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Conflicting Narrative Identity Formation in Racialized Intercultural Discourse Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist* – A Cognitive Narratological Approach

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Abstract. The paper addresses the issue of how racialized intercultural relations can problematize the formation of narrative identity. How it can call in question the narratability of racialized subjectivity and lead to conflicting narrative identites of the same character as inferrible from narratorial discourse, vis-à-vis the way the character views itself in its intramental activity. And how all of this follows from, and is traceable through the manifestations of, racialized cognitive architecture, and thus, paradoxically, unnarratability can become the source of narrativity. The conflicting nature of racialized subjectivity and narrative identity formation will be examined, then, through a socio-cognitive lens. This study will draw on Nadine Gordimer's apartheid-era novel, *The Conservationist* (1974) as a tutor text and will be informed especially by colonial/postcolonial theory, cultural as well as cognitive narratology, cognitive cultural studies, theories of intercultural communication, and discourse analysis.

Keywords: apartheid literature, cognitive narratology, intercultural discourse, Nadine Gordimer, narrative identity.

Introduction

The main character, always in focus in Nadine Gordimer's apartheid-period narrative *The Conservationist* (1974) is Mehring, a middle-aged, rich white industrialist, the director of an investment fund and a member of more boards of directors than he cares to keep count of, who – although he is not a farmer – buys himself a farm on the money he earned in industry. He does it "to make contact with the land" and "as a sign of having remained fully human and capable of enjoying the simple things of life that poorer men can no longer afford." It is a

"weed-choked, neglected" farm, "a dirty piece of land, agriculturally speaking" (1978, 22). For tax reasons he could have left it "misused or wasted," but he decided to stop "the rot," clean up the place, make it productive (1978, 23). Although he has an experienced black foreman, Jacobus, who runs the farm and manages the black farm workers with great skill, Mehring *is* the farmer, the boss. He thinks he has "to keep half an eye (all he could spare) on everything" (1978, 23). He is open to learning new facts, ready to cope with the new situation since this is what industry required from him in the city after all: he was "accustomed to digesting new facts and coping with new situations" (1978, 23).

But is he open to learn, is he ready to cope with the situation, really? What the Transvaal countryside has in store for the central character of this apartheid narrative in terms of human environment – the Afrikaners-alias-the-Boers-alias-the Dutch, the Greeks, the Asian Indians, and especially the native black Africans (even if safely segregated in "the location") – both irritates and confuses him to a greater and greater degree. All this on top of a leftist mistress, Antonia, whom he helps to flee abroad (1978, 264), and a son, Terry with "well-meaning, if half-baked, social conscience" (Smith 1993, 50), with whom the generation gap could not be wider (add a divorced wife, who is an insufferable nuisance to him).

So the more we get to know of Mehring, the less we know who he is. And he has the same problem with himself. Thus the novel is gradually developing into a journey, which is his quest for self-definition although, puzzling as it is, he could not be more solidly defined than he is – by the racial and social position that he occupies and the ideological conformity he represents in apartheid society. He is "a fundamental pillar of the oppressive system in South Africa" (Clingman 1990, 209). What we have as his story unfolds are more and more messed-up relationships: interpersonal, interracial, intercultural disengagement, and contrived or cut-off communication in all of these respects.

The author decided not to help her reader. As Nadine Gordimer made it plain in the Jannika Hurwitt-interview, in *The Conservationist* "you have a real narrator," "with a totally dispassionate view from outside," but the book is predominantly an interior monologue (Mehring's for the most part, but not always), and the line between when Mehring is speaking and when he is not "is very vague" (1990, 147). Although the dispassionate narrator clearly, though implicitly, represents Gordimer's antiapartheid stance (much-discussed in Gordimer criticism), and in various ways it is Mehring who is in the explicit or implicit focus of the intramental and intermental activities[1] of the other characters too, narrative comprehension does take considerable effort on the part of the reader. The reason why habitual narrative-comprehension mechanisms fail us is the vague line just mentioned:

1 Theoretical concepts coming from cognitive narratology like "intramental activity" and "intermental activity" will be much more useful for us than "interior monologue" and "dialogue" since the whole novel is cognition – chiefly Mehring's – after all.

the presented intramental activity "jumps about from different points of view" in the book (Hurwitt 1990, 147). "I chose to ignore," Gordimer admits, "that one had to explain anything at all. I decided that if the reader didn't make the leap in his mind, if the allusions were puzzling to him—too bad" (Hurwitt 1990, 148).

When leaps in our mind are needed to yield clues to understanding a narrative, narrative coherence is accessible through inferences. The latter are what Gordimer's leap-in-the-reader's-mind idea translates into. Constructionist theory of inference generation distinguishes local and global coherence inferences as well as explanatory and communicative[2] ones (Graesser, Singer and Trabasso 1994, especially 375–376). The allusions that trigger those inferences can be overt, but in this case are more characteristically covert, embedded in the narrative discourse, which is to say: they are implied. It is so because the true nature of the society the novel is about must "*reveal itself*," Gordimer argues in the Pat Schwartz-interview: "The suffering inflicted by White on Black, the ambiguities of feeling, the hypocrisy, the courage, the lies, the sham and shame—they are all there, implicit. If you write honestly about life in South Africa, apartheid damns itself" (1990, 83; emphasis in the original).

Racialized Cognitive Architecture: Intentionality

The Conservationist invites us into Mehring's and other characters' cognition, their intramental and intermental activities, then. Thus what we have to engage, when trying to make sense of this narratively organized discourse, is the basic source and container of the cognition of the novel's fictional minds (and ours): their (and our) cognitive architecture. The many kinds and formalized models of cognitive architecture aside (from neuroscience and cognitive psychology through artificial intelligence), for narratological purposes cognitive architecture is "the range of databases" in our mind that are affected by new information, our "knowledge stores" (Zunshine 2006, 48–49). The attempt to interpret Mehring's fictional mind is also to examine the cognitive architecture behind his cognition, by the light of our own. We try to interpret his by mobilizing our own. It is in his cognitive architecture, where we can find what makes a mentality like his tick; where we can also hope to discern clues to some of the allusions Gordimer talks about. And it will be the hidden allusions, together with what triggers them, on what we can draw our inferences regarding the baffling phenomenon Mehring is. Antiapartheid Gordimer's method of presenting apartheid society in the fictional

2 The last one (the "communicative exchange between reader and author" – Graesser, Singer and Trabasso 1994, 376) is conceived in the present paper as modified by psychonarratologists Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon, to mean communication between the narrator and the reader, and not the *author* and the reader (Bortolussi and Dixon 2003, 16).

universe of *The Conservationist* makes it possible for her to condemn that society implicitly, i.e. without making her objective narrator judgmental. She described the method to one of her interviewers in simple terms: "I thrust my hand as deep as it will go, deep into the life around me, and I write about what comes up" (Schwartz 1990, 83). But she writes about it in such a manner that judgement is left, through the allusions, to the reader's ability to infer. Apartheid will then fall to the ground by its own weight.

If – to borrow and extend Gordimer's metaphor – we thrust our metaphorical hands deep into the novel, what comes up is a man whose narrative identity is both a solid logical product, constructed by the apartheid social environment and – for the same reason – an identity falling apart before our eyes until he becomes totally dysfunctional in terms of interpersonal and intercultural communication. Socially, he is a successful industrialist. Innately, he is not a bad human individual. Yet he is a dismal failure socially too, to such an extent that Mehring, the boss who lords over everything, ends up on the ground, physically and in a moral sense, with an apprehension that he will be killed in the next moment and will not even know why. Is his whole problem – and it is now readerly inference – ignorance? Failed identity formation (another readerly inference)? A failure that does not know itself? Or rather, a failure that does know, but does not want to acknowledge itself? As Judith Levy suggests, "Mehring is already a dead man, but he does not know it. Or at least that knowledge is kept at an unconscious level as 'unwelcome knowledge'" (Levy 2006, 108)? My suggestion below will be that he *does* know and *is* conscious of it, but is reluctant to act upon that knowledge.

So the reader thrusts his or her metaphorical hand into the novel and what comes up is a central personality, to whose identity we gain access through his own thoughts and recollections. But the protagonist does not see the first and most important aspect of his identity: the extent to which it has been claimed by apartheid, whose racist relational and communicative logic he internalized. While processing *The Conservationist*'s narrative discourse as readers, we sense that we are dealing with two conflicting identities, then: one which develops through Mehring's narrative of himself, and one that the objective narrator develops about Mehring. How can we trace where we are with those two narrators, separately and vis-à-vis each other, and then, eventually, with the narrative subject called Mehring? We can trace it by examining Mehring's cognitive architecture by the light of our own knowledge stores, as the only way to recognize some of the allusions that Gordimer had in mind in the interview quoted above – and then by making our readerly inferences. Such an investigation involves, in turn, examining those two of the four levels of cognitive architecture that Patrick Colm Hogan calls the level of intentionalism (the character's goals, beliefs, intentions)[3] and the level

3 "Intentionalism" as defined by Hogan and applied in this paper is not to be confused with Lisa Zunshine's "intentionality," a broader term which covers all declaired and concealed intentions

of representationalism (the system of structures as well as mental processes and contents of the character's cognition; e.g. images of experience) (2010, 239).

"The portrayal of a particular mind-style can often be a major objective of a literary work (probably *the* major objective [...])," Catherine Emmott asserts, "and is important for the reader's overall interpretation of the work" (1997, 30; emphasis in the original). It is enough to look at the level of intentionalism in Mehring's cognitive architecture to realize that his mind-style is the clue to an overall interpretation of *The Conservationist.* But to draw up an inventory of the intentionalist domain of his mind only to prove that he is a racist tycoon and a misogynistic male – something that has been established about him by critics so many times (often rather one-sidedly) – would be superfluous and not to the point in the present context. Instead, let it suffice to quote some examples that would illuminate the point about the conflicting nature of the two identities: the protagonist's identity as he views himself as opposed to the identity that emerges from the objective narrator's discourse, and to how it is rooted in the intentionalist realm of the protagonist's cognitive architecture.

Mehring's beliefs and convictions spring from his aversion to, and disdain for, blacks, also for the Afrikaners/Boers/Dutch; and from the social position which makes it possible for him to buy whatever he wants to, especially property and women. His intentional thinking is fully racialized and sexualized. As Rose Pettersson puts it: he "ruthlessly exploits whatever and whoever comes in his way in order to achieve his own gratification" (1995, 91). His treatment of a girl on an airflight – Dorothy Driver's example – is totally "de-personalizing" (1990, 187). Not that his ruthlessness is that of a zealous backer of the apartheid, though. It is rather nonchalant. "[T]he Great Impartial" – these are the politically radical Antonia's condemning words; "[T]he politics are of no concern. The ideology doesn't matter" (1978, 82). Mehring nonchalantly accepts what an apartheid society has to offer a wealthy white male, not only in social advantages but also in racist clichés, true. Nonchalantly but not quite unthinkingly. He is intelligent enough to have apprehensions: "Soon, in this generation or the next, it must be our turn to starve and suffer. Why not?" – he is meditating, lying on the ground, with earth in his mouth (1978, 46–47). The bodily position is a reminder of the black stranger found dead, face down, in Mehring's third pasture and hastily and insensitively dumped into a shallow grave by the racist Afrikaner police but later washed up by incessant rain and flooding, as a symbolic reminder – a ghost that keeps haunting Mehring as it were. The murdered subaltern of postcolonial South Africa[4] is haunting Mehring,

aimed at characters, readers by other characters, narrators, and authors. Zunshine distinguishes seven embedded levels of intentionality in a single Virginia Woolf paragraph (2010b: 206–207).

4 The racial institution of apartheid was established (in 1948) many years after the country had already been granted the status of a sovereign state (in 1934), thus, formally, South Africa was no longer a colony at the time the action takes place.

the postcolonial colonizer – who "fails to realize that the colonial era has already come to an end" (Kathrin M. Wagner 1993, 84).[5] But it is also an allusion to some dull, unconfessed remorse that does not know itself. It is the objective narrator's allusive device encouraging both backward-oriented and forward-oriented readerly inferencing. One, white minority rule denies black native majority land and life, Mehring being the foregrounded representative case in point – a backward-oriented inference. Two, the reader's forward-oriented inference that the dead man needs to be properly buried anticipates that he will be eventually buried decently by the blacks at the end of the novel, a concluding incident coded with significant meaning (about that significance later below).

But the predominant motives of the Mehring phenomenon, determining his cognitive architecture on the intentionalist level can be found in the multiple meanings of his being a conservationist. Two of these meanings/allusions are overt, both Mehring and the reader are aware of them. The third is covert and Gordimer (her objective narrator, that is) leaves it to the reader to work for it.

Firstly, Mehring is an avowed conservationist in the most common (and in itself conflictive) sense of environment protection: he wants to stop "the rot," clean up the land as I have already mentioned. Protection of the environment is a cause that he takes so seriously that, for one, he prohibits the farm workers' children to play games with guinea fowl eggs (1978, 12). He also refines that agenda to the point that it swings over into its own parody: "He is pathologically concerned with the conservation of the land, and he cannot allow himself to drop as much as a cigarette end on his farm" (Pettersson 1995, 94). But the real conflicting elements of the conservationist component of the environmental protectionist's narrative identity are not these; rather, it is how an oversensitive relation to the physical environment (the country, the continent, the oceans, the sky [1978, 11]) is almost totally insensitive to what is happening to, and what he himself is doing to, the human environment. Insensitive on the level of routine intermental activities at least;[6] intramentally it is a much more complex issue as indicated above and will be further elaborated below. Another – similarly overt – "conservationist" in him is the one that contributes to the conservation of the racist system, a characteristic that his conscientious-objector son, Terry challenges and his leftist mistress, Antonia castigates with scorn. As we have seen, Mehring has his apprehensions (of the blacks taking over one day, maybe),

5 This is the generally accepted view concerning Mehring, but I side with Lars Engle, who refines the point: "Mehring seems to imagine himself specifically defending industrialism against romantics who find it distasteful, rather than defending colonialism" (1993, 103).

6 *Almost* totally because we do see signs of his concern for others. He does manifest fatherly feelings for his son, not necessarily obstinate or wrong-headed in every respect. He does lend the Toyota pick-up to his unsufferable Boer neighbour, Old De Beer. He does give instructions to Jacobus to assist the dead man's reburial ("Jacobus must look after everything nicely") even if Mehring himself does not even want to hear about it (1978, 266).

he is warned that he is a racist after all, he would even "make the world over, if it were easy as that" (1978, 81), and he does have racially-motivated survival reflexes (he turns his back on everything and runs in the end). However, the real clue to his mentality and the fundamental source of who he is, and therefore to the dual identity of this racialized subject is the third (covert) meaning of "conservationist:" he internalized (conserved internally) the ruling white elite's view of the apartness of racialized South Africa. What the narrative is doing here – as it is processing Mehring through his story, so to say – can be described with cognitive naratologist Manfred Jahn's flow-charting method ("an adaptation of Bremond's model"): the internalization of the external into an internal story, which is then externalized into an external story (2003, 201). In our context: it is the external (the racist apartheid world) internalized by Mehring which is then externalized as the Mehring-story, viewed both internally (through presenting his mental activity) and externally (by the objective narrator).

Racialized Cognitive Architecture: Representation

"Representation" is one of the key notions of postcolonial theory, and that theoretical idea is relevant in our case too. (I will take up that line later below.) As for the level of "representationalism" of cognitive architecture, it "systematizes our mentalistic idiom, developing it into a system of structures ('working memory,' 'episodic memory,' and so on), process ('memory consolidation,' 'memory retrieval,' etc.), and contents (e.g. particular images from one's past experience)" (Hogan 2010, 239). In order to make the subject manageable, we need to limit our enquiry into the representationalism-level of Mehring's cognitive architecture to what and how his mind stores of general knowledge and of his personal experience (the latter also forms part of his knowledge). In other words, what the representations of these would be in his knowledge system. The way we can access and evaluate Mehring's multi-component knowledge is – as has been indicated above – by confronting it with our own general knowledge of the world and with the way we, the readers store (i.e. represent) what Mehring experiences (both of his social environment in general and as personal experience as an individual in particular). The name of the game for the reader is comparing representations: Mehring's and ours. We can do this only partly on the basis of our own general knowledge of the world. We also need to rely on what we gather about Mehring's general knowledge of the world as well as about what his personal experiences are, and how he stores them. Our source regarding the latter (i.e. his mental representation of general knowledge and personal experience stored in his long-term memory as his knowledge) is what Emmott's narrative-comprehension theory calls the reader's "text-specific knowledge," – information

"stored in the mental representation of a character" (1997, 7 and 19). For us, it is information that we gather from the text, as we process the narrative, about Mehring's representations.

Our text-specific knowledge does confirm what Rita Barnard establishes about how the pastoral that our industrialist protagonist hoped for when he bought a farm turns out to be an ironic one against an apartheid background. Apartheid did not "simply" marginalize black Africans; rather, it was a world of "forced removals" and brutal relocations of the black population whose civil rights were absolutely denied in the first place (2007, 71 and 76). The way the dead black stranger is shoveled in by the police without investigation, itself alludes to the total denial of rights. It is the rights of the native people and their right to live which are declared dead and are buried here symbolically. What makes the "misdirected pastoralism" – "the ultimate symbol of white capitalist corruption and alienation" (Kathrin M. Wagner 1993, 85) impossible is also that Mehring himself is racist. It is enough to look at his entity representation when he is first led to the dead man by Jacobus and first espies the corpse (the point of view is Mehring's): "One of them" (1978, 15). He does not call the people to whom the land belongs "blacks," not even in his thoughts. The denied other of the apartheid is just "they" and "them" for him. He is "incapable of seeing other (black) human beings in other than functional terms," Dorothy Driver notes (1990, 190). Once it is as bad as this, it may not be going too far to suggest that foreman Jacobus, who does his best to balance between the master and "them" (Jacobus's own people) is introduced and referred to by Mehring as his "herdsman." It may be another indirect allusion, in which the cowherd is only one step removed from the black "herd" or "herdsman of the black" – keeper/manager of the black "herd," some of whom are Mehring's farm workers and all of whom live behind a barbed-wire fence on the "location."[7]

Mehring's intermental (actual and imagined actual) dispute, and to a much greater extent intramental (i.e. recollected) debate with Antonia and Terry open up a rich mine of representations.[8] And here it is not the cliché that triumphs: Antonia's and Terry's representations as Mehring stored them in his mind are much more complex and sophisticated than Mehring's representation in their mind. They are the ones who break away from racist schemata and scripts (especially political activist Antonia does), yet their view of Mehring is cliché-ridden. (See the mental representation of the white industrialist's relation to the

7 Gordimer regarded apartheid much worse than even "colonial racism" (see her Gross-interview, 1990, 307).

8 It is also rich in metarepresentation. We "metarepresent" our representations if we "keep track of sources of our representations." It is "a particular cognitive endowment closely related to our mind-reading ability" (Zunshine 2006, 47). Mehring does keep track of the sources of his representations and keeps evaluating them. As for his lover and his son, he does not accept them as a source. The mental process that leads him to this decision is cognition about cognition, a representation regarding representation – i.e. metacognition or metarepresentation.

land in Antiona's mind [1978, 176–178].) Mehring may be captive to much of the colonialist/apartheid mentality, and his contempt for scripts of convention may not go far beyond avoiding parties and new-year messages by not responding to people's phonecalls. And here, once more, we sense dramatic irony: the objective narrator winking at us from behind his protagonist's back because of the conflicting logic of such a behaviour. Yet, subconsciously, Mehring probably does feel that he accumulated some representational deficit in the racialized world and the reason for it is the very social side on which he stands. So he is trying to make up for some of it by conscious experience-acquisition when he lies down on the ground in the very position the black corpse was found lying – "his non-rational physical sympathy with the dead man" (Smith 1993, 50). Although this is itself a conflictive image as the objective narrator may also allude to the naive if not ridiculous nature of the moment on somebody's part who contributes to the blacks becoming social outcasts even if he is not promoting the ideology, apartheid being the largest and deterministic frame in South Africa between 1948 and 1994.

The circumstances of his desertion of the farm may also be ridiculous – and, for him, most humiliating – at the end of the novel, but the cognitive approach sheds a different light on it. The interpretation Mehring puts on the incident (a woman who may or may not have trapped him; a strange man, who may or may not want to rob, kill or castrate him [1978, 262]) can be seen as Mehring's inference, triggered by racist schematas and scripts. The Afrikaans-speaking man may have wished "to protect" him (as vice squad or a "guardian of the purity of the master race" [1978, 263]), but the incident brought Mehring to the end of his tether, because *his* inner representations tell him something else. Let me surmise that Emmott's contextual frame theory will help us out as for what that something else can be. "The 'contextual frame' stores information about which characters are co-present in which location at which time" in a narrative. And, besides overt participants, unmentioned participants can be covertly present in the same location at the same time (Emmott 2003, 304). I submit that the participant who is not present in the Mehring-scene is the dead black man.

The dead man is the most significant participant, who is not present overtly/physically at this location at this time, but is co-present in our contextual frame, especially because Mehring himself links the disgraceful incident to that of the murdered stranger in his intramental reflections. He is suddenly paranoid and scared, not simply because "[t]hese are the bastards who shovelled him [the black corpse] in as you might fling a handful of earth on the corpse of a rat, just to cover the stink" (1978, 263). But also because his human decency gets the upper hand in him concerning the dead black man, and because he feels (probably also as a result of the inner representations yielded by his racial experience and meditations) that the time for his own burial has arrived, and these people are here to shovel *him* in, this time. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say: apartheid

caught up with Mehring at this point, the poetic justice part of it certainly did – poetic justice meted out by the objective narrator. Justice is administered in the fashion we have already seen at work in the novel: through the allusive technique that makes readerly inference possible. The thought that crosses Mehring's mind that perhaps the time for his own burial arrived is an allusion, which implies (the reader infers) that *Mehring is* the stranger, metaphorically speaking (a stranger in the land of the many sub-Sahara black tribes of South Africa). The objective narrator makes us aware of how Mehring, who views himself as the triumphant industrialist now ready to learn how to be a good farmer is in fact *struggling* more and more flounderingly in the role in which he is positioned in the apartheid world. Mehring, the "the stranger" is doomed to death in a socio-cognitive sense (because his social role is); and he (what he represents socially) *is* buried (symbolically) when the black corpse is buried. This does identify him, metaphorically, with the murdered stranger. Mehring, the colonialist-"stranger" is doomed to death, has been dying gradually as he realized it faintly and then more and more vividly, but now he is "murdered," figuratively speaking (turns his back on the farm, on the pastoral dream in apartheid hell and on his racist role in it). Our forward-oriented local inference, on reading the scene in question, is that he will try to get away alive. Our forward-oriented global inference is that black South Africa is moving towards liberation. After all, as Gordimer explained in the Hurwitt-interview, the funeral of the unknown man is a reburial when his own land receives him at long last ("he has now been put with proper ceremony into his own earth"). In other words, the "disguised message" of the "resurrection theme" is at work here (1990, 150), the resurrection of the black African in South Africa. In Stephen Clingman's words: "the raising of the black body simultaneously represents a 'return of the repressed' on both political and psychological levels" (1990, 208). But a backward-oriented global readerly inference, established by a network of allusions, can certainly take it one step further and indicate that *Mehring* was the dead stranger all through. The question was: how much intermental and intramental work it took for him to realize it too. *The Conservationist* is the process of that realization.

Memories and narratives are removed from previous experience, Mark Freeman theorizes, but they "still deserve to be considered real and potentially important as sources of information about ourselves and our past" (1993, 91). As his memories and representations are for Mehring. His memories are too many and more important than he believed them to be (his former strategy of willed noninvolvement and isolation fails). We can adapt Uri Margolin's phrase to describe what happens to him: what we are witnessing is "perceptual system shutdown or crash," where the mind is overwhelmed with impressions and our ability to decode them is reduced (2003, 289) – if by "perceptual" we mean *mental* perception instead of the physical.

Manifestations of Racialized Cognitive Architecture: Intra- and Intermental Activity, Positioning

What is stored in the levels of intentionality and representations of Mehring's cognitive architecture as his knowledge that motivates his cognition is revealed in his intramental and intermental activity as well as in his positioning. We have already seen details illustrating how the intra- and intermental point, centripetally, to what Mehring's cognitive architecture contains as the source of those mental activities. But if we examine this relation from an inverse direction – i.e. intra- and intermental activity as manifestations of cognitive architecture – the reversed (centrifugal) perspective reveals features of Mehring's cognitive behaviour that would otherwise remain hidden.

What makes our conservative-conservationist protagonist a much more complex figure than those who seem to be progressive in thinking by comparison (Antonia and Terry) is that although we expect the political conservationist in him to be fully guided by his intentionality, and that he will live up to the requirements of his representations – in fact he cannot entirely, not in every respect. The realization dawns upon the attentive reader early as a forward-oriented inference. Mehring refers to the murdered black man as just "one of them" (1978, 15), as already mentioned. Yet, he instructs Jacobus in the closing sentence of the first chapter-like unit of the text, motivated by some innate humanness, to cover the dead man with something: "You'd better take something – to put over, down there. (His head jerks towards the river.) A tarpaulin. Or sacks" (1978, 21). True, he avoids to refer to him even as "him." Paradoxically, Mehring's reaction, once he has seen the dead man, is already an improvement on the initial colonial arrogance with which he related to the news when Jacobus first communicated it to him and he responded by asking: "Why should I go to look at a dead man near the river?" (1978, 13).

What our cognitive narratological approach helps us notice very soon is that Mehring's intramental and intermental activities (his recollections and meditations, on the one hand, and his interpersonal exchanges, on the other hand) do not go hand in hand. While intermentally he is a faithful representative of the socially constructed role racial discrimination prescribes for the English-speaking white boss (he wants to keep an eye on everything, to have his orders obeyed and detests black Africans), intramentally he is a realist too. Racist power discourse assigns him a place at the top, but intramentally he has no illusions: "They [the blacks] know everything about us" (1978, 57); "They have been there all the time and they will continue to be there. They have nothing and they have nothing to lose" (1978, 260). Intermentally he never uses the harsh tone with Antonia that she adopts with him, but intramentally he is right (the realist again)

about how her kind of radicalism is shallow and does not take the world very far. In intermental negotiations he is often tough with his son, Terry, but intramentally he does cherish genuine fatherly feelings for him.

Mehring's mind "habitually runs" on a "fine criss-cross of grooves" (1978, 58). He senses a "gap" that "lies at a deeper level in the text than the undeniable truth of the white man's ultimate failure to possess the land." It arouses "terror in him, the sense of standing over an abyss" (Levy 2006, 113). Our context can refine the point further: the "fine criss-cross of grooves" of his mind makes it possible for him to confront his cognitive intentionalism and the representations of his knowledge systems with his experiential knowledge of the world. Thus he is engaging in a task which will be the reader's too, who, in turn, will compare Mehring's cognitive architecture with his/her own. The resulting slow process of transformation, is checked and qualified and barely discernable in his intermental activity. But he is indeed making steady progress intramentally, with the nameless black corpse as a concealed catalyst, until Mehring's subconscious and formless dissociation from his dream of colonialist pastoralism takes shape in his mind, overwhelms him and erupts from under the surface in that humiliating scene at the end of his story.

However, all this takes place inside Mehring. At this point one would expect the intramental and the intermental to be in full accord. But very few sentences are actually exchanged intermentally, no matter how radical the nature of Mehring's decision is. In what is a brilliant piece of writing, the clashing intermental confrontation between Mehring and the "thick-headed ox, guardian of the purity of the master race" (1978, 263) all takes place intramentally, in Mehring's mind (1978, 261–265). It is one of the many moments (but the most crucial one) of the intramentally presented intermental in the novel. It can also be seen as the intensively imagined intermental that effects a decisive change in the realm of the intramental.

And with this we have reached the problematic of positioning. The protagonist of *The Conservationist* is the embodiment of a paradox, therefore his position is paradoxical. Colonial-reflexed postcolonial apartheid is itself a paradox. *That* is the external that Mehring internalized, which internal story is then externalized as his story, mostly through his intramental activity as we have just seen. And his story is about how he has been positioned by this culture.[9] But, as we saw earlier, he also develops dilemmas related to his position. The more closely he examines his alienating and alienated role, the more distressed he becomes.

The whole novel can be regarded as a narrative of position-discomposure – a novel of repositioning eventually. Gordimer called her central character "a kind

9 Our place in society depends on the role we take, Gordimer argues. We may run away from our "inevitable role," or we can "take it on." "But the fact is that you have a role; there is no such thing as an ivory tower – that's a place in itself. You are consciously or unconsciously creating a position in your society" (Gray 1990, 180).

of fossil" in the Schwartz interview (1990, 80). And he is too, in that he is the walking embodiment of an outdated social establishment. An establishment that forces Jacobus, Mehring's black foreman into a seemingly easy-to-mold position, a good illustration of what Homi Bhabha described as mimicry.

Jacobus is a position-shifter depending on who he is dealing with. It is an existential imperative for him to do the job to Mehring's satisfaction; but he also does his best to help his own people on the sly side. Jacobus's positioning differs from the rest of the blacks. The latter are positioned by apartheid to be undesirable and oppressed aliens in their own country,[10] but *his* positioning comes from Mehring, one character positioning the other. So his activity as a double narrative agent of the storyworld, i.e. serving Mehring, the white boss, but trying to help his black people too, means that in his intramental cognitive operations he rejects the positioning that comes to him from Mehring. "An ironic compromise," "the sign of a double articulation" is what mimicry is in Bhabha's definition; pretended accommodation, inclusive of its difference "that is itself a process of disavowal" (1994, 86). This makes Jacobus a skillful juggler of positions: he tells the black women "to warn the children not to collect eggs *where they could be seen,*" and reassures his conservationist white boss that "there were plenty of guinea fowl about if you had to be up at work early enough to see them" (1978, 33). "[T]he discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*" after all (Bhabha 1994, 86; emphasis in the original). As for Mehring, he may be fossil, but he is certainly not petrified. We see him, as we read on, more and more as a man of "disjointed consciousness" – also Gordimer's words, this time from the Diana Cooper-Clark interview (1990, 225). In the cognitive narratological context of the present study we can say that what Mehring is experiencing is a widening rift between his position and his positioning cognitive architecture.

Communication

"[I]t needs to be made clear about cultural discourse and exchange within a culture that what is commonly circulated by it is not 'truth' but representations," Edward Said claims about culture and representation in general, adding: "there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a *re-presence,* or a representation" (1979, 21; emphasis in the original). We have already seen the racialized level of such colonial representations in Mehring's cognitive architecture that bear the mark of apartheid. Thus what we find in *The Conservationist* is that it is also about the impossibility of intercultural communication in a *de jure* postcolonial but *de facto* colonial world of racial segregation. Communication is completely racialized

10 "What is South Africa?" Frantz Fanon asks. "A boiler into which thirteen million blacks are clubbed and penned in by two and a half million whites" (1968, 87).

in the apartheid South Africa of Gordimer's novel. When group communication shifts from the intercultural to an interracial basis in a racist environment, interest in the – marked or unmarked[11] – culture of the racial other is eclipsed.

A whole array of incidents and communicative details illustrates the following two points that appear to be the same but are different: one, interest in intercultural presence is killed by racist representations; two, meaningful interracial communication is made impossible by trivial and evasive communicative routines. To appreciate the first point (absence of intercultural presence), it is enough to realize that we cannot detect any genuine black African cultural presence in the storyworld-agents' communications. It is absent from the novel in every respect other than the objective narrator's indirect discourse (e.g. symbolic suggestions).[12] As a matter of fact, any kind of preoccupation with the racial other's culture is totally absent all along the racial line, be it the English-speaking industrialist Mehring, the Africaner De Beer and his family, or the immigrant owner of the Indian store and his family. There is no sign of positive inter- or crosscultural engagement among them either. And they all have a contempt for blacks and black culture. Mehring detests the Afrikaners and keeps his distance from black Africans as much as he can. He is sharply aware of Jacobus's interracial agency: Jacobus serves the white man but also helps the blacks; Mehring lets "them" bury the murdered stranger if they want to – but he wants to have nothing to do with "them." Nor do his frequent travels to other countries mean anything to him culturally, no sign of cultural pursuits or memories concerning cultures outside South Africa (Japan, for example). Afrikaner De Beer does cherish history, but it is the Boer history of heroes of the Boer wars, prime ministers, politicians who implemented apartheid and signed their photos for him; not mentioning his own grandfather, who fought in the Kaffir Wars, and a "kaffir" doll[13] the grandfather took from a Kaffir chief before they burned his place (1978, 54–55). Such details speak for themselves. But Mehring is full of uncertainties concerning his own "I" identity, both individual and personal, and his collective or "we" identity[14] comes under fire from Antonia and Terry. He can speak Afrikaans – "the white man's other language" – but he uses it only when he speaks to officials (1978, 17).

11 It is Roy Wagner's distinction. As opposed to the marked (narrower) sense of culture (literature and the arts), "culture" is used in my essay in the unmarked (broad) sense, to include "science, art, and technology, the sum total of achievements, inventions, and discoveries" (Roy Wagner 1981, 22), "unmarked" to the immense extent that cognitive cultural studies broadens it, viewing culture, as Raymond Williams did, as "a whole way of life" (Zunshine 2010a, 8).

12 See, for example, Kathrin M. Wagner on Gordimer's "landscape iconography," Lars Engle discussing *The Conservationist* in the context of the Rev. Henry Callaway's *The Religious System of the Amazulu* (1993, 95 and on), or Michael Thorpe on how "[t]he ancestor motif centers upon the unknown man who near the beginning is found murdered on Mehring's farm" (1990, 117).

13 "Kaffir" used for a long time by white colonizers to refer to black Africans is a cruelly offensive word today.

14 Jan Assmann's categories (2011, 112–113).

If his intercultural dislike of the Dutch does not show through in his interpersonal handling of the De Beers's visit and he generously lends them what they want before they ask for it, it is because he wants to shake them off as fast as possible. Black foreman Jacobus loathes the Boers more than Mehring does, resents his boss lending De Beer his Toyota pickup and tells Mehring so. And the way Gordimer's Indian immigrants feel in South Africa adds further details to what Vasu Reddy tells us about what South African writers of Indian origin emphasize in their works: "the dehumanizing effects of racial oppression" (2001, 83).

Human conversations evolve, John J. Gumperz informs us, along the "culturally possible lines of reasoning" (1982, 160). The conversations that apartheid culture makes possible – turning now to the second point of banal and elusive speech acts – are the trivial and evasive communicative routines that follow from what we have just seen in particular, but also from the racialization of intercultural communication in general. Mehring has no doubt that the blacks "are busy complaining about *him* in the safety of their own language, they retreat into it and they can say what they like" (1978, 75; emphasis in the original); and "[t]he children don't understand the language," English that is (1978, 10). Interracial communication between, say, Mehring and Jacobus, is possible only through "the conventions of polite conversation" (1978, 223–224). It is always "the usual sort of exchange between his black man and himself" (1978, 58). Between the Boers and Mehring communcation is "the well-regulated demands and responses" (1978, 58). When De Beer wants to ask Mehring something, it goes like this: "There has been a whole preamble of small talk about the weather, the drought, the usual thing before getting to the point" (1978, 49). Apartheid South Africa may be part of the reader's general knowledge as s/he starts reading *The Conservationist* but as we read the novel, we gradually acquire the text-specific knowledge that intercultural communication in this racist culture is not really *inter* and not *real* communication. Intercultural skills simply mean a skillful manipulation of communicative surfaces as dictated by, and can be expected from, one's (Mehring's, Jacobus's, and the others') position in this particular sociocultural hierarchy. It is Jacobus's position that makes him quite an artist of evasive communication and communicative manoevring. He is "not without sycophancy" in Mehring's presence (Mehring finds, intramentally) (1978, 12); in the presence of others he "agrees with everything that Mehring says, rather than gives an independent answer" (1978, 56), although Mehring will soon find, when they are alone, that Jacobus does have an independent view of the matter. But the blacks look up to the black foreman since "they knew Jacobus was the boss of the show, he ran that farm while the white man lived in town" (1978, 37). A careful look at how these two conduct their interpersonal dealings with each other shows that intramentally both argue stubbornly (whether it is the guinea fowl issue or whether they need a fierce dog or not [1978, 32–33]), but

intermentally the strategy is always clash-avoidance on Jacobus's part, the roundabout method. His disagreement with a negative point Mehring raises is always through a positive idea. This brings us to the matter of discourse, a subject which has been crying for attention in this paper for a while.

Conclusion: Discourse and Narrative Identity

But it would be sheer tautology to repeat the points already made about how apartheid is a racist discourse, anti-apartheid narratorial feelings are a counterdiscourse, and the characters have their own discourse. What we would capture in our discursive net if cast this way would be only parts (significant constituents, though) of the main discursive concern of the narrative as a whole – of the global narrative discourse.

We can look for *The Conservationist*'s global narrative discourse in the narratorial consciousness. As I claimed elsewhere in a narrato-cultural essay: "a narratorial mind is not simply present in a narrative text, but the text *is* the content of that mind since what the text contains is the product of a narrator's or an implied author's consciousness" (Abádi-Nagy 2008, 21). And our extradiegetic (external) teller of the tale (Gordimer calls her "objective narrator" as indicated earlier) is an implied-author narrator, who has an anti-apartheid mindset, and that is the cultural determination that produces and rules the Gordimer novel's text (the *what* of the narrative) and *shapes* the narrative (the *how*). Without getting entagled in the intricacies of Seymour Chatman's definitions of content and expression (story and discourse) planes vis-à-vis substance and form,[15] I wish to adopt his idea of "deep narrative predicate," which is not the same as (though constructed through a series of) "surface lingusitic predicates" (1978, 146). A deep *narrative* predicate can determine not only longer stretches of narrative, but a whole work, narrated or nonnarrated, directly or in mediated ways, embedded directly or indirectly

15 Above I quoted Gordimer on how the main points the novel is making are "implicit." Where can we look for what is implicit in *The Conservationist*? It can be found in the narrative discourse, as we process it, in both the narratological and the discourse analysis senses of the term "discourse." And the two are closely interrelated. Ever since Seymour Chatman introduced the distinction between story and discourse – content versus expression (1978, 26 and on) – discourse is the how, the manner as opposed to the story-line, the subject, the what. It is the way as David Herman puts it: it is "the method of narrative presentation," "the mode of telling," "the manner in which those events are organized in the recounting" (2002, 214). And by focusing on the expression level of the story or the manner of telling (the narratological sense of discourse), we will be attentive to discourse entities, discourse units, and discourse structure in the discourse-analysis sense. To put it in a more narrative-specific way, in Herman's words elsewhere (based on Catherine Emmott): "narrative can be viewed as a discourse environment in which producers as well as interpreters of stories use many different linguistic resources – or coding strategies – to establish and maintain reference to discourse entitites that interact with one another in narrative-specific ways" (2003, 13).

in narratorial consciousness or/and storyworld character-focalizers. The deep narrative predicate – what can be called narratorial global discourse in the contexts of this paper – was already mentioned above as the widening rift between Mehring's position and the apartheid-driven cognitive architecture that positions him. *The Conservationist*'s mediated discursive point is that such a seemingly unresolvable tension, culminating in a rift, necessarily disjoins a sensitive human individual from his or her own cognitive architecture in a brutally inhuman society, even if that sensitivity is internally half-buried already under the social values that the individual incorporated into his or her own cognitive architecture. This global narrative discourse or deep narrative predicate organizes the *how* of Gordimer's narrative in the senses Chatman theorizes the *how*: the "structure of narrative transmission" ("form of expression") and enfolding discourse "manifestations" ("substance of expression") (1978, 26). Let it suffice to say, more simply, in the concrete terms of the novel, what the *how* that Gordimer's deep narrative predicate develops in the novel is: the narrator processes Mehring through a series of events/actions and recollections (inter- and intramental activities), making him think over who he is, what his position in apartheid society is. After all, as Frantz Fanon asserts relating to (otherwise mainly reacting against) French psychoanalyst Octave Mannoni's ideas: "the problem of colonialism includes not only the interrelations of objective conditions but also human attitudes toward these conditions" (1968, 84). In turn, through Mehring's own narratives that narrativize the formation of his narrative identity, the extradiegetic anti-apartheid narrator herself thinks apartheid-driven South Africa over, adjusting Mehring's perspectival filtering to align the reader with the narratorial vantage point. In a word, the discursive method is mapping socio-cultural cognition here.[16]

If *The Conservationist* is the cognitive cultural mapping of its deep narrative predicate, the "plot" (not in the usual sense because much more of the novel is stasis than action) will be mental. How? Similarly to the way every single narrative entity (characters, objects, and narrative space[17]) is inscribed with the deep narrative predicate, the contextual blocks or discourse units, each and every one of them are also weaving the same global discourse of the narrative, through a series of local discourse contexts. This is yet another (the third), the discourse-analysis sense of "discourse." It is an understanding of a discourse unit which points to a unit of content, perhaps inclusive of subsidiary events and/or changing locations, but remaining inside the same local narrative context (Emmott 1997,

16 It is not identical with "cognitive mapping." The latter is reserved to mean, in a narrower sense: "a mental model in *spatial* relations;" in the extended sense as used by Marie-Laure Ryan: the readerly construction of narrative space "as a background for the understanding of plot, character motivations, and the moral issues articulated in the text" (Ryan 2003, 215–216).

17 Gordimer's copius descriptions of various aspects of landscape and space thoroughly imbued with thematic concerns and symbolic significance have been given ample treatment in Gordimer criticism. (See Brian Macaskill [1993] and Kathrin M. Wagner [1993].)

12–13). Our example can be the De Beer family's visit with Mehring as one and the same local discourse context, in spite of the shifts from the Mehring/De Beer interpersonal exchange in Mehring's house to Jacobus and De Beer outside and then the switch to the Jacobus/Mehring confrontation over the De Beer visit. It is also the global narrative discourse which is woven in the discourse structure of the shifting contextual units that the text divides into or is putting itself together through. In our De Beer-visit example the kaffir doll – as only one hint at racial intolerance among the many – is a case in point.

The way global discourse units can be built into multiple local discourse units (contexts) is not only through discourse (deep-predicate) distribution. The narrato-rhetorical purpose is also served by cultural narrato-rhetorhemes[18] which also shape Mehring's narrative identity. Some of the narrato-rhetorhemes can have global narrative functions, as, most outstandingly, the governing trope of the murdered black stranger does. The dead man highlights the South African social condition that Fanon talks about; very slowly and behaviouristically it also awakens Mehring to realize, at first only very vaguely and then with growing intensity, where he stands with where he is. He senses that "his relation to the land he owns but cannot possess," as Rowland Smith remarks, is "inauthentic," this being "part of Mehring's crisis of consciousness;" and the "internal and imagined" debates with Antonia and Terry become "ultimately destabilizing" (1993, 50). Let us add that his attitude towards his own position can at long last take the shape of severing ties with his own position as a farmer at least at the level of a sudden gut-reaction after all those rationalizations.

But the gut-reaction that ensued was also *provoked* by those rationalizations. We can tell from a series of inferences. That we have to rely on inferences (he is a much more complex socio-cultural construct than his mistress's and his son's simplified views of him could justify) is indicative of the paradox the Mehring-phenomenon revolves around, ultimately: his identity turns out to be, eventually, unnarratable by himself even to himself; yet this becomes the source of the narrativity of such an identity. It speaks to the productivity of cognitive narratology that its methodology made the inference of a cognitive rift in Mehring possible. Since that cognitive rift can be read to be rooted in a sociocultural split in the individual's identity, we

18 The narrato-rhetorical units that I called cultural "narrato-rhetorhemes" in a separate study are narrative units loaded with cultural content and rhetorical purpose, meant to develop and frame the cultural narrative rhetoric. It is rhetorical suasion through culture in the narrative. A narrato-rhetorheme can be a functionally restricted cultural sign or one that encompasses a whole book. Elemental or immensely complex, it can convey overt or covert rhetorical content in the storyworld, on the narratorial discourse level, or anywhere else in the multiple communicative intricacy called narrative fiction. It is by leaving the category undefined in more specific terms that it can retain the flexibility to take in, in an unregulated fashion, the rhetorically marked multiplicity, heteroglossia, and transformations of textual manoeuvres of persuasion; an analytical tool which is hoped to make an intricate narrative "traffic" of discursive communications manageable for theory and criticism. (Cf. Abádi-Nagy 2014, 35–39.)

can also rephrase our diagnosis of Mehring. Paul Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of the self" (1994, 16) posits that "[t]he narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character" (1994, 147–148). And the identity of the story told in *The Conservationist* describes an individual who lives and behaves as almost a mechanism of a set of "acquired identifications." "To a large extent," Ricoeur goes on to say, " […] the identity of a person or a community is made up of these identifications with values, norms, ideals, models, and heroes, *in* which the person or the community recognizes itself. Recognizing oneself *in* contributes to recognizing onself *by.*" It is "otherness assumed as one's own" (1994, 121; emphasis in the original). The Mehring-phenomenon can be rediagnosed, his narrative identity that his story projects onto the pages of the novel redescribed, then, as the case when the other claims the same: the other of acquired colonialist-apartheid identifications enters into the composition of the same, to produce the concordance of the narrative identity (a clearly negative concordance) that identifies Mehring.

But the identity of all narrative compositions can be described, Ricoeur advises us, not simply as concordance but as "the synthesis of the *heterogeneous*," a "configuration" of "*discordant concordance*" (1994, 141). His theoretical insight vividly illuminates both the alienated stasis and the rift as well as the slow movement away from stasis that construct Mehring's narrative identity. The discordant element is introduced into concordance with the discovery of the murdered African. The dead stranger slowly activates Mehring's innate self – the innate self of a man who has almost totally become a dead stranger himself by any standards of opennes to human rights and democracy. The circumstance that he is intelligent enough to comprehend what is happening to him and is bent (even if instinctively and reluctantly at first) on expelling as much of the other from the same as he is capable of at the stage where the novel leaves him (or, bent on resisting the other, which other is bent on expelling the same out of him, if you like).

This capability is – if not a resurrection as the black man's is through his reburial – is at least a promise of at least one white man coming to his senses. It is a factor that makes it possible for anti-apartheid Nadine Gordimer to treat a basically despicable character like Mehring with qualified sympathy. Judith Levy rightly points out, "contrary to prevailing critical opinion" that "in the delineation of the protagonist in *The Conservationist,* the vision of the individual on a personal inner quest has not been wholly superceded by this character's representing and playing out the inevitable destiny of his class and status. Rather, these two visions exist side by side, expressing, perhaps, ambivalence on the part of Gordimer herself" (2006, 103). Except that it remains sympathy that cannot be regarded ambivalence on the novelist's part. Let me grant Gordimer herself the right to decide the issue. In her response to a Peter Marchant interview question she said: Mehring "is just exactly

the kind of man I hate in South Africa. But, once I began to write about him and got under his skin, I began to understand him better. I don't believe that to understand all is to forgive all. Certainly in a country with conflict like my own, that's a very dangerous attitude. But for a writer, it's absolutely essential to understand all, and once you do, you cannot be entirely unsympathetic" (1990, 259).

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Discourses of the I: The Panic of Identity in Edward Albee's *Me, Myself and I*

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Abstract: "Hello, there! My name is OTTO. [...] I want to make trouble because I want to make things even more complicated than they are around here, and then maybe I can get out of this whole mess – this family and everything. Let's see: my name is OTTO. I have an identical twin brother. I'm trying to get rid of him, rid of all of them – but it's not easy: you know how twins are; well, maybe you don't" – OTTO, one of the identical twin brothers (both named Otto) of Edward Albee's *Me, Myself and I* opens the play addressing the audience. Albee's wit and sharp irony dominate the play, managing to "engage, to upset, to trouble" audiences and readers. In my paper I analyze the methods Albee employs in transforming the stage into a meta- and intertextual "space" subverting and undermining any belief in identity and language as fixed, stable and functional "entities."

Keywords: Albee, *Me, Myself and I*, subjectivity, metatheater.

Asked whether he would elaborate on the theme of identical twins in his plays (*The American Dream*, *Me, Myself and I*), Edward Albee answered that it was a "powerful dramatic device" but "not worth a PhD dissertation" (After Show Discussion 2008a). *Me, Myself and I*, that premiered in January 2008 at Princeton, McCarter Theatre Center while Albee was the first recipient of the Princeton University/McCarter Theatre Playwriting Fellowship, builds on this "powerful dramatic device," and becomes a representation of the "primitive horror of [and fascination with] the Same" (Girard's phrase 1978). While in *The American Dream* through the mutilation of one twin the other turns into a monstrous, uncanny double, an empty shape invested with the status of a symbol, the simulacrum of an invalidated myth, in the 2008 play the rupture is induced voluntarily by one of the twins, OTTO. "Gemini," Jean Baudrillard states, "possess a specific property, a particular and sacred fascination of the Two, of what is two together, and never was one" (1994, 97). Through breaking the bond of twins, OTTO embarks and pushes his brother, lowercase otto, into an endless process of

multiplication, simulation, that destabilizes any subject position and the very process of signification.

Caught in the double trap of being terrified and at the same time enchanted by simulation, being unable to resist the magic and the horror of the simulacrum, Mother finds it perfectly logical to name both her sons Otto – a palindrome name – being later frustrated and confused by her own doing. OTTO cannot resist breaking away from the situation, and from his identical twin, just to immediately find a new, a "true identical twin brother" in his own mirror image, transforming thus both himself and lowercase otto into duplicates of a never-existed original, depthless models without a source. He creates an epistemic and ontological gap, he indulges in ambiguity and uncertainty; he uses the paradoxical logic of the game set up by Mother in the first place to refashion the playing field upon which their subjectivity has been inscribed and to reorganize the power system that circumscribes the positions they are supposed to occupy. He farther destabilizes the "delicate balance," the uncanny symmetry that Mother has created – by giving birth to identical twins and naming them the same – subverting the binary system of signification, of sign and referent.

The motif of the doppelganger and doubling has been a recurring theme in literature from folklore to works by Shakespeare, Poe, Dickens, Wilde, Borges, and many others. It often appears as the embodiment of split identity, belonging to the realm of the carnivalesque, the monstrous, the supernatural, suggesting the threatening possibility of expropriation of identity. In Albee's play as well, the motif of twins and OTTO's struggle to separate himself from and "get rid" of his brother create a play that "[o]n the surface […] is a very funny story of a pair of twin brothers and their family, but on the deeper level [it] addresses core questions of our modern society. How do we shape our identities and sense of self in a world that seems to inscribe culture upon us? In our increasingly virtual era, does the very meaning of existence change? In an age of molecular biology, how do we distinguish ourselves from our DNA?" – as Emily Mann, director, phrases it.

In his "Letter to an Audience" Albee states:

> I tend to become uncooperative – and occasionally downright hostile – when people ask me what my plays "are about" […] What is *Me, Myself and I* about? Oh, about two hours, including intermission. […] A play is, after all, about everything that happens to the characters from the beginning of the play to the end and (unless the author has killed them all off by curtain) the characters' lives before the play begins and after it ends. This means, as I see it, that a play is fully described (or explained) by the experience of seeing it. (2008b, 3)

As we now do not have the possibility to "see," that is experience the entire play in its whole length of about two hours (including intermission), I will try to sum it up – though in the case of *Me, Myself and I*, without a traditional plot and its constant destabilization of the process of theatrical representation, of verbal signification, it will be quite a challenge.

We learn that twenty-eight years ago Mother gave birth to identical twin boys upon which their father left. Doctor has subsequently moved in as he "read Mother's vibes" and understood that he was needed. We step into the family's life in medias res, with OTTO announcing his Mother that, on the one hand, he is going to become Chinese as the future is in the East and he "wants in on it" and, on the other, that his twin, otto, does not exist any longer. This announcement then propels the whole play into the realm of ontological and epistemological questioning. Mother constantly asks "Who are you? Which one are you? Are you the one who loves me?", otto falls into an acute crisis of identity being denied his existence by his brother, his mother and Doctor, as well as by Maureen, his girlfriend, who sees him, feels him, loves him, even faces the challenge of talking to Mother to convince her that otto exists, but who – being unable to tell the twins apart – sleeps with OTTO. The final scene of confrontation, when otto tries to prove his existence and regain his position in the system, when he tries to reinscribe himself into the mesmerizingly unstable discourse of the play, even after OTTO's declaration that he has been replaced by a "true" identical twin, Otto in italics, is interrupted by the appearance of the twins' father, Man, on a cart pulled by black panthers (the four-legged kind), packed with emeralds (all papier-mâché), with the banner "The happy ending," just as OTTO has suggested earlier he would. But Mother's accusations make him change his mind – flip the banner to "The former happy ending" – and leave once again.

Structurally the play is divided into two acts. Act I begins with a pre-scene with OTTO in front of the red curtain addressing the audience:

> OTTO: (*Out, entering from left, moving center.*) Hello, there! My name is OTTO. I'm on my way to see my mother. (*Indicates red curtain.*) She's back there. I'm going to see her because I want to make trouble, because I want to make things even more complicated than they are around here, and then maybe I can get out of this whole mess – this family and everything. Let's see: my name is OTTO. I have an identical twin brother. I'm trying to get *rid* of him – so I can get rid *of* him, rid of *all* of them – but it's not easy: *you* know how twins are; well, maybe you don't. […] They're so hard to get *rid* of – these twins! (2011, 5; emphasis in the original)

It ends with a post-scene, OTTO once again addressing the audience directly as the curtain closes: "I think I'm making progress – fucking everything up.

(*Imitating Mother.*) 'otto my darling … you don't exist.' (*Imitating otto.*) 'How can this be!? How can this be!?' Well … that is a dilemma. How do we solve it? How do we figure *that* one out?! Hmmm! (*Idea.*) Well, perhaps an intermission would help" (2011, 38; emphasis and ellipsis in the original).

Act II consists of seven scenes and ends with a Conclusion – the two brothers trying to come to terms with the inescapability of their subjectivity(ies) and with their now existent third, "this new *Otto:*"

> otto: (*Almost crying.*) And how are we going to deal with *that* [*Otto*]!?
> OTTO: (*Thinks about it.*) Well … I guess we'll just have to think of ourselves as triplets. (*Pause; finally they laugh, embrace.*)
> otto: What do we do now, huh?
> OTTO: (*Indicates the curtain.*) Well, I think the play's over. Let's go join the curtain call. (2011, 77; emphasis and ellipsis in the original)

As it becomes obvious from even such a brief – and necessarily inadequate – summary, *Me, Myself and I* is a play which indulges in its own genre, its own medium – language and visual representation, and in its central theme, subjectivity and the relation between reality and the imagination, the reality of and in a literary work, deconstructing and destabilizing them, playing out one against the other, and showcasing their instability and ambiguity. In his "Letter" Albee warns his audiences: "My plays […] can be enjoyed to their full, unless you bring to the theatre with you the baggage of predetermination – 'a play must go like this'" (2008b, 1). However, *Me, Myself, and I* does display itself as a meta- and intertextual discourse that does necessitate some knowledge and understanding of theatrical conventions and literary references in order for one to disclose the subversive and the ironic (in the Hutcheonian sense) nature of the play.

The subject appears as fundamentally destabilized, in a continuous struggle to attain balance from where necessarily it will shift into uncertainty again. Julia Kristeva argues that the speaking subject is necessarily, always already split, under the constant pressure of his Freudian drives and social constraints. Though the system presupposes a unified, transcendental ego that operates only within practices that subserve the system, the active, speaking subject is capable of endless combinations of positions and elements of the system, able to create games, to play, thus positioning him/herself outside the realm that the system can grasp and describe within its own logic. For any deviation from the rules fragments the order and becomes "unreadable," it resists intelligibility (1986).

By the very fact of giving birth to identical twins Mother already subverts the system. This "malfunction" sets her on the course of becoming a subject who – as Doctor states – "strew[s] confusion in [her] path" (2011, 60). Naming both her sons Otto makes sense to her: "You don't see the logic of it … identical twins, identical

names" (2011, 22; ellipsis in the original) for "when they were old enough to know they had names, they knew they were the same person," "I would take them in my arms and make them one. They would nestle there and enfold and … become one – be one" (2011, 23; ellipsis in the original). She turns into one of the "archetypal Albee mothers" (Lahr 2010) – like Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Mommy in *The American Dream*, A in *Three Tall Women* or Woman in *The Play about the Baby*), who by the palindromic name acknowledges her sons' identical physical reality but "outrageously denies them their individual interiors" (Lahr 2010).

In this sense OTTO's "declaration of independence" (Lahr 2010) reads as an attempt of finding a way out of this labyrinth of shifting meanings. He becomes a good "dessembler" (2011, 68) as he puts it, deconstructing what would read as an allegorical story of inner struggle externalized in the figures of the twins embodying two sides of the coin, that is two different personae of one and the same personality and – as Ben Brantley argues – "about the need of all children to divorce themselves from the collective identity of family" (2010). He dissembles further markers of his subjectivity as well: nationality, language, and the fundamental element of his existence, that of being a character in a play.[1] Thus function his declarative statements that he is tired of being an "occidental" and – given that "the future is in the East" – he is leaving and he is going to be Chinese (2011, 13), that he has a new brother and "the old one is gone. He doesn't exist. Poof! Gone! Just like that!" (2011, 15), which set the play in motion and generate the existential crisis that has already been lurking in the air from the twins' birth. Within the "reality of the play" as Albee calls it, these utterances appear as "performatives" in the sense that J. L. Austin ascribes to them. Austin states that given that not all utterances "state" a fact or "describe" a state, and neither are all of them verifiable as true or false, we should/can differentiate a quite versatile group that he calls "performatives" in whose case "the uttering of the sentence is, or is part of, the doing of an action" (2000, 290), deriving their name from "perform," the usual verb with the noun "action:" "it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" (2000, 291). Accordingly, OTTO's declaration nullifies otto's existence, he is erased from the discourse. Of course, Austin also states that "a performative utterance will […] be in a peculiar way hallow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem or spoken in soliloquy" as "[l]anguage in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly – used not seriously, but in ways parasitic upon its normal use" (2000, 298), which leads us to a discussion

1 A similar decomposition of subjectivity markers opens Albee's *Occupant* where Louise Nevelson challenges every word of Man's introductory phrase: "Ladies and Gentlemen … the great American sculptor … Louise Nevelson" (Albee 2005, 626; ellipsis in the original), as I show in "The Dead Tell No Tales!? Edward Albee's *Occupant*" published in HJEAS 2012.

of two other fundamentally ambiguity-leaden aspects of *Me, Myself and I*: its language and the issue of reality of a/in a play.

In *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theatre after Modernism* Elinor Fuchs argues that in contemporary drama "character has lost its preeminence with its wholeness, it has dissolved into a flux of performance elements" (1996, 173). Neither do these works preoccupy themselves with the duality of illusion and/vs. reality as "[t]he question has disappeared with the new perception that all fixed reality is a fiction" (Fuchs 1996, 175). *Me, Myself and I* questions not only any stable identity, but the stability of meaning, the functionality of the process/any process of signification, and the possibilities of the genre to convey all this instability – itself being a sign-system with set conventions and a heritage of over two thousand years. As Fuchs states "'character' as a term of dramatic art can never be independent of contemporary constructions of subjectivity" (1996, 8). Understanding subjectivity then as a process through which one becomes an active/speaking subject inscribed by culture through/in language, Albee's preoccupation with language and theatre becomes a means of not only epistemological, but ontological, philosophical and critical questioning.

Me, Myself and I builds on the hallmark Albee wordplay, wit and humor, where the most fundamental questions of identity turn into verbal acrobatics. Every word, phrase and expression is dissected, analyzed and its referents multiplied. This is a game that Mother has initiated and that she and her "omniscient" Doctor partner play at mastery level, so no wonder that somebody uninitiated and unaccustomed to their game (like Maureen), asks: "Is this English she's speaking?" (2011, 56). Even such banalities as the expression "ta-ta" occasion verbal duels:

> OTTO: […] TA!
> Dr.: (*To exiting OTTO.*) The expression is not "Ta!", the expression is "Ta-ta!"
> Mother: What?
> Dr.: (*To Mother.*) Ta-ta! The expression "goodbye" is Ta-ta.
> Mother: Goodbye? Where are you going?
> Dr.: (*Shakes his head.*) Forget it. […]
> Mother: […] And then he said "Ta!" or something. (To Dr.) What does *that* mean?
> Dr.: What does what mean?
> Mother: Ta! What does ta mean?
> Dr.: We've been through this! The expression is not "ta!" The expression is "Ta-ta!"
> Mother: ("*Remind me.*") And what does *that* mean?
> Dr.: It means goodbye.
> Mother: (*Accusatory.*) You see!? I said you were going somewhere!
> Dr.: (*Getting out of bed.*) You're not nice. (2011, 15–17)

The crisis of identity also manifests itself as the breakdown of communication. Lowercase otto's first sense of terror with reference to loss of identity arises from his brother pretending not to hear him: "otto: I'll see him coming and I'll say hello, and it's as if he was deaf: he doesn't hear me. It's been going on for – what? – *days* now, and just now: 'OTTO,' I said and he just walked by me. I yelled: 'Hey, OTTO!' … and … nothing. […] it was […] as if I wasn't there, as if I … didn't exist" (2011, 32; emphasis and ellipsis in the original). Later, he uses talk, language to try to prove his existence (also asking Maureen to talk to his Mother and convince her that he still exists):

> otto: I don't *exist*.
> Mother: Yes; I mean *no*. No; you don't exist.
> Dr.: You've been replaced.
> otto: (*Guffaw*.) I don't exist!
> Mother: I'm sorry; yes.
> otto: Mother, who are you talking to?
> Mother: Why … *you*, of course. My baby boy; my otto.
> otto: (*To Dr.*) And you. Who are you talking to?
> Dr.: To your mother, mostly. (*otto raises his arm threateningly*.) You! To you. You, of course.
> otto: (*Pause*.) Then I *do* exist. (2011, 36; emphasis and ellipsis in the original)

However, in concordance with Austin's thesis that performatives need to be witnessed, his vanishing is considered as effected given that, as Doctor argues, it has been uttered and the utterance has been heard:

> Mother: Well … so we'll talk. That's what the girl wants to do, as I understand it … talk. "Can we talk?" she said on the phone. "Can we meet and talk?" I would have thought she'd say "*May* we," but what do I know? "Can we talk? otto asked me to call you." As I said, she sounded urgent. What do you suppose it's about?
> Dr.: (*Feigning puzzlement*.) Gee, I can't imagine. Do you think it could have anything to do with OTTO – big OTTO; loud OTTO – having decided little otto doesn't exist?
> Mother: (*Dismissive*.) People don't decide things like that.
> Dr. You *heard* him! You heard him *say* it!
> Mother: Fiddlesticks!
> Dr.: (*Out*.) And I haven't heard *that* one in a long while either!
> Mother: What people say and what they mean don't always mesh. You know that!

> Dr. Yes, but you heard him *say* it! (2011, 52–53; emphasis and ellipsis in the original)

Implicitly, the limitations of theatrical representation also occupy a central position. Albee constructs a postmodern pastiche world – to use Fredric Jameson's term according to whom postmodern culture constitutes "a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum" (quoted in Storey 2003, 150). *Me, Myself and I* abounds in cultural references: from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* to the Black Panthers – though specified that here they refer to the "four-legged ones," they still evoke American history, while at the end of the play the Father appearing "*driving a chariot – all the following clearly oversize and fake: papier-mâché, or whatever – pulled by four big black panthers on wheels – clearly fake*" (2011, 73) remind one of Walt Disney cartoons but also evoke Willy Loman's fantasies of his brother Ben and his "emeralds." Dramatic genres and conventions are scrutinized, merged and played out against each other. The domestic realist tradition of American drama history is reshaped by its mixture with elements of classical tragedies and Shakespearian comedy built on mistaken identities, features of vaudeville and farce, while the minimalist set, the constant experimentation with language, self-referenciality pay homage to theatrical ancestors from O'Neill's relentless quest for new forms in drama to Pirandello, Ionesco, Tennesse Williams and, of course, Beckett, in whose honor Albee raises Doctor's bowler hat. As it becomes obvious even before the curtain raises, the play constantly breaks the fourth wall illusion, drawing attention to its own artificiality. Beyond the characters constantly addressing the audience directly, there are whole scenes delivered in soliloquy (Scene 2 and Scene 4 in Act II), they also discurse on theatrical conventions and make comments on themselves being characters in a play:

> Mother: […] (*Out.*) You don't see the logic of it… identical twins, identical names?
> Dr.: (*A general statement.*) Symmetry, yes; logic, no.
> Mother: I wasn't talking to you.
> Dr.: Yes, I know. (*Points.*) To *them*! But you're confusing them, and a confused audience is not an attentive one, I read somewhere.
> Mother: Oh? (*Thinks.*) *King Lear* is confusing.
> Dr.: (*Granted.*) True.
> Mother: And people pay attention to *King Lear*. Or they try to.
> Dr.: They know they're *supposed* to. (2011, 22; emphasis in the original)

> Dr.: Where are *you* going?
> Mother: I've got to pee.
> Dr.: We're doing a scene here.
> Mother: Well, vamp or something. I've got to pee.
> Dr.: Yes, but…
> Mother: I've been doing nothing but sitting in the damn bed ever since we started. Talk about the twins or something. I'm going. (2011, 25)

> (*OTTO appears at stage left proscenium, unseen by otto and Maureen. Leans; finger to lips, to silence audience. Watches.*) (2011, 40)

> OTTO: […] Ah, well; off we go. (*Hears voices.*) Oh, wait! Some people are coming. (*Indicates off upstage right.*) I think I'll stick around and snoop. In the Japanese puppet theatre – the Bunraku – there's a tradition that if the people who are manipulating the puppets wear black fishnet – while they're on stage – they're invisible. It's really magical. (*Moves to stage left proscenium.*) Now, in Western theatre, there's the tradition that if you lean against a proscenium just so, (*Does so.*) you can watch a scene and the people who are *in* the scene won't see you. At least I *hope* that's the tradition. (2011, 47; emphasis in the original)

When asked with reference to such seeming distrust of dramatic realism, Albee argued: "I think I learnt the fourth wall thing from Brecht more than anybody. I like an audience to be confronted and have the characters talk to them, and sometimes even ask them to talk back. I don't want them to be, you know, spies. I want them to participate in the reality of the play" (Goldberg 2010). *Me, Myself and I* demands such active participation from audiences. It confronts us with the paranoia and panic of our times: is it possible that we could just vanish like so many of what Toby Zinman (2008) calls Albee's "imaginary sons, invisible sons, vanishing sons, silent sons" or in Scott Brown's terms "ghost sons" as in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Three Tall Women*, *The Play about the Baby*? Does our identity consist merely of elements that can/will be expropriated and that constitute constantly shifting personae? Are we mere "role-playing subjects" (Fuchs 1996, 6) in a sustained transition, trapped in the labyrinth of the ever-multiplying layers of meaning? Are we similar, or rather identical with otto who struggles exasperatedly to pin down the meaning of what he is told and what he says, and thus to prove his existence, to be heard, to communicate, that is proclaim his individuality through language, words that keep exploding into multiple meanings. These characters inscribed in their own illogical though symmetrical discourse, constantly questioning and manipulating language, and of course being manipulated and modified by the very language they use and

through which they exist, stand for what Ben Brantley has called "the ruling passion, jubilant and exasperated" of Albee (and Stoppard), whose "faithless lovers […] are words:"

> It is one of the livelier paradoxes of the English-speaking theater today that its two most dazzling wordsmiths are incurably suspicious of the language they ply with such flair. No other living playwrights give (and, it would seem, receive) more pleasure from the sounds, shapes and textures of their lavishly stocked vocabularies. And none is more achingly conscious of the inadequacy of how they say what they say.
>
> This contradiction is not just an element of their style; it's the essence of it. It's what gives that distinctive, heady tension to their plays, the friction that sends the minds of receptive theatergoers into exhilarated overdrive. (Brantley 2008, 8)

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The Story of Orpheus and Eurydice in Coetzee and Rilke

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Abstract. J. M. Coetzee's *The Master of Petersburg* (1994) is a text about a father (Dostoevsky) mourning the death of his son. I am interested in the presence and meaning of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in the novel, compared to the meaning of the myth in R. M. Rilke's poem "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes." (1904). I read the unaccomplished encounter between Orpheus and Eurydice as a story that portrays the failed intersubjectity plot of Coetzee's novel(s). Following Blanchot's reading of the myth, I examine the contrasting Orphean and Eurydicean conducts – Orpheus desiring but, at the same time, destroying the other and Eurydice declining the other's approach. I argue that Orpheus's and Eurydice's contrasting behaviours can be looked at as manifestations of a failure of love, one for its violence, the other for its neglect, and thus the presence of the myth in *The Master of Petersburg* is meaningful in what it says about the theme of intersubjectivity in Coetzee's oeuvre.

Keywords: Orpheus, Eurydice, encounter, intersubjectivity.

J. M. Coetzee's seventh novel, *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), is a novel about the trauma of losing a son; it is a mourning text both in the sense that in it the protagonist Dostoevsky tries to work through the trauma of loss (and through him Coetzee tries to work through the trauma of the loss of his own son[1]) and in the sense that the novel textually performs the work of mourning by trying – and failing – to understand this loss. Dostoevsky cites the story of Orpheus and Eurydice in reference to the death of his son and to his experience of this loss. The presence or invocation of the Orpheus myth in *The Master of Petersburg* is significant for my argument in that it tells the story of a wished-for but (never realized) failed encounter and in this it is suggestive of the difficult and wounded

1 Mourning as a theme of the novel has a biographical aspect as Coetzee's son died in 1993 in an accident (in a mysterious fall from a high balcony), when he was twenty-three, shortly before the writing of *The Master of Petersburg*.

nature of intersubjectivity that Coetzee's novels evoke through their engagement with the theme of the encounter with another human being.

In *The Master of Petersburg* Dostoevsky's mourning is gradually saturated with certain mythological motifs and stories. It is as if the very state of mourning evoked mythological stories by its sheer archaic intensity. Reminiscences and traces of the myths of Daedalus, Penelope, and Orpheus are at play in the novel, informing Dostoevsky's mourning and his "tale of Pavel," his son. These stories play a crucial role, as the fictional Dostoevsky remarks: "One by one, in fact, the old stories are coming back, stories he heard from his grandmother and *did not know the meaning of*, but stored up unwittingly like bones for the future. A great ossuary of stories from before history began, built up and tended by the people" (Coetzee 2004a, 126; emphasis mine).

Tamás Valastyán discusses the Orpheus-Eurydice encounter as an allegory of the act of interpretation in which Orpheus plays the role of the desirous reader and Eurydice that of the impenetrable work of art. Valastyán argues with Blanchot that the critical intention and hope conceived in the illusion of touching – coming into relation with the other – is doomed to be an ironic, hopeless gesture taken in the direction of the work of art. Eurydice can never be "saved" by Orpheus's look; she can never be reclaimed from the deep (Valastyán 1999). The sense of touching the other (as in the 5th century Attic relief) is nothing but the illusion of touching (obtaining). The irony arises in/from the paradoxical gesture of the touch, being and meaning closeness *and* distance at the same time. The touch – as well as the look – are what unite and separate reader from work of art. One could say that the presence of the fragments of myths in Coetzee's novels might be seen as carrying such an Orphic critical-understanding function in his prose, trying to – through a self-reading, self-understanding gesture – bring meaning, embed and "tame" these painful narratives into (known) stories (through myths' "innate"-archaic "universalizing" nature), but given the private-unique event(-like) nature of these texts, the novels continually elude the rendering of such a "universal" meaning.

The Master of Petersburg evokes the myth of Orpheus (and those of Penelope and Daedalus) as underlying subtexts behind the story of the death of Dostoevsky's son and of his mourning. These myths are there *in place of.* As in Rilke's poem "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes.," in which it is not Orpheus who is crying but his lyre *instead of him* ("out of one lyre / more grief came than from all grieving women"), in this novel these myths bear a figurative logic and have a tropological function. Like Penelope, with these myths Dostoevsky weaves a new tapestry, composing his loss in different ways – into *patterns.* Coetzee's recourse to the fragments of mythological references in the novel carries a "tropological" function of "patterning" or "screening." These myth fragments function as metanarratives to the characters' stories of identity serving to complement their narratives precisely through their fragmentariness.

The story may be interpreted as an allegory of Coetzee's use of myth, as well as an allegory portraying and entwining the many failed intersubjectivity plots of Coetzee's fiction. Blanchot's reading of the myth (2008, 60–61) helps in examining the two attitudes to intersubjectivity staged in it and in Coetzee's novels discussed here: Orpheus desiring but, at the same time, destroying the other and Eurydice declining the other's approach. Orpheus's and Eurydice's contrasting attitudes can be seen as manifestations of a failure of (in) love, one for its violence, the other for its neglect.

The Master of Petersburg deliberately and repeatedly calls the Orpheus legend into play, by having Dostoevsky refer to himself as a (failing) Orphic figure: "Poetry might bring back his son. […] But he is not a poet. […] A gate has closed behind his son, a gate bound sevenfold with bands of iron. To open that gate is the labour laid upon him" (Coetzee 2004a, 17, 19). Mike Marais's (Blanchotian-Levinasian) reading of the novel marks the presence of the Orpheus story in the novel as a myth that serves as a metaphor for the desire which inspires Dostoevsky to write (suggesting a relation between writing and death, Orpheus's encounter with Eurydice being an encounter with the dead) (2006, 90).[2] Just like Orpheus, Marais argues, Dostoevsky betrays (rather than reestablishes) the filial relation (2006, 91). The consequent paradox of the novel, Marais notes, is that in failing to find the right words in his mourning, he establishes what Levinas terms as "unrelating relation" (1969, 295, quoted in Marais 2006, 92).

According to the legend, Orpheus is driven into the underworld by his desire for his wife. So, unlike Perseus, Heracles, Theseus, or Iason, he undertakes the trip to Tartaros out of love; he goes down wailing (Kerényi 1977, 366). Even Hades is moved by his song and he only shows mercy once, allowing Orpheus to bring his wife back to the land of the living as long as she walks behind him and he never tries to look at her face until they reach the surface. Dostoevsky "thinks of Orpheus walking backwards step by step, whispering the dead woman's name, coaxing her out of the entrails of hell; of the wife in graveclothes with the blind, dead eyes following him, holding out limp hands before her like a sleepwalker" (Coetzee 2004a, 5). In the myth, Orpheus agrees but fails, looking back at the very end to make sure his wife is following, and thus he loses Eurydice forever (Graves 1981, 159*).* The novel conjures up the central moment of Orpheus's attempt to rescue his wife – the act of looking backward:

> Not oblivion but the moment before oblivion, when I come panting up to you at the rim of the well and we look upon each other for a last time, knowing we are alive, sharing this one life, our only life. All that I am left to grasp for: the moment of that gaze, salutation and farewell in one, past all arguing, past

2 Chiara Lombardi (2010) also examines the myths of Orpheus and Eurydice and that of Eros and Psyche as illustrations and representations of the paradoxical relation between life and writing.

> all pleading: 'Hello, old friend. Goodbye, old friend.' Dry eyes. Tears turned to crystals.
> I hold your head between my hands. I kiss your brow. I kiss your lips.
> The rule: one look, one only; no glancing back. But I look back. […] Forever I look back. Forever I am absorbed in your gaze. (Coetzee 2004a, 53–54) [3]

The test Hades sets on Orpheus is a test of desire. It is Orpheus's desire for the other, the beloved woman – not to resist looking backwards – that finally "kills" Eurydice;[4] it is the very desire for an encounter with the other that sends the other away. As Gillian Rose argues, Orpheus's "mistake" consists in gazing at Eurydice and thus risking everything (1996, 110).[5] Blanchot reads Orpheus's backward look at Eurydice as transgressive precisely because of its violence in wanting to possess – and by possessing destroy – the (otherness of the) other:

> Eurydice is the strangeness of the extreme distance that is *autrui* at the moment of face-to-face confrontation and when Orpheus looks back, ceasing to speak in order to see, his gaze reveals itself to be the violence that brings death, the dreadful blow. […] man facing man like this has no choice but to speak or to kill. […] should the self ever come under this command – speech or death – it will be because it is in the presence of *autrui*. (2008, 60)

"Cain killing Abel," Blanchot goes on, "is the self that, coming up against the transcendence of *autrui*," attempts to confront it by resorting to murder (2008, 60). He adds, however, that in this alternative speech/murder, "speech is no less grave than death" (2008, 62). Orpheus descends into hell to bring back his beloved but he comes back alone. He was able to move and charm and delight anyone with his song, he even has Sisyphus sit down and rest on his boulder, making

3 Though primarily alluding to the Orpheus legend, the motif of looking backward is present in the Daedalus-Icarus legend as well, in relation to Daedalus the father, who looks back from his own flight to see how his son manages with his wings. Daedalus's look behind is the loving backward glance of the father at his son. The image of looking backwards at the same time invokes the biblical episode of a transgressive act of looking back: the story of Lot's wife. Looking back turns the looker into a salt pillar, indicating the frozen, arrested temporality of melancholia, the inability to mourn and thus work through the loss, illustrating the "unnatural," painful convulsiveness of the melancholic.

4 In Coetzee's novel, it is suggested that Dostoevsky is responsible for and implicated in Pavel's death. Allusions to his implicating himself in Pavel's death abound: "*I will come back*. The same promise he made when he took the boy to school for his first term. *You will not be abandoned*. And abandoned him" (Coetzee 2004a, 5). Ironically, the novel opens with his already late arrival to Petersburg; his son dead.

5 Like in Rilke's poem "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes." (1904), it is the undoing (failing to obey the prohibition and looking backward) which makes the work: "If only he might / turn once more (if looking back / were not the ruin of all his work, / that first had to be accomplished)" (Rilke/Kline).

even the stones (all that was wild [Kerényi 1977, 313]) enchanted by his song, but now, on encountering his real other/autrui in Eurydice, he is no longer able to move her, as this is most beautifully presented in Rilke's "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes.:" "the slim man" is "mute and impatient, gazing before him;" his hands "hung, clumsy and tight" [Rilke/Kline]). He so much awaits the encounter with his beloved that he is "no longer aware of the weightless lyre, grown into his left side." His desire for the other is so elementary he even forgets about his lyre concentrating all his strength and attention on the moment of encounter (Valastyán 1999). "His steps ate up the path in huge bites / without chewing: / […] ran ahead like a dog, / turned back, came and went again and again, / and waited at the next turn" (Rilke/Kline). Never has a journey been so long, never has a look been waiting more eagerly for a return-look (Thomka quoted in Valastyán 1999). Orpheus turns back and this is the cause of their tragedy. Kerényi and Valastyán discuss a 5th-century Attic relief representing of the encounter of the three – Orpheus, Eurydice, and Hermes – which shows the woman holding the hand of both men, with a hand taking leave of her husband and being taken by the other hand by Hermes, who already escorts her back (Kerényi 1977, 268). Eurydice lays her hand on Orpheus's shoulder and he holds her hand – thus taking a last farewell from each other – and, at the same moment, Hermes too takes Eurydice's hand thus signaling his destination of escorting her back to the underworld. The uniqueness of this representation stands in that it so powerfully presents the tension of separation and connection (Valastyán 1999).

The power of Rilke's poem lies in its extremely sensitive concentration on, and presentation of, the figure of Eurydice. Unlike Orpheus, who is eager and impatient for the encounter, Eurydice – "the so-beloved" (Rilke/Kline) – is "uncertain, gentle, and without impatience. She was in herself, like a woman near term" (Rilke/Kline) or, in Stephen Mitchell's translation: "She was deep within herself, like a woman heavy / with child, and did not see the man in front / or the path ascending steeply into life" (Rilke/Mitchell). She is as if awaiting the event of the encounter – like a mother ("heavy") awaiting the miracle of birth – but she is in fact "deep within herself" (Rilke/Mitchell) she "did not think of the man" (Rilke/Kline). She is "without impatience. She was in herself" (Rilke/Kline). The encounter between the two of them does not take place; it is impossible to take place as Eurydice is alone, deep in herself, declining Orpheus; she does not want to because she cannot encounter the other. She cannot turn (her looks) to the other, because she turns (in)to herself. She no longer desires the other, the other's intimacy ails her: "She was no longer that, that man's possession no longer" (Rilke/Kline).

Orpheus's and Eurydice's reactions might be seen as allegories of Coetzee's portrayals/representations of intersubjectivity. Orpheus desires the other (and with his desire kills her), while Eurydice declines intersubjectivity. Coetzee

seems to change the gender roles: in his novels, it is the female characters – Magda, Susan Barton – who represent the impatient Orphean/Orphic desire for an encounter with the other, while male characters such as Friday or Michael K represent the Eurydicean closure or inability (or resistance) to an encounter with the other. They (Michael K as well as Friday or the barbarian girl, occasionally) personify Eurydice's question from Rilke's poem – "Who?" – not even realizing there is another there, incarnating loneliness; they are like Eurydice, the lonesome ones closed into themselves. They are at the same time Orpheus/"orphanos" (from the Greek and Latin word), fatherless, orphan (the name Orpheus originates from the Proto-Indo-European verb root "orbh," meaning to put asunder, apart, to separate) (Freiert 1991, 46). Orpheus's and Eurydice's contrasting behaviors might be seen as failures of love, of "love turned inside out" (Coetzee 2004a, 125), one through excess and violence, the other through indifference.

Indeed, *Waiting for the Barbarians* as well as *Life & Times of Michael K* seem to tell the (colonial) story (of intersubjectivity) that the full stops (the punctuation marks) act out and stand for *between* Orpheus, Eurydice (and Hermes) in the title of Rilke's poem: "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes." Instead of using a comma between the names, the full stops suggest an unbreakable barrier between the protagonists. Orpheus and Eurydice's myth thus tells the story of an encounter in which one can only come close to the other but never close enough. Eurydice comes from a different world (she's dead) – she is other – and she will remain in this different world; she comes only to depart. The penetrating-aggressive Orphic gesture – the (possessing) look – has no effect on Eurydice who remains unchanged and untouched by the encounter with Orpheus. Her question "Who?" in Rilke's poem is more tragic than the Magistrate and the barbarian girl's "goodbye," which at least acknowledges the presence of the other (even if acknowledging the impossibility of union/encounter). Eurydice does not even realize there is another there (that Orpheus was there). Orpheus remains a mere spectator like in another sonnet of Rilke's: "And we, spectators always, everywhere, / looking at […] we live our lives, forever taking leave" ("Eighth Sonnet"). Orpheus takes leave in Rilke's poem(s), Eurydice does not even do that. "Who's turned us round like this, so that we always, / do what we may, retain the attitude / of someone who's departing?" Rilke's poem suggests an innate "separateness" (challenging the Platonic myth). In Rilke's "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes." both Orpheus and Eurydice depart, but while Orpheus departs from Eurydice, Eurydice departs from noone. While Orpheus is changed by/after the (non)encounter – he stands there "someone or other, whose features / were unrecognizable," nothing happens to Eurydice, who walks backward as she came "by that same path," "uncertain, gentle, and without impatience" as she was before. The encounter cannot take place, not even through the mediation of a third party – Hermes, who is present between the two of them as a messenger, to mediate between the two but whose physical presence reminds

of the impossibility of an unmediated ("naked") union between the two of them. Hermes is there instead of Hades (replacing Hades), who, as if he already knew, his forbidding word to Orpheus a (paternal) warning to him, like an index finger, "take care," "mind you," the forbidding word without which there is no desire, that sets desire on and the godly gesture that makes Orpheus (as a desiring being) be born.

The function of the fragments of myths in the novels discussed would be, then, to embed the unbearable, terrifying encounter in some context that will render the forever wounded and wounding nature of the encounter meaningful. Their function would be something similar to the intermediary function of Hermes in the Orpheus-Eurydice encounter. The human relation is terrible, Blanchot says, because it is tempered by no intermediary (2008, 59). The myths, as evoked by Coetzee, might be said to have this "Hermes-like" intermediary function: to alleviate and temper the terrible-traumatic (metaphysical and colonial) encounter in Coetzee's fiction. His recourse to these mythological references suggests possibilities of rewriting the myths, but in very fragmentary and erratic fashion: myths are present as momentary flashes, and it is precisely their momentariness that makes their presence so meaningful in Coetzee's oeuvre.

The mythical fragments and flashes (often not longer than half a sentence) are themselves like the ever-elusive, traumatic nature of the event of encounter in Levinas. They flash up only to disappear in the next moment, in the next sentence. The singularity of the encounter, its traumatic "eventness," unsuited to the stability, continuity and durability usually attributed to myth, takes away the comforting meaningfulness and coherence of myth, perhaps reawakening the forgotten traumatic core of the encounter with the (divine, human) other that gave rise to mythological stories in the first place. In Coetzee, myths flash up for a painful instant (as if) repeating the unembeddable nature of the encounter.

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Three Sophisticated Ladies and Their Turns of Discourse: Edith Wharton, Flannery O'Connor, Alice Munro

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Abstract: My paper focuses on certain "turns of discourse" which can make the main messages of literary masterpieces by Edith Wharton, Flannery O'Connor, and Alice Munro communicate, despite differences in time, space, culture. Thus the label of feminism may be superficial here. What these three writers of canonical world literature share is a fine gift for feminine irony, that is responsible for both their stylistic virtuosity and their thematic choices. I was particularly interested in their intricate views and ways of dealing with the difficulties of the mother-daughter relationship in their exclusively concise short fiction. The *horror*, *(hurt) hubris*, and *humility* of actually living such life experiences and then turning them into literary artifacts have represented my special concern here. The sweet sharp thorns of this classic challenge in real life can make of it the inexhaustible literary theme confirmed by each one and all of these "three sophisticated ladies" in their splendid works.

Keywords: daughterhood, intertextuality, irony, metafiction, motherhood.

Irony and sharp wit will always distinguish a certain feminine rhetoric, rather intellectual than ideological; rather pragmatically achieved, perhaps, yet not devoid of passion and a certain type of (rather sarcastic) humor, since *ridendo castigat mores*.

Two things must be established from the very beginning: the first one is that, although not (half) as often included in syllabi bibliographies as their consecrated male fellow-writers, these three women writers are *not* minor writers. And the second one is that, despite this fact, feminism may not be the first safe label to attach to such writers as the ladies we will focus on here. They are: early twentieth

century elegant New Yorker Edith Wharton, mid-twentieth century shocking Old Southern Flannery O'Connor, and last but not least, early twenty-first century intricate Canadian Alice Munro. On the contrary, if we have to establish influences and precursors, then these can only be: (Nathaniel Hawthorne via) Henry James for Edith Wharton; William Faulkner for Flannery O'Connor; and perhaps all of these American literary masters and disciples taken together, plus many others, from all over the world as far as Alice Munro is concerned.

At first sight, the main message of their short stories may even seem to oppose that of some not much older predecessors, like Kate Chopin, or Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Unlike the fin de siècle protagonists of Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," and Chopin's *The Awakening* – the feminine main characters of Wharton's "The Old Maid," of O'Connor's "Good Country People," of Munro's "Silence" and "Corrie" evince no radical endeavours to get out of the "trap of marriage," or of that of any other kind of "traditional" relationships between a man and a woman, such as the (moral) bond between unmarried (or even extra-marital) couple partners. And yet the chastening meaning of the "realistic" life-choices made by such anti-heroines may be at least as dramatic and intense – if not even more so – than that of Edna Pontellier's drowning suicide, or that of the woman locked between the four yellow-papered walls desperately surrendering to insanity.

Though apparently far away from each other in both time and space, these three "sophisticated ladies" will prove to speak the same language, which is *not only* English: it is a particular *language of the mind*, creating a multilayered rhetoric of fine, perverse psychological fiction, enhanced in all its raw strains of verisimilitude by cool detachment and a certain cerebral contemplation of their brilliant and strangely twisted life stories. These life stories have all kept their mark of every-day (anti-)heroism – which has actually earned these writers a passport to universality and also to the contemporary literary canon, irrespective of the century.

Despite the stylistic and setting differences among these unique stories, there are certain narrative motives by which they communicate, such as: the (*hurt*) *hubris*, the *humiliation*, and the *horror* of being a woman and having to deal with it in a men's world, and in the absence of men. And this message can only be conveyed by the ironic turns of discourse of minimalist feminine narrative. Alas: no scholarly classifications, no carefully established trends or fashions can make any difference here.

*

Hailed by Lloyd Morris, its first reviewer, as the best accomplishment of the entire volume[1] – "The Old Maid: *The 'Fifties*" is the second one of the four novellas

1 In "Mrs. Wharton Looks at Society: In Four Novellettes She Re-creates Four Successive Decades in New York Life," published in *New York Times Book Review*, May 18, 1924, Lloyd Morris praises especially "The Old Maid," where "irony is the vehicle of concentrated tragic passion

of which Edith Wharton's 1924 volume *Old New York* consists. They all form a symmetrical *illo tempore* pattern for the pun in the entire volume's title, anticipating an evocation of four fictive decades within a nineteenth century lost New York. The writer performs this imaginary (re)staging game, under the same compulsion of "a backward glance" – a phrase that she so dearly inherited from Walt Whitman, and which she would use again later as an echo in her 1934 memoirs book's title. "Old Walt" is likewise evoked in "The Spark: *The 'Sixties*," i.e. the third episode of Wharton's shorter fiction volume *Old New York: Four Novellas*.

"This is not a story-teller's story" (Wharton 2002, 187) – the narrator of "The Spark" warns us teasingly. The witty remark is actually valid for the entire assemblage of the four novellas. And moreover – none of these is free from intertextuality. If "The Spark" evokes (a possible image of) Walt Whitman and the Civil War (1861–1865), "The Old Maid" will make the reader return to Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1850 celebrated romance *The Scarlet Letter* and its similar narrative strategy of an apparent evocation of the past.

If Hawthorne's allegorically revisiting seventeenth century Puritan Boston results in the American chronotope of a universal story of guilt, remorse and innermost turmoil – then Wharton's revisiting Old New York of the mid-nineteenth century (when *The Scarlet Letter* was actually published, creating a scandal) will echo Hawthorne's story of guilt and remorse, in the finest possible fashion, proving that the dominant themes have remained quite contemporary – if not (anymore) in fact, at least in fiction.

*

Narrative conciseness is one of the most demanding qualities that shorter fiction writers will strive to attain in their works. It is this distinct feature that characterizes such literary works as these we are just considering here. Whether written by Edith Wharton, Flannery O'Connor, or Alice Munro, the short stories we are discussing prove their authors' virtuosity in narrative suggestiveness by extreme concentration of material, and also by a rhetoric of understatement. What is left unsaid helps readers find between the lines all the room they may need for their imaginary contribution to the story, enhancing its dialogical dimension.

"The Old Maid" can be interpreted as a comedy of manners in miniature, so typical for Edith Wharton's narrative art. By completing the title with the historical interval – "*The Fifties*," i.e. the mid-nineteenth century – it should correspond to, the narrator can only imply that kind of Old New York mentality

which lifts the story high above the circumstances of narrow convention in which it arises, and makes it an austere and potent reading of life" (Wharton 2002, viii). This would be later confirmed by first rank literary critics of the twentieth century, such as R. W. B. Lewis, in his volume *Edith Wharton* (2002, 299).

according to which *marriage* was a necessity for young women of a higher social rank. But is this view absolutely obsolete today?

And we may further wonder: *who* could be "the old maid" within this novella?

> *You* could always have told, *every one* agreed afterward, that Charlotte Lovell was *meant to be an old maid*. Even before her illness it had been manifest: there was something prim about her in spite of her fiery hair. Lucky enough for her, poor girl, considering her wretched health in her youth: Mrs. James Ralston's contemporaries, for instance, remembered Charlotte as a mere ghost, coughing her lungs out – that, *of course*, had been the reason for her breaking her engagement with Joe Ralston. (Wharton 2002, 117; emphasis mine)

The narrator's voice can merely arouse the reader's suspicion by this insistence (see the italicized pronouns, implying the doubtful familiarity of common knowledge and commonsensical acceptance of a cliché) as to the anticipatory obviousness of Charlotte's fate. The emphasis is carried on:

> So the James Ralstons had lent her their little farmhouse, and Mrs. Jim, with her extraordinary gift of taking things in at a glance, had at once arranged everything, and even pledged herself to look after the baby if Charlotte died. Charlotte did not die. She lived to grow robust and middle-aged, energetic and even tyrannical. And as the transformation in her character took place she *became more and more like the typical old maid*: precise, methodical, absorbed in trifles, and attaching an exaggerated importance to the smallest social and domestic observances. (Wharton 2002, 118; emphasis mine)

The repetition and the emphasis of the label-formula: "more and more like the typical old maid" builds up the skeleton of a narrative structure in which plot is condensed with all its segments, as if just wrapping up this skeleton. But the stronger the insistence, the greater the reader's doubt that this is the (kind of) story to be taken for granted. Moreover, this will enable the reader to surmise that "the old maid" is rather a social role that Charlotte Lovell must now learn well and assume for the rest of her life, for the sake of someone else, whom she loves more than herself.

Due to this ironic self-questioning structure of the literary text, we know already from the Part Two first pages that Charlotte has decided to put on the mask of spinsterhood. And soon enough we may infer that it is for the sake of her favourite "poor foundling" – Clementina/Tina, her own daughter by Clement/Clem Spender.

Further on during the same paragraph we learn that "poor Jim Ralston was killed by a fall from his horse" (2002, 118) – which is enough to change the

entire pattern of the narrative puzzle. Delia Ralston, his wife and Charlotte's first cousin, becomes now a young widow "with a boy and a girl to bring up;" therefore she will magnanimously take Charlotte and "Charlotte's foundling, too" home, to live with herself and her own children, under the same roof. "The little girl was called Tina Lovell: it was *vaguely* supposed that Charlotte had adopted her" (2002, 118; emphasis mine). Hence the household will be run now by the two women, raising (their) three children together.

Still the question remains open: who is "the old maid"?

As time goes by, Delia Ralston née Lovell regrets more and more her formerly conventional renouncing Clement Spender's love for the sake of the proper marriage to her late husband Jim Ralston. She realizes she sacrificed her soul in choosing social safety and welfare over true love. She comes to acknowledge and even envy her cousin Chatty's moral strength in having had rather a moment of passion followed by the birth of an illegitimate child: Clem's daughter, Tina.

As for Clem himself, his destiny is just as ironic as the fates of the two cousins gravitating around his memory: he becomes a docile husband to a decent wife, who would help him sell all his paintings to all their visiting American acquaintances, overseas. He may well never suspect that his accidental lovemaking to Chatty had resulted in Tina's birth. And that Delia, who had once rejected him, would eventually become the girl's legally adoptive mother – lest the old story should fatefully repeat itself. For fear that Tina might inherit her natural parents' passionate inclinations and recklessly ignore social convention, Delia Ralston decides to shelter her natural niece by the proper surname of Ralston, thus enabling Tina to get married to Lanning Halsey, the wealthy young man she sincerely loves, yet whose parents might otherwise never have allowed their union.

Therefore, "the old maid" cannot be Charlotte, Tina's natural mother; it cannot be Delia, whom Tina prefers to call "mother" – although compared to Delia's infatuation with Clem's and Chatty's daughter, Delia's affection for her own daughter appears no more than duty-bound. And fortunately, nor will "the old maid" be Tina, who gets "saved" by a last minute adoption launching her into the happy ending marriage to crown the story. "The Old Maid" is just a threatening label: either to be avoided by marriage (whether conventional or as a blessed love-match), or to be preferred as the least of two evils, compared to the even worse social status prospect of a mother whose child's father could not afford to marry her.

"The Old Maid" of Edith Wharton is evidently no fairy-tale, despite its conventional happy ending with the wedding that confirms a young couple's love-match. There is no room for fairy-tales in Edith Wharton's Old New York. All the more so, then, this perfect finale touch is employed in the same ironic mood, to keep the entire novella sealed by its waveringly bitter question-mark.

Chatty and Delia are stuck with each other, in a love-hate relationship whose key is Tina – a constant reminder of much more than just Clem Spender: rather of the two cousins' failed youth. If Chatty feels she failed her youth chances by an act of passion, Delia considers to have failed her youth chances by the "wiser" determination to give up passion for ever. The irony of their opposite choices in life brings them together for Tina's sake. Hawthorne's Hester Prynne with her Pearl, facing together the Puritans' righteousness are never too far away from this New England romance background.

Yet this effort of raising together the lost love child is carried out rather as a competition than as a collaboration between Chatty and Delia. The polarity between *hubris* and *humility* forms the nucleus of Wharton's Old New York novella. And this *hubris-humility* double game is what dominates all the stories we are further here discussing: we shall see it at work in O'Connor's Old South story of forlorn Georgia, and then likewise in Munro's contemporary Canadian stories. From *hubris* to *humility* the only way for these non-heroic protagonists is that of (innermost stifled) double *horror*: the *horror* at facing the others' cynicism and the *horror* at being oneself ready for compromise. This (dis)balance between "*pride and prejudice*" has been perhaps the oldest double theme with modern women novelists, ever since Jane Austen.[2]

Charlotte will never ask for mercy and support from Delia – on the contrary; the novella plot in itself is such an ironic structure that it almost leads to Tina's "rescue" by Delia *despite* Chatty herself. Or at least apparently.

When she first comes to her much better off cousin Delia Ralston, Charlotte Lovell only needs advice from a happily married woman. Chatty confides in Delia and confesses to her, still nurturing the hope that she can both marry Joe Ralston, the cousin of Jim, Delia's husband, *and* keep her baby Tina, Clem Spender's love child:

> Social tolerance was not dealt in the same measure to men and to women, and neither Delia nor Charlotte had ever wondered why: like all the young women of their class they simply bowed to the ineluctable. No; there was no escape from the dilemma. As clearly as it was Delia's duty to save Clem Spender's child, so clearly, also, she seemed destined to sacrifice his mistress. As the thought pressed on her she remembered Charlotte's wistful cry: "*I want to be married, like all of you*," and her heart tightened. But yet it must not be. (Wharton 2002, 105; emphasis mine)

2 This thematic pattern of realistic narrative can only function due to a specifically feminine gift for sharp wit. The way to this double *horror* of *hurt hubris* and *humility* also passes through some reference books and their women authors of the twentieth century, such as: *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983) by Iris Murdoch; *Possession* (1990) by A. S. Byatt. Yet that line of digression should have to wait for now.

Ironically, again, Delia should have been the last person for Chatty to have appealed to for advice: as an embodiment of social conformity and high bourgeois prejudice – moreover, as the true old flame of Clem Spender, who had found in Chatty's arms one night's comfort for his rejected love for Delia – Mrs. Jim Ralston could hardly be trusted for impartiality.[3] Not only would Delia "sacrifice" Clem's mistress, but she would also take *possession* of their love child – as if "saving" the girl from poverty and social decay – and, by raising Tina with (at least) the same affection as she owed her own children, claim the girl's soul. Tina becomes Delia's *property*, regarding her not only as her benefactor, but also actually as her mother; Charlotte will remain "Aunt Chatty"– thus paying the price for her daughter's respectability and financial security in Old New York high life. Therefore, for Tina's sake, Chatty is finally deprived by everything and everyone, Tina included.

But the plot has its meanders until this is accomplished. *Proud but poor* Charlotte will first try to detach herself and her daughter from Delia's (perverse) protection.[4] As soon as the girl shows her alarming attraction for Lanning Halsey, a charming young man, whose parents would never have allowed him to marry Chatty Lovell's daughter, Charlotte is ready to depart from Delia's home, withdrawing with Tina to some place suitable for their modest social condition. At this point, Delia is not yet ready to offer adoption. Instead, she tries to assure Chatty that her home would always be the place for all of them to share:

> "I hope you exaggerate, Charlotte. There may be disinterested characters ... But, in any case, surely Tina need not be unhappy here, with us who love her so dearly." "*Tina an old maid? Never!*" Charlotte Lovell rose abruptly, her closed hand crashing down on the slender work-table. "*My child shall have her life ... her own life ... whatever it cost me ...*" (Wharton 2002, 131–132; ellipsis in the original, emphasis mine)

Therefore, playing the role of "the old maid," Charlotte had given up her right to a life of her own. Now she would have to also yield her daughter. To Tina, the happy bride to be, Aunt Chatty will never be more than a narrow-minded spinster with rigid rules. The only one who can understand her joy of living is

3 In her hypocrisy, devoted conformity and dull conventionalism, Delia Ralston should remind us of Adèle Ratignolle's character in Kate Chopin's 1899 audacious novel *The Awakening*. Its tragic fin-de-siècle protagonist, Edna Pontellier, will commit suicide. Hers is the archetypal mask of "the fallen woman" – whereas Edith Wharton's Charlotte Lovell is a good survivor, as "the old maid." Chatty cannot afford any other "destiny:" she has to live for Tina, her daughter, cost what it may.

4 In 1939, the same year when Margaret Mitchell's emblematic Old South novel *Gone with the Wind* became a Hollywood cult movie, thus turning Vivien Leigh into our image of Scarlett O'Hara, Edith Wharton's novella "The Old Maid" was also adjusted for the silver screen. Bette Davis played Charlotte Lovell. It is significant that originally, Edmund Golding, the film director, had intended Bette Davis to play *both* Charlotte and Delia. According to his interpretation, then, Delia may represent Charlotte's alter-ego.

Delia – the girl's accomplice-like foster-mother, and the kindly author of the true mother's utter defeat by alienation and annihilation.

Apart from its plot and its setting in mid-nineteenth century Old New York, with such labyrinthine windings sustained by classic verisimilitude – the essential requirement of realism in fiction – the beauty of such a cruel story stays in its stylistic achievement. Thus Edith Wharton's 1924 novella should be read as a modern story, with all its contemporary qualities acquired from psychoanalysis, enhancing its dramatization in both monologue and dialogue.[5]

High society respectability is ultimately a matter of money, of *possession* – and Charlotte can only use her intelligence in the best interest of her daughter, Tina, whose access to the exclusive world of Old New York comes at the price of her own mother's absolute self-denial.

*

From Edith Wharton's high modernist comedy of manners and elegant cityscape we have come now to a postmodern dark comedy. And yet, though published some good three decades later and taking us to a totally different American fictive setting, Flannery O'Connor's short story "Good Country People" from the volume *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* (1955) evolves in the same mode of failed motherhood and twisted daughterhood.[6]

The same selective omniscient narrator is recounting the grotesque story of Joy/Hulga Hopewell, Manley Pointer, Mrs. Hopewell – Joy's callous mother, and Mrs. Freeman – her tenant's ubiquitous wife. An all-pervasive sense of gloomy alienation and devastating meaninglessness remains suspended somewhere on the imaginary screen of this narrative. The story seems to unfold strictly *on a two-dimensional plane*, rather like a sketch, hardly ever allowing the reader any insight into the characters' minds. The setting is a fictive Georgia countryside in the American Old South, where nothing much ever seems to happen. And yet.

What actually happens is that the characters' any attempt at communication is doomed to fail. Ridiculous (and almost harmless) as it may seem at first, an invasion of clichés, platitudes, truisms, prejudices becomes more and more threatening, until it catches under its net, of all characters, Joy/Hulga herself – ironically,

5 1924 remains a hallmark of high modernism in world literature: it is the year when Thomas Mann's masterpiece *The Magic Mountain* (*Der Zauberberg*) was first published. The first quality the two writers share is the sharp irony which yields their superb comedies of manners. Much like Mann's, Wharton's work obviously corresponds to this particular modern trend of psychoanalytical realism in world fiction. Like Thomas Mann, Edith Wharton is no "innovator" of narrative art. And yet, like both Thomas Mann and Henry James – her best literary friend – Edith Wharton remains convincing in style and message until today.

6 "Before the story ends, however, O'Connor develops the most romantic scene in all her fiction. Bible salesman Manley Pointer, with his phallic name, and Joy/Hulga will try to seduce each other on a picnic with no food" (Whitt 1997, 77–78).

the only one apparently safe, or who at least displays a certain aloofness and considers herself to be quite immune against all this empty everyday nonsense, which is the others' void "conversation."

Joy could be a cleverly masked alter-ego of the writer herself, a parody illustration of O'Connor's much debated anti-intellectualism.[7] Her own vulnerability is symbolically expressed by her protagonist's artificial leg. Like Homer's legendary Achilles' heel, or like Melville's Captain Ahab's missing leg lost to Moby Dick – but then also like Flannery O'Connor's own lameness, due to her fatal lupus disease – Joy's missing leg signals her being a misfit. "Big spectacled Joy-Hulga" (O'Connor 2000, 275) is thirty-two years old, a Ph.D. in philosophy, an alleged atheist and nihilist:

> Her name was really Joy but as soon as she was twenty-one and away from home, she had had it legally changed. Mrs. Hopewell was certain that she had thought and thought until she had hit upon the ugliest name in any language. Then she had gone and had the beautiful name, Joy, changed without telling her mother until after she had done it. Her legal name was Hulga. (O'Connor 2000, 274)

> One of her major triumphs was that her mother had not been able to turn her dust into Joy, but the greater one was that she had been able to turn it herself into Hulga. (O'Connor 2000, 275)

(Un-/Re-)naming /entitling represents a matter of great concern for both mother and daughter. Joy (re)names herself Hulga, as soon as she comes of age. Then she earns her Ph.D. in philosophy, as if to even better mark the detachment between herself and her mother. Whereas the (divorced) mother, instead of feeling proud of her daughter's brilliant mind, of her exceptional scholarly and moral achievement, feels rather embarrassed by it, and also by her daughter's reading books of nihilistic philosophy, as if by some sort of monstrosity; as if by another form of (affective) lameness, of (mental) disability, preventing her daughter from "enjoying herself." As if this could only mar the girl's feeble chances to a conventionally successful femininity:

> The girl had taken the Ph.D. in philosophy and this left Mrs. Hopewell at a complete loss. You could say, "My daughter is a nurse," or "My daughter is

7 In his Bakhtinian approach of Flannery O'Connor's work, Robert H. Brinkmeyer, Jr. makes a point of her anti-intellectual persona: "I'm not an intellectual and have a horror of making an idiot of myself with abstract statements and theories" – she writes in a letter. Yet Brinkmeyer, Jr. comments: "But of course O'Connor was an intellectual. As the scope and size of her personal library, together with her many references to her readings in her letters, attest, she was extremely well read, particularly (and not surprisingly) in literature and theology" (Brinkmeyer, Jr., 1993, 143).

> a schoolteacher," or even, "My daughter is a chemical engineer." You could not say, "My daughter is a philosopher." That was something that had ended with the Greeks and Romans. All day Joy sat on her neck in a deep chair, reading. Sometimes she went for walks but she didn't like dogs or cats or birds or flowers or nature or nice young men. She looked at nice young men as if she could smell their stupidity. (O'Connor 2000, 276)

On the other hand, the short story title voices the first and foremost of these invading truisms – like the vengeful furies in classic mythology. "Good Country People" is Mrs. Hopewell's phony way of referring to a most elusive social category, comprising the Freemans, whom she had hired to help her with all the work on her farm, and also Manley Pointer, the young Bible salesman, who comes into the picture as if out of the blue, selling Bibles: "Then she would tell how she had happened to hire the Freemans in the first place and how they were godsend to her and how she had had them four years. *The reason for her keeping them so long was that they were not trash. They were good country people*" (O'Connor 2000, 272; emphasis mine). Likewise, "good country people" is someone like Manley Pointer, the nineteen years old Bible salesman: "'I'm just a country boy.' He glanced up to her unfriendly face. 'People like you don't like to fool with country people like me!' 'Why!' she cried, *'good country people are the salt of the earth!* Besides, we all have different ways of doing, *it takes all kinds to make the world go 'round. That's life*!'" (O'Connor 2000, 278–279; emphasis mine).

Reading this tough story twice, we may see that it is in this trap of nonsense and clichés – or rather trying to escape it – that Joy/Hulga falls prey to her perverse seducer, (whose name is not even) Manley Pointer. Compared to the philistinism of her mother, who has no use for a Bible, yet tries to find a convenient lie to mask this – Hulga's choice of atheism and nihilism represents a self-assumed attitude. She is ready to take the risks of her decision. Paradoxically, Hulga's claim to cynicism distinguishes her as the only one honest about her beliefs in the entire group of characters. And perhaps this is why she has to dearly pay for her exclusiveness. Her portrait drawn between *hubris* and *humility* cannot fit into this picture. The *horror* of it all stems from her own genuineness: from Hulga's arrogant claim to absolute authenticity.

On the other hand, the actually cynical character is Manley Pointer, who needs no philosophical system or vision to bluntly state his own view upon life and the world: "'And I'll tell you another thing, Hulga,' he said, using the name as if he didn't think much of it, 'you ain't so smart. I been believing in nothing ever since I was born!'" (O'Connor 2000, 291).

In competition with "good country people" like him, gullible/defiant Joy/Hulga cannot but fail, despite her exceptional intelligence and learning: her missing leg, her heart condition, her poor eyesight are only the more evident

of her vulnerable points. Besides she can still be suspected of a tender soul – probably fatally wounded when she was ten and got shot in the leg by (an adult's) mistake, in a hunting accident, about which the reader will never learn much more except for the superficial details of fascinating *horror*, that Mrs. Freeman enjoys asking and getting from Mrs. Hopewell: "Hulga had heard Mrs. Hopewell give her the details of the hunting accident, how the leg had been literally blasted off, how she had never lost consciousness. Mrs. Freeman could listen to it any time as if it had happened an hour ago" (O'Connor 2000, 275). It is Joy's girl's soul that Hulga is doing her best to hide. Yet the shock that gives her the final blow will also take the reader by surprise.

When Hulga and Manley decide to go for a picnic, each one of them secretly plans to seduce the other. Joy/Hulga makes the fatal mistake of underestimating her much younger partner, unable to anticipate the 180 degrees reversal of their entire situation. Up in the barn loft, where she will climb just to prove him that she is not at all embarrassed by her leg prosthesis, just like in a grotesque parody of an erotic prelude, Joy/Hulga allows Manley Pointer to take off both her eyeglasses and her artificial leg. Not only does he remove these: he takes *possession* of them – rather than of the girl, erotically – adding them up to his weirdly morbid collection of medical items from people with disabilities. Then he vanishes, leaving Joy/Hulga at a loss. End of the story.

Hulga's leg may be a grotesque and/or Gothic fetish – somehow reminding us of Berenice's teeth, in Edgar Allan Poe's homonymous short story. But at least in Poe's namesake story, Berenice's teeth were (supposed to be) "natural." There's *nothing natural* in Flannery O'Connor's "Good Country People." Or perhaps just Manley Pointer's sordid and outrageous wickedness – which is as genuine as Joy/Hulga's candid intelligence. The only perfect object of ugliness is Pointer's evil mind, where there is actually no room for any faith or vision, whether logical or just imaginary: there is only the absolute monster. And his confession reverses the entire meaning of the story – because O'Connor's story does have a meaning, which is (at least) double: aesthetic and moral.

Perhaps this is the most surprising aspect of the entire narrative: that it proves *ourselves* as readers to be still responsive to morally meaningful story-telling. That we are not (yet) as tough and as cynical (intellectuals or aesthetes) as we may delude ourselves to be. That our own artificial leg may still hurt. Now and then, when touched by a great artist in story-telling, like lovely Miss Flannery.[8]

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8 Robert Giroux's recollection of his first encounter with Flannery O'Connor as her would-be editor is touching: "Robert Lowell brought her into my office late in February 1949. [. . .] Behind her soft-spoken speech, clear-eyed gaze and shy manner, I sensed a tremendous strength" (O' Connor 2000, viii).

The same allegorical fight between *authenticity* and *philistinism* (and also pharisaic conformity) is rendered in Alice Munro's short story "Corrie," from her volume *Dear Life*. The most obvious affinity between O'Connor's Joy/Hulga and Munro's Corrie is their symbolical lameness and their bold defying refusal to regard themselves as defeated by it:

> She led the way and he was able to see what he hadn't been sure of before. She was lame in one leg. "Isn't it a steep climb back up?" he asked. "*I'm not an invalid.*" "I see you've got a rowboat," he said, meaning that as a partway apology. "*I'd take you out in it but not right now*. Now we've got to watch the sunset." She pointed out an old kitchen chair that she said was for watching the sunset, and demanded that he sit there. She herself sat on the grass. He was about to ask if she would be able to get up all right, but thought better of it. "*I had polio*," she said. "*That's all it is. My mother had it too, and she died*." "*That's too bad*." "*I suppose so. I can't remember her*." (Munro 2013, 156–157; emphasis mine)

If O'Connor's Hulga defies-and-denies her mother, Mrs. Hopewell, by rejecting her original name, Joy, which obviously did not fit her – Munro's Corrie can hardly cling to any memory of her mother, Mrs. Carlton, who died of the same disease from which she herself suffers.

Not only are both Hulga and Corrie brave and bold: they also initiate their games of sexual seduction. And they are likewise cheated and betrayed in their expectations: like O'Connor's Manley Pointer, so is Munro's Howard Ritchie focused on material profit, albeit of a more prosaic kind and less shocking than a medical prosthesis: it is cash, pure and simple. And while Howard Ritchie is an architect, even "a church architect" – as Mr. Carlton regards him – he also pretends to care about religion, just like Manley Pointer, in a philistine and pharisaic manner, that should have deluded no one, least of all (self-deluded) cynical Corrie:

> The fact that he had produced a condom did not mean that *he was a regular seducer*. In fact, *she was only the second person he had gone to bed with, the first being his wife*. He had been brought up in a fiercely religious household and still believed in God, *to some extent*. He kept that secret from his wife, who would have made a joke of it, being very left-wing.
> Corrie said she was glad that what they were doing – *what they had just done – appeared not to bother him*, *in spite of his belief*. She said that *she herself had never had any time for God, because her father was enough to cope with*. (Munro 2013, 158–159; emphasis mine)

Alice Munro's dry humour is enhanced by the laconic selective omniscient narrator, whose austere rhetoric undermines the crisp yet unequal dialogue. What Howard says about himself contradicts himself; what Corrie never says about herself can only prove how far they are from each other. And how lonely she actually is. And how vulnerable, too.

Nothing can scare Corrie more than the perspective of their illicit love-affair coming to its end: "She made herself speak lightly, but she had gone deathly cold. For what if he said no? No, I can't let you. No, it's a sign. It's a sign that we have to stop. She was sure that there'd been something like that in his voice, and in his face. *All that old sin stuff. Evil*" (Munro 2013, 161; emphasis mine).

They were discussing bribe: the price they had to pay, in hard cash, for their "sinful liaison." This money would become Corrie's duty and "Lillian's ill-gotten gains." As the short story opens, Lillian Wolfe is a housemaid with the Carltons, father and daughter. Soon the wealthy Mr. Carlton dies and Corrie, in her late twenties, lets Lillian go away from their provincial town and get a job in the city. Howard then claims to have reencountered Lillian at a party in the city, where he had gone with his wife. Lillian would work there as a housemaid, employed by Ritchie's friends who had invited him over, together with his wife. Howard pretends that Lillian had blackmailed him, threatening to tell everything to his wife. This is how they find the bribing solution. Corrie offers to pay the money herself. Howard just has to deliver the sum twice a year, sending it to the p. o. box allegedly belonging to Lillian. And thus their unofficial relationship could carry on "safely" – for years, even decades on end: "Sometimes Corrie would fill up with tears, hiding her face against him. '*It's just that we're so lucky*,' she said" (Munro 2013, 167; emphasis mine).

Meanwhile, advancing toward middle-age, Corrie has to prove her "superior woman" understanding and cope on her own with the time when Howard, living now in Toronto, will devote to his family. The Ritchies' holidays abroad, their expensive hobbies – all require money. Corrie suspects nothing, until one day. She had taken a voluntary job with the town's library, helping to recover long lost books. Intertextuality echoes and games of intricate *masking* and *unmasking*, indicating (belated) postmodern metafiction will intensify the story, (as if) illustrating a *narcissistic narrative* pattern – one of those defined by Linda Hutcheon, the celebrated contemporary Canadian theorist and critic of postmodern literature.

As she learns incidentally about Lillian Wolfe's unexpected death – at merely forty-six years of age, after some terrible illness – Corrie has "her finger in *The Great Gatsby"* (Munro 2013, 167). The forlorn library of the small town in Canada, where Corrie is the last one to care about the great American modern novel – about a love story culminating in catastrophic self-delusion – represents a symbolic place for a secular revelation moment.

This moment of desperately repressed, silenced shock triggers in Corrie's mind the lucid understanding of the actual *price* she had been literally paying for her "lucky" love-affair with a married man. Or rather: the fact that it was her would-be lover (just a couple of years older than herself) whom she had been regularly paying. *Horror* at him and also at herself is all that remains after *hubris* and *humility* have filled and emptied the balance with their tormenting qualms.

And yet the story rounds up in a mode that – even if not altogether optimistic – is not at all one of despondency. Compromise with oneself is a commonsensical, if not a heroic, solution – when all is said and done: "So that's the way they're going to leave it. Too late to do another thing. When there could have been worse, much worse" (Munro 2013, 174).

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But *silence* is never safe in a story by Alice Munro. Narrative art has as much use for silence as music does. And the best illustration of this is the very short story with this self-contradicting title: "Silence" from Munro's volume *Runaway.*[9]

"Silence" is the third and last one of *the Juliet stories*, after "Chance" and "Soon." Therefore we may ascribe to this set of shorter narrative pieces the rank of a specific diegesis, with an anti-heroic feminine protagonist and her network of relationships with other literary characters, in various settings, at various moments of her sad and strange story of silenced solitude.

The Juliet of "Silence" is a Canadian Provincial Television star, having earned her popularity by leading a talk-show usually debating "Issues of the Day." Therefore she is involved in depicting everyday reality for some invisible audiences, who appreciate her for her public work. Juliet has thus become a quintessential protagonist of "purely" realistic fiction. Her professional career at this point represents a sort of mise-en-abyme reflection of the fiction she is also part of.

As a girl, Juliet had made some life choices that seemed to promise her quite a singular destiny for a young woman: she "had majored in Greek and Latin at college" (2006, 71), as we learn from "Chance" – the first story about Juliet. Much like Flannery O'Connor's Joy/Hulga, Alice Munro's Juliet makes a professional start marked by high intellectual vanity, which threatens to doom her to isolation later in her life. Her first job was that of teaching Greek mythology at a countryside

9 Presenting this volume, Jonathan Franzen, himself an American highly successful contemporary writer, uses an eight-argument critical demonstration of Alice Munro's narrative genius. He entitles his essay "INTRODUCTION: What Makes You So Sure You're Not the Evil One Yourself?" (Munro 2006). To my mind, even this title strangely echoes Flannery O'Connor's sarcastic titles, e.g. "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," a. s. o., thus providing us here with another (indirect) link, with another suggestion of affinity between the writers considered in the present essay.

school, though "she was not a real teacher" (2006, 71), but then she said: "I love all that stuff. I really do" (2006, 71).

Juliet's acquaintance with Eric Porteous started by "chance," indeed. She learned he was a fisherman, some ten years older than herself; married to Ann, who got paralyzed after an accident, and died afterwards. When Juliet went to his village to look him up, his wife Ann was just being buried.

The next story about Juliet, "Soon," tells about her failure to reestablish a relationship with her parents, Sam and Sara; and especially about Juliet's tormenting sense of guilt at not having seen her mother still alive, for the last time:

> Because it's what happens at home that you try to protect, as best you can, for as long as you can.
> But she had not protected Sara. