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Uredili *Edited by* Špela Virant, Irena Samide



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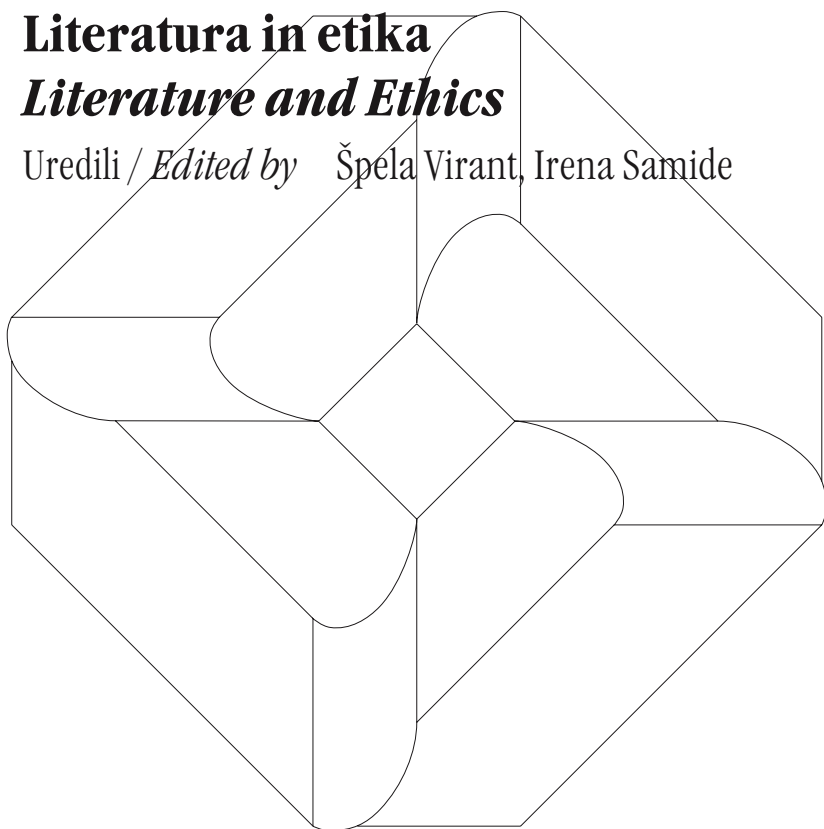
- 1 Špela Virant, Irena Samide: **O literaturi in etiki (predgovor)**
7 Špela Virant, Irena Samide: **Literature and Ethics (An Introduction)**

RAZPRAVE / PAPERS

- 13 Tomo Virk: **Etična literarna veda med kakofonijo in pluralnostjo**
- 33 Werner Wintersteiner: **From a Violent Past towards a Global Ethics? Twentieth Century Atrocities in Select Novels of the Twenty-First Century**
- 53 Alenka Koron: **Kaj je ali bi lahko bila etična naratologija?**
- 67 Dejan Kos: **Etika in estetika med posvetnostjo in presežnostjo**
- 79 Vladimir Gvozden: **What Makes a Good Book? *Bonae literae* in Twenty-First Century**
- 91 Iztok Osojnik: **Svoboda in nezavedno: nekaj opazk o etiki poiesisa**
- 109 Daniel Graziadei: **Towards an Ethics of Intercultural Misunderstandings**
- 123 Adriana Elena Stoican: **A Transgressive Ethics of Alterity in Jhumpa Lahiri's and Rodica Mihalisi' Narratives of Uprooting**
- 137 Stevan Bradić: **Staging the Ethical in the State of Emergency in J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians***
- 149 Yvonne Hütter: **Ethics and Aesthetics in Jonas Lüscher's *Barbarian Spring***
- 165 Mateja Pezdirc Bartol: **Specifičnost dramske forme in etična vprašanja v dramatiki Simone Semenič**
- 181 Gašper Troha: **Etika v sodobni britanski dramatiki**
- 193 Irena Avsenik Nabergoj: **Razkrivanje temnih resnic družbe in nezlomljiva moč dobrega v Dickensovem romanu *Oliver Twist***

Literatura in etika
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Uredili / *Edited by* Špela Virant, Irena Samide



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O literaturi in etiki (predgovor)

Špela Virant, Irena Samide

Že Aristotel v *Poetiki* ugotavlja, da tragedija nagovarja emocionalne, kognitivne in etične sposobnosti gledalca, in sicer za dosego katarze, ki je njen cilj. Tragedija sicer izzove emocionalno reakcijo, razum in etično držo gledalca pa Aristotel preprosto predpostavlja, ko našteva tri možne zgradbe dejanj, ki ne vodijo h katarzi: če se zlobni in pokvarjeni ljudje dokopljejo do sreče, če isti padejo v nesrečo in če dobri brez tragične zmote padejo v nesrečo (1452 b 30). Sploh slednje lahko vzbudi le zgražanje, meni Aristotel, ki sploh ne dopušča možnosti, da bi se odrasli člani demokratične družbe, ki imajo izoblikovane predstave o tem, kaj je prav in kaj ne, odzvali drugače. Razmerja med literaturo in etiko so se nato v zgodovini pogosto spreminjala. Razsvetljenstvo je literaturi naložilo, naj bralca poučuje, koncept estetske avtonomije jo je osvobodil tega poslanstva, etični obrat je znova pozval k prepričevanju tega razmerja. Aktualna dogajanja, kot so nove oblike vojn, migracije, socialna stiska, skratka soočenje z zgodbami ljudi, ki so padli v nesrečo le zato, ker so se rodili v napačnem delu sveta, v telesu napačnega spola ali barve kože, ne da bi sploh imeli priložnost zagrešiti tragično napako, literarno vedo postavljajo pred nalogo, da preveri svoj instrumentarij za analizo te razsežnosti literature in svojo vlogo v tem kontekstu.

O etiki v literaturi lahko govorimo vsaj na treh ravneh, in sicer o etičnosti imaginacije, naracije in interpretacije. Literatura, ki se definira kot fikcija, se sicer lahko izmakne razpravam etičnosti vsebin, dohitijo pa jo na drugi ravni. Ker kaže, »kaj bi se lahko zgodilo«, postane privilegirano mesto utopij in distopij. Postmodernizem jih je zaradi ideološkosti zavrnil, danes pa se v literaturo vračajo v različnih oblikah in zastavljajo različna vprašanja, ki zadevajo tako bremena preteklosti kakor tudi prihodnje preživetje v zaostrenih razmerah liberalnega kapitalizma.

Literarna besedila posredujejo vrednostne sisteme, norme in etična vprašanja prek načina, kako pripovedujejo, tako s specifično rabo jezika (semantiko, sintakso, retoriko) kakor tudi z narativnimi postopki. Ti postopki so v okviru študij o narativni etiki, ki imajo že večdesetletno tradicijo, precej raziskani, vendar se z novimi literarnimi praksami na eni strani in razvojem naratologije, postkolonialnih študij in študij spola ter razvojem sodobnih medijev na drugi strani odpirajo nove možnosti za razmislek.

O etičnosti interpretacije lahko govorimo tako na ravni imanentno literarnih postopkov, torej načinov, kako literatura interpretira podatke, ki so splošno sprejeti kot realni, kakor tudi na ravni literarnovedne interpretacije literature. Prav tu se odpirajo vprašanja, ki presegajo zgolj literarnovedne pristope, saj sprašujejo po odnosu literature do sveta in po umeščanju literature v svet. Ta vprašanja posegajo v samo srž človekovega razmerja do sveta, do soljudi, s tem pa tudi v srž literature ali tega, kar bi lahko bila: ne le refleksija teh razmerij, temveč njihov del.

Heinz von Foerster je članek »Das Konstruieren einer Wirklichkeit«, v katerem je med drugim razmišljal o pomenu in implikacijah teorij radikalnega konstruktivizma, sklenil z lapidarnim odgovorom na vprašanje, kako vpliva na pojmovanje estetike in etike: »Estetski imperativ: Če hočeš spoznavati, deluj. Etični imperativ: Deluj vedno tako, da odpiriš nove možnosti.« (60)¹ Članki, zbrani v tej tematsko zaokroženi izdaji *Primerjalne književnosti*, kažejo, da je danes mogoče o literaturi in etiki razmišljati na zelo različne načine, s tem pa, tako upava, odpirajo možnosti za nove razprave.

Tematsko številko odpira razprava Toma Virka, ki v poglavju »Etična literarna veda med kakofonijo in pluralnostjo« načenna temeljna vprašanja razmerja med etiko in literaturo. Zgodovina refleksije tega razmerja je, tako Virk, dolga prav toliko kot refleksija o literaturi sama, kar že samo po sebi priča o relevantnosti tematike. Razprava osvetljuje nekatere ključne pojme in pojmovne sklope etične literarne vede, zlasti razmerje med etiko in moralo, etiko in estetiko ter etiko in politiko, in se ob tem osredinja na razmislek o nekaterih pomembnejših sodobnih smereh raziskovanja te problematike od t. i. »etičnega obrata« s konca osemdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja dalje. Virk je prepričan, da je etična literarna veda v mnogih pogledih celo najpomembnejša veja literarne vede, obenem pa je zanjo značilno, da jo sestavlja množstvo raznolikih pristopov. Da ob tem ne bi zašli v postmoderno kakofonijo – pluralnost brez metodološke in teoretične avtorefleksije –, se Virk zavzema za tak pluralizem pristopov, ki ga poleg jasne osredotočenosti na raziskovanje *etičnih* vprašanj odlikujeta avtorefleksija ter *odgovorno* branje: prav to so namreč osnove *etičnega* raziskovanja.

¹ Foerster, Heinz von. »Das Konstruieren einer Wirklichkeit«. *Die erfundene Wirklichkeit. Beiträge zum Konstruktivismus*. Ur. Paul Watzlawick. München: Piper, 1981. 39–60.

Z vprašanjem kompleksnega razmerja med umetnostjo in politiko, etiko in estetiko ter etiko in literaturo se ukvarja tudi Werner Wintersteiner v članku »Od nasilne preteklosti h globalni etiki? Grozodejstva dvajsetega stoletja v izbranih romanih enaindvajsetega stoletja«. Izhajajoč iz teze, da literatura sama po sebi *ni* etična in da lahko prav zato izpolnjuje etične namene, raziskuje tri sodobne romane iz treh različnih geografskih okolij: *Burnt Shadows* (2009) pakistanske avtorice Kamile Shamsi, *L'Art français de la guerre* (2011) Francoza Alexisa Jennija, za katerega je avtor dobil Goncourjevo nagrado, ter *Dvorce iz orehovine* (2003) zelo prevajanega hrvaškega avtorja Miljenka Jergovića. Ne glede na dejstvo, da uporabljajo izbrani trije romani zelo različne estetske strategije in ponujajo različne etične »odgovore«, je vsem skupno to, da prevprašujejo grozodejstva ter razloge za vojne in nasilje na *globalni ravni*, pa naj gre pri tem za globalno etiko v smislu globalne družbe (Shamsie in Jenni), ali pa za globalnost človeške šibkosti in perfidije kot pri Jergoviću. Drža, ki jo pri tem romani izbirajo, ni nikoli moralistična ali didaktična, temveč estetsko odprta in večplastna, v prvi vrsti osredotočena na pripovedovanje zgodb, ki zadevajo vsakogar od nas.

Tematiko pripovedovanja oz. etične naratologije načenja prispevek Alenke Koron z naslovom »Kaj je ali bi lahko bila etična naratologija?« Ob upoštevanju različnih novejših teoretskih razmislekov na tem področju in zlasti postmoderne etiške teorije Alaina Badiouja se avtorica članka ukvarja z metodološkimi pristopi za raziskovanje etičnih razsežnosti besedil ter pokaže na to, kako lahko literarno besedilo s svojo formo senzibilizira bralke in bralce za etične implikacije pripovedi.

Razmerje med etiko in estetiko je v središču naslednjih dveh prispevkov tematskega sklopa: Dejan Kos v razpravi z naslovom »Etika in estetika med posvetnostjo in presežnostjo« ocrta zgodovinski razvoj razmerij med estetiko in etiko. Problematizira pojem estetske avtonomije in temeljne logocentrične evidence ter nakazuje možno razrešitev ugotovljenih protislovij v absolutizaciji načela odprtosti. Po kakovostnih kriterijih za literarna dela danes v primerjavi s časom pred uveljavitvijo koncepta estetske avtonomije sprašuje Vladimir Gvozden v prispevku z naslovom »Kaj je dobra knjiga? *Bonae literae* v enaindvajsetem stoletju«, kjer se najprej podrobneje posveti pojmu *bonae literae*, kakor ga je razumel Erazem Rotterdamski, nato pa oriše razvoj problematike do danes, ko sicer ni več enotnih, zavezujočih vrednot in kriterijev za presojo literature, pojmovanje dobre knjige pa vendarle še ohranja nastavke, ki jih je miselno zastavil Erazem. Iztok Osojnik v prispevku »Svoboda in nezavedno: nekaj opazk o etiki poiesisa« išče etiko

literature v *poesis*, ustvarjanju, v dogodju biti, in na primeru pesmi *Zaupanje* Muanisa Sinanovića iz zadnje zbirke *Dvovid* prikaže, kako poteka ta proces od znotraj navzven.

Članki v drugem delu tematske številke se bolj načrtno posvečajo etičnim vidikom in perspektivam v posameznih literarnih besedilih. Tako Daniel Graziadei v prispevku »O etiki medkulturnih nesporazumov« analizira odlomke iz treh sodobnih romanov, kjer so opisani nesporazumi, kakršni lahko nastanejo v medkulturnih komunikacijah. Etično razsežnost razkrivanja takšnih nesporazumov obravnava tako na ravni fiktivnega sveta kot tudi na ravni bralnih dejanj, na obeh ravneh pa gre za podobno revizijo postopkov osmišljanja in konstrukcije resnic. V medkulturni prostor posega tudi prispevek z naslovom »Transgresivna etika drugosti v pripovedih o izkoreninjenosti Jhumpe Lahiri in Rodice Mihalis«. V njem na temelju sodobnih teorij, ki iščejo presečišča med humanistično in poststrukturalistično etiko ter ju na ta način poskušajo preseči, Adriana Elena Stoican razvije metodološki pristop in ga aplicira na deli dveh sodobnih avtoric, ki tematizirata pomen medkulturnih srečanj.

Stevan Bradić v prispevku »Uprizarjanje etike v izrednem stanju: V pričakovanju barbarov J. M. Coetzeeja« podrobno analizira izbrane odlomke omenjenega romana, v katerih se zrcali problematičnost etike, ki ostaja znotraj imperialne logike, ter poudarja nujnost povezave med etiko in politiko. Da etičnega in političnega delovanja ne moremo povsem ločevati, pokaže tudi Yvonne Hütter v članku z naslovom »Etika in estetika v romanu *Frühling der Barbaren* Jonasa Lüscherja«. Na temelju analize omenjenega romana odpira temeljna vprašanja funkcij in dometa književnosti pri posredovanju vrednot v tradiciji razsvetljenstva in pri oblikovanju kognitivnih procesov, ki bralcu potencialno omogočajo aktivno etično in politično delovanje.

Kako doseči etične dimenzije besedila brez eksplicitno političnih izjav, etičnih imperativov in didaktičnih poant – pa tudi brez neposredne tematske navezave na prikazovanje nasilja, pobojev, vojnih grozot itd. –, proučuje Mateja Pezdirc Bartol na podlagi »ne več dramskih« besedil Simone Semenič. V prispevku z naslovom »Specifičnost dramske forme in etična vprašanja v dramatiki Simone Semenič« avtorica ugotavlja, da je predpogoj za vzpostavitev etičnega razmerja estetska izkušnja. Šele ta postavlja bralca/gledalca pred etične dileme in zahteva njegovo angažiranost, ki pa se ne kaže v politični aktivnosti, temveč v razreševanju vprašanj, idej in občutij, ki jih neko delo odpira. Na področju dramatike ostaja tudi Gašper Troha, ki se v prispevku »Etika v sodobni britanski dramatiki« sprašuje, kakšne so možnosti etične raz-

sežnosti besedil, ki temeljijo na šoku in prikazujejo svet kot radikalno distopijo – kar zagotovo velja za besedila t. i. gledališča »u fris« (primer: *Razdejana Sarah Kane* in *V Republiki sreče* Martina Crimpa). Troha zagovarja tezo, da so v svetu fluidnih vrednot in krhkih moralnih vrednot prav tovrstna besedila edina možnost obravnavanja etičnih vprašanj. Tematski sklop sklene prispevek, ki se dotika britanske književnosti, tokrat v klasični maniri: Irena Avsenik Nabergoj se v članku »Razkrivanje temnih resnic družbe in nezlomljiva moč dobrega v Dickensovem romanu *Oliver Twist*« sprašuje, s katerimi sredstvi Dickensovo narativno besedilo tematizira, problematizira ali konsolidira specifične moralne vrednote in norme in prihaja do sklepa, da je prav pripoved s svojo imaginacijo in sposobnostjo za celostno zaznavanje duševnega in duhovnega stanja junakov tista, ki uri človekov praktični moralni čut za zasledovanje etosa.

Literature and Ethics (An Introduction)

Špela Virant, Irena Samide

Already Aristoteles in his *Poetics* observes that tragedy addresses the spectator's emotional, cognitive and ethical competences in order to achieve the catharsis for which it aims. Tragedy provokes an emotional reaction, but the ability of cogitation and the ethical stance of the spectator are simply presupposed by Aristoteles, namely, when he lists the three possible forms of plot to be avoided: A good man – without committing a tragic fault – must not be seen to be passing from happiness to misery, a bad man from misery to happiness, and an extremely bad man from happiness to misery (1452 b 30). Especially the first situation is solely odious for Aristoteles, who does not allow for the possibility that a mature member of society who knows how to tell right from wrong could react differently. The relations between literature and ethics have often changed in the course of history. In the age of enlightenment, literature had to educate the reader; the concept of aesthetic autonomy relieved literature of this obligation; the ethical turn, meanwhile, once again started to review these relations. Occurrences, such as new forms of warfare, migrations and social anguish – that is, confrontation with the stories of people who passed into misery only because they were born in the wrong part of the world, in a body with the wrong skin color or sex, without even having had the chance to commit a tragic fault – also call on literary studies to examine the tools it uses to analyze the ethical dimension and its role in this context.

It is possible to speak about ethics on at least three levels: the ethicality of imagination, the ethicality of narration, and the ethicality of interpretation. While literature, which defines itself as a fiction, may be able to remove itself from such discussions, at another level it is caught up in them. Because literature shows “what could happen,” it becomes a privileged site of utopias and dystopias. Though postmodernism rejected these two “topias” on account of their being ideological, today they are, in various forms, returning to literature and giving rise to various questions that concern the burden of the past and the survival in aggravated circumstances of liberal capitalism.

Literary texts mediate value systems, norms and ethical questions through how they tell – that is, both through the specific use of language (semantics, syntax, rhetoric) as well as through narrative approaches. These approaches have, in the context of studies on narrative ethics, which has a tradition stretching back several decades, been much studied; and yet, with new literary praxes on the one hand and the development of narratology, postcolonial studies and gender studies as well as the development of new media on the other, new questions arise.

We can speak about the ethics of interpretation at the level of immanently literary approaches – that is, the ways in which literature interprets information that is generally accepted as real – and also at the level of how literary studies interpret literature. Precisely here questions arise that go beyond merely literary approaches, since they dispute the relationship literature has to the world and the place literature holds in the world. These questions penetrate to the very essence of our relationship to the world, to our fellow humans, and by this to the core of literature or what it could be: not only a reflection of these relationships, but a part of them.

Heinz von Foerster, in his article “Das Konstruieren einer Wirklichkeit”, discusses the relevance and the implications of radical constructivism. In his conclusion he gives a terse answer to the question of how this affects the concepts of aesthetics and ethics. He formulates two imperatives. “The aesthetic imperative: If you want understanding, act. The ethical imperative: Act always in a way that opens up new possibilities.” (60)² The set of thematic articles contained in this issue of *Primerjalna književnost* demonstrates that today it is possible to write about literature and ethics in many different ways and by this they, one hopes, open up possibilities for new discussions.

The set of thematic articles begins with Tomo Virk’s contribution entitled “Ethical Literary Criticism between Cacophony and Plurality,” probing the basic relations between ethics and literature. The reflection on this topic is as old as the reflection on literature, which itself shows the general importance of ethical research. Virk’s treatise sum-

² Foerster, Heinz von. “Das Konstruieren einer Wirklichkeit.” *Die erfundene Wirklichkeit. Beiträge zum Konstruktivismus*. Ed. by Paul Watzlawick. München: Piper, 1981. 39–60.

marizes the most prominent research directions of this topic after the so-called ethical turn in literary studies that happened in the 1980s. His article focuses on some basic concepts and relations of ethical literary criticism, such as the relation between ethics and morality, ethics and aesthetics, and between ethics and politics. Virk is convinced that ethical literary criticism is in many ways the most important part of literary criticism, but he identifies the so-called cacophony of ethical approaches to literature, characterized as it is by the lack of theoretical and methodological self-reflection. He makes a case for self-reflection and ethical reading as the basis for ethical criticism.

The complexity of the relations between art and politics, ethics and aesthetics, ethics and literature is central for Werner Wintersteiner in his article “From a Violent Past towards a Global Ethics? Twentieth Century Atrocities in Selected Novels of the Twenty-First Century.” Starting from the thesis that literature itself is not ethical and that, because of this, it can serve ethical purposes, he discusses three modern novels from different regions: *Burnt Shadows* (2009) by Kamila Shamsie, *The French Art of War* (2011) by Alexis Jenni and *The Walnut Mansion* (2003) by Miljenko Jergović. Although all three novels use quite different aesthetic strategies and offer different ethical “answers,” they are all searching for the causes of violence on a global level – either they are asking about a global ethics in the sense of a global society (Shamsie and Jenni), or about the global weakness of man (Jergović). The novels are never moralistic. They are aesthetically open and complex, focused on the narration of stories that concern everybody.

The ethics of narration is the major theme of Alenka Koron’s article “What is Ethical Narratology, or What Could It Be?” By taking into account different theories, especially Alain Badiou’s postmodern ethical theory, the author of the article reflects upon the methods of ethical narratology and shows how a literary text can sensitize the reader to the ethical components of the narrative.

The relation between ethics and aesthetics is the major theme of two articles in this set: Dejan Kos, in his article “Ethics and Aesthetics between Profanity and Numinosity,” provides a short outline of the historical development of these relations. He questions the idea of aesthetic autonomy and the basic logocentric evidence. As a possible solution to the inherent contradictions he suggests absolutizing the principle of openness. Vladimir Gvozden, in his article “What Makes a Good Book? *Bonae literae* in Twenty-First Century,” focuses on the qualitative criteria for literary works today. First, he explains the concept of *bonae literae* as understood by Erasmus of Rotterdam; then he

outlines the further development. Today there are no coherent criteria for the evaluation of literature, but there still exists a small residuum of Erasmus's view. Iztok Osojnik in his article "Freedom and the Unconscious: Some Observations on the Ethics of Poiesis" tries to find the ethics of literature in *poiesis*, creating, in an event of being, and demonstrates with the poem *Zaupanje (Trust)*, written by Muanis Sinanović, how this process works out from the within to outside.

The texts that form the second part of this thematic volume focus on the ethical aspects of single literary works. Daniel Graziadei's article "Towards an Ethics of Intercultural Misunderstandings" offers an analysis of three contemporary novels that describe misunderstandings arising in intercultural communication. He discusses the ethical dimension of these misunderstandings on the level of fiction and on the level of the act of reading. On both levels he points out the revision of the different processes that lead to the construction of truth and meaning. Also located in the realm of intercultural relations is the article "A Transgressive Ethics of Alterity in Jhumpa Lahiri's and Rodica Mihalîs' Narratives of Uprooting" by Adriana Elena Stoican. On the basis of modern theories that search for an intersection between poststructuralist and humanist ethics and try to overcome them, she develops a methodological approach and applies it to the works of two contemporary novelists that deal with the importance of intercultural encounters.

In "Staging the Ethical in the State of Emergency in J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*," Stevan Bradić analyses selected excerpts from Coetzee's novel that show the problems of an ethics that stays within imperial logic. He stresses the necessity of a link between ethics and politics. The impossibility of separating ethics from politics is also made evident in the article "Ethics and Aesthetics in Jonas Lüscher's *Barbarian Spring*," by Yvonne Hütter. She offers a thorough analysis of that novel, while discussing fundamental questions about the function and the scope of literature in terms of the imparting of values in the tradition of the enlightenment and the forming of cognition that enable the reader to act ethically and politically.

Mateja Pezdirc Bartol's paper "The Specific Features of the Dramatic Form and Ethical Questions in Dramatic Works by Simona Semenič" deals with three "no longer dramatic" texts by the Slovenian playwright and considers the possibilities of formulating an ethical dimension without explicitly political statements, ethical imperatives, didactic points or depictions of violence. Here, the precondition is the aesthetic experience that poses ethical dilemmas and provokes the reader into actively looking for answers on his own. Gašper Troha focuses on "Ethics

in Modern British Drama.” He asks about the ethical dimensions of plays that aim to shock the spectator and depict the world as a radical dystopia. His main thesis is that in a world of fluid, instable values this is the only way to discuss ethical questions in the theatre. The concluding article – Irena Avsenik Nabergoj’s “Uncovering the Dark Truths of Society and the Unbreakable Power of the Good in Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*” – focuses on the question of how Dickens’s novel addresses the topic of moral values and points out that it is the narrative’s ability to imaginatively display the mental and spiritual states of its heroes that engages the reader’s practical moral sense.

Etična literarna veda med kakofonijo in pluralnostjo

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Čeprav je tako imenovani »etični obrat« v literarni vedi nastopil na prehodu iz osemdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja v devetdeseta, zlasti v ameriški literarni vedi kot reakcija na dekonstrukcijo, je razmerje med etiko in literaturo predmet literarnovednega zanimanja že od samih začetkov refleksije o literaturi. Razprava povzema nekatere vidnejše sodobne smeri raziskovanja te problematike ter poskuša prikazati njihove prednosti in pomanjkljivosti. Kot največjo pomanjkljivost izpostavi problem »kakofonije«, terminološke in metodološke neuskklajenosti v sodobni etični literarni vedi. Kot nujno podlago za njeno odpravo predlaga natančen pretres nekaterih ključnih pojmov in pojmovnih sklopov etične literarne vede, na primer vsebine in dometa pojmov »literatura« in »etika«, razmerja med etiko in moralo, etiko in politiko ter etiko in estetiko (prav to zadnje razmerje odpira nova, še ne zadostno osvetljena vprašanja, npr. problematiko estetske avtonomije v povezavi z etičnim vrednotenjem, problem estetskega prevrednotenja na podlagi etičnega vrednotenja ipd.). Ob sklepu se razprava zavzema za intenzivnejšo metodološko in teoretično avtorefleksijo na področju etične literarne vede.

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / literarna veda / etični obrat / etika in morala / literatura in politika / estetska avtonomija

Povezovanje literature z etiko (ali moralo) ima dolgo in častitljivo zgodovino.¹ Že vsaj Platon in Aristotel sta bila mnenja, da literatura moralno vpliva na svoje sprejemnike. Aristotelovo razpravljanje o sočutju ter

¹ Izraz »etična literarna veda«, uporabljen v naslovu razprave, je zasilni prevod angleškega »ethical literary criticism«, ki sicer tudi sam ni ravno idealen, a vsebuje manj dvomij kot katerakoli slovenska ustreznica. Najbolje ga je seveda mogoče prevesti opisno, torej kot pristop znotraj literarne vede, ki se osredinja na raznovrstne etične razsežnosti literature oziroma literarnega polja. Ko ga skrčimo na *tehnični termin* (zanj ni nujno – čeprav je zaželeno –, da je docela smiseln in nedvoumen; pomislimo le na termina »primerjalna književnost« in »literarna teorija«), imamo poleg izraza »etična literarna veda« še druge možnosti: »etični pristop k literaturi«, »etična kritika« (po zgledu »ekokritike« in »evokritike« nemara celo »etokritika«), »etično kritištvo« itn. Duhu slovenske terminološke tradicije se mi zdi najboljše prva dva pojma, zato dajem prednost njima.

očiščenju – oziroma *katarzi* – v *Poetiki* je bilo izhodišče za mnoge sodobne razprave o etičnem dometu in pomenu literature. Podobno velja za nekatere njegove pojme, razvite v drugih delih, na primer za v *Nikomahovi etiki* razgrnjeno teorijo o *phronesis*, praktični življenjski modrosti oziroma »pametnosti«, ki se nam pomaga pravilno odločati v življenjskih položajih in tako živeti *dobro*, to je etično življenje. Ta teorija je pomembno vplivala na neoaristotelovsko smer v novejši etični teoriji, še posebej na njen prispevek k sodobni etični literarni vedi. Drugi antični, srednjeveški ali zgodnji novoveški avtorji so bili glede tega za sodobno literarno vedo sicer manj navdihujoči, a to ne pomeni, da pri njih ni najti plodovitih nastavkov za premislek o razmerju med etiko in literaturo. Nasprotno, zlasti v srednjem veku se je o tej temi precej razpravljalo,² a tudi pozneje zanimanje zanjo nikoli ni docela upadlo. Če izpostavim le en, nekoliko manj znani primer: leta 1767 je Christian August Clodius v štirih debelih zvezkih objavil monumentalno delo *Versuche aus der Literatur und Moral*, kjer je v enem od poglavij tako rekoč »imanentno« (in z današnjega gledišča nekoliko staromodno) obravnaval etiko in moralo v starogrških tragedijah. Clodiusovo delo je sicer za današnjo etično literarno vedo manj zanimivo; omembe vredno je predvsem kot monografska obdelava teme *literatura in etika/morala*, kar je za starejša obdobja redkost. Precej zanimivejši pa so priložnostni spisi nekaterih drugih. Angela Locatelli tako denimo opozarja, da so nekatere misli Shaftesburyja, filozofov škotskega razsvetljenstva in nekoliko pozneje Shelleyja o razmerju med literaturo in etiko »anticipirale posamezne vidike sodobne filozofske misli Jürgena Habermasa (1990) in Marthe C. Nussbaum« (49) in da so bile po duhu že v skladu z etično teorijo s konca dvajsetega stoletja, torej prav nič staromodno moralistične. Podobno bi bilo mogoče ugotavljati tudi za poglede nekaterih nemških romantikov (pisateljev in pesnikov ali filozofov), pa še za koga. Toda proti koncu devetnajstega stoletja in na začetku dvajsetega se je ukvarjanja z etiko v literaturi oprijel slab sloves *moraliziranja*, in v začetnem obdobju izoblikovanja velikih literarnovednih šol se ne razvije posebno področje, ki bi ga lahko imenovali »etična literarna veda« ali »etični pristop k literaturi«. Literarno vedo tedaj bolj od etičnih razsežnosti zanima estetska, bolj od vsebinskih pristopov pa tako imenovani »formalistični«.

Tako stanje se je dramatično spremenilo v zadnjih dveh desetletjih dvajsetega stoletja, ko je – sprva in vsekakor najobsežneje v ZDA in Kanadi – nastopil tako imenovani *etični obrat* (*ethical turn*) v literar-

² Za danes že klasično poročilo o teh razpravah gl. Curtius. Za novejši pregled gl. npr. Johnson.

ni vedi. Sama metafora obrata, ki evocira Kopernika, morda pa tudi Kanta (in spominja na toliko drugih modernih obratov: jezikovnega, teoretičnega, političnega, kulturnega, estetskega itn.), je sicer nekoliko pretirana. Ne le zato, ker »obrat« ni zajel kar vse literarne vede, temveč le njen del, temveč tudi zato, ker se je tudi po romantiki razpravljanje o literaturi, etiki in morali v različnih oblikah vseskozi nadaljevalo, in to ne le v angloameriški literarni vedi, ki v moderni etični literarni vedi prednjači, temveč tudi drugod. Vendar pa drži, da sta literarna veda in filozofija šele v osemdesetih in devetdesetih letih dvajsetega stoletja svojo pozornost tako rekoč *programsko* usmerili k različnim vidikom razmerja med literaturo in etiko. Med najvidnejšimi filozofskimi in literarnovednimi akterji tega »obrata« so bili Wayne Booth, Martha C. Nussbaum, Alasdair Macintyre, Richard Rorty, J. Hillis-Miller, Stanley Cavell, Adam Zachary Newton, Lawrence Buell, James Phelan in drugi. Le malo pozneje, leta 2004, in konceptualno neodvisno od zahodnega »etičnega obrata«, je v kitajski literarni vedi Nie Zhenzhao utemeljil nov, podrobno izdelan, sistematičen pristop k literaturi, ki ga je poimenoval »etična literarna veda«. V zadnjih desetletjih se je tako imenovana etična literarna veda močno razvila in razvejala v niz posamičnih smeri, med katerimi so najvidnejše *narativna etika*, *literarno retorična etika*, *etika branja* in *etika drugosti*, njim ob boku pa še *etika pisanja*, *etika fikcije*, *etika razlike*, *etika kritištva*, *etika interpretacije*, *etika svetovne književnosti*, *etika imaginacije*, *etika hiperteksta*, *etika empatije* itn. Seznam je potencialno neskončen, raziskovalno področje »literatura in etika« pa po vsem sodeč tako odprto, da je že kar nekoliko kaotično. Ne preseneča, da je to stanje marsikoga zaskrbelo. Dagmar Krause je po mojem mnenju pravilno opazila, da

pomeni etika različnim ljudem precej različne reči in da poskus razjasnitve glede tega dodatno otežuje okoliščina, da se le redki med tistimi, ki o tem razpravljajo, potrudijo podati definicijo etike in morale, čeprav ta pojma vsi brez zadržkov uporabljajo. Povrhu le redko pojasnijo, na kateri ravni je po njihovem mnenju opaziti vpliv etike na literaturo, kaj šele, da bi razjasnili, kaj sploh lahko velja za tak vpliv. Celotna debata med, denimo, M. Nussbaum, Boothom in Posnerjem je žrtev te neusklajenosti. (36)

Podobno opaža Lawrence Buell:

Ker ni posebnega pristopa k etičnim vprašanjem, ki bi si ga delila več kot le peščica raziskovalcev, delujočih na različnih področjih literarne vede in teorije, povzroča več kot le običajno zmedo, ko – to se pogosto dogaja – priznani zastopniki etične literarne vede svojega razumevanja etike ne soočajo z alterna-

tivnimi razumevanji ali s starejšo tradicijo glede te teme [...]. Kaže pa, da vsaj za zdaj ta kakofonija nikogar preveč ne skrbi. (11)

Doslej je bilo sicer že kar nekaj poskusov, da bi to kakofonijo vsaj delno omejili in pojasnili temeljna gibalna in vzroke »etičnega obrata«. Pojavile so se genealogije, tipologije in klasifikacije etičnih pristopov k literaturi. Pri pojasnjevanju vzrokov za njihov vznik konec dvajsetega stoletja raziskovalci in raziskovalke največkrat omenjajo obrat od dekonstrukcije in »tekstualizma«. Občasno se pojavljajo tudi domneve, da je omenjeni »etični obrat« v literarni vedi, pa tudi nasploh v humanistiki, posledica vse večje potrebe humanistike po prepričljivejši družbeni legitimizaciji (glede tega so posebej zanimiva dela M. Nussbaum *Love's Knowledge, Poetic Justice in Not for a Profit*). Kar zadeva poskuse genealogije, tipologije in klasifikacije, te zvečine omenjajo tri smeri sodobnih etičnih pristopov k literaturi: neoaristotelovsko (npr. M. Nussbaum), dekonstrukcijsko (de Man, Hillis-Miller, Derrida) in pa razvejano paleto pristopov, katerih skupna poteza je izhajanje iz Levinasove (včasih tudi Blanchoteve) etike (Derek Attridge in armada drugih). Bržkone eno najpopolnejših klasifikacij je leta 1999 podal Buell v članku »In Pursuit of Ethics«. V njem je razložil teh šest »genealoških pramenov« etične literarne vede: 1) tradicionalni pristopi, ki se osredinjajo »na moralne teme in vrednote literarnih del in njihovih implicitnih avtorjev« (7), na primer v spisih Bootha; 2) pristopi, ki uporabljajo literaturo za namene etične filozofije (M. Nussbaum, Rorty); 3) dekonstrukcijski pristopi, ki se delijo v »dva posebna [...] etična tokova« (9), v *etiko branja* (B. Johnson, Hillis-Miller) in v *etiko drugosti*, ki izhaja iz Derridajevega dialoga z Levinasom; 4) »povečana pozornost [...] do subjekta in njegovega delovanja«, nastala pod vplivom »poznega dela Michela Foucaulta« (9); 5) še en pristop, ki izhaja iz poznega Foucaulta in za katerega je značilna kritika redukcioničnih pristopov in vsesplošnega »spoznavnega skepticizma« (10), kakršen naj bi bil značilen za poststrukturalizem; 6) »povečana osveščenost glede poklicne etike« (10). Ob teh šest genealoških pramenov postavi Buell še pet »značilnih potez« (12) etične literarne vede: 1) obnovljeno zanimanje za prispevek avtorja pri izdelavi besedila; 2) poudarjanje odgovornosti bralca do besedila, ki je razumljeno kot bralčev *drugi*; 3) pozornost do vloge »formalnih« potez literarnih del pri vzpostavljanju njihove etične razsežnosti; 4) razlikovanje med etiko in moralo, in 5) osvetljevanje razmerja med osebnim in družbeno-političnim (12–14). Nekoliko drugačen – po mojem mnenju precej bolj sistematičen – nabor možnosti za raziskovanje etičnega v literaturi z

vidika etične literarne vede razvije Nie Zhenzhao s temi »petimi vidiki« (Biwu 29), ki že predpostavljajo razlikovanje med etiko in moralo (o tem bo govor nekoliko pozneje): 1) prvi se osredinja na pisatelje in pisateljice, na raziskovanje njihovih moralnih vrednot, zgodovinskega ozadja teh vrednot ter njihove povezave z vrednotami, izraženimi v delih teh pisateljev in pisateljic; 2) drugi se osredinja na literarno delo, v njem izražene moralne pojave ter na njihovo razmerje z moralnimi pojavi v realnosti, zlasti v družbi; 3) tretji zadeva razmerje med bralci in deli in raziskuje moralne učinke del na bralce in družbo ter bralsko vrednotenje moralne drže avtorjev in njihovih del; 4) pri četrtem gre za preiskovanje moralnega dometa avtorjev in njihovih del z gledišča etike ter za vpliv njihove morale na druge sodobne in poznejše avtorje in njihova dela; 5) peti zajema različna splošna vprašanja glede razmerja med literaturo, etiko in družbo (Biwu 29; Zhenzhao »Ethical« 19–20). V nasprotju z Buellom, ki podaja nekakšno klasifikacijo celotnega »kakofoničnega« korpusa besedil s področja sodobne etične literarne vede, zadeva Zhenzhao predlog zgolj njegov lastni pristop, ki pomeni v sodobni literarni vedi enega od redkih zares celovitih pristopov k literaturi z gledišča etike.

Polje etične literarne vede je torej odprto in široko, posamezni pristopi znotraj nje pa so ne le pluralni, temveč celo »kakofonični«. Vendar to ne pomeni, da med njimi ni nikakršnih skupnih točk. Vsak etični pristop k literaturi verjetno predpostavlja, da ima literatura poleg drugih vrednot, denimo estetskih in spoznavnih, tudi etične.³ Posamezni raziskovalci resda niso docela soglasni glede tega, kaj sestavlja te vrednote, na kateri ravni literarnega dela jih moramo raziskovati, s katerimi metodami in s kakšnim izhodiščnim pojmovanjem etike. Vendar pa imajo zvečine podobne poglede na to, zakaj je literatura posebej primerna prav za raziskovanje z gledišča etike. Najprej je tu okoliščina, da je za večino literarnih umetnin (če ne za vse) značilna tako imenovana *singularnost*, ki po mnenju etične filozofije oziroma teorije velja tudi za etično dejanje in etično izbiro. V tem primeru imamo opraviti z nekakšno *strukturno analogijo* med literaturo in etiko, ki torej že sama na sebi naravnost spodbuja raziskovanje razmerja med njima. Nič manj pomembne se zdijo glede tega nekatere druge značilnosti literature, ki jih odkrivajo ne le literarni znanstveniki, temveč tudi filozofi, pa celo psihologi in kognitivni znanstveniki. Z gledišča dognanj teh disciplin je denimo literatura ne le posebej dozvetna za etično raziskovanje, temveč tudi primerna kot sredstvo etične vzgoje, to pa zato, ker zmore zbuditi

³ Na Slovenskem je klasična referenca za to seveda Kosova *Literarna teorija*.

čustva, spodbujati sočutje oziroma empatijo in razvijati domišljijo, kar so vse *spoznavni modusi*, značilni tudi za moralno ali etično sodbo, ki po svoji naravi ni propozicijska ali zgolj reflektivna, kot so to nekateri drugi tipi sodb, ampak ima svoj, literarnemu soroden način legitimnega utemeljevanja.

Glede teh značilnosti raziskovalci etične razsežnosti literature torej bolj ali manj soglašajo. Razlike se pojavijo predvsem glede tega, kakšne učinke povzroča – ali lahko povzroča, ali bi celo morala povzročati – literatura s temi svojimi značilnostmi z gledišča etike. Nekateri so prepričani, da literatura ponuja moralne zglede, ki naj bi jim sledili (ali jih zavračali), in da je pri tem posebej učinkovita prav zaradi prej opisanih lastnosti. Drugi so mnenja, da literatura pred bralca postavlja *posamične, singularne* etične oziroma moralne situacije, like in njihove odločitve, in da tako krepi naše etične oziroma moralne zmožnosti, saj je nekakšna vaja v moralni imaginaciji in refleksiji. Ko denimo beremo *Antigono, Hamleta, Zločin in kazen* ali katerikoli roman Henryja Jamesa ali George Eliot, v skladu s tem pogledom (*pace* Borges) sami začasno postanemo Antigona, Hamlet, Raskolnikov ali protagonisti romanov Jamesa in George Eliot in tako pridobimo (etično, moralno) izkušnjo, ki je sicer ne bi.⁴ Spet tretji poudarjajo, da literatura spodbuja našo zmožnost za empatijo ter (s)poznavanje in priznavanje *drugega* ali *drugosti*, kar je za marsikoga predpogoj etike (vsaj v Levinasovem smislu).

Te tri možne drže znotraj etičnih pristopov k literaturi – ki so vse izdatno zastopane v sodobni literarni vedi in je v njih mogoče celo videti tri prevladujoče tokove pri etičnem raziskovanju literature: *moralnega, etičnega* in *metaetičnega* – so si med seboj tako različne, da ne dopuščajo soglasja glede razmerja med literaturo in etiko in da celo ponujajo zelo različne odgovore na nekatera temeljna vprašanja, povezana z etično ali moralno razsežnostjo literature, na primer: Ali literatura uči moralne vrednote ali ne? Ali ponuja navodila, kako živeti dobro oziroma moralno življenje? Ali z branjem literature postanemo boljši ljudje? Oziroma če se pomaknemo h kompleksnejšim vprašanjem: Ali je literarno delo sploh lahko nemoralno? Ali moralni spodrsaljki v literarnem delu zmanjšujejo njegovo estetsko vrednost (in narobe)? Ali delo, ki je z moralnega oziroma etičnega gledišča sporno, sploh lahko obvelja za umetniško? Kako je glede tega pri literarnih umetninah, ki so nedvomno obveljale za klasične (denimo Shakespeareove drame, romani

⁴ To je – sicer zunaj etične literarne vede – obsežno dokazoval že denimo H. R. Jauss v svojem monumentalnem delu *Estetsko izkustvo in literarna hermenevtika*.

Marka Twaina), v katerih pa vsaj z gledišča nekaterih skupin sodobnih bralcev odkrivamo pomembne moralne zdrse?

Raziskovalci etične razsežnosti literature na ta in podobna vprašanja odgovarjajo različno. Razhajanja ne le v njihovih mnenjih, temveč tudi utemeljevanjih so tako velika, da vse skupaj skoraj že daje vtis nekakšnega etičnega relativizma ali celo nihilizma. Seveda, etični relativizem – ki ni isto kot etični pluralizem! – je znotraj etične teorije legitimna drža. Menim pa, da ni ravno obetavna in plodovita teoretična podlaga za ukvarjanje z etično literarno vedo. Da bi se izognil relativizmu, predlagam v nadaljevanju kratek kritični pretres nekaterih ključnih pojmov in postavk, na katerih temelji etična literarna veda. Tovrsten premislek je po mojem mnenju nujno potreben, če želimo vnesti nekoliko reda v motečo in arbitrarno »kakofonijo« etične literarne vede in tako prispevati k temu, da se razvije v pluralistično, a notranje konsistentno raziskovalno polje.

* * *

Naj začnem s splošno trditvijo, ki ni čisto brez notranje protislovnosti: ko razpravljamo o literaturi in etiki, se moramo čim bolj izogibati posploševanjem in apodiktičnim trditvam. Njihovo veljavnost je namreč pogosto mogoče zlahka ovreči s protiprimeri. Mnogi raziskovalci s področja etične literarne vede (Hillis-Miller je že tak) denimo menijo, da literatura ne ponuja eksplicitnih (pa tudi ne implicitnih) »navodil za moralno ravnanje« (Posner, »Against« 11). Takšno prepričanje temelji na posebnem pojmovanju literature, povezanem z znanimi pojmi, kot so *estetska avtonomija*, *odprto delo*, *fikcija*, *kvazirealnost*, *neskončna semioza*, *polivalenčna konvencija*, *pisljivo besedilo*, *polifonični roman*, *semantična aporija*, *zdrs označenca pod označevalcem* ipd. Kopica *natančnih branj* literarnih besedil, zlasti v okviru dekonstrukcije in anglo-ameriškega novega kritištva, pa tudi drugih metodoloških usmeritev, po vsem sodeč potrjuje temeljno nedidaktično naravo literature, ki bralcu ne daje nikakršnih jasnih navodil – denimo za etično ravnanje. Toda čeprav ta ugotovitev morda res velja za pretežni del moderne literature, pa ne zajema čisto vse; še manj je kot posplošitev veljavna za predmoderno literaturo, ki je nastajala v drugačnih okoliščinah in v okviru drugačnih funkcij kot moderna. Kdor bi denimo trdil, da vsaj ena od funkcij Sofoklejevih tragedij, Dantejeve *Božanske komedije*, srednjeveških *eksemplov* itn. ni bila tudi nekakšno dajanje moralnih smernic ali celo navodil bralcem, bi zanikal izpričana dejstva. To pa ne velja le za starejšo, antično in srednjeveško literaturo, temveč tudi na

primer za Voltairovega *Kandida* (oziroma za dobršen del razsvetljenske literature nasploh), za vso angažirano literaturo ali, če dam še en značilen primer, za dela velikih ruskih romanopiscev devetnajstega stoletja, ki so za ruske bralce vselej veljala tudi kot nekakšno moralno navodilo oziroma moralna instanca. Nobenega dvoma ni, da tudi marsikatero drugo moderno literarno delo svoje bralce *lahko* tudi (moralno ali kako drugače) vzgaja oziroma poučuje.

Vendar pa se tudi nasprotna posplošujoča trditev, namreč, da literatura *daje* moralna navodila, izkaže za enako napačno. V novejšem času tako prepričanje, ki je pogosto povezano s tako imenovanim »referencialnim branjem« oziroma z »močnim« pojmovanjem *mimesis*, največkrat sicer ostaja implicitno, skrito pod plaščem ideološke ali politične kritike. Za zahodne raziskovalce namreč taka drža preveč spominja na staromodni moralizem, da bi jo preveč očitno poudarjali. Vendar je v mnogih primerih prav ta moralistična drža še kako navzoča. Nezahodni raziskovalci se zdijo glede tega precej bolj sproščeni in manj samozavestni. Za Nie Zhenzhaa, ki je gonilna sila kitajske – lahko bi tudi rekli, »vzhodne« – različice »etičnega obrata« v literarni vedi, je »temeljna funkcija literature dajanje navodil in vzgoja človeka v moralno bitje« (Kim 398). A čeprav Zhenzhaa navaja dobre primere v potrditev svoje teze, jih mnogi argumenti njegovih nasprotnikov spodkopavajo.

Nauk, ki ga lahko povlečemo iz spodletelosti obeh skrajnosti, je torej preprost: o tem, ali literatura daje ali ne daje moralnih navodil oziroma smernic, ali nas etično vzgaja ali ne, ne moremo dajati splošnih sodb. Literatura svoje bralce *lahko* moralno vzgaja, a enako jih lahko tudi *ne*. Odgovor na vprašanje o njeni moralno didaktični funkciji je odvisen od mnogih okoliščin, ki so vselej *posebne*, zadevajo pa sprejemnikov horizont pričakovanja, njegovo literarno kulturo, njegovo bralsko izurjenost in izobrazbo, zgodovinski trenutek, tip besedila (»berljivo« ali »pisljivo«, če uporabim Barthesova izraza, samonanašalno ali angažirano, »poetično« ali »mimetično« itn.) in še marsikaj.

Vztrajanje pri močnih, posplošujočih trditvah utegne biti eden od razlogov za nespravljivo kakofonijo etično/moralno motiviranih pristopov k literaturi. Drugi, nič manj pomembni, je zelo raznoliko, poljubno razumevanje samega pojma literatura oziroma njenega obsega, ko je govor o njenih etičnih vidikih. Booth na primer literaturo razume v preširokem (čeprav obenem tudi preozkem) pomenu kot sinonim za *pripoved*. Preširoko (in preohlapno) se zdi tudi pojmovanje Eskina, ki uporablja pojem »literatura v širokem pomenu, tako da vključuje tudi film itn.« (Eskin, »Introduction« 557). Na popolnoma drugačno rabo naletimo pri Angeli Locatelli: »Literaturo sem označila kot 'umetniško'

zato, da bi nakazala, kako pojma literatura ne uporabljam v najsplošnejšem pomenu kot kakršnokoli napisano besedilo, temveč v ožjem pomenu tistih del, ki so po kakovosti in učinku umetniška ali si za to prizadevajo« (47). M. Nussbaum je pri svoji obravnavi etičnega v literaturi še bolj restriktivna; njene analize so uporabne le za poseben tip modernega romana.

Tako različna pojmovanja morajo seveda nujno voditi do zelo različnih ugotovitev glede tega, kakšni so vloga, domet in pomen etičnega v literaturi. Mnogi raziskovalci so denimo prepričani, da so pomeni in »sporočila« v *umetniški* literaturi preveč kompleksni, da bi omogočali enoumno parafrazo (s tem pa tudi kakršnokoli moralno ali drugačno navodilo), medtem ko je pri tako imenovani »trivialni literaturi« to drugače. Če torej uporabljamo pojem »literatura« v tem smislu (torej kot »umetniška literatura«), je že vnaprej jasno, da tako pojmovanje izključuje razumevanje literature v duhu dajanja moralnih navodil ali smernic. Ali če dam še en primer: mnogi raziskovalci so mnenja, da je realistična literatura bolj »referencialna« kot modernistična literatura, denimo, Joycea ali V. Woolf, ter zato primernejša za tak pristop k literaturi, ki meni (npr. pri M. Nussbaum), da se iz literature lahko marsičesa naučimo o etiki in morali ter o tem, kako živeti dobro življenje. Spet drugi raziskovalci, zlasti tisti, na katere so najbolj vplivali Levinas, Blanchot ali Derrida, pa, nasprotno, višji etični potencial pripisujejo *odprtim delom* visokega modernizma. Dobršen del med seboj neusklajenih, nespravljivih in polemičnih postavk v etičnih pristopih k literaturi gre tako na račun tega, neenotnega izhodiščnega pojmovanja same literature.

Temu analogen je problem zelo različnih razumevanj pojma *etika*. M. Nussbaum denimo svoje razumevanje izpeljuje iz Aristotelove etike (mislim pa, da implicitno – čeprav bi sama to zanikala – vsaj delno tudi iz utilitarizma),⁵ kar že samo na sebi močno zamejuje domet njenega zanimanja za etično v literaturi. Po njenem mnenju je temeljno etično vprašanje to, kako živeti »dobro življenje« v Aristotelovem pomenu besede. Drugo skrajnost pomeni Boothovo razumevanje etike,⁶ ki je skrajno široko in zato ne prispeva k razreševanju zmede na tem področju, temveč jo prej spodbuja. Booth razume etiko etimološko iz grške besede *ethos*, to pa tako, da mu pomeni »značaj«, »zbir značilnosti, ki zadevajo naše navade«, »vse tisto v posamezniku ali družbi, za kar

⁵ Pri tem imam še posebej v mislih njeni deli *Poetic Justice in Not for a Profit*, kjer etično vrednost literature tesno povezuje z njeno družbeno uporabnostjo.

⁶ Za podobno široko – in zato komaj uporabno – razumevanje gl. Devereaux 10.

smo lahko prepričani, da se bo ohranjalo iz položaja v položaj. Svoj etos, svoj značaj izražam s svojimi privajenimi izbirami v vsaki domeni svojega življenja, in družba izraža svoj etos z izbiro, kakšna bo«. Na ta način etika zaobsega »celoten razpon učinkov na 'značaj' ali 'osebo' ali 'sebstvo'« (Booth, *The Company* 8). Richard Posner je po mojem pravilno opazil, da »zastavi Booth definicijo tega, kaj je 'etično', tako široko, da v dobršni meri sovпада s tem, kar sam razumem kot 'estetsko'« (Posner, »Against [...] Part Two« 359). To opažanje potrjujejo mnoga mesta v Boothovem osrednjem delu s področja etične literarne vede, *The Company We Keep*, denimo tole:

Ko tako razširimo svoje pojme, se pokaže zlaganost vsakršnega ostrega razločevanja med estetskimi in etičnimi vprašanji. Če beseda »vrlina«⁷ pokriva vsakršno pristno moč ali silo in če je človekov etos celota njegovih ali njenih vrlin, tedaj lahko velja za etično kritištvo vsak pristop, ki poskuša pokazati, v kakšnem odnosu so vrline pripovedi z vrlinami sebstev in družb ter kako vpliva etos vsake zgodbe na etos – celoto vrlin – vsakega bralca oziroma kako etos bralca vpliva na etos zgodbe. To očitno pomeni, da se ukvarjamo z etično literarno vedo tako tedaj, ko hvalimo zgodbo ali pesem zato, ker »dviguje našo estetsko občutljivost« ali »zvišuje našo zmožnost čustvovanja«, kot tudi v primeru, ko napadamo dekadenco, seksizem ali rasizem. (Booth, *The Company* 11)⁸

Po mojem mnenju utegne biti takšno razumevanje vprašljivo, saj zbrisuje mejo med tem, kaj je v literarnih delih (pa tudi nasploh) specifično *etično*, posledično pa implicira ne le to, da so moralne ali etične pomanjkljivosti literarnega dela v enaki meri tudi estetske, temveč tudi nasprotno. O tem bom podrobneje spregovoril malo pozneje. Na tem mestu bi želel le še dodati, da bržkone najbolj izdelano ter najširše uporabljeno (pa tudi zlorabljeno) razumevanje pojma *etika* v sodobni etični literarni vedi izhaja iz Levinasa (včasih sta mu pridružena še Blanchot ali Bahtin s sorodnima pojmovanjema) in je vključeno ter

⁷ Angl: »virtue«. Pravzaprav bi bilo glede na sobesedilo pri Boothu besedo bolje prevajati kot »odlika«. Tako bi bila Boothova poanta jasnejša, saj beseda »odlika« nima tako enostransko etične konotacije kot denimo »vrlina« in Boothu omogoča etične in estetske »odlike« spraviti pod enoten skupni okvir. Prevod »vrlina« sem izbral, da bi vsaj z namigom (na primer na okorno sintagmo »estetska vrlina«) opozoril na Boothovo (vsaj po mojem) preveč poenostavljeno in zato napačno izpeljevanje, po katerem je vsaka »odlika« samodejno tudi že etična. Če bi šlo za antični kontekst in za Aristotelovo pojmovanje etike, bi bila taka izpeljava bržkone manj sporna; a Booth jo postavlja v popolnoma drugačen kontekst.

⁸ Etika se pogosto prekriva z estetiko v tistih pristopih, ki enačijo etiko s teorijo vrednot (oziroma vrednostno teorijo) in je nimajo zgolj za njen del. Vtis je, da lahko sem vsaj delno uvrstimo tudi Booth (gl. npr. Booth, *The Company* 106 isl.).

nadgrajeno (pogosto ob pomoči Derridaja, Badiouja ali Baumana) v raznih oblikah tako imenovane *etike drugega* oziroma *etike drugosti*. Tovrstni etični pristopi k literaturi se, kadar pravilno razumevajo in uporabljajo svoje filozofsko izhodišče, največkrat ukvarjajo z vprašanjem *odgovornosti* bralca ali s problemom *literarnosti* kot nekakšnega zgledega *modela drugosti*; v zadnjem primeru se večkrat prevesijo že v nekakšno *meta-etično* obravnavo literature. Dodati pa velja, da je Levinasova etika, če jo poznamo le površno in nato uporabljamo za namene etične literarne vede, še posebej ranljiva za nerazumevanja in napačne poenostavitve. V takih primerih denimo levinasovsko naslavljanje *drugosti* ni razumljeno kot *rekanje* (le dire), temveč kot *izrečeno* (le dit), to pa lahko – pogosto v kontekstu postkolonialnih študij – pripelje do dvoumnih rezultatov.⁹

Še eno pomembno vprašanje, ki ga mora pri sebi razjasniti vsak raziskovalec etične razsežnosti literature, je razmerje med etiko/moralo in estetiko, ki sem se ga ob Boothu bežno že dotaknil. Če formuliram dilemo čim krajše: kljub znamenitemu zatrjevanju Oscarja Wilda, da ni moralnih in nemoralnih literarnih del (temveč so le dobro ali slabo napisana), bi bržkone le malokdo resno izpodbija trditev, da imajo vsaj nekatera dela – če ne celo vsa – tudi tako ali drugačno etično oziroma moralno razsežnost. Ključno vprašanje glede tega je, kakšno je razmerje med estetsko in etično vrednoto in/ali vrednostjo. Če ponovim nekatera izmed že navedenih vprašanj: *Ali je literarno delo sploh lahko nemoralno? Ali moralni spodrsljaji v literarnem delu zmanjšujejo njegovo estetsko vrednost (in narobe)? Ali delo, ki je z moralnega oziroma etičnega gledišča sporno, sploh lahko obvelja za umetniško?* Zagovorniki estetske avtonomije so prepričani, da je umetnost ločena od etike in da etične vrednote nikakor ne vplivajo na estetske. Za tako držo imajo pogosto zelo dobre razloge (poleg čisto teoretičnih denimo obrambo svobode literarnega ustvarjanja pred sodnim pregonom). Toda mnogi raziskovalci s področja etične literarne vede se z njo ne strinjajo. Argumentov, s katerimi utemeljujejo svoj pogled, je preveč, pa tudi preveč heterogeni so, da bi jih tu lahko pregledno navedel. Raje se bom osredinil na poseben in zelo pomemben problem, povezan s tem, namreč na estetsko prevrednotenje kanoniziranih literarnih umetnin na podlagi njihovega etičnega prevrednotenja. Booth se v knjigi *The Company We Keep* precej podrobno ukvarja s tem vprašanjem (z njim se knjiga pravzaprav začne in konča); pri tem se sklicuje na svojo lastno izkušnjo glede prevrednotenja nekaterih del, denimo *Huckleberryja Finna*, *Gargantue in Pantagruela*, pa tudi nekaterih drugih.

⁹ Gl. npr. Zalloua, Meffan in Worthington, Weller.

Booth se dobro zaveda kompleksnosti te problematike, ki je zaradi aktualistično ideoloških interesov pogosto podvržena enostranskim poenostavitvam. Izhaja tudi iz svoje lastne, glede tega »konvertitske« izkušnje. Kot mlad profesor književnosti, tako denimo poroča, se ni zavedal domnevno etično spornih mest v Twainovem in Rabelaisevem romanu, tudi ko je bil nanje opozorjen, ne, saj je pri njem prevladala privzgojena filozofija estetske avtonomije. Toda ko je – sklepamo lahko, da ob večji življenjski zrelosti – pozneje ta mesta tudi sam zaznal kot etično sporna, je to pomembno vplivalo na njegovo estetsko vrednotenje teh del. Nekateri raziskovalci so Bootha zaradi take drže kritizirali, češ da je ob spremembi svoje naravnosti podlegel tendenčnemu, površnemu, ideološko preddoločenemu branju ter da je obe deli vrednotil s stališča svojega lastnega zgodovinskega etičnega in moralnega horizonta, ne da bi upošteval zgodovinske in kulturne okoliščine ter moralne standarde dob in kultur, v katerih sta bila romana napisana (gl. npr. Berrong 689 isl.). Nie Zhenzhao bi tovrstno Boothovo branje imenoval *moralno* in ne *etično* kritištvo (o razliki med obema malo pozneje). Toda vtis je, da se Booth zaveda tovrstnih možnih ugovorov in ima nanje dobro pripravljen odgovor. Ustrezno branje literarnih del po njegovem ne pomeni, da se posameznemu delu pasivno prepustimo in nas tako v celoti posrka v besedilni svet, temveč da ob branju kljub življenju obenem ohranjamo tudi distanco, da še vedno ostajamo tudi oseba, kakršna smo v svojem lastnem, dejanskem družbenem in zgodovinskem svetu, in da zato nujno vrednotimo tudi s tega, svojega lastnega položaja.¹⁰

Problem tovrstnega prevrednotenja je občutljiv in kompleksen; ne le da je še vedno nadvse aktualen, temveč je po mojem mnenju celo eden najpomembnejših problemov etične literarne vede, ki se vselej znova pojavlja v novih različicah. Če ostanem pri Boothovem primeru, vidim načeloma tri možnosti za etično literarno vedo, kako se spopasti s tem problemom. Boothove argumente sem na kratko že predstavil. V skrajnem primeru (sam Booth ne gre tako daleč) se lahko tovrstno razumevanje stopnjuje do popolnega odrekanja umetniške vrednosti ti-

¹⁰ Gl. Booth *The Company* 414 isl. Booth, kot je razvidno iz tega, zavrača možnost popolnega pripoznanja *drugoga* in *drugosti* (in je tudi res kritičen do te veje etične literarne vede kot »modne«). – Sicer pa Booth tu pravzaprav odpira pomembno hermenevitično vprašanje. Do podobnih uvidov je prišla (pod vplivom Gadamerjeve hermenevtike) tudi denimo estetika recepcije s svojo postavko, da ustrezno razumevanje literarnega dela vselej vključuje celotni razpon zgodovinskih horizontov pričakovanja, vključno s horizontom aktualnega bralca, seveda. Vendar pa je s tega izhodišča mogoče priti do različnih sklepov glede estetskega vrednotenja.

stim kanoniziranim literarnim delom, ki so z gledišča trenutnih etičnih ali moralnih standardov sporna. Del politično in ideološko motivirane sodobne literarne vede se odloča za to možnost. Boothovi nasprotniki na drugi strani poudarjajo estetsko avtonomijo ali pa, če ne izhajajo iz te predpostavke, pomen *natančnega branja* literarnih besedil, zahtevajo izločitev bralčevega aktualnega horizonta razumevanja, dokazujejo Boothovo prenapeto »nadinterpretacijo« in zgrešeno branje, pa tudi domnevno nepoznavanje ali vsaj neupoštevanje zgodovinskih okoliščin nastanka dela ter tedanjih moralnih in etičnih standardov. Po mojem mnenju nobena od teh možnosti vprašanja ne razrešuje ustrezno; plovitejša bi bilo razumevanje, ki bi *resno* upoštevalo zgodovinski horizont nastanka dela, obenem pa vključevalo tudi aktivno soudeležnost aktualnega bralca z njegovim lastnim horizontom ter med obema momentoma zmoglo vzpostaviti ustrezno razmerje. Temu se po mojem približa Hanna Meretoja, ko ugotavlja tole:

Branje proznega dela o konkretnem zgodovinskem svetu lahko na dva med seboj povezana načina prispeva k bralčevemu zgodovinskemu čutu kot čutu za to, kaj je mogoče. Prvič, bralcu omogoči začutiti prostor izkušnje, znotraj katere je bilo mogoče izkusiti nekatere reči, težko ali nemogoče pa izkusiti druge, prostor izkušnje, ki je spodbujal nekatere vrste delovanja in mišljenja in odvrčal od drugih. Če gojimo čut za tovrstni prostor izkušnje, lahko razumemo dejanja, ki utegnejo sicer ostati nerazumljena. Drugič, čut za to, kakšne vrste prostor izkušnje je bil pretekli zgodovinski svet, lahko bralcu ali bralki omogoči, da z novega zornega kota uzre svoj lastni aktualni zgodovinski svet, da vidi njegove meje in slepe pege in zaznava druge možnosti izkušnje, misli in delovanja. (Meretoja 44)

Če to perspektivo po smislu prenesem na Boothov primer: Booth (enako seveda velja prav za vsakogar) ne stoji na kakem brezčasnem, nadzgodovinskem, absolutnem moralnem stojišču, s katerega bi lahko delil objektivno veljavne, absolutne moralne sodbe. Njegov položaj je omejen tako zgodovinsko kot tudi kulturno in osebno. Podobno kot bi se – mogoče zgolj iz politične korektnosti, mogoče iz prepričanja – izogibal (tako je vsaj razvidno iz njegovega pisanja) kritiziranju etičnih oziroma moralnih standardov kake druge, zlasti *subalterne* sodobne kulture z merili in standardi svoje lastne, bi moral biti previdnejši tudi pri preveč poenostavljeni kritiki etičnih meril *zgodovinsko* drugih kultur z gledišča svojih lastnih zgodovinskih standardov. Pa ne morda zaradi filozofije *etičnega relativizma*, ki bi vsiljevala mnenje, da so zaradi odsotnosti transcendentnega etičnega temelja vse vrednote nekako ekvivalentne, pač zgodovinsko in kulturno relativne, in se nam

tako denimo suženjstvo, ki se v kakem klasičnem literarnem delu pojavi kot nekaj samoumevnega, ne bi smelo zdeti nekaj moralno spornega. Nauk, ki ga ponuja Meretoja, nakazuje na drugačno poanto. Ta je v tem, da ob branju literarnih del, ko empatično vstopamo v drugačne, nam sicer tuje prostore izkustva, zaradi svojega *začasnega vživetega prebivanja* v njih začutimo njihovo izkustveno realnost, ki je doživljajsko popolnoma enako *realna* kot naša lastna. Ob tem se zavemo omejenosti in provizoričnosti svojih lastnih prostorov izkustva in s tem tudi zgodovinskih, kulturnih, moralnih itn. standardov. Tako zgodovinske kulture kot naša lastna lahko delujejo zgolj znotraj omejenih *možnosti*. Z gledišča danes še niti slutene, kaj šele dosežene moralne/etične ravni so naše moralne/etične norme po vsej verjetnosti enako pomanjkljive in sporne kot tiste, ki jih grajamo pri zgodovinsko (ali kako drugače) oddaljenih kulturah. Ne nazadnje nas tudi šele zavest o tem zares lahko *etično dvigne* in nam pomaga, da »živimo bolje« tako v Boothovem kot pri M. Nussbaum ves čas poudarjanem, torej aristotelovskem pomenu te sintagme. Kajti edino tako bomo tudi »boljši« literarni zgodovinarji in interpreti.¹¹

Z zadnjim primerom se približamo naslednji pojmovni dvojici, ki zahteva razjasnitev medsebojnega razmerja: *etika* in *politika*. Tudi tu smo soočeni z dvema nasprotujočima si pogledoma: za nekatere raziskovalce s področja etične literarne vede pravzaprav ni bistvene razlike med etiko in politiko oziroma – v nekoliko blažji različici – sta obe področji »ne-ločljivo povezani« (Schwarz 9; za podobne poglede prim. še Nussbaum, »Exactly« 60; Booth, *The Company* 70; Henriksen; Kamboureli), medtem ko za druge politični pristop k literaturi nima mesta znotraj etičnega (Meffan in Worthington; v osnovi tudi Zhenzhao, »Towards« 84, 87; Erdinast-Vulcan 63; Newton 27).

¹¹ Ker je prav tu največ možnosti za nesporazume, naj formuliram še malo drugače. Prav je, da so z današnjega gledišča tudi pretekla zavržna etična dejanja in standardi deležni naše kritike; ne nazadnje se etična/moralna zavest dviguje tudi (če ne celo predvsem) na ta način. A to ne bi smelo vplivati na naše estetsko vrednotenje literarnih del. Klasična literarna dela, ki temeljijo na danes nesprejemljivih etičnih standardih, so načeloma prav toliko etično »zavržna« kot tista, ki temeljijo na današnjih, le da bo ta perspektiva dosežena šele v prihodnje, z višjega etičnega gledišča. A tako zgodovinsko starejši kot današnji etični standardi so vselej zgolj v okviru vsakokratnih možnosti. Literarna dela, ki temeljijo na njih, so, če povem preprosto in tudi nekoliko okorno, odsev svoje dobe. In – spet poenostavljeno – njihova estetska vrednost je odvisna edino od tega, kakšen odsev dobe so, ne pa od tega, katere vrednote so bile za to dobo standardne. Za občutljivega (ali pa kar: dovolj profesionalnega) literarnega zgodovinarja oziroma interpreta zato »moralne napake« v delu, ki so to le z današnjega gledišča, ne pa z gledišča omejenih možnosti svoje dobe, ne bi smele veljati tudi za estetske.

Povezave med etiko in politiko sicer ne kaže kar zanikati. Med njima je temeljna vez denimo z gledišča, da je – v duhu Aristotelovega *homo politicus* – pravzaprav vse nekako povezano s politiko, drži pa tudi, da se etika in politika pogosto ukvarjata z istimi vprašanji. Vendar pa po mojem mnenju za etično literarno vedo niso plodovite prav vse kombinacije tega razmerja. Nekatere so ji lahko v oviro. Če zelo poenostavim, sta v osnovi dve možnosti razmerja med etiko in politiko: 1) prepričanje, da politika temelji na etiki in izhaja iz nje, in 2) temu nasprotno prepričanje, da etika temelji na politiki (drža, ki se po mojem nevarno giblje v bližini makiavelizma). Mislim, da drugo prepričanje ne omogoča pravega etičnega pristopa k literaturi, saj je etika¹² z njegovega zornega kota vselej politični konstrukt, in če poskušamo dognati poslednje vzgibe dejanj in odločitev literarnih oseb (ali avtorjevo »namero«), tako vselej končamo v političnem pristopu, ne etičnem.

Z gledišča etične literarne vede je zato po mojem mnenju edino dosledno, da med obema jasno razločujemo. Etika in politika nikakor nista eno in isto; v nekaterih pogledih si celo nasprotujeta (*Antigona*, denimo, je dober primer tega). Medtem ko gre pri politiki vselej za vprašanje moči in oblasti, pri *pravi* etiki nikoli ne gre za to, čeprav lahko razmerja moči in oblasti seveda sprožajo tudi etična vprašanja. V konkretni praksi je politika vselej poskus *pridobiti moč in oblast nad drugimi*; to je tudi značilnost političnega diskurza. Pri etiki je to drugače. Tu ne gre za zavladanje drugemu, temveč za *spoštovanje drugega*. V tem pogledu se etični diskurz – ne le v literarni vedi – tudi bistveno loči od političnega. Po mojem prepričanju etičnega pristopa k literaturi ne smemo uporabljati kot krinko za politični (ali kak drug) pristop. Strinjam se z Eugenom Goodheartom, da »mora biti vsakdo, ki se ukvarja z etičnim kritištvom, odporen na jezik moči« (Goodheart, citiran v Henriksen 490), kakršen je značilen za politično kritišтво.

Iz praktičnih razlogov šele zdaj omenjam terminološko vprašanje, ki bi moralo spremljati oziroma celo vpeljevati vsako ukvarjanje z etično literarno vedo (pa tudi z etičnimi vidiki drugih ved), namreč razmerje med *etiko* in *moralo*. Filozofi in literarni znanstveniki pojma pogosto uporabljajo kot zamenljiva (denimo Devereaux,¹³ Eskin, »Intro-

¹² Seveda pa tudi etični pristop k literaturi. Dober primer neustrezne, delno pa celo neetične obravnave najdemo pri M. Nussbaum, ko Posnerjevega drugačnega pojmovanja razmerja med etiko in literaturo ne zavrača s stvarno argumentacijo, temveč z diskreditacijo Posnerjevih domnevnih političnih nazorov (Nussbaum, »Exactly« 60).

¹³ Raba pri M. Devereaux je problematična ne le zaradi nerazločevanja med pojmom, temveč tudi zaradi mnogo preširokega pojmovanja izrazov etično/moralno, ki po njenih lastnih besedah zajema tudi »politično, ideološko, religiozno itn.« (Devereaux 10).

duction«, Nussbaum, *Love's*), čeprav se včasih zavedajo njunih različnih pomenov, pa tudi pojmovno zgodovinskih razlogov, ki so zakrivili terminološko nedoslednost glede tega (gl. npr. Nussbaum, *Love's* 169; Eskin, »On literature« 574). Drugi med obema pojmomoma jasno razlikujejo. Za Nie Zhenhzaa, na primer, je etika »splošna oznaka, ki zajema tako moralne kot nemoralne pojme, medtem ko je moralnost ožja oznaka, ki izključuje nemoralne pojme« (Zhenzhao v Ross 8); na podlagi tega tudi razlikuje med etičnim in moralnim pristopom k literaturi. »V nasprotju z moralnim pristopom pri etičnem pristopu k literaturi ne gre preprosto za vrednotenje dela kot dobrega ali slabega na podlagi današnjih moralnih načel. Etično kritištvo poudarja 'zgodovinskost', se pravi, obravnava etičnih vrednot v danem delu glede na posebni zgodovinski kontekst oziroma obdobje, v katerem je bilo delo napisano« (ibid 10; tudi Zhenzhao, »Towards« 54–55) ter ne glede na interpretacije osebne ali za njegovo dobo veljavne etične standarde.

Dodati sicer velja, da vzpostavitev jasne razlike med etiko in moralno ni prvenstveno naloga literarne vede, temveč prej filozofije, ki je obremenjena z zgodovinsko dediščino terminološkega nerazločevanja med obema. A če se želimo spopasti s prej omenjeno motečo kakofonijo, je tudi za etično literarno vedo nujno vsaj zavedanje o razliki med obema področjema. Ne nazadnje »morala zgodbe« ni isto kot »etika zgodbe«.

S tem končujem pregled tem, ki jih mora etično raziskovanje literature nujno podvreči metodološki avtorefleksiji. Za sklep želim odgovoriti na – hote v duhu moralnega besednjaka formulirano – vprašanje, kakšen nauk je mogoče potegniti iz vsega tega. Kot prva se ponuja ugotovitev, da etična literarna veda – v mnogih pogledih morda celo najpomembnejša veja literarne vede – ni monolit, temveč jo sestavlja množstvo raznolikih pristopov. Razlogov za to raznolikost je več: osredotočanje na različne vidike ali ravni literarnih del oziroma polja literatura v celoti, različna metodološka izhodišča, podloženost z različnimi etičnimi teorijami oziroma filozofijami itn. V tej raznolikosti lahko vidimo značilno postmoderno kakofonijo tipa *anything goes*, lahko pa tudi za literarno vedo prav tako značilen *pluralizem*. Razlika med obema je po mojem mnenju v avtorefleksiji. Kakofonija je pluralnost brez metodološke in teoretične avtorefleksije.

Raznolikost etičnih pristopov k literaturi, ki so izjemno pomembni tudi v širšem družbenem kontekstu, je sicer načeloma neomejena. Ob ustrezni metodološki avtorefleksiji je literaturo z etičnega vidika res mogoče docela ustrezno raziskovati na najrazličnejše načine. Vseeno pa obstajajo (poleg že omenjene avtorefleksije) po mojem tudi nekatere omejitve, ki jih mora tovrstno raziskovanje literature upoštevati, če naj

velja za *etično* literarno vedo. Raziskovalci na tem področju morajo denimo spoštovati načela *etike kritištva*. To pomeni, da etičnega pristopa k literaturi ne smejo uporabljati kot preobleko za drugačne pristope. Literarna dela morajo brati *odgovorno*, kar pomeni, da morajo spoštovati njihovo singularnost in jih ne smejo izrabljati za lastne namene, tako kot se to na primer pogosto dogaja v raznih ideološko motiviranih pristopih. Etična razsežnost in potencial literature sta tako dragocena, da ju etična literarna veda ne sme zamegljevati z neodgovorno obravnavo. Beseda »etično« v sintagmi »etična literarna veda« bi morala po mojem mnenju zato označevati dvoje: posebno polje raziskovanja in obenem način, kako raziskujemo. Ti dve zavezi – raziskovanje etičnih vprašanj, in ne česa drugega, ter *etično* raziskovanje – sta po mojem mnenju za sicer pluralno etično kritištvo neprestopni meji.

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Ethical Literary Criticism between Cacophony and Plurality

Keywords: literature and ethics / literary criticism / ethical turn / ethics and morality / literature and politics / aesthetic autonomy

Although the so-called *ethical turn* in literary studies happened in the eighties and nineties of the twentieth century, the topic “Literature and Ethics” in its various forms and denominations has been present since the beginnings of the reflection on literature. This treatise summarizes the most prominent research directions of this topic and attempts to point out their strengths and weaknesses. As the most burning deficiency, it identifies the so-called cacophony of ethical approaches to literature, characterized by the lack of theoretical and methodological self-reflection. In order to overcome this deficiency, it proposes to scrutinize some basic concepts and relations of the ethical literary criticism, such as the range of terms “ethics” and “literature”, the relation between ethics and morality and between ethics and politics, the problem of aesthetic autonomy in relation to the ethical evaluation, the problematic issue of aesthetic re-evaluation on the ground of ethical evaluation, etc. In the conclusion, the treatise stresses the general importance of ethical research in literary studies and points out (the ethical) obligations of researchers engaging in ethical literary criticism.

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From a Violent Past towards a Global Ethics? Twentieth Century Atrocities in Select Novels of the Twenty-First Century

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The relationship between ethics and literature has always been a contested one. I firstly discuss this relationship, arguing that literature is not ethical per se, which is the reason why it can serve ethical purposes. Secondly, I state, in line with Martha Nussbaum, why any ethical thinking today has to refer to global ethics. Drawing from this, I present three recent novels, all of which deal with fundamental twentieth century atrocities: Burnt Shadows by Kamila Shamsie, The French Art of War by Alexis Jenni and The Walnut Mansion by Miljenko Jergović. They pose philosophical and ethical questions about war, violence and the great ruptures of civilisation. They are a component of world literature in the sense that the plot, and the ethical reflection triggered by this, is not related to a single nation state, but to the global situation. The authors make use of a historical profile encompassing a period of 60 to 100 years of narrated time. In this way, they can make a connection between personal and historical-political development visible. But this connection is less enconced in the material history of the facts than in an ideology and "culture" that is responsible for the permanence of war and violent conflicts. The involvement of the characters in conflicts proves to be more than just a matter of character and of personal attitudes; it is also the result of social constellations. The personal and the political are never separated, which in no way releases the individuals from their responsibilities.

Keywords: literature and ethics / world literature / twenty-first century / novel / aesthetic autonomy / social engagement / Shamsie, Kamila / Jenni, Alexis / Jergović, Miljenko

Ethics versus aesthetics? [“... and more isn't necessary”]

In his commemorative speech at the opening of the Salzburg Festival 2016, the philosopher Konrad Liessman put forward, with reference to Hölderlin's poem *To The Fates*, the thesis that art, and in particular literature, does not have to be explicitly political in order to have a political effect. With this statement, he posed a series of rhetorical questions:

Shouldn't art itself despair in light of this state of the world, and if not fall silent, at least raise its voice in a political sense, shouldn't it intervene, at least draw attention to, transcend itself to point to those unbearable situations, shouldn't it take rousing action instead of worshipping beauty? (Liessmann)

The answer to this is that art, simply due to its existence, is already a critique of the world – “and more isn't necessary” – as the motto and the title of his speech, with an allusion to Hölderlin's poem, state:

In this rejection of the world, in this focus on art itself, there is a critique that does not intervene in an actionistic way, does not even name grievances, but instead retreats into a completely different sphere in which only one thing counts: the successful work of art [...]. And because of this, has art not always been, in a dual sense, a criticism and an objection to reality due to its sheer existence? Due to it insisting on this principle of creating from freedom, and due to it wanting to give credit to the criteria for success only to its own aspirations – to no other earthly, but also to no godly power. (Liessmann)

Anyone who dared to object to this position would quickly be accused of neglecting the aesthetic dimension of art in favour of a dull moralistic or political “message.” And yet, Liessmann's statement is only half the truth. For it is not even about racking one's brains over what art should or must do. It is quite simply about determining what art *does*, and what this means; what questions or problems arise therefrom. And indeed, there are a great many authors that do not stop at Hölderlin's “and more isn't necessary,” but who instead write contemporarily or historically critical texts, whose works do not exclude ethical and political topics, but explicitly address them. And that is precisely why there is this controversy that Liessman hints at.

Art and politics, ethics and aesthetics – to what extent these are compatible is an old dispute that is once again being revived today. For after all, it is a contradiction that is inextricably connected to the literature of modernity as autonomous art: if it is part of the essential nature of literature in modernity, the age of the *aesthetic regime* (Rancière), to

be “free,” not dependent on any economical or political power, and only subject to the laws of aesthetics, then how can it serve ethical or political goals? This contradiction has emerged in ever new forms in literary and political debates since the end of the eighteenth century – for example, as a dichotomy between *l’art pour l’art* and *littérature engagée*, as a plea for or against the “ivory tower,” but also within the encampment of political art – for example, in the *expressionism debate*, the so-called “Brecht-Lukács debate.” The opponents and proponents of the ethical and political dimensions of literature have debated at times very simply, and sometimes also with the sophistication with which Sartre’s essay *What Is Literature?* was penned, or Maurice Blanchot’s *L’Espace littéraire* or *La part du feu*, Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* or Rancière’s *Politique de la littérature*, or the arguments of the deconstructivists in Derrida’s cohort, or the moral philosophers in Martha Nussbaum’s, Wayne Booth’s or Soshana Felman’s following. As one can see, our topic – literature, ethics and politics – has a long history.

It is quite impossible to set out these debates in all their ramifications here, and I have not yet even differentiated between ethical and political questions at this point. However, it is important to me to locate my own stance on this question in the context of this great debate, and not to act as if it were possible to assume a completely new and independent position here. In essence, my line of argument will be that I simultaneously acknowledge and reject the contradiction between ethics and aesthetics; that I do not deny it, but that I refuse to side with either party; I make the assertion that here, we are dealing with a productive tension that need not necessarily be overcome once and for all in one way or another, and that we need aesthetic autonomy precisely for ethical reasons. I will summarize my position in the following contradictory statement:

- Literature is not about ethics, it is about aesthetics;
- Literature is always about ethics, precisely because it is about aesthetics;
- In our globalizing societies, literature might herald a global ethics.

Perhaps, however, it is quite useful to contemplate in which historical moments this debate about the ethical function of art flares up, and which societal problems it tries to come to terms with in this way. For obviously, this subject matter has a more explosive nature in certain moments than in others. One such important moment was the First World War. The war was also experienced as a collapse of val-

ues. What followed was a general discreditation of moral authorities and political institutions as well as of science. Literature, on the other hand, was viewed as a place where one could still meaningfully discuss ethical questions; aesthetics had remained ethically unobjectionable – and this despite the moral discreditation of many writers as well (see Mayer). After the Second World War, there was a similar discussion surrounding the 1968 movement, with a re-launching of the demand for political art. A further historical moment was, for example, the late 1980s, in particular in the eastern part of central Europe, when people saw in literature a power to aesthetically delegitimise and overcome the already shaky communist system. Today, one whole generation later, the issue has gained meaning once more, initially originating from the USA and France. Perhaps now, in view of the contradiction between the so-called *European peace project* and the bleak political reality, we are once again searching for ethical foundations, for art as the ultimately least ethically exhausted entity, that is to say for a reflective medium of reality that is not already completely corrupted by this reality?

The literary work of art as a medium of ethical reflection must not be mistaken for the problematic pedagogic stance that wishes to distil moralistic statements from literature. Instead, we must understand ethics as a meta-theory of morality – not rules of behaviour therefore, but rather practices of how one could arrive at substantiated rules (see, for example, Ricœur). With this, we have already made an important differentiation from a doctrinaire political literary criticism and similar such “engaged” literature that does not conceive of writing as a process of searching, but as something that already knows right from the start what its statement is.

Thus it can be seen that contemporary authors are increasingly assuming a cosmopolitan position when they discuss ethical political questions. It is an ethical reflection that also considers their own point of view and that takes into account the fact that considering global interconnections, the ethical discussion cannot seal itself off nationally either (see Nussbaum, *For Love of Country?*).

The main question for an ethical perspective on literature – no matter whether from the point of view of the artist or the critic – however, is the handling of the contradiction between aesthetic openness on the one hand, and an intended message or clearly interpretable statement on the other. While the moral philosophers, such as Nussbaum & Co., with all due interpretational caution, ultimately argue hermeneutically and do indeed seek to recognize an objectively distilled message from texts, the representatives of deconstruction, those whom Liesbeth

Korthals Altes describes as followers of a “*déconstructivisme de gauche*” (44), surmise the “illegibility” of texts and establish the ethos of the text as being beyond any moralistic or political message.¹ The question is whether these approaches succeed at finding “une voie médiane entre le relativisme épistémologique et éthique auquel semble contrainte la postmodernité, et le retour à des notions naïves du sens, du sujet et des valeurs” (ibid. 47). Paul Ricœur’s approach, which rejects several of Nussbaum’s postulates without lapsing into absolute relativism, seems to have more success with this.

L’originalité de Ricœur est [...] qu’il n’y a pas vraiment opposition entre l’esthétique et l’éthique, entre une lecture qui serait hors de l’éthique, d’une part, et un domaine pratique d’autre part, soumis à l’éthique, où il ne subsisterait rien du jeu imaginatif, esthétique. Il les voit liés dans une “tension fructueuse” (ibid. 51–52).

Ricœur assumes there is a “fruitful tension” between ethics and aesthetics that binds the two. Aesthetics is the corrective measure for all-too speedy certainties and a complacent one-dimensional worldview: “L’expérience esthétique s’avère ainsi indispensable à la disposition éthique d’un Moi qui est à la fois constant dans son ‘maintien de soi’ et précaire, conscient d’être habité par l’‘autre’” (ibid. 52).

The dialogic character of the work of art, which – as Sartre (1948) already knew – only unfolds its potential through its reception, is based on an ethics of dialogue or of “responsivity” (Mitterer) that in turn allows a self-reflection of the reading subject in the medium of aesthetics.

The dilemma of how a clear statement, a “message” is to be reconciled with the aesthetic and therefore communicative openness of the work of art, however, must continually be solved anew. After all, in doing so, multi-perspectivity and thereby interpretative ambiguity must be given the attention they deserve. Jean Bessière opines the same, when he says of a completely analogous contradiction:

De fait, ce paradoxe n’est recevable qu’à une seule condition: que l’œuvre le reconnaisse comme tel, qu’elle en fasse un moyen de la question de la valeur, et que cette reconnaissance soit, dans l’œuvre, rendue manifeste au lecteur. Grâce à ces dernières précisions, on entre, de fait, dans le jeu de la réflexivité. (5)

¹ Of course Nussbaum also approximates Ricœur’s position in certain formulations. See, for example, her wording “that we grasp the practical content of a literary text adequately only when we attentively study the forms in which it is embodied and expressed; and that, in turn, we have not correctly described the literary form of, say a James novel if we have not asked what sense of life it expresses” (*Love’s Knowledge* 172).

With this, the ethical dimension is installed in the text itself, and evolves in the reception on the part of the reader. However, this means that there is no clear-cut set of values or “ethics of the text” that one could “objectively” describe, and that one cannot expect texts to teach us how “to live well” (Nussbaum) either. Thus, in concordance with Ricœur’s concept of literature as a “laboratoire,” Vincent Jouve is also of the opinion that:

La littérature se présente moins comme un catalogue de modèles à suivre que comme un laboratoire. Si la philosophie peut s’y intéresser, ce n’est pas en tant que réservoir d’un savoir éthique et moral, mais comme champ de possibles qui n’a d’autres limites que celles de l’imagination et où, en conséquence, l’expérimentation est plus libre que dans la réalité. (6)

The work in this “laboratoire” is an interplay between meeting and distance. On the one hand, it means delving into the text, allowing oneself to be seduced, it is emotional identification; but this is balanced out by the critical analysis that observes the text “from the outside.” In place of the Nussbaum-inspired “teaching us to live well,” Ricœur’s maxim could be: “plus une œuvre m’apprend à bien (me) lire, plus elle est éthique” (Korthals Altes 53). In this sense, ethics in literature means not to give answers, but to ask questions.

To sum up: when ethics and aesthetics collude, great works of art can arise. Hereby, however, aesthetics is not some sort of packaging for a previously established statement or idea, but it is the medium of an exploratory movement and an attempt to say things that cannot be said in any other way. Milan Kundera formulated this thought, with reference to Hermann Broch, in all its radicality: “The sole *raison d’être* of a novel is to discover what can *only* be discovered by a novel. A novel that *does not discover* a hitherto *unknown* segment of *existence* is immoral. Knowledge is the *novel’s only morality*.” (Kundera 6, original emphasis). The ethical reflection on the part of the readers is not forced by the text, but is instead supported by the text’s dialogic offerings. This is successful when texts are not “smooth,” but when something irritating, or even something contradictory is expressed in them, when they expose the paradox of which Bessière speaks. The aesthetic means for this can be so different and diverse that it is impossible to draw up a poetics of this artistic openness.

Which aesthetic means can be implemented in order to stimulate a global ethical discussion is what the following exploration aims to show, with the help of examples.

(Global) ethical reflection in the contemporary novel

All three of the following examples are an objection to the argument arising from *l'art pour l'art*, which states that every type of art that explicitly broaches the subject of ethical or political questions is less valuable in an artistic sense. These are literarily complex works that make several central events and social developments of the last century the subject of discussion. They pose philosophical and ethical questions with direct reference to war, violence and the great collapses of civilisation in the twentieth century that continue to haunt us. Even if politics plays an important part in these works, the real questions are of an ethical nature.

However, these are texts that do not teach, but instead narrate, confront us with stories which, through what they tell and what they do not tell, discuss ethical attitudes and also demand such an attitude from us as readers. These are texts that pose questions in various ways, that is to say they question what they recount. In any case, these are not texts that “ambush” their readers and force a particular perspective onto them, but instead they demand answers and make answers possible. These are texts that do not directly, such as in the form of positive heroes and heroines as figures to identify with or by means of the explicit opinion of the narrative voice, or indirectly, in the form of clearly negative heroes and heroines, carry out moralistic evaluations. On the contrary, the “heroes” themselves are problematic, they fall short of their own aspirations, or they turn out to be powerless against that which they recognize as false. Presented with their story embedded in a complete network of relationships and experiences, which they neither perceive, let alone understand, on occasion the acting figures themselves know less about the world in which they live than the readers. But these heroes and heroines are always entangled in the social conflicts and struggles of their time, and they are, accordingly, more or less aware of this. They repeatedly have to make ethical decisions, and their success as well as their failure is what constitutes the narrative material.

All three novels are a component of *world literature* in the sense that the storyline, and in particular the ethical reflection triggered by this, is not related to a single nation state, but (to varying extents) to the global situation. The depiction of this world takes place to varying degrees in the three novels, but always dominantly, from the perspective of the individual figures, who, however, are thought of with more or less sympathy from the explicit or implicit narrative voice. But never are we sold an objectified worldview as the truth; the positions always remain

“undefended,” exposed to objection and opposition – not just to the judgement of the readers, but also to objection within the novel itself. This is a significant component of their literary ethics.

Regardless of these similarities in ethical behaviour, the selected texts differ in an elemental way even in their subject matter, and in the basic geographical and political conditions:

- A novel in which the main characters commute between various countries: it is one of those countries, that “always fight wars, but always somewhere else” (Shamsie 261) – the USA; furthermore, the country that aggressively subjugated other countries itself, but then became a victim of the nuclear bomb attacks – Japan; and the “hostile brothers” Pakistan and India, who in their rivalry do not shy away from atomic threats either;
- One novel concerns itself with a country that not only emerged as a colonial power, but also became a victim of Hitler’s aggression – France;
- Finally, one literary work takes place in a country that was formed after the First World War and was invaded by the Nazis in the Second World War, was forced to make great sacrifices and waged a war of liberation; a country which decades later, however, dissolved in a bloody civil war itself – Yugoslavia.

But the three pieces are also distinguished by means of the chosen narrative perspective and the narrative style, to put it briefly: by the respective aesthetic means. The linking of the personal with the political, which is present throughout, is accentuated very differently; the question of the responsibility of the protagonists stands out to varying degrees.

Kamila Shamsie: *Burnt Shadows*

In her novel *Burnt Shadows* (2009), the Pakistani author Kamila Shamsie tells the violent history of the twentieth century using the example of one of the largest ruptures of civilisation, the dropping of two atomic bombs over Japan. In her novel, the author draws a common thread between the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to the nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan, all the way to the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001 and the US detention camps in Guantánamo. Here, however, she is less concerned with the military

and political events than their influence on the attitudes and mentalities of the people in the respective countries.

The title plays on the fact that the heat of the atomic bomb vaporised people so quickly that their bodies remained only as shadows in the ground – a macabre symbol of the destructive power of the bomb. The content of the story: Konrad, a German pacifist, who has just fallen in love with the young Japanese woman Hiroko in Nagasaki, becomes a victim of the atomic bomb. She, on the other hand, survives and finds refuge with the German-American family of her boyfriend in Delhi. There she falls in love anew, with a Muslim Indian, and marries him. The division of India forces the couple to emigrate to Pakistan. Years go by. Her grown(-up) son Raza attracts the attention of the American secret services due to various circumstances. In the end, it is Kim, the granddaughter of Hiroko's American friend from Konrad's family, who denounces Raza to the CIA out of fear he could be a terrorist. He is seized and now faces an uncertain fate in Guantánamo.

The novel shows, not only in the course of action but also in the symbolism used, how the protagonists are inextricably involved in the geopolitical conflicts. Hiroko's back is burned during the atomic bomb attack, "three charcoal-coloured birdshaped burns on her back" (65); ever since, these parts of her body are numb and insensitive. This reminder is burnt into her, and it determines her life. The dark birds, to which an entire section of the novel is dedicated, will not let her go.

The clash of differing moral concepts and values becomes clearest in the confrontation between Hiroko and Kim; it is not so much a conflict between generations as it is between nations, for the people cannot escape from the cage of their nationally-oriented way of thinking. With this, Shamsie shows that it is not simply about individual morals, but about fundamental societal attitudes. When she accuses Kim, Hiroko accuses the whole of American society:

When Konrad first heard of the concentration camps he said you have to deny people their humanity in order to decimate them. You don't. [...] You just have to put them in a little corner of the big picture. In the big picture of the Second World War, what was seventy-five thousand more Japanese dead? Acceptable, that's what it was. In the big picture of threats to America, what is one Afghan? Expendable. Maybe he's guilty, maybe not. Why risk it? Kim, you are the kindest, most generous woman I know. But right now, because of you, I understand for the first time how nations can applaud when their governments drop a second nuclear bomb. (275)

Kamila Shamsie tells the story of a *global person*, from whose fate one can read global threads of connection. The novelty here is the post-colonial gaze that Shamsie directs at the US and the western world as a whole. Although her novel starts with the Second World War that originated in Germany, and initially a German man is at the forefront, Europe no longer plays any role in her narratives – the European breaches of civilisation remain only symbolically present as “burnt-out shadows.” The author is concerned with the problems of the current day from an Asia-Pacific point of view. Here, she comes to a horrifying realization, which in fact is relevant for Europe after all, namely the insight that the basic mental attitude that made the construction and dropping of the bomb possible in the first place remains in effect and makes further collapses of civilisation still possible. One example for this is offered by the following scene, in which the American Kim explains to her Japanese-Pakistani friend Hiroko why she regarded a Muslim with distrust:

Kim stood up, and walked a few steps towards Hiroko.

“If I did look at him and see the man who killed my father, isn’t that understandable? I’m not saying it’s OK, but you have to say you understand.”

“Should I look at you and see Harry Truman?”

Kim’s eyes first widened, then narrowed. Was that supposed to be a trump card? Ridiculous, and insulting. Her own family had lost one of its own in Nagasaki; Konrad’s death was the most vivid story of terror she had grown up with. (ibid. 273–274)

This is, as is the entire novel, a clear post-colonial challenge of the western, especially North American perspective. But obviously, this is not accompanied by a trite, clear division of good and evil. For Konrad, a victim of the atomic bomb attack in Nagasaki, belonged to Kim’s family, at the same time as being Hiroko’s fiancé, an insoluble entanglement. In this way, on the one hand, we are on Hiroko’s side, who embodies post-colonial criticism, but on the other hand, we can also understand Kim’s feelings, while we simultaneously distance ourselves from her when she lacks empathy for Hiroko, the victim of the bomb, and depreciates her answer as a strategic game (“trump card”). The fact that Kim is portrayed as quite likeable, and that she is also amiable towards the main protagonist Hiroko and is friends with her, makes this dilemma more complex, demanding and realistic, both aesthetically and ethically. Indeed, ethics and aesthetics do not actually have to form a contradiction.

Alexis Jenni: *The French Art of War*

The novel addresses a similarly long time period as *Burnt Shadows*, namely from Hitler's occupation of France until the present day in the new millennium. It also focuses on key political events, especially on the wars that France waged in this time. Here, low-threshold forms of violence such as the racist riots in the banlieues or the militaristic youth education are made a theme of discussion just as much as conflict-related violence itself.

With the very first sentence, a "tone" is set that will be characteristic for the continuing "melody" – the inseparable fusion of the political and private spheres: "Les débuts de 1991 furent marqués par les préparatifs de la guerre du Golfe et les progrès de ma totale irresponsabilité" (Jenni 9).

The decisive factor in this novel is, in fact, not the depiction of the big wartime events. That would be too banal, as the author himself reasons through one of his main characters: "Les événements posent une question que son récit ne résout pas" (52). That is why he resorts to a trick: we find out about the life story of the main character, Victorien Salagnon, who has participated in all these wars – from the Second World War, to the Vietnam War, to the colonial war in Algeria – as a soldier, but not directly from him himself. Instead, Salagnon tells his life story to a narrator (who remains unnamed), his much younger friend and art student who, in turn, imparts it to the readers. This provides us with an original structure of the work from two threads: the *Roman*, that is the life of Salagnon, told in the third person, and the *Commentaires*, in which the narrator discloses his own story, the encounter with Salagnon and his observations on the political events in the first person narrative. It is a broken, subjectivised account of the big story, in which precisely the person from whom we find everything out, our sole middleman, remains nameless and in the dark.

The novel thrives on the continuous intertwining of small and large events; the protagonists recognize the same patterns in banal everyday scenes as in the great waging of war. In this way, the novel becomes a history of mentalities and a political history in one – and this in the mirror of the reflections of a person who is not particularly likeable, a good-for-nothing and a flaneur, who precisely because of this, however, musters up enough time to engage himself in observation, listening, contemplation and in spontaneous encounters. For what Jenni commands masterfully are the reflective monologues of the narrator, which in the way in which he tells them turn everyday occurrences into dem-

onstrations of large-scale politics; likewise, the dialogues and debates that comment on many key scenes of the French war history of the twentieth century. This means that episode by episode, an overall picture of a (French) society is formed that is thoroughly permeated by a culture of war and violence, in which even children in history lessons find out not only the facts, but are, for example with the aid of Caesar's *Gallic War*, "instructed in the art of war."

I wish to go into more detail in one scene here, for, precisely in all its inconspicuousness and banality, it is perhaps the most interesting from an ethical point of view. It plays out in a *bureau de tabac*, where the narrator buys a newspaper. The newspaper seller, who is, incidentally, not reading a tabloid, but a quality newspaper ["On ne peut plus compter sur les caricatures pour se protéger des gens," as the narrator sarcastically and self-critically admits (192)], says to him, without clarifying his sentences in more detail, with reference to an anti-racist measure of the government:

"C'est avant qu'il aurait fallu agir. [...] S'il y a dix ans, quand il était encore temps, on avait frappé fort sur ceux qui bougeaient, on aurait la paix maintenant." (193)

Il n'affirmait rien de précis, je comprenais ce qu'il disait, et cette compréhension seule valait déjà l'approbation. Il le savait. Nous sommes unies par la langue, et lui jouait des pronomes sans jamais rien préciser. Il savait que je ne dirais rien, à moins d'entrer en conflit avec lui, et il m'attendait de pied ferme. [...] Il avait reconnu en moi un enfant de la I^{re} République de Gauche, qui se refuse de dire et se refuse à voir. [...]

La pourriture coloniale revient dans les mêmes mots. "La paix pour dix ans", il l'avait dit devant moi. Ici, comme là-bas. Et ce "ils" ! Tous les Français l'emploient de connivence. Une complicité discrète unit les Français qui comprennent sans qu'on le précise ce que ce "ils" désigne. [...] Comprendre „ils“ fait être complice. (194–195)

The narrator realises immediately that a classic phrase is being quoted here, an intellectual figure that occupies an especially prominent place in the inventory of French racism. *I have given you peace for ten years*; with these words, in 1945, General Duval justified the massacre committed by the French army of the Algerian civilian population in Sétif. But although he is aware of this, the narrator does not react, does not put the newspaper seller in his place. He feels caught out, because he understands him, and this makes him helpless.

We are dealing here with a particularly interesting point, a multiply complex ethical discourse. Firstly, the reminder of the French colonial massacre is evoked, an exceptionally dissonant tone within the context

of the glorious hero's tale of the liberation of France from National Socialism in 1944/1945. Already, this is an important opposing voice against the official version that would like to present the *Grande Nation* exclusively as a victim of fascism. Secondly, here, a link is established between the colonial wars and the racist discourses of the present – a language-sensitive critique that shows that the racist patterns of thinking are still based on the old colonial we-them distinctions. And finally – and this is surely the most important point – the fact that the narrator self-critically admits his own failures, where a courageous intervention would have been called for. It is this personal level that actually makes the other two criticisms truly credible. The self-criticism is what first leads beyond the cheap, pure ideology criticism, which is indeed often articulated with a feeling of self-righteousness and arrogance. It is only this personal involvedness that turns the political criticism into a scene of ethical complexity.

One dilemma, however, remains to be noted. With its detailed depiction of France's culture of violence and traditions of war, embodied by a male warrior caste, the novel still remains rooted in that against which it rebels. Salagnon is portrayed in a thoroughly complex manner as a soldier and artist simultaneously, but even he is, after all, just one version of the warrior. With this, the author puts exactly the protagonists of this warrior mentality at the forefront – other, deviating characters, especially female figures, such as Salagnon's wife Eurydice or the new (Arabic) girlfriend of the narrator, on the other hand, remain very vague and predominantly voiceless. This is where a post-colonial and feminist interpretation of the novel could pick up. The aesthetic question of how one can afford the meticulous depiction of that which one criticises without falling into the trap of suppressing everything else, everything resistant, and above all the perspective of the victims, however, must also first be clarified in such an interpretation as this.

Miljenko Jergović: *Dvori od oraha*

In many ways, Miljenko Jergović's *Dvori od oraha* (*The Walnut Mansion*)² offers a counterpoint to the two previous novels. Certainly, this is also a novel that tells the story of an entire century at once, from 1900 to 2000, and indeed here too, like it or not, the people are also

² Unlike the two other books, this description is not based on the reading of the original, but on the German translation.

implicated in the greater history and politics. This is narrated using the story of a Yugoslavian family, namely chronologically back-to-front. The novel, therefore, begins in the present and moves further backwards with each chapter, from the death of the main character Regina all the way back to her birth.

But in contrast to the other two works, here the protagonists are not in the least bit concerned about passionately commentating, let alone shaping the political occurrences. The people *suffer* politics, almost like an illness, and they try to escape it, which, however, not all are able to do. This goes hand in hand with a completely different kind of character. Unlike Jenni's novel, which portrays almost only men, in Jergović's novel, the women are the real heroines. And – this is another aspect that makes this work unique – the story is told in an almost baroquely extravagant manner. The text consists of numerous small episodes that weave into one another and together form one great historical tale. They greatly soften the directness of the family story told in a backwards chronological order. But it is less of a heroic epic; from time to time, one has the impression that it is more of a picaresque novel, and usually it is a tragedy of the little people. The wars and the political events are tragic, but in fact they are presented as a farce and statement of human stupidity and malice. Jergović denies the events any pathos, including the pathos of criticism that we find with Shamsie as well as Jenni. This, too, is an important difference for the ethics of this novel.

Instead of pathos we find humour, irony, sarcasm and bitterness, satirical little scenes full of tragicomedy. The contempt for war and the culture of war is ubiquitous in Jergović's work, but is expressed perhaps nowhere as pointedly as in the scene in which a war, namely the Yugoslav War of 1992, is mentioned for the first time in the novel. There, he writes with unsurpassable sarcasm:

The following month, which was as long as the war lasted in Dubrovnik, would be the most difficult in Dijana's life, worse than the three months she spent with crazy Manda. Her son and especially her daughter rejected her and treated her like a stranger. [...]

Their relations would improve a little only on the twenty-third day of fighting. While they were in the shelter an incendiary shell hit their house and it burned to the ground, leaving nothing to serve as a remembrance of their previous life. (47)

Jergović embeds his stories in the political events that concern Yugoslavia and the entire European continent, and at times, the narration also spills over to the United States of America. But he wants

nothing less than to tell a political story of the century. In truth, it is a *story of private life* in times of war, violence and terror in the sense of Philippe Ariès. It is a story in which the pursuit of profit and vindictiveness, sexual desire, jealousy, betrayal, and the striving for a successful life are as much the driving motives as are brutal violence and human affection. Whether the heroes and heroines succeed, whether they survive or die a meaningless death – an absurd coincidence is often responsible for this. Few people are real villains, and true heroines and heroes are even scarcer. Most of the contemporaries swim along somehow in the great maelstrom of history and try, usually inadequately, to save their own skin. To this end, they are soon prepared to commit almost any turpitude. For each struggling group settles up with their supposed friends or real enemies in the most brutal way: “Men write history with knives, and women summon it with words. It was that way this time too, at the edge of every ravine, gorge, and animal dumping ground” (263). Jergović describes a war, particularly the Second World War, as a “mystical temptation of blood and slaughter” (267).

Some figures, such as Regina’s brother Luka, embody a type such as Švejk, who reject war and attempt not to become guilty themselves. They remain little-appreciated outsiders. Đovani, another of Regina’s brothers, conversely, returns to Yugoslavia out of idealism after Hitler invades France. He joins the Chetniks because he believes he can fight for freedom in this way. He does not personally participate in their murderous deeds; however, he is seen as the ringleader of a hit squad and is unceremoniously shot by the communist partisans. Regina, confronted with the news of his death, saves the family honour (and her position after the partisans’ win) by inventing a story about Đovani’s homosexuality, which he is living out in France. People are happy to believe this more exciting and attractive form of the “truth.” This is just one of the many examples of how the tragedy of the narratives unexpectedly turns into the tragicomic and the grotesque.

In this novel, there is an authorial narrator who bitterly relates the events and often gives a sarcastic commentary on them. Nonetheless, as a reader, one never feels blindsided or indoctrinated – probably precisely because he not only tells his stories in a seductively exciting manner, but because the narrator lays all his cards on the table, positions himself and therefore is open to opposition.

Nevertheless, he is also the ethical authority of this novel, who not only comments on the events, but also on the fantasies of the people and the justifications of their actions. Most of the time, however, he does not judge, but instead tells a multitude of stories and anecdotes, of ad-

ventures and embarrassments, of the most terrible violence and unlikely strokes of luck. This means that in the end, the ethical question remains with the readers – and this is a good thing. They can not only allow themselves to engage in judging the characters and their behaviour, based on their own experiences and their value system, to judge the author based on what they interpret from his novel, but they can also compare the novels with each other and decide which aesthetic strategies and which ethical assessments they find to be more convincing.

Comparing the three novels

All three novels demonstrate how powerfully politics, one could almost say – world history – intervenes in the life of the individual and influences it. Nowhere is there an idyll away from the bloody battles, wars and civil wars, away from terror, military coups and takeovers by dictators. With this, the novels pose ethical questions just using the topics and plot – questions about the causes of societal violence, about the possibilities of a good life, despite all violent experiences. Again and again, the heroes and heroines themselves face ethical challenges that they often cannot withstand, they incriminate themselves and are partly responsible for the political developments that cause them to suffer. The overarching issue of all three works is very explicitly that of the causes of (societal) violence. The authors use the “*méthode roman*” to explore these causes in writing. In the prologue, Kamila Shamsie asks quite programmatically: “How did it come to this?” (Shamsie 4), while with Jenni, the question at the forefront is why the French still cannot live together peacefully today. Jergović, on the other hand, seems to be the only one whose writing originates from the idea of the immutability of human violence as a constant in social life, or to put it another way: he asks how a personal propensity to violence promotes and facilitates political violence, and vice versa.

In order to discover the causes of political violence, all three works make use of a historical profile encompassing a period of 60 to 100 years of narrated time. In this way, they can represent biographical links and make a connection between personal and historical-political development visible. But this connection is less ensconced in the material history of the facts. Rather, it is identified as an ideology or an intellectual attitude that still prevails and is considerably responsible for the permanence of war and violent conflicts, for a culture of violence. The involvement of the characters in conflicts and wars, their taking sides

or their avoidance, therefore, prove to be more than just the outlet of personal attitudes and a matter of character, but rather, they are also the result of constellations, dispositifs and discourses. The personal and the political are in this way never separated, which, however, in no way releases the individuals from their responsibilities.

The aesthetic strategies and ethical “answers” of the three works, however, are quite different. Although all three narrate a whole host of episodes and relate these very vividly, nevertheless, Shamsie and Jenni come closer to a *political thesis novel*, while Jergović’s thesis perhaps consists in rejecting all political regimes equally. Accordingly, the heroes and heroines of *Burnt Shadows* and *The French Art of War* extensively discuss world affairs, the wars and their own conduct. In *Burnt Shadows*, this leads to the recognition of the continuity of mechanisms of North American imperialism; in *The French Art of War* to the insight that the current French racism is largely a product of the colonial wars. *The Walnut Mansion*, on the other hand, is a single panorama of human atrocities that cannot be reduced to the respective political systems. Here, the political reflections are also less of an issue for the numerous characters of this novel; instead, this task is assumed by the narrator. But he debates less than he narrates. He offers an unlikely plethora of episodes “as only life itself can write them,” one might agree, that nonetheless all point in the same direction, consolidate towards the “argument” of human cruelty. If the “global ethics” of Shamsie and Jenni is the ethics of the global society, then with Jergović, it is the globality of human weakness and perfidy. Of course, all this is just my interpretation of the novels as a cultural science-oriented peace researcher, for the aesthetic openness of all three works refuses any and all definitive interpretations.

Translated to English by Lizzie Warren Wilson

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Od nasilne preteklosti h globalni etiki? Grozodejstva dvajsetega stoletja v izbranih romanih enaindvajsetega stoletja

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / svetovna književnost / roman / 21. stoletje / estetska avtonomija / družbeni angažma / Shamsie, Kamila / Jenni, Alexis / Jergović, Miljenko

Razmerje med etiko in literaturo je že od nekdaj sporno. Prispevek najprej osvetli to razmerje in zagovarja tezo, da literatura sama ni etična, prav zato pa lahko služi etičnim namenom. V soglasju z Martho Nussbaum razloži, zakaj se mora sleherno razmišljanje o etiki danes navezovati na globalno etiko. Nato predstavi tri sodobne romane, ki se ukvarjajo z grozodejstvi. Vsi trije se dotikajo osrednjih dogodkov in socialnih premikov 20. stoletja. Zastavljajo vprašanja o vojni, nasilju in civilizacijskih prelomnicah. Ne poučujejo, temveč pripovedujejo zgodbe. Uvrščajo se v *svetovno književnost*, in sicer zato, ker se zgodbe in etična razmišljanja, ki jih te vzbujajo, ne navezujejo na posamezne nacionalne države, temveč (v različni meri) na globalno situacijo. Ne glede na te podobnosti se razlikujejo po tematikah in po zemljepisnih ter političnih scenarijih: *Burnt Shadows* (2009) Kamile Shamsie je roman, v katerem je v ospredju vprašanje atomskega orožja, bombe na Nagasaki in njenih posledic. *L'Art français de la guerre* (2011) Alexisa Jennija se ukvarja s Francijo, z deželo, ki ni bila le kolonialna sila, temveč tudi žrtev nacističnega nasilja.

Roman *Dvorci iz orehovine* (2003) Miljenka Jergovića opisuje vojne in nasilje v Jugoslaviji v 20. stoletju. Tema, ki povezuje vsa tri dela, je spraševanje po razlogih za (družbeno) nasilje. Pripovedovani čas zaobjema obdobja od 60 do 100 let. Avtorji tako naredijo vidno povezavo med osebnim in zgodovinsko-političnim razvojem. Toda ta povezava se ne skriva le v materialni zgodovini dejstev, temveč predvsem v ideologiji in »kulturi«, ki je odgovorna za trajanje vojne in nasilnih sporov. Izkaže se, da je vpletenost likov v konflikte in vojne več kot le vprašanje značaja in osebne držę; je plod družbenih konstelacij. Osebno in politično nista nikoli ločena, kar pa seveda posameznikov ne odvezuje od odgovornosti.

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Kaj je ali bi lahko bila etična naratologija?

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Na ozadju etičnega obrata v literarni vedi je postalo aktualno tudi razmišljanje o etični naratologiji, ki jo vodi prepričanje, da zgodbeno etiko oziroma etiko obdelave pripovedi oblikujejo formalne strategije in pripovedne tehnike. V članku so podrobneje obravnavani trije novejši prispevki avtorjev (Tilmann Köppe, Nora Berning in Wolfgang G. Müller), ki so etični naratologiji resda naklonjeni, vendar jo različno pojmujejo. Z medsebojno primerjavo njihovih stališč in analizo primera besedilnega odlomka si razprava prizadeva na podlagi razmerja med etiko in estetiko ter razločevanja med etiko in moralo izluščiti produktivne nastavke za možno postklasično etično naratologijo. Tako skuša z upoštevanjem postmoderne etiške teorije Alaina Badiouja, v zavezništvu z dognanji klasične teorije pripovedi in s pomočjo izbranega instrumentarija pokazati na hevrstiko za raziskovanje kompleksnih etičnih razsežnosti pripovedi in senzibilizirati bralca/ko za etične komponente pripovedi.

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / literarna veda / etični obrat / postklasična naratologija / etika in morala / etika in estetika / Pahor, Boris

V naslovu članka zastavljeno vprašanje *Kaj je ali bi lahko bila etična naratologija?* meri na neko razvojno odprtost, nedokončanost dogajanja, pogojnost obstoja ali nastajajočo usmerjenost etične naratologije. V ozadju namreč evocira misel, kaj in kakšna bi lahko bila, pa ni ali še ni etična naratologija. Tako spraševanje je upravičeno, če upoštevamo, da je kljub tako imenovanemu etičnemu obratu v teorijah pripovedi oziroma v literarni teoriji,¹ vzniklem kot reakcija na formalistične trende poststrukturalizma in dekonstrukcije, doslej nastalo le malo spisov avtorjev in avtoric, ki bi eksplicitno tematizirali etično naratologijo, njena vprašanja in pristope. Ti spisi oziroma avtorji, katerih stališča se v marsičem razlikujejo in se jim bomo bolj ali manj natančno posvetili v nadaljevanju, so: James Phelan, Roland Weidle, Wolfgang G. Müller, Adam Zachary Newton, Tilmann Köppe, Astrid Erll, Vera Nünning in

¹ Podrobneje o etičnem obratu glej Korthals Altes (142–146).

Nora Berning. Ob delih naštetih avtorjev in avtoric je nastal tudi niz spisov drugih raziskovalcev in raziskovalk, ki se ukvarjajo z etičnimi vrednotami posameznih fikcijskih ali nefikcijskih pripovedi v različnih literaturah in včasih programatično poudarjajo svojo pripadnost npr. postkolonialni, kulturološki, feministični ali *queer* naratologiji; te veje naratologije vse obravnavajo pomembne etične teme in po njihovem zgledu bi lahko bila ukrojena tudi naratologija, ki bi uporabljala instrumentarij in metode, prilagojene etični problematiki.

Ta pot premišljevanja o etični naratologiji se zdi obetavna, a le do neke mere. Da bi lahko to delno skepsu pojasnili, potrebujemo vsaj okvirno vednost o tem, kaj je etika. *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* navaja naslednjo definicijo: »Preučevanje konceptov, vpletenih v praktično mišljenje: dobro, pravično, dolžnost, obveza, vrlina, svoboda, racionalnost, izbira. Tudi preučevanje drugega reda, zadevajoče objektivnost, subjektivnost, relativizem ali skepticizem, ki so lahko navzoči v trditvah, napravljenih v teh okvirih.« (Blackburn 126) Etika je torej »filozofska disciplina, ki si prizadeva pojasniti pojmovne vire, uporabljene pri praktičnem mišljenju, in preiskuje veljavnost določenih trditvev« (Köppe).

Ko skušamo iz te nekoliko poenostavljene okvirne opredelitve etike sklepati, kaj bi lahko bila etična naratologija, se odpirata po Köppeju, ki ga jemljemo za izhodišče pričujočega odgovarjanja na naslovno vprašanje, dve poti razumevanja. Obe sta odvisni od tega, kako pojmuje naratologijo. Če naj za začetek zadošča opredelitev, da je naratologija sistematično teoretsko preučevanje pripovedi, bi etična naratologija lahko pomenila: a) bodisi način, kako je izpeljano preučevanje, in se nanašala na literarnega strokovnjaka, ki torej v etičnem duhu preučuje pripovedi, b) bodisi teoretično preučevanje zgolj etičnih pripovedi. Toda takoj lahko opazimo, da se zdita ti dve opredelitvi preozki.

Če bi kot tretjo možnost skušali opredeliti etično naratologijo kot preučevanje etičnih vidikov pripovedi, naletimo na nasprotni problem. Tako pojmovanje naratologije se izkaže za preširoko: vključilo bi namreč vse pripovedi, saj je očitno mogoče vsako pripoved interpretirati z etičnega vidika.

Še naslednja možnost bi bila, če bi sprejeli opredelitev naratologije znotraj okvirov, ki so jih v zadnjem času postavili npr. Tom Kindt in Hans-Harald Müller (2003) ali tudi Nilli Diengott (1988), podpira pa jo tudi Köppe (2009), in sicer da sta iz naratologije izključeni interpretacija pripovedi in celo teorija interpretacije. Po tem razmeroma strogem gledanju na naratologijo naj bi bila njena naloga teoretično preučevanje in razlaga pojmov za analizo pripovednih besedil, vključno

s produkcijo, strukturo, oblikami in funkcijami le-teh, z interpretacijami besedil pa naj se ne bi ukvarjala. Tako koncipirana naratologija ima po Köppeju isti teoretični status kot etika; obe sta pristopa višjega reda, višjega v tem smislu, da ne izrekata trditve o nekih povsem določenih dejanjih in dogodkih (etika) oziroma pripovedih (naratologija), temveč skušata pojasniti pojmovna orodja, ki jih potrebujemo za to, da lahko sploh postavimo take trditve. Iz te točke se za etično naratologijo spet odpirajo tri možne poti koncipiranja.

Po prvi ima etična naratologija širši domet od navadne naratologije, ker poleg pojmov, s katerimi se ukvarja navadna naratologija, obravnava tudi etične koncepte. To možnost Köppe zavrne kot nesmiselno, češ da tako zasnovana naratologija označuje preveč heterogeno, pojmovno ne ravno združljivo polje preučevanja, za katerega zaradi sofisticiranosti filozofske etike niti ni kompetentna. Še več, Köppeju se zdi ta pot koncipiranja podobno nesmiselna, kot bi bilo npr. nesmiselno zaradi tega, ker pač pripovedi lahko obravnavajo številne zadeve, med njimi tudi pokrajine, vpeljati kombinacije, kakršni sta npr. pokrajinska naratologija ali gospodinjska naratologija na podlagi dejstva, da pripovedi berejo tudi gospodinje.

Po drugi poti gre razmislek v to smer, da so nekateri koncepti, s katerimi ima naratologija opravka, vsaj na nek način etično pomenljivi in da zato konstituira žariščno področje etične naratologije. Primer bi lahko bil pripovedovalec, ki ga je mogoče razumeti kot osebo, katere dejanja ali pogledi imajo nek etičen pomen. Toda takoj ko začnemo pregledovati etične trditve enega ali drugega pripovedovalca, se spet vrnemo na raven interpretacij, glede na ozko razumevanje naratologije pa bi morali ostati znotraj kroga pojasnjevanja *pojma* pripovedovalca in se ne ukvarjati s pripovedovalci na delu, torej z določenimi osebami pripovedovalcev v določenih pripovednih tekstih. S tem sicer Köppe noče zanikati, da ima uporaba različnih vrst pripovednih tehnik vsakovrstne učinke, za katere se meni, da so lahko na ta ali oni način etično pomenljivi. A ugotavljanje etičnega pomena posameznih pripovednih tehnik je po njegovem še vedno stvar interpretacij, izpeljanih ob posameznih primerih, in ne konceptualnih pojasnjevanj, ki zadevajo naratologijo.

Tretja pot bi bila, da bi razumeli etično naratologijo le kot *modo di dire, façon de parler*, kar pomeni preprosto, da sta ob nekaterih priložnostih, predvsem da bi olajšali analizo nekaterih aspektov (nekaterih in ne vseh) pripovedi, koristni tako naratologija kot etika. To bi pomenilo, da etična naratologija ni posebna veja naratologije, temveč prej naratologija v službi določenih ciljev in v spremstvu etike, in ta pot se zdi Köppeju najsprejemljivejša. Še posebej relevantno se mu zdi misliti

o naratologiji in etiki, kot da priskrbita hevrstiko, ki zasleduje te cilje. Nato Köppe navede nekaj področij raziskovanja, kjer bi se etična naratologija lahko pokazala koristna.

1. Skupno delovanje etike in naratologije bi lahko po njegovem pomagalo pojasniti zapletena vprašanja o dvojnem statusu fikcijskih likov kot tekstualnih entitet in hkrati moralno odgovornih oseb.

2. Nekateri filozofi menijo, da lahko literarne pripovedi igrajo pomembno vlogo v razlagi etičnih pojmov. Naratologija bi lahko pomagala identificirati te vidike zgodb.

3. Nekatero značilnosti praktičnega mišljenja so tesno povezane s posameznimi potezami pripovedi: nekateri trdijo, da igra menjavanje perspektive in dejstvom nasprotujoče pripovedovanje zgodb ključno vlogo v moralnem mišljenju oziroma da otroci pridobijo svojo sposobnost za pripisovanje razlag nekemu vedenju prek pripovedi oziroma da skušajo ljudje odigrati zgodbe, ki se jim zdijo smiselne. Koncepti, ki jih obravnava naratologija, bodo očitno imeli pomembno vlogo za te veje etične teorije. Isto velja za t. i. tezo o pripovedni identiteti, po kateri je pripoved vpletena v konstituiranje oziroma ohranjanje identitete sebstva.

4. O pripovedni fikciji se pogosto trdi, da vpliva na moralne sposobnosti svojih bralcev. Eden od posebej pomembnih načinov, kako je to mogoče doseči, je z vzbujanjem »moralnih« občutij, kakršni sta npr. sočutje ali sram. Naratologi bi lahko obravnavali pripovedne tehnike, ki so odločilne za takšno naravnost bralcev, medtem ko bi filozofi pretresali vlogo emocij v etiki.

5. Pripovedi se običajno presoja glede na njihovo estetsko kakovost. Vendar še danes potekajo kontroverzne debate o tem, ali so moralni pogledi pripovedi relevantni za njeno estetsko vrednost. Etična naratologija bi lahko prispevala pojasnila o medsebojnih konceptualnih povezavah, ki so predmet diskusij.

Kljub nekoliko sholastičnemu načinu razmišljanja ponujajo tu povzeti Köppejevi nastavki nekaj koristnih izhodišč. Vsak po svoje sta jih uporabila Wolfgang G. Müller (»From Homer's«) in Nora Berning (»Critical«) in v nadaljevanju si jih bomo pobliže ogledali. Oba sta mnenja, da je etiko in estetiko nesmiselno postavljati v opozicijo, kakor je to naredila L. Korthals Altes (2008), saj sta v literaturi nerazdružljivo povezani (Müller, »From Homer's« 10; Berning, »Critical« 105). Etično naratologijo sta oprla na pojmovanje, da ima forma semantično razsežnost in da je pripovedna forma katalizator etične senzibilizacije, nanašajoče se na konstrukcijo vrednot.² Vendar etičnih vrednot, ki so

² Termin konstrukcija vrednot (*value construction*) je vpeljal Roland Weidle (2009), prevzela pa sta ga N. Berning in za njo še Wolfgang G. Müller.

sporočene v pripovedi, po njunem ne smemo razumeti napačno, torej kot entitet, ki bi jih lahko poistovetili s pojmi ali normami, obstoječimi brez povezave s tekstom. Te etične vrednote so neločljive od forme teksta, saj jih tekst ne sporoča na didaktičen način, pač pa le senzibilizira bralca za etične teme in probleme.

Nora Berning izhaja iz nasprotnih stališč kot Köppe. S prepričanjem, da se naratologija nikakor ne sme odreči interpretaciji, pa nasprotuje tudi Kindtu in Hansu-Haraldu Müllerju, ki ju ima za konservativna. Etična naratologija je zanjo holistična, intersubjektivno preverljiva analiza zgodbene etike pripovedi, kar so konstrukcijske vrednote dela (Berning, »Critical«103). Njeno naslednje izhodišče pa je ideja Fredrica Jamesona o ideologiji forme, po kateri je forma imanentno in resnično samosvoja ideologija (prim. Jameson 127). Formalne poteze pripovedi oziroma pripovedne tehnike so po njenem hrbtenica pripovedi in imajo etični pomen v toliko, »kolikor podpirajo temeljno funkcijo pripovedi kot močan vehikel vednosti, vrednot in verjetij« (Berning, »Critical« 104).

Ideja o semantizaciji pripovednih form, ki jo zagovarja N. Berning, implicira, da pripovedni diskurz ni nevtralen medij za prikazovanje (historičnih) dogodkov in da so – neodvisno od medija, prek katerega so pripovedi posredovane – procesi tvorjenja sveta v smislu Nelsona Goodman (1992) oziroma kulturnih konstrukcij nujno prežeti s kulturnimi vrednotami, v katere so investirana razmerja moči in boji o pomenu kulturne identitete. Ker pa se N. Berning hkrati navezuje na široko pojmovanje pripovedi, ki poleg verbalnih vključuje tudi npr. filmsko pripoved, grafični ali morda bolje, risoroman, fotografijo itd., je potrebno po njenem pri analizi konstitutivnih elementov pripovednega tvorjenja sveta upoštevati še medialnost pripovedi. Zato skuša v nasprotju z Jamesom Phelanom,³ ki se sicer s svojo retorično naratologijo prav tako posveča etičnim vprašanjem in problemom, vendar svoje pojmovanje pripovedi omejuje na (verbalno) pripovedno fikcijo, sama osvetliti tudi vlogo drugih medijev pri diseminaciji norm in etičnih vrednot v kulturi.⁴ Pri tem se navezuje na tipologijo konstruiranja vrednot v različnih tipih medijev, ki jo je izdelal Roland Weidle (2009).

Večina pripovednih tehnik, ki jih Weidle omenja, se nanaša na to, kar imenuje Gérard Genette (1983) pripovedna situacija. Prav konfiguracija pripovedne situacije igra pri konstrukciji vrednot v pripovedi

³ Prim. npr. Phelan, »Narrative«.

⁴ Pri tem sledi usmeritvi urednikov zbornika *Ethics in Culture: The Dissemination of Values Through Literature and Other Media*. Glej Erll, Grabes in Nünning.

osrednjo vlogo. Poleg pripovedne situacije je pomembna še fokalizacija (ta je po Genettu lahko ničta, notranja ali zunanja), saj je s pripovedno situacijo tesno povezana: vpliva na reprezentacijo likov in časovnih ter prostorskih relacij, napelje nas k razumevanju protislovnih položajev, pomaga lahko inscenirati proces spominjanja in prispeva h konstrukciji pripovednih prostorov (Berning, »Critical« 111). Tem kategorijam iz klasičnega naratološkega repertoarja je treba po N. Berning dodati še koncepta likovih prostorov (*character-spaces*), kakor ga je vpeljal Alex Woloch (2003),⁵ in pripovednih teles (*narrative bodies*), ki ga je konceptualiziral Daniel Punday (2003).⁶ Skupaj s kategorijami pripovedne situacije in pripovednega časa sta ta dva postklasična naratološka koncepta pogonski sili pripovednega tvorjenja sveta in za bralca soustvarjata pogoje, da lahko – pogosto na samorefleksiven način – izpelje moralno-intelektualno sondiranje v zgodbah reprezentiranega materiala (Berning, »Critical« 111)

Po N. Berning lahko neesencialistična kritična etična naratologija, za katero se zavzema, osveži tako naratologijo kot etično kritištvo. Kritična etična naratologija je čezmedijska, ker ima naratološke kategorije, ki tvorijo njen analitični okvir, za fenomene, ki se pojavljajo v več kot enem mediju (114). Videti jo je mogoče kot hevrstiko za interpretacijo, ki vznikaja iz »ekspanzivne narave postklasičnih novih naratologij« (113) ter povezuje preučevanje formalnih značilnosti, medijsko specifičnih struktur pripovedi in diskusijo njihovih ideoloških ter etičnih implikacij. Bistvenega pomena je, da literarni strokovnjaki, ki delujejo v okolju sodobne etične filozofije, spoznajo antropološke, psihološke in kulturne potrebe po neesencialističnem etičnem diskurzu za formiranje osebnih in kolektivnih identitet.

Naslednji, ki ga moramo kot teoretika in praktika, ki je eksplisitno pisal o vprašanih etične naratologije,⁷ pritegniti v obravnavo, je

⁵ Koncept likovih prostorov pomeni po N. Berning dinamično interakcijo med liki, prostori in splošno pripovedno formo in vključuje vprašanja perspektivizacije, ni pa omejen nanja; produktivno ga je mogoče dopolniti z Lotmanovim konceptom meje kot topološkim kulturnim modelom ter analitičnim instrumentarijem Katrin Dennerlein in drugih, ki so obravnavali prostorska razmerja pripovedne fikcije, pri čemer je treba te instrumentarije prilagoditi žanru literarne nefikcije, ki ga naratološko analizira in interpretira Berningova (prim. Berning, *Towards* 44–45).

⁶ Pojem pripovednih teles se nanaša na kategorijo rizomatske strukture, pri kateri lahko vsak del vzgoji nove povezave med različnimi osmi interpretacije. Te osi segajo od reprezentacij duševnosti in vidikov umsko-telesnih interakcij do vprašanj telesnosti in splošnejše identitete; prav tako kot pri pojmu likovih prostorov pa so potrebne prilagoditve žanru literarne nefikcije (prim. Berning, *Towards* 45).

⁷ Prim. Wolfgang G. Müller, »An Ethical« in Müller, »From Homer's«.

Wolfgang G. Müller. V zadnjem članku se najprej ukvarja s pojmovnimi razčiščevanji in pri tem naklonjeno navezuje na Berningovo, čeprav pojmuje etično naratologijo nekoliko drugače od nje in brez dodatka »kritična«, njegova baza analiziranih primerov pa ostaja tekstna. Zanimiv je tudi njegov odnos do Newtona (1995) in Phelana. Prvega zavrača, ker je apriorno poistovetil pripoved z etiko. Bližji mu je Phelan, ker povezuje etični odziv s tehnikami pripovedi. Toda Phelan se zlasti v knjigi *Living to tell about it* (2005) omejuje na jaz- oziroma prvoosebne pripovedi, kar imenuje likova pripoved (*character-narration*), in izrazito naveže na teorijo bralčevega odziva, W. Müller pa je po lastnem mnenju žanrsko širši in manj strogo usmerjen k bralčevemu odzivu (W. G. Müller, »From Homer's« 10–11). Sicer se tudi sam opira na Ricœurjev pojem pripovedne identitete, vendar gre dlje od njega in Phelana ter poudari, da so ne le prvoosebne pripovedi, ampak tudi pripovedi s prikritim pripovedovalcem ali z dominantno perspektivo likov zelo pripravne za izražanje moralnosti. Kot pravi že Nora Berning, Müller pa ji pritrjuje, velja isto za nefikcijske pripovedi in druge medije, le da se Müller v svojem članku omejuje na fikcijsko pripoved (19–20).

Kar zadeva pojem moralnost pripovedi, je ta včasih resda rabljen sinonimno z etiko, vendar je po Müllerju vseeno bolje, da se – v povezavi z literaturo – zavedamo distinkcij. »Moralo pogosto razumemo kot sistem vrednot, vrlin, norm ali načel, ki nam povedo, kako ravnati v določeni situaciji. V navezavi na literaturo lahko moralo razumemo kot niz pravil in norm, ki jih je mogoče abstrahirati od literarnega dela oziroma jih je mogoče uporabiti za umeščanje v določen ideološki kontekst.« (Müller, »From Homer's« 20–21) Čeprav se Müllerju, ki mu je ljubši termin etika kot morala, ne zdi nesmiselno umeščati literature v kontekst moralne filozofije ali iskati literarno reprezentiranih moralnih vrednot, to početje le ni prava naloga etične naratologije. Slednja je namreč tako po Berningovi kot po njegovem mnenju disciplina, ki prodira k etičnim temam skozi pripovedno formo ali, drugače rečeno, skozi estetiko. Prav fikcija pa je za izražanje finih etičnih nians bolj primerena kot nepripovedni žanri, saj pripovedne tehnike lahko posredujejo množstvo stališč, perspektiv, sprememb v zaznavanju, notranjih uvidov itd., medtem ko npr. v drami ni mogoče prikazati ob govornem dialogu potekajočih notranjih misli, reagiranj na replike itd. Distinkcija med sicer povezanimi pojmom morala in etika je torej bistvenega pomena za Müllerjevo razumevanje etične naratologije: medtem ko je moralo mogoče abstrahirati iz teksta v obliki moralnih propozicij in trditev o vrednotah in normah, je etika nerazdružljivo povezana s tekstom kot estetsko entiteto oziroma z njegovo estetsko formo (22).

Müller na podlagi svojih stališč o etiki in morali sklepa, da teksti, kakršen je npr. roman *Jaz, porota (I, the Jury)* Mickeya Spillanea, ki nima kakšne moralne vsebine in zanimive rabe pripovedne tehnike, tvegajo, da bodo pristali v popularni literaturi. Problematičen bi se lahko zdel tudi Bret Easton Ellis z romanom *Ameriški psiho (American Psycho)*, toda v tem delu so odbijajoče reprezentacije postavljene v ambigvitetna razmerja s pripovednimi tehnikami (24). Na podlagi teh Müllerjevih stališč je jasno, zakaj ne more podpirati Newtonove teze, da so vse pripovedi etične. Še manj mu je všeč ideja, da bi lahko bila prisotnost pozitivnih moralnih vsebin kriterij za vrednotenje fikcije (25). Pristop z etičnega vidika mora po njegovem zajeti tako obravnavo moralno pozitivnih in moralno negativnih likov in njihovih dejanj ter motivacij. Tudi prikaz kriminalnih dejanj je moralno pomenljiv, ker razkriva trpljenje (žrtve) ali morda storilca in kot vemo že od Aristotela dalje, ima percepcija žalosti ali sočutja močan učinek na sprejemnika dela. Prikaz zla je po Müllerju pogosto celo bolj vznemirljiv kot prikaz dobrega (25). Posebno nenavadne učinke empatije izzove perspektiva psihopatskega kriminalca.

Drugi, aplikativni del razpravljanja posveti W. Müller besedilnim analizam, ki kažejo medsebojno odvisnost estetike in etike, kar je tudi osrednji postulat v njegovem članku (26). Obravnavani odlomki niso iz prvoosebni pripovedi, temveč drugih tipov. Prvi primer tvori ta odlomka iz romana Jane Austen *Prepričevanje*; ob prvem Müller pokaže, kako je moralno dejanje reprezentirano s tehniko gledišča (*point-of-view technique*) oziroma z omejevanjem likovega gledišča, ki mu z rabo polpremega govora sledi osvetlitev notranjega doživljanja, ob drugem odlomku pa izpostavi pretanjeno ironijo, prek katere bralec skupaj s protagonistko spozna nevrednost odličnih manir, če niso podprte z moralnimi načeli. Naslednja skupina odlomkov je iz poznega romana Henryja Jamesa *Zlata skleda (The Golden Bowl)*. Analizira jih predvsem stilistično in glede na rabo polpremega govora ter opozori, da je roman daleč od didaktičnosti in da nikjer ne moralizira neposredno o prešuštvu, čeprav govori o njem. Tretji primer je reprezentacija vsakdanjega dogodka v odlomku iz poglavja Kalipso (*Calypso*) v romanu *Ulikses (Ulysses)* Jamesa Joycea; tudi v njem ni neposrednega komentarja moralno obtežene situacije (spet gre za prešuštvo), vendar občutimo njeno moč zaradi pisateljevega kombiniranja neverbalnih dejanj in prefinjene rabe gledišča oziroma fokalizacije (prim. Müller, »From Homer's« 26–32). Primeri naj bi pokazali, da so lahko moralni vidiki medčloveških razmerij prikazani v romanu na načine, ki so nedosegljivi drugim oblikam diskurza.

Ponuja se torej sklep, da je etiko pripovedi mogoče obravnavati ustrezno le, če se vzame pripovedovanje zgodb resno, to je kot umetnost, in fokusira na pripovedno tehniko, ki prispeva tako k ustvarjanju izraza moralnim temam in problemom kot h kognitivnemu ozaveščanju bralk in bralcev o kompleksnosti človeških življenj in razmerij. Vidimo lahko torej, da se je Müller v svojem članku kljub načelni naklonjenosti pripovednoteoretskim prizadevanjem N. Berning, ki je v svoji knjigi *Towards a Critical Ethical Narratology* (2013) uspešno osvetlila konstrukcijo vrednot v literarni nefikciji (Müller, »From Homer's« 33), v bistvu približal skepsi, omenjeni v izhodišču tukajšnjega razpravljanja, da bi etična naratologija lahko kdaj postala sistematična znanost. Pač pa je produktivno razvil možnosti, ki jih je Köppe pod pogojem, da govorimo o etični naratologiji kot *façon de parler*, nakazal npr. pod točkama tri in štiri. Tako kot Berningova tudi Müller zatrjuje, da etične vsebine pripovednih besedil ni mogoče artikulirati v obliki filozofskega argumenta in propozicij. Prav tako etična razsežnost umetniškega pripovednega dela ne more postati moralno napotilo za ravnanje v konkretnih situacijah, lahko pa opozori bralca na zapletenost moralnih problemov.

Premišljevanje o tem, kaj je ali bi lahko bila etična naratologija, moramo slednjič obrniti tudi v nasprotno smer in se vprašati še, za katero vrsto etike naj bi pri etično naratološkem razpravljanju o pripovednih tehnikah pravzaprav šlo. Večina avtorjev, ki so se doslej ukvarjali z etično naratologijo, vključno s predstavniki ter nadaljevalci ameriške šole retorične naratologije, se je oprla na Aristotelovo etiko, Vera Nünning pa je v razpravi *The Ethics of (Fictional) Form: Persuasiveness and Perspective Taking from the Point of View of Cognitive Literary Studies* z vidika kognitivnih študijev opozorila, da je pri raziskovanju etičnih razsežnosti pripovednih strategij,⁸ mogoča in posebej v sodobnih postmodernih časih in razmerah potrebna drugačna etiška teorija, ki obravnava tudi izkušnjo alteritete in drugosti drugih. Ta naj bi, če nekoliko poenostavimo, resda ustrezala zahodni tradiciji sočutnega razumevanja literarnih del, vendar hkrati tudi blokirala empatijo in identifikacijo z literarnim likom, kadar so npr. bralcu ali bralki literarnih del ponujene perspektive antijunakov, zločincev, nasilnežev itd.

Po Badioujevi *Etiki*, ki jo citira Nünningova, je zavedanje drugosti in radikalna razlika med mano in vsemi drugimi (vključno z mano) temeljni kamen etike. Po njenem je Badioujev pogled kompatibilen s

⁸ Prepričanje, da formalne pripovedne konvencije oblikujejo zgodbeno etiko, V. Nünning (38) prav tako kot Müller in N. Berning opira na Fredrica Jamesona in še na Terryja Eagletona.

pri Levinasu navdihnjeno etiko, ki se je odmaknila od preskriptivnih razsežnosti tradicionalnih vrednot in približala odprtejši postmoderni etiki. Prav ta pa nam omogoči ceniti etično vrednost pripovednih strategij, »ki vzbujajo ne le občutljivo razumevanje živečim ljudem podobnih likov, ampak tudi priznanje nestabilnosti, odprtosti, raznorodnosti in kompleksnosti« (47). Že Šklovski je npr. povezal empatiji nasprotne strategije distanciranja z estetskimi lastnostmi literature. Taka strategija je npr. potujitev, ki bralca odvrne od rutine, upočasni bralni proces in mu omogoči na novo uvideti in ovrednotiti stvari, čeprav to ne pripelje vedno do kognitivnega sklepa; nekateri literarni teksti pač terjajo priznanje kompleksnosti in drugosti in samo delno razumevanje besedila (48). K etični vrednosti fikcije lahko prispeva tudi multiperspektivčnost besedila oziroma več fokalizatorjev, ki posredujejo konfliktne verzije dogodkov oziroma perspektiv nanje; prav diferenciranje med njimi je pomembno za razumevanje etične vrednosti branja literature, saj se mora bralec odločati, ali deliti perspektivo katerega od likov, ali pa na podlagi lastne (več)vednosti priti do povsem drugačne interpretacije. Podobne potenciale imajo tudi ironija, obravnava časa v besedilu in pomenljivost ambigviteta ter praznin oziroma vrzeli.

Da bi npr. bralec ali bralka lahko razumel dogodek, predstavljen iz perspektiv različnih likov, mora presoditi ne le zanesljivost likov in njihovo razumevanje dejstev, ampak tudi njihove moralne vrednote. To je lažje v viktorijanskih romanih kot npr. v modernističnih ali postmodernističnih, kjer so bralci spodbujeni, da sprejmejo drugost in raznorodnost ter razumejo kontradiktorne etične pozicije in se tako bližajo etiki drugosti. Eno od pripovednih sredstev stopnjevanja kompleksnosti etičnih implikacij je zanesljivost oziroma nezanesljivost pripovedovalca ali fokalizatorja; če ju podpira diskretna raba polpremega govora, to lahko omogoči bralčevo prepoznanje ironičnega distanciranja med njima. Soočenje z etično spornim pripovedovalcem ali fokalizatorjem lahko resda evocira empatijo, lahko pa tudi vzbudi sočutje do njegovih žrtev, odpor ali celo gnus in potrditev bralčevih drugačnih vrednot oziroma spodbudi refleksijo, če je gladko razlikovanje med »sprejemljivimi« in »nesprejemljivimi« pozicijami sploh možno (51). Raba teh tehnik po Nünningovi torej napeljuje k problemu, da morda, tako kot trdi Badiou (26), ni nobene etike same na sebi, ampak samo etika resnic (oziroma etika procesov resnice), ki pripoznava, da je resnica lahko samo povezana (oziroma se lahko udejanja) z določenimi situacijami in subjekti. Zavedanje in premislek take etike resnic je mogoče okrepiti z rabo pripovednih konvencij, ki vodijo bralce k skrbi za like, vpleteno-

sti v njihove usode in k posvajanju njihovih perspektiv, pri čemer pa te perspektive hkrati zahtevajo priznanje heterogenosti in kontradikcij med pozicijami, ki jih liki utelešajo (nav. m.)

Razpravljanje o tem, kaj je ali bi lahko bila etična naratologija, naj sklenem s ponazoritvenim primerom, ki s svojo formo senzibilizira bralca za etične implikacije literarnega besedila in tako na umetniški način inscenira badioujevsko postmoderno etiko procesov resnice. Odlomek je iz izteka romana Borisa Pahorja *Nekropola* (1967), v katerem pisatelj po dvajsetih letih kot turist obišče taborišče, kjer je bil zaprt med vojno, in je del daljšega, dialoško strukturiranega premišljevanja o kolektivni odgovornosti nemškega naroda za obstoj koncentracijskih taborišč. To premišljevanje ni etično splošno, ampak se vedno nanaša na povsem določene situacije, zlasti še takrat ko pisatelj spregovori o le enkrat izkazani srčni kulturi nekega nemškega častnika. Spomni se namreč ene same sočutne geste s strani storilcev v vseh štirinajstih mesecih svojega medvojnega bivanja v taboriščih, in sicer nekega plavolasega nemškega stražarja, ki je videl, kako je kot bolničar oskrbel gnojno bulo na nogi taboriščnika in mu je zato priskrbel nekaj riža.

Plavolasi podčastnik, ki je sedel na vznožju topiča in zajemal iz menažke, je z žlico pokazal name. Zelo rahlo, skoraj trudoma sem mu pokimal in se vrnil z lončkom iz lepenke v kot. Do polovice je bil napolnjen z rižem, beli lonček, in meni se je zdelo smešno, če mladi Siegfried misli, da se je mogoče odrešiti s tako posodico riža, ampak obenem se mi je zdelo, da je lonček odsev varljive prikazni. In sedel sem na kocu in tiščal z dlanmi toplo lepenko, ki se je mehko vdajala. Nisem bil lačen, odkar sem kašljal, je lakota splahnela, vonj, ki je prihajal iz lončka pa se mi je upiral. Nekomu ga moram dati, sem pomislil, in žal mi je bilo, da sem ga sploh vzela. Zakaj zazdelo se mi je, da mi ga je plavolasi poslal iz spoštovanja, ker sem opravljal tak posel, da pa v njegovem spoštovanju ni bilo spoštovanja do uničenih ljudi. In objemal sem z dlanmi oblo in toplo lepenko in se trudil, da bi gledal z očmi plavolasca na dolgo vrsto kariatid, ki so stale pod vozovi na potrebi, nosile na lobanjah razpadajoči svet in bile črtaste mumije, ki so se jim obveze razpletle in se bodo zdaj zdaj sesule v prah. Skušal sem razbrati njegovo misel, a čeprav sem se zastonj trudil, mi je bilo, kakor da imam v dlaneh mehko živo bitje, mladega belega zajčka, in toplota, ki mi je iz dlani počasi lezla navzgor po lakti, se mi je zdela znana, in zaprl sem oči in silil z vsemi močmi svoj spomin, da bi mi prišel na pomoč. (Pahor 195–196)

Odlomek je, tako kot ves roman, napisan v prvi osebi, pripovedovalec torej podaja lastno etično perspektivo na dogajanje. A če ga pozorno beremo, pravzaprav razkriva nestabilno, ambivalentno, odprto in kompleksno podobo dogodka z darovanim lončkom riža v vrtincu različnih

čustvenih in miselnih odzivov, pri čemer se menjujeta zunanja in notranja fokalizacija, ki pa ni fiksna. Prvi odziv je neverbalni (»zelo rahlo, skoraj trudoma sem mu pokimal«), sledi bolj ambivalentna reakcija, ki združuje pripovedovalčev odpor do nepričakovane geste (»se mi je zdelo smešno, če mladi Siegfried ...«) z morda bolj naklonjenim sprejemom (»se mi je zdelo, da je lonček odsev varljive prikazni«). Sledi popolni odpor (»nekomu ga moram dati«, »žal mi je bilo, da sem ga sploh vzel«), nato pa poskus vživetja v plavolaščevo gledišče, oziroma v njegov pogled na zapornike v bližini, ki so reprezentirani s potujitvijo (»se trudil, da bi gledal z očmi plavolasca na dolgo vrsto kariatid ...«, »in bile črtaste mumije, ki so se jim obveze razpletle«). Poskus vživetja v podčastnikovo gledišče, ki ga pogojno lahko imamo za primer variabilne fokalizacije, resda spodleti (»a čeprav sem se zastonj trudil«), preostane pa toplota (»mi je bilo, kakor da imam v dlaneh mehko živo bitje, mladega belega zajčka«, »in toplota, ki je iz dlani počasi lezla navgor po lakti«), ki se pripovedovalcu zdi znana. Toda ko se že zdi, da je pred nami nekakšno (hvaležno) sprejetje daru in pomiritev z njim, sledi najbolj nedoumljivi del odlomka, ki nekako zamegli enosmiselno dojetje podčastnikove geste: »[I]n zaprl sem oči in silil z vsemi močmi svoj spomin, da bi mi prišel na pomoč.« Vprašanje, zakaj je bilo pravzaprav treba tako siliti spomin, da bi prišel pripovedovalcu na pomoč, tako ostaja mišljenjsko odprto in nepojasnjeno.

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What is Ethical Narratology, or What Could It Be?

Key words: literature and ethics / literary criticism / ethical turn / postclassical narratology / ethics and morality / ethics and aesthetics / Pahor, Boris

On the backdrop of the ethical turn in literary studies, it has become customary to reflect upon ethical narratology guided by a conviction that narratological ethics, or the ethics of narrative treatment, is shaped by formal strategies and narrative techniques. This article provides a detailed discussion of three recent contributions in favour of ethical narratology; however, each of the three authors – Tilmann Köppe, Nora Berning and Wolfgang G. Müller – understands ethical narratology differently. Providing a comparison of

their views and an analysis of a selected passage, the present discussion seeks to identify the productive blueprints for a potential postclassical ethical narratology on the basis of the relationship between ethics and aesthetics, as well as the distinction between ethics and morality. By taking into account Alain Badiou's postmodern ethical theory, the article thus aims to show, in accordance with the findings of the classical theory of narrative and with a selection of adequate instruments, the heuristics of exploring the complex ethical dimensions of narratives in order to sensitise the reader to the ethical components of the narrative.

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Etika in estetika med posvetnostjo in presežnostjo

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V svoji dolgi zgodovini sta etika in estetika stopali v raznovrstna razmerja. V predmodernih časih sta bili večinoma tesno prepleteni, s pojavom sekularizacije pa njun odnos postaja nejasen in protisloven. Razprava problematizira koncept estetske avtonomije, ki na Zahodu od 18. stoletja do danes določa razmerje med središčem in obrobjem literarnega polja. Podlago tega koncepta tvori antropocentrična domneva, da estetika v zaprte sisteme smisla vnaša načelo poljubnosti, s pomočjo katerega osamosvojeni subjekt neskončno razširi možnosti svoje samorefleksivne uresničitve. Na tem mestu se ob temeljnem problemu legitimnosti antropocentrizma zastavlja tudi vprašanje o (ne)združljivosti načela poljubnosti z nosilnimi razsežnostmi posameznikove identitete. Tako se denimo estetski prostor semantične odprtosti ne odreka etični razsežnosti, bistveno zaznamovani s semantičnim redukcionizmom. Razrešitev tega protislovja iščemo v absolutizaciji načela odprtosti, ki mu je v radikalnem preseiganju antropocentričnih brezpotij pripisan status nepoljubnega in ireduktibilnega izhodišča obeh področij.

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / literarna veda / etika in estetika / antropocentrizem / posvetnost / presežnost

Razmerje med etiko in estetiko je zapleteno iz več razlogov: področji ne premoreta enotnih definicij, vpeti sta v spremenljive duhovno-oz. kulturnozgodovinske okvire, raznovrstne in večplastne pa so tudi njune funkcije.¹

Pojem dobrega, ki je v središču etičnega premišljanja in ravnanja, je lahko utemeljen v vrednostnih hierarhijah, normativnih sistemih, moralnih zakonih, naravnem pravu, kategoričnem imperativu, metafizičnih narativih ali pa v sferi presežnega. Njegove definicije povezuje le to, da v njihovem fokusu ni interes posameznika, temveč skupnosti in da imajo smisel le takrat, ko iz njih izhajajo dejanja. V tem duhu so lahko

¹ Razprava je nastala tudi v okviru raziskovalnega programa št. P6-0265, ki ga je sofinancirala ARRS.

etični diskurzi praktični napotki za moralno ravnanje, premišljanja o kriterijih takšnega ravnanja, deskriptivni nabori vrednot ali metarefleksije o dometu in naravi lastnih konceptualizacij.

Tudi lepota, ki je predmetno področje estetike, prevzema različne pojavne oblike – ob tem, da je lahko prapočelo oz. njegova emanacija, smisel bivajočega, uravnoteženost (simetrija, red, sorazmernost, skladnost, harmonija), popolnost (ki jo sestavljata tudi grdo in zlo) in/ali poetološki princip (nedoločenost, pomenska odprtost), pogosto uteleša tudi temeljna etična in spoznavna načela. Locirana je torej v različnih razsežnostih vsakokratnega modela sveta – v pogledu opazovalca, v njegovem okolju ali v transcendentnem izvoru. V prvem primeru jo najdemo v mehanizmih delovanja zavesti in/ali zaznavnega sistema, v drugem v naravi, družbeni interakciji in/ali kulturnih artefaktih, v tretjem pa v sferi metafizike ali predbitnega. Lepota ima lahko pragmatične funkcije v biološkem, psihološkem (emocionalnem, spoznavnem, etičnem) in družbenem pogledu, lahko pa – nasprotno – njena osrednja funkcija postane prav presejanje pragmatičnosti.

Obe področji sta povezani na različne načine, na različnih ravneh, v različnih funkcionalnih okvirih in v različnih kulturnozgodovinskih konstelacijah. V razpravi se tej mnogovrstnosti ne bomo mogli posvetiti. Izhodišče premisleka bo problematično razmerje med etiko in estetiko v prevladujočih poetoloških diskurzih sodobnih družb – torej v dobi, ko je sekularna logika antropocentrizma pridobila moč, da premislek o razsežnostih, ki presegajo njeno obzorje, odriva na obrobje znanstvenih in literarnih sistemov.

Etika, estetika in problem antropocentrizma

Ob izteku zgodnjega novega veka smo predvsem na Zahodu pričali globokim družbenim spremembam. Sociologi in zgodovinarji jih opisujejo kot prehod iz stanovsko organiziranih v funkcionalno diferencirane družbe (Luhmann 89–100; Allan 227). Za prve so značilne nizka stopnja vertikalne mobilnosti, hierarhičnost in zavezanost posameznika skupnemu, metafizično utemeljenemu simbolnemu redu, za druge pa visoka stopnja mobilnosti, razsrediščenost in nehierarhična povezanost funkcionalnih sistemov (pravo, politika, ekonomija, izobraževanje, umetnost itd.). Z razkrojem korporativnih identitet se posameznik znajde v položaju, ko je primoran v svoji zavesti izoblikovati repertoar konkurenčnih modelov sveta. Osrednje točke njihove legiti-

macije ne najde več zunaj sebe oz. v vrednostnih hierarhijah, ki bi bile obvezujoče za celotno družbo, temveč vse bolj le v svoji lastni zmožnosti vzpostavljanja skladnosti v neskladnem svetu. Ta logocentrični mehanizem postane izhodišče produkcije smisla in je hkrati podlaga za vzpon antropocentrizma, ki je najprej v funkciji emancipacijskih projektov meščanstva, nato pa ga celotna družba sprejme kot prevladujočo podlago simbolnega reda. Svoje kulturnozgodovinske temelje najdejo ti projekti v tradicijah humanizma, renesanse, racionalizma in zlasti razsvetljenstva, ko je posamezniku dokončno pripisan status avtonomnega subjekta. Na simptomatičen način se prav v tem obdobju pomenski obseg grškega pojma *hypokeimenon* (tisto, kar »leži spodaj«) in njegovega latinskega prevoda *subiectum* skrči na oznako spoznavajočega jaza (prim. Snój, »O hipostazi«). V zadnjih stoletjih se ta duhovnozgodovinska konstelacija – sprva na Zahodu, kasneje pa vse bolj tudi globalno – razširi do te mere, da se zazdi tako rekoč neproblematična. Spričo njenih teženj po sekularizaciji in – kot bomo videli kasneje – trivializaciji mišljenja bomo v tej zvezi govorili o »posvetni« paradigmi etike in estetike.

Prav spričo že skoraj dogmatske narave prevladujočega pogleda na svet je po mojem mnenju nujnost njegovega preizpraševanja toliko večja. Pri tem se najprej izkaže, da projekt subjektovega osamosvajanja nima enoznačnih družbenih učinkov. To velja tako za etiko kot tudi za estetiko.

Tako lahko denimo ugotovimo, da je antropocentrizem po eni strani pomembno vplival na spremembo etičnih standardov. Z zagovarjanjem človekovega dostojanstva je prispeval k izostritvi zavesti o pomenu družbene pravičnosti, omilitvi nekaterih družbenih nesorazmerij, krepitvi nadzora nad centri moči, širjenju strpnosti, nastanku konceptov socialne države in človekovih pravic itd. Vendar pa je prav tako očitno, da ima utemeljitev etike v racionalnosti avtonomnega subjekta tudi drugo plat. Vzpostavljanje vrednostnih sistemov in njihova razumska utemeljitev se ne moreta izogniti očitku poljubnosti. Ta značilnost racionalnosti je evolucijsko pogojena: njene orientacijske prednosti namreč v celoti izhajajo iz t. i. plastičnosti kognitivne samoorganizacije (Cleermans 59–70). Razum je tako rekoč makrosinteza neskončno spremenljivega osrednjega živčevja. To pomeni, da je subjektova zmožnost proizvajanja raznovrstnih modelov sveta načeloma neomejena, med vsemi možnostmi pa seveda izbere tisto, za katero meni, da je najbolj skladna z njegovimi koristmi. Ker so slednje vedno partikularne, je takšna tudi legitimacija lastnega ravnanja. Etike, utemeljene izključno v razumu, so torej pragmatične in poljubne. Z drugimi besedami: s

pomočjo razuma je mogoče kakršnokoli ravnanje, ki koristi neki skupnosti, utemeljiti kot etično.²

Podobno daljnosežen je vpliv antropocentrizma na prostor estetske izkušnje. Njen izvor je odslej posameznikova težnja po izživetju svoje samorefleksivne narave. Ker je ta ideal spričo komunikacijskih in družbenih omejitev v vsakdanjem življenju neuresničljiv, se prostor estetske samouresničitve programatično odmakne od semantike preostalih družbenih sistemov (Schmidt 409–438). Pomenska odprtost in neskončnost imaginacije postaneta splošno sprejeti predpostavki estetskih praks, konvenciji večpomenskosti in fikcionalnosti pa orodji njune uresničitve. Z njuno pomočjo vase zagledani subjekt oslabi mehanizem kognitivnega in družbenega (samo)omejevanja, kar pomeni, da je emancipacijski potencial avtonomne estetike utemeljen v logiki de pragmatizacije. Na ta način pa hkrati že postane razvidna tudi druga plat obravnavanega pojava: antropocentrični koncept estetske avtonomije je zaznamovan z nerazrešljivim protislovjem med nepragmatičnostjo estetike in pragmatičnostjo etike. Ali natančneje: estetska hermenevtika fikcionalnosti in večpomenskosti je konceptualno nezdržljiva z ontološko in enoznačno logiko etičnega diskurza. Tako v privilegiranim prostoru subjektive samouresničitve ena od ključnih razsežnosti njegovega obstoja izgubi veljavo, brez nje pa postane vprašljiva družbena relevantnost celotnega estetskega polja. Izkaže se, da ista logika, ki estetiki omogoča širjenje notranjega prostora, hkrati omeji njen vpliv na »zunanje« prostore. Tako ni presenetljivo, da širša javnost, pa tudi družbene elite, estetsko polje večinoma dojemajo kot prostor bolj ali manj poljubne igre pomenov.

Poti in brezpotja antropocentrizma

V razpravi zagovarjamo stališče, da je mogoče protislovne družbene učinke antropocentrizma docela pojasniti šele takrat, ko prepoznamo tudi protislovnost njegovih logocentričnih predpostavk. Vrnimo se zato k vprašanju o naravi razuma, ki smo se ga dotaknili v prejšnjem poglavju.

Dinamičnost kognitivne samoorganizacije nas ne sme napeljati k domnevi o odprtosti njenih racionalnih makrosintez – vsaj ko gre za t. i. analitični razum, kakršen prevladuje na Zahodu (Roth 182). Njegovo delovanje je namreč zaznamovano z izrazito težnjo po redukcionizmu

² Trpljenje, ki ga povzročajo razsvetljskemu etosu zaprisežene družbe, so zgovoren dokaz te trditve. Tudi t. i. totalitarne družbe svojo etiko praviloma utemeljujejo prav v (psevdo)znanstvenih teorijah.

in trivializaciji: stabilnost skuša doseči tako, da išče prehodne funkcije (»algoritme«, »programe«) med neodvisnimi in odvisnimi spremenljivkami (»vhodi« in »izhodi« oz. dražljaji in odzivi), s čimer se približa delovanju »stroja« (v Turingovem pomenu) in modeliranju napovedljivih svetov (Kordeš 46–47).³ Po tej poti razum proizvede strukturne, procesne in ontološke evidence, ki med drugim vzpostavljajo tudi okvir za razumevanje etičnega in estetskega prostora. V mislih imamo predvsem *dihotomnost* (predpostavko o ločenosti subjekta in objekta in o tem, da je svet mišljenju dostopen le na način logike razlikovanja), *kavzalnost* (predpostavko o nenehnem spreminjanju vsega, kar obstaja, in o tem, da svet biva v sosledju vzrokov in posledic) in *ontološkost* (predpostavko o nedvomnosti obstoja, ki najkasneje z Descartesom pridobi status poslednjega branika gotovosti).

Ker prevladujoča različica antropocentrizma stoji in pade z veljavnostjo teh temeljnih logocentričnih evidenc, se bomo v nadaljevanju posvetili prav njim.

Dihotomnost

Predpostavka razlikovanosti nam najprej zastavlja uganko o tem, v katerem položaju se osamosvojeni subjekt pravzaprav nahaja. Obe možnosti – da se nahaja v svetu ali zunaj sveta – zanikata logiko spoznavnega procesa. V prvem primeru je namreč spoznavna dihotomija ukinjena, v drugem pa moramo predpostaviti nekakšno nespoznavno psevdo-metafizično pozicijo.

Prepričanje o ločenosti subjekta in objekta poraja tudi vprašanje o dostopnosti sveta spoznanju. Na tem mestu se pri podrobnejšem premisleku izkaže, da pravzaprav nikoli nimamo opravka s svetom samim, temveč vseskozi le z odzivi našega telesa. Vseskozi imamo torej dostop le do svojih lastnih stanj, do izkustvene resničnosti, ki je izoblikovana v skladu s specifičnem delovanjem spoznavnega sistema (Glaserfeld 108). Zavest ne posnema zunanosti, temveč proizvaja tiste verzije sveta, ki so v funkciji preživetja. Podoba resničnosti zato ni le predmet, temveč je tudi rezultat spoznavnega procesa.

³ Sicer poznamo tudi tehnike, s pomočjo katerih zahodna racionalnost »dekonstruira« svoje lastne predpostavke in se skuša približati kontingenci sistemov, iz katerih je izšla. To se dogaja zlasti v poststrukturalističnih pristopih, ki pa se znajdejo pred novo težavo. Nemogoče je namreč ohraniti racionalno držo in hkrati razkrajati njeno lastno logiko. Tako se zdi, da je prepletanje predracionalne odprtosti s trivialnostjo racionalnosti privedlo le do nove dezorientacije.

Logika dihotomnosti nam naposled narekuje, da pomislimo tudi na njeno lastno nasprotje – na nerazlikovanost. Te dihotomije razum prav tako ne more doumeti. Najprej zato, ker je on sam vzpostavljen v načelu dihotomnosti, nato pa tudi zato, ker se nerazlikovanost nahaja v nemisljivem položaju: po eni strani presega dihotomno logiko, hkrati pa je tudi sama del dihotomije. Obenem se zdi univerzalna in partikularna. Logike razlikovanja in razlikovanega sveta na tem mestu ni več mogoče razlikovati.

Kavzalnost

Pred nerešljivimi dilemami stojimo tudi takrat, ko opazovalca in njegov svet opazujemo s pomočjo vzročne logike. V trenutku, ko točko opazovanja predpostavimo kot izhodišče, postane očitno, da izhodišča ne moremo nikoli opazovati. Zapademo lahko le v neskončno regresijo samoopazovanja. Spoznavna teorija ta pojav imenuje »slepa pega«.

Na podoben problem naletimo pri opazovanju sveta. Če ima vsako stanje svoj vzrok, potem je seveda nerazložljivo, kaj stoji na začetku te premočrtnosti. Znova se ponujata dva neracionalna odgovora: bodisi prvi vzrok ne obstaja ali pa je izšel iz neobstoja.

Po eni strani je očitno, da se je razlika med vzrokom in posledico vzpostavila šele z našo lastno zmožnostjo pomnjenja. V tem pogledu si upravičeno pripisujemo status izhodišča opazovanja. Vendar pa se v trenutku, ko s pomočjo kavzalnosti, ki izhaja iz nas samih, opišemo razliko med sabo in okoljem, ta evidenca zruši vase. Očitno je namreč tudi, da smo mi, ki opazujemo svet, izšli prav iz sveta, ki ga opazujemo. In da je odločitev o naši ločitvi od sveta lahko sprejel samo svet, od katerega smo se ločili. Kraj, od koder opazujemo svet, je izšel iz misli, misel iz telesa, telo iz zemlje, zemlja iz vsega, kar je bilo pred njo. Naše spoznanje je torej začelo nastajati že davno pred nami. In pri njegovem nastanku nismo imeli nikakršne izbire. Ne izbiramo niti svojih želja. Sredi iluzije o nas samih kot izhodišču lastnih izbir se izkaže, da nismo izbrali nas samih. Točka opazovanja torej ni izhodišče opazovanja (Kos 8–10).

Ontološkost

Na najtežji problem naletimo, ko s pomočjo obeh evidenc premišljamo predpostavko o nedvomnosti lastnega obstoja in obstoja sveta. V prvem primeru smo na mestu, kjer smo pričakovali lasten temelj, naleteli na

praznino: misli si nismo izmislili mi sami, temveč si je ona izmislila nas. Ko uvidimo, da nič, kar iz sveta izhaja, ne more postati njegovo izhodišče, v ideji sebstva prepoznamo samoprevaro našega uma, ki je postala tako razširjena, da njene nesamoumevnosti ne opazimo več.

O obstoju samem sicer ne moremo dvomiti, dvomljiva pa prav tako postane njegova samoumevnost. Evidenci dihotomnosti in vzročnosti sta nas naučili, da sleherni pojem premislimo v razmerju do njegovega nasprotja. V našem primeru gre torej za nasprotje med obstojem in neobstojem. Kako lahko razumemo to temeljno negacijo? Je neobstoj zanikanje ontologije ali pa je le naš koncept, ki je tudi sam ontološki? Je torej nič ne-ontološka kategorija ali je le podoba, katere obstoj je ne-ontologijo že zanikal? Je mogoče, da bi obstoj izšel iz neobstoja in neobstoj iz obstoja? Vse to so vprašanja, ki zahtevajo odgovor, večji od razuma.

Preseganje brezpotij

Zgornje aporije se naposled še zaostrijo s spoznanjem, da zdravorazumski, antropocentrični dualizem temelji na logični zmoti. Evidence, ki služijo utemeljitvi njegove racionalnosti, je namreč proizvedla prav racionalnost sama. Opraviti imamo torej s tipičnim primerom krožnega argumenta. Zdi se torej, da je antropocentrizem v spoznavnoteoretičnem smislu učinkovit samo zato, ker nerešljive probleme izrine iz obzorja svojega opazovanja. S parafrazo Heinza von Foersterja bi nekoliko ironično lahko celo rekli, da so možnosti za njegov uspeh toliko večje, kolikor bolj temeljen je problem, ki ga ignorira (von Foerster 1).

Tako smo se znašli na prelomnici, kjer smo ostali brez izbire. Če se nočemo sprijazniti z brezizhodnostjo, moramo biti pripravljeni hkratnost nasprotij vzeti nase. Razum se bo moral dokončno posloviti od prestola in sprejeti svoje mesto v zboru nevladarjev.

Povežimo torej logiko opazovanja s protislovnostjo njenih evidenc. Če je gotovost obstoja absolutna, si lahko zamislimo tudi absolutnost njegovega nasprotja. Ne le, da nas lahko ne bi bilo – lahko ne bi bilo *ničesar*. Ker pa svet obstaja, iz nepomirljive dvojnosti neizogibno zrasede podoba sile, ki je neobstoj zanikala. Kajti nemogoče je, da bi neobstoj zanikala praznina. Vzrok, ki je brez vzroka, je lahko samo večji od neobstoja in od tega, kar je nastalo z njegovim zanikanjem. Nasprotja bivajočega so lahko presežena samo v predbitni nenasprotnosti. Znašli smo se pred poljubnostjo redukcijonizma in ireduktibilnostjo njegovega nepoljubnega izvora.

Etika, estetika in presežnost

Etika in estetika sta že od nekdaj povezani s kategorijo presežnosti. To velja zlasti za antične in srednjeveške tradicije, v novem veku pa z vzponom antropocentrizma v ospredje stopajo sekularni koncepti. Namesto presežnostjo se zdaj področji raje ukvarjata z vlogo senzoričnih in razumskih dejavnikov v polju subjektive (samo)refleksije.⁴ Na tem mestu se ne moremo ukvarjati z naborom različnih razumevanj estetike in etike – ne le zato, ker bi to zahtevalo posebno razpravo, temveč tudi zato, ker želimo skupni imenovalc obravnavanih področij izpeljati iz njune notranje logike. Zato se najprej na kratko ozrimo na prehojeno pot.

Avtonomni položaj, ki si ga prisvoji novoveški subjekt, je v temelju zaznamovan z odprtostjo, izhajajočo iz variabilnosti in plastičnosti kognitivne samoorganizacije. Ta odprtost po eni strani omogoča prilagodljivost v dinamičnih okoljih, po drugi pa je vir neizogibne poljubnosti. Estetika in etika se nanjo odzivata na različna načina: prva z dekontekstualizacijo preizkuša njene potenciale do skrajnih meja, druga jo omejuje s pragmatizmom normativnih sistemov. Obe pa plačujeta davek: estetika izgubi vpliv na družbene sisteme, ki sledijo pragmatični logiki, etika, ki ji ne uspe odpraviti temeljne odprtosti avtonomnega subjekta, pa je zdaj tudi sama zaznamovana s poljubnostjo. Na tem mestu se je treba odvrniti od simptomov in se posvetiti vzroku težav – logocentrizmu avtonomne subjektivitete. Podroben premislek pokaže, da je zdravorazumsko prisvajanje izhodiščnega položaja zabloda, saj je točka samozavedanja lahko samo rezultat predhodnih procesov. Ničesar ni, kar bi izhajalo iz nas samih – razen ničā samega. Zdaj ob vseh ostalih izgubi samoumevnost celo ontološka evidenca, antropocentrizem pa doživi svoje dokončno razbitje. V opuščanju izhodiščnosti lastnega obstoja se pogled usmeri k tistemu, iz česar je izšel obstoj.

Na tej točki se najprej zazdi, da se je problem poljubnosti še zaostрил. Pred nami je zrasla odprtost, ki je ne moremo doumeti, kaj šele skrčiti na obvladljivo mero. Vendar pa se prav na koncu brezpotja uresniči pesnikova prerokba: »[K]jer je nevarnost, raste / tudi Rešilno« (Hölderlin,

⁴ Zato ni presenetljivo, da je prva novoveška estetika pravzaprav poskus presejanja nasprotja med empiristi in racionalisti: Baumgarten sredi 18. stoletja *aisthesis* definira kot *scientia cognitionis sensitivae*. Čeprav v zadnjih desetletjih ideal avtonomnega subjekta spričo vse bolj fragmentarnega in partikularnega doživljanja sveta izgublja veljavo, pa iz njega izhajajoč koncept estetske avtonomije še vedno ostaja splošno sprejet legitimacijski okvir družbenega sistema umetnosti. To seveda pomeni, da so preostala pojmovanja estetike odrinjena na obrobje.

»Patmos« 191, prev. D. K). Odgovor se ponuja kar sam: odprtosti ne moremo preseči z neskončnim izkoriščanjem njenih potencialov in ne z omejevanjem, temveč *s sprejetjem njene absolutnosti*. V njej se ona sama še enkrat odpre, etika in estetika pa najdeta svoj skupni izvor.

Najprej nam sprejetje popolne in brezdanje odprtosti ne razkrije le presežnosti narave, temveč tudi naravo presežnega. Odkar je bil na nedoumljiv način zanikan popoln neobstoj, je vse, kar obstaja, izenačeno v evidenci svojega obstoja. Ker enost presega sleherno dihotomijo, jo dihotomni razum lahko predpostavi le kot absolutno nedoumljivost. Z izgubo lastnega dna smo izročeni brezdanjosti vsega, iz česar smo izšli. V praznini prilaščenege izhodišča si nas prilasti izhodišče, ki ne more biti izpraznjeno. Naše ne postanejo le bolečine drugih teles, temveč tudi to, kar je večje od bolečin. Kako bi lahko bil namreč izvir obstoja napolnjen s čim drugim kot s tem, kar napolnjuje vse, kar obstaja? S čim drugim, kot z eno samo nedoumljivo enostjo?

Zlo postane stvar nesporazuma. Svojo moč ohranja le dotlej, dokler ne razumemo, da je dostopnost enosti edini smisel razdeljenosti. In da je edini smisel privida v njegovem samozanikanju. Samo v lastni negaciji se lahko sebstvo odpre svetovom, ki so ga ustvarili in tistemu, kar je v samozanikanju ustvarilo te svetove. Na značilno izostren način je to misel izrekel Gorazd Kocijančič: »Etika v najglobljem smislu je arhitektonika biti v oziranju na neuzrtljivo predbitno.« (Kocijančič 70)

Estetika pride v stik z istim izvorom po drugačni poti. Absolutnosti ne sprejme z radikalnim samozanikanjem, temveč z radikalno samopotrditvijo. V nasprotju z dobroto je bila namreč lepota že v svoji »sekularni« različici zaznamovana z nedoločenostjo. Toda medtem ko je bila takrat omejena z obzorjem izkustvenega prostora, z množitvijo prividov prilaščenege sebstva, nam njena absolutna nedoločenost odzame dno z izenačitvijo sebstva in ne-sebstva. V njej sta izenačena celo obstoj in neobstoj. Odprtost se napolni s svojo lastno odprtostjo. Tako nas tudi najvišja lepota – prav kakor je to storila najgloblja etika – ne vrne le svetovom, iz katerih smo zgrajeni, temveč tudi temu, od koder so se oni sami vrnil. Neizpraznjeni praznini.

Ko torej lepota ne daje le prostora naši uresničitvi, temveč hkrati uresničitvi odvzema naše ime, je izvorno etična: v brezimnosti vrnemo to, kar nam ne pripada, in smo vrnjeni temu, čemur pripadamo. Vse naše posebnosti so povečane v neposebnosti našega nič. V sebi smo pogubljeni, v drugih odrešeni. Uzrtje lastne neizhodiščnosti, ki je odpravilo razloge nedobrote, v presežni odprtosti prepozna izhodišče dobrote. Protislovna narava našega obstoja se razkroji v pred-protislovnost svojega izvora.

Tako nas najgloblja etika položi na oltar brezdanjosti, najvišja lepota pa opravi daritev. Takrat znaki priključijo to, kar je označilo njih. Tudi lepota, ki smo jo ustvarili, nas izroči temu, kar nas je ustvarilo. Utripu brezdanjosti na dnu obstoja. Umetnost postane predsmrtna molitev, odzven prarajevoja, slutnja nerojenega. V njej se utelesi *ethos* sam. In naša dejanja mu dajo ime, ki ni ime: ljubezen. Znaki, ki ne priključijo *nje*, so pusti.

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Ethics and Aesthetics between Profanity and Numinosity

Keywords: literature and ethics / literary criticism / ethics and aesthetics / anthropocentrism / profanity / numinosity

The relationship between ethics and aesthetics has differed throughout their long history. For most of the premodern era they were closely linked, but in modern and postmodern societies the relationship between them is becoming unclear and contradictory. This paper addresses the profane concept of aesthetic autonomy, which in modern societies has developed as a kind of side effect of the anthropocentric idea of the subject's autonomy.

The position which the modern subject has assumed is fundamentally characterized by a semantic openness arising from the variability and flexibility of cognitive self-organization. On the one hand, this openness is an advantage, as it allows for a greater adaptability in dynamic environments; on the other hand, it is also a disadvantage, as it hinders the establishment of a consensus and stable conditions. Ethics and aesthetics are trying to resolve this problem in two different ways: the former is testing the limits of the potentials of openness by means of non-pragmatism, while the other is limiting these potentials through the pragmatism of binding normative systems. However, both pay a price: aesthetics loses its influence on the social systems which follow a different logic, while ethics, which cannot do away with the fundamental openness of an autonomous subject, is now itself marked by arbitrariness.

At this point it is necessary to turn away from the symptoms and address the cause of the problems: the logic of autonomous subjectivity. A detailed consideration initially shows that the subject's taking possession of the initial condition is untenable, since the point of self-awareness can only be the *result* of processes which precede it and not vice versa. Nothing originates in us—except nothingness itself; on its basis, even the category of existence becomes arbitrary, and in this contradiction, anthropocentrism undergoes its ultimate dismantling. Our view is directed towards something greater than existence and non-existence. We must bid farewell to being the starting point.

It first seems that the problem of arbitrariness has gotten worse. In front of us there grew an openness which we cannot comprehend, let alone reduce to a manageable degree. However, it is also here that a solution arises: we can neither overcome the openness by endlessly making use of its potentials nor by limiting it, but instead by accepting its absoluteness. When the subject comprehends that the comprehension comes entirely from the world which he or she is in the process of comprehending, his or her horizons open up to the world from which he or she originated, as well as to that from which the

world originated. To an openness which opens once again. To a not-empty emptiness. This absolute equalization of all with all is the numinous foundation of ethics and aesthetics. In it, the relationship between what we are and what we are not is (in a way that cannot be exceeded) marked by the principles of deliverance and non-distinctiveness.

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What Makes a Good Book? *Bonae literae* in Twenty-First Century

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The first part of the article analyses the term bonae literae that leads us to the core of the problem of good book before the period of aesthetic separation that occurs at the end of the eighteenth century. Its second part attempts to demonstrate that even in the case of fragmented literary canon we often repeat the same "elitist" operation of power we criticize. Long before the emergence of modern literary studies organized through university departments and research institutes, properties of the good book were related to the evaluation of its rhetorical qualities, its dependence on poetic tradition and, above all, on its moral qualities. In twenty-first century there is no single criterion by which we can assess whether a book is good or not either in terms of its aesthetic or ethical properties. Thus, it seems that the answer to the question of good book would be as simple as it is paradoxical: there are good books and good books, old and new, classical and modern, good foreign and good domestic books, mostly written by great novelists and only few by great poets. In fact, the answer to the question of good book is problematic because it is difficult to find the clip that connects individual experience of the text and experience in general. Of course, the result is not disappearance of the concept of goodness (it still has certain content) but rather its vagueness. Therefore, caution is always needed in any generalizations, regardless of whether we generalize culturally or multiculturally. However, it appears that there still exists a small, almost invisible residuum of Erasmus's view of bonae literae in the fragmented contemporary literary canon: belief in the idea that literature has a value in itself.

Keywords: literature and ethics / literary canon / literary evaluation / ethics and aesthetics / aesthetic experience / subjectivity / freedom / metapolitics / modernity

Long before the emergence of modern literary studies organized through university departments and research institutes, properties of the good book were related to the evaluation of its rhetorical qualities, its dependence on poetic tradition and, above all, on its moral qualities. Recall, for example, Erasmus of Rotterdam's favorite term *bonae literae* that leads us to the core of the problem of good book before the period of

aesthetic separation that occurs at the end of the eighteenth century, which says that the beautiful “pleases universally without concept”. In numerous letters, Erasmus celebrates *bonae litterae*, literally translated as good literature, because it inculcates in readers and students *boni mores*, good behavior, a certain standard of ethics followed by proper moral sentiment. The request is to learn Latin and Greek from the best texts of classical writers written both in prose and in verse freed from the burden of accumulated comments. However, it is known that “a real semantic nexus” (Marino 89) *bonae litterae* is untranslatable because it designs the entire classical literature, science and education, as well as the Christian belief seen as a healthy and salutary knowledge. Johan Huizinga goes so far as to say that the *bonae litterae* is the common name of a good thing for which Erasmus and his supporters have fought opposed to conservatism of those who have ignored the same good thing. Besides this connection of the idea of good book within the intellectual and moral community, for our discussion it is important to emphasize that Erasmus argues for the essential contribution of *bonae litterae* in the process of purification of faith and its forms. This means that in early modern period a good book already has several goals, among which is the most important its contribution to the moral training of a Christian. Consequently, I could quite reliably assume that Erasmus knew what a good book is, or what good books are, although I could not translate the meaning of his understanding of *bonae litterae* into a unified and generally applicable concept. It is important that the goodness of a book is not experiencing its fulfillment in the book itself, but outside of it, regardless of whether it is about creating privileged communities within wider Christianity or reaching the pure form of Christianity itself. The book is good in itself, but it is such only because it serves, thanks to the existence of a particular community, a better reading and understanding of the Scriptures, the best book, the book of all books.

Do these answers make sense today? At a first glance, it would seem not. After the enthronement of taste in the eighteenth century, this way of thinking about the good book was pushed into the background, because the assessment of book’s goodness has been increasingly based on subjective impressions and not on an objective value that Erasmus could easily find in the Scripture. It could even be argued that Erasmus was a Christian as well as the ancient Greek, because he connected the harmony with the higher order that exists outside us: a good book is a book that confirms the external harmony, *i. e.* a good book is an expression of the pre-existent harmony. On the classical view, the work is a microcosm that allows us to think that outside of work, in the

macrocosm, there is an objective, essential standard of goodness. In modernity, such a criterion acquires meaning only by reference to subjectivity as an expression of modern individuality: a unique style wants to be the creation of a world, a world in which the artist moves, a world which we undoubtedly are allowed to enter in order to understand it, or enjoy it. However, the world of the book is not presented to us as an a priori common world. The question of what makes a good book becomes the question of the existence of a unity without any transcendent confirmation.

Even the aestheticians at the turn of the eighteenth century clearly pointed out how personal, or in fact intersubjective experience is important for judging art, but this experience is no longer accommodated in religion, but in a system of supposedly shared human values. From the very beginning aesthetics attracted authors of broad intellect and general knowledge, not specialists for literature, who therefore looked for connections by which the experience of the beautiful aligns with other mental faculties. Lord Shaftesbury tried and managed to impress as the seeker of wisdom and harmony, while at the same time claimed that wisdom cannot be attained by the intellect, but by a balanced and harmonious personality that is able to grasp the beauty and order of the world. Philocles from *The Moralists* believes that the idea of possessing what we like is pure nonsense, trying to convince us that we actually possess different possibilities to achieve satisfaction. Thus, Philocles separates intellection of the beauty of a tree or the ocean from mastering it. According to Shaftesbury, the experience of beauty is devoid of utilitarianism, or the desire for possession.

For example, we are certainly able to contemplate the beauty of the ocean, though we cannot possess the ocean (Shaftesbury II 127). Of course, the idea of beauty liberated from the utilitarian urge will leave an irrevocable mark on the philosophical and later on a popular experience of beauty (and, a fortiori, on the concept of “good book”), although Shaftesbury as a practical man thought that “the admiration and love of order, harmony, and proportion, in whatever kind, is naturally improving to the temper, advantageous to social affection, and highly assistant to virtue, which is itself no other than the love of order and beauty in society” (I 279). In short, Shaftesbury sees the experience of the beautiful as something that occurs within a broader totality that includes harmonious character, moral interest and human education. Today this linkage of interested and disinterested experience of the beautiful may seem contradictory, but the aesthetic theory of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century did not see any problem

in it. Consequently, Shaftesbury's possible answer to the question of what makes a good book is related to the properties of a non-utilitarian contemplation of the beautiful, which helps the development of virtue, love of order and beauty in society, even if it is obvious that his society differs from Erasmus's, Joyce's or, say, Sebald's. There is no doubt that ethics and aesthetics from the beginning make a strong but complex alliance, but this alliance is historically variable, which also inevitably changes the nature of our arguments about the relationships of literature and ethics.

For example, today the argument similar to Shaftesbury's often serves to justify the activity of reading in the contemporary utilitarian world, or in our garden of Adonis, whose fruits grow rapidly, but also quickly wilt and die. If the world is quite pragmatic and market-oriented, the act of reading literature is even more valuable, or ethical, because it leads us to the personal fullness offered by good books. Although this attitude sounds like a good advertisement for the study of literature in the contemporary world, it associates the traditional argument of aesthetic value and the notion of autonomy, freedom and (im)possible harmony of modern individualism. Categories like order and harmony, so significant for the aestheticians of the eighteenth century remain, in various forms, very influential today, but without pretensions to validity within the universal community. It is important to underline that this conception of literature is radically immanent, because its value is based on subjectivity: read to be different, read to be what you really are, read for the sake of an authentic experience, or simply – just read (without special reasons why, the great metaphor of *bonae literae* will implicitly take care of your reasons). After all, more than it addresses the transcendent value of aesthetic experience or understanding of the question of what makes a good book, the reference to harmony has a tinge of consistent ethical affirmation of the well-balanced individual. Consequently, it seems that when one says that this or that book is good for him or her, this functions both as an ethical projection and aesthetical judgment.

Of course, there is no single criterion by which we can assess whether a book is good or not, either in terms of its aesthetic or in terms of its ethical properties. It is clear that we will not evaluate in the same manner a novel, a collection of sonnets, tragedy or a narrative poem. Even when it comes to the genre of novel it is certain that we will apply variety of criteria in assessing the qualities of realist or modernist, detective, romance or postcolonial novel. Moreover, I suspect that for most readers today, unlike their known and unknown ancestors, it is easier

to estimate the value of a novel than of a collection of poems. Thus, it seems that the answer of true literary ruminants would be as simple as it is paradoxical: there are good books and good books, old and new, classical and modern, good foreign and good domestic books mostly written by great novelists and only few by great poets. In fact, the answer to the question of good book is problematic because it is difficult to find the link that connects individual experience of the text and experience in general. Of course, the result is not disappearance of the concept of goodness (it still has a certain content) but rather its vagueness.

The roots of such an understanding of good book lie in the transformation that was very well documented by French nontraditional philosophers of the eighteenth century. In the famous *Essay on Taste* Montesquieu almost axiomatically diagnosed the problem of the formation of taste by pointing out that sources of the beautiful, the good, the agreeable, are inside us (119). And to look for the reason for this means to seek the cause of the pleasure of our souls. The facts that I like summer and the goldenness of grain, that I am interested in the history or geography, or that I love intrigues and stories that do not begin *ab ovo*, or my melancholy, make me ultimately different from you and give me the right to say that Thucydides's *Peloponnesian War* is a good book for me. But at the moment I am saying this to you I would like to affirm my possible resemblance with you. Otherwise, I would prefer to remain silent.

It is clear that the idea of a general judgment of a good book is based on a short circuit. The point is that when I say "this book is good," it does not mean that at the same time I give a definition what a good book is either in ethical or in aesthetical terms. Actually, it seems that I mix ethics and aesthetics without determining what they are. My subjectivity considered that the characteristics of which I speak are indefinable. But when I say that a book is good, I still do not want to just say only that I like that book. Actually, I want to tell you that this book is beautiful, but that it also contains certain issues (including moral issues) that might be important not only for me but for you too. In fact, I want to tell you that the book I like also has something more, some features that go beyond the relation of which I speak. If there is, at least according to Gérard Genette, a subjective meta-aesthetician that always must see the field of representations that he or she creates about himself or herself (85), then our attention must be also directed to a kind of meta-ethical position characteristic of literary discourse's morality and its notions of type, empathy, plurality, politicality, concrete universality, perfection etc. Thus it seems that I am entering the

field of subjectivist meta-ethics and/or meta-aesthetics which believes that our ethical and/or aesthetical sensibility work best when they are immersed in a specific context which might be offered by a (good) book. This component of *meta* inside my subjectivity thinks that its description is objective and that its act of assessment is correct, but it does not take into account the subjective manner in which it recognizes a (good) book.

It is obvious that we need a hypothesis of generalization, we need to legitimize the linking of individual and general – be it humanity, common well-developed imagination, shared ideology, belonging to this or that imagined or real community. My assumption is based on the belief in the idea of a “higher” order, or instances of understanding that are fundamentally non-cognitive or at least they do not need to be explained every time when I speak about a good book. There are some analogies by which I judge, although they do not have the required objective value. Is this seemingly untenable position a necessary condition of my answer to the question of what makes a good book? Is the *goodness* of a good book just one inevitable working hypothesis?

Unlike Erasmus, who could count on the objectivity of *bonae litterae*, which is based on its connection with the Bible as best book, the best book for us is, at best, doomed to be only a working hypothesis. In fact I would say that the answer to the question of what makes a good book is still tied to the existence of the supposed but never achieved existence of the best book. Like in Erasmus, the best book arises in relation to a good book (about which I speak), as the hypothesis that gives itself the task to determine the conditions under which a book can be a good book. In this respect, as in the case of Erasmus but with different consequences, the best book looks like an attempt of deduction of a priori intuitions that universally condition the perception of a good book.

The basic idea of talking about the good book is that the object is “inert.” However, this inertia belongs to my reception of the text, to the belief in the continued presence of values, in a sort of canon, but also to the belief in the working hypothesis that a book that is good maybe sometimes, through the experiences of others, will become the best book. For example, if my experience of a good book is matter of the heart or spirit, as was thought by Pascal, Rousseau, Gombrowicz and many others, then the heart and spirit must become the subject of my knowledge, not the good book, which leads me into the short circuit, because my superior instance is rather vague and non-literary. Or, let us consider one contemporary example: if I am saying that a book

is good from the postcolonial perspective, obviously my experience of its goodness is matter of its political or even ethical virtues according to recently developed attitude that colonialism was wrong. Then, the subject of my knowledge again finds itself in a short circuit, because the goodness of a good book is again something outside the book, which I try to universalize in the name of its particularity. However, it does mean that when I tell you that a book is good, I cannot escape the assumption that I canonize my spirit (“heart,” “politics” or “ethics”) as a representation of understanding of the universal and eternal value (the best book), and so in a manner that this representation my spirit creates about itself and its judgment takes into account this field of self-representation seriously (meta-aesthetically, meta-ethically). Since there is a short circuit, speaking about the good book cannot be grounded, but can only move in the sphere of working hypotheses. Thus, it seems that the reasons – spiritual, political, ethical – that lie beyond the good book itself remain resistant until today, although it is hard to canonize them in a single notion of understanding related to the universal value.

Therefore, caution is always needed in any generalizations, regardless of whether we generalize culturally or multiculturally. Namely, the good book as a work of framing cannot take the place of the imaginary best book, *i.e.* it cannot attain the pure value of the sign or signifying effects of the best book. In a certain sense, familiar to the German Romanticism, it is always on its way to the absolute. The answer to the question of what makes a good book is based on the assumption that is exhibited in a curious and unexpected way by deconstructivist Paul de Man:

Therefore I have a tendency to put upon texts an inherent authority, which is stronger, I think, than Derrida is willing to put on them. I assume, as a working hypothesis (as a working hypothesis, because I know better than that), that the text *knows* in an absolute way what it's doing. I know this is not the case, but it is a necessary working hypothesis that Rousseau knows at any time what he is doing and as such there is no need to deconstruct Rousseau (Rosso 118).

Once again, the good book is made out of the assumption that it knows what is the best book, because it has a basis of its functioning. Thus, as proposed by Adam Zachary Newton, we might talk about ethics of literature only in the alternative sense that “signifies recursive, contingent, and interactive dramas of encounter and recognition” (12). Thus it seems to me that the idea, expressed among others by Northrop Frye, that every act of evaluation is simply “one more document in the his-

tory of taste” (Booth 384) is an oversimplification both of the concept of taste and the place of literature. In the words of Terry Eagleton, as long as “art was extricated from the material practices, social relations and ideological meanings in which it is always caught up, and raised to the status of a solitary fetish” (19), false elitism will be a dominant position from which we pose the question of taste in literature. Thus it appears that even in the case of fragmented literary canon (feminist, postcolonial, multicultural...) we often repeat the same “elitist” operation of power we criticize.

However, from the same point we can go in a different direction. According to Jacques Rancière, romantic conception of literature is a striking example of the axiom of equality characteristic of the modern era (*The Politics* 26–27). The premise of there no longer being a strict division into genres and styles that follows the lines of the social hierarchy characteristic for ethical regime now operates on the assumption that everyone talks to everyone, that every form of discourse, in principle, is available to all. Rancière relies on the continuity between individuals in the political equality and equality of materials and themes in the aesthetic (*The Politics* 81). If we accept this, then we quickly come to the conclusion that the problem of the good book is actually a political problem. According to Rancière, who appears to be fond of the described short circuit of the good book, modern literature is democratic because it talks about things in a prosaic style that is indifferent to what is being processed. Indeed, everything could be the proper subject of literature. It seems that we can also agree with late Jacques Derrida who has affirmed writing as an unconditional right to say everything and/or the right not to speak at all – and to ask any deconstructive questions that are imposed by the subjects of human being and his sovereignty (Derrida 28; see also Robson 88–101).

Philosophical aesthetics has grown from a failure of the rationalist tradition of the eighteenth century to comprehend the immediacy of the sensory relationship of the subject with the world that makes up part of the aesthetic pleasure (aesthesis). The primacy of the empirical leads Rancière to what he calls the scene of aesthetic regime, or to artistic events that are, like any scientific abstraction, constituted themselves into historically developed distinctive languages. He maintains the principle of Kantian transcendental understanding that replaces dogmatism of the truth with the search for the conditions of possibility (Rancière, *The Politics* 50). Opposite to Lyotard (via Kant), according to whom the specific task of modern art is to witness the impotence of mind when faced with the unthinkable, Rancière goes in the direction

of an-archic deconstruction of the regimes of art's perception. Art is vague, and it is its main virtue. Or, for our purposes here, the goodness of a good book is its vagueness, which is its main virtue. As already shown, this virtue actually argues for something larger than itself. It is, of course, freedom, which is still one possible condition of a good book. Rancière's work reflects something that Manfred Frank noticed about the Kant's "third Critique":

Even when I do not produce an aesthetic product, but enjoy one, I still must use my freedom. For nothing sensuously visible and reconstructable in thought is sufficient to impress the character of the aesthetic on an object of nature [i.e. the understanding cannot produce aesthetic judgments]. I must, in order to become aware of the *freedom* represented in the object, use my own freedom (Frank 158; quoted in Bowie 57).

Aesthetic product thus becomes a utopian ethical symbol of attained freedom: this symbol enables us to see or hear a picture of how the world would be like if freedom were realized in it. We can see it in this way because of that aspect of self-consciousness whose basis cannot be articulated in concepts, if concepts are understood in the Kantian sense, as the rules for identification of objects (Bowie 57). The main feature of literature is its availability, and the purpose of reading literature is that gifted students, autodidacts and finally all those who are not destined to read this or that text became able to adapt its words to create their own text (Watts 114). However, we must warn that *bonae literae*, of course taken metaphorically, gives reasons to the people who are inclined to hear them: "[I]f we cannot be harmed by fiction, then we cannot be improved. Fictions, to repeat, preach only to the converted" (Landy 74). Literature can only happen inside an ethical life of certain kind that is often quite innocently called "literary field." *Bonae literae* lives for the people that belong to a certain presupposition. This means that the idea that literature trains ethical sensibility always has certain limits.

Moreover, according to Rancière, aesthetics from the beginning has its own politics ("The thinking" 8). This does not make him happy and he calls that metapolitics (often termed dubiously as "ethics" or "morality") to indicate the deceptive doing of politics outside the limits of politics. The aim of metapolitics is to exclude its subjects from politics or to elevate them above the political; some would even say that ethical criticism has been always searching for metapolitical status. If the main task of ethics is to give valid reasons why something is good or not, then we might ask, for example, a postcolonial literary critic can he or she justify

the ethical reasons outside the secluded space of institution of literature. And where exactly? But if the presumption of the institution of literature is a must then how he or she can reasonably defend the difference of his or her approach to the literature or to the “outside” world. This is another reason why we need to rethink the legitimacy of this kind of ethics of literature: let us remind that academic scholars do not have the monopoly on answering the question what should be; real moral position cannot be drawn from the literary studies because the good book is always just a working hypothesis, which inevitably separates our experience of the book from the experience of, say, a refugee camp.

Thus, it seems to me that our secret desire for metapolitics and immunization from contemporary politics might explain why “in the last few decades ethical criticism has again become respectable, indeed widely so, ranging from the left to right politically and from traditional to avant-garde aesthetically” (Booth 384). Feminism, postcolonial criticism, “cultural” criticism, religious probings, re-emerging nationalism and spirituality have their own versions of *bonae literae*. There is nothing new if we say that their attitudes to the good remain synthetic and not analytic. Thus, it seems that the reasons – spiritual, political, ethical etc. – that lie beyond the good book remain resistant until today, although it is difficult to canonize them in a single notion of understanding related to the universal ethical value (or values). In the Kantian framework, the statement “this book is good” is not just an expression of feelings but more like a recommendation or even an order. Then we must re-think whom we are addressing (or commanding) when we speak about literature. It appears, here, that there still exists a small, almost invisible residuum of Erasmus’s view of *bonae literae*: belief in the idea that literature has a value in itself. There is no doubt we share conviction that literary writing may still reveal something “deep,” “meaningful” in regard to the relationship between language and the modern world, and also about the relationship between knowledge and cultural practices. Is the nature of this conviction ethical or aesthetic, or is it again difficult to disentangle them? Thus it seems that the *bonae* still has a certain content, albeit vague, wrong if metapolitical, and more acceptable if it longs for a radically egalitarian literature that will not attempt to solidify a unique and single sense of its own, but a way to deal with the tragedies of the century without forgetting to add some spicy humor, irony, parody and comedy to it. Since literature can even exist without a constant and dull repetition of the list of self-defeating consequences (of the crisis, the disintegration, fragmentation, anomie, gelatinization, loss of freedom, etc.), one who poses the question of the relationship of ethics and literature should be

more interested in a space where writing comes into collision with what enables it, thanks to which it writes.

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Kaj je dobra knjiga? *Bonae literae* v enaindvajsetem stoletju

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / literarni kanon / literarno vrednotenje / etika in estetika / estetsko izkustvo / subjektivnost / svoboda / metapolitika / moderna

Prvi del članka podaja analizo pojma *bonae literae*, ki nas povede v srž problema dobre knjige pred časom estetske separacije, ki se pojavi ob koncu 18. stoletja. Drugi del poskuša prikazati, da celo v primeru fragmentiranega literarnega kanona pogosto ponavljamo »elitistično« operacijo moči, ki jo kritiziramo. Dolgo pred nastankom sodobne literarne vede, ki je organizirana v univerzitetnih oddelkih in raziskovalnih inštitutih, so se lastnosti dobre knjige nanašale na vrednotenje njenih retoričnih kvalitiet, navezav na poetično tradicijo in predvsem na moralne odlike. V 21. stoletju ni enotnega kriterija, po katerem bi lahko presojali, ali je knjiga dobra ali ne, niti v estetskem niti v etičnem smislu. Tako se zdi, da bi odgovor na vprašanje dobre knjige lahko bil tako preprost kakor tudi protisloven: obstajajo dobre knjige in dobre knjige, stare in nove, klasične in moderne, dobre domače in dobre tuje knjige, ki so jih večino napisali veliki romanopisci in manjšino veliki pesniki. Odgovor na vprašanje dobre knjige je problematičen, ker je težko odkriti, kaj povezuje individualno izkušnjo z besedilom in izkušnje nasploh. Seveda rezultat ni izginotje koncepta dobre knjige (še vedno ima nek pomen), temveč predvsem njegova nedoločnost. Zato je vedno potrebna previdnost pri generalizacijah, ne oziraje se na to, ali generaliziramo kulturno ali multikulturno. Zdi se, da še vedno obstaja majhen, skoraj neviden ostanek Erazmovega pojmovanja *bonae literae* v sodobnem fragmentiranem literarnem kanonu: verjetje v idejo, da ima literatura vrednost sama po sebi.

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Svoboda in nezavedno: nekaj opazk o etiki poiesisa

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Etika literature se kaže v tem: ne popustiti glede nezavednega dela. Literatura je poiesis, ustvarjanje, postajanje. Je dogodje biti. Na tem ozadju je mogoče dojeti težo slavnega izreka Samuela Becketta iz Worstward Ho: »Poskusi znova. Naj ti spodleti znova. Naj spodleti bolje.« (81) V romanu Neimenljivi piše: »Ne vem, nikoli ne vem: V tišini, ki je ne poznaš. Nadaljevati je treba, ne morem nadaljevati, nadaljeval bom.« (116) Beckett se spopada z molkom, vrti se okoli tišine besed, tišine, ki je ni mogoče ubesediti. »Ta tišina [besede] je Realno, kolikor se upira simbolizaciji v jeziku, in vendar je tisto, kar uokvirja simbolno prej in potem. Lacan za notranje izločeno naravo tega Realnega uporabi neologizem ekstimno.« (Chattopadhyaya 51) Ekstimno je odgovor na hermenevitično vprašanje o etiki v literaturi, o dogodju literature kot darežljivosti biti (Urbančič, O krizi 11), o nezavednem delu kot meta-etičnem (Badiou) literature ne v njeni estetičnosti niti v njeni moralnosti (niti ne v religioznosti, skoku vere, kakor bi nadaljeval Kierkegaard), ampak v njeni ekstimnosti, v tišini/prepadu biti. V kratkem ekspezeju bom ob analizi pesmi Muanisa Sinanovića »Zaupanje« iz zbirke Dvovid v optiki filozofskih izhodišč v članku na konkretnem literarnem besedilu pokazal, kako pesnik zgoraj skicirani dogodek izpelje ne v pogledu od zunaj, ampak znotraj kot »action in progress«, kot dogodek, ki aktualizira samega bralca.

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / poezija / pesniška govorica / poiesis / techne / nezavedno / svoboda / dogodje / ekstimnost

Globalization is a proxy for technology powered capitalism, which tends to reward fewer and fewer members of society. (Malik)

Rimski cesar Mark Avrelij je helenistično etiko povzel v preprostem stavku: »Ne da razpravljaš, kakšen bodi dober mož, temveč da si, to je glavno.« (132) Gre za zahtevo performativnosti, počiščenja nihilizma morale, uresničitve, ki jo je nakazal Freud z izrekom: »Wo Es war,

soll Ich werden.« (357)¹ Nedvomno pa jo izrazi tudi staro grško reklo: *Hic Rhodus hic salta*. Iz povedanega lahko rečem, da poskakujemo po Rodosu, ko razpravljamo o problematiki etike poezije. Uporabljam izraz poezija, da poudarim razliko med konvencionalnim pesništvom kot estetičnim klepanjem poezije in poezijo kot etičnim uresničenjem. Zato je članek treba brati kot performativ etične prakse, kot etično prezentacijo. V tem se kaže aporetičnost znanstvenega prispevka, ki ga označuje dvojno delo: literarni članek nekaj reprezentira, ampak sama reprezentacija je že prezentacija, performans. Zato je zaželeno, da znanstveno delo zatemni soj erosa, saj ga križata živa izkušnja literature in aktualizacija poezije.

S tem sem skočil *in medias res*. V luči etične razsežnosti literature se odzivam na dve vprašanji. Prvo nagovarja ontološki pogoj etično razkritega literarnega dela (v mojem primeru poezije), Realno² uresničene poietičnega/ustvarjalnega dela, ki je seveda svoboda. Drugo vprašanje pa izpostavlja *techné* (veščino) etičnega dejanja v poietičnem postopku: kako početi stvari (pisati), da bi razprli ontološko sfero pesniškega procesa in sprožili individuacijo/kristalizacijo³ etične uresničitve onkraj dobrega in zla lažne morale, kar seveda vzame v obzir nezavedno delo.

Kjer je Bog, sta tudi strah in trepet. Bog v zahodnjaškem simboličnem univerzumu pomeni neskončno absolutno onkraj vednosti, onkraj spoznanja, neznanega, nedosegljivega (apofatičnega) Boga. O tem bo več govora pozneje ob naslonitvi na Sørenea Kierkegaarda in njegovo misel. Sintagma strah in trepet ne označuje zgolj naslova Kierkegaardove knjige, ampak ontološki stanji, temeljni eksistencialni izkušnji sodobnega človeka. Toda po drugi strani naj bi Bog z ljubeznijo in milostjo v živo govoril zveličanemu posamezniku, apostolu, ne pa tudi sinu božjemu, kar dokazuje Jezusov vzklik na križu tik pred smrtjo: »*Eli Eli Lamá Sabactáni*, Moj Bog, moj Bog, zakaj si me zapustil!« (Mt 27, 46–47) Prav to naj bi verujočemu pomenilo najvišji

¹ »Kjer je bilo, tja moram priti.« (Lacan, *Spisi* 170)

² Izraz Realno uporabljam v pomenu Lacanovega realnega. »Realno je tisto, kar dejansko omogoča razvozljati to, iz česar sestoji simptom, namreč nek vozec označevalcev.« (»Televizija« 55) Gre seveda za zapleten pojem, a tu ni prostora, da bi ga razvili.

³ Z uporabo izraza opozarjam na enega temeljnih pojmov iz filozofije tehnike Gilberta Simondona, slabo poznanega francoskega misleca, ki je usodno vplival na razmišljanja Gillesa Deleuza in njegov koncept nastajanja (*devenir*) ter pojmovanja virtualnega in aktualizacije, kar je Deleuzu nekako uspelo zamolčati. Kristalizacijo/individuacijo pri Simondonu lahko razumemo v pomenu Deleuzovega pojmovanja aktualizacije (gl. Simondonu posvečene razprave v Paičevem tematskem bloku »Tehnosfera«).

možni dosežek na tem posebnem področju človeškega prizadevanja. Razodetja in odrešitve ne smemo zamešati z božjim kraljestvom, ki menda nekje čaka uboge v duhu. Bog je nespoznaven (*Agnostos Theos*), onkraj kakršnegakoli razumevanja in dojemanja, kot nas obvešča Dionizij Areopagit v svojem *Pismu diakonu Doroteju* (506). Bog onkraj dobrega in zla. Areopagit piše o »skriti resničnosti, ki je ena in skrivna« (507), o kateri upravičeno rečemo, da je onkraj dobrega in zla, onkraj vsake morale.

O trepetu in poslušnosti piše tudi Simone Weil, zagotovo ena tistih resnično etičnih posameznic, ki je upravičena kaj reči o dobrem in zlu. »Dobro in zlo. Resničnost. Dobro je to, kar stvarjem in bitjem daje več resničnosti; zlo, kar njihovo resničnost zmanjšuje.« (28) Navidezno imamo opravičiti s tradicionalnim razumevanjem Boga in resničnosti kot transcendentálnima kategorijama obligacije, ponižnosti, nedoumljivosti in odgovornosti. Kaj pa se zgodi, ko ustrahujočega in nedosegljivega Boga ter omejeno svobodo nadomestimo s svobodo kot tako? Svoboda pokriva resničnost onkraj ustrahujočega absolutna, onkraj vsakršnih metafizičnih (spoznavnih), moralnih ali političnih omejitev. To želim pokazati tudi v svojem prispevku.

Ampak naj najprej uvedem kontroverzno pojmovanje »dogodka« (*Ereignis*), tega izmuzljivega »pripetljaja«, ki se izmika tradicionalnemu akademskemu filozofskemu spoznanju in teoretiziranju. Prav to je bil verjetno razlog, da je dolgo trajalo, preden ga je Heidegger, njegov tvorec, začel uporabljati v javnosti. Imel je pomisleke o njem, imel je težave z razlago njegove temeljne bitnosti, toda zelo odločno je poudaril, da gre za dogodek klica biti (*Sein*) same, gre namreč za živ »odziv« posameznika (*Dasein*), ne pa za teoretične elaboracije njegovega ustreznega pomena. Njegova vpeljava je nujna in še toliko bolj zahteva nadaljnjo raziskavo v tej smeri, ker Heidegger trdi, da »umetnost [...] pripade v dogodek [*Ereignis*]« (91). Dodajam, da to velja tako za »etično« onkraj dobrega in zla kakor tudi za svobodo. Preprosto rečeno, *Ereignis* ni nekaj, kar v prispevek vključujem kot referenco na slavnega in kontroverznega filozofa. To, kar počnem, izvajam kot dar, dogodek biti (nič), kot odgovor na (neobstoječi) klic, ki me vzpostavlja v pisanju prispevka. Mene kot umetnika, vzpostavljenega v takem dogodku, ne pa *vice versa*, mene kot avtorja, iniciatorja takega dogodka. Spomnimo se tu Kierkegaardovega skoka vere. Mar je tak skok resnično možno doumeti, ne da bi ga sam izvedel? Ali, če sem še radikalnejši, je mogoče razpravljati o globokem in resničnem Budovem (ali kateremkoli drugem avtentičnem) nauku, ne da bi doživel brezdanzji *satori* (zenbudistično razsvetljenje) onkraj besed?

Luigi Pareyson je v svoji prelomni knjigi *Ontologia della libertà* v poglavju Svoboda in transcendenca o takem dogodku svobode zapisal naslednje:

Dogodka torej nič ne najavlja, nič drugega kot nič in v tem je njegova svoboda, tj. svoboda. Pravzaprav: znak svobode je prav to, da je nič ne najavlja. Svobode ne najavlja nič drugega kot sama svoboda. Svoboda je brez predhodnega opozorila. Svoboda, ki ni nič drugega kot svoboda, ima v svojem izvoru samo ta nič, praznino, ničnost. Svoboda postulira sama sebe: dejanje, ki afirmira svobodo, je samo dejanje svobode. Dokaz ali dedukcija svobode ne obstajata: prav zaradi tega ne obstaja nikakršna njena definicija. Uresniči se sama v sebi, sestoji se in črpa iz svojega uresničenja. Ni je mogoče pojasniti, je nedokazljiva, nedoumna. Ne obstaja »izkušnja« nje, ali še bolje: izkuša jo lahko samo dejanje svobode, izkusi se v dejanju svoje izpolnitve. Ne vklaplja se v sistem, na nič se ne obeša, z ničemer se ne usklajuje, ne ustvarja »sistema«, njena oporišča so nedvomno v drugih rečeh. Svoboda se kaže samo kot svoboda in se dokazuje samo s svobodo. Izkusiti jo je mogoče samo v svobodi: ne gre za začaran krog, ampak za samo (»virtuozno«) dejanje svobode. Svoboda se rojeva sama od sebe, samo sebe afirmira in samo sebe uresničuje. Je svoje ustvarjanje s pomočjo same sebe, dejanje samo-ustvarjanja, samovzpostavitev. V svojem dejanju postane s samim svojim dajanjem. Svoboda je izbor svobode. Bitje, ki bi bilo »potencialno« svobodno, ne obstaja: svoboden si samo v dejanju. Svoboda je vrzel v kompaktnosti realnosti, prelom, razpoka, razcep v kontinuiteti univerzuma. Absolutni začetek je ta nič svobode in prav zaradi tega je presenečenje, čudež, vzbuja čudenje: zaradi tega ta nič vsebuje nekaj vrtoglavega, je brezno, ki vzbuja tesnobo, osuplost. Svoboda je v tem smislu misterij, ki ima en vzvišen in en potlačitven aspekt, ker ima sama v sebi fundamentalno dvoznačnost. (29, ta in sledeči prevodi Iztok Osojnik)

Lahko rečem, da dogodek etike onkraj vsake absolutne transcendenca dobrega ali zla v moralnem pomenu vključuje dogodek svobode. Gre za predontološko svobodo. Toda v zvezi s svobodo gre še za nekaj več. Pareyson nadaljuje: »Dogodek svobode je začetek, *samovzpostavitev, samostvarjenje* iz sebe.« (41; poudarek dodan) To pa velja tudi za dogodek poezije. Platon v *Simposionu* v znamenitem odlomku 205c zapiše: »Zakaj sleherni vzrok (*ergasia*) za prehajanje iz nebivanja (*me on*) v kakršnokoli bivanje (*to on*) je *poiesis*.« (97)

Kar je že Platon ugotavljal za poezijo, velja tudi za literaturo. Pojem označuje široko področje, ki pokriva veliko pisnih izdelkov. Tudi ko njen pomen zožimo na *belles-lettres*, imamo še vedno opraviti z obsežnim kompleksom tekstualnih stvaritev, ki na splošno vedno ne ustrezajo običajnim umetniškimi razsežnostim v pomenu Heideggerjeve izjave, da »umetnost [...] pripade v dogodek«. Na tem mestu se bom obravnavi te problematike izognil in se osredotočil na poezijo.

Kakšne vrste jezikovni stroj je poezija? Ob-ontološki, seveda? Ne da bi dalje zapletal razpravo o tem, naj začrtam razliko med dvema vrstama, dvema temeljnima funkcijama jezika. S tem se odzivam tudi na drugi izziv, ki ga predme postavlja osrednja tema številke: ozreti se na problem etike jezika. Ni dvoma, da se tudi v svojem prispevku nanašam na govorico, ki operira s pomeni. Ampak v odzivu na dekonstruktivistični apel dogodka ali »skok vere«, ki je živa govoričica etičnega onkraj pomenov v svetu nepravičnih in neemancipiranih odnosov (reproduciranih v znanstveno tehnološkem svetu), se zgodi nekaj drugega: aktualiziram svobodno delovanje in ustvarjalni prag emancipiranega sveta.

Naj preidem k vprašanju etičnega. Kam se lahko ozrem pri iskanju odgovorov nanj? Pomembni etični in ekološki pesnik Jure Detela je bil nedvomno delujoči etični človek. In še bolj kot to, bil je vzoren etični pesnik. Njegov postopen razvoj v zrelega (etičnega) pesnika je sledil črti, ki jo je zarisal angleški romantični pesnik William Wordsworth v baladi »Hart Leap Well«. V njej pripoveduje o mogočnem jelenu, ki ga zasleduje nepopustljivi lovec. Jelen se uspe izmakniti vsem lovčevim pastem in se nikoli ne preda, nikoli se ne odreče svoji svobodi. Na vrhu prepadnega hriba je končno stisnjen v kot, saj ne more nikamor več pobe gniti. A jelen se ne vda. Wordsworth njegovo zadnje in končno dejanje nepopustljive nevdaje opiše takole: »Three leaps have borne him from his lofty brow, / down to the very fountain where he lies.«⁴ Če iščemo kaj takega, kar bi označili za »pogumno dejanje«, ga najdemo tukaj. To je skok. Detela je spoznal, da je ta skok to, kar je pomembno. Antilski pesnik Aimé Césaire je takšno dejanje poimenoval »veliki skok v poetično praznino« (liii). Detela je prepoznal globoko sporočilo Wordsworthove balade in je od takrat dalje sledil njemu klicu. Šele s skokom se odzoveš na klic. V enem od svojih esejev je Detela o tem jasno pisal in dodal nekaj verzov iz Wordsworthove ode *Intimations of Immortality*: »Ye blessed creatures, I have heard the call / Ye to each other make.«⁵ In ni ga le slišal, ampak se nanj dejavno odzval. Arthur Rimbaud v svojem znamenitem pismu »Lettre du Voyant« pravi: »Je dis qu'il faut être *voyant*, se faire *voyant*.«⁶ Šele ko se odzoveš in skočiš, postaneš »videc«. Celotni Detelov pesniški genij, njegova močna in pretresljiva poezija, neuklonljiva etična drža, globoki uvidi v naravo življenja in govoričice (sam jo imenuje simbolizacija)

⁴ »V treh skokih se je pognal s strmega vrha, navzdol k samemu izvriu, kjer leži.«

⁵ »Blagoslovljena bitja! Slišal sem klic / ki ga vsakdo od vas pošilja za druge.« (Pesmi 288)

⁶ »Pravim vam, da mora biti videc, da je videc.«

ter v politično in družbeno resničnost tedanjega časa so vzniknili iz tega klica. Vzajemno s potrebo spremeniti nasilni svet, saj je zanj sprememba simbolizacije (načina govornice) pogojevala korenito spremembo socialnega in političnega sistema. In obratno: Deteli je sprememba v strukturi simbolizacije pomenila spremembo produkcijskih odnosov buržoazne družbe. V ospredju njegove poezije niso bili pomeni besed, temveč nekaj temeljno drugega. Niti ni šlo za racionalna spoznanja ali za moralno zavest, marveč za globok notranji (etični) pretres, popolno preobrazbo in rekonstrukcijo njegovega bitja.

Ta razmišljanja nas privedejo na prag aktualizacije drugačne funkcije govornice, ki ni medij za posredovanje pomenov, kibernetično orodje komunikacije. Seveda so pomeni še vedno prisotni, vendar ne igrajo več dominantne vloge, postali so snov pesmi. Resnična razsežnost pesmi je drugače. Morda v oblikah življenja, kakor jih je poimenoval Ludwig Wittgenstein. Ničesar novega ne razkrivam. Vemo, da je Platon že davno tega o poeziji govoril kot o dejavnosti (dejanju, *ergasia*), pri kateri se bivajoče (*to on*) pojavi iz nebivajočega (*me on*). Ta proces postajanja bivajočega je imenoval *poiesis*. *Poeiesis* ni *techne*, veščina (tehnika), kako nekaj ustvariti, ampak je delujoče postajanje bitnega kot takega. To velja tudi v času tehnične reprodukcije umetnosti, o kateri piše Walter Benjamin (145). Filozof je tako opozoril na pravo naravo poezije kot na delovanje postajanja biti. Pri tem ni načel vprašanja o idejah (pomenih), zanj je bil bistven proces postajanja bitnega (ustvarjanje) kot resnična narava poezije.

Ta drugačna funkcija ali povsem druga razsežnost govornice ni komunikacija, tj. tok pravega pomena neke resnice, idej, Boga, lepote itd., ampak dogajanje/postajanje biti. Bit je *Sein* (ne *Seiende*, bivajoče), drugo od ne-bit (ki jo Nietzsche prepozna kot nič, *nihil* nihilizma oziroma nihiloliberalizma, kot je o njem pisal Mark Fisher v svojem blogu (*Democracy*)). Govorimo torej o biti in ne o ne-bitu, ustvarjalnosti in ne o u-ničenju življenja, o smrti. Smrt je grozljivi proizvod sodobnega posthumanega sveta tehnike. Potrošništvo in uničevanje. Ni težko prepoznati sodobnega stanja neoliberalnega delovanja globalnega kapitalizma kot nihilističnega, izkoriščevalskega, uničevalnega, eksterminacijskega itd. Nedvomen dokaz za to so dnevna ekološka sporočila o stanju planeta. Alternativa nihilistični govornici komunikacije in nadzora v njeni kibernetični funkciji, ki strukturira notranji stroj nihilistične eksploatacije, je ustvarjalna funkcija postajanja biti pesniške govornice. Resnična solidarnost pesnika (kot proizvajalca) v pomenu, ki ga je razdelal Walter Benjamin, v svetu množičnega uničevanja in grozljivih genocidov (upoštevajoč vsa živa bitja, pri čemer je vztrajal Jure Detela),

je raba govornice (simbolizacije) v njeni »poietični« funkciji živega erosa, njegove polnosti (Kierkegaard ga je poimenoval strast, Nietzsche vesela znanost itd.).

Prehajam k zadnjim taktom svojega »muzikalnega« prispevka. Naj si še enkrat zastavim vprašanje o naravi etičnega dejanja, nujnega za zagon poietične razsežnosti govornice poezije, ne da bi se skliceval na etiko, ampak v dejanski etični praksi (s skokom v praznino biti onkraj pomena). Nisem prvi, ki trdi, da tudi filozofija pripade etični praksi govornice. Kot bi zapisal Kierkegaard in mnogi drugi, ni filozofije brez prave strasti.

Gre za dve vrsti etičnega delovanja, ki vznikata iz »praznine« poezije. Besedo praznina uporabljam, ker nima nič opraviti z nasprotjem Pomena. To, kar izpostavlja, je onkraj, izven njegove domene. Razumeti moramo, da etično ne pomeni moralnega ali moralističnega. Etično zaznamuje resnično naravo/držo dela, ki je že storjeno, moralni aspekt pa izpostavlja način, kako bi moralo biti kaj opravljeno in v večini primerov ni. Vprašanje o etiki seže onkraj dobrega in zla morale. Spomnimo se križarjev, ki so celo svoje (kristjane) pobijali pod parolo zapovedi o neubijanju – in to celo z blagoslovom papežev. Morala, hipokrizija, licemerje so verjetno največji prispevek RKC (Nikejske sekte), ki je usodno zaznamoval zahodni zgodovinski svet. Danes temu rečemo ideologija kot lažna zavest. Pomislimo pri tem na globalno prevaro, imenovano *pax americana* (globalno uveljavljanje »demokracije in svobode«).

Kaj je potemtakem etika poezije? Na začetku sem omenil ontološko pojmovano svobodo kot odgovor na to vprašanje. Toda kako početi stvari v horizontu tega delujočega/ustvarjalnega dogodka? Stéphane Étienne Mallarmé je v pismu Verlainu zapisal, da »je na dnu samo eno, na čemer vsak pisec, celo genij, dela nezavedno« (Césaire xlviii). Tudi Césaire jasno zagotovi, da je »nezavedno [tisto], na kar se odziva vsaka prava poezija« (prav tam). Izvajanje poietičnega procesa sproži dvojno raven zadovoljitve nezavednega dela. Smo pri psihoanalizi. In to lacanovski. Govorim o jeziku Realnega, o tem, kar ostane od govornice, ko se otrese imperativa vednosti, o ekstimnosti naracije, notranje izločene narave Realnega, o pisanju, ki se ne neha pisati. Ne govorim o kakršnemkoli neobvezujočem blebetanju. Etika Lacanove psihoanalize se, če povežem, glasi: Ne popusti glede nezavednega.⁷ Nekaj podobnega

⁷ Lacan zahteva, da se ne popusti glede svoje želje. A iz njegovega teksta lahko izpeljemo, da gre za nezavedno: »To je mesto, od koder nas nezavedno, namreč vztrajnost, s katero se kaže želja ali tudi ponavljanje tega, kar se v njej zahteva [...].« (Etika 52) Ko nekaj strani naprej razpravlja o svetniku (psihoanalitiku), ki deluje kot izmeček,

je že pred njim trdil tudi Mallarmé. »Za Lacana je Realno pripoved, v kateri se negacija pripovedi nikoli ne neha zapisovati; ta negacija se zapisuje vedno znova *ad infinitum*.« (Chattopadhyaya 52) Ne smemo pozabiti, da je Realno tisto zunaj jezika, kar se upira simbolizaciji v jeziku. Lahko rečemo, da je Realno tiho. Je neke vrste govoreča tišina. Lacan nadaljuje:

Ker je ta tišina zunaj spoznanja, ne moremo zagotovo vedeti, ali smo ali nismo v tišini. Ta tišina uokvirja pripoved kot mejna točka. To strogo nedosegljivo tišino, iz katere prihajajo vsa govornica in zgodbe in v katero tudi izginjajo, je nemogoče inkorporirati v pripoved, [...] ki kroži okoli te tišine, tako kot lončar, ki konstituira praznino v središču svoje vaze [...], naredi rob okoli praznine in ji s tem podeli obliko, ki ostane tako zunaj kot znotraj, to je tako znotraj vaze kot zunaj nje. (*Etika* 51)

Bralec bi upravičeno opozoril, da je eno teoretizirati o tej vrsti govornice, povsem drugo pa je ustvarjalno pisati v takšnem tekstualnem *passage à l'acte*. Ampak pisec, čigar literarni opus je bil posvečen prav temu, obstaja, namreč Samuel Beckett. Trdim – nisem edini – da drži, ki se kaže v literaturi Samuela Becketta, neposredno korespondira z lacanovskim Realnim. Njegov vztrajen napor vztrajati pri ne-narativni govornici in neulovljivi etični drži je viden že iz nekaterih njegovih slavnih stavkov, na primer tega: »Moram govoriti, ko nimam več ničesar povedati, razen besed drugih.« (*Neimenljivi* 26) Ali iz iste knjige: »Nadaljevati je treba, ne morem nadaljevati, nadaljeval bom.« (116) Ali pa v izjavi, ki se zdi skoraj identična zgoraj zapisanemu Lacanovem imperativu: »Ne popusti. Naj ti spodleti znova. Naj ti spodleti bolje.«⁸ (*Worstward* 81)

V zgornjih primerih se srečamo z govornico/govorno funkcijo, ki ne posega po »buržoazni eksploataciji govornice in simbolni in pomenski konstituciji«, kot jo je označil Jure Detela (105). Govornice ne artikuli- ra kot prenosnika/označevalca vednosti (pomenov), kar je bistvena dimenzija poezije. Čeprav je Detela razpravljal o etiki v odnosih človeka do živali, je bilo zanj ključno načelo, pri katerem je vztrajal, namreč načelo pravice do življenja za vsa bitja. Dobro pa se je zavedal, da je do uresničevanja tega načela še daleč: »Ni težko pokazati, da etično načelo, ki ga zahtevam za živali, ni spoznano in upoštevano niti v primeru ljudi.« (108) O pravici do življenja je pisal tudi Aimé Césaire:

pravi, da »na ta način udejani, kar nalaga struktura, da omogoči subjektu, subjektu nezavednega, da ga vzame za razlog svoje želje.« (59)

⁸ Andrej Skubic to prevaja takole: »Vselej poskusi. Vselej zamoči. Pa kaj. Poskusi spet. Zamoči spet. Zamoči bolje.« In nižje: »Poskusi spet. Zamoči spet. Spet bolje. Ali bolj huje. Zamoči spet huje. Spet še huje.« (V rokopisu)

»Vse ima pravico do življenja.« (xlv) Toda tu že sežemo onkraj obzorja Detelove ekološke etike. Ne smemo pozabiti, da razpravljam o »skoku vere«, skoku v neznano, o skoku v praznino onkraj diskurza vedenja, v črno luknjo simbolizacije, v praznino in tišino (brezno) Realnega. Trdim, da gre za vrsto skoka, ki ga govornica izvaja kot etično dejanje poezije (*poiesis*).

Potemtakem vprašanje, kako delovati etično in se ne ujeti v moralne pasti tradicionalne govornice komunikacije, nadzora in vodenja (metafor, zapovedi, imperativov in pomenov) v smislu recikliranja istega ter uresničevati dejansko svobodo in alternativo globalnemu tehnokratstvenemu nihilizmu sodobnega neoliberalnega sveta, svoj odgovor najde v poeziji (*poiesis*). Žarko Paić zapiše to takole: »Moč nezvedljive umetnosti je dogodek absolutne svobode med totalno politiko in estetskim redom. Treba se je prebiti med obema in se dotakniti najglobljega dna brezna. Vse drugo je brez vrednosti in zasluži, da izgine.« (*Sloboda* 568)

Eksistencialna revolucija, ki sledi zgornji izjavi, se odvija v Nietzschejevem pomenu večnega vračanja istega (dogodka/*Ereignis*), vedno znova darovanega *ad infinitum* po biti/*Sein* (Urbančič, »Kritični« 347). Skok vere ni nekaj, kar izvedem jaz, temveč je dogodek, ko se brezno nezavednega odpre pod mojimi nogami. Šele po dogodku se lahko reflektiram kot subjekt. Kristalizacija je živ dogodek resnične solidarnosti in etika poezije v svojem dejanskem dosežku.

Poskušajmo zgornja izvajanja preveriti ob branju poezije oziroma povsem konkretne pesmi mladega slovenskega pesnika Muanisa Sinanovića. In sicer kot kontemplacijo o nezavednem delu/zadovoljitvi njegove poezije.

zaupanje

trogloditski značaj ritma,
spano upravljajočega
v ustni votlini,
tli
kot pravek vsakega
vzorca. In misel,
skrčena v idealno prožnost,
nas obmetava z zrni nedomačnosti,
zaradi česar
moramo ves čas utripati
z vekami naše poglede.
Kar v vodi zažubori,
pričaka čez
geografske širine.

Kar v vodi zažubori,
je napihano
v prizor pred očmi ribe,
veter pod nožicami goloba,
vodo pred usti ribe,
obraz pred ogledalom,

v bravurah
tistega, kar ni povedano,
česar se dotikamo
v svoji enojnosti,
svoji ednini,

preko let, preko pisem,
ki niso poslana v steklenici,
ampak zgolj
v svoji papirnatosti
spuščena v vodo

in prispevovana.
Razgrni culo in se v njej
oglej v neogledljivosti.
Robovi cule zarezujejo
črto, kot črto v steklu,
razpenjeno in v pogledu
netakljivo, med

potlačnim tokom
in pomirjeno gladino.

(nikoli pomirjena črta.
nikoli razbite sence.
vedno zobje v potencialu,
da postanejo klavirske
tipke, na katere bi
igral jezik za njimi.
vedno potencial, da nebo,
da sonce na koži
vse splete v jeziku,
v neodblesku, nevpito,
jezikovno).
kakorkolnost.

Zahvala Njemu.

Ta izvrstna pesem na koncu zbirke *Dvovid* (95) naj bi torej imela simptomatično strukturo, delovala naj bi, kakor da je izrečeno tisto, kar ni izrečeno, a samo zato, da ne bi bilo izrečeno in ravno s tem izrečeno. To je ta metoda nastavljanja hrbta nezavednemu delu, odmakniti se proč, dati prostor. To, kar se skriva, nevidno pokazano v neodblesku, se kaže v besedah, v govorici, tli v bravurah/popačenjih tistega nekaj, kar ni izrečeno: »trogloditski značaj ritma, / spano upravljajočega / v ustni votlini, / tli / kot pravek vsakega / vzorca.« Sinanović je človek izredne koreografske raznolikosti premišljevanja, teoretično in praktično dodobra seznanjen z delovanjem stroja govorice od zunaj in od znotraj. Ve, kako je treba strukturno dopustiti in slediti trogloditskemu značaju ritma, da pride do zadovoljujočega učinka pesmi, do tega, da pesem uresničuje prehod iz *me on* v *to on* (iz nebivajočega v bivajoče) ter v teh saltih in spiralah postajanja ustvari napetost za naslado in zadovoljitev (Eros) tega, kar se izmika, oziroma kar nastaja in obstaja samo kot izmikajoče se in kar konec koncev generira ontološko stanje, »eksistencialno« naslado (nezavedno zadovoljitev), »pravek vsakega / vzorca«, »trogloditski značaj ritma«, svobodo. Nezavednega ni mogoče nadzorovati ali voditi, lahko pa ga je izzvati, se mu nastaviti, podtakniti, da spregovori. Miller piše: »Subjekt [...] mora povedati vse, kar mu pade na misel. Ne sme pripravljati lepih govorov ali se očiščevati skozi govorico, temveč nasprotno podati gradivo brez vsakega reda.« (9) Muanis pa: »Razgrni culo in se v njej / oglej v neogledljivosti. Robovi cule zarezujejo / črto kot v steklu, / razpenjeno in v pogledu netakljivo, med // potlačenim tokom / in pomirjeno gladino.« Ta je seveda »nikoli pomirjena črta. / nikoli razbite sence.« Ampak kaj to pomeni za delovanje same pesmi v njenem označevalskem postajanju, v njenem spletnju v jeziku, v tem, da ostane, zdaj ko je tu, agregat, ki generira nepovedanost in »neogledljivost«, v »neodblesku, nevpito jezikovno kakorkolnost«? Ni dvoma, da pesnik v trganju teh spiral, teh »zrn nedomačnosti«, te zgolj papirnatosti, ki jo vzame voda, zavestno vodi »nikoli pomirjeno« črto v steklu nikoli razbite sence, »netakljivo, med // *potlačenim* tokom in pomirjeno gladino« (poudarek dodan). Ko je pesem napisana, je tostran svojega predhodnega nič, se je že »zgodila«. Isaac Bashevis Singer piše: »Kakšna bizarna sprememba. Minuto prej je bil Reb Mendel pošten, ugleden jud, zatopljen v premišljevanje svetih spisov, uro pozneje pa se je, zaveden od neveste, znašel ujet v mrežo incesta.« (Pareyson 29) V tem je teža »dogodka«, razlika med biti in ne biti, med nebivajočim in bivajočim, v tem je učinek dejanja, ki pripade *poiesis*. Gre za, rekel bi, negativno veččino, kako aktualizirati virtualni potencial, ne da bi ga ne-realiziral: »vedno zobje v potencialu / da postanejo klavirske / tipke,

na katere bi / igral jezik za njimi. / vedno potencial, da nebo, / da sonce na koži / vse splete v jeziku, / v neodblesku, nevpito, / jezikovno [...].« Recimo, da gre za večino, kako v govorico izzvati globoko notranjo, potlačeno nezavedno, da izda svoje obrate in povleče potrebne geste, ne da bi se kakorkoli ne oglasilo – s tem, da ne gre za nobenega od slavnih štirih diskurzov psihoanalize, ampak za petega, ki ga odlikuje dogodek *poiesis* v luči dogodka svobode, o kateri je pisal Pareyson. In ga skozi neobstoječi temelj cepi oni slavni vztrajalnik: Ne popuščaj glede svoje »govorice«! Gre torej za etiko delovanja (starogrško *ergasia*), ki pa je kljub vsemu ni mogoče reducirati zgolj na sekundarno zadovoljitev nezavednega, temveč je treba teoretično in praktično narediti še korak dalje. Ta korak zaznamuje besedica ekstimmnost. Ali, če do sedaj povedano še radikaliziram z uvedbo praznih besed, kot so *sunjata*, *zimzum*, apofatičnost, darmakaja. Zadnji v nizu se bo treba še posvetiti, ampak kdaj drugič.

Čeprav se ob koncu pesmi prav v navezavi na zgornji niz kot poseben izziv veže vprašanje: Kdo je skrivnostni »Njemu« [z veliko začetnico!], ki mu gre zahvala? Je Sinanović z uporabo zaimka v pesmi zdrsnil nazaj v metafiziko vere ali pa se od tu dalje odpira neznano, ki zapade skrivnosti kot živi očitnosti onkraj govorice in morda celo onkraj nezavednega dela kot živi dogodek tišine, ki je ne uokvirja več nobena govorica? Malce spominjajoč na opozorilo, ki ga je Ludwig Wittgenstein zapisal v sedmem paragrafu *Logično-filozofskega traktata*: »Ko o čem ni mogoče govoriti, je o tem treba molčati.« (162) Toda pustimo razgovor o tem za kakšno drugo priložnost.

Naj počasi sklenem glodanje suspenza etične drže v luči neomajnosti tega »Ne popusti!«, ki subjekt razgradi onkraj tako etičnega kakor meta-etičnega v »zadovoljitvi«, ki je v duhu tradicije nikakor ni mogoče označiti za filozofsko ali votivno vero (niti zreducirati na katerokoli od religij). Rekel bi, da tu ne gre za nikakršne skoke, kakor namiguje Kierkegaard, še manj pa za kompromise, ko zdravemu mislecu odpove razum (lucidnost). Česar seveda ni treba zreti kot tragedije modernega postčloveka v dobi tehnosfere. Žarko Paić takole okarakterizira čas prehoda od mišljenja biti k teoriji volje in svobode (ta nikakor ne polarizira grožnje): »Modernost se prične s pošastnim pogojem svobode. Biti sam in sam svoj pomeni biti na robu razpoke, iz katere prodira nič.« (»Kierkegaard« 153) Problem je seveda v strahu in trepetu, ki ju sproža odsotnost vsake absolutne vednosti in utvare absoluta.⁹ Povratek k reli-

⁹ Ni mogoče spregledati, da sta strah in trepet učinka ideološke (tržne/upniške) manipulacije nadzorovane družbe ter militaristične globalistične oblastne biopolitične kampanje.

giji ni več mogoč. Bog je dokončno mrtev, in čeprav dobo znanstveno tehničnega postavlja in (re-produciranja) znanstvenega označevalca brez označenega označujemo kot krizo subjekta, to ne pogojuje niti konca sveta niti konca posameznika niti konca zgodovine. Paić nadaljuje: »Teološki suspenz etičnega zdaj nadomesti tehno-logično nevtraliziranje religioznega. Vpričo prodora nečloveškega zdaj nista več prava alternativa niti Abrahamov nož brezpogojne vdanosti Bogu niti Kristusov križ v odpuščanje grehov.« (151) To velja tako za Abrahamovo kakor za vero Mohamedanov, torej za vse tri religije knjige, ki vztrajajo pri mesijanskem fundamentalizmu, predvsem pa ne nudijo nobenih iztočnic za preseganje ekskluzivnega sovraštva in nasilja, ki ga ne pogojuje zloba posameznih vernikov negativcev, ampak je ta vgrajena v sam izključujoči in imperativni stroj vere kot monoteistične kampanje. Vojaški marši niso poezija. Le ta nas usmerja drugam. Brezno svobode ne pomeni smrti, ampak obratno, dogodek, »prehod iz nebity v bit« (Pareyson 41), ki se je že zgodil.

Tega le površno nakazanega ozadja se dotikajo tudi naslednji Sinanovičevi verzi iz pesmi »Breza« iz zbirke *Dvovid*: »biti gledan, brisan / skozi *usesplošni šum*« ali pa »zavisenju // glave / v *popolno in najpopolnejšo / črnino*« (87; poudarki dodani). Tudi Zbigniew Herbert zapiše v pesmi »Razodetje« podobna verza: »Mrtva zvezda, / črna kaplja neskončnosti.« (65)

Svoj shematični prispevek končujem z elaboracijo udarca Realnega, torej poietične govorice kot singularne perforacije desubjektivizacije in »zadovoljitve/individuacije« onstran načela intimnega ne/ugodja, ki povezuje večji del tega, o čemer sem pisal zgoraj. Gre za vprašanje

absolutnega negativizma, ki ga v kasnejšem budizmu zastopa nauk, znan kot *sunyavata* [praznina, praznost], zasidral pa se je tudi v tako imenovani negativni teologiji Areopagita in v nauku o primatu volje [...], v zgodovini tako odrivanega ob stran, da še danes nimamo teorije volje in svobode, ki bi bila enakovredna naši dobro razviti teoriji mišljenja. (Günther 31)

Tu samo opozarjam na to. Ne morem se spustiti recimo v celovit prikaz Güntherjeve filozofije nič ali budistične izkušnje *darmakaje*, kažem samo na variacijo »poietične govorice«, ki jo je mogoče označiti, ko obrnemo hrbet vsemu, kar je povezano z mišljenjem biti, in se sledeč »govorici sistema joge, negativni teologiji Areopagita, ideji *zimzuma* [skrčenje, kondenzacija, zgostitev] kabalista Isaaka Lurije in pred kratkim Heideggerju, torej najgloblji filozofski temini, srečamo z ničem, ki zre v nas iz ozadja zavesti« (39). Gre za realnost (tehnosfero), kjer sta pojem in število prikovana drug ob drugega. Ta se nahaja natančno na

prehodu iz biti v nič. To je treba razumeti na ozadju suspenza »mišljenja biti«: »Dojeti moramo, da pojem svoje resnice nima v sebi [v pomenu, označenem], ampak da ta [resnica] korenini v brezpojmovnosti števila.« (41) O tem govori tudi Lacanova izjava, da nas

nezavedno, če ga res obvladuje struktura, ki v jeziku [*lalange*], kot mu pravim, tvori govorico, opomni, da pobočju smisla, ki nas fascinira v govoru (*la parole*) – preko česar bit, ki ji je Parmenid pripisal misel, deluje kot ekran tega govora –, da proučevanje govorice [...] pobočju smisla zoperstavlja pobočje znaka. (»Televizija« 52)

O pomenu števila (algoritma) za poietično govorico sem pisal drugje (»Neoliberalna«). Rad bi spomnil tudi na znamenitega ruskega avtorja, morda najradikalnejšega med vsemi izrednimi pesniki iz obdobja ruske zgodovinske avantgarde, ki je prav na osnovi elaboracije števil izoblikoval svojo matematično metafiziko in poetiko. Gre za Velimirja (Viktorja) Vladimiroviča Hlebnikova, ruskega pesnika z začetka 20. stoletja, ki je na številih zgradil znamenito poetiko »samovite besede«, »zaumnosti« in posebne aritmetične zgodovinske logike. V njegovem numeričnem sistemu je na primer 3 pozitivno, 2 pa negativno število; posebno vlogo imajo števila 317, 28 in tako dalje. Zanimivo bi se bilo na ozadju Güntherjeve filozofije ničā kot matematičnega tabeliranja negativnosti poglobiti v Hlebnikovo aritmetiko časa in se s pomočjo njegove logike zgodovine in tabel usode prebiti do njegove samovite, zvezdne govorice. Ali kot zapiše sam Hlebnikov: »Samovita beseda se odreši prikazni danih okoliščin vsakdana in namesto očitne laži gradi zvezdni somrak.« (43)¹⁰ Naj to ostane še en izziv za raziskavo suspenza etike poezije in »individuacije« (Stiegler 62 in dalje), kot jo je zasnoval Gilbert Simondon, po njem pa povzel Gilles Deleuze v svoji filozofiji nastajanja, imanence, virtualnega in aktualizacije.

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¹⁰ Žal tu ni mogoče razviti izrednega pojmovanja samovite besede, ki ga je razvil Hlebnikov. Zato še enkrat opozarjam na sila dragocen blok o Hlebnikovu v reviji *Apokalipsa* 198–199 (2016), ki sta ga pripravila Anja Banko in Samo Krušič, mimo katerega ne more nihče, ki se resno ukvarja s tematiko poietične govorice.

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Freedom and the Unconscious: Some Observations on the Ethics of Poiesis

Keywords: literature and ethics / poetry / poetic language / *poiesis* / *techne* / the unconscious / freedom / *Ereignis* / extimacy

The ethics of literature is defined by the imperative not to give up the workings of the unconsciousness. Literature is *poiesis*, creating, becoming, an event of being (*Sein*). “The art belongs into the event of being” (*Ereignis*). On that background it is possible to figure out the incredible importance of the famous saying by Samuel Beckett from *Worstward Ho*: “Try Again. Fail again. Fail better.” (*Worstward* 81) And with the famous end words of the novel *Unnamable*: “I don’t know, I’ll never know: in the silence you don’t know. You must go on. I can’t go on. I’ll go on.” (116) Beckett wrestles with the silence, he circles around the silence, which is impossible to catch by words. “The silence is the Real, so far it resists to be symbolized by language, though it is the very it that frames the symbolic before and after.” (Chattopadhyaya 51) Lacan coined the neologistic term extimacy to address that inner nature of the Real. The extimacy offers the answer to the hermeneutic question of ethics in literature, of an event (*Ereignis*) of literature as the generosity (Urbančič, *O krizi* 11) of being (*Sein*), to the question of the unconscious workings of literature not in its aesthetics or morality (neither in its religiosity or the religious jump as Kierkegaard would suggest it), but in its extimacy, the silence/abyss of being (*Sein*). In a short expose I analyze the poem “Zaupanje” (Trust) by Muanis Sinanovič from his last poetry collection *Dvovid* (*Dual seeing*) in the light of the philosophical premises, schematized

in the article, and show how the poet the above sketched event does not work out in the view from the outside but from the within as an event in progress, which actualizes the reader herself.

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Towards an Ethics of Intercultural Misunderstandings

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This paper proposes that one of the striking effects of literary misunderstandings is a challenge of our truths and cognition. Such seems to be particularly true when the sense-making process of the implicit reader is touched and redirected by the uncovering of the misunderstanding. The surprise, challenge and scrutiny that follows offers an ethical potential to rethink one's own processes of reality- and truth-construction as well as one's bias and stereotypes. The article took examples from three contemporary novels – Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Wizard of the Crow, Amara Lakhous's Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a piazza Vittorio, and Patrick Chamoiseau's L'empreinte à Crusoé in order to investigate the ethical potential of literary misunderstandings that double the misunderstandings by affecting the characters in the fictional world and involving the readers in their individual acts of reading. The examples chosen allow to conclude that literary misunderstandings have indeed the potential to offer amazement and puzzling that lead to a strong offer for revision of the sense-making processes and established truths that guide the reading process as well as cognition in general.

Keywords: literature and ethics / interculturality / cultural identity / implicit reader / cultural misunderstanding / conviviality / Ngugi wa Thiong'o / Lakhous, Amara / Chamoiseau, Patrick

The following pages investigate the relation between ethics and literature by taking a short look at intercultural misunderstandings in three contemporary novels in English, French, and Italian. Arguably the relation between ethics and literature can be questioned within the fictional world, in the reading process and in the text's relation to the world. While I will focus on the first two, you are welcome to read my choice of examples as an implicit commentary on the third one.

What could ethics of misunderstanding(s) mean?

If the “concept of misunderstanding presupposes that S[ender] and H[earer] both believe their respective interpretations of the utterance function to be the same and also to be ‘correct’” (Falkner 12), the detection and correction or repair of a discrepancy can be seen as a way of applying ethics and performed negotiation of social coexistence or conviviality.¹ This seems especially true, if one follows Falkner into the “assumption that neither S nor H are ‘correct’ in their interpretations of the utterance because there is no ‘objective’ communicative content” (Falkner 3), only a negotiated one after the startling moment of detection of incongruence. Similarly, point six of Marcelo Dascal’s eight questions to be posed when analyzing misunderstandings is no question but a straight-forward suggestion proposing that “it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the ethical aspects of communication, as they emerge in the issues raised by misunderstanding.”²

But what are these ethical aspects of communication? Dascal argues that “reaching out towards the other [...] is inherent to communication qua coordinated action, and [...] essential to the ‘coming to an understanding’ it requires” (756). He discerns a minimum of “two [...] ‘duties’: the duty to make oneself understood and the duty to understand [...]. Both require from the communicators a certain amount of effort [resting] on mutual trust between responsible individuals” and not on “misuses [...] of language – as in double-talk, demagoguery, some types of advertising, and other forms of deception” (757). Therefore the analysis of misunderstandings induced by such misuses “must take into account the moral implications of manipulative practices that evade communicative responsibility [...] and jeopardize the [...] mutual respect upon which much of the social fabric depends” (Dascal 757). This argument is very much in line with Wilfried Härle’s criticism of communicational practices in contem-

¹ According to Paul Gilroy conviviality refers “to the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multicultural an ordinary feature of social life in [...] postcolonial cities [...]. Conviviality [...] introduces a measure of distance from the pivotal term ‘identity’, [...] and turns attention toward the always-unpredictable mechanisms of identification” (xi).

² How often does a misunderstanding occur? How often is it detected and corrected? How is it managed? What are its causes? What is the logic of misunderstanding? “It is worthwhile to take a closer look at the ethical aspects of communication.” What about the “non-standard” cases? “Finally, theories of misunderstanding should at some point exercise some measure of self-awareness and self-criticism” (cf. Dascal 795–796).

porary politics and the media as well as his counterproposal for an ethically responsible and utilitarian way of speaking. However, in his *Ethik* the German protestant theologian goes further, imagining a culture of language that would be based on speaking the right word at the right time (chapter “Das rechte Wort zur rechten Zeit”), by “speaking well of each other,” and “speaking about others as if they were present” (433–434). In view of the current power of populist demagoguery this seems sensible, but when applied to literature it could amount to censorship of production and even reception. A perspective which treasures the *Universal declaration of Human Rights* – especially “the right to freedom of thought” voiced in Article 18 and “the right to freedom of opinion and expression” stated in Article 19 – would have to consider such censorship a violation of our human rights. However and at the same time, any willful attack on peaceful conviviality would run contrary to the “spirit of brotherhood” proposed at the end of Article 1. The dilemma of the declaration and its application seem to reside in the premise of a (universal) harmonious communication situation and becomes tangible in the negotiations of the margins of freedom of thought and speech in competitive or hostile communication situations. Such views based on a speaker’s duty stand in stark opposition to the philosophical position of Emmanuel Levinas who argues that the “prendre” (taking) in the French word for understanding (“comprendre”) points towards the absorbing, comprising and grabbing aspect of the cognitive process (Levinas/Nemo 61–62).³ According to Levinas the “difference that exists in proximity, in the face-to-face relation, does not allow for indifference; instead, it suggests responsibility. Non-indifference is the basis for our humanity; it is ‘the source of all compassion’ we do not reach out to the other willfully, but are forced to do so” (Roberts 1138).

Yet even if forced to reach out and absorb, “[t]o reach an understanding [...] is [...] a matter of [...] being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were” (Gadamer 371). Responsibility, uttermost attention, benevolence and a considerable effort to make oneself understood and to understand are needed in order to transform undetected conflicting understandings via detection and negotiation into a common understanding. As will be shown below,

³ “La connaissance a toujours été interprétée comme assimilation. Même les découvertes les plus surprenantes finissent par être absorbées, comprises, avec tout ce qu’il y a de ‘prendre’ dans le ‘comprendre’. La connaissance la plus audacieuse et lointaine ne nous met pas en communion avec le véritablement autre; elle ne remplace pas la socialité; elle est encore et toujours une solitude” (Levinas/Nemo 61–62).

ethics of *literary* misunderstandings are further complicated by strategies of narrative mediation and conventions of fictionality.

Ethics and literary misunderstanding(s)

The quarrel between Richard A. Posner, Marta C. Nussbaum and Wayne C. Booth in *Philosophy and Literature* (21.1 and 22.2) shows the difficulty and multilayered conflicts that can arise when one is repudiating or advocating an ethical stance towards literary communication and on its way conflates moralist prescriptions for literary production with similar prescriptions for the reading-process in the expectation of a moral teaching as well as with ethical descriptions of the literary communication situation. A fantasy of prescriptive moralist interventionism is impossible to appease with a descriptive investigation of possible ethical implications that concern the act of reading. Less problematic than the determination of the ethics of literature and in literature seems the assessment of the value of narration for ethics. As J. Hillis Miller argues in *The Ethics of Reading*, “[t]here is no theory of ethics [...] without storytelling” (23) and as Hubert Zapf points out, ethics need “concrete exemplification of experience in the form of stories, which allow for the imaginative transcendence of the individual self toward other selves” (853–854).

In the following I would like to argue that the performance of a literary event called misunderstanding – no individual accidental misreading, but a narrative strategy that involves the *implied reader* (Iser) – is not only a “concrete exemplification of experience,” but a form of lived experience with an ethical quality. This ethical quality concerns “Ethics as Relationship [...] between texts and readers” (Buell 6–7) and seems especially effective when it remains undetected long enough to contradict the “imaginary object” brought forth via ideation within the consecutive reading process (Iser 147–148). Whenever the misunderstanding unfolds alongside the ideation process and the allocation of information offers no advantage, the reader is involved in the misunderstanding. In such cases the element of surprise has the potential to heighten the impact of the destruction of well-established interpretation patterns.

To some this might sound like an unnecessary narrowing of the focus as literary misunderstandings are being used in comedies and tragedies to cause laughter, tears, and shock. Therefore the exposure and consequences of a misunderstanding enforces per se meta-reflections

concerning our linguistic, cognitive, social, and epistemic conviviality. This seems to imply that every literary misunderstanding surpasses the general ethics of aesthetics. However, in many such cases the spectators find themselves in possession of a comfortable *advance of information* (Pfister 41–43) and possess an oversight in comparison to the individual characters, allowing distanced pity or derision without questioning the interpretative and cognitive abilities of the perceivers. In such cases the potential for meta-reflections and a critique or even a deconstruction of discourse is remarkably smaller than in cases in which the reader has to experience an orchestrated misunderstanding. The focus will therefore be directed towards misunderstandings that undermine the *horizon of expectation* (Pfister 31; 41–42; 98) of the reader and question the reader's position and activity. If *the act of reading* is a process of sense-making that fills the blanks and connects the missing links that arise due to differences between various schemes provided by the text, then the “blanks” that “are present in the text” and “denote what is absent from the text and what must and can only be supplied by the reader's ideational activity” show an “intimate connection” between the two (Iser 216). Iser argues that this interaction is conditioned by needs for completion and needs for combination (182), the “constitution of meaning” implying “the creation of a totality emerging from interacting textual perspectives” and enabling the discovery of “an inner world of which we had hitherto not been conscious” (158).

In the case of literary misunderstandings that involve the implied reader this interaction is being highlighted, doubled and criticized by the staging of the collapse of a previous ideation and understanding. New and long discarded possibilities contradict the previously executed choices, performed ideations and projections. Thus, cognition, habitual sense-making processes, established world-views, personal attitudes and idiolects are brought to the fore and questioned even though the reader is not misinterpreting the text, but consecutively constituting meaning according to the amount of information accessible at any given moment of the reading process. Thereby the relation between reader and text as well as reader and world are up for revision.

Three textual examples

As the following pages will show, the effect that arises from a carefully managed information distribution can be heightened if the process of misunderstanding, detection and coming to a new understanding

is foreshadowed by characters or narrators. When misunderstandings within the fictional world evolve simultaneously with or are followed by the detection of an ongoing misunderstanding on the level of mediation, the analogy and the chronology add emphasis. In other words, readers who have just been offered a laugh or cry about the stupidity of one character or the other, might be uncommonly open to self-criticism when detecting their own deception and their own misunderstanding of the same, similar, or overall situation. The following examples from contemporary novels arguably do facilitate and train the renunciation from previous beliefs, convictions, or interpretations. I take my examples from texts that present the interaction of people with different cultural backgrounds as established in the fictional worlds. Not so much because “[m]isunderstandings are particularly easy to find in cross-cultural communication” (Yus Ramos 217–239), but because it is in these examples that I found the most striking attacks on the cultural presumptions, ethnocentrism and logocentrism of the implied reader.

Exposing centrisms

In an attempted “decolonization of the mind” Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong’o wrote *Murogi wa Kagogo* in Gĩkũyũ and translated it into English as *The Wizard of the Crow*.⁴ The novel’s playful layers and confrontations of explicit and implicit meanings as well as ideologies from different discourses offer much space for misunderstandings and their uncovering: they are a central device for comedy and satire within this work. While positive identification is provided by the titling wizard, a role shared by the protagonists Kamĩtĩ and Nyawira, all levels of government and most social strata of the fictive state Aburĩria are depicted as extremely loyal to a totalitarian ruler, highly corrupt and greedy, highly competitive amongst themselves, ideologically blinded, helplessly egocentric and power-hungry. In one instance a big part of the inner circle of tyranny travels to New York where the Ruler expects to receive Global Bank funding for his megalomaniac project Stairway to Heaven, a modern day tower of Babylon. Contrary to his many expectations, the Ruler who is literally suffering from self-inflation will only experience an unsuccessful meeting with bank officials.

⁴ “The choice of language and the use to which it is put is central to a people’s definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe” (Thiong’o *Decolonising* 4).

Rumor has it that the Ruler talked nonstop for seven nights and days, seven hours, seven minutes, and seven seconds. By then the ministers had clapped so hard, they felt numb and drowsy. [...] When they became too tired to stand, they started kneeling down before the Ruler, until the whole scene looked like an assembly in prayer before the eyes of the Lord. [...] That, it is said, was the scene that confronted three messengers – white, brown, and black – from the Global Bank [...]. They did not show undue surprise, [...] because the visitors took this to be a native religious ritual. [1] They were Bank diplomats who had been trained to understand that money knew no religion, race, skin color, or gender; that money was the root of all money, the only constant law of the new global order. Still, they had been trained to be sensitive to the diversity of cultures, and so their only fear was intrusion, lest they hurt any nerves by intruding into a live religious rite. (Thiong'o 496–498)

Arguably the accumulation of the number seven at the beginning of the quote and the three with the appearance of the messengers shows a deep play with numerology that relates the novel to the sacred and ritualistic texts as used by the exaggerated hagiographic propaganda of the regime. But these three messengers bring no presents and mistake the consequences of a prolonged logorrhea of a totalitarian ruler of grotesque proportions on his loyal ministers and guards for a religious ritual. It is therefore pure luck that the Ruler's pause after his biblical flood of words coincides with their entry. Even though noted, they still have to fight for a chance to speak as the Ruler is not used to humans that do not lend him his ear and life for the time he finds fit.

The phrase *urgent message* did the trick, and the Ruler switched off. He beheld the briefcases in the hands of the three officials. These must contain the contract between the Global Bank and Aburūria. The sight of the briefcases also stirred life in the ministers. Hope was alive. The persuasive arguments of the Ruler must have moved these officials. (Thiong'o 498–499)

While the dictatorship is characterized by a constant accumulation of hyperbolas, euphemisms, ambiguities, lies, double-talk, corruption, totalitarian repressions and self-centered isolation the emissaries are traced in a few lines as exhibiting too many intercultural predispositions and anticipations, imperial bias, colonial epistemologies, a radical neoliberal ideology as well as too little questions and no cultural interest whatsoever. Furthermore, the Global Bank conceives itself in a hierarchical communication between donor and beggar. The *cultural translatiōn* (Italiano/Rössner 11–12) between the two parties fails. Under time-pressure, and without any effort of decontextualisation, the transfer of signs, meanings, and significations is imperiled even before an equally

self-centered recontextualisation eliminates the last chances of coming to a mutual understanding. Thus multiple misunderstandings are presented even though most of them remain unvoiced and partially unsolved during their conversation. Therefore, all readers who have not pledged unwavering allegiance to the Ruler of Aburiria or the Global Bank may rejoice and enjoy these undetected misunderstandings, particularly as they seem to allow for what seems impossible: an even-handed dialogue. For the reader who has witnessed nearly five-hundred pages of hyperbolic totalitarianism, clientelism, corruption, misogyny, and state terror as well as brave and creative acts of (mainly female) resistance the criticism by the donor institution can only be perceived as a superficial misinterpretation of specific incidents that tells more about the critic than about the criticized: they do not question the solicitor's applicability for funding by dismissing the grotesquely megalomaniac project proposal, but interfere directly in the interior politics of the dictatorship; by ultimately asking for even tougher political repressions the criticism does not question the status quo of totalitarian state terror.

[W]e have in our hands two reports concerning the present state of your country, and the Bank has a few questions regarding them. [1] The first concerns your women. We have heard Aburirian women have started beating up men. In our view, this is taking women's liberation too literally and too far. [...]. The second concerns this business of queuing. [...] Your women are challenging the natural order of things, even setting up what they call people's courts; and the queues challenge the social order. We don't need to remind you of the obvious: if the masses take the law into their own hands, you will have nothing but chaos on yours. Extreme democracy. Direct democracy. The Greeks of old, in the city-state of Athens, I believe, tried it, and what happened? It brought down Greek civilization. Mr. President, go back to Aburiria. Put your house in order. Then send us a memorandum addressing anything new you wish us to consider. [...] ... but please excuse us. We have another appointment," the Bank officials said [...]. [1] The Ruler was aghast that the Bank's officials would walk out without having heard his economic theories and philosophy and especially his architectural vision for *Marching to Heaven*. (Thiong'o 499–500)

Now given the possibility that the readers who did not feel offended by the critical depiction of the totalitarian power system of a fictive country may have felt sympathy with the interruption of the totalitarian flow of words by the bank officials, the critique of policies instantly caricatures any alignment with them. Arguably this criticism and subsequent leave does not only challenge the Ruler's self-awareness and world-view, but also any presuppositions that international bodies comply with the rule of international law and fully respect democracy. Thus the pungent

parody of totalitarian dictatorship is accompanied by a similarly strong parody of monetary and political institutions on the transnational and international level. Their interpretation of the situation at hand is similarly exaggerated and one-sided, their conclusions expose highly ideological positions and an authoritarian impetus. It is accompanied by an ideological stance towards history which prefers the Roman *Imperium* over the Greek *Politeia*. The Global Bank is interested in a continuation of the stable rule of money and males, fearing change in the form of radical female emancipation and radical democratic participation. The different interpretations of international hierarchies and singular events – be it the situation the messengers found in the room or the political situation in Abuñria – are not resolved. The supplicant needs to accept the misunderstanding of the donor, only the (narrating voice and the) readers are able to comprehend the multiple failure to come to a mutual understanding.

Thus, I would like to argue, this example engages with various readers' positions and perspectives in a global context. It challenges totalitarian post-colonial regimes, ridicules utilitarian stances towards intercultural communication and – via the conservatory, patriarchal as well as misogynist rationale of the Global Bank – common presuppositions as well as official claims about the guiding principles of international economic funding. While the Ruler's continued misunderstanding of his meager value outside his realm and his relapse offer comic relief, the reader can be sure that the emissaries will go on to their next appointment with their guiding principles patriarchy and stability firmly in place.

Finding one's own centeredness

The choice of literary language is similarly important for the Italo-Algerian contemporary author Amara Lakhous who states on his webpage amaralakhous.com: "I Arabise the Italian and Italianise the Arabic." His short novel *Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a piazza Vittorio* uses elements of the detective story, investigative interviews and personal diary writing in order to solve a murder case and the search for a missing person who is thought to be the murderer. While eleven characters testify his or her truth in first person narration, the main character is only present via eleven "ululations" or wails that consist of various diary entries that follow the different versions of truth and add his perspective on and experiences with the person interviewed.⁵ Due to this structure a polyphonic panorama of

⁵ Ululation derives from Latin and denominates a "howl or wail; a cry of lamentation" or the "action of howling or wailing" (OED).

a culturally mixed community living in an apartment building in the center of contemporary Rome is available to the reader. Two misunderstandings that arise from the absence of an authoritative narrative instance and the progressing sequence of different truths in *Clash of Civilizations over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio* seem instructive when thinking about ethics of misunderstanding. The first concerns the identity of the man. Due to his good language skills he is believed to be Italian. When he declares that he comes “from the South” the Romans think of Southern Italy, not of the Southern coast of the Mediterranean. Therefore, Ahmed is misunderstood to be Amed, Amede’, Amade’, or Amedeo to the puzzling of the protagonist and at least one Muslim member of this intercultural society.⁶ In the “Eight Wail” of his diary Ahmed recalls one such incidence that is worth recording:

C’è una cosa che merita d’essere ricordata: quando Sandro [il proprietario del bar Dandini] mi ha chiesto il mio nome gli ho risposto: “*Ahmed*”. Ma lui l’ha pronunciato *senza la lettera H* perché non si usa molto nella lingua italiana, e alla fine mi ha chiamato *Amede’*, che è un nome italiano e si può abbreviare con Amed. (Lakhous, *Scontro* 98, emphasis added)⁷

As this misunderstanding only comes to the fore after 100 pages, the reader has to readjust to a name behind the name that the previous informants had offered, a more complex identity behind the identity which was offered to the sense-making process. This element of surprise and correction is enhanced via the last “truth.” This is not an interview but a final resume in line with the conventions of traditional detective stories. Criminal investigator Mauro Bettarini’s conclusion has two parts that succeed each other, the second part erasing the first via additional information and further investigations. The first deduces quite plainly that Ahmed Salmi is the murderer (cf. Lakhous, *Scontro* 123), his disappearance, apparently typical for criminal foreigners, confirming his involvement (cf. Lakhous, *Scontro* 124).⁸ The second truth challenges this

⁶ Cf. “Ottavo ululato [I] Giovedì 27 marzo, ore 22.39.” Similarly Abdallah Ben Kadour asks why Ahmed lets himself be called Amadeo if he has been given a precious name shared by the prophet Mohammed (cf. Lakhous, *Scontro* 98; 111).

⁷ “Eighth Wail [I] Thursday March 27, 10:39 PM [...] Something to remember: when Sandro [the owner of the Bar Dandini] asked me my name I answered, “*Ahmed*.” But he pronounced it *without the letter ‘h,’* because ‘h’ is not used much in Italian, and in the end he called me *Amade’*, which is an Italian name and can be shortened to *Amed’*” (Lakhous/Goldstein, *Clash* 99, italics added).

⁸ “L’immigrato delinquente è abituato a cambiare nome e a falsificare la sua identità.” (Lakhous, *Scontro* 124)

conclusion as Ahmed is found in an emergency room. Turns out he is completely innocent, having been hit by a car hours before the grieving mistress of an abducted dog killed Lorenzo Manfredini, named *il Gladiatore*, a man who organizes deadly dogfights.⁹ As the investigator falls prey to xenophobe discourse and has to amend his assessment after realizing that his premise – the murderer has fled – is flawed, the absence of any spirit of brotherhood and harmonious communication situation becomes palpable. Therefore this novel arguably uses misunderstandings and their belated uncoverings in order to confront the reader with both the racism and supremacism of the Eurocentric discourse while training the readers to scrutinize their potential gullibility and convictions.

Another Crusoe changing/challenging the real Crusoe

In Patrick Chamoiseau's *L'empreinte à Crusoe* a man tells the story of his survival on a desert island in a stream of oral narration without full-stops. He has no memory about shipwreck, instead, he finds himself on a beach, wearing a sword belt with an embroidery that reads: Robinson Crusoe. According to his own account he survived and remained sane by developing from a colonial "idiot" on hostile territory (cf. 56) into a small person ("petite personne") in deep ecological and spiritual interconnection (cf. 179). The third form of being-in-the-world – after the colonial idiot and the little person of animist belief – is induced via an earthquake that unravels any remaining elements of anthropocentrism and utilitarianism that had survived the previous deconstruction of the supremacist claim over the non-human. It is out of this blank state that the deep contact of the land-artist ("artiste" cf. 218) with an irreducible island-world arises. The shaking of the earth shakes him and his relation to all living things is suddenly gone, as orientation, balance, individuation and identification have to give in to an "abruption of perception" resulting in a blank gaze that oscillates between "the infinity of its detail" and "the excess of its entirety." His winding narration without full-stop thus explains why the captain and the ship's surgeon are not listening to a man gone crazy because of solitude, but an impressive man who is nearly indifferent to the arrival of a ship (cf. 220). Yet, even though they are impressed by appearance and monologue, the captain and the surgeon know more than the

⁹ "Ahmed Salmi detto Amadeo è innocente" (Lakhous, *Scontro* 127). "Dopo lunghe ricerche Elisabetta Fabiani era riuscita a scoprire l'autore del rapimento del suo [cagnolino] Valentino, e dunque ha deciso di vendicarsi duramente [...]" (Lakhous, *Scontro* 126–127).

survivor and the readers: In fact, the author of the logbook that frames the three parts of the account turns out – after the third part – to be a slaver and his name is Robinson Crusoe. The survivor on the desert island turns out to be Ogomtemméli, Crusoe's formerly loyal slave who turned from accomplice in the trade to abolitionist revolter and had therefore been marooned. Thus, the evolution of the lonely man is offered for revision to the protagonist and the implicit reader: the amnesic island dweller misunderstood the meaning of the name on the sword belt and his colonial zeal turns out to be the result of unconscious mimicry, a white mask on black skin. While the reader needs to recompose the character culturally, phenotypically and intertextually, his sense-making and ideational activity are put into question. More tragic consequences await Ogomtemméli when he apparently recovers his memory due to the smell- and soundscape of the slave ship and detects his misunderstanding (at least partially): He tries to free the enslaved and is killed in the attempt. As the novel ends soon thereafter with Crusoe writing his famous first entry as a castaway on the *Island of Despair* the reader is not only asked to revise the imagination of the oral narrator of this post-colonial Robinsonade, but also of the original.¹⁰ After reading *L'empreinte à Crusoe*, one has to imagine Robinson as a slaver turned cast-away who has just been informed extensively on the possibilities of island life by his former slave Ogomtemméli and is either willfully choosing to continue living as a colonial idiot, or being unable to do otherwise. Furthermore it offers the possibility of imagining an altogether different Robinson Crusoe who has learned from the narrator and the equaling shipwreck.

In conclusion then, the misunderstanding of the reference of an embroidery leads to the construction of an unconsciously usurped identity that undermines colonial hierarchies and intertextual or canonical certainties while offering a new relation to the desert island trope as well as a revision of the nexus man-earth.

Conclusion

These examples lead to the conclusion that the literary performance of intercultural misunderstandings which unfolds alongside the implicit reader's sense-making and ideation process has a metafictional potential and can therefore question these processes as well as the value system

¹⁰ "En l'an de grâce 1956. [/] Je n'en sais plus la date exacte. [/] Je reprends mon journal de bord après toutes ces semaines." (Chamoiseau 231)

of the reader and her or his cultural background, thus producing not only surprise, but also a destruction of stereotypes and possibly a deconstruction of discourse. This deconstruction, I would like to propose, includes an ethical potential. But what kind of ethics can arise from rhetorical strategies that confront readers and characters with radical openness of meaning and transfer decisions of interpretation from the fictional world to the reader's cognition? Activated via the destruction of previously established truths, fueled by amazement and shock, the intercultural misunderstandings analyzed unfold their ethical potential in the ensuing meta-reflections that inform the construction of alternative significations.

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O etiki medkulturnih nesorazumov

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / medkulturnost / kulturna identiteta / implicitni bralec / kulturni nesorazum / sožitje / Ngugi wa Thiong’o / Lakhous, Amara / Chamoiseau, Patrick

Prispevek razvija tezo, da so literarni nesorazumi kognitivni izziv našemu pojmovanju resnic in imajo lahko kot taki osupljive učinke. To se dogaja zlasti tedaj, ko se razkrivanje nesorazuma dotakne implicitnega bralca in preusmeri njegov postopek osmišljanja. Presenečenje, izziv in preverjanje, ki sledijo, nudijo etični potencial za premislek o lastnih postopkih konstruiranja realnosti in resnice ter o predsodkih in stereotipih. Članek obravnava primere iz treh sodobnih romanov; to so Ngugi wa Thiong’o: *The Wizard of the Crow* (2006), Amara Lakhous: *Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a piazza Vittorio* (2008) in Patrick Chamoiseau: *L’empreinte à Crusoé* (2013). Raziskuje etični potencial literarnih nesorazumov, ki podvajajo nesorazume tako, da najprej vplivajo na like v fiktivnem svetu in nato pa na bralce v njihovih individualnih bralnih dejanjih. Na temelju izbranih primerov lahko sklepamo, da lahko literarni nesorazumi res potencialno zbudijo zbežnost in osuplost, ki terjata revizijo uveljavljenih resnic in postopkov osmišljanja, ki vodijo tako bralne kakor tudi kognitivne procese nasploh.

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A Transgressive Ethics of Alterity in Jhumpa Lahiri's and Rodica Mihalis' Narratives of Uprooting

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The paper investigates Jhumpa Lahiri's and Rodica Mihalis' accounts of uprooting in order to highlight their common transcending mechanisms that facilitate dialogues across cultural differences. By presenting interactions between South Asian, Romanian and American characters, the authors promote a conception of cultures as changing systems that can become enriched by transfers of meanings beyond borders. Both authors illustrate how characters who come from dissimilar cultural contexts can engage in meaningful interactions. The Indian-American encounters as well as the Romanian-American intersections are portrayed as opportunities for human understanding beyond the individuals' specific affiliations. By providing examples of cultural agreement between protagonists from highly different backgrounds, both authors present ethical models of cultural interactions that reduce the possibility of cultural clashes. If we accept the premise that literary figures can serve as ethical models, the possibility of cross-cultural communication presented by Lahiri and Mihalis seems especially relevant in the contemporary context of intersecting migration routes and cultural flows. Although produced by authors from different cultural traditions, the narratives discussed promote a transcultural ethics that reveals the importance of shared values as antidotes to cultural collision.

Keywords: literature and ethics / migrations / cultural identity / cultural values / interculturality / Lahiri, Jhumpa / Mihalis, Rodica

The paper analyses ethical models of connectedness across cultural difference illustrated in narratives of uprooting by Jhumpa Lahiri and Rodica Mihalis. The present paper aims to situate itself along the expressions of “innovative thinkers” that strive to shape “more cosmopolitan, transcultural approaches” in the study of literature (Bernheimer 13). At the same time, my discussion of authors from different cultural spaces relies on Mary Louise Pratt’s position regarding the aim of comparative literature to cultivate “deep intercultural understanding and genuinely global consciousness” (62). Both authors share histories of

transplantation from their countries of origin to the United States of America. I have chosen the syntagm “narratives of uprooting” instead of “migration literature” given that the primary corpus of this analysis is made up of different literary genres – a short story and a memoir. I have chosen these creations given their autobiographical core of transplantation, inherent in the memoir and fictionalized in the short story. Jhumpa Lahiri was born to Bengali immigrant parents in London and she grew up in New England. Her collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*, focuses on the cultural effects of daily interactions between Indian immigrants and American characters. Rodica Mihalis’ memoir, *The Gypsy Saw Two Lives* presents her life in communist Romania followed by her defection in 1981.

Transgressive ethics: beyond humanist and poststructuralist perspectives

My approach aligns with critical voices that invoke the emergence of an “ethical turn” in philosophy, literature and cultural theory starting from the late 1980s (Phelan np.) and moving to the mid-1990s (Grabes 3). From the perspective of everyday practices, ethics can be conceptualized as an “individual subjective theory” (Hallet 197) or a set of norms that regulate human behaviour, indicating “what is right or good, what we ought to do” (Levine 1) or helping us answer the vital question “How one should live?” (Nussbaum 15).

The present paper introduces an innovative outlook that aims to transcend the humanist and poststructuralist models of ethics. My perspective delineates itself from a deconstructionist position that privileges alterity, to the point of overlooking the possibility of communication between different voices. At the same time, this approach wishes to avoid a humanist celebration of universality that would dissolve cultural diversity into a homogeneous blend. In order to fashion a novel ethics of cultural encounters, I will follow Dorothy J. Hale’s suggestion for an intersection between poststructuralist and humanist ethics that might converse while maintaining their specific agendas (2009).

An interesting model of analysis that connects Sameness and Difference, while respecting their specificity is developed by Raimond Gaita. This philosopher argues that a great deal of spiritual and ethical considerations in art and literature attempt to illustrate how our responses to various experiences create “a sense of common humanity,

a commonness that is marked by the “we of fellowship” (286). Along similar lines, Charles Altieri advances a philosophy of “sharing without erasing boundaries” (121) that can improve our “moral philosophising” (121). Another provocative approach involves the tripartite classification of ethics developed by Marshall Brown. In order to link ethics with real life situations, Brown suggests two levels of ethical relations that should supplement Levinas’ first level of transcendental ethics. The second level refers to a horizontal ethics (53) that requires us to learn the idiom of the Other in order to “find common ground as a basis for agreement” (Brown 56). The third level, vertical ethics, involves a discipline of encounters at the local level that prepares individuals for the grand objectives of horizontal ethics, focused on the “conflicts of the Other” (60). Brown considers that literary representations are the best illustrations of how the vertical dimension, i. e. “the conflicts of the Same” (60) shapes the ethical domain (59). Since the plot of a narrative is directly correlated with ethics (Harpham 35–37), the readers are invited to investigate/decipher the “complexity of the negotiated encounter” (64), as a basic training necessary for fulfilling the requirements of horizontal and transcendental ethics:

Our ethics take their start from the most intimate, most *fragile encounters*. The newly transpiring dimension is a realm not of symbolic greatness but of the infinitely small, perhaps a kind of *transcendence from below*. Such a vertical ethics—hermeneutic, individual, flexibly uneven—is the indispensable training ground for the grander, knottier, more intractable demands of horizontal and transcendental ethics (Brown 70) (my emphasis).

I find Brown’s approach particularly fruitful as it facilitates a gradual shift from small scale, local ethics to horizontal ethics, providing potential tools for managing the dialogues with cultural others. My analysis of cross-cultural interactions between Indian/Romanian and American characters is meant as an exercise in “transcendentalism from below”. More specifically, it scrutinizes the “fragile encounters” between individuals from different cultural spaces, aiming to extract instances of connection. My discussion of cultural intersections relies on a body of theories that foreground the relationship between literature and ethics, as suggested below.

Literature and ethics

The present section discusses theories that regard literature as an important tool in the transmission of ethical values. David Parker considers that literature is a more suitable channel of ethical speculation/thinking than philosophy, as it carries a “contextualized mode of ethical reflection” capable to filter moral issues in “ways unavailable to conventional philosophical discourse” (12). In a similar vein, Peter Levine connects the narratives created by stories with the narratives of our lives, arguing that the themes presented in stories have the potential to stimulate the readers to apply “moral reasoning” to their own lives (5). Interestingly, Hallet assumes that reading is an act of constructing ethical models (202) given the ethical dimension of the literary figures (195).

In my attempt to uncover ethical models of cultural interactions, I will focus on “the ethics of the told” (Phelan 2013), foregrounding the characters’ choices when faced with cultural otherness. The paper sets out to demonstrate that Jhumpa Lahiri and Rodica Mihalis promote a transgressive ethics of alterity, paralleled by a transcultural approach to cultural identity. To use Hallet’s words, this discussion establishes whether the literary figures from South Asian American and Romanian American narratives are likely to produce an ethical model as a “transcultural” configuration (209). The next section presents several theories that argue for the importance of cultural commonalities in the dynamics of transcultural interactions.

Transcultural bridges: finding moments of connection

The transcultural mode highlights the fluidity of cultural boundaries, leaving room for cross-border exchanges. This approach assumes that cultures are already mixed prior to their contact and celebrates cultural fusion rather than cultural difference in itself. While cultural specificity is important in a politics of recognition that promotes respect for cultural diversity, transcultural communication cannot be conceived as interplay of unrelated cultural differences. According to W. Berg, the idea of cultures as overlapping systems can generate the occurrence of meaningful dialogues between different cultural backgrounds (9). N. Papastergiadis is also interested in examining the mechanisms by which cultures communicate across boundaries (124). Similarly, H. Siegel considers that transculturality refers to ideals that are valid beyond the cultures that explicitly recognize them (398). Considering

these observations, the body of the paper investigates manners in which the works analysed foreground the transgressive ethics of alterity as a vector of transcultural understanding. Relying on the theories presented so far, the next part of the paper analyses the ethical implications of cultural encounters in “The Third and Final Continent” and *The Gypsy Saw Two Lives*.

Body of the paper

The main character of “The Third and Final Continent” is an Indian man who emigrates from India via England to America. While waiting for his wife’s arrival, he rents a room in an old American woman’s (Mrs. Croft) house. By meeting Mrs. Croft, the man encounters a model of womanhood whose main attribute is independence: at the age of 103, Mrs. Croft lives on her own. This aspect is shocking to the Indian man, since it contradicts his familiar coordinates of womanhood. (While his mother experiences widowhood as a trigger for madness, Mrs. Croft conceives the same condition as an opportunity for self-management).

While juxtaposing different cultural models, “The Third and Final Continent” illustrates how commonalities facilitate communication between them. This transcultural mechanism is exemplified with Mrs. Croft and the Indian man, whose ability to spot shared values facilitates their communication. The man finds out that Mrs. Croft considers him a “gentleman” (Lahiri 185), appreciating his punctuality (Lahiri 178). Similarly, the man’s pedantry seems to correspond to Mrs. Croft’s set of Puritan values. In this context, the term “Puritanism” refers to the religious system that flourished in New England starting from the seventeenth century. Considering the temporal setting of plot (the 1960s) and Mrs. Croft’s age, we may assume that she illustrates the Puritan upbringing specific to the nineteenth century America. The manner of clothing was extremely important for Puritans, the “expression of their sober and orderly life, but also [...] an outward sign of their particular piety (Bremer et al. 346–7). When he first visits Mrs. Croft, the Indian man is smartly dressed, which produces a favourable impression to the old lady: “in spite of the heat I wore a coat and a tie, regarding the event as I would any other interview” (Lahiri 177). This manner of dressing entails a ceremonial approach to the idea of a first visit, which seems to resonate with Mrs. Croft’s strict attitudes. Mrs. Croft’s reactions illustrate that she appreciates her tenant’s punctuality, courtesy and pedantry. These values represent a point of intersection, suggesting that

dialogue between an Indian immigrant and an old American woman is possible despite their different cultural origins.

Similarly, Mrs. Croft can relate with a culturally different type of womanhood, embodied by Mala, the immigrant's wife. In preparation for her visit to Mrs. Croft, Mala carefully selects her traditional outfit: a clean sari, extra bracelets (Lahiri 193). Prior to the visit, her husband considers Mala's meticulousness exaggerated, expecting Mrs. Croft to be critical of his wife:

I wondered if Mrs. Croft had ever seen a woman in a sari, with a dot painted on her forehead and bracelets stacked on her wrists. *I wondered what she would object to.* I wondered if she could see the red dye still vivid on Mala's feet, all but obscured by the bottom edge of her sari. (Lahiri 195, my emphasis)

Contrary to the man's assumptions, the old lady pronounces Mala "a perfect lady" (Lahiri 195). The American woman's appreciation illustrates that Indian Hindu and early American cultural models overlap with respect to decorousness expressed by unrevealing clothing. In the early American Puritan tradition, women's clothes were monitored in order to avoid "violations of seemliness and decency" (Bremer et al. 348). In accordance with Puritan sobriety, the length of Mala's sari corresponds to Mrs. Croft's rejection of miniskirts. Despite its marks of cultural difference (sari, the bindi dot, bracelets, henna tattoos) Mala's manner is consistent with Mrs. Croft's standards of female appearance. Caesar also remarks on the transcendent nature of this encounter, given Mrs. Croft's ability to spot the commonalities beyond herself and an Indian woman:

To Mrs. Croft, Mala is a "lady", because Mrs. Croft looks beyond the differences between herself and Mala – the dark skin, the bangles, the sari, the henna-stained feet – to see the similarities, the long skirts that she (and her furniture) wear as a sign of their propriety and concealment, the understanding of the deference owed to age, the formal manners (56).

This moment of intersection can also be explained as a partial overlapping of religious patriarchal discourses. Puritanism promotes the image of the ideal woman as "domestic, self-sacrificing, submissive wife, mother, and daughter" (Westerkamp 132). The marital image of authoritative husbands and compliant wives is an important Puritan principle (Porterfield 20). Along similar lines, the Hindu tradition prescribes womanhood as a set of relations that thwarts the idea of female autonomy while celebrating male domination (Bose 66–7, Deka 124). The intersecting gender

politics supported by Puritanism and Hinduism certainly accounts for the two characters' related outlooks. This fact suggests that a comparative perspective on gender roles, religious identity and female mobility would further nuance the analysis. I intend to develop this approach in a future research project that would examine the possibility of female emancipation in the context of transnational migration.

Interestingly, Mrs. Croft's appreciation of Mala triggers a change in the Indian husband's attitude to his own (arranged) marriage. When he finds out Mrs. Croft's positive reaction, the husband re-evaluates and eventually accepts Mala as his partner: "I like to think of that moment in Mrs. Croft's parlor as the moment when the distance between Mala and me began to lessen" (Lahiri 196). This change of outlook suggests that the validation of his cultural model by an American perspective encourages him to reconsider his own culture from a different angle. Given that Mrs. Croft, whom he respects, is impressed by his wife, the Indian husband can overstep his estrangement from Mala, transgressing the alienation usually experienced in arranged marriages. As Caesar points out, Mrs. Croft helps the two immigrants understand what they have in common with one another and with the space in which they have arrived (57). The husband's reconsideration of Mala from an American frame of reference illustrates that one can better understand one's culture from the perspective of another. This example illustrates how literature can function as a disseminator of transgressive ethical values, as it presents characters engaged in acts of crossing physical and cultural boundaries. Relying on Hallet's argument, we may consider that these literary figures can offer the readers ethical models of transcultural communication. The next part of the corpus analysis investigates analogous cultural scenarios presented in Mihalisi's memoir *The Gypsy Saw Two Lives*.

The protagonist of the memoir, Rodica, becomes an American citizen and mother of two daughters, Eva and then Natalie. The motherhood condition shapes Rodica's willingness to become assimilated into the American culture. For example, Rodica is happy to be a member of a play group made up of mothers and their young children. Rodica's belonging to this community hints at the transcultural dimension of motherhood that builds lasting friendships with American mothers:

We formed a core of neighbourly and motherly commitment not only to our children but to one another and the community [...]. The bond lasted beyond the play group, past our children's childhoods and teenage years. We still meet regularly, just as mothers. True friendships go beyond convenience and immediate needs; they last a lifetime. That was the type of bond we had (Mihalisi 266).

As well as Mrs. Croft and Mala, Rodica shares the transcultural ability to bond with women from different cultures, albeit in different circumstances. In Rodica's case, the mother-role is the main trigger of her impulse to bond with American women, while Mrs. Croft and the Indian immigrants become connected via their shared values. Rodica's bonding with American mothers helps her develop a special outlook on cultures, as spheres that need not clash on account of their dissimilarities. At some point, Rodica realizes that she cannot share her friend's (Susan) tolerance of their children's drawing on the walls. A product of communist education, Rodica advises her daughter not to repeat the drawing experience, while Susan encourages the children's artistic drive: "Truth to be told, our parenting styles were completely different. Susan was the embodiment of a free spirit. I was that of rigidity and order, traits inherited from my Eastern European upbringing. I sought perfection; Susan sought creativity" (Mihalis 266). One could argue that Rodica's perception of the two backgrounds places the American system in a superior position, as suggested by the contrast between their outlooks. Seen from this angle, the Romanian protagonist may be characterised as the holder of a "self-colonising" (Kiossev np) perspective. This status places Rodica in an "extracolonial" peripheral space from where she contemplates American values. While the centre – (lateral) periphery model has the potential to open new research directions, Rodica's choice also enables a different line of interpretation. Thus, her appreciation of a different parenting style does not necessarily imply the desire to emulate American models. Rodica is aware of the *difference*, without turning it into an obstacle to cultural interaction. I consider this a relevant dimension of her transculturality that acknowledges the validity of another system, without letting dissimilar values break communication.

Instead of becoming defensive, Rodica gains the precious insight that different outlooks can coexist without generating conflict: "I didn't want my Eva to draw on people's walls, but Susan viewed the act as a sign of creativity. I learned that not everyone had the same perception of values as I did" (Mihalis 267). Being exposed to cultural difference, Rodica accepts its existence, without trying to assess the superiority/inferiority of other cultural perspectives. This attitude suggests that Rodica can respect contrasting cultural values, without assimilating them: "I loved Susan's friendship and wanted to continue and cherish it in my life, but not her parenting style, so different from mine. Neither style was good nor bad; they were just too different from one another. They were *incompatible*" (Mihalis 267) (my emphasis).

Rodica's reflections illustrate her ability to acknowledge cultural difference not because she agrees with it, but because she realizes it is meaningful to other people. I think this kind of understanding reflects the epitome of accepting Otherness. Rodica's friendship with a person from a different culture with whom she does not always agree underscores her ability to transcend cultural alliances. This transgressive stance helps her relate to other individuals, primarily as human beings beyond their cultural belonging. At this point, Lahiri's and Mihalisi' voices overlap by presenting cultural encounters as ethical models of dealing with alterity in a manner that cuts across ideas of fix affiliation. At the same time, both authors employ the vertical dimension of ethics, situated at the level of daily interactions. By presenting quotidian encounters between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, both authors emphasize the importance of transcultural ethics as a path to minimizing cases of cultural conflict.

Another instance of transculturality is represented by Rodica's visit to Nancy Grace, an American famous socialite whom she meets at an elite party in Philadelphia. Nancy has the reputation of an eccentric personality, a rich divorcee who lives in a sumptuous house. When they meet for the first time, Nancy is intrigued by Rodica's presence and she invites the Romanian woman to pay her a visit sometime. When the visit actually happens, Rodica is impressed by the elegance of Nancy's place, a mixture of "comfort and discomfort" (Mihalisi 198). At some point, the American hostess invites Rodica to swim together in the nude in the indoor swimming pool and the Romanian woman accepts gladly. Rodica's quick response to Nancy's unusual invitation takes Nancy aback, since the latter expects Rodica to hold prejudices against naked exposure. At the same time, Rodica associates Americans with a sense of shyness and reluctance to be seen bare-skinned: "Americans had a reputation of being shy" (Mihalisi 199). Prudishness is a cultural inheritance from the early Puritan tradition that correlated nakedness with eroticism and a sense of guilt (Colwell 2007). At the same time, Rodica's own background is imbued with rigid traditions regarding sexual freedom. Ceaușescu's dictatorial rule turned Romania into a unique case in Socialist Eastern Europe, through the establishment of a dynastic form of Socialism (Irimie 279). In order to increase the labour resources of the communist state, Ceaușescu's legislation advocated a "harsh pro-natalist line" (Irimie 279) that prohibited abortion. This regime promoted a repressive attitude to nudity and sexuality, censoring sex and nudity scenes from novels, press, movies and art productions. Thus, the moral code that permeated the daily social be-

behaviour of Romanians had “a great deal in common with the puritanism, even prudery, so common in communist societies” (Irimie 279). Therefore, when applied to the Romanian context, the term “puritanism” refers to an effect of a state policy and not a religious system, as in the American case. The legal practice of nudism adopted by certain Romanian intellectuals in their summer holidays in specific areas of the Black Sea Coast represented a form of temporary escape from communist restrictions. Although nudism was not an official movement of opposition, it provided a sensation of freedom, similar to the hippy conventions (Costache 2008). Nancy’s triumphant attitude as she launches the invitation deconstructs Rodica’s cultural stereotype about Americans and makes her consider Nancy a “unique” representative of American values (Mihalis 199). At the same time, Rodica informs Nancy that she and her husband used to practice nudism in communist Romania, spending their time on the beach in the company of naked strangers: “We stayed in the nude the whole time, even when we cooked and ate” (Mihalis 199). Since Nancy hopes to impress Rodica with her eccentric ways, she is disappointed to find out that Rodica’s background involves a higher degree of non-conformism: “Perhaps her daring idea of two women swimming in the nude in a private swimming pool suddenly seemed decent and tame compared to the outrage of eating in the nude in front of strangers” (Mihalis 200). Apparently, Nancy’s unmet expectations trigger the occurrence of a cultural clash, given that she gives up her audacious proposal and ends the evening with a silent dinner.

At a deeper level, however, this episode reveals a transcultural mechanism that helps the two women reach a common ground. Both of them belong to a category of individuals who have the courage to disobey cultural/political traditions, albeit in different contexts. Whether in communist Romania or in capitalist America, Rodica and Nancy share a transcending outlook as they choose to express their freedom by violating overlapping ideals of Puritan chastity and communist prudery. Despite Nancy’s apparent discontent, she actually appreciates Rodica for the rebellious practices of her youth. As they eat together, Rodica is aware of the emerging bond between her with Nancy: “As we slowly chewed that first dinner, I knew she and I would see each other again” (Mihalis 200). This episode parallels the encounter between Mrs. Croft and Mala. Mrs. Croft’s appreciation of the Indian woman illustrates that Hindu and Puritan conventions overlap with respect to decorousness expressed by unrevealing clothing. Similarly, Rodica and Nancy adopt the same non-conformist

practice (nudism) in order to contest different repressive systems (Puritan traditions and communist policies of sexual control). In both cases, the characters succeed in crossing cultural borders as they reach a layer of common values that diminishes the separatist effects of cultural difference.

Conclusions

The present discussion offers a comparative perspective on accounts of relocation by women authors coming from different cultural traditions to a common destination, the United States of America. The interpretation of the primary corpus focuses on the mechanisms of vertical ethics, illustrated by the daily interactions between American, Indian and Romanian characters. The close reading of the texts underlines the transcultural dimension of cultural encounters that is common to Lahiri's and Mihalis' visions. Considering that their protagonists manage to overstep differences and establish communication, they may represent ethical models of accepting Alterity. The pattern of vertical ethics configured in the works analysed involves the finding common of grounds while acknowledging and respecting cultural difference. This transgressive ethics of cultural interactions may serve as a starting point for the horizontal ethics of cross-cultural relations that may subsequently generate a philosophical discourse of transcendent cultural ethics. The key elements of this frame of mind would involve a focus on converging cultural values, respect for cultural difference and a non-hierarchical conception of cultures. As the analysis has demonstrated, individuals from different cultures (Indian, American and Romanian) can establish meaningful bonds by finding surprising intersections between distinct cultural codes. More specifically, the Indian-American connection is created by an overlap between Puritan conventions and Hindu norms of decency. Along similar lines, a Romanian and an American woman can build a relevant dialogue because they share similar strategies of resisting traditions of prudery and sexual control. The present analysis suggests that a comparative approach to authors from different cultures can unravel a transcultural ethics of cross-cultural relations.

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Transgresivna etika drugosti v pripovedih o izkoreninjenosti Jhumpe Lahiri in Rodice Mihalisi

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / migracije / kulturna identiteta / kulturne vrednote / medkulturnost / Lahiri, Jhumpa / Mihalisi, Rodica

Prispevek raziskuje pripovedi o izkoreninjenosti Jhumpe Lahiri in Rodice Mihalisi z namenom, da izpostavi obema skupne presežne mehanizme, ki omogočajo vzpostavljane dialoga kljub kulturnim razlikam. Avtorici prikazujeta interakcije med liki iz Južne Azije, Romunije in Amerike ter tako uveljavljata koncepcijo kultur kot spremenljivih sistemov, ki se bogatijo s transferi pomenov prek meja. Obe ilustrirata, kako lahko liki, ki prihajajo iz različnih kulturnih kontekstov, vzpostavijo pomenljive interakcije. Srečanja med Indijo in Ameriko ter med Romunijo in Ameriko upodabljata kot možnosti za medčloveško razumevanje, ki presega specifične afiliacije posameznikov. S primeri medkulturnega sporazumevanja med protagonisti z zelo različnim ozadjem avtorici prikažeta etični model medkulturnih interakcij, ki zmanjšujejo nevarnost spopadov med kulturami. Če sprejmemo premiso, da lahko razumemo literarne like kot etične modele, se zdi možnost medkulturne komunikacije, kakor jo prikazujeta Lahiri in Mihalisi, še posebno relevantna v sodobnem kontekstu svetovne krize, kakor se kaže v sodobnih problemih migracij in

terorizma. Čeprav avtorici v svojih delih izhajata iz različnih kulturnih tradicij, obe obravnavani pripovedi uveljavljata transkulturno etiko, ki v ospredje postavlja pomembnost skupnih vrednot kot zdravilo proti spopadom kultur.

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Staging the Ethical in the State of Emergency in J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*

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*In this article I analyze the novel by J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), in an attempt to show how it stages an insufficiency of the ethical reaction, by positioning it upon a social stage which determines its reach and effects. I proceed by reading this stage in the categories of Giorgio Agamben's concept of the state of emergency, which spans throughout all of the novel's events, and defines the relations between its main characters, the Magistrate (novel's narrator and protagonist), the "barbarian girl," and Colonel Joll. My main focus rests on two episodes: firstly, I present how the Magistrate's supposed humane treatment of the "barbarian girl" is in fact only a humanization of the imperial domination, and secondly I analyze the scene of mass torture of the "barbarians," led by Colonel Joll, in which the Magistrate's reaction is shown to be misplaced and insufficient. Finally, by reverting to Badiou's understanding of ethics, I show that both the Magistrate and Colonel Joll function within the boundaries of the imperial logic, and how the Magistrate's ethical reactions remain ineffective precisely because they do not question the very foundations, the supposed universal law, from which they stem, and therefore never manage to reach the objective level of action. In this sense Coetzee's novel, on the level of form, fulfills that which is presented as lacking on the level of its content – by making its readers find a position outside of the logic of its characters, it presents them with the insufficiency of ethics devoid of any relation to politics.*

Keywords: literature and ethics / South African literature / Coetzee, J. M.: *Waiting for the Barbarians* / Agamben, Giorgio: *Homo Sacer*

Upon its publication the novel of the famous contemporary South African writer J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) was welcomed as a masterpiece of the so-called *late-modernist* literature, which resonated significantly in the emerging field of postcolonial studies. Its complex story raised numerous questions about race, imperialism, the "dangerous" other, the use of torture, responsibility, desire,

and the relation of power and truth that unfortunately seem to be as relevant today as they were when the work was first published. My primary focus in this essay will be the perspective internal to the narrative itself – I will analyze the staging of the ethical response of its main protagonist to the imperial acts of violence, in order to show its dependency upon the situation in which it is taking place. For this purpose I will focus on two episodes from the novel, the first one being the often commented upon (Attwell, Attridge, Hayes) encounter between the Magistrate and the “barbarian girl,” and the second one the mass beating of the “barbarians” in the central square of the town, in which most of the novel takes place. In both of these episodes the character of the Magistrate seems willing to act ethically, but in both cases his actions seem to be insufficient, either when he functions as the representative of the sovereign power or when he acts against it.

For this analysis, instead of Greek understanding of ethics as the “good way of being,” a more appropriate approach seems to be the one outlined by the Stoics and in the modern sense Kant. As Alain Badiou notices, for the Stoics the “wise man is he who, able to distinguish those things which are his responsibility from those which are not, restricts his will to the former while impassively enduring the latter” (Badiou 1). This is how we find the character of the Magistrate in the beginning of the novel – an elderly man attending to his duties as the head of the imperial outpost, awaiting for his retirement. But after the events of the novel start to unravel, he reluctantly accepts to fulfill the duty of the subject bound by a universal law, in the Kantian sense. This is immensely important particularly because the regular rule of law is already suspended at this point,¹ and I intend to show how the apparent insufficiency of his response does not originate in some kind of flaw in his character or inconsistency of his actions but precisely in the logic of the general law he aims to enact.

I will therefore start from what I understand to be the “stage” of the events in this novel. By this I do not mean the spatial location of the plot, which is undeniably important, but from the juridical circumstances under which the plot takes place.² In the very beginning of the novel we are informed of the arrival of Colonel Joll of the Third Bureau, a representative of the emergency powers, as the Magistrate notes: “We do not discuss the reason for his being here.

¹ In this sense his ethical response is based on the Kantian “principle that judges the practice of a Subject” (Badiou 2).

² These two are indeed related, since both deal with the question of the border, the inner and the outer, the inclusion and the exclusion.

He is here under the emergency powers, that is enough” (Coetzee 4). The said “stage” is therefore explicitly defined in the terms of the *state of emergency*.³ In his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben offers a complex explanation for these circumstances and their implications. Summed up, they can be described as the state of suspension of juridical order, based on the decision of the sovereign, which as an effect reduces his subjects to *bare life*. The sovereign is the one “to whom the juridical order grants the power of proclaiming a state of exception and, therefore, of suspending the orders own validity” (Agamben 17). Because of this he “stands outside the juridical order and, nevertheless, belongs to it” (Schmitt, qtd. in Agamben 17). The situation created by the emergency “has the peculiar characteristic that it cannot be defined either as a situation of fact or as a situation of right, but instead institutes a paradoxical threshold of indistinction between the two” (Agamben 18). In addition to this, the life “caught in the sovereign ban [...] is originally sacred” (53), and by definition *may be killed and yet not sacrificed* (12), becoming in a sense totally exposed to the violence of the sovereign power.

This setting of the “stage” therefore implies that the power is redistributed from the very start of the narrative – the Magistrate still functions in his official role, but the real power now resides with the representatives of the state of emergency (i.e. Colonel Joll). Nevertheless, the novel, does not start from the potential “chaos” of indistinction, it rather proceeds gradually, through localized events of violence that, from the juridical point of view, do not demand a response from the Magistrate. In this manner his reactions are delegated to the sphere of ethics, that is, to the sphere of his private decisions. At the same time, with each act of torture committed by Joll, the Magistrate becomes more and more involved with his prisoners. Through this we are witnessing the split in the very structure of the imperial power: the Magistrate, who is officially no longer in charge, sees it as his moral duty to intervene in the actions of the new imperial official, in order to enact the values he believes to be fundamental for the Empire, values which have been suspended

³ Once put in the historical context the novel seems to, paradoxically, predict the state of emergency that was instituted in South Africa from “the mid to late 1980s” (Engle 123), with the emergency mirroring the fictional text by consisting “of a confrontation between a white state power which claimed to be European in its core beliefs and an oppressed non-white majority which had encountered European traditions in the form of colonialism, racist capitalism, and white owned technologies of oppressive power” (123).

precisely to be “protected” and “preserved”. Accordingly he claims the following: “I struggle on with the old story, hoping that before it is finished it will reveal to me why it was that I thought it worth the trouble” (Coetzee 34–35). It can therefore be said how the Magistrate stands in for the imperial ethics and politics during the regular rule of law (which is supposedly based on them), and his interventions serve to protect the Empire from itself, to protect its “better nature”, compromised by this state of emergency, which is supposedly motivated by the “barbarian” threat.⁴ But this is only an internal perspective on the situation, a perspective of an imperial subject and an administrator, and its limitations become apparent through his relation to the “barbarian girl”.

The character of the “barbarian girl” appears in the narrative only after she was partially blinded, crippled and effectively reduced to a beggar by Colonel Joll’s torture (Coetzee 37). After the Magistrate notices her, he leads her to his quarters, where the following scene takes place:

The fire is lit. I draw the curtains, light the lamp. She refuses the stool, but yields up her sticks and kneels in the centre of the carpet.

“This is not what you think it is,” I say. The words come reluctantly. Can I really be about to excuse myself? Her lips are clenched shut, her ears too no doubt, she wants nothing of old men and their bleating consciences. I prow around her, talking about our vagrancy ordinances, sick at myself. Her skin begins to glow in the warmth of the closed room. She tugs at her coat, opens her throat to the fire. The distance between myself and her torturers, I realize, is negligible; I shudder. (Coetzee 39)

After this the Magistrate proceeds to bathe her body, and then falls asleep – this scenario repeats regularly while she remains at the outpost (40, 42, 43, etc.). Her relation to the Magistrate can be, and often was read allegorically, where she supposedly stands in for the colonized as such, while Colonel Joll and the Magistrate represent different faces of the Empire.⁵ In addition to this I propose to read their relation in the

⁴ Similarly, in his analysis of the novel Thomas P. Crocker describes how the state of emergency shows that “constitutional commitments are not absolute, and under conditions of necessity, can be abandoned in order to protect the physical survival of the state. Constitutional commitments, on this view, depend on perceived necessities” (309). Therefore, ordinary law, “which includes prohibitions against the use of torture” (308), is seen as something that “should not stand in the way of official necessity” (308).

⁵ At this point the “national allegor[y]” (Jameson 69) in which the “psychology and [...] libidinal investment is to be read primarily in political and social terms”

terms of sovereign and bare life. From this standpoint, even before they meet, the power that Magistrate potentially has over her, as a citizen and an official of the Empire, is total, and what he does with her completely depends on his personal decisions.⁶ Here the indicated ethical dimension of their interaction becomes crucial: once the ordinary rule of law is suspended the actions of the individual are no longer limited by an external force, and will instead depend upon his/her personal relation to the supposed universal law. The described relation forms one of the decisive splits within the novel – even though the Magistrate is in the position of the sovereign he does not use his power in its full extent, like Joll does, because he presumes the existence of some kind of boundary even though no such boundary is legally in effect.

In his book *J. M. Coetzee and the Novel* (2010) Patrick Hayes proposes two readings of the interaction between the Magistrate and the “barbarian girl”: on the one hand, “the Magistrate shudders because he is horrified at the thought that what he is doing has a kind of moral equivalence with what Colonel Joll and the torturers did: that he might be dominating and abusing the girl in the very impulse of his charitableness” (67); on the other he proposes the possibility that the shudder “reveals the Magistrate’s sadism” (67), and after a similar assessment of the Magistrate’s constant sleepiness after bathing her, he concludes that “[t]he text oscillates between these alternatives, keeping them in play” (70).

What I propose instead is the parallel existence of both of these motivations, one being foundational for the other, in a structure deliberately constructed in such a way as to offer distinct and alternative sources of satisfaction to the Magistrate. He is absolved from the guilt of the committed violence by the “Christlike charitableness” (65), and allowed still to enact the hierarchical relation to the “barbarian girl.” His constant bathing of her body is directed at wiping out the text of the colonization in an obvious attempt “to wash himself clean

(72), seems to be an unavoidable frame of reading. It should, of course, be approached carefully, and with an awareness that it does not exhaust all of the possibilities. As a “metonymy” of the colony, the body of the “barbarian girl” becomes a text of the colonization, and the Magistrate is “metonymic of the settler culture itself, ambivalent, ‘schizophrenic’, both colonized and colonizing” (Ashcroft 154).

⁶ As Patrick Hayes notes: “[The Magistrate] and Colonel Joll have the girl entirely in their power: she is quite literally powerless to resist, and both are (albeit with ostensibly different motivations) trying to interpret her” (67). This power is based upon the state of emergency through which all of the “barbarians” are reduced to bare life, and simultaneously, at this point in the novel, all of the imperial citizens function as the representatives of sovereign power in relation to the “barbarians.”

from his sense of complicity with Empire” (Poyner 61), especially in its new form, introduced by the state of emergency. But the result of this practice is only the reemergence of blankness, incompleteness of the “barbarian girl”⁷ – there can be no absolution while reproduction of the relations of subordination is taking place. One can therefore claim that the supposed ethical reaction perpetuates the colonial domination.

In the final move of their relationship, the Magistrate returns the “barbarian girl” to the population he sees as “her people,” revealing the implied ideology of the “stage” from which he acts: “Only, now that I have brought you back, as far as I can, I wish to ask you very clearly to return to the town with me. Of your own choice” (Coetzee 97). She has to be made into a free subject so she could *freely choose him*⁸ as her ruler/lover: in order to fulfill the fantasies framed by the logic of (his) universal law, he has to be freely chosen and thus absolved of any guilt, and one can see that the absence of such choice was the obstacle in his previous advances. This is how his ethical response is dependent upon his imperial desire. On the other hand his recognition of the need for a free choice is an implicit recognition of the failure of the “pure” ethical relation, devoid of political context, and a signifier of the inadequacy of the supposed law itself, which requires individuals to be inscribed in it as imperial subjects in order to be fully recognized.

In other words, the Magistrate wants her to become an imperial subject of her own free will and thus retroactively accept the violence she has been subjected to, and also, paradoxically, he wants her before this violence took place. Following the allegorical reading instead of the

⁷ The Magistrate notes: “She is incomplete! I say to myself. Though the thought begins to float away at once, I cling to it. I have a vision of her closed eyes and closed face filming over with skin. Blank, like a fist beneath a black wig, the face grows out of the throat and out of the blank body beneath it, without aperture, without entry” (Coetzee 58).

⁸ By providing her with a choice, it can be said how the Magistrate is staging a sort of a *social contract*, in an attempt to justify the Empire in its ideal form. But even in this form the Empire does not get chosen: “It is only outside the limits of the Empire that he can present her [barbarian girl] with a free choice, but she knows that this freedom would be undermined the minute she accepts” (Attwell 81). In addition to the need to be desired it is precisely his implied knowledge that he will never be desired that blocks his attempts at constructing her. That is why he is not merely a *sadist*, hiding behind altruism, or an altruist that even at his best remains a torturer. One can rather claim that his dominating and objectifying desire is formed by such a discourse that it needs to be willed in order to be justified. In other words – at this point in the novel, he is, paradoxically, both, a sadist and an altruist, his objectification and domination being based on his altruism.

“literal one” (Attridge), it can be said that the colonizer who is always already in a situation after the violent colonization took place wants from the colonized to desire this colonization, and therefore projects himself as the object of desire in the past, before any of it took place. The Magistrate wants her to be willingly included in the Empire before her actual inclusion.

From Badiou’s perspective, one could say how he does not want her to be just any possible *other*, but the *good* other,⁹ whose differences one could respect: “The problem is that the ‘respect for differences’ and the ethics of human rights do seem to define an *identity!* And [...] as a result, the respect for differences applies only to those differences that are reasonably consistent with this identity” (Badiou 24).¹⁰ And the “barbarian girl” once faced with a choice refuses this imperial game, and remains in its eyes the inassimilable other, or rather the other which is included only through its exclusion, as the starting point of the imperial juridical order, its identity and ideology.

Similar logic, taken to its extreme, can be seen in the second episode I intend to analyze. It takes place after the Magistrate returns from the “barbarian lands,” and is incarcerated because he has supposedly “treasonously consort[ed] with the enemy” (Coetzee 105). At this point the “barbarians” are fully recognized as the “enemy” by the representatives of the Third Bureau, but the inhabitants of the outpost, the citizens of the Empire, have known them mainly through the exchange of goods. In this sense the violence that takes place in the town square can be understood as organized mainly for their “benefit.” It starts with Colonel Joll’s return from his military raid, with a group of prisoners. At first, the crowd gathers to meet their supposed victorious defender. Through this process the people of the whole town are transformed into a singular “subject,” and their relation to the law is suspended through the presence of the representative of the state of emergency.

In contrast to this, the Magistrate, who has escaped his confinement, joins the crowd, but refuses to accept its logic: “For me, at this moment, striding away from the crowd, what has become important above all is that I should neither be contaminated by the atrocity that is about to be committed nor poison myself with impotent hatred of its perpetrators” (140). His refusal of the crowd logic is also a refusal to

⁹ Badiou points out: “As a matter of fact, this celebrated ‘other’ is acceptable only if he is a good other – which is to say what, exactly, if not the same as us?” (Badiou 24)

¹⁰ Attridge similarly notices how the imagined other of the Empire in this novel is “*its* other” which is “still [...] part of its system” (Attridge 30).

identify Joll as the embodiment of the law. At this point the “barbarians” make their appearance: “[A]t the end of the rope, tied neck to neck, comes a file of men, barbarians, stark naked [...]. A simple loop of wire runs through the flesh of each man’s hands and through holes pierced in his cheeks. ‘It makes them meek as lambs’” (138–139). After this introduction a peculiar and violent scene takes place – Colonel Joll inscribes onto the prisoners bodies the word “ENEMY,” and the people start beating them until this words is “washed clean” by the blood from their wounds (141). It can be said how the purpose of this spectacle is the *creation* of the enemy out of bodies that are being beaten. This is why the word “enemy” must be “washed clean” from their backs – their bodies must be transformed into the word itself. As Patrick Lenta claims: “The guards inscribe the tortured bodies in a way that produces the victim’s status as enemy” (76), but it is the crowd of spectators that puts this word into circulation. The enemy is therefore “arbitrary” and “consensual,” and the spectacle can be seen as a social contract of sorts, between Joll and the townspeople. Through this process the outer is incorporated in the inner, and the “barbarians” are *assigned* with a body.

Only after all of this has taken place does the Magistrate decide to intervene, and his attack is directed not at the people but at the leader of the spectacle: “When I turn to Colonel Joll he is standing not five paces from me, his arms folded. I point a finger at him. ‘You!’ I shout. Let it all be said. Let him be the one on whom the anger breaks. ‘You are depraving these people!’” (Coetzee 144) He then addresses the crowd in the following words: “‘Look!’ I shout. ‘We are the great miracle of creation. But from some blows this miraculous body cannot repair itself!’ [...] ‘Look at these men!’ I recommence. ‘Men!’” (144). Because of this *ethical* intervention the Magistrate is than severely beaten on the spot by the officers of the Third Bureau, in a similar manner to the prisoners, him being the first imperial citizen in front of whom the law has withdrawn itself (now reducing him to bare life, a category which will be expanded in great measure further in the novel).

Described violence can be interpreted from the standpoint of Badiou’s understanding of contemporary dominant ethics which he designates as *nihilism* (Badiou 30). Namely, “ethics is conceived here both as an a priori ability to discern Evil (for according to the modern usage of ethics, Evil – or the negative – is primary: we presume a consensus regarding what is barbarian), and as the ultimate principle of judgment, in particular political judgment: good is what intervenes visibly against an Evil that is identifiable a priori” (Badiou 8). In the

described scene we are precisely faced with this a priori inscription onto the blank bodies of the prisoners – Colonel Joll designates the “enemy” and the “barbarian,” and in turn he and the power he represents are elevated to the status of the good. In such situations Badiou claims how the politics is ultimately “subordinated to ethics, to the single perspective that really matters in this conception of things: the sympathetic and indignant judgment of the spectator of the circumstances” (9). The described scene in the novel offers something more – not only judgment but also punishment, which is possible and acceptable precisely because of this mechanism. In this sense we, as readers, are faced with the *final* consequences of such ethics, and at the same time, with its *starting* point in the reaction of the Magistrate. It is one and the same movement.

This is why the mass beating of the prisoners can be described as the *simulacrum of truth*: “When a radical break in a situation, under names borrowed from real truth-processes, convokes not the void but the ‘full’ particularity or presumed substance of that situation, we are dealing with a *simulacrum of truth*” (73). An emancipatory action indeed is a brake in the situation, an exception to the rule, but this exception is proclaimed from the position of the supplement of the situation, not from its very center. Sovereign power of the Empire here proclaims the state of exception and this is one of the main reasons why such an event is only a simulacrum. What is at stake, what this ethics legitimates, is in fact the “conservation by the so-called ‘West’ of what it possesses. It is squarely astride these possessions (material possessions, but also possession of its own being) that ethics determines Evil to be, in a certain sense, simply that which it does not own and enjoy” (14). Hence fidelity to such “simulacrum (and it demands of the ‘few’ belonging to the [...] [collective] substance prolonged sacrifices and commitments, since it really does have the form of a fidelity) has as its content war and massacre. These are not here means to an end: they make up the very real [*tout le reel*] of such a fidelity” (74). In other words, the creation of the enemy, the violence (torture or collective beating), and following conflict are not coincidental, but at the very heart of the ethics of the Empire. The simulacrum of this event can best be uncovered in a simple fact that it is not *universally addressed*,¹¹ but rather based on the

¹¹ As Badiou claims: “What allows a genuine event to be at the origin of a truth – which is the only thing that can be for all, and can be eternally – is precisely the fact that it relates to the particularity of a situation only from the bias of its void. The void, the multiple-of-nothing, neither excludes nor constrains anyone. It is the absolute neutrality of being – such that the fidelity that originates in an event, altho-

substantiality of the imperial subjects, their identity, community etc. being an event of exclusive inclusion, through which the Empire is to reassert itself.

The Magistrate is, in this situation, a naive, ridiculous figure, which cannot make this connection, and continues to enact the starting point of the suspended law, by appealing to the humanity of the victims. Simultaneously, just as with the “barbarian girl” he does not intervene before the beating starts but only after it passes a point of no return – which can be read either as his reluctance to expose himself, or as an acceptance of certain amount of violence, necessary against the “barbarians” that “threaten” the Empire. His reaction, because it takes place upon the stage of the imperial logic, is consistent with its nihilist ethics – it reduces the prisoners to the “status of victim, of suffering beast, of emaciated, dying body,” to their “animal substructure [...] to the level of a living organism pure and simple (life being, as Bichat says, nothing other than ‘the set of functions that resist death’)” (11). By invoking their status of “men” the Magistrate designates them as *bare life*, which inhabits all of the bodies of citizens present at the square, in their relation to the representative of the sovereign power. But at this point this is still not clear, and only when the military campaign starts to descend into chaos will the imperial citizens experience this identification. He never invites townspeople to collectively resist the imperatives of imperial power, through which a space of immanent exception form its logic could be created.

The conflict of the two representatives of the Empire, and therefore of two extremes of singular ethics, at least on the level of the story itself, has no clear resolution. In this sense the Magistrate’s humanness was made impotent precisely because of his reliance on the “universal” law which was proven not to be universal because it did not take into account the particular and the objective. The question the novel poses can, therefore, be read as a question on how to ground an ethical response in a space that is groundless, in a state of exception, which does not exclude the worst kinds of violence. For a possible answer we could look in the direction of what is absent from the novel, namely, the emancipatory collective action. Throughout the story the Magistrate’s responses were always delegated to his private sphere, and have never transgressed onto the level of the community. In this sense, subjective was always presented as determined by the objective, ethics by politics.

ugh it is an immanent break within a singular situation, is none the less universally addressed” (73).

This novel can thus be understood as an intervention in the fabric of the common, because it does not offer any certain point for readers to identify with in the world it creates, but rather invites them to create such a point for themselves. It provokes a political response by presenting us with inadequacy of the purely ethical one. It could be said how it shows that no act of resistance to power can be accomplished in solitude, while at the same time questioning the basis of what is common.

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Uprizarjanje etike v izrednem stanju: *V pričakovanju barbarov* J. M. Coetzeeja

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / južnoafriška književnost / Coetzee, J. M.: *V pričakovanju barbarov* / Agamben, Giorgio: *Homo Sacer*

V članku analiziram roman *V pričakovanju barbarov* (1980) J. M. Coetzeeja in pri tem poskušam prikazati, kako avtor uprizarja nezadostnost etičnega odziva tako, da ga umesti na družbeni oder, ki določa njegov domet in učinek. V nadaljevanju ta oder razlagam s kategorijami koncepta izrednega stanja, kakor ga je razvil Giorgio Agamben, ki zaobjema vse dogodke v romanu in opredeljuje razmerja med glavnimi liki, torej med Uradnikom (pripovedovalec in protagonist), »barbarskim dekletom« in polkovnikom Jollom. Posebno pozornost posvečam epizodama: najprej predstavim, kako je Uradnikovo domnevno humano obravnavanje »barbarske deklice« dejansko le humanizacija imperialne dominacije, nato pa analiziram prizor množičnega mučenja »barbarov«, ki ga vodi polkovnik Joll, v katerem je Uradnikov odziv prikazan kot neumesten in nezadosten. V sklepnem delu se vrnem k Badioujevemu razumevanju etike in prikažem, da tako Uradnik kot tudi polkovnik Joll delujeta znotraj meja imperialne logike. Uradnikovi etični odzivi ostajajo neučinkoviti, ker ne postavljajo pod vprašaj temeljev, torej domnevnega univerzalnega zakona, iz katerega izhajajo, in zato nikoli ne dosežejo objektivne ravni dejanj. V tem smislu Coetzeejev roman kot forma izpolnjuje, kar je v njem na ravni vsebine prikazano kot manjkajoče – nas bralce prisili, da najdemo stališče zunaj logike literarnih likov, sooča nas z nezadostnostjo etike, ki se ne povezuje s politiko.

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Ethics and Aesthetics in Jonas Lüscher's *Barbarian Spring*

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The article claims that Jonas Lüscher's first novel titled Barbarian Spring follows a twofold program: it is a book with a strong moral and political message, and at the same time it is challenging literature's possibility to incite action. Therefore, the book stands within the tradition of the Enlightenment when it comes to educating the reader, and in a larger sense, believing in the social value of Bildung; yet, it simultaneously shows the limits of the Enlightenment frame by decomposing the linkage between moral knowledge and actual behavior. To pursue this twofold goal, the book intertwines traditional aesthetic forms with modernist goals, and demonstrates in the end the limits of applicability and fertility of both approaches in today's context and when – as the text suggests – consequentialist categories are applied. The text diagnoses the malfunctioning of the syncretism of Capitalism, Christianity, and the Enlightenment not only when it comes to issuing rules for moral behavior, but also when it comes to giving meaning to experience. Following this second possible purpose of literature – sense-making – the book examines literature's therapeutic possibilities, when therapy means the integration in or the creation of a coherent interpretational scheme.

Keywords: literature and ethics / Swiss literature / Lüscher, Jonas: *Barbarian Spring* / ethics and aesthetics / didactic function / therapeutic function / social engagement

Fifty years after the *Zürcher Literaturstreit*, Switzerland in 2016 has a new literary controversy: Jonas Lüscher and Peter Stamm are debating – not less vigorously than Emil Staiger and his opponents at the time – on the purpose, possible impact, and adequate evaluation of art (Lüscher, *Literatur*; Stamm, *Lieber*). Leaving aside the personal alliances (*pro/contra* Lukas Bärfuss) and idiosyncrasies of the two counterparts (both accusing the respective other as acting out of vanity), what remains is *grosso modo* the classical *l'art pour l'art-versus-littérature engagée* scheme that repeats itself with differing foci and contexts over time. Lüscher is taking the part of the committed intellectual; Stamm the part of the uninvolved, form-focused artist.

Lüscher's role and position in the recent debate seems to be in line with his first and hitherto only book *Frühling der Barbaren* (2013; *Barbarian Spring* 2014), which was received as book on the financial crisis respectively a book with a moral and political program. This direction in the reception so far is induced by the plot and setting of the counterfactual novel (high-stakes London city managers experiencing the consequences of England's national bankruptcy while on a luxury vacation in Tunisia) and by Lüscher's biography: Lüscher was educated as an ethics teacher for primary schools, and was pursuing a doctorate in Philosophy at the ETH Zürich with a project on Richard Rorty and the role of narration for capturing social complexity.¹ The aim of this article is to complement the existing readings by confirming that the book pursues a political-critical program, but that it is at the same time bringing into question the feasibility of such an approach. Diversely, in my opinion, the two most flagrant topics of *Barbarian Spring* are (a) its strong anti-capitalist message and its implicit incitement to act, and (b) its strong doubts about the possibilities of literature to influence social conduct and hence literature's impotence when it comes to inciting action. Describing these mechanisms will be the first part of my argument, which will be divided into two subsections (the first valuating the text's didactic aspiration and the second focusing on the novel's style). The second part will analyze the peritexts and the narrative situation. Besides the more directly political and moral dimensions, the book thematizes other purposes that literature can serve and which can be summarized – following one of the major motifs of the book – as therapeutic, defined as the integration into or the creation of a coherent interpretational scheme. Meaning and sense-making are the salient topics on this level. It is in pursuing a therapeutic program that ethics and aesthetics – according to the book's presentation – could coincide, insofar as narration can create the frame of reference for meaning and consequently also meaningful behavior. It is important to notice that while the book diagnoses and shows the consequences of the loss of a coherent universal framework and asks indirectly for remedy, it does not deliver a new framework itself.

¹ See his profile on his publisher's webpage: <http://www.chbeck.de/trefferliste.aspx?action=author&author=140723067> (last access 8.12.2016). Research so far: Beck, Hofer-Krucker Valderrama, Kleinpass, Reidy.

Didactic aspiration vs. uselessness and dangerousness of literature

Rarely is there as clear a message in modern and postmodern literature as in *Barbarian Spring*. The characters are grouped in sharp antagonisms, and are the embodiments of morally charged stereotypes which can immediately be deduced from their names. The reader witnesses the obscene self-celebration of global capitalism in a 250.000-pounds wedding of London stock-traders at a luxury resort in Tunisia, and later the brutal implosion of parts of this same system when Britain goes bankrupt overnight, leaving the former filthy-rich wedding guests to face living without privileges, through the eyes of Preising (“Preis” in German means “price”), a Swiss industrial magnate who *in loco* gets invited to the wedding by the groom’s mother Pippa Greyling, an English teacher. Preising’s Croatian-German business executive is called Prodanovic, rooted in the Croatian verb *pròdati* (selling) (Hofer-Krucker Valderrama 48, note 31). The most eye-catching exponent of London city traders explains the background of his nickname Quicky: “[Q]uick trigger finger. That’s why they were all so hot for me: the army, the firm and the bank” (Lüscher, *Barbarian* 90). Quicky worked as a mercenary in Iraq before becoming a businessman. The military analogy together with its implicit moral judgment is called to mind on more occasions. Watching the English traders at the pool, Preising states that, “Even in this state of near-nakedness [...] they all looked like they were in uniform” (30). During the wedding, “People drank themselves into a stupor as though it was their duty, and went into the palm grove to throw up like they were executing some preordained plan” (88). The Brokers operate as an unconscious, strength-following mass, and not as single individuals who act on one’s own responsibility: “These young people were conditioned to hang on every word uttered by any confident speaker [...]. It didn’t matter to them who was speaking or what they were saying, it was all about the attitude of the person delivering the message” (86).

The sharp antagonism, with which the text works, is grouping the characters in agents and non-agents, whereby the second group is indirectly supporting the first group’s actions by not opposing resistance. The exclusivity of this split is emphasized by alluding to but not working with other traditional antagonisms like Orientalism: calling to mind the orientalist categories (passion, irrationality, hospitality, etc.) but not using them underlines the universal propagation of capitalism: Preising’s Arab business partners are described in exactly the same terms

as their occidental counterparts, whereby recklessness and egotism combined with a talent for quick decision-making are the prevalent characteristics. Saida Malouch – her name blatantly makes reference to Edward Said – the owner of the resort and daughter of Preising’s business partner in Tunisia, remains level-headed and cool-blooded after Britain’s bankruptcy: “It was time to act” (94). Orientalist features are used by orientals to sell their product (the *1001 Nights-Resort* “was modelled [...] on what market researchers thought a first-class tourist to Tunisia might imagine when he pictured a typical Berber settlement”; 25). The universality of capitalism is also emphasized by the fact that “Daghfous” – the name of the family which would like to take over the Malouch family business but instead gets themselves swallowed – is one of the most widespread names in Tunisia, whereas *Malouch* (Moloch) provides the text’s moral evaluation: The world (Orient and Occident) is a global Moloch!² The novel, therefore, is not part of the orientalist discourse and neither ostensibly of its postcolonial deconstruction,³ but plays with the orientalist tradition to underline its message, which is claiming the totality of global capitalism and moral corruption and the impotence of the humanist tradition in front of these facts.

The second traditional antagonism that proves neglectable in front of the more powerful division in agents and non-agents is the antagonism between the brute money-making business and high culture. S(t)anford Greyling, the groom’s father and Pippa’s husband, a sociology professor, impersonates the academic elite with its wish for distinction that turns out to be only façade because Sanford is searching “adventure” (44), driven by a death wish,⁴ and “acting like a teenager” (47) just like the London City trader telling about her Porsche-adventure on German autobahns, where “only her amazingly sharp reflexes, honed by all those hectic hours on the trading floor, [...] had enabled her to cheat certain death” (39). Sanford refers the story to Preising “with his professional hat on” (39), but further on ends up having sex and making wedding plans with Miss Porsche (106–109).

The ability to take action of the mentioned groups is further highlighted by their counterpart: the text ridicules and judges Preising’s incapability to take decisions by paralleling his problems with deciding about closing or not closing “the second-to-top button of his shirt”

² My gratitude goes to Katharina Schillen for her Arab skills and help with name-research, and to the reviewers for constructive critique.

³ Although, Laura Beck’s brilliant talk gives an example of how fruitfully postcolonial theories can be applied to Lüscher’s book.

⁴ As the trip to the Berber cave dwellings proves (58–59).

(40), and compensating or not compensating for the loss of a camel driver's herd by giving him 15,000 francs. Preising's "agonized wrestling was cut short by Saida, who [instead took action] [...] and told the chauffeur to drive on" (24). The text's moral judgment is also made clear via the comments of the frame-I-narrator on Preising's conduct regarding the camel driver scene ("Preising could always find reasons for not taking action"; 23) and the I narrator's comment on Preising's behavior more generally ("Preising wasn't inclined to give too much thought to greater or higher things, or at least he wasn't willing to do anything more than just think about them, and certainly wasn't prepared to shoulder the responsibility that came with them"; 67).

Preising tries to circumvent guilt and responsibility but has to face the fact that his firm is using Dinka children to assemble pieces – a fact that he comments by "maintaining a contemptuous silence" (130). The moral message is overly clear: one can be guilty by being a spectator! Choosing the hot theme of child labor is a strategy to direct the reader's emotions: the topic is so absolutely morally wrong that the implied author can implicitly count on the abhorrence of the reader. When some of Preising's business partners elaborate on "what a delicate subject child labor was [...] Much more problematic than your average do-gooder might like to think" (7), then it is clear to the reader on which side s/he has to stand. None of the characters in the embedded story qualifies for identification, and the novel's cartoonish experimental arrangement does not allow ambivalence. The reader's self-assurance lies in filling the gap: in not being either of the stereotyped characters, and therefore, in not acting without thinking properly and in not finding excuses for non-action, consequently, in embracing the novel's morality, which follows the Christian *caritas* code and the Enlightenment code of taking responsibility for one's decisions.

This didactic strand is further underlined by the "novella" (Novelle) genre.⁵ Kleinpass traces the features and transformations of the Novelle genre by making reference to Goethe's and Heyse's poetic theory represented in *Barbarian Spring*, and sees one of the differences between the genre-convention and Lüscher's version in the lack of a *Tugendideal* (ideal of virtue): the world, according to Kleinpass, has become inscrutable for Preising (35) and Hofer-Krucker Valderrama states, that Preising experiences the confusion and complexity typical of globalization (49). I do not agree. I think the text – beyond Preising's distor-

⁵ Unluckily, this gets lost in the English translation which does not reference the genre after the title like in the German original.

tion, and primarily via the frame-I-narrator's valuation of Preising's account – denounces every recourse on incomprehensibility very clearly as evasive move: Preising uses overly complex constructions to skip responsibility but his entanglement in guilt is crystal-clear. Otherwise, Preising's non-acting – his “disconcerting irresponsibility” (Kleinpass 34, my translation) – would not classify as *unerhörte Begebenheit* (outrageous occurrence) in the Goethean sense.⁶ The *Tugendideal*, which is lacking in the text, must be embodied by the reader.

However, Kleinpass is right that the novel – and this is where the metafictional self-deconstruction of the text begins – marks the middle-class intellectuals together with their enlightenment ideal of *Bildung* as useless in today's context. Consequently, this applies to the novel itself: the moral message is overly clear, yet literature's potential to incite action is not equally evident. The text challenges a direct causal connection between reading literature and social conduct, between moral knowledge and actual behavior, and underlines this by showing the uselessness and unpredictability of literature's impact.

For Preising, literature is a topic for small talk: “Books are a wonderful ice-breaker” (Lüscher, *Barbarian* 28) and apparently this seems to work for establishing contact with Pippa (28); citations from canonic texts “tended to crop up a lot in social situations” (76). Literature, as far as Preising is concerned, is a vehicle for intellectual narcissism. Once the situation heats up in the resort, Preising saves the poem that Pippa recites at her son's wedding but not Pippa, and he is also “ignoring some desperate guests who made a grab for the door handles” (124–125) of the only available car, in which Saida and Preising leave the scenario. Against this background, saving the poem (69) becomes the sentimental gesture of an egoist who is trying to cover his inhumanity by staging his devotedness to art, a gesture of striking similarity to the real-world middle-class intellectual's horror in front of the destruction of Palmyra and the simultaneous human indifference and reference to complexity when it comes to taking action and helping the people who live there.

Pippa really seems to have believed in the Enlightenment's idea of progress via formation, but this former faith of hers is clearly marked as naïve given the sharp contrast with reality. The topic of the poem *The Axe Handle* by Gary Snyder, that Pippa wants to recite at her son's wedding, is formation by emulation: “When making an axe handle /

⁶ Goethe famously defines “Novelle” as type of text structured by one central outrageous event or conflict – the “unerhörte Begebenheit” (outrageous occurrence).

the pattern is not far off.' And I say this to Kai [my son] / 'Look: We'll shape the handle / By checking the handle / Of the axe we cut with'" (70). The poem itself draws the analogy between the shaping of an axe handle, the shaping of society, and the shaping of literature: "Pound was an axe / Chen was an axe, I am an axe / And my son a handle, soon / To be shaping again, model / And tool, craft of culture, / How we go on" (70). Applied to her son, Pippa reflects: "It was obvious that in shaping her axe handle, she's taken some duff measurements. [...] In any case, she was adamant that reciting a poem at his wedding wasn't going to change a thing" (71–72).

As far as the novel goes, Pippa is right and wrong about the capacities of literature for engineering reality. Presumably, she did not succeed in shaping her son, and as she has foreseen, reciting the poem at her son's wedding turns out to be a disaster (84–88). However, there is a striking example of how literature actively and decisively contributes to the formation of actuality in the novel:

In an attempt to get Preising's attention again [during their adventure trip to the Berber dwellings], Sanford served up the tale of the traditional Tunisian wedding feast. This basically consisted of a roasted camel with couscous. But the camel, which was cooked whole, was supposedly prepared in the refined manner of a Russian *Matroschka* doll, being stuffed with a whole sheep, which in turn was stuffed with a goat stuffed with a bustard stuffed with a dozen quails, each of which had been stuffed with barberries and dates. Preising was skeptical. He had the feeling he'd heard this story, or something very like it, somewhere before, and in the context of a joke, what's more. (53–54)

This does not stop Preising from using the story on his account "to impress some of the young people [at the wedding]" (89). "Quicky, who had a sharp mind but a very poor knowledge of literature, and who'd only half-listened to Preising's story the night before, was able to reel off the entire recipe for roasted camel verbatim, entrancing his audience with the prospect of an authentic Tunisian feast" (121). The infuriated mass of former rich parvenus subsequently puts the recipe in action, substituting several missing ingredients with dog-puppies, which requires the murder of their owner Rachid, and the flames for the roasting set the whole resort on fire. The recipe that Sanford sells as Berber folklore is a passage (without counterpart in real life) from T. C. Boyle's novel *Water Music*. Therefore, parts of Boyle's fictional text become reality in *Barbarian Spring*, evidencing that literature *can* form reality but one cannot foresee in what way: instead of a just society one might end up with a roasted camel!

Not a matter of style

Barbarian Spring dovetails an overly clear moral message with serious doubts about the possible impact of literature as a whole, apart from which form literature uses to pursue this educational goal. The form *Barbarian Spring* deploys is an intertwining of traditional forms with modernist goals: the conservative narrative styles, due to their anachronism, are not causing the consequences they were intended for in the enlightenment tradition (educating the reader directly), but they create disturbance and display the text's artificiality (and attempt to educate the reader indirectly).

The novel has two I-narrators: Preising, who is telling about his business/holiday trip to Tunisia, and the frame-I-narrator, another patient in Preising's psychiatric clinic who functions as the editor of Preising's story. Preising's very peculiar way of presentation is an exposition of bourgeois narration: his old-fashioned, mannerist way of talking is commented on and ridiculed as early as page one by the frame-I-narrator: "À propos, for heaven's sake! – that was one of his affectations, larding his speech with archaic turns of phrase he knew full well nobody else used anymore" (1). His frequent use of antiquated terms accompanied by French particles ("his wife, *très charmant*"; 15) and his excessive use of hypotaxis is typical for the narration in the tradition of the nineteenth century: the style seems a parody of Thomas Mann, whose *The Magic Mountain* with its topos of the clinic as refuge out of time and space might well be a pretext for *Barbarian Spring*. Ronald Speirs comments on the poeology of Mann and other non-modernist writers during the Third Reich:

[M]ostly they employed a mixed mode of fiction, well established in German literature since the Enlightenment, one which incorporated realistically observed detail into various types of didactic or exemplary narrative. Their common aim was to defend humanity against its despisers, and to offer some vision of hope, however precarious, to set against the fear on which tyranny depends. (Speirs 165)

This seems to be Preising's approach: he tells the frame-I-narrator a story to prove his point (1) and to implement a didactic program ("You could never be sure whether Preising's stories were true or not, but that wasn't the point. What mattered to him was the moral of the story."; 10). His statements are an (inauthentic) enactment of humanism and the Enlightenment's hope in moral progress by cultural education. When Pippa voices misgivings on whether or not to recite the poem at her son's wedding, Preising tells her with great pathos:

['T]his poem goes way back in time, into the history of many generations, and also points the way forward to future generations. It reflects,' he continued, getting into his stride, 'the Great Chain of Being. One day, your son will become a father himself, and when he does, he'll think back on your words. It's really important, this poem. Pippa, you have to recite it this evening'. (72)

As I have shown above, this framework – even if it were not corrupted as in Preising's case who uses *Bildung* to click with other people – is marked as outdated and does not apply to today's society: Preising "knew next to nothing about the relationship between grown-up children and their parents" (72).

Preising's pseudo-message together with his conservative style serves, beyond its speaker's intent, the modernist goal of defamiliarization and alienation. The reader, like the frame-I-narrator, stumbles over certain words and constructions of Preising's presentational mode, unmasks Preising as an intellectual snob and takes the Brechtian critical position in front of this overly artificial character. However, this is not all: the reader also deconstructs the Brechtian goal, which is still in the Enlightenment tradition of believing that awareness incites actual acting. The text strikingly shows that knowledge or awareness is not enough to act because in Preising's case, action is not incited by knowledge: once Preising has learned that his company is based on child labor, he does nothing; as he does nothing in front of the camel driver's despair although he knows well what should be done. The novel decomposes the Enlightenment's linkage of progress of knowledge with progress of justice, especially when seen from a consequentialist perspective hence when judging the consequences of an action or non-action and not the agent's intent. This can also be shown via Pippa's disillusionment, Sanford's opportunism, and, when all of these strands are put together, the implicit self-reflexive prognosis of the impact of the novel *Barbarian Spring* on social conduct. Pippa's cultural-educational intent may be authentic but she attains no results. Sanford's moral sense and his sociological and psychological knowledge about the behavior and desires of men his age gets promptly substituted with new interpretations that suit and sustain his behavior and desires (108–109). The reader may be alienated (and therewith *ex negativo* know what s/he should do), but will that change anything in the real world according to the text's own prognosis?

Preising's doctor has difficulties in diagnosing his pathology: it is not the "common depression" (10) of the frame-I-narrator, "Yet in our inability to see ourselves as capable of taking action we were alike" (10). A possible reason why Preising's pathology is so difficult to diagnose is that Preising's pathology is the normal mental condition of most of the

novel's presumable readers (and the present commentator): educated and living in capitalist societies, with a moral consciousness yet incapable of acting, reading novels while elsewhere people are suffering, and in doing so actually thinking of themselves as serving humanity. Preising ends his story (which culminates in assisting the massacres in the resort, the arresting and presumable death of Saida, and the Dinka children assembling pieces for his firm) with "Come on, [...] Supper should be ready" (132). Laura Beck reads Preising's pathological prudence as a comment on Switzerland's neutrality. I think this can be enlarged: the clinic might as well be the Christian West, the fortress of Europe, the cradle of Enlightenment that goes to supper while clearly knowing that millions suffer – this because of various reasons, but connected via our disinterest and thereupon within our frameworks by our guilt.

As previously mentioned, the moral message gains clarity by taking a critical stance in front of the possibilities embodied by the characters; but at a second level, the novel suggests a familiarization with the characters, whether that be Pippa's disillusioned faith in education, Sanford's opportunism, or Preising's lethargic intellectual vanity. While clearly knowing what should be done (and thereby taking the critical stance), it is more likely that the reader will find excuses for non-action (and therewith fall in the category of "Preising"), find new elaborations for pursuing personal gain (the category of "Sanford"), or embrace defeatism (the category of "Pippa"). Yet, will this new awareness to be one of these three characters change anything?

The displaying of intent against consequences (the strong moral drive together with serious doubts about its impact) is a possible key to the "wrong-question(s)-enigma" that frames the text: "'No,' said Preising, 'you're asking the wrong questions' (1); 'Look here,' he said, 'I'll prove it to you. À propos of which, I'll tell you a little story [...] with a moral to it' " (1–2). Additionally:

So, what had been the point of all this – this sad story full of tragic coincidences? It was a tale with no didactic purpose to it. Preising seemed deeply downcast by his own story [...] "So what was the point of your story then?" I pressed him, mercilessly. Preising's response seemed pregnant with some secret knowledge on his part, yet also a deep anxiety about what he knew. "Once again, you're asking the wrong question," he said. (132)

Besides being a veritable conundrum for generations of literary scholars, on a formal account it is an elegant possibility to have it both ways: to set the agenda of engaged or moral literature while challenging the feasibility of such an approach and avoid one-sided answers.

Therapy and the creation of coherence

Hofer-Krucker Valderrama interprets Preising's narration as redirection activity (49). I agree but would emphasize the role of the frame-I-narrator in this evaluation: it is the frame-I-narrator's comments that set the moral tone by dropping the keyword "responsibility," and therewith suggest from the start to read Preising's narration as manoeuvre of exculpation: "Now, I realized straight away that, even with the first sentence of his story, Preising had effectively succeeded in absolving himself of all the responsibility for the events that subsequently unfolded" (Lüscher, *Barbarian* 4). But who is this I-narrator who stages Preising's account, and what are his reasons for telling?

Details on his background can be easily overlooked because they are presented *en passant* in a very few lines at the height of Preising's apocalypse-narration:

In effect, what Preising was presenting me with here was a variation of the by-now familiar theme of "Where were you when Britain went bankrupt?" Latterly this genre had taken over from the earlier "Where were you on 9/11?" [...] Incidentally, my two answers to the respective questions were: sitting in front of a portable TV in the boardroom of a haulage firm in Bayreuth, where all the staff had gathered to watch the tragedy unfold; and watching a flat-screen TV in the cafeteria at the University of Lucerne [Britain's bankruptcy]. (99–100)

It is impossible to determine which position he held in the haulage firm. What is sure is that someone with a practical job in Bayreuth decided to go to Lucerne. Choosing a small university out of one's own region most presumably coincides with wanting something specific there. The University of Lucerne had only three departments until 2016 (*Barbarian Spring* was published in 2013): Theology, Cultural and Social Studies, and Law. The Law school includes a Center for Transport Law,⁷ but the fame of the University lays in its research in theology and social ethics.⁸ The text leaves open what the frame-narrator was doing at the University of Lucerne, but transport law does not integrate as good with the rest of the text as theology: next to judging Preising as irresponsible, the frame-I-narrator comments several times on the cynic behavior of the bankers, who declared money "released

⁷ <https://www.unilu.ch/fakultaeten/rf/institute/kompetenzstelle-fuer-logistik-und-transportrecht-kolt/>

⁸ <https://www.unilu.ch/fakultaeten/tf/institute/institut-fuer-juedisch-christliche-forschung-ijcf/>

the potential to achieve great things. Yet this greatness was mostly measured in terms of the square meterage of living space in Cape Ferrat” (67). There are several recourses on Christian imagery in the text (e.g. Rachid’s name, which means “who has the faith,” the recurrence of purgatorial fire, etc., see Kleinpass 34) and the frame-I-narrator feels responsible for the text’s unity and clarity, which can be seen from his repeated corrections of Preising’s accounts (see Lüscher, *Barbarian* 84, 88). It could even be assumed that Preising, together with his whole story, is an invention of the frame-I-narrator. But for what reason?

Next to his presumed studies in Theology, the only other thing that is known about the frame-I-narrator is that he lost his child. The reader discovers this when Preising tells the I-narrator that Pippa lost her second child:

“For someone like me, who never had kids [...] it’s hard to imagine what it means to lose a child. You, though, [...] know only too well what it means.” No, actually, I didn’t. Preising was mistaken. Just because you’ve experienced something, it doesn’t mean that you know what it means. [...] Some things are so senseless that there is no point in trying to give them meaning. (33)

This fictitious rejection of trying to give meaning is an analogon of Preising’s impossible but necessary “moral of the story.” It is plausible to presume that one of the “wrong” questions that the frame-I-narrator is asking (and which initiate the text) is the question for meaning and the “why.” When facing existential aporia like the loss of an innocent child the problem of theodicy is not far off. The frame-I-narrator’s fixation with global justice and his moral evaluation of Preising might as well be his redirection activity. Preising tries to distract himself from his own guilt, while the frame-I-narrator tries to distract himself from the absence of guilt – and sense. Literature and narration, traditionally, have not only been connected with moral education but also with meaning. Sense arises by integrating punctual experience into a coherent narration (Taylor). Following the frame-I-narrator: experience in itself is nothing. Only interpreted experience is meaningful, and interpretation is possible only in reference to a larger framework. What *Barbarian Spring* diagnoses is the incongruity of the traditional frameworks – Enlightenment and Christianity – with today’s experience: it is impossible to generate a meaningful and successful story by reference to one of the two. This can be due to a problem inherent in the framework itself (as in the case of theodicy) or due to the incongruity of different frameworks: the Enlightenment’s ideal of *Bildung*, as presented in the novel, has become an attitude

(Preising), capital (Sanford), or useless because without impact (Pippa) when confronted with the reality of neoliberal capitalism. The same is true for the more genuinely Christian or metaphysical framework: the apocalypse in *Barbarian Spring* is not to be followed by salvation (Hofer-Krucker Valderrama 45). Emblematic is the Bible reference at the end of Preising's account: "English tourists could be seen walking down the dead-straight road across the desert like latter-day Israelites leaving Egypt" (125). The biblical quotation works as a joke, not as carrier of meaning.

Preising's quest for the "moral of the story" and the frame-I-narrator's quest for meaning are both presented as pressingly needed yet presumably idle. Both choose narration as the royal road to achieving their goals but get hampered by the multiplicity of frames: *Barbarian Spring*, although imagining Britain's bankruptcy, is not showing the bankruptcy of capitalism but the bankruptcy of Christianity and the Enlightenment as frames of reference when connected with capitalist society.

The title of the book *Barbarian Spring* is followed by a definition by Franz Borkenau put before the main text: "What is barbarism in actual fact? It is not the same thing as cultural primitivism [...] It is a state in which many of the values of an advanced civilization are present, but without that social and moral coherence which is the prerequisite for a culture to function rationally" (0). The question is: Who are the barbarians? Reidy is right in stating that the word "barbarian" never occurs in the text, but only in the peritexts (160). Without the Borkenau-quotation one might be tempted to attribute the term to the brutalization of some of the Londoners after the crash – using the word then in its ostracizing and self-assuring function – but with the given definition by Borkenau the answer can only be that barbarism describes the current state of affairs: it is the syncretism of unrestrained capitalism and Enlightenment or Christianity which does not "function rationally," which lacks "coherence."

In *Barbarian Spring*, the society whose value-system is based on Christianity and the Enlightenment but whose praxis is capitalistic is diagnosed with something very similar to depression: it has become incapable of understanding itself as an agent, and it has lost the experience of meaning, with a cure (active substance and method of application) yet unknown. The Borkenau-citation goes on: "But it is precisely for this reason that 'barbarism' is also a creative process: once the overall coherence of a culture is shattered, the path lies open for a renewal of creativity [...] There is no historical basis for believing that the end result will be some tabula rasa" (0). There is neither any "historical

basis” for believing that there was ever a Golden Age of Coherence, nor that it might ever become real. The state of coherence itself is Utopia. However, following Wolf Lepenies’s *Melancholie und Gesellschaft*, this would be the place of literature and narration: imagining a cure. Literature, to function as therapy, would have to lift itself up to the level of frame working.

However, this is not what *Barbarian Spring* does; it stops with the diagnosis. *Barbarian Spring*, notwithstanding its clear moral message, evaluates the probability that literature can induce this sort of action as pretty dim: awareness is not enough to actually start acting, and this also counts for the awareness to live in Barbaria.

Lüscher’s book takes a more humble and sceptic stance than its author. Involved literature does not necessarily have the consequences which are intended. Still, in the book’s evaluation the ostensibly uninvolved counterprogram could be subsumed under Preising’s category.

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Etika in estetika v romanu *Pomlad barbarov* Jonasa Lüscherja

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / švicarska književnost / Lüscher, Jonas: *Pomlad barbarov* / etika in estetika / didaktičnost / terapevtskost / družbeni angažma

Prispevek analizira prvi roman Jonasa Lüscherja *Frühling der Barbaren* (2013) in ugotavlja, da roman razvija dva koncepta: ima izrazito moralno in politično sporočilo, istočasno pa izziva potencial književnosti, da bralca spodbudi k dejavnosti. Roman se uvršča v tradicijo razsvetljenstva, tako v ožjem smislu, saj gre za vzgajanje bralca, kakor tudi v širšem, saj tematizira družbeno vrednost »omike«, vendar pa istočasno opozarja tudi na meje razsvetljenske drže, ko razgradi vezi med moralnim védenjem in dejanskim vedénjem. Pri razvijanju teh dveh konceptov roman prepleta tradicionalne estetske oblike z modernističnimi idejami in prikaže meje uporabnosti in plodnosti obeh pristopov v sodobnem kontekstu, zlasti glede na posledice. Besedilo diagnosticira nepravilno delovanje sinkretizma med kapitalizmom, krščanstvom in razsvetljenstvom, in sicer ne le tedaj, ko gre za vzpostavljanje pravil moralnega vedenja, temveč tudi tedaj, ko gre za osmišljanje izkušenj. Roman upošteva postopke osmišljanja kot drugo možno funkcijo književnosti in pri tem preverja njene terapevtske zmožnosti, pri čemer je s terapijo mišljena integracija in kreacija koherentne interpretacijske sheme.

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Specifičnost dramske forme in etična vprašanja v dramatiki Simone Semenič

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Članek analizira tri ne več dramska besedila (Poschmann) Simone Semenič, to so zgodba o nekem slastnem trupu [...]; medtem ko skoraj rečem še [...] ter sedem kuharic, štirje soldati in tri sofije. Glavne osebe vseh treh del so trpinčene in zlorabljene ženske, žrtve verskih in političnih vojn ter patriarhalnih vzorcev in vsiljenih družbenih vlog. Usode žensk so povzete po resničnih osebah in so fragmentarno postavljene v brezčasen fikcijski okvir. Za pisavo Simone Semenič je značilno spodkopavanje ustaljenih bralnih konvencij, s čimer tesneje vključi bralca v proces dekodiranja in interpretacije besedila. Delitev na glavno in stransko besedilo je presežena, saj didaskalije preraščajo uprizoritvene napotke in postajajo enakovreden del besedila, izpostavljena pa je njihova narativna funkcija. Naslovnik dramskega besedila mora tako za posamezni tekst premisliti temeljna razmerja, kdo govori in komu govori, s tem pa tudi status avtorja, dramskih oseb kot tudi svojo lastno pozicijo. Bralec/gledalec je emocionalno in kognitivno tesneje vpet v dogajanje in tako postane v večji meri tudi soudeleženec in posledično soodgovoren za stanje v družbi. Simona Semenič z inovativnimi besedilnimi strategijami doseže umetniške učinke in razpre etične vidike skozi univerzalno perspektivo. Čeprav krši temeljne dramske konvencije, jih v metadramski obliki hkrati relativizira in revitalizira, nove besedilne strategije pa so kar najtesneje povezane z vprašanji recepcije in moči gledališča danes.

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / slovenska dramatika / Semenič, Simona / dramska forma / postdramsko gledališče / didaskalije / gledalec

Uvod

Branje slovenskih dramskih besedil zadnjih dveh let, kot ga odražajo prispela besedila na natečaj za Grumovo nagrado – ta zaradi skromnega izdajanja dramskih besedil prevzema tudi vlogo letnega pregleda dramske produkcije –, kaže, da je v opaznem deležu besedil zaznati odmeve družbenopolitičnega dogajanja, ki so ga zaznamovale begunska kriza,

165

različne oblike nasilja, vojne grozote ipd. Kljub aktualni in družbeno angažirani tematiki pa del tovrstnih besedil pri bralcih ne vzbudi nobenih etičnih premislekov. Ta dramska besedila namreč gradijo svoj literarni svet na podlagi klišejskih oziroma stereotipnih predpostavk in črno-belem prikazovanju dramskih oseb ali pa pogosto zgolj prenašajo medijska poročila v dialoško formo. Po drugi strani so našteje teme prisotne tudi v dramskih delih Simone Semenič, a njena dramatika bralca in gledalca postavlja pred številne etične dileme, je prostor premisleka in spraševanj in zahteva njegovo dejavno sodelovanje. Zgoraj omenjena na natečaj prispela besedila nas torej postavijo pred temeljna vprašanja, kaj je literatura in kako učinkuje, ter hkrati napeljujejo na misel, da sama tematika še ne aktivira etične razsežnosti literarnega besedila.

Simona Semenič je v intervjuju dejala, da se je ob nastajanju drame *5fantkov.si* ukvarjala predvsem z dvema vprašanjema: najprej, »kaj je danes lahko zgolj gledališki tekst (ne pa hkrati predloga za TV-dramo na primer) in drugič – na kakšen način lahko še teme, kot so vojna, zlorabe v družini in podobno, pridejo do vsega navajene publike« (Plahuta Simčič 15). Gre za dve ključni vprašanji, s katerima se srečujejo današnji dramatik, in sicer vprašanje dramske forme in vprašanje recepcije. V nadaljevanju bomo zato analizirali formalne značilnosti izbranih besedil, saj avtorica ves čas krši oziroma postavlja pod vprašaj temeljne dramske konvencije, zlasti Ingardnovo formalno značilnost drame, to je delitev na glavno in stransko besedilo, ter Szondijev pojem absolutnost drame in s tem povezan status dramskega avtorja in naslovnika, to je bralca oziroma gledalca. Drugo vprašanje pa je povezano z načini prikazovanja vojnih grozot in različnih oblik nasilja, za katere se zdi, da je sodobni gledalec zaradi množice podob, ki jim je vsakodnevno izpostavljen, postal že povsem neobčutljiv. Dramatika je imela že od svojih začetkov težave s prikazovanji tovrstne tematike, saj je bilo nasilne in grozljive dogodke na odru nemogoče uprizoriti v skladu z Aristotelovo zahtevo po verjetnosti prikazovanja, ki se ji je kasneje pridružila še zahteva po spodobnosti, drama naj torej ne prikazuje ničesar, kar je moralno nespodobno (Kralj, *Dve* 99). Prav zato so se dramatik posluževali različnih strategij, kot so ustno poročilo sla, tejhoskopija, osredotočenost na napeto atmosfero, redukcija na posledice katastrofalnih dogodkov ipd. (prav tam). Danes so zahteve po verjetnosti in spodobnosti presežene, v dobi medijskega stampeda podob, dominacije množičnih in novih medijev je nevarnost drugje, namreč da gledališče ne bi zgolj prenašalo dnevno-političnih vsebin na oder, oziroma kot poudarja Hans Thies Lehmann (307):

Živimo v spektaklu, ki pa ga hkrati lahko le opazujemo – to je slabo tradicionalno gledališče. Postdramsko gledališče se poskuša v teh razmerah razmnoževanju 'podob', v katerih se na koncu utrudijo vsi spektakli, izogniti, postane 'mirno', 'statično', ponuja slike brez referenc in prepušča dramatično nasilnim in konfliktnim slikam medijev, če jih ne sprejema parodistično.

Skozi predstavljeni perspektivi bomo analizirali tri dramska dela Simone Semenič, ki vstopajo v polje postdramskega (Lehmann) oziroma ne več dramskega pisanja (Poschmann), to so *zgodba o nekem slastnem truplu ali gostija ali kako so se roman abramovič, lik janša, štiriindvajsetletna julija kristeva, simona semenič in inicialki z. i. znašli v oblaku tobačnega dima; medtem ko skoraj rečem še ali prilika o vladarju in modrosti ter sedem kuharic, štirje soldati in tri sofije*. V vseh treh delih avtorica izpostavlja etična vprašanja, povezana z odnosom družbe do drugačnih, zapostavljenih, marginaliziranih, ker prihajajo z Vzhoda, ker so ženske ali ker so razmišljujoči posamezniki, vse povezuje dejstvo, da so v družbi neslišani, utišani in odstranjeni glasovi, so na strani pozicije nemoči in podrejenosti. Dramske osebe vseh treh del so trpinčene in zlorabljene ženske, žrtve verskih in političnih vojn ter patriarhalnih vzorcev in vsiljenih družbenih vlog. Izbrana dela bi lahko zaradi tematskih in oblikovnih sorodnosti povezali v trilogijo.

zgodba o nekem slastnem truplu ali gostija ali kako so se roman abramovič, lik janša, štiriindvajsetletna julija kristeva, simona semenič in inicialki z. i. znašli v oblaku tobačnega dima

Pred nami je drama, ki se nenehno zaveda svoje dramskosti, pa vendarle ni napisana v dramski formi. Če se klasična dramska besedila začnejo z uvodnimi didaskalijami, ki nam posredujejo informacije o nastopajočih osebah ter prostoru in času, se drama Simone Semenič prične takole:

*v tej drami je sedem likov, eden izmed sedmih likov sem jaz
jaz, sedmi lik v tej drami, stopim pred vas spoštovano (zahodno) gledalstvo, stopim
pred vas s pipo v roki (Semenič, zgodba 1)*

Sedmi, brezimni lik v drami je tisti, ki nam v svoji pripovedi predstavi celoten dogodek, to je gostija, na katero bo prišlo pet eminentnih gostov, postregli pa jim bodo obaro iz trupla. Čeprav je dramsko besedilo možno razumeti kot pripoved sedmega lika, pa ta ves čas opozarja

bralca oziroma gledalca, da je v gledališču, bodisi s svojimi direktnimi nagovori bodisi z omembami scenskih elementov, ne nazadnje tudi s stalnim pomanjkanjem časa. Sedmi lik ima torej funkcijo pripovedovalca, ki napoveduje goste, vljudno kramlja, komentira in interpretira celotno gostijo, a hkrati tudi manipulira z dejstvi in relativizira dogajanje. Pripoved brezimnega lika predstavlja okvir, v katerega so vstavljene izpovedi trupla; čeprav ni več živ lik, se truplo edino neposredno izjavlja in zastopa identitete različnih žensk:

*truplo še vedno stoji tam na rampi in premika ustnice
in potem ga slišiš*

moje ime je olena popik in nisem hotela umreti
nisem hotela umreti
ne vprašajte, zakaj nisem hotela umreti, ker vam ne bom znala odgovoriti
nisem hotela umreti naj zadostuje

*dragi gledalec, če nisi vedel do zdaj, potem zdaj ni več dvoma, da imaš pred sabo
truplo
čez nekaj replik ti bo jasno, da je to vzhodno truplo
v tej drami zahodnih trupel ni, samo vzhodna
(če kaj takega, kot je vzhodno truplo, sploh obstaja) (Semenič, zgodba 5)*

Priča smo pretresljivim zgodbam žensk, ki so bile izpostavljene najrazličnejšim oblikam nasilja: posiljene, zlorabljene, utopljene, pretepe, umorjene ..., vendar nasilje ni prikazano na odru, temveč posredovano v obliki izpovedi trupla, to so ostri kriki nemoči, ob katerih bralec/gledalec težko ostane ravnodušen.

Na zaslonih televizijskih poročil vidimo predvsem obraze vladajočih, strokovnjakov in novinarjev, ki komentirajo podobe, ki govorijo, kaj prikazujejo in kaj naj bi mi mislili o njih. Grozote niso banalizirane zato, ker vidimo preveč njihovih podob. Na zaslonih ne vidimo preveč trpečih teles. Vidimo pa preveč teles brez imena, preveč teles, ki nam niso zmožna vrniti pogleda, ki ga obračamo k njim, teles, ki so objekt govora, ne da bi sama lahko govorila. (Rancière 60)

Semeničeva prav tem brezimnim telesom vrača identiteto, ne gre za brezimne žrtve, vse imajo ime in priimek, o vsaki izvemo nekaj konkretnih biografskih dejstev ter fragmente njihovih življenjskih usod, vse naštete žrtve so resnične osebe, avtorica je njihove usode našla na spletu, s čimer realno prebija odrsko iluzijo. Sporočilo žrtev pa je enako in se kot refren ponavlja skozi celotno besedilo – »želela sem živeti«.

vse povezuje dejstvo, da so bila njihova življenja nasilno prekinjena. Zgodba se ponavlja iz izpovedi v izpoved in gre v neskončnost, kar truplo ponazori ob koncu z naštevanjem imen žrtev, ki jim ni videti konca. Truplo, čeprav zastopa mrtve, nastopa kot živo in se neposredno izjavlja ravno zato, da gledalcu vrne pogled, če parafraziramo Rancièra. Izpovedi trupla na bralca/gledalca močno učinkujejo tudi zaradi kontrasta z brezskrbnim kramljanjem pripovedovalca, ki skupaj z napovedanimi eminentnimi gosti predstavlja zahodni, razviti svet, pozicijo moči in udobja. Gostje so le del pripovedovalčeve pripovedi, s pripovedovalcem in truplom ne komunicirajo, se pa hranijo z obaro iz trupla, pojedina kaže na družbo brezbržnosti, ki použije šibkejšega, iz tega kroga ni izvzeta niti avtorica besedila:

*simona semenič se neha hraniti v trenutku, ko truplo utihne
sedi, malo pomišlja
še malo pomišlja
in potem si vzame repete
(zgleda, da ji omamno dišeča obara tekne)* (Semenič, zgodba 15)

Kje je torej mesto gledalca v tej gostiji? Tudi gledalec je del zahodnega sveta, ki ga pripovedovalec ves čas neposredno nagovarja (cenjeno občinstvo, velespoštovana publika, imenitni gledalec ...), gledalcu je namenjena njegova pripoved kot tudi izpovedi trupla (truplo gleda vate, ga slišiš, ti maha, si predstavljaš ...), s čimer je gledalec vključen v dogajanje kot dejavna kategorija – ni več privilegirani opazovalec, temveč soudeleženec in posledično tudi soodgovoren za stanje v družbi.¹ V zvezi s pripovedovalcem Blaž Lukan (170) opozarja na dvojje:

[P]rvič, njegov neposredni nagovor občinstvu ali *alokucija* je v resnici *ilokucijski* akt, ki sodi v domeno *performativa* oz. teorije performativnosti, s katero pripovedovalec v dejanje vključi še gledalca kot dejavno kategorijo. In drugič, skozi pripovedovalca se drama vzpostavi kot samozavedajoč se (meta)organizem, njegovi avtodeskriptivni in avtorefleksivni trenutki dramo razkrivajo kot dramo oz. jo vzpostavljajo v njeni dvojnosti.

Temeljna dvojnost tradicionalnega dramskega besedila se kaže v delitvi na dialog in didaskalije oziroma glavno in stransko besedilo (Ingarden

¹ Krstna uprizoritev besedila, napisanega leta 2010, katerega premiera je bila 13. 11. 2011 v privatnem stanovanju režiserja Primoža Ekarta, v produkciji zavoda Imaginarni, je namesto eminentnih gostov za mizo posadila šest gledalcev, nastopajoči osebi pa sta bili brezimni lik in truplo. Izjemna bližina in intima med vsemi udeleženci, kjer ni delitve na oder in avditorij, je še dodatno poudarila etični naboj besedila.

252; Kralj, *Teorija 5*), česar pa za pričujoče besedilo ne moremo več trditi. Kot je razvidno že iz citiranih odlomkov, je ta delitev presežena, a hkrati ohranjena v tipografskem zapisu, ležeče je zapisana pripoved brezimnega lika in pokončno govor trupla. Opazna je neobičajna vizualna oblikovanost besedila, kjer ni več delitve na dejanja in prizore, prav tako replike niso zapisane po vlogah, temveč besedilo teče zdržema, kot pesnitev v svobodnih verzih, dolžina vrstic pa deloma sledi premolkom pri govoru, prehodi v novo vrstico večkrat nadomeščajo rabo ločil. Besedilo je v celoti zapisano s samimi malimi črkami. Presežena pa je tudi opredelitev drame, ki izhaja iz aksioma o absolutnosti drame (Szondi 30), da je bralec/gledalec neposredno soočen s prikazovanimi osebami, saj se te v direktnem govoru predstavljajo same: to velja le za brezimni lik, medtem ko so eminentni gostje posredovani skozi pripoved, truplo pa zastopa različne usode trpinčenih in zlorabljenih žensk. Kljub nedramski zunanji formi in številnim pripovednim elementom besedilo ves čas ohranja temeljno ontološko dramsko situacijo, to je uprizarjanje, postavitev v gledališče, prisotnost publike in opozarjanje na neprestano pomanjkanje časa, značilno za gledališko uprizoritev. Čeprav Semeničeva krši temeljne konvencije dramskega besedila, jih v metadramski obliki hkrati relativizira in revitalizira.

medtem ko skoraj rečem še ali prilika o vladarju in modrosti

Patrice Pavis zapiše, da je prilika ali parabola »reduciran model našega sveta«, pri čemer »[d]ramatik marsikdaj ne ubere najlažje poti, tako da bi sedanost opisal z vso silovitostjo naturalističnih podrobnosti, saj bi s tem tvegat, da bistveno prikrije, ideološkega mehanizma, ki ga podpira in domneva njen veristični videz, pa ne razkrije« (519). Drama Simone Semenič izhaja iz pravljичnega izročila o vladarjih v razkošnih sobanah, hkrati pa je pred nami »poučna zgodba« o ustroju družbe, prikazu njenih mehanizmov, manipulaciji z ljudstvom, izmišljenih notranjih sovražnikov, upor, vojni in družbeni odgovornosti. Besedilo tako gradi na prezentaciji univerzalnega in konkretnega: pravljični nekoč in nekje ves čas prebija stvarni tukaj in zdaj, najočitneje v podobi 20-letne cvetoče lipe, enem od temeljnih simbolov slovenstva, ki korespondira z nastankom dramskega besedila leta 2011, ob 20. obletnici osamosvojitve Slovenije. Dramske osebe so nosilci arhetipskih lastnosti, ki so izražene že z njihovimi imeni: oblast oziroma državo in s tem pozicijo moči predstavljajo mogočni vladar Vladimir, duhovni svetovalec Bogomir in minister Branimir, ki morajo zaradi nezadovoljstva med ljudstvom

in možnega upora poiskati krivca, zaradi nespoštovanja inštitucij in hujskanja ljudi pa za nevarne razglasijo tri hčere, to so Ljuba, Vera in Nada, ki tako predstavljajo tri temeljne etične imperitive – ljubezen, vero, upanje.

Replike naštetih oseb so obdane z obsežnim pripovednim kontekstom, ki se prične že v naslovu, identiteta govorca ostane skrita vse do zadnje vrstice besedila, ko izvemo, da pripovedni tok pripada Sofiji, modrosti, materi treh hčera. Vloga Sofije tako spominja na brezimni lik iz predhodno analizirane drame, tudi Sofija je pripovedovalka, ki kreira in komentira dogajanje, le da bralec do konca ne ve, kdo govori, od režijskega branja pa je odvisna njena pozicija v uprizoritvi. Sofija je del zgodbenega sveta, ki ga opisuje, gre za tip generativnega pripovedovalca (Richardson 152), vendar pa ne prihaja do komunikacije z ostalimi dramskimi oseba-mi, njeno pripovedovanje je namenjeno bralcu/gledalcu. Dramsko besedilo ohranja temeljno formalno delitev na dialog in didaskalije, tako so replike navedene po vlogah, govor Sofije pa v poševnem tisku. Če Anne Ubersfeld zapiše: »Osnovno lingvistično razlikovanje med dialogom in didaskalijami zadeva subjekt izjavljanja, torej vprašanje, *kdo govori*. V dialogu je to papirnato bitje, ki ga imenujemo *oseba* (in ni identična avtorju); v didaskalijah pa govori avtor sam« (Ubersfeld 26), potem lahko ugotovimo, da pri Semeničevi didaskalije ne pripadajo avtorju, temveč dramski osebi in bolj ustrezajo opredelitvam naratologov, ki poudarjajo, da v didaskalijah ne gre za avtorjev glas, temveč pripovedovalca (Richardson 151). Sofija je torej zapisana kot didaskalija, ki ima pripovedno vlogo, s čimer bralci/gledalci ne sledimo le neposrednemu izjavljanju dramskih oseb, ampak dobimo natančnejši vpogled v njihove misli, predvsem pa Semeničeva razširi kronotop dogajanja izven vidnega polja zaznav gledalca, s čimer dobi gledalec/bralec občutek »romanesknega konteksta«. Didaskalije tako nikakor niso stransko besedilo, saj Sofiji pripada največji delež besedila. In če je Ingarden (371) zapisal, da stransko besedilo v uprizoritvi odpade oziroma se materializira v gledališke znake, s čimer iz območja jezika prestopa v nebesedna, večinoma vizualna sporočila, v tem dramskem besedilu didaskalij ne moremo uprizoriti, saj ostajajo na ravni jezika oziroma je delni prehod v materialnost odvisen od vsakokratnega branja režije. Njihova oblikovanost pa je tudi takrat, kadar prinašajo podatke o prostoru in času, drugačna kot v tradicionalni dramatiki, besedilo se začne z besedami: *nad kraljevskim mestom / temni oblaki / se zbirajo / se zbirajo / mnogo mnogo let nazaj* (Semenič, *medtem* 30), saj ne gre zgolj za pragmatično funkcijo, temveč tudi poetično, na estetsko oblikovanost zapisa kažejo ponavljanja, neobičajen besedni red, prehodi v novo vrstico ipd.

Sorodnosti s prejšnjim besedilom niso vidne le na formalni, temveč tudi na idejno-tematski ravni, kar je opazno zlasti v prikazu ženske kot žrtve, pri čemer je Simona Semenič tudi v tem primeru usode treh hčera povzela po resničnih osebah, t. i. drinskih mučenkah, ki so jih četniki pobili in vrgli v reko med drugo svetovno vojno (Semenič, *Umetnost* 23). Ljuba, Nada in Vera tako končajo v reki, svobodo bi si lahko kupile s sodelovanjem z oblastjo, ker želijo lepši in pravičnejši svet za vse, jih vržejo v bordel, kjer se nad njimi izživljajo in jih posiljujejo vladar in vojaki, zaradi državljanske nepokorščine jih mučijo, pretepejo, obglavijo in trupla vržejo v reko, njihovo smrt pa zlorabijo za svojo politično korist – krivdo pripišejo barbarom z vzhoda ter hčere razglasijo za junakinje vojne. Vprašanje, kako vsa ta grozodejstva prikazati na odru, Semeničeva prenese na raven pripovedi, kot neposreden opis dogajanja, torej ne kot mimesis, temveč diegesis: Semeničeva vseskozi verjame v moč besede, besede so zanjo močnejše od podob.²

*biriči zgrabijo nado
jo slečejo
do golega
tako da lahko vidimo, da se je kri že strdila
ime mi je
in sem plemkinja
biriči pretepajo nado
s korobači bijejo njeno golo telo
njeno mlado telo
meso se cefra in kri šprica
nada kriči v joku
nada joče v krikih
in jo še kar bijejo
eden, dva, trije, štirje, pet njih s korobači
telo se zvija
meso se cefra
kri šprica
in potem se pet njih utrudi
telo nepremično leži
rodila sem jo, ko so dišale akacije (Semenič, medtem 56)*

Rojstvo in smrt ter s tem povezana materinska tragika Sofijo postavijo na stran ženskega principa rojstva in ljubezni, ki je nasprotje moške-

² V krstni uprizoritvi, premiera je bila 24. aprila 2015 v SNG Mala drama Ljubljana v režiji Primoža Ekarta, je nasilje nad tremi ženskami še poudarjala zvočna kulisa, in sicer ritem bobnov in zvoki udarcev.

mu principu oblasti, vojn in nasilja, vendar pa v sodobni paraboli ne gre za enoumno sporočilo, parabola »nikoli ni v celoti prevedljiva v nekakšen nauk: predaja se igri različnih pomenov in odbleskom teatralnosti« (Pavis 520). To velja še zlasti za lik Sofije, tako na vsebinski kot oblikovni ravni: izmuzljiva in zagonetna je njena pozicija v strukturi drame kot tudi končno dejanje, doleti jo namreč čast, da se kot mati mučenk poroči z vladarjem, njeno razmerje do Vladimirja pa se ves čas giblje med občudovanjem in prezirom, lastnimi čustvi in dobrobitjo države, odnos med modrostjo in oblastjo tako ostaja dvoumen in odprt.

sedem kuharic, štirje soldati in tri sofije

V besedilu nastopa štirinajst dramskih oseb, ki so našteje že v naslovu. Semeničeva je dramo napisala po naročilu umetniške vodje MGL Barbare Hieng Samobor, in sicer o usodi Sophie Magdalene Scholl, članice odporniškega gibanja proti nacizmu, ki so jo leta 1943 obglavili v Münchnu, staro 21 let (Semenič, *Pot* 17). Gre torej za prikaz izjemne ženske, ki je zaznamovala zgodovino, vendar pa je želela avtorica besedilu dati širši okvir in univerzalno sporočilo, zato je na spletu poiskala še dve izjemni Sofiji, Sofijo Lvovno Perovskajevo, ki je bila leta 1881, stara 27 let, obsojena na smrt z obešanjem zaradi političnega aktivizma, sodelovala je namreč pri več neuspešnih atentatih na carja Aleksandra II, ter Marie-Sophie Germain, matematičarko iz Pariza, ki je umrla leta 1831 zaradi raka na dojki, stara 55 let, njena izobrazba pa ni bila nikoli priznana. Vse tri poleg enakega imena družijo dejstvo, da so s svojim razmišljanjem in dejanji presegale okvire svojega časa in prostora ter delovale proti zahtevam in pričakovanjem patriarhalne družbe, bile so intelektualke in aktivistke, ki so želele spremeniti svet. Vendar pa besedilo ni biografska drama, usode treh zgodovinskih oseb so predstavljene fragmentarno, s poudarkom na njihovi eksekuciji. Tako kot pri prejšnjih dveh dramah so tudi tokrat usode resničnih Sofij postavljene v brezčasen fiksijski okvir, ki ga tvorijo kuharice in soldati. Kuharice so popolno nasprotje Sofij, sedijo v polkrogu in molče lupijo krompir od začetkov sveta, a hkrati imajo mnenje o vsem in vsakomur, klepetajo in obrekujejo, medtem ko se vrtili kolesje zgodovine. So večne spremljevalke ponavljajočih se dogodkov zgodovine, otopele, pasivne, malenkostne, privoščljive, so brezimna množica povprečnih, kar avtorica poudari tudi z izbiro imen: ta pedantna, ta nergava, ta debela, ta dolgocajtna, ta fina, ta jeznorita in ta zamišlje-

na, v skladu z značajskimi lastnostmi je izjemno natančno oblikovana tudi njihova jezikovna podoba, kar prinaša številne ironične poudarke. Kuharice so tako konformistične ohranjevalke stanja, hkrati pa tiste, ki hranijo vojake, hranijo vojno, poganjajo kolesje zgodovine. Tudi soldati so brez imen, označeni le z zaporednimi rimskimi števkami, poudarjena je njihova moška moč in karizma, izvršujejo ukaze in izpolnjujejo birokratske predpise, s čimer skrbijo za stabilnost družbe in podpirajo vsakokratno politiko. Nasilje nad Sofijami ima torej dva obraza: nerazumevanje in pristajanje na vsiljene družbene vloge, kar kuharice večkrat poudarijo: »ma to ni nič, ženska se mora poročiti, ženska mora roditi / to je naše poslanstvo, bože mili, saj za to smo tukaj / aneda« (Semenič, *sedem* 85), ter fizična odstranitev vseh, ki so grožnja obstoječemu sistemu.

Tudi tokrat ni v ospredju prikaz nasilja, več pozornosti je namenjene sami proceduri postopka, nesmiselnosti pravilnikov, točnosti zgodovinskih dejstev kot pa izvršitvi dejanja, ki je posredovano skozi kratke replike kuharic in omogoča različna režijska branja.³ Za potrebe celote in večjega učinka je Semeničeva zgodovinska dejstva fikcijsko preoblikovala, konkretno pa tako pridobi veljavo univerzalnega. Vse tri Sofije v drami čaka obglavljenje, zato npr. »sofija, ta druga« v svoji repliki poudari, da je bila prva ženska v Rusiji, obsojena na smrt z obešenjem zaradi političnega aktivizma:

IV.

mogoče je bilo res tako, kot pravite, gospa, ampak mi bomo vseeno izvršili kazen s sekiro

ta jeznorita
to morda sicer res ni zgodovinsko natančno, zaradi tega pa ni nič manj resnično

ta nergava
in potem

³ Simona Semenič je za dramsko besedilo leta 2015 prejela Grumovo nagrado, premiera je bila 16. 9. 2015 na velikem odru MGL. Režiser krstne uprizoritev Diego de Brea je brezčasnost poudaril še s črno-belo estetiko uprizoritve, izborom glasbe ter svetlobno scenografijo, medtem ko je za eksekucije uporabil drug medij – sopolstavljen v živo in projiciranje vnaprej posnetega materiala na platno, gre za igrane posnetke v črno-beli tehniki. Besedilo je doživelo številne dramaturške črte, zgodbe Sofij pa so bile skrčene na najnujnejše informacije.

I.
mi odpustiš?

ta jeznorita
naredi pavzo, da bi bil učinek večji

sofija, ta druga
odpustim ti

ta fina
zazecham

ta zamišljena
zamahneš

(Semenič, *sedem* 81)

Odlomek ilustrira tudi formalno zgradbo besedila, ki ukinja dvojnost glavnega in stranskega besedila, tokrat tudi v tipografiji, na vprašanje, kdo govori (Ubersfeld 26), dobimo dvakrat odgovor kuharice, te namreč izrekajo svoje replike in didaskalije, med njimi ni nobene razlike ali hierarhije, bralec/gledalec pa je tako neposredno soočen ne le z govorom dramskih oseb (Szondi 30), temveč tudi z didaskalijami, saj je stranski tekst del izreke dramskih oseb. Kuharice so dramske osebe in hkrati pripovedovalke, opisujejo in komentirajo svoje misli ter svet okoli sebe, komunicirajo z gledalcem, v celoto sopostavljajo različne čase in prostore, saj Sofije pripadajo trem različnim stoletjem in trem velikim evropskim državam. Formalna zgradba besedila torej le še poudarja brezčasnost, večno kolesje zgodovine in s tem tudi univerzalnost sporočila.

Zaključek

V vseh treh besedilih so žrtve ženskega spola, resnične osebe, postavljene v fikcijski okvir, to so vzhodna trupla žensk, sodobne drinske mučenke, tri Sofije iz zgodovine. Ne gre za brezimna trupla, v vseh treh delih se ponavlja »ime mi je«. Semeničeva prikazuje konkretne osebe, dogodke, čas in prostor, vse to pa postavi v brezčasni okvir, ki ga ustvari s ponavljanji dogodkov, naštevanjem oseb, pravljlično strukturo, prenovljeno vlogo didaskalij, elementi narativnosti ipd., s čimer dobijo ideje njenih dram univerzalno sporočilo. Individualne usode so tako neke vrste simbol za vse trpinčene in zlorabljene ženske – trupla

moške pozicije moči, trupla patriarhalne družbe, trupla zahodnega sveta, zato je možno tudi feministično branje navedenih tekstov. Vendar pa Semeničeva sega širše: dramska besedila problematizirajo vojne,⁴ represijo zahodnega sveta, nesmiselnost birokratskih predpisov, vsiljene družbene vloge, razmerje med izjemnim posameznikom in povprečnostjo množice, institucionalno podprto nasilje, mehanizme moči in oblasti ter na drugi strani vprašanje empatije, družbene odgovornosti, razumevanje drugega oziroma drugačnega. Semeničeva da v svoji dramatiki glas nemočnim, nevidnim, utišanim in odstranjenim. Če sledimo Lehmannu (295), da so politična tista »vprašanja, ki imajo opraviti z družbeno močjo«, potem lahko zapišemo, da se Semeničeva ukvarja prav s tovrstnimi vprašanji, zato je njena dramatika tudi politična.

Pisava Simone Semenič ves čas nastaja v tesni povezavi z njenim praktičnim delom v gledališču, kjer deluje kot režiserka, producentka, dramaturginja in performerka, zato natančno predvidi, kakšne občutke želi vzbuditi. Avtorica ves čas manipulira z gledalčevimi čustvi in estetsko distanco, zato njena besedila kljub ostrim idejnim poudarkom ne učinkujejo pesimistično, saj uporablja najrazličnejše potujitvene strategije, s katerimi blaži podobo sveta: ironijo, sarkazem, cinizem, rabo nenavadnih besed, humor, pri čemer besedila prežema temeljna izmuzljivost in dvoumnost (lahko je, lahko pa tudi ne).⁵ Njena besedila so tako sestavljena iz različnih diskurzov, so žanrski konglomerat, v katerem se srečujejo elementi rituala, pravljice, politične drame, komedije, parabole ..., so preplet tragičnega in komičnega, ironije in empatije, grozljivega in igrivega, bralčev/gledalčev položaj pa tako niha od udobja estetske distance (Pezdirč Bartol, *Recepcija 196–198*) do neposrednega nagovora in dejavnega sodelovanja. Pri čemer pa pojma dejavno sodelovanje ne razumemo v smislu fizične vključenosti v uprizoritev, k čemur je stremelo avantgardno gledališče (195), temveč izhajamo iz opredelitve, da biti bralec oziroma gledalec ni pasivni položaj, ki bi ga morali spremeniti v aktivnost, temveč je tudi »gledanje akcija« (Ranciére 13, 15) – gre torej za gledalčevo emocionalno in kognitivno vključenost, ki pa jo Semeničeva še stimulira z uporabo različnih besedilnih strategij. Nove besedilne strategije oziroma formalne inovacije tako niso same sebi namen, temveč so kar najtesneje povezane z vprašanji recepcije in moči gledališča danes.

⁴ Iz izjav kuharic je razvidno, da vojna vedno proizvaja mrliče, tudi soldati so tako žrtve, npr. »za tristo ust smo ga nalupile / potem pa nihče ni prišel jest / vsi so umrli« (Semenič, *sedem* 56).

⁵ Dramsko delo *sedem kuharic, štirje soldati in tri sofije* je bilo tako v napovedniku uprizoritve označeno celo za komedijo.

Nove tekstne prakse pa ne pomenijo radikalnega preloma s tradicionalnim (Lukan 167), marveč izhajajo iz zavesti o krizi dramske forme in krizi reprezentacije, prisotni že skozi 20. stoletje. Za pisavo Simone Semenič je tako značilno spodkopavanje ustaljenih bralnih konvencij kot tudi destabilizacija temeljnih pojmov teorije drame. V predstavljenih treh primerih je opazna odsotnost velikih začetnic in ločil, s čimer avtorica tesneje vključi bralca v proces dekodiranja in interpretacije besedila:

V resnici sem hotela pustiti odprte poudarke, misli in ločila. Nisem hotela sugerirati, kje je konec stavka. Cezure sem na neki način določila s tem, ko preidem v novo vrstico – kot da pišem poezijo. Hkrati pa napišem klicaj samo tam, kjer se mi zdi nujno potreben. Ta princip pisanja je v bistvu zelo zanimiv. Kar včasih zapišem kot trditev, lahko nekdo drug prebere kot vprašaj. (Semenič, *Umetnost* 25)

Dramska besedila Simone Semenič spreminjajo vizualno podobo, niso razdeljena na dejanja in prizore, so brez seznama nastopajočih oseb, delitev na glavno in stransko besedilo pa je presežena, saj didaskalije prenašajo uprizoritvene napotke. Ob uprizoritvi jih nikakor ne moremo izpustiti ali materializirati v gledališke znake, saj postajajo enakovreden in konstitutiven del besedila. Pri Simoni Semenič ne gre za ukinjanje didaskalij, temveč za revitalizacijo, pri čemer je izpostavljena njihova narativna funkcija (pripoved o ločenih dogodkih, komentar dogajanja, možnost vpogleda v misli oseb, posredujejo oznake časa in prostora, so sredstvo komunikacije z občinstvom ipd.). Z vnosom elementov narativnosti pa v nekoč absolutno dramo tesneje vstopa tudi avtor. Če je Anne Ubersfeld (26–27) zapisala, da se avtor v dramatiki prostovoljno odreče temu, da bi govoril v lastnem imenu – avtor je subjekt besedila le pri didaskalijah –, Toporišič njeno misel preoblikuje:

Gledališka besedila pri Semeničevi lahko razumemo tudi kot izpoved avtorja ali izraz njegove »osebnosti«, »čustev«, »problemov«, kajti vsi subjektivni vidiki niso več preusmerjeni na druge govorce. Tako besedilo postane v nasprotju z absolutno dramo tudi subjektivno, ker se avtor ne odreče temu, da bi govoril v lastnem imenu; avtor je subjekt besedila ne le pri didaskalijah, ampak v celotnem besedilu« (Toporišič 99).

Do podobnih ugotovitev so prišli tudi naratologi: »[P]ripoved bistveno prispeva k dramopiščevim ustvarjalnim prijemom, omogoča interdiskurzivno eksperimentiranje in z razkrajanjem dramskega dejanja spodbuja samorefleksivnost.« (Koron 45)

Naslovnik dramskega besedila (bralec, režiser in igralci, gledalec) mora tako za posamezni tekst premisliti temeljna razmerja, kdo govori

in komu govori, s tem pa tudi status avtorja, dramskih oseb kot tudi svojo lastno pozicijo (Pezdirc Bartol, *Slovenske* 279). Dramska besedila zahtevajo njegovo dejavno sodelovanje, ga spremenijo v aktivno kategorijo, bralec/gledalec je vpet v dogajanje in tako v večji meri tudi soudeleženec in posledično soodgovoren za stanje v družbi. In če je Lehmann zapisal, da »[g]ledališče pravzaprav ne postane politično z neposredno tematizacijo političnega, temveč z implicitno vsebino svojega načina predstavljanja« (Lehmann 300), smo prišli do sklepa, da velja enako za etiko, saj dramsko besedilo ne postane etično angažirano z neposredno tematizacijo etično- problemskih vsebin. Simona Semenič etične dimenzije besedila ne aktivira eksplicitno s političnimi izjavami, etičnimi imperativi, moralističnim posredovanjem vrednot ali didaktičnimi poantami prav-narobe niti z neposrednim prikazom nasilja, pobojev, vojnih grozot ipd. Estetska izkušnja je namreč predpogoj za vzpostavitev etičnega razmerja, ki je po drugi strani temelj, s katerega si je moč prizadevati za politični učinek (Ridout 66). Simona Semenič s svojimi deli zahteva angažiranost, ki jo Helena Grehan zaobjame s pojmom ambivalenca oziroma protislovje. Angažiranega bralca/gledalca ne razume v smislu, da bo ta vstal s svojih sedežev in postal politično aktiven, temveč vidi njegovo angažiranost v razreševanju vprašanj, idej in občutij, ki jih neko delo odpira. Če je uprizoritev zmožna angažirati gledalca za proces etičnega razmisleka, bo v njem pustila občutek protislovnosti. Vendar to ni protislovnost, zaradi katere bi postal gledalec inerten, temveč gre za produktivni prostor, ki omogoča pretakanje zamisli, konceptov in zanimanj. Protislovje je oblika nelagodja, izkušnja preloma, ki drži gledalca povezanega z drugim, z umetniškim delom, z odgovornostjo – to je torej etični proces, ki traja še dolgo potem, ko je gledalec zapustil gledališko dvorano (Grehan 22).⁶

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⁶ Članek je nastal v okviru raziskovalnega programa št. P6-0265, ki ga je sofinancirala Javna agencija za raziskovalno dejavnost Republike Slovenije iz državnega proračuna.

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The Specificity of the Dramatic Form and Ethical Issues in the Drama of Simona Semenič

Keywords: literature and ethics / Slovene drama / Semenič, Simona / dramatic form / postdramatic theatre / stage directions / spectator

The paper deals with three no longer dramatic texts (Poschmann) by Simona Semenič, namely *the feast or the story of a savory corpse or how roman abramovič, the character jansa, julia kristeva, age 24, simona semenič and the initials z. i. found themselves in a tiny cloud of tobacco smoke; sophia or while i almost ask for more or a parable of the ruler and the wisdom* and *7Cooks, 4Soldiers, 3 Sophias*. The main characters in all three texts are bullied and abused women, victims of religious and political wars as well as of patriarchal paradigms and enforced social roles. Their stories are based on true stories and then set within a timeless fictional frame in their fragmentary form. Characteristic of Simona Semenič's writing is the subversion of traditional reading conventions which involves the reader more closely into the decoding of the text and its interpretation. The division between the dialogue and stage directions disappears as stage directions become more than mere directions and their narrative function is emphasized. It is therefore necessary that the addressee of the text reconsiders basic relations within it, who speaks and to whom, what is the position of the author, of the dramatis personae, and their own position. The reader/spectator is more emotionally and cognitively involved in the plot and thus becomes to a greater degree a participant, and consequently responsible for the state of the society. Simona Semenič uses innovative textual strategies to achieve an artistic impact and to open up ethical aspects through a universal perspective. Even though she violates dramatic conventions, she at the same time relativizes and revitalizes them, and her new textual strategies are closely tied to the problems of reception and the power of the theatre today.

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek / Original scientific article
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Etika v sodobni britanski dramatiki

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V devetdesetih letih je v Veliki Britaniji nastajala dramatika, ki jo je kasneje Aleks Sierz poimenoval gledališče »u fris«. Njena glavna značilnost je bil šok, ki so ga dosegali s prikazovanjem skrajnih tem na odru (posilstva, umori, zloraba drog, psihično mučenje ...).¹ Je ob takšnih tekstih sploh mogoče razpravljati o etiki? Gledališče »u fris« je zaznamovalo tudi kasnejšo britansko in evropsko dramatiko, ki pa ni več tako radikalna v prikazovanju mučenja na odru. Kakšne so možnosti etične razsežnosti teh besedil, ki pa nastajajo v skrajno deziluzioniranem svetu? Razprava analizira Razdejane Sarah Kane in V Republiki sreče Martina Crimpa, da bi prišla do odgovora na vprašanje, kako je etična dimenzija vpisana v te drame in koliko je ta možnost etike prepričljiva za sodobnega bralca/gledalca.

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / angleška dramatika / gledališče »u fris« / Kane, Sarah / Crimp, Martin

Drama Sarah Kane *Razdejani* je bila premierno uprizorjena v londonškem gledališču Royal Court leta 1995 in velja za najbolj kontroverzno uprizoritev t. i. gledališča »u fris«. Mediji so avtorico močno napadli in s tem ustvarili veliko zanimanja za njene drame ter za gledališče cele generacije mladih britanskih piscev, ki so bili prepričani, da ne obstaja nič, česar ne bi mogli pokazati na odru. Kot je to zapisala Sarah Kane sama ob polemiki okrog *Razdejanih*: »Ničesar ni, česar ne bi mogli prikazati na odru. Če obstaja nekaj, česar ne moreš predstaviti na odru, potem o tem ne moreš govoriti. Zanikaš njegov ali njen obstoj. Sama sem zavezana samo resnici, ne glede na to, kako težka je.« (Urban 39)

Zdi se, da so Sarah Kane in ostali avtorji njene generacije želeli gledalce prisiliti v to, da bi do kraja dojeli distopijo sodobnega sveta. Kljub temu Sarah Kane eksplicitno poudari etično razsežnost svoje drame

¹ Prikazovanje skrajnega nasilja v literaturi sicer ni nič novega. Takšni so bili npr. že Senekov *Tiest*, Shakespearov *Tit Andronik* ali Webstrova *Vojvodinja Malfijska*. V Parizu je bilo ob koncu 19. st. ustanovljeno posebno gledališče, Grand Guignol, ki je uprizarjalo samo takšne in podobne tekste, z delovanjem pa je prenehalo šele ob koncu 2. svetovne vojne. Res pa je, da je bilo v Veliki Britaniji vse do 60. let prejšnjega stoletja prikazovanje spolnosti in nasilja celo cenzurirano. Tisto, kar je šokiralo pri novi gene-

Razdejani. Kot jo citira Aleks Sierz v svoji knjigi *Gledališče »u fris«*: »Razdejani so vsekakor optimistična drama, saj si osebe v njej prizadevajo postrgati življenje iz ruševin.« (151) Sedemnajst let kasneje so v Royal Courtu premierno uprizorili dramo Martina Crimpa *V republiki sreče* (*In the Republic of Happiness*, 2012). Crimp je starejši kolega Sarah Kane, ki pa nikoli ni bil del generacije gledališča »u fris«, čeprav je s svojim zgledovanjem po ostali evropski dramatikii nanjo vplival. Gre ponovno za krut in satiričen prikaz sodobne družbe, a z manj eksplisicnimi prizori nasilja. Receptija je bila kontroverzna: »Vsak večer so odobravojoči smeh spremljali demonstrativni odhodi iz dvorane. [...] Kar pa se tiče kritikov, je njihova reakcija na Cookovo postavitev nihala med inteligentnim odobravanjem (*Guardian*, *Times* in *Independent*) in grobimi žalitvami (*Sunday Telegraph*, *Spectator*).« (Sierz, *The Theatre* 235)

Oba teksta nedvomno predstavljata komentar sodobnega sveta in tako spadata v politično gledališče, vendar nas tokrat bolj zanima vprašanje, ali ob tem razvijata tudi kakršnokoli etično sporočilo. Prikazujeta le distopijo in puščata gledalca/bralca, da si ustvari lastno stališče, ali pa vendarle razvijata tudi nekakšno etiko v sodobni družbi? Da bi lahko odgovorili na to vprašanje, bomo analizirali obe besedili in raziskali, kako, če sploh, je vanju vpisana etična dimenzija. Rezultati nam bodo morda pokazali, kako lahko razvijemo etiko v sodobni, postmoderni družbi, kjer je koherenten in eksplisiten sistem vrednot bržkone nemogoč, saj sta deziluzija in negotovost sodobnega človeka, ki se kažeta tudi v opusih Sarah Kane in Martina Crimpa, prevelika.

Sarah Kane: *Razdejani*

Razdejani se začnejo z didaskalijo: »Zelo draga hotelska soba v Leedsu – ena tistih dragih sob, ki bi lahko bila kjerkoli na svetu.« (255) Na sceno vstopita Ian, šovinističen in homofoben novinar, in njegova znanka Cate. V prvih dveh prizorih ugotovimo, da je Ian očitno bolan in da ga nekdo preganja. Kate, ki pride z njim, a njun odnos ni nikoli docela pojasnjen, je mentalno zaostala mlada ženska. Prva dva prizora sta napisana v realistični maniri, tako da vidimo Iana pri običajnih opravilih, kakršna so naročanje sendvičev, tuširanje, narekovanje članka po telefonu ... Ko se dogajanje razvija, postaja Ian vedno bolj dominanten in nasilen do Cate.

raciji britanskih dramatikov, je bila predvsem količina tega nasilja in njegova že kar programska uporaba, ki je v gledališča ponovno prinesla dramski tekst kot središčno točko uprizoritve.

Na začetku drugega prizora, ko ima Cate napad, jo Ian posili in ona pobegne skozi okno v kopalnici. Na koncu drugega prizora na vrata potrka Vojak in vstopi z avtomatsko puško v rokah. Ianova pozicija se radikalno spremeni, saj sedaj Vojak prevzame dominantno vlogo, zaman išče Cate in na koncu urinira po postelji. Konec prizora zaznamuje eksplozija, ki spremeni scenografijo in nas prestavi v nekakšno vojno področje po veliki katastrofi: »V hotel je udarila granata. V eni od sten je velika luknja in vse je prekril prah, ki se še vedno ni polegel.« (277)

Zdi se, da je nasilje v svojem naturalističnem prikazu glavna tema tega prvega dela, a kot ugotavlja Ken Urban ob ponovni uprizoritvi v Royal Courtu leta 2001, ki jo je režiral James Macdonald, je »postavitev izpostavila tako poanto teksta kot njegovo iskanje etičnega načina bivanja« (44, 45). Sarah Kane svoje osebe oblikuje tako, da je gledalčeva empatija nenehno na preizkušnji. Cate je resda ranljiva, a ne povsem nevedna. Je nedvomno žrtev, a obenem se nam dozdeva, da vodi svojo lastno igro, ko zapeljuje Iana in ga ugrizne v penis. Na drugi strani je Ian seveda dominantni moški, za katerega se zdi, da je na smrt bolan. Nenehno se bori z bolečino in kašljem, poleg tega pa se zdi, da njegova preteklost skriva več, kot nam avtorica razkrije – tu imamo v mislih predvsem njegove nenehne namige na delo za obveščevalne službe. Oba sta torej obenem žrtvi in rablja, zato je naš občutek za dobro in zlo, prav in narobe, nenehno na preizkušnji.

Še bolj je to očitno v drugem delu, ko se znajdemo na bolj abstraktnem prizorišču, ki evocira vojno in njene grozote. Tu Ian postane žrtev brezimnega Vojaka. Nasilje se še stopnjuje in doseže vrh s posilstvom Iana, ki je le ponovitev posilstva, ki so ga neznani vojaki izvršili nad Vojakovim dekletom Col. Dogajanje opisujejo naslednje didaskalije: »Vstane in z eno roko obrne Iana. Z drugo prisloni pištolo Ianu h glavi. Potegne Ianu hlače dol, se sleče še sam in ga posili – miže in ovohavajoč Ianove lase. Vojak joče iz vsega srca. Ianov obraz razodeva bolečino, vendar ne pisne. Ko vojak konča, si potegne hlače nazaj in zarine pištolo Ianu v anus.« (283)

Nato Vojak Ianu izsesa oči iz jamic in si požene kroglo v glavo. Ponovno nam avtorica ne pusti, da bi zlahka sodili njene osebe. Ian je sedaj nedvomno žrtev, a njegova zla dejanja iz prvega dela še odzvanjajo v naših glavah. Vojak je na videz morda res radikalna podoba nasilja in grozot državljanske vojne (Kane je dramo pisala pod vplivom prizorov iz vojne v Bosni in Hercegovini v devetdesetih), a ponovno zbudi v gledalcu nekaj sočutja z zgodbo o svojem dekletu Col, ki je bila brutalno posiljena.

Še več, na samem koncu drame avtorica ponuja prizor pomiritve, kjer se človečnost ohrani v teh skrajnih okoliščinah. Ian umira in Cate ga zapusti, da bi našla nekaj hrane. On se spremeni v žival, »ki izloča,

masturbira in poje telo mrtvega dojenčka. Po vsem tem umre.« (Urban 46) Vendar to še ni konec drame. Na njegovo glavo začne deževati in Ian se zbudi. Cate se vrne z ginom, klobaso in nekaj kruha ter hrano deli z Ianom. Zadnja replika je Ianov: »Hvala ti.« (290) To je podoba dobrega, dobrote med dvema človekoma, ki sta storila grozne stvari in morala grozote tudi prestopiti. Kot zaključí Ken Urban: »Za Sarah Kane dobro ni moralni imperativ, ki ga zapoveduje neka višja instanca, pač pa je odvisno od okoliščin in se vzpostavlja v določenem kontekstu.« (46)

Martin Crimp: *V republiki sreče*

Ob koncu devetdesetih je gledališče »u fris« izgubilo svoj zamah in avtorji so začeli iskati v novih smereh. Ena od teh je bila vrnitev k žanrom, iz katerih je to gledališče izhajalo. To so naturalistični način odrskega prikazovanja, čeprav prizori eksplicitnega nasilja na odru niso bili več tako radikalni, satira, ki izhaja iz drame absurda, in nekakšna poetična razsežnost, ki predstavlja alternativo prikazani distopiji in se kaže npr. v že opisanem zadnjem prizoru *Razdejanih*.

Eden takšnih sodobnih tekstov je drama Martina Crimpa *V republiki sreče*. Krstno jo je uprizoril režiser Martin Cook v gledališču Royal Court leta 2012 v času okrog božiča. Uprizorjena je bila tudi v Ljubljani. V sezoni 2015/16 jo je v Drami režiral Sebastijan Horvat, ki je najbolj znan prav po svojih provokativnih in družbenokritičnih uprizoritvah. Čeprav ima podnaslov »zabava v treh delih«, je daleč od nedolžnega božičnega komada. Razdeljen je na tri dele (1. Uničenje družine, 2. Pet temeljnih svobod posameznika, 3. V republiki sreče). Vsak od njih je napisan v povsem drugem žanru.

Prvi del prikazuje britansko družino srednjega razreda pri božični večerji. Tri generacije – Babi in Dedi, Očka in Mama, Debbie in Hazel (teenagerki) – spominjajo na prizore iz Ionescovih iger, kjer osebe ves čas govorijo, a se ne morejo razumeti. Rezultat je groteskna podoba družinskih razmerij in skritih frustracij od Dedovih poslovnih polomov, slabega finančnega položaja in naglušnosti njegovega sina, do Debbiejine najstniške nosečnosti. Na to zabavo pride nepovabljeni Stric Bob z izgovorom, da se z ženo Madeleine selita v neko daljno deželo in mora na poti na letališče enkrat za vselej povedati, kaj si Madeleine misli o njih. Bob v svojih dolgih monologih bruha skrite misli in obtožbe. Končno se jim pridruži tudi Madeleine, ki jim pojasni, da odhajata v deželo, ki je kot »okenska šipa. [...] Trdna. Jasna. Ostra. Čista. In če se ga bo kdo od vas samo *dotaknil*, se bo urezal direkt skozi – direkt do kosti.« (45)

Drugi del je bolj eksperimentalen in odkrito satiričen. Vseh osem igralcev/oseb si izmenjuje replike povsem svobodno, tako da imamo občutek, da govorijo neposredno občinstvu. Pet temeljnih svobod posameznika na satiričen način predstavlja zapovedi, ki jih pred posameznika postavljata sodobna družba in množični mediji. Te so: 1. Svoboda, da pišem scenarij svojega življenja. 2. Svoboda, da razširim noge. 3. Svoboda, da doživim strašno travmo. 4. Svoboda, da pustim vse za sabo in grem naprej. 5. Svoboda, da dobro zgledam + večno živim. Teme so znane iz tabloidov, literature za samopomoč, TV oddaj ipd. Povprečen gledalec se zlahka identificira z njimi in razbere avtorjevo satirično poanto. Kot je opazil Aleks Sierz v londonski postavitvi: »V najboljših trenutkih se je vzpostavila resnična dinamika na odru. Do izraza je prišel ves humor teksta, kot takrat, ko je moški igralec govoril o tem, da bo zaprl svojo vagino, ali o tem, da ima pravico nositi mini krilo.« (*The Theatre* 234)

Tretji del je postavljen na sanjsko prizorišče: »Ogromna soba. Dnevna svetloba. Velika okna dajejo slutiti zeleno pokrajino – toda pokrajina je zabrisana. Soba je popolnoma prazna – v njej je morda edino nekaj, kar je videti kot opuščena pisalna miza. Stric Bob je sam. Poslušaj.« (59)

Gre za deželo, v katero sta emigrirala Madeleine in Stric Bob. Na trenutke jo dojemamo kot poetično podobo sreče, na kar nas, bržkone satirično, napeljuje tudi motto iz Dantejeve *Božanske komedije*: »Tu non se' in terra, sì come tu credi.« (Crimp 59) Gre za navedek iz prvega speva Raja, ko Beatrice pravi pesniku: »Nisi na zemlji, kot ti um verjame, / a niti blisk z neba do tal ne seže / tak hitro, kot greš ti v njegove hrame.« (I/91) Dogajanje med Madeleine in Stricem Bobom je v popolnem nasprotju z idiličnostjo scene. Je namreč polno maščevalnosti in zlobe. Kot zapiše Sierz: »Je hkrati vpogled v nesrečo nekega para in metafora za razpad kateregakoli populističnega političnega sistema.« (*The Theatre* 234, 235) Sreča, ki sta jo iskala, se izkaže za nemogoč cilj. Na koncu skušata zapeti »srečno pesem«, a je ta le skupek mrmranja in nasprotujočih si besed:

Stric Bob: Se smejeva, ko hruška belo zacveti,
 še bolj, ko spet drevo ozeleni –
 tu in zdaj od pamtiveka
 sva najsrečnejša človeka. [...]
 Svet – plus mami in ati –
 nočna lučka – država –
 so ... so ...
 Madeleine *sotto voce*: Zgoreli, ostal je pepel.
 Stric Bob: Ostal je pepel –
 Ja, vse je res prima. (63)

Zaključni akord se sprevrže v banalno samopromocijo, ki nas spomni na Madeleinin refren s konca prvega dela, ko pravi: »[Z]ato jaz nikoli, ne, nikoli, ne, nikoli ne grem v globino.« (46) Sedaj Stric Bob svojo srečno pesem, ki se napoveduje kot poanta celote, pospremi s pozivom k všečkanju oz. prenosu. »Stric Bob: Klikni na moj nasmejani obraz / in si namesti verzijo te pesmice / brez besed.« (63) Avtor sicer ne zavzame jasnega etičnega stališča do prikazanega sveta, je pa njegova satira nedvoumna. Kot pravi Sierz, so bili ti trije prizori »zmagoslaven primer politične igre, ki se izogne očitnemu politiziranju, in igra, ki pljune na božične igre« (*The Theatre* 235).

Če hočemo sedaj govoriti o etični razsežnosti teh del, moramo odgovoriti na vprašanje: Kako lahko sodobna dramatika obravnava etična vprašanja in predstavi etične odločitve? O kakšni etiki sploh govorimo. Pri tem velja opozoriti na razlikovanje med etiko in moralo, ki ga že ves čas implicitno uporabljamo. Etika je namreč sistem vrednot, ki se nenehno spreminja in je odvisen od vsakokratne situacije, subjektov, ki so v njej ..., čeprav ima v osnovi tendenco po splošni veljavnosti. Moralo po drugi strani sestavlja serija pravil, ki se določijo v konkretnem kulturnem in časovnem kontekstu. Čeprav izhaja iz etike, postane morala vedno utesnjujoča, saj ne more predvideti različnih situacij in kontekstov, v katerih naj bi se uporabljala. Tega se zavedata tudi oba obravnavana avtorja. Zato zgolj postavljata vprašanja oz. svoje osebe pred etične izbire, ki pa jih eksplicitno ne komentirata in ne podajata moralnih pravil. Zdi se, da bi bilo to preveč naivno v današnjem dezorientiranem svetu.

Etika literature in dramatike

Kot smo skušali pokazati z analizo obeh dramskih tekstov, etika v sodobni literaturi ni nikoli eksplicitna in ne predstavlja jasnega sistema vrednot. Literatura je bolj sredstvo prevpraševanja etičnih vrednot bralcev/gledalcev, včasih pa se zdi, da nas skušajo avtorji prepričati, da je tudi v današnjem svetu radikalne distopije mogoče najti ostanke človečnosti. Hubert Zapf je podoben obrat detektiral v svojem članku *Literary Ecology and the Ethics of Texts*: »Še več, zanimivo je opazovati, da odpiranje tradicionalne etike za ekološka vprašanja sovпада s spremembo fokusa s paradigme filozofije na paradigmo literature v sodobnih etičnih razpravah.« (853)

Zapf razpravlja o štirih točkah, ki so bile deležne posebne pozornosti in se zdijo zanimive tudi za naše vprašanje:

1. »Naracija je postala medij za konkretno predstavljanje etičnih problemov, ki jih ni mogoče raziskati zgolj na sistematično teoretični ravni.« (ibid.)

Tukaj navaja Josepha Hillisa Millerja (*The Ethics of Reading*), Paula Riceourja (*Oneself as Other*) in Martho Nussbaum (»Perceptive Equilibrium: Literary Theory and Ethical Theory«), da bi pokazal, kako je glavna etična dilema postalo vprašanje razmerja med subjektom in drugim. To razmerje ne more biti predstavljeno in razloženo s pomočjo abstraktne sistematizacije, temveč mora biti definirano s pomočjo resnične izkušnje, ki jo lahko evocira literatura. »Etika v tem smislu ni morala. Prav nasprotno, predstavlja kritiko moralnih sistemov, v kolikor ti predstavljajo trdna, konvencionalna in neosebna pravila mišljenja in obnašanja.« (854)

Prav to smo našli v *Razdejanih* in *V republiki sreče*. Oba avtorja opisujeta sodobno družbo, a predstavita svoje osebe na način, ki onemogoča kakršnokoli moralno sodbo. Osebe so tako rablji in žrtve hkrati, v ospredju obeh tekstov pa so njihovi odnosi. Slednji so nenehno dekonstruirani, s čimer avtorja vzpostavljata kritiko sodobne družbe in prisilita gledalca/bralca, naj tudi sam preizpraša svoj sistem vrednot.

2. »Način, na katerega literatura, ki sporočilo vedno posreduje skozi osebno perspektivo, odseva povezavo med etiko in subjektom. Ta subjekt pa ni zgolj misleči jaz, ampak je konkreten subjekt, ki je sam zapleten v številna razmerja.« (853)

To je prav tisti obrat, ki je bil ključen za gledališče »u fris«. Aleks Sierz ga definira takole: »V nasprotju z gledališčem, ki nam dovoljuje, da v njem v miru sedimo in z razdalje motrimo dogajanje na odru, nam gledališče 'u fris' v svojih najboljših trenutkih zleze pod kožo in nas popelje na čustveno potovanje. Z drugimi besedami, to gledališče ni spekulativno, temveč izkustveno.« (*Gledališče* 23) Martin Crimp uporablja podobno taktiko. Najbolj očitno v drugem delu, ko vsi igralci govorijo direktno v publiko o temeljnih pravicah posameznika, s tem pa komentirajo osnovna pravila sodobne Zahodne družbe.

3. »Način, na katerega opisi življenj v fikciji lahko vzpostavljajo forum dialoške odvisnosti med subjektom in drugim ter poleg tega razliko in različnost drugega, ki je za etiko bistvena.« (853)

Na ta način lahko interpretiramo odnose med Ianom, Cate in Vojakom v *Razdejanih*. Sarah Kane je, kot smo že pokazali, prepričljivo pokazala kompleksnost in spremenljivost teh odnosov med osebami.

Ti odnosi postavljajo etična vprašanja, ki nimajo enostavnih odgovorov, čeprav se zdi, da Kane verjame v človečnost tudi v najbolj krutih razmerah. Crimp je manj radikalen, čeprav nas tudi on sooča z različnimi razmerji od družinskih vezi do intimnega odnosa v zadnjem delu. Vmes je zapleteno razmerje do samega sebe, ki pa je prav tako družbeno pogojeno.

4. »Literatura in umetnost nista le ilustracija moralnih ideologij, ampak tudi simbolna prezentacija kompleksnih življenjskih procesov, katerih etična moč izvira prav iz njihove sposobnosti kljubovati enostavnim interpretacijam in prisvojitvam.« (853)

Zgornja točka se jasno kaže v obeh analiziranih delih. Kot smo pokazali v naši analizi, enako pa ugotavljajo tudi avtorji za druge drame Sarah Kane in Martina Crimpa (prim. Urban in Sierz *Gledališče »u fris«*, *The Theatre of Martin Crimp*) je glavna značilnost te dramatike prav dekonstrukcija družbenih ideologij. Nič čudnega, da Sierz razume Crimпов komad kot »politično igro, ki se izogne očitnemu politiziranju« (*The Theatre* 235). Lahko bi torej rekli, da sodobna britanska dramatika nedvomno ima etično razsežnost, če slednjo razumemo v njeni moderni obliki, ki jo opiše Hubert Zapf. Slednja ni več eksplisitna, ampak je vgrajena v obliko žanra in v način, kako so dramske osebe predstavljene.

Zaključek

Za konec si lahko postavimo vprašanje, ki je bilo vseskozi v ozadju naše razprave: Je mogoče govoriti o etiki v dramskih tekstih, ki temeljijo na šoku in prikazujejo sodobni svet kot radikalno distopijo? Odgovor je, kot smo skušali pokazati, pozitiven. Še več, zdi se, da je to edina možnost obravnavanja etičnih vprašanj v svetu, kjer so vrednote fluidne in se vsak trden sistem moralnih vrednost slej ko prej izkaže kot naiven, ko je soočen s pojavi, kakršni so vojna proti terorju Georga Busha mlajšega po 11. septembru, ukrepi proti Islamski državi, globalne teroristične grožnje, vojna v Siriji, emigrantska kriza itd.

Snov sodobnih dramatikov, in tu britanski seveda niso nikakršna izjema, so prav razmerja med dramatis personae, torej med subjektom in drugim, s čimer pravzaprav raziskujejo, kaj definira našo družbo in nas same. Nič čudnega torej, da se Zapfovi poudarki v sodobni debati o etiki berejo kot opis oz. analiza *Razdejanih* in *V republiki sreče*. Etika je tu predstavljena kot družbena kritika. Sarah Kane je v naturalistični

maniri napisala predstavitev sodobne distopije, ki jo dopolnjuje zadnji, nadrealistični prizor, v katerem predstavi možnost etičnega dejanja oz. dobrote, če skušamo biti natančnejši. Martin Crimp uporablja drugačen pristop, ki temelji v evropski dramatični tradiciji – prvi del na drami absurda, drugi na post-dramskih komadih, kakršen je *Športni komad* Elfriede Jelinek, tretji del pa na poetični drami 19. stoletja. Kar imata obe besedili skupnega, je način kompleksne gradnje dramskih oseb, ki sprejemniku preprečuje, da bi si ustvaril mnenja o njih. Gledalca/bralca prisilita, da nenehno oscilira med sočutjem in mržnjo, odporom in razumevanjem ter ga tako pripravita do tega, da naknadno racionalizira lastno doživetje. V tej racionalizaciji pa tudi prevprašuje lasten sistem vrednot in s tem lastno etiko. V primeru idealnega sprejemnika bi slednji bržkone prišel do spoznanja, da se etika nenehno spreminja in je povsem odvisna od konteksta oz. naših razmerij z drugimi. Ta razmerja lahko vodijo v dominacijo in konkurenco, ki nas v radikalni obliki pelje v prikazano distopijo, lahko pa vodijo tudi v smer empatije in sočutja, ki je prikazana v zadnjem prizoru *Razdejanih* in jo Crimp daje le slutiti kot odsotno alternativo v *V republiki sreče*. Kakšna bo reakcija publike, je skoraj nemogoče napovedati. Kot lahko sklepamo iz poročil Aleksa Sierza in podobno lahko trdimo za ljubljansko postavitev Crimpovega besedila, takšni teksti dajo ljudem misliti. In to je verjetno največ, kar lahko dramski avtor naredi v smeri ubesedovanja etike v literarnem delu. Podobne rešitve najdemo pri ostalih britanskih avtorjih 90. let – npr. pri Marku Ravenhillu, Conorju McPhersonu idr.

Seveda pa ti pojavi niso bili brez odmeva tudi pri nas. Najbolj jasne paralele se kažejo v opusu Simone Semenič, ki se je na začetku svojega ustvarjanja močno zgledovala pri gledališču »u fris«. Tako je npr. drama *5fantkov.si*, ki je do sedaj njena najuspešnejša, besedilo, kjer otroci preigravajo različne prizore fizičnega in psihičnega nasilja, ki ga vidijo doma in na splošno v družbi, s tem pa seveda podajajo tudi komentar teh odnosov, ki močno vpliva na gledalca. Zanimivo je, da je Simona Semenič v svojih zadnjih delih, npr. v *medtem ko skoraj rečem še ali prilika o vladarju in modrosti*, podobno kot Crimp napisala postmodernistično žanrsko lepljenko o naravi oblasti in družbe. Prav ta izredno prepričljivi in pretresljivi komad, ki ga je režiser Primož Ekart postavil na mali oder ljubljanske Drame, prav tako načenja etična vprašanja, ki so dandanašnji vedno bolj aktualna. Vendar pa bi analiza opusa Simone Semenič zahtevala posebno obravnavo. Za zaključek lahko rečemo le to, da lahko analizirane pojave v britanski dramatiki najdemo tudi v ostalih besedilih sodobne evropske dramatike, kar kaže na univerzal-

nost obravnavanih problemov, pa tudi na določene strukturne rešitve, ki so za njihovo obravnavo še posebej primerne.

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Ethics in Modern British Drama

Keywords: literature and ethics / English drama / »in yer face« theatre / Kane, Sarah / Crimp, Martin

In the 1990s, Great Britain has produced a new form of dramatic literature and theatre that was subsequently described and defined by Aleks Sierz as “in yer face” theatre. The main features of this writing are shock and presenting things like rape, slaughter, masturbation, drug abuse etc. on stage. These are used in order to stir viewer’s emotions of fear and revolt. However, Sarah Kane, one of the most famous writers of the genre, said she was trying to search for the remnants of humanity in the modern world.

The paper focuses on the question, how this ethical dimension is written in texts that show us the radical dystopia of our world. Firstly, it analyses Sarah Kane’s *Blasted*, which was one of the most controversial dramatic texts of the 1990s. Later on it looks into the further development of the British drama

by taking into consideration *In the Republic of Happiness* (2012) by Martin Crimp, which also deals with a possibility of ethics in the present. Through the analysis and comparison of both texts it shows how ethics is inscribed in modern British drama and comes to a conclusion that ethics is possible in modern literature.

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek / Original scientific article

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Razkrivanje temnih resnic družbe in nezlomljiva moč dobrega v Dickensovem romanu *Oliver Twist*

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Prispevek predstavlja Dickensov roman Oliver Twist in se osredotoča na literarno tehniko razkrivanja kontrastnega razmerja med kriminalnimi dejanji starega Juda Fagina in plemenitim ravnanjem sirote Oliverja. Analizira razpletanje zgodbe do najstrožje kazni in zmagoslavja dobrega nad zlim. Zanima nas predvsem, s katerimi sredstvi Dickensovo besedilo tega romana, ki je zapisano in se bere v specifičnih kontekstih, tematizira, problematizira ali konsolidira specifične moralne vrednote in norme. Dickensov roman s svojo narativnostjo razkriva etična vprašanja v območju človekovih vrednot in odgovornosti v kapitalistični družbi, ki je polna nepravilnosti, zlorab ter odkritega ali prikrita nasilja. Prinaša pripovedi in refleksije o delovanju in značaju različnih oseb, vzeti iz resničnosti, ter jih postavlja pred bralca, da bi izzval njegovo vrednotenje, moralno sodbo in etično angažiranost. Razkrivanje notranje povezanosti dejanj in posledic kaže, kako literatura, še posebej roman s svojo narativnostjo, lahko učinkovito dopolnjuje moralno filozofijo (Nussbaum). Medtem ko je moralna filozofija vezana na abstraktni jezik in se ukvarja z univerzaliziranimi, pa pripoved s svojo imaginacijo in sposobnostjo za celotno zaznavanje duševnega in duhovnega stanja junakov vadi človekov praktični moralni čut za zasledovanje etosa, ki omišlja celotno kompozicijo Dickensovega romana.

Ključne besede: Ključne besede: literatura in etika / literarna veda / etični obrat / angleška književnost / Dickens, Charles: *Oliver Twist* / dobro in zlo

Uvod

Dickens je roman napisal pod vtisom svoje lastne izkušnje težkega življenja ubogih ljudi, še zlasti sirot, v revnih predelih velikega mesta Londona. Njegovo delo zrcali socialne razmere v Angliji 19. stoletja.

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Kapitalistični liberalizem je zatiral uboge in nemočne ljudi, saj že zakonodaja ni bila naklonjena revnim.² Dickens so močno prizadeli siromaštvo, otroško delo ter zlorabe otrok in sirot, izkušnje, ki jih je doživel v tovarni, pa so bile navdih za številne like iz njegovih poznejših del, med drugim tudi iz *Oliverja Twista* in *Davida Copperfielda*.³

Kapitalistični duh je povzročil razslojevanje večjega dela prebivalstva in naraščanje števila sirot med otroki. Ti so bili izpostavljeni prekupčevalcem in izkoriščevalcem in če ne bi bilo vsaj nekaj poštenih in dobrih ljudi, bi bil položaj za sirote brezupen. Lik enega takšnih osirotelih otrok Dickens upodobi v svojem romanu *Oliver Twist*. V njem opisuje mladega dečka, ki je zvaobljen v kriminalno združbo, kamor s svojim nežnim in plemenitim značajem nikakor ne sodi. Oliver se mora vključiti v roparsko družbo, ne da bi v kriminalu tudi sodeloval. Rešitev za nedolžnega dečka Dickens najde v liku gospoda Brownlowa, ki se bori proti zlorabi otrok. John Gordon meni: »Dickensov Brownlow rešuje Oliverja iz Faginove združbe mestnih morilcev otrok in predstavlja njihovo vaško nasprotje. V tem romanu je zato, ker je potreben, saj bi brez takšnega lika Oliverja in vsakega drugega otroka, ki ga vidimo, uničil eden ali drug morilec otrok.« (Gordon 13)

Ker roman zelo izrazito odseva različne etične dileme, ki jih s seboj prinaša kapitalistično razslojena družba z revščino na eni ter bogatenjem na drugi strani, nas zanima, kako literatura s svojo narativno fikcijo lahko slika etična vprašanja in ogroženost socialno šibkih v nepravični družbi.

Pogledi o etičnih vprašanjih v narativni fikciji

V obdobju od leta 1980 naprej se je pri filozofih in literarnih kritikih pojavil tolikšen usmerjen interes za narativno literaturo, zlasti literarno zvrst romana kot način predstavitve etičnih vprašanj, dilem in problemov, da se je za to novost uveljavil izraz »etični obrat« (*ethical turn*). Izraz označuje refleksijo o etičnih vprašanjih v narativni fikciji, pri čemer se osredotoča na človekovo srečanje z »drugačnostjo« (*otherness*), oblikovanje samega sebe (*self-fashioning*), vrednot in odgovornosti ter vidike nasilja. Čeprav sta bila filozofa Jacques Derrida in Emmanuel Levinas

² Za pregled socialnih razmer v Dickensovem času gl. Duckworth 2002 in Werner in Williams 2011.

³ Dickens je pozneje kot novinar s posebnim čutom za usode šibkih razkrival krivičnost zakonov, ki niso bili naklonjeni revnim ljudem; takšen je bil »Novi zakon o ubogih«, izdan leta 1834.

posebej pozorna na etično delovanje poezije, Martha Nussbaum pa na dramatiko, se etična kritika osredotoča predvsem na roman. Navadno je to upravičeno z argumentom, »da roman s svojo obliko in tematskim gradivom predstavlja natančno to, za kar v etiki gre, to je: refleksijo o človekovem delovanju in značaju; nasprotujoče si težnje, želje in izbire, ki potekajo v času, ponujene bralčevemu vrednotenju ali sodbi z različnih perspektiv« (Korthals Altes 219). Etična kritika je najbolj popularna »v Veliki Britaniji in v Združenih državah, kjer je moralna osnova na področju humanistike tradicionalno močna« (Korthals Altes 219).

Med pomembnimi raziskovalci sodobne literarne teorije in etične kritike je tudi Robert Eaglestone. Kot piše v delu *The Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory* iz leta 2010 (582), se izraz »etična kritika« ne nanaša na šolo ali kritični pristop k etiki, ampak bolj na razmah zanimanja za odnos med etiko, literaturo, kritiko in teorijo od poznih devetdesetih let 20. stoletja, pogosto imenovan »etični obrat«. Wayne Booth je v delu *The Company We Keep* iz leta 1988 zapisal, da je »etična kritika« dejansko postala »izobčena disciplina« (3). Eaglestone pa ugotavlja, da

je zunaj discipline literarnih študij obstajala renesansa zanimanja za etična vprašanja v filozofiji in v mejnih disciplinah, ki je našlo v literaturi, in posebej v pripovedi, vitalen vir za razvijanje in poglobljanje razumevanja etike. Vodilni primeri tega so filozofi Alasdair MacIntyre, Paul Ricoeur in Martha Nussbaum, ki so vsi gledali na literaturo kot sredstvo za globlje razumevanje etičnih tradicij in za etično vodilo. (582)

MacIntyre v knjigi *After Virtue* (1985) posebno pozornost posveča pripovedim. V njih vidi vitalni okvir našega razumevanja življenja, kajti življenje oblikujemo s pripovedmi, z zgodbami o sebi in drugih. Z delom *The Ethics of Reading* (1987) je vpliven tudi Joseph Hillis Miller, prepričan, da »brez pripovedovanja zgodb ni teorije o etiki« (2–3). Etična pravila dobijo svoj smisel samo v situacijah, ki so predstavljene v pripovedi oziroma kot pripovedi: »Etika ni samo oblika jezika, ampak tekoč ali zaporeden (*sequential*) način jezika, skratka zgodba. Etika je oblika alegorije, oblika tistih dozdevno referenčnih zgodb, ki jih pripovedujemo sebi in tistim okrog nas« (50).

Martha Nussbaum meni, da branje narativne fikcije pomembno dopolnjuje moralno filozofijo s tem, ko ponuja nekakšno izkustveno učenje in moralno zavest o tem, kako je mogoče živeti dobro življenje. Booth etični pomen literature tako visoko ceni, da knjige personificira kot prijateljice, branje pa ima za prijateljstvo in dar (Booth 157–373, cit. tudi Nussbaum 231).

Liesbeth Korthals Altes v svojem poglavju »Ethical turn« v *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (2010) pravi: »V sorodnem duhu, toda z večjim zanimanjem za formalne vidike literarne komunikacije retorična naratologija (Booth 1988; Phelan 1996) raziskuje sredstva, s katerimi narativni teksti konstruirajo vrednostne učinke in izvablja-jo bralčevo etično angažiranost« (219). Ta »humanistična« spoznanja pa so predmet kritike tako v Levinasovi etiki drugosti (*ethics of alterity*) kot tudi v dekonstrukcijski etiki (*deconstructive ethics*), ki so jo razvili Derrida, Blanchot, Lyotard in Paul de Man. Avtorica ugotavlja: »Narativno ustrezni modeli, ki so jih navdahnili ti filozofi, postavljajo etični vpogled, ki ga literatura lahko ponudi, v izkušnjo radikalne tujosti drugega, jaza in sveta, in v končno nedoločljivost pomena in vrednot« (219). Levinas kot posebno vpliven promotor »obrata k etiki« je v knjigi *Otherwise than Being* (1981) pokazal, da svojega odnosa do literature ne razume kot spodbujanje k moralnemu življenju, temveč kot opisni način osnovnih možnosti moralnega življenja.⁴

Liesbeth Korthals Altes ugotavlja, da imajo kritiki, ki se osredotočajo na raso, spol (*gender*), razred in multikulturalizem, navado »gojiti dekonstruktivni sum v 'humanistično' etiko, saj naj bi bila sokriva za patriarhalno in kolonialno zahodno zatiranje. 'Neodločljivost' (*undecidability*) kot ultimativno etiko romana pogosto zamenjujejo za bolj polemično formulirane alternative, kakor so feministične (Irigaray, Cornell, Armstrong) ali post-kolonialne etike (Bhabha, Spivak)« (Korthals Altes 220). V poglavju »Narrative Fiction between Ethics and Aesthetics« v delu *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (2010) pa Liesbeth Korthals Altes zapiše:

Ironično je, da so se raziskovalci literature izogibali vprašanju o etiki, moralni filozofiji, nezadovoljni s kantovsko deontologijo in z utilitaristično etiko, pa so nenadoma (na novo) odkrili literaturo, zlasti roman. MacIntyreovemu delu *After Virtue* (1981), ki je utiralo pot, so kmalu sledili drugi filozofski prispevki, ki so utemeljevali pomembnost narativnosti za teorijo o etiki (Nussbaum 1990; Taylor 1989; Rorty 1989; Ricoeur 1990). [...] Celotni misleci, ki so najbolj zagrizeno kritizirali 'humanizem', kot Foucault, Derrida in Lyotard, so začeli izrecno reflektirati o njihovi lastni – postmoderni – etiki. (220)

V »sedanji eksploziji kritike o etiki« razlikuje med tremi poglavitnimi težnjami: (1) pragmatična in retorična etika; (2) etika drugačnosti ter (3) politični pristopi k etiki (221). V razlaganju prve usmeritve odlično

⁴ Robert Eaglestone ocenjuje, da je Levinas »zelo močno vplival na diskusije o razmerju med etiko in literaturo« (Eaglestone 585).

zadane bistvo razlike med filozofskim in literarnim pristopom k etičnim vprašanjem in pravi:

V delovanju znotraj ameriške pragmatične tradicije Nussbaumova, Booth, Parker in Phelan zagovarjajo stališče, da narativna fikcija lahko igra pomembno vlogo v moralnem razvoju bralcev z modeliranjem njihovih emocij, samopodobe in življenjskega nazora. Ta vrsta kritike ne razpravlja samo o moralnih stališčih, ki so izrecno tematizirana v nekem delu; gre za več, trdi, da zasleduje *etos*, ki je vključen v celotno kompozicijo. Z reaktualizacijo aristotelovske etike M. Nussbaum argumentira, da je narativna fikcija nujno potrebna dopolnitev k moralni filozofiji: zadnja je vezana na abstraktni jezik in se ukvarja z univerzalijami, medtem ko moralna dispozicija in akcija zahtevata fleksibilnost, imaginacijo in sposobnost za prilagajanje konkretnim situacijam, po katerih univerzalije navadno ne posegajo na očitni način. S tem ko nas pritegne v situacije vrednostnih konfliktov, pripoved vadi naš praktični moralni čut za nadomestno izkustveno učenje. (Korthals Altes 221)

Razlika v razlaganju odnosnosti v moralni izkušnji je izpostavila dve različni merili: težnjo k »istosti« v dojetanju splošnega moralnega čuta in skupnih vrednot (Nussbaum in Booth) na eni strani in velik poudarek na razmerju do »drugega« v dojetanju lastne moralne izkušnje znotraj samega sebe (Levinas) na drugi. Zanima nas predvsem, »s katerimi sredstvi narativni teksti, ki so zapisani in se berejo v specifičnih kontekstih, tematizirajo, problematizirajo ali utrjujejo specifične moralne vrednote in norme ter kako je njihova etična vrednost lahko vsebovana v spraševanju po moralnosti sami« (Korthals Altes 222). Drugo odprto vprašanje se tiče epistemološkega in etičnega statusa diskurza kritika. Liesbeth Korthals Altes meni: »Ne obstaja nekaj takšnega kot 'etika' teksta, obstajajo samo različne vrste etičnega branja. Nevarnosti v uporabljanju literarnega dela kot posrednika za promocijo vnaprej določenih etičnih idej so očitne. Toda skrbna retorična in naratološka analiza vsaj dajeta tekstualno osnovo za etično uspešno diskusijo interpretacij. Etično branje, če literaturo vzamemo resno, zahteva sofistične spretnosti v estetski (naratološki in retorični) analizi.« (222)

Dickensovo razkrivanje resnice o temni strani družbe v romanu *Oliver Twist*

V romanu *Oliver Twist* Dickens s podnaslovom: *The Parish Boy's Progress* nakaže, da je zgodbo o Oliverju Twistu zapisal z namenom razkritja nekega splošnega vzorca. Potem ko besedilo začne opis realističnega milje-

ja, razvoj dogodkov vodi v smer nekakšne melodrame. Pri tem Dickens prepleta prvine satire in patosa, naturalistične podrobnosti in simbolne elemente, realistične like in stereotype, skladnost upodabljanja in ekstravagančna naključja, strasten dialog in moralistične prvine. William T. Lankford v članku »'The Parish Boy's Progress': The Evolving Form of *Oliver Twist*« meni, da je ta navidezna tematska in simbolična zmedenost pravzaprav progresivna transformacija načina reprezentacije v romanu:

Oliver Twist se začne v eni vrsti resničnosti in konča v drugi, ker ima Dickens težave s tem, da bi razvil narativni način, ki je primeren, da izrazi silo njegove domišljije in resničnost o tedanji družbi. Trudi se ustvariti novo vrsto romana, da bi jasno razkril neodkrito resnico; formalni problemi, s katerimi se srečuje, so zakoreninjeni v globoko občutenih moralnih konfliktih, tako javnih kot tudi zasebnih. Ti konflikti so razkriti v težavni ambivalentnosti Dickensovega portretiranja kriminalnega podzemlja in v pisateljevi ustvarjalni negotovosti glede odnosa med tatovi in družbo, na katero ti prežijo. (20)

Izid romana *Oliver Twist* leta 1838 je takoj izzval protest zaradi Dickensovega realizma v reprezentaciji likov in njihovih usod. William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863) se je odzval s kritiko, da so zločinci in tatovi predstavljeni neverodostojno, in v njih vidi »nenaravne karikature« (407). Ta in podobne druge obtožbe o grobosti in pretiravanju v slikanju tatov so pisatelja pripravile do tega, da je za tretjo izdajo romana leta 1841 napisal predgovor, v katerem je med drugim zapisal:

Zdelo se mi je primerno pokazati na povezave med udeleženci v zločinu tako stvarno, kakor obstajajo; slikati jih v vsej njihovi deformiranosti, v vseh njihovih bednostih, v vsej nečisti revščini njihovega življenja; pokazati jih takšne, kot resnično so, za vedno neprijetno prežeče skozi najbolj umazane poti življenja, z velikimi, črnimi, pošastnimi vislicami, ki zapirajo njihov pogled, jih obrnejo kamor koli; zdelo se mi je, da storiti to pomeni poskušati nekaj, za kar je bila velika potreba in kar bi bilo v službi družbe. Zato sem to storil najbolje, kot sem zmožel. (Dickens 2008, liv)

Dickens ne zagovarja resnicoljubnosti svoje umetnosti le na podlagi njene naturalistične točnosti; vrednost resnice, ki jo predstavlja, najde v njenem moralnem namenu: »V malem Oliverju sem želel pokazati načelo Dobrega, ki preživi v vseh nenaklonjenih okoliščinah in na koncu zmaga.« (Dickens 2008, liii) To protagonista romana naredi prej za alegorično figuro kot pa za resničnega dečka; preizkušan je moralno, vendar ne z nizom alegoričnih grehov, ampak z »gručo takšnih zločinskih tovarišev, kot so v resnici obstajali«, očitno prikazani, »kakršni v resnici so« (Lankford 20).

Dickens je branil svojo zgodbo na podlagah realizma; njegov roman je sam na sebi družbeni komentar in moralni poduk, ki ju je razumel kot družbeno dolžnost. V zvezi s pomisleki glede slikanja prostitutke Nancy je Dickens zapisal: »Brez koristi je diskutirati, ali se zdi ravnanje oziroma značaj dekleta naraven ali nenaraven, verjeten ali neverjeten, pravilen ali zgrešen. RESNIČEN JE [IT IS TRUE].« (Dickens 2008, lvii) Dickensovo vztrajanje v »realizmu« prikazovanja življenja odseva pisateljeve osebne izkušnje dejanskega krutega stanja v Londonu njegovega časa, ko je liberalni kapitalizem človeka ponižal na golo blago.

Spopad med Dobrim in Zlim v zatiralski družbi in zmaga principa »Dobrega«

Stephen Gill v Uvodu oxfordske izdaje iz leta 2008 na več mestih izpostavi pisateljeve literarne prijeme v slikanju spopada med Dobrim in Zlim. Meni, da se najmočnejše emocije, ki preplavljajo Dickensovo prozo, vzbujajo ob ugotovitvah, da dogodki za glavnega junaka nastopajo »naključno« in so »nezasluženi«: »Ko pade v položaj, iz katerega ni rešitve, z njegovo prihodnostjo razpolagajo sile, ki so onkraj nadzora.« (Gill xx)

Andrew Mangham v članku »God's Truth: Kant, Mill and Moral Epistemology in *Oliver Twist*« (2012) poskuša pokazati, kako Dickens v tem romanu išče »resnico« v pomenu, ki ga avtor v predgovoru tudi sam razloži. Pri tem se opira na stališče filozofov, ki so v 19. stoletju zaznamovali diskurz o razmerju med človekovo izkušnjo in filozofskimi razlagami temeljev moralnega reda. Mangham ugotavlja, da je bilo v 19. stoletju v središču filozofskega diskurza vprašanje, ali je »moralno spoznanje skupek izkušenj določene osebe, ali pa obstajajo takšne reči, kot so a priori ali 'naravni' principi etike, ki presegaajo človekovo prakso« (733).

John Bowen se v knjigi *Other Dickens* (2000) navezuje na Dickensovo razlago v predgovoru in v reprezentaciji likov, da izpostavi temeljno vprašanje romana (Bowen 82–106). Meni, da Dickens moralno spoznanje povezuje »z idejo objektivne in nedotakljive resnice«; ta je v prvem delu romana utelešena v glavnem junaku Oliverju, ki v svojem značaju in ravnanju samodejno povezuje resnico in dobroto (Mangham 733–734). Michael Slater v svoji knjigi *Charles Dickens* (90) navaja podatek, da je bil Dickens pod vplivom dela *The Life of Friedrich Schiller and the Life of John Sterling* (1826), v katerem avtor Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) kljub kritičnosti do Kantovega idealizma v svoji viziji o

transcendentalnem sistemu etike ter *a priori* oblikah spoznanja in razumevanja prepoznavna »večno zlate resnice«.

Dickens sam označi nasprotujoči si sili romana kot »princip Dobrega« in »klavarno resničnost« Zla (Dickens 2008, liii–liv), konflikt med dobrim in zlim v romanu pa se kaže tudi v načinu njegove predstavitve. Lankford ugotavlja:

Oliver in tatovi predstavljajo nezadostne vrste resničnosti in nasprotne standarde resnice, notranja napetost med moralizirajočim »principom« in naturalistično »resničnostjo« pa ustvarja nedoslednosti v temi in karakterizaciji. V tem moraliziranem realizmu je resnica opazovanja podrejena resnici nauka, prav tako kot je v razvoju romana realistična predstavitev tatov vsebovana v moralni fabuli o zmagi dobrega. Nedoslednosti postanejo koherentne, ko jih vidimo kot stopnje v preusmeritvi in razvoju pripovedne oblike znotraj razvijajočega se konteksta »Napredka župnijskega dečka«. (21)

V uvodnih poglavjih Dickens raziskuje obseg, do katerega zatiralska družba lahko zakrknje in pokvari človeško naravo, z uvedbo Mayliesa pa roman »zamenja stališče ter se ukvarja s poenostavljeno definiranim dobrim in slabim« (21). Toda »idealizirana čednost« (ang. *goodness*) se hitro pokaže za ranljivo. Poenostavljeno moralnost, ki na kratko prevlada v poglavjih z opisi dežele, razbije Rosina bolezen. Ko se Dickens »vrne« s podeželja v mesto v zadnji tretjini romana, se razkrije njegova potlačena simpatija z liki iz podzemlja. Lankford meni: »Dickens subverzivno razkriva skrito podobnost med dečkom in tatovi, pripovedni način pa se razvija k odkritju njihove skupne notranje človečnosti« (21). »The Parish Boy's Progress« se konča pri vešalih, toda tam Oliverjevo mesto zavzame Fagin.

»Napredek« dečka Oliverja, napovedan v podnaslovu romana, se začne v zavetišču za brezdomce, ki je bilo običajno v večini manjših ali pa velikih mest. V tem okolju deček še ni »princip Dobrega«, ampak zgolj umrljivo bitje, neimenovana sirota, ki bi bila po videzu lahko tako otrok plemiča kot tudi berača. Z »nalepko« zavetišča za brezdomce Oliverju grozi, da bo »tepen in zatiran od sveta – preziran od vseh, pomilovan od nikogar« (21).

V naslednjih poglavjih Dickens opisuje, kako Oliver postane »žrtev sistematičnega poteka izdajstva in prevare«. Lankford meni: »Bistvena beseda je 'sistematičen', saj so predmet Dickensovega napada omejevalnost in hinavščina, ki preplavljata družbeni red, odnosi, ki sankcionirajo zakone o revežih, kakor tudi zakoni sami« (21). Brutalnost zakonov in grobost njihovega uveljavljanja postaneta le simptoma širšega pomanjkanja dobrotelčnosti in dobrohotnosti v družbi. V tej so

revni zatirani čustveno kot tudi ekonomsko. Dickensov protest zoper družbo je usmerjen bolj v Oliverjevo obupno potrebo po ljubezni kot pa v njegovo fizično lakoto. V zgodnjih poglavjih se nujno postavlja vprašanje, ali Oliver lahko preživi, fizično in duhovno, ko pa je vedno znova izstradan, pretepen in osamljen ter deležen brutalne neumnosti, čemernosti in krutosti. Pisatelja imaginacija vodi iz ene vrste resničnosti na začetku v drugo na koncu, to je v moralno resnico, kot se kaže v odnosih med liki, ki nastopajo v romanu.

Symbolno vlogo lika Oliverja Twista kot »principa Dobrega«, ki jo je pisatelj sam izrecno izpostavil v predgovoru v tretjo izdajo romana, opisuje John Gordon v svojem delu *Sensation and Sublimation in Charles Dickens* (2011). Meni, da je parabola »principa Dobrega« v liku Oliverja Twista zares zgovorna šele ob nenehnem soočanju z nasprotji, kot so demonska podoba Fagina, za katerega pisatelj skozi celotno knjigo uporablja besedo »Jud«, prevare njegovih podložnih sodelavcev, naivna agresivnost množic in drugo.

Gordon dobro zadene nehoteno vlogo Oliverja pri Faginovi končni usodi. Od trenutka, ko Oliver pride v Faginovo kriminalno združbo, postane njegova grožnja. Fagin v malem dečku prepozna izjemno osebnost, toda z njegovo nedolžnostjo si ne more pomagati, zato je zanj samoumevno, da mora Oliverja skvariti. Ko se mu Oliver po vsakem zapletu v kriminalnem okolju »po naključju« izmuzne, ga hoče za vsako ceno najti. Ko ga najde, mu grozi z »vislicami«. Gordon o Oliverjevi usodni vlogi v Faginovem življenju meni: »Oliver ni samo sodelujoča stran Faginove situacije. Je Faginova nemesis. Je nekdo, ki ga je Fagin pobral za svojo mrežo in ga je postavil na stran kot tistega, ki je vreden več kakor vsi drugi skupaj, nekdo, ki ga je s svojim dvojnim pobegom naredil histeričnega. Je tudi nekdo, ki si ga Fagin najbolj želi ubiti, najraje z obešenjem na vislicah [...]« (8).

Fagin se boji, da bi ga Oliver kdaj ovadil, zato zanj vidi samo dve možnosti: ali odpoved nedolžnosti s sodelovanjem v kriminalu ali smrt. Ko Nancy, očarana nad Oliverjevo plemenitostjo, stopi na dečkovo stran, jo Sikes ob Faginovem odobravanju ubije. Oliverjeva nedolžnost je toliko »vzrok« Faginovega zločina nad Nancy, kolikor je s svojo nepokvarjeno naravo vplival na njeno plemenito stran, da se mu je kar najodločneje postavila v bran pred Faginovo agresivnostjo, s tem pa raztogotila Juda in njegovega pomočnika Sikesa.

Ob soočenju s težkimi okoliščinami, v katerih se je znašel Oliver, se postavlja vprašanje, ali nedolžni deček sploh lahko fizično preživi v ekstremno nemoralnem okolju in pri tem ohrani temeljno človeško dostojanstvo. Dickens s slikanjem več zaporednih dogodkov pokaže, da

Oliver v vsaki življenjski nevarnosti naleti na dobre ljudi, ki ga rešijo; vsakič se prečisti in tako postane »princip Dobrega«.

Ko ga rešijo Mayliejevi, se v njihovem toplem domu sreča z njihovo posvojeno siroto Rose. Dickens jo, podobno kot Oliverja, upodobi kot ideal fizične in duhovne lepote ter dobrote. V to idilo pa udari bolezen in Rose spravi na rob smrti (pogl. 33). Nevarnost deključine smrti Dickens vzporeja z nevarnostjo zloma harmoničnega odnosa med simbolnim svetom narave na deželi in duhovnim svetom nedolžne osebe:

V svojem opisu podeželske pokrajine in podrobnosti Oliverjevega okrevanja je Dickens znova in znova poudarjal simbolno in duhovno ujemanje med redom vidne narave na deželi in človekove narave, tako da pokrajina predstavlja fizična znamenja svoje duhovne identitete s človekom. Toda ko Roza nenadoma zboli – po dolgem sprehodu na deželi – se harmonično razmerje med naravo in nedolžnim zlomi. Gospo Maylie skoraj premaga strah, da bo njena posvojena hči umrla; ona in Oliver razpravljata, kako in ali bo Previdnost določila izid. (Lankford 24)

Oliver mora sprejeti možnost, da se njegovo upanje ne bo uresničilo. Prestopiti mora prag »naravnega« reda in vstopiti v območje neodumljivega. Problem se razreši, ko Rose kot po čudežu okreva. John Gordon meni, da Oliver ne samo upa v njeno ozdravljenje, temveč v to tudi trdno verjame. Oliverjevo vero, da Rose ne sme in ne more umreti, doživlja kot nezmotljivi zakon dobrote, kot pravi:

Oliverjeva intuicija se ne more motiti. Njegov instinktivni čut, da bo Rose živela, prihaja iz jasnovidnega jedra. On to ve, in s tem vedenjem to tudi izvede – dela, po zdravnikovi besedi, »čudež«. [...] Oliverjeve molitve so bile uslišane, ker se pod vplivom Mayliejevih, s katerimi je bil uglašen, trese v stiku z njimi, občuti tovarštvo do svoje prijateljice sirote. (Gordon 22–23)

Simbolizem analognega doživljanja »naravnega« in duhovnega reda resničnosti, ki ustvarja idilo življenja v prelepi pokrajini (pogl. 34–35), ogrozi trenutek, ko Oliver skozi okno (zunaj hiše) zagleda zakrknjeno in mrko podobo hudodelca Fagina ter vzklikne: »Žid! Žid!« (pogl. 35)⁵

⁵ Avtorica članka uporablja besedo Jud, saj izraz Jud uporablja tudi Judovska skupnost Slovenije kot krovna organizacija Judov na Slovenskem (prim. <https://sl-si.facebook.com/jewish.community.slovenia>, 24. 5. 2017). V navajanju odlomkov iz Dickensovega romana v Župančičevem prevodu pa avtorica članka izraza Žid ne spreminja. Pisatelj Charles Dickens očitkov, da je antisemit, ni imel za upravičene. V svojem odgovoru na pismo gospe Elize Davis z dne 22. junija 1863 ne ustreže njenemu pričakovano-

Toda Fagin prav tako hitro izgine, kot se je pojavil, in ne pusti za seboj nobenih sledi. Simbolno to lahko pomeni, da se zdi v tem čistem okolju eksistenca hudodelca Fagina povsem nerealna.

Lik Oliverja Twista spominja na kategorijo izjemnih osebnosti, ki jih radi označujemo kot karizmatične. To karizmatičnost je Dickens prikazal z estetskimi prijemi, ki dajejo občutek delovanja sublimnega.⁶ David Ellison v svojem delu *Ethics and Aesthetics in European Modernist Literature: From the Sublime to the Uncanny* (2004) predstavi pojem sublimnega, ki ga v nemščini označujeta pojma *das Erhabene* in *Unheimlichkeit*, v literaturi romantike in moderne. Izpostavlja dejstvo, da je pojem sublimnega zelo splošen in nedoločen, zato je treba pri vsakem avtorju ob natančnem branju ugotavljati vidike »vzvišenega«, ki jih pesnik ali pisatelj zasleduje. V svoji študiji se dotika pojava sublimnega pri Kantu, Kierkegaardu, Nietzscheju, Baudelaireu, Wagnerju, Alainu-Fournieru in nekaterih drugih. Zdi se, da Dickensovi podobi Oliverja Twista še najbolj ustreza koncept »lepe duše« v Alain-Fournierovem romanu *Le Grand Meaulnes* (1913). Ellison posveča peto poglavje svoje knjige temu romanu v luči pojma »lepe duše«. Gre za pojem precejšnjega filozofskega pomena, ki vključuje ali simbolizira mešan način estetske moralnosti:

Angleški izraz »the beautiful soul« je točna ustreznica termina »die schöne Seele«, katerega razvoj v spisih najpomembnejših pesnikov in mislecev nemškega klasicizma in idealizma posreduje, na mikroskopski način, konceptualno dramo, ki se je odigravala v tem obdobju, zlasti glede problematične narave razmerij med estetskimi in moralnimi zahtevami. (Ellison, 121–122)

Ellison o imaginarnem svetu Alaina-Fourniera v romanu *Le Grand Meaulnes* ugotavlja:

ju, da se bo opravičil za svoj »antisemitizem«, ampak namesto tega opraviči lik Fagina v svojem romanu in gospe Davis odgovori: »Fagin v Oliverju Twistu je Jud, ker je bilo na žalost v času, v katerem se zgodba dogaja, resnično tako, da so to vrsto kriminala skorajda brez izjeme zastopali Judje« (Gl. Roth 1939, 306).

⁶ Prikaz podobe Oliverja spominja na bogato evropsko izročilo umetnosti, ki je v upodabljanju sublimnega ustvarilo velika dela. Robert Doran v svoji knjigi *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant* (2015) raziše celotno zgodovino rabe pojma »sublimno« na temelju Longinove študije o sublimnem. Longin med vidiki sublimne izkušnje navaja ekstazo, začudenje in čudenje. Philip Shaw v svojem delu *The Sublime: The New Critical Idiom* (2006) ponuja panoramni pregled rabe in razlage pojma »sublimno« v obdobju od antike do sodobnosti, Stephen Jaeger pa v knjigi *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (2012) obravnava primere, ki razkrivajo možnosti umetniške reprezentacije očarljivega, karizmatičnega in sublimnega v besedilih in podobah.

Namesto da bi ustvarjal junaka, kot je Wilhelm Meister, ki gre skozi življenje in se podreja svojim moralnim preizkusom, da bi se transformiral, namesto da bi svojemu protagonistu dal sposobnost krmarjenja med ekstremi čistosti in onečaščenja, Alain-Fournier svojo imaginacijo sveta deli v dva nespravljiva dela – na eni strani lepo, a nedosegljivo področje idealizirane ljubezni, na drugi strani domena greha in kesanja, za katero, v nasprotju s Heglovo shemo, *ni odpuščanja*. (129)

Ob ravnanju izjemne osebnosti mladega dečka Oliverja Twista, ki jo pisatelj označi kot »personifikacijo Dobrega«, bralec bolj jasno vidi tudi silno nasprotje med Oliverjem in Faginom. William T. Lankford v svojem članku (1978) prepoznava še druga nasprotja v Dickensovem romanu. Pisatelj jih prikazuje s sopostavljanjem upodobitev kriminalnih dejanj in idilične narave, v kateri zlo in smrt nimata mesta; s slikanjem nasprotja med žalostjo zaradi bolezni mlade Oliverjeve prijateljice, nedolžne sirote Rose, ter s soncem obsijano spomladansko naravo (25), s kontrasti med Faginom in Brownlowom v odnosu do Oliverja, z nasprotjem med dekletoma Nancy in Rose, ki se kaže v njunem socialnem ozadju, v tem, kjer in kako živita, ne pa toliko v njunem notranjem doživljanju (29), s kontrastom med usmiljeno naravo Brownlowa in neusmiljeno, kruto naravo Sikesa.

Sodba zločincem in nevidno delovanje moralnega zakona

Po dogodkih pri Maylijevih pisatelj Oliverja, ki je bil doslej v središču, pusti v ozadju in v ospredje postavi pot Faginove kriminalne združbe do končnega obračuna, ko njene člane zadene ustrezna kazen – po vrstnem redu od najmlajšega do najstarejšega: Noe Claypole, Doger, Sikes, Fagin. Noe Claypole je tako kot Oliver zbežal od krutega Soweberyja in prišel v London. Prav tako kot Oliver je padel v past zločinca Fagina, a se je v nasprotju z Oliverjem hitro pokvaril. Dodgerja so ujeli pri kriminalnem dejanju in ga obsodili na zaporno kazen. Sikes ubije zavedeno dekle Nancy in se v begu srečuje s svojo vestjo, pod težo katere si sodi sam z obešenjem (pogl. 49–50). Fagina ujamejo in ga pred razjarjeno množico obsodijo na smrt z obešenjem (pogl. 52).

Poglavje 52 je posvečeno sojenju Faginu, soočanju obupanega obsojenca z njegovo lastno vestjo in njegovemu srečanju z Oliverjem. Ta Fagina dan pred usmrtnitvijo obišče v zaporu v spremstvu svojega dobrotnika Brownlowa. Vrhunec ironije je, da zunaj stojijo za Fagina pripravljene vislice, s katerimi je nekoč grozil Oliverju v strahu, da bo pobegnil iz njegovega skrbno varovanega jetništva in ga izdal zakonom pravice. Kriminalci se morajo soočiti s svojo vestjo in s trpljenjem, ki so ga s svo-

jimi dejanji dolgo povzročali drugim. Kot nasprotje sodbe nad zločinci pa sklepno poglavje (pogl. 53) predstavi srečo plemenitih likov, ki se umaknejo na podeželje: »Nedolžnost in izkušnja, dežela in mesto, dobro in zlo – vse je znova radikalno ločeno na koncu romana« (Lankford 31).

Dickens ob pomoči nasprotnih osebnosti, Fagina in Oliverja, opisuje delovanje dobrega in slabega v stopnjevanju od začetka do konca knjige. Oliverja »zajame Fagin, reši ga gospod Brownlow, Fagin ga znova ugrabi, in še enkrat se izgubi, preden pride silen napad zbranih moči Dobrega nad tistimi, ki predstavljajo Zlo, s čimer se zgodba konča« (Gill xiii). V 52. poglavju Dickens dokončno izpostavi nasprotje med dobrim in zlim. Motiv, ko Oliver Fagina obišče v ječi, pisatelj opiše z mojstrskim slikanjem nasprotja. Fagin ne kaže nobenega spoštovanja ne do Boga ne do kateregakoli človeka, od Oliverja pričakuje le korist, saj si obeta, da ga bo rešil iz ječe, Oliver pa ga poskuša pridobiti za srečanje s smrtjo v duhovni pomiritvi ob molitvi. Ko Fagin ugotovi, da ga Oliver ne bo rešil iz ječe, ampak ga poskuša pripraviti do kesanja, ga zajame trepet, ki napetost med dobrim in zlim stopnjuje do vrhunca: »Čustvena dinamika pripovedi v tej točki zahteva končno konfrontacijo dobrega in zlega in še en izdelan paragraf, ki bralca pridruži množici, čakajoči zunaj Novih vrat.« (Gill xxiii)

Roman sklene temna usoda, ki doleti zločince. Najhujši zločin, ki se je lahko zgodil, je Sikesov barbarski umor mlade Nancy. V 48. poglavju začenja refleksija pisatelja o neprimerljivosti groznega dejanja: »Od vseh hudodelstev, ki so bila izvršena tisto noč pod plaščem mraka v obširnem londonskem okrožju, je bilo to najhujše. Od vseh strahot, ki so zapuhtele svoj smrad v jutranji zrak, je bila ta najostudnejša in najgrozovitejša« (Dickens 1956, 436). Zasijalo je sonce, ki prinaša luč in novo življenje, a morilec se v sončni svetlobi še mučnejše sooča s svojo krivdo:

Morilec se je hotel luči zakleniti, a luč se je vendarle usipala noter. Že v jutranjem svitu je bil ta pogled strašen, kaj šele zdaj, v tej žareči svetlobi! ... Enkrat je vrgel odejo preko nje; a še huje je bilo gledati njene oči v domišljiji, kako se obračajo proti njemu, huje kot gledati jih v resnici, kako strme navzgor, kakor da zasledujejo po stropu migljajoče in plesoče svetle pege – odsev mlake strnjene krvi! (436)

Kategorični moralni imperativ morilca postavi neposredno pred njegovo vest. Njegova dejanja ga sodijo neusmiljeno po zakonu »naravne pravičnosti«, ob spontanem revoltu množice, ki deluje kot energija »ljudske pravice«, pa si sodi sam z najstrožjo kaznijo. Pisatelj sredi 48. poglavja izreče moralni nauk: »Nihče ne govôri, da morilci uidejo pravici in da božja previdnost spi. Na stotine nasilnih smrti odtehta ena sama dolga minuta take blazne groze« (442).

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Uncovering the Dark Truths of Society and the Unbreakable Power of the Good in Dickens's *Oliver Twist*

Keywords: literature and ethics / literary criticism / ethical turn / English literature / Dickens, Charles: *Oliver Twist* / good and evil

This paper presents Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist* and focuses on literary technique of unveiling of contrasting relationship between criminal deeds of the old Jew Fagin and noble behaviour of the orphan Oliver. It analyzes denouement of the story until the severest punishment and the triumph of good over evil. We are interested especially through what devices Dickens's narrative text, written and read in specific contexts, thematises, problematises and consolidates specific moral values and norms. Dickens's novel, through its narrativity, uncovers ethical concerns in the area of human values and responsibility in a capitalist society that is fraught with injustice, abuse, and overt or covert violence. It offers stories and reflections on the actions and characters of various individuals, which are adopted from real life, presenting them to the reader in order to challenge his values, moral judgments and ethical engagement. When we see the connection between acts and consequences, we see how literature, especially the novel with its narrativity, can effectively complement moral philosophy (Nussbaum). Whereas moral philosophy is tied to abstract language and deals with universals, narrative's ability to imaginatively display the mental and spiritual states of its heroes engages our practical moral sense; we pursue the *ethos* that imbues the entirety of Dickens's novel.

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