to speaking arabic in reference to the Western man and the Maghrebi man living in France, stereotypes that have developed in Europe following the discrimination events of one or the other. Our research will attempt to answer the following questions: • What linguistic processes are emphasized by the humorist in order to provoke laughter? • Does the humorist adopt certain contractions or particular liaisons in order to make people laugh? We think of linguistic aspects facilitating the expression of humor such as linguistic variation, elongations, hypercorrection, and other linguistic aspects are solicited for this purpose.

Keywords: humour; variation; diastratic.

Problématique et choix du sujet

Notre propos dans cette contribution est de voir à quel degré l'humoriste peut à travers l'usage délibéré des effets de la variation linguistique et certains aspects de la langue comme procédé de communication, retenir l'attention du destinataire et garantir cette communication. Notre choix du corpus s'est orienté vers le monologue dont l'auteur est Gad El Maleh dans *l'autre c'est moi*. L'auteur est d'origine maghrébine, il vit en France et il est très en vogue pour ses spectacles en direction de ses stéréotypes que nous avons cités plus haut, un sujet très prisé par les communautés arabe, occidentale et israélite. Notre étude vise un aspect de la variation linguistique dans ses manifestations, diatopique,¹ diachronique², diaphasique³ et diastratique⁴ à travers le monologue, qui est défini par les dramaturges grecs tels que Sophocle dans Antigone,

¹Variation *diatopique*, c'est la variété linguistique spatiale et régionale.

²Variation *diachronique*, c'est l'évolution de la langue par rapport à l'histoire.

³Variation *diaphasique*, qui se correspond au style de la langue.

⁴Variation *diastratique*, c'est la variété linguistique selon le niveau social et démographique.

comme un genre théâtral qui remonte à l'antiquité. Il est aussi appelé *one man show*, une expression qui renvoie à un anglicisme qui désigne l'expression homme seul sur scène. Il indique qu'il s'agit d'un spectacle assuré par un seul artiste. Ce genre de spectacle est connu chez des humoristes comme Florence Foresti, Elie Kkou, ont eu beaucoup de succès et ont fait salle comble. L'humoriste Gad El Maleh, est l'auteur de plusieurs *one men show*, et acteur dans plusieurs films qui ont eu du succès¹. C'est en 2005 qu'il met en scène un nouveau spectacle *l'autre c'est moi* qui a connu beaucoup de succès dans plusieurs pays et qu'il reprend en 2007 en adoptant la technique du stand up², une technique à travers laquelle il s'adresse directement au public dans une position debout en interprétant plusieurs personnages, comme le blond dans *l'autre c'est moi*, l'homme parfait qu'il met face à plusieurs situations qu'il surmonte sans aucune difficulté mais qui reste snobe, il est souvent décrit comme rutilant et en tout point parfait, que ce soit à la piscine, à la vie, au lèche-vitrine ou encore à la neige, le Blond sort toujours gagnant du duel. Le deuxième personnage mis en scène est l'homme d'origine maghrébine qui a des difficultés à tous les niveaux, social, culturel linguistique mais qui reste très sympathique. Les sujets favoris dans les spectacles de Gad Elmaleh sont la dualité entre la société occidentale et la société maghrébine dont il met toujours un parallèle entre les modes de vie dans un langage humoristique pointé parfois de burlesque. Plusieurs aspects verbaux et para verbaux caractérisent ces stand up, nous citons en premier lieu, un caractère non verbal telle la kinésique, une forme de communication non verbale. Cet aspect est décrit par le philosophe Allemand Hegel, comme consolidateur du geste « *chez l'orateur, le geste rivalise avec la parole; jaloux de la parole, le geste court derrière la pensée et demande lui aussi à servir d'interprète* » (Hegel, 1971:52). Cette forme non verbale contribue à la communication de manière effective, comme il peut être descriptif, le cas de certains mouvements tels le froncement des sourcils et du front, ou le mouvement de l'index à désigner un objet; comme il peut être émotif comme dans l'agitation des pieds qui renvoient à l'impatience ou à l'ennui. Le troisième type est le non verbal symbolique qui est culturel. L'auteur a signalé l'intérêt de l'aspect para verbal dans une interview en déclarant à un journaliste « *le corps et les gestes sont importants dans ma culture marocaine* ».

Description et analyse du corpus La variation linguistique comme prétexte à l'humour.

Par ailleurs, d'autres manifestations sont aussi déterminantes dans ses monologues qui organisent les conduites et les comportements de l'humoriste et des spectateurs, ce sont les attitudes et les représentations. Elles ne sont pas directement observables et généralement associées au comportement de leurs auteurs. Une représentation sociale est “une forme de connaissance, socialement élaborée et partagée, ayant une visée pratique et concourant à la construction d'une réalité commune à un ensemble social” (Jodelet, 1989:62); enfin, les représentations ne sont ni

¹Ce film est une comédie, dont le nom est “chouchou” dirigé par Merzak Allouache dans lequel Gad El Maleh joue avec d'Alain Chabat. Ce film a fait plus de trois millions d'entrées au Box Office.

²Cette technique a été développée aux USA, un genre original du spectacle de comédie où l'humoriste est seul devant son public, il raconte des histoires drôles devant son public sans interruption.

fausses, ni justes ni définitives dans le sens où elles permettent aux individus et aux groupes de s'auto catégoriser et de déterminer les traits qu'ils jugent pertinents pour construire leurs identités par rapport à d'autres. Notre étude vise l'aspect verbal de la communication, le corpus choisi cible une forme nouvelle du parler, celle d'un parler blanc ou blond opposé au parler beur en référence à l'homme occidental et l'homme maghrébin qui vivent en France, des stéréotypes qui se sont développés en Europe suite aux événements de discrimination de l'un ou de l'autre."L'autre c'est moi" est un monologue qui a eu une grande audience en France, le pays où il a été produit et interprété. Plusieurs réactions ont été enregistrées à la suite de sa représentation. Les extraits choisis du monologue ont été d'abord téléchargés à partir du site you tube¹ ensuite transcrits selon des conventions de transcription orthographique. La première séquence dure quatre minutes et six secondes et la deuxième dure deux minutes et trente sept secondes. Les thèmes abordés portent sur une situation d'un voyage en avion, deux personnages sont représentés dans le spectacle. Le blond qui est le français de souche et le maghrébin est celui qui vient d'un des pays du Maghreb², installé depuis peu ou longtemps mais qui ne s'est pas totalement intégré et pour preuve son langage n'est pas celui du français, il adopte un parler que l'auteur appelle parler beur. Les thèmes abordés dans l'esprit de l'opposition qui conforte le propos « Pour rire, il faut d'abord ressentir le conflit, le contraste, au moins la coexistence de deux procédures », confirme J.Fourastié (1983). *Le rire, suite. Denoël Gonthier.*

Séquence 1 : Plusieurs personnages sont mis en scène, le maghrébin qui appréhende l'avion, le douanier sujet à la risée, ensuite l'hôtesse par ses gestes automatiques, enfin les passagers crédules qui applaudissent le pilote à l'atterrissement. Séquence 2: Le maghrébin à l'aéroport, le blanc avec ses enfants avant le décollage et après.

Pratiques langagières et caractéristiques linguistiques

Deux pratiques langagières sont enregistrées dans les séquences sélectionnées pour le besoin de l'étude : Le langage ou le parler blanc , une expression empruntée à Gad El Maleh, elle renvoie au blond un homme qualifié de calme dont le langage est structuré parfois soutenu. Il est serein et conforme à la norme de la langue française, son usage est jugé correct par le respect des formes morphosyntaxiques de la langue française enfin il est normatif. Toutefois, le langage beur ou parler beur est celui pratiqué par le maghrébin dont beur faisait référence au départ aux arabes qui résident en France, c'est un terme en verlan; Patricia Toumi-Lippenoo déclare que : «Beur» (féminin «beurette») est un terme familier, qui désigne les descendants des émigrés d'Afrique du Nord, installés et nés en France. Le mot est entré dans Le Robert en septembre 1985. Selon elle, le mot «beur» est le résultat direct de l'inversement des syllabes du mot «arabe». Elle rajoute, également, que ce même mot «beur» donne l'appellation «rebeu» qui désigne la troisième génération de l'immigration maghrébine. Le Beur est par définition, l'enfant de la deuxième génération d'immigration. Il est à la fois un Français, parce que né sur le sol français, et un fils d'immigré. Ce parler beur est caractérisé par le roulement du "R", il renvoie à un registre familial moins élaboré ou à une maîtrise moins qualifiée de la langue française. Cet aspect se distingue comme

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfF5G7Iolno>.

² Ces pays sont soit l'Algérie, le Maroc, ou la Tunisie.

un marqueur identitaire considéré comme une variable, introduit principalement par William Labov. Cet écart est très présent dans plusieurs sketchs de l'auteur, dans lesquels Gad Elmaleh fait un va et vient entre deux niveaux de langues « Courant et familier » en prenant en considération deux facteurs de l'appartenance des personnages interprétés, spatial, régional et social. Il est alors plus juste d'évoquer la notion de variation celle de la variation *diatopique*, c'est la variété linguistique spatiale et régionale (comme le français parlé en France/au Canada/en Afrique; à Paris/ à Marseille) que l'on connaît des dialectes et les régiolectes et la variation *diastratique*, c'est la variété linguistique parlée selon le niveau social et démographique (comme la langue des jeunes/des personnes âgées, ruraux/urbains, professions différentes, niveaux d'études différentes...). Nous avons préféré la notion de variation à la notion de registre car l'auteur a mis à profit ces deux facteurs de l'appartenance sociale et spatiale ou régionale qui est au centre de notre problématique, cependant l'auteur l'utilise comme prétexte à la provocation du rire auprès des spectateurs.

La variation diastratique au service de l'humour

Elle apparaît à travers plusieurs séquences, d'abord celle où apparaît un vocabulaire et une syntaxe simple et courante, respectant les règles de grammaire, employées dans une phrase simple et correcte. C'est l'une des caractéristiques du langage courant. « *L'avion plane à cause de la pression des ailes, (...), je dirai y'a rien d'irrationnel à un moment donné la technologie, il faut faire confiance (...) l'avion qui ça fait plus de 50 ans qui plane dans les airs* » (le blond). Le blond utilise un vocabulaire scientifique, par l'usage de certains termes comme la pression, la technologie, irrationnel. Il faut noter que l'auteur, insère des mots de l'anglais et de l'arabe dialectal dans ses sketchs, ces mots sont choisis pour l'effet comique de leur sonorité et non pas pour leur effet de sens. « *Tu pourrais te mettre à coté, attention une autre garer, non walou, c'est à moi ce tire fesse* » (Sketch : le ski). Walou est un mot emprunté de l'arabe dialectal et est compris par tous les maghrébins ; il signifie « rien ». Comme il invente une expression *tire fesse*, une expression composée de deux mots, un verbe et un nom dont la juxtaposition a un effet humoristique par son effet dépréciatif. « *Eh oh ki rak ça va !* » (Sketch : le blond). Formule marocaine et algérienne très utilisée pour désigner « comment vas-tu ? », accompagnée d'interjections *eh! Oh!* « *Non, je sais pas, vous voulez pas aller en after en befor, en stand-by !* » (Sketch : l'australopithèque). Dans cette expression on trouve trois mots en anglais chaque mot a un sens « before : avant », « after : après », « stand-by : stand par ».

L'insertion de ces termes dans un sketch français est l'une de ses caractéristiques utilisées par Gad Elmaleh et ceci, grâce à sa dualité culturelle franco-marocaine et aussi pour séduire et attirer l'attention des téléspectateurs, c'est de la créativité lexicale et l'appartenance plurilinguistique.

Cohérence / Cohésion

Au niveau de la progression : Répétition

Le maghrébin semble en difficulté à trouver des mots, du vocabulaire pour décrire sa peur, le mot peur est répété plusieurs fois (S1). Une peur qu'il vit au quotidien ou celle qu'il fait vivre aux autres.

Règles d'isotopie : Ces règles ne sont pas respectées dans le parler beur car les idées ne sont pas enchaînées. Il n'existe pas d'articulateurs logiques, les propositions sont disposées de manières juxtaposées, ce qui crée une forme d'incohérence dans les propos qui traduisent une faiblesse langagièrre.

Les allongements

C'est un trait de la langue, qui exprime l'étonnement, la surprise dans des situations familiaires mais il peut renvoyer aussi à l'incertitude. Un allongement important est exprimé dans le parlé beur, et à plusieurs reprises. Cet allongement est caractéristique de la variation diastratique qui est un allongement vocalique qui semble assurer d'autres fonctions que celle de la productivité lexicale. En effet, les locuteurs maghrébins l'utilisent pour exprimer une valeur grammaticale d'intensité ou de restriction. Ils transposent les règles phonologiques de l'arabe sur le français, et ce, en adaptant les règles de la langue d'arrivée à celle de la langue de départ.

Parler blond/ parler beur

La langue utilisée est tributaire du personnage interprété dans le monologue. Nous avons noté deux registres de langue dont la première relève du registre soutenu où le blond s'exprime dans un langage correct dont la forme morphosyntaxique est respectée. Le blond en référence au français de souche, est une personne habituée à prendre l'avion ; il arrive à contrôler sa peur et son stress. Il s'agit du français typique, qui parle en blanc selon l'auteur, une forme nouvelle du parler emprunté à l'auteur. Son vocabulaire est choisi, avec des formes de politesses telles que «papa te demande: il est où ton sac? » une forme emphatique qui est souvent employée pour insister et mettre en relief de manière ironique. D'autre part, le deuxième personnage est le maghrébin, qui vit en France mais étranger à sa culture, il parle en beur, un parler associé à son identité, le registre dans lequel s'inscrit le maghrébin est un registre familier, relâché qui s'exprime par les gestes.

Trois paramètres déterminent l'usage de la forme d'une langue par rapport à une autre, *un paramètre social, un paramètre géographique et un paramètre historique, et la langue connaît des variations dans ses trois axes : variations diastratiques, variations diatopoques et variations diachroniques*. (Calvet, 2005:78).

Plusieurs procédés de la variation diastratique corrélos aux groupes sociaux sont mis en œuvre qui se manifestent à travers:

La contraction dans le parlé beur

S1: j'sais pas vous au lieu de je ne sais vous

j'ai pas peur" au lieu de je n'ai pas peur

L'avion c'est pas dangereux au lieu de l'avion ce n'est pas dangereux

T'as peur au lieu de tu as peur

Les douaniers isont pas là pour arranger les choses "au lieu de les douaniers ne sont pas là pour arranger les choses

“Ya deux cents passagers” au lieu de il ya deux cent t'es trop fort au lieu de tu es trop fort

S2: j'en pouvais plus au lieu de je ne pouvais plus

Apocopes dans Parano au lieu de paranoïaque

L'emprunt à la langue arabe dans *yallah* une interjection dans la langue arabe, qui renvoie à *allez -y*, cette expression est aussi un marqueur d'appartenance arabe et très récurrente dans le parler arabe .

Parler en blond/ parler blanc

Eh dis donc pithou¹

Le choix du terme Pitchou n'est pas aléatoire, car il renvoie à une certaine affectivité d'origine française exprimé pour le blond personnage créé par l'humoriste; le choix en est une fauvette qui se trouve dans l'ouest de la France.

Conclusion

L'auteur du *one men show*, a fait recours aux effets de langue par le biais de la variation linguistique pour inciter le rire auprès des spectateurs. Plusieurs techniques langagières ont été mises à profit. Pour solliciter le rire, Gad El Maleh fait des allers retour d'une variation à une autre comme nous l'avons montrée dans l'analyse. En ce qui touche la variation sociolinguistique, la manipulation du registre se fait à travers la juxtaposition des unités lexicales de plusieurs variétés de la langue française et de la langue arabe, voire à la langue anglaise. Le choix d'une variation soit diastratique en référence à l'appartenance sociale et identitaire de l'auteur, dans laquelle il se reconnaît car il revendique cette appartenance maghrébine et méditerranéenne par un parler simple fondé sur l'emploi des interjections , des mots déformés et des syllabes avalées fait sciemment avec une intonation très forte qui engendrent un effet humoristique que je tente de définir comme parler beur. D'autre part, cette variation est aussi celle d'un langage exprimé par le blond, un personnage interprété par l'auteur où le blond sait manger, sait nager, sait se comporter dans toutes les situations, mais il reste antipathique. Par ailleurs, le beur ne sait pas faire beaucoup de choses, mais il est décrit comme sympathique et drôle. La première forme de langage du blond interprété par l'auteur, renvoie à une sorte d'absurde dans l'emploi de formes linguistiques bien structurés qui renvoient à son appartenance un peu snobe telle décrite par l'humoriste, il utilise un vocabulaire recherché, des mots savants, des phrases longues avec une syntaxe complexe. Les temps des verbes utilisés sont le subjonctif, l'imparfait soit des temps difficiles à conjuguer que seul le blond est capable de faire, on peut définir cette forme de langage par le parler beur en opposition au parler blanc. Des aspects linguistiques facilitant l'expression de l'humour, une expression aussi moralisatrice qui pousse à réfléchir sur l'autre et sur soi.

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Sitographie

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfF5G7Iolno>.

¹ Nom usuel d'une petite fauvette à plumage sombre, gris ardoisé et brun, à longue queue, la fauvette pitchou, commune dans la région méditerranéenne et localement dans l'ouest de la France

LE CORPS CHEZ SADE – L'HUMOUR NOIR

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Abstract: In most cases humour is associated with a fun context, optimism and joy. The literature of the eighteenth century, in particular libertinage, offers us another perspective of humour: the black humour with the irony and sarcasm that it enfolds. Oriented in the majority of situations towards the victim and the events that she/he has to experience or to live, black humour is an integral and strong important part in the psychology of the libertine. Sade, the author who put his mark on the literature of the century, has built in Justine a series of scenes having as main binding the matter of humour. In an era of contrasts, shadows and enlightenment, black humour completes the panoply of features of the emblematic character for the Enlightenment: the libertine.

Keywords: black humour; libertin; Sade.

Dans l'œuvre de Sade le corps souffre un avilissement qui complète la panoplie des pratiques burlesques auxquelles le corps de la victime est soumis. Cette pratique, qui des fois converge avec l'ironie et le sarcasme, donne au roman libertin une vision plus cruelle, plus brutale.¹ C'est cette perspective de présenter les événements qui crée l'unicité des romans du marquis et plutôt leur caractère sadique. Ainsi, on découvre le long de l'histoire de Justine l'ironie et le sarcasme ayant des formes différentes, mais avec le même fondement : l'humour noir.

Le corps, soit-il masculin ou féminin est le point focal du roman. Ce que le marquis réussit à créer avec sa plus connue œuvre c'est un enchaînement des hypostases des corps dans de différentes situations. Le libertinage sadien est une image dressée d'une société habituée au masque, qui n'a pas le courage de s'assumer son vrai visage. Ainsi, le marquis emmène dans ses œuvres des caractères sociaux qui composent un univers libertin authentique. Les personnages, soumis à son imagination, souffrent et font souffrir les autres, profitent et vivent pour le plaisir et la jouissance, alors qu'aucun protagoniste n'échappe à sa+ pratique ni à la fascination qu'il exerce, les héroïnes se caractérisent au contraire par la diversité de leurs conduites et de leurs rôles.(Genand, 2015 : 15) Stéphanie Genand identifie quatre catégories de personnages féminines : les victimes, les spectatrices, les esclaves et les maquerelles, en tant que, concernant la suite des personnages masculins, toutes suivent la même trajectoire, les hommes étant des *sectateurs du vice* (Genand, 2015 : 15) , bien sûr avec quelques exceptions qui ne comptent pas trop dans la construction de l'homme libertin. Les personnages sont donc toujours partagés selon leur sexe et on identifie dans l'éventail des caractères deux grandes catégories : *les ironistes* et *les ironisés*. Dans la première catégorie, spécifique presque exclusivement aux hommes, on groupe les personnages masculins du récit. Soit qu'on parle des moines, de Rodin ou le marquis de Bressac, les présences masculines sadiennes ironisent et font souffrir le pauvre corps féminin. Les deux actions s'entrelacent et forment un scénario social parfait dans un contexte libertin bien connu par le monde, mais peu assumé par la société du siècle. Dans l'autre

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¹Qui prend plaisir à faire souffrir, qui manifeste une méchanceté, une cruauté systématique, cf. Larousse, <https://www.larousse.fr>, consulté le 25 mars 2019, 11h48

catégorie, des ironisés, on a les corps féminins, qui, ayant comme représentante principale Justine reçoivent toutes les insultes physiques et morales des hommes. Les filles du couvent, les élèves de Rodin, Suzanne - la plus jeune des compagnes de Justine dans le château des faux-monnayeurs – sont les victimes des hommes autour d'elles. Le manque de tolérance et empathie qui caractérise les mâles les transforment dans la plupart des cas dans des tyrans du corps. Le corps le plus tyrannisé est celui de Justine – la capitaine de l'armée des femmes en souffrance. Elle connaît tous les supplices des libertins de sa vie, et chaque fois elle réussit à dépasser la terreur et le chagrin. Le désespoir ne prend pas naissance dans son esprit et ainsi, elle atteint le degré d'héroïne du libertinage. Elle joue même un rôle d'apôtre si on prend en considération les leçons de religion qu'elle donne à Rosalie, la fille de Rodin. Elle est le sauveur des victimes, un Jésus au féminin, qui endure les atrocités des gens sur la Terre pour connaître ensuite la paix éternelle. Cette analogie avec la religion n'est qu'un autre blasphème menée vers la religion et les vertus qu'elle promeut. La religion tombe dans l'attrape de l'humour noir, elle apporte que de la souffrance, des blessures, de la torture, douleur et larmes. La vertu de la pauvre Justine n'est pas appréciée par les gens et à une première vue ni par la divinité. Elle tombe percée par la foudre.

A la recherche de la symbolique de la mort de l'infortunée de Sade, on retrouve le ciel qui s'ouvert et qui laisse sortir la lumière, et c'est en lumière que Justine quitte ce monde. C'est la récompense d'une vie vertueuse mais déshonorée par les gens – elle quitte ce monde dans une lumière qui envoyé par le ciel, qui a inondé son corps. Elle devient lumière, sur la terre et dans le ciel. Sa sœur, Juliette, est la première qui reçoit de la lumière de Justine, elle renonce à la vie, et devient une Carmélite, *l'exemple et l'éducation*. (De Sade, 1791 : 279) Ainsi Justine accomplit son but, elle tourne le visage du monde vers le Dieu qu'elle l'a beaucoup aimé. Sa sortie est une scène à composante divine, pas soumise à l'ironie, la montée de Justine vers le ciel et la sacralisation du corps féminin.

Dans l'absence de l'ironie, la cruauté est plus douce, elle ne connaît pas ses apogées les plus scabreuses. *Où vas-tu, malheureuse ?* (De Sade, 1791 : 113) demande Rodin sa fille. Cette appellation ne révèle pas la déférence d'un parent trop préoccupé par le bonheur de sa fille, mais plutôt la cruauté d'un libertin sans limites. Le sentiment de paternité n'existe pas dans le cœur de celui-ci ; sa fille n'est pour lui qu'une autre femme qu'il transforme dans sa victime. Il n'est pas tolérant avec elle parce que c'est sa propre fille. Il avoue à Rombeau :

– *Quoi ! parce qu'elle est ma fille ? Belle raison ! s'écria Rodin ; et quel rang t'imagines-tu donc que ce titre doive avoir dans mon cœur ? Je regarde un peu de semence éclosé du même œil (au poids près) que celle qu'il me plaît de perdre dans mes plaisirs. Je n'ai jamais fait plus de cas de l'un que de l'autre. On est le maître de reprendre ce qu'on a donné ; jamais le droit de disposer de ses enfants ne fut contesté chez aucun peuple de la terre.* (De Sade, 1791 : 110)

Cette indifférence de Rodin étonne son ami, Rombeau, qui met cette attitude en opposition avec l'amour : *je te croyais amoureux.* (De Sade, 1791 : 112) Même en libertinage, l'amour est associé à la paternité et celle-ci est synonyme de la déférence. Ce que montre Rodin ? Un grand manque de pitié concernant sa fille. Si elle a le corps qui doit être utilisé pour leurs expérimentations, pourquoi pas ?

Il se montre même surpris par le fait que Rombeau ne connaît pas déjà cet aspect : *Moi ! épris d'une fille ?... Ah ! Rombeau, je me supposais mieux connu de toi [...]* (De Sade, 1791 : 112). Rodin incarne ainsi la typologie du libertin sans scrupules qui ne garde aucun morceau d'humanité et pour lequel le seul sentiment qui mérite son

attention c'est le plaisir. Rodin n'a pas de liaisons avec les femmes de sa vie : il les utilise : les deux domestiques, sa fille, les jeunes filles de la pension et à la fin : Justine. Un fanatique de la science du corps, la chirurgie, il expérimente des sensations que l'utilisation de son objet d'étude peut offrir. Il sait soigner le corps, mais il le fait juste pour que le corps puisse supporter les traitements qu'il va appliquer. C'est un faux bénéfice qu'il offre. Un corps souffrant ne peut pas offrir des résultats satisfaisants. Il traite le physique pour replanter la souffrance à un degré plus élevé, utilise le corps pour son plaisir et détruit le psychique avec son sarcasme.

Le délice de l'agresseur est souvent incorporé dans une attitude ironique concernant sa victime qui est humiliée et déshonorée non pas seulement physiquement, à travers les pratiques libertines de son bourreau, mais aussi du point de vue psychologique. Les deux perspectives d'une scène, corporelle et psychologique forment la complexité de l'image typique libertine. Rodin, qui début était *très ému* (De Sade, 1791 : 93), devient *plus à l'aise* (De Sade, 1791 : 93) une fois que Julie, sa victime, a les yeux couverts par le bandeau. Afin d'accomplir son plan, les yeux de la victime doivent être cachés. Les yeux sont des abîmes, il n'a pas le pouvoir de se laisser regardé. Il l'accuse sans écouter les mots de la jeune fille et n'étant pas du tout impressionné par les demandes de pitié que Julie lui adresse. Il contemple l'image de la jeune fille soumise à ses plaisirs noirs. *Quel monstre peut chercher le plaisir au sein des larmes et de la douleur ?* (De Sade, 1791 : 93) se demande Thérèse (Justine) en regardant Rodin- le libertin et sa petite victime. Ce chirurgien qui travaillait juste pour son goût et qui a sauvé Justine force les enfants de son pension et les soumet à ses caprices noirs. En analysant le personnage Rodin, on pourrait dire que Justine joue le rôle d'une clairvoyante dans sa relation avec celui-ci. Dès le début, elle remarque que Rodin avait *l'œil vif, l'air de la force et de la santé, mais en même temps du libertinage.* (De Sade, 1791 : 89) Mais ce n'est pas Justine qui parle, c'est Thérèse, une Justine expérimentée qui connaît déjà le monde et qui voit au-dessous des apparences, pour laquelle les gens ne sont plus seulement les descendants d'Adam et Eva et ont perdu la plupart de leur composante divine.

L'ironie ou l'humour noir donne le ton à l'écriture. La subtilité et la dénotation spécifique aux libertins et à leur classe sociale souligne aussi la fine éducation de laquelle les aristocrates bénéficient, composante principale de l'acte et de l'art de la parole. Les mots de Dom Séverino font tressaillir la jeune Justine, il l'invite dans la sacristie, elle est choquée. C'est son premier moment d'insécurité associé à une institution qu'elle voyait sainte, maison du Dieu, autel du bonheur de l'esprit. Justine reste douteuse, sceptique même hésitante concernant l'invitation du moine. Elle ne peut pas croire. Elle ne veut pas croire. Il ironise Justine en caractérisant les moines. La technique d'écriture de Sade ne nécessite pas des interventions du narrateur. Le ton ironique résulte des répliques des personnages, situation retrouvée aussi dans le discours de Dom Séverino. Ce que commence avec une ironie bien cachée devant un discours enrichi avec des mots spécifiques à la religion, devient le préambule pour une présentation directe et claire des intentions des moines :

— *Et où donc, charmante pèlerine ? me répondit le moine, en m'introduisant dans la sacristie... Quoi ! vous craignez de passer la nuit avec quatre saints ermites !... Oh ! vous verrez que nous trouverons les moyens de vous dissiper, cher ange ; et si nous ne vous procurons pas de bien grands plaisirs, au moins servirez-vous les nôtres dans leur plus extrême étendue.* (De Sade, 1791 : 122)

Construite dans la majorité des scènes comme une pièce de théâtre, *Justine* peut être partagé en trois actes principaux : 1) l'enfance et l'innocence ; 2) la jeunesse et l'essai ; 3) la maturité et la paix éternelle.

La première catégorie comprend une Justine authentique, qui essaie de trouver des gens d'honneur, qui, après avoir quitté l'abbaye où elle a été éduquée avec sa sœur, Juliette, cherche les proches de sa famille pour trouver le soutien qu'elle a besoin. La première surprise : les vieilles connaissances refusent toute implication dans la vie d'une jeune orpheline. La couturière et le prêtre déçoivent Justine, leur attitude étant complètement différente par rapport aux expectatives de la fille. Son père est mort, elle ne représente rien sans lui. C'est un des premiers cas de supériorité de la masculinité dans le récit sadien. L'identité de leur mère n'est pas présentée, seulement la position sociale de leur père qui, après sa mort, ne vaut rien pour les pauvres petites filles. Les filles, qui ont perdu leurs parents doivent partir en vingt-quatre heures de l'abbaye.

La jeunesse nous révèle une Justine métamorphosée. Elle cache son identité, elle est devenue Thérèse – et ensuite, toute l'action est construite autour de cette nouvelle hypostase de l'héroïne. En fait c'est Thérèse qui souffre et endure toutes les atrocités du monde libertin dans laquelle elle entre sans avoir connaissance de cela. Ce déplacement de l'image de l'héroïne principale de Justine vers Thérèse assure une transposition du corps, de l'enfance vers la jeunesse, l'âge de toutes les grandes découvertes et des curiosités. On a une Justine qui a laissé derrière ce qu'elle était avant et a commencé lutter avec le monde pour vivre. Vivre c'est un don duquel elle doit se montrer digne. Elle doit confronter le monde et ses atrocités. La société n'a pas gardé un bon lieu pour la gardienne de l'honneur. Il n'y a pas une place vacante qui attend son occupante en lui offrant les bénéfices bien connues pour une fille du bien dans un monde trop cruel pour son existence pure et vertueuse. Et le prix de la vertu c'est cher pour elle. Thérèse souffre, endure, se purifie. Elle ne voit pas ce que se passe autour d'elle, elle sent. Chaque moment et aventure est gravée sur son corps qui reste comme un journal de vie, un témoignage de tout ce que s'est passé.

La fin de Justine, dans le troisième acte du récit révèle à nouveau Justine, une nouvelle Justine. Ayant passé des aventures difficiles à imaginer, elle vit une renaissance sociale aidée par sa sœur, Juliette, et Monsieur de Corville. Cependant elle ne se trouve pas apte pour sa nouvelle vie, elle ne se retrouve plus sur la Terre, même si cette fois-ci c'est une Terre de la paix. Elle est devenue une connaisseuse des gens et des faits, une clairvoyante et avoue à sa sœur que cette situation ne va pas durer longtemps. Sa prédiction s'accomplit et la deuxième métamorphose comprend le corps de Justine. Elle devient qu'esprit, ce qu'elle a toujours été.

La transgression du corps du terrestre vers l'absolu est réalisé par Sade dans une manière naturelle et apparemment simpliste. La déclaration directe de Justine, – *Je ne suis pas née pour tant de félicités* (De Sade, 1791 : 321) , c'est le premier pas de l'héroïne vers la sortie de ce monde. Soumis plusieurs fois à la psychologie affligeante de ses bourreaux, le corps de Justine perd sa composante tellurique, elle éclate, comme la foudre qui lui ouvre les portes des cieux et tous les excès auxquels son corps a été agenouillé sont effacés et enterrés.

Tout le long des aventures de Justine on identifie plusieurs types de rire. Le rire de complicité spécifique au libertin qui vise la création d'une alliance ayant comme principal but l'accomplissement de ses plans est présent dans la scène qui surprend le dialogue entre Justine et Monsieur le comte de Bressac. Celui-ci essaie de paraître le sauveur de la pauvre fille grâce au fait qu'il la présente à sa tante, est celui qui recourt au rire dans une manière dérisoire en se moquant de Justine dans une discussion ayant

comme sujet la religion. C'est en vain qu'il essaie le convaincre de renoncer à ses principes, elle restant fidèle à la divinité. Ce type de rire entoure le libertin dans une auréole bienveillant, même amical. Au fond c'est juste une dissimulation de celui-ci qui cache ses intentions et plans dans le préambule de la discussion. Qu'est-ce qu'il fait le comte ? Exactement cette chose. Au début il vient pour une discussion, mais le long de leur entrevue il dévoile ses intentions : engager Justine pour tuer sa tante, Mme de Bressac. Il lui explique qu'il a besoin de « les mains de Justine » pour accomplir son plan. Le corps de Justine devient ainsi arme criminelle après avoir expérimenté le viol et l'humiliation. C'est toujours le marquis qui rit et plaisante quand il voit Justine après qu'elle a essayé sauver Mme de Bressac du plan maléfique de son neveu. C'est le rire de fausse amitié qui assure le fond du dialogue et qui donne naissance à l'ironie et au sarcasme.

Le comte ironise la situation créée par Justine et continue son discours avec des mots qui forment une avalanche des insultes, une blasphème contre le corps de Justine. *Les belles fesses ! disait le comte avec le ton de la plus cruelle ironie et touchant ces objets avec brutalité, les superbes chairs !... l'excellent déjeuner pour mes dogues !* (De Sade, 1791 : 72) C'est la déconsidération du corps féminin par les deux hommes : M de Bressac et Jasmin, son valet. Au niveau spirituel c'est un affront contre les lois religieux, contre la vertu et tout ce qu'elle implique. Le scélérat et son aide, des homosexuels acerbes et cruels supposent le corps de Justine à ce traitement extrême afin de lui appliquer une correction. Justine est condamnée à souffrir pour avoir été sincère, pour avoir essayé sauver la vie de Mme de Bressac, la femme qui lui a offert plus qu'un travail, sa confiance. Un regard superficiel pourrait nous mettre dans la situation de penser que la fausseté, le mensonge et l'injustice ont fini la bataille en avantage, mais Justine échappe et continue sa malheureuse vie. Cet épisode ne représente qu'un maillon dans la longue chaîne des malheurs vécus par Justine.

Mais jusqu'à la fin de l'histoire, après chaque événement tragique l'espoir lui donne l'élan nécessaire pour réessayer et continuer sa vie d'après les mêmes principes et convictions. En ensemble, l'histoire de Justine est l'incarnation d'une guerre qui après chaque bataille envisage de nouvelles perspectives pour le perdant, une ironie complète et complexe à l'adresse de son personnage principal qui est l'objet de dérision face à la vie et ses inconnus chemins. Dans la scène présentée, la présence du sarcasme dans le discours de son bourreau est soulignée par la narratrice comme adjvant dans la souffrance physique. L'ironie c'est le synonyme psychique de la violence, le sarcasme c'est pire – une tentative de tuer l'âme. Mais dans le cas de Justine si ses mains ne sont pas devenues des armes, son âme l'a fait. C'est son arme contre les malheurs qu'elle doit dépasser, les seuils pour passer au niveau suivant de la sagesse spirituelle. Justine- son corps, son âme- est une victime des plusieurs comportements scélérats, une victime qui ne perd pas les batailles avec ses malfaiteurs. Le seul pouvoir devant laquelle elle tombe c'est la divinité qui va la prendre près d'elle à la fin de l'histoire. Ainsi, la destruction du corps de Justine ne reste pas singulière dans les essais de ses bourreaux. Il ne faut pas oublier qu'un comportement scélérat implique une action psychique en même temps qu'une action mentale. Le libertin scélérat cherche le plaisir dans la destruction de sa victime et pour atteindre l'apogée de l'exalte il applique une possession complète : physique et psychique.

Le deuxième libertin cruel qui incarne l'humour noir dans son attitude c'est M. de Grenade en observant l'embarras de Justine quand elle a observé les lancettes : [...] *Il n'en fit que rire* (De Sade, 1791 : 201). Le rire est dans cette scène plus qu'une réaction, c'est la réponse, la menace, la clochette qui annonce un autre sacrifice de la même offrande : le corps féminin. Zéphire, *l'autre jeune homme* (De Sade, 1791 : 201), sers la

même technique de communication : le sourire. Cette fois-ci le sourire, n'est plus séparé de la situation, il est l'introduction même, car le jeune homme, en suivant les ordres de son maître, la place dans la position nécessaire pour le traitement sanguin. Encore une fois agenouillé devant l'autel libertin du plaisir, Justine s'évanouit- son esprit quitte le corps soumis à la douleur. C'est dans cette douleur que le monstre sanguinaire trouvait son plaisir et tout est fait au nom de l'*histoire des passions* (De Sade, 1791 : 203). Si la couleur de la passion est le rouge, dans le cas de M. de Grenade, le rouge doit couler et sortir du corps, il voit le plaisir, il ne la sent pas, ses yeux sont la chaîne d'intériorisation de l'ivresse, la fenêtre vers son esprit. Son nom est aussi représentatif, la grenade comme fruit doit être seulement piquée pour laisser couler sa douceur rouge. Ses grains sont couverts d'une peau fragile et douce qui cache une chair juteuse qui entoure un noyau dur – une image transposé du corps, qui a presque la même composition : la peau, la chair, l'os. Ainsi, l'idée de jouir et d'utiliser le corps pour la jouissance gagne une nouvelle acception. Le saignement extorque le corps de vie d'énergie et le laisse vulnérable devant les lancettes du maître piquer.

En outre, il ne faut pas oublier le sourire méprisant de la Dubois quand Thérèse (Justine) lui a demandé une seconde fois d'être sa protectrice. La réaction de la Dubois la place dans la catégorie des libertins, alors que sa féminité lui donne encore un air moins affligeant. Ayant encore une fois le rôle de la victime, car elle n'a pas accepté devenir leur complice, Justine se trouve dans une situation sans espoir : soit elle va accepter les conditions de la bande, soit ils vont sodomiser son corps pour satisfaire leurs désirs et plaisirs et ensuite vont la poignarder. Celle qui l'a aidé une fois, pour échapper est maintenant partie du groupe des agresseurs et sous l'égide de l'humour noir, accompagné cette-fois-ci d'un sourire, elle se moque de la position de Justine. Toutefois, elle lui offre une alternative - ce fait pourrait –être la compassion féminine de laquelle un petit morceau est resté dans le cœur de la Dubois.

Le corps chez Sade est menacé par l'humour noir. Dans chaque situation que Justine doit vivre et dépasser son corps est soumis à une forme d'humiliation difficile à imaginer et beaucoup plus difficile à vivre. C'est une humiliation complète, un dénigrement de l'instance du corps. L'abus physique et moral s'entrelacent et transforment Justine dans la victime absolue de l'humour noir et l'ironie. Ses bourreaux, des masques sociaux construits d'une manière complexe, sont l'incarnation des « initiateurs » dans des différentes étapes de son parcours. Si dans le roman libertin on trouve des fois les caractéristiques du bildungsroman, dans Justine, on est les spectateurs d'une saga d'un corps meurtri. Au début du roman, restée orpheline, et ayant rompu la liaison avec sa sœur, Justine prend dans ses bras l'espérance et commence son périple. C'est toujours l'espoir qui lui donne le pouvoir de continuer sa lutte. Les aventures la rendent immunisé contre la malhonnêteté des gens et lui changent la perception sur le monde et ceux qui le forment. Le corps une fois pur, lisse, tout doux et blanc est transformé progressivement dans une relique meurtrie, pleine de cicatrices et empreintes. On dit que les yeux sont le miroir de l'âme dans son cas, le corps en prend la place. Rodin, le faux chirurgien, qui 'efface ' les cicatrices de son corps ne fait que d'espace pour les suivantes, dont le créateur est même lui. Le corps est soumis à un processus de récréation, reconfiguration de la composante émotionnelle à partir la douleur ressentie suite aux atrocités qu'il souffre.

Néanmoins, le rire n'apparaît pas dans Justine seulement avec un symbolisme noir, accompagnant les atrocités des libertins, Rosalie rit quand Thérèse (Justine) expose sa réflexion concernant l'activité de Rodin. C'est un rire qui dit 'tu n'as rien entendu', un rire de compassion, qui transmet encore l'innocence de Justine, qui n'a pas

dévoilé le vrai visage de celui qui va devenir un nouveau bourreau libertin pour elle, un rire de fausse joie. Il pourrait être aussi interprété comme un rire de déception, de ‘je sais plus que je montre’ – fait qui est exprimé directement par la suivante réplique de Rosalie : *Écoute, me dit cette charmante fille avec toute la candeur de son âge et toute la naïveté de son aimable caractère ; écoute, Thérèse, je vais tout te dire, je vois bien que tu es une honnête fille... incapable de trahir le secret que je vais te confier.* (De Sade, 1791 : 91). Elle se confesse devant Thérèse (Justine), en lui décacher le vrai caractère de son père. Rodin, qui se trouve sous la protection de Rombeau, le véritable chirurgien de Saint-Marcel (De Sade, 1791 : 92), est associé aux expérimentantes de celui-ci, il aime découvrir des nouvelles choses concernant le corps, il se veut un érudit du corps. Ce que lui transforme dans un tyran du corps, c'est le motif pour lequel il tient la pension :

Tu veux savoir à présent, Thérèse, ce qui l'engage à tenir pension ? ... le libertinage, mon enfant, le seul libertinage, passion portée à l'extrême en lui. (De Sade, 1791 : 92) Il faire connue ainsi sa vraie nature, il ne veut pas découvrir des choses concernant le corps pour le soigner, mais pour pouvoir profiter au maximum de ce qu'il peut offrir : le plaisir. Il a, à la fin, le même motif qui anime chaque libertin véritable.

La décadence, la dégradation et la décomposition du corps sont les trois aspects D de l'anatomie sadienne. L'homme n'est qu'une carcasse destinée à faciliter la touchée du plaisir dans un univers plus charnel qu'il a été jamais présenté dans une œuvre littéraire.

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L'IRONIE NOTHOMBIENNE, UNE AUTRE FORME DE VIE ?

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Abstract: An American soldier, Melvin Mapple, who is in the Iraq war, and a writer named Amelie Nothomb start an epistolary discussion that is sometimes replaced by an inner narrative. Amélie Nothomb succeeds in the novel Life form to move from reality to fiction, from calm to madness and from irony to comedy. The Nothombian character is an obese who sabotages his body to cope with the atrocities of the war and is built so that the writer can take up the different forms of the sometimes controversial relationship with his readers. We are talking here about an ideal reader, Melvin, a man who reveals himself totally to a stranger. The irony is noted in the writing of this novel, the construction of the male character and Amélie's reaction to the course of events. Once again, we are faced with a masculine - feminine duality typical of the Nothombian world, but now the masculine character is put at the center of the story. The reflections on the relation to oneself and to the body, the impossibility of accepting one's own life make the Nothombian character an unsuited person who tries to find happiness in the lie, who is not capable of living a "normal" life and who needs to escape from reality and ironically, the writer allows him, but is she?

Keywords: letters; irony; life.

L'ironie a occupé une place très importante dans la littérature universelle et elle est toujours un sujet de réflexions. Hamon (Paris, 2010) considère l'ironie un acte double : l'ironie comme communion avec un complice et comme excommunication du naïf qui ne comprend que le sens explicite et littéral de la communication. Dès l'Antiquité elle apparaît dans les récits sous différentes formes qui sont soit évidentes soit insaisissables, parce que l'ironie est une marque si subjective. Le lecteur croit détenir son sens, et il déverrouille son mystère à travers son expérience et ses pensées. Mais est-elle vraiment mystérieuse, énigmatique, ou elle est simplement devant nous, mais sous une variété d'allures ?

Amélie Nothomb, une romancière belge qui est facilement reconnaissable, garde une relation très proche avec ses lecteurs par la correspondance. Le roman *Une forme de vie* vient à mettre en évidence cette relation parce que l'écrivaine réserve pour la rentrée littéraire du 2010 un roman autofictionnel qui a comme personnages principaux, un soldat américain, Melvin Mapple et une écrivaine nommée Amélie Nothomb. Elle déclare s'avoir inspiré d'un article de USA Today (Payot, 2010) qui parle d'une épidémie d'obésité dans l'armée américaine basée en Irak. On observe dès le début son ironie parce qu'elle met en antithèse deux mondes : l'Amérique qui se débrouille si bien qu'est capable à rendre ses soldats conquéreurs obèses et l'Irak qui meurt de faim et qui se voit fusillé pour l'idéal démocratique.

La correspondance entre ces deux personnages ne commence pas bien parce que l'écrivaine offre à Melvin ses romans et sa réponse n'est pas celle attendue par Amélie. Il dit « Vous voulez que j'en fasse quoi ? » et elle répond évidemment énervée : « Peut-être rééquilibrer un meuble ou surélever une chaise. Ou les offrir à un ami qui a appris à lire. » (Nothomb, 2010 : 5) Le sarcasme d'Amélie est le déclencheur d'une relation épistolaire qui va devenir vraiment intéressante à travers le roman.

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Si l'on pense aux films américains et aux stéréotypes avec lesquels le monde hollywoodien nous a habitué quand on dit soldat américain on s'imagine un musclé prêt à donner sa vie pour sa patrie, mais ici l'image du Melvin pose quelques questions dès le début. On se pose la question si Amélie, l'auteure essaie de se moquer, d'ironiser de l'armée américaine en décrivant cet homme si grotesque si monstrueux et sa maladie : l'obésité.

L'obésité, une ironie de la vie ?

Melvin Mapple se veut un personnage tragique qui sabotage son corps et qui tombe dans une solitude totale. Il raconte les horreurs de la guerre qui l'ont fait à grossir:

J'ai découvert la terreur. Il y a des gens courageux qui supportent, moi pas. Il y a des gens à qui ça coupe l'appétit, mais la plupart, dont moi, réagissent à l'opposé. On revient du combat choqué, éberlué d'être vivant, épouvanté, et la première chose qu'on fait après avoir changé de pantalon [...], c'est se jeter sur la bouffe. (Nothomb, 2010 : 11)

Alors on voit un soldat terrifié qui avoue que la nourriture est devenue comme une drogue, comme une manière de se suicider et d'échapper aux combats. Mais dans cette dite tragédie de Melvin, on entend le rire créateur de l'auteure qui crée une atmosphère sérieuse pour les événements qu'il raconte, il se sent dégouté par ses collègues qui n'ont pas été attirés par cette drogue, la bouffe.

Le rire créateur est un concept que l'on considère comme étant définiteur pour ce roman. Amélie Nothomb réussit à se moquer de son personnage principal au moment où elle le met dans une situation si comique et lui donne la possibilité de se dévoiler comme un personnage tragique, un inadapté qui se veut héros.

L'héroïsme de Melvin Mapple n'est pas confirmé ni à travers l'histoire, ni à la fin du récit, alors que l'écrivaine ne fait que rire et créer un monde tellement antithétique.

Melvin le considère un manque de sensibilité et pas de bravoure. Mais il n'est pas le seul à voir ainsi les choses, ses collègues obèses s'amusent en s'encourageant à manger : « That's the spirit, man ! » (Nothomb, 2010 : 19).

Melvin voit son obésité comme une victoire contre la guerre, il se révolte pour répondre violemment à la violence du combat. Il dit « Je suis fier de ma dernière victoire : je n'entre plus dans les tanks. La porte est trop étroite. » (Nothomb, 2010 : 17), mais est-il vraiment un héros ?

Selon nous, on croit qu'il est si effrayé de mourir qu'il essaie par tous les moyens d'échapper de cet endroit, de ne pas participer à guerre meurtrière. Il ne milite pas contre les injustices de la guerre ou contre l'état américain qui les a envoyés à lutter et à tuer des gens, il seulement veut vivre.

On ne croit pas que la vie, le destin a ironisé ce personnage, mais c'est lui-même qui est tombé dans cet état. Ce sont les résultats de ses actions et de ses pensées qui parfois semblent être près de la folie.

Par cette réflexion sur le sens de la vie, on découvre une romancière qui questionne les aspects tragiques des acteurs de la guerre et le corps est celui qui doit porter les marques. Le corps est la réflexion de l'esprit et des pensées, mais pourrait-on croire que l'obésité est une façon d'échapper à la réalité, une manière de se cacher et de serrer les pensées les plus profondes qui pourraient nuire ?

La graisse, une souffle d'air ou un supplice?

Dans ce roman comme dans la plupart de ses ouvrages, Amélie Nothomb ne perd pas l'occasion d'insérer des éléments du monde oriental auquel elle porte une évidente affection.

Le soldat américain qui personnifie sa graisse en la nommant Schéhérazade est le symbole d'une génération de soldats qui sont fortement influencés par cette guerre. On s'interroge sur la signification du nom choisi, parce que l'on sait que dans *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, Schéhérazade était une princesse qui prouve qu'elle est une femme rompue aux affaires et qui sait parfaitement négocier avec les hommes. Elle agit prudemment, et inspire confiance et affection au roi, son mari. Alors Melvin qui ressent vivement le manque d'une femme dans sa vie veut sentir aimé, accepté, mais dans le même temps il a besoin d'être apprivoisé, d'être sauvé. Il est le prisonnier de ses pensées, des horreurs qu'il a devant lui à chaque instant.

La graisse le protège de ses insécurités, mais il le laisse vulnérable devant la vie parce que selon les normes de la société un obèse n'est pas vu comme une personne normale, mais plutôt comme irresponsable, comme un gens qui est tombé dans le dérisoire et qui ne s'aime pas.

L'autre personnage du roman, l'écrivaine Amélie Nothomb, même si parfois à des réflexions sur les épîtres, essaie de ne pas influencer le lecteur, mais à un moment donné la photo qu'elle reçoit de Melvin la détermine d'intervenir en faisant sa description. Elle dit :

Le sexe de cette tumeur n'était pas identifiable, l'ampleur des bourrelets cachait les parties génitales. Les seins gigantesques suggéraient une femme mais, noyés parmi tant d'autres replis et protubérances, ils perdaient leur impact de mamelles pour s'assimiler à des pneus. (Nothomb, 2010 : 42)

Tous les traits décrits par Amélie font l'image monstrueuse de Melvin qu'elle a du mal à accepter. Elle est indignée par la légèreté et le manque de gêne avec lesquels le soldat défile et présente son obésité, cette maladie qu'il veut présenter devant le monde.

La narratrice apprend à mieux connaître ce natif de Baltimore qui s'est engagé dans l'armée pour ne plus crever de faim, elle le soutient et l'encourage dans son projet de "body art" quand, brusquement, les missives en provenance de Bagdad s'interrompent. Dès lors Amélie Nothomb, dérogeant à la règle qu'elle s'était fixée de ne jamais poursuivre ses interlocuteurs, va se mettre en quête du soldat Melvin. Elle essaie de prendre le rôle du sauveur et quand elle trouve que Melvin est de retour en Amérique, elle décide d'aller le visiter.

Alors l'obésité de Melvin Mapple réussit à faire sa première victime, Amélie Nothomb, le personnage, se voit obligée d'aller aux secours d'un inconnu qui a créé par ses lettres une image si déplorable de sa vie. Elle veut aider Melvin Mapple à se débarrasser de ses victimes qu'il porte en lui, les victimes de la guerre qui se sont transformées en graisse.

Pour le soldat, tout ce qu'il raconte devient sa réalité, les mots qu'il écrit deviennent ses armes qu'il utilise à son gré sans penser aux conséquences.

La fin du roman est la plus comique ou ironique, c'est difficile à se décider. Etant dans l'avion Amélie ouvre la dernière lettre de Melvin qui lui avoue que tout ce qu'il a raconté c'était un mensonge. Le soldat n'est pas un soldat, mais un inadapté qui vit dans le sous-sol de ses parents, il est vraiment obèse mais non pas à cause de la guerre sinon à cause de lui. Alors Amélie se voit devant une décision, comment éviter

Melvin qui l'attend à l'aéroport, elle décide d'empêcher cette rencontre en cochant sur le formulaire qu'elle fait partie d'un groupe terroriste. Elle se voit déjà dans la prison de Guantanamo seulement parce qu'elle a voulu éviter un fou qui l'avait menti pendant des mois dans ses lettres. Ironiquement elle n'accuse pas Melvin de cette chose-ci, elle se voit la seule responsable, elle aussi a besoin d'être libérée d'elle-même. Elle dit : « Tu le sais: si tu écris chaque jour de ta vie comme un possédée, c'est parce que tu as besoin d'une issue de secours. Être écrivain, pour toi, cela signifie chercher désespérément la porte de sortie. » (Nothomb, 2010 : 63)

Pour conclure, on peut dire que l'ironie nothombienne fait le délice de la lecture de ce roman, mais elle tombe sur un sujet vraiment important : la sincérité avec les autres, mais surtout avec soi-même. Si Melvin décide de mentir c'est parce qu'il veut se sentir comme un héros, mais en réalité il est un être dégoutant qui se croit accepté par Amélie. Les réflexions sur le rapport à soi et au corps, l'impossibilité d'accepter sa propre vie font du personnage nothombien un inadapté qui essaie de trouver le bonheur dans le mensonge, qui n'est pas capable de vivre une vie « normale » et qui a besoin d'échapper à sa réalité et ironiquement, l'écrivaine lui permet, mais pas en totalité. La forme de vie que prend l'ironie dans ce récit est si inattendue, le jeu des instances narratrices et l'image des personnages sont si bien mélangés qu'à la fin on se sait plus quoi croire.

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DON JUAN DANS LA LITTÉRATURE. UN TRAITEMENT IRONIQUE DU MYTHE DE PROMÉTHÉE ?

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Abstract: *Don Juan is one of the most notorious characters in literature. Its famous story has been told and retold by many authors, each of them exploiting different features of the character. Some of the critics have even classified Don Juan as a literary myth, basing their consideration on the very large and constant presence of the character in literature. Our paper deals with some of the recurrences of the character of the conqueror in French literature. The aim is, on one hand, to observe its passage from the first literary version, that of Tirso de Molina to some French versions and, on the other hand, to observe if the literary versions of Don Juan can be considered, as Gilbert Durand affirmed, a deformation of the classical myth of Prometheus, by ironical means.*

Keywords: *the myth of Prometheus; Don Juan; myth deformation; literary myth.*

Préambule

Don Juan est l'un des personnages les plus notoires de la littérature, jouissant d'une présence constante dans l'imaginaire des auteurs. S'agissant d'un personnage dont la fascination – sur les auteurs aussi bien que sur les lecteurs – est indéniable et qui conserve, de manière évidente, des traits repérables dans (presque) toutes les occurrences, l'intérêt que la critique a manifesté à son égard est immense, de sorte que l'on a même parlé du « mythe de Don Juan » (Rousset : 2012, Biet : 1998)¹.

Notre intervention d'aujourd'hui est construite autour d'une affirmation et autour d'une interrogation. L'affirmation est celle de Gilbert Durand (Durand 1979 : 174), qui affirme que l'on pourrait voir dans le mythe de Don Juan le résultat de la déformation ou de l'usure du mythe de Prométhée. L'interrogation est la nôtre, et elle porte notamment sur la question du mythe littéraire, à savoir si l'on peut vraiment parler, dans le cas de Don Juan, d'un mythe littéraire ou, au contraire et tout simplement d'une histoire notoire. Pour essayer de trouver une réponse, nous allons travailler sur un corpus qui inclut le *Don Juan* de Tirso de Molina, celui de Molière, *Les âmes du purgatoire* de Mérimée, *Une matinée de Don Juan* de Musset, *Don Juan de Maraña* de Alexandre Dumas et *La dernière nuit de Don Juan* de Edmond Rostand.

Dans un premier temps, nous retournerons au mythe de Prométhée, pour déceler son symbolisme, sa valeur anthropologique, aussi bien que ses mythèmes centraux, ce qui va nous permettre, dans un deuxième temps, de voir, dans les œuvres du corpus, si l'on peut parler d'une conservation de ces mythèmes et de la valeur sociale de l'histoire.

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¹ Bien qu'il introduise l'histoire de Don Juan dans la catégorie du mythe littéraire, Jean Rousset pose, toutefois, la question pertinente si l'histoire de Don Juan, dont la première version est connue et attestée historiquement, mais dont la récurrence dans la littérature mondiale est notoire peut être considérée un « mythe », dans le sens qu'un Eliade ou d'un Vernant. Par contre, Christian Biet, parle du « mythe du séducteur », oscillant toutefois entre le concept de « prototype » ou celui d'«homme sans nom » (p. 16), pour définir Don Juan. Il y voit également un « Prométhée moderne qui défie les forces célestes et terrestres » (p. 17) pour faire valoir son idée de liberté.

Le mythe de Prométhée

Le mythe de Prométhée est l'un des mythes anthropogéniques de la mythologie gréco-romaine, fondamental, selon nous, parce qu'il statue le processus d'humanisation, plus que celui de création de la race humaine. Nous entendons par *humanisation* un processus culturel, à savoir le dépassement de l'animalité, tandis que la création de la race est un processus naturel.

L'histoire que conte le mythe est bien connue, surtout dans la variante proposée par Hésiode dans sa *Théogonie* : le titan Prométhée vole le feu divin, détenu par Jupiter / Zeus et le donne aux hommes, ce qui est à la fois un acte de transgression – Jupiter est le maître tout-puissant de l'Olympe, tandis que Prométhée appartient à la génération antérieure, vaincue dans la Titanomachie – et de culturalisation, car le fait permet aux hommes la cuisson des aliments, notamment de la viande, ce qui médiatise le passage de la nature à la culture ou, si l'on veut, de l'animalité à l'humanité¹. Encore, le feu permet aux hommes de forger les métaux pour la construction des armes et des outils domestiques et la pratique des métiers. Or, les armes ne sont pas seulement un élément qui permet l'agression, elles viennent aussi remédier à la faiblesse physique des hommes², tandis que la pratique des métiers assure la survie indépendante des hommes.

La transgression de Prométhée trouve son origine dans la rivalité de longue date entre lui et le maître des dieux et dans l'ascendant que le titan a sur le maître des dieux. Prométhée sait plus que Jupiter, il sait notamment qui est celui qui pourrait mettre fin à la domination olympienne de Jupiter. De cette perspective, le vol du feu ne serait pas un geste civilisationnel, qui consacrerait Prométhée comme le protecteur des hommes, mais un acte de fronde, voué à mettre en question la toute-puissance de Jupiter³. De cette perspective, le vol du feu acquiert une valorisation négative, car il cause l'apparition du mal sur la terre et la souffrance. La valorisation positive, qui est l'ouverture vers la connaissance et l'humanisation est donc doublée de celle-ci, négative, qui explique la présence du mal dans la vie des hommes. Le vol du feu est donc un geste doublement civilisationnel : il marque le passage de l'animalité à l'humanité, par la cuisson de la viande, et établit l'indépendance de l'homme par rapport aux dieux.

Voilà donc les deux mythèmes fondamentaux rattachés au mythe de Prométhée : la transgression et la culturalisation. Nous soulignons, à ce moment, que, dans notre perspective, ces deux sont dans une égale mesure des mythèmes constitutifs du mythe de Prométhée et que, selon nous, la transgression n'est pas un but en soi, mais elle ouvre la voie à la culturalisation.

La transformation ironique des mythes. Don Juan. Quelques avatars

Maintenant, si l'on revient à la prémissse énoncée, selon Gilbert Durand (Durand : 1979 : 174), le mythe de Prométhée se transforme dans le mythe littéraire de Don Juan, par les usages successifs et dont il ne survit que le mythème de la

¹ Selon Claude Lévi-Strauss, les mythes gé des tribus bororo attribuent au jaguar le rôle d'introducteur de la cuisson des aliments. (Lévi-Strauss :2003).

² Selon la version d'Hésiode, Epiméthée, le frère de Prométhée et le créateur des animaux, leur a donné toute la force physique, laissant pour l'homme-animal la faiblesse physique et la nudité.

³ L'on sait, d'ailleurs, que le geste frondeur de Prométhée provoque l'ire de Jupiter qui se venge non pas seulement de Prométhée, l'enchaînant sur le mont Caucase, mais aussi des hommes, auxquels il envoie la première femme, Pandora, qui porte sur la terre toutes les formes du mal, inconnue aux hommes jusqu'alors.

transgression. Ce serait l'une des formes de l'éclipse du mythe, l'hérésie, qui s'actualise dans l'impérialisme d'un seul mythe, le mythe choisissant ainsi une seule voie. Dans le cas du mythe de Prométhée, par la suppression du mythe de la générosité, de l'altruisme et de l'héroïsme sacrificiel, on arriverait au mythe de Don Juan.

Que les mythes subissent, le long du temps et surtout par le passage dans la littérature, des « réductions » (Brunel 1986 : 118), cela est indéniable. Certaines impliquent même un traitement ironique du mythe proprement-dit : c'est le cas de la « transfiguration baroque », « dans laquelle une formation mythique se voit transformée par une réécriture ludique qui œuvre par le moyen de l'inversion ou du trompe-l'œil » (Wunenburger 1994 : 19), un procédé qui relève du burlesque (Tristan 1992 : 7) et même de l'ironie.

Pour répondre à la question si l'histoire de Don Juan pourrait être considérée une réduction ironique du mythe de Prométhée, et par cela un mythe littéraire¹, nous avons analysé quelques occurrences du personnage dans des textes de la littérature française, en nous rapportant toutefois à la première version (littéraire) connue, celle de Tirso de Molina.

Il faut aussi ajouter que la littérature a enrichi le portrait et l'histoire première de Don Juan par la contamination avec une autre histoire, celle de Miguel de Mañara / Mañara². Cette contamination pourrait être probablement expliquée par le portrait de pécheur impardonnable que le noble sévillan a laissé de soi-même, par modestie ou par pénitence :

Yo, don Miguel Mañara, ceniza y polvo, pecador desdichado, pues lo más de mis logrados días ofendí a la Majestad altísima de Dios, mi Padre, cuya criatura y esclavo vil me confieso. Serví a Babilonia y al demonio, su príncipe, con mil abominaciones, soberbias, adulterios, juramentos, escándalos y latrocinos; cuyos pecados y maldades no tienen número y sólo la gran sabiduría de Dios puede numerarlos, y su infinita paciencia sufrirlos, y su infinita misericordia perdonarlos.³

D'ailleurs, Prosper Mérimée montrait, dans les pages introductives des *Âmes du purgatoire*, que la figure littéraire de Don Juan est le résultat d'un métissage entre celle de Don Juan Tenorio – « qui a été emporté par la statue de pierre » – et de don Juan de Mañara, que « le dénouement distingue ». Il s'est constitué ainsi une histoire unique, qui met ensemble, fond et transforme les variantes connues :

Chacun avait autrefois sa légende séparée. Avec le temps, toutes se sont fondues en une seule [...]. Quant à la vérité de cette histoire ou des deux histoires, elle est incontestable, et en offenserait grandement le patriotisme provincial des Sévillans si l'on révoquait en doute l'existence de ces garnements qui ont rendu suspecte la généalogie de leurs plus nobles familles. (Mérimée 1834 : 1).

¹ Nous avons déjà montré pourquoi, selon nous, Don Juan n'est pas un mythe, ni même un mythe né en littérature. L'observation pertinente de Rousset sur la répétitivité paradigmatische de l'Invité de pierre, avec ses respectifs avatars, nous conduit vers l'idée que nous nous trouvons, avec cette histoire, devant un motif, celui magistralement nommé par Rousset, du « mort châtié ». A ce motif, s'ajoute celui du « séducteur châtié », par la présence itérative du personnage de Don Juan. Ces deux motifs deviennent incontournables de cette histoire qui, pourtant, n'est pas, selon nous, un mythe, un mythe littéraire ou un mythe né en littérature, mais une histoire notoire.

² Prodigieux représentant d'une noble famille de Séville, né en 1627 et mort en 1679, dans le monastère de la Hermandad de la Santa Caridad. Très jeune, il a déjà une carrière publique et son nom apparaît dans des documents officiels.

³ *Testamento y discurso de la verdad* de Miguel de Mañara, cité par Martín Hernández, Francisco, *Miguel Mañara*, Universidad de Sevilla, 1981.

Dans le texte de Tirso, Don Juan apparaît en tout premier lieu comme le séducteur des femmes de toutes classes sociales, de la duchesse Isabella à la pêcheuse Tisbea et à la plébéienne Arminta. La séduction est sa profession et elle équivaut au vol, donc à un acte transgressif¹, qui porte atteinte au statut social des femmes. Pour ce qui est du crime, Don Juan tue Don Gonzalo, père de Ana, sans projet précis et sans plaisir, le geste apparaissant comme une action d'auto-défense. Toutefois, c'est ce crime, plus que les répétées séductions, qui engendre le châtiment du *burlador* et qui introduit l'un des éléments centraux de l'histoire, la statue du mort qui accomplit le châtiment.

Repris ensuite par Molière (1665), Dom Juan conserve sa veine de séducteur, à laquelle s'ajoute un athéisme assez prononcé, anticipé déjà par le sous-titre de la tragique comédie : *Le festin de pierre ou l'athée foudroyé*. Au séducteur épris de la beauté des femmes et qui prend un vif plaisir à la conquête², Molière ajoute le côté du libre-penseur antireligieux, capable d'accomplir la transgression sociale et métaphysique : il se moque de son père qui l'appelle à la pénitence, du mendiant qui demande l'aumône, aussi bien qu'il refuse de se repentir pour sauver son âme. Mais, selon nous, les actions transgressives du Dom Juan de Molière ne décrivent pas, comme dans le cas de Prométhée, une rivalité avec Dieu, le détenteur du pouvoir suprême. Tout d'abord, parce que Dom Juan ne croit pas à une religion révélée, donc à Dieu³ et ensuite parce qu'il est, lui-même, le diable, auquel Sganarelle le compare⁴.

À l'époque romantique, Don Juan devient chez Musset un mélange entre le héros romantique, en proie au *spleen* – le mal du siècle – et le conquérant libertin. Il est un bon vivant assez sarcastique, dont la seule occupation est l'examen des conquêtes passées et la recherche de nouvelles victimes⁵, incliné vers le progrès, mais seulement un progrès dans la jouissance personnelle⁶, qu'il concrétise dans la recherche d'une femme pure, qui puisse compléter la liste de ses conquêtes. La transgression se transforme donc en quête perpétuelle, pour l'assouvissement du désir. De plus, l'absence du crime, l'acte transgressif le plus évident, fait de ce Don Juan un bon vivant plus qu'un libertin, lui enlevant par cela le rôle social.

Au XXème siècle, Edmond Rostand imagine un Don Juan qui reçoit un châtiment humiliant. Au lieu de la confrontation avec le diable, aux enfers, ce qui prouverait le caractère diabolique et par là la force du personnage, le séducteur est transformé en personnage de guignol, réduit donc à un rôle risible. Celui pour lequel la séduction des femmes avait été une voie vers le savoir⁷, un savoir qu'il avait d'ailleurs assumé en se proclamant le rival de Dieu le créateur⁸ est condamné à l'éternelle

¹ *Sevilla a voces me llama / el burlador, y el mayor / gusto que en mi puede haber / es burlar una mujer / y dejarla sin onor.* (de Molina, acte II)

² *J'ai une pente naturelle à me laisser aller à tout ce qui m'attire. Mon cœur est à toutes les belles et c'est à elles à le prendre tour à tour, et à le garder tant qu'elles le pourront.* (Molière 1910 : 97).

³ Sa fameuse formule mathématique.

⁴ [...] il me vaudrait bien mieux d'être au diable que d'être à lui. (Molière 1910 : 20).

⁵ [...] laisse tomber sur le plus petit pied que tu apercevas (Musset 1876 : 125) ; j'aime assez en hiver la neige où personne n'a marché (Musset 1876 : 130).

⁶ Et que te reste-t-il pour avoir voulu te désaltérer tant de fois ? Une soif ardente, ô, mon Dieu ! (Musset 1876 : 128).

⁷ Posséder, c'est connaître ! Ah ! Connaître ! Ah ! Savoir ! (première partie, scène 6) (Rostand 1921).

⁸ Tout beau fruit, nous dis-tu, n'est qu'un ver qui se cache / Voilà ce secret qu'il ne faut pas qu'on sache / Essayez maintenant de vivre en le sachant (I, 4) (Rostand 1921).

humiliation : celle d'être un fantoche et celle d'apprendre qu'aucune des femmes conquises ne l'avait aimé : « Sort donc pantin, Homme qui veut te recréer à ton image » (le diable à Don Juan).

Ce Don Juan est un corrupteur, un séducteur que le seul amour occupe et dont il est le héros¹. S'il s'agit de transgression pour le Don Juan de Rostand, elle n'est pas dans le crime – aucun crime n'est d'ailleurs évoqué de manière explicite – mais dans avoir fait de l'amour une forme de manifestation du pouvoir². Or, la transgression suppose enfreindre une loi suprême.

La période romantique marque une mutation notable dans les variantes littéraires de Don Juan. Chez Mérimée (*Les âmes du purgatoire*) et ensuite chez Dumas (*Don Juan de Marañón ou la chute d'un ange*, 1836), la figure de Don Juan Tenorio est métissée avec celle de Miguel de Marañón / Mañara. Dans les deux versions, Don Juan est à la fois séducteur et criminel, commettant donc la transgression. Chez Mérimée, le crime advient par négligence, mais consacre Don Juan comme un libertin et comme un mondain dans le milieu universitaire de Salamanque. Chez Dumas, le plaisir dans le crime est plus évident et s'accompagne du mépris pour les valeurs sociales – l'amour filial et l'amour fraternel. La transformation suppose aussi, dans les deux variantes, un pacte infernal et la volonté de souiller la toute-puissance de Dieu par la conquête des femmes pures, ayant une vie consacrée : Teresa devenue sœur Agathe chez Mérimée, Marthe, chez Dumas : « Allons, décidément, il paraît que le diable ne veut pas que je me fasse ermite ». (Dumas, 113).

Toutefois, dans les deux cas, le transgressif et le séducteur Don Juan – plutôt bohème chez Mérimée, plutôt sarcastique chez Dumas – est sauvé par l'amour d'une femme pure et par la conversion.

Conclusions

Comme l'on a pu voir, la figure littéraire de Don Juan est placée, selon les variantes que nous avons analysées, dans de différents espaces : l'Espagne et Naples chez Tirso, la Sicile chez Molière, la France chez Musset, Venise pour Rostand, Séville et Salamanque pour Mérimée, Madrid chez Dumas. Cela prouve qu'il serait réductif de voir dans Don Juan une figure typiquement espagnole, sinon une qui répond à un certain univers mentalitaire occidental. L'ancre social n'est donc pas à évoquer. D'ailleurs, cet « espagnolisme » a été à la fois nié –Gregorio Marañón³, entre autres – ou accepté sans réserves, comme par Manuel Losada Goya⁴ ou par Michel Del Castillo⁵.

Daniel-Henri Pageux remarque fort bien que si l'histoire racontée par Tirso fonctionne comme réponse à un certain contexte social et culturel, ceux espagnols, le passage de cette histoire hors des frontières espagnoles appelle à des modifications

¹ *Une ville d'amour a vu mon premier jour, / Mon dernier doit avoir une ville d'amour / Une seule épipaphe à Don Juan est permise : / Il naquit à Séville et mourut à Venise* (scène 1) (Rostand 1921).

² *L'amour, c'est l'un qui souffre et l'autre qui regarde / Et je fus toujours l'autre, et cela je garde,* deuxième partie (Rostand 1921).

³ *Don Juan, bien qu'il soit venu au monde de la légende, en Espagne, n'a presque rien d'espagnol.* (Marañón 1967 :31).

⁴ Selon Losada Goya, Don Juan incarne le type traditionnel de l'Espagnol, « avec les bonnes et les mauvaises acceptations du génie de ce peuple ». Article *Hispanisme* in *Dictionnaire de Don Juan*, Dir. Pierre Brunel, p. 466).

⁵ *Don Juan, sauvé ou damné, reste un personnage typiquement espagnol.* (del Castillo 1977 : 226).

substantielles qui atténuent, voire éliminent, sa valeur exemplaire : « Dans ces conditions, l'histoire mythique de Don Juan serait bien cette histoire exemplaire suscitée par une société, une culture, comme réponse à ses problèmes particuliers. Le « mythe de Don Juan, hors de l'Espagne, sera donc obligatoirement une altération de l'histoire ». (Pageux in Brunel 1994 : 918-919).

À observer les constantes dans les variantes analysées de l'histoire, le personnage de Don Juan apparaît comme un libertin qui séduit les femmes par amour ou par volonté d'affirmer son pouvoir, un séducteur donc et aussi comme un criminel¹. Il s'agit donc d'un double vol : celui de la pureté ou de l'honneur des femmes et celui de la vie des hommes. Les deux sont des actions transgressives. Maintenant, si l'on revient au mythe de Prométhée, le vol y est présent aussi, le vol du feu, attribut divin et symbole de la connaissance, donc du pouvoir. Mais, chez Prométhée, le vol ne résulte pas d'un choix égoïste, comme dans le cas de Don Juan. C'est un geste transgressif, à but civilisationnel / civilisateur, ce qui n'est pas retrouvable dans les actions transgressives de Don Juan.

Donc, l'histoire de Don Juan n'est pas, selon nous, ni un mythe né dans la littérature, ni une transformation ironique du mythe de Prométhée. C'est une histoire notoire et qui a connu d'innombrables variantes et interprétations. Mais, notoire ne signifie pas exemplaire.

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¹ À part la version de Mérimée, le crime est toujours présent dans l'histoire de Don Juan.

L'IRONIE OU LA CRITIQUE DE LA MODERNITE DANS LA POESIE DE LEOPOLD SEDAR SENGHOR

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Abstract: *The poetry of Senghor defined partly as an ontological attempt at legitimation is let impregnate by other stakes scripturaires. The stoical nostalgia of which it is the cockpit carries the emanations of an ethical evaluation and a critical judgement. This nostalgia is constituted like anthem with the foot together and holds ironic place of attack against modern times which make antagonism a precondition necessary to historical dynamics.*

Keywords: irony; rationality; spirituality.

La poésie de Léopold Sédar Senghor ne se réduit pas à une simple apologie des valeurs de l'Afrique subsaharienne. Le poète place son projet dans une perspective à bien des égards humanistes et se soulève par ricochet contre les maturités étranges auxquelles ont donné lieu les successions que le monde a connues sous les Temps modernes. L'œuvre poétique de Senghor est aussi par ce qu'elle ne dit pas. En ce sens où elle «existe par ses absences déterminées» (Hamon, 1984: 12), la poésie de Senghor s'investit d'une ironie qui s'inscrit dans un cadre historique. Elle doit, en effet, sa veine ironique au rapport qui l'unit à certains principes fondateurs de la modernité. Après une descente dans le règne de la psyché, le poète porte au monde un verbe où le non-dit est le lieu d'un surcroît de sens. Le savoir dont ce verbe est le support repense la condition du monde et prend fait et cause le vivre ensemble. L'orientation éthique de ce savoir rencontré dans la psyché dans la mesure où il prêche l'unité contre les séparations introduites par la Modernité, fait du poète une conscience supérieure et fonde, dans le même élan, le label ironique de son verbe. En fait, A en croire la conception de l'ironie au sens où l'entend Jankélévitch, la poésie de Senghor semble posséder un label ironique. «L'ironie constitue une forme de conscience supérieure qui mérite le qualitatif bonne» (Schoentjes, 2011: 42). L'homologation de cette hypothèse ne peut se faire sans cerner en quoi le verbe du poète raille, considéré dans sa totalité comme un hymne à l'unité, le figement dans l'antagonisme comme choix très cautionné par les Temps modernes. La chaleur communiale à laquelle le poète appelle implique le dépassement de la dichotomie émotion nègre /raison Hélène. Il y a besoin de saisir en quoi, par son appel à la conciliation de l'émotion et de la raison dans un tout cohérent, la poésie de Senghor dévoile le déficit de la norme à laquelle se subordonnent servilement les Temps modernes, en l'occurrence la rationalité, et se fait, ainsi, ironique.

La nostalgie comme attaque ironique

La foi du poète en images de la psyché qu'il explore au moyen de la rêverie soutient que *les fins humaines sont destinées à prendre le dessus*. En effet, chatouillé par les rêveries, le poète «a vu dans le sommeil léger [...] / qu' (ils) étaient tous réunis/ [...] ses premiers camarades de jeu, et d'autres qu'[il] ne connaissait pas de visages [...]//» (Senghor, 2006: 63). Le poète rêve le pluralisme et nourrit l'espoir que «l'enfant

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Blanc et l'enfant noir [...] aillent la main dans la main» (*Ibidem.* : 74). Un silence sourd dans ses versets. Il est ce non-dit qui donne lieu à un surcroît de sens. Son verbe se veut être hymne à l'unité et par là soulèvement contre la modernité en ce qu'elle «établit la domination des élites rationalistes sur le reste du monde» (Touraine, 1992: 46). Devant l'esprit de domination et son corolaire le culte de la possession ainsi décrié : «j'ai peur de la foule de mes semblables/ [...] aux mains dures^{1//}» (Senghor, *op.cit.* :11-12), le poète régresse vers son Royaume d'Enfance. Senghor s'en prend à l'esprit possessif auquel il substitue la communauté du destin. Hubert Colette, l'épouse française du poète éveille, en lui, le souvenir d'enfance :

J'ai soif j'ai soif d'espaces et d'eaux nouvelles [...]// Je cherche au fond
de tes yeux troubles [...]// et j'y distingue à travers la vitre embuée, le
paysage/d'outre-océan de nos hiers [...]// (*Ibidem.* : 41)

L'enfance, le lieu d'une condensation heureuse, redimensionne «la maison de l'aimée par la maison du père, comme si tous ceux que nous avions connus (et aimés) devaient, au sommet de l'âge, vivre ensemble» (Bachelard, 1960: 109). Ce processus préfigure une attaque à résonance ironique. «Il existe chez tout ironiste une forme de nostalgie d'un monde idéal, une sorte de paradis perdu que chacun porte en soi» (Schoentjes, *op.cit.* : 48). En effet, Senghor se déshérite du monde et conclut au moyen de la rêverie une descente dans son Royaume d'Enfance. Ce monde où donner et recevoir font un s'établit comme l'allégorie du vivre ensemble. Le vivre ensemble qui semble avoir son image archétypale dans l'âme du poète défie la modernité servile, pour pasticher *le savant et le politique* de Max Weber, au progrès qui ne peut s'accomplir que par la domination de l'homme par l'homme. L'appel à la chaleur communiale ainsi traduit par Senghor dans son recueil *Ethiopiques* : «Princesse, nous serons le ciel et la terre», s'inscrit à *contre-courant de la modernité*. A travers sa bien-aimée française, Senghor s'adresse aux modernes qui font de la rationalité leur seule et unique religion. Cet appel prélude une rencontre où la science se fait ensemencer par la foi et la spiritualité. Les communautés tapies dans les principes de la modernité s'estiment être les seuls groupes dignement humains. Au nom du substrat fondateur de la modernité qu'elles intègrent dans leurs choix stratégiques, les communautés auxquelles le poète fait allusion refusent l'esprit du partage. A ce titre, la philosophie humaniste de Léopold Sédar Senghor rejoint en sourdine l'idée que René Girard se fait du modèle. «Le modèle ne souhaite pas partager ce qu'il a et ce qu'il est avec autrui» (Dieckhoff, Jaffrelot, 2006 : 82). De ce fait, la résolution de Senghor de réitérer son appel en dépit de la sourde oreille de son interlocuteur devient, tout compte fait, un moyen de dévoilement. Par le surcroît du sens de son verbe, le poète démasque son interlocuteur qui est tenté, très articulé aux principes de la modernité, de croire que «pour (se) définir et (se) mobiliser, (il aura) besoin d'ennemi» (Todorov, 2008: 71). Justement, «l'ironie aide à démasquer son interlocuteur» (Schoentjes, *op.cit.* : 255).

L'enjeu critique de la mise à nu des limites de la rationalité

La manifestation poétique de la communauté du destin que le poète prend à bras le corps est une «Mer intérieure qui unit les terres opposées/ Les sœurs complémentaire : l'une est couleur de flamme et l'autre, sombre, couleur de bois

¹. A travers l'expression : « Les mains dures », Senghor semble vouloir faire allusion à l'esprit de possession.

précieux [...]//» (Senghor, *op.cit.* : 45). Sous les Temps modernes, l'esprit prométhéen perçoit la spiritualité et la foi comme une forme de primitivisme. Senghor passe outre cette dichotomie et fait de la conciliation une façon d'être dans la connaissance. Il révèle de la sorte les limites de l'idéal des modernistes qui se fient sans retenue à la rationalité. Son verbe s'assortit ainsi d'une dimension ironique et déboulonne les prétentions des Temps modernes. A l'image de l'humaniste Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, le poète est péremptoirement convaincu que «la science ne peut aller aux limites d'elle-même sans se colorer de mystique et se charger de foi» (Teilhard De Chardin, 1968: 126). Le verbe du poète de la Négritude devient rupture de l'illusion et désabuse «les modernistes [qui] vivent dans une bulle, protégés de tout ce qui trouble la raison» (Touraine, *op.cit.* : 47). Quand il convie les nations qui sont très branchées sur les principes de la modernité, au rendez-vous de donner et de recevoir, Senghor cherche à justifier la nécessité d'un ordre unitaire où «le sens et l'esprit» (Senghor, *op.cit.* : 177) se concilient pour de cette manière rétablir le monde, en proie au schisme, dans ses vrais repères. La rationalité ne peut porter l'homme sur la ligne de l'achèvement¹. Senghor fait son constat en ces termes :

Vous avez trop souvent opposé l'esprit et la matière, la raison au cœur, la science à la foi [...] pour ne pas vous être aperçus du danger. Le danger de créer un monde [...] sans âme. (Dijan, 2005: 101)

A travers le chant qu'il dédie à son amie, Hubert Colette, la Française, le poète convie le monde moderne à s'imprégnier des valeurs de l'Afrique noire. Son chant n'est d'autre qu'une allusion aux valeurs spirituelles du monde noir : «Mon amie/ [...] je te chante ce chant d'ombre/ d'une voix nouvelle avec la vieille voix de la jeunesse des mondes//» (Senghor, *op.cit.* : 44). Il est décidé à les proposer dans le cadre du *concert des civilisations*² en vue de pallier les insuffisances de la rationalité. Faire surgir de quoi vient le déficit de la rationalité comme résultat de la modernité et offrir les valeurs du monde noir comme palliatif, en dépit du statut subsidiaire de ce monde aux yeux de l'interlocuteur et des clichés dans lesquels il est confiné, placent le poète dans la logique de l'ironie. Le barbare rappelle le modèle ou bien les groupes qui s'instituent comme tel

¹. A la manière de Péguy, Senghor est conscient que s'il fallait dire en un mot ce qui manque au moderne, ce mot serait la foi. Il aurait rejoint également Herbert Marcuse qui voit dans la modernité un véritable asservissement de l'homme. L'homme intègre l'idée d'utilité et au nom du principe de rendement, il ne se limite pas à procéder à des régulations pour vivre en société. Il passe outre en s'infligeant plus de restrictions. Ainsi, au nom du même principe, l'homme se consume à travailler et reporte *sine die* la satisfaction de ses désirs. Senghor réagit à ce constat comme pour prévenir le violent retour du refoulé. Senghor, pour reprendre Renée Tillot, *est un sensuel, un être aux sens ouverts sans intermédiaire entre le sujet et l'objet*. L'anthropologue Blaise Bayili nous apprend que l'émotion implique le sens du sacré et inscrit vitalement la vie humaine dans l'ordre cosmique. Cette vitalité s'exprime par une raison intuitive dont le lien entre le sujet et le monde extérieur est l'émotion. La raison intuitive crée une sympathie entre le sujet et l'objet.

². *Le concert des civilisations* qui est à l'origine de l'éthique qui se loge dans la poésie de Senghor, consiste dans un ordre où l'un et l'autre s'enrichissent sans se mutiler et sans que les uns ne se nient au profit des autres ou au profit d'un modèle suprématiste. Il s'agit, pour rappeler Senghor, d'une union qui ne confond pas. Il ne s'agit pas non plus, pour parler comme Robert Delavignette, d'appauvrir l'humanité en assurant le triomphe d'un seul des aspects possibles de la culture humaine, mais plutôt de permettre à chaque élément de la famille terrestre d'apporter au concert commun pour enrichir l'ensemble, ce qu'il possède de meilleur.

à leur humanité. Cette inversion des rôles est une variante de l'ironie dans la mesure où elle est dictée par une visée caritative. Abstraction faite de la spiritualité, la rationalité, poussée à son acmé, demeure, à en croire le poète, déficitaire. Le subalterne s'érige en sauveur en offrant ses valeurs. Senghor rejoint, ce faisant, l'ironie de Mathieu l'évangéliste : «celui qui est le plus grand parmi vous sera votre serviteur : quiconque s'élèvera sera abaissé et quiconque s'abaissera sera relevé» (Schoentjes, *op.cit.* : 51). Senghor s'en prend souterrainement à l'idéal moderniste et le considère, chemin faisant, comme une mise à mal de la nature des choses. En effet, sous le règne de la modernité, l'homme doit malencontreusement sa valeur au rapport antagonique qui l'unit à l'objet. La vision du monde qui se profile derrière le verbe de l'auteur de *Chants d'ombre* fait ressortir une aberration dans la logique des Temps modernes. Le poète fait surgir à sa manière là où réside la carence des modernistes :

Que nous répondions présents à la renaissance du monde /Ainsi le levain
qui est nécessaire à la farine blanche. /Car qui apprendrait le rythme au monde
défunt des machines et des canons [...]// ? (Senghor, *op.cit.* : 25, 26)

L'aspect incitatif du verset possède un tant soit peu une orientation ironique. Il est, à vrai dire, un démenti contre l'autosuffisance de la rationalité érigée en promesse d'une civilisation enchanteresse. «L'ironie (de Senghor) est précisément ce qui fait mentir cette vérité» (Schoentjes, *op.cit.* : 59). Par ce jeu de cacher-révéler, l'ironie du poète de la Négritude épingle les foyers de la crise dans le substrat fondateur des temps modernes et fait de la sorte écho au bien-fondé que Freud développe à l'égard du projet civilisationnel que propose la modernité. Le préfacier du *Malaise dans la civilisation* en résume l'idée maîtresse : «cette civilisation qui serait censée apporter à l'homme le bonheur tant espéré, le constraint à son propre malheur» (Freud, 2010: 10). A l'instar de Freud, Senghor est tenté de croire qu'en dehors de la foi, de la spiritualité et de l'accomplissement émotionnel, la modernité rationaliste en ferait une machine vouée à se perdre dans un *rouage fonctionnel*. L'homme moderne, devenu un simple instrument, renonce à la satisfaction de ses désirs, réprime ses instincts et, au lieu de se limiter aux régulations nécessaires à la pérennité de l'ordre social, il inscrit son propre accomplissement dans un éternel report au risque de subir le violent retour du refoulé. Le culte de l'unité que le poète prend à bras le corps en ces mots : «mon désir est de mieux apprendre ton pays de t'apprendre/ [...] et mon pays de sel et ton pays de neige chantent à l'unisson [...]//» (Senghor, *op.cit.* : 142), inscrit l'ironie sous-jacente à son œuvre dans l'esprit de la définition que Pierre Schoentjes donne de l'ironie de situation :

L'ironie de situation déborde le cadre littéraire pour envisager l'ironie de l'histoire et rappeler que les cités ou les empires au sommet de leur gloire sont aussi au plus près de leur chute et que les causes de leur déclin sont ironiquement là encore, les mêmes que celles qui ont fait leur gloire. (Schoentjes, *op.cit.* : 61)

Le dévoilement du sens du nationalisme politique : une ironie contre l'origine de l'esprit de domination

L'ironie de Senghor devient tentaculaire et s'étend sur d'autres principes issus à bien des égards des temps modernes. Le voyage à la Mésopotamie auquel invite la

bien-aimée est un voyage à l’unité. Il est aussi une incitation à l’abolition des frontières surtout politiques entre les nations :

Princesse [...] / descendons les fleuves / Au pays de ma mère, la
Mésopotamie où [...] / Les hommes y sont de quatre coudées. Ils ne distinguent
pas leur gauche/ de leur droite[...]//. (Senghor, *op.cit.* : 147)

L’éthique dont les germes bruissent dans ce verset porte un cachet subtilement ironique. Le verset s’institue à travers le surcroît de sens qui jaillit du non-dit qui le sous-tend comme un parti pris implicite contre une autre invention de la modernité, en l’occurrence le nationalisme politique qui est un nationalisme d’enfermement. En effet, «il est une forme politique de la modernité où l'espace national intégré [...] s'inspire des principes de la raison» (Touraine, *op.cit.* : 160). Le poète met l’accent sur l’origine du schisme qui se creuse dans le corps de l’humanité. Le progrès est subordonné à une condition hostile à l’humanisme, à savoir la domination de l’homme par l’homme. Le règne que propose le poète en est départi. Il est aussi une ironie contre la modernité qui a instrumentalisé l’appartenance et en fait, de surcroît, un dispositif à vocation politique. Le poète fait ironiquement flèche de son humanité contre ce qu’est le nationalisme en réalité.

«Le sens originel de *eiron* pourrait être celui qui interroge, demande et se demande» (Schoentjes, *op.cit.* : 59). Tel un *eiron*, Senghor s’interroge sous le mode exclamatif après avoir épingle une ambivalence dans les choix de son interlocuteur empêtré dans les principes de la modernité : «Printemps de Touraine, si seulement tu étais fidèle ! Tu ne sais ce que tu veux, tu te donnes, et te refuses [...]//» (Senghor, *op.cit.* : 347). Cette bivalence s’inspire du nationalisme qui, devenu une religion séculière, a pris la forme du racisme. «En faisant du nationalisme l’un des modes de subjectivation (qui) identifient le citoyen à l’Etat-nation, la modernité développe le racisme et l’exclusion» (Touraine, *op.cit.* : 349). L’exclamation trouve sens dans le substrat où s’origine l’ambivalence que cautionne la modernité. Elle cultive les antagonismes, légitime la haine de l’autre et fait du nationalisme, au nom de la domination et son corolaire le progrès, un appareil de contrôle politique. Bref, l’exclamation de Senghor est ironique en ce qu’elle est un dévoilement des perspectives non déclarées du nationalisme d’enfermement. La haine de l’autre légitimée par le détournement du nationalisme d’enfermement est un préalable nécessaire à la dynamique du progrès.

La poésie de Senghor reçoit par moments une valeur évaluative et glisse par conséquent à travers le cacher-révéler un jugement critique. Elle censure la bivalence ressentie dans le faux égalitarisme que la modernité feint d’établir à travers ses prétentions universalistes. Le vrai égalitarisme passe par le partage, le désintéressement et la mise en place d’un ordre où donner et recevoir font un. En feignant de se mettre de plain-pied avec les autres, l’interlocuteur du poète «donne de la main droite et de la main gauche enlève la moitié» (Senghor, *op.cit.* : 98). Il s’agit, ici, d’un pamphlet tacite contre l’hypocrisie des modernistes et, par voie de conséquence, d’un jugement critique. Le constat senghorien est empreint, de ce fait, d’une vocation ironique. «L’ironie est évaluation, c'est un jugement critique» (Todorov, *op.cit.* : 318). L’hésitation observée dans le rapport des modernistes à l’altérité et au différent démasque que la modernité est hostile au partage sans lequel aucun égalitarisme n’est envisageable. Par-dessus la servitude au progrès qui repose pour une large part sur la domination, la modernité

cultive chez ses adeptes la peur de l'autre. Cela étant, l'ironie afférente au constat que fait le poète dévoile l'origine de la résistance que la modernité oppose à l'éthique communie. Le moderniste redoute que l'autre s'établisse comme un égal. L'égalitarisme donne lieu à la similitude des aspirations, qui fait de l'autre un *double monstrueux*. L'ironie culmine dans le dévoilement de la vulnérabilité de la modernité dont la rationalité n'exclut pas le théologique¹. Le poème dramatique *Chaka* en dit long :

Chaka : Je dis qu'il n'est pas de paix [...] sous l'oppression de fraternité sans égalité. J'ai voulu tous les hommes frères.

Voix Blanche : Tu as mobilisé le sud contre les blancs. (Senghor, *op.cit.* : 129)

L'égalitarisme chez les modernistes est une condition suffisante à la résurgence de la violence. La modernité ménage un espace à l'antagonisme. Elle prévient l'égalitarisme devenu, sous son règne, synonyme du *mimétisme*. «Le modèle ne souhaite pas partager ce qu'il a et ce qu'il est avec autrui. Le disciple, pense-t-il, le trahira et marchera sur ses brisées» (Girard, 1972: 30). La dialectique à l'œuvre dans ces répliques du poème dramatique *Chaka* fonde une autre nuance de l'ironie du poète de la Négritude. Elle démantèle l'édifice moderniste et en vient à soutenir, à travers le non-dit du verbe poétique, que les principes fondateurs de la modernité, en l'occurrence la rationalité, le progrès et le nationalisme, sont aussi imprégnés d'une pensée hérétique.

La poésie de Léopold Sédar Senghor fait de la nostalgie des âges mythiques que fait redécouvrir la rêverie, une variante de l'ironie. Les réminiscences font l'apologie de l'unité et raillent par conséquent les séparations survenues dans le monde sous la modernité. L'appel à la conciliation de la raison et de l'émotion dans une union qui ne confond pas déboulonne les prétentions de la modernité en soulignant que la rationalité ne peut être, abstraction de la foi et de la spiritualité, la promesse d'un lendemain enchanteur. A travers sa valeur évaluative, la poésie de Senghor dévoile ironiquement le substrat où le nationalisme trouve son plein sens. Elle l'associe au refus de l'égalitarisme qui semble inspirer terreur et effroi aux modernes. L'égalitarisme, croient les modernes, est susceptible de donner existence à la similitude des aspirations qui, à son tour, entraîne une jalousie meurtrière. De-là, la rationalité des Temps modernes semble être imprégnée d'un détail théologique quelque peu hérétique.

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¹. La peur éprouvée devant la similitude des aspirations puise sa substance dans la jalousie meurtrière des fils d'Adam. Les deux frères, Caïn et Abel, se tournent chacun vers un type d'agriculture dont les fruits sont offerts à Dieu. Caïn devient cultivateur et Abel éleveur de bétail. Or, au moment d'offrir à Dieu les prémices de leurs produits, survient le drame. Dieu agréé l'offrande d'Abel mais rejette celle de Caïn. La rivalité organisée autour de l'amour divin sur lequel se rencontrent les deux frères provoque une jalousie mortelle. La fratrie considérée comme la forme la plus achevée de l'égalitarisme aurait été à la base de la similitude des aspirations radicalisée dans le fratricide.

