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Dear Reader,

Our journal, whose first issue You are holding in your hands, has set as its main aim, also due to the Romanian-English-Hungarian relations of our university and faculty, to establish an intercultural practice. The passage from one culture to the other, the free alternation of cultural perspectives offer such advantages that no culture today can do without, regardless of whether we are talking about the culture of large or smaller nations, about majority or minority cultures.

Interculturality, however, cannot mean a kind of universality lingering above particular cultures, assuming to be culturally neutral. And neither can it be a large culture assuming the universality of some of its own features. It should rather mean reciprocal multilingualism and the plurality of cultural identities.

Being familiar with several cultures offers us the possibility to view our “own” culture as well as “the Other” cultures from an inner and outer angle simultaneously. This dual perspective creates a much more comprehensive opportunity for self-reflection than any of the viewpoints based on a monolingual and monocultural existence. And, of course, it provides much more favorable conditions for learning about others.

It is a well-known fact that architecture has been the art defining the styles of the great ages of art history. Architecture could fulfill this role exactly because, due to its specific structure, it has been capable of bringing about the union—inaccessible to any other art form—of this inside and outside perspective.

Our journal—of course, with much more modest but professionally well-founded ambitions—aspires to achieve something similar: to offer a simultaneous, outward and inside view of the Hungarian, Romanian, and English (and occasionally other) cultural universes.

We hope that You take our endeavors with confidence and the patience that any new initiative deserves.

Béla Bíró
Executive editor



Homburg—*Dramaturg's Journal*—The Biography of a Production

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Introduction/the *mise en scène*

This *Journal* was born digital, and is a work in progress, as well as a work in (and about) *process*.

It was inspired by the request of director Jorge Cacheiro that I serve as dramaturg for *Homburg*, JC's new adaptation of *The Prince of Homburg* by the German author Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811). I decided to keep track of the show from the moment it entered my life as a responsibility and challenge on October 8, 2008, through its world premiere opening and run at the MSU Kasser Theater, March 10-15, 2009.

The *Journal* speaks for itself. But I will say that part of its “charm” seems to derive from the gradual unfolding of my awareness of exactly I was being drawn into—a separate (un)reality, another world—the intricate methodology of theatrical production.

Heinrich von Kleist—dramatist, essayist, erstwhile journalist—was a quintessential Romantic figure. Born into an aristocratic Prussian family with a tradition of military service, he lost both his parents by the age of fifteen. Through Kleist's mercurial, unhappy career, he fervently yearned for a *Lebensplan* (“life plan”) but instead became a hectic and inveterate wanderer and oft-thwarted

author, given to debilitating anxieties and serially-destructive quarrels with friends. His literary pretensions were openly scorned by his idol, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Kleist engaged in several ill-fated and unconsummated epistolary love affairs until, at thirty-four, less than five months after completing his final work, *The Prince of Homburg*, he finally found a woman devoted enough to commit suicide with him on the banks of the Wannsee River outside Berlin.

The Prince of Homburg—unpublished at the author’s death—serves as the basis for Cacheiro’s *Homburg*. It is the story of an impetuous, Hamlet-like Prussian cavalry officer who has chronic difficulty choosing between the rigors of service and the allure of dreams—his own and others’. As the play opens, Prince Friedrich “awakens” under a tree away from the battlefield, into a setting that may or may not be a dream. The drama itself often reads as an overheated manifestation of Kleist’s imagination rather than a version of the historical account upon which it was based, the June 18, 1675, battle of Fehrbellin. The Prince is set adrift into a complex of relationships that test his mettle: with Hohenzollern, his duplicitous and manipulative friend; the Elector of Brandenburg, imperious monarch and commander, and his empathic wife, the Electress; and the willowy, passionate Princess Natalie, Homburg’s cousin. Conflicts of the head and heart arise from the first moments of the play and persist until the ambiguous conclusion. Does the Prince serve the state, or is his legitimate allegiance to his love? Is he guilty of the crime to which he has been condemned to death, or a victim of circumstance? Is he a dilatory scribbler with his head in the clouds, or a martyred, conscience-wracked, existential hero?

Part I: Pre-concept through the eve of the first production meeting

10/8—First formally set-up meeting with Jorge Cacheiro to talk about the show—outside at the cafe. He dwelled preponderantly in the world of the conceptual—words like “performance art,” “ephemeral,” “layers of perception,” “improvisational space,” “nothing is really clear,” “who is Homburg?” and “who is Kleist, for that matter?”—he says he is looking to create “a metaphor for theatre” and since the only work of his I have seen was *Suburbia* I will magnanimously be forgiven for any misconstruing because that was an “anomaly.” He says he wants to return to a “paratheatrical creation” that exudes an “experimental/existential” aura. He speaks of lights being dragged across the stage rather than a fixed grid; of a floor made of paper so that it will be “ripped up” as the play goes along. He is emphatic that he does *not* want any kind of essay or program note or formal critique from me. He is willing to do a talkback for the cast at which I would be the interlocutor. All of this is perfectly fine with me, I say, and I mean it. I feel like a blank slate with respect to JC’s ideas and I am secretly pleased to feel this way and

to simply bring my sensibility to bear. Callbacks are 12/13, rehearsals start 1/19 and we open 3/10.

11/13—JC asked me to find “texts” from the Kleist play and from his letters, and from Christa Wolf’s novel, *No Place on Earth*. We spent a hurried fifteen minutes in my office talking about Kafka [The Trial], Kant [dialectic], Wagner [bombastic music], and other German cultural matters of mutual interest. Also discussed uplighting downstage toy soldiers to cast huge shadows. I sent him the link to the Metropolitan Museum exhibition with the Levinthal cibachromes of toy soldiers. JC’s imagination is scattered all over the place, *deliberately* unfocused, it seems to me, as if he is trying to be smilingly provocative—not in a self-conscious way, just his natural inclination to get me thinking, which is also fine with me for now, although I really don’t need all that much incentivizing. My major concern is not to overstep my boundaries as so-called dramaturg although JC does not have any (obvious, excessive) proprietary feelings about the show—as of now, that is. I know he has also met and talked with Erhard Rom about the set but I have no idea what they discussed. In general, there is a conceptual air about the piece—let it happen and go along for the ride; but at the same time you have to *do* something on the ride, and that “something” is coalescing in JC’s imagination. It’s an interesting M.O. which I can live with—freedom within unstated constraints.

11/14—Another impromptu “corridor”/on the run meeting with JC. This time as a result of my sending him the toy soldier photographs he launched into a quasi-improvisational description of the stage floorboards exploding upward and blossoming out as if a bomb had been dropped thereon. I had been digging more deeply into Kleist’s writings and asked JC if he would admit Kleist’s essays into the textual mix. At first he was hesitant, then said ok, we would lay everything out on the table and pick and choose. I said I would not get into the stories or the other plays, although the temptation was big—just branch out from the letters into some of the hard-edged themes of the essays. We talked sketchily about the actual Homburg character and who would be cast but I am not familiar with the names of many of the student-actors although I have seen the shows by now and could recognize the students by sight. [No matter, as it is not up to me.] It turns out that on some unconscious level I have turned to rereading Kafka and reading Brecht in the past couple of weeks and now it turns out that they both admired Kleist’s work tremendously. One can see why. In the case of K. there is a sense of over-riding dread and the placelessness of place; in the case of B., the alienation of the audience and the didacticism of the theatre and the insistence upon the stage as needing to be expanded as a forum for action of many different and unexpected kinds.

11/15—Woke up today thinking about the endless “journeying” of Kleist, his peripatetic, obligatory Romantic *wanderjahr* throughout continental Europe all the while resolving to be a writer, yet when you get down to it, his productive period really only spans five years. Everywhere he went, Kleist found it difficult to remain focused—and there is still debate to this day about what he *actually did do* in some of the places he went—i.e., was he a spy ... or some such. Rather, for me, writing has always had to be sedentary. I have taken notebooks with me on trips and made “field notes” but the *real* writing always has to be in one specific spot, where I am right now, in my study at my desk in my own house. Even in the years before the computer, I never considered notes/jottings/on-site observations as “real” writing. I have always been very strict on this definition, so when people ask me how long it takes to “write” my books, I first explain the actual definition. It’s going to be interesting to see, in this regard, how JC handles the conflation between Kleist/Homburg—insofar as every author has elements of himself in every character he creates. *Madame Bovary, c’est moi*. Stephen Dedalus/James Joyce, etc. When you layer on top of that the emphasis on the dream-state in Homburg you end up with a work that is tissue-layered, ambiguous...

11/16—email to JC—just so we are on the same page—I am referencing the Kleist *Selected Writings* superbly edited by David Constantine—Hackett Publishing Co., Indianapolis and Cambridge, paperback 1997, 2004. I also ordered another book of letters and essays edited by Philip B. Miller called *An Abyss Deep Enough*—will send the particulars soon.

The Constantine preface is brilliant & I urge you to read it & his translation of the play is gorgeous.

The letters here are so aphoristic as to defy excerpting—you cannot go wrong with any of them on pp. 416-427—they are all about the tensions between controlling oneself from within and existing as if a marionette worked by fate; the indecisiveness of hovering between truth and falsity and not being able to discern which is which; the infinite number of ways that doubt invades our every thought. Talk of death is constant. I read someplace—perhaps you have heard this—that for the last decade of his life K. asked several people to commit suicide with him. I also see his exquisite solitude even when in the company of others—the Sartrean “hell is other people.” And of course that romantic conviction that his sadness is of a higher order than anybody else’s.

Talk to you soon. NB

11/17—Leafing through the new Metropolitan Museum of Art *Bulletin*, a selection of recent acquisitions, I come to *Wanderer in the Storm* (1835), a small oil by Carl Julius von Leybold. It’s as if the Romantic era is finding me again while I am going more deeply into Kleist. “A lone man in a fluttering black cape, boots,

and blue pants walks through an autumnal, storm-swept landscape,” writes curator Sabine Rewald in her accompanying note. “The figure of the lonely wanderer in untamed nature as a personification of restless yearning was beloved by the German Romantics,” she continues. Indeed, in my own continuing and willful conflation of Kleist and Homburg, both inhabit a dreamscape-landscape. In the case of the former, he literally roams the length and breadth of Europe on an undefined mission—supposedly to “become a writer.” In the case of the latter, his somnolence takes us immediately to unresponsive silence when the Elector, Hohenzollern and others try to communicate with him. One can only hazard a guess at what is going through the mind of the Wanderer and the mind of Homburg—an inner journey that mirrors the (metaphorical) outer one. If we could cross over the boundary of the Homburg text and penetrate the unconscious of Homburg asleep under the tree, what would we find there? Part of the allure is the not-knowing—an effective dramatic device that draws us immediately into the action of the play.

11/18—Came across this great quote from Tim Sanford, Artistic Director, Playwrights Horizons, that really resonates as I embark upon this new adventure: “Only a careful reading of a dramatic text can make it come alive . . . It is my background in critical theory that has provided the foundation for how I read. All of the key questions of [wrong term/literary management]—the definition of style, the relation of form and content, and the relation between writer and reader or audience—stand at the center of literary and dramatic theory. So while [again—literary manager—not the right term for what I want to do] needs a range of theatrical experience to assess a writer’s voice, craft, evolution and importance, a foundation in critical discourse can help put these qualities in perspective . . . The ability to analyze plays intellectually and historically does not preclude the ability to respond to them emotionally and subjectively. Theory is analogous to craft for the artist.” Indeed. As I said earlier, and as I discussed with SK the other evening, I have no interest in “literary management.” I am more interested in watching the drama unfold from the outside and in the case of Homburg [as I was explicitly asked by JC] to provide texts and other stimuli—but in the end, at least the way I feel now, it doesn’t matter to me what the play is; rather, the application of a sensibility to the work in such a way that illumination is provided.

11/19—I want to make a note of this today as a marker to see if my reaction is premature further down the line. JC announced a production meeting for next Tuesday at 1 pm as “time is of the essence” for the show, and I teach at that time so will not be able to come. This goes to the function of the dramaturg and shows how ill-defined it still is, i.e., apparently *not* obligatory for the initial production meeting (?), which JC had previously told me was important, as the concept would be set

forth. Being a team player to my core, my initial reaction was annoyance at having to miss the meeting. Then I told myself that my “function” has many dimensions, some unstated and perhaps unknown—even to myself at this early date, so I should put this into a healthier perspective and not over-react. He is the director, after all, and the play is foremost in his mind now, and he has abandoned his purportedly “laid-back” attitude of just a few days ago, in deference to the encroachments of the play “only fifteen weeks away” and on the other side of a four-week Xmas break as well. I can empathize with that sense of time. So, as I said, I am just entering this response as a “flag” here in my journal, and will revisit it, once we are under way and thinking more about the meaning of my role as it evolves. Bottom line, though: I do favor the image of myself around the table *with the others*.

11/20—Act I—Homburg as Hamlet? The dilatory, preoccupied, abstracted, “dreaming” Prince, alone . . . observed from a distance by concerned friends who speculate about his “condition” . . . who seems “ill” and needs a doctor . . . yet how much of his behavior is feigned and how much “real?” . . . Is he a “Madman” as Hohenzollern says? Emotionally confused about the young woman, Natalie, who, by the way, was an ahistorical construct of the author . . . and she runs away from him even as she appreciates his attentions . . . “I lay down in her lap,” Homburg says of the night/Natalie as [projected] seductress, as Hamlet asked Ophelia [“as fair a thought to lie between maid’s legs”] when they were preparing to watch the play within the play . . . and again, we see Homburg “pencil and writing tablet in hand,” as Hamlet had his “tables . . . meet I set it down.” . . . and then there is his final monologue in Act I scene six explicitly [stage direction] delivered from “the front of the stage,” with that same alchemy of resoluteness and speaking to the abstract air as the doomed Prince in Shakespeare’s play. I’m sure there’s going to be more of this but it certainly comes across in Act I.

11/21—Came across this observation from writer and dramaturg Maryanne Lynch: “Structure makes a work out of text—however text is defined—but structure itself is a work made out of context.” I enjoy theoretical musings like this, but in the end, it’s the *application* of theory that excites me and “makes” drama. At this stage in our “*devised*” production of *Homburg*—to use the Anglo buzzword I have seen of late in the English and Australian dramaturgy literature I have been reading—there is no real structure to go on, because the text is to be assembled. And our context is . . . well, I guess it is the setting likewise to be *devised*. The one thing we do know is that it is not the original, “sacred” narrative text. By this stipulation we are already making a statement. The importance of the dramaturg being there from the beginning is made ambiguous when the beginning itself has not been defined. All of this circularity is part of JC’s exercise, to be resolved soon, so I should stop hypothesizing and wait.

11/22—Beginning with the earliest teen-age and early 'twenties letters in the beautifully-edited collection, *An Abyss Deep Enough* and from the outset you can see the fissures in Kleist's "life plan"—the resolution (in writing) to make something of himself; and the reality that he does not know what to make of life, let alone of himself. He is constantly, poignantly taking a firm stand in the obligatory situations of his life and then in the next breath existentially questioning these positions. This omnipresent tug of war between his assurances and resolutions and the simultaneous questioning of the resolutions—no matter what "structure" the play takes in JC's hands I feel that this theme must be manifestly clear to the actors and the audience. There must be an excruciating dialectical tension in the air at all times—this ricocheting between two extremes, at times within the same sentence—it will be interesting to see how that is conveyed theatrically.

11/23—Another theme that moves to the surface as I go through the early letters, especially to K's beloved but distanced Wilhelmine, worshipped more often than not from afar, is this recurrent promise to "one day explain why" any number of his actions, thoughts, words, dreams. It's as if he holds her, and the world, at arm's length *in order to* achieve experience. I remember when I first became entranced by Romanticism while reading Wordsworth & etc. in college—it was because of this unrequited relationship between the sentient person and his world. Nature was—*is*, in Kleist's descriptions—"out there" for the sole purpose of putting him into a position to rhapsodize about it. In this regard I can see where JC is going when he talks about the stage as a huge bare, blank canvas. I picture the lone figure of Homburg at the center and I imagine all kinds of "projected" (in the best sense of that term) images all around, above, behind and beneath him—these images would need to be seen fleetingly, like sensations, rather than discernible pictures, sufficient to determine what they might be, but not too long in duration, in order to prevent the audience from lingering, i.e., thwarting the satisfaction of the audience in the same manner that H. must be thwarted. The same way with any musical accompaniment . . . I know I am now conflating H. and K. indiscriminately but perhaps this is a necessary pitfall.

11/24—I have finished the letters up to the time K. goes to Paris and the imminent "break" with Wilhelmina. I put that word in quotes because the relationship is so epistolary as to be verging upon abstract. There is also of late a condescending tone to the way he feels he must "teach" her how to perceive the world of phenomena which actually is more a construct of his imagination by now. The insistence upon staying in motion reminds me of what I have read so often about sharks who need to keep swimming. He would rather dwell within his mind while moving from place to place rather than pacing back and forth in his room and

not seeing another person; yet, even in the realm of “Others” he describes his interaction with friends as being purely about satisfying his own mercurial sensations. He persists in describing an ideal domestic situation “with” Wilhelmina, in a house with a family and yet he is compelled to keep on the undefined path of his personal “*bildung*” to her exclusion until he has “found” whatever it is he is looking for so that he will be “ready” for her. What I would give to see her side of the correspondence where I am sure I would find repressed suffering and a desire to please that eventually would have to become worn out. So I have decided as of tomorrow to go back to the play for a while and try to finish that before returning to the letters and also to begin reading the Wolf novel—(which I know JC wants me to get into) as respite from K’s mind and also to forestall becoming “angry” with him.

11/25—It’s fascinating, and revealing, to read two totally conflicting reviews of February 2002 performances of the Royal Shakespeare Company production of *The Prince of Homburg*. Michael Billington of *The Guardian* revels in the way Kleist’s play echoes the great dream-life tradition of Shakespeare, Calderon, Strindberg and Pirandello; and he finds the ambiguity “on the bare, raked stage” invigorating by virtue of being “susceptible to any number of possibilities.” Whereas critic Kate Kellaway of *The Guardian*, writing two days later, complains that “the sense of what is real and what is dreamt is more frustrating than provocative.” To her, this is no more than a “cold, existential exercise.” So there you have it.

Tomorrow afternoon at 2:15 will be the first production meeting for the show. JC, Michael Allen, Erhard Rom, Ingrid Proos, myself, and others TBD will be there. Erhard told me yesterday that he has already been developing many ideas, sketches, etc., and has showed some of them to JC. He mentioned re-using the flats from an opera he designed. Am looking forward to seeing how these “visions” mesh.

Homburg Dramaturg’s Journal Part II—From first production meeting through Christmas break

11/26—There we were around the long grey conference table, JC, Erhard, Michael, Ingrid, and me. David Lawson (sound) and Peter West (light) were not present; they have worked with JC before and he likes their work. As JC began to describe his “vision” of the show, I was struck yet again by the tension between “willful not-knowing where it’s going to go,” i.e., “not knowing how the play will end,” Kleist as presenter and imaginer, a character in the play who is constructing the narrative, on “a journey of discovery from order to disorder,” JC says, “as the

work will get away from him ... playing in the 'Romper Room' of his mind ..."—all of this fluidity, "malleability" and flux—creation as the performance goes along—vs. Jorge's mental clarity (obvious to me, anyway) of precisely the opposite sense: that he, the deviser, has many explicit elements, intentionalities and effects already confirmed in his mind. This is the artifice of performance, during which, in real time in the theater, the audience will be made to believe that they are bearing witness to a play that is "feeling its way" when in actual fact it will be utterly pre-conceived.

Further promulgating the illusion of this [non-structural] structure will be the manipulative faculty of the Kleist character, in some instances manifested by his acting as a puppeteer playing with a miniature of the actual set, "conjuring up the play"—like a doll's house or diorama, moving toy figures around, "like a child playing with an imaginary friend," the *deus ex machina* in full view of the audience. I mentioned how much I liked the idea of this "foregrounded prop," and JC immediately corrected me—that actually K. might "pick it up and move it around" to another location on stage—so, even that artifice will not be securely fixed in place.

Ingrid had researched and brought in many images of costumes; Erhard presented some stunning evocations of Anselm Keifer ruined landscapes—detritus and chipped, torn plaster and debris strewn across expansive warehouse-like floor spaces, reminiscent of Mass MoCA or of Dia: Beacon—which I visited during the summer. The surreal juxtaposition of Prussian/Napoleonic regalia—tall shiny riding boots and plumed helmets and glittering swords and rearing, noble horses set against post-apocalyptic gloom and wreckage was, to my mind, a perfect way to begin discussing *the mise en scène*. But once again, when I weighed in, I got a distinct "vibe" from JC—which conversations I was permitted to enter and which were off-limits, signalled in the way he turned his chair explicitly in ER's or IP's direction—they were on the other side of the table from Michael and me—JC alerting them to "separate one on one meetings" they would be having. JC clearly is the director in his forthright, didactic and emphatic manner and concomitant assumptions about others' behavior. This is a defined *persona* he has obviously employed for many years.

I found myself during the meeting coming out with more and more "external," analogous references to literary matters, the terrain where I felt more comfortable. With reference to a conversation about incomplete or destroyed works akin to Kleist's own unconsummated long play, I mentioned D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, André Breton, Kafka, Thomas Mann, and other modernist favorites. In the context of costuming and evocation of period drama I also talked about two Broadway productions of classics I had recently seen—the Patrick Stewart *Macbeth* and the Kristen Scott-Thomas *Seagull*. I then made "knowing" and erudite references to the metric text of the Homburg play. I also heard myself praising and complementing

the others at the meeting, time and time again. Upon reflection these spontaneous effusions coming out of my genuine enthusiasm for *Homburg* now feel a bit over the top; what was I doing . . . straining for credibility? [“Hey, guys, don’t forget about me!”] Feeling my way along in the production meeting by exercising my sensibility, I recalled the conflicted literature on the limits of acceptable dramaturgical behavior—by dramaturgs themselves, in terms of the challenge of fitting in to a collaborative environment wherein others’ roles are more clearly defined—in their minds as well as in the mind of the director.

Note to self: Exhibit more methodical and reasonable behavior modification next time around.

Toward the conclusion of the meeting, JC reiterated with reflective gravity that this “journey” ahead of us was going to be “*very hard*” [emphasis his] and that we were all going to have to labor conscientiously to accommodate this emotionally-draining process of “gestation” of *Homburg* followed at the other end by its inevitable dissolution. JC was talking to himself as much as to us, psyching himself up for the unforeseen challenges and choices ahead.

11/29—Back to the play. Act II—Homburg is hardly ever “in the moment.” He may be onstage, yes; but he is either distracted, thinking, writing, dreaming (as the stage directions make clear), or talking (as he does to Natalie) about what he *will* do and how he *will* act. In Kleist’s letters to Wilhelmina he speaks similarly to her about the generalized hypothesis of their future imagined life together. So often in the play I feel as if the human present is a pretense, a cover for what is going on within H’s psyche. In dramatic terms, how will this illusion be conveyed? I can see the use of filmic projections that JC and ER have talked about in order to visualize making the unconscious conscious, a question of dramatic representation and how important this is to JC. In performance-art terms he wants this to be different than the usual, expected theatrical experience, so then it’s a choice about how far ahead of the audience’s conditioning one wants to push. For instance, I have been reading all week long the critical praise for Martha Clark’s current work, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, and how she has managed to communicate a surfeit of complex information very successfully, judging from accounts of the performance. There is recognizable imagery on the virtually-transparent bodysuits; performers “flying” through the air with wires intentionally visible; music that fits the subject matter, eroticism that holds and keeps the attention—and all the while, not one review has implied any incoherence to the show, something admirable and very difficult to bring off. That would be my worry with *Homburg*—again, & for the umpteenth time, I would want people to file out of the theatre satisfied they had seen and learned—and *understood*—something *new*—I wouldn’t want them to be too confused or perplexed or alienated . . .

11/30 & again 12/1—Act III. 5—In Homburg's melodramatic scene with his adoptive "Mother," the Electress, once more I think of Hamlet when he comes to his own mother's chamber, & Gertrude is likewise one step removed from *him* through having married Claudius; even more echoes of Hamlet a bit later on when Homburg tells Natalie to go "to the nunnery." The impassioned speech revealing Homburg's idealization of the family and panicked aversion to death harbors added irony when you realize it was written in the months leading up to Kleist's willful suicide. There is poignant tension between Homburg's pre-emptive failure to obey orders (i.e., do one's duty) and the obligations of military discipline; and the allure of Natalie's love, as she offers to go and plead the case to the Elector for H's redemption. This language is beautifully rendered. At first H. does not "hear" Natalie, he is so distracted and in "contemplation" by the daydreaming that seems to pass across his countenance like clouds rushing in front of the sun, haunted by recurrent visions of the open grave awaiting him. It's weird to be reading [and re-reading] the text right now in a conventional and close manner with the front of my mind; and then at the same time, when I take a pause, to think about how this very same elegant text is going to be truncated, cut, manipulated, rearranged. Hmmm . . . am I more conservative in my regard for the [sacred] text than I thought? Am I more of a "modernist"—less of a postmodernist—than I thought? Do these distinctions even *matter*? I can still think and write dramaturgically even if, in the end, my reservations have little or no effect on the final production. Given that production mode is different than literary mode, shouldn't I be thinking primarily about the most effective *dramatic* iteration of the *mise en scène*?

[Time will tell. Which is why I'm going to leave these questioning words above; and then, once we start rehearsal, come back, and see to what extent my literary mind can tolerate excisions and changes and their effect upon the integral rhythms of the play.]

12/6—It's the weekend and now I have a chance to do my "homework." Jorge came by my office a few days ago to talk briefly about the callbacks for 12/13 and the kind of actors he was looking for as Kleist and the Princess. His orientation was physical more than anything else; the body type for K. has to be thin, not diminutive—he cannot be a prepossessing person. The Princess has to be willowy, flighty. He reminded me that he needed the excerpt/citations from *An Abyss Deep Enough* for use as sides for the callback. The students weren't going to be reading from the play, but, rather, from K's letters to Wilhelmina. I promised to provide for the weekend, as per below. Going through the text with this presentational aspect in mind I found myself drawn to the instances where K. acts as if he has to declare his mental intentions, to prove himself to W. He always takes some kind of stand and then is likely to contradict himself—pull back from a purportedly strong position. He comes across as impossible to pin down for more than the span of time

it takes to set down his thoughts. And how frequently he wishes for death, imagining it as the only graceful “solution” to the the incessant problem of life. Here are the excerpts I sent to JC:

- p. 19: “if, then . . . none to give.”
- p. 22: “My late reflections . . . in the military.”
- p. 26: “I hear the words . . . suffer doubly.”
- p. 30: “When one has . . . nature as well.”
- p. 35: “The exercise . . . interesting truth.”
- p. 40/41: “My plan . . . *Restes fidele*.”
- p. 42/43: “Imagine yourself . . . genial fate?”
- p. 49: “But now hear . . . *completely* . . . “
- 51: “I went for a walk . . . rankly.”
- 57: “I turn now . . . notes some day.”
- 59/60: “An eighteen-year-old . . . fearful image.”
- 64: “And so . . . cathedral steeples.”
- 67: “—O if only . . . feelings as *these*?”
- 70: “But from no sight . . . final implications.”
- 76: “It is ever clearer to me . . . to the stars.”
- 82/83: “But there are other ways . . . enough, enough!” [this tutelage, to me, is quintessential]
- 88: “Whenever we entered a coach . . . until long after.”
- 97: “dear Wilhelmine, grant me . . . on these conditions?”
- 100: “Forgive this journey—Heinrich.”
- 107-108: “But when thoughts are at war . . . find the *right* choice.”
- 115: “Ah, there is nothing more disgusting . . . neither heat nor light.”
- 117: “As long as we can still visit the ruins . . . its various hues.”
- 121: “I am supposed to be here to study . . . *because the storm can grasp it by the crown*.”
- 124-125: “For man has an incontrovertible . . . we do as we *ought* to do.”
- 130: “But when I look about me . . . of the world.”
- 134: “A man works . . . letter from you.”
- 139: “But do I not have something . . . just to think of it.”
- [143-145: *Wilhelmine's one letter to K., returned to her unopened, I found astonishing. Perhaps there will be some way to incorporate . . . ?*]
- 147-148: “It is quite probable . . . very soon to die. H. K.”
- 159-160: “What we loved in each other . . . Come to me!”
- 165-166: “Between . . . wakings days.”
- 191: “I am in my room . . . come to naught.”

12/7—The next [brief, final] section of this book is called “The Suicide Letters.” I will get to these in the next day; before I forget, want to note that the

more I read in John Willett and Mary Luckhurst's fine work about Brecht's dramaturgical stipulations, most especially in his 17-year stretch of *Messingkauf Dialogues*, the more I see how I am adhering to B's rigorous standards, even to the extent that he expected his dramaturges to be copiously writing, writing, writing . . . taking notes, *Aufschreiberin*, acting as the distanced, informed observer. But not in the diminished sense of mere record keeper or in order to capture the gospel of the director; rather, as a form of *collaborative testimonial* to the events as they unfold, just as I am doing here, from inception of the idea all the way to mounted production. I think I have referred elsewhere to "bearing witness" to the evolution of the play—others speak of the "journey," the "process," & so forth in the same exalting manner. Indeed, as Sue Trauth and I were discussing last night at the intermission of her show, once the process of rehearsal begins it takes over her entire mind, and it is well-nigh impossible to concentrate upon anything else. Whereas I, being a hair's breadth away, and off to the side, as it were, can still accommodate the other matters of life, which adds yet another facet to the dramaturgical mind—its liminal nature—situated between the totally engaged world of the play on one side, and the phenomena of the rest of life on the other. A fine place for me temperamentally because I would not want to cede the space of my entire consciousness to something—unless I were its originator; and even then, while I have certainly been capable of obsession, I have *always* had to keep going on other fronts, no matter what creative project I was involved with. It is healthier in the long run.

12/7 [later]—from the *Suicide Letters*—

p. 202—the Hamlet quote ["The time is out of joint . . . "] for inclusion somewhere in the Homburg piece if we are wanting to establish a resonance with the Shakespeare—it helps explain K's motivations and it will certainly be familiar to the audience.

p. 204—the entire letter to Henriette Vogel, his designated suicide companion—the Vogel/dove parallel is worth considering. What is this theme of being *compelled* to have someone commit suicide *with* him? Suicide as a social/joint action. This is fascinating.

206—"Do you not recall . . . Adieu."

It is interesting that in the autopsy report they refer to the "not-quite fully loaded pistol" which resulted in the bullet lodging in K's brain and not emerging out the back of the skull. Ambivalence?

Yet the bodies were found facing each other in a sitting position in a declivity in the earth with several guns, which implies enhanced preparation in the event one of them did not fire effectively.

Even in death, Kleist mystifies me . . .

12/8 & 9— . . . likewise, halfway through Christa Wolf’s novel, *No Place on Earth*, the story of an imagined meeting between Kleist and Karoline von Gunderode, a “now-forgotten” poet who committed suicide by stabbing herself to death five years before Kleist shot himself—I’ve had to put the book down now and reconsider the construct of Romantic suicide. I’d understood this as the Chatterton-inspired ideal, the consummate solution to the unfulfilled temporal life, ennobled in the early to mid nineteenth century at the peak of the Movement. But as I have alluded to already—whether through defects in my own learning or what, I am not certain—I am having trouble rationalizing Kleist’s particular way of going about it, seeking another to accompany him in his *thanatos*. My instinct is that this coupled way was less the norm. Knowing that Henriette Vogel was suffering from terminal cancer likewise gives value to her suicide—but wherefore the two *together*? Perhaps an idealized loneliness compounded their mutual pain, two solitudes united—because by my reading of this Kleist does not have the same (more conventional) love for Henriette as he did for the rejected Wilhelmine, nor the kind of love he professed for his sister Ulrike. *No Place on Earth*, at least on first reading, I find vague, passive, its constantly shifting point of view often from one sentence to the next (purposefully?) alienating, either to be in keeping with its subject, or to put the reader at arm’s length. It is not a particularly “warm” book, that’s for sure. For lack of a better metaphor at this moment, it’s like “the fly on the wall” effect, except that this fly flits back and forth between being inside Kleist’s consciousness and without, in the minds of others around him, or even further, on the disembodied omniscient plane, and in a realm beyond even that, a figment of Wolf’s imagination. Wolf zeroes in a lot on Kleist’s condition as *illness* in the medical sense, that he is the victim of a *systemic* disease apart from the exalted intoxication of being fatally romantic (or “a” Romantic). Does any of this attitude or p.o.v. have a place on stage in our *Homburg*—it has to—why else would JC insist that I read this book? I am not going to question him on this now. I am going to wait and see, until we are in rehearsals.

12/12—A cold, windy and altogether unappealing day. I was going to go into NYC for research at Lincoln Center Library, but instead spent the whole day at home reading essays in John Willett’s *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. I am often drawn back to B. because I enjoy his manifesto-like style. He is so proscriptive and sure of himself, but does not come across as arrogant; but rather, as a man who genuinely loves the theatre, wholly certain of its purpose and role as a didactic place where people actually learn. He also sees the theatre as compelled graphically to represent its informing times, a place where no intellectualizations or pretenses can be honored. The major element, the “soul” of theatre, is *narrative*; I like this—B. can be an iconoclast yet still echo and revere Aristotle without embarrassment. He can be an iconoclast and still put forth

detailed “models,” as he calls them, for his production of *Mother Courage*, and hand them to succeeding directors without compunction. For B., the theatre was far more than a series of discrete plays one after another. The stage was a demonstratively social place where the connectives between people had to be believable and the actor refrained from entering his “character.” The stage was an encompassing and representative world that the audience watched in order to have its imagination tested and expanded. The last thing B. wanted in his theatre was a group of silent, motionless bodies situated there without affect . . .

12/13— . . . which, as it turns out, makes a perfect segue to the callbacks in Life Hall 125, wherein Michael and Jorge had set up a table at one end with three chairs and then laid down a line on the floor with masking tape to represent the front edge of the stage. Knowing this journal is going to be posted by Carrie Urbanic on the new ACP Web site next month, I will refrain here from naming the names of the dozens of students who read for the roles; once the cast is chosen, I will start to do so. I *can* talk about the ambience and strategy and process of the callbacks during the time I was there, from 10 am through to 3:45 when they were almost over but I had to leave.

It was odd to sit quietly at the beginning, as the first group of about ten students, boys and girls mixed, came in; and to realize that *I* was nervous for *them*. However, JC soon made the students feel at ease by joking casually, telling them they were “going to have a little fun.” Among other physical exercises, he had them grouped in a tight circle gradually backing up, expanding outward ever-so-slowly, excruciatingly slowly, as they talked softly to each other in made-up “German” and kept at least a foot away from each other at all times, smiling and laughing, stopping or touching each other “in an inappropriate place” when JC clapped his hands. Then each one had a chance to walk the tape line slowly and engage in some variant of an assigned movement exercise, i.e., on their toes, crawling on all fours, giggling, or gazing at one of the others lined up against the side. JC told one girl with long blonde hair to gradually bring it forward over the front of her head and down her face until her face was entirely hidden; and another girl to shriek as if she had seen a mouse at her feet. These initial group exercises were all executed even slower than slow motion, with voices dialed down, stressing the conveyance of the body.

A few male students reading for the Kleist role enacted some of the ideas we had discussed in the production meetings: JC offered a handful of peanuts meant to serve as toy soldiers and asked “Kleist” to crouch down and speak to them “in a detached way,” as if from out of his fantasy-imagination, “a little boy, or a weird man, an impotent, frustrated fellow who cannot write or create.” He then auditioned several pairs of students with sides from an early scene in *The Prince of Homburg* in which Hohenzollern, Homburg’s purported friend, talks to the Prince

and attempts to “wake him up.” JC’s instructions to the students were just enough to get them started. I was intrigued by his verbal characterization of Hohenzollern as an Iago type character, devil-like, a “Mephistopheles” meant to be foil to the Prince’s dreamlike, distracted, Romantic nightwalker personality. “This is not reality,” JC insisted over and over. “This is an illusion. This is *theatre*.” As JC drew the fuzziness out of the Prince while impressing upon Hohenzollern his sinister ulterior motive, the scene became more extreme and polar, in a good way. I could see and feel the “drama” coming forth.

We watched several run-throughs of the Electress, accompanied by Princess Natalie, receiving sudden word of her husband the Elector’s reported death in battle. JC was looking for someone with the ability to convey the sense of the Electress as being “a strong figure, the mother of the Nation, her heart broken but having to go on with her life nevertheless.” This was followed by iterations of a romantic scene between the Prince and Natalie in which the dramatic agenda was to demonstrate “the huge dreamer, the nightwalker, the pleader,” attempting to win over his “fragile, poignant, free-agent cousin,” who, on the contrary, is not immediately drawn to him; yet gradually becomes seduced into a kiss after a procession of his eloquent words. I noticed recurrent flower imagery here and elsewhere in Kleist’s text, as “buds” and “fragile plant” morphed into “tendrils” and then into a “winding vine upon the back of this great trunk,” the plane surface of her lover’s chest becoming erotic, naturalistic, their voices charged with tension. JC wanted to see “a soft moment culminating in the accomplishment of an objective”—the Prince winning his lady love—but most of the students had difficulty building the arc of the progression; they burst forth with passion from the outset of the dialogue. It was a challenge to instruct and channel them into a series of actions and words that gained dynamic and consciously gradated momentum.

The spirit of Shakespeare hung in the big, black-curtained and drafty space—to which Kleist’s rhythms and themes bear great resemblance. I heard at times echoes of the madness of Hamlet, the ambition of Macbeth, the jealousy of Othello, the imperiousness of Henry, the impetuosity of Hotspur, the winsomeness of Juliet or Ophelia, the stoicism of Gertrude; I thought of all of these and more during the hours of rhetoric. It was obvious, after a while, who among the aspirants had rehearsed and who was “winging it;” who tried for chemistry with his or her partner, and who remained in his or her own bubble of feeling. So much zeal—raw energy—nervous tension—inexperience—ungainliness—oftentimes a seeming lack of understanding of what the actual text meant in deference to a histrionic and projecting performance. But on the other hand, several times I was moved to tears by the exposed emotions of these kids. My nostalgia for lost youth getting the better of me? I took my cue from Michael and Jorge and did not reveal my reactions. The mask was in place; yes, even I, the *dramaturg*, was playing a role, offering my opinions, when asked, only between exits and entrances.

12/17—A rushed production meeting at 2 pm today, an hour before the department meeting. There was a palpable air of tension, exacerbated by the fact that Erhard brought in a set design and some concept drawings and set them up on a side table—I got the impression JC was not ready to look at these because he had other preoccupations, becoming evident when he sat down and began to go through the weekly schedule for the show, working backward from opening night. Perhaps there was tension also because since the last time we met we had the callbacks, and the cast—an *excellent one!*—was posted on Monday afternoon on the bulletin board in the corridor outside Michael's office [I ran into a couple of students who had been cast and they were highly-agitated with excitement and anticipation]. JC said in his opening remarks that he was “not going to change a word of the actual script” for *The Prince of Homburg*, but rather would interpolate textual excerpts from the letters and Wolf novel at various points in the story—so, as I questioned/confirmed with him, we will be “maintaining the through-line” of the plot? “Yes.” It did occur to me when the students were working from the sides how what they were reading at least bore *some* resemblance to the familiar literature from their classes, and I felt a passing concern about how they might react if they were told at rehearsal that the whole thing was going to be chopped up and rearranged and subverted into outright “performance art” as JC had (I thought) told me when we first discussed his methodology. However, now it appears we will be doing a *combination* of traditional verse drama intercut with “performance-art style” interludes and embellishments. I feel better about this decision and I think the show will be better for it. This is not meant as a slight of the sophistication of our students—who are up for anything—or our audiences, who are reasonably open-minded. It's just that the play itself has a comforting array of recognizable characters, almost in a fairy-tale way: the Prince, the Princess, the “parent” figures, the friends and noblemen, etc. So when JC inserts his other ideas—besides textual and presentational, including sound [David Lawson was at the meeting] and light, which JC reiterated will be “paramount,” I am sure we'll end up with an exciting and different evening, made more intriguing by first presenting and then deconstructing/subverting the traditional drama to which we are all accustomed.

Another echelon of pressure—the NASD evaluator will be here during the performance-week of Homburg; and there will also be one evening dedicated to bringing back a lot of Theatre alumni as a way to show them what we are up to now, and begin a concerted effort to attract financial support to the Department—this special performance will be followed by a JC/NB talkback.

Next imperative: Return to the text and finish reading the play. [Carrie liked my spontaneous title for this journal, THE BIOGRAPHY OF A PRODUCTION, but I am not 100% sure about it—will set it down here for future consideration.]

12/20-21—The denouement of *The Prince of Homburg* is a constantly vacillating meditation on life, love and death. We are accustomed to having faith that love conquers all, but Kleist subverts this expectation by, at the very conclusion, placing the suspicion into our minds that none of the action really “happened” in the first place. I see now what JC meant by telling us that “the play runs away from him [Kleist].” Natalie becomes foregrounded as a strong woman who is driven by her love for her doomed cousin. She slowly discovers her own powers in dealing with those far more (regally) powerful than she is politically. The Elector wants to do the right thing but he also needs to uphold and represent the law; thus he is willing to “forgive” Homburg, but only if H. publicly concedes that the Elector erred. Old soldier Kottwitz, the Fool/Polonius stand-in, is given latitude by the Elector to debate and speak his wise mind without fear of reprisal, and so it becomes his responsibility to stand up for the masses who want the Prince to prevail. Hohenzollern in his last maneuverings is Judas, the betrayer/friend in the walled garden. And the existential Prince—on the way to his final audience with the Elector stopping by the graveyard to view the “vault” awaiting him—hews strictly to his death wish after displays of ambivalence, and goes out of his way not to have to confront Natalie . . . Or . . . is he pursuing this end resolutely and manipulatively in order to draw forth the deeper emotions and allegiances of the others? Does Homburg’s blindfold possess symbolic value, manifesting a repressed “vision” beyond the conventions of a man condemned? In the end, the dramatic wheel comes full circle, as the Prince lies where he was first seen by us, on the ground, and the “thundering cannon” wake him (a reversal of the death-salute at the end of Hamlet, summoned by Fortinbras). The Prince becomes conscious into the moment of victory for the army—as if the interim activities were imagined. Which, in another sense, they were, since they emanated from the mind of playwright Kleist, who will, in our production, be orchestrating the action. *This stagecraft will come through as a brilliant stroke!* I’m smiling as I write these words because it has just occurred to me that Kleist is playing a “crafty” trick on us—making the play reflexively comment upon itself as a way to skim the surface of artifice; especially if one knows anything about the final year of his life, while he was writing the play, and the explorations of the viability of suicide were predominant in his thinking. Homburg’s hopes and fears—his anxiety about dying countered repeatedly by his desire to meet death—are transmuted into the material of this final phase of the drama. The Prince is an “unconscious gambler,” in all senses of both words, impelled toward death while knowing he is dreaming, and therefore will not die, but rather be awakened with the dawn, the “light” that shines through the blindfold. Is this conceit, in turn, an elaborately-repressed wish of Kleist, the fabricator of the drama?

12/24—JC’s email in response to the above entry: “Neil, you are right on with everything and indeed we are going toward a work that is not just about the fascinating content that is *Prince of Homburg*—but is also about art and the artist making it.”

Homburg Dramaturg’s Journal Part III—From start of rehearsals through set build

1/14—Looking forward with anticipation to the first rehearsal next Tuesday the 20th from 5-9 pm. Today in my inbox received Erhard’s sketches for the sets. The first impression was as if they had emanated from inside the brain of Kleist—as if the set was a manifestation of what someone else was thinking: “walls” evocative of manuscript pages ripped open to reveal the actual brick wall of the theatre, and on the floor, magnified sheets of paper strewn about, the rejects of the author’s fevered brain. In another view, ER has placed a strip of script handwriting around the walls at molding-level, with Kleist positioned in front of the writing as if he had walked out from the words, been made flesh by them. A third version has ominously-piled thunder-clouds superimposed upon the rear wall, as if the heavens will open at any moment—and there is another view of a massive magnified moon hovering overhead, casting pale light upon the floor. These are supremely literate visual interpretations wherein the stage is a text to be read—but with all ease, not intimidating. To me as a writer, this is most appealing, because the set becomes a variant of language, immediately understandable. Going into this labyrinth, one of my fears had been that the resolutely-experimental nature of the concept might alienate our audiences. I now think that may have been too proprietary, not giving our community enough credit.

1/20—Thus it began. A freezing night. Room 125, 5:30 pm. A circle of chairs: a few people were not there, but I will mention everybody’s name—Christian, A.J., Mike, Roger, Larissa, Tara, Irene, Julia, Alli, Adam, Gavin, Jerome, Nikhil, Scott, Josh, David and Anthony. At the long table, Jorge, Michael, and me. JC started out by delineating the course of the journey and the main themes as he envisioned them: that *The Prince of Homburg* is one of the great plays of theatrical literature; that it is a really difficult piece (he said it as a challenge, not a threat); that it was the classic story of one man’s struggle between the exercise of his free will and the pressures to fall in line with the rest; that it was equally going to be—in our production—a meditation on the dynamics of making a work of art, following the artist’s way instead of the proscribed mores of one’s society. In JC’s adaptation/rendition, the author Kleist has been added as a character within the drama. Thus, the audience will become privy to K’s inner world grafted upon the dramatic construct of the pre-existing play. This

character/Kleist will manipulate aspects of meaning, and the audience will need to follow along. It will be the job of our gathered “top-level collegiate ensemble of actors” to come together “as a company” and put the story across.

Throughout JC’s pep-talk, the group listened closely, some people taking notes, all exercising extreme concentration. Then they began to read through the entire script, with JC interpolating at the end of major scenes, turning to me on occasion to ask me if I had anything to add. I was secretly proud of my cultivated dramaturgical demeanor, always respectful of the director, assiduously taking notes for this Journal, speaking at first only when called upon but then as we went along finding it easier to interject and also feeling that my commentary was helpful and supportive for the students. I realized last night in the actual practice that the pedagogical core of dramaturgy attracted and inspired me. I was able to draw upon my lifelong affinity with seeing into texts, and then to pull forth viable meanings for the group, posited in such a way that they were not didactic or over-intellectualized; but, rather, illuminating and useful for the actors.

Reviewing my notes as I type, I see that the most frequently-recurring word is “Why?” Why will we be moving lines of text around? Why are these events happening in the way that they are? Why does it always seem as if the Prince is choosing between what he *should* do and what he actually *does* do? Why is it that no matter *what* he does, there are no apparent consequences? Does he ever come out of his apparent sleepwalk? Does he ever *really* want to conform to military order, or is that just a façade?

From time to time, I would allow my eyes to drift away from the printed Bartlett/Bryer RSC script and allow my ears to take over. I listened to the harmonious interplay of male voices—A.J., Mike, Roger, Gavin ... I realized how perfectly their tonalities came across, how skillfully and fortuitously their roles had been cast, in such a way that the story was always moving forward through the music of the words even when the dialogue was at times inherently—intentionally-chaotic and confusing. And then in contrast, when Tara spoke, as the Princess, she was the only female voice in a deep sea of soldiers, and her emotionalism shone through. What great counterpoint!

JC was skillful in showing us the progression of Homburg from Romantic to leader to soldier/warrior as the action proceeded until the crystallizing moment when it is revealed that the Elector—the commander—did not die in battle as was thought. This game-changer for the Prince forced him to make a more aggressive move for the Princess even as the Elector, his power restored, stood forth as Homburg’s ultimate arbiter and judge. With the heightened foregrounding of Hohenzollern, Homburg’s erstwhile friend, sheer politics entered the mix as well ... and over all of this, as JC reminded us, we would see the manipulations of Kleist on stage, at one moment approaching the players and arranging their positions, at another ripping up the script in frustration as “the play gets away from

him” before the final transition, back to the Garden, where it all began, back to the dream—of history, of personality, of the very Theatre itself.

When the reading was done, promptly at 9:00, and the cast was putting on their coats and checking their cell phones and chattering among themselves on the way out, Christian, who plays Kleist, came up to me and asked how he could get the edition of Kleist's letters I had referenced in my remarks. “I need everything I can get my hands on,” he said fervently. “I need to get inside the guy's head as soon as possible.” I promised to email him this morning with the title of the book I've been using for my research, *An Abyss Deep Enough*. “Abyss” indeed . . . We're all going to descend down there. We *have* to . . .

1/21—The production meeting this afternoon was about the budgetary and physical/material logistics of the set design—Erhard going over his groundplan/section/deck plan/wall “A”/wall “B”/wall “C” and baseboard detail drawings with MA, Randy Mugleston, Aaron Bockros, Ed Flynn and the production staff. Peter West, the lighting designer, was also there, and Debra Otte, our chief costume designer, sat in on behalf of Jessica Lustig, who will be coming in to join the team, now that Ingrid Proos has left for Australia. All of these comings and goings were compounded by JC's pacing back and forth restlessly behind Erhard and murmuring ominously about the “perfect storm” we might face if we did not deal with certain pressing issues, while ER kept on speaking deliberatively. On top of this ferment lay the added anxiety of the Department still not having hired a TD. After thirty minutes of largely-opaque (to me) discussion about “rakes” and “counter-rakes,” and “Hollywood” and “Broadway” set structures, and the relative merits of fog and mist machines, I was feeling tense and frustrated. It was disorienting to have been an integral participant in one dimension of our production with such ease of spirit one day; and then, the very next day, to be out of my element. I tried telling myself that the debates around the table were “not my problem,” but to no avail, because I feel such affinity with the team and the show, and it was impossible to remain at arm's length about anything. I hated the idea that I had to sit there with nothing to contribute.

1/22—Tonight JC spent the first hour working with Christian (Kleist) and A.J. (Homburg) alone, on the beginning of the play, in a kind of dimly-lit, speechless pantomime to establish the premise of Kleist as the maker of the play or, as JC put it, to show the audience, as they are filing into the theatre, Homburg as a character emerging from the imagination of Kleist. In the creative process itself, character is developed, gestates, is born, flourishes . . . and dies (we shall see . . .) The final element must remain ambiguous here. Although I am keeping a journal of the production, I do not want to reveal too many secrets and surprises before the show opens. From time to time I have—and will continue to—censor myself. I will

report on some moments, but not others; spotlight some focal points, and omit others. [*This editorializing is for the benefit of you, Dear Readers, the audience out in the wider world beyond the production, who will be coming to the play in March—to allow you to enjoy the fullest pleasure.*] Tonight’s session was the ultimate manifestation of “devising” theatre, in that JC gave initial instructions to set Christian and A.J. on their way—and then stepped back and watched their improvisations unfold—periodically getting up from his chair and guiding them slightly, nudging them one way or another. They sought ways of showing Kleist’s mercurial personality—his meekness and delicacy in conflict with his manic eruptions, talking murmuringly to himself at one moment and exploding into heavy breathing the next, while coming to terms with the realization that he is constructing the *pièce de resistance*, the masterpiece. JC then called in the male ensemble for a run-through the battle scene that opens Act II. The band of brothers took shape as they worked toward rudimentary blocking, but their progress was severely impeded by linguistic glitches in the Bartlett/Bryer translation. We kept having to stop and revise lines on the spot so that they would flow. At one point JC called upon me to elucidate a questioning motif in Homburg’s dialogue with his comrades and I could sense that everyone realized the script was fractured and getting in the way of the message. I had to leave early, and when I woke up the following morning found Alisone Alcordo’s Rehearsal Report in my inbox (as she has stepped in as stage manager). Alisone mentioned in her notes that we would be shifting over to a new translation of the play—David Constantine’s version, which I had so highly praised to JC months ago. I am pleased at this choice. Constantine’s work is lyrical, strongly-iambic and rich, and will add depth and texture to the presentation.

1/26—A noted director once said something to the effect that *only reading* the script of a play was tantamount to going into a restaurant and reading the menu without tasting any food. I thought this was rather extreme. But now, having watched a few rehearsals in the same timeframe that I am also teaching a section of “Play Script Interpretation,” I’m revisiting the assertion, and I can appreciate the merits. Rather than “either-or,” it is more accurate to say that *reading* and *witnessing* theatre are two different, complementary experiences, possessing distinct qualities; it’s too extreme to say that one is undisputably “better” than the other. Case in point, sitting in on some nicely-developing performances the past few days, then last night sending out this *Journal* to the cast for the first time, and in immediate response (well, to be truthful, more like 2:00 or 3:00 a.m.) receiving enthusiastic emails from several students asking if they can meet and talk with me about helping them understand the text more clearly. On the one hand, we have intuitive performers entering the work without complete literary knowledge—especially since they now have a new script in hand and have been told to be off-

book in six days—yet they are still able, because of their skills (and gifts) to put words across with emotion; on the other hand, they likewise know their performances will improve with deeper comprehension.

Tara and A.J., in scene rehearsal yesterday as Princess Natalie and Homburg, are good examples of this issue: her voice—naturally melodious and poignant, an instrument—in contrast with A.J.'s tone and bearing—low and inherently humble. These are natural selves in front of us, bringing inborn conflict to the stage as a result of good casting—and then the director taking that inherent contrast and working to get multi-layered, building up characters required by the story they inhabit. “Forget about the emotion,” he told them at one point. “Get the ideas crystal-clear.” Then followed a few minutes of conversation with me about what the author Kleist “was trying to say.” JC’s instruction was blatantly counter-intuitive when I heard it the first time, but Tara and A.J. responded by focusing more upon each other, establishing eye-contact, therefore conveying the appearance of communication to the audience. “This is your world,” JC said a moment later. “You’re reading each other now.” Toward the climax of the scene, Homburg, seated, struggles to write a letter in response to the Elector’s conditional promise of freedom. JC told him to get up out of the chair and walk around and away from Natalie while raising his voice in anger and petulance. A.J. moved literally from sitting to standing and emotionally from dignity to disturbance.

During the scene immediately following, the ensemble of soldiers gathered to present their case to the Elector. Homburg was absent, yet I *felt* him in the room, and said so. Such is the larger meaning of the Hero, the major protagonist, in the realm of a play, where the space before you tells you things that a page in a book cannot—to revisit my initial thoughts above. Mindful of following the action, you cannot possibly constantly—or consciously—register and tell yourself who is and is not *present*, but the *presence* of the hero is noteworthy no matter what is transpiring.

Later the same day . . . No matter what else I do—and, as is usual for me, I am doing a lot of thinking and writing about several other intellectual and pedagogical issues and longer-term writing projects (including another book) at the same time—it is impossible to get “the show” out of my mind. It is always flowing there, a constant, subterranean river of preoccupation. I have talked with colleagues on the Department directing faculty about how they maintain all their other teaching and “life in general” responsibilities while they are in the thick of a production, and they have told me how difficult it is. The play begins to take over your life, they say, and you have to engage in very strict mental conditioning to manage. Fortunately, I have had experience in this regard. All those years, “back in the day,” as a freelance writer, working out of our tiny apartment, when the kids were little, and juggling many assignments in controlled chaos; followed by

decades of arts administration, first running a huge development department, and then an entire foundation, conditioned me in the art of compartmentalization—while thank God not losing my healthy addiction to creativity, and the constant generation of new ideas. That said, I can feel *Homburg* as an ever-expanding territory in my imagination. And we are only one week into rehearsals.

1/28—Last night, rehearsing Act II, scenes 1-8, was about first putting the soldiers and then the ladies through their paces. The emphasis was upon the alchemy that comes out of the volatile combination of meaning and music—“music” in this case being the iambic line and its imperatives. JC zeroed in on the actors’ natural tendency to speak faster, accelerate deeper into the lines. He pulled them back time and again to “hit those syllables like a musician . . . *attack* the *beginning* of the lines, and *lift* the *ends* of the lines.” Just as it was imperative for the actors to know “where they are going” with the lines, it was also necessary to push the inherent idea, to imagine people and places mentioned. To that end, he stopped for reflection and discussion after particularly noteworthy beats. I sat in silence, figuring I would know intuitively when to contribute. I was mindful that certain kinds of subjective comments coming from me as the dramaturg would be off-limits. I decided, at first, to remain in the realm of overall explication, i.e., of a symbol or difficult vocabulary word, where silence hung in the air, and JC half-turned toward me, or one of the students, lined up in chairs, looked over at me. That would be my cue to say something useful. As the evening progressed, the discussions became more permeable and I felt less deliberative about intervening, but even so, as much as I was tempted, I stopped myself from outright spontaneity.

About three hours in, JC made an emphatic comment to the students about “finding the intellectual part *first* and the emotional part *later*.” He was cautioning them against prematurely loading connotative emotional expression into the lines before being completely conversant with meaning. He reminded them of the incremental nature of the work, that there were still “weeks and weeks to go.” When some of the histrionics were a little over the top and “actory” sounding, JC urged them to go back and find their “real” voices, which they were instantly—remarkably—able to do. At times like these, the word “director” made eminent sense, as someone who is a synthesis of *guide* and *driver*. It is a difficult path to maintain, because if you cross over into dogmatism then you pre-empt and devalue the young actor’s sense of self-discovery. You run the risk of interfering with his or her precious “journey.” So, in that spirit, I, too, only spoke up when the “moment” called out for it; happily, the longer I am in rehearsal the more adept I become at sensing these moments.

1/29—The production meeting yesterday afternoon was a more lucid experience for me than last week’s. It’s like learning a new language—there is no

substitute for total immersion; or, even better, travelling to the foreign country itself (“*Theatreland?*”), living among the inhabitants and native speakers. My biggest breakthrough—which I kept to myself—was coming to comprehend the distinction between *haze* and *fog*. It seems, according to Randy Mugleston’s helpful dichotomy, that *haze* tends to drift laterally from left to right across the Kasser stage due to the vicissitudes of the ventilation system, whereas *fog* rises up, which is the effect Jorge is looking for—“the morning fog of the swamp.”

There was further discussion around the table about swords, guns, and banners, as the time for actual depiction encroached upon the commensurately-contracting realm of conjecture. It was a pleasure to be introduced to Jessica Lustig, our new costume designer. After the meeting broke up in a record-breaking twenty-one minutes, Jessica and I sat and talked for awhile. She showed me inspiration images she had borrowed from The New York Public Library Picture Collection. Several caught my eye: a tall Napoleonic-era soldier, hatless, leaning distractedly against a marble mantelpiece; Nazi soldiers marching in close ranks wearing characteristic rounded helmets (there will be no plumes in this production, JL told me); and a striking portrait of Kleist’s contemporary, Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), painter of the famous Romantic image *Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (*Wanderer on the Fog-sea*). While I knew Friedrich’s apt and iconic work, I had never seen a picture of the artist himself. Jessica was drawn to his piercing eyes and high, pale brow. She then showed me her preliminary sketches for the costumes, in blue and charcoal/pencil and wash, based upon conversations with Debra Otte and JC. The women’s gowns are layered, diaphanous, and Empire-waisted, and the Princess will be dressed all in white; the soldiers are fitted, high-collared, brass-buttoned, their uniform palette in shades of grey, sporting high black riding boots. Her one drawing of Homburg depicted the Prince as we first encounter him in stage, lounging on the ground against a tree, arms outstretched, wearing a loosely-fitting blouse, jodhpurs and boots. I recalled for Jessica my flashback memory from a summertime matinée in 1977 at the Chelsea Theatre Center in NYC when my wife and I saw the indelible Frank Langella—at that time in his late 30s, lanky, black-haired, dark eyes darting back and forth—starring as the Prince.

1/30—5:45 am—Lying in bed thinking about the resolution—or, better, *irresolution* at the end of Act II scene viii, after Homburg has heard that the Elector is *not* dead after all, and so has to scramble to regroup and redefine his position in the space of a few frenetic moments. Whereas the Prince had the eyes of the Princess and the nation focused upon him, suddenly now he is back to square one, suffering from a spontaneous power-vacuum. The theme sounded hauntingly familiar. I clambered upstairs in the darkness to my study and started leafing through excerpts from other works by Kleist in the David Constantine anthology,

and soon found what was nagging at me—a short essay, *Reflection*, that Kleist wrote in December 1810 for the *Berliner Abendblätter* in the form of a letter addressed to the son he never had. “The proper time for reflection,” K. says, giving hypothetical advice, “is not before you act, but after ... [W]hen the deed is done, our powers of reflection may serve the purpose they were actually given us for, namely to bring us to consciousness of what was wrong or unsound in how we acted and to regulate the feelings for other occasions in the future. Life itself is a struggle with Fate; and in our actions it is much as it is in a wrestling match . . . ”

Noon—Tara/Princess Natalie came to see me to talk about the play. She was very concerned about how to achieve a better understanding of her character and so had been asking herself questions such as, “What would have been a typical day in the life of a woman in Princess Natalie’s time period? What is her back-story?” She had not had much luck going to the Library to find books about Kleist; those she did dig out were too dated, academic, and dry. The more we talked, the more I realized that what Tara—and probably many of the others—needed was an insight into the transcendent European Romantic mentality, the *Zeitgeist* consciousness of the brink of the nineteenth century when *The Prince of Homburg* was written—rather than attempting to probe the historical moment when the events giving rise to the play occurred. This challenge opens up the larger and more comprehensive issue of cultural literacy facing our drama students. They are filled with energy and enthusiasm and the desire to do well and to respond to our (the professors’) advice; this is wonderful. But unless and until they embrace the *contexts* for the works they are performing and/or studying in class, they will not achieve full appreciation—an appreciation which, in turn, will inform their time on stage and increase their understanding as theatre artists. Although Tara, a devoted actress, had taken the initiative to contact me in response to the first installment of my Journal, that did not mean to me that the other cast members did not feel similarly. The more I teach here, and especially in this Department, to which I am still a newcomer, the more I learn that every student is different, every one has a differently-calibrated learning curve, and we as teachers must respect that, and let them march to the beat of their different drummers. I reassured Tara that to spare her further tribulations wandering around the Library, I would find some good Web sites on Romanticism and email them to her. I chose ones where the emphasis was on the visual in order to help stimulate her imagination:

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/romanticism.html>

http://www.metmuseum.org/TOAH/hd/roma/hd_roma.htm

5:00-6:45 p.m.—The Battle, Act II, scenes I and 2—A.J., Roger, Gavin, Jerome, Anthony, Josh. At first it was all about JC hammering away at the urgency of keeping the metric figure in consonance with the meaning of the words spoken.

“Know where you are going with the idea,” he said at one point, and, at another, “The idea has to flow with the words.” This was a tough road, largely (I thought) because the actors are not *conversant* with such language. It is one thing to study Shakespeare, to use the appropriate analogy, and analyze it line by line and quite another to articulate iambic pentameter with syntactical awareness, a difficulty further compounded by a continuing struggle with the basic vocabulary of battle. So it was most helpful to abandon these recitations which were only fitfully “off-book,” and spend the second part of rehearsal collectively going through the entire scenario of what was actually happening on the battlefield through the descriptive words of the characters watching the events unfold, then comparing these events in “real” time to the initial command instructions and strategy that had been laid out earlier. Everybody chimed in on this entertaining deconstruction, and, when it was done, JC had them read through the whole scene again. The improvements in both articulation and resultant imagery were admirable. Toward the end of scene 2, when Homburg makes his pre-emptive, impulsive choice to give the command to charge—not to place too melodramatic an emphasis on this—my heart was pounding with a potent mixture of anxiety and excitement. Everybody stood up to take a break, and I told JC how I was feeling. He gave me a mischievous smile with anticipation at bringing in the rhapsody of Wagner’s music over the crackles and flare-ups of muskets and cannon-fire blasting through the rolling fog.

2/3—Don’t want to get too pretentious or “high-brow” as I go along, but have been reading Kierkegaard (not far away from Kleist psychologically, when you think about it) and noticed what he means by “experimenting.” He says, “I wanted the concept to come into existence in the individuality and the situation.” This is what JC and the cast are doing with *Homburg*. They are rigorously respecting a pre-existing text (except in those instances where we substitute a word or phrase that reads better in English). The experimental part comes from weaving through the *persona* of Kleist [i.e., “individuality”] as well as other theatrical “situations” and additions (some of which have been cited here, some of which remain to be invented). The connotation of “experiment” in theatre can spill over into “far-out” or “edgy” or “avant-garde.” However, it also exists in a simpler arena structurally, especially when the experiment is *predicated*, as our production is, upon valuing the original work. I have always believed that all experimental art must give acknowledgement to what came before as well as the situation out of which it arose. Take Dada as a vivid and immediate example. For its time, there wasn’t much that was wierder or wilder, but Dada *never* claimed to emerge out of *nothing*—always openly acknowledging its birth-pangs in the cataclysm of the Great War.

... *later the same day* ... JC spent an hour during the first part of rehearsal this evening in one-on-one session with Christian, who plays the role of Kleist and who (I can tell) has been getting fidgety about not having anything to do as of yet. JC explained to him that the priority is to get the play crystallized first, and then work on specific, calibrated “interventions” in the form of excerpts from Kleist’s writings that JC has provided to Christian. They talked about these selected passages; Christian recited them one by one; and then JC asked him where in the play he thought would be the right place to insert them. It was a marvelously collaborative and inductive process, and C. had some good ideas. “You have the biggest acting challenge of anyone,” JC told him. “I am going to keep feeding new lines to you up until the end and maybe even while the show is in performance.” Christian thought that was “cool,” as well he should—because the Kleist character acts as a subversive/connective tissue in the drama. As I had been musing earlier this morning, the integral nature of the original is preserved, then the disruptive element is intercut, to create a weaving *other text* possessing its own parallel arc. The three of us talked about the adverse circumstances of Kleist’s brief life, his chronic inability to resolve the dialectic he saw and felt in every circumstance, the extreme degree to which his creative endeavors were suffused with suffering—pain as a corollary to art. “What if *you* did not fit into a structured world; how would *you* react?” JC asked C. a while later. Between bursts of inspiration and excitement, Christian became introspective, his eyes gazing inward. This bodes well for the performance.

2/4—Production meeting in the Conference Room—An exponentially-bigger crowd this week—props, sound, electrical and set assistants—Alice, Josh, Ed, and Dennis—in addition to the usual group. The logistical details are multiplying as well: Does the giant door through which everyone has their exits and entrances open and close by itself? Would it be possible for Kleist to write across the back wall in huge block letters [like a subway graffiti-artist?] using a legible medium that could be erased between acts? [Erhard seemed skeptical]. JC had up until now seen the toy soldiers that Kleist is supposed to deploy in front of the footlights as being able to fit into his pockets, but Peter West is now saying that they would be too small to cast the right kind of upward shadow. The soldiers need to be at least “G.I. Joe” size—in which case, how can Kleist carry them around? In a low voice, I suggested saddle-bags, but fortunately nobody heard me . . . just as well . . . Then there was the question of the size and shape of the regimental banners captured from the Swiss army and laid at the feet of the Elector as souvenirs of triumph in battle. Aaron and Erhard sketched them as proper standards affixed to rigid cross-bars; but JC wants something in the realm of *pennants* that ripple and billow in the breeze. And what about the chairs on stage? They are meant to be early 19th century style but, as someone said, “You can’t just drive over to K-Mart and pick

them up . . . we need time to find them.” Jessica gleefully held up a blue wool officers’ overcoat with two rows of brass buttons running down the front and said she had found three more like it in the costume shop; now all she needed was vintage epaulettes. Her discovery was greeted with delight and applause.

. . . *later the same day* . . . I sat in on JC’s scene work with A.J./Homburg and Roger/Hohenzollern. Once again I felt the desperation in their friendship, as Homburg tries to communicate intimately, struggling against the constraints of his official position—his *station*, as it were—as well as the inhibitions of his fevered imagination that creates “strange dreams” which he tries to describe, but come out sounding like hallucinations, and Hohenzollern calls him a “madman.” “The stage is yours,” JC told A.J. as the two actors rose to their feet and tested the ground beneath them. The Prince must carry himself like a prince while at the same time demonstrating hesitancy, vulnerability, mortality; while on the other hand, Hohenzollern must tread a fine line between loyalty and self-interest.

2/5—*A Dramaturgical Moment, Perhaps*—Walking hurriedly to teach my class, hands plunged deeply into pockets and head bent against a knife-like winter wind, I bumped into Erhard outside Life Hall. “*Guten morgen*,” I said to him, in jest. He was dead serious and stopped me in my tracks. “Those banners . . .” he said. “I’m still not clear as to what Jorge wants.” I assured E. they were supposed to be “silky-flowy” and “wavy.” The first image that popped into my mind was a long-ago production of *Macbeth* I had seen—“You know, like Shakespeare in the Park, that kind of thing.” Erhard got that. “O.K., thanks, that’s what I thought,” he replied, and continued on his way. I forged ahead toward College Hall, against the bone-chilling gusts, late for my seminar on *The History of the Imagination* (how appropriate).

2/6—I sat for an hour with A.J. before rehearsal and we talked about the difficulties of the role, which are many; but I told him I thought he was the perfect person for the part of the Prince *because* of the difficulties themselves, and the bare fact that he, A.J., knows all too well that, in “real life,” he is so different from the character. He understands the distinction and is working hard—perhaps too hard—to take it on. He also happens to be an inordinately introspective young person, and this fascination with the poetic language of so many of the lines slows him down. These vibrant paradoxes convinced me even more that A.J. will come through. Then, when I got home late last last night, I dug out my thirty-year-old copy of *Romanticism* by Hugh Honour. Something I had read in there in the past . . . was nagging at me . . . ah yes, *there* it was, on p.23, underlined in pencil all those decades ago—“The only constant and common factor in the ever-shifting attitudes and scales of belief [of the Romantics],” Honour wrote, “was belief in the

importance of individuality—of the individual self and its capacity for experience—and the rejection of values not expressive of it. This emphasis on the supreme value of the personal sensibility of the artist is, of course, closely allied to those notions of genuineness and sincerity and living experience (*Erlebnis* in German philosophy) which led to the Romantic conception of personal authenticity or what, for want of a better word, one may call personal truth.”

I am not ashamed to admit that I was moved nearly to tears by the lovely recitations of Larissa, Tara and Julia—Electress, Natalie, and Lady in Waiting—rehearsing their scene with Homburg when he comes to plead with the Electress for her help in saving him from the firing squad. I was impressed with the way those who were not speaking gave fixed and rapt attention to the person who was, reaching heretofore unexplored depths of empathy. I had not yet had the uninterrupted opportunity to watch Larissa and Tara interacting as aunt and niece, both of them overwhelmed with fear and dread at the Prince’s impending fate; victimized by their diminished status as women in a man’s world, yet equally impassioned about what thread of hope still remained that they might grasp. When JC moved the group seated in a semi-circle into basic blocking, A.J. took the moment when the Prince grasps the Electress around her knees, and played it over a few times. The transition from reading/almost but not quite off-book to enactment made the physical contact more powerful. As the Prince called her “Mother,” and invoked his childhood under her nurturing guidance, the Electress laid her hand gently on his head, conveying so much with that simple, poignant gesture.

2/7—What a great sight!—everybody on stage at the beginning of III.1—A.J., Mike, Roger, Larissa, Tara, Irene, Julia, Allison, Adam, Gavin, Jerome, Nikhil, Scott, Josh, David, and Anthony—while Christian delivers his Kleist monologue to set the tone. I was in my usual spot facing everybody as if I had a front row center orchestra seat, and when Christian, gazing into the middle-distance, spoke his final line introducing the scene, “. . . something to make you run away,” I got a chill of foreboding up my spine, and impulsively called out to JC that I thought that was *really* going to make the audience spring to attention and wonder what on earth was about to happen. “Well,” he replied hesitantly, striding back and forth, “. . . *perhaps* we will cross the fourth wall with that . . . I’m not sure yet . . . we’ll see . . .” At which point I felt, yet again, that I had gone too far, and backpedaled. “Of course, I ‘m not the director,” I said, “that’s just my opinion . . .,” as Christian just stood there, looking at me and then at Jorge, seeking a sign. JC told C. to run the monologue again from the top, which he did with gusto. Meanwhile, the rest of the cast was spread out, left and right, engaged in ad-lib conversation, what JC called “the murmur of the public as life goes on.” I decided to keep my mouth shut for the next half hour and instead of formulating intelligent and/or supportive reactions to

what was going on, simply allowed myself the pleasure of observing these young people with their virtually inexhaustible energy.

2/9—JC took A.J. aside tonight, far upstage, by the shabby, poorly-hung black curtains, away from the others, and talked at length with him again about “using his imagination” to create a truly “Romantic character,” ever-mindful that his (A.J.’s) personal style was markedly different than the Prince of Homburg’s style. How, JC asked, would he envision a modern-day Romantic figure? [The artist formerly known as] Prince, and Lenny Kravitz, came to A.J.’s mind as good examples to reach for in visual terms. “You need to come into a room in a way that everybody notices,” JC said. “You are playing an extraordinary human being—the best soldier and the best lover . . . and the play, in itself, is a war, in which the stakes are high—who does the audience care about the most?” JC pushed more deeply than I have heard before about the “larger than life” dimensions of the Prince, his “transcendent and elevated” bearing, and, with respect to the spoken lines, that at this point JC as director was predominantly “interested in clarity. I am not interested in feelings yet. Right now you should be asking yourself with every line, ‘Do I really know what I am saying?’ The feelings you are trying to express now are premature; they will not be resolved for another ten or fifteen days, when you *own* the role.”

A few minutes later, A.J. was delivering a line evoking what “the poet tells us” about “the span above the earth and the realm below . . .” and I realized suddenly—so suddenly that I did not write down what scene it was because the metaphor was more important to me—that the Romanticism of the play permeates every scene, no matter who is talking, because the work is a haunting reflection of the ethos of Kleist’s epoch. The year of the actual battle of Fehrbellin, 1675, is a pretext, in much the same way that Hamlet’s “Denmark” or Macbeth’s “Scotland” are pretexts for mental situations of rampant indecision. When we “analyze” Hamlet, we do not delve into the daily life of the ancient Danish court; rather, we seek to determine the ways in which Elizabethan psychology is made manifest.

In that spirit, I told Jorge during a ten-minute break that I thought “in ten or fifteen days” it might be a good idea for me to talk with the cast about the literary and moral world of early 19th century Europe—the years that literally were the *center of gravity* of Romanticism and that gave issue to *The Prince of Homburg*—the resonances of language in the feverish text of the play that call forth “inflated feelings and impossible passions” swinging wildly between sublime elation and bleak despair; yearning love and the insanity of romance; the sanctity of Nature; the receding goals of permanence in deference to the constancy of change through eternity; the paradigmatic aspiring, solitary individual; the ephemeral flower; the fog of the unconscious; the allure of antiquity; the false, conflicted glories of war.

“Yes . . . more like ten days from now . . . but first they have to *own* their lines, *own* the play,” he replied.

. . . *later that night* . . . spent a fascinating hour looking for inspiration images that would work for an invitation to our show, after which my head was spinning around even more within the vortex of Romanticism:

http://farm1.static.flickr.com/182/425611332_a3872e4faf_o.jpg

http://images.easyart.com/i/prints/rw/en_easyart/lg/3/0/Portrait-of-an-Artist-in-his-Studio-Theodore-Gericault-302614.jpg

<http://www.historyofjihad.org/austria7.jpg>

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/ef/Hugo_lerocherde_lermitage.jpg/120px-Hugo_lerocherde_lermitage.jpg

<http://www.filmfestivals.com/cannes97/gprince.gif>

2/11—2:30 pm—Production Meeting—JC began by ruefully yet stoically announcing that *Homburg* was “a bear of a play” but that “stumble-throughs” were continuing apace. [*Full dramaturgical disclosure*: When I first heard that phrase a couple of weeks ago, I thought it was a somewhat derogatory slogan that JC had made up; now I learn from reading Alisone’s Rehearsal Reports it is an actual theatrical term and is part of the developmental process.] He spoke about the difficulty of the language and the “clunkiness” of the translation. Hence the fact that some of the actors were still not quite off-book was to be expected—even so, it was frustrating. Another challenge is to find more variants for integrating the character of Kleist into the ongoing action; to my less-demanding eyes, the several instances I have seen thus far have been excellent. I did not realize, until talking yesterday to our Assistant Director, Sandy Taylor, that she and Christian Castro are devising the placement of the Kleist-quotes—and doing a brilliant job. I hesitate to divulge the nature of these herein, because I do not want to spoil the fun for the audience . . .

We then went around the table as usual. It was heartening to hear again from Aaron that “sets are going well” and that the Kasser staff has further accommodated to our team, allowing more time to build within their space. But—another surprise!—here I had been assuming that fog machine issues were sorted out, but now it seems, upon further investigation, that the minuscule particles created within the “fog” emanating from the grates in the floor of the stage have the potential to trigger the fire alarm in the theatre, at which point the fire-curtain descends within ten seconds. Furthermore, Randy reported with customary equanimity, the natural fog/air movement from left to right will be inhibited from dissipating properly due to the construction of the set. Randy offered to talk further with “Fireman Bobby” [*NOTE*: This is the affectionate nick-name for University Fire Marshall Robert Ferrara] about the matter.

Erhard launched into a detailed rundown of prop/set concerns. I was *stunned* to find out that the banner issue was still unresolved from last week—after I had mistakenly come to the assured conclusion that all was well. To the contrary, the flags are *not* meant to be pennant-shaped, because that would prohibit them from unfurling as the soldiers march in and out. They must hang rectangularly, mounted upon poles, with a cross-bar running through the top. Thankfully, JC agreed that the banners do not have to be graphically or historically-accurate; they will be “generic” but stylish, deliberately without incongruous coloration. Erhard reported that it will *not* be possible to mount removable muslin on the rear wall of the set where Kleist does his wild scribbling. JC added to the mix of complexity of prop requirements by insisting that everyone in the cast will need a place to sit on stage, therefore six chairs and a bench will not be sufficient. Also: The massive, twelve-foot high, three-foot wide door only opens once at the beginning of the play, and will be controlled by a strand of monofilament rather than a complex winch mechanism which would need to be built down into and below the floor. And the cloud-scheme meant to be projected against the rear wall still lacked a “moving, layered” effect, Erhard continued, so he was trying to obtain the enabling computer program.

Another shift from stasis to tumult—those little toy soldiers I had thought were to be “G.I. Joe” size because of difficulties in uplighting anything smaller . . . well, this week it transpires they *can* be miniatures after all. JC also wants miniature equestrian horses to cast malevolent, ghostly shadows hovering above the actors. Erhard said he could acquire an actual *projection* of equestrian horses to overlay and gradually supercede the shadows; JC was emphatic that we cannot have such enhanced assistance. It would “lose the poverty of the effect.”

5:30 pm—Erhard came to the start of rehearsal and showed us his 11 X 17 computer-generated color drawings, as well as architectural renderings, and a three-dimensional mock-up of the *Homburg* set complete with figures and furniture. The students said it looked “cool” and “awesome,” and everybody crowded around and peered into the model and imagined where they would be standing and walking during their performance. Erhard spoke animatedly to the assembled cast about his “minimalist” aesthetic style, intended to highlight “what the piece is about psychologically,” the stage conceived as eminently adaptable, “not dictating too much what has to happen where.” He left the graphic materials tacked to the wall, and placed the set maquette on a high table so that everyone could look at them at their leisure.

This presentation segued nicely into JC’s positioning everyone for their spots at the beginning of Act II immediately following intermission. He placed “the ladies” in one group stage left, and “the soldiers” stage right in two groups, playing chess and talking. He moved people around with a light touch to the shoulder here and there,

intermittently stepping back and away to contemplate the configuration of bodies aligned in space. JC's expert eye was in evidence; the tableau, when crystallized, took on a painterly aspect. The action was set in motion by Anthony/Stranz, midstage with his back to the audience, lighting a cigarette. Irene/Lady Bork is a student in my Play Script Interpretation class and I had asked her earlier that afternoon what she actually "talks" about when JC tells the ladies to start a conversation in low voices. To my delight, Irene told me that she and Julia and Larissa and Allison and Tara are speaking in character; they all have developed detailed back stories about themselves, and the fabricated "gossip" stays determinedly within the parameters of the play.

2/12, late afternoon—Walking to the parking lot at 4:45, I ran into Christian and Adam coming toward me from the dorm. "Hey, Neil," Christian called out. "Where are *you* going? Rehearsal starts in fifteen minutes." "I'm not coming today," I said. "I need to go home and take a break to ponder all of the artistic dimensions and decisions being made. I'll be there tomorrow." "That's a great excuse," Adam said, smiling. "I'll have to remember that and try it myself." The two of them laughed merrily and continued along. But what I'd said to them was true. What I've managed to write about so far this week represents the mere tip of the iceberg that is *Homburg* in the making. At times, sitting quietly off to the side of the room scribbling during the hothouse atmosphere of rehearsal, I have felt "*The Thing Itself*" opening up like some huge, dense chasm of possibilities even as paradoxically the days go by and the structure becomes tighter and the alternatives narrow.

2/13—The opening and closing of the play are slow-motion, enchanted, ritualized mirror-images of each other—everyone in the Court of the Elector proceeding onstage to witness the onset of the Prince's dream; and then, two hours later, the final, richly-ambiguous "hour of his ordeals"—*martyrdom or redemption?—death or transfiguration?*—beginning and ending in the Sacred Garden—all meticulously calibrated second-by-second to a funereal drumbeat. The seventeen-member ensemble responds exquisitely to JC's choreography, coming together then drifting apart in ones and twos as a well-oiled interlocking human machine, each part integral to each other. The powerful, vacillating focus upon the Prince at center stage is enhanced by rudimentary, dim lighting, half-a-dozen simple clip-lamps lying sideways on the floor, revealing the actors' pale, smooth faces and drab street-clothes—everyone bundled up, shoulders hunched, arms crossed, cloaked in layers of hoodies, scarves, and sweaters against the damp chill of the rehearsal hall, as the building heat has been turned off on the eve of a holiday weekend.

2/14—The costume boots arrived and, as I entered the hall, the guys were trying them on and stomping back and forth across the floor as JC instructed them on how to walk, heel hitting the ground *hard*. Princess Natalie will wear boots, too, in the Second Act, as an integral component of her “masculinization”—after all, she is the commander of the regiment bearing her name and, through Tara’s increasingly-accelerated and imperative performance, takes charge summarily, dispensing orders with flair. Listening to the dialogue between Tara/Princess and Mike/Elector when she comes on bended knee to plead with her uncle for the salvation of the Prince, I heard as if for the first time the harshly repeated dialectic of fatherland and the rule of law *versus* affairs of the heart and dreams. Later on, as JC coached Adam/Dorfling on *his* sudden entrance and ensuing confrontation with the Elector, an interesting point arose about how important it is for the actor to “come in [to the scene] on *text*—to *explode* with text.” They’ve got to burst onstage with a message already internalized and percolating in their minds so that it comes across to the audience before a word is even uttered. We in the audience cannot be waiting for the message or our attention will be diverted, diminished. Not only in spoken words but in written modes the text is always there in Homburg. We lose count of the hurried letters, crumpled notes, military dispatches and other epistolary signs that behind the façade of the drama resides the compulsively-generating mind of a writer writing about writing . . .

In a poignant scene just before the Prince’s final transformation in the Garden [I leave the reference intentionally vague here, again, out of respect to You, Dear Reader, who will soon be coming to see the play], Anthony/Stranz offered A.J./Kleist a carnation. I jotted the moment down in my notebook because the name of that all-too-common flower set off a chain of long-submerged memories . . . It *meant* something . . . as Kleist would surely have known . . . yes! . . . Pink carnations were filled with symbolic meaning—going back to antiquity, the Greek ceremonial crowns (“*corone*”); and the other powerful root in the Latin “*caro*”/“*carnis*” meaning flesh, and its extension, “*incarnation*,” God made flesh; as a matter of fact, in German heraldry the color of the carnation specifically refers to the tincture of human skin. Let us not forget the apocryphal story that when Jesus suffered his final agonies, and his mother Mary wept at his plight, it is said that carnations sprang up where her tears fell.

After the break, JC continued with inductive notes on the pervasively anxious atmosphere of the drama. It’s a time of rampant instability and political insurrection; the rumor mill grinds, murmurs of gossip drift here and there, the nexus of control changes hands from one moment to the next, flitting mothlike and erratic across the stage: “Things fall apart/the center cannot hold.”

2/15—[Received this wonderful email from Julia/Lady in Waiting]—Hey Neil, I read the first half of your journals in the first email about a month ago,

mostly to get a better idea of the world of the play and to understand what the performance art part of the piece is supposed to be. The journal was very interesting to read and although I don't always completely understand what is going on, it was interesting to see your struggles through this process as an artist. Because of the journals and rehearsals I am really starting to love the fact that Kleist is apart of this play and how he is watching his world unfold and work against and with him . . . plus Christian does a great job. It was also interesting to view this play through Jorge's eyes and your eyes through the journal and see what was wanted for auditions, meetings and for the play. Learning about Kleist's life in the journals was also interesting. I am going to try to read the rest but with school, rehearsals, hw and work, time is limited! Thank you for writing the journals because they are really helpful. Also, thank you for your insights during rehearsals because honestly it is really helpful, even though you mostly regard certain lines and lead characters, it is helpful for me in understanding this world. I know you kind of spoke about not knowing where you fit in sometimes in the process and what your role is (correct me if I'm wrong) but I think your insight really helps a lot of actors make sense of this and make better choices.

2/16—JC reminded the cast in all seriousness that there were three weeks to go until the opening. I took him aside and asked if I could have some time to speak directly to the cast. I could tell instantly that he thought the end of this week was too soon. We agreed upon next Tuesday the 24th at 5:00 p.m., and I reassured him that I would take up no more than half an hour of rehearsal time.

Tonight was once again about JC pushing A.J. to express in his own words his objectives in a given scene; then to find the meaning of the textual words spoken beyond simply eloquent recitation; and, below the meaning, to look for resonances—people and places—in his life experiences to help him convey a legitimate emotion linked to those experiences so that the audience would connect personally with him. Immediately thereafter, running a scene with Roger/Hohenzollern, the script called for A.J./Homburg to swoon/fall to the ground. “Try to fall *in a Romantic way*,” JC instructed him. From one moment to the next, these young actors are being asked to shift from micro to macro, from the poetic dynamics of a line to the visual and psychological conditions of an Era . . .

2/17—further to the above . . . from Pierre Courthon, *Romanticism* (1961)—
 ”There will always be Romanticism, and there always has been since primeval man took his first steps on the path of culture. But it seems unlikely that there will ever be another movement so wholeheartedly devoted to the cult of the heroic, of sublimated passion, of reckless violence and untrammled freedom, as that which launched a revolt against the frigid conventions of society . . . It was like an eruption of a volcano in the night, or a stampede through a world of shadows

heralding the sudden rapture of a glimpse of the moon breaking through clouds, or a sunburst on a rainy day. Such was the unforgettable experience of those who witnessed the triumphant breakthrough of this new movement with its insistence on the dramatic moment, its soaring aspirations, its mingling of swashbuckling militarism with moods of wistful reverie and a craving for the inapprehensible, its obsession with death and the sublime, ‘the consecration and the poet’s dream.’”

2/18—Production Meeting. JC led off this afternoon by stating that he and the cast were “still struggling in the rehearsal hall” [more on that perception later]. The predominant theme of this meeting otherwise was “when do we *have* the theatre . . . when can we get into the Kasser Theatre . . . ?” JC was anxious to get the cast up and moving around on the raked platform. Aaron said he was shooting for the middle of next week but was understandably cautious about letting anybody on stage until it was perfectly safe. Peter West was quite “focused” about the lighting situation: “The plot itself is not a gigantic undertaking,” he said. “What we have in the air is a good place to start, and I am positive we will not get ourselves into a box.” The report from costumes—Jessica Lustig—was equally good. The additional boots had arrived; four coats were shipped UPS ground instead of air, so they would be delayed by a few days, but no big deal; the ladies’ clothes were all cut out; the parasols had arrived. Jessica warmly invited anyone who wanted to see the colors and textures of the fabrics to visit the costume shop. [*Note to self*: I should do this soon.] We then moved on to the continuously-morphing saga of haze and fog. Yesterday they conducted a “haze test” and it did not set off any alarms. However the fire marshall will not modify the particle detectors. Someone pointed out, in continuation of last week’s dialogue, that “haze is different than fog . . . less of a problem.” Someone else—thinking ahead—advised that when the trough was built transversely into the stage floor we needed to be sure that the fog hose would fit into it, as the trough was only “eighteen inches front to back.” At this point I felt that I was taking notes but not “getting” the evolution of the haze/fog issue. I will wait until it comes up again next week and see how I adjust. Erhard raised the matter of how long we would be allowed to stay in the theatre every night for rehearsal. Jared said that everybody had to be out by 11 pm sharp—no exceptions, because, after that magic hour, “the Monster comes into play.” There was collective, knowing (sardonic?) laughter around the table.

After the meeting as the others left the room JC said he realized that my natural personality was to be more supportive of the students in rehearsal, but that this was the moment when they had to start bearing down. I told him that I had been chatting with Josh and Adam earlier in the day and that they thought things were going really well. JC was skeptical of this, as he had noted at the outset of the meeting. In his view, there is still a long way to go, and he is setting the bar higher. I promised to be more rigorous going forward.

2/19—Ran into Mike/Elector in the corridor and he told me that he and Anthony/Stranz had imagined an alternate and more definitive ending for the play. They seemed to *want* the show to end conclusively, not ambiguously. A few days ago, Nikhil/Morner had said much the same thing to me. I tried to explain to Mike that such an ending, while perhaps more comforting to the actors, would be inconsistent with Kleist's entire world view of irresolution; this was a play that came out of a mentality that could never countenance tying up any loose ends—that the only true resolution for Kleist was death. Mike nodded but did not seem too convinced.

Jessica had invited me to come visit the costume shop so after class I went up there. The first thing I saw when I entered the room was Princess Natalie's gown, glowing as if from within, gossamer and sparkling-silver on the lacy surface with a silvery sheath beneath, draped over and around a dress-dummy bathed in eastern light filtered among bare winter trees and suffused through a row of windows.

. . . **that evening** . . . the emotional stakes in rehearsal have been ratcheted up several notches. Tears flowed in several scenes as the tenuousness of the Prince's future was stretched to the breaking point and JC pushed and pushed some more, intentionally interrupting moments at the height of their crisis. During ten minute breaks in the lobby, actors stood and sat singly, staring off into space, rubbing their eyes; others were surrounded by cast members seeming to console them . . . (about what? I thought) . . . perhaps the gradual death of their inhibitions and the disintegration of protective layers separating them from the abstract rawness of their feelings. This is a point in rehearsal, several students have told me, when they are feeling comfortable in their bodies and have found opportunities to work on the nuances of their lines. But the inevitable, ironic consequence is that with the energy and confidence to explore more thoroughly comes exposure and nakedness.

Erhard sat in on the rehearsal and we spoke again about the banners taken from the Swiss army in triumph of the victory. By now it is an "in-joke" between us and we can have a quiet laugh . . . but on the other hand, E. wants to see the issue resolved, and he feels more strongly now that they *must* be wavy pennants and *not* mounted on "T" shaped poles. I urged him to speak directly with JC about this, and he did, and they seem to have agreed that the banners needing to be rolled up when they are cast onto the ground at the feet of the Elector is another good reason to make them "billowy" and not rigid. At another scene, E. asked me why Christian/Kleist was writing on the side wall in *addition* to the back wall of the set. "I did not put any paper up there on that side," he said to me. "I don't *get* it." Again, I told him to take that issue up with Jorge.

During a run-through of Act III.1, when Hohenzollern comes to visit Homburg in jail, I found myself yet again wishing the pace could be picked up

somewhat. It seemed slow, too much verbiage muddling the message and interfering with the drive forward. I did not say anything because I felt it was not my place, but then JC told A.J. and Roger to stop sitting down on the floor and on a chair (as the stage directions indicated) and instead to walk around, keep moving. Then a few minutes later he tapped me on the arm, and said in a whisper that he thought the scene “still wasn’t working.” Tonight, when I got home, I took out the script, went through the 5 ½ page scene with a pencil, and attempted to thin out the dialogue, like pruning, or weeding. Halfway along, I upbraided myself, “How *dare* you tinker with the words of the poet Kleist? How *presumptuous* of you!” Then another inner voice answered, “It seems sacrilegious but the problem with the translation from German is the ponderousness and end-loading of many of the sentences.”

2/21—My careful line-edits were done with the goal of creating a rapid-fire, more spontaneous-seeming exchange between the two comrades, during which less explication was required from each because they are so intimate and can anticipate each others’ thoughts; and further, to enhance the effect of Hohenzollern’s probing to find out exactly how much the Prince already assumes and then goading him to do *something*, quite literally to “*change his mind*,” coax him to get engaged in the momentum of his life, not let events carry him along haphazardly—this effort at persuasion all the while complicated by Hohenzollern’s other, unspoken motives. It was a tough haul but I was happy with the results after reviewing one more time. I xeroxed the pages, put them in an envelope, and slipped them under the door of JC’s office yesterday morning. He emailed me today that he had received the pages and would soon read them.

2/23—*Two weeks to go.* JC and I were chatting half-heartedly and quietly in the empty rehearsal space; while in the Conference room across the hall Roger and A.J. were, indeed running my newly-edited scene with Julie Lawrence’s coaching. JC used the metaphor of “the train approaching the station” and I conjured up an image of the station master slowly waving his lantern back and forth, back and forth; then JC said he visualized a raggedy brass band standing on the platform getting ready to play and then we decided to stop trying to come up with these Kafkaesque and Fellini-esque analogies as Mike, Adam and Josh walked in and it was time to start rehearsal and blocking of Act II.9. I remarked how in re-reading the play again over the weekend I had noticed how often the Elector mentions “*The Prince of Homburg*,” like an escalating refrain throughout the story—from all different points of view, benign, bemused, accusatory, anticipatory, angry, vengeful . . . As I have elsewhere noted, the Prince is onstage even when he is not physically there. He is a ghost in absence and remains partly-spiritlike in presence. He always seems to have an aura around him when there are others nearby. Even

Natalie and Hohenzollern can only get so close, before either they, or the Prince, severs the connection.

The spoils of war—the banners from the Swedish army—are brought in and laid at the Elector’s feet, then the Prince addresses the Elector, assuming he can rightfully claim the victory, only to be summarily arrested for entering the fray prematurely. JC worked on Mike rising more forcefully to the occasion and being more in command, to the extent that he needed to manipulate and dominate everyone there. After the Elector declares that the Prince be relieved of his sword, JC told Mike to “move into another theatrical space,” allowing the Prince to make a fiery speech from across the divide between them. Again it was a challenge of energy-modulation, as A.J. still needs to learn what some of the words actually *mean*. These are the kinds of moments when I do feel I can step in and help explain, which I did, to good effect.

Thus the director *directs* and the dramaturg *elucidates*.

2/24—The entire cast was called for 5:00 p.m. to hear my half-hour presentation on Romanticism. They sat on the floor and I was perched on a chair, conscious of time-constraints, and so, deciding to focus only upon those elements of this vast, sweeping Movement that pertained to the *Zeitgeist* spirit of the age of Kleist and *Homburg*: the era, from 1770s to 1830s with Kleist hitting the epicenter as *The Prince of Homburg* was written in 1811; the roots in Germany and the migration of the movement to England and thence to America and Transcendentalism; the inspiration for modernism and experimentalism found in Romanticism as reinforcement for JC’s decision to include Kleist as a living character in the show; the Romantic belief in the lyric work as, in itself “an event in history,” expressing social change embodied within art forms; the assumption that the world is an uncertain, turbulent place, ever in a state of becoming, never perfected, always transient, ephemeral—therefore, human experience not given to resolution, which is why the *play* cannot be resolved; that the work of art, to a Romantic, is an extension of the artist’s mind—incorporating the Tradition but subverting it; that Freedom as an ideal is exalted [cf. Rousseau, *Social Contract*], but exists by virtue of Man’s incessant drive to break free from his “chains,” another pervasive metaphor in the play; that beneath, within, and/or above the world of quotidian phenomena are other varied worlds of dreams, madness, ghosts and myths paralleling everyday experience, worlds that cannot be perceived by everyone, only by certain adherents to the *poetic*; that the Princess Natalie, a fabrication of Kleist’s unfulfilled, unconsummated fantasies, is the embodiment of the idealized woman of the era, “the woman of active, independent thought . . . with an empowered mind”—aspiring to attain the qualities of the *male* mind, which is why JC’s decision to “masculinize” her in the second act is so apt; Natalie remains on a pedestal as a love-object, the vision of the woman the author never

had; the realm of Nature, especially flowers and plants, abounds in Homburg—Nature as the wellspring against which Man tests his Imagination, hence the importance of the play's being bracketed by a Garden at the beginning and end, further manifestation of the cyclic version of History cherished by the Romantics, & the driving reason why Homburg and the Elector are at odds with each other throughout the drama—because the verdict of History is at stake; and then, Friendship, such a central concept to the Romantics—as Blake put it, “Opposition is true Friendship,” going a long way toward explaining the integral nature of the Hohenzollern/Homburg arguments, making the elusive goals of peace and resolution even more fleeting as Heart and State vie for dominance. The students listened, gazed off into the middle-distance, reflected, were silent for a while, and then, the questions slowly unfurled.

2/25—Production Meeting. Today's atmosphere was fragmented—not disorganized, just bits and pieces springing up from here and there around the table even though JC tried to run it in order. To the continuing credit of the group, however, the meeting clocked in at twenty-two minutes. The overall obsession was once again when we can “get into the space,” this time cranked up a few notches. It's now looking like we will not be able to use the Kasser stage until *next Thursday*, giving the actors five days for spiking, blocking, and accustoming themselves before opening on 3/10. I did hear Erhard telling Alice, the prop-master, that the dowels for the banners need to be 1 ¼ inches in diameter; the banner “issue” I can definitively say, is now resolved (*I hope*). Now we are on to swords; someone remarked to Jessica that two of the swords would not have baldricks (the leather strap that goes—messenger-bag like—from shoulder diagonally to waist). This gave rise to a protracted discussion about exactly *which* cast members get swords. Jessica and I, sitting next to each other, started chatting about how important it was for the Elector to have a sword, especially since he leads everyone into battle; but JC seems to envision the Elector *without* a sword. I interjected that when Homburg reaches out in fury and tears off Golz' sword, it would need to be fastened with Velcro or some such. [Nobody answered. Oh well ... not my area ...] Then we thought how perfect it would be for Kottwitz to carry a riding crop, since he is so much about his horsemanship, and also, it would give him something to use as emphasis for his various overheated statements and declarations. JC liked that idea—or, more precisely, as he always says instead of “liking” something, “We can *try* that, sure.” Evidently there is still not a full quota of twelve matching chairs, which remains an imperative need. Lights are still “in pretty good shape.” Ed never seems to have any further comment, which is fine with him and everybody. Peter dropped in a little while later and reiterated that message. Jessica also wanted to know if specific times had been set for run-throughs because she wants her two student assistants to be able to see the show so

they can get a feel for it. She also mentioned that one cast member had missed his fitting time and that, going forward, she was going to institute a \$25 fine for this. To which JC replied, “Can you make that \$50?” JC in drawing the meeting to the end cautioned all of us against “bringing any ‘drama’ into Kasser that is not about the show ... Once we are in there, we are going to need to be serious and focused.” We dwindled to an unresolved conclusion around the matter of also not being able to get into the recording studio in the basement of Kasser in order to do some voice-overs with Christian/Kleist. After everybody else left the room, Alice showed JC, Jessica and me the toy soldiers she had purchased, dumping onto the table the little knights in shining armor and a prince on rearing horseback and a brave soldier with halberd poised, and a princess in a long gown—out of their plastic bag, there they lay, scattered, colorful and fabulous—cheering us immensely.

2/28—Run-through last night [“GO”] was called for 5:15. Everyone was in the room—there was more than the usual amount of horseplay, hugging, joking, fooling around, laughter, eating, giggling, flirting and etc. etc. etc. until JC called all to order. Before the play began, Christian gathered the cast to surround him as if in a huddle and there was some kind of communal ceremony which JC, Sandy and I were not privy to. In the quietness before the action I could sense more than actually hear the rain pouring down outside on this unseasonably balmy evening. I felt as if I were in a church rather than a theatre.

JC had warned me on Monday that he might have to start toughening up his commentary. Indeed, at the end of the first act, it was about the 49-minute mark, the lights came up and JC thanked the cast—and then said “OK guys,” he thought the performance was “*atrocious*.” He went into a heated discourse about people needing to decide “where they were,” and “where they were going,” to “find the character and play to an objective and go for it,” to stop sounding like they were high school students in a Shakespeare play and start “owning the lines as words and saying them to each other in colloquial ways like real conversation.”

He told them to speed up the second act but even so it still came in at 51 minutes, only five minutes shorter than the usual running time.

JC then reviewed and presented Sandy’s notes as dictated to her by him during the rehearsal. People were tired with eyes glazed over, but did their best to remain attentive and receptive. I took my own notes and told JC I would email them to him when I got home:

Jorge—some of this i discussed w/ you last night.

I will be schematic so you can readily access what I'm talking abt.

137ff—hohenzollern still needs narrative clarity

142—‘you can't see the pearl’ . . . hamburg needs to be more emphatic and stress the metaphorical meaning here and elsewhere - he is too plaintive, not noble enough, not separated enough by degree from Hohenzollern

148—‘the plan precisely is to annihilate them’ . . . dorfling needs to set this line apart from the preceding with more clarity

150—Homburg monologue—‘Fortune’ is a *woman*—he needs to speak it as if he *knows* this and feels this fact

155—kottwitz edits—sounded good to me—it works

156—I think hamb. should emphasize ‘on MY head be it—follow ME friends’

157—I sat with morner and went through my edits with him line by line F.Y.I.

159—princess' revised speech—much better, much clearer sounding

161—‘your words fall heavy as gold into my heart’—still needs to be delivered with (I think) resignation rather than just “declaratively”

162—sparren's ‘is all this strange to you?’ . . . as I sd, not enough sense of self-importance and privileged knowledge

164—elector—‘none the less’ . . . is fine until “whom mere chance bestows it on me,”—again this goes to making a clearer distinction/reference to hamburg himself

166—at bottom—Homburg says “canvases” which destroys the metaphor—it is CANVAS—and also i am not sure the dynamics of this speech are right—too much yelling—just my opinion

III.1—moves much more smoothly—they have made a lot of progress with this scene

III.5—Homburg and the electress—I was confused b/c the blocking had changed so much since the last time i saw it—I thought he was supposed to walk around—the kneeling and getting up needs to be clarified to find the right rhythm for doing that

177—when Homburg bids farewell and exits—still not clear. I think that last line shd be delivered more nobly—not so desperately (this is the case in other places, the over-reliance upon desperation)

181—Natalie—‘heart, why do you beat’ . . . this is one of the best lines in the play and she says it beautifully but her back is to the audience so maybe she shd turn around . . . ? just my opinion

181—and as we discussed the elector here and elsewhere has to build up his tone of magnanimity and differentiate from imperiousness. I did speak with mike about it for a while and he understands.

182—she really does take over the play in this scene as you wanted her to—no doubt about it anymore—well-done

188—‘maddest of madmen’—I think “horrified” is the right word here—mortification—appalled—rather than just plain angry

192—as discussed—dorfling's final line is not delivered with enough frustration and “pique”—right now it sounds simply eloquent and declamatory

195 and ff—kottwitz—as we said—appealing, human, but still too choppy. Here and elsewhere it is now a matter of varying dynamics and nuances of emotion rather than “getting through it” and also he has the audience going along for the ride for sure.

198—hohenzollern's speech—again—strained desperation takes precedence over trying to recount a story with narrative coherence

199—we talked about the guys needing to show more emotional reaction in the background instead of just standing there

200—here and elsewhere—the theme of the ‘vault’ being open and homburg surveying it, looking in, etc—I do not feel this has been foregrounded enough—it is an important through-line

201—‘I wish to SUFFER the death imposed upon me’—please get this word right

202—Homburg speech—again—too plaintive—here he should sound more noble—more seeking benediction—shouldnt be so strained

203—elector—‘i'll tell you when you are dismissed’—take advantage of this moment more effectively.

205-06—final yelling, cheering etc.—sandy did a *great* job of orchestrating this passage.

thanks and let me know if you have any questions.

yrs nb

P.S. It is so gratifying to watch you with the kids. Yes, you are a fine director . . . but you are also a great *teacher*.

3/2—At 1:00 this morning I received another email from Julia. It is *remarkable* that a supporting actress with just a few lines has now written twice in response to the Dramaturg's Journal. It shows me that, as a teacher, you can never know *who* you are reaching—and *how*. Here is Julia's email:

I have to say that we are a pretty unfocused bunch at times, but when Kleist came over and stood quiet with us, I really got focused and felt a different energy than before he did that. I don't know why he did it but it worked for me. I guess we all have to find that focus within ourselves though. Not only because it's crunch time, but in all our processes. I can feel that the next week is going to be tough. But I'm ready for it. I know exactly what Jorge means about the words sounding like “kids doing a Shakespeare play” and I understand all of his notes. I don't really have lines, but for the others, I think they may understand but I guess it's difficult

to just take a note and execute it. I want to be at a level where I can do that, just take a director's note and execute it, perfectly. By the way, thanks for putting my note in your journal. And also, I read the part about the analogies and I kind of laughed to myself because I just thought of all the sports analogies that Jorge uses in rehearsal. They work, and he is a great director, but they are pretty funny lol. Just some thoughts. =) Julia

3/3—*One week to go* and this is the first entry I've written *before* a rehearsal or a meeting—I customarily wait until after it is over or the next morning to set down my thoughts. I think because we are coming down the home stretch I am beginning to reflect upon the past five months, especially with regard to the evolution and clarification of my role. Talking with a colleague just the other day, I remarked on the aspect of dramaturgy that got me excited, i.e., the need to be adaptable to the director, and the fact that one's function is defined *relative to* the director. I actually favor this, because it opens up the door to the unexpected and provides you with immediate and ongoing challenges. There can be no "status quo" for the dramaturg. Also, this 'tightrope without a net' experience has helped me gain a much better concept of the kind of dramaturg I would like to *continue* being—someone who is in contact with the cast continuously rather than doing research ahead of time, providing the results of that research, and then backing away. The play-work evolves in rehearsal and is never the same as it was on the day of the first table-read. Thus *the relationship of the actors to that work also evolves*, changes, needs to be revised sometimes from day to day, moment to moment, certainly with an intuitive director. My most important contribution—and I will have more to add to this in the week to come—looking back, has to do with my interventions on behalf of the meaning of the language. I do not tell the actor how I think he or she is supposed to *deliver* that meaning, but I can certainly be relied upon to describe, fill in, color the meaning and give my thoughts on the emotion behind the meaning. I also think that intervening with and editing the script in places where it proved untenable, unspeakable, awkward and so on, turned out to be a positive contribution on my behalf, and one that was successful because the director permitted it—even *asked* for it at times. And the oft-used and somewhat worn out phrase, "another pair of eyes" does hold some validity for me also, insofar as I think the students did like having me in the room as a supportively-felt presence. That influence remains unquantifiable, like so much else in pedagogy.

Later the same day . . . Rehearsal was called for 5:15 and the atmosphere was much more relaxed than last week. No freneticism this evening, no fooling around. People were purposeful and intent. Yet again, for what seemed like the twentieth time, we began with III.1, the pivotal scene where Hohenzollern (Roger) visits his

friend Homburg (A.J.) in the jail. This time JC told them to act as if there were cell bars between them, so they remained separated and standing while they talked across a space of six feet or so. JC interrupted them countless times asking “what does this *mean* . . . what does *that* mean.” At times he said things like “I’m not getting the *urgency* of what you’re saying . . . I’m not getting the *objective* of that line . . . That line is not *landing* . . . That line doesn’t have the *investment*—Don’t try to *feel* your way through it,” he said. “*Think* your way through it.” As I watched Roger and A.J. go, over and over again, I thought about the layers upon layers that had been added, then taken away, then modified, restaged, “spiked,” edited, sped up, slowed down, heightened up, toned down, emphasized and de-emphasized—yet still, the words *lived*.

I noticed afresh the motif of freedom here and elsewhere, as when Hohenzollern asks Homburg “Well then, how can you be *free*?” if the Elector has not returned his sword. So many times through the play this thread appears, as it does throughout the aesthetic of Romanticism. We are only as “free” as we think we are—or as others with (ostensibly) more power decide we are. Freedom, in this Kleist-world, is relative and interdependent; one person’s freedom is another’s consternation/inhibition. As when, in IV.1, Natalie (Tara) goes to see her uncle, The Elector (Mike), to plead for the release of her lover. Again, how many times in the past six weeks have we run and re-run this scene, the cumulative effect showing tonight to full advantage as JC applied the same method here as he had with the preceding exercise, interrupting frequently to give notes, ideas, inferences—to my eyes, trying to get even more from these two talented actors (who communicate so well between themselves).

Tonight was about the contesting nature of the dialogue, the fact that Natalie comes to present a case and therefore needs to maintain her composure within a certain range; whereas the Elector, because of his finely-tuned consciousness of his station, has likewise to keep some reserve, even as he struggles with empathy for his beloved niece. “Heart” battles with “mind” within both characters, “Fatherland” vs. “blood,” leaping back and forth as the advantage is seized then relinquished, by one and then the other. Natalie’s ingenuous manipulateness relative to the Elector, delivered in the guise of self-deprecation, (as she is “only a woman”), recalled Hohenzollern’s behavior in counterpoint with Homburg earlier on.

The role of Natalie is one of the most profound displays of poetry in tribute to the female muse I have ever witnessed on stage. As I said to JC during the break after this complex display of emotions, Natalie is all the more formidable when you consider Kleist’s multitude of problems with women—that he was able to liberate himself from personal demons and create her as a flesh and blood creature; or, perhaps, the creation was itself an essential but temporary liberation, one more permutation on the theme of freedom, until the poor, sad K. found the *final*

freedom of death by suicide within half a year after he wrote the words I was now hearing?

3/4—Production Meeting, began at 2:35. Just when I thought the banners were laid to rest, JC announced that they “are still an issue” and “need to be rehearsed.” Yes, *of course*; it is one thing to have the banners ready to specifications, and quite another to “test-drive” them, as it were, and make certain they work in all their magnificent billowing action. And just when I thought the twelve chairs were ready to go, Erhard walked into the room, took a sidelong glance at the elegant, cane-backed, curve-legged example by the door, and pronounced it “not what I asked for.” But then after a beat, during which the room was dead silent, he added “. . . but we can work with them.” The swords are all in, but the problem still remains of how to accomplish Homburg’s successful tearing-off of Golz’ sword. “I call this play Men in Boots with Swords Clanking,” JC said, only half in jest. The fact of the matter is that until we can rehearse with the men actually walking/tromping around on stage with swords at their sides we will not know the complete extent of their impact upon the ecology of the show. To that end, Stage Manager Alisone handed out a day-by-day schedule of this final week, according to which the first full dress rehearsal will not happen until Sunday evening. Jessica pleaded for an extra day and JC said he would work on it. Because of the snow day this past Monday, the opening itself is now pushed back to Wednesday evening, with Tuesday billed as a Preview, and JC will announce it as such before the curtain that night. Despite these vicissitudes, I was singularly impressed with the “can-do” spirit around the table. Randy had been over to see the set construction and raved about the successful slope of the ramp and the magnitude of the 24-foot high walls. JC then gave a sensible, low-key pep talk to all of us, saying to “be positive, show the best face of our Department, don’t descend into chit-chat, and put on a great show, which we all know how to do.” Meeting adjourned at 2:54—nineteen minutes!—*fantastic*.

Later the same day . . . 5 pm . . . Dean’s Conference Room . . . “Notes.” Everyone was sitting around the polished table, all seventeen members of our intrepid Company, some with pads and notebooks at the ready, others simply listening quietly. JC proceeded to talk through the entire first half of the show, moment by moment, scene by scene, words emanating directly from the hard-wired labyrinth of his brain—without one pause, without any actual “Notes” in front of him. Much of what he spoke about concerned guidance in how and where people should *look* while in performance. The rules of eye-contact and focus were laid out imperatively. The rules of gazing off stage without connecting to the audience. The rules of watching a distant battle as if it were really “out there.”

. . . the rules of living in their own world for two hours in such a way as to lend credence to the additional “reality” of the rest of their world that is invoked, even if not literally seen by them or by the audience.

. . . *to live in a poetic construct made for their presentation over the course of five days, only to disappear, to be “STRUCK,” starting at 10 a.m. on Sunday, March 15th. . .*

. . . **3/6 @ 3:00 p.m.**—*Through the looking-glass.* I’d never opened the Stage Door before. It was right there, where Randy said it would be, around the side of the Kasser building past the Box Office. For some reason, even though I had been assured it would be open, I reached toward the handle expecting it to resist me. But no . . . I opened the door and became disoriented, not clear which way to turn. Glossy photos on the walls of various University dignitaries posing with visiting show biz and theatrical celebrities. Another door that warned “Do not enter.” A couple of hesitant turns this way and that and then another door with a sign saying something to the effect of not entering through the Lobby. I opened it and peered around the corner. It looked like the Lobby to me. I turned left and saw a door that said “Stage Door,” (I think.) By now I felt—illogically—as if I were trespassing. I opened the door and there I was, in the other world, a hugely cavernous world, a seemingly-unpopulated space, silent except for the occasional “snap” and “crack” of what sounded like a staple gun, then the occasional “slap” of wood being tossed to the floor. I stepped deeper in and saw the outer sides of constructed walls, wooden sections about six feet wide extending upward more than twenty feet. I walked around toward the steps leading down into the house and, as I did, the vista of the stage set slowly revealed itself, cerulean/powdery/textured blue canvas with white highlights, as if inside a cloud or ascending toward the heavens. The floor beneath was tilted, raked precipitously from back down to front, scuffed and flecked with paint. Three carpenters hammering and cutting barely looked up from their work to acknowledge me. Up in the booth, someone was test-projecting a huge Moon image and it dimly glowed against the back wall. I was so enthralled with the empty magnitude of the place that I did not even take time to imagine the actors “strutting and fretting their hour upon the stage.” Instead I marveled at the intricacy of the structure and the way all the pieces seemed to fit together—in a rough-hewn way from the back and yet seamlessly from the front. After five minutes of tentative wandering, I went out the way I came in, saying goodbye to nobody in particular. Outside on the nondescript balcony overlooking the parking lot it was once again an unchanged dimly-sunny and half-heartedly balmy false-spring day, students coming and going, unaware of *the other place* from which I had just emerged, blinking. And soon thereafter, *this* came to me, from our campus photographer, Mike Peters, and today’s magical circle was completed. http://www.mikepeters.com/HM/homburg_index.html

Homburg Dramaturg's Journal Part IV—From Tech through Strike

3/9—Arriving at 6:00 on a rainy Sunday evening, eight hours after everybody else on this “10 to 10” day, I spent three hours last night at Tech, sitting next to Set Designer Erhard Rom and Costume Designer Jessica Lustig, behind lighting designer Peter West and stage manager Alisone Alcorido, (murmuring into their headphones), and forward and to the right of Sound Designer David Lawson—while JC by turns darted about the room, called out instructions to the actors, stopped the action, dictated notes to Assistant Director Sandy Taylor, and leapt up onto and down from the stage. I mention all of these people by name yet again, because last night really was theirs and the cast's. It was not a night for dramaturgy in the usual sense; it was all sound cues and light cues and missing buttons and loose neckerchiefs and charcoal-smudged cuffs, additional last-minute blocking, and moving spikes two feet upstage and focusing footlights to try one more time to get the miniature horses' shadows to prance along the rear wall. The ladies in waiting spent quite awhile rehearsing the scene in which the Electress faints upon hearing of the Elector's death—a scene made all the more realistic by Larissa's chronic upset stomach brought on by a corset that was far too tight and a dinner eaten in haste. But naturally, she got over it, stoic as always, insisting that the action be played. The Wagner sounded portentous; the organ music swelled; and musket and cannon fire threatened to blow out the sides of the house. I did notice a few things, not having seen everyone in costume until now: no hats (JC hates them); and no swords (just two belts to ‘signify’ them, and a wise choice, I thought). Faded pale lights made Homburg's conversation with Hohenzollern in the Garden at midnight suitably chilly. The banners flowed effortlessly, deep blue with silvery crosses mounted upon black staffs. Erhard's battle clouds raced in two contrapuntal layers back and forth across the graying sky; and the arched, blood-red, stained glass window at the conclusion of Act I came in to resonate hauntingly with the bottom half of a massive full moon. I praised E. for this imagery under my breath, even as he pointed out to me all of the “flaws” in the set that still needed to be remedied, none of which I could see. But E. and I have batted around this conversation before—i.e., the obsessed expert habituated to the minutest detail vs. the informed theatre-goer happening upon something for the first time. E. sees a complex of problems needing to be solved. I see a three-dimensional translation of the playwright Kleist's metaphorical microcosm unraveling up there in a sparse, blue-tinged lidless wooden box surrounded by the limitless blackness of the Void.

3/10—The Preview performance, still being “teched.” I sat dutifully and read the program bios before the play began, attempting to transition into pretending to be a member of the audience who had never seen the show. But once the action

began, my good intentions at objectivity failed and I found myself, instead, registering the progress made by everyone. Instead of following the through-line of the story, I was thinking about how great everybody looked in their costumes, how the smartly-cut mens' coats showed off the gleam of their high boots; how the ladies' parasols gently opened in contrast with the intrusive cannon-shot; and how poignant were the long-evolving scenes between the Prince and the Princess and Hohenzollern and the Elector and the Electress—how Larissa commanded the heart of the stage in her grief, and A.J. struck the correct tone of ambition, and how the officers and soldiers grouped and regrouped as their allegiances shifted from one partisanship to another. The play tonight was like an organism being born—but then again, I had already seen it innumerable times. At intermission I spoke with several of my students, enjoying the show but having trouble following the plot. I had sent them my journal ahead of time but the aspect of the journal that they favored was the description of the process rather than the elucidation of the story.

And here resides another dimension of theatre that I shall take away from being *inside* a show: living with a play during the life of its realization from concept to enactment is a completely different sensory experience than reading it on the page. “How obvious,” you may be saying right now, Dear Reader; yes, it is obvious—but as Mandi, one of my students, remarked to me in our brief intermission chat (a young woman who has chosen to pursue the BA instead of the BFA)—she is already an actress, and she knows this about herself, and so, by extension, she now wants to understand *all the dimensions beyond* acting, in order to become a fully-realized inhabitant of the craft.

3/12—5:30 a.m.—My head buzzing, my heart pounding, I awoke with the realization that last night's performance was the most dream-like I have seen. Or perhaps this is what happens with the play . . . as one experiences it over and over and it burrows ever-more deeply and insidiously into one's imagination, the work starts to take on hallucinatory qualities. The rhythms of the language especially hit home as I was watching last night, and I was quite aware that my breathing was constrained and I felt tense and wound-up—not nervous, just hanging on every word and expecting certain phrases that I have become partial to over these past weeks and months. There is no question anymore that the “plot” is confusing, twisting and tortured, as it fades in and out of what is real and what is not. The characters, themselves, observe the “strangeness” of their situation, and their own mystification compounds the problem for the viewer. The big themes are prominent and the big conflicts are dramatically presented. Rather, it's the nuances and the clouds—reiterating the smoke and fog and clouds of the play—that keep me guessing, even now. The audience respected the dramatic and highly-theatrical appearance of the show, the tableaux and the ritual and the overbearing music; whether they were able to actually follow along remains unclear, but perhaps, in

the end, Kleist was not seeking coherence even though he always talked about the fact that he wanted a life-plan. By this point in his life, Kleist, like the Prince, said he desired death. The Prince did not necessarily meet it head-on and Kleist does not pull the trigger either—at least not so that *we* will witness it.

Tonight is the “talk-back,” so over the next 12 hours I will need to find a way out of this mental morass and into some semblance of dramaturgical coherence for the expectant crowd . . . or then again, maybe I won't. Maybe I'll just go with what I possess.

3/13—5:15 a.m.—Last night when I walked into the lobby I spotted JC sitting in the corner talking on his cell phone. I was going to let him be, but he called me over. I said I was feeling like a Homburg-addict; if I didn't get my nightly “fix” of seeing the show I would go into withdrawal pangs. I said I didn't know what I was going to do with myself after the run ended this weekend. (Roger suggested to me the other day that I could continue to send him and the rest of the cast my journals, but I told him that my life really isn't that interesting, which is not *quite* true . . .). Carrie joined us, and we chatted about the talk-back scheduled for after the performance, and she asked me if I was “ready.” Of course, I replied, not saying what I have been thinking for the past several days, that I could probably talk for days on end about *Homburg* and never get close to the bottom of it.

During the show, I jotted down “keywords” in the first and second acts as they occurred to me. It was as if I were seeing it for the first time. The first act was all about insubstantiality: dreams and nothingness and imagination and madness and visions and fainting—the ephemerality of what was (supposedly) happening. Even the battle scene, the way it had been staged behind a screen of smoke, was obscure to the eye and ear. At the top of the second act, Kleist presents his soliloquy about “turning the axe upon myself” as a vivid way of seeing the world in two halves—that eternally Romantic dialectic. Then the play rumbles onward to its conclusion to insist upon this divide, beginning with Hohenzollern pointedly asking Homburg “how [he] can be free” when he does not yet have his sword back in his possession; and from there to metaphors of a more forceful and concrete and insistent nature than in the first act: custody, jail, chains, imprisonment, the grave, the firing squad and death—versus the heart “in [its] dwelling-place” and beyond, the core of all human feeling. As JC has insisted so many times—which will triumph? Will it be the construction of an illusion by the artist, or the destruction of the state by subversion? Will it be the artifice of the play being written, or the shredded words that lead nowhere except to obstruction of the characters' actions?

The talkback went very well because JC and I limited our remarks in deference to hearing from the actors about their biggest challenges in the development of the play. I noticed—as we went around the group and they testified

resolutely but wearily to the respectful, supportive audience—that the common theme was *the text*, the language, conveying the motifs and meanings of the message. Indeed, how difficult this journey has been for them all, compounded by the relentless ambiguity of the work itself, right down to its final moments, exemplifying the conflicted denouement of the drama of Kleist’s sad and tortured life.

3/14—Last night was even clearer. At first I thought it might have been because I shifted positions. In the theatre I always gravitate toward the left-hand aisle, preferably *on* the aisle so I can stretch my legs. But this time I headed to the right after I entered. This angle gave me a better approach to the Prince, since almost all of his speeches are delivered from stage right. Furthermore, dare I say it, the fog, so essential to the battle scene, was not used. I surmised that JC was once more “trying something new,” but I found out afterwards that no, the fog machines just did not work. The effect was gone but the clarity was there—a paradox if there ever was one. Beyond these stagecraft matters, three more major factors leapt out at me. One was the sharp division between the Elector and the Prince, which, although I have noted it earlier, tonight was signaled like a clarion-call with the Elector’s first fiery, threatening speech to the Prince at the outset of the play. He has been warned, and soon, he is warned again, and again. The Elector has no choice but to stand for the dignity and imperatives of his office. Mike carries this through with such force. He took over the stage as JC had been telling him to do for the past two months. The other thing that came home to me was the dilemma of the writer commenting upon this dilemma within the work itself. I cannot recall a piece of theatre that attacks the issue of writing—the difficulties, the obstructions, the challenges—not to mention the physical act of reading letter after letter—with such relentlessness. I admit that JC added the conceit of Kleist tearing his own words down from the walls and scattering them across the floor. Even without that display, the Prince cannot seem to get a grip on his own writing, from the moment he has trouble taking down the orders for battle in his pocket notebook to the revisions of his note from prison that lead to Natalie’s desperate frustration. And the third motif that leapt out at me last night was the constant question of “where” the Prince of Homburg *was*. I understood last night that throughout the play, he was everywhere and nowhere—*hic et ubique*, as Hamlet says in pursuit of his father’s ghost. After the curtain falls, he lives here, in my mind.

3/15—Sunday—Strike. By the time I arrived in Kasser at 10:30 in the morning, a dozen guys and women in black t-shirts and jeans and work-boots wielding whining electric screwdrivers were stooping and scrambling here and there in a mood of urgent, fiery intensity. The raw two-by-fours underneath the floor were already exposed and being dismantled, their fate—salvaged or not?—

uncertain; the raked plank floorboards had long since been ripped up and loaded outside in the dumpster; and the blue painted muslin stretched over plywood flats was half-stripped off, dangling in forlorn shreds. I asked Alice how long she thought it would take to do the whole job, start to finish. She said they hoped to be finished by 6 pm . . .

Five minutes was more than enough time for me. I took one last look around and walked out of there.



Effacing Myths and Mystification of Power: Sam Shepard's *The God of Hell*

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Abstract. Sam Shepard's *The God of Hell* dramatizes an initiation process that leaves the domain of the personal and familial and widens into a national rite of passage within which a nation—metonymically represented by the Wisconsin farmers Frank and Emma—is forced to leave behind the illusory cultural myth of a “normal, rural America” (Sarah Palin) and recognize a culture of war whose violence, in lack of an identifiable enemy, turns upon itself and destroys its own. The play, read in the conceptual framework of Victor Turner's theories on ritual and liminality and Michel Foucault's “The Subject and Power,” effaces the mechanism and strategies of a power that subjects individuals into servitude.

Keywords: Sam Shepard, culture of violence, Michel Foucault, power relations, Victor Turner, ritual, liminality

Hell is empty,
All the devils are here.
Shakespeare: The Tempest

Sarah Palin, the Republican nominee for the vice-presidency in the 2008 elections, used as a slogan of her campaign speeches an intended return to the “true, normal America.” She defined the veritable American as the farmer, populating the backlands, living according to the values and among the

circumstances of small-scale family farms. She built her political discourse on an image of the United States and of its citizens that has long disappeared, if it ever existed at all.¹ Family farms have been replaced by “agribusiness,” and the farmer—just as the iconic cowboy—has survived only in MGM and Warner Brothers productions, on the silver screen, and—apparently—in Ms. Palin’s propagandistic rhetoric.

Her speeches opened up the Pandora-box of scrutiny and satire on all fronts. In the twenty-first century, when cable TV and cyber-media have taken over the job of the satirist, and people’s lives are saturated with the media’s continuous focus on politics, politicians, and their every word, it has become problematic for authors other than journalists to find effective means to tackle political issues in their respective arts. Shepard, however, found the appropriate tools and format to bring political satire back onto the stage without sounding propagandistic by transplanting wide-ranging global issues and international conflict onto an idealized and myth-imbued surrounding. America’s Diary-land becomes an anachronistic pastoral landscape which big-time politics invades and destroys.

The God of Hell opened in New York in October 2004 just before the presidential election. Most reviewers and critics dismissed the play for its obvious political commitment and immediate aims.² Shepard, however, calls it a comedy and uses within its naturalistic set and character development elements of Beckettian farce that together with vaudeville and dark humor, and the complex way he effaces the mechanisms and strategies of a power that subjugates individuals into servitude by the most horrendous means of objectification, keep the play from turning into simplistic agitprop.

¹ For an insightful discussion of how the United States transformed from a rural into a mostly suburban and urban society and from European-style small-scale farming to large enterprise agriculture, see for example Ronald Takaki’s *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*.

² Several reviewers of both the original production at the Actors Studio Drama School theater in New York and its subsequent premieres in San Francisco and London have criticized Shepard for his political commitment explicit in the play that transforms it, according to his critics, into propaganda. They reject the play for its abundant symbols relating to the current political climate (Connema), reading it as “a curious throwback to Brechtian times when theater tried to browbeat or terrify audiences into a new political awareness” (Hodgins), stating that Shepard only manages to create a cartoonish hell (Fisher). They argue that even though politically committed, art has to be great and has to “make everything more beautiful in order to fulfil its most essential function, that of seizing and holding the viewer’s attention” (Teachout) and that Shepard failed to do so in his new play. The 2007 collection of essays edited by Johan Callens on Shepard’s body of work phrases a harshly critical paragraph on the play, asserting that “*The God of Hell* (2004) comes across as a somewhat disappointing combination of earlier ventures . . . Every Bush may deserve his Gulf War, but Shepard’s riposte to the second one pales in comparison to his first, despite the added urgency of the nation’s paranoid war on terror, following the attacks on New York’s World Trade Center in September 2001. True, Shepard now parodies the icons used before in a more nostalgic fashion (the flag, the farm, the sturdiness of the American heartland, etc.), but his dystopian fantasy on both sides of the Atlantic was perceived as preaching to the choir” (33).

The playwright has also referred to *The God of Hell* as a satire on Republican fascism. One of the play's central issues evolves around the Iraq War and its effects on American culture and mentality. But Shepard manages to re-create the genre of the satirical play by mocking both the advertisement-driven overt patriotism and paranoia dominating the American mind since 9/11, and the entirely unrealistic image of an innocent and uncorrupted rural America that—according to leading politicians of the day—the country must and shall return to once the “enemy” is destroyed. Johan Callens mockingly asserts that “it is as if Shepard had set *States of Shock* in the living room of *Buried Child* and brushed aside his earlier caution concerning political didacticism” (33). In contrast, I argue that Shepard has always been a politically involved playwright responding to both the country's involvement in international affairs, and its internal social and economic changes that transformed the “metanarratives” (Lyotard's term) of the American dream, of endless frontiers, and of the unalienable rights of any individual to freedom and happiness, into mere anachronistic illusions. His plays focus on the possibilities of identity construction, imposed or chosen subjectivity, and human interaction in a society and culture built upon violence and the false ideal of a Manifest Destiny of invasion and subjugation.

The God of Hell abounds in historic and political references and its ideological mindset is powerfully emphatic. Rather than recreate a historic reading, I will focus in this chapter on how the protagonists of the play are forced to transit from their isolated, eventless, and ignorant rural existence to a subject position imposed upon them by the invading “culture of war.”³ In this process the myths of this culture are called into question and proven deficient by Shepard's exaggerating and parodying some of their elements. Power is exercised through violent mechanisms and strategies in order to force its subjects into the positions adequate to accept and sustain the status quo.

In analyzing this transition from the “never-never land” of “open-door-policy” rural Wisconsin idyll to its sacrifice on the altar of manifest patriotism, and the farmers' “subjection”—in the Foucauldian sense—into positions of servitude alien to them so far, I resort to Turner's concepts of liminality and neophyte status. I also rely on Foucault's discussion of the interplay of power and freedom in order to better illuminate how Shepard employs this horrific rite of passage to show the

³ Katherine Weiss argues that for Shepard war plays a crucial role in the making of America, and in the process the American male is sacrificed. In “Cultural Memory and War Trauma in Sam Shepard's *A Lie of the Mind*, *States of Shock*, and *The Late Henry Moss*,” she discusses Shepard's three plays as fundamentally different works that embody a discourse which reveals the playwright's concerns regarding an American culture deeply infested with a rage and violence that manifest in all of his male characters and that are rooted in a trauma of war that men cannot overcome. Thus these male figures become unable to connect and communicate with their families and communities. This incommunicable trauma and the violence fuelled by this frustration destroy the community and the culture in which the consciousness of war goes back as far as the frontier days.

danger inherent in obscure power relations: A society where power is impossible to locate or even name, and where forms of resistance have been numbed by passivity, credulity, and ignorance, the manifestations of power can and will easily turn into strategies of domination and physical determination.

The God of Hell returns to the familiar Shepard territory of the American Midwest where Frank and Emma lead a seemingly perfect bucolic life on their dairy farm. This almost flawless embodiment of what Senator Palin later calls “the normal America” is exposed as a grandiose anachronism: the only family enterprise left after the invasion of the rural landscape by big corporations and government intervention. The farmer’s subject position as small-scale producer has been abolished by state-grants for non-production. The shift from an economy of production to one of commerce and monetary interaction has long ago taken place, now everything needs to be advertised, bargained for, and sold, even the land—metonymy of country.

Shepard has always been the nostalgic dramatist of the disappearing rural America, finding and dramatizing the fantastic in farming families’ lives and mourning the tragic decay of the myth of the self-sustaining, nature-bound, truly manly American.⁴ *The God of Hell* laments the decay of old myths and traditional life-style; but, at the same time, it mocks the ignorance of those who fall prey to manipulative subjection into non-existent stereotypical positions as that of the old-time farmer, the cowboy, the Patriot.

The familiar archetypes of rural life are destroyed by the new myths and new perceptions of a culture of fear and paranoia, looking for an enemy that here is elusive and obscure. The lack of a viable future for traditional farm-existence is also symbolized by the protagonist couple’s childlessness. (Sophie Watkins interprets the houseplants that Emma obsessively overwaters and Frank’s heifers as substitute children.) By act three Frank has been persuaded to sell his cows that “are going to contribute to the future security of this nation” (36), and as lights start to dim at the end of the play, Emma’s plants illuminate the stage. They emanate increasingly intense blue flashes—just as Haynes and Frank— becoming thus symbols of the radical contamination of this rural environment and the lethal transformation that the invasion results in.

The play opens in medias res, the morning after Haynes’ arrival. Like Agnes and Tobias who in Albee’s *A Delicate Balance* received their panicking friends into their home, the couple in *The God of Hell* offers shelter to Frank’s fugitive old

⁴ Such Shepardian farming families are, for example, the Tates in *Curse of the Starving Class* whose avocado farm is threatened by the “zombie invasion” of developers; or the traumatized family in *Buried Child* on their land left barren for decades hiding the corpse of the murdered child; the image of the debilitated—once virile and capable—traumatized male appears also in the figure of Eddie in *Fool for Love* who only fantasizes about buying a farm and settling down, or the either deadly violent or utterly “impotent” male characters in *A Lie of the Mind*.

friend even though Emma has a deep-rooted sense of danger that makes her question the identity and affiliations of their guest.⁵

Frank and Emma perform their morning routines while discoursing about the uninvited, long-lost friend they had put up in their basement.⁶ The set as envisioned by Shepard creates a comfortable but somewhat outdated atmosphere of old-timey farm world and a sense of isolation and distance from society. The modest living room with an exterior door leading to a small mudroom and porch that separates the interior from the “*distant vague, snowbound pastures*” (5) and the small kitchen with “*usual . . . appliances, cupboards, and sink—all dating from the fifties*” (5) remind one of the “not-exactly Norman Rockwell” home in *Buried Child*. Ayres-Frederick in his review asserts that Shepard must like kitchens as they constitute the focal point of almost all of his family plays’ sets. The reviewer reasons that “maybe they [kitchens] represent the heart and hearth of America where people can express their true hungers and needs and get those hungers fulfilled and needs met” (1). On the contrary: kitchens in Shepard’s sets become the site of frustration—often equipped with the Shepardian iconic empty refrigerator—and the sites of erupting violence. They function as stages upon which characters play out their envisioned, invoked, or wished-for subjectivities and where they witness and suffer the destruction of these illusory identities.

In *The God of Hell* the shabby living room and kitchen with its smell of burnt bacon and coffee represent a way of life that seems to have been ripped out of the chronological flow of time.⁷ Emma’s family has lived here for generations, she was born and raised in the house that has looked the same for decades (as the kitchen appliances dating from the fifties suggest). The old-fashioned and worn-down set mirrors and symbolizes the owners’ life that reproduces the lives of generations before them. This—ideally warm and cozy—shelter becomes part of Shepard’s satire: the lack of alteration gives birth to decay rather than nostalgia, while in a

⁵ This inexplicable sense of danger appears as a specifically feminine trait in both Shepard’s and Albee’s works—see, for example, Ann in *Peter and Jerry*. Their female characters instinctively identify menacing situations, or when they fail to do so or ignore their feeling—as Stevie does in *The Goat*—their destruction is inevitable. This subconscious female knowledge, just as Conchalla’s mysterious goddess-like features in *The Late Henry Moss*, or Woman’s wise insights into human behavior and interactions in *The Play about the Baby*—posit women in the two playwrights’ works in the subject position of the Other.

⁶ Frank is oiling his boots before going out to feed his “replacement heifers” and Emma is watering her plants methodically crossing the stage from the kitchen sink to the plants lined along the walls—as Shepard specifies—“*arranged without any sense of design or order*” (5) that are already dripping from overwatering.

⁷ Involving the audience’s sense of smell in the theatrical experience is a hallmark feature of Shepard’s work resurfacing in several of his plays: the toast popping out of the stolen toasters in *True West*; Esteban’s menudo cooked on stage so that its smell fills the auditorium in *The Late Henry Moss*.

Turnerian reading, the house turns into the “segregation site” where neophytes undergo their liminal trials.

Frank and Emma live out of touch with the world, as if stranded on an island in the middle of the icy landscape, frozen in time and space; fossils of an earlier lifestyle and culture prone to be lethally wounded once the outside world comes knocking and invades their territory. The set becomes the locus of Frank’s forced rite of passage with the representative of power Welch in the role of the ritual elder, Haynes used as an aid for instruction along with Welch’s patriotic paraphernalia as dominant symbols, while the heifers and plants are sacrificed as remnants of the left-behind state of existence. In Foucauldian terms, on the stage of *The God of Hell* we witness the necessary conflict of power and freedom, the strategies Welch employs “to structure the [other characters’] possible field of action” (221), and the “modes of objectification” (208) that transform Welch’s neophytes into a new type of subservient and weakened subjects.

Turner defines liminality as a period meant to offer neophytes the space, time, and means to acquire all the knowledge and skills necessary for them to function efficaciously in the community they are about to enter and to fulfill the new subject position(s) they are to appropriate within the power relations of their society. Within the three-fold ritual structure, liminality cannot be described in terms of power-relations due to the fact that in this phase of any rite, the initiands are stripped of any insignia and all their affiliations that would connect them to their earlier status or community. They are deprived of their will and freedom to act, and are perceived by the social structure as being ritually unclean, polluting, in a sense dead. Among such conditions, according to Foucault, one cannot talk about power relations because if there is no freedom, “power [is] equivalent to physical determination” (221) for “power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free” (221). Power always implies freedom, and thus, different forms of resistance.

Accordingly, Emma remains the one character who manifests resistance and thus evades liminal subjection and the horrid rite of passage. From the start, she takes on the role of the interrogator: in her first scene with Frank, when she keeps asking questions regarding Haynes’ identity, occupation, origin, and reasons for fleeing, in the hopes of getting “a kernel of information that will later prove to be essential to the plot” (Ayres-Frederick 1).

Her instinctual feminine sense of danger proves to have been right with the arrival of Welch, for whom her ambience represents effortlessly conquerable territory. For, despite her presentiment, Emma and her husband live according to the open-door policy of America’s Dairyland: “EMMA The door was open because this is Wisconsin and we all leave our doors open in Wisconsin! It’s the open-door policy” (27-28). Welch ironically acknowledges this as a “charming custom” (28), a statement that pushes Emma onto the defensive and awakens her resistance

towards the intruder who would make fun of the traditions that define her: “It’s not a custom, it’s a trust” (28). Whether it is a custom or a trust, further events prove that a subject position built on unaltered heritage and outdated traditions has become unsustainable. Their ignorance about the workings of the world outside their isolation, their lack of strategic knowledge and forms of resistance, make Frank and Emma vulnerable and guilty in their own downfall. For—as Foucault phrases it—“the analysis, elaboration, and bringing into question of power relations and the intransitivity of freedom is a permanent political task inherent in all social existence” (222). The “fundamental phenomena of ‘domination’” (Foucault 226) surface simultaneously with ignorance and passivity. Emma and Frank’s apparent naivety and dutiful polite hospitality opens up their hermetic little universe to the violence and fear-fuelled anger of a power that—without the control mechanism of resistance—will subjugate and destroy anything different, that does not march to the common rhythm.

Emma, however, remains the rather simple-minded, but lucid and down-to-earth voice of reason throughout Haynes’ re-initiation and Frank’s “conversion” under the violent guidance of the demonic ritual elder Welch. She tries to remain in control of her space, the kitchen—traditionally a feminine area—and follow her routines. She ritualizes ordinary events and secular elements of her eventless life in order to add an emotional and spiritual intensity and dimension to it that the frozen winter Wisconsin existence does not possess. Through overwatering the flowers and burning the bacon she proves to herself that she is in control and has the freedom to choose among a set of activities as well as among a variety of methods of performing these. In her seclusion from the world she cannot help but develop such habits, for winters “cause behavior like this . . . You get into these habits. These trains of thought. If I—if I didn’t water like this, I wouldn’t know what to do with myself. There would be a horrible gap. I might fall in” (23). Her routines help her hold on to a sense of self. She thus endures being cut off from social interaction. But the basic human need to communicate still resides in her with a force that makes her open up even to the stranger Haynes who emanates “blue flashes.”

She “comes to her senses” only when facing Welch’s sly intimidating techniques. Once she leaves the kitchen to ring the bell and call for Frank, Welch immediately invades her space stapling strings of American flags all over her cupboards. Emma, however, trained through routines in exercising her freedom against the numbing void of the frozen and lifeless Dairyland, resists.⁸ She remains suspicious of the vicious menacing power that Welch represents, confused and

⁸ Scene three opens with her standing on the kitchen counter taking down the strings of lags; she even tries to convince Frank to confront Welch and get the heifers back, thus appearing as the defender of their traditional rural lifestyle, mentality, and morality.

frightened by the ability of this devilish force to infiltrate and transform her husband and their lives in such a radical manner.

She remains outside the liminal area created by Welch, as Frank suggests, "lost in the ocean of ice and snow" (35). As a woman, she is left out of the military patriotic preparation of the males around her for which she is supposed to create and ensure the appropriately manifest patriotic ambiance. Her inherent sense of danger alarms her and raises her resistance, even though her change of policy from the tradition of the "open door" to her assertion that "[w]e are closing our doors to the outside world" (36) comes too late. Her world has been contaminated as the light-emitting plants demonstrate. The final scene of Emma ringing the bell in distress like a tocsin and calling out her husband's name into the wide frozen landscape recalls the final image of *A Lie of the Mind*: the visual metaphor of the fire in the snow, set by women as a warning and a symbol of their resistance to and apparent "liberation" from the grip of the violent males, echoed here by the bell's aural call of warning and the houseplants' ghostly light creating a hallmark Shepardian collage of theatrical effects.

Emma thus evades Welch's brainwashing technique; her resistance is not crushed by the power scheming to force its subjects into mindless servitude. Frank, on the other hand, falls victim to the new, mechanized, and horrific ritual of initiation that uses such accessories as remote-controlled electric teasers to recruit new adapts. The archetypal farmer Frank, involved in real physical work and representing a traditional attitude and way of thinking, undergoes a process of mental and physical transformation process. His new blue suit, tie, and attaché case make him seem oddly out-of-place in his own home and within his own environment. His funny walk betrays the fact that his "initiation" involved not only friendly persuasion and bargaining on the price of heifers, but torture as well that literally "got him by the balls," a method of "conversion" that apparently makes initiands emanate blue flashes of light. For—as Welsh declares—people have become vulnerable to such drastic processes of conditioning because they have lost their memory of the past, they have no connection with their history that still demanded people's involvement in the shaping of their personal and national fate: "There's no memory any more. That's the problem. No memory at all. Pearl Harbor. The Alamo. The Bataan Death March. All gone. Vanished like they never even happened" (32). People have lost, or rather given up their freedom or what Foucault calls their "duty" of analyzing and questioning the power relations of their society. They are involved solely with their immediate interests, such as the heifers in Frank's case, and their social sensitivity has withered away and has been reduced to a concern for such cultural icons as Krispy Kremes, Mallomars, and comic books, the items Haynes hopes to still retain after his re-initiation. People subject themselves to voluntary servitude to a power they do not see and do not understand, as the resistant Emma's desperate words demonstrate:

FRANK He's [Welch] from the government!

EMMA What government?

FRANK Our government.

EMMA I don't know what our government is anymore. Do you? What does that mean, "our government"? (35)

As a veritable subject/neophyte of such a subjugating power, the fugitive Haynes displays the features of a Turnerian initiand. Throughout the play he remains the terrified victim of a power he is running from and feels closing in on him. Even though Emma tries to calm him down reassuring him that "Wisconsin is the perfect getaway" (22) where nothing ever happens, his very presence along with Welch's appearance imbue the atmosphere with a tension and mysterious menace that justify Emma's suspicions.

Haynes, the first messenger of this threat, appears somewhat cartoonish and robotic jumping up and reacting in violent terror every time his hosts question him about his affiliations or the blue flashes his fingers emanate whenever he touches something. He refuses the doctor Emma suggests should check the blue flashes that "are not normal" (24), thus categorizing her guest as the "Other," different, implicitly dangerous. Haynes, however, refutes such a categorization and subjection: he resorts to scientific explanation and—as "normally" people do—appeals to Emma's trust: "Why don't you believe me?" (24).⁹

He reacts similarly terrified whenever the name Rocky Buttes is mentioned, as Welch discloses later, the site of a "minor nuclear leakage" that Haynes was hired to mend. The name also pinpoints a feature of the power Haynes is running from: by alluding to Rocky Flats, the nuclear power site near Denver, Shepard posits power in secret military activities, a politics and economics that is not deterred even from using mechanisms and materials that could cause total annihilation. The fear of possible pollution or destruction that already the name induces is intensified by the strange blue flashes and the "lecture" Haynes delivers on plutonium, after swearing Frank to secrecy.¹⁰ From the question of replacement heifers and

⁹ He accounts for the blue flashes as being nothing but "static shock" (24).

¹⁰ HAYNES Do you know what plutonium is named after, Frank?

FRANK What? Plutonium?

HAYNES Yes.

FRANK No—what?

HAYNES Pluto—the god of hell.

FRANK Oh—I thought he was a cartoon.

HAYNES Do you know how long it remains radioactive and biologically dangerous once it's released into the atmosphere?

FRANK Plutonium?

HAYNES Yes.

FRANK No, I don't know anything about it.

HAYNES Five hundred thousand years.

breeding, Haynes jumps to the topic that has been terrifying the American conscience for decades and has kept the country in paranoid despair: nuclear power. His presentation on plutonium's carcinogenic nature and its effects on the genes of the reproductive cells causing mutations, in other words, "abnormalities," its ability to spread through space and time as a "tasteless, odorless, and invisible" (20) deadly substance can also be read as a symbolic description of the power he is trying to escape: polluting, undetectable and undefinable, infiltrating everything right down to the genes and destroying them from inside out. At the same time, this "lecture" also offers a possible interpretation of the play's title: the Latin mythological god of hell, Pluto represents the mysterious power whose workings are meant to achieve not the redemption but the destruction of mankind. Frank and Haynes' discussion takes on an atmosphere of universal threat and crisis where personal and world issues become undistinguishable: "FRANK Are we talking about a world situation or something personal, Graig? HAYNES What's the difference?" (19).

Haynes' secretiveness, his involvement with some secret state organization with undecodable abbreviations as its name, and his affiliation to such dangerous and polluting materials as plutonium, his strange physical and mental state differentiate him radically from his hosts. He represents the "mysterious Other" who imposes upon those whose world he invades an imminent and deadly threat. Both Frank and Emma recognize him as the depository of knowledge that they lack but towards which they also seem to be ignorant. They only start thinking of him as the "carrier" of pollution after Welch describes him as such:

You're contaminated. You're a carrier. What're we going to do about that? We can't have you free-ranging all over the American countryside like some kind of headless chicken, can we? You've already endangered the lives of your friends here, not to mention the Midwest at large. Now, that was pretty selfish of you, wasn't it? Poisoning the Heartland? (30)

FRANK That's a long time.

HAYNES It is. The most carcinogenic substance known to man. It causes mutations in the genes of the reproductive cells. The eggs and the sperm. Major mutations. A kind of random compulsory genetic engineering that goes on and on and on and on.

FRANK That would probably affect my heifers then, wouldn't it?

HAYNES Yes, it would, Frank. It definitely would affect your heifers. It would affect every heifer within six hundred miles of here. It would penetrate the food chain and bio-accumulate thousands of times over, lasting generation after generation. Tasteless, odorless, and invisible. (20).

The question of genetic engineering that in Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* appeared as the desired height of scientific achievements that Nick the young biologist wanted to claim as his own, here appear as accidental consequences of imprudent human action that will affect the environment and future generations (not only of cows) beyond our limited imagination.

Thus, in Frank's perception, Haynes is transformed into the "dangerous Other" who is initiated into some secret knowledge and skills that he is able to conceal in order to mislead and contaminate the innocent. In Frank's mind, his friend turns into the disciple of some horrific powerful god, sent on a mission to exploit his confidence and loyalty, deceive him and "contaminate" him beyond salvation: "He's [Haynes] a carrier. He was sent here to do us in . . . He's a traitor! He's betrayed us all. A pretender. They look like us. They act like us. But underneath they're deadly" (36).

Turner defines liminal personae as necessarily ambiguous since they elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locates states and positions within social and cultural settings. Frank and Emma's inability and ultimately their uninterest in fixing Haynes in a subject position, locates Haynes as liminal, different, and thus dangerous. He himself verbalizes his betwixt-and-between state, emerging from the dead—as Frank believed he was—when, almost crazed by fear, he denies his own existence, snapping out at Emma: "You don't know me. I don't exist" (27). His "abnormal" status also materializes in the staging of the play: he is put up in the basement, underneath and separate from the "normal" living area from where he rises from time to time as ghost.

Initiands are also perceived by the social structure as ritually unclean and polluting; therefore, the necessity of their seclusion possesses an immediate urgency.¹¹ Still, the idea of Haynes as the carrier of contamination—versus the mysterious power represented by Welch—is underscored and ironically scrutinized by the banality of the scene that dramatizes this "contamination" and need for cleansing: "EMMA [talking about the sofa Haynes has stained with coffee] Oh, don't worry about that. It's beyond ruin. It's seen way worse than coffee spills. Premature calves. Afterbirth. Blood all over the place. You can't wreck it" (22-23). Accordingly, Haynes proves to be everything but the horrible source of contamination and embodiment of evil as Welch describes him. In Emma's down-to-earth and logic-dominated perception, Haynes appears basically incapable of wrecking even a sofa, much less a whole country and way of life.

Destructive power does, however, reside in the second intruder, Welch. As the agents in Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, Welch appears at the house and invites himself in. He barges into Frank and Emma's mid-American ambiance like the "zombie invasion" Wesley talks about in *Curse of the Starving Class*. And while in the earlier play the violence that erupts within the family makes them vulnerable to the danger coming from the outside, Emma's "open-door policy" and their inability

¹¹ See Mary Douglas' discussion of the theme of ritual pollution and cleansing in *Purity and Danger*.

to resist efficaciously turns this farmhouse into an easy target for any intruding power.¹²

Welch arrives as the familiar not-too-welcome know-it-all and persuasive salesman with an arrogant can-do attitude that quickly turns into a violent routine of interrogation. As a modern-day representation of the anachronistic door-to-door salesperson, he invades the house with an abundance of patriotic paraphernalia selling them—with an apostolic air and discourse—like the latest must-have commodity. But he soon proves to be totally different from a more successful version of Arthur Miller's Willy Loman. With his pathetic and disapproving rhetoric he reproaches Emma for her lack of any manifestation of their loyalty and devotion to the country:

WELCH Well, Emma, this is Wisconsin, isn't it? I'm not in Bulgaria or Turkistan or somewhere lost in the Balkans. I'm in Wisconsin. Taxidermy and cheese! Part of the U.S. of A. You told me that yourself.

EMMA What are you driving at?

WELCH You'd think there would be a flag up or something to that effect. Some sign. Some indication of loyalty and pride.

EMMA Loyalty? To Wisconsin? (12)

Welch manifests himself as the agent of a power that is effaced here as demanding total and manifest approval and devotion from its subjects, the Foucauldian “new form of pastoral power” (208) that invades the “pastoral” landscape of Wisconsin and imposes on people a “matrix of individualization” (Foucault 215) within which one gains subjectivity if one parades his/her adherence to the group, otherwise risking confrontation, expulsion, even annihilation. And the shrewd Welch is selling the ultimate patriotic armor necessary for showcasing this adherence: the “starter kit” of flags and cookies from which the buyer can move up to the “Proud Patriot package”—an alliterative play on words Shepard uses to sharpen the irony in saleable patriotism.

Welch is also selling his image as the twenty-first century equivalent of Lewis and Clark, this time travelling across the country from West to East. The ritualistic journey of Shepard's male characters to an ideal West—that ultimately always proves an illusion—is transformed into its opposite. This trip backwards, to origins, however, also implies a reinvigoration of a culture of conquering and violence, of confrontations with and destruction of people (Natives) and nature that would

¹² In *Curse of the Starving Class* the door broken down by the father that the son tries in vain to mend symbolizes their vulnerability caused by the “curse” of violence (“nitroglycerin in the blood”) that they carry within.

oppose such an expansion. Thus Welch is un-masked as the menacing executive “hand” demonstrating the force of a power that cannot be pinpointed: “the department” that “keeps [him] on [his] toes” (9).

Charles Donelan affirms that “Welch incarnates the devil himself, or at least a contemporary flag-waving version of the title’s god of hell” (1), while Paul Hodgins argues that Welch can only be seen as the simple instrument of evil, a flat caricature-like character the workings of whose mind remain hidden. In my reading, Welch needs to be a robotic, emotionless, highly intelligent, detached, and sarcastic character in order to be a believable representative and a terrifying model of a power and culture of dominance that denies individuality except that of militant patriotism, that fascistically rejects anything and anybody other or different. He stands in for a power that aims and is able to manipulate and deceive its subjects into accepting and thus sustaining its unquestioned and incontestable authority.

This power authorizes Welch, the robotic parody of a salesman/secret agent/warrior patriot to recruit new subjects and to function as ritual elder in their initiation. He possesses knowledge and skills, as well as the right information to give him the upper hand in the situation and locate him as initiator. He holds and handles the necessary symbolic objects (his “Patriot package” and money) with which to “instruct” new recruits; the grotesque “abnormality” of Haynes to demonstrate the workings of the power structure and the consequences of resisting the exercise of this power; as well as the technological insight and equipment to capture, efface, and punish such treason. Within the world of the frozen Wisconsin landscape, this technology and what it is capable of appear as something menacing and destructive, abused by a power that assumes no responsibility for the effects of its actions (for example, the “minor nuclear leakage”) and feels absolutely no obligation towards its subjects. Welch defines this power position in a well-articulated and terrifying image that conveys the parameters of a totalitarian regime:

We can do whatever we want, bobby-boy. That should be clear by now. We’re in the driver’s seat. Haven’t you noticed? There’s no more of that nonsense of checks and balances. All that red tape. All that hanging around in limbo, waiting for decisions from committees and tired-out lobbies. We’re in absolute command now. We don’t have to answer to a soul, least of all a couple of Wisconsin dairy farmers. (31)

The *modus operandi* of this power involves sly interrogation, persuasive branding and self-marketing, and technology-assisted physical torture. As Welch ironically puts it, those uninitiated into these technological marvels are unable even to see the danger: “It’s extraordinary how blind the naked eye is. No wonder people have so

much trouble accepting the truth these days” (30). His sarcastic remark doubles in meaning: while Frank is unable to detect the danger he brings upon himself and Emma by accepting Haynes into their house, he is also blinded by Welch, not noticing how he himself is drawn into the horrific military and patriotic conversion and initiation process conducted by the intruder. He is mesmerized by Welch’s powerful discourse, the embodiment of the ideal of a masculine power and of the capable fertile male. In his looks—thus, first in his appearance—he becomes the mirror image of this demonic initiator.

In a media- and image-dominated world where immediate and first-hand observation has been replaced by images of a technologically and virtually created reality, and where inter-personal conversation has been replaced by the flood of discourses that are always and necessarily ideological and propagandistic, the truth has become elusive and deceptive. People are being blinded by the multitude of images, facets, and perspectives of reality and interpretations of the world that they are exposed to and that are imposed upon their own thinking. Pinpointing the enemy and identifying the source of contamination has become problematic; thus in such a world of elusive truths, shifting images, and simulacra, and in a culture of disbelief and suspicion, the one who knows the enemy holds control. Playing upon the paranoia and fear that he himself awakens in Frank and that epidemically takes hold of the new victim, Welch depicts Haynes as the embodiment of evil that infiltrates and infests America.

The persuasive Welch, as the depository of all truths, beyond being able to identify the source of pollution, appears to be selling also the means of ritual cleansing. His militant patriotism, his arrogant and sly interrogation techniques and torture methods, however, prove to carry another, more destructive type of contamination threat. He recruits his new adapts by literally “gripping them by the balls,” he subjects them to a physical and mental “training” that seems to be a reinvented version of Pavlovian conditioning and brainwashing that transforms men into zombie-like automatons. He pre-signals the violent nature of his initiation methods when he mockingly plays around with picking words that would rhyme with Haynes’ name such as pains, shames, and blames, words that seem to have been chosen from the register of subjugation, totalitarianism, enslavement:

Well, well, well—Mr. ‘Haynes,’ is that it? Mr. Haynes? Very inventive. Deceptively simple. Almost poetic. ‘Haynes’—rhymes with ‘pains,’ or is it ‘shames’? Possibly. Could even be ‘blames.’ The choices are endless. Well, not exactly endless. Everything has its limits, I suppose. Everything runs into a brick wall sooner or later. Even the most heroic ideas. . . sooner or later it would come down to just a finite number of possibilities, wouldn’t it, Haynes? Brains, maims, flames, chains. Which is it? What’s it going to be? (29-30)

By scene three the verbal mockery turns into deadly serious methods of convincing threateningly mentioned at the end of the previous scene: “What would happen to your body now if you had to undergo the same ordeal? The same stress to your appendages? . . . The pain to your penis, for instance?” (32). The aural image of the torture going on in the basement created by the sounds of yelling, of “piercing,” and “sharp screams” (37), materializes in the horrifying picture of Welch dragging onto stage the heavily breathing and yelling Haynes pulled by an electrical cord that “*runs directly into the fly of Haynes’s [sic!] pants*” (39). The button on the other end of the cord enables Welch to deliver remote-controlled electric shocks to his captive. This visual metaphor echoes Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* with Pozzo tugging Lucky as the ultimate image of humanity trapped in an eternal battle fighting for positions of dominance, an image a variation of which Shepard has already created in *A Lie of the Mind*.¹³ In *The God of Hell* Shepard pushes the boundaries of menace further to achieve the effect of a vaudeville nightmare with Welch in the role of the “demon clown” (Shepard quoted in Shewey 75). The torture is explicit and cruel, and the grotesque events represented on stage dramatize effectively how fragile power relations are and how power once escaped from its interplay with and continuous provocation by freedom will at any moment turn into totalitarianism.

Shepard’s harsh criticism is directed against any totalitarian regime and against any kind of torture.¹⁴ At the same time, he also criticizes the ignorance with which people accept the status quo and fall captive to serving a power that denies their right to freedom and which ultimately destroys them. He attacks that lazy passivity with which Americans rest and hope “to get a free ride on the back of Democracy” (42). Controversially, the playwright puts these words into the mouth of the most devilish character, Welch, representative of a power that gains its force from the passivity, ignorance, and servitude of citizens. The air of sarcasm and irony that Welch adds to the words “[w]hat have you done to deserve such rampant freedom? Such total lack of responsibility . . . Sooner or later the price has to be paid” (42) suggests a power that is aware of how easily people can be manipulated and is consciously exploiting its subjects’ inability or unwillingness to act or resist in any form.

The final scene of the play presents the transformation process of Frank into a brainwashed slave of Welch’s cause. He and Emma are expected to display a show-your-colors mentality and total transparency towards the invading power. Together with Welch images and simulacra of a rampant patriotism flood the house

¹³ In the earlier Shepard play, Mike drags onto stage the bound Jake who is holding an American flag between his teeth, another element linking the two works.

¹⁴ “EMMA You’re not torturing him, are you? What’re you doing? WELCH Torturing? Torturing! We’re not in a Third World nation here, Emma. This isn’t some dark corner of the Congo” (38). “EMMA . . . This is absolute torture! I don’t care what country we’re in” (39).

which turns into a battleground where the forces of a fear-driven warrior patriotism that has nothing to do with the land any longer and that treats the country itself as a commodity, collide with and easily extinguish resistance weakened by passivity, ignorance, and isolation.

Frank and Haynes subjugated and subjected into the position of neophytes, also face a liminal challenge. They are sent on a journey towards the west with the heifers, an ironic doubling of the old time cowboy movies with Haynes and Frank heading back west “[a]t night. By train. Across the Great Plains” (41), towards Rocky Buttes that Welch depicts as a “[w]hole different landscape. Wide open. Just like the Wild, Wild West. Not a tree in sight. Endlessly flat and lifeless” (42). This reads like a set description from the script of an old Hollywood western. Frank’s task of reaching the desert and taking his beloved heifers to their destruction at the contaminated site of Rocky Buttes represents a test of loyalty. At the same time, in the universe of Shepard’s plays the desert represents the site of eternal liminality and marginalization, cut off from human contact, outside chronological time and social structure. Welch ironically defines the test as being “delivered to your Manifest Destiny” (42): a destiny of being eternally trapped in the hold of the power that deprives its subjects of freedom and thrives as there exist no strategies of resistance. Emma remains the sole free individual protected by her femininity. But her escape also means her dismissal from the community of men. She becomes now the dangerous Other, the enemy, who resists the subject positions offered by the network of domination. Meanwhile, she has also been deprived of all the myths, traditions, customs, in her own words “trust[s]” that she defined herself by. Therefore, she also is forced into the betwixt-and-between liminal position of ambiguity and neither dead nor alive state where the possibility of resistance is eliminated.

Terrified by physical torture and the idea of an invisible enemy closing up on them from every direction, left in ambiguity after all their beliefs and grand narratives have been discarded as nonsense or sacrificed for the sake of the “cause,” Frank and Emma are subjugated and subjected to a power that operates through concealment and mystification. They are truly blinded and fail to recognize the threat coming from within, and to resist an imploding structure that feeds on itself in a cannibalistic and self-destructive manner, a culture of schizophrenic paranoia and of insatiable hunger for dominance.

The initiation process dramatized in *The God of Hell* leaves the domain of the personal and familial and widens into a national rite of passage within which a nation is forced to leave behind the illusory cultural myth of Ms. Palin’s “normal, rural America” and recognize a culture of war whose violence—confronted by an unidentifiable enemy—will turn upon itself and destroy its own. Such a horrific picture makes Frank deliver one of Shepard’s hallmark poetic soliloquies culminating in a bitterly ironic punch line:

FRANK (*Out to audience again.*) It's times like this you remember the world was perfect once. Absolutely perfect. Powder blue skies. Hawks circling over the bottom fields. The rich smell of fresh-cut alfalfa laying in lazy wind rows. The gentle bawling of spring calves calling to their mothers. I miss the cold War so much. (39-40)

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An East-Central European Success Story György Dragomán's *The White King*

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Abstract. One of the narratives determined by “the common East-European misery” is György Dragomán’s novel entitled *A fehér király* [*The White King*], published in 2005. The stream of events—told by a child narrator and defined also by the alterity/alienage-image—reflects not only the general tendencies of communism-stories, but also their overall effects. Dragomán follows the relativizing prose-poetic technique used by Ádám Bodor: he mixes referenceable, decodable elements in the prose-texture for a later diversion away from them. The open, loose end writing technique and the delay of identificative acts indicate Bodor’s prosepoetical procedures. Even the speakers’ language is questionable for us (as well as the speakers’ language in the Bodor-prose): the multiethnic location implies a mixture of language. The name database familiar from the Bodor-prose also has a space-building function: the names outline the space, which, in its turn, delimits the events.

Keywords: Hungarian literature, alterity/alienage-image, borderline-identity, “the common Est-European misery”

The mainstream of the last decades’ ways of expression and prose is constituted by the narratives on “the common East-European misery” and on its identity. They also tackle issues related to the alterity/alienage-image. One of the most representative survival-stories generated by fear and defenselessness is György Dragomán’s novel entitled *A fehér király* [*The White King*]. During the last decades many novels, narratives, short stories were written which—directly or

indirectly—try to explain the nature of the dictatorship. Although *The White King* can be related to this intent, it is not an epoch-document, but more of an attempt to explain *documents* left in torso, encrusted in language, waiting to be ravelled.

György Dragomán appoints an eleven-twelve year-old child, nicknamed Dzsátá (Djata) as the narrator of the novel, who—according to the chronotopic coordinates of the novel and identified in conformity with the hints of the context—could have even been the author or any of us who witnessed and watched the dictatorship in the Romania of the eighties (more widely: Eastern and Central Europe) *from below*. I am not an exception either: during my first reading I was “haunted” by the “it is like all of this happened to me”—Ádám Bodor-like feeling (Bodor, *Az érsek* 49).

The traceable effects of the Bodor-texts on the Dragomán-prose are not present only through the “life-sensation”, we will see in the following some of the elements of the Bodor-effect, which can be found in *The White King*—the successful¹ novel of the first representative of the post-bodorian triade: György Dragomán, Zsigmond Sándor Papp and Gábor Vida.

(Chronotopos)

The concrete space of *The White King* is marked by a single toponymy: the Danube Channel, where the narrator's father is hauled after being arrested—the moment of the arrest defines the action and time of the novel, everything is correlated to it and conditioned by it. The anthroponyms populating and constructing the space and the Romanian denominations of the articles of personal use—similar to the Ádám Bodor and Sándor Zsigmond Papp prose—lead us to the conclusion that the action takes place in a middle-sized city in Romania inhabited also by Hungarians.² Some critics of Dragomán found his biography definitory rather on the road of approaching his novel, than explaining it. Csaba Károlyi—in comparison with the novel *Isten hozott* by Krisztián Grecsó—states that “Both novels cover autobiographic elements even if we take into consideration the age and life-story of the main characters and authors. . . . Dragomán left his hometown (Marosvásárhely, Târgu Mureş) at the age of 15 and had to go far away to Szombathely to finally settle down in Budapest. . . . However, neither of the texts assert auto-biographicality” (Károlyi 95–97). István Csuhai stands on a similar position: “For a better understanding of the book, it is useful to know that the author and his family left Transylvania to settle down in Hungary in 1988 when he was 15 years old” (Csuhai 25).

¹ The *A fehér király* novel was translated into 28 languages by November 2008.

² The usage of the expression “brant” (devil, hell) and some other elements could suggest Marosvásárhely (Târgu-Mureş), but I do not consider it relevant.

Dragomán is also following Bodor's relativizing prose-poetical technique: he mixes referenceable, decodable and translatable elements in his prose-texture, so that he can visibly differentiate from these by relativizing and devalorificating them. The early critics of *The White King* highlight the topographic localizability and abstractability:

[T]he first-person singular narration of growing up is situated in the Romania of the eighties, although paradoxically we can barely find any reference to a somewhat concrete political-historical correspondence with that period. . . . [These narrations of growing up] relate about defencelessness through a Kafka-universality making it impossible to associate with only one Romanian location. These characteristics and situations, as we can easily admit, could have occurred anywhere in the region of Eastern-Europe—perhaps with some chronological delay. (Csuhai 25)

Ferenc Takács also delimits the chronotopos in order to open up to wider dimensions throughout his analysis: “Yes, it is obvious that we are in Ceaușescu's Romania, in its particularly miserable and cruel ending, the eighties” (Takács 118). “The text of the *A fehér király* does not give obvious information regarding where the action takes place, at least I did not find any. A Romanian town inhabited also by Hungarians can be the spot, the characters are both of Hungarian and Romanian ethnicity. Flats, flowerbeds, ordeal and the fear of cutting off electricity during movie-projection in the cinema”—writes Csaba Károlyi, then comparing it with Krisztián Grecsó's novel, he states: “Grecsó brings the world of the lowland village, while Dragomán the world of the Transylvanian city” (Károlyi 96).

The temporalization, the chronology is defined by the repetitive evoking of the moment of the father's deportation. “Back then it had already been six months since we saw our father, he was supposed to be gone only for a week, on a very important business near the seaside, in a research plant—when he said goodbye, he told me how sorry he was that he could not take me along” (8)—as the narrator communicates us in the first chapter, without specifying the exact moment when his father was taken by a van full of grey-coated agents. The duration of the action is one and a half year: it starts on the 17th of April—on the day of the parents' wedding anniversary—with the stealing of some tulips, about half year after the father had been hauled and ends with the funeral of the grandfather, when the father “had already been away at the Danube Channel for more than two years” (280). In almost every chapter we can find reference about how many months had passed since the narrator had seen his father.

Whilst the relatively easily identifiable events which help the definition of time seem authentic (the radiations from the Soviet Union's Chernobyl had probably taken place when the time of the novel suggests it), at the supposed place

and time (in Romania, a few years before the eighties) there had not been any civil wars or partisan movements—with these deliberate delays, with the *out of place events* the text relativizes the referential indications and itself. This also empowers the supposition that the survival-stories of these borderline-communities determined by defencelessness and fear can be abstracted from the tight chronotopos: they can happen anytime, anywhere and to anybody.

(Lack of) structure

The White King—following the structure of Ádám Bodor's *Sinistra District*—is a frame-novel composed of texts which could also function as independent short stories, the frame is a constituting part of what it contains: the disappearance, the reappearance and the re-disappearance of the father bonds the action into a frame. The absence and the replacement of the father and the desire to fulfill his absence determine the text and the narrative. “I remember my father's face clearly: it was unshaven, smelled like cigarettes, seemed extremely tired, it had a half-sided smile. I thought a lot about it, but I am not sure he knew he was not coming back any time soon” (10)—remembers the narrator the departure of his father. The visualisation of departure in the text leads us to the conclusion that there is a multi-angled, implicit intertextual connection (Genette) between Dragomán's and Bodor's narration. The “father-hauling” story told by Füles, the child narrator of the *Az Eufrátesz Babilonnál* [*The Euphrates at Babylon*] novel, starts like this: “On that very day, when I last saw my father, because three men sat him in a car and drove him away, I grasped the breast of Andrea Noprítz. . . . On that afternoon I arrived home somewhat later, because I traded my pencil-sharpener for a coloured imprint” (Bodor, *Eufrátesz* 7) in consonance with Djata's words: “. . . and I also remembered that goodbye a lot of times, when I last saw him, my father's colleagues came after him in a grey van, I had just got home from school, when they took off, if our last class, biology, had not been cancelled I would not even have met them” (8).

The novel sets off with the theft of tulips at dawn, following the father's legacy, the child (“I thought of dad and that he must have been doing it somehow like this every year”) decimates the tulip stock of the near little park, so that they celebrate in this way the wedding anniversary with his mother left alone. The events planned to the last detail, are intensified by the appearance of the secret service agents: in this moment it becomes clear to the child-narrator that his father had not departed towards a research plant at the seaside with his “colleagues” six months ago, as he thought, (or as he was told), but that he was hauled to dig at the Danube Channel due to his guerilla organizations against the political system. The scene, with its brutality, advances the basic tone of the phrasing which becomes

definitory further on. One of the agents “ethically” enlightens the narrator’s mother that holding back the truth from the child

was a mistake, because he will find out sooner or later; it is better to overcome such cases as soon as possible, because lies only give birth to lies, and then the mother burst into laughter, and said, yes, you are truly the friends of truth, and after that the shorter one told her to shut her mouth, and mom really became silent. The grizzled turned towards me and asked if I still thought that they were the colleagues of my father, and I remained silent, but I felt my body going cold like after gym class after an examination running, when you have to lean forward in order to be able to breathe. The grizzled smiled at me and said they were not the colleagues of my father, but they were from the internal-security service and that my father was in arrest for taking part in anti-statal organization so I was not going to see him for a while, because he shovels at the Danube Channel; and if I knew what that meant, that he was in a labor camp, and as weak as he was he was not going to resist too long and was never going to come back. It was possible that he was already dead, and as the agent said this, my mother grabbed the cup from the table and smashed it to the ground, so that the agent stopped talking and for a moment there was silence. (16)

The first chapter contains all the patterns which will develop and evolve further on in the novel: the very determinant missing of the father, the reason for this, the defined roles for replacing him, the family-lies and system-lies, the brutality, the verbal and physical aggression, the fear, the defencelessness, the interdependence.

The buildup of the novel makes the structure open in the same way as in its precursor’s novel, the *Sinistra District*: the action evolves from the independent short stories put in a relatively chronological order. The short stories start in medias res: the narrator as well as the reader find themselves in a ready situation, but the *situation* remains open at the end of the short story too, we do not find out how the yarn ends. At first the narrator signals something, then he goes on with a long, continuous description of the endless pieces of the story, gradually introducing to us the premises of the events. The lower case subtitles (tulips, the jump, end of the world, pickaxe, music, numbers, valve etc.) of the chapters that can be read also independently, are compact, condensed allusions to their contents.

(I/Self-narration)

All the events regarding the narrator and everything around him are built up in a long monologue. The fragmentation of the monologue and the episodes, the

translation, conversion of the dialogues are part of the novel's structure. We witness a downward-upward motion of the camera, the focusing and narrowing changes according to the child's perspective. The dialogues appear also in the child's interpretation, a translation imitating the original one. The narrator uses indirect speech—this way especially the parts referring to himself become humorous, ironic. This definitely requires a retrospective point of view—a heterogenous one: the narrator's identity becomes heterogenous by mixing the wisdom of (an) the adult and the posterior explanation of (self) irony into the presumed homogenous perspective. The point of view changes also within a chapter: tulip-stealing seems to happen simultaneously with the action itself, the father's hauling is nested in here, as a retrospection from an earlier event which determines the action and the structure of the novel. At the moment of the narration the story-teller is aware of what happens later, but he pretends not to know: placing himself back at somewhere in late autumn, when his father was taken.

The narrator tells the story for the pleasure of the narration, hoping to understand and making himself heard, jabbering, proving his *own truth* (“... really”), he starts the sentences with “so” repeatedly, followed by the development of the previous theme (“It all started with . . .”). The development would naturally involve the explanation, the ending, but this does not happen: the tension is not dissolving, and we do not find out what were the agents looking for (who “just happen to pass by, and since they were there, they thought that they would look around a little bit to see if they can find something in the doctor's room” (17)). Furthermore, it also remains a mystery what happened to the children who lost the money of the class on slot machines and planned to pretend to be sick the following day:

We knew perfectly that if we did not get sick by the next day, then we were dead, at school the others would beat us to death because by that time it would be clear that we accidentally lost the class-money—which should have been spent on flags and placards for the pageantry on the 1st of May—on slot machines, in the basement of the Puppet theater, because Feri made us believe that on those machines every third player automatically would win. (22–23)

The open, loose-end writing technique and the delay of identificative acts indicate Bodor's prose-poetical procedures. There are many other things left unclear: whether the junior football match between the Vörös Kalapács (The Red Hammer) and the Áttörés (Breakthrough) teams did take place, what did they (the author and his mother) sell on the Sunday flea market, in order to raise money for the search of the father, how did the gold-digging end etc. The openness of the action segments results in the unfinishability of the *main story*: according to the sequences of the ending scene (the child running after the police-van with his

father in it) the story and the world interpretation do not come to an end either, all of this is an endless running in the hope of survival.

The *image* of the self-narration, Djata, is not shown by the text, his face glitters before the confrontations. First he sees the reflection of his own face in the golden ring of Vasököl (Iron Fist), the geography teacher:

. . . and, in the meantime, Vasököl took his hand out, and there were no brass knuckles on it, but he was holding something, we could not see what, then he held out his fist in front of me, he wore a very wide golden ring I could see the reflection of my face and then he asked if I could guess what he was holding, but by then I was so scared that even if I could do so, I would have been too afraid to speak out . . . (94)

He does not want to lose on purpose due to his respect for sports and the impossibility to cheat, so the geography teacher reminds him of his earlier prank, about the valve hidden in his fist. Djata, together with his pal Feri (who tells on him) stole a valve from the front wheel of the teacher's motorcycle. After the confrontation emerges the fact that the *valve is leaking*, the self-image of Djata suffers a distortion and giving in to blackmail, albeit by constraint, he sets off on the Haza Védelme (The Defence of the Homeland) competition, where he wants to win despite the threatenings, he scores maximum points, but the result is institutionally altered.

Another confrontation takes place at the forced channel digging, when the narrator pulls out the military photo of his father, which he always carried with him in his coat's inner pocket. He used to compare it placing it besides his reflection in the mirror confronting, identifying himself.

. . . then I pulled out my father's photo and I looked at that too, it was dirty from all of the touching, but I could still see his face. Formerly everybody told me how much I resembled my father, once I kept looking at myself in a pocket-mirror by putting my father's picture near it, and I could really see that my chin and my mouth are exactly like his. (53)

The juxtaposition of his own reflection and his father's photograph the identificational act of self-reflection broadens, but shifts at the same time.

At the end of the novel, his face flashes only in imagination on the varnishing of his grandfather's coffin, that is, it would flash if he went closer to it: this distance-keeping kept him away from his father also, before and after the deportation, and this is what holds him back from getting to know himself: "I was looking at the varnishing of the coffin, I knew if I approached the black painted

wood properly, I could see in its reflection my own face and that made me feel terribly anxious" (289).

The tragicomic aspect of the scene of the grandfather's funeral turns into absurdity by the appearance of the father in chains, but not even the closest persons may approach him. Djata can only see his father's pale face behind the bars of the police-van's door. And he can only remain with the hope that the formerly acquired white king figure—which he stole from the ambassador, and kept near his father's military photo—is a caution for the final victory. Namely, just in the middle of this eighteen-chaptered novel, in the tenth one, the stake and fate of the *game* are settled: though life is battle and warfare, he refuses to get a checkmate. He steals the ivory-carved white king before he would lose, he puts the whole world in his pocket with all of his enemies in it "and I reached into my pocket, I firmly squeezed the white king, the cold ivory slicked perfectly well into my hand, and I knew, that nobody is going to beat me in the warlike game, because even the most beautifully painted tin soldier is bagatelle in comparison with this leader" (175).

(Names, border-identities)

The identification act is delayed: we only know the nickname of the main character, the self-narrator (which only turns up in the fifth chapter) and, besides that, we know his "original" first name is identical with his father's and grandfather's, according to the ancient tradition. "The origin" of the name "Djata" is untangled by an interview with Dragomán: the author was called so by his classmates, friends. The etymology of the nickname is related to his friends of Romanian ethnicity: "my Romanian friends named me Săgeata (arrow—ed. note) because I had a bowing arrow. My Transylvanian-Hungarian friends found this too long, so they shortened it to Djata, which was eventually used by the Romanians also" (M. László). The undefinable identities which run into each other and are inseparable indicate the existence of the border-identities present in the Bodor-prose also.

The names of the most important persons, that is the family members, remain unknown for the readers. Only the secondary characters are denominated, we get to know mostly their nicknames or first names—the way we would hear them or the way the child hears them. The delivery and the phrasing of the text seems to act on our auditive senses and imagination: throughout the quick slideshow of the events the language used becomes questionable (just like in the Bodor- and Papp-prose): the multiethnic scene presumes mixed language.

The familiar name database from the Bodor- and Papp-prose has a space-building function this time also: the names outline the space which delimits the events, they assure the localizability of the action.

The narrator uses an integrating technique in translating the dialogues similar to the one he uses for the names of the characters. Both Hungarian and Romanian names are characteristic for the scene presuming a multicultural region. The latter get into the text in a phonetic transcription, suffering a distortion based on hearsay: *Gyurka, Szabi, Jánku Zsjánu, a híres hájduk, Gica bá, a Frunzák: Romulusz és Rémusz, Nagyprodán, Traján, Csákány, Áronka, Feri, Horáciú, Janika, filtrú nélküli Kárpáci, Filimon Szürbú* – some of these are denominations of articles for personal use and character-names from the Romanian history book. As some critics formerly observed:³ there are such words, ideas, idioms in the text, which can be known mostly only to readers who are familiar with the Romanian language or have lived in the country (or at least in one of the East-European dictatorships). This reading indication imposes a special conditioning: one of the three dogs of *Vászilé bá*'s son is called *Kloska* and that implies the other two to be called *Horia* and *Krisán* corresponding to the three rebel peasants notorious from the history of the Romanian nation. This (post-colonialist) game played with the reader can also be related to the post-bodorian trend, the prank pulled on the reader, the lesson taught, the dislocation could result in different readings conditioned by space, just like in the prose of Sándor Zsigmond Papp and Gábor Vida, followers of the Bodor stream.

“Natural” aggression, as an expression of the system image)

The text continuously questions itself, it keeps wondering whether all of this is true, whether it really happened the way *it is told*. The belief of imagination and its transformation in *reality* dominates: the narrator knows that he only imagines some of the events, but these ideas are so strong that he considers them real. The narrator “almost” hears as the phone rings on the other side of the line, Djata “sees

³ “The first sentence of *The White King* already gives away the fact that its language is going to be based on the Romanian-Hungarian common speech, not on the one from Hungary: the action sets off with the ringing of the alarm clock. The *pohárszék, jálézár* and *blokk* words found on the first page underline this” (Károlyi 96), respectively: “My favourite example is the repetitive use of the ‘take away/give back the electricity’ expression in the chapter entitled *Mozí [Cinema]* because it mixes the planes of the language used and the characteristic approach of everyday life in a sensible manner. I had the opportunity to hear this expression in Transylvania from many people, many times, in many situations at the beginning of the nineties, if the provision of some public utility—electricity, water, telephone—stopped or was suspended. The figure of speech here, in this novel, does not only suggest what the luckier readers from Hungary would assign to it in the first instance, meaning that the power, ‘they,’ some influential people are responsible for a possible, random technical issue. The ‘take away/give back the electricity’ juxtaposition sums up the drastic experience of a countryful of people used to 15 watt lightbulbs and powersaving campaigns. It simply means: they took it away, they gave it back. That is it. It is better than if it had been vice versa. It radiates temper not resignation” (Csuhai 25).

clearly” the bloodshots on Iza’s thigh—probably his first love—and that he whispers to her, although the storytelling questions this. The narrator knows that the scarfaced Csákány cannot be his father but still addresses him in that way:

[H]e smiled at me and I just wanted to see his eyes and his mouth, and then I already knew that he was not my father, he could not be my father, but I still took a step towards him, and I still spoke out and said: father!, although I knew I was not seeing my dad and the workers were lying, but I still said it and, by doing so, for a moment I felt I might be wrong, that he still was my father. (58)

Besides the father’s absence and the desire to fill this, aggression and brutality form the other text-organizing component. The characters, almost without exception, are (verbally and/or physically) aggressive: the secret service agents, the workers, Gica bá the football coach, the teachers (Iron Fist), the grandfather, the people standing in the queue – the whole sick society. Everybody who possesses some kind of power (Nagyprodán, when he is appointed brigade leader) becomes aggressive and everybody who is bigger, stronger (even Djata pokes the clothes-hanger boy who is weaker, shorter, more miserable than himself, and he would throw the cigarette onto the teacher’s face if he could). It might seem funny that a teenager goes to school with a wrench in his pocket (intended to fight with, but could be useful also for screwing), if this aggression was not so extremely serious, followed in most cases by fighting, a real war: the neighboring flock of kids who appropriate the ball and challenge them to win it back the way we know from stories about Indians. The “game” presented in an eight-page long single sentence degenerates into a brutal, bloody war. The edge-games, the teenager school-stories, the apparently irresponsible deeds, drolleries unobservedly transform into a cruel fight, the kids do not refrain even from self aggression: they want to get sick if they are trying to get away from responsibility, and starting with the basic methods known by every pupil (eating chalk, thermometer manipulation), they also experiment with inducing pneumonia, and the action ends with premeditated fracture of the ankle (they considered working in the mines of Petrozsény as a previous option as a shelter). As “legitimated players of the Vörös Kalapács youth team” they have to fight with determination, until death, otherwise Gica bá, the heavy-handed rough football coach, will tear them to pieces.

Quoting the novel of Imre Kertész, *Sorstalanság* [*Fateless*], being exposed to masterfulness, to power, everyone’s dependency of these is *natural*: it is part of the social *order*, of the system set in (programmed to) survival. *Voluntary* social labor is natural, the sabotage of the public work is a sin (after the channel diggers put the children to work for free they even wrote their names on a list so that they come back after Sunday’s lunch), it is natural that the secret service agent empties the

cupboard, the maths-teacher beats and tortures the pupils. It is also natural that we do not speak about certain things because someone, anyone—also referring to the text-construction procedure of the Bodor-prose—can denounce us. Even the teenager knows, possesses the strategies of life-conduct of the survival society, he lies, he does not say anything (for fear of being reported by the others, and depriving himself of an act of heroism, he cannot speak about what happened in the cinema when, after “taking away the light” and screaming from the schoolmates, they entered a secret projection room where they watched sex-film sequences). All of these reflect the premature juvenile sense of responsibility, fear:

Usually Mom discusses everything with me, telling me many times what happens and why it happens that way, explaining the way things are, and on those occasions she usually answered my questions, if not I knew it was because she thought that it is better not to talk about that, because what I do not know I cannot even accidentally share with the others. I totally agreed with her because I knew there are things which are dangerous even to talk about like . . . why are the secretary general of the party and the commandant of the armed forces treasonous animals or who did they haul away from our acquaintances. (176)

Mixing and uniting conscious regulations and subconscious feelings, the child has no problem lying (the commandant of the armed forces brings superstitious luck), but his instinctive ethic-sense conflicts with cheating (he is allright with participating in The Defence of the Homeland contest instead of his colleague, but despite the threatenings of Iron Fist he shoots the perfect score, even though the result was institutionally altered in the favor of School no. 3). Lies, cheating, defencelessness, fear become natural, usual, elemental. Everybody lies to a certain degree, they are all addicted to the system, the micro-stories of life-lies and the macro-stories of system-lies equally determine the text-space. Everything is interwoven with some kind of Balcanic-playfulness, almost with cheerfulness: the stake of survival is conceived as a life-goal, the evasion of the system possibly using its own rules, which sometimes can joyfully get you killed. Since there are not well defined regulations, everyone has to guess for themselves, how to sidestep, avoid the rules mostly by cheating and lying. In this process everyone gets dirty, sort of becomes part of the system which—as we have seen also at Bodor—cannot be divided unambiguously into victims and dastards.

This is why Djata’s victory in chess becomes a torso as he grabs the white king figure in his pocket. A torso, just like the sculptures in the garden of his alcoholic grandfather. The grandfather, former party-secretary, lives in a mansion expropriated from a sculptor. A parallel can be traced between the statues left in torso (which remained in the garden) and the world visualized in the text. The

language-sculptures left in torso are deconstructed and melted in the text. This procedure is achieved in a playful manner, this is not a game without a stake, like the statue-imitation game played with his friend Szabi either: playing the Forradalom Fáklyavivője (Revolution Torch Carrier) game on the pedestal of the stolen statue; who can resist longer throwing stones or “standing column-saint” during math-class as a punishment: standing on the top of the garbage-can turned upside down, on one leg, with the arms above the head waiting for salvation, that is, the end of class. All of these in the hope of survival, because this world visualized in the text can only be lived *through*.

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“ . . . it’s only adornment, a right to live, a hope”
An Outline to Endre Ady’s Image of Romanians

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Abstract. The present study highlights and defines some of the characteristic features of one of the greatest Hungarian lyric poets, also remarkable short story writer and journalist, Endre Ady’s (1877-1919) general idea of Romanians, on the basis of his specific writings poising between literature and journalism, using the comparative method to find the coherence between past and present. The analysis follows those conceptional, stylistic trends and options, whereby the poet is reacting to notions such as nationalism, tolerance and intolerance, the inferiority complex of a smaller culture, the collective sense and the soul in the light of the day to day social and political events, the mechanism of prejudice against ethnic groups, the impacts of the mid-life crisis, and the role of culture in the relation between mentality guided by rationalism or by faith. During the contextual analysis, Endre Ady’s attitude as litterateur is highlighted, as a genuine and contemporary model in his ability to find the equilibrium in his writings between the ambivalent duality of his intellectual constitution and social-political views. This ability could be a key element, effective approach to a modern European community.

Keywords: Endre Ady, image, Romanians, tolerance, prejudice, literature, journalism

Written sources relate differently and with aspects about the characteristics of different historical ages and public stage. Works belonging to the science of history have their own means to provide resumes about processes that determine the existence of human communities, usually based upon already fixed data and facts, more or less crystallized, interpreted in a wider perspective. This is done so by literature and journalism (particularly in reporting) although not from a

historiographical point of view and not with such means. Writings from these two latter areas contribute a great deal to the overall view of monitoring the history of mentalities. So it is easily understandable why sketches situated at the verge of literature and journalism have always played a significant role in the analytical portrayal of social and political processes.

In the following, I will offer some flashes regarding Endre Ady's¹ image of Romanians as reflected in those writings of the poet that are closely related to or can be lined in into the concept of the sketch. Some conclusions are projected into present-day life.

Equilibrium-creating analysis

The written source from which and upon which I have worked, is the anthology *Those who sleep and wake up*, subtitled *Hungarian Writers' Short Stories about Romanians*,² which gives us a thorough cross-section view of Endre Ady's writings on this issue.

The book comprises 44 writings, of which 18 are of Endre Ady's. Despite his high attendance ratio in the book, perhaps surprisingly it's applicable statement—if we take the subtitle of this collection as basic criteria for selection—that Ady is the one who harmonizes this selection by remaining a little bit outside of the main theme, while he presents the balance factor with the overall of his writings there enlisted.

As concerning the general image of this anthology, the selected writings are based upon different authorly and human behaviors and fundamental positions that can be categorized. From this respect, Zsolt Láng summarized very expressively regarding the main guidelines of the volume when writing in his book review that “Romanians don't have to be loved, this idea has come into public knowledge somewhere around the beginning of the 20th century, probably because of the Treaty of Trianon . . . This idea bore no such significance and complexity earlier that time. But simultaneously with this there stings the other possibility too: Romanians shall be loved! One fact is clear: it was always easier to hate, to

¹ Ady, Endre (1877–1919): one of the greatest Hungarian lyric poets, also remarkable short story writer and journalist. His works have a major influence on Hungarian and European literature. Best-known books of poetry by this author: *Új versek* [*New Poems*], *Vér és arany* [*Blood and Gold*], *Illés szekerén* [*On Elijah's Chariot*], *Szeretném, ha szeretnének* [*I'd Love to Be Loved*], *Minden-Titkok versei* [*Poems of All Mysteries*], *Ki látott engem?* [*Who Has Seen Me?*], *A halottak élén* [*Leading the Dead*], *Az utolsó hajók* [*The Last Boats*].

² Körössi P., József (ed.). *Akik alusznak és akik fölébrednek. Magyar írók novellái a román emberről.* [*Those Who Are Sleeping and Those Who Awaken. Hungarian Authors' Short Stories about Romanians.*]

execrate and to repel, than to love.” (Láng 8).

This determinative ambiguity can also be found in the writings of Endre Ady, never as a statement, but as a proportionate and sustainable interposition. The author gives such an insightful description of his era's social and political phenomena, that the contemporary reader involuntarily reads the writings into his own age.

The selected writings of Ady can be categorized as journalism with literary pretence. Among them we find open letters (*Hungarian and Romanian / Letter to Octavian Goga*), notes (*Romanians' Rodostó, Romania*), pen sketches (*The One Who Sat for Iancu*), sketch stories (*One Hundred of Hiding Families, One Priest and One Ecclesiastical Unit*), and some short analyses that can be taken as short essays (*Octavian Goga's Charges*). They can be categorized according to their conceptions, themes and writing modes as well. Some of them react to some eloquent actions or human tokens in a very striking mode, in the style of daily periodicals, while other articles are lyrical short proses containing stories and a definite shred of psychological analysis. Meanwhile the author uses here and there a sentimental, yet withheld tone of voice, and in his almost every article we can find the voice of healthy irony and self-irony. We can also notice the trespassing of some of his symbolical and allegorical elements of his poems into his comments. He also handles with an excellent sense the indirect quotations of his time's stereotypical and ironical phrases.

Highlighting historical and social relations

Ady's writings in this anthology present an authentic and perceptive radiography of the social relations that formed throughout history and are peculiar to the author's specific themes. Endre Ady examines the mentioned domain's certain main and—one can tell—permanent components with a watchful care, among which we can mention:

- a) a radiography of the collective consciousness and collective soul, especially through analyzing everyday life's suggestive momenta (The Csögi-land—similar to the main character Ion from the eponymous novel of the Romanian writer Liviu Rebreanu—; The Ghost of Szelezsán Rákhel, The Death of Madam Veturia);
- b) ignorance and its connected identity crisis, authoritarianism, respectively the relationship between the rough, barbaric living conditions and the civilizing efforts (*The changing of Wiesner Rudolf* seems to be the associate-written prose of the poem On the Hungarian Waste Land by the same author);
- c) ethnic prejudices and marriage (The Resurrection of Girl-hood), the “rivalry” between fervent spiritual life and rational pragmatism (Spring

liturgy, The Horse-trade of Dumbrava, Mrs. Puskas's Christ—in all of these writings appears a more archaic, magical and hidden side of spiritual life, and the texts are mediating these through a kind of transcendental sense of reality);

- d) mapping the prime movers of the renegade's soul (Romania);
- e) the relationship between men of politics and men of culture: through those who are doing both politics and art we may read about the art of the irregular logicity of politics (or of the “virtuosity” connected to politics) in Ady's *The Disbanded Republic* (1905): “Great falls may come in close time, and blissful are the nations that can act as smart eager beavers” (“Élet” 157);
- f) the complex of the “small culture” (Octavian Goga's *Charges*) and its compensating fix ideas, as a psychological equalizer (irrational bidding, proudness/disdainfulness, enviousness, discernment based on an emotional base, etc.)—*The One Who Sat for Iancu*.

Ady's writings that concern this theme prove that the author thinks of Central-Eastern Europe as a kind of melting pot, where the historical interplay and the momenta of daily actuality closely combine—this is why cutting their ambiguity is sometimes a risky operation.

Of all the anthology's Ady-writings exemplary is from this point of view the radiography of the unquestionably counterproductive phenomenon of the *Barking patriots* published in 1902, which exemplifies that the noisy, but in the same time (perhaps because of this) shadowing patriotism trips the balanced, reserved and rational judgement. “We are a nation with strong affinity to Romanticism”, states the author (see Kőrössi 218), and this Romanticism in his idea appears as a notion of general infantilism: what we strongly believe in, will turn out to be our weakest point in time of crisis and ambush.

In his sketches with literary claim Ady often uses the countryside as scenery—not to oppose town and village, but to have the opportunity to analyze in simple and clear-out forms such phenomena that show up in a wider social scale as well.

In his articles Ady handles professionally his strong emotions that are reactions to mostly illogical, but manipulatively more effective-efficient strategies, gestures, actions (thus rises the question: can we speak about this theme without emotions?). If the author is more emotional—e.g. in *Hungarian and Romanian—Letter to Octavian Goga* (“Élet” 138-40), his attitude is reflected through sentences that remind us of the polemical literature's feverish style, yet they bear Ady's inner discipline.

The overriding importance of the need for communication

As for an expressive, but at the same time empathic example for Ady Endre's balance and objectiveness in his approach and usage of the theme, we may quote from the author's *Octavian Goga's Charges* article, in which, among other issues, he dissects the organic differences between cultures that raises in time and their impact on collective soul:

Sure enough, this peculiar Hungary a little bit always lived its life together with Europe, through crusades, Protestantism, French Revolution till the bodily, brawny reality of Socialism. It's our luck or our curse: every pulsation of the greatest civilizations not only infiltrated in us, but also constantly pierced us throughout. I'm not saying that it's unimaginable, but for now our intellectual culture is dizzily big and vividly rich for present day Romanians, but most of all it's blinding, thus provocative, too. But our place, the true meaning of geography, was ordered and decided this way, we don't have too much of benefit out of it, it's only adornment, a right to live, a hope. ("Összes prózai művei" 18)

Behind these kinds of statements we find causes originating to a certain point from the author's spiritual temper. In the same time however these constitute an organical own-interpreted opinion-formatting role of the almost naturally entitled mediator between the cultures of East and West, as stated by László Németh: "What [Ady] knows, suspects about Hungarian relations, Hungarian past, is lining up to a certainty carried in his temper. He is the Hungarian, the history happened to him; when he speaks about Hungarians, he simply remembers things" (Németh 447).

How will Ady's rational judgement and sympathetic ability or even his confiding good temper act in circumstances, events that warn about transfiguration of such people of whom he considered his true friends in principle, like Romanian poets and essayists Octavian Goga and in certain aspects Emil Isac? Ady's sketches confirm: the necessity of denomination, of saying out things in most cases designates in his writings a kind of middle course, in order that thoughts should result in valuable deductions. These texts are written by the erring, because reflective, pensive man who is reconsidering again and again his own inner world, who maybe realizes at every turn that nothing is foredoomed for final determination, and irrespective of the options somebody may have, you can communicate with him, as long as he can support his ideas with healthy, traceable and elucidated arguments. In those moments when Ady lets himself in the flow of sometimes intolerant general atmosphere, he tries to legitimate his arguments, in order to be capable of having or continuing a dialogue. In the same time, he shows

between the lines the great communicational gap that is very often traceable amidst ethnic or human interrelations, nowadays maybe even more accentuated than in his time. Probably that's the reason why Ady composes in such a way to let his readers think, ask for answers and decide.

Of course, we cannot make abstraction of Ady's options derived from his personal conceptions and style, from the author's basic political and social position, views. Onto his constitutional variegation comes not only the interpretation of different approaches of liberalism (at least two: the real one and the theatrical one), but also the processing of the effects of socialism which is gaining ground. This kind of ambiguity can be traced in one of the key-elements of his self-awareness and conception: his relation to Transylvania. He sets Transylvania as an example for his contemporaries, this way on the one hand he wanted the region to be a part of Hungary, that would necessitate more strenuous attention from the state, and on the other hand he thought of this traditional, history-honored, realistic and liberal Transylvanian society as a good pattern for the wellfunctioning of multicultural/multi-ethnic society as well. That's why Béla Pomogáts said that Ady is the forerunner of the idea of Transylvanism (15).

Afterword: of the benevolent ambiguity

Endre Ady sympathizes with liberal and socio-democratic ideas, interprets extreme nationalism as an instrument and not as a programmatic target, expresses his thoughts with a slightly radical tone of voice. His lyrical and journalistic mode of thinking and expressing himself are overlapping each other, as András Veres properly suggests (see Kabdebó et al. 45). The reason this might be so is that—be it poetry or journalism with literary pretence (thus sketch as well)—Ady is looking for the genuinely human that is sought, found and then illustrated with great naturalness, almost with an implicit openness. In his quest, belonging to an ethnic group is not authoritative, he pays equal attention to Hungarian-Romanian relationships, to Jew and Gipsy matters and themes as well. We can also find in his articles and sketches the idea that the backstage movements of politics that oppose to everyday life's existential interests (altogether with the snakes and ladders and material decay following it), affect everybody in the same way, merging all ethnical groups in a perverse manner into living their trivial reality. Meanwhile the answer for this problem could be culture (including communication and upheaval as well), literacy and civilizing, and also that personal interests should approach, because without this approach there is no true community, nor real nation. It is not the irony of fate that Ady could observe this from Paris at a certain point.

As we all know, Ady is critical as well towards himself as towards his nation-fellows, while—in legitimate, reasonably sustainable cases and situations—he stands up for both Hungarians and Romanians. In a way he revises himself

permanently, his image of Romanians comes off as if he would deliberately, patiently and carefully watch the reflection in a mirror of the tiny traces left by time on their face, on their image. But Ady goes even further: sometimes, if necessary, he is able to compromise with the image shown by the mirror.

(English translation: Tímea-Ildikó Kosztándi)

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New Mannerism? Mystery and Cultural Memory in Four Postmodern Novels

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Abstract. From a literary viewpoint, peculiar characteristics of Mannerism are intricate plots, refined style, fine rhetoric, particular metaphors, surprising parallelisms and the taste for decorative elements. It seems that in four novels written at the end of the 20th century we can find the same characteristic features.

Other common elements present in all four books (*The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco, *The Emerald Game* by Ioan Petru Culianu, *Dictionary of the Khazars. A lexicon novel* by Milorad Pavić and *Hollóidő [Raven's Times]* by István Szilágyi) are the tremendous erudition and knowledge used by the authors to evoke and describe past periods, and the appropriate linguistic tools, with the help of which the authors can place the readers in past consciousness and eras. The evoked time slices are also common: the Middle Ages and the period of Mannerism faced with the present, which is related to the former ones. The moral, according to which all aspirations of reconstructing the past are mere illusions, is also common. And still: the moment of key importance in all novels is the aspiration to record all memories in writing.

Keywords: Mannerism, postmodern works, mystery, cultural memory, erudition

It is the common experience of people at the end of the millennium that the world has become confused, self-evident structures have disappeared (digital technical structures have replaced machineries characteristic of modern era), information obtaining is mosaic-like. It is also basic experience that external forces

are manipulating in an invisible way (we cannot back out of the influence of the media). We can never be sure whether the facts related to us have a real and strong basis; the real world, as the trap of communication society, is slowly becoming one of the virtual worlds: we have got into a labyrinth of information. In this anarchic freedom we often feel the lack of Order, which used to sort things out. Art is also intricate and many-sided, and resists the receiver's deciphering efforts. As if we were living in the era of Mannerism again.

Mannerism is an artistic trend, which first appeared in Florence in the middle of the 16th century signaling the crisis of the blissful balance of the Renaissance, first in painting and sculpture, later in architecture and literature. The wars in Italy, the shift of economic and commercial center from the Mediterranean to other areas, the Reformation, the new scientific and philosophical revelations, they all led to the fact that the solid ground of the outlook of the Renaissance, which had alloyed religion and humanism, started to shake.

The fortunate historical moment, when reality and the cult of beauty could be reconciled, when man's earthly aims and transcendent aspirations, understood in their platonic meaning, seemed to be compatible, when in the same time the artist could be the sovereign creator of beauty, and the educator the servant of public utility, has faded away. As the basis had split, the artistic practice started to deviate from the ideal norms of the Renaissance. (Klaniczay 28)

The artists, who were profoundly living through the crisis, considered that the particular artistic representation, which suggested equilibrium and classicistic idealization, was not appropriate any longer, that is why distortion and ambiguity became the main characteristics of the subjectivism of Mannerism.

Mannerists attributed less significance to harmonious and balanced composition than the artists of late Renaissance to such an extent that we can easily regard the entire trend as the rejection or modification of the latter one. Mannerism is characterized by a greater freedom of choosing attitudes, perspectives and colors, all classical sense of line and endeavor to harmony and shapeliness were submitted to it. The human being idealized by late Classicism was disjointed, as if mannerist artists had caught characters while moving. They immortalized these characters in some strangely contorted and distorted positions. . . . Contrary to creations belonging to late Renaissance, mannerist paintings have a less heroic moral and sentimental message thus leading to many-folded comprehension. (Little 39)

Mannerism noticed non-aesthetic or even problematic objects and human beings standing at the periphery, and regarded them as having the same value as beautiful and aesthetic ones had. On the one hand the mannerist style assumed over-refined virtuosity; on the other hand it presumed deprivation of the classical perspective of the Renaissance. The mannerist space always chooses extremes and exaggerations instead of rational perspectives. (Characters appear in vertical, distorted position on the canvas.) New genres come into being, which use symbolic ways of representation such as hieroglyphs, which were intended to evoke the esoteric knowledge and the hidden wisdom of ancient Egyptians.

At times a tremendous amount of knowledge takes up a cryptic shape in mannerist works of art. . . . Secret sciences, hermetic doctrines revealing themselves only to the initiated, represented the obvious or hidden symbolic content of many mannerist works of art. These works prove that astronomical theory, cabbalistic doctrines and the science of alchemy had never influenced the artists' imagination to such a great extent. Mannerist paintings, belonging to both lay and religious genres, are extremely rich and many-sided in contents. This is also proved by those contemporary tracts, which analyze the possibilities of deciphering the message of works, and which, besides their primary meaning, give room to at least three deeper ones, thus invest them with allegorical, moral and mystic meaning. (Kelényi 18)

From a literary viewpoint, peculiar characteristics of Mannerism are intricate plots, refined style, fine rhetoric, particular metaphors, surprising parallelisms and the taste for decorative elements. The aesthetics of Cinquecento re-interpreted the Renaissance practice of mimesis. Personal viewpoints, fantasies and intuition became more important than the imitation of nature. The ideal of beauty was gradually replaced by a new norm concentrated in the concept of *grazia*, which means internal beauty, and which prefers deviation from natural proportions and distortion. Admiration is regarded as the aim of any work of art, the rhetorical complexity, the intricacy of the language, the scientific characteristic and emblematic significance of works, they all served this purpose. But all this was available only to the narrow strata of the initiated.

The thinker of the postmodern era does not consider reality as being strongly established from a metaphysical point of view—there are as many kinds of realities as there is consciousness. This leads to the fact that art cannot be univocal. As the stable world image of classical modernism disappears, the hierarchy of values becomes ensnared; the creator loses his faith to declare his existence as having an absolute scope. In the 20th century the law of the universal cause and effect gradually becomes unstable (see Einstein's theory of relativity), therefore it is no

wonder that openness becomes the dominating characteristic in literature. In the spirit of postmodern aesthetics it is allowed to handle all eras and authors, to re-write, paraphrase and mix different styles, ways of representation and techniques. Absolute points of reference were lost. Therefore the author leaves the reader on his own; he does not offer any Ariadne threads so that he could comprehend works. On the other hand, the sharp line between fiction and reality is getting blurred. There is a constant change of the narrative technique and viewpoint, the singular and the plural. Self-reflexivity of literature grows: the transmitting system of signs becomes itself a message. (The reader realizes that the work is about how to write a work and how it should be received.) It might be the increased awareness, which makes tragic, beautiful, majestic elements so rare, and tragicomic or grotesque structures and irony so dominating in postmodern works. The author invites his reader for a common play. Such a play is commenced when the author quotes mistakenly or he refers to non-existing works and authors. The essence of the play is to put the reader in tune with the fact that there is always another more important meaning concealed behind a seemingly important issue, and that all phenomena are many-sided.

As Ihab Hassan pointed out, the main characteristics of postmodern works are uncertainty, ambiguity, fragmentary representation, self-reflexivity, irony, hybridization, polyphony and intertextuality. “As an artistic, philosophical, erotic and social phenomenon, Postmodernism is open towards playful, optative, dividing, dislocated and blurred forms, towards the discourse of fragments, the ideology of fractions, the willingness of dismantling, the calling of silence—it is open towards all mentioned; however it suggests their antithetical reality” (quoted by Cărtărescu 43).

For the naïve reader, Umberto Eco’s work entitled *The Name of the Rose*, published in 1980, is a crime story embedded into a historical framework. The plot of the work is formed by a chain of mysterious events. Eco figured his main character, the old, blind Spanish Jorge, responsible for multiple murders, keeping in his hands all threads of action, after the figure of the famous Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges. The Italian scholar of semiotics, who became writer, owes a lot to Borges, and commemorates him in a postmodern manner characterized by the use of irony: throughout the plot everybody is looking for him. Readers have to be trapped with the help of a simple, exciting story, which, in the meantime, contains deep philosophical doctrines and tremendous cultural substance—this is what Eco had learnt from Borges.

The plot of the novel entitled *The Name of the Rose* relates events happening in 1327 in a Benedictine abbey in North Italy in such a fictitious place, which is

represented as being real, and which could really exist. Adso, a monk from Melk, who will put his memories together in the late years of his life, arrives at the abbey being accompanied by his master William, a Franciscan monk from Baskerville. The text, written according to the conventions of historical novels, is also a memorandum and a Bildungsroman from Adso's viewpoint, as the events evoked by him will influence his entire life in the years coming. The act of building the monastery, the monks' life, the history of the heretic movements (told by his master to the rather interested Adso), the ideological fights within the Church related to Jesus' poverty, the extremely picturesque depiction of the Inquisition, they all strengthen the realism of the world during the Middle Ages. Brother William has come to prepare the meeting of the parties sustaining on one hand the Emperor, on the other hand the Pope, but the abbot entrusts him with the exhilaration of an entire series of murders. The victims of these murders are monks, who used to work in the library and reproduction workshop of the largest monastery in Europe. But the crime story structure of the book is only a superficial stratum. Imitating the interpreters from the Middle Ages, the author completes an explanatory glossary to his work, which he names *Side Notes to the Name of the Rose*. They refer to the game of the labyrinth, which dominates the novel, concluding that "even a naïve reader realizes that he has to deal with such labyrinths, which do not have anything in common with special representation." The labyrinth does not stand only for the scene of the novel (the library was originally meant to be built as a labyrinth, which could be deciphered with great difficulty only), but it also suggests the plot itself, being made up by the acts of searching, lapsing and finding. All this is already present in the introductory part in the intricate structure of the appearing and disappearing manuscripts.

An abstract model of conjecturality is the labyrinth. One is the Greek, the labyrinth of Theseus. This one doesn't allow anyone to get lost in: you go in, arrive at the center, and then from the center you reach the exit. This is why in the center there is the Minotaur; if he were not there the story would have no zest, it would be a mere stroll. Terror is born, if it is born, from the fact that you don't know where you will arrive or what the Minotaur would do. But if you unravel the classical labyrinth, you find a thread in your hand, the thread of Ariadne. The classical labyrinth is the Ariadne's-thread itself.

Then there is the mannerist maze: if you unravel it, you find in your hands a kind of tree, a structure with roots, with many blind alleys. There is only one exit, but you can get it wrong. You need Ariadne's-thread to keep from getting lost. This labyrinth is a model of the trial-and-error process.

And finally there is the net, or, rather, what Deleuze and Guattari call 'rhizome'. The 'rhizome' is so constructed that every path can be connected with every other one. It has no center, no periphery, no exit, because it is potentially infinite. The space of conjecture is a rhizome space. The labyrinth of my library is still a mannerist labyrinth, but the world in which William realizes he is living already has a rhizome structure: that is, it can be structured, but is never structured definitively. (Eco 607)

The characteristics of a crime story can be traced in several different strata: the text operates as an enigma, which needs to be deciphered by the reader; the past is illustrated as a peculiar corpse, which is revived by the interpretation of the novel. The introductory part, the intermediary narrator's text, is built on the vision of authenticity; in fact it is the story of searching for a manuscript and the attempt to reconstruct it. This game inherited from Mannerism, is the favorite artistic procedure of Postmodernism. It represents in a miniature size the purpose of the entire work: to reconstruct and revive something, which has irremediably and irrevocably passed away, with the help of its remained elements. At the end of the story Adso looks back once again at the scene of the great adventure of his youth, and he tries to re-infer the contents of those codices, whose scorched shreds he has found among the ruins. This symbolic deed, just like the title of the novel, is the metaphor of the past. According to Postmodern thinkers, history is ungraspable as an objective factor; there are only several different narrative ways, which are the products of the imagination, just like fictitious novels. Our ideas are related to real events as Adso's shreds of codices are to the former library containing hundreds of volumes.

One of Eco's Postmodern games is the procedure through which he builds fragments belonging to other authors in the text of his own works, without using quotation marks, as if they belonged to himself. Another procedure used by him is the imitation of the literary habit of the Middle Ages regarding the use of quotations: there are plenty of them in his works. But some of these quotations are invented by himself, which he puts into his characters' mouth.

But I believe a historical novel should do this, too: not only identify in the past the causes of what came later, but also trace a process through which those causes began slowly to produce their effects.

If a character of mine, comparing two medieval ideas, produces a third, more modern, idea, he is doing exactly what culture did; and if nobody has ever written what he says, someone, however confusedly, should surely have begun to think it (perhaps without saying it, blocked by countless fears and by shame). (Eco 534)

Thus adepts led by detective fervor have made long lists of these quotations, systematized the so-called authors, and in this way they tried to reconstruct Eco's extremely rich collection of doctrines.

The title of the novel, whose primary aim is to draw the readers' attention, is also related to the link with the past. It is a source of another mystery, as there is no information about any roses in the book. Abelard, the philosopher-poet of medieval Paris, uses the expression *nulla rosa* to explain the fact that language can express things, which have disappeared, as well as things, which have never existed. The last line of the novel refers back to the title, the meaning of the Latin hexameter quoted is: *the former rose is a mere noun, we can grasp nouns only*. Thus this closure refers to the fact that everything that was pulsating with life and painful experience survive in fragments kept by language. In the same time he evokes the big controversy characterizing the scholastics of the Middle Ages, which serves as cultural and historical background; this controversy was carried on between the *nominalists* and *realists* regarding the science of signs. *The Name of the Rose* makes interpretation open as it is the joint of a beautiful, scented flower and an abstract concept, and it precisely evokes the viewpoint suggested by the novel about history.

Among the connotations appears the outstanding literary work of the Middle Ages, *The Romance of the Rose*, the allegorical, didactic love poem. It is an important step in the development of Adso's personality to meet the mystery of love. The fact that he does not know the name of the beloved woman is another ingredient of mystery.

The series of murders, which makes the framework of the novel, is committed because of a certain book. The novel representing the mechanism of the persecution of heretics, the fights for investing dignities, the world of mutinous controversies about faith and religion in a realistic way is also a parable of how ancient culture was saved (and lost) during the Middle Ages. (The book looked for and eventually found just to perish in the huge, apocalyptic fire, is the part of Aristotle's *Poetics* with regard to comedies.) During the search there are several attempts to reconstruct the text through quoting other books. *The Name of the Rose* becomes a model to Eco's later works¹ due to the fact that it suggests in the same time the illusion of certain knowledge and the eternal human aspiration to preserve cultural values. This duality can be traced in British and Serbian historical novels belonging to the halo of Eco's trickery novels, as Péter Milosevits names them in his work entitled *History of the Serbian Literature*, whose authors also conceal tremendous cultural material behind the mask of crime stories.²

¹ For example, in the novel entitled *Queen Loana's Mysterious Fire*, written in 2004, the aim of the investigation is retracing his own earlier identity with the help of books which he read in his childhood.

² Milorad Pavić is Professor of Theory of Literature, Ioan Petru Culianu taught History of Religions.

Milorad Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars. A Lexicon Novel*, published in 1984, also swaggers with the variegation of genres: it contains a saga novel (the history of the Branković), a surrealist, fantastic tale about dream hunters (Hoffman's influence), a history novel about the Empire of the Khazars, and a crime story revealing the secrets of the Hapsburg—Turkish war. An important time slice of the plot is the period of Mannerism. The dictionary form is the most economical variant of information storing, its use leads to open works in literature, whose main aim is to attract the reader actively in its interpretation, as the reader is the one who chooses the order of the headlines while reading.

Just like the success of the novel *The Name of the Rose*, the popularity of the *Dictionary of the Khazars. A Lexicon Novel* is due to the fact that each category of readers can find something adequate to their own interest: crime story, fantasy, sex or national philosophy, historical and cultural data, and exciting novel structures. The theme of the book is a less-known nation, which nevertheless had a real existence (the Khazars) and a real, but blurred historical event, a controversy organized by the Great Khan in the 8th-9th centuries, which was carried out between the representatives of three monotheist religions. The form is traditional: the book is formed of three volumes (the red one represents Christianity, the yellow one stands for Judaism, and the green volume contains Muslim doctrine). The fiction of the lost manuscript, being reconstructed later in the 17th century, is an occurring theme in this book as well (the Christian representative is Saint Cyril, whose biography and other sources refer to the Khazar mission—here we have to deal not with a fictitious, fake document, but with a document, whose existence was real, just like that of Aristotle's volume in Eco's book), as well as the topography of the poisoned book. Daubmannus, who published the *Dictionary of the Khazars* in 1691, impregnated a copy with poison, and, because the Inquisition had burnt all books, only that copy survived, which had been printed with the help of poisonous printer's ink, and which had a golden coat. The control copy, having a silver cover, also survived the fire. This is why Pavić wrote in the introductory part of the book a mysterious, ironic, and in the meantime a curiosity-kindling reassurance: "The author assures the reader that he will not have to die if he reads this book, as did the user of the 1691 edition, when *The Dictionary of the Khazars* still had its first scribe" (1). The publisher himself, Johannes Daubmannus (alias Jakob Tam David ben Jahja) published a text dictated by an Orthodox monk, which he had reconstructed with the help of the Jew Cohen, the Serbian Brancović, the Muslim Masudi and that of the dream hunters on the basis of the lost Jewish, Christian and Muslim sources. The version of these printed papers, whose reconstruction was completed in the 20th century (amended later with relevant information), unavoidably places three periods on top of each other: the legendary early Middle Ages, the period of the Balkan wars full of sufferings and hardships, and the end of the 20th century.

The style of crime stories and the postmodern self-reflexivity is alloyed into an ironic sentence on the verso of the first page of the book: "Here lies the reader who will never open this book. He is here dead forever" (Pavić, np).

The style is variegated: the sophisticated tale-telling manner of the Byzantine chronicles, the Muslim ornate style of the *Tales of One Thousand Nights*, the world of the Old Testament and the medieval Jewish tales, they all stand by each other and reveal similarities in spite of their differences. They are counterpointed by the reconstructed text in the 20th century. The modern editor points out that the three volumes of the dictionary published by Daubmannus introduce three time slices, which were unified by the modern editor.

The work has an open structure as the receiver can change the order of reading: he can read the book backwards or forwards, at random or even following the references offered by the Encyclopedia, but the essence of the novel is revealed only if he reads the entire work. The entries recur in alphabetic order three times, and they partly cover each other. The reader has the choice of liberty: he can read the work by volumes or by reading similar entries one after the other. With each recurrent entry the author makes the reader see the events in a different light, the reader's interpretation can but wander between different variants and can but ask himself about the truth concealed by them.

The revelation treated as real evidence by postmodern story-writing becomes obvious from the collation of different versions: each and every reader explains history according to his own viewpoint and interest. (According to the Christian source Princess Ateh managed to convince the Great Khan to follow her, thus becoming a Christian together with his people, according to the Jewish source the same thing happened, only the Khan and his nation became followers of Judaism, and last but not least, the Muslim source evidences the Princess's great role in the process, after which the Khazars became Muslims). The recurrent motifs of the book are *the face, the dream, the mirror*, and they all are considered chain-links of the text-labyrinth.

The ironic sparks of the self-reflexivity so much beloved by Postmodernism can be noticed at every step in Pavić's book. Such sparks are the instructions published in the 20th century, whose aim is to decipher the essence of the labyrinth:

He may, of course, wander off and get lost among the words of this book, as did Masudi, one of the writers of this dictionary, who wandered into others people's dreams, never to find his way back. In that event, the reader has no other choice than to begin in the middle of any given page and forge his own path. Then he may move through the book as through a forest, from one marker to the next, orienting himself by observing the stars, the moon and the cross. (Pavić 13)

The author's voice, who teaches Theory of Literature as well, can be heard sometimes: "Hence, each reader will put together the book for himself, as in a game of dominoes or cards, and, as with a mirror, he will get out of this dictionary as much as he puts into it, for, as is written on one of the pages of this lexicon, you cannot get more out of the truth than you put into it" (Pavić 13). He invites the reader for a game in semiotics, he highlights the idea that only those readers are able to re-create the world who can read the book in the proper order.

As the author of the reconstructed dictionary dating back to the 17th century does not use any criticism of sources, and due to the exquisitely legendary style, the 20th century-editor's apparently precise comments operate as fiction: the reader is completely insecure concerning the information read (which is mere fiction and which is real historical fact?). Both the structure and the evoked reality are labyrinth-like. Another series of mysteries built on the basis of time is outlined by the passage between different historical timelines. To this aspect the multiplication of the identities of heroes is added, this idea being represented by the motif of the "Khazar face." The motif of the face, as the mirror of the soul, occurs here as the emblem of the secrecy and eternal inscrutability of the Khazars' destiny. The motif of the Khazar face occurs in the murders committed in the 20th century, whose description is placed at the end of the book, and whose reason is the purchase of the Khazar documents. The murders are the reincarnated representatives of the three afterlives, which prevent Adam Ruháni, the original entity manifested in *the Khazar Dictionary*, from reincarnation due to the aligned search of the representatives of the three monotheist religions, thus they want to maintain the state of postmodern fragmentariness. Completion and perfection are both transcendent and mythical in the same time, but they are available in a linguistic form only through the Khazar dictionary. This postmodern philosophy of language questions whether there is reality apart from language. It also refers to the fact that we can apprehend reality only with the help of the language.

The revival of mythical characters partially covers but also rouses the reader's suspicion regarding the author of the *Dictionary of the Khazars* as the Arab and Christian specialists dealing with this problem are murdered in Istanbul, and Dorota Schultz of Jewish origin is imprisoned on the ground of false accusations. Who managed to acquire the manuscripts left in the hotel and the only copy of Daubmannus's publication, which had not been poisoned? It goes without saying that the serial killer acquired them. (If the editor is Madame Schultz's other identity from Krakow, the interpretation leads back to the labyrinth of identities).

As well as with Eco, the idea of the library appearing as a labyrinth appears in Pavić's book. The editor of the *Khazar Dictionary* (the copy published by Daubmannus), Father Nikoljei Teoktiszts admits in his last manuscript that he had bought all kinds of Arabian, Hebrew and Greek manuscripts for Squire Avram at the markets and cellars in Vienna. He also pointed that these manuscripts were

placed in the same order as the ones belonging to the Brancović. Dr. Isajlo Suk, professor of the University of Novi Sad, is also lost in the double labyrinth (building=book). “He thought of how this building was like a book written in an unknown language he had not yet learned, how these corridors were like the sentences of a strange language, and the rooms foreign words he had never heard before” (Pavić 107).

No matter how fabulously surrealistic the events are, a certain coercion of reference is needed by the reader. Experiencing central European dictatorships, the reader nods when he reads about a student’s right to examine his own professor, scholar and archaeologist at the University of Novi Sad, his work is banned for no reason; he is slapped on the street by unknown people.

Ioan Petru Culianu’s novel *The Emerald Game*, written in 1987, also alloying the structure of historic novels and that of detective stories, is halfway between the intellectualism of *The Name of the Rose* and the Dan Brown-like sensation-chasing mystery. The appearance of authenticity is provided by the memoir-like characteristic of the text just like in *The Name of the Rose*. Just like Eco and Pavić, the Romanian professor has his editor publish the translation of a found and then lost manuscript dating back to the 16th century. The motif of the object trouvé has an outstanding role in Avant-garde literature. (We speak about Postmodernism at the point when its striking innovations have become common patterns). In this case we speak about an immigrant intellectual who fled to Italy in 1972 because of the Romanian dictatorship. He finds a codex in his luggage, which got lost at the airport in Rome, and which might have probably been stolen from one of the Transylvanian libraries. He starts translating the text written in Latin, but at some point the manuscript is stolen from his hotel room by unknown smugglers. Thus the first series of mystery, which is not solved throughout the novel, is given: who, where from and why has smuggled the manuscript? Just like in Pavić’s novel, the mysteries of the plot remain unrevealed, and this time this aspect is due to the fact that the translator loses the manuscript before he succeeds in completing his assignment. The translation is a distorted act: the multilayered linguistic filter blurs the meaning of the text: the Latin used by English Humanists is grafted into 20th century English by the Romanian immigrant while being in an Italian hotel. Unlike the Serbian novel, in Culianu’s work the direct relationship between the Latin memoir dating back to the 16th century and the 20th century stops at this point, nevertheless—just like in István Szilágyi’s novel entitled *Hollóidő* [*Raven’s Times*]¹—the conformance between the evoked past and the present circumstances is obvious. The experience lived in Florence in the 16th century can be easily identified by the modern reader, who is constantly under the influence of a certain coercion of reference: the power structure manipulating from the background in fake democracies, the failure of the interpretation of phenomena subject to theories

of conspiracy, the defenselessness of the intellectual, they all are characteristics which ask for referential reading.³

The genre of the memoir creates the appearance of authenticity, in the meantime, due to the fragmentary structure—the novel becomes an open work. This method makes the reader have an active role, it is him who has to decipher the possible solution just like Thomas, the main character, who unwillingly gets involved with the events; thus the witness eventually becomes a detective, the nominated victim becomes a murderer (and this is a postmodern flick).⁴

Another flick addressed to the reader's expectancies, conversant to Renaissance culture to some extent—in the spirit of the traditional postmodern manner—is the fact that in the background of the premeditated murders there is Pico Della Mirandola, who lectures about *Human Dignity*.

The motif well-known from Eco's novel is that of searching and getting lost; detective and his assistant (this time the detective is Doctor D'Altavilla, and his assistant is Thomas, who later becomes memoir writer); the labyrinth (the streets of Florence) or, more abstractly, the mystery of the series of murders. (One of the favorite motifs of Mannerism is the labyrinth.) Just like in Eco's novel, the murders evoked from the past take place within a week one after the other. The horror of *The Name of the Rose* seems to be grouped around the images of the *Apocalypse*; with Culianu they are mysteriously related to constellations and Botticelli's famous painting, the *Primavera*. The victims are members of the Neo-Platonic Academy, who all are closely associated with the painting. With the help of astrology, alchemy and magic they are all trying to decipher the correspondences encoded in it. The novel represents the decline of Florence during the Renaissance, the progress of Mannerism, when, sequel to the loss of power of the Medicis, under Savanarola's influence souls become dominated by the desire of damnation. Bright palaces, astrological and alchemical laboratories, manufacturers' workshops in the outskirts of the town, monasteries and the districts of the poor in the outskirts—they all stand for the 16th century authenticity alloyed with the crime story written with great mastery.

The title is also mysterious: in the same time it refers to the jewels of the victim, the blaze of the town still preserving the glamour of the Renaissance, the name of the third victim (Smeralda Vespucci), the heat lighting of the mystery. There probably are other meanings as well, which are relevant and revealed only to

³ The images of the relatively few brutal events, such as that of the victims (former accomplices) hung on the butcher's hook, or that of the last victims drowned in seething tin, have their own 20th century correspondent: the same modus operandi was applied by legionnaires in Bucharest when executing Jews. An efficient method of getting rid of corpse was immuring them in concrete.

⁴ Under the influence of the coercion of reference the reader recalls that the murderers of Ioan Petru Culianu, Professor of History of Religions at the University of Chicago, have not been found ever since then.

readers initiated in occultism. The stake of the murders might be the preservation of Renaissance culture and that of Florence's economic and political primary role.

István Szilágyi's novel entitled *Hollóidő* [*Raven's Times*], published in 2001, is also close to the conception of the classical historical novel. Nevertheless, his predecessor depicts more tradition with regard to both the postmodern approach and way of creation. In his study about the novel, András Görömbei highlights the synthetic characteristic of István Szilágyi's novel: he points out that the novel uses the characteristics of chronicles, historical novels, didactic novels, adventure stories, crime stories, sagas, myths, stories from the Bible, psychological and philosophical essays in a masterful manner. Helping and completing one another, these types of novels create a sovereign form, which is elevated to a higher scope. The diversity of the language is attained through the presence of psalms, biblical sermons, epics, there are letters, documents having a moralizing purpose, which remind the readers of Zrínyi's *Vitéz Hadnagy* [*The Valiant Lieutenant*], and the image of the cake and ale served in encampments is also evoked. One of the leading religious genres in the 16th and 17th centuries, the religious dispute, is also present in the book.

The novel entitled *Hollóidő* [*Raven's Times*] is interwoven with a rich web of literary motifs: the raven, the book, the bread, skulls, the fire, the church, migration, escape, birth, decline and death, building and demolition (for example the church and its ruins, the wall built of mugs made of bone and pyramids built of skulls etc.), from among which the motifs of searching, deception and finding excel. Motifs are gradually becoming more and more, but a certain mystery remains around them. The motif of secret is of prime importance in this book as well. Its presence is defined as being a postmodern characteristic by András Görömbei. In his *Studies about István Szilágyi* he points out that the poetic form used in the novel comes into being by the alloy of modern and postmodern world experience. On one hand it is a determined, decisive aspiration of seeing the world as a unit and of understanding and modeling destiny, on the other hand it is a continuous perception of the fact that the logic of events is erratic. It is often cleared up that several things, which are considered to be what they seem to be, mean something totally different. This hesitation can be understood also from the determining role of historical situation, which is outlined by space and time. He highlights that those who live in subjection, thus in defenselessness, can never be sure of anything. Everybody struggles against oppressors and parryies in his/her own way. Everyone has his/her own mentality and character, therefore what seems to be consistency from a certain viewpoint, is totally absurd from another one. In this way the historic time and situation join the postmodern experience of life, the total insecurity.

The open ending of the novel, the fact that both parts end with sharp caesurae, leaving so many questions asked by the reader unanswered, can be comprehended

as a part of postmodern practice, which means rupture with traditional narratives. In the meantime it corresponds to the motif of secret, which runs all through the novel as the metaphor of the fact that past cannot be deciphered, and which has the same role as Eco's rose.

In the first part the third person narrator is close to Tentás's viewpoint, in the second part the first person narrator is one of the fellows from Revek who have joined the army. Due to the limited knowledge of the narrator many points of the plot remain blurred, as they are external to the narrator's perspective: this is also the source of the mysteries. (Where does the student come from, what's Fortuna's past like, what consequences will the bailiffs' slaughter have, Fortuna's travels and death, Tentás's disappearance, his final stepping out of the story, etc.).

As far as the narrator of the second part is concerned, total insecurity prevails. (It can be established only with the help of lengthy investigation that the narrator using first person plural is Máté Darholc, one of the boys who ran away from Revek.) The scenes of the plot are continuously flapping from fiction and reality; they constantly incite the reader to try to identify them. This effect is completed by the presence of real and imaginary people, real and imaginary places, projection of different time slices on top of each other. The closeness between Tentás and the author is marked by the fact that the title of the first part ("Lovat és papot egy krónikáért" ["A Horse and a Priest for a Chronicle"]) evokes the anecdote of the student's liberating action, that of the second part ("Csontkorsók" ["Mugs of Bone"]) evokes the motif of one of his recurrent dreams. What can be expected to happen from the viewpoint of the reader of the first book (for example the father and son relationship between Tentás and Fortuna or the schoolmaster's Transylvanian relationships) does not exist from Máté's perspective or it remains a mystery. As well as in Eco and Pavić's novels, it is questionable whose saying and text can be heard.

The title of Szilágyi's novel, just like those of Culianu's and Pavić's, is metaphorical, but in the meantime it is easily decipherable as the recurrent symbol of the novel is the image of birds feeding themselves with corpses, a striking representation of the horror occurring in history.

The plot of the first part of the novel, paraphrasing Shakespeare, evolves around the *Chronicle of Nuremberg*. It might have been the reason for which Pastor Terebi was kidnapped from among his followers by the emir, whose liberation stands in the center of the first book. It is the reason for which indirectly all inhabitants of Revek are murdered. Thus the book is double-faced: it represents a culture-preserving and in the meantime a destroying principle. This duality is represented by the motif of the poisoned book in the other two novels. The ironic reference to the role of culture is achieved through the presentation of the main character's ability to fulfill his nightmare, that is to precisely count how many skulls he needs to build a pyramid, and this ability is the product of the

Renaissance-type teaching of mathematics. The head of the master, who passes the knowledge and who in the meantime is the life-giving father, is placed on the top of the pyramid.

The common space in Pavić's and Szilágyi's novels is the mannerist world of the battles between the Turkish Empire and the Hapsburgs. The image of footing at the end of the millennium in Central and East Europe resembles the evoked mannerist world to a great extent. Another common element is the presence of the macabre as if it were the revival of the interest of Mannerism in all that is distorted. The title of Szilágyi's novel refers to the scavengers of the Apocalypse whereas the second part (*Mugs of Bone*) refers to the student's nightmares. Reality and dream are often interwoven in the novel, nightmares often end up in the realm of reality. Eco's Adso dreams about the grotesque world of *Coena Cypriani*. The drift in Pavić's novel also points towards fantasy and unrealism: those who try to reconstruct the material of the *Dictionary of the Khazars* dream about each other's lives, destinies and deaths. Culianu's hero takes a journey to the afterlife just like Dante's hero made his own while, following a baffled attempt of murder, he might possibly be in coma. In Szilágyi's novel nightmares, fantasies and the irrational become reality. "All of a sudden there it was, in the depth of the church near the sanctuary, where, overwhelmed with horror, we could see a huge pile of skulls one on top of the others. The man is ardently adjusting and ordering them in lines... along this long, labyrinth-like alley-way" (Szilágyi 393).

The identity of the characters is less intricate than that of Pavić's characters, but they are also subject to the motif of secret. (This stands for Fortuna Illés in the first place who is thought to be a schoolmaster by the boys from Revek. As a matter of fact he is a secret agent from the 17th century, a mythical forefather: "the father and also the grandfather of almost everyone") (Szilágyi 331).

The characters of Szilágyi's novel also reincarnate. There are several references that they can be interchanged. Tentás has heard that he is very much alike Fortuna Illés who might well be his father, the flustered old priest believes Andriska to be the child Tentás, and the student to be his own young father, Fortuna. The two infants from Revek, abducted by the schoolmaster (possibly Fortuna's later son and grandson), would search for the mystery of their origins just like Tentás did throughout the novel.

While Pavić's entire work is a labyrinth, Eco, Culianu and Szilágyi use it as a thematic motif: in the novel entitled *Hollóidő* [*Raven's Times*] the ruined church appears to be the labyrinth, where Tentás disappears from the group of the boys from Revek. The way leaving from Revek to the uncertain is understood as a labyrinth by the boys from Revek and such is the fortress of Bajnaköves.

All books represent the world as being undecipherable, but to a different extent. Eco, Culianu and Szilágyi have some doubts but they still believe in the organizing power of the intellect and the opportunity given by rational acts. Adso

accepts his master's reasoning about the possibility of solving the mystery, Thomas risks his life to reach the final apprehension of things, during their education the orphans from Revek become brave soldiers who can find their way in the surrounding confusing world and are ready to protect their country.

Other common elements present in all books are the tremendous erudition and knowledge used by the authors to evoke and describe past periods, and the appropriate linguistic tools, with the help of which the authors can place the readers in past consciousness and eras. The evoked time slices are also common: the Middle Ages and the period of Mannerism in relation to the present. The moral, according to which all aspirations of reconstructing the past are mere illusions, is also common. And still: the moment of key importance in all novels is the aspiration to record all memories in writing. The reconstructed Khazar dictionary becomes the completion of the world. Through his continuous reading, copying, elucidating searching, Tentás also manages to "create a world." For Adso it is of vital importance to keep the memories of his youth, and he who wants to reconstruct the lost medieval text can find his peace only when he publishes the reconstructed text.

Because of their nature, the reconstructed texts contain a lot of gaps, which have to be completed by readers in order to solve recurrent mysteries.

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Adaptation Strategies in József Pacskovszky's *The Wonderful Journey of Kornél Esti*

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Abstract. The present paper aims at a parallel analysis of the narrative specificities of Dezső Kosztolányi's *Kornél Esti* and its film adaptation directed by József Pacskovszky, *The Wonderful Journey of Kornél Esti* [*Esti Kornél csodálatos utazása*, 1994]. The short story cycle *Kornél Esti* drifts apart from the classical narrative tradition, and through its metapoetical figures and the complexity of its genre combining narration with treatise and essay it can be related to late modern literary discourses. Its adaptation under discussion can be regarded as a representative example of (self-)reflexivity in film, which initiates a medial-intermedial dialogue both with literary and film tradition.

Keywords: metanarrative, reflexive adaptation, silent cinema, mise-en-abyme, heterotopia

Kosztolányi's oeuvre is a recurrent challenge of Hungarian film history, and within, that of Hungarian adaptation. The present paper aims at an analytical rather than historical approach, focusing mainly on the narrative aspects of a particular adaptation, however, we cannot ignore the fact that the character of adaptations is considerably determined by the context of (film) history as well. In his survey of the history of Hungarian adaptation, Gábor Gelencsér (2006) considers that prior to the postmodern literary achievements of the 1980s, adaptation is the dominant figure of Hungarian film history.

The first adaptation of Kosztolányi, *Anna* (*Édes Anna*, 1958) was directed by Zoltán Fábry in the period after the revolution of 1956. From a film historical point of view, this film is the product of the period paving the way for modernism (1954–1962)¹. In these years the relationship between film and literature becomes closer, the classical adaptation is in its prime. As an expression of the spirit of the age, Fábry's expressionist, visionary approach reinforces the events constituting the historical background of the novel, turning the film into a means of expressing overtones only mildly suggested by Kosztolányi's novel.

In the 1960s, in the period of the Hungarian new wave cinema (1963-1969), the history of adapting Kosztolányi's works to the screen continues with two films directed by László Ranódy: *Skylark* [*Pacsirta*, 1963] and *Golden Dragon* [*Aranysárkány*, 1966]. Ranódy's adaptations do not belong to the films that bear the traces of the changes in attitude and in form of expression of the period. Gábor Gelencsér considers it surprising that in the age of the auteur cinema, in which the relationship between literature and film is redefined in several respects, there are only two adaptations which join the new wave endeavours, namely, *Twenty Hours* [*Húsz óra*, 1965] directed by Zoltán Fábri and *Cold Days* [*Hideg napok*, 1966] directed by András Kovács. The monochrome and color adaptations of Kosztolányi's two novels, the *Skylark* [*Pacsirta*] and the *Golden Dragon* [*Aranysárkány*], which continue the nineteenth century narrative traditions further towards the depths of psychological prose, represent versions of the classical adaptation pattern, due to the elaboration of plot in accordance with the text and due to the acting aiming at psychological genuineness. The value of the film *Skylark* lies in the eminent acting, as well as in the coded messages addressed to the viewer of the time, eager to notice hidden meanings and contents. The main character is acted by Anna Nagy, her parents are acted by Klári Tolnay and Antal Páger, emblematic actors of Hungarian film art; Ranódy's film mainly focuses on the psychological drama of the parents. The merit of the *Golden Dragon* is indisputably the performance of László Mensáros, acting professor Novák.

In the 1980s—from a film historical point of view, the eighties represent a transitional period (1979-1986)—Ranódy returns to Kosztolányi's oeuvre; his episodic film entitled *I Dream of Colorful Inks* [*Színes tintákról álmodom*, 1980] combines three short stories—*The Key* [*Kulcs*], *Bathing* [*Fürdés*] and *The Chinese Pitcher* [*Kínai kancsó*—with an amateur film shot with the members of the Kosztolányi family; the images taken from their everyday life are paralleled with the stories of Kosztolányi's literary heroes. Ranódy's death also meant the death of the type of adaptation represented by him.

In the period of film history defined as the political and poetical reflection of the change of regime (1987-1995), which does not abound in adaptations, the

¹ I rely on Gábor Gelencsér's periodization of film history (2006).

young director József Pacskovszky, at the beginning of his career, turns again towards the Kosztolányi theme, more precisely, towards a segment of unique aesthetic value of Kosztolányi's life work. The short story cycle of *Kornél Esti* drifts apart from the classical narrative tradition, and through its metapoetical figures and the complexity of its genre combining narration with treatise and essay, it can be related to late modern literary discourses. As a result of the character of the literary source, of the modes of film narrative becoming highly sophisticated by the 1990s, and also of the director's creative vision, *The Wonderful Journey of Kornél Esti* [*Esti Kornél csodálatos utazása*, 1994] can be regarded as a representative example of (self-) reflexivity in film, which initiates a medial-intermedial dialogue both with literary and film tradition.

Most often, adaptations are based on one author's single work. Those based on several texts, connected in accordance with the scriptwriter's conceptions, usually assume an additional task: that of rendering the writer's world view (Cf. Gelencsér 2006). The genre of short story proves to be the most frequent and the most proper starting point in such cases. As far as the concept of the totality of the work of art, the borders of the literary work are concerned, the *Kornél Esti* text(s) maintain a degree of uncertainty. It is hard to decide—and in the spirit of *Kornél Esti* we can even say that the difficulty in making a decision in this respect is coded within the text—,whether the short stories are juxtaposed at random, or they are linked together, constituting an organic unity.

Béla Németh G. draws attention to the fact that Kosztolányi did not start writing the pieces of the *Esti Kornél* as the parts of a previously planned whole. The gesture of revision and connection is subsequent; and, what is relevant from the point of view of the film, besides the separate *Esti* volume, not only in short stories written after, but also in those written prior to it, there appear the questions, motifs and rhetorical specificities characteristic of *Kornél Esti*, what is more, the world of *Kornél Esti* is reflected in some poems as well (117). If we define the "Esti syndrome" of Kosztolányi's works as an attitude to life, as a world view or as a meditative, contemplative, stoic philosophical standpoint, then the above mentioned borders of the text seem to dissolve, which can justify the apparent incompatibility that the title of the film contains the name of Kornél Esti, though the selection of the texts that will constitute the source of Pacskovszky's adaptation is not limited to the *Esti Kornél* corpus.

These texts can be read in an optional order, no logic of causality or temporality can be set up within their relation. Later chapters allude to earlier phases of Kornél Esti's life, there is no chronological order in the construction of the biography, what is more, we cannot even speak of a biography, Kornél Esti is not the hero of a Bildungsroman, not a round character in the sense of the novel tradition, but rather a rhetorical "figure", a *linguistic Doppelgänger*, the double of the speaker projected into the text.

The double, the Doppelgänger appears not only at a thematic, but also at a formal level, as a text structuring principle: based on certain structural correspondences, Mihály Szegedy-Maszák (1987) considers the book entitled *Kornél Esti*, published in 1933 in form of an independent volume, and the short stories forming a cycle from the volume entitled *Tarn* [*Tengerszem*], published in 1936, as each other's *doubles*.

Kornél Esti is undoubtedly the alter ego of the writer, in the sense that the abstract author delegates the task of text production—whether written or spoken—to this figure, whose distinct feature is in this way to serve as a pretext for an imaginary dialogue set up between different narrative positions. The pretext of the double is essential in order to create and to maintain a dialogical situation between Kornél Esti and the unidentified first person narrator (in this case the abstract author), dialogue which bears Platonic and Socratic reminiscences of the genre, and at the same time provides the mirror structure of narration, the permanent switches of roles between the homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators, the alternation of the narratorial point of view. The narratorial situation is not always unambiguous, it may also happen that due to a subsequent intercalation (e.g. “*Kornél Esti said*”—in the last piece of the *Kornél Esti* cycle, in the *Eighteenth Chapter*) the whole narratorial discourse is put in quotation marks, and is thus assigned to Kornél Esti.

The often quoted architextual comment of the opening chapter withdraws the *Esti Kornél*-texts from among the traditionally distinguishable genres, undermines the concept of the story existing prior to narration, the ideal of the novel pattern based on causality, the ideal of biography, instead, it formulates the poetics of possible worlds, it takes over the romantic ideal of fragmentariness, of course, not devoid of self-irony either: “*It is a travel account, in which I relate where I would have liked to travel, a novelized biography in which I also account for how many times the hero died in his dream. I stick to one thing. Do not glue it with some awkward story. Everything should remain what is proper for a poet: a fragment*” (1965. 586, translated by me, J. P.). This self-referential instruction of the text remains valid also for its transposition into motion picture. Pacskovszky's film endeavors to face this challenge.

Most interpreters (Szegedy-Maszák 1987, Bengi 2000, Dobos 2002) unanimously consider the text of *Kornél Esti* as a complex of self-referential, metapoetical figures. Mihály Szegedy-Maszák mentions several aspects of the self-mirroring character of the text(s): the world of *Kornél Esti* is a literary world, in which the undefined narrator and the title figure are both writers, there are many allusions to texts within texts, to the act of reading and writing; *Kornél Esti* abounds in linguistic games. Esti is present in the texts both as a character, a partaker in the events, and as a narrator, reflecting on events he is not part of, assuming a continuously interpreting, evaluating and contemplating attitude.

Kornél Esti, as a narrator, is not always reliable: “Esti’s reliability is disputable, because in *Kornél Esti* the speaker is not the same as the viewer, the subjective speaking situation does not necessarily mean an outer point of view, the objective speaking situation does not necessarily presuppose an inner point of view. The point of view is not a part, but the limit of the narrated world; an eye, through which we see without seeing the eye itself” (135).

The present paper does not aim at fully exploring the narrative specificities of the literary text; our purpose is to examine to what extent the film preserves the metapoetic character of Kosztolányi’s text and renders a similarly, analogously reflexive film narrative.

According to Friedrich Kittler, since the birth of the film on 28 December 1895, the unmistakable criterion of high standard literature has been the impossibility of turning it into a film (314). If we regard adaptation as an act of translation, then Kittler’s statement is consonant with Kosztolányi’s translation theory rooting in his organic view of language: the possibility of translation from one language into another has different stages, and the more developed a language, the less it can be translated (Cf. Szegedy-Maszák 167). What is more, in an essay Kosztolányi even writes, polemically of course: “*It is impossible to translate*” (120, translated by me, J. P.). Analogously, in the sense of this approach, it would be impossible to adapt *Kornél Esti* to the screen.

The two theoretical impossibilities—that of translation from one language into another and transposition from one medium to another—essentially refer to the same act of faithfully reproducing an original. The linguistic games of *Kornél Esti*, the diversity and often ambivalence of narrative tone, modality (Cf. Bengi 10-11), the alternation of the point of view, the lack of a storyline (the reader might suspect, the “story” is the act of narration itself) is indeed incompatible with any intention of transposition aiming at fidelity to the letter of the text.

In another essay Kosztolányi expounds the above quoted “impossibility”:

If we acknowledge literary translation as being justified, then we cannot expect the translator to offer a word by word translation, as faithfulness to the letter is in fact unfaithfulness. The material of every language is different. The sculptor solves his task differently if he has to carve the figure in marble or wood. The materiality imposes a change, and the statue is always made by two: by the sculptor and by the material itself. The work of the literary translator is similar. He has to carve a statue in a totally distinct material. Freedom is necessary for this. One must not translate a poem with the preciseness of an official translator just as one must not translate a play upon words literally. He has to create something new instead, another one, which is identical with the original in spirit, music and form. A fake, which, still, is true. To translate is to dance in chains. (575, translated by me, J. P.)

As it can be seen, Kosztolányi's concept is embedded in the romantic tradition of creative freedom. Fidelity to the letter of the original is in fact infidelity, striving for an identical reproduction fails to transmit the spirit of the source text. Accordingly, there is no point in calling to account the compositional, poetical and rhetorical unity of the literary text, its irrepeatable uniqueness inseparable from its materiality.

In the film under discussion an inherent, not transparent, *literary* universe is formed, with closed frames, out of which there is no "passage" to "reality" in the sense that the film rejects the illusion of reality; instead, by making use of several devices, techniques and procedures, by making reference to film history as well as paradigms of film theory, it creates a reflexive *textual* space.

One way of achieving this is by breaking the continuity of narration. The ruptures of the narrative flow suspend the possibility of relating a story based on causality, on the interaction of characters etc. Apparently, there are two parallel journeys, that of the young Kornél and the adult Esti, two temporal hypostases of the same personality, Kornél travelling towards life (symbolized by the motif of the sea) and Esti travelling towards death (expressed in the metaphorical layer of "the last lecture"). In fact, the film does not put in parallel two separate storylines, two independent journeys, but there are several knots tangling up the narrative threads, there are several intercalations, several moments of passing from one narrative level to the other, which result in a highly stylized, metaphorical, mental chronotope.

The film respects the metafictional character of the literary text and seems to follow the inherent instructions of the short stories, responding to the challenge of genuinely rendering Kornél Esti's mental journey. For example, the following statement, taken from the famous *ars poetica* chapter of the short story cycle, namely, the *Nineth chapter*, can be considered such an instruction, (mis)guiding the reader in the textual universe: "After expounding all this, I remembered that the opposite is also valid, at least to the same extent, as in the case of everything in this world" (670, translated by me, J. P.). This sentence reminds the reader of the fact that in the textual universe under discussion the meanings do not have a referential validity, the freedom of language undermines the authority of meaning, besides, it is difficult to formulate any statement about the text, about the work of art itself, without validating its opposite at the same time.

As follows, I will examine the selection of the literary material to be transposed into film. I have already mentioned that Pacskovszky does not only rely on texts taken from the *Kornél Esti* cycle, he also makes use of other short stories, poems, what is more, the script is completed with elements written in the spirit of Kosztolányi's texts. In fact, three chapters are taken from the *Esti Kornél* cycle, namely, the *Third chapter*, which relates the story of the journey to the sea (summary: "in which, in 1903, immediately after school leaving, in the train at

night, he is kissed on his lips by a girl”), the *Seventh chapter*, (“in which there occurs Kücsük, the Turkish girl, who is like a honey cake ”), as well as the *Fifteenth chapter* (“in which Pataki is worried about his son, while he is worried about his new poem”). I have to mention here that the short summaries of the chapters ironically play upon this convention of adventure novels. The film more or less adjusts to the former two chapters, though there can also be found significant changes: for instance, in the *Third chapter*, at the end of the journey to the sea, the dialogue between Kornél and the mother of the handicapped girl is in fact a virtual conversation, an interior dialogue, the young writer candidate expressing his compassion towards the suffering mother (this compassion towards a fellow human being initiates him into the world of literature), while the film “amplifies” this conversation, the dialogue actually takes place between the characters. Thus the film version becomes a kind of “exteriorization,” “concretization” of the literary text. As concerns the *Fifteenth chapter*, it is transcribed to a greater extent: in the text Pataki is worried about his son’s appendectomy, whereas in the film he is concerned about his wife’s incurable disease, and while the writer is engaged in the problems around writing a poem, Pataki jumps out of the window (the suicide is an additional element as compared to the text). In this way the film alters the interpretation of the message: in the short story art is opposed to life, life and art discredit each other, Kosztolányi ridicules the concept of *impassibilité* of art towards the problems of life, considered of lower rank as compared to the decision of including or leaving out a few lines from the poem. The film reinforces the interpretation that art is *incapable* of solving real life problems. Pacskovszky interprets the “film version” literally: if it is a *version*, then the script really has to bring significant and meaningful changes to the source text.

The script extends beyond the limits of the *Kornél Esti* cycle. From among the short stories written prior to *Kornél Esti*, the script includes *The Woman from Vienna* [*A bécsi asszony*] and *Hrusz Krisztina’s Wonderful Visit* [*Hrusz Krisztina csodálatos látogatása*], and from among those written after it, out of the short stories of the volume entitled *Tarn* [*Tengerszem*], *The Last Lecture* [*Az utolsó fölolvadás*] is included. The film dramatizes two versions of the story *The Woman from Vienna*: a version with Kornél and a version with Esti, the latter being the adaptation of Kosztolányi’s text, the former being a “double” created by the script. In the former version Kornél asks Sárkány to allow him to use his flat in order to meet the woman from Vienna; in the latter version Ábel, a friend asks the same thing from Esti. There is a chiasmic symmetry between the two stories. Similarly, the events taking place at the railway station from Marienhof have two versions reflecting each other. The parallel of the stories of the young Kornél and of the old Esti is highlighted by the juxtaposition of the elements of the story, what is more, the camera movement provides the passage from one level to the other: the camera moves horizontally from one level to the other, there is no cut, the passage is

carried out within one single motion picture. Additionally, one sequence is shot from various camera angles, from various points of view. This technique might remind us of a former literary experiment, which left its imprint on film as well: the French roman nouveau was interested in the variation of the point of view within narration, and Alain Resnais–Alain Robbe-Grillet’s *Last Year in Marienbad* is the best example of this endeavor in film.

There appear several episodes which merely allude to Kosztolányi’s texts, without carrying out a full dramatization, e.g. *The Bulgarian Conductor* [*A bolgár kalauz*] and *Happiness* [*Boldogság*]. The literary texts are present in the film in several ways: quoted by the *voice over* narrator—whether with Esti’s or with Kornél’s voice—included in the characters’ discourse, e.g. quotations from poems: *Kornél Esti’s Song* [*Esti Kornél éneke*], playful crambos, also “performed” both by Esti and by Kornél, or in form of *mise-en-scène* (either restricted to an episode or based on the whole text). The frame story as well as the opening and closing scenes are provided by the text entitled *The Last Lecture* [*Az utolsó fölolvasás*].

In Kosztolányi’s work entitled *The Technique of Writing* traveling becomes the allegory of the writer’s career: “Our journey is dark. There are no traffic lights to warn us. Our railway stations do not have names. We go ahead, blindly and insecurely, and we do not know when, where and why we arrive” (371, translated by me, J. P.). Accordingly, in the film the train journey has an obvious metaphorical meaning, it is a journey leading through memories, visions towards the inner layers of the self.

The relativity of time and space is emphasized in the *Third chapter*: “Did they travel backwards or forwards? Half an hour had passed? Or only half a minute?” (609, translated by me, J. P.). The film narrative suggests a mental journey, in which time is flexible, reversible: the piece of paper, on which Esti writes for Kücsük, the Turkish girl the most beautiful Hungarian words of Turkish origin, becomes visible for Kornél through the train window, as if coming from the future. The relativity of time, the difference between the subjective and the objective time is also suggested by the fact that in the railway station from Marienhof, Esti’s watch shows a time different from the clock of the railway station.

The *voice over* narratorial comment, whether with Esti’s voice, or with Kornél’s one, does not respect the rules of retrospection; the two voices are randomly combined, even within one sequence. In other cases, the voice frame does not correspond to the image frame, the narratorial comment or the background music extend over the cuts between the sequences, and as a result of these incongruencies the borders between the narrative levels are dissolved. The film applies the technique of shot–reverse shot in a way that it seems as if Esti and Kornél were travelling together, face-to-face on the train, though they belong to ontologically different dimensions. Thus, the simultaneity of the different narrative levels is achieved.

The sequences follow one another in a way that everyday space experience is broken. This is achieved by various unrealistic effects. For example, the *mise-en-scène* of the short story entitled *The Woman from Vienna*—Esti meets the mysterious woman in his flat—ends by the conductor's entering the compartment and asking for the tickets: the room interior abruptly turns into the interior of a compartment. Film space is an artefact, as it is illustrated by the antropomorphic moon face witnessing Esti and Kücsük's kiss in the train window, the background reminding of a theatrical scenery (see picture No. 1). Esti, having a conversation with the conductor, points upwards: at the top of the train a woman can be seen, performing an opera aria. This surrealistic vision can be interpreted as a self-reflexive gesture of the film: the aspiration towards totality is expressed in relation to the medium itself: totality, in terms of film, would be a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk* best expressed by the art of the opera (see picture No. 2).

On his journey to his last lecture, Esti looks into the camera, and addresses not only the hypothetical future audience, but also the actual viewer of the film. The look into the camera, the direct contact with the viewer is a taboo in principle, the viewer experiences the shell of a fictional world from the outside, and if the character looks out, the shell of fiction is broken (see picture No. 3).

The schemes of classical narration are broken also by allusions to film history. Pacskovszky's film initiates a vivid, playful dialogue with the early film. The exposition of the film is a stylistic paraphrase of the silent cinema: the sequences of the exposition are monochrome, accelerated in the manner of the early film, the actors act similarly to silent film actors, the scenes are accompanied by piano music, and there are intertitles. Esti and Kornél appear in black and white suits respectively, as each other's contrastive reflections. The contrastive feature of the motif of the double functions well visually, they appear as antagonistic figures characteristic of the burlesque. They perform the movements and gestures necessary for setting out for a journey, they repeat each other's gestures, reminding the viewer of the farcical situations of the burlesque. However, there is a little delay in their movements, and the exchange of hats definitely breaks the mirror-effect, they reach across the hypothetical mirror between them, the illusion of which is thus dissolved. The exchange of hats mocks at the viewer's expectation of adventure, at the "black hat white hat" character types well known from commercial films (see picture No. 4).

The sequence following the exposition is similarly a silent film paraphrase, in which the main motifs, namely traveling, woman and death are linked: at the railway station a woman disguised in a death mask, the actress of the early cinema chases the writer (see picture No. 5). The travel by train is illustrated by images of the engine and the wheels, which seem to be archive shots of earlier movies, from the early period of film history. These images have not only a diegetic, but also a metadiegetic function, showing that the journey takes place in a mental space and

time, at the same time back into film history. The evocation of film history, the nostalgia towards the beginning of the film medium can be partially explained by the fact that these images create the atmosphere of the time when Kosztolányi's writings were actually born.

Pacskovszky's film assigns diegetic function to visual quotations, quasi-quotations alluding to the early period of film history, which originally enchanted the viewers by the power of showing rather than by the elaborated techniques of narration. Tom Gunning (1992) highlights the non-narrative character of Lumière's and Méliès' early cinema, as compared to later development of cinema. He considers the first films as films of attraction, through which the viewer witnessed a sort of magic. Because of this, the viewer's attitude was that of unconditioned admiration, being influenced by the irresistible splendour of the image. As the film gained ground, and newer techniques and procedures came to light, the cinema of attraction was gradually repressed by the narrative film; however, it had an indisputable influence on later chapters of film history as well.

The reflexive character of Pacskovszky's adaptation is reinforced by various techniques of embedding films within the film. The train window functions—with Foucault's term—as a heterotopia. Esti prepares for the last lecture in the compartment, in front of the window/stage curtains. The reaction of the public—applause, cheering, then howling him down—can be heard too, as noises coming from outside the image frame. Then, the train window serves as a screen on which mental images are projected. Looking out of the window, Kornél watches the film of his daydreams. The opening pictures of the short story entitled *The Woman from Vienna* are also projected onto the window, Ábel and Esti greet each other from ontologically different dimensions; in another sequence the *voice over* narrator describes the cities, and in the meantime the images projected onto the window illustrate the description; further on, Grete tries to arouse in Esti the memory of their former meeting, after the unsuccessful trial she gets off the train and sits onto her husband's motorcycle, which is projected onto the train window in form of a close up (see picture No. 6).

This procedure, that of projecting a film onto the train window results in a sort of *mise-en-abyme*, respectively, it evokes the metaphor of the film as window in film theory. André Bazin interprets film by making use of the metaphor of the window: according to him, film is a window to reality, it represents reality (contrary to this theory, Rudolf Arnheim and Sergei Eisenstein expound the metaphor of the film as a frame, representing an abstraction differing from reality).

The other embedded film, film-within-film is the one projected in the Fortuna cinema, where Esti goes on Wednesday evenings, while Ábel has a date with the woman in his flat. While the short story only mentions that the homodiegetical narrator, who is also a partaker in the story, is away during the rendezvous, the film fills the empty spaces (*Leerstellen*, Iser) of the literary text, and sends the writer to

the cinema. There, on different occasions, Esti watches the same film: sequences from a sort of silent film parody, a love assault which seems to dramatize his repressed subconscious. Psychoanalytic traces can be found in Kosztolányi's prose writings as well. In a psychoanalytic approach, the film is conceived on the analogy of the dream as well as on the analogy of the mirror. The latter metaphor is inspired by the Lacanian subject: the motion picture is a kind of mirror-image of the viewer, creating the possibility of identification with the film universe. Thus, the film can be interpreted in psychological terms, as the projection of inner dreams and desires.

From among the psychoanalytical terms applied to film, the most popular one, namely, voyeurism is also a motif of Pacskovszky's adaptation. The short story entitled *The Woman from Vienna* itself contains the motif of voyeurism. In the film Esti finds the woman in his flat. Their meeting is emblematic, I cannot help interpreting this image allegorically, as a metafictional allusion (see picture No. 7).

The man and the woman are situated on different parts of the mirror: in the background we can see Esti the writer's mirror reflection, while in the foreground there is the figure of the woman, the attraction of the spectacle. They can be interpreted as standing for the spheres of the verbal and the visual respectively, they belong to "other spaces" (Foucault). This image can be interpreted as a covert allusion to the relationship between film and literature: a game of otherness and mutual attraction.

Adaptations can be regarded as a special case of reception: their perception is determined, in an ideal case, by the experience, the interpretation of another, distant text. However, it works the other way round as well: the viewer's experience will not leave the reading of the text untouched either. The relationship between film and literature is a dynamic relationship, fusion as well as dispersion, if it is thought of in terms like palimpsest (Genette) or heterotopia (Foucault). On these grounds it is worth reconsidering the matter of "faithful adaptation" as well, as Ágnes Pethő does:

Instead of the question of *faithful* adaptation (which is, on the one hand, an unattainable ideal, as it is never the text but rather the interpretation that is 'adapted'; and on the other hand, as an ideal it is meaningless: why should the literary experience be doubled), it is more interesting to describe the mutually controlling motions of the bifold consciousness, and to point out the way the literary elements (those that can be traced back to literary sources) become part of the intertextual network. From a non-normative point of view, the idea is not that we should weigh and appreciate the extent to which the original text 'penetrates' through the filter of the film texture and the extent to which literature as 'source' can 'nourish' and serve the film. (105)

As a conclusion, we can say that although Pacskovszky's art film does not belong to the epoch-making films of film history, nevertheless, its treatment of time, its metaphorical structure, the motif of the mental journey as well as the fact that it relies on several texts instead of one, relate it to Zoltán Huszárík's *Sindbad* [*Szindbád*, 1971], which is a landmark indeed, a reference in Hungarian adaptation history.

Pacskovszky creates a film universe which gains independence from the literary source, transposing literary reflexivity into film language. Still, it manages to remain faithful to the spirit of Kosztolányi's texts, considered by Teréz Vincze as being suitable for being turned into film:

On the one hand . . . it is great if the basic material is a work which, by its content, by its structure, makes several interpretations possible, in the course of which newer and newer junctions turn up. . . . On the other hand, I consider such a literary work as being suitable for being turned into film, which is in some way related, either by its theme or by its structure, to problems and issues which are essential for film as an artistic form of expression." (172)

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Annex

Pictures from József Pacskovszky's *The Wonderful Journey of Kornél Esti* (1994)



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



**Power and Seduction (Hungarians as Liviu Rebreanu
Presented Them in His Novels)
Self-image and the Presentation of the Other during the
Development of the Relationship Between the Romanians
and the Hungarians**

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Abstract. The essay deals with the problem of alterity as it appears in two major novels by the modernist Romanian writer, Rebreanu Liviu. The essay focuses mainly on ethnical alterity, represented by different characters of the novels belonging to the Hungarian minority and the nature of their relationship to the (Romanian) hero.

Ethnical alterity is presented in four well-contoured forms:

1. The Other perceived as personal enemy (foe) or public enemy (eg. the representatives of the Austro-Hungarian rule).
2. The Other acting as an agent of Fate, representing hidden powers that will play a major role in both the intellectual formation and the personal tragedy of the hero.
3. The Other appearing in the double form of sexual and ethnical alterity personified by the angelic/demonic women figures.
4. Alterity mirrored by the language.

The theoretic presentation of the problem of alterity in the modern age intermingles with the analysis of images, characters and plot.

Keywords: alterity, identity, ethnicity, modern literature

The history of Europe knows several conflict zones and peoples who traditionally are enemies. Besides the “great” ones, like the French-German, Polish-Russian, Turkish-Greek and English-Irish, the antagonism between the Hungarians and the Romanians is only a rather unimportant episode in the history of the European enmities.

Like all historical constructions, this one too was generated both by various historical facts and by the interpretation of the events stored in the collective memory and in the history books, through the intricate ways remembering and forgetting works.

The “Other” has always been present in the life of every community. The feelings towards the stranger, who may not fit into local norms, vary from total acceptance to total refusal. The more traditional the community, the more irritating the presence of the stranger, while the inhabitants of a cosmopolitan metropolis are more likely to be tolerant. “Hospitality” has a great importance in the traditional, rural cultures, still, it is only a positive way of expressing differences.

Romanians and Hungarians started to shape the commonly known image of each other in the modern age, at the end of the 18th, the beginning of the 19th centuries, when nationalism and the modern political ideas were born. Naturally, as we are speaking about ethnics living on the same geographical site (Transylvania) and being in contact on a regular basis, some stereotypes that made possible the identification of the Other had existed even earlier. However, they only became a power able to generate ideological debates and even political deeds after the modern nationalistic ideas took shape.

The way Eastern people were looking at one another, and to a certain degree even to themselves, was largely influenced by the way the western culture, in order to strengthen its political-economical position, was speaking about the East (Said 9-57). The image of Eastern Europe adopted by the western way of thinking largely influenced both the Romanian and the Hungarian self-image and the image they developed about each other. This would explain the fact that all Eastern European small nations claim to have been the bastion of western Christianity, defending it against the barbaric East (Turkish, Russian Empires) (Mitu 228-29).

The image of the Romanians developed by the Hungarians during the 19th century was hardly more than an element of the Hungarian national problem. Only after the *status quo* following World War I, and mainly in the works of the Transylvanian writers did it receive a more important role. On the other hand, the image developed by the Romanians about the Hungarians gained a much greater importance in the Romanian political culture and it changed together with the formation of the modern nation, having a more positive character at the beginning of the 19th century, and assuming the image of a rival, an oppressor and that of an enemy at the beginning of the 20th (Mitu 229-41).

In his work *History and Myth in the Romanian Common Thinking* Lucian Boia gives a detailed analysis of the particular behavior of the Romanians towards the other nations. He observes two factors that played an important role in the formation of the ideas made up about the Other: “on the one hand the reaction of

the somewhat isolated, rural civilization,¹ on the other hand, the influence of the strong and ceaseless foreign rules and impacts. These factors were antagonistic but in the same time also completed each other and resulted in a definitely original synthesis” (Boia 191).

The Other, the Stranger is not necessarily an ethnic category, it also includes everybody who represents values that are different from the generally accepted ones. Because of the long period in which they lived divided, the problem of the Other/Stranger was present among the Romanians themselves. The differences among the Romanians living in Moldavia, Muntenia and Transylvania (Moldovean, Muntean, Ardelean) were emphasized sometimes even up to the middle of the 19th century. Later, the political discourse, urging unification and nation forming efforts, started to emphasize the idea of unity and sameness. At the beginning of the 19th century the attribute “ardelean” (from Transylvania) referred only to geographical belonging, all the inhabitants of Transylvania, regardless of their religion or ethnic origin were called like this by the people living in the two Romanian countries (Majuru). (The thought of being divided according to regions is strongly present in common thinking nowadays too, in spite of the one hundred and fifty years, when the political discourse emphasized the idea of unity.) In the period between the two World Wars, ideologists belonging to the right wing identified the Romanian spirit with the Orthodox Church. This clearly meant the intension of remaining separated from the Catholic and Protestant Western patterns, and in the same time made a distinction between the Orthodox Romanians and those belonging to the Greek Catholic Church (most of them living in Transylvania).²

Being defenseless against different foreign powers almost all the time, the attitude of the Romanians towards the Others, and towards being different, was

¹ According to Adrian Majuru by that time the name “ardelean” had a positive meaning. Servants, craftsmen, traders, intellectuals coming from Transylvania were very popular regardless of their religion or nationality, because they were considered honest, clean, thoughtful, loyal, steady people, who do not steal or lie. The image of the “Hungarian from Transylvania as a monster slaughtering Romanians” was only shaped after the unification of Moldavia and Muntenia in 1879, as an ideological support of the fight for Transylvania.

The Romanian soldiers arriving in Transylvania after World War I were brought up in this ideology, most of them had never read any Romanian newspaper published in Transylvania. They did not have the faintest idea of the realities of the Transylvanian public life and knew nothing of the way the Romanians from Transylvania felt for the Hungarians. Even the officers were startled when they had to face the reality. Camil Petresu in his novel *Ultima noapte de dragoste, întâia noapte de război* [*The Last Night of Love, the First Night of War*] describes how surprised they were when they entered the beautiful, well organized villages right near the frontier, in which “the streets were wider than the avenues in Bucharest”.

² According to Nae Ionescu, one of the most influential right wing thinkers of the age, a Catholic Romanian can only be a “loyal” Romanian, a real Romanian, regardless of all other attributes, can be nothing else but an Orthodox (Ornea 91/95).

characterized on the one hand by images created about enemies (Turkish, Greek, Russian) on the basis of historical experiences, and on the other hand by sympathies generated by the dominant cultural patterns (attraction rooted in Neo-Latin brotherhood felt for the French, then as a counterbalance of this, and as a result of geopolitical determination, sympathy towards German culture, characterizing first of all the Romanians living in Transylvania and Bucovina.

The attitude taken towards the Others becomes much more intricate when the Other One is not a remote entity, or a conqueror, but a permanent presence, living “within the walls,” like the Hungarians, the Jews, or the Gypsies. Compared to the “Outsider Other,” the strangeness of the “Other living with us” loses much of its dramatic character because of the everyday experiences, but in the same time, being always present, stirs some restlessness. This can become just as good a ground for the birth of the different myths, as physical remoteness, and the lack of actual knowledge about the Other. The political conditions had a basic influence upon the image of the Hungarians taking shape among the Romanians. For example the Romanians living in Transylvania were in majority at the end of the 19th century when nationalistic ideas started to become more and more powerful. Yet they were politically ignored both within Hungary and within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. This discrimination naturally generated and kept alive the image of the Hungarians as oppressors and enemies. The political fight for unification made a good use of this in its propaganda. (The myths presenting the Hungarians as enemies are living elements of the Romanian common thinking even today, because the “Hungarian danger” has been used by every political regime regardless of their ideological orientation.) However, the two nations were living near each other and as a result gained direct experiences, so regardless of the ideologies trying to shape a homogeneous image of the enemy (Edelman 104)³, a more detailed and more subtle image of the Hungarians could also be formed. Because of its characteristics it may serve important data for the scientific approaches of the Hungarian identity.

In this study I will examine the different kinds of images of the Hungarians created in Romanian literature. My chosen writer is Liviu Rebreanu, an important man of literature in the period between the two World Wars. Rebreanu was Transylvanian and studied at Budapest in Hungary, so, when creating Hungarian characters, he could rely both on his own experiences and on those of the community he belonged to.

When examining the problem of differences, we must not forget that in this case it appears within the framework of fiction. This does not exclude ideological purposes, but, compared to a newspaper article or a political speech, here the inner

³ Following Kenneth Burke, Murray Edelman states, that “when concentrating on a certain political enemy, more attention will be given to some characteristics, while others will be ignored.”

rules of text building, the plot and the characters gain much greater importance. In the same time these are classic, emblematic pieces of Romanian literature (both novels are required at the baccalaureate exams), so I think, that the fictitious construction of the Other may also get embedded in common thinking, and may survive like this through generations.

2. Background: Romanian prose between the two World Wars

That period was the glorious time of the Romanian prose. The novel, as a literary genre, appeared rather late in Romanian literature. The first work that can be considered a novel, Nicolae Filimon's *Ciocoii vechi și noi* [*Old and New Boyars*], was published only in 1863. This is in close connection with the fact that the development of the Romanian bourgeoisie was also late. It took time until a strong social stratum, willing to support culture and demanding good literary achievements appeared on the scene of Romanian society. However, in the thirties, the novel reached a popularity what has not been surpassed ever since. This was the time when the classic, emblematic values of the Romanian literature, written by Liviu Rebreanu, George Călinescu, Camil Petrescu, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Mihail Sadoveanu, Mihail Sebastian, Mircea Eliade and others were born.

The rise of literature and the flourishing of cultural life takes place in the period when Romania left behind World War I as one of the winners, its territory grew considerably and the young nation was proud of itself. It is not accidental that, according to Rebreanu, culture had an utmost importance in the grounding of national values: "Now we are laying the foundation of the genuine Romanian culture. . . . From the point of view of our culture we are a young nation. Until now we were fighting for survival. In the future we shall prove the world that, through our culture, we are going to live for ever" (Kormos 51).

According to Nicolae Manolescu the prose of the era can be divided into three main categories as far as poetics is concerned: the objective, realistic, "Doric-type" novel, focusing on a social grounding (e.g. the works of Liviu Rebreanu, George Călinescu, Mihail Sadoveanu and others), the subjective, quasi-modernist "Ionic-type" novel concerned with the inner world of the individual (e.g. the works of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Camil Petrescu, Mihail Sebastian etc.) and the allegorical-mythical "Corinthian-type" novel (some of the works of Mircea Eliade) (Manolescu 7-57). Mircea Cărtărescu draws the attention to the interesting phenomenon that in many cases, e.g. in the novel *Enigma Otiliei*, considered to be a classical realistic one, of the Balsac type of realism, so characteristic of the second half of the 19th century "Doric-type" novel, it is a subsequent construction, therefore we can speak about imitation, a meta-novel (Cărtărescu 287-88). Romanian prose was renewed by the above mentioned writers who also created

wider horizons (mainly following the French psychological novel). Consequently, they are the ones, who gave birth to modern Romanian literature.

3. The image of the Hungarians in Rebreanu's novels

Liviu Rebreanu (1885-1944) was born in Bistrița-Năsăud county, in Transylvania. In this region the Romanians had been the majority for a long time. However he attended the Military Academy at Sopron and at Budapest, therefore he knew very well both the national-political aspirations of the Romanian rural intellectuals and the Hungarian public life in the Monarchy. At the beginning of his career he wrote in Hungarian language under the name Rebrai. His first works were not really valuable short stories, sketches, short dramas. They were published in different newspapers and magazines. He also translated Austrian dramas to Hungarian. He became a Romanian writer only after 1909, when, like many of his contemporaries, he moved to Bucharest. His first great novel was published in 1920. Its title is *Ion* and it gives a naturalistic description of the psychological distortion caused by thirst for land and social defenselessness. The same topic is elaborated again in his next novel entitled *Răscoala* [*The Uprising*] (1933), this time in epical tableaux.

Here I am going to examine Rebreanu's two early works, the novel *Ion* published in 1920 and the novel entitled *Pădurea Spânzuraților* [*Forest of the Hanged*]⁴ published in 1922. The action in both novels takes place in Transylvania, therefore Hungarian characters play a much more important role in these than in Rebreanu's other writings. Other works by Rebreanu will only be mentioned.

3.1 Opponent and enemy

In the novel *Ion* we are told in fact two stories: that of Ion, and that of the teacher from the same village, Pripas. We can follow Ion's desperate fight for land, not lacking violence, lies, deceiving people and this all lead him towards an unavoidable failure. The everyday life of the Herdelea family gives us a faithful image of the life of the rural Romanian intellectuals and petit bourgeoisie at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. The village is a closed community, the peasants hardly have any contact with the world, but the rural intellectuals take part in the life of the region. Balls, elections, lawsuits, job affairs all offer possibilities to leave behind the village and meet other people. As it is a

⁴ The quotations (translated into English by the author of the essay) are taken from the following editions: Rebreanu, Liviu: *Ion*. Bucharest: Állami Irodalmi és Művészeti Kiadó, 1960; Rebreanu, Liviu: *Akasztottak erdeje*. [*Forrest of the Hanged*] Bukarest: Kriterion, 1970.

Transylvanian site and the time is the last years of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy, the term “others” naturally refers not only to the members of the Romanian petit bourgeois, but Jews, Hungarians, Germans as well.

In the life of the Herdelea family Hungarians mostly appear as the representatives of the power (school-inspectors, lawyers, policemen), who come to execute some external order, generally meaning something unpleasant for the Herdeleas. Therefore their attitude towards the Hungarians assumes the form of their relationship with the power. The various characters’ reactions to the demands of the power differs according to their age, experiences and temperament. The father, Zaharia Herdelea once got his well paid job on the recommendation of the benevolent school-inspector, Csernátoni, but this position also made him dependant, because he is obliged to follow the orders of the school-inspectorate. The other school-inspector, Horváth, Csernátoni’s successor appears only as a means of the power, hardly anything is told about his personality. He is merely the representative of the “oppressing power”, a nuisance for the elderly teacher who also has financial troubles, and is criticized because the children hardly speak the Hungarian language. The school-inspector writes him a letter in which he expresses his wish: at the coming elections Herdelea should vote Béla Bech, a German-Hungarian candidate and not Grofşoru, the Romanian lawyer. Being afraid of the consequences, the teacher obeys him, what’s more he convinces some other people to do so. Like this the purely Romanian region loses the opportunity to have a Romanian representative in the Hungarian Parliament and the teacher has to face the contempt of his children, ardent nationalists, although he did everything for ensuring a better life for them. He is called a coward, even a traitor.

The other representative of the power who has some role in the life of the teacher is Lendvay, the lawyer. He is a serene, benevolent man, but in fact he gives very little help to Herdelea. “I don’t mind if he does not speak Romanian, as long as he is an honest man” says the teacher’s wife, otherwise a devoted nationalist, when the lawyer tries to help them on the occasion of the forced sale. Lendvay’s benevolence proves less than enough, finally Herdelea is helped by Grofşoru, who in the same time intends to make a bit of campaign for himself. (According to the law Herdelea is suspended for a while because of having a lawsuit, his living is ensured by Grofşoru, who uses the teacher’s misery for propaganda purposes. “He started to tell the story to everyone, but in an exaggerated and adorned way, dressed into nationalism. Herdelea soon became “a martyr”, “the brave defender of the Romanian peasants”, “the victim of the revenge of the Hungarians” (398). The teacher is just as grateful to Grofşoru for receiving attention and getting some help, as he used to be to the former school-inspector and to Lendvay, whom in his present situation he starts to regard to be his enemies: “When I am thinking that I was fighting against this man serving the interest of the Hungarian gentlemen!” (383).

When they are not the representatives of the power, the Hungarians mostly appear as generous gentlemen characterized by great tolerance and a “gentleman-like” behavior. Madarassy, the forest engineer, for example, is a hobby hunter, an educated, literature loving man, who also likes all kinds of parties, no matter if they are organized by Romanians, he speaks fluently and reads in Romanian language. Titu Herdelea, who in fact is the character the writer identifies with, likes to have long talks with him. Madarassy’s positive behavior at the same time serves as a counterpoint for the attitude of the “renegade” Romanian district administrator, Chițu. Rebreanu describes the scene of people drinking in the inn from Jidovița. One of the teachers, half drunk and full of ardent nationalism, starts to sing Andrei Mureșanu’s *Deșteaptă-te române* (the present day national anthem) and all the others join in. The district administrator gets very angry, those who are present are saved from an unpleasant scandal by the forest engineer:

Madarassy, the forest engineer was a kind man and told Chițu softly: “Why shouldn’t they sing, my friend, if they like to sing? Please, old chap, don’t exaggerate . . .”

“I will not tolerate any manifestation of nationalism” answered the district administrator in a revolted tone. “My consciousness opposes it! This is sheer nationalistic instigation!”

“Oh, no, it isn’t anything like that” said the engineer trying to sooth him. Forget about this damned instigation! Just one song will not ruin the state . . . Well, it’s a pity I don’t know it, because I would join in too.” (181)

While the teacher chooses loyalty towards power, Titu, his son, is devoted to nationalistic ideas and opposes power. At the beginning of the novel Titu is just a young man with incomplete studies, cherishing dreams about becoming a poet. Instead of looking for a job he lives an idle life daydreaming. Later he becomes more and more committed to the nationalistic ideas, but his incurable romanticism drives him towards exaggerated, thoughtless actions. When he becomes a village notary at Gargo he starts to dream about the “Romanian paradise” and when Friedmann, the Jewish notary, who knows the living conditions in Romania quite well, depicts them in a rather somber way, accuses him of having a “Hungarian point of view”. When he has to sequestrate he goes only to the houses of the Hungarians and tells to his father, who was sued and suspended for a time because of Ion, to be proud for defending a Romanian, even if that man is surely a rascal.

Likewise, it goes without saying that he considers the young policeman, who tries to be his friend, his personal enemy: “How could I be the friend of a Hungarian policeman? I can’t imagine anything more shameful . . .” (383). The officer’s name is not even mentioned in the novel, he appears just for a very short time, but his figure assumes a mythical character, he becomes the embodiment of

oppression, the source of all misfortunes. Therefore, he does not consider him what he indeed is, his rival (unlike him, the police officer courts successfully the pretty, young Romanian teacher). In fact their conflict never becomes a real one, although Titu calls him a “hangman,” the officer leaves as a victorious knight. Titu, in this fight for love remains defeated, and experiences it as a nationalistic, ideological fight, gets into a real conflict with another representative of power, a police lieutenant. As a result he is accused of being a subverter. Ovid. S. Crohmăniceanu observes that Rebreanu’s novel displays a cyclical character. In the last chapter of the novel *Răscoala* [*The Uprising*], published in 1933, Titu Herdelea is accused to be a rebel who instigated the peasants. But this time the representative of the power is a Romanian officer. Titu, who plays the role of the resonator, realizes that regardless of its nationality, the nature of power is always inhuman.

3.2. The means of destiny

The *Forest of the Hanged* is an epic picture of the conflict between duty and consciousness. The main character, lieutenant Apostol Bologa is a typical representative of the young men so frequently present in the literature of that era. He is nervous, sensitive, uncertain, daydreaming, longing for ideas and finding new ideas all the time. In the first chapter, as a member of the court martial, he sentences the Czech officer, a deserter, without any remorse, but in the last chapter he finds it impossible to sentence for spying the peasants from Gyimes, he rather chooses to become a deserter himself, that is, he chooses death. The *Forest of the Hanged* is in fact a psychological novel, mainly concerned with the psychological motivations of the hero and the change of his ideas. The world he lives in is typical to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the army is the place where young people belonging to different nations and having different ideas meet. Among Bologa’s comrades we find Cservenko, the pacifist Rhutenian teacher, Grosz, the Jewish engineer, who is a convinced leftist, the Czech officer who is ready to humiliate himself for the sake of his family, Varga, the “professional soldier,” for whom army merits always come first and Karg, the rigid, almost sadistic Prussian general. People differ not only in their nationality, we find other antagonisms too: soldier—civilian, religious—atheist, rightist—leftist etc.

Apostol Bologa’s tragedy is caused by Hungarians, although in most of the cases they are unconscious means of destiny. His father, a fanatical nationalist is a rigid, unkind man, his mother lives her life wrapped up in ardent mysticism. For the disillusioned young man, seeking for new ideas, the friendship and kindness of his philosophy professor at the university from Budapest ensures the possibility of advancement. The writer doesn’t even mention the name of this professor, who evidently takes the place of the unkind father, who had died a long time ago, anyway.

The relationship between the professor and his student was that of a priest and a believer. The teacher, who knew the human soul quite well, loved Bologa and soon was able to understand his restlessness. He thought that the young man, whose personality was ruled by doubts, was a typical representative of the generation that, after losing its faith in God, tries desperately to find something instead of the human soul. They are looking for a sort of scientific divinity lacking mysteries and unknown things, for the complete truth behind which there are no other explanations containing everything, even nothingness. (31)

This way the professor gives Bologa a philosophical grounding, and becomes his “spiritual father.”

The fatherless young man would not be obliged to become a soldier, still, when World War I starts, he joins the army and in this decision he is mainly influenced by a Hungarian character who appears just for a short time in the novel. The nameless “very proud, self-conceited sharpshooter lieutenant, the son of the Hungarian county judge” (39) courts Bologa’s fiancée, and as the coquette young girl has a good opinion of him, Bologa feels offended and wants to become a soldier himself. Later he breaks his relationship with his fiancée seemingly for another Hungarian officer, but in reality, by that time not recognized by him either, because of his love for Ilona, a peasant girl from Gyimes. Another Hungarian man, Pál Vidor, Ilona’s father plays the role of the herold of the fate, as he is the one who brings the news that changes Bologa’s life completely: innocent peasants are hanged because they are accused of being spies. In the final scene the sexton will kiss the man who is going to be hanged. Pál Vidor is a sensible, simple, benevolent man, totally different from the nervous, sophisticated, uncertain Bologa. In his physical appearance Rebreanu drew a prototype: after the not really sympathetic Hungarian officers a Hungarian peasant full of hospitality. “Pál Vidor approached him smiling, offering his hand and welcoming him in his house. His skinny face was wrinkled, his brown eyes showed that he was clever, even shrewd, he wore his grey, bushy moustaches brushed upwards as the Hungarian peasant generally did” (112).

Vidor and Ilona, the pure hearted, warm, simple people, here play the role of the Romanian peasant characters in the Transylvanian literature (e.g. the novels of Károly Kós, Miklós Bánffy, János Kemény, or Albert Wass, or Aprily’s poems). They are the embodiments of the very simplified thought telling that among the simple people, on the level of everyday life there is no antagonism between the two nations. Enmity is always stirred by those who possess power or want to grasp it.

Rebreanu explained that he created the two characters, Vidor and Ilona for the sake of “authenticity,” yet he himself admitted that “humane” in this case might not seem real.

My hero . . . is basically weak, as every man, he is longing for love and finds it with a Hungarian girl, although this would not seem very probable for a professional man of literature, and when he is hanged, another Hungarian man, Ilona’s father is crying for him. I think that this is humane, and a novel that lacks real life, but is bustling with horrors and contradictions, has no chance to survive. (Săndulescu 47)

Bologa’s desertion is not a well prepared one, it is somehow done in the spur of the moment. He is captured by lieutenant Varga, a professional officer, who was the first to notice that Bologa has changed. He is a friend, a comrade, and an opponent at the same time, and being a relative of the above mentioned philosophy professor, his feelings towards the Romanian comrade are definitely benevolent. “Just a short time ago you used to like me, we understood each other very well” (98), he complains in the hospital where they are lying side by side. But the truth is that even at the beginning of the novel Bologa does not really like him, considers him “a stupid, arrogant professional” (98) and when they get together by chance in the hospital he suffers because of the sheer presence of Varga: “He found his words, even his glance malevolent” (98). Thus, in Bologa’s conception the former comrade becomes an enemy, although a very honest one. For Varga there are three important things: “fatherland, faith and the past” (99), and as he knows Bologa well, he is the first to realize that the conviction rooted in Bologa by his uncle, the philosopher, began to lose its firmness and its place is taken by the nationalistic ideas. This is why he tries to make him remember his professor and his duty and warns him that his new commitment will surely cause him trouble. “My uncle, who loved you as his own son would not recognize you now, believe me, Bologa! . . . Your feelings will lead you right into the arms of our enemies. . . . Into the arms of those, who are the enemies of the country, no matter of which country! In this moment, my friend, in your thoughts and soul you have already become a deserter!” (99). Varga believes in the sanctity of the military oath and he has a very low opinion of Apostol Bologa’s new ideas. For the sake of their former friendship and because he hates “spying” he does not inform his superiors about Bologa, but warns him, that if once he will face him as a deserter, he should not count on his mercy. From that moment for Bologa he ceases to be a friend or a comrade, he becomes a real enemy, his own fatal words will designate him for the duty of capturing Bologa and sending him to the court martial.

3.3 The woman and her two faces: the virgin and the prostitute

As the mentioned Rebreanu novels are basically concerned with the life of men, the Other taking the shape of a woman belonging to the foreign nation gets an utmost importance. In this case the difference is not only in nation but also in sex, the dynamics of attraction and refusal act in this system of relations. The strangeness of the Other becomes even more evident by emphasizing sexual characters. According to Murray Edelman “when a group of people lives under oppression, it many times happens that the women belonging to that group are thought to have an exaggerated erotic character. This is common in the case of the Black or the Jewish women and it is true for women who belong to some rival ethnic groups” (Edelman 114). Erotic characteristics can be emphasized regardless of the relationship of oppression and being oppressed (although it undoubtedly contains the scheme of practicing power), because of the curiosity, attraction, or on the contrary, antipathy stirred by the Other being close, and therefore provocative. In the two, above analyzed novels of Rebreanu the woman belonging to the other nationality appears in two roles: the “prostitute,” who seduces and destroys, in the novel *Ion*, and the innocent, pure virgin offering redemption, real, but never fulfilled love in the *Forest of the Hanged*.

In *Ion* Titu Herdela’s first, “romantic love” is Róza Láng, the wife of the drunkard Jewish teacher from the neighbouring village. She is a pretty, but rather immoral woman, the first thing what is told about her is that “in the afternoons she remained in bed reading romantic love stories like a daydreaming bayadere” (131). She tries to behave like the femmes fatales from the novels she reads, in fact it is she, who seduces the inexperienced young man. Love is the essence of her life and she finds it with many men. Compared to the clumsy, rural young girls, the teachers or the daughters of the priests, “the geese” as Titu calls them, Mrs. Láng has erotic emanation.

Róza Láng was a pretty woman: her face like that of a doll, with a small nose, lazy, daydreaming eyes, her body like that of a twenty year old girl. . . . She was longing for a great love that could be a reward for all her disillusionment, and as it has never come, she put up with small adventures, at least they offered some change. . . . She enjoyed seeing Titu gazing at her and she was happy to feel his trembling lips on her hands. (131)

This passionate love affair becomes life itself for Titu, he not only neglects to look for a job, but also forgets about his own nation. “Since he has been head over heels in love with Rozika, he started to love the Hungarians and the Jews, as the woman herself was Hungarian, married to a Jew. In order to make this love evident, he spoke Hungarian readily” (233).

Róza Láng is the temptation and the impediment in Titu's life, he has to overcome them in order to be able to devote himself to the idea of nationalism. His love for the woman works like a drug or like a brainwashing, Titu loses himself. "The boy literally lived only for Róza Láng. He was caught by the cobweb of love. After he had met her for some times, the woman ruled all her thoughts and feelings. He was thinking of her day and night, he was disturbed and tortured, but he was also happy. . . . He didn't care for anything else but Róza" (260). Titu Herdelea regains himself only when he goes to work to a far-away village, Gargó, and soon finds out that his love got somebody else instead of him. Titu's love for Mrs. Láng is evidently interwoven by the ethnical interpretation of the Other. At the beginning of his love, to please Róza, he is ready to speak Hungarian, but later, when he escapes from this enchantment he is ashamed that "his first passionate love was a Hungarian woman" (260), and he tries to make peace with his nationalistic ideas by telling that "hatred can never be extended to the women of the oppressors" (260). Titu's love for Róza is a "sinful love," not only because in fact it is adultery, but also because only by getting rid of it can he become a real patriot.

Ilona, the peasant girl from Gyimes in the *Forest of the Hanged*, on the other hand, brings the promise of a redeeming love. Apostol Bologna arrives at Gyimesközéplak, into Ilona's house, as a tired, disillusioned and sick man. His Romanian fiancée, Marta chased him by her vanity into the life of a soldier, which by this time causes him unbearable problems of consciousness. Ilona does everything to cure the sick soldier. She is the symbol of faithfulness, of unconditioned commitment, of the woman who never asks, only gives: attention, care, food, herself. Although she does not know when Bologna will come back from his leave, he goes to the station every day never asking why he does what he does, just helping him.

The prejudice towards the women of the rival nation is present at their first meeting. In the physical description of the girl, through the symbolic colors, exaggerated erotic characteristics are to be found: "She wore a bright red kerchief on her head, her big, black eyes were almost laughing, her lips were like cherries" (109), and she looked at the lieutenant with "unusual courage" (109). Not accidentally, Bologna first supposes that she is a woman of loose morals: "She surely made happy all the soldiers, who like me, were given this room" (111).

His leave brings nothing else to him just disillusionment and a final break with his fiancée, and when he returns, in Bologna's soul springs up the love for the simple peasant girl. By this time Ilona appears in a poetic light, the girl is waiting faithfully for her lover under a cherry tree in blossom, like a Solveig from Gyimes, in the scene of kisses the ray of the sun penetrating in the room, surrounds her head as a glory, the mystical moment of their first kiss is enveloped in light.

Through the window facing the railway shone into the room the last lines of the setting sun. A golden stripe was vibrating on the table, crossed the yellowish floor almost until the door separating them as a magic bridge. Apostol's heart was full of painful happiness . . . Ilona kept talking, her eyes were glowing in a strange brightness. The light between them was laughing and this laugh was reflected by the girl's face. Now Apostol forgot why he had got up and was wondering how he could pass through that light without disturbing it. And while wondering he realized, that he had already stepped into the flood of the golden light, and stopped a bit confused, because the girl was also coming closer, as if she had been lured by a who knows what kind of mysterious power. (168)

Ilona's purity and simplicity is a kind of an answer to the emotional process that unfolded in Apostol's soul. When returning to his native village, the disillusioned atheist lieutenant finds again the idea of Christian love. But according to the Christian mythological elements their love is ill-omened: they make love after the mass of Good Friday, then Apostol proposes to her and on the next day, on Saturday they have their engagement in the presence of the priest. But Easter Sunday brings about the death of the peasants accused of spying, the order that calls Bologa to be the member of the court martial, his hasty deserting, being captured and executed.

While in the relationship of Titu Herdelea and Róza Láng ethnic belonging is an impediment, the love of Bologa and of the peasant girl, who belongs to an inferior social class, tries to get fulfillment within the framework of the Christian scale of values, superior to ethnic ones. Ethnic peculiarities here are only decorations, like Ilona's festive dress, her red waistcoat and green kerchief. The love between the lovers belonging to different ethnic groups does not become a reality, Róza Láng is morally inferior to Titu and is the wife of another man anyway, Ilona, in spite of her fairy-likeness, can not bring about redemption, just peace, the last chance of happiness for a man, who is ready to sacrifice himself.

3.4. The other language

When perceiving the Other, the language spoken by him or her plays an important role. In the linguistic environment present in Rebreanu's novels, the foreign (Hungarian) language is the most evident sign of being different, therefore the characters generally are suspicious towards it. When they consider the foreign language a potential source of danger, they in fact react to the system of power behind it. According to Reinhart Kosseleck "A language becomes the criterium of enmity if a political will is involved, totally independent of languages. It may have

an economic, religious or social character but it is always politically motivated” (Kosseleck 8).

The Hungarian language in *Ion* appears mostly as the means of political oppression. The fact that Herdelea’s pupils cannot tell the Lord’s prayer in Hungarian brings about trouble and Titu becomes mad when he hears that the teacher from Gargó forces the Romanian pupils to speak in Hungarian. The fact that the women in the family of the teacher who is paid by the state, do not speak Hungarian stirs surprise and indignation. In the case of Mrs. Herdelea not speaking the Hungarian language is a question of principle, but it is true, that she never had the possibility to learn this language and she doesn’t need it in her everyday life, still she says that she doesn’t use it, because she “hates Hungarians and their language” (96).

For Apostol Bologa foreign languages mean the army, the language of his home is Romanian, while the language generally used in the army is German. The Hungarian language in this novel becomes the language of uncontrolled, irrational feelings, that of swearing, of anger and of love. In *Ion* Titu Herdelea gets annoyed when he hears that the teacher, although she is the adept of nationalism, talks to the Hungarian officer in Hungarian, and Apostol Bologa becomes indignant when, getting home he finds his fiancée chatting in Hungarian with a Hungarian lieutenant. But the anger stirred by the use of the Hungarian language is in both cases only a pretext, Titu Herdelea is upset because the other one is more successful in courting, while Apostol Bologa is led by his new, unconscious love for Ilona. According to the public opinion of the small town he leaves his fiancée because she was speaking Hungarian, and thus here the use of language becomes the euphemistic description of unfaithfulness. Yet Bologa confesses to himself the truth: “He does not love her any more, not because of jealousy but because he loves the other girl. His becoming upset because of the Hungarian language and the Hungarian man was a mere comedy” (150).

In Rebreanu’s novels Hungarian is not only the language of the power and of the rivals, but also that of love. The interpretation of the foreign language depends on whether it can be connected to the love for the “prostitute” bringing about destruction and the loss of identity, or to the one felt for the “virgin” who ensures purification. The love felt for Róza Láng estranges Titu from his nationalistic ideas and this is symbolized by his use of the Hungarian language. Earlier he used this foreign language only functionally (that is, when it was necessary), influenced by his love, “in order to express his love he spoke readily in Hungarian” (233). After he escapes from the cobweb of this love and as a journalist becomes the ardent adept of nationalistic ideas, he is ashamed for his love confessions told in Hungarian, this language becomes again the language of the oppressors for him.

The erotic emanation of the girl belonging to the foreign nation materializes through the foreign language, thus the language becomes the substitute of love.

Titu goes to work into a Hungarian village and at the beginning he hopes that “the continuous Hungarian speech will make the impression that he is still close to Róza and this will quench his desire” (233).

When Ilona and Apostol Bologa meet for the first time, it is the girl’s speech that charms the lieutenant. He asks Ilona to speak about the everyday life in the community in which Hungarians and Romanians equally live, and while listening to her, he becomes more and more interested: “In fact not her words, but her strong, yet sweet voice that was caressing as a silk ribbon and sometimes was like the song of a mischievous child. From that moment he didn’t want anything else just to hear her voice and he was wondering what to ask to make her go on talking” (111). The way the foreign girl talks here too has erotic emanation, it prepares the scene in which Bologa, coming back from his leave, conscious of his love for Ilona, kisses her for the first time: “the flood of the warm sounds filled his soul soothing his nerves” (167).

So the language of the Other almost never appears in a neutral context, it can have either the role of spanning, or the role of estranging depending on the feelings of the individual. It is not a simple means of communication, but the best means of showing differences.

The image of the Hungarians in Liviu Rebreanu’s novels, the way of presenting the Hungarians, was naturally influenced by ideological point of views too, which are very far from literature. Both novels were published at the beginning of the twenties, that is in the years following the Treaty of Trianon. By that time the author had been living in Bucharest for a long time and he was also influenced by the political ideology of the era. Consequently the image of the Other is generally the image of the enemy. The power that makes it difficult for the individual to achieve his aims and desires, or sometimes just to live a better life, cannot be anything else but an enemy. The Hungarians who represent power appear in Rebreanu’s novels both as foes and as the enemies of the community (Schwab 39-41), but they very rarely have really important roles. The writer always focuses on the description of the acts and motivations of the Romanian characters.

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The Possibility of Narratorial Irony in the Novel *Ion* by L. Rebreanu

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Abstract. Liviu Rebreanu is one of the greatest Romanian writers. The theme of his novel *Ion* is the life of the Romanian community in Transylvania at different levels of the social structure. Traditional Romanian literary criticism considers this novel to be the foundation of Romanian nationalism on the whole. The paper will demonstrate, by multilevel narratological analysis, the idea that despite of those above, the writer does not himself represent nationalist thinking as his narrator employs very sophisticated methods for distancing himself from the nationalistic heroes of the novel. The narratological attitude suggests a fine irony against all kinds of nationalistic prejudices.

The analogies with the personal life of the author, the base of earlier analyses, lead to misunderstanding.

The study presents an interpretation of the novel that may help Romanian and Hungarian communities in the reciprocal understanding of the problems confronted.

Keywords: the problem of the narrator, fictional signals, the reader's contribution, the case of the epithet „nationalist,” points of view, nationalism as annihilation of empathy, true empathy, the public man and the writer, empirical writer, abstract writer, fictitious narrator, a possible mise in abyme

The narrator of the novel *Ion* is a heterodiegetic authorial one.¹ It does not form part of the narrated world and represents the fictionalized ego of the author. This type of narrator usually narrates in all forms of the past tenses and in the third person, but quite often it makes use of the first person as well, in order to comment, evaluate and explain the actions and even the thoughts of the heroes.

However, the narrator of *Ion* starts telling the story in the present (in the first three subsections—numbered with Arabic numerals—of the first chapter), it is only in the fourth subsection that it turns to the simple perfect (“Ion trecu încet pârleazul de lângă grajd . . .” [“Ion slowly passed by the ladder near the stable . . .”]). But also this simple perfect rather fulfills (and will fulfill also in the following chapters) the function of a continuous present, open towards the future, about which neither the narrator seems to have more information than the heroes of the novel themselves. The (apparent) simultaneity of observation and narration creates the permanent impression that the narrator closely follows its heroes. Their gestures, words and thoughts are rendered from a position of strict temporal and spatial proximity. The distance is minimal, and it is exclusively determined by the basic requirements of the act of narration. The narrator does not distance itself from its heroes, not even from an ideological point of view. It does not want to be present in the story as a person (as an explicit “ego”), on the contrary, in a perfect agreement with the basic idea of the novel, in fact it represents itself in all the characters of the novel (not being totally identified, as we will see, with any of them).

This essential identity much complicates the narrative situation. Since, at a first analysis, it might seem that we have an authorial narrator, with many possibilities of making use of the various forms of the narrative discourse: the metanarrative-commenting, the explanatory, the evaluative, the abstract, the emotive, and even the modal one. The narrator seems to still be capable of returning into the past of history and of making firm anticipations, of changing, in accordance with the requirements of the narration, the focalization and the perspectives of diegesis. However, Rebreanu’s narrator renounces these possibilities almost integrally (including also the corresponding devices), coming closer to a narrative version which is popular also today, namely, the one with an authorial heterodiegetic narrator, of neutral type. With a single significant difference: besides the “unlimited” external perception (external “omniscience”), the narrator also makes use of the “unlimited” internal perception (internal “omniscience”). However, also in this case, the narrator adapts to the level of knowledge and consciousness of the heroes. It never seems to know more about the

¹ In the present analysis I make use of the terminology initiated and improved by Genette (1990), Stanzel (1993) and Eco (2002), especially in their form systematized by Lintvelt (1989).

characters of the story, more than what they know about themselves, or more than what they know about one another.

In this way, the narrator refrains from directly making ideological appreciations about the words, actions or thoughts of his heroes. The advantages of this narrative modality manifest themselves especially when the expectations of the readers do not totally coincide with the author's intentions. Thus, the created narrative ambiguity has very important consequences at the level of reception, more precisely, in decoding the text and in the mental assimilation of fiction.

This objective, "labored" style (as it was characterized by traditional criticism) urges the reader himself/herself to make the coordination of the pieces of information at the various levels of the narrative text, coordination which the narrator refuses to make. The abstract reader—disguised as fictitious reader (that is, as the "dialogical" partner of the fictitious narrator, also placed into the world of the novel)—is constrained to complete the narrative text with the missing discourses, as a response to the urge launched by the narrative voice through the transmitted information. However, the success of this operation presupposes the awareness and analysis of the objective relations between the fictitious signals transmitted by the abstract author on the one hand², and between the discourse of the narrator and that of the heroes, on the other hand. This is extremely complicated, as in the given narrative modality, the three "discourses" are melted to such an extent that they seem to be inseparable.

If the reader does not follow the narrative text with great attention, he/she might easily fall into the trap of diverse misinterpretations, no longer being capable of comprehending the true meanings involved in the words, gestures and even thoughts of the heroes.

Narratology makes a relatively clear difference between the abstract author (U. Eco's "model author") and the fictitious narrator (which in our case is itself authorial). The abstract narrator is the one which, on the one hand, creates the person of the narrator and the narrative situation, and, on the other hand, conducts from behind the narrator the process of unfolding of the narration. In the case of the authorial narrator, even the narrator is an alter ego of the author, though disposing of an autonomy to which many times even the abstract author has to surrender (not to mention the empirical one).

In the case of the novel *Ion*, the division of the novel into volumes, chapters and subsections can surely be assigned to the abstract author. Through this the abstract reader (corresponding to the abstract author on the side of reception) is transmitting the fictitious signals which help him/her disclose the deeper meaning. The fictitious signals can be transmitted, besides the so-called paratext (which in the case of *Ion* also includes—together with the title, preface and chronological

² In Umberto Eco's terminology, the "model author".

chart—the recommendation “Celor mulți umili!” [“To the many humble ones!”], as well as the dating “March 1913—July 1920”, placed to the end), also by the narratorial discourse.

As the competence of the narrator decreases, these fictional signals deriving from the “subconscious of the narrator” (a possible name of the abstract author) become more and more indirect, acquiring at the same time an increased importance. Given the fact that the model author proposed by Rebreanu deprives the narrator of a very important part of the narrative competences, which in the given model would be its due, in the narratorial text of *Ion* these signals cannot be but more or less indirect.

As there is no explicit ideological viewpoint, the exploration of the implicit ideological viewpoint—based on the fictitious signals transmitted through the temporal, spatial and ideological organization of the narratorial text—gains a more and more crucial importance.

The historical-philological method, predominant in the Romanian literary discourse for several decades, proves to be fatally misleading in the case of Rebreanu’s novel. Even to an incomparably greater extent than in the case of other Romanian realist novels. Due to the similarities (at first sight, startling indeed) between the author’s and Titu’s biographies, the readers and the critics have considered (usually tacitly) that Titu would be a kind of spokesman of the author. Starting from this hypothesis, the novel could be interpreted in a purely nationalistic manner, and from this point it assists in an “ideal” way the nationalistic education of the “young generations”, the formation of the so-called “national consciousness”. Today’s Funars³ are to a great extent the products of these nationalistic interpretations, in the Transylvanian nationalist political discourse the “influence” of the presupposed “unmediated authorial discourse” from *Ion* can be textually pointed out.

And all these despite the fact that in the case of *Ion* this interpretive practice does not seem to have much real support in the actual narratorial discourse. The epithets “nationalist”, “great Romanian”, “ardent Romanian” etc. are never defined by the narrator. We do not have direct indications to clearly decide the ideological overtones with which they are used. The more the narratorial discourse containing these appreciations is permanently contaminated by the elements specific of the characters’ interior monologue, the more complicated the clarification of the overtones gets. Many times the two modalities of discourse merge, causing confusion. We cannot know for sure who the appreciations belong to: the narrator, the heroes, the reader or the public opinion? Many times the only thing we can be sure about is the fact that Rebreanu’s model author itself is extremely careful so that we should not know anything for sure. At least from direct sources. The only

³ Proeminent leader of the national-extremist Great-Romania Party.

modality to point out the overtone of these appreciations is offered, on the one hand, by the personality of the heroes who the epithets refer to, and on the other hand, by the minutely elaborated connexion of the interpersonal relations.

What we can also point out at first sight is that the mentioned epithets occur in the narratorial discourse only and exclusively in connection with heroes whose personality traits immediately put them in quotation marks.⁴ In this way, the epithets always acquire an implicit ironical, sometimes even satirical overtone.

Which are the characters that are labeled by the narrator as being “nationalist” ones?

First of all the priest Belciug. Although his character is taken out of the negativist quotation marks at the end of the novel. At least apparently. (The final chapter, entitled *Sfârșitul* [*The End*], constitutes a separate problem, which we will discuss at the end of the present analysis.) However, it is sure that in most part of the narration (even in its key moments) he is the most sombre character of the novel (even repugnant sometimes). Belciug’s doubtful personality is also evidenced by the fact that he is the source of most of the misery which comes upon the Herdelea family, and especially upon the most sympathetic character, schoolmaster Herdelea.

The first characterization of Belciug is made from Titu’s perspective: “Popa îl lua cu trăsura ori de câte ori se ducea la Armadia sau la Bistrița și trăgeau câte un pui de chef, *ocărând* împreună pe unguri, căci Belciug era *mare naționalist*, deși nu prea arăta a fi, de frică să nu-și piardă ajutorul de la stat, fără de care n-ar mai fi putut trăi în rândul oamenilor . . .”⁵ [“The priest took him in his carriage whenever he went to Armadia or Bistrița, and they were carousing a little, *slandering* the Hungarians together, as Belciug was a *big nationalist*, though he did not really show it for fear he might lose the support from the state, without which he could no longer have lived among the people”] (emphasis mine, B.B., 102). The quotation clearly reveals that nationalism is a sort of synonym of the anti-Hungarian sentiments, which manifest themselves also in the attitude towards the Hungarian language. In front of the judge “Preotul roși și rosti câteva vorbe pe ungurește. Deși știa binișor ungurește, avea oroare să vorbească mai ales în fața autorităților, vrând astfel să dovedească tuturor că românul nu renunță niciodată la drepturile lui” [“The priest was uttering a few words in Hungarian. Although he spoke Hungarian quite well, he had a dread of speaking especially in front of the authorities, by this he wanted to prove to everybody that a Romanian never renounced his rights”] (113).

⁴ For a more detailed presentation of the plot of the novel, see Júlia Vallasek’s paper in the present issue of *Philologica*.

⁵ The quotations are taken from the 2006 edition of Rebreanu’s *Ion*.

However, when he is led by his own interests or those of the church (in his case the two are identical) Belciug can be malevolent, even ruthless also with his Romanian fellows. He thrusts “his friend”, Herdelea, to the bottom of despair with a fanatic satisfaction. He is rude also to the peasants who intersect his way. In his blind passion against Herdelea, Belciug is ready to send Ion to jail as well, after offending him in the church, in front of the whole village. These outbursts are enough to place also the value of his “nationalism” within ironical brackets. And to generate a shadow of lack of trust also at his “definitive” “transformation” at the end of the story.

The other character directly labeled as being an ardent Romanian is Grofşoru, the lawyer esteemed not only by the Romanian community, but also by his Hungarian colleagues. He too, similarly to Belciug, “chiar în vârtejul visurilor naţionale nu uita realitatea” [“even in the whirl of nationalist dreams he did not forget reality”]. At the same time he does not forget to use the occasions which may raise him in the eyes of his electors. On the day of the election a minor incident takes place, a peasant from among those who try to break the line of the gendarmes, is stabbed (accidentally, rather than in a premeditated way) by a zealous gendarme. Grofşoru immediately turns the event in favor of the electoral success, shouting theatrically: “—Cetăţeni, a scurs sânge nevinovat! Teroarea . . .” [“Citizens, innocent blood was spilt! Terror . . .”]. After the officer draws his attention to the fact that he is not permitted to make electoral propaganda, Grofşoru changes the record, but the melody does not change. Even the narrator feels obliged to draw attention to the manner in which this character usually manifests himself, by using the noun *ciorovoială* (‘row’): “—Protestez împotriva acestei noi încălcări de lege!—strigă Grofşoru deschizând o nouă *ciorovoială* cu ofiţerul.” [“I protest against this new violation of the law!—Grofşoru cried, starting a new *row* with the officer”] (emphasis mine, B. B.).

In general, Grofşoru’s strategy is a well-thought and efficient one: through Herdelea he wants to win the votes of the Jews from Jidoviţa. The failure does not make him lose his temper at all, on the contrary, he continues to behave in a “strategic” way, helping Herdelea with respect to the following elections: “era într-adevăr hotărât să mulţumească pe Herdelea când i se va prilejui. Astfel câştiga un partizan şi în acelaşi timp se ridica în ochii întregului ţinut . . . Cum să nu se aleagă deputat acela care întinde o mână de ajutor chiar şi adversarului de ieri?” [“he was indeed determined to express his thanks to Herdelea when an opportunity offered. In this way he won a partisan and at the same time he rose in the eyes of the whole region . . . How should one who offered a helping hand even to his yesterday’s enemy not be elected as a deputy?”] (271). He courts Herdelea :“—Am auzit că pătimeşti cu ungurii . . . Foarte trist . . . Foarte, foarte trist . . . Nu-ţi închipui cât te compătimesc!” [“I have heard that you are expiating with your Hungarians . . . Very sad . . . Very, very sad . . . You don’t imagine how much I sympathize with

you!”] (271). However, a little later, under the influence of Herdelea’s honest and naïve reactions, we find out what hides behind his compassion: “simți toată emoția acestui suflet muncit și bun și fu cuprins de *compătimire adevărată*.” [“he felt all the emotion of this elaborated and good soul and was overwhelmed by *true compassion*”] (emphasis mine, B. B.). The epithet “true” reinforces the reader’s suspicion (also based on other phraseological indices) that the previous manifestation was a theatrical “compassion” (272), though the character is a “pious soul” [“suflet milos”] indeed (283). The calculation seems to be reinforced also by nationalist sentimentalisms (“Ș-apoi, mai ales, suntem români, așa-i?” [“Then, above all, we are Romanians, aren’t we?”]). All these also question the uninterested character of his nationalist sentiments. Not at all by accident, the narrator also reveals his supreme dream, that of reaching “Camera de pe malurile Dunării”. [“The chamber on the banks of the Danube”]. “Victor Grofșoru era om deștept și șiret ca toți politicienii, între care râvnea să ajungă.” [“Victor Grofșoru was a clever and cunning man as all the politicians, among whom he wished to reach”] (271). The idea occurs again in the toast held on the occasion of the consecration of the church (360). Otherwise, Grofșoru’s honesty is also questioned by Mrs. Herdelea (220).

The schoolmistress also belongs to the group of characters who are not only labeled as nationalists, but who also declare to be as such: “Pricep eu ce ziceți—spune ea avocatului maghiar—, dar nu vreau să vorbesc ungurește! Nu-mi place mie să mă strâmb trăncănind într-o limbă străină, când nici n-am nevoie! sfârși dăscălița cu o superioritate zdrobitoare și strângând din buze, parcă numai gândul c-ar putea vorbi ungurește îi strepezește dinții” [“I understand what you say—she told the Hungarian lawyer—, but I don’t want to speak Hungarian! I don’t like struggling ridiculously to chatter in a foreign language, when I don’t need to! the schoolmistress ended with a sweeping superiority, tightening her lips as if her teeth got chipped only to the thought of speaking Hungarian”] (312). However, she has prejudices against everybody. Doamna Herdelea “nu-și ascundea disprețul [nici] față de proști, cum zicea dânsa țăranilor [români]” [Mrs. Herdelea “did not hide her contempt [even] towards the dumb, as she called the [Romanian] peasants”] (180).

Otherwise, as far as national prejudices are concerned, the novel abounds in diverse examples: prejudices against the Jews (“ovrei”, “jidani”), against the Gypsies (“cioroi”), against the Hungarians, the Saxons etc. As concerns the Hungarians and the Jews, the image is a little more nuanced, there occur also positive characters, which are considered as decent people both by the heroes of the novel and by the narrator. There can be found respectable personalities even among the gypsies . . .

However, the basic tone is contempt towards everything that is “alien”. It is no wonder that Belciug, when he wants to deeply offend the schoolmistress, taking away their only table won at the previously organized auction, enters her home

with the help of an old gypsy. The schoolmistress, losing her temper, throws them out with a gesture that Belciug comments on by using the terminology of the common prejudices, saying: “m-a ocărât dăscălița țigănește” [“the schoolmistress slandered me filthily like a Gypsy”].

The fact that the members of the Romanian community do not condemn the nationalists—despite the fact that the peasants (Ion, Ana, George, Baci, Florica) do not give evidence of being nationalists, and among the majority of the intellectuals the natural national sentiment does not lead to manifestations of intolerance—, is explained by the more and more nationalist policy of the Hungarian state. The men of the power, like the judge, who in the narrative text mostly occurs (of course, from the viewpoint of the heroes) as “the Hungarian”, the inspector Horváth, who persecutes the children who simply do not have the possibility to learn Hungarian perfectly (not to mention the fact that in the given environment they might not even need to *perfectly* know the Hungarian language), the lawyer of the company, which the Herdeleas got indebted to, also present a degree of intolerance and arrogant pretention of national superiority, which inevitably stirs adverse reactions. However, in the manifestation of resentments there is a large diversity of reactions.

Besides Spătaru, who manifests his irredentism without any constraint (134), the main representative of nationalism based on resentments is the most complex and at the same time the most contradictory hero of the novel: Titu Herdelea. As far as he is concerned, the narrator does not label him directly as nationalist, still, Romanian nationalism is especially embodied through and in his character. The novel assigns to him phrases and attitudes which could not be considered “EU-compatible” (with a fashionable term nowadays) even in that age. Unfortunately, his considerations, many times *puerile*, were later taken seriously by the nationalists between the two World Wars and in Ceaușescu’s era. And by many nationalists in our days as well.

Traveling by train towards Sibiu, Titu states: “Pretutindeni aceiași țărani, umili, voinici, răbdători: pe șosele albe, alături de care silitoare, pe câmpiile galbene, răscolite de brațele lor și udate de sudoarea lor prin satele sărace, stoarse de vlagă. Unde era munca, erau numai ei. Pe urmă veneau gărilile mari, anticamererele orașelor și țărani nu se mai zăreau. În schimb, apăreau surtucarii grăbiți, gălăgioși, nerăbdători, vorbind poruncitor numai în grai străin.

—Noi muncim ca să benchetuiască ei! se gândea Titu înecat de o revoltă din ce în ce mai mare. Asta-i ilustrația nedreptății și oropsirii noastre! . . . La Cluj schimbă trenul. De-abia izbuti să se cațere într-un vagon ticsit de oameni, să-și așeze geamantanul pe coridor. Atâta vorbă unguerească îi înnegrea sufletul. Se simțea de parcă s-ar fi oprit deodată într-o mocirlă.” [“The same peasants everywhere, humble, brave, patient: on the white roads, along which they were working industriously in the yellow fields grubbed by their arms and watered by

their sweat in-between the poor, languid villages. Where there was work, one could see only them. Then the big railway stations, the anterooms of the towns followed, and the peasants could no longer be seen. But then the hurrying, noisy and impatient townspeople appeared, speaking, in a commanding tone, only in a foreign language.

–We work so that they can have fun! Titu thought, choked with an ever bigger revolt. This is the illustration of the injustice and oppression exercised on us! . . . In Cluj he changed trains. With difficulty he managed to climb up into a carriage crowded with people and to place the suitcase in the corridor. His soul was blackened by so much Hungarian talk. He felt as if he had suddenly stopped in a slough.”] (335-336)

The reader may ask in fact: what would be revolting in the fact that the peasants live in villages (a big majority of the Hungarian population of Transylvania being peasants too, just like many Swabians and Saxons), and the working class and the bourgeoisie (which was indeed of German and Hungarian majority) live in the towns? Was not that so in Romania too?

Titu’s indignation has a national purport, but the coin has two sides in this case too. The narrator seems to see both of them, though Titu is not aware of their consequences. “Își aduse aminte cum în Săscuța, acum vreo zece ani, când a trecut spre Bistrița, singur văcarul era român și stătea într-o hrubă în capul satului, pe când azi, fără școală și fără biserică jumătate comună e românească” [“He remembered that in Săscuța, about ten years before, when he had gone to Bistrița, only the herdsman had been Romanian, he had stayed in a hut at the end of the village, however, then, without school and without church, half of the community had been Romanian”] (174). It is true that at the edge of the linguistic border, there was a Romanian village (Vireag, in which the congregation would have Pinteș, Laura’s husband as priest), which became Hungarian under the influence of the Hungarian speaking environment.

The misery of the Romanian peasants from a locality with rich Hungarian peasants (Gargalău) raises in Titu not only the natural national sentiment and the instinct of solidarity, but (separated from Rozica and constrained to the collection of the pawns also from the miserably poor peasants) it also thrusts him towards nationalist nonsense. The absurdity of this would come to light especially if we transposed it into the mouth of a Transylvanian person of Hungarian ethnicity, living in our days, belonging to the Székelys (maybe one in Titu’s situation): “deseori se visa în fundul unei temnițe, legat în lanțuri și totuși fericit în inimă, simțindu-se martir, care prin jertfa sa trebuie să smulgă izbânda tuturor. . . . Și închipuirile acestea îi umpleau ființa de plăceri sufletești nebănuite. . . . Avu o bucurie când îi dădu prin gând să rupă orice relație cu toți ungurii și să nu vorbească decât românește. . . . Îi era rușine însă când își amintea că i-a declarat dragoste [Rozicăi] în ungurește și că întâia iubire pățimășă e o ungueroaică” [“he

often dreamt that he was staying at the bottom of a prison, tied in chains, still happy in his heart, feeling like a martyr, who had to acquire others' victory by sacrifice. . . . And these imaginations filled his soul with unsuspected pleasures. . . . He was happy when it crossed his mind to break all relations with the Hungarians and to speak only Romanian . . . He was ashamed when he remembered that he had confessed love [to Rozica] in Hungarian, and that his first passionate love had been a Hungarian woman" (187). Later he is consoled by the thought that still, Roza is the wife of a Jew, and otherwise "ura niciodată nu poate cuprinde pe femeile asupritorilor. Spre a fi cu totul liniștit, făcea legământ că o va învăța și pe ea românește" ["hatred can never be extended to the oppressors' women. In order to be totally reassured, he swore to himself to teach her to speak Romanian, too"] (188). It would be hard for someone to invent phrases whose content should exhaust more completely the idea of thinking contaminated by prejudices. Now all the Hungarians—without discrimination—are overwhelmed by Titu's "hatred", including the decent people, like Madarasy, who sympathizes with the Romanians without reserves, or Csernátoni, the lawyer, who had been protecting his father for a lifetime.

From this time onwards, Titu becomes insensitive not only in connection with the possible Hungarian considerations, but also in connection with the tragedy of his father: "trebuie să fii mândru pentru că suferi fiindcă ai apărat pe un român, chiar dacă românul s-a întâmplat să fie un mișel . . . E o faptă superbă! Cu cât vor fi mai grele, cu atât te vei ridica mai sus în fața tuturor! zise tânărul invidios că nu el este în locul învățătorului, să se poată lăuda pretutindeni cu sacrificiile lui pentru cauza neamului" ["you must be proud that you are suffering because you have defended a Romanian, even if he happened to be a villain . . . It is a great deed! The greater the sacrifice, the higher you will rise in everybody's eyes! the young man said enviously because he was not in the schoolmaster's situation, to be able to boast everywhere with his sacrifices for the cause of the nation"] (195).

It is no wonder that from the discussions with the schoolmistress Virginia Gherman (who, ironically, will get married to a Hungarian gendarme), the Hungarians simply disappear from his point of view: "Când românii vor stăpâni pe pământul strămoșilor, când toate lumea va crede ca dâșii, când . . . Vorbele îmbătau pe amândoi." ["When the Romanians will reign over the land of the ancestors, when everybody will think like them, when . . . They were both intoxicated by the words"] (247). The narrator does not make comments on the margin of these considerations, however, the verb a "îmbăta" ["to get drunk"], qualifies, indirectly and discreetly, the nature of these "outpourings of hope" ["depănări de nădejde"].

Remaining alone, the dream gets even "sweeter": "Iată-l în Cluj, unde a fost o singură dată cu câțiva ani în urmă. Pretutindeni numai grai românesc . . . Și ce grai! Parcă toată lumea vorbește 'ca în țară,' mai dulce ca inginerul Vasile Pop din

Vărărea, care a colindat România întreagă . . . Firmele magazinelor, străzile, școlile, autoritățile . . . tot, tot e românesc . . . Statuia lui Matei Corvinul zâmbește către trecători și le zice: ‘Așa-i c-a venit ceasul dreptății?’ . . . Judecătorul, care a fost atât de obraznic cu Herdelea în Armadia scoate pălăria până la pământ dinaintea lui. Titu vrea să fie mărinimos, să-i arate că stăpânii români sunt nobili și iertători.” [“There he is in Cluj, where he was only once a few years ago. One can only hear the Romanian language everywhere . . . And what language! As if everybody were speaking ‘like in the country,’ sweeter than the engineer Vasile Pop from Vărărea, who has wandered all over the whole territory of Romania . . . The firms of the shops, the streets, the schools, the authorities . . . everything, everything is Romanian . . . The statue of Matthias Corvin smiles to the passers-by, saying: ‘The time of justice has come, hasn’t it?’ The judge, who has been so rude to Herdelea in Armadia, bows to the ground in front of him. Titu wants to be generous, to show him that the Romanian lords are noble and forgiving.”] He asks himself: “Ce-i cu mine? Aiurez?” [“What’s with me? Am I talking nonsense?”]

However, not only that this “nonsense” was taken seriously later and in reality, but it was also put in practice. Several times.

If these texts are not put between ironical quotation marks, the readers, who are not influenced by nationalist ideas (that is, all the pro European Romanians, and all the foreigners, even the pro Romanian ones) will be able to ask in fact: if this is the way things are, what is the aversion against the methods of the representatives of the Hungarian state based on? If the Hungarians are the oppressors (and they are, without doubt!), then what will be (or what are) the Romanians like, who will take over the methods of the oppressors (and it is known that they have taken them over many times), even improving them?!

Nationalism annihilates any empathy. On the side of the Hungarians, the representatives of the power become more and more incapable of putting themselves in the situation of the Romanians. They no longer ask the question: how would I feel if I were in their position? As such a question involves, in the vision of the nationalists, the betrayal of their own nationality. Titu himself gets closer and closer to the vision of the Hungarian nationalists. That is why he has no other choice but to leave the country. However, his puerile state of mind manifests itself even in this crucial moment: “—Nu mai plec nicăiri!—strigă seara înainte de somn în euforia serbărilor de la Astra—Rămân aici! . . . Ar fi o trădare să plec de aici! . . . Aici avem nevoie de oameni! Aici e nevoie mai mare ca oriunde!” [“I won’t go anywhere!—he shouted in the evening, before going to bed, in the euphoria of the celebrations at Astra—I will stay here! It would be a betrayal to leave from here!

. . . We need people here! There is a greater need here than anywhere else!”] However, in the morning he seems not to remember these things: “—Cum să rămân

aici . . . Dincolo e fericirea adevărată . . . Acolo trebuie să fie!” [“How should I stay here . . . True happiness is on the other side . . . There it must be!”] (342).

In the given state of affairs, the reference character of the novel is not, cannot be Titu, but rather his father, schoolmaster Herdelea. But irony (this time explicit) cannot avoid him either. At Sîngeorz Băi “După prânz, stând cu toții de vorbă într-un chioșc, la umbră, Herdelea povesti amănunțit rudelor câte a pățit. Voind să-și pregătească mai frumos ieșirea la pensie, o întoarse pe coarda națională, arătându-le cum toate i se trag din faptul că a luat apărarea unui biet țaran român față de samavolnicia unui magistrat ungar, apoi stăruind mai ales asupra examenului când inspectorul i-a cerut să nu mai lase pe copii să crâcnească pe românește, și sfârșind melancolic:

–Dar decât să-mi unguresc sufletul la bătrânețe și să-mi vând conștiința, mai bine s-ajung salahor muritor de foame! Mai bine! . . . De aceea mă și bate capul să ies la pensie curând, curând . . .” [“After lunch, having a conversation with everybody in a kiosk, in the shadow, Herdelea related, in details, to the relatives all the troubles he had gone through. He wanted to carefully prepare his retirement, so he continued in a national tone, telling them that all his troubles derived from the fact that he had defended a poor Romanian peasant from the tyranny of a Hungarian magistrate, then dwelling especially on the exam when the inspector had asked him not to let the children open their mouth in Romanian, then ending in a melancholic tone:

–But instead of Hungarianizing my soul and selling my conscience at an old age, I’d rather become a starving day-labourer! I’d rather! . . . That is why I want to retire soon, soon . . .”] (320). A bit later he also changes the record: “. . . sosi apoi și Comunicarea inspectorului că ministerul a binevoit să-i încuviințeze trecerea la pensie, mulțumindu-i pentru serviciile aduse statului. Herdelea tremură citind adresa și se îngâmă de mulțumirile ministrului. Firește că, până seara, toate Armadia află regretele guvernului de-a fi pierdut un învățător atât de harnic ca Herdelea și toate lumea se minună de asemenea distincție rară . . .” [“then the inspector’s Communication also arrived, with the ministry’s approval of his retirement, thanking him the services he had done for the state. Herdelea was trembling while he was reading the address and the ministry’s thanks made him proud. Of course, by the evening the whole Armadia found about the government’s regrets about having lost a schoolmaster so diligent as Herdelea had been, and everybody wondered at such a rare distinction . . .”] (354).

In spite of all these, he is the only character of the novel capable of true empathy. He cannot be defeated by the insulting negligence of Laura either, who, by marriage, is now enviably well-off. He puts himself in her place, and immediately realizes the relative normality of her gestures: “avu o clipă de mânie, dar și-o stăpânii repede. Așa-s copiii, când cresc mari și se înstrăinează. Parcă el n-a fost așa? S-a dus la înmormântarea tatălui său, dar nu s-a deranjat niciodată cât a

zăcut, șapte săptămâni. Și doar era coala, al patrulea sat. Pe maică sa, de câte ori vine pe aici, o cinstește cu rachiu dulce. Încolo parcă nici nu ar fi. Grijele și dragostea le păstrează cu zgârcenie pentru căminul lui. Atunci ce să se mire, că pe Laura n-o mai dor durerile lui. Asta-i viața. E tristă. Cine să-i schimbe rostul? Viața trece peste cei bătrâni, peste cei slabi. Viața e a celor tineri și puternici. Egoismul e temelie vieții” [“he had a moment of anger, but he tempered himself quickly. Children are like that, when they grow up and become estranged. Wasn’t he like that too? He went to the funeral of his father, but he never bothered as long as he had been staying in bed, seven weeks. And it was not far off, the fourth village. Whenever his mother comes here, he honours her with sweet brandy. On the other side it is as if she didn’t exist. He keeps his concerns and love for his home. Then why should he wonder that Laura no longer cares about his problems? Life is like that. It is sad. Who could change its sense? Life overcomes the old and the weak. Life belongs to the young and strong. Selfishness is the basis of life.”] (258-259).

And we can be sure that even the words of the schoolmistress, who “potrivește părerile după împrejurări” [“adjusts her opinions to the circumstances”], come from him in fact, from their everyday discussions: “–Lumea știe că suntem români, dar șovinismul nu-i bun niciodată. Adică ce-o fi, dacă să-i înveți ungurește! Lasă-i să învețe că-i bine azi, când știi o limbă străină, să vezi bine că fără ungurească nici nu te poți mișca din loc . . . Dacă-s vremurile așa, noi să le schimbăm?” [“–Everybody knows that we are Romanians, but chauvinism is never good. That is to say, what if you taught them Hungarian! Let them learn it, for it is good if you know a foreign language today, you see, without Hungarian you cannot make a single move . . . If these times are like that, why should it be us who change them?”] (326).

Rebreanu, both in the roles of model author and fictitious narrator, seems to share the opinion of the schoolmaster, rather than Titu’s opinion. In spite of the fact that it might be relatively easy to prove about Rebreanu, the empirical person, that he also cherished considerable nationalist sentiments, and around the 1940s he was often thinking even in the ideological categories sacrificed by the German national socialism (*Blut und Boden, Lebensraum*), without identifying with the fascist ideology, continuing to remain loyal to the liberal ideas. “Spațiul vital românesc, în cuprinsul frontierelor noastre nu e rezultatul unor cuceriri samavolnice, ci expresia curată a ființei neamului românesc . . . Pământul acesta ne-a zămislit pe noi după chipul și asemănarea lui” [“Within our frontiers, the Romanian living space is not the result of some tyrannical conquests, but the clear expression of the entity of the Romanian nation . . . This land created us in its image and likeness”] (305).

Even the famous reception speech held in front of the members of the Academy seems to us surpassed by the post-nationalist history of the new millennium. Many of Rebreanu’s considerations seem to us almost shameful today: “Orașele noastre nu sunt expresia specificului național . . . Orașul nostru înființat și

dezvoltat în multe cazuri din alte necesități decât cele românești, nu s-a adaptat încă deplin, spre a fi aievia, ca duh și civilizație izvor de românism curat . . . Țăranul e serios și naiv, orășanul e ironic și sceptic” [“Our towns are not the expression of the national character . . . Our towns, in many cases founded and developed out of needs other than Romanian ones, were not yet fully adapted to be forever, as spirit and civilization, the source of pure Romanianness . . . The peasants are serious and naïve, the townspeople are ironical and sceptic”] (313).

In his laudation I. Petrovici states with good reason: “. . . substanța concluziunii discursului ascultat, nu este deosebit de nouă, ba am putea spune, că e astăzi foarte răspândită, uneori chiar pe cale să alunece în primejdioase exagerări” [“the substance of the conclusion of the discourse that we heard is not very new, on the contrary, we could say that it is widely spread nowadays, sometimes even on the verge of sliding into dangerous exaggerations”], namely, into “fărămițarea unității și universalității adevărului în compartimente naționale distincte” [“crumbling the unity and universality of truth into distinct national compartments”].

As if he had wanted to offer support to his opponent, in an article from *Familia* entitled *Transilvania 1940*, Rebreanu wrote: “Dreptatea românească e atât de evidentă, că noi n-am socotit necesar s-o demonstrăm, sau n-am știut. Numai cine n-are dreptate trebuie să zbućiume, să mintă și să înșele pentru a crea aparențe împotriva evidenței” [“Romanian justice is so evident that we did not consider it necessary to prove it or we did not know it. Only those who are not right have to struggle, to lie and to cheat in order to create appearances as opposed to evidence.”] (331-333). Obviously, similarly to the Hungarian nationalists, he is also incapable of getting out of the vicious circle of the state-nation logic, and implicitly that of moving the frontiers, because he is not able to see, also similarly to the Hungarian nationalists, the part of truth of the other party.

In his quality of an abstract author, and especially as a fictitious narrator of the events from the world of the novel, he cannot avoid confronting with the alternative truths. On the one hand, and in the absence of explicit confessions, the supposition is imposed that in the process of elaboration of his novels, Rebreanu also takes into account the valuable opinions of the possible Hungarian and German readers, as well as the opinion of those speaking western languages of wide circulation. In his literary heritage we find series of short stories and dramatic texts written in the Hungarian language. These texts demonstrate by all means that at a certain moment he considers it not only possible, but also challenging to succeed in front of a Hungarian public. It is hard to believe that only a few years later this public completely disappeared, even from his subconscious. Not to mention the fact that in the case of a “minority”, the wish to demonstrate his value in the public opinion of the “majority” represents a social-psychological instinct which is impossible to surpass.

However, in this case his narrator (projected into the “world” of the literary work) must also take into account the values and opinions of the possible Hungarian, German and other readers speaking western languages. But Rebreanu must have been tempted obligatorily by the perspective of a success of universal literature. This temptation as such must also have had its rigorous consequences. His narrator had to “play” in accordance with universal democratic rules well known to Rebreanu as well. Literature is the domain of the integrity of truth. The domain in which, owing to the very mediality of the literary phenomenon, the artistic truth cannot be unilateral (as in the “national” historic sciences) or of an “absolute” objectivity (as in the natural sciences), on the contrary, it has to be shaped in a complex unity of the various significant viewpoints.

The deeper a novelist shapes the character of an artistic criterion of this complexity, the better chances he will have to become a prestigious writer. Rebreanu—as testified by his masterpieces—is conscious of the importance of this criterion. Even if between the empirical and the abstract writer there appear significant divergences, sometimes even impossible to reconcile.

Similar divergences can be pointed out firstly due to the composition of the novel. From Călinescu and Lovinescu to Săndulescu and today’s young critics, a great deal of substantial things have been written about the symmetry of this composition. Still, an aspect, which is crucial in my opinion, has remained unobserved: the complex connection between the two levels of the novel, the social one and the national one. As in *Ion* we have two “lands” and two “loves”. On the one hand, Baciú’s land, on the other hand, the land of Transylvania. On the one hand, the love for Florica, on the other hand, the love for the Transylvanian people. In order to acquire the land, in both cases, true love must be betrayed.

Ion’s tragedy entirely takes place within the Romanian community, the Hungarian oppression does not influence at all the unfolding of the events. This tragedy would not change at all if its heroes (Baciú, Ana, Ion, Florica, George) lived beyond the Carpathians.

Why did Rebreanu mix the two “novels”, practically separate, the fate of the Herdelea family and Ion’s story? Rebreanu is a writer too conscious to juxtapose them purely accidentally, based on exclusively biographical considerations. The fact that the title of the novel comes from the name of the peasant hero, who excels by his individuality, and not from the most sympathetic hero of the history, the old Herdelea, suggests, as clearly as possible, that Ion’s figure has a strong symbolic character, that he represents more than what can be represented only within the “sentimental novel”.

What is more, this sentimental novel seems to be a *mise en abyme*, which would have the primary function of directing us in the more complex interpretation (see Dällenbach 1980) of the national novel, that is, in filling the empty spaces

(*Leerstellen*), left by Rebreanu (whether consciously or subconsciously, it seems to be impossible to decide) to the disposal of the reader free of biased attitudes.

In this way, Ion would become also the hero of the national novel, despite the fact that he is not involved in it, not even accidentally. As in the given Romanian community it is not the Hungarians but other Romanians that are the owners of the lands. As a consequence, the conflict of the land and of love would also be valid at the other level of the plot of the novel.

What would this mean?

The answer lies in the analysis of the relationship Ion-Titu. This relationship is—on both sides—very close and especially deeply significant. On the one hand, Ion “gets” the idea to compel Baciú to yield the land to him, only from Titu. The suggestion is subconscious (literally and figuratively), but Ion takes it seriously literally as well. On the other hand, Titu also represents the nationalist idea of yielding the land to Transylvania by force. Metaphorically speaking: with the competition of the Transylvanian intellectuals, the Old Romanian Kingdom “compels” the world public opinion to “marry off”, “with land with everything”, the (multicultural) population of Transylvania. Since truth (more precisely, the right to self-determination) cannot be reached through a democratic decision of the entire population, that is, by a plebiscite, as it would be right and equitable, but through a war, based on some secret treaties concluded with the forces of the Antant. It seems that Ion’s gesture also suggests to Titu the “solution” to his problem. Anyway, the sympathy between the peasant with individualist instincts and the intellectual with collectivist beliefs requires a convincing explanation, as it is almost mystical and explored “consciously” by the abstract author of the novel.

The history related to achieving national truth is no longer dealt with in the novel. However, the reader is aware of the fact that the historic event has already taken place: (see the dates at the end of the text): after the war (very implausible at the temporal level of the “narrated world”, but it is a well-known fact of later real history) Transylvania got unified with the country. And the consequences of the event remain hidden. The peasant-sentimental novel ends definitely, Ion will expiate his sins. However, the intellectual-national novel remains suspended. This one, as the open works much later, must be completed by the reader of the book himself/herself, within the occasionally “definitive” process of elaboration of an interpretive reading . . .

The natural question arises: if this unification will be carried out just as Ion’s “unification” with Baciú’s lands took place, won’t there be necessarily tragic consequences too? If the Romanian intellectuals will act similarly to a “reduced entity”, like Ion, if national egotism will be their main governor, not taking into account the possible consequences, will it be possible to avoid the tragic consequences? Will Titu be able to betray his Transylvanian identity without the entailing consequences? Will he be able to reduce his personality to the exclusive,

even exclusivist “Romanian” identity, without transforming this latter too into a nationalist malformation, self-destructive from a moral and spiritual point of view?

There are as many virtually justified questions, which can be formulated only by today’s reader, capable of freeing himself/herself from the secular nationalist prejudices. And if the questions are formulated, the signs become rather clear: “Visurile sunt tot atât de fără preț aici, ca și dincolo—*scrie Titu de la București* . . . Raiul unuia poate să fie iadul altuia. Fericirea e clădită de închipuirea fiecăruia și fiecare și-o potrivește ca o haină . . . Sufletul meu rătăcește aici într-un deșert fără popasuri ca o pasăre care și-a pierdut cuibul” [“The dreams are just as priceless here as on the other side—*Titu writes from Bucharest* . . . One’s heaven can be the other’s hell. Happiness is built on everybody’s imagination, and fitted to everybody like a dress . . . My soul strays here in a desert without a place to rest, like a bird which lost its nest”]. The reader cannot help remembering the discussions with Friedman, the notary who lived for a while in Romania and presented to him the situation from there in rather sombre colors, but which Titu, under the influence of nationalist enthusiasm, did not believe. The quoted sentence represents his last words. And if we think of what followed—the fascist dictatorship, the dismembering of Transylvania, the communist dictatorship, the humiliation of the Ceaușescu regime (even on behalf of a nationalism of an exceptional, and at the same time puerile harshness, of Titu’s type)—, Titu’s premonitions seem to us perfectly justified.

It is true that at the end of the novel everything “gets settled,” the reader already knows that the land of Transylvania “was unified with Romania”, the girls get married, the Herdelea couple finds a quiet place, without material difficulties, in the Romanian community from Armadia, priest Belciug “mends his way”, Groșoru assumes the responsibility of George’s trial. But it is because of these idyllic arrangements that irony still hovers over this impressive ending, well rounded also from a narrative point of view. As the end also has the value of a beginning. The future is open towards a history which will sweep “*zvârcolirile vieții*” [“the tossings and turnings of life”]: “Suferințele, patimile, năzuințele mari și mici, se pierd într-o taină dureros de necuprinsă, ca niște tremurări plăpânde într-un uragan uriaș.” [“The sufferings, passions, big and small longings get lost in a painfully boundless mystery, as some feeble tremblings in a huge hurricane.”] (365).

The latent irony suggests that nothing is and nothing can be definitive. Things have their temporal dimension. Baciú got married out of interest too, but later he passionately fell in love with his wife, under the auspices of traditional morals it could not have happened in another way, once he knew that he owed everything that he had and that he was, to her, to his wife. His love towards his wife becomes so strong that Baciú simply cannot bear her death any longer. He starts drinking. Ion is no longer capable of such love, with archaic aura. He is already a modern

individual, an ego pushed as far as paroxysm. Inspector Csernátoni understands the Romanians and does not consider that it would be the interest of the Hungarian state to compel the Romanian children to learn Hungarian perfectly. Horváth, overwhelmed by the zeal of an ardent nationalist, is no longer capable of thinking reasonably to a certain extent.

However, irony presupposes a relatively clear authorial intention (see *Compagnon* 74-105). In Rebreanu's case this intention seems to be rather *instinctive*, stemming from a born narrative and social sense.

The Transylvanian society, just like the European society at the end of the century, passes through a period of profound changes. The relationships between majority and minority, men and women, peasants and intellectuals change. The peasants increasingly become tools in the hand of nationalist intellectuals. More precisely, of selfish intellectuals, as nationalism is nothing else but the cultural egotism converted into political doctrine. The intellectuals want to acquire political influence by raising the national sentiment. And in this way they betray the real interests of all nations. In our case, it is not the old Romanian Kingdom that will rise to the cultural, economic and political level of Transylvania, but inversely, Transylvania will be lowered to the level of the Balkans.

If we abandon the nationalist interpretation, based especially on the philological-historical parallelism between Titu and Rebreanu, and we risk an interpretation through the prism of the complex of relations among the abstract author—narrator—heroes, unthought-of perspectives open up for us, which do place Rebreanu's novel among the most important masterpieces of world literature. And which—due to today's historical events—gains stringent actuality again. Together with *Pădurea spânzuraților* [*Forest of the Hanged*], which, through the elaboration of the basic ideas from *Ion*, represents aspects of the concepts of cultural and civic nation still unclarified today, Rebreanu's work could offer a firm intellectual basis for the reinterpretation, in post-nationalist terms, of these concepts of primary importance, also aiming at the ideological fundamentals of the Romanian state.

(Translated by Judit Pieldner)

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***Pădurea Spânzuraților* or the Multifaceted Dimension of Love**

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Abstract. The article debates the dimension of love in Rebreanu's novel *Pădurea Spânzuraților* [*Forest of the Hanged*], love seen as rapprochement, reunion between two peoples, and a genuine phenomenon of cultural exchange. Thus the image of the Hungarian people is shaped due to Romanian literary works created with Hungarian characters. The multi-faceted approach of love in the novel comprises: protecting love, paternal love, Christian love, and universal love (meeting Ilona). Eros overcomes the novel's tragic tune, faith and universal love between two people of different nationalities conquer it into eternity.

Keywords: universal love, Christian love, Hungarian-Romanian literary-cultural relations, eros

“The relationship lived with God primarily as divine love present in man” (Velasco 113) – is the dimension of Christian love rendered in Rebreanu's fiction, an axiom which relates to “universal love” as a means of soul to access the heavenly realm.

The paper proposes to seek the holy in the feeling of love between two people of different nationalities: Apostol and Ilona, highlighting meanwhile the Romanian-Hungarian literary and cultural links. Love thus becomes a celebration of the existence of a close cooperation between these two peoples, moreover a

phenomenon of cultural exchange, a common language of the interethnic dialogue. The interferences of this kind have always constituted a clearly defined reality and they are part of the vivid substance of both nations.

Adrian Marino, in his preface written for Károly Köllő's *Literary Confluence*, outlines the importance of writing a history regarding literary-cultural Romanian-Hungarian relations: "I believe it is time to emphasize the existence of a void regarding the history of Hungarian – Romanian cultural and literary relations. Both in Romania and in Hungary. And by 'history' I do not mean fragmentary, documentary, or bibliographic contributions, which do exist and are indispensable as well as extremely useful, but a true synthesis regarding these relations" (7). The Hungarian-Romanian cultural and literary contacts favor the quest of one's own image of the Hungarian readership in Romanian literature with Hungarian characters.

Literary critics have issued a wide range of opinions. Ion Simuț, in his volume *Rebreanu, beyond realism*, suggests the revelation of "another Rebreanu." The novel *Pădurea spânzuraților* [*Forest of the Hanged*] is "the most important religious novel of our literature. Right from its very beginning it is portrayed as a novel of mystic crisis. . . . The metaphysics, symbolic values, discrete poetry of mystery constitute attempts to enrich the dimension of the novel, to multiply the levels of significance" (295). Love for Bologa is a divine principle, craving for the holy, as well as the search of the "other," revelation of "universal love," the great meeting with Ilona.

As a child, Bologa was brought up by his mother who instilled a mystic mood, having thus the manifestation of God.

Right at the moment he knelt at the end of his prayer, the sky suddenly opened and in an endless remoteness but yet so close as if it had been in his heart, there appeared a curtain of white cloudlets, in the midst of which God's face was shining as a golden light, blinding, frightening and at the same time as comforting as a maternal kiss. Out of the godlike brightness a lively look could be discerned, infinitely tender and great, which seemed to peer into all depths and nooks.

. . . This wraith lasted just one second and was so boundlessly sweet that Apostol's soul stopped throbbing, and his eyes were filled with a strange and sick glitter. However, his soul was so full with love that he would have been happy to die right there, then, looking at the godlike wonder . . . When he returned to his place, his face seemed to have changed. His blue eyes on his white cheeks were like two sources of light.

– Mom, I have seen God! mumbled the child with ardor while Mrs. Bologa was trying to wipe her tears with a handkerchief bathed in tears. (Rebreanu, *Pădurea* 33)

The first form of love, i.e. “deity’s revelation,” is identified, according to Liviu Petrescu’s vision, with a paternal, guardian love “born of a childish portrayal of life,” the unveiling of a “completely other” located beyond the intelligible world of childhood, which used to fill one’s heart with amazement, tempting the imagination through miraculous events, a harmony of contrasts and love (Rebreanu, *Realitate* 65-81).

The sequence of revelation is followed by the confession about the loss of the divine role-model, the denial of divinity in individual existence because of his father’s death:

‘I have lost God,’ flashed through his mind, closing his eyes with fear as if he had wanted to prevent the blight. He clearly felt that he was crashing into a chasm without bottom and he could not stop, he could not get hold of anything. But this lasted just for a minute, or maybe even less, and in the end he remained with a fiery horror in his heart as if he had woken in the middle of the night, alone, in a huge graveyard, not knowing which way to go . . . (Rebreanu, *Pădurea* 35)

Seemingly, we witness our hero’s inner fall due to the loss of deity.

Another dimension of love present in the novel is “Christian love”—it is the moment when Bologa’s soul is annoyed by doubt hearing that the Czech officer Svoboda has been sentenced to death. “No duty in this world can enforce me to kill my comrade, says Gross, slightly frowned . . . Nothing is more than man!” (Rebreanu, *Pădurea* 44).

Right from the beginning of the novel, Bologa senses the solution of love in the convict’s “bright gaze.”

Even the death sentence was welcome with a smile and eyes . . . Of course, such people do not fear death nor are they envious. (Rebreanu, *Pădurea* 23)

The damned human eyes seemed to mesmerize him with their contemptuous look at death and beautified by a huge love. In the end, Bologa thought that the mouth of the condemned would open and give a terrible cry of redemption, exactly as the first believers, whom ground at the point of death, could see Christ. (Rebreanu, *Pădurea* 26-27)

The size of Christian love is emphasized also by the reality of war that circumscribes the relations between Romanians and Hungarians, the pain in the souls of all people. Romanians, Hungarians, Czechs, Germans, all men in their liminal state of existence, were united in their sufferings by this death-machine/machinery.

The aspects of twinning that social condition creates shared by all oppressed do not miss from this novel either. The hearst Vidor gets along very well with his Romanian townsmen. People speak both languages.¹ When Romanian peasants are hanged for no reason, their terrified Hungarian neighbors condemn such acts.² Bologa lives his last moments accompanied by Ilona's love, his father-in-law Vidor, the mayor of the village, and other simple people of different nationalities. (Slămnoiu 41-42)

Bologa advances to lieutenantcy, becomes an "apostle of war" in which he begins to see "the true source of life," a situation that triggers in his soul another moment of inner change, a new religious stage.

Experiencing the crystallization of religious feeling, the author passes from the events to an ascetic attitude—pensive, Bologa's evolution being decisive. "Love lives eternal, without beginning and without end . . . Through love you discover God and you high heaven" (Rebreanu, *Opere* 294). Priest Boteanu is to Apostol Bologa a touch with divinity, the amount of eternal values ("Our ideal is God").

"Universal love," another dimension of love in this novel, is meeting Ilona. She was "a girly about eighteen years old, with a red kerchief on her head, with big black eyes, that seemed to smile, with full and wet lips" (Rebreanu, *Opere* 92) — She appears for the protagonist as a light, as an opportunity of recovering springs of life, a materialization of light. "Through the window from the garden, the sun was shining from the east. A strip of gold was shaking awry, over the table onto the yellow floor, up near the door, separating Ilona from Apostol as a bridge in fairyland" (Rebreanu, *Opere* 198).

Falling ill the night he had decided to cross the lines, the girl stayed incessantly next to him, watching over. He could feel "the caress of her look on his forehead, and lips, so he did not dare to wink for fear he should dispel his heart's joy" (Rebreanu, *Opere* 93). Breaking engagements with Marta enhances his moral shock; the reason of his decision had also been Ilona, whom meanwhile had fallen

¹ "The church yard was full of people. . . . Among peasants who jammed around the priest, Apostol Bologa saw many soldiers with faces transfigured by piety, stammering prayers. But he was astonished when catching sight of the Hungarian sergeant of his chancellery with a candle lit, edgeways" (Rebreanu, *Pădurea* 205).

² "— My poor sister-in-law cried as a madman, pitying them, said the hearst! Two of them are from Faget, well-known men, Romanian, and one is a native, . . . Poor Horvath, dear priest, you must know him, from the railway station street . . . woe is his!" (Rebreanu, *Pădurea* 205).

"Henceforth, Apostol Bologa has lost the track of time. Doctor Meyer used to come twice a day telling him he was alright but he should stay in bed till he would bring him a miraculous medicine that would cure him right away" (Rebreanu, *Pădurea* 133).

dear to him. Seeing Ilona again [0]disturbs his soul's waters.³ The girl looks at Apostol with "a fearful curiosity and especially waiting eagerly for a miracle to come" (Rebreanu, *Opere* 132).

They share triteness, "Apostol watched her and listened to her attentively and still understood nothing. Her voice with its rough flexuosity as that of a wild song would trickle into his heart, through all its pores pampering his nerves" (Rebreanu, *Opere* 133). They look at each other coyly and anxiously. Then they embrace with an "angry passion," sparkled by love.

In the novel, the woman's body is not individualized, she is purified by natural elements. Divinity and womanhood seem to dispute primacy in Apostol's soul: "she vaguely realized that between God and his love there is a great gap, and he could not understand what was the purpose of that clash? If God is love, why isn't she an innate part of Him?" (Rebreanu, *Opere* 204). However, femininity is still a human feature. Daniela Gabriela Tăpârlea believes that "the chromatic symbolism of the novel contributes to the creation of color correspondence and the emotions felt by the characters" (41).

"Here and there, yellow, blue, green and red blossom the line of action" (Tăpârlea 42). Ilona is a girly about eighteen years who wears "a red kerchief," her lips "dark red and wet" were moving jerkily. The first exchange of glances between Apostol and Ilona is highlighted in red. "They sipped one another's look with so much excitement as if in between their eyes there had been stretched a red silk thread" (Rebreanu, *Opere* 155). Even the sun rejoiced in their idyll that was why there seemed to rule a "white silence over which floated the sun's smile, as a golden powder" (Rebreanu, *Opere* 140), and "from all gardens laughed blossomed trees, and on the verge of streets they had light petals shed, just like in fairy tale weddings" (Rebreanu, *Opere* 140).

The novel's tragicness is defeated by Eros, for a moment, because faith and universal love between people of different nationalities conquer him in eternity. Love rekindles the sacred, purifies the self, thus Liviu Malita considers that "Rebreanu does not oppose this world to a transcendent 'beyond' but prefers to make it occur in this world, i.e. a 'beyond,' by a fullness and a wealth without comparison" (305).

³ Călin Teuțișan considers that "his love towards Ilona and the hallucinatory act of desertion are both subscribed to the coordinates of a pathetic and paroxymal solar feeling which encloses, quite undifferentiatedly, the love for a woman, love for people in general, divine love, sacrificial idea and suicidal decision which brings his life to an end" (*Dicționarul analitic de opere literare românești* 311).

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Communicative Spirit between Writers and Scripts in the Romanian and Hungarian Languages

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Abstract. The paper looks at Octavian Codru Tăslăuanu and Octavian Goga, two major figures of Romanian literature and culture from the beginning of the twentieth century. The relationship that developed between the two, both on a personal and on a professional level, represents a central focus of the discussion, revealed through references to letters, memories, and confessions of the two writers themselves, but also through quoting opinions of László Gáldi and Sámuel Domokos. The two Romanian writers also collaborated with the *Luceafărul* periodical, the importance of which in shaping Goga's literary career is also highlighted, as well as Goga's contribution to transforming the student publication into a veritable literary and cultural forum. Tăslăuanu's concerns for primarily aesthetic, and only secondarily nationalistic criteria in appreciating literary works and as guidelines for the *Luceafărul* are also emphasized, while the paper also outlines the Hungarian reception and literary historical views on these major Romanian cultural figures.

Keywords: Goga, Tăslăuanu, *Luceafărul*, aesthetic criteria, nationalism.

“ . . . Whoever is not capable to do his education in the sense of a moral flexibility which shall protect him from sacrifices and surprises should put a distance between himself and this world and to devote himself to loneliness . . .” Octavian Goga

Continuing Octavian Goga's idea taken from *Crumbles*¹ where morals written at different periods of his life are gathered, we can say that there are different ways of escaping loneliness but one very essential has always been communicating with the likes.

At the beginning of my teaching career, my literary interests guided me towards a work concerning the life and works of Octavian Codru Tăslăuanu, originating from Bilbor-Harghita, a friend of Octavian Goga's, both known for their activity at the *Luceafărul* periodical founded on 1st July 1902 in Budapest. Possessing some interesting material, some of which unpublished, amongst other preoccupations, I had been working for a few years hoping to complete and extend the study on him.

As a state of mind or an intention cannot stay inside for a long time and a state of mind, no matter how authentic it could be, cannot become a "truth" but only in and through communication, I wrote a letter to Sámuel Domokos Dr., University Professor in Budapest, well-known researcher and literary historian, telling him about my intentions and asking him to accept my application to doctoral studies at the Romanian Language and Literature Department whose Head he was at the Eötvös Loránd University Budapest. Amongst others, I wrote to him that "I would be delighted to have you as my scientific coordinator with the thesis on Octavian C. Tăslăuanu provided you accept this unexpected and courageous proposal" (posted on 17 January 1982).

On 25th March 1982, Professor Sámuel Domokos sent me a letter as cordial as possible which began as follows: "Dear Colleague, my answer comes late but as a positive one, though I do not like Tăslăuanu whose untruths about Goga I confuted. He was a passionate nationalist and he hindered Goga's relationship with Ady. I accept your topic on condition it does not refer to Goga. But I propose another topic from the Romanian-Hungarian folk researches, fairy tale anthologies, folk poetry or bilingual materials of which we do not have much. I see that you like folklore and probably you know Hungarian? I like this topic very much and it would be a great success for our relations . . . "

In my response, I thanked him for the precious information given, specifying at the same time that choosing a folklore topic has aroused my attention.

Although the topic referring to the life and especially the activity of O. C. Tăslăuanu and O. Goga did not become a doctoral thesis, I have not abandoned the subject as the present paper proves.

In his books *Octavian Goga* and *Memories from Luceafărul*, O. Tăslăuanu presents us a "little known and little emphasized" (202) Goga but avoiding a sterile

¹ Octavian Goga began in Iași on 17th November 1916 his intimate diary entitled *Crumbles from a Fall*, diary that he kept until 26th December of the same year. *Crumbles* includes the poet's morals written in different periods of his life, partially published in *Revista fundațiilor* (6th year, December 1939) and then in *Tribuna* (9th year, No. 31 (444), 5th August 1965).

biographism. As he also states, “even though some relationships and influences between Goga’s everyday life and his poetry can be traced, I think it is a pure waste of time to reveal the mystery of the poet’s sources of inspiration” (77).

Tăslăuanu’s writings on Goga written in a balanced but somehow unobjective way are a mixture of biography, literary history and scattered comments of literary criticism.

As in every beginner, Goga found in Tăslăuanu a devoted and loyal friend, and, more importantly, a permanent spiritual stimulant. “His character prone to get discouraged needed this very much” (10) as László Gáldi remarks in his work dedicated to the poet and he continues, “in their conversations which lasted till dawn, Tăslăuanu beamed this active spirit through which he managed to revive *Luceafărul* after its uncertain beginnings” (10).

Ioan Lupaș’s letters reveal that Goga was tormented by pessimism and disappointments having an innate predilection towards melancholy leading him to an intimate-minor poetry in 1903-1904 to which Sámuel Domokos, in his study on Goga adds: “we do not think that these states of mind would have been connected to his conceptions” (61-62). Let us interpret this way, comparing the two statements of Sámuel Domokos, the first referring to Tăslăuanu: “Let us not forget that Tăslăuanu was older having a greater life experience and being more practical than Goga.” (62); the second focusing on Goga, “characterized by a profound national sentiment, having firm political convictions, needing no advice from others in this field!” (62).

As we will see, the events of his life contradict the above opinions. The documents prove that it was Tăslăuanu’s merit to have guided Goga towards the core of his national and social inspiration. Here is the confession: “I encouraged him as I saw that he found his original sources of inspiration and creation in the rural life” and then “he decided to tune his lyra and sing the pain of the oppressed nation he was part of” (*Amintiri* 18).

In what concerns the poet’s inclination towards pessimism, Tăslăuanu claims it not to be of personal nature, “but derives it from the millennial sufferings of our peasantry that we meet in the folk songs and bitterness of the everyday speech” (80). Călinescu, analysing his poetry, remarks a similar idea: “an ineffable of metaphysical origin, an unmotivated pain of an ancient people grown old by the cruel experience of life expressed through ritual wailing conveyed without explaining the meaning” (610).²

Tăslăuanu is right, as noticed by several critics and literary historians, when he states that Goga would not have written his beautiful verses had there not been the *Luceafărul*. He would not have elaborated his programmatic poetry “had there not been a periodical which published what he wanted” (21) and adds, “It was

² The same quotation can be found in the 1941 edition, page 540.

Luceafărul that gave Octavian Goga and Ion Agârbiceanu to literature” (21). Tăslăuanu also leaves us this meaningful confession about the most significant poet of the *Luceafărul* periodical: “The shining talent of Goga ornamented the periodical, but even this had the merit to keep the lyra of the poet tuned and wove his glory of rays which crowns his forehead with immortality” (*Spovedanii* 131).

Sámuel Domokos, author of studies on Goga, becomes suspicious, discontent with Tăslăuanu’s statement: “Does Goga owe more to *Luceafărul* or the periodical owes more to the poet?” and notes that “more precisely, it can be said: they could not have existed without each other” (62).

Let me make a short digression. Let us suppose *Luceafărul* had not existed, Goga would have found another periodical but it is not sure that he would have found a publisher (let alone a mentor) to whom he could have attached as a Transylvanian as we could see in Tăslăuanu’s case. In other words, Sámuel Domokos does not think (deliberately or not) that a periodical (at that time and circumstances, *Luceafărul* but let us not neglect O. Tăslăuanu) could have smoothed the way of a young writer of Goga’s talent. We ground our affirmation with a single example (less valuable, let us admit it!): *Familia*, where Eminescu published for the first time, with its publisher Iosif Vulcan—who became his literary godfather as it is known—would it not have helped the future “development” of the poet?

A vigilant observer of the Romanian realities of those times, O. Tăslăuanu, as Goga himself, fought to transform *Luceafărul* from a student publication with minor cultural goals into a literary and cultural periodical which should embrace the general Romanian problem of the time. Concerning the “nationalism” of the periodical, Tăslăuanu specifies, “we have not cultivated a cheap and noisy nationalism but we struggled to raise the cultural level of the readers with serious studies” (*Amintiri* 55-56). Otherwise, László Gáldi sees in Tăslăuanu the one who “had strong but sincere and objective national feelings. He does not avoid Romanian-Hungarian relations... but he studies them with the candidness of a man who loves truth” (34).

Even Sámuel Domokos stated that the publisher of *Luceafărul* “defended the need of the national character of Romanian literature, regarding from the point of view of the Romanians of Transylvania” (65).

In *Memories from Luceafărul*, Tăslăuanu states “the generation of *Luceafărul* has enriched the Romanian literature with the specific Transylvanian art and raised the cultural level of Transylvania”, to specify in *Octavian Goga*: “In reality, we did not give birth to a new current but we continued the Transylvanian traditions” (26).

In many articles and notes Tăslăuanu defends the priority of the aesthetic criterion in appreciating literary works explaining its inter-conditioning with the ethical and ethnical factor.

Seen through the eyes of today's researcher, we can discover contradictions, animosities, debatable opinions in the writings of the publisher of *Luceafărul*, some of these remarked in our paper "Considerations, conceptions and aesthetical, cultural creeds with Octavian C. Tăslăuanu."

Besides these, we mention that the Romanian literature of those years was enriched at the chapter of artistic translations thanks to Octavian Goga, who thus lined up to the tradition of his predecessors, G. Coșbuc and Șt. O. Iosif. Dan Brudașcu's book, *Octavian Goga—translations from universal poetry* (2005) had to appear so that an order could be made regarding "Goga's detractors and minimalizers" (Brudașcu)³ (Hungarians and Romanians as well) who hurried to minimalize some translations from Petőfi and Ady and, in the case of some Hungarian critics and literary historians (like Aladár Schöpflin), who made remarks according to which Petőfi, Ady and Madách would have "decisively" influenced Goga's creations without whom the poet from Rășinari "could not have reached the peaks of perfection and activism-visionarism that he did . . ." Dan Brudașcu, with an extraordinary moral correctness, also mentions Goga's defenders. One of the Hungarian personalities who had a realistic and benevolent vision defending Goga was Sámuel Domokos who is to be considered "the best-balanced Hungarian hermeneutist of Goga's work" (Brudașcu). He outlined that the Transylvanian poet has already traced the inner spiritual lines of his original creations long before he started translating the works of Hungarian writers and considered the poets of Transylvanian origin, G. Coșbuc, Șt. O. Iosif, and Goga as real peaks of literary translations at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Sámuel Domokos remarks:

Goga did not become an exceptional poet because he followed Petőfi's poetical programme but because he had the necessary talent to speak in the name of an oppressed people and to be its guide. Without these extraordinary qualities he would have become a mere epigone, whoever the chosen master would have been. He owes his poetical affirmation not to his masters but primarily to his talent. (91)

The moral debt of the poet to align with the multitude, to step beside it, to identify with its aspirations, the noise and the profile of the streets is the most recurrent idea in Octavian Goga's poetry and writings. The same idea was shared by Endre Ady, the one connected to life, the poet who had seen redemption just in Man and Humanity. His song as well as Goga's, being that of the streets, dreaming for all. The mutual respect and love of the two representatives of Romanian and Hungarian spirituality remain examples for future generations.

³ See also Adrian Botez's book on Goga.

The one who wrote “I did not have the gift of silence. I could not hide anything, neither good nor bad” (18) or “No one has the right to steal the beauty from our souls” (287), Octavian Goga, and the one who “loved the much suffering world”, saying “the real dream is the courageous dream” (14-17), wishing “to belong to someone” (16, 311), Endre Ady in all that they did in thought, acts and creation nowadays belong to both nations.

(Translated by Zsolt Orbán)

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