

**ANNALES DE L'UNIVERSITÉ DE CRAÏOVA  
ANNALS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA**

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**ANALELE UNIVERSITĂȚII DIN CRAIOVA**

**SERIA ȘTIINȚE FILOLOGICE**

**LIMBI STRĂINE APLICATE**



**ANUL IV, Nr. 1-2, 2008**

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### **SECRETAR DE REDACȚIE**

Laurențiu BĂLĂ

**ISSN: 1841-8074**

# Teaching English in Long-Distance Business Classes

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## **RÉSUMÉ :** *Enseigner à distance l'anglais des affaires*

Le présent article est focalisé sur la manière dont les étudiants en économie qui fréquentent les cours d'enseignement à distance doivent être guidés par le professeur d'anglais pour mieux maîtriser les problèmes de grammaire, de vocabulaire, mais surtout de communication dans les conditions où il rencontre les étudiants seulement quelques fois avant l'examen. Dans ce cas, le manuel joue un rôle très important, car il doit suppléer le travail du professeur. Par conséquent, il doit être conçu d'une façon simple (je me réfère ici à son utilisation) mais en même temps plein d'informations précieuses qui peuvent aider l'étudiant à bien acquérir la langue anglaise.

**MOTS-CLÉS :** *difficultés, anglais des affaires, enseignement à distance*

Teaching ESP lectures to students involved in the long-distance system represents a challenge not only for the English teacher but for all the teachers involved in this process. Usually, classes are highly heterogeneous in the sense that students are of different ages, their motivations vary considerably and their learning experience is particular to each and every person. Moreover, distance learning relies more on individual training and less on the teacher's lectures which rather constitute an intensive but reduced guide in the field of the subject that he/she teaches. However, it is also important to mention the fact that, most people who choose to follow the lectures of a Long-Distance Faculty, have a full time job, therefore, the time devoted to private study is flexible and often reduced to several hours a week. Teaching adults thus becomes a challenge, in the sense that the teaching material should be concise, effective, I mean rich in information but at same time easy to follow and attractive. Achieving a self-teaching textbook may be quite a difficult task for the language teacher and the short period of time in which teachers and students meet should rather be focused on how the manual works (I mean on how the communicative activities that the CD-s may offer should be practiced, on the way the results of certain exercises may be checked, on how to correct yourself at the end of a task, etc. rather than on certain vocabulary or grammar problems).

However hard it may seem for the teacher to compress the syllabus and the explanations in just a few meetings, teaching long-distance students may also be a pleasant and interesting experience. This is because, the interaction with adults (as

most of them are people who already have a job and a family) can be quite rewarding, in the sense that, just as the authors of the book *Teaching English as a Foreign Language* point out,

adults learning English bring to the task a mature personality, many years of educational training, a developed intelligence, a determination to get what they want, fairly clear aims, and above all strong motivation to make as rapid progress as possible. These are formidable qualifications which far outweigh any disadvantages, and make teaching adults a challenging and satisfying experience.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the English teacher should take into account all the possible advantages and disadvantages of coping with students that attend long-distance classes. He/she should stimulate them to learn by themselves but this means that they are given alternative methods to supplement the teacher's absence. The choice of materials that are to be handed to long distance students and the problems that arise when coping with such learners form the reference topics of my current research paper.

### **Common problems in long-distance teaching**

As far as the foreign language teaching is concerned, the situation is even more complex if we think that, in long-distance classes, students tend to form mixed classes, with different abilities of communication in English. Moreover, the distance of the previous contact with English as a foreign language is specific to each student. Some have just graduated high school, and their English knowledge is quite good or excellent, while others may be returning to studies after a long period of absence in which they have stopped practicing the English language skills.

However, we should not consider the age criterion as a language barrier, as a clear cut distinction between long-distance students. What we as teachers should take into account are the various factors that lie behind these elder students:

1. the daily rhythm determined by professional life; (...)
2. social responsibilities, for example towards children, family, employer;
3. economic conditions, which for example oblige learners to acquire (additional) qualifications (...)
4. previous-positive or negative-experiences of the teaching and learning process, for example anxieties about learning (...).<sup>2</sup>

The selected causes mentioned above can be said to characterize the elder age group that usually enrolls in the long-distance studies. As a consequence, in terms of aspirations, we, as teachers, should have in view the fact that not all students enroll in the English class because they feel particularly attracted to this language. Due to the integration of our country in the European Union, more and more foreign companies offer jobs (especially in the business field) which require a

good mastering of English, therefore, the number of students interested in this language has increased a lot lately. But, for the students who have already passed a certain age, English, as well as the earning of a Degree in Business may not represent his/her desires but rather, just as we have mentioned above, the demands of a new society, the conditions of promotion or even maintenance in his/her job. Thus, the elder generation has to face the pressure of the younger one, much more trained and accustomed to the use of the English language. This may lead to the development of certain feelings such as anxiety which may hinder the efficient communication with the teacher and with the rest of the class. Generally, these students tend to underestimate their competence in the acquisition of the new language and tend to lose their interest in the lectures.

Thus, the content of foreign language programs should be based upon the most systematic, accurate, and empirical measures of students' needs and of the language required by the tasks they must perform outside of the classroom. This content-based approach should emphasize the learning of the foreign language in conjunction with subject matter so that they integrate particular content with language teaching aims (Graves, 1996). (...) To summarize, in order to alleviate anxiety in foreign language university students (...), educators ought to provide meaningful content that is akin to their particular disciplines. An example of this approach would be to develop curricula for professional disciplines, such as health professions, business, science and technology, (...) for academic purposes (...).<sup>3</sup>

### **Efficient Solutions to the Long-Distance Teaching**

As we have previously mentioned, the elaboration of a complex textbook is essential for such students whose main English knowledge relies on individual practice. The textbook should contain not only business vocabulary, grammar issues, speaking, listening, reading and writing activities but also various electronic supports such as cassettes, floppy disks, CDs containing instructions that would guide them towards an effective acquisition of English. Self evaluation tests followed by answer keys should not be neglected either.

In a special chapter, students should also be familiarised with the various Cambridge Teofl and/or other business English examinations and encouraged to pass them in order to obtain professionally valid certificates that would constitute a major advantage in their careers. Another section should be devoted to various websites, private courses. Internet connections that might help them improve their educational training. These modern techniques are vital for the students' rapid progress in a class where teacher-student interaction relies on just one face-to-face meeting.

The variety and interaction of media which are being used to support the language learner at a distance is constantly changing and expanding. CD-ROMs and the Internet offer the possibilities of text, pictures, sound and interaction. Electronic mail and computer conferencing are used for tutor-student communication or for students to communicate with each other. Electronic resources may supplement

other learning materials. Since one of the particular challenges of learning languages at a distance is that of learning to speak and understand others speaking, synchronous interactive computer-mediated systems which facilitate spoken communication are of particular relevance and have been developed by distance teachers.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, the material that the English teacher will design for the long-distance students should be an excellent study companion, providing strong motivation in achieving proficiency in English and becoming successful competitors on the newly developed job market.

Under such circumstances, the teacher's job is to introduce the textbook to students and explain in a slow, concise and precise way the content of the chapters, how the instructions should be interpreted or how the required tasks should be performed. Moreover, the English teacher should draw the students' attention on what exactly they should focus more on or what and when to review and consolidate certain concepts. He/she may also underline the fact that a foreign language cannot be learned without practice and that, by choosing a partner, or, working in groups, with 3 or 4 classmates, would bring positive reinforcement and would create a pleasant emotional environment.

In conclusion, the teacher's workbook is meant to enable students learn English in a productive way despite the fact that they are separated from each other in time and space. The English teacher should constantly try to develop his/her manner of teaching and improve the textbook with modern and effective techniques of learning so that the student shouldn't be discouraged whenever he/she runs into a new grammar, listening, or writing problem. The textbook should also contain a list of frequent errors, of keys to the exercises of answers to different frequent questions, etc. Teaching long-distance students may be a difficult but at the same time interesting and rewarding.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Broughton, Christopher Brumfit, Roger Flavell, Peter Hill, Anita Pincas (1980), *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*, New York: Routledge, New York, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Bryam (2001), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*, London: Routledge: London, p. 184.

<sup>3</sup> Matt A. Casado, Mary I. Dereshiwsy, "Foreign Language Anxiety of University Students", in *College Student Journal*, Vol. 35, Issue 4, 2001, p. 539.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Bryam, *op.cit.*, p. 184.

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# Argou fără frontiere

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## RÉSUMÉ : *Argot sans frontières*

L'auteur s'est proposé de passer en revue quelques termes argotiques qui peuvent être rencontrés en plusieurs langues, ayant des sens identiques, ce qui démontre une certaine manière commune de percevoir la réalité parmi les utilisateurs de l'argot, quelle que soit leur langue maternelle. La liste n'est pas du tout exhaustive, car aux termes mentionnés on peut ajouter d'autres, dont les sens sont les mêmes au moins dans deux langues, comme *banană* (en roumain) et *banana* (en italien), mot qui signifie « pénis » dans les deux langues.

**MOTS-CLÉS :** *termes argotiques, caractère international, sens identiques*

Într-un excelent studiu despre argoul românesc<sup>1</sup> – după știința noastră cel mai complet apărut până acum la noi –, Miorița Baciuc Got observă că limbajul argotic „găsește permanent modele și stimulente în resursele creatoare ale limbii proprii sau în limbile străine” (2006: 74), fapt explicabil, în opinia autoarei, „printr-o psihologie de clasă comună, care determină fenomene asemănătoare în vorbirea anumitor categorii sociale, indiferent de naționalitate și de limbă.” (*ibidem*).

În culegerea de studii ce poartă numele de *Cercetări etimologice* (București, Editura Univers enciclopedic, 2001), Vasile Drimba face câteva precizări privind etimologia mai multor termeni argotici turcești dintr-un studiu al lui Max Wagner, intitulat *Der türkische Argot* și publicat în *Buletinul Institutului de filologie română „Alexandru Philippide”*, X, 1913, pp. 1-33, considerat de cercetătorul român „cel mai complet studiu pe care îl cunoaștem asupra argoului turcesc” (Drimba, 2001: 263).

Exceptând câțiva din acești termeni argotici de origine turcească, intrați și în argoul românesc, și asupra cărora ne-am oprit și noi, într-un alt articol<sup>2</sup>, alte câteva cuvinte din studiul lui Wagner, chiar dacă nu au stat la baza vreunui termen argotic românesc, ne-au prilejuit câteva observații interesante, credem noi, despre caracterul internațional al argoului. Este vorba de:

§ 1. *Alat*. Termenul *alat* „membrum virile”, „Werkzeug” în studiul lui Max L. Wagner, („sculă, unealtă”, n.n., L.B.), este însoțit de echivalentele acestuia în engleză (*tool*) și franceză (*outil*), completate de Drimba cu termenii românești



*sculă*, *unealtă* și *instrument*, cu mențiunea că «termenul *unealtă* este întrebuințat și pentru „pudendum feminae”» (Drimba, 2001: 263).

Ceea ce ni se pare interesant este faptul că, astăzi, termenii menționați anterior nu prea mai sunt folosiți ca echivalente argotice pentru „penis”, singurul care și-a păstrat sensul atribuit de Drimba fiind *sculă*, acesta figurând, cu acest sens, în patru din cele cinci<sup>3</sup> dicționare de argou ale limbii române consultate de noi (și, din câte știm, singurele publicate până acum).

Astfel, Volceanov menționează următoarele sensuri pentru *sculă*: „1. (*intl.*) („limbajul lumii interlope”, n.n., L.B.) *unealtă* sau *instrument* folosit de un spărgător; 2. cuțit, șis; 3. penis; 4. aparat electronic audiovizual” (1998: 232), definiții pe care le întâlnim nemodificate și în ultima lucrare a autorului (2006: 219). În schimb, la *unealtă* găsim numai sensurile: „1. cuțit, șis; 2. *sculă* folosită la comiterea unei infracțiuni” (1998: 275), aceleași ca și în dicționarul din 2006 (p. 261). Termenul *instrument* nu apare în niciuna din cele două lucrări citate.

La Nina Croitoru Bobârnice, pentru *sculă* sunt menționate aproximativ aceleași sensuri, cu deosebirea că ea înțelege prin termenul în cauză întregul aparat genital al bărbatului, iar pentru a întări parcă acest lucru, înregistrează și o expresie destul de interesantă: „1. *unealtă* de spargere; 2. cuțit, șis; 3. aparat electronic (televizor, videocasetofon etc.); 4. aparatul genital al bărbatului; *expr. și-a suit sculele-n pod*: a rămas impotent” (1996: 172), iar *instrument*, respectiv *unealtă* nu figurează.

Dan Dumitrescu menționează printre numeroasele sinonime argotice pentru „sexul bărbatului” termenii *instrument* (este singurul care îl pomenește!) și *sculă* (2000: 184), *unealtă* nefiind prezent nici la acest autor.

În sfârșit, la Tandin figurează atât *sculă*: „1. *unealtă* de spargere; 2. cuțit, șis” (1993: 84), cât și *unealtă*: „cuțit, șis; obiecte, scule folosite la comiterea infracțiunilor” (1993: 96), dar nici unul cu sensul menționat de Drimba.

În ceea ce privește termenul *sculă*, vom menționa un alt sens, mai degrabă peiorativ, pe care acesta îl are în argoul contemporan, și anume „persoană, personaj, individ, tip”:

– Care, din motive personale, i-a vîndut-o unei *scule* importante, zic meșterii care trebăluiesc de zor la viloi, de pe la Guvern sau Cotroceni.

[AC, 1(424)2000]

De asemenea, ar trebui pomenită o expresie de data aceasta, *mare sculă* (aproape o *locution figée*, cum ar zice francezii), care are aproximativ același sens, dar este, după părerea noastră, mult mai ironică:

– Ba c-a fost *mare sculă* pe vremea lui Ceaușescu, intromisionîndu-se pînă în preajma Cabinetului I, ba că s-a încuscrit, după revoluție, cu PUNR-ul lu’ fra-su, Valer Suian, ba că tot pe-atunci a fost mare mahăr în Ministerul Telecomunicațiilor.

[AC, 6(429)2000]

În sfârșit, credem că ar merita menționat un caz mai rar în argoul românesc, un fel de joc de cuvinte – de genul lui **cel / ăl mai tare din parcare** –, bazat pe rimă deci, și amintind prin aceasta, într-un fel, de *rhyming slang*, procedeul argotic din limba engleză. Este vorba de o completare a expresiei anterioare, și anume **mare sculă pe / de / în / la basculă**, în această ordine a frecvenței prepozițiilor:

Bineînțeles, l-a băgat și în PNȚCD, unde a ajuns **mare sculă pe basculă**.

(Tricolorul)

Nu-mi place soiul ăsta de interactivitate în care una din părți, gazda, e **mare sculă de basculă**, iar ceilalți rămân un soi de neica-nimeni.”

(<http://carnaval.ablog.ro>)

Cine-l ascultă și nu-l cunoaște, tinde să-i creadă balivernele, mai ales că se dă „rotund”, lăudându-se cu o rudă apropiată, **mare sculă în... bascula** finanțelor sucevene.

(Crai nou)

Aud că le-a scăpat din obiectiv până și galaxia dumnealui vigilantul vardist electro-nist de stradă roșie, Ghiță Nicolîță ajuns între timp **mare sculă la bascula** Camerei Deputaților pe Dâmbovița-n-jos.

(Informația de Severin).

Spre deosebire de argoul românesc, în care, așa cum am arătat mai sus, termenii citați de Drimba nu prea mai circulă, ceilalți termeni argotici paraleli, **tool** din engleză, respectiv **outil** din franceză, pe care Wagner îi menționează alături de germ. „Werkzeug” ca echivalente argotice pentru turc. **alat**, figurează și în prezent în dicționarele de argou ale limbilor respective.

Astfel, deși nu apare în lucrarea lui Ionescu nici măcar ca substantiv cu alte sensuri, ci numai ca verb (1972: 229), fără a avea vreo legătură cu sensul de care ne ocupăm aici (să nu uităm că e vorba de un dicționar apărut cu mult înainte de 1989, mai precis în 1972!), **tool** figurează – e adevărat, fără sensul atribuit de Wagner –, la Nimară: „1. hoț de buzunare; 2. prost; 3. elev/student tocilar” (1993: 244). Abia la Volceanov apare termenul **tool** cu sensul „penis”, alături de alte câteva sensuri, printre care și cele menționate de Nimară (1995: 246). În sfârșit, în cel mai bogat dicționar de argou englez-român apărut la noi, cel al lui Balaban, **tool** figurează cu nu mai puțin de șapte sensuri ca substantiv (primul este „penis”!) și trei ca verb (1996: 415).

În ceea ce privește termenul **outil** din argoul francez, acesta nu figurează la Frosin, în a cărui lucrare întâlnim în schimb un cuvânt precum **outillé**, cu explicația „bine dotat (*despre un bărbat*)” (1996: 111)! Ținând seama că e foarte limpede despre ce „dotare” e vorba, e curios faptul că termenul **outil** nu apare, cu atât mai mult cu cât verbul **outiller** este explicat prin... „a lovi *sau* a ucide cu cuțitul” (*ibidem*). În schimb, Dumitrescu înregistrează pentru termenul **outil** următoarele sensuri: „1. instrument, sculă de spărgător; 2. nume generic pentru arme (cuțit, pistol etc.); 3. sexul bărbatului (vezi **os à moelle** b); 4. individ enervant, agasant,

plictisitor, sâcâitor” (1998: 185). În sfârșit, din lucrarea lui Colin (2002: 569) aflăm lucruri interesante despre prima atestare a folosirii termenului *outil* cu sensul „penis”. Este vorba de... secolul al XIII-lea, în „Fabliaux”-uri!

Celor doi termeni argotici menționați anterior li se pot adăuga exemple din argoul italian, unde cuvinte precum *arnese* (purtând mențiunea *glum.*) sau *atrezzo* înseamnă „sculă, instrument, unealtă, penis” (Luca, 1999: 7, respectiv 9), la fel ca și *instrumento*, care are ca sensuri „instrument, sculă, os, ciocan, penis” (Luca, 1999: 111).

Și în limba spaniolă, un termen precum *herramienta*, care înseamnă „sculă, unealtă”, a căpătat și sensul argotic de „sulă, penis” (Calciu, 1992: 813; Espasa, s.v.), iar *instrumento*, însemnând „instrument, ustensilă” etc., are și echivalentele argotice „sculă, sulă, penis” (Calciu, 1992: 871; Espasa, s.v.).

De asemenea, un paralelism interesant întâlnim în cazul cuvântului spaniol *aparato* („Pene. Término eufemístico para referirse al órgano sexual masculino, cuya denominación exacta no se emplea por pudor.”, Espasa, s.v.) și al echivalentului său românesc, *aparat* (folosit mai ales la plural), în expresia *a fi la aparate*. Expresia apare la Bobârnice (1996: 22) având sensul „a avea contact sexual” și la Dumitrescu (2000: 183), cu sensurile „a avea contact sexual, a face sex”.

Și în limba germană, un termen precum *das Gerät* are, pe lângă sensurile „1. chestie, sculă (și fig.) 2. femeie, fată”, și pe cel de „3. penis; sculă” (Lăzărescu, 1997: 97).

**§ 2. *Bildrcin*.** La paralelele din alte limbi, ale termenului «*Bildrcin* „Strassenmädchen” (propriu „Wachtel”)» („prepeliță”, n.n., L.B.) – citate de Wagner (p. 17) – Drimba (2001: 264-265) adaugă multe vocabule românești înregistrate de G. Istrate în *BIFR*, XI-XII, p. 480 și urm.: *bibilică, bufniță, găinușă, puică, pupăză* ș.a.

Acestea, credem noi, li se pot alătura și alți termeni care în limba română denumesc diferite specii de păsări, dar care în argou au același sens: *prostituată*. Evident că există diferite nuanțe, dar care nu le schimbă, în esență, sensul: de exemplu, *bufnița* este o prostituată care „lucrează”... noaptea (ca și pasărea al cărei nume îl poartă!), în timp ce *vrăbiuța* este o prostituată... tânără (de la forma diminutivală a substantivului, în strânsă legătură cu mărimea, sau poate mai bine zis, cu „micimea” acesteia!).

În limba germană mai există termenul *die Bordsteinschwalbe* (rândunica de trotuar), care... lucrează mai ales noaptea, fiind un sinonim pentru prostituată.

Și în limba franceză există un nume de pasăre folosit, printre mulți alți termeni, pentru a denumi aceeași realitate, prostituata: este vorba de *grue* („cocor”, în limba română), termen considerat azi învechit și familiar.

**§ 3.** Acestor termeni li se pot adăuga și alții, cum ar fi *ciocan*, termen care, nu numai în română, are sensul de „penis”, „sexul bărbatului”. Cu mențiunea „argou, argotic”, Alexandru Ciorănescu îi atribuie sensul de „membru viril” (2001:

193). Astfel, el apare la Anca și George Volceanov cu indicația *vulg.* și cu sensul de „penis”, alături de alți termeni din aceeași familie: **ciocăneală**, s.f. „1. întâlnire amoroasă 2. contact sexual”; **ciocăni**, vb. IV (*obs.*) A. tr. (*d. bărbați*) „a avea contact sexual cu o femeie”; B. refl. (*d. femei*) „a avea contact sexual cu un bărbat”; **ciocănitoare** s.f. „1. femeie de moravuri ușoare 2. nimfomană” (1998: 66). Dan Dumitrescu îl menționează și el cu sensul „sexul bărbatului”, adăugând alte cuvinte din aceeași familie: **ciocăneală** („act, contact sexual”), **a ciocăni** (despre un bărbat – „a avea contact sexual, a poseda sexual o femeie”), **a da (a trage) ciocane** (același sens cu verbul **ciocăni**) (2000: 183). În lucrarea pe care o semnează singur de data aceasta, *Dicționar de argou al limbii române*, George Volceanov adaugă la termenii citați mai sus câteva sinonime pentru **ciocăneală**, și anume: **ciocăneanu**, **ciocănescu**, **ciocănitură**, și **ciocănoiu**, precum și o expresie, **a o ciocăni în vârf** (*adol., obs.*) „a se masturba” (2006: 64). Singurii autori care nu menționează în lucrările lor termenul **ciocan** sunt Traian Tandin, la care figurează totuși doi termeni din familia lexicală a acestuia, și anume **ciocănar** „fraier; neinițiat, ageamiu” și **ciocănitoare** „1. prostituată; 2. femeie căreia îi plac relațiile intime cu bărbații” (1993: 25), și Nina Croitoru Bobârnice, dar și aceasta menționează totuși derivatele **ciocănar** „credul, naiv, nepriceput”, **ciocăneală** „act sexual”, **ciocăni** „a avea un raport sexual” și **ciocănitoare** „curvă, târfă” (1996: 55-56).

Aceleași sensuri i le atribuie și George Astaloș: «A ciocăni / act sexual – De la „ciocan” (sexul bărbatului). „A ciocănit-o”: a avut-o (a făcut dragoste cu ea). „Ciocăneală”: act sexual (cu derivatul său „ciocănit”). „Ciocănitoare”: femeie rea de muscă. Ironic: ciocăneanu; ciocănitură; ciocănescu; ciocănoiu. » (2001: 216)

În toate aceste lucrări, mai apare un termen derivat de la **ciocan**, și anume **ciocănar** „fraier; neinițiat, ageamiu” (Tandin, 1993: 25), „credul, naiv, nepriceput” (Croitoru Bobârnice, 1996: 55), „individ naiv, credul, ușor de înșelat” (Volceanov/ Volceanov, 1998: 66), „naiv” (Dumitrescu, 2000: 128), dar acesta nu are nicio legătură cu organul sexual la bărbatului, ci cu sensul peiorativ de „muncitor necalificat” (cf. NODEX, DEX).

Deși departe de bogăția familiei lexicale pe care acest termen o are în argoul românesc, el este folosit cu același sens și în argoul german, **Hammer** având, pe lângă alte sensuri, și pe acela de „penis, ciocan (*fig.*)” (Lăzărescu, 1997: 105). De altfel, argoul german înregistrând și verbul **hämmern** vt., vi. (*d. bărbați*) „a se culca cu, a da ciocane, a ciocăni (*fig.*)” (*ibidem*).

Și în argoul englez **hammer** are, printre alte sensuri, și pe cel de „penis, ‘ciocan’ (*mai ales Austr. și Can.*)”, iar ca verb, la fel ca în argoul german, înseamnă „a ‘trage (*niște/câteva*) ciocane’/ a lua ‘la ciocane’, a face sex cu (*Br.*)” (Balaban, 1996: 160).

În sfârșit, în argoul italian **martello** are și el, pe lângă alte sensuri, și pe cel de „ciocan, sculă, măciucă, penis” (Luca, 1999: 131).

## CONCLUZII

Fără a avea pretenția unei abordări exhaustive a acestor termeni argotici (destul de mulți, de altfel), ce pot fi întâlniți în mai multe limbi, având aceleași sensuri în argourile respective, ne-am propus să facem doar o trecere în revistă a câtorva dintre aceștia, prezenți în mai multe limbi, sau, în orice caz, mai cunoscuți. Existența acestui caracter internațional al argoului este remarcată și de Miorița Baciuc care îl explică „printr-o psihologie de clasă comună, ce determină fenomene asemănătoare în vorbirea anumitor categorii sociale, indiferent de naționalitate și de limbă.” (2006: 74).

Ea nu face decât să confirme o mai veche afirmație a lui Iorgu Iordan, care observa pe bună dreptate

că există coincidențe, la prima vedere cu adevărat surprinzătoare, între argot-urile țărilor nu numai vecine, ci adesea îndepărtate una de alta. Nicio altă față a activității lingvistice nu se dovedește a fi atât de internațională ca aceasta, tocmai fiindcă, independent de granițe politice, pedeparte cei care o reprezintă seamănă ca psihologie într-o mai mare măsură decât alte categorii sociale, iar pedealta legăturile dintre ei, cel puțin când e vorba de anumite specii de argotizanți, sunt foarte strânse.

(Iordan, 1937: 150-151)

## NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Este vorba de *Argoul românesc. Expresivitate și abatere de la normă*, Cuvânt înainte de Mircea Borcilă, București, Editura Corint, 2006, 192 p., care, alături de capitolul III – „Pregnanța oralității” – al lucrării Rodică Zafiu, *Diversitate stilistică în româna actuală*, București, Editura Universității din București, 2001, reprezintă, după părerea noastră, cele mai pertinente studii dedicate argoului românesc contemporan.

<sup>2</sup> Vezi „Cuvinte de origine turcească în argoul românesc”, in *Analele Universității din Craiova, Seria „Științe filologice”*, Lingvistică, nr. 1-2/2006, pp. 34 -40.

<sup>3</sup> Este vorba, se pare, de 6 dicționare, căci în 2003 a apărut a doua ediție, „revăzută și adăugită”, a *Dicționarului de argou al limbii române* al Ninei Croitoru Bobârnice, după ce prima ediție văzuse lumina tiparului în 1996. Din păcate, în ciuda tuturor demersurilor noastre, nu am reușit să intrăm în posesia acestuia...

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### **Periodice**

[AC, 1(424)2000] = *Academia Cațavencu*, nr. 1(424)2000.

[AC, 6(429)2000] = *Academia Cațavencu*, nr. 6(429)2000.

(*Informația*) = *Informația de Severin*, 03 octombrie 2008.

(*Crai nou*) = *Crai nou*, nr. 3997, 01 septembrie 2005.

(*Tricolorul*) = *Tricolorul*, nr. 1228, 05 aprilie 2008.

# A Syntactic Analysis of Epistemic Modal Verbs

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## ABSTRACT

The general outline of the paper is to tackle the complex problem of modality in English and Romanian from the perspective of traditional and modern linguistics. The paper attempts to reveal the theoretical background against which teachers can build and consolidate their knowledge of modal verbs by means of a thorough analysis that should include their morpho-syntactic features and behavior. It is of paramount importance to get a better understanding of how modals and modality occur at the mental level and how they are produced through language taking into consideration the complex occurrences and features of modal verbs in English and Romanian.

**KEYWORDS:** *epistemic modality, epistemic modals, syntactic behavior*

The general outline of the paper is to tackle the complex problem of modality in English and Romanian from the perspective of traditional and modern linguistics. The paper attempts to reveal the theoretical background against which teachers can build and consolidate their knowledge of modal verbs by means of a thorough analysis that should include their morpho-syntactic features and behavior. It is of paramount importance to get a better understanding of how modals and modality occur at the mental level and how they are produced through language taking into consideration the complex occurrences and features of modal verbs in English and Romanian.

There is great necessity for a contrasted study of modality from the perspective of traditional and modern grammar, discussing its relationship with tense, mood and aspect. There are a number of reasons for undertaking a study on the complexity of modal verbs syntax starting with the formal properties of modals, but a more fundamental factor may be that it is never easy to package complexity into the meaningful chunks of information teachers present to their students. Indeed, modals are fascinatingly complex. At the formal level, we form modal auxiliaries and determine whether to treat a word as a modal or as another part of speech. At the semantic level, we not only have to deal with the meanings of the various modals, but the different classes of modals found in English. Syntactically, the question is whether all modals are auxiliaries. Since a whole class of modals is used interpersonally and they generate speech acts, the pragmatics of modal use



must be considered. Also, sources of difficulty in interpreting modal meanings are believed to reside in the fact that

the inventory of modal meanings is not stable across languages, moods do not map neatly from one language to another, modality may be realized morphologically or by free-standing words, and modality interacts in complex ways with other modules of the grammar, like tense and aspect.<sup>1</sup>

Scholars have also been preoccupied to decipher the relationship between modals and modality, coming to terms with what the modal auxiliaries really are (and aren't), what the difference is between *modal* and *modality* and what are the values of modality. Thus, according to Bidu-Vrănceanu and Dindelegan (2001), **modality** in the field of logic expresses the way in which an utterance is necessarily or possibly true/false, thus leading the way in understanding the classical values of modality: necessity and possibility. These two facets of modality may be understood either as absolute, i.e when interpreted in relation to all possible worlds (alethic necessity/possibility) or by means of what is known/believed by the speaker as a result of his/her empirical experience (non-alethic modality). The same researchers identify other viewpoints that consider modality to be the speaker's involvement, attitude, opinion, subjective appreciation with respect to the descriptive component of the utterance.

Downing and Locke consider modality "a semantic category which covers such notions as possibility, probability, necessity, volition, obligation and permission"<sup>2</sup>. To these basic modalities they add the notions of doubt, wish, desire, regret and temporal notions as *usuality*. Thus modality acquires the status of "a relation with reality, whereas a non-modal utterance treats the process as reality" because modality projects the above mentioned notions onto the content of the proposition according to the speaker's attitude and intervention. They also define epistemic modality as the utterance in which the speaker comments on the contents of the clause, committing to the truth of the proposition embedded in the clause, as well as non-epistemic (also called deontic for obligation and permission) modality as being characterized by the speaker's intervention in and change of the speech event

Also, in French linguistics<sup>3</sup> modality expresses the position of the speaker in the act of uttering in relation to himself, to the listener and to the content of the utterance. This understanding of modality is structured on 3 typologies:

- ***alocutive modalities***, oriented towards the listener/interlocutor, who requested, demanded, urged, was forbidden to perform a certain task; the speaker makes his intention, position, expectations known to the interlocutor; it is the modality of obligation and permission, also known as deontic modality, the value of the utterance is neither true nor false but rather prescriptive. Deontic modal operators include 'It is compulsory/allowed/forbidden/recommendable/unadvisable/unhealthy/u

njust'etc and they address a specific interlocutor who is expected to perform in accordance to the given prescription.

- ***elocutive modality***, equivalent to epistemic modality. It is speaker oriented, the speaker expressing his position with respect to what he/she is uttering on the basis of the two notions of epistemic modality: necessity and possibility. These two notions are regarded from the perspective of what is known/believed by the speaker in accordance to the rules of the community and of the time of the utterance since epistemic modality displays a high degree of cultural and social determination. The two basic epistemic operators are 'It is known that', where the speaker expresses certainty in and responsibility for the truth value of the utterance (factive operator) and 'It is believed that' expressing the speaker's lack of engagement in the truthfulness of the utterance (non-factive, opinion operator);
- ***delocutive modalities***, oriented towards the content of the utterance itself; it is characterized by the speaker's and the interlocutor's neutrality as the message is uttered as an assertion with no particular receiver (as in *The store opens at seven* or *She told me the store opens at seven*).

In Lyons' view (1977) the term 'epistemic' has developed a slightly different meaning in linguistic semantics than the original meaning used by logicians and philosophers. Going back to the origin of the word (Greek for 'knowledge') epistemology is the science concerned with the nature and source of knowledge, epistemic logic has come to deal with the logical structure of statements asserting or implying that a proposition is known or believed. Epistemic modality is supposed to measure the status of the speaker's understanding or knowledge of the reality around. Epistemic statements, however, encompass not only the speaker's own judgements but also "*the kind of warrant he has for what he says*"<sup>4</sup>. Epistemic modality is used to qualify assertions, to indicate what is known/believed/supposed, to indicate what results can be expected in a particular situation and to discuss alternatives.

The question of what we mean when we say that modals have meaning turns out to be quite a complex one. Palmer (1990) notes that modality is concerned with our opinions and attitudes, and most linguists accept the existence of at least two types of modality – epistemic and deontic. *Modal*, then, refers to the morpho-syntactic behaviour and properties of a certain class of words, while *modality* refers to the meanings and intentionality of words. Epistemic modality is concerned with the speaker's judgement of the truth of the proposition embedded in an utterance whereas deontic modality is concerned with "*influencing actions, states, or events*" (Palmer, 1990: 6); in other words, deontic modality is oriented towards performing speech acts in a Gricean sense<sup>5</sup>.

## The Syntactic Behaviour of Modal Verbs

Downing and Locke (1992) identify the categories of words that are able to express modal meaning as:

- **Lexical verbs:** allow, beg, command, forbid, guarantee, guess promise, suggest, warn, the so called performative verbs that urge the interlocutor to act in accordance to the speaker's expectations;
- The verbs **wonder** and **wish**, expressing doubt and wish;
- The lexico-modal auxiliaries composed of **be** and **have** + **another element + Infinitive** (have got to, be bound to)
- The **modal auxiliaries** proper: can, could, will would, must, shall, should, may, might, ought and the semi modals need and dare;
- **Modal disjuncts** (probably, possibly, surely, hopefully, obviously etc)
- **Modal adjectives** – possible, probable – in impersonal constructions;
- **Modal nouns** – possibility, probability, chance, likelihood;
- The **remote past** and some **if clauses**: I thought I'd go with you, if you don't mind;
- The use of **non-assertive items** such as any: They'll **any** kind of fruit;
- Certain types of **intonation** (fall-rise) and **hesitation** in speech.

Some syntactic features are identified by Downing and Locke by means of which epistemic modality is set into action in an utterance. The paradigm under discussion is carried out by means of MIGHT as representative of most modals and the point they make is that when referring to past time epistemic modals do not bear past meanings:

<b>Existential subject:</b>	There might be enough
<b>Be+ING</b>	He might be waiting.
<b>Stative verbs</b>	He might be twenty.
<b>Dynamic verbs</b>	I might leave early.
<b>Passive voice</b>	It might be rebuilt later.
<b>Lexical auxiliary</b>	It might have to be abandoned.
Past reference with <b>have+en</b> occurrences:	He might have left by now.

Palmer notes that *“the treatment of the modals as auxiliaries was based initially upon their functions with relation to negation, inversion, code and emphatic affirmation”*<sup>6</sup>. He also considers the role of the paradigm for modals which demonstrates that there are severe restrictions of combination with other forms, their occurrence being only possible in initial position due to their lack of finite form as well as being unable to shift their place.

We must leave.  
 \*We leave must.

Hence their inability to combine with one another, thus being essentially different in nature from ‘catenatives’ (full verbs).

Some modals’ similarity to catenatives (characteristic of complex phrases) lies in their very similar patterns for marking past tense, proven in the way in which both modals and catenatives mark tense twice as opposed to primary auxiliaries in simple phrases, which only mark tense once:

He happens to live there	He can’t be there now.
He happened to live there	He couldn’t be there yesterday.
He happens to have lived there last year.	He can’t have been there yesterday.
He happened to have lived there the year before.	He couldn’t have been there the day before. <sup>7</sup>

As Palmer notes, another specific syntactic behaviour of modal verbs (except should) is to use past tense to mark tentativeness, i.e a lesser degree of positiveness, certainty of performance towards the action:

Will you go there? / Would you go there?  
She may arrive at 7. / She might arrive at 7.

An important observation regarding the use of past tense is that “in a very small number of uses of the modals does past tense, in fact, mark past time”<sup>8</sup>:

They can lift that rock. (Physical ability in the present)  
They could lift that rock when they were children. (Physical ability in the past)

The argument for considering **could**, **would**, **should**, **might** as past forms of the corresponding modals (can, will, shall, may) lies in their function in indirect speech, where they submit to the rules imposed by the sequence of tenses and actually fulfil a past tense function, thus providing us with the ultimate test for verification:

I’ll come.	→	I said I’d come.
I shall come.	→	I said I should come.
I can come.	→	I said I could come.
I may come.	→	I said I might come.

However, in most situations these apparently past form are used neither as past time referents nor with the same meaning as their correspondents, hence generating the practice of treating them as distinct auxiliaries.

Palmer does identify a pattern in the function of these forms based on 3 simple rules:

*1. The futurity forms of WILL and SHALL have no past tense/past time forms (there is no future in the past)*

Although Palmer makes an important point of the fact that there is no future tense proper in English, he admits that there are reasons to assume that SHALL and WILL fulfil the function of primary auxiliaries in the formation of the future more than they behave as modal verbs. Firstly, they are conditioned by the person of the personal pronoun subject in the sense that SHALL is used for 1<sup>st</sup> person sg. and pl. subjects, whereas WILL operates with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person subjects, sg and pl. Moreover, the two modal auxiliaries maintain their roles even in indirect speech and their choice is not imposed by the original sentence but rather by the pronoun:

I shall see him tomorrow.  
He says he will see him tomorrow.

Also, passivization is not blocked as there is a clear-cut distinction between WILL of volition and WILL of futurity:

I shall meet Mary at the station.  
Mary will be met by me at the station.

WILL and SHALL as auxiliaries do not emerge in conditional clauses merely because most of their occurrences in conditional subordinates are strictly forbidden if they refer to futurity and only allowed if they bear a modal meaning:

We'll go together if he will come tomorrow. (WILL of volition = If he wants to come tomorrow).

For past time reference, SHALL and WILL encounter some restrictions as they occur as SHOULD and WOULD in indirect speech but they are not commonly used for future in the past except in literary/livresque occurrences:

I shall be better soon. → He said he would be better soon. (reported speech)  
He would die within a month. (future in the past)

Also, Palmer notices that there are no tentative forms WOULD and SHOULD for futurity and there can never be double negative marking, i.e. "the negation of the futurity of an act seems not to be distinct from the futurity of the negation of an act"<sup>9</sup>:

He won't come tomorrow.  
He'll not come tomorrow.

Palmer concludes the argument by asserting that SHALL and WILL are not wholly tense auxiliaries as they can't be 'divorced' from the other modal uses in order to set up a futurity paradigm just for the sake of having one.

2. Only the subject oriented modals *WILL* and *CAN* have past tense forms for past time but *SHOULD* or *MIGHT* do not act as past forms. Palmer Argues the case by appealing to the semantics of discourse oriented modals which refer to speaker or hearer participation (promising, permitting) and this can only occur at speech time, i.e. in the present:

When I was little, I would/could swim very well. (habit/ability in the past)

\* When I was little, I should/might swim very well.

I should/might still swim very well now that I am all grown up.

3. Even *WOULD* and *COULD* are not used where there is reference to a single past action (with some exceptions)<sup>10</sup>:

\*I asked him and he would come. (It is not a habit in the past but rather a single promise in the past for the future)

I asked him and he wouldn't come. (refusal to perform a single action)

Whenever I asked him, he would come. (habit, repeated past and present action)

\*I ran fast and could catch the bus. (incorrect because it is not an ability in the past but rather an isolated action)

I ran fast but couldn't catch the bus. (inability to perform a single action)

Whenever I ran fast I could catch the bus. (ability in the past)

Therefore *WOULD* and *COULD* are blocked when there is implication that a single action in the past actually took place and they are used when they imply the denial of such an action or when the action is repeated, thus turning into a habit in the past.

Palmer notes that the only exception to this rule is personified in the use of *WILL* for insistence and *CAN* for sensation:

He had been warned but he would still do it. (insistence)

She took a deep breath and she could smell the mountains. (sensation)

Zdrengea and Hoyer raise the problem from the perspective of generative grammar of whether modals should be approached as belonging to the base component if they abide by some common universal rules applicable to all languages or to the transformational component if treated as peculiarities and variations in each language.

One of their first premises for analysis resides in the fact that the syntactic behavior of modals can be predicted from their semantic structure. Thus, the selectional restrictions of modals should arise from decomposing them into a set of meanings "*such that there may be an overlap in the sets of components assigned to different modals or to different interpretations of the same modal*"<sup>11</sup>. However, the selectional restrictions of English modals tends to be arbitrary in nature thus such an interpretation is at times forced and does not relate to the features of the modal alone but rather to its relation to the other elements in the sentence.

Another important point they make is that modals are acquired quite early by native speakers therefore they are understood as part of “*patterns in sentence formation*”. The assumption they make in their study is that

there is a universal feature (or features) or M(odality) which is realized in different ways in various languages. In English the feature of M(odality) is realized as a syntactic category M(odal) which is referred to by syntactic transformations such as Interrogation, Negation etc. (1995: 9)

In generative transformational grammar the list of modals has been restrained to 5 items: MAY, CAN, SHALL, WILL and MUST operating on the formula

**Aux->C(M)(have-en)(be-ing)**

All theoretical approaches to modal verbs must abide by the criterion of simplicity that should apply not to singular cases but rather to the whole system in order for it to be effective. The attempt to categorize the distributional requirements of modal verbs (WILL, SHALL, CAN, MAY, WOULD, SHOULD, COULD, MIGHT and perhaps OUGHT TO) has always met with the problematic existence of quasi modals (NEED, DARE, USED TO, HAVE TO) which satisfy only a part of the syntactic (and at times semantic) criteria of modal verbs (1995:11).

Thus, modal verbs seem to lack the ability to occur internally in the auxiliary system, i.e. although they appear to behave as auxiliaries in the past according to the auxiliary re-writing rule, they bear an entirely different shade of meaning than their counterparts such that each member of the pair should be treated separately.

He may come ->She said he might come.

Two important points are also made by Zdrenghea and Hoye:

- **the modal verb imposes a hypothetical meaning to the main verb**, thus the modal is auxiliary in relation to the main verb since the S node dominated NP and VP:

She may arrive at 7.  
She wants to arrive at 7.

- **the modal verb takes the secondary or auxiliary position in relation to its main verb.**

Syntactic restrictions seem to operate on the main verb in its relation to the subject, not with the modal verb.

**The syntactic role of semi-modals** in a sentence is problematic. Are the semi-modals auxiliaries or main verbs? Palmer does not directly address the question, but in a discussion on *be bound to*, he does make reference to the main verb being a verb of action, suggesting that he sees *be bound to* as an auxiliary (Palmer, 1990).

Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1983: 83) point out that periphrastic modals (the semi-modals ending in *to*) “*behave syntactically more like main verbs than do modals*”, but a footnote at the bottom of the same page suggests that they still consider periphrastic modals to be auxiliaries. Furthermore,

Structurally, *have to* is not truly a periphrastic modal since it requires *do* support... In other words, *have to* looks like a verb and behaves very much like a periphrastic form in many contexts. Thus we have treated it like one. (1983: 81).

Many of the semi-modals behave atypically.

- *Used to, have to*, often take *do* support in the negative and interrogative (*Did you use to take long walks?*), while
- *need* sometimes behaves as a proper modal auxiliary (*You needn't do that*) and sometimes as a semi-modal requiring *do* (*You don't need to do that*).
- *Had better* displays the formal characteristics of modal verbs proper (no *-s*, no non-finite form, no chaining with other modals), but the presence of *better* makes treating it as a modal verb technically incorrect.

The **semi-modals** behave atypically, combining characteristics of both full verbs and auxiliary verbs. It is also true that the category is defined by the semantic functions of its members, not necessarily by their formal qualities. Since their category is so heterogeneous in nature, we may imply there are no cross-categorial common features all semi-modals should share. The category lacks the features that would unite its members in analysis and one should, therefore, take into account the individual structural and semantic characteristics of each semi-modal. It is also necessary to understand when and how to substitute semi-modals for modal auxiliaries, and to be able to grasp the subtle changes of meaning these substitutions sometimes indicate.

E.g. You needn't have done that. (unnecessary but performed action)  
You didn't need to do that. (unnecessary and unperformed action)

Expressing and interpreting modality is not an easy task for English, irrespective of the learner's previous linguistic background and epistemic readings create a wide range of problems. There are several sources of potential difficulty: the problem of establishing the precise degree of certainty expressed by particular linguistic forms; the range of linguistic devices available for signaling this aspect of



meaning; and the interaction of different types of meaning in different contexts. Moreover epistemic devices also function pragmatically as politeness markers, which further enhances the importance of understanding modals and the way in which they operate at all levels.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> M. McShane, S. Nirenburg, R. Zacharski (2004), "Mood and Modality: Out of Theory and Into the Fray", in *Natural Language Engineering Journal*, 10.
- <sup>2</sup> A. Downing, M. Locke (1992), *A University Course in English Grammar*, Prentice Hall, p. 382.
- <sup>3</sup> P. Charaudeau (1992), *Grammaire du sens et de l'expression*, Paris: Hachette.
- <sup>4</sup> F.R. Palmer (1988), *The English Verb*, London: Longman, p. 51.
- <sup>5</sup> See H.P. Grice (1975), "Logic and conversation", in P. Cole & J.L. Morgan (Eds.), *Speech acts*, New York: Academic Press.
- <sup>6</sup> F.R. Palmer, *op.cit.*, p. 96.
- <sup>7</sup> *Idem*, p. 97.
- <sup>8</sup> *Idem*, p. 96.
- <sup>9</sup> *Idem*, p. 108.
- <sup>10</sup> *Idem*, p. 124.
- <sup>11</sup> M. Zdrenghea, L. Høye (1995), *Modal Verbs and Modal Expressions in English*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Clusium, p. 9.

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# Intercultural Communication in Language Teaching

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## ABSTRACT

Intercultural communication has made a huge progress in the last decade. Communication between people from different backgrounds and social cultures has been perceived as an important part of the theory of communication. The attempts to explain the communication, specifically intercultural one are linked to the intergenerational communication identity and the perspective of communication as a liberated determination in a culture where the cultural norms and rules are associated with the huge cultural tendency and the characteristics of the individuals. Intercultural contact shows that the individuals can gain intercultural competence by developing and preserving intercultural relationships, thus intercultural communication takes place by the discursive hypothesis of dissimilar cultural distinctiveness.

**KEYWORDS:** *intercultural communication, intercultural growth*

To be able to understand intercultural communication it means to be able to understand the patterns in which the spoken and written language might be comprehended in different circumstances and the way language in context is seen in the process of communication. A study on intercultural communication is concerned with characteristics of the communication among speakers of, English, for example, and persons speaking other languages, such as Romanian.

The persons engaged into a communication, who may come from different backgrounds, both regarding the social and the cultural one or persons belonging to different cultures and geopolitical background, know that this process of communication depends on some aspects of the context, amongst which the purpose of communication represents the main one.

Milton Bennett asks a few important questions in *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication*, such as:

The study of intercultural communication has tried to answer the question, "How do people understand one another when they do not share a common cultural experience?" (...) we now realize that issues of intercultural understanding are embedded in other complex questions: What kind of communication is needed by a pluralistic society to be both culturally diverse and unified in common goals?"<sup>1</sup>

He gives the definition of intercultural communication by regarding it as an experience that takes place between persons belonging to different backgrounds and culture. A crucial intercultural communication also takes place in language teaching, in the professional background context which implies a certain attention and pragmatism. A multicultural group of students is a permanent challenge because it involves persons belonging to different cultures, who use the communication as a second language acquisition to their first one, and it is possible for them to build a common pattern to escape the innate problems one might have when is in the process of intercultural communication.

An English teacher is used to speakers/ students taking part in intercultural communication as a habitual purpose, using language in such a imaginatively and reciprocally way to make sure that the innate communication is perceived and the impending error message is avoided. In the beginning phases, a student may come within reach of intercultural communication through their individual abrupt culture and misunderstand the objective of their teachers, although beginning to use language methodically, students become more aware of the conducts in which sociological principles form verbal communication and began to use conversation more efficiently.

The multi-functionality of recurrence in a communication and the genuine intercultural discourse information are important if we try to press forward our perceptive of intercultural communication, providing a useful dialogue approach for intercultural communication. By making use of this recurring communication strategy, communication collapse can be avoided, thus, the students provide significant answers.

There are cases when students employed in intercultural exchange of information try to read between the lines and this is the moment the cultural dissimilarity may occur leading to the inevitable input of misinterpretation in intercultural communication.

This view of intercultural and intracultural communication emphasizes that some communication events may rather easily be categorized as intercultural (...) The transactional view of communication emphasizes the mutuality of behaving either simultaneously or sequentially, the behaviour of each ... influencing the behaviour of the other. Speaking and listening generally are sequential, while behaviours involving nonverbal codes are more likely to be simultaneous.<sup>2</sup>

What is eventually worth observing in dealing with cultural background in the analyses of intercultural communication are those characteristic of the mutual body of information of a social background experience. The analysis of intercultural communication is still characterized by a collection of abstract and practical approaches entrenched in linguistics. The genetic characteristics are significant for intercultural communication which takes place whenever partakers bring in different knowledge into the communication. Intercultural communication constitutes a region of investigation of its own and the understanding

acknowledgment is of fundamental importance to understanding communication, particularly intercultural communication.

A student placed in a developing society must be shown how to take this first step in intercultural communication and this can be a significant factor in choosing the power-structures of the communication seen as a type of intercultural relation which would go beyond the misunderstandings of the first acquisitions. Intercultural communication frequently expands into situational talk when perceptiveness of the dialogue between the participants in the communication is highly endangered, thus in intercultural communication a certain kind of impending dissimilarity may exist.

To be competent intercultural communication involves things such as the management of meanings comprehensibly, and engaging in following the exact rules and patterns of communications making it highly suitable and positive that is efficient, so we can say that intercultural communication competence involves the agreement of the participants to reciprocal meanings and rules. The more students have intercultural communication proficiency, the better they can enlarge and maintain it within a level that can allow them perfect understanding when joining a intercultural communication. Teachers must include power in the premises of intercultural communication and also in interpersonal communication. Intercultural communication engages communicators fine-tuning and influencing the behaviours of each other by examining the models of how individuals adjust in such relations and also the consequences of student's observance to this matter and divergence from those anticipations.

We can regard intercultural communication proficiency from the point of view of people's ability to act accordingly and have personal aims in life, and act fittingly to a certain situation of politeness, for example, all these representing global principles for obtaining that proficiency. Communication must be repeated before we can say it has a certain contact with culture. The detailed notional suppositions for the successful intercultural workgroup communication hypothesis may consider workgroups as a whole system encompassing methods that work in a certain circumstance. Students from various backgrounds are introduced as individual members in the workgroup that functions as a whole, participating in the process of communication, taking decisions and resulting in an effective communication. Heterogeneity, on the other hand, leads to a smaller amount of effective communication; it is important not to take for granted that a group is varied just because the group members come from different racial cultural groups or people who come from a alike managerial or occupational culture, in the case of the effective intercultural workgroup communication theory, the focus is on improving group effectiveness and indirectly improving inter-groups relations.

Together, intercultural communication serves as an internal reserve for working toward the rising host communication competence, so as to smooth the progress of their own intercultural growth.

## **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Milton J. Bennett (2000), *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Selected Readings*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> L.E. Sarbaugh (1988), *Intercultural communication*, Transaction Publishers, pp. 7-8.

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# **Limitations, Isolation, and the Search for Knowledge in Robert Frost's Poems *Neither out Far nor in Deep*, *Desert Places*, and *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening***

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## **ABSTRACT**

This is a comparative study of three of Robert Frost's poems. *Neither out Far nor in Deep*, *Desert Places*, and *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* are written brilliantly in everyday, spoken language and present common images about man, nature and its beauty. But this clear and simple language is also ambiguous because it is actually loaded with meanings and expresses simultaneously the poet's pessimism and optimism. These poems seem to be simple stories about watchers and/or travelers but they are more than that; they speak about nature as a source for knowledge and truth and about man and his limitations and isolation in the face of the powerful, incomprehensible and uncontrollable universe. Moreover they also focus on man's determination and persistence, despite his vulnerability and deficiencies, to embark on a quest for knowledge, for truth. Nature will never reveal all its secrets to man but Frost implies that people should keep on trying as there is always something to be discovered and in the same time he warns them not to forget about their world and let themselves be seized by loneliness.

**KEYWORDS:** *incomprehensible and uncontrollable universe, man's limitations and isolation, the search for knowledge and truth*

Robert Frost is one of the leading twentieth century American poets and a four-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize. Although his work is mainly associated with the landscape and life of New England, and although he uses traditional forms and verse, Frost is anything but a merely regional or minor poet. The philosophical dimension of his poems transcends any place or time. Frost's work is rich in meditations on universal themes and can also be considered modern due to its multiple layers of ambiguity and irony expressed through the simple words of the spoken language. John H. Timmerman describes Robert Frost's poetic world as being "rich with implication, and devoid of direct pronouncement unless surrounded by undercutting ironies"<sup>1</sup> and adds that "ambiguity shapes the common denominator"<sup>2</sup>. Moreover one can notice that the poet writes in such a way as to make the printed words linger in the reader's audible imagination and in his/her

mind. Thus, it is only fair to characterize Frost's poetry not only as traditional and regional but also as experimental and universal. Frost cannot be seen as a New England poet. He is even more than an American poet; he is the poet who addresses people everywhere. Frost's country is the country of human experience and of human thought.

Robert Frost buries his ideas deep into the lines of his poems or hints at them and hopes that the reader will discover them or at least will be as close as possible to the true meaning of his verses. The poet helps the reader make a connection, but he never forces it on him/her. James L. Potter explains that Frost firmly believes that "*if the poet has the creative imagination to perceive ideas and objects in new relationships, his readers should be creative enough to appreciate his perceptions when he hints at them*"<sup>3</sup>. His poems need a close reading or several readings with the ears and mind wide open because they seem to be saying less than they do. It is not the words as such that count so much but the overall image that they project and the meanings that they allude to.

According to his poems, it is evident that Robert Frost believes in an ever changing and unknowable universe. The universe cannot be explained through science, religion, or philosophy. Such being the case evolution is simply a metaphor for a changing world. But this does not prevent him from trying to understand as much as possible. Nevertheless, he insists on the idea that one should know its limits even as he strains to pass them. No limit will ever be passed, since indeed it is a limit, which does not mean that we shall never stare at the infinite space between ourselves and the universe trying to make some sense of it. People, for instance, who look at the sea "*cannot look out far*", "*cannot look in deep*", but "*when was that ever a bar/To any watch they keep?*" (*Neither out Far nor in Deep*)<sup>4</sup>. It is human to want to know more than we can. But it is more human to know what "*cannot*" means, what are our limitations. The poet, too, seems to have decided to see everything that he can see. It is true that no man sees or understands the entire world, but the poorest man is the one who refuses to try or who blinds himself. The man with his eyes open has the best chance to understand things. Frost never says these things directly in his poems, he only suggests them. Sometimes he even makes his message ambiguous so that the reader can think for himself.

In *Neither out Far nor in Deep*, *Desert Places*, and *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* there is a division between the world which man knows and the one which is unknown to him. The poet makes it clear that the unknown always attracts man's interest. Philip Gerber points out that in Frost's poems, including these three poems one may say, "*at war against nature's posted territories is man's unquenchable desire to reach beyond his grasp*"<sup>5</sup> for he longs "*to break through the barriers set against him*"<sup>6</sup> and lusts after the impossible things. If man is indifferent to the world of people, of social obligations, of promises like in *Neither out Far nor in Deep*, or if he forgets about it for a moment like in *Desert Places*, or if he also thinks of it like in *Stopping by Woods*, it does not seem to matter too much because the focus is on man's attitude towards the unknown



world, on his reaction to this ever changing world, on his position in rapport with it. Although the sea, the fields, the woods belong to this earth where people live, and although they may be claimed more or less by people, they are also part of the universe which is incomprehensible and uncontrollable. And as the universe in its infinity contains the so much desired 'truth,' it results that all its components are a source of knowledge. But then we have to deal with the ambiguity of nature where it is considered as a source of knowledge, of wisdom because nature – sea, fields, woods – “*does not exist to work continual miracles of revelations*”<sup>7</sup>. The individual is soon to become aware of his limitations, his isolation and thus his loneliness. It proves to be difficult for man to go beyond the mysteries of the universe. What he sees is not too much as compared to what else there may be “*out far*” and “*in deep*”, but this does not make him to give up looking for knowledge. Still, man must learn his place among the final truths of existence. Only by observation can man become aware of his own position in this universe, of his limitations and the infinity of the universe. Man must learn his limitations and accept them because in fact this is the most important “*lesson for survival*”<sup>8</sup> as Philip Gerber calls it. And this is a lesson nature is ready to give. Nature always seems to be willing to show man how limited and vulnerable he is, how lonely he is in this ever changing universe. Frost's poem *Desert Places* illustrates this idea.

Going past a field, in his “*race*” through life, the poet/the speaker observes the spectacle of nature and becomes aware of his position in the universe. He recognizes the power of nature, especially of snow, to obliterate the limits and the boundaries of things and thus to make him aware of his own limits. Once the snow has covered the whole ground, the field will become even less expressive than before when it was “*covered smooth in snow*”<sup>9</sup>. The field becomes “*A blanker whiteness of benighted snow/With no expression, nothing to express*”<sup>10</sup>. The snow is deep enough to hide not only the “*few weeds and stubble showing last*”<sup>11</sup>, but also the very contours of the land. A total whiteness helps the woods to “*have*” the field in and covers everything, raising, as it does in *Stopping by Woods*, the idea of boundarilessness preventing man from seeing too far because of his limited perception of which he becomes aware. It is interesting how places blur before man's eyes whenever he finds himself somewhat participating in the inhuman transformations of natural world. In fact, this is nature's way to hint at man's limitations.

In *Desert Places* the poet/the speaker is receptive to nature's message. He does not have to enter the woods to learn the lesson; it is enough if he looks at nature carefully. While observing nature the poet/the speaker become aware of the absence of something. In her analysis of *Desert Places* from *Toward Robert Frost: the Reader and the Poet*, Judith Oster highlights the fact that this great lack is the absence of imagination in man caused obviously by man's limitations. In the poem, the poet expresses his fear of nothing to express: it is a “*whiteness... with no expression, nothing to express*”<sup>12</sup>. Frost is aware of his limitations as a human being; and, as Oster justly claims in her comments on the poem, he seems to fear a day when he will find nothing in himself, nothing showing or growing, and thus he

will have nothing more to say. Critics often see the pessimism from this poem and implicitly of the author. It is true that the poem ends with the fear of one's own emptiness, one's own nothingness; and that in this poem nothing or emptiness can be defined as the absence of something. What is more, the poet's terror of identifying his own "*desert places*" with the blank landscape is even more obvious. When the poet or any reader makes a journey into one's own, he can discover "*desert places*", can find spaces in himself – both in his knowledge and in the soul. And the inner spaces, the empty places within one's self become much more terrifying than the outer spaces, than the "*empty spaces*" "*between stars*"<sup>13</sup>. Consequently, Mordecai Marcus writes in his study of *Desert Places* from *The Poems of Robert Frost: an explication*, those who wish to scare him by pointing to empty spaces even more frightening than a mere field – the far reaches of the universe – will have no effect on him because he has to face such terrors "nearer home", that is in the inner self.

But if the poem seems rather pessimistic at first, a close reading will make the reader realize that it also has a positive meaning. Snow as a source of knowledge or truth does not give a final answer to man's inquiry but gives the watcher "*continual reassurance*"<sup>14</sup>. This way of Frost's of not telling things directly makes his poems ambiguous, but a sensitive reader can grasp the full meaning of the poems. It is the case with this poem too. Nothingness is intensified in the third stanza and becomes reality: "*And lonely as it is, that loneliness/Will be more lonely ere it will be less –/A blanker whiteness of benighted snow/With no expression, nothing to express*"<sup>15</sup>. Nothingness acquires almost a positive meaning. Not only does the poet, as a man, become aware of his limitations but he also indirectly refers to the fact that nothing has escaped his observation. Frost evokes a similar awareness in *Neither out Far nor in Deep* by the force with which the emptiness is depicted as well as by the energy with which it is perceived. The poet knows everything about nothingness, that is emptiness which is entailed by limitations; and there are other people who in searching for truth, for knowledge will discover their limitations. Nonetheless this should not stop them. The fact that they have only a limited perception of the ship is both a hope because they see something, and a realization of their limited abilities.

*Neither out Far nor in Deep* focuses on man's unquenchable desire to reach beyond his grasp, his thirst for knowledge. This poem, the critic James L. Potter says, shows that "*the universe by implication is opaque to man's vision*"<sup>16</sup>, but this does not stop him from trying to discover its mysteries. Thus, within the naturally imposed boundaries, man struggles to achieve whatever he might with whatever abilities or talents he has. Frost emphasizes the idea regarding the attraction of the unknown in *Neither out Far nor in Deep* as well as in *Stopping by Woods*. Dark woods, which are a fusion of desire and of fear, "*typify the great concern of man for knowledge of the unknown that awaits him. Dark woods, full of mystery and promise, draw man like a filing to the magnet*"<sup>17</sup>. These dark woods remind the reader of the mysterious sea of *Neither out Far nor in Deep* and the people who continue to "*look at the sea all day*"<sup>18</sup>, seduced by its deep, dark, mysterious depth.

They turn their back on the land that is on their normal and ordinary life, because they long for the unknown. They keep looking out to the sea as if it were the source of knowledge. But if in this poem people seem to forget all about their world, the traveler in *Stopping by Woods* remembers his promises that is his world with everything that it includes. Yet he is so bewitched by the unusual loveliness of the woods that he renounces his world, at least for a period, in favor of the world of the unknown – the woods. The poet/narrator tries to escape the spell cast upon him by the woods and to urge himself back into commonsense reality by invoking his “promises” or by remembering his commitments, his responsibilities. Although his initial renunciation to his world is not obvious, it is nevertheless expressed in the very lines which have made many critics believe that he decides to continue on down the road without stopping for inquiries. The poet/narrator remembers that he has “promises to keep” but he also knows that he has “miles to go before” he sleeps. The traveler knows that he still has time before death, the only certain thing in life, comes and he has to take advantage of his own time the best he can. The repetition of the last line is a hint that the reader should read between the lines of this last stanza: “The woods are lovely, dark and deep,/But I have promises to keep,/And miles to go before I sleep,/And miles to go before I sleep.”<sup>19</sup> The reader should not take into consideration the literal meaning of the last two lines, especially as he should know that Frost not only feels reluctant to express his ideas clearly but also expects his readers to be perceptive and intelligent. Lawrence Thompson is sure that “any poet who uses metaphors with the deliberate meaning of suggesting more than is stated offers his readers (...) the freedom to read the poem on as many different planes of reference as may be discovered.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, these last two lines should also be seen as a metaphorical reference to the brief span of human life and the compulsion this puts the poet/narrator under: to take risks and explore the truth while he can. Only a few “miles” to go before “I sleep”, that is before he dies. Such an idea justifies stopping by woods in the first place and considering the quest for knowledge implicit in the vision they offer. The whole stanza emphasizes man’s need for ‘truth’ and his resolution to look for it no matter how much of this ‘truth’ he will have discovered in the end given the fact that his perception of things is limited, his mind is finite and the woods are infinite. Moreover even if man is sharply limited in his intellectual powers and his perceptions, Frost maintains “a humanistic faith in man’s resources such as love and courage”<sup>21</sup> as James Potter observes. Taking into considerations such aspects, the readers cannot fail to notice the optimism of *Stopping by Woods*. Mentioning the “promises” the traveler has to keep, the poet squeezes in between the lines and words the thought that the traveler is expected by somebody at home, that his presence is desired by other people so he is not alone. Furthermore, the traveler finds in him those resources which help him embark on the quest for knowledge, for truth and those are courage, determination and persistence.

So these two poems present the sea and the woods, respectively as a source of knowledge. Both poems suggest the eternal fascination of nature and its mysteries, with the implication that it may be the realm of ‘truth’. But the sea and

the woods are obscure; they do not seem to be too willing to reveal their secrets. Yet this does not stop the man from trying to find out as much as he can. The poet observes that people keep on looking at the sea although they neither look out far nor in deep. There is a similar situation in *Stopping by Woods*. The woods are both dark and deep, and still they appeal to the traveler who wants to probe their secrets. The fact that he has not moved at the end of the poem is a sign that although he is aware of his responsibilities toward his world, he will choose to go on a search for truth, at least for a while without forgetting though about his people.

Whether man is to be scorned for spending his time on a futile task – his attempt to probe the secrets of an opaque universe – or admired for his courage and determination is a question that seems to arise from *Neither out Far nor in Deep*. Under the heading “Resolutions” in *Robert Frost Handbook* James Potter finds that the answer is to be found in the same poem. It is not scorn that best describes the poet’s attitude towards all these people because the poet also hints to the “balance between the concept of man as limited both because of his deficiencies and because of the opacity of the universe”<sup>22</sup>. In *The Poems of Robert Frost: an explication*, Mordecai Marcus goes further and sees the last stanza: “They cannot look out far./They cannot look in deep./But when was that ever a bar/To any watch they keep?”<sup>23</sup> as reflecting in the same time the poet’s admiration and skepticism. He is glad to see human speculation continuing but he is aware that it will not achieve much. The poet’s insistence on the truly impenetrable depths that challenge human knowledge and the demonstrated capacity of the people to see part of the way as they strive to see further is a clear recognition of the essential limitations of man, without denial or protest. But this does not mean that they should stop looking for further knowledge. His poem *Stopping by Woods* suggests that he agrees with this search for knowledge, for as much as one can understand from the truth of the universe.

In *Neither out Far nor in Deep*, and *Stopping by Woods* the poet sounds as if he acknowledges the futility of looking for the ‘truth’. Man cannot learn too much from the sea or from the woods because his perceptions are incomplete and uncertain. Nevertheless, the poet concedes that people are right to keep searching. They cannot see much but there is something to see as he suggests in his poem *Neither out Far nor in Deep*. Again the poet blends pessimism and optimism in the same poem. On the one hand man’s relationship with the universe is uncontrollable and difficult because “what the visible reality signifies is uncertain”<sup>24</sup> and on the other hand he suggests that this relationship is manageable because “the activity of looking is partly satisfying, since people do see something”<sup>25</sup>. So, people’s watch is not entirely futile, they do see something: a ship rising on the horizon and a gull standing on the beach. But their view of the ship is limited because in reality much of it is below the line of the horizon, and their view of the gull is simply a reflection from the surface of the sand washed by the sea incessantly. In the end, the issue is not only about the problematic nature of the universe but also about man’s finite mind. He fails to see all that there exists in nature: man “cannot look out far” nor “in deep”. It is true that the universe is largely incomprehensible and

uncontrollable, but it is also true that man's capabilities are limited. As a result man's position is unfortunate. But what stance does man take, what is his attitude?

In Mordecai Marcus' study of *Neither out Far nor in Deep* from *The Poems of Robert Frost: an explication* we are shown that man turns from the varying sights of land, from what he knows, towards the distances of water representing mysteries he hopes to grasp because he cares about what he does not know, not about what he knows. He cannot look out very far, or in very deep; but this has never bothered him. As the critic affirms, it is obvious that despite people's determination and persistence, they cannot achieve a penetrating vision of reality – nature and even human nature – or what lies behind it; yet they will not stop looking, none will. And the image the poet presents in the beginning of the poem stands as testimony to this. The poet observes people by the sea who make a uniform mass as they gaze away from the commonplace shore toward the depth and mystery of the ocean. In *The Explicator*, when analyzing *Neither out Far nor in Deep*, Peter D. Poland describes the watchers as people who “stare vacantly seaward in search of the ‘truth’, mesmerized by the mysterious, limitless sea”<sup>26</sup>.

But in this search everyone seems to be self-centered and detached, and denies any contact with other human beings. Man's isolation from the others, as well as man's isolation in the universe, is suggested in *Neither out Far nor in Deep* by the standing gull. The poem introduces not a flock of standing gulls, but a single gull only – and gulls, as it is well-known, flock together when they are stationed by the water's edge, they are very rarely found alone. Thus, Frost uses the solitary gull as a symbol to point out that people isolate themselves in such an activity. Poland is right to stress that people are so absorbed in their quest for ‘truth’ that they have become oblivious of all else but their own pursuit. In his comments on this poem from *The Explicator* Poland translates the watchers' attitude through the idea of cutting themselves off “from the land world and all it represents (struggles and suffering, commitments, obligations, responsibilities), and from one another as well”<sup>27</sup>. He continues by comparing them to the solitary gull calling the watchers isolates. This suggested solitude in the pursuit of ‘truth’, of knowledge about the universe and the self, reminds us of a similar solitude implied in *Stopping by Woods*. The poet/narrator in this poem is lonely with the woods, that is lonely in front of possible knowledge, and if he is to embark on a quest for knowledge he must renounce the world of people and promises for as long as his quest lasts. The same loneliness appears in *Desert Places*. While the poet/narrator stops to observe the spectacle of nature and ponder over his human nature, he forgets about his destination which has something to do with his everyday life. He does not go into the woods, that is he does not go on a search for knowledge, he only receives a lesson from nature. He learns from nature the zones of his own limitations as proved earlier in this essay. But while he contemplates the landscape, he detaches himself from everything, especially from the world he belongs to, and he focuses on his own self: “The loneliness includes me unawares”<sup>28</sup>.

All these poems show us the man choosing between land and sea, between his world and an unknown world represented by the woods. So he chooses between

the human and the inhuman, between the finite and the infinite. The sea and the woods are infinite, limitless; and they are a source of knowledge, they can teach lessons. In *Stopping by Woods* the poet hints at the contrast between the road along which he/the narrator travels, connecting village to village, and the silence of the woods where the limitations of the world do not seem to apply: "*The woods are lovely, dark and deep*"<sup>29</sup>. So it is only in them that he can find the 'truth', it is only from them that he can acquire more wisdom even with the price of isolating himself, of renouncing his world. The same idea is suggested in *Neither out Far nor in Deep*. People turn their back on the land that is the world of limits, and look at the infinite sea which is a world full of mysteries and of unknown things. *Desert Places* also shows how the poet/narrator chooses to forget for a while about his limited world, and listen the message nature has for him.

In these poems Frost seems to tell us that he is not different from other people except for the fact that he is inclined to walking about and to pondering over the things he sees, and to taking accurate note of the way they strike him as he looks. The poet uses everyday, conversational words and concrete images as symbols, as metaphors for deeper thoughts, his aim being to provide "*a simple basis for original perceptions*"<sup>30</sup> as James L. Potter puts it. Potter tells its readers that "*Frost believed that everyday subjects were at best, so that readers could be surprised by new perceptions of familiar things and ideas*"<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, the poet's poems are the work of a man who has never stopped exploring himself and the world. He has been able to believe that the things he is concerned about will turn out to be true for other people. He trusts his own feelings, his own doubts, and his own certainties. But this does not mean that he gives clear solutions, he lets the reader to judge for himself.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Robert Frost: *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> *Robert Frost Handbook*, p. 165.

<sup>4</sup> *A Further Range*, Book Six.

<sup>5</sup> *Robert Frost*, p. 155.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> Philip L. Gerber, in *Robert Frost*, p. 154.

<sup>8</sup> *Robert Frost*, p. 155.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Frost, in *Desert Places*, from *A Further Range*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>14</sup> Philip L. Gerber, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Frost, in *Desert Places*, from *A Further Range*.

<sup>16</sup> *Robert Frost Handbook*, p. 131.

<sup>17</sup> Philip L. Gerber, *op.cit.*, p. 168.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Frost, in *Neither out Far nor in Deep*, from *A Further Range*.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Frost, in *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, from New Hampshire in *Collected Poems* by Robert Frost.

- <sup>20</sup> Laurence Thompson, in *Robert Frost, an Introduction* by Robert A. Greenberg (ed.), p. 16.  
<sup>21</sup> *Robert Frost Handbook*, p. 110.  
<sup>22</sup> James L. Potter, p. 132.  
<sup>23</sup> Robert Frost, in *Neither out Far nor in Deep*, from *A Further Range*.  
<sup>24</sup> James L. Potter, in *Robert Frost Handbook*, p. 91.  
<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.  
<sup>26</sup> Peter D. Poland, in the online periodical *The Explicator*.  
<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.  
<sup>28</sup> Robert Frost, in *Desert Places*, from *A Further Range*.  
<sup>29</sup> Robert Frost, in *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, from New Hampshire in *Collected Poems by Robert Frost*.  
<sup>30</sup> *Robert Frost Handbook*, p. 166  
<sup>31</sup> *Idem*, p. 165.

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## English as a *Lingua Franca* in Medicine

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### RÉSUMÉ : *L’anglais en tant que lingua franca en médecine*

À cause de sa descendance gréco-latine, la terminologie médicale est considérée une terminologie objective et rigoureuse. Pourtant, comme toute langue, le sociolecte médical est assujéti à une instabilité aussi synchronique que diachronique. L’article analyse une modification récente importante dans la langue médicale, voire la tendance de l’anglais de devenir la langue internationale en médecine. L’étude contrastive du roumain médical et de l’anglais met en évidence les problèmes du contact linguistique : la néologie, les influences et les interférences. Inspiré par les terminologues français, l’article propose aussi un modèle de constitution d’un vocabulaire médical raisonné et normalisé. Ce type de vocabulaire exposerait les divergences entre les différents usages terminologiques, expliquerait les défauts à éviter et justifierait le choix des termes privilégiés.

**MOTS-CLÉS :** *terminologie médicale, langue internationale*

Among the many current issues raised by oral and written medical language, the present study focuses on one of the key strands of linguistic research, namely the terminological approach to medical discourse, and tries to evaluate to what extent English can be considered nowadays the *lingua franca* in medicine.

In the medical domain, the recent considerable advances in diagnosis, treatments, techniques, and in new areas of research, such as proteomics, genomics, or medical informatics, have brought about, within the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a change in terminology. Even though medical terminology still rests firmly on the two pillars of Latin and Greek words, every year medical neologisms are coined in English, to denominate a state-of-the-art breakthrough, and then they are rapidly imported into other languages. Vernacular medical languages, such as Romanian or French – diachronically linked and synchronically similar – part of which used to be pure Latin and Greek, have undergone several stages of appropriation of English terms. More often than not, English phrases are borrowed as such, with inconsistent levels of nationalization. Expressions like *stress*, *compliance*, *screening*, and many abbreviations and acronyms, which have their root in the medical *lingua franca* English, are gaining acceptance everywhere, without being translated. At the same time, this situation calls for a more thorough look on language policy, as English medical terms should be at least well understood, in



their phonological, semiotic and morphosyntactic behaviour, if not adapted to national languages, with a maximum of precision, clarity, and accuracy.

As English is becoming a worldwide and ever-growing source of new words for almost all national languages on the European part of the Atlantic, we may wonder whether the massive borrowings could end up in altering the cultural integrity of a language (Eyraud, 1974: 13). English linguistic hegemony is justifiable to some extent, as mentioned before, because of great medical advances initiated on Anglo-Saxon territory. Therefore, to come forward and try to nationalise words, such as *stress* or *feedback*, which have enjoyed a universal recognition till now, is rather difficult. One of the major dichotomies in terminology places in balance the tendency towards internationalisation of nomenclatures, in view of a universal vocabulary, and the trend to nationalisation, in order to preserve the linguistic diversity.

From a diachronic perspective, numerous adoptions of English linguistic units have sometimes led to both terminological and notional ambiguities, affecting the medical oral code, as well as the written discourse. Vernacular medical languages have become a mixture of Hellenisms, and neologisms, the latter more often than not created on the spur of the moment, so as to keep the pace with new concepts. We will scan the following examples, taken from the *Romanian Journal of Cardiovascular Surgery* (\*\*\*, 2006: 132-134), to emphasize the fore-outlined linguistic problems raised by a vernacular medical language, such as Romanian:

- (1) Toate guideline-urile pentru valvulopatii folosesc numai criterii ecocardiografice [...]
- (2) Valva trebuie considerată, metaforic vorbind, ca o structură dinamică, formată din şase cuspidi dispuse în perechi de câte două scallop-uri [...]
- (3) [...] scallop-ului sau a tehnicii “edge to edge” [...]
- (4) [...] valvă mitrală floppy [...]
- (5) [...] valvă mitrală flail [...] (\*\*\*, 2006: 132-134)

At a first glance, what strikes us is that Romanian words and the English ones are used together in the same phrases, without any signal of their belonging to different languages.

In example (1), the term *guideline*, a common word in Romanian medical literature, has been borrowed with spelling and pronunciation from English. The problem lies in two directions, the former, there is a Romanian equivalent for *guideline*, namely *ghid*, and the latter, the agreement in number, making use of the morph “i”, specific to Romance languages, and in gender, with the Romanian pronoun *toate*, an inadequate choice, as *guideline* comes from an utterly analytical language. The same situation in example (2), in which *scallop* is taken *ad litteram* from English, without paralinguistic markers, such as commas, inverted commas or italics, to signify its belonging to a different linguistic code. The agreement in number and gender is in this case again inappropriate. A compromise solution to insufficient lexical resources to counter-balance the borrowings is that of quoting the English phrase or term, such as in example (3), *tehnicii “edge to edge”*.

Example (5) presents us with Romanian words collocating with English ones, as if they were part of the same language. The following ambiguous phrases: *valvă mitrală floppy* and *valvă mitrală flail* can only result from the same difficulty in coming up with Romanian equivalents to English terms.

In a nutshell, the examples above prove that, although, on the one hand, there are situations when English terms should be borrowed as such, on the other hand, there are cases in which the neologisms are too many to be successfully adjusted to other languages. To prevent the latter from happening, Romanian linguists could take into account how French linguists and physicians handled a similar situation, by setting up in 1960 a committee for the study of medical terms, to survey more attentively English neologisms that didn't properly fit French. In the beginning, it was something of a teething troubles, but the successive analyses brought to light diverse problems, of which we enumerate some: French terms with English pronunciation, words coined by French scientists, drawn afterwards to English, such as *pontage*, *écart-type*, *roulement mésodiastolique*, becoming *bypass*, *standard deviation*, *mid diastolic rumble*, English phrases taken *ad litteram* and used alongside French ones, throughout medical texts, articles or book titles, and even at medical conferences, such as *paludisme for ever*, *hit parade de la névralgie*, *flash back sur le colloque* (Eyraud, 1974: 22); other linguistic errors highlighted were inadequate periphrases, imprecision in designating notions, false monosemantic words, overlapping of neighbour lexical fields and forced calques.

Should the Romanian language be subjected to the same linguistic analysis, provided that Romanian linguists and physicians join forces, there may be found ambiguities worth classifying and disambiguating.

Besides linguistic problems, a pragmatic aspect is worth mentioning, namely the relationship of the language with its users. Thus, a physician suggested that, in the era of the machine-language, the medical term should be coined by the person who had made a discovery in the domain, in their native language, and adopted as such in other languages. That statement must have been followed, if we took into consideration English linguistic supremacy. On the other hand, a vocabulary depending entirely on the inspiration of a person, could lead to a limited, and sometimes obscure, opaque or inadequate terminology. Therefore, it is not the word that belongs to the medical scientist, but only the discovery. In terms of signifiers, it is up to the joint effort of terminologists and physicians to look for the most adequate expression to designate the new concept, technology or pathological entity. And terminology should be adapted when transgressing the linguistic boundaries of the language of origin.

In a nutshell, though English can be considered nowadays the *lingua franca* in medicine, as well as in other scientific domains, there is also a growing interest of nationalisation of English terms.

A step in the disambiguation and nationalisation direction would be a Romanian medical vocabulary, made up out of imported English terminology. It is an undeniable fact that a clear, concise and coherent vocabulary of a medical speciality, able to account for semantic difficulties, and to make a justified choice

of a term in favour of another, should be a priority. A committee for the study of medical terms, made up of at least two linguists and one physician, should first elaborate lists of English terms and their Romanian equivalents, to be afterwards subjected to Romanian physicians, to find out their opinions. If the results are encouraging, with the help of prominent medical personalities, a line of linguistic sections may also be opened within medical conferences and congresses, to gain more insight in the medical terminology.

By means of further enquiries, research finally could result in bilingual dictionaries, many of them over-specialized.

Inspired by the studies of Ammal Jamal, a Canadian terminologist, we suggest a concrete method of building up a medical vocabulary, with the clear stages of a methodological approach to translating terms, applicable to both monolingual vocabularies and bilingual ones (Jammal, 1988 : 535-541). We briefly highlight the difficulties encountered, namely void of meaning, misnomers, and false friends.

As ideally there should be a certain amount of pondering time between the medical discovery and the creation of the most adequate signifier to denote the technique, pathological entity, surgical approach or medical therapy, on more than one occasion newly coined terms have nothing special than the haste of the scientist, eager to communicate the breakthrough. It is explicable, though, as the medical specialist cannot wait for the terminologists and linguists to gather and coin the appropriate name for a reality that is of paramount importance.

The best way to fight inadequate expressions or neologisms and to make a Romanian medical vocabulary can be a clear-cut methodology, observing the following steps:

1. The making up of a “terminological tree”, corresponding to the medical speciality under discussion. This stage distinguishes the trunk from the main branches and the ancillary ones. To gather all the necessary information, the team have to consult up-to-date articles, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and reference books in the domain.

2. The clearing of the terminological tree, by isolating all the terms in all the contexts, in which they occur. This stage is characterized by false friends and void of meaning; many words will finally have to be discarded. Hence, a list of terms is made up by the team and presented to as many medical specialists as possible. Those have to grade the words according to a scale – with A, B, C, and D levels – on the basis of the following triad of criteria: frequency, opacity, and the degree of confusion the selected items may cause. The terms ranked A, and sometimes B, depending on the time and money factors, will be afterwards considered for extracting specific information, in order to set up a special vocabulary.

3. The analysis stage, in which words in contexts are analysed from a semantic point of view, in order to extract the semantic features that could lead to a definition and even a Romanian equivalent. Another list of terms, followed by the definition of each linguistic unit is presented to physicians, so that they give their

feedback on the matter. Consequently, three situations may occur. Physicians' definitions of the notions may coincide, in which case the word is kept as such. The definitions may be the same, but denoting different notions, in which case the team have to make a choice or to present the two sides, explaining the difference. The last possible scenario is that in which definitions do not overlap, therefore the team have to make a justified choice in favour of one term or another.

4. The synthesis stage, in which all the terms gathered, and their definitions are given the final form, which should be clear, concise, and distinctive. Any semantic ambiguities should be explained thoroughly.

5. The confrontation stage. The team presents the final form to the critical eyes of the specialists in the domain, and finally to the great public (Jammal, 1988: 535-541).

Without denying the legitimacy of English being spread worldwide, as a result of Anglo-Saxon scientific breakthroughs, we also stress the importance of using the national languages resources where possible, to enhance comprehension and facilitate transmission of information among speakers of vernacular languages. Thus, our study has approached medical language from a different perspective – that of national terminologies – which should be as coherent and clear as medical lexicon in its entirety, is uniform and consistent throughout the world (Janson Cohen, 2003: 5).

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# **Eminescu and the Shakespearean Model. Shakespeare's Influence on Eminescu's Journalistic Articles and Poetry Published during the Author's Life until 1874**

**Corina Mihaela GEANĂ**

## **ABSTRACT**

Eminescu has had an important contribution in the way Shakespeare has been received in Romania. Our Romanian poet was one of the authors who best understood the Shakespearean phenomenon. If the writers from 1848 haven't studied Shakespeare profoundly, at the literary society *Junimea* the name of the English dramatist is very often cited, even from the society's first meeting, when it was read Petre Carp's translation from *Macbeth*. Being related to such a context, Eminescu's image of Shakespeare becomes clear. The ways in which Eminescu understood Shakespeare's literary works is the expression not only of a poetical knowledge but also of a poetical acknowledgement, as we can speak of a relation of congeniality between Eminescu and Shakespeare.

**KEYWORDS:** *Eminescu, Shakespeare, influence, articles and poetry*

For Eminescu, Shakespeare belongs to the natural geniuses' category. From the simple suggestion or reference, until the original literary production started from a suggestion of a character, a name or a line, Eminescu has referred to Shakespeare in his entire creation, either lyrical, epical or dramatic. Eminescu's knowledge and admiration for "*the Northern brilliant eagle*" dates back to his adolescence. The poet's attitudes mirrored in his juvenile poems reflect the direct or indirect influence of some literary models to whom Eminescu has referred and to whom he owes a great part of his culture. First of all, Eminescu has the possibility of knowing the Shakespearean literary works, as a prompter, when he "reads" a lot, especially through the German language (the Schlegel – Tieck translation). In a note dating from that period, it is written: "*The figure – Coriolanus!*" The poet is obviously talking about Shakespeare's tragedy *Coriolanus*.

Shakespeare's acknowledgement as a national poet has been enabled by the way the great English dramatist had been received in Germany. Lessing, who had tried to ensure a national repertoire for the German theatre, is also the one who had started a controversial discussion upon the French classicism's rigid spirit, thus recommending the productive influence of the Shakespearean genius: "*a genius can not sparkle but from another genius*", and Shakespeare is "... *a tragic poet*,

*much bigger than Corneille*”, Lessing used to say in his 17<sup>th</sup> letter belonging to the cycle “*regarding the newest literature*”. These ideas led to the appearance of the romanticism and to the “Sturm-und-Drang” movement. The authors of the “Sturm-und-Drang” movement have been inspired by the Shakespearean literary production to feel the need to come back to the German national past. Shakespeare is a significant personality who has contributed to the aesthetical program of fighting for a national art, which has come into contradiction to the adherents to the French classicism, which had become the expression of an aristocratic and reactionary social position.

Eminescu, being one of Shakespeare’s admirers, feels the urge of fighting against the French classic dramatists. Just like all the romanticists, Eminescu appreciates only Molière, whose name is often cited together with that of Shakespeare’s. Thus, through French and German literatures, through Voltaire (*English letters*, 1734) or Lessing (*A letter about the newest literature*, 1759; *The dramaturgy from Hamburg*), Shakespeare had become a permanent presence of the continental culture. Moreover, we find some favorable opinions about Shakespeare at Herder (“*Who can imagine a more sublime poet of the Northern nature ...*”) and Goethe (“*Shakespeare, my friend ...*”), which are similar to Eminescu’s remarks about the English dramatist.

An important stage in Shakespeare’s knowledge is Eminescu’s translation of Heinrich Theodor Rötcher’s paper about *The art of the dramatic representation*. Before and during his studies at Vienna, Eminescu accomplishes a remarkable philological paper, the poet trying to find the adequate correspondences in order to realize a technical vocabulary of the scene, just like we can observe from the newest editions of the translations. Rötcher’s paper refers to numerous Shakespearean heroes and artistic means, as well as to some of the most important Shakespearean plays: *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. Among the dramatists, Shakespeare was considered the best. He was followed by the Greeks, Calderon, Lessing, Goethe and Schiller.

Eminescu’s entire literary production, in which we include the poems published during the author’s life, as well as his posthumous ones, abounds in references to Shakespeare and his works, similar to those remarks expressed by Rötcher in his paper. Just like Rötcher, Eminescu considers genius as an exceptional feature, characteristic only to some individuals, among whom he names Shakespeare. Eminescu sees in the great poet of the English Renaissance the most obvious illustration of the genius concept. Shakespeare’s art distinguishes itself through a profound organic structure: “*Our predecessors used to believe in what they were writing, as Shakespeare used to believe in his fairy tales (...)*” The idea of the identification with different types of heroes and feelings within the same scene can be also met in *Epigonii*.

Eminescu had tried to define the genius as a sort of equilibrium between the “fantasy” and the “reflection”. The authors are characterized by one feature or the other; “*the union between both of them is perfection, their bearer, a genius.*” Unlike the modern artist, who is sterile and sceptic, Shakespeare represents the

perfection, an equilibrium between an inexhaustible fantasy (“the absolute abstraction”), characteristic to some of the comedies, and another one, of the grave tragic, the psychological realism. The Romanian poet considers this feature to be subordinated to the national spirit, thus identifying Shakespeare with the popular soul. Shakespeare is therefore a national poet:

Shakespeare has spoken about the man just like he really is. His drunkard is a drunkard, his hero is a hero, his madman is a madman, his sceptical person is a sceptical person and every man is described according to his character, as People conceive as they see, and Shakespeare belonged to his people, above all.<sup>1</sup>

Anticipating our future literary productions, Eminescu becomes a more and more demanding critic as regards the interpretative art, which has to be a natural and realist one. Eminescu's ideas about the scene's “aesthetics” resemble those of Hamlet's:

Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.<sup>2</sup>

Just like Hamlet, Eminescu advises the actors to eliminate the “icy” acting, as well as the “exaggeration” of the characters' feelings. He detests “*the affected talk and false pronunciation*”, advising the actors to maintain “*the decent measure in the way they talk and move*”, as well as “*the beautiful decency*”, which are several requirements in order to sustain the theatrical equilibrium, necessary in any interpretation.

Just like his contemporaries, Shakespeare has stood against the artificial and affected way of writing and talking, characteristic to the English aristocracy and bourgeoisie. This linguistic mannerism has been called *euphuism*, the term coming from John Lyly's novel *Euphues*. In *Troilus and Cressida*, the hyperbole is parodied and in *Henry IV*, *A midsummer night's dream* and *Much ado about nothing* Shakespeare banters the attempts of an affected and false expression.

One of the proofs of Eminescu's knowledge of Shakespeare may be considered *Mortua est!*. As Tudor Vianu used to say, Hamlet's “*deepest melancholy*” *finds its answer and the hero “equips himself against a world of misfortunes”*<sup>3</sup>:

To be, or not to be: that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them? ...<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, in Eminescu's poem, "*the real plan and the transcendental one are indistinct without being able to lead to a solution*".<sup>5</sup> The poem *Mortua est!* resembles the reflections from *Hamlet*'s well-known monologue (Act III, Scene I):

For who shall declare which is ill and which well,  
The is or the isn't? Can anyone tell?  
For he who is not, even grief can't destroy,  
And oft is the grieving, and seldom the joy.<sup>6</sup>

Eminescu's poem is filled with the feeling of pain, the author oscillating between being and not being. The feeling of pain also dominates the Shakespearean tragedy. The only difference is that in *Hamlet* the real component is much more present, the author making use of numerous enumerations and of some opposed concrete elements. Just like Hamlet realizes the absurdity of the existence in a badly-made world, Eminescu comes to the sad conclusion that reality is deceitful and that the only solution is death:

To exist! O, what nonsense, what foolish conceit;  
Our eyes but deceive us, our ears but cheat,  
What this age discovers, the next will deny,  
Far better just nothing that naught but a lie.<sup>7</sup>

The last line reminds us of Schopenhauer, according to whom life is a continuous struggle for existence. The history of a life is the history of pain and the shortening of the existence would be the most desirable thing. The poem's end represents the illustration of a great theme of the universal literature – "*the life is a dream*":

I see dreams in men's clothing that after dreams chase  
But that tumble in tombs ere the end of the race ...<sup>8</sup>

At the end of the Renaissance and during the entire Baroque epoche, the comparison of life with the shadow, the dream, had become a leit motif. The motif "life as a dream" appears at Ovid and later at Shakespeare, in *Hamlet*: "*A dream itself is but a shadow*."<sup>9</sup> or in *Macbeth*:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
.....  
Life's but a walking shadow (...)<sup>10</sup>

This motif appears at Eminescu, too, in *Împărat și proletar*, in the Caesar's meditation at the seashore: "*That life is but the way to endless death at last*".<sup>11</sup> This motif appears at Eminescu and Schopenhauer both. Schopenhauer considered



that “*life and dream are the pages of one and the same book*”. For Schopenhauer, the world is a representation of our brains and the dreams are intellectual phenomena, therefore life can be nothing but a dream. Eminescu has been inured to Schopenhauer's philosophy, but the way in which this motif is poetically structured brings him closer to Shakespeare. Several lines from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* are revealing in this matter:

(...) We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep ...<sup>12</sup>

Overwhelmed with remorse, after the Commune's defeat, the Caesar invokes the legendary figure of the King Lear. The unfortunate old King Lear, declined from his throne, driven away by his own children, struck by madness, appears in front of the Caesar:

And to the king it seemed that through the starlight fair,  
Treading the forest trees, and crossing the ocean clear,  
With long and snowy beard, and heavy thoughtful air,  
A crown of withered grasses caught to his tangled hair  
There came the mad King Lear.<sup>13</sup>

Among the Shakespearean plays, *Hamlet* is the play which resembles most to Eminescu's literary works. *Epigonii* and *Junii corupți* are revealing in this respect. In *Epigonii*, the poet includes himself in the epigones' category: “*And here we are, the epigones*”<sup>14</sup>, who have nothing from the old generations' visionariness: “*You trusted in your art, but we believe in neither self nor fate.*”<sup>15</sup> Just like Shakespeare, Eminescu believes that truthfulness must prevail in art: “*and of this flying dust are we.*”<sup>16</sup> The syntagm “*the earth is naught but flying dust*” also appears at Shakespeare in *Hamlet*: “*... And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?*”<sup>17</sup>; “*Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; (...)*”<sup>18</sup> In *Junii corupți*, the rhetorical end of the poem reveals, through three comparisons, the discrepancy between what the unworthy youth of the present days affirm and what they really are. These comparisons remind us of the four comparisons through which the King Claudius tries to justify his marriage to his brother's former wife and to show how he handles these contradictory moods:

... as 'twere with a defeated joy,-  
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,  
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage ...<sup>19</sup>

The Shakespearean literary production abounds in figures of speech, mainly epithets and extremely suggestive comparisons. Being liable to antitheses, to disputed figures of speech, Eminescu seems to have been inured to the Shakespearean literary works before going abroad.

The line “*My kingdom for a horse*” from *Richard III* becomes “*My kingdom for a cigarette*” in *Cugetările sărmanului Dionis*, Eminescu parodying here the famous hemistich from the Shakespearean play, by making use of the romantic irony. Finding himself in the position of an imaginary tomcat, the hero sees himself “*tragically mewling, a Garrick*”, in other words reproducing the art of one of the greatest interpreters of the Shakespearean tragedies from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

A much more limited chapter of the topic Eminescu versus Shakespeare is that of the pure parallelisms or similitudes.

Possible Shakespearean sources have been pointed out by D. Murărașu, in *Comentarii eminesciene*. The critic considers that *Venere și Madonă* contains the same metamorphosis of the angel into a demon which is also described by Shakespeare in his *Sonnet XXIX*. But that precise line the critic is talking about is mistaken for another one which is found in *Sonnet CXLIV*: “*And would corrupt my saint to be a devil*”<sup>20</sup> The ambivalence of the angel-demon relation from the same poem (“*You weep dear child?*”<sup>21</sup>) seems to have an echo in *Sonnet XXXIV*: “*... but those tears...*”<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, Radu Manoliu, in the article *Izvoarele motivelor și procedeele din poeziile lui Eminescu, Preocupări literare* thinks that this world that Eminescu is talking about in his poem reminds us of the world from *A midsummer night's dream*. The action from *A midsummer night's dream* and from *The Tempest* takes place in the Wonderland, in the land of the Fantasy. These plays belong neither to the drama nor to the comedy categories.

The Shakespearean critique underlined the fact that Shakespeare is a writer of the nature. Thus, the words *nature*, *natural*, *unnatural* and their synonyms are very significant in his literary production. Shakespeare himself stated that the role of the art is “*to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature*”.<sup>23</sup> The poetry of the nature has a very important role in Eminescu's lyrical creation, too. Shakespeare had an extraordinary capacity for storytelling, his art consisted precisely in the power of imagining “stories” which take place outside the stage. Maybe this is the very reason for which he is the most cinematized author from all over the world, his plays being multiple audio-visual scenarios. The epic character of the Shakespearean theatre is given by the legendary and mythological thrill of the facts, the characters' acting being surrounded by mystery.

Radu Manoliu and Dan Grigorescu, starting from one of Călinescu's suggestions, consider that the idea of the first line from the last stanza in *Egipetul* – “*For bells there are beneath the sea, that muffled peal at evening hour*”<sup>24</sup> is taken from Ariel's song, although Dan Grigorescu thinks that “*we cannot talk about a direct influence*”<sup>25</sup>:

Full fathom five thy father lies.  
Of his bones are coral made;  
Those are pearls that were his eyes;  
Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.

Sea-nymphs hourly ring his kneel:  
Ding dong.  
Hark, now I hear them.  
Ding-dong bell.<sup>26</sup>

The metaphor of the sea from *Egipetul* makes us think of the *metaphor of the mirror*. Shakespeare's literary works are full of this metaphor. People are some alive mirrors, and the world is a theatre, a complex mechanism. The *metaphor of the mirror* also works at Eminescu in the same way. The magus "gazes down upon that mirror's yellow sheet"<sup>27</sup>. But, the moment he has read "the inverted sign", the world has turned into a desert, the wind has raised the sand "that swallows tall cities with temple and tower, and makes of each dwelling a grave"<sup>28</sup>. At Eminescu, the impression of a theatre is realized through unrealistic means. The same thing is happening at Shakespeare, whose works are dominated by the figure of the "spirit" who has not only a material function but also a spectral one<sup>29</sup>.

The motif "the world as a theatre" has been discussed by a lot of Romanian and foreign exegetes, but Tudor Vianu in his work *Studii de literatură universală și comparată* seems to have achieved the most extended debate. The Romanian critic has had in view the evolution of this motif along the centuries, starting with the representatives of the Socratic School, followed by Epictet – *The handbook*, Marc Aurelius, Lope de Vega, Quevado, Calderon and Shakespeare. "The world as a theatre" appears in most of the Shakespearean plays: *Hamlet*, *The merchant of Venice*, *The tempest*, *Macbeth*, *As you like it*. In the well-known monologue from the comedy *As you like it*, Jack explains the Duke, who had lost his throne because of the intrigues from the court, that:

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players.  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts (...)<sup>30</sup>

For Macbeth life is an actor who plays his role and then disappears:

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more, It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing.<sup>31</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A fragment translated from the review *Familia*, VI, No 3, Pesta, 18/30 January, 1870, pp. 25-28.

<sup>2</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, Bilingual Edition, Pandora Publishing House, Târgoviște, 2003, p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> Translated from Tudor Vianu, *Studii de literatură universală și comparată*, Bucharest, 1963, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> *Hamlet*, the cited edition, p. 158.

- <sup>5</sup> Translated from Dan Grigorescu, *Shakespeare în cultura română modernă*, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1971, p. 83.
- <sup>6</sup> Mihai Eminescu, *Poems*, English version by Corneliu N. Popescu, Eminescu Publishing House, 1978, p. 68.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>9</sup> *Hamlet*, the cited edition, p. 124.
- <sup>10</sup> *Macbeth*, V, 5, Oxford World's Classics, Edited by Nicholas Brooke, Oxford, University Press, pp. 203-204.
- <sup>11</sup> Mihai Eminescu, *Poems*, the cited edition, p. 105.
- <sup>12</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988. The fragment is extracted from *The Tempest*, Act IV, Scene I, p. 1184.
- <sup>13</sup> Mihai Eminescu, the cited edition, p. 104.
- <sup>14</sup> *Idem*, p. 128.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>16</sup> Mihai Eminescu, p. 130.
- <sup>17</sup> *Hamlet*, the cited edition, p. 128.
- <sup>18</sup> *Idem*, p. 296.
- <sup>19</sup> *Idem*, p. 42.
- <sup>20</sup> William Shakespeare, *Sonnets*, Pandora Publishing House, Târgoviște, 1998, p. 148.
- <sup>21</sup> Mihai Eminescu, the cited edition, p. 57.
- <sup>22</sup> William Shakespeare, *Sonnets*, the cited edition, p. 38.
- <sup>23</sup> *Hamlet*, the cited edition, pp. 24-25.
- <sup>24</sup> Mihai Eminescu, the cited edition, p. 73.
- <sup>25</sup> Dan Grigorescu, the cited edition, p. 102.
- <sup>26</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, the cited edition, p. 1173.
- <sup>27</sup> Mihai Eminescu, the cited edition, p. 71.
- <sup>28</sup> *Idem*, p. 72.
- <sup>29</sup> Grid Modorcea, *Shakespeare și Eminescu*, Craiova: Aius, 2006, p. 221.
- <sup>30</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, the cited edition, p. 638.
- <sup>31</sup> *Macbeth*, the cited edition, p. 204.

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# Le pouvoir de la presse française

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## ABSTRACT: *The Power of French Media*

Starting from Honoré de Balzac's novel *Les Illusions perdues*, which presents the initiatic journey of French journalist, Lucien Chardon, in this article I have tried to compare the condition of the journalist in the 19th century with the condition of the journalist today, offering – at the same time – some opinions from the readers regarding French media.

**KEYWORDS:** *Journalist, 19<sup>th</sup> century French media, French media today*

Dans l'article ci-dessous, j'ai essayé de faire une parallèle entre la presse française du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et le statut du journaliste à cette époque-là en regardant le parcours du journaliste Lucien Chardon du roman *Les Illusions perdues*, d'Honoré de Balzac, et la presse française d'aujourd'hui et le statut du journaliste à présent.

D'ailleurs Honoré de Balzac connaît bien le domaine de la presse parce que le romancier évoque le domaine de la presse dans plusieurs de ses écrits. Fidèle à sa passion – l'observation des types humains saisis dans leur milieu – Balzac entreprend une série des portraits des journalistes qu'il réunit sous le titre *Monographie de la presse parisienne* (1835). Le parcours de Lucien Chardon est celui de tous les jeunes provinciaux qui ont du talent. Faute de se faire reconnaître comme écrivain, il se fait initier au monde de la presse par un rédacteur rompu à toutes les stratégies du succès mondain.

Lousteau, qui sera le futur rédacteur en chef de Lucien, est le type de journaliste qui connaît toutes les ficelles de la notoriété. À travers ce personnage, Honoré de Balzac brosse un portrait impitoyable du journaliste à succès. Dans son roman *Les Illusions perdues*, publié en 1843, il n'épargne aucune des compromissions auxquelles doit se livrer un apprenti journaliste. Le fragment ci-dessous est tiré de la II<sup>e</sup> partie du roman ; il retrace un parcours initiatique. Lousteau parle en parfait connaisseur :

Je ne vous parle pas du plaisir d'aller au Spectacle sans payer, car ce plaisir deviendra bientôt une fatigue, mais vous aurez vos entrées dans les coulisses de quatre théâtres. Soyez dur et spirituel pendant un ou deux mois, vous serez accablé d'invitations, de parties avec les actrices, vous serez courtisé par les amants, vous ne dînerez chez Flicoteaux (restaurant aux prix abordables) qu'aux jours où vous n'aurez pas trente sous dans votre poche, ni par un dîner en ville. Vous ne saviez où

donner de la tête à cinq heures dans le Luxembourg (jardin au centre de Paris, non loin du quartier des éditeurs), vous êtes à la veille de devenir une des personnes privilégiées qui imposent des opinions à la France. Dans trois jours si nous réussissons, vous pouvez avec trente mots imprimés à raison de trois par jour, faire maudire la vie à un homme, vous pouvez vous créer des rentes de plaisir chez toutes les actrices de vos théâtres, vous pouvez faire tomber une bonne pièce et faire courir tout Paris à une mauvaise. Si Dauriat (éditeur parisien auquel Lucien Chardon a confié son recueil de poésies en manuscrit) refuse d'imprimer les Marguerites (titre du recueil de poésies) ; sans vous en rien donner ; vous pouvez le faire venir ; humble et soumis ; chez vous ; vous les acheter deux mille francs. Ayez du talent et flanquez dans trois journaux différents trois articles qui menacent de tuer quelques-uns des spéculations de Dauriat ou un livre sur lequel il compte ; vous le verrez grimper à votre mansarde et y séjournant comme une clématite. Enfin votre roman ; les libraires ; qui dans ce moment vous mettraient tous à la porte plus ou moins poliment ; feront queue chez vous ; et le manuscrit ; que le père Doguereau (libraire parisien qui hésite de publier le roman de Lucien dont le manuscrit porte le titre L'Archer de Charles IX) vous estimerait quatre cents francs ; sera surestimé jusqu'à quatre mille francs. Voilà les bénéfices du métier de journaliste. »

Lucien Chardon, le personnage principal du roman *Les Illusions perdues*, quitte Angoulême pour Paris avec un rêve secret : devenir un poète connu, mais le monde des éditeurs réserve à Lucien une série d'amères découvertes. Pour revêtir la robe des journalistes « *la robe virile des journalistes* », les jeunes esprits doivent renoncer à leurs illusions et accepter la dégradation morale. « *Le journal, au lieu d'être un sacerdoce est devenu un moyen pour les partis, de moyen, il se fait commerce, et comme tous les commerces, il est sans foi et loi.* »<sup>1</sup> Pour devenir un journaliste redouté, Lucien devra mettre en oeuvre les conseils cyniques de ses confrères. Voilà comme exemple la confiance que Lousteau fait à Lucien de Rubempré :

Enfin, mon cher, travailler ce n'est pas le secret de la fortune en littérature, il s'agit d'explorer le travail d'autrui. Les propriétaires des journaux sont des entrepreneurs, nous sommes des maçons. Aussi plus un homme est médiocre, plus promptement arrive-t-il ; il peut avaler des crapauds vivants, se résigner à tout, flatter les petites passions basses des sultans littéraires comme un nouveau venu de Limoges, Hector Merlin, qui fait déjà de la politique dans un journal du centre droit et qui travaille à notre petit journal ; ...je l'ai vu ramasser le chapeau tombé d'un rédacteur en chef..., ce garçon-là passera entre les ambitions rivales pendant qu'elles se battront. Vous me faites pitié. Je me vois en vous comme j'étais et je suis sûr que vous serez, dans un ou deux ans, comme je suis. Vous croyez en quelque jalousie secrète, à quelque intérêt personnel dans ces conseils amers, mais ils sont dictés par le désespoir du damné qui ne peut plus quitter l'Enfer.<sup>2</sup>

Lousteau voulait prévenir Lucien sur les risques du métier de journaliste et c'est pour cela qu'il donne un exemple si dur pour un jeune journaliste qui se trouve au commencement de son évolution journalistique. Mais, en même temps, il est très bien qu'il n'essaye pas de lui cacher la vérité sur ce métier. Il le prévient

qu'en peu de temps dans son âme se donnera une bataille entre « dire ce qu'il doit être dire » et « dire ce qu'il faut dire sans offenser les autres ». Lousteau, qui est un *alter ego* de Lucien (« *Je me vois en vous comme j'étais et je suis sûr que vous serez, dans un ou deux ans, comme je suis.* »), a raison, parce que d'une certaine façon, le journaliste est un acrobate parce qu'il doit jongler avec les pensées de ses lecteurs.

Cette comparaison est valable aussi pour les journalistes de XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle. À présent, le travail du journaliste consiste principalement à recueillir des informations sur un événement de l'actualité ou sur un sujet particulier (en consultant les dépêches des agences de presse, en interrogeant des spécialistes ou des témoins, et en s'appuyant sur différentes sources) et à écrire des articles ou à publier des reportages (écrits, audio, photo ou vidéo) dans un journal ou dans un magazine, dans une émission de radio ou de télévision, sur Internet ou dans d'autres médias de masse. Cette activité peut se pratiquer sous différentes formes selon la fonction qu'occupe le journaliste. On parle de *rédacteur* pour le journaliste qui rédige des articles de presse, de reporter, quand il rapporte des faits dans l'objectif d'informer le public, de chroniqueur ou de *critique* quand ses articles sont spécialisés dans un domaine particulier (dramatique, musical, d'art), d'éditorialiste s'il doit mettre en avant son opinion ou celle de sa rédaction, etc. Lorsque le journaliste effectue une enquête plus approfondie sur un sujet donné, on utilise également le terme de *journaliste d'investigation*. Même si elles n'ont pas pour rôle d'écrire les articles à proprement parler, d'autres personnes travaillant au sein de la rédaction d'un média écrit ou audiovisuel ont également un statut de journaliste : secrétaire de rédaction, éditeur, maquettiste, dessinateur, photographe, directeur artistique, iconographe, documentaliste, rédacteur en chef, correcteur/réviseur, webmaster, chef d'édition, présentateur, preneur de son, preneur d'image (« JRI », journaliste reporter d'image), monteur, etc.

La définition du journaliste professionnel selon la loi (1935 et 1974) :

Le journaliste professionnel est celui qui a pour occupation principale, régulière et rétribuée l'exercice de sa profession dans une ou plusieurs publications quotidiennes ou périodiques ou dans une ou plusieurs agences de presse et qui en tire le principal de ses ressources. Le correspondant, qu'il travaille sur le territoire français ou à l'étranger, est un journaliste professionnel s'il reçoit des appointements fixes et remplit les conditions prévues au paragraphe précédent.

Sont assimilés aux journalistes professionnels les collaborateurs directs de la rédaction : rédacteurs-traducteurs, sténographes-rédacteurs, rédacteurs-réviseurs, reporters-dessinateurs, reporters-photographes, à l'exclusion des agents de publicité et tous ceux qui n'apportent, à un titre quelconque, qu'une collaboration occasionnelle. Toute convention par laquelle une entreprise de presse s'assure, moyennant rémunération, le concours d'un journaliste professionnel au sens du premier alinéa du présent article est présumée être un contrat de travail. Cette présomption subsiste quels que soient le mode et le montant de la rémunération ainsi que la qualification donnée à la convention par les parties.



Les témoignages des lecteurs sur la presse française et sur le statut du journaliste démontre cette chose. Voilà quelques opinions exprimées dans le périodique *Marianne* :

- a) La presse concernant les journaux nationaux est trop volumineuse « *je ne sais pas par où commencer* ». (Auteur : Ajour – le 25 février 2005)<sup>3</sup>
- b) La presse concernant les journaux régionaux est beaucoup trop de « *comptes à régler et d'informations non-vérifiées* ». <sup>4</sup>
- c) « *La presse concernant les magazines hebdomadaires d'information contient beaucoup de publicité et d'articles passe-partout avec des photos venant toutes de la même agence* ». <sup>5</sup>
- d) « *Chaque fois que la presse se trompe en allant trop vite sur une affaire, elle fait un joli mea culpa de deux lignes et quelques jours après on recommence* ». <sup>6</sup>
- e) « *J'estime que nous sommes un pays où la presse est assez diversifiée ; il est surtout amusant de voir que d'un journal à un autre on trouve aussi des discours radicalement différents, voir carrément paradoxale* ». <sup>7</sup>
- f) « *La presse française ?... Elle est partielle, mais revendique avec pugnacité son objectivité. Elle ne prend pas du recul, mais estime faire des "sujets de fond". Elle a une très haute opinion d'elle-même, mais elle ne fait qu'effleurer les sujets qui méritent être approfondis. En un mot comme en cent, elle est semblable à toutes les presses du monde. Mais affirme sa supériorité !* » <sup>8</sup>
- g) « *Très asservie au pouvoir économique. Absolument pas novatrice, ou contestataire, juste un outil de propagande du pouvoir en place* ». <sup>9</sup>
- h) « *Pour la presse écrite – beaucoup plus objective que la presse télévisuelle qui est trop soumise au pouvoir de l'État* ». <sup>10</sup>

Les lecteurs ont des opinions différentes sur la presse française, mais il y a une certitude : une liberté d'opinion plus grande qu'au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le statut du journaliste s'est changé, même s'il est obligé de respecter certaines règles qui lui sont imposées dans la rédaction du journal où il travaille, il a la liberté de changer cette rédaction avec une autre.

Si les journalistes de XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle ne pouvaient pas exprimer librement leurs opinions, les journalistes du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle ont toute la liberté pour dire ce qu'ils pensent sur différents sujets. Mais, je crois que justement cette liberté a commencé de limiter la vraie vision sur un sujet ou un autre. C'est-à-dire qu'il y a des journalistes qui choisissent écrire des mensonges seulement pour avoir un article choquant. Au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, le journaliste n'était pas respecté par son chef et il était obligé de faire son apprentissage dans ces conditions, au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, le journaliste seul choisit son statut. Il est respecté par ses lecteurs s'il est sincère ; il est respecté par « ses sujets » s'il respecte lui aussi leur intimité. Un vrai journaliste doit avoir une forte documentation derrière ses articles. Et il doit savoir présenter les

informations ramassées pour ne pas dénaturer les paroles de « ses sujets », parce que s'il ne sait pas garder la confiance de « ses sujets », il perdra leur respect.

Un autre sujet intéressant est celui des photographies attachées aux articles. Les photographies représentent un but des journalistes, mais aussi des marchands des journaux et elles sont attrayantes pour les acheteurs. Les photographies doivent être faites avec l'accord « des sujets », parce que les personnes publiques ont le droit de vivre comme elles veulent, selon leurs propres règles. Normalement que les personnes publiques n'aiment pas être photographiées sans leur accord. Leur désaccord d'être photographiées dans des circonstances imprévues attire l'insistance des photographes qui les poursuivent partout, quand elles se trouvent avec leurs familles ou même quand elles se trouvent dans leurs maisons.

Un problème actuel serait celui que la presse écrite connaît des difficultés économiques, notamment du fait de la concurrence, déjà ancienne, des moyens audiovisuels et de celle, plus récente, de l'Internet. Elle tente de répondre à ces défis sur le terrain des nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication. Les journalistes ne doivent pas chercher à tout prix des sujets non orthodoxes ou de radicalité politique.

En conclusion, les faits qu'un journaliste rapporte au public doivent être porteurs de sens, car cela confère le pouvoir aux journalistes dans le processus de la formation de l'opinion publique et dans l'influence que la révélation de ces faits peut avoir dans les prises de position de ce public.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Honoré de Balzac (1974), *Les Illusions perdues*, Paris : Presse de la Renaissance.

<sup>2</sup> Honoré de Balzac, éd.cit.

<sup>3</sup> Périodique *Marianne*, Le numéro du 23 février 2005, sujet questionné Ratapoil.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, sujet questionné Lemasson.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, sujet questionné Ajor.

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*, sujet questionné Caillatte.

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, sujet questionné Avrol.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem*, sujet questionné Alary.

<sup>9</sup> *Idem*, sujet questionné Sandmayer.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*, sujet questionné Geraud.

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# George Orwell's *1984*: Political Tool or a Prediction about the Future?

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## ABSTRACT

Recent events, like the Tismăneanu Raport and the introduction of this Raport and other texts like it in the curricula for the school graduate exam, demonstrate that the ghost of Totalitarianism still haunt us and this is a topic more actual than ever.

George Orwell is one of the most well-known critics of the totalitarian regimes; he and his works should be in the centre of any deception about oppressive regimes.

My comments so far have been based on the assumption that a book can change society. *1984* certainly takes itself seriously, and the possession of a book like Orwell's in the Big Brother society it depicts would be a thought-crime of the first order. At this point, I would like to say that a self-righteous society that ignores warnings like Orwell's in *1984* frightens me. Perhaps more so than Oceania, Eastasia, and Eurasia. Is this descriptive of Western culture at this juncture in history? If we do not have Big Brother as such, there might be other, more subtle things to worry about. As I was reading *1984*, I was struck by many echoes of Foucault, and his theories of discipline. And Foucault makes it clear that he thinks power and discipline permeate all areas of society, whether totalitarian or democratic. In another parallel, I think that Orwell's idea of doublethink is not restricted by any means to the fictional society of Oceania. An example from the book deals with the Party's claim that the revolution happened to liberate the proles: "*But simultaneously, true to the principles of doublethink, the Party taught that proles were natural inferiors who must be kept in subjection, like animals, by the application of a few simple rules*" (65). I see doublethink in the way that European powers colonized the rest of the planet, and in the continuing economic domination of poorer countries. I see doublethink in certain attitudes towards women, where the double standard is alive and well. These ideas raised by Orwell are more than a little disturbing, if all of the implications are examined.

**KEYWORDS:** *totalitarianism, double thinking, thinking, Police, Big Brother*

Although it is a fictional one, space in *1984* is not utopical space. If we consider space as a state of affairs as a state of mind, then in *1984* Orwell presents

us an extreme space that could only exist under special circumstances. But the base for this utopic space is the real one.

Orwell presents space in *1984* using the enclosure system. In fact there are several spaces each deriving from another just as concentric circles<sup>1</sup>. We can depict two major spaces in *1984*: one is Macro space, and the other is Individual space.

Macro space represents in fact the setting and the state of affairs on which the action takes place. Macro space is not the most important one in the book, but it is the starting point of the action. Without understanding it, we can't understand the book.

Macro space includes:

- Geopolitical Space
- Doctrinal or Ideological Space
- Force – Ratio Space
- Language Space
- Temporal Space

At first glance, Orwell seems more interested in individual Space that is how Macro Space influences common man. Orwell classes Winston for this, an ordinary man, whose life changes under the pressure of Macro Space. But, in my opinion, this is just a literary device to attract readers. Winston is just an example; his life is not a singular one, he is not the exception, he is just the rule. Like him, many others suffered in the prisons of the Thinking Police<sup>2</sup>.

Winston is not the major character in this book; the major character is the System and the People. The System is the Macro Space and the People are the Individual Space. In fact, the book presents the fight between Macro Space and Individual Space. Unfortunately, in the end Macro Space wins, Individual Space being included – it disappears – into Macro Space.

But Space does not exist alone in this book. Another important element is Time. We know that Space and Time are interrelated. Time is somehow superior to Space, because it is Time that modifies Space, Space changes from one day to another under the influence of Time. Our entire existence is based on the interrelation between Time and Space. Humans are Space because we have a physical body, and Humans are Time because we grow, we change in psychic and in Spirit.

But can Time really exist if there is more left to feel it? Let's take Winston in the cell. Does Time really exist for him? After some time spent in the prison, Winston loses track of time, he lives in a sort of atemporality. But this is no outside reference, just the walls of his cell. Of course, for him Space exists, because he can see the surrounding things, but Time is no longer present for him, at least he is not conscious of it.

The only time he realizes that Time passed, is when he sees himself in the mirror. By the image of himself he realizes that he must have spent many months in prison. Time is more a psychological matter. We perceive time differently. For example, when we boil some water for coffee. If we stay and wait near the kettle,

time will pass very hard, but if we do something else in the meantime, time will pass easier.

So, is Time what we perceive in interior, a state of mind, or just a unit of measurement? For Winston time stopped! The final goal of the System is to alter time, to control it. Life in Oceania is atemporal, with no real past, with no real future and no present<sup>3</sup>. In the end, Winston loses his past, because he forgets what he was, or eventually he loses himself. After months of imprisonment he no longer has a name, he is just a thing, out of Space and out of Time.

The geopolitical space in *1984* reflects the overall scene in which the action takes place. For the geopolitical space in this book, Orwell relies on a real life model: the geopolitical situation from his time: that is the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War. In this respect, Orwell is not subtle at all; perhaps he doesn't even want to be.

For someone who has some knowledge about geopolitics, the similitudes are obvious. Orwell is a man of his time, and *1984* is – in this respect – the result of a paranoid society. Orwell imagines the world divided between three superpowers: Eurasia, Oceania, East-Asia. For didactical reasons we can depict:

- 1) Eurasia to be the Soviet Union – in fact, an enlarged Soviet Union, comprising the tortoise from its proximity.
- 2) East-Asia to be China plus the former European colony from South-East Asia.
- 3) Oceania to be United Kingdom (the Former British Empire) plus United States.
- 4) The forth part of the world is a sort of “no man's hand” third world countries that constantly change their masters and serve as battle ground for the three superpowers.

This division of the world is a direct result of the Third World War fought at the end of 1950's –the beginning of 1960's<sup>4</sup>. More important than discovering who these superpowers are is to discover the reasons why Orwell makes this division. The answer lies in the realities of his time and it's a direct result of public and official mentality at the end of 1940's.

We said before that Orwell imagines Eurasia to be an extended Soviet Union, comprising: Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, but also Western Europe. The reason for this is simple: during those days, the general belief among people and, indeed, among military thinkers in the West, was that Europe could not survive an attack from the Soviets.

World War II transformed the Soviet Union into a formidable war machine and the Western arms were no match for it, at least on the conventional level. The march towards Berlin and the brilliant campaign in Manchuria convinced the West that the new Soviet blitzkrieg was unstoppable by conventional methods. Indeed, Western military rapports revealed that Western Europe could only survive two or three days in front of a Soviet attack, thus the only salvation was the nuclear bomb. But, in 1949, this nuclear insurance policy failed, because now Russia had its own nuclear bomb<sup>5</sup>.

Of course, the Mutual Assured Destruction policy (MAD) was at its beginning, but even then people realized that a war between USA and USSR could destroy everything. Having this in mind, people thought the Cold War; thought the Third World War would be a limited one, not a global one. The scenario was very simple: USSR attacks the Western Europe, reaches the Atlantic in 2-3 days and then a peace treaty is signed, in order to avoid a mutual assured destruction. Another idea was that USSR could impose a blockade against Europe.

All this was thought in order to avoid a nuclear war. In this respect, USSR developed the Operational Maneuver Group, a force comprising all armed forces deployed very fast. The idea was that, if it was fast enough, it could – in conjunction with Special Forces – over NATO tactical nuclear weapons before being used. So, in Orwell's time, all odds pointed out that Russia will win a war.

Second of all, in Orwell's time, there was a lot of public appeal for Communism. Europe was recovering from the war, the Marshall plan was at its beginning, and communism and USSR seemed as a worker's paradise<sup>6</sup>. That's why Orwell imagines Eurasia from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

While Eurasia is the ground or land superpower, Oceania is the naval superpower. Oceania is nothing else than UK + USA. Traditionally, the Royal Navy was the largest and more powerful navy in the world. Oceania inherited this power from its predecessor United Kingdom. After World War II, UK lost its status of naval superpower in favor of USA. But, as Orwell imagines Oceania, this doesn't matter, because UK and USA are one now.

In 1949, the year when *1984* appeared, the West had overwhelming naval supremacies over USSR. The days of Admiral Sergei Gorskov, the brilliant Soviet naval strategist, are far, so the West still enjoys supremacies over the West. Just as in real life, in Orwell's book UK remain free from Soviet rule, as a hope for a future debarkation in the continent, just like in World War II.

East-Asia is China. For any intelligent man, it was obvious that a country that has 1/4 of human population would become, sooner or later, a superpower. In the case of East-Asia the proverb: "*When two fight, the third wins*" proves to be true. The Third World War was fought between USSR and USA, but China was not employed. While USA and USSR were consuming much of their resources in the war, China remained unaffected. This is the final goal of any power: to close the gap between it and other powers by doing nothing. The end of the war found USA and USSR (now Oceania and Eurasia) weakened, so the gap between East-Asia, and the two had reduced considerably.

The fact that China expanded, engulfing the Indochina has a simple explication. Indochina was very much under French rule. But after World War III, France disappeared. So Indochina remained without a master. Oceania and Eurasia being too weak to claim it, the closed power and the freshest are – that is China – annexed it.

In *1984* Orwell presents us a mixture of doctrines. There were two interpretations of the main doctrine in Oceania – in fact the only doctrine. Up until 1990, Soceng was thought to be a doctrine emerged from a highly technologized

society, having nothing in common with a real life doctrine. This idea was present in the Communist countries, whose leaders wanted to make sure that no link between Communism and Soceng were made. The other interpretation, equally simplistic, is that Soceng is an “evolved” or “improved” – in the negative way – Communism. This is the interpretation mediated by the so called “analysts” and “critics” who wanted to discredit Communism. In their mind, Soceng is a kind of Communism which now benefit from the high tech machines that are put to help enslave humanity.

Of course, bought interpretations are false. In fact, Orwell makes it perfectly clear in his book: Soceng is not Communism, and Soceng is not Fascism. It is a highly evolved doctrine, designed to last forever, to succeed where other doctrines failed. It is a doctrine of a “negative perfection”.

Orwell anticipated a current; a political current of the 70's and 80's developed in the former Communist bloc. Some leaders, among which are own Ceausescu, developed the so called “national Communism” – that is a Communism adapted to the national realities of that country. Of course, it was a paradox, because one of the goals of Communism is internationality. Nationalizing it, Communism stopped being Communism<sup>7</sup>.

The same thing happened in Orwell's world. This time, not only in one part of the world, but in the entire globe, there is only one doctrine: that is Socialism – a sort of Socialism. The only difference is – just like in the real world of the 60's and 70's it's national character. Each of the three superpowers developed their own socialism, having little differences between one another.

Of course, in Orwell's world – just like in the real one – we have the “uncommitted” or “no allied” countries which are, in fact, just a battle ground for the three superpowers. In presenting us the doctrine of the world, Orwell starts from a very dearing premise, in an apocalyptic way – Socialism and its main representant USSR won the Third World War, imposing this doctrine in the entire world – or at least convincing other countries like Oceania to adopt it.

Throughout history all political changes happened after a war or a revolution. Orwell follows the pattern of the changes after World War II. It was Stalin who said that a country imposes its rule and doctrine as far as its armies realizes. This war time was after World War II. USSR and USA did impose their rule in the territories they conquered. But after World War III, USSR merged to impose Socialism not only in the territories it conquered, but also in the rival countries.

This is the bizarre side of the world Orwell imagines in *1984*. The first Cold War, that between USA and USSR was a doctrinal one, but the Second one is not, because all superpowers have the same doctrine<sup>8</sup>.

Another interesting aspect of Soceng is its benefiter. Throughout history, all revolutions were started by a certain class (social class) who wanted to gain control over the country's wealth. But who are the masters of Oceania? At a first look it would seem that the members of the Interior Party are the masters of Oceania<sup>9</sup>. But are they really? If we read the book carefully, we will see that even the members of

the Interior Party are just slaves, simply employees. Orwell presents us very clear the life style of the Interior Party. They are not rich people, they don't have wealth, not even power. But who is the real master of Oceania, if not members of the Interior Party?

The real master is the System. All actions taken, all life in Oceania circles around The Big Brother. But who is Big Brother? Is it a person? – No one saw him – no one knows if he really exists. Or is it just a **Thing**, an idea, a personification of the Oppressive System, that now takes a life of its own, becomes alive?

Big Brother is just like a ghost, or more likely like a God, omnipresent or omnipotent. The inhabitants of Oceania are his followers and the members of the Interior Party are the priests, spreading his “teachings” Big Brother lives only in the minds of the people, mutually feared and respected.

He is the only doctrine in Oceania, a doctrine raised at the rank of religion<sup>10</sup>. The reason I wrote this chapter was to make a comparison between the fictional year 1984 and the events and state of affairs Orwell presents in his book, and the real year 1984 and the events that actually took place. I wanted to see whether Orwell's prediction about the future was wrong or true. Fortunately, Orwell was wrong.

What should have been the high of the totalitarian regime was, in fact, the beginning of the end for totalitarianism – at least its biggest representant. The biggest representant of totalitarianism was USSR, and the unprecedented changes initiated in this country triggered a chain reaction that led to the almost total destruction of totalitarianism – as it is perceived in the West.

It is easy to see that when he talks about totalitarianism, Orwell thinks about USSR – as the most powerful totalitarian state. After World War II the main concern of the Western strategist was not whether USSR will be or not a superpower, but how to prevent USSR from becoming the dominant superpower of the world.

The history of the force ratio between USA and USSR is quite simple and has a continuous aspect. From 1945 – the year Second World War ended – till 1985 USSR experienced a rapid and continuous grow of its power. USA experienced a slow growth and sometimes even stagnation.

The end of the Second World War found USSR in disadvantage. The war destroyed half of its territory, killing 27 million men. But despite this – it also united its inhabitants, gather all people from all the republics. It is well known that before 1940 there were a lot of people who wanted to separate from USSR. When the Natzy invaded USSR many people helped them in the chance that this would help them get free<sup>11</sup>. But this was about to change. As the war progressed and the Natzy crimes expanded, people begun realizing that it is much better under Soviet rule. It is well known the say: *“From two dictators, we prefer the one who speaks Russian”*.

So, the end of the war found USSR in ruins, but also strengthened. The brutality of the war and the collective effort to defend the country galvanized all the resources – transforming USSR into a huge economic and military machine.



On the other hand, the end of the war found USA virtually untouched. Not a single bomb and not a single bullet was fired on America territory. The loss of man was minimum, the American effort in the war being uneconomical one. So, the advantage was on the American side, which also possessed the Bomb.

After 1947, USSR started a huge economic expansion plan, with implication in all fields. So, by 1970's the gap between USA and USSR was closed. Moreover, at the beginning of the 1980's USSR enjoyed overwhelming military advantage the force ratio being 3:1 at almost all military fields.

The presence of 300 SS-20 missiles in Europe and more than 60.000 tanks made Europe a Soviet hostage<sup>12</sup>. Even in the Navy changes were made. Traditionally the West was the master of the seas, first through Britain and then through USA. By lacking a direct access to the world oceans, the Soviet Navy was always the "poor relation" in the Soviet Armed Forces. But this was about to change. In the 1970's, under the leadership of Admiral Serghei Gaskov, the Red Navy started a huge expansion project, and soon large number of Soviet surface ships were to be seen in all seas and oceans.

It seemed that USSR was unstoppable. But this was about to change, while 1980's witnessed a series of events that would lead to the rapid destruction of USSR<sup>13</sup>. The destruction of USSR had two main reasons: an inside reason, and the external factors. This is at the official level. At the beginning of the 1980's Soviet Union witnesses the death of three leaders: Brejnev, Andropov, Cernenko, died one after another in just three years. This in itself proved to be fatal for the stability of the country – the political forces in USSR being unable to come up with a young and powerful leader. And when they finally found such a leader it was a disaster: Mihail Gorbaciov gave the final blow to his country sealing its fate. The four years of political instability from 1981-1985 had a negative effect on the country. The two leaders succeeding Brejnev were bought aging men – one, a former leader of the KGB paranoid about the West, the other an old man, who was ill from the moment he took power<sup>14</sup>.

This proved that the Communist regime was in a serious crisis. There was no young man capable to continue to rule the country – because they stopped believing in Communism – and the ones qualified to this were too old. So, Communism was dying. Gorbaciov only bury it. His so called reforms destabilized the country in such a way that led to its destruction.

Added to this was the disastrous war in Afghanistan. Failing to win a rapid victory in Afghanistan, USSR consumed huge resources in an unstoppable war. Of course, the West took advantage of this. The Reagan and Thatcher doctrines and actions helped the destruction of USSR.

At the beginning of 1980's Reagan made his famous "Empire of Evil" speech, encouraging the so called "Star Wars" system and revealing numerous new weapons like the B2, that virtually overran – in theory – the 70 billion dollars anti-aircraft system of USSR. Moreover, the West started flexing its muscles by conducting a series of military actions in the 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries: Britain in the

Falklands, USA in Grenada – and, more important, the substantial help given to the Afghani myaledins.

So, the official interpretation is that USSR simply couldn't keep up with the West, losing the Arms Race. But, in reality this is just a smoke screen. USSR was never vulnerable, military speaking. The famous Star Wars system – designed to shoot down Soviet missiles was a utopic project, too expensive and too complicated to work even today. The stealth bombers that were to penetrate Soviet defensive only works against small countries with limited capabilities – and more than that USSR had its own stealth planes<sup>15</sup>.

In my opinion, this is just a carefully organized plan designed to cover the reality. And the reality is that a military, economic colos like USSR – the largest and richest country in resources in the world – doesn't just collapsed in 3 years. The answer is to be found in the former KGB and its agents and in the former leaders of the country – who controlled the economy – the military industrial complex.

For them the reality was a brutal one: they were, in fact, the ones that controlled the country, perhaps the world. They were the ones that brought enormous profits to the budget, not the politicians. And what would they get: a lousy salary, a black Volga and an apartment. Of course, it was a feeling of envy when they saw their Western counterparts – rich, powerful, with expensive cars and houses.

Of course they had the power, but they didn't have the money. That's what they wanted to change. The money and country resources will no longer be spreaded to the population, they will no longer work for the masses – from now one they will be the masters, not some old guys from the Party. That's the real reason why USSR collapsed, not American military superiority. And that's where Orwell is wrong. He forgets one thing: human nature. Humans will always be greedy; will always "kill" each other for money.

A society like the one presented by Orwell – where humans work for the System<sup>16</sup>, just for the sake of it – is utopic. Humans are humans. The final goal of a human is money and power. And it's the humans that will run the world, not the System, not the Big Brother. Big Brother is the multinational corporations, the oil companies that invade countries and kill people for money. So, in the end, Orwell's vision is a false one. Or – perhaps not. Totalitarism is present even today. We just don't see it.

Reading George Orwell's "1984" I found it very difficult to discover whether it is a science fiction book, a pamphlet, a political manifesto, a propaganda book or a vision of the future. Perhaps all these elements are present in this book. To fully understand *1984* a traditionalist approach is needed. We should take into consideration the era in which *1984* was written because – in my opinion – it is a book closely linked with the events and state of mind of that time.

As World War II progressed, it soon became obvious that Natzy Germany and Imperial Japan were just temporary enemies. The real enemy was yet to come. An enemy so powerful that it may be impossible to defeat. Military thinkers started

working on a strategy to stop this seemingly unstoppable war machine that was the Soviet Union.

The late 1840's and all 1950's were years of great paranoia. It was the beginning of the Cold War. People expected a war that would make past wars seemed like a joke. It was a war against an enemy that had the resources and the ambition to end Western domination over the world. In addition to this awesome power, this new enemy had something else, more frightening than all the weapons that it could produce: public approval.

The years following the end of Second World War were years of many uncertainties in the West. People saw the Soviet Union as a Worker's Paradise and many wanted the same thing in their country. So, the very foundation of Western Capitalism was threatened. Something had to be done. People's minds had to be changed, outside influences had to be removed, and the Worker's Paradise had to be transformed into pure evil. So, a great propaganda machine started working, huge investments were made in Western Europe, people suspected by Communist believes were arrested and removed from public life, helped by some "friendly collaborators" among which George Orwell.

1949, the year when *1984* appeared, was a year when the West took two devastating blows: the first Russian nuclear detonation and the victory of Mao's communist army in China. 1949 is the height of Western paranoia regarding Communism<sup>17</sup>. After the Russian campaign in Eastern Europe, and especially after the brilliant attack in Manchuria, it became obvious for Western military strategists that the Red Army could not be stopped by conventional methods. World War II transformed USSR into a perfect military machine, one that could defeat the heavily outnumbered and outgained allies' army from Western Europe in a matter of days or even hours. Having this in mind, the West – particularly USA – considered the atomic bomb to be insurance in case of a Russian attack. But in 1949 this insurance policy failed, because now USSR had its own atomic bomb in addition to its huge conventional army that was not demobilized after World War II. In addition to this, in 1949 China became a communist country. In the eyes of the Americans, one quarter of human population fraternized with the enemy over night.

Now communist countries had unlimited man power, unlimited natural resources and the atomic bomb. Many years, people in the West thought that Russia will never pass an atomic bomb, but now the unthinkable became reality. This is why George Orwell imagines Eurasia – a metaphor for USSR – extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific, including Western Europe, because those days it seemed impossible to defend Europe in case a war broke-out.

This is the context in which *1984* was written and in my opinion this wants and states of affairs are the starting point of the book and I can look at it otherwise – a book of its era, nothing more – a book written in a paranoid society, at the beginning of an uncertain future – a future that could lead to destruction. Public appeal for Europe being so great those days, Orwell even imagined Oceania (UK +

USA) as a socialist country – because it seemed to be the victorious doctrine in the future.

Having this in mind, Western propaganda machine had to charge people's mind from adoration for USSR to fear. A paranoid society is more docile, easier to control. People gather together when they are all united against a common public enemy – real or not – just like people of Oceania were united by their hate for “the enemy of the state” or for the ever changing outside enemies.

Intentional by or not, *1984* is part of this propaganda machine – one meant to civilize USSR and totalitarianism. *1984* is a book full of negative perfection. First we have a perfect Cold War. If we want to know what a Cold War is, like we will have to see it in opposition with a Warm War or an Open War – a war waged by armed forces. The Cold War – the only we know – was an ideological confrontation between the Communist East and the Capitalist West, materialized in the Armies Race, Space Race and in Proxy Wars – wars fought by intermediaries.

But this First Cold War was an imperfect one, because – in Orwell's vision – it leads to an open war between USA and USSR. In the First Cold War, the enemies really hated each other; they had different ideologies and had all the reasons to destroy each other<sup>18</sup>. But, in Orwell's book we discover a Second Cold War – this time a perfect one – between the three superpowers. This is a perpetually Cold War, in which the enemies have no reasons to destroy each other, because they will lose more than they will win.

In the First Cold War, the only reason why the enemies didn't attack each other was the fear of retaliations. But in Orwell's book this is not the only factor. The three superpowers do not want to conquer territories from their enemies. In all three superpowers, the basic law, on which the entire society is built, is fear and imprisonment, cutting of all contacts with the outside world. But if one country conquers another, then its inhabitants might find out that their way of life it is not the best one, they might come in contact with another civilization, and might rebel against the authorities.

So, a sort of cohabitation exists between the three superpowers the three being more allies than enemies, allies against a common enemy: their own population. In fact, unlike the First Cold War, there is no ideological difference between the three. That's why they constantly change sides. The only reason they keep fighting is to control their own population on the basis of fear against the outside enemy, to fructify the lack of goods and decent life in the name of the fight against the outside enemies. But, in fact, the real enemies for the state are within the country, not outside it.

We can see here the visionary side of Orwell's book. Of course, Orwell didn't live enough to see it, but we had a sort of Perfect Cold War in real life too. It was the doctrine that dominated the 60's, 70's and 80's: MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction). Beginning with the mid 1960's both USA and USSR built so many nuclear missiles that they had the ability to destroy the entire Earth four or five times. This triggered a sort of stalemate, a peace of terror. Of course, in Orwell's

time, USA was still the only nuclear superpower, an era of Mutual Assured Destruction being hard to imagine.

Another visionary aspect of Orwell's book is the anticipation of Proxi Wars. In "1984" the battle is among the three superpowers where the seemingly unimportant communities, remote from the capitals, which they used to test new weapons and tease each other. In the real world, this Proxi War took a global dimension the entire world becoming a war zone for USA and USSR, the only "safe" region being the Northern Hemisphere: North America, all Europe and URRS.

Another example is the perfect brainwash practiced by the members of the Interior Party. Through history, all leaders tried to change the mentality and the entire existence of the people in order to serve their goals. They tried to transform simple man – a national man capable to question his leaders' decisions – into "new man" – a sort of machine with automatic thinking built to serve his leaders.

Of course, these attempts were more or less brutal. For example, the Victorian man was not created by force; he was created by the society, following a natural development. He was, probably, the most successful "new man" ever created in the real history. But never the less, he was an artificial man, built during a special period in history: the height of Britain power. But this man tried to forget the natural side of humanity. This man was far from being perfect, because, eventually he disappeared along with Britain's might at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>19</sup>.

In real history, all these attempts to change human nature failed, because you can't just extract from human mentality what is inherited, what is written in our genes. Sooner or later humans will rebel against any attempts to transform them into robots. Even in Orwell's book, we can see the idea of revolution, even if this is a remote possibility. It is the fear of retaliations that prevents the population from rebellion. It is the perfect system of repression that keeps humans in this constant state of alienation.

The model for Orwell's book is Soviet Union in Stalin's time and Nazi Germany. But Orwell makes it perfectly clear that the governing system in Oceania is more than Communism or Nazism. The governing system in Oceania has a lot of "improvements", it learned a lot from Communism and Nazism, succeeding where other systems failed. All political leaders realized that with fear alone you can control a population. It would be better if you can make them really believe in your ideas. As society developed, it was obvious that the best way to manipulate people is through mass-media and books – the only means of information. Soon, leaders realized that if you control the media, you will control the world.

So, in fact, Orwell does not present a utopic society, not even a "perfect" one, but simply a real society, a real governing system taken to the extreme. All political leaders will behave in the same way as the Interior Party, if they are given the means. In Orwell's book we see a perfect system of propaganda. In other political systems through history, the propaganda machine tried to reinterpret history and literature in order to serve their objectives. One of the victims of the

mechanism was Orwell himself. During Communist era, the so called critics reinterpreted Orwell's book as a warning against a super—technological society. They argued that Orwell's world from *1984* was not a consequence of a political system but a consequence of technology.

But the governors of Oceania take things to the extreme. They don't bother to reinterpret books, TV shows or historical personalities. They simply rewrite them. If a book does not serve their interests, it is simply rewritten and the original book just disappears. The same thing with people: if someone is against the System, he or she simply ceased to exist; he or she is erased from history.

This is in fact the only difference between Orwell's world and the real world: in the real world we reinterpret books and history; in Orwell's world the books are rewritten. There is no real history. History is in fact fiction. History charges with the political system. It is well known the saying: "*One people terrorist is another people's freedom fighter.*"<sup>20</sup>

So, we have in a fictional world, we are fictional characters, puppets left to live in arrogance, and Orwell knew this very well. What he does is to present all these facts in an allegoric manner. Orwell's fictional world is a combination of all systems and it will be a limited person simplistic to say that Orwell's world is a parody of just one political system: "Big Brother" is always present, he always watches us, he just takes numerous figures: the figure of the Secret Police during Communism<sup>21</sup>, the figure of the SS during Nazism, or even the figure of the fight against Terrorism. The Big Brother is the System, and as long as you oppose it, you will always be an enemy of the people!!

#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> George Orwell "The Orwell Reader".

<sup>2</sup> George Orwell "History Guide".

<sup>3</sup> Michael O'Connor (2003). Review of Gordon Bowker's "Inside George Orwell".

<sup>4</sup> *Burmese Days* (1934).

<sup>5</sup> *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935).

<sup>6</sup> *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936).

<sup>7</sup> *Coming Up for Air* (1939).

<sup>8</sup> *Animal Farm* (1945).

<sup>9</sup> *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).

<sup>10</sup> *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933).

<sup>11</sup> *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937).

<sup>12</sup> *Homage to Catalonia* (1938).

<sup>13</sup> "The Spike" (1931).

<sup>14</sup> "A Nice Cup of Tea" (1946).

<sup>15</sup> George Orwell "The Orwell Reader".

<sup>16</sup> George Orwell "History Guide".

<sup>17</sup> Michael O'Connor (2003). Review of Gordon Bowker's "Inside George Orwell".

<sup>18</sup> "Boys' Weeklies" (1940).

<sup>19</sup> "Inside the Whale" (1940).

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# Under the Spell of the Fantastic: Gabriel García Márquez's Short Stories

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## ABSTRACT

In his early short stories, Gabriel García Márquez approaches the dichotomy *real world – the unconscious*, projecting within this setting a myriad of nightmares and phantasms, in order to set free his characters' minds. The author places himself beyond the conventional boundaries of reality to accurately seize a clearer perspective on the transcendental dimension of life. His psycho-analytical introspections enhance the intricate working of mind and, at the same time, bring forth his talent. The short stories display universal themes, envisaged from an abstract point of view, while the dreams increase the sense perceptions impact in a distorted world.

**KEYWORDS:** *delirious universe, surrealistic framework*

The short stories of the collection entitled *Eyes of a Blue Dog* show an undoubted unity of inspiration, an indisputable coherence that arises from the enhanced protagonism of death; they are a breathtaking excursion into 'another' reality, ruled by the ineluctable presence of death, firstly revealed like an obsession foreseen in dreams, and then acknowledged as an absolute experience of the human being.

The collection *Eyes of a Blue Dog* is deliberately echoing a number of mysteries and from the formal point of view, it matches several patterns. The author dispels the confinements of the conventional reality; everything is displayed like a code that we have to decipher. The absurd brings about its own order of things. The phantoms are slinking into the reality of some generic characters. The weather phenomena, the scents, the specters, the inner turmoil, the anguishes are interwoven into a labyrinth of the absurd, of some distorted dimensions: "*I was feeling as being transformed into a ravaged field, powdered with algae and lichens, with sticky and soft mushrooms, a field overgrown with the repellent flora of moistness and darkness.*"<sup>1</sup>

Time and space – the well-known notions – are projected under a different light. Time is not chronologically displayed, but its sound, sometimes high-pitched, sometimes barely perceptible makes vibrate, by fits and starts, the frail souls. The protagonist is disconcerted by the turmoil of time. In *The Monologue of Isabel*



*Watching it Rain in Macondo*, the suspension of time is represented in the destructive rain, which breaks up the life of the townspeople. Before the arrival of the rain, the time perception of the townspeople exists in the cyclical state of time. The framework representing the cyclical time of Isabel's hometown is ruined because of the rain; however, the destruction of the town evokes another time suspension. Isabel describes the effect of time distortion due to the longevity of the rain as follows: "*The notion of time, upset since the day before, disappeared completely. Then there was no Thursday. What should be Thursday was a physical jelly like a thing that could have been parted with the hands in order to look into Friday.*"<sup>2</sup> It is clear that in Isabel's town the cyclical time perception turns into the distorted chronological time frame created by the force of the uncontrollable events. This new time frame is neither cyclical nor linear but it is similar to a cage that prevents people from moving into the future or the past. The rain, a frequent element in Márquez's short stories, deepens the anxiety, sharpens the perception, and it seems to impart a stained rhythm to every consciousness; it stands for the favourite background of introspections. *A Man Is Coming in the Rain* depicts rain as being the respite characters need to face their existential fright.

Our reality loses all sense of proportion, the author explains referring himself to the genesis of his work-and it often poses us, the writers, serious issues like the fact that words are not enough. When we talk about a river, the largest one a European reader can imagine is the Danube, with 2,790 km. How could he possibly imagine the Amazon, which in some places is so wide that, from one shore you can't behold the other? The word storm triggers a certain image to the European reader and a different one to us; the same happens with rain, which is not to be related to the torrential deluges from the tropics. The rivers with boiling water and the storms which make the Earth shake as well as the cyclones which sweep away the houses are no tales; they are the dimensions of nature in our world.<sup>3</sup>

In *Eyes of a Blue Dog*, the cigarette becomes a catalyst of the nervous tension. Within its pages, the look encompasses more meanings than words do and dreams replace the ordinary reality:

Then she looked at me. I thought that she was looking at me for the first time. But then, when she turned around behind the lamp and I kept feeling her slippery and oily look in the back of me, over my shoulder, I understood that it was I who was looking at her for the first time. I lit a cigarette, I took a drag on the harsh, strong smoke, before spinning in the chair, balancing on one of the rear legs. After that I saw her there, as if she'd been standing beside the lamp looking at me every night. For a few brief minutes that's all we did: look at each other. I looked from the chair, balancing on one of the rear legs. She stood, with a long and quiet hand on the lamp, looking at me. I saw her eyelids lighted up as on every night. It was then that I remembered the usual thing, when I said to her: 'Eyes of a blue dog.' Without taking her hand off the lamp she said to me: 'That. We'll never forget that.' She left the orbit, sighing: 'Eyes of a blue dog. I've written it everywhere'<sup>4</sup>

Márquez's short stories unfold like spirals where the external parameters are perverted by the inner universe framework. Every short story reveals to us as a laborious process of introspections. Characters are generic and their anguishes seem to be thematic. None of the characters surpasses his anonymity. The short stories are pledged with both visual and sensorial metaphors that enhance the expressive note. Intricate psycho-sensorial insights become a substitute for the narrative texture.

The Absurd suspends any narrative lead; the propelling force of the short story is a hectic sequence of metaphors that embody the pulsations of a feverish consciousness: *"I remembered the nights of August with their amazed silence, broken only by the millennial noise of Earth, rotating on its corroded and merely greased spindle. Unexpectedly, I trembled with an overwhelming sadness."*<sup>5</sup>

Many of the motifs and techniques that were going to completely blossom out in the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* – the unlimited possibilities of exploring the subconscious, the multiplicity of perspectives, the great freedom in approaching Time and Space – have their starting point within these short stories: *"Aren't you the woman on the staircase? Time and space. Ah, you also know this story! But why do you say this? Space and time...This is it; I enjoy so much to see them upside down."*<sup>6</sup>

How does the author's narrative genius burst out? García Márquez stated: *"... I started writing by chance, perhaps only to prove to a friend that my generation was able to bring forth writers; then, I was caught in the trap of keeping writing for fun, and later, I was caught in another trap, that of becoming completely engrossed in writing."*<sup>7</sup> The author has definitely turned his passion for writing into his most powerful belief and life credo: *"It was of no use his crawling with his entrails out in order to drive away the ravens of debauchery. He had tried to defend himself by hiding behind the bulwark of childhood. He had attempted to raise a trench of lilies that would divide the past from the present."*<sup>8</sup>

*The Third Resignation* is grounded on *"the shocking contrast between sensations (constantly distressful), described with accuracy and craftsmanship, and a surrealist narrative construction, rather far-fetched"*<sup>9</sup>; the short story is the monologue of a young man, apparently dead since childhood, but who has kept growing in his coffin, being in the end overwhelmed with a double threat: that of a more and more obvious decomposition of his own body as well as of the dread to be buried alive.

From the structural point of view, the narrations fall under two categories that strictly comply with the chronological criterion: those written in the beginning, between 1947 and 1950, and those from 1950 to 1955.

The distinguishing features of the texts from the first category relate to both content and style. Consequently, they approach universal literature motifs – death and life, reality and dream, existence and appearance, the human being and his double, the recreation of some biblical myths- in an abstract way, without any localization; space and time emerge as vague, neutral notions, often omitted. The fantastic element is not engendered, like in the posterior works, by an exaggerated

contact point – sometimes to cosmic dimensions – with the real world, but by the phantoms and nightmares that come to life through the steadfast exploration of the subconscious as a stylistic device.

In his early writing period, Gabriel García Márquez is obviously influenced by the delirious vision of a surrealist nature as well as by the innovations introduced by Kafka and by the American and the English fiction writers: Faulkner, Hemingway, Joyce, Virginia Woolf, whose works he has been passionately reading all these years. Most short stories almost lack the narrative thread, which implies a progressive development of the intrigue, as the description of some psychic states provoked by the ubiquitous subconscious – particularly through dreams – prevails over the action itself, extremely reduced or partially done. The texts are eclectic, full of allusions, of suggestions and of nebulous expressions, which impose on readers – necessarily elitist – the effort to co-operate for their interpretation.

In *The Other Side of Death* there is barely any action; everything lies in simply following the thoughts of a unique leading-character, sometimes, from an omniscient point of view, other times, through the soliloquy.

The main theme is the one of the double, which interferes -within the surrealist approach of dreams - with the motif of the circular time, of the eternal return. G. Márquez's short story forcefully asserts its originality through the artistic realization, engendered by the subtle and yet surprising intensification of the disparate images that originate in the readers' being wrapped in the realm of dreams.

*The Mirror Dialogue* tackles the same theme of the double and it also reflects the prose writer's interest in the mirror motif, so noteworthy in Borges' creation, the Argentinean writer whom Márquez deeply admires. The narrative is also structured through the protagonist's soliloquy, this time while he mechanically performs his early shaving. The writer's craftsmanship also stakes here on the impact caused by the surprise element. In the first pages, the man's platitudinous thoughts, anchored in the daily order of things – the common job he has to arrive at in time, the shop on his street from where you can get anything as if it were Pandora's box – create a monotony that makes the reader be certain nothing transcendental will take place. When readers least expect it, Márquez succeeds in making the fantastic burst out: the image in the mirror comes to life, and on the double's cheek there is a cut, absent from the face of the terrified man who is looking in the mirror, in the uncertain glitter.

The texts from the first period are characterized by imprecision and obscurity. The theme of loneliness also defines Márquez's first short stories. *Eyes of a Blue Dog*, for instance, poses provocative questions about what loneliness and isolation actually mean; in this short story, loneliness generates the text by osmosis with another essential theme in Márquez's work, that of love. Both loneliness and love are finely exploited through the same surrealist technique. It is possible that the short story emphasizes the frustration and futility of all relationships, since the narrator will never remember the woman outside the dreams world.

The world of dreams is associated with the unconscious, and one of García Márquez's principle interests in *Eyes of a Blue Dog* is to capture the unique atmosphere of this phenomenon. Portraying the narrator's dream simultaneously as an intensely, physically real environment and a vast, obscure netherworld, the story allows the reader an insight into the complexities of the unconscious mind. Countless novels and short stories make reference to the unconscious, and the characterization process almost always takes into consideration the inner workings of the mind but García Márquez is unique in setting the entire story in the unconscious. Reality is a side note, the subject of several memories outside the dream, which may refer to yet another dream or merely to another layer of the woman's or the narrator's unconscious minds.

From this perspective, within the unconscious world the reader is able to perceive the desires and fears that underlie everyday life and motivate conscious actions. It is not necessarily clear from the story to what degree and in what way the unconscious world affects waking life, nor is it clear what result conscious actions have in the unconscious mind. García Márquez poses questions throughout the story about the mysteries of this interaction, embodied by the woman's obsessive quest to find the narrator, whose unconscious desires can overwhelm the conscious life.

The intriguing final line of the story, identifying the narrator as unique among men in his inability to remember what he has dreamt when he is awake, implies that it is impossible for the narrator to fulfill his unconscious desires. It seems to suggest that no other man has this problem, although the woman may be ironic in her statement, actually meaning that no one remembers his or her dreams. Indeed, the woman is also unable to remember her dreams, or at least encounters a disconnection between her conscious and unconscious memories, since she is unable to remember where she has written 'Eyes of a Blue Dog' while she is dreaming. The conclusion of *Eyes of a Blue Dog*, therefore, does not seem to resolve the question it poses about how the unconscious desire manifests itself in waking life, despite the suggestion that the narrator and the woman are resigned to hopelessness and isolation. It is possible that García Márquez prefers to stress the ambiguity of the relationship between unconsciousness and consciousness, leaving its mysteries unresolved.

Between the limits of imagination, anything can happen, but to know how to depict with naturalness, with simplicity and without any exaggeration the pearl that you have succeeded in taking out is not something within anyone's reach. Gabriel García Márquez has proved his innate ability to tell stories and to frame them into the surrounding reality as well as his talent to explore the unexpected resources of the human subconscious:

Her thoughts always went down along the damp, dark passageways, shaking the dry cobweb-covered dust off the portraits. [...] How could she, after being a beautiful woman, her blood peopled by insects, pursued by the fear of the total night, have the immense, wakeful nightmare now of entering a strange, unknown world where all dimensions had been eliminated? She remembered. That night – the night of her

passage – had been colder than usual and she was alone in the house, martyred by insomnia. No one disturbed the silence, and the smell that came from the garden was a smell of fear. Sweat broke out on her body as if the blood in her arteries were pouring out its cargo of insects. She wanted someone to pass by on the street, someone who would shout, would shatter that halted atmosphere. For something to move in nature, for the earth to move around the sun again. But it was useless. She took refuge in all her beliefs. Why didn't it dawn right then and there or why didn't she die once and for all? She had never thought that beauty would cost her so many sacrifices. At that moment – as usual – it still pained her on top of her fear. And underneath her fear those implacable insects were still martyring her. Death had squeezed her into life like a spider, biting her in a rage, ready to make her succumb. But the final moment was taking its time. [...] She tried to react and couldn't. Fear had absorbed her completely and remained there, fixed, tenacious, almost corporeal, as if it were some invisible person who had made up his mind not to leave her room. And the most upsetting part was that the fear had no justification at all, that it was a unique fear, without any reason, a fear just because.<sup>10</sup>

In *Eva is Inside Her Cat* the protagonist herself exercises the magical events. Eva is the center of the supernatural events. She exists as a form of spirit and possesses the ability to enter any living organism at will. The conflict of the story lies in her attempt to battle against her sickness of insomnia and her beauty, which she considered as an unwanted heritage passed down from her ancestors. However, once she enters her spirit form, Eva gains the upper hand in resisting against this unwanted heritage. This is because she is a spirit and is no longer confined to the physical flesh, to which the social bond and the oppression of her ancestors are tied.

In vain she struggled to chase those terrible creatures away. She couldn't. They were part of her own organism. They'd been there, alive, since much before her physical existence. They came from the heart of her father, who had fed them painfully during his nights of desperate solitude. Or maybe they had poured into her arteries through the cord that linked her to her mother ever since the beginning of the world. There was no doubt that those insects had not been born spontaneously inside her body. She knew that they came from back there, that all who bore her surname had to bear them, had to suffer them as she did when insomnia held unconquerable sway until dawn. It was those very insects who painted that bitter expression, that inconsolable sadness on the faces of her forebears [...]. Everything was asleep around her. And from her corner, in order to bring on sleep, she tried to go back over her childhood memories. But that remembering always ended with a terror of the unknown. Always, after wandering through the dark corner of the house, her thoughts would find themselves face to face with fear. Then the struggle would begin. The real struggle against three unmovable enemies. She would never – no, she would never – be able to shake the fear from her head. She would have to bear it as it clutched at her throat. And all just to live in that ancient mansion, to sleep alone in that corner, away from the rest of the world.<sup>11</sup>

Gabriel García Márquez's style can be considered as the most important literary contribution Latin America has given to the world.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Gabriel García Márquez, *Ochi de câine albastru*, București: RAO International Publishing Company, 2005, p. 151.  
<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 153.  
<sup>3</sup> Gabriel García Márquez, *El olor de la guayaba. Conversaciones con Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza*, Barcelona: Bruguera, 1982, p. 85.  
<sup>4</sup> Gabriel García Márquez, *Ochi de câine albastru*, ..., p. 95.  
<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 148.  
<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 54.  
<sup>7</sup> Gabriel García Márquez, *El olor de la guayaba*, ..., p. 33.  
<sup>8</sup> Gabriel García Márquez, *Ochi de câine albastru*, ..., p. 51.  
<sup>9</sup> Dagmar Ploetz, *Gabriel García Márquez*, Madrid: Edaf, 2004, p. 26.  
<sup>10</sup> Gabriel García Márquez, *Ochi de câine albastru*, ..., pp. 39-42.  
<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 37-39.

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# Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*-the-Writer: The Storyline

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## ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates that in the Samuel Beckett's second novel of the Trilogy, *Molloy*, the main character strives to complete his individual quest through writing. In the process, he tries to overcome the impediments which arise at different phases in his literary creations. Molloy-the-writer's text presents his failure to find his self through a movement towards his roots, here symbolized by his mother. Molloy writes in a Proustian style, with a recurrence of a confusing use of involuntary memory that ultimately adds a sense of ambiguity to the text.

**KEYWORDS:** *interior monologue, Proustian style, involuntary memory*

*The Trilogy writes itself* Michael Robinson (1969) says, with an evolution from the simplicity of this situation wherein the writer who has abandoned literature, yet who is compelled to write by a force he does not understand, sits in a room and writes three novels (141). What follows is the mere result of thoughts given to a piece of paper, a concentration of words under the shape of a shapeless story. Molloy is the author of his own life recomposed in writing, no rules implied in this creation and no restraints. The author is bound only by words as he continuously thinks that if he ceases to use his mind, then he definitely ceases to exist both in his world and in the world he places himself in when he writes. Molloy's work deals with *the transfer of his thoughts to paper* (Robinson, 142), Moran is a more reliable writer whose story is framed into a real purpose, that of finding Molloy, Malone, when writing, is actually embracing one central idea and intention – that of completing a simple process of dying and the Unnameable only speaks, leaving his creation be recorded by all powerful meaningless words.

## Molloy's Storyline

*Molloy* is written by two narrators, both of whom have interior monologues in the novel. The more the story evolves, the greater is the reader's chance to distinguish them in terms of their names only, as the experiences and thoughts presented are more often than not similar.

The first narrator of the book, Molloy, writes his work in two paragraphs, and the first of them finds its end on the second page. In this début, there are some of the very few clear ideas which are released in the discourse.

1. the writer's location:

I am in my mother's room. It's I who live here now. (Beckett, 1969:7)

2. the writer's amnesia:

I don't know how I got there. Perhaps in an ambulance... (7)

The truth is I don't know much. For example my mother's death. Was she already dead when I came in? Or did she only die later? I mean enough to bury. I don't know. (7)

3. the writer's immobility:

I was helped. I'd never have got there alone. (7)

4. the writer's preoccupation:

There's this man who comes every week. Perhaps I got here thanks to him. He says not. He gives me money and takes away the pages. So many pages, so much money. (7)

5. the writer's family and acquaintance: Molloy informs his readership that he knows he had a mother, he remembers her and he is aware of her dying. He says nothing about his father, but mentions a possible son, although he is not sure about his real existence.

All I need now is a son. Perhaps I have one somewhere. But I think not. He would be old now, nearly as old as myself. (8)

It seems to me sometimes that I even knew my son, that I helped him. Then I tell myself it's impossible. (8)

He also mentions his possible son's mother, but the reference here is both vague and uncertain.

It was a little chambermaid. It wasn't true love. The true love was in another. We'll come to that. Her name? I've forgotten it again. (8)

6. the writer's "publisher", the man who reads and corrects his writings, who makes suggestions and who remunerates Molloy's literary work.



He comes every Sunday apparently. [...] It was he told me I'd begun all wrong, that I should have begun all differently. He must be right. I began at the beginning [...].  
(8)

It is also in the first paragraph that the author Molloy makes it clear that what we read is not the first thing he has written. The pages we read at the beginning of Molloy's work are actually a "middle" intended to be an introduction for the beginning – the first part of the second paragraph, actually –. *Here's my beginning* (8), Molloy says, just before finishing the first paragraph, pointing out at the same time the fact that, in reality, he has nearly reached the end of his writing. *It was the beginning, do you understand? Whereas now it's nearly the end.* (8) This idea is also embraced by Leslie Hill (1990), who considers that the first part of the novel is *a preamble, itself part of the narrative, but written, in terms of the chronology of the plot, at some point in time later than the end of Part One of the novel (and perhaps after Part Two)* (62). He also notes that *the real beginning is already the end of the story and the apparent beginning, already a repetition of something else, of a past viewed in retrospect* (62). Paul B Kelley calls this strategy *a narrative temporality in which the play of repetition defies the writerly quest for origin*" (16) It is, in fact, a presentation of images in the light of a faded reflection into the past, reflection taken by Molloy and brought into the present through his own filters of incapability and fatigue.

If in the first part Molloy seems to have reached a definitive point of view which could enable him to remember and judge his life, his following part is a good picture of his confusion, as he constantly forgets things, and his unreliability as a writer. Molloy's second paragraph lasts for 80 pages and it is a long monologue, sometimes written with no coherence in which he describes various things in an intricate way. He is his main character, thus his work seems part of his own disorganized diary where he encounters a succession of bizarre characters: an elderly man with a stick, a policeman, a charity worker, a woman whose dog he kills running over it with his bike – her name is never completely determined *a Mrs. Loy, I might as well say it now and be done with it, or Lousse, I forget, Christian name something like Sophie* (33), one whom he falls in love with *She went by the peaceful name of Ruth I think, but I can't say for certain. Perhaps the name was Edith.* (56), a young old man, a charcoal-burner who lived in a forest and, finally, the man who takes him to the room he writes in.

Molloy first writes how his last journey began. He appears on a on a hill-top, crouched, he says, in the shadow of a rock, *like Belacqua, or Sordello, I forget* (Molloy, 11), and from there he saw two men walking towards each other along a country road. After a short time, the two men meet; they exchange a few words, and then go their separate ways. In the French text, these men are designated as A and B, and they are still largely A and B in the English New World Writing extract of 1954, but in the definitive translation of 1955 they have become A and C, a possible reference to Abel and Cain whose legend (which was first mentioned in Dante and the Lobster, 1954) illustrates Beckett's preoccupation with the unpredictable nature of God's favours, for Cain was cursed from the earth, after

seeing his brother's offering preferred to his own for no apparent reason. But A and C also recall Gamier and Mercier respectively: they know each other perhaps, one is short, the other tall, one of them at least looks old, and A, like Gamier at one point in the manuscript, walks with his head bowed on his chest.

John Calder (2001) speaks about a set of coded messages which exists in Samuel Beckett's prose and poetry. Being a novel and not a play, *Molloy* is devoid of stage directions and clear indications about setting and atmosphere. This is why the places where the action happens have to be imagined and pictured as if they were real. Calder has his own explanation for the scene with A and C. He says:

The description of the countryside in the first pages of *Molloy*, where A and C (Abel and Cain) can be seen walking from a higher point was clear in my mind, and I instantly recognized the scene when I went to Roussillon, where Beckett was during the war. The hill-top village commands the surrounding countryside in all directions; anyone on any road can be seen from a distance. The meaning of A and C becomes clear. The first is a friendly presence, the latter sinister, such as a German patrol on its way to the village, which would necessitate the departure of anyone not wanting to be questioned. There is, of course, no hint of this in the novel (Calder, 89)

The preliminary apparition is therefore of considerable significance for the rest of the story, but Molloy soon dismisses what he calls "*these rags to cover my sham*" (Molloy, 15) and declares that on waking he determined to go and see his mother. "*I needed, before I could resolve to go and see that woman, reasons of an urgent nature*" (16), and the reasons that now impel him are connected with the need to establish their relationship "*to fill my mind until it was rid of all other preoccupation and I seized with a trembling at the mere idea of being hindered from going there, I mean to my mother*" (16). He fastens his crutches (without which he cannot walk, having one stiff leg) to the crossbar of his bicycle and sets out.

When Molloy reaches the ramparts of his town, he is arrested, and later questioned by a sergeant at the police-station for some obscure irregularity in his manner of resting on the bicycle. As he is released only late in the afternoon, he goes to the country and some time afterwards finds himself back in the town (he is no longer sure it is his mother's town) where he runs over a dog, whose owner, a woman called Lousse, protects him from the indignation of the bystanders and gives him lodging in her own home. He is the one who, in some way, replaces the dead animal in her affections, and stays a good while with her, quite unable to leave, he thinks, because she drugs his food. There he loses track of his bicycle, the author continues, and eventually leaves without it, on crutches only, his initial concern to discover its whereabouts having changed to indifference. Molloy strongly hints that Lousse kept him for sexual reasons, but she nonetheless makes no attempt to prevent his departure, except perhaps, he says, by spells, for she is, as Hugh Kenner has pointed out in 1961, the Calypso (or Circe?) of this Odyssey, just

as the woman who later approaches Molloy on the seashore is its Nausicaa and the police-sergeant its Cyclops (117-119).

After leaving Lousse, Molloy wanders around the town and contemplates settling in a blind alley. In this period he even attempts unsuccessfully to commit suicide. Finally, leaving the town in some haste, he spends a while at the seaside, renewing the stock of sucking-stones that keep him from feeling hungry. Soon, however, his mother's image begins again to harrow him, and he moves inland through a forest, where his progress becomes slower and slower. A charcoal-burner, sick with solitude probably, offers his unwanted affections to Molloy (just as the donkey-man does to the hero of *La Fin*) and is soundly belaboured for his pains. No longer able to hobble, Molloy next takes to crawling, hears a distant gong, then a voice saying "*don't fret, Molloy, we're coming*" (Molloy, 91), and finally sinks into the bottom of a ditch at the very edge of the forest. It is from this ditch, evidently, that he is rescued in order to be made to write his story in his mother's room, not knowing what has become of her in the meantime. Thus, the end of Part I refers to the beginning, and vice-versa, and, in this way, the tale is made circular.

### **Psychologist B. Weiner's Attribution Theory as a Solution for Molloy-the-Writer's Failure**

Attribution theory is concerned with how individuals interpret events and how this relates to their thinking and behaviour. Heider (1958) was the first to propose a psychological theory of attribution, but Weiner and colleagues (e.g. Jones et al, 1972; Weiner, 1974, 1986) developed a theoretical framework that has become a major research paradigm of social psychology. Attribution theory assumes that people try to determine why people do what they do, that is, attribute causes to behaviour. A person seeking to understand why another person did something may attribute one or more causes to that behaviour. A three-stage process underlies an attribution: (1) the person must perceive or observe the behaviour, (2) then the person must believe that the behaviour was intentionally performed, and (3) then the person must determine if they believe the other person was forced to perform the behaviour (in which case the cause is attributed to the situation) or not (in which case the cause is attributed to the other person).

Weiner focused his attribution theory on achievement (Weiner, 1974). He identified ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck as the most important factors affecting attributions for achievement. Attributions are classified along three causal dimensions: locus of control, stability, and controllability. The locus of control dimension has two poles: internal versus external locus of control. The stability dimension captures whether causes change over time or not. For instance, ability can be classified as a stable, internal cause, and effort classified as unstable and internal. Controllability contrasts causes one can control, such as skill/efficacy, from causes one cannot control, such as aptitude, mood, others' actions, and luck.

There is a strong relationship between self-concept and achievement. Weiner (1980:362) states: "*Causal attributions determine affective reactions to success and failure*". Consequently, one is not likely to experience pride in success, or feelings of competence, when receiving recognition from a person who constantly praises everybody with no actual degree of appreciation. On the other hand, if one receives recognition from a person who has very few words of appreciation for the others is likely to generate great positive effect. People with higher ratings of self-esteem tend to attribute success to internal, stable, uncontrollable factors such as ability, while they contribute failure to either internal, unstable, controllable factors such as effort, or external, uncontrollable factors such as task difficulty. Contrary, people who experience repeated failures in their actions are likely to see themselves as being less competent in what they do.

The attribution theory has been used to explain the difference in motivation between high and low achievers. According to the attribution theory, high achievers will approach rather than avoid tasks related to succeeding because they believe success is due to high ability and effort which they are confident of. Failure is thought to be caused by bad luck that is not their fault. Thus, failure doesn't affect their self-esteem but success builds pride and confidence. On the other hand, low achievers avoid success-related chores because they tend to either doubt their ability or assume success is related to luck or to other factors beyond their control. Thus, even when successful, it isn't as rewarding to the low achiever because he/she doesn't feel responsible, that is it doesn't increase his/her pride and confidence.

This theory can have an application into the world of the novels in the *Trilogy* inasmuch a filter of perceptions towards the characters' behaviour. Molloy is, thus, a low achiever in his perimeter of incapacities with no possible force to succeed but his mind. His failure is both bad luck and inner disability to concentrate on the real needs in a normal society. His stream of living is meaningless because he has no intention to make it otherwise and limitation is left alone in the site of despair. The Attribution Theory, thus, enriches this writer-character with proper will and determination. Together they can be analysed with a prior on their behaviour and mental development.

### **Molloy's Proustian Style**

Samuel Beckett confessed to Deirdre Blair "*I am not an intellectual, I am only a sensibility. I conceived Molloy and what followed the day I became aware of my stupidity. Then I began to write the things I feel*" (Blair 1978: 403). When writing *Molloy*, Beckett did not choose to make use of the distance between writer and character he had previously taken into consideration when creating his previous novels. Here he lets worlds mingle, atmospheres combine in such a delusive way, that they lose the line of separation and fall into each other. He lifts the veil, invites the reader in and offers him an unreliable story written by a strange

writer, namely his character, Molloy, who knows how to act in the same spirit as his creator.

Like Beckett, Molloy is a writer, and, like Beckett, he has reached the stage when he wants to say the last things [...]. Now that he feels he is within sight of the end of his labours, the writer, Molloy, exploits his own personality and experience in order to keep writing. To keep writing is crucial, for the only certainty he has is that he must go on writing. (Topsfield 1988:76)

It has been argued that Molloy writes in a Proustian-like style, by making use of biographical data and the attempt to rebuild the past through writing. One of the critics who embraces this idea is Paul B Kelly (2002), who presents the figure of the writer-narrator in *Molloy* and *Proust*, and focuses on the idea that “*although Molloy, like Marcel, is compelled to reconstitute the past through writing, it is clear from his present situation that he is no longer able to do precisely that*” (11):

Yes, I work now, a little like I used to, except that I don't know how to work anymore. That doesn't matter apparently. What I'd like now is to speak of the things that are left, say my good-byes, finish dying. (Molloy, 7)

*À la recherche du temps perdu (In Search of Lost Time)* has a canonical becoming in literature, as canonical writing is born of an originality fused with tradition. Marcel Proust's fictional poetic of images of memory gives a permanent place to the explosive impact of everyday experiences. In Proust's conception, the writer is a man of intuition, in the way that there is a clear cut distinction between the man-writer, the one who creates and who concentrates on pointing out ideas through words and the self he manifests in his habits, social life and vices. Understanding Molloy from this perspective is an attempt to avoid speculation from the plain analysis of the story he offers and to deeply concentrate on the character he creates. Proust invoices that there is no meaning in searching explanations for writings in the lives of authors, but in the mere core of achievements presented as a creation of poor extent but of rich connotations.

Marcel Proust abandons the traditional novel, that of Cervantes, Defoe, Fielding or Richardson, and introduces the flux of involuntary memory. There is an exquisite contrast between the involuntary memory and the voluntary one. It is the voluntary memory which points out memories outlined by intelligence that is those memories which come as an aware process to remember events, places and people. Proust's character and writer at the same time feels a great pity that such memories can only be partial and that they are bare of past essence. They have the mission to unlock the narrator's past as the core subject of the novel. Proust evolves in an author capable to give life of his own to his narrators, to make them bigger or smaller, to ignore them for a time in order to rediscover them later in completely different environments. It is their ability of being reborn that Proust searches, as if they were people he met again, under a different face, ignored once but quite

precious at present in the light of transformation and evolution (Coordinator Ion, A:240).

An instance which continuously comes ahead when there is analysis on involuntary memory in *In Search of Lost Time* is the episode of the madeleine.

For many years, already, everything about Combray that was not the theater and drama of my bedtime had ceased to exist for me, when one day in winter, as I returned home, my mother, seeing that I was cold, suggested that, contrary to my habit, I have a little tea. I refused at first and then, I do not know why, changed my mind. She sent for one of those squat, plump cakes called petites madeleines that look as though they have been molded in the grooved valve of a scallop shell. And soon, mechanically, oppressed by the gloomy day and the prospect of another sad day to follow, I carried to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had let soften a bit of madeleine. But at the very instant when the mouthful of tea mixed with cake crumbs touched my palate, I quivered, attentive to the extraordinary thing that was happening inside me. (Proust: 45)

Alan Astro (1990) considers this scene the most famous of Proust's entire masterpiece as, by biting the teacake after having softened it into a cup of herbal tea, the narrator remembers a similar taste sensation he once had had in his childhood.

The purely formal repetition of the act takes on the emotional and intellectual content of its original occurrence. Beckett tells us that in such moments of involuntary memory, the Proustian hero experiences 'the total past sensation, not its echo, nor its copy, but the sensation itself, annihilating any spatial and temporal restriction (p. 54)' (Astro, 30).

The literary creation here takes a disjointed nature and reflects experience parted by the temporality of traditional narrative discourse. Time, developed as theme in the narrative sphere, is inclined to move forward, with a great offer for the reader to go from present to past, from future, back to the present frame. Ideas and their configured descriptions appear as a mention hardly noticed from the context and structure. Nevertheless, an instance later, even on the same page, Proust is likely to return to the same idea and dwell on it a little longer before moving on.

Samuel Beckett used Proust's great epic *À la recherche du temps perdu* in accordance with his own sense of justifying his character-writer's misery and unhappiness evolved from a precarious memory into pessimism of high proportions. If we deny human values, human degradation loses its status of perception. In Beckett's writing, pessimism occupies a central place by getting its power from inner analysis meant to bring force. Beckett admitted to John Pilling that when he was writing Proust's monograph and his later prose "*perhaps I overstated Proust's pessimism a little*" (Pilling, 1976: 22). This idea is reinforced by Cid Corman in his book *Word for Word: Essays on the Art of Language* (1977) and by Nicholas Zurbrugg in *Beckett and Proust* (1988). Cid Corman affirms that Beckett "*often uses Proust as his own mouthpiece*" (102) in order to sustain "*his*

*deepest negative convictions*” (109). Although important trademarks existent in Proust can also be seen in Beckett’s work, it would be unfair to say that Beckett is a spokesman for Proust. On the other hand, it would be fair to claim that by identifying with Proust’s ideas in his idiosyncratic way, Beckett’s prose could be said to reflect his own point of view at the time.

In *Molloy*, Samuel Beckett accepted and used involuntary memory. He focused on the lack of reliability of his first writer’s memory and employed it as a tool in the novel. His main utility is the painful distrust, which is on the top of all things thought of and written by the author, Molloy. *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* accepts this idea and reinforces the persistence of involuntary memory in *Molloy*. It can be considered that Proust’s influence is not only on Beckett as creator of the novel, *Molloy*, but also on Molloy as creator of his few pages of literary composition.

For the composite protagonist of Three Novels, memory as a constitutive force is unreliable. Molloy does not know (cannot remember), how he reached his mother’s room; he has forgotten the name (Edith?, Ruth?, Rose?) of the “little chambermaid” in which he experienced true love. His narrative proper begins with an image of rumination, of cows in the evening silence: ‘They chew, swallow, then after a short pause effortlessly bring up the next mouthful... perhaps I’m remembering things’ (Ackerley, Gontarski 2004: 362).

As a writer, Molloy invokes memory in order to build his text. The monologue is trapped by a continuous trial to find details and stories previously lived or heard of, so that he could form a line of textual representations based on them. His memory is not a reliable one, and the products which can be obtained of it are both vague and elliptical. Molloy is not a trustworthy writer; his story is a put together of instances linked by a single style. “*My reasons? I had forgotten them. But I knew them, I must have known them, I had only to find them again*” (Molloy, 27).

Without being aware of it, Molloy writes about his dualist state of being, about the relationship between his mind and matter, about his oblivion of rational things. Thus, his work takes the readership far beyond Rene Descartes’ version of dualism, which holds that the mind is a non-physical substance (Descartes 1641:1-62), into the night where things, in their natural process of decomposition, can inspire the senses.

For in me there have always been two fools, among others, one asking nothing better than to stay where he is and the other imagining that life might be slightly less horrible a little further on. [...] And these inseparable fools I indulged turn about, that they might understand their foolishness. And that night there was no question of moon, nor any other light, but it was a night of listening, a night given to the faint soughing and sighing stirring at night in little pleasure gardens [...] where there is constraint [...] Yes, there were times when I forgot not only who I was, but that I was, forgot to be. (Molloy, 48-49)

When Molloy writes in this way, using a clear style and outlined ideas, his work seems superior, it has philosophical connotations and it leads to deep introspection. He becomes obsessed with interior retrospection and offers a few pages of analysis of spirit and mind. He is now preoccupied with high values, his memory is used for positive thinking.

And a good thing too. But in there you have to be careful, ask yourself questions, as for example whether you still are, and if no when it stopped, and yes how long it will still go on, anything at all to keep you from losing the thread of the dream. (Molloy, 49)

Elizabeth Barry (2006) considers that Molloy, the narrator, is placed against *“the expressions and exploration of [...] involuntary memory”* (69). This comes as a result of the state of doubt which is often presented as an overwhelming procedure of creation. Memories appear as a negative flash, their pain and psychic danger become almost impossible to endure on behalf of the author. They interfere with his story, break it and then take the pieces again and rearrange them in a way that they become a parted whole of a unique line of narration.

The obsessive memory Molloy uses when writing is merely a *“storehouse of expressions that hark back [...] to the world of the distant or the recent past”* (Barry, 65). There is no real specification in the novel of whether the episodes told by Molloy had a real fundament in history or they are simply products of the writer's imagination with the purpose of further confusion in the story. Molloy writes about images and events which are not always connected with each other, and which resolve in an unexpected sphere.

Molloy's loss of memory appears in his creation under different forms. His own name seems to luckily come to his mind as if it were in an epiphany *“And suddenly I remembered my name, Molloy. My name is Molloy, I cried, all of a sudden, now I remember.”* (Molloy, 23), but he does not remember the purpose of his visit to his mother. While lying in a ditch, with no remembrance whatsoever of his arriving there, Molloy has a moment of pure meditation *“Perhaps there is no whole, before you're dead”* (Molloy, 27). If Molloy, the writer, can remember one detail and then this detail is brought to light, there are always other particulars which are reabsorbed into forgetfulness. The complete activity of memory never provides the character with the total picture of his self. Its nature is so discrete that it frustrates the need for continuity; its inability to fill the gaps opened up by oblivion reveals the arbitrariness of any attempt to master reality, and the inconclusiveness of Molloy's writing registers exactly the failure of such an effort.

In 2001, John Calder writes:

Memory and habit are interlinked. The nostalgia for the past has become part of our mind-set and we build our every day existence on habit; even pain and illness can become habit (Calder, 65).



There is a great connection between Molloy's memory and habit. As he becomes nostalgic for the past, this state accumulates all his energy into revealing his already experienced actions. He uses his mind in order to be able to acknowledge some faded reactions and, once he has achieved this, he continues to repeat them all through his novel:

But I must say that with Lousse my health got no worse, or scarcely. By which I mean that was already wrong with me got worse and worse, little by little, as was only to be expected. [...] So all I can say, and I do my best to say no more, is that during my stay with Lousse no new symptoms appeared, of a pathological nature, I mean nothing new or strange (Molloy, 55-56).

H. Porter Abbot had already considered this aspect in 1973 by saying memory and habit are two highly developed faculties men are endowed with and they them to perceive order and in this way to achieve security.

Memory and habit tie past, present, and future together, allow a life to be abstracted from flux, imply causality and development. The "higher" constructs, too, arise from Memory and Habit: schemes of history, philosophies, psychologies, moralities. All these are myths generated by man's need for security. There are a few men, however, who have a need for demythologized experience. They are willing to undergo the agony of insecurity for a perception of things as they are and an experience of time as it is, unmanacled from Memory and Habit. Such perceptive experiences Beckett labels alternatively 'new' or 'true' experiences. (Abbot, 3)

Molloy's experience in creating literature is unique, even though his text might be a put together of instances remembered, in an unspecified and unimportant order. His experience provokes reactions to what he writes, but they seem to be out of time in order to emphasize his proper chronology and causality. The episode with Lousse's description illustrates it.

Lousse was a woman of extraordinarily flatness, physically speaking of course, to such a point that I am still wondering this evening [...] if she was not a man rather or at least an androgyne. She had a somehow hairy face, or am I imagining it in the interests of the narrative? (Molloy, 56)

The writer Molloy does not praise this; he merely uses it out of habit and with the purpose to occupy pages. He writes, so he remembers and if he remembers things right, to his mind, this means that he knows. If he either cannot remember, or he has never known the real situation, he invents, again out of habit and for the well functioning of his novel.

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## Le discours littéraire entre l'imagination et la réalité. L'Erôs ou le rose de Macedonski

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**ABSTRACT:** *The Literary Discourse between Imagination and Reality.  
The Eros and the Colour Pink of Macedonski*

Macedonski in his novel *Thalassa*, in the chapter *Eros*, re-creates the pink colour as a real sign of the revolution of the Earth and the sentimental links. The sensation is rendered by objects or colours. *Thalassa*, influenced by the dream he really believes in, hasn't the power to recognize the reality from the imaginative world he created, *he is his own senses*. The pink colour becomes the symbol of the door that let us to enter the world of mystery.

**KEYWORDS:** *the pink colour, sensation, reality/imagination*

Alexandre Macedonski, un des plus célèbres poètes roumains de son époque, tempérament combatif et néo-latin intransigeant, a été aussi le champion de la littérature française en Roumanie.

Le roman, ou plutôt le poème *Thalassa*, paru pour la première fois à Paris sous le titre *Le livre de feu* (puis *Le Clavaire de feu*), commencé en 1890 en roumain et puis pensé et écrit directement en français, portant en sous-titre *L'Épopée sexuelle*, a coûté à son auteur 14 années de labeur assidu.

*Thalassa* ou l'épopée des sens est dédiée au peuple français : À la France, cette Chaldée, et comprend 12 chapitres dont chacun nous donne la sensation d'une couleur : *Solo sélénaire*, *Jours d'or*, *Eros* (chapitre qui devient le point de départ de notre étude), *L'épode rouge*, *Priape*, *Erèbe*, *Pronaos*, *Flûtes et Hautbois*, *La Messe de feu*, *Dies irae*, *Messe suprême*, *Ultra coelos*. Chaque chapitre veut recréer, par des termes proprement choisis, la sensation de la couleur prédominante car Macedonski y étudie les rapports des sentiments avec la sexualité ou la correspondance des cycles que la terre accomplit au cours d'une année, autour du soleil.

Très proche de Flaubert par la sobriété et la précision du style, par son obsession de rendre l'image colorée à travers les pages du livre, Macedonski recrée dans le chapitre *Erôs* l'image d'un rose tendre mais charnel à la fois en mettant surtout l'accent sur la description de la nature, divine par sa magie, de même que sur la description des sentiments, surtout de l'amour naissant. Notre étude tend à expliquer deux relations qui naissent à l'intérieur du roman et surtout

dans ce chapitre : le rapport entre *l'imagination et la sensation* et le rapport entre *la réalité et la description* en insistant surtout sur l'idée de sensation.

### **L'imagination / La sensation**

Dans le roman de Macedonski on assiste à un mélange de sensations, d'objets, de couleurs qui réalisent l'image d'ensemble. Sa lecture détermine un fort relent d'épices orientales. On se penche avec anxiété sur les phases de la voluptueuse aventure qui forme les thèmes du roman. On suit de près le jeune héros Thalassa qu'aiguillonne inéluctablement sur la montée de son calvaire, Eros, le cruel dieu d'amour. Et tous ses spasmes où le sang se mêle à la passion et tous ces élans vers une extraordinaire ivresse se succèdent dans un prestigieux décor d'azur et de soleil, en cet Orient, terre promise des voluptueux intellectuels, entraînant le lecteur vers le dénouement tragique où va s'abîmer cette victime d'une aveugle et torturante virilité.

Dans le chapitre *Eros* du roman *Thalassa* ou *Le calvaire de feu*<sup>1</sup>, dans cette merveilleuse épopée érotique, la *linéarité* habituelle du récit est brisée. Thalassa, sous l'empire d'un Erôs insensible, n'est pas capable de discerner la réalité du rêve ; le principe « *du rêve vécu* » (p. 38) ne se reconstitue pas, c'est le sentiment de possession qui le domine.

Esclave « *de sa propre essence spirituelle* » et « *cessant de lutter* » (p. 45), Thalassa s'abandonne à son destin. Ses sensations s'entrelacent : la vue, le toucher, l'ouïe, l'odorat se superposent sur l'air, le parfum, la lumière, la couleur, la forme, l'objet et tout devient le symbole des « *matrices frémissantes de germes latents* » (p. 41).

Le décor simple est la cause de cette linéarité. Tout se rencontre dans l'*horizontalité* de l'île : « *les creux s'assombrissaient vers l'Occident* », « *les jours s'écoulèrent allongés et voilés de rose jusque sur les midis* », « *les bords des nuages (...) se polissaient des derniers reflets du jour* » (p. 39), « *le mal montait et démontait comme la mer* » (p. 42), « *les flots s'accouplaient au soleil* » (p. 40), tout est dominé par « *la fluidité de l'eau* » (p. 46).

Mais la *verticalité*, là où elle existe, s'annonce plus violente que jamais : des « *vapeurs subtiles* » détruisent le calme (p. 39), « *le soleil fondait dans la mer* » (*idem*), « *les flammes se roulaient sur lui* » (p. 40), « *des cieux sillonnés d'éclairs et galopés de nuages bitumineux descendent* » (p. 42), « *Sulina rentrait par vifs éclairs dans son imagination* » (p. 43).

Au centre de l'image, vue par une sorte de caméra cinématographique qui n'est autre que la sensibilité de l'auteur, au milieu de l'île- horizontalité absolue complétée par l'immensité bleue de la mer, s'érige le phare, le seul élément qui s'assume la notion d'*obstacle*. C'est celui qui bouleverse les choses, les sens, les correspondances. L'action semble se dérouler autour de cet obstacle voulu.

## La réalité / La description

*La description* du cadre commence avec *le coucher du soleil* – « *le soleil tombait dans la mer* » (p. 39), avec les tressaillements de la lumière, les cieux qui s'assombrissaient vers l'Occident, les bords de leurs nuages qui foudraient les « *derniers reflets du jour* » et « *les scintillements de rubis* », les « *limpidités de spinelles* » (*idem*). L'image, d'un rose pâle se colore en *rouge*. C'est un rouge à peu près nocturne, couleur du feu central de l'homme et de la terre, le mystère caché de la vie. Sorte de « *blessure* » ou « *cicatrice* » (p. 38), il devient la couleur de l'âme, du coeur, même de la libido.

Au lever du jour le blanc et le rose redeviennent les messagers d'un nouveau commencement. La ville, « *joliesse blonde* » (p. 43), dresse des toits « *fleuris de roses remontantes, des frontons égayés de glycines* » (*idem*). « *C'est à l'aube d'un jour rose que la chaloupe (...) lui apparut réelle* » (p. 44), « *octobre inondait les hauts espaces de soufre, noyait les levers et les couchers dans des flamboiements dont quelques-uns remontaient jusqu'au rouge vif* » (*idem*). Ce passage du rose au rouge vif accentue, encore une fois, la violence du rouge diurne, le principe mâle qui incite à l'action.

Mais le rouge en lui-même, avec ses pouvoirs destructeurs, est le symbole du jour. Et Macedonski connaît très bien les méthodes de mettre en évidence l'image de l'ardeur et de la beauté qui redeviennent la force impulsive, génératrice de jeunesse, un vrai Erôs, libre et triomphant, symbole d'un pouvoir vitalisant.

Après un « *sommeil réparateur* » (p. 39) qui ouatait d'anesthésie les nerfs du jeune homme, on assiste à l'éclosion de la sensation - sorte de trouble semblable à ceux des « *tortionnaires* » (*idem*). Purificatrices, car l'amour doit être purificateur, « *les flammes* » (p. 40) de la passion s'emparent de son corps et le brûlent.

Thalassa se sent perdu dans l'immensité des sensations. Ses sens s'enflamment, il perd le contrôle, tout devient chaos. Des chimères le hantent, des chaînes le brûlent, « *des lèvres lui mangeaient les lèvres, lui buvaient l'âme* » (p. 41), « *des lèvres de feu, des gorges fascinantes surgissaient de partout* » (p. 45), ses yeux sont « *noyés d'extase* », les « *paupières rougies et battues* » (*idem*).

Mais ces questions n'ont qu'une seule réponse : connaître la vierge, « *connaître ce qu'il y a de cieux dans la boue et de boue dans les cieux* » (p. 43). Et tous les couchers et levers du soleil traduisent ses troubles, le rouge gagne de l'importance comme source de l'intensité de la passion, de l'union : les aubes « *sanglantes* » se transforment en rouges agonies « *crépusculaires* » (p. 46). Les nuages, eux aussi prennent l'allure d'un « *champ de carnage* », car les cieux sont « *mangés de flammes, rougis comme de sang* » (*idem*).

Au fond on assiste à l'éternelle lutte entre *le feu et l'eau*, principes indestructibles des premiers jours de l'existence : « *les flots se mariaient à un principe différent (...), à l'âme même des mondes* » (p. 41), « *la fluidité de l'eau* » semble détruire en quelque sorte « *le flamboyant tourbillon* » de la flamme (p. 46).

*Le personnage* pâlit sous l'amalgame de sens : « *noyé dans une atmosphère de jour rose* » (p. 38), il se confond avec ses sens. La violence de l'extérieur,

dominé par le rouge mordant du soleil, se complète avec celle de l'intérieur ravagé par les sensations, de sorte qu'il ne trouve « l'accalmie du sommeil » (p. 40) qu'aux « heures torrides » du jour (*idem*).

Dans la vision de Macedonski *le rose* devait être la couleur dominante dans ce chapitre, *Eros*. Mais, du premier jusqu'au dernier plan, le tableau se plie sous le poids *du rouge* et, à travers le rouge, l'auteur arrive à la couleur de rouille qui étouffe « *les aspérités de l'onyx* » (*idem*). Symbole d'une renaissance mystique, *le rose* prend la valeur de la régénération, une possible initiation aux mystères.

Le jeune Thalassa s'initie à l'amour. Ses sensations le tourmentent, il perd le sens de la réalité. Pour lui, le monde des sensations devient un second monde, plus proche de son âme, plus réel que la réalité en elle-même. Le rose, comme variante primaire du rouge naissant, se transforme vite en rouge, apogée de la sensualité / sexualité ou même en grenat, décadence et destruction des sens. Le héros « vit » le rêve de sa transformation, physique et mentale.

Si pour les autres chapitres Macedonski donne des indications à propos de l'évolution des événements, dans *Eros* l'auteur laisse au lecteur le droit de s'imaginer librement la sensation éprouvée après la lecture du chapitre. Il re-crée la sucrerie du commencement : le jeune homme qui ne croit ou ne veut pas croire dans le pouvoir de la passion et des sens.

Dieu ou humain, Thalassa, sous le signe de l'Erôs, se laisse dominé par l'amour transcendant et la sagesse divine. Tout évolue du rose de la « cicatrice » au rouge vif des passions et à la couleur de « rouille » ou de « soufre » des couchers et des levers du soleil quand l'image est bouleversée par les brouillards du matin.

#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Toutes les citations renvoient à Macedonski, Al. (1969), *Opere*, vol. V, Proză, București: Editura pentru literatură.

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# Using Newspapers when Teaching English to Business Students

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## ABSTRACT

Nowadays, finding new teaching tools has become a real challenge for teachers who are constantly looking for additional methods to use in class in order to make their lessons more attractive and efficient at the same time. The present paper tries to present some ways of using newspapers in English classes helping students become confident in themselves and in their ability of functioning in an English-speaking environment.

**KEYWORDS:** *teaching tools, authentic/non-authentic texts*

Nowadays, teachers have become more and more interested in bringing new ideas to class, in changing the way courses were perceived by students, in trying to make them as interesting as possible for their students. Finding new teaching tools has become a real challenge for teachers who are constantly looking for additional methods to use in class in order to make their lessons more attractive and efficient at the same time. Thus, the traditional method of teaching has somehow become forgotten by many teachers, the new and modern approach being more and more used and praised by teachers worldwide.

When dealing with business students, the teacher has to think in advance of ways of introducing vocabulary and language as proficiently as possible. The students need to become accustomed to the specific vocabulary the business domain implies, but, at the same time, they need to be able to communicate their ideas and feelings in a proficient and efficient way.

It is known that newspapers, magazines, radios, are easily accessible to anyone these days. Therefore, besides using textbooks when teaching English to business students, teachers now have the possibility of bringing into class an authentic text. The debate upon whether to use an authentic text versus a non-authentic one has always been a matter of importance for many teachers.

One aspect of reading and listening that concerns many teachers and methodologists is the difference between authentic and non-authentic texts. The former are said to be those which are designed for native speakers, they are 'real' texts designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language in question. Thus, English-language newspapers are composed of what we would call authentic



English, and so are radio programmes for English speakers. A British advertisement is an example of authentic text, so is a chapter from a novel written for an English-speaking audience. A non-authentic text in language teaching terms is one that has been written especially for language students.<sup>1</sup>

When using authentic business texts, the teacher hopes the students will be able to master and become accustomed with the vocabulary by learning how to read the business part of an English newspaper. Finding an authentic text is an easy task nowadays since technology offers more than a helpful hand for those who need it. Since English newspapers are scarce on the Romanian market, the teacher may use the Internet as an effective way of finding satisfactory texts to be used in class. Therefore, one may easily have access to newspapers like *International Herald Tribune*, *Newsweek*, or *Time* magazine. These newspapers offer a wide range of authentic texts which are of interest for the future businessmen. At the same time, even if they are not quite authentic texts, the use of Romanian newspapers written in English are a great tool for the teachers to use in classes. *Bucharest Business Week*, *Business Romania* or *Invest Romania*, are examples of newspapers written in English which contain problems of national importance. These can be easily reachable on the market but also on the Internet and may be easier to students since they are already familiar with the events happening in their country.

Even if newspapers are easily accessible, the task of the teacher is a difficult one since he/she has not only to find a certain issue of a newspaper but also to choose which texts to be used in class. Using newspapers as teaching tools has advantages and disadvantages at the same time. On the one hand, the most important advantage is students' possibility of dealing with authentic texts, making them aware of the way business terms are used, introducing them to real English. At the same time, they have a positive effect on the students' motivation to learn a language since one can find topics that he/she considers being of high importance to them. The teaching activity becomes more creative while the teacher ensures himself that the students don't become bored with using a textbook too often. What is important for the students is to make them feel they learn the real language. On the other hand, using newspapers in EFL classes may have disadvantages. It is known that newspapers' articles contain difficult language and complex structures, certain expressions that the students find difficult to understand without mentioning the cultural background they need to be aware of.

If a British reader walks past a newspaper stand and sees the headline 'England in six-wicket collapse' he or she will almost certainly guess that the England cricket team has been beaten in an international match. This guess will be based on the reader's pre-existing knowledge of newspapers, their experience of how headlines are constructed, their understanding that *wicket* is a cricketing term, and their knowledge that England has not been doing too well in the sport lately. If the reader then goes on to buy the newspaper he or she will use all this pre-existing knowledge to predict the relevant article's contents both before and during the reading of it.

However, a reader who did not have such pre-existing knowledge would find the reading task more difficult”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the teacher has to constantly assist students when dealing with such texts. He/she needs to discuss with students before using newspapers in class. He/she needs to take into consideration the knowledge level of the students and their ability of coping with such texts. At the same time, the teacher has to find out what students think of newspapers, which areas they believe are important to them, how often they read a business newspaper and what they are interested in. Questionnaires and discussions are ways of finding these issues from the students. Their opinions are important to the teacher before introducing a newspaper text in class. Business newspapers contain many types of articles which students may not find so interesting. Yet, students tend to be interested in topics such as the financial situation of certain companies, new products on the market, stock prices or currencies.

Many teachers seek textbooks or textbook packages that meet all of their instructional needs. Unfortunately, few find exactly what they are looking for. A textbook and its accompanying materials can rarely meet all of a teacher’s criteria simply because students’, teachers’, and institutions’ needs vary so widely. According to the dominating conventional wisdom in the field, ‘there is no such thing as a perfect textbook’. Moreover, teachers generally want and need to adapt supplemental instructional materials to changing student populations, learning needs, and individual interests. For these reasons, it is essential for teachers to develop basic skills in supplementing and adapting published course texts and in devising techniques for deploying these materials effectively in the classroom.<sup>3</sup>

Before introducing a newspaper article in the class, the teacher has to discuss with the students the devices they need to be accustomed with in order to find the right information quickly and efficiently. Headlines should be discussed first, since these may be misleading to students when dealing with such texts. In the journalistic style, headlines don’t always offer a general view on what the article is about. At the same time, they leave out short words; they contain idioms or may be presented in the form of rhetorical questions only to attract the reader’s interest. What is also important for the students to know is that they don’t have to understand each and every word or expression but rather to infer the meaning from the context. If they waste time on trying to find the meaning of unknown words, they will lose the general idea of the article which in fact is the main purpose of dealing with such texts.

It is often difficult to convince students of English as a foreign language that texts in English can be understood even though there are vocabulary items and structures the student has never seen before. But this is the case, not only for non-native speakers, but also for some speakers of English as a first language. Skills such as extracting specific information can be satisfactorily performed even though students do not understand the whole text; the same is true for students who want to get ‘the general

idea' of a text. It is considered vitally important to train students in these skills (e.g. the ability to understand what is important even though the reader cannot understand everything) since they may well have to comprehend reading in just such a situation in real life.<sup>4</sup>

When using newspapers in class, the teacher may come up with several activities that are intended to help the students cope with such texts. Some activities may be fun and exciting, motivating the students to find out what the text is about.

A great way of exploiting newspaper articles is the jigsaw text. This type of activity maximizes the students' involvement and covers all the four skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking.

The teacher may start the lesson by writing on the blackboard the headline of the article the students are about to read. He/she asks them to guess what the article is about. The students come up with several ideas about what they think the article is going to discuss. Then the teacher divides the class into two groups. Each group receives half of the newspaper article. They are asked to read the text and record the main ideas. At the same time, each group has to think of questions to ask the other group about the information they are missing. The activity is fun and exciting since they do not always find out the answer they are looking for. Once they collect all the information they need from the other group, they are asked to present their articles. Their variants may be different or almost the same. In the end, the entire article is read and the students discuss if their first expectations were right and if they were close to writing the whole article. Further discussions may be led in the class related to the subject presented by the article. The unknown words are explained and used in other contexts.

This type of activity makes the students feel more comfortable about dealing with unknown words, it teaches them how to get the meaning from the context without worrying too much about their meaning, and, what is most important, it introduces them to a piece of that 'real' language they may be afraid of.

Pictures from magazines are also a great source of varied activities. Instead of using the article, the teacher may show the students an image and make them predict what the article is about or ask them to write their own article based on the picture they are presented.

The choice and use of pictures is very much a matter of personal taste, but we should bear in mind three qualities they need to possess if they are to engage students and be linguistically useful. In the first place they need to be appropriate not only for the purpose in hand but also for the classes they are being used for. If they are too childish students may not like them, and if they are culturally inappropriate, they can offend people.<sup>5</sup>

The lesson becomes dynamic, encouraging natural communication and student interaction in ESP classes. The teacher should act as a 'mediator', helping people when needed but not interfering all the time in their debates.

The use of newspapers in English classes helps students become confident in themselves and in their ability of functioning in an English-speaking environment since, these types of authentic texts are the one of the best tools to bring the real world in the classroom. Newspapers are a great way of enriching vocabulary, improve reading skills, gain cultural knowledge and update with the latest events in the world.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, Cambridge, 1991, p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition completely revised and updated, Longman, 2001 p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> Dana Ferris, John Hedqcock, *Teaching ESL Composition: Purpose, Process and Practice*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup> Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, Cambridge, 1991, p. 191.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition completely revised and updated, Longman, 2001 p. 136.

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## George G. Byron – Born for Opposition

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### ABSTRACT

Lord George Gordon is one of the most colourful figures in literature, personifying the Romantic Movement in his life as well as in his multi-faceted writings. The shortness of his life and his dramatic death enhance his stature and the term Byronic hero is as vital as a reference today as it was during his lifetime. No surprise, then, that both his writing and his life have inspired countless composers, from the time of his life to the present; only Shakespeare and Homer can claim such a lasting influence. It is that brooding, tortured magnificently and satiric works have also attracted composers.

The most striking thing about Byron's poetry is its strength and masculinity. His works were characterized by heroes who had a rebellious, non conformist streak. To some extent the hero of Byron's poems had a degree of autobiography. Trenchantly wilt he used unflowery colloquial language in many of his poems. He made little use of imagery and did not aspire to write of things beyond this worlds; the Victorian critic John Ruskin wrote in *Praeterita*, 1884 of him that "*he spoke only what he had seen and known; and spoke without exaggeration, without mystery, without enmity and without mercy*". His attitude towards writing poetry is summed up well in a letter to Thomas Moore on July 5<sup>th</sup> 1821: "*I can never get people to understand that poetry is the expression of excited passion, and that there is no such a thing as a life of passion any more than a continuous earthquake or a eternal fever. Besides, who would ever shave themselves in such a state?*"

**KEYWORDS:** *Byron, Romantic Movement, poetry*

The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is the age of Byron. In language which was intelligible and persuasive, under shapes and forms which were suggestive and inspiring, Byron delivered a message of liberation. It has been said that Byron could only represent himself under various disguises that *Childe Harold* and *The Corsair*, *Lara* and *Don Juan* are variants of a single personality who sins and suffers and yet is to be pitied for his suffering. He is praised for his "*sincerity and strength*", for his single mindedness, his directness, his audacity. His quarrels with mankind, his anger against fate were perfectly genuine. The literary works of

Byron were often characterized by characters that had a rebellious, non conformist streak. To some extent the hero of Byron's poems had a degree of autobiography.

George G. Byron said once that he had been "*born for opposition*". In spite of his tendency to dramatize himself, to strike an attitude he could be remarkably clear-sighted about himself and this phrase sums up the central aspect of his life and work. He rebels against the norms of society and of the literary culture of his age. For Byron, politics, morality and poetry are inextricably intertwined; by extension, there is a crucial connection between what he writes and how he lives. His recognition of this makes him that much more effective and compelling as a rebel. When he died at Missolonghi in 1824, before he had seen any action in the Greek War of Independence, for which he had gone to fight he quickly came to be viewed as a martyr for the cause, a central figure around whom the freedom fighters – and their European allies – could rally and eventually throw off the Ottoman yoke. It was an appropriate conclusion, to a relatively brief life, in which the poet repeatedly insisted on the superiority of actions to words. "*Born for opposition*" he died for it, too.

Byron's life was tumultuous, and he has become the figure for a certain type of Romantic writer. But we need to see how the living and writing come together. If Byron saw himself as in some way cursed from the beginning, he could find physical justification for the belief in the deformed foot with which he was born and psychological justification in a miserable childhood spent with his Calvinist mother in Aberdeen.

When he inherited his uncle's estate at Newstead Abbey near Nottingham, in 1798, he began to believe that as a member of Regency aristocracy, he could be "well avenged" for his cruelties of his birth. He would assert himself against the odds. He became obsessed with physical fitness and was to brag, when he swam the Hellespont in 1810, that it was the one achievement of his life. Freed from the shackles of poverty, he launched, on an amorous career that seemed, at every stage, to flout convention.

For Byron, the price of his wholesale sexual rebellion was to be exile: he left England for Italy, in April 1816, never to return. But he soon discovered that the amorous delights of Venice provided ample compensation. It was until he became the official companion of Countess Teresa Guiccioli that he appeared ready to settle down; and even there he broke all the rules, wrecking the Countess' marriage in the single minded pursuit of his passion. It would be wrong to see all this activity as a mere self-indulgence. Byron's emotional restlessness reflected two things: his commitment to personal freedom and his belief that things did not, could not remain static.

In 1810 he went on the Grand Tour of Europe, in the course of which he began the poem that was to bring him fame two years later: *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. It is very much an autobiographical poem with the hero's restless depravity and self-imposed exile, a mirror of Byron's own psychology. But it is also an astute and angry response to the state of Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Byron could not share in the generally held English reaction against all the original ideals of the French Revolution. For him, Napoleon was still a hero; the episode of the Elgin Marbles (still reverberating today) was an indication of England's perfidy. He recognized the importance of the Greek ideal as represented by the ruined, classical past and by stirring towards Greek Independence that were to find their fulfilment twelve years later. In writing ostensibly about himself, Byron was in fact producing a highly political and provocative poem, championing of freedom throughout Europe. Typically, his maiden speech in the House of Lords in 1812 was against the tyranny of a government that wanted the death penalty for frame breaking against what he saw as the "*palpable justice*" of the bill. But he soon saw that his rebelliousness would not suit him for Parliament: he did not belong in that system, either. His fight against political hypocrisy, however was to bring him into active involvement with the attempts of the secret revolutionary society of the Carbonari to free Italy from the Austrians in the 1820s and teen, of course, the final act – much more than a gesture on behalf of the Greeks.

All this time he was writing poetry of an extraordinary range and diversity. Even the works that won him popular acclaim the so-called Turkish Tales, did not exactly fit comfortably into a literary tradition. Byron was focusing all his attention and energies on characters with which he could sympathize, mysterious adventures with guilty secrets, set apart from society and driven by some all-consuming fury that elevates them into potentially tragic heroes. These lonely figures can be compared to the rebellious Prometheus, about whom Byron writes on several occasions. The image of the rebel god who brought fire to mankind, and was punished for it is an apt reflection of the rebel poet. After winning early fame as the most fashionable poet of Georgian England, Byron's reputation turned from celebrity to notoriety. Exiled by hostile public opinion amid mounting debts and the aftermath of a disastrous marriage, his best known work *Don Juan* was written during extensive travels through Europe and Near East. By bringing his anger and hatred to the lyric, Byron reveals the dark side of the "*true voice of feeling*" and the "*spontaneous overflow*" of emotion that characterize Romanticism.

Vindication (that is revenge and its justification) remains central to Byron's poetry. By fusing anger and patience, or outburst and deferral, Byron creates a seductive mode of intense expression that opens up a space for readers' sympathy, even as it alienates them.

The Romantic Revolt in England coincided with similar movement in France about the same time, the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Byron represents the universal reaction of the 19<sup>th</sup> century against the ideas of the eighteenth. It is the influence of the French Romanticism that had its repercussions in England, too. Walter Scott began the reaction but Byron's protest was even more comprehensive. He rejected the whole manner of thought of his predecessors.

Stendhal in *Oeuvres complètes* (Memories of Lord Byron) in 1829 said:

lord Byron's mockery is bitter in Childe Harold; it is anger of youth; his mockery is only ironic in Beppo and in Don Juan. Lord Byron knew how to paint only one man: himself. Moreover, he was and he knew himself to be a nobleman; he wanted to

appear as such to the world, and yet he was a great poet and wished to be admired: two incompatible desires and an immense source of unhappiness for him.

In Childe Harold Pilgrimage the poet, a man sick of dissipation and hating his fellows, seeks by solitary travel to find some relief from his usual mode of living. A mysterious, deliberative provocative blend of confession and accusation defines the Byronic speech. Perhaps, the most famous sample of this occurs in Canto IV of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage during the scene in the Roman Coliseum, where Byron addresses "*Time, the avenger!*" (CHP 2; 167 Canto 4). He first asserts his patience, even as he hopes for revenge:

If calmly I have.....  
Reserved my pride against the hate  
Which shall not overwhelm me, let me not have worn  
This iron in my soul in vain-shall they not mourn?

The angry Byron frequently lets his mask slip, as he plays the role of *poète maudit* with strong overtones of vindictiveness. To this his audience typically responds not with sympathy, but with a disturbed fascination; by means of its angry moods the Byronic personality compels attention.

Combining the satirist's enthusiasm for punishment, the dramatist's sense of anger as spectacle, and the lyricist's confessional mode and matter, Byron creates poetry to this stage of revenge. Particularly when he broods upon personal injuries and betrayals the result is a strangely confessional and performative invective, filled with curses.

In fact, the construction of the Byronic subject typically depends upon a curse pronounced by or upon him, which enacts his alienation from the rest of humanity; one thinks of Childe Harold, of Manfred, of the Giaour, of Cain, etc.

In choosing the curse as vehicle, Byron situates his angry between the precincts of sincerity and performance, since cursing performs its meaning according to the authentic fervour of the curser. In other words, a curse is a dramatic attempt to compel the sympathy of the world, and it depends for its power on both sincerity and spectacle, or private emotion and public rage.

If, as Goethe said he was the "*greatest talent*" of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he associated that talent with scandal and reproach. But he was born with certain noble qualities which did not fail him at his worst. He was courageous, he was kind and he loved truth rather than lies. He was a worker and a fighter. He hated tyranny and he was prepared to sacrifice money and ease and fight in the cause of popular freedom.

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# Deixis for Social Purposes

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## ABSTRACT

This paper deals with a modern theory of deixis for social purposes. We have tried to separate the two main forms of deixis: pronoun deixis and deixis for social purposes. Forms of address, affixes, clitics, and particles have been defined as being very important in the analysis of deixis for social purposes.

**KEYWORDS:** *social deictic terms, relational social deixis*

## General aspects on ‘deixis’

Following the Anglo-American conception of linguistics and the philosophy of language, we can define pragmatics as “*systematic study of meaning by virtue of, or dependent on, language use*” (Huang, 2001). The main topics include implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and deixis. The notion ‘deixis’ comes from the Greek word meaning *to point out* or *to show*. ‘Deixis’ deals with the relationship between the structure of a language and the context in which the language is used. It is a universal linguistic phenomenon due to the fact that all human languages contain deictic terms. If a language has not deictics, it cannot serve the communication needs of its users as efficiently and effectively as a language which does have them. The following example illustrates what would happen in the absence of deictic information:

(found in a bottle in the sea)

*Meet me two days from now with a board about this long.*

Without relevant deictic information, one would not know who to meet, where or when to meet the writer of the message, or how long a board to bring. This example is adapted from Fillmore (1997: 60).

‘Deixis’, in a broad sense, is potentially a context-dependent linguistic expression, typically anchoring in the perspective of the speaker. Fillmore (1982: 35) defined ‘deixis’ as “*the name given to uses of items and categories of lexicon and grammar that are controlled by certain details of the interactional situation in which the utterances are produced*”. ‘Deixis’ includes extended use of linguistic categories such as spatio-temporal locating adverbials, demonstratives, tense, and social deictic terms.

The concept of ‘deixis’ derives mainly from the work of Bühler who wrote (1934/1963: 94): “*what ‘here’ and ‘there’ is changes with the position of the*

*speaker, just as the 'I' and 'thou' jumps from one interlocutor to the other with the exchange of the roles of sender and receiver".* The concept has been explored and developed by writers such as Brown 1995, 1998, Fillmore 1977, 1981, 1982, 1998, Levinson 1983, 1992, 1996 and Lyons 1977, 1995. Expressions like *I, we, me, you, this, that, to my left, behind me, here, over there, now, yesterday, next year* are all indexed to the speaker in speaking; that is they take their current interpretation from the speaker at the moment of speaking. It is necessary for a listener to identify the speaker, and the time and place of utterance, in order to interpret fully what was said, and what was meant by what was said.

### **Social Deixis – Overview**

In this paper we provide a descriptive analysis of deixis for social purposes, or simply, social deixis. Data will be drawn from English and Romanian languages, and not only, because they are genetically unrelated and structurally distinct languages, to show the diversity and richness of the social deictic systems in both languages.

Although each deictic system of English and Romanian is different in linguistic form and function, there may be a pragmatically significant parallelism on the correlation between the choice of deictic expressions and the discourse segment. Social deixis or deixis for social purposes represents the encoding of social distinctions that are relative to participant role, particularly aspects of the social relationship holding between addresser (speaker) and addressee(s), or speaker and some referent. Therefore social deixis is concerned with "*the codification of the social status of the speaker, the addressee, or a third person or entity referred to, as well as the social relationships holding between them*". (Levinson, 1983: 63; Anderson and Keenan 1985; Fillmore 1997; Manning, 2001). In Fillmore's view social deixis deals with "*that aspects of sentences which reflect or establish or are determined by certain realities of the social situation in which the speech acts occurs*". He goes further to include in social deixis much of the speech act theory, Levinson disagrees, he believes that the term "social deixis" should be restricted to "those aspects of language structure that encode the social identities of participants, or the relationship between them, or one of them and persons and entities referred to".

By *social deixis* we mean that aspect of language which reflects certain realities of the social situation in which the speech act occurs. Social deixis commonly encodes information concerning the relative relationship between participants in linguistic communication. More specifically, social deixis may reflect whether the participants are of the same or different social status, sex or age group, whether they are kin related in designated ways, or whether they are personally intimate, etc. Such information may be found in the choice of personal pronouns, in the selection of different forms of names, titles and kinship terms of address, or in the use of particle words indicating respect or reverence (i.e. honorifics or politeness markers). Any misselection or misuse of these social deictic expressions will often be regarded as inappropriate or even impolite and

rude. And, of course, there are social and cultural differences in this aspect between different languages. Social deixis also encodes information about the social setting of the speech event, particularly the degrees of formality of the occasion in linguistic communication. Such information may be reflected in the selection of the speech levels, formal or informal, which are established and distinguished at various levels of linguistic structure, either lexical or syntactical. In addition, expressions of some social acts, such as greeting, insult, gratitude, etc. should be taken as social deictics, because they reflect some social realities, and their contents and contexts of use are culturally specific. However, since these usages can be dealt with in the study of speech acts, we will follow the view that social deixis can be systematically restricted to those aspects of language structure that encode the social identities of participants, or the social relationship between them.

The information encoded in social deixis may include social class, kin relationship, age, sex, profession, and ethnic group. Defined in this way, social deixis is particularly closely associated with person deixis. For this reason there are linguists who argue that person deixis cannot be studied independently of social deixis. (e.g., Marmaridou, 2000: 79, 81). Muhlhausler and Harre pointed out the fact that the presence of social deixis implies that of person deixis, but not vice versa. This aspect can be sustained by the fact that in the historical reduction of pronoun systems, those pronouns that mark social deixis tend to be lost. In other words the V form is typically replaced by the T forms. Even in Romanian language there is a tendency to replace the existing forms: ‘dumneata’ or ‘dumneavoastră’ with the personal pronoun: ‘tu’ (in English ‘you’), following the English pattern.

Brown and Levinson identified two main types of socially deictic information: *absolute and relational*. The *absolute information* in social deixis is illustrated by forms that are reserved for authorized speakers or authorized recipients. For the first situation it is representative the Chinese form “Zhen” that was used by the emperor to refer to himself. Fillmore (1997) discovered that the same form was met in Japan. For the latter situation of those forms that are reserved for authorized recipients, restrictions are placed on most titles of addresses such as Your Majesty, Mr. President, and Professor in English (Levinson, 1983: 91), in Romanian language we meet restrictions at the following forms: ‘Înălțimea Voastră’, ‘Preasfinția Voastră’ or ‘Dl. Președinte’.

*Relational social deixis* has four axes that can be represented between *speaker and referent* (for example referent honorifics), *speaker and addressee* (addressee honorifics), *speaker and bystanders* (bystander honorifics), and *speaker and setting* (e.g., level of formality). *Referent honorifics* are forms used by the speaker to show respect towards the referent; *addressee honorifics* are forms that are used by the speaker to show deference towards the addressee. *Referent honorifics* are more common than *addressee honorifics*. Furthermore, *bystander honorifics* are forms that are used by the speaker to show respect to a bystander, including participants in the role of audience and non-participant overhearers. In the end, the *speaker-setting axis* deals with the relation between the speaker (and

perhaps other participants) and the speech setting or event. Here we can include the formal or informal style that is a characteristic of perhaps all languages to a certain extent. Many languages in the world have replacement vocabularies. Brown and Levinson presented in English, on formal occasions, one may use 'dine' to replace 'eat', 'residence' to replace 'home', and 'bestow' to replace 'give'. We also meet in Romanian language a replacement vocabulary. We say 'a cina' to replace 'a mânca' or 'reședință'/'proprietate' to replace 'casă'.

Since there are a lot of personal pronouns and names, which some linguists attribute to social deixis, they are included in the social deictic words and expressions which this article is devoted to. The typical encoding for social deixis is represented by morphological expressions of honorificity (affixes, lexical items, clitics, or particles), pronouns, vocatives, summons forms, titles of addresses and the choice of vocabulary.

Personal and polite pronouns are used to mark respect and to mark kinship relations.

### **Marking of respect**

It is known that a number of European languages have the familiar 'tu'/'vous' type of distinction in the second-person singular pronoun. Brown and Gilman called this distinction T/V distinction. In a T/V system, there are two second person singular pronouns: one familiar or T, and the other polite or V. There are some languages which do not show the T/V distinction in their personal pronoun systems (e.g., English language with 'you'). There are languages which show two or more degrees in the T/V distinction (e.g., Romanian language has three degrees: 'tu' = familiar, colloquial; 'dumneata' ('mata') = medium; 'dumneavoastră' = very polite). Therefore for Romanian language the V form comes from status terms. The V form is commonly derived from the second-person plural pronoun (e.g., French language 'vous').

### **Marking of kinship relations**

There are languages that have three forms in the first person dual (e.g., aboriginal language). Other socially deictic information such as age and sex can also be indicated through the use of personal pronouns (Oceanic languages). In some languages personal pronouns differ with the sex of the addressee.

### **Forms of address**

Forms of address represent another common way of realizing social deixis. They include different types of name such as first name (e.g., 'John', 'George'), last name (e.g., 'Bennet', 'Doolittle'), or combination of first and last names (e.g., 'John Bennet'), kinship terms (e.g., 'uncle', 'aunt'), titles borrowed from names of occupations (e.g., 'doctor', 'engineer'), ranks in certain social/professional groups (e.g., 'colonel') and other sources (e.g., 'madam'), and a combination of titles and names (e.g., 'Professor Sir George Bennet'). Terms of address can be used to perform a variety of socially deictic functions. First of all, in English, Romanian,

and in many other languages, the use of address forms which include a title and the last name but not the first name, such as 'Mr. Bennet', 'Dr. Martin', and 'Lady Doolittle', marks the higher status of the addressee and signals the distance between the speaker and the addressee.

Second, many languages in the world utilize generalized forms of address such as 'Sir' in English. Thirdly, certain modes of address are used in many languages to claim in-group solidarity like: 'pal' in English or 'frate'/'prietene' in Romanian language.

But addressing forms such as: 'cucoane'/'cucoană', 'jupâne'/'jupâneasă' indicates that the addresser has an inferior social position. There are many specialized addressing terms for different social reports (relatives or not): from young to old: 'nene', 'nea', 'neică', 'leliță', 'dadă', 'mătușă' etc. In English the forms of address are varied: for clerical titles we meet the following forms of addresses: pope – 'your Holiness'; cardinal – 'your Excellency'; archbishop – 'your grace'; bishop – 'your eminence'; priest – 'father'; king/queen – 'your majesty'; prince/princess – 'your highness'; 'your grace', 'your honor'. We also have these forms into Romanian language, but poorly represented: 'majestatea voastră', 'înălțimea voastră', 'sfinția voastră' and so on.

### **Affixes, clitics, and particles**

Socially deictic information can also be encoded by affixes, clitics, and particles. These forms are attached to verbs to indicate such relations such as intimacy, neutral or formal, respect between the speaker and the addressee. In English and Romanian these aspects do not exist.

### **Choice of vocabulary**

We can reflect the socially deictic information in the choice of the vocabulary. Languages have a whole series of "deferential" and "humiliative" pairs of lexical items in their vocabularies. Brown and Levinson said that the use of honorific/dishonorific terms has two-sided nature: the lowering of the self on the one hand, and the raising of the addressee on the other. (1987: 185)

In **conclusion** there is an interrelationship between the person and social deixis. The person deixis of vocative expressions can also be shown to be socially constructed and hence dependent on social deixis. Considering the following utterance taken from Louise Cummings: hey, you stupid ass, put the vase down! The vocative 'you stupid ass' encodes a number of features of the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. It is obvious that the speaker in this case has some authority over the addressee – the speaker's assault on the addressee's intelligence suggests that the speaker possesses power that the addressee lacks. But the use of an animal name indicates a lack of social distance between speaker and addressee. The speaker could have chosen the word 'fool' to show a social relationship of greater distance.

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## **Predarea limbii române ca limbă străină: experiențe, orientări, perspective**

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**RÉSUMÉ :** *L'enseignement du roumain langue étrangère : expériences, orientations, perspectives*

Dans le contexte des nouvelles politiques de l'Union Européenne, l'enseignement – l'apprentissage du roumain langue étrangère est un domaine de grand intérêt, qui s'impose de plus en plus sur le marché du travail.

**MOTS-CLÉS :** *roumain langue étrangère, modules didactiques*

Pe plan internațional, româna este considerată, alături de celelalte limbi romanice „majore”, una dintre cele cinci limbi oficiale ale Uniunii Latine – organizație internațională ce cuprinde 36 de state având ca limbă oficială sau națională o limbă romanică. Eficientizarea comunicării în Uniunea Europeană, respectarea drepturilor lingvistice ale cetățenilor reprezintă un punct important pe agenda europeană (un exemplu este organizarea de către *Uniunea Europeană a Anului European al Limbilor* în 2008).

Compatibilizarea sistemelor de învățământ între țările membre ale Uniunii Europene, armonizarea sistemelor și programelor de învățământ (conform *Cadrului European de Referință*) reclamă aducerea predării limbii române ca limbă străină la standarde europene. Acesta nu e doar un fapt de sincronizare științifică, dar și o necesitate de ordin practic, solicitată și de forurile internaționale.

Predarea-învățarea limbii române ca limbă străină este în prezent un domeniu de interes, cerut pe piața muncii din ce în ce mai mult, în contextul noilor politici ale Uniunii Europene.

Limba română e învățată nu numai de către studenții veniți la studii în România, dar și de către specialiști în diverse domenii umaniste (istorici, filologi, sociologi, psihologi), oameni de afaceri, clerici, diplomați, funcționari guvernamentali, cadre militare, de poliție etc.

O activitate desfășurată cu profesionalism poate contribui la o imagine pozitivă a învățământului românesc în lume și, atrăgând mai multe categorii de cursanți, poate aduce beneficii materiale României și implicit, departamentului nostru.



Din păcate, după 1989, predarea limbii române la studenții străini a fost neglijată, scăzând chiar sub standardele de dinainte de 1989: a scăzut numărul de studenți, cadrele didactice care predau la această secție au scăzut considerabil.

Cadrele didactice tinere evită orele la studenții străini deoarece le percep, în mod fals, ca o activitate puțin interesantă, lipsită de oportunitățile unei cariere semnificative. Astfel, activitatea de predare a limbii române la studenții străini riscă să dispară.

De aceea e necesară formarea de noi profesii din departamentul nostru, includerea în curriculum-ul Facultății de Litere a unor cursuri opționale de lingvistică aplicată, a unor modele de practică pedagogică la studenții străini, organizarea unor cursuri de informare și perfecționare ținute de specialiști români, antrenarea studenților de la Facultatea de Litere în teme de cercetare în acest domeniu (lucrări de diplomă, de masterat, de doctorat). În felul acesta s-ar face schimbul de generații în rândul profesorilor care predau limba română la studenții străini, corectând percepția actuală deformată, așezând această activitate pe baze noi, în conformitate cu standardele internaționale în domeniu.

Cursurile de predare a limbii române se desfășoară în spații parțial lipsite de dotările corespunzătoare (televizor pentru vizionarea de materiale, mai multe copiatoare pentru multiplicarea de materiale, mai multe calculatoare etc.). În ciuda acestor neajunsuri, departamentul nostru are o activitate dinamică foarte apreciată de către Minister, o activitate în schimburi culturale internaționale (burse Erasmus, lectorate de limba română în străinătate).

#### **A. Experiențe, realizări**

În cadrul departamentului nostru au fost publicate:

- manuale de limba română pentru străini
- caiete de exerciții
- articole teoretice privind predarea limbii române
- culegeri de comunicări științifice

S-au înregistrat și multe participări la manifestări naționale și internaționale.

#### **B. Orientări**

Pentru revitalizarea unui domeniu marginalizat, cum e predarea limbii române la străini, se impun anumite obiective:

1. Elaborarea unei perspective de ansamblu asupra dezvoltării, cercetării și practicii în domeniul învățării limbii române la subiecții străini, comparativ cu alte țări, în acord cu exigențele internaționale în domeniu.

2. Crearea unui site internet – *Limba română ca limbă străină*

3. Amenajarea unui laborator lingvistic, cu conectare pe Internet, dotat cu aparatură necesară atât pentru utilizarea unor materiale audio-video de specialitate, pentru desfășurarea activităților curente ale departamentului pentru studenții străini, cât și pentru desfășurarea unor activități de cercetare în domeniul comunicării în context multicultural, și a comunicării interculturale.

4. Dotarea spațiilor cu tehnologia necesară desfășurării activităților didactice la standardele internaționale, modernizarea metodelor de predare-învățare a limbii române în acord cu metodologia internațională.

5. Crearea unei biblioteci a departamentului care să permită cadrelor didactice și studenților accesul la informație și un sistem personalizat de instruire.

6. Perfecționarea sistemului de predare a limbii române cu scop specific, crearea unor module de învățare rapidă a limbii române prin cursuri intensive, destinate unor studenți din afara sistemului de învățământ universitar (diplomați, oameni de afaceri, funcționari etc.).

7. Dezvoltarea unor relații de colaborare cu instituțiile românești de cultură din străinătate, cu Ministerul Afacerilor Externe, cu atașatii culturali ai ambasadelor României în străinătate, pentru preluarea unor solicitări adresate acestora de către cetățeni interesați să învețe limba română prin cursuri anuale/semestriale etc.

### **C. Perspective**

O metodă de predare-învățare a limbii române ca limbă străină bazată pe principiul *modulării* presupune înlocuirea manualului unic printr-un set de materiale didactice reprezentând module distincte, dar în același timp, legate între ele, pe baza cărora procesul de predare-învățare a limbii române să poată fi, în orice moment, adaptat în funcție de problemele specifice nu numai ale fiecărei grupe de subiecți, ci și ale fiecărui individ în parte.

a. Un modul va fi o culegere de *Exemple de pronunțare*, recurgându-se la înregistrări pe casete, CD-uri etc.

b. Un alt modul propus este un *Manual de conversație* legat de viața curentă. Are ca scop investirea în situații de comunicare a structurilor gramaticale în ordinea în care sunt predate și asimilate. Situațiile de comunicare vor fi legate de viața curentă: *masa, hotelul, la spectacol, orașul, o plimbare* etc. Textele vor fi sub formă de *dialog*, urmate de conversație dirijată de către profesor, precum și de cuvinte, sintagme, expresii, unități frazeologice grupate în funcție de câmpurile semantice și de familii lexicale care aparțin temei propuse. De asemenea, trebuie

incluse construcții și formule grupate potrivit criteriului actelor de vorbire, prin care să se exprime necesitatea, certitudinea, speranța, permisiunea

Acest modul include și câteva texte din literatura română, care oferă posibilitatea de deschidere a orizontului lingvistic. Subiectul vizat de aceste texte este, evident, un individ cu capacități cel puțin de nivel mediu și bine motivat pentru studiul românei. Posibilitățile de explorare a textelor literare, la toate nivelurile de organizare a expresiei lingvistice, sunt practic nelimitate.

c. Alt modul pornește de la cerințe, unanim acceptată astăzi, ca limbile străine să fie învățate în contextul lor cultural. *Modulul de cultură și civilizație românească* este un instrument de informare, de introducere a studenților în domeniile menționate și, pe de altă parte, un veritabil suport pentru practicarea structurilor gramaticale și conversaționale ale românei. Trebuie să fie în întregime sau parțial dialogat, să conțină informații precise și autentice din punct de vedere științific, dar, pe de altă parte aceste informații trebuie să constituie obiectul unei puneri în scenă. Acest dialog didactic de fapt este comunicare, dar și spectacol al comunicării.

d. Module consacrate limbajului lumii afacerilor, marketingului, negocierilor, publicității, poeziei, teatrului, agriculturii.

e. Module privind Uniunea Europeană și NATO.

În locul textelor cu limbajul limbii de lemn (pentru prezentarea reliefului României) de exemplul peisajul românesc este de o „gingășie infinită”, lanurile de grâu sunt „semnul bogăției neasemuite a câmpiilor noastre” putem propune un dialog de genul:

- Unde este situată România?
- În partea de sud-est a Europei, în peninsula Balcanică.
- Cum putem identifica România pe hartă?
- Avem mai multe puncte de reper: Marea Neagră și Cursul Dunării.
- Lungimea Dunării pe teritoriul românesc e de 1075 km.
- Da. Observ că Dunărea se varsă în Marea Neagră prin trei brațe.
- Aici este și Delta Dunării cu o suprafață de 4340 de km.

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# Edgar Allan Poe and his Creative Imagination

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## ABSTRACT

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) was a remarkable American writer with a wide intellectual range. His fields of interest varied a lot and he had knowledge of French, Greek, Spanish, Italian and German. Although he had a tumultuous personal life scattered with misfortune, fate poured genius into this mystic, odd writer.

Poe is chiefly known in our days as a teller of tales, even if he created a half-dozen of very popular poems. His tales, in particular, have had an impact on three major forms: fantasy and science fiction, horror stories and detective fiction. 'A Decided Loss', 'Metzengerstein' and 'Ms found in a Bottle' are the titles of his early tales; while works like 'Ligeia', 'The Fall of the House of Usher' and probably one of Poe's greatest short tales 'The masque of the Red Death' show the writer's attraction for fantasy, terror and even mystery.

**KEYWORDS:** *imagination, horror, fiction.*

## Imagination versus reason

Though Edgar Allan Poe was always unconsciously guided by the secret obsessions of his imagination, he did not follow his inspiration blindly. Another faculty constantly interfered. Even in his fantastic tales he never lets himself go. There is method in his madness. Madness, moreover, is not incompatible with reason, as he himself observed on several occasions, notably in *The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether*. It sometimes consists in stubbornly making right deductions from wrong premises. Poe, at any rate, knew how to impose a strict discipline on his nightmares. The data of his morbid and undoubtedly disordered imagination are always controlled by a severe method and presented in the form of a clear and logical train of events bound together by connections between causes and effects. In other words, his reason always rules his creative activity. He wanted it so.

According to him, inspiration and reason are compatible; they even combine harmoniously with each other. In his fantastic tales he has succeeded in balancing the two opposite faculties, but so great was the power of reason over him that he composed under its exclusive guidance a series of tales which he rather pedantically called "*tales of ratiocination*": *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The*

*Purloined Letter, The Gold Bug, The Mystery of Marie Rogêt, and Maelzel's Chess-Player.*

### **Edgar Allan Poe defines artistic inspiration**

Poe reached mastery of his art by combining his visionary side and his analytical intelligence. In *Magazine-Writing – Peter Snook*, he lays it down as a principle that “*There is no greater mistake than the supposition that a true originality is a mere matter of impulse or inspiration. To originate is carefully, patiently, and understandingly to combine.*” (1994: 43)

Thus, for Poe – whether he wrote in prose or verse – inspiration was necessary, but not sufficient. He reached at a very early date a voluntarist conception of literary creation which he set forth in several critical essays, *The Philosophy of Composition*, *The Poetic Principle*, *Fancy and Imagination*, and in reviews of Longfellow's poems, Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge*, and above all Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*. All these essays overlap and repeat each other, which proves Poe's belief in the importance of his thesis. And that he should have felt it necessary to write all this dogmatic criticism shows how deeply convinced he was of the power of reason in this field.

To begin with, Poe asserts that inspiration is a legend and a myth and those who claim to have written under its influence are only imposters. According to him *poeta fit, non nascitur*: you are not born a man of genius, you become one, provided you are sufficiently diligent – and intelligent, for everything depends on the will and a judicious application of the intellect. To prove the truth of this paradox, Poe gives as an example his one work that had met with the greatest and most immediate success: *The Raven*. He takes it to pieces in *The Philosophy of Composition* in order to show “*that no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition – that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem*”. (1994: 120)

Yet we cannot take Poe's word for it and blindly accept his thesis that a poet is not an inspired artist but a clever technician knowing how to obtain a deliberately chosen effect by appropriate means. Baudelaire, for all his sympathy with such an aesthetics, could not help voicing some doubts when he commented on *The Philosophy of Composition*: “*Did he make himself, by a strange and amusing vanity, much less inspired than he naturally was?... I should be rather inclined to think so.*” (1941: 45) Indeed, how can we put stock in Poe's so-called confession and believe that *The Raven* was the work of Poe – Dupin alone without the help of the other Poe, the inspired neurotic? It is impossible in particular to believe that his famous refrain was not given to him after long gropings (he had already used “*no more*” in the *Sonnet – To Zante* and *The Haunted Palace*).

Besides, we do know that *The Raven* was not the result of a few hours' lucid work. Its composition was spread over several months. He let it grow organically as it were (conformably with the precepts of romantic aesthetics), and this at a time

when Virginia was dying and he was reduced to nearly complete destitution. It is not surprising under such circumstances that *The Raven* should have spontaneously expressed his agony, his haunting fear of the future, his terror at the thought that his beloved wife was soon to disappear forever. It is not a feat of virtuosity, but a cry of pain – even if its form has been cleverly wrought. Poe's account of the genesis of this poem is nothing but an a posteriori analysis.

In fact, *The Raven* was to a large extent the result of inspiration, imposed on the poet before being perfected by the craftsman. In a way he confessed this semi-mystification in one of his *Marginalia*: "*It is the curse of a certain order of mind, that it can never rest satisfied with the consciousness of its ability to do a thing. Not even is it content with doing it. It must both know and show how it is done.*" (1926: 67)

Poe, however, did not underestimate the importance of intuition, as this note shows:

That the imagination has not been unjustly ranked as supreme among the mental faculties, appears from the intense consciousness, on the part of the imaginative man, that the faculty in question brings his soul often to a glimpse of things supernal and eternal – to the very verge of the great secrets... Some of the most profound knowledge – perhaps all very profound knowledge – has originated from a highly stimulated imagination. Great intellects *guess* well. (1926: 73)

But for all the intense awareness of what he owed to inspiration, Poe nevertheless preferred to lay emphasis on analysis and conscious arrangement, all those aspects of the creative activity which can be clearly defined and, to some extent, codified, with regard to the tale as well as poetry.

Reading Poe's tales we sense that the writer's aim was not exclusively truth, but also what he called "*passion, or the excitement of the heart, which although attainable, to a certain extent, in poetry [is] far more readily attainable in prose.*" (1926: 68)

Hence his emphasis on the "*tone*" of the tale aside from the contents, on the impression to be produced rather than on the purely narrative element. Besides, he thought that a tale must not be a mere narrative, for then its "*hardness*" and "*nakedness*" would "*repel the artistical eye*".

"*Two things are invariably required*", he claimed:

first some amount of complexity, or more properly adaptation; and secondly, some amount of suggestiveness – some undercurrent, however indefinite, of meaning... It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that *richness* (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term)... (2002: 86)

In other words, the reader must feel beyond the letter of the narrative the presence of a spirit which confers on all the details and incidents a precious but inexpressible meaning. Here Poe joins hands with Coleridge and the German romantics. He wants his tales to bring the reader into contact with what he called

"*the Ideal*" or, as he also said, borrowing the word from Augustus Wilhelm Schlegel, he wants them to be "*mystic*".

Poe's tales were not ends in themselves, but a means to make us feel the mystery and horror of our condition. We must go beyond the surface of his narratives. Most of his texts are only pretexts which he uses to take us beyond appearances. His purpose was not simply to build perfect plots, but to make us share his dreams, and through the rational to reveal the irrational to us.

All these aesthetic principles often seem to verge on transcendentalism. But Poe, who felt only contempt for Emerson and his disciples, would have indignantly rejected such an insinuation. He equated transcendentalism with the surrender of intelligence and the failure of reason. For his part he was ready to accept the existence of a mystery at the center of the universe, but his intelligence, as *Eureka* shows, strove to pierce it and eventually reached, instead of Emerson's vague pantheism, what Allen Tate has called a form of panlogism. Poe's rationalism, like the hero of *A Descent into the Maelström*, resisted the fascination of the abyss and refused to be engulfed by a hazy spiritualism.

However, though Poe tried hard to maintain equipoise on all levels between his reason and his imagination, it is obvious that Roderick Usher repeatedly got the better of the Dupin within him. He was closer at heart to his haunted criminals than to his impassive detective. In the last analysis, therefore, for all their rational construction and cleverly organized narrative contents, his tales are lyric outbursts in disguise, in which the "*I*" of the speaker corresponds less to fictitious characters than to Poe himself, had he let himself go. And this is one of the reasons why he never succeeded in creating any lifelike characters in his tales (his personal experience of life was much too limited). He gave as an excuse that the extreme brevity of the tale does not lend itself to the study in depth of characters, but the true reason was that he was himself the hero of all his tales.

If Roderick Usher, Egaeus, Metzengerstein, and even Dupin are all alike, if Ligeia, Morella, and Eleonora look like sisters, it is because, whether he consciously wanted to or not, he always takes the story of his own life as a starting point, a rather empty story on the whole since he had mostly lived in his dreams, imprisoned by his neuroses and obsessed by the image of his dead mother.

What he makes the narrator of "Berenice" confess is probably partly true of himself:

The realities of the world affected me as visions, and as visions only, while the wild ideas of the land of dreams became, in turn, – not the material of my every-day existence – but in very deed that existence utterly and solely in itself. (1994: 95)

This further explains why he rebelled against the moralizing literature of the America of his time, why he protested against what he called "*didacticism*". His only care and preoccupation was to take himself, that is to say his dreams, as the subject of his tales under the pretext of entertaining the reader.

In conclusion, Edgar Allan Poe is both a writer and a philosopher; his works are proving once more the power that comes from combining both the inspiration



of a genius with his real life. There is no doubt that most of his masterpieces are a result of his tragic life. His artistic imagination is the final ingredient which gave Poe's stories meaning and harmony.

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# The Narcissistic Modern Man in Conrad's Fiction

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## ABSTRACT

For the Polish-born English writer, Joseph Conrad, the symbolic manner is not simply a narrative aid, but the organizing principle of his novels. In the symbolic context, Conrad's work offers significant interpretative potential even in mythological and classical terms. In his modernist disposition for mythological identification, Conrad, despite critical parallelisms, resorted neither to Oedipus, nor to Sisyphus to define the condition of the modern man – the enigma of self. This is the case of the seamen onboard the *Narcissus*, James Wait, Lord Jim and Kurtz.

The paper focuses on three of Conrad's works, namely the novels *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, *Lord Jim* and the novella *Heart of Darkness* and it intends to follow the logic of the myth of the Narcissus in order to understand not only how the mythical framework applies to the characters' fates, but also to detect Conrad's attitude towards it.

**KEYWORDS:** *Narcissus, mythological identification, ambivalence, self*

Conrad's stories are remarkable for the ambiguous quality of their symbolic expression. It appears that Conradian ambiguity is intentional and aims primarily at demonstrating that dualism is inherently human. The symbolic expression of his fiction relies extensively on the mythological. Despite numerous critical parallelisms, Conrad's modern attempt for mythological identification is defined neither by the story of Oedipus, nor by that of Sisyphus, but by the story of Narcissus. Although duplicity is the principal structural pattern of his prose, Conrad appears fully convinced of one thing – the egoism of the modern world, which, in his prose comes to be embodied by the myth of the Narcissus.

Marked by awkwardness with women, Conradian heroes constantly become prey of their latent egoism and fall into the narcissist pool. This is the case of the seamen onboard the *Narcissus*, James Wait, Lord Jim, Marlow and Kurtz. In his lifetime, Conrad did sail on a *Narcissus*, whereas in his fiction he decided to give it a symbolic dimension. The paper focuses on three of Conrad's works, namely *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness* and attempts to analyze the narcissistic pattern lying underneath each of them.

In *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* the male community of the *Narcissus* orbits the only 'woman' that brings about their communion and witnesses their pain. The woman referred to is the ship herself, the *Narcissus*. Brian W. Shaffer<sup>1</sup> (1999: 51)

draws the reader's attention so as not "to ignore the dual focus of the tale announced in its title: the ailing James Wait, who is black, and who, in Conrad's words, is *"the centre of the ship's collective psychology and the pivot of the action"* (Conrad 1979e, 168); and the merchant ship *Narcissus*, which is white and is named for a white flower." Furthermore, Robert Hampson (1992: 105) suggests that *"in both title and narrative, the whiteness of the Narcissus is poised against the black sailor, Wait."* The novel abounds in black and white contrasts, which apart from the literal dichotomy, also serve to subvert their traditional associations.

The ship dispossesses herself of her name in order to lend it to the crew and convert them all into narcissists. As Brian W. Shaffer (1999: 52) puts it, *"If Wait's blackness connotes his obscurity, the ship's name denotes his (and the rest of the crew's) narcissism."* This maritime microcosm owes its existence to the ship, thus, her absence consequently implies its inexistence. In crucial moments of the novel the ship assumes the role of the refused woman, Echo. The logic of the myth helps us understand the fate of the crew.

Wait is the black mirror that reflects all the selfish selves of the crew. As Jacques Berthoud puts it, *"the title of the novel suggests"* that *"Wait converts sailors into narcissists"* (1984: xxii). Their doubt about his imminent death inspires their fear of self's consummation and keeps their sentimental expectations alive. Dieter Paul Polloczek (1999: 227) refers to David Manicom to point out how Wait *"creates fictions about his illness"*:

Not only do these fictions allow him to perform death as a way of masking his will to life. They also make him narcissistically embrace and get caught up in them.

His argument continues by emphasizing the effect of Wait's *"narcissistic narrative"* (Polloczek, 1999: 227) upon the crew:

Wait is not the only fiction-maker in Conrad's novella who ends up caught in the confinement of his own fictions. The legal ramifications of Wait's incarceration — as I mentioned, he is eventually found "shamming sick" (NN, p. 88), allegedly in order to escape his duties — make him both a case of fraud with regard to nostalgic solidarity and a case of sympathy with regard to his occasionally ignored real sickness. Both the superiors and the crew turn Wait into a symptom of the crisis regarding solidarity each thinks pervades the 'Narcissus.' Both kinds of narration construct Wait's narcissism as a curse somehow harking back at the various cases of fraud and sympathy made of him.

Unlike the other members of the crew who satisfy Wait's whims in order to feed their own narcissism, Singleton remains stoical and indifferent to Wait's fate. Donald Torchiana<sup>2</sup> (1979: 277) defines Singleton as *"the opposite of the Narcissism to which the crew will fall prey"*.

The descriptions applying to Singleton point to him as a sage. He is *"the oldest able seaman in the ship"* (NN 2), the *"venerable Singleton"* (NN 32) who lives *"untouched by human emotions"* (NN 25). Despite his illiteracy, Singleton is

equipped with forecasting wisdom. As if to have read the myth, Singleton foresees Wait's death at the sight of land and this deprives the crew of their certainties. Wait's fear of mortality pending in the connotation of his name<sup>3</sup> is matched by his fellow sailors' fear but counterpointed by Singleton's imperturbability. Although the crew are well-aware that Wait is about to die they turn to Singleton as if to confirm what he had initially predicted and in return the laconic and reticent Singleton reinforces his oracle that Wait must die at the sight of land. Like Narcissus the crew experience their passing away any time they pay a visit to Wait:

...each, going out, seemed to leave behind a little of his own vitality, surrender some of his own strength... (NN 91)

As to keep faith with the myth, land appears in the shape of the island Flores<sup>4</sup> to take away Wait's soul and the selfish folly of the crew.

Narcissism becomes an important theme in *Lord Jim* and defines Jim's sense of "exalted egoism" (LJ 246). The Patna episode shatters Jim's hopes to live up to his ego-ideal. Although Jim's personality is traced by Marlow in the captive phrase "one of us" (LJ 50), the episode reveals that Jim represents and at the same misrepresents that community Marlow identifies as "us". Daniel Cottom (1987: 119)<sup>5</sup> argues that,

The "spirit of perdition" that haunts Jim and that he is unable to make clear is also Jim himself as Marlow is haunted by him and unable to see him clearly. Thus the tale of Jim's fate also serves to reveal the demonic soul of the community from which Jim is exiled and with which Marlow identifies. Jim is, as it were, the neurotic symptom that takes form on the body of modern Western civilization because of the irresolvable contradiction internal to it. Marlow's repeated assertion that Jim is "one of us" is as much a curse as it is a statement of sympathy.

Jim's maritime failure becomes revelatory of human frailty and indicative of human pride at the same time. It is for this reason that the "us" cannot accept Jim's failure. The contradiction lying at the core of this episode is two-sided. Daniel Cottom (1987: 119) adds that,

If Jim's problem is that he is unable to understand the absence of spirituality in the modern world and so never ceases to be haunted by this absence, the problem of the community that Marlow represents is that it is unable to admit the insubstantiality of the secular values with which it has replaced spirituality and so never ceases to be haunted by illusions that are, if anything, more pathetic and more deadly than Jim's.

Withheld from Jim and anticipated in Marlow's speech, there exists another self which identifies itself in terms of narcissistic desire. Marlow's bewilderment with Jim is his response to decipher this desire:

He was not speaking to me, he was only speaking before me, in a dispute with an invisible personality, an antagonistic and inseparable partner of his existence -- another possessor of his soul. (LJ 59)

Patusan provides for Jim a romantic playground for the entertainment of his ideals. On a humane level, Jim deserves another possibility and Patusan is offered to him as a second chance, but Jim demands this second chance in order to recover his romantic self-image. Viewed from this perspective, his intention is narcissistic to the core.

In Patusan the story seems to follow the logic of the myth. Jim's heroic deeds in defence of the Patusanian community grant him a divine status. He is called Tuan Jim, that is, Lord Jim by the inhabitants. He is converted into a little Narcissus made renowned for his heroism. In Patusan Jim meets Jewel, who becomes his female double. Their union acquires significance because it represents the successful search for share of personal conviction, the "*moment another soul will believe in it*" evoked in the epigraph to the novel. Jewel is important to Jim because she is offered to him as another chance. In their union he finds the confidence lost with *Patna*.

Despite her refusal to believe in Jim's past, it is her who fears it and identifies it as the "*sign*" or the "*call*". Pirate Brown is the "*sign*" or the "*call*" Jewel has always feared. Brown's words, "*Why did you come down here for?*" (LJ 230) act out the narcissist pool upon which Jim discovers his mirrored self. They suggest that Jim has never overcome the *Patna* episode and that Patusan has helped him only entertain his romantic imagination of adventures.

The tragedy is that Jim has made two promises, the first is personal and the second is collective. The first is to Jewel promising that he will never leave and the second is to the whole Patusanian community promising his responsibility for any single life in Patusan. His tolerance to Brown and the subsequent massacre restrict Jim to keeping to one promise only, that is to one choice. His responsive letting go of Brown is indicative of Jim's self-destructive narcissism, which is made responsible for his inability to cope with the past either by forgetting it or by learning from it. Jim results not to have mastered either of them.

In the end, Marlow comments, "*He goes away from a living woman to celebrate his pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct.*" (LJ 246) After the death of Dain Waris, Jim does not see the escaping possibilities the others can see. His quick reaction and lack of hesitation in facing Doramin along with his disregard for Jewel's calls, metaphorically recalling Echo's, suggest that Jim has seen only one alternative of action, that is, to be true to the Patusanian community, therefore to the "*ideal of conduct*". Marlow's positivism of expression in characterizing the woman as "*living*" and the ideal as "*shadowy*" discusses the value of Jim's action. In his view, Jewel's existence is real; the ideal's is shadowy and defenceless.

In *Heart of Darkness* the journey into the heart of darkness is a journey into the deep recesses of self. Marlow and Kurtz come to represent two sides of the narcissistic self. Marlow's growing interest in Kurtz is indicative of his narcissistic

need to recover an image of self cast beyond “*the door of darkness*” (HD 14). J. Brooks Bouson (1989: 94) argues that in Africa “*Marlow confronts cast-off images of self and haunting fantasy figures from his surfacing past.*” These images, which Marlow traces in the harlequin, the African natives, come together into one single image, that of Kurtz.

In Kurtz, Marlow finds a single embodiment of these various characters and split-off aspects of self: the heady romanticism and desolate isolation of the harlequin, the illusive grandiosity, plundering greed, and hollowness of the white exploiters, the depletion of the starving natives, the devouring hunger of the cannibals. (J. Brooks Bouson, 1989: 95)

The wild African nature acts as a tempting catalyst to expose the fragility of Kurtz’s ideal self and of what he represents. The feminine descriptions applying to the African nature suggest that Kurtz allows himself to be devoured by it and in this way he detaches himself from the community, whose values he was supposed to embody and propound. In this detachment, he loses faith in these values and his empathy with this community. In his contact with a new community, that is, the African community, he searches no other values, because he realizes that he can master this community in all senses:

My intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my – “everything belonged to him.” (HD 49)

The extreme narcissism underlying his discourse makes Kurtz not only lose feeling for any community, but also become a great danger to it. Kurtz’s report written for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs is a beautiful piece of idealistic eloquence, which is ruined by his later-added cannibalistic postscript “*Exterminate all the brutes!*” (HD 51). Emblems of his linguistic danger are the heads decorating his fence, the attacks upon villages etc. Kurtz’s psychic deterioration is summed up by the “*unspeakable rites*” (HD 50) he participates in, which allude to cannibal acts. Exalted egoism and the newly-discovered hedonistic-masochistic freedom lead to Kurtz’s narcissistic decay, first spiritual and second physical.

In the end Kurtz is simply a crawling figure, “*an animated image of death carved out of old ivory*” (HD 59). In the last moments of his life all he has to say is a repeated epiphanic “*The Horror!*” (HD 68). Aaron Fogel<sup>6</sup> (1987: 138) argues that “*When Kurtz says, “The horror!” twice, it’s narcissism: even in his most “curt” moment, he can’t stop the histrionic self-chiming. At the moment of last resort, he falls into selfishly penitential repetition. It is, probably, a final joke about his egoism.*”

What can finally be suggested is that Conrad’s view of the modern man was that of an individual led by narcissistic drive. He conceived it as a condition, which dictates his characters’ behaviour and which is clearly noticeable in their forms of

discourse. Conradian narcissists manifest different forms of narcissism. For example Wait's narcissism is not similar to Jim's or Kurtz's narcissism.

Wait's plight acquires the crew's attention and interferes with their work. His dying pretending image interrupts their tasks, activities and pleasures. This image, which they come to pray at and revere, mirrors their sentimental concern for self's possible expiration. In this way, Narcissus (the crew) falls in love with his own image (Wait), a fascinating, unstable, tempting but ultimately dead image. Self-consummation is the end of both.

Jim's story is suggestive of another form of narcissism. According to *Lord Jim*, to be too sentimental for this world is the same as to think that there exists another world, different from this, to which we apparently belong and for which we suffer. When this suffering is shared with other sentimentalists, it acquires social significance. Otherwise, it stands for a worthless and negative narcissistic attitude towards society. In the novel this attitude comes to be identified as "*exalted egoism*."

Kurtz's form of narcissism is the most dangerous, because he discovers it under alien circumstances and the result is doubly destructive. It ruins the formerly ideal Kurtz by making him dig into the depths of self to find his evil self lying there. The resurrected evil self will eventually engage itself into a penalizing campaign towards the local inhabitants. Kurtz's story suggests that the good and the bad cohabit in men, that the evil triumphs, anytime it dictates the weakness of the good. The unbalanced cohabitation of both proves that ambivalence is essential and inborn in human beings, which is why it has a classical taste that makes us be identified with a Narcissus.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> From "The Nigger of the 'Narcissus' (1897)" by Brian W. Shafer, Leonard Orr and Ted Billy (eds.) (1999), *A Joseph Conrad Companion*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- <sup>2</sup> From "The Nigger of the 'Narcissus': Myth, Mirror, and Metropolis" by Donald T. Torchiana; Robert Kimbrough (ed.) (1979), *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- <sup>3</sup> Vernon Young detected the homophonic play on the word "wait" (Wait: weight, burden).
- <sup>4</sup> 'Flores' – 1. one of the Lesser Sunda Islands, an island arc with an estimated area of 14,300 km<sup>2</sup> extending east from the Java island of Indonesia; 2. (*Spanish*) n. flowers.
- <sup>5</sup> From "Lord Jim: Destruction Through Time" by Daniel Cottom, Harold Bloom (ed.) (1987), *Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim*, Philadelphia: Chelsea House.
- <sup>6</sup> From "Forceful Overhearing" by Aaron Fogel, Harold Bloom (ed.) (1987), *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, New York: Chelsea House.

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# Composizione di un testo argomentativo in lingua italiana da parte di studenti albanesi

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**ABSTRACT:** *The Composition of an Argumentative Text in Italian by the Albanian Students*

In the curriculum of Italian language for Albanian students of Vlora University, the composition has got an important role, since they have a good knowledge of this language. These last years a new course is instituted to improve the students' linguistic communication.

The Italian language laboratory helps the students in the conscious usage of linguistic instruments, especially it guides them in expressing themselves concisely and correctly in any composition. Among all kinds of text (narration, description, exposition), the argumentative one is the most difficult for foreign students. That is why I developed a research with students of Italian language of Vlora's University. The didactic of argumentative text, the strategies of teaching to students its composition are the topics of this work.

**KEYWORDS:** *composition, didactic of argumentative text, teaching*

## Introduzione

Nella scuola albanese di ogni grado, ma soprattutto all'Università, si sente la necessità di rafforzare le abilità di scrittura, oltre a quelle di lettura e di comprensione dei testi sia in lingua albanese sia in lingua italiana. Specialmente quando si tratta di scrivere in lingua italiana una tesina o un breve saggio, gli studenti albanesi si rendono conto che è difficile, che scrivere in una lingua straniera è diverso dallo scrivere in lingua materna.

Nel curriculum della lingua italiana per gli studenti albanesi dell'Università di Valona, la scrittura ha sempre occupato un posto importante, dato che gli apprendenti hanno una certa competenza in italiano. Ma questi ultimi anni, con lo scopo di migliorare la comunicazione linguistica in lingua italiana degli studenti e per prepararli nella stesura di saggi, tesine e tesi, si è istituito un corso specifico di scrittura. Il Laboratorio di Linguistica italiana vuole promuovere negli studenti un uso consapevole degli strumenti linguistici e in particolare la capacità di esprimersi in forma scritta in modo corretto ed efficace. Si parte da alcune nozioni di base di linguistica come il processo comunicativo, il segno linguistico, il testo ecc, si

continua con l'approfondimento delle conoscenze della lingua, delle sue funzioni e dei suoi elementi, soffermandosi sui principali problemi incontrati dagli studenti nell'espressione scritta come l'ortografia, gli accenti, gli apostrofi, la punteggiatura, l'uso di coesivi e connettivi, l'uso del lessico. In una seconda fase, si passa dall'analisi di alcune tipologie testuali, alla stesura e la revisione di un testo scritto. La varietà delle tipologie testuali che si analizza è ampia e risponde alle situazioni comunicative, più vicine all'interesse dello studente.

Tra le varie forme testuali che di norma vengono richieste all'Università, quella argomentativa risulta la più difficile per gli studenti stranieri.

Ho condotto una ricerca con gli studenti di italiano del primo anno dell'Università di Valona chiedendo a loro di svolgere un tema argomentativo in italiano. Dai loro temi, ho potuto verificare che per loro, il problema non era il contenuto, ma la struttura del testo. Abituati con a comporre dei testi in albanese, gli studenti sbagliano nella strutturazione dei testi in italiano. Dalle analisi risultano anche problemi riguardanti l'uso dei connettivi, l'uso del lessico, e l'ortografia.

I risultati della ricerca, e il contatto quotidiano con le difficoltà nell'insegnamento della composizione dei testi argomentativi da parte degli studenti, ci pongono alla necessità di svolgere con gli studenti attività propedeutiche, per far sì che lo studente capisca cosa gli viene richiesto per poter poi sviluppare la sua tesi.

Per arrivare alla didattica del testo argomentativo e alle strategie della scrittura di un testo argomentativo è necessario fermarsi nella tipologia dei testi, e definire poi cosa sia un testo argomentativo e quali siano le caratteristiche che lo rendono tale.

### **Tipologia dei testi. Definizioni**

Attualmente esistono diverse tipologie a seconda dei parametri usati per costituirle, tuttavia, secondo Lavinio, una delle più diffuse è quella fondata sulle funzioni dominanti nei diversi testi, funzioni intese come corrispondenti ai macroatti linguistici già individuati dalle tradizionali partizioni retoriche del discorso prosastico (descrizione, narrazione, esposizione, argomentazione) e rispetto alle quali alcune proposte riducono (non citando il tipo espositivo) e altre ampliano (aggiungendo, per esempio, il tipo regolativo) (Lavinio, 1990: 72).

Una tipologia di questo genere è quella presentata da Werlich (1983) il quale distingue cinque fondamentali tipi testuali caratterizzati da un focus dominante:

- il tipo descrittivo
- il tipo narrativo
- il tipo espositivo
- il tipo argomentativo
- il tipo regolativo

I testi, molto spesso sono caratterizzati dalla compresenza di tipi testuali differenti: argomentazioni che si intrecciano a descrizioni o parti narrative che si alternano ad altre regolative ecc. Bisogna quindi tenere presente che parlando di testi argomentativi si vogliono indicare quei testi a dominanza argomentativa, cioè *“correlati con la capacità di istituire relazioni tra (e riguardo a) concetti attraverso la messa in rilievo di similarità, contrasti, trasformazioni, con lo scopo di dimostrare la validità di una tesi e, più generalmente, di persuadere”*. Così,

entro un testo argomentativo possiamo reperire, usate magari come ‘argomenti’ a sostegno di una tesi o per confutarne un’altra, porzioni testuali narrative (es.: la narrazione di come si è svolto un esperimento o si è arrivati a una scoperta scientifica), porzioni descrittive (es.: descrizione di cose o fatti) o espositive (es.: definizioni/spiegazioni terminologiche). (C. Lavinio, 1990: 150)

### **Il testo argomentativo: caratteristiche**

In seguito presentiamo alcune definizioni sul testo argomentativo. Si può definire “argomentativo” un testo in cui compaiono e sono prevalenti anche se non unici i procedimenti argomentativi. Un testo argomentativo presenta un problema, su cui si formula un giudizio e contiene le prove adatte a sostenerlo. Sono testi argomentativi gli articoli di fondo e gli articoli di commento, i saggi, i commenti a testi letterari, o ai film, agli spettacoli teatrali, ecc.; a scuola il cosiddetto “tema” è spesso un testo argomentativo che richiede allo studente la capacità di esprimere un giudizio motivato su un particolare problema. Lo scopo di un’argomentazione può essere persuasivo: chi scrive cioè, si propone di influire sul comportamento di chi riceve il suo messaggio. Tuttavia lo scopo di un’argomentazione può essere quello di sostenere in modo convincente un giudizio su qualunque questione. La costruzione di un discorso argomentativo si avvale anche dei procedimenti retorici del confronto, dell’analogia, della classificazione, dell’elenco, come sostegno all’apparato di prove costruito. Anche il discorso argomentativo può utilizzare dei grafici o delle tabelle per evidenziare dei dati numerici e può includere parti narrative, descrittive, espositive che in questo ambito hanno funzione esplicativa. Ma in un discorso argomentativo può essere presente anche il procedimento retorico della **confutazione** in cui si espone la tesi sostenuta da altri e rifiutata da chi scrive con una serie di argomenti (dati certi, indizi, esempi, citazioni). (P. Desideri, 1991)

La tecnica dell’argomentazione equivale ad un procedimento attraverso il quale si sostiene e si motiva un’opinione, o una tesi, con lo scopo che esse vengano comprese e condivise. Convincere uno o più interlocutori è un’impresa difficile; solo motivazioni valide esposti in forma efficace possono indurre gli altri ad aderire alle tesi sostenute da chi parla.

Gli scopi dell’argomentazione sono prevalentemente di carattere pratico: mirano di agire sui comportamenti, a trovare soluzioni a problemi, ad influenzare opinioni e punti di vista. La ricca varietà dei testi argomentativi dà la misura della grande importanza che questa tecnica riveste nella nostra società: sono testi

argomentativi le arringhe degli avvocati, molti articoli giornalistici, I messaggi pubblicitari, alcuni tipi di rapporti tecnici e molti altri testi ancora.

Un carattere peculiare dell'argomentazione è la soggettività: chi sostiene una tesi non può aspettarsi che tutti siano d'accordo con lui; quindi è possibile che interlocutori confutino le opinioni con argomenti diversi, sostenendo, a loro volta, il proprio punto di vista. È dunque importante possedere tecniche valide ed efficaci a cui potrà ricorrere sia per sostenere la propria tesi sia per confutare quelle non condivise.

Un messaggio argomentativo, anche breve, contiene, dunque, un'affermazione (tesi) sostenuta da altre affermazioni (argomenti).

Il testo argomentativo ha una struttura riconoscibile:

- una presentazione del problema di tipo informativo che fa da premessa all'argomentazione vera e propria;
- una tesi da dimostrare;
- gli argomenti a sostegno della tesi;
- (eventualmente) una antitesi da confutare;
- (eventualmente) gli argomenti a sfavore della antitesi;
- la conclusione, dove si "tirano le somme" e si dimostra la ragionevolezza della tesi.

Il testo argomentativo deve presentare le caratteristiche tipiche di ogni testo per essere considerato tale: la coerenza e la coesione. La coerenza riguarda il piano tematico, in quanto si tratta dei legami logici che vengono istituiti tra le varie parti di un testo mentre la coesione riguarda tutti quei meccanismi che uniscono le diverse parole, frasi e periodi. È proprio di quest'ultima che ci si occuperà qui di seguito, in particolare di quegli elementi che hanno la funzione di collegare due o più parole, o frasi, o periodi esprimendo i rapporti di senso tra questi elementi di un testo e che proprio per questo prendono il nome di connettivi semantici distinti, secondo una tipologia proposta da Van Dijk (1979) in seguito da Berretta da quelli testuali o pragmatici "*che collegano parti di testo in quanto unità di discorso o enunciazione che dir si voglia*" (M. Berretta, 1984: 239)

Secondo Desideri i connettivi argomentativi italiani possono essere suddivisi in:

1. nessi di causa-effetto: *perciò, dato che, in conseguenza, a causa di ciò, se... allora ecc.*
2. di dimostrazione: *infatti, in effetti, ovviamente, chiaramente ecc.*
3. di conclusione: *dunque, quindi, così, allora ecc.*
4. di valutazione: *probabilmente, certamente, indubbiamente, senz'altro, è da sottolineare che ecc.*
5. di contrapposizione: *altrimenti, bensì, di contro, invece, anzi ecc.*

6. di riferimento o di anticipazione: come abbiamo già visto, come vedremo in seguito etc. con una forte prevalenza del meta-commento, introdotto dai verba dicendi. (P. Desideri, 1991: 136-137)

### **Insegnare a comporre un testo argomentativo**

L'insegnamento quotidiano ti mette in contatto con le difficoltà che sono legate a questo particolare argomento. L'educazione linguistica deve concordare al rafforzamento di abilità testuali, competenze e capacità comunicative. È compito dell'insegnante allargare la «mappa del mondo» degli studenti, presentando in classe attività di scrittura ben programmate.

Prima di cominciare a scrivere il tema allo studente deve essere consapevole dell'argomentazione. Cioè il primo problema che viene posto, è quello di insegnare attività propedeutiche, iniziando con l'esercizio di comportamenti comunicativi come la discussione in classe che comporta il saper ascoltare l'opinione degli altri e quindi il rendersi conto della possibilità che non tutti la pensino nello stesso modo e che le proprie idee vengano criticate, dovendole così sostenere in maniera convincente e contemporaneamente tentando di smontare gli argomenti di supporto alle tesi altrui. Un esercizio importante è la lettura di testi con contenuto argomentativo come articoli di fondo, i quali aiutano a capire le regole strutturali del testo argomentativo, sicuramente cercando di migliorare nelle proprie produzioni. È molto importante la scelta dell'argomento da parte dell'insegnante, il quale non solo deve proporre un tema interessante, ma anche un tema conosciuto dagli studenti. È doveroso da parte dell'insegnante offrire materiali adatti per dare la possibilità agli studenti di discutere, riflettere, di conoscere a fondo l'argomento proposto, per riuscire dopo a produrre un testo efficace, coerente e coeso.

Della Casa nella sua trattazione dei testi argomentativi: ci spiega come si può arrivare ad una procedura efficace per reperire gli argomenti proposti:

**1. Si riflette sul problema**, cioè sarebbe utile spiegare quali dei «campi» legati all'argomento da trattare siano importanti per gli interlocutori, definendo così anche la strategia convincente da adottare.

**2. Si va alla ricerca**, degli elementi di prova analizzando gli argomenti pro alla tesi sostenuta che vanno ricercati in ogni campo che si è individuato come importante. Per aiutare la tesi, individuando dati, fatti e opinioni. In questa fase è necessario raggruppare ogni campo in «sotto-problemi» specifici. Le conclusioni delle analisi aiutano la tesi principale.

**3. Si confrontano** gli elementi di prova con la tesi generale, così da essere sicuri che non siano in contraddizione o che non pervengano a conclusioni diverse rispetto a quella proposta.

Questo è dunque l'itinerario generale che svolge chi ha già definito la sua tesi al momento di comporre un testo argomentativo, anche se spesso si tende a mettersi a scrivere, ci si butta sull'argomento da trattare e non si valorizza la fase

“creativa” del nostro processo di scrittura: il rischio è diventare noiosi, monotoni, ripetitivi... sicuramente poco innovativi!

Nel corpo argomentativo viene sviluppata l'argomentazione vera e propria, con la presentazione degli argomenti a favore e, se si vuole, anche di quelli avversi per confutarli. Fondamentale in questa fase è anche l'ordine degli argomenti, che può aiutare a dare logica e incisività e quindi maggiore adesione da parte degli interlocutori. Infine, nella conclusione viene ribadita la tesi e si fa un breve riassunto dei punti fondamentali trattati precedentemente.

La strutturazione del testo non è un processo lineare, quindi anche durante la stesura di un testo argomentativo si possono elaborare nuove idee non previste precedentemente e si può modificare il testo man mano che lo si sta scrivendo. Infine, per la fase di revisione del testo si possono tenere presenti alcuni consigli (Della Casa, 1989: 484-467) questo proposito:

1. Utilizzare una varietà linguistica corrispondente alla natura del discorso e ai suoi scopi.

2. Mantenersi su un piano neutro e impersonale o puntare invece su un'espressione più brillante e personalizzata, in relazione sempre al tema e all'udienza.

3. Definire tutte le parole che hanno un ruolo importante nell'argomentazione, e il cui significato presenta diverse accezioni o può essere equivocado.

4. Prestare particolare attenzione al collegamento degli enunciati e alla chiara indicazione del loro ruolo all'interno del discorso.

5. Curare l'articolazione in capoversi e, eventualmente, in sezioni contraddistinte da sotto-titoli.

Per quanto riguarda, infine, la revisione conclusiva, si porrà attenzione, oltre alla correttezza e fluidità linguistica:

- alla fondatezza, esaustività e persuasività degli argomenti controllando i dati e le conclusioni;

- alla chiarezza ed evidenza dei diversi nodi del ragionamento (il problema, la tesi principale, le giustificazioni);

- all'efficacia dell'ordine di presentazione;

- alla coesione tra frasi e capoversi;

- all'omogeneità del lessico e all'efficacia dell'espressione, considerato il tema affrontato e il pubblico a cui ci si rivolge.

### **Strategie di scrittura di un testo argomentativo**

Gli studenti sono chiamati a svolgere molto spesso elaborati in cui devono esprimere opinioni su un argomento di interesse generale, di attualità, ecc. Di solito, è proposta la scelta fra più titoli: è quindi opportuno individuare con sicurezza l'argomento giusto. Ecco qui di seguito uno schema di fase da seguire.

## La scelta

Se ti è concessa l'alternativa fra più argomenti, orientate verso quelli che conosci meglio, anche se gli altri possono sembrarti più attraenti e suggestive.

## L'analisi del titolo

Analizza con cura il titolo prescelto per capire esattamente quali siano le richieste e per non rischiare di allontanarti dalla traccia. Al proposito:

- considera ogni elemento del titolo per comprendere i termini del problema;
- poniti delle domande sulle tue conoscenze circa le problematiche che ti si chiede di discutere;
- cerca di individuare le richieste della traccia, anche quando non sono esplicite (come spesso avviene), ma vanno "lette tra le righe", dedotte in base ad associazioni di idee.

Esaminiamo, per esempio il titolo seguente:

Il fenomeno del tardivo allontanamento dei giovani dalla famiglia di origine è oggi molto comune. Alcuni lo fanno risalire alla difficoltà di trovare lavoro, altri ai nuovi rapporti genitori-figli. Qual'è il tuo parere?

Il titolo, che parte da un dato acquisito, presenta un invito ad argomentare, manifestato esplicitamente dalla domanda finale che ti chiede di entrare in causa con opinioni personali. Prima di iniziare lo svolgimento, sarebbe bene considerare ogni elemento del titolo allo scopo di comprenderlo al fondo. Il primo passo consiste nell'individuare il problema, ovvero: il tardivo allontanamento dei giovani dalla famiglia.

- Sai in che cosa consiste?
- Conosci il significato della parola "tardivo"?

**Prima opinione:** alcuni lo fanno risalire alla difficoltà di trovare lavoro.

- Conosci i problemi del lavoro giovanile oggi?

**Seconda opinione:** Altri ai nuovi rapporti genitori-figli.

- Sai in che cosa consiste questa novità nei rapporti?
- Questa novità sottintende un mutamento: rispetto a quale periodo?

## La pianificazione

Completata l'analisi del titolo, si passa al momento della pianificazione. Essa consiste sostanzialmente nella ricerca e nel ricordo delle idee che scaturiscono dalla lettura del titolo. Inizialmente le idee si fanno strada a fatica, poi si affollano confusamente e si accavallano; occorre dunque ordinarle. Esistono molti metodi per mettere ordine fra le idee. Il più funzionale consiste in tre momenti:

1. puntualizzazione degli argomenti o dei problemi posti dal titolo, nella loro specificità e secondo più punti di vista;
2. individuazione della, o delle, tesi e degli argomenti a sostegno;

3. conclusione.

E' utile creare una scaletta di argomenti sia per il primo sia per il secondo punto.

- La tesi e gli argomenti. L'individuazione della, o delle, tesi da sostenere deve tenere conto della possibilità di avere a disposizione argomenti validi per sostenerla, che abbiano la forza del convincere ed il sostegno dell'attendibilità.

Esaminiamo il seguente titolo:

*La violenza nello sport: esprimi la tua opinione.*

Individuiamo la tesi e formuliamo una griglia di argomenti.

*Tesi:* La violenza nello sport è da condannare.

*Primo argomento:* Nuoce alla competizione amichevole.

*Secondo argomento:* Coinvolge spettatori innocenti.

*Terzo argomento:* Allontana i veri appassionati dallo spettacolo sportivo.

*Quarto argomento:* Innesca violenze di altro tipo (intolleranza, razzismo).

*Quinto argomento:* Richiede un'eccessiva presenza di forza pubblica che potrebbe essere impiegata altrove.

La scelta degli argomenti è di fondamentale importanza e deve mirare a convincere l'interlocutore mediante l'uso prioritario di criteri razionali. L'appello ai sentimenti ed alle emozioni può essere suggestivo, ma, di fatto, poco utile. Del tutto irrilevante, anzi spesso dannoso, è poi l'uso di frasi fatte, proverbi e così via che non solo non convincono, ma finiscono con il provocare fastidio.

**Come scegliere gli argomenti a sostegno?** Il metodo più efficace consiste nell'enunciazione di fatti concreti, esempi che sono sotto gli occhi di tutti, inconfutabili e reali. I fatti concreti sono costituiti da esempi tecnici, fatti storici, cronaca e così via.

Ad esempio la tesi **“Non bisogna attraversare con il rosso”** è sorretta dagli esempi.

Un terzo metodo valido è quello ricorso alla logica: è più sottile, più complesso, ma anche più lucido. Osserva l'esempio:

*Tesi:* *l'eccessiva esposizione al sole nuoce alla salute.*

*Primo argomento:* il sole provoca una forte disidratazione che determina il precoce avvizzimento della pelle.

*Secondo argomento:* la formazione di melanomi (tumori della pelle) è favorita da lunghe esposizioni di raggi solari.

*Terzo argomento:* il sole è causa di ustioni profonde e dolorose.

Gli argomenti suscitano la riflessione dell'interlocutore che collega logicamente i fatti secondo il rapporto di causa-effetto.

L'ultimo metodo di ricerca degli argomenti consiste nel fare riferimento a valori etici universali ed incontrovertibili.



Ad esempio la formazione del valore “i bambini vanno difesi e amati” va a sostegno della tesi “non bisogna coinvolgere i figli nelle liti familiari”.

### La stesura

Completata la pianificazione, si passa alla stesura vera e propria, che consiste nello sviluppo di tutti i punti previsti nel corso della pianificazione. Per la stesura si può fare riferimento allo schema seguente:

1. trattazione dell’argomento o del problema considerato da più angolazioni
2. presentazione della tesi
3. sviluppo degli argomenti a sostegno della tesi, secondo la griglia pianificata
4. eventuale confutazione di possibili antitesi (opinioni contrari alla tesi)
5. conclusione che ribadisce brevemente la o le tesi

Nel testo argomentativo è importante la scelta del registro linguistico, in stretta connessione con il destinatario a cui è rivolto il discorso.

Poiché di norma e se non vi sono diverse indicazioni, il destinatario è il docente, il registro abituale è quello formale, con l’uso eventuale di un lessico specialistico, nei casi in cui esso venga richiesto.

Lo stile del testo argomentativo richiede chiarezza e precisione, e inoltre buona norma non dilungarsi in argomenti inutili, ma limitarsi a proporre quelle veramente efficaci in modo sintetico ma esauriente. Più di ogni altro testo, quello argomentativo richiede una forte coerenza logica nell’esposizione degli argomenti, quindi è abituale l’uso dei connettivi.

Un esempio di stesura	
	<b>La violenza nello sport: esprimi la tua opinione</b>
Il problema	<p><i>La violenza nello sport costituisce oggi un grave problema sociale con il quale devono misurarsi le istituzioni, le forze dell’ordine, le società sportive e i privati cittadini. Quotidiani e settimanali riferiscono episodi di violenza che esplodono prima, durante e dopo gare sportive, soprattutto in occasione di partite di calcio fra squadre particolarmente in competizione fra loro.</i></p> <p><i>La violenza sportiva può essere intesa in due modi: sono violenti gli spettatori, i cosiddetti tifosi, e, fra questi, in particolare gli ultras, che si abbandonano a vandalismi, offese personali, fino a giungere alle percosse e, in casi estremi, all’omicidio. Sono violenti anche gli atleti, quando, nei campi di gioco, si lasciano andare a scorrettezze ed comportamenti contrari alla lealtà</i></p>

	<i>sportiva. Vi sono, infine, gli sport violenti (pugilato, lotta) sui quali è aperto un acceso dibattito che qui non è il caso di trattare.</i>
Tesi	<i>Io ritengo che la violenza nello sport sia da condannare in ogni caso e sotto ogni forma.</i>
Primo argomento	<i>Essa, infatti, nasce alla competizione amichevole che rende piacevole lo spettacolo sportivo. Se gli atleti in campo sono scorretti, forniscono un esempio negativo agli spettatori, che si sentono autorizzati, a loro volta, ad estremizzare i loro comportamenti. Poiché gli interventi delle società sportive non sono abbastanza efficaci contro gli ultras ed i mezzi impiegati per frenargli sono insufficienti, e' molto frequente il ripetersi di violenze che trasformano la competizione sportiva in una vera guerriglia urbana.</i>
Secondo argomento	<i>All'uscita dallo stadio, o addirittura durante lo svolgimento della partita, è capitato che spettatori innocenti siano stati coinvolti in episodi di guerriglia urbana. Ricordiamo gli episodi più gravi. Alcuni anni fa, a Roma, durante una partita di calcio, un padre, che assisteva allo spettacolo sportivo con il suo bambino, fu colpito in un occhio da un razzo e morì davanti al figlio. Qualche anno dopo, un giovane tifoso è stato accoltellato a Genova da un rivale sportivo ed è morto prima di poter essere soccorso.</i>
Terzo argomento	<i>Episodi del genere denunciano un grave problema ed allontanano i veri appassionati dai campi di gioco, in quanto rendono pericoloso assistere a competizioni sportive. Si profila la seria minaccia che gli spalti si trasformino in terreno di lotta, mentre dovrebbero assicurare un pomeriggio di serena distrazione. Quindi, è sempre più frequente il fenomeno dell'assenza dei veri sportivi, che, per non correre rischi preferiscono seguire le partite attraverso la televisione.</i>
Quarto conclusione	<i>Poiché i tifosi violenti sono persone violente e non "bravi ragazzi" che</i>

### Conclusioni

Concludo questa relazione riaffermando l'importanza del rafforzamento dell'abilità della scrittura nel processo dell'insegnamento/apprendimento della lingua e cultura italiana a scuola. Come uno dei processi più delicati, la composizione dei testi argomentativi in lingua straniera chiede competenze apprezzabili da parte dello studente e mette il docente davanti alla necessità di

svolgere con loro studenti attività delicate e significanti. È doveroso da parte dell'insegnante offrire materiali adatti per dare la possibilità agli studenti di discutere, riflettere, di conoscere a fondo l'argomento proposto, per riuscire dopo a produrre un testo efficace, coerente e coeso.

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# Le réalisme objectif de type balzacien

Claudia-Mihaela RACU

## ABSTRACT: *Balzac's Objective Realism*

Balzac's realism means more than an exact and thorough presentation of a material frame of life. This depends on a human reality which it represents, it doesn't signify anything by itself. Balzac consistently affirms the existence of a relation between the individual and his social environment. Balzac's realism has been generated by this immense popular energy which brought about three big revolutionary movements in France, along 60 years. His literary production has been supported by the atmosphere of the 1830's popular movement.

**KEYWORDS:** *realism, society, people, matter, movement*

« Le réalisme » est un terme polysémique qui n'a pas une définition précise et qui a généré de nombreuses controverses par sa complexité. Le réalisme (comme la majorité des termes en *-ism*, c'est-à-dire comme le classicisme, le romantisme ou le symbolisme) « *pose les mêmes problèmes difficiles et crée la même tension* », en finissant par « *imprimer à notre littérature un rythme spécifique* »<sup>1</sup> (Guy Larroux). Comme ceux-ci, il définit de certains ensembles tandis que, dans la réalité, nous nous confrontons avec des oeuvres uniques, irréductibles les uns aux autres. Le réalisme littéraire, *réalisme*, est identifié, même dès la première apparition du terme français (en *Mercur de France*, 1826) avec « *la littérature du vrai* »<sup>2</sup>. Pour l'histoire de la littérature, il signifie, comme notion qui a des racines profondes en France, ce rapport-là envers la réalité, présent dans les romans de Stendhal, Balzac ou Flaubert. L'histoire précoce et l'ascension du monde bourgeois capitaliste constituant, en effet, le thème de Stendhal et Flaubert. Le réalisme français du XIXe siècle implique « *l'hégémonie du roman* »<sup>3</sup>, le réalisme étant la grande époque du roman. Pierre Barbéris synthétise le secret du réalisme de la *Comédie humaine* : « *chez Balzac le réalisme implique l'absolu* ». La grande ambition de Balzac a été de « *tracer, dans ses infinis détails, l'histoire fidèle, le tableau exact des moeurs de la notre société moderne* ». Le réalisme de Balzac a été généré par cette immense énergie populaire qui a fait que la France vive seulement en soixante dix ans trois grands mouvements révolutionnaires. Le réalisme balzacien doit être cherché en Balzac-le mystique, Balzac – l'anthropologue et le sociologue, Balzac – le penseur politique et le poète, Balzac – le maître de la description et l'écrivain. Dans cet article on fera l'analyse du réalisme objectif de type balzacien seulement de point de vue de la mystique et de l'anthropologie de l'écrivain. En ce qui concerne le réalisme de la mystique de Balzac, Felix Davin (autorisé par Balzac même de faire cette affirmation de *La Comédie humaine*) écrit en 1840, en

préfaçant *Études philosophiques* : « Il s'agit ici d'une d'entre les plus grandes démarches littéraires que quelquefois un seul homme a eu l'audace de la concevoir ». Dans ce compartiment de la *Comédie humaine*, *Père Goriot* et *Eugénie Grandet*, et surtout dans les romans *Louis Lambert* et *Séraphita*, qui avec *Les Proscrits* ont paru en 1835 sous le titre *Le livre mystique*, il devient évident que celui qui a décrit l'existence sociale de son temps lui-même pouvait la dépasser largement dans sa conception sur la réalité et que celui-ci voyait le monde social englobé dans un ordre transcendant, sur temporel. Après le désir de Balzac, il devait se répandre dans son œuvre toute la réalité, non seulement celle empirique, quotidienne, historique dans sa mobilité, mais aussi celle invisible, qui la couvrait du mystère. Par son aspiration vers ce qui dépasse la limitation de ce monde, Balzac s'approche du romantisme. Il cherche des compensations dans une réalité idéale, plus haute, à cause « de l'insatisfaction envers les conditions de vie héritées »<sup>4</sup>. Le spiritualiste Balzac considère la transcendance « une anti-monde salutaire de la misère des états actuels ». « L'idéalité du surnaturel se révèle comme partie complémentaire de la réalité » de laquelle elle est solidement liée « dans un rapport de tension dialectique »<sup>5</sup>.

Les notions de base de la cosmogonie de Balzac sont « *La Matière, Le Mouvement et Le Produit* »<sup>6</sup> qui correspondent généralement au matérialisme de l'époque des lumières de Diderot mais dans le même temps en se distinguant essentiellement de celui-ci par le point de départ déiste. La doctrine d'un dieu créateur de cette mystérieuse substance éthérée dans la recherche de laquelle Balthazar Claës (le héros de *La Recherche de l'absolu*) dépense sa vie n'est pas une chrétienne. Balzac – par son personnage Balthazar Claës – n'était pas préoccupé par les dogmes de l'église – pour lui seulement le noyau mystique comptait dans la religion et il reconnaissait de lui-même : « *Devant Dieu j'appartiens à la religion du Saint Jean de l'église mystique, seule qui a gardé la vraie doctrine. Voilà le fond de mon cœur* »<sup>7</sup>. Klauss Heitmann croit que Balzac trouve la vraie instruction dans la doctrine philosophique et religieuse de ceux de l'époque des lumières : on parle donc d'une variante de la théosophie dans l'esprit d'une doctrine mystique et gnostique d'autrefois qui s'appuie sur la croyance que l'esprit aurait déchu à la suite d'un péché originel de l'ordre divine dans l'état naturel, mais maintenant il serait obligé d'obtenir la suprême sagesse de la contemplation du Dieu et de retourner à l'état originel. Les deux romans *Louis Lambert* et *Séraphita* ont à la base la croyance de l'appartenance du moi humain à l'autre monde. L'implication personnelle et sa propre aspiration sont évidentes dans ces deux romans, Balzac en se rapportant à *Séraphita* – dans L'« Avant-propos » de *La Comédie humaine* – pour appuyer sa conviction que l'homme est plus d'« une créature finie ». La conception sur la vie du romancier (qui se trouve dans la plus étroite liaison avec la mystique balzacienne), la religion et la musique sont « les trois formes de poésie en se dirigeant vers Dieu qui délivrent de tous sentiments de ce monde »<sup>8</sup>.

Le grand thème l'amour fait son apparition de plusieurs fois dans les romans de Balzac sous la forme de force spirituelle irradiante et en quelque sorte comme

reflet de l'amour divin qui ne satisfait que l'esprit, dans *Le Lys dans la vallée*, à la madame de Mortsauf, une adepte de Saint-Martin. Par l'amour il renaît dans *La Comédie humaine* le rêve sur la reconstruction de la totalité androgyne primordiale (dans *L'enfant maudit*, chez Etienne d'Hérouville et Gabrielle de Beauvouloir, ceux deux « colombes blanches » qui composent « seulement un seul âme », « un seul être divine » et ainsi « accomplissent-ils le rêve ravissant de Platon » ; dans *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, chez la courtisane Coralie, qui en regardant son bien-aimé dormir elle obtient la révélation de la « divinisation » « qui te permet, ici là-bas sur la terre, être deux pour sentir, mais seulement un pour aimer »). À cette image idéale de l'amour de Balzac correspond-elle une vision transfigurée de la femme, conçue comme une créature angélique, médiatrice entre homme et Dieu, créée d'une substance plus fine. C'est le cas d'Eugénie Grandet qui offre à son infidèle cousin « l'amour des anges » et qui est assise par Balzac sur la même échelle sociale avec les madones de Raphaël. Dans *La Comédie humaine* « l'amour sensuel équilibre l'amour mystique (...) L'amour signifie pour Balzac autre chose que pour Louis Lambert : dans la même mesure l'impulse indomptable vers l'idéal comme si vers la volupté charnelle » (*La Cousine Bette*).

Une série de théories importantes pour l'image de l'homme et du monde dans *La Comédie humaine* (théories ayant à la base l'hypothèse d'une substance primordiale, imaginée comme un fluide inconsistant)<sup>9</sup> dépend de la métaphysique et de la « vraie doctrine » de Balzac. Il s'agit, premièrement, du magnétisme ou du mesmer-isme propagé par Franz Anton Mesmer, cette « science-là des fluides impondérables » – comment l'appellera-t-il Balzac en *Ursule Mirouët* et quant à laquelle « il accordait à la pensée, à la volonté et é l'amour une force d'action et d'irradiation conçue au sens matériel ». La physionomistique de Johann Kaspar Lavater et la phrénologie de Franz Josef Gall inspirent à Balzac « leur théorie en ce qui concerne l'impression extérieure de l'âme dans les caractéristiques du visage et du crâne » qui devient importante pour sa manière de décrire les hommes. La théorie « du développement du monde » exposée par Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (la naissance du monde d'une substance unique, « unité de composition », créée par Dieu, qui puis, en fonction des conditions de l'existence et de l'environnement, se diversifie-t-elle sans cesse et se développe-t-elle en formes toujours plus hautes) fascine Balzac et dédie à celui-ci *Le Père Goriot*. Ce qui préoccupait particulièrement le romancier dans cette œuvre était la thèse que les différences d'entre les êtres et la diversité des espèces d'animaux dériveraient de la variété du moyen. L'auteur déclare dans *L'Avant-propos* de la *Comédie humaine* que cette thèse constitue le fondement de son œuvre. Son projet est d'écrire, à l'analogie avec les regards d'ensemble existants en ce qui concerne « les espèces zoologiques », une œuvre adéquate quant aux « espèces sociales », les espèces de la société humaine, les classes, les états et les métiers. Stephan J. Gendzier<sup>10</sup> confirme la supposition que pour sa sociologie zoologique aussi que pour sa « physionomistique » Balzac était obligé à quelques idées de Diderot. Il est sûr que Balzac a décidé de transposer la notion de moyen des séances de la nature au domaine sociologique où elle obtiendra une fonction-clé en commençant avec

Taine et jusqu'au présent. Mais Balzac dépasse le naturalisme ultérieur à la formule de Zola par le fait qu'il a remplacé, respectivement il a complété la théorie biologique déterministe du moyen avec une sociale, basée sur les dates spécifiques du développement de la société.

Balzac – l'anthropologue : Balzac déclarait<sup>11</sup> que l'objet de ses romans le représentait « *l'homme et la vie* ». La tentative de présenter *La Comédie humaine* séparée en composants anthropologiques et sociologiques peut être justifiée, éventuellement, par le fait que Balzac même (il se confessait à son ami Felix Davin, l'auteur de l'*Introduction* aux *Etudes philosophiques*, dans *Comédie humaine*, vol. 6) « *avant d'arriver à la société formée d'hommes, il a dû s'occuper de l'analyse de l'homme qui constituait l'élément originaire de celle-ci* ». Klaus Heitmann et Théophile Gautier remarquent : Balzac est l'homme qui, après Dieu, a créé le plus, parce que tant d'êtres vifs n'ont jamais jailli d'un esprit humain. Aussi que Dante, Balzac a créé un cosmos qui a son enfer et son purgatoire, mais aussi un paradis composé de beaucoup de personnages vertueux. En ce qui concerne l'homme et la vie, Balzac présente une abondance d'hommes dans des scènes d'une multitude de domaines de la vie : scènes de la vie privée, scènes de la vie de province, scènes de la vie à Paris, scènes de la vie politique, scènes de la vie militaire, scènes de la vie à la campagne, des études philosophiques et analytiques qui ne sont eux même autre chose que des scènes de la vie humaine. Balzac – l'anthropologue impressionne aussi du point de vue quantitatif que du point de vue qualitatif (il s'agit de la qualité de l'espèce humaine dominante dans *La Comédie humaine*). Les personnages de Balzac ne sont pas du tout des êtres à une articulation spirituelle fine. Balzac aurait voulu offrir par ses romans « *une histoire du cœur humain tissée fil-à-fil* »<sup>12</sup>, mais son intérêt n'était tout de suite celui d'un psychologue. Dans l'histoire du roman réaliste français, Balzac n'appartient pas aux anatomistes de l'âme comme Proust. La passion et non pas la complexité spirituelle c'est le leitmotiv dans cette « *histoire du cœur humain* ». La passion représente pour Balzac la vraie existence humaine de laquelle surgissent tous les grands accomplissements culturels. Balzac précise : « *la passion est l'essence entière de toute l'humanité. Sans celle-ci la religion, l'histoire, le roman et l'art n'auraient aucun sens* »<sup>13</sup>.

Pour mieux comprendre Balzac et totalement, la recherche allemande (par Ernst Robert Curtius) et puis celle de Suisse ont décidé qu'on doit établir une corrélation entre *passion* et *humanité*. Curtius a remarqué dans la théorie balzacienne de l'énergie spirituelle « *le mot magique nous devons le connaître pour pouvoir comprendre le vrai Balzac* ». L'homme balzacien, conduit par l'énergie, appartient à une élite composée des génies, des êtres qui ont un destin réel et se trouve au-dessus de la masse amorphe de figurants, au-dessus des hommes banals, sans aucune prétention à la dignité romanesque. Voilà la vraie répartition du monde entier dans *La Comédie humaine*, démontre Albert Béguin<sup>14</sup> et non pas celle imposée par Balzac en bons et méchants. Albert Thibaudet<sup>15</sup> parle de la « *secrète succession du Dieu-père* » dans *La Comédie humaine*, idée soutenue par le fait que Balzac « *crée les grandes figures à son image* » en construisant « *un*

*univers humain en concurrence avec celui créé par Dieu* »<sup>16</sup>. « *Si je possède un trait caractéristique, alors celle-ci est, je peux vous assurer, l'énergie* »<sup>17</sup> remarque Balzac de soi-même en 1825 dans une lettre vers une amie. Albert Béguin et puis Madelaine Fargeaud se rendent compte eux aussi de « *cette énergie qui en partant du créateur irradie vers les créatures* » et qui « *a finalement une base religieuse* » en étant « *le moteur de l'aspiration vers l'éternité* ». Les deux critiques affirment que chaque individu qui peuple l'univers de Balzac est, comme l'auteur en personne, « *chercheur d'absolu et assoiffé de l'éternité* » et Balzac est pour ceux-ci « *l'auteur l'entière vie terrestre duquel, l'œuvre immortelle* » se définiront par « *la recherche de l'absolu* »<sup>18</sup>.

Le désir passionné est fixé monoman autour d'un seul but auquel on sacrifie tout. Les « *monomanes* » de Balzac sont en même temps « *avares* » et « *absents* »<sup>19</sup>, avides pour posséder quelque chose et indisponibles pour n'importe quoi autre chose. Des « *monomanes* » balzaciens connus sont : Balthazar Claës – qui dédie sa vie à l'effort de reproduire à la manière expérimentale la matière étherée primordiale, son feu dévorateur étant la chimie ; Père Goriot « *ce Christ de la paternité pour ses filles* » ; Hulot, personnage du roman *La Cousine Bette*, qui fait partie de ces hommes-là que la nature l'a doué à la précieuse capacité d'aimer au-dessus des limites imposées par elle-même à l'amour. Mais tous les monomanes de Balzac ont leur place bien délimitée dans la société. Balzac dit « *on trouve de l'énergie seulement par les êtres détachés de la société* ». « *La puissance vitale* » est la loi d'après lequel Balzac croyait que l'énergie se consumait et qui mettait ses héros devant la seule alternative : choisir entre l'excès et la médiocrité. Pour les êtres vigoureux, comme Balzac, la décision n'était pas difficile. « *Vivre avec excès* » est la décision de Raphaël de Valentin (qui cherche son bonheur dans l'immoralité – « *une art comme si la poésie* »). Celle-ci est aussi l'option de Balzac, qui consacre son existence entièrement à la littérature, existence qui s'éteint de bonne heure à l'excès de la passion créatrice.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Guy Larroux (1998), *Realismul. Elemente de critică, de istorie și de poetică*, București: Cartea Românească, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Klauss Heitmann (1983), *Realismul francez de la Stendhal la Flaubert*, București: Editura Univers.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> *Catherine de Médicis*, in *La Comédie humaine*, vol. 7, p. 241.

<sup>7</sup> Balzac, *Lettres à Madame Hanska*, Ediție publicată de Roger Pierrot, Vol. 2, Paris, 1968.

<sup>8</sup> Balzac, *La Duchesse de Langeais*, in *La Comédie humaine*, vol. 4, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> Klauss Heitmann, *op.cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> Stephan J. Gendzier (1962), « L'interprétation de la figure humaine chez Balzac et Diderot », in *L'Année balzacienne*.

<sup>11</sup> Balzac, *Avant-propos à la Comédie humaine*, vol. I.

<sup>12</sup> Balzac, *Lettres à Madame Hanska*, vol. I.

<sup>13</sup> Balzac, *Avant-propos...*, in *La Comédie humaine*, vol. I.

<sup>14</sup> Albert Béguin (1965), *Balzac lu et relu*, Paris.



<sup>15</sup> Albert Thibaudet (1936), *Histoire de la littérature française de 1879 à nos jours*, Paris.

<sup>16</sup> Klaus Heitmann, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>17</sup> Balzac, *Correspondance* (1960), Édition publiée par Roger Pierrot, vol. I, Paris.

<sup>18</sup> Albert Béguin, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>19</sup> Maurice Bardèche (1967), *Balzac romancier*, Geneva.

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## **La communication écrite en français des affaires : enjeux et perspectives**

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**ABSTRACT :** *The Written Communication in Business French:  
Challenges and Opportunities*

Writing a business letter is always a difficult exercise. The business letter is often the window of your company, and the image of your company can depend on this letter. A good business letter must be clear, logical, precise and short. This is why, one must use short sentences (between 8 and 16 words) and short paragraphs (if it is possible, less than 6 lines). There are constraints in the formulation and the presentation. The relations between the firms, those with the suppliers and the customers suppose much politeness.

**KEYWORDS:** *business letter, firm, written communication, recipient*

L'expansion des entreprises entraîne souvent la création de nouveaux services et oblige les administrateurs à mettre en place des moyens pour faciliter les communications. Le personnel administratif, parfois appelé à prendre des décisions, doit pouvoir compter sur une circulation rapide de l'information provenant de tous les services. La communication doit se faire facilement que ce soit pour transmettre des renseignements, pour aider à la prise de décision ou pour modifier une décision déjà rendue.

La rédaction d'une lettre d'affaires est toujours un exercice difficile. C'est un type de rédaction qui repose sur de nombreuses règles qu'il faut apprivoiser. Dans cet article, nous allons explorer ce type de correspondance en nous attardant surtout aux expressions usuelles qui sont l'épine dorsale de la communication d'affaires. Nous nous proposons d'identifier les différents modèles de présentation de la lettre d'affaires, d'identifier les particularités des éléments de la lettre d'affaires, d'identifier les bonnes formules d'introduction, d'identifier les bonnes formules de salutation et d'utiliser des expressions propres au développement et à la conclusion de la lettre d'affaires selon les différents types de lettres.

Les plus fréquents types de lettres d'affaires sont : prendre rendez-vous, confirmer un rendez-vous, demander des renseignements, faire une réservation, confirmer une réservation, proposer ses services, passer une commande, répondre à des commandes, conditions de paiement, relances de paiement, modalités de paiement, réclamations, répondre à des réclamations, négociations et accords,

conclure un contrat, circulaires d'informations, offres d'emploi et candidatures, correspondance personnelle, courrier électronique.

Dans les lignes suivantes nous allons présenter trois types de lettres commerciales et nous allons analyser la manière dont elles sont rédigées.

### **1) Proposer ses services**

« Eric Lang et Associés  
45 boulevard des Pyrénées  
64000 Pau  
France

Lawrence, le 17 novembre 1999

Messieurs,

Nous avons appris de nos associés que vous cherchez une agence qui puisse se charger de la promotion de vos produits aux États-Unis. Nous pensons que nous pouvons vous aider : nous avons créé cette agence voici de nombreuses années et nous possédons des bureaux dans le Midwest et sur la côte ouest, et nous avons acquis une certaine expérience de la vente et promotion des appareils ménagers électriques. Nous avons aidé plusieurs entreprises anglaises à relancer leurs ventes aux États-Unis et nous sommes convaincus que vous aussi, vous pourriez bénéficier de notre expérience. Notre représentant en Grande-Bretagne, Charles J. Parker, se ferait un plaisir de vous rendre visite afin de discuter plus amplement de vos besoins. Vous pouvez le contacter au numéro de téléphone suivant : 1 97 45 47 56. De toute manière, il sera dans votre région la semaine prochaine et passera très certainement vous voir.

Nous vous prions de croire, Messieurs, à l'expression de nos sentiments les plus dévoués.

Peter Bowles »<sup>1</sup>

### **2) Circulaire adressée aux entreprises de la région concernant les services immobiliers disponibles**

« Moulins, le 12 janvier 1999

À l'attention de tous les Directeurs de toutes les entreprises de la région  
d'Auvergne

Notre Réf. : CE/MB

Cher Collègue,

Mon associée, Anne Montaigu et moi-même vous adressons cette lettre afin de diffuser aussi largement que possible les services immobiliers que nous pouvons offrir aux entreprises de la région.

Depuis la création de cette entreprise en 1976, nous avons progressivement développé notre gamme d'activités et de clients. Nous venons d'ouvrir un centre d'informations à

*accès libre à Moulins destiné à tout membre du public désirant obtenir les dernières informations sur le marché immobilier.*

*En ce qui concerne les besoins particuliers des entreprises, nous pouvons offrir les services suivants :*

- *Une brochure hebdomadaire donnant tous les renseignements concernant les locaux à vendre et à louer ;*
- *Une liaison directe avec les établissements de financement ;*
- *Un service de gestion des locations ;*
- *Un cabinet de conseil en droit et assurances ;*
- *Une aide à l'obtention de prêts immobiliers ;*
- *Un soutien technique pour la planification de l'espace et la décoration ;*
- *Une base de données informatiques reliée au réseau immobilier national.*

*Nous pouvons mettre à votre disposition tous ces services et bien d'autres encore. N'hésitez pas à nous appeler dès aujourd'hui au 44 56 23 71 ou à nous rendre visite personnellement au 45 Avenue du Général Leclerc, Moulins, où le meilleur accueil vous sera réservé.*

*Dans cette attente, veuillez recevoir, cher Collègue, nos respectueuses salutations.*

*Charles Eluard »<sup>2</sup>*

### **3) Plainte au sujet de l'envoi des mauvaises marchandises**

*« Dessous Dessus  
14, rue Legrand,  
80000 Amiens,  
France*

*Wolverhampton, le 21 septembre 1999*

*À l'attention de Mr Malraux*

*Objet : facture no. 13322/08/92*

*Cher Monsieur,*

*Nous regrettons d'avoir à vous informer que les articles que vous nous avez envoyés le 25 août n'étaient pas ceux que nous avions commandés.*

*Nous vous demandons de bien vouloir vous reporter à notre commande (copie ci-jointe) et à votre facture (no. 13322/08/92). Vous verrez que les slips, jupons et soutiens-gorge ne sont pas de la taille, des couleurs et des qualités de tissus demandées.*

*Nous sommes vraiment étonnés d'avoir pu constater de telles erreurs alors que vous êtes d'habitude si compétents. Vous serait-il possible de nous contacter dans les plus brefs délais afin de pouvoir rectifier ce malentendu ?*

*Veillez agréer, cher Monsieur, l'expression de nos salutations distinguées.*

*Fred Smith*  
*Directeur*

*P.J. (1) : Copie de notre bon de commande »<sup>3</sup>*

Dans le premier type de lettre : **proposer ses services** nous observons que l'adresse du destinataire (qui comprend le nom du destinataire et l'adresse) est écrite dans la partie droite de la page. La date est mentionnée toujours dans la partie droite, sous l'adresse du destinataire. On précise d'abord la localité où la lettre a été rédigée et ensuite la date. On s'adresse au destinataire avec l'appellatif *Messieurs* parce qu'on ne connaît pas exactement son nom. La lettre comprend deux paragraphes : dans le premier on développe le contenu et le dernier paragraphe contient la formule de conclusion.

Dans le deuxième type de lettre : **circulaire adressée aux entreprises de la région concernant les services immobiliers disponibles** on précise tout d'abord la localité où la circulaire a été rédigée et ensuite la date. Les destinataires et leurs fonctions sont mentionnés d'une façon plus officielle en utilisant la formule : *à l'attention de*. Cette lettre comprend aussi des références qui précisent les codes. On s'adresse au destinataire avec l'appellatif *Cher collègue* parce que la lettre est adressée à un confrère.

Dans le troisième type de lettre : **plainte au sujet de l'envoi des mauvaises marchandises** on précise le nom du destinataire puisqu'il est connu. On mentionne aussi l'objet de la lettre qui est la facture *no. 13322/08/92*. On s'adresse au destinataire avec l'appellatif *Cher Monsieur* qui indique des liaisons amicales. La lettre comprend aussi une pièce jointe ou annexe où se trouve une *copie de notre bon de commande*.

En parcourant ces trois lettres modèles on se rend compte qu'une bonne lettre d'affaires doit être claire, logique, précise et courte. C'est pourquoi, on doit utiliser des phrases courtes (entre 8 et 16 mots) et des paragraphes courts (si c'est possible, moins de 6 lignes). La lettre d'affaires doit être structurée selon un schéma précis :

a) l'introduction (ici on doit faire référence à quelque chose d'antérieur : une facture, un mandat, une lettre) ex : *Nous avons bien enregistré votre commande du 14 courant et vous en remercions.*

b) le contenu qui sert à la présentation des faits proprement dits. Ex : *Cependant, nous tenons à vous signaler que des incidents techniques ont perturbé notre planning de fabrication. Nous ne pouvons donc pas vous livrer à la date prévue.*

c) la conclusion du contenu (dans ce paragraphe on décrit les conséquences pour le futur qui résultent des faits présentés dans le contenu) ex : *La livraison ne pourra avoir lieu que le ... au lieu du ...*

d) la conclusion (ici on exprime son désir, ses espérances et attentes). La conclusion est importante parce qu'elle souligne le ton de sa lettre. Ex : *Nous vous remercions d'avance de votre compréhension.*

e) la formule de salut est la continuation de la conclusion. Ex : *en vous remerciant de votre compréhension, nous vous adressons, Monsieur, nos salutations distinguées.* Les formules de fin d'une lettre sont très pompeuses. Mais elles font partie des règles de politesse et on doit leur accorder une importance spéciale même dans la correspondance d'affaires. La politesse est une condition essentielle pour une bonne affaire. C'est pourquoi on dit : *veuillez nous contacter*, et non pas *contactez-nous* : cette forme d'impératif est très sèche dans les lettres, mais est commune dans les annonces. L'impératif doit être évité dans les lettres d'affaires. Certainement, il peut être utilisé s'il n'exprime pas une commande, par exemple dans des expressions du type : *N'hésitez pas à nous contacter. Veuillez nous contacter.*

Dans une lettre d'affaires on peut utiliser le pronom personnel *je* ou *nous*. Si l'on choisit l'une de ces formes on doit l'utiliser jusqu'à la fin de la lettre. Il est préférable quand même d'utiliser la forme *nous* pour montrer qu'on est un employé de la firme et non pas son propriétaire.

En ce qui concerne les formes verbales dans la communication écrite en français des affaires il est préférable d'utiliser le présent. Si l'on doit utiliser le futur, il est préférable d'utiliser la forme simple. La formulation au futur, *le paiement devra s'effectuer* sonne plus poliment que la formulation au présent *le paiement doit s'effectuer*. Les temps passés, comme le passé récent ou le passé simple s'utilisent très rarement dans les lettres d'affaires. Le passé simple est une forme littéraire. Le passé récent se trouve seulement dans des expressions comme : *nous venons de recevoir, nous venons d'apprendre que.* Le temps imparfait exprime un état, un événement en déroulement : *les clients attendaient les articles.* Dans le cas des verbes réfléchis, le passé composé est formé avec *être* et le participe passé s'accorde différemment, si le pronom réfléchi est complément direct ou indirect. Ex : *Les directeurs commerciaux se sont rencontrés lors d'un déjeuner d'affaires.* (revoir quelqu'un : *se* est complément direct). *L'entreprise s'est connectée sur Internet.* (connecter quelque chose : *se* est complément direct). *Ils se sont envoyé des méls.* (envoyer quelque chose à quelqu'un : *se* est complément indirect, *des méls* est complément direct postposé). *L'assistante de direction s'est permis de rappeler le rendez-vous à son chef.* (permettre quelque chose à quelqu'un : *s'* est complément indirect ; *de rappeler le rendez-vous à son chef* est complément direct postposé). Dans les réclamations ou les refus on utilise surtout les formes impersonnelles. Ex : *Il s'avère qu'une erreur s'est glissée dans votre facture* est une formule plus polie que : *vous avez fait une erreur dans votre facture.* Le subjonctif est utilisé après les verbes qui expriment le désir ou la volonté : *je souhaiterais que la livraison me parvienne rapidement.* Mais après *j'espère que* on utilise l'indicatif. Après les expressions : *je suis sûr/certain que* on utilise le subjonctif si elles sont à la forme négative. Ex : *je ne suis pas sûre que cette offre soit avantageuse.* On utilise le subjonctif après les locutions : *pour que,*

*afin que, de manière que, de sorte que, de façon que.* Ex : *pour que nous puissions effectuer ce virement.* Quand deux verbes dans une proposition ont le même sujet, on peut utiliser le participe présent. Ex : *Nous référant à votre facture, nous vous informons que.* Si l'on désire décrire un événement irréel, improbable, on doit mettre le verbe de la proposition avec *si* au plus-que-parfait et le verbe de la proposition principale au conditionnel passé. S'il s'agit d'une présupposition très polie, qui est réaliste et probable (des adverbes comme *déjà, toutefois* indiquent la même chose), le verbe de la proposition principale est utilisé au présent. Ex : *Si vous aviez réglé la facture, nous ne vous aurions pas envoyé cette lettre de rappel. Si vous aviez, toutefois, réglé cette facture, nous vous demandons de ne pas tenir compte de cette relance.* On doit aussi respecter la concordance des temps. Ex : *Nous avons constaté que la qualité des articles livrés ne correspondait pas aux échantillons soumis. Nous constatons que la qualité des articles livrés ne correspond pas aux échantillons soumis.* En ce qui concerne la diathèse, dans la lettre d'affaires la diathèse active est préférable. Des expressions comme : *la documentation vous a été envoyée, la marchandise vous sera livrée* semblent moins personnelles et on ne les recommande pas.

Pour indiquer un intervalle de temps on utilise les conjonctions : *comme, lorsque, quand.* Si l'on veut exprimer un motif on utilise : *comme, étant donné que, parce que.* Ex : *Comme je serai absent le 8 mai, je ne pourrai pas participer à la réunion.* La présentation d'un motif ne doit pas commencer par *parce que* ; il est plus simple d'utiliser : *en raison de, à cause de* plus un substantif. Ex : *à cause d'un voyage d'affaires.*

En conclusion, la communication écrite en français des affaires doit atteindre des objectifs clairement définis. Il y a des contraintes dans la formulation et la présentation. Certaines phrases sont figées, les formules de politesse notamment. Les relations entre les firmes, celles avec les fournisseurs ou avec les clients présupposent beaucoup de gentillesse. La manifestation du désaccord se fait poliment, au moins au début. Les appellatifs *Monsieur, Madame, Mademoiselle* ne sont pas utilisés pour flatter, mais pour montrer du respect. La lettre d'affaires est souvent la vitrine de votre entreprise et l'image que se font de vous vos fournisseurs et vos clients peut en dépendre.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Williams Stuart, Nathalie McAndrew-Cazorla (1999), *Franceza pentru oamenii de afaceri*, București : Teora, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, p. 211.

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## **La Francia de la Resistencia en una novela de Juan Manuel de Prada**

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**RÉSUMÉ :** *La France de la Résistance dans un roman de Juan Manuel de Prada*

Dans le roman *Le septième voile*, Juan Manuel de Prada réalise une magnifique évocation de la France pendant la Résistance. Tout en respectant les règles du genre, il mélange des personnages et des événements réels, avec des personnages et des événements fictifs, mais tout est très véridique. D'autre part, il ne parle pas seulement de sabotages, de déportations et d'horreurs de la guerre, mais il reconstitue en même temps l'esprit de l'époque, en mentionnant des auteurs qu'on lisait et des chansons en vogue. La géographie, elle aussi, est très exacte, qu'il s'agisse des villages traversés par les personnages, ou bien des rues parisiennes. On remarque une documentation minutieuse de l'auteur.

**MOTS-CLÉS :** *France, la Résistance, Juan Manuel de Prada, roman*

La novela histórica tiene una gloriosa tradición literaria. Se considera normalmente que la novela histórica apareció a finales del siglo XVII y los autores más importantes de la época eran Madame de Lafayette y César Vichard de Saint-Réal. Pero el género ha tentado más tarde plumas famosas, como las de Walter Scott, Alexandre Dumas, Henryk Sienkiewicz, Valerio Massimo Manfredi, Marguerite Yourcenar, Amin Maalouf, o Umberto Eco. Y de esta manera ha conseguido sobrevivir, hoy en día se siguen escribiendo novelas que evocan acontecimientos históricos.

Estos autores tienen que asentar los cimientos de su construcción sobre una documentación nada superficial, y las novelas tratan de parecer verosímiles con respecto a la verdad histórica, aunque se mezclan generalmente acontecimientos y personas reales y ficticios.

Pero hay maneras y maneras de mezclar las cosas y de aturdir al lector. Se suele citar la famosa afirmación de Alejandro Dumas: "*Il est permis de violer l'histoire, à condition de lui faire un enfant.*".

Juan Manuel de Prada en *El séptimo velo* (2007) toma como decorado la Francia de la Resistencia. El autor confiesa haber leído *La France des années noires* de Jean-Pierre Azéma y François Bédarida, *Histoire de la Résistance* de

François-Georges Dreyfus. Se ha documentado también en cuanto a la fábrica Renault de Billancourt y a la figura de Henri Lafont.

Se observa la honestidad del autor español, quien presta atención al mínimo detalle. Se puede decir que Juan Manuel de Prada realiza aquí un trabajo de joyero. Se lee en la novela la descripción del desfile de las tropas alemanas cuyos soldados visten muy correctamente y están muy limpios, la narración de los sabotajes, la evocación de los discursos del general De Gaulle, de la conquista de París, etc. El autor introduce, por supuesto, personajes ficticios al lado de los personajes históricos. Pero Juan Manuel de Prada cuida las cosas aparentemente insignificantes: menciona las novelas que se leían en aquel entonces, o las canciones que se cantaban.

Presenta el principio de la ocupación, la admiración de Hitler por París y el asombro de los soldados alemanes que se quedan sorprendidos al vagar por las calles de la capital francesa. El autor menciona una de las hipótesis históricas sobre las conjeturas que salvaron la capital francesa de la destrucción. En la época, los alemanes eran amables con los franceses, los soldados alemanes ayudaban a las mujeres, o regalaban chocolate a los niños, pero al mismo tiempo no se olvidaban de saquear Francia, los trenes se iban a Alemania con todos los recursos. No había más carbón, papel, cerillas... Pero la cortesía de los alemanes había vencido las reticencias de los franceses, había ganado su confianza. Por eso, los judíos que habían abandonado antes el país, volvieron a París. Desafortunadamente, fueron enviados más tarde a los campos de concentración. El episodio de la deportación aparece en la novela, el autor describe la muchedumbre obligada a salir de su casa sin haber tenido tiempo para vestirse, la gente en pijama, o en bata, con pantuflas. Casi todos llevaban la estrella judía. Juan Manuel de Prada evoca también la reacción de los transeúntes franceses, es decir la cobardía de los transeúntes franceses, que no manifestaron su compasión, sino todo lo contrario, se pusieron a cantar una versión antijudía y blasfema de la *Marsellesa*, que circulaba en la época:

Amour sacré à la patrie,  
conduis, soutiens nos bras vainqueurs.  
France, notre France chérie,  
combat avec tes défenseurs,  
aux juifs fais mordre la poussière,  
fais rendre gorge à ces voleurs  
de notre or et de notre honneur,  
puis chasse-les hors la frontière.  
Aux armes, antijuifs, formez vos bataillons,  
marchons, marchons,  
qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons.<sup>1</sup>

Jules, el protagonista, tiene que viajar a Cherburgo y durante el viaje lee una novela de Drieu La Rochelle (1893-1945), un escritor colaboracionista de la época, director de la *Nouvelle Revue Française* bajo la Ocupación.

Uno de los combatientes de la Resistencia tiene una bella voz de barítono y empieza a cantar *La chanson du maçon*, que canta mejor que Maurice Chevalier. En la novela se puede leer parte de la letra en francés:

Un maçon chantait une chanson, là haut sur le toit d'une maison,  
Et la voix de l'homme s'envola pour se poser par là comme un oiseau  
Sur la voix d'un autre maçon qui reprit la chanson sur le toit voisin de la maison...  
Et quand reviendra la belle saison, nous serons des millions de maçons à chanter sur  
le toit de nos maisons.<sup>2</sup>

Resistentes que son conducidos hacia Mont Valérien para ser ejecutados cantan durante el trayecto *Le chant du départ*:

La République nous appelle,  
sachons vaincre ou sachons périr;  
un Français doit vivre pour elle,  
pour elle un Français doit mourir.<sup>3</sup>

El día de la liberación de París es descrito de esta manera: «Amaneció sobre París con una luz neta, como si el sol deseara abreviar los trámites de su advenimiento; los miembros de la *troupe* circense, que en sus expediciones por las poblaciones en las que asentaban su campamento solían congregarse en su derredor a una multitud de curiosos, a causa de sus vestimentas abigarradas y su aire de cingaros, pasaban esta vez desapercibidos entre los parisinos que, para sacudirse el recuerdo de tantos años luctuosos, habían elegido sus prendas más domingueras o decididamente carnalescas, entre las que no podían faltar los colores de la enseña nacional, a veces en tablillas prendidas a las faldas, o en franjas cosidas a los jerseys, o en lazos anudados al cabello, o en escarapelas que ondeaban en los ojales de las chaquetas. Una multitud madrugadora (o quizá más bien insomne, como ellos mismos) los empujó hacia la plaza de la Concordia; en la fachada ciclópea del Ministerio de Marina se echaban en falta unas pocas columnas, roídas por el fuego de los morteros. Algunos Panzer calcinados se dispersaban por aquella vastedad arquitectónica, con la carrocería aún humeante, como cucarachas a las que Dios hubiese prendido fuego, después de rociar con gasolina. Al lado del Sena, que bajaba cenagoso y cárdeno, arrastrando el barro y la sangre de las trincheras, descansaba otro tanque abrasado, en esta ocasión un Sherman de la División Leclerc, convertido ya en un improvisado altar por los transeúntes que depositaban a su vera ofrendas florales y cirios que esparcían un olor de colmena derretida. Alguien había escrito con tiza, sobre la chapa renegrida, la siguiente inscripción: “Ici sont morts trois soldats Français”. Quizá fueran senegaleses, o espahíes, o republicanos españoles, pero ya De Gaulle había proclamado que quienes luchan por Francia son hijos de Francia.<sup>4</sup>

Obviamente, la alegría de los franceses no tiene límites. Todo el mundo es feliz de poder lucir la bandera nacional:

El cielo era de un añil que escocía los ojos, mitad glorioso y mitad sombrío; de las ventanas de las casas, abiertas de par en par para limpiar los microbios del colaboracionismo, brotaba un barullo de voces radiofónicas, entre la arenga y el responso. [...] Una multitud expectante y vocinglera, deseosa de aclamar a sus héroes, se había congregado a ambos lados del camino que llevaba desde el Arco de Triunfo hasta Notre Dame, cruzando el Sena por el puente d'Arcole. [...] Había gente en los balcones y ventanas de los edificios que flanqueaban el itinerario; los más osados, incluso, se habían encaramado a los tejados, o trepaban a los árboles y a las farolas, desde donde hacían ondear banderas tricolores. [...] Apenas cuatro meses antes, aquella misma muchedumbre (o una porción nada exigua de la misma, al menos) había recibido con idéntico alborozo al mariscal Pétain, a quien ayer consideraban un salvador y hoy de buen grado hubiesen apaleado.<sup>5</sup>

Pero no habían olvidado a los colaboracionistas, quienes durante la guerra no habían ocultado su simpatía por Alemania y habían ayudado a los soldados de Hitler. Habían sufrido mucho, y la venganza tenía que ser equivalente. Jules Tillon, el protagonista de la novela, tiene una hermana, Thérèse, quien había colaborado de manera “horizontal” con los invadientes, como dice el autor. Cuando acaban las hostilidades Thérèse tiene que soportar la rabia de sus compatriotas. Volviendo a su casa, Jules encuentra sobre su casa la cruz gamada y ve a su madre en un estado deplorable:

Llamaron a la puerta, pero nadie acudió a abrirles; sin embargo, les pareció oír un murmullo claudicante, agitado de sollozos, como de quien sólo aspira a que le dejen morir en paz. Jules se decidió a entrar; una mesa patas arriba y fragmentos de loza entorpecían el movimiento de la puerta. Apenas sus ojos se habituaron a la penumbra, pudieron distinguir otros muebles volcados sobre el suelo, cajones esparcidos aquí y allá, colchones destripados, un desorden de ropas hechas un gurrño. Sortearon los obstáculos que surgían a su paso, hasta llegar a la habitación del fondo, de donde procedía aquel llanto exhausto. Usando como parapeto un armario ropero que también había sido derribado y concienzudamente saqueado, se agazapaba una mujerica con la cabeza pelona, desnuda de cintura para arriba; en los senos alguien le había dibujado con tizne sendas cruces gamadas.<sup>6</sup>

Jules tiene que ir a Drancy a buscar a su hermana, y ahí tiene la ocasión de ver a las prostitutas de Henri Lafont torturadas por los vencedores:

La reata de mujeres pasó a su lado, como un séquito fantasmal o una procesión de penitentes. Sobre sus carnes sazonadas por el vicio las huellas de la tortura parecían acaso más lacerantes. Habían sido violadas, sometidas a descargas eléctricas y termocauterios; a alguna, incluso, la habían arrancado los pezones, y de sus senos brotaba una sangre exhausta, como el residuo de una lactancia carnívora. Eran esclavas – lo delataba su esbeltez de aves zancudas y una mirada en la que parecía cobijarse el frío de la estepa –, hijas seguramente de aquellos rusos blancos, prófugos de la revolución bolchevique, que se habían instalado en Billancourt y otros suburbios de París. Una de ellas se detuvo ante Jules; tenía unos ojos grandes, como de mosaico bizantino, de un color gris con irisaciones de nácar, y unos

pómulos que se adivinaban patricios, pese a la tumefacción causada por los golpes. Sus labios, que habían sido hechos para la tarea de los besos, estaban partidos en varios lugares; una costra de sangre reseca suplantaba el carmín.<sup>7</sup>

Estas venganzas en contra de las jóvenes que habían tenido relaciones con los alemanes son un hecho histórico, y otros escritores las habían mencionado antes (por ejemplo, Marguerite Duras en *Hiroshima, mon amour*). La misma saña justiciera selló de alguna manera la carrera de la famosa actriz Arletty, cuyo nombre se menciona de pasada hacia el final de la novela de Juan Manuel de Prada. Arletty se había enamorado también de un oficial alemán. Juan Manuel de Prada afirma con razón que tanto Arletty como Maurice Chevalier habían actuado en espectáculos para los alemanes.

La geografía es siempre exacta, los nombres de los pueblos atravesados por el circo de Fidel Estrada, y también los cafés o las calles de París. El desfile de las tropas alemanas está muy bien situado en el mapa de París:

Vio desfilar por los Campos Elíseos, con infinito espanto e infinita lástima, el mejor ejército del mundo. Las divisiones de la Wehrmacht confluyeron en el Arco del triunfo desde las avenidas de Wagram y Friedland, después de que sus generales rindieran un homenaje ante la tumba del Soldado Desconocido, que previamente habían escarnecido izando la bandera roja con la cruz gamada. Luego continuaron su avance por las avenidas de la Grande-Armée y Cléber, siguiendo exactamente el mismo itinerario que veintiún años atrás habían cubierto las triunfantes tropas francesas, al mando del mariscal Joffre.<sup>8</sup>

Uno de los monumentos parisinos evocados es Notre Dame. Al principio de la guerra, tiene lugar una misa en la catedral, los parisinos piden a Dios que proteja Francia:

El atrio de la catedral estaba abarrotado de gentes venidas de todos los distritos de París, por una vez desentendidas de los prejuicios clasistas, ajenas a la llovizna que había empezado a caer, como un llanto pudibundo. Cubierta de sacos terreros, la fachada de Notre-Dame parecía un baluarte a punto de rendirse.<sup>9</sup>

La gente escucha con gran devoción las palabras del vicario. El autor no deja escapar la posibilidad de observar que en tiempos felices se olvidaban de Dios. Hay también una procesión dirigida por las autoridades, y llevan el estandarte de Juana de Arco, para que la heroína de otra guerra acuda también en su ayuda:

Cuando concluyó la ceremonia, las autoridades encabezaron la procesión que recorrió la nave central antes de salir al atrio, encabezada por el estandarte de Juana de Arco, blanco con flores de lis bordadas en oro y los nombres de Jesús y María que la Doncella de Orléans invocaba, antes de adentrarse en el fragor del combate. Jules sintió repugnancia por aquellos gobernantes que presumían de laicos pero no vacilaban en prosternarse llorosos ante las reliquias de la santa, rogando que les fuera concedida la gracia que no merecían. Juana de Arco sabía que la plegaria

fortalece el ánimo; pero tras rezar ordenaba que le pusieran armadura y arreciaba contra el enemigo. Aquellos petimetres, en cambio, se arrodillaban ante el peligro y no se levantaban para hacerle frente. El desprecio que le provocaban semejantes ineptos le crecía como una mata de ortigas mientras se sucedían las invocaciones a la cohorte celestial, que la congregación repetía como si de un ensalmo se tratara.<sup>10</sup>

De una novela de esta envergadura no podía faltar la descripción realista y conmovedora de un campo de concentración:

André vio a los reclusos supervivientes, con sus raídos uniformes a rayas, como espectros reducidos al esqueleto, radiografías de hombre sin fuerzas para dar un paso, sin fuerzas siquiera para articular palabra; vio los montículos de cadáveres, como muñecos desmadejados y pestilentes; vio morir ante sus ojos a algunos infortunados después de engullir con voracidad las viandas que los liberadores les repartían, porque sus estómagos, amnésicos de sus funciones digestivas, no pudieron soportar el atracón; vio los barracones infestados de parásitos, alfombrados de heces, donde se mezclaban los cadáveres y los agonizantes; sólo se les podía distinguir porque sobre estos últimos burbujaban a millares las chinches, disputándose la última gota de su sangre expoliada. La mayoría de los internos de Bergen-Belsen eran judíos; primero habían sido despojados de su patrimonio, empleado para sufragar la maquinaria bélica, cuando no para colmar la codicia de sus captores; después habían sido exprimidos hasta el último depósito de sus fuerzas en trabajos extenuados o abyectos; ya por último, se les había sometido a vejaciones impronunciadas, antes de su abandono definitivo, sin provisiones, sin agua, en condiciones de insalubridad extrema, mientras sus carceleros ponían pies en polvorosa. La contemplación de aquel espectáculo de humanidad reducida a viruta provocó en André algo más que una conmoción: fue como si el entero universo se hubiese vaciado de repente, convirtiéndose en una inmensa cáscara habitada por la nada metafísica, una nada que engullía las almas de los hombres, también la suya propia, las masticaba y evacuaba, convertidas en detritus cósmico.<sup>11</sup>

Se puede decir que Juan Manuel de Prada hace una evocación muy respetuosa de la Francia de la Resistencia. Según las reglas del género, mezcla personajes y acontecimientos reales con personajes y acontecimientos ficticios, pero todo es muy verosímil. Además, no habla sólo de sabotajes, de deportaciones y de horrores de la guerra, sino reconstituye a la vez el espíritu de la época, evocando los autores que se leían y las canciones de moda.

## NOTAS

<sup>1</sup> Juan Manuel de Prada (2007), *El séptimo velo*, Barcelona: Seix Barral, p. 455.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, p. 443.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, p. 500.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, p. 100.

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*, p. 111.

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, p. 122.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem*, p. 381.

<sup>9</sup> *Idem*, p. 371.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*, p. 372.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem*, p. 534.

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## **Les mineurs en prison : une étude sociologique sur un public éloigné de la lecture**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Minors in Prison: A Sociological Study on a Public that Keeps Away from Reading*

The study of minor prisoners who compose a particular public, one that is far away from a literary notion of reading and that represents a limited case, allows to question reading regarding its functioning. In front of their way of appropriating texts, and even in front of the nature of these texts, as most of them do not belong to cultured literature, and not even to legitimate writing forms, a deconstruction of the ordinary definition of reading is necessary – definition that tends to take more interest in socially valued readings, literary or scholar readings – in order to reflect on discredited reading practices. The choice of the works that are read indicates the prevalence of visual, television or cinematographic culture. Indeed, most novels which minors read are either novelizations, or novels adapted to films, and of which they have seen the filmed version. The imprisoned minors belong both to the childhood universe and to the universe of adulthood. It is striking to notice in their discourse a part of the adult who is accustomed to the judicial system and to its functioning, a part that lies next to the childhood that expresses itself through the leisure given by readings, plastic activities and games. The readings that are preferred by these young prisoners involve what we could call proximity texts, which means writings (or images) which are associated to their daily life, represented by newspapers and correspondence. The researched finality is not inscribed in a sacralized relationship with writing and cultivated culture, but it reveals self management and the relationship of the self with the world.

**KEYWORDS:** *lecture, prison, minors*

En 1994 nous avons réalisé une recherche sur la lecture en prison<sup>1</sup>, au cours de laquelle nous avons fait une étude de terrain pendant six mois, où nous avons été confrontés à des publics pour le moins éloignés des pratiques cultivées et littéraires de la lecture. Cette recherche nous a conduits à nous interroger sur un public pour qui la lecture représente un univers totalement étranger, réduite souvent à quelques (mauvais) souvenirs scolaires, et qui se retrouve malgré lui confronté aux livres. L'intérêt pour la lecture en milieu carcéral est diversifié, dépendant de facteurs aussi bien sociaux que pénitentiaires<sup>2</sup>. C'est ainsi que le



volume de lecture des détenus varie selon le type d'établissement dans lequel ils sont incarcérés, selon l'offre de lecture proposée (si l'établissement est doté d'une bibliothèque en accès direct ou en accès libre dans laquelle le détenu peut se rendre pour y consulter les livres qu'il souhaite emporter en cellule, ou d'une bibliothèque fermée qui s'apparente davantage à un entrepôt et où la sélection des livres se fait en cellule à l'aide d'un catalogue recensant les titres des livres disponibles) et les conditions de détention (cellule individuelle ou partagée). La durée de la peine joue aussi un rôle important, surtout dans la création de nouveaux lecteurs. Les détenus qui, non-lecteurs à l'extérieur s'initient à la lecture en prison, sont en général des condamnés à de moyennes ou de longues peines (trois ans minimum) pour qui la lecture s'inscrit dans une gestion du temps. La lecture est souvent considérée comme une activité carcérale comme une autre, qui aide à supporter la détention en favorisant une mise entre parenthèses de cet espace-temps, contraint. Outre la lecture-évasion, deux autres finalités de la lecture apparaissent en prison. Le livre aide à une recomposition de soi et de son identité fragmentée : ceci explique l'immense succès rencontré par les biographies, avec une préférence pour celles liées à l'univers de la prison et du judiciaire, ainsi qu'à l'intérêt porté aux essais de sciences humaines. La dernière finalité présente un rapport pragmatique à la lecture, où le livre devient un instrument de préparation à la sortie, un support d'information sur le monde extérieur ou un outil d'apprentissage (d'un métier ou en vue d'un diplôme). Cette rapide présentation des principaux résultats de notre recherche s'applique essentiellement au public majoritaire en prison : les adultes, et concerne aussi bien les hommes que les femmes. Si l'on constate des différences sexuelles dans les lectures, elles n'apparaissent pas dans les processus généraux d'appropriation du livre. Par contre, on constate une nette différence dans le rapport avec la lecture qu'entretiennent les mineurs. Ils forment une population carcérale nettement détachée des adultes, du fait de leur statut judiciaire à part et aussi de la distance qu'ils entretiennent avec la lecture. Des différentes populations pénales que nous avons pu rencontrer, ce sont ceux qui sont les plus éloignés de la lecture, tout du moins d'une conception herméneutique<sup>3</sup> de la lecture. Le mode de construction et d'appropriation des textes diffère de celui d'une lecture cultivée ou scolaire. Ces textes ne font pas forcément l'objet d'une lecture de type exégèse mais sont utilisés dans un rapport pragmatique avec l'environnement du lecteur. Ils n'ont pas besoin pour faire sens d'être référés à d'autres lectures, mais s'ancrent dans la quotidienneté non scripturale du lecteur.

L'étude des détenus mineurs qui composent un public particulier, très éloigné d'une conception littéraire de la lecture et qui représente un cas limite, permet d'interroger la lecture sur son fonctionnement. Face à leurs modes d'appropriation des textes et à la nature même de ces textes, qui pour la plupart n'appartiennent pas à la culture littéraire cultivée ni même à des formes scripturales légitimées, une déconstruction de la définition ordinaire de la lecture – qui tend à s'intéresser davantage à des lectures socialement valorisées, textes littéraires ou textes savants – s'impose pour réfléchir sur des pratiques lectorales déconsidérées.

## **1. La place des mineurs dans le système pénal**

En 1992, on dénombrait 545 détenus de moins de dix-huit ans, ce qui équivaut à 1,1 % de la population pénale, dont 422 prévenus et 123 condamnés<sup>4</sup>. Cette faible proportion ne doit pas occulter les spécificités de ce public et l'intérêt qui en résulte. Des interviews couplées avec de l'observation nous ont permis de construire les pratiques culturelles de ces adolescents, issus de milieux très défavorisés, pratiques fondées sur une culture visuelle de masse, la télévision figurant le loisir premier. Leur faible activité lectorale est en interaction constante avec leur culture (télé)visuelle. Etudier la lecture chez les mineurs incarcérés favorise une approche de ceux que l'on nomme les faibles lecteurs et permet d'interroger les composantes de cette pratique précaire<sup>5</sup>.

Les mineurs rencontrés sont essentiellement des garçons. Il n'existe pas de quartiers pour mineurs dans les établissements pénitentiaires, en raison du faible nombre de délinquantes emprisonnées<sup>6</sup>. D'une part la délinquance féminine est plus faible que la délinquance masculine, d'autre part les filles font l'objet d'un traitement judiciaire plus souple. Les quelques mineures incarcérées le sont dans des prisons pour femmes et y sont soumises au même régime que les adultes. Eu égard au nombre ténu de mineures interviewées, cet article se centrera sur les lectures masculines.

Les détenus mineurs sont considérés en raison de leur âge<sup>7</sup> comme à part dans l'univers carcéral. Ils doivent passer leur séjour en détention séparés des adultes, dans un quartier spécialement aménagé pour eux dans une maison d'arrêt<sup>8</sup>. Ils sont donc isolés du reste de la détention et possèdent une bibliothèque qui leur est propre, ne pouvant se rendre dans celle des adultes. Les mineurs représentent un univers particulier dans le milieu carcéral, lié à leur statut juridique mais aussi à leur niveau socio-culturel qui est très bas. Nous avons rencontré un nombre important d'adolescents soit illettrés soit faiblement pourvus de compétences lectorales qui leur permettaient simplement de déchiffrer à grand peine les gros titres des journaux ou des revues.

## **2. Un éloignement d'avec la culture livresque**

### *2.1. Le rapport texte/image*

Les mineurs sont peu nombreux à lire. De surcroît, ceux qui lisent, lisent peu. Rares sont ceux qui détiennent des compétences lectorales leur permettant de rentrer aisément dans un texte. La majorité d'entre eux entretient un rapport éloigné avec l'écrit. Les seules expériences de lecture de texte ayant été vécues lors de leur scolarité, ils ont donc un rapport contraint avec le livre, où la lecture n'est pas liée au plaisir mais à la contrainte et à la difficulté. L'apprentissage de la lecture étant pour la majorité à la fois douloureux et incomplet, ils ont cessé de lire, leur scolarité terminée. L'incarcération les fait renouer et avec l'écrit et avec le livre, par le biais d'une rescolarisation<sup>9</sup> (voire même d'une première scolarisation,

car nous avons rencontré des adolescents qui n'ont jamais été scolarisés) à laquelle s'ajoute la présence de livres et de magazines sur des thèmes qui les intéressent dans une salle qui leur est réservée. Cette bibliothèque de détention fait aussi office de salle de cours et de lieu de réunion.

L'éloignement avec le culturel et le lectoral se manifeste à travers leur méconnaissance des désignations. Ainsi ils sont nombreux à appeler « livre » l'imprimé en général ; ce terme recouvre à la fois les livres réels mais aussi les magazines et les revues. L'auteur leur semble également une notion floue : à la question « *Attachez-vous de l'importance à l'auteur ?* » un adolescent de 17 ans, qui faisait partie des lecteurs et possédait une certaine maîtrise lectorale, a répondu par une autre question « *L'auteur, c'est celui qui l'a écrit ?* ». Cette méconnaissance s'avère typique de ceux qui sont issus d'une culture de l'oral et non de l'écrit. Ils viennent d'un milieu social et familial où l'écrit n'est pas valorisé et où la transmission des savoirs se fait plus de façon orale que scripturale.

On rencontre un petit nombre de lecteurs de romans, chez ceux qui sont dotés d'une certaine maîtrise des compétences lectorales. Pour pouvoir apprécier le texte, il est nécessaire d'être à l'aise dans le déchiffrement. Ces lecteurs de romans étaient déjà des lecteurs à l'extérieur, c'est-à-dire qu'ils entretiennent préalablement à leur incarcération une familiarité avec le livre, même s'il s'agit de faibles lecteurs. Les adolescents lecteurs de romans n'appartiennent pas à la catégorie de ceux qui découvrent la lecture en détention.

Le choix des ouvrages lus témoigne de la prégnance d'une culture visuelle, télévisuelle ou cinématographique. En effet, la plupart des romans que les mineurs lisent sont soit des novellisations, soit des romans adaptés en film, et dont ils ont vu la version filmée. Ils connaissent bien souvent déjà l'histoire avant d'ouvrir le livre. Il s'agit essentiellement de « romans d'action », tout comme l'on parle de films d'action. Ils racontent la quête musclée et aventureuse d'un héros, plus rarement d'une héroïne. Les titres fréquemment cités sont : *Conan le Barbare*, *Indiana Jones*, *Le silence des agneaux*. Les livres lus s'inscrivent dans les genres policier, fantastique, science-fiction, aventure, tous des genres qui ont leur pendant cinématographique. Ces adolescents essaient de retrouver dans un livre les sensations et les émotions que leur procure un film. Alors que les adultes lisent aussi des romans policiers, la lecture de romans fantastiques et de science-fiction est propre aux mineurs, ainsi que le goût pour les romans d'aventures. Ces trois types de récits présentent la particularité d'ouvrir l'imaginaire sur des univers fictifs très éloignés du quotidien et la réalité du lecteur. Ils offrent une plage de divertissement et favorisent une évasion cognitive. Ils s'inscrivent dans les récits initiatiques dont sont friands les adolescents. Si les mineurs incarcérés acquièrent rapidement une logique pénitentiaire et mettent en place les mêmes stratégies qu'un adulte habitué à l'enfermement, dans leurs lectures s'exprime leur jeunesse. Elle se manifeste aussi dans le fait de lire des romans dont ils connaissent l'histoire, l'ayant vue sur grand ou petit écran. Cette redondance lectorale est typique de l'univers enfantin, où les enfants aiment lire et relire la même histoire. Elle apporte un plaisir sans cesse renouvelé et rassure en même temps. La relecture

réduit la prise de risque quant à la déception ; le lecteur s'aventurant en terrain connu, il n'a pas à craindre d'avoir fait le mauvais choix, d'avoir choisi un livre décevant qui ne correspondra pas à ses attentes. « *Des fois, je prends des livres qui parlent de films, de films que j'ai déjà vus, comme je sais que l'acteur principal, c'est intéressant ce qu'il faisait, ça me donne plus envie de le lire jusqu'au bout* ».

La prégnance du visuel et du filmique traverse leur discours sur les livres. Le roman est envisagé comme une fiction visuelle, et le héros de l'histoire devient « *le rôle de l'acteur principal dans le livre* ».

Si l'écrit tient une faible part dans la culture des jeunes détenus, il n'en est pas de même de l'image. Leur culture est avant tout une culture visuelle, voire télévisuelle. La plupart d'entre eux sont des non-lecteurs à l'extérieur. Le fait d'être entourés de livres dans leur salle de réunion qui fait office de bibliothèque et de salle de classe suscite une certaine curiosité à l'égard de l'imprimé. Ils sont attirés par les magazines et les livres comportant des illustrations. Les ouvrages les plus lus, ou tout du moins feuilletés, sont les « années » sportives, telles *L'année du football* ou *L'année de la boxe*, récapitulatifs imagés des événements sportifs d'une année particulière, ainsi que le *Livre des records*, qui outre des illustrations comprend des textes courts relatant des exploits insolites ou grotesques. L'attraction de ce livre réside dans l'effet d'étonnement et d'amusement qu'il suscite. On retrouve en commun avec les détenus adultes l'intérêt pour le sport, intérêt qui est aussi très vif à l'extérieur.

Les bandes dessinées ont aussi beaucoup de succès mais cela concerne les bandes dessinées que l'on nomme « classiques », comme *Tintin* ou *Boule et Bill*, c'est-à-dire la plupart du temps des bandes dessinées enfantines. Il s'agit surtout de bandes dessinées humoristiques. Les mineurs apprécient *Astérix* qui les amuse beaucoup, alors qu'ils sont dépourvus de toute référence à la culture latine et ainsi ne saisissent pas pleinement le sens des jeux de mots ou allusions dont ces récits abondent. L'étude de ce public montre qu'il n'est pas nécessaire de maîtriser pleinement les références contenues dans un texte pour en jouir. Le plaisir du texte peut résider ailleurs que dans les intentions premières de l'auteur. Les mineurs trouvent leur compte dans des sens autres qu'ils construisent selon leur propre univers de références.

Ces types d'ouvrages illustrés présentent un double attrait pour des faibles ou des non-lecteurs, lié au texte et aux images. Ils ne requièrent pas de lecture suivie et possèdent de multiples entrées. Ils sont adaptés à une lecture fragmentée, mode d'appropriation du texte idéal pour des faibles lecteurs. Les textes courts, qui commentent souvent des images, facilitent une lecture à haute voix, qu'effectue un détenu pour ceux qui ne lisent pas. Cette forme de sociabilité autour d'un livre est bien souvent une première expérience pour la plupart de ces détenus. Ils découvrent en prison que la matérialité du livre peut conduire à des rapports de coopération et de solidarité. En outre les images ne repoussent pas les mineurs illettrés. Même sans compétences scolaires lectorales, ils peuvent participer au plaisir du livre et à sa manipulation. Le livre d'objet étranger parce que pensé inaccessible devient peu à peu un objet familier qui s'intègre dans leur univers

carcéral. Cette intégration dans le carcéral amène également à considérer la lecture comme une activité carcérale parmi tant d'autres, chez les détenus non-lecteurs à l'extérieur. Aussi, rompent-ils tout rapport avec les livres lors de leur sortie, cette activité n'ayant plus lieu d'être.

Les magazines, qui proposent à la fois une lecture fragmentée et des illustrations, intéressent beaucoup les mineurs incarcérés. Parmi ceux qui les attirent le plus se trouvent les programmes télévisés. Ils font l'objet d'une lecture et d'une relecture attentives. « Le truc du Canal Plus, le programme, même je l'ai lu six fois, je vais le relire encore. » Ils lisent et relisent les mêmes articles pour s'en imprégner pleinement, sans s'en lasser. *Télé 7 jours* reste le magazine télévisé le plus lu. Ils lisent non seulement les programmes mais aussi les articles, les « potins » sur les vedettes. Cela prolonge leur plaisir de téléspectateur, et par l'anticipation des programmes à venir et par la connaissance de la vie hors plateau des personnalités du petit écran. Ils prennent aussi des nouvelles de ces vedettes par la lecture de la presse à scandale. Ils sont amateurs de ragots concernant les célébrités.

Mais, tout comme chez les adultes, c'est la presse régionale qui est la plus lue, et plus précisément une rubrique particulière : les faits divers. Cela leur permet d'obtenir des renseignements sur ce qui se passe à l'extérieur, dans leur quartier et de s'informer de leurs amis, de savoir où en sont les alliances et les conflits et ainsi de ne pas être complètement exclus de la vie extérieure.

Ces adolescents entretiennent un rapport ambigu avec les magazines dit de charme (*Play-boy*, *Penthouse*). Ils sont à la fois attirés par, mais en même temps choqués de voir que telle starlette ou actrice ose poser dévêtue. Ils les regardent tout en se moquant d'eux-mêmes. Ils tentent de maintenir un contact distancé avec leur sexualité ; ils sont à un âge où les tabous engendrés par leur éducation sont les plus vivaces. Les magazines de charme sont tolérés dans le quartier des mineurs. Ils se les procurent par la « cantine », terme qui désigne l'achat d'objets divers dont des revues à l'intérieur de la prison. Par contre, les revues pornographiques sont formellement interdites en vertu de la loi sur la protection des mineurs. De même, le canal télévisé interne de la prison ne diffuse pas de film pornographique, tandis que les établissements pénitentiaires recevant un public composé uniquement d'adultes en proposent régulièrement.

## *2.2. Les mineurs en prison : entre enfance et âge adulte*

Les mineurs incarcérés appartiennent à la fois à l'univers de l'enfance et à celui de l'âge adulte. Il est frappant de constater dans leur discours une part de l'adulte habitué au système judiciaire et à son fonctionnement qui voisine avec une part de l'enfance qui s'exprime dans les loisirs à travers les lectures, les activités plastiques et les jeux. Ainsi nous avons rencontré des adolescents de 17 ans, dont c'était la première incarcération mais qui avaient déjà fréquenté les tribunaux, vivant leur enfermement comme des vieux habitués de la prison, élaborant des stratégies visant à réduire leur peine. C'est ainsi qu'ils participent à toutes les

activités culturelles, non par intérêt réel pour ce qui est proposé mais parce que cela leur donne des points supplémentaires pour une libération anticipée. Ils ont développé une logique carcérale témoignant de leur adaptation à ce milieu, que l'on rencontre chez des détenus plus âgés et souvent multirécidivistes.

Parallèlement à cela, ils font montre d'une quasi-naïveté enfantine dans leur univers imaginaire. Ils aiment les récits (écrits ou filmés) dont la structure relève de celle du conte merveilleux<sup>10</sup>, qui mettent en scène la quête d'un héros semée d'embûches et revêtent souvent la forme de récits initiatiques. Ce genre d'histoires s'écarte complètement des lectures des adultes. Ces derniers apprécient grandement les « *romans vrais* »<sup>11</sup> et les histoires vécues ; ils recherchent des récits ancrés dans le réel et accordent une large part de leurs lectures aux biographies, celles ayant trait au milieu carcéral et à l'univers de la criminalité en tête. Quant aux romans qu'ils sont nombreux à lire, la vraisemblance s'avère être un critère d'appréciation et de sélection primordial. Les choix lectoraux des mineurs diffèrent de ceux de leurs aînés ; ce qui les intéresse sont les ouvrages illustrés et les romans de fiction pure. Les essais philosophiques et historiques s'apparentent trop à des mauvais souvenirs scolaires pour ces jeunes dont la scolarité perturbée s'est arrêtée au maximum en troisième. Quant aux biographies, si leur ancrage dans la réalité attire les adultes, il produit un effet contraire chez ces détenus qui préfèrent ce qui les éloigne de leur réel et les fait rêver. L'évasion cognitive est la motivation principale, voire unique, de la lecture de romans.

La lecture est utilisée pour combler les temps morts. La plupart des mineurs lisent « quand j'ai rien d'autre à faire ». Elle ne représente pas un loisir primordial mais une activité de substitution. Elle permet de remplir un vide temporel, une plage laissée vacante par l'absence d'un programme télévisé distrayant ou d'une activité carcérale. Les jeunes lisent essentiellement pour suppléer la télévision. Ils lisent « quand y a rien à la télé », c'est-à-dire lorsque les programmes ne proposent ni séries ni films. Ils vont alors se tourner vers la lecture pour satisfaire leur besoin de fiction.

La motivation fondamentale de la lecture en prison est pour ces jeunes l'évasion. L'esprit, concentré sur le texte qu'il concrétise, laisse momentanément de côté l'espace-temps de la détention. La lecture de romans est recherchée dans les moments de déprime. La projection dans un univers fictif que ce genre occasionne favorise une forme de divertissement où le lecteur met entre parenthèses son quotidien et sa réalité pour tester d'autres virtualités. Les moments de lecture les plus intenses sont le week-end et la nuit. Les week-ends paraissent très longs. Toutes les activités carcérales sont arrêtées, il n'y a plus de distraction ; la fin de semaine véhicule un ennui important, qu'il apparaisse nécessaire de rompre. L'acquisition de connaissances représente un certain intérêt pour quelques-uns, mais il s'agit de connaissances non valorisées socialement ni scolairement, comme approfondir son savoir sur tel sport. Il peut s'agir aussi de connaissances ultra-spécialisées sur tel type de voitures de course ou sur tel corps d'armée. Certains sont aussi fascinés par des époques comme la préhistoire. Ils lisent et relisent des ouvrages spécialisés sur ces thèmes, jusqu'à acquérir une certaine érudition, telle

l'érudition enfantine sur un objet culturel précis acquise sous forme ludique (c'est ainsi que l'on rencontre des enfants extrêmement instruits sur les châteaux médiévaux, cette connaissance étant utilisée comme base ludique). Ces traités présentent une forme attractive ; les illustrations en composent une part importante.

### 3. Des lectures de proximité.

Les ouvrages que les mineurs lisent appartiennent à la culture populaire, dont eux-mêmes sont issus. L'incarcération peut amener un changement dans leur rapport au livre, en ce sens que des non-lecteurs se retrouvent à manipuler des ouvrages, que ce soit pour les lire ou pour en déchiffrer des extraits, ou alors pour simplement regarder les illustrations. Mais aussi bien les titres choisis que le mode d'appropriation du texte et de l'image s'inscrivent dans des pratiques populaires. La détention et la proximité physique avec l'écrit peuvent conduire à une modification de l'intensité de la pratique (de non à faible, de faible à un peu plus forte) mais non à une variation de goût et de culture. La télévision garde le monopole du loisir<sup>12</sup> et continue à s'imprimer dans la relation des mineurs avec l'écrit. Les romans et les documentaires font appel à leur culture visuelle. La lecture qu'ils pratiquent revêt un caractère à la fois textuel et imagier. Ces deux modes de lecture coexistent. Toutefois, pour la majorité d'entre eux, on constate une nette préférence en faveur de la lecture imagière, l'image leur paraissant plus simple à saisir et à en concrétiser le sens que le texte écrit. L'apparente facilité d'accès à l'image, son abord immédiat sans passer par un apprentissage scolaire douloureux, semblent plus séduisants et donnent l'impression d'apporter un plaisir direct, alors que la jouissance textuelle apparaît médiatisée par des compétences lectorales acquises. Or, Roland Barthes<sup>13</sup> ainsi que d'autres sémiologues ont montré que l'apparente facilité de lecture de l'image est un leurre et que son sens est le résultat d'une construction cognitive nécessitant la mise en oeuvre de diverses compétences lectorales.

La question qui se pose est « qu'est-ce que la lecture ? » face à ce public mineurs éloigné de la culture lectorale cultivée mais qui possède ses propres pratiques de lecture. Car lorsqu'on va au-delà de la notion ordinaire de lecture, qui recouvre généralement la lecture littéraire ou la lecture d'apprentissage c'est-à-dire des formes de concrétisation et d'appropriation textuelles valorisées s'exerçant sur des écrits également valorisés, on s'aperçoit qu'en fin de compte ces jeunes lisent, mais que la majeure partie de leurs lectures ne s'intègre pas dans *Les pratiques culturelles des Français*<sup>14</sup>. En effet il ne s'agit pas de lectures littéraires, ni de lectures suivies, encore moins de lectures socialement valorisées. En fait, les lectures préférées de ces jeunes détenus concernent ce que l'on pourrait appeler des textes de proximité, c'est-à-dire des écrits (ou des images) s'inscrivant dans leur quotidien, qui sont la presse et le courrier. Ces écrits ni littéraires ni même livresques, intéressent davantage les mineurs incarcérés par leur familiarité et leur discours sur un univers qui est le leur. Ils interagissent dans leurs pratiques quotidiennes. C'est ainsi que la lecture des magazines de télévision provoque un

plaisir anticipatoire par la prévision et l'organisation des programmes futurs. Ils indiquent aux jeunes détenus quels seront les futurs moments de loisirs télévisés les plus agréables et s'insèrent dans une gestion du temps de l'incarcération, temps d'ennui que vont tromper des plages de distraction. La lecture des faits divers dans la presse quotidienne régionale relève aussi d'un processus de proximité : il s'agit d'être informé de ce qui se passe dans son entourage proche extérieur.

Le courrier (aussi bien sa lecture que sa rédaction) représente une activité essentielle de la détention. Tout détenu, qu'il soit mineur ou majeur, homme ou femme, primaire ou multirécidiviste, attend avec impatience les lettres de ses proches : parents ou amis. Le courrier s'avère le lien le plus important avec l'extérieur. Les mineurs écrivent de nombreuses lettres, mais leurs correspondants, contrairement aux adultes, ne sont pas les membres de leur famille, avec laquelle ils vivent plus ou moins une situation de rupture, mais leurs amis. La sociabilité avec des pairs du même âge représente une des caractéristiques de l'adolescence. En prison, cette sociabilité s'exerce à travers les lettres, qui font l'objet de lectures et de relectures attentives. Les lettres contiennent deux types d'informations : une formelle et l'autre, la plus importante, informelle. Les informations formelles traitent de l'entourage des deux correspondants. L'information informelle réside dans la lettre elle-même, dont l'existence signifie au détenu qu'il n'est pas oublié, et que même enfermé et donc exclu physiquement de son réseau de sociabilité, il continue d'exister pour ses amis.

R : Je lis souvent les trucs de mes copains et de mes copines.

Q : Les lettres ?

R : Ouais, les lettres, ouais. J'en ai beaucoup ; je les relis, je les relis, je les relis. J'aime bien.

Il s'agit de lectures ordinaires, tout comme il existe des écritures ordinaires<sup>15</sup>, « *lecture ancrée dans un espace connu, vécu, lecture qui informe sur les faits quotidiens et proches, ce type de lecture s'articule intimement à l'expérience vécue* »<sup>16</sup>. La finalité recherchée ne s'inscrit pas dans un rapport sacralisé avec l'écrit et avec la culture cultivée, mais relève de la gestion de soi et de son rapport au monde. Cet attachement à des lectures de proximité, qui parlent sur et de soi, qui participent à un jeu de miroir, se retrouve aussi à l'extérieur des prisons. Il caractérise les pratiques lectorales ou « *liseuses* » pour reprendre l'expression de Michel de Certeau<sup>17</sup> de ceux qui, aussi bien adolescents qu'adultes, demeurent faiblement pourvus en capital à la fois scolaire et culturel et pour qui la culture cultivée reste un univers étrange et étranger. Ainsi les mineurs incarcérés ne sont pas tant un public éloigné de la lecture qu'un public éloigné de la définition scolaire et socialement rentable de la lecture.



## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Il s'agit d'une recherche réalisée en 1994 par Jean-Louis Fabiani et moi-même, auprès de six sites pénitentiaires, comprenant des prisons pour hommes, pour femmes et pour mineurs et se répartissant en maisons d'arrêt et établissements pour peine.
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. Jean-Louis Fabiani, Fabienne Soldini, *Lire en prison*, éditions de la BPI, collection « Études et recherche », 1995.
- <sup>3</sup> Bernard Lahire, « la raison des plus faibles », Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1993.
- <sup>4</sup> Rapport annuel de l'administration pénitentiaire 1992 ; La documentation française.
- <sup>5</sup> Cf. Joëlle Bahloul, *Lectures précaires : études sociologiques sur les faibles lecteurs*, BPI Centre Georges Pompidou, 1988.
- <sup>6</sup> En 1992, les prisons françaises comptaient 22 mineures incarcérées, soit 1,1 % de la population féminine, dont 19 prévenues et 3 condamnées. Cf. *Le rapport annuel de l'administration pénitentiaire* 1992.
- <sup>7</sup> La majorité de mineurs incarcérés sont âgés de 16 et 17 ans. Toutefois, les adolescents sont passibles d'emprisonnement à partir de 13 ans. Il est cependant rare de rencontrer des moins de 16 ans en détention : en 1992, on dénombrait 35 mineurs de 13 à 16 ans dans les prisons métropolitaines, soit 6 % de la population carcérale mineure. Notre échantillonnage se compose uniquement d'adolescents de 16 et 17 ans.
- <sup>8</sup> Cf. *Pénologie*, Bernard Bouloc, Paris : Dalloz, 1991.
- <sup>9</sup> La scolarité étant obligatoire jusqu'à 16 ans, elle se poursuit en détention. Les mineurs âgés de 17 ans, qui légalement peuvent arrêter leurs études, sont également scolarisés, en général deux à trois jours par semaine.
- <sup>10</sup> Cf. Vladimir Propp, *Morphologie du conte*, Seuil, 1965.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. Fabienne Soldini, « Lecteurs captifs », in *Lire, faire lire*, ouvrage collectif sous la direction de Bernadette Seibel, Éditions du Monde, 1995.
- <sup>12</sup> La télévision représente la principale activité de loisirs des mineurs incarcérés. Lorsqu'ils ne vont pas en classe, ils la regardent dès leur réveil jusqu'à tard dans la nuit. Leur chaîne favorite est M6, qui diffuse essentiellement des séries, des téléfilms et des films, c'est-à-dire des fictions qui proposent du rêve et de l'évasion. Ils connaissent par coeur l'agencement des programmes de cette chaîne et organisent leurs journées en fonction de l'enchaînement des émissions.
- <sup>13</sup> Roland Barthes, *Rhétorique de l'image*, Communications, 1964.
- <sup>14</sup> Olivier Donnat et Denis Cogneau, 1989.
- <sup>15</sup> *Écritures ordinaires*, ouvrage collectif sous la direction de Daniel Fabre, P.O.L., 1993.
- <sup>16</sup> Bernard Lahire, *op.cit.*, p. 109.
- <sup>17</sup> Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien*, Gallimard, réédition 1990.

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# **The Representation of Victorian Melodrama in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray***

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## **ABSTRACT**

Oscar Wilde's life and writing have fascinated readers and stirred much critical speculation. Although his literary genius excelled in many literary genres, his prolific pen produced only one novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The paper focuses on Wilde's only novel and aims at demonstrating that apart from promoting his aesthetic ideas, his novel was also a parody of the decayed Victorian values. Such a critique is vividly conveyed by Wilde through the inclusion in this novel of the Vane family.

**KEYWORDS:** *Victorian melodrama, aesthetic, life, art*

Wilde's art dates back to the last decade of the Victorian Age, a time when the foundations of Victorian society and all it stood for felt threatened and unstable by the great social *fin-de-siècle* changes. In such circumstances, Wilde's aestheticism does not appear as an accidental orientation, but as a conscious and intentional choice. His was not simply Platonian inspiration, Greek marvel, indebtedness to Pater or anything alike. It was a fashion upon which he modelled not only his art, but also his lifestyle and it provided above all the means to ignore and attack all those artistic forms, which he regarded to be vulgar.

Wilde's only novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, despite its being intended to manifest much of Wilde's artistic aesthetic credo, it allows in many ways the possibility to denounce and criticize the British Victorian society. As Michael Patrick Gillespie (1996: 58) suggests:

The novel emerges as very much a product of the Victorian era, yet no fixed or single image of that period--no Platonic ideal--exists as a unified and consistent vision within the consciousness of either the author or his readers. As a result, any notion of the age projected by the narrative of Wilde's novel will necessarily incite a multitude of different visions.

The paper focuses on the Vane episode in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and views it not only as an allegory or intrusion of vulgar reality, but also as a clever parody through which Wilde ridicules all realistic and moralistic art. In *The Picture*

of *Dorian Gray* Wilde is recycling outdated literary codes (such as Victorian melodrama) to adapt them to his own purpose.

Victorian melodrama embodied a view of art and life which did not comply with Wilde's artistic beliefs. It was representative of Victorian art, which claimed to reflect reality and feed its audience with plain truths. The moral message each play intended to convey was the hero's faithfulness to the right principles, even in harsh circumstances and God's or Divine Providence's reward to him and punishment for the wicked. This is the view of the world Sibyl Vane believes in. For instance, in the passage below she dreams aloud about the future adventures of her brother James, who is leaving her to make his fortune as a sailor:

Yes, there were delightful things in store for him. But he must be very good, and not lose his tempter, or spend his money foolishly. ... He must be sure, also, to write to her by every mail, and to say his prayers each night before he went to sleep. God was very good, and would watch over him. She would pray for him, too, and in a few years he would come back quite rich and happy. (DG 96)

In the above passage, Wilde ridicules the conventional morals and principles of the Victorian Age. When Sibyl thinks of the gold James is certain to find, she has in mind those quixotic principles of the Victorians. God is going to be good to James Vane and watch over him in the same way as Mrs Vane will watch over Sibyl when the gloomy and morose James Vane is in Australia.

To Sibyl Vane Dorian Gray appears as unreal. The fact that she calls him 'Prince Charming' suggests among other things that she regards him as a character in a play. Although Sibyl is depicted as naïve and uninformed about life, she has not mixed her art with reality. By keeping art as pure as it should be, Sibyl has rightly drawn the borderline between these two spheres.

Likewise, at the beginning *Dorian Gray* is not interested in her as a person. What actually appeals to him is her art, her artistic unpredictability. Sibyl is one night Imogene, another Juliet, and the other Rosalind, but never Sibyl Vane herself. Although the meeting with Sibyl Vane at the theatre represents Dorian's first encounter and independent appreciation of art, the place and the atmosphere share none of Wilde's aesthetic expectations. Lawrence Danson (1998: 51-52) explains:

In chapter 4, Wilde pulls out all the conventional stops, even the clichés, to signify a theatre that only begins in the sordid physicality where Zola's ends. Dorian, wandering 'a labyrinth of grimy streets', discovers 'an absurd little theatre' run by a 'hideous Jew' with 'greasy ringlets and an enormous diamond. ... In this ne plus ultra of sordid reality Dorian discovers – rather, he creates –' the greatest romance of [his] life'. Dorian's energy, like the narrator's, is invested in dressing up the theatre and making it into a theatre of romance. The poor actress Sibyl Vane disappears into Rosalind and Imogen; her flesh is a threat rather than (as in Zola) a goal; symbolization takes precedence over materiality. In response to Lord Henry's question, 'what are your actual relations with Sibyl Vane?' Dorian – in a moment of great potential comedy – leaps to his feat 'with flushed cheeks and burning eyes', to

cry, 'Harry! Sibyl Vane is sacred!' (CW51). Dorian cannot bear too much of the realism that kills romance at this first stage in his progress toward experience.

Although Sibyl has had a tough life, she has always been free to think and act her own way. Life's miserable quality has made her have great expectations about her future. She hopes to open a new window in her life and this appears to be her main mistake. Once Dorian enslaves her, she loses the sense of art and makes the same error as Basil.

The night Dorian takes Basil and Lord Henry to the theatre to show them Sibyl's beautiful acting, she thwarts his expectations by playing badly and unemotionally. The two friends, disappointed, soon leave the theatre, because they see that Sibyl's acting is bad and unoriginal. The episode provides an excellent example of what Wilde calls bad and good art. The previous evening, when Dorian was still an actor in her play, Sibyl's acting had been great, because the two spheres were still clearly divided. The moment she frustrates the division between the two, her art becomes callous and cold.

At the beginning of chapter five, Sibyl Vane, who fails to keep apart reality and life and dangerously abandons art for love, reveals her mother her great love for her Prince Charming. Her mother's response is:

I am happy, Sibyl, when I see you act. You must not think of anything but your acting. Mr Isaacs has been very good to us, and we owe him money. (DG 86)

The idea of Prince Charming being a perfect gentleman along with his having a wealthy appearance tempts Mrs Vane. It is evident that in Mrs Vane's words Wilde points out the theatres' low rank in the Victorian Age, when no attention was paid to the performance itself but to how to raise money to the detriment of beauty.

Sibyl Vane, whom Oscar Wilde depicts with such colours that give the air of a marvellous actress, is always in sharp contrast with the mundane and typical ugly fin-de-siècle London actress. As I have already underlined, her mistake is mixing the sphere of art with that of life. Consequently, chaos is created. I maintain that when she passes away, she loses the reality of her love for Dorian and manages to purify her art:

How different Sibyl was! She lived her finest tragedy. She was always a heroine. The last night she played...badly because she had known the reality of love. When she knew its unreality, she died, as Juliet might have died. She passed again into the sphere of art. There is something of the martyr about her. Her death has all the pathetic uselessness of martyrdom, all its wasted beauty. (DG 161)

Oscar Wilde highlights the Vanes' lower-class origin by describing the dingy circumstances in which they live. The most emphatic contrast between the sordid London life and the beauty of art is conveyed when Wilde first introduces James Vane:

He was thick-set of figure, and his hands and feet were large, and somewhat clumsy in movement. He was not so finely bred as his sister. One would hardly have guessed the close relationship that existed between them. (DG 90)

Wilde exposes the shallowness of the traditional view of art and the ideology it stood for, by transferring the characters of Victorian melodrama to a hostile, naturalistic context. It seems as if Wilde had plucked the Vane family straight out of an old-fashioned piece of melodrama, and dropped them into the middle of one of Shaw's unpleasant plays. When James Vane, for instance, takes leave from his mother to sail to Australia, this young idealist learns that she had never married his father and belongs to the class of fallen women. Indeed, Shaw could have used this passage in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in one of his problem plays.

While Victorian melodrama pretended to mirror reality in a sincere way, Wilde points to the theatricality of the Vane family and, as a result, to the artificiality of the middle-class values they stand for. Sibyl's mother, for instance, embraces her daughter "*with one of those false theatrical gestures that so often become a mode of second nature to a stage-player*" (DG 90) and in another moment, she is pathetically calling her child while she is "*looking up to the ceiling in search of an imaginary gallery*" (DG 94). On the one hand Mrs Vane's behaviour to her daughter is literally an artificially affectionate act reminiscent of the Victorian caring mother and on the other these motherly cares of hers sound hypocritical. Indeed, she allows her daughter to continue to see her gentleman lover when she suddenly realises the rich prospects of this mysterious young man. As Wilde sarcastically writes:

Thin-lipped wisdom [Mrs. Vane] ... hinted at prudence, quoted from that book of cowardice whose author apes the name of common sense. ... Then Wisdom altered its method and spoke of espial and discovery. This young man might be rich. If so, marriage should be thought of. (DG 88)

Mrs Vane belonged to that category of low-rank theatre actresses of the nineteenth century melodramas, in which sad events dominated the greater part of plays and the actors' feelings were utterly exaggerated. Appropriately, James Vane seems to be one of those heroes who hunt down the wicked and punish them by doing justice. Sibyl complains to James in this way:

Oh, don't be so serious, Jim. You are like one of the heroes of those silly melodramas mother used to be so fond of acting in. (DG 101)

In sum, Wilde suggests that if one follows middle-class values, one will act as badly as some second-rate actors in Victorian melodrama who used to preach this phoney morality. The hypocrisy of these middle-class values is emphasised in the eleventh chapter when the reader learns that they protect a pervert like Dorian Gray against scandals only because of his wealth. As such, Dorian, the spokesman

of decadence, praises the hypocritical formality of Victorian respectability in the following excerpt:

For the canons of good society are, or should be, the same as the canons of art. Form is absolutely essential to it. It should have the dignity of a ceremony, as well as its unreality, and should combine the insincere character of a romantic play with the wit and beauty that makes such plays delightful to us. (DG 211)

James Vane's case is representative of the sordid reality. He wants to go to Australia to make money and take Sibyl and his mother off the stage, because he detests art. Ordinary people, as James is, have no appreciation of the beauty and care nothing about what art is. This part reinforces Wilde's artistic credo as being opposite and supreme to what James Vane stands for.

James Vane has already heard of a young gentleman going every night to the theatre where Sibyl performs and is so deep in thought about him. He learns that this gentleman is a young dandy, which is why he comes to hate Dorian. This reminds us of those mediocre people in London who hated and discriminated Oscar Wilde.

The conversations taking place among the Vanes are typical of those Victorian melodrama dialogues. When James Vane makes a threat for fear that Dorian will do harm to his sister, his melodramatic words touch his mother profoundly:

Don't forget that you will have only one child now to look after, and believe me that if this man wrongs my sister, I will find out who he is, track him down, and kill him like a dog. I swear it.

The exaggerated folly of the threat, the passionate gesture that accompanied it, the mad melodramatic words, made life seem more vivid to her. She was familiar with the atmosphere... She would have liked to have continued the scene on the same emotional scale, but he cut her short....It was with a renewed feeling of disappointment that she waved the tattered lace handkerchief from the window, as her son drove away. She was conscious that a great opportunity had been wasted. She consoled herself by telling Sibyl how desolate she felt her life would be, now that she had only one child to look after. She remembered the phrase. It had pleased her. Of the threat she said nothing. It was vividly and dramatically expressed. She felt that they would all laugh at it some day. (DG 105)

Physical appearance provides another contrast between brother and sister. For example, "*her flower-like lips touched the withered cheek, and warmed its frost*" (DG 94). Again Sibyl's beauty is compared with James Vane's brutal description. When they walk through the park some hours before James leaves for Australia "*the passers-by gleam in wonder at the sullen, heavy youth, who, in coarse, ill-fitting clothes, is in the company of such a graceful, refined looking girl. He is like a common gardener walking with a rose*" (DG 95). Ordinary man is in this instance compared with the beautiful girl of art.

Moreover, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* demonstrates the out-datedness of the moral values which Victorian melodrama embodied. James Vane, who sincerely believes in middle-class values and acts like the traditional hero in Victorian melodrama, is placed by Wilde in a meaningless universe in which evil is not punished by God nor by any almighty providence. When twenty years after Sibyl's suicide, James finally meets Dorian Gray, he is deluded by the dandy's mask of "*unstained purity of youth*" (DG 284).

Being on the brink of committing a terrible crime and revealing no sensitivity, James Vane shows a sense of justice based on the most primitive revenge morality. In his naive view of the world, beauty and youth can only be connected with innocence. He does not understand that beauty is ambiguous in the modern world of facts. Though he promised his mother that he would track down Dorian Gray and "*kill him like a dog*" (DG 104), if he abused his sister, it is James Vane who is accidentally shot like an animal during a hunting at Selby Royal. This meaningless accident stresses the absence of a god or some Divine Providence which punishes the wicked and recompenses the good. As Dorian Gray remarks, after he has escaped his avenger:

Actual life was chaos, but there was something terribly logical in the imagination. It was imagination that set remorse to dog the feet of sin. It was the imagination that made each crime bear its misshapen brood. In the common world of fact the wicked were not punished, nor the good rewarded. Success was given to the strong, failure thrust upon the weak. That was all. (DG 296)

By suggesting the absence of a god who takes care of the morally upright, Wilde undermines the religious foundation of Victorian morality which often favoured the wealthy (even when they were as degenerate as Dorian Gray) and punished poor people like James Vane in real life or "*in the common world of fact*" (DG 296). Through the Vane episode Oscar Wilde exposes above all the hypocrisy of Victorian morality.

In the final analysis, the Vane episode in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is not a disturbing remnant of old-fashioned, realist fiction, but Wilde's conscious parody of the traditional dramas of revenge and disruption of the ideology which they recommended. It can also be added that in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Wilde does not only parody Victorian melodrama but even his own decadent aestheticism.

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**Invito alla lettura: l'esperienza del "Laboratorio di lettura,  
analisi e diffusione del romanzo francese contemporaneo"  
(Università degli Studi di Torino, Facoltà di Lingue  
e Letterature Straniere)**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Invitation to Reading: The Experience of the 'Workshop on French Contemporary Novel' (University of Turin, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures)*

In this paper we intend to present a workshop proposed at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the University of Turin, centred on French and Francophone contemporary novel. Many are the purposes of this didactic activity: to provide students with methods for novel analysis and with an outlook on contemporary prose writing; to promote the diffusion of contemporary and new writers among young readers; to involve students in oral and written productions about the novels read and examined in class.

**KEYWORDS:** *French and Francophone contemporary novel, workshop, novel analysis*

Gli ordinamenti didattici che regolano i corsi di laurea triennale e specialistica costruiti sul sistema dei crediti formativi universitari (cfu), entrati in vigore in Italia dieci anni fa hanno richiesto una modifica dell'offerta didattica delle Facoltà universitarie, e conseguenti revisioni e rimodulazioni degli insegnamenti. Accanto ai corsi di impostazione tradizionale, relativi alle discipline dette «di base» di un percorso di studi, accanto agli insegnamenti inerenti le «discipline caratterizzanti» uno specifico iter formativo e a quelli delle «discipline affini», si rilevano attività differenti per l'organizzazione e per la tipologia di lavoro: i tirocini e i laboratori.

Nel primo caso natura e scopo risultano evidenti: la proiezione, pur se per un limitato numero di ore, dello studente nel mondo del lavoro attraverso l'esperienza di uno *stage* presso enti pubblici o privati, durante il quale viene offerta la possibilità di uscire dalla dimensione di puro discente confrontandosi con una realtà professionale e mettendo in pratica conoscenze e competenze acquisite nel corso degli studi. L'espressione «laboratorio», al contrario, non appare necessariamente trasparente quando viene impiegato per indicare un'attività formativa all'interno di un ciclo di studi di ambito umanistico, mentre se si pensa

alle Facoltà scientifiche il termine evoca immediatamente ore di esercitazioni tra microscopi e macchine complesse destinate ad accompagnare le lezioni dei corsi magistrali, passando dalla teoria alla pratica.

La Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere dell'Università di Torino ha scelto di proporre agli iscritti, accanto a un ricco ventaglio di tirocini, una cospicua scelta di laboratori; ciascuno è parte dell'offerta didattica di uno specifico settore o di un gruppo disciplinare e, come tale, si prospetta come applicazione pratica di ipotesi teoriche di interpretazioni di testi o problemi letterari. Per quanto concerne l'offerta didattica della Francesistica, dal 2004 è attivo un "Laboratorio di lettura, analisi e diffusione del romanzo francese contemporaneo", dedicato allo studio della narrativa francese e francofona contemporanea e, più precisamente, di autori francesi e francofoni esordienti.

Alle origini dell'iniziativa, prima dei contatti informali, motivati dall'interesse da parte di alcuni docenti che per ricerca e studio si occupano di letteratura contemporanea di espressione francese; quindi, nel riformato contesto dell'insegnamento universitario composto da due cicli di studi – laurea triennale e laurea specialistica –, l'istituzione di un modulo da 5 crediti formativi (6 secondo le nuove tabelle entrate in vigore nella nostra Facoltà a partire dall'a.a. 2008-2009) in collaborazione con istituzioni universitarie e iniziative culturali francesi e italiane che da anni ormai annoverano esperienza e impegno per la promozione della lettura in generale e del romanzo in particolare, prodigandosi con energia nel progetto di avvicinare sempre di più al libro un pubblico composto da giovani. Il "Laboratorio di lettura, analisi e diffusione del romanzo francese contemporaneo" si appoggia sulle antiche relazioni culturali e sulla consolidata collaborazione transfrontaliera tra Savoia e Piemonte e in particolare tra l'Università di Chambéry e l'Università di Torino, cui si affiancano, per la Savoia, il Festival du Premier Roman di Chambéry e, per la nostra regione, il Premio Città di Cuneo per il Primo Romanzo.

Risale al 1987 la fondazione, a Chambéry, del Festival du Premier Roman su iniziativa di Jacques Charmatz<sup>1</sup>, un insegnante deciso a incoraggiare i suoi allievi alla lettura della narrativa francese contemporanea, aggiungendo alla lettura dei 'classici' della storia letteraria tradizionalmente in programma anche quella di alcune figure emergenti. Il riconoscimento dell'interesse e della validità del progetto, e il sostegno incontrato presso le istituzioni locali, fanno sì che nel 2009 si sia giunti a celebrare la XXIII edizione del Festival du Premier Roman, destinato a incontrare, come nelle precedenti, successo di pubblico e critica. Avvalendosi di una rete ormai collaudata di *comités de lecture* composti da professionisti del mestiere del libro (insegnanti, bibliotecari, librai), da semplici ma appassionati lettori e, soprattutto, da giovani delle scuole superiori e dell'Università, il Festival è attivo in realtà tutto l'anno, sin da quando, nell'autunno, una lista di primi romanzi di scrittori francesi e francofoni che hanno pubblicato nell'anno in corso o nell'anno immediatamente precedente viene sottoposta ai 'comitati di lettura' che, sostituendosi a paludati critici avvezzi ad altisonanti premi letterari, leggono, rileggono, analizzano, ponderano, valutano le opere loro sottoposte stabilendo loro

stessi, e soltanto loro, quali semplici ma accorti *lettori*, la selezione che porterà nel maggio dell'anno successivo, quattordici finalisti al Festival du Premier Roman di Chambéry. Un Festival, dunque una festa del romanzo e della lettura e dei lettori, non un premio con giuria e prebende, nel rispetto della missione che l'iniziativa si era posta sin dalla sua progettazione. Una rassegna di autori rappresentativi della narrativa in lingua francese di oggi, letti e scelti dai lettori, e che tali lettori incontrano. Lettori che, peraltro, hanno dimostrato e continuano a dimostrare ogni anno capacità di analisi critica e lungimiranza nel valutare, perché, se si sfogliano gli elenchi degli scrittori esordienti via via passati attraverso il Festival di Chambéry si incontrano nomi oggi affermati e tradotti in numerose lingue straniere, e soprattutto rappresentativi di specifici filoni della letteratura contemporanea. Due casi fra i tanti: Michel Houellebecq e Amélie Nothomb.

Più recente rispetto al Festival di Chambéry, dal 1998 il Premio Città di Cuneo per il Primo Romanzo<sup>2</sup> organizza un lavoro analogo applicato alla letteratura italiana contemporanea. Una simmetria di iniziative col tempo si è poi costruita tra queste manifestazioni gemelle: il Festival di Chambéry ha inaugurato una sezione dedicata agli scrittori esordienti italiani, mentre il Premio Città di Cuneo si interessa alle novità letterarie, sempre nell'ambito del romanzo, provenienti dalla Francia e dai paesi di lingua francese.

Maturato nello spirito che anima le iniziative di Chambéry e di Cuneo, sin dal titolo il modulo didattico del "Laboratorio di lettura, analisi e diffusione del romanzo francese contemporaneo" intende mettere in risalto la propria fisionomia rispetto agli insegnamenti ufficiali di Francesistica, nei confronti dei quali peraltro si delinea come attività integrativa e sperimentale, secondo il profilo e gli obiettivi dei laboratori, attività pratica di supporto ai contenuti e alle tematiche sviluppate negli altri corsi di letteratura. Non si tratta, infatti, di un corso impostato esclusivamente sulle tradizionali lezioni frontali, bensì di un ciclo di incontri dove le lezioni del docente sono fatte seguire da esercitazioni durante le quali gli studenti hanno parte attiva.

Il programma del Laboratorio comprende una serie di lezioni introduttive mirate a ripercorrere le origini e gli sviluppi del genere letterario 'romanzo', con riferimento specifico alla storia letteraria francese, a riflettere sulle diverse teorie e sui principali metodi critici per l'analisi dei testi in prosa, familiarizzando con tali tecniche di analisi attraverso esercitazioni prima a partire da estratti da romanzi francesi parte dei programmi dei corsi magistrali, quindi attraverso la lettura e l'esame di alcuni romanzi di autori francesi e/o francofoni esordienti.

I romanzi in programma variano ogni anno e provengono da una rosa di venti opere segnalate dagli organizzatori del Festival di Chambéry fra quelle che, alla data di inizio del Laboratorio, si annoverano, in quel momento del percorso di selezione, fra le maggiormente apprezzate dai 'comitati di lettura' francesi per l'edizione in corso del Festival, e da cui quindi con alta probabilità usciranno i quattordici finalisti invitati a Chambéry nel mese di maggio. Nella fase applicativa del Laboratorio gli studenti lavorano su tali romanzi, parte individualmente, parte collaborando tra di loro, divisi in piccoli 'gruppi di lettura', a ciascuno dei quali è

richiesto di prendere in esame almeno uno dei romanzi consigliati, redigendo una relazione che viene poi presentata oralmente agli altri gruppi. Successivamente, sempre sotto la guida del docente, all'interno di ciascun gruppo di lettura vengono elaborate recensioni in italiano e in francese, interviste da sottoporre agli autori e traduzioni in lingua italiana di una scelta antologica di brani considerati dagli studenti come i più riusciti oppure i più significativi dei romanzi. Per ciascun elaborato è data la possibilità agli studenti di lavorare individualmente oppure a quattro mani, collaborando con un compagno; tuttavia, il confronto tra diversi lettori, dunque tra differenti punti di vista all'interno di ciascun gruppo è sempre incentivato e porta risultati assai soddisfacenti. Attraverso tali attività da un lato si intende insegnare agli studenti di Lingue e Letterature Straniere come si legge un romanzo, acquisendo e mettendo in pratica un metodo di lavoro che potrà essere utile per tutto il loro iter di studi; dall'altro, si ci pone il fine di avvicinare i giovani a forme di produzione scritta diverse da quelle normalmente previste nei corsi magistrali, sensibilizzandoli ai diversi registri linguistici e ai differenti stili di espressione.

Nel contempo, si auspica di stimolare la riflessione e il confronto sulle questioni che pone il lavoro di traduzione letteraria, mentre la preparazione delle interviste è mirata all'approfondimento dello studio e della lettura critica dei romanzi, e quindi anche alla stesura delle recensioni, destinate ad arricchirsi con le parole degli autori stessi. Nel corso del Festival du Premier Roman di Chambéry e alla Fiera del Libro di Torino agli studenti è infatti offerta l'occasione di incontrare gli scrittori di cui hanno letto i romanzi, assistendo alla presentazione che essi propongono delle loro opere e, soprattutto, rivolgendosi direttamente a loro per porre domande, avanzare osservazioni e perplessità, chiedere chiarimenti su aspetti della vicenda, dei personaggi, dei temi affrontati, dell'organizzazione della narrazione, nonché avanzare interpretazioni di figure, brani, situazioni. È con entusiasmo che i giovani lettori si calano nei panni di giornalisti in erba, esponendo in maniera critica e personale e in una forma di scrittura che si allontana da quelle abituali del percorso di studi (la relazione, la tesi di laurea, ecc.) i romanzi scelti, dei quali, trattandosi di novità letterarie, sono spesso loro i primi 'critici letterari'. La loro partecipazione dinamica e il loro impegno consentono di pervenire alla realizzazione di articoli interessanti, che recensiscono i primi romanzi con toni vivaci e con profondità di analisi, senza lesinare osservazioni pungenti, suggerendo talora letture critiche che, come viene sistematicamente riscontrato dagli autori intervistati, riescono a rilevare interpretazioni e significati inattesi ma sempre coerenti con i temi, le realtà e le discussioni oggetto delle opere.

L'originalità del "Laboratorio di lettura, analisi e diffusione del romanzo francese contemporaneo" consiste dunque nella scelta di collegare le attività in aula e il lavoro individuale a casa a interventi 'sul campo', consentendo agli studenti di partecipare in maniera attiva a iniziative culturali e instaurando un inconsueto dialogo con gli autori, da cui talora scaturisce il progetto per una tesi di laurea. Nel mese di maggio, in chiusura del semestre, il Laboratorio porta gli studenti fuori dalla sede delle lezioni, con la partecipazione di una 'delegazione' del gruppo al

Festival du Premier Roman di Chambéry e con la loro presenza all'incontro sul Premier Roman organizzato presso la Fiera del Libro di Torino. Alla manifestazione di Chambéry è possibile ascoltare gli autori nelle conferenze e nei dibattiti in cui illustrano al pubblico i propri romanzi, rispondendo alle domande dei lettori e confrontandosi con gli altri selezionati per l'edizione in corso.

Per l'edizione 2009 del Festival<sup>3</sup> è stata impostato un calendario di incontri molto variegato, articolato in conferenze rivolte a un pubblico mirato (studenti delle scuole superiori, studenti universitari, «grand public») e in presentazioni degli scrittori da soli davanti ai lettori («tête à tête»), in dibattiti tra due autori i cui romanzi, per contenuti o stile di scrittura si prestano a un confronto («pas de deux») e in tavole rotonde («mots croisés») nelle quali più figure esordienti discutono sull'atto della scrittura, sulla loro esperienza – la prima – di romanzieri, sul percorso che li ha condotti alla composizione, sul progetto o la realizzazione di un secondo romanzo, oppure sull'intenzione di cimentarsi con altre forme di espressione letteraria. L'apertura del Festival di Chambéry, già avviata e destinata a estendersi anno dopo anno a iniziative simili attive in altri paesi, mira infine a dare impulso alla lettura, a partire da una riflessione sulla narrativa contemporanea a livello europeo, coinvolgendo un ventaglio amplissimo di lettori, ma con uno sguardo particolarmente attento a un pubblico giovane.<sup>4</sup>

Il bilancio dell'esperienza del Laboratorio: anno dopo anno si susseguono gli autori e cambiano gli studenti, ma immutata è la partecipazione entusiasta e attiva a un'iniziativa che, pur saldamente radicata negli scopi e nella metodologia didattica di un percorso di studi in ambito umanistico, rivolge un'attenzione specifica alla realtà della letteratura contemporanea e, più in generale, intende sensibilizzare e formare i giovani nei confronti della lettura e dell'analisi letteraria, affinché, vagabondando tra gli espositori della Fiera del Libro, o tra gli scaffali di una libreria, o di una biblioteca, gli studenti possano guardare al romanzo con sempre maggiore spirito critico. Un vero e proprio 'invito alla lettura', attraverso l'attualità affascinante della narrativa contemporanea e, soprattutto, attraverso l'inconsueto dialogo diretto tra scrittore e lettore che consente di pervenire a una comprensione profonda dei romanzi e di scoprire, per mezzo della lettura prima e la viva voce degli scrittori poi, l'intero percorso della scrittura letteraria.

A testimonianza dell'interesse per questo tipo di proposte didattiche nell'attuale insegnamento universitario e soprattutto della risposta più che positiva da parte degli studenti, dal 2008, tramite un accordo di partenariato tra il Festival du Premier Roman di Chambéry e Università di Torino, il Laboratorio è stato inserito fra le attività promosse dal programma di cooperazione transfrontaliera Alcotra "Giovani e Primo Romanzo / Jeunes et Premier Roman 2008-2010", finalizzato a incoraggiare la lettura della narrativa contemporanea tra gli studenti.

## NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. J. Charmatz, "L'enthousiasme du pourquoi pas", in *Europe*, septembre 2003, pp. 152-155.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. [www.primoromanzo.cuneo.it](http://www.primoromanzo.cuneo.it).

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. [www.festivalpremierroman.com](http://www.festivalpremierroman.com).

- <sup>4</sup> Il Festival di Chambéry attualmente progetta di estendere il proprio campo di azione, estendendo l'iniziativa e proponendo in questo modo una più ricca riflessione sulla narrativa contemporanea europea, dedicando spazio anche ai 'primi romanzi' spagnoli (si veda il programma dell'edizione 2009 del Festival) e, in futuro, costruendo una sorta di gemellaggio tra manifestazioni analoghe in altri paesi d'Europa.

## Limba și fantezie poetică

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### RÉSUMÉ : *Langage et fantaisie poétique*

L'œuvre de La Fontaine est une véritable fête du langage ; tout se passe dans l'intimité du langage, tout est sous-jacent au langage. Le déchiffrement, dans une nouvelle grille, de l'œuvre de La Fontaine, usant de la lecture plurielle, conduit à la conclusion évidente que La Fontaine s'installe, avec un naturel impeccable, dans la langue de son temps ; d'une langue usuelle, son génie relève une langue artistique.

**MOTS-CLÉS :** *langage, poésie, fantaisie, harmonie, multiplicité*

Un scriitor nu-și poate, cert, traduce sensibilitatea și viziunea asupra lumii decât în măsura în care dispune de un material adecvat. O solidă informare în materie de istorie literară și de istorie a limbii, cunoașterea situației literare și lingvistice în momentul creării operei respective. El poate să se conformeze, total sau parțial, obiceiurilor și gusturilor epocii, poate să reia o tradiție abandonată sau să manifeste o atitudine nonconformistă. Fiind date starea și tendințele limbii într-un moment determinat, încercăm să surprindem maniera în care La Fontaine a exploatat posibilitățile limbajului și a știut să-i perceapă multiplele nuanțe spre a ajunge la o exprimare personală.

Este interesant de sesizat care sunt cuvintele sau formele cele mai uzitate și, când este vorba de autor, care este randamentul lor stilistic: nu putem spera să definim și să clasăm, nici ulterior să comparăm, fără să măsurăm. Ordinea de apariție a ideilor nu este indiferentă în ceea ce privește semnificația operei și aduce o „informație” considerabilă în legătură cu zonele profunde ale creației. Stabilirea „ideilor-cheie” ale unei opere concură la conturarea marilor axe semantice și stilistice care o orientează.

Studiul gramatical își propune, în acest sens, să pună în valoare forța sau gradul de sensibilitate pe care-l transmite creatorul stilului sau grație unei anumite alegeri în domeniul sintactic.

Cu lexicul, însă, va începe adevărata dificultate, fiindcă ne aflăm în prezența a două ordini de fapte a căror confuzie generează inconveniente: limba brută și utilizarea limbii. Stilistul își propune să releve intențiile și efectele asociate vocabulelor.



În același spirit, el va continua cercetările referitoare la ordinea cuvintelor și tehnicile frazei, remarcând că orice formulă este adecvată atunci când corespunde unui efect oportun.

Franceza nu are, la drept vorbind, gen neutru, dar oferă urme sporadice ale unui gen inanimat sau șozist. Stilistica este favorizată numai acolo unde asimilarea este reală.

Tendența este încă și mai manifestă în cazul relativului care transpune – figurat –, ființele și lucrurile în circumstanțe locale.

Ce pelé, ce galeux, d'où venait tout leur mal.

Acest uzaj răspunde în plus și unei griji de reducere a maselor gramaticale. Folosirea modernă a unor astfel de turnuri este o reminiscență clasică, o eleganță și, din acest punct de vedere, cu atât mai sugestivă pentru stilistică.

Scriitorii secolului al XVII-lea, influențați de tradiția latină, utilizează premeditat reflexivul pentru a trimite la subiectul persoanei a III-a, fie că acest subiect este nedeterminat, cum a și prevalat în uzul limbii, fie determinat:

On a souvent besoin d'un plus petit que soi.

Pe lângă determinare, substantivul și verbul necesită actualizarea. Prin definiție, infinitivul este inactualizat, dar sistemul sintactic care-l leagă de restul frazei poate contribui la o actualizare parțială.

Folosit cu o valoare învecinată cu aceea a substantivului, drept complement, subiect, subiect impropriu, zis real, infinitiv istoric, el primește în mod obișnuit un început de actualizare cu ajutorul prepoziției *de* căreia, în acest caz, i se dă numele de „articol al infinitivului”:

Grenouilles aussitôt de sauter dans les ondes.

Gradul zero în turnurile învechite – consecință a inactualizării – dă enunțului o insolită rapiditate:

Grenouilles aussitôt de sauter dans les ondes,  
Tandis que coups de poing trottaient.

Astfel de fapte devin rare începând cu secolul al XVII-lea. Aici, arhaismul este nu numai savuros, dar el permite poetului și obținerea unui efect de dinamism, perfect adecvat.

În fraza negativă, articolul nehotărât poate fi omis: nu este necesară actualizarea semnului unui obiect care este declarat inexistent:

Je n'ai pas rencontré âme qui vive.

Dar, în mod cu totul intenționat, pentru a sugera o idee de abundență, La Fontaine scrie:

Il n'avait pas des outils à revendre.

Absența articolului *un* în fața numelui predicativ este o rămășiță a vechiului uzaj. Ea conferă substantivului o valoare care tinde spre aceea a adjectivului.

Je crois, pour moi, que c'est folie !

Posesivul reapare imediat ce se intenționează degajarea unei idei, cu toate valorile pe care le incumbă. În cazul lui La Fontaine, posesivul va sublinia uneori conveniențele și obligația care decurge de aici:

Le moine lisait son bréviaire.

Posesivul etic, foarte familiar, asociază enunțului locutorul și destinatarul:

Contrat passé, notre homme...

Scopul comunicării poate rezida în caracterizarea unui obiect sau a unui proces:

L'onde était transparente.

Când La Fontaine notează:

Le rat fut à son pied par la patte attaché.

pasivul pare să marcheze, în mod fericit, concesia animalului, ceea ce reduce la minimum efortul broaștei. Complementul de agent al pasivului este introdus prin prepoziția *par* care se folosește, de obicei, cu verbe discontinue (de altfel, această noțiune de continuu sau discontinuu nu se află în cuvânt, ci în spiritul care-i impregnează percepția).

Folosit ca substitut al pasivului, pronominalul a admis multă vreme un complement de agent introdus prin *par* sau *de*:

Cependant par Baucis le festin se prépare.

În toate epocile, scriitorii au apelat la transpunerile figurate:

Jupiter y consent. Contrat passé, notre homme

Franche du roi des airs, pleut, vente...

Multe verbe, printre care toate verbele de stare, pot să fie construite impersonal, fie că nu se urmărește ratașarea verbului la un subiect personal, fie că acest subiect nu se poate desemna. În versul lui La Fontaine remarcăm însă și un alt tip de construcție impersonală:

Médecins au lion viennent de toutes parts  
De tous côtés lui vient des donneurs de recettes.

Atenția este dirijată asupra evenimentului, restul nu intervine decât cu titlu complementar de explicație. Nu numai că această construcție răspunde unui mod particular de a percepe fenomenele, fără a le lega imediat de cauza care le produce; nu numai că această construcție aduce un element de varietate, dar ea și permite echilibrarea frazei, evitându-se o cădere prea bruscă.

Gramaticienii secolului al XVII-lea atestau deja faptul că trecutul definit detașează de prezent, în timp ce trecutul nedefinit ratașează la prezent. Uneori, viitorul se apropie de trecutul definit; expresiile circumstanțiale care însoțesc aceste două timpuri sunt adesea asemănătoare; este posibil să fie și alternate ca în aceste versuri ale lui La Fontaine:

Le porc à s'engraisser coûtera peu de son;  
Il était, quand je l'eus, de grosseur raisonnable.

Valoarea durativă va permite imperfectului reliefaarea faptelor obișnuite sau repetarea faptelor în trecut:

Que faisiez-vous au temps chaud?  
... Je chantais.

Imperfectul, numit de concordantă, imperfectul spuselor provin, ambele, din aceeași exigență psihologică. Situându-se în timp între trecut și prezent, imperfectul creează, grație unui ușor decalaj, o modalitate de unificare temporală a celor două date pe care o numim concordantă. Această aptitudine a devenit și instrumentul cel mai eficient al stilului indirect liber:

L'arbre étant pris pour juge,  
Ce fut bien pis encore. Il servait de refuge  
Contre le chaud, la pluie et la fureur des vents;  
Pour nous seuls il ornait les jardins et les champs;

Timpul vizat va marca o atenuare, motivată de valoarea de neterminare, introducând și un fel de ezitare discretă.

Acțiunea privită din perspectiva rezultatului va fi redată de La Fontaine fie prin perifraza *rendre* + participiul trecut:

Trois jours au plus rendront mon âme satisfaite.

fie prin simpla corespondență lexicologică: *chercher – trouver; apprendre – savoir; partir – arriver; fuir – se réfugier*.

Rezultatul poate fi dobândit pe moment, aceasta fiind și una dintre valorile asociate trecutului anterior:

Et le drôle eut lappé le tout en un moment.

*En un moment* confirmă aspectul, dar nu autorizează în nici un fel negarea valorii aspectuale, proprie trecutului anterior; tot așa de bine La Fontaine ar fi putut scrie: *lappa*.

În afara sistemului ipotetic particular, subjonctivul rămâne, prin excelență, modul eventualului:

Ou à chacun Jupiter accorde sa requête,  
Nous lui romprons bientôt la tête.

Incompatibil cu subordonata introdusă prin *si*, condiționalul reapare cu *quand* sau imediat ce subordonarea face loc unui sistem coordonat:

Et quand ce serait un royaume;  
Je voudrais bien savoir...

El poate diminua temeritatea unei afirmații în viitor, el exprimă refuzul ironic sau indignat al unei eventualități prezente în mintea personajului sau care i-a putut fi sugerată, dar și o hiperbolă atenuată.

„Infinitivul narativ” sau „infinitivul istoric” din versurile lui La Fontaine are, din punct de vedere temporal, valoarea unui trecut definit; în plus, el traduce rapiditatea cu care procesul desemnat succede procesului precedent (aici *vinrent*). Din cauza suprimării, în forma verbală *de se moquer*, a oricărui indiciu temporal, *vinrent* servește drept indiciu și cele două acțiuni par simultane, printr-un procedeu analog cu acela al turnurii *vinrent se mettre*, în care *vinrent* slujește drept indiciu temporal pentru infinitivul prezent. În același fel, în timp ce *se mettre* se prezintă ca scopul procesului principal *vinrent*, *de se moquer* apare drept consecință.

Après les bons partis, les médiocres gens  
Vinrent se mettre sur les rangs.  
Elle de se moquer.

Dacă participiul prezent ar avea o valoare de prezent, aceste două fraze nu s-ar înțelege:

Le sien s'était perdu, tombant de sa ceinture.

Din această valoare atemporală, participiul numit prezent își revendică o suplețe care-i permite ajustarea mecanică, dar *grosso modo*, la timpul principalei.

Ca mod, el înfățișează faptul drept un cadru – concomitent și maniera – al acțiunii principale. Din punctul de vedere al aspectului, el exprimă durativul.

Progresia de la cunoscut la necunoscut oferă frazei o bază logică, o alură directă, o claritate deosebită. În poezie, este adevărat, anumite toleranțe sunt sau erau admise:

Aucun nombre, dit-il, les mondes ne limite.

În locul verbului simplu, poate exista un grup compus dintr-un auxiliar de mod și un infinitiv. Pronumele personal se plasează între ele două; situarea înaintea auxiliarului dă o tentă de afectare limbajului. Încă în secolul al XVII-lea, cele două turnuri sunt în mare concurență, dar pentru marii scriitori alegerea desemna o intenție bine conturată. În cazul lui La Fontaine, varietatea corespunde unui efect comic: celor doi hoți, în dezacord asupra faptului, le repugnă să uzeze de același tip de frază.

L'un voulait le garder, l'autre le voulait vendre.

În grupurile expresive *ne...jamais*, *ne...rien*, mai rar cu *point*, elementele puternice pot să fie deplasate la începutul frazei.

Rien ne sert de courir.

Legătura tematică asigură continuitatea gândirii prin raportarea, mulțumită unui loc privilegiat, a unui termen la un alt termen precedent și care simbolizează aceeași idee sau o idee analoagă:

Un loup n'avait que les os et la peau  
Tant les chiens faisaient bonne garde.  
Ce loup rencontre un dogue aussi puissant que beau,...

Prin intermediul ei, am putut explica locul pronumelui personal complement, multe poziții anticipate, printre care chiasmul. Datorită ei, fără supraîncărcătura gramaticală și, numai prin demersul spiritual, avem impresia înlănțuirii normale, a unității. Combinate cu alte tipuri de legătură, ea permite realizarea și accentuarea continuității.

O regulă sintactică atestă că doi termeni coordonați nu sunt, totuși, de același fel, ei trebuie să îndeplinească însă aceeași funcție. Astfel, în versul lui La Fontaine:

Un souriceau tout jeune et qui n'avait rien vu

subordonata relativă, epitet al lui *souriceau*, este coordonată cu adjectivul *jeune*, având aceeași funcție.

Pentru ca un discurs să fie coerent, ceea ce înseamnă că el se supune unei organizări, unei sintaxe, este necesar ca părțile sale constitutive, la toate nivelele, să aibă o funcție predicativă raportată la subiectul discursului. Această identitate de funcție a fost adesea numită „unitate” de către retorică. Putem considera digresiunea ca o relaxare sau ca o ruptură a funcției predicative atribuite unui discurs pentru un subiect dat.

Fraza parantetică – tip de frază amplă din cauza inserării parantezelor – conduce la reușite excepționale, dar și la iminența unor pericole, mai ales în enunțul oral, cu excepția cazurilor în care se reia ideea anterioară, fapt care modifică aspectul general:

À ces mots, l'animal pervers  
(C'est le serpent que je veux dire  
Et non l'homme: on pourrait aisément s'y tromper),  
À ces mots, le serpent...

De multe ori greoaie, această construcție este caracteristică pentru expunerea științifică, mizând mai mult pe precizie decât pe eleganță.

La Fontaine exploatează metrii cei mai variați și extrage din combinațiile lor – imprevizibile – efectele cele mai insolite. Poetul este dublat de un adevărat magician: juxtapunere a unor metri diferiți, ingambamente, cezuri neașteptate, „rejets”, „contre-rejets”, totul este expresiv. Astfel, durerea teatrală din *La jeune veuve* este opusă ironic realității:

[Elle] Lui criait : « Attends-moi, je te suis ; et mon âme,  
Aussi bien que la tienne, est prête à s'envoler ! »  
Le mari fait seul le voyage.

Salturile iepurilor, încetineala broaștei, funcționarea vârtelniței, cavalcadele înnebunite... totul este sugerat într-o manieră de neuitat: o astfel de artă ține în egală măsură de caricatură, de stampa japoneză și de desenul animat.

La sugestiiile ritmului se asociază acelea ale sunetelor. Dacă de la sunetul izolat se trece la o serie de sunete, domeniul expresivității se lărgeste considerabil. Expresivitatea versului lui La Fontaine este fondată nu numai pe virtuozitatea ritmică, ci și pe armonie. Repetarea melodică a anumitor cuvinte:

Un lièvre en son gîte songeait

evoca un abis de melancolie – *son gîte songeait*.

Cele mai diafane sunt versurile care se transformă în pură armonie și ajung la o calitate poetică demnă de cei mai mari artiști. Reflexe verlainiene:

Dont ils voyaient l'objet se perdre dans les eaux

sau nostalgie romantică, lirism discret, șarm al reveriei:

Sans pouvoir satisfaire à leurs vaines envies.  
Il ne regnera plus sur l'herbe des prairies.

Exclus din versul francez începând cu secolul al XVII-lea, adevăratul hiat, întâlnirea a două vocale identice, este, și el, susceptibil de efecte expresive:

Après bien du travail le coche arrive au haut  
A ces mots on cria haro sur le baudet.

Cacofonia este un accident care se întâlnește și la cei mai reputați scriitori. Stilist rafinat, La Fontaine îi exploatează conotațiile în așa fel încât totul, grație ei, poate deveni joc:

Le rat fut à son pied par la patte attaché [patata]

sau

...en son gîte songeait [sonson].

Un debit rapid, care-i lasă locutorului de-abia timpul să respire, auditorului timpul să realizeze înlănțuirea ideilor, ar putea fi semnul unei emoții intense, răspunzând unei dorințe, de escamotare, de marcarea a unui interes redus, manifestat sau simulat, față de fenomenul sau obiectul prezentat:

Même il m'est arrivé quelquefois de manger  
Le berger.

În funcție de durata grupului *Le berger* se poate ajunge fie la escamotarea crimei de către un leu ipocrit, fie la o mărturisire de o sinceritate... exemplară, dar atât de puțin compromițătoare!

Puțin preocupat de rigiditatea malherbiană, La Fontaine nu este obnubilat de simetria rimelor: el se mulțumește uneori cu asonanțele și „uită” chiar din timp în timp să rimeze... Împerechează cuvinte care, niciodată, nu pot fi imaginate împreună – *œuf/bœuf*, *Cicéron/larron*, *équipage/potage* – sau uzează în mod inventiv de calambur: *pêcheur/prêcheur*. Fabulistul excelează în folosirea termenilor și a turnurilor savuroase, în descoperirea sunetelor evocatoare: vocea groasă a lupului și blândețea mielului, țipătul bufniței, grăsimea pisicii, lupta leului și a musculiței:

Comme il sonna la charge il sonne la victoire.

Înțelepciunea populară și confidențele sunt aureolate de o sensibilitate și de o fantezie poetică uluitoare. La Fontaine intervine frecvent în povestiri precum Diderot sau Stendhal, lăsând să se întrevadă un epicurism original și atrăgător. Critica modernă a încercat să decrypteze valențele proteice ale operei lui La Fontaine și a stabilit

conexiuni surprinzătoare: Lucrețiu, Virgil, Homer, Mozart... Însăși multiplicitatea unor astfel de conexiuni demonstrează cât de inesizabilă și cât de variată apare această poezie.



# Syntax in Legal Language

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## ABSTRACT

Legal texts are highly formulaic or stereotypical. Some texts can be quite elaborate in terms of structure but routine legal documents tend to follow a predetermined structure that changes little over time. Sentences in legal languages are quite a bit longer than in other styles. They are also more complex containing a lot of embeddings. The language of law is characterized by highly technical vocabulary and colloquial terms used in specialized ways.

**KEYWORDS:** *nominalizations, embedded clauses, multiple negations*

## Introduction in the Language of Law

The language of law is characterized by highly technical vocabulary and colloquial terms used in specialized ways. It is also plagued with lengthy noun phrases, heavy use of passive voice, multiple negatives, and complex grammatical structures, including multiple embedded clauses and unusually placed subordinate clauses.<sup>1</sup> The English legal language has influences from different languages at different periods. For example the Latin terms entered the legal language since 597 when the Christian missionaries landed. A major impact of Latin was to encourage the use of writing because at that time there was no standard for written English. Latin words or phrases are still used today as for example: *quid pro quo*, *versus*, *in re*, *bona fide*, *male prohibitum*, *lex fori* and many more. There are some words with Anglo-Saxon roots which have survived to today, including *writ*, *ordeal*, *witness*, *deem*, *oath* and *moot*. Legal terms from Norse include the word *law* itself, but otherwise the language did not have a large impact on legal English. The Norman Conquest from 1066, made French the language of aristocracy. Some of the characteristics of Law French that have left traces in today's legal language include addition of initial *e* to words like *squire*, creating *esquire*; adjectives that follow nouns (*attorney general*); simplification of the French verb system, so that all verbs eventually ended in *-er*, as in *demurrer* or *waiver*; and a large amount of technical vocabulary, including many of the most basic words in the English legal system. English colonizers transported legal English throughout the British Empire, including North America.

Legal language was originally entirely oral. If there was a writing of a legal event, it was merely a report of the oral ceremony. Eventually, the writing became a type of authoritative text. The written text became more important than the oral text. This progression can be seen in written reports of court proceedings, which first merely documented an oral event, but which later became the event itself. Legislation also went through this progression. Printing contributed to these trends by allowing for a standardized and widely-available version of the written text.

It is said that legal language is full of archaic words and phrases. According to Mellinkoff, *“the language of the law retains numerous Old and Middle English words and meanings which have long since passed out of general usage”*. As for example words and phrases such as *“to wit”*, *“aforesaid”* and *“witnesseth”* adverbs of the sort *“herein”* and *“therewith”* and phrasal expressions like *“comes now plaintiff”* and *“further affiant sayeth not.”*<sup>2</sup>

Another statement often heard about legal language is that it is much more precise than ordinary language. Mellinkoff observed that lawyers *“make many attempts at precision of expression”*<sup>3</sup> although he also noted that those attempts were not always successful.

### **The Ambiguity of Syntax in Legal Language**

Legal texts are highly formulaic or stereotypical. Some texts can be quite elaborate in terms of structure but routine legal documents tend to follow a predetermined structure that changes little over time. Sentences in legal languages are quite a bit longer than in other styles. They are also more complex containing a lot of embeddings. The sentences are connected by either hypotaxis (the subordinate status of one clause in relation to another separated from it by a subordinating conjunction) or by parataxis (the juxtaposition of clauses or phrases without the use of coordinating or subordinating conjunctions). Another specific feature of legal English is the use of binomials, or trinomials which are conjoined phrases which consist of words like *by and* and *or*, as in *I give, devise and bequeath the rest, residue and remainder...* They have been used since Anglo-Saxon times. Conjoining words is still extremely common in legal language. One reason for such lists of words is to be as comprehensive as possible. They also can add emphasis. But they can lead to ambiguity because of the rule of interpretation.

Many pejorative adjectives have been used to describe the language of the law, including *“wordy”*, *“unclear”*, *“pompous”* and *“dull”*. Legal language differs from ordinary language in many ways:

1. Technical terminology (testator, libel per quod, hedonic damages).
2. Archaic, formal, and unusual or difficult vocabulary (such as *said/aforesaid*; *to wit*; *hereinafter*).
3. Impersonal Constructions (avoidance of the first and second person pronouns *“I”* and *“you”*; judges referring to themselves as *“the court”*).
4. Nominalizations (*“the injury occurred...”*).

5. Passive constructions (“the girl was injured...”).
6. Multiple Negations (“innocent misrecollection is not uncommon”).
7. Long and Complex Sentences (sometimes hundreds of words long).
8. Wordiness and redundancy (“I give, devise and bequeath the rest, residue and remainder of my estate...”).

One of the aims of legal English is to gain precision and an attempt of gaining precision is to repeat nouns (e.g., player), rather than using a pronoun (e.g., he) after a person or thing is introduced. Pronouns can sometimes have ambiguous reference, so this technique can indeed enhance precision. Lawyers, however, avoid pronouns almost routinely, even where no ambiguity is possible. Avoiding pronouns does have an unintended benefit: it reduces the use of sexist language.

Impersonal Constructions are also characteristic for the grammar of a legal text. Legal style tends to avoid the first and the second personal pronouns (I and you) because the third person is more impersonal and it creates an impression of objectivity and authority. Another means of avoiding vagueness is to repeat the nouns rather than using a pronoun instead and this avoidance of pronouns can have an unintended benefit, it can reduce the use of sexist language.

Verbal groups are characterized by a high number of non-finites. Among the finites the most frequently found group is modal auxiliary + be + past participle, and in this construction the most used modal auxiliary is *shall* which expresses deontic modality. Crystal and Davy say that *shall* expresses “*what is to be the obligatory consequence of a legal decision and not simply as a marker of the future sense, which is its normal function*”<sup>4</sup>

e.g.:

Such waste shall be subject to all provisions of Directive 75/442/EEC. It shall in particular be:

- destined for duly authorised facilities only, authorised according to Articles 10 and 11 of Directive 75/442/EEC,
- subject to all provisions of Articles 8, 12, 13 and 14 of Directive 75/442/EEC.<sup>5</sup>

In this example *shall* occurs in passive sentences. In legal language *shall* does not indicate the future, it indicates an obligation. *Shall* is also to be found in declarations. It is commonly used in legal language and therefore it has the function of indicating that the document in which it occurs is legal. In these examples one can see that the verbs are followed by a preposition like: *to* or *for*.

In the language of law the determiners *such* and *said* are also frequently found. Another feature of the grammar of legal English is the noun phrases. According to Crystal and Davy the subjects of legal English seem to be “*abstract or they are not primarily to be taken as referring to some physical objects*”.<sup>6</sup> The majority of the subjects have many components as one can notice from the following example:

The use of the designation ‘Parmesan’ for a cheese which does not conform to the specification for ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ would in any event constitute an evocation of that PDO, which is prohibited by Article 13 (1) (b) of the Basic Regulation.<sup>7</sup>

In the above mentioned example we have a subject containing many parts of speech: the definite article *the*, the noun *use*, the preposition *of*, again the definite article *the*, the noun *designation* and the noun *Parmesan*. This noun group represents postmodification rather than premodification. According to Crystal and Davy there is a certain division of postmodification:

- a. a preposition with a nominal group (i.e. a prepositional phrase), e.g. the use *of the designation*
- b. a non-finite clause e.g. the provisions of the rule *mentioned before*.
- c. a dependent clause which may be introduced by a pronoun or simply attached directly to the nominal it modifies e.g. the man *that I saw on the street*.
- d. an adjective e.g. “*God the Father almighty*”<sup>8</sup>

Passive sentences are predominately used in legal texts because they allow the speaker or writer to omit reference to the actor (as in the girl was injured at 5:30). And the lawyers have strategic reasons to use this passive that is to deliberately de-emphasize or obscure who the actor is. Passives being impersonal give an aura of objectivity and authoritativeness to the text. These passives are commonly used in court orders and they are less common in contract where the parties typically wish to spell out exactly who is to do what. In legal texts the accent is put on the noun pattern. Nominalizations are frequently used and are nouns derived from verbs (e.g., injury from the verb injure). Like passives, they can be used to obscure the actor (the injury occurred at 5:30). A legitimate function of nominalizations is that they allow the law to be stated as generally and objectively as possible. Lawyers often use passives and nominalizations strategically, however. They avoid them when they wish to be as precise as possible, and use them when they wish to be deliberately imprecise.<sup>9</sup>

The sentences in legal English are long but the structure is unambiguous and logical and this leads to repetition and monotony. The sentences are connected by either coordination or subordination. Coordination is a relation between two or more linguistic elements equal with each other. If there are coordinating conjunctions, then the coordination is called syndetic, if there are no coordinating conjunctions but they can be supplied they can be called asyndetic. Clausal coordination exists between two or more main clauses or two or more subordinate clauses. In the clausal coordination one can find ellipsis because the elements in common need not be repeated. Subordination involves an unequal relationship between two items. Two elements are subordinate or embedded if one item is dependent on the other.

*Adverbial and prepositional phrases* are often used in the legal style due to their great mobility. They are perfect instruments to clarify meaning and avoid ambiguity, sometimes having an unusual position and being coordinated.

The most frequent structure of prepositional phrases is P-N-P (Preposition + Noun + Preposition)

“for the purpose of”, “in respect of”, “in accordance with”, “in pursuance of”, “by virtue of”. Introductory adverbial phrases can be “where”, “when” or “if”.

The first paragraph of the article begins with the conjunction “when” introducing a “*pre-positioning of the case description coming from the requirement that very few legislative statements are of universal application and it is absolutely crucial for the writer to specify the kind of case description(s) to which the rule applies*”.<sup>10</sup> This phenomenon can be observed in the great majority of law reports, in the articles published in the newspapers or in the judges’ reports. In this way, the reader learns about the context of the process, about the persons involved and maybe about precedent cases.

The verbal phrases in legal language are notable for their high number of non-finites but there are also finites the most significant group is the one involving a modal auxiliary, the verb *be*, and the past participle. The most common auxiliary in legal English is *shall* which is used to express deontic modality. *May* is the other modal auxiliary used in legal English. It is used when “*somebody is permitted to do something*”. The majority of the relative clauses are defining clauses. Non-defining relative clauses are found in parenthesis and their function is to give additional information. The relative pronoun *that* often appears in relative clauses. Some relative clauses are introduced by verbs like *mentioned, specified, and stated*. Adverbial clauses are also present in legal texts and are found in the initial position. Prepositional phrases as well as nominal constructions abound in legal English. Crystal and Davy say that “*Legal draftsmen take full advantage of adverbial mobility, but always as a means of clarifying meaning and avoiding ambiguity*.”<sup>11</sup> Nominalizations are frequently used in the language of law: They are nouns constructed from verbs usually adding *-age* (as in *salvage, leakage, stowage* or *storage*) or *-tion* (as in *allocation, distribution* or *termination*).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Peter Tiersma (1999), *Legal Language*, Chicago: University Chicago Press.

<sup>2</sup> David Mellinkoff (1963), *The Language of the Law*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language*, Cambridge, pp. 206-207.

<sup>5</sup> Taken from the Case C-176/05, KVZ retect GmbH v. Republik Österreich, March 2007.

<sup>6</sup> David Crystal, *op.cit.*, p. 206.

<sup>7</sup> Taken from the Case C-132/05, Commission of the European Communities v. Federal Republic of Germany.

<sup>8</sup> David Crystal, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Tiersma, *op.cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Vijay Bhatia (1994), “Cognitive structuring in legislative provisions”, in Gibbons, John (ed.) *Language and the Law*, Harlow, p. 144.

<sup>11</sup> David Crystal, Derek Davy (1969), *Investigating the English Style*, London: Longman.

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# The Application of Speech Acts Theory to the Discourse of Advertising

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## ABSTRACT

Speech acts theory provides a means of insight into the functioning of advertising discourse. The present paper tries to apply some concepts of the speech acts theory to the discourse of advertising, by stressing those terms that seemed to be more relevant in the respective field: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts; Searle's taxonomy of speech acts (representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, declarations); direct and indirect speech acts, the indirection strategy; the felicity conditions; the maxims of the cooperative principle, floutings.

**KEYWORDS:** *locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary, representatives*

In this paper, I will make a theoretic presentation of speech acts theory, with stress on those aspects that are linked to the functioning of advertising discourse.

Regarding the the notion of discourse, among the various definitions, I quote the one provided by Daniela Roventă-Frumușani: "*An utterance which is considered in its interactive dimension: the power to act upon the interlocutor, the entering into the situation of uttering; a subject of utterance theories and of pragmatics.*" (72) The same author adds that

We will never meet discourse in general, but certain contextualized forms: weather forecast, advertisement, toast, report. Not all societies use the same discursive genres (Amazonian Indians have no TV news), and neither the same discursive interactions ("bargaining" is unacceptable in western countries, while refusing to bargain is an offence in Arab countries). (68)

Continuing this line of thought, advertising discourse is a mark of consumer society, ubiquitous in the contemporary space, and impossible to neglect as a subject of study by communication disciplines.

Applying speech act theory to advertising discourse implies many problems of interpretation, as this form of communication is different from the written text. In an advertisement, the linguistic component represents only a part of it, the rest of the message being carries by what is called *paralanguage*. Guy Cook explains this phenomenon as follows:

The Saussurean approach, in dealing with the relationship between language and substance, leaves a great deal out of account. In communication, language always has physical substance of some kind, and though this substance – sound waves or marks on paper – serves as a trigger for the assignation of phonemes or graphemes by the receiver, allowing him or her to build the signs which create linguistic meanings, it carries other kinds of meaning too. In face-to-face communication, important meanings may be conveyed by eye contact, gesture, body movement, clothing, touch, body position, physical proximity, voice quality, volume, pitch range and laughter; in writing, the same is true of page and letter sizes, typefaces and handwriting styles. These and many other factors also carry meaning which may reinforce or contradict the linguistic meaning of the signs which they accompany. They are examples of paralanguage. (66)

Regarding speech acts, Geoffrey Finch tells us that “*We can see them as different ways in which cooperativeness is realised in any exchange.*” (*How to Study Linguistics*, 161)

In essence, speech act theory argues that when we use language we are performing certain acts. This theory tends to concentrate largely on illocutions.

The discovery of the speech acts phenomenon by the language philosopher J.L. Austin, a professor at the University of Oxford, marks the beginnings of pragmatics as we know it today. He developed this theory during the 1930s, and exposed it in a series of lectures which he gave at Harvard in 1955. These were then developed in *How to Do Things with Words*. (Finch, 2000) Preoccupations regarding this subject had existed before, too, but Austin’s discovery put them in a new light. According to Jacques Moeschler in *Dicționar enciclopedic de pragmatică*,

Reinach, before the First World War, had already set apart *social acts* (cf. Reinach 1983), which Austin would call *illocutionary speech acts*, or Gardiner, between the two world wars, made several remarks which announced the Austinian theory of speech acts and anticipated several of Grice’s ideas (cf. Gardiner, 1989). Finally, the Austinian theory of speech acts was developed along the time and presented two main stages (c.f. Austin, 1970 and Récanati, 1981). [These stages were represented] by Austin (1970) and Searle (1972). (35) (my translation)

I will follow the outline of the so-called *classical theory* of speech acts (*Dicționar enciclopedic de pragmatică*) as it is briefly presented by Geoffrey Finch in *Linguistic Terms and Concepts*.

Traditionally, philosophers made a distinction between speech and action. Consequently, the analysis of speech was interested in whether it made a truthful description of reality or not, not in whether it was effective. Austin opened another kind of perspective, by demonstrating that utterances can be considered as events, the same as other actions are considered. Austin distinguished among three kinds of acts realized through utterings: *locutionary*, *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary*. The first kind referred to the actual uttering of a statement, which is logical and grammatically correct. An illocutionary act is realised through the first kind, the



one that is linked to language: assertion, warning, wish, promise etc. The last type, the perlocutionary act, is represented by the effect which the illocutionary act has upon the receiver of the message: persuasion, discouragement, surprise, delusion etc. Similarly, in *Dicționar de științe ale limbii*, Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu tells us that

By uttering a certain statement, the speaker sends forth certain combinations of sounds, organized under the form of sequences of morphosyntactic structures, which send certain lexical and grammatical meanings (locutionary act), but, at the same time, he expresses a certain communicative intention (illocutionary act) and pursues the realization of a certain effect upon the interlocutor (perlocutionary act). [...] The comprehension of Speech Acts Theory as theory of illocutionary acts is almost current, because the locutionary component constitutes a grammar subject, while the perlocutionary component is exterior to the proper statement. Thus, the concept of speech act is identified with the concept of illocutionary act. (18)

Advertising discourse is conative, persuasive. It tries to convince us that certain products can make our lives better. In pragmatic terms, the transmission of the advertising message in a written or audio-visual form to the target public represents the locutionary act; the attempt of the advertisement of convincing this public to buy the respective product is the illocutionary act; and the success of this attempt, the fact of having convinced the receiver that the product is useful, proved by the possible purchase of the respective product, represents the perlocutionary act.

Going back to Finch's presentation, he tells us that at first, Austin made a distinction between *performative* and *constative* utterances. The first type represents a special group of utterances the saying of which actually performs the action named by the verb. Finch gives us the following examples:

act of marriage	<i>I pronounce you man and wife</i>
act of naming a ship	<i>I name this ship Saucy Sue</i>
act of closing a meeting	<i>I declare this meeting closed</i>
act of a wager	<i>I bet you a fiver</i>
act of apology	<i>I apologise</i>

(Finch, 2000: 181)

Further on, Finch explains that, in order for these utterances to count as performatives various conditions have to be met, which Austin named *felicity conditions*. Constatives consist of all those other utterances, such as statements and questions, where actions are being described or asked about rather than explicitly performed.

Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, in *Dicționar de științe ale limbii*, explains the concept of *felicity conditions* in more detail:

[Austin] took into consideration the particular case of conventional acts, whose performance implies an institutional frame. Austin defined three types of conditions:

A) conditions regarding the conventional *procedure* implied by the performing of the considered act, which must have a certain effect: A<sub>1</sub>) the procedure must include the uttering of certain words by a certain person, in certain circumstances; A<sub>2</sub>) the persons and circumstances must be adequate to appeal to the procedure; B) conditions regarding the *execution* of the procedure: B<sub>1</sub>) the procedure must be executed by all the participants correctly and B<sub>2</sub>) thoroughly; C) conditions regarding sincerity: C<sub>1</sub>) by appealing to the procedure, the respective person must have his/her feelings involved in that procedure; C<sub>2</sub>) the participants must subsequently behave according with what is implied in the procedure. The violation of these conditions determines a certain kind of failure of the act. The procedural or executional deficiencies are considered by Austin *misfires*, which trigger the nullifying of the act. (442) (my translation)

Keeping in mind that the creation of an advertisement doesn't imply an institutional frame, and at least condition A<sub>1</sub> is not fulfilled (the text of advertisements are different every time), an advertisement couldn't be regarded as a performative act.

In what follows, I will reproduce a classification of constative acts:

The indirect strategies of the constative act, typical for the advertising discourse, determine to interact:

1. assertive acts through which it is stated that the product which makes the subject of advertising is used.
2. descriptive acts through which: the brand of the product is indicated; the product is placed in the frame of a similar range of products ("positioning"); the superiority of the product is asserted (at the linguistic level); a descriptive pattern is imposed, which regards a heterogeneous ensemble made of quality, how to use it, the appropriateness for certain situations of usage etc.
3. attributive acts, through which the attribution of a quality to a product is realised in two stages: at the beginning, a value is presented (the staging is of particular importance in this case); then we have the presentation of the product by different procedures like overexposure, the placing of signature etc.
4. informative acts, through which the advertising campaign that announces a new product presents itself as a "court", which fulfils an act of informing the public." (*Discursul publicitar*) (my translation)

Coming back to Finch's presentation, Austin realised that the distinction between performatives and constatives was far-fetched, because constatives also realise a certain act, even if it has a purely linguistic nature. Therefore, Austin made a new distinction, namely between *explicit* and *implicit* performatives. Explicit performatives contain a performative verb, that is, a verb that names the action being performed, for example, *affirm*, *assert*, *forecast*, *predict*, *announce*, *insist*, *order*, *state* etc. Implicit performatives haven't such a verb, nevertheless they assume its presence.

At this point, it is important to mention the concept of *illocutionary force*, as it is linked to another classification of felicity conditions, namely the one realized

by Searle. The illocutionary force of a statement represents a “*specific conventional force, associated to the propositional content of an uttering, expressing the way in which the statement is ‘taken’ by the participants to the verbal exchange (as an assertion, request, promise, excuse etc.)*” (Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, in *Dicționar de științe ale limbii*: 256) (my translation)

It is also Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu in *Dicționar de științe ale limbii* who makes a presentation of felicity conditions, in the sense given by Searle:

By distinguishing between constitutive and settling rules, he considers that the rules which establish relationships between different marks of the illocutionary force and illocutionary acts are of the constitutive type. The felicity conditions allow the establishing of a set of usage rules for these marks. Among the four types of conditions suggested by Searle, the one which imposes a certain structuring of the statement is the *essential condition*; it shows what an act expresses (for instance, the request stands for an attempt of the sender at determining the receiver to perform a certain action). The other types of conditions are: the *preliminary conditions*, which define a series of general situational premises for performing an act (for example, in order to perform a request, the receiver must be able to realize the requested action, and the sender must believe that the receiver is able to realize it, and that the latter will not realize it on his/her own initiative); the *sincerity conditions*, which define those requirements regarding the sender’s beliefs, feelings, intentions, which are considered as appropriate for the respective act (e.g., for a request, the sender must really want the fulfilling of the requested action by the receiver); the *propositional content condition*, which formulates restrictions regarding this component of the communicative act (e.g., for a request, the statement must express a future action of the receiver). (442) (my translation)

By taking this classification as a guide, we can establish the felicity conditions of an advertisement text (let’s say, a commercial advertisement) as follows:

- *the essential condition* is realized through the attempt of the promoter of a certain product at convincing, at determining a target public to buy the respective product;
- *the preliminary conditions* are realized by the fact that an advertisement attempts at being received by a certain segment of the population, the target public, about whom a conclusion was reached, following market surveys, that the respective public might purchase that product (for instance, advertising campaigns for luxury products are not directed at segments of the population with low incomes); moreover, the promoter of the product knows that the target public will become interested in the purchasing of that product, to the disadvantage of other similar products on the market, only if it is convinced to do that (“By uncovering the receiver’s “dreams” and expectations, the advertising message rises certain wishes and needs, which the act of purchasing (in the case of the success of the persuasion), as a securing, and inhibition and frustration liberating act will satisfy.” (Rovența-Frumușani, 2003: 151) (my translation)).

- *the sincerity conditions* are realized because the promoter's wish to sell a product is genuine, as the promoter's existence on the market depends on the success of the product among the public.
- it is more difficult to follow if the *condition of propositional content* is realized or not, because the message of the advertising text is rarely stated in a clear manner.

Going back to Finch's presentation, he says that, at the end, all utterances constitute speech acts of one kind or another, whether they are explicitly marked by a "performative" verb, or they are implicitly signalled. Some of the speech acts are considered as fundamental and they are grammaticalized in different types of sentences (declarative, interrogative, imperative). The taxonomy of speech acts varies from the point of details from one author to another, but one of the most widely used is that propounded by Searle. In what follows, I will reproduce its presentation, which was realized by Finch in *Linguistic Terms and Concepts*:

1. *Representatives*, which commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition (paradigm cases: asserting, concluding)
  2. *Directives*, which are attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something (paradigm cases: requesting, questioning)
  3. *Commissives*, which commit the speaker to some future course of action (paradigm cases: promising, threatening, offering)
  4. *Expressives*, which express a psychological state (paradigm cases: thanking, apologising, welcoming, congratulating)
  5. *Declarations*, which effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions (paradigm cases: excommunicating, declaring war, christening, marrying, firing from employment).
- (182)

It is also Finch who tells us that such speech acts can be looked at as *direct speech acts*, because there is a match between *sentence meaning* and *speaker meaning*. But a great part of what we want to convey is not realized directly, as the listener must grasp additional meanings. It is the case of *indirect speech acts*. These are perceived as being more polite because, especially in the case of requests or orders, they allow the listener some freedom to comply and therefore, a certain degree of power.

Speaking about the *reasons of indirection*, Daniela Roventă-Frumușani summarizes them as follows:

[...] we can talk about generating it for *psychological reasons* (a less abrupt message can be more efficient – it is the case of requests, advice, or, by rephrasing what Tadeusz Kotarbinski said in *A Treatise on Good Work (Tratat despre lucrul bine făcut)*, – "What is well done is done indirectly"), for *sociological reasons* (social taboos do not allow direct expression); finally, we think that the possibility of handling responsibility by indirection is even more important than the communicative efficiency and the pressure of social codes. In the case of irony, the speaker can defend himself/herself when accused of having offended somebody, by limiting himself/herself to the literal meaning, in the way that such orders as "It's

hot in here” for the command “Open the window” reduce the obligation of the interlocutor to comply.

A *rhetoric of obliquity*, as Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni pertinently put it, indirection is necessary in order to avoid imposition on the other, the aggression of the interlocutor’s subjectivity; indirection can be included in the concept of *face saving* as an infrastructure of social interaction.” (39-40) (my translation)

In the case of advertising discourse, an instance such as “We *insist* that you buy the X product!” is found in the early days of advertising, when its creators couldn’t rely on the habit of audiences of understanding them, of recognizing their “illocutionary force”.

In order to support this idea, I quote Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu in *Dicționar de științe ale limbii*:

Grammatical from the locutionary point of view, a speech act can be felicitous or infelicitous, depending on whether the receiver correctly identifies or not the illocutionary force of the uttering through which the speech act is materialized. [...] The illocutionary force can be expressed directly or indirectly. (256) (my translation)

The same idea is expressed by Finch in *How to Study Linguistics*: “[...] *one of the principal things we do when trying to interpret an utterance is that of deciding on the particular act or acts which are being performed. Only then can we judge how to respond.*” (161)

In *Linguistic Terms and Concepts*, Finch rephrases Searle’s judgement:

Searle suggests that in understanding indirect speech acts we combine our knowledge of three elements. These elements are: the felicity conditions of direct speech acts, the context of the utterance, and principles of conversational cooperation, such as those provided by the *cooperative principle*. [...] The process of combining these elements draws heavily on *inference* because much of what is meant is not explicitly stated. (183-4)

As we said before, the felicity conditions have to do with the speaker being in an appropriate situation to make the utterance. In the advertising message, for example, if a supermodel like Claudia Schiffer states that a certain L’Oreal cream is perfect for one’s skin, the audience of that ad is inclined to believe her, as she is associated with the idea of perfection as well; moreover, she is supposed to use that cream herself.

It is also interesting that, in an advertisement like the one mentioned before, it is not the person whose image is used that is directly interested in promoting the product. The words that she utters have been analyzed for a long time and carefully chosen by copywriters in order to establish a certain direction for the interpretation of the message. Moreover, the public that is “initiated” in the popular culture is aware of that; people know, to a certain degree, the mechanisms of producing the advertising message, but they cooperate, they allow being “seduced”.

Going back to the elements of understanding indirect speech acts, it is the *context* which Searle mentions that gives us clues about how the utterance should be interpreted. In the case of advertisements, they need to be identified as such. For example, one must make the difference between a description of a product made for scientific reasons and for commercial ones.

Finch tells us that *the conversational principles* represent the major assumptions which speakers and hearers conventionally hold about relevance, orderliness and truthfulness.

As it has already been stated, the conversational principles are established by the *cooperative principle*, which is also presented in Finch's *Linguistic Terms and Concepts*:

[The cooperative principle is] a term derived from the philosopher H.P. Grice and important in the study of conversational structure. Grice's principle assumes that people cooperate in the process of communication in order to reduce misunderstanding. The principle itself states, 'Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged'.

(cited in Malmkjaer, 1995: 355). (159)

In order to comply with this principle, speakers must follow four subprinciples, called by Grice *maxims*:

1. *Maxims of Quantity*

(a) Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.

(b) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

2. *Maxim of Relation*

Be relevant.

3. *Maxims of Manner*

Super maxim: be perspicuous. More specifically:

(a) Avoid obscurity.

(b) Avoid ambiguity.

(c) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

(d) Be orderly.

4. *Maxims of Quality*

Super maxim: try to make your contribution one that is true. More specifically:

(a) Do not say what you believe to be false.

(b) Do not say that for which you lack evidence.

(Finch, 2000: 160)

Further on, Finch tells us that speakers can choose *to flout* the cooperative maxims, that is, to apparently involve some element of communication failure. Floutings give us the opportunity to apply the cooperative maxims indirectly: "[...] many, apparently irrelevant replies are often indirectly relevant. Indeed, such is our natural tendency to cooperate that we will go a long way before assuming that

*something said to us is nonsensical.*” (Finch, 2000: 161) These floutings allow us a certain degree of creativity in communication.

For example, if an advertisement makes use of a metaphor and says: “Class A; a new star in Mercedes-Benz Galaxy”, a maxim of quality (“Do not say what you believe to be false.”) seems to be violated.

Participants are aware of an underlying tension between the simple maxim and its flouted form and it is this which gives rise in many instances to indirect speech acts.” (Finch 2000: 161) In *How to Study Linguistics*, Finch tells us that “Indirect acts are indirectly cooperative. They depend on us being able to pick up the relevant clues from intonational and thematic force, together with the context of the utterance, in order to arrive at a correct interpretation of the speaker’s meaning.

(Finch, 2003: 162)

Further on, I will analyze the application of the cooperative principle concept in a commercial realized for a L’Oreal product, more exactly, an event from July 2007. I quote from a news Internet site:

Britain’s advertising watchdog criticized L’Oreal on Wednesday for a mascara commercial featuring actress Penelope Cruz that “exaggerated” the effects of the product. The Advertising Standards Authority said the company broke its rules and misled consumers by failing to make it clear that Cruz was wearing some fake individual lashes. In the TV commercial for L’Oreal Paris Telescopic Mascara, Cruz stood on a terrace next to a telescope and said: ‘Imagine, lashes that could reach for the stars.’ In a written ruling, the watchdog said the commercial “exaggerated the effect that could be achieved by using the mascara on natural lashes.” It ordered L’Oreal to make it clear in future adverts if models are wearing fake lashes. The watchdog also criticized L’Oreal’s claim of ‘60 percent longer lashes’. Some people might take that to mean their lashes would actually increase in length, rather than just look longer, the ASA said. L’Oreal said it would comply with the ASA’s orders.

(Reuters, *L’Oreal rapped over Penelope Cruz mascara ads*)

This is an example of communication failure: two maxims of cooperation are perceived not as flouted, but violated – a maxim of quantity (“Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.”), and a maxim of manner (“avoid ambiguity”). The ad makes use of a directive speech act, in this case an attempt to get the audience to “imagine” the benefits of a product at a hyperbolized dimension. The violation of the cooperative principle consists in the failure to insert the word “look” in the text; also, the failure to provide an item of information which is regarded as a condition for the achievement of felicity conditions (the situation of communication is not entirely appropriate if the actress is wearing fake lashes).

To sum up, I have tried to apply some concepts of the speech acts theory to the discourse of advertising, by stressing those terms that seemed to be more relevant in the respective field: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts; Searle’s taxonomy of speech acts (representatives, directives, commissives,

expressives, declarations); direct and indirect speech acts, the indirection strategy; the felicity conditions; the maxims of the cooperative principle, floutings.

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