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TEMATSKI SKLOP / THEMATIC SECTION
The Rule of Description

Uredil / Edited by: Péter Hajdu

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Orsolya Milián: **Remediation and Mediamachia in Ekphrases**
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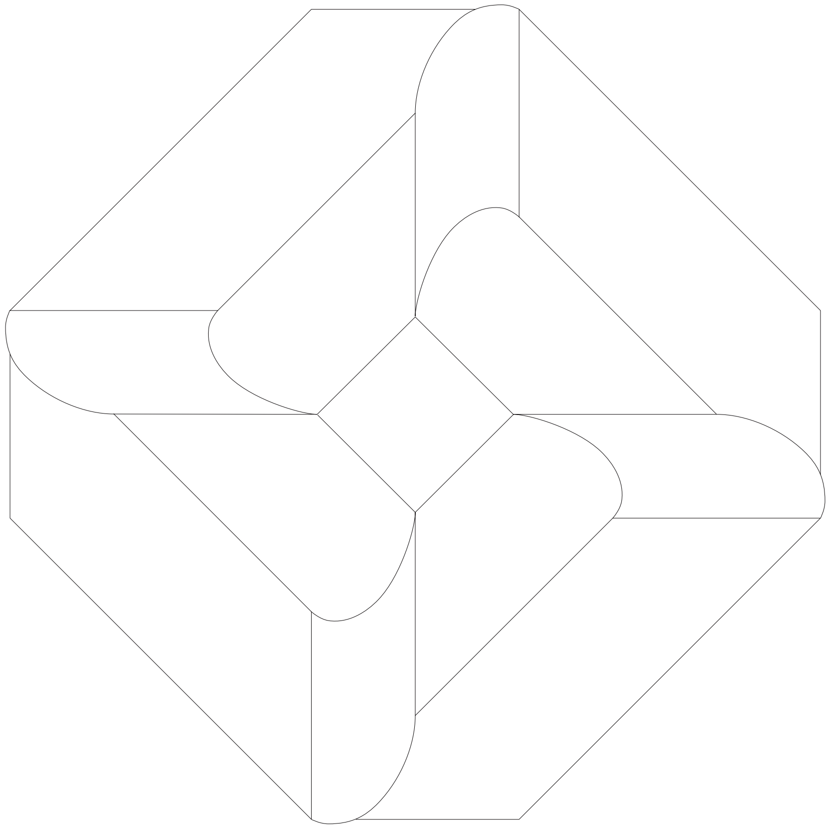

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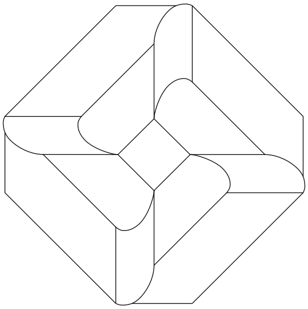

The Importance of Description: An Introduction

Péter Hajdu

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The importance of descriptive passages varies among literary works and most likely differs among literary genres as well. Some non-literary narratives, such as a joke, may exist even without description. With the help of cognitive narratology, it may be argued that zero descriptions are inscribed in the text when a scenario is activated which implies default descriptions. If the importance of descriptions in narrative texts is imagined as a spectrum, short non-literary genres may represent one extreme in which descriptions play a negligible role, while the other end is occupied by narratives in which descriptions are of utmost importance. To introduce the thematic cluster on description I will explore the significance of the descriptive in the two extremes, first in a joke, then in utopian writing by means of two nineteenth-century Hungarian utopic novels which both abound in lengthy descriptions stitched together by a weak story. Utopia's main purpose is to describe an alternative reality, but that reality is not alternative as much from the viewpoint of individual human action as it is from the standing of technical or (in many cases) a transformed natural environment and social functions. Such an alternative reality can be described, not narrated while the description may additionally make use of narrative elements.

Even if narratology's usual focus on time and event may imply otherwise, descriptions are not disposable elements (or mere embellishments) of narrative. In his *Narrative Discourse,* Gérard Genette defined the descriptive pause as a case in which zero narrated time is paired to some narration time; this definition unavoidably created the impression that description is a feature of the *sujet* and hardly has anything to do with the *fabula*, which means description is a rhetorical device of story*telling* and is therefore not essential to the story. As if description was some optional addition to what is to be told in a narrative. When Genette decided to use the term pause (instead of description) as the abbreviated form of the descriptive pause, he emphasized the dimension of time, for which he even developed the following quasi- or pseudo-mathematical formula: “pause $NT = n$, $ST = 0$. Thus $NT \infty\!> ST$” (Genette, *Narrative* 95). According to this interpretation, the pseudo-time of the narrative is infinitely greater than the story time since the latter is zero. However, the pause is almost continuously accompanied by an adjective in Genette’s text as it is generally called a “descriptive pause” (e.g. 93, 94, 95, 99, 106). In a footnote Genette attempted to prevent two misunderstandings: on the one hand, narratorial commentary may be another instance of when discourse corresponds to zero story time even though Genette does not regard these types of passages as “strictly speaking narrative.” On the other hand, “every description is not necessarily a pause in the narrative” (94).

In his analysis, Genette actually narrates the development of the nineteenth-century French novel later eclipsed by Proust and his no-pause-descriptions. Within Genette’s narration, Balzac elaborated “a typically extratemporal descriptive canon” (100), which can be properly described by the formula above, Stendhal “avoided that canon by pulverizing the descriptions” (101), but his position remained marginal, while Flaubert was the precursor of the Proustian description (ibid.), which makes the concurrence of description and a character’s contemplative pause a rule (102). This narrative seems to imply (perhaps unintentionally) a teleology which posits Proust as the end-point of a development. In other words, it is as if Proust attained the aim of finally getting rid of descriptive pauses or the Balzacian canon of description by always narrating how someone experiences an image and never halting narrated time.[1] One can, however, consider the possibility of a narratology that focuses on space instead of time, including questions regarding how a narrative creates a world which can be either fictional or imaginary in nature. Such a narratology must necessarily assign a highly important role to description.

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[1] For Genette, a description that does not constitute a pause is a narrative about a person who looks at an object. Gerald Prince’s definition of description, however, extends to “(nonpurposeful, nonvolitional) happenings” as well, therefore he can offer the following example for a description without pause: “After the fish followed an excellent meat dish, with garnishing, then a separate vegetable course, then roast fowl, a pudding … and lastly cheese and fruit” (Prince, *A Dictionary* 19). For Prince this sentence from Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* is the description (and not the narrative) of a dinner, although this contradicts his general characterization of descriptions, namely that they represent objects or happenings “in their spatial rather than temporal existence, their topological rather than chronological functioning, their simultaneity rather than succession” (ibid.). In this example all the items are represented in temporality, in chronological functioning and in succession, still it is regarded as a description. The nonporpurseful, nonvolitional nature of a dinner is also questionable.

I do not want to challenge the obvious truism that narrative is about narrating events: it would be both difficult and absurd to develop a definition of narrative that views description as a necessity. Discussions on minimal narrative will most likely never expand upon description. The importance of descriptive passages, however, not only varies among literary works, but also among literary genres. Some non-literary narratives, such as a joke, may not even contain description, such as can be said in the case of the following joke: "A horse walks into a bar, and the bartender asks, 'Why the long face?'" If we agree that the aforementioned text meets the requirements of minimal narrative, then we must admit that this joke is capable of narration without description.

Gérard Genette thought that any verbal utterance is automatically a narrative. One of his examples of the minimal form of narrative, "I walk" (Genette, *Narrative* 30), does not even relate an event. Possibly by inserting descriptions, to mention just one option, such a narrative can be amplified, yet amplification will not make it more narrative. In 1989 Gerald Prince argued that at least one event is necessary for a narrative (Prince, *Dictionary* 58). Most theoreticians, however, believe that an event is a change of state (Toolan 14); the question arises of whether a change of state can be narrated without describing State 1 and State 2, or one of them at the very least. If we take Genette's second example of minimal narrative as an instance of narrating an event, the answer will be positive: "Pierre has come" (ibid.). Neither State 1 ("Pierre is not here"), nor State 2 ("Pierre is here") is described; only the action which changed the situation is narrated, namely that he has come. Based on the action, however, both states can easily be reconstructed. It is, however, probable that when the narrating agent makes the narrative more developed and interesting through amplification, some details or descriptions regarding both states will be needed. It is only the minimal form that renders description unimportant. In 1982 Gerald Prince (followed by Shlomith Rimmon-Kennan in 1983) stated that a minimal narrative presupposes at least two events in chronological order (Prince, *Narratology* 4; Rimmon-Kennan 19). The example of the joke referred to above meets even this requirement. State 1: a horse outside the bar; Event 1: the horse walks in. State 2: a horse in the bar; no contact with the bartender. Event 2: the bartender talks to the horse. State 3: the two agents in the bar have verbal contact. It is only Gerald Prince's complex definition of minimal narrative dating from 1973 that this example of a simple joke cannot fulfill since Prince's definition stipulated the presence of three events connected by the principles of chronology, causality and closure (Prince, *A Grammar* 31).

Such a minimal narrative can lack description. It can, however, also be argued that the expression "long face" already contains a minimal description, namely an adjective. If we contrast "a face" with "a long face," we can clearly see that the latter has been described to a limited degree. In Jasper Fforde's novel *Lost in a Good Book* Miss Havisham and Thursday Next see a grammasite ("A parasitic life form that live inside books and feed on grammar"), more precisely an adjectivore, at a gunport of the prison hulk in the back story of *Great Expectations*. I quote their educative dialogue:

> "Can you see the gunport it was feeding on?"
> "Yes."
> "Describe it to me."
> I looked at the gunport and frowned. I had expected it to be old or dark or wooden or rotten or wet, but it wasn't. But then it wasn't sterile or blank or empty either—it was simply a gunport, nothing more nor less.
> "The adjectivore feeds on the adjectives *describing* the noun," explained Havisham, "but it generally leaves the noun intact." (Fforde, Ch. 26.)

Fforde's witty fantasy forces the reader to confront the possibility of a narrative cosmos that exists without description. For a description we need adjectives, and without adjectives there is no description. Strangely enough, the adjectivores leave the noun intact: the gunport is still there, but it is simply a gunport. Let us therefore imagine telling the joke about the horse walking into a bar after the attack of an adjectivore: it will no longer be a joke if the bartender cannot describe the face of the horse.

In a paper entitled "The Boundaries of Narrative" Genette went even further by declaring that unqualified nouns "may be considered as descriptive by the sole fact that they designate animate or inanimate beings" (Genette, "The Boundaries" 5). The idea that designation is already description leads to the conclusion that description without narrative is possible while it is impossible to narrate anything without description. Despite this theoretical possibility, Genette declares that "purely descriptive genres never exist" (6). The validity of this claim may depend on the definition of genre and purity. I find it imaginable that in some literary traditions short descriptive poems can be regarded as forming a genre;[2] it is rather obvious that some of the most canonical haikus are purely descriptive.[3] Genette's other important claim is that description is "naturally" *ancilla narrationis*, a handmaiden of narrative, and always plays an auxiliary role to narration.[4]

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[2] If epigrams are viewed as a genre, then epigrams obviously cannot be exclusively descriptive in nature since many narrative epigrams (including those in dialogic form) have been written throughout the roughly 2,600 years that the genre has existed. However, we can speak about types of epigrams as genres or at least subgenres. For exam-

While I do not go so far as to view designation automatically as description, I would like to consider the fact that cognitive narratology allows for the interpretation of the articles in "*a* bar" and "*the* bartender" as also bearing a descriptive function, even if these examples cannot even be taken as a form of minimal descriptions. According to cognitive narratology, readers understand narrative on the basis of general scenarios (or scripts, or frames, or schemata; Stockwell 75–90) which govern our expectations. New details modify these expectations, although it must not be forgotten that a great amount of detail will not be needed if the story follows an expected scenario. A scenario implies not overly detailed visions of some objects and locations. If nothing else is said about the given bar which is the setting of the narrative, we do not have any reason to imagine anything special about it. Yet, even if the setting is just "*a* bar," it is still expected that this location contains tables and chairs, a few people with drinks in front of them and, most importantly, a bartender. Based on this interpretation originating from cognitive narratology, I therefore categorize this type implication as a zero description.

The role played by preexistent scenarios in cognition also explain why the second sentence of the joke refers to "*the* bartender" (with

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ple, Claudius Claudianus, a late Roman poet active around 400 CE, wrote a series of seven epigrams describing a crystal ball that enclosed a drop of water (*Carmina minora* 33–39). Claudianus seems to continue the tradition of Martial's Books 13 and 14 (*Xenia* and *Apophoreta*), which describe little souvenirs given away at a banquet. In a rather strict sense of the term, this entire tradition can be regarded as part of the genre *ekphrasis*. On the one hand, the epigrams describing a curious object do not form a genre of their own, but rather a variation of the epigrammatic genre; on the other hand, we can dispute their purely descriptive character as well. When one of Claudian's crystal poems starts with the following: "while the child is happy to touch the crystal's slippery surface…" (c. m. 38,1), we can interpret such elements as narrative, with which the poems cannot be *purely* descriptive anymore. If we read such passages from the theory of Philippe Hamon, they appear as contributing to the focalization of the descriptive (Hamon).

[3] Some translations of Baisho's exemplary haiku refer to frogs that jump; the presence of the verb may provide this haiku with a rather limited form of narrativity. Other translations only mention the noise the frogs make on the water's surface.

[4] Genette makes a possible exception: in didactic or semi-didactic works, narrative may be the auxiliary of narrative ("The Boundaries" 6). Didactic, evocative, engaged literary works seem to have played an increasingly important role in literature since the times of structuralism; today, the didactic probably cannot be very easily dismissed from serious literary discussion. The utopian may have always already belonged to the field of the didactic.

a definite article) since his existence and presence has already been implied by the mention of "*a* bar." Of course, the listener expects something strange, since the case of a horse walking into a bar makes it impossible to rely upon a default scenario; similarly, the number of objects one does not imagine as being present in the bar is infinite and can comprise anything from a lawnmower to a dissection table: unless, that is, one is told otherwise. The listener therefore adheres to the principle of the minimal departure[5] and does not modify the features of a scenario if it is not necessary. Those who listen to the joke probably expect some verbal interaction between the horse and the bartender. I therefore conclude that the narrative offers zero descriptions, which subsequently forces the narratees to rely on the default descriptions inscribed within the activated scenario. This does not mean, of course, that one's understanding cannot be modified at a later point or retrospectively, provided that new details appear that make one do so, as occurs in the following joke: "A blind man walks into a bar. And a table. And a chair." In this case the default scenario does not work: after the second sentence, the listener has to abandon the default description of the imagined bar in favor of visualizing a single, long, metal object, a process that also means having to abandon the first scenario that was activated for another one.

I argue that zero descriptions imply no deviation from the default descriptions inscribed in an activated scenario. Some speech genres rather than literary genres (such as joke) can operate with minimal or zero descriptions; at the other end of the spectrum, we can find narratives in which descriptions are of utmost importance. My example of the latter is utopian writing. While utopias tend to be narrative texts, hardly anybody reads them for the story. At least this has mainly been the case since Thomas More's *Utopia*, which gave the genre its name, but can hardly be credited with inventing it. The structure of utopias tends to follow that of a travelogue: a traveler sets off for an unknown and hidden place. Upon arrival, the traveler is given a guided tour in order to educate him or her regarding the alternative, more or less ideal society that is found there; the end generally concludes with the traveler's return to the place of origin, where a report of his or her experiences is then delivered. Although the journey to and fro may contain some adventures, focusing on the traveler occurs more commonly in satirical versions or anti-utopias. In a genuine utopia, the narrative frame is hardly more than a pretext, a carrier for the description of an alternative society. As a result, the story of gaining access to this new world is much less interesting than the content of the experience itself.

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[5] The principle is mostly used in the theory of possible worlds, cf. Ryan, "Fiction" and Ryan, *Possible*.

Since the eighteenth century, utopias have been increasingly set in the future, a version of utopian writing which is also called a *euchronia.* Although time travel poses a possible narrative tool for maintaining the travelogue scheme in euchronias, some utopian novels have also emerged- in which the main character is at home within the represented, alternative society and therefore does not need a guided tour of the utopia since the character's familiarity with his or her surroundings renders the utopian kind of learning process unnecessary.[6] In contrast to the main character of such a version of utopian writing, the readers, however, still have to learn a lot, a process that does not occur on the diegetic level even though descriptions also abound in this type of text since there are many unfamiliar objects, institutions, social mechanisms, habits etc. which must be explained and described in detail. From this viewpoint no difference can be detected between utopias and dystopias.

Descriptions therefore play an extremely important role in utopian novels, which I will try to demonstrate through the examples provided by two nineteenth-century, Hungarian utopian novels: *The Novel of the Next Century* by Mór Jókai and *The New World* by Titusz Tóvölgyi. Both abound in long descriptions stitched together by a weak story. When a story is set in the future, the description of an object or a social institution can be easily connected to a historical back-story. Readers are not only informed of how something works or looks, but also receive details regarding how it developed. (Even in Book 2 of Thomas More's *Utopia*, Hythloday entails some information about how King Utopus conquered a peninsula which was later transformed into the island of Utopia.) This is not, however, the only way descriptions challenge the zero narrated time definition since in utopian texts it is customary to describe customs, holidays and ceremonies. A ceremony, for example, is a chain of events, and therefore it can be legitimately said that a ceremony is not described but rather narrated. In this kind of formulation, iterative, heterodiegetic narratives may abound in utopian texts. Based on my interpretation, however, I contend that if how things are generally done in a completely alien society is explained to a character or the reader this type of explanation acts as a description rather than storytelling. The border between the two, however, is not always easily drawn since a description can contain narrative elements, just as a list of events can, in certain cases, create a description.[7]

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[6] It is not impossible for a dystopia to develop an alternative of the guided tour. In Zamyatin's *We* the state wants to send out a spaceship and its citizens are encouraged to describe their society, so that their manuscripts can be put into it. The narrator and protagonist D-503 writes such an introduction for aliens, although the text becomes increasingly diary-like during the writing process. In Orwell's *1984* it is O'Brien who introduces Winston into a deeper or true understanding of his own society.

Written between 1872 and 1874, Jókai's utopia tells the story of how Dávid Tatrangi, a Transylvanian-Hungarian inventor and genius in politics and economics, establishes world peace and a global society of harmony and well-being during a period spanning the years of 1952 to 2000. Early on in the novel, the story contains a six-page chapter entitled "The Alhambra of Vezérhalom," which mostly surrounds the description of a luxurious building complex that was temporarily being used as a hospital owned and run by an exiled Russian princess. Today Vezérhalom (literally "Chieftain Hill") is a hill in Buda that is located within the city borders of Budapest, although in Jókai's times it was actually on the edge of the capital city. Even if a total of four pages out of the entire chapter describe the buildings, the chapter begins with the following sentence: "This is the story of how the Alhambra came to the Vezérhalom in Buda"[8] (Jókai 1.119). The introduction explicitly calls the chapter a "story" of how something existing as an object in the imagined future came into being in the past, which still figures as the future in relation to the present of narrating. The second paragraph relays the information that a rich merchant had the palace built; following the description, readers will be informed of the changes in ownership after the builder's death. The descriptive part is a rich catalogue of architectural styles, colorful materials, and artifacts of different historical periods. Although the look of the building complex does not play any important role in the story's later development; the chapter may be legitimized by offering a nice opportunity to display the author's descriptive talents, and also by the passage which explains that most of the artifacts are high-quality replicas and describes the imaginary technical developments by means of which twentieth century will be able to imitate great art for twenty percent of their cost. What the chapter offers is not only the description of the Alhambra but also that of the future cultural environment. The description may contain the narrative of the technical development which will have resulted in it. While dystopias tend to envision a purely functional and artless technical environment, Jókai imagines an advanced technique that brings with it the democratization of high quality art.

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[7] For an early example we can go back as far as to Homer. The catalogue of ships in the *Iliad* (2.494–2.759) actually lists actions: "[T]here came fifty ships, and on board of which went young men of the Boeotians"; "they…were led by Ascalaphus and Ialmenus"; "And with him there followed forty black ships" (Homer). Only actions for hundreds of lines, but the result is not the story of how the Greek gathered and traveled to Troy, but the description of the Greek army. See also Gerald Price's example from *The Magic Mountain* quoted in my first footnote.

[8] All the translations from Jókai's and Tóvölgyi's novels are mine.

Published in 1888, Títusz Tóvölgyi's *The New World* (which bears the subtitle of "A Novel from the Socialist and Communist Society") contains a second chapter entitled "The Palace of a Man in the New World" (Tóvölgyi 212–216). While this title seems to promise pure description, the chapter in fact describes a house in which a party is going to be held. Descriptions of the house, preparations for the party and an introduction to the social behavior in a future communist society intermingle inexplicably. The first sentence of the chapter reads as: "Zoltán Sziklai, a man of immense income, inventor of glass architecture, celebrated the anniversary with his hundredth wife."[9] The description of the house is first broken off by two paragraphs explaining how somebody can have immense income and rent a luxurious palace from the state (which owns all property) in the future communist society that Tóvölgyi has created. The huge differences of income do not cause any social tension because these differences are based on merit, such as the individual's personal contribution to the common good; in Sziklai's case this contribution was inventing glass architecture. When the description mentions the entrance hall with its seventy-one portraits of the host's ex-wives, a six-line narrative of his marital history is inserted, which also functions to remind readers of the information provided in Chapter 1 concerning the regulation of sexual life in Tóvölgyi's new world: extra-marital sex is severely punished, but marriage only lasts for two months. While spouses have the right to stay together for another two-month marriage if they choose to, the obligation is only for a two-month term (210). "With some of his seventy-one wives Sziklai repeated the obligatory two months, with some of them even tripled it," yet he has lived with his current, seventy-first wife[10] for a complete year, and it is rightly supposed that this marriage is for the rest of their lives (213).

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[9] It is rather ironic that the wonderful invention of glass architecture which makes Tóvölgyi's architect so wealthy was to become the symbol of panoptic totalitarianism in Zamyatin's *We*.

[10] It is a little bit confusing that the actual wife is the seventy-first one while seventy-one portraits of ex-wives are mentioned. Either this could be the result of a simple mathematical mistake, or we can suppose that the portrait of each new wife

Other than also serving as a means for relating the details of this new society to the reader, the host's sexual history is vital to understanding the arrangement of the party: there is a table for the thirty-two children of the host, another table for his forty ex-wives (the other thirty-one have either passed away or live somewhere else), and another one for the forty current husbands of the invited ex-wives. "A fourth table is for the guests" (214). About one-quarter of the chapter is filled with a dialogue conducted between the host Sziklai and his brother-in-law, which, however, does not seem to bring the story forward: they only discuss how much they love society's present organization and what was wrong with the previous one. From the standing of time, this dialogue can be called a scene. If the purpose of the whole novel is to describe a desirable future society rather than narrate a story, the speaker should instead be called descriptor rather than narrator, thereby making this particular dialogue into a cooperation between two second-degree or intradiegetic descriptors.

In Jókai's novel, Alexandra, the prime minister of the Russian post-revolutionary nihilist state, first enacts a *coup d'état* to declare herself Tsarina, then tries to seduce Severus, one of the closest allies of the novel's protagonist. The final act to the long process of seduction that results in Severus's complete surrender and treason is that the Tsarina performs a mass execution while creating an example of sublime scenery. First the narrator describes the pond at Pavlovsk Palace, upon which Severus and Alexandra Tsarina are enjoying a leisurely boat ride (Jókai 2.206–2.207). Severus finds the view beautiful and declares it to be the second greatest he has ever seen. Alexandra asks about the most beautiful scenery and promises to recreate it in Russia. In reply, Severus describes a pond in Egypt which is more beautiful because of the red lotuses, the red flamingos (instead of the swans of the north), and the water painted red by sunlight (207). Alexandra installs a steam guillotine by the pond that beheads four people at once and subsequently has twenty thousand political enemies executed in one day, thereby painting the water red with their blood. The red water dyes the swans' feathers red while the Egyptian lotuses are replaced with floating heads.

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is added to the gallery upon the occasion of the first wedding, therefore allowing us to surmise that the actual wife (with whom Sziklai is renewing his vows for the sixth time) is also an ex-wife who legitimately has her portrait among the others. In any event, how the sixth renewal of the protagonist's marriage with his seventy-first wife manages to be the hundredth anniversary remains unexplained.

The description of the operation of the steam guillotine and the bloody pond is so impressive that it makes the narrative appear as a frame whose main purpose is to deliver this description, while the narration itself also flows from description to description. The narrator (descriptor) describes scenery, which is seen by the characters. Then a character (as an intradiegetic descriptor) describes another type of scenery and compares both. Then another character (the descriptee of the intradiegetic description) transforms the first scenery to make it more similar to the second one while the result is described by the extradiegetic narrator/descriptor. It is also true that the resulting visual experience has an overwhelming effect on Severus, who regards the termination of the opposition as a guarantee of Alexandra's enduring power, an opinion that therefore influences his decision to change sides. This way the description pushes forward the narrative.

The central role played by description in utopian narrative makes it nearly impossible to separate description from narrative; if we were still to attempt to separate each and define the extent of their dependency upon one another, the narrative emerges as the handmaiden of description rather than vice versa. Utopia's main purpose is to describe an alternative reality; that reality is not alternative as much from the viewpoint of individual human action, as it is from a technical standing. The utopian world's transformed natural environment and the functions of its society form an alternative reality that can only be described rather than narrated. As was demonstrated above, description in this type of work may also make use of narrative elements. Both Jókai and Tóvölgyi describe houses of the future by utilizing descriptions that contain narrative features. While Jókai relates the history of ownership in reference to a certain house, Tóvölgyi focuses upon a ceremonial reception held in a certain house. None of the narrative features found in the entire work is important or memorable as opposed to the descriptions, which are. In the case of Tóvölgyi's work, the description of the house and the event to be hosted there serves to explain the order of sexual relationships in a communist future, resulting in descriptions that provide a dynamic connected to various narratives. To offer a few examples, Tóvölgyi summarizes Zoltán Sziklai's marriages, organizes a sort a plot around a love story, relates how society's harmonious and therefore apparently static operation is challenged by the revolt of the ugly[11] and offers solutions to how this imagined society will cope with revolution. All of these narratives promote the description. It is not the description that makes the narrative possible, but rather the narratives that deepen, explain and ultimately test the description.

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[11] In his *Assemblywomen* Aristophanes already drew a connection between the equality of goods and equality of access to sex. In Tóvölgyi's utopia all property and

Instead of providing a final answer to the question of what dependency relations exist between description and narrative, I suggest that the situation be visualized with the aid of a spectrum. My introduction began with the example of a joke which—I argue—represents one extreme of a narrative containing a description of minimal significance; utopian writing can be seen as the opposite extreme, in which narrative elements acquire importance by making the description more vivid. It is my contention that the function and importance of description in narrative texts should be analyzed and evaluated in every literary genre and literary work with a view toward this spectrum.

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The collection of papers featured in this issue devoted to description cannot examine all the possible variants that can be placed on the spectrum suggested above. **Orsolya Milián**'s analysis of ekphrastic poems underscores the fact that the topic of ekphrasis can hardly be avoided in the course of deepening our understanding of description. The two poems Milián discusses depict Peter Brueghel the Elder's painting, *The Parable of the Blind*, which can in turn be legitimately viewed as a narrative in its own right. The dynamic relationship between the narrative and descriptive therefore serves as a central issue for both the poems and the analysis. **Orsolya Tóth** investigates how the context created by the popularity of J. C. Lavaters's physiognomy influenced descriptions of handwriting in nineteenth-century novels and the role such descriptions played in characterization. **Péter Hajdu**'s paper discusses the descriptions of costumes and rituals in literary or semi-literary genres which lend crucial significance to the role played by descriptions in literary or semi-literary genres, such as ethnographic narratives, science fiction, including an additional example taken from postcolonial writing. In their studies, **György C. Kálmán** and **László Sári** discuss the important role played by descriptions in novels; the former paper

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means of production belong to the state, but some remarkable inequalities in income still exist, a factor that is generally accepted as based on merit. The two-month marriages cannot guarantee equality in access to sex, which means that social tension can result since the ugly cannot accept beauty as a form of merit due to which the beautiful may have greater access to sex. (The current "incel" movement renders Tóvölgyi's seemingly absurd conflict strangely relevant.)

explores Flaubert's *Madame Bovary,* a novel frequently mentioned in connection to the descriptive in academic discourse while the latter investigates Pynchon's *Inherent Vice*, a work in which selected descriptions are revealed to play a surprisingly important role in the production of meaning. The cluster is closed by **Zoltán Z. Varga**'s reflections on Roland Barthes's description theory.[12]

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Remediation and Mediamachia in Ekphrases

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Remediation as conceived by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin designates a kind of intermedial relationship in which various media may refashion or appropriate, pay homage to or rival one another. Taking as example the literary form of ekphrasis, understood in its narrower sense as the literary description of a visual work of art, this article examines ekphrasis as a technique of remediation. Following Bolter and Grusin's understanding of remediation and W. J. T. Mitchell's analysis of the text-image dialectic, this article aims at outlining the traits of the paragonal struggle (that is mediamachia) between word/text and image in "The Parable of the Blind" by William Carlos Williams and "Der Blindensturz" by Gisbert Kranz. Firstly, it establishes a theoretical framework within which the differentiation of ekphrasis as a strategy of verbal hypermediacy becomes possible. Secondly, it presents a comparative analysis of the above mentioned poems, showing that while Williams's poem effaces the visual (Brueghel's The Parable of the Blind*) keeping its traits in verbal allusions only, and in a sense repressing the image in order to create its own verbal "self-portrait," Kranz's poem adds another stratum to the mediatization of Brueghel's painting through verbal description, namely the typographic image of the verbal text which exhibits the "skeleton" of the original pictorial composition as well. Thus, Kranz's poem might be considered as a form of multiplied hypermediacy. As opposed to Williams's more conventional ekphrasis, Kranz also rearranges the traditional word-image hierarchy of ekphrases (that tend to give supremacy to words) in that it vindicates a more "democratic" or balanced relation between the verbal and the visual medium.*

Keywords: intermediality / literature and visual arts / poetry / image description / ekphrasis / Williams, William Carlos / Kranz, Gisbert / Brueghel, Pieter the Elder

"*Eyes have always stood first in the poet's equipment.*"
(William Carlos Williams)

Ekphrasis as verbal hypermediacy

In their remarkable book entitled *Remediation. Understanding New Media* Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin raise the question: "What is a medium?"[1] Their answer is the following:

> a medium is that which remediates. It is that which appropriates the techniques, forms, and social significance of other media and attempts to rival or refashion them in the name of the real. A medium in our culture can never operate in isolation, because it must enter into relationships of respect and rivalry with other media. (Bolter and Grusin 65)

This definition of medium obviously alludes to Marshall McLuhan's famously aphoristic statements "the medium is the message" and "the content of any medium is always another medium" (McLuhan 7–8) in the sense that, according to Bolter and Grusin, in media history newly emerging media always reproduce or repackage earlier or old media, their contents, techniques, practices or conventions. For example, writing remediates speech, photography remediates painting, film remediates photography, computer games remediate film, and so on. During the process of remediation, media sometimes just borrow and recycle the content of the remediated medium, while at other times they build the respective medium itself in themselves or invoke it through allusions. Thus, a medium never appears isolated, it constantly stands in relation to other media in various ways. To put it more precisely, we, the users of the medium situate the respective medium in comparison with other media and their technical conditions, perceptual, receptive and institutional traditions or everyday practices of consumption.

According to Bolter and Grusin, remediation, the blending of old and new media, is realized through two logics or strategies, namely immediacy and hypermediacy. Immediacy refers to the workings of media by which they aspire after transparency and immediateness by covering up all hints of mediation or making the medium invisible. Hypermediacy denotes precisely the opposite: It aims at drawing the viewer's or reader's attention to the medium and its opacity and heightening our awareness of the medium's presence. In Bolter and Grusin's words: "[H]ypermediacy is opacity—the fact that knowledge of the world comes to us through media. The viewer acknowledges that she is in the presence of a medium and learns through acts of mediation or indeed learns about mediation itself" (Bolter and Grusin 70–71).

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These two processes of remediaton should not be considered as completely separate strategies or logics, since on the one hand according to the authors, hypermediacy can build upon immediacy (or at least upon the illusion of it), and on the other hand, it depends on us, the recipients, whether we judge something as transparent and immediate or multiply mediated. Indeed, as Bolter and Grusin argue:

> What seems immediate to one group is highly mediated to another. In our culture, children may interpret cartoons and picture books under the logic of transparent immediacy, while adults will not. Even among adults, more sophisticated groups may experience a media event as hypermediated, while a less sophisticated group still opts for immediacy. (Bolter and Grusin 71)

It is very telling that the authors etymologize remediation from the Latin "remederi" (Bolter and Grusin 59) which means "to cure" or "to heal." By playing upon this meaning, the authors designate the phenomenon when we assume that the newly emerging medium not only transforms, but also complements, even develops the earlier medium or media, that is it corrects, or "heals," its or their deficiencies (e.g. in connection with a more authentic mediation or documentation of reality). For that reason, the remediating medium always takes on a competitive, rivaling position against the remediated one. Or as Bolter and Grusin point out: "All currently active media (old and new, analog and digital) honor, acknowledge, appropriate, and implicitly or explicitly *attack* one another" (Bolter and Grusin 87, emphasis mine). Naturally, this combative or militant wording ("attack one another") is well known in the vocabularies of treatises that compare diverse art forms and media with each other—one can think of Leonardo da Vinci's *Paragone*, Lessing's *Laokoon* or Rudolf Arnheim's *A New Laokoon: Artistic Composites and the Talking Film*.

Although Bolter and Grusin touch upon the relationship between verbal and visual media only briefly, since in addition to paying homage (or inseparably linked to it) they name the "implicit or explicit *attack*" among the strategies of media reacting and relating to each other, perhaps it is not unreasonable to correlate their views with the ones formulated by W. J. T. Mitchell. In his book entitled *Picture Theory*, Mitchell argues that in the Western logocentric history of ideas there exists a weighty tradition of conceiving images as radically different from language, kept under linguistic control or appropriated by it, which ultimately treats the power relations between the speaking subject and the mute Other, the privileged viewing subject and the disadvantageous viewed object as figures of knowledge. Mitchell essentially perceives words and images as equals that tend to occur inseparably from each other, though their simultaneous appearances obviously take shape in various cultural products. Nevertheless, Mitchell does not capture the text/image relation with the aid of the doctrine of the sister arts, but rather by means of the figuration of *the war between or among signs*, inasmuch as the relation between images and language incessantly resists neutral classification and the rivalry between them never constitutes just a contest between two signs, media or art forms, but also a struggle between body and soul or nature and culture. In other words, Mitchell detects the nexus between image and verbal text and the discourse about it as a politicized domain where ideological and power struggles take place for cultural primacy. Similarly, Bolter and Grusin also indicate that remediation and the medial rivalry interconnected with it never consists in a merely semiotic or technological skirmish, but takes on the form of social, aesthetic, even economic duels (Bolter and Grusin 19). In consequence remediation denotes a particular kind of intermedial relationship in which, through processes of medial refashioning or appropriation, "both newer and older [media] forms are involved in a struggle for culture recognition" (Bolter 14).

The primary purpose of Bolter and Grusin's book *Remediation. Understanding New Media* is to delineate the strategies of new media, and accordingly they do not endeavor to create a meticulously wrought, over-arching media historical master-narrative that would start with orality and end in new media. At the same time, in accordance with their above-quoted definition of medium they argue that remediation does not emerge together with the invention of digital or new media, and it does not operate only within the logic of new and earlier media following each other in succession, inasmuch as "older media can also remediate newer ones" (Bolter and Grusin 55). In the light of this assertion perhaps it is not surprising that—although on only one single occasion—they mention ekphrasis, "the literary description of works of visual art" (Bolter and Grusin 45) after all. They consider ekphrasis as a form of remediation, as long as it achieves "the representation of one medium in another" (ibid.), though—inasmuch as they do not focus on image/text relations—

they do not expound on whether the logic or strategy of immediacy or that of hypermediacy would be more characteristic of ekphrases. It is therefore worth asking: If we consider them within the conceptual framework of Bolter and Grusin's remediation theory, which logic is more typical of ekphrases?

One could mention a huge body of scholarly literature that either implicitly or explicitly discusses ekphrasis as if its essential purpose or aspiration were to provide an immediate access to something outside of its text.[2] (Let me remind the reader of those analyses that treat Homer's "The Shield of Achilles" as referring to an actual, existing shield; one could also mention the case of Jean Boivin, who ordered the fabrication of a shield, a forged "translation" of Book XVIII of *The Iliad*.) That is to say, there exists a theoretical tradition which treats ekphrases as though we should and must look through the ekphrastic text in order to understand the subject or the referent of the verbal discourse, as though while longing for the natural sign (or the illusion of it) we could easily and without hindrance look through words, and would desire to be able to do so with our physical eyes or our mind's eye. By definition, ekphrases involve a dialogue with their "neighbours," the artworks of the sister arts. Sometimes they explicitly and thematically portray this, for example by presenting dialogues between a painter and a poet or a private art collector and a visitor of his gallery (see for example the Prologue to Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* or Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess"). At other times they vivify or give voice to visual works of arts via ventriloquism (see for example the ending verses of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn"). Ekphrases always recontextualize and reframe visual representations, but they typically do not seek to visually recreate the respective artwork, they do not strive for setting up striking spectacles by the help of the typographic layout of words. The specialty—and perhaps the appeal—of ekphrases conventionally lies precisely in the fact that the described picture never is or never will be present in the literal or physical sense. As W. J. T. Mitchell puts it so neatly:

> A verbal representation cannot represent—that is, make present—its object in the same way a visual representation can. It may refer to an

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[2] For an outline of such a theoretical tradition see my doctoral dissertation in Hungarian: Milián Orsolya: *Az ekphraszisz fikciói. Elméleti, történeti és diszciplináris átrendeződések az ekphraszisz teoretikus diszkurzusaiban* [*Fictions of Ekphrasis. Theoretical, Historical and Disciplinary Realignments in Theoretical Discourses on Ekphrasis*] or Murray Krieger's seminal book entitled *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*.

> object, describe it, invoke it, but it can never bring its visual presence before us in the way pictures do. Words can 'cite', but never 'sight' their objects. (Mitchell 152)

In his exceptional book chapter entitled *Ekphrasis and the Other*, Mitchell emphasizes that in the case of ekphrases, the desire or aspiration to shape language into images will sooner or later amount to a resistance to the image, which ultimately leads to the suppression and repression of the image by words (Mitchell 154–157).

Therefore the duel or the dialogue between word and image in ekphrases characteristically does not come into play through an analogical exchange or an iconic semblance, but takes place via a radical appropriation. On the one hand, during the process of interart translocation or the so-called *transposition d'art*, words eliminate the materiality of the visual medium—in Garrett Stewart's terms, they "demediate" pictures; on the other hand, words always tamper with their object of description by means of various rhetorical and narrative devices (such as focalization, narrativization, description, metaforization, allegorization, name dropping and so on). In this sense ekphrases produce, bring into being or perform, rather than map, mirror or represent something, namely they produce "images" that do not exist outside their verbal discourse, even if they describe visual artifacts that de facto exist. In other words, as Mitchell points out, "in a sense all ekphrasis is notional, and seeks to create a specific image that is to be found only in the text as its 'resident alien', and it is to be found nowhere else" (Mitchell 157). Jaś Elsner reaches a similar conclusion with regard to the representational strategies of ekphrases:

> for the speaker in ekphrasis, his speech is an attempt to service and fulfill the listeners' desire for knowing the painting. The ekphrases keep the dynamic of desire flowing and yet, simultaneously, demonstrate its failure and its lack. The more the speaker performs his speeches, the less can they be said to have succeeded in their aim. … In needing to cover that void …, the ekphrastic impulse constantly reveals it. (Elsner 175–176)

One of Mitchell's most remarkable suggestions concerning ekphrasis is that in contrast to film, illustrated books, pattern or concrete poetry, and theatrical shows, "the ekphrastic encounter in language is purely *figurative*" (Mitchell 158, emphasis mine). However, he briefly notes that in the case of pattern or concrete poetry the war between signs or the battle between media explicitly comes into sight, since here "the written signifiers … themselves take on iconic characteristics" (ibid.).

Nonetheless, Mitchell does not keep count of those intermedial configurations where the text works up and tampers with the picture not only in a linguistic-tropological, but also in a visual-typographical sense, that is to say, where the text, besides building upon the descriptive linguistic performance, at the same time significantly builds on the iconic performance of the typographic arrangement of the text as well. In these intermedial occurrences the ekphrasis seems to make up for, or fill in with visual elements, the absence or gap that exists between the "resident alien" and its linguistic home. In my view, in such cases the ruptures, tensions or conflicts residing in intermedial or mixed works of art or the duel between the text and the image come over differently than in the case of conventional ekphrases that commonly give the verbal medium a dominant role—sometimes even by definition (see for example Áron Kibédi Varga's approach[3]). In the outstanding cases of composite forms that are at the same time both descriptive and iconic, or ekphrastic and calligramatic if you like, the traditional word-image hierarchy of ekphrases (that tend to give supremacy to words) is rearranged, in the sense that these complex intermedial works of art seem to vindicate a more "democratic" or balanced relation between the verbal and the visual medium.

Based on Mitchell's and Elsner's theoretical standpoints, which entail linguistic skepticism as well, it seems clear that if we explore ekphrases in the context of Bolter and Grusin's remediation theory, ekphrases should not be associated with immediacy, rather, they should be linked to hypermediacy, that is the strategy of remediation which makes us aware of the presence and operation of the medium—in terms of ekphrases, the presence, workings and functioning of the verbal medium.

The blind leading the blind: Williams, Kranz, and Brueghel

In order to take a closer look at the paragonal struggle for domination or power, that is mediamachia between text and image, and the strategies of hypermediacy materializing in ekphrastic discourse, this section will more closely examine "The Parable of the Blind" by William Carlos Williams and "Der Blindensturz" (alternate title: "Brueghels Blinde") by Gisbert Kranz.

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[3] "If we turn to *secondary* relations, relations where word and image appear subsequently, we do not find the same type of relations. … That part which appears later dominates the original part. … If the image precedes the word, the term used is *ekphrasis* or *Bildgedicht*" (Kibédi Varga 43, italics in the original).

Like the judgement between immediateness or multiple mediatedness, the interpretation or even the realization of remediation depends on the recipient and his or her background knowledge. For example, though it may seem self-evident that both "The Parable of the Blind" by the American modernist poet/writer William Carlos Williams and the poem entitled "Der Blindensturz" by Gisbert Kranz,[4] primarily known as a literary historian, remediate Pieter Brueghel the Elder's *The Parable of the Blind* (alternate title: *The Blind Leading the Blind*), these texts may turn up in a socio-cultural context where neither the painting, nor the artist's name is familiar.[5]

Undoubtedly, other works by the soi-disant "Peasant Brueghel" or works attributed to him—such as the *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* or *The Hunters in the Snow*—constitute tremendously popular themes in ekphrastic literature as well, and perhaps the endless polysemy of Brueghel's paintings is one of the principal reasons for the fact that dozens of literary and other media products have remediated his paintings to the present time. Choosing only from the field of literature and from texts relating to Brueghel's *The Parable of the Blind*, besides Williams's and Kranz's poems, one could also scrutinize "Die Blinden" by Josef Weinheber, "Brueghel: Die Parabel von den Blinden" by Erich Lotz, "Die Blinden" by Walter Bauer, "Les Aveugles" by Charles Baudelaire and the Hungarian modernist poet Mihály Babits's poem entitled "Vakok a hídon" ["Blinds on the Bridge"] or Gert Hoffmann's novel entitled *Der Blindensturz*.

Williams's "The Parable of the Blind" appeared for the first time in the spring issue of *The Hudson Review* in 1960, being published in revised form in his 1962 volume entitled *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems*, which opened with the title cycle of ten poems ("Pictures from Brueghel"). "The Parable of the Blind" became the ninth part of that cycle of poems. Williams's correspondence reveals that he was considering including reproductions of Brueghel's paintings in his poetry volume, but ultimately abandoned this plan. However, the poem titles—such as “Children’s Games”, “The Hunters in the Snow”, “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus”, “The Parable of the Blind” and so on—obviously denominate paintings by or attributed to Brueghel, just as Kranz’s poem title “Der Blindesturz” does. In addition, the title of Williams’s cycle of poems and several of the poems specify the painter’s name.[6] The alternate title of Gisbert Kranz’s poem (“Brueghels Blinde”) acts exactly in this manner, but beyond that the poem’s typographic configuration also alludes to Brueghel’s painting. Hence it is not particularly hard to diagnose the interart connection between the two poems and Brueghel’s painting—at any rate, if we are familiar with the painter’s body of work.

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[4] The poem was published under the title "Brueghels Blinde" in Kranz's volume of poetry entitled *Niederwald und andere Gedichte* in 1984. But Kranz had already published the poem without any title in an eminent handbook entitled *Das Bildgedicht. Theorie, Lexikon, Bibliographie* edited by him (Kranz, *Das Bildgedicht* 31). Later on the poem appeared in several anthologies and periodicals. For instance, it was republished in a thematic issue on concrete poetry in the journal entitled *Deutsch Betrifft Uns* in 1986. Kranz also published the poem under the pseudonym Carlo Carduna. Siglind Bruhn published the poem in English in her monograph entitled *Musical Ekphrasis. Composers Responding to Poetry and Painting* (Bruhn 59).

[5] For instance, I typically encounter such a situation at my seminar on *Static Image Analysis* attended by first year students.

Both poems offer descriptions of Brueghel’s *The Parable of the Blind* and both of them are ekphrases, but even a brief look reveals some striking dissimilarities, especially that the typographical or visuospatial arrangement of Kranz’s poem forms a configuration, an image with potential meanings, while Williams’s poem uses a more traditional page-setting. Williams demediates or dematerializes Brueghel’s painting, but at the same time preserves verbal traces of the pictorial medium that was effaced and erased from the material level of poetic signification. Phrasings like “without a red” (which draws our attention to the absence of vivid colors from Brueghel’s painting), the words “the canvas” and “the composition”—the latter occurring three times—or allusions to the process of viewing (such as “a peasant / cottage *is seen*,” emphasis mine) and the agency or functioning of the painting (such as “the composition shows”; “no seeing man / is represented”) might be considered as traces or marks of the pictorial that had been imprinted on the verbal medium. The poem begins with an appreciative but ambivalent praise (“this horrible but superb painting”), before describing and narrating the painting in a laconic manner, typical of Williams. At the same time or perhaps even more importantly, the poem also provides a narrative of the activity and process of viewing—in the words of James Heffernan “a narrative of the viewer’s eye in motion” (Heffernan 168)—as if we were to follow the wandering eye of the lyrical subject, which itself seems to look for the correlations among the particular visual details. Instead of comprehensively itemizing the observed objects and the spatial, syntactic or semantic relations among them,

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[6] See for example the following excerpts: “Brueghel the painter / concerned with it all” (“The Hunters in the Snow”); “Brueghel saw it all / and with his grim / humor faithfully / recorded / it” (“Children’s Games”).

Williams's *The Parable of the Blind* emphasizes the process or the event of visual perception, and because of that it seems that the most prolific interpretation of Williams's poem would consist in analyzing how the speaking subject views, rather than what he views.

It is quite striking that when the viewer (and the mediator of the painting) enumerates details of the painting, he provides minimal information about the spatial layout of the visual components. In this fashion, the diagonally downward line of human figures clinging to each other is described in detail—in proportion to Williams's laconicism—(e.g. "leading / each other diagonally downward"; "one / follows the others stick in / hand"), while no information is disclosed about the precise location of the elements of the rural scenery (such as "the peasant cottage" or the "church spire"), and these are mentioned only briefly, as if incidentally. This particular viewer of the painting seems to be mainly interested in the human figures, the blind beggars and the catastrophe, the downfall to which their marching ultimately leads, and which can only be witnessed by the painting's actual viewer, since "no seeing man / is represented" on Brueghel's painting. (As I shall point out later on, this does not necessarily mean that Williams's poem would only recognize the significance of Brueghel's painting in the representation of blind people left to themselves by the able-bodied community, and as a result classifying it as genre painting only.)

The threefold occurrence of "composition" might be interpreted as a reference to the structuredness and the visual code of the painting, but we can also correlate it—especially the lines of "there is no detail extraneous / to the composition"—with the composition of the poem itself. Accordingly, this self-reflexive remark may draw our attention to the fact that though the painting is not re*present*ed by the poem in the spatial or literal sense, but Williams's poem itself has an organized, structured and meaningful form, and as such by reason of the artistic shaping of its verbal signs is equal or at least related to the respective painting. As A. D. Baker has argued in his doctoral thesis in connection with Williams's cycle of poems *Pictures from Brueghel*: "The method of the poems is deceptively simple: they appear to be casual restatements of an original picture, but a discrete art in their organization makes them verbal artifacts in their own right" (Baker 162). We might perceive this gesture as a declarative self-description that effaces the picture from the poem's discourse by hinting at its own linguistic capacities, the power of verbal "composition" or the force of the poem's taciturn character and its success; at the minimum, it brings itself and the linguistic aspect into prominence. Therefore, this motif of rivalry would prove that the poem is able to "catch up with" or be an equal to the painting and it might even exceed it in its effect on the recipient or the powerful representation of the dreadful threat of downfall.

Williams significantly rearranged the lines of "The Parable of the Blind" for the volume edition, especially with regard to the last four stanzas, so presumably he was preoccupied with the physical layout of his poem on a book page, that is to say, apparently he was interested in his text's visuality. Despite that, the final form of the poem does not display the pursuit of configuring words into an optical image; the redesigned page-setting makes no attempt to fit in the emblematic or pattern poetry traditions. The visuospatial presentation of this *vers libre* poem and the use of enjambments make the poem's sonority, its phonesthesia and aural rhythm a priority. In other words, to quote my epigraph from Williams, though the "eyes" are still indispensable pieces of the "poet's equipment"—insofar as the poems of "Pictures from Brueghel" broach the performance of the viewer's gaze all the time—apparently they are not the most important artistic "tools," at least in the sense that Williams, who was an amateur painter as well, alludes to the visual dimension only by resorting to words that can be read aloud. The lineation of "The Parable of the Blind" fundamentally serves the smooth continuity of the lyrical voice's flow (and its readibility in such a way) and does not endeavor to arrest or freeze its movement into a visual shape or spatialize it through the typographical placement of words.

At first glance it may seem that the reverse process is taking place in Kranz's poem: this text is incontrovertibly held together by a visual pattern, these lines of poetry are made to fit a visual shape as well, and their meanings can be accessed through the process of deciphering both the words and the visuospatiality of the textual fragments arranged on the white book page. (Not to mention the fact that if we do not speak German at all, we might comprehend the poem as a visual, though visually *meaningful* pattern only.) Naturally, the optical image here becomes apparent only through the (re)mediation of writing and the typographical arrangement of the text, and as a consequence we cannot state that Kranz's poem entirely frees the visual from the domineering ambitions of language. Nonetheless, while trying to construe the text/image suture of *Der Blindensturz* we must constantly make decisions about whether we read or view the poem, since in this mixed media format (as well as calligrams or pattern poems in general) the image and the text cannot be perceived at the same time; nor can they both be understood at the same time. Thus, one might tentatively argue that in its semiotic war between texts and images, the image-text dialectic of Kranz's poem stages an encounter of equals. Or at least it sets ups a duel between *more equal* participants, especially as compared with the bulk of the ekphrastic literary tradition, which tends to subordinate the visual to the textual/verbal.

As might be seen from the above, I would steer clear of identifying the word-and-image relation in Kranz's poem as a peaceful coexistence. Perhaps it is sufficient to refer to those fruitful tensions that arise from reading and/or looking at the block of text in the upper right corner of the poem:

l
i
n
ks
liegen
lässt die kirche[7]

One could decode this layout of words as an image of a towered church or a church with a steeple, but in no way would it be interpreted as such by all readers/viewers. Moreover, it is open to debate whether this connotation has built on the knowledge that Kranz's poem remediates Brueghel's painting or whether it has been formulated owing to the fact that the word "kirche" [*church*] features in the fragment. In the former case a recollection of an example of fine art or a visual remnant, while in the latter case a verbal element is influencing or even guiding the process of construction of meanings. If one identifies this excerpt as a visual tautology of the word "kirche" [*church*] and one's understanding is driven primarily or solely by that solitary word (or the verbal medium itself), the visual form or pattern will actually be endowed with the function of an illustration, an appendix or supplement that complements the text. In this case the image becomes subordinated to the word.

Resembling to some extent Williams's poem, Kranz's ekphrastic calligram or calligramatic ekphrasis denotes the downward direction of the blind people's route as well as their fate, the "disaster." But here the typographic arrangement of the block of text in the lower left corner of the book page itself shows a gradual, diagonal and downward movement that can be conceived as such both through the visual perception of the fragment and the Western convention of reading from left to right:

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[7] In Siglind Bruhn's translation: "ignoring the church to the left is" (Bruhn 59).

augenlos, der sich
        hält am stab von
                augenlos, der sich
                        hält am leib von
                                augenlos, der sich
                                        hält am leib von
                                                augenlos, der sich
                                                        hält am stab von
                                                                augenlos, der sich
                                                                        hält am leib von
                                                                                augenlos, der
                                                                                        stürzt
                                                                                        bo-
                                                                                        den-
                                                                                        los[8]

In addition, the vertical layout of the words ending the poem ("der stürzt bodenlos" ["who falls bottomless"]) conjures up in itself the notion of falling, while the lack of punctuation at the ending of "Der Blindensturz" indicates the continuous or infinite nature of the fall. Nevertheless, in order to interpret the downward line as the route of blind people connected to each other, one must inevitably rely on language, the repetition of the word "augenlos" ("eyeless" or "blind") and the verbal description of their march. While Williams's poem does not localize the "church" (in Williams's words "the church spire") within the literary space of the ekphrasis, not only do the two parts of Kranz's poem that are visually and typographically separated from each other mirror the arrangement of the main syntactical elements of Brueghel's painting, but the empty space between the two blocks of the text represents the spatial distance between the chief compositional constituents of the painting, and—if we take verbal meanings into account as well—the physical-spatial or religious distance between the blind people and the church.

Kranz's "Der Blindensturz" seems to give a more substantial role to the "church" than Williams's "The Parable of the Blind", and it looks as though this increased significance is primarily assignable to the visuospatial arrangement of its blocks of text and the visual shape of the excerpt incorporating the word "kirche." In order to explore this hypothesis and its consequences more thoroughly, one has to take into account some pivotal aspects of the rich and diverse interpretive traditions of Brueghel's *The Parable of the Blind*.

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[8] In Siglind Bruhn's translation: "eyeless, who holds on the staff of eyeless, who holds on to the body of eyeless, who holds on to the body of eyeless, who holds on the staff of eyeless, who holds on to the body of eyeless, who falls bottomless" (Bruhn 59).

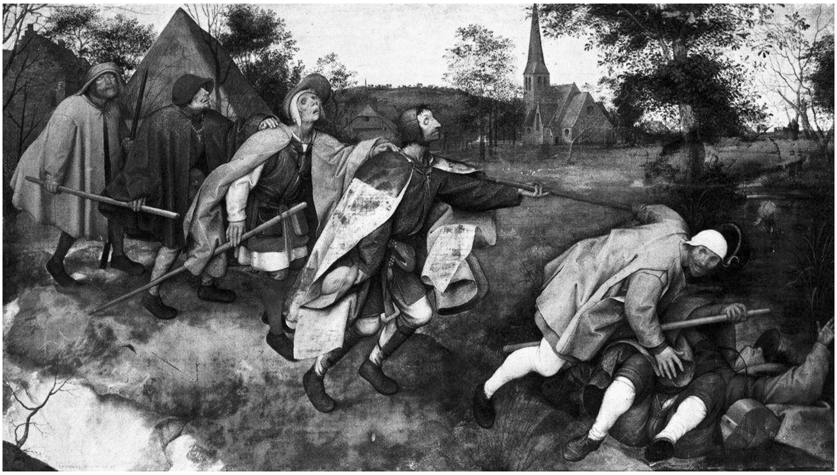

Figure 1: [Pieter Brueghel the Elder: *The Parable of the Blind* (*The Blind Leading the Blind*). 1568. Museo e Gallerie Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples]

Brueghel's intentionally polysemous art probably accounts for the fact that although art historians unanimously consider *The Parable of the Blind* a pictorial masterpiece and the painting has engendered many thoughtful explanations, we do not yet have a single, consensually accepted art historical interpretation of it. In essence, interpretations of the painting vary according to the judgment whether one has to deal with a genre painting or an allegorical painting. In the former case the picture would focus closely on human figures engaged in everyday activities: "Brueghel's work depicts the tumbling down of half a dozen blind men holding to each other … [T]he crippled, blind beggars and pilgrims, who inseparably belonged to the cityscapes of the time, were primarily understood as comic figures" (Kukla, transl. mine). In Brueghel's time, blindness was also customarily associated with criminality, as it was often a penalty imposed for committing unlawful acts. Blindness was also associated with moral corruption, as it was believed to be God's punishment for sin. Since in general blind people could not find any job, they frequently had to fall back on begging.

But it is much more common to decipher Brueghel's *The Parable of the Blind* as an allegorical work founded upon certain texts of Scripture: "Leave them [the Pharisees] alone. They are blind guides! But if a blind person leads another blind person, they will both fall into a ditch" (Matthew 15:14). For instance, Hans Sedlmayr, who devised his famous *Strukturanalyse* (structure analysis) method as applied to Brueghel's *The Parable of the Blind*, sets forth the following probable meanings:

> [T]he painting provides a grim and dreadful atmosphere because of the parabolic arc proceeding downwards and the use of some alarming colors in the lower part of the picture, while one of the horizontals in the upper part of it expresses calmness through the completely amiable quality of coloring. The original, literal meaning refers to the conception of blinds as empty-headed people prevailing in the late sixteenth century, while the allegorical meanings evoke the idea of "the blind leading the blind" that is the parable of the world turned upside down and blind people symbolizing zealous, errant souls. An additional eschatological meaning brings forth the inexorability of the fall and touches on the last things of human destiny (such as death), thus it assigns the additional meaning of fatelessness to the tranquil landscape, the location of the plot. Finally, Brueghel's painting possesses a tropological meaning, too, inasmuch as it encourages the viewers to classify their own selves as belonging among the zealous, errant souls and interpret the representation as a call for (better) self-comprehension. (Quoted in Imdahl 90, transl. mine)

Accordingly, Brueghel's representation of blindness may refer to a sin, a stroke of fate, a bigotry or an aberration from a religious system of beliefs, but it might also mean untrainedness or a lack of intellect or self-understanding.

It is worth mentioning that the village church in the background of the painting is noticeably similar to St. Anna Pede at the village of Dilbeek (Belgium), which still stands today. Brueghel's painting may had been inspired by or might illustrate the parable of Jesus, but it might also be based on a common maxim, the widely known Netherlandish saying of "the blind leading the blind," especially considering that Brueghel himself had often created drawings and paintings on the subject of proverbs, most notably in works such as *Big Fish Eat Little Fish* (1556), *Twelve Proverbs* (1558) and *Netherlandish Proverbs* (1559). The last one features a small trio of blind men, a line of beggars in the background, thus it is a specific visual representation of the well-known proverb and a prefiguration of *The Parable of the Blind*. Be that as it may, this painting shows Brueghel's ability to create mesmerizing allegorical works based either on religious doctrines or popular proverbs.

Like the sightless beggars in the foreground, the church in the background also called forth various, conflicting interpretations. According to some scholars, the building does not bear any iconographic meaning at all, being merely a typical element of Flemish countryside (Hagen and Hagen 193), while others suggest it is a religious symbol which brings to the forefront the parabolic and moralistic discourse of Brueghel's painting. As its vertical axis splits the group of people heading towards their inevitable fate into two, dividing those who are already falling from those who are just wavering as yet, it might indicate that while the first two men in the line of beggars are already beyond recovery, those at the end of the row might let go of one another and avoid falling into the swamp—thus, they still might be saved. One of Brueghel's most brilliant ideas was to cut the church spire off the upper edge of the picture with the frame. As a consequence, it is impossible to decide whether we are looking at a Catholic or a Reformed church and whether the "zealous, errant souls" of the blind people interpreted along the lines of Matthew's Gospel belong to one denomination or the other. In other words, we cannot tell from the pictorial syntax whether this painting, which was created during the period of religious wars waged in the sixteenth century,[9] signifies an anti-Catholic or an anti-sect[10] representation or whether—as Sedlmayr has argued—its meanings have to be constructed on a more universal level.

As mentioned earlier, Williams's ekphrasis seems to relegate the church to an ancillary role and place much more emphasis on the fate of the blind men, while Kranz's ekphrastic pattern poem elevates the church to a protagonist—not only verbally, but visually, too. These procedures of remediation may show that the two poems have conflicting preferences concerning the distinctly different interpretive traditions of Brueghel's work. In this respect one could state that Williams's poem is prone to comprehend Brueghel's *The Parable of the Blind* as a genre painting, while Kranz's poem tends towards grasping it as an allegorical depiction; however, their impact on the interpretive possibilities of the misfortune or the disaster mentioned in the poems' endings seems to be worthy of closer scrutiny.

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[9] The painting's low-spirited tone may be related to the establishment of the Council of Troubles in 1567 by the government of the Spanish Netherlands. The Council ordered executions in order to enforce Spanish, Catholic rule and subdue Protestantism.

[10] By the time Brueghel painted *The Parable of the Blind* in 1568, many religious sects had appeared in the Low Countries, such as the Lutherans, the Zwinglians, the Frankists (followers of Sebastian Frank), the Spiritualists and the Servetiens, as well as the Anabaptists. As Margaret A. Sullivan argues along the lines of The Gospel of Matthew: "The charge of blindness could be applied to the church—the priests who kept concubines and the convents and abbeys that failed to carry out their mission of caring for lepers and the needy, as well as the multiple sects who put their own understanding of the Bible above the wisdom of the church fathers—but for Bruegel's viewers the number of blind men in the painting made the sects, each with its own dogma and interpretation of the Bible, the most obvious candidates for criticism."

Discussing Kranz's "Der Blindensturz", Siglind Bruhn notes that "the German expression 'links liegen lassen' is particularly powerful, since it covers both the literal observation that the blind men pass the church, 'leaving it behind to their left', and the figurative meaning of 'deliberately not taking notice of it'" (Bruhn 60). While in the literal sense the words just signify walking past a building, in the metaphorical sense both translational choices mark a turning away from "the church" (that is falling away from God and one or all of the religious sects) or a practice of false religion; moreover, the latter solution ("deliberately not taking notice of it") implies that the blind men's way of acting rests on an intentional and conscious decision. If we favor metaphorical implications and take them into consideration together with the relationship of the two visuospatially separate blocks of text of the poem, the *Der Blindensturz* will establish the quality of the attitude towards "the church"—that is the turning away from it—as the chief reason and explanation for the blind people's "bottomless fall." It can be readily accepted that the interpretations of this complex state of affairs may vary vastly; however, the multiplication and dissemination of meanings depend on how one decodes "the church." For example, besides the literal and figurative meaning of "stumbling" the word "fall" may also denote that the human characters will be doomed to Hell for eternity. (And who exactly will be condemned to Hell? The Catholic errant or the Protestant?)

At first glance, Williams's poem seems to omit completely the allegorical aspects of Brueghel's painting. It is almost as though an amateur or a dilettante spectator was viewing Brueghel's *The Parable of the Blind*, reaching the conclusion that the "beggars" will "stumble finally into a bog" and that will cause their "disaster" (that is, they will lose their way in the morass and may even drown there). This ekphrasis does not attribute central importance to the "church," but even so, the weight of the word "disaster," which concludes the poem, retunes the strayed blind men's stumbling into the swamp. The ending of the poem hardly touches upon eternal punishment or everlasting damnation, but it brings an aggregate tragedy, the wanderers' stumbling to death and the risks of zealotry (e.g. following a leader blindly) to the fore all the more.

Conclusions

Both poems remediate Brueghel's *The Parable of the Blind*, but not in an innocent or transparent manner. Both can be differentiated and recognized as cases of hypermediacy, but there exists an essential difference between the two of them. While Williams's poem effaces the visual (Brueghel's painting) keeping its traits in verbal allusions only and in a sense repressing the image in order to create its own verbal "self-portrait," Kranz's poem adds another filter or stratum to the mediatization of Brueghel's painting through verbal description, namely the typographic image of the verbal text which exhibits the "skeleton" of the original pictorial composition as well. Thus, Kranz's poem might be considered as a form of multiple hypermediacy. As opposed to Williams's more conventional ekphrasis, Kranz' also rearranges the traditional word-image hierarchy of ekphrases (that tend to give supremacy to words) in that the poem vindicates a more "democratic" or balanced relation between the verbal and the visual medium. Kranz's ekphrastic and calligramatic poem is a mixed media artwork that brings into effect a more multilevelled hypermediacy through the multiplication of mediation. In this way it urges us to take a reflexive look at the mediation of pictures and texts and the relationships between them in a more forceful and vigorous manner.

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Remediacija in mediamachia v opisu podob (*ekphrass*)

Ključne besede: imtermedialnost / literatura in likovna umetnost / poezija / opis podob / ekfraza / Williams, William Carlos / Kranz, Gisbert / Bruegel, Pieter st.

Remediacija, kot jo koncipirata Jay David Bolter in Richard Grusin, označuje vrsto medmedijskega razmerja, v katerem lahko različni mediji eden drugega preoblikujejo, se medsebojno prilaščajo, vzajemno sklicujejo ali tekmujejo med seboj. Na primeru literarne forme *ekphrasis*, razumljene v ožjem smislu kot literarni opis umetniškega likovnega dela, prispevek analizira *ekphrasis* kot eno izmed tehnik remediacije. Sledeč Bolterjevemu in Grusinovemu razumevanju remediacije in analizi dialektike med besedilom in podobo J. T. Mitchell želim v tem prispevku orisati poteze boja (torej *mediamachia*) med besedo/besedilom in podobo v pesmih »The Parable of the Blind« Williama Carlosa Williamsa in »Der Blindensturz« Gisberta Kranza. Najprej vzpostavim teoret-

ski okvir, znotraj katerega diferenciacija opisa podobe kot strategija besedne hipermedijskosti sploh postane mogoča. Zatem predstavim primerjalno analizo omenjenih pesmi, ki pokaže, da medtem ko Williamsova pesem izniči vizualno (Brueghelov motiv *Slepi vodi slepe* oz. *Parabola o slepih*), katerega poteze ohranja zgolj v verbalnih namigih in na nek način zatre podobo, da bi ustvarila svoj besedni »avtoportret«, Kranzeva pesem mediatizaciji Brueghelove slike skozi verbalni opis doda še eno plast, in sicer tipografsko podobo besedila, ki razkrije »skelet« izvorne likovne kompozicije. Tako je mogoče Kranzevo pesem razumeti kot obliko multiplicirane hipermedialnosti. V nasprotju z Williamsovo bolj konvencionalno *ekhphrasis* Kranz preuredi tradicionalno hierarhijo med besedo in podobo (ki običajno daje prevlado besedi), tako da vnovič vzpostavi enakopravnejše razmerje med verbalnim in vizualnim medijem.

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Description of Handwriting: Physiognomic Portraits in Nineteenth-Century Novels

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The article examines a specific type of description: that of a character's physical features, or, in the broader sense, the possibility of ekphrasis in narrative. First of all, I focus on how the looks of persons–characters–are rendered in the nineteenth-century novel. Then I turn to the means and functions of describing handwriting. Recently corporeal narratology has emphasized that the representation of human bodies within a narrative is always determined by the fact that the body image is historically and culturally constituted. In the nineteenth century the key components of this cultural context were provided by J. C. Lavater writings on physiognomy. Relying on the terminology of Graeme Tytler I reconceptualize, in the language of narratology, the emergence of the post-Lavaterian portrait.

Keywords: narratology / the novel / nineteenth century / narrative technique / physiognomy / handwriting / description / Lavater, Johann Kaspar

My paper discusses the potential of one specific type of *description*, the *ekphrasis* in its wider sense. Thomas Mitchell, relying on an early explanation by George Saintsbury, defines *ekphrasis* as a "[m]ore general application that includes 'any set description intended to bring person, place, picture etc. before the mind's eye'" (Mitchell 153). From these variants, I specifically focus on the description of characters in nineteenth-century novels, later exploring the methods used to describe handwriting, along with the array of functions we might attribute to this technique. More recently, representatives of corporeal narratology have put increasing emphasis on how the representation of human bodies within a narrative is always determined by the fact that the body image is at all times historically conditioned (Punday 9–17, Földes 6–12). In the case of nineteenth-century literature, an important constituent of this cultural context was the physiognomic literature of the modern period.

Physiognomy could be defined as an approach founded on the presumption that the external features of humans, like countenance and posture, form a valid basis for assumptions concerning personality and character; as a discipline, it is interested in the interrelationship between the soul and the body (Békés, *Mutasd* 58). The problems of definition lie in the difference one might observe in how various historical periods and cultural traditions define personality and character, or the external "marks" which somehow can be and should be "read." What are we supposed to think about the body and the soul, not to mention the relationship between them? I have refrained from using the word *science* to describe *physiognomy.* The esteem of this form of cognition has profoundly changed in the last two hundred years. At the end of the eighteenth century, one of the most influential representatives of modern physiognomy, Johann Caspar Lavater still thought that physiognomy would soon turn into a proper science, sharing the status of mathematics (Lavater, *Essays on Phyisiognomy* 37). However, the prophecy has never been fulfilled, and to some extent, it was precisely the criticism of his works which popularized the counterarguments calling the scientific nature of this endeavour into question. This is what one of his most important critics, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg referred to (Lichtenberg 19–52; Belting 113–122). The satire he wrote about the subject is the parodic example of the anti-physiognomic way of thinking (Craig 70), which makes Lavater's examples ludicrous with the help of illustrations (for example, shadow images of pig tail and dog tail). According to Lichtenberg, Lavater's concept of physiognomy represents at best an art or a skill (*Kunst*) and by no means a science (*Wissenschaft*) (Craig 61). The short triumph is recalled in Umberto Eco's witty judgment, according to which physiognomy is an old science—if it is a *science* at all" (Eco 19, italics added). Nonetheless, Lavater's observation that physiognomy was a part of everyday practice was left unchallenged by his critics. In his view, everyone makes physiognomic judgments in their personal exchanges even if they have never heard about the term itself (Lavater, *Essays on Phyisiognomy* 32). The criticism of the tenets of physiognomy was summarised by Béla Bacsó in the following words: "[N]o one denies that we can indeed read and we do actually make judgement based on external features, however, the surface can only provide an insecure foundation for what we really have to comprehend and read" (Bacsó 66).

Eco's text can hence be understood as the history of physiognomy turned into a satire with action, but that should not conceal the tragic interpretation of the story, as it is, in fact, connected to the history of stereotypes. Cesare Lombroso's theory (Lombroso 36), inspired by physiognomy, but also relying on the results of phrenology, claims that the criminal instinct is hereditary, and it is reflected by corporeal anomalies. A good deal of composure is needed when reading Lavater's ideas about the limited intellectual capacity of women, or the features of national physiognomy. Moreover, it is clear that the "theory" of racism is also closely related to national physiognomy. The bad reputation of this type of discourse, however, is not rooted solely in the tragic events of the twentieth century. As Richard T. Gray puts it, "Lavater himself fell victim to coercive power of positivism and Enlightenment scientism" (Gray 4).

There are potential arguments against silence and suppression, if we do not try to rehabilitate an inexcusable ideology. Rather we may perform a critical examination of the historical and aesthetico-historical contexts of a discourse type that responded to the emergence of physiognomic thinking by a revision and partial elimination of the external/internal, body/soul opposition. For historical studies, physiognomic literature is relevant as a body of *source texts* contributing to the interpretation of how humans are represented, which in turn facilitates the decoding of specific texts and works of art (Békés, *Pál* 381). This potential can be leveraged in verbal and visual representations alike. Familiarity with physiognomic literature can be harnessed in research within the disciplines of art history, literary history and historical studies. The connection between the history of the novel and physiognomy is particularly interesting in this respect. From the first third of the twentieth century, more and more interpretations relied on this method: the works of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola and Lermontov were frequently analyzed from this perspective (Graham 75–121). According to John Graham, physiognomic insight in the novel genre "was no longer a bit of esoteric information to be tossed into the stream of action, but it had become a primary method for determining the truth about the character" (Graham 82). The shape of the temples or a change in the complexion revealed the character's intellectual and moral capacities (Graham 82–83). Based on this approach, one could interpret the external description of characters in a system of *analepsis* and *prolepsis*, with special regard to the physiognomic canon developed by Lavater. In other words, the description of a character is judged in a different way, along different expectations by a reader who is familiar (or was re-familiarized) with the ideas of physiognomy. In Hungarian histories of the novel, this approach is completely absent, which makes a recent book-length study on the narratological bearings of physiognomic descriptions in nineteenth-century Hungarian novels a most welcome development (Kucserka 131–155).

As to the history of the European novel, Greame Tytler must be mentioned, whose vastly influential volume offered an overview of the connection between the physiognomic tradition and the nineteenth-century history of the novel. A whole chapter of his book is devoted to the examination of *description*, the methodology of character descriptions in epic genres. Of course, physiognomic description already played an important role in the presentation of characters well before Lavater. Based on Tytler's short summary, it can be asserted that as early as in the Homeric epics, appearance, the beauty or ugliness of characters, was endowed with moral meaning. In the world of ancient epics, characters make physiognomic judgments, the face gives away a noble parentage, and there are examples of zoomorphic representation as well. In medieval epic literature, the color of the hair is a source of moral judgment. Blonde people are virtuous, red hair is a sign of betrayers, black refers to diabolical figures. Christian heroes are beautiful, pagans are ugly. Beautiful pagans tend to convert. By the seventeenth century, two fundamental portrait types emerged. The idealized portrait (in the representations of female beauty), and the grotesque portrait, in the case of diabolical or eccentric characters (Tytler, *Physiognomy* 123–140). From the nineteenth century on, Tytler observes a departure from these types in European novels. The change, related to the spread of Lavater's ideas, was in part a quantitative transformation: the description of characters became remarkably more detailed. Besides the face, writers provide ample detail on stature, gestures, voice, handwriting, attire and the close environment, too. On the other hand, Tytler also claims to identify the traces of Lavater's physiognomic vocabulary in nineteenth-century novels—in phrases like contour and symmetry, as well as in extensive commentary of the impact of moral development on physical appearance. All this leads to a narratological shift, too: the character is not seen exclusively from the viewpoint of the first person or third person narrator, but from a dual perspective. This dual perspective of the narrator and the observing character lends dramatic features to the portrait. Thus, *descriptio* becomes fragmented, we see the same figure from the perspective of several characters, and there are even examples for the perspective of an imaginary physiognomist (Tytler, *Physiognomy* 166–181).

Tytler's work, after an overview of the historical background, provides examples for the new portrait type from English, French and German novels, and refers to it as the post-Lavater portrait. In his survey, he avoids the evaluation of direct influence, although it must be added that Tytler's and others' later physiognomic analyses of specific authors and works do address this problem to some extent.[1] Thus, instead of a detailed presentation of these, Tytler talks about a "Lavaterian physiognomical climate" (Tytler, *Physiognomy* 131). Of course, the extreme popularity of the author warrants this: by 1810, his fundamental work saw 15 French, 20 English, two American, two Russian and one Italian editions.[2] As John Graham puts it, the work was so popular that someone interested in literature could hardly avoid encountering it in some form. In Melissa Percival's view, the secret to Lavater's unparalleled success was the way he readily commented on several prominent problems of his times: the theory of knowledge, the question of language, and the relationship between moral and physical beauty. Apart from that, he found a unique language to convey his ideas (Percival 159–160). His methodology and vocabulary relied on different disciplines, including theology, natural sciences and arts. According to others, the "success of the Fragmente probably derived from the metaphysical and religious adornment of their scientific content. For Lavater, the human body was not merely a temporary earthly frame for the spirit, to be discarded after death, but a form capable of regeneration and endless transformation in the next life, according to the spiritual character and moral development of its owner" (Tytler, *Physiognomy* 54–55). In what follows, based on Tytler's book and Lavater's works, I endeavour to sum up the most important developments in the case of (to use Tytler's phrase) physiognomical portraits in narratological terms.

In fact, physiognomical description employs a special system of reference. As I have already highlighted, in this description type, internal features can be inferred from "external" characteristics. The internal development of the characters (like their virtuous life) visibly impresses itself on the external appearance. This is the subject of Nelly Dean's physiognomic musing in Emily Brontë's novel, where she gives the following advice to the young Heathcliff: "A good heart will help you a bonny face, my lad … if you were a regular black; and a bad one will turn the bonniest into something worse than ugly" (Brontë 82).

A spectacular example of this method appears in Miklós Jósika's work from 1836, where the figure of Olivér Abafi is characterised by the narrator as one whose "evil heart" is also reflected in his countenance, but who learns to master his passions, which in turn becomes visible on his external appearance (Jósika 34–35).[3] In other words, following the three areas of description as proposed by Philippe Hamon (name associated with the personality of the character, physical portrait, psychological portrait), it is safe to assert that in the physiognomic tradition, the latter two, the physical portrait and the psychological portrait, are closely connected. It follows then, that description does not only serve the purpose of "conjuring" a subject, but in some cases, substitutes the psychological portrait: for example, the recurring changes in Heathcliff's body are also representative of his psychological development (Brontë 74–75; 112–113).

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[1] For example, Tytler, "Physiognomy and the Treatment" 300–311; Tytler, "Physiognomy in *Wuthering*" 137–148; Tytler, "Faith" 223–246; Percival 159–187; Erle 134–164.

[2] For a detailed bibliography see Graham 121–130.

The change in narrative technique mentioned by Tytler also affects the problem of observation in relation to focalization, or, in Bal's definition, the relationship between the described object and the vantage point. For the act of observation requires more than simple physical capture. Whenever we perceive something, we also immediately interpret it. In other words, description is a verbal rendering of the perceived object (or figure) (Bal 109–146). Based on Tytler's book, the observing subject appearing in nineteenth-century novels can be conceived as the prototype of the physiognomer, into whose figure, Kevin Berland's essay offers important insight. Lavater's work represents the physiognomer through the discourse of sensitivity. The narrative persona emerging in the introductory chapter of the magnum opus offers a model of this sensitivity: "Sometimes … at first sight of certain faces I felt an emotion which did not subside for a few moments after the object was removed; but I did not know the cause"[4] (Lavater, *Pysiognomische Fragmente* I.7; Berland 31–32). Lavater trusts the intuitive power of such judgments. Physiognomic experience might even stimulate physical symptoms. His work is a result of physiognomic perception and observation, or in Kevin Berland's words, a certain kind of sentimental quasi-empiricism (Berland 31–35). To provide an example from a novel: when we see the Abbé Pirard from Julien's point of view in *The Red and the Black*, Julien's subsequent swoon (Stendhal 236–237) is not a part of the description in a narratological sense, but in the nineteenth-century physiognomic tradition, it is a part of physiognomic experience. Therefore, the description becomes an integral part of the narrative in this case, too.

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[3] This change is discussed in more detail in Kucserka 61–66.

[4] The edition quoted by Berland: Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*. III vols. Ed T. Holloway. Tran. Henry Hunter. London: 1789–1798. I. 7. Berland. 31–32.

Tytler's comment about the expansion of the elements of description can also be applied to Hamon's model. In Hamon's concept, description consists of the subject (for example, "house"), or the described object itself, and a series of different sub-subjects (like door, roof, room), that is, the components and conceptual subcategories of the described subject. These subcategories together produce the vocabulary related to the described subject (Hamon 465–485).[5] It means that when the subject is the human body, the number of possible subcategories sees a significant increase due to Lavater's influence. The popularity of physiognomic inquiry made the vocabulary for the description of the human body more wide-ranging and elaborate. The hierarchy of subcategories (like the order or the prominent role of the eyes, the temple, and the line of the nose in connection with faces) might also imply a physiognomic context.

François Berthelot, one of the founders of corporeal narratology, distinguishes three categories of features in connection with the physical body. Parts of the physical body are clearly defined material elements, but also skills, which are non-material in nature, but belong to the functions of the body, like the five senses, voice, and movement. Finally, there are the so-called basic features, like sex, age, and physical features including stature and weight (Berthelot 10). Of course, corporeal narratology offers an interpretation of these categories that differs from the physiognomic interpretation of the same (Földes 22–23). In fact, the latter works against categorization, and warrants the permeability of distinct features. In Lavater's thinking, one part of the body never contradicts another, but they are always interconnected, interdependent, and governed by the same soul. Next, we read that from one healthy part of the body one may infer the health of the whole body and a complete character (nature) (Lavater, *Pysiognomische Fragmente* III.110). Analogy-based discoveries frequently appear in Lavater's physiognomic practice, too. One of his general rules is related to those "whose figure is oblique, whose mouth is oblique, whose walk is oblique, whose handwriting is oblique: that is, in an unequal irregular direction. Of him a manner of thinking, character and conduct are oblique" (Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy. Designed to Promote Knowledge and the Love of Mankind* 463).

Handwriting occupies a central role in Tytler's concept because its role within novels significantly intensifies around the beginning of the nineteenth century. This tendency is partially rooted in Lavater's physiognomic ideas. According to his confession in the *Physiognomic fragments*, as he compared more and more writings, he became ever more convinced of the physiognomic relevance of handwriting, which is determined by the writer (Lavater, *Pysiognomische Fragmente* III.113). The use of handwriting as evidence in legal cases might seem to reinforce the authenticity of physiognomy, as each and every individual possesses a unique and inimitable (or at best scarcely and hardly imitable) handwriting. This insight might be related to the function of handwriting in novels, too. The most widely known example of this is Stevenson's novel published in 1886, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Here, the identification of the figure of Hyde and Jekyll is partly made possible by the similarity of their handwriting, but the fundamental difference between the two of them is marked precisely by the differing angle of their script (Stevenson 42). A similar function, that of identification, appears abundantly in nineteenth-century Hungarian novels.[6]

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[5] A criticism of the same: Bal 144.

Nonetheless, Lavater's book goes further than identification, and in the chapter on handwriting, offers different approaches to the detailed physiognomic examination. Form, resilience, the height, length and position of the letters, the connection between them should all be considered (Lavater, *Pysiognomische Fragmente* III.118). Not only the space between lines, but their level or oblique running is also relevant. The overall impression about the penmanship can be characterised by its clarity and ease or the lack of these features. However, our handwriting—just like our face—is prone to change over time, and might reflect our momentary state of mind. As Lavater puts it, "one's handwriting refers to the spiritual state and the disposition of the individual, as the same person using the same ink, same paper, committing the same mistakes, will certainly write differently in a state of anger than when he/she wants to be kind or to offer consolation for the reader. Who would deny that encountering a not frequently seen handwriting, we can judge if it was written in a relaxed or an agitated state?"[7] There is some inconsistency between how the meticulous system of observation is described, and how in the analyses of actual handwritings whose copies were included in the *Physiognomic Fragments*, Lavater often fails to venture beyond physiognomic judgment (Lavater, *Pysiognomische Fragmente* III.115–118).

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[6] E.g. Jókai, *Politikai divatok* I.180–181; Jókai, *Egy magyar* II 158; Jókai, *A tengerszemű* 117.

[7] This passage seems to be missing from English editions, the translation is mine. "Denn eben aus dieser Verschiedenheit erhellet, das sicht die Handschrift eines Menschen nach seiner jedesmaligen Lage und Gemüthsverfassung richte. Derselbe Mensch wird derselben Tinte, derselben Feder, auf demselben Papiere seiner Schrift einen andern Charakter geben, wen er heftig zürnt—und wenn er liebreich und brüderlich tröstet. Wer will's läugnen das man's nicht oft einer Schrift leicht ansehen könne, ob sie mit Ruhe oder Unruhe verfaßt worden" (Lavater, *Pysiognomische Fragmente* III.112–113).

According to Tytler's assessment, in nineteenth-century novels, handwriting contributes to the shaping of character: "For example in *Vanity Fair* the reference to Rowdon Crawley's 'schoolboy hand' emphasizes his immaturity, just as something of George Osborne's arrogance is suggested when the narrator speaks of a letter of his to Amelia being couched in his 'well-known bold handwriting'" (Tytler, *Phisiognomy* 218). In *Pride and Prejudice*, Miss Bingley praises Darcy's swift, straight handwriting (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* 40), and in this case, it is more characteristic of the observer than the subject of the observation. The dialogue concerning handwriting in Jane Austen's *Emma* is considered as essentially inspired by Lavater:

> "I have heard it asserted," said John Knightly "that the same sort of hand-writing often prevails in a family … Isabella and Emma, I think do write very much alike." … "Yes"—said his brother hesitatingly, "there is a likeness. I know what you mean—but Emma's hand is the strongest." (Austen, *Emma* 264–265.)

Later Emma thinks of Frank Churchill's handwriting as the most beautiful male handwriting, but Mr. Knightley again expresses his disagreement: "It is too small—wants strength. It is like a woman's writing" (Austen, *Emma* 265). In Tytler's interpretation, "[t]hus we see how skillfully the author manages, first of all to characterize Emma through Knightley's judgement of her handwriting, and, secondly, to suggest his interest in the heroine as well as his jealousy of Frank Churchill" (Tytler, *Physiognomy* 219).

Besides the function of fashioning of character, one must also count with a potential ironic reading of Lavater's physiognomic ideas in nineteenth century novels. In the opening parts of *Great Expectations*, lonely Pip makes a physiognomic judgment based on his parents' epitaph and speculates about physical features not on the basis of handwriting, but that of engraved letters: "The shape of the letters on my father's [tombstone], gave me an odd idea that he was a square, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, 'Also Georgiana Wife of the Above' I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly" (Dickens 21).

The most widely known example of a change of handwriting, however, must be Goethe's *Elective Affinities*. First, we read in the assistant's postscript about Ottilia's slowly and stiffly running handwriting (Goethe, *Elective Affinities* 30). Later we read that Charlotte "changed her pens for others which had been written with, to teach her to make bolder strokes in her handwriting" (Goethe, *Elective Affinities* 51). Where Charlotte's technical assistance could not help, love triumphed. In a memorable scene of the novel, Ottilia is copying Eduard's text, and after finishing, an interesting change occurs:

> She put down the original and her transcript on the table before Edward. "Shall we collate them? she said, with smile. Edward did not know what to answer. He looked at her—he looked at the transcript. The first few sheets were written with the greatest carefulness in a delicate woman's hand. Than the strokes appeared to alter, to become more light and free—but who can describe his surprise as he run his eyes over the concluding page? "For heaven's sake" he cried, "what is this? this is my hand." (Goethe, *Elective Affinities* 105)

In this scene, we see Ottilia's handwriting, but the focalizer is Eduard. His vocabulary about the male and female nature of the handwriting, its closed, easy and liberal features can be familiar from Lavater's works. Even more important, however, is that Eduard reads this change as a sign of love. In Tytler's analysis, the identical handwriting represents the truly Lavaterian aspect of the passage: "[T]hrough this poetic treatment of an essentially Lavaterian idea Goethe manages to convey the close spiritual bond between the lovers" (Tytler, *Physiognomy* 219). The description of the handwriting thus signals the beginning of the mutually accepted phase of the relationship between Eduard and Ottilia.

It was probably not the influence of Lavater, but the success of *Elective Affinities* that made the assimilation of the woman's handwriting to that of the man an example of the transformative power of love in Hungarian literature, too. One of the examples for this is the correspondence between the prominent Hungarian poet of the nineteenth century, Sándor Petőfi, and his wife, Júlia Szendrey. An expert in textuality in the 1930s claimed that the similarity between the two hands is rooted in imitation. Indeed the already present similarity between their handwriting became even stronger after the marriage between Júlia and Petőfi, and she started to "consciously imitate Petőfi's handwriting, as witnessed by manuscripts by Júlia from the 1860s, which were so similar to Petőfi's writing that it called for experts to separate them" (Mikes-Dernői Kocsis 257).[8] A later example, the confession of Alaine Polcz (Miklós Mészöly's wife) is so far not supported by philological arguments, but strengthens the myth of love. In her memoirs, she twice mentions that Mészöly's and her own handwriting became similar from time to time (Polcz 67–68; Mészöly and Polcz 864–865).

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[8] On the edition by Lajos Mikes see Gyimesi 83–84.

My final example is also philological in nature, and might be characterized as the act of re-inscribing an original handwriting. The correspondence of the outstanding figure of Hungarian Neology, Ferenc Kazinczy, contains a remarkable source from 1828: Karolina Gyulay's only surviving letter to Kazinczy. Karolina was the daughter of Kazinczy's former lover, Zsuzsanna Kácsándy. The curiosity of the letter is summed up by Mariann Czifra in the following words:

> The letter is unique in that it is written by two hands, so that the original fading ink is thoroughly rewritten with a tint of stronger color. The hand in stronger tint follows Karolina Gyulay's handwriting, but one can still identify Kazinczy's own writing. Kazinczy leads his pen over each and every word, letter, and line by Lotti. There is an unadorned answer to this: probably Kazinczy did this simply because of the fading tint. However, this still does not account for the selected method, since if the letter was so important, it could have been simply copied. Furthermore, there is no other example of this overwriting method in Kazinczy's literary estate. (Czifra)

In this letter Karolina Gyulay expresses her sorrow over the death of her mother. From Kazinczy's perspective, on the other hand, it deals with the loss of his former lover (Szauder, *Veteris vestigia* 347–433; Szauder, *A kassai* 90–114). The critic characterizes this gesture in the following words:

> As the loving child transforms her grief over the absence of her mother into sentences, the nearly 70 years old man leads his pen over the same sentences; as the dear daughter draws the memory of her mother with tint, it is overwritten by the loving man, thereby creating a monument for Susie, because even if all love inevitably ends, some loves leave everlasting traces." (Czifra)

What is the proper context for Kazinczy's unique practice? Can we see this as a sort of preparation for the act of imitation as quoted from *Elective Affinities*? Even though Kazinczy's enthusiasm for Goethe is well-known, he never made a reference to this novel, though an indirect familiarity with the text cannot be excluded. In all likelihood, he acquired his knowledge of Lavater's idea second hand, too, yet many sources claim that he was aware of the fundamental principles of physiognomy (Tóth 37–39). A deep "imprint" of Lavaterian concepts seems to be at work when he uses similar techniques judging the portraits in his *Hungarian Pantheon*: "Kajdacsi was endowed by God with a face from which the eyes turn away in horror, and as I gather, even his hair is red. Sándor Császár's head properly reflects his soul, while Bittó's visage suggests something bad according to Lavater's precepts."[9] At the same time, Kazinczy seems to suggest a degree of irony when he is recounting anecdotes about people confusingly similar to each other, where the reasonable conclusion would be that people similar in appearance share the same internal characteristics, too (Kazinczy, *Pályám* 220). Therefore, Kazinczy's remarks reflect a contradictory assessment of the ideas he considers Lavaterian. The same structure appears in those passages of Goethe's autobiography[10] (read by Kazinczy) which reflect on Lavater, and provide an insight into the far-reaching popularity of the latter. The Swiss minister is represented as a sociable person, who "was gifted with an insight into persons and minds by which he quickly understood the state of all around him" (Goethe, *The Auto-biography* 157). However, later he also mentions jokes directed against Lavater, and recalls how people tried to deceive the master of physiognomy by mixing up portraits and signatures. For example, a painter from Frankfurt misled Lavater by sending him the portrait of Bahrdt, while it was a portrait of Goethe that he originally ordered. Goethe himself suggests that Lavater did not enjoy universal popularity: "The number of those who had no faith in Physiognomy, or, at least, regarded it as uncertain and deceitful, was very great" (Goethe, *The Auto-biography* 152). There is only one area where Kazinczy expresses no doubts in connection with physiognomy: the area of handwriting. As he puts it in a letter to Károly György Rumy, "Ich glaube, Lavater hat recht, wenn er aus der Handschrift an den Mann schliesst" (Kazinczy *Levelezése* XV. 40.). In the preface to his autograph collection, he writes: "The manuscripts of famous or infamous people are worthy of our attention, just like their portraits: exactly how, we do not understand, but we feel that we are brought closer to them, to the unknown by a look at their portraits and by touching the sheet on which their hand had rested."[11]

Kazinczy's passion for collecting and copying autographs can be interpreted—following Attila Debreczeni's lead—as the sign of a cultic worship of relics or a practice of museology (Debreczeni, *Kazinczy, a dokumentátor* 281–289; Debreczeni, *Kazinczy emlékállító* 226–247). On the other hand, we might have to bear in mind that the nineteenth-century Hungarian writer was profoundly influenced by the physiognomic tradition, and for him, the study of handwriting was an important insight into character. Probably the—literal—overwriting of Karolina Gyulay's letter also fits into this context.

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[9] "Kajdacsit az Isten olly arcczal bélyegozta meg, a'melytől borzadva fordul—el a szem, s a' mint hallom, neki a haja is veres. A Császár Sándor feje mutatja melly lelkű, a' Bittóé pedig a' Lavater tanításai szerint rosszat gyaníttat." Kazinczy Ferenc—Gr. Dessewffy Józsefnek. 1827. szeptember 11 (Kazinczy, *Levelezése* XX. 355).

[10] On the relationship between Goethe and Lavater: Moore 165–193.

[11] "A' jól vagy rosszúl nevezetes emberek' Kéziratai a'szerint érdemlik figyelmüket mint az ő arczképeik; magunk sem értjük mint esik, de érezzük, hogy hozzájok, a' nem ismertekhez, közelebb tétetünk, midőn képeiket látjuk, midőn illethetjük a' papirost, mellyen kezek nyúgodott …" MTAKt. Földrajz 4.r. 3. 107a.

Translated to English by Csaba Maczelka

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Opis pisave: fiziognomski portreti v romanih devetnajstega stoletja

Ključne besede: naratologija / roman / 19. stoletje / pripovedna tehnika / literarni liki / fiziognomija / pisava / opis / Lavater, Johann Kaspar

Pričujoči prispevek se ukvarja s posebno vrsto opisa, namreč fizičnih potez literarnega lika in, širše, možnostmi opisa podobe (*ekphrasis*) v pripovedi. Najprej raziščem, kako se videz oseb – *likov* – odraža v romanu 19. stoletja. Nato preučujem sredstva in funkcije opisovanja pisave. Korporealna naratologija je nedavno izpostavila, da reprezentacijo človeških teles v pripovedi vedno določa dejstvo, da je podoba telesa zgodovinsko in kulturno konstituirana. V 19. stoletju je o ključnih prvinah tovrstnega kulturnega konteksta v svojih spisih o fiziognomiji pisal J. C. Lavater. Ob naslonitvi na terminologijo Graema Tytlerja v naratološkem jeziku rekonceptualiziram pojav postlavaterskega portreta.

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Descriptions of Rituals

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Although the presentation of customs and rituals may refer to several actions, what makes them descriptions rather than narratives is a general approach that takes alternatives into consideration. If a series of possible events depends on many factors and a text presents all of these factors and alternative possibilities, the end result is a description. This is most obvious in simple texts (shown in the example of a product leaflet), while in sophisticated narratives such as a novel, descriptions of rituals tend to be from the characters' viewpoint instead of the narrator directly. The examples to be analysed have been taken from a medical leaflet providing patient information, an ethnographic text by Bronislaw Malinowski, and two twentieth-century popular novels (sci-fi and fantasy, respectively), The Dispossessed *by Ursula K. Le Guin and* Eric *by Terry Pratchett, followed by a post-colonial novel, Avarind Adiga's* The White Tiger.

Keywords: literature and ethnography / narratology / rituals / customs / description / Malinowski, Bronisław/ Pratchett, Terry / Le Guin, Ursula / Adiga, Aravind

When Aristotle declared that tragedy is more philosophical compared to historiography, he highlighted a fictional story's potential for relaying abstract description, namely that fiction may relate what the world is like. Fiction's ability to depict includes the kinds of necessities and probabilities that regulate the world, which Aristotle found more interesting (i.e. more philosophical) than the mere notation of events. When narratologists, however, explore the role played by descriptions in a text, they do not focus on the descriptive of it; they rather tend to appreciate the narrative potential of a description.[1]

Even if we define a narrative through action, occurrence, event, or change of state, many types of texts can be found that seem to describe an abstract scheme rather than narrate, even if these texts either mostly or exclusively relay acts. The two most obvious examples are the recipe and the instruction manual. When a recipe starts with the proverbial "Take two eggs," an act has already been prescribed for the reader. The second-person singular may indicate that the addressee is identical to the would-be actant, or a general subject, yet readers will probably visualize themselves starting the chain of actions by taking two eggs. Nowadays recipes more frequently start with the following: "Ingredients: 2 eggs…" yet then continue to provide directions, such as "Separate the eggs, combine the egg yolks with sugar, etc." Every sentence tells an action or an event, all of which leads to changes of state (at least for the eggs);[2] the recipe may still be viewed as not reporting or narrating the preparation of a dish, but rather describing how to do it.

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[1] For example, when Mieke Bal reaches the conclusion based on the analysis of the description of Rouen in *Madame Bovary* that the description also narrates, she seems to sing the praises of description due to its narrative potential and ability to inform the reader of what is taking place in the character's mind.

It can be said that a script is neither a narrative nor a description, but a completely different text-type. Seymour Chatman considered it a good idea to keep the number of general text-types rather low and subsequently only worked with three of them: narrative, description, and argument (6–12). Based on the current state of narrative studies, according to which the category of narrative can include anything in which something happens (such as film, drama, painting, newspaper articles or even Facebook posts) I prefer to say that a narrative is not necessarily told in indicative mode, but can also be imperative, conditional or optative. While instruction manuals and product leaflets could be regarded as narratives in the imperative or the conditional mode, I argue that they should rather be seen as descriptions. Does the categorization of descriptions and narratives depend on the frequency of verbs in actual wording? The example I provide is an information leaflet for a pain killer, which is full of verbs, although mostly in -ing form, but is still far from being narrative.

> *Tell your doctor and stop taking [the] tablets if you experience:*
> - Unexplained stomach pain (abdominal pain) or other abnormal stomach symptoms, indigestion, heartburn, feeling sick and/or vomiting.
> - Unexplained wheezing, shortness of breath, skin rash, itching or bruising (these may be symptoms of an allergic reaction).
> - Yellowing of the eyes and/or skin (jaundice).
> - Severe sore throat with high fever (these may be symptoms of a condition known as agranulocytosis).

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[2] I use the word "event" to refer to any change of state, as in what Peter Hühn calls "event I," which is different from "event II" of some importance that makes a narrative interesting, relatable, or eventful (Hühn 80–82). Wolf Schmid only would call the latter an "event" (Schmid, *Narratology* 2–5; Schmid, "Eventfulness" 233–34).

> - Blurred or disturbed vision (visual impairment) or seeing/hearing strange things (hallucinations).
> - Fluid retention e.g. swollen ankles (this may be a sign of kidney problems).[3]

Many events and multiple changes of state are mentioned in this passage, yet the diffuse, abstract, alternative nature of the events challenge narrativity. The "you" featured as both subject and addressee of the discourse is completely general; although the subject's physical condition is highly important, the text does not situate him or her in any particular way. Similarly, it is important to note that most of the events will not happen; if everything goes well, none will. If the following style of language were used, this text would be undeniably narrative: "John experienced a stomach pain, which he could not explain, therefore he told his doctor and stopped taking the tablets." This chain of events is only one of the options that the text offers since John cannot experience pain *or* another abnormal stomach symptom since the possibilities are not organized into any meaningful structure. The undefined, vague and general nature of the agent and the lack of circumstances surrounding the actions probably also undermine narrativity. The "you" in the leaflet is a function, not an agent. As a reader, I can perform the function if I experience this or that symptom, but I also imagine several different people experiencing it as well. When the verb is connected to an empty agent-function, it only creates a narrative via the concrete process of actualization. In lieu of this, I find it more appropriate to call this type of a text a description: in the example I discussed above, the verbs describe a pain killer by means of its possible effects.

The use of the connective "or," which could also introduce every line in the list of symptoms, is a feature which I view as an index of description. If the patient experiences one of the symptoms, he or she will tell the doctor; if the patient does not experience any of them, the sufferer will continue taking the tablets. The doctor's reaction may depend on which particular symptom the patient has experienced. The alternative concretizations depend on the body of the agent. In alternate cases, other factors may also influence the course of events. Based on my interpretation, a text that tries to map all the possibilities is a description rather than a narrative, even if the text deals with actions. This may not only be true when a text relates the ideal scenario in a hortative mode (how to use medication safely, how to prepare a meal properly, how to construct a piece of furniture etc.), but also when it describes how something is done in a community.

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[3] Package leaflet: Information for the user, Ibuprofen 400 mg film-coated tablets https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/files/pil.7352.pdf

As a counter-argument, one may refer to highly developed literary narratives that contain alternative or bifurcating story lines. Robert Coover's much discussed short story from 1969, "The Babysitter," is a conglomerate of narrative fragments comprising only a couple of lines each; many of these fragments mutually exclude each other. Some novels offer alternative endings, which undeniably lends them the air of the experimental without undermining their narrativity, at least in retrospect. The most oft-mentioned example of this kind is probably John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, but I would also like to take this opportunity to mention Mór Jókai's 1875 novel, *Az élet komédiásai* [*Comedians of Life*]. Bifurcating story-lines are rather common in several popular genres. DVD editions of television series, for example, may often contain alternative endings, not to mention video games. Normally, if any of the possible listed events happens, the need for (narratable) action is created, while the list itself is only a description of possibilities. Coover's story can be interpreted as describing a general babysitter's network of relationships, including everything that can happen to her. However individualized the babysitter may seem to be, if everything happened to her that could occur theoretically, she becomes the abstraction of a general type.

Despite this, a story that bifurcates at the end does not make the text descriptive; for this to happen, all—or at least many—of the possibilities must be mapped. Classical epic poetry already established this habit by either indicating alternative story lines or possibilities that "almost" happened. Telemachus tried three times to string his father's bow in vain, and if Odysseus had not indicated his dissent, Telemachus may have succeeded during the fourth time (21.128–129). Such "almost-episodes" are far from rare in epic poetry (cf. Nesselrath). Mentioning that something could have happened otherwise—even if it renders a non-event a part of the narrative discourse—is not the same as mapping how a ceremonial (or even everyday) routine can or should be performed depending on variable circumstances. There is no recipe, no established scenario for how to kill your wife's suitors when you return home after twenty years. This entire narrative could have feasibly happened otherwise. As a counterexample, a sacrifice is regularized in every detail, including reactions to any possible event. I therefore classify a text as descriptive if it explains an ideal course of actions in a hortative mode (what should be done so that medicine has the proper effect, how to prepare a dish, how to build a bookshelf, etc.) while also relaying how an act is performed within a given community. As a result, I therefore regard conditional and disjunctive conjunctions (if, or) as possible indications of the descriptive.

Representations of customs or rites can additionally be regarded as iterative narratives, such as in the following example of a tribe that sacrifices a goat to their Moon deity every new moon. Functions are circumscribed here, too, since the concrete agents may change with every iteration. A different goat is sacrificed every month, at times the priest may be different. The personal identity of those attending the rite may change as well, but the public does not change as a community: perhaps it is the act of attending the rite that renders them a community. In any event, the role of the goat and the priest is always the same, while some rules most likely regulate what qualities are needed to play these roles. Some narratives represent the agents with sufficient concreteness, while other texts describe rather than narrate rites, even if a rite is a chain of actions.

Representations of rites, customs or ritualized customs can be encountered in several kinds of literary, non-literary and semi-literary texts. My first example is taken from an essentially descriptive text; while ethnography is primarily the field of writing down (or describing) a people, ethnographic works also contain countless narrative elements, as can be seen in the description of the habit of the *katuyausi* found in Bronislaw Malinowski's seminal work *The Sexual Life of Savages in Northwestern Melanesia* (269–273). The expression, *katuyausi*, means the "amorous expeditions of village girls to other communities." If the girls of a village decide to hold a *katuyausi*, they choose an intermediary "to arrange the date and conditions of their prospective visit to the boys of the other village." This ritualized custom has neither a special date on the calendar nor an obligatory setting and may depend on various conditions. If this is a narrative, the characters are girls and boys from two different villages, but the series of events may happen between any pair of villages; the identity of the intermediary always changes, but the functions remain constant. The girls leave their village "as a rule early in the afternoon," which means that the time of the day may change depending, for example, on the distance to the target village. They then walk to the selected village in a completely decorous manner, sit down in the village grove and start doing their make-up and arranging their hair or adjusting their appearances while maybe singing or playing music. "When they are ready to receive, they sing the song which is the previously arranged signal for the boys to come nearer." The song that functions as a signal may be one of the conditions negotiated through the intermediary. Malinowski thus explains the "ceremony of choice": "According to custom, the initiative in pairing off should come from the hosts, and each guest has to accept any offer made to her as a matter of etiquette." However, everybody knows the inner hierarchies of both communities, therefore "the choice is largely based on anterior intrigues and attachments" rather than random attractions. Quoting the presentation of the choice/proposal ritual in its entirety is worthwhile for the purpose of demonstrating how many alternatives the text lists; a participant can obviously perform only one of them during a single *katuyausi*, although different participants can perform several of them simultaneously, while some options may not be fulfilled at all.

> Each boy then ceremonially offers a small gift to the girl of his choice—a comb, a necklet, a nose stick, a bunch of betel-nut. If she accepts the gift she accepts the boy for that night as her lover. When the boy knows the girl well he presents the gift himself. If he does not or if he feels too shy, he will ask help of an older man, who hands over the offering with the words, *'kam va'otu'* (*va'otu*—visiting present, present of inducement), 'So-and-so gives it to you; you are his sweetheart.' Very rarely does a girl refuse or ignore such a present; if she did, she would greatly offend and mortify the man. (271)

The boy offers one of four possible gifts (of course, the list is not necessarily complete or excludes other options), and he does so either directly or through an intermediary. He asks for help if he does not know the girl well, or even if he knows her well, but is shy. Although the intermediary utilizes a fixed formula, this form contains a variable, namely the name of a mandator. Due to etiquette, the girl accepts the gift and the proposal, but in very rare instances she may decline to accept. What renders the passage as a description rather than a narrative is the listing of possible alternatives along with the use of loosely defined functions as actants instead of characters, such as girl, shy boy, an older man. It must be mentioned that even this ceremony displays local variations since it is "carried out … in a less delicate manner in the southern villages."

While Malinowski praises the "strict decorum" of the *katuyausi*, he simultaneously begins telling a story of decline, which already seems to represent a genuine narrative. In the good old days, girls of a village did two, three or four such excursions every year, but already the first missionary had the *katuyausi* forbidden, therefore

> the regulated and decorous custom … has fallen into decay. But even while I was in the Trobriands, parties of girls from Okaykoda visited Omarakana,

> and from Kaybola went to Kwaybwaga; also the Kwaybwaga girls avenged themselves on their lovers by going on *katuyausi* to Vilaylima. Early in my stay at Omarakana in 1918, a number of such guests came, at harvest time and ostensibly to admire the yams, and I was even able to photograph them and to watch the earlier part of the proceedings. (272)

The concrete settings, the exact naming of characters and dates and the continuous presence of the protagonist-observer "I" render this excerpt into an ambitious singular narrative. Yet what this passage actually relates to is not what a *katuyausi* is and how it is performed or what its rules are, but how the custom is declining due to the oppressive influence of the missionaries and how the ethnographer could nonetheless gather information regarding a type of ceremony that is becoming increasingly rare.

In contrast to Malinowski's ethnographic approach which is for the most part interested in making generalizations, lists the alternatives and tries to take every possibility into consideration, Malinowski sometimes refers to individual cases or characteristic stories. To represent Melanesian attitudes toward unsuccessful marriage, adultery and jealousy, the author cannot utilize a general scenario; in lieu of a universally valid ritual, Malinowski (114–121) provides a kind of collection of stories. As such, the author names the characters and the settings found in every story while it is clear that the ending always depends on the characters' personal decisions. These texts form miniature narratives that mostly contain a tragic ending and exist independently of one another. Each story in this series begins with a reference to characters, settings and source of information, such as "In a small village near Omarakana there lived a man called Dudubile Kautala, who died in 1916 … and whose funeral I attended" (117). The Melanesians do not have any generally describable system of rules regarding how to ruin a marriage or what to do when a marriage has gone wrong, except what Malinowski summarizes in the following: "In each of these cases it was open to the woman simply to leave her husband" (120-121). Maybe "simple" procedure (i.e. when people follow social norms and rules) cannot be narrated:[4] a normal function is rather the object of description, in which the agents are indicated in broad brushstrokes, while individual, norm-breaking choices cannot be described. The latter case demands the usage of narrative. In the case of rituals and formalized customs individual, non-normative behavior is obviously out of the question.

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[4] As Tolstoy famously expressed this insight in the first sentence of *Anna Karenina*: "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."

Rituals or automatized schemes of actions are not rare in novels either, especially if a novel represents a world with which readers are obviously unfamiliar. Such a novel has to explain many things, including even basic procedures at times. Several types of this kind of a novel exist. A historical novel introduces its readers to the alien world of the past; even realist novels can seem to "discover" the life of a social group or region based on the supposition that readers do not know anything about the said group or area. The following three examples displaying this tendency have been taken from works that force readers to confront an even deeper level of strangeness: novels that belong to the genres of fantasy, sci-fi and post-colonial literature.

Given that the reader's main object in reading a novel generally lies in the story, entailing information about customs and rituals may be important, yet still tends to happen within the context of relaying a character's experience (or maybe knowledge), be it the character's direct report of the experience, free indirect discourse, or a third-person-singular narrative utilizing a character's focalization. Terry Pratchett's *Eric* is a fantasy novel which makes use of travel narrative patterns by actually telling the story of a magic journey through both space and history. The episode of Eric's visit to the Tezuman Empire, at which time his wish to "rule the world" becomes true, begins in the manner of an ethnographic text or tourist guide: the omniscient narrator offers a short introduction to the characteristics of the Tezumen:

> The Tezuman Empire in the jungle valleys of central Klatch is known for its organic market gardens, its exquisite craftsmanship in obsidian, feathers and jade, and its mass human sacrifices in honour of Quezovercoatl, the Feathered Boa, god of mass human sacrifices. … The Tezumen are renowned on the continent for being the most suicidally gloomy, irritable and pessimistic people you could ever hope to meet, for reasons that may soon be made clear. (Pratchett 52–53)

The omniscient narrator explicitly retains some information and lets the characters discover what is occurring. When the characters realize or experience something, the narrator might explain this aspect or put it into perspective. For example, Rincewind, Eric's confused and incompetent "daemon" guide, remembers and tells Eric that "The Tezuman priests have a sophisticated calendar and an advanced horology" (51). Two pages later the narrator tells us why: "It was true about time measurement as well. The Tezumen had realized long ago that everything was getting worse and, having a terrible literal-mindedness, had developed a complex system to keep track of how much worse each succeeding day was" (53).

The Tezumen genuinely accept Eric as the Ruler of the World and therefore offer him huge baskets of jewels as a tribute. The first phase of a ritual is narrated, without either explaining to readers that there is a second part to follow or offering any explanation of its inner logic. Rincewind, however, realizes that the carvings on the pyramid represent the Tezumen's plans for the second phase, namely "what they intended to do to the Ruler of the World" (68). "He would be left in no doubt that they were annoyed. He might even go so far as to deduce that they were quite vexed." Rincewind sees a contradiction between the tribute of jewels and the planned torture-to-death of the Ruler, but Ponce da Quirm, a professional traveler (and fellow prisoner at this point) explains to him: "Well, he is the Ruler. … He's entitled to some respect, I suppose." What follows after this direct quotation is Rincewind's inner reasoning reported in free indirect discourse:

> Rincewind nodded. There was a sort of justice in it. If you were a tribe who lived in a swamp in the middle of a damp forest, didn't have any metal, had been saddled with a god like Quezovercoatl, and then found someone who said he was in charge of the whole affair, you probably would want to spend some time explaining to him how incredibly disappointed in him you were. (Ibid.)

The ritual, however, is not actually described in this novel. The obvious reason for this is that the ritual will not occur: it is only a ritual which the Tezumen imagine and long for, one that is represented visually, yet remains undescribed. What is told instead is the story of a character learning the ritual and understanding why it is supposed to work that way. This type of a narrative, however, cannot take alternative scenarios into account and subsequently therefore steers clear from a description of how this act is generally done in the given society.

This example from *Eric*, however, does not prove that a description of customs including all their alternative scenarios is impossible within the pages of a novel. In Ursula K. Le Guin's sci-fi novel, *The Dispossessed* (1974), when the protagonist Shevek moves to the capital of the anarchist moon Anarres and is accommodated in a single room, he experiences loneliness as a moral burden. The narratorial voice (maybe quoting Shevek's inner thoughts in free indirect discourse) explains why a single room is a problem for a member of the Anarres community.

> As a child, if you slept alone in a single it meant you had bothered the others in the dormitory until they wouldn't tolerate you; you had egoized. Solitude equated with disgrace. In adult terms, the principal referent for single rooms

> was a sexual one. Every domicile had a number of singles, and a couple that wanted to copulate used one of these free singles for a night, or a decade, or as long as they liked. A couple undertaking partnership took a double room; in a small town where no double was available, they often built one on to the end of a domicile, and long, low, straggling buildings might thus be created room by room, called 'partners' truck trains.' Aside from sexual pairing there was no reason for not sleeping in a dormitory. You could choose a small one or a large one, and if you didn't like your roommates, you could move to another dormitory.… A person whose nature was genuinely unsociable had to get away from society and look after himself.… But for those who accepted the privilege and obligation of human solidarity, privacy was a value only where it served a function. (Le Guin 170)

Different scenarios for various, possible plots are listed in this excerpt circumstantially. There is a normal way to live (always in a community), with some special occasions for separation (mainly for copulation), and all the possible reasons for changing the normal train of events are taken into account. However, the different solutions for those "egoizing," or being totally unsociable garner the moral censorship of the community. While none of these alternatives to a normal way of life were actually taken by Shevek himself, they obviously were and will be by several people on Anarres. This passage therefore does not offer a narrative in this instance, but rather a description of how things work in this particular world, including which life-paths can be chosen there and a demonstration of the background to the protagonist's moral struggles.

In Aravind Adiga's novel, *The White Tiger*, Balram Halvai, an Indian entrepreneur, tells his life story in a series of letters to the Chinese prime minister who wants to learn about the success of some Indian entrepreneurs as a generalizable example. The self-narrative is continuously combined with commentaries that explain the rules and mechanisms of Balram's own society to the foreign visitor. This version of the postcolonial novel therefore represents an inverse of the utopian travelogue; while in a utopia the traveler is usually given a guided tour in order to understand the workings of the perfect society better and then retells the acquired knowledge after returning home, in Adiga's novel the reader receives the native guide's speech directly, not to mention that Balram always discusses the imperfectness of his world. He furthermore tends to interpret events taken from his own life as examples of general customs, except for when he emphasizes that what he did was exceptional, a rare counter-example which breaks the rule in a very singular way. This strategy sometimes makes it possible to describe customs with all the possible alternatives in detail.

An example of the technique described above can be found in the passage which discusses elections in India. Elections do not play any role in the protagonist's career history since the local authorities in the democracy depicted in the novel officially report a unanimous result once the decision regarding which party's bribe will be accepted has been reached. Voters are not even allowed to enter the polling place. The narrator tells the story of one electoral campaign, but after reaching the point when the power groups reach their agreement, makes his father speak: "It's the way it always is…. I've seen twelve elections—five general, five state, two local—and someone else has voted for me twelve times" (Adiga, chapter "The Third Night"). This is one person's experience, from which one should not conclude that every voter always contemplates the elections from a passive distance that is heavily tinged with resignation. The next two pages then depict an alternative form of behavior. While this represents an individual case, the narration continuously emphasizes that the alternative kind of behavior is also frequent, and has its own, well-developed scenario, too. "On the day of the election, one man went mad. This happens every time, at every election in the Darkness."[5] Or: "They were trying to dissuade him, but only halfheartedly. They had seen this happening before. They wouldn't able to stop this man now" (ibid.).

In this case "going mad" means that somebody tries to vote. This eventuality is therefore also possible: "it happens every time" that some individuals really want to vote at the election. Although the narrator only mentions the one case he had witnessed, he still makes it clear that this is an alternative which is encoded in the election ritual. When the exemplary madman reaches the polling place, the counting of votes has already been completed; the result is declared (the vote was unanimous), and the congratulatory posters are being hung. When the erstwhile voter declares his intention to vote, he is slain by the police. This is the ritual of election: after a harsh campaign the elite groups make a deal among one another, then in the midst of colorful ceremonies (but without any involvement on the part of voters) the election ends with unanimous result, followed by a spectacular celebration of the winner. Anyone who actually wants to vote is killed. The narrator also makes it clear that this was neither the standard procedure during this single event nor in his father's time, but has been present throughout all the time since then. During the time of narration, he is wanted for murder and lives with a fake identity in Bangalore, far from his home village.

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[5] Darkness is Adiga's metaphor for the impoverished areas of rural India.

Yet he is still registered as an active voter every year: “The police know exactly where to find me. They will find me dutifully voting on election day at the voting booth in the school compound in Laxmangarh in Gaya District, as I have done in every general, state, and local election since I turned eighteen. I am India’s most faithful voter, and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth.”

The narrator tells the story of himself experiencing election for the first time in his adult life, but by emphasizing the fact that this is the way all elections have occurred every time, since this time and everywhere in the Darkness, while additionally representing both possible means of action (staying away from the polling place or going there), the narratorial commentaries transform the singular narrative into a general description of a social ritual.

It would most likely be nearly impossible to locate a description in a literary text in which nothing at all happens, in which time is not a feature, nor does any verb appear apart from that of *to be*. This circumstance, however, does not automatically mean that description is also narrative. When a narrative explains how an act must be done or how something is usually done in a community, the telling of different, sometimes alternative actions becomes the description of the rites and rituals that belong to a given community.

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Opisi ritualov

Ključne besede: literatura in etnografija / naratologija / obredi / običaji / opis / Malinowski, Bronisław / Pratchett, Terry / Le Guin, Ursula / Adiga, Aravind

Čeprav lahko predstavljanje običajev in ritualov zajema različna dejanja, je razlog, da gre za opise in ne za pripovedi, v splošnem pristopu, ki upošteva tudi alternativne možnosti. Če je niz potencialnih dogodkov odvisen od mnogih dejavnikov in besedilo poleg vseh teh dejavnikov predstavi tudi alternativne možnosti, je končni rezultat namreč opis. To je najočitneje pri preprostih besedilih (kot pokažemo na primeru reklamnega letaka za izdelek), medtem ko so v kompleksnejših vrstah pripovedi, kot je denimo roman, opisi ritualov običajno podani z gledišča likov, ne neposredno z gledišča pripovedovalca. Primere za analizo smo vzeli z zdravstvenega letaka za informiranje bolnikov, iz etnografskega besedila Bronisława Malinowskega, dveh popularnih romanov 20. stoletja, *The Dispossessed* Ursule K. Le Guin in *Eric* Terryja Pratchetta (prvi je znanstvenofantastični, drugi pa fantazijski roman), ter postkolonialnega romana Aravinda Adige *The White Tiger*.

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Descriptions in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*

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Although it is a common perception that Flaubert's Madame Bovary *employs a conventional set of procedures in order to balance story-telling and description, not only is the number of descriptions contained in this work surprisingly low but also these descriptions are rather peculiar and have a special function. This paper focuses on Flaubert's descriptions regarding the cap of the young Bovary, Emma and Bovary's wedding cake and the town hall of Yonville; all these are the emblems of bad taste, the philistine ideal of happiness and the artificial sublimeness of the public space. These descriptions raise further questions in connection to the narrator's special point of view, their aims and position as well as the function of these segments. From a textual standpoint, these elements are also paralleled and partially interwoven with a kind of cataloging or listing type of text formation. I contend that they are in fact parodical in quality and that the end effects result in a mockery of the conventions of narration which were about to become established at the time: instead of being conventional, the descriptions of Madame Bovary are ironically counter-conventional.*

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While most of us must have some memories of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, the details of these images are most likely rather faint. We do remember the story, for sure: a lame husband possessing no prestige, his wife brimming with desires and volatile in her despair, a married couple living in a French village and surrounded by a *petit bourgeois* setting. We know, of course, that the novel is much more than this: it is both a realization and a parody of the romantic topic of adulterous woman. We may even recall that there is something upsettingly dissonant in the text as one does not feel any empathy or even sense of judgement suggested to the reader, a set of symptoms traditionally labelled as *impassibilité* that sometimes carries just a tinge of the grotesque about it. In any event, *Madame Bovary* used to be considered one of the peak accomplishments of the great realist narrative tradition, one representing a grand social panorama, a formation and demonstration of the conventions of the realist novel.

According to the conventions of realism, description forms a seminal part of the narrative. There is obviously no need to define the concept of description; suffice it to say that one extreme version will call storytelling itself into question (this would be the "too much" type of continuous description) while the other challenges all elements outside of verbal action. This latter version corresponds to the drama, in which there is no description at all, only the speech of the characters and the events themselves. To put it in a very rough way, during description the narration stands still as the narrator takes the floor: it is the narrator's turn to describe the settings, the objects surrounding the event and the characters. We tend to recollect realist novels as a balanced structure of dialogues accompanied by the narrator's telling of the story and descriptions. Readers may also look back on *Madame Bovary* as a typical, paradigmatic example of the realist novel: a rather conventional structure possessing the same elements listed above, a work that is along the lines of Balzac or Tolstoy. Yet we may also remember that *Madame Bovary* is much more than that: in my estimation, it is an example and a parody of the theme of romantic adultery, with something worrying and dissonant embedded within the text.

Since different kinds of description exist the segments of texts which we tend to label a "description" may be different in several aspects. It is a common assumption, for instance, that description is a part of the text when and where narration *stops*: it is a *pause* in the course of the narration, a time in which nothing happens. Within this framework, description may be opposed to segments of the text where the *story* has been foregrounded, as is particularly true in the case of dialogue, which lacks description.

Yet this perception of description is not at all satisfactory for several reasons. First, many types of descriptions (however small or minimal), or traces of descriptions can be found in all segments of the narrative: when a story is told, it always refers to characters who possess gender, age and are positioned within a certain setting. Even when the scenery is not *described* or what we are looking at is a case of a pure dialogue form, references to the world surrounding the speakers and to the speakers themselves still appear as a sort of description itself, inasmuch as it contributes to the image or representation on the part of the reader, which may amount to description.

Secondly, as Genette notes, "Descriptions … as constituents of the spatio-temporal universe of the story, are *diegetic,* and thus when we deal with them we are involved with the *narrative* discourse" (Genette 94). This implies that every description is *part* of the narrative and therefore does not exist in opposition to it. As Genette continues, "Every description is not necessarily a pause in the narrative" (ibid.). There is *descriptive pause*, "which is therefore not to be confused either with every pause or with every description" (ibid.). In several cases, a description is included into the time passing within the narrative: it is part of the story, so to speak. Observing or describing an object takes time, an aspect that may be thus represented in the course of the narrative.

When I state that there are relatively few descriptions in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, I am actually referring to the fact that there are very few occurrences of a specific type of description: while the text contains a number of descriptions, the frequency of descriptive pauses is highly limited. In other words, when an object (or person or environment) is described, the lack of a descriptive pause means that the passing of time cannot be perceived by the reader. This type of description commonly occurs as a feature of the realist mode of writing. Since realist conventions dictate that description is an important part of the narration, it is expected that plot narration will sometimes be interrupted by shorter or longer segments of descriptions. It is furthermore expected that the proportion of these parts be somewhat balanced, meaning that the reader is provided with sufficient information regarding the surroundings and characters, but the narrative's progress remains unimpeded by an excess of superfluous information.

Before turning to some descriptive pauses in *Madame Bovary*, a few other types of description utilized in this novel must be mentioned. One type concerns Léon and Emma's famous ride in a cab, along the streets of Rouen, which provides a description of the city, albeit a very strange one since the reader essentially receives a list or catalogue of the streets of Rouen. While it can be argued that this description is not a pause since the trip does have a duration and *something* is happening at this point; the fact, however, remains that the end result is only a lot of street names. These names could be interpreted as a kind of map, yet one which lacks directions or points of reference in favor of a sort of absurd exactness. In other words, this section embodies a meticulous description of a seemingly concrete location which is impossible to imagine. Despite this circumstance, Flaubert's "map" still succeeds in contributing to the story: we understand that the streets of Rouen must be *imagined* in order to fully visualize the narrative, yet this type of visualization is simply impossible.

Other, similar catalogues appear in the novel's narrative that bear a much closer resemblance to a descriptive pause in that these examples do not take part in the narrative course, have no real duration and time therefore seems to stand still when these segments are being narrated. One example consists of a list of Emma's readings: her favorite books when she was in the nunnery, a list of bad literature and sentimental readings that essentially amount to kitsch. Not only the description of these works is ridiculous, but also the endless and disordered jumble in which they are presented (the catalogue) creates a humorous effect. Once again, the reader is not led anywhere as there is no direction, no climax or rise or fall in the narration: the reader must instead face an enumeration of items of bad taste. Another list appears in the course of Emma's dreams of honeymoon locations, which are to include tall mountains, blue seas, a house in the Alps, stars above… In short, this grouping of details reveals the shallow vision of a shallow spirit. The narrator borrows yet another description from the character, Léon, who has in turn borrowed it from a cousin:

> A cousin of mine who travelled in Switzerland last year told me that one could not picture to oneself the poetry of the lakes, the charm of the waterfalls, the gigantic effect of the glaciers. One sees pines of incredible size across torrents, cottages suspended over precipices, and, a thousand feet below one, whole valleys when the clouds open. Such spectacles must stir to enthusiasm, incline to prayer, to ecstasy; and I no longer marvel at that celebrated musician who, the better to inspire his imagination, was in the habit of playing the piano before some imposing site. (Part II., Ch. 2.)[1]

Once again, Flaubert provides the reader with a sort of inventory of commonplaces: a catalogue, a list, an account of obligatory ingredients that have been happenstance placed one after the other. This usage of catalogue-like descriptions would not be complete without another brief list of the presents Monsieur Homais brought as the godfather of Emma's child. "His gifts were all products from his establishment, to wit: six boxes of jujubes, a whole jar of *racahout*, three cakes of marshmallow paste, and six sticks of sugar-candy into the bargain that he had come across in a cupboard" (Part II., Ch. 3.).[2] In this case, a list of random, useless objects perfectly projects the character and petty nature of Homais.

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[1] "J'ai un cousin qui a voyagé en Suisse l'année dernière, et qui me disait qu'on ne peut se figurer la poésie des lacs, le charme des cascades, l'effet gigantesque des glaciers. On voit des pins d'une grandeur incroyable, en travers des torrents, des cabanes suspendues sur des précipices, et, à mille pieds sous vous, des vallées entières, quand les nuages s'entr'ouvrent. Ces spectacles doivent enthousiasmer, disposer à la prière, à l'extase ! Aussi je ne m'étonne plus de ce musicien célèbre qui, pour exciter mieux son imagination, avait coutume d'aller jouer du piano devant quelque site imposant."

As a short digression, it may be added that Flaubert's cataloging technique also appears in other contexts found in the narration itself. Following the scene containing the marriage cake, the narration describes the guests' behavior, their activities and sources of entertainment in a vein that very much resembles Pieter Brueghel the Elder's style in *Children's Games* or *Proverbs*: in other words, the reader is confronted by a list of actions which are isolated, disconnected, incoherent and discontinuous:

> But with the coffee everyone woke up. Then they began songs, showed off tricks, raised heavy weights, performed feats with their fingers, then tried lifting carts on their shoulders, made broad jokes, kissed the women. At night when they left, the horses, stuffed up to the nostrils with oats, could hardly be got into the shafts; they kicked, reared, the harness broke, their masters laughed or swore; and all night in the light of the moon along country roads there were runaway carts at full gallop plunging into the ditches, jumping over yard after yard of stones, clambering up the hills, with women leaning out from the tilt to catch hold of the reins. (Part I., Ch. 4.)[3]

In Flaubert's usage, a catalogue or inventory containing disparate and disjointed elements can therefore produce a comical effect due to the random, often surprising nature of this type of description. To mention another work in which the author employs this type of strategy, Flaubert's *Bouvard and Pécuchet* contains a catalogue of the heroes' fields of study which are not in the least connected to one another, just as no connection is frequently to be found linking the subjects themselves to different parts.

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[2] "Il donna, pour cadeaux, tous produits de son établissement, à savoir : six boîtes de jujubes, un bocal entier de racahout, trois coffins de pâte à la guimauve, et, de plus, six bâtons de sucre candi qu'il avait retrouvés dans un placard."

[3] "Mais, au café, tout se ranima; alors on entama des chansons, on fit des tours de force, on portait des poids, on passait sous son pouce, on essayait à soulever les charrettes sur ses épaules, on disait des gaudrioles, on embrassait les dames. Le soir, pour partir, les chevaux gorgés d'avoine jusqu'aux naseaux, eurent du mal à entrer dans les brancards ; ils ruaient, se cabraient, les harnais se cassaient, leurs maîtres juraient ou riaient ; et toute la nuit, au clair de la lune, par les routes du pays, il y eut des carrioles emportées qui couraient au grand galop, bondissant dans les saignées, sautant par-dessus les mètres de cailloux, s'accrochant aux talus, avec des femmes qui se penchaient en dehors de la portière pour saisir les guides."

As was mentioned previously, Flaubert's usage of description does not halt at descriptive catalogues of items: two other, famous descriptions found in *Madame Bovary* present clear examples of the descriptive pause, as opposed to a descriptive list. Most readers can recall both, as one consists of a description of the hat of the young schoolboy, Charles Bovary, and the other depicts the wedding cake of Emma and Charles. Within the realm of literary analysis, a considerable amount of literature has dealt with both the cap and the wedding cake, such as Amann 2006, Bernard 1985, Begam and Soderholm 2015, Collas 1985, Kalka 2017, Porter and Gray 2012, Nabokov 1980, Privat 2013, to mention just a few sources.

> The 'new fellow,' was still holding his cap on his knees even after prayers were over. It was one of those head-gears of composite order, in which we can find traces of the bearskin, shako, billycock hat, sealskin cap, and cotton night-cap; one of those poor things, in fine, whose dumb ugliness has depths of expression, like an imbecile's face. Oval, stiffened with whalebone, it began with three round knobs; then came in succession lozenges of velvet and rabbit-skin separated by a red band; after that a sort of bag that ended in a cardboard polygon covered with complicated braiding, from which hung, at the end of a long thin cord, small twisted gold threads in the manner of a tassel. The cap was new; its peak shone. (Part I., Ch. 1.)[4]

Found on the first pages of the novel, the description of Charles Bovary's cap as a schoolboy first leads the reader to believe that this segment represents the first unit of a *system*. In other words, this description forms a part of "the rules of the game" for the narration, which will subsequently contain interesting, characteristic objects, scenes, landscapes etc., some of which will be important later on and are therefore described by the narrator in a detailed way. The case of Bovary's cap, however, does not accomplish this at all since the description is not followed by any other description possessing a similar amount of detail or length. Moreover, until the wedding cake scene, the narration contains no descriptive elements whatsoever. Only two descriptions of this type exist in the entire novel. Secondly, the cap itself will not prove to be at all important since further reference will not be made to it (the only, somewhat similar case occurs later on, when a separate, more elegant cap is described). When viewed from retrospect and within the context of the entire text, the initial description of Bovary's cap is surprising as it does not fit, is not part of the narrative (or any) system, is overblown and, therefore seems quite peculiar.

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[4] "Mais, soit qu'il n'eût pas remarqué cette manœuvre ou qu'il n'eût osé s'y soumettre, la prière était finie que le *nouveau* tenait encore sa casquette sur ses deux genoux. C'était une de ces coiffures d'ordre composite, où l'on retrouve les éléments du bonnet à poil, du chapska, du chapeau rond, de la casquette de loutre et du bonnet de coton, une de ces pauvres choses, enfin, dont la laideur muette a des profondeurs d'expression comme le visage d'un imbécile. Ovoïde et renflée de baleines, elle commençait par trois boudins circulaires ; puis s'alternaient, séparés par une bande rouge, des losanges de velours et de poils de lapin ; venait ensuite une façon de sac qui se terminait par un polygone cartonné, couvert d'une broderie en soutache compliquée, et d'où pendait, au bout d'un long cordon trop mince, un petit croisillon de fils d'or, en manière de gland. Elle était neuve ; la visière brillait."

We do not have an overall view or comprehensive perception of the cap. Our sight is directed vertically by the narrator and follows a projection that starts below and moves down upwards while relaying the details of the object, one after the other. It is highly questionable why the cap is being described at all, since any overall image of the object in its entirety is missing from the text and thereby impedes the reader from visualizing what one assumes the narrator is striving to depict.

One possible interpretation of why Flaubert included a description of Bovary's cap is that the text is meant to convey the ridiculous, absurd, unconceivable and indescribable nature of the cap, similar to what Horace discusses in the first lines of his *Ars poetica* regarding a text's contradictory, incongruous or incompatible elements: it is ridiculous, he says, if a painter unites a horse's neck to a human head, and then mixes all parts of different animals, so that what is a beautiful woman in the upper part terminates unsightly in an ugly fish below (Horatius 292).

Based on Horace's estimation of the effect incongruous, textual elements possess, one interpretation is that the description of Bovary's cap functions as a demonstration of confusion, inadequacy and bad taste. The text is composed so that just these traits come to the fore when one tries to imagine the object depicted: an unimaginable, unconceivable, blurred image.

Yet another possibility is that this description also signifies the character of the owner of the cap and his wretched, characterless, shabby nature; the metonymical connection between the accessory and its proprietor is transformed into a metaphorical relationship as if the reader has realized the essence (or lack thereof) of Charles Bovary via his cap. It is as if the sense of confusion, ugliness and clumsiness which characterizes the cap and its presentation simultaneously illustrates the very character of Bovary. Moreover, the narrator even inserts the following, rather telling half-sentence: "one of those poor things, in fine, whose dumb ugliness has depths of expression, like an imbecile's face." While it is naturally clear that Bovary is not an imbecile, this short insertion still directs the reader`s attention to identify the idiotism of the cap with that of Bovary. In conclusion, it can be stated that the cap places Bovary's "calling card" on the table of the reader by becoming an emblematic representation of this particular character.

I argue that at least one additional issue is at work in Flaubert's depiction of Bovary's cap as the reader is left unaware of who exactly is viewing and describing Bovary's cap in such a detailed and meticulous manner. The narrator of the novel's first pages may in fact be one of Bovary's classmates who is speaking in the first-person plural as somebody who is in the act of observing the adventures of a new boy who has joined the class, an episode that suddenly appears immediately after the cap episode: "[E]n montrant de façon minutieuse les composantes de l'objet [le narrateur], finira par le faire disparaître complètement devant nos yeux" (Lőrinszky and Ádám, 2003: 180). Some analyses tend to label this initial narrator a "collective" narrator (Hajdu, "The Collective"); strangely enough, he does not survive the first pages. Other interpretations (Röhrig 54) refer to the similarity between his and Homais's voice, as if the two were, in a way, identical. After the detailed account of the cap, this narrator turns into an impersonal, faceless, nameless observer of the events unfolding in the novel. Even if he were a classmate, the only thing he notices, observes and describes is Bovary's cap. No account is provided of the students or the teacher's appearances, their clothes, features, the classroom or anything else. It is as if this insignificant (as well as ugly) object were the only object worthy of being remembered and described.

The reader may additionally gain the impression that this whole section could be a parody or mockery of the convention of description itself. Do you need some description? Am I supposed to supply one? A description to characterize the class and the new boy? Here you are. Observations down to the tiniest details, an exactness to the level of manic, a circumscription of the implications of the object, without taking care of its visualization and its sense. And all this is told by a narrator who does not even care of describing anything else in the room, and emphasizes—in an absurd way, again—an insignificant part of a student's clothes, and remembers every inch of it.

Now let us turn to the case of the wedding cake description:

> A confectioner of Yvetot had been entrusted with the tarts and sweets. As he had only just set up on the place, he had taken a lot of trouble, and at dessert he himself brought in a set dish that evoked loud cries of wonderment. To begin with, at its base there was a square of blue cardboard, representing a

> temple with porticoes, colonnades, and stucco statuettes all round, and in the niches constellations of gilt paper stars; then on the second stage was a dungeon of Savoy cake, surrounded by many fortifications in candied angelica, almonds, raisins, and quarters of oranges; and finally, on the upper platform a green field with rocks set in lakes of jam, nutshell boats, and a small Cupid balancing himself in a chocolate swing whose two uprights ended in real roses for balls at the top. (Part I., Ch. 4.)[5]

A similar conclusion can be drawn in the case of this description; even if it can be argued that "two points make a line," any attempt to draw a comparison between these two instances will still not produce a system within the text as their presence does not suggest the existence of a rule. Although these two descriptions resemble one another (a feature I will expand upon at a later point in this examination), they do not resemble any other part of the novel. The final impression is that the narrator can only be intent upon deceiving or leading the reader astray by dangling the promise of something (or at least foreshadowing a possible continuation of further descriptions) then betraying this expectation as the promise is not kept since no description whatsoever figures in the text of the novel, let alone any continued, narrative purpose for the object itself.

The description of the wedding cake represents both a very similar yet also remarkably different instance of Flaubert's usage of description. The main, striking similarity between this passage and that containing Bovary's cap is that the reader's eye is once again directed vertically, from the bottom layer of the cake to the top. Similarly, the cake is comprised of heterogeneous, inconsistent, confusedly connected elements. Like the cap's patchy parts, the stories surrounding the cake are elevated one upon the other in a way that lacks any sense of harmony. If one were to make an effort to classify these levels, the reference to the base as a Greek temple represents classical religion. Above this follows the level of a romanticized medieval age containing the scene of grim battle, crowned by the top, which symbolizes idyllic family life, the center of happiness. One difference between the case of the cap and the wedding cake is that in the latter instance the reader may find it easier to visualize the overall image of the cake as the overall sense of confusion and error is less evident. Yet the meticulous itemization of the cake's characteristics suggests the impression of total senselessness as the reader is left to wonder why all the components, motives and ingredients to this cake are described and listed when the cake has no role at all in the following narrative. It is as if this description that creates a sense of complexity and overcrowded richness serves the purpose of expressing the type of grandiosity, imagined uniqueness and even historical importance that the novel's *milieu* so desires, naturally accompanied by their praise for the "art" of the confectionary as well as the careful wedding preparations. If the cap of Bovary stands for *petit bourgeois* bad taste, ugliness and misery, the wedding cake signifies ridiculous, cheap illusions and fake happiness.

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[5] "On avait été chercher un pâtissier à Yvetot, pour les tourtes et les nougats. Comme il débutait dans le pays, il avait soigné les choses ; et il apporta, lui-même, au dessert, une pièce montée qui fit pousser des cris. À la base, d'abord, c'était un carré de carton bleu figurant un temple avec portiques, colonnades et statuettes de stuc tout autour, dans des niches constellées d'étoiles en papier doré ; puis se tenait au second étage un donjon en gâteau de Savoie, entouré de menues fortifications en angélique, amandes, raisins secs, quartiers d'oranges ; et enfin, sur la plate-forme supérieure, qui était une prairie verte où il y avait des rochers avec des lacs de confitures et des bateaux en écales de noisettes, on voyait un petit Amour, se balançant à une escarpolette de chocolat, dont les deux poteaux étaient terminés par deux boutons de rose naturels, en guise de boules, au sommet."

The description of the wedding cake is additionally significant in that it once again raises the question of who is the one seeing and describing this object. While the narrator must evidently be performing this task, the fact is that the narrator has not taken the trouble to describe anything in such detail since the cap episode. Once again, the reader is left with the feeling that the narrator is mocking the technique of description itself, as if the cake alone were the most important, most spectacular, most memorable element found in the entire wedding. In the case of the cap we may suspect that we are hearing the voice of a classmate; it is not inconceivable that the one describing the wedding cake is a guest of the party, or perhaps the confectioner himself who is expressing pride for his masterpiece. In any event, this detailed, cataloging technique creates an artificial effect that strikingly diverges from the texture of the whole novel as regards both its length as well as its function. This description stands so far out from the preceding and following parts of the text that the gesture of the description itself (and this very type of description) appears as an obstacle or challenge to the process of reading: it creates a feeling of artificial and fabricated nature that is furthermore relayed by a new character who takes over the narration with a pedantic, pompous, overly detailed voice. This dislocation pushes the description toward fictionality since the reader suddenly shifts his or her focus from the described object to the change in the narrating voice: the process of textual construction is suddenly made clumsily and obviously visible to the reader. To repeat, the role of the descriptions is not primarily that of description itself, but rather the aim to unsettle the reader by creating a sense of uncertainty concerning the identity of the narrator who is seeing, describing and narrating these particular objects. They are parts of the irony not only inasmuch as what they describe but also in who describes and for whom.

A final example of Flaubert's ironic usage of description is contained in the depiction of a remarkable sight in Yonville which in turn symbolizes the superficial, fake and conceited nature of the city's society.

> The market, that is to say, a tiled roof supported by some twenty posts, occupies by itself about half the public square of Yonville. The town hall, constructed 'from the designs of a Paris architect,' is a sort of Greek temple that forms the corner next to the chemist's shop. On the ground-floor are three Ionic columns and on the first floor a semicircular gallery, while the dome that crowns it is occupied by a Gallic cock, resting one foot upon the 'Charte' and holding in the other the scales of Justice. (Part II. Ch. 1.)[6]

Albeit on a smaller scale, this description is a repetition of the same technique used in describing the cap and the cake: if these objects were emblems of a pitiful, miserable philistine taste or a shabby marriage containing no perspective, Flaubert's depiction of Yonville allows the reader to perceive its public square as an emblem of the city and its hypocritical, superficial and conceited community. Similar to the case of the wedding cake in which the "confectioner of Yvetot" serves as an important stamp of authenticity of the product, in this instance it is the Paris architect who serves to legitimize the entire product; even if his name is not mentioned, the "presence" of a prestigious personage (one whose name is perhaps not even remembered) serves to guarantee the work of art, the expression is even typeset in italics. As someone to be boasted of, the unknown architect is also proof that the village or little city of Yonville has an obvious connection to the important towns of Yvetot or, even to Paris itself. The eye is led here, again, in a vertical way, from the bottom to the top the building consists of three, disjointed parts which display very different styles and functions. Similar to the cake, the base is a Greek temple on the first level followed by the gallery which functions as a site of representation where the mayor may stand, give a speech and invite his guests to view his city. Finally, the third level, the upper façade, is once again hard to visualize and remains a somewhat obscure structure (or sculpture? Relief?) that has been crowded with a variety of symbols. The question again emerges regarding the narrator's identity, beyond that of observer and the person providing an account of the building. The third level must be rather high since it is barely visible to the passer-by: the details connected to this final level seem to be an altogether superfluous description of something which cannot be observed, an excessively precise and pointless text regarding something of no interest. It cannot be the voice of somebody just walking by the building—it is a very well informed account by somebody who knows the tiny details and even the history of the building, that is: the voice of the narrator. This contributes to the humorous nature of the description, the narrator pretending to be an enthusiastic observer, a proponent of the petty and pretentious object, one that proves just as ridiculous as the cap or the cake.

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[6] "Les halles, c'est-à-dire un toit de tuiles supporté par une vingtaine de poteaux, occupent à elles seules la moitié environ de la grande place d'Yonville. La mairie, construite *sur les dessins d'un architecte de Paris*, est une manière de temple grec qui fait l'angle, à côté de la maison du pharmacien. Elle a, au rez-de-chaussée, trois colonnes ioniques et, au premier étage, une galerie à plein cintre, tandis que le tympan qui la termine est rempli par un coq gaulois, appuyé d'une patte sur la Charte et tenant de l'autre les balances de la justice."

Through my examination of three, pivotal—yet dissonant—descriptions contained in *Madame Bovary* I aimed to demonstrate that Flaubert's handling of how certain objects are depicted acts to subvert the regular function of descriptions. By distorting the expected function of a description via the inclusion of confusingly detailed observations and the displacement of the narrative voice, the cases of Bovary's cap, the wedding cake and Yonville's town hall transform description into mockeries that "abducts" the reading process in a way that forces the reader to reconsider the role of the narrator and its function. Ultimately, the conventions connected to the act of description as well as the reader's conventional expectations are ridiculed. It is a well-known interpretation of Flaubert that his works deconstructed, questioned and parodied the conventions of realism well before the norms connected to text formation had even been established or consolidated. Strangely enough, some of the most excellent writers (Cervantes, Sterne or Pushkin) similarly deconstructed literary conventions as they were still in the process of being introduced. Thus, as has already been widely recognized, Madame Bovary follows this "tradition" by querying many types of conventions, including that of description.

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Flaubertovi opisi v *Madame Bovary*

Ključne besede: naratologija / francoska književnost / Flaubert, Gustave: *Gospa Bovary* / pripovedna tehnika / opis / realizem / parodija

Na splošno se zdi, da Flaubert v romanu *Madame Bovary* uporablja konvencionalen nabor postopkov, da bi uravnotežil pripovedovanje in opisovanje, vendar so opisi v tem literarnem delu presenetljivo redki pa tudi dokaj nenavadni in imajo prav posebno funkcijo. Pričujoči prispevek se osredotoča na Flaubertove opise čepice mladega Bovaryja, na Emmino in Bovaryjevo poročno torto ter na yonvillsko mestno hišo; vse to so emblemi neokusnosti, filistrskega ideala sreče in zlagane sublimnosti javnega prostora. Ob navedenih opisih se porajajo nadaljnja vprašanja v povezavi s posebno pripovedovalčevo optiko, cilji in umeščanjem teh opisov kot tudi njihovo funkcijo. Z besedilnega vidika kažejo ti elementi podobnosti s katalogiziranjem oziroma se delno prepletajo s tipom besedilotvornega postopka, značilnega za naštevanje. Zastopam stališče, da so v resnici parodični, saj je njihov končni učinek norčevanje iz pripovednih konvencij, ki so se v tistem času ravno uveljavljale: namesto da bi bili konvencionalni, so opisi v *Madame Bovary* ironično antikonvencionalni.

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Description, Historical Reference, and Allegories of America in Thomas Pynchon's *Inherent Vice*

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Thomas Pynchon's Inherent Vice, *the concluding novel in his California trilogy exhibits a curious allegorical structure of California and, by extension, America, by way of descriptions of historical reference. This paper argues that these descriptions constitute a system that reflects the contemporary moral and political anxieties of post-postmodern fiction in the immediate context of the novel's publication. What is more, the text employs Pynchon's "stylistic, residual postmodernism" in order to put forth a powerful cautionary tale when relying on and reconfiguring the generic codes of* noir.

Keywords: narratology / American literature / postmodernism / post-postmodernism / Pynchon, Thomas: *Inherent Vice* / narrative technique / description / allegory / noir

Thomas Pynchon's *Inherent Vice* of 2009, his final piece in what critics refer to as his California trilogy, revisits a crucial rupture in American political and cultural history. A late addition to the series (*The Crying of the Lot 49* was published in 1966 and *Vineland* a quarter of a century later), Pynchon's blend of California *noir* and historiographic metafiction is significantly set during Ronald Reagan's second term as governor of California, and after the capture of the Manson family. Thus, as Casey Shoop (Shoop, "Thomas Pynchon, Postmodernism") argues, *Inherent Vice* offers a retrospective understanding of an experimental phase in what came to be known as Reaganomics under his presidency (see: Niskanen), and accounts for the divided public perception of the counterculture. Combining Pynchon's hallmark of paranoia as a mode of understanding (Bersani) with elements of historiographic metafiction (Hutcheon) and the California *noir* in Chandler's style, the novel adopts a curious third person singular, point-of-view narrator, transposed into Sortilège's voice-over in Paul Thomas Anderson's 2014 film adaptation. The novel's mode of narration, as well as the film's voice-over, mark a conscious intent upon allegorizing what critics, by default, recognize in Pynchon as the struggle between the "Elect" and the "Preterite" for claiming the true American heritage (see the narrator's remarks on Slothrop's tract "On Preterition" in Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* 555). The narrative consciousness balances between allegory, *noir*'s "gritty realism" and historical accuracy in keeping a double distance from the *diegesis*. This can best be illustrated by how descriptions—atmospheric, historic *and* allegorical—work in *Inherent Vice*.

In what follows, I will demonstrate (1) how perspective and voice are separated in these descriptions, (2) how this separation is due to retrospective historical knowledge about the era, and (3) how the perspectival difference is downplayed by the supposedly ironic narrative voice, (4) only to reinforce or undermine historical accuracy at will in an attempt to strengthen allegorical messages. These textual features, in turn, will underline the tendency to which critics—M. P. Eve and R. E. Kohn, together with Nicoline Timmer and Diana Benea, among others—refer to as "post-postmodern" sensibility in Pynchon's work starting with *Vineland*. This post-postmodern sensibility can be seen as "a drive toward intersubjective connection and communication, and also [as] a sense of 'presence' and 'sameness' … performing a complicit and complicated critique on certain aspects of postmodern subjectivity" (Trimmer 13) in *Vineland* (1990). In the case of *Mason & Dixon* (1997) it is highlighted as "a newfound concern for the family and community," "an increasing visibility of spaces of alterity and the politics of informing our relationship with the Other," while *Against the Day* (2006) exhibits "an incipient ethic of responsibility." *Inherent Vice* (2009), however, displays "a marked interest in questions of social justice and moral duty," and, in turn, "rehumanizes" the subject (Benea 143–144).

In line with the suggestions that Pynchon's output shows post-postmodern sensibilities, I will argue that the description of landscapes, either diegetic or pictorial, provides a system for making sense of California or "America" in *Inherent Vice*. As Casey Shoop argues in an essay on the connection between Jameson's articles on postmodernism and Chandler:

> California is so often imagined as the site of postmodernism, in both its ecstatic and its nostalgic incarnations. Los Angeles becomes [during the period of time between Jameson's two articles on Chandler] the center of a spatial allegory for the seemingly irresolvable tension between the critical urge to map social totality and the burgeoning acknowledgment that such a thing is no longer possible. (Shoop, "Corpse and Accomplice" 207)

In line with Shoop's observation, I will provide an analysis of three distinct examples, where the landscape is described as a counterpoint to the indiscernibility of the social structure represented by the novel's notorious Golden Fang, either a schooner, a tax haven for dentists, or an Indochinese heroin cartel, or all of these at once, constituting—possibly—a vertically organized crime syndicate to produce, import, and distribute drugs as well as to control their social and market penetration, and also to provide treatment for side-effects of substance abuse, whether psychological or dental. The three instances, significantly, are Larry Doc Sportello's drive to Santa Monica; his encounter with the depiction of what he understands is supposedly the first colonial encounter with the valley of California; and his journey from the scene on his way home and beyond, into an imaginary future. These descriptions can be seen as imaginative attempts to re-conceptualize the social structure marked by the often violent real estate speculation characterizing the region, a tendency marked by segregation and disappearance of ethnic neighborhoods (as indicated by Tariq Khalil's story and the telling name of Mickey Wolfmann's "Channel View Estates" in the novel).

The fist example is Larry "Doc" Sportello's drive to Santa Monica, indicative of how the description of scenery, which is normally an atmospheric device, is turned into an historically accurate account of how political contexts have shaped the perception of the landscape. The scene is filtered through the narrative consciousness under the influence, the very narrative mode of *Inherent Vice*, as the acronym for *L*ocation—*S*urveillance—*D*etection, Doc's private investigative agency, located in the same building with a thinly disguised drug distribution center may indicate. Thus, the trip itself is that of a consciousness whose perspective seems to be close to Sportello's point of view despite the obvious separation of voice. This divide between point of view and voice is also in line with how the ironic tone of the passage is intent on downplaying the historical difference in knowledge between the narrator's supposedly diegetic point of view and the reader's extradiegetic and historically distant position.

> ON CERTAIN DAYS, DRIVING INTO SANTA MONICA WAS LIKE having hallucinations without going to all the trouble of acquiring and then taking a particular drug, although some days, for sure, *any* drug was preferable to driving into Santa Monica.
> Today, after a deceptively sunny and uneventful spin up through the Hughes Company property—a kind of smorgasbord of potential U.S. combat zones, terrain specimens ranging from mountains and deserts to swamp and jungle and so forth, all there, according to local paranoia, for fine-tuning battle radar

> systems on—past Westchester and the Marina and into Venice, Doc reached the Santa Monica city line, where the latest mental exercise began. Suddenly he was on some planet where the wind can blow two directions at once, bringing in fog from the ocean and sand from the desert at the same time, obliging the unwary driver to shift down the minute he entered this alien atmosphere, with daylight dimmed, visibility reduced to half a block, and all colors, including those of traffic signals, shifted radically elsewhere in the spectrum. (Pynchon, *Inherent Vice* 50)

The passage's opening with the double entendre of "trip" extends to the ambiguity of perception under the influence: the view of the landscape is filtered through paranoid rumor and hazy observations, adding to the implausibility of the narrator's drive along the coast. Yet the detail mentioned in passing about "the Hughes Company property" attributed to local paranoia is precise enough to anchor the episode historically. As Casey Shoop remarks,

> virtually the entire infrastructure of Southern California, from freeways to waterways, depended on federal funding, the defense industry, the lifeblood of its regional economy, subsisted entirely on government contracts, of which "California received fully twenty-five percent." (Shoop, "Thomas Pynchon, Postmodernism" 72–73)

When the text refers to federal funding in support of Californian businesses in the arms trade as "local paranoia," it indeed presents a possible historical account for how Reagan's second term as governor may have been sponsored by federal money. Given the historical distance between the narrative time frame and the date of the novel's publication, the "preterite" theory about the abuse of power seems all the more plausible in the light of Housing and Urban Development scams under Reagan's presidency that came to light in the 1990s. Pynchon's retrospective account of the end of the counterculture also attributes the restructuring of the landscape to the New Right in that "this homegrown revolution from the right organized around the protective ethos of entitlement: suburban retrenchment, anticommunism, privatization, military spending, small government, and (less advertisably) racism" (Shoop, "Thomas Pynchon, Postmodernism" 69–70). It is not difficult to identify in these elements the major motives *Inherent Vice* shares with the other pieces in the California trilogy, notably with *The Crying of the Lot 49*. Thus, atmospheric descriptions similar to the above quoted passage from the novel—emphasized by the shift of colors as in a hallucination or, alternatively, in a film sequence indicating a nostalgic reference to the past—acquire referential potential, by virtue of the distance between the point-of-view narration and its historical distance to the context of reading well beyond the time-frame of the narrative. This distance is marked by how the narration posits the knowledge it renders as paranoid, thereby paradoxically maintaining the historical authenticity of the point-of-view narration, and by the stylistic choices in the narrative voice that keep a distance from the content rendered thereby. One may be tempted to suggest that conspiracy theories are presented in a curious light in *Inherent Vice*, something that the 2014 film adaptation takes full advantage of by its choice of filters reminiscent of the color technologies of the historical period in question. The complexity of the description in question testifies to how Pynchon makes full use of the postmodern pastiche *and* irony in order to lay claim to an historical narrative with a potentially referential claim, yet maintaining its uncertainty—the very sign of the post-postmodern, according to McLaughlin (McLaughlin, "Post-postmodern discontent".

The second description in the series constituting an overarching allegory of America is when *Inherent Vice*—like other pieces in the California trilogy—explicitly evokes allegorical images of California, the final destination and elaboration of manifest destiny. Both in *The Crying of the Lot 49* and *Inherent Vice*, these instances are centered around paintings, Remedios Varo's "Bordando el Manto Terrestre" ["Embroidering the Earth's Mantle"], and an unidentified mural of the Portolá expedition of 1769 to the valley of California, respectively.[1] The description of the latter bears some resemblance to the above quoted passage in its emphasis on color and the reconstruction of states of consciousness.

> In a room off the lobby where they sent Doc to cool his heels was a mural depicting the arrival of the Portolá expedition in 1769 at a bend of the river near what became downtown L.A. Pretty close to here, in fact. The pictorial

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[1] That the scene itself is allegorical of California may be suggested by what seems to be the deliberate historical inaccuracy of Pynchon's description here: the Portolá expedition had originally set out for Monterey, which they did not recognize on their way based on the earlier, and quite exaggerated, descriptions, so when heading further north, they got as far as what they believed to be, based on Sir Francis Drake's previous account, San Francisco Bay. Yet Drake's description had also been mistaken by the expedition, and Portolá's claim gave the name to what is San Francisco Bay today. This is probably a historical case of the palimpsest, a reading Pynchon can make full use of, no matter if substituting Los Angeles for San Francisco had been done deliberately or otherwise. The historical palimpsest serves a similar function to the one outlined above in relation to the description of the drive to Santa Monica. The allegory of California, and by extension, America is created by the gesture how the text repeats the inaccuracies of the colonizers.

> style reminded Doc of labels on fruit and vegetable crates when he was a kid. Lots of color, atmosphere, attention to detail. The view was northward, toward the mountains, which nowadays people at the beach managed to see only once or twice a year from the freeway when the smog blew away, but which here, through the air of those early days, were still intensely visible, snow-topped and crystal-edged. A long string of pack mules wound into the green distance along the banks of the river, which was shaded by cottonwoods, willows, and alders. Everybody in the scene looked like a movie star. Some were on horseback, packing muskets and lances and wearing leather armor. On the face of one of them—maybe Portolá himself? there was an expression of wonder, like, What's this, what unsuspected paradise? Did God with his finger trace out and bless this perfect little valley, intending it only for us? Doc must have got lost then for a while in the panorama, because he was startled by a voice behind him. (Pynchon, *Inherent Vice* 343–344)

As if to provide an explanation to the scene, Crocker Fenway, representative to the Golden Fang reclaiming their property from Doc, comes possibly the closest to fully explicating the central allegory of Pynchon's *oeuvre* about the struggle between the "Elect" and the "Preterite," associating the former with the sense of entitlement corresponding to the colonizer's gaze in the mural, explicates the meaning of the complex image in very simple terms.

> "It's about *being in place.* We—" gesturing around the Visitors' Bar and its withdrawal into seemingly unbounded shadow, "we're in place. We've been in place forever. Look around. Real estate, water rights, oil, cheap labor—all of that's ours, it's always been ours. And you, at the end of the day, what are you? One more unit in this swarm of transients who come and go without pause here in the sunny Southland, eager to be bought off with a car of a certain make, model, and year, a blonde in a bikini, thirty seconds on some excuse for a wave—a chili dog, for Christ's sake." He shrugged. "We will never run out of you people. The supply is inexhaustible." (Pynchon, *Inherent Vice* 347)

This time, the descriptive emphasis shifts from the deliberately vague historical reference to a state of mind or consciousness, which is exposed by the narrative as criminal in its intent, and cynical in attitude. The Golden Fang do not simply exploit people as human resource for their own purposes, but they literally lay claim to an empire composed of bodies. As Puck Beaverton, accomplice to the organization's assassin Adrian Prussia, explains, Adrian is always caught but is never charged, because the corrupt LAPD depends on federal money in line with its annual clearance rate, and his victims end up in pieces in support columns for the highway overpasses, thereby giving new meaning to the Reaganite expression "pillar of the community" (Pynchon, *Inherent Vice*

323). If the New Right's claim to entitlement is allegorized in *Inherent Vice* as the Golden Fang, it follows that Reaganomics sports an economy in which the empire of the "Elect" is literally built over the body of the "Preterite." Indeed, Adrian Prussia kills a "client from the LAPD Vice Squad" whose intel on "a sex ring" "would be enough to bring down the administration of Governor Reagan." Adrian volunteers his services to the Department "as a good American," as someone who "had always voted Republican" (321). Thus, the activities of the Golden Fang do not only invest the mural with allegorical meaning, but also connect the idyllic image of valley of the river in its "Elect" interpretation to the New Right. These ties are established by the figure of Adrian Prussia as well as through Vigilant California, a fictional patriotic organization. One night, Larry Doc Sportello falls asleep in front of his television set only to wake up and witness a rally featuring Nixon, who delivers a feverish speech about "Fascism for Freedom." When Doc compares the face he sees on TV to the fake twenty-dollar bill found by the FBI and connected to operation of the Golden Fang, he can claim that "[t]he two Nixons looked *just like photos* of each other!" (Pynchon, *Inherent Vice* 120).[2] Once again, what seems to be atmospheric description in the form of a mural rendered from Larry Doc Sportello's perspective, condenses the many motives of the narrative, cuts to the heart of the very organization of the diegetic reality and, thus, of the central allegory of the novel. It is of importance here that the ways in which the text layers historical references onto its narrative and allegorical design are characteristic of the postmodern, yet utilized in the service of post-postmodern sensibilities. In this specific instance, the central allegory about the struggle between the "Elect" and the "Preterite" for the true meaning of America does not only expose the cynical attitude and criminal intent of the former, but, as it will become explicit in the third passage I will quote, extends the allegory historically: from the mystical and mythical continent of Lemuria in the past that can only be experienced in a vision (Pynchon, *Inherent Vice* 108–110) through the present moment of the narrative depicting the demise of the counterculture, and to the foreseeable future marked by the publication of the novel in 2009.

The third description from *Inherent Vice* reveals how exactly atmospheric description acquires an allegorical dimension only to give way to historical reference outside the time frame of the novel and into the future. The narrative concludes with symbolic recuperations, with Doc's having reconstructed the family romance of the Harlingens' and inadvertently taken revenge for Christian F. Björnsen, a.k.a. Bigfoot's partner—what Benea reads as "a marked interest in questions of social justice and moral duty" (Benea 143–144). The trajectory of his story makes Doc sensitive to the suffering of others, he seem to have understood his own entanglement with his ex-girlfriend, Shasta, whose return had initiated his investigation in the first place. Thus, the text, despite its postmodern elements and generic leanings seems to satisfy all the requirements for qualifying as post-postmodern. But at the end Doc sets off on yet another journey, an individual ride home, symbolically away and to the south, and into the future.

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[2] The fake twenty-dollar bill is a clear sign of a possible conspiracy, as only dead presidents are allowed to be represented on US currency, and Nixon is alive within the timeframe of the narrative. He died in 1994, and subsequently made it onto a US one-dollar coin in 2016, together with two other presidents that year—Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan.

> Doc figured if he missed the Gordita Beach exit he'd take the first one whose sign he could read and work his way back on surface streets. He knew that at Rosecrans the freeway began to dogleg east, and at some point, Hawthorne Boulevard or Artesia, he'd lose the fog, unless it was spreading tonight, and settled in regionwide. Maybe then it would stay this way for days, maybe he'd have to just keep driving, down past Long Beach, down through Orange County, and San Diego, and across a border where nobody could tell anymore in the fog who was Mexican, who was Anglo, who was anybody. Then again, he might run out of gas before that happened, and have to leave the caravan, and pull over on the shoulder, and wait. For whatever would happen. For a forgotten joint to materialize in his pocket. For the CHP to come by and choose not to hassle him. For a restless blonde in a Stingray to stop and offer him a ride. For the fog to burn away, and for something else this time, somehow, to be there instead. (Pynchon, *Inherent Vice* 368-369)

This ride references both of the above described journeys in that it is in the exact opposite direction to Doc's first trip to Santa Monica, and lacks a clear destination, similarly to the historical Portolá-expedition and in contrast to the fictional arrival of the colonizers in the allegoric mural in the club for the Elect. The passage aims at dismantling the significance of ethnic and racial difference crucial to the colonizers' allegory and a key issue in the struggle for the meaning of America, and, for the Elect, for material resources. That the idea of racial difference is central to colonization (the importance of "who was Mexican, who was Anglo") is further supported by the example of Tariq Khalil in the novel, and Pynchon's signature journalistic piece, "A journey into the mind of Watts" (Pynchon, "A Journey into the Mind of Watts"). On the one hand, this misty conclusion of the novel is atmospheric as well as allegorical in referring beyond the narrative's time frame. The reference to atomized individuals tailing one another on the highway, about to run out of gas, the thwarted hope of erasing the significance of racial and ethnic differences, of free drugs and casual sex, of change in general for the better, all these extend into an allegory of the "Preterite" view of America. At the same time, each of the elements in the allegory signals the bleak changes yet to come immediately after the precise historical moment the novel set out to capture: just over the apex of the counter-culture, after the capture of the Manson family, when new conservative political forces are gearing up to institutionalize change at federal level. What the novel posits as Doc's hopes and desires is quickly to be dismantled in the oil crisis of the early seventies (the possibility of his running out of petrol), destroyed through hypocritical campaigns against drug users (the forgotten joint that does not materialize in his pocket) and mainstream appropriation of free love as pornography (no blonde in a Stingray offering a free ride),[3] undermined by Watergate, by the repercussions of Reagan's presidency, well beyond their immediate contexts, possibly affecting the present of the publication of the novel. Pynchon's historiographic metafictional narrative in this respect blends well together with the California *noir*, whose distinctive features, among others, are the omnipresence of crime and corruption, i. e., inherent vice literally, and a pointedly gritty realism in its portrayal, features that the novel combines and utilizes to outline a powerful cautionary tale.

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[3] Cook accuses the novel of "pornification," and argues that "Since Pynchon's 1970 requires sexual liberation as an inseparable component of its frisson, *Inherent Vice* both succumbs to a prefeminist sexual nostalgia trip, and becomes a palimpsest overwritten with four subsequent decades of sexual codes. This retrograde inflection makes it possible both to fetishize 'presentable' short-skirted female hordes and instil in them the drive to erotic variations entailed in twenty-first-century Californian porno industry scripts. It seems that this Californication of sexuality has, in this late Pynchon novel, overtaken and neutralised the taboo-breaking sex still evident in *Vineland* and *Against the Day*. Where these novels dramatized female submissiveness (and only occasionally their assertiveness) as an exceptional vice which, in individuals like Lake Traverse and her great-grandniece Frenesi Gates, is both emblematic of and inherent in elect/preterite power relations, *Inherent Vice*'s California is a state where the mass of women know that sexual availability and versatility are expected of them as matter of course, and must hope to encounter Doc Sportello and not Charlie Manson. It speaks for the power of the Californian mediated sex industry's ubiquitous products that they evince the potential to suborn a writer whose earlier works did as much as any to locate the description of the sexually extreme at the forefront of the counter-culture" (Cook 1160–1161). However, I think his description applies rather to the film than to the novel's sexual politics, which seem to maintain the difference between what Cook identifies as "four subsequent decades of sexual codes" and a historical take on the generic codes of the California *noir*. Women are rather presented as exposed, and not for purposes of titillation, but for a demonstration of how vulnerable they might have been even during the sexual revolution. The reference to the "restless blonde in a Stingray" and "offering a ride" for Doc is more of a romantic fantasy modelled on the Harlingens's happiness and his own misfortune with Shasta than a "palimpsest overwritten with four subsequent decades of sexual codes." If anything, *Inherent Vice* ultimately emphasizes this almost hopeless desire to reconstruct the family romance despite historical circumstances.

Although *Inherent Vice* was almost invariably received as, to quote Michiko Kakutani's review, "Pynchon-lite" (Kakutani, "Another Doorway"), a toned-down version of the author's high postmodernist preoccupations, I tend to strongly disagree, if not in the interpretation itself, than at least in evaluation. I see how Pynchon's prose in *Inherent Vice* almost seamlessly combines the generic code of *noir* with postmodern poetics and the compelling presence of an American postmodernist historical consciousness that, according to Shoop, we are only beginning to fathom. Indeed, the central element of *noir*, the omnipresence of crime and corruption in society, is the central trope of *Inherent Vice*, one that is made redundant by the many textual layers, referential and figurative, in the allegory of California/America. But Pynchon counters the omnipresence of crime with an almost humanistic use of postmodern poetic playfulness, and this is probably why critics often see the final piece of the California trilogy as part of an ongoing shift in Pynchon's late literary output towards "post-postmodern" sensibilities. These tendencies are marked by what Diana Benea (143–144) calls "the tension between a stylistic, residual postmodernism" and newly found topics: "concerns for the family and community," an "increasing visibility of spaces of alterity," "the politics informing our relationship with the Other," an "incipient ethics of responsibility," and, in the case of *Inherent Vice*, "social justice and moral duty." However, I hope to have demonstrated how these new themes are not independent of expert ways of creating descriptions that are constructed as atmospheric, allegorical and having referential claims at the same time, and how, despite critical claims, Pynchon's aesthetics is *not in tension, but rather in line with* his supposedly "stylistic, residual postmodernism." In the case of *Inherent Vice*, the critical contradiction emerges from how we tend to read the novel itself, and the way in which we relate to the (post-)postmodern dilemma of the "seemingly irresolvable tension between the critical urge to map social totality and the burgeoning acknowledgment that such a thing is no longer possible" (Shoop, "Corpse and Accomplice" 207).

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Opisi, zgodovinske reference in alegorije Amerike v romanu *Inherent Vice* Thomasa Pynchona

Ključne naratologija / ameriška književnost / postmodernizem / postpostmodernizem / Pynchon, Thomas: *Inherent Vice* / pripovedna tehnika / opis / alegorija / noir

Inherent Vice, sklepni roman kalifornijske trilogije Thomasa Pynchona, izkazuje nenavadno alegorično strukturiranje Kalifornije in Amerike nasploh skozi opise z zgodovinskimi referencami. Članek dokazuje, da ti opisi tvorijo sistem, ki odraža sodobne moralne in politične skrbi postpostmodernega romanopisja v neposrednem kontekstu izdaje romana. Poleg tega roman vključuje Pynchonov »stilistični, zastareli postmodernizem«, da bi načel močno svarilno zgodbo, pri čemer se hkrati opira na genetične kode žanra *noir* in jih obenem rekonfigurira.

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Description Degree Zero and the Un-Reality Effect: Roland Barthes on Description

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In his work, Roland Barthes raises the issue of description several times in a context that appears to be connected to the equally recurrent theme of the resistance to meaning. Barthes explored the function of description in two major fields of study: the field of fictional narratives and the field of visual signs. My paper focuses on the former in order to trace Barthes's theoretically divergent accounts regarding description's function and the presence of insignificant detail in narrative texts. Firstly, I analyze how Barthes attributed an ideology-critical function to description and the superfluous detail in critical debates that took place in the 1950s in connection to the French Nouveau Roman. Following this, my study focuses on the new position occupied by description in Barthes's structural narrative theory. In the last section of the paper, the notion of reality effect, more precisely, the way in which Barthes transforms and redefines the function of seemingly insignificant details in a narrative as operators for the autonomy of textual signifiers is examined.

Keywords: narratology / narrative structure / description / insignificant details / ideological criticism / reality effect / cultural semiotics / Barthes, Roland

Description in the work of Barthes: narratology and cultural semiotics

The concept of description as a literary sub-genre, a unit of the narrative division of labor in the realist novel, or an illustrative example of the discrepancy (and the poetic possibilities ensuing therein) between image and text, the visual and the linguistic seems too old-fashioned of a vision for a literary and cultural critic who is justly regarded as revolutionary. In spite of this apparent discrepancy, the question of description haunted Roland Barthes throughout his career. The recurring conceptualizations of description dating from different periods in his work indicate a path in which description articulates the theme of *resistance to meaning* within different theoretical frames. This theme belongs presumably to "the author's personal and secret mythology, that subnature of expression where the first coition of words and things takes place, where once and for all the great verbal themes of his existence come to be installed" (Barthes, *Writing* 10), to borrow Barthes's own eloquent words from his very first book, *Writing Degree Zero* (1953). This protean thematic in Barthes's oeuvre is obviously beyond the scope of my study which instead focuses on how Barthes attributed meaning (or a resistance to meaning) to description within different theoretical and historical contexts during his life's work. While at first glance the issue of description may seem to possess merely a minor role, it is my contention that analyzing Barthes's attention to this topic will provide greater insight into the evolution of his intellectual position over time.

Description is a composite notion in Barthes's texts that is able to conceptualize ideological, narrative and semiotic problems as well. From a literary and semiotic standpoint, description seems to be linked to two major problematics in the work of Barthes, namely to problems of narrative representations on the one hand, and problems of visual representations on the other hand. In connection to a topic that I will analyze in the largest section of my paper, some of Barthes's writings first of all focus directly on literary description's function in a narrative construction. In an extension of this concept, I examine descriptions which are parts of narrative texts (rather than independent textual units such as portraits, descriptions of work of arts or *ekphrasis* that are exempted from narrative function) including descriptions of objects, venues, decor, spaces or visual perceptions experienced by characters belonging to a fictional universe. Papers such as "Objective Literature" containing Barthes's reading of Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Les gommes* (*The Erasers* in English translation), or his "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative," one of the most influential texts in French structuralist narratology as well as "The Reality Effect" particularly strive to define the possible roles description possesses in the general system of the signification of a narrative. Although these approaches to literary descriptions stem from different theoretical frames and are written with different theoretical goals in mind, all devote special attention to cases in which a description located in a particular narrative appears either superfluous or dysfunctional based on the semiotic model of the system of narrative signification. When Barthes evokes *The Erasers*' "anthological descriptions" by claiming that anthological descriptions are "entitled to take up our time regardless of the appeals which the dialectic of the narrative may make to it" (Barthes, "Objective" 13–14), defines the "marginal functionality" of "informants" as authenticating "the reality of the referent, root fiction in the real world" in his structuralist narratology (Barthes, "An Introduction" 249) or investigates (in *The Reality Effect*) the narrative and semiotic function of insignificant details in a narrative, in each case Barthes seeks a structural explanation (whether narrative, rhetoric, aesthetic or semiotic in nature) regarding the presence of seemingly meaningless descriptive textual representations in narrative. Why it is so important for Barthes to solve this problem is easily understandable: in both of his theoretically divergent, narratological works—including both the aforementioned "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" (1966) and *S/Z* published three years later in 1969—Barthes supposes that there is no "pause of signification," whether we conceive the narrative as a closed or open textual entity or not. Subsequently, finding any seemingly superfluous or meaningless textual unit which neither moves the plot forward (meaning that, in semiotic terms, the unit does not have a correlative counterpart in the syntagmatic organization of the plot), nor takes part in the construction of characters or the fictional milieu of the story is unacceptable.

Roland Barthes's cultural semiotics is another fertile field to which the topic of description could be connected. From his *Mythologies* (1953) written at the beginning of his career to his last book, *Camera Lucida* (1980), Barthes never lost a fascination—irrespective of their cultural medium or manifestation, such as advertisements, Hollywood movies, fashion or photography—for the social meaning and usage of visual codes. In his cultural semiotic analysis of visual objects, Barthes follows a process that bears great similarity to his approach regarding narratives: after classifying the signifiers and their possible connections according to linguistic models borrowed from Saussure, Benveniste and Hjelmslev, he then describes the most important ways in which socially encoded meanings are to be read. In his approach to the visual system of signs, Barthes once again happens upon the same dysfunctional elements he had originally encountered in his studies of narrative: signifiers which may be challenging to integrate into the general semiotic process of signification. In his "The Rhetoric of Image," Barthes postulates a "non-coded iconic message" whose function resembles that possessed by informants and the reality effect: it is responsible for the verisimilitude of the socio-cultural representation, or artifact, and assures the reader or the spectator regarding the represented object's very existence. To be more precise, a "non-coded iconic message" reaffirms the "*having-been-there*" of the represented object. While the semiotic organization of culturally readable connotations creates the meaning of visual representation, the "message without a code," or in other words, the pure denoted image, does not belong to the semiotic process of the signification (cf. Barthes, "The Rhetoric" 36). In another essay entitled "The Photographic Message," Barthes labels this paradoxical resistance to the (semiotic) meaning as "photographic insignificance" ("The Photographic" 27), a term he later elaborated upon in greater detail in his *Camera Lucida* under the name of "*punctum*."

My brief overview of the theories surrounding description that are found in the work of Roland Barthes suggests that the question of description—understood as a verbal or visual re-presentation of a fictional or real visually perceivable reality within an artifact—is associated with Barthes' exploration of the limitations surrounding a semiotic approach of narrative, textual, or visual representations. In my following examination, I only analyze Barthes's theoretical writings that focus on description's various roles in narrative literary texts.

Description and ideological criticism

In Barthes's career, the matter of the description emerges for the first time in the 1950s. With his essays, "Objective Literature" and "Literal Literature," works which examined Alain Robbe-Grillet's early novels, *Les gommes* and *Le voyeur*, Barthes's writings not only played a key role in the critical debates surrounding the French "Nouveau Roman," but also helped Robbe-Grillet better articulate the critical novelty of his own works. These two novels by Robbe-Grillet had been vehemently attacked by supporters of *engaged literature* who blamed *The Erasers* and *The Voyeur* for representing an alienated, reified and dehumanized world that thereby supported a bourgeois-capitalist ideology. From the perspective of a Marxist critique, the lengthy descriptions found in *Les gommes* or *Le voyeur*—lacking the good intentions of the realist novel to instruct the reader regarding how things work in the social, technical world—perfectly illustrate the rule of the object (goods) over human conscience, the rule of space over time. For representatives of the leftist critical tradition a nineteenth-century realist novel's meticulous usage of description was already regarded as a "strategy of a bourgeoisie threatened by social practice and anxious to escape condemnation" by "reifying and petrifying everything." According to this interpretation, works by Robbe-Grillet as well as those written by other figures from the Nouveau Roman literary movement were nothing less than examples of the amplification of the social-historical process mentioned above (cf. Rancière, *Le fil* 20).[1] In his refutation of this interpretation by leftist critics, Barthes (later followed by Robbe-Grillet) denied the existence of any sort of continuity with the realist, "bourgeois," tradition of description, while simultaneously defending the experiments carried out by the Nouveau Roman. In essence, Barthes rejected the utilitarian definition of literature as a tool meant to aid the evolution of the public's political consciousness via the representation of exploitation and class-struggle.

In defense of his views, Barthes employs a surprisingly persuasive strategy rooted in poetical and philosophical arguments in his detailed analysis of some descriptive sections of *The Erasers*. The descriptions chosen by Barthes concern a dish served to the protagonist and a meeting between a hitman and his employer that takes place in a nearly empty room. Barthes's analysis mainly focuses on (1) how the function of the objects has changed in Robbe-Grillet's novels (in relation to the realist novel), (2) what kind of ideological consequences stem from their modified status and (3) what kind of narrative (and poetic) tools are employed during the textual constitution of these fictional objects. Although the theoretical framework used in "Objective Literature" precedes Barthes's structural-semiotic model of the narrative, it is quite obvious that Barthes has nevertheless already formulated one of his recurrent hypotheses regarding modern descriptions which resist the encompassing narrative system of meaning. According to Barthes, Robbe-Grillet's descriptions do not (or hardly) participate in the narrative task of moving the plot forward or depicting a social context in which the characters act, thereby allowing the description to be reintegrated into an upper level of the narrative meaning. Apparently, Robbe-Grillet's famous anthological pieces with their meticulous, geometrical, quantitative descriptions of foods, furniture and rooms are too voluminous in relation to their role in the narrative. Unlike the strategy realist novels employed in the nineteenth century, the lengthy depictions of a slice of tomato or a nearly empty interior do not help the reader to understand the social or psychological laws which govern their "real world" any better. As Barthes claims, "Robbe-Grillet's object has neither function nor substance" (Barthes, "Objective" 15) and what he means by function in this instance is the role possessed by the described object within narrative meaning.

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[1] My translation. In his reading of *The Reality Effect*, Jacques Rancière also attributes the critique of the bourgeois-capitalist cultural production to Barthes.

Beyond these pre-narratology observations, Barthes also views Robbe-Grillet's descriptions as presenting a dilemma concerning the theory of language. According to Barthes, the depiction of the objects in Robbe-Grillet's novels proposes a new way of thinking about the relationship between language and reality in fiction. It must be mentioned that this dilemma actually extends back to Sartre's work *Nausea*, in which description (especially that of the chestnut tree at the end of the novel) stages dramatic scenes that highlight the discrepancy between the intelligible and constructed nature of reality as represented in human consciousness (what Sartre calls "essence") and the sensual experience of this reality which Sartre recognized as something independent of consciousness ("existence"). A state of existential vertigo grips *Nausea*'s protagonist when he realizes the epistemological gap between a reality conceptualized by the intelligible nature of the human consciousness (with its teleologically constructed concepts) and raw, unintelligible, empirical and sensorial reality. Roquentin, the hero of the *Nausea*, feels threatened by this weird, purely material reality whose amorphous chaos could only be controlled and mastered by the arbitrary, but necessary inner order of an artistic composition, the only remedy against the attacks of vertigo for him is the small jazz melody he heard oftentimes being played during his crisis.

Both Barthes's two essays and Robbe-Grillet's early novels are embroiled in a polemic with this Sartrean view as found in his work *Nausea*. In *The Erasers* descriptions are anything but expressions of a tragic hero's dramatic encounters with the epistemological rupture between essence and existence. While Robbe-Grillet's novel and Barthes's essays do not deny that objects possess an essentially different nature compared to the consciousness which can form ideas of them, they both contend that this difference or sense of strangeness does not trigger any feeling of anxiety or disgust. As Robbe-Grillet states, "there exists something in the world which is not man, which makes no sign to him, which has nothing in common with him" (Robbe-Grillet, "Nature" 52). According to Barthes's analysis, the narrative art of *The Erasers* stresses a separation between descriptive consciousness and described reality both on the level of narration as well as on that of narrated consciousness; in the end, neither the protagonist nor the reader experiences the famous, ontological nausea related in Sartre's novel. Unlike Sartre's first-person, autodiegetic narration, the heterodiegetic, third-person narration in *The Erasers* reduces the possibility for the emergence of a central, "tragic" consciousness.

At this point in the debate, the argumentation of the defenders of Nouveau roman turns from a phenomenological approach of fictional objects' descriptions to ideological criticism. Robbe-Grillet argues that his descriptive technique is a part of his critique against an anthropomorphic viewpoint and the resigned humanism manifested in both the classical as well as the existentialist novel. (By humanism Robbe-Grillet is referring to the bourgeois myth of the eternal human essence, which serves as a philosophical principle for maintaining the social order.) Inspired by Barthes's essay on his own novel, Robbe-Grillet contends that his descriptions aim "to reject the 'pananthropic' notion contained in traditional humanism, and probably in all humanism" (Robbe-Grillet, "Nature" 57). To achieve this goal, Robbe-Grillet represents fictional objects almost exclusively by their visual appearance in order to avoid using metaphors which he considers to be vehicles for forging a kinship between mankind and the material world. Thus, according to Robbe-Grillet, his flat and sober, non-anthropomorphic descriptions prevent establishing an intimacy between man and things, and also the constitution of a tragic (modern) consciousness from the feeling of their separation.

Robbe-Grillet criticizes the intellectual position which he believes complicitly accepts the "human condition," and its artistic manifestation in the notion of "tragedy" and consequently abandons the possibility of developing new ideas to change these conditions. With these two arguments, Robbe-Gillet strikes back at the progressive critique which accuses him of being reactionary. Barthes, in turn, further expands a political, ideological defense of the Nouveau Roman by studying the critical function of the descriptions of fictional objects. On the one hand, Barthes points out that the representation of classical fictional objects functions as a mirror for the human gaze, in which the subject either glorifies his own superior position, or the very same fictional object might become an allegory for the fate of all humans, a "vehicle of a melodrama; it decays, vanishes, or recovers a final glory, participates in short in a veritable eschatology of matter" (Barthes, "Objective" 20). On the other hand, Barthes also argues that neutral, impersonal descriptions lacking virtually any social or psychological type of marker establish a metacritical position. According to Barthes, Robbe-Grillet's descriptions do not refer to any fictional or non-fictional externality as their function is to form a linguistic obstacle to the reader in that they are entirely self-referential and therefore do not witness the existence of anything beyond their own linguistic reality. Narrative formalism and linguistic self-referentiality try "to asepticize the very form of narrative, it is perhaps preparing, without yet achieving, a deconditioning of the reader in relation to the essentialist art of the bourgeois novel" (Barthes, "Literal" 57). With this interpretation, Barthes puts the famous impersonal and allegedly alienated descriptive technique, the zero degree of description of the Nouveau roman, in the service of ideological criticism.

Description and structuralist narratology

The issues surrounding description occur in a more traditionally theoretical context in Barthes's texts written in the mid-sixties, particularly in relation to the work, "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative." This study figured as the opening paper in the eighth issue of the journal *Communications*, which contained studies by authors such as Gérard Genette, Tzvetan Todorov, Claude Bremond, Umberto Eco and Julien Greimas and was later viewed as the collective debut of French literary structuralism in narratology. "An Introduction" is often referred to as a keystone work supporting the field of structuralist narratology due to its proposal to apply Saussurean semiotics systematically to the field of narratives by separating narrative signifiers (*signifiant*) from the signified (*signifié*), thereby defining narrative units (what Barthes labels as "functions" in accordance with Propp) and their possible relationships in a semiotic interpretation of narrative meaning. To understand description's new position within this narratological framework, it is first necessary to outline some of the most important concepts underlying Barthes's structural narrative theory.

Indeed, Barthes does not study the question of description under this name in his narrative study. He proposes a general, systematic model for the narrative meaning, one that is destined to replace the old rhetorical and taxonomical approach which examines the traditional parts of a narrative separately. Nevertheless, Barthes did not cease to be interested in how objects of a fictional universe become meaningful, including how they participate in the production of the meaning. Within his new, narratological framework, Barthes replaces and redefines the issue of description as one that falls under the category of narrative information. When he defines the elementary units of narrative meaning (the "functions"), Barthes focuses mainly on "two broad classes of functions, distributional on the one hand, integrative on the other" (Barthes, "An Introduction" 246). Indeed, he limits the name "function" to the former, while "indices" (*index* in the French text) refer to the latter. Whether they are indispensable for the coherence of the story ("cardinal functions"), or have a complementary role in building it ("catalyses"), "[t]he functions in this specific sense now correlate with units on the same level," while indices "cannot be fulfilled without switching to another level" (Barthes, "An Introduction" 246). Furthermore, "they can be saturated (completed) only on the level of characters or on the level of narration" (Barthes, "An Introduction" 249). It may be said that "indices" possess a narrative function in order to lend a third, vertical dimension to the fictional universe (the second, horizontal dimension is provided by the deployment of the plot) and are responsible for creating a "worldlike" fictional universe in which narrative events take place. Similarly, indices are also responsible for creating a metaphorical network in the text. Barthes divides the category of indices into two subclasses: "indices proper, referring to a personality trait, a feeling or an atmosphere" and *informant*, "used to identify and pinpoint certain elements of time and space." Indices "always signify implicitly, while informants do not … they provide pure locally relevant data" (Barthes, "An Introduction" 249).

The question remains concerning how descriptions fit within this new conceptual frame offered by the structural analysis. One of the basic hypotheses held by the semiotic approach to narratives is that narrative units cannot be identified with textual units. A textual unit (textual signifier) can comprise several narrative units (narrative signifier), while a narrative unit can be composed of several textual units. The traditional economy of description and narration made famous by nineteenth-century realist novels, that utilize a clear textual separation between descriptive and narrative passages, cannot be operational from a semiotic perspective. From this vantage point, description appears to cease to exist as an independent sub-genre or even literary dilemma. Obviously, descriptions could be defined as indices with high integrative function since they aid the reader's ability to understand the upper level of characters and actions by contributing to the understanding of the behavior and the deeds of characters. According to this interpretation, indices add to the creation of a socio-historical space, which thereby motivates the plot; in other words, descriptions possess psychological or social referents ("signified"). Yet descriptions can also be viewed as informants since they are there "to authenticate the reality of the referent, to root fiction in the real world" (Barthes, "An Introduction" 249). Within this capacity, descriptions possess a reduced functionality in the general economy of narrative meaning; in other words, they keep the self-referentiality—without their critical or political function—which was emphasized in the essays examining Robbe-Grillet's novels in the 1950s.

Reality effect

The question of description and its narrative function reappears a few years later in Barthes's oeuvre. His *Reality Effect* (1968) reestablishes the study of the description as an autonomous literary problem while questioning it from a double perspective that is both historical and narratological: what type of reasons underlie the different historical practices of descriptions and in what form do these ideas persist—if they do at all—in contemporary (the late sixties) fictional and non-fictional writings? What is the function of the "insignificant detail," and what is "the ultimate significance of the insignificance" "detached from the semiotic structure of the narrative" (Barthes, *Reality* 12) in many modern and classical, fictional and non-fictional narratives? These questions (the latter in particular) are directly rooted in what Barthes discussed under the label of *informant* in his structuralist approach to narratives. However, at this point in his interpretation, the structuralist presupposition of the work of art as a closed totality (meaning that no narrative signifier is superfluous) serves only as point of departure in order to arrive at a more radical critique of the semiotic account of narrative fiction.

Barthes extends the history of description back to the rhetorical genre of the epideictic discourse from antiquity. He argues that to some extent the early forms of the description were already exempted from the general communicative aims of rhetorical speech. According to Barthes, the most illustrious historical form of the description, the *ekphrasis*, was not subordinated to any referential verisimilitude, which was later known as realism; rather it was mainly guided by discursive rules and constraints. Predominant in classical pieces of description, the autotelic, aesthetic function is still strongly recognizable in realist descriptions. By analyzing the description of Rouen in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Barthes points out that "the entire description *is constructed* … to associate Rouen with a painting: it is a painted scene taken on by language," and the meaning of the description "is given by its conformity, not to the object of description, but to the cultural rules governing representation" (Barthes, "The Reality" 13). The aesthetic organization of the descriptive textual unit frames a smooth transformation from a visual realm to a linguistic one both in the case of classical and realist descriptions; "if it was not subject to aesthetic or rhetorical choice, any 'seeing' would be inexhaustible by discourse" (14). Realist descriptions take advantage of their implicit claim on the noble tradition of classical descriptive art, thereby justifying the presence of long, detachable textual parts and details that seem to be "superfluous" within the narrative structure of a work of art. However, in nineteenth-century realist fiction (as well as non-fiction) the "aesthetic plausibility" of the description "is totally interwoven with the imperatives of 'realism'" (14), understood in this case as principally the predominant denotative usage of the language.

At this point Barthes once more reformulates one of the recurrent topics in his work that he had already interpreted in his essay analyzing Robbe-Grillet and his writings on photography (which he additionally developed later on in his *Camera Lucida*). According to Barthes, the goal behind representing the "concrete reality" and "insignificant detail" in realist prose is to inform the reader regarding the existence of a thing (or its former existence) and not to endow it with qualities and meaning. The "'representation of reality,' a naked account of 'what is' (or was), thus looks like a resistance to meaning" (14). This realist representation of "the 'real' is assumed not to need any independent justification, that is powerful enough to negate any notion of 'function,' that it can be expressed without there being any need for it to be integrated into a structure, and the *having-been-there* of things is a sufficient reason for speaking of them" (15). Barthes supposes that the notion of *vraisemblable* (verisimilitude) went through a cultural transformation from antiquity to realism. In classical culture the *vraisemblable* is "general and not particular" and "never other than the thinkable … entirely subject to the (public) opinion" (15). In modern realism, however, this intelligible world seems artificially arranged and opposed to a "raw" reality which might be expressed by markers of the "reality" that are restricted to reporting the existence of their referent.

According to this new, modern order of representation, the markers of reality are those signifiers in a narrative whose function is reduced to asserting and confirming the *vraisemblance* of the narrated universe itself. Descriptive details which do not refer to any narrative signified, which could not be integrated into the semiotic structure of the narrative "say … only this: *we are the real*" (16). This is precisely what Barthes calls the "reality effect" (*effet de reel*). From a semiotic vantage point he defines the superfluous details as narrative signifiers which do not have any "signifié" (meaning that they are not integrated into a higher level of signification), but only referents. However, as a final point in his argument, Barthes declares that a referent without "signifié" (or meaning to put it simply) in a narrative structure can only provide a *referential illusion*, because "at the very moment when these details are supposed to denote the reality directly, all that they do, tacitly, is signify it" (16).

In a recent essay examining modern fiction, the neo-Marxist critic and philosopher, Jacques Rancière, objects to Barthes's ideas concerning the function of insignificant details in modernist prose (what Rancière understands in a broad sense of the term, including the nineteenth-century realism). Rancière argues that the examples chosen from Flaubert's novels (in particular the barometer of *Un coeur simple* which, for Barthes, does not possess any social or psychological connotation that demands to be integrated into the narrative as a meaningful totality) are not insignificant at all, are not self-referent, "empty" markers of the verisimilitude, freed from the burden of representing an extra-textual reality. On the contrary, according to Rancière the abundance of the "insignificant" details in the realist novel bear witness to a cultural-political and—first and foremost—sensual emancipation of subaltern population (Rancière, *Le fil* 25–26). Instead of being vehicles of a *reality effect*, "insignificant" details are rather markers of an *equality effect* in that they express "the discovery of an original ability of working-class men and women to get access to forms of experiences they were excluded from until this moment" (Rancière, *Le fil* 20).[2] According to Rancière, excess description is also opposed to the semiotic structure of the narrative as a whole, yet in his interpretation the intrusion of multitudinous details in the novel becomes a sign of the democratization of fiction enacted due to a "redistribution of the forms of the sensible experience" (30).

Rancière's analysis amply demonstrates how relative it is to qualify any detail as "insignificant" in a literary work while simultaneously underscoring the limits to a semiotic conception of the narrative which remains detached from the historic-social context of a work's production or reception. Rancière criticizes Barthes for missing the real political stakes involved in description: "[I]dentify modern literature and its political impact with a purification of the narrative structure, by sweeping out the parasitic images of the real" (30). Yet at this juncture, Rancière reduces Barthes's position mainly to the critical approach of "unmasking" the false nature expressed in his essays of the *Mythologies* and those discussing Brechtian theater in the 1950s. While we can partly attribute this credo regarding the political and critical power of the intellectual work to his analysis of Robbe-Grillet's descriptions, Barthes's position became less articulated on the matter during his structuralist (and post-structuralist) years. Similar to other Barthes texts dating from the late 1960s (such as *The Death of Author*, "From Work to Text," *S/Z*), *The Reality Effect* advocates the autonomy of a textual realm and the liberation of the literary text from all forms of a representative task; the text-reality relationship deployed therein radically inverts the mimetic conception of the literary text according to which textual representations are supposed to be subordinate to an *a priori*, given reality. This liberation of textual signifiers outlines a rather indirect and utopian political program, in which the critique of a bourgeois, capitalist social order's cultural domination carries less of an emphasis, but still emerges in the critique of reading as consumption as well as in Barthes's rejection of the notion of author and that of the work of art as a bourgeois institutions of intellectual property, limiting the freedom of interpretation. While admittedly in a way that is quite different compared to Rancière's, Barthes's critique is also oriented against the concept of narrative as an organized totality; it rather aims the literature and the language in their generality as systems of representation. Barthes claims not only that the textual representations are not homologous or analogous with an extra-textual reality and governed by their own logic and laws, but also suggests—with an epistemological audacity—that the very concept of "reality" is constructed as a linguistic "mirage" in which descriptions of concrete details function as "unreality effects," and consequently as operators for the autonomy of textual signifiers. Obviously such a critical position could not easily be transformed into a political reading tool; the next stages in Barthes's career bear witness to a personal turn during which the issue of the insignificant detail, the *having-been-there* of represented objects and humans, evolves into a melancholic investigation of themes connected to mortality and death.

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[2] "[L]a découverte d'une capacité inédite des hommes et des femmes du peuple à accéder à des formes d'expérience qui leur étaient jusque-là refusées."

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Stopnja ničte pisave in učinek nerealnosti: Roland Barthes o opisu

Ključne besede: naratologija / pripovedna struktura / opis / nepomembne podrobnosti / ideološka kritika / učinek realnosti / kulturna semiotika / Barthes, Roland

Roland Barthes v svojem delu večkrat spregovori o opisu v kontekstu, za katerega se zdi, da je povezan z enako pogosto tematiko, namreč z upiranjem pomenu. Barthes je raziskoval funkcijo opisa v sklopu dveh večjih raziskovalnih področij: fikcijske pripovedi in vizualnih znakov. Da bi izsledil Barthesove teoretsko različne razlage, ki zadevajo funkcijo opisa in prisotnost nepomembnih detajlov v pripovednem besedilu, se v svojem besedilu osredotočam na prvo področje. Najprej analiziram, kako je Barthes v kritičnih razpravah, ki so se v 50. letih 20. stoletja odvijale v zvezi s francoskim *nouveau romanom*, opisu in odvečnim podrobnostim pripisoval ideološko-kritično funkcijo. Zatem se posvetim novi poziciji, ki jo je zavzel opis v Barthesovi strukturalni teoriji naracije. V zadnjem delu prispevka proučujem pojem učinka realnosti, natančneje način, na katerega Barthes preobrazi in redefinira funkcijo navidezno nepomembnih pripovednih detajlov kot sredstva za doseganje avtonomnosti besedilnih označevalcev.

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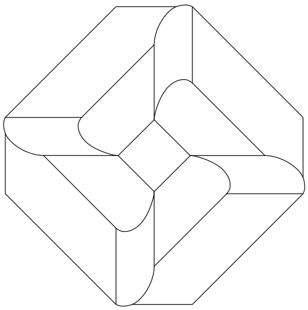

Two Female Images by A. Tennyson: Biblical Keys and Interpretation Facets (the Pre-Raphaelites, K. Balmont, I. Bunin)

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The article examines two female images by A. Tennyson, the Lady of Shalott and Godiva from the eponymous poems, through the prism of biblical and iconographic allusions. The former (Shalott) alludes to the plot and iconography of The Annunciation, the latter (Godiva)—to the motifs of The Old Testament and The Apocalypse. Picturesque paintings by the Pre-Raphaelites, among which were a number of those related to these Tennyson plots, provide even more reassurance with regard to the significance of biblical plots and iconographic canons in the specified Tennyson's works. Sufferings, fatalism, sensuousness, antinomicity, picturesqueness—all this made the Tennyson female images magnetic to Russian Modernist writers, the images which were in harmony with the spirit of the turn of the twentieth century. K. Balmont and I. Bunin in their translations of the Tennyson's poems made their own interpretations of the images of the Lady of Shalott and Godiva, accentuating (and even adding) details and nuances of meanings important for symbolist aesthetics.

Keywords: literature and visual arts / English poetry / Tennyson, Alfred / female characters / Lady Shalott / Lady Godiva / iconography / biblical allusions / Pre-Raphaelites / Russian translations / Balmont, Konstantin / Bunin, Ivan Aleksejevič

Russian literature was always open to the world's influence, but at certain times certain cultures became of increasing interest. The turn of the twentieth century was one of such periods, termed the Silver Age. Distinctive features were the West European cultural realities, literary movements, motifs and images chosen by Russian writers – in the first place by symbolists – to transmit to Russian ground. For example, the aesthetics of the Pre-Raphaelites with their cult of the archaic, close attention to the Middle Ages, to mythology, their aspiration for the synthesis of the arts, their intimate relationship with romanticism, proved to be in exceptional consonance with the symbolists' quest.

The Pre-Raphaelites' work is, in turn, inseparable from the poetry of their elder contemporary, Alfred Lord Tennyson, who captivated Russian minds in the Silver Age on the back of the increasing popularity of Rossetti, Hunt, Millais, Waterhouse. They not only admired Tennyson's poetry but also created a number of paintings inspired by his verses and poems. Tennyson was translated in Russia already during his lifetime (from 1859) but at the turn of the twentieth century he became exceptionally famous thanks to the natural harmony between many of his subjects and motifs and the Silver Age values. The Lady of Shalott and Lady Godiva, two female images in Tennyson's poetry, are the most recognizable for the Russian reader.

At a cursory glance the two characters have little in common. Godiva's story stems from mediaeval chronicles concerned with real, historical individuals – Earl Leofric and his wife; the story of Godiva's legendary naked horse-ride through Coventry (a condition imposed by her husband to lower the citizens' taxes) is most likely fictitious, but it was formed early and developed with time (Donoghue).

The plot of the poem "The Lady of Shalott" concerns a lady doomed to weave to the end of her days and observe the outside world only through a mirror; when she breaks her prohibition by looking directly at handsome Lancelot through her window the curse comes inexorably upon her. Tennyson might seem to have used the Arthurian plot here (which he later reconstructed in his "Idylls of the King"), but on closer inspection it becomes clear that "The Lady of Shalott" story bears little resemblance to the plot-prototype about the unrequited love of Elaine of Astolat for Lancelot (as will be shown later, the Tennyson story is not at all about unrequited love). Besides there is not much similarity between the Tennyson plot and another possible original source – the thirteenth century Italian novella *La Donna di Scalotta* (Potwin 238). In fact it is the author's individuality that prevails in the poem.

It is seemingly the singularity of the authorial interpretation of already existing images that conditioned their deep-seated, not instantly noticeable, affinity in the Tennyson works. Both plots arise from fictitious (The Lady of Shalott) or semi-fictitious (Godiva) times and events. Both characters are impelled to go beyond the bounds of everyday reality (each has its own), making, at the same time, a great sacrifice. For Godiva, it is her modesty, chastity; for the Lady of Shalott, it is life itself. In both cases a heroine's path plays an important role in the plots. The common element in these paths is the duality, the ambivalence of their perception. Figuratively, it is possible to highlight two viewpoints: the one "from outside," the other "from inside." Seen from the first viewpoint—"from outside"—the stories' pictures appear aesthetically attractive and even seductively sensual. The "from inside" perspective is accessible only to the heroines; this viewpoint is tragic, connected with the realization of a special, life-changing mission. Mysticism, mythopoetics, fatalism, sensuousness, antinomies, picturesqueness—all these rendered the images magnetic to Russian Modernist writers.

Before embarking on a review of the translations by Balmont and Bunin it is worth paying attention to a significant subtext of Tennyson's works, a subtext to which the Pre-Raphaelites responded with interest, and with which the Russian poets entered into a dialogue. This is about a fanciful composition of mythological, legendary and biblical allusions in the texts.

In "The Lady of Shalott" such allusions emerge from the specificity of the setting right from the beginning. The depicted scenery is manifestly endless; it breaks the boundaries into Creation:

> Long fields of barley and of rye,
> That *clothe the wold and meet the sky* (Tennyson, *Poems, vol. 1, 1842* 77)

There are two static and isolated spots in this space: the island of Shalott (natural isolation) and Camelot castle (artificial isolation). Both island and castle are multivalent symbols in the mythology and legends of different peoples. The island most often carries a positive connotation (paradise, a refuge for the blessed, shelter from the chaos). It is on an island that Tennyson places the heroine's residence, described as:

> Four gray *walls*, and four gray *towers*,
> Overlook a space of *flowers* (78)

As for Christian symbolism the tower was robustly associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Middle Ages. This association goes back to Solomon's "Song of Songs":

> Thy neck is like the tower of ivory (*American Standard Version,* Song of Sol. 7.4)

Examples can be found in The Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary ("Mystical rose, / *Tower* of David, / *Tower* of ivory, / House of gold"; *The Racolta* 158) as well as in *hortus conclusus*-type iconographic paintings. The same is true for flowers (this symbolism will be looked at later). The castle is an ambiguous symbol that could be associated with a dwelling, fortress, temple and a town. The latter was often depicted as a castle in Christian iconography, but meanings could differ (on the one hand, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and on the other, the fall of Babylon). The two locations are connected by a river. This is another multivalent symbol; let us recall the river Lethe in Greek Mythology, the river of oblivion, the apocalyptic river of life. Tennyson focuses attention on the direction of the river—*from* the island *to* Camelot. This and other mentioned scenery details seem to anticipate upcoming events and provide symbolic "keys" from them.

In addition, there are some conspicuous floral symbols related to the Lady herself. For example, the image of the willow continually accompanies the heroine:

> *Willows* whiten, aspens quiver (Tennyson, *Poems, vol. 1, 1842* 77)
>
> By the margin, *willow*-veil'd (78)
>
> And as the boat-head wound along
> The *willowy* hills and fields among (85)

The willow is traditionally associated with sorrow, death, separation:

> By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
> Upon the *willows* in the midst thereof we hanged up our harps. (Ps. 137)

Shakespeare's Desdemona singing a sorrowful song about a willow is a more recent allusion:

> The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
> Sing all a green *willow;*

Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing *willow*, *willow*, *willow* (Shakespeare 254)

The willow accentuates the exclusiveness of a heroine, her mysteriousness, her moon-like, twilight nature, but also anticipates a sorrowful course of events.

Another floral symbol is the lilies that bloom around the island:
Gazing where the *lilies* blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott. (Tennyson, *Poems, vol. 1, 1842* 77)

As the heroine leaves her work and looks at the outside world not through the mirror, but directly out of the window, the first thing she sees is the *lily*:

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom (83)

Then she sees "the helmet and the plume" (83) of Lancelot. The situation "a lady sees a lily and a handsome youth" alludes to an evangelical event – The Annunciation (or Lady Day) – and first of all to its visual perception through iconography which was influenced to a great extent by Apocrypha and legends. According to the Apocrypha, the Virgin Mary was to *weave* a new veil for the Jerusalem Temple. It was exactly when she was weaving that the Archangel Gabriel saw her as shown, for instance, on many Byzantine images starting from the twelfth century (the Blessed Virgin Mary depicted with a reddish purple thread in her hands while listening to the Archangel Gabriel is a recognizable image).

A certain symbolic tradition of positioning figures, depicting interiors, relating internal and external spaces, was established in religious painting. Thus, the Annunciation scene is placed as a rule in a small enclosed room with a window (another variant is a fenced-in space with an obligatory tree). Outside the window (or the fence) there will be a river, a tree (or trees), some buildings and often a castle – see, for example, paintings by Domenico Beccafumi, Sandro Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci and Rogier van der Weyden. One can notice how similar these elements on the paintings to Tennyson's features. His earlier version of the poem—that appeared in 1833—contains even more details relating to Annunciation iconography. For instance:

> The little isle is all inrailed
> With a *rose-fence*, and overtrailed
> With *roses*: by the marge unhailed (Tennyson, *Poems, 1833* 10)

The rose is a traditional symbol of Our Lady and the theme "Madonna in the rose garden" is among the most popular in religious painting. Or two more examples:

> A *pearlgarland* winds her head:
> She leaneth on a velvet *bed*,
> Fully royally apparellèd,
>   The Lady of Shalott (10)

The pearl headdress is a multivalent symbol accentuating the mythopoetic side of the image: the pearl is linked to femininity, the waters and the moon (one can recall *The Birth of Venus* by Sandro Botticelli, where Venus emerges from the shell as a pearl) and, again, to Our Lady (for example, the pearl headdress rests on the Virgin Mary's head in the artwork by Hubert and Jan van Eyck *Ghent Altarpiece*, by Quentin Matsys *The Virgin and Child with Angels*, in a number of paintings of Madonna by Carlo Crivelli). The image of a bed in the Virgin Mary's room where the Archangel Gabriel sees her is also no less traditional than the rose.

When looking at the Pre-Raphaelites' illustrations, one can notice that there is an interior with mirror (almost indistinguishable from a window) and scenery. As one would expect, the motif of weaving is also present – see, for example, *The Lady of Shalott* by William Holman Hunt or *I Am Half-Sick of Shadows, Said the Lady of Shalott* by John William Waterhouse. Certain details were even accentuated by the Pre-Raphaelites. It is the reddish purple color of the thread that dominates in the paintings of Hunt and Waterhouse (Tennyson refers only to "colours gay"). In fact in *The Lady of Shalott* by Waterhouse (1894) the reddish purple thread in the Lady's hands is in the center of the painting what evokes the most direct visual associations with one of the canons of Annunciation iconography. Some other details related to the Annunciation's and Virgin Mary's symbolism (and missing in the Tennyson poem) were even added by the artists. A sort of fence/enclosure in front of the lady in the Hunt picture brings to mind an enclosure in the religious paintings of "hortus conclusus"—see, for example, *The Little Garden of Paradise* by Upper Rhenish Master. Among other examples are the cherubim's wings and the red/blue color of the Lady's clothes directly associating with the color of the

Virgin Mary's garments. But perhaps it is John Melhuish Strudwick who went furthest in narrowing the distance between the image of the Lady of Shalott and the Virgin Mary – the portrait, interior and, of course, a lily on the floor speak for themselves (see his painting *Elaine, The Lady of Shalott*).

When for the first time the Lady looks at the outside world (to be more accurate, at Lancelot) not through the mirror the curse comes into force. We would risk suggesting that from this point on the Annunciation symbolism changes to Christ symbolism. The curse manifests itself in the following lines:

> Out flew the web and floated wide;
> The mirror crack'd from side to side (Tennyson, *Poems, vol. 1, 1842* 83)

Let us compare it with:

> And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom (Matt. 27.51)

Following this, the Lady meets her doom with resignation and the only thing she does is leave her predestined enclosed space to reveal herself to people. The first edition of the poem (1833) is illustrative in this context – it is in this version that people find a parchment in the hand of the already deceased lady, on which is written:

> "The web was woven curiously
> The charm is broken utterly,
> Draw near and *fear not – this is I*,
> The Lady of Shalott." (Tennyson, *Poems, 1833* 19)

Let us recall that there were words of love to Lancelot on the parchment of the departed Elaine of Astolat. Here we see something completely different. The Lady notifies people that by her death "the charm is broken utterly" (broken, not executed!) and asks them not to fear. Curiously, these lines are open to ambivalent interpretations—the breakage of the charm might relate not only to the Lady but also to all people. The latter becomes plausible also because of another evangelical analogy:

> …Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. (Matt. 14.27)

In other words this story is not about a woman's love for a man, but about a sacrificial atonement, about a virtuous example of going beyond the bounds of external conditionality (though at a high price).

So, from this perspective the meaning of the mysterious Tennyson plot is revealed through biblical and iconographic allusions.

Balmont puts more emphasis on the mystic, "magic" component in which the symbolists were keenly interested. First of all, the title is changed, now it is "The Fairy Shalott." The name of the location transforms into the name of the lady. And "the Lady" herself becomes "the Fairy." Here is a small, but illustrative deviation from the original:

TENNYSON	BALMONT
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,	Как в этот миг сверкал простор
Moves over still Shalott.	Пред стихнувшей Шалот.[1]
(Tennyson, *Poems, vol. 1, 1842* 82)	[*Over calmed Shalott*] (Balmont 143)

The feminine Russian inflection -ей makes it evident that "Shalott" is female and therefore in this context a woman.

And it is not the only example. The expressions "печалилась Шалот" (*Shalott experienced sadness*) (Balmont 142) and "воскликнула Шалот" (*Shalott exclaimed*) (143) unequivocally prove Balmont's translational liberty. Tennyson's point is different—his heroine is in fact depicted as an *object* of magic charms and not as their *possessor*.

Here is another minor, but semantically illustrative, translator's deviation:

TENNYSON	BALMONT
She saw the water-lily bloom,	В окно увидел жадный взор
She saw the helmet and the plume,	Купавы [*globeflowers*], шлем [*helmet*],
	коня [*horse*], простор [*the vast*],
She look'd down to Camelot.	Вдали зубчатый Камелот.[2]
(Tennyson, *Poems, vol. 1, 1842* 83)	(Balmont 143)

As one can see, Balmont calls "the water-lily" "the globeflower." Such an appellation will lead the Russian reader away from the iconographic "lily" to the literary ("The Snow Maiden" by Ostrovsky) and – further on – mythological sphere. Besides, the expanded enumeration (globeflowers, helmet, horse, open space) distorts Tennyson's meaningful focus.

Balmont's translation is more laconic than Tennyson's original. For example, the description of Lancelot is stripped of grand "cosmic" images like "branch of stars," "golden Galaxy," "starry clusters bright." However there is one thing that Balmont accentuates. It is a dream motif, the motif that was important for the symbolists. In the translation it is present even where Tennyson does not have it. The number of examples for such a relatively short text is quite impressive:

TENNYSON	BALMONT
And by the moon the reaper weary, Piling sheaves in uplands airy, Listening, whispers “‘Tis the fairy Lady of Shalott.” (Tennyson, *Poems, vol. 1, 1842* 79)	И жнец усталый, при луне, Снопы вздымая к вышине, Тихонько шепчет, **как во сне**: – [*Whispers quietly,* ***as if in a dream:*** *–*] “Волшебница Шалот!”[3] (Balmont 141)
***	***
And moving thro’ a mirror clear That hangs before her all the year, Shadows of the world appear. (79–80)	Лишь видит в зеркало она Виденья мира, **тени сна**[4] [... ***shadows of a dream***] (141)
***	***
Or when the moon was overhead, Came two young lovers lately wed (81)	Когда же, лунных снов полна, [*When full of* ***moon dreams***,] Чета влюблённых шла, нежна[5] (142)
***	***
Like some bold seer in a trance (84)	И, как провидец, **в блеске сна**,[6] [... ***in the splendor of a dream***] (144)
***	***
And her eyes were darken’d wholly, Turn’d to tower’d Camelot (85)	И вот затмился взор очей, Глядя на сонный Камелот.[7] [*Looking at* ***dream-girt Camelot.***] (144)

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[1] Literal (non-poetic) English translation of the whole extract: “As the vast glared at this instant / Over calmed Shalott.”

[2] Literal (non-poetic) English translation of the whole extract: “The gaze saw in the window / The globeflowers, the helmet, the horse, the vast, / Far away toothed Camelot.”

[3] Literal (non-poetic) English translation of the whole extract: “And by the moon the reaper weary, / Raising sheaves high into the air / Whispers quietly, as if in a dream / ‘The fairy Shalott!’”

[4] Literal (non-poetic) English translation of the whole extract: “She sees in the mirror nothing but / Visions of the world, shadows of a dream.”

[5] Literal (non-poetic) English translation of the whole extract: “When full of moon dreams, / A loving couple walked, in tenderness.”

[6] Literal (non-poetic) English translation of the whole extract: “And as a seer in the splendor of a dream.”

[7] Literal (non-poetic) English translation of the whole extract: “And her eyes were darkened, / Looking at dream-girt Camelot.”

It is rather obvious that details related to mysticism and the coexistence-contraposition of two worlds—the sensuous and the ultramundane—were the highest priority for the Symbolist Balmont.

Let us turn now to the translation of Godiva by Bunin. The name of the heroine could serve as a starting point for an analysis of the poem. According to Daniel Donoghue in his book *Lady Godiva: A Literary History of the Legend*, the Old English form of the name (Godgifu) fell out of fashion in the twelfth century (Donoghue 3); the name Godiva was finally fixed in the fifteenth century and, seemingly, at the same time a folk etymological variant (Goode Eve) appeared (3). Not only phonetic resemblance but also Godiva's nudity gave grounds for associating her with the Foremother of humanity. But as for the epithet "good": as is known the Fall divided the lives of the first people, Adam and Eve, into two parts: to the extent that originally their nudity was sinless and virtuous, after the Fall everything changed. The violation of God's commandment had far-reaching repercussions too—not only our first parents but also all humanity found themselves in a tragic situation. However it was Eve who disobeyed first. So what is Godiva like? We would risk suggesting that again we deal with an allusion to the biblical story.

"Goode Eve" or Godiva shows absolute humility facing the hardship that befell her. It is worth recalling here the two viewpoints: the one "from outside" and the other "from inside." On the one hand, Godiva's nudity is not at all sinless as the action takes place not in the pastures of Heaven; moreover, she is sensual and tempting for a gaze "from outside." It is worth noting that Godiva becomes a sort of seductive object consciously. Besides, some picturesque details allude to a biblical context, namely to the image of the whore of Babylon from the Apocalypse, who is described as sitting upon a "scarlet coloured beast" (Rev. 17.3) and arrayed "in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold" (Rev. 17.4) Let us compare: the palfrey Godiva rides is "trapt / In purple blazon'd with armorial gold" (Tennyson, *Poems, vol. 2, 1842* 114) (John Collier's *Lady Godiva* is of assistance for visual perception of this similarity). On the other hand Godiva is "closed on with chastity" (114) and the inner essence of her ride is self-sacrifice and self-overcoming.

The ambivalence is also present in her loose hair—"And shower'd the rippled ringlets to her knee" (114)—which, paradoxically though justifiably in her situation, is seen not as a sign of dissoluteness (in Russian: "loose"—"распущенный"; "dissoluteness"—"распущенность"), but, on the contrary, as a sign of modesty (in Russian "modesty" [скромность] and "cover" [скрывать] are cognates).

Godiva goes along a path opposite to that of Eve. If Eve is chaste at first and after the Fall, infected by sin, passes this "deadly virus" to all future generations, Godiva, the other way round, moves from darkness (certainly, not the darkness of sin, but that of fear of the role she took on). On her path Godiva symbolically moves away from the power of the dark side. Depicting architectural elements "watching" Godiva, Tennyson mentions such lifeless creatures as:

> The little wide-mouth'd heads upon the spout
> Had cunning eyes to see… (114)

These are gargoyles, architectural details resembling some demonic characters; their symbolism is undoubtedly important. Eventually Godiva reaches light, as is conveyed to us in a picturesquely symbolical form:

> Not less thro' all bore up, till, last, she saw
> The white-flower'd elder-thicket from the field
> Gleam thro' the Gothic archway in the wall.
> Then she rode back… (115)

In the end Godiva appears crowned, which can be perceived rather as the attainment of moral excellence than the strengthening of her social status.

So Godiva makes her symbolic way from the fear of disgrace to light and the removal of an intolerable burden from people's shoulders, thus, becoming Good Eve or Anti-Eve (because Eve's way is the ontological opposite: she, on the contrary, puts an intolerable burden on people).

In fact, the very name Eve is not featured in the Tennyson poem and the phonetic resemblance of the names is not played with. Therefore the use of the name Eve in the translation by Bunin draws attention:

> TENNYSON
> Then she rode forth, clothed on with chastity… (115)
>
> BUNIN
> На нем она пустилась в путь – **как Ева**, [*She rode the horse forth – **as Eve,***]
> **Как гений целомудрия**… [***As chastity's angel…***] (Bunin 127)

Alluding to the biblical story, Bunin does not put an emphasis on the difference between Godiva's and Eve's paths; the name Eve goes alongside the "chastity's angel." That is to say, Bunin's Godiva is analogized with Eve before the Fall. The second expression is another translational liberty of the poet and is actually a very vivid image. For the Russian reader, it naturally evokes the association with Pushkin's "beauty's angel pure and clear." In other words, having been transferred to a "different culture" the image acquires national recognizability. But conversely, the image of gargoyles, including both a picturesque level (medieval architecture) and a symbolic one (biblical subtext) was not accentuated. So instead of "The little wide-mouth'd heads upon the spout / Had cunning eyes to see" (Tennyson, *Poems, vol. 2, 1842* 114) Bunin has "Разинув пасть, лукаво вслед за нею / Косился желоб" (*With jaws agape and squinting eyes the spout slyly watched her go*) (Bunin 127). This image is not fully transparent for the Russian reader (due to pragmatics – the difference between Russian and West European architecture).

So, the female images created by Tennyson incorporate a multitude of traditions and allusions, having interpreted biblical stories in a particular but recognizable way, having fancifully combined the past and the contemporary, the historical and the fictitious, the ethical and the aesthetic. And having been "illuminated" by the Pre-Raphaelites' paintings they became especially attractive to Russian Modernists. That is why the choice of Balmont and Bunin was in no way accidental. The poems may seem to have been translated close to the original … then, it is all the more interesting to spot not immediately conspicuous discrepancies that offer an opportunity to muse anew on the uniqueness of each epoch, differences and similarities of national cultures and individual writing styles.

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Dve ženski podobi A. Tennysona: biblijski ključi in vidiki interpretacije (predrafaeliti, K. Balmont, I. Bunin)

Ključne besede: literatura in likovna umetnost / angleška poezija / Tennyson, Alfred / ženski liki / Gospa z gradu Shalott / Godiva / ikonografija / biblijske aluzije / prerafaeliti / prevodi v ruščino / Balmont, Konstantin / Bunin, Ivan Aleksejevič

Prispevek preučuje dve ženski podobi A. Tennysona, in sicer Lady Shalott in Godivo iz istoimenskih pesmi, skozi prizmo biblijskih in ikonografskih aluzij. Prva (Shalott) aludira na zgodbo in ikonografijo Marijinega oznanjenja, druga (Godiva) pa na motive iz stare zaveze in Razodetja. Slikovita dela prerafaelitov, med katerimi se mnoga sklicujejo na Tennysonove motive, dodatno potrjujejo pomen biblijskih zgodb in ikonografskih kanonov v omenjenih Tennysonovih delih. Trpljenje, fatalizem, čutnost, antinomija, slikovitost – zaradi vseh teh lastnosti so bile Tennysonove podobe žensk, ki so zelo privlačile ruske modernistične pisce, v harmoniji z duhom časa na prehodu iz devetnajstega v dvajseto stoletje. K. Balmont in I. Bunin sta v svojih prevodih Tennysonovih pesmi po svoje interpretirala podobe Lady Shalott in Godive, tako da sta poudarjala (celo dodajala) podrobnosti in pomenske odtenke, pomembne za simbolistično estetiko.

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UDK 821.111.09-1Tennyson A.

On the Phenomenon of Biliterariness (Based on the Experience of Studies of South Slavic Literatures)

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Russian Slavic scholars have focused on issues of studying and interpreting South Slavic Literatures for a long time. A recent landmark in the field, the Lexicon of South Slavic Literatures *presents not only prominent Yugoslav writers but unveils their literary interconnections. Among other things, a feature of South Slavic literary context is a phenomenon of biliterariness of a number of writers, i.e. their affiliation with literary life of several national literatures. This phenomenon has deep historical, literary, ethnic, lingual, and religious roots. In certain periods, mostly under the influence of extraliterary conditions, it triggers heated debates. For example, the Soviet Union collapse provoked polemics over the attitude of Russian writing authors (Aitmatov, Bykov) representing national literatures towards Russian literature. While identifying the specificity of works authored by writers whose literary activity can be affiliated with two literatures, it should be taken into account that their biliterariness may be diachronic, i.e. pertaining to different periods, or synchronic, i.e. manifesting itself throughout the development of two literatures simultaneously. Scholars studying multinational contexts of any kind are facing a challenge of developing key criteria to identify national dominant.*

Keywords: South Slavic literatures / national identity / multiculturalism / bilingualism / biliterariness

Russian Slavic scholars have focused on issues of studying and interpreting South Slavic Literatures for a long time. One of the milestones of the recent years was the publication of the *Lexicon of South Slavic Literatures* (2012), in which the literary works of Bosnian and Herzegovinian, Macedonian, Serbian, Slovenian, Croatian, and Montenegrin writers for the first time became "an independent subject of scientific research as both a distinct literary community and an integral part of the pan-European context" (*Leksikon* 7).[1]

A team of contributors of the *Lexicon* headed by the founder of the academic school of Literary Southern Slavic Studies, Professor Galina Ilyina (1930–2018) faced the problem how to comprehensively survey the existing types of inter-Slavic relations. The problem persists until the present, when post-Yugoslav nation-states seek to revitalize their national heritage, promote their literary languages, and revise national canons after gaining independence.

With regard to scholarly goals, there are two types of articles covering Yugoslav subject matter in the *Lexicon* literary-historical outlines and portraits of writers. Ten review articles based on the material studied during the research project present the main stages of literary development: folklore, medieval literature, national awakening, romanticism, realism, Art Nouveau (the Modern), avant-garde, socialist literature, (social or new) realism, modernism and postmodernism. The structure of these articles is based on an integral comparative-typological approach to national literatures as distinct literary communities that analyses their artistic process and at the same time shows the degree of convergence and divergence among them, their deep similarity and the logic of individual national movements, as well as their interaction with the European literary environment while taking into account the differences and asynchrony in their development. The "portraits of a writer" specify and deepen the insight into relationship between the general and the nationally specific, the universal and the local covered by review chapters. Instead of attempting to provide quantitative equality of writers included in the *Lexicon*, the contributors rather focused on the work of writers considered to be the most significant and relevant for their respective national literatures.

A crucial problem the research team faced in the course of the project is the phenomenon of biliterariness, i.e. involvement of a single writer into the literary life of several national literatures. This phenomenon has deep historical, literary, ethnic, lingual, and confessional roots. In certain periods, mostly under the influence of extraliterary conditions, it erupts and triggers heated debates. For example, the collapse of the

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[1] The study was conducted within the framework of the project "Language and Culture in Polyethnic and Multi-Confessional Communities of South-Eastern Europe: Interdisciplinary Research" (Institute of Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences), included in the program of basic research 2018–2020 of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences "Cultural and Complex Societies: Understanding and Management." All translations from non-English sources are mine.

Soviet Union provoked polemics over the attitude of Russian writing authors (Aitmatov, Bykov) representing national literatures towards Russian literature.

Former Yugoslavia has a specific historical background. Since the ancient times, the Yugoslav lands have been populated by ethnically related peoples speaking closely related languages, but their historical development was affected by divergent social, political, religious (for instance the Great Schism of 1054) and cultural factors. The relations between South Slavs were further complicated because they belonged to different state formations, which were often at war with each other. Some of them fell and spent centuries under Austrian rule, others—under the Ottoman Empire. All this conditioned the structure of the emerging cultural context of the region and the system of internal relations within it. The twentieth century, with its two world wars, civil war, revolutionary transformations, Yugoslav Wars and breakup of Yugoslavia resulted for the Yugoslav peoples in multiple changes of political order, ruling ideologies, and relations between nations. Only towards the end of the twentieth century and after the Yugoslav wars, Yugoslav republics became independent nation-states. The political and social calamities overwhelming the country over the course of a century had a direct impact on the inter-literary relations between South Slavic communities and on centripetal and centrifugal tendencies within their shared cultural space. Since the transitions between periods of literary development were marked by political turmoils, which caused fatal ruptures in social and artistic consciousness, the arts—literature above all—took upon itself the mission to preserve national identity, national traditions, and cultural continuity.

In 1918, conditions were ripe for the formation of a multinational literary context. For the first time, the nations composing the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (with the exclusion of Slovenians and Croats of Italy and Austria) found themselves within the same state system in which the majority of the population had practically no need for a lingua franca. Under such conditions, a piece of art produced within one literature could become a part of the literary context of another. Writers, artists, musicians, and theatre people no longer needed to cross state borders, but instead they could freely switch between and rapidly adapt to various cultural frames. The possibility of direct contacts, participation in joint literary and artistic events, creative associations and publications increased. However, even though Yugoslav nations were ethnically related, they had developed in different historical conditions, religions, and cultural traditions, which predetermined their unique identities, artistic expressions and mentalities. The existing communities were divided not only on the grounds of confessional differences, but also aesthetic values. Several cultural streams thus collided on the territory of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. On the one hand, the predominantly Catholic lands (Croatia, Slovenia, Vojvodina) were formed in the cultural sphere of the Latin West. They experienced considerable Latin, Italian, and later Austro-German influences. On the other hand, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia were Orthodox lands gravitating towards Byzantium, and later towards Russia and its culture; moreover, Macedonia had close ties with Bulgarian culture. The third Yugoslav component had been under the Ottoman and, more broadly, the Oriental influence. Most intensively it affected Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to a lesser extent Serbs, Montenegrins, and Macedonians, who succeeded to preserve the Orthodox fundamentals of their culture and literature. The historically differentiated cultural streams in Yugoslavia oscillated between centripetal, complementary, and cumulative forces on the one hand, and centrifugal, differentiating forces aimed at assertion of national rights against the unitary tendency of "integral Yugoslavism" on the other hand. The correlation between these forces was very unstable as they succeeded each other on a dominant position, which led the whole system to the verge of collapse or significant changes in its nature.

The situation was similar in the second, Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia with its single ideological system. There, the role of cultural contacts, both at personal level and between republics, increased to an even greater extent. The pan-Yugoslav cultural space existed not only as a cover for official policy. Its vitality was evident manifesting itself in international meetings and festivals held, books and joint journals published. This led to convergence, overlapping, and, in certain cases, even to interlocking of various literary phenomena. The integration process took different forms. One of them may be termed "biliterariness" (bi-literary existence). This term was proposed by the Slovak literary theorist and comparatist Dionýz Ďurišin, who noted that "biliterary writers exist in each literature in a different way corresponding to their place and significance in given literature" (Ďurišin 249).

However, efforts at ideological and cultural unification under the slogan "Brotherhood and Unity" have been challenged by the resurgence of the concept of national individuality since the late 1960s. Fiction literature and the humanities played a considerable, if not the leading, role in the introduction of this concept into the public consciousness. This process spread throughout almost all the cultures of Yugoslavia. Starting from the 1970s, many writers whose national literary affiliation was ambiguous began to be "divided" between national literatures. Instead of fading over the years, this trend even accelerated in the post-Yugoslav successor states.

Recent intensification and expansion of literary research formats such as histories of national literature, literary encyclopedias, lexicons, and bio-bibliographical dictionaries has called for urgent development of appropriate methodology. Resorting to such publications is associated not only with the necessity to strengthen the national identity of the peoples, who have recently gained their statehood, but just as much with the globalization process and the concomitant danger of universal cultural uniformity.

While identifying individualities of work of writers whose literary activity can be affiliated with two national literatures, it should be taken into account that their biliterariness can be diachronic, i.e. pertaining to different periods (Stanko Vraz, Ivo Andrić, Meša Selimović), or synchronic, i.e. manifesting itself throughout the development of two literatures simultaneously (Petar P. Njegoš, Hasan Kikić, Radovan Zogović, Vladan Desnica). Even though the role and significance of a given writer for two literatures is recognized, in certain cases (especially when it comes to national literature history textbooks or literary encyclopedias) it is necessary to ascertain the national dominants of their work, with full understanding that simplifications are inevitable. All scholars involved in studies of multinational contexts of any kind face the challenge of defining key criteria to identify this dominant. Example can be found in experience of the editorial board of the bio-bibliographical dictionary *Russian Writers of the Twentieth Century*, who had to address the issue of whether bilingual writers working in the space of the Russian language and literature, such as Gennady Aygi, Vasil Bykov, Chinghiz Aitmatov, were part of the corpus of Russian literature. In the preface to the dictionary, Professor Pyetr Nikolayev wrote:

> Many of their texts were created in Russian; their contribution to Russian literature and Russian culture in general is very significant. But the main source of their creativity lies in the national spiritual elements: Chuvash, Belarusian, Kyrgyz, etc. As a general rule, their native language was the one that they began to write in, and it was the life of their national homelands that was the subject of their narration. Therefore, in the context of modern art, they represent, first and foremost, their national literatures. The examples of Vladimir Nabokov and Iosif Brodsky do not refute this statement: the core fundamentals of their work are within the specifically Russian artistic phenomena. (Nikolaev 6)

The question arises what features should be considered as markers of writer's affiliation with a certain literature. Should these be permanent residence in the country, involvement in literary life, membership in the Writers' Union, cooperation with and publications in periodicals, personal opinion? For example, the reason for Ivo Andrić to be included in the *Lexicon of Croatian Literature* in 1998 was his commitment to "the language, stylistic, thematic, and philosophical components of Croatian heritage" despite him "switching to Serbian and entering Serbian literary life" (*Leksikon Hrvatske književnosti* 13). Any such features may bear great significance in a particular case, but in our opinion, no single criterion can be considered self-sufficient when it comes to revealing the national literary dominant of the writer's work. It is only a complex of all or several of them creating a coordinate system in their interdependence that allows to affiliate the writer's work with one or another national literature, which, however, does not anyhow diminish his role (if there is any) in other literature. As a result, the key features of national literary affiliation defined by the authors of the *Lexicon* are the following:

1. Language. In the South Slavs' case, the situation is complicated by the fact that for South Slavic languages this component is not a constant, but a variable, since there are actual lexical, phonetic and stylistic distinctions, which begin to take on great importance in certain historical conditions, as we can already witness in the SFRY successor states. As noted by Nikita Tolstoy, these distinctions are largely caused by the fact that literary languages and literatures of the South Slavic peoples were formed at different speeds and in different bilingual situations. In case of Serbs and Montenegrins, bilingualism was homogeneous: Paleoslavic (Old Church Slavonic) and Serbian. Bilingualism of Croats and Slovenians had heterogeneous nature: Latin/Italian/German and Croatian/Slovenian. Hungarian-Croatian bilingualism was also present among Croats (Tolstoy 126). For the literary language of Bosnian Muslims, the existence of literature written in three oriental languages (Turkish, Arabic, and Persian) and its transition to the national language through Arabic alphabet did not pass without a trace. All these factors, to a greater or lesser extent, shaped the perception of their language in relation to other South Slavic languages at different stages of development.

2. Place of birth; ethnic and religious environment of upbringing, education, and identity building; the role of folk art in the author's ethical and aesthetic world perception.

3. Incorporation into the literary environment, both external (participation in elective bodies, literary organizations, periodicals) and

internal (participation in or association with literary groups, movements, certain aesthetic norms).

4. National (and sometimes literary) self-identification. This feature can be construed as defining. Nevertheless, it must be understood that, however important this factor is, the subjective decision of a writer is bound to be affected by extraliterary factors when it comes to authoritarian and all the more totalitarian regimes. Also, the reasons that carry weight can be strictly personal with no relation to literature.

5. With all due regard for the undoubtful importance of the features mentioned above, it is a person's mentality, in formation of which the above factors had a hand, that we consider the most significant constant. It manifests itself in themes and literary forms of the work, its connection with literary traditions, in regional and ethnic features regardless of the writer's place of residence and sometimes even of his literary self-identification.

Here are three examples:

Ivo Andrić (1892–1975) was born in Bosnia to a Catholic family, spent his childhood and school years there, and received his higher education in Zagreb, Vienna, and Krakow. The publication of the anthology *Croatian Young Lyrics* (1914) in Zagreb marked the beginning of his literary activity, and he became a member of the Croatian Writers' Society. His first books were written during his imprisonment for participation in the anti-Austrian movement during the First World War and published in Zagreb in 1918 and 1920. As the War ended, Andrić being an active advocate for Yugoslavism moved to Belgrade, entered the diplomatic service, and got actively involved in the literary life of the capital. In 1961, he received the Nobel Prize. There are three literatures laying claim to this writer this day. At the beginning of his literary career, Andrić can be considered as a Croatian writer through the lens of the type of his creative writing, its stylistic and linguistic features, aesthetic proximity to Expressionism widespread in Croatia at the time. It is needless to say that this experience had a lasting impact on him. Then he became a Serbian writer, one of those determining the development of Serbian literature and not just that, which does not contradict his original affiliation with Croatian literature. The influence of Andrić's literary work is felt in the works of many writers of other South Slavic literatures. The exotic world of Bosnia became for him a model of human existence, but, having excellent knowledge of the material itself, he described it from the perspective of a person of different, Christian, European culture and world perception. In Andrić's mind, this world was interesting not only and not so much in itself, but rather as a prototype of a human community in the context of coexistence of people and nations with different worldviews.

Meša Selimović (1910–1982) was born into a dynasty of Bosnian beys. He proclaimed himself a Serbian writer, remaining a representative of Bosnian culture. The world of the novels *Death and the Dervish* and *The Fortress* that brought him fame is the world of Muslim Bosnia, its psychology, ethics, domestic culture brought to light through the eyes of a Muslim (not from a religious but ethnic point of view), i.e. described by him from within. This, however, does not in any way exclude that Selimović being a writer of the second half of the twentieth century was gravitating towards the philosophical model of Existentialism. He was the one credited with transforming the genre structure of the novel, which had an immensely beneficial impact on the development of both Serbian and Bosnian literatures.

Mak Dizdar (1917–1971), like Selimović, was descended from an old Muslim family. Permanently residing in Sarajevo and participating in the literary and social life of Bosnia and Herzegovina, he, nevertheless, chose to define himself as a Croatian writer. With due respect to this decision made by Dizdar (apparently, not without a good reason), while studying his work, one comes to the conclusion that all the imagery of the artistic world of his poetry is deeply rooted in the traditions of the old and new Bosnian Muslim literature. As it was noted by the authors, who included an article about Dizdar in the *Lexicon of Croatian Literature*, preserving language purity and beauty of its archaic nature as the pivots of tradition, the poet showed how the culture of his native land "with its own language and civilizational context did not lose its continuity after the Turkish conquest, when Bosnian kings and magnates had passed into oblivion" (*Leksikon Hrvatske književnosti* 68). In their concluding sentence, the authors of the article drew a remarkable inference: "The indisputable place of Dizdar in Croatian anthologies does not exclude that, in the widest sense of the word, his work overall contributed to the emancipation of Muslim Bosniaks" (ibid. 69). While the significance of the poet for Croatian literature cannot be denied, it seems impossible to exclude him from Bosniak literature. Perhaps there was no one in the twentieth century who expressed the spirit of Muslim Bosnia and its evolution better than Dizdar. Slobodan Prosperov Novak, a contemporary historian of Croatian literature, has concluded that "after the death of the poet, he comfortably positioned himself in two literatures simultaneously" (Prosperov Novak 168).

The same is true with regard to the literary works of Montenegrins Mihailo Lalić (1914–1993) and Radovan Zogović (1907–1986), who, despite living full-time in Belgrade and taking an active part in its literary life after the Second World War, never broke ties with their homeland. The artistic world of their works is also tightly bound to it, not just in terms of themes but also mentality. Their characters have clearly depicted national features; even the style of the works reflects the Montenegrin imagery based on the folk concepts of nature, man, and their interrelationship developed under special historical conditions. Both of them draw heavily on folk art. Both called themselves Montenegrin Yugoslav writers, although some literary scholars affiliate them only with Serbian literature. Meanwhile, the definiteness of literary affiliation does not at all exclude their recognition of the reliance on the richer literary traditions of Serbian literature and their creative contribution to the enrichment of two literatures.

Applying flexible and non-dogmatic scholarly criteria presented above may help to regard biliterariness of certain writers as less controversial and even painful (for national literatures).

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O fenomenu biliterarnosti (na podlagi izkušenj študij južnoslovanskih književnosti)

Ključne besede: južnoslovanske književnosti / nacionalna identiteta / multikulturnost / dvojezičnost / dvoliterarnost

Težave pri študiju in interpretaciji jugoslovanskih književnosti so že dolgo v središču pozornosti ruskih raziskovalcev. Prelomna izdaja zadnjih let je *Leksikon južnoslovanskih književnosti*, ki predstavlja ne samo ugledne jugoslovanske pisatelje, temveč tudi kvalitativno nove medsebojne literarne povezave. Ena izmed značilnosti jugoslovanskega literarnega konteksta je fenomen biliterarnosti pisateljev, tj. njihova povezanost z literarnim življenjem več nacionalnih književnosti. Ta pojav ima globoke zgodovinske, literarne, etnične, jezikovne in konfesionalne korenine. V določenih obdobjih, večinoma pod vplivom zunanjih pogojev, pride na površje in postane predmet vročih razprav. Na primer, razpad Sovjetske zveze je spodbudil polemiko o razmerju predstavnikov nacionalnih književnih pisav v ruskem jeziku do ruske književnosti. Pri ugotavljanju značilnosti dela pisateljev, katerih literarna dejavnost je lahko povezana z dvema literaturama, je treba upoštevati, da je njihova biliterarnost lahko diahrona, se nanaša na različna obdobja, ali sinhrona, tako da se manifestira v celotnem razvoju dveh literatur hkrati. Vsi literarni zgodovinarji, ki se ukvarjajo s študijami o večnacionalnih literarnih kontekstih, se soočajo z izzivom razvijanja ključnih meril za opredelitev nacionalne dominante biliterarnih pisateljev.

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Metapoetics in Norbert Gstrein's Novel *The Years to Come* (*Die kommenden Jahre*)

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This article comments on the metapoetic dynamics of the narrative in the novel of the contemporary Austrian writer Norbert Gstrein, The Years to Come (Die kommenden Jahre, *2018) aiming at a more profound understanding of Gstrein's poetics. We first try to define the term metapoetics drawing on the relatively scarce body of scholarship on the topic and relying primarily on Matthias Freise's definition. This is followed by a review of the work of Norbert Gstrein, with a special emphasis on the questions of his poetics raised previously both in his novels and essays. The central part of the paper devoted to the interpretation of the novel analyzes the most prominent instances of metapoetics in the novel: the motto at the beginning, the symbolism of glaciers, the relationship between irony and pathetics suitable to reveal the truth, the central character of the authoress, her literary evening, the insertion of two different versions of chapter 13, as well as other books mentioned in the novel. In conclusion, we summarize the possible answers given by the novel to the questions of poetics the narrative implicitly raises and show how the metapoetic level of the text influences the creation of the meaning of the text.*

Keywords: Austrian literature / Gstrein, Norbert: *The Years to Come* / narrative structure / metapoetics

This article aims to highlight the metapoetic aspects of the novel *The Years to Come* by the contemporary Austrian writer Norbert Gstrein published by the German publishing house Hanser in February, 2018, with a view to understand Gstrein's poetics more thoroughly. Bearing in mind the previous literary tradition, in his earlier novels, Gstrein touches upon the issue of literary art, both explicitly and implicitly, first of all the (im)possibility of objective narration, while in his latest novel he focuses on the role of literature and the position of a writer in contemporary society. We will use literary interpretation to describe Gstrein's implicit poetic expression identified in the text of the novel, and show how it participates in the formation of multilayered semantic structures which transcend the unilateral meanings of the individual layers of a literary work. First of all, we will try to define the term metapoetics in relation to the existing body of theory which is not large, despite the tendency of authors to comment on art and literature implicitly in their works, i.e., in an artistic form that has been present in literary and art history since the times of ancient Greek literature at the latest since Aristophanes.[1]

Metapoetics

In this article, the term metapoetics is used to designate the specificity of a literary text to refer to both its contemporary cultural context, and back to itself as a poetic text. In the broadest sense, the term is often identified with Jakobson's "poetic function" (1960), while in German literary and theoretical tradition it is related to Schlegel's definition of modern poetry as transcendental (Schlegel fr. 238). The prefix "meta" indicates that this is a reflexive, that is, a self-reflexive phenomenon. A more widespread term, often used in a related sense, is metafiction. It denotes a set of self-referential literary procedures by which the author or narrator draws the reader's attention to the fictionality of a text, thus problematizing the relationship between reality and fiction.[2] In this text, however, we will opt for the concept of metapoetics, since the subject of our study are primarily the narrator's and the characters' drawing statements expressing the author's attitude in relation to the key issues of poetics in general, which is why his literary text becomes a poetic commentary, offering answers to the questions about the origin and nature of poetry, its effect and power, its social role and individual knowledge, the position of an artist in society and the world in general. The text becomes a manifesto, analysis or critique, which further enhances its importance for study.

The most common is the distinction between implicit and explicit metapoetics, and Matthias Freise distinguishes also between thematic and structural metapoetics depending on whether a work of art, its production and reception, form and literary practices become the subject of a text—either directly or symbolically or metaphorically—or a text by its form refers back to itself as a poetic creation, disclosing its own construction (4–5). Depending on the questions the text aims to answer, Freise further distinguishes between historical, technical, aesthetical-philosophical, and cultural metapoetics. In historical metapoetics, an artist situates himself/herself or a text within a social, economic, political or psychological situation; technical metapoetics focuses on the adherence to or violation of stylistic tendencies, the use of standard or innovative literary procedures, and the ways of the formation of a text; aesthetical-philosophical metapoetics deals with the questions of philosophical aesthetics, perceiving art as a human activity, the purposefulness or superfluity of art, the ludic character of art, inspiration understood in a metaphysical way, etc. In cultural metapoetics, the question of the belonging to a certain epoch becomes central pointing out the relationship between different procedures and different images of the world in a text and its axiology, the creation of meaning and the perception of art as a search for meaning viewed in a diachronic context under changed cultural conditions (3).

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[1] In addition to Freise, on whose definitions we rely in this article, other authors also tried to systematically define the concept of metapoetics: see Steiner; Müller-Zettelmann; and Pott.

[2] For a systematic overview of the concept of metafiction, see Waugh, and on metafiction in the twentieth-century American novel, see Radonjić.

These individual metapoetic aspects of a literary text are not mutually exclusive; only some of them can be identified as characteristic for the texts of certain cultural epochs, while others are completely absent. Thus, thematic metapoetics can be identified in realistic movements that emphasize the referentiality of the sign, while structural metapoetics is more pronounced in avant-garde movements that emphasize the difference between text and the world, that is, the self-referentiality of the sign. In epochs and movements that insist on either the compatibility of the sign and the reference world or on their incompatibility, the metapoetic expression is twofold and is revealed both on the thematic and structural levels. Freise illustrates such metapoetics by Lermontov's poetry (7–8) and in this article, we will discuss it within a postmodernist narrative—a novel of the contemporary German author Norbert Gstrein.

Gstrein's works

With his new novel, Norbert Gstrein confirms his reputation as a master of "profound narrative art" (Neubert 12) multi-layered, obscured levels of meaning, flawless and impeccable style, and complex and indirect linguistic expression.[3] Gstrein earned this reputation after publishing his first novel *Anyone* (*Einer*, 1988), which soon became the subject of a large number of interpretations due to the author's bold wordplay and language skepticism, as well as the audacious poetic questioning of the scope of narration.[4] In this novel, Gstrein discusses life in his native Tyrol, which he will continue to do in the subsequent works from the earliest period of his writing: the short story *The Next Day* (*Anderntags*, 1989), the novel *The Registry* (*Das Register*, 1992), the novella O_2 (O_2, 1993) and *Kommerzialrat*, 1995, which are often labelled as "Antiheimatroman" (anti-homeland or anti-regionalist novels) in the style of Thomas Bernhard. Gstrein writes about the "Austrian soul and soullessness" (Gstrein, *Das Register* 90) intertwining frame and embedded stories, hastily changing perspectives and narrators, juxtaposing scenes of nature and "civilization," and demonstrating the ultimate inability of the terms and concepts of the codified language to directly express the truth about the individual and the world (cf. Knežević, "Knjiga").

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[3] Unless otherwise stated, the titles of Gstrein's works, and quotations from his texts originally published in German are translated into Serbian by the author and from Serbian into English by Vesna Bratić.

The novel *The English Years* (*Die englischen Jahre*, 1999) marks a new stage in Gstrein's work characterized by two constants: their plots unfold in conflict-ridden places in different parts of the world at different times: starting from World War II, through the wars in the former Yugoslavia to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the narration itself is characterized by narrative skepticism, a radical suspicion that any story can be told entirely and objectively, as a rounded whole. Thus, in *The English Years*, several narrators tell their different accounts to the novel's curious heroine of a deceased Jewish writer, an internee on the Isle of Man in the aftermath of the Second World War. At that point, the novel acquires a pronounced metapoetic dimension. A story of a writer becomes a story of the construction of a novel, but also a story of exile and (de)construction of the identity of an exile.

Two Gstrein's novels are set against the backdrop of the 1990s conflict in Croatia and Kosovo, *The Art of Killing* (*Das Handwerk des Tötens*, 2003) and *The Winter in the South* (*Die Winter im Süden*, 2008). In *The Art of Killing*, he makes even greater use of the documentary method in the construction of the novel, in the fashion of Danilo Kiš, of whom he often speaks and writes as his writing role model (cf. Car). The novel discusses what the writer actually does in practice—the (im)possibility to construct a new, fictional, reality from shreds of truth, half-truths, and figments of imagination. Paul, the protagonist, is a freelance journalist and mediocre writer trying to write a novel about Christian Allmayer, a war correspondent reporting on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, who was killed in Kosovo. In addition, the novel is based on the true events surrounding the tragic death of Gabriel Grüner, a reporter for the German magazine *Stern*, to whose memory the novel is dedicated. The alleged misuse of delicate details from the journalist's biography, brought public condemnation on Gstrein in Germany.

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[4] Here are just a few: an extensive analysis of the novel in the critical edition is given by Heribert Kuhn (111–143), and the collection of papers dedicated to Gstrein's work in the 2011 edition of the Drosch Literaturverlag (Bartsch and Fuchs 89–114), where Christina Weiss, Ulrich Weinzierl and Gerhard Melzer wrote about the author's debut novel.

To defend himself against these allegations, Gstrein wrote an essay titled "Who Owns a Story?" ("Wem gehört eine Geschichte?," 2004), in which he not only strove to shed light on his narrative procedure, but also to point to a "middle ground" between realistic, even naturalistic attempts to write about warfare, when fiction starts to resemble reality too closely and ends up on the borderline with kitsch, and a kind of art that refuses to commit to reality, and gives itself the right to transcend reality to the point that it almost ignores it.[5]

The same principles of narration, which must, in fact, be a continuous "critique of narration," can be found in another Gstrein's novel set against the backdrop of the wars in the Balkans – *The Winter in the South*, but also in the subsequent, extremely successful, novels such, as *The Whole Truth* (*Die ganze Wahrheit*, 2010) set in the publishing industry, *An Idea of the Beginning* (*Eine Ahnung vom Anfang*, 2013) which links the eternal topic of the danger of books with terrorism, and the 2016 novel, *In the Free World* (*In der freien Welt*, 2016), which discusses the problem of narration—about a Jewish painter and a writer killed in America—set against the backdrop of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These novels have earned Gstrein not only the reputation as one of the most important contemporary writers in the German language, but also a skeptic as regards the possibility of literature to "mirror" reality. He is also skeptical about the ability of the medium of language, in itself treacherous and inadequate, to convey any narrative.

The Years to Come

The latest Gstrein's novel lacks the usual backdrop of a major conflict, a world war, or a low-intensity conflict in a politically prominent area. There is a globally present conflict, though; a world war has already silently begun and warfare has been taking place in all spheres of life. Gstrein discusses a number of current socio-political topics: Trump's election for president, a refugee and economic crisis, migration, climate change and lack of ecological awareness, the melting of glaciers in the poles, the relationships between industry and science and media and contemporary art, and the general feeling of insecurity in the contemporary world. Through these topics, however, in the manner of the best German and world story tellers, Gstrein explores the universal issues of fragile human existence, the relationship between freedom and necessity, interpersonal, spousal and parental relations, while the examination of the topic of transience leads him to the exploration of the nature and purpose of art. The novel does not give unequivocal and clear answers to most of the above questions, but it, nevertheless, discusses and challenges patterns of living in the contemporary world thus raising both current and all-time poetic issues: the position of an artist in contemporary society, the engagement of contemporary art, intellectual responsibility, the relation between art and society, the principles of postmodernist poetics, the nature of art and its functions understood differently in different cultural epochs. Hence, the novel is decidedly metapoetic; it is characterized by the presence of thematic—both explicit and symbolic, and structural metapoetics. The novel is set in 2016, the year of the great refugee crisis. The I-narrator, Richard, is a scientist—glaciologist, a rationalist and skeptic, married to Natasha, a successful writer, an enthusiast and engaged empath. It is through Natasha's empathetic actions—she takes care of a family of Syrian refugees—that Gstrein sets a scene for the discussion of one of the novel's core questions: whether an honest conversation about the ongoing refugee crisis is possible without aligning ourselves to either the right-wing or the left-wing politics, and whether one can be just in such a conversation (Gstrein, Interview). At Natasha's initiative, the couple lent their summer house by a lake near Hamburg to the Farhi family, thus generating much media hype. The situation in the small town in which the summer residence is located becomes fraught with tension as a group of teenagers starts visiting the estate to "keep an eye" on the refugee family. At one point, the tension threatens to brim over into violence, as one night two Syrian boys are abducted. The boys are soon found in the nearby woods, unharmed, but scared stiff. Richard grows increasingly skeptical about Natasha's intense involvement with the Farhi family and her interfering with their lives, which was supposedly meant to facilitate their adaptation and especially about Natasha's writing project with Mr Farhi, which is why she spends the summer at the lake, alienating herself from both the husband and daughter. Richard, too, becomes alienated from his previous life, which is why we can read the novel as a story about a middle-aged man who entertains a thought to simply walk away of his life. With his longing for retreat in nature, he embodies not only skepticism towards social engagement, but also escapism as one of the statements of the intellectual elites of our time. The novel sets out to explore, *inter alia*, what Gstrein calls the "American coquetry" that could be recognized among American intellectuals who, in the lead-up to Trump's victory claimed "that if the worst happens, [they] will all flee to Canada." (Gstrein, Interview) In this context, it may be interesting to note that Richard is an Austrian and does not feel completely at home in Germany and it is, thus, all the more possible to link the author to his character Bassam Farhi and establish the character as the author's double through the motive of emigration and exile, bearing also in mind an allusion to Natasha and Bassam getting intimate during their cooperation on the literary project. The novel opens with Richard's staying in America and his encounters with his colleague and friend, a Canadian-born Serb, Tim Markovich, who offers to Richard a real exit, i.e., to actually move with his family to Canada, more precisely to St. John's, Newfoundland, supposedly the oldest settlement in North America. Richard is offered yet another exit by his colleague Idea, a Jewish-Mexican, who is, at the same time, sentimental and brutally candid with him and to whom he feels greatly attracted – she invites him to climb Popocatépetl with her, although there is no more ice there. Gstrein further underscores the complexity of the emotional entanglements of modern man by introducing the character of Katja, Natasha's prematurely died twin sister, whom Richard often fondly remembers, as well as that of Fanny, Richard and Natasha's daughter, the embodiment of the innocent existence in the world, with whom Richard spends three weeks in the countryside between the glaciers and meadows of his native Tyrol, reading her *The Last of the Mohicans*. Natasha and Richard's estrangement culminates after the literary evening in the town by the lake, and Richard leaves for America once again with the intention to spend some time with Tim in Canada. Two versions of Richard's stay end in the same way, because the gun that is introduced at a relatively late point in the story has to fire, eventually.

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[5] The essay communicates with Imre Kertesz's text "Who does Auschwitz belong to?" (1998).

The novel consists of four parts, the first being titled "Canada" and encompassing Richard's stay in America, his conversations with Tim and Idea, a bicycle accident in the place called Canaan, and a retrospective of the Farhi family's moving into the summer house by the lake accompanied by a TV footage. The second part, titled "Canaan," takes place during the summer Richard spends in Germany and Austria and unfolds the events surrounding the dramatic episode with the disappearance of the Farhi boys, the weeks in Tirol, and, finally, Natasha's literary evening. The title of the second part refers both to the place where Richard has had the bicycle accident, and, despite the altered spelling, to the biblical land of Canaan, a land of freedom and prosperity, promised to the Jewish nation, as "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8, 3:17, 13:15, 33:3). Geographically, Canaan is a fertile area of the Middle East's Mediterranean coast, the site of the encounter and conflict between the Eastern and Western Empires and home to the most sacred sites of both Christendom and Islam. Here, we can recognize a crystal-clear symbolism of the promise of a better life in a distant country which is reached through a series of temptations and tribulations, especially when taking into consideration that the Second Book of Moses, also called Exodus, is dedicated to the exodus of the Jewish people who left the life of slavery in Egypt and set out on a harrowing journey towards the Promised Land. However, Gstrein twists and loosens the symbolism, which undoubtedly relates to the immigrant fate of the Farhis, in a postmodernist fashion, by choosing North American toponyms invoking biblical geography for the titles of his chapters. This is emphasized in the scene of Richard's waking up after the Canaan accident, when both Canada and Canaan appear in rapid alternations before his blurry sight as he regains consciousness.

Canada becomes a naïve metaphor for a new Promised Land—Canaan, which is also the name of the place where Richard, paradoxically, barely manages to get help after being hurt.[6] This relativization frees the symbolic reading from tacky sentimentalism and ideological one-sidedness: the once promised land is now a land that people hastily abandon, and bearing in mind the multitude of global threats, America and Europe also need a new Canaan of their own. By using biblical toponyms, Gstrein also establishes an intertextual connection with the Bible as a literary text, which, much before our time, recorded an account of migration of a large number of people across continents in search of a better, more secure and more dignified life – a refugee story. This intertextual communication with the Bible is at the same time a metapoetic place in the novel through which the author draws attention to the history of the topic of refugees, most likely alluding to the plethora of contemporary literary texts that touch upon the subject. The religious context in connection to the Second Book of Moses is also introduced via the character of Pastor Alderich, who provides spiritual guidance to the Farhis through the process of conversion to Christianity. When Richard speaks of his injury and the place where the accident occurred, the pastor immediately refers to the "Promised Land, which everyone can find in themselves only" (130). In the continuation of the conversation, the pastor rejects the possibility that, despite God's will for them to leave for Canaan, the Farhis actually reached the desired destination when they came to Germany. The hypocrisy of the priest's statement is disclosed by Natasha, who opposes the abstract humanism of religion to which her concrete material support stands in stark contrast. In this way, Gstrein avoids the black-and-white modeling of characters and their actions, and we may draw attention here to Gstrein's mastery in the art of introducing some of the eternal philosophical themes in passing, seemingly nonchalantly. Here, it is the everlasting question of the origin of evil in the world—since Natasha understands Aldrich's statement as a justification for the war in Syria for reasons that mortals cannot fathom—which is, already in the following sentence, relativized and devoid of pathos, silenced and suffocated by a mimetic excess related to the described events.

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[6] The idea, which Gstrain introduces ironically, was originally developed in a serious key by Daniel Vannorman Lucas, *Canaan and Canada* (1904), who claims, among other things, that the country is probably the only ethical battleground in the universe and that good must prevail.

The third part of the novel encompasses two versions of chapter 13 telling two different versions of Richard's return to the United States on the way to Montreal. What is at play here is a process of marking a work of literature as an artistic creation, whose development and ending do not rely on reality but on the author's intent and the laws established within the world of a work of art, which is, precisely, what structural metapoetics is about. The novel, however, concludes with the chapter entitled "What really happened" ("Was wirklich geschen ist," 273), which again refers to reality and which, in a metapoetic sense, reflects the writer's earlier statement that a work of literature must not deviate too much from reality, and, thus, in both structural and thematic sense, completes the realistic motivation.

Gstrein formulates some of his poetic attitudes in an essay entitled "All humanity loves aggressive morality. That's the immoral thing about it" published in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* on 22 March, 2018, which can be read as an accompanying text to the novel. The essay begins with the topic the author has been preoccupied with: the mimetic quality of literature, that is, the problem of transposing reality into a literary form, which is discussed in the novel through Natasha's project and the public promotion of the project in front of an audience in a small town by the lake. The second subject of the essay is "the aggressive moralizing in public appearances," which in the novel gains its literary expression in Natasha's need for public engagement reflected as much in her taking care of the Syrian refugees as in her uncompromising attitudes.

It is Natasha who discredits all other attitudes taking a stance of an unquestionable moral authority. In an interview to Ö1, speaking about literature and politics, Gstrein points out that moralizing is not always the most appropriate answer: "Whenever we discuss politics, whenever we discuss literature, in the beginning and in the end of our talk we always talk about morality, and it is in the in-between that we have to let other voices, other options, arguments and counter-arguments be heard."

Only in this way can literature "keep the space for discussion open about every position that can be argued," that is, no position should be declared unjustifiable too early (Gstrein, Interwiev). In that way, literature becomes the meeting point of different, opposing views, both rational and emotional, in which the dual nature of man as both a rational and an emotional being is reflected.

Metapoetics in the novel

In this section, we will interpret the passages and procedures in the novel that we have labeled as metapoetic in order to identify Gstrein's implicit poetic statement, that is, the answers to the questions about the nature and function of literature in the modern world, presented in a literary form, bearing in mind the author's explicit statements expressed in interviews and essays.

The novel opens with a motto to be read first and foremost in a moral key, as in the above-mentioned author's statement that in politics and in literature, morality must be discussed in the beginning and in the end: "Not forever here on earth / for a short time only" (7).

The motto primarily draws attention to transience as an absolute determinant of human life, directly and inextricably linked to the codification of ethics governing human action in every religion, ideology, philosophical doctrine, whether rightful actions are to be rewarded by immortality, new life, redemption or paradise in the afterlife or they serve as a confirmation of the dignity of human beings as free, saved, and able to rise above their selfishness, their instinctive nature, etc. The motto, therefore, becomes an invitation to the reader to reconsider his/her own position in the world and his or her acting or failure to act in relation to other beings and nature. In the novel, this is realized when Idea emails the same quotation to Richard in Spanish, as a prompt reply to his report on the turbulent day when the Syrian boys were found in the forest.[7] In addition to the "natural melancholy" (168) contained in them, the lyrics spur Richards to urgent action. Under the motto at the beginning of the book, it is written—and this is what Idea communicates to Richard—that the verses originate from the Song of the Aztec King Nezahualcóyotl, one of the most powerful people of his time, poet and philosopher, who is credited for the flourishing of the Aztec world, and, by the same token, responsible for numerous human casualties. Any literary reference, whether fictional or real, is a possible metapoetic commentary. Here, the commentary is about the ability of literature to encapsulate human experience within a form in which it can survive as a testimony of a life that existed or could have existed long ago, that is, in a form which opens the possibilities for both the contemporaries and future generations to benefit from the account and find it actual and relevant to their own life and work.

The message expressed in the verses can also be related to the issue of the lack of ecological awareness, referred to by Richard's profession—glaciology, that is, in his conversations with Tim. The question of human (in)action is the question of what kind of world we will leave behind. Human transience is contrasted with the eternity of nature itself, the eternity of glaciers, but as a consequence of human neglect, they, too, as Tim notices, are "by no means eternal" any more (12). Unlike Richard, for whom the study of glaciers primarily serves to facilitate a withdrawal from the world, as in the aforementioned elitist escapism, Tim insists that the main task of a scientist is to reveal to the people the dire consequences of their actions, the indications of the imminent ecological disaster, that is, the annihilation of life, and, alongside it, all the testimonies that life ever existed. In this way, the novel touches upon the issue of moral responsibility of science and conscience of scientists, alongside the question of moral responsibility of literature—through Natasha's work. That is why Natasha and Tim could be literary doubles, because he not only admires the fact that she is a writer, but his actions in his own domain (that of science) are similar to hers in literature—they both act bravely, unconditionally and unwaveringly.

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[7] "No para siempre en la tierra, sólo un poco aquí" (167). By citing these and some other Idea's pithy sentences in Spanish, the author marks them and thus additionally highlights them in the otherwise densely woven text.

The introduction of a double is one of Gstrein's favorite literary procedures used as a means of characterization, interiorizing of the action and shifting of the narrative events from the outside towards the inside. It also serves for reflecting upon the events, reconsidering the relationships between characters, and the hero's questioning of his own identity. In addition to the connection the narrative establishes between the characters of Richard and Bassam, and Natasha and Tim, Natasha and her sister Katja killed in a car crash could also be read as doubles. In his memories of Katja, Richard reassesses his relationship with Natasha, searching for what he seems to have never found in Natasha, just as he, observing the relation between Natasha and Bassam, casts an inward look upon himself, torn apart by the new circumstances that challenge his habitual skepticism and rationalism. Bearing in mind Renate Lachmann's theoretical postulates on the motif of a double as one of the very common motifs in literature from Romanticism to Postmodernism, Gstrein's introduction of doubles at several levels can also be considered to represent technical metapoetics, that is, commenting on a procedure by way of actually using it:

> Literature, however, which is both doubleness and split, both shapes and interprets, and is, in a way, itself not immune to a dualism of its own processes and representational structures: there is a duplication of the author and the implicit author, the narrator and the protagonist, the reader and the implicit reader, the author and the reader. (Lachmann 262)

All these categories of dualism can be found in Gstrein's novel.

The symbolism of glaciers is what could be identified as the central metapoetic motif in the novel. It belongs to thematic and aesthetical-philosophical metapoetics. When an industrialist asks Richard's colleague and friend, Idea Selig, what prompted her interest in glaciers, she answers:

> There is hardly any matter more transient than snow, but it is preserved in the ice of glaciers. Just think of all the snow that has fallen for all these years. Imagine the snow of the days when Cortes conquered Mexico, or the snow from the times of Christ's birth, or the snow from when the first humans lived. (59)

Idea's response symbolically expresses the central position of romantic and idealistic aesthetics, predominant in the eighteenth and nineteenth century understanding of art, as well as in the neo-romantic conceptions of modernity. The perishability of human existence in its physical form can be overcome only through art. A glacier is, therefore, perceived here as a symbol of art, where the beauty of life, in itself transient and perishable, is preserved and elevated to eternity.

The connection with idealistic aesthetics is the verb "aufheben" (*to sublate*), which functions here in its two meanings: "to keep, to preserve" (*aufbewahren*, *erhalten*), or "to cause it to cease, to put an end to" (*aufhören lassen*, *ein Ende machen*), which are at the heart of the central concept of Hegel's dialectics: dialektische Aufhebung.[8] Just as the snow in a glacier ceases to exist in its primary form—that of fragile, extremely transient matter, but it, nevertheless, does not cease to exist, so is reality abolished in art through a dialectical relationship with fiction, creating a "more complex truth" about life (Gstrein, "Die aggressiv"), while remaining preserved for thousands of years, all with the intention of preserving life from decay, on the one hand, and on the other, providing an understanding of "complex cognitive processes in literature" (Gstrein, "Die aggressiv").

Hence the author's multiple references to books and legends that deal with large and important collective experiences from a long time ago, such as the Second Book of Genesis or Aztec legends, or directs mentions of the titles of the books that influenced the characters' worldviews and their lives, such as *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Moby Dick*. At the same time, Gstrein diminishes the seriousness of his metapoetic commentary about the influence and importance of books by taking an ironic stance on it. For instance, when Natasha wants to keep the upper hand in one of their marital arguments, Richard becomes aware that her point is actually a quote from one of the books on her bedside table and retorts citing a character from that same book, that is, he answers to one literal quote with another. The irony here rests on a reversal similar to the one from Cervantes' parody of the chivalric romance when literature claims to become life. Gstrein's focus, too, is not on the seductiveness of literature—since he does not even mention the title of the book from which the spouses take their "lines"—but on the dangers of a dogmatic understanding of literature and the tendency of modern man, man of every time, to take ideas and concepts from literature uncritically, which, at the same time, reflects his inability to achieve authentic communication with other human beings, even those closest to him.

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[8] Hegel explains the double meaning of the word in the first book of *Science of Logic* (*Die Wissenschaft der Logik*, 1816): "To sublate and being sublated (the idealized) constitute one of the most important concepts of philosophy. It is a fundamental determination that repeatedly occurs everywhere in it, the meaning of which must be grasped with precision and especially distinguished fromnothing.—What is sublated does not thereby turn into nothing. Nothing is the immediate; something sublated is on the contrary something mediated; it is something nonexistent but as a result that has proceeded from a being; it still has in itself, therefore, the determinateness from which it derives." (Hegel 81)

This passage, however, is not only a self-reflexive metapoetic commentary on the lack of communication in the modern world, but also contributes to the characterization of Natasha, the central heroine of the novel, a type of contemporary socially engaged writer and the embodiment of what Gstrein terms as "aggressive morality." As in Gstrein's earlier novels, writers are either protagonists or central characters which makes their actions emblematic in a poetic sense. For Natasha, her social engagement is not only understandable in itself, but also inseparable from her role as writer, since this is how a writer draws public attention to his/her actions, with the intention of being a positive example in the world. She is a representative of contemporary writers who believe in the possibility of literature's direct engagement in order to raise the level of public awareness on certain topics and in that sense her actions are rightful and exemplary—hers is the idea for a TV footage on providing the accommodation for the Syrian family, she authors a blog for a Berlin newspaper on the topic of accepting immigrants and works on a literary project with a public reading to further draw attention to the immigrants' plight. Her writing activity rests on the belief that literature and morality are inseparable, and the view that communication between the writer and the audience must necessarily take place in the contemporary social environment that is a scene of political, class and moral conflicts, all of which necessarily leads to the conclusion that a work of literature and the opus of a writer not only have to be situated within this context, but must also firmly uphold indisputable moral principles. Nevertheless, Gstrein finds a series of flaws to this seemingly perfect manifesto and exposes them in the episodes in which Richard, in his merciless skepticism, reveals the exhibitionism and egoism of contemporary art as the main driving forces behind this kind of model morality, whether it be conversations in writers' circles or an argument arising because some artists obstructed a distribution of food and necessities in a refugee camp while looking for participants for their performance. Richard's ironic take on possible theater performance for German pensioners, who would, from the safety of the decks of their cruisers, witness a spectacle of people drowning somewhere off the Libyan coast, questions—in all its parodic exaggeration—the need of contemporary art to replace life itself, that is, the repeatedly asked question of the meaning and role of art: "why there should still be art"

(199). It is interesting to note that Natasha does not respond directly to this question, but ignores it with disdain as self-evident, thus renouncing Richard's credibility as an interlocutor on topics of art, since he is a scientist whose greatest achievement is "ridiculous measuring of the world" (199). Such an attitude reintroduces the idea of dogmatic thinking, which is detrimental even when the thinking is right—in this novel, as it will turn out, both for the reality to which Natasha's art refers, i.e., the fate of the Farhi family, and for art itself—Natasha's writing project. Accusing Richard of being deprived of emotions, she implies that art must be warm and emotional—which is an anachronistic idea abandoned completely as early as in the avant-garde—and reduces humanity exclusively to empathy and sensitivity, neglecting its intellectual and discursive components, both in life and art. We should not forget here the allusion to Kehlmann's novel *Measuring the World* (*Die Vermessung der Welt*, 2005) as a "chosen signal" (Juvan 30), which invokes in the reader's mind the relation between the principles of action and contemplation, the key principles of human nature deeply embedded in Western culture, and embodied in Kehlmann's characters Gauß and Alexander von Humboldt. Richard and Natasha can be perceived as their parodied, weakened replicas through which Gstrein comments negatively on the activism and escapism of contemporary intellectuals revealing the futility, and even destructiveness of the actions of the elites.

Natasha's literary evening's fiasco is also an important metapoetic place in the novel, inserted, like a play within a play, primarily as an ironic commentary on contemporary literary events. After preparing the show for the whole summer, Natasha and Bassam Farhi perform together in a bookstore in the center of the town by the lake, in front of the local audience, the same small-town folks with whom we got previously acquainted, as both curious and suspicious, even homophobic in relation to the Farhis. The attitude of such an audience towards literature was announced earlier when one of the neighbors, a certain Dr. von Gunten, commented that "the life of the Farhis must be a true gift for a writer" (138). Instead of Natasha, Bassam Farhi provides an answer to this comment citing an alleged Russian saying that there are only two real professions, that of a writer and that of a frontiers guard, because only they cannot be performed for too long without passion (139). Both statements reintroduce Gstrein's favorite poetic theme of shifting/safeguarding the boundaries between reality and literature, mixing truth and fiction, and judging literature against non-literary criteria, which becomes the main reason for the failure of Natasha's evening. Von Gunten's statement reflects a misconception about the necessity of the truthfulness of literature, which, with the consolidation of realistic poetics, established itself as a value criterion: an authentic life story is a prerequisite of a good work of literature, or even more pronouncedly, the other way round—only literature based on a true story is good. [9] This is why a lady from the audience protests after she realizes that Natasha, in her story, mentions the route that the Farhis did not take, even if thousands of other immigrant families have travelled that route: "What about the other stories? Are they also made up?" (205). The disappointment of the audience stems from a naïve, Platonic belief that literature must reflect reality as they came to hear what really happened. Indicative, in this sense, is the presence of an inspector investigating the kidnapping of the Farhi boys—it is highly unlikely that he attends the event out of his great love for literature; he clearly wants to uncover at least some shreds of the blurred truth (29). The evening almost turns into a court hearing, when a lady from the audience stubbornly insists that she be answered for each and every episode whether it was "experienced" or "fictitious," revealing both herself and the audience as a truly petty bourgeois auditorium interested only in the piquant and shocking details of the lives of others, with pre-prepared typified reactions of wonder, pity, condemnation, etc.[10]

That is why neither Natasha's "pleading for the power of fiction did not make any difference, because with each sentence it only became clearer that the problem lay exactly in the fictionalization and that there could not be a question of power" (207). Everything gets further complicated when someone from the audience asks Mr. Farhi to say something in Arabic, which he does, provoking an additional suspicion in the inspector that he did not speak about an ordinary morning of his family in Damascus, but complained about his position in a language that no one could understand, instead.

Two things, here, are the subject of Gstrein's metapoetic reflection. One relates to the problem of the reception of art, the fact that, after centuries of writing and reception of literature and different eras with diverse concepts, most people still understand art in a Platonic way as simply a replica of life, spiced with exoticism and incomprehensibility. The other refers to literary dilettantism. Although she understands the Aristotelian concept which states that literature speaks of what is possible and probable, and not about what really happened, allowing even for deviations from what is possible and thus confirming the aesthetic autonomy of literature, Natasha writes on deeply personal experiences in a typified, schematized way, relying on black-and-white moral concepts and mediated emotion and ignoring both the irrational and negative in human nature and the paradox of human existence. In his essays, Gstrein calls such writing "kitsch of proximity," believing that instead of genuine human empathy, it can only generate an automated, cold reception, preventing a critical encounter either with the present or the past (Gstrein and Semprun 32).

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[9] For easier understanding of the problem, it is sufficient to mention the sentences that we often hear in the everyday experience in relation to the evaluation of a work of literature or a film: it is based on true event, it must be good.

[10] A critique of the petty-bourgeoisie is present in the earliest Gstrein's novels, and from *The Art of Killing*, it is accompanied by an open criticism of the media, since it is precisely media reporting that contributes to such a mentality. These two levels of criticism are joined in the novel at the point of Natasha's flirting with the media.

This concept is contested by Gstrein's novel, based on a constant destabilization and relativization of both the narrated and the narrative instance—through auto-irony and doubles, and continuous metanarrative reflection. These narrative devices in the novel allow for the formation of a complex, multi-layered image of the world, in the way in which Idea's statement, somewhere between pathetic and ironic, allows us to acquire knowledge of life without having to resort to excessive didacticism.

When Richard answers lukewarmly to her enthusiastic invitation to climb Popocatépetl together, excusing himself by obligations, Idea first warns him that she should not be treated like an idiot, and then retorts passionately in Spanish: "Por que no aprecias la vida? … No se puede vivir sin amar" (100).[11] Her trick was, continues the narrator, "in forcing irony and pathos so close together, that, as hard as you tried, there was no way of avoiding it: you could try throwing yourself on one side or the other for a time, but in the end, there was no way to escape truth" (100).

This highly metapoetic expression is also illustrated in other Idea's passionate statements, in Spanish, usually accompanied by irony or auto-irony, revealing the inevitability of balancing the emotional and intellectual in an attempt to understand the paradoxical human position in the world, which is the essential task of literature.

The indication that Idea is the conveyer of the metapoetic level of the text is given in the remark that she bears the name of an Uruguayan poet. In Idea's claims and statements, which we read as an aesthetical-philosophical metapoetic commentary, an important theme of the role, purpose and expressive means of literature is realized at the diachronic level via the symbolism of the glacier, while at the synchronic level, it is realized through her "passion for paradoxes" (60) which reflects the necessity of the collaboration between the pathetic and the ironic in the expression of contemporary art, i.e., the emotional and intellectual in its relation to reality.

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[11] "Why do you not appreciate life? … You can not live without loving."

Therefore, in the novel, Natasha embodies a type of contemporary artist who craves for constant media attention, striving to bring current political topics closer to art in a pamphleteering way. Richard's reflection on her art, after the literary evening, is a critique of the scope of such art that wants to communicate great truths and to become a truth itself, while using primitive and one-dimensional means that leave the audience unresponsive (cf. Knežević, "O stvarnosti"). This is the opposite of the concept of art based on Idea's "trick" which, by constantly shifting between the ironic and pathetic relations to reality—and between the ironic and pathetic stances of the writer towards himself/herself—brings the reader inevitably, as in a game, to the paradoxical truth about the absurdity of human existence.

The whole novel is imbued with the paradox and the absurd, both at the level of the sentence and at the level of the plot, and especially so in the two versions of the thirteenth chapter, the first metapoetically marked by the title "The End for Literature Lovers" ("Ende für Literaturliebhaber," 241), and the second by the fact that Richard introduces himself to an unknown woman as an Austrian writer to whom he, according to Natasha's words, "looks creepily alike" (260), which establishes an auto-ironic relationship between the narrator and the writer as each other's double.[12] It is also remarkable that neither of the two versions of the story of Richard's return to Canaan and Canada is functional in terms of motivating the end of the central plotline describing the events around the house on the lake. By inserting two possible continuations of the storyline, a realistic narrative frame breaks apart, the relationship with the reality to be mimetically represented is relativized, and the need is emphasized for its reflection through playing with the fictional. This is why we recognize this procedure as technical metapoetics. The first version suspends Richard's dream of moving to Canada. Gstrein's skepticism is directed here against the lachrymose sentimentality, this time absurdly placed within the world of science, which, at the level of the novel as a whole, is inevitably viewed in relation to art through the previously established constellations of the relations among the quartet: Natasha – Tim – Richard – Idea. The critical edge of the second version is directed at certain clichés in literature and film related through a seemingly absurd story of an acquaintance with an, to say the least, unusual female figure, overly pathetic and prone to excessive immersion in literature, as well as the cliché of the mystification of the figure of a writer.

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[12] Richard's contemplation of living with Natasha in a few more instances in the novel makes space for additional poetic comments on the relationship between reality and literature, Richard's fear of becoming one of the characters in Natasha's prose, perhaps, the most obvious among them.

The absurd is intensified here to the point of unbearability. The blending of life with fiction gets its pathetic, simultaneously comic and grotesque, version. At the end, however, through a legend with which Richard intends to commence his lecture in Montreal, the text returns us back towards the glacier metaphor. The affirmative statement that "there was hardly any greater pathos than the pathos of truth" (269), is followed by a legend, allegedly present wherever there are glaciers in the world, about a son who found his long missing father in the ice, the father's face as young as his own. The awareness-raising recognition of the similarity of our personal experience to what was experienced by the people in the past is identical to that realized in art. The pathetic picture of life caught in ice, similar to that of Laookon's dying, saved from inevitable bodily decay and preserved for eternity in the art of sculpture, is ironically shattered by the facts from Richard's own lecture warning of an ecological catastrophe, the melting of glaciers and the destruction of the world, which mock mercilessly the idea of the eternity of art (cf. Knežević, "O stvarnosti").

The novel ends with the realization of the paradox at the level of plot: Bassam Farhi not only acquired but actually used the gun mentioned in Natasha's text during the literary evening, severely wounding boys and girls wandering around the house, although they did not do any harm to his family. What Natasha wrote as fiction, she afterwards accomplished in reality: not only did she give Richard's hidden gun to Farhi, but also encouraged him to use it. Paradoxically, a humane advocate of unquestionable ethical principles becomes an instigator of violence, a victim becomes a perpetrator, and a story of an immigrants' plight in a globalized world—a story about the fate of us all—becomes a story of the detrimental confusing of literature with reality.

Conclusion

The above analysis has shown how the metapoetic expression identified in the text of the novel of the modern Austrian writer Norbert Gstrein *The Years to Come* (*Die kommenden Jahre*) participates in the formation of complex semantic structures of a text. The attitudes about literature, its expressive means, its function both in the social and individual sense, as well as its relation to reality, which the author otherwise presents in essays and texts in newspapers, are realized in the novel in a sensual-concrete form through characters and their actions, dialogue and reflection, within a predominantly realistic, constructive principles of plot development, which simultaneously problematize and relativize.

The thematic metapoetic aspect is reflected in the problematization of individual attitudes about contemporary art, especially through the fact that the central heroine is a writer herself, while structural metapoetics is present through the author's using of the same procedures that he examines: pathetization, irony, doubling, reversal, and paradox. Gstrein's placing Natasha's creative engagement in the year of the global refugee crisis and introducing the episodes that recreate events from the contemporary literary environment has been identified as a cultural and historic metapoetic commentary, while the most striking instances of metapoetics provide, both diachronically and synchronically, an aesthetical-philosophical answer to the question of the role of literature (the glacier metaphor) and the means through which it achieves its highest peaks (pathos and irony). Technical metapoetics is combined with aesthetical-philosophical metapoetics in the narrator's masterful irony which questions both the concepts of engaged art ("authors' usefulness"; Interview 91), that are too close to reality and the fictionalized, clichéd representations of life. Gstrein's (auto)ironic edge is directed not only to writers and intellectuals, but also to philologists "who always have to get to the bottom of everything and cannot accept that there is perhaps no reason behind things" (70), which also made the author of this text question her own conclusions at multiple levels.

In addition, in the interpretation section we have shown that the metapoetic passages serve other purposes, too. They are used for characterization and for thematizing the current political, social, and environmental issues in the world, which adds even more complexity to the semantic level of the text mirroring the complexity of human relations in the contemporary environment. Interspersed manneristicaly with episodes and storytellers' memories of encounters and conversations from different times, the novel as a whole is an affirmative answer to the poetic skepticism, which the artists inevitably face. Despite the relativity of every truth and its absolutely certain unachievability, and despite the paradox of our efforts to find sense, the literature that forces us to face the antinomies of our existence and the world we live in, is not only possible—in the way that Gstrein writes it—but, also, necessary.

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Metapoetika v romanu *Die kommenden Jahre* Norberta Gstreina

Ključne besede: avstrijska književnost / Gstrein, Norbert: *Die kommenden Jahre* / pripovedna struktura / metapoetika

Razprava poskuša prek komentiranja metapoetične dinamike pripovedi v romanu sodobnega avstrijskega pisatelja Norberta Gstreina *Die kommenden Jahre* (2018) poglobiti razumevanje Gstreinove poetike. Na začetku poskusi opredeliti izraz metapoetika s pomočjo sicer dokaj skromnega nabora znanstvenih obravnav te teme, pri tem pa se nasloni predvsem na definicijo Matthiasa Freiseja. Temu sledi pregled dela Norberta Gstreina s posebnim poudarkom na vprašanjih njegove poetike, ki so se v preteklosti porajala tako v njegovih romanih kot esejih. Osrednji del prispevka, posvečen interpretaciji romana, analizira najbolj izstopajoče primere metapoetike v romanu: začetni moto, simbolizem ledenikov, odnos med ironijo in patetiko, primeren za razkrivanje resnice, osrednji lik avtorice, njen literarni večer, vključitev dveh različic 13. poglavja in drugih knjig, ki so omenjene v romanu. V zaključnem delu povzemamo možne odgovore, ki jih podaja roman na vprašanja o poetiki, implicitno zastavljenih skozi pripoved, in pokažemo, kako metapoetična raven besedilnih vplivov soustvarja pomen besedila.

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The Geographical Imagination in Early Twentieth-Century Latvian Novels

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The article explores the geographical imagination in Latvian novels published during the early twentieth century. We first focus on our experience and preliminary results of the literary mapping, then we turn towards representations of neighboring countries of Latvia as well as selected continents in these novels as case studies. The early twentieth century as a period of extensive migration and growing awareness of global events in Latvian society provides a rich variety of representations of foreign geographical places. By discussing the advantages and limits of literary mapping, we argue that the interpretations of Latvian novels within the perspective of the geographical imagination provide valuable knowledge for the social history of literature. Furthermore, we demonstrate that the research of geographical diversity in novels refers not only to real mobility, but also to stereotypes, therefore the acquired information might be productively used in imagological analyses.

Keywords: Latvian literature / Latvian novel / twentieth century / literary geography / literary mapping / imagology

The aim of this paper is to provide insight into an ongoing investigation of the geographical imagination in early twentieth-century Latvian novels, giving an overview of the preliminary results of this research as well as charting territory for potential further studies.[1] Building on the outcomes of investigations carried out by Franco Moretti and Barbara Piatti, who propose linking literary geography and digital humanities (Moretti, *Atlas*; Moretti, *Graphs*; Piatti, *Die Geographie*) and corresponding to Stephen

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[1] The present research has been carried out within the project "Empowering knowledge society: Interdisciplinary perspectives on public involvement in the production of digital cultural heritage" at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia, Riga (ERAF project Nr. 1.1.1.1/16/A/040). The digital mapping within the project was carried out by senior scholars Pauls Daija and Benedikts Kalnačs and by research assistants Madara Eversone, Signe Raudive, and Artis Ostups.

Greenblatt's call for mobility studies (as quoted in: Pressner and Shepard 208), we are interested in determining to what extent important period changes in Latvian society such as ongoing urbanization, refugee movement after the unsuccessful uprising in tsarist Russia in 1905, workers' mobility beyond the borders of present-day Latvia, and growing openness to foreign influences were reflected in early twentieth century Latvian letters. By exploring literary sources from this point of view, it would be possible to ascertain whether Latvian novels provide a substantial contribution to social history, enabling the understanding of real and discursive transformations in the geographical imagination of the period (see further: Daija, Kalnačs, "Exploring"). Following Mimi Urbanc and Marko Juvan, we understand geographical imagination as a field that is "founded on cultural representations that have both emotional and ideological import" and explores the "imagination [that] helps form people's identities, their understanding of the world, and the world itself" (Urbanc and Juvan 319). Accordingly, it is a part of humanist geography that concerns itself "with what gives places a peculiar color, how places enter human consciousness, and how the way consciousness interprets space then influences the formation of places" (Urbanc and Juvan 319).

In the theoretical part of this paper, we characterize our sources and discuss the concept of distant cartographic reading important for the present research (Juvan 91). The following two case studies cast more light on the methods and results of the ongoing research by tackling specific segments of the established text corpus. First, we focus on the representation of borderlands (Estonia and Lithuania) in early twentieth-century Latvian novels; secondly, we tackle the representation of "exotic" locations in novels. The paper concludes with a brief appraisal of potential directions for future research.

Description of the sources and distant cartographic reading

In the twentieth century, literary mapping was mostly linked to the creation of biographical maps that displayed authors' birthplaces and charted other important locations linked to their lives. In most cases, this visual material was used as an illustration of research results achieved by an implementation of more traditional scholarly methods. In the late twentieth century, following new impulses provided by the so-called spatial turn, the field of research has been substantially enlarged, and literary mapping is increasingly placed within a broader context of digital humanities:

> Since the late 19th century, literary maps had been employed in literary geography, schools, and tourism to illustrate living places of famous authors, spaces represented in literary texts, the diffusion of literary currents, regional differences in productivity within a national literature, and the like … pioneering maps of literature have appeared since the 19th century in connection with literary tourism, pilgrimages to writers' houses, and visiting the "original" scenes described in poetry and fiction … [First maps] expressed a tendency to transcend a merely illustrative role and serve analytical purposes, although often based on outlived positivist assumptions or even questionable nationalist ideology. (Juvan 88)

Accordingly, the understanding of literary mapping has also changed, and this approach is now being considered as not only playing a subordinate role but also acquiring an analytical potential in literary scholarship that opens up new perspectives in the field. The opposition to such an approach predominantly points toward the inevitably experimental character of any research that at this stage makes use of literary mapping as well as of distant reading (Döring 139–149). As Todd Pressner and David Shepard note, "[m]aps and models are never static representations or accurate reflections of a past reality; instead, they function as arguments and propositions that betray a state of knowledge" (207). At the same time, when dealing with prose fiction, one needs to keep in mind that, in the words of Christian Jacob, the map "is a problematic mixture, where the transparency of a referential illusion coexists with the opacity of a medium that materializes this image" (quoted in Bray 282).

Within our research, a corpus of texts that consisted of all novels published in the Latvian language between 1900 and 1914 (forty-six in total) had been created, and the entire material was digitized. We have selected the text corpus according to the Index of Latvian novels, published by the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia. (Briedis and Rožkalne 119–123) We did not include unfinished novels of the period and translated novels. A database of geographical place names, containing 3367 units (this number includes geographical place names repeatedly encountered in literary texts) that was complemented by relevant text excerpts and information regarding the time the novel narratives unfold, was established. The overall aim was to gather material available for quantitative analysis and distant reading in order to strengthen the knowledge of social transformations in early twentieth-century Latvian literature thus far predominantly dealt with by other research methods (see Kalnačs, Daija, Eglāja-Kristsone and Vērdiņš).

In our approach we focused on the presence of place names that referred to specific geographical localities as well as ones that reflected the horizon of expectations of both novel characters and their readers. Places that were referred to implicitly were also considered. All place names were included into the database together with text excerpts as well as meta-data referring to the narrated time and the date of publication of the novel. Compiling these data made it possible to gather information that enabled an understanding of the variety of geographical space encountered in the novel narratives as well as to get insight into the dynamics of the appearance of certain cities, states, and regions in the novel corpus. The acquired knowledge can be further exploited both in an analytical fashion to define the main selection principles and provide theoretical data analysis from various perspectives as well as for illustrative purposes, such as gathering quantitative information on geographical place names or adapting the research for tourist guidebooks.

The tasks of our research included, first, the analysis of the geographic diversity of represented spaces as well as the transformations in representation of such universal categories as the country and the city, the centre and the periphery, the native land and foreign places; secondly, the visualization of data through the development of specific digital platforms that made it possible to provide graphic models using local maps of Latvia or world maps. In the process of the creation of the corpus it was observed that all but one of the novels contain specific place names. The investigation then focused on the remaining forty-five novels that for research purposes were subdivided into two main groups. The first of these included what might roughly be called elite or "serious" literature (realist, naturalist, and modernist novels, twenty-four in total), and the other group consisting of popular literature (twenty-one novels), including such subgenres as sentimental, picaresque, and detective novels.[2]

Only five novels had their main narrative action set outside the borders of present-day Latvia. These locations included cities in Western Europe and the US (in novels *Brīvības karotāji pie Sarkanās upes* and *Stiprinieku karalis Zigfrīds*),[3] in the Balkan region (*Karš un mīlestība* and *Krusts un pusmēness*), and in Siberia (*Starp Sibīriju un Indiju*). All these texts belong to popular literature. Nineteen novels predominantly feature the Latvian countryside and minor towns, focusing on two historical regions, Vidzeme (Livland) and Kurzeme (Kurland). Thirteen novels featured the main city of the region, Riga, as the primary location where the narrative unfolds. There was almost a parity between elite novels (*Zvaigžņotās naktis*, *Zem saules*, *Patrioti*, *Nolādētais*, *Bursaki*, *Sieviete* and *Zelts*) and popular literature dealing with the city (*Gods un apziņa*, *Dēmona slāpes*, *Uz mākslas spārniem*, *Mantu, asinis, dzīvību uz Tēvijas altāra!* and *Tumša ēna jeb Dvēseles sāpju mocekļi*). Situated between these different groups there are nine novels of the corpus; seven of those juxtapose the countryside and Riga, including both elite novels (*Skolotāja Kalēja piedzīvojumi*, *Tilti un pārigājēji*, *Jauni avoti* and *Pēdējais latvietis*) and popular novels (*Skaistā cietēja Milda*, *Skaistā Adelīna jeb Mīlestība un briesmas* and *Dzelzpiere Briesmīgais un viņa varoņa darbi*). In two further cases a juxtaposition between the Latvian countryside and a foreign land was provided where certain parts of the narrative are focused on events that occur in the Russian cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, in one case (*Rīta blāzmā*); and in Istanbul, Turkey, in the other (*Noslēpumainais gredzens*). Most texts focus on events that are close to the moment of their publication on a time scale (including the late nineteenth century); five novels feature earlier decades of the nineteenth century (*Patrioti, Baltā grāmata*, *Brīvības karotāji pie Sarkanās upes*, *Starp Sibīriju un Indiju* and *Ūdens burbuļi*), while two texts deal with the sixteenth-century (*Kad mēness dilst*) and seventeenth-century (*Pa tumšām tekām*) history of the region, respectively.

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[2] On the interactions between elite and popular literature as well as the principles according to which one level is to be distinguished from the other, see Daija and Kalnačs, "Nineteenth-Century" 162–172.

[3] See Attachment for the full list of novels, their authors, title translations and publication data.

This overview makes it clear that in all types of novels there are certain similarities with regard to the main geographical locations where the action unfolds. The differences between elite and popular literature are to be traced in other and more specific aspects of representation, as we demonstrate in the continuation of the paper. Another important characteristic is linked to the preserved domination of the countryside in early twentieth-century Latvian novels. However, there was a certain challenge to this tradition on the rise, and the representation of urban space in Latvia also played a substantial role in literary texts, while foreign locations gradually started to acquire importance. Such aspects as the migration from the country to the city, especially to Riga, and other potential directions, including even moves beyond the borders of a particular region that are linked to attempts to secure prospects for a better life might be singled out.

In addition to an aesthetic analysis of literary texts, the research of the novel corpus opens up new perspectives on the historical and social conditions represented in early twentieth century Latvian literature. Three aspects become highly important here. First, in the novel corpus we encounter certain locations that are described in detail and suggest a high level of familiarity on the part of the readers of the time; however, from the present-day point of view these localities often remain rather obscure. This includes the names of popular hotels, restaurants, and other social establishments of the early twentieth century whose mapping requires an additional inquiry. Without further investigation, it is relatively often impossible to grasp whether the author mentions real or imagined places in these cases; and on a number of occasions this will never be possible to establish with a sufficient level of certainty. As specific architectural sites (important buildings, bridges etc.) also belonged to the corpus of the registered place names, in a number of cases they were attributed to the category of lost places. In addition, research was also needed with regard to real or imagined places only referred to in a vague form (such as a capital letter indicating a particular place name etc.). An attempt was made to ascertain whether it is possible to establish the real location. However, it was recognized that fictional place names might be considered a topic worthy of separate investigation that would potentially point towards literary mechanisms participating in the creation of an imaginary nationscape by emphasizing typical features instead of particularities.

Secondly, from the perspective of cultural history, it is also important to pay attention to place names that refer to historical regions. The early twentieth century indicated changes in the geographical imaginary of the Latvian people gradually moving away from the focus on local particularities towards a more inclusive understanding of regional identity. The idea of political autonomy of the Latvian-speaking regions was also on the rise, and therefore, besides the traditional regions of Vidzeme, Kurzeme and Latgale, geographical names like Latvija (Latvia) and Baltija (the Baltics) start to appear more often. They were linked to and at the same time also opposed to such categories as Eiropa (Europe) and Krievija (Russia).

Thirdly, foreign settings provide an especially productive field for research both in terms of the social history of literature and the geographical imagination of the Latvian reading public during the early twentieth century. At this time, the development of new technologies and media enabled a much swifter acquisition of information about foreign locations that also entered the colloquial speech of the population. The naming of these locations may be referred to simply in passing and remain without any importance for the plot development, while at the same time they serve the purposes of revealing important features of the geographical imagination of society.

It becomes obvious that not all place names encountered in the novels acquire an equal level of importance. Some of these place names refer to locations that are substantial for novel narratives. However, there appear to be a number of place names that do not have a direct link to the unfolding events. These place names enter the text through the stories or memories of some of the protagonists who refer either to their past activities or future plans, or, sometimes, demonstrate their awareness of well-known facts or topical issues discussed in society. Finally, a separate segment in the variety of place names is formed by those namings that have no importance for the plot development, but indicate established values or contain certain cultural reminiscences. For these reasons, the material was structured according to three principal categories: first, important settings; secondly, projected spaces and places; thirdly, topographical markers or those places which, even if mentioned in texts, have no direct relationship to the unfolding narratives. Here we follow the model established by the *Literary Atlas of Europe* (Piatti, "Mapping" 92).

By gathering a substantial amount of information on these issues, important to make such an inquiry reliable, and by creating graphic models of gradually developing trends in these representations, that tend to change during the period under investigation, new perspectives in textual interpretation also open up for further research.

In the following we provide two case studies that specify the application of the above strategies to the analysis of the novel corpus by paying attention to the dynamics of changes in social history that are reflected by literary texts where space is "understood as socially produced, constructed, segmented, and given meaning" (Juvan 82).

Representations of Estonia and Lithuania in the context of social mobility

In the context of the political history, the Latvian-speaking regions of Vidzeme and Kurzeme had closer ties to Estonia, and the northern part of contemporary Latvia (Vidzeme, or Livland) even formed a joint territorial unit with Southern Estonia in the Russian Empire. Even if these ties still preserved their importance especially due to the German-speaking university tradition in the Estonian town of Tartu (then also subject to Russification), the late nineteenth and early twentieth century marked a considerable rise of interest in Lithuanian lands. This move was stimulated by the ideology of national romanticism that searched for common historical and ethnic roots of the two nations (Lithuanian and Latvian) which belong to the same group of Baltic languages. From this perspective it is interesting to compare the contexts in which Estonian and Lithuanian territories are represented in early twentieth-century Latvian fiction.

Lithuania is mentioned in thirteen novels of the corpus (*Aija*, *Kad mēness dilst*, *Patrioti*, *Baltā grāmata*, *Dīvaina mīlestība*, *Vīrie*šu *krietnums un sieviešu untums*, *Degoša sala*, *Bursaki*, *Pēdējais latvietis*, *Pa tumšām tekām*, *Zelts un mīlestība*, *Zelts* and *Zem saules*), while Estonia is featured in eleven novels (*Kad mēness dilst*, *Patrioti*, *Caurie ziedi*, *Iedzimtais grēks*, *Bursaki*, *Pa tumšām tekām*, *Sieviete*, *Ūdens burbuļi*, *Skolotāja Kalēja piedzīvojumi*, *Tilti un pārigājēji* and *Zem saules*). Five of the above texts contain both Lithuanian and Estonian places names. On closer inspection it might be argued that Lithuania is represented with more diversity. It is possible to separate two groups of Lithuania-related references in the novels. The first one points towards two-way mobility by describing Lithuanian immigrants in Latvia and Latvian subjects who go to Lithuania mostly for commercial reasons. Action in one novel (*Baltā grāmata*) is set close to the Latvian and Lithuanian border, where the protagonists remember their stay in Vilnius on various occasions as well as travels to this city. Alongside such principal Lithuanian sites as Vilnius, and also Kaunas, minor places, such as Pandėlys, Ratkūnai, and Suvainiškis, are mentioned as well. In the novels we often encounter secondary characters who either had been born, or lived and worked in Lithuania. The specific place names include Vilnius (*Zelts un mīlestība*), the Kaunas region (*Vīriešu krietnums un sieviešu untums*), Joniškėlis, Martiniškės, and Žagarė (*Aija*, *Dīvaina mīlestība*, *Zem saules*, *Patrioti*). The constant presence of Lithuania in the geographical imagination of the Latvian population is also revealed through such details as the arrival of a physician from Vilnius (*Zelts*); students trying to escape to Western Europe and being arrested in Kaunas (*Bursaki*); business deals made in Lithuania (*Pēdējais latvietis*); an opinion, expressed by a traveling Jewish merchant, that there are better opportunities for small-scale trade in Šiauliai and Žagarė than in Riga (*Patrioti*). The second group contains historical references, where Lithuania is mentioned in a historical perspective as one of the most important European powers in the sixteenth century (*Kad mēness dilst*) and a major centre of Catholicism (*Patrioti*); as a shelter of refugees from Kurzeme in the seventeenth century (*Pa tumšām tekām*); and in the context of such an important event as the publication of the first Latvian language texts in Vilnius.

Besides these two groups, Lithuania has been depicted in one novel as a mystical and unattainable part of the landscape for those living close to the border. The text here repeatedly refers to "Lithuanian forests" visible in the distance that provide a substantial element of the landscape encountered by the protagonist, and partly also serves as a projection of his dreams:

> There, in the south toward Lithuania, the black line of the pine forest is like a fallen desire … And he named some unfamiliar place. That must be deep in the Lithuanian countryside … The ripe summer slumbers in a blue haze, and the Lithuanian woodlands are drowning in smoke, just as they did back then … And he goes outside and looks across the lake toward the Lithuanians' bluish conifer forests. … There lies the black Lithuanian forest, barely visible, like a bow that has been released into a shallow curve. … Rūtiņa will be taken away to the Lithuanian forests. … The Lithuanian woodlands lie in blue curves and are mute and motionless, as in fairy tales. … The blue Lithuanian forests lay like a motionless rampart, full of the myth and longing of that, which is remote … The scorching wind blowing through the branches of the apple trees, and the calm blue-ing of the Lithuanian forest on the horizon at the southern edge of the sky made his heart grow heavy. … Beyond the lake, like the stroke of a painter's brush, like a wooden slat arrow shot into a shallow bend, slumbered the Lithuanian woodlands… (Akuraters 28–29, 33, 42, 96, 99, 103, 104, 112)[4]

In a rather more restricted sense, in the novel corpus Estonia is most frequently referenced in the context of the university town of Tartu. Discussed in the texts are protagonists who either have already entered the university or relish plans to begin their studies there (*Iedzimtais grēks*, *Bursaki*, *Ūdens burbuļi*, *Skolotāja Kalēja piedzīvojumi*, *Tilti un pārigājēji*, *Zem saules*, *Patrioti*). In one case this choice is abandoned because the character is looking for better options provided by the universities of Moscow or Warsaw (*Zem saules*). There are also critical remarks with regard to the frivolity of student corporations in Tartu (*Tilti un pārigājēji*); however, in an another novel by the same author student life in Tartu is characterized as exemplary (*Skolotāji Kalēja piedzīvojumi*), referencing the quality of the university library that even includes the book collection and refers to the design of the book shelves. One novel also mentions scholarships for Latvian students at the University of Tartu (*Patrioti*).

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[4] Here and further all quotations from Latvian are translated by Anna Reynolds.

While the references to the University of Tartu build up a substantial part of the Estonian-related place names, two further groups can also be singled out. One of them, similar to the Lithuanian references, indicates historical events. In the historical novels of the corpus Tallinn and Narva are places where certain battles occur in the seventeenth and eighteenth century (*Pa tumšām tekām*), or where the Swedes gather in the sixteenth century (*Kad mēness dilst*). Some other historical events include famine in Estonia and Finland in the mid-nineteenth century (*Patrioti*), and the impact of socialist ideas on particular restrictive decisions made by the Estonian clergy (*Skolotāji Kalēja piedzīvojumi*). The second group contains various Estonian towns that are mentioned as a part of travels and almost exclusively not as destination points; Estonian locations remain temporary shelters for the protagonists during their prolonged journeys. One of the characters arrives in Latvia from Russia taking the road via Narva (*Sieviete*); another one departs from Tartu in order to go to Tallinn (*Iedzimtais grēks*). In addition, one novel mentions Estonia as an important health resort and a place suitable for the summer vacations of wealthy middle-class citizens alongside such locations as the Crimea, Finland, and Jūrmala (an important sea resort in Latvia).

This analysis suggests several important aspects of how literary mapping can offer important data to social history. First of all, it becomes clear that particular locations mentioned in the novels often do not have a direct relation to the narrative development, but rather serve as signals of mental mapping of the perceived or experienced spaces. Therefore, an important aspect in these representations is provided by an apparent matching of place names to the expectations of the novel readers already familiar with a specific set of places.

An analysis of these namings offers interesting ground for inquiries with regard to imagological perspectives on Lithuania and Estonia in early twentieth-century Latvian society. However, to get results that are representative enough, it would be important to enlarge this set of data. Our preliminary observations indicate that on the level of everyday communication in early twentieth-century Latvia there are closer ties to Lithuania than to Estonia. Estonia is primarily associated with university studies in Tartu, while contacts with Lithuania also tend to include trade, travel, and short-term stays in various minor places as well as visits to Vilnius and Kaunas as major economic and cultural centers.

"Exotic" locations: metaphors and places of action

The development of a geographical imagination is also closely linked to the gradually growing presence of other continents as demonstrated by the novel corpus. The representation of foreign lands (both in the East and in the West) is still ruled by certain stereotypes to a considerable extent. So-called exotic locations are especially important in texts that were classified as popular literature. This can be more closely observed through the comparison of two continents, Africa and America, and their representation in the novel corpus.

Both continents remain almost equally unexplored for the Latvian population during this period, but their representations reveal different attitudes toward these faraway lands. While there is no information provided with regard to the colonies in Africa, the growing migration to America forms a part of the social mobility of the Latvian population, and at that time small communities of Latvian immigrants are already established there.

Africa is mentioned in eleven novels of the corpus (*Patrioti*, *Dēmona slāpes*, *Vīriešu krietnums un sieviešu untums*, *Iedzimtais grēks*, *Krusts un pusmēnesis*, *Brīvības karotāji pie Sarkanās upes*, *Bursaki*, *Stiprinieku karalis Zigfrīds*, *Skolotāja Kalēja piedzīvojumi*, *Tilti un pārigājēji* and *Zem Saules*), while America appears in eighteen of them (*Zīda tīklā*, *Patrioti*, *Dīvaina mīlestība*, *Vīriešu krietnums un sieviešu untums*, *Iedzimtais grēks*, *Krusts un pusmēnesis*, *Leons Vesers: Brīvības karotāji pie Sarkanās upes*, *Mantu, asinis, dzīvību uz Tēvijas altāra!*, *Bursaki*, *Pēdējais latvietis*, *Plūdi*, *Stiprinieku karalis Zigfrīds jeb Vīra spēks un sievietes sirds*, *Vēja ziedi*, *Rīta blāzmā*, *Skolotāja Kalēja piedzīvojumi*, *Tilti un pārigājēji*, *Zem dzimtenes debesīm* and *Zem saules*). A closer look at the namings reveals that America is more often represented as a place of narrative action or the final destination of the protagonists. At the same time, Africa is usually involved in a metaphorical sense.

The references to Africa can be subdivided into three groups. The first one includes historical events and contemporary political conflicts. To this part belong references to the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa, and Napoleon's exile to the island of St. Helena (*Vīriešu krietnums un sieviešu untums*), the rivalry between France and Germany with regard to Morocco (*Iedzimtais grēks*), and the popular appeal of the library of Alexandria in Egypt (*Skolotāja Kalēja piedzīvojumi*). The second group contains references related to the colonial imagination. The colonial contexts are detectable in the figure of a slave who has been brought to America from Africa at the beginning of the nineteenth century (*Brīvības karotāji pie Sarkanās upes*); in the discussion of the colonial wealth that has been brought to Europe from Africa (*Tilti un pārigājēji*); and in the attempt of the population of Vidzeme to raise money for a charity mission in Africa (*Patrioti*). Only one novel, where the action takes place in Serbia (*Krusts un pusmēness*), features a real encounter with Africa. The protagonist of this novel has returned from this distant continent, but its representations remain on the level of stereotypes that involve bright sunshine, deep forests, wild beasts, and black beauties. The third group includes very general and metaphoric features that refer to life and experience in Africa, such as great heat, physical pain, unknown directions, or unexpected experiences:

> You see, for the Ganges, whom I call the emancipated loner, love does not have a smiling nature, it is not a blossoming mountain of flowers, not a hallelujah, not a day of celebration, not a velvety green birch grove – rather it is a sweltering ache, it manifests the heat of the noonday sun, it is a sun-baked African cliff in an ebbing sea of sand. (Jēkabsons 265)
>
> The coastal sand has grown so hot in the sun that the soles of feet are burning. This does not seem like Latvia, but rather like a corner of the African Sahara – beneath the very Equator … (Skuju 43)
>
> “That is one of Egypt’s torments!” Rutkis complained, rubbing the places where it hurt. “How would it be if I ground in some grass, too?” “Let him feel shame before the world!” Old Rasa yelled in anger from the garden. Truly like the torments of Egypt. He could no longer lie down nor even really sit because of the pain.” (Gruzna 1374)
>
> It has pulled us forward quickly and now we are heading to Africa with express mail! (Rozentāls 145)
>
> Who persuaded them to flee? No one. They decided to do it themselves, for scientific purposes. Just like Stanley in Africa, or Przewalski in Central Asia. (Gruzna 484)

Along with the colonial references they are characteristic of the contemporaneous European imagination of Africa in terms of “suspended reality” and “imperialist ethnographies” bringing the theme of adventures into the foreground (Riesz 79–82). What is more important, in these references we witness that those authors who describe Africa do not have direct knowledge of the continent, and rely on information obtained from books and newspapers.

In this regard, there are certain similarities in the representation of America, as some of the characteristics that refer to this continent remain on the same level of stereotypes. The first group of references is related to travel where America is often involved as a metaphoric image for an upcoming long and hazardous journey:

> "To Liepāja…" "Or even to America – what does it matter to us!" (Upīts, *Zīda* 183)

> They had wanted to cross the border at Virbaļi. And then go on, even as far as America. (Gruzna 484)

> Minna began blubbering loudly. "What's all this caterwauling? I won't be going to America. You know how to read, you could bring yourself to write too, now and again." (Upīts, *Plūdi* 346)

> Bravo! Mother doesn't want to send me to the swamps of Misi Sipi to toughen up – she's found a place for me right here, nearby." (Jaunsudrabiņš No. 247, 2)

A trip to America even comes into question as a substitute for an attempted suicide when there are unpayable debts, or it contains a more or less unrealistic future dream:

> Your credit is finished, ganz aus. You want to get away to America, or put a string around your neck? (Kalniņš 74)

> Gentlemen, but what are the rest of us to do, those who won't be getting ministers' portfolios? "Let us be envoys, consuls and other such men." "I am going to Paris in any event!" "And I – to Constantinople!" "I – to Peking!" "I – to Rome!" "I – to the United States, or to Brazil, whichever I like best!" (Skuju 19)

There are, however, also cases when a real journey to America is involved. In one novel the protagonist decides to try his luck as a Gold digger (*Iedzimtais grēks*); while in another one, in the aftermath of a successful participation in the gold rush in Alaska, the protagonist establishes himself as a farmer in Mexico (*Stiprinieku karalis Zigfrīds*). Agents also appear that pretend to help people to move to either America or Siberia in a search of a better life (*Plūdi*); and Lithuanian casual workers overseas are said to get better payments than professors in Germany (*Skolotāja Kalēja piedzīvojumi*). A Latvian teacher decides to follow her pupils' family to America (*Zem dzimtenes debesīm*); and it is also maintained that there are more scientists of Latvian origin in Buenos Aires, Berlin, and Vladivostok than in Latvia (*Rīta blāzmā*). These examples point toward the second group of references, connected to the popular image of the United States of America as a land of extraordinary wealth that becomes visible in references to the Gold Rush in Alaska, or the USA as a place where wealth can be acquired almost at once. America is considered to be the land of millionaires (*Zem saules*); and two novels deal with an inheritance left by a relative living in the US (*Plūdi* and *Vīriešu krietnums*). The third group of America-related references relates to the perception of the continent as an "altogether different" place, including contemporaneous political trends (cf. Firchow 90–94). Compared to Europe, America has different laws (*Tilti un pārigājēji*). America is also involved as a progressive example in the context of the emancipation of women (*Vīriešu krietnums* and *Pēdējais latvietis*) or the discussion of other socially radical ideas. It is mentioned that a Latvian language newspaper had published a paper that was sent by a compatriot in the United States (*Bursaki*). Sensationalism surrounds a novel that features a meeting in Philadelphia with a physician who turns out to be a serial killer (*Mantu, asinis, dzīvību*). The fourth group includes historical events that are mentioned rather seldom; references to the nineteenth-century civil war (*Patrioti*, *Brīvības karotāji;* in the latter case, also a location in Mexico is involved) as well as the late nineteenth-century Spanish-American war are rare examples (*Vīriešu krietnums*). A number of specific places that cover a wide geographical area also occur. One novel (*Spēkavīru karalis Zigfrīds*) involves numerous locations in Europe as well as in the US, and among the place names involved one finds Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Washington. In addition, more specific locations are also indicated, among them Central Park in New York, the White House in Washington, and the Montgomery Hotel in San Francisco.

These examples allow for certain conclusions regarding the representations of foreign and exotic locations. The abundance of stereotypes reveals that in most cases the inclusion of these place names serves as a reference to the already known rather than pointing toward the strange or unfamiliar. A general observation can also be made that America as a place for the narrative action is used solely in those novels that can be attributed to popular literature. While it is hard to find examples where national or colonial stereotyping has not been involved, it is worth mentioning that some of the stereotypes do not appear in Latvian novels—for instance, one does not find the image of America as a "melting pot," nor does one witness an interpretation of America in terms of the American Revolution or utopian vs. dystopian views on America (cf. Firchow 90–94). On some occasions we can find references to real mobility of the Latvian population to America, while on the whole the representation of both Africa and America can be productively used in imagological research by turning attention to the different ways national and colonial stereotypes were established in Latvian letters.

The images of the foreign that excite readers also follow certain models of translated fiction that predominantly portray characters against some kind of background that remains exotic for the Latvian population, while at the same time it is adapted to serve their knowledge and expectations. It is also possible to trace the appearance of facts already familiar to readers from newspapers. This also confirms that popular fiction most often recycles information available in other sources. In this process, persistent stereotypes emerge that influence the geographical imagination of a substantial part of the Latvian population for a long time to come.

Concluding remarks

A digital analysis of all Latvian novels published between 1900 and 1914, and the research opportunities it provides, allows for both theoretical observations and case studies. As becomes visible in the examples dealt with in this paper, the interpretations of Latvian novels within the perspective of the geographical imagination provide knowledge that would be harder and more difficult to obtain by using conventional methods of literary analysis. At the current stage of research, it is already possible to draw a few provisional conclusions.

The novels as sources of social history demonstrate not only real mobility, but also stereotypes and attitudes, and it might even be argued that the second level of information is more useful and productive for purposes of research. In this regard, we have to reject the idea of "mimetic illusion" (Piatti, *Die Geographie* 27) and to accept that not all places depicted in the novels match their real-life counterparts, especially when the authors have not been directly acquainted with the locations they describe. In further research, significant attention should thus be paid to the divide between fictional and real geography (Piatti, *Die Geographie* 24–26). By exploring fictional geography, the research might be fruitfully developed through a dialogue with imagological studies. Secondly, we anticipate that literary maps might be used as a significant research instrument, even though we are well aware that they would not serve in this capacity on all occasions. To increase the analytical capacity of literary maps, it would be productive to combine them with other kinds of maps—e.g., biographical maps depicting the mobility of writers themselves or historical maps depicting the routes of professional or educational migration of the Latvian population—which would provide an analysis of the impact social changes had on the geographical imagination, or aspects when the social developments were inconsistent to what was imagined. Similarly, as revealed by our case studies, the historical level in literary maps should be separated from the contemporaneous one, as we witness a high level of literarization of some regions that had been depicted based on what had been read about them instead of what had directly been experienced. It is important to compare this material with specific historical sources also in order not to overemphasize certain presumptions and add more interpretative space to the gathered material that uncovers assumptions and attitudes shared by authors and reading public of the time. The data corpus thus provides a substantial basis for the social history of literature.

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Appendix: Corpus of Latvian Novels (1900–1914)

Author	**Title (in Latvian)**	**Title (in English)**	**Year**
Ernests Dinsbergs	*Vīriešu krietnums un sieviešu untums*	*Male Virtue and Female Caprice*	1900
Zeiboltu Jēkabs	*Ūdens burbuļi*	*Bubbles in the Water*	1900
Kārlis Kalniņš	*Noslēpumainais gredzens*	*The Mysterious Ring*	1901
Viktors Eglītis	*Rīta blāzmā*	*At Dawn*	1901
Zemzarītis	*Tumša ēna jeb Dvēseles sāpju mocekļi*	*A Dark Shadow, or Martyrs of Spiritual Pain*	1902
Andrievs Niedra	*Kad mēness dilst*	*When the Moon is on the Wane*	1902
Viktors Eglītis	*Tilti un pāri gājēji*	*Bridges and Those Who Cross Them*	1902
Kārlis Cilinskis	*Skaistā cietēja Milda*	*The Sufferings of Beautiful Milda*	1903
Andrejs Upīts	*Plūdi*	*The Flood*	1903
Kārlis Cilinskis	*Skaistā Adelīna jeb Mīlestība un briesmas*	*Beautiful Adeline, or Love and Danger*	1904

Zemzarītis	*Mantu, asinis, dzīvību uz Tēvijas altāra!*	*Possessions, Blood, and Life on the Altar of the Fatherland!*	1904
Haralds Eldgasts	*Zvaigžņotās naktis*	*Starlit Nights*	1905
Zemzarītis	*Uz mākslas spārniem*	*On the Wings of Art*	1905
Reinis Dievkociņš	*Gods un apziņa*	*Honour and Conscience*	1905
Andrievs Niedra	*Sikspārnis*	*The Bat*	1905
Kārlis Jēkabsons	*Dēmona slāpes*	*Demon's Thirst*	1907
Valdis Lesiņš	*Slimā dvēsele*	*The Sick Soul*	1907
Antons Birkerts	*Pedagogi*	*The Pedagogues*	1907
Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš	*Vēja ziedi*	*Blossoms of the Wind*	1907
Diženajo Bernhards	*Dzelzpiere Briesmīgais un viņa varoņa darbi*	*Ironhead the Terrible and His Exploits*	1908
Andrejs Upīts	*Jauni avoti*	*New Springs*	1908
Leons Veseris	*Starp Sibīriju un Indiju jeb Tuksnešu varoņi*	*Between Siberia and India, or Heroes of the Desert*	1909
Andrejs Upīts	*Sieviete*	*Woman*	1910
Antons Birkerts	*Nolādētais*	*The Damned*	1910
Leons Veseris	*Brīvības karotāji pie Sarkanās upes*	*Freedom Fighters on the Shores of the Red River*	1910
Tirzmaliete	*Zem dzimtenes debesīm*	*Beneath My Native Sky*	1911
Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš	*Aija*	*Aija*	1911
Skuju Frīdis	*Zem saules*	*Beneath the Sun*	1912
Andrejs Upīts	*Zīda tīklā*	*In the Silken Web*	1912
Jānis Akuraters	*Degoša sala*	*Burning Island*	1912
Augusts Deglavs	*Patrioti*	*The Patriots*	1912
M. Kalniņš	*Dīvaina mīlestība*	*Strange Love*	1912
Zemzarītis	*Krusts un pusmēness*	*The Cross and the Crescent*	1912
Andrejs Upīts	*Pēdējais latvietis*	*The Last Latvian*	1912
Ivande Kaija	*Iedzimtais grēks*	*Ancestral Sin*	1913
Jānis Kārstenis	*Kā sacēlās vētra*	*How the Storm Arose*	1913
Zeiboltu Jēkabs	*Caurie ziedi*	*Empty Blossoms*	1913
Čiekurs	*Žurku krodziņš*	*Rat Tavern*	1914
Roberts Klaustiņš	*Pa tumšām tekām*	*Walking along Shadowy Trails*	1914
Viktors Eglītis	*Skolotāja Kalēja piedzīvojumi*	*The Adventures of Teacher Kalējs*	1914
Andrejs Upīts	*Zelts*	*Gold*	1914
Leopolds Rozentāls	*Stiprinieku karalis Zigfrīds*	*Zigfried, King of the Mighty*	1914
Pāvils Gruzna	*Bursaki*	*The Students*	1914
Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš	*Baltā grāmata*	*The White Book*	1914
Anonīms	*Zelts un mīlestība*	*Love and Gold*	1914
Zeltenietis	*Karš un mīlestība*	*Love and War*	1914

Geografska imaginacija v latvijskih romanih zgodnjega 20. stoletja

Ključne besede: latvijska književnost / latvijski roman / 20. stoletje / literarna geografija / literarno kartiranje / imagologija

V prispevku raziskujeva geografsko imaginacijo v latvijskih romanih, objavljenih na začetku 20. stoletja. Najprej podava lastne izkušnje in preliminarne rezultate projekta literarnega mapiranja, nato se posvetiva študijskim primerom: reprezentacijam držav, ki so sosede Latvije, in posameznih izbranih kontinentov v navedenih romanih. Zgodnje 20. stoletje kot obdobje množičnih migracij in vse večjega zavedanja globalnih dogajanj postreže z izjemno raznolikimi reprezentacijami tujih geografskih prostorov v latvijski družbi. Ob hkratnem razpravljanju o prednostih in omejitvah literarnih preslikav zagovarjava stališče, da so interpretacije latvijskih romanov v perspektivi geografske imaginacije vir dragocenega védenja za socialno zgodovino literature.

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Decommunizing the National Poet: Post-1989 Reading of Eminescu, Botev, and Petőfi

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This article attempts to explain why de-mythicizing–and not mythicizing–the institution of the "national poet" illustrates more closely and more deeply the ideological, cultural and identity-related changes in post-communist East-Central Europe. As for the case studies, I have chosen the critical reception of Mihai Eminescu, Hristo Botev, and Sándor Petőfi, precisely because the aforementioned phenomenon is more frequent in countries such as Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary, whose self-portrayals in terms of identity are profoundly indebted to the East-West binary opposition. In order to demonstrate that de-mythicizing the national poet occurs predominantly after 1989, I analyze a series of critical and imagistic reconsiderations of Eminescu, Botev, and Petőfi, brought about by the fact that anti-communist, pro-Western intellectual elites regarded the cult of the national poet as a symptom of cultural and ideological backwardness, typical for the 'uncivilized' East, scarred as it was by the trauma of national communism. Thus, it has become evident that breaking away from the Eminescu/Botev/Petőfi national myth is part of a larger decommunizing tendency, tributary to the capitalist transition.

Keywords: literature and ideology / East-Central European literatures / postcommunism / national poets / demythicizing / Eminescu, Mihai / Botev, Hristo / Petőfi Sándor

In post-communism, the most heated ideological, social, and cultural debate in Central and Eastern Europe revolved around nationalism.[1] Much to the surprise of the Western intellectual elites, who considered that socialist ideology and nationalism are incompatible, if not downright antagonistic, the researchers that specialized in the study of East-

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Central cultural space regard nationalism as an aspect of the "perilous legacy" of communism (Mevius, *The Communist*).[2]

Apart from the realization that, "far from ruthlessly suppressing nationhood, the Soviet regime pervasively institutionalized it," which, in turn, brought about a "political field supremely conducive to nationalism" (Brubaker 17), and putting forward different types of "national communism/socialism/Stalinism" (Sugar; Verdery, *National*), there is also scientific consensus regarding the fact that the nationalistic excesses of Nicolae Ceaușescu in Romania, Todor Zhivkov in Bulgaria, and Slobodan Milošević in Former Yugoslavia remain extreme cases, yet not anomalies for the Eastern European communism of the 1970s and 1980s. Precisely that is the reason why post-communist nationalism was conceptually separated from the whole process of capitalist transition, being mainly labeled as "a political and ideological phenomenon … rooted in and marked by Leninist-authoritarian mentalities and habits, directed against any principle of difference and primarily against those groups and forces that champion pro-Western, pluralist orientations" (Tismăneanu 7). To draw a rather cynical symbolic parallel, "[t]he Wars of Yugoslav Succession, when nationalism—in opposition to liberalism—is in play, hold a critical function in transition culture: the unspoken, but deadly alternative to markets and pluralism" (Kennedy 240). Despite the fact that numerous studies illustrate that Eastern post-communist nationalism is deeply indebted to the disappointments and frustrations brought about by transitional economic, social and cultural changes (Todorova 98; Verdery, "Nationalism"), anti-communist intellectual elites cultivate an exclusively "progressive" image of post-communism (Lánczi 69–71), one of the major challenges of overcoming totalitarianism being precisely that of eliminating the issue of nationalism from the inner workings of new, free, and democratic societies.

This point of view—as anti-communist as it is anti-nationalist—powers one of the most prominent cultural debates of post-communism, namely the reorganization of the literary canon, whose main focus is the critical reassessment of the national poet. Due to the fact that, in many East-Central European countries, the cult of the national poet reaches similar, if not greater heights during communism than during the second half of the nineteenth century (when – in the most European countries—can be identified the peak of cultic commemoration/veneration), this reassessment is often tantamount to a de-mythicization. The two contradictory phenomena—the communist mythicization and the post-communist de-mythicization of the national poet—are characteristic of countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania, whose national identities are built upon unsettledness and their peripheral and hybrid character, constantly vacillating between East and West. The old Romanian inferiority complex regarding its position between the Occident and the Orient, best described through the metaphor of "a Latin island in a Slavic sea" (Djuvara; Martin) finds a counterpart in the hesitation Bulgarians experience when faced with a choice between Balkanism and Occidentalism (Otfinoski; Hupchick) and the Hungarian back-and-forth motion between East and Mitteleuropa (Katzenstein; Kehoe).

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[2] I will be employing the term "communism" instead of "socialism" in discussing the political regime that reigned in Central and Eastern Europe starting with the end of the Second World War and up until 1989. Even if the term was initially met with resistance in the academic debates of the 1990s on the grounds that ex-Soviet republics regarded themselves as "socialists on the path to communism," the term has gained strength during the 2000s, also on the ground of the many resolutions/reports/laws that condemned the crimes of "totalitarian communist regimes": Council of Europe – 2006, Romania – 2006, Hungary – 2010, Bulgaria – 2016, etc.

Moreover, the particularities of the communist consecration of the national poets Hristo Botev (1848–1876), Sándor Petőfi (1823–1849), and Mihai Eminescu (1850–1889), as well as their post-communist de-mythicization process represent necessary additions to the substantial study authored by Marijan Dović and Jón Karl Helgason, *National Poets, Cultural Saints. Canonization and Commemorative Cults of Writers in Europe*. Despite its uncontested merits, this volume—and the sections devoted to re-reading the myth of the national poet from other major research projects such as the one edited by Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer, *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, or Andrew Baruch Wachtel's *Remaining Relevant after Communism. The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe*—pay little to no attention to the phenomenon of post-communist de-mythicization.

On the one hand, the critical reception of Eminescu, Botev, and Petőfi confirms that the national poets "assumed an unprecedented level of social relevance … during the commemorative century (from late 1830s to the Second World War): the leap from individual to mass veneration, the crescendo-like ritualization, and the growing connection with national movements" (Dović 62). Whether they were (Botev and Petőfi) or not (Eminescu) bards/martyr poets of their nation and regardless of the inherent geopolitical, cultural, and identity differences between Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria, the mythicization of the three writers witnessed at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century roughly follows the same pattern.

Owing to the popularity of his manuscripts (amassing nearly 14.000 pages) made available several years after his death, Eminescu is rapidly turned into a symbol of Romanian spirit: "[I]n a number of years, Eminescu transforms … from a rather weak symbol of nationalism, to the great prophet of Romanian nationalism" (Boia 49). His conservative and nationalist views, mainly expressed through his journalistic texts, will be ideologically manipulated by the promoters of anti-Western traditionalism, the socialists, and the extreme-nationalist members of the Legionary Movement (paramilitary organization of fascist descent), the poet being considered "the integral expression of the Romanian soul" (Iorga 167). Eminescu comes to rank among great national prophets and martyrs, alongside Zalmoxis, the presumed supreme god of the Geto-Dacians, the forefathers of the Romanian people; Ștefan cel Mare [Stephen The Great], Moldova's ruler for nearly half a century and a fervent defender of Christianity; Horea, the Transylvanian leader of the peasant uprising against the Hungarian nobility; and, unsurprisingly, "The (legionary) Captain" Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the Iron Guard's leader. The myth is confirmed by the most renowned Romanian interwar critic and literary historian, George Călinescu, who, in his *History* (371–402), entitles "The National Poet" the chapter dedicated to Eminescu.

Botev himself (who dies in 1876, following his allegedly leading a military campaign meant to revive the revolutionary spirit and the dream of national emancipation after five centuries of Ottoman occupation) is mythicized both by socialist movements, being perceived—especially thanks to the influential critic and literary historian Todor Pavlov—as an "immortal Son, teacher and leader of the people," "the embodiment of the profound essence and unconscious compulsions that define the revolutionary spirit of Bulgaria and of the entire humankind" (Kiossev, "Heritage" 136), and the fascist regime installed after the 1934 *coup d'état*: the city of Orhania is then renamed Botevgrad, Ivan Mešekov publishes *Hristo Botev—poet and genius* in 1936, and in 1939, at the presumed site of his death, Okolchitsa, a monument is erected in his honor, which bears an immense orthodox cross at its top, portraying the poet "as a prophet or the archangel Michael, and also as Moses and Christ" (Penčev 125).

The hyperbolized figure of Petőfi (who died in 1849 on the anti-Russian battlefield in Transylvania where he fought for Hungary's independence) becomes visible especially after 1920, as the Treaty of

Trianon forces Hungary to cede other countries 70% of its territory and 60% of its population, while the texts of the national poet become a banner for all interwar revisionist movements. The very influential study authored by János Horváth, *Petőfi Sándor* (1922), where Petőfi and his contemporary János Arany are declared "the towering national classics of Hungarian literature," places the poet above the confines of the Romantic period, conceptualizing a so-called "folk-style lyrical realism," which amasses the spirit and aspirations of an entire people irrespective of any historical context (Neubauer 54). He is featured on national banknotes and a monument in his memory is erected in Budapest. His bust was to become the central symbol of Greater Hungary, the extended national territory obtained after the First and Second Vienna Diktats (Frank 208–209).

The communist "saints"

On the other hand, the coming of Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary under Soviet influence did nothing to alleviate the process of mythicization. Quite the contrary.

In 1948, Eminescu receives posthumous membership to the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania, and the 100th anniversary of his birth (in 1950) paints the image of a poet who fell victim to "the bourgeois-landowning exploitation" and who wholeheartedly supported the proletarian cause. During the entire Stalinist regime (1948–1965) established by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, his most promoted text was the abridged version of the 1874 poem "Împărat și proletar" ["Emperor and Proletarian"], containing the renowned "revolutionary" verses "Destroy the hateful system, the ruthless, the unfair, / Which splits the world asunder—poor these and rich the others" (Eminescu 131). After the gradually more explicit independence from Moscow (1964) and especially starting with 1971, when Nicolae Ceaușescu outlined the beginning of his infamous "cultural revolution," which was to serve as basis for the nationalist-communist regime, Eminescu is again "rewritten," becoming yet again a symbol of the Romanian spirit and the nation's exceptionality. His patriotic 1883 poem "Doina," which describes Romania under foreign rule and exploitation, is recited at official gatherings, public manifestations and in schools. The national poet is also employed as a major argument by the protochronist doctrine, which questionably attributes cultural and scientific innovations to the Romanians, with Eminescu allegedly anticipating not only existentialism and modernist poetry, but also different findings in the field of sociology and physics (Papu). In 1989, a century after his death, Eminescu, "the universal man of Romanian letters" (Noica), comes to serve as symbolic tool for strengthening the myth of the "beloved leader" Ceaușescu, whose nationalist project the poet had presumably shared.

After the Second World War, the cult of the national poet grew in size in Bulgaria as well, irrespective of whether the communist dictatorship was of a Stalinist or a "humanist-socialist" origin, as Todor Jivkov's regime, installed in 1956, had proclaimed itself to be. The highest peak in the Balkan Mountains is eponymous with Botev as are several football clubs, thousands of schools, streets, prizes, and cultural institutions. In 1948, the 100th anniversary of his birth gives way to a wave of festive events: "The authorities established Botev monuments in Sofia, Vracha and Kalofer, and commissioned a bibliography and biography. Schools and cultural clubs dedicated special weeks to Botev's life-work, and some important social institutions were renamed 'Hristo Botev'" (Sygkelos 218). The majority of his poems ("Hadzhi Dimitar," "My Prayer," "The Hanging of Vasil Levski," "To My Brother," "To My Mother," "On Parting," "In the Tavern") go on to become popular folk songs among Bulgarians. Read through the lens of socialist realism and then nationalist communism, the poems and journalistic works authored by Botev, "the universal bard of freedom," express not only the need for sacrifices in order to obtain national emancipation from the Ottoman occupation, but also the imperious urgency to wipe out fascism, colonialism, and capitalist exploiters: "His burning patriotism arose from a sense of international brotherhood. His love for his people led him to love all the oppressed, without distinction as to race or nationality" (Topencharov 57). The myth of the national poet was even employed to legitimize the regime's most heinous crimes. Botev's martyrdom would also be invoked during the so-called Bulgarisation of Turkish citizens, actually nothing less than ethnic cleansings coordinated by Jivkov in the 1980s (Penčev 127).

The national poet was also deployed to legitimize the Hungarian Stalinist regime of Mátyás Rákosi (1945–1956). During the last days of World War II, Petőfi's name is used in anti-Nazi propaganda, in reference to his fight for liberty and independence more than a century prior. In a first phase, "the Propaganda Department gave instructions to use quotes from Petőfi, such as 'Destroy the scoundrels at home!' and 'On your feet, Hungarians, the Fatherland calls!'," and then the symbol of freedom gradually gave way to the symbol of the nation;

the poet's portrait was displayed alongside those of Lenin and Stalin, in order to emphasize the fact that the new regime respects and values the national identity (Mevius, *Agents* 87–110). Central squares, statues, streets bearing Petőfi's name are to be found all across the country. Even the longest bridge over the Danube, linking Buda and Pesta, is named after the national poet in 1945. *Petőfi, our Banner* (the title of Horváth Márton's 1950 volume) becomes a common slogan during the public manifestations organized by the Hungarian communist party: "Following the Soviet cultural commissar Anatoly Lunacharsky's claim that Petőfi was 'the Bolshevik of his age'," the communist cultural policy presented Petőfi's "democratic internationalism" as harmonious with his commitment to a "national revolution" (Hites 43). Following the same logic of manipulation, it hardly comes as a surprise that the poet's nationalist, anti-imperialist, and republican spirit tutored the anti-Stalinist Revolution of October 1956, which started off as a peaceful manifestation conducted by members of The Petőfi Circle and which originated in front of Petőfi's statue. One of the major points agreed upon by the revolutionaries, prior to the insurgency being brutally muffled down by the Red Army, was the revival of the old National Peasant Party as "The Petőfi Party" (Cornis-Pope, "Revolt" 87). The so-called "Goulash Communism" that managed to gradually set in during János Kádár's regime (1956–1988) unsurprisingly exploited Petőfi's mythical figure to its fullest extent. Even if the consequences of the Treaty of Trianon have become a sensitive topic in the meanwhile, the poet's revolutionary and anti-imperialist spirit was continually reiterated. Four monographies paying explicit homage to the poet, as well as three literary historical overviews dedicated to the cultural period in which he lived and created are published during the 1960s, further underlining that he has become the symbol of two revolutions: the one in 1848 and that of 1956, respectively. His name features on even more streets, schools, prizes, organizations, and cultural institutions, and the erection of new statues in his honor becomes a common occurrence (Frank 210–217).

Concluding, the cult of "the beloved leader" (Ceaușescu, Jivkov, Kádár) and national communism as forms of independence from both soviet imperialism and Western, capitalist imperialism go hand in hand with the mythicization of the national poet in all three of the aforementioned cultural spaces.

The anti-communist de-mythicization

This state of fact is representative not only for the construction of national identity for the three countries, which for over half a century had been under communist control, but it also explains why the post-communist decommunizing process regarded anti-communism, anti-nationalism, democracy, and westernization as conceptually equivalent. Moreover, it explains why the national poet was the object of this de-mythicization[3] more intensely and more systematically than in any other historical period.[4] For the anti-communist, pro-Western intellectual elites, the "cultural saint" corrupted by national-communist propaganda must be condemned as a symbol of backwardness, provincial inferiority complexes and rudimentary Eastern self-isolation against the Western civilization. All the other possible functions of the national poet—for example, what Marko Juvan calls "sainting" as "worlding" or "cosmopolitanism" (14), or what Andrei Terian perceives as integration into the "intercultural and intertextual network" of world literature ("Mihai Eminescu" 36) or what Dimitar Kambourov identifies as its "healing effect by curbing both the populist and individualist extremes of the collective unconscious" (53)—are not even vaguely outlined, the foremost urgency being his de-mythicization, labeled as an immediate liberation from every form of ideological and political (especially communist) manipulations.

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[3] The mythicizing efforts (even in aberrant forms; Terian, "Prophet" 307–325) unsurprisingly continued after 1989: national poets were employed as legitimizing symbols by various nationalist political factions, their birthday as well as the day they died were turned into various national festivities, the most important cultural institutions bear their names, new statues were erected in their honor. Nevertheless, unlike all other historical periods, post-communism did not develop new mechanisms of reproducing their canonical status.

[4] Previously, the most virulent critiques of Eminescu, Petőfi or Botev were the result of circumstantial cultural or geopolitical feuds, which had never once succeeded in generating an authentic following and, in turn, a process of de-mythicization: e.g., in 1980s, Moses Rosen, Chief Rabbi of the Romanian Jewish Community, sparks a public outcry as he protests against the fact that antisemitic political articles authored by Eminescu were to be featured in his *Collected Works*; in his 1977 study, *The Image of Germans in Hungarian Literature*, Johan Weidlein calls Petőfi "an apostle of hate" and "one of the most dangerous agitators in history … for the seed he sowed in a people so easily instigated reaped bad and ultimately horrible things" (92); in Bulgaria, the fact that Botev wrote little over twenty poems prompted debates surrounding the legitimacy of his canonical status as national poet and to his replacement, in several books on Bulgarian literary history, by Ivan Vazov (1850–1921), a prolific poet, novelist, and playwriter, "the Patriarch of Bulgarian literature," "the most translated Bulgarian writer of all time."

Virgil Nemoianu's 1990 contribution to this topic is crucial and holds true not only for Romanian culture. The Romanian-born American professor, author of one of the most seminal studies on Romanticism (*The Taming of Romanticism*, "'National Poets' in the Romantic Age: Emergence and Importance"), most clearly states that the detachment from the myth of the national poet and democratization/European integration are virtually equivalent:

> No, in Romania, where this is still not possible, but among Romanian intellectuals living in the West, I often notice a joyful tendency: a self-critical inquiry of Romanian thought and literature of the last century, and especially a certain detachment from Eminescu and his legacy of ideas. … The chance at drifting away from the West … was more and more vigorously proclaimed by autochthonous successors of Eminescu's myth. Anti-historicism, passivity and sleep-like withdrawal found among them virulent defendants. … Proof that it was not merely an incidental aberration is the fact that during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, precisely this post-Eminescu literary production creates for itself a grinning mask of crass simplicity, a rude and repressive ideology that seeks to validate the Orwellian totalitarianism of one of the most pitiful dictators in Romanian history [Nicolae Ceaușescu]. (Nemoianu, "Despărțirea" 8)

A similar point of view lies at the foundation of another contribution, that of I. Negoițescu, the most influential postwar interpreter of Eminescu, a political prisoner during the 1960s, and exiled intellectual during the 1980s. Dissatisfied with the fact that the 1991 anti-government protests employed images of Eminescu as a legitimizing symbol, Negoițescu pleads for clear distinction between the "great poet" and the "absolutely infamous politician," whose positions anticipated extremist movements and who was nothing short of a major obstacle in the "civilizing process" of the Romanian people (Negoițescu 12). But perhaps the harshest critique of the myth of the national poet (also due to the scandalizing effect it had in the public sphere; Terian, "(Re) politicizing" 11) was published in 1998 in the explicitly anti-communist journal *Dilema*. The reasons for relegating Eminescu ranged from the need for deconstructing the interpretative clichés surrounding his works and amending the ideological manipulations brought to his image, through addressing the general oversaturation with his works triggered by its vulgarization, to the kitsch surrounding the public homage he was constantly brought. This issue, edited by the young novelist Cezar-Paul Bădescu, would later become a book entitled *The Eminescu Case* including critical responses in regard to "the monstrous personality cult" to which Eminescu was subjected (9). If the more mature generation of contributors to this volume plead for the "courage to break away from Eminescu if we wish to find him anew, bring him closer and turn him into a contemporary" (12–13) or for "a plural, contradictory, fascinating and 'lively' Eminescu," simultaneously "democratic" and "postmodern," "the exact opposite of the mummified, ancient image of the 'national poet'," typical of communist times (16), the considerations of the younger writers and intellectuals are intently outrageous. Eminescu's works are labeled as "nearly illegible," "confusing," and "crabbed" (19), his political views are regarded as "null," typical of pre-modern times (43), while the concept of "national poet" itself is seen as a phenomenon proper to "nations and cultures of minor status," which have not yet embarked on the journey to democracy (27). Even the efforts aimed at de-mythicizing Eminescu on scientific grounds, both through methodology (Bot) and rhetoric (Boia), appear to have not taken into account the "transnational dimension" of the national poet's canonization (Mironescu 75). The cliché regarding Eminescu's uniqueness and exceptionality is further perpetuated by the idea that the inability of the Romanian culture to let go of the cult of the national poet would make it inferior to other European cultures.

The extent of the efforts directected toward de-mythicizing Eminescu are also confirmed by the confusion felt among the anti-communist ideologues. Significant for this matter is a 2002 article of ultraconservative intellectual Horia-Roman Patapievici, one of the most vocal condemners of the crimes of the communist regime and who, at that time, had risen to a management position in the National Council for the Study of the *Securitate* Archives. Going against the de-mythicizing project undertaken by "Dilema" (with which he was very close)—albeit without admitting to it—Patapievici's rhetoric betrays a tendency symptomatic for post-1989 Romanian culture:

> As a national poet, Eminescu cannot survive, because we are now exiting the era of *the national*. Eminescu can no longer be a canonical poet, because the sociological revolution that took place in higher education brought to power "intellectuals" that seem downright allergic to the word "canon" and who reach for their revolver as soon as they hear the word "tradition." Neither can he be considered profound, because depth, not being seen as a postmodern trait, is no longer appreciated by progressive intellectuals. … For the imperious need for renewal felt among young intellectuals that seek to become internationally visible, Eminescu plays the role of a corpse well hidden in the closet of Romanian culture. (58)

For Patapievici, "the former national poet of classicist Romania" had become the topic of de-mythicizations because—from the standpoint of "neo-communist" postmodernists—he was "politically incorrect." Nonetheless, none of the Romanian detractors of the Eminescu myth display any signs of a "left-wing" ideological stance. Quite the contrary, many of them are vocal promoters of liberalism, according to which any socialist idea implies a revival of the communist regime. As previously mentioned, in Romania during the 1990s, the cult for the national poet is associated with totalitarianism, whereas de-mythicization is equivalent to Europeanization and cultural emancipation.

The mythological "inheritance" of communism visibly influenced the critical reception of Hungary's national poet as well: "After 1989, Petőfi's icon lost much of its luster among the literati and the intellectuals, precisely because communists, nationalists, populists, and promoters of other 'isms' had glorified his somewhat naïve rhetoric of political, national, and global freedom," notes John Neubauer, while taking into account the blatant xenophobia found in some of the poems and articles authored by Petőfi around mid-nineteenth century: in one instance he curses the "whore mothers" of the "Swabian Germans living in Hungary," in another, he cries out that a "Serbian plague" "was gnawing at the country's leg" while other texts find him lamenting the ungrateful Serbs, Croats, Germans, Slovaks, and Romanians, which he accuses of "biting" "the Magyar who defended them from the Turks and the Tatars" (Neubauer 43–48). With the rise of liberal anticommunism, "the youthfully rebellious tribune and democrat Sándor Petőfi was not expected to become a protagonist" (Halász), an idea further emphasized by the reputed professor of Hungarian origins from Indiana University, Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, which also noted the consequences the exaggeration of Petőfi's image during communism has had on contemporary readerships:

> At a conference celebrating the 175th anniversary of the birth of Petőfi, held at the beginning of April 1998, several participants spoke of a general lack of interest in the works of this nineteenth century author … Some poems by Petőfi, [Endre] Ady, and even [Atilla] József seem unreadable today. Teachers do not know how to handle them, and they are usually avoided by the authors of dissertations. By contrast, the young critics of the 1990s are avid readers of works by the authors who were dismissed by the Marxists in the late 1940s. (206)

A crucial role in interrupting the process of Petőfi's mythicization was also played by the scandal that erupted in 1989 and continued throughout the 1990s because of the presumed discovery of the poet's skeleton in Barguzin, a village in Siberia. As István Rév informs in detail in his study *Parallel autopsies*, the legend of the poet's death not in 1849 on the anti-Russian battlefield in Transylvania, but in a forced labor camp in Siberia was also invoked during the Second World War as means of propaganda, but as European communist dictatorships fell apart, turning the national poet into an "archetype of the Hungarian Gulag victim" (35) met anti-communist expectations perfectly. The archeological expeditions turned out to be a fiasco, because the analysis of the "repatriated" skeleton undoubtedly showed that, "instead of being the remains of a young but mature Christian male, [it] belonged to a sexually immature, Orthodox Jewish female, the perfect antithesis of a real hero" (37). The research team was accused of fostering "communist" and "anti-national" feelings, and conspiracy theories and extreme-nationalist speculations were developed around the topic until well into the late 2000s. However, the Hungarian scientific community regards this incident as proof for the fanatical dimensions taken by the mythologic-ideological manipulations of Petőfi's image. The most vividly "post-ideological" phase of Petőfi's reception reached its climax after 1989, especially against interpretations put forward by the reputed critic and literary historian István Margócsy (who, in 1999, published a very "perceptive" study of Petőfi's poetry; Neubauer 42). He is regarded less and less as a "saint," "an idol," "a martyr," and "a revolutionary" and more as a reflexive poet of nature, whose "poetic subjectivism is in conflict with the universal character of the prophetical poet" (Komáromy 35).

However, the promise of de-ideologizing the national poet in post-communism has not of late been delivered in Hungary either. Decommunizing Petőfi brings forth a new façade, one that aligns itself to anti-communist liberal ideology:

> 1990s brought about a critical surge preoccupied with debunking his cult by laying bare the figurative and material devices deployed in the various phases of its development along with the various ideological intentions these phases came to serve. However, while taking on a supposedly more historical and ideology-free stance, striving to find ways to make Petőfi's poetry relevant regardless of, and despite, political misappropriations, these approaches were fueled by a very similar dynamic. When, for instance, they emphasized Petőfi's embeddedness in the cultural markets of his era and his successful commercialization of poetry, their angle was, once again, clearly determined by a post-socialist political and economic climate and the new values it foregrounded. (Hites 43–44)

However multifaceted, the de-mythicizing discourse surrounding Hristo Botev also seeks to adapt the national poet to the post-communist political and cultural climate. An excellent contribution to the matter is Boyko Penčev's *Hristo Botev and the Necessity of National Icons*. A first national debate was launched in 1991 by Ilia Todorov, when he dully demonstrated that Botev did not in fact wrote the famous "proto-communist" manifesto (discovered and published in 1934) containing the credo that was to become the legitimizing slogan of Bulgarian socialism for over half a century: "I believe in a bright and universal communism!" (121–125). Moreover, his poetry and journalistic work are shown to possess traits that come at loggerhead with values of the democratic society post-communist Bulgaria sought to become. Sometimes, Botev is seen as a major source of xenophobic and anti-democratic rhetoric, as he perpetuates the false equivalence between *ottoman* and *Turk*, which in its turn aggravates the existing tensions between Bulgaria and its southern neighbors (127). In other instances—as in Milena Kirova's 1995 *The Narcissistic Botev: Mythology of a (Re)Birth*, and Inna Peleva's 1998 *Botev. The Body of Nationalism*—the poet is subjected to a "radical deconstructivist reading" with a view to demonstrating that his writings were often misread in an attempt to turn him into an instrument for idealized (national) narcissistic self-reflection. Although Bulgarian conservative intellectuals labeled such psychoanalytical interpretations as "encroachment[s] on Botev" (Penčev 124), as they would presumably exaggerate the importance of otherwise irrelevant biographical details or nuances in his works, a re-evaluation such as Peleva's is regarded as fully capable to

> fully reconstruct those aspects of Botev's work that have been left out of the "high" literary and historiographic readings of the texts of the "national idol." Her aim is to identify in these texts not only the long-acknowledged appeals to freedom, fraternity, and equality, legitimizing precisely the type of eschatology of the Bulgarian national revolution that seems acceptable from the point of view of European culture, but also—and most importantly—to identify the "dark discursive doubles" of those glorious appeals and to reconstruct the "ardent primitiveness of the savage thought" in the national revolt, which has been omnipresent in Botev's works but has been systematically left out by the interpretive canon. (Elenkov 456–457).

After 1989, Botev, formerly a symbol of patriotism and national pride, would become a figure that is "depressingly pessimistic and deprived of dutiful revolutionary optimism," the helpless reflection of an "intolerable situation: the Bulgarians have proven to be the most backward, the most oriental among the Balkan nations yet they were unable to recognize this condition as unbearable" (Kambourov 66).

The rupture between the fanatically patriotic representations of the national poet and the expectations and needs of post-communist societies is also reflected in the popular short film written and directed by Deyan Bararev in 2012, irreverently titled "Botev Is an Idiot." The film brings together the classical figure of the nineteenth-century revolutionary and artist—keen not only to pay homage to his country through his writings, but also to sacrifice his life for it (as Botev was habitually portrayed by the school curriculum, deeply indebted to communist practices)—and the twenty-first-century rebel (the typical nonconformist Western teenager), who perceives the national poet as a sterile idealist, an abstract idol used to legitimize a false social system, prohibitive in regard to values such as basic human companionship, fairness, and meritocracy. In a world shaped by effortless or illicit success, Botev can be nothing but a "fool." Portrayed similarly to a Dostoevskyan "idiot," Botev seems to be re-mythicized by Bararev's film, winner of several predominantly Eastern-European film awards. In fact, the film does not present Botev's model of reception as a solution for transcending the post-communist crisis. The process of his "decommunizing" both parodies the inertial perpetuation of the old regime and simultaneously confirms the near impossibility of his assimilation by the younger generations.

Conclusions

In Romania, where 1989 was marked by the bloodiest divorce from the communist regime in Central and Eastern Europe and "anti-communism became synonymous with democratization" (Petrescu 45), the disappearance of the Eminescu myth led to the near pro-European statement of the 1990s: an escape from cultural "backwardness" and presumed "minority" status, and an exercise in civility on the part of the liberal intelligentsia. In Hungary, where the communist system was the most liberal between 1960 and 1980, and where the break from this regime did not encounter notable difficulties, Petőfi appears as a figure of capitalist transition only to the nationalist fanatics who attempt to turn him into a proto-martyr of the Gulag relentlessly searching for his remains in Siberia. The ideological excesses of the national poet are left behind in the nineteenth century, as Hungarian cultural institutions try to limit Petőfi's image to the field of aesthetics and cultural production. In Bulgaria, where many suspect that the communist regime continues to live on under the guise of democracy, Botev's deconstruction aims to serve as clear reflection of the country's cultural inferiority complexes. The post-communist freedom and democracy would therefore imply a departure from the "rudimentary" cult of the national poet.

By analyzing these cultural phenomena, so similar in their manifestations, it is evident that the imperative of "civilizing" the post-communist East finds a particular expression in the efforts of decommunizing Botev, Eminescu, and Petőfi. Nonetheless, the post-1989 de-mythicizations of the three poets are manifestations of what Bulgarian theorist Alexander Kiossev calls "self-colonization," as all these efforts are validated through and testify to a "culture of backwardness" obsessed with "filling in" or "catching up" with the West, a "never-ending pursuit of recognition by the center." If previous attempts at deconstructing the three national poets are now regarded as incidental and originating from outside the national culture, this time the nation itself—through its most prominent intellectuals—is the de-mythicizing agent. The European integration takes place in the absence of myths forged in the past—especially if they were amplified during communism—and by assimilating the mythology of the new, liberal world order. Thus Botev, Eminescu, and Petőfi reemerge as ideologized as ever, yet with the claim of having been fully de-ideologized—a paradox that not only describes the post-communist status of the national poet, but also perfectly illustrates how anti-communism/the culture of post-1989 transition helped shape the identity of East-Central Europe.

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Dekomunizacija nacionalnega pesnika: branje Eminescuja, Boteva in Petőfija po letu 1989

Ključne besede: literatura in ideologija / vzhodnosrednjeevropske književnosti / postkomunizem / nacionalni pesniki / demitizacija / Eminescu, Mihai / Botev, Hristo / Petőfi Sándor

Razprava poskuša pojasniti, zakaj demitiziranje – in ne mitiziranje – institucije »nacionalnega pesnika« natančneje in globlje ponazarja ideološke, kulturne in identitetne spremembe v postkomunistični vzhodni in srednji Evropi. Kot študije primerov v razpravi obravnavam kritično recepcijo treh nacionalnih pesnikov – Mihaija Eminescuja, Hrista Boteva in Sándorja Petőfija –, in sicer zato, ker je omenjeni pojav očitnejši v državah, kot so Romunija, Bolgarija in Madžarska, torej državah, ki svojo lastno identiteto razumejo predvsem skozi binarno opozicijo vzhod-zahod. Pokazati želim, da se demitiziranje nacionalnega pesnika dogaja zlasti po letu 1989, in v ta namen analiziram vrsto kritičnih in imagističnih obravnav Eminescuja, Boteva in Petőfija, ki jih je povzročilo dejstvo, da so antikomunistične, prozahodne intelektualne elite

obravnavale kult nacionalnega pesnika kot simptom kulturne in ideološke zaostalosti, značilne za »necivilizirani« vzhod, ki ga je prizadela travma nacionalnega komunizma. Tako se na koncu izkaže, da je opuščanje nacionalnega mita Eminescu/Botev/Petőfi del širše tendence po »dekomunizaciji«, ki jo je s seboj prinesla kapitalistična tranzicija.

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek / Original scientific article
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Kritiški in pesniški odziv Jacquesa Dupina na Giacomettijevo kiparstvo

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Članek se ukvarja s povezavo med pesnikom in likovnim kritikom Jacquesom Dupinom ter kiparjem in slikarjem Albertom Giacomettijem. Njegov cilj je razlaga nekaterih podobnosti v opusih obeh umetnikov, ki pa presegajo zgolj motivno-tematske vzporednice. Predvsem gre za podobno razumevanje narave umetniškega dela in razmišljanje o umetniškem mediju pri Dupinu, ki je nekakšen hermenevtični preplet refleksije o Giacomettiju in Dupinovega lastnega pesniškega ustvarjanja. Dela, na katera se članek opira, so predvsem Dupinova monografija Giacometti *in pesniški zbirki* Odprtina *(*L'embrasure*) in* Vzpenjanje *(*Gravir*) ter Giacomettijev kiparski opus in njegovi dnevniki.*

Ključne besede: literatura in likovna umetnost / francoska poezija / Dupin, Jacques / kiparstvo / Giacometti, Alberto / likovna kritika

Umetniška pot Jacquesa Dupina, enega najpomembnejših sodobnih francoskih pesnikov, se je začela leta 1950, ko se je v Parizu seznanil z Renéjem Charom, predstavnikom poznega nadrealizma.[1] Char je bil sprva Dupinov pesniški mentor (podpisal se je denimo pod spremno besedo v njegovem prvencu *Pepelnik potovanja* [*Cendrier du voyage*]), s tem da je bilo njuno dolgoletno prijateljstvo odločilnega pomena tudi za Dupinovo pot poznavalca in kritika sodobne likovne umetnosti. Char je namreč Dupina seznanil s številnimi umetniki in galeristi. Dupin je svojo kariero začel z njegovim posredovanjem kot asistent Christiana Zervosa, urednika prestižne revije *Cahiers d'art*, in je odtlej veliko časa preživljal z umetniki. Obiskoval jih je v ateljejih, jih opazoval pri delu in o njih pisal, s številnimi izmed njih pa je bil tudi v prijateljskih odnosih. Njegovo prijateljevanje s slikarji in kiparji je bilo tesno povezano s pesniškim ustvarjanjem. V intervjuju z Michaelom Brophyjem pravi takole:

> Nikakor nisem bil pripravljen na to, da me bosta kdaj zanimala sodobna umetnost in druženje z umetniki. Pa vendar sem temu od svojega dvajsetega

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[1] Pričujoči tekst je predelan segment iz obsežnejšega magistrskega dela.

> leta naprej posvečal vse svoje življenje. […] Vsak dan sem se srečeval s slavnimi umetniki, med prvimi so bili Brancusi, Picasso, Brauner, Lam, Léger, Miró, Giacometti … večinoma so vsi postali tudi moji dobri prijatelji. Obiskoval sem njihove ateljeje, potem delal intervjuje, pisal tekste, sledilo je pripravljanje razstav … […] Bil sem med umetniki, pisatelji in obrtniki, umetnost mi je jemala večino časa, življenja. Ločnice med mojim poklicnim udejstvovanjem in pesniškim ustvarjanjem ni bilo: področji sta povezani, prepletata se brez moje vednosti, razkrivata sorodnosti in tketa svitek, ki se ga ne da več razmotati. (Brophy in Dupin 1010)[2]

Od leta 1967 do 1972 je Dupin tudi sam urednikoval. S kolegi je ustanovil revijo *L'Éphémère*, ki je bila protiutež reviji *Tel Quel*, okrog katere so se zbirali takratni pomembni pisci, denimo Francis Ponge, Marcelin Pleynet in Denis Roche. Revija *Tel Quel* se je zvečine pod strukturalističnim vplivom Rolanda Barthesa osredotočala na *écriture*, tako da je poezija v njej izgubila privilegirani status. Vrh tega je zanimanje za poezijo na splošno upadalo, zaradi česar sta osrednji francoski pesniški reviji *Mercure de France* in *Cahiers du Sud* prenehali izhajati. Nasprotno so se pesniki, zbrani okrog revije *L'Éphémère* (med pomembnejšimi so bili poleg Dupina Gaëtan Picon, Yves Bonnefoy in André du Bouchet), vračali k pesniškemu izročilu z začetka stoletja in se navduševali tudi nad likovno umetnostjo. Vendar delitev na dva »tabora« ni bila tako ostra; pesniški idol, na katerega so se sklicevali eni in drugi, je bil Stéphane Mallarmé (Greene 52). Ta je bil v pesniškem in filozofskem smislu izredno pomemben tudi za Dupina, ki se mu je v poeziji med drugim približeval z iskanjem »bele pesmi«, v kateri se pomen besed daje le še kot igra označevalcev.

Druga plat Dupinove poetike, ki temelji na njegovem razmišljanju o enovitosti umetnosti ter o naravi likovnega in literarnega medija, se lepo sklada s poslanstvom revije *L'Éphémère*, v kateri so poleg poezije redno izhajale tudi likovne kritike. Ena od njenih prvih številk je bila posvečena Giacomettijevemu kiparstvu.

Z Albertom Giacomettijem, švicarsko-italijanskim kiparjem in slikarjem, se je Dupin seznanil pred začetkom druge svetovne vojne. Giacometti je iz rodne švicarske vasice Stampa v Pariz prišel leta 1922, da bi pri slovitem Antoinu Bourdellu študiral likovno umetnost. Prvič je samostojno razstavljal že v 30. letih. Njegovo ustvarjanje je doživljalo številne vzpone in padce. Po prihodu v Pariz se je najprej pridružil nadrealistični skupini z Andréjem Bretonom na čelu, a se je od nje hitro oddaljil. Pariška leta so zanj pomenila oster prelom z mladostjo.

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[2] Vsi prevodi iz tujejezičnih virov so delo avtorice.

Ustvarjanje »po naravi« in realistično upodabljanje sta se mu naenkrat zazdela nesmiselna, ne toliko zaradi takrat prevladujočih kubističnih in nadrealističnih teženj, ampak zaradi občutka nemoči, da tistega, kar umetnik zares »vidi«, ni mogoče upodobiti. Ta občutek je bil obenem tudi osrednje gonilo njegovega nadaljnjega umetniškega iskanja. Njegovo prvo krizno obdobje je bilo obdobje »ploskih kipov« (oziroma »ploskih glav«), ženskih figur v slogu oceanske in afriške umetnosti ter postkubističnih kipov. Na sredi tridesetih let se je vrnil k bolj realističnemu ustvarjanju, vendar so njegovi kipi ostajali bolj ali manj nedokončani, veliko pa jih je tudi uničil. Obdobje, v katerem ni razstavljal, je trajalo vse do leta 1947.

V drugem kriznem obdobju so se Giacomettijevi kipi bolj in bolj manjšali (v povprečju so bili veliki približno sedem centimetrov), toda po vojni se je, paradoksno, lotil velikih ženskih in moških figur ter portretov in avtoportretov. Največkrat sta mu pozirala žena Annette in brat Diego ter včasih japonski profesor Isaku Yanaihara in ljubica Caroline.

Leta 1951 je Giacometti prvič razstavljal v galeriji Maeght, s katero je sodeloval tudi Dupin. S pesnikom sta vse do Giacomettijeve smrti leta 1966 ostala dobra prijatelja. Dupin je v njegovem ateljeju pri opazovanju ali celo poziranju preživel veliko časa. Zato ni nič čudnega, da je Dupinova »najobsežnejša« monografija (obsega komaj slabih sto strani) posvečena prav Giacomettijevemu ustvarjanju.

Dupinove kritiške tekste bi bilo ustrezneje imenovati »premisleke« ali »refleksije«, saj njegova metoda nikakor ni kritiška v strogem pomenu besede. Gre namreč za skorajda poetične meditacije bodisi o specifičnem likovnem delu bodisi o celotnem opusu kakega umetnika. Zanimivo je, da se Dupinovi teksti o umetnosti drugih velikokrat nerazdružljivo prepletajo z njegovo lastno poezijo in razmišljanjem o umetnosti. Dupin ni sicer nikoli eksplicitno pisal o svojem razumevanju literarnega medija in poezije, so pa zato refleksije o pesnjenju vtkane v njegov pesniški opus, še zlasti v zgodnji zbirki *Odprtina* (*Embrasure*) in *Vzpenjanje* (*Gravir*).

Vzporednice, ki se vzpostavljajo med Giacomettijevim kiparstvom ter Dupinovim kritiškim in pesniškim opusom, bi lahko napeljevale na misel, da gre za izrazit vpliv enega umetnika na drugega. Vendar je treba poudariti, da ne gre za motivno-tematsko podobnost, temveč bolj za občutek, da pesnik in kipar o umetnosti in umetniškem delu razmišljata podobno. Trditev, da je Giacometti s svojo umetniško vizijo vplival na Dupina, se zdi preveč naivna. Opusa obeh umetnikov sta namreč preveč razgibana in raznorodna, da bi lahko razločili eno samo jasno linijo te »podobnosti«.

A kako lahko sploh govorimo o podobnosti, ko pa gre za različna umetniška medija? Kako se lahko substanca enega medija, ki ima svoje lastne formalne zakonitosti, zrcali in preobrazi v drugem mediju? To sta vprašanji, s katerima se bom ukvarjala v nadaljevanju tega besedila, kot podlaga pa mi bodo rabile nekatere vzporednice, ki jih lahko najdemo v opusih obeh umetnikov.

Uporaba prostorskosti v kiparstvu in pesništvu

Dupin je velikokrat pisal in govoril o simbolnem in tudi konkretnem preseganju meja med umetnostmi. V likovnem in literarnem mediju je odkrival isto substanco: »V gibanju stavka prepoznavam čustvo, ki mi ga je zbudila oker odrgnina na kosu platna ali pastiliranje doprsnega kipa iz mavca. In ko poskušam napisati besedilo za kako razstavo, se mi zgodi, da me ustavi podoba pesmi, ki sem jo napisal prejšnji dan« (Brophy in Dupin 1010). Vendar je treba poudariti, da se ni zavzemal za nekakšno enotno, združeno umetnost, temveč je zgolj prevpraševal in raziskoval naravo, možnosti in omejitve različnih umetniških medijev, »tisti 'kako' likovnega – ali katerega koli drugega – dela« (Raillard 73).

Ampak kako se lahko v literaturi približamo kipu v tridimenzionalnem prostoru, ki ima v primerjavi z literarnim delom prostornino, relief in obliko?

Dupin se (naj gre za refleksijske ali pesniške tekste) osredotoča predvsem na telo v prostoru, na njegovo gibanje, in hkrati na umanjkanje telesa v prostoru – na praznino. Vse to so za razumevanje njegovega opusa ključni elementi, rdeča nit, ki se vleče skozi njegovo pisanje.

Element prostorskosti v svoji poeziji rabi idejno; razmišlja predvsem o odpiranju prostora, na kar kaže že naslov njegove zbirke *Odprtina* (*L'embrasure*). *Embrasure* v slovenščino prevajamo kot »odprtino« ali »lino«, ki napotuje na idejno osišče zbirke. Odprtina omogoča prostor, ki je nasprotje zaprtja ali pomanjkanja prostora. To Dupin simbolno enači z zadušitvijo ter posredno z zatiranjem in ujetništvom. Občutek ujetosti je nekakšna *condition humaine*, pobeg iz te »ječe« pa nekaj, za kar bi si moral človek neprestano prizadevati. »Samota se zapira okrog človeka, toda človekova usoda je, da si nenehno, brez upanja prizadeva narediti razpoko v steni svoje ječe,« je zapisal Dupin v monografiji o Giacomettiju (11). Sredstvo tega preboja, ki se simbolno kaže kot odprtina v zidu, je seveda pisanje, umetnost. Njena naloga je, da razpira prostor in s tem omogoča dihanje.

»Lina« iz *Odprtine* je povezana s številnimi drugimi pesniškimi podobami, ki simbolno ponazarjajo odprtje in se pojavljajo tudi v Dupinovi pozni poeziji. Simboli odprtja v njegovih pesmih so denimo rana in iz nje iztekajoča kri, razne odprtine in razpoke, prodor iz ječe ali ujetništva, dihanje, vulkanski izbruhi, uničujoči viharji, razširjanje človeškega telesa v prostoru in odpiranje vagine.

Dupin je element prostorskosti, ki ga v likovni umetnosti tako privlači, v svojo poezijo poskušal prenesti tudi na formalni ravni. Zanimivo je, da svojih pesniških tekstov velikokrat sploh ni imenoval »pesmi«, ampak »figure«. V zgodnjih zbirkah je oblikovnoeksperimentalnih elementov še zelo malo; pogosteje se začnejo pojavljati v poznejšem opusu. Ti formalni posegi velikokrat spominjajo na protomodernistično eksperimentiranje z obliko (na primer na likovne pesmi Dupinovega vzornika Mallarméja). Dupin na pomen prostorskosti opozarja s tipografskimi posebnostmi, uporabo dvojnih presledkov, nenavadno razporeditvijo znakov na papirju in podobnim. Dominique Viart, avtor verjetno najodmevnejše monografije o Dupinu, pravi, da gre pri njem zvečine za pisavo, ki jo »prekinja motrenje čutnozaznavnih elementov« (191). S tem postanejo v pesmi nadvse pomembni vizualni elementi, ki so poleg leksikalnih ključnega pomena za razumevanje pesmi.

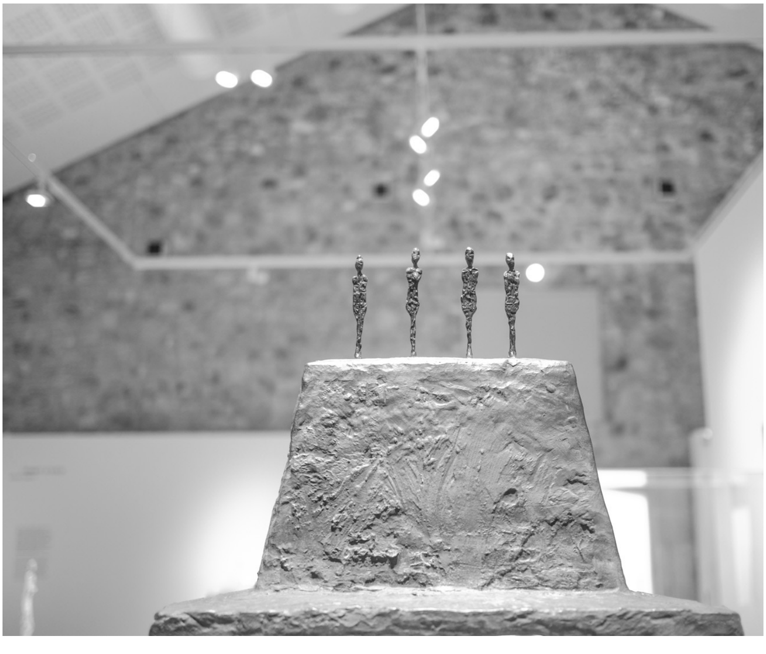
Vprašanju prostorskosti se Dupin posveča tudi takrat, ko v refleksijskih tekstih razmišlja o likovni umetnosti, še zlasti pa se z njim ukvarja, ko piše o Giacomettiju. V njegovem kiparstvu vidi predvsem dve plati prostora: prostor kot razdaljo in kot gibanje. S tem vprašanjem pa se v svojih dnevnikih, zapiskih ali pismih drugim umetnikom ukvarja tudi Giacometti.

Element razdalje Giacometti rabi predvsem za to, da figure predstavlja v njihovem lastnem, organskem prostoru: »Tako oko zares vidi in tako Giacometti prikazuje bitja in stvari: v njihovi razdalji, v njihovem prostoru, torej z upodabljanjem tega prostora, z upoštevanjem razdalje, ki ga ločuje od oseb« (Dupin, *Giacometti* 58).

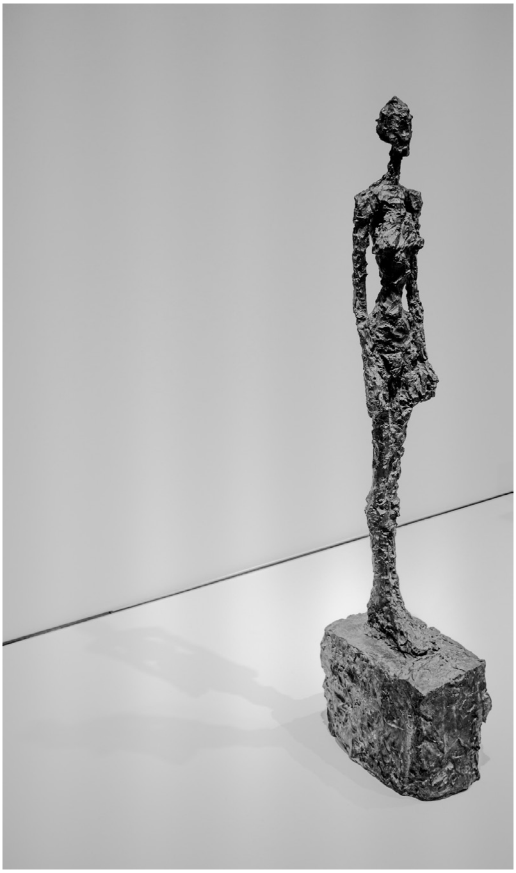
Upoštevanje razdalje, s katere Giacometti opazuje telesa v resničnem življenju, ima v njegovem kiparstvu več posledic. Kipi se v obdobju ene od njegovih ustvarjalnih kriz drastično zmanjšajo; nekateri ne merijo več kot šest ali sedem centimetrov. Taka je denimo kompozicija z naslovom *Štiri figurice na podstavku* (*Quatre figurines sur piédestal*), pri kateri so na stopničasta temelja postavljene štiri drobne, komaj nekaj centimetrske figurice. Te s svojo pokončno in nepremično držo že nekoliko spominjajo na nek drug Giacomettijev eksperiment z velikostjo – na bronasto, skoraj trimetrsko *Pokončno žensko* (*Femme debout*) s konca petdesetih let, za katero je Giacometti dobil navdih pri pokončnih ženskih kipih v arhajski oceanski in afriški umetnosti, ki sta ga navdušili na mladostnem potovanju z očetom v Italijo.

»Velikih« kipov po zgledu *Pokončne ženske* je naredil kar nekaj, a pri branju njegovih dnevnikov in pisem ne dobimo občutka, da je bil z ekstremno velikostjo ali majhnostjo tudi v resnici zadovoljen. V pismu prijatelju Pierru Matissu, ki je priloženo njegovim dnevnikom in zapiskom, piše:

> Tudi ko sem hotel po spominu narediti tisto, kar sem videl, so kipi na mojo grozo postajali vse manjši in manjši in so samo, kadar so bili zelo majhni, kazali podobnost, pa vendarle so me njihove dimenzije vznejevoljile, neutrudno sem začel znova in se čez nekaj mesecev znašel na isti točki. Velika figura se mi je zdela napačna in majhna prav tako neznosna, potem pa so figure pogosto postale tako majhne, da so se od zadnjega dotika kiparskega nožiča sesule v prah. Toda zdelo se mi je, da so glave in figure vsaj malo resnične le, če so majhne. (44)



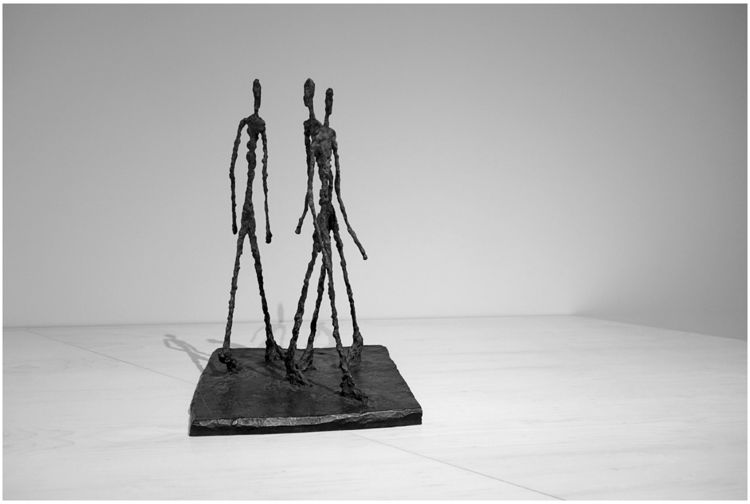
Slika 1: Alberto Giacometti: *Štiri figurice na podstavku*, 1965–1966. Fotografija: Yann Caradec, 2015. (CC BY-SA 2.5 SI).



Slika 2: Alberto Giacometti: *Pokončna ženska*, 1957. Fotografija: Yann Caradec, 2015. (CC BY-SA 2.5 SI)

Razdalja obstaja med umetnikom in telesom, ki ga opazuje, lahko pa tudi med različnimi telesi ali predmeti v kiparski kompoziciji. Razdalja, ki ločuje ta telesa, ima za Giacomettija poseben metafizični pomen: implicira oddaljenost, s tem pa praznino, samoto, nič.

To postane zlasti očitno pri tako imenovanih skupinskih kipih iz obdobja med letoma 1948 in 1949. Najbolj znani kompoziciji iz tega obdobja sta *Skupina treh moških* (*Groupe de trois hommes*) in *Trg* (*La place*). Pri njiju gre za več manjših moških figur na podstavku, ki so del istega kipa, istega »prostora«, a hodijo druga mimo druge, ne da bi se zaznale ali pogledale. Izražajo tesnobno samoto, praznino in solipsizem človeških bitij, ki se gibljejo sama zase, stran od drugih, četudi so si fizično čisto blizu.



Slika 3: Alberto Giacometti: *Skupina treh moških*, 1948. Fotografija: Luc Blain, 2018. (CC-BY-NC-CA 2.0)

Na praznino med telesi, ki so upodobljena na sliki ali sestavljajo kip, je bil Giacometti pozoren tudi pri drugih umetnikih. Rabo prostorskosti in opomenjanje praznine, ki ločuje like na sliki, je občudoval zlasti pri Franciscu Goyi in Jacquesu Callotu. Dupin v monografiji o njem poudarja, da so pri omenjenih slikarjih »grozljivi prizori, podobe pošasti in norcev, čudno povezani z enim in istim vztrajnim klicanjem praznine, z eno in isto uporabo ostrih linij, za katere se zdi, da trgajo prostor« (Dupin, *Giacometti* 18). V zvezi s Callotovimi risbami in grafikami pa je Giacometti v svoj dnevnik zapisal, da je »edini trajen in pozitiven element pri Callotu praznina, velika zevajoča praznina, v kateri njegovi liki gestikulirajo, se pokončujejo in uničujejo« (26).

Jean-Paul Sartre v nekem članku o Giacomettiju pravi, da je kipar postal zato, ker je povsod videl praznino (424).[3] Vendar Giacometti s prikazovanjem praznine in niča ne meri na *condition humaine*, ampak na nekaj še bolj prvinskega, nekaj, kar pravzaprav *pogojuje* delo samo. Danielle Molinari o Giacomettijevem slikarstvu pravi: »Poteze so navzoče samo zato, da dajejo obliko in trdnost belini. Ni poteza tista, ki je polna, belina je« (57).

Skrajna oblika oziroma stanje praznine pri Giacomettiju – najbolj metafizično med vsemi – predstavlja večno odsotnost: smrt. Svoje najpretresljivejše srečanje z njo opisuje v tekstu z naslovom »Sanje, sfinga in T-jeva smrt« (»Le rêve, le sphinx et la mort de T«), ki je nekakšen dnevniški zapis. Najobširnejši (in tudi najpomenljivejši) del tega teksta z naslovom »Smrt« retrospektivno govori o smrti Giacomettijevega prijatelja Pierta Van Meursa, ki je na skupnem potovanju umrl pred njegovimi očmi. Groza, ki jo je občutil ob pogledu na prijateljevo negibno truplo, je bila tudi poglavitni razlog, da je vse skupaj zapisal:

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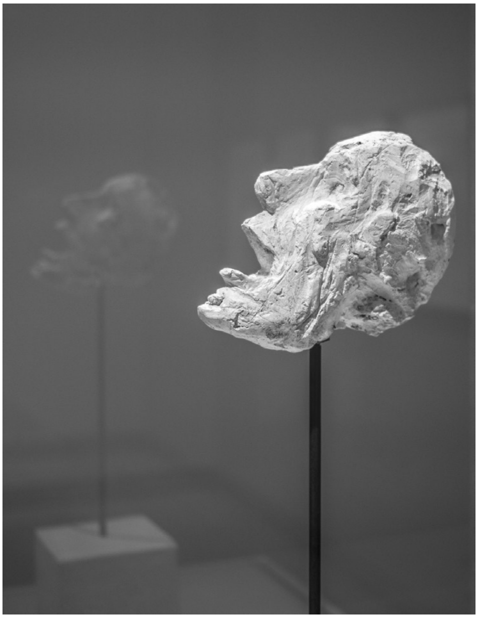
[3] Sartre je bil velik občudovalec Giacomettija; pomenljivo se zdi, da je fotografijo njegovega kipa *Moški, ki se spotakne* (*L'homme qui chavire*) izbral za naslovnico svojega dela *Bit in nič*.

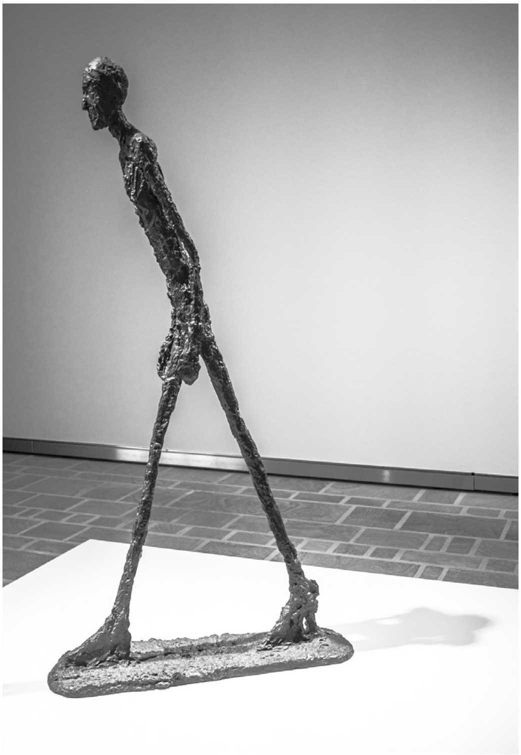
> Znova sem ga videl na robu postelje, nepremičnega, s slonokoščeno rumeno kožo, zvitega v klobčič in že čudno daleč, in videl sem ga malo potem, ob treh zjutraj, mrtvega, z udi, s kot skelet tankimi udi, razmetanimi, razkrečenimi, zapuščenimi daleč stran od telesa, z gromozanskim napihnjenim trebuhom, glavo, vrženo naprej, odprtimi usti. […] Ob postelji sem nepremičen gledal, kako ta glava postaja predmet, majhna škatla, merljiva, nepomembna. V tistem trenutku se je črni ustni votlini približala muha in počasi izginila v njej (29).

Četudi pretresljiva, je bila Van Meursova smrt za Giacomettija vir navdiha. Petindvajset let po tej travmatični izkušnji, ki ga je ves čas preganjala, je naredil bronen kip *Glava na drogu* (*Tête sur tige*): glavo, ki je ločena od telesa in nataknjena na drog, zapičen v podstavek, usta pa ima na široko odprta v smrtnem krču. Nič še nikoli ni bil tako gost in tako blizu.



Slika 4: Alberto Giacometti: *Glava na drogu*, 1947. Fotografija: Yann Caradec, 2015. (CC-BY-SA 2.5 SI)

Druga raba prostorskosti pri Giacomettijevih kipih je gibanje. Njegov zgled pri poustvarjanju premikanja so bili stari egipčanski kipi, nad katerimi se je navduševal že v mladih letih. Občudoval jih je zaradi iluzije gibanja, ki naj bi bila, kot pravi v nekem intervjuju, celo tako zelo močna, da so jih Grki potem, ko so jih prepeljali v Grčijo, čez noč zaklepali iz strahu, da jim ne bi ušli (Giacometti 248). Zdelo pa se mu je, da takega gibanja pri svojih kipih ne more poustvariti. Kipe v gibanju (še zlasti moške figure) je delal od leta 1947 naprej. Obstaja veliko različic moških kipov z istim naslovom, denimo *Moški, ki hodi* (*L'homme qui marche*) ali *Moški, ki se spotakne* (*L'homme qui chavire*), kakršne je delal v serijah. Vendar kljub številnim poskusom s svojim delom – podobno kot pri kipih ekstremnih velikosti – nikoli ni bil povsem zadovoljen. »Popolna nezmožnost narisati gibanje po naravi […]. Samo nepremičnost ali kretnje, ki dopuščajo iluzijo gibanja v popolni nepremičnosti,« je zapisal v svoj dnevnik (188). Občutek nezmožnosti, da bi poustvaril gibanje, ga ni nikoli več zapustil, ampak se je le še poglabljal.



Slika 5: Alberto Giacometti: *Moški, ki hodi* I. I1960. Fotografija: Yann Caradec. (CC-BY-SA 2.5 SI)

Umetniški pogled in upodabljanje realnosti

Za moderno umetnost, ki se je začela na prelomu iz 19. v 20. stoletje, je nedosegljiv ideal nekaj simptomatičnega.[4] Včasih so za mojstrovine veljala dela »starih«, v moderni pa se je ideja idealne, izpopolnjene umetnosti pomaknila v abstraktno sfero, zaradi česar je umetniški ideal postal popolnoma nedosegljiv.

Giacometti se je v svojem ateljeju vsak dan znova znašel v podobnem položaju. Kakor praznina ločuje njegove figure, četudi stojijo na istem podstavku, tako njegovo umetniško vizijo in njeno dejansko realizacijo razdvaja neka temeljna zareza: »Ločuje nas brezno, praznina, ki jo izločamo, razdalja, ki jo napor in lucidnost, da bi jo zmanjšali, delata le še bolj bolečo. Ta razdalja, ta praznina, ki iz Diega[5] naredi tujca, iz stola nerazumljiv, nestalen, nevaren predmet […] Pred to vrtoglavico, pred tem strahom Giacometti seže po svinčniku, čopiču, kepi gline« (Dupin, *Giacometti* 10).

Giacomettijeva umetniška pot se deli v dve poglavitni obdobji: predpariško in pariško. Preden je odšel študirat v Pariz, je slikal predvsem tihožitja, krajine in portrete »po naravi«: »Zdelo se mi je, da med mojo vizijo in sposobnostjo nekaj narediti ni nobene prepreke. Bil sem gospodar svoje vizije,« pravi v intervjuju s Pierrom Schneiderjem (Giacometti 262–263). Njegova umetniška kriza je sovpadala s prihodom v Pariz, ko je »kar naenkrat vse postalo tuje. Ti si ti in svet, ki je zunaj, zanesljivo postaja nejasen« (prav tam). V tem opažanju je zajeta osrednja Giacomettijeva dilema: kako upodabljati realnost, če ta beži in se izmika?

Kot v Balzacovi zgodbi *Neznana mojstrovina* je za Giacomettija stvarna umetnina glede na ideal le nekaj nepopolnega, saj ideje ne more v celoti poustvariti.

Njegovo razočaranje zaradi vrzeli med idealom in dejansko upodobitvijo se izraža tako v sistematičnem »uničevanju platen in morjenju kipov« (Dupin, *Giacometti* 21) kot v nenehnem neuspešnem, a vztrajnem upodabljanju subjektivne umetniške vizije:[6] »Čeprav vem, da je zame denimo nemogoče izklesati ali narisati glavo tako, kot jo vidim, je to vendarle edino, kar poskušam početi« (Giacometti 84).

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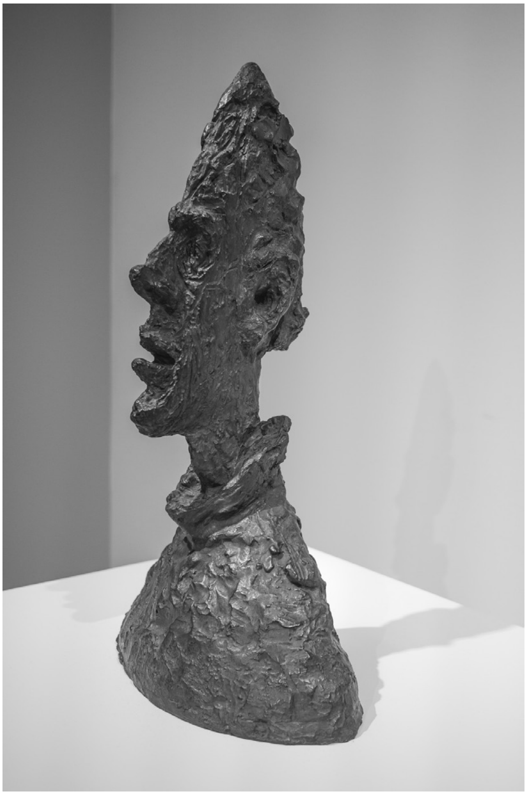
[4] Glej Belting, *The Invisible Masterpiece*.

[5] Tj. iz Giacomettijevega brata, ki mu je od vseh modelov najpogosteje in najbolj vztrajno poziral.

[6] Poudariti je treba, da Giacometti ni realist. »Podobnost« je nekaj subjektivnega (vsak ima namreč nekoliko drugačno predstavo o tem, kaj je »podobno«), a je zanj kot posameznika hkrati vendarle *edina možna*.



Slika 6: Alberto Giacometti: *Velika mala glava*, 1954. Fotografija: Yann Caradac, 2015. (CC-BY-SA 2.5 SI)

Sredstvo, s katerim lahko upodabljamo svet, kot ga vidimo, je seveda umetnost. Giacomettijevo videnje realnosti je večplastno, »kot bi bila resničnost neprestano za zaveso, ki jo odstiramo […] In za njo je vedno še ena« (275).

Po koncu kratkega nadrealističnega obdobja je Giacometti začel z »nenamernimi deformacijami« (*déformations involontaires*): kipi so se bodisi ploščili bodisi ekstremno večali ali manjšali. Večplastno resničnost je treba, tako kot to velja za Giacomettijevo dvanajstranično *Kocko*, znova in znova prevpraševati: »Svet me vsak dan bolj in bolj spravlja v začudenje. Postaja prostranejši in čudovitejši, bolj neulovljiv in lepši« (Giacometti 274). Za umetnika svet nikoli ne bo postal stvar, ki jo docela pozna; vsak dan bo zanj nov in vsakič znova vir njegovega zanimanja in radovednosti. Modeli, ki mu bodo pozirali, bodo zanj vsakič znova neulovljivi.

Iz prepričanja, da sveta in stvari v njem nikoli ne moremo zadosti poznati, izvira tudi Giacomettijev spor z nadrealisti in oddaljitev od njihove skupine. Po njegovem mora biti umetnikov pogled očiščen vsakršnega balasta, vedno kritičen, vedno prevprašujoč. Nič čudnega torej ni, da pogled (in s tem tudi glava) velikokrat nastopa kot glavni motiv njegovih kipov (glej seriji *Velika glava* [*Grande tête*] in *Ost v oko* [*Pointe à l'oeil*]).

Razmišljanje o pogledu pri Dupinu se začne tam, kjer se Giacomettijevo konča. Kakor želi Giacometti očistiti svoj pogled nepotrebnega znanja o svetu, da bi ga bolje razumel, tako je Dupinovo umetniško poslanstvo čim bolj očistiti jezik, ki je kot pesniško sredstvo v umetniškem smislu enakovreden pogledu, in vzpostaviti novo, »razkolniško pisavo« (Dupin, *L'embrasure* 160). Dupin svojo poetiko odstira v svoji poeziji, pesniška samorefleksija in razmišljanje o pisavi pa sta dve od njenih najpomembnejših osišč.

Motiv pesnikovega prevprašujočega pogleda je povezan predvsem z motivoma tème (ki je hkrati tudi slepota) in svetlobe (ki je razumevanje), ki pogojujeta drug drugega. Slepota je pogoj za uvid, pravi Dupin. To velja zlasti za cikel »Bližina mrmranja« (»Proximité de murmure«) v zbirki *Odprtina*. »Pogled« za Dupina in Giacomettija ni nujno vezan na svetlobo, ki pade na mrežnico, ampak gre bolj za nekakšno »duhovno gledanje« in razumevanje. Če želimo svet res »videti«, ga moramo hkrati tudi »ne-videti«, torej pozabiti, kar o njem vemo, in ga dojemati tako, kot bi vsak trenutek na novo vznikal pred našimi očmi. Ali z Dupinovimi pesniškimi besedami: »Da vidim to, o čemer govorim, in da govorim prav zato, ker ne vidim. Torej da dajem videti, česar ne vidim, česar mi ni dovoljeno videti. In da jezik med razgrinjanjem zadeva ob stvari in jih odkriva« (*L'embrasure* 139). Prava vrednost Dupinove hermetičnosti je torej v načinu, kako se pesnik približuje svetu in stvarem v njem.

Temna, hermetična pisava, ki šele omogoča razumevanje, je vedno nujno izmikanje, drsenje in veriženje. Samo tako lahko namreč ubesedimo svet, ki mu vlada fundamentalna razpoka. Stvari, ki jih priklicujejo besede, sproti izgubljajo smisel v razpoki, ki ločuje »realni svet« in našo percepcijo sveta; s pisanjem sta zato nujno povezana takojšnji izbris in uničenje pomena: »Vsak umaknjeni korak iskreč se / prekine in umori bližino pomena«, je zapisal v eni od nenaslovljenih pesmi iz cikla »Rastoča noč« (»La nuit grandissante«) (*L'embrasure* 121). V tem se Dupin močno približuje poststrukturalističnim mislecem, čeprav poststrukturalizma nikjer neposredno ne omenja.[7] Pomen se izgublja, briše in znova izpisuje; ne gre za besede brez pomena, ampak se nam ta nenehno izmika, saj ne more biti fiksiran ali določljiv. Besede, osvobojene vsakršne reference, se lahko nanašajo samo na svojo lastno igro (Grilc 13).

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[7] Res pa je, da težnje, ki bi jih lahko označili za dekonstruktivistične, najdemo že pri modernih pesnikih s preloma iz 19. v 20. stoletje, denimo pri Mallarméju, ki ga

Dupinovo spoznanje, da realnosti zaradi razpoke oziroma razlike ni mogoče ujeti, ubesediti oziroma upodobiti, ni tako grenko kot Giacomettijevo. Misel o temeljni razpoki je že od začetka vtkana, celo »vkalkulirana« v njegovo poezijo; pesnik ve, da je ubeseditev razlike mogoča le prek umetniške igre pomenov, ko se v »godnem pesku vtisne in izbriše zaplet znakov – in znak, ki sledi« (Dupin, *L'embrasure* 31). Brisanje pisave in s tem tudi pesmi je pri Dupinu sicer zelo pogost motiv. Gre za subtilno destrukcijo in vnovično vzpostavljanje, za nekakšen hermenevtični krog: besede, ki se (samo na videz) navezujejo na zunanji svet, zaradi razpoke, ki mu vlada, rušijo že obstoječa razmerja tako v svetu kot tudi v pesmi. Pesem lahko torej obstaja prav zaradi te temeljne razpoke.

Destrukcija se pri Dupinu godi na motivno-tematski ravni (Jean-Pierre Richard opozarja na ostre, nevarne predmete, ki naj bi napotovali na ranljivost pesmi, na njeno nasilje nad samo sabo [279]), z rušenjem sintakse (za veliko besed v pesmi ni jasno, ali imajo funkcijo osebka ali predmeta) in nenadnimi grafičnimi zarezami, praznimi prostori, zamolki itn. Dupin vzpostavlja nekakšno »polno« odsotnost, ki postane glasnik odsotne stvari. Kot je pri Giacomettiju praznina pri kipu *Nevidni predmet* (*L'objet invisible*) nabita s pomenom (»praznina ima delež pri kipu« [Dupin, *Giacometti* 40]), tako sta praznina in tišina pri Dupinu opomenjeni; sta molk, ki postane »obstoječa beseda« (Viart 162).

Ker želi Dupinova pesem govoriti o zarezi v svetu, ne more imeti popolne, zaokrožene oblike. Samo fragment lahko ustrezno ubesedi polifono izkušnjo sveta: pesem se napiše, da bi se nato sesula sama vase. Dupin se fragmenta drži skoraj programsko; nekateri teksti že s svojimi naslovi nakazujejo nezaključenost (denimo »Morene« ali »Trzljaji« [»Saccades«]). Po drugi pa lahko fragmentarnost opazimo tudi v nekaterih Giacomettijevih delih, čeprav v njih nikakor ne prevladuje. Glave, brezoblična telesa, roke, noge, oči – kaj so to drugega kot zgolj fragmenti neke umetniške vizije, ki želi biti celostna, a zaradi fragmentarne izkušnje v enem samem delu ne more zajeti polifonosti sveta? »Ne morem hkrati videti oči, rok ali stopal osebe, ki je dva ali tri metre pred mano, ampak mi tisti edini del telesa, ki ga gledam, daje občutek, da obstaja celota«,

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je Dupin zelo cenil. V Mallarméjevih pesmih gre za zvočno igro besed, ki se ne navezujejo na nič, njegov ideal pa je »bela pesem«, ki se tako kot pesniški subjekt umika v odsotnost, v Nič.

je zapisal Giacometti (85). To pa še kako velja tudi za poezijo Jacquesa Dupina. Njegove tekste je treba brati v okviru neke celote (bodisi pesniškega cikla, zbirke, ali še bolje, opusa), kajti le takrat se izriše širši pogled na svet, ki nam ga poskuša podati prek okrnjenega delca.

Realnost je polifona in nestabilna in torej zahteva nenehno prevpraševanje oziroma preiskovanje, vendar ne samo v smislu ustvarjanja vedno novih umetnin, ampak tudi v obliki nenehnega poustvarjanja enih in istih motivov, novega in novega prevpraševanja sveta (Bishop 618). Prav zato Giacometti vedno znova izdeluje Diegovo glavo in Annettino figuro, ju vsakič vidi na novo in drugače ter išče način, kako bi zaobjel, pa ne realnih Diega in Annette, temveč njuno bistvo – in prav to je tisto, kar ga žene naprej v njegovem umetniškem iskanju: »Včasih verjamem, da bom ujel pojavnost, a jo potem spet izgubim in začeti je treba znova. To je torej tisto, kar me žene pri delu« (Giacometti 268). Glava pred njim vznika vsak dan znova in znova, zdi pa se, kot da bi bilo vsakič drugače in prvič.

Kakor se kipar vedno znova vrača k istim modelom, tako pred pesnikom vznikajo vedno iste podobe. Dupinovo ponavljanje enih in istih motivov ne pomeni nujno neizvirnosti, ampak, kot opozarja Viart, vračanje k starim motivom vedno proizvede neko drugo, novo delo (121). Dupin se že skoraj postmodernistično poigrava z motivi in s starimi besedami na novo napisane knjige, z neprestanim ponavljanjem, s sledmi, ki se brišejo in znova zarisujejo, na variacije in ponavljanja pa napotujejo tudi konkretni naslovi pesmi, kot so »Palimpsest« (»Palimpseste«), »Drugi gozd« (»La forêt seconde«) in »Ponavljanje« (»La répétition). Nekatere dele starih tekstov celo do besede natančno vtke v nove.

Pisava tako nikoli ne more biti nevtralna, saj nosi težo svoje preteklosti, vseh svojih preteklih kontekstov. Zliva se v nenehen hermenevtični krogotok: stari konteksti dajejo podlago za nove, hkrati pa novi napotujejo na sveže branje starih. Pri Dupinu se označenec oplaja s podobami, ki ga obkrožajo, in s tem dobiva nov kontekst, pomenske pramene. Zato je pisava vedno nekaj premikajočega se, vedno korak pred sabo. Ker je beseda nenehno v gibanju, je tudi tekst venomer v postajanju, nikoli fiksiran (Viart 60). S tem se Dupin spet približuje poststrukturalističnemu mišljenju oziroma dekonstrukciji (zlasti Derridajevemu pojmu *iterabilnosti*).

Umetnik pri delu

Dupin je večkrat posedal v Giacomettijevem ateljeju. Včasih mu je poziral, drugič ga je le tiho opazoval pri delu. Gledal je, kako izpod njegovih spretnih rok vznika žensko telo, ki bo postalo kip, ena od mnogih variacij, naslovljenih *Pokončna ženska* (*Femme debout*):

> Giacometti v ateljeju. Njegove roke zajamejo pest zemlje, jo ponesejo na ogrodje, jo nekaj kratkih trenutkov gnetejo. Vznikne pokončna ženska, neodpravljiva in živa, ki zapolnjuje moje pričakovanje, ki moje pričakovanje utrjuje. […] Nenadno in neskončno rojstvo, vrtoglav prizor, pred katerim se težko ubranim nenavadnega občutka, da me vse to osebno zadeva. (Dupin, *Giacometti* 15)

V zadnjih nekaj stavkih je zajeto Dupinovo dojemanje umetniškega procesa, ki ga očitno tudi »osebno zadeva«. Ko opazuje druge umetnike, se bolj kot na karkoli drugega osredotoča na vznikanje, na rojstvo umetniškega dela. Rojevanje prisotnosti, vznikanje dela iz nebiti v bit je za Dupina temeljni (in edini) dogodek umetniškega ustvarjanja. O nastajanju umetniškega dela ne piše samo v zvezi z Giacomettijem, ampak tudi s Tàpiesom ali Mirójem.[8]

Dupin, sicer idejni dedič Mallarméja, je po misli o abruptnosti, eksplozivnosti rojstva umetniškega dela in po presežni pesniški energiji nedvomno blizu svojemu mentorju, Renéju Charu. Charova poezija je zelo raznolika, kljub temu pa ga tako kot Dupina z lahkoto označimo za pesnika bliska, vznika, rojstva: »Kakor Rimbaudova se tudi [Charova] dogodivščina začne z jutranjo živahnostjo: nasproti nas in v nas svet vznikne z bliskom neke nove nedolžnosti« (Richard 67).

Če je bit pri Charu nekaj, kar se nenehno obnavlja, ustvarja in vzdržuje, je njeno nasprotje »zaprtje, otopelost, obraba, zamaščenost, teža« (prav tam 72). Na podoben način to razume tudi Dupin. Svoje pesniško poslanstvo označi za »boj proti vsemu tistemu, kar zapira. […] Poezija se dviguje proti zatiranju, ki ga občutimo v biti, v fizičnem« (Viart 19). To, kar povrne svobodo, odpre prostor in razklene okove, je poezija. Pisanje je rahljanje vezi, ki dušijo, zaradi česar Dupin poezijo med drugim vzporeja z dihanjem, svežino: »vendarle svežina besede in trave / kot dih trajajočega življenja« (*L'embrasure* 105). Ta misel pa nas napotuje nazaj k Dupinovemu pojmovanju poezije kot boja proti zasužnjenosti prostora in zadušitvi.

Vznik pesmi, »eksplozija zrna« (prav tam 148), je zanj ponavljajoče se – a nikoli identično – dejanje, ki je abruptno, brez začetka in konca, ter torej obstaja zunaj časovnega okvira. To po njegovem velja tudi za Giacomettijeve kipe: »Ker je [ta pokončna ženska] obenem že od začetka vznik neke prisotnosti in neizčrpna možnost, pomika se proti meni in se od mene odmika, vse v istem trenutku ali, bolje, zunaj časa« (*Giacometti* 17).

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[8] Glej Dupin, »Devant Tàpies« in »L'impromptu«.

Dupina, ki v svojih tekstih največkrat opisuje nastanek ženskega kipa iz niča, v kiparstvu navdušuje prastar pigmalionski mit, stvarjenje oziroma prvobitno rojevanje ženskega telesa iz gline. Motiv vznikanja ženske, ki se iz pokrajine počasi lušči v bivanje, je pogost v njegovi zgodnji poeziji. Giacometti je želel s svojimi visokimi stoječimi ženskimi figurami, pri katerih sta ga navdihovali oceanska in afriška umetnost, zajeti univerzalnost tega, kar ženska *je*. Univerzalna ženska je zanj brez vsakršne partikularnosti. Podobno gre tudi v Dupinovi poeziji za upesnjevanje arhetipa ženske. V ženskem telesu se združujejo razpršenost, izmuzljivost in nekakšen božanski naboj: »Če se z njo spoprimeš, se pogrezne. Če se priplaziš k njenim / stopalom, se njen cvetni venec upogne. Strup brizga. Tihotapsko blago / iz čipk se dovrši v dremežu med / vrsticami« (*L'embrasure* 60).

Očitno je, da ima žensko telo lastnost pisave, pesmi. Pesnik svoj boj za prostor tu privede do skrajnih meja, s tem da so te meje tokrat konkretne in vidne, saj gre za telo. Telo popušča pod pritiskom, se razširja in na koncu razprši, odpre in izgine (Viart 89). Žensko telo je kot iz gline ustvarjeno iz kaosa (»zdelo bi se, da bi se morala tako krhka pojava zanesljivo vrniti v kaos, iz katerega je izšla« [Dupin, *Giacometti* 16]), a se sproti izmika, se širi in postaja nevidno. Motiv vznikanja ženskega telesa je torej še en element, s katerim se pesniško upovedovanje pri Dupinu poskuša približati likovnemu.

Sklep

Kakor so bili v Giacomettijevih očeh neločljivo prepleteni kiparstvo, slikarstvo in risanje (»Ta kipar je vedno slikal, ta slikar je vedno kiparil. Različni načini izražanja so zanj le instrumenti enega in istega iskanja in ene in iste izkušnje« [Dupin, *Giacometti* 73]), tako se je enovitega prevpraševanja umetniškega medija (bodisi kiparskega, slikarskega ali pesniškega) v svojih pesniških in kritiških oziroma refleksijskih tekstih loteval tudi Jacques Dupin. Njegova poezija dostikrat drzno prehaja meje med mediji; včasih se to zgodi formalno, včasih pa je vključevanje elementov vanjo, ki so lastni slikarstvu in kiparstvu, bolj subtilno in vsebinsko, npr. ko piše o prostoru, vznikanju telesa ali njegovem razširjanju.

V Dupinovi poeziji ne gre za neposreden vpliv Giacomettijevega slikarstva in kiparstva. Likovna umetnost je Dupina nedvomno fascinirala, a ne tako, da bi v svojo poezijo poskušal prenesti konkretne ideje ali motive drugih umetnikov. Pri njem gre za nekaj širšega – za pogled na svet, za pojmovanje umetnosti, ki ga išče in najdeva pri Giacomettiju (pa tudi pri drugih umetnikih, pri Tàpiesu, Miróju, Charu, de Staëlu idr.). Oba dajeta pogledu, očiščenemu ustaljenih sodb, prvenstven položaj: da bi svet lahko resnično razumeli, mora biti vsak dan drugačen in uzrt na novo. V ustroju sveta oba opažata temeljno razpoko, ki preprečuje, da bi umetniško delo polno upodobilo umetnikovo vizijo realnosti.

Dupin torej nikoli ne ostaja zgolj pasiven opazovalec. Dupinovi pesniški in kritiški oziroma refleksijski teksti so namreč mesto, na katerem se njegovo razumevanje lastne umetnosti spaja z njegovimi razmišljanji o umetnosti drugih. Ločnico med Dupinovim kritiškim pisanjem in pesništvom je težko potegniti zato, ker se tesno prepletata. To se ne dogaja samo na formalni ravni, ko jezik kritiških oziroma refleksijskih tekstov postane poetičen ali ko njegova poezija razvije skorajda filozofsko abstrakten in očiščen jezik, ampak tudi vsebinsko. Dupinovo kritiško pisanje in poezija se prepletata v nekakšnem hermenevtičnem krogu: refleksija osvetljuje poezijo in poezija daje oporo refleksiji. Težko bi bilo reči, da eden od obeh načinov izražanja, torej refleksijski ali pesniški, pri njem bolj vpliva na drugega, saj gre za eno in isto stvar: za ubesedovanje pogleda na svet in umetnost, ki ju vsakič znova prevprašuje.

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Jacques Dupin's Critical and Poetical Response to Giacometti's Sculpture

Keywords: literature and visual arts / French poetry / Dupin, Jacques / sculpture / Giacometti, Alberto / art criticism

The article deals with connections between the French poet and critic Jacques Dupin and the Swiss sculptor and painter Alberto Giacometti. Its main goal is to manifest and to explain certain similarities in their understanding of a work of art, which surpass mere motific or thematical parallels. It is above all Dupin's understanding of the nature of a work of art and a reflection on the medium of art; this reflection is a rather hermeneutic interlacement between reflection on Giacometti's work and on Dupin's own artistic creation. The article is mostly based on Dupin's monograph *Giacometti*, his books of poetry *L'embrasure* and *Gravir*, Giacometti's sculptures and his diaries.

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