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IRONIE ROMANESQUE, AMBIGUITÉS DE L'HUMOUR ET ECHOS DE RIRES DANS LA FÊTE DE L'IN SIGNIFICANCE DE MILAN KUNDERA

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Abstract: The article examines the mechanisms and functions of irony and the humorous devices and ambiguities in Milan Kundera's novel "The Festival of Insignificance". The syntagmatic, paradigmatic and intertextual forms of irony, as well as the strategy of mystification and the existential irony, are analysed in the light of the carnivalesque spirit of insignificance. The humorous effects of quirky incongruities and the technique of semantic relativisation generate ambivalence and reveal the echoes of the diabolical laughter defined in "The Book of Laughter and Forgetting".

Keywords: Kundera; irony; humour.

La fête de l'insignificance, le dernier roman de Milan Kundera, paru deux ans après la publication de son œuvre dans la « Bibliothèque de la Pléiade », pourrait être perçu comme un épilogue¹. Par son titre aux consonances paradoxales et à la tonalité ironique, le roman annonce le thème de l'insignificance comme matière méditative et fil conducteur traversant les lignes de la narration. L'exploration de l'insignificance comme catégorie existentielle² s'inscrit dans la logique du « cycle français de Kundera » (Ricard, 2003 : 46) qui englobe trois autres romans aux titres révélateurs de leurs enjeux cognitifs³. Du point de vue de la composition, ce roman bref présente une intention de synthèse des deux périodes de l'auteur en conciliant « la fatalité du nombre sept »⁴ (Kundera, 1986 : 105), emblématique de la période tchèque de l'auteur, avec la concision de la période française.

Le but de cet article est d'analyser les mécanismes de l'ironie mis en œuvre dans *La fête de l'insignificance* en explorant la posture du narrateur et les variations de certains thèmes et motifs récurrents dans l'œuvre de Kundera. L'ironie intratextuelle et intertextuelle, ainsi que les stratégies de mystification et l'ironie existentielle, sont examinées sous l'éclairage de l'esprit carnavalesque de l'insignificance. Les effets de décalage humoristique et les procédés de relativisation sémantique sont générateurs d'ambivalence et révélateurs des échos du rire diabolique défini dans *Le livre du rire et de l'oubli*.

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¹ Le texte de la quatrième de couverture de la première édition française (Blanche) du roman définit le roman comme « Drôle de résumé » et « Drôle d'épilogue ».

² Selon l'auteur, « Un thème, c'est une interrogation existentielle » (Kundera, 1986 : 104).

³ *La Lenteur*, *L'Identité*, et *L'Ignorance*.

⁴ L'auteur précise que c'est « un impératif profond, inconscient, incompréhensible, archétype de la forme » (Kundera, 1986 : 106) auquel il ne peut pas échapper. Mais en commençant à écrire en français, il rompt cette fatalité et inaugure son cycle français aux nouvelles caractéristiques formelles.

À propos de l'art de l'ironie romanesque et de l'humour selon Milan Kundera

L'art du roman de Milan Kundera est empreint de ses conceptions de l'humour, de l'ironie et du rire qu'il présente dans plusieurs essais et interviews. Il rattache la sagesse du roman à « l'esprit de l'humour »¹, définit l'humour comme révélateur de « l'ambiguïté morale »² du monde et insiste que le roman est un « territoire où le jugement moral est suspendu » (Kundera, 1993 : 16). L'humour fonctionne aussi comme un mécanisme de mise à l'épreuve du sens préconçu et de renversement car, selon l'auteur, « une réalité se découvre dans son ambiguïté » et « les choses perdent leur signification apparente » (Kundera, 2005 : 129). Dans la partie intitulée « L'esthétique et l'existence » de son essai *Le rideau* Kundera développe des idées qu'il avait déjà exposées sur certains concepts esthétiques comme l'*agélastie* et l'humour. Il revient sur la dimension subversive et dangereuse des blagues qui demeurent incompréhensibles aux *agélastes* et souligne l'ambiguïté foncière de l'humour et le décalage comme ressort de l'humour : « l'homme en face de nous n'est pas ce qu'il pense être » (Kundera 2005 : 129).

Ainsi, la vision et la pratique de l'humour misant sur l'ambiguïté axiologique et sémantique et exploitant des procédés de désstabilisation des convictions préconçues et des idées reçues reflète une stratégie de refus de la crédulité et de relativisation des interprétations existentielles. Le regard lucide et ludique sur le monde, la posture critique désabusée et l'ambition assumée d'« unir l'extrême gravité de la question et l'extrême légèreté de la forme » (Kundera, 1986 : 116) sont autant de caractéristiques de l'écriture de l'auteur. L'ambiguïté associée par Kundera à sa vision de l'humour romanesque rejoint certaines observations de Jean-Marc Moura sur l'humour littéraire, son ambivalence et sa « poétique de la coexistence » (Moura, 2010 : 106), ainsi que ses orientations (ou dispositions) dont l'humour « lié au sentiment du contraire » (Moura, 2010 : 109). L'orientation reflétant ce « sentiment du contraire » correspond à la pratique kundérienne de l'humour. Dans un entretien radiophonique avec N. Biron de 1976, Kundera affirme que « le tragique et le comique sont indissociablement liés » (Chvatik, 1995 : 125). Par ailleurs, la conception kundérienne de l'art romanesque comme « un champ imaginaire où le jugement moral est suspendu » (Kundera 1993 : 16) recouvre la catégorie de l'« humour du suspens des jugements communs »³ proposée par Moura.

Une autre catégorie proche de l'humour et caractéristique de l'écriture de Kundera est son ironie que les critiques désignent comme « ironie désenchantée » (Scarpetta, 1996), « ironie totale » (Thirwell, 2011 : 70) ou comme « sa propre «méthode» » (Rovere, Ricard, 2011 : 50). Le mot « ironie » fait partie des « Soixante-

¹ Kundera insiste que « Le roman est né non pas de l'esprit théorique mais de l'esprit de l'humour » (Kundera, 1986 : 192).

² Kundera se réfère à l'opinion d'Octavio Paz pour relever que l'humour « rend tout ce qu'il touche ambigu » et qu'il est « la grande invention de l'esprit moderne » qui est « liée à la naissance du roman » (Kundera, 1993 : 14). À la fin de son texte, le romancier formule sa propre définition de l'humour : « L'humour : l'éclair divin qui découvre le monde dans son ambiguïté morale et l'homme dans sa profonde incompétence à juger les autres ; l'humour : l'ivresse de la relativité des choses humaines ; le plaisir étrange issu de la certitude qu'il n'y a pas de certitude. » (*Ibidem* : 45)

³ Moura évoque des auteurs comme Kafka et Dubillard pour définir cette orientation qui « suspend les significations et les raisonnements courants » et sans invalider le sens permet une « ouverture permise par une distance ambiguë » (Moura, 2010 : 109).

treize mots » (Kundera, 1986 : 159-160) et sa définition développe l'idée kundérienne du roman « comme art ironique » de l'ambiguïté sollicitant une posture active de décodage et d'interprétation de la part du lecteur. Il approfondit ses réflexions sur l'ironie dans « Qu'est-ce que l'ironie ? » (Kundera, 1993 : 239-241) en soulignant la complexité des « *rapports ironiques* à l'intérieur du roman » ainsi que le rapport ironique du « vrai romancier avec ses personnages ». La conceptualisation opérée par le romancier révélant des points d'intersection théorique des deux notions n'a d'ailleurs pas échappé à l'attention des critiques qui notent que « les deux termes semblent interchangeables dans son vocabulaire » (Forest, 1976 : 101) et que « si Kundera ne prend pas bien soin de distinguer humour et ironie, c'est qu'ils ont en commun de s'en prendre à la citadelle ontologique de la vérité, du sérieux et de la morale. » (Vibert, 2009 : 172)

Mécanismes de l'ironie et stratégies de mystification

Même si des interférences entre l'humour et l'ironie sont observables, il est plausible de dégager quelques mécanismes de l'ironie proprement kundérienne en les situant dans la perspective théorique de Philippe Hamon pour analyser leur fonctionnement dans *La fête de l'insignifiance*. L'irradiation ironique de la posture¹ de l'auteur-narrateur a une forte teneur relativisante, car le narrateur garde sa distanciation et sa position extradiégétique surplombante en pratiquant parallèlement des entorses aux règles de vraisemblance et en intervenant dans certains de ses textes en son propre nom. Ainsi *La Fête de l'insignifiance* exhibe les artifices de la fiction en incorporant les commentaires de l'auteur et en l'introduisant en tant que « maître ». Le personnage du narrateur n'apparaît pas explicitement dans la diégèse mais est mentionné pour avoir laissé le livre intitulé *Souvenirs* de Nikita Khrouchtchev au groupe d'amis auxquels il avoue sympathiser : Alain, Ramon, Charles et Caliban. Le motif du livre découvert génère une sorte d'ironie à retardement car avec la progression du récit, la ligne narrative historique (l'histoire des 24 perdrix à l'époque du stalinisme) et la ligne contemporaine se croisent et les héros coexistent dans un espace ambivalent d'emboîtement d'un récit inventé. Les seuils de la fiction sont déstabilisés ainsi que la perception des niveaux de narration, un esprit carnavalesque se dégage de l'absurdité de la convergence des lignes de narration dans un (non-)lieu flottant entre l'uchronie et l'ironie.

D'autres mécanismes ironiques concernent les rapports des personnages sur le plan narratologique et thématique ou la combinatoire macrostructurale contradictoire et pourraient être associés à l'ironie « paradigmique » et « syntagmatique » (Hamon, 1996 : 69-70). Au-delà des effets d'ironie déclenchés par l'exploration de thèmes et motifs récurrents ou par les liens à l'intérieur de l'architecture compositionnelle des romans, se profile l'ironie sur le plan intertextuel. L'ironie renforce la cohérence de l'œuvre de Milan Kundera en modulant des échos et des allusions ludiques à ses romans précédents ou bien en tissant un réseau intertextuel plus large grâce aux renvois implicites à d'autres œuvres ou discours préexistants.

Des variations sur des thèmes typiquement kundériens comme l'érotisme, la dichotomie légèreté-pesanteur, le kitsch et l'homme-kitsch, les anges, la plaisanterie, la

¹ Philippe Hamon aborde la question de l'ironie globale, de la « posture d'énonciation ironique » (Hamon, 1996 : 4-5) et des problèmes d'interprétation face aux textes « modalisés ironiquement » (Hamon, 1996 : 84).

mystification et le rire fournissent des ressorts ironiques et humoristiques, alors que de nouveaux motifs polysémiques viennent se greffer sur les isotopies directrices comme le motif du nombril, de la plumette, de la bonne humeur, mais aussi la figure de l'*excusard* et le thème de l'insignifiance. L'érotisme, par exemple, se voit relativisé par le développement du nouveau motif du nombril qui figure plus particulièrement l'inflation de l'érotisme et sa dévalorisation au profit de la reproduction dénuée de teneur érotique. Par ailleurs, le motif du nombril s'articule avec le thème de la maternité et celui des anges « anombriliques » pour interroger deux variations des relations mère-fils sur le mode du contrepoint et la description tragi-comique d'un possible traumatisme sublimé, générant un sentiment de frustration affective chez Alain. Sa fixation sur l'image de la mère absente connaît un traitement ambigu enchevêtrant une activité créatrice déplacée (il invente des histoires absurdes sur sa mère), des hallucinations auditives (il a des conversations avec la photo de sa mère démissionnaire) et des échos essayistiques détournant ironiquement un raisonnement proche du discours psychanalytique¹. La méditation, autant ironique que nostalgique, sur la fin éventuelle de l'érotisme s'accompagne d'une autre réflexion aux consonances amères abordant l'éventualité de la fin des blagues et l'entrée dans une « époque de l'après-blague » ancrée dans un contexte restrictif de régime totalitaire et/ou de règne de l'esprit de sérieux. La fin du roman pourtant, carnavalesque et vertigineuse d'absurdité, marque l'adhésion du narrateur à l'esprit de non-sérieux et à son ironie corrosive teintée de fantaisie débridée et d'humour défiant bon sens, normes et tabous.

À l'échelle des personnages, il est possible d'introduire la notion *d'ironie existentielle* pour désigner les dissonances engendrées par l'immaturité, le lyrisme ou l'attitude kitsch de certains personnages sujets à leurs illusions. Ils sont souvent confrontés par leur naïveté ou narcissisme à une stratégie de mystification de la part de différents personnages libertins ou matures² désabusés, refusant de prendre le monde au sérieux à l'instar de la posture du narrateur. La ronde des ironisants et des ironisés, des naïfs et des libertins, des mystificateurs et des mystifiés représente une configuration actuelle mouvante que les lecteurs retrouvent dans le dernier roman de Kundera. Les nouvelles déclinaisons de la mystification définie par Kundera comme « la façon active de ne pas prendre au sérieux le monde » (Kundera, 1986 : 170) se déploient dans la perspective des personnages D'Ardelo, Ramon, Charles et Caliban.

La stratégie de la mystification est problématisée et illustrée par Charles et Caliban qui travaillent occasionnellement comme serveurs et ont inventé « la farce de la langue pakistanaise » (Kundera, 2014 : 96) comme mode de divertissement plaisant pendant les cocktails. Caliban endosse le rôle d'un étranger parlant un étrange sabir censé représenter la langue pakistanaise. Cette blague insolite figure l'attitude commune du noyau des quatre personnages d'amis réagissant à la course peu glorieuse du monde en adoptant la « seule résistance possible : ne pas le prendre au sérieux » (Kundera, 2014 : 96). Dans leur intention de saper le sérieux du monde par leurs blagues, les quatre amis se situent dans l'espace des complices initiés à l'esprit ironisant de la mystification. Ils forment ainsi une communauté au sein de laquelle se réalisent certaines fonctions de l'ironie que Philippe Hamon définit comme « dia-bolique (l'ironie sépare les complices des naïfs mal compréhensifs) et sym-bolique (sun-bolon :

¹ Voir le chapitre « Comment on enfante un excusard » (Kundera, 2014 : 76-77).

² En réfléchissant sur l'humour, Kundera présente la vision avertie « d'un homme adulte qui a derrière lui beaucoup d'expérience de la "nature humaine" [...] et qui, depuis longtemps, a cessé de prendre au sérieux le sérieux des hommes. » (Kundera, 2005 : 130).

signal de reconnaissance entre deux personnes qui ne se connaissent pas) » (Hamon, 1996: 151). Les quatre amis redoutent pourtant que le temps des blagues soit révolu, avec « le crépuscule des plaisanteries » (Kundera, 2014 : 98) devenues dangereuses à l'époque du stalinisme, avec les temps de la censure et des représailles totalitaires et même jusqu'à nos jours. Charles et Caliban semblent devenir des mystificateurs mystifiés dans la mesure où personne ne prête attention à leur pseudo-pakistanais et ce charabia est une blague dont l'unique dupe s'avère la jeune Portugaise Mariana tombée sous le charme du Pakistanais imaginaire.

D'Ardelo et Ramon représentent une configuration actuelle antithétique du point de vue de leurs fonctions narratologiques dans la mesure où D'Ardelo est un avatar de l'homme-kitsch alors que Ramon fait partie des personnages désabusés et lucides, réfractaires au kitsch, à l'esprit de sérieux et aux idées reçues. D'Ardelo est un homme sérieux et narcissique, avide de guetter « dans les yeux de chacun sa propre image » et de « l'embellir » (Kundera, 2014 : 27) qui décide spontanément de proférer un mensonge inexplicable, de réaliser un acte gratuit en mentant à Ramon qu'il souffre d'un cancer mortel. Par sa nécessité de contempler son reflet dans le miroir des yeux des autres, il se situe non pas du côté des personnages mystificateurs, mais cristallise comme un avatar de l'homme-kitsch, ayant besoin de « se regarder dans le miroir embellissant et de s'y reconnaître avec une satisfaction émue » (Kundera, 1986 : 160). Or, par un renversement assez inattendu de la situation, D'Ardelo subit à son tour les manifestations de l'ironie existentielle lorsque Ramon, saisi de compassion, décide de le gratifier d'un mensonge pieux en lui laissant croire qu'il jouit d'une réputation de conquérant de l'objet inaccessible de sa convoitise : la belle La Franck.

Le rire, l'humour et l'insignifiance

Même si une distinction nette entre ironie et humour demeure une tâche assez ardue, mon analyse de l'humour kundérien abordera les procédés humoristiques misant sur les effets de décalage ou sur la « synthèse contradictoire » (Moura, 2010 : 251-258) et les manifestations d'**«inconsistance»** (Moura 2010 : 258-269), ainsi que les dissonances sémantiques et les manifestations d'indétermination du sens. Une distinction entre humour et ironie sera tracée à partir de l'opposition formulée par Pierre Schoentjes qui évoque une idée sur laquelle plusieurs critiques sont unanimes : « les auteurs associent d'habitude le comique et l'humour au rire alors qu'ils préfèrent lier l'ironie à un autre phénomène physiologique : le sourire. » (Schoentjes, 2001 : 222) Pierre Schoentjes précise que la fonction de l'ironie est d'interroger, tandis que « celle du rire est de divertir » (Schoentjes, 2001 : 222) alors que Gérard Genette soutient que l'ironie « est toujours polémique » sans être plaisante, à la différence de l'humour « qui se veut toujours plaisant » (Genette, 2002 : 205). Le rire, la plaisanterie ou la blague représentent un thème de méditation dans les essais de Kundera et un motif récurrent dans ses romans. L'hypothèse de la « fin des blagues » reflète l'appréhension formulée par l'auteur dans *L'art du roman* au sujet de l'avenir du rire : « L'histoire européenne du rire touche à sa fin. » (Kundera, 1986 : 175). Cette prise de conscience amère n'empêche pourtant pas le romancier de poursuivre son exploration du monde sur le mode de l'ironie en entretissant les procédés humoristiques subversifs et les ressorts démystificateurs d'un rire typiquement romanesque et profondément kundérien.

Dans le troisième chapitre du *Livre du rire et de l'oubli*, intitulé « Les anges », Kundera distingue deux types de rires. Le rire des anges reflète la joie de l'harmonie du bon ordre et de la plénitude du sens et de la vie. Par ailleurs, le rire originel est défini

comme le rire du diable qui révèle l'absurdité des choses et procède de la perte du sens du monde, de ses significations discordantes et du décalage dont découle une sensation de légèreté : le rire a « quelque chose de méchant (les choses se révèlent soudain différentes de ce pour quoi elles se faisaient passer) mais il y a aussi en lui une part de bienfaisant soulagement (les choses sont plus légères qu'il n'y paraissait, elles nous laissent vivre plus librement, elles cessent de nous opprimer sous leur austère sérieux. » (Kundera, 1985 : 108). C'est d'ailleurs cette légèreté libératrice qui est modulée dans le dernier roman de Kundera et représentée dans sa nouvelle manifestation : l'« insignifiance ». Elle devient la source essentielle du rire diabolique et des situations existentielles de décalage et de « synthèse contradictoire » entre « l'ordre et le désordre, le sens commun et l'excentricité, et, [...] le rire et l'horreur. » (Moura, 2010 : 252). Une telle coexistence ambivalente est contenue dans le « mensonge inexplicable » suscitant l'« inexplicable rire » (Kundera, 2014 : 22) de D'Ardelo qui se réjouit de son cancer imaginaire et de son acte gratuit. D'Ardelo est saisi d'une crise de fou rire qui lui demeure inintelligible mais fait transparaître la rupture au niveau de sa consistance psychologique et devient une manifestation de l'esprit d'insignifiance et d'absurdité.

Un autre effet humoristique de coexistence du rire et de l'horrible se dégage du personnage de Kalinine qui souffre d'un problème de prostate l'obligeant à entrecouper ses discours solennels de pauses fréquentes et d'être à chaque retour applaudi par son public. Les pointes d'humour scatologique et l'incongruité scabreuse de la particularité de Kalinine sont renforcés par l'ironie syntagmatique du récit dévoilant le fondement inattendu du rebaptême de la ville de Königsberg en Kaliningrad. Dans l'esprit de coexistence diabolique et incongrue de l'horrible et du risible, une des figures les plus sinistres de l'Histoire, le dictateur Staline qualifié de « Lucifer du siècle » (Kundera, 2014 : 43) est présenté saisi d'une « tendresse méconnue » (Kundera, 2014 : 42) causée par la « douleur petite, concrète, individuelle, compréhensible » (Kundera, 2014 : 43) de Kalinine. Le chapitre « Arrivent un chasseur et un pissoir » présente les personnages dans une mise en scène imaginaire de la pièce supposée de Charles destinée au théâtre de marionnettes. Le procédé de renversement et d'enchevêtement des niveaux du récit et le mélange de tonalités humoristique, fantastique et ironique multiplie les lieux d'indétermination du texte qui par un effet de mise-en-abyme s'interroge sur l'interprétation problématique du fragment. Le rire du « moustachu, vêtu d'une vieille parka usée » (Kundera, 2014 : 135), ce rire diabolique d'un personnage satanique révèle l'absurdité de la situation, suspendue dans son brouillage sémantique, en générant une réaction de rire chez les spectateurs imaginaires du fragment invraisemblable, ainsi que la bonne humeur chez Ramon.

Le motif de la « bonne humeur » traverse les lignes narratives et fait l'objet de la méditation de Ramon qui problématise cette notion dans une digression essayistique de son discours pour se référer à la conception de Hegel qui « dit que le vrai humour est impensable sans l'infinie bonne humeur [...] » “*unendliche Wohlgemutheit*”. [...] C'est seulement depuis les hauteurs de l'infinie bonne humeur que tu peux observer au-dessous de toi l'éternelle bêtise des hommes et en rire » (Kundera, 2014 : 98-99). La bonne humeur est reliée au thème clé de l'insignifiance dans une autre digression méditative, dans la perspective de Ramon, qui fait l'éloge de cette catégorie existentielle en conseillant à D'Ardelo, qu'il croit mortellement malade, de respirer « cette insignifiance qui nous entoure, elle est la clé de la sagesse, elle est la clé de la bonne humeur » (Kundera, 2014 : 139). La prise de conscience de l'insignifiance comme valeur renvoie à l'idée de légèreté développée dans *L'insoutenable légèreté de l'être* et révèle l'ironie existentielle des personnages à la recherche de la bonne humeur qui

s'avèrent pris dans le piège ambivalent de l'insignifiance. Cette idée de l'insignifiance est codée aussi dans la métaphore de la plumette décrite dans le chapitre « Une plumette plane sous le plafond ». La plumette représente un « motif de raccord »¹ (Scarpetta, 1996 : 83) entre les deux lignes narratives, renvoie au motif de l'ange déchu et se présente comme un élément fantaisiste et incongru. C'est une métaphore de la légèreté et de l'insignifiance, mais en même temps la plumette fait penser à la position surplombante de l'ironiste et à la plume du romancier qui se sert des ressources de l'ironie et de l'humour² pour interroger les aléas de l'existence et les vicissitudes de l'Histoire.

Conclusion

La fête de l'insignifiance reprend et module certains thèmes récurrents dans l'œuvre kundérienne et renforce le réseau tissé par le romancier qui met en œuvre différents mécanismes ironiques, stratégies de mystification et procédés humoristiques en vue de poursuivre son interrogation existentielle et son exploration des mondes possibles. Les interférences de l'ironie diffuse et de l'humour défiant le bon sens engendrent des lieux d'indétermination du texte et contribuent à la fragmentation ludique de la composition et aux ambiguïtés et dissonances du contenu. Le roman introduit l'hypothèse de la « fin des blagues » tout en multipliant les manifestations de l'ironie existentielle, les mystifications et les infractions humoristiques à l'esprit de sérieux et en ouvrant des voies vers la « bonne humeur ». La posture ironique du romancier et ses stratégies (inter)textuelles de pair avec les effets et ambiguïtés de l'humour favorisent l'implication du lecteur dans la recherche des sens possibles au-delà des messages et morales univoques.

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¹ Terme utilisé par Guy Scarpetta dans son analyse de *L'Immortalité* pour désigner les motifs de liaison qui traversent différentes lignes narratives. Leur présence, ainsi que celle des « thèmes majeurs », assure le « principe de l'unification par le dispositif thématique et motivique » (Scarpetta, 1996 : 80).

² Philippe Hamon rappelle au sujet des « topographies de l'ironie » qu'elle se caractérise par une « "supériorité", "rapport d'œil" surplombant » (Hamon, 1996 : 109) alors que Jean-Marc Moura considère que « l'humoriste "plane" » et évoque son « vol erratique » (Moura, 2010 :115).

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LE PERSONNAGE GIRALDUCIEN ENTRE IRONIE ET HUMOUR

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Abstract: I have chosen the topic of the Giraldavian character between irony and humor, taking into account the path the author chose for each of his main characters. In this way, whether it is about Siegfried and Genevieve in the play Siegfried, or Helene and Hector in The Troy war will not happen, Judith in the play with the same name, Electre in Electre, Alcmene and Amphitryon in Amphitryon 38, the character built by Giraudoux is like the author himself, between myth and demystification, between reality and imaginary, between irony and humor, while accepting a dual personality who is significant for his destiny. I will follow their storyline, which is not at all simple, on the contrary, they have to travel a very complex path and it is exactly here that we find the Giraldavian style: his characters evolve, they change, however they are able to keep their verticality. What does not change is their vision because Giraudoux's characters are visionaries for whom irony is part of their destiny and humor is part of their attitude. One must emphasize in his work the influence of the tragicomedy by highlighting several well-known Giraldavian methods, like self-parody, satire, burlesque. The writer makes the transition from sublime to tragic, from reality to imaginary, from sacred to pagan, from everything that is noble and has value to something that degrades and may cause pain or fatality to his characters. The Giraldavian irony is what Jankélévitch considered to be an irony sprung from <<solitude of own self>>, a form of self-parody capable of destroying the human being, of submitting it to a timeless force, of the mythological. When dealing with irony, the Giraldavian humor is biased; it becomes a black humor as defined by André Breton. In this way, Giraudoux's characters revolt, lose their lucidity, by trying to escape an unpleasant reality, fighting against the war, against a world and a society that they perceive as being strange. Using irony and humor, Giraudoux has built characters able to redefine the existentialism, but unable to fight with superhuman forces such as the mythical characters, the author submitted them to paradoxes, the laughter and the pain go together as well as life and death. We will take into consideration this kind of analysis in order to accomplish this thesis, to fulfill the criteria found in the Giraldavian theater without forgetting the trace of myth that has always been present in his work.

Keywords: irony; humor; myth; character.

Tout d'abord, il faut situer le dramaturge dans le temps et dans l'espace pour bien comprendre sa position concernant l'histoire, l'atemporalité et le comportement humain. C'est un triangle qu'on trouve important dans la réalisation de cette analyse, car l'écrivain rajoute à une histoire déjà donnée, un temps irréel et tout cela met en lumière un certain comportement humain.

Il faut souligner aussi la manière psychologique dans laquelle Giraudoux présente ses personnages. Il est nécessaire de mettre l'accent sur cet aspect car, sans reconnaître la valeur psychologique de ses pièces, on ne peut pas parler de l'ironie et de l'humour. C'est une sorte de théâtre dans le théâtre, cet humour et cette ironie des gestes, de l'attitude, du destin, c'est comme la défense du dramaturge devant une histoire trop dure.

Les pièces de Giraudoux ont représenté pour les années trente en France, une sorte de renouvellement du théâtre, il s'agit d'une manière propre d'aborder quelques-

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uns des plus importants thèmes de l'humanité, comme l'ironie et l'humour, les deux spécifiques pour le style de l'écrivain.

Pour mettre en évidence le thème de l'ironie et de l'humour, on a choisi quelques pièces représentatives : *Judith*, *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*, *Electre*, *Amphitryon 38* et *Siegfried*. Il s'agit de pièces qui ont en commun le temps de la guerre, donc un temps actuel, mais aussi une temporalité mythique, le destin des personnages étant soumis à la force du mythe qui précède leur passé, leur présent et leur avenir. Egalement, on observe bien les deux outils que l'auteur utilise pour mettre en évidence leurs histoires : l'ironie de leur vie et l'humour de leur attitude.

On va mettre l'accent sur ces deux aspects parce que le personnage giralducien est un personnage qui lutte contre le vent du présent avec du courage et de l'humour, étant conscient de l'ironie qui entoure son destin et se rendant à l'histoire avec la responsabilité d'un personnage mythique.

L'ironie et l'humour des pièces giraldaciennes proviennent aussi du langage utilisé par les personnages, chose bien évidente vu qu'un élément qui influence le langage est l'intérêt pour la politique que l'auteur a manifesté pendant sa carrière.

Un exemple serait la scène lorsque Jupiter parle d'une manière électorale devant les Thébains rassemblés à la fin d'*Amphitryon*, sous le balcon du palais : <<Devant ces magnifiques et superbes Thébains... Ces tristes sires...>> (Jean Giraudoux, 2002 : 132). Il parle d'un air démagogue.

Le langage électoral mis dans une lumière humoristique se rencontre dans toutes les pièces de Giraudoux où l'écrivain prend comme thème principal la guerre, l'histoire, donc, il s'agit de ce point de vue, de presque toutes les pièces giraldaciennes.

Pour commencer l'analyse, il faut mentionner que les pièces choisies ont en commun ce type de langage humoristique qui provient d'un bagage politique appartenant au dramaturge, un humour ironique, mais dans beaucoup de couleurs et d'ici on remarque la complexité des personnages de Giraudoux.

La relation entre l'attitude humoristique de ses personnages avec les personnages mythiques a pour but de refaire un trajet atemporel, c'est le mythe qui commence l'histoire et c'est la réalité qui l'accomplit, c'est toujours le mythe qui reste derrière l'histoire pour lui donner de la valeur et du sens. On trouve important de ce point de vue de faire la différence entre l'histoire du mythe et l'histoire conçue par l'écrivain parce que l'humour et l'ironie sont des critères d'analyse dans l'œuvre giraldacienne, ce sont des outils littéraires pour définir le caractère et les situations les plus importantes dans lesquelles on rencontre les personnages.

La première pièce soumise à l'analyse, *Siegfried*, est une pièce qui se déroule en quatre actes, l'action se passe en Allemagne après la guerre, mais la situation politique présentée est tout à fait imaginaire. L'histoire commence le 12 janvier 1921 et dure cinq jours. Les trois premiers actes ont lieu à Gotha, dans la maison du Conseiller Siegfried et le quatrième acte se passe à la gare frontière entre Allemagne et France.

Dès le début on connaît l'histoire de Siegfried, un homme amnésique qui cherche à dénouer l'éénigme de son identité perdue. Comme dans toutes les pièces de Giraudoux, il y a un conflit : d'une part, la révolution de Zelten, d'autre part, l'intervention surprise des généraux allemands pour retarder le moment où Siegfried découvrira sa vraie identité.

Dans cette pièce, l'ironie vient du pouvoir morale de ce personnage qui vit le présent dans le passé et le passé dans le présent parce que sa mémoire est presque nulle. Il sent un passé qui lui appartient, des habitudes, une langue, toute une civilisation, mais il ne peut pas situer toutes ces choses dans un temps donné ou comme appartenant à une

certaine civilisation. Il sent d'être quelqu'un d'autre, il semble accepter la situation, mais il lutte avec lui pour se redécouvrir, pour comprendre ce qui semble incompréhensible.

Il réalise son destin jusqu'à la fin, il commence à parler cette autre langue, à accepter ces autres habitudes, cette autre civilisation et cette autre histoire de lui. C'est ici l'ironie de Siegfried qui avec l'intelligence d'un homme perdu entre les mondes, vit avec humour son destin et accomplit son histoire, il abandonne les masques, les jeux politiques, il joue la dernière carte de la vie, de l'amour, de l'essentiel.

On trouve important de mentionner l'humanité des personnages girauduciennes, c'est comme une démythification de leur part, c'est peut-être parce que la limite entre le mythe et le réel ne manque pas dans les pièces de Giraudoux.

La deuxième pièce soumise à l'analyse c'est la pièce *Judith* qui renvoie à une figure biblique célèbre : la veuve de Béthulie qui a sauvé sa ville en séduisant et puis en tuant sous sa tente, Holopherne. L'histoire de Giraudoux se passe pendant trois jours : la nuit de marche à travers le champ de bataille, celle de l'amour et du meurtre. L'action a lieu dans une ville juive assiégée.

En résumé, dans le premier acte, on voit Judith entre le refus orgueilleux et l'acceptation frénétique. Personne ne réussit à la convaincre qu'elle est la seule qui puisse sauver son peuple, en se rendant à Holopherne. Jusqu'à la fin du premier acte, elle accepte son rôle. Le deuxième acte met en scène l'action, ce qu'on appelle l'épreuve. On voit Sarah, entremetteuse juive au rôle d'agent double qui précipite la jeune fille dans un piège. Bernée et injuriée, celle-ci appelle à son secours Holopherne. Elle se laisse séduire par le général ennemi. Le dernier acte met en scène la récupération de Judith. Elle essaie d'expliquer à Jean qu'elle a tué pour empêcher la routine du quotidien. En fin, résignée, Judith, la putain, accepte de devenir Judith la sainte.

L'ironie dans cette pièce part même du thème appartenant au récit biblique : la ville juive de Béthulée est assiégée par le général Holopherne, au service du roi Nabuchodonosor. Cette ville est dans un réel danger : les gens pourraient périr de faim et de soif. Judith, une femme pieuse, de nationalité juive pure, prie Dieu pour sauver sa patrie. De cette manière, inspirée par sa croyance, elle se rend dans le camp ennemi, elle prétend livrer Béthulée à Holopherne. Celui-ci croit ses intentions et même si elle était à sa merci, il la respecte pendant les quatre jours qu'elle passe dans son camp. Un soir, Judith profite du fait qu'il avait bu pour fêter et elle l'égorgue pour qu'à la fin, elle rentre dans sa ville avec la tête du général exposé aux regards des autres. C'est l'histoire mythique de la jeune vierge qui sauve son peuple. Tout finit quand les prêtres et les militaires ont proposé au peuple juif Judith en exemple de pureté, de vertu et de courage.

C'est l'histoire que Giraudoux change parce que Judith de Giraudoux succombe au charme d'Holopherne. Judith de Giraudoux n'est pas une sainte et l'influence du mythe se fait présente à la fin, quand l'héroïne accepte la version officielle qui la présente comme pure et héroïque.

L'ironie et l'humour de cette pièce liée au mythe originaire sont bien précis, cette fois-ci, on dirait que l'écrivain ajoute de son humour propre, de son ironie caractéristique. C'est quelque chose d'évident dans les pièces de Giraudoux, d'amener avec lui, une part de son attitude, de sa croyance, de son savoir-être. Il pourrait sembler impossible d'analyser ses personnages en se détachant de la croyance de l'auteur, de sa propre histoire parce que, d'une part, les histoires de Giraudoux sont réalisées par rapport à la réalité politique et d'autre part, ses personnages sont bien liés à la mythologie.

La troisième pièce soumise à l'analyse est la pièce *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu* pièce en deux actes, la plus célèbre du théâtre de Giraudoux. Rédigée en 1935, elle met en évidence une contradiction parce tout le monde sait que la guerre de Troie a eu lieu, c'est un paradoxe entre le titre et la vraie histoire. C'est à partir du titre qu'on peut observer l'ambiguïté giraldrucienne. Mais l'écrivain tient compte de l'unité de lieu et de l'unité de temps. L'action se déroule pendant une journée, du matin au soir.

L'ironie est évidente si on met l'accent sur le personnage d'Hector qui à peine est de retour du combat le matin et il consacre sa journée à lutter pour empêcher une guerre qui est déclarée pour le soir même. Connaissant les risques et le péril d'une guerre, Hector choisit, cette fois-ci, la paix, la diplomatie. L'atemporalité de la pièce est mise en évidence par le temps utilisé dans le titre, le futur, c'est-à-dire, la sûreté de lutter contre un événement historique qui s'est déjà passé, donne l'air ironique du personnage giraldrucien parce que celui-ci lutte de toutes ses forces et fait de tout son mieux pour empêcher la mise en œuvre d'un épisode mythique.

La quatrième pièce choisie pour l'analyse est *Amphitryon 38*, pièce en trois actes. L'action du deuxième acte se déroule dans la chambre d'Alcmène et pour le premier et le troisième acte, celle-ci a lieu en plein air, sur une terrasse. Pendant toute l'histoire, on reste au palais d'Amphitryon.

L'histoire dure vingt-quatre heures, d'un soir à un l'autre soir, avec deux entractes qui symbolisent les nuits. Le premier acte, sous l'invocation nocturne de Sosie, mène à la nuit véritable, pour la rencontre d'Alcmène et de Jupiter, qui a pris l'apparence d'Amphitryon. C'est l'enjeu du premier acte, d'amener Jupiter dans le lit d'Alcmène. Le second acte commence en un lever de soleil et s'achève au milieu du jour sur l'entracte d'une fausse nuit, rencontre truquée dans la chambre des erreurs parce qu'il imagine un redoublement du premier acte, non plus clandestin, mais cette fois-ci, annoncé. La fidélité menacée d'Alcmène se manifestera devant cette tentation avec autant de force que, dans le premier acte, son amour trop confiant, pour Amphitryon. Après l'adultère inconscient, suivit l'adultère involontaire. Alcmène qui est le mobile, devient l'instigatrice, en mettant son époux dans le lit d'une autre. Le dernier acte referme la boucle sur la journée, on observe la même terrasse, mais en dépit d'Alcmène et grâce à elle, selon la légende, va naître le petit Hercule. Alcmène et Amphitryon refusent l'aventure, même sous la menace de Jupiter. Pour le persuader de ne pas introduire le divin dans son couple, Alcmène lui offre l'amitié humaine. Jupiter, par compassion et par tendresse, feint de renoncer à la rencontre et de se priver de la nuit <<officielle>>

L'humour et l'ironie de cette pièce jaillissent de l'aventure, de la fausse communication dans les relations fatales entre dieux et humains, du pathétique d'une situation de vaudeville, même du tragique de l'attachement conjugal. Il y a de l'ironie et de l'humour presque dans toutes les scènes parce que les personnages alimentent de cette façon leur destin.

C'est la pièce giraldrucienne où la rencontre avec les dieux met en lumière la fatalité humaine, mais le dramaturge, en utilisant l'ironie, sauve ses personnages de leur propres faiblesses humaines. Cette fois-ci il s'agit d'une ironie provenant d'une situation de vaudeville, comme on a déjà mentionné, un cercle conjugal où on trouve l'humour noir, la parodie.

La liaison avec le mythe confère aux personnages de Giraudoux une ironie fatale, on observe de leur part, un humour prédestiné comme si ceux-ci luttaient contre le courant, avec un espoir et un courage qui devraient leur donner raison et confiance.

L'auteur reste fidèle aux mythes, même s'il écrit d'autres histoires, il s'inspire à la puissance des mythes pour en créer des personnages bien rattachés à la réalité quotidienne. Il faut savoir qu'il s'agit d'un auteur qui connaît très bien l'actualité, qui a eu le pouvoir de l'influence et qui redonne à l'histoire ce qui appartient de droit à l'histoire.

La dernière pièce choisie pour cette analyse est *Electre* qui se déroule en deux parties et un interlude. L'histoire d'*Electre* se passe dans un seul décor, la cour du palais, en douze heures : du soir des noces d'Electre au matin de ses noces. Le crime, l'adultère, l'aspect policier de la pièce, la découverte progressive du crime, la guerre, toutes ces choses contribuent à souligner l'humour et l'ironie d'*Electre*.

Il s'agit d'un mythe bien connu : Electre, la fille d'Agamemnon et de Clytemnestre, se trouve dans la situation de haïr sa mère qui a tué son père avec l'aide de son amant Égisthe, qui est désormais régent du trône. Elle attend la venue d'Oreste pour se venger, bien qu'au début, elle ignore qui a tué son père. Agamemnon, le Roi des Rois, a sacrifié sa fille aux dieux.

Sur ce grand mythe de l'Antiquité, Jean Giraudoux a écrit une pièce d'une grande force tragique sans jamais perdre cet esprit étincelant, cet humour qui ont fait de Jean Giraudoux l'un des plus grands écrivains du XXe siècle.

La pièce Électre apparaît comme la réécriture de la réécriture d'un mythe. Avec de nombreuses modifications anachroniques, on observe la présence du couple bourgeois comme un mirage burlesque du couple tragique, mais il est important de souligner que la pièce Électre est une des nombreuses preuves de l'intemporalité de la tragédie. Écrite en 1937, il s'agirait en effet d'une « tragédie bourgeoise », selon Jean Giraudoux lui-même.

On peut aussi remarquer que le destin des personnages se développe dans le sens du mythe. L'auteur garde la valeur du mythe et donne à la réalité moderne un personnage qui ne puisse pas s'adapter sans échapper à ses principes, à son destin.

Les personnages de *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*, *Judith*, *Electre*, *Amphitryon 38* et *Siegfried* ont un sens commun, mais aussi différent de l'humour, chacun par rapport à sa propre histoire, un sens de l'ironie qui semble influencer leur destin, amener les personnages du passé au présent, mais aussi à l'envers.

En conclusion, l'analyse du texte giraldien ayant en vue les outils de l'ironie et de l'humour est un trajet mythique qui envisage le comportement des personnages, l'histoire même créée par le dramaturge et l'atemporalité. C'est un triangle qui redonne au théâtre de Giraudoux l'universalité et l'existentialisme, même la vérité, parce que sans une goutte vérité, le mythe ne survivrait pas à l'histoire.

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LA GIARA DI LUIGI PIRANDELLO TRA UMORISMO E IRONIA

Nabila KADIR*

Abstract: “The Jar” is a short story written in 1906 by Luigi Pirandello. The story takes place in the Sicilian countryside during the olive harvest. Don Lollo Zirafa, a pretentious wealthy and cantankerous landowner who plans an exceptional harvest, acquires a huge jar bigger than the ones he already possesses. He imagines it already full of oil. Hence, he inspects the work of his workers by threatening and swearing to kill anyone who dares not to complete his task! The unthinkable happens: the brand new jar, waiting in the reserve broke. The break is frank and important. The three of his day workers discover the wrongdoing, warn him. Don Lollo’s harsh reaction didn’t make to wait. After he calms down, he agrees to rely on Zi Dima Licasi, a competent terracotta container repairer and inventor of a patented miracle sealant. This product would, no doubt, alone, could have wound the jar, but was without rely on the distrust and suspicion of Don Lollo Zirafa, who insists that the craftsman consolidates the break with an iron wire. The craftsman gives in to the stubborn owner and began to work. First, the putty, then, the points. To do this, it is placed inside the huge vase and begins to sew with the help of a peasant. By the end of the tragicomic takes place: Di Zima cannot get out of the jar. He is imprisoned there while he repaired it himself! And the only solution for him is to get out of there is to break it again. We inform Don Lollo who, furious, and as usual in case of dispute with others, decides to go to his lawyer. He cannot stop laughing at the strange request of his client and advise him to release the craftsman otherwise he runs the risk of being prosecuted for kidnapping. Don Lollo negotiates an agreement with the craftsman: he agrees to pay him the repair but provided that the latter agrees to compensate him for the value of the jar. To be “clean” vis-à-vis the law, Zirafa pays his share of market and ensure that “the prisoner” has food and drink. The craftsman refuses the proposal and offers a drink and a smoke to the peasants and the night turns into party in the nose of the rich owner who, in the early morning, furious, gives a violent kick to the jar that breaks. Zi Dima is free and winner!

Keywords: break; jailed; litigation.

Introduzione

Luigi Pirandello, drammaturgo, scrittore e poeta italiano, nasce nel 1867 a Girgenti (attuale Argigento) e muore nel 1936 a Roma, della sua attività bisogna ricordare che fu il fondatore nel 1925 di un Teatro dell’Arte a Roma che propose nuovi autori al pubblico italiano. Nel 1929 fu nominato Accademico d’Italia e nel 1934 organizzò un convegno internazionale a cui parteciparono i più importanti esponenti dei teatri come Copeau, Reinhardt, Tairov. Nello stesso anno otteneva il Nobel per la Letteratura.

La giara (Pirandello, 1992: 24) , è una novella scritta da Pirandello e contenuta nella raccolta “Novelle per un anno”, (ma è già ricca di umorismo) ed è pubblicata per la prima volta sul “Corriere della Sera” nel 1909.

Successivamente Pirandello ne trae anche un atto unico teatrale e la inserisce nelle Novelle per un anno. Frattanto Alfredo Casella ne aveva tratto la commedia musicale coreografica in un atto dallo stesso titolo, con coreografia di Giorgio de Chirico, rappresentata a Parigi nel 1924. Ne furono in seguito tratte due versioni

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cinematografiche: la prima, del 1954 venne diretta da Giorgio Pàstina ed inserita nel film a episodi Questa è la vita; la seconda, del 1984 venne inserita nel film a episodi Kaos, dei fratelli Taviani. Ambientata in un podere siciliano, ha per protagonisti due vecchi in lite a causa di una giara rotta: Don Lollò Zirafa, un padrone avaro che ricorda il Mazzarò di Giovanni Verga, e l'iroso aggiusta brocche Zi' Dima Licasi. La vicenda mostra già un umorismo molto evidente, che però non ha ancora nulla di tragico e si indirizza piuttosto verso l'assurdo (Zi' Dima rimane imprigionato nella giara che don Lollò non vuole rompere).

La storia rappresentata ripercorre con umorismo molti dei temi cari allo scrittore agrigentino, tra cui la molteplicità dei punti di vista, l'ambiente siciliano e i conflitti interpersonali.

Riassunto “La giara” tratto da “Novelle per un anno” di Luigi Pirandello

La commedia, di gusto campestre e giocoso, vive tutta nel contrasto fra due personaggi di opposto carattere, pittoreschi rappresentanti di una civiltà contadina, vivacemente messa in evidenza dal colorito dialogo e dalla corale partecipazione agli avvenimenti di tutti gli abitanti del fondo rustico. I due sono Lollò Zirafa, proprietario di una bellissima giara “nuova fiammante”, che si è rotta, e Zi Dima, l'artigiano incaricato di ripararla. Lollò dà continuamente in escandescenze per tutto quello che avviene nel suo podere; la rottura della giara lo manda addirittura in bestia. Egli s'è portato in campagna l'avvocato Scimè e lo persegueva, interpellandolo per ogni fatto anche minimo per difendere i suoi interessi, che sente continuamente lesi. Un uomo così iracondo, interessato e causidico (porta sempre con sé il codice civile) si trova ad avere a che fare con lo scontroso Zi Dima, che alle sue esplosioni d'ira che terrorizzano i contadini, non si scompone affatto e gli risponde sempre per le rime. Il caso beffardo gioco un brutto tiro a Lollò Zirafa, la sua giara è eccezionalmente stretta di bocca; Zi Dima l'aggiusta da dentro, ma quando fa per uscirne non vi riesce. Alloggio abusivo o sequestro di persona? Ne nasce un paradossale “caso” che diverte l'avvocato Scimè e tutti gli astanti ed esaspera sempre più la contorta coscienza giuridica di Lollò Zirafa. Per liberare Zi Dima occorrerebbe rompere di nuovo la giara; ma il vecchio concia brocche non vuol saperne di ripagarla come pretenderebbe Lollò. E decide di rimanere nella giara. Su consiglio dell'avvocato, Lollò si allontana, sperando che la notte induca Zi Dima a più miti consigli.

Invece lo scanzonato prigioniero organizza un'allegra festa intorno alla giara, acquistando vino e cibarie – è una vera beffa – proprio con le dieci lire che Lollò ha voluto fargli accettare come compenso del lavoro da lui eseguito, con la riserva mentale di mettersi in regola di fronte alla legge e di acquisire maggiori diritti contro di lui in una civile vertenza. Il festoso baccano costellato di entusiastici evviva per Zi Dima, tra canti al suono dello “scacciapensieri” e balli intorno alla giara, esaspera l'iracondo Lollò che irrompe con furia fra i festanti e sferra un calcio alla giara, mandandola a rompersi contro un albero. Zi Dima ne esce illeso e trionfante. Le donne lo applaudono, gli uomini esprimono la loro gioia issandolo sulle spalle e portandolo in trionfo. È la gioiosa rivalsa di tutti contro l'arroganza vessatoria di Lollò Zirafa, rappresentata con schietta e sorridente arguzia.

I personaggi: un contesto umoristico

La giara è senza dubbio un capolavoro di umorismo lieto, quasi pittorico della

terra siciliana. La novella dai toni tragicomici ci racconta il contrasto tra lo sciocco massaro don Lollò ed il povero Zi' Dima. La novella presenta tutti i tratti del migliore Verismo sia nel contenuto (narra di gente comune, di vicende quotidiane), sia nello stile (il lessico è popolare, il narratore è impersonale o corale). Pirandello è molto influenzato da Giovanni Verga, ma non possiede la sua dimensione malinconica e pessimista. Il personaggio di Lollò Zirafa è costruito sul modello di Mazzardò de *La roba* (cfr. vol. 5. : 396-399), ma è più istintivo e vive non tanto per accumulare ricchezze in se stesse, ma per attaccare briga con gli altri e ha l'ossessione della legge (*a furia di carta bollata e d'onorarii agli avvocati, citando questo, citando quello e pagando sempre le spese per tutti, s'era mezzo rovinato*, righe 12-14). Anche gli altri personaggi non hanno la stessa tristezza e infelicità che avevano in Verga, ma sono piuttosto contadini lavoranti che vogliono evitare guai e fare festa anche a notte fonda (*i contadini ubriachi che, presisi per mano, ballavano attorno alla giara*, righe 261-262); l'avvocato che ha regalato il calepino al possidente si diverte moltissimo (*quello seguitava a ridere e voleva che gli rinarrasse il caso com'era stato, per farci su altre risate*, righe 185-186). Il vecchio Zi' Dima ha un carattere facile all'irritazione, ma si rivela poi un burbero simpatico e testardo, con una concezione positiva della vita, una grande autostima (ha *il suo merito d'inventore*: un mastice che è il migliore del mondo) e idee precise sul lavoro.

L'umorismo nel brano

La vicenda presenta un umorismo forte ed evidente, che però non ha ancora nulla di tragicomico, non è ancora – come Pirandello teorizza nel saggio *L'umorismo* – il *sentimento del contrario*, in quanto la comicità non si confronta con sotterci motivi dolorosi delle azioni. I comportamenti di Don Lollò e Zi' Dima non nascondono cioè cause negative ma derivano dalle loro nature istintive. La comicità, perciò, tende alla farsa o all'assurdo: lo sconsiderato Zi' Dima resta imprigionato nella giara, Don Lollò tiene di più alla giara che alla vita umana; seguono la trattativa legale tra l'uomo nella brocca e il possidente fuori, il baccanale notturno intorno alla giara sotto la luna, il rotolare della brocca abitata giù dalla discesa, verso l'olivo contro cui si rompe. Lo stile del racconto è verista anche per la voce narrante che si tiene in disparte, tranne in qualche passaggio in cui gli avvenimenti vengono sottolineati con il tono di chi si diverte di fronte alle stranezze dell'esistenza (*E con chi non l'attaccava Don Lollò Zirafa?... Eccolo là sotto la costa con gli scaricatori... E la vinse zi' Dima*) e nei moltissimi gustosi sicilianismi presenti nel lessico.

L'umorismo secondo Pirandello

L'atteggiamento umoristico pirandelliano consiste nella caricatura all'estremo sia dei modi di fare che nella fisionomia dei suoi personaggi e nei fenomeni della vita e della quotidianità, questo per dimostrare che non esiste una legge che regolamenta la vita dell'uomo se non quella del caso. Pirandello distrugge così l'immagine di idea di personalità coerente, rivelando le passioni e gli impulsi estremi di ogni individuo.

Che cos'è l'umorismo? Se lo chiedeva Pirandello in un saggio del 1908.

“Se volessimo tener conto di tutte le risposte che si son date a questa domanda,

di tutte le definizioni che autori e critici hanno tentato, potremmo riempire parecchie e parecchie pagine, e probabilmente alla fine, confusi tra tanti pareri e dispareri, non riusciremmo ad altro che a ripetere la domanda” (Pirandello, 1908: 45). Per un punto di partenza più formale, abbiamo voluto partire dal vocabolario. La definizione trovata sul Gabrielli dice che è l’attitudine a percepire, presentare e valutare la realtà evidenziandone, attraverso l’uso dell’intelligenza e della cultura, gli aspetti strani, paradossali, contradditori, disposti a sorridere con più o meno accentuato distacco. Il termine ha origine da un adattamento dell’inglese *humour*, ripreso anche dal francese *humour* con l’accezione di “giocoso, capace di afferrare il lato comico delle cose”. Ma la storia di questa parola è ancora più antica, e deriva dal latino *umor*, sia nel senso di corpo fluido, liquore, umidità, o vapore, sia nel senso figurato di fantasia, capriccio o vigore. Fin dall’antichità gli umori del corpo venivano considerati segni o cause di malattie, mentre dal punto di vista figurato il significato e la funzione degli umori si rifa alla concezione ippocratica dei fluidi corporali, accettata anche dalla medicina medievale. I quattro fluidi principali: sangue, flemma, bile gialla e bile nera, sono responsabili degli atteggiamenti psicofisici dell’uomo, siano essi permanenti o momentanei. Ma l’umore è anche donna: la caratteristica di umidità è sempre stata attribuita al genere femminile e al suo carattere, definito appunto umorale. Ciò premesso, potremmo affermare che l’umorismo è donna? Varrebbe la pena scoprirla, nonostante sia opinione comune che la capacità di far ridere e la maggiore iniziativa al riso siano prerogative dell’uomo, basate su secoli di cultura prettamente maschilista. Piuttosto, si può dire con certezza è che la donna è attratta dal riso, e indica come particolarità cruciale del possibile partner la capacità di far ridere. Stilare una definizione chiara e unitaria dell’umorismo è comunque un arduo compito, proprio per le sfumature che lo rendono variegato e complesso in ogni espressione. Che cosa s’intende con la parola “umorismo” e quali insidie nasconde il terreno del suo significato, solo all’apparenza chiaro e certo, ma in realtà carsico e ricco di insidie? Per rispondere a tale quesito, spontaneo e immediato è il riferimento all’omonimo saggio di Pirandello, L’umorismo, che vuole il suddetto come protagonista di uno scritto rivelatosi fondamentale nel definire le differenze fra “il procedimento dell’arte umoristica rispetto a quello dell’arte in genere” (Pirandello, *op.cit.* : 15-160).

Quest’ultima dipinge ordinatamente quadri dai colori tenui e dalle linee nette e definite, allo scopo di illustrare, chiarire, spiegare; la prima è, invece, portatrice di dubbio e rottura, scomposta e disorganica e non più in grado di tracciare confini e disegni precisi, a favore della mescolanza disordinata, ma, al contempo, ricca di sfumature e significati. In questo orizzonte caotico, l’umorismo la fa da padrone nel governare proprio quanto vi è di più sfuggente e, a un primo approccio, persino incomprensibile.

Scrive Pirandello:

[...] Il vero nodo della questione è appunto qui: cioè, se l’umorismo debba essere inteso nel senso largo con cui comunemente si vuole intendere, e non in Italia soltanto; o in un senso più stretto e particolare, con peculiari caratteri ben definiti, che è per me il giusto modo d’intenderlo. [...] Inteso in questo senso stretto e per me proprio, se ne troverà [...] in molto minor copia, anzi in pochissime espressioni eccezionali, così presso gli antichi così come presso i moderni di ogni paese, non essendo prerogativa di questa o di quella razza, di questo di quel tempo, ma frutto di una specialissima disposizione naturale, d’un intimo processo psicologico [...], (*ibidem.*:105)

L'umorismo viene dunque investito di un ruolo fondamentale, che va oltre l'artificio formale e linguistico, per farsi materia e soggetto insieme di un procedimento che svela e crea nuove dimensioni epistemologiche, grazie alla messa in atto di due momenti successivi e consequenti: il disimpegno e la presa di distanza. In questo modo, contenuti pesanti e problematici riescono a essere espressi e veicolati al pubblico in maniera leggera, celando, almeno in parte, dietro ai toni all'apparenza scanzonati, l'effettivo dissolvimento della trama narrativa, e rendendo così meglio trasmissibili realtà cui fanno capo concetti negativi e scomodi, quali la privazione, la mancanza, la discordanza, il disaccordo.

Visto in quest'ottica, che lo investe d'importanti responsabilità, cos'è dunque l'umorismo e in che direzione si modifica il livello concettuale passando da questo, alla più diretta comicità, sino alla pungente ironia?

L'umorismo è il “sentimento del contrario” ci dirà Pirandello; ma è anche altro, oltre questa chiara definizione epigrafica, che pure meriterebbe spiegazioni e approfondimenti. Ci sono diversi saggi in cui il siciliano, anche se non direttamente e univocamente, ha scritto e teorizzato di umorismo. In questi si trovano *in nuce* tanti segmenti di quello che nel 1908 diventerà il testo cardine attorno a tale problematica e al quale si vuole giungere, con una sorta di cammino a ritroso, sulla scia delle tracce lasciate dagli altri testi coniati nell'officina teorica pirandelliana; e non solo.

Conclusione

La giara è senza dubbio un capolavoro di umorismo lieto, quasi pittorico della terra siciliana. La novella dai toni tragi-comici ci racconta il contrasto tra lo sciocco massaro Don Lollo’ ed il povero Zi’ Dima.

Al primo che con la sua avidità non sa neppure godere dell'abbondanza dei beni di cui la natura lo colma, si contrappone la figura di Zi’ Dima personaggio umile e costretto a subire le arroganze del padrone.

Ma questa volta il povero la spunta e prova “la gaezza mala dei tristi” lui che triste lo avevano fatto diventare le circostanze suo malgrado. Questo ad ulteriore dimostrazione dell'amara legge di vita per la quale chi è sopra comanda e chi è sotto si danna. In definitiva la novella raffigura la vita di personaggi umili, ma dignitosissimi impegnati nella lotta secolare contro ogni tipo di violenza fisica e morale.

L'atteggiamento umoristico pirandelliano consiste nella caricatura all'estremo sia dei modi di fare che nella fisionomia dei suoi personaggi e nei fenomeni della vita e della quotidianità, questo per dimostrare che non esiste una legge che regolamenta la vita dell'uomo se non quella del caso. Pirandello distrugge così l'immagine di idea di personalità coerente, rivela le passioni e gli impulsi estremi di ogni individuo.

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L'UMORISMO NE LA CARIOLA DI LUIGI PIRANDELLO

Souad KHELOUIATI*

Abstract: This short story presents a man, a lawyer and a professor of law, who wants to tell in a mysterious way a recent mania that torments him. He is a man dedicated to work, he is honest whether in public or in private, he is never distracted. One day, as he returns from Perugia by train, unable to concentrate on his work, he begins to look at the charm of the countryside without seeing anything. It's because he cannot see what's outside, but he sees life only through the mask that the world has imposed on him, he will never be able to live again, he sees the desires that disappeared even before their birth. From there, he begins to find the life he has always lived unbearable. The character does not resign himself to his "mask" but accepts his role with an ironic and humorous attitude. The man, conscious of relativism, will realize that the image he has always had of himself does not really correspond to that which others had of him and he will make every effort to steal this inaccessible side of his ego. He wants to remove the "mask" that has been imposed on him and reacts with despair. The main questions that we'd want to answer to through this article are: What does humour mean according to Pirandello? And how is humour used in the short story 'La Carriola'?

Keywords: Pirandello; Carriola; mask; humour.

Premessa

Un avvocato di successo e richiesto per la sua bravura dopo scopre che sta vivendo una vita che non è per nulla il suo sogno. Scopre di vivere la vita che avrebbe voluto fare un altro, un genitore e chissà chi, ma non è la sua vita; pensa e si dice chi vive la vita secondo il volere degli altri, vive la vita di un altro e quindi non vive. Ormai disperato per aver capito che ha sprecato la sua vita con un atto liberatorio prende un vecchio cane che gironzola sempre per il suo ufficio e fa la 'carriola' lo prende per le zampe anteriori e lo porta a spasso. questo è un gesto metaforico ma di estrema realtà.

In questa frase "*lo pensa ma non è così*" il Pirandello esprime tutte le sue considerazioni sulla teoria dell'uomo e delle maschere. Secondo il Pirandello nessuno si conosce, perché se veramente, qualcuno conoscerebbe se stesso comprenderebbe che ciò che gli succede.

E quando alla fine capisce, quando inizia veramente a conoscersi, comprende che tutto ciò in cui crede "*ho che ha fatto*" è soltanto una cosa morta che è costretto a portarsi con se.

In questo articolo vorremo rispondere a queste domande: Che cosa significa l'umorismo secondo Pirandello? E come viene usato nella novella 'La Carriola' di Luigi Pirandello.

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1. La vita di Pirandello

Luigi Pirandello nasce nel 1867 in un paese chiamato Cavusu (da Pirandello denominato poi Caos) in Sicilia, che a quel tempo faceva parte del comune che oggi si chiama Agrigento. Pirandello proveniva da una famiglia borghese la cui situazione economica era abbastanza buona grazie al commercio e all'estrazione di zolfo. Già al ginnasio Luigi si appassiona alla letteratura e a soli undici anni scrive la sua prima opera, purtroppo andata persa. Studia filologia romanza alle università di Palermo, Roma e Bonn e si laurea nel 1891 con una tesi sulla parlata agrigentina.

Nel 1892 si trasferisce a Roma e lì conosce la moglie Maria Antonietta Portulano che sposa nel 1894. La moglie proveniva da una famiglia ricca e grazie alla sua dote la coppia poteva vivere con una certa agiatezza. Nel 1895 nasce il primo figlio, Stefano, nel 1897 nasce Rosalia e, in fine, nel 1899 Fausto. A causa del crollo improvviso di una delle miniere di zolfo del padre dello scrittore la famiglia entra in una crisi economica. La moglie di Pirandello, già di salute cagionevole, si ammala sempre di più, fino a essere ricoverata in un ospedale psichiatrico.

Comunque, nel 1904 arriva il primo successo di Pirandello con *Il fu Mattia Pascal*. Si tratta, però, solo di un successo di pubblico, il successo tra i critici arriverà, invece, più tardi e grazie alle opere teatrali.

Pirandello politicamente era un nazionalista e purtroppo appoggiò il sistema fascista. Era anche dell'opinione che i siciliani avessero sofferto delle ingiustizie sotto il controllo di diversi governi italiani e probabilmente vide il fascismo come una soluzione a questa situazione. In più, il padre di Pirandello era stato un garibaldino e può anche darsi che ciò gli abbia fatto sopravvalutare i fascisti. Un altro fatto che forse ha importanza è che la nuova compagnia teatrale di Pirandello aveva bisogno del sostegno governativo. Comunque sia, i rapporti tra i fascisti e Pirandello non furono mai però molto stretti poiché la filosofia antitotalitaria presente nelle sue opere male si adattava all'ideologia fascista. La prima guerra mondiale rappresenta un periodo molto duro per Pirandello. Il figlio più grande è ferito e la moglie rinchiusa in un manicomio. Dopo la guerra lo scrittore, quindi, vive unicamente per il lavoro e per trasmettere al pubblico quello che la vita gli ha insegnato. Il successo diventa enorme in tutto il mondo, grazie sia al teatro sia alla prosa, e nel 1934 riceve il premio Nobel.

Pirandello, nel 1936, si ammala di polmonite durante le riprese di un film tratto da *Il fu Mattia Pascal*, e questa malattia lo porterà alla tomba. Il funerale è messo in scena da Pirandello stesso. Il grande Luigi Pirandello, avvolto in un lenzuolo bianco, è portato sul carro dei poveri. Il corpo bruciato e le ceneri furono sparse per il suo paese natale, "Caos".

2. L'umorismo pirandelliano

Il riso tutte le volte "non ci viene alle labbra" come dice Pirandello (1992: 120), c'è qualcosa che lo trattiene. Ma che cos'è l'umorismo secondo Pirandello? Per analizzare l'opera pirandelliana è innanzitutto importante capire il concetto di umorismo, perché questo diventa lo strumento con cui rappresentare, nella narrativa o sulla scena teatrale vicende e personaggi. Secondo, Luigi Pirandello nel suo saggio, "L'umorismo" (1908), La parola 'umore' "derivò a noi naturalmente dal latino e col senso materiale che essa aveva di corpo fluido, liquore, umidità o vapore, e col senso anche di fantasia capriccio o vigore." Luigi Pirandello, per la prima volta, parla di **umorismo** in senso esplicito, facendo una differenza con il comico. Il comico non è

altro che l'avvertimento del contrario, che nasce dal contrasto tra l'apparenza e la realtà e che genera la risata, emblema di una situazione contraria a quella che dovrebbe essere normalmente. Si tratta, però, di una risata superficiale, che non porta subito alla riflessione. L'umorismo è dunque, come qualcosa che faccia ridere e contrappone l'ironia verbale, nella quale la contraddizione è solo verbale e apparente, all'umorismo, nel quale invece essa la contraddizione è essenziale. Luigi Pirandello considera l'umorismo come un sentimento del contrario. È generato dalla riflessione, dall'accettazione di una triste realtà e dal contrasto tra apparenza e realtà, maschere e vera personalità. E se prima di fronte all'immagine della vecchia signora il genere umano sghignazza in una grossolana risata, adesso la riflessione genera un sentimento di compassione: colei che cerca di nascondere il peso dei suoi anni dietro abiti eleganti e fascino spietato, fa pena all'animo umano che, riflettendo, percepisce la sua debolezza, la paura di invecchiare, la fragilità umana. (Pirandello, 1908).

L'autore non lascia da parte la componente umoristica nei suoi celebri romanzi: la maggior parte dei suoi scritti, compresi quelli teatrali, ruotano tutti intorno al perno del sentimento del contrario e alla maschera che ogni soggetto umano decide di indossare nella società in cui opera quotidianamente.

Dunque, ha costruito un edificio pirandelliano solo per privarlo delle sue strutture portanti, per minarlo dai fondamenti, per farlo sbriciolare con un preciso disegno di corrosione. Nell'organismo che va tratteggiando inserisce il germe della malattia che inesorabilmente lo distruggerà. Visione naturalistica e visione umoristica sono, infatti, perfettamente contrapposte: se la prima si fonda su una consistente realtà esterna da ritrarre, la seconda invece adotta un punto di vista doppio, presentando contemporaneamente una cosa e la sua ombra, i pieni e i vuoti.

Quello che esamineremo in questo lavoro è, pertanto, l'umorismo tragico di Luigi

Pirandello attraverso la novella la 'Carriola'. Questa novella ci aiuterà a comprendere a meglio come Pirandello usa l'umorismo nella sua opera. La scelta della novella non è casuale perché, Pirandello tiene in modo particolare alle sue novelle ed è proprio in loro che ha sviluppato fino in fondo i temi essenziali dell'esistenza umana (Pirandello 1970:copertina). La domanda principale a cui si cercherà di dare una risposta sarà quindi:

Come è usato l'umorismo in questa novella di Pirandello?

3. Analisi della novella *La Carriola* di Pirandello

3.1 Riassunto di 'La Carriola' di Luigi Pirandello

La Carriola è una novella di Luigi Pirandello facente parte della raccolta Novelle per un anno, pubblicato nel 1917. La trama ha come protagonista un famoso avvocato, chiuso e ignaro nella sua prigione della forma di eremita professionista che la società gli impone. Un giorno, ritornando da un viaggio di lavoro, mentre in treno studia alcune pratiche, ad un certo punto, riscontrando difficoltà nella lettura, alza lo sguardo verso il finestrino e viene attratto dalla dolcezza della campagna. Si accorge che non è lui che guarda, ma il suo io più profondo, libero e vero, e che avverte dunque il brulichio di una vita che avrebbe voluto vivere, ma che non ha vissuto. Come in Cialula scopre la luna, anche qui la natura richiama l'uomo ad una vita più libera, fresca e genuina. Giunto quasi a destinazione, l'avvocato si sveglia, e sente amaramente la frattura tra la vita sognata e felice e la realtà della forma che lo rinchiede nella sua

prigione. Quando sul pianerottolo di casa legge, inciso sulla targa di ottone, il suo nome costellato da titoli accademici e professionali, sente di nuovo la frattura tra l'io felice del suo sogno e la maschera che è costretto a portare, portandosi il peso degli obblighi familiari, professionali, sociali. Viene preso allora dalla voglia di abbandonare tutto e iniziare una nuova vita: tuttavia, il pensiero dei figli lo obbliga a ritornare nella sua forma, e quindi rientra a casa conducendo la solita vita. Da quel giorno la vita dell'uomo comincia a cambiare, egli vive la pena del vedersi vivere, come se in lui esistessero due personalità: quella del vecchio io, cioè l'avvocato di successo, insieme a tutti i doveri e alla forma imposta dalla società, e quella del nuovo io, scoperto di recente, che si ribella al vecchio. Non potendosi più liberare della forma in cui vive, si vendica di essa compiendo lo stesso atto, ogni giorno, nella massima segretezza. Appena ha un minuto libero, infatti, l'uomo si chiude a chiave nello studio, e preso da una forte voluttà "corre alla cagnetta ce dorme sul tappeto: piano, con garbo, le prende le due zampine di dietro e le fa fare la carriola: le fa muovere non più di otto o dieci passi, con le sole zampette davanti, reggendola per quelle di dietro".

3.2. L'umorismo in *La Carriola di Pirandello*

Per quanto possa sembrare una novella ironica, in realtà ci troviamo di fronte a un umorismo amaro. Il narratore è assolutamente serio quando parla della sua mania e della sua angoscia e l'umorismo scaturisce dall'interpretazione del lettore, che capisce il divario esistente fra l'uomo che il protagonista è l'uomo che vorrebbe essere, ma non sarà.

"Chi vive quando vive non si vede, vive"

questa frase determina la consapevolezza dell'autore che tutta la sua vita precedente; è stata vissuta sì ma senza un giudizio. Infatti secondo il Pirandello l'uomo quando vive non riesce a vedere ciò che sta facendo cosa sta succedendo, vive senza capire che quegli obiettivi che gli sono stati preposti alla fine non gioveranno a lui ma solo a chi glielo ha imposto.

Nella mente turbata del protagonista, quest'ultimo atto è un modo per evadere dai doveri della forma in cui è costretto a vivere, una maniera per vendicarsi della società che gli impone di essere quello che in realtà non vorrebbe. La carriola svolge il motivo del relativismo psicologico in senso verticale, del contrasto tra la mutabilità del nostro io e la rigidità della forma. Si sviluppa poi il tema della perenne insoddisfazione dello spirito umano, che aspira ad un mondo diverso, libero dalle ipocrisie, dagli schemi del conformismo e affermare così l'autenticità dell'essere.

Infatti, il personaggio pirandelliano non è riconoscibile su canoni morali e comportamentali o su posizioni sociali gerarchicamente definite; non siamo più di fronte ai "caratteri" e ai "tipi" della letteratura teatrale e romanzesca tradizionale. Nell'appendice polemica dell'edizione del 1921, *Avvertenza sugli scrupoli della fantasia*, Pirandello risponde a chi taccia di inverosimiglianza il suo personaggio, difendendone la natura autentica e credibile:

Credo che non mi resti che congratularmi con la mia fantasia se, con tutti i suoi scrupoli, ha fatto apparir come difetti reali, quelli ch'eran voluti da lei: difetti di quella fitizia costruzione che i personaggi stessi hanno messo su di sé e della loro vita, o che altri ha messo su per loro: i difetti insomma della maschera finché non si scopre nuda.

I termini “maschera” e “nuda”, messi assieme, danno vita alla figura retorica dell’impossibilità, l’*adynaton*, corrispondente però all’inconciliabile condizione e all’irrisolta conflittualità del personaggio pirandelliano. Il denudamento della maschera trasforma il simulacro sociale dell’individualità in un volto che, pur riconoscendosi, continua ad essere deformato nello specchio degli altri. Ed è proprio questa tensione tra l’apparire e l’essere a costituire il primo nucleo delle molte drammaturgie del personaggio.

Nella Carriola ritroviamo queste sequenze: l’atto compiuto in segreto dall’uomo, sequenza narrativa dove l’uomo narra appunto il gesto che si concede; descrizione dell’uomo, sequenza descrittiva che non descrive l’uomo fisicamente, ma ci fa capire che posto ha all’interno della società; il timore nel compiere l’atto, sequenza espressiva dove viene riportato il timore dell’uomo; il ritorno a casa, sequenza espressiva dove l’uomo vede in modo sfocato una vita diversa dalla sua, forse più bella da vivere; lo sdoppiamento, sequenza riflessiva dove l’uomo fa capire che sta vivendo una vita voluta non da lui, ma dalla società; la vita di molti uomini, sequenza descrittiva dove vengono spiegati gli stati d’animo di molti uomini; l’atto segreto dell’uomo, sequenza narrativo-espressiva.

La novella parla di un avvocato che vive una vita che non è sua, che non ha voluto lui, ma la società. Per questo l’uomo si lascia dei momenti da solo con la sua cagnetta cui fa fare la carriola. L’ordine degli eventi della novella non corrisponde completamente con quello dell’intreccio perché è presente una grandissima analessi che è il nucleo essenziale del racconto. La funzione che mette in moto il movimento narrativo è lo sdoppiamento dell’uomo che riesce a vedere la sua pseudo vita, diversa da quella che avrebbe voluto avere. Il momento di massima tensione si trova nel gesto che compie l’uomo con la sua cagnetta. Le vicende sono narrate in un tempo storico indeterminato, dato che non sono presenti marche temporali. La durata delle vicende, secondo l’intero brano è di quindici giorni, ma, secondo l’analessi, è di circa mezza giornata. Il movimento narrativo predominante in assoluto è la pausa, usata sia per descrivere i personaggi (l’uomo e la cagnetta) sia per esprimere gli articolati pensieri dell’uomo. Questo movimento narrativo conferisce all’intera novella un ritmo molto lento. Le vicende sono ambientate in luoghi immaginari, cioè non riconoscibili a livello topografico o storico, e sono tutti degli ambienti interni: il treno, la macchina e lo studio. Di questi tre ambienti, il più importante per la comprensione della novella è l’ultimo, infatti quello è l’unico luogo dove l’uomo può “togliersi la maschera” datagli dalla società per essere un attimo se stesso. La descrizione degli ambienti è completamente assente. I personaggi principali sono i protagonisti delle vicende: l’uomo e la cagnetta. Dell’uomo abbiamo un autoritratto con una presentazione diretta, fatta dall’uomo. Tutte e due i personaggi sono dinamici: l’uomo, vedendo la sua vita, si accorge che questa non è la vita che ha voluto lui, ma quella che ha voluto la società e per questo ha molto rancore; la cagnetta, da giovane, giocava con i bambini e, ormai vecchia, preferisce dormire senza essere disturbata nello studio dell’uomo.

Difatti, la fondamentale tematica nella Carriola è la ‘scomposizione’ umoristica della vita, da intendersi come una “costruzione illusoria continua” con le sue finzioni, le sue illusioni e le sue maschere.

Oggi siamo e domani no

Ci dice Pirandello. E l’uomo?

Sempre mascherato, “senza volerlo, senza saperlo, di quella tal cosa ch’egli in buon fede si figura di essere: bello, buono, grazioso, generoso, infelice ecc. ecc. E questo fa tanto ridere a pensarci” (Pirandello, 1908: 214)

E ciò che Pirandello fa dire ad Adriano Meis dal signor Anselmo Paleari (*Il fu Mattia Pascal*, cap. XIII, *Il lanternino*), che lo ritroviamo qui, in ‘Umorismo’ (Pirandello, 1908: 216)

All'uomo, invece, nascendo è toccato questo triste privilegio di sentirsi vivere, con la bella illusione che ne risulta: di prendere cioè come una realtà fuori di sé questo suo interno sentimento della vita, mutabile e vario”. È così che le voci opposte e inconciliabili, del pensiero e dell'emozione si fondono nell'immagine del “triste privilegio” che dà voce all'umoristico uomo “fuori di chiave”.

Secondo il pensiero pirandelliano, è possibile che due affermazioni contrarie siano unite non in un rapporto dialettico che consentirebbe di superarle giungendo ad una sintesi, bensì in una paradossale compresenza. Solo così possiamo comprendere l'ambivalenza relativistica dell'umorismo pirandelliano, solo così è possibile capire come il nulla possa, al contempo, essere tutto; nulla per il pensiero cosciente, tutto per il sentire inconscio.

“Ma nessuno può fare che il fatto sia come non fatto”
Questa frase; fa comprendere all'avvocato che non può rinnegare il passato anche se quel passato non è stato vissuto da lui in prima persona; perché a lui sono legati molte persone; le quali senza il suo aiuto “si sentirebbero persi”; infatti il mondo dell'avvocato è come un rete protettiva; levando anche un solo pezzo gli altri si scioglierebbero a sua volta, fino a cedere; ed è per questo che nessun può rinnegare il suo passato senza provocare ingenti danni a se e a chi gli sta accanto

La riflessione, secondo Pirandello, non si nasconde mai, né potrebbe essere mascherata o eliminata del tutto dalla volontà o dalla coscienza di un personaggio, come potrebbe succedere con un sentimento; non è come lo specchio, davanti al quale l'uomo si rimira, ma si pone davanti a ciascuno come un giudice, analizzando vicende e personaggi, con obiettività e imparzialità, scomponendo l'immagine di tutte le cose, le vicende e i personaggi stesi nelle loro componenti: da questa scomposizione nasce quello che Pirandello chiama avvertimento del contrario.

È da sottolineare, infine, che mentre tutti possono percepire l'aspetto comico in quanto ognuno può avvertire che una cosa avvenga o che un personaggio si comporti in modo contrario a ciò che tutti ritengono normale, il drammatico-umoristico viene capito e sentito solo da coloro che usano la riflessione, e comunque non dalla massa in quanto questa segue regole generali accettate supinamente e non i singoli individuali bisogni; per Pirandello ciascuno ha un proprio modo di attualizzare la riflessione, perché i bisogni personali sono assolutamente individuali.

Per questo motivo, la situazione dell'avvocato nella novella ‘La Carriola’ è comica per la massa che ride delle stramberie del personaggio, che riscopre la vita dopo anni in cui è vissuto, ubbidiente e sottomesso, e drammatica per Pirandello che vede nella reazione dell'avvocato e nelle sue ‘stravaganti’ l'improvvisa ribellione alla forma che uccide la vita, alla maschera imposta dagli altri e dal destino, e infine alla alienazione nella quale lo costringono le norme e le forme della società, per cui il nuovo modo di essere dell'avvocato non può che apparire naturale.

Conclusione

Per Pirandello le cause, nella vita, non sono mai così logiche come lo possono essere nell'opera narrativa o teatrale, in cui tutto è, in fondo, congegnato, combinato,

ordinato ai fini che lo scrittore si è proposto, anche se sembra in alcuni casi che il procedimento sia libero e casuale. Perciò nell'umorismo non possiamo parlare di coerenza, perché in ogni personaggio ci sono tante anime in lotta fra loro, che cercano di afferrare la realtà: l'anima istintiva, l'anima morale, l'anima affettiva, l'anima sociale, e i nostri atti prendono una forma, l'avvocato assume una maschera, la sua coscienza si atteggia a seconda che domini questa o quella, a seconda del momento; per questo l'avvocato ha ritenuto valida la sua determinata interpretazione della realtà o dei suoi atti e mai può essere totalmente d'accordo con l'interpretazione degli altri, in quanto la realtà e il nostro essere interiore non si manifestano mai del tutto interi, ma ora in un modo ora in un altro, come volgono i casi della vita. Pirandello guarda dentro la vicenda ed i personaggi, ed agisce come il bambino che rompe il giocattolo per vedere come è fatto dentro. Nell'umorismo, quindi, distingue un aspetto comico che deriva dall'avvertimento del contrario e un aspetto umoristico o drammatico che deriva dal sentimento del contrario; il primo è esterno all'uomo e facilmente visibile, per cui ciascuno è capace di coglierlo; il secondo è invece interno all'uomo, ma non può essere colto se non attraverso la riflessione.

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MEANS OF REALIZATION CONVERSATIONAL HUMOUR IN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: The paper will discuss the means of realization of conventional humour in English, from morphological constructions and vocabulary to anecdotes. The paper is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the most important theories of humour in the English language, such as Koestler's Art of Creation, Raskin's script-based theory of humour, the general theory of verbal humour, Attaro's model of jokes and model of humour. The second part analyses the means of realizing conversational humour, the most important being lexemes and phrasemes, teasing, self-humour, anecdotes. The main objective of this paper is to discuss some of the semantic and pragmatic characteristics of conversational humour which cannot be categorized as jokes.

Keywords: conversational humour; humour theories; humour realization.

Introduction

Humour has been a preoccupation for a long time. Several theoretical models have been proposed in order to explain the function of humour in language. These theories have taken into account the functions of humour which can be noticed especially in conversations. Speakers use humour socially or anti-socially, to mock or exclude the targets of the humour. The humour theories analyse how humour is constructed and how it is used in conversations, but also how the people it addresses to cope with it.

In the first part of our paper we are going to present the most important theories of three of the most important researchers in the field: Arthur Koestler, Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo. The Second part focuses on the means of realization of conversational humour, such as

I. Theories of humour in the English language

The theories of humour are generally divided into three branches:

(i) theories of incongruity or contradiction which are mostly cognitive, namely they are based on some objective characteristics of a humorous situation or text. Every such act involves two frames of reference which have a common part which can allow us to shift from one to another.

(ii) theories of superiority or criticism or hostility which emphasize the negative attitude of the speaker that uses the humour against the person he speaks. Generally this type of humour has a political, gender or ethnic character.

(iii) theories of release or relaxation. The most important representative is the German psycho-analyst Sigmund Freud who is especially concerned of the recipients of humour, of the effects the humour has on them. For Freud, humour represents a substitution mechanism which transforms aggressive impulses into normal ones.

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Most of these theories are mixed theories that prove the fact that humour is a large phenomenon which cannot be encapsulated into only one theory.

The most relevant humour theories are the following:

(i) Arthur Koestler's theory

This theory which was discussed in his book *The Art of Creation* (1964) is one of the first theories regarding the humour. According to him, humour, along with discovery and art, is part of creativity. In case of humour, it means a interference between two frames of reference: worlds of discourse, namely codes. The important aspect of his theory is represented by the idea of bisociation which regards the importance of projections in people's minds.

(ii) Victor Raskin's script-based semantic theory of humour.

His most important contribution to the theory of humor is represented by his book entitled *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*, which may be analysed as the weightiest contribution to the incongruity theory of humour. The main ideas of the book are:

a. The hypothesis is:

“A text can be characterised as a single-joke-carrying text if both of the conditions are satisfied. (i) The text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts. (ii) The two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite in a special sense. The two scripts with which the text is compatible are said to overlap fully or in part on this text”. (Raskin: 1985: 99)

b. A main idea pointed out in the book is that referring to the explanation of the relationships of the scripts involved, namely ‘script overlap’ and ‘script opposition’. Raskin gives examples of semantic common parts which fit both scripts and others which fit only one script and, under certain conditions, also the other script. Certain conditions concern scripts with their linguistic representations, such as: “Time is money”, “Death is going to a final destination”.

(iii) The general theory of verbal humour

It was drawn up by both Raskin and Attardo in the article entitled “Script theory revis(it)ed: joke similarity and joke representation model”. The article has as a purpose the integration of Raskin's model into the five-level representation of jokes imagined by Attardo. Krikmann notices that, as a result, they proposed a six-level hierarchical representation model of verbal jokes.

(iv) Isotopy-disjunction model of jokes

It was set up by Attardo in his *Linguistic Theories of Humour* (1994) who was concerned with developing a theory of linear organization of jokes, focusing on the possibility of translating jokes fro one language into another, especially into Italian. He concludes that referential jokes can be generally translated while verbal jokes can be translated only in some cases.

II. Means of realizing conversational humour

Humour has been analysed from different perspectives: philosophical, sociological, anthropological and linguistic. Regarding the linguistic humour, the researchers have been studied its semantics, cognitive, sociolinguistic and pragmatic features. Linguists have been interested in verbal humour which is the humour produced by means of language or text. A special type of verbal humour is represented by conversational humour. Conversational humour can be expressed from single words (lexemes), phrasemes, whole sentences and even whole sentences in spoken discourses. Dynel (2009: 3) considers that conversational humour is “an umbrella term for various

verbal chunks created spontaneously or repeated verbatim for the sake of amusing the recipient, either directly contributing to the semantic content of the ongoing conversation or diverting its flow into a humorous mode/ frame/ key, in which speakers need not genuinely mean what their humorous verbalizations convey”

We are going to analyse the most frequent means of expressing conversational humour:

(i) Lexemes and Phrasemes

They are the shortest humorous pieces of texts that are borrowed from other languages. The humorous potential of these lexemes and phrasemes is represented by their juxtapositions (incongruity) of their constituents and their new semantic meaning. Although used in every-day language, they can't be looked for in dictionaries as lexical items and, as a result, they are considered to be exceptional.

According to Dynel, there are several processes that lead to the formation of lexemes:

- derivation (adding prefixes and suffixes)
e.g. *a kitchennaut* (a person working in a kitchen)
- compounding and combining words
e.g. *a whistle number* (an impressive number)
a Monday-morning idea (a bad idea that occurs to someone after a weekend spent partying)
- blending (combining parts of words)
e.g. *a sexcapade* (a sexual escapade)
a alcoholiday (a holiday with alcohol)
- acronyms
e.g. *DNA* – National Association of Dyslexics (an acronym that it is usually used with another meaning)

Phrasems are the constructions which have a humorous and surprising semantic character due to unexpected juxtapositions of their subordinate elements:

- e.g. *kick the bucket* (someone died from natural causes)
go ballistic (suddenly become very angry)

There is also a special type of phrasemes whose conventional meaning is replaced by another meaning, such as *donors of organs* meaning ‘persons on motorcycles on highways’, *a geriatric ward*, meaning ‘elderly people spending time together’.

(ii) Teasing

Teasing is a particular form of humour, discharging several pragmatic functions, such as mock challenges, threats, imitation. Teasing does not express the truth, and it is generally very appreciated by the participants to the dialogue. There are linguists (Drew, 1987, Boxer & Cortes-Conde, 1997) who believe that teasing is aggressive, but we believe that there is no degree of aggression in this type of humour which is more a speaker-oriented humour.

- e.g. *Female: You are a thief and a liar.*
 Male: I only lied about being a thief. I don't do that anymore.
 Female: Steal?
 Male: Lie.

(iii) Self-humour

It is a form of self-teasing, the speaker directs his humour towards himself. This type of humour is used when admitting a mistake, proving the speaker's intelligence to make fun of himself.

e.g. *My brain must be on the standby mode.*

(iv) Anecdotes

Anecdotes are pieces of discourse with the help of which the speaker talks about his/ her own life experiences or about other people's experiences. In most cases, the speaker presents an event from other people's life as a personal one. Anecdotes use a colourful language, a lot of lexemes and phrasemes mixed with non-verbal communication (body language, the tone of voice) which emphasize the humorous effect. Anecdotes usually refer to situations which can hardly be considered funny, which are sometimes quite dramatic. Nevertheless, the addressee responds to them in a humorous manner.

e.g. (i) *Oh, I would never dream of assuming I know all Hogwarts' secrets, Igor. Only this morning, for instance, I took a wrong turn on the way to the bathroom and found myself in a beautifully proportioned room I had never seen before, containing a really rather magnificent collection of chamber pots. When I went back to investigate more closely, I discovered that the room had vanished.* (Dumbledore to a visiting headmaster in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* by J.K. Rowling)

(ii) *I like talking to myself. It is one of my greatest pleasures. I often have long conversations all by myself, and I am so clever sometimes I don't understand a single word of what I am saying.* (The Rocket from *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* by Oscar Wilde)

Conclusions

In this paper we have discussed several types of realization of verbal humour that are representative for the general semantic and pragmatic characteristics of humour and which cannot be included in the category of jokes, namely lexemes and phrasemes, teasing, self-humour and anecdotes. We noticed that these categories can be combined in certain cases. In our analyses we have taken into account the most important theories about humour that were briefly presented in the first part of the paper.

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HUMOUR AND IRONY, AND INVOLUNTARY HUMOUR – GENERATED BY NEOLOGISMS, ESPECIALLY AS PART OF ENGLISH-TO-ROMANIAN WORD BORROWING

Constantin MANEA*

***Abstract.** The aim of the paper is to give an illustrative and typological picture of the way neologisms can be (and are actually) used in Romanian to generate humor and irony. When misuse and distortion of word usage (mainly through 'barbarisms') occur, involuntary humour is likely to step in. In this context, linguistic standardization could be seen as a (cultural) antidote to such cases of linguistic impropiety and sheer howlers.*

Keywords: neologism; humour; irony; Anglicism.

1. Introduction

It would be a sheer platitude or an utter cliché to say that the predominantly neologistic trend in vocabulary has long been used to humorous or satirical purposes, as well. On the other hand, it is clearly noticeable that the more recent stratum of the lexicon tends to be stylistically opposed to the older words, forming some sort of tension, or even a (bizarre) competition. In a paper that we published four years ago (*I. L. Caragiale – ca lingvist autentic: „lecții” pentru prezent și pentru viitor*), we dealt with the main issues occurring in Caragale’s writing with respect to the (then) recent loanwords. We noticed that, apart from censuring the rather numerous solecisms noticeable in the speech of most Romanians, most of which belonged to the neologistic word stock – as uneducated variants (e.g. *sezisat, Ampotrofagu, bampir, cioclopedic, ezercit, endependent, lăcrămație, maneră, marinel, mariner, marinal, nifilist, plebicist, proprietar, renumerație, șifonel, sufragiu, teribel, triveal, vitrion*, etc.), Caragiale tackled the various words smacking of affectation and jargon – be they (a) mistakenly calqued forms, e.g. “*A se slăbi, Mitică!*”, (b) pseudo-etymological forms, which mimicked the airs of educated speech that the would-be newspapermen, diplomats, educationalists or officials of the time would put on, e.g. *icre moiu*, “*o voiū îndeplini*”, “*are canal și tramvaiu*”; *didul, magadie*, “*sus disul*”; “*nu cedeadă*”, “*d-sa contesteadă*”; “*refudă*”, “*caudându-i lediuni*”, “*providoriu*”, “*fiind de sedon*”, “*câțiva serginți și oficiari (...)* cu greu au sbutit să năbușească sinistrul”, (c) the fake Europeanized jargon (or argot) of the *nouveaux riches*, or the recent “upper crust” of the time, a ludicrous mixture of recent French loans and other almost meaningless xenisms, e.g. “*parol, dumnevoastră atî luat casa!*”, “*d-șoara Matilda dice că sametegal*”, “*o femeie de aşa înaltă extracțiune trebuie să aibă un suivez-moi*”, “*faci de mauvaises plaisanteries*”, or (d) a variegated body of pseudo-learned terms making up a genuine gobbledegook or gibberish that can convey the sense of an immense, energetic, continual verbosity-driven drivel, paradoxically acting in place of the real humanity that should have populated the nation, e.g. “*umanitatea suferindă*”, “*bravii convivi*”, “*cupa plină de delicii*”, “*parc-am fi la un atac de tiraliori*”, “*lumina petroleului*”, “*infatigabilă silfidă*”, “*O enormă afluență de tot ce Târgul Mare are mai distins*”, “*tot ce are Capitala mai distins ca profesioni libere*”,

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“*Pardon, mașer, v-am călcat!*”, “E un ger afară, *mașer*, că nu-ți poți face o idee...”, “un farmec *indicibil*”, “binevoiți a dispoza ca să se satisfacă cât mai urgent nevoieile școalei”, “școala ce cu onoare o dirijați”, “acele *dulci modulațiuni*”, “decât *crudele-i lecțiuni de civism*”, “*amant al libertății*”, “să rămâie o pată *neștearsă și indelebilă* asupra...” (the redundancy here is caricatured by purposeful exaggeration), “Bucureștii sunt *un mic Paris*”, “*Belgia Orientului*”, “*Madame Esméralde Piscopesco*”, “*hôtel Piscopesco*” etc. As a matter of fact, I. L. Caragiale seems to have abhorred abstractions (when the speaker endeavours to attain stylistic and literary value from mere linguistic form or intention), mainly in the broader context of his – not only personal – crusade against the so-called “groundless forms”, which utterly undermined the nation’s very well-being, not only its intellectual and ethic status.

Most literary critics and linguists have observed that Caragiale’s characters try to make up for their scarce, faulty education by talking to excess, and one of the strata of vocabulary they are irresistibly attracted to is the neologistic word stock. Since the then Romania was an up-and-coming world, not unlike a crucible or a melting pot, their speech was equally effervescent, and typically very expressive, e.g. “*o stric (...) pardon la ficsonomia obrazului*”, “*onoarea mea nereperată*”, “*romanse cu individ infam localitate*”, “*capatat bună lecție moralitate* în public”, “*acest secol lumină*”, “*Mare devenă*”, “*aplicat agresorului palme*”, “*o voiu îndeplini cu zel și activitate*”, “*prin care le cere pardon* de durerea ce le o cauzează”, “*conjură* încă o dată pe *dezolata mama*”, “*Luxul și devergondajul* atâtore femei de această tristă speță”, “*o andaluză absolut inconcurabilă, brillantă și fermecătoare*”, etc. Of course, the most massive group in that admixture of new words was represented by the French loans, e.g. *amploiat, guichet, ridicul, tren de coincidență* (cf. Fr. *train de correspondance* – instead of “(tren de) legătură”); “*linii de tramways*”, etc. What Caragiale did not agree with, and consequently bitterly criticized, was sheer neologistic exaggeration, formed by those loans that were violently connotative (assuming an educated or cosmopolitan air), and/or pointless (or else *otiose*), e.g. “*redjează Sentinela Ordinii*”, “*damele [fac] bezele călduroase*”, “*n-are niciodată o politică vizavi de mușterii*”, “*zice dezolată cucoana*”, “*tânără amăgită, delăsată, abandonată*”, “*o polemică (...) între cele două ebdomadare locale*”, “*făcând două gropițe asasine* în obrajii”, “*care are antipriză* de flașnete în Popa Tatu”, “*L-a suplimatără*”; *avucat, particoler, un santim, bulivar(d), capabelă, teribelă, artiștii, madipolon, enteres, gardirop*, etc. Last but not least, we had to notice that a remarkable percentage of the neologisms Caragiale used (ironically or humorously) were derived by *calque* (or *loan translation*), e.g. “*Zgomote despre un grav incident diplomatic*” (cf. Fr. *rumeurs*), “*cea mai fină pricepere a cutelor* sufletului omenesc” (cf. Fr. *les replis*), “*Doamna merge departe?*”, “*madam Piscopesco se consideră* în oglindă”, “*o poză (...) pe care o trece amicilor*”, “*Când mă disperasem și porneam să mă întorc*”, “*transportându-ne* în strada Graților”, “*asa încât tremurăm de viața noastră și a elevelor*”, “*cu o clipire fieroasă*” (cf. Fr. *billeux*), “*am dat parola de onoare* să (...)", “*înaintează cu pasul sigur*”, “*slăbuță și de un temperament nervos*”, “*privire plină de cel mai înalt dispreț*”, “*el este fiul operelor sale*”, “*strâns uniti față cu primejdia economică*”, “*și în considerația titlurilor dv.*”, “*s-a pronunțat cu vociferări la adresa guvernului*”, “*nu mănâncă toată ziua* în vederea corsetului”, “*suntem în pozițiiune a da, din același izvor autorizat, amănunte asupra (...)*”, “*una din acele pasiuni care decid de viața unei femei*”, “*numai o confuzie fără plan nici ordine*”, etc.

1.1. Humour and involuntary humour. In some cases, the very expressiveness of the neologistic terms – at least, when one compares them to the native word stock – has

been so remarkable as to generate stylistic shades that can be subordinated to the concept of humour and/or irony. Sometimes, when it came to the extreme point of usage, various “educated”, “knowledgeable” or “expert” users of Romanian became aware of the comparative impropriety of such or such neologistic words, neologistic affectation or neologistic exaggeration, and employed the tool of irony and humor as an *instrument* of criticism (and satire) of, and setting right the situations in question (an attitude that is all the more valuable in the globalized, generally hyper-neologistic, society that we live in). There are numerous names of Romanian literary persons who engaged – or merely dabbled – in dedicated anti-neological satires (or else, propriety pleas), e.g. Alecsandri, Hasdeu, Hogaș, Caragiale, Brăescu, Călinescu, etc. We believe that the socio-linguistic implications of such cultural enterprises are absolutely obvious. At best (or at the very top), the result is *metalinguistic humour*... However, when we refer to involuntary humour, we merely tackle the millennium-old human nature, thirsting for novelty, yet naturally and inescapably limited.

To give an example, we think everybody would agree that, in commercial activities (and especially in commercial advertising), the quality level of the products is reversely proportionate to the level and abundance of the neologisms used (typically, “distinguished” or “stylish”, and of course completely underserved attributes). For instance, I personally can remember that, in the mid-nineteen-eighties, at the very height of the (economic) and food crisis in the country, there were market stall notices reading *mălai cremogen, ouă de consum* or *margarină tartinabilă*.

2. A tentative typology

Here is a tentative typology of the broader pheonomenon hinted at above:

2.1. The first level (when neological words are used as “learned” or “cultural” items, which also adds a falsely academic or doctor-like air, which is actually circumscribed by, or implicatory of, irony), e.g. “dacă ieși în băscălie vreo caricatură istorică din *vulgata naționalistă* (adică programa școlară în ultimul secol), e ură de neam; dacă contrazici vreun episcop *sfertodox*, e ură *sexomarxistă* de Dumnezeu”.

2.2. The second level (when neological words acquire various personal nuances in use, usually related to irony), e.g. “*Ofensajii de serviciu din comentariatul românesc* au găsit un nou cal de bătaie: “discursul urii”; *Legumiada* (cf. Liviu Dragnea’s so-called campaign for growing our own Romanian tomatoes); *Penaliada* (the term was coined by the same character); “Luminile și umbrele *statului vertical*” (a TV statement by T. Coldea; ironically hinting at the rather frequent phrase “statul paralel”); “O doamnă criticeasă a descoperit escrocheria” (D. R. Popescu ironically said in an interview for *România literară*, 8 Sept. 2017 – with evident supperadded gender implications).

2.3. The third level (when the neologistic word can be said to have certain creative values, or even expressively literary nuances), e.g. “democrație torentială” (coined by D. Pătraru). Rather infrequently, one can encounter notable stylistic feats, mainly in materials generated by the mass media; the humour thus created is arguably high-quality, more often than not involving punning and/or ad-hoc lexical creativeness, by ironically using quotation marks or acronymy, pseudo-etymologization, etc. – e.g. “Drumul spre *prenoriat* (1) Am vrut să încep cu “antreprenoriat”, dar m-am răzgândit în timp ce scriam. Să zic de ce. Cuvântul “antreprenoriat”, neologism la noi în dicționar, provine din cuvântul francez “entrepreneur”. În această limbă a omletei cu brânză, “entreprendre” înseamnă “a întreprinde”, pentru că vine de la “întreprindere”. Însă

“entre” este preluat din latină și semnifică “între”, iar “prendre” înseamnă “a face”. Practic, *facem o chestie între două părți*. Până să ajungem să facem o chestie în două părți, ar trebui să ne gândim *ab initio* (cuvânt pompos pentru început) la ce am vrea să facem și, mai ales, de ce să o facem. De ce să alegi să o iezi pe barba ta? 1. E *cool*. (...) A fi antreprenor a ajuns sinonim pentru “*coolness*”. Ești *cool* dacă ești antreprenor, ești de porc dacă ești angajat. (...) ca să fii *in trend*, trebuie să fii *entrepreneur* (...) rădăcinile ar trebui să fie un pic mai bine ancorate (*btw, citește și aici ce se întâmplă dacă vrei să pleci de la locul de muncă și ai preaviz*). (...) am prins și perioada când era “super-mega-uber-cool” să fii angajat la o “*multi-inter-hyper-națională / transnațională / internațională / galactică*” companie, pentru că aşa creșteai în ochii oamenilor. Iar dacă aruncai pe masă o carte de vizită “embosată” cu inițialele companiei și o poziție de “front desk officer” (*aka receptioner/primitoare de oameni/făcut de cafele*), cădeau fetele pe spate. Spread the love, b-a-b-e-s. Acum e *cool* să fii “*managing partner / partner / senior partner / deputy*” – la tine acasă ce-i drept. (...) aş zice că s-ar putea pune la un moment dat problema unei duble personalități și a autoflagelării, dar *excedem* discuțiilor. (...) Cred că am câte o idee care va schimba/revoluționa/impacta/îmi va aduce o gârlă de bani în fiecare minut” (net).

As a matter of fact, using *abbreviations* and *acronymy* in order to generate humour and irony has been a good source of inspiration and also a rather prolific mechanism of creation with Caragiale, too, e.g. *S.P.M.D.R.* (“Societatea Protectoare a Muzelor Daco-Române”); and, in later times, with other classical, universally recognized, writers of humourous and satirical fiction such as Ilf and Petrov (e.g. *Centropup*).

One can safely state that occasional, usually very apt, para-literary neological (and pseudo-neological, or sometimes pseudo-etymological) lexical coinages – which are, in fact, clever jocular and humorous constructs – have been quite frequent, even abundant of late, e.g. *trivă* (“mai mult decât divă”), “agent de *proximitate*” (*Vouă*). Let us compare such instances with the older popular jokes about *tricou* and *bicou* (“un fel de tricou cu doar două găuri, pentru brațe”), *bilă* and *trilă*, etc. Along the same lines, *monolog* is jocularly decoded as meaning “olog de un picior”, *biolog* “olog de ambele picioare”, *sexolog* “olog de șase picioare” (e.g., *miriapod sexolog*), *bizar* means “zar dublu”, *amânat* “fără mâini”, *microscop* “scop mărunt”, *prudent* “pastă de dinți cu extract de prune”, *meritoriu* “teritoriul ocupat de livada de meri”, *rateu* “pateu din carne de rață”, *telegar* “bidiviu care te duce departe, departe”, *teleostean* “pește lung, care se gătește cu leuștean”, *horticultor* “agricultur ungur cu vederi fasciste”, *troică* “o doică dotată cu trei mamele”, *triserică* “biserică de trinitarieni”, *hipotensiune* “tensiune ca de cal”, *competiție acerbă* “competiție la care nu pot participa cerbii”, etc.

Some instances (or patterns) of metalinguistic humor have even turned (virally) international – or else, internationally viral, e.g. (an internet joke): “(Profesoara de română): Zi, Gigele, la ce mod și la ce timp este verbul din propoziția ‘Mama mea va mai avea un copil’? (Gigel): La *preservativ imperfect!*”

At other times, however, the result of the effort of coining something counting as (neological) lexical humour is rather modest – i.e. mere (flat) jokes, shallow witty anecdotal schemes, e.g. “Cum se numesc *circuitele* unui calculator aruncat pe geam? *Dezintegrate...*” (adev.ro/p4qj84)

In our opinion, a very important, quite notable thing (at least for someone interested in English studies, like the author of this paper) is that, more often than not, more or less recent *English* loan words form the main source of the humour generated in this country – so, one can talk about real humorous creativity in Romanian, e.g. “1968:

Crăciun cu... *hippy ending*" (the title of a TV documentary); "Bill Gates e judecat pentru bigamie. El spune: – Dacă trăiești cu două femei nu înseamnă bigamie, înseamnă *multitasking*" (adev.ro/p4qj84); "Guvernul *Daddy Cool*" (though the pronunciation was unfortunately rather approximate: *dedi* – a *TVR 1* lampoon). "În altă ordine de idei, gata vacanța, aşa că Livulică, *ai em bec!* (n.r. – m-am întors) „, a scris Călinescu". (adev.ro/peoi8m).

At times, there can be significant humorous creativity on Romanian linguistic ground, e.g. *C.D.P.* (in a pseudo-Englished pronunciation, i.e. *si-di-pi*) – meaning "Cercul de Prieteni" (from a TV showman); "*am marchetat*" (derived from *marketing*, as it were – used in an ironically jocular manner; *TV: Vouă*).

There are cases of genuine lexical coinages, that is constructs occurring within the framework of English linguistic expression proper, e.g. "A merry crisis and a happy new fear!" (graffiti on a building near a mall in Pitești – an incredibly appropriate and skilful case of Romanianized urban humour); "să fii victimă unei *economii de adevăr*" (instead of "minciună"; cf. the English ironical euphemism *rather economical with the truth* – Cătălin Ștefănescu, *Garantat 100%*, *TVR1*); "gradul de *engagement* al utilizatorilor atrași de... (a colaborat, cândva, cu SIE)" – (Mircea Badea, *Antena 3*).

Sometimes, (rather vulgar) punning based on ambiguity comes into play, e.g. "Gabriela Firea e bună în multe *poziții*" (cf. Eng. *position* "job" – in a TV show).

At other times, spelling and pronunciation can come into the picture: "chiar acordurile de pace Israel-Egipt de la Camp David (*Ceamp David*, cum a zis d-na Dăncilă, probabil ca să-i facă o placere și lui Netanyahu, pomenindu-l pe *ceampionul David*, învingătorul lui *Goliath*)" (C. T. Popescu, on the net). Satire is sometimes present in a direct manner in the caricatured pseudo-English pronunciation of some terms – mainly Romanian words, or proper names, e.g. *Instagram, frățioare!* [-weə] (Mircea Badea).

It will be interesting to note that the procedure in question (and the Anglo-American source of the lexical pseudo-coinage) can claim rather old roots in our national culture, e.g. "Melody Bar" (said by a character in the early-1970 Romanian film *B.D. în acțiune*, with an evident ironical intention – the same character had already mentioned "barul Melody").

2.4. The fourth level: when the neologistic terms are used in a conscious manner, but get out of the relative control exerted by the user's stylistic and semantic capabilities, especially on grounds having to do with insufficient cultural competence, and therefore acquire overtones of involuntary humour – e.g. "e *bilaterală* treaba" (instead of "respectul e reciproc" – said by a *TV star*). A special case is represented by misused or overused euphemisms (or items of *PC vocabulary*), when one cannot avoid the feeling that such terms are being employed cynically, e.g. the phrase *sistemul legal asimetric* in reference to *inegalitate în fața legii* (when in fact it should simply mean *injustiție socială*). As we have also stated in some previous papers (e.g. *PC Vocabulary and Euphemism in English and Romanian*, 1999), more often than not PC vocabulary borders on an overly hypocritical, partly desemantized kind of neologistic mumbo jumbo, e.g. *condiționalitate, contributivitate, convergență economică, decrispare, deficit de imagine, deradicalizare, incluziune socială, interconectivitate, interoperabilitate, judiciarizare, multiculturalitate, operaționalizare, optimizare fiscală, politică de coeziune, restricționalitate, subfinanțare, subsidiaritate, transparentizare, utilitate publică*, etc.

2.4.1. Neologisms versus traditional words. In the same context, the possibility ought to be noted (a possibility which was rather frequently used, in actual fact, by various authors) to oppose the neologicistic terms to the old, obsolete or obsolescent, even archaic type of expression, which almost always results in guaranteed comical effects, e.g. *încălzire de mijloc* (instead of “încălzire centrală”), *învîrtezbor* or *văzduh-înșurubariu* (instead of “elicopter”), *agie de năravuri* (instead of “poliție de moravuri”), *mreje tainice* (instead of “rețele secrete”), *lovitură / pălitură din ungheraș* (instead of “corner”), *Veacul de Mijloc* (instead of “Evul Mediu”), *bolniță ostășească* (instead of “infirmerie militară”), *cu duh de harță* (instead of “din spirit de contradicție”), *chivernisire gospodărească* (instead of “management economic”), *Oblăduirea Treburilor Dinlăuntru* (instead of “Ministerul Afacerilor Interne”), *icoană de tagmă* (instead of “tablou de gen”), *doxa urzelii* (instead of “teoria conspirației”), *privaz de întire* (instead of “cadru de referință”), *tocmeală de vreme slobodă* (instead of “program pentru timpul liber”), *cîrpăcît din cap în coadă* (instead of “ieșit din reparații capitale”), *teapă obștească* (instead of “stare socială”), *zvod de pedestrași* (instead of “pluton de infanterie”), *roată de pojarnici* (instead of “compănie de pompieri”), etc. Other examples may concern the “translated” vs. the “untranslated” variant of various loan words, e.g. *butoaie* (instead of *tonouri*), *lațuri* (instead of *loopinguri*), *așchii* (instead of *cipuri*), *tumbagiu* (instead of *culbutor*), *s-a înjegoșat lumânărica* (instead of *s-a ancrasat bujia*).

The same goes for (jocularly or mockingly) attempting to “analyze” neologisms, e.g. “Este clar, analizându-i părțile, ce semnifică *paratrăsnet*; cu *parapantă* e ceva mai greu să te dumirești; dar *parapet*?” (See also – above –pseudo-etymologies such as *monolog*, *biolog*, *bizar*, *telemea*, etc.)...

On most occasions, (rather shallow) humour is derived from punning based on neologisms, e.g. “*A dezinforma*: sinonim neologic pentru *a minti*”, “*Diagnostic*: nume inventat, pornind îndeobște de la rădăcini greco-latine, care îți spune, în stil medical-științific, că ești gras sau betiv sau impotent sau canceros sau ţăcănit”; “Oare opusul *persoanei fizice* este persoana *psihică*? Opusul unei *faze mortale* este o *fază vitală*? Iar opusul unui *mit urban* este un *mit rural*?”... (All the above examples are taken from our own writing).

3. Involuntary humour and the media

On the other hand, there are contexts that can be detected in the mass media, in which *involuntary humour* occurs, e.g. “Daniela’s. Fasole bătută” (label of a canned food produce); “Nu mai face tu *ironisme de-asteală*!” (half-illiterate lexical forms, which we heard in various TV programmes). Far from being downright or simply laughable, this type of involuntary humour can be generated by (a) the speaker’s or writer’s wish to surprise, interest, astonish or even fascinate their interlocutors or readers (e.g. “Asociația Aurora Salt spre Stele”); (b) naive approaches to the referent or the specific domain (e.g. “Ion C. – artist” – *TVR1*: actually, the man was only and merely a... painter, i.e. Eng. *an artist*); (c) knowingly or unintentionally overlooking, disregarding or dispensing with the generally accepted meaning of the (more or less recent) neologicistic item (e.g. “În jurul vârstei de 30 de ani, ironizezi o persoană de 15–20 de ani pentru că nu a *experimentat* internetul prin *dial-up*”; “Inca din anii 70 au inceput sa circule *rumori* privind diferențele, ori chiar divergențele, dintre Nicolae și Elena Ceausescu” (from an article by V. Tismăneanu). We should add that some of them are genuine howlers, being due to the speakers’ desire to sound unduly, or far too,

expressive – mainly in mass media contexts (e.g. “*Rusia continuă să trăiască după această ocazie a Spaniei*”; “*Japonia a murit frumos*” (Russia 2018 Football World Cup commentaries), or to the effect of solipsistic contextualisation (e.g. “*Top 10 englezisme pe care le putem evita. Sfaturile specialiștilor*”), etc. (On this last point, one can be reminded of the famous *HOW TO WRITE GOOD* rules: 1. Avoid Alliteration. Always. 2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with. 3. Avoid clichés like the plague. They’re old hat. 4. Comparisons are as bad as clichés. 5. Be more or less specific. 6. Writers should never generalize. Seven. Be consistent! 8. Don’t be redundant; don’t use more words than necessary; it’s highly superfluous. 9. Who needs rhetorical questions? 10. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement”). The acme of involuntary humour seems to be official use of that kind of silly, overinflated pomposity that some people deem necessary in what can be loosely called *officialese*, e.g. “*Se pregătește Legea pentru desfășurarea activităților de picnic*” (literal quote from a radio broadcast); it can be compared to the cases of “officially sounding”, “overregulated speech” that old-time military authorities thought appropriate to employ in would-be official circumstances, e.g. “*Se execută somn de voie*”...

3.1. Foreignisms. It seems to us that that the most thoroughly delectable and juiciest involuntary humor results from the speakers’ wholesale importing foreign terms that are not needed (at least, in normal communication), just because they seem to sound “trendier”, e.g. “pentru un *look dramatic*”, “o problemă e *capitalizarea politică*”, “*Cu cât este mai mic venitul unei familii, cu atât membrii acestei familii tind să fie supraponderali*”, “Într-o zi vei *realiza* că nu există bine fără rău și frumos fără urăt”, “*Amical patetic*”, a scris El Mundo Deportivo după meciul pierdut de selecționata Spaniei în fața României”, “Casa Mărtisor este o *locătie* de petreceri pentru copiii și adolescenții din București”, “New York Times a prezentat *locătile* atacurilor confirmate”, “Dacă acestea din urmă afișează contextul și sunt sensibile la informațiile privind *locăția* sau alte puncte de interes”, “Vizitează galeria de imagini a *locăției* noastre”, “Nu vreau să îți spun momentan numele *locăției* fiindcă vreau să fac un *review* tare fain pentru cei care se gândesc să meargă cândva, cumva”; “a ține *timeline-ul*” (the host of a TV programme, who seemed not to have heard of the Romanian phrases “a respecta *termenul* (de finalizare / de dare în folosință / de livrare)”, etc.); “să deții o oglindă *acurată* și să ai forța să o plimbi de-a lungul unui drum” (*România literară*, 1 Sept. 2017). Such unnecessary Englished neologistic terms are likely to spring from False Friends, which are unfortunately circulated rather massively by the press e.g. *tinde să, devastator, a capitaliza, focusat, locație*, or *dramatic* and *tipic* used as both adjectives and adverbs. They can be compared to the side-splitting verbal humour in Caragiale’s sketches and comedies, e.g. “*a mâncă de la datorie*”, “*masă..., sufragiu*”, “*Hebe, caliciu*”, etc. Or, in other words, *Caragialiana is reloaded...*

3.2. Various subtypes. One can make various interesting linguistic remarks relevant of (and focusing on) several contextual or discourse details and/or parameters like the following ones: (a) *False Friends* that (can) generate ambiguity, e.g. “Hipertensiunea arterială (...), cel puțin unul din patru adulți fiind afectați de aceasta boala, adică peste un *bilion* de persoane din lume”, “Ultima *decadă* aproape a dublat numărul diabeticilor”, “Planul *comprehensiv* de control al cancerului va fi lansat în prima parte a lunii aprilie”; (b) interlinguistic paronymy (which is, after all, one of the causes, and also a variety, of the occurrences listed in the class of the actual *False Friends*), i.e. when the pressure of the original form is added to the fact that the would-be journalist (and translator of the text) lacks elementary knowledge of both English and

Romanian grammar and semantics, e.g. *caribbean* (!), instead of *caraibian* (in the *Lumea* magazine, no. 8/2015); (c) flawed, un-Romanian (or simply ridiculous) collocation , e.g. “să îndeplinească și un *set de condiții*”; “șosete exfoliante” (TV advertisement); (when grammar rules, rules of logic and natural collocation are infringed): “Şerban Nicolae: *Iohannis abundă în declarații stupide*” (internet); (d) pleonastic expression, e.g. “Dacă vrei un sfat *adevărat*, și *real* (pron. *riăl*) și pe bune...” (said by two maturely-intellectual-looking young ladies); (e) tautologous expression, verging on absolute illiteracy, e.g. “Avioanele *supersonice* zboară cu o viteză mai mare decât a sunetului” (*Telejurnal*, 20.06.2015); (f) excessive, unruly lexical creativity, producing grotesque *barbarisms*, e.g. “companiile de asigurări majorează tarifele de RCA pentru că a crescut *daunalitatea*. De fapt, daunele plătite au stagnat la circa un miliard de lei...”; (g) genuine verbal (i.e. semantic and lexical) howlers, e.g. “dezvoltare *plată*”, “creștere *orizontală*” (one can easily and frequently come across their French counterparts, too); (h) the role played by translation in this process is by no means minor, e.g. *serial killer* – which was reported by Radu Paraschivescu as having been translated to “ucigaş de cereale”; (h') in numerous cases, sheer literality in taking over Anglo-American materials (i.e. mistranslating or inappropriately calquing them) accounts for such howlers as “[Theresa May] a promis că nu va rămâne nicio piatră neîntoarsă” (*Telejurnal* – the best part of the resulting involuntary humour lies in the fact that, after the inquiry into the circumstances of a London block of flats accidentally crumbling, the remains looked like... absolute ruins and mere rubble); (i) a combination of the above, e.g. (*Telejurnal*, 20.06.2015.) “(...vor disloca) o *companie* de aproximativ 750 *de militari*” (!) (the source of the mistake seems to have been multiple: maybe misreading the data written on the prompter – 750 instead of 75 soldiers –, the English-to-Romanian translation proper – it was in fact a whole *battalion* –, or maybe the information received from the TV editors); (j) the part the younger generations play in circulating calqued phrases, e.g. “O, da?” (implying irony, i.e. “Nu zău?” – in actual fact, this can be a case of literal translation).

4. Anglicisms as a case in point

The cases of extreme Anglicisms circulated by the media (but also by common speech) are more and more numerous, e.g. *retard*, *retarzi*; “Nu intrăm acu’ să discutăm pe *issues* aceste *probleme*”; “Ne adresăm dispariției parcărilor” (cf. Eng. “to address an issue”); “să fie *expuși* și la alte idei” (cf. Eng. *exposed to sth.*); “formula sa unică este *extraputernică*”, (“scutece) pevăzute cu *extrastratul slip*” (TV adverts); “stereotipuri *mentalitare*”; “modul de organizare a serviciilor publice ce *ofertează* [instead of “*oferă*] formarea continuă de la 7 subiecți”, “să fie un document *promotionat*” (?); “un *paletar* de măsuri (propus de Obama)”; “un posibil mare viitor *atractor turistic*” (a term that the *Google Translate* online programme “understands” – rendering it as “a possible next big *attraction*”); “o viitoare înscriere a zonei Roșia Montană pe lista *tentativă UNESCO*”; “Eu sănăt *solicabil*!” (heard in a very respectable pub); “iconizarea sfîntului” (TVR2), etc.

4.1. Remarks. A few observations will be in order at this point: (a) The group of the neologistic items coming from French is continually dwindling, and now even French proper names are mispronounced à *l'anglaise* (thus becoming *phonetic hyper-Anglicisms*), e.g. “*Auguste* (Rodin)” was pronounced [ogást], “*Blaise* (Matuidi)” was pronounced [bleiz], and *Airbus* was mispronounced (by two different people

consecutively) both [érgas] and [erbiús] (TVR1, 13.09.2016); “se relansează în fanfer” (cf. Fr. *en fanfare*). (Conversely, one should note that before 1990 one would have been exposed, in this country, to extremely imaginative hyper-Frenchified coinages *made in Romania* such as *choix à la crème* instead of *choux à la crème*).

(b) Here are some other extreme cases of involuntarily humorous cases of lexical subservience, due to translation, e.g. the Romanian subtitles for a French TV documentary render “des expatriés” by “expați”. Some internationally established calque patterns were “acclimatized” to the Romanian vocabulary – and cultural background, e.g. *Das Kaskaval* (cf. the internationally recognized pattern “*Das Auto*”, “*Le vin*” – cf. Eng. “*the wine*”, “*the Poet*”, etc.); sometimes, the authors of such lexical (and cultural) freaks seem to assume the excessiveness and relative preposterousness of the cultural allusion – or calque pattern – that they constructively (and consciously) take over, e.g. “*Thug Security*” (the name of a guard and protection company).

5. Funny contaminations

A very interesting category of lexical and logical solipsism is represented by what may be termed latter-day *malapropisms* and *Spoonerisms* (or what Romanian linguists may safely term “deraiari lexical-frastice”, implying the misuse of phraseology, idiom and collocation), e.g. “Liderii partidului vor susține discursuri” (TVR); “ocazie monumentală” (mistakenly combining *ocazie uriașă* and *ratare monumentală*); “pe parcurs ce filmăm...” (cf. “pe măsură ce...” or “pe (toată) durata filmării”; we have to admit that, for the time being, the noun *parcurs* cannot – still – function as a conjunctive, unlike *măsură*); “ele sunt barate [maybe instead of *blocate!*] la mantinelă de partidele vechi” (TVR1); *a sărit în evidență* (erroneously made up from *a sări în ochi* or *a bate la ochi* and *a ieși în evidență*);

In some cases, contextualization is marred by a funny type of syntactic and phrasal contamination, which totally pulverizes traditional, usual collocation, e.g. “...mi-a frapat atenția” (where the two deep structures that have been infelicitously combined were “m-a frapat (ceva)” or “am fost frapat de (ceva)”, and “mi-a atras atenția (ceva)”; “Respingerea moțiunii a clarificat apele” (TVR: the mistaken combination merges the phrases *a limpezit apele* and *a clarificat lucrurile*); “Orice grecieală a Greciei ar fi speriat piețele financiare și ar fi scuturat increderea în euro”: the author of the mistranslation-cum-calque literally took over Eng. *to shake* (see *Collins online* “If an event shakes a group of people or their beliefs, it causes great uncertainty and makes them question their beliefs”), using the verb having the same meaning in Romanian – so, instead of Rom. “a face (ceva) să se clătine (serios...)”).

At times, spoonerism is made even worse by redundancy, e.g. “Mi se pare aşa, la prima aparență...” (TV); “Am fost feblețea și slabiciunea lui!” (Internet). Mistaken phrasal-collocational contamination can sometimes use (journalistic) expressiveness as a possible excuse, e.g. “(X) a pus tirul pe Y” (TVR – instead of “a pus tunurile / tunul / artilleria (greia)”).

6. Conclusion

Everything that is new (in language as elsewhere) is, should or could be welcome – i.e. *useful*, that is to say more practical, constructive, effective, informative, valuable, *ergo* superior. Still this is not always the case. Moreover, what is – or, in the context, seems – excessive is, or can prove, useless or laughable. Overusing or misusing

neologism can also prove a matter of cultural attitude. So, neologistic terms that are used in a manner that most of the speakers may judge extreme, undue, disproportionately affluent or utterly unnecessary should be avoided by all careful speakers. If humour is generally something laudable, even when it comes as irony or satire (the Romans used to say *Ridendo castigat mores*), the same cannot be said about involuntary humour.

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CONCEPTUAL MOTIVATION OF ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN ODD AND HUMOROUS BODY PARTS IDIOMS

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Abstract: *Idiomaticity is a complex and controversial domain of semantics. The paper analyses from a cognitive point of view a series of English and Romanian odd and humorous body parts idioms. While traditional linguists study mainly the formal and functional aspects of idioms, cognitive linguists have a completely different approach. They consider that there is a systematic conceptual motivation for many idioms. Most idioms are products of our conceptual system and not simply a matter of language. Our work is based on the cognitive theory according to which idioms are motivated by conceptual structures: conventional knowledge, conceptual metonymies and metaphors. The notion of embodiment can be easily applied especially to human body idioms. We also try to prove that there is a considerable degree of correspondence regarding this type of idioms in both languages, i.e., they share the same figurative meaning, as well as the same underlying conceptual strategies.*

Keywords: cognitive theory; conceptual metaphor; conceptual metonymy; conventional knowledge; humorous idioms.

1. Preliminary issues

Phraseology is one of the most debatable fields of linguistics. The characteristic feature of idiomaticity as a discipline is that traditional criteria and traditional methodological approaches cannot function here, and that is for the simple reason that all these have been created for regular language and its phenomena. Describing idioms and idiomaticity is a very complex problem which should be seen from a multiple linguistic perspective.

In *Longman Idioms Dictionary* (2001: VII) an idiom is defined as a “sequence of words which has a different meaning as a group from the meaning it would have if you understand each word separately”.

An idiom is a conventionalized multiword expression whose units are generally unclear from the semantic point of view. A *conventionalized* expression is a phrase which has been used over time so frequently that it has lost its special metaphorical origin and with which many speakers of a language are very familiar.

Croft and Cruse (2004: 230-231) refer to the prototype definition of idioms with one necessary characteristic and a few of other typical characteristics offered by the standard view on idioms. The necessary feature is conventionality and the other features are: inflexibility regarding syntactic structures; figurative meaning; proverbiality meaning that idioms usually described everyday activities; informality; affect since they usually have an evaluation or affective stance towards what they describe.

In his book, Langlotz (2006) approaches an essential problem in phraseological and linguistic analysis: the creative structure and the creative use of idioms. In other words, two principles seem to function in the production and interpretation of constructions: *the creativity principle* or open-choice principle and *the idiom principle*.

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The linguist tries to relate the two principles to idioms. Idiomaticity is the linguistic branch that analyses phraseological, i.e. pre-established, fixed structures and focuses on those linguistic expressions which are closely connected to the idiom principle. Indeed, traditional definitions of the notion of idiom have principally relied on distinguishing these expressions from standard constructions. In this process of defining idioms in opposition to the norm of grammatical regularity, they have almost always been connected to notions such as linguistic irregularity, arbitrariness or anomaly.

The author introduces the notion of idiomatic creativity. In his opinion idiomatic creativity captures the varied evocation of a relatively stable idiomatic construction in a specific context of use. Idiom-variation data therefore question the rigid dichotomy between the creativity principle and the idiom principle. Rather than leading to a strict opposition between regular standard constructions and irregular idiomatic constructions, idiomatic creativity implies that idiom production and comprehension are subject to a dynamic tension between the two principles. This leads to the idea that idioms cannot simply be described as lexical units; rather, they seem to occupy a position between the lexicon and syntax, leading to an ambiguous dividing line between the productive and reproductive aspects of linguistic competence. Thus, the author's conclusion is that idiom and creativity are not contradictory terms. (Langlotz, 2006: 8-9).

2. Cognitive perspective on idioms

A cognitive linguistic investigation into idiomatic creativity must design an appropriate model of the mental basis of this phenomenon. The model must reflect the concepts, results and insights provided by phraseological analysis and the empirical data reflecting the phenomenon. Accordingly, in his book Langlotz addresses the following questions (*ibidem*: 10):

1. How are idioms represented and organised in a speaker's cognitive grammar?
2. What cognitive structures and processes are based on this patterning?
3. Along which lines does idiom variation occur?
4. Can idiom variation be explained with reference to more general cognitive processes that determine their mental representation and use?

Idiomatic creativity consists in the conceptualiser's competence to construct, structure, manipulate and interpret conceptual patterns of figurativity. First, idioms were created as non-conventional metaphors or metonymies.

Thus, their internal structure incorporates the systematic and creative extension of semantic structures. In this sense, idioms are structurally and semantically complex linguistic constructions that are inherently creative, real proofs for language creativity (*ibidem*: 11).

While Makkai (1972), Weinreich (1980) and other linguists study mainly the formal aspects connected to idioms and Fernando (1996) classifies idioms according to their function in discourse, cognitive linguists have a completely different perspective. The outstanding representatives of experiential realism, Lakoff (1987), Johnson (1987) and Gibbs (1990, 1991, 1997) have discussed aspects concerning the nature of meaning, the role of metaphor and metonymy, the process of categorization and the relationship between form and meaning. It is natural within the new theoretical framework founded by cognitivists, based on the way people perceive, conceptualize and categorize the world around them, that the complexity of idioms should occupy a central place. (Trantescu, 2018, 2019)

Without totally denying the traditional view according to which the meaning of an idiom cannot be completely inferred from the meaning of its components, these linguists consider that there exists a systematic conceptual motivation for many idioms. Most idioms are products of our conceptual system and not simply a matter of language. An idiom is not just an expression that has a meaning somehow special in relation to the meanings of its constituent parts, but its meaning arises from our more general knowledge of the world embodied in our conceptual system. In other words, most idioms are conceptual, and not linguistic, in nature (Kövecses, Szabó, 1996: 330).

Motivation refers to a speaker's ability to infer the meaning of an idiomatic expression by reactivating figurativity, i.e. to understand why the idiom has the idiomatic meaning it has with a view to its literal meaning (Langlotz, 2006: 45).

The meanings of most idioms can be regarded as motivated and not arbitrary. Idioms are conceptually motivated in the sense that there are cognitive mechanisms such as metaphors, metonymy and conventional knowledge which link the literal meaning with the figurative idiomatic meaning.

The term *conventional knowledge*, as a cognitive mechanism, designates what is known and shared about a conceptual domain by the people belonging to the same culture. This knowledge includes, for example, the body part corresponding to a conceptual domain. Lakoff (1987: 446) suggests that people have in their mind large sets of conventional images of world around them, depending upon their specific culture. Conventional images are context independent and they remain subconsciously sometimes for the rest of our life.

Cognitive linguists consider that many idioms are based on *conceptual metonymies and metaphors* which link the concrete and abstract areas of knowledge. They view metaphor and metonymy as cognitive mechanisms that relate a domain (or domains) of knowledge to an idiomatic meaning in an indirect way. (Trantescu, 2014, 2015, 2018, 2019)

Metonymy is distinguished from metaphor in such a way that metonymy is characterized as typically involving one conceptual domain, rather than two distinct ones as in the case of metaphor. Furthermore, metonymy involves a 'stand for' conceptual relationship between two entities (within a single domain), while metaphor involves an 'is' or 'is understood as' relationship between two conceptual domains such as anger and fire (Kövecses, Szabó, *op. cit.*:338).

The target-domain of conventional metaphor determines the general meaning of the idiom.

According to Kövecses and Szabó (*ibidem*: 352) the meaning of many idioms depends on the following factors:

- source-target relationship, which determines the general meaning of idioms;
- systematic mappings between the source and target domains, which provide more specific meaning of idioms;
- specific knowledge structures, or inferences, associated with the source domain, i.e. the general knowledge of the world;
- cognitive mechanisms: metaphor and metonymy.

The cognitive frame provides an adequate explanation for body parts idioms since the notion of embodiment can be easily applied especially to human body idioms. In most of the cases, more than one cognitive mechanism contributes to the motivation of the idiomatic meaning; this motivation results from the combination of three factors: conventional knowledge, metonymy and metaphor. Human body parts idioms are more predictable than others, simply because as human beings we are more familiar with our

perception of the shape, size and functions of individual parts of our own bodies, since we experience them every day. The idiomatic language is mostly anthropocentric, i.e. it is focused on people, on their behaviour, perceptions of their environment, on their physical and emotional status (Bílková, 2000: 6).

If we consider that some idioms are partly semantically transparent, and that their meaning can be determined by means of conceptual mappings between source and target domains, it is possible to analyse in detail the idiomatic structures in any language. Are there idiomatic expressions common to several languages? Are there common concepts resulted from the way people conceptualize the reality all over the world?

Starting from these aspects the purpose of this paper is to analyse a series of English and Romanian odd and humorous body parts idioms from a cognitive perspective. The analysis is based on the cognitive theory according to which idioms are motivated by the above-mentioned conceptual structures. Since in the process of inferring the meaning, the speakers activate first of all the idiom key words, the total figurative meaning can be anticipated from the meanings of its components. It is equally interesting to notice whether the speakers of English and Romanian have common elements in the way they conceptualize important parts of their human body and in the way this conceptualization is reflected in the idiomatic expressions.

We shall examine the general conventional knowledge which conceptually motivates the meaning of many idioms as the first cognitive strategy which connects the physical (or source) domain of our knowledge about these parts of the human body with the abstract (or target) domain of knowledge. Conceptual metonymies and metaphors which underlie various idiomatic phrases will be also analysed.

The analysed idioms have been collected from standard dictionaries of idioms: *Longman Idioms Dictionary - LID* (2001), *Oxford Idioms. Dictionary for Learners of English* (2003) - *OID* and *Dicționar de expresii și locuțiuni ale limbii române* (1985), but other dictionaries of both English and Romanian have also been consulted. The authors of these dictionaries used an impressive corpus. This corpus was consulted to identify idioms and all their variations in different contexts and registers. For instance, *Longman Idioms Dictionary* makes use of a huge collection of texts in electronic form in order to find out how an idiom behaves and how frequent it is. The authors of the dictionary used a variety of different corpora. The Longman Corpus Network consists of the British National Corpus-written texts; the British National Corpus-spoken texts; the Longman Spoken American Corpus; the Longman Written American Corpus; the Longman Learner's Corpus. (*LID*, 2001: x-xi)

3. Cross-cultural cognitive motivation of English and Romanian odd and humorous body parts idioms

To prove that, generally, the same conventional knowledge and the same conceptual metaphors and metonymies can be found both in English and Romanian odd and humorous body parts idioms, examples will be given from both these languages.

3.1. Ear idioms

- *something goes in one ear and out the other* it is used in the spoken register in order to say that when you tell someone something, they pay no attention or do not

remember it. The Romanian counterpart is *a-i intra cuiva ceva pe o ureche și a-i ieși pe alta*.

There are two conceptual mechanisms here: the metonymy THE EAR STANDS FOR HEARING and the metonymy THE EAR STANDS FOR ATTENTION.

English: *If you tell lads how to play football instead of showing them, it just goes in one ear and straight out the other.*

I called them yesterday and explained exactly what I wanted, but obviously it all went in one ear and out the other. (LID, 2001: 98)

Romanian: *La judecători, ce intra pe-o ureche iase pe alta.* (C. Negrucci, ap. DLRC, IV: 590).

- *have somebody's ear* means 'to be listened to by someone in a powerful position, so that they are willing to support you and pay attention to your advice, opinions etc.'

Paral said that minority groups had to get the ear of the President if they wanted to be taken seriously.

The Citizen's Symphony Committee is a group of men and women in business who claim to have the ear of wealthy donors whose money could revive the symphony. (LID, 2001: 98)

The idiom is motivated by the conceptual metonymies: THE EAR STANDS FOR THE PERSON and THE EAR STANDS FOR ATTENTION. There is no Romanian corresponding idiom.

- *lend an ear* 'to give somebody the opportunity to tell you their ideas, feelings etc, especially if no one else will listen to them' has no equivalent in Romanian.

The conceptual motivation is achieved by the metonymy THE EAR STANDS FOR LISTENING and by the metaphor TO LISTEN IS TO BE SYMPATHETIC.

An important part of a family doctor's job is to lend an ear to patients who just want to talk.

Every month Mayor Dudley opens his office doors to lend an ear to ordinary citizens for an hour and so. (idem)

- *listen with half an ear* 'to listen to someone while thinking about something else' has an equivalent in Romanian: *a asculta numai cu o ureche*.

The conceptual strategies which link the literal meaning with the idiomatic one are the metonymies THE EAR STANDS FOR LISTENING and THE EAR STANDS FOR ATTENTION.

English: *I spent all day listening with half an ear to the radio, hoping to get some news about the situation.*

Victor lit a cigarette and listened with half an ear, amused by the girls' chatter. (idem)

Romanian: *Asculta numai c-o ureche ce-i spunea, căci gândurile ei erau în altă parte.* (DELLR, 1985: 760)

- *play something by ear* 'to react to a situation as it happens, because you do not know how it is going to change or develop'. The idiom is specific to informal English, and in Romanian we have similar expressions: *a cânta după ureche; a lua/ a face ceva după ureche*. The meaning is different: 'to play something without a score' and 'to do something empirically, without a theoretical background, without having the necessary knowledge'. Conventional knowledge functions as conceptual strategy both in English and in Romanian.

English: *When asked whether the President's health would stand up to the trip, Mandela's press secretary said, " We'll have to play it by ear".* (LID, 2001: 98)

Romanian: **Cântă după ureche** cu multă ișcusință și talent. (DELLR, 1985: 760)
Ar trebui să mergi la doctor, nu să iezi medicamente după ureche.

- *cloth ears* is an old-fashioned slightly rude expression meaning ‘someone is not listening or paying any attention to you’:

Go on, cloth ears, I told you to open it. (LID, 2001:63)

The conventional knowledge and the metonymies THE EAR STANDS FOR HEARING/LISTENING and THE EAR STANDS FOR ATTENTION seem to be active in this case, motivating the idiomatic expression.

A possible Romanian counterpart could be *a avea bumbac în urechi* ‘a person doesn’t hear well or pretend not to.’ In this case, the ontological metaphor THE EAR IS A CONTAINER also functions:

Parcă ai avea bumbac în urechi de nu-mi răspunzi. (DELLR, 1985: 96)

- *somebody’s ears are burning* is used to say that people have been talking about someone when they are not there, or to ask the person who is being talked about if they realize this:

Your ears must have been burning this morning- Helen’s been telling us how wonderful you are. (LID, 2001:99)

This superstition is present in Romanian culture, too, since there is the idiom: *a-i fiui urechile*. In Romanian, this also means ‘to get news’:

Cred că mă vorbeste cineva de rău, îmi fiuie urechile.

The motivating cognitive strategy is conventional knowledge.

- *be all ears* meaning ‘to be eager to hear what is being said, to be very attentive’ has a Romanian counterpart *a fi numai urechi* or *a fi numai ochi și urechi*:

English: “Are you listening to me?” “Yes, go on, **I’m all ears.**”

I realized too late that my sister was listening, all ears, to our conversation. (idem)

Romanian: **Eram numai ochi și urechi** ca să nu pierd nimic din ce se spunea.

The idioms are conceptually motivated by two cognitive mechanisms: THE EAR STANDS FOR HEARING/LISTENING and THE EAR STANDS FOR ATTENTION.

- *prick up your ears* ‘to start to be interested in what someone is saying’ has an idiomatic equivalent in Romanian: *a ciuli urechile*

The motivation comes here from the conventional knowledge: the image of an animal (especially of a horse or dog) whose ears stand erect when on the alert:

The horse’s ears were pricked.

English: Adams **pricked up his ears** as soon as I mentioned money.

I pricked up my ears when they asked if anyone was interested in learning more about natural cures for basic problems.

Helen’s ears pricked up at Jamie’s name. (idem)

Romanian: **A ciulit urechile** când a auzit de concurs.

In Romanian, the expression also means ‘to cut the ears of an animal’ or (about an animal) ‘to cuddle’.

- *be up to your ears/neck/eyes in something* is used in spoken English and means ‘to have more of something, especially work, than you want or can deal with’:

Herefordshire farmers have been up to their ears in potatoes because of the high rainfall this year.

I can’t come this weekend- I’m up to my ears in work.

He must be up to his eyes in debt. (idem)

There is an idiomatic counterpart in Romanian *pâna peste urechi*, motivated by the same conceptual strategies: conventional knowledge and the metonymy THE HEAD/ EAR/NECK/ EYE STANDS FOR THE PERSON:

Era ocupat până peste urechi. (DELLR, 1985: 761)

In Romanian we have also the idiomatic expression *a fi îndrăgostit până peste urechi* ‘to be very much in love’:

Fratele meu este îndrăgostit până peste urechi. (Bădescu et al., 2011: 197)

- *have a word in somebody’s ear* ‘speak to somebody in private about something’ and its Romanian counterpart *a spune ceva cuiva la ureche* are conceptually motivated by the metonymy THE EAR STANDS FOR HEARING and by the ontological metaphor THE EAR IS A CONTAINER FOR SECRETS. These conceptual structures link the literal meaning with the figurative one.

English: *Can I have a word in your ear, John?*

I must have a word in her ear before the others arrive. (OID, 2003: 450)

Romanian: *Ce i-a spus atunci la ureche n-am putut afla niciodată.*

- *send somebody away/off with a flea in their ear* ‘refuse somebody’s request very angrily’: When he came to ask for his job back, we *sent him away with a flea in his ear.* (ibid., 126)

For these phrases there are no Romanian counterparts.

The idiom *send somebody away/off with a flea in their ear* goes back a long way. It appeared in English for the first time about 1430 in a devotional work entitled *The Pilgrimage of the Life of the Manhood*, in which the last word meant the state or condition of being human. It was a translation of a work in French of about a century earlier made by the Cistercian monk Guillaume de Deguileville.

In old French, the idiom had a different sense, of provoking or having amorous desire.

In modern French, to have a flea put in your ear means ‘somebody is putting a suspicion into your head’. The same expression occurs, with almost the same meaning, in other European languages, including German, Italian and Greek. In Dutch, it is a way to say that you are restless.

Conventional knowledge motivates this idiom. The root association may be the result of getting a literal flea in one’s ear, something that was frequent in earlier times when hygiene was poor, and houses and their inhabitants were often infested with fleas. A flea or any other insect entering one’s ear would jump about in its attempts to get out and bite. It is hard to imagine anything more frustrating and painful. It is known to have driven some people almost mad (the old remedy was to pour oil into the ear).

It is interesting from the cognitive point of view to notice how many different implications have been drawn from one simple circumstance. A flea moves fast, so it may have suggested something desirable but unattainable, or something uncontrollable like a fit of passion. A flea may have been thought to be a bad external influence that whispered messages of distrust. English speakers may have considered that the physical and emotional discomfort aroused by a flea in the ear resembled severe criticism. It is possible that several of these ideas fused in various language versions of the idiom. (www.worldwidewords.org)

- *walls have ears* (old fashioned) means ‘somebody may be listening, so be careful what you say’ has a Romanian counterpart *pereții au urechi* which is, obviously, a linguistic calque.

English: *You’d better keep your voice down, walls have ears, you know.* (OID, 2003: 371)

Romanian: Vorbește mai încet! Nu știi că pereții au urechi?

The conventional knowledge clearly motivates this idiom. This saying comes from a story about Dionysius of Syracuse (430-367 B.C.) who is said to have an ear-shaped cave cut and connected between the rooms of his palace so that he could hear what people were speaking in another room. Similar listening posts were placed in other palaces, including The Louvre, during the age of Catherine de Medici. In English this idiom was first recorded in its present form in 1620. (idioms.thefreedictionary.com)

Conventional knowledge motivates the following Romanian idioms:

- *a se culca pe o ureche* (*urechea aceea*) means ‘to not care about anything’: *Dacă a văzut că e lăsat în pace, s-a culcat pe o ureche și toate s-au dus de râpă.* (DELLR, 1985: 167)
- *floare la ureche* ‘something of no importance, which can be done very easily’: *Gândești că e floare la ureche să cauți acul în carul cu fân?* (Anton Pann, ap. DELLR, 1985: 240)
- *într-o ureche* has two meanings: a) ‘extravagant’: „*Ei, Ieronime, zise bătrânlul vesel și-ntr-o ureche, ce mai lucrezi, strengariule?*” (Mihai Eminescu, ap. DELLR, 1985: 761); b) ‘mad’: *Nu trebuie să te superi, aşa e el, într-o ureche.*

3.2. Eye idioms

Our conventional knowledge concerning the eye is a source of cognitive motivation for many English and Romanian phrases.

The idiom *a worm’s-eye view (of something)* with the idiomatic meaning ‘a point of view on a certain situation from a low position’ is in opposition with the idiom *a bird’s-eye view*:

The historian gives the big picture of social events; the anthropologist takes a worm’s-eye view.

His award-winning play gives a worm’s-eye view of doings at Elsinore Castle after Hamlet sees his father’s ghost. (LID, 368)

The idiom *give somebody a black eye* has the figurative meaning ‘to harm somebody making him appear stupid or weak’. The motivation consists in conventional knowledge about a fight between two persons. In Romanian we have *ochi vânăt*, not *negră* (black). A possible Romanian corresponding expression would be *a da cuiva peste ochi*.

English: *I was prepared to preach the word of the Lord and give the godless a black eye.* (LID, 107)

Romanian: *Degeaba am încercat să-mi susțin punctul de vedere; mi-a dat peste ochi cu ultimele rezultate.*

The conventional knowledge also motivates the meaning of the idiom *somebody’s eyes are popping* ‘to be very surprised, even shocked’.

The girls were all wearing bikinis and Dad’s eyes were popping out of his head, weren’t they Dad? (LID, 109)

In Romanian there is the expression *a-i ieși cuiva ochii din cap* which has two meanings: 1. ‘to be shocked’ and 2. ‘to feel very tired after a great effort’.

Îl asculta cu ochii ieși din cap de uimire.

Alergase atât de repede, încât simțea c-o să-i iasă ochii din cap. (DELLR, 289)

Another humorous counterpart is *a face ochii mari cât cepele.*

La auzul unor asemenea vești a făcut ochii mari cât cepele.

The expression *make sheep's eyes* with the idiomatic meaning 'to be in love' has no Romanian equivalent. Conventional knowledge is the cognitive strategy.

Many of the metonymies used as a cognitive source represent the conceptual basis for the figurative meanings, now lexicalized of the word *eye*.

Thus, the metonymy EYES STAND FOR EYESIGHT represents the conceptual basis for the lexicalized meaning 'the ability of seeing'.

We shall analyse some odd idioms motivated by this metonymy:

- *cast an eye over/on something* has the idiomatic meaning: 'to read or to look at something very rapidly'. There is also a Romanian correspondent: *a-și arunca ochii (or o privire, o ochire)*.

English: *Do you have time to cast an eye over these accounts?*

Dexter cast his eye over the final preparations and said he expected the event to be the most successful in years. (LID, 107)

Romanian: *Când își aruncă ochii spre poartă ce să vadă!* ... (I. Creangă, ap. DLRC, I, 134)

The idiomatic motivation also derives here from the metaphor SEEING IS TOUCHING.

- *the naked eye* refers to the natural ability to see without a magnifying instrument
In Romanian we have *a vedea cu ochiul liber*.

Engleză: *Bacteria are invisible to the naked eye.* (OID, 249)

Romanian: *Aceste microorganisme nu se pot vedea cu ochiul liber.*

The above metonymy also motivates the following Romanian expressions:

- *a bate la ochi:*
Lipsurile băteau prea tare la ochi ca să nu le fi putut îndată constata. (A. I. Odobescu, ap. DLRC, I, 202).

The metonymy EYES STAND FOR ATTENTION/ VIGILANCE underlies the following idioms, linking their literal meaning with the idiomatic one:

- *catch somebody's eye* with the meaning 'to draw somebody attention' has no Romanian equivalent.

I liked all the paintings, but the one that really caught my eye was a Matisse.

Can you try to catch the waiter's eye? (OID, 51)

I tried to catch her eye, but she just stared out the window. (LID, 107).

- *have eyes in the back of your head* meaning 'to be able to notice everything what is happening around you' has the Romanian equivalent *a avea ochi la spate*:

English: *You need to have eyes in the back of your head* when you are teaching a class of ten-year-olds.

No, of course, I didn't know what was happening. I don't have eyes in the back of my head. (LID, 109)

Romanian: *Se cam fereau de ea, căci avea parcă ochi la spate.* (DELLR, 458)

- *keep your eyes peeled* or *keep your eyes skinned* is used in spoken English with the meaning 'to watch carefully for something':

These guys are used to keeping their eyes peeled for cops, but I don't think they'll recognize you as a cop.

I told him to keep his eyes skinned and notice whether anything unusual was going on. (LID, 109)

The metonymic structure EYES STAND FOR GOOD OR BAD FEELINGS could be used as a cognitive strategy in motivating the following idioms. (Trantescu, 2016)

- have eyes only for with the idiomatic meaning ‘to prefer, to like only something or somebody’. It has an identical Romanian corresponding idiom: *a avea ochi doar pentru ceva/ cineva*:

English: *She was always surrounded by men, but she had eyes only for Harry.* (Webster’s, 507)

Romanian: *Avea ochi doar pentru fiica cea mare.*

- make eyes at ‘to flirt’.

In Romanian there is the phrase *a face ochi dulci cuiva*.

English; *The students gathered in the square to make eyes at the pretty girls.* (Webster’s, 507)

Romanian: *Tot timpul balului îi făcuse ochi dulci.*

- give somebody the eye ‘to flirt’:

All the boys were giving her the eye. (Webster’s, 507)

- have (got) a roving eye ‘to be always ready for a love affair’:

Be careful of Brian – he’s got a roving eye. (OID, 326)

A Romanian equivalent is the idiom *a-i fugi* or *a-i aluneca cuiva ochii după cineva*:

Îi fugeau tot timpul ochii după femei.

- *a i se scurge cuiva ochii după cineva sau după ceva* (‘to be fond of’):

Cum văzură ele condurii, li se scurgeau ochii după dânsii (Petre Ispirescu, ap. DLR, part 2, vol. VII, 96).

Tânărului i se scurgeau ochii după fata aceea.

Another cognitive strategy seems to function here. It is the metaphor LOVE/PASSION/PLEASURE IS FIRE. The intensity of love seems to melt the eyes and they become liquid.

- *de la ochi sau verde în ochi* (‘ruthlessly’):

Spune-mi verde în ochi, ca să știu ce leac trebuie să-ți fac (Creangă, ap. DLRC, 248).

Un copil de ieri să mă batjocorească de la ochi! (Alecsandri, ap. DLRC, 248)

The synecdoche EYES STAND FOR THE PERSON also motivates this idiomatic meaning.

3.3. Finger idioms

Conventional knowledge is the cognitive mechanism which links the literal meaning of these idioms with the figurative one.

- stick/ stand out like a sore thumb used in order to say that someone or something is very easy to notice, or looks wrong or strange, because they are so different from everyone or everything around them has no Romanian equivalent.

We live in a village where any stranger, especially a foreigner, would stick out like a sore thumb.

I don’t know why they had to build such an ugly office block- it sticks out like a sore thumb (LID, 349).

- be all thumbs or be all fingers and thumbs used in order to say that someone is unable to do things neatly and carefully with your hands has a Romanian corresponding idiom, but containing the word mâna: *a avea două mâini stângi*, conveying the same idea of clumsiness.

English: *Believe me- I’m all thumbs in the kitchen- I would be useless without my gadgets to help me out.*

I was all fingers and thumbs when I tried to disentangle camera and rucksack from around my neck (idem).

Romanian: *Când vine vorba de croitorie, am două mâini stângi.*

Conventional knowledge may also motivate the Romanian expressions below:

- *a se ascunde după deget* or *a se da după deget* means ‘to try to hide an obvious guilt’: *Din felul cum vorbea se vedea clar că vrea să se ascundă după deget* (DELLR: 187).
- *a-și linge degetele* or *buzele* or *a se linge pe buze* is used in order to say that someone is very excited about something that is going to happen, because it will give them something they want or need:

Își lingea degetele când se gândeau la foloase.

A possible counterpart in English would be *somebody is licking his or her lips*:

The media has been licking its lips in anticipation of Harden’s speech, hoping for a chance to catch him in a lie and bring him down.

The drop-in utility stock prices have many investors licking their lips at the thought of bargains (LID, 215).

- *a încerca marea cu degetul* means ‘to try to solve something, but with little chances to succeed’:

Cercați voi marea cu degetul, dar ia să vedem cum i-ați da de fund? (Ion Creangă, ap. DLR, VI: 121)

- *have a finger in every pie* ‘to be involved in many different activities and have influence over many people, often in order to get an advantage for yourself’ has no Romanian corresponding idiomatic expression:

Johnston has a finger in every pie and is well known throughout the state as an environmental activist.

The Conservatives do not like change either, because they have their fingers in too many pies (LID, 120).

This idiom is also motivated by the conceptual metonymies THE FINGER STANDS FOR THE ACTIVITY.

- *not lift/raise a finger* meaning ‘to be too lazy to help someone with their work or to not care enough to help someone who is in need or in danger’ has a counterpart in Romanian: *a nu mișca un deget*:

English: *My husband would not lift a finger to help me with the kids. He said it was my job.*

Two of the firm’s clerks watched the man being robbed without raising a finger to help him (LID: 120).

Romanian: *N-a mișcat un deget să ma ajute în acele momente grele.*

This phrase is also motivated by the conceptual metonymy THE FINGER STANDS FOR THE ACTIVITY.

THE FINGER STANDS FOR THE ACTIVITY motivates the following English and Romanian humorous idiomatic constructions:

- *twiddle your thumbs* means ‘to do nothing, either because you have nothing to do, or because you are waiting for something to happen’:

We don’t want to strike, but we can’t just sit around twiddling our thumbs until the management produce an offer.

Basically, he’s getting paid \$20,000 a year to sit in an office and twiddle his thumbs (LID, 349).

In Romanian we have the idiomatic expression *a sta cu degetul în gură*, which means the same, ‘to waste time’.

Eu socotesc, mărite împărate, că cel ce a făcut o asemenea vitezie, nu cred să se fi culcat pe urechea aia, și să fi stat aşa cu degetul în gură după ce a ucis pe zmei (P. Ispirescu, ap. DELLR: 188).

In this case, again, we have another cognitive source which motivates the idiom, i.e. conventional knowledge.

The idiomatic expression *be caught with your fingers in the till* has the meaning ‘to be caught stealing or doing something illegally’. In Romanian, a possible equivalent would be *a fi prins cu mâna în sac/traistă*.

Three cognitive strategies function here : conventional knowledge, the metonymy THE FINGERS STAND FOR THE ACTIVITY and THE FINGERS STAND FOR THE PERSON. (Trantescu, 2016).

English: *I began to suspect that Collins had his fingers in the till, and I wondered how I could prove it.*

Maxwell was not the only boss to be caught with his fingers in the till (LID: 150).

Romanian: *N-a mai putut să nege fiindcă a fost prins cu mâna în sac.*

The same meaning is conveyed by the Romanian idiom *a avea degete lungi*:

Avea degete lungi și nu puteai să-i încrezi ceva de valoare.

The same conceptual mechanisms are at work in the case of the idiom *sombody’s sticky fingers* used in order to say that someone steals. There is an equivalent expression in Romanian with the word *mână*: *a i se lipi de mâna*:

English: *Some of the tourists with sticky fingers try to break off pieces from the castle wall* (ibidem: 121).

Romanian: *I se lipise de mâna bibeloul și a plecat cu el din magazin.*

THE FINGERS STAND FOR THE SKILL is the cognitive strategy for the idiom *have green fingers* ‘to be good at gardening’. It has no equivalent in our language:

If you have green fingers, you can make even a tiny balcony or patio into a secret garden.

Orchids are the supreme test for green fingers, because it is extremely hard to get them flower (ibidem: 120).

In American English we have the similar expression *have a green thumb*.

She is one of those people who takes care of every stray cat and has an incredible green thumb. Her apartment is a jungle (ibidem: 349).

TO TWIST SOMEBODY AROUND YOUR (LITTLE) FINGER IS TO HAVE CONTROL OVER SOMEBODY represents the cognitive mechanism which links the literal meaning of the following expressions with their idiomatic one:

- *wrap/twist/wind somebody around your little finger* ‘to be able to make someone do what you want them to do’ has a Romanian counterpart- *a purta, a învârti, a juca pe cineva pe* or *după degete*:

English: *Spencer had always known how to wrap his mother round his little finger.*

She is a smart girl and she could easily have Mr Winters wrapped around her little finger (LID, 120).

Romanian: *De opt săptămâni mă poartă pe degete și mă fierbe* (M. Sadoveanu, ap. DELLR, 187).

Îl învârtea pe degete cum voia ea.

This metaphor is consistent with TO BE UNDER SOMEBODY’S THUMB IS TO BE UNDER HIS OR HER CONTROL:

- *be under somebody's thumb* means to be completely controlled or influenced by another person:

Now that they are married, she's completely under his thumb and never sees her old friends (OID: 405).

In Romanian we have the expression *a fi sub papucul cuiva*:

Era complet sub papucul soției sale.

The same idea of control is conveyed by the Romanian idiom *a avea (pe cineva) la degetul (cel) mic* 1) ‘to have somebody under your control’; 2) ‘to be superior to another person’:

Face tot ce vrea el și nu-i iasă din cuvânt; îl are la degetul mic.

Știa atât de multe încât îi avea la degetul mic pe toți.

In all these cases motivated by the above metaphors, the metonymy THE FINGER STANDS FOR THE PERSON is also at work.

3. 4. Hair idioms

We shall analyse the general conventional knowledge which conceptually motivates the meaning of many odd and humorous *hair* idioms as the first cognitive strategy which connects the physical (or source) domain of our knowledge about the *hair* with the abstract (or target) domain of knowledge which arises when the word *hair* is used in idioms. Conceptual metonymies and metaphors which underlie these *hair* idiomatic phrases will be also analysed. (Trantescu, 2019)

- *keep your hair on/keep your shirt on* is used for telling somebody who is angry or very excited about something to keep calm. It is very probable that this idiom is also motivated by conventional knowledge and by the conceptual metaphor TO BE ANGRY IS TO LOSE CONTROL. There is no Romanian equivalent *hair* idiom, but we also use a metaphorical expression for this state of mind: *a-și păstra săngele rece*:

English: *Keep your hair on, Mum! You can hardly see the damage.*

Keep your shirt on! We've got plenty of time to get to the airport. (OID, 151)

Romanian: *Păstrează-ți săngele rece!* Nu s-a întâmplat nimic grav.

- *bad hair day* is used about a day when you cannot make your hair look attractive and you therefore feel annoyed and ugly, and often about a day when everything seems to go wrong for you.

Today is definitely a bad hair day Can't I just stay home?

You look as though you need a drink- bad hair day? (LID, 148)

Conventional knowledge is the mechanism that links the literal and figurative meaning of the idiom. The phrase refers to the fact that if you think your hair looks bad, then you feel that you look ugly and nothing in that day will go right for you. There is no Romanian counterpart. This humorous expression is used in spoken English.

- *get /keep somebody out of your hair* is motivated by conventional knowledge and means ‘to stop someone from annoying because they are always near you or always trying to involve in your affairs’. This expression has no Romanian idiomatic equivalent.

I got involved with the society because it gets me out of my wife's hair now that I am retired.

I don't care what you are telling him, just keep him out of my hair! (LID, 148)

- *get /have a wild hair* is used in slang, American English. It means ‘to have a strong wish or need to do something that seems strange to other people’.
He's in one of his weird moods. I think he has some wild hair. (LID, 148)
 In Romanian there is the expression *a avea peri de lup* which means ‘to be an evil person’.
Are peri de lup și inima lui e neagră ca smoala. (DELLR, 358)
- *a/the hair of the dog that bit you* is used about an alcoholic drink that you drink in order to feel better after drinking too much the night before There is no idiomatic equivalent in Romanian with the word *hair*, but the same meaning has the expression *cui pe cui se scoate*.
 The origin of the idiom consists in real facts. In the past, if a person was bitten by a dog, burnt hair from the same dog was used as a protection against infection.
The day after the carnival, the bar opened at 10.am. for those who just wanted a little hair of the dog.
You look terrible-how about trying the hair of the dog that bit you? (LID, 148)
Mai bea un pahar de vin! Știi cum se spune, cui pe cui se scoate.
- *a hair shirt* is used about a difficult or unpleasant situation that someone chooses or accepts, especially if they do this because they are sorry for something that they have done.
The company will probably wear its hair shirt for a few weeks, and then go back to its old ways of ignoring employees' complaints.
He apologized once again for what he had done, but this time he was beginning to find an odd sort of comfort in his hair shirt of guilt.
 A hair shirt was a rough, uncomfortable shirt worn by some very religious Christian people to punish themselves for a sin or to show they do not care about comfort.
 There is no Romanian idiomatic counterpart.
- *something makes your hair curl* (informal, humorous) used in order to say that a story, experience, etc. is surprising or shocking. The Romanian equivalent is *a i se face părul măciucă*, *a i se ridica părul în cap*, *a i se zbârli părul*. In Romanian we also have an expression with a different lexical structure, but the same meaning: *a i se încrețit carnea sau pielea (de groază)*
 English: *I could tell you a few things about Fiona that would make your hair curl.*
Did you watch Dan's video? I bet you saw some things that made your hair curl.
 Romanian: **I s-a încrățit carnea de groază.**
Urlau dobitoacele de ti se făcea părul măciucă în cap. (P.Ispirescu, apud DELLR, 367)
- *your hair stands on end* (informal) has the same conceptual motivation, the same meaning and the same Romanian equivalents as the previous idiom.
I first read the report my hair stands on end. (OID, 151)
- *pull/tear your hair out* is used to say that someone is very desperate, angry, frustrated or worried about something. There is a perfect equivalent in Romanian *a-și smulge părul din cap/a se lua cu mâinile de cap/păr*.
 English: *All these plans for a big outdoor wedding have Mom pulling her hair out.* (LID, 149)
 Romanian: *Când auzi de cele ce se întâmplase se luă cu mâinile de păr.* (DELLR, 504)
Își smulgea părul din cap de disperare.

- *something will put hair on your chest* (spoken) it is used humorously to tell someone to eat or drink something because it will be good for them, especially when you are giving them a strong alcoholic drink. There is no Romanian idiomatic equivalent.
He poured her a large gin and tonic, and said, “Drink up-this’ll put hair on your chest. (LID, 149)
- *split hairs* ‘to talk about small, unimportant differences between things as if they were important’. In Romanian there is the idiom *a despica firul de păr în patru*: English: *Saying that you are not rejecting him, you are just rejecting his behaviour, may be splitting hairs.* (LID, 149)
 Romanian: *Căci Pirandello era, înainte de toate, un sicilian, iar neamul de acolo are în vinele sale elemente care vin din vechea îndoială elenică, din obișnuința sofistică a jocului cu ideile și, pe lângă aceasta, din tendința arabă **de a despica firul în patru**.* (N. Iorga, apud DELLR, 191)
- *not see hide nor hair of somebody/something*. In spoken English means ‘not see somebody or something for some time’. In Romanian, the idiomatic equivalent is *a nu vedea picior de*:
 English: *I haven’t seen hide nor hair of her for a month.* (OID, 339)
 Romanian: *Am căutat peste tot, dar nici picior de lucrător n-am văzut.*
 Conventional knowledge is also relevant for the following Romanian idioms:
 - *când va crește păr în palmă* means ‘never’.
S-o pricopsi, când mi-o crește păr în palmă. (Anton Pann, apud DELLR, 502)
 - *cât păr în palmă* (pe broască) ‘nothing’
Am avut minte cât păr pe broască. (M. Sadoveanu, apud DELLR, 503)
 - *cu păr pe limbă* refers to an impolite person, even stupid.
E cu păr pe limbă, nu știe să se poarte. (DELLR, 503)
 - *a-și da părul pe mâna altuia* ‘to have a great influence on a certain person to dominate somebody’.
 The cognitive mechanisms here are also the metonymies THE HAIR STANDS FOR THE PERSON and THE HAND STANDS FOR THE PERSON.
Și-a dat părul pe mâna ei, poate sa facă din el tot ce pofește. (idem)
 - *a-i ieși cuiva peri albi* ‘to grow old earlier because of too many troubles, to be under stress’
Mi-o ieșit peri albi de când am fată mare. (V. Alecsandri, apud DELLR, 31)
 - *în doi peri* ‘something fuzzy, ambiguous’
Răspunsul lui a fost în doi peri, aşa că nimeni nu știa ce să credă.
 - *a se lúa cu cineva de păr* ‘to fight with somebody’
Se încinse o vorbărie, de vreo trei ceasuri, aci apropiindu-se, aci gata să se ia de păr. (L. Reboreanu, apud DELLR, 504)

3.5. Mouth Idioms

Next we shall analyse the conventional knowledge and the conceptual metaphors and metonymies which motivate both English and Romanian odd *mouth* idioms and examples will be given from both languages. (Trantescu, 2018)

- *be all mouth (and no trousers)* (informal) means that somebody talks a lot about doing something, but is, in fact, not brave enough to do it:
Don’t be scared of her. She won’t hurt you- she’s all mouth. (OID, 245)
- In Romanian, we have an equivalent: *a fi doar gura de cineva:*

Nu te încrede în tot ce spune; se laudă, e numai gura de el! (DELLR, 274)

The cognitive strategy is the metonymy: THE MOUTH STANDS FOR TALKING.

- *make somebody's mouth water* has the Romanian equivalent idiom: *a-i lăsa gura apă*. The meaning is ‘to make somebody feel hungry and also, make somebody want to do or have something very much’:

English: *The smell of your cooking is making my mouth water.*

The sight of all that money made his mouth water. (OID, 245)

Romanian: *Mi-a lăsat gura apă când am văzut atâtea bunătăți.* (DELLR, 41)

Îi lăsa gura apă după o asemenea funcție.

The idiom is motivated by conventional knowledge.

- *be born with a silver spoon in your mouth* ‘be born into a very rich family’.

They had been born with silver spoons in their mouths, and never had to worry about money. (OID, 35)

Conventional Knowledge motivates this phrase. There is no idiomatic equivalent in Romanian. This is commonly thought to be an English idiom referring to the British aristocracy. Yet, the earliest citation in print is from the USA. Deb. U.S. Congress, 1801: “It was a common proverb that few lawyers were born with silver spoons in their mouths.” Medieval spoons were usually made of wood. Spoon was also the term used for a chip or splinter of wood and it is likely that is how the table utensils derived their name. It has been a tradition in many countries for wealthy godparents to give a silver spoon to their godchildren at christening ceremonies. That may be the source of the phrase, or it may simply be derived from the fact that rich people ate from silver while others did not. In the keynote speech to the US Democratic National Convention in 1988, the Texas State Treasurer Ann Richards modified the proverb at the expense of the well-born and wealthy George Bush: “*Poor George, he can't help it - he was born with a silver foot in his mouth.*” (www.phrases.org.uk)

- *foam at the mouth* (informal) means ‘to be very furious’.

He stood there, foaming at the mouth. I have never seen anybody so angry. (OID, 128)

In Romanian we have the idiom *a face spume la gură*:

Când și-a dat seama că fuseseră trădat, făcea spume la gură de furie.

Both idioms are motivated by conventional knowledge. When an animal foams at the mouth, it means it is very ill or angry.

- *straight from the horse mouth* (about information) ‘directly from the person who really knows because they are closely connected with its source’. It is used in informal register.

I got it straight from the horse's mouth. He told me himself. (OID, 176)

In horse racing circles tips on which horse is likely to win spread among punters. The most trusted authorities are considered to be those in closest touch with the recent form of the horse, that is, stable lads, trainers etc. The phrase from the horse's mouth indicates one step better than even that inner circle, that is, the horse itself. (www.phrases.org.uk).

In Romanian we have the expression *la botul calului*, meaning something completely differently, ‘to do something quickly, right before you leave’.

A făcut haz, nu i s-a mai intâmplat să i se vorbească de plată și tocmai, qșa, la botul calului. (Ion Vinea, apud DELLR, 90)

Both idioms are used in informal style and are motivated by conventional knowledge.

- *have a plum in your mouth* (disapproving) ‘speak in a way that is thought to be typical of the English upper classes’.

She speaks as she's got a plum in her mouth. (OID, 291)

If you spoke with a plum in your mouth it would be quite difficult to be understood and make a strange sound. In Great Britain, there are lots of different accents that define not only a person's region but also their social class. People consider that the upper class, especially, the aristocracy, speak with a plum in their mouth.

In Romanian there is an idiom with almost the same structure, the same meaning, 'to speak unclearly' but not referring to a particular social class *parcă are prune în gură*:

Nu înțelegi ce spune, parcă are prune în gură. (DELLR, 564)

- *your heart was in your mouth* (informal) meaning 'to be very anxious or afraid' has a Romanian corresponding phrase: *cu sufletul la gură*. The Romanian expression has also other meanings: 'panting' and 'dying'.

English: *My heart was in my mouth – I was sure the tree was going to hit him.*

Once a child is born, you are destined to spend at least 18 years with your hand in your wallet and your heart in your mouth. (LID, 165)

Romanian: *Așteptau rezultatele examenului cu sufletul la gură.*

Alergase tot drumul și a ajuns cu sufletul la gură.

Era foarte bolnav, cu sufletul la gură.

The cognitive mechanism linking the literal, concrete meaning with the figurative, abstract one is the conventional knowledge.

- *live from hand to mouth* has no idiomatic Romanian equivalent.

In this case, two cognitive mechanisms link the literal meaning with the idiomatic one: 'spend all the money you earn on basic needs such as food, being unable to save any money'. These are the conceptual metonymies THE HAND STANDS FOR WORK/ACTIVITY and MOUTH STANDS FOR EATING.

English: *Don't tell me not to worry - I'm 28 years old and I'm still living from hand to mouth. There are a lot of former hockey players living hand to mouth who could use an extra \$200 a month.* (LID, 151)

In Romanian, we have the idiom *de la mâna până la gură* with the meanings : (1) 'very quickly' : *Prostul uită, din natură, de la mâna până la gură.* (Anton Pann, ap. DLR, VI, 665) ; (2) in some geographical areas. : 'very little' : *Milă de la mâna până la gură.* (Zanne, II, ap. DLR, VI, 665).

This idiomatic phrase is motivated by conventional knowledge.

- *(not) look a gift horse in the mouth* (informal) 'you should not find something wrong with something given to you free'.

The origin of this idiom is in the fact that people usually judge the age of a horse by looking at his teeth. The idiom is, thus, motivated by conventional knowledge.

In Romanian there is a similar idiom with the same meaning: *calul de dar nu se caută la dinți.*

English: *He didn't want to accept the offer of a free holiday, but I told him not to look a gift horse in the mouth.* (OID, 219)

Romanian: *S-a mulțumit și aşa. La urma urmei, calul de dar nu se caută la dinți.*

- *put your foot in your mouth* 'say or do something that upsets, offends or embarrasses somebody without intending to':

He really put his foot in his mouth when he mentioned the party to her. She hadn't been invited. (OID, 130).

Conventional knowledge and the metonymy THE MOUTH STANDS FOR SPEAKING seem to be the mechanisms which motivate the idiom. There is no Romanian idiomatic equivalent:

- *put your head in the lion's mouth* has the figurative meaning ‘deliberately put yourself in a dangerous or risky situation’:
People's career choices depend on their temperament – some people think it's fun to put their head in the lion's mouth.
He wasn't afraid to put his head in the lion's mouth. (LID, 162)
The Romanian corresponding expression is : *a-și vârâ/a-și băga/pune capul sănătos sub evanghelie:*
Acum îi părea rău că-și pusese capul sănătos sub evanghelie.
Another equivalent is *a intra în gura lupului:*
Dar vezi, sărbii au dincolo treburile lor, mai ales ziua, și ar fi stupid să riște să intre în gura lupului, în plină zi (DELLR, 359).
The cognitive mechanisms which link the literal, concrete meaning with the figurative, abstract meaning are the conventional knowledge and the metonymy THE HEAD STANDS FOR THE PERSON.
- *put your money where your mouth is* (informal) ‘show that you really mean what you say, by actually doing something, giving money, etc. rather than just talking about it’:
The government talks about helping disabled people but doesn't put its money where its mouth is.
Do you think she'll win? Come on, then, put your money where your mouth is. (OID, 242)
The idiom is motivated by the metonymy THE MOUTH STANDS FOR TALKING.
There is no Romanian idiomatic equivalent.
- *put words into somebody's mouth* ‘say or suggest that somebody has said something, when they have not’:
You are putting words in my mouth. I didn't say the whole house was dirty, I just said the living room needed a clean. (OID, 451).
The idiomatic counterpart in Romanian is a *pune vorbe în gura cuiva:*
Nu-mi pune mie asemenea vorbe în gură. Niciodată n-am spus aşa ceva.
According to the cognitive hypothesis, the motivating strategies are the metaphor THE MOUTH IS A CONTAINER FOR WORDS and the metonymy THE MOUTH STANDS FOR SPEAKING.
- *take the words right out of somebody's mouth* ‘say exactly what another person was going to say’
'The speed limit on motorways should be raised'
'I agree completely! You've taken the words right out of my mouth'. (OID, 451).
The Romanian equivalent is *a-i lua cuiva vorba din gură*. It has a double meaning: (1) ‘say exactly what another person was going to say’ and (2) ‘interrupt somebody, not to allow somebody to speak’:
(1) *Mi-ai luat vorba din gură*, referitor la acestă problemă.
(2) *Nu-i deteră răgaz, căci îi luau vorba din gură.* (DELLR, 275)
The same conceptual motivation functions here as in the case of the idiom *put words into somebody's mouth*: the metaphor THE MOUTH IS A CONTAINER FOR WORDS and the metonymy THE MOUTH STANDS FOR SPEAKING.
- *out of the mouths of babes (and sucklings)* (saying) is used when a small child has just said something that seems very wise or clever:
It was my daughter who told me I should enjoy life more. She's only four years old, but out of the mouths of babes... (OID, 245)
The origin of this idiom is in the Bible (www.phrases.org.uk):

Matthew 21:16: And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

Psalms 8:2: Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

Din gura copiilor iese adevarul has the same source:

Nu te supără! Nu știi că din gura copiilor iese adevarul?

The idioms are also motivated by the metaphor THE MOUTH IS A CONTAINER.

4. Conclusion

As can be noticed from this analysis, the conceptualizations of many odd and humorous body parts idioms depend especially on the conventional knowledge which we have about the placement, shape, and functions of these body parts. The other two conceptual sources, cognitive metaphor and metonymy play a relevant role in the way we store relevant information in our mental dictionary. The cognitive theory that the meaning of the constitutive parts of some idioms partially motivates the meaning of these idioms proved to be valid.

Our analysis shows that there is a certain degree of correspondence between English and Romanian regarding these idioms. Thus, there is a considerable number of odd and humorous idiomatic expressions in both languages which share the same figurative meaning, as well as the same underlying conceptual strategies, a clear proof for cross-cultural cognitive motivation and cross language similarity.

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SATIRE IN JOHN BETJEMAN'S POETRY

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Abstract. Sir John Betjeman has written about the great themes – love, God, death, and place, but he is known for his nostalgia for the past, his exact sense of place, and his precise account of social dysfunctions, at a time when the values he wrote about had been questioned and altered. He used traditional poetic forms, wrote about public issues, celebrated classic architecture, and satirized much of contemporary society for its superficiality, beaurocracy, failure of human communication, hypocrisy, egotism and moral fatigue. Betjeman's poems are often humorous and ironical, characterized by a satirical and observant character. His attack on the values of contemporary society is mainly directed to the promoters of empty and often destructive "progress". "Perhaps [Betjeman] can best be described as a writer who uses the medium of light verse for a serious purpose: not merely as a vehicle for satire or social commentary, but as a means of expressing a peculiar and specialized form of aesthetic emotion, in which nostalgia and humour are about equally blended" (Brooke, 1962). His light, ironical but biting satire on human nature helped him to express his belief in the importance of human values, which makes Betjeman a truly modern significant poet.

Keywords: satire; irony; modern; tradition.

John Betjeman was known as a poet, a writer and a broadcaster who wrote with accessible verse about, public issues, landscape and suburbia, celebrated classic architecture, and satirized much of contemporary society for its superficiality, beaurocracy, failure of human communication, hypocrisy, egotism and moral fatigue. He was born near Highgate, London on August 28th, 1906 and grew up in this London suburb, where T.S. Eliot was one of his teachers. In 1925, Betjeman went to Magdalen College, Oxford but he didn't complete his degree.

Betjeman's first book of verse, *Mount Zion*, and his first book on architecture, *Ghastly Good Taste*, appeared in 1933. Churches, railway stations, and other elements of a townscape are largely evoked in both books. Four more volumes of poetry appeared before the publication of *Collected Poems* (1958). His later collections were *High and Low* (1966), *A Nip in the Air* (1974), *Church Poems* (1981), and *Uncollected Poems* (1982). Betjeman's prose works include several guidebooks to English counties; *First and Last Loves* (1952), essays on places and buildings; *The English Town in the Last Hundred Years* (1956); and *English Churches* (1964; with Basil Clarke). He was knighted in 1969, and in 1972 he succeeded C. Day-Lewis as Poet Laureate of England. This role, combined with his popularity as a television broadcaster, ensured that his poetry reached a large audience.

Betjeman developed numerous close friendships with a variety of people over the years; he wrote many letters and his voluminous correspondence was collected in the two-volume *Letters*, published posthumously beginning in 1994.

Betjeman's poetry was considered something of a phenomenon. It was written in traditional poetic forms and simple everyday language it evoked a sense of nostalgia and a distaste for modern progress. However, it has attracted many readers for its satirical and observant grace and was also praised by literary critics. As Ralph J. Mills

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pointed out in *Descant*, “Betjeman is a phenomenon in contemporary English literature, a truly popular poet. The sudden fame won by his *Collected Poems* ... brought him a wide reputation and made him quickly into a public personality”. (Mills, 1969: 2-18)

Sir John Betjeman has written about the great themes – love, God, death, childhood but he is well-known for his nostalgia for the past, his exact sense of place, and his precise account of social dysfunctions, as he lived in a period when the values he wrote about had been questioned and in permanent change.

Betjeman’s poems are often humorous and satirical; they are pictures of Britain and its people from the 1930s to the 1960s. Betjeman creates a variety of voices in his poems and at times the voices are satirical, at times playful and self-deprecating, at times slightly serious and sad.

Some poems contain more than one aspect of comedy, some focus only on one. Some aspects that can be found include courtship and sexual relationships, representations of gender, bawdy humour and sexual innuendo, comic deflation of pomposity and manners, the mockery of the privileged classes, green world ideas, satire, farce and nonsense, the comedic aspect of ritual, religion and festivity, allegory and upbeat resolutions.” (retrieved from [filestore.aqa.org.uk › resources › english › Aspects of Comedy](http://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/Aspects%20of%20Comedy))

Betjeman lived and wrote during changing times and his poetry reflects a skeptical and critical view of that change in contemporary world. He chooses satirical voices to describe and condemn modern life, especially the world of advertising and commercialism. He mistrusts progress and mocks what he sees as a destruction of the past by those who are mainly interested in making money.

His attitude and thinking is obviously supported by the fact that Betjeman responded to architecture as the visible manifestation of society’s spiritual life as well as its political and economic structure. He attacked speculators and bureaucrats for what he saw as their greed and lack of imagination. In the preface of his collection of architectural essays *First and Last Loves* he says,

We accept the collapse of the fabrics of our old churches, the thieving of lead and objects from them, the commandeering and butchery of our scenery by the services, the despoiling of landscaped parks and the abandonment to a fate worse than the workhouse of our country houses, because we are convinced we must save money.

Betjeman made numerous appearances on television to promote preservation and became, as Willa Petschek maintained, “a cherished national cult.” “Modern “progress” is anathema to him” (Petschek, *The Betjeman Phenomenon*, New York Times Magazine, 1967, 8: 39)

Betjeman distrusts progress and believes that change is, more often than not, for the worse. He hates big business and the profit motive with as much fervor as any Marxist. His attack on the values of contemporary society is mainly directed to the promoters of empty and often destructive “progress”. The property developers who destroy community are the objects of his particular hatred (Taylor-Martin, 1983:13)

His attitude and loathing of greed and of representatives of modern progress is evident in *Advertising Pays* and *The Executive*.

Advertising Pays is told through the voice of an advertising man. The poem is written in the first person and assumes the character of an advertising executive who sits in Claridges, a hotel frequented by important people such as royalty or opinion makers with the aim of: Meeting and greeting persons of renown/ and looking through the

people who are down/. The poem suggests that it pays to influence important people because in turn they will influence others to buy products which are not as good as they are advertised. “I am paid by various representatives of trade/ for telling lies about the things they sell”.

Deflation of pomposity, mockery of privileged classes and above all in it Betjeman attacks the deceit of advertisers, their wide ranging powers (the advertising man he can be nice to everyone when needed” just in case”) and changing faces. Betjeman uses comic hyperbole to mock the unscrupulous attitudes of advertisers who will say anything to make a quick money “six tons of government glue” are sold “in tins as Irish stew”)

In *The Executive* Betjeman constructs the portrait of the young executive with mordant irony and laughs at the smart young businessman and his double identity. The poem’s speaker is the executive pretend to have acquired a certain status symbols (the scarlet Aston-Martin and a speed-boat) although the origin of his wealth is unclear and suggests corruption: “And how did I acquire her? Well, to tell you about that/ And to put you in the picture, I must wear my other hat”.

Betjeman’s criticism of in the decay of human values brought by commercialism and modernity values is amplified in *The Executive*, which also castigates the corruptibility of public officials by private interests: “I do some mild developing. The sort of place I need/Is a quiet country market town that’s rather run to seed/ A luncheon and a drink or two, a little savoir faire -/ I fix the Planning Officer, the Town Clerk and the Mayor”.

The poem, which records a possible meeting between a young developer and a tradition preservationist, is a powerful attack “on a modern idol who is really a modern monster” (G.M. Harvey, *Poetry of Commitment*: 115). The monologue is built upon carefully ironic structure. At first the young man’s pride, self- assurance and obsession with status symbols seem mocking and amusing; this mask is abruptly dropped when his style (modern style) and the brutal reality are brought together; His sudden violence shows him as a profound threat to social order: “Pedestrians and dogs and cats, we mark them down for slaughter”.

In his social role the executive symbolizes the destruction of the traditional, civilized values of order, integrity and humanity, while in his personal attitude and his boast of slaughtering pedestrians with his sports car display his violent impulses. The full irony of his conversation with the presumed poet emerges finally in the satirical tone of the poem’s closing lines: “And if some preservationist attempts to interfere/ A “dangerous structure” notice from the Borough Engineer/ Will settle any buildings that are standing in our way /The modern style, sir, with respect, has really come to stay”. To a certain extent the end of the poem displays also a impotency against the modern style embodied by the young executive and the fear that traditional assets are somehow gone.

The poem Christmas begins in a joyful light tone (the church altars with holly and yew and those who hang bunting in the red Town Hall). Here, Betjeman satirizes the superficiality of the modern world where Christmas decorations and presents have replaced spiritual understanding of the religious festival. Ironically, Betjeman laughs at the gifts such people buy: “Around those tissued fripperies/ The sweet and silly Christmas things/ Bath salts and inexpensive scent/ And hideous tie so kindly meant.”

In a mocking tone, the author admits that Christmas is an unique time of the year: And girls in slacks remember Dad/ And oafish louts remember Mum/ Even sleepless children’s hearts are glad”. However, those ironic voices are contrasted with

the idea that “No love that in a family dwells/ No carolling in frosty air/ Nor all the steeple-shaking bells” cannot be compared with the ancient truth of the Christ birth.

In many poems Betjeman ridicules human behaviour, often through creating absurd voices, especially in the presentation of English society, the manners of the privileged classes, their snobbery and shallowness.

In Westminster Abbey Betjeman uses a dramatic monologue to present the prayer of an upper-class and affluent lady, living in London during the Second World War. She starts the prayer by asking God “to bomb the Germans”, but to “spare their women”. After this, she goes on to ask for God to place her house under “special care”. The female speaker is xenophobic, a snob and a hypocrite who arrogantly thinks she can negotiate with God in prayer because she assumes he shares her prejudices: “Keep our Empire undismembered/ Guide our forces by thy hand/... Protect them Lord in all their fights/ And even more protect the whites. “For these favours she will repay God by going to evening service, ‘whosoever I have the time’. Betjeman is extremely satirical and ironic, showing her absolute ignorance of the Christian faith as she is only praying for her own personal benefit. In the last stanza, through a parallel between the sacred and the fashionable, Betjeman characterizes with a sarcastic irony the woman who says, “Now I feel a little better” as she finished her prayer with “Dear Lord I cannot wait/ Because I have a luncheon date.”

Love, courtship and marriage, sexuality and lust are central aspects of the satirical genre and they are present significantly in Betjeman’s poetry though his poems do not specifically celebrate marriage. (retrieved from [filestore.aqa.org.uk › resources › english](http://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english), Aspects of comedy: 3) In A Subaltern’s Love Song and The Licorice Fields at Pontefract he chooses a self-deprecating voice which through different ways mocks the passion of men who are in love - or in lust. In both poems the male lover finds himself in a state of submission to the charms of the lady.

The poem The Licorice Fields at Pontefract begins like a 19-th century romantic poem: “In the Licorice fields at Pontefract/ My love and I did meet”, but further on, we learn that the speaker, the young lover is smitten with the red hair and sultry lips “shaped for sin” of his love. Also, he is in admiration of her “sturdy legs”, “the strongest legs in Pontefract”. Finally, the hero is “a captive slave” and his love leaves him “winded, wilting [and] weak” as she holds him in her strong and bare brown arms. There is a comical effect in the way the speaker shows his passion “yet at the same time there is an innocent appreciation of the beauty of women and the thrill of desire.” (*ibidem*: 5)

Marriage is seen as a possible happy outcome in *A Subaltern’s Love Song*. Here he builds in an optimistic tone an amorous courtship between the speaker and the graceful Joan Hunter Dunn, presumably, the daughter of a satisfied father who “shines as we walk”. They spend together some time at a county house, play tennis and dance at the county club have a late night sexual encounter in his Hillman and end up engaged; although his engagement seems an erotic fantasy. In *A Subaltern’s Love Song* the speaker is obsessed by the athletic Miss J. Hunter Dunn to whom he subordinates himself - he is her metaphorical subaltern and his wish to be overcome by her is depicted with a slightly masochistic nuance (always depicted with attributes of power, “strongly and adorable”, winning). Miss Dunn is almost the archetypal Betjeman erotic figure characterized by “The speed of a swallow, the grace of a boy”. She is more powerfully constructed than Myfanwy, Wendy in Indoor Games near Newbury, the female in The Attempt or in The Licorice Fields of Pontefract. She is a sort of modern

county type “of femme fatale but more horsey and perhaps a bit beefy.” (John Hollander, Betjeman: *Almost Uniquely Qualified*, New York Times, 1972, 11:18).

Sex and lust are key features of Betjeman’s satirical vision. The subject of Senex and Late Flowering depicts a different kind of passion, the feelings and behaviour of old men who still have desires.

In Senex Betjeman makes use of mocking exaggeration in the story of an old man on his tricycle who sees the “tennis-playing biking girls” with golden hair, whom he can only enjoy voyeuristically. He begins by complaining about the troublesome nature of the flesh which the speaker calls “merry misery”. In risible-sad images he prays not to care about it and he compares the carnal desire with dogs having in their teeth underwear, suspenders and buttocks. The first verse of the poem “Oh Would I could subdue the flesh” shows that it is only a truth about human nature though inappropriate and painful; and the writer is aware of that.

In Late Flowering Betjeman creates an older male persona to mock the sexual desire of old man. There is a fascination with approaching death that permeates the sexual language of the poem. Betjeman connects the concepts (love and death) together as one. Lust and ribaldry are depicted in a comically macabre way. There is sexual humour in the old man’s drunken courting, but he is really no more than a skeleton: the mouth that opens for a kiss “has got no tongue inside”. Here Betjeman connects humour with grotesque; it is a powerful, disturbing image.

Sexuality permeates many of his poems. Betjeman does it in his specific ways; it is expressed through visual and tactile images: “Soap scented fingers I long to caress”, “Black-stockinged legs under navy blue serge”, “Golden the light on the locks of Myfanwy”, (Myfanwy), “I love your brown curls, black in rain my coleen/ I love your grey eyes”, “Press to your cheek, my hand so hot and wasted (The Attempt) or with satirical humorous ribaldry as in Pot Pourri from a Surrey Garden: “Up the Butterfield aisle rich with Gothic enlacement/Licensed now for embracement/Pam and I, as the organ/Thunders over you all” and in Group Life: Letchworth: “Wouldn’t be jolly now, to take your Aertex panters off/And have a jolly tumble in /The jolly, jolly, sun?”

Betjeman is a born versifier and has an unusual mastery of details which make him ingenious and original. “Betjeman,” constitutes a kind of distorting mirror in which all our critical catch-phrases appear in gross unacceptable parody. He is *committed, ambiguous, and ironic*; he is *conscious of literary tradition ... he is a satirist ..., bringing a new language and new properties to poetry...*” (Philip Arthur Larkin, Introduction to *Collected Poems*).

“Perhaps [Betjeman] can best be described as a writer who uses the medium of light verse for a serious purpose: not merely as a vehicle for satire or social commentary, but as a means of expressing a peculiar and specialized form of aesthetic emotion, in which nostalgia and humour are about equally blended.” (Brooke, 1962). His light, ironical but biting satire on human nature helped him to express his belief in the importance of human values, which makes Betjeman a truly modern significant poet.

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COMIC EFFECTS AND SATIRICAL ASPECTS IN THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST BY OSCAR WILDE

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Abstract: The Importance of Being Earnest is one of Oscar Wilde's most famous works, a perfect representation of his social and cultural criticism as it reveals a very humorous approach of the aristocratic class of the Victorian Era. The play exposes the characters' opinions on a variety of topics and it involves the audience with the abundance of paradoxes it presents. The famous witty comments that Wilde shares with the readers/audience make one think of the lying and deceit society had to face. The present article intends to explore the playwrights' humour and irony revealing the layers of his work.

Keywords: humour; society; paradox; satire; food.

Oscar Wilde's society plays are famous all over the world especially for their comic, ironic and satirical elements as they seem to be dealing with very contemporary aspects, thus making readers focus on the way their communities have or have not changed from the time the Irish author created his works. The contrast remarked between what his characters pretend to be and what they actually are is something which cannot be denied in the case of the challenges our society is faced with nowadays.

Famous, to great extent, just for being famous, Wilde may be viewed, from some perspectives, as the first modern man. He is also uniformly hailed as one of the central founders of the modern literary and dramatic traditions; meanwhile, his absurdist farce *The Importance of Being Earnest* might be considered the first modern play in English, or even the first modern play at all. "Modern" was one of Wilde's favorite words: one he used to distraction, describing, variously, the era he lived in, the era to come, the era that his innovations would bring to pass, his work, and himself. (Salamensky 2012: 2)

The Importance of Being Earnest is not only Wilde's best-known play, but it is also part of the curricula in high schools and universities as students are asked to share their opinions on the matters the author intended his readers to become aware of and react in accordance to the times, remembering that people lie, cheat, pretend and sometimes do not care about hurting others or even themselves, as the purpose is to achieve something desired and expected for personal satisfaction.

One of the paradoxes of culture is the absorption of rebels into the canon, so that the work of irony becomes a 'classic', fixing and epitomising a style and a whole period. Wilde treated such notions with a mixture of eagerness and scepticism. He would have relished the irony of his most trivial of comedies being a text for examination in schools. 'Fortunately, in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever ...' (Jackson 1997: 175)

The night of 14th February 1895 represented the premiere of the play at St. James's Theatre and it was Wilde's second work staged that year after *An Ideal Husband* (3rd January 1895). *The Importance of Being Earnest* was received with much

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enthusiasm and Wilde's success was undeniable as the audience could not stop laughing and praising the performance. Considering the fact that Wilde's trials started in the spring of 1895 and they were followed by his incarceration there was a shut down on the performance of the play. However, the accomplishment of the show was presented by the actor Allan Aynsworth (who played the part of Algernon Moncrieff) who years after that production mentioned that he had never seen such enthusiasm from the audience who cheered for a long time, making him realise that it was his most successful appearance on stage.

Although it has been voiced that the reactions of the characters are exaggerated and some of their conversations seem to be a bit unnatural for our contemporary social etiquette, there is no argument about the play's popularity. Wilde's language and his intentions of making readers and audiences laugh and process some traits of social customs that might appear a bit ridiculous offer the delight of the play. *The Importance of Being Earnest* has been acknowledged as one of the best comedies in the English drama revealing Wilde's literary achievement in the field as it represents "a bright bubble of nonsense which mocked every principle, law, and custom, of the society he lived in." (Eltis 1996: 171)

The play begins with Algernon playing the piano, even though he does not seem to be very talented. The description of his room shows that he belongs to the upper class and the presence of his butler also points to his lifestyle. However his response seems to hint from the very beginning to the novel *The Green Carnation* and its veiled presentation of homosexuality and to the desire to keep things private when necessary:

Algernon asks Lane if he has heard what he was playing. Lane replies, "I didn't think it polite to listen, sir" (C. W., 321). For the Victorian audience, Lane's is the seemingly guarded response of the domestic servant expressing his detached view of the household activities. However, the fact that the term "musical" was a 1890s code word for homosexuality illuminates quite another aspect of the scene. When Lane announces that he did not think it polite to acknowledge Algernon's musicianship, he represents through encoded verbal allusion Victorian society's refusal to acknowledge behaviors which it knows exist and which affront its moral codes and assumptions, even when that society and its attitudes are challenged directly, as Algernon challenges Lane. In order to maintain his detached role as one who supposedly does not observe beyond his station, Lane is forced into the hypocritical and absurd position of denying his own senses. In his witty exchange with Lane, Algernon affirms the power of dandy language to manipulate characters into revealing the inherent absurdity of their poses by saying (or doing) things which they know contradict a reality which they otherwise acknowledge. (Flanagan Behrendt 1991: 173)

In *The Importance of Being Earnest* the author focuses also on the absurdity of the situations all of his characters share, making the play extraordinarily funny throughout their encounters and conversations. Even though there are times when laughing about what the characters share in their talks might be against one's principles and values there is no argument about the presence of paradox and parody in the text. One famous example is Algernon's concern with his aunt's dinner party and his being placed next to Mary Farquhar

who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner-table. That is not very pleasant. Indeed, it is not even decent ... and that sort of thing is enormously on the increase. The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public. (Wilde 2010: 78)

By changing “dirty” into “clean” Algernon supports the idea that happy marriages should not be talked about as it is scandalous to flaunt a good and honest marriage. This might also be influenced by his own morality and the lack of shame when it came to paying off his debts and to being honest with his family. In any case the audience finds it amusing, even though of course supporting a happy and healthy marriage is the natural reaction of society. The criticism is not only against the standards of the Victorians, but at the same time it deals with the audiences’ reaction to such issues.

The genius of Wilde’s Society Plays, especially the quintessential *The Importance of Being Earnest*, is that Wilde is able to seamlessly marry *satire* and *family drama*, and thus they can be read as double commentary on the outside world and a fictional world. Thus, if the *story* itself becomes the focal point of contemplation – without having to read Wilde’s stories solely in light of the audience’s world *outside* of the world of the play – I argue that his Society Plays, especially *The Importance of Being Earnest*, are thoroughly *family dramas*, and – given the strictures and structures of upper-class Victorian society – serious, albeit often light, investigations into social and individual psychology and their ultimate effects on family dynamics. (Bennett 2015: 4)

The author enjoyed pointing to things that would seem rather odd in a real life situation, such as Algernon’s fascination with food and especially with muffins. Nowadays few men would comment on their pleasure of eating muffins with such enthusiasm as he did. The talk that Algernon and Jack have while including the topic of the dessert may even seem ridiculous to a point, but nevertheless the readers/audience truly enjoy the comic atmosphere that is creates. The fact that Algernon is fond of muffins and insists on telling his friend about it when they have several serious conversations shows somehow a certain type of refuge in the food, the mentioning of that topic helps provide the comic effect that Wilde intended.

ALGERNON. If it was my business, I wouldn’t talk about it. [*Begins to eat muffins.*] It is very vulgar to talk about one’s business. Only people like stockbrokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties.

JACK. How can you sit there, calmly eating muffins when we are in this horrible trouble, I can’t make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

ALGERNON. Well, I can’t eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

JACK. I say it’s perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

ALGERNON. When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as anyone who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins. [*Rising.*]

JACK [Rising]. Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way. [Takes muffins from ALGERNON.] ALGERNON [*Offering tea-cake*]. I wish you would have tea-cake instead. I don't like tea-cake.

JACK. Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

ALGERNON. But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.

JACK. I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances. That is a very different thing.

ALGERNON. That may be. But the muffins are the same. [*He seizes the muffin-dish from JACK.*] (Wilde 2010: 125)

The muffins are also regarded by Cecily as some sort of a dish that brings upon repentance, something that has to be earned somehow. There is also Algernon's eating all the cucumber sandwiches which his aunt enjoyed so much right before her arrival for tea, as he promised to order some especially for her, while not letting Jack touch any of them and lying to Lady Bracknell that there were no cucumbers at the market, not even for "ready money", after realising that he had eaten all of them. In some way he is getting back at his aunt by no providing her with what she wanted and so not following her instructions. The cucumber sandwiches were considered a "reckless extravagance" showing that only people from the higher class were able to afford the cucumbers, which were not considered nutritious enough and also lacked protein, while the poorer individuals were trying to purchase food which could give them energy and so not waste their money. The pre-dinner snack with the cucumber sandwiches was a sign of status being the favourite of the upper class as that is exactly the reason why Lady Bracknell requested them. Algernon is aware that in the Bracknell family the lady of the house is the one that gets whatever she wants considering the fact that her husband does not appear in the play and apparently has no voice of his own, his wife being the one expressing their personal opinions on all the important matters.

Whilst the references to food seem to imply a criticism of the upper class and a way of exerting power over one another in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Wilde uses food imagery also as a medium to heighten the sense of farce embedded in his play. His constant reference to cucumber sandwiches as a metaphor for the superficiality of the late Victorian upper class has found life outside of the play, and even today the cucumber sandwich eating upper class "dandy" seems to exist as a recognizable stereotype within British culture. (Fenge 2016: 93)

The way in which Algernon behaves might be found also in Wilde's character who enjoyed lying to his friends and he found it appealing being a mystery, so there came as no surprise when the protagonists of his most famous play are also liars leading a double life. Both Jack and Algernon create alter egos meant to help them escape to the city for the former and to the country for the latter. Jack talks about his brother Ernest who lives in the city and he sometimes visits, while Algernon has a sick friend called Bunbury who is always feeling under the weather exactly at the right moment he needs to escape a social gathering. When Algernon finds out what Jack has been doing he is not angry but insists on talking about what Jack had told him: "You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to every one as Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest." (Wilde 2010:75)

While one might feel betrayed by a friend who has lied about his identity Algernon feels a stronger bond to and he decides to describe Jack as a fellow

Bunburyist, confusing him a bit in the beginning and then explaining what he meant by such a name:

ALGERNON. [...] What you really are is a Bunburyist. I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know.

JACK. What on earth do you mean?

ALGERNON. You have invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's¹ to-night, for I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week. (Wilde 2010: 77)

The two protagonists tell their families whatever they consider appropriate in order to help them avoid explaining the real reasons for doing one thing or another. Their fabrications are actually true in the end, even though they have to assume their identities as following the final discoveries:

The amusing conclusion thus puts the teasing homoerotic insinuations between Jack, Algernon, and Algernon's forged friend, Bunbury in fictional suspension. From one perspective, it looks as if the real world of the play has simply mimicked fiction. Yet from another, the comedy shows that fiction must remain intact for real life to continue. (Bristow & Mitchell 2015: 303)

Jack's surname is taken from the place the man who found him was going but it also represented the location where Wilde himself had taken his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, on holiday, thus inserting personal elements as well and not tackling only with Victorian society as a whole which was on the verge of collapse, always facing what they wanted to be and what they really were. This is much the case of Gwendolen for example. She is certain she does not wish to follow into her mother's footsteps but at the same time she guides Jack to propose to her exactly in the manner that she finds suitable to her desires:

JACK. Gwendolen, I must get christened at once – I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.

GWENDOLEN. Married, Mr. Worthing?

JACK [Astounded]. Well ... surely. You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.

GWENDOLEN. I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.

JACK. Well ... may I propose to you now?

GWENDOLEN. I think it would be an admirable opportunity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr. Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you.

JACK. Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN. Yes, Mr. Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

JACK. You know what I have got to say to you.

GWENDOLEN. Yes, but you don't say it.

JACK. Gwendolen, will you marry me? [*Goes on his knees.*]

GWENDOLEN. Of course I will, darling. How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

JACK. My own one, I have never loved anyone in the world but you.

GWENDOLEN. Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girl-friends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present. (Wilde 2010: 84-85)

This type of behaviour is meant to guide readers towards family drama. The high standards of the Victorian society that Wilde wanted to criticize and the rather foolish behaviour one would observe in some characters such as the desire both Gwendolen and Cecily share of having a husband named Ernest no matter what his character might actually be. Gwendolen mentions that there is “absolute confidence” about the name as it is a “safe name”, while not seeing the absurdity of dreaming of someone just because he bears a certain name, while mentioning to Jack that: “We live, as I hope you know, Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits I am told: and my ideal has always been to love some one of the name of Ernest” (Wilde 2010:83). Gwendolen is not the only one talking about marriage and commitment. There is also the moment when Lady Bracknell calmly shared her opinion about engagements and marriage when Jack comes to be assessed in order to see his potential for marrying her daughter: LADY BRACKNELL. To speak frankly, I am not in favour of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other’s character before marriage, which I think is never advisable. (Wilde 2010: 135)

Lady Windermere’s Fan, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest* all include masterful portrayals of the gender wars up close, with plots hinging on domestic power struggles, romantic and financial haggling, confusion about what constitutes the “good” or the “ideal” woman or man, and a critical look at society’s hypocritical condemnation of “women with a past” versus its tacit endorsement of philandering men. Wilde features strong female protagonists who turn things to their advantage on the strength of their own will and intelligence, and who sometimes form unexpected, counterintuitive alliances with others that expand their individual and social horizons and develop alternative visions of marriage, family, and female self-fulfilment. (Diekerkes-Thrun 2015: 80)

The connections that are finally revealed between the characters prove that they were not only telling the truth but they have to adapt in order to believe what they are actually saying. The end of the play where Jack mentions how vital it is to be earnest while he is accused of showing signs of triviality by Lady Bracknell who is confident that she is never wrong being the leader of her family, who no includes the newly found Ernest. The solutions found in the play seem rather ridiculous and odd, but nevertheless incredibly amusing as in Wilde’s work the solution was always exposed as a problem in order to portray the social satire intended for the readers/audience.

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LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF HUMOUR IN THE 18TH CENTURY LITERATURE

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Abstract: The concern in linguistics of humour has the purpose to describe and explain its function in language. Linguistics has an important role in humorology because language is the medium of producing humour. During the 18th century there was a wide range of literary humour, much of this being sarcastic. We chose to analyse Jane Austen's novel in order to show the role of linguistic aspects of humour in criticizing the society of that time.

Keywords: humour; laughter; irony; sarcasm.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse how British writers of the 18th century used humour in their works. The concern in linguistics of humour has the purpose to describe and explain its function in language. Academic research on humour goes back to Plato and Aristotle and to the numerous journals and books dedicated to this topic. Linguistics has an important role in humorology because language is the medium of producing humour.

Humour is the quality of being amusing or comic: (...) the ability to appreciate things, situations or people that are comic; the ability to be amused: (...)” (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* 1995).

In Latin the word “humour” stands for moisture. In ancient times it was meant as the right and healthy condition of body fluids. But nowadays it represents a well-known element of literature. The need of people to get entertained in a humoristic way is placed in nearly all epochs of mankind. *Humour* can be distinguished between “clean” and “dark” humoristic styles. Among dark writings we can differentiate: satire, irony, parody or even sarcasm. A well-known example is the so called “black humour”. Different interpretations of humour depend on nations, social classes, or mentality.

During the 18th century there was a wide range of literary humour, much of this being sarcastic. Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne wrote humorous novels which became instruments of social reforms.

In Fielding's works a great deal of wit is displayed and satire is used when the vices of vanity and hypocrisy are ridiculed. Lord of Chesterfield told his son that “a gentleman is often seen, but very seldom heard, to laugh” “exquisite mirth and laughter” were recommended by Fielding for their therapeutic effects on mind of man. In his “Preface” to *Joseph Andrews* they “conduce better to purge away spleen, melancholy, and ill affections, than is generally imagined. Nay, I will appeal to common observation [...] whether the same companies are not found more full of good humour, and benevolence, after they have been sweetened for two or three hours with entertainments of this kind, than were soured by a tragedy or a grave lecture”. By his “comic epic poems in prose”, Fielding provided his readers with good humour and benevolence in minds and hearts of men.

England is famous for the *English humour* and Jane Austen is a representative for this style. Some critics describe her works as novels of social comedy. A characteristic for the 18th century was the quick change of literary taste. The society

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was always corrupt and common life was still rough and full of superficial manners, but one thing changed during the last years of the 18th century: feelings got more and more popular and refined. A new kind of fiction, a comedy of life and manners, appeared on the literary stage. In the world of novelists Jane Austen can be seen as a pioneer of comedy because she combined her gifts in writing wit and satire totally effortless. She always wanted to keep her own style: a reflection of the society she lived in. Jane Austen was born into a world surrounded by leafy parks and smooth lawns. Her literary genius lies in the perfect and unique simplicity which make the reader feels magically transported into the eighteenth century life, rather than reading a book. Sometimes Jane Austen is compared to Shakespeare because there is the same criticism of life and the quick irony which exposes it (Dawson 1998). Like Shakespeare, Jane Austen was an ironical censurer of her contemporaries. Her ironical approach uses an indirect method of imitating and exaggerating the faults of her models (Simpson 1968, p. 52).

In her works, especially in *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen rebuilds the society where she integrates her serious concern over the appropriate relation of the individuals through a structure of description and dialogue. She expresses her views by giving humourless formality on the social side and cynical moments and amusement on the individual side (Duckworth 1971: 140).

In Austen writing irony has the function to express her antipathy, severity and disgust towards an imperfect society, a characteristic tone for Austen in Simpson view. Sometimes her use of irony is interpreted as being cruel or merely humorous. Lionel Trilling says: "sooner or later, when we speak of Jane Austen, we speak of her irony, and it is better to speak of it sooner rather than later because nothing can so far mislead us about her work as a wrong misunderstanding of this one aspect of it (Trilling 1954: 124)". He thinks that irony is a fundamental element in Jane Austen's works with the exception Mansfield Park. In this novel the ironic undertone seems to be absent (Byrne 2014: 73).

Jane Austen combines social criticism and humour; she has the ability of combining different desires of people. By signs of the body or dialogues of her characters she shows their erotic motives. Under the humoristic surface there is also erotic. (Maletzke 1997: 12).

The novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, is written in a humoristic way with plenty of ironic text passages or situations which maintain the interest of the reader along the story of love and marriage. Jane Austen uses different ways to show humour and irony to the reader: by giving imagery, character descriptions and by creating comical conversations. In her novel the reader himself is often a "victim" of her ironic way of writing. She gives readers a point of view of themselves in a very specific way, so that they are able to laugh at themselves. She also loves to create characters and to make fun of them afterwards by presenting them as ridiculous persons. Persons she likes to attack are often foolish, arrogant or ignorant. Her intention is not only the entertainment of the reader. She also uses irony and humour to show her personal opinions on society. Satire is used by Jane Austen to show unintelligible behaviour in morals or ethics and stupid social manners.

One important aspect to mention is the appreciation of humour by the reader. While a modern reader might find the society ridiculed by Austen not at the same extent at the time of the novel publication since the contemporary norms and values are quite different from those of the 18th century.

Elisabeth Bennet is the protagonist whose sense of humor might be seen as a marker for her growth and maturity. This feature is described both by the narrator and

the other characters of the novel: her cousin Mr. Collins who when proposing to her talks of her “wit and vivacity”, which he wishes to silence (Austen, 93), her sister Jane who is used to Elisabeth’s sarcasm: “Laugh as much as you choose, but you will not laugh me out of my opinion” (Austen, 76); or the narrator says “But Elisabeth was not formed for ill-humour; and so every prospect of her own was destroyed for the evening, it could not dwell long on her spirits.”(Austen, 79).

Humour is used as a reaction of fighting against Lady de Bourgh’s insult upon Elisabeth and her sisters’ education. Instead of being intimidating by a person of a higher social rank and age, our protagonist is amused by Lady de Bourgh critics and she “hardly could help smiling” (Austen, 141).

This scene provides an example for the use of humour in order to exercise power and dignity. Elisabeth refuses to submit herself to the power of high social class and fights for her place and respect.

Sense of humour belongs to smart people and positive characters. An example is Elisabeth’s father who reacts in an allied and humorous way when our protagonist refuses her cousin proposal: “An unhappy alternative is before you, Elisabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. Your mother will never see you again if you do NOT marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you if you DO.” (Austen, 97). Elisabeth, just as her father, chooses at times to counter her mother’s attack in a playful manner.

Elisabeth relationship with Mr. Darcy involves humorous exchanges and witty commentaries. The tone of their relationship is given by Mr. Darcy who refuses to invite her to dance and comments on her appearance as “tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt [him].” (Austen, 11) In turn, Elisabeth uses humour to defend against his review and henceforward she engages in attempts to tease and mock him in order to reveal his proud and disagreeable character.

The sense of humour allows our protagonist to handle the challenges of life and society and helps her to reach maturity and mental and spiritual growth. The fact that Elisabeth develops into the particular kind of woman she can be perceived as critique against women’s social position. The novel uses humour to explore women options and possibilities of development in different ways.

The use of humour in *Pride and Prejudice* is a safe way for Jane Austen to proclaim her opinions about the mentalities and to criticize the society without offending anyone. This manner of criticizing through humour and with the help of a “feminine” character allows Austen to practice criticism and develop the novel.

Literary humour is thus obviously subject to historical changes and has social impact and, in order to last it must be sufficiently simple and pleasant.

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IRONY AND HUMOUR IN THE NOVELS BY VIRGINIA WOOLF AND GRAHAM SWIFT

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to look, comparatively, at the way irony and humour appear in the novels by Virginia Woolf and Graham Swift. The paper will answer the following questions: In which novels are irony and humour more present, in the ones closer to traditional novels or in the more innovative ones by Virginia Woolf? What is the role of irony and humour next to lyrical moments in both authors' novels? The theoretical framework will combine narratological theory with pragmatics and psychology.

Keywords: jokes; satire; comedy; tragedy.

The use of irony and humour can be associated with the way a person can be seen as presentable and witty in a conversation in the novels by Virginia Woolf and Graham Swift. Even though their novels have been analysed as lyrical novels (Drobot 2014), they also have an ironic and humorous dimension. We can notice some novels by both authors where the characters use language in a very skilful way in their monologues, addressed to the reader, such as the title character in the novel *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf, Bill Unwin in the novel *Ever After* and George in *The Light of Day* by Graham Swift. All three characters improve their use of language: Orlando throughout the ages tries to improve his/ her writing skills, Bill Unwin moves around in an academic, literary world, and finds his own tragedy reflected in the great works of art, while George is a detective who has the chance to learn language skills from Sarah, a Modern Languages Lecturer. Hermione Lee (1977: 147) states that there is “the fluctuation between wit and lyricism in the treatment of *Orlando*”. Harold Bloom, in *The Western Canon*, identifies *Orlando* as a defense of poetry, “half laughing, half seriously”, as Woolf claimed in her diary (Virginia Woolf, 1980: 131). Wood underlines the fact that George’s language is “full of subtle linguistic effects, and even a ‘fugitive lyricism’” (Lea 2005: 189). In *Ever After*, according to Malcolm (1977: 143), the “incidents involving the Potters often recall social satire”. The irony and humour are elements which concern the use of a witty type of language, a language that questions all social realities the characters witness. In Woolf’s novels such as *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* there are episodes where there is dialogue, and through it the characters confront their partner by showing how they can keep a conversation, entertain and display their wits. Similar scenes occur in Graham Swift’s *Last Orders*, where the characters take part in a sad moment, the funeral of their friend, but at the same time with lyrical and philosophical reflections they make lots of witty remarks, showing their humour and irony at various aspects of life. The irony and humour are strongly tied to aspects of social satire present in the novels of both authors.

The intention of Woolf when she wrote *Mrs Dalloway* also has to do with ironic, humorous and critical aspects of society: she “was a prosaic novelist as well as a poetic one, a satirist and social critic as well as a visionary [...] In novels like *Night and Day*, *Jacob’s Room*, *Mrs Dalloway*, *The Years*, and *Between the Acts*, Woolf is deeply

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engaged by the question of how the individual is shaped (or deformed) by his social environment, by how historical forces impinge on his life and shift its course, by how class, wealth, and sex help to determine his fate." (Zwerdling 1977: 69). Meng Xiang Jie (2003) identifies elements which make *Mrs Dalloway* a literary work promoting social satire:

First, Mrs. Dalloway portrays Big Ben by symbolism. The Big Ben is the symbol of the Queen. It controls people's acts and thinking tightly, and it even disturbs and pries into the private life of people. Besides, as followers of Big Ben, the sounds of other bells also function as forces to control people tightly. Next, the reactionaries leading by the Queen persecute every revoler, Septimus is such a revoler who is conceived by critics as a madman. In fact, he is a thinker and a revolutionist. Septimus was a promising young man, and had a bright future. But the World War I destroyed him. When the First World War ended, he found himself unable to feel. He begins to reevaluate the world like a thinker. He totally denies the English society and holds that it is full of evil, loath, and agony. Septimus wants to overturn the old society, and build up a new world. But the evil society would not allow revolters like him to live in the world. The controller of the society and his accessories suppress him through such representative figures as Dr Holmes and Sir William. [...] Virginia Woolf's satire on English society is reflected in the no-love society. There is no love between people. If there is love, it is an ugly and cruel one.

Through the criticism of society as a society of no love among people, Woolf suggests the theme of isolation of the individual, common in the Modernist literature. She also sets up the mood of what follows after Modernism, that of questioning. She suggests a questioning mood when she illustrates the individuals' being controlled by other individuals or by the state, and thus imposing certain rules, norms, values and perspectives of life on them. Through this, she suggests a questioning of the mainstream perspectives and mainstream values. Woolf claimed that "on or about December, 1910, human character changed" (1966: 320). According to Kenney Jr. (1977: 42), "she proceeded to argue, without specifying the causes or nature of that change, that because human character had changed the novel must change if it were to be a true representation of human life." Woolf had a tradition with the use of humour ever since the Charleston Bulletin, the newspaper created by her family. Her humour has been noticed by the British Library: "No one escapes the sharp wit and teasing by aunt and nephew, and Woolf's humour and mischievous nature are brought to the fore in this new publication by one of the 20th century's greatest authors." (Flood 2013) She makes fun of her brother in law, Clive Bell, and her jokes are very much appreciated by her family: "It is understood that Clive Bell Esquire attained his present undisputed eminence in the world of Art and Letters by his skill in the science of equitation; and his vulpine ascendancy here displayed to which his literary zeal, and familiarity with the classics of our tongue here displayed, added little or nothing of ponderable gravity." (Flood 2013) Here she makes use of playing with words, of witty language, but at the same time in her description of her brother-in-law she manages to be very concise, very to the point and very effective in suggesting to the audience a description of him. Woolf is a very good observer of social realities: her novel *Mrs Dalloway* has been called a "dark comedy of manners" (Colletta 2003: 37). According to Colletta (2003: 37), Woolf might well have been remembered by her readers as a writer with a great sense of humour and great use of satire: "Virginia Woolf thought that her reputation might well

rest on her satiric sensibilities and that she would be remembered merely for being a humorist, and in most of her writing her satirical impulses are evident."

The image of Woolf as a humourist and satirist contradicts the image created of her by the media recently and by the literary world, through the book and film *The Hours* written by Michael Cunningham, where the focus is on the episode of her depression and on the sad aspects of her novel *Mrs Dalloway*. There are two sides to Woolf's writing, poetic – humourous, lyrical – narrative, inner world – outer world.

Graham Swift's novels work on a similar principle. With both writers, it depends which aspects take up the readers' attention. There is in *Last Orders* by Swift a strong contrast between humour and tragedy, which can be brought together to suggest black humour.

The humour present in Graham Swift's *Last Orders* is classified as black humour, due to the reactions to Jack's death:

Thomas Leclair in his article "Death and Black Humor" rightly concludes that
For the Black Humorists, man alive is in the midst of death; in their fiction, death is more than a convenient resolution for plot...it is a cause of action rather than an effect, an end that dictates beginnings and middles. (Leclair 1975: 7)

Swift handles his characters and their events in such a way as to yield a tragicomic picture of both. The tragedy is felt less in the event of Jack's death than in the lives of the other characters, but its impact on the reader is weakened by the comic delineation of the characters and their behaviour throughout the story. (Fares)

The comedy and tragedy coexists in the novels of the two authors, and are equally present, depending on the episode we focus as readers and as critics. Professor Lidia Vianu has noticed the coexisting of lyricism and irony, and has asked Graham Swift in an interview about this, in relation to his novels:

LV. *Out of This World* and *Shuttlecock* are intensely personal experiences, related with an eye open to irony. How do you make lyricism and irony coexist? Would you agree that this is a typical feature of your generation, the Desperado writers?

GS. Lyricism and irony can coexist, and need to – imagine looking at the world entirely without one or the other. I'm a great believer in 'this and that', in complexity, even paradox. Confusion again! The title of one of my novels – *Waterland* – is itself an ambiguity, a 'both' not an 'either/or'. I'm fascinated by borderline conditions, or rather by the difficulty of drawing a distinct line between some fundamental human concerns – between past and present, say, or history and story. There's an even more impossible line, which I think all writers of fiction sooner or later come to reflect on – the line between what we agree to call the real world and a world that exists but mainly in our heads, the world of imagination, memory and invention. In short, the line between fact and fiction. I think we're all hybrid, ambiguous creatures inhabiting both worlds and we can be lyrical about each. As soon as we're aware of how imprecise the border is between the two, irony steps in. (Vianu 2009: 343)

Swift thus believes that irony is introduced once we go into a questioning mood. The identification with fictional characters falls into this category, and an example is Bill Unwin in *Ever After*. His personal dilemmas resonate with those of Hamlet, but only up to a point. When he comes back to the realities of the conflicts in the academic world, the mood switches to satire and irony. In the interview, Swift

shows his declared intent and awareness of using the coexistence of the two aspects: lyricism and irony. Woolf was also situated in-between lyricism and irony, traditionalism and a break with tradition: her novels have been classified as belonging to Victorian Modernism and Romantic Modernism. She oscillated between the realist tradition, of portraying characters and creating social satire and comedy, on the one hand, and breaking up with traditional narration, and focusing on poetic prose. Woolf's novel *Orlando* has a similar vein, where an intellectual, a writer, the title character, goes through various ages and comments critically the social conventions of the times. Like Bill Unwin, Orlando apparently tries to view his life from various perspectives, he or she tries on many different identities and even many different ages and cultural mentalities. The mixture of social comedy and lyricism persists here as well.

What theories, narratological, pragmatic, or psychological can be used to better explain this mixture?

The main explanation lies in the way that allusions to other literary texts are means of creating irony and humour.

The irony is a technique which creates the following consequences: what is described appears to be the reality, when in fact the reality is something else. Swift and Woolf use intertextuality, with references and parallels to other works, to create an opposite result. In Graham Swift's *Ever After*, Prentis is not the hero that Hamlet suggests to the reader. Prentis compares his life incidents with those in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, yet his life is far from being heroic. The episode where the couple in the academic domain wishes to steal a scientific discovery is far from the heroic and romantic aura that he creates when he tells the story of meeting Mr Potter's wife. The play by Shakespeare is also an element used by Woolf in her novel *Between the Acts* to create parallels with heroic, literary characters and real-life characters who question life and take it humorously, and no longer as seriously as characters in the past literary works did. In *Mrs Dalloway*, there are also intertextual references to Shakespeare's works, namely to *Cymbeline*, which parallel memories of Clarissa's youth and Septimus' thoughts of suicide. The role of such references is to intensify the tragic and lyrical mood, but also to create a strong contrast between serious, lyrical, tragical atmosphere belonging to the literary references of the past and that open to questioning and humour belonging to the world of the current novels by Woolf and Swift. Woolf also uses references to Greek tradition in order to create a comic atmosphere, by taking the ancient comedy further. The short story *A Society* by Virginia Woolf

deploys the mechanisms and plots of famous Aristophanean comedies, such as *Lysistrata* and *Women of the Assembly*, in order to enhance its own utopian and critical message. Taking the genre of ancient comedy as a foil, the development of the story, from the comic idea to the various references to historical, as much as personal, events acquires an enriched dimension that illustrates the writer's learned and refined art of an illusion. All in all, it is a witty and hilarious example of Virginia Woolf's original and creative art of reception of the Greek classical tradition. (Romero Mariscal 2012: 5)

The short story brings to the fore Woolf's skills of social observation: "With a subtle comic touch, the narrator describes the idleness of a group of six or seven women who are sitting together after tea." (Romero Mariscal 2012: 10)

The mixture of poetry and irony is not restricted to novels that were considered more innovative than the others. *Mrs Dalloway* has been considered an example of Woolf's innovative style, yet to what extent has she managed to do what she intended? The social aspects are still there, just like in *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, novels

which remind of Jane Austen's style. Like Austen, she tries to make use of comic irony, meaning suggesting that a character believes a certain thing about another character, and then the belief proves not to be true. All characters have certain ideas about the others throughout Woolf's and Swift's novels. The reader has access to these ideas, for example in the novel *Last Orders* by Graham Swift, the main character, Jack, has died and his friends are on a journey to scatter his ashes at Margate. We get our perception as readers on Jack through the perspectives of his friends, and our impressions can be contradicted, as we move from their perspectives to those of the members of his family.

We notice that common to both authors is the use of comic irony, and the use is not restricted to the more experimental novels written by Virginia Woolf. The irony is situational, although there are also instances of verbal irony, where the authors play skilfully with language. For instance, in *Last Orders*, Vic refers to the box where Jack's ashes are saying that it "looks like a large instant-coffee jar". (Swift 1996: 3)

The joking mood in *Last Orders*, otherwise dealing with a tragic and serious subject, death, could be regarded as a means of compensation, of keeping sane, as a defence mechanism in front of the sad reality of life. In *The Two Principles of Mental Functioning*, Sigmund Freud develops a theory claiming that, with respect to jokes, we try to look for pleasure and to get rid of pain. This could be applied to the novels as well as to Modernism and Postmodernism, when they promote questioning, irony and a humorous approach to what seemed to be the mainstream perspective on life and the mainstream values. Comic and lyrical coexist with traditional narration in the novels of both authors. Perhaps the problematic issues are avoided by means of being apparently less serious about it, through resorting to a humorous frame. In *Mrs Dalloway* one of the themes is also death, and it is balanced by a sense of comedy. Even as far back as Horace, in *Ars Poetica*, laughing was used to create a connection with the reader, as art was supposed to both teach and make the reader have fun (Christensen 1981: 151, 154). "Elegance of tone with triviality of content" is another way of understanding the mixture of moods in *Mrs Dalloway* (Ames 1972: 368). According to Little (1983: 21), Woolf uses comedy as a technique in order to say "many dangerous things obliquely". Rachman (1972: 8) notices that the British class system is portrayed "in a comic vein", by making fun of the hypocrisy found in society. In contrast to the affectation and artificiality of society satirized in *Mrs Dalloway*, the characters in *Last Orders* are extremely natural and spontaneous. They do not act as the social norms claim they should, they let themselves think and act as they feel. As a result, the humour is a good part of their experience of travelling together.

According to pragmatics theory, irony and jokes should be instances of violating the cooperation principle, yet in the novels this theory cannot explain all instances of humour. The characters make use of skilful plays-upon-words and are more sophisticated than those that tell jokes in everyday life. The authors create a game of perception and perspective, as sometimes it is lyricism that comes to the attention of the reader, and other times the humour and irony. Narratological theories tell the difference between fabula and story, and they can account for capturing the reader's attention in this way. Sometimes the level of the fabula comes into the foreground, but firstly it is the level of the story that we perceive. At the level of the story, incidents are modelled by the work of writers. They can change the order in which incidents appear in the story, and contradict the normal chronological order. The level of the fabula consists of the incidents which go through the work of the readers' imagination.

The use of irony, humour, comedy and all elements which give a lighthearted tone to the works of Swift and Woolf have the role to balance the serious themes of

death which are common to both of them. In this way, the reader finds a way out of the dark atmosphere. The humorous remarks serve as ways of relieving tension of the tragic and dramatic moods suggested by poets such as Shakespeare to whom there are intertextual references. The questioning of norms and frames of mind start in a humorous way, in order to seemingly test the ground with readers of serious cultural backgrounds, and later the readers are drawn in to judge and reflect on the ways we can still relate to the past cultural heritage. The entire process is part of creating a connection with the reader and to help him or her sympathize with the characters. The characters in Woolf and Swift may share some of their own doubts and concerns related to contemporary culture and world affairs. In time, values and mentalities change. The writers try to keep up with these changes through setting up a dialogue between past and present mentalities, as in the novel *Ever After*, where Unwin identifies himself with Hamlet, while the setting is so different. Unwin moves about in the academic world, while Hamlet is part of a royal world with its laws. Hamlet is always serious, while Unwin also takes up a humorous and ironic approach to his life problems.

The powerful contrast between tragedy and comedy is another way to blur up boundaries in the works of Woolf and Swift. They try to make these two aspects coexist in a harmonious way, that does not make the reader feel that they treat life's important issues (such as death) with disrespect. The mixture of poetry and humour makes the characters relatable for the reader; he or she feels that they can easily sympathize with these characters precisely due to the spontaneous mixture of comedy and tragedy, poetry and irony, which are all naturally present in everyday life.

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THE ABSURD CHARACTER IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S THEATRE PLAYS

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Abstract: Over time, the absurd theatre surprised the theoretical thinking and became the researchers' major subject of modern and post-modern literature. It can be said that the idea of absurd thinking preceded its literary representation; but the concept first existed as a genuine experience of the absurd, as an intuition or as a true sense of absurdity, then as a genuine theoretical attitude towards the world, life, freedom or death. Undoubtedly, there is no absurd unitary literary movement that can be recognized in literature because of its common features. None of the writers adhere to a common view of the world. However, artistic consciousness can refuse to recognize an aesthetic category, which, ultimately, from the perspective of literary critique can become with time, a defining one for the literary production of that age. Thus, although one can not speak of a literary movement, there is still a significant aesthetic structure, specific to the absurd theatre and literature in Beckett's theatre plays. In our article, we try to decipher to what extent Beckett's works show the symptoms of the world's existential crisis. The phenomenon of this crisis - social, existential, language or communication - is manifested at all levels. It appears as a disorder, a destruction of an existing order, and at the same time as a condemnation of this order in which Beckett combined nostalgic humor with a devastating sense of pain and defeat.

Keywords: modern literature; post-modern literature; absurd theatre.

Postmodernism is an orientation in the universal culture, manifested in the second half of the twentieth century. The postmodern literature takes up the idea of recovering in a parodic and playful style all the other previous currents, with the representative methods and type of writing. Postmodernism recovers the previous aesthetic experience, but one it treats in a new way: ironic, playful, parodic. There is a new opening to the real, to the authenticity of the world and of being, but this authenticity is of a different kind than that postulated by modernism.

The tragic expectation, the disappointment, the impossibility of communication in a marginal and absurd world, the degradation and the fall are the obsessive themes of Samuel Beckett's work. Thus, Beckett's humanity is decomposing, full of diffuse beings, mutilated, paralyzed, enclosed in a chamber or clay pot, buried in the sand, crawling into the mud. The beckettian character can only be dismembered, dumb or blind, whose degradation has been taken to the limit. He does not even have the certainty of his existence, and alienation can not be mentioned. But Beckett's theatre plays have a very different purpose than the conventional ones and, therefore, they are used by very different methods. They can only be judged according to the criteria of the theatre of the absurd, and the purpose of this article is to define it and make it intelligible. This brings us closer to the postmodern character, exiled in a place of no one, into a space of degraded matter.

Beckett's man is "a human being who travels through the world and life, a human being on the road that comes from nowhere and leads to nowhere. This man is struggling in rotten environments and his only repeated attempt is that of self-denial, but

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failure is inevitable. The only existential comfort is the character's illusion. These characters want to get out of their self just to return to themselves" (Balotă, N., 2000: 394).

Beckett's message is obvious, and his writings will confirm that words can do anything. But, equally, the opposite is true: often, they can do nothing. And if, therefore, fiction is unhelpful in the face of reality, however, only this fiction of helplessness can be real. As such, we understand very clearly that the pleasures of the imagination are not at all innocent, and the very act of writing (or reading) distorts reality to varying degrees, especially that- central - according to which we are all prisoners in our own bodies and that soon we may not even be so.

Thus, Beckett's theatre plays gradually become an increasingly clear way of retreating into the world of words or sometimes even into words. For they are the supreme proof that the one who speaks to them has not yet reached nothing, the speech representing, the mere agonizing extension of a last kind of existence.

Beckettian theatre is an exercise in lapidary and maximum condensation applied to the message. The reading of his work places us in an opaque, timeless universe, in which darkness and light coexist. His characters prefer illusion, dream, escape into imagination more and more. In order to survive, the characters resort to various subterfuges, all of which are reduced to trying to escape the reality: all of them are building imaginary worlds or demanding to be kind, hoping that the world could become a place more suited to life, trying to reinvent themselves and reinvent their own universe with the help of literature.

Beckett's characters are diffused, mutilated, paralyzed, enclosed in a chamber or clay pot, buried in the sand, dragged through the mud, dismembered, blind, mute; these characters form the core of a decomposed humanity, passed through a strange catastrophe, or, more precisely, waiting for a final catastrophe that is not happening but throwing its bad shadow-like cloud that darkens the face of the earth before the outbreak of the storm: "The misery of the characters in Beckett's writings are mostly grotesque" (Powell, K. T., 2005: 199). For example, if we consider the drama of those who await for Godot as a rehearsal of the lightless man's drama, we may say that it is not really a drama but a grotesque game. Indeed, the situation of Beckett's characters is an absurd-grotesque one. They are not people, but at most marionette characters that resemble with clowns. Degraded, without any past or profession, their clown identity provokes laughter. Such a reduction in humanity is done in Samuel Beckett's theatre plays.

We chose to exemplify, the exchange of replicas and the grotesque play on two voices, of the meditative Vladimir and of the confused Estragon, the insinuating thought of futility, of the impossibility of leaving the vicious circle of a monotonous, endless repetitive score. But the fight is always resumed, the boredom and the uselessness are ingeniously concealed by the conversion of the tragic into the grotesque, by transforming the grimace into a smile, the meditation into conversation, the lamentation into drollery. The time is filled with trifles, the conversation sweetens the powerlessness, the jokes play or even mimic the thought, the game makes the waiting easier, the agitation maintains the illusion of movement in a world where everything stays still, in which inertia reigns: "Estragon: We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?" (Beckett, S., 1970: 11)

Furthermore, the four characters' jokes are constructed through a dizzying alternation of short, repetitive replicas, such as: "Vladimir: We are waiting for Godot. Estragon: True." (Beckett, S., 1970: 12) and the comic bursts out of meaningless dislocations caused by passing very quickly from one replica to another. More, the

second act of this theatre play brings the same postponement of the long-awaited arrival of Godot, but there are indications that this expectation is prolonged in vain, by a pasture always resumed for a perpetual tomorrow.

Other characters are guilty of being totally different from others, and are therefore perceived as monsters. This fact is up to a real point, for these types of characters are indeed strangers and their existence, which does not defy the values by not accepting them, keeps them at a distance, causing an axiological vacuum around it and in which the characters are bound to live.

Turning his conscience backwards, Beckett's absurd hero, forced to face a stronger guilt than himself, reveals his sordid backward: a bad self-consciousness, which makes guilt and personal evidence of his own deeds is no longer possible. But moderns recognize their blame to some extent, and through this assumption of guilt, they will draw the consequences by condemning themselves in different ways, but most often to death. It is quite different in the case of postmodernists, who have lost sight of the criterion of a reasonable culpability and by this and the possibility of distinguishing the executioner victim, reaching the desperation of the characters themselves, equivalent to their loss. Guilt has become generalized, and nobody really likes anything.

The postmodern character no longer fights in any way because he feels dead from birth and thus unable to live and die. He is forced into the mud, in the wind, under the rain, condemned long before being blamed. In such a world a process of the whole human condition has really been opened, a serious indictment has already been issued, from which the chaotic speech of the judges appears, and the sentence is expected. In this general process, the hero is a prosecutor, a witness, a lawyer, and sometimes a judge, but it is not a moral judgment, but an approach beyond good and evil, in the intimacy of being and existence itself. Most postmodern heroes are ready to say they are not responsible for anything, everything has happened without them, that they do not even know what happened, and their consciousness remains clear.

Alienation, inability to communicate, and perhaps even the feeling of guilt come from the way the individual sees himself. Hypocrisy towards himself, anxiety, self-indulgence, or metamorphosis as self-destruction or self-punishment characterize the modern character. The self that loses itself because of a too strong will of self-destruction is the central hero of modernism. The character tends to break off from the world, from the other, in order to remain in perfect isolation: "The self will is dictated by fear, and any attempt to remove the alienation or to attempt to communicate, involving establishing relations with others, is considered meaningless" (Liao, S. L., 2014: 390). The existence he recognizes and accuses is an inappropriate one, the character can not justify his own existence, hence his sense of guilt. The absurd feeling of life can not be a generator of positive action, it only leads to nihilization. For the modern character, knowing himself in a perfect way is to shut himself up, to endure definitively, that is, to die.

The modern character acquires self-consciousness through a wake-up which is nothing more than a nausea of anything and nothing, due to precisely the needless and meaningless existence. Awakening reveals that existence means fissure, distance from itself, absence of any finality. Characters are defined as beings who live surrounded by their images. Everyone perceives himself/herself with that absolutely cool and formal distance, which is that simple view; and this generally means that for every human being, the human being itself can not be an object as such, but a quasi-object.

Beckett's absurd characters are "alienated individuals who still aspire to be tragic heroes, but they find that there are other conditions that make it possible to

question the self" (Hussein, M. S., 2011: 9). Thrown into the world, this character is incapable of experiencing the depth, being circumscribed to a trap universe that limits and paralyzes his/her ability to understand and act.

Beckett's characters evolve on stage like grotesque, degraded, lacking self-confidence characters whose identity causes laughter. We may hear and see them talking, asking each other, contradicting, embracing, constantly searching for and refusing each other. Their desire has disappeared. The fundamental structure is "the Other and I", the first having the role of the interlocutor in order to create the illusion of the dialogue, to allow the proper self to express: "Clov: What is there to keep me here? / Hamm: The dialogue. (Pause)" (Beckett, S., 1989: 21). The insularity of the characters is that they seem to be on the stage without having a role. They have nothing to say but they can say anything, nothing to do but they can do anything, except to leave, to stop being there. With the last words, mimicking his death because of the inability to say it, evoking the imminence of prison, hospital, asylum, the character is not yet a prisoner or crazy. But he is agonistic, on the verge of extinction, exhausted by presence, reduced to anonymity and larval state. Beckett is one of the writers who express regression and abandonment the best. The blind, the deaf, the infirm, the people unable to move are the representatives of a sub-humanity on which he concentrates with a morbid bitterness.

It arises a conventional world that cannot be positioned in a concrete social paradigm; society no longer represents a unitary structure, dominates the lack of causality and determinism. It is a world emptied of reality, and the fall of the supreme values coincided with the death of God, that is, with the disappearance of human reporting to a center that can ensure stability and security. Existence, as perceived by the writer, is devoid of meanings, it is a trivial, insignificant existence, in which everything is relative, ambiguous, conventional, unrelated; the action, when it exists, can hypothetically start to infinity. Beckett works on the body like a rock sculptor, fragmenting it into his own visibility, causing an unprecedented dramatization. Beckett's world is empty, or it is progressively emptied (objects, food, living beings, nature), which adds to the effectiveness of some of the playable accessories. The objects used as background act as a game and contribute to the subjugation of each character. Indeed, the last theatre plays show that what limits the word by the weight of the presence is the body itself. This world is a decaying universe.

The character's identity can only be a problem of image imposed on the character by the outside world, but it can also be a problem of the multiple potentials of this character's self that ultimately define his own identity. The question that will continue to persist refers to the character's uncertainty about the self-image as it appears in the character's consciousness during the waking hours or, on the contrary, the character can be identified with the wild and violent desires of his/her own dreams. Every being, whether in a dream or not, is all that represents his/her most hidden desires, to the same extent as the respectable character's cover shows to the outside world. In the alienated existentialist universe the characters are no longer themselves. Examining in intimacy or confrontation with others, Beckett's characters realize that something in their existence has changed, that they gradually lose their qualities that characterize the human existence as a whole.

If the self is only a nuance for the modernists, something beyond the power of understanding and action of the individual, then for postmodernists the self can only exist because of the existence of others, but only as a subjective reflection in the consciousness of others, because everything is just an illusion, the world being a game of mirrors in which the real is confused with illusion. The postmodernist character loses

the real identity by spraying himself into all sorts of acts and fragments of no significance. Everyone must interpret a role until he identifies with himself and until life, in the form of illusion, becomes a real life for the character.

The postmodern character in *Endgame* is also an example which conceptually refers to the lack of meaning or the progress in human life. It is an ensemble made up of pieces of life that he has gathered together and then assimilate them as if they were real, resulting in one's inability to communicate, and on the other hand the impossibility of finding their own real or illusory identity. This character was reduced to a simple being made of paper, to some reflexes of human beings who had to wait indefinitely because they can only exist in a state of permanent provocation. Their expectation determines an attraction of the nihil, the state of a vacuum. But if life in this vacuum is impossible, then the postmodern characters will try to fill it as they can and the game they use is the obliteration. Many times, assuming identity takes place only at the aesthetic level, and space and time of existence are fictional, making it possible for each person to become a character, and self-consciousness to these heroes is manifested only by the act of speaking or writing. Meaningless words are carried out through repetition, with each character expressing considerable pain at their condition: "Clov: Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished. (*Pause.*) Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap. (*Pause.*) I can't be punished any more. (Beckett, S., 2000: 12). But the senses remain inaccessible. Not only the characters, but the relationships also are indefinable.

Postmodern characters in lead to the extreme illusion-reality relationship and implicitly demonstrate how the self identity is sprayed into chaotic, inconsistent acts and manifestations, annihilating the personality, which in some cases is replaced by a mask. These characters, deprived of personality, sprawl in seemingly insignificant acts and behaviors a distorted image of the human condition. Thus, the authenticity of the human being often appears as a non-authentic one, denaturating the true face of the human condition. Language tends to reflect the purposeless nature of everyday discussion and in the absence of events, of the action, the subject of the theatre plays could be supported through dialogue, language. But, being drained of common sense, of common idea, it ceases to be a means of communication between characters, no longer assures complicity and understanding. Demolition of the logical edifice of the language takes place; it is dismantled, loses its traditional valences, is no longer a messenger of information, meaning, becomes banal, dissociated, disaggregated. Through words without a meaning, thanks to an aberrant logic, through the silence or the breaths quantified to the harmonization, the characters of Beckett's universe "embodies the difficulties encountered by the individual of the twentieth century, his efforts to pronounce his existence" (Webb, E., 1973: 22).

Considered by researchers as belonging to postmodernism, Beckett's entire theatre plays conveys this sense of meaninglessness through his construction of a repetitive, cyclical plot, lacking in any positive progression. The presence of another character makes it possible to recognize the need for values of cohabitation, of human solidarity. Beckett also uses the dialogue in order to emphasize the inanity of human interaction in such an alienated society. The human being in front of another human being, who recognizes and acts as such, assuming the responsibility of communication, has overcome the absurdity. Even the most sophisticated character is not entirely alone. Absurd is the tragic character in front of a mirror, and even so he is not alone. The mirror returns only the face of the solitary, a kind of double absurd. The face in the mirror is not another but the same face. For this type of character, looking in the mirror

means risking to contemplate himself, to take his own mask as his neighbor. Trying to get out of the self, looking only at himself, is to condemn in advance the impossibility of leaving himself - a perfectly absurd situation.

In such absurd situations, this type of absurd character forms the basis of the interchangeable and the metamorphosable character. Connected with the everyday world, the usual world, and the other world, it forms strict correspondences whose result is that the absurd, the nostalgia and the inability to reality are accentuated.

The pure self is not viable, it is the source of its own annihilation and, in order to save itself, it splits into a profound and superficial self. Like in *Waiting for Godot*, the characters have lost their sense of hope but they cling on all the same.

In this alienated existential universe, Beckett's absurd characters are no longer themselves, examining either in intimacy or in confrontation with others, they realize that something in their existence has changed. Although they want to find out the cause of their gradual transformations into human wrecks, these characters fail to remove the veil of confusion and general disorientation. Their personality is, in fact, limited to fragments of disorganized, chaotic human acts, expressing their state of derision in front of their inability to understand the reality in which they live. Their status, of clowns, only allows them to manifest themselves as such in a world whose meanings have been lost. Therefore, any change in their behavior is possible. The mechanism of their universe being disturbed, everything is perfectly equal, no one understands anyone else.

The characters in *Molloy* seem to have no blended identity. For these postmodern characters their very existence, much reduced and mutilated, is a burden. The agony they go through is not a struggle with death, but a struggle for a certain death: that of the end of time, ultimately equivalent to a rebirth, yet impossible to attain. Molloy himself considers his own identity and states that at times he really forgets who he is and feels like a stranger to himself. For Molloy, the reality is revealed only as an appearance, as an illusion, which in turn is revealed as part of a dream or illusion. Finding their identity is no longer possible, because the human being itself is condemned to isolation and powerlessness. Thus, Molloy's fragmented self is reflected in his fragmented words: "even my sense of identity was wrapped in a namelessness often hard to penetrate, as we have just seen I think; and so on for all the other things" (Beckett, S., 1979: 15). Expressing the gradual loss of his human essence, Molloy expresses the profound crisis of the society in which he lives, the detachment of the individual from his human substance, deepening in the gap between himself and reality, between the individual and the world.

The theme of this theatre play was generated by a double motivation: on the one hand, the reading of the Trilogy (Molloy, Malone dies and The Unnamable) led to the idea of the existence in the narrative field of structures that, at least at first sight, distance themselves from the formulas of literality and approach those of the stage representation.

Molloy's image of himself can be understood as an entitlement to ontological certainty. But as long as there is a conflictual pendulum of being in the world (lying down, or standing, or kneeling) - associated with the image of a broken self, the signs of a deep disharmony will be recognized. But, as long as there will be a conflictual pendulum of the world, a perpetual permutation of the self in more places, and in many ways - associated with both the image of a broken self - the signs of profound disharmony will also be recognized. Thus, Molloy's rhetoric does not concern at least one geographical location. Obviously, the two coordinates (time, space) can secure the being - which at Beckett is, as we know, outraged,

besieged continually.

The pathological language in *Not I* corresponds to the concept of psychiatry: a formal disorder of thought, characterized mainly by the ideological disorganization. The schizoid symptomatology of the characters is a common one and its implications are largely recognized in *Watt* also. It refers to the process of individualization, a progressive growth of the human consciousness and a reconciliation of aggressive impulses (which are part of the unconscious).

Beckett's character sinks in waiting as in a state of trance that reduces him to the stage of passive witnesses of events and, broadening the horizon, of history. Beckett moves inside the perimeter that he imposed for himself, respecting a rule of the game he considers sacred.

Happy Days is a circle; beautiful days are, in fact, a vicious circle of life that has lost its beauty, becoming synonymous with captivity. A physical and soul captivity of the characters who suddenly wake up trapped. Winnie is progressively swallowed by a mound of earth, while Willie, free to move, lives in his dungeon, hidden from her gaze. A very strange geography of this micro-universe in two, in which she remains immobilized, and he, though free to move, cannot see it. Syncopated communication, loneliness, despair, nostalgia, tenderness, absurdity, powerlessness, fear of death. The whole spectrum of human emotions is present between her and him, exiled in a life like a desert, empty and vast, exasperatingly long and frighteningly fragile.

The killing routine is seen as an attribute of old age, but also a substance that dissolves the senility of the couple. The day can be beautiful if you accept its limits. Everything happens invariably between the bell that announces the awakening and the one that gives off. Life and death are the extremes of the day when beauty creeps in the form of unexpected memories or revelations. There are usually no variations and this is a sign of normalcy for Winnie. Life is a permanent struggle with time, a fight that we cannot overcome unless, paradoxically, we recognize ourselves from the beginning defeated.

Thus, any honest approach to the idea of postmodernism must begin with a transfer. Being such a complex phenomenon, it could be seen as a perpetual journey into unique imaginary worlds, in different conceptions of literature, a labyrinthine, paradoxical and at the same time amazing journey, because the unusual one hits you at every step, at every crossroads, you it invigorates and forces you to reconsider almost everything you knew about this literary trend. This journey through the prominent veins of postmodernism implies both the release of any conceptual limitations, of any aesthetic prejudice, the total openness in the attempt to capture the imaginative living, as well as the complexity of the narrative game. That is why Beckett's readers will be able to reach the specific rhythm of this new type of writing or dramatic text only by accepting to submit without conditions to the true essence of the otherness that is the language and, above all, the language of the other. And these are aspects impossible to perceive only by introspection: the texts leave, on readers willing to enter the game that the writer proposes implicitly, the impression of an extraordinary sense of the rhythm of the existence of the other or, better said, the other.

Paying proper attention to this aspect means, in essence, the availability to become aware of our own rhythms. But the paradox is maintained, remaining impossible to be solved: we become aware of what we are or who we are only at the moment when we are able to understand that they all represent, in essence, what we have never been able to do until at the end.

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IRONY IN JAMES JOYCE'S DUBLINERS

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Abstract: The paper deals with the use of irony in James Joyce's volume "Dubliners". It starts from a theoretical presentation of the concept and then focuses on the sources of irony in the short stories, as identified by John Blades, but in a personal analysis. Though the stories present many examples of cosmic and situational irony, verbal irony is also discussed. The paper ends with a presentation of the ironic contrasts in "An Encounter", seen as one of the very few stories in the volume in which irony is a source of humour.

Keywords: verbal irony; situational irony; ironic contrast.

Introduction. Irony: Definition, Types, the Use of Irony in Literature

According to *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, irony comes from a Greek work meaning "dissimulation" and it was "first recorded in Plato's *Republic* (4th c. BC), where it has approximately the meaning of 'a glib and underhand way of taking people in'." (Cuddon, 1999: 427) For the Roman rhetoricians, it was both a rhetorical figure and a manner of discourse in which the meaning was in general contrary to the words. In English, irony was mentioned for the first time in the 16th century, as a means by which somebody said one thing and meant the opposite. The term came in general use in the 17th and early 18th centuries, with the theoretical observations on the concept made as a consequence of the increasing number of its practitioners. Theorists identified various kinds of irony, from verbal/ rhetorical to dialectical/ Socratic, Romantic, world/ cosmic/ philosophical.

Actually, the term seems to elude definition because no definition will cover every aspect of its nature. However, "most forms of irony involved the perception or awareness of a discrepancy or incongruity between words and their meaning, or between actions and their results, or between appearance and reality. In all cases there may be an element of the absurd and the paradoxical." (*ibidem*: 430)

Verbal irony and the irony of situation are the two basic kinds of irony. Verbal irony involves a contradiction between what is stated and what is meant. Situational irony occurs when the result of an action is contrary to the expected one. In addition to these, romantic irony is the attitude of a writer who does not expect his/ her work to be taken entirely seriously and does not want it to be; consequently, they are aware of what they are doing and comment on their own process of creation in a self-aware and self-critical form of fiction. Socratic irony is an attitude of apparent ignorance manifesting itself in a series of seemingly naïve questions that are meant to trap the interlocutor. Cosmic irony/ irony of fate is a contrast between the absolute and the relative, the general and the particular, the reality and the human ideals, human intentions and actual results, while dramatic and tragic irony appear when the audience is aware of the significance of certain words or actions, but the speaker/ character is not.

According to Elizabeth Black, the person who produces irony trusts that the audience is capable of understanding and appreciating it, i.e. they have shared cultural experiences and the ability to reason analogically. Thus, irony is not something inherent

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in an object or a situation, but rather something that depends on our perception. It is also important socially. "Irony is conventionally defined in dictionaries as 'saying one thing and meaning another' and is dependent on the context, our judgment of the speaker and hearer, the relationship between them and the topic under discussion for its interpretation." (Black, 2005: 110) It is a discoursal phenomenon, being "embedded in a communicative situation, whether spoken or written" and involving "the situation, relationships, and so on". (*ibidem*: 115) When directed against other persons, it serves as an oblique polite form of criticism.

In literature, irony may not necessarily appear overtly, but also as an ironic tone or an ironic way of seeing things. It has many functions, being sometimes the instrument of truth, but also having the capacity to purify, refine, deflate or scorn.

Very fashionable in England in the 18th century, as a precious and efficient weapon in satires, irony went out of fashion later, but is still present occasionally in verse, prose or drama. James Joyce is only one of the 20th century authors that used it extensively in his works.

Cosmic, Situational and Verbal Irony in James Joyce's *Dubliners*

Ironically enough, Joyce left his native place and lived in "exile" in various European cities, but he constantly returned to Dublin in his books. His relationship with the city – at that time the second one of the British Empire, but seeming more a large village than a metropolis – was ambivalent: he despised the forces that deformed the souls of its people – the Roman Catholic Church and the British state – and deplored their victim status. Thus, he did not view Dublin with nostalgia and glamour, but realistically, sometimes ironically, always sympathetically. (cf. Blades, 1996)

Joyce wrote the stories in *Dubliners* with the intention of giving the Irish the possibility of taking a good look at themselves through a "nicely polished looking-glass" (his own words according to Blades, 1996: 11). The stories have been conventionally described as ironic, though "there has been little attempt and even less success in textually localizing the irony". (Hutcheon, Butler, 1981: 245) Still, though they are built apparently on the cosmic and situational modes of irony, they also contain instances of the verbal one, sometimes quite difficult to recognize as it does not operate at the level of the single sentence.

John Blades (1996) identifies three sources of irony in *Dubliners*: the fact that the situation of one character parallels that of another, the abruptness of the endings, and the gap between the ambitions of a character and his/ her failure to achieve them or the gap between the ideals and the realities of life in Dublin.

As far as the first source is concerned, we have the example of the two mothers in *The Boarding House* and *A Mother* and of the male characters in *A Little Cloud* and *Two Gallants*.

The mother in *The Boarding House*, Mrs. Mooney, does her best to secure a husband for her daughter, Polly. The one in *A Mother*, Mrs. Kearney, does her best to secure spectators for a concert in which her daughter will play the piano and then money for her performance. Mrs. Mooney does not have a husband, as they became separated after he attacked her with the cleaver. Mrs. Kearney has a husband, a bootmaker who is much older than her and whom she respects "in the same way she respected the General Post Office, as something large, secure and fixed; and though she knew the small number of his talents, she appreciated his abstract value as a male." (Joyce, 1995: 97) Still, the woman without a husband seems to manage better than the

one who presumably benefits from his protection. Mrs. Mooney is presented as a “determined woman”, “quite able to keep things to herself”, “who governed the house cunningly and firmly”, knowing “when to give credit, when to be stern and when to let things pass”. (*ibidem*: 40) When she notices something going on between her daughter Polly and one of the young men living in the house, she keeps “her own counsel” (*ibidem*: 41), intervening only at what she considers to be the right moment. Though it was actually her daughter who seduced the man and not vice versa, she is sure that “reparation” will be made. After all she is an “outraged mother” (*ibidem*: 42) and he abused both her hospitality and her young and inexperienced daughter. She knows that a scandal might cost him his job and is determined not to accept money in exchange of the loss of her daughter’s honour, but only marriage. The young man himself fears scandal and, in spite of the fact that he is aware of Polly’s faults, accepts to marry her. Mrs. Kearney is presented as a woman with tact. She was educated in a convent, where she learnt music and French, then got married to a man who was far from the ones in her romantic dreams, but who proved to be a good husband and father, taking good care of his wife’s and their daughters’ well-being. Their daughter Kathleen was also educated in a convent where she learnt music and French. One day Mrs. Kearney is approached by Mr. Holohan, assistant secretary of the Eire Abu Society, with the proposal that Kathleen should be the accompanist at a series of four grand concerts to be given in the Antient Concert Rooms. Mrs. Kearney uses her tact to dispose the items for the programme, as “She knew what *artistes* should go into capitals and what *artistes* should go into small type. She knew that the first tenor would not like to come on after Mr. Meade’s comic turn.” (*ibidem*: 95) and she knew to slip the doubtful items in between the old favourites. She also sends tickets to a series of their friends. And she draws a contract stipulating that her daughter will receive eight guineas for her services. But her tact leaves her in the end precisely when she would need it most. When she asks for the money she is sent from one organizer to another and finally is paid only half of it. Consequently, she makes a terrible fuss and forbids her daughter to play during the second part of the last concert, the one attended by most of the people. Somebody else takes over the accompanist’s part and the Kearneys leave in rage, the woman’s behaviour being disapproved of by everybody.

In both *A Little Cloud* and *Two Gallants* we have two pairs of male friends, one apparently successful, the other not much so. The less successful one examines his life and finds it lacking in many respects, whether we speak of the seemingly happily married life that makes the character feel trapped however, or the single life of a character that dreams of marriage and its advantages. The two friends in *A Little Cloud* are Tom “Little” Chandler and Ignatius Gallaher, who meet after eight years of separation. During these eight years, Gallaher became “a brilliant figure on the London Press” (Joyce, *op. cit.*: 46), having always been the adventurous type, while Little Chandler, a delicate, refined man, stayed in Dublin, got married, had a son and apparently lived a quite boring life. He envies his more successful friend who can afford to go to expensive places of which he himself does not even dream. Gallaher, on the other hand, seems tired of his life, full of bustle and agitation, and is happy to have a short holiday. Of which he cannot spend much with his old friend as he has other obligations. The brief encounter with Gallaher makes Little Chandler find his own life unsatisfactory: he finds his pretty wife repellent and irritating, his furniture too prim, and channels his frustrations towards his little son at whom he shouts, making him cry. Then he feels remorseful.

The friends in *Two Gallants* are Lenehan and Corley. Both of them have spent all their life in Ireland. Lenehan is a leech, insensitive to courtesy, who offers stories, limericks and riddles in exchange of the rounds his friends buy him. Corley is the son of a police inspector, who is often seen with policemen and knows the inner side of all affairs. He is quite self-centred and has made a conquest – a woman who gives him presents and money. In this short story Lenehan is the one who examines his life and finds it lacking.

He was tired of knocking about, of pulling the devil by the tail, of shifts and intrigues. He would be thirty-one in November. Would he never get a good job? Would he never have a home of his own? He thought how pleasant it would be to have a warm fire to sit by and a good dinner to sit down to. He had walked the streets long enough with friends and with girls. He knew what those friends were worth; he knew the girls too. (*ibidem*: 37)

Dubliners offers us a collection of slices of life. Nothing exceptional happens in any of the stories, Joyce recording only brief experiences in the characters' lives. As such, the stories begin and end abruptly, often leaving the reader in mid-air. "[...] our progress through the text is continually being arrested, not simply due to the episodic form of the collection, but also because we witness lives whose progress is invariably arrested by failure or hesitation." (Blades, 1996: 12) Particularly representative in this respect is *After the Race*, which presents a night of partying after a car race, a night during which the Irishman loses heavily but happily in favour of his continental "friends".

The discrepancy between the characters' dreams and what life offers them is a source of irony in most of the stories. The boys in *An Encounter* dream of an adventure but run away scared when they are about to live it, realizing that in real life adventures may be more dangerous than in games or fantasies. The young girl in *Eveline* dreams of leaving Dublin and starting a new life with Frank, as his wife, in Buenos Aires. But as she prepares to leave she realizes that her life, hard as it is, is not "a wholly undesirable life". (*ibidem*: 23) Consequently, though she goes to the station, she cannot follow Frank to the boat. The young character of *Araby* spends a whole day dreaming of the enchanted bazaar where he will supposedly go in the afternoon to buy something for the girl he likes. But his uncle comes home late so he goes to Araby only to find the bazaar devoid of all charm and about to be closed. Gabriel Conroy in *The Dead* dreams of spending a romantic evening with his wife only to find her wanting comfort over the loss of a childhood boyfriend brought back to her memory by one of the songs heard at the party attended with her husband.

Verbal irony is present in the short stories especially under the form of ironic contrasts: "through this channel of poverty and inaction the Continent sped its wealth and industry", "the cheer of the gratefully oppressed" (Joyce, *op. cit.*: 26). Farrington in *Counterparts* is "tall and of great bulk", while his boss Mr. Alleyne is "a little man", who reminds his employee that "you get a half an hour for your lunch and not an hour and a half" (*ibidem*: 57). A thorough and interesting analysis of irony in *The Boarding House* is made by Linda Hutcheon and Sharon Butler who point out that "Joyce's primary mode of irony here is verbal and not situational, despite first impressions". (1981: 245) According to the two authors, the very title of the story presents a summary of its content, as the word *boarding* is reminiscent both of the naval action of coming alongside a ship in order to attack and of *accosting*, i.e. making sexual advances. Irony is achieved by Joyce here by: echoing repetition (*instinct, affair, reparation* are words

that are used several times, by different characters and with reference to different characters), interjections (*Oh my God*, uttered by Polly when she tells Doran that her mother knows everything), ellipses marked by points of suspension, ironic juxtaposition. Irony is directed against the religious, financial and sexual restrictions of Irish society. It “also becomes a triple-encoded phenomenon in that each repeated intratextual ‘mention’ of a word such as ‘reparation’ echoes earlier ones and also the three general semantic codes in such a way that three simultaneous and complementary significances are evoked.” (Hutcheon, Butler, 1981: 258) Joyce reveals “the social institution of marriage as a sordid sexual and financial arrangement enforced by the authority of the church, of business interests, and of the family structure.” But “Although Mrs. Mooney, Polly, and Bob are aware of the drama they act out, they remain unaware of the ideological forces that *direct* their actions.” (*ibidem*: 258) Consequently, situational irony is also much present in the short story.

Irony as a Source of Humour. *An Encounter*

The general dictionaries of the English language present irony as a situation or usage of language that is supposed to be amusing (cf. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 2003, for example), but Joyce’s short stories are rarely so. One of the very few relatively funny stories in *Dubliners* is, in my opinion, *An Encounter* due to the ironic contrast between what the boys imagine they will do during their day’s micing and what actually happens.

The story begins abruptly:

It was Joe Dillon who introduced the Wild West to us. He had a little library made up of old numbers of *The Union Jack*, *Pluck* and *The Halfpenny Marvel*. Every evening after school we met in his back garden and arranged Indian battles. He and his fat young brother Leo, an idler, held the loft of the stable while we tried to carry it by storm; or we fought a pitched battle on the grass. But, however well we fought, we never won siege or battle and all our bouts ended with Joe Dillon’s war dance of victory. His parents went to eight-o’clock mass every morning in Gardiner Street and the peaceful odour of Mrs. Dillon was prevalent in the hall of the house. But he played too fiercely for us who were younger and more timid. He looked like some kind of an Indian when he capered round the garden, an old tea-cosy on his head, beating a tin with his fist and yelling: ‘Ya! Yaka, yaka yaka!’ (*ibidem*: 10)

The ironic contrast between the peacefulness of Mrs. Dillon’s odour and the fierceness of her son’s behaviour is followed in the next paragraph by the contrast between the above mentioned behaviour and Joe Dillon’s reported vocation for priesthood, which made everyone incredulous, but was nevertheless true.

The contrasts continue throughout the story. Brought by Joe, a spirit of unruliness diffuses itself among the children, who get involved in all sorts of games inspired by the white men’s fights with the Indians. But the narrator of the story, a young schoolboy, is not so much fascinated by the literature of the Wild West as by some American detective stories. This and the fact that Joe’s brother Leo is rebuked by one of the priests during the classes diminishes the glory of the Wild West for him. However, we find him longing for “real adventures”, not “mimic warfare”, things that “do not happen to people who remain at home”, but “must be sought abroad”. (Joyce, *op. cit.*: 11)

Taking advantage of the fact that the summer holidays draw near, the boy decides to play truant for one day together with Leo Dillon and another colleague named Mahony. They make detailed plans for the respective day. They are to save money, make excuses for their absence from school, meet at ten on the Canal Bridge, go along the Wharf Road until they reach the ships, then “cross in the ferryboat and walk out to see the Pigeon House.” (*ibidem*: 11) They part quite excited in the evening, but the first signs that things will not go well appear when the narrator confesses that “That night I slept badly.” (*ibidem*)

In spite of this, in the morning he is the first to arrive at the meeting point. He is soon joined by Mahony, but not by Leo as well. The brother of the boy who brought adventure to the group proved thus to be the least adventurous of them. Both our narrator and Mahony are happy and decide to proceed with their plan. We are told in much detail how they go on Wharf Road, whom they meet, what children they “attack” with Mahony’s catapult, how they are insulted by them, and how they themselves call Leo names because without him they could not arrange a siege. They watch and record everything that goes on around them, the everyday life in Dublin, especially the activity on the quay. They cross the Liffey in the ferryboat, but on the other side of it things are not that bright. It is as if they had come to another world. The day which had been just sunny until then becomes “sultry”, the biscuits they see in a shop’s window are “musty”, the streets are “squalid” (*ibidem*: 13). Refreshed by a bottle of raspberry lemonade, Mahony chases a cat, but the cat escapes. They are too tired to go to Pigeon House and decide to return home lest their adventure should be discovered.

While they are resting, a man approaches them. Again the boy records every detail regarding the man’s appearance and gestures. The man starts a conversation with them, but they do not feel comfortable about it. It is about boys and girls, but our young boy finds it inappropriate in an older man. Mahony leaves them alone as he sees the cat which had escaped earlier and goes in pursuit of it, while the man starts talking about the chastising of boys:

When a boy was rough and unruly there was nothing would do him any good but a good sound whipping. A slap on the hand or a box on the ear was no good: what he wanted was to get a nice warm whipping. [...] He said that if ever he found a boy talking to girls or having a girl for a sweetheart he would whip him and whip him; and that would teach him not to be talking to girls. And if a boy had a girl for a sweetheart and told lies about it then he would give him such a whipping as no boy ever got in this world.” (*ibidem*: 15-16)

The man seems to have a sick pleasure to whip boys and seems to long for our narrator’s understanding and maybe acceptance of such treatment, but of course the latter is scared. He says good-bye claiming that he has to go, then leaves calmly, calls his friend on an assumed name with false bravery and is very happy when Mahony comes running as if to help him.

The boys in the short story do not seem to have any of the qualities necessary for them to become heroes of adventure tales. Their day seems rather lost – they did not do anything extraordinary and they would probably have gained more if they had gone to school. Still, their power of dissimulation in the end is remarkable.

Conclusion

Without being an exhaustive study of irony in the volume discussed, the present paper has concentrated on the main aspects connected with it. The situational and cosmic modes appear to dominate in a work from which verbal irony is not excluded either, being embedded in every layer of the text. Regardless of the mode it takes, we deal however with a bitter and painful irony that does not provoke laughter or even a smile, but rather tears and sadness at the Irish paralysis that the writer is trying to expose.

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CHARLES DICKENS'S USE OF IRONY IN OLIVER TWIST OR, THE PARISH BOY'S PROGRESS

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Abstract: The works of fiction authored by the Charles Dickens (1812-1870) remain notable for their enormous capacity to render with fidelity the description of an age that underwent major technical progress accompanied by profound social changes and tensions. The contradicting influences exerted on the society of the time are captured in Dickens's novels by means of irony, which the social writer uses in order to depict in a most faithful manner the conflict between appearance and reality. In this paper, the specific case study chosen to illustrate Dickens's use of irony is Oliver Twist or, the Parish Boy's Progress.

Keywords: verbal irony; situational irony; dramatic irony.

On Irony

The Victorian novelist Charles Dickens is primarily associated by literary critics with a description of the social issues that troubled England in the 19th century as a result of all the changes that Victorian society was experiencing at that particular point in time. But an important matter that should be borne in mind is the fact that Dickens resorted to a specific literary device, which he exploited masterfully, in order to achieve the grim social critique of his age: irony. It is this topic that the present paper will attempt to dwell on, analysing the manner in which irony is exploited in Dickensian fiction as a means of achieving the author's purpose, with special reference to one of his widely known novels, i.e. *Oliver Twist or, the Parish Boy's Progress*.

The *Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines irony as “a mode of discourse for conveying meanings different from, and usually opposite to, the professed or ostensible ones” (Childs, Fowler, 2006:123). Thus, irony can be broadly understood as a means of transmitting an underlying meaning that is different from the words uttered by a person. The typology of irony integrates “two main categories: situational and verbal. All irony, however, depends for its effectiveness on the belief in and exploitation of the difference and distance between words or events and their contexts (...). The contexts of situational irony may be primarily social, moral or metaphysical” (Childs, Fowler, 2006:123), whilst “verbal irony usually operates by exploiting deviations from syntactic or semantic norms. The ability to recognize such irony depends upon an appreciation of the particular linguistic, or sometimes more general social or moral, context” (Childs, Fowler, 2006:124).

The term *irony* has its roots in the Greek comic character *Eiron*, a main character in Greek comic plays, who “pretended to be a clumsy underdog, but, ultimately, always revealed himself as a witty and clever man” (Garmendia, 2018:6) triumphing over the boastful Alazon. The Greek word *eironēta* derived from this character and came to mean “dissimulation” or “purposely affected ignorance.” The

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word then entered Latin as *ironia*, and eventually became common as a figure of speech in English in the 16th century.

To put it simply, after all the considerations above-mentioned, irony is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. Furthermore, irony occurs when a situation ends up in quite a different way than the general anticipation. To put it simply, irony implies a difference between appearance and reality that can be exploited by artistic consciousnesses as a means of developing the public's interest. It makes a work of literature more intriguing and forces the readers to use their imagination in order to comprehend the underlying meanings of the text. What is more, real life is full of ironical situations and expressions, therefore, the use of irony brings a work of fiction to life.

Oliver Twist – Irony as a medium of social critique

The focus of our paper is represented by a canonical Dickensian novel that managed to illustrate the miserable status of the low Victorian classes through one single line uttered humbly by an orphan boy in front of a committee: "Please, sir, I want some more". We are referring to *Oliver Twist or, the Parish Boy's Progress*, a novel whose disturbing message was acknowledged by the author himself in the preface as "some of the characters in these pages are chose from the most criminal and degraded of London's population" which, inevitably, led to serious objections against it "on some high moral grounds in some high moral quarters" (*OT*, v).

The second novel published by Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* is basically the story of a young orphan, Oliver, and of his attempts to preserve his integrity in a society that refuses to provide him with any guiding help. Oliver is born in a workhouse, orphaned almost from his first breath by his mother's death in childbirth and his father's unexplained absence. Without any shade of parental presence, the infant was thrown into a cruel and abusive world without any kind of protection. Following his mother's death, "for the next eight or ten months, Oliver was the victim of a systematic course of treachery and deception. He was brought up by hand" (*OT*, 4) and "farmed, ' or, in other words, (...) dispatched to a branch-workhouse some three miles off (...) without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing, under the parental superintendence of an elderly female (...)." (*OT*, 4). His ninth birthday "found him a pale thin child, somewhat diminutive in stature, and decidedly small in circumference" (*OT*, 5), who is sent to a workhouse, where again he and the others are treated badly and practically starved. The other boys, unable to stand their hunger any longer, decide to draw straws to choose who will have to go up and ask for more food. Oliver draws the shortest and, on the appointed day, after finishing his first serving of gruel, he goes up, "desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery" (*OT*, 13) and, "somewhat alarmed at his own temerity", asks for more: "Please, sir, I want some more." (*OT*, 13)

Oliver's performance throughout the rest of the novel is determined by those humbly uttered words. The Board considers it highly important to get rid of the young boy whom they consider an object of property that can be traded without any kind of restraint: the first attempt is to offer the boy as an apprentice to a chimney sweeper, then to the parochial undertaker. Oliver runs away from the latter and walks towards London but, on his way, he meets a boy named Jack Dawkins, or the Artful Dodger, who opens Oliver's way to a place where a gentleman will give him a place to sleep and food, for no rent. It is under these circumstances that Oliver encounters Fagin, the

aforementioned gentleman, and is offered a place to stay. Oliver eventually learns that Fagin's boys are all pickpockets and thieves, but not until he is wrongfully accused of their crime of stealing an old gentleman's handkerchief. The boy gets arrested, but his innocence is testified in court and, thus, he is saved. The gentleman whose handkerchief was taken, Mr. Brownlow, feels bad for Oliver, and takes him in. This new stage in Oliver's life is very different from the reckless misery of his former experience, but this does not last too long. Throughout the rest of the novel, Oliver oscillates between being forced to lead a criminal life and escaping from the hands of Fagin and his thieves. In the end of the novel, Fagin is executed, his gang is destabilised and Oliver ends up living in peace and comfort in a small village in the English countryside.

The life spent in London forces Oliver to struggle his way in a city that has been genuinely dehumanised as a result of industrialization. The spectrum of social classes is skilfully anatomized in this novel: there are characters from the poor sector, including members from the workhouse, Oliver, Fagin, and the pickpockets, Bill Sikes and Nancy; characters from low to high middle-class including policemen, judges or shopkeepers and Mr. Brownlow, who is an upper-class gentleman.

An early example of the social novel, the book's main direction is to expose the cruel treatment of the many orphans in London during the Dickensian era and to call the public's attention to various contemporary evils, including child labour, the recruitment of children as criminals, and the miserable lives of street children. *Oliver Twist* renders an unromantic portrayal of criminals and their sordid lives and is, overall, a dark portrait of poverty in England in the 1830s, with its transparent language, which is ironic, impregnated with black humour, implying the exact opposite of what is often written. Dickens's choice of irony makes sense as he intended to criticize the English Poor Laws and to raise the public awareness, encouraging the readers to go beyond the literal meaning and discover the real truth.

The irony that Dickens resorts to in order to mock the hypocrisies of his time and to convey the deeper meanings he intended can be classified in three types, i.e. **verbal irony** – which “usually operates by exploiting deviations from syntactic or semantic norms.” (Childs, Fowler, 2006:124); **situational irony** – that basically implies a contradiction between what one expects and what actually happens; **dramatic irony** – usually employed in plays, where “the members of the audience have been apprised of a character's real situation before he knows it himself, and who can therefore anticipate and enjoy the frustration of the ideal by the actual” (Childs, Fowler, 2006:123).

Oliver Twist simply abounds in numerous and meaningful examples that could easily serve as illustrations for each of the ironical categories above mentioned. The following section of this paper will be devoted to only a few instances of such uses, with reference to the meaning hidden behind what is said literally.

Verbal irony

The pages of *Oliver Twist* abound in quite illustrative verbal ironies, out of which we will perform a selection to prove our purpose. In Chapter II, the parish authority and workhouse authority discuss over “*who can provide Oliver with the nourishment he stands in need*” and make the decision to send the poor infant to a branch-house “under the parental superintendence” of Mrs. Mann” (*OT*, 4). The word “parental” carries the ironic significance because, as the narrative progresses, we are informed that the woman was preoccupied with “what was good for herself” better than “what was good for children” (*OT*, 4). In addition, Mrs. Mann was ironically hailed as “*a woman of wisdom and experience*” and “*a great experimental philosopher*” (*OT*, 4).

The verbal irony contained in her characterization reveals what kind of person Mrs. Mann really was: selfish, avaricious and mean. In the same chapter, Dickens exclaims: “*What a novel illustration of the tender laws of England! They let the paupers go to sleep!*” (p. 9). The above sentences are the cynicism expressed by Dickens towards the Poor Laws, which in fact were very harsh for the paupers. In Chapter III, the “*wisdom and mercy of the board*” throw Oliver in a solitary room as a consequence of the “*offence*” he committed when asking for more food: “*For a week after the commission of the impious and profane offence of asking for more, Oliver remained a close prisoner in the dark and solitary room to which he had been consigned by the wisdom and mercy of the board*” (OT, 14). Dickens is obviously ironic of the board’s judgment and treatment of the children in the workhouse. The same chapter describes Oliver’s affairs as being “*auspicious and comfortable*” (OT, 15) whilst incarcerated, which, in fact, was quite the opposite. In Chapter VI, Oliver gets familiarized with the daily routine of the undertaker. It is on this occasion that he becomes aware of a very curious fact: “*Ladies and gentlemen who were in passions of anguish during the ceremony of interment, recovered almost as soon as they reached home*” (OT, 40). Dickens depicts the situation in ironical terms, as “*very pleasant and improving to see*” (OT, 40, *our emphasis*).

Dramatic irony

In Chapter VI, the characters assume Oliver died after they had beaten him, however, it was not so. The readers know that Oliver had not died yet. The characters’ lack of knowledge and the readers’ understanding of the reality is an example of dramatic irony: ““*Ah! mercy indeed, ma’am,’ was the reply. I only hope this’ll teach master not to have any more of these dreadful creatures, that are born to be murderers and robbers from their very cradle. Poor Noah! He was all but killed, ma’am, when I come in.’ ‘Poor fellow!’ said Mrs. Sowerberry: looking piteously on the charity-boy.* (OT, 44)

Dramatic irony can be seen in the last few chapters of this classic novel, but in Chapter XLVII, this irony is made explicit through the discovery of Nancy’s plans to return Oliver to Mr. Brownlow and to let him escape the evil hands of Bill Sikes and Fagin. This is a good example of dramatic irony, as initially the reader and Mr. Brownlow alone are aware of this plan, but then Fagin becomes aware of it and tells Bill Sikes. Chapter XLVII contains another instance of dramatic irony, as after Sikes is informed by Fagin about Nancy’s betrayal and decides to take violent action against her, which she does not know when Sikes comes to her: “*The girl was lying, half-dressed, upon it. He had roused her from her sleep, for she raised herself with a hurried and startled look. ‘Get up!’ said the man. ‘It is you, Bill!’ said the girl, with an expression of pleasure at his return. ‘It is,’ was the reply. ‘Get up.’ There was a candle burning, but the man hastily drew it from the candlestick, and hurled it under the grate. Seeing the faint light of early day without, the girl rose to undraw the curtain. ‘Let it be,’ said Sikes, thrusting his hand before her. ‘There’s enough light for wot I’ve got to do.’ ‘Bill,’ said the girl, in the low voice of alarm, ‘why do you look like that at me!?’*” (OT, 364).

Situational irony

Following his request for more food from Chapter II, Oliver is sent to incarceration. Though some “*enemies of ‘the system’*” might dare to conceive this period as a punishment, our hero was not denied “*the benefit of exercise, the pleasure of society, or the advantages of religious consolation*” (OT, 15), as Dickens informs the readers. Ironically, the novelist informs the reader of the generous opportunities Oliver

is provided for while incarcerated: “As for exercise, it was nice cold weather, and he was allowed to perform his ablutions every morning under the pump, in a stone yard, in the presence of Mr. Bumble, who prevented his catching cold, and caused a tingling sensation to pervade his frame, by repeated applications of the cane. As for society, he was carried every other day into the hall where the boys dined, and there sociably flogged as a public warning and example. And so far from being denied the advantages of religious consolation, he was kicked into the same apartment every evening at prayer-time, and there permitted to listen to, and console his mind with, a general supplication of the boys, containing a special clause, therein inserted by authority of the board, in which they entreated to be made good, virtuous, contented, and obedient, and to be guarded from the sins and vices of Oliver Twist: whom the supplication distinctly set forth to be under the exclusive patronage and protection of the powers of wickedness, and an article direct from the manufactory of the very Devil himself.” (OT, 15).

In Chapter II, the reader is presented with an instance of situational irony when Oliver is given the chance to leave Mrs. Mann’s place and go with Mr. Bumble. There is a discrepancy between Oliver’s wish and Mrs. Mann’s expectations: Oliver would like to go along with Mr. Bumble; however, he instead asking whether Mrs. Mann could go as well, realizing that she did not allow Oliver to go: ‘*Will you go along with me, Oliver?*’ said Mr. Bumble, in a majestic voice. Oliver was about to say that he would go along with anybody with great readiness, when, glancing upward, he caught sight of Mrs. Mann, who had got behind the beadle’s chair, and was shaking her fist at him with a furious countenance. He took the hint at once, for the fist had been too often impressed upon his body not to be deeply impressed upon his recollection. ‘*Will she go with me?*’ inquired poor Oliver. ‘No, she can’t,’ replied Mr. Bumble. ‘But she’ll come and see you sometimes.’ (OT, 7).

In the same chapter, a gentleman is convinced that Oliver had lived well in his previous place, yet, in truth, Oliver had not received a good life:

‘I hope you say your prayers every night,’ said another gentleman in a gruff voice; ‘and pray for the people who feed you, and take care of you - like a Christian.’ ‘Yes, sir,’ stammered the boy. The gentleman who spoke last was unconsciously right. It would have been very like a Christian, and a marvellously good Christian too, if Oliver had prayed for the people who fed and took care of him. But he hadn’t, because nobody had taught him. (OT, 9)

The description of the workhouse is in itself a suggestive example of situational irony, where the contrast between reality and appearance is more than evident:

“It was a regular place of public entertainment for the poorer classes; a tavern where there was nothing to pay; a public breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper all the year round; a brick and mortar elysium, where it was all play and no work. ‘Oho!’ said the board, looking very knowing; ‘we are the fellows to set this to rights; we’ll stop it all, in no time.’ So, they established the rule, that all poor people should have the alternative (for they would compel nobody, not they), of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it. With this view, they contracted with the waterworks to lay on an unlimited supply of water; and with a corn-factor to supply periodically small quantities of oatmeal; and issued three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll of Sundays.” (OT, 9-10)

Most ironically, the poor people are offered the tremendous possibility of choosing between gradual and quick starvation.

All in all, there is a major context of situational irony that Dickens deploys in this novel under the form of the reversal of worlds and values that Oliver has to deal with throughout the pages of this novel. The young boy is born into a world that should provide at least for his basic needs, i.e. housing, food and human interaction. But his mother dies at birth and the infant is thrown into a parish workhouse where he has to live for 9 years under unimaginable circumstances: there is little food, even less protection and almost no genuine human interaction. Dickens, in fact, remains highly appreciated for the “description of slum and workhouse” that “could have come with very little alteration out of the pages of a sociologist...and political economist” (Hobsbaum, 1998:38). The workhouse described by Dickens “is considerably more than one specific workhouse, keenly observed though it is - it is more, even, than a representative of its class. It is, as Dickens says, a conglomeration of churchwardens and overseers, the instigators and perpetuators of a bad system. Here, the human spirit is systematically ground and punished into subjection” (Hobsbaum, 1998:39)

Under normal circumstances, one would expect the world one is born into would give the individual the chance to a decent life. With Dickens, this expectation is unrealistic, and *Oliver Twist* is most relevant in this regard: it is the underworld, the world of petty offences, of crime and criminality, of low social values that provides the boy with food and shelter. Chapter VIII of the novel marks this transition to a world that accepts Oliver, takes care of him and instructs him. Which is nothing that the formal world managed to do.

Conclusion

Despite its use of irony, *Oliver Twist* remains one of the darkest, most intense works of Charles Dickens. It captures the corruption, violence, hypocrisy and misery of the low Victorian classes and is populated by child laborers or street children that become criminals. Oliver himself might have turned into one, having no one to actually protect him and care for him. But the boy, on the contrary, manages to preserve his inner self and, on the whole, the novel depicts that evil has been destroyed by its own bad features in the conclusion of its constant battle with good, and that virtue is eventually rewarded at the end.

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IRONY IN THE EARLY NOVELS OF WILLIAM GOLDFING

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Abstract: The general view expressed in William Golding's art is related to the human nature which is considered to be both rational and religious. The early novels of William Golding are defined by most of the critics as being allegories, some of them satires, some others parodies. Irony is used as a technique that underlines the human depravity of his characters.

Keywords: satire; irony; novels; characters; plot.

1. During the second half of the 20th century, there was the common idea that contemporary writers could no longer create *big books* because of the so fragmented society and its mores, a society which was so accustomed to the depravity of the modern man.

The World War II changed the society, but also the way people used to think. Golding mentioned that before the war he trusted in the efficacy of social and political effort, while afterwards, he profoundly distrusted man's potential for progress not because the basic nature of man changed in the second half of the century, but because the war witnessed again man's inhumanity towards man as Golding remarked to a Leningrad conference of the European writers. He had the advantage of having started writing quite late in his life: "I have observed the world. I started to write late- I have reached certain conclusions. I have always been struck by the thing which men do to other men. I know of deeds which took place during the war, about which I still cannot think without feeling physically ill"¹.

The action of his novels is steeped in the inner consciousness of the leading character who is closed and determined rather than being open-minded and capable of change. Golding admits in his *Personal communication* that from the beginning he wrote under the influence of dominant ideas rather than of dominant people. He was free to explore the nature of the universe.

Although his novels seem to derive one from the other as it is the case of *Pincher Martin* and *Free Fall*, Golding considered that each new fable should spring from new ground: "I don't think there's any point in writing two books that are like each other"², the writer's achievement representing a continuous progress, a continuous development.

The general view expressed in Golding's art is related to the human nature, which, according to the writer's opinion, is both rational and religious. The early novels of William Golding: *Lord of the Flies* (1954), *The Inheritors* (1955), *Pincher Martin* (1956), *Free Fall* (1959), *The Spire* (1964), *The Pyramid* (1967) are defined by most of the critics as being allegories.

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¹ William Golding, *The Condition of the Novel*, New Left Review, No.29, January-February, 1965: 34

² Interview with Frank Kermode, *The Meaning of It All*, Books and Bookmen, October, 1959: 10

2. The basic problem with Golding fables appears when the reader tries to understand from a particular novel the explicit moral. In *Lord of the Flies*, for example, it is about the natural human depravity which is inescapable. It is about an ideal terror.

During history, man has been forced to suffer the role of a victim. In the same way, one can see in Golding's youngsters some unfortunate victims of circumstance and in the writer's novels, the image of a humanity permanently divided between reason and religion, common-sense and ritual, terror and pity. The novels represent descriptions or portrayals of moral facts.

Since Golding's purpose in writing his novels is to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature, his aim is really to comment upon the civilized world. Golding's boys in *Lord of the Flies* are merely the metaphor by means of which he makes his comments upon the real world. His metaphor is itself satirical since it makes fun of adults. Briefly put, *Lord of the Flies* says that civilized man, in his civilized society is no better than a pack of children running wild without adult supervision. This comparison seems absurd at first, but Golding uses irony in order to make his point about the evolution of the society.

A major part of the satire in *Lord of the Flies* is aimed at very large targets. Golding is not much interested in the smaller human traits, the man himself being his chief target. The author satirises the civilized voters of democracies and the citizens of dictatorships for accepting whatever they are told. They have no more conviction than Samneric who take the easiest way out of each situation, instead of doing their own thinking.

There are many instances in which satire occurs in the novel. Most of them are only funny in a bitter way, Golding actually revealing a terrible truth.

One example of irony is when Jack says that they must have rules: "We'll have rules!" he cried excitedly. "Lots of rules! Then when anyone breaks 'em—"

"Whee—oh!"

"Wacco!"

"Bong!"

"Doink" (Golding, 2001: 25).

The ironic aspect is that although Jack supports the idea of having rules, he will become the leader of the savages that kill Piggy.

Another example of irony is the fact that we never get to know the real name of the boy named Piggy. *Piggy* is his nickname which is used by the school boys to make him feel bad. We only know him as Piggy. The boys hunt pigs for food on the island, and they end up killing Piggy, too.

We also have irony when there is a clash between Ralph and Jack concerning leadership on the island: "Grownups know things," said Piggy. "They ain't afraid of the dark. They'd meet and have tea and discuss. Then things 'ud be all right". (Golding, 2001: 82) Ralph replies: "If only they could get a message to us," cried Ralph desperately. If only they could send us something grownup . . . a sign or something" (*ibidem*). Ironically, they receive a grownup, the parachutist, but he is already dead. He doesn't make things better, he causes more fear because the children think he is the beast.

Another example is related to Roger's narrow escape when the heavy coconuts rained down all around him. Roger should have been very glad because he was lucky enough not to have had his head broken, but instead he thinks that he might try throwing stones at Henry so as to just miss hitting him, the way coconuts had just missed hitting his head.

“A sudden breeze shook the fringe of palm trees, so that the fronds tossed and fluttered. Sixty feet above Roger, several nuts, fibrous lumps as big as rugby balls, were loosed from their stems. They fell about him with a series of hard thumps and he was not touched. Roger did not consider his escape, but looked from the nuts to Henry and back again. The subsoil beneath the palm trees was a raised beach, and generations of palms had worked loose in this the stones that had lain on the sands of another shore. Roger stooped, picked up a stone, aimed, and threw it at Henry—threw it to miss. The stone, that token of preposterous time, bounced five yards to Henry’s right and fell in the water. Roger gathered a handful of stones and began to throw them” (Golding, 2001: 51).

Dramatic irony occurs when the audience knows something that the characters do not. A good example of dramatic irony is to be found in chapter 5 when the boys discuss the identity of the beast. Only Simon understands the true nature of the beast and the reader is aware that the other boys do not know its identity. “Simon became inarticulate in his effort to express mankind’s essential illness. Inspiration came to him” (*ibidem*: 77).

Satire is also used when Ralph and Piggy talk with Samneric about the *dance* at which Simon was killed. None of the boys admits having been there even though they are all scared and shaken by the terrible incident. This episode is built upon the game of pretending, of trying to hide what is real, the author makes fun of his characters because their lies are obvious.

He jumped to his feet and stood over Ralph.
It was dark. There was that—that bloody dance. There was lightning and thunder and rain. We was scared!”
“I wasn’t scared,” said Ralph slowly, “I was—I don’t know what I was.”
“We was scared!” said Piggy excitedly. “Anything might have happened. It wasn’t—what you said.”
He was gesticulating, searching for a formula” (*ibidem*: 139).

Another example of irony takes place at the end of the novel when the officer says that he expected the boys to put up *a better show*. Ralph tries to explain how things fell apart, but the officer says: “I know. Jolly good show. Like the *Coral Island*” (*ibidem*: 182). In fact, the remark is ironic because the boys’ experience was the exact opposite of what took place in the story of *The Coral Island*. The effect of the situational irony is tragic in *Lord of the Flies*, the fire that was used in an attempt to kill ends up saving the boys. The ending is unexpected and surprising.

3. William Golding’s situational irony can be found in the novel *Pincher Martin*, too. The novel was considered by many critics his most challenging and problematic book. It is rather a configuration of symbols than a proper allegory. Through most of the book, one sees a man who struggles by himself to survive on a rock in the North Atlantic using his recollections. The end of the novel reveals that, in fact, this person, Pincher Martin, has been dead since the beginning of the story.

It may be said that the novel has two possible interpretations. It either represents an expansion of the few seconds prior to Martin’s death by drowning, denying in a way Golding’s attempt to imagine a story about a dead person, or another possible interpretation would be related to the theory that considers Martin as already dead, the initial title of the novel being *The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin*.

In order to understand better who Pincher Martin is, the commentaries given by Golding himself in a letter published in the *Radio Times* on 21 March 1958, are of

great importance: "Christopher Hadley Martin had no belief in anything but the importance of his own life; no love, no God. Because he was created in the image of God he had a freedom of choice which he used to centre the world on himself. He did not believe in purgatory and therefore when he died it was not presented to him in overtly theological terms. The greed for life which had been the mainspring of his nature, forced him to refuse the selfless act of dying. He continued to exist separately in a world composed of his own murderous nature. His drowned body lies rolling in the Atlantic but the ravenous ego invents a rock for him to endure on." (Carey, 2009)

From the beginning of the novel, Martin is grasped in the hands of fortune. He may seem an admirable person of rationality and wild will, a type of Robinson Crusoe, but the satiric representation gradually diminishes this admiration. Actually, Martin's rationality and logical thinking make him contradict his own assumption that he is an intelligent and educated person when he realizes that he must not let madness sneak into his mind and that he cannot fight death.

The novel *Pincher Martin* is based on a series of flashbacks that constitutes one of the techniques used for writing the novel. The flashbacks show Martin's earlier life as a civilian and as a naval officer. They are important because they represent projections of Martin's consciousness. The hero of the book, Pincher Martin, desperately struggles to survive. Blown off his ship, Martin manages to get to a rock where he takes shelter. He then tries to explore the rock, discovers a pool of water where he can drink from, builds a pile of stones as a signal for rescue and forces himself to eat anemones and mussels. By verifying his existence through his identification disc, he discovers that *he was what he always had been*.

The novel *Pincher Martin* is based on a rhythmical noise and disconnection. The end of the book reminds us of the fragment that describes the moment when Martin was about to drown meaning it reminds us of the novel's first paragraphs. Martin's situation is rendered concretely in the following fragment: "When the air had gone with the shriek, water came in to fill its place, burning water, hard in the throat and mouth as stones that hurt. He hunched his body towards the place where air had been but now it was gone and there was nothing but black, choking welter. His body let loose its panic and his mouth strained open till the hinges of his jaw hurt. Water thrust in, down, without mercy. Air came with it for a moment so that he fought in what might have been the right direction." (Golding, 1984:7)

Picher Martin was incapable of accepting the idea of his own death, thinking that he might deceive it. The critics considered the novel a satire against rationalism, but behind Martin's rationality there is another element that marks his story and that is, his ego, a powerful force called the *dark centre*. It is this ego that helps him resist. But the unknown thing has its source in something else than Martin's ego. It is the thing that created Martin's dark centre which is ironically associated with God.

4. The following novel, *Free Fall* is a clear continuation of the novel *Pincher Martin*, with the observation that Martin's ego compels him to deny the otherness of the universe and to regard the manifestation of God as a projection of the self. Sammy Mountjoy, when he is about to be sunk completely in his self, can cry for help, thus acknowledging the otherness of the universe and experiencing its divinity.

The view of the human condition in *Free Fall* resembles the image of a man dramatized in *Pincher Martin*. Instead of presenting the story from an omniscient point of view, the novel *Free Fall* is a first-person narrative, with Sammy Mountjoy, a famous painter, reflecting on his past. The novel contains subjective almost lyrical

evocations of Sammy's youth and also includes many commentaries, providing us with a more detailed social context than the writer used to.

The most important innovation of Golding's style in this novel is represented by his abandoning of the fundamentally linear plot specific to the earlier novels. There is no fable in *Free Fall*, no symbolic artifice. The novel stands between art and life.

The narrative is built especially out of his recollections and it is ordered more subjectively than rather chronologically. For Sammy, free will is a fact of his existence.

Free Fall aims to define the condition of a man rather than moving toward some clear-cut narrative and thematic resolution of his state.

The first-person narrative represents the idea of Sammy's limitations as a human being. A short summary of the story includes five sections. The first part presents Sammy's childhood, the second records his adolescent years, his meetings with Beatrice, the girl whom he desires. The third section presents Sammy as an adult, now a prisoner in a Germanic concentration camp who is first interrogated by Dr. Halde and then released into a world which he sees as an instinct with the divinity. The forth section skips over radically in time to Sammy as a schoolboy. The final part returns to Sammy's post-war present, rendering his visit to Beatrice and his last efforts to communicate with his spiritual parents, two teachers, who affect him deeply.

The main function of all these parts is to present a character who has reached the end of his resistance and looks for release. Sammy narrates his story and recognizes his guilt in behaving towards Beatrice as he had, but being conscious at the same time that is not the only one responsible for what she has become.

The hero contemplates his vision of a scientifically explicable universe and then his moral vision of a universe informed by the spirit, reaching the conclusion that both worlds are real.

5. The novel *The Spire* develops from the previous one, *Free Fall*. Although it describes the most part of the inner life of Jocelin, the novel does not represent a first-person narrative as was the case of *Free Fall* and *Pincher Martin* in his flashbacks.

From a narrative point of view, Golding shapes his story by describing the construction of a spire for a church in medieval England and the realizations that it leads to in Dean Jocelin. The building of the spire is described through its threatening stages: the discovery that the ground provides no foundation for such a structure, the moving of the earth as the town rises, the ringing of stones in the church, the building of pinnacles and the encircling of the tower with a steel band, the bending of the pillars.

At the beginning, Jocelin considers himself to be a man chosen by God, but gradually he realizes that he first has to ask for forgiveness from Father Anselm, a friend of his youth, and from Roger Manson, one of the persons whom Jocelin has destroyed because of his obsession with the spire.

On his deathbed, Jocelin sees the spire again as a work of God and is overwhelmed by a feeling of terror and joy. Many characters in the book live more as an adumbration of the Dean, Golding focusing on his inner life.

The fundamental meaning of the narrative in *The Spire* is represented by Jocelin's gradual progress toward self-knowledge.

6. William Golding's novel *The Pyramid*, is very different from the previous novels. Two parts of the novel were published separately and Golding presents the three parts of the novel as quite independent units.

The Pyramid also contains a number of comic passages, an aspect which is not to be found in the other novels. In some way, the novel resembles *Free Fall*, both of them being first-person narratives with a hero that looks back over his past. *The*

Pyramid represents for Golding a shift into a new fictional area, a shift into the realistic novel.

The novel includes three sections describing Oliver and his relationships with different persons in Stilbourne, the English village in which he has grown up before succeeding as a chemist.

The first section describes his relationship with Evie Babbacombe, the Town Crier's daughter. The second part presents the action that takes place several moments later, on Oliver's return after his first term at Oxford and his encounter with Evelyn De Tracy.

The third section presents the image of a middle-aged Oliver, drawn back home, to Stilbourne where he finds out about the death of Bounce Dawlish, his music teacher. He then relives several moments of his childhood and analyses himself, catching sight of the person who has become.

William Golding uses irony in his novels in order to create a tension between expected and real results. The author uses irony to get away with making comments about humankind, society and social phenomena.

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IRONIC INSTANCES BEHIND THE DYNAMICS OF RELATIONSHIPS IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S THE KITE RUNNER

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Abstract: Irony makes The Kite Runner more intriguing and forces the reader to use his/her imagination and comprehend the underlying meanings of the text. Therefore, the use of irony brings the novel closer to real life, and especially to real relationships and their dynamics. We can claim that Khaled Hosseini uses irony to advance the plot, themes, and the character development.

Keywords: irony; relationships; dynamics; kite runner

Conceptual Framework

Generally speaking, irony explains the use of language, and of situation, associating a different kind of something called discrepancy. One can mention three different types of ironies: verbal, dramatic and situational. When it comes to verbal irony, you may say or write something but what you really mean is something completely different. Dramatic irony may be encountered when somebody possesses information of which some characters from a book are not aware of. Situational irony is when something happens, which is the opposite of what was appropriate or what was expected to happen.

Irony, as such, has gone through countless development stages, approaches and interpretations. For instance, “for the Roman rhetoricians *ironía* denoted a rhetorical figure and a manner of discourse in which, for the most part, the meaning was contrary to the words.” (Cuddon, 1999: 427) In *The Concept of Irony* (1841) Kierkegaard elaborated the idea that irony is a mode of seeing things, a way of viewing existence. Later, Amiel, in his *Journal Intime* (1883-7) expressed the view that irony springs from a perception of the absurdity of life. (*ibidem*) What is more, most forms of irony involved the perception or awareness of a discrepancy or incongruity between words and their meaning, or between actions and their results, or between appearance and reality. In all cases there may be an element of the absurd and the paradoxical. (*ibidem*: 430)

As irony is such an oblique quality or mode of expression, it would be true to say that we can encounter both direct or overt irony, as well as an ironic temper or tone; an ironic way of looking at things and of feeling about them. (*ibidem*: 431)

Overall, “irony entails the expression of one’s intended meaning through language which, taken literally, appears on the surface to express the opposite. While in rhetoric, *irony* is a figure of speech, in semiotics, it is a kind of double sign” (Chandler and Munday, 2011). Since irony is a characteristic stylistic feature of postmodernism, we consider that Khaled Hosseini’s novel *The Kite Runner* is permeated with this rhetorical figure/manner of discourse. Additionally, we can claim that Khaled Hosseini uses irony to advance the plot, themes, and the character development.

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The Kite Runner – Plot

The initial spark to write *The Kite Runner* sprang from Khaled Hosseini's watching a CNN report on the Taliban's having banned the kite flying. Hence, Hosseini's inspiration for the story line of the novel in 1999.

The setting of *The Kite Runner* unfolds in three very different places, even though two of them are identical and yet so dissimilar. The book starts out in Kabul, Afghanistan in the 1960s, then switches to a town in California called Fremont, then goes back to Kabul in 2001, which is so different from the Kabul of Amir's childhood it might as well be on a different planet. The novel's narrator, Amir, is a fully developed individual. Both Amir's good qualities and his bad ones are exposed, and much of the power of the novel is revealed from his portrait. We are easily drawn into his world, due to the author's skills in storytelling. As with all enthralling stories, we forget the fiction and immerse ourselves in this "reality" which, in so many ways, connects with our own experiences, leading us to reflect on our lives and our values. However, the world created by Hosseini is entirely different from the experiences of many western readers and, as such, provides fascinating and often disturbing insights into a different culture.

The Kite Runner is a novel with a very consciously crafted structure. The way Baba treats both Amir and Hassan as "sons", which at first seems good-natured, is much later revealed to be what it actually is – the love of a father for a legitimate and an illegitimate son. The moment when Hassan is raped echoes later both the rape of Kamal and the (implied) rape of Sohrab. Assef disappears, only to reappear in a more despicable form at a critical moment. The unfinished business of the day (Hassan threatened to make him "one eyed Assef") is unwittingly finished by his son – a connection which might perhaps strain credibility but certainly delivers a very satisfying symbolism. Baba's paternal love for Amir and Hassan is replicated later in Amir's paternal love for Sohrab.

The Dynamics of Relationships in The Kite Runner

The story of Amir and Hassan, bound by brotherhood but separated by class and ethnicity is, on a larger scale, a story about universal brotherhood, and suggests that the social, political and religious boundaries that divide people can be transcended. Given the deep and enduring ethnic divisions between the Sunni and the Shi'a in Afghanistan, the book is also a quasi-political treatise. (Pashtuns are Sunni Muslims while Hazaras are Shi'a Muslims)

Hassan's social position is solely based on his status as Hazara. Like all Hazaras, Hassan looks different than the Pashtuns, so his ethnicity is permanently stamped as his identity. Hassan does not have the opportunity for an education because of his position, and neither Hassan nor Amir question it. It is interesting to note that Amir, as a ruling-class Pashtun, did not know the details of his "superiority" over the Hazaras. He did not know his own history and apparently, he never cared about it enough to learn (he became aware of the implications of the difference between the Pashtuns and the Hazaras when he found a history book that belonged to his mother).

Even though the two boys are close friends Hassan idolises Amir, obeying his every wish. He even accepts the blame for minor transgressions. Amir and Hassan are both motherless, Amir's mother having died giving birth to him and Hassan's having abandoned him a week after his birth. Ali is the one who remembers the boys that "there was a brotherhood between people who had been fed from the same breast [the wet

nurse] a kinship that not even time could break.” Amir’s first word is “Baba”. Hasan’s is “Amir”. “And under the same roof, we spoke our first words. Mine was Baba. His was Amir. My name. (cf. Hosseini, 2013: 11)”

The fact that Amir’s name became Hassan’s first words symbolizes his love and devotion to him from birth and in turn “Baba” being Amir’s first words shows Amir’s love and need to make his father proud and acknowledge him as a “worthy son”. Hassan loves Amir so much that he takes everything for Amir and he even gets to the point where he lets Amir blame him for stealing, so he can get rid of him. Amir would get rid of his most faithful friend in order to absolve his feelings of guilt.

The theme of brotherhood presented here through the two characters is established from the outset with the two motherless infants having the same wet nurse. The first words spoken by each reveal what is most important to them, and lay the “foundations for what happened in 1975 – and all that followed”.

Amir and Baba

The paternal relationship is often overwhelming. Driven by a need to prove himself, Baba outshines his father, “a respected judge”, with his feats of daring and the accumulation of wealth and power. Amir struggles to prove himself, burdened by his sense of inadequacy and intimidated by his father’s towering psychical presence. The story of “Shahnamah” (a Persian epic), has a particular resonance for Amir. The words: “If thou art indeed my father, then thou hast stained thy sword in the life-blood of thy son”, metaphorically express Amir’s bitterness at his father’s rejection. His desperate need to “bring [the kite] home and show Baba... once and for all that his son was worthy,” is Amir’s hope of securing the affection he craves.

There is a wide gap between Baba and Amir. Amir is a lonely soul, craving for and dispossessed of his Baba’s regard. As a result, Amir develops a sense of hatred for all those who have an opportunity to entertain Baba’s company. As it is reflected in his words:

I remembered all the times he didn’t come home until after dark, all the times I ate dinner alone. I’d ask Ali where Baba was, when he was coming home, though I knew full well he was at the construction site, overlooking this, supervising that. Didn’t that take patience? I already hated all the kids he was building the orphanage for; sometimes I wished they’d all die along with their parents (Hosseini, 2013: 16)

His senses of emotional insecurity are reflected in his following thought: “Baba hardly ever used the term of endearment jan when he addressed me (*Ibidem*: 27)”

Amir has a desperate desire to be with his father and for it he can even tell a lie as he himself states:

I remembered the day before the orphanage opened, Baba took me to Ghargha Lake, a few miles north to Kabul. He asked me to fetch Hassan too, but I lied and told him Hassan had the runs. I wanted Baba all to myself. (*Ibidem*: 12)

Baba’s disappointment in his son is a further indication of his insecurity. His incapacity to accept a child who is so unlike him indicates Baba’s need for affirmation. **Ironically**, like his son, Baba too has a guilty secret. Either loneliness or lust draws Baba to the bed of Sanubar, the wife of his servant. But Ali is also his friend and Baba dishonors him in the single worst way and Afghan man can be dishonored. While Baba is a courageous man, willing to fight against injustice and dishonour, he is also

sometimes violent and unreasonable. Only Rahim Khan is the one who dares to criticise him. Consequently, with no capacity for self-reflection, Baba shuts himself off from his feelings and must constantly surround himself with people to fill the emotional void in his life.

Ali and Hassan

Juxtaposed with the difficult relationship between Amir and Baba is that between Hassan and Ali. Ali is a gentle and loving father, cradling in his arms the disfigured, new-born infant, despite his certain knowledge that he could not be his father. The importance of “blood” is overridden by the depth of paternal affection Ali feels for Hassan. Ironically, it is the importance of “blood” that awakens Baba’s paternal affection for the child he cannot acknowledge. Baba, however, scrupulously fulfils his responsibilities to both his sons. He “never forgets” Hassan’s birthday, and sacrifices his own happiness to prove a better future for Amir in America.

As he matures, Amir’s relationship with Baba improves, partly because Baba finds a reason to be proud of him, but also because Baba mellows with age and is able to acknowledge his tenderness for his son. The paternal relationship which sustains Amir through his childhood, however, is with Rahim Khan. The one that reasons with Baba is Rahim. Chiding him over his harsh treatment of Amir, and it is he who nurtures Amir’s talent for writing. Rahim Khan also takes paternal responsibility for Amir’s moral guidance, gently insisting that he finds “a way to be good again”.

Amir and Sohrab

We only meet Sohrab at the very end of the novel. When Amir finally meets him, he realizes “[t]he resemblance [to Hassan] was breathtaking”.

Amir’s physical rescuing of Sohrab from Assef, as well as from his suicide attempt, is admirable. He also rescues the boy from the psychological terrors of his circumstances. Sohrab’s parents have been murdered, and he has been degraded and sexually abused by Assef. After the suicide attempt, Sohrab seems broken and beaten. He can only say how he is incredibly, “tired of everything.” All he wants is his “...old life back” – a life with his parents and grandmother, in their old house, before everything went down.

Amir cannot save Sohrab by giving his old life back. From the rubble of the past, from the horrors and secrets, Amir and Sohrab have emerged, and they must take care of each other. Amir brings Sohrab home to America to raise him as a son with his wife, Soraya.

It is not an easy rescue. In America, Sohrab does not speak for months. His is the “...silence of one who has taken cover in a dark place....” Amir continues to try to engage the boy; Soraya hangs back, waiting for a sign from Sohrab. Finally, we get a small sign of hope. Celebrating Afghan New Year, Amir buys a kite and Sohrab shows a flicker of interest. Together, Amir and Sohrab bring down another kite in a contest similar to the ones from Amir’s childhood. Sohrab allows a hint of a smile to cross his lips. Amir notices and acknowledges it as, “A tiny thing”. But, it is a start – with a little luck and faith, Sohrab is starting a journey of healing.

Amir and Rahim Khan

Rahim Khan is Amir's confidante, the only adult Amir he can turn to when he needs someone to be there for him and to get something off his chest. Rahim is always supportive of Amir, providing him with the positive reinforcement that he rarely gets from his father. Rahim convinces Amir to continue writing after Baba "feigned interest" in his son's first short story; it is Rahim who "rescued me" from Baba's long silence and refusal to read even one word of Amir's story.

Amir has a close relationship with his Baba's business partner and also his best friend, Rahim Khan. The novel opens with Amir receiving a call from Rahim, who is asking him to come to Pakistan, as he is very ill. He is also the one that suggests that this trip is a way for Amir "to be good again," so he is helping Amir redeem for some wrongdoing, which we later learn about when Amir narrates his childhood experiences. Rahim Khan is not Amir's father, but he stands in as the kind of father Amir wishes he had; his relationship with his father, Baba, is tense and strained.

When Amir is a child, Baba confides to Rahim (and Amir overhears) that he worries about Amir because he may not be able to defend himself out in the real world: "And where is he headed?" Baba said. "A boy who won't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything" (Hosseini, 2013: 22)

Baba even goes so far as to tell Rahim, "'If I hadn't seen the doctor pull him out of my wife with my own eyes, I'd never believe he's my son'" (*Ibidem*: 23). Rahim is gentler and understanding of Amir's dreams. Knowing that Amir wants to be a writer, Rahim supportively reads Amir's works, while Baba barely glances at his stories. Rahim even gives Amir a writing notebook in which to write his stories. Although Amir appreciates Rahim and their close relationship, he desperately wants Baba's attention. This is why he vows to win the kite fighting competition that leads to all of the following events.

Eventually, Amir and Baba flee Afghanistan and immigrate to California. They become closer when living in the United States, and especially once Amir marries Soraya and they all live together. After Baba's death, Amir finds out that Baba hid a major secret from him: that Baba was Hassan's father and that Amir and Hassan are half-brothers. Though Amir does forgive his father, the tension between the two continues after Baba's death. Meanwhile, it is Rahim who presents this opportunity for Amir to redeem himself by adopting Sohrab, who is his nephew.

Purpose of Irony in *The Kite Runner*

Khaled Hosseini uses irony in *The Kite Runner* in order to make the reader come to moments of revelation and realizations. Situational irony appears when there is a difference in the expected outcome of an action or situation and the real outcome.

Situational irony is omnipresent in the novel under scrutiny. It is believed that after Amir wins the kite tournament, his relationship with his father, Baba, will flourish and he will have the opportunity to change, for the good, as a human being.

It is greatly ironic that Amir allows Hassan to be raped to gain Baba's favour by bringing home the kite. This is because this action epitomizes the cowardly traits that Baba so despised. Also, he did this to achieve happiness, but the polar opposite happened as he became riddled with guilt for over two decades.

Another case in point of situational irony focuses on Baba and Amir in California. When they move to America, their status could be compared to the Hazaras

in Afghanistan, which leads to Baba's talks with Amir has always labelled him as an ethical and moral man but we know that is not what he really is.

The raping of Hassan by Assef can be categorized a situational irony since nobody would ever have imagined that Assef was a child molester, a paedophile. Also, this section of the plot should have been Amir's highlight of the year, as he had become champion in the kite running competition.

The worst laceration was on your upper lip. [...] The impact had cut your upper lip in two, clean down in the middle. But not to worry, the plastics guys sewed it back together and they think you will have an excellent result though there will be a scar. That is unavoidable. (Hosseini, 2013: 131)

This is ironic, since the lip scar reminds Amir of how his childhood best friend, Hassan had a similar one after he had gone through surgery for his hare-lip malformation. Therefore, Amir feels that he is being enlightened of having the burden of not helping Hassan out when he needed him by getting beaten up by Assef.

It is hugely ironic that it is Assef's beating of Amir that finally provides him with the atonement he so desperately desired. This is because Assef is the original source of Amir's guilt as he was the one who raped Hassan, giving Amir that impossible choice which left him emotionally distraught for years after the incident.

At this point of the novel both Amir and Hassan (unfortunately deceased) both have lip abnormalities. Hassan is born with the cleft lip, while the beating that Amir receives from Assef as an adult, inflicts a permanent scar on his lip. This similarity shows the bond between the half-brothers.

In its prevalence throughout the novel, irony appears also when Amir utters Hassan's same words to Sohrab, Hassan's son, "For you a thousand times over". It is ironic as the Pashtun-Hazara social relationship is inverted when Amir says this to Sohrab. Additionally, Amir was somewhat envious of Hassan's usage of words despite Hassan being illiterate and Amir teaching him words. Amir goes back and ironically uses Hassan's same words to his son.

Dramatic irony

Dramatic irony occurs when the audience knows something that the characters do not know about yet.

[...] no matter what the mullah teaches, there is only one sin, only one. And that is theft. Every other sin is a variation of theft. [...] when you kill a man, you steal a life," Baba said. "you steal his wife's right to a husband, rob children of a father. When you tell a lie, you steal someone's right to the truth. When you tell a lie, you steal the right of fairness. Do you see? (Hosseini, 2013: 19)

When Baba said "when you tell a lie, you steal someone's right to the truth," he was actually the person stealing information about Amir and Hassan and how they were both half-brothers. It is ironic, since he said that "Now, no matter what the mullah teaches, there is only one sin. And that is theft. Every other sin is a variation of theft." Yet, he was exactly who he claimed not to be: the worst of all sinners.

Baba's dishonesty about Hassan is hugely ironic due to the almost self-righteous manner in which he leads his life. His strong views on the previously mentioned sin, are once again ironic as Baba stole Ali's right to a faithful wife, as she committed adultery with him, even though Baba and Ali were considered to be best

friends. There is even a deeper connection between Baba and his son, Amir, aside from their being blood-related. Amir sets out to emulate all of Baba's admirable traits. Therefore, in chapter 9, Amir repeats an act performed 26 years earlier: "earlier that morning, when I was certain no one was looking, I did something I had done twenty-six years earlier: I planted a fistful of crumpled money under a mattress." (*Ibidem*: 254).

Amir lied to his father, that he had lost the money and when Baba found the money, he tried to figure out how it got there. "We may be hard-headed and I know we're far too proud, but, in the hour of need, believe me that there is no one you'd rather have at your side than a Pashtun." (*Ibidem*: 169)

Ironically, Hassan (who was a Hazara), when in his darkest moment needed Amir's help (who was a Pashtun), he did not assist him, which was to lead to tragedy. When Sohrab used the slingshot to stop Assef hurting Amir, we find another ironic situation, because Sohrab's father, Hassan, held a slingshot that was aimed at Assef's face that was not shot since Assef had backed off of them. But when Amir was being beaten up Assef later on in the story near the end, Sohrab held the slingshot that his father taught him how to use the same position his father had held at when Hassan was getting verbally insulted by Assef. And the ironic part is that Sohrab is the one who shot the hard ball at Assef's eye and yet his father did not. (cf. Hosseini, 2013: pp. 304-305)

Furthermore, Ali's sterility is ironic as he is much more of a father figure to Hassan than Baba is to Amir, yet he cannot ever actually father a child on his own. He essentially bears Baba's paternal burden that he owed Hassan.

Verbal Irony

Assef actively uses verbal irony when he speaks. Another example of verbal irony is used by Assef during Amir's 13th birthday, on which occasion he maliciously comments: "Wali and Kamil are here too. They wouldn't miss it for anything" (Hosseini, *op.cit.*: 102). The truth is that both Wali and Kami have agreed with Assef's disgust towards Amir, as well as contributed to the raping of Hassan. Amir, is fully aware of the fact that neither Wali, nor Kamil care about him, and they would definitely miss his birthday party if they wanted to.

In the hospital room after Baba collapses in the flea market, Amir remembers Baba saying: "In the hour of need, believe me there's no one you'd rather have at your side than a Pashtun" (*Ibidem*: 169). It is extremely ironic Baba says this, as both he and Hassan failed their best friends in their time of need. For instance, Baba had an affair with Sanaubar, Ali's wife; additionally, he did no support Ali when his wife left him and he never owned up to the fact that Hassan is his son. Similarly, his other son, Amir, stood in the shadows while Hassan was being raped, and chose not to act. Even though Baba claimed that Pashtuns are reliable and trustworthy, neither he, nor his son behaved according to their so-called traits.

As Amir returns to Afghanistan to save Sohrab, he re-encounters Assef who challenged him to fight in order for Amir to receive the custody of Hassan's son. While Amir is being beaten up, he states "My body was broken – just how badly I wouldn't find out until later – but I felt healed. Healed at last" (*Ibidem*: 303)

This statement is ironic because he says he feels healed as his body is being abused. He does not literally mean his body is on the verge of healing, he is most likely feeling the opposite; however, he means he is starting to be emotionally alleviated. The rape that he witnessed in his childhood had marked his life and this occasion of being physically destroyed by Assef lifts a weight off his chest.

Concluding Remarks

In the present article, I have emphasized the functions of irony in the dynamics of relationships in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. As such, irony makes the novel more intriguing and forces the reader to use his/her imagination and comprehend the underlying meanings of the text. Therefore, the use of irony brings the novel closer to real life, and especially to real relationships and their dynamics.

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VISUALIZING TIME – A PSYCHOLOGICAL THRESHOLD FOR THE IMAGINATION

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Abstract. William Faulkner used time in various ways to express his attitude towards the conditions of American society after the Civil War. Time's ramification functions figuratively both as a structural and thematic device. Faulkner's mastery in transposing his visual art is obvious in his making time flow through the respective consciousness of his characters. For Faulkner as for Nietzsche memory goes back into the past for a certain reason. The latter believes that "[one] can explain the past only by what is most powerful in the present" (Nietzsche 40). In *Absalom, Absalom!*, the reader is taken back and forth in time getting glimpses into the past in order to understand Sutpen's story as related by other narrators. One of Faulkner's techniques is using flashbacks such as tall tales "to distort reality out of most if not all proportions referred to as 'hyperbolic humor'" (Skei 85). The strong imprint that the implacable forces of the past left on the characters' minds can only be relieved through remembrance and imagination. This analysis focuses on the importance of readers visualizing of the use of time and its ramifications in *Absalom, Absalom!*. By engaging with Faulkner's "timeplay" the reader not only situates himself within two-time frames but also discovers the author's distinct use of humor and irony as tools to criticize the atrocities and aberrations of the Civil War.

Keywords: South; time; imagination; humor; visualization.

Introduction

Patricia Tobin suggests that only after several readings of the novel, a critic is able to view *Absalom, Absalom!* as a whole (257). Faulkner's use of the concept of time is an indispensable, narrative technique in his endeavor to create confusion in his novels. In terms of structure, it is hard to notice from the first reading that the present time, represented by Quentin's narrative to Shreve, and later Shreve to Quentin, integrates all the other narrative perspectives that concern the past. The time structure needs to be visualized as it remains abstract when considered beyond the text. The reader is almost never aware of an exact present.

There have been long polemics among Faulknerian critics such as Sartre, Brooks, Tobin, Bourassa etc., on the author's intentions of using time.

I agree pretty much with Bergson's theory of the fluidity of time. There is only the present moment in which I include both the past and the future, and that is eternity. In my opinion, time can be shaped quite a bit by the artist; after all, man is never time's slave (Faulkner qtd. in Meriwether and Millgate 70).

Cleanth Brooks interprets time as not existing "apart from some being's consciousness of a felt continuity, time is merely an abstraction" (253). In his novel, *The Wild Palms*, "Faulkner has Harry Wilbourne speak of the current of time that runs through remembering"(qtd. in Brooks 253). Later in his book, the critic manages to "distinguish the various strata of Quentin's knowledge" (303) relying on the

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chronological occurrence of events that assembled creates the history of the individual. In his essay “Time in Faulkner: The Sound and the Fury,” Sartre overtly asserts his opinion on Faulkner’s use of time:

Faulkner’s despair seems to me to be anterior to his metaphysic; for him, as for all of us, the future is barred.[...] We live in a time of incredible revolutions, and Faulkner uses his extraordinary art to describe a world dying of old age, with us grasping and choking in it. I like his art, but I don’t believe in his metaphysic. A barred future is still a future (Hoffman and Vickery 232).

Comparing his view to Bergson’s, Faulkner thinks that life implies motion. Faulkner travels back and forth in time between past and present, getting glimpses into the past in order to understand the Sutpens’ story. The past must be reinterpreted and each reinterpretation becomes part of the past, which adds a new perspective that transforms into a new evaluation of the whole story. Alan Bourassa also explains that Quentin’s hearing and retelling of Sutpen’s story are never meant to establish what really happened, but rather establish what Miss Rosa has called the “might-have-been,” “what we can call the virtuality of the past” (164). Faulkner’s creation of time as a flowing picture mirrors his definition of Yoknawpatawpha “a Chickasaw Indian word meaning water runs slow through flat land” (qtd. in Gwynn and Blother 74).

No one can ever run away from his past and try to restart an entirely new life, as the past inevitably influences the present. Sutpen ignored and even tried to oppose this truth: he imagined that he could restart a new life and leave behind his past in West Virginia, but he was wrong. He invested all his efforts in accomplishing his “design” of life but the past eventually caught up with him when Charles Bon and Clytie showed up in the story. While Charles’ mother could not take revenge on Sutpen for his lack of humanity, Wash Jones was unable to stand Sutpen’s treatment of Milly Jones and murdered him. The past then inevitably becomes the present for every one of Faulkner’s characters in the novel.

Faulkner uses time in other ways in his novel, among which Hoffman distinguishes two: one where time movement is comprised within points in the past, as in *The Sound and the Fury*; and one time movement includes the present as a narrative frame in *Absalom, Absalom!*. In both instances, everything is rooted in the past. Hoffman also notices that present time does not signify anything when taken alone: instead “it is infused with the past, it has meaning only in terms of it, and its complex nature results from the fusion of the two.” Therefore, time flows “from past into present and from present into past” (260). Sometimes past events are implacable, like bars making up the protagonists’ prison. As in Hardy’s *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, in *Absalom, Absalom!*, the protagonists have a past secret to hide. They strive to occupy respectable positions in their society even if the circumstances of their ascent are unknown to people living in that community. However, the past as represented by the respective protagonists’ wives and children - makes its impact when they reappear and change the protagonists’ life course significantly. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Quentin explains the impact of the past upon the present :

Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed, did

feed, let this second pool contain a different temperature of water, a different molecularity of having seen, felt, remembered, reflect in a different tone the infinite unchanging sky, it doesn't matter: that pebble's watery echo whose fall it did not even see moves across its surface too at the original ripple-space, to the old ineradicable rhythm." (*Absalom, Absalom!* 261)

Becoming aware of Faulkner's visual arts talent brings to mind his use of "frozen moments" or "tableaux" representing moments that "erupt and freeze, then fade, recede and diminish, still motionless" (Hoffman and Vickery 227). This technique alludes to framed pictures that resist oblivion comparable with the motionless images in each of this novel's tableaux- Miss Rosa sitting and talking to Quentin, Mr. Compson talking to Quentin and Shreve talking to Quentin. Thus, present time represents the frame whereas the character with his own story remains motionless but full of abstract meaning. Sartre thinks that Faulkner's present is suspended to indicate the "arrested motion in time" (qtd. in Hoffman and Vickery 227), illustrating Faulkner's superlative mastery in transposing his visual arts ability by his use of time.

Faulkner's "visualization" technique is still necessary in order to situate facts within the narrative. This is important given the confusion created by Faulkner's technique to make time flow through the characters' consciousness. The reader is walked back and forth in time, among complicated sentences, such an example being the rather confusing narrative presented by Miss Rosa. Time's circularity clearly affects these characters and everything around them. As Olga Vickery puts it, "For Faulkner, the essence of time, as of truth, lies in people's actions and behaviour" (256). Faulkner's use of characters has a strong relationship with his use of time. Characters throughout the Faulknerian canon tend to mentally isolate themselves in time. Brooks thinks that Faulkner might have understood but not approved those who retreat into the past: "Faulkner believed that to isolate the past from the present was to falsify the very nature of time. It was a fallacy in which some of Faulkner's characters were trapped, but never Faulkner himself" (268). In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Goodhue Coldfield, "[...] retired into the impregnable citadel of his passive rectitude" (Faulkner 63). Besides, Miss Rosa isolates herself from the community as she cannot live in the present, as Sartre calls "suspension" of the present time (Hoffman and Vickery 227). She cannot forget the past marked by Sutpen's indecent proposal that leaves deep wounds on her soul.

In his *Deleuze and American Literature*, Alan Bourassa posits the interrelatedness of time and virtuality. For him, the "virtual" images reflecting the past make their way into the present. For Faulkner as for Nietzsche, memory is always for something or of something, going back into the past for a certain purpose. This virtuality is defined as "the real survivor of history" (Bourassa 151). For example, Thomas Sutpen's representing of the past is for Quentin the image that actualizes itself in a series of narrators: Quentin, Shreve, Mr. Compson, and Mrs. Rosa. The stories and the reconstructions told in *Absalom, Absalom!* represent the power of the past that haunts the narrators' minds.

Faulkner believes that time exists only in the people's minds, saying: "time is a fluid condition which has no experience except in the momentary avatars of individual people. There is no such thing as was - only is" (qtd. in Meriwether and Millgate 225). He illustrates that concept at the end of Quentin's search for the truth of the story happened in the past. It proves that the literal past is inaccessible to him, all he had were experiences viewed according to the narrators' interpretations. Consequently,

everything happens in the present. It seems that past facts perfectly integrate the present time frame creating a simple story. Critics such as Bergson, Hoffman, Brooks, Aiken, and Faulkner all think that time is continuous.

The concept of time contributes to the foundation of the structure of Faulkner's novel; situating the reader within the frames of the novel helps significantly. According to Patricia Tobin, "both structure and style serve to withhold meaning and delay revelation long enough for the reader to become hypnotized with the mythical reverberations of the *Yoknapatawpha* saga" (107). Through visualization, readers can mentally situate facts within the two periods of time. The 19th century, when the told events occur, and the 20th century, when the story itself is told by the narrators' reminiscence of interrelated events that are not told in chronological order. Rather, the past events are pieced together in the framework created by the characters' narration, and the reader hopes to reconstitute the real truth of the story. In conclusion, the realization of the existence of the two parallel periods of time seems to have been the greatest obstacle in the readers' understanding of how to look at the story. The narrators use flashbacks, as they represent important pieces to fit in the story that they are reconstituting. Readers need to go back and forth these dimensions so that they can understand the contextual meaning of the novel. The author must move from an account of Bon and Henry to a description of Quentin and Shreve as they sit in the cold dormitory room imagining what went on in the past.

Faulkner manipulated his visual arts skills transferring them to his writing. As Panthea Reid puts it "He imported both the abstract theory of autonomy and the actual practice of composition from visual arts." She also adds that his language "employed a liberated sense of the artist's freedom to manipulate blocks of language like shapes on a canvas which he imported from his 1925 exposure to Post-Impressionist painting" (106). By using tall tales, Faulkner intended "to distort reality out of most if not all proportions referred to as 'hyperbolic humor'" (Skei 85) and Sutpen's "gigantism and inflexibility must disqualify Sutpen for a realistic narrative" (Tobin 111). Such techniques charged his works with abstract meaning which invites the reader to interpret the author's meaning intentions.

A Psychological Threshold

Critical interpretations help readers visualize the author's psychological and abstract use of time. Faulkner interlaced paragraphs related to the present and past as a game for the reader who is searching for the underlying meaning. Hoffman describes Faulkner's use of time as "a continuum: time flowing from past into present and from present into past" (26), whereas Vickery views time as a cyclical continuous process that finally ends up in "an eternal growing present" (256). According to these critics, past experiences inevitably influence present. Carl Rollyson expands this influence affecting future as well, saying "a novel set completely in the past is virtually an impossibility, for the past can be imagined only in its relationship to the present and future, just as the present and future have to be created in Faulkner's writing with reference to the past" (3). The reader needs to visualize and make links between events happening in the two time dimensions in order to understand Faulkner's writing intentions.

Faulkner's use of metaphor brings its highest contribution to the creation of figurative meaning. Faulkner's eye for detail, his flow of words and the care with which he selected them are characteristics of an artistic soul full of sensitivity. He wished to

project images that were there in his mind into his writing. What Beck evinces as most individual in Faulkner's style is the "persistent lyrical embroidery and coloring, in extended passages, of the narrative theme" (37). Metaphor is used to convey various meanings such as ironic significance "So he [...] took his wife [...] and installed her, kennelled her...and returned to the house (*Absalom, Absalom!* 206); in the description of Sutpen's naming his children "with his own mouth his own ironic fecundity of dragon's teeth" (62).

Faulkner uses elements of style such as ellipsis and what might be called suspension techniques, consisting of the isolation or merging of events or periods of time or of some missing information. As Gail Mortimer puts it, suspension is "often vividly characterized as a space, a gap which the reader is meant to fill or complete in some actively creative way" (77). In his book *Cartea Esecurilor*, Mircea Mihăiesă conjectures that the reader must undertake the omniscient narrator's role because of the absence or secrecy of important things that results from the story's porosity, created out of a variety of perspectives. "Their narration, always retrospective creates a space of secret"¹ which determines the reader which "substitutes the omniscient author whereas the character gets out of the picture wherein he has been entrapped" (186) ². This device is very often used in the four novels but especially in *Absalom, Absalom!*.

Faulkner's use of imagery helps readers' visualize a reality of its own as well as understand figurative meaning. Vickery distinguishes between the language of reason and symbolic language. The former is meant to define reality whereas the latter is responsible for the creation of the abstract meaning. According to Joseph Gold, the difficulty in reading rises from a language play that "sets up a barrier between the intention of the words and the reader" (144). In his choice of words to create pictures, Faulkner uses symbolism. Words referring to time are charged with figurative meaning. According to Mortimer, twilight is a fusion of light and dark, of white and black which is used in different contexts, such as people are born and die at twilight. Twilight may also refer to "a period of decline" (71). Chapter six opens with "that dead summer twilight - the wisteria, the cigar-smell, the fireflies – attenuated up from Mississippi and into this strange room, across this strange iron New England snow" to set the atmosphere adequate to the introduction of the sad news that "Miss Rosa was buried yesterday" (173).

Remembrance and Imagination

Readers' attention is much requested since information about the past is either missing or unsaid. It comes out that Faulkner's preoccupation with the past lies at the core of understanding the figurative unexpressed meanings of his texts. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, time's passage is related to the feeling of nostalgia and the idea of loss. In her book, Faulkner's *Rhetoric of Loss*, Gail Mortimer describes Faulkner's world as "a world sustained among tensions about loss: loss of the self, loss of control, loss of desired objects through the passage of time" (7).

In his explanation about the theme of loss in Faulkner's fiction, Mortimer writes about the significance that certain present objects carry as they represent "traces or reminders of abstract things and embody the latter's meaning" (93). These objects constitute reminders of the individuals which do not exist anymore. Sutpen's house;

¹ "Narațiunea lor, întotdeauna retrospectivă, crează un spațiu al secretului." (translation mine)

² Cititorul se substituie autorului omniscient, pe când personajul ieșe din imaginea în care a fost închis" (translation mine).

clothes getting the individual's personality imprinted on them "like the same coat that new might have fitted a thousand men, yet after one man has worn it for a while it fits no one else and you can tell it anywhere you see it even if all you see is a sleeve or a lapel" (Faulkner 246). Sutpen's wife, Ellen, is compared to an empty shell which could be interpreted as her fragility in the implacable world she lives in "[...] the butterfly of a forgotten summer two years defunctive now-the substanceless shell, the shade impervious to any alteration of dissolution because of its very weightlessness: no body to be buried: just the shape, the recollection, translated on some peaceful afternoon" (126). This absence of her body is another example of the pattern already presented: the prevalence of the past. There is only her memory – namely her past - that is left in the present. Another example is Quentin Compson's comparing himself to "a hall" in which figures and sounds of the past recur ceaselessly, "as an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names [...]. He was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts" (12).

Characters retell what they remember and they imagine what must have happened. The protagonist, Thomas Sutpen, appears and is referred to as a ghost. Only imagination can release torment in the characters' minds. The implacable forces of the past have left a strong imprint on the characters of the novel. Sartre notices that for Faulkner "the past is unfortunately never lost; it is always there, almost as an obsession" (qtd. in Hoffman and Vickery 229). For example, Quentin's obsession is the most illustrative of this idea. On the one hand, in *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin is very much concerned with time in general and with everything that surrounded Caddy, his sister. In her essay "The Contours of Time," Vickery is sure that an excessive concern with the past can destroy the individual's natural progress in both life and time, and that memory confines the individual to the past whereas imagination can free him (The Novels of William Faulkner 257). In *The Sound and the Fury*, death is Quentin's means of escaping out of his obsessions with his sister, Caddy, or time, whereas in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Quentin seems to be trapped in the haunting past, as evinced by Miss Rosa's account, as he thinks of his own family and the ghosts from his past.

Faulkner's blend of imagination and time is made to function on the irreconcilable level of ironic awareness, where all is discontinuous, alienated and fragmentary and deeply hidden behind deception. As Skei puts it, Faulkner attempts to show "'man in his ageless struggle,' and to show how people within the borders of his imaginary kingdom must respond to hypocrisy, stupidity, gluttony, and all the new ways of the world" (89).

Conclusion

As Joseph Reed writes in his book, *Faulkner's Narrative*, Robert Frost considered *Absalom, Absalom!* to be "simply made of metaphor" (145). Time's passage reveals a great deal of psychological change in the characters' minds. Through visualization, readers can imagine pictures created by the author. His use of metaphor brings its highest contribution to the creation of figurative meaning. In decoding such uses, interpreting symbols is key to understanding Faulkner's critique of aspects of the reality in which he lived.

One of the American Civil War consequences is confusion in thinking. People adjust religion's principles to satisfy their own needs. Waggoner interprets many of Faulkner's early works as hovering "between present despair and the memory of a lost faith, and of the later ones that they seem to be bidding us to repent and believe in God

and man, as we wish, or can, or must.” (249) The allusions to earlier times (biblical, mythical, and historical - American Civil War) coupled with metaphorical patterns could not have been created without constant references to past events related to effects in the narrators’ present. Through interpretation and visualization, readers can follow these meaning paths distinctly created but that actually and finally intersect to reveal Faulkner’s indignation and disapproval with the social injustices.

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DIE DINGE ALS SYMBOLE DER SUCHE NACH IDENTITÄT - REISENDE AUF EINEM BEIN

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Abstract: *Becoming known only after having been awarded with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2009, Herta Müller, a Romanian-born German writer writes about oppression and fear as she felt them during Ceausescu's regime as well as about her continuous search for identity. "Reisende auf einem Bein", her first book published in Germany after having fled the Romanian dictatorship, is an example of the way in which writing is a way of becoming aware of one's identity/one's lack of identity/one's multiple identity. Continuously looking for something without realizing what that "something" might be, Müller's main character discovers (as the author herself) things which acquire a symbolic value for her quest of an identity, whichever this identity might be.*

Keywords: identity; quest; things.

1.Herta Müller – ein Leben zwischen zwei Ländern

Herta Müller wird 2009 berühmt, wenn ihr der Nobelpreis verliehen wird. Auf der Site nobelprise.org, werden ihr Leben und Werk dargestellt. 1953 ist sie in Banat, einem Gebiet in Rumänien, geboren. Während des Zweiten Weltkrieges meldet sich ihr Vater freiwillig in Hitlers Waffen-SS. Nach dem Seitenwechsel Rumäniens und der Kriegserklärung an Deutschland kommt es zu engen Beziehungen zu der Sowjetunion: Stalin ordnet an, dass alle Rumäniendeutschen zwischen 17 und 45 Jahren in die Sowjetunion zu Zwangsarbeiten deportiert werden sollten. Unter diesen Leuten befindet sich auch Herta Müllers Mutter. Die Autorin studiert Rumänische- und Deutsche Literatur in Temeswar und sie hat Freunde in der *Aktionsgruppe Banat*, einer Gruppe von Schriftstellern, die gegen Ceausescus Diktatur kämpfen. Nach dem Studienabschluss arbeitet sie als Übersetzerin in einer Fabrik und lehnt ab, mit der *Securitate* zusammen zu arbeiten. Als Folge verliert sie ihre Arbeitsstelle. Sie beginnt Bücher zu schreiben, aber die Behörden censurieren Abschnitte aus ihren ersten Werken. Sie spürt die Bedrohung und sie hat dauernd Angst für ihr Leben. 1987 wandert sie nach Deutschland aus. Das erste Buch, das sie in Deutschland publiziert, ist *Reisende auf einem Bein*. Müller pendelt zwischen zwei Ländern, zwei Sprachen und sie sucht ihren eigenen Weg zu finden. In diesem Kontext wird ihr Schreiben wesentlich zu einer Suche nach Identität und zu einem Mittel sich selbst zu entdecken.

2.Der Begriff Identität

Dieses Zögern zwischen zwei Ländern, zwei Sprachen, zwei Kulturen kann mit der Idee der Identität verbunden werden. Das Konzept von *Identität* ist umfangreich und die Theoretiker versuchen es auf verschiedene Weisen zu erklären. Zum Beispiel hält Ménessier den Begriff Identität für die kulturelle Zugehörigkeit die durch drei Elemente verstanden werden soll: die Sprache, die Beziehung mit einer gesellschaftlichen und staatsbürglerlichen Gesamtheit und durch den Gebrauch von gemeinsamen Traditionen:

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« [...] l'identité gagne à être appréhendée par le biais de la notion d'appartenance culturelle ; mais il convient de préciser de quelle manière elle gagne à l'être. Cette notion d'appartenance culturelle permet ainsi de saisir la diversité et la complexité des traits caractéristiques de la culture ; elle comprend en effet (1) l'insertion dans une communauté linguistique, (2) la reconnaissance du lien entre l'individualité et une collectivité d'existence sociale et éventuellement civile (pour les cultures dans lesquelles un processus de différenciation politique s'est opéré), (3) l'usage de traditions communes, ce qui a des effets très profonds sur la détermination des conduites, même sur celles qui paraissent les plus individuelles, (4) le partage de valeurs, plus ou moins conscient ou explicite, mais à partir duquel se déploie l'expérience morale individuelle aussi bien qu'intersubjective. » (Ménissier, 2007)

Andere Forscher meinen, dass die Identität zwei Bedeutungen hätte: eine “gesellschaftliche” Bedeutung und diese Bedeutung kann mit den drei oben angeführten Elementen (Sprache, Gesamtheit und Traditionen) verbunden sein, aber auch eine persönliche Bedeutung, die in Zusammenhang mit einer Eigenschaft steht, auf die jemand stolz ist:

“Identity is presently used in two linked senses, which may be termed “social” and “personal.” In the former sense, an “identity” refers simply to a social category, a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes. In the second sense of personal identity, an identity is some distinguishing characteristic (or characteristics) that a person takes a special pride in or views as socially consequential but more-or-less unchangeable. Thus, “identity” in its present incarnation has a double sense. It refers at the same time to social categories and to the sources of an individual’s self-respect or dignity. [...] Nonetheless, “identity” in its present incarnation reflects and evokes the idea that social categories are bound up with the bases of an individual’s self-respect.” (Fearon, 1999:3).

Herta Müller vereinigt in ihrem Werk diese zwei Perspektiven, weil sie sich darum bemüht, sich selbst zu entdecken: sie ist zwischen diesen zwei Typen von Identität und der Roman *Reisende auf einem Bein* stellt genau dieses Dilemma dar.

3. *Reisende auf einem Bein – ein Buch über die Identität*

« Roman de transition, *Reisende auf einem Bein*, le premier récit écrit en Allemagne, dit la difficulté du « passage », de l’adaptation à un monde inconnu qui se dérobe sans cesse au nouveau venu, car il ne connaît ni les codes ni les rites : une seule langue, mais deux pays et deux sociétés différentes. » (Bary, 2010:365-372)

Die innere Zerrissenheit, die verursacht von dem Kontakt mit dem anderen Land, wo sie ihre Muttersprache sprechen kann, verursacht ist, ist für Müller und für Irene, die Hauptgestalt des Romans, schwierig zu ertragen.

Die physische Entfernung zwischen zwei Ländern kann durch Reise abgesabt werden. Die Reise schafft eine Verbindung zwischen zwei Punkten, zwischen zwei Ländern. Man verlässt ein Land, um in ein anderes anzukommen. Müllers Titel “Reisende auf einem Bein” betont die Idee von der Reise. Die Erzählerin sucht dem Lesern das Gefühl von Entfernung von einem Ort zu vermitteln. Es geht um eine Bewegung zu einem Ziel, aber diese Bewegung ist schwierig vom Anfang an. Der Leser denkt an etwas, das nicht völlig ist. Die Reise ist ein Prozess, der offen und ständig ist;

die Reise bedeutet Durchfuhr/Transit und das Partizip Präsens ("Reisende") beschreibt einen aktiven Vorgang, der nicht abgeschlossen ist. "Der Reisende" ist die Person, die im Transit ist und der Begriff suggeriert das Gefühl von endloser Bewegung, die Unmöglichkeit ein Ziel zu erreichen.

Die Protagonistin, Irene kommt aus einem fremdem Land, das sie verlassen hat, und fährt nach Deutschland. Sie ist zuerst eine Reisende und hofft, eine neue Heimat in Deutschland zu finden, aber sie bleibt eine Emigrantin, oder ...eine Reisende, wie alle Emigranten, weil sie sich in Deutschland nicht "zu Hause" fühlt. Die Erzählerin spricht über die Zugehörigkeit zu einem Land durch die Gestalt, die sie vorstellt; Müller wählt das Thema der Identität als Kern ihres Buches.

Die Identität ist ein zentrales Thema bei Müller. Viele von ihren Werken veranschaulichen es. "*Ethnic identity* is defined as a sense of belonging based on one's ancestry, cultural heritage, values, traditions, rituals, and often language and religion." (Green: 2015) Die Identität ist das Gefühl von Zugehörigkeit zu einer Gruppe. Müller ist durch ihre Bücher auf der Suche nach einer Identität und ihr Ziel ist, darüber nachzudenken. Das Schreiben wird ein Mittel der Behauptung der Identität und sie stellt verschiedene Aspekte dieser Thematik dar: die Heimatlosigkeit, die Auswirkungen der Heimatlosigkeit auf die Psyche, die Einengung als Folge des totalitären Systems in Rumänien. Die Schriftstellerin verändert ihre Erfahrungen in Literatur, die eine Hilfe auf der Suche nach ihrer Identität wird. Diese Suche ist eine Reise zur Selbstentdeckung; was sie am Ende der Reise entdeckt ist keine Identität, aber eine Nicht-Identität, weil die Reise ihr die Macht gibt, verschiedene Identitäten zu finden; diese Reise ist eine bewusste Möglichkeit der drei in ihr vorhandenen Identitäten: sie gehört zu der banatschwäbischen Dorfgemeinschaft, weil sie dort geboren wird, bzw. zu einer Minderheit; sie ist eine politische Verfolgte, weil sie die Einengung des Ceausescus totalitären Regimes empfindet; sie ist eine Rumäniendeutsche vor den deutschen Behörden. Die Konsequenz ist, dass sie keine Heimat in Deutschland findet. Diese persönlichen Gefühle prägen die Protagonistin der Schriftstellerin.

Irene ist eine Auswanderin, die aus Rumänien nach Deutschland kommt. Sie wohnt in Berlin und sie lebt in der Hoffnung, dort ihre Heimat zu finden; sie kennt drei Männer und erzählt verschiedene Aspekte ihrer Beziehungen mit ihnen. Oft irrt sie durch die Stadt und befindet sich in der Nähe von Orten, die mit der Idee von Transit verbunden sind (Haltestelle, Flussufer, Flughafen, Bahnhof). Ihre Umherirren durch die Stadt sind symbolisch für ihre Suche nach ihrer Identität. Sie hat eine künstlerische Tätigkeit: sie will ein Collage aus Zeitungsschnipseln machen. Das ist eine Weise ihr Trauma zu überwinden.

4. Die Dinge als Symbole der Identitätsuche

Kapitel zehn ist eines der wichtigsten des Buches und stellt drei Sequenzen dar: die erste beschreibt Irene auf der Straße und in einem Laden; die zweite betont ihre Gefühle, wenn sie einen Brief aus "dem anderen Land" bekommt; die dritte hat Stefan im Mittelpunkt. Scheinbar gibt es keine Verbindung zwischen den drei, aber der Leser kann die Problematik der Identität darin vermuten. Diese Problematik ist durch einige Dinge annähernd, die Symbole der ständigen Suche warden. Müller legt großen Wert auf die Dinge und sie erklärt ihren Grund dafür:

"Kann man sagen, daß gerade die kleinsten Gegenstände, und seien es Trompete, Akkordeon oder Taschentuch, das Disparateste im Leben

zusammenbinden. Daß die Gegenstände kreisen und in ihren Abweichungen etwas haben, das den Wiederholungen gehorcht – dem Teufelskreis. Man kann es glauben, aber nicht sagen. Aber was man nicht sagen kann, kann man schreiben. Weil das Schreiben ein stummes Tun ist, eine Arbeit vom Kopf in die Hand.” (Müller, 2011 : 7-21)

In Kapitel X bekommen sie eine spezielle Bedeutung, weil sie mit der Idee von Identität verbunden sind. Im ersten Teil des Kapitels ist Irene vor einem Schaufenster, sie schaut sich die Kleider an und hat ein ungewöhnliches Gefühl: sie wünscht “mehrere Körper um die Kleider aus dem Schaufenster zu tragen.” (S. 93) Sie braucht mehrere Körper, als ob sie mehrere Personen vertreten würde. Das ist eine Form, um eine doppelte Identität oder mehrere Identitäten zu behaupten. Mehrere Körper bedeuten mehrere verschiedene Personen. Das ist was Irene ist: sie ist gleichzeitig politische Verfolgte, Rumänin und Deutsche.

Irene tritt in einen Laden ein. Die Gestalt will Spitzenhöschen kaufen; sie sucht ein Ding, das die Frauenidentität definiert: das ist ein Ding, das sehr intim ist; sie denkt an die Frauen, die verschiedene Unterhöschen wünschen, weil die Frauen sehr unterschiedlich sind. Diese Suche nach einem so intimen Ding ist symbolisch für die Suche nach sich selbst.

Die zweite Sequenz stellt Irene zu Hause dar. Sie öffnet den Briefkasten und findet darin einen Briefumschlag. Das ist auch ein Symbol, weil er die Verbindung zwischen zwei Ländern und zwei Personen vertritt, aber er betont auch die Idee von Reise, von Transit: “Danas Briefe waren immer viele Wochen unterwegs” (Müller, 2010: 96).

Irene bekommt den Brief “aus dem anderen Land”. Es ist ein Land ohne Name; vielleicht hat es keinen Namen, weil die Protagonistin ihn vergessen will; sie will auch die Wirklichkeit vergessen, die er vertritt. Trotzdem kann sie nicht, weil diese Briefe ihr an die Realität erinnern; sie waren Symbole der Überwachung, der Verfolgung, der Unmöglichkeit etwas Persönliches direkt zu vermitteln: der Passiv bennent die Leute, die die anderen überwachen, die den anderen ihre Briefe öffnen: “Waren immer schon einmal geöffnet worden (...). Die Inhalte der Briefe waren alt.” (Müller, 2010: 97) Mit anderen Worten beschreibt Müller die Angst des Absenders, der nicht natürlich schreiben konnte, weil er vorsichtig sein sollte: “Und vorsichtig waren die Inhalte, geprüft, auf das, was man schreiben durfte. Und auf das, was man nicht schreiben durfte.” (Müller, 2010: 97)

Irene liest den letzten Satz: “Ich hab Sehnsucht, fast eine körperliche Sehnsucht nach dir.” (Müller, 2010: 97). Die Erzählerin führt das Thema der Sehnsucht nach dem anderen ein. Das sollte ein intimes Gefühl sein, aber es kann nicht sein, weil Irene das Gefühl der Anwesenheit einer anderen Person hat; das ist ein fast physischer Eindruck: sie fühlt einen Atem “dass Dana nicht gehörte” (Müller, 2010: 83).

Der Brief ist nur ein Vorwand, der der Erzählerin das Nachdenken über Heimweh erlaubt. Irene ist nie sicher, wie Heimweh ist, wie das fungiert, wenn es ein Gefühl oder etwas anderes sei. Die Gestalt sucht sich selbst zu verstehen; sie will auch erfahren, wie man Heimweh vertreibt.

Die letzte Sequenz des Kapitels 10 hat Stefan im Mittelpunkt. Es geht um seine Beziehung mit seiner Stadt, mit dem Spielzeug seiner Kindheit, mit seiner Mutter. Scheinbar glaubt er, dass ihn nichts mit Ausnahme des Spielzeugs mit diesen Orten verbindet. Das ist eine andere Facette der Identität. Identität bedeutet nicht nur ein Land, sondern es ist auch ein Ort, ein Ding, ein Wesen zu dem man gehört. Manchmal ist die Wahrnehmung dieser Zugehörigkeit unbewusst.

Das Kapitel 10 stellt verschiedene Facetten der Identität dar: die Erzählerin verwendet zwei Gestalten, um mehrere Identitätstypen zu beschreiben: es geht um eine weibliche Identität, eine Auswanderinidentität, eine menschliche Identität, eine Identität, die mit der Kindheit verbunden ist. Das Ende des Kapitels zeigt zwei Formen der Wirklichkeit: die Wirklichkeit der Gegenwart (“die anwesenden Dinge”) und die der Vergangenheit (“die abwesenden Personen”). Die Gegenwart ist hier, ist sachlich, während die Vergangenheit zu der Subjektivität gehört.

5. Die Identität als Ziel – vom Titel zum Text

Das Kapitel 10 ist symbolisch für die Idee von der Reise. Irene geht durch die Stadt; sie schaut die Kleider aus den Schaufenstern an; sie schaut auch die Beine der Frauen an, die auf der Straße gehen. Das Bild der Frauen ist an ihre Beine reduziert, als ob nicht anders wichtig wäre. Sie sind dort für die Männer. Der Begriff “Beine” wiederholt den selben Begriff, der in dem Titel beobachtet werden kann. Die Frauen gehen durch die Stadt. Irene geht auch durch die Stadt. Sie suchen nach etwas, weil etwas ihnen fehlt; sie sind alle in verschiedenen Formen “Reisende” auf der Suche ihrer Identität. Irene hat hier eine doppelte Identität: sie ist eine Frau wie die anderen, aber sie ist auch eine Auswanderin, die in einem neuen Land ihre Identität zu finden hofft. Die Sehnsucht und das Heimweh sind zwei andere Themen, die mit dem Titel verbunden sind: der Brief, den Irene von Dana bekommt, ruft die Idee von Reise hervor.

Die Erzählerin erklärt völlig den Titel des Buches im Kapitel 11: “Reisende, dachte Irene, Reisende mit dem erregten Blick auf die schlafenden Städte. Auf Wünsche, die nicht mehr gültig sind. Hinter den Bewohnern her. Reisende auf einem Bein und auf dem anderen Verlorene.” (Müller, 2010: 114) Das Bein, auf dem sie reisen, vertritt was dauerhaft ist, was die Reisende noch haben; das Bein, das fehlt, ist was sie verloren haben. Alle Leute sind so, Reisende durch Leben. Die bedeutsame Idee ist die von der Relativität des Lebens. Das Ende des Romans stellt die Meinung dar, dass alle Menschen Reisende sind :

“Menschen, die nicht mehr wußten, ob sie nun in diesen Städten Reisende in dünnen Schuhen waren. Oder Bewohner mit Handgepäck.” (Müller, 2010: 202).

6. Schlussfolgerungen

Der Roman “Reisende auf einem Bein” ist weniger ein Roman über etwas und mehr ein Roman über Selbst. Er beschreibt eine ständige Suche nach einer Identität, die unmöglich zu finden ist, weil es keine eigene Identität ist, aber eine komplizierte Identität gibt, die mehrere Facetten hat und dynamisch ist. Bei Herta Müller wird das Schreiben eine Form um sich selbst besser zu verstehen und um den anderen zu helfen, sich besser zu verstehen. Die Spannung zwischen der schwäbischen Identität, der rumaniendeutschen Identität und der Identität von politischer Verfolgten zeigt die komplizierte Persönlichkeit der Schriftstellerin.

« Effectivement, Herta Müller n’écrit pas pour témoigner, ni pour raconter, encore moins pour se raconter. Elle écrit pour retrouver dans l’écriture la cohérence indispensable à la vie, comme si les mots permettaient de recoller les morceaux des existences brisées, des êtres dont les blessures sont si profondes qu’elles restent pour toujours béantes et douloureuses. Fragments éclatés, ses romans et ses récits, comme ses collages, sont une reconstruction obstinée de son paysage intérieur brisé par la folie totalitaire. Et

c'est sans doute ce qui confère à son écriture sa singularité bouleversante.
(Bary, 2010: 365-372)

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TILL EULENSPIEGELS STREICHE ALS SPIEGELBILD DER GESELLSCHAFT

Olga KAITER*

Abstract: *The Humanist ideas had a restricted nature in Germany, failing in this way to bring significant changes. Concerning the literary field, significant artistic achievements were not known during the Renaissance; however, some notable productions for the spirit of the time were recorded, such as two popular books written by anonymous authors, Till Eulenspiegel and Faust, which would later become the sources of some famous work of German literature. During the Renaissance, the popular stories of a profound satirical nature reunited in the Adventures of Till Eulenspiegel (1515) were very successful. The hereby paper aims to capture the image of the society portrayed by Till Eulenspiegel as a result of the character's interaction with the rigid social norms of his time.*

Keywords: *satire; buffoon; to play tricks on someone; mirror-image; society; self-control.*

Das Zeitalter des 15. und des 16. Jahrhunderts steht im Zeichen der neuen Entdeckungen in allen Gebieten. Ein neues, optimistisches selbstbewusstes Lebensgefühl verbindet sich mit den letzten mittelalterlichen Traditionen. Nicht nur die Welt wird entdeckt, sondern auch der Mensch. Im Mittelpunkt des Denkens steht nicht mehr allein Gott, sondern immer mehr die Welt und der Mensch in ihr. Als Folge des Einflusses der italienischen Renaissance entsteht die Sehnsucht nach geistiger Erneuerung, die zur Entdeckung der schöpferischen Kräfte des Menschen führt. In dieser Zeit gilt die antike Welt als das beste Vorbild. In der Wiederentdeckung der römischen Antike, wo der Mensch eine zentrale Stellung hat, glaubt man ein neues Selbstverständnis finden zu können. Der Humanismus als eine besondere Ausprägung der Renaissance beschäftigt sich mit diesem Aspekt des Selbstverständnisses, aber auch mit der universellen Bildung. Vernunft und Logik rücken in den Vordergrund des Interesses und verdrängen die mittelalterlichen Traditionen. Die Zeit der Reformation Martin Luthers bringt einen Erneuerungswillen. Im sozial-politischen Bereich kann man einige wichtige Aspekte feststellen: während die Reichsfürsten ihre Macht festigen, verschärft sich die wirtschaftliche Lage der Bauern. Etwa um 1500 wird die Ausbeutung der Bauern und Handwerker unhaltbar. Die Geldwirtschaft (Kaufleute, Gewerbetreibende, Wucherer u.a.) trägt zur Auflösung der alten Verhältnisse bei. Im literarischen Bereich ist die Reaktion der Schriftsteller auf die sozialen Missstände unterschiedlich. Manche klagen an, andere resignieren, viele antworten mit Ironie, Sarkasmus, Zynismus und Satire. Die von ihnen angebotene Literatur hat nicht nur eine Unterhaltungs- sondern auch eine Belehrungsfunktion. Die Entlarvung menschlicher und gesellschaftlicher Fehler und Schwächen hat als Ziel nicht nur die Kritik dieser Missstände, sondern auch den Leser darauf aufmerksam zu machen und seine Moralvorstellungen zu ändern. Folglich bemerkt man in dieser Zeit eine besondere Vorliebe für die Kleindichtung, entweder in der Form von Flugblättern oder Flugschriften, oder in der Form des Volksbuches, das im 16. Jahrhundert zum großen

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Interesse wird und Fabeln, Legenden, Sagen, Schwänke umfasst. Die Erzählungen, die das Volksbuch sammelt, stellen unvernünftige Taten von Personen, oder Personengruppen dar, sie verspotten und zeigen negative Aspekte mit Bezug auf die Politik und Gesellschaft der Zeit. In der Literatur der spätmittelalterlichen Epoche wird der Narr zu einer wichtigen Figur. Er verkörpert die Torheit des Menschen, der seine christliche Orientierung verloren hat und dessen Aufgabe nun ist, den Menschen zum Nachdenken und Selbstprüfung seines Selbstverständnisses anzuregen. Der Narr ist das Symbol einer Welt, in der die Bürger von Zukunftsängsten geplagt und mit der eigenen Identität konfrontiert sind.

In diesem geistig-kulturellen Kontext erscheint etwa im Jahr 1510 in Strassburg eine von dem Braunschweiger Zollscreiber und für eine kurze Zeit Landrichter Hermann Bote zusammengefasste Sammlung von 96 Schwankergeschichten mit dem Titel: *Ein kurtzweilig Lesen von Dyl Ulenspeigel, geboren us dem Land zu Brunßwick*. Mit diesen *Historien* erscheint Till Eulenspiegel zum ersten Mal in der Literatur und beweist durch seine hinterfotzigen Streiche, die er gegen alle Schichten der Gesellschaft führt, seine Schlagfertigkeit, Mutterwitz und Lebenstüchtigkeit. Der Legende nach soll der Schalk Till um 1300 im niedersächsischen Kneitlingen am Elm geboren und 50 Jahre später in Mölln (südlich von Lübeck) gestorben sein. Der Familienname kommt eigentlich nicht vom Tiernamen „Eule“ sondern vom mittelhochdeutschen „ulen“ – „wischen“ und von „spegel“ – „Spiegel“ oder „Hinterteil“. Damit ist vielleicht auch der Charakter des schelmischen Tills zu verstehen. Er lebt als fahrender Geselle bäuerlicher Herkunft, durchzieht das Land, hat kein festes Zuhause, ist besitzlos und verübt seine Narrenstreiche, ohne jemanden zu verschonen. Er ist keineswegs ein Narr, der nur an Streiche denkt. Wenn man ihn näher beobachtet, entdeckt man sein hervorragendes Denkvermögen und seinen Scharfsinn. Er gibt sich als fauler Gelegenheitsarbeiter (Bäcker, Schneider, Schmied, Tischler, Fleischer, Seiltänzer, Arzt, Hochschullehrer, Kirchendiener), Gauner, Zechpreller, Bauernfänger und Beutelschneider aus, er erpresst, betrügt und belügt und treibt seine Scherzen mit den damaligen Fürsten und Geistlichen. Seine Absicht ist, den Mitmenschen einen Spiegel vorzuhalten und ihnen bildlich durch Streiche ihre Schwächen wie Dummheit, Hochmut, Eitelkeit, Habgier, Scheinheiligkeit, Hartherzigkeit, Faulheit, Sündhaftigkeit und Oberflächlichkeit zu zeigen. Hinter dem schallenden Gelächter steht seine scharfe Kritik an den Missständen der spätmittelalterlichen Gesellschaft, an den Ungerechtigkeiten des Adels, des Klerus, aber gleichzeitig auch seine Sympathie für die benachteiligte Schicht der spätmittelalterlichen Gesellschaft.

Der Schauplatz seiner Handlung ist ganz breit, von den engen Handwerksstuben, Dörfern, städtischen Marktplätzen bis zu den Fürstenhöfen und Herbergen. Er führt sein abenteuerliches Leben in der Tat in den zu seiner Zeit ökonomisch entwickelten Gebieten Deutschlands. Die Mehrzeit der Städte sind Hansestädte wie Bremen, Hamburg, Lübeck, Braunschweig, Erfurt, Halberstadt, Hannover, Hildesheim, Rostock, Magdeburg, Quedlingsburg, Stade, Stralsund, Uelzen und Wismar, aber auch eine andere Gruppe von Städten im Zentrum des fränkischen Kapitalismus wie Nürnberg und Bamberg. Manche Historien spielen im Ausland: in Polen, Holland oder Tschechien. Als Landstreicher hat Eulenspiegel keine Familie und Freunde, er lebt einsam und genießt die Freiheit und die Unabhängigkeit. Er verdient seine Existenz dank seiner Intelligenz, List, Schlauheit und vielen Tricks.

Das Eulenspiegel-Buch schildert Leben und Streiche des Helden Till von der Geburt bis zum Tod und spiegelt gleichzeitig die maroden Verhältnisse der

spätmittelalterlichen Gesellschaft wider. Das Buch beachtet eine biographisch-chronologische Einteilung. Die ersten neun Historien beschreiben Ereignisse und Streiche aus Tills Kindheit und Jugend, beginnend mit Historie 1 über Tills Taufe, bis Historie 9, in der Till das mütterliche Haus verlässt und zwar im Inneren des Bienenkorbes. Die Historien von 88 bis zur Historie 92, in der der Protagonist sein Testament macht, thematisieren Verfall, Alter und Krankheit von Till. Mit der Historie 95 wird von den seltsamen Vorgängen bei Tills Begräbnis erzählt. Die erste Historie über Eulenspiegels Taufe als Sakrament zum Eintritt in die christliche Gesellschaft vermittelt das geschlossene christlich-religiöse Weltbild, das den Zweifel an der christlichen Tradition ausdrückt. Till wird an einem Tage dreimal getauft: einmal in Ampleben, in einem Nachbardorf, in der Kapelle seines Taufpaten Till von Ütze, ein zweites Mal nachdem die Taufpatin nach heftigem Biergenuss mit dem Kind von einem Steg in den stark geschmutzten Bach gefallen ist und ein drittes Mal im Dorf Kneitlingen im Kessel mit warmem, sauberem Wasser. Nicht nur die Taufe als Eintritt in die Gesellschaft scheitert sondern auch die Beerdigung des Protagonisten. Wenn Eulenspiegel nicht zum Mitglied der christlichen Gesellschaft werden kann, dann ist er auch nicht „totzukriegen“, er bleibt aufrecht im Grab stehen. Er stirbt allein, arm und unkonventionell, wie er immer gelebt hat.

Till Eulenspiegel stammt von verarmten Bauern ab. Nach dem frühen Tod des Vaters wird die Mutter arm und hofft, dass Eulenspiegel ein Handwerk lernen würde. Dem Wunsch der Mutter, ein Handwerk zu lernen, kommt Eulenspiegel nicht nach, denn es gibt doch weit bessere Möglichkeiten durch das Leben zu kommen. Folglich lernt er Seiltanzen. Dabei lernt er sowohl die Niederlage als auch das Heimzahlen kennen. Wenn er über der Saale balanciert, schneidet die Mutter das Seil durch und Till fällt ins Wasser und wird verspottet (3. H.). Diese Sequenz kann er nicht vergessen und bald will er auf dem Seil Kunststücke vorführen. Er lässt sich von jedem Bauernjungen einen Schuh geben und wenn er vom Seil die Schuhe hinabwirft, stürzen alle Bauern auf die Schuhe (etwa 200 Paar Schuhe), denn jeder will seinen Schuh zurück haben. Das allgemeine Aufeinanderschlagen, das entstanden ist, kann kaum beschrieben werden.

Eulenspiegel ist allen anderen geistig überlegen, aber nicht durch die Bildung, denn er hat nie eine besondere Bildung bekommen. Seine Waffe ist aber die Klugheit. Er macht sich über die anderen lustig und stellt gleichzeitig die verrottete Kirche, die Einfältigkeit der Bauern, die Überheblichkeit der Zünfte dar, ohne die negativen Aspekte der Gesellschaft seiner Zeit auszusparen. Seine Streiche heben eine Handlung hervor und bewirken oft negative Emotionen und Aggressionen, indem sie auf diese Weise zu einem Mittel der Gesellschaftskritik werden. Eine gewisse Weisheit und die alltägliche Wirklichkeit werden sichtbar, als Ausdruck eines Weltbildes und einer Epoche, die sich im Zeichen des Umbruchs befinden. In der Mitte des wandelnden Weltbildes steht der Mensch, der von einer falschen Doppelmoral beherrscht ist und deshalb Belehrung braucht.

Erwähnenswert sind in diesem Sinne die drei Historien zu Beginn des Buches, die Eulenspiegels Spott über die Kirche und Pfarrer darstellen. In der 13. Historie wird erzählt, wie sich Eulenspiegel bei einem Pfarrer verdingt und wie er ihm die gebratenen Hühner vom Spieß isst. Im Haus des Pfarrers dient er als Knecht und dabei hat er die Möglichkeit das eheähnliche Zusammenleben des Pfarrers mit seiner einäugigen Magd zu verfolgen und dementsprechend zu handeln. Da Eulenspiegel die Haushälterin immer wieder verspottet und nur die halbe Arbeit tun will, weil sie auch nur mit einem Auge sieht, muss er bald das Pfarrhaus verlassen voller Hoffnung auf einen neuen Dienst. Da die Bauern des Dorfes Büddenstedt einen Küster suchen, gibt sich Eulenspiegel als die

richtige Person aus. Eulenspiegel will in dieser Geschichte nicht unbedingt das Verhältnis des Pfarrers mit seiner Magd im traditionellen moralischen Sinne wiedergeben und verspotten. Andererseits ist er auch kein Verteidiger der Ehelosigkeit, die auf jeden Fall nicht mehr funktioniert. Eulenspiegel will doch die verlogene Moral der Pfarrer zum Ausdruck bringen.

Die 14. Historie setzt die Handlung fort und berichtet, wie Eulenspiegel im Dorf Büddenstedt Küster wird und um eine Wette eine Tonne Bier gewinnt. Dabei kritisiert Eulenspiegel das unhöfliche Verhalten des Pfarrers, der die kirchlichen Normen nicht beachtet. Dieser verrichtet die Notdurft in seiner Kirche und dadurch werden die sakralen Vorstellungen, die Heiligkeit der kirchlichen Vertreter in Frage gestellt. Damit entsteht der Zweifel über die Unterschiede zwischen den Geistlichen und den Gläubigen aus dem Volk.

Die 15. Historie veranschaulicht, wie Eulenspiegel in der Ostermesse ein Spiel machte, dass sich der Pfarrer und seine Haushälterin mit den Bauern raufen und schlagen. Die Aufführung des Osterspiels wird in der Osternacht von dem Küster Eulenspiegel anders organisiert. Die drei Bauern, die die drei Marien vor dem leeren Grab verkörpern, sollen nicht nach Jesu Christi fragen, sondern das Ziel ihrer Suche ist „ein alte einäugige Pfafferhur“ anzugeben und damit die geheime Beziehung des Pfarrers ans Licht zu bringen. Die allgemeine Schlägerei kann nicht mehr vermieden werden und Eulenspiegel flieht, Kirche und Dorf verlassend. Auch in dieser Erzählung übt Eulenspiegel Kritik an den Vertretern der kirchlichen Institution.

Die Welt, in der sich Eulenspiegel bewegt, ist die Welt der Ware-Geld-Beziehungen. In dem Aneignungsprozess benutzt Eulenspiegel weder Gewalt noch Waffen. Im Vordergrund stehen die Freigiebigkeit und die Freiwilligkeit der Tauschpartner. Das regierende Gesetz ist das des Tausches. Zunächst fordert Eulenspiegel die Einwilligung seines Gegenübers in den Besitzwechsel und diese Zeit benutzt er dann, um sich auf die Flucht vorzubereiten.

Eulenspiegels Geschichten spielen in einer Welt, in der die Produkte bereits Waren sind. In der 38. Historie wird von einem Pfaffen erzählt, der sein Pferd dem Herzog nicht verkaufen will und beide Gegenstände seiner Liebe, das Pferd und die Magd verliert.

Eulenspiegel reagiert auf die gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse entsprechend. In der 68. Historie wird er von einem Pfeifenmacher zum Essen eingeladen, wenn er kann. Er findet aber das Haus verrigt und kann doch nicht rein. Dafür spielt er dem Pfeifenmacher einen echten Streich, der unvergesslich bleibt. Er schickt die Magd zum Markt zum Pfeifenmacher, damit sie ihm hilft, den großen Stör heimzutragen. Diese Gelegenheit nutzt er aus, um dem Pfeifenmacher eine Belehrung zu vermitteln.

Die allgemeine Moral der Verhältnisse drückt Eulenspiegel in der 22. Historie aus. Das Essen, die Naturalform des Hauptteils seines Lohns, wird ihm vorenthalten. Recht nehmen bedeutet für Eulenspiegel List und Zungenfertigkeit und keine Waffen.

In der 67. Historie wird Eulenspiegel das Opfer des Opfers eines Pfaffen, zu dessen parasitärem Anhang er auch gehört. Der Pfaff versucht ein altes Bauernpaar, das seit fünfzig Jahren verheiratet ist, zu überzeugen, sich noch einmal trauen zu lassen, in der Absicht auf der Hochzeit gut zu essen und noch gutes Geld zu erhalten. Zum Essen bringt er auch Eulenspiegel mit, der eine Ledertasche verliert, auf die sich das alte Bauernweib heimlich setzt.

In einer neuen Hypostase befindet sich Eulenspiegel in der 40. Historie. Der harte Winter treibt ihn eine Arbeit zu suchen und Brot zu erwerben. Der Arbeitgeber ist diesmal ein Schmied, dessen Arbeitbedingungen er akzeptieren soll. Aufgrund der

Teuerung will er Eulenspiegel nicht einstellen, aber Eulenspiegel bittet ihn, dass er ihm zu arbeiten gibt, was er will, und zu essen, was es gibt. Eulenspiegel muss von frühmorgens bis zur Mittagszeit arbeiten, das Essen mag er aber nicht und schwört sich dem Schmied alles zu bezahlen. Er nimmt seinerseits eine Arbeitsanweisung wörtlich und ruiniert zur Rache die Produktionsmittel. Schließlich macht er sich aus dem Staub. Wenn es in dieser Geschichte heißt, "mit dem Maß würt dir wider gemessen", so nur deshalb, weil es das allgemeine ökonomische Maß, d.h. Gesetz, ist, an dem alle und alles unter den neuen Bedingungen gemessen werden.

Besondere Aufmerksamkeit schenkt Eulenspiegel im Volksbuch auch den Repräsentanten des Adels und der Justiz, die falsch leben und das Land falsch regieren. Als Höhepunkt seiner Kritik an der weltlichen Institution gilt die 63. Historie, in der Eulenspiegel als spaßiger Geselle auftritt und durch Wortwitz in den Besitz eines Guldens kommt. Als Ausdruck der ironischen Selbstkritik ist die Antwort des Bischofs, dass viele arme Leute im Lande kein Geld besässen, um warme Kleidung zu kaufen, er selbst habe so viele Kleider, dass sein Pferd sie nicht tragen könne.

Eulenspiegel ist nicht dumm, er ist schlau und alle seinen lustigen Streichen decken die Leichtgläubigkeit und die Lebensuntüchtigkeit der Menschen aller Stände auf. Vom König von Dänemark beauftragt, seinem Pferd die allerbesten Hufeisen aufzuschlagen, geht Eulenspiegel zu einem Schmied und lässt das Pferd mit goldenen Hufen und silbernen Nägeln beschlagen, die der König dann teuer bezahlen musste (23.H.).

Ein anderes Mal belädt er einen Karren mit Erde und setzt sich darauf, nachdem ihm der Herzog von Celle verboten hat, sein Land zu betreten. Vor der Burg des Herzogs ruft er laut, dass er keinen Fuss auf dessen Boden setze, eine Tatsache, die eigentlich stimmt (26.H.). Mit einer ähnlichen Situation ist Eulenspiegel auch in der 25. Historie auseinandergesetzt, wenn ihm verboten wird, das Herzogtum Lüneburg noch zu betreten und er dafür sein Pferd aufschneidet und sich hineinstellt. Es steht fest, dass Eulenspiegel zu jedem Problem eine Lösung findet.

Bekannt ist auch die 21. Geschichte, in der berichtet wird, wie Eulenspiegel auf der Burg des Grafen von Anhalt zum Turmbläser wird und den Auftrag erhält, bei Sichtkontakt zu einem Feind sein Horn zu blasen. Da er aber wegen des Essens unzufrieden ist, beschließt er die Feinde nicht anzublasen und wenn keine Feinde da sind, bläst er sie an. Der Herzog ist wütend und will Tills Verhalten verstehen. Daraufhin antwortet ihm Eulenspiegel, dass man ohne Essen nicht ins Horn blasen könne.

Als Turmwächter des Grafen von Anhalt wird er zur Truppe strafversetzt, aber er vermeidet immer, sich in den Kampf einzusetzen und deshalb wird er entlassen. Einer seiner Streiche zielt auf die Wache der Stadt Nürnberg und löst eine bedrohliche Situation aus. Eulenspiegel flüchtet nachts vor der Wachstube herum und ärgert einige Stadtwachen, die ihn verfolgen, um ihn zu fangen. Um seinen Verfolgern zu entkommen, rennt er über einen Holzsteg, aus dem er vorher einzelne Planken herausgebrochen hat. Die Bewaffneten wissen nicht, dass der Holzsteg nun gefährlich ist und alle fallen durch die Lücke ins Wasser. Viele verletzen sich, einer bricht sich den Arm, ein anderer das Bein und einer hat sogar ein großes Loch im Kopf (32.H.). Auch diesmal helfen ihm die List und die Flucht, die Gewaltanwendung ist bei ihm kein Thema.

Viele Geschichten enden mit Eulenspiegels Flucht, während seine Mitmenschen Geld, Besitz oder Ansehen verlieren. Dafür wird er oft verflucht. Als Handwerksgeselle stellt er sich dumm und nimmt aufgetragene Arbeiten wörtlich. Er

näht Stoffe falsch zusammen (48.H.), nimmt die spöttische Antwort des Bäckers beim Wort und bäckt Meerkatzen und Eulen, die er dann mit einem hohen Gewinn an die begeisterten Braunschweiger verkauft (61.H.) oder er betrügt Wirtsleute um ihr Essen. In Erfurt geht er zum Markt und wird von einem Metzger an einem Stand angesprochen, ob er nicht etwas kaufen möchte. Eulenspiegel nimmt einen Braten, denn der Metzger hat ihm gesagt, er solle einen Braten nach Hause mitnehmen (56.H.).

Es gibt andere Geschichten, in denen er böse Spiele mit Leuten treibt. In der 53. Historie näht Eulenspiegel eine lebende Katze in ein Hasenfell, die er in einem Sack als lebendigen Hasen einigen Kürschnern aus Leipzig verkauft. In einer Geschichte geht er zum Markt und sagt den Milchverkäuferinnen, dass sie ein riesiges Fass mit Milch vollmachen sollen, er würde dann alles bezahlen. Die Verkäuferinnen gießen die Milch in das große Fass, aber sie füllen es nicht vollständig. Eulenspiegel weigert sich die Milch zu bezahlen, weil das Fass nicht voll sei. Die Verkäuferinnen zanken sich, weil niemand weiß, wie viel Milch dazu getan wurde. Eulenspiegel nutzt diese Situation aus und macht sich aus dem Staub (68.H.).

Eulenspiegel zeigt eine besondere Geschicklichkeit, wenn er den Direktor eines Krankenhauses überzeugt, dass er an einem Tage seine Patienten ohne Arznei heilen kann. Dafür soll er vom Direktor viel Geld haben. Eulenspiegel flüstert jedem Kranken ins Ohr, dass er einen von ihnen, eigentlich den Kränksten und den Schwächsten, zu Pulver verbrennen und den anderen das Pulver zu trinken geben werde, damit sie gesund werden. Wenn die Kranken am nächsten Tag Eulenspiegels Frage hören: „Wer gesund ist, soll sofort herauskommen und nach Hause gehen“, laufen alle weg, weil sie Angst vor Eulenspiegel hatten. Eulenspiegel bekommt sein Geld und verlässt eilig die Stadt (89.H.).

An einer berühmten Universität in Erfurt wird Eulenspiegel von den Professoren herausgefordert, einem Esel das Lesen beizubringen. Auch in dieser Situation erweist sich Eulenspiegel überlegen. Er legt zwischen die Seiten eines Buches Hafer und dressiert das hungrige Tier, die Seiten mit dem Maul umzublättern, um Hafer zu suchen und zu fressen. Vor den Professoren lässt Eulenspiegel den hungrigen Esel die Seiten umblättern, aber diesmal findet das Tier kein Futter mehr und ruft nur „I-a, I-a“. Eulenspiegel erklärt dann, dass das Tier die ersten zwei Buchstaben I und A gelernt habe, die restlichen wolle er ihm später beibringen (29. H.).

All diesen angeführten Beispiele beweisen Eulenspiegels Absicht zur Darstellung der schlechten Zustände der spätmittelalterlichen Gesellschaft. Er spottet über die selbstzufriedenen Bürger (Bauern, Handwerker, Händler, Professoren, Ärzte u.a.), über das abergläubische, tolerante Volk, über den arroganten, bestechlichen Adel (Herzöge, Könige) und nicht zuletzt gegen die unwürdigen Geistlichen. Unter der Narrenkappe befindet sich ein ruheloser, scharfer Geist, der seinen Mitmenschen einen Spiegel vorhält, damit sie darin ihre Schwächen, Fehler und Eitelkeiten erkennen. Mit Wortwitz und Hintersinn beschwört Eulenspiegel komische bis groteske Situationen herauf und dadurch vermittelt er Wahrheiten über Menschen, Taten, Orte und Zeit. Er findet immer eine einfache aber doch wirksame Art und Weise, um sich für ungerechte Behandlungen zu rächen. In diesem Fall könnte er als Anarchist gesehen werden, der sich gegen bestehende Verhältnisse auflehnt. Seine Kritik, die zwischen den Zeichen seiner Geschichten zum Ausdruck kommt, muss nicht nur seinen Mitmenschen sondern der ganzen Gesellschaft helfen.

In einer Welt der Dummheit und Lüge sind Eulenspiegels Streiche positiv zu bewerten, denn sie kommen der Gesellschaft zugute. Eulenspiegels Interventionen retten die Menschen vor der Selbstgenügsamkeit, in der sie stecken bleiben.

Eulenspiegels Geschichten haben geographisch weitreichenden und überzeitlichen Erfolg, weil sie unterschiedliche Aspekte des menschlichen Lebens um 1500 kritisch und mit viel Humor beschreiben. Von besonderer Bedeutung ist die belehrende Funktion der Geschichten.

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RENEGOTIATING JAPANESE, JAPANESE-AMERICAN AND AMERICAN IDENTITIES AND CULTURAL SPECIFICITY IN POST-WORLD WAR II JAPAN: LYNNE KUTSUKAKE'S THE TRANSLATION OF LOVE

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Abstract: The paper looks into Japanese, Japanese-American and American identities, as they appear in the context of post-World War II in Kutsukake's novel *The Translation of Love*, analyzing people's mentalities and perceptions of them, the changes that occur in cultural specificity, as well as other post-war realities. This entails following what happens at the clash of tradition and change, and how identity gets renegotiated and reinterpreted against the background of historical and social alterations, revealing the irony and the ironic – in the sense of bitterness, absurdity, as well as off-guard (for the characters) complexity – behind it. We also want to discern the meaning of such notions as democracy and Americanization put forward in the novel.

Keywords: identity; Japanese; World War II; negotiation; transformation.

1. Introduction

The paper focuses on the post-World War II transformations taking place in Japanese, American and Japanese-American identities, as highlighted in Lynne Kutsukake's novel *The Translation of Love*. The first part of this study introduces the new American ideology and the means used to instill it. The second looks at both old and renegotiated Japanese values. Last but not least, the third glances at the delicate position of the Japanese-Americans as outcasts.

2. The Americanization of Japan. The discourse of the dominant

One of the significant changes made in school life is the introduction of American food as a form of aid, not primarily or especially as a relief from poverty, but as a means to supposedly achieve a superior state of being that is connected with the democratic stance. Hence, instead of traditional rice and ..., the pupils get powdered milk and bread, peanut butter, oily meat and, rarely, eggs. The *chocoretto* sweet is also associated with the Americans, made to represent them, as one pupil answers with this word when the teacher asks the class one day what the American nation is “most famous for” (Kutsukake, 2016: 36). Moreover, the way children boast and taunt one another about having eaten *chocoretto* suggests its desirability, its delicatessen quality, and the fact that it is a luxury that can be procured with sacrifice and/or only on the black market.

American food is given away in schools for lunch, handed out at distribution tables, before which interminable lines form during the breaks. The food is not enough for everybody, and children get to think of strategies to get a place in front of the line faster – like using their body strength to elbow their way there, or, on the contrary, their

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feeble body build to crawl between the others' feet. This shows the scarcity of resources and penury that Japan has ended up in during the time of the American occupation, subsequent to the bombings and the final hostilities of the war, in 1946. There is a planning of food distribution, small schoolkids being fed first. Also, the time when boiled eggs are on the menu is a memorable event: such a day is called by 12-year-old Fumi "an egg day" (*ibidem*: 17). These details regarding food aid manage to give a clear picture of the way in which appearances are kept, and allegedly substantial help coming from the Occupation covers up the reality of insufficiency and shortage.

Another important food-related aspect is the transformation of this kind of helping act into a political statement. The consumption of American food by Japanese children, made in an official manner in schools, is not only a form of acculturation (Sam and Berry, 2006: 1), i.e. Americanization. It introduces a biased view and a double standard in the way in which people are considered, according to their national identity and implicit food habits and practices, in terms of their ability of think properly. In other words, what is suggested is that their judgment is potentially impaired because of the wrong food that they customarily ingest: "lunches were to help them think clearer, think freer. To become creative and independent." (Kutsukake, *op. cit.*: 13); these meals "were said to make you democratic faster" (*ibidem*: 14).

Americans implement an ideology according to which they are the saviors of the Japanese. It is the good fortune of the latter that the Occupation has come, as now the Japanese have stumbled upon the unique chance of entering a process of civilization whose beneficiaries they are solely due to the domination of a democratic people over them. The eastern world is seen as backward, enveloped in obsolete practices and thinking, in need of being awakened to the wonders of modernity in all its aspects. Therefore, the Occupation is the best thing that could have happened to them.

Food is a basic need in Maslow's pyramid. Thus, it is a powerful instrument of manipulation, and a means of appeal, drawing people, especially the young, who are less accustomed to native tradition, to the new ideology. Since the Americans come accompanied by the possibility of having this primary need satisfied in times of dire straits, their ways are *ingested* along with it, and seem *more palatable* because of it as well. Opinion is formed through the intermediary of satiating the hunger of the famine-driven, war-eroded Japanese people; together with the food, the Japanese consume and absorb the American ideology as well, just like metaphorical fish swallowing it "hook and sink". Food is a bait and a transporter of thought and mindset. It is the sugar coating the pill. The new ideology requires from the Japanese to acknowledge their own ways as inferior to the Americans', forcing them to divest their mindset of its legitimacy, and outgrow their customs, adopting the new ones, and a new perspective. It is not only that they have to adapt, they also need to admit to the previous known path as being flawed. If the new food will help them become creative, or think clearly, the implication goes that they were not that before, that their thinking was defective, that they were robot-like etc.

American reform aims at reorganizing the system of education to reflect American, rather than Japanese values. Hence, the subjects taught in school need to move away from the "militaristic" and "feudalistic" morals, history and geography towards others that reflect individualism and democracy, such as social studies. The legacy of the past and passing it to the new generation, who would be raised in the spirit of respect for the ancestors and for collective thinking, needs to be replaced with self-centeredness, having one's own mind and ideas, and a divided, I-oriented society, relaxed about the old values, perhaps debunking them in order to feel no sense of duty

towards the former order, political regime, and way of life. A new mapping of the world is also necessary in the collective consciousness, along with reconfiguring territory in the imagination of Japanese children, dismantling Japan as a world superpower. Different, second-hand maps are brought to classrooms, on which a new, “shriveled bean” Japan is placed on the edge, looking as if it could “fall off” the atlas altogether (*ibidem*: 36), leaving room for the American continent in the middle. The physical map mirrors the new ideological discourse that has to be learnt and internalized, in which steps are taken for the symbolical transformation of Japanese culture into the marginal one, with the American culture taking the focus and the central position in people’s minds. People need to come to acknowledge American culture as the better of the two, reaching the point where they reject their own as less relevant or flawed. Also, mixed classes, made up of boys and girls, are meant to bring a relaxation in the area of sexual morals, which can also function as a distraction from political matters, leaving the young generation to enjoy the new freedom instead of preoccupying themselves with the seriousness of state issues, making them less prone to fighting authority.

The appearance of the Americans as democratic and minding the Japanese people, looking out for their wellbeing, is made through propaganda regarding the possibility of letter-writing. Newspapers popularize the case of a war veteran who got a new pair of glasses as a result of having written a letter to General MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. Of course, since other letters with serious complaints and questions are ignored, the resolution of such a trivial matter in exchange is merely a slap in the face of the petitioners. It strictly reflects propagandistic purposes, and goes to show, given the trifle pushed forward as an example, precisely the disinterest of the Americans in the grievances of the Japanese. The veteran’s words get quoted from one newspaper to the other, as a means of instilling the idea that the Occupation has the people’s best interests at heart, and as an alleged instance of democracy and free speech: “I never expected anything to come out of it, but this is what democracy means! If you have a problem, write a letter,” (*ibidem*: 56).

The way Americans tend to see the Japanese by stereotyping them, and as less civilized, as savages or even as less human, is present in some practices and attitudes. The post-war reality of spraying the Japanese with DDT is one example. In schools, pupils stand in a line, waiting to have their heads and shoulders sprayed by the Hygiene Patrol to kill potential lice. Aya and her father get sprayed accidentally on the ship that sails from Canada, because of their Japanese physical features which make the coast guards believe that they are residents of Tokyo or its surroundings. The danger posed by this substance to the health of the human beings treated with it is not taken into account. Or, rather, it is overlooked intentionally, placed lower in importance than the fear of the Americans of getting contaminated with parasitical insects, because the Japanese are deemed less human and less important than other people of the white race.

Even a good-hearted person belonging to the second-generation Japanese-Americans, the Nisei, such as translator Matt Matsumoto, has a preconceived idea about the Japanese being brainwashed puppets, as he thinks to himself: “This was supposed to be a nation of robots, people who blindly followed their emperor, people who would never challenge authority.” (*ibidem*: 45) He expresses this bias in the context in which he wonders how come the Japanese are writing so many letters, once they have been let know of the possibility, since they are, after all, a collectivistic people. If an educated and kind individual thinks like that, we can infer the way other Americans, who are not of Japanese origin, think like.

3. Old and new/renegotiated Japanese cultural traits

Before passing on to see how old values get reinterpreted in the new post-war context, we can mention two traits that appear in the text which can be considered as belonging to the traditional Japanese culture and mindset. One is the prominence of space – as a dimension, over time – and spatialized thinking. Aya thinks of packing up unpleasant moments in tiny pellets, and then put the packets of time intervals into a box. Space is a dimension of the eastern world, whereas the predominant dimension in the mindset of the western one is time. Aya is part of both worlds, being half-Japanese and having lived in Canada, and her thoughts encompass both dimensions in this interesting manner, the overriding one seeming to be, nevertheless, space.

The other is the importance of the notion of honor, having as natural counterpart the fear of shame – especially public shame. When Fumi accidentally tears Aya's blouse, the latter hides the incident from her father, even though it was an accident. For Aya, explaining to her father what happened in school is worse than pretending it did not occur at all, because it shows her failure to become integrated and is implicitly face-threatening. Sensei Kendo feels shame because he could not go to war and sacrifice for his empire, although he was objectively unfit because of his shortsightedness.

The Japanese proverbial care not to damage face publicly, as well as their respect for rank and hierarchy is ever-present, but with a twist. Let us first see some instances in which it is minded. Even though translator Matt Matsumoto would have written the English versions of the letters more quickly had he typed them himself, he nevertheless handwrites them, as “he was not allowed to type [...] because that was the job of the secretaries” (*ibidem*: 49). A double subordination is in place here: the job and qualification status, and the implication of gender hierarchy, with women placed on an inferior plane, as less capable than men. Hence, there are also gender-specific jobs: the interpreter, the one who writes history (i.e. creates meaning) is a man, whereas the woman is a mere copyist. That is why Matt’s preference for typing and the fact that he learns it from his sister need to be kept a secret, as they are somehow shameful and inappropriate.

When the principal introduces Aya to the pupils, after he enters the classroom, he first discusses it in private with the teacher beforehand, and only then gets out and re-enters with the girl. The principal’s side talk with Sensei Kondo gives the latter time to get used to the idea, a heads up to process the situation and plan for what comes next in the immediate future; he gets a chance to set the scene for the introduction and know what will happen beforehand, preserving an advantage in terms of the studied reactions and attitude that he will decide to display, as well as an opportunity to study the others’ reactions given the fact that, unlike them, he knows what is about to occur. When the principal comes back into the room, this time with Aya, he introduces her to the sensei and not to the class, as he is the most important person in the room after the principal.

A few remarks are due here. First, there is a difference between the way in which the Japanese educational culture is teacher-oriented and not student-oriented, as western ones. Efforts have been made increasingly to center the educational process on the student. In our culture, the teacher has progressively disappeared from the picture, remaining in the background to intervene for soft guidance. In this context, in the western world, the principal would have addressed the class, not the teacher, in the introduction of a new colleague, probably without the preparatory talk. Or, rather, the introduction would have been made by the teacher herself/himself, as there would have

been no real need to stress hierarchy or put it on display in this case. Also, sensei's authority is seen in the way in which he makes adjustments by changing desk mates, moving Fumi's away, to the back of the class, and the new girl next to her, instructing Fumi to help her find her way around. In our student-oriented culture, the students involved in this placement would have been asked their opinions, and their preferences would have been taken into account.

The principal's attitude also shows the fact that eastern spatialized thinking, combined with the issue of observing rank pays due respect to the idea that everyone is a master of one's space of activity, territory and area where one acts. A few details in the scene described above point to this. The principal's tap on the door is sharp and authoritative, because his rank is higher and he takes the liberty to interrupt a lesson and require for the new student to start immediately despite the semester having begun, but he confers with the teacher in a whisper, updating him on the matter before telling the students.

Proof of the observance of rank is the way in which the angle to which people bow depends on status – the higher the position and distance, the lower the bow. The students bow to ninety degrees to the principal, but much less to Aya. While talking in the teacher's ear, the principal, who is shorter than his interlocutor, tends to compensate by standing on his tiptoes, whereas the other stoops.

Disobedience between ranks is unpardonable, and it is common sense to expect punishment when one fails to observe hierarchy. Because she has accidentally torn Aya's blouse, Fumi gets slapped on her face by Kondo sensei and is made to stand in the heat outside facing a tree for an entire afternoon. We notice that punishment can be corporal, without arising any outrage.

Traditionally, etiquette is important for the Japanese people. This is visible in the advice that Aya's father gave her regarding bows upon their return to Japan. It is not only that bows are necessary and customary, but also that they should be performed in a certain manner. The way in which they are made counts, to the tiniest detail: arms should be kept tight along one's body, the bow bent should be ninety degrees, and it needs to be maintained long enough to be respectful. Apart from bows, generally, "Every phrase had a correct counter-phrase, every gesture a precise and appropriate response." (*ibidem*: 24) This ritualistic nature of conversational mannerisms makes us think of Eric Berne's transaction series, more particularly what he calls rituals and procedures, namely dialogues in which the meaning is beyond the actual words and has to be inferred, as it cannot be taken merely and strictly from what is being said; to put it plainly, what is said is not literally what is meant (Berne, 1973: 35-40). Berne describes these verbal interactions as involving "programming" by society, and points out that they "have to be learned" (*ibidem*: 35).

Another instance of emphasis laid on etiquette, as well as the public manifestation of respect for people and institutions (in this case school and the notion of education and passing knowledge to others in general), is the way in which everyone entering the school building needs to take off their street shoes and wear slippers or even go inside barefoot. However, post-war reality looks less imposing than this tradition and its pretentiousness. Elements pertaining to the derisory, prosaic and at times embarrassing show that pomposness and seriousness are, on the one hand, disharmonious with the paucity of the context, and, on the other, a sometimes hypocritical attempt to keep up appearances despite what the real situation looks like. People enter shoeless but the building is drab and the floors are dirty; also, the principal has a big hole in his sock. Education and teachers are highly esteemed, but the sensei

mistakes Canada for the United States of America, and, despite stressing the importance of learning English properly, his pronunciation is flawed, as when he says English it sounds like “*Ingurishu*” (Kutsukake, *op. cit.*: 23). In this context, the usual manifestations of respect look more like stiffness and appear as artificial. They seem the distressed attempt of a crumbling world to keep to its former guiding lines and customs, which seem inauthentic against the background of the change provoked by war and the American Occupation.

Transformation of society is visible in the mass of people strolling in the Hibiya Park on a regular afternoon. Translator Yoshitaka Matt Matsumoto notices the diversity in the crowd, permeated, unlike in older times, by American GIs. The old and the new are mirrored by the Japanese couples, who “walked shyly side by side, never touching”, and, respectively, the couples formed by American soldiers and Japanese young women, who hold hands, and which have become “so commonplace nobody gave them a second glance anymore” (*ibidem*: 82). The existence and distinctive behavior of the two types of couples illustrate the change undertaken by Japan. The couples formed by men and women of Japanese descent manifest the discretion and restraint valued in traditional Japanese culture, whereas the ones made up of members of mixed descents show, symbolically, the process of acculturation in which the dominant party is the American – just like the male is, in the relationship, holding the upper hand – and the modified morals of this new world of diversity, in the sense of libertinage and professed open-mindedness.

The existence of the short-lived mixed couples above is a compromise so that the Japanese women involved in them could access better food, money or material gain without which the survival of family members would sometimes be impossible. Sumiko, Aya’s sister, works in a dance hall that is deemed more high class in Ginza, and she needs to put up with being held by American GIs for food perks like jam, chocolate or marshmallows. Her appearance changes into a more provocative one: permed hair, high heels, short skirts and red lipstick, matching an interior transformation, a new type of post-war identity that is born out of this context for some Japanese girls, and which Sumiko is aware of: “She wished she could just be her former self, but she couldn’t. Somewhere along the way, she had become the clothes she wore.” (*ibidem*: 159) These new feminine selves were a grotesque blend between Japanese common sense and simplicity and the western modern, flashy, brazen, self-confident and perhaps emancipated or democraticized American woman. Sumiko thinks of it as a mixture of the Japanese “proper girl” – “demure and polite, trained to serve tea [...] told to keep her eyes downcast and not speak unless spoken to”, who submitted willingly and gladly to arranged marriages and to anything her parents told her to do without exception – and a personality that was “shady and risqué” (*ibidem*: 161). However, compromise goes by degrees. Sumiko’s establishment is, nevertheless, only for dancing, while others in Ginza are brothels with minimal compartmentalization meant to serve the purpose of the locale in a very crude and business-like manner. Sumiko is not an *only*, i.e. a steady (though temporary) girlfriend of an American soldier (whose status is actually only a little better than a prostitute’s), or a *panpan*, which is a woman who sells her body.

Last but not least, the negotiation of values pertaining to the old world takes place when it comes to people’s attitude towards maimed war veterans, who are out begging in the streets of Tokyo. On various occasions in the novel, the honor and duty of defending the empire is invoked and, respectively, the shame that a man is covered by if he evades military service. In a culture who thinks in these terms, war veterans

would normally be held in high esteem and treated as heroes. Except that they are presented as begging for scraps, the details of the manner in which this activity occurs being telltale in their turn. The Japanese veterans keep out of the Hibiya Park, so as not to disturb the carefree strollers inside, as if reluctant to bother them or intrude with their misfortune and physical deformity. While they wait for the mercy of the passers-by, they just hold their bodies in a dignified posture, merely waiting silently and almost graciously to be noticed. It is clear that a hint of the honor, dignity and discretion that represented life principles for the old world is still traceable in their conduct. Also, their uniforms are worn out but kept clean, reminders of a sense of patriotism that also animated the traditional world. One veteran keeps his back straight like a monk in a Zen posture, despite being blind, and looks straight ahead, keeping his head held high and poised, giving out self-respect in spite of the circumstances. However, passers-by ignore these men, whom they should consider, according to their culture, heroes. People are avoidant of them and, hence, of reality, obviously trying to forget what they mean, the trauma that they have lived, but oblivious, at the same time and through this, of their own culture. The Japanese soldiers are uncomfortable reminders that the old world is lost. Moreover, this coldness culminates with the image of one such amputee being robbed of the little he has received by four young boys of his own nationality, who knock him to the ground and hit him. Bearing witness to this scene is the one thing that makes Matt decide to honor the men and give them some money instead of turning away, even though, for him, they are former enemies. The American sparing some cash for Japanese soldiers because he thinks that they deserve to be honored seems a rough comment on the status quo in post-war Japan.

After their arrival to Japan from Canada, Aya's father characterizes his countrymen's inquisitiveness and curiosity over any matter as them being "nosy" and "busybodies", and instructs his daughter to keep quiet and avoid giving them explanations (*ibidem*: 29). Here there is a change that happens under the influence of the times as well. The Japanese value discretion, as we have pointed above, as well as speaking little and meaningfully. They are proverbially famous for avoiding to say "no", in order not to offend (Fukushima, 2003). Politeness implies scarcity of words, avoiding confrontation, and not bothering the interlocutor with intrusive or harsh comments. The Japanese are therefore high context (Hall, 1989: 105-116), leaving the communication partner to infer meaning from their indirectness, rather than spelling out the truth. In being brisk, harsh, cross, hurried in their manner of speech, as Aya's father characterizes them, they prove that they have borrowed something from the American low-context address, which is being put forth in conversations without the tact of assertiveness, resulting, rather, and perhaps due to their hard life, in aggressiveness directed blindly at everyone.

4. Taking up the undecided middle: Japanese Americans

The Japanese-Americans who are forced to return to Japan after the war are strangers to both their native country/culture, and to that of immigration. In 1946, Aya's father is no longer welcome in Canada because he is of Japanese origin, and is sent on "forced exile", i.e. deported, to Occupied Japan, or, as a choice, instructed to go east of the Rockies, to the marginal regions of Canada. Among other Canadians of Japanese descent, Aya hears talk of "hate" towards them because of their background, and the verb used is "to get rid of", in what regards their deportation (Kutsukake, *op. cit.*: 25). Immediately after Aya's father is glad to see the Nippon land from the ship, and utters

the word “home”, because on the shore “Everyone looks like us” and appear to have come to greet them, he quickly becomes disappointed and despondent as he hears shouts of “*Amerikajin! Cigaretto!*” instead of the warm welcome he expected (*ibidem*). The natives regard them as American, and hence only expect to gain from them something material, no longer acknowledging them as their own people. Expelled by the country that adopted them as foreigners, they go back to the country of birth to find fellow countrymen who reject them as foreign as well. The Japanese Americans who are forced to go back to Japan are called “repats” in a derogatory way.

The physical, concrete forced exile is paralleled by a symbolical one. Having no country to call home goes hand in hand with having no clear national identity. Neither the Americans nor the Japanese acknowledge either the Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans), or others of Japanese origin who have lived in America and taken the American dress habits, accent, and manners, as their compatriots. It is as if their mixed blood would make them damaged goods, spoiled in some irremediable sense. This attitude is visible in a bartender’s eyes as he serves Matt/Matsumoto a drink while noticing his Japanese features and perfect American accent: the man at the counter gives his client a “funny look” of confusion, the ingredients of which are an inability to place someone on the map of national identities, envy, distrust, hatred and fear (*ibidem*: 197). The Americans seem to be even more chauvinistic. An illustration is provided by the way in which Aya and her mother are made to wait to be attended in a clothes shop in America, strictly because they are Japanese, while others who enter after them are served first, and with better-quality products; when the girl is finally brought an item of clothing, the shop-assistant tells them that the mustard yellow coat she came with was the only one in stock “for people like you” (*ibidem*: 155).

The way in which Matt, as a nickname – short for Matsumoto – is also an American name in its own right illustrates the character’s doubleness and ambivalent identity, as well as his versatility as a professional translator. For him, in a way, the post-war context is one that, on the one hand, serves him best, being the ideal place, since he can pass for both an American and a Japanese, knows both languages, and can be integrated in both worlds. He can find a job in both countries, and makes good money out of translations. On the other hand, a Japanese American is also the worst thing to be at a time like that, as you are neither-nor, rejected by both sides because of your in-betweenness, not standing a chance to be fully integrated anywhere as a Nisei, being a living walking reminder of a fresh trauma to people belonging to either country.

Since the national difference is a racial one as well in this case, and one’s appearance is immediately telltale of both, the reaction gotten from people to your own person is immediate and unavoidable. The racial element adds this implacability of being put on the spot all the time, without any possibility of postponement or opportunity to disguise your identity, at least on some occasions. A Japanese American is forced to be made out spontaneously, immediately, and get the unpleasant feedback with no delay. Such a person has to be ready to face the potential rejection constantly, without breaks or interruptions. When Matt goes to the Midnight Club in Grinza with his colleague Eddie, to look for the girl in the photo received from Fumi (i.e. Sumiko, her sister), they are denied entrance because they do not look like American GIs, because of their Japanese features.

For Matt things are even more complicated, since he is a soldier, and needs to wear his American army uniform in the streets of Japan, while his Japanese traits are also plainly distinguishable. To the Japanese who look at him, he is the enemy twice:

once because he is the Occupation, belonging to the nation who has destroyed their homes, killed their families and brought them to starvation, despite mimicking the happiness of democracy, and, secondly, because he did that against the nation that is in fact his true home country, which is all the more shameful for a people for whom collectivism, patriotic feeling, honor and sacrifice are part of their cultural build. We understand, in this light, Matt's relief when he can dress like a civilian at the zoo. The missing uniform, the absence of a cloth, makes him merely a Japanese man, which earns his people's respect, but also the despise of the young Japanese women who go around accompanied by American GIs, whose reaction is the opposite of respect, as they seem to tell him, with their eyes, that they do not need Japanese men. Their superiority may also have something to do with a reproach for the Japanese men's inability to have protected them, their women, from the enemy, whom they now need to befriend and even sell themselves to in order to scrap a living.

The above-mentioned frustration of the Japanese American, related to their rejection by both countries to which they should belong, is mirrored by typist Nancy Nogami, Matt's colleague. A Nisei established in the States, Nancy came to Japan to visit a relative before the war started, and got stuck there with no possibility of return once it broke out. Her attitude at the zoo betrays the way in which she perceives the Japanese – as barbaric savages, killing tigers and lions because they feel these are a threat to safety, starving elephants to death. Her revolt and hysterical laughter while recounting these facts shows her outlook, and mean to point to how absurd she considers the inhabitants of this country. Also, she seems to hate the white monkeys of the Hokkaido area – most likely because they are a powerful symbol of Japanese national identity – rattling their cage while saying that they will not be scared of anything and that they are probably deaf, having survived a war. Nancy confesses that she would return to America in the blink of an eye, if possible, and her nostalgia for the US is visible in the way in which she looks for Camay soap in the black market. When she tries to enter her name in the family registry to get a ration card, she finds out that, because she has spent a lot of time abroad after the war outbreak, and because of her Japanese descent, she is no longer considered American, although she was born on the American continent. However, this makes her turn her animosity against the Japanese, not the Americans who have rejected her, because America is the country she identifies with, and where she pictures her life as potentially better.

5. Conclusions

The stress has fallen on the irony of a context in which people can no longer keep to the former boundaries that provided for them a clear sense of identity. Forced to adapt to a blurry situation, feeling unsafe and rejected, they permanently strive to renegotiate their place among the others. Matt Matsumoto's comment on the way in which the bartender looks at him sums up the historical-social context that we have analyzed:

How could you be Japanese and American at the same time, was the unspoken question. If you're supposed to be American, how come you look Japanese? If you're supposed to be Japanese, how come you don't talk like us? Or, if your Japanese was good and you did talk like them, the question became, How come you don't think like us? There was always one more hurdle placed in front of you, another barrier to acceptance. Of course it was not as bad as back home in America. No one here had told him 'We don't sell to Japs' or thrown a stone through his family's front window. Still, it was complicated. There was

envy, and who could blame the Japanese? Anyone who worked for the Occupation forces ate well, dressed well, and generally seemed without a worry in the world. But mingled with that envy was distrust. Who were you really? Whose side were you on? (*ibidem*: 197).

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THE IRONY OF SELF-DESTRUCTION IN SYLVIA PLATH'S LADY LAZARUS

Cristina MIRON*

Abstract. This paper highlights the main instances of irony in Sylvia Plath's celebrated poem "Lady Lazarus" which are closely connected to the reconciliation of opposites, blasphemous associations, dédoublement of the poet's persona), vengeance against the patriarchal society, theatricalization of suffering.

Keywords: irony; feminism; blasphemy; double

1. On the concept of irony

A widely used term, irony knows three possible interpretations: 1. "a rhetorical and literary device", 2. "a mode of literature" and 3. "a way of perceiving life itself" (Quinn, 2006:222). A quite comprehensive definition for the first sense is given by Childs and Fowler as "a mode of discourse for conveying meaning different from, and usually opposite to, the professed or ostensible ones." (Childs, Fowler, 2006: 123) or simplified in Quinn's version as a "technique of implying something very different from what one is ostensibly saying" (Quinn, *op. cit.*: 222). In spite of admitting that irony simply eludes any definition by its very nature, Cuddon clearly explains that irony involves "the perception or awareness of a discrepancy or incongruity between words and their meaning, or between actions and their results, or between appearance and reality" to which elements of the absurd and the paradoxical add almost all the time. (Cuddon, 1999: 430) The two main types of irony are the verbal irony (based mostly on litotes, hyperbole, understatement, puns, paradox) and situational irony (or sometimes irony of behaviour). (see Cuddon, *op. cit.*:430; see Childs, Fowler, *op.cit.*:123, 124). All irony "depends on the belief in and exploitation of the difference and distance between words or events and their contexts" (Childs, Fowler, *op. cit.*: 123). The intention of irony ranges from a comical light one to an ominously dark, tragic one (see Quinn, *op. cit.*: 222). It is considered the "witting or unwitting instrument of truth", which "chides, purifies, refines, deflates, scorns and 'sends up'" (Cuddon, *op. cit.*:431).

The history of irony starts in the Antiquity with Plato and Socrates, passes through the classical tragedy where it acquires the form of dramatic irony (when the implied meaning of a situation or words is understood by the audience but is opaque to the characters, see *ibidem*: 237), is the subject of theory for the Roman rhetoricians Cicero and Quintilian, it becomes the efficient weapon of satirists or of analysts such as Schlegel, then it turns into a grand Hegelian concept, synonymous with Romanticism or is even conceived as an essential attribute of God. (see Quinn, *op. cit.*: 222-223; see Cuddon, *op. cit.*: 427-432). In the 20th century, playing a central role in the New Criticism, "the term is used to denote an essential characteristic of poetry, the capacity of poetic language to reconcile opposites." (Quinn, *op. cit.*: 223)

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2. Sylvia Plath and her confessional poem *Lady Lazarus*

Sylvia Plath has often been recognized as an author of confessional poetry, a type of poetry which “synthesizes the inclination to personalism and consciousness building of the nineteenth century with elaborate masking techniques and objectifications of the twentieth.” (Hoffman, 1978: 688) Following the example of the romantic poets, the confessional poets place the “I” at the centre of their poetry, favour self-expression and deal with personal experience, but they lack the “bardic impulse of their forebears” (*ibidem*: 690) by choosing to treat rather non-poetic topics such as family conflicts, psychological illnesses (madness) or sex. Moreover, by refusing to highlight the “extraordinary perspective” of the Romantic bard and choosing the presentation of the life and experience of the “average” man, “the modern ‘persona’ had become a representative rather than an ideal man.” (*ibidem*: 691).

The poem *Lady Lazarus* was composed in the autumn of 1962, a highly creative period of Sylvia Plath who was then alone with her two children, after she had separated from her husband, the poet Ted Hughes, after seven years of marriage. The poems, as well as the letters from this period, display her moods which turned from despair to exhilaration, from extreme anger to optimistic belief in the ability to start a new life, as well as her fascination with death, physical and mental pain. But this particular poem balances the negative side with the presentation of “the myth of the phoenix, of the rebirth out of suffering” (Bassnett, 2005: 20).

The title of this poem, probably inspired by T.S. Eliot’s lines “Lazarus, come from the dead, / Come back to tell you all” (Ford, 2016), contains a reference to the New Testament story of Lazarus who was miraculously resurrected from the dead by Jesus, but Sylvia Plath gives it a feminist imprint suggesting the potential insertion of biographical elements which accounts for the confessional features of this poem. Just like the title which juxtaposes irony with a feminist tint of blasphemy, the poem will put together hints to the appalling experiences of the Jews who were kept in the Nazi concentration camps with the superficial language of advertising, mass shows and pornographic display. The mythical and literary allusions made along the poem add to the variety of tone.

Technically speaking, the poem develops as a dramatic monologue with a high emotional intensity imbued with expressionist violence. Plath’s persona is a female Lazarus who protests against the patriarchal society (before the age of radical feminism), a creative agent who fights against the violence and the destructive acts of the males. Moreover, the poem’s persona is not the traditional submissive woman type, she is a fighting protesting woman who is violently angry and also eager to take revenge on men. The poem has a conversational style ranging from open confessions to violent warnings and criticism for interfering into her intimate life.

The structure of the poem includes 28 stanzas perhaps suggesting the normal duration of the women’s menstrual cycle which itself symbolizes death and rebirth. Plath starts by breaking the communication laws and introducing the anaphoric pronoun *it* from the very first line, thus inviting the reader to a re-reading of the poem to understand the meaning of this pronoun: “I have done it again. / One year in every ten / I manage it –” (Plath, 1981: 244). It eventually turns out that “it” refers to the attempts at suicide made by Plath’s persona (which in this case coincides with Plath herself). When she was ten, she had a swimming accident which almost killed her, mentioned midway through the poem: “The first time it happened I was ten. / It was an accident.” (*ibidem*: 245). At the same point in the poem, she refers to the second attempt which

took place in the summer of 1953 when she took an overdose of sleeping pills and hid in a very small space beneath the bedroom of her home in Wellesley, Massachusetts. She was found by her brother and her mother: “The second time I meant / To last it out and not come back at all. / I rocked shut // As a seashell. / They had to call and call / And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.” (*ibidem*). The poem starts by anticipating a third attempt from which she predicts that she will again revive like the phoenix from its own ashes with the clear purpose of revenge against men: “Out of the ash/ I rise with my red hair / And I eat men like air.” (*ibidem*: 246) In real life, her next suicide attempt succeeded on 11 February 1963.

The poem is constructed on explaining and confessing why the persona wants to do away with this life, and so the whole suffering of this female hero is displayed all along the poem. The physical self-description developed in the second and third stanza contains clear references to the suffering of the Jews in the Nazi concentration camps, thus suggesting the depth of her own suffering. The metaphor “my skin / Bright as a Nazi lampshade” (*ibidem*: 244) is merely horrifying as it refers to the idea that the Nazi people used the skin of the Jews to make lampshades, whereas the metaphor “My right foot / A paperweight” (*ibidem*) suggests the heaviness of her emotional pain which feels like a physical weight. The last metaphor in this series “My face a featureless, fine / Jew linen.” (*ibidem*) alludes to a depressive loss of the sense of identity, a woman who feels lost in the crowd, no different from any other woman, not a special person for anybody. Moreover, Jew linen represents another Biblical allusion: Jew linens were used to wrap the dead bodies before they were laid in the tomb thus suggesting that the poem’s persona feels nothing, just like the dead.

At the beginning the persona sees herself rather dead than alive, therefore identifies with the initial image of Lazarus in the tomb, starting to decompose and feeling nothing: “The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth? / The sour breath / Will vanish in a day. // Soon, soon the flesh / The grave cave ate will be / At home on me”. (*ibidem*) In the fifteenth stanza the poet introduces the metaphor of dying as an art: “Dying / Is an art, like everything else.” (*ibidem*: 245) further extended as a show which involves the presence of an audience (“the peanut crunching crowd” (*ibidem*)) and as “a big strip tease” (*ibidem*) (when speaking about her comeback from the tomb) suggesting that the audience is eager to be entertained by her presence rather than to comfort her or rejoice at her return to life.

The last 9-10 stanzas of the poem concentrate on the theme of protest against the patriarchal society. As Susan Bassnett states, the woman here “transcends her torments and exacts revenge for her suffering on men” (Bassnett, *op. cit.*:111). The feminine persona sees the men around as enemies and for that she uses the German term for Mr (“Herr”) as well as the German word “Doktor” thus continuing the series of metaphors started at the beginning of the poem and resorting to horrible images related to the Holocaust. Although the doctor that helped her come back to life would normally be seen as a helper, he is considered an enemy because he opposes her wish to die expressed in the line “The second time I meant / To last it out and not come back at all.” (Plath, *op. cit.*: 245) The male figure shifts from a particular human “Herr Doktor, Herr Enemy” (*ibidem* 246) to the universal cosmic figures of “Herr God, Herr Lucifer” (*ibidem*) and the female figure is seen by man as a valuable object, not as a human being with her own feelings and emotions: “I am your opus, / I am your valuable, / The pure gold baby // That melts to a shriek.” (*ibidem*) These last two lines introduce a new imagery of death which is developed in the final part of the poem: violent death by fire, by incineration with a clear reference again to the death of the Jewish victims in the

Nazi concentration camps. “Ash, ash— / You poke and stir. / Flesh, bone, there is nothing there—— // A cake of soap, / A wedding ring, / A gold filling.” (*ibidem*) The Nazi oppressors were known to poke around the heaps of human ashes in order to find valuable jewels and gold fillings, but also to use the remains of the incinerated bodies for making soap. The poem ends in revenge, with the poetic persona determined to rise back from her own ashes and take revenge on men. “Out of the ash / I rise with my red hair / And I eat men like air.” (*ibidem*: 247) The revengeful coda is carefully predicted with the repeated imperatives “Beware / Beware.” Not only are these words taken from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan* “And all should cry, Beware! Beware! / His flashing eyes, his floating hair!” (Ford, *op. cit.*), but also the rhyme with *hair* is preserved. This final allusion, according to Mark Ford, “helps to give the incantatory rhymes of Plath’s closing lines [...] a dangerous uncanny power, as a spell or a curse.” (Ford, *op. cit.*)

As the poet herself said in the introduction of this poem to the BBC Radio, “The speaker is a woman who has the great and terrible gift of being reborn. The only trouble is she has to die first. She is the phoenix.... She is also just a good, plain, very resourceful woman.” (Bassnett, *op. cit.*: 113).

In this poem, Sylvia Plath masterfully combines personal intimate details with horrible realities of World War II, mythical allusions to English Romantic poetic allusions. The poetic imagery of the poem starts with the imagery of death seen as the decay of corpses and the lack of feelings, then goes on with the imagery of a living person who feels a deep suffering and prefers to play dice with death and finally sees the promise of revenge the suffering woman will take against all the male world that has caused her the pain.

3. Ironic instances in *Lady Lazarus*

Bruce Bawer states that, in spite of other critics’ assumptions that “Ariel poems are saved by their irony, [...] Plath’s irony is facile and, moreover, always directed at others—never at the poet herself.” (Bawer in Bloom (ed.), 2007:16) Contradicting this idea, Christina Britzolakis, in *Gothic Subjectivity*, argues that

Plath’s later poems are structured by an unstable and theatricalized irony that manifests itself as hyperbole. [...] [A]ll of Plath’s speakers participate in a pantomime of what Paul de Man calls ‘conscious inauthenticity’. This play of masks is the product of Plath’s engagement with the legacy of modernism, as an ironic ‘counterdiscourse’ of the aesthetic, of which Baudelaire and Poe are often seen as the inaugurateurs. (Britzolakis in *ibidem*: 132)

As Britzolakis synthesizes,

Paul de Man links the trope of irony with the Baudelairean concept of dédoublement, of self-duplication or self-multiplication. [...] [A]bsolute irony is a consciousness of madness, itself the end of all consciousness; it is a consciousness of non-consciousness, a reflection on madness from the inside of madness itself. But this reflection is made possible only by the double structure of ironic language: the ironist invents a form of himself that is ‘mad’ but that does not know its own madness; he then proceeds to reflect on his madness thus objectified. (*ibidem*: 131-132).

Lady Lazarus is clearly built upon the theme of the double triggering feminist injections, as Stan Smith (qtd by Gill, 2008:59) argues : “the rapid shifts of the imagery

enact the doubleness of a self which is a solid ‘opus’, a ‘valuable’, the ‘pure gold baby’ of the collective patriarchy, and then, across an enjambment, ‘melts to a shriek.’” Moreover, as Gill herself adds, this poem “exemplifies the difficulty, raised earlier, of differentiating between the lived experience, emotions or voice of the poet and those of an invented speaker, or ‘I’”. (*ibidem*) This connection is sensed by Britzolakis, too, who adds a gothic shade to this relation:

In Plath’s later poetry, the drama of dédoublement is transformed into a revenge plot starring the figure of the fatal woman or vampire. This revenge plot inverts the earlier victimization plot of Gothic romance; its most well known moments are the scapegoating of ‘Daddy’, theemonic apparition at the close of ‘Lady Lazarus’ who ‘eats men like air’, and the flight of the queen bee of ‘Stings’, who is ‘more terrible than she ever was’. Far from being reducible to an aspect of biography or self-fulfillment, however, it brings into play a thematic of artifice and perversity, a dizzying circulation of inherited texts and images. The fin-de-siècle theme of femininity as appearance brings together a crisis of mimetic notions of representation with a crisis in the social meanings of femininity. (Britzolakis in Bloom (ed.), *op. cit.*:138).

Irony is set from the very title of the poem because it converts the Biblical allusion to the story of Lazarus, miraculously resurrected from the dead by Jesus, to a feminist perspective, an irony which can be considered blasphemous. The ironic blasphemy doesn’t end here, reaching its climax with the ironic metaphor of the “big strip tease” associated with the persona’s comeback (connected with the religious resurrection from the dead).

Not only the title is based on irony, but also the very first lines which break down one of the rules of communication: the use of an anaphoric personal pronoun “it” in the initial line draws up an ambiguity which somehow distances the reader from the topic of communication. The first line of the second stanza, “A sort of walking miracle” (Plath, *op. cit.*: 244), probably tends to disambiguate the pronoun *it*, but it succeeds only partially.

Along the poem, the irony unfolds on two levels: *self-directed irony*, which springs from the fact that the poem speaks of self-destruction and, by de-doubling, the persona sees herself (or the poet sees the persona) suffering but also smiles at her own suffering, and *irony directed towards the others*, towards the external patriarchal world, which stems from the poet’s dissatisfaction with it which may be a direct cause of her wish to commit suicide.

Self-irony develops both on a physical level and on a psychological one. The comparisons used to achieve the physical description of the lyrical ego develop on the basis of an ironic juxtaposition of terms. The fine irony brings together two positive adjectives: “bright”, “fine” with two allusions to the atrocities undergone by the Jews in the concentration camps: “my skin / Bright as a Nazi lampshade, [...] / My face a featureless, fine / Jew linen.” (*ibidem*) The juxtaposition between personal suffering and extreme violence exerted upon millions of people has got an ironic character, too, which is developed by other more overtly death-connected allusions: “Flesh, bone, there is nothing there—— / A cake of soap, / A wedding ring, / A gold filling.” (*ibidem*: 245) These relics “are more than the residue of one failed marriage, or even of a despairing femininity, they are among the poignant traces of the massacre of millions of Jews and others in the Nazi death camps. These ‘notorious shards’, as Steiner terms them,

‘seemed to enter into her own being’.” (Gill, *op. cit.*: 61) The irony here can also have some visionary sad announcement Plath may have not even been aware of:

That no consensus exists among contemporary historians over whether the Nazis made cakes of soap out of their victims (though they certainly did “manufacture” hair and skin, rings and fillings and bones) drives home the bitter irony that propels the poem, namely that imaginative approaches to the Shoah may distort, rather than safeguard, the dreadful but shredded historical record. Reenactments of the calamity, including her own, are indicted, even as Plath issues a warning that they will take their toll. (Gubar in Bloom (ed), *op. cit.*:181-182).

This irony is further doubled by another one: the theatricalization of suffering, which actually “anticipate[s] a contemporary theatricalization of the Holocaust” as Susan Gubar rightfully notices (in *ibidem*: 180). And, further on, she remarks,

Certainly, her vengeful warning that “there is a charge / For the hearing of my heart” evokes the charge—the cheap thrill and the financial price and the emotional cost—of installations, novels, testimonials, college courses, critical essays, and museums dedicated to the six million. The commodification of Lady Lazarus’s exhibitionism issues in spectators paying “For a word or a touch / Or a bit of blood // Or a piece of my hair or my clothes”; she brags about her expertise at the art of dying: “I do it so it feels like hell. / I do it so it feels real” (245, emphasis mine). (in *ibidem*)

Another ironic instance in the poem, the metaphor of dying as an art, literally echoing the title of the medieval guide for a good death *Ars moriendi*, develops again on the opposition between death - an uncontrollable phenomenon in nature and art – a human creation. The act of suicide in fact plays upon this opposition, as long as the person who commits suicide wants to control the phenomenon, defying at the same time God’s most exquisite creation. Therefore, the suicidal persona of the poem sees herself as an artist of dying, ironically controlling the art of non-creation, of creating nothingness. Her two attempts at self-destruction appear as her creations, her artistic works which she describes in detail by de-doubling: two different settings, two different ways of doing it. The last attempt is hinted as unsuccessful, too, as another step towards a comeback. In this third case, reality is the one that ironically denies the writing. As a real artist in the art of dying, the persona of the poem becomes extremely boastful and self-centred, but at the cost of self-irony again: “I do it exceptionally well/ I do it so it feels like hell./ I do it so it feels real. / I guess you could say I’ve a call. // It’s easy enough to do it in a cell. /It’s easy enough to do it and stay put.” (Plath, *op. cit.*: 245)

The irony towards the others is obvious when the persona directly addresses her audience (which encompasses both the readers and the audience to her strip tease show) or her aggressors. The aggressors alternatively change roles with the audience, in that they are, in turn, the interlocutor (addressed in the second person) or the outsider (spoken of in the third person), thus demonstrating that whatever is outside the poetic ego represents an anti-ego, an enemy, a potential aggressor (or showing signs of a badly hidden misanthropy). When she addresses her aggressors “O my enemy. / Do I terrify?” (*ibidem*: 244) by identifying them as enemies, she hopes the display of her suffering body will be terrifying enough for them to become a weapon. This time, the audience appears as an outer crowd of people cruelly crunching peanuts while admiring the strip tease show staged by “them” (the above-named enemies): “The peanut-crunching crowd/ Shoves in to see// Them unwrap me hand and foot—— / The big strip tease.”

(*ibidem*: 245) Further on, assuming the ironical role of a showwoman, the persona addresses the audience (which now becomes the interlocutor), exhibiting herself in the totality of her body with deep self-pity rather than self-irony here: “Gentlemen, ladies / These are my hands / My knees./ I may be skin and bone, // Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.” (*ibidem*) Irony can nevertheless be detected underneath the juxtaposition between the crowd’s “brute, amused shout: / ‘A miracle!’” (*ibidem*: 246) and the strong victimising effect on the showwoman (“knocks me out”). And, last but not least, the bitterest shade of irony is probably to turn suffering into pure commodity, as the poem perfectly points out (here Plath’s verses become a warning against this process of commodification of suffering, be it the pain of the Jews or the suffering of Jesus or of the saints, whose relics are still hunted all over the world as precious goods). “There is a charge // For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge / For the hearing of my heart - / It really goes. // And there is a charge, a very large charge / For a word or a touch / Or a bit of blood // Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.” (*ibidem*: 246)

4. Conclusion

Based on confession and the usage of the double/mask, Plath’s poem *Lady Lazarus* resorts to irony in dealing with the theme of self-destruction. Combining irony towards others with self-irony, the poet develops the motif of female revenge against male’s dominance and of the phoenix-like comeback of the suicider, inserting allusions to the theatricalization of suffering with special emphasis on the victims of the Holocaust. Irony pervades each stanza of the poem and proves indispensable for expressing the strong negative feelings of the poet.

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VISUAL ASPECTS OF THE WRITTEN SIGN IN YOKO TAWADA'S OEUVRE¹

Monica TAMAS*

Abstract: As a bilingual writer and constant traveler between cultures, Yoko Tawada has shown a keen curiosity with regard to what changes beyond borders and what is left between. For Tawada, the transformative experience of traveling is inextricably entwined with the experience of language and signs, for culture itself is such a system. Her protagonists act as passive observers of an almost incomprehensible spectacle of reality, which they try to decipher one sign after the other. The images displayed all around contain strange letters and ideograms, for the road traveled is too often encoded in a new language. In this study, I analyze Tawada's use of written characters as poetic devices that multiply the possibilities of written language. In her oeuvre, Tawada complicates the semiotic relationship through cultural intersections and transfer of meaning, reinterpreting the visual sign.

Keywords: Yoko Tawada; transnational literature; written signs.

Writing in both Japanese and German, Yoko Tawada has found inspiration in the cultural intersections encountered throughout her journeys around the world, as well as in her adoptive country, Germany. Born in Tokyo, Tawada studied Russian literature at Waseda University, then moved to Germany immediately after her graduation, seeking the experience of how it feels to live immersed in a foreign language. It is there that she became aware of the peculiarities of the two languages she was thinking and writing in, and began to explore their dynamics in her writing as well. She made her debut in Germany, taking advantage of the special position she was in, as a transnational and exophonic writer. Her first published book, entitled *anata no iru tokoro dake nanimonai / nur da wo du bist da ist nichts* (Tawada, 1997) contains a short story and several poems, presented both in their original Japanese version, as well as in the German translation signed by Peter Pörtner. In 1991 Tawada made her debut in Japan and started writing in German as well, publishing *Wo Europa anfängt*. To this date, she has been awarded all important literary prizes in both Germany and Japan, like the Akutagawa Literature Prize (1993), the Adelbert-von-Chamisso Prize (1996) or the Goethe Medal (2005), as well as the National Book Award for Translated Literature in the United States in 2018, for *The Emissary*, Margaret Mitsutani's English translation of Tawada's dystopic novel *Kentōshi* (Tawada, 2014).

With a keen curiosity for language and cultural differences, Tawada documents her experiences as a foreigner in Germany and as a traveler around the world, in her fiction as well as in her essays. Most of her characters are likewise travelers trapped in a No-Man's-Land between cultures, acting as passive observers of an almost

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incomprehensible spectacle of reality. Like a camera that renders the image making use of a controlled aperture, so does the character's fixed gaze symbolically possess the landscape and its subjects, trying to decode a reality imprisoned in a network of signs. And precisely this permanent sense of incongruity between the main character's conscious self and the world represented as a fabric of signs and images is what drives the narrative forward. In this essay, I will look at Tawada's visual explorations of written signs as poetic devices that multiply the possibilities of written language, complicating the semiotic relationship between sign and meaning through cultural intersections and transfer.

For Tawada, the experience of traveling is inextricably entwined with the experience of language and signs. In a comparative study on Tawada's experiments on language communicability, brought in the context of Walter Benjamin's philosophy of language, Birgit Maier-Katkin observes that Tawada is constantly trying to expose and expand the essential function of language (Maier-Katkin 2010, 461). Throughout this essay I will look at how the Japanese-German author also tries to reveal the potential meanings hidden in and behind the written text through variation, dislocation, and reinterpretation, thus expanding the sign's capacity of signification.

Tawada's fascination with different writing systems and with the musicality of human language becomes clear in her lectures and writings. The 'poetic-lectures' that Tawada held at Tübingen University in the winter semester of 1997/98, subsequently published in the collection *Verwandlungen* (Tawada, 1998), dwell on the problems arising from the encounter with Otherness and the Foreign in the shape of languages, appearance, and written signs. The second lecture, entitled "Schrift einer Schildkröte oder das Problem der Übersetzung" ("The writing of a tortoise or the problem of translation"), deals with the characteristics of the two different writing systems: the untranslatable letters of the Latin alphabet, that by themselves contain no signified, and the Chinese ideograms used in Japanese writing, whose graphic representation, to which meaning is attached, outranks the sign's phonetic value. The text itself can become a visual material, in works such as *Borudō no gikei* ("The brother-in-law from Bordeaux") (Tawada, 2009), where the mirrored Japanese ideograms that title each section, "irritieren die optische Wahrnehmung und reizen womöglich zu neuen Entdeckungen" ("irritate the optical perception and may stimulate new discoveries") (Matsunaga, 2010: 447). Japanese writing, which combines ideograms of Chinese origin and two syllabaries (supplementing ideograms as phonetic lettering systems that adapted Chinese writing to the necessities of the Japanese language), is by itself a marvel to a reader with no knowledge of Japanese. For this reason, the German translation of *Borudō no gikei*, entitled *Schwager in Bordeaux* (Tawada, 2008), uses the same *kanji* characters that title paragraphs as the Japanese original, with no explanation regarding their meaning, but also without the mirroring effect. Likewise, a few of these *kanji* appear in maximized form, each occupying an entire page, and are interspersed as such throughout the book.

Tawada also discusses the difference between the two disparate writing systems, the visually suggestive Japanese signs and the Latin script, in several of her works in prose, using them either as markers of cultural identity or as opaque signs that obscure meaning. Intrigued by a book she finds at the flea market, with unknown letters written in a circle on its cover, the narrator in *Ein Gast* (Tawada, 1993) is told that the book is actually a mirror. "Für unsere Augen sehen Sie genauso aus wie diese Schrift. Deshalb sage ich, daß es ein Spiegel ist." ("In our eyes you look exactly like this writing. This is why I'm telling you that it is a mirror.") (*ibid.* : 10) Nonetheless, this

incomprehensibility of the written message functions in both directions. The narrator herself compares the Latin alphabet to “ein Gitter oder [...] die Wiedergabe meines Gesichtes im Fensterglas eines Nachtzuges” (“bars or [...] the reproduction of my face in the window glass on a night train”) (*ibid.* : 20) that blocks the scenery. It is thus language codified as strings of undecipherable written signs that prevents the traveler to discover and enjoy the larger image, thus obscuring the very culture it represents.

Contrastingly, the Japanese narrator of the short story “Das Fremde aus der Dose” (Tawada 2011b), a Japanese woman residing in Germany, notices that the very map of the city becomes an encoded network of letters, “verrätselt oder verschleiert” (“enigmatic or foggy”) to the eyes of those unable to read Latin script, either because they are tourists of a different cultural background, or because they are too young or simply illiterate. The written words that populate the city landscape also seem to materialize on the faces of those living in it, which explains the uneasiness strangers feel when looking at the narrator, whose face is mysteriously undecipherable to them. Bombarded with questions that attempt to verify the accuracy of facts about Japan, the narrator feels as if she is requested to translate a writing hidden in her facial expression: “Jeder Versuch, den Unterschied zwischen zwei Kulturen zu beschreiben, misslang mir: Der Unterschied wurde direkt auf meine Haut aufgetragen wie eine fremde Schrift, die ich zwar spüren, aber nicht lesen konnte.” (“I failed every time I tried to describe the difference between the two cultures: The difference was inscribed directly on my skin like a foreign writing, that I could feel indeed, but I could not read.”) (Tawada, 2011b: 42)

In fact, the very image of Japanese characters allows the reader to grasp the meaning of the text without transforming the written characters into sound, without acknowledging the musicality of the language, but focusing on the ideas expressed within. This is also one of the reasons why modern poetry readings have failed to attract the same level of interest in Japan, since—Tawada explains in “Schrift einer Schildkröte oder das Problem der Übersetzung”—the artistic combinations of characters cannot be verbally conveyed to audiences on such occasions. Hinting to the rich history of Japanese culture, transmitted since ancient times through the introduction of Chinese characters (the oldest texts written in Japan date back to the 7th century) (Keene, 1993) and their subsequent adaptation to the requirements of the Japanese language, Tawada notes that “[i]n den Gesamtkörper der Ideogramme ist die Kulturgeschichte eingeschrieben” (“the history of the culture is written in the entire body of ideograms”). (Tawada, 1998: 27) As literature flourished in Japan, poems were put together in collections of poetry that survived up to this day (*Man'yōshū*, ‘The Collection of the Ten Thousand Leaves’ compiling poems that go back as far as the 5th century, is the oldest preserved such collection) and diaries or novels became the main pastime of court nobility. Word games that used homophones, thus playing with the possibilities of phonetic sounds beyond the written text, were the norm and are also one of the reasons why modern editions of these collections of poems, translated into modern Japanese or other languages, require numerous footnotes in order to explain the probable meanings, readings and word games contained within the poem.

Thus, the lack of representation of meaning in the Latin alphabet poses a problem to a reader of ideograms. In the short story “Musik der Buchstaben” (“The Music of Letters”) (Tawada, 2010a : 27), the unnamed narrator, which we can interpret as an alter ego of the author herself, reveals her thoughts upon receiving a poem by the French writer Véronique Vassiliou in her letter box. Although she does not understand French, she is baffled by her incapacity to grasp even the slightest unit of meaning from

the text she is looking at, despite knowing every single letter contained within: “Ich kann zum Beispiel auch nicht Chinesisch, aber wenn ich das Zeichen für »Mensch« 人 sehe, weiß ich wenigstens, dass dort ein Mensch steht.” (“I also don’t know Chinese, for example, but when I see the sign for »person« 人, I know at least that there is a person there.”) (*ibid.* : 32) As the ideograms used in Japanese writing originated in China, the meaning of many such characters remains the same and a Japanese person can grasp ‘islands of meaning’ inside a text written in Chinese, despite the fact that both countries have simplified their writing on separate occasions¹. This is why the Japanese narrator asks herself: “Ist es möglich, dass ich von einem Buchstaben, den ich kenne, gar keine Information bekomme?” (“Is it possible, that I cannot obtain any information whatsoever from a letter that I know?”) (*ibid.* : 33) The written code is familiar, the limits of the sign are graspable, but the signified is inaccessible to the reader. As Ilma Rakusa also observes, “[d]er ideogramm-geschulte Blick” (“the ideogram-trained eye”) is struggling when confronted with letters that do not illustrate anything and signs that do not display their sensuality (Rakusa, 2011 : 72), as Japanese calligraphy does. Nonetheless, the narrator in “Musik der Buchstaben” acknowledges the ambivalence of this phenomenon, stating that “Eine Sprache, die man nicht gelernt hat, ist eine durchsichtige Wand. Man kann bis in die Ferne hindurchschauen, weil einem keine Bedeutung im Weg steht. Jedes Wort ist unendlich offen[.]” (“An unknown language is a transparent wall. You can look through it in the distance, because there is no meaning standing in your way. Each word is infinitely open.”) (*ibid.* : 33) The unknown language hinders the apperception of meaning like an invisible wall that lets one only assume the possibility of comprehension, without giving any clues on what the message contains.

We find similar scenes in novels such as *Yōgisha no yakkōressha* (“The Suspects on a Night Train”) (Tawada, 2002) and *Amerika - hidō no tairiku* (“America - the Cruel Continent”) (Tawada, 2006), where the second person narrators encounter different writing systems, like the unintelligible text on the passport the main character of *Yōgisha no yakkōressha* discovers in the last chapter of the novel, or the Arabic writing on a lady’s passport that asks the main character of *Amerika - hidō no tairiku* to fill in her forms of immigration to the United States. In another scene of *Amerika*, John, a *nisei*², asks the protagonist to read him a poem received from his Japanese mother, as he himself cannot read Japanese. But the Japanese narrator is puzzled, for although the writing seems strangely familiar, every attempt at deciphering it is blocked:

「文字たちは、ひきあげられる網の中でのたうちまわる魚のしっぽの
ように跳ね乱れ、明らかにあったはずの漢字の記憶をなぞりながら、
倒れる前のサーファーのように波頭からずれ落ちて、分かりそうで分
からない新造文字へとくるくる変身しながら、行の終わりにはもうあ

¹ In Japan, the list of simplified *tōyō kanji* (kanji for general use) became the official standard in 1946. As well, starting with the 1950s, Mainland China standardized simplified characters in printing with the goal of promoting literacy. Although the two countries modified their writing systems independently, many characters remained the same, while others are still similar. (Höllmann, 2017)

² Japanese-American immigrant of second generation.

なたにはついていくことのできない海底に向かって沈んで行った。

[...]『あなたのお母さんは、存在しない漢字の世界まで飛んで行って
しまったらしい』という文章が思い浮かんだが口にしなかった。[...]
これはすごく特殊な書道の文字で、わたしには読めそうもないな。」
(45-6)¹

Tawada uses this obstruction of meaning in other texts, such as “Zungentanz” (Tawada, 2010b), where she transcribes Japanese sentences in Latin script, with no spaces between words and no translation, or in the theatre play “Till” (Tawada 2013), which combines Japanese and German to the surprise of readers or viewers². As kanji characters become marks of “Japaneness” to the Western reader, they have an aesthetic potential which Tawada exploits in the works she publishes in Germany. Nonetheless, both Japanese ideograms, as well as signs written in Latin script become empty spaces filled only with possibilities to the unfamiliar reader and their possible meanings are replaceable or deferrable for as long as the true meaning is not conveyed. As the Latin alphabet is a set of graphic symbols that only gains meaning when it is part of a significant morphological unit, namely of a morpheme, it lacks the visual power of Japanese ideograms. This fact, together with a certain flexibility on the German publisher’s side (konkursbuch Claudia Gehrke Verlag is the only publishing house Tawada collaborates with in Germany), can quite possibly explain Tawada’s interest in joining image and text in the graphic design of most of the books she has published in Germany up to now, as if wanting to compensate for an aesthetic shortcoming.

Tawada’s attention to graphic details in writing is striking, no matter the language she uses in each work. In her oeuvre, some of the letters of the Latin alphabet, as well as some of the Arabic numbers or even punctuation marks can hide meanings or become poetic elements to be deciphered. For example, in “Rabbi Löw und 27 Punkte” (“Rabbi Löw and 27 dots”) (Tawada, 2011e), she analyses the importance of punctuation marks as elements that constitute a text’s physiognomy and a tool for decrypting the graphic code in two of Paul Celan’s poems. We find a similar attention to calligraphy in Tawada’s short novel, *Moji ishoku* (“Transplanted letters”) (Tawada, 1999). The narrator of this story is an unexperienced translator, who isolates herself on an island with the goal of translating Anne Duden’s short story “Der wunde Punkt im Alphabet” (“The sore point in the alphabet”) (Duden, 1995), but the results of her endeavour are quite baffling: The translation transcribes every German word into Japanese, without changing German syntax, thus creating a very unfamiliar phrasing. The fragmentation that appears in the paragraphs rendering Anne Duden’s story into

¹ The characters bounced in disarray, like tails of fish wriggling inside a net being pulled up from the sea. While you followed the traces of kanji that should have been there clearly, like a surfer about to tumble the signs slipped from the crest of a wave and spinning they transformed into newly forged letters which were just vaguely intelligible. By the end of the line you could no longer keep up, and they sank to the bottom of the ocean. The phrase “It appears that your mother flew to a world of non-existent kanji” came to your mind, but you didn’t utter it. [...] “These letters are written in a very special calligraphy, which I am nowhere near able to read.” (Translation by the author of this paper)

² *Till* was interpreted by Lasenkan Theatre in Theater Werkstatt Hannover in 1998. <<https://www.theaterwerkstatt-hannover.de/archiv/till>> (last accessed March 15, 2020).

Japanese is furthermore aggravated by the use of commas to separate words, although no commas appear anywhere else in the main narrative. The modified syntax of the translation makes the language hardly intelligible, but the string of words thrown in disarray lets the reader guess the meaning hidden under the literal surface. Tawada contends that “[e]ine literarische Übersetzung muß obsessiv der Wörtlichkeit nachgehen, bis die Sprache der Übersetzung die konventionelle Ästhetik sprengt” [und] “von der Unübersetzbarkeit ausgehen und mit ihr umgehen, statt sie zu beseitigen.” (“A literary translation must follow literalness obsessively, until language disrupts conventional aesthetics” [and] “take untranslatability as its starting point and deal with it, instead of eradicating it.”) (Tawada, 1998: 35) The idea of pursuing literalness and the untranslatable when working with translation generates the storyline in Tawada’s *Moji ishoku*.

Letters of the Latin alphabet or numbers can also become poetic devices through their material shape, when Tawada explores the possible meanings hidden within. Their visual image opens the narrative of the short story “An der Spree” (Tawada, 2011a), which illustrates Europe as a space codified by letters and numbers. If the graphic representation of “0”, first recorded in India, appeared as a necessary “something” that represents “nothing”, Tawada interprets it as a symbol that marks “einen leeren Platz” (“an empty place”). Apparently, without placing one’s self inside this empty space, without becoming the “zero”, one cannot find any sense of orientation. What Tawada seems to suggest here is that we need to unload the space we occupy of any burden of selfness and cultural background and look outward, outside ourselves, with eyes that seize in a circular motion everything around us. It is a paradigm of consciousness similar to that of the second person narrator in the travelogue *Yōgisha no yakōressha*, who loses any sense of self-identity while on a trip through India. This “0”-space also becomes a point of reference on the map the narrator draws on a piece of paper: “[D]ie Null ist Indien. Der Ferne Osten ist genauso entfernt vom Punkt Null wie Europa. Die Null in der Mitte, links der Nahe Osten mit seinem Europa, rechts der Ferne Osten. Das ist ein symmetrisches Bild. Ich weiß jetzt, wo ich bin.” (“The zero is India. The Far East is just as far away from Point Zero as Europe. The zero in the middle, on the left the Near East with its Europe, on the right the Far East. It is a symmetrical picture. I now know where I am.”) (*ibid.* : 22) Point-Zero can thus be interpreted as a mindset, because it becomes the place that allows the narrator the necessary distance from both Japan and Germany, cultures she wants to return to in the position of the curious outsider, as it is the case in most of Tawada’s novels.

As for Tawada’s recurrent use of the letter “O”, which also appears several times on the first page of “An der Spree” in capital form, Hansjörg Bay recognizes it as a “poetic program”, indicating that Tawada’s interest lies primarily in the graphic form of “O”: “eine Form, die nichts bedeutet, aber durch die Leere, die sie umschließt, ein Aussetzen oder eine Abwesenheit aller Bedeutungen markiert.” (“a form, that does not mean anything, but marks through the emptiness that it encloses, a suspension or a lack of all meanings.”) (Bay, 2010 : 156) On the other side, “O” is an opening¹: the graphic spelling of toponyms that the narrator of “Im Bauch des Gotthards” (Tawada, 2011d) discovers as she exits the Gotthard tunnel all contain the vowel “O” twice, like the two

¹ Similar to the radical 門 (*mon*, gate), which Tawada discovers in several of Celan’s poems translated into Japanese and interprets as a sign of Celan’s translatability (“Übersetzbarkeit”). (See Tawada 2011c)

ends of the tunnel: Airolo, Lavorgo, Giornico etc. We should also note the resemblance that “O” bears to the character 口, meaning mouth, entrance (as well as way out/in, when inside the compounds 出口/入口), or hole, a kinship that heightens the apperception of “O” as way of access to something else, reachable only by way of language in visual representation. In Tawada’s works written characters invite and guide poetic imagination, untethered from their material function as embodied speech segments.

In Tawada’s oeuvre, books are at the same time visual art pieces and gateways to the world of fantasy, but this is mostly in the works published in Germany where she capitalizes on the possibilities of book design. It is quite possible that Tawada’s close relation to her German publisher allowed her to invest more in the visual features of the works she published in Germany, but I also believe that she felt the need to supplement to the Latin alphabet, otherwise inferior in character number and aesthetic potential. Irrespective of their being included in the books Tawada published in Japan or Germany, the visual codes (paratext, appearance of characters etc.) are accoutrements that make her printed works generate a contrasting visual experience that pre-figures the content of the written text.

Tawada’s attention to the aesthetic appearance of her printed works mirrors her interest in the semiotics of culture and language, with a particular focus on written signs as markers that mystify the cultural landscape, blocking or allowing the generation of meaning. For Tawada writing in itself has an aesthetic value for its materiality, similarly to the visual components that accompany the written text in many of her works. Likewise, the juxtaposition of the Japanese writing and Latin alphabet happens both on the surface of the text and inside it, as many of her essays and novels discuss visual aspects of the writing systems. Written characters signal allegiance to a certain writing culture and, by this, they encode meaning in a form that only allows literate insiders to have access to. With no knowledge of the language these characters transcribe, the viewer can at most interpret their shape, with no idea of the meanings hidden inside the text. Nonetheless, this obstruction of meaning becomes a poetic device that multiplies the possibilities of the written sign, obscured as a present absence, which is both emptied and liberated of meaning.

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***STUDYING ENGLISH. FREQUENT ERRORS
MADE BY ROMANIAN STUDENTS II: MORPHOLOGY,
SPELLING, PUNCTUATION***

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Abstract: Students learning English as a foreign language often make errors under the influence of their mother tongue. Romanian students are no exception. The former part of this analysis (issued in 2018) deals with the most common mistakes occurring during the study of English on the following levels: syntax, stylistics, lexic, phraseology. In the latter part of this research we focus on morphology, spelling and punctuation.

Keywords: assessment; sources of errors; types of errors; analysis; correcting errors.

From the perspective of analysing frequent errors made by students learning English, the teacher must always stand somewhere in between two positions: the former – of being a *guardian angel* and, consequently, to permanently interfere with the students' discourse; the latter – of letting go and releasing the students' speech, no matter how linguistically accurate this might be.

Such swinging position of the teacher has been fluctuant along the years – from mistake hunting in the behaviourism of the 50-ies (XX-th century) up to a total freedom in speech – despite of clear and obvious errors made during the process. However, the latter position arose quite instantly new questions and challenges: to what extent of accuracy a teacher should allow a discourse flow without pointing out errors and rectifying mistakes? And this – considering that a lesson of English takes places before students hearing and listening to a discourse, fluently – maybe, but with serious problems of correctness.

At the same time, a new issue arises when debating over the assessment: how would a teacher evaluate and mark a student, so that the obtained grade should rate and justify the students' knowledge? According to the discourse fluency or according to its linguistic accuracy? In other words, the grade (mark) will be granted for fluency or for correctness? Which of the two criteria is more ethical?

In answering such questions we refer again to strategies of studying English (see: Dan Mihai Barbulescu and Ioana Mariela Barbulescu: *A Long-Term Strategy in Teaching English as a Foreign Language*, 2012, pp 432-438). In this paper we structure the English language teaching-learning process on three stages: Acquisition, Organization, Operational. According to this strategy, the Operational Stage is the most favourable ground for putting together a sound linguistic discourse; we consider therefore that this is the best moment to apply the criterion of fluency and to place accuracy on a background place. But not earlier.

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In any case, both fluency and accuracy are two elements which are to be fixed by a solid practice. It is just that the former is based on the student's individual and personality features, while the latter depends also (but not only!) on the teacher.

Why does this happen? Well, there are two steps in a foreign language teaching-learning process, both equally important: *One*: transmission of information from the teacher to the student. This step depends on both engaged parties: on the teacher (the capability and competence of communicating essential information) and on the student as well (capacity of receiving information from the teacher). Such activity itself is to be found during all and any foreign language lessons. *Two*: fixation/consolidation of skills acquired in the previous step. This process depends on the student solely – at least for the reason that no one could study but for himself/herself.

Skills are included in this fixation step – consequently, fluency also – and skills are to be acquired only by a sound practice – you may ask about it any sportsperson or instrument player.

Frequent errors made by Romanian students learning English as a foreign language may be analysed from different perspectives. Regarded from the view point of practical consequences, the ascertained errors lead to either inappropriate, or unsuitable, or even totally wrong translations.

Nevertheless as seen from the perspective of tutorship, as teachers of English, one of our constant care is to attentively watch upon a correct language usage, so that students could acquire perfectly good English, or proper English, or standard English – be it British English, General American or General Australian.

When collecting information on inaccuracy, well-defined groups of errors are polarized, classified according to common features. Without setting a hierarchy we can identify the various levels where such errors occur: syntax, stylistics, lexic, phraseology, morphology, spelling and punctuation.

In this sequel study we will focus again on the errors of competence made by students in non-philological faculties and caused by two main reasons: the interference with the students' native language (in our case, Romanian language) and the target language (English) (some scholars consider also a third reason: the second or third foreign language the students simultaneously learn), but this time it is the morphological level we have in our attention. We also analyse spelling and punctuation aspects.

The morphological level

At the morphological level, errors follow somehow the part of speech classification. And, since in English the most important part of speech is the verb, a significant percentage is represented by the verbal area.

One of the difficulties encountered by Romanian learners studying English in non-philological faculties is that they can hardly make a difference between simple (non-progressive) and continuous (progressive) verbal aspects, and this happens because there is no such grammatical category in their mother tongue.

A statement in Romanian such as: *El lucrează*. requires a larger context, so that anyone could be able to correctly translate it into English: *El lucrează* (= este angajat). → *He works* (= he has a regular job) and *El lucrează acum* (nu îl deranja!). → *He is working now; do not disturb him.*

Another situation that is hardly perceived by Romanian native speakers is represented by Present Perfect Tense because, as it is known, this verbal tense has several temporal values in English.

And indeed, if we can speak about a corresponding situation of non-perfect verbal tenses both in English and in Romanian (since there is a *Past Tense* in English and *timpul trecut* in Romanian, a *Present Tense* in English and *timpul prezent* in Romanian, and a *Future Tense* in English and *timpul viitor* in Romanian), well, for the English *Present Perfect Tense* there are no less than three corresponding tenses in Romanian: past, present and future. Puzzling and confusing, isn't it?

① *He has studied English.* (He can speak English now.) = A învățat engleza.

② *He has studied English since September.* = Invată engleza din septembrie.

③ *After he has studied English he will get a better job.* = După ce va învăță engleza va căpăta o slujbă mai bună.

On the other hand, for someone off the English verbal tense system, it is quite beyond comprehension that the Romanian present tense may be rendered into English, according to the context, using three different English tenses. Hence – a long list of errors occurring when translating from a language into the other. The string of statements has become classic: ① *Ia te uită! Plouă.* ② *Plouă adesea toamna.* ③ *Plouă de azi dimineață.*

and it is often mistakenly translated in all three examples: **It rains.* But one of the traductology fundamental principle says: *the context determines the text.*

In this situation we find it suitable to mention that, during our current English lessons, we use a table where these three cases are displayed; so we can explain the contextual dissimilarities that lead to the three different translations in English of the Romanian homonymic words:

The Romanian text	What does the verb indicate?	The corresponding English tense	The English text
① <i>Ia te uită! Plouă.</i>	An action in progress in the moment of speaking	Present Continuous	<i>It is raining.</i>
② <i>Plouă adesea toamna.</i>	A general, repeated action	Present Simple	<i>It often rains in autumn.</i>
③ <i>Plouă de azi dimineață.</i>	An action started in the past, still in progress at the moment of speaking and, possibly, going on after the moment of speaking	Present Perfect Simple Continuous	<i>It has been raining since morning.</i>

Displaying this synthetical issue illustrated with examples and explained by verbal tenses definitions has had good results for the understanding of linguistic phenomena; corroborated with a long practice, it has based the correct English tense forms rendered from Romanian.

Continuing our study, the next issue is Question Tags – that represent communication forms used quite often in English. For this reason, many school books introduce such structures right from the very first lessons. In many other languages, question tags are formed by simply adding a linguistic unit at the end of the sentence, irrespective of the subject, tense and auxiliary verb:

Romanian: *El e student, nu ? / nu-i aşa ?*

French: *C'est un étudiant, n'est-ce pas?*

German: *Er ist ein Student, oder? / nicht wahr? /gell?*

Still in English, there are three rules that take into account exactly the three items shown above:

① The subject should show up at both ends of the statement:

He *is a student, isn't *he* ?*

② The auxiliary verb does not change, and neither do the verbal mode, tense, person or number:

He is a student, isn't he ?

③ If, in the former part of the sentence, the verb is in the negative form – than in the latter it must be in the affirmative form:

He is(+) a student, isn't t(-) he ?

And the other way around:

He is not(-) a student, isn't he ?

Students' unawareness of the three question tag rules, corroborated with the Romanian tag rules often have as results such errors as: **He left, isn't it ?* or simpler forms: *She will come, right ?* In addition, sometimes students forget that question tags are false questions, since there is no switch between subject and auxiliary verb. And yet, very often one can read: * *Is he a student, isn't he ?*

Another special chapter of English grammar that confuses the Romanian learners is the Modal verb group. The matter, still under the logo *erudit etiam inter se disputant*, comprises general and specific features of modal verbs, as settled by various linguists; one of such features is that modal verbs have no long infinitive, and neither do they ever combine with a long infinitive form. And again, under the influence of the Romanian language, we may come across such mistaken statements as: **He can to go.*

As to the *Causative "Have"* structure, which has no Romanian corresponding configuration, this again is a difficult issue for our students – the same situation with the *Present Perfect Tense* or the verbal opposition simple/ continuous. For this reason, it is no rare situation when we can read: **I fixed my car at the service.* actually meaning *I had my car serviced.*

The vast chapter of nominal parts of speech is also a land for errors caused by differences between English and Romanian.

The article is a part of speech which is present in both languages: there is a definite article, as well as an indefinite article. But, in many cases, the rules of usage differ. One of the most frequent errors occurs in the following case: if the translation is from Romanian into English: *El este doctor.* → **He is Ø doctor.* If the translation is from English into Romanian: *He is a doctor.* → **El e un doctor.* But this is not the only case of errors: the *Zero Article* in English is quite puzzling for Romanian students,

especially for the reason that, in many cases, the corresponding Romanian article is the definite one. *Ø Children* always *Ø children*. → *Copii* – tot copii. or: *Ø Water* boils at *100° C.* → *Apa* fierbe la *100° C.*

The adjective is, in both languages, the part of speech to describe or qualify a noun. In Romanian the adjective concords in genre, number and case, and, not taking into consideration some stylistic exceptions, it comes after the noun: *un băiat înalt* while in English, the adjective is in anteposition. As a consequence of such difference (interference with the students' native language), a common error is the adjective postposition in English: **a girl beautiful*, **a car new* etc.

But most adjectival errors occur when the comparison of short adjectives is used. Whenever explaining the adjective, many Romanian teachers of English use the following strategy: firstly – common elements in the two languages are mentioned (therefore long adjectives are introduced because they form the comparative of superiority with the adverb *more* and the superlative of superiority with the adverb *most*). This strategy forms a pattern of correspondence in the students' mind: *frumos* = *beautiful*, *mai frumos* = *more beautiful*, *cel mai frumos* = *the most beautiful*.

But, as already known, in English, short adjectives form the comparative degree of superiority adding the *-er* ending (and not with the adverb *more*), and the superlative degree of superiority – adding the *-est* ending (and not with the adverb *most*); since this rule does not exist in Romanian, such errors often occur: **She is the most nice person*. or: **My house is more big than your house*.

Pronominal adjectives are also a good area for error occurrence as a result of the differences between the two languages. This happens because, in English, the possessive pronominal adjectives are often present while in Romanian they are absent: *Dl. Palmer este în grădină și citește ziarul*. → *Mr. Palmer is in the garden reading his newspaper*. Due to the fact that in this statement the possessive pronominal adjective *his* has no correspondence in Romanian¹, students do not feel the urge of using it.

As in Romanian, prepositions have a very important role in English, providing completion for time and space circumstances in the context. Nevertheless, the usage of prepositions differs in English and in Romanian. The difficulty lies not only in the fact that for the same circumstances different prepositions are used in the two languages (see for instance: *în acest moment* → *at this moment*), but also because variants of contemporary English – say, for instance British English versus American English – provide different solutions.

Traditionally we say that in this part of Central Europe, we study and speak a sort of Mid-Atlantic English. At the same time, linguists admit the existence of several *Englishes*: British, American, Canadian, Australian, New-Zealand, Caribbean, Arabian, Indian, Pakistani, South African. The present Mondovision system altogether with the internet web have a significant contribution to convergence of the *Englishes* – as long as, say, a Canadian English speaker can watch or listen to a live broadcast from Durban, in South African English.

Still, there are clear situations when teachers cannot choose but to point out such differences between, for instance, British English and American English.

A standard example is as follows:

¹ A statement in Romanian like: *Dl. Palmer este în grădină citindu-și ziarul*. where *-și* is not an indirect object, but it shows possession (*ziarul său* = *his newspaper*), may be closer to the English version; both such wordings are encountered in Romanian.

British English**American English**in the streeton the streetin the skyon the skyin the fieldon the field

If there is a text containing the syntagma *pe stradă, pe cer, pe câmp* to translate from Romanian into English, the student will claim that in American English the preposition *on* is correct.

And yet, there are cases when differences between *Englishes* have nothing in common with the Romanian variants: in weekend → at the weekend (BE) and on the weekend (AE).

There are indeed matches such as: in grădină → in the garden, in (luna) iulie → in July; at the same time there are many un-matches that confuse students:

at dawn = in zorito go for a walk = a merge la plimbareat last = in sfîrșitto go on a trip = a merge în excursiein the evening = Ø seara

etc...

Another error is based on the fact that the Romanian language uses the same case forms to show both direction and location, answering to the questions *unde?* (= where?) and *încotro?* (= where to?) with the same grammatical form, unlike other languages.

Thus, we teach our students that in English preposition *to* shows direction, while *at* points to a location; in other words: *to* always works with verbs of movement (*to go to school*), whereas *at* is used with verbs of position (*to be at school*).

And still, there are cases in English when these two prepositions *to* and *at* may be used with the same verb of movement, of course with a different meaning: *Throw the ball at me!* and: *Throw the ball to me!*

Temporal prepositions also provide sometimes erroneous translations – particularly in cases where British English and American English differ:

The Romanian text**Bristish English****American English**

De acum înapoi ne vedem luna. (= în fiecare zi de luni)

From now on we will meet on Monday. (BE)

From now on we will meet Ø every Monday. (AE)

The most frequent error is: **From now on we will meet Mondays.*

Another error is originated in verbs and / or adjectives conjoined with certain prepositions in English, other than the ones in Romanian. Under the influence of the Romanian language, there is a tendency of mistakenly translating into English, following the Romanian pattern:

The Romanian text	Not correct	Correct
<i>E mândru să aibă aşa oaspeţi !</i>	* <i>He is proud to have such guests!</i>	<i>He is proud of having such guests!</i>
<i>El se plâng că ea întârzie.</i>	* <i>He complains that she is late.</i>	<i>He complains of her being late.</i>
<i>El s-a supărat că ea a întârziat.</i>	* <i>He got angry that she was late.</i>	<i>He got angry at her being late.</i>

It is also worth mentioning the spelling (orthographical) system and the punctuation marks – again with differences in the two languages.

As it is known, in English there is no such mark as dialogue dash; dialogue is marked with quotation marks; nevertheless the dialogue dash is very often present in English texts to mark the dialogue. Besides, comma may show up in English in such situations where its presence is not allowed in Romanian.

At the same time, there are differences between words spelled with capital letters: in English, names of languages and peoples, days of the week, months of the year. But not in Romanian. Consequently, a widespread error is not to use capital letters in such circumstances, in English.

Conclusions

Discussing over linguistic mistakes, researchers of the late XX-th century settled two groups of errors: of performance and of competence (see Corder, S. P., 1971), and also found causes of both groups: errors of performance are motivated by lapse of memory (considered as unsystematic and not very serious), while errors of competence are persistent and systematic.

For practical purposes, things should be analysed from two perspectives: case (A) – when translating a text from Romanian into English; case (B) – when translating a text from English into Romanian.

As already stated in the former study (see: Dan Mihai Barbulescu and Ioana Mariela Barbulescu: *Studying English. Frequent Errors Made by Romanian Students (Part 1: Syntactical, Lexical, Stylistical and Phraseological Levels*, 2018, pp. 249-256), we can ascertain that for point (A), the main reason for errors to occur in English is calquing (loanwording), while for point (B), the main reason for errors to occur in Romanian is the incidence of Anglicisms – see Dan Mihai Barbulescu and Ioana Mariela Barbulescu: *Again about Anglicisms in the Romanian Language. Case Study*, 2017, pp 23-29.

Taking into account that Romanian students at the non-philological faculties studying English will read and write articles in English, teachers should draw their attention upon the differences between a scientific discourse and a general text, upon the distinct features of the technical and scientific style in opposition with the colloquial or formal one (for example – the plural form of nouns originating in Latin in Greek).

Analysing errors in English resulted from the influence of the Romanian language (as a native language) always helps in tutorship process because teachers will

be ready to point out different aspects and detail certain problems. In this way, teachers will be prepared for students' questions.

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ORTHOGRAPHY AND PUNCTUATION - A NECESSITY AND A CHALLENGE OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

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Abstract: Formation and development of those skills and competencies necessary to express pupils' thoughts and feelings in a correct, logical and concise way, awareness of the process of communication and cultivation of a clear and correct speech and writing are permanent concerns of the educators. In assessing the culture of a person, the way he writes and pronounces correctly is a basic index, as writing (and speaking) in accordance with the rules of a language is no longer characteristic only to philologists or people with higher education, but to any person. Thus, the problem of correct writing and properly use of punctuation marks appears since the early years of school, at primary level. The existence of orthographic and punctuation rules is an important factor in the stability of the literary language that schoolchildren assimilate, but the difficulty lies precisely in the decoding of these norms at the level of the children's language. It becomes, consequently, the task of teachers to find methods and approaches that are accessible to primary school pupils and lead to diminishing and even excluding the amount of mistakes school faces with at the moment. The teaching of the Romanian language goes through a difficult way, but this action must be organized, systematically and methodically, on each of the discipline's levels. The present paper wishes to highlight the difficulties that appear in spelling and punctuation in primary school education, as for example those perceived by teachers and, in particular, by pupils, and to offer the remedies teachers chose to use.

Keywords: orthography; punctuation; primary school education.

1. Introduction

L'existence de règles d'orthographe et de ponctuation représente un élément de la stabilité du langage littéraire, mais leur simple présentation dans les ouvrages spécialisés ne donnera pas les résultats attendus et absolument nécessaires, tant qu'ils ne sont pas parfaitement maîtrisés et appliqués par la plupart des locuteurs du roumain. La quantité de fautes est parfois très élevée et leur source doit d'abord être recherchée dans la première forme correcte d'orthographe. Enseigner la langue roumaine qui commence au niveau primaire suppose un long chemin et, tout à fait, favorable au développement de la communication verbale et écrite des élèves. Cette action ne peut pas être sporadique, mais elle doit être assurée en permanence dans toutes les activités des élèves, organisées systématiquement et méthodiquement, pour chaque niveau de la discipline.

Écrire correctement signifie écrire selon des règles orthographiques bien définies: « L'orthographe est le résultat des opérations d'écriture et ne prend en compte que ce qui est considéré comme correct dans un système d'écriture donné. À travers elle, on exprime, à la fois, l'expression phonétique et phonologique de certains faits, ainsi que la manière d'existence graphique d'autres qui ne sont pas contingents à la réalisation sonore. » (Beldescu, G., 1973: 157)

« L'orthographe ne se réfère qu'à l'écriture de divers mots, en partie, et à l'écriture des plus petits groupes de mots qui font un corps commun dans le discours, comme: *il t'a demandé, je l'ai perdu, qu'est-ce qui t'arrive?*; tandis que l'écriture de

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diverses combinaisons de mots auxquelles il est nécessaire de marquer par écrit les rapports exprimés oralement par des pauses et par l'intonation signifie la ponctuation. » (Avram, M., 1977: 151-152)

L'orthographe est le domaine de la science et de la pratique linguistiques, qui vise à écrire correctement les mots d'une langue. Elle en étroite liaison avec un autre compartiment de la linguistique - *l'orthoépnie*, qui étudie la prononciation correcte et littérale des mots. Le rapport de l'orthographe et de la ponctuation est évident, tandis que la ponctuation est « un système conventionnel de signes avec le rôle de marquer les pauses, l'intonation, l'interruption du discours. » (Beldescu, G., 1984:49) Tant l'orthographe, que l'orthoépnie et la ponctuation sont basées sur des règles ou des normes contraignantes, qui ne sont pas absolument rigides et c'est pourquoi, pour de diverses raisons, elles permettent également des écarts ou des exceptions qui posent de réels problèmes aux apprenants.

2. Le rôle de l'orthographe et de la ponctuation dans l'enseignement primaire

Le processus de formation des compétences orthographique, orthoépnie et de ponctuation commence avec une fois avec l'acquisition des connaissances du processus de lecture-écriture. Ainsi, la lecture correcte des textes de l'abécédaire contribue à la formation d'une prononciation correcte (orthoépnie), et ceci, implicitement, influence l'écriture correcte. Les deux concepts, correct et erroné s'opposent l'un l'autre, jusqu'à s'exclure: «Ce qui est correct n'est pas erroné et ce qui erroné, ne peut pas être correcte, donc en parlant de correctitude, nous considérons les domaines les plus divers, la conformité avec certaines règles, le respect des règles du domaine donné. » (Romalo, V., 1972: 85)

La formation des compétences d'orthographe et de ponctuation est l'une des principales tâches de l'étude de la langue roumaine dans sa première étape - celle de l'enseignement primaire; son accomplissement qui doit être poursuivi avec persévérance et détermination tout au long des années scolaires. Toutefois, les instituteurs sont les premiers responsables du premier niveau de formation de ces compétences et doivent assurer l'organisation et le développement dans les meilleures conditions du processus d'enseigner et d'apprendre correctement l'orthographe, un processus qui implique la transformation des éléments de langage pratique dans des actes de langage conscient. Les enfants doivent atteindre une étape d'automatisation de leurs activités langagières. Cela suppose que l'enseignant doit aider les élèves à acquérir consciemment et à long terme des concepts qui sous-tendent théoriquement ces compétences, gérer et contrôler l'exercice d'application, en pratique, des normes d'orthographe jusqu'à automatiser les règles de celle-ci. « Il est plus difficile d'amener l'énoncé individuel au niveau de celui littéraire, que de conformer directement l'écriture des élèves avec les normes orthoépiques. » (Iordan, I., - ediția a II-a, 1947: 210)

Généralement, les notions d'orthographe sont enseignées tout comme les notions de construction de la communication, en utilisant à la fois des voies inductives et déductives. Dans le processus de former les compétences d'orthographe, les élèves analysent, comparent, synthétisent, résument et généralisent les activités qui ont une signification particulière dans le développement de leur pensée logique. L'étude de l'orthographe est indissociablement liée au développement de l'expression écrite des enfants. Les élèves doivent avancer, à ce niveau, dans le mécanisme de la formation des mots et de leur utilisation correcte, sans utiliser une terminologie spécifique, par un processus de découverte progressive.

Dans l'enseignement primaire on apprend les règles pour l'utilisation du point, du point d'interrogation et du point d'exclamation, de la ligne de dialogue, des deux points, de la virgule (au cas des énumérations ou du vocatif) des guillemets et des ellipses. En Ière et en IIème, les règles de ponctuation sont incomplètes. Les exercices sont faits empiriquement et selon chaque situation, en particulier, parce que leur explication linguistique dépasse les connaissances grammaticales des élèves. La consolidation de ces notions se fera au fil du temps, tout en variant la typologie des exercices dans des classes spéciales, dédiées à ce but, mais, également, dans toutes les circonstances dans lesquelles les élèves sont obligés à s'exprimer par écrit. A ce niveau, les règles orthographiques et de ponctuation sont basées sur de multiples exemples, sur des solutions situationnelles, sans explications théoriques. **L'exercice** devient donc la forme de base pour créer les bonnes compétences de communication et d'écriture correctes, extrêmement accessible. On peut aussi parler de la **lecture orthographique** qui suppose à découvrir au niveau du texte littéraire le moyen d'écrire des mots, du placement du texte dans la page, de l'utilisation des paragraphes. Les actions de **transcrire** et de **copier** contribuent aussi à former la compétence d'écrire correctement.

L'assimilation correcte de ces notions, qui suivra en IIIème et IVème année, dépendra d'un travail soutenu et logique pour l'écriture correcte développée en IIème année, par conséquent, l'enseignement de l'orthographe doit être considéré avec sérieux et responsabilité. Après de nombreuses et répétées explications, dictées, copies, exemples, questions réciproques, les élèves se créent un réflexe dans la découverte des sons et des graphies correctes pendant le travail qui suppose à écrire, d'après la dictée. Le problème de la graphie correcte est, avant tout, une question de prononciation correcte et de formation des compétences de perception des unités composant le message, puis d'écrire. L'amélioration et la stabilisation de la prononciation proviennent de l'expérience d'une action pareille répétée. Ceci est appliqué depuis la Ière année d'école, lorsque les enfants font d'abord des exercices de reconnaître le son dans le mot, puis passent à apprendre comment l'écrire. En apprenant à écrire, leurs connaissances augmentent progressivement, l'enfant acquiert la conscience de la correspondance générale entre les lettres et les sons dans notre système orthographique.

Il y a aussi des exceptions qui lui sont communiquées instinctivement à ce moment, mais par l'intermédiaire des règles, plus tard (d'après Molan, Vasile, 2014: 188):

- des sons qui sont formés par des groupes de lettres (*ce, ci, ge, gi, che, chi, ghe, ghi*);
- écrire avec ou sans tiret (*nu îl/ nu-l, nu am/ n-am, să îl/ să-l, să îmi/ să-mi*);
- des mots qui avant *p* et *b* notent obligatoirement *m*;
- des sons écrits en deux lettres différentes *î* ou *â*;
- des mots contenant des consonnes doubles que les élèves découvrent à l'aide de l'enseignant, celui-ci explique le mécanisme de formation (*a înnói – renouveler ; a înnoda – noyer; înnorat-nuageux*);
- des mots contenant des voyelles doubles, les élèves découvrant que lorsqu'ils séparent les mots en syllabes, les deux voyelles identiques vont à des syllabes différentes (*al-co-ol, fi-in-fă*);
- des mots écrits au pluriel avec deux ou trois voyelles *i*. Par exemple, *copil* pour lequel l'enseignant peut utiliser le processus de séparation en syllabes, quand le mot a deux syllabes on l'écrit avec deux *i* (*copii*) et quand il en a trois syllabes, avec trois *i* (*copiii*);

- les diphongues et les triptongues qui apparaissent à partir de la période de l'alphabet, mais ces exercices peuvent continuer dans les années suivantes pour fixer cet aspect linguistique. En ce qui concerne leur prononciation, il faut rappeler aux élèves que cela doit se faire dans la même syllabe (des exercices de prononciation, séparer les mots en syllabes);

- des mots qui présentent des différences entre l'orthoépie et l'orthographe (*eu, el, ea, ei, ele, eram, este, ești* ...). Prononcer avec *e*, au lieu de la diphongue *ie*, implique une fixation erronée de cet aspect de l'orthoépie et de l'orthographe. Si, lorsqu'ils apprennent à écrire, les enfants n'apprennent pas la bonne prononciation qui, par rapport à la lettre est «exceptionnelle», ils ne vont pas la considérer comme une prononciation normale et, dans de différentes situations, ils vont essayer de l'éviter, ayant la conviction qu'il s'agit d'une prononciation "incorrecte";

- la différence entre l'orthographe des mots contenant la lettre *x* et leur prononciation (*examen* - examen, *exercițiu* - exercice, *text* - texte, *expoziție* - exposition)

- comprendre la logique de l'utilisation du tiret dans les exercices de substitution. On commence du sens que les mots transmettent, basé sur la compréhension du message, par exemple: Bunica *mi-a* povestit întâmplarea./ Ma grand-mère *m'a* raconté l'histoire (à qui a-t-elle raconté? *mie-îmi-mi / à moi*). Dans ce cas, on prononce le pronom personnel *mi*, forme non accentuée, dans la même syllabe avec le verbe auxiliaire *a*, étant reliés par un tiret. Le remplacement a été fait en remplaçant une personne par une autre, ou le singulier avec le pluriel ;

- la confusion le plus fréquemment rencontrée dans la graphie des mots *codri, albaștri, negri*, pour lesquels on maintient la même prononciation pour la forme articulée et la forme non-articulée. Ni le nombre de syllabes ne représente un support pour la reconnaissance des formes articulées, parce que le *i* du mot *codri* est syllabique: *codri* = *co-dri* (deux syllabes) *codrii* = *co-drii* (deux syllabes). Dans ce cas aussi, nous pouvons adopter la même règle que dans l'exemple ci-dessus: *acești codri – codrii aceștia, pantaloni albaștri – albaștrii pantaloni*.

- écrire les noms propres composés, soit avec des termes fusionés (*Câmpulung*), soit avec des termes séparés par un tiret, des noms propres dépourvus d'unité morphologique (*Cluj-Napoca, Câmpia Turzii, Ocna-Mureș, Ștefan-Voda*) ou des noms propres composés de mots entiers écrits avec des termes séparés par le blanc (*Valea Oltului, Marea Neagră, Delta Dunării*). L'orthographe de ces noms, même pour les élèves de la IIIème et de la IVème année, ne peut pas être faite à partir d'un système de connaissances théoriques accumulées jusqu'à ce moment, car celles-ci dépassent leur niveau de compréhension. Tout ce qui peut être fait dans ce cas est d'utiliser beaucoup d'exemples, dans lesquels on introduit les catégories de noms mentionnés, et des exercices d'identification à partir d'un texte donné.

3. La relation entre la morphologie et l'orthographe

La relation étroite et réelle entre l'orthographe et la morphologie, la multitude et l'importance des implications morphologiques dans l'orthographe ont conduit à la croyance que la norme orthographique est une concrétisation des abstractions grammaticales, selon lesquelles elle doit être traitée et fixée. L'orthographe est subordonnée à la morphologie chaque fois que ses règles fixent la graphie d'un fait de nature morphologique (écrire et prononcer avec *ă, ea, î* après *s, j*). La norme orthographique a pour objet une situation du langage écrit qu'il réglemente et qu'il impose aux locuteurs. Par exemple, on réalise l'homogénéité de la structure de certains

dérivés avec des suffixes et leur représentation sous forme écrite: *cluj / ean, ieș / ean, munt / ean*; la régulation de la graphie des mots composés en fonction du degré de soudure morphologique: *bunăvoiței*, avec unité morphologique et *relei-voințe*, sans en avoir cette unité. (după Beldescu, G., 1984 : 182-188)

4. La relation entre syntaxe et ponctuation

Dans le roumain, il existe des relations logiques établies entre les mots, les groupes syntaxiques et les phrases qui forment des unités distinctes du point de vue du sens. Pour exprimer ces relations, on utilise sauf les processus grammaticaux et les pauses, l'intonation ou l'interruption de la communication. La nécessité d'exprimer les idées par écrit de manière à les rendre plus faciles et plus compréhensibles a suscité un intérêt croissant pour établir des règles concernant l'utilisation des signes de ponctuation. Un signe de ponctuation oublié ou mis d'une manière aléatoire change radicalement le sens de l'énoncé.

L'acquisition de la ponctuation, dans les classes primaires, nécessite une explication empirique ou situationnelle. Au début, la ponctuation est enseignée une fois avec la lecture correcte et expressive pendant les dictées, les expressions orales et écrites, car en utilisant la diction et l'intonation appropriées, les élèves comprennent quels signes de ponctuation on devrait utiliser. Par exemple: en Ière année, les premières marques de ponctuation apparaissent une fois avec l'enseignement des sons et des lettres: *le point, la virgule, le tiret, le point d'interrogation et le point d'exclamation*. En IIIème et IVème classe, on reprend les informations sur l'orthographe et la ponctuation, pour être consolidées et enrichies, tandis que les règles d'orthographe précédemment étudiées sont présentées à un niveau supérieur, tout en complétant et en élargissant leur champ d'application.

Il existe une relation subordonnée entre la syntaxe et la ponctuation. Par conséquent, au moins au début de l'apprentissage de la lecture et de l'écriture, « il est nécessaire d'aborder les éléments de ponctuation et d'orthographe présents dans le texte ». (Neacșu, Ioan, 2008: 70-71) Après avoir observé les différents aspects de la ponctuation, les élèves sont mis à les utiliser dans leurs propres structures, justement pour les rendre plus conscients. En ce sens, nous pouvons dire que nous utilisons **le point** dans les situations suivantes: après un énoncé, indiquant la fin de la communication (**Exemple:** *Tu ai fost în concediu la mare.*) ou après des mots isolés équivalents à une proposition indépendante (**Exemple:-** *Cine a cîtit această carte?/- Eu.*)

Le point d'interrogation marque l'intonation des propositions ou des phrases d'interrogation directe : **Exemple:-** *Cât costă această carte?* (proposition interrogative) / - *Ai știut că el a plecat?* (phrase interrogative)

Le point d'exclamation marque graphiquement l'intonation des propositions ou des phrases exclamatives ou impératives (**Exemple:** - *Ce frumos cântă privighetoarea!* / - *Cât de frumos ai știut să răspunzi la întrebare!*) ou les noms en vocatif placés à la fin des propositions impératives ou exclamatoires (**Exemple:** *Ce frumos ai cântat, Roxana! / Vino repede, băiatule!*). De même, on l'utilise après la répétition d'une interjection et après chaque membre de la répétition qui est indépendant, c'est-à-dire qu'après l'avoir prononcé, on fait une petite pause (**Exemple:** *Of! Of! Ce grea e bâtrânețea! / U! A! Pi! Bre! Ce scandal!*) et après la répétition d'une interjection et la formation d'une seule unité (le point d'exclamation est mis après la dernière interjection, et il y a une virgule ou un trait d'union entre eux): **Exemple:** *Hei, hei! Nu știți nimic despre el?*

La virgule délimite graphiquement certaines propositions, à l'intérieur de la phrase et les parties d'une proposition, à l'intérieur de la proposition. Elle concrétise le moyen dans lequel les phrases ou les phrases se séparent dans leurs éléments constitutifs, en fonction des relations syntaxiques établies auparavant. Elle est mise entre:

- des catégories grammaticales similaires lorsqu'elles ne sont pas liées par les conjonctions *și* ou *sau*. **Exemple:** *Copilul, bunicul, cățelul, pisica au intrat repede în casă.* (sujet multiple) / *Camera înaltă, luminoasă, inundată de lumină împărea un vis.* (attribut multiple)
- plusieurs noms prédictifs avec ou sans déterminant. **Exemple:** *Această casă este înaltă, frumosă, nouă.*
- apposition simple ou développée et le reste de la proposition. **Exemple:** *Mircea, fiul nostru cel cuminte, a sosit vesel acasă.*

Le point-virgule (;) marque une pause supérieure à la virgule, mais plus petite que le point et divise deux propositions ou phrases indépendantes.

Exemple: *Avea poftă să mănânce o legătură de lăptuci; dormind visase că a înflorit grădina de zarzavat ca în anii cei buni.* (Fănuș Neagu - *Dincolo de nisipuri*)

Deux points (:) marquent un discours direct ou une énumération et indiquent une courte pause pendant le discours.

Exemple: *Profesorul spuse mulțumit: - Ai răspuns corect!*

Copilul a așezat pe bancă tot ce avea în ghiozdan: cărți caiete, penarul, cutia de culori și un măr.

Le respect de ces règles et d'autres ainsi que l'utilisation de signes de ponctuation, conduiront à exprimer en écrit des idées claires et pleinement compréhensibles.

5. Les causes des erreurs d'orthographe et de ponctuation

Les fautes d'orthographe représentent du point de vue pédagogique une déviation de la forme correcte, un comportement contre-accusé impliquant une appréciation négative, c'est-à-dire un fait fortement imprégné par des impératifs moraux. Du point de vue linguistique, la faute d'orthographe acquiert des significations différentes selon ses implications au niveau du système fonctionnel, orthoépique ou orthographique. Une faute devient très grave à partir du moment où elle interfère avec la communication, dérange le message, le rend ambigu ou annule sa capacité de communiquer toute information.

Les élèves se trompent pour de différentes raisons que nous ne pouvons pas toujours déterminer. L'exercice s'est avéré être la clé du succès dans ce domaine. Si l'élève écrit de plus en plus, il écrit de mieux en mieux. On sait que les élèves entrent en 1ère classe avec un vocabulaire médiocre, avec des difficultés à prononcer des sons ou des imprécisions dans la connaissance des significations authentiques des mots. Cela reflète le faible développement des opérations intellectuelles et de l'appareil verbo-moteur qui assure la reproduction correcte et la prononciation des sons et des mots selon les règles orthoépiques de la langue maternelle. Eliminer ces lacunes est l'une des tâches permanentes pour l'enseignant et nécessite de nombreux exercices. Il ne s'agit pas des exercices quelconques, mais de ceux qui sont destinés à attirer l'enfant vers la vie scolaire, tout en éveillant son intérêt pour le savoir. Mémoriser, chanter, dire des devinettes, des histoires, des contes de fées, les événements dans la vie des animaux ou des enfants sont la source la plus appropriée.

Parallèlement à ces causes, cependant, des difficultés surgissent, indépendamment de la volonté de l'enseignant, causée par les limites intellectuelles de

chaque élève. Par conséquent, la connaissance des *causes* générales des fautes d'orthographe ne nous dispense pas de l'obligation de connaître chacun des enfants avec lesquels nous travaillons. Il y a des élèves qui peuvent facilement gérer la graphie correcte et surtout l'orthographe, mais il y a aussi d'autres qui s'y débrouillent difficilement ou plus difficilement. La qualité et les résultats de l'orientation et du soutien de l'enseignant dépendent de sa compétence didactique dans le choix des méthodes et des procédures pour s'assurer que toute personne qui va à l'école est correctement formée.

Certaines causes peuvent être de nature méthodique parce qu'il y a encore l'habitude d'insister sur le côté théorique, sur une mémorisation mécanique des règles d'orthographe, au détriment des exercices explicatifs et d'une formation des compétences pratiques. Parmi ces autres causes, nous mentionnons:

- a) Ignorer les leçons spéciales pour la formation des compétences orthographiques, dans le système de leçons; on n'observe pas les problèmes orthographiques dans tous les types de leçons, dans tous leurs liens;
- b) Choisir des textes avec un grand nombre de difficultés orthographiques;
- c) Former des règles orthographiques peu claires, insuffisamment exemplifiées;
- d) Le manque de contrôle et d'explications des devoirs écrits et la diminution des exigences qui visent l'orthographe des enseignants;
- e) L'absence de lien entre les différents chapitres de la grammaire, de l'orthographe et de la ponctuation. La tâche d'enlever les fautes dans la communication écrite des élèves consiste à: corriger et analyser les fautes, mettre en évidence les erreurs typiques, organiser des activités spéciales pour les éliminer.

Connaître les erreurs de l'écriture est le résultat des *exercices, sous toutes formes* (dictées, transcriptions, copies, compositions) réalisés individuellement par les élèves. Dans les premières classes, le contrôle est fait quotidiennement par l'enseignant; à la fin du devoir, on écrit la forme correcte du mot erroné. L'élève, pour lequel la mémoire visuelle est prédominante, a l'habitude de mémoriser la forme incorrecte, même si elle a été découpée en rouge par le professeur. Par exemple: même si le mot *poiet* sera corrigé avec la forme correcte *poet* par l'enseignant, il existe le risque que l'élève l'écrive toujours *poiet*, comme il le prononce d'ailleurs.

En IIème et en IIIème année, les devoirs sont corrigés par le contrôle individuel des élèves, par rangées ou par groupes, en les confrontant, en les mettant en mesure d'évaluer leur travail. L'efficacité des leçons est augmentée par la correction des dictées au tableau noir, tout en impliquant les élèves; cette action contribue à la prise de conscience du processus de l'écriture. Nous devons les rendre conscients du fait que l'écriture est le miroir de l'homme, sa première carte de visite. Une bonne graphie est un signe de respect tant pour nous-mêmes, que pour notre langue ancestrale.

Les notions de langue et de littérature roumaine se concrétisent dans l'acte de communication en roumain, à tout niveau d'étude, ce qui permet à chaque homme d'exprimer ses idées correctement et clairement, par l'utilisation de toutes les méthodes que l'étude des aspects linguistiques, y compris ceux de l'orthographe et de la ponctuation, les lui offre. Comprendre l'importance exceptionnelle de l'orthographe, exige que l'école soit responsable d'enseigner à la jeune génération à avoir une bonne connaissance de l'orthographe et en maîtriser les compétences. « Nous devons corriger les erreurs que nous avons laissé passer hier, mais aujourd'hui même nous devons fermer la voie aux erreurs de demain; le problème de l'orthographe ne sera pas résolu par une pédagogie thérapeutique, mais par une prévention. » (Beldescu, G., 1973: 94).

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IRONY AND SENSE OF HUMOR IN DIDACTIC COMMUNICATION: TRAPS AND STRENGTHS

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Abstract: In the educational environment, more than in the general human interaction, the messages must be productive: besides using the same code, the discourse must meet other criteria in order to reach the target represented by the student-receiver; in this regard, the transmitter should turn to a whole arsenal of techniques for drawing attention and always find the most appropriate persuasive approaches. Emotional response occupies an important place in this context, as communication must be primarily a relationship and then a vehicle of resources that one wants to share with others. In fact, the super communicator teacher would be the one who designs and carries out all of his activity by ensuring effective communication that is in line with the real needs of his students: well-structured and well transmitted. This paper brings into the readers' attention the means by which good sense of humor can enhance good didactic communication.

Keywords: sense of humor; irony; effective didactic communication

Introduction

In the context of the increasingly accentuated changes taking place in today's society, specialists in pedagogy and teachers worldwide are looking for wonder-tools and inspired strategies in order to enhance positive and productive learning contexts for their students.

Tense and rigid educational environments can lead to learning but they never guarantee long-term success. When teachers and learners share passion and joyfulness for studying, class tensions are reduced to minimum, criticism is less sharp, co-learning is enhanced, and self-esteem is best preserved and even boosted on both sides. Mental and emotional activism ensures development in the sense that if teachers and students do not search together, do not experiment, do not challenge each other, they do not make mistakes so as to correct themselves afterwards, do not laugh together, none of them evolves enough.

The present paper is meant to emphasize some of the didactic approaches which can bring significant benefits to the entire educational process by valuing the resources of humor and irony.

Humor theories. State of science

Humor is generally defined as an attitude, a perspective, "a set of skills that can facilitate the achievement of important goals in one's life. Although humor may be connected to jokes telling as well, it turns out to be much more than joke-telling" (Goodman, 2005: 6).

Starting with the well-known philosophers of antiquity, Aristotle, Plato, and continuing with Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, Henri Bergson and Sigmund

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Freud, many thinkers approached the problem of humor from multiple angles, and formulated theories on this topic. Different sides of humor have been analyzed with highlights on their psychological, philosophical, anthropological, film and literature-related and sociological implications. Humor theories have been classified into three distinct groups: *incongruity*, *superiority*, and *relief* theories. More than 100 approaches of humor from different perspectives remained largely dissipated and incongruent after 2500 years. They are not necessarily competing with one another; the theories are just focusing on different aspects of humor, certain directions prevailing over the others. However, recent theories and applied studies on humor focus on its social role and its beneficial effect on the human psychic and cognition.

In contemporary times, Roger Dawson, one of America's top experts on the art of negotiating, succeeded in identifying only five categories of attitudes and approaches that make people laugh. All these elements, when used appropriately, help a person become a better communicator and a more popular character, the replies of whose remain for much longer in the audience's cognitive and affective memory. The first one in Dawson's list is *exaggeration*, and it is followed by *word-games*, *irony*, *nonsense*, and *deception of expectations*.

Possible recipes of success in didactic communication - humorous skills

Starting with these theories that underline the advantages of humor-based classroom approaches, with their various facets, teachers have become aware that humor can be largely valued in didactic strategies as an asset within their reach.

Didactic communication requires four components: teacher, student, didactic message and specific contexts. Coherence and efficiency in didactic communication rely on unity, common directions and interests.

People best relate to one another when they feel contented amused or at least have one eye turned toward the real world and the other is open to absurdity.

An English philosopher and essayist used to say that man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be (William Hazlitt). Who we are in terms of these attitudes is in part a function of whom we're around.

Laughter is a sign of "complicity with other people, who laugh, be they real or imaginary" considered Henry Bergson, "it must have a social meaning" (2014: 17, 18). It means that social interaction makes us aware of certain realities we wouldn't notice otherwise. The meaning of our message becomes the result of its reflection on the other interlocutors' personality awareness.

It is obvious that a student should never remain alone in the learning process within the class activities. He must be a member of the team consisting of the other class mates and their teacher. Knowledge, experiences, theories, all of them should circulate from one to another until the established educational goals are achieved.

Extracting the collaborative decision of the interlocutors is both skill and endowment. A teacher needs this skill in order to grasp the attention of his distracted audience, and to persuade them into "buying" what he has to offer in point of instruction and education. It is an attribute that adds value to his speech and helps him sell himself specific to what students need, want, feel at that moment. That's why cultivating humorous skills becomes a necessity for a teacher-to-be. A productive teacher is, in the students' view, a humorous teacher as well. By improving his humorous skills, an

experienced teacher can also perform better in his career because educational communication is much enhanced by means of humor.

People are different but those activities that prove efficient to everyone are technically stress-reducing approaches, those contexts in which awareness of your surroundings brings a funny perspective of the situation. A good sense of humor pays off in most of the cases, it is an effective life challenges – solving “device”: “sense of humor can be improved to become a life-long personal asset” (Dr. Louis Franzini, 2018: 13). It makes the impossible possible by creating and strengthening the genuine emotional connection between the interlocutors within the educational environment. They are both felt like being more trustworthy, reliable and open-minded.

Humor can be seen from different perspectives, but within the educational environment there are two of them which speak louder: humor is a skill - some teachers have – to be amusing and make the students smile or laugh, and on the other hand, humor is the capacity of the students to be open to receiving the humorous approaches and react consequently.

A teacher who is good in this respect bases his strategy on an advanced knowing of his audience. Moreover, he should give the others the opportunity to know him as he is: “Good teachers, therefore, are ready to laugh at themselves, to share their own mistakes, to help children understand that teachers are people too” (Dr. Louis Franzini, 2018: 122)

Psychologists say that in educational environments humor makes it easier to illustrate knowledge and make learning more comprehensible (Medgyes, 2002) In terms of teaching-learning methods, *classic* is considered reliable, clear, objective but still “outdated”. Students do no longer stand in need of *masters* to enlighten them. They need *partners* of communication and *facilitators* of learning. They feel and consider that disagreeing is not impolite or destructive. Students need debates, challenges and freedom of expression in all respects. They are eager to exploring, experiencing, confronting theories. They like affirming their views and unveiling themselves as different, special, particular, and new. *Classic* teachers take the train because they strongly believe that the railway reaches the destination safely. *Brave* teachers experience non-conformism, and they invent contextual means of transport to take the whole teaching-learning group to a superior level. They do not offer answers, explanations, clarifications; they just open horizons in the form of parables that give rise to many more possible interpretations. Students get the productive chance to think, rethink, imagine, associate, create and get amused at the same time. Real life is both strict and funny, it is hard to predict and almost impossible to approach by the book. That’s why school life is expected to bring students closer to reality, make them ready to confront challenges outside. A shock may have different impact on the people according to the general, to the particular and to the personal context of someone. There is time to laugh and time to cry, but students must be taught how to always look for an ace up their sleeve. Grin and bear it can be a temporary key and resource until mind and soul gain the necessary energy to maximize the outcome. It works the same in school: students need space to manifest their personalities and time to consider and reconsider any issue. A humorous teacher is neither boring nor inconsistent. He plays his trump card without giving up the rigor of the final conclusion whenever necessary. A free spirit cannot be imposed to adjust to a given pattern, the way a shy and spiritless student cannot be easily persuaded into thinking outside his own limitative patterns. Different points of view within a study group are also not easy to bring to a common denominator in the absence of a facilitator with a consistent sense of humor.

We get back to Roger Dawson's art of negotiating and bring his theory within the educational environment, with some explicit examples of school humorous behavior.

Dawson says that ridiculous proportions of an idea raise eyebrows, curiosity, and amusement and make people laugh. A teacher can *exaggerate*, for example, the proportions of the students' knowledge or their level of involvement in studying, attendance records, and anything related to these topics will surely make students laugh. He can try to compare a student to a man of science, an artist, and raise amusement, interest and motivation at the same time.

Word-games is another way of creating good mood and involvement during classes suggested by Roger Dawson. For example, when a non-talented student is drawing on the whiteboard and explaining the way a thermometer works, the teacher whispers to the other students: "whatever you might see on the board, imagine it is a thermometer!" And he suggests the student to write the object's name above. The immediate effects of these interventions on the class will be relaxation of the atmosphere, and an active involvement in discussions.

Irony goes beyond humor and it can become harmful when not dosed correctly. Someone who constantly addresses ironical remarks to people around or to the same people can highly damage their self-esteem, their general confidence in the collaborative process they are taking part in, and it alarmingly decreases motivation. Using *irony* in an educational context can have distinct reasons and outcomes: on the one side, a teacher wants to be funny in order to help students make fun of troublesome situations. On the other side, he wants to draw attention and strengthen his hierarchical position or to keep under control his own emotions by manipulating others. However, self-irony is better received in classroom, and it can be extremely helpful in avoiding ridiculous situations for both students and teachers.

Nonsense can also create funny contexts especially when one interlocutor cannot find a reasonable explanation or solving to an absurd situation, a pointless act under the given circumstances. Nonsense can "get" someone out of an embarrassing situation. A student who couldn't solve any topic during a test motivates his failure by saying that he lacked inspiration and didn't want to offer an imperfect embodiment of his mastery in the domain. And his teacher can appreciate the value of the respective test saying that the solution is brilliant, but it is completely missing!

Sometimes a discussion seems to be moving in one direction and it suddenly turns another one. The change should intervene as close to the end as possible so that the interlocutor gets completely astonished at the way the whole meaning has been changed. This attitude in communication is called *deception of expectation*.

However, the humorous attitude has to keep itself in between two basic limits: the lowest and most dangerous is Denigration, followed by exclusion, and the most desirable is Solidarity; the latter brings cohesion and productivity by stress decrease and reinforcement of the active involvement of the whole group. A positive reaction from the students is mainly expected when this humorous skill becomes permanent practice otherwise it can be disconcerting and so detrimental to the educational communication.

Conclusion

Sense of humor is definitely a quality that we want for ourselves and for those around us as well. Humorous people are less boring and they manage to avoid stress and

easily overcome anxiety. They are generally felt like imaginative, innovative, original, astute, perceptive, insightful and discerning.

Sense of humor works effectively both in positive and troublesome social contexts, where personal and institutional needs must be considered simultaneously (Jennings, P., 2017).

Be it shared with others in direct social interactions or just used to make the best of a bad job, humor is both an endowment and a necessity. It is a fact that positive emotions help us connect to one another, to the outside world and, more than that, a good mood facilitates memorizing things faster and for a longer period.

As we mentioned above, a committed teacher is supposed to have the best motivational conduct to gain his students' trust, interest, respect, engagement. Motivation is the energy of the whole teaching-learning process. Under these auspices, emotional intelligence is largely promoted and empathetic disposition, both on the educator and the student's side, is attentively cultivated and facilitated. Humor neutralizes acid situations and reveals new ways of getting to success without much agony. Teaching-learning becomes exciting, salutary and easier to the actors involved in didactic communication. The benefit is real for the students and obvious for the teacher. Progress comes faster, satisfaction and interest leave last. A teacher's sense of humor awakens students from lassitude, keeps them mindful, curious, active, arouses laughter, interest and a deep sense of fruition. Tensed situations disappear from the classroom as long as laughter works "as a valve" (Herbert, 1991): pressure gets in, positivity gets out!

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CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ESP

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Abstract: The present paper aims to explore the main challenges in teaching English for Specific Purposes in technical faculties in Romania. Three main types of challenges were identified: institution related challenges, student related challenges and teacher related challenges. The first category includes classroom size and lack of homogeneity. The second type of challenges refers to students' lack of interest in the discipline and their poor level of English. As far as the third category is concerned, the biggest challenge is the teacher's lack of familiarity with the students' specific disciplines and hence, the need to rely on their expertise, without causing them to become demotivated and disrespectful.

Keywords: challenges; needs; objectives.

1. What is English for Specific Purposes?

ESP has been described in various ways by different authors. Thus, some regard it as “an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning” (Hutchinson, Waters, 1987:19). Strevens (1988:1) pointed out that “ESP is a particular case of the general category of special-purpose language teaching”. Despite having divergent opinions, all authors agree that ESP represents one of the most prominent areas of ESL teaching.

2. Importance of ESP

ESP is an important and distinctive part of English Language Teaching. People all over the world are fully aware of the importance of English as a common language of a globalized world. Students’ perception of mastering a language has changed radically over the years. Two or three decades ago, learning a second language was restricted to studying its grammar and acquiring as many new words as possible. Nowadays, learners’ main objective is to become more marketable in terms of employment and to be able to use English as naturally as possible in real life situations.

The development of ESP is closely connected with the phenomenon of globalization which has led to the rise of English as the language of international communication. Brunton (2009:2) states that “ESP has increased over the decades as a result of market forces and a greater awareness amongst the academic and business community that learners’ needs and wants should be met wherever possible”. ESP development is apparent in the growing number of specialist courses in subjects such as Legal English, English for Logistics, English for Electronics, English for Accounting, etc, offered by more and more language schools. Cambridge ESOL exams also offer special exams in Legal English (ILEC), Financial English (ICFE) as well as in Business English (BEC).

3. ESP versus General English

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The first question that arises when discussing ESP and General English is whether they are two separate areas of English language teaching. Are there any differences between ESP and GE in point of objectives, syllabus, teaching and testing techniques? As Hutchinson points out, there are no differences in theory, but there are a lot of dissimilarities in practice (Hutchinson, 1987:53).

ESP courses are usually designed for adults who are already familiar with English whereas GE courses are designed for primary and high school students. When designing an ESP course, the English teacher's main objective is to meet the learners' specific needs. The GE teacher aims to develop the students' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.

As it is quite difficult to predict what the future needs of GE students will be, the selection of materials to be taught may be seen as a difficult task for the teacher. When it comes to ESP learners, they study English with a clear purpose in mind, that of using it in specific vocational contexts. Thus, the selection of appropriate content turns out to be a less challenging task for the teacher. On the other hand, being restricted to a not very wide range of specialized topics may be seen as a real burden by certain ESP teachers.

ESP courses are usually shorter than GE courses. ESP students are highly motivated to learn because the course is tailored to their exact needs. The necessity to be able to use English correctly to communicate professional information and to perform job-related tasks stimulates them to make progress in their learning process. ESP learners should be encouraged to become independent learners. Teachers should familiarize them with different learning strategies, giving them the freedom to choose the most efficient ones for themselves. Thus, the objective of the ESP course of "turning learners into users" (Carver, 1984:134) is reached.

The age of GE learners may vary from young children to adults. GE courses are focused on grammar, language structure and general vocabulary. Teachers lay equal stress on all the four skills. If appropriately tackled, any subject can be interesting for the students.

4. Challenges in teaching ESP

The ESP teacher must have the qualities of a good GE teacher as well as the specific qualities desired for his own field (Robinson, 1991). Although, in theory, "the methodology of ESP teaching may not differ radically from that of GE" (Dudley-Evans, St. John, 1998:13), practice shows that there are quite a lot of differences between an ESP teacher and a GE one. The former is far from being an expert in the carrier content of the material being taught. There are situations when an ESP teacher knows less about a topic than his/her students. Experienced teachers will know how to turn this situation which might look embarrassing at first sight into a real advantage instead of feeling insecure in the classroom and losing confidence in their abilities to teach the course. In other words, unlike the traditional class, in the ESP class, teachers are no longer the authority on subject knowledge. They turn into language consultants, often resorting to their students' expertise in the subject matter.

ESP teachers fulfill various roles. They have to analyse learners' needs and design a course accordingly. Besides, they are language instructors and evaluators. The first task, that of analyzing learners' needs, poses a lot of problems to ESP teachers. It is commonly agreed that the success of an ESP course depends largely on needs analysis. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (2007:123), the concept of needs analysis

encompasses professional and personal information about the learners, English language information about the learners, the learners' weaknesses as well as information about the environment in which the course will be taught. The difficulty of analyzing needs comes from dealing more often than not with heterogeneous classes of students. They come from different backgrounds; therefore, they have different learning styles and strategies. They also have different expectations and different reasons for attending the course.

Designing an ESP course is based on the conclusions drawn by the teacher during needs analysis design. No course can be designed without deciding on its objectives first. On the other hand, there are a lot of factors which ESP teachers perceive as obstacles in reaching their aims. We have already mentioned one of the first obstacles that ESP teachers encounter - that of being confronted with heterogeneous and large classes. They also have to cope with other issues such as the students' lack of motivation. This lack of motivation also noticed among students studying to become mechanical engineers might be accounted for by the fact that English is seen as less important than their engineering disciplines. Moreover, ESP students may miss the GE lessons which they associate with having fun while playing games, watching authentic English videos, getting involved in creative group activities, etc. It may be said that ESP curriculum poses a lot more pressure on learners than GE curriculum does.

Another major challenge for ESP teachers is the fact that they permanently have to adapt to a new environment for which they have not been prepared. The issue becomes even more serious when an ESP teacher finds himself/herself dealing with English for Science and Technology, English for Accounting and English for Law. Since ESP teachers are not specialists in the students' professional field, they have a lot of difficulty in designing a topic syllabus. They are unable to decide which topics should be tackled, how much importance should be attached to each of them, which topics should come before the others, etc. ESP teachers should by no means introduce topics which have not been talked about during their engineering courses. Hence, a close cooperation with the subject teacher can prevent ESP teachers from demotivating their students.

How can ESP teachers deal with the variety of problems they are faced with in their activity? ESP teachers need to have a positive attitude towards the ESP content, to be familiar with the fundamental principles of the subject area and to be aware of how much the students already know. As Ellis and Johnson (1994:26) show, "it is the learners who have the specific content knowledge and who are able to bring that knowledge to the classroom". In other words, ESP teachers should never ignore students' communicative needs in the workplace and permanently resort to relevant materials. At the same time, they should be confident in what they can offer as language teachers, without trying to convince students that they are expert in the field. Students will feel willing to get involved in communicative activities if they are led to believe that they possess enough knowledge in their field of study, which they should use as the basis of learning ESP.

When working with large groups of students, ESP teachers can easily notice different attitudes to learning ESP. First, there are students who have a good level of general English as well as solid knowledge in their professional areas. These students are very easy to work with because they are always open to new activities. Then, there are students who are good at general English, but who are quite reluctant to try to acquire specialized English either because they feel more comfortable practising general English or because they are not attracted by technical topics. There is also a third

category of students who possess a deep knowledge of their professional areas, but who have a lot of difficulty in making use of it due to their poor level of general English. Experienced teachers will find the right tools to get all the students involved in the lesson.

ESP students need to understand and be able to use technical vocabulary in their work. Consequently, those who considerably develop their vocabulary are likely to accomplish their daily tasks more successfully. Nowadays, professionals from any working area are highly motivated to use a second language in order to respond to society demands such as providing quality service, keeping up with a dynamic society and fulfilling their personal goals. Hence, teaching vocabulary to ESP students is another challenge ESP teachers have to face. What vocabulary should be selected and what activities should be used to teach it? How much vocabulary do students need in order to become independent users in professional contexts? Teachers need to encourage their students to learn new words with the help of context and immediately use them in a practical way. As far as the introduction of new words is concerned, it is commonly agreed that more frequently used words precede the less frequently used ones. Not being a specialist in the students' professional areas, the ESP teacher finds it very hard to decide which words are more frequently used than others. Another difficulty teachers encounter is that of choosing the exact Romanian equivalent of an English technical word. Such a word as *bearing* has several correspondents in Romanian: lagăr, cuzinet, palier, pivot. When coming across it in a technical text, it is quite difficult to find the exact correspondent in the given context.

Should ESP teachers use already existing materials or should they design their own materials tailored to the students' exact needs? There is no reason for ESP teachers to hesitate to take advantage of the variety of teaching materials available as long as they respond to the students' needs. Preparing new textbooks may turn out to be not only time-consuming, but also energy-consuming. On the other hand, ESP teachers sometimes have no other option but to design their own materials for students studying Logistics, for instance. Being a relatively new science, there are few materials appropriate for its study. Electronic materials are becoming increasingly appealing and popular among students because they allow for greater independence and variety in learning by means of audio and video materials.

5. Conclusion

As compared to GE teaching, ESP teaching may be said to pose more challenges to any teacher in charge of it, no matter how experienced he/she is. ESP is described as a highly-centered approach. Yet, the role of the ESP teacher is tremendous as he/she must fulfill five key roles, being at the same time a teacher, a course designer, a collaborator, an evaluator and also a researcher.

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L'HUMOUR – UN OUTIL PEDAGOGIQUE EN CLASSE DE FLE

Mihaela GAGEA*

Abstract: It is often said that the laughter is a way of communication, it expresses the joy of life and characterizes the human being. The humour, in a positive sense, is considered the primary emotion which releases the laughter. Using a pedagogy of humour may be one of the possible solutions to the boredom that rules frequently in the classrooms. Therefore, this would mean using the humour in a systematic manner, in order to create the right atmosphere for the learning process and to establish a relationship which cares more about the exchange and the collaboration. Obviously, in order that the learner could be motivated, he must feel involved in the learning process. In this sense, the humour is a major contributor. It boosts certainly the interest in learning thanks to an enjoyment at once mental, sensorial and physical, in the zest for life.

Keywords: the pedagogy of humour; the learning process; the exchange.

«Enseigner une langue étrangère signifie transmettre un certain nombre de connaissances linguistiques et culturelles à l'apprenant, l'habituer à s'exprimer avec clarté dans la langue cible mais aussi et surtout le former à comprendre, à accepter, à apprécier sa culture et la culture de l'autre» (Mitu, 2006 : p.76).

Il est généralement admis que l'humour, le rire, ont un effet positif sur l'apprentissage. Il soulage les tensions, aplanit les difficultés, il permet de «dérailler» en toute sécurité, il rassemble ; il attire l'attention, il motive et facilite l'apprentissage.

L'humour implique des aspects intellectuels, émotionnels, sociaux et physiologiques, il allie la notion de partage à celle de plaisir, deux éléments qui devraient faire partie intégrante de l'enseignement.

L'humour est un acte social. Cohésif, l'humour est vu comme révélateur de l'élasticité de l'individu, de sa capacité à faire partie d'un groupe. Le rire doit être partagé. De ce partage résultant des liens qui peuvent, dans une classe, se révéler formateurs et motivants.

L'humour est à la fois une volonté et un moyen de briser le cercle des automatismes. Stimulant pour l'intelligence, il permet de transgresser l'ordre moral pour reconstruire un monde nouveau et libre. Et, c'est cette liberté qu'il génère qui nous attire, en tant qu'enseignant, car l'expérience a démontré qu'on n'apprend que dans la liberté, la liberté de penser, de dire et de contredire.

En valorisant l'originalité et la singularité, l'enseignant crée une volonté de dépassement de soi – même chez l'apprenant. Et, c'est cette dynamique du progrès personnel qui contribue à la mise en œuvre du processus d'apprentissage.

De manière plus générale, l'humour a une influence sur l'humeur en libérant le principe de plaisir. L'humour ne se résigne pas, il défie, il implique non seulement le triomphe du moi, mais encore du principe de plaisir qui trouve à s'affirmer en dépit des réalités extérieures défavorables. Cet ensemble de notions éminemment positives stimule sans aucun doute le désir d'apprendre, d'apprendre sans peur, grâce à un plaisir à la fois psychique, sensoriel et corporel, dans la joie de vivre.

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L'humour se révèle très efficace dans le processus de persuasion/mémorisation. L'association entre l'information donnée et le plaisir qu'elle suscite par le message où l'image humoristique qui l'accompagnent stimule la mise en mémoire. Il permet également de conceptualiser, et crée ainsi des liens mentaux, essentiels au processus de mémorisation.

Par conséquent, en facilitant la compréhension, la mémorisation et le désir de communication, l'humour semble être un outil didactique de première importance, qui peut accroître l'autonomisation de l'apprenant par rapport à la langue cible, objectif fondamental des divers modèles d'intervention en salle de classe.

Dans une perspective pédagogique, on pourrait aborder divers facettes de l'humour :

- les manifestations de l'humour : le rire, le sourire, la connivence ;
- les outils de l'humour : les textes, les dessins, les films ;
- les effets de l'humour : cognitifs, psychologiques, physiologiques, sociaux ;
- les dangers de l'humour : l'incompréhension, la perturbation, l'agression, l'exclusion.

La caricature comme outil de l'humour

La caricature peut être définie comme un document visuel comique, satirique et amusant qui vise à réfléchir les faits sociaux anciens ou quotidiens de manière exagérée. D'habitude, la caricature est une image amusante à réfléchir prenant toutes sortes d'événements publics et sociales d'une manière exagérée. Dans le Robert Micro on la définit comme: *dessin, peinture qui, par l'exagération de certains détails (traits du visage, proportions) tend à ridiculiser le modèle.*

Les définitions nous montrent que l'exagération et l'humour dans les évènements sociaux sont deux facteurs plus utilisés dans les caricatures, donc on peut dire qu'elle est un moyen authentique favorable qu'on peut utiliser en didactique de FLE

Tout d'abord, la caricature constitue un matériau précis pour travailler. On ne se perd pas dans plusieurs interprétations comme dans un texte. Le dessin humoristique offre l'occasion de voir que la communication humoristique est toute une activité. Dans la vie quotidienne et surtout quand on est dans un pays étranger, on voit bien qu'interpréter l'humour constitue une vraie activité mentale : l'interprétation de l'humour fait appel à une réflexion qui associe intelligence et intervention d'autres savoirs non seulement linguistiques mais avant tout semble-t-il, d'ordre culturel.

L'absence de texte ou sa brièveté et la simplicité du message rendent ce document tout à fait abordable, même pour les débutants, comme les enfants de l'école primaire. Nous allons voir que les caricatures peuvent faire saisir chez les apprenants des questionnements qui touchent au domaine de l'enseignement, à la violence en classe, au racisme, au respect du code routier, à l'écologie, à l'usage d'Internet...et inciter les élèves à faire des comparaisons d'après l'expérience qu'ils en ont dans leur pays d'origine. En outre, le dessin humoristique a l'avantage de porter en lui de nombreux implicites, ce qui permet un apprentissage interculturel irremplaçable. Il faut ajouter que cela nous permet d'aborder un vocabulaire qui, faisant partie de leur univers quotidien, pourrait être retenu très rapidement.

Il est certain que la caricature frappe les esprits. On y exagère bien sûr et cet état d'esprit est très proche de celui des enfants qui se montrent si souvent excessifs dans

leurs réactions : ils s'enthousiasment ou ils s'émerveillent facilement. Il faut prendre en compte que l'absence de textes ou au moins de textes longs facilite la participation des élèves faibles. Comme elle comporte peu de texte ou pas du tout, celui-ci n'est pas un frein à la compréhension. La caricature à travers l'humour et le rire provoque avant tout la curiosité et la capacité d'observation des apprenants qui sont souhaitées en classe.

Les séances reposant sur la caricature favorisent aussi l'acquisition des compétences dites transversales, ces compétences transférables à d'autres matières proposées dans le programme scolaire et qui permettent de développer chez les apprenants des capacités qui dépassent les simples savoirs et renvoient plutôt à des mécanismes cognitifs : prendre des notes, structurer un discours, exploiter des informations, exercer son jugement critique, changer des attitudes, parler en public, communiquer avec les autres etc.

Séquence didactique

Activité : *Les classes surchargées*

Niveau B1

Thèmes

Aspects de la vie en société.

Type de leçon: acquisition de nouvelles connaissances

Support visuel : <http://la-caricature-de-l'école.e-monsite.com>

Objectifs :

Objectifs communicatifs :

- Repérer des images.
- Décrire des personnes, saisir l'humour de la situation.
- Exprimer son opinion envers le message délivré.

Objectifs (inter-) culturels :

- S'exprimer à propos de la société actuelle.
- Comparer la Culture Cible et la Culture Propre.

Technique d'exploitation

- **Compréhension globale**

Montrer le dessin. Demander aux apprenants de se concentrer sur l'image, les personnages et leurs visages.



Activité 1 :

- Qui sont les personnages ?

- Des ouvriers.
- Des mécaniciens.
- Des étudiants et des professeurs.
- Des élèves et des gardiens.

- Où se passe l'action ?

- Dans un moyen de transport en commun.
- Dans une école.
- A l'aéroport.
- Dans la rue.

- Quelle est l'état d'esprit des enfants ?

- Ils sont heureux.
- Ils sont tranquilles.
- Ils sont émus.
- Ils sont étonnés.

• Compréhension détaillée

Activité 2

Répondez aux questions :

- Quel est le titre principal de cette caricature ?
- A quelle actualité le dessin fait référence ?
- Quel message on délivre dans cette image ?

Activité 3

A partir de cette caricature, expliquez et donnez des synonymes pour les mots ci-dessous :

- Classe :
- Surchargée :
- Pousseur :

Quel est le genre de la caricature ?

- Comique
- Littéraire
- Politique

- **Mise en commun à l'oral.**

Activité 4

Répondez aux questions :

- La classe surchargée est un problème défavorable. Qu'en pensez-vous ?
- Faites une comparaison entre le système éducatif de la France et de la Roumanie. Quelles sont les ressemblances et les différences.
- Quelle solution propose le gouvernement à ce problème ?
- Pourriez-vous trouver une bonne idée pour éviter ce phénomène ?

Pistes de correction :

Le problème des classes surchargées est un phénomène courant. C'est la conséquence des suppressions de postes de professeurs. L'enseignement de masse implique des risques : on ne peut pas accorder le temps nécessaire à chaque élève (30 voire plus par classe) ; on risque de perdre la qualité et les valeurs.

Dans ce dessin ce phénomène est accentué : on voit qu'il y a beaucoup d'élèves, c'est très exagéré, il y a même une petite fille complètement écrasée par la porte.

De plus, cette caricature montre que le gouvernement adopte une politique démagogue en montrant qu'il cherche et propose des solutions, ici quelque peu absurde. On devrait bien engager des professeurs, au lieu d'engager des « pousseurs ».

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LE DEVELOPPEMENT DU LANGAGE CHEZ LES ENFANTS PRESCOLAIRES PAR LE JEU DIDACTIQUE

Ruxandra-Viorela STAN*

Abstract: *Communication between people is generally done using the language, which is a form of human activity, and these features are done gradually in the family, from the infancy, without a scientific or methodological guidance. In the kindergarten, under the influence of the educational process in which the child takes part, it takes place a rapid assimilation of the various aspects of the language, thus developing new functions and forms of language. In the collectivity, the child speaks more with other children, shares his impressions, feelings, desires, and gradually moves from the situational language (specific to the pre-school age) to the contextual language of communication, which has a predominant role, and as the child explores the surrounding world, it goes more and more beyond the limits of the experience, coming off the influence of the present moment.*

Keywords: language; preschooler; communication.

Particularités du vocabulaire et de la structure grammaticale du langage des enfants d'âge préscolaire

Depuis le début de la vie, l'enfant apprend sa langue maternelle, c'est à dire la langue dans laquelle parlent les adultes qui l'entourent. Sur cette base, la communication de l'enfant avec les adultes est assurée, car les enfants acquièrent des connaissances et partagent leurs pensées et leurs désirs.

La langue est le principal moyen de formation humaine. Le langage, en tant qu'activité de communication humaine, est réalisé à travers le langage et toutes ses ressources. La forme de base, naturelle et concrète du langage est la parole (langage oral).

Comme nous le savons, la parole est une activité de communication qui s'apprend progressivement, se structure et se systématisé à travers d'innombrables exercices, des expériences qui commencent dans l'enfance et se prolongent.

Tout au long de la vie. Si l'ensemble de l'environnement socioculturel dans lequel l'homme se développe contribue à la formation et au développement de la langue, la maternelle joue un rôle particulier dans l'amélioration de l'expression.

Le développement du vocabulaire et de la structure grammaticale est déterminé par l'élargissement des relations avec l'environnement, par l'enrichissement continu des connaissances de l'enfant sur les objets et les phénomènes du monde environnant.

«Les recherches ont révélé que dans le développement du lexique, ainsi que dans la structure grammaticale de la langue, il existe de grandes différences individuelles, qui dépendent en premier lieu des conditions de vie et d'éducation de l'enfant. Ainsi, si à 3 ans le nombre de vocabulaire est environ 800-1000 mots, à 4 ans le nombre de mots double (1600-2000), à 5 ans il atteint environ 3000 mots, à 6-7 ans le volume de vocabulaire de l'enfant d'âge préscolaire dépasse 4000 de mots. "(Roșca, A., Chircev, A., 1965, p. 112).

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À la suite des recherches, il a été constaté qu'un enfant de 5 ans avait dans son vocabulaire:

- 1199 noms;
- 399 verbes;
- 141 adjectifs;
- 92 adverbes;
- 123 autres mots.

À la fin de la période préscolaire, le vocabulaire des enfants comprend environ 4 000 mots. Les enfants comprennent leur signification et les utilisent comme moyen d'exprimer leurs pensées et leurs sentiments. Non seulement l'aspect quantitatif du discours des enfants impressionne, mais aussi son aspect qualitatif.

Les enfants parviennent progressivement à prononcer correctement presque tous les sons caractéristiques de la langue, à s'exprimer en phrases simples ou développées, construites grammaticalement correctement, et peuvent raconter une histoire, ou décrire davantage un événement qui s'est passé, langage contextuel.

Plus le langage des enfants est riche, plus ils comprendront et acquerront facilement leurs nouvelles connaissances, plus ils exprimeront leurs pensées et leurs désirs avec clarté et avec précision, et plus leur pensée sera développée. plus ils enrichiront facilement leur langage, les modalités d'expression verbale.

En raison des particularités du phonographe, du moteur du verbe et de l'analyseur auditif, ainsi que des particularités de la pensée, le discours des enfants présente certaines caractéristiques spécifiques, liées à la prononciation correcte des sons et des mots, à la richesse du vocabulaire, à la structure grammaticale, à la cursivité et à l'expressivité de la langue.

Une particularité du langage des enfants est liée à son aspect phonétique, à savoir la prononciation. L'omission, l'inversion et la substitution sont fréquentes chez les enfants d'âge préscolaire et, dans une moindre mesure, entre 5 et 6 ans. Dans les activités pédagogiques menées à l'école maternelle, la prononciation des enfants est corrigée progressivement, de sorte qu'à partir de 6 ans, tous les enfants ont une prononciation grammaticalement correcte (Păiști-Lăzărescu, M., 2006, p.6)

Le vocabulaire des enfants d'âge préscolaire qui viennent pour la première fois à la maternelle est limité. Il s'agit d'environ 1000 mots et se compose de noms et de verbes. Le vocabulaire passif est plus riche que le vocabulaire actif.

Une autre caractéristique du discours des enfants d'âge préscolaire est l'utilisation inappropriée de formes grammaticales. Dans le discours des enfants d'âge préscolaire, en particulier des plus petits, prédominent les phrases simples, courtes et souvent non reliées, ce qui montre le poids que les enfants rencontrent pour apprendre et reproduire la construction correcte des phrases.

L'expression du petit enfant d'âge préscolaire présente une certaine incohérence et change souvent d'un sujet à l'autre, sans aucun lien entre eux. Le langage situationnel prédomine, les enfants étant liés au moment spécifique dans lequel se déroule l'action, accompagnant leur conversation d'actions.

Par conséquent, dans le discours de l'enfant d'âge préscolaire, ce sont les noms et les verbes qui prédominent, des adjectifs montrant des caractéristiques visuelles, auditives, tactiles et moins prononcées et numériques.

Une particularité du vocabulaire des enfants d'âge préscolaire est l'utilisation de diminutifs, également déterminés par l'univers miniature dans lequel ils vivent (pantoufles, ours en peluche, lapins) et par le discours des personnes d'âge mûr qui veulent les nourrir, les attirer avec de la soupe, du bouillon, de la nourriture. Les

diminutifs donnent un charme particulier à la parole des enfants, mais leur utilisation abusive déforme leur parole et leur image sur le monde environnant.

D'un point de vue lexical, la langue de l'enfant enregistre les progrès en termes de nombre de mots, mais aussi en termes d'acquisition du sens des mots. Si le petit groupe souhaite enrichir le vocabulaire actif de leurs noms, de parents, du nom des objets et des phénomènes perçus directement de l'environnement et de la vie sociale, le groupe des 6-7 ans vise à enrichir le vocabulaire avec:

- noms communs qui expriment un degré plus élevé de généralisation (sur les êtres, les choses, les phénomènes de la nature);
- des noms propres qui désignent des êtres, des noms de localités, des pays;
- les adjectifs qui expriment des caractéristiques liées à la couleur (rouge, jaune, bleu), la forme, la taille (grand, moyen, petit), les dimensions (grand-petit, long-court, mince-épais); traits positifs et négatifs (bons, mauvais, honnêtes, courageux);
- les pronoms personnels (moi, toi, lui, elle),
- les verbes exprimant des actions ou des états différents (je joue, je mange, le chien qui aboie, le chat dort);
- adverbes;
- numérals cardinaux et ordinaux (un, deux, trois, premier, dernier, deuxième)
- prépositions simples et développées;
- conjonctions.

L'âge préscolaire est caractérisé par l'utilisation inappropriée de formes grammaticales. En ce qui concerne la structure grammaticale, nous suivons:

- l'utilisation correcte du singulier et du pluriel de certains noms;
- l'utilisation correcte des cas du nom;
- l'expression correcte des degrés de comparaison des adjectifs;
- la mise en œuvre correcte de l'accord entre les parties de la peine;
- associer des mots aux significations qu'ils véhiculent.

À la maternelle, l'enfant d'âge préscolaire n'apprend pas les règles grammaticales en tant que telles, ne connaît pas leur définition, mais respecte dans le langage les principales règles pour la modification et la combinaison de mots dans des phrases.

Les particularités du discours des enfants d'âge préscolaire sont liées à l'âge des enfants et, au fur et à mesure que leur développement se corrige, leur discours devient de plus en plus correct.

Tout au long du processus pédagogique de la maternelle et, en particulier, des activités d'éducation linguistique, la parole des enfants s'améliore du point de vue phonétique, le vocabulaire actif et passif s'élargit, les formes demandées grammaticalement sont consolidées.

Méthodes pour enrichir le vocabulaire par le jeu

Le vocabulaire des enfants d'âge préscolaire comprend: les noms communs, les noms propres, les adjectifs, les nombres cardinaux et ordinaux, les verbes, les adverbes, les prépositions, les conjonctions.

Dans la période préscolaire, l'enfant apprend le lexique de base de la langue maternelle, dans les conditions d'un développement normal, à l'âge de 3 ans, l'enfant possède un vocabulaire lui permettant de communiquer avec les autres, d'exprimer des souhaits, des sentiments et des manifestations de volonté.

L'enfant d'âge préscolaire utilise un langage situationnel, utilise plus de mots avec un contenu concret, directement lié à la réalité qu'il voit. Dans le discours de

l'enfant d'âge préscolaire en général, les noms et les verbes prédominent, des adjectifs qui montrent des traits perceptibles.

Le développement de la langue se concrétise à la fois dans les activités spécifiques de l'enseignement des langues et dans l'ensemble du programme de la maternelle. En utilisant le jeu didactique dans le processus de développement de la langue, l'enfant d'âge préscolaire effectue la transition graduelle de la langue concrète - de la situation à la langue contextuelle - et au fur et à mesure que l'enfant dépasse les limites de l'expérience sensorielle, le vocabulaire s'enrichit en créant les conditions d'une communication continue avec les autres.

Les jeux pédagogiques peuvent être utilisés à la fois pour la consolidation et la clarification des connaissances, ainsi que pour leur vérification et leur systématisation, pour une prononciation correcte, pour un enrichissement ou une consolidation du vocabulaire, pour la formation d'un discours correct et cohérent.

Afin d'enrichir le vocabulaire des enfants avec leurs propres noms, nommer leurs noms, frères, parents, éducateurs (petits et moyens groupes), puis le groupe nombreux, noms de localités importantes du comté, du pays, de certaines formes de objectifs de secours ou socio-économiques connus des enfants, le nom du pays, de certaines personnalités historiques, divers jeux éducatifs tels que: "Qui a arrêté le volant?"(identifiant et nommant les membres du groupe auquel ils appartiennent), "Ma famille" (nommant les parents, les frères et sœurs), "Où la lettre est-elle arrivée?", "Dites où elle se trouve?" (Le nom correct de l'adresse du domicile, à la maternelle, le nom du pays, du comté, etc.).

La plupart des jeux didactiques sont destinés à enrichir le lexique des enfants avec des noms communs qu'ils nomment: objets et phénomènes perçus directement dans le monde environnant et dans la vie sociale, noms d'objets nécessaires à leur vie et à leur activité, parties du corps, objets d'hygiène personnelle, vêtements , chaussures, nourriture, moyens de locomotion, leurs saisons et phénomènes spécifiques, animaux domestiques et sauvages, plantes connues et leurs éléments constitutifs, certains aspects de leur travail, de la vie sociale de leurs parents (Păișă-Lăzărescu, M., 2006, p.21).

Les jeux didactiques contribuent à l'enrichissement du lexique du point de vue de l'acquisition de mots nouveaux, de leur consolidation et de leur activation, tâche très importante à l'ère des grandes accumulations.

L'enrichissement du vocabulaire en mots synonymes peut être réalisé avec une grande efficacité, également à travers le jeu éducatif: «Comment ça se passe? »(Exposer des histoires courtes sur certains animaux connus par observation directe, et extraîtes d'histoires, de fables, dans lesquelles on peut utiliser différents synonymes, différents synonymes: renard saboté, muselé, rusé, énonçant le sens du manque de sincérité.

Pour utiliser correctement le pronom, on utilise des jeux dans le petit groupe - exercice pour pronom personnel et politesse: "Qui a eu la balle?" (Remplacer le nom du collègue du groupe et de l'enseignant par des pronoms personnels et de la politesse).

Le jeu pédagogique "Qui vous a donné le jouet?" Contribue à l'apprentissage par les enfants de l'utilisation correcte des différents pronoms personnels et démonstratifs en fonction des relations établies entre les membres du jeu. Ils ne sont pas autorisés à utiliser le nom de l'enfant qui offre les jouets, mais à désigner-le en utilisant le pronom personnel ou démonstratif approprié.

L'enrichissement du vocabulaire en chiffres cardinaux et ordinaux se fait par le biais de certains jeux didactiques; dans le petit groupe, les chiffres cardinaux sont acquis: un, deux, trois et les ordinaux correspondants: premier, deuxième, troisième.

Le jeu didactique ‘Nommez et dites ce qu’il est’ contribue à enrichir le vocabulaire des enfants d’âge préscolaire avec différents adjectifs: couleur (rouge, jaune, vert, bleu).

Également à l’aide de jeux didactiques, le vocabulaire des enfants avec des verbes indiquant les attributions de membres de la famille, d’autres adultes, est enrichi et, dans le grand groupe, l’élément de nouveauté est lié au nom des effets de certains phénomènes naturels (“Dites ce que vous faites!”, “Trouver le mot juste”).

Les jeux didactiques contribuent à l’enrichissement du lexique, en termes d’acquisition de mots nouveaux, de consolidation et d’activation. Différents jeux didactiques peuvent être organisés et peuvent fonctionner avec différents antonymes, homonymes, synonymes (“Répondez correctement”, “Mots avec plus de significations”, “Mots avec un sens opposé”).

Certains jeux didactiques contribuent à enrichir le vocabulaire des enfants de mots - des adverbes indiquant le lieu de l’action, son heure et son déroulement.

Le jeu didactique contribue à la fois à l’enrichissement du vocabulaire, de son activation et de sa pratique, ainsi qu’à l’acquisition d’une expression claire, cohérente, grammaticalement correcte, à la culture de l’indépendance de la parole et à la stimulation de la créativité dans l’expression orale.

À la fin de la période préscolaire, l’enfant a maîtrisé les formes grammaticales et les utilise généralement correctement dans son discours.

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UNE PLACE REPENSÉE POUR L'HUMOUR DANS LE VOLUME COMPLÉMENTAIRE AVEC DE NOUVEAUX DESCRIPTEURS DU CECR

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Abstract: Our study is a comparative analysis of the two editions of the reference instrument in languages, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR), in terms of humour and related words in its 2001 edition and 2018 edition, CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors. The occurrences of such words have significantly increased in the latter edition, thus updating the instrument to the permanent evolution of the language use in our society.

Keywords: humour; irony; CEFR.

1. La mise à jour du CECR : le *Volume complémentaire avec de nouveaux descripteurs de 2018*¹

Le Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les langues : apprendre, enseigner, évaluer², conçu en 2001, a l'objectif de fournir une base transparente, cohérente et aussi exhaustive que possible pour l'élaboration de programmes de langues, de lignes directrices pour les curriculums, de matériels d'enseignement et d'apprentissage, ainsi que pour l'évaluation des compétences en langues étrangères³.

Les fonctions principales du CECR sont : (a) fournir un métalangage pour discuter de la complexité de la compétence langagière, réfléchir, communiquer des décisions sur des objectifs et les résultats d'apprentissage qui soient cohérents et transparents et (b) proposer des idées pour l'élaboration de programmes et la formation des enseignants. (*Volume complémentaire* : 22).

Pour répondre aux demandes de compléter les échelles de descripteurs et pour récupérer, dans une certaine mesure, les changements sociaux ayant eu lieu pendant presque deux décennies, en 2018 est paru le *Volume complémentaire avec de nouveaux descripteurs* rédigé par Brian North et Tim Goodier (Fondation Eurocentres) et Enrica Piccardo (Université de Toronto/Université de Grenoble-Alpes). Il est important de noter que les ajouts n'ont aucun impact sur le schéma descriptif du CECR ou sur ses Niveaux de Référence Communs. Le volume complémentaire et tout particulièrement les descripteurs des nouveaux domaines enrichissent le dispositif descriptif du CECR et sont calibrés sur ses niveaux (*ibidem*).

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¹ Le Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les Langues : apprendre, enseigner, évaluer. *Volume complémentaire avec de nouveaux descripteurs* est publié en février 2018 par le Conseil de l'Europe (la Division des Politiques éducatives - Programme des Politiques linguistiques) et il est disponible en ligne à l'adresse <https://rm.coe.int/cecr-volume-complementaire-avec-de-nouveaux-descripteurs/16807875d5>. La citation de ce document sera marquée dans notre texte comme *Volume complémentaire*.

² La citation de ce document sera marquée dans notre texte comme « CECR ».

³ <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>, consulté le 20 mai 2019.

Le Tableau 5 – Résumé des modifications résultant du projet (*idem* : 52-54) présente d'une manière synthétique ces ajouts et nous en ferons en ce qui suit un bref aperçu. Le Volume complémentaire avec de nouveaux descripteurs :

- introduit le niveau **Pré-A1**, un niveau de compétence à mi-chemin du A1, et en fournit des échelles, y compris pour l'interaction en ligne.
- apporte des **modifications aux descripteurs de 2001** (chapitre 4 du CECR), synthétisées dans l'Annexe 7 - *Liste des modifications apportées à certains descripteurs de 2001* (p. 238), concernant les activités et les stratégies de communication langagières et certains aspects des compétences langagières communicatives (chapitre 5). Parmi ces modifications, la majorité concerne **les descripteurs de niveau C2** pour mieux refléter les compétences des utilisateurs/apprenants de niveau C2. Pour les **niveaux A1-C1**, les modifications sont peu nombreuses, et elles visent surtout le remplacement du syntagme « locuteur natif » qui a fait polémique depuis la parution du CECR, par le terme de « locuteur ». La traduction en français réalisée par Gilles Breton et Christine Tagliante a été améliorée, notamment en ce qui concerne les descripteurs.
- renforce la description des **Niveaux plus** dans l'Annexe 1 - *Principales caractéristiques de la langue parlée dans les niveaux du CECR (CECR 3.6)* (p. 171).
- reformule l'échelle *Maîtrise du système phonologique* en mettant l'accent sur l'articulation des sons et les traits prosodiques.
- développe la **Médiation**, un concept important, présent dans le CECR, qui a pris une dimension encore plus grande, à la hauteur de la diversité linguistique et culturelle croissante de nos sociétés. L'élaboration de descripteurs pour la médiation a été la partie la plus longue et la plus complexe du projet aboutissant à la production du volume complémentaire du CECR. À l'accent mis sur les activités pour la Médiation de textes s'ajoutent des échelles pour médier les concepts et la communication, soit un total de 19 échelles pour les activités de médiation. Les stratégies de médiation (5 échelles) concernent les stratégies employées pendant le processus de médiation, plutôt que celles de la préparation à la médiation.
- complète les stratégies et les compétences **plurilingues et pluriculturelles**. L'échelle *Exploiter un répertoire pluriculturel* décrit l'usage des compétences pluriculturelles dans une situation de communication. C'est donc sur cette compétence que l'accent est mis plutôt que sur les connaissances ou les attitudes. Cette échelle est en totale conformité avec l'échelle du CECR *Adéquation sociolinguistique*, bien qu'elle ait été élaborée de façon indépendante. L'échelle *Exploiter un répertoire plurilingue* renvoie au niveau fonctionnel de la langue la plus faible de la combinaison de langues et indique clairement quelles langues sont impliquées dans la médiation inter-langues (en particulier pour les échelles concernant la transmission d'informations), dans la compréhension plurilingue et dans l'exploitation du répertoire plurilingue.
- introduit trois nouvelles échelles qui traitent du texte créatif et de la **littérature** : *Lire comme activité de loisir* (uniquement pour le processus de réception ; les descripteurs proviennent d'autres ensembles de descripteurs du CECR) ; *Exprimer une réaction personnelle à l'égard de textes créatifs* (moins intellectuel, niveaux inférieurs) ; *Analyser et formuler des critiques littéraires* (plus intellectuel, niveaux supérieurs).
- renforce le domaine **en ligne** par deux nouvelles échelles créées pour les catégories suivantes : *Conversation et discussion en ligne* et *Transactions et coopération axées sur des objectifs*. Elles sont destinées aux activités de l'utilisation de l'internet : la vérification ou l'échange de réactions, l'interaction orale et les productions plus longues dans les liaisons en direct, l'utilisation du clavardage (transcription d'un langage oral),

des contributions écrites plus longues à des blogues ou à des discussions, et l'intégration d'autres médias.

- propose de **nouvelles échelles de descripteurs** provenant d'autres ensembles de descripteurs du CECR : *Utiliser les télécommunications et Donner des informations*.
- fournit des échelles de descripteurs propres aux **langues des signes** grâce au Fonds national suisse de recherche scientifique (le projet Prosign). Sept échelles conçues spécifiquement pour la compétence à signer sont incluses dans ce *Volume*, sur la base de la recherche conduite en Suisse. On peut également consulter des liens vers des variantes des échelles de descripteurs du CECR 2001¹ pour la langue des signes dans le projet du Centre Européen pour les Langues Vivantes du Conseil de l'Europe (CELV).
- ajoute une nouvelle collection de descripteurs pour les **jeunes apprenants** fournissant deux jeux de descripteurs pour les groupes d'âge 7-10 ans et 11-15 ans. Les descripteurs adaptés aux jeunes apprenants figurant dans les PEL ont été réunis et s'y sont rajoutés les descripteurs servant à l'évaluation des jeunes apprenants, offerts généreusement par le « Cambridge English Language Assessment ».

2. Répertoire des occurrences du terme *humour* et d'autres termes apparentés dans le *Volume complémentaire* avec de nouveaux descripteurs

Parmi ces modifications complexes, présentées brièvement ci-dessus, qui développent et mettent à jour tous les aspects impliqués dans le processus d'enseignement/apprentissage /évaluation, notre recherche se propose d'approfondir les occurrences des termes *humour*, *humoristique*, *plaisanter*, *plaisanterie blague*, *ironie*, *sarcasme*, *parodie*, dans les échelles de descripteurs proposées dans cette édition récente du CECR.

L'humour fait partie de nous-mêmes, de nos actions, de notre spontanéité, de notre esprit, de notre culture et de notre société. Il est donc essentiel d'insister sur l'acquisition des compétences nécessaires pour le saisir et pour l'utiliser lorsqu'on parle en langue étrangère, tout en respectant les normes socioculturelles des situations communicationnelles dans lesquelles nous nous trouvons.

a. Humour

Dans le CECR le mot apparaît une seule fois à la page 83, dans le Chapitre 5 *Les Compétences de l'utilisateur/apprenant*, sous-chapitre 5.1 *Compétences générales*, comme facteur lié aux valeurs, croyances et comportements relevant du **Savoir socioculturel** (5.1.1.2). L'humour apparaît dans cette catégorie à côté de la classe sociale, des groupes socioprofessionnels, de la fortune, des cultures régionales, de la sécurité, des institutions, de la tradition et du changement, de l'histoire, des minorités (ethniques ou religieuses), de l'identité nationale, des pays étrangers, des États, des peuples, de la politique et des arts.

Dans le *Volume complémentaire*, il y a cinq occurrences dans les descripteurs de différentes compétences :

1. Dans l'échelle de descripteurs *Comprendre en tant qu'auditeur* (chapitre *Réception*, sous-chapitre *La compréhension orale*) au niveau C2 : *Peut, dans un exposé,*

¹ Dans le CECR est spécifié, au Chapitre 4 *L'Utilisation de la langue et l'apprenant/utilisateur*, sous-chapitre 4.4.5 *Communication non verbale - 4.4.5.2 Le comportement paralinguistique*, que « la langue des signes élaborée n'entre pas dans le *Cadre de référence* même si les spécialistes de ce domaine peuvent y trouver des notions et des catégories pertinentes pour leur domaine » (p. 73).

comprendre l'humour ou les allusions (p. 60). Ce descripteur est enrichi par rapport à celui présent dans le CECR, chapitre 4.4.2.1 *Écoute ou compréhension de l'oral* (p. 56) : *Peut suivre une conférence ou un exposé spécialisé employant de nombreuses formes relâchées, des régionalismes ou une terminologie non familière.*

2. Dans l'échelle de descripteurs *Comprendre la correspondance* (chapitre *Réception*, sous-chapitre *La compréhension de l'écrit*) au niveau C1 : *Peut comprendre de l'argot, des expressions idiomatiques et de l'humour dans une correspondance privée* (p. 64). Pareil, ce descripteur est enrichi par rapport à celui présent dans le CECR, chapitre 4.4.2.2 *Lecture ou compréhension de l'écrit* (p. 58) : *Peut comprendre tout type de correspondance, avec l'utilisation éventuelle d'un dictionnaire.*

3. Dans l'échelle de descripteurs *Écriture créative* (chapitre *Production*, sous-chapitre *Production écrite*) le niveau C2 est complété avec : *Peut utiliser des expressions idiomatiques et faire preuve d'humour à bon escient pour renforcer l'impact du texte* (p. 79). Dans le CECR, chapitre 4.4.1.2 *Production écrite* le descripteur était : *Peut écrire des histoires ou des récits d'expérience captivants, de manière limpide et fluide et dans un style approprié au genre adopté* (p. 52).

4. Dans le chapitre *Compétences communicatives langagières*, sous-chapitre *Sociolinguistique*, le terme est mentionné comme notion clé de l'échelle *Adéquation sociolinguistique* : *nouer des contacts, suivre des routines simples aux niveaux inférieurs, sans demander à l'interlocuteur de se comporter différemment (à partir de B2) et utiliser des expressions idiomatiques, des sous-entendus et de l'humour* (aux niveaux C) (p. 143). Le niveau C1 de cette échelle est complété à la page suivante avec : *Peut comprendre l'humour, l'ironie et les références culturelles implicites et saisir les nuances de sens* (p. 144).

5. Dans l'Annexe 9 – *Descripteurs supplémentaires - Descripteurs individuels*, l'échelle *Instaurer une ambiance constructive* mentionne au niveau B2 : *Peut faire preuve d'un humour adapté à la situation (par ex. une anecdote, un commentaire jovial ou drôle) de façon à créer une ambiance positive ou à refocaliser l'attention* (p. 250).

b. Humoristique

Il y a deux occurrences communes dans le CECR et le *Volume complémentaire* :

1. Au niveau C1 de l'échelle *Conversation* (sous-chapitre *Interaction orale*) : *Peut utiliser la langue en société avec souplesse et efficacité, y compris dans un registre affectif, allusif ou humoristique* (CECR : 62 et *Volume complémentaire* : 88).

2. Au niveau C1 de l'échelle *Correspondance* (sous-chapitre *Interaction écrite*) : *Peut s'exprimer avec clarté et précision dans sa correspondance personnelle, en utilisant une langue souple et efficace, y compris dans un registre affectif, allusif ou humoristique* (CECR : 69 et *Volume complémentaire* : 97).

Dans le *Volume complémentaire*, il y a deux autres occurrences :

1. Dans l'échelle de descripteurs *Écriture créative* (chapitre *Production*, sous-chapitre *Production écrite*) au niveau C1 : *Peut intégrer des expressions idiomatiques et humoristiques, ces dernières n'étant pas toujours utilisées à bon escient* (p. 79).

2. Dans l'Annexe 9 – *Descripteurs supplémentaires - Descripteurs individuels*, l'échelle *Conversation et discussion en ligne* mentionne au niveau C2 : *Peut, dans une discussion en ligne, s'exprimer avec précision de façon familière, humoristique, en utilisant des abréviations et/ou un registre de langue qui renforce l'impact des commentaires* (p. 248).

c. Blague

Dans le CECR il n'y a aucune occurrence de ce terme.

En revanche, dans le *Volume complémentaire*, il y en a quatre :

1. Dans le chapitre *L'Interaction*, sous-chapitre *L'Interaction orale*, le terme est mentionné comme notion clé concernant les fonctions du langage dans l'échelle *Conversation : allant des salutations, etc., en passant par des offres, des invitations et des accords, jusqu'à l'expression de degrés d'émotion, d'allusion et de blagues* (p. 87).
2. Dans le chapitre dédié aux langues des signes, intitulé *Compétences à signer*, à la compétence *Pragmatique*, pour l'échelle *Structure du texte signé : La notion de « texte signé » traduit le fait que les textes en langues des signes avaient une durée de vie limitée avant que les moyens d'enregistrement (monologues) ne soient devenus disponibles. En dehors des blagues, des récits spécifiques, des prières et d'un petit nombre d'autres types de textes qui se transmettaient dans une communauté, les textes ne pouvaient pas perdurer dans le temps mais restaient par définition dialogiques. Ils ne pouvaient pas être conservés et on ne pouvait pas en disposer pour une analyse de discours, à des fins éducatives ou pour le développement d'une argumentation. Cela a changé avec les enregistrements vidéo* (p. 157).
3. Dans le même chapitre, « blague » apparaît aussi relié à la compétence *Sociolinguistique*, dans l'échelle *Adéquation sociolinguistique et répertoire culturel* au niveau C1 : *Peut raconter une blague issue de la culture sourde* (p. 162).
4. Dans l'Annexe 9 – *Descripteurs supplémentaires - Descripteurs individuels*, l'échelle *Exploiter un répertoire plurilingue* mentionne au niveau C1 : *Peut raconter une blague dans une langue différente, en conservant la chute de l'histoire dans la langue d'origine, car la blague en dépend et expliquer la blague à ceux qui ne l'ont pas comprise* (p. 248).

d. Ironie / sarcasme

Dans le CECR le terme *ironie* apparaît une seule fois à la page 18, dans le chapitre 2 *Approche retenue*, sous-chapitre 2.1.2 *Compétence à communiquer langagièrement*, relié à la **compétence pragmatique** qui renvoie également à la maîtrise du discours, à sa cohésion et à sa cohérence, au repérage des types et genres textuels, des effets d'ironie, de parodie.

Dans le *Volume complémentaire*, il y a neuf occurrences :

1. Comme notion clé de l'échelle *Conversation et discussion en ligne* (chapitre *Interaction*, sous-chapitre *Interaction en ligne*) : *la capacité à utiliser des symboles, des images et d'autres codes pour que le message transmette le ton, l'accent, la prosodie, ainsi que le côté émotionnel, l'ironie, etc.* (p. 99). Il est important de mentionner que l'interaction en ligne a été ajoutée à ce Volume. Le CECR présente l'interaction orale et l'interaction écrite, la seule mention liée au domaine en ligne étant dans le cadre de l'interaction écrite : *participer à des forums en-ligne et hors-ligne* (p. 68 et p. 111).
2. Dans la nouvelle échelle de descripteurs *Médiation générale* (chapitre *La médiation*) au niveau C2 : *Peut expliquer, dans un langage clair, fluide et bien structuré, de quelle façon les faits et les arguments sont présentés, transmettre précisément les aspects évaluatifs et la plupart des nuances et souligner les implications socioculturelles (par ex. le registre utilisé, les euphémismes, l'ironie et le sarcasme)* (p. 108). Nous soulignons le fait que le mot *sarcasme* n'apparaît pas du tout dans le CECR, tandis que nous le rencontrons six fois dans le *Volume complémentaire*.
3. Au même chapitre (*La médiation*), dans l'échelle de descripteurs *Traiter un texte à l'oral* au niveau C2 : *Peut expliquer (en langue B) les déductions faites alors que les*

liens et les implications ne sont pas explicites (en langue A), et souligner ce que la façon de s'exprimer de l'orateur ou de l'écrivain suppose de sous-entendus socioculturels (par ex. des euphémismes, de l'ironie, des sarcasmes) (p. 114).

4. Toujours dans ce chapitre (*La médiation*), dans l'échelle de descripteurs *Traiter un texte à l'écrit au niveau C2 : Peut expliquer par écrit (en langue B) la façon dont des faits et des arguments sont présentés dans un texte (en langue A), particulièrement lorsqu'un point de vue est rapporté, et peut attirer l'attention sur l'utilisation, par l'auteur, des sous-entendus, des critiques voilées, de l'ironie et des sarcasmes* (p. 116).
5. Au même chapitre *La médiation*, sous-chapitre *Médiation des textes*, pour l'échelle *Analyser et critiquer des textes créatifs (incluant la littérature)* est spécifié : *Au niveau C1, l'analyse devient plus subtile, elle porte sur la façon dont l'œuvre intéresse l'auditoire, son niveau de classicisme, et si elle emploie l'ironie* (p. 122).
6. Dans le chapitre *Compétences communicatives langagières*, sous-chapitre *Sociolinguistique*, dans l'échelle de descripteurs *Adéquation sociolinguistique* au niveau C1 : *Peut comprendre l'humour, l'ironie et les références culturelles implicites et saisir les nuances de sens* (p. 144).
7. Dans l'Annexe 2 – CECR : *Tableau 2 – Grille pour l'auto-évaluation (incluant l'interaction en ligne et la médiation)* à la *Médiation*, au niveau C2 : *Je peux expliquer, dans une langue claire, aisée et bien structurée, la façon dont des faits et des arguments sont présentés, transmettre fidèlement les aspects évaluatifs et la plupart des nuances et souligner les sous-entendus socioculturels (l'utilisation du registre, les euphémismes, l'ironie et les sarcasmes)* (p. 178).
8. Dans l'Annexe 6 – *Exemples d'utilisation dans différents domaines des descripteurs de l'interaction en ligne et de la médiation*, parmi les descripteurs de l'échelle *Traiter un texte à l'oral (Médiation de textes)* au niveau C2 : *Peut expliquer (en langue B) les déductions faites alors que les liens et les implications ne sont pas explicites (en langue A), et souligner ce que la façon de s'exprimer de l'orateur ou de l'écrivain suppose de sous-entendus socioculturels (par ex. des euphémismes, de l'ironie, des sarcasmes)* (p. 210).
9. Dans la même Annexe 6, le descripteur de l'échelle *Traiter un texte à l'écrit (Médiation de textes)* au niveau C2 : *Peut expliquer par écrit (en langue B) la façon dont des faits et des arguments sont présentés dans un texte (en langue A), particulièrement lorsqu'un point de vue est rapporté, et peut attirer l'attention sur l'utilisation, par l'auteur, des sous-entendus, des critiques voilées, de l'ironie et des sarcasmes* (p. 214).

e. plaisirter/ plaisiranter

Dans le CECR il y a trois occurrences :

1. Dans le Chapitre 5 *Les Compétences de l'utilisateur/apprenant*, sous-chapitre 5.2 *Compétences communicatives langagières - 5.2.2 Compétence sociolinguistique*, dans l'échelle *Correction sociolinguistique* au niveau C1 : *Peut utiliser la langue avec efficacité et souplesse dans des relations sociales, y compris pour un usage affectif, allusif ou pour plaisirter* (p. 95).
2. Le même chapitre renvoie à la compétence discursive (sous-chapitre 5.2.3.1), notamment à la capacité à structurer le plan du texte : *comment sont racontées les histoires, les anecdotes, les plaisirteries, etc* (p. 96).
3. Le terme apparaît aussi dans l'Annexe D - *Les spécifications de ALTE* (Association of Language Teachers in Europe), dans le Document 6 - *Résumé des spécifications de ALTE relatives aux Études*, au Niveau 5 (Compréhension de l'oral/Expression orale

(Écouter/parler)) : EST CAPABLE DE comprendre des plaisanteries, des sous-entendus familiers et des allusions culturelles (p. 182).

Dans le *Volume complémentaire*, il y a quatre occurrences :

1. Comme notion clé de l'échelle *Correspondance* (chapitre *Interaction*, sous-chapitre *Interaction écrite*) : *type de langage : allant d'expressions toutes faites à un usage permettant l'expression d'émotions, d'allusions et de plaisanteries dans une écriture correcte utilisant un ton et un style appropriés* (p. 96).
2. Comme descripteur de l'échelle *Conversation et discussion en ligne* (chapitre *Interaction*, sous-chapitre *Interaction en ligne*) au niveau C2 : *Peut, dans une discussion en ligne en temps réel, s'exprimer avec précision et clarté, ajustant son langage avec souplesse et sensibilité, en fonction du contexte, montrer de l'émotion, faire des allusions et des plaisanteries* (p. 100).
3. Dans le chapitre *Compétences communicatives langagières*, sous-chapitre *Sociolinguistique*, dans l'échelle de descripteurs *Adéquation sociolinguistique* au niveau C1 : *Peut utiliser la langue avec efficacité et souplesse dans des relations sociales, y compris pour un usage affectif, allusif ou pour plaisanter* (p. 144).
4. Dans l'Annexe 6 – *Exemples d'utilisation dans différents domaines des descripteurs de l'interaction en ligne et de la médiation*, parmi les descripteurs de l'échelle *Conversation et discussion en ligne* (*Interaction en ligne*) au niveau C2 : *Peut s'exprimer de façon claire et précise dans une discussion en ligne en temps réel, adapter son langage avec aisance et sensibilité en fonction du contexte, montrer de l'émotion, faire des allusions et des plaisanteries* (p. 193).

Conclusion

Le *Volume complémentaire* du CECCR, paru en 2018, accorde une importance accrue aux compétences communicatives concernant la compréhension et la production de l'humour dans des contextes sociaux, tels établir et entretenir des relations personnelles ou l'utilisation souple de la langue dans un but social. Cela est démontré par la multiplication des occurrences des termes *humour*, *humoristique*, *plaisanter*, *plaisanterie*, *blague*, *ironie*, *sarcasme* dans les ajouts aux descripteurs de 2001 ou bien dans les nouvelles échelles introduites. Le terme *blague* n'apparaît pas du tout dans le CECCR, tandis que, dans le *Volume complémentaire*, il apparaît quatre fois. Ou bien, le cas de l'*ironie* est encore plus évident : une occurrence dans le CECCR et neuf occurrences dans le *Volume complémentaire*.

Sitographie :

Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les langues : apprendre, enseigner, évaluer, 2001, <https://rm.coe.int/16802fc3a8>

Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les langues : apprendre, enseigner, évaluer. Volume complémentaire avec de nouveaux descripteurs, 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/cecr-volume-complementaire-avec-de-nouveaux-descripteurs/16807875d5>

TRANSLATING FROM ONE LANGUAGE INTO ... THE SAME LANGUAGE!

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Abstract: *The translation of specialised texts requires skilful command not only of the source language and the target language but also of the specific field for which the translation is produced. Does the translation of specialised texts require different techniques? Does it involve the use of special strategies in order to come up with a meaningful but at the same time easily understandable translation? Does the translation of specialised texts address only the initiated in the field or should it be equally comprehensible to the laymen? In particular, should a military text be translated for the military staff only or for the civilians as well? These are some of the questions that this paper starts from and to which it will hopefully find suitable answers.*

Keywords: military; strategy; translation.

1. Introduction

Translation is a difficult task which involves more than expertise in two different languages. It encompasses linguistic knowledge, experience, ability to play upon words and to notice and render subtleties. But what happens when the translator has to deal with a specialised field? Then obviously a trustworthy translation requires knowledge of the respective field besides all the other prerequisites.

When people think of translation, they undoubtedly have two languages in mind, but translation means carrying (meaning) across. Can this also be done from one language into the same language, especially when it comes to transferring meaning from a highly restricted field to a more accessible one? Is the military domain such an access-restrictive domain? The examples discussed further on will illustrate this idea. Specialised language is a type of language that needs decoding. For a non-specialist and even for a translator it is sometimes difficult not only to grasp the finest nuances and the specialised jargon but also to understand the meaning of the communicative instance. First you need to filter the information, the language, the words, transpose them into language that can be understood by people outside the field and then capture the most subtle nuances and render them as faithfully as possible.

For instance, people in the military (as in many other domains) have their own jargon or specialised language whether it belongs to a formal or an informal register. For a non-specialist, these expressions sometimes have to be translated from the military code into the civilian code. One question remains, though: since the meaning of some words and expressions are restricted to people belonging to the field, how should they be translated? Should they be adapted to be understood by people outside the field? And if so, what is lost in translation and to what extent? Or should the translator strive to keep the local flavour, so to speak? And if so, to what extent can that flavour be preserved? On the other hand, can the translation of even such highly specialised texts be done by a person who has not been initiated in the art and craftsmanship of translation, but is very familiar with the conventions of the military register? A convincing translation needs more than a lexical and grammatical analysis.

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2. The Military Jargon

Starting from the idea that each person has two languages: “the common language and the language of their profession”, one can understand why some linguists used concepts such as: professional language, jargon or specialised language. Professional language refers to technical language, consisting of all the terms belonging to a profession or job such as engineer, physician, doctor, athlete, military officer, and more recently, IT specialist, etc. The notion of professional jargon was originally used to express a scientific terminology (for example, linguistics). Words with an expressive role joined purely technical words and, in time, these new languages – so to speak – were called jargons or specialised language, referring to a particular subject, profession or even culture.

According to Cabré, the distinction between common language and specialized language is based on two criteria. Specialized language is characterized by the use of certain types of written or oral texts and the use of terminology. Unlike the general texts, specialized texts are evaluated according to very specific criteria, among which prevails brevity, specialization and adequacy.

Specialised communication differs from general communication in two ways: in the type of oral or written texts it produces, and in the use of a specific terminology. The use of standardized terminology helps to make communication between specialists more efficient. The criteria they use to evaluate specialized texts are not the same as those used to evaluate general texts. In general texts, expression, variety and originality prevail over other features; in specialized texts, concision, precision and suitability are the relevant criteria. (Cabré, 1999: 46).

Using a certain jargon, both in the original and in the translated version may give participants and readers alike a sense of belonging to that particular group, to that community, a sense of importance. Like all corporations, the military have a jargon of their own: it may seem obscure or complex to a novice. However, this language, highly codified at times, has fairly simple rules, as well as a particular vocabulary. Military vocabulary is an integral part of oral and written language; it is used not only by professionals - soldiers and officers, those who do their military service, civilians who work for the army - but by other categories in every day speech or ordinary situations, for example, when men remember their past or during history classes; it is also included in some expressions of the current language.

First and foremost, it is important to understand and identify the features of military terminology. The semantics and pragmatics of military terminology is as important as the vocabulary itself. The army, as an institution and a phenomenon has always been of interest for historians and leaders, but it has only relatively recently caught the attention of linguists, sociologists. The army as a linguistic phenomenon is a field to be exploited as language is directly and inextricably linked to a certain mentality, to a certain way of thinking and acting. Military language is clearly distinguishable from other types of languages due to a few easily recognisable features.

2.1. Characteristics of military discourse

Brevity and clarity represent a key element of military communication, that is why it makes use of various strategies and techniques to comply with these

requirements. The syntax of the military language is as brief as it is rigorous: it must be expressed in the shortest sentences possible, with the minimum of embellishments. For instance, a very simple command such as: “X, report!” refers to the fact that X must inform his/her superior on a particular matter. In some cases, the verb is omitted altogether: “Eyes left!” – turn to the left). This concern for brevity can go as far as the use of interjections, or even monosyllabic sounds, to replace whole sentences:

“Halt!” – used to order soldiers to stop marching;

“Hooah” – which can be either used to express “hear and understood” or in response to a cheer;

However, the vocabulary and the strategies used are far from unimaginative.

2.1.1. Drills commands¹

“Fall In” – troops move into formation on the parade square and/or ground;

“Fall Out” – troops are dismissed;

“Dismissed” – units may leave the parade square/ground;

“Attention” – soldiers adopt the “Attention position”;

“Stand at Ease” (United States: “Parade Rest”) – soldiers stand in a more relaxed position;

2.1.2. Abbreviations

Abbreviations – the procedure through which a word or a phrase is shortened – is another technique frequently associated with military terminology.

“cap” – for captain;

“copter” – for helicopter;

“chute” – for parachute;

2.1.3. Compound words

Compound words, especially through the juxtaposition of two nouns, put together to form a new word or convey a new / different meaning, is another technique which could also account for the need of brevity: *airbase*, *aircraft*, *air force*, *battlefield*, *battleship*, *ex-military*, *headquarters*, *peace treaty*, *shipmate*, *warfare*, *wartime*, etc. Like many other compound words, the compound words used in military terminology can be spelt either as one word or as two words hyphenated or not.

2.1.4. Acronyms

The list of acronyms – the procedure through which the initial letters of different words are combined and then pronounced and used as a new word – used by military terminology is indeed complex and confusing. The same acronym could stand for different things both in the military and civilian language. The procedures are various and they may have two, three, four, five components or in some cases, even more than five components.²

“PT” – physical training;

“VA” – Visual Acuity or sharpness of vision;

“XO” – Executive Officer. The second-in-command to a commanding officer.

“NCO” – Non-Commissioned Officer. A military officer who has not received a commission, such as sergeant (Army) and warrant officer (Navy).

“TDY” – Temporary Duty Station. A temporary assignment at a location other than a service member’s permanent duty station.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drill_commands

² The majority of the examples and the explanations provided are taken from: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/military-life-cycle/friends-extended-family/common-military-acronyms>

“COLA” – Cost of Living Allowance. Compensation service members receive to offset the cost of living in more expensive areas of the U.S.

“MEPS” – Military Entrance Processing Station. Where service members take the ASVAB, get a physical, choose their military job and swear in.

“DEERS” – Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System. A database of military families and others entitled to receive TRICARE and other benefits.

“TRICARE” – Military health care program. TRICARE provides health benefits to service members, retirees and their families.

2.1.5. Military proverbs and sayings¹

There are a lot of sayings originating from the military field, many of which have become common ground in everyday language.

Beat a (hasty) retreat – originally “beat the/a retreat” – it referred to a strategy of the British Army, but nowadays it refers to a quick withdrawal in order to avoid an unpleasant situation.

Meet your Waterloo – denotes defeat by someone / something that is too strong or too difficult for you, making reference to the battle of Waterloo in 1815 when Napoleon was defeated.

Steal a march – gain an advantage over your opponent.

Tell in to the Marines – it is highly unlikely to accept an unbelievable story.

2.1.6. Coded units

Once again, military life used some encoded phrases which have later become the norm even in other domains:

“MAYDAY” – a distress signal asking for help generally spoken over the radio by people on ships or on airplanes.

“Roger, Roger That” – used in radio transmissions, meaning “understood”;

“SOS” – Save Our Souls; developed to be used as a radio signal in Morse code has now become a universally understood signal.

3. Translating from military language into ... civilian language

Military people have a lot of things in common and specific terminology is one of them; on the one hand, terminology of everyday life (barracks, manoeuvres, mission, missile, etc.) and secondly, a set of technical terms concerning the military status (hierarchy, war strategies, equipment, uniforms, apparatus, armament, etc.). This terminology is sometimes different between the three branches of the Army (Air Force, Land Forces and the Navy), let alone the civilian vocabulary. Each of the three branches of the army has its own set of technical words that even the professionals of the other two armies often do not know. Moreover, these sets of technical terms belonging to Air Force, Land Forces or the Navy are divided in turn in terms used (and often known) exclusively by a weapon of the Army (artillery, infantry, etc.), by a unit of the Air Force (pilots, trainers, air base personnel, engineers, etc.) or by a Marine Corps (mechanics, infantry, submarines, etc.), which considerably increases the complexity of the military lexicon. For instance, the following military terminology can be “translated” into their civilian equivalent:

Battalion – organization;

Commander – Director or Senior Manager

Mission – task, responsibility

¹ <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/military-and-war-phrases.html>

Discharge – Retire
Warrant Officer – Department Manager / Head

4. Military terminology in everyday language

On the other hand, there are a lot of terms borrowed from the military field and used in various aspects of everyday life or in other professional branches. Some of them have become common ground and they have even lost their military origin. Thus, people use phrases which originated in the military, since language does not only reflect our view of the world, but also influences it and even shapes it.

ASAP – as soon as possible

Boot camp – from a military camp it started to designate a training centre

Good to go – means that you are ready or prepared, whereas in the military was frequently used by front line units, meaning “ready to proceed”.

I got your six – “I’ve got your back”; if we imagine the body as a clock, where 12 is the front face and 6 is the back of the body, that is the vulnerable position, the phrase refers to the fact that the person uttering these words will be around to protect you. It was initially used by pilots in the World War I.

Not on my watch – I’m not in charge; related to the Navy, where the command of a ship is divided into “watches” and officers take turns to be in charge of the ship, becoming the “officer of the watch”.

On standby – in the military, it expressed readiness for immediate deployment, but its use extended to refer to a person or thing ready to be used if necessary.

To be taken aback – to be so surprised or shocked that you cannot respond at once; it was initially used in the Navy and referred to a sudden change in the wind direction.

To bite the bullet – which was literally used by soldiers undergoing surgery before the use of anaesthetic. Today, in common language it refers to taking action, however unpleasant or difficult it might be.

5. Striking the balance between the original and the translation

The latter half of the 20th century marks the beginning of a new philosophy regarding the theory of translation. It becomes a normative science, which involves the concept of “minimax”, that is minimum of cognitive effort, maximum of efficiency. Roman Jakobson (1965) claims that any linguistic sign can be translated into another more elaborate linguistic sign, and, in his view, the translation exhibits three main forms:

1. *Intrapilingual translation or rewording* – which is a sort of rephrasing, an interpretation of verbal signs because synonyms can never render the perfect equivalent, there is always some gain or some loss when signs from one language are translated into another language;

Anti-armored vehicles grenades = *grenade antiblindat*

Chain of command = *ierarhie militară*

Close-in-work – *operațiuni în spații restrânse*

Deadly warfare = *confruntare pe viață și pe moarte*

2. *Interlingual translation or translation proper* – which renders a linguistic sign from the source language via another linguistic sign into the target language:

Drill sergeant = *sergent de instrucție*

*Heavy weapons = armament greu
Line up his target = a-și alinia fiinta
Secure the perimeter = a securiza perimetru*

3. *Intersemiotic translation or transmutation* – which is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal sign systems, belonging to another code (music, mathematics, painting, etc.).

However, translation is not a neutral activity and different translators have adopted different taxonomies, as translation can be situated anywhere between the two extremes: literal translation or free translation. These two concepts have been thoroughly discussed and named differently by different linguists.

Eugene Nida favours the terms *formal vs dynamic equivalence* – concepts which shift between different levels of literalness between the source text and the target text. To a greater or lesser extent, formal equivalence can be understood as word-for-word translation, whereas dynamic equivalence refers to sense-for-sense translation, taking into account a high degree of readability. According to Nida, dynamic translation is the “quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors” (Nida, Taber: 1969, 200). Later on, Nida distances himself from the term “dynamic equivalence” in favour of the term “functional equivalence”, which is more comprehensive and alongside with the meaning of the text to be translated refers to its function as well. Functional equivalence is in favour of naturalness, rather than closeness to the linguistic and grammatical characteristics of the source text when rendered into the target text.

For instance, this procedure could prove useful for the translation of some terms whose literal translation would cause not only misunderstandings, but also flaws in communication. The translation is in fact a brief explanation in the target language in order to avoid ambiguity.

*act of leverage = acțiune (pol/mil) care creează un avantaj strategic
burn-through range = distanță maximă de cercetare în condiții de bruiaj* (in this case, the literal translation *pragul de străpungere a bruiajului* would be both ambiguous and unnatural).

*curfew = interdicție / restricție (de corculație)
draft evader = persoană care se sustrage de la serviciul militar*

Newmark (1988) opposes *semantic translation* – which struggles to render the same meaning as the original text – to *communicative translation* – which struggles to produce the same effect or at least as close as possible on the reader as the source text produces on its readership.

Mary Snell Hornby (1988) speaks of two main trends in translation in Europe: the *linguistic approach* – at the core of which we identify the concept of equivalence – and the *functional approach* – which sees translation not only as communication but also as an intercultural act. Not satisfied with the solutions brought by the linguistic approach and the concept of equivalence, Christiane Nord sees the need of looking for intermediate models, which, in her opinion (Nord, 1997: 45-46) can be classified as follows:

- a) a *pragmatic model* – the one which deals with the situational conditions of the communicative act;
- b) a *culture-oriented model* – which takes into account the cultural conditions of the interaction;

- c) a *consistent model* – which provides a logical connection between the theoretical and methodological elements;
- d) a *comprehensive model* – applicable for the translation of both literary and non-literary texts;
- e) an “*anti-universalist*” *model* – which permits the differentiation of various cultural elements between the translation and the original;
- f) a *practical model* – which takes into account “all forms of transcultural communication needed” that a translation makes use of;
- g) an *expert model* – the model in which the translator is knowledgeable and skilful in their area of expertise, which allows them to take the right decisions in the translational process.

Nord favours the Skopos theory (Vermeer 1978, Reiss and Vermeer 1984) because it starts from the principle that any communication is an act driven by purpose, and, by extension, so is a translation, steered by purpose and that helps the translator to choose the best or the most suitable translation strategy. It can be considered as a kind of bridge between the theory and the practice of translation. She enlarges upon *documentary translation* – which sees translation as a sort of document of the communicative interaction between the source text and the target text and *instrumental translation* – whose main purpose is to produce an instrument for the communicative interaction between the source text and the target text.

The mission of the translator – so to speak – is not an easy one and the translation of specialised texts raise additional problems since, as Vîlceanu states “specialisation in a subject area (legal translation, medical translation, technical translation, business translation, literary translation, etc.), is required not only for certification purposes, but also for effectiveness and efficiency”. (Vîlceanu, 2017: 119).

Proficient translation involves several levels of competence and Neubert lists them as following:

- *language competence* – knowledge of the grammatical and the lexical systems of both the source language and the target language;
- *textual competence* – understanding the text norms for both source language and target language;
- *subject competence* – since no one can possess exhaustive knowledge it is advisable to master the specialised domain to translate from and into;
- *cultural competence* – since any translation is linked to the culture from which it is translated and the culture into which it is translated;
- *transfer competence* – since translation actually means carrying meaning across.

6. Conclusions

We can rightfully say that translation does not just happen, it is a complex laborious process. Specialised language and the standardisation it brings make communication between professionals from the field more efficient. But for people outside the field, getting the proper meaning may sometimes be confusing and ambiguous and that is why some terms must be first processed in the source language and the meaning must be transferred from the specialised field to common language. This is also a challenge that translators of specialised texts have to face. Proficient translation involves fluency in both languages, but also mastery of specialised terminology and at the same time solid knowledge of theoretical constructs and

concepts of Translation Studies. The translator of specialised texts must start from these theoretical concepts but also plan ahead and develop a strategy while complying with the ethics of translation and the conventions of the respective field.

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HUMOUR IN TV ADVERTISEMENTS

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Abstract: Advertising campaigns are more and more designed to appeal to an increasing number of potential clients setting up a liaison between a company, its products and their customers. The language of advertising belongs to so called loaded language the aim of which is to change the will, opinions, or attitudes of its audience. The three main theories of humour are: cognitive-perceptual (including the incongruity theories); superiority (affective-evaluative theories); relief (including psychodynamic theories).

Keywords: subliminal message; humour typologies; affiliate humour.

During the last century, the intensive globalization and circulation of goods enhanced marketing policies of business companies. Advertising has become a science with precise goals and quantified results¹. Advertisements exert a sort of psychological supremacy over the consumers seen as *defenceless audience* as advertising and public information campaigns are processes of mediated persuasion still based on a strategy that seeks to change the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals by exposing them repeatedly to mass communicated stimuli [...] (Schrøder in Littlejohn, Foss, ed., 2009: 133).

Advertising campaigns are more and more designed to appeal to an increasing number of potential clients setting up a liaison between a company, its products and their customers. Cook (1992:224) states “ads may not always be obliged to refer to a product, but they are still obliged to refer, however obliquely, to a change of behaviour”. Leech (1972:25) considers that the language of advertising belongs to so called *loaded language* (such as political journalism and religious oratory) the aim of which is to change the will, opinions, or attitudes of its audience.

Advertising language compared to others has a very precise material goal determining a potential customer to buy a particular kind of product. In such a case persuasion is employed at full blast and subconscious marketing techniques are applied to boost the sales. “Many believe in the power of the subconscious mind and propose that subliminal messages are hidden in ads and are addressed to that hidden part of the

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¹ Being at the crossroads of many fields, advertising has been the object of interdisciplinary studies: “Advertising texts are of great value for the analyses from linguistic, sociologist, sociolinguistic, psychological, ethnologic and last but not least marketing point of view. Linguists are interested in language of advertising because they want to know how particular language works in this type of discourse, which linguistic means are used here and how advertising language is changing in the course time. Sociologists may be interested in the fact, how advertising influences the values, attitudes and behaviour of the society. On the other hand, sociolinguists may study the effects of any aspect of society on the way language is used in advertising in the course of time. Psychologists may try to examine the effect of the advertising on human mind and motivation to fulfil material and social needs. Ethnology may find in this field a good evidence of how the culture of the nation has been developing. And marketing experts and advertising agencies are interested in the language of advertising to find the tricks how to make advertising more effective”. (Lapsanská, 2006:11)

brain, while others believe that subliminal messages do not affect human's behavior (Herjase *et alii*, 2013:113)

Eisend and Tarrahi (2016) analyse the effectiveness of advertising in point of inputs and outcomes considering the entire chain of *underlying processes*. They enumerate the following elements: the source, the receiver, the message and the strategies that occur in advertising, exert influence and produce effects during processes.

The source primarily influences attitudes and behavior due to an acceptability–inference process; the message influences cognitions and emotions due to an emotion–cognition process; strategies foster processing and effects on memory due to a retrieval process; and receiver characteristics primarily influence attitudes, cognitions, and emotions due to a sense-making process.

Gus and Weinberger (2006:23) make an introduction to the theories of humour: cognitive-perceptual (including the incongruity theories); superiority (affective-evaluative theories); relief (including psychodynamic theories) each having “dozens of variations”. In what Cognitive theories of humor are concerned, Gus and Weinberger emphasize that

An essential aspect of the cognitive theorists focuses on incongruity, though they differ about whether incongruity is a necessary and sufficient condition for humor [...] The pleasure derived from incongruity is the divergence from expectation, and the greater the divergence the funnier the material. The pleasure is in the playful confusion and contrasts.

Superiority in humor, often labeled disparagement, has a long history [...] and is among the subjects of a broader class of research that examines the social function of humor explained in the negative terms of superiority, aggression, hostility, ridicule, or degradation (Gus, Weinberger, 2006:26)

Different sub-theories of arousal safety have in common a view that there is a physiological release in which humor helps to vent tension. Relief theory, Morreall (1983, apud Gus, Weinberger, 2006:28) argues, may coexist with an incongruity (relief through resolution) or superiority (relief as triumph) situation. In his proposal for a new theory of laughter, Morreall (1983) suggests that

in examining the incongruity, superiority, and relief theories three general factors emerge that can form the basis of a comprehensive theory. The first is change of psychological state that involves either a shift in cognition (serious to non-serious state) and/or affect (boost in positive feelings or release of suppressed feelings). Second, the change of psychological state must be sudden. To laugh, Morreall argues, we need to be caught off guard. Finally, the psychological shift must be pleasant. The result is a feeling of amusement or mirth, which may or may not result in laughter.

In pursuit of customers'attention marketers use various psychological and linguistic tools designed to enhance the impact of the advertisements and operate behavioural changes that favour sales.

Why has humour become one strategic tool in advertising? According to McGhee, the key to understanding humor's contribution to health and wellness is its ability to build both more positive emotion and reduce feelings of anger, anxiety and depression (Goldstein, Ruch, 2018:176)

Mulken *et alii* (2004:708) consider that one way in which advertisements are persuasive is by giving their audience a pleasurable experience. “The consumer may associate the pleasure they experienced in processing the ad with the product that is being advertised, which in turn may lead to a more positive attitude towards the product”.

Humour has a strong effect on consumer attitudes and is considered one of the most persuasive forms of advertising. The effectiveness of humour in accomplishing specific communication and sales objectives has been studied by decades. Nevertheless, according to Su-Ying Li (1995:8)

humor may work well only in certain media (television versus print), in certain messages (image versus informational), with certain products (snack foods versus cosmetics), with certain brands (established versus new), or under certain market conditions (high brand-switching behavior versus low).

Humor is a paradox. It is universal and it is individualized. It is found in every culture throughout history, and yet it is specific to time and place. Laughter is social, yet humor is personal. While humor is a natural human trait, response to specific humor executions is a learned behavior (Gulas, Weinberger, 2006:54).

Madden, Weinberger (1984:23) emphasize that the pleasure derived from the humor varies as a function of the congruity between the style of the humor and the idiosyncratic humorous preference of the individual [...]

Martin *et alii* (2003) describe four basic types of humour in a tight relation with peoples' personalities: *affiliative humour* and *self-enhancing humour* are adaptive humor styles which people use to make others laugh; *aggressive humour* and *self-defeating humour* are maladaptive humor styles which individuals use to tease, ridicule, humiliate, put down or manipulate others.

Adaptive humour styles are beneficial to interpersonal relationships and the people preferring them are more likely to have positive outcomes (high levels of self-esteem, extraversion, relationship satisfaction and positive moods) while maladaptive humor styles show that people preferring them are prone to negative outcomes (with low levels of self-esteem, psychological health and relationship satisfaction, the tendency to put down themselves or mock with their own weaknesses).

Many researchers – mainly Goldstein and McGhee (1972), Madden and Weinberger (1984), McCullough and Taylor (1993), Catanescu and Tom (2001) - examined humour items in advertising context and settled that they can be grouped according to their similarities: use sexual and aggressive types as forms of humour, puns and jokes as the main humour typologies or the use ‘ludicrous’, ‘nonsense’ and ‘silliness’.

Considering humor categories or humor devices that an advertisement can contain Elbers (2013,11-13) discusses about Cain's (2011) typology of humorous devices: (a) puns - in which humor is explained as something that ‘occurs’ when there is a kind of discrepancy between the ‘expected’ and the ‘stimulus’, (b) understatement/exaggeration - the idea of exaggeration is to make a reference to the brand and its success, (c) ludicrous - something that is ridiculous or absurd , (d) satire/irony - can be seen as the denigration of other people or products or as making something else ridiculous, (e) comic - can be understood as humor that is perceived as ‘funny on its own’, (f) jokes/nonsense - there is no meaning attached to the “funny part”, and (g) others.

According to Speck (1991), it is difficult to indicate what kind of ‘humor type’ an advertisement contains to make the advertisement humorous (*apud* Elbers, 2013:13). In such a context the interpretation of the significance could be made globally; a tv advertisement may be assigned a humorous typology (for example, a pun) but it may also contain ironic or comic elements.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of using humour in ads may be influenced by several factors such as humour types, media, audience, or product types (Su-Ying Li, 1995:9). Using different types of humorous advertisements in TV may have as a result the impact on Attention, Comprehension, Persuasion, Source Credibility, Source Linking (Weinberger, Gulas, 1993). If people feel good about a commercial, they would transfer positive feeling to the product itself.

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INSIGHTS ON TRANSLATION AS AN EMOTIONAL PHENOMENON

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Abstract: Translation can be regarded both as a cognitive process and a set of attitudes and behaviours. Words do not only convey meanings, but also emotions of various intensities. In order to shape different language versions, translators' emotional responses are essential ingredients. The translator or interpreter covers several stages during the translation process: the text that bears positive or negative connotations, the translator's inner mood and the reader's emotions. The main purpose of the present study is to reveal the implications of emotionality for translation work and to explore the impact of emotions on readers.

Keywords: emotion; connotation; cognitive.

According to *OALD*, emotion is “a strong feeling of any kind, excitement or disturbance of the feelings.” (p. 377). The Dictionary of Psychology (3rd online edition), by Andrew M. Colman, conveys the following definition: “any short-term evaluative, affective, intentional, psychological state, including happiness, sadness, disgust and other inner feelings.” As the latter definition suggests, an emotion is generally a temporary condition, having the clear intention to transmit various feelings, depending on spatial-temporal or socio-cultural factors.

Irrespective of its nature, a text conveys emotions both for the translator and the reader. An emotional response contributes to the shaping of different language versions and is an essential element for the translator whose role is to establish a more or less accurate version of the text. At the same time, readers' ability to interpret emotions varies substantially across the world.

Although it is practically impossible to cover the whole range of emotions, the specialized studies have always highlighted the importance of the three dimensions in translation:

- a. the text bearing different emotional connotations;
- b. the translator's inner state;
- c. the reader's perspective and his ability to give an accurate interpretation to the emotions embedded in the text.

The three-dimensional perspective on translation

The three dimensional analysis including the source text, the translator and the reader emphasizes the powerful role of emotions in the process of translation, which from different writers' perspective, should be given their full potential. Except for its informative content, the text also conveys attitudinal information and an emotional affinity of the sentences. Apart from their rich polysemy, words have an emotional force which renders a high level of sensitivity among readers.

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The greatest work done on emotions is related to their positive or negative valences, because both categories are included in the text and need to be dealt with accordingly. Emotions' intensity is another relevant aspect to be considered in the process of translation. Intensity of words may arouse curiosity among readers and somehow help them to decipher the writer and translator's intentions. High, medium or low emotions pertain to the sentences and help to recognize the linguistic choices the writers make to change the strength of emotional expressions.

The subjective factor should not be ignored when it comes to interpreting emotions. The words' connotations intended by the interpreted may be completely different from the reader's. Happiness, fear, surprise, sadness, etc., can be associated with various episodes in both translator and reader's life so as to render separate perceptions. Identification of the true meaning of emotions can be based on a highly accurate context or on the reader's ability to discover the symbolism behind each word. The less ambiguous the emotional expressions, the greater likelihood for the reader to generate a thorough understanding of information.

The lists of emotions that words generally convey are known as *emotional lexicon*. Despite their not being so numerous, these collections are conceptualized and encoded in every language. They are semantically diverse and fall into multiple morphological classes. They may consist of mental verbs (*love, hate, want, wish, hope etc.*), nouns (*anger, fear, surprise, happiness etc.*), adjectives (*disturbed, sad, dissatisfied, angry etc.*), intensifiers (*terribly, awfully, strongly, absolutely etc.*) or prepositions (*tremble with fear, love for money, jump for joy, pale with fear etc.*).

However, manually created databases containing emotion-bearing words can be time consuming and sometimes unsuccessful due to the fact that there is no clear boundary between emotion intensities. The context, our own perception or the surrounding words are the best guidelines in selecting the most appropriate emotional connotations.

As regards the inner mood when dealing with the text, it might be argued that the translator generally develops a sense of intimacy with the text in the way he constructs meanings or expresses himself. His high involvement with the written word is imperative in order to create the best version and to exploit the most subtle nuances of emotions. Translators should benefit from a lot of freedom, as long as it contributes to rendering the most faithful bits of information. Whether translation is literary or non-literary, its processor should identify with the content from the beginning to the end. This special text-translator chemistry is essential in order not to lose the original thread, but make it an attainable ideal.

The translator dominated by the spirit of the original, must not dwell on the writer's words, but entirely possess and comprehend the genius of the author. The translator's inner state can be illuminated in so far as he understands translation more as a dynamic process devoid of personal vanity, cultural prejudice or pre-established linguistic norms. The translator's inventiveness can lend the text a sort of grandeur, sensitivity and empathy. Unless words or emotions transmitted do not resonate with readers there is a high probability for the translation to be misinterpreted or regarded as superficial.

The translator's main intention should be more related to stirring a particular delight in readers and providing them with some intellectual aesthetics. According to Hills (2012, 77), "entering into translation is like entering into a relationship and through contact with the language of others, translators can get a greater sense of

themselves. When rendering or transferring emotions in writing, the translator shapes a text so as to render a vast amount of emotional information.”

The emotions of the readers stand for another dimension in the translation process. Participants in the act of reading do not simply skim through the text for the simple pleasure of reading and grasping information. They usually create mental representations of the text or a certain unity which ultimately leads to a psychological insight of what is processed. Furthermore, readers perceive emotions as partly linked to their past or present experiences or to a wide range of psychological factors. They generally tend to be moved by the story and want to immerse themselves in other worlds. Most often, they feel the emotions of the text when identifying themselves with certain characters.

Emotion-evoking scenes may penetrate the reader’s judgment or increase tension and emotional impact. Readers are not only receivers of written content but display varied emotions and transcend the world of neutral words in an attempt to charge them with sophisticated stylistics. The choice of nouns, verbs or adjectives with a highly emotional impact may influence and manipulate the reader, so that he should totally transfer himself into the translated text.

As Mauss et alii, (2006) stated “emotions can be broadly defined as multifaceted embodied phenomena that involve loosely coupled changes in subjective experience, behaviour and peripheral physiology.”

Emotional intelligence in the translation process

Emotional Intelligence refers to the different ways that individuals “attend to, process and utilize affect-laden information of an intrapersonal (e.g. managing one’s own emotions) or interpersonal (e.g. managing others’ emotions) nature.” (Petrides 2009, a.10)

Despite some disagreement among specialists as to what represents true EI, it is obvious that it moderates responses to stress being “a predictor of many different variables in many different situations and contexts.” (Petrides 2009, a. 7)

Specialists have established a connection between EI and the level of anxiety experienced by translators. Dewaele (2010) showed that those with higher than average levels of EI experienced less foreign language anxiety and were able to determine the emotional state of their interlocutor. Depending on the language competence and cultural background, emotion-laden concepts are processed differently. Regulation of one’s emotions must become a prerequisite for the interpretation of the text. Creative writing is more likely among emotionally intelligent interpreters who demonstrate better adaptive translating behaviours.

Interaction with the translated text

As a complex activity, translation requires more than a single openness to the text. It includes several steps like: creativity, competence, expertise, time-management etc. All these factors represent the internal and external environment in which the translator operates with the written word. As stated by Saldanha and O’Brien (2013, 147), “in much of the translation process research published to date there are consistent observations of individual differences within groups. Clearly, no matter how controlled the experiment, the translator’s individual personality, experience, attitude and so forth will have an impact.”

The use of terminology or expressions is highly connected to the translator's ability to manage emotions. The whole personality of the translator is involved in the process. It is not only his linguistic competence that improves the quality of the translation, but also his commitment, self-esteem, self-confidence or earlier experiences.

As regards positive or negative emotions, Lehr (2013) showed that "positive emotions improved creativity and style, while negative emotions enhanced accuracy and coherence in terms of terminology in translation." Most positive emotions are found in literary texts because they trace a delicate emotional connection between languages, whereas technical translations seem to be more specific with a higher level of exactness. Rarely do engineering-like texts provide us with emotional concepts. Therefore, there is no identification of the translator with the text, but a clearer rendition of the technical concepts themselves.

How to perceive emotions

Our way of perceiving emotions may depend on several factors: our level of EI, a certain context, cultural background or a momentary state of mind. We filter information in our environment by detecting relevant aspects and making them easy to understand. It is our general tendency to be emotional as regards our visual perception and to be drawn to objects that are arousing. On the other hand, rarely do we analyze the parts of the whole, on the contrary, the whole itself is more prevalent in our perception.

Emotional stimuli catch our attention, indicating our sensitivity to various spatial elements. In terms of translation, emotion bearing words such as: *envy, death, jerk, despair, rape* etc., are generally processed more efficiently than neutral words due to their emotional significance. Also, they appear to be more memorable.

Knowledge of a wider context helps the translator to render the most appropriate meanings. This context which is provided by language refers to the brain processes that set up the way information is processed. Prior experiences of both writers and translators may reflect very clearly whether the two parties belong to the same or various affective realities. Translation is highly influenced by this aspect, because in such a case, emotions should have similar connotations. If the text generator comes from an environment different from the interpreter's, the translation can be affected or misinterpreted.

According to Kissler et alii. 2007, "words with emotional connotations capture the reader's attention and are associated with enhanced brain responses compared to neutral words." Pourtois and Sander, (2010, 87) stated that "the emotion nature of a stimulus depends on a person's particularities and what is perceived as emotional for one person may be perceived as lacking in emotional meaning for another."

For instance, translating a text about the Chernobyl disaster might elicit similar emotional responses to various translators, depending on their personalities or previous emotional experiences. Thus it can be concluded that our perceptions to emotions depend to a greater extent on such factors as inner state, vision on the surrounding world or cultural background.

The power of words and their emotional impact

The translation exercise regarded as a highly complex and personal process introduces the translator into a completely new world in which words are visualized as more or less impactful. Depending on their emotional level words may cause a gradual

sense of discomfort and unease. The text processor analyses the information individually, in an attempt to grasp the general meaning. A broader perspective opens to the translator when he establishes the purpose of his work, the target readers and the impact created by the words.

As Barrett, Lindquist and Gendron (2007) stated, “language gives contextual information, constrains meaning and serves to shape and bias perception processes.” “Each translated work is filtered through one particular person’s imagination and perception and fixed in a particular time.” (Costa, 2007, 122)

While working with the text, translators’ inclinations, subjectivity or physical reactions come into play and impact the translation process. There is no clear boundary between absolute detachment and emotional influence. A complete detachment from a personal vision is impossible, therefore translators need to create meanings based on their own feelings, and also keep a straight line with the text author’s intention.

Consider, for example, the following paragraph about *Humanity’s Crisis of Purpose*, published in *Psychology Today* on-line magazine (13th June 2019): *Modern realities frequently leave people feelings at best confused, at worst cynical and hopeless. In part, this is a reaction to specific concerns – job loss, globalization, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, climate change and the erosion of familiar moral assumptions to name just a few.*

The first reading of the fragment might induce the idea that the author’s main purpose was to terrify the reader by comparing modern society to a series of dramatic experiences. This very short paragraph abounds in negative emotions which the reader might perceive in the most striking way. The sequence of negative words: *confused, cynical, hopeless, job loss, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, erosion* may lead to distressing reactions for translators and readers alike. The strength of the words cannot be reduced, since their emotional intensity is self-evident. Therefore, the affective reality of the words should be taken for granted.

Regulation of emotions among translators and readers is a gradual process which triggers commitment to the text, cooperation and identification with word connotations. The ability to modify emotions and make them adaptive is related to age, self-awareness and time spent of translation.

Conclusions

Language is a living organism and words bear various meanings while being uttered. Most writing pieces overflow with emotions, while the interpreter tries hard to reconcile and select the best meanings to be conveyed. Even if emotions do not find their perfect equivalents in languages, they develop progressively at any level of language acquisition. Translation is not an isolated process, but a dynamic exercise reflecting the translator’s style, tonality and personal thinking. There is a science of emotions which both interpreters and readers should understand to its full potential.

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PROMOTING THE TRANSLATION OF THE ADVERTISING DISCOURSE

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Abstract: *The translation of the advertising texts used to be associated with a mere linguistic transfer of content. This assumption has proved to be wrong and ineffective. The translation of the advertising content needs to be integrated into a more varied communication act and should be based on the idea of “internationalisation of markets”. The translation of an ad results from the advertiser’s efforts to ‘internationalise’ a certain product on a foreign market which requires intensive work in terms of adapting it to a different language and, more importantly, to a different culture and mindset. Our paper aims to look for answers to these specific issues, focusing mainly on the discourse of advertising for the tourism industry.*

Keywords: advertising; tourism; translation.

I. Introduction

The new discoveries in terms of the responsibilities that translators have and the changes in the notion of translation have brought about a paradigm shift in our understanding of it. One logical explanation for this change of perception is that the profession of translator is internationalising at a fast pace which is why many localised ideas do not raise to the expectations of the field anymore.

Globalisation has also been putting a lot of pressure on the existent translation theories making new habits change, partly because of the progress of the new technologies. Scholars and basically everyone whose job involves performing translation tasks are in need of new configurations to cope with the new challenges that can be either external or internal.

The notion of translation seems to be outdated now, being replaced by other more recent translation concepts such as localisation, internalisation, adaptation, versioning, mediation or transcreation. How much can the notion of translation be extended to enclose the forever changing communication circumstances and how can new ranking be rearranged behind these concepts? At first glance translation makes us think of a word-for-word shift which is oriented towards one direction only with the translators identifying themselves with humble workers ensuring the trade.

Gambier (2016:888) presents Sun’s (2014) opinion on the current status of translation studies. The latter states that the new developments in translation studies have managed to debunk the traditional definition and image which is now veering towards creativity, voice, interpretation, commitment and, most interestingly, an ethics of responsible subjectivity. The term itself and its adjacent concepts are continually influencing the contemporary theories on translation and the shift from printed material to the digital culture is taking place at the moment.

Nowadays, professional translators seem to hesitate in categorising their work as being either transcreation, transeditation or localisation as they feel it can belong to most types at the same time. Despite the development of new authorities and technologies meant to treat translation accurately, a translator’s work on either the

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literary or the non-literary categories is still crucial due to the forever-changing communication circumstances and necessities.

Our subject of interest is the wide field of non-literary translation, mainly the translation of tourism advertising. Unchallenging as it may seem, the advertising message imposes great care while being transferred to the target text as it needs to appeal to a different audience who have been subject to sometimes totally different cultural and social backgrounds. The relatively new concepts of localisation and internalisation greatly contribute to the mediation of the message making it accessible to the intended audience to whom the product addresses.

II. Internationalising versus localising the tourist message

Most large companies are willing to market their products abroad and the advertising industry is struggling to meet everyone's needs. Perhaps the most stringent problem it faces is the development of international competence which is required for a product to catch on and appeal to a foreign audience. So what seems to be the problem?

Anholt (2000) states that more than half of the business that is happening globally is subject to international trade and the main problem it faces is that a huge percentage of the current advertising agencies are performing locally rather than internationally. This means that the remaining percentage which is rather small will face a lot of pressure from companies selling all ranges of products with some of them succeeding in making a certain product known outside its country of origin and others failing to do so. Anholt (*ibidem*: 2-3) tries to debunk the traditional conviction that finding language equivalents is basically the only answer for every issue in international communication by qualifying it as rather odd:

A strange attitude indeed, especially since it is constantly confirmed and reinforced by the practices of global ad agencies- companies which style themselves as strategically-minded international communication consultancies. But there you go, and I don't see too many signs that this approach has changed over the years: every day, somewhere in the world, scarily junior people working on major global briefs in major global agencies are still treating the creative part of their international campaigns as nothing much more demanding than finding the cheapest translation company in the Yellow Pages. Anholt (*ibidem*: 2-3).

Thus, he condemns most advertising companies' tendency to rely too much on mere language equivalents and ignore the social and cultural component resulting in a message which is most definitely void of message for the foreign market whose customers must be persuaded to go for the product. Therefore, no real communication with the target audience can be performed without refining the cultural and social edges of the text so that buyers can perceive it as familiar and worth trying. Otherwise, the advertising content will fail to achieve its purpose and the product will be overshadowed by the huge variety of the same kind that is on the market nowadays.

Moreover, advertisements are communication bits which belong to the vocative text category. Titela Vîlceanu (2005) argues that the translation of this category of texts greatly benefits from the application of communicative approaches as they will undoubtedly work on the target audience's decision to buy. Thus, communication will be enabled by spotting the right cultural component which facilitates the comprehension of the content.

Reisinger (2009: 238) tries to give a description of the foreign customer's profile which should be taken into account by those who are in charge of the translation of the advertising message. She states that one of the most significant challenges would

be exactly catering for different categories of international tourists and coping with cultural misconceptions and sometimes even clashes.

The needs and expectations of future international travelers will be influenced by their national cultures- the most powerful force that shapes people's behaviours. National cultures affect how tourists think, communicate and understand. Tourists from different national cultures have distinct cultural values, norms, customs, rules of social behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, needs, expectations, experiences, motivations and communication styles. They perceive things differently, develop different meanings and behave differently. Those from very different cultures will have the biggest difficulties in interacting and communicating with each other. Reisinger (*ibidem*).

English advertising message	Romanian equivalent
Want to visit a rather quaint place?	<i>Îți dorești să te bucuri de atmosfera vetustă a tînutului?</i>
Served with neeps and tatties and usually a Scotch whiskey, it's the traditional meal of Burns Night.	Garnisit cu tiuși și grumbe și însoțit de un whiskey scotian este felul de mâncare tradițional de Ziua Bardului.

Fig. 1 Table showing attempts to either internationalise or localise the advertising message

The table above shows two examples of translated advertising messages, encompassing several translating approaches such as equivalence, adaptation, explicitation and implicitation.

For instance, the first one, *Îți dorești să te bucuri de atmosfera vetustă a tînutului*, has been performed through adapting the message for the Romanian audience so that it doesn't sound foreign. Remaining faithful to the initial message by attempting perfect equivalence, *Vrei să vizitezi un loc de o eleganță tradițională?*, would have had a neutral tone with no effect on a Romanian looking for an interesting holiday destination. Translating *quaint* as *atmosferă vetustă* will raise the standard of the message by employing a posh word which makes the whole message more refined and sends the type of holiday to the cultural category. Since it is an attempt to make the discourse more appealing to the target audience, we can also qualify this translation as one employing a slight localisation element.

The second one, *Garnisit cu tiuși și grumbe și însoțit de un whiskey scotian este felul de mâncare tradițional de ziua bardului*, was initially a reference to Scottish cuisine employing their specific dialect with a view to conveying a specific atmosphere. Not surprisingly, only few people coming across it would understand the meaning of *neeps* and *tatties* but the discovery of it by doing a Google search would add to the surprise and hopefully would enhance the satisfaction of discovering new information which would subliminally influence the decision to buy. Strange though it may sound, we have decided to translate *neeps* as *tiuși* instead of opting for the more approachable *napi* and *tatties* as *grumbe* not the well-known *cartofi* in an attempt to preserve the exotic touch. This is also a translation attempt to localise the message by addressing to one region of the country only.

Opting for the classic words to replace the regional ones, would have made the message appeal to a larger category of potential buyers, sliding towards internationalisation. Translating *Burns Night* as *Ziua Bardului* can be considered both explicitation and implicitation in translation first because it represents an attempt to explain what that event is all about (explicitation) and second because it replaces the

proper noun *Burns*, only familiar to a restricted category of holiday makers, with a more general notion which nevertheless gives hints about who the personality is.

III. Standardisation versus Adaptation of the initial advertising message

The advent of commercial satellite communication and also the globalisation of markets occurring in the 1970s made advertisers create international marketing strategies obtained through a standardization approach which meant that a certain product would keep its name and advertising message all around the world. Ortiz-Sotomayor (2007:6) presents Papavassiliou and Stathakopoulos (1997) stated advantages of this strategy such as the cost-effectiveness and the consistency of image. For some time, standardisation was considered ideal in the global world as it was thought to promote and facilitate international trading by blurring the social and cultural distinctions between nations.

Nevertheless, as Ortiz-Sotomayor (*ibidem*) explains, advertising companies soon understood that trying to erase the social and cultural differences while working on the advertising message was a big mistake as it sent a hard to decode message to a specific country and it also showed lack of respect for the local culture. Thus, the only option that was left was try to break these cultural boundaries by abolishing the standardisation approach and filter the advertising message through adaptation and localisation strategies. Ortiz-Sotomayor (*ibidem*) also shows some of the most significant advantages of the adaptation approach as suggested by Papavassiliou and Stathakopoulos (1997):

- | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) Separate messages should be used to reach buyers in different markets by fitting the message to each particular country |
| 2) There are insurmountable differences (e.g. cultural, economic, legal, media and product dissimilarities) between countries and even between regions of the same country) |
| 3) These differences necessitate the adaptation or development of new/different advertising strategies |
| 4) Assuming similar buying motives for consumers across foreign markets may be simplistic, or even dangerous |

Fig. 2 Table showing Papavassiliou and Stathakopoulos' (1997) advantages of adaptation: Ortiz-Sotomayor (*ibidem*).

Anholt (*op. cit.*: 5) gives a metaphorical description of what translating without taking into account the cultural element means:

Translating copy is like picking fruit from one tree and trying to glue it onto the branches of another. The fruit will wither and eventually rot, and anyway, even if a miracle happened and you could find a way of grafting the living fruit onto the branches, the fruit would still be growing on the wrong tree, and nobody in their right mind would want to pick it and eat it. Anholt (*op. cit.*: 5).

On interpreting this metaphorical description, we get to realise the many flaws that translating without considering the cultural and social dissimilarities can present, as, basically, the standardised message tells nothing to people coming from different cultural backgrounds about the product's worth. To be even more exact, Anholt (*ibidem*) comes up with a specific example to demonstrate how differently people coming from different environments look at the same concept:

A cup of coffee = a half-pint mug filled with equal quantities of lukewarm dishwater, instant coffee granules, and sugar. (The British)	Una tazza di café = a tiny cup with a couple of spoonfuls of espresso (The Italians)
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Fig. 3 Table showing the British and Italian perceptions on one concept as presented by Anholt (*ibidem*).

Anholt (*ibidem*: 6) believes that everything we say is influenced and mediated by culture and words represent the tools which culture uses to communicate its particularities and that tackling the complexity of the advertising message requires not only language but also cultural mediation.

Many things can be understood about cultural differences by simply analysing the way people from different cultures hold casual conversation. Sulaiman and Wilson (2019: 52) support this perspective by presenting Katan's (2004: 41) description of this:

Cultural differences result in different content and style being used for a particular communicative event. For example, the conventions on 'small talk' differ from one culture to another. In the USA, where small talk is a big part of everyday life, most conversations would start with pleasantries ranging from 'how was your day?' to 'what's up man?' Even a conversation with a stranger might start with something trivial like a generic comment on sports. In the British context, people tend to comment on the weather (e.g. 'cold, isn't it?' or 'it's a lovely day, isn't it?') while in Italian culture it is quite common to engage with personal appearances, health and family. Katan (*ibidem*: 41).

Accordingly, the area of tourism advertising mirrors the communication framework that facilitates the selling of tourism successfully. They mirror how the tourism industry and potential holidaymakers respond to such communicative instances. Sulaiman and Wilson (*ibidem*: 53) argue that the translation of tourist promotion materials needs to reach the heart of the culture to which the target audience pertain otherwise it risks developing the so-called 'cultural bumps' leaving readers puzzled as, despite being composed in the local language, the message still sounds foreign.

In the table below we have attempted to mediate the advertising message in accordance with Katan's (*op.cit.*:41) observations on small talk so that it can be culturally accessible for the American audience, the former, and the British one, the latter.

American-like mediated message	British-like mediated message
Howdy! Dreaming of a romantic getaway or an exciting vacation to Las Vegas?	Whether you go on holiday alone, with your significant other, with your family or with your closest friends, let Travel Centre be the purveyor of your dream holiday.

Fig. 4 Table showing our attempts to make the TM more culturally-specific

As seen above, the introduction of a typically American greeting formula will convey the idea of a friendly invitation to a chat, adopting a direct approach of the matter under discussion while the second one uses two terms (*significant other* and *purveyor*) which are predominantly used by the British audience, the whole approach

leading us to believe that the conversation is less abrupt by adopting a ‘nice weather, isn’t it?’ strategy before the actual issue gets to be discussed.

IV. Conclusion

The translation of advertising and tourism texts is bound to remain a never-ending issue as long as our global society evolves and introduces more and more cutting-edge technology. Translators of advertising texts struggle with the message they want to convey to different audiences by shaping and reshaping it to a point where it manages to get across. It is not as easy as it seems as it involves an adjustment on multiple levels. The cultural and social elements of communication seem to be much more important than the linguistic one, allowing the message to infuse the potential buyer with a burning desire to try what it sells. Therefore, the Cultural Turn has impacted all the traditional translation theories and methods making translation become a cross-cultural event and the translator a cultural agent.

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SIMILARITY AND AMBIGUITY - THE INSUFFICIENT CONDITIONS FOR WORDPLAY TO EMERGE IN TECHNICAL ENGLISH TEXTS

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Abstract: The article presents a few aspects related to non-wordplay in technical English texts. Wordplay is based on similarity of linguistic forms (polysemy, homonymy) which is realised in an appropriate linguistic context. The technical texts have a non-creative character and might be inappropriate contexts for wordplay.

Keywords: non-wordplay; contrastive senses; similarity

Introduction

There is absolutely no doubt that not all utterances are amusing: “the mere presence in the language of a potentially similar (and contextually unrelated) phrase is a widespread phenomenon, and does not make an utterance amusing” (Richie, 2004: 117). Technical English might be learnt as a foreign language or might be a medium of instruction. Learning a new language consists of the acquisition of vocabulary along with pronunciation, spelling, register, style, morphological features, and syntactic and semantic relationships among words.

Prior research in the field of technical English has suggested that technical vocabulary keeps growing whilst the field of study progresses. Theorists who counted terms in technical vocabularies state that they may range between 1,000 and 5,000 terms (NATION, 2008 :10). Hence, it is not easy to learn and use such a large number of words in order to integrate in a professional community. Specialists developed lists of words easy to use by teachers and learners of ESP. For instance, WARD (1999) examined foundation-level engineering texts and determined the number of words students need to know (2000 word families covering up to 95 percent from his textbook corpus). Later on, in 2009, Ward developed an English word list of basic engineering for low - level language undergraduates which covered multifarious disciplines of engineering and contained 299 word types covering up to 16.4 percent of a corpus of engineering textbooks:188 of them are also in A General Service List of English Words (GSL) 1000 list, 28 are in the GSL 2000, and 78 are in the Academic Word List. The first ten words in Ward’s list are: *system, shown, equation, example, value, design, used, section, flow, given*. Also, there is evidence that the Electrical Engineering field “is such a vast field that not even specialists themselves are familiar with the full range of associated terminology” (HANN, M., 2004:141).

Therefore, the differences between natural language, perceived as imprecise, creative, ambiguous, vague, and technical language, which is precise, unambiguous, non vague, non-creative, represent the basis of the present study. In an engineering text, not only the terminology is new, but also grammar rules may change and some verbs and prepositions are used with a rather new significance.

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In this context, it is worthwhile to examine the traits of the technical text in order to identify whether or not, such a text type, represents an appropriate or inappropriate context for wordplay to emerge.

1. The technical text is strictly functional, all coming into contact with it out of necessity: “People generally do not settle down with a glass of wine to spend the evening reading installation guides for fun” (Byrne, J., 2006: 10). Similarly, the information needs to be accurate and sufficient: “[...] the challenge for technical communicators is to ensure that all of the relevant information is indeed conveyed but also that it is conveyed in such a way that the readers can use the information easily, properly and effectively” (idem).

Moreover, all disciplines have their own vocabulary of specialised terminology, referred to as jargon (White, F.D., 1996:191; Mancuso, J.C., 1990: 186). Specialised terminology is crucial in any sort of communication whether the enunciator would like to avoid ambiguity. The way people learn a specialized language is similar to the way of learning a foreign language, *i.e.* acquiring the skills of communication needed to communicate in a professional environment. Therefore, it is more than specific terminology since it is a new language based on the natural language, but with its specific grammar rules and linguistic restrictions. (Hann, M., 2004: xv-xxvii)

2. Typically, the technical text is related to its polysemous nature, as a term from Mechanics might have a different meaning in Computer engineering or some other technical field.

3. Furthermore, some terms might be rather ambiguous due to homonymy (identical spelling and pronunciation), which is homophony (identical pronunciation but different spelling) and homography (identical spelling but different pronunciation).

Aim

The paper attempts to identify the lexical aspects with respect to the emergence of wordplay in technical English texts utilised in *Computer Engineering* and *Electric and Mechanical Engineering* classes. These might be relevant whilst reading and translating specialised texts in the classroom, the teaching aim being that of endowing students with specific skills necessary for future engineering communication. Also, the article is not an exhaustive and comprehensive treatment of the area which is rather broad and complex, it only offers a general overview and illustrative examples discovered during teaching practice.

Aspects to consider

Many technical words, for instance in Electrical and Mechanical Engineering vocabulary have been adapted from Physics. Generally, such words come from two different major branches of Physics, *i.e.* Mechanics and Electricity (Hann, 2004:10). Besides this, because simple words might occur in various technical texts, Hann’s *Collocation Dictionary* may be a useful tool to identify the *polysemous nature* of words. In addition, some words such as common adjectives, verbs, prepositions and certain nouns prove to be false friends and cause confusion whilst translating them (Hann, 1992:12). *Homonyms*, on the other hand, are rather frequent adding supplementary difficulties to comprehend the meaning. Moreover, Hann emphasises that *mechanische*

Spannung has two meanings in the same text (tension and stress), one of them being unknown to the reader, *stress*. (idem).

As shown previously, polysemy and homonymy might generate ambiguity and/or wordplay in a natural language context: “wordplay is based on the similarity of linguistic forms which is realised in an appropriate linguistic or nonlinguistic context” (Żyśko, K., 2017: 7). Nonetheless, in technical texts, wordplay is infrequent, the context permitting a restrictive selection of senses:

The notion of context enforcing a certain reading of a word, traditionally viewed as selecting for a particular word sense, is central both to lexicon design (the issue of breaking a word into word senses) and local composition of individual sense definitions (Pustejovsky, J., Bouillon, P., 2013: 3).

Typically, polysemy is considered to relate “to the capacity of words to show different sides” and it should be viewed “as a catalyst for enriching languages” (Pennec, B., 2018: 25). To Victorri and Fuchs (1996), polysemy is an entirely central phenomenon in language being the rule not the exception. Therefore, it is found in all syntactical categories i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) and, to a lesser degree in other grammatical words such as determiners, pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions (Pennec, B., *ibidem*).

In respect of homonymy prior research indicates that it is characterised by distinct words whose form is “accidentally the same” (Victorri and Fuchs, *ibidem*: 5). For instance, the terms *plant* in *employees at the plant* (*plant* = factory) and *plant* (a form a vegetal life) are homonyms, there is no link between them, therefore they are completely distinct.

The research in this article builds on existing knowledge in the field of linguistics. In order to better understanding polysemy and homonymy, it is useful to address polysemy as the characteristic feature of a lexical unit to be linked to several *sememes*, one of the semes being common. In contrast, homonymy is characterized by different meanings, the corresponding *sememes* having no common *seme*. Nonetheless, “the morphological and acoustic kinship can also be a source of confusion when the context is not enough to select one meaning or another” (Pennec, B., *ibidem*: 26). With different spellings and identical acoustic form, which is the case of homophones, there is misunderstanding, confusion, ambiguity (idem).

Furthermore, it is typical for ambiguity to occur “when a linguistic item has only one representation at one level (e.g. phonetically) but more than one representation at another level (e.g. semantically)”(Żyśko, K., idem). Chomsky (1957:11; 1965) made a list of representative levels, such as phonemic, morphemic and structural. For Attardo (1994: 96), ambiguity covers “everything which is unspecified”, and it is of several types: phonic ambiguity, syntactic ambiguity, alliterative ambiguity. Tuggy (2006: 167) discusses about the difference between ambiguity and vagueness, focussing to demonstrate “whether two or more meanings associated with a certain phonological form are distinct (ambiguous), or linked as nondistinguished, non-conventionalised subtypes of a single, more general meaning (vagueness)”. Equally important, such examples as *store* employed in the context of *permanent storage* (Computer engineering) and *store* used for *supermarket* could be viewed as ambiguous; also, *uncle* “father’s brother” vs. *uncle* “mother’s brother” should be considered as vague. Subsequently, “the borderline between ambiguity and vagueness is fuzzy (not absolute), with polysemy as a halfway point between the two” (Żyśko, K., *ibidem*: 9). Moreover,

there are other terms or expressions whose content marks different sorts of vagueness, i.e. the expression *a while* (Victorri and Fuchs, 1996: 21).

Method and Material

The method used to obtain data for analysis was that of studying and teaching specialised texts during ESP classes for the Computer Engineering and Electric and Mechanical Engineering undergraduates, during a whole year of study. General and technical dictionaries and thesauruses, and parallel texts were used to thoroughly investigate the meaning in technical context.

The source texts are extracted from the Student's books *Oxford English for Information Technology Second Edition* (henceforth OEIT) and *Oxford English for Electrical and Mechanical Engineering* (henceforth OEEEME), published by Oxford University Press. The texts are primarily meant to serve as learning resource for *engineering communication*.

Procedures and Practice

The analysis of examples is conducted to illustrate the link between the non-plurality of interpretation of specialised terms and the co-text and/or context - generated polysemy or homonymy of specialised terms. As noted earlier, with the technical text, there is no intention of generating wordplay because the aim of the writer is to convey clear, accurate data to the reader. One of the definitions of wordplay this article rests on is the following:

[...]the various textual phenomena in which structural features of the language(s) used are exploited in order to bring about a communicatively significant confrontation of two (or more) linguistic structures with more or less similar forms and more or less different meanings (Delabastita, 1996: 128).

Typically, the features of wordplay identified more frequently such as similarity of forms, ambiguity (homonymy) and humour, are the ones to be investigated in order to demonstrate the non-wordplay character of the technical text (Krikmann, 2006: 48). It is worth mentioning that the literature is rich in respect of the various ways of categorising instances of wordplay. A few studies following the structuralist thought (e.g. Chiaro 1996) classify wordplay as graphological, morphological, phonetic, semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic. In other studies, distinction is made between significant (intentional) and non-significant (non-intentional wordplay) (Delabastita, 1993:122), or verbal and referential (Attardo, S., 1994:95).

As stated previously, the approach utilised is that of denotational unrelatedness, not the cognitive one. Therefore, the ambiguity might emerge either from homonymy or from polysemous terms, using Attardo's view of wordplay as being based on ambiguity (homonymy) and Źyško's view of wordplay creation as driven by polysemy. Furthermore, there is also the common practice in lexicon research which distinguishes between *contrastive* ambiguity (homonymy) (Weinreich 1964) and *complementary* polysemy (Pustejovsky 1996: 27-28):

[...] contrastive polysemy deals with homonyms such as *match* (a small stick with a tip which ignites when scraped on a rough surface) and *match* (contest in a game or sport),

whereas complementary polysemy deals with interrelated semantic aspects of a word, such as, in the case of *record*, for example, the physical object and the music. Cases, such as *smart* as in “a smart person” or “a smart dress”, *and/air* as in “a fair trial” and “fair hair” lie somewhere in between. (Nerlich, B., Todd, Z. et al., 2003: 8)

For example, for Pustejovksy words such as *match* (in sports) and *match* (in the match box) exhibit contrastive polysemy and words such as *paper*, as in *reading a paper*, *writing a paper*, *giving a paper*, *making something out of paper* exhibit complementary polysemy:

[...] there are two types of sense complementarity: (a) category preserving, and (b) category changing. I will define logical polysemy as a complementary ambiguity where there is no change in lexical category, and the multiple senses of the word have overlapping, dependent, or shared meanings. Hence, complementary polysemy is a slightly broader term than logical polysemy, since the former also describes how cross-categorial senses are related (Pustejovksy, 1996: 28)

The terms identified as potentially generators of wordplay will be addressed in point of resistance to lexical similarity and / or ambiguity. The analysis of example in this article is based on the theory of generative lexicon; also, it is inspired from the simplest model of lexical description (Pustejovksy, 1996) utilised to investigate the polysemies in the general lexicon¹:

(44) A lexicon *L* is a *Sense Enumeration Lexicon* if and only if for every word *w* in *L*, having multiple senses *s₁, ..., s_n* associated with that word, then:

(i) if *s₁, ..., s_n* are contrastive senses, the lexical entries expressing these senses are stored as *w s₁, ..., w s₂*.

(ii) if *s₁, ..., s_n* are complementary senses, the lexical entry expressing these senses is stored as *w{S₁, ..., S_n}*.

Every ambiguity is either represented by (i) or (ii) above. (*ibidem*: 38)

This model will be adapted for the purpose of this article. Henceforth, a few examples will be presented and explained to demonstrate the infrequency of wordplay in the technical English texts.

(1) But as server *farms* increase in size [...] (OEIT, 2009: 138),
server *farms*

{farm1}: CAT count_noun; GENUS area of land [ARG 1+human][ARG 2+animal]

{farm2}: CAT count_noun; GENUS collection of networked server computers, “a large collection of networked server computers that work together by sharing the service workload”[ARG 1+object][ARG 2 -human]

The description shows that wordplay might be generated by the ambiguity of the term *farm* because, for instance, undergraduates in the field of engineering are not familiar with the specialised term, the general term from standard language being more common, i.e. *animal farm*.

(2) [...] it completes an electrical circuit which heats up a heat-sensitive *pellet* (OEEME, 2012: 60)

{pellet1}: CAT count_noun; GENUS a small ball of a edible substance [ARG 1+ food]

¹ Abbreviations taken from Pustejovksy (1996: 34-37): CAT (category type), GENUS (genus term); other abbreviations: ARG (argument)

{pellet2}: CAT count_noun; GENUS metal object “a small ball of metal for a gun”
[ARG + object]

{pellet3}: CAT mass_noun; GENUS material “compressed mass of moulding material
of prescribed form and weight”[ARG 3+object]

In the example above, *pellet*, and its contrastive senses denotes ambiguity.

(3) With *a skin*, a player can become a jukebox (OEIT, 2009: 62)

{skin1}: CAT uncount_noun; GENUS outer layer of a human or non-human body
[ARG 1 +human] [ARG 2 + animal][ARG 3+permanent]

{skin2}: CAT uncount_noun; GENUS solid layer on top of a liquid [ARG + substance]
[ARG 2 + temporary]

{skin3}: CAT count_noun; GENUS a layer that is part of an object [ARG 1 + object]
[ARG 2 + permanent]

{skin4}: CAT uncount_noun; GENUS “the combination of CSS and HTML that
determines the look and feel of a website, document or page and that can be easily
substituted, thus transforming appearance without altering functionality and data” [ARG
1 + non-human] [ARG 2 + non-object] [ARG 3 + visual] [ARG 4 +
permanent/temporary]

The *skin* is well-known in the standard language as a *layer*. However, as a
specialised term it is rarely imagined to mean what the definition in {skin4} expresses.
It is a suggestive example of wordplay generated by ambiguity.

(4) *hopper* (OEEME, 2012: 75)

{hopper1}: CAT count_noun; GENUS objet, “facility or container for storing
workpieces in an unsorted state” [ARG 1 + object] [ARG 2 + storing feature]

{hopper2}: CAT count_noun; GENUS object, “a large funnel” [ARG 1 + object] [ARG
2 + thin tube]

In this case, the wordplay might exist because of the types of objects described by the
term *hopper* in different specialised contexts. Not knowing the exact meaning in the
context might generate humour, unintentionally, whilst in usage.

(5) *latency* (OEIT, 2009: 109)

{latency1} CAT uncount_noun; GENUS elapsed time [ARG 1 + object] [ARG 2 +
process]

{latency} CAT uncoun_noun; GENUS interval [ARG 1 + reaction] [ARG 2 +
behaviour]

The term *latency* contains the category of time although it infers various situations
related to objects, reactions or behaviour. Once more, the context is more relevant for
the meaning than the presence of the same term.

Other similar examples illustrating contrastives senses are: “A third principle
behind OOP is *polymorphism*” (OEIT, 2009: 153); “employees at the Dearborn *plant*”
(OEIT, 2009: 153); “A second feature of OOP is inheritance” (OEIT, 2009: 153); it
cause the beam to bend (OEEME, 2012: 86) a dummy gauge (OEEME, 2012: 89);
Licence to chill (OEIT, 2009: 163); the first electronic virtual assistant, or EVA (OEIT,
2009: 164); Screenfridge (OEIT, 2009: 163).

Conclusion

Understanding technical English texts is a fiendish work for all expert or inexperienced readers because particular terms are sometimes a hindrance. It is evident that disambiguation in technical English texts is more about matching the corresponding word and arguments from the lexical entries. Homonymy characterizes the technical lexicon, the contrastive senses being the central generators of ambiguity. Nevertheless, the co-text and the context in technical texts are normally intentionally unambiguous and lacking of humour. Whether a piece of wordplay might be seized underneath the specialised layer of technical language, it is undoubtedly due to temporary lack of knowledge in the field of specialised language of the respective reader. No technical texts affords itself to create wordplay and put the reader in difficulty.

This article is not comprehensive enough to draw significant conclusions. However, the illustrating examples and the analysis indicate that there is no intentional wordplay in technical language although similarity and ambiguity might be present.

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«DIN NĂZDRĂVĂNIILE LUI NASTRATIN HOGEA», ANTON PANN - ENJEUX DE L'IMAGINAIRE DANS L'ACTE TRADUCTIF

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Abstract : The value of Anton Pann's "Plaisanteries" (we can use the possession because the versified tales are part of his literary work) consists of a great sense of authenticity and a large perspective of analysis (the message, the way to transmit some moral principles, the ironic and humorous effects etc.). Anton Pann himself translated "The Pleasantries" from Turkish and he imprinted them with a particular subjective feature: the verse form. And the challenge to the Romanian-French translator is to render the message that is centered upon a moral lesson because Pann's style of writing is based on the deep meaning of popular wisdom. The vivid images he creates are meaningful for some ideas that refer to human flaws and they become an endless source of humor and ironic hints.

Keywords : humor; ironic; images.

Tributaires de la spiritualité orientale et de la condition humaine, les contes sur Nastratin Hogaé puissent leur origine dans le soufisme et ils sont significatifs par la manière dont on transmet la sagesse. Suite à une lecture comparative des contes en prose (le recueil intitulé *Peripețiile lui Nastratin Hogaé*, traduit du persan par Mihai Cernătescu, Naser Nikoubakht, édition 2016) et en vers (*Din năzdrăvăniile lui Nastratin Hogaé*, Anton Pann, édition 2011), nous observons les marques du style original dont le poète Pann traite les thèmes et les motifs des contes, en y rajoutant de la valeur poétique.

Anton Pann (1796-1854)¹ imprègne les contes en prose d'une nuance authentique : la forme versifiée. Nous avons considéré cela comme un challenge et une poussée des limites dans l'acte traductif. Partant de ces idées directrices sur le texte-support, deux contes en vers *Din năzdrăvăniile lui Nastratin Hogaé*, nous nous proposons d'observer la complémentarité entre les intentions ironiques-humoristiques de l'auteur roumain, la matérialisation de ces intentions dans la langue d'arrivée et les images qui en résultent.

Le monde créé par Anton Pann est empreint d'érudition et de gaminerie. Le poète parle aux plus humbles, il manie le langage et l'utilise habilement dans ses textes anecdotiques. L'objet de son ironie n'est pas nommé puisque l'auteur envisage un type, une catégorie plus générale. Il accorde une grande attention à son texte, il le remanie jusqu'à ce qu'il retrouve ce point commun de l'ironie, de l'allégorique et du divertissement. L'humour est truculent ! Pas de lyrisme qui donne sur le pathétique ! C'est seulement l'écoulement de la pensée vive transposée dans des mots bien choisis.

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¹ Le contexte politique et social est celui de la période phanariote (1711/1716-1821) et prémoderne avec les démarches vouées à la recherche de l'identité nationale. Quant à la position d'Anton Pann par rapport aux événements, celui-ci reste le haut-parleur de la sagesse populaire à l'opposé du courant centré sur l'assimilation des modèles culturels occidentaux. Anton Pann (sur son vrai nom: Anton Pantoleon Petrov) a fourni aux lecteurs roumains une variante des contes sur Nastratin Hogaé, en 1852, en vue d'une reconnexion à la sagesse orientale.

Un autre aspect à observer vise la nuance humoristique qui *affecte* les vers. La manière dont on *pense* le signifiant rend possible une image polyvalente du signifié. Lecteur et traducteur se laissent contaminés par les impressions produites suite à la lecture du texte original. Alors, le problème qui se pose est celui de choisir la variante la plus proche de l'image que l'auteur a voulu créer à travers ses vers. « Pas d'imagination sans interprétation, sans mise en scène d'un espace de jeu, dans position d'un écart. L'image est révélation d'autre chose qu'elle. Elle signifie, elle anticipe ». (Védrine, 1990 : 9) Par exemple, un terme populaire roumain, censé provoquer le rire par la simple prononciation, ne peut être rendu en français que par un syntagme ou par une phrase entière. Dans ce cas-là, l'image produite dans l'esprit du lecteur étranger risque une perte dans le contenu humoristique. Alors, l'enjeu des images eidétiques se déclenche dans un essai de compensation.

Le *sémantisme* de l'humour et de l'ironie dans l'œuvre d'Anton Pann tourne autour de la vie-spectacle. Certes, la nuance populaire complète l'image de la sagesse antonpannesque. Lire ses vers signifie lire une intelligence dont on ressent subtilement le poids. Il s'agit d'une esthétique très fine de la phrase, d'une harmonie des mots qui dévoile une disharmonie des mœurs, de la situation, des valeurs sociales, en général.

L'influence orientale est ressentie dans le penchant pour les proverbes et les maximes – expressions de la sagesse et de la vérité. Les mots d'esprit servent à maintenir le lien avec la littérature populaire. Anton Pann réussit à trouver un point de convergence entre l'Orient et l'Occident, mais son œuvre est assimilée à l'espace balcanique. La poésie est une activité qu'il fait plaisir, en montrant une très grande capacité d'invention et de reconstruction au niveau de l'imaginaire. Il mise sur l'humour et l'ironie, sur la subtilité des mots habilement choisis, sur le jeu des sonorités. Même s'il s'agit des traductions, il les a imprégnées de son talent de versificateur (c'est le facteur *subjectivité* du traducteur).

La manière dont Anton Pann use du lexique crée l'impression qu'il joue avec les mots, en s'appuyant sur les effets de la polysémie et de la répétition. Son écriture se caractérise par un débit qui découle de la profondeur et le caractère universel de la sagesse populaire. Anton Pann accentue l'effet humoristique et son rire a une visée morale. Il ne dit jamais tout et invite le lecteur à trouver l'essentiel de ses contes en vers. Cela entraîne également un défi dans l'acte traductif puisque notre démarche vise le transfert en français de l'idée directrice du texte en roumain. Dans son article, *La traduction – voie vers un autre monde*, la traductrice et professeur roumaine Ioana Irina Durdureanu souligne l'importance du message inséparable à *l'univers extralinguistique*:

« En fait, c'est ce qu'une traduction doit faire: transposer le lecteur dans le monde de l'autre, y compris sa culture, sa façon de découper la réalité, sa modalité de concevoir ce qui l'entoure. Si cela est possible ou non à tous les niveaux, c'est un débat encore en question, parce que les défenseurs de la linguistique infirmeront toujours le fait que l'on peut traduire la pensée d'un auteur, la culture d'un peuple, etc. Mais le pivot central de toute traduction devrait être le message puisqu'elle ne se limite pas au simple transfert linguistique des mots, mais tout un univers extralinguistique est impliqué dans le processus traduisant ». (Durdureanu, 2017 : 240)

Il n'y a pas d'équivalence sémantique ou sonore parfaite. Nous nous proposons de mettre en évidence plutôt le sens ironique-humoristique. Même si la forme métrique n'est pas respectée intégralement, nous essayons de garder la constance et l'uniformité.

Afin de préserver le rythme et de ne pas enregistrer beaucoup de pertes en ce qui concerne le sens, nous avons parfois choisi de regrouper les vers.

Une autre remarque dans notre démarche sur les enjeux de l'imaginaire antonpannesque porte sur le niveau du lexique. Selon Georges Mounin, la traduction est « une série d'opérations dont les matériaux initiaux et les produits finaux sont des significations ». (Mounin, 1963 : 232) L'actualisation du registre populaire équivaut à une invitation à réfléchir plutôt sur la morale du texte, sur l'idée directrice qui se concrétise dans une image que le lecteur moderne garde dans sa mémoire. Et nous nous proposons de faire ressortir justement cette idée dont l'impact dans la conscience du lecteur est au-dessus de tel ou tel choix dans l'acte traductif. Parfois, un mot ou une expression sert à accentuer l'effet comique ou garder la rime, mais c'est trop vieilli(e) pour le lecteur moderne. Alors, une explication s'impose.

Les éléments prosodiques ont aussi leur rôle. Nous avons choisi de varier la longueur des vers et de créer sinon de la rime au moins l'effet de continuité au niveau du rythme (les vers d'un nombre variable de syllabes se succèdent de sorte qu'ils créent un effet d'écoulement). Même si la longueur des vers varie dans la traduction en français (10-15 syllabes), nous avons respecté la strophe. Dans le cas des vers, la fidélité ne concerne pas l'exactitude, mais la capacité de trouver un équilibre entre signification et sonorité. D'ailleurs, « le contexte linguistique ne forme que la matière brute de l'opération : c'est le contexte, bien plus complexe, des rapports entre deux cultures, deux modes de pensée et de sensibilité qui caractérise vraiment la traduction » (Cary, 1986 : 35).

Chaque conte mise en scène par Nastratin vise à produire une impression dans la conscience du lecteur. Selon Henri Bergson, « il n'y a pas de comique en dehors de ce qui est proprement humain ». (Bergson, 1940 : 2) Le comique du langage se dissout dans le comique des actions et des situations de sorte que le lecteur soit attiré dans les jeux des images qui représentent autant de facettes de l'être humain, de sa nature contradictoire et, par extrapolation, de la société de cette époque-là. « Nous rions toutes les fois que notre attention est détournée sur le physique d'une personne, alors que le moral était en cause ». (*ibidem* : 87)

Les Plaisanteries de Nastratin Hoga – textes choisis

Un nebun făgăduiește ș-înteleptul s-amăgește	Le fou promet et le sage se laisse dupé
<p>Într-o zi Nastratin Hoga, ceartă c-un vecin având, Fuse tras la judecată, pentru dânsul jalbă dând; Nastratin plecând să meargă spre a se înfățișa, Băgă-n sân un pietroi mare și se-nfățișe aşa; Când părătorul de dânsul spunea câte îi plăcea, Nastratin pe taină sânul își arăta și tăcea. Judecătorul văzându-l că își bătea sânul plin, Toată dreptatea o dete în partea lui Nastratin;</p>	<p>Un jour, Hoga Nastratin s'accroche avec son voisin Qui lui a fait malice en le portant en justice; Une grosse pierre sous sa chemise, Hoga se présenta ainsi devant le juge; Pendant que le cafardeur accusait Nastratin, Celui-ci montrait vers son sein Bouche close, sans avoir l'air de rien. Une fois le cafardeur mis dehors, Le juge dit à Nastratin, le gagnant: - Sors ce que tu m'as montré; Il sortit la grosse pierre, la déposa devant</p>

<p>După ce jeluitarul fu d-acă afară dat, Zise lui Nastratin Hoga: - Scoate ce mi- ai arătat; El scoțând îndată piatra, o puse cu cinstă jos și se trase la o parte, cu chip prea politicos;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dar ce este asta? zise judecătorul bătrân; - Este darul, el răspunse, ce ți-l arătam în săn. 	<p>le juge Il fit un pas en arrière comme s'il rendait un hommage;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qu'est-ce que c'est ? demanda le vieux juge; - C'est un don et ma blouse n'en était que le refuge.
<p>Un conte en vers très suggestif pour l'idée de corruption dont l'image se concrétise par la tromperie de Nastratin. Dans la traduction en français, nous avons souligné la nuance comique en permutant le deuxième vers en première position et en supprimant la répétition. Ce qui nous intéresse c'est justement l'astuce de Nastratin qui met une pierre sous sa chemise et fait semblant d'y avoir mis quelque chose de plus précieux. Pour respecter le rythme, nous avons procédé à l'économie lexicale et rendu le vers « Toată dreptatea o dete în partea lui Nastratin » par le nom <i>le gagneur</i> en permutant le vers « După ce jeluitarul fu d-acă afară dat: Une fois le cafardeur mis dehors, / Le juge dit à Nastratin, le gagneur ». Cela met en évidence que l'accusateur a perdu le procès et Nastratin est sorti gagnant. Le geste de Nastratin de déposer la pierre devant le juge et de faire un pas en arrière témoigne de l'ironie: « comme s'il rendait un hommage » (nous avons souligné cette idée en utilisant la comparaison). En ajoutant le syntagme <i>comme si</i>, nous avons réalisé une amplification au niveau du sens.</p> <p>Pour traduire le dernier vers, nous avons utilisé l'explicitation et la modulation: « Este darul, el răspunse, ce ți-l arătam în săn – C'est un don et ma blouse n'en était que le refuge ». L'ironie est rendue ici par l'antiphrase. Le choix des mots familiers <i>s'accrocher avec qqn. – se disputer¹</i> et <i>cafardeur - dénonciateur²</i> (<i>pârătorul</i>) se fonde sur l'essai de garder l'oralité du texte en roumain. Au niveau de l'imaginaire, l'effet produit est celui d'un dialogisme permanent avec le lecteur.</p>	

<p>Haina mai mult e privită decât persoana cinstită</p> <p>Nastratin Hoga odată fiind la nuntă chemat, Se duse în haine simple, ca sărac biet îmbrăcat; Nuntașii asfel văzându-l nici în seamă nu-l băga, Ci pe cei cu haine scumpe să trateze alergă; Si după ce aşezără la masă pe toți frumos, Il puseră și pe dânsul în colțul mesii de jos. Nastratin, văzând aceasta, se sculă,-n grab</p>	<p>On regarde plutôt la parure, mais on traite la personne en belle ordure</p> <p>Invité au repas de mariage, Nastratin ressemblait à un bousillage; Les convives se hâtaient à traiter les bien habillés Et Nastratin – ils l'ignoraient; Il fut mis sur le plancher Tandis que les autres à table mangeaient. Alors Hoga emprunta les vêtements d'un ami Et s'habilla comme un éfendi. Il avait l'apparence d'un homme galant</p>
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¹ Cf. *Le Parisien* <http://dictionnaire.sensagent.leparisien.fr/accrocher/fr-fr/>

²Ibidem <http://dictionnaire.sensagent.leparisien.fr/cafardeur/fr-fr/>

<p>alergă, Și la un al său prietin să-i dea hainele-l rugă; Dându-i hainele acelea, se-mbrăcă galant pe loc, Puse ș-o blană asupră-și, cu postav roșu de foc, Și aşa mergând el iarăși la nunta ce-a fost chemat, Cum îl văzură nuntașii, cu cinstă l-a- ntâmpinat: -Poftim, poftim, Hoga-efendi, către dânsul toți zicând, L-a pus tocma-n fruntea mesii, fiecare loc făcând. El dacă șezu la masă ș-a-ntins mâneca în vas, Zăcând: - Poftim, poftim, blană, mănâncă ce e mai gras. Îl întrebară nuntașii: - Hoga-efendi! zicând, Pentru ce o faci aceasta, ș-întingi mâneca, mânănd? - Pentru că, el răspunse, eu întâi când am venit, Cu hainele cele proaste, nimenea nu m-a cinstit, Și când v-am dat bună ziua, abia mi-a zis: „Mulțămim”, Iar cum venii cu acestea, toți mi- au zis: „Poftim, poftim”; De aceea și eu blana se mănânce o poftesc, Că văz toți privesc la haine și persoana n-o cinstesc.</p>	<p>Le tissu fourrure rouge vif y ajoutant, Quand il fut de retour au repas de mariage, Les convives l'accueillèrent avec beaucoup de louanges: -Entrez, entrez, Hoga-éfendi, lui dirent tous à la fois, Et le mirent en haut bout de table. Il s'assit, plongea la manche dans le pot et dit: -Tiens, fourrure, mange ce qui est de plus gras. Et les convives lui demandèrent: -Hoga- éfendi ! Pourquoi mets-tu la manche à manger ?</p> <p>- Parce que, répondit-il, quand je suis venu plus tôt, Vêtu comme un oignon, personne ne m'a adressé un mot, J'ai dit « bonjour », vous m'avez à peine salué à votre tour, Et puis, habillé de manière policé, Tous m'ont dit: « Entrez, entrez »; Si vous aimez la parure et traitez l'homme en belle ordure, Alors j'invite à manger la fourrure.</p>
<p>Dans la traduction de ce conte en vers, nous avons utilisé notamment la transposition et la modulation. La permutation des mots nous permet de créer la rime et de préserver la poéticité du texte. Nous avons utilisé l'équivalence pour traduire « ca sărac biet îmbrăcat – (Nastratin) ressemblait à un bousillage ». Le nom <i>bousillage</i> (fam., péj. « ouvrage bâclé, fait trop rapidement et sans soin »¹) fait référence aux vêtements de Nastratin qui lui donnent un aspect minable. La position du complément circonstanciel de lieu <i>à table</i> devant le verbe <i>mangeaient</i> est nécessaire pour garder la rime.</p> <p>La suite d'actions désignées par les verbes « se sculă,-n grab alergă » est un effet des contes en prose. Pour adapter cette dynamique aux contraintes de rythme et de rime requises par la forme poétique, nous avons introduit la conséquence par <i>alors</i> et</p>	

¹ Cf. *Ortolang* <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/bousillage>

insisté sur les mesures prises par Nastratin méprisé par les convives pour son apparence¹: « Alors Hoga emprunta les vêtements d'un ami / Et s'habilla comme un éfendi ». Vêtu galamment, Nastratin fait une bonne impression. Nous avons choisi le mot *éfendi*² pour rendre la couleur locale (n'oublions pas l'origine orientale des contes !). Il s'agit toujours d'une compensation dans le choix de traduction du vers « Cu hainele cele proaste, nimenea nu m-a cinstit – Vêtu comme un oignon, personne ne m'a adressé un mot », notamment l'expression « vêtu comme un oignon » (« être mal habillé »³).

Nous considérons que l'explicitation est utile pour traduire « Iar cum venii cu acestea (...) – Et puis, habillé de manière policé ». Nastratin s'est retourné au repas de mariage habillé élégamment (nous avons choisi le terme littéraire *policé* au détriment du néologisme *raffiné* qui est moins approprié vu le public-cible de cette époque-là). Dans la traduction des deux derniers vers, nous avons utilisé le *si-conditionnel* pour mieux rendre la signification du geste de Nastratin: « De aceea și eu blana se mănânce o poftesc, / Că văz toti privesc la haine și persoana n-o cinstesc. – Si vous aimez la parure et traitez l'homme en belle ordure, / Alors j'invite à manger la fourrure ». Donc, la transposition aide à mettre en évidence l'effet produit par l'attitude des convives à l'égard de Nastratin. L'exagération devient ici un marqueur du comique. Pour souligner l'image générale de désapprobation et la nuance ironique, nous avons utilisé le syntagme « belle ordure » (pour désigner « une personne méprisable »⁴) empreinte d'une forte valeur dépréciative. Par inversion des rôles (procédé comique), Nastratin l'éfendi tourne ses convives en dérision. La société même devient une mascarade.

« Langue, imaginaire : les territoires couverts par ces deux mots sont si immenses que même leur intersection ouvre des espaces infinis ». (Klein-Lataud, 2007 : 99) Cette citation est valable aussi dans le cas des contes analysés et introduits dans l'imaginaire du lecteur étranger par l'intermédiaire du processus traductif. Nous constatons que l'enjeux des images prolonge les nuances ironiques-humoristiques des contes même si l'on a tout dit en usant des mots. Il y a toujours cette impression de la surprise, de l'*espace infini* qu'un geste risible ou sentencieux peut ouvrir dans l'esprit du lecteur.

Faire sortir les contes de leur contexte linguistique et transposer les mêmes images dans un autre idiome vise une démarche interprétative qui repose sur une série de choix. En d'autres termes, il s'agit d'une reconstruction dont le but est de faire connaître au lecteur étranger un morceau de l'imagerie antonpannesque. Anton Pann garde le ton ironique et le voile par la rime, le rythme, les mots bien choisis et une attitude joviale. Une bonne réception des *Plaisanteries* en vers repose, finalement, sur le désir de comprendre quelle est la substance de cette jovialité apparente.

¹ Du point de vue historique, on fait allusion à l'époque du prince phanariote Ioan Caragea (XIX^e siècle) où la dépravation, le luxe et les fêtes grandioses étaient des choses habituelles. Cela se reflétait aussi dans la manière de s'habiller et l'on appréciait plutôt l'apparence somptueuse que la personne en cause.

² *Seigneur, maître chez les Turcs* (titre généralement réservé aux fonctionnaires civils, aux ministres du culte, aux personnes instruites. - Ortolang <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/efendi>

³ e-Xionnaire <https://www.quotheque.exionnaire.com/expression-vetu-comme-un-oignon-1715>

⁴ Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française <https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A9O0677>

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QUELLE PLACE POUR L'IRONIE ET L'HUMOUR DANS LE TEXTE DE SPÉCIALITÉ ? ÉTUDE DE CAS : LE DISCOURS GRAMMATICAL DANS TROIS OUVRAGES DE RÉFÉRENCE FRANÇAIS

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Abstract: In this paper, we examine three reference grammars of the French language, showing that in general, such texts do not use discursive strategies such as irony and humor. The analysis of the third grammar, on which we leaned longer, shows that, in fact, it is not impossible to write a grammar using irony and humor, even if this is rather rare in a scientific paper.

Keywords: irony; grammatical discourse; humour.

I. Problématique :

Il ne faut pas une longue réflexion pour donner une réponse négative à la question que nous lançons dès le titre de notre contribution : généralement ou mieux encore normalement, il n'y a pas de place pour l'ironie et l'humour dans le texte de spécialité, s'agissant de phénomènes propres plutôt à la langue commune. En effet, les fonctions du texte de spécialité, ainsi que ses particularités linguistiques semblent empêcher la mise en œuvre de ces phénomènes appelés à jouer d'autres rôles dans la communication.

Nous avons choisi de nous pencher plus attentivement sur le discours grammatical, qui représente un discours de spécialité à part entière et qui est, à vrai dire, le texte de spécialité le plus familier à un enseignant de langue étrangère et le seul qu'un enseignant de langue soit censé maîtriser au plus haut niveau, bien que d'autres domaines soient généralement invoqués dans la littérature pour parler du texte de spécialité : économique, juridique, médical, technique, etc. À cette raison s'ajoute celle de l'insuffisance des études concernant le discours grammatical, quelle qu'en soit la perspective. À cet égard, nous reprenons les interrogations formulées récemment par J.-R. Lapaire (2016) et qui bien que placées dans une perspective didactique, montrent pleinement le possible apport d'une analyse plus approfondie du discours grammatical :

Des termes savants sont imprimés dans un précis grammatical mais comment ces termes sont-ils lus ? Des notions linguistiques sont définies durant un cours magistral mais comment celles-ci parlent-elles à l'esprit de ceux qui écoutent ? Les analyses proposées en linguistique ont-elles été conçues pour être reçues ? Comment peut-on le savoir ? Il manque encore au discours grammatical une *théorie de la réception*. (Lapaire, 2016)

Notre étude porte sur trois ouvrages de référence que tout enseignant de français à l'université utilise dans son travail d'enseignement et de recherche scientifique : une grammaire normative et deux grammaires descriptives et explicatives, dont une qui se présente dès son titre comme une grammaire « critique ». Dans un premier temps, nous nous proposons des éléments de réponse concernant l'incompatibilité attendue entre un

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tel type de texte et des phénomènes linguistiques tels l'ironie et l'humour. Dans un second temps, nous procérons à une analyse plus attentive du dernier ouvrage, qui, à la différence des deux autres et des ouvrages de grammaire, en général, exploite largement les deux phénomènes évoqués. Nous montrons quels sont les mécanismes sur lesquels repose la mise en œuvre de l'ironie et de l'humour dans cet ouvrage et dans quel but ils y sont utilisés.

Sans entrer dans la complexité de la discussion théorique de ces deux phénomènes, qui ne fait pas l'objet de notre étude, nous pensons que les définitions proposées par le *Trésor de la langue française* (version informatisée en ligne <http://atilf.atilf.fr>) sont pleinement suffisantes pour circonscrire les deux phénomènes décrits :

IRONIE, subst. fém.

- A. — Figure de rhétorique par laquelle on dit le contraire de ce qu'on veut faire comprendre.
B. — *Ironie socratique* ou *ironie*. Ignorance simulée, s'exprimant en des interrogations naïves, que Socrate employait pour faire découvrir à ses interlocuteurs leur propre ignorance

HUMOUR, subst. masc.

Forme d'esprit railleuse qui attire l'attention, avec détachement, sur les aspects plaisants ou insolites de la réalité.

II. Le discours grammatical dans les trois ouvrages retenus

Les trois ouvrages que nous avons retenus pour notre étude constituent des grammaires de référence du français, que tout enseignant universitaire connaît et utilise dans son travail :

1. Grevisse, M. ; Goosse, A., *Le Bon Usage*, 15^e édition, Bruxelles, Edition de Boeck Université, 2011
2. Riegel, M., Pellat, J.-Ch. et alii, *Grammaire méthodique du français*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1994
3. Wilmet, M., *Grammaire critique du Français*. Paris : Duculot, 1997.

Ce qui nous intéresse dans le cadre de ce travail, c'est le fonctionnement du texte que ces grammaires proposent, analysé dans le cadre d'une analyse discursive et textuelle. Bien qu'étant un terme de spécialité, donc en principe monosémique, le terme *grammaire* est en réalité un terme polysémique : il désigne en même temps une réalité de la langue (les règles de construction de la phrase simple ou de la phrase complexe, par exemple, dans une langue), une connaissance intérieurisée de ces règles par les usagers (la compétence grammaticale), une description ou simulation grammaticale proposées par les linguistes et/ou didacticien (concrétisées dans des ouvrages). Pour délimiter notre objet d'étude, nous nous rapportons à la définition proposée par Germain et Séguin, qui discutent également dans leur ouvrage la question de la polysémie du terme *grammaire*, reprise synthétiquement par nous aussi :

Un livre de grammaire n'est rien d'autre que la manifestation externe, concrète, de la description ou de la simulation linguistique que fait un linguiste ou un didacticien, visant à

reproduire, tant bien que mal, la connaissance grammaticale interiorisée de l'usager de L1. (Germain, Séguin, 1995 : 33)

Ce que nous examinons donc dans cette étude, c'est le fonctionnement du texte, tel qu'il est conçu dans ces trois ouvrages de grammaire français. Etant donné la nature des phénomènes linguistiques qui nous intéressent, nous examinerons principalement les renvois à d'autres auteurs, définitions, concepts, etc., qui pourraient offrir l'occasion de faire recours à l'ironie et/ ou à l'humour.

a. *Le Bon Usage*

Le Bon Usage, référence incontournable dans le domaine de la grammaire française, paru pour la première fois en 1936, a été périodiquement réédité par la suite et enrichi de nombreuses additions et mises à jour, sans pour autant s'éloigner de sa structure et de ses buts initiaux : « *observer, décrire, expliquer, à l'intention d'un large public.* » (Gosse, note préliminaire de la 15^e édition). Comme son titre l'indique, il s'agit d'un ouvrage normatif, mais qui fonde la norme sur l'usage, sur l'emploi effectif de la langue, une norme issue de l'observation des faits et non pas une norme essayant d'imposer les faits. Ses buts sont clairement définis dans l'avant-propos de la 12^e édition :

fournir une description du français aussi complète que possible ; apporter des jugements normatifs fondés sur l'observation de l'usage, des usages ; permettre aux locuteurs et aux scripteurs de choisir le tour qui convient le mieux à l'expression de leur pensée et à la situation de communication dans laquelle ils se trouvent. (Grevisse, M., Goosse, A., 2011 : 9)

Pour ce qui est de la question qui nous intéresse, l'examen de quelques paragraphes seulement du *Bon Usage* est pleinement éclairant. Nous avons choisi le chapitre sur le complément d'objet, plus exactement les paragraphes sur la définition et sur le complément d'objet direct (p. 335-336). Les éléments qui nous intéressent sont marqués typographiquement par l'emploi des polices de caractères plus petites.

Concernant la manière de réaliser les renvois, nous remarquons l'absence des références exactes (noms des auteurs, par exemple) dans le texte, ainsi que l'emploi de toute une série de stratégies de politesse, visant à atténuer toute possible critique et à valoriser autant que possible les apports de la tradition grammaticale. Parmi les procédés utilisés, nous citons l'emploi du sujet indéfini « *on* », des tournures passives et impersonnelles, des circonstants de temps, des modalisateurs, etc.

Par exemple, concernant la distinction direct/ indirect par rapport à l'objet, les auteurs du *Bon Usage* évoquent la terminologie traditionnelle, dans un paragraphe très valorisant :

1. On disait autrefois régime direct, régime indirect, termes qui peuvent être, à l'occasion, fort commodes à employer parce qu'ils se réfèrent à la forme grammaticale. (ibidem : 9)

Les procédés utilisés sont : le sujet indéfini « *on* », qui permet de ne pas préciser la personne, le verbe modal « *pouvoir* », qui exprime la possibilité ou l'intermittence, valeur soutenue également par le circonstant « *à l'occasion* », qui exprime justement

l'intermittence temporelle, l'adjectif évaluatif « *commode* », la justification réalisée par la subordonnée causale.

L'abandon de cette terminologie, au profit d'une terminologie estimée plus convenable est justifié un peu plus loin, mais après la présentation, comme nous l'avons déjà montré, des qualités de la terminologie traditionnelle :

2. On ne peut nier que cette définition ne convienne à des ex. comme *J'éteins LE FEU, Le menteur nuit À SA RÉPUTATION*. – Mais elle s'applique assez mal à d'autres cas : *J'ai reçu UNE GIFLE. Berthe a la rougeole*. (Grevisse, M., Goosse, op. cit. : 9)

Le rejet de la terminologie traditionnelle est donc, d'une part, fortement atténué, et d'autre part justifié par son incapacité à expliquer tous les cas, sans qu'aucun jugement négatif soit émis. Dans de tels textes, il n'y a pas de place pour l'ironie ou pour l'humour, qui serviraient à d'autres buts.

b. *La Grammaire méthodique du français*

Tout comme dans le cas de l'ouvrage *Le Bon Usage*, le titre de cette deuxième grammaire fournit dès le commencement des renseignements précieux. Ainsi, l'adjectif « *méthodique* » caractérise notamment la manière de mener la démarche scientifique : il s'agit d'une démarche qui repose sur des principes, qui procède par des étapes et qui est orientée vers l'accomplissement de certains buts. En effet, ses objectifs ont été accomplis, de plus, ils s'apparentent à plusieurs égards à ceux de la première grammaire examinée :

On a donc enregistré les variations les plus caractéristiques du français tel qu'il se parle et s'écrit ; rappelé certaines prescriptions des grammaires normatives ; signalé les principales « tolérances » grammaticales établies par l'arrêté du 28-12-76 et les récentes propositions de rectification de l'orthographe publiées au J.O. du 06-12-90 ; et surtout tenté de situer les usages concurrents selon les registres de langue et les clivages entre langue écrite et langue parlée. (Riegel, M., Pellat, J.-Ch. et alii,, 1994: XXXI)

Par contre, à la différence de la grammaire de Grevisse, celle-ci ne procède plus à des renvois et privilégie la description et l'explication des faits de langue. Les différents sous-chapitres contiennent à la fin une liste bibliographique propre, mais il n'y a pas de renvois proprement-dits à ces études dans l'ouvrage. Si dans *Le Bon Usage* les séquences se rapportant à la tradition grammaticale sont nombreuses, tel n'est pas le cas dans la *Grammaire méthodique du français*. Lorsque de telles séquences apparaissent, il n'y a pas de déploiement argumentatif, mais une simple évocation de la tradition grammaticale :

3. La tradition grammaticale appelle **complément d'attribution** l'objet second introduit par à, bien que ce rapport ne caractérise pas tous les objets seconds construits avec cette préposition [...] (ibidem :406)
4. L'usage actuel, fidèle à une longue tradition grammaticale, réserve le terme d'attribut à la fois à un type générique de fonction et aux constituants de forme variable qui remplissent cette fonction. (ibidem: 419)

c. La Grammaire critique du Français

Pareil aux titres des deux grammaires précédemment discutées, celui de cette troisième grammaire est pleinement éclairant : il s'agit d'une grammaire qui se rapporte constamment aux auteurs, théories et concepts de référence dans le domaine et qui le fait d'une manière polémique, en proposant de nouveaux points de vue, de nouvelles perspectives. Concernant les deux phénomènes qui nous intéressent, l'humour notamment est vraiment exploité dans cet ouvrage, qui se déclare « *critique* », mais qui propose en fait une critique amusante, agréable et, évidemment, constructive. En effet, le lecteur se trouve réconforté dans sa lecture dès la première ligne de l'avant-propos, qui montre une attitude auto-ironique :

Ce livre est le fruit d'une longue préméditation et d'une courte imprudence.
(Wilmet, M., 1997: 7)

Ce réconfort était d'ailleurs tout à fait nécessaire, devant un ouvrage difficile, qui ajoute aux objectifs de toute grammaire – ceux de décrire et d'expliquer – celui de dresser un état des lieux et de faire avancer la recherche dans le domaine.

Rédigée dans le même style que l'avant-propos, la grammaire de Wilmet utilise de nombreux procédés qui allient la critique et l'humour, tels :

- les renvois explicites aux auteurs de référence, avec des adjectifs ou des adverbes évaluatifs
- 5. Même constat désabusé¹ d'André Martinet en ce qui concerne la majuscule (comp. 87) et la ponctuation. (*ibidem*: 438)
- 6. Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1980 : 30 et 31) distingue plus utilement une énonciation étendue et une énonciation restreinte. (*ibidem*: 441)
- le mélange des niveaux de langue (emploi du français familier et des expressions idiomatiques)
- 7. Les linguistes travaillant sur l'oral ont toutes les peines du monde à transcrire les enregistrements, avec leurs brisures et leurs raccords, selon les normes graphiques. (*ibidem*: 439)
- 8. De pseudo-DDL ont beau entrelacer la syntaxe interrogative du DD avec les pronoms du DI, ils ressemblent comme deux gouttes d'eau à des DIL. (*ibidem*: 446)
- l'emploi des allusions littéraires ou culturelles :
- 9. Privé des marques prosodiques, l'écrit laisse les interprétations à la divination du lecteur. (*ibidem*)
- 10. L'évidente séduction des parallélismes (DI > DIL > DD > DDL) n'empêche pas que ce quatrième mousquetaire du DR ait un statut mal assuré. (*ibidem*)

¹ Tous les soulignements nous appartiennent.

Très souvent, ces procédés se combinent dans des paragraphes qui s'avèrent de véritables bijoux stylistiques, qui font de cet ouvrage un texte poétique et argumentatif également :

11. Cette variété de pronoms bipartite demeure curieusement ignorée des grammaires, qui voyant ‘un cas d’ellipse’ dans p. ex. Quel costume mets-tu ? UN BLEU ? (ou LE BLEU, TON BLEU, CE BLEU ...) justifient cette politique de Gribouille – et seules les méilleures en prennent la peine, la majorité imité (imitent ?: cf. 302, 5) « de Conrard le silence prudent » - par un gymkana dialectique où le diable se perdrait. (Wilmet, M., *op. cit.*: 154)

III. Conclusions

Dans cette contribution, nous avons examiné trois ouvrages de grammaire française de référence, en nous interrogeant si de tels textes pourraient faire place à des phénomènes linguistiques tels l’ironie et l’humour. Étant donné les buts des grammaires, qui sont, généralement, la description et l’explication des faits de langue, de tels phénomènes y sont plutôt absents. L’examen du troisième ouvrage, sur lequel nous nous sommes penchée plus longuement, montre qu’en fait, il n’est pas du tout impossible d’écrire une grammaire en mettant en œuvre l’ironie et l’humour, même si cela est plutôt rare dans un ouvrage scientifique.

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TRANSLATING SHAKESPEARE FOR THE SCREEN. A CLOSE-UP TO FRANCO ZEFFIRELLI'S "ROMEO AND JULIET"

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Abstract: The present paper examines the dynamic intersection between translation and adaptation for the screen of Shakespeare's language, zooming in the invisible "performance" of the translator in order to secure meaning equivalence. The purpose of this paper to analyse Shakespeare's language for "cinematic" adaptation and to define the role of the translator for the screen subtitles. Within this frame, we shall analyse and compare two English-Romanian translations of "Romeo and Juliet" scenes for the screen with respect to situational and dramatic irony.

Keywords: irony; Shakespeare; translation.

I. Introduction

Even if Shakespeare's plays were mainly written for the stage, today, many people have their first encounter with his stories through film. The question this article debates is in what manner does the version of the story seen and adapted for screen relate to the version produced to be seen on stage? Holmes (1972) mentioned the relations between translation studies and other disciplines, taking into consideration two possibilities: translation studies as an independent discipline relying on its own resources and a division of other disciplines exploiting their models, paradigms and concepts. Cattysse (1992), in accordance with the former researchers, considers translation studies as a discipline that can give a distinctive perception on topics which are generally dealt with in the framework of other disciplines, such as film studies, literature, theatre because of its ability to incorporate inter-semiotic translation as one of its objects. According to Vilceanu:

translators are aware that they have to create a space of in-betweenness, a space in which foreign cultural elements are smoothly inserted. Their strategic choice is motivated by the need to find cultural equivalents. The two cultures may interfere on a smaller or a larger scale. (Vilceanu, 2006: 2).

An argument made by the semiotician Jakobson (1987) represents the base the point for this analysis. He stated that the meaning of a sign is its translation into another sign or sequence of signs in the same language, sometimes in another language or in another semiotic language (visual-in this case). In accordance with Jakobson views, Zohar (1997) developed a theory of transfer which applies to all variations of the next phenomenon: a text which was produced in a cultural system A is re-created in a cultural system B.

Deep-rooted in his polysystem theory, his theory of transfer, has been used in research dealing with transfer within one language and from literature to the cinema, from page to screen. Following his footsteps, Weissbrod (2004) has mapped the forms of transfer inferred by his theory. In the present article are used the ideas and principles

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of Jakobson and Even-Zohar in order to an analysis of the cinematic adaptation of exclusively Shakespeare's plays originally written for the theatre.

Rothwell (1999) claims screen adaptations of Shakespeare's plays have served several purposes. In accordance, Cartmell (1999) sustains the purpose of "proving the relevance of the Bard to our times, manifesting the ability of the cinema to cope with works originally written for the Elizabethan theatre and obtaining what Bourdieu called "cultural capital".

The following article is also based on theories which have been developed outside translation studies and deals particularly with the relations between the cinema and the Shakespeare's plays.

Additionally, the current article takes as a fundamental base the classic works of Nicoll (1936) and Beja (1979). His assumptions concerning the translation of texts created in the past represent the reference to examine how modern film-makers, such as Franco Zeffirelli, deal with the antiquity of the Shakespearean source text and transport it to the audience. (Holmes, J., *op. cit.* :72) Therefore, the attention is driven upon cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays as a case of inter-semiotic and inter-temporal translation, rather than indulging in literary, theatrical and cinematic topics per se.

II. Methodological Scenery

From its earliest days, cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays have been a significant part of the history of cinema and the volume of research dealing with these adaptations for the screen is enormous and still growing.

The present article approaches the subject of screen adaptations for Shakespeare's plays from a translation studies perspective. First, the article deals with Jakobson's general conception of "inter- semiotic translation" in correlation with Even-Zohar's transfer theory Secondly, the assumptions concerning the translation of texts created in the past by Holmes.

When combining research dealing with the relations between cinema and theatre in general and cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in particular results in a framework for debating with two questions:

1. How do two distinct media which use different semiotic languages and rely on different repertoires such as cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, move between the theatre and the cinema?
2. How do they handle the discrepancies between the screen adaptation text in "Romeo and Juliet" by Franco Zeffirelli and the text of the same play?

At the level of methodological scenery, this paper embraces several research methods based primarily on procedures of investigation, qualitative and quantitative accommodating it to Shakespeare's language in translation from play text to screen adaptation. Between the methods of research, there will be one to analyse and compile the most relevant theoretical assessments regarding the topic of *inter-semiotic translation* in Shakespeare's plays, from a stylist, linguistic and cultural perspective in correspondence with the cinematic effect on screen adaptation. Cinema presents Shakespeare plays with a completely different dynamic, different forms of identification than the ones offered by the stage. Additional perspectives, angles, shots, stillness and movement, are bringing in diverse settings and locations, sound, and colours, images, and textures "elements joining in endless permutations." (*ibidem*, p. 45)

Specific methods such as: contrastive textual irony analysis vs screen adaptation text and evaluation of Shakespeare language are used, with the focus of analysis on chosen scenes from “Romeo and Juliet”, Act 3, Scene 5 and Act 4, Scene 5. With reference to this case study, an in-depth analysis of different ways in which Shakespeare and Zeffirelli express this point of the story.

Looking through various screen cuts from the film, such as Act 3, Scene 5, the findings will reveal what is lost and what is preserved from Shakespeare’s language in the cut first phase of screen irony translation or in what way the different perspective of this procedure in cinema affects the source language message.

III. Theoretical Views

At the level of theory background, the concepts which are basic to Even-Zohar’s transfer theory are the “system”, “repertoire” and “model”. (Zohar, S., *op. cit.* :123). First, a “system” is conceived as a network of relations between cultural phenomena which dominate diverse positions between each other. For instance, a culture tends to function as a macro-system encompassing various relatively corresponding systems, in this case, the cinema. The system’s products such as the theatrical plays or films are created with the help of the system’s repertoire. The repertoire supplies the producer with single elements as well as models which are “ready-made” combinations of elements and the rules of combining them. The procedure of existing models generates both the creation and consumption of products in an easy manner. In this case, a model serves as a “recipe” for the creation of the complete product. The model at its base determines the genre to which it belongs only if the product is a text. However, the term also applies to definite aspects of a text, like the photography or lighting when the text under study is a film. Therefore, a change in the model is brought about by adding or removing one or more elements and by combining models.

Toury sustains that the use of the repertoire (e.g., preferring some models to others) is determined mainly by norms— instructions for actual behaviour which reflect the values and ideologies prevalent in a cultural system or some part of it.

In the case of transfer – the re-creation in a system B of a text originating in a system A – the norms guide the producer to reconstruct the source closely, adapt it to the existing repertoire of the target system or make some compromise between these two extremes. The editing process as the most determinant cinematographic tool in “interpreting” Shakespeare. In theatre the dialogue lines must be the action itself, while in film it is the images, without words, that have this function. In his writing, Shakespeare’s action was concentrated in speeches and gestures. Film can have all that in variable perspectives of light, colour, texture, shapes and lines organized within frames and their juxtapositions, which will compose a complex visual field. (Toury, 1995: 102-103).

Shakespeare’s plays originated in a specific cultural system like the 16th-century English theatre and he commonly deviated from them and presented additional complexity, meanwhile the playwright used contemporaneous models. For example, in “Hamlet”, Shakespeare transformed the common play of vengeance of that time into what we now call a “Shakespearean tragedy”. This article discusses the adaptation of Shakespeare’s plays to screen, focusing merely on additions, omissions, and alterations of his language in dramatic and situational irony translation of some selected scenes for analysis.

IV. 1 Perspectives on Irony

The term “irony”¹ comes from the fusion of two terms: Latin term *ironia* and Greek term *eirōnia/eirōn* meaning dissembler, to hide under a false appearance.

As a prime definition, irony represents a normal part of human language. On this ground, the pragmatic theory stands for a more detailed and complex explanation. However, Wilson and Sperber (1992) felt the need to still notify the lack of academic research and attention for irony in Shakespeare’s plays and how much about it is still not understood.

For instance, most studies of verbal irony are separated into one of three categories: theoretical, experimental or computational. In addition, they sustain that the concept of irony is analysed theoretically and by means of created examples in studies from the first category. The second category analyses theory in controlled experiments. The third category contains more recent studies to decide if irony is better identified by using algorithms or machine learning. Even so, moderately attention has been seen in reference with linguistically studying irony in natural language.

Grice gave an effective early definition of irony by using the Cooperative Principle. From his point of view, irony remains an example of flouting the first maxim of quality: “Do not say what you believe to be false” (Grice, 1992: 46).

He also affirms that all cases of verbal irony include an opposition between what is meant and what is literally said. He theorises that the audience will understand that something other than the literal meaning in Shakespeare’s text is meant when someone makes an obviously false statement.

Consistent with his opinion, the most obvious alternative meaning is the one opposite to the literal meaning. This process creates an ironic interpretation. He adds the condition that irony covers an expression of “a feeling, attitude, or evaluation” (*ibidem*, p. 24). In addition, O’Brien (1991) does not sustain the requirement of an ironic tone of voice as a necessity for the expression of irony, a point of view sustained by other studies. Lastly, he insinuates that a major part of irony is pretending.

In this chain of thought, his definition of irony as an ironic expression simply means the opposite of what is literally said, collapses for types of irony that do not contain a false statement. (*ibidem*, p.55). For example, the rhetorical questions and understatement as Wilson suggests. From his linguistic perspective, the imitative account of irony interprets irony instead as an imitative use of language. This type of language use indirectly suggests something originated on a similarity in content and simultaneously, it conveys an attitude towards the referent in case. (*ibidem*, p. 56)

IV.2 Screen vs. Play Irony in “Romeo and Juliet”

In Shakespeare Play “Romeo and Juliet” there are two types of irony that we will analyse in the further corpus design. First, *situational irony* which stands for an event or occasion in which the consequence is meaningfully different from what was expected or considered appropriate to occur. Also called irony of events as well as irony of circumstance and irony of fate.

Turner describes situational irony as “a long con, a ruse taking place over time. Participants and onlookers do not recognize the irony because its revelation comes at a later moment in time, the unexpected “twist.” (Turner, 2015: 12). In situational irony,

¹ Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, p. 1205, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, 2016.

the anticipated outcome contrasts with the end result". Furthermore, Kousser supports the idea that

the essence of situational irony lies in an apparent contradiction or incongruity between two events or meanings, a contradiction resolved when the literal or surface meaning turns out to be one of appearance only, while the initially incongruous meaning turns out to be the reality. (Kousser, 1982: 87).

One example of situational irony from the play "Romeo and Juliet" adaptation for the screen in scene 5, Act 4, when Juliet's fake death leads to her real one.

Even if Juliet threats to take her life if she is forced to marry Paris, in effect Juliet tried to fake her death so as to avoid really committing suicide. Nonetheless, she is moved to the final resort of taking her own life. In this chain of events, her faking death turns into a real one when she unknowingly persuades Romeo to kill himself and then she awakens to see him eventually dead.

The second type of irony present in Zeffirelli's "Romeo and Juliet" adaptation for the screen is *dramatic irony*. From *ibidem*, p. 34 point of view, *dramatic irony* is "a literary device commonly used by playwrights in their plays. It occurs when the audience understands the implication and significance of a specific situation on stage, whereas the characters are unaware of the gravity of the meanings underlying that situation." (*ibidem*, p.30). Portrayed as one of the features of Shakespearean tragedies, dramatic irony is used to sustain and build the audience's interest, thus keeping them dynamically engaged in the play. Examples of dramatic irony in "Romeo and Juliet" play are given below with the corpus analysis.

The dramatic irony of this particular Scene 5, Act 3, revolves around Romeo and Juliet and the Lady and Lord Capulet. This scene captures when Romeo and Juliet saying each other adieu, saying the following:

e.g. SL¹. Juliet: O, thinkst thou we shall ever meet again?

Romeo: I doubt it not; and all these woes shall serve/For sweet discourses in our time to come.

Juliet: O God! I have an ill-divining soul/ Methinks I see thee, now thou art below/As one dead in the bottom of a tomb.//

TL². Julieta: Iubitule, ne vom mai revedea?

Romeo: Numă-ndoiesc! Durerea mea și-a ta/Se vor preface-în fragede-amintiri...

Julieta: O, Doamne! Am urât presimtiri!/ Îmi pari, precum te văd acolo, jos/C-ai fi cumplitei morți adus prinos!//

Nevertheless, this scene cannot be seen as "sweet discourses" but more as a scene full of sadness or despair. Even at first reading of the play or the first encounter with the screen adaptation, this still can be seen as implausible prediction, imaginably not knowing that Romeo will next be seen by Juliet directly in a tomb. All these indicators sustain the dramatic irony presence because this is a tragedy and because of the indicators given by the chorus we know that they will meet again and Juliet is right.

¹ Source Language, English

² Target Language, Romanian

A considerable part of the dramatic irony in this scene 5 has more to do with Juliet's parents than with Juliet herself, ironically. Initially, Lady Capulet misinterprets Juliet's tears:

e.g. SL. Lady Capulet: Evermore weeping for your cousin's death /
What, wilt thou wash him from his grave with tears?//

TL. Madonna Capoletto: Tot îl bocești pe vărul tău, anume? /
Doar n-ai putea să-l mai aduci pe lume!//

In this scene it is with strong impact to the audience when Juliet is longing for Romeo, not Tybalt, even though the truth comes out slightly later in the scene, marking once again the dramatic irony presence. Further in the play, the Lord and Lady Capulet are extremely delighted with the idea of Paris and Juliet wedding, planning for her to marry Paris on Thursday. What is known at this time in the play is that Juliet is already married to Romeo.

This corpus was analysed to create an overview of the mechanisms used in the process of translating irony of Shakespeare's play "Romeo and Juliet" on screen adaptation in order to secure meaning equivalence. The analysis provides insights into the translator choices in selecting consistent applied theories that are best suited to explain the irony in the scene's samples.

V. Conclusions

In conclusion, after analysing the vibrant intersection between translation and adaptation for the screen of Shakespeare's language, specifically examining the use of situational/dramatic irony, we can say that cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's show a major role in inter-semiotic translation rather than only to provide an exhaustive history of Shakespeare on screen. Following the corpus analysis design, the discrepancies between the screen dialogue and the play dialogue of the same play "Romeo and Juliet" can be accounted for the temporal distance that separates them and by the evolution of the Shakespeare's language in the process of translation.

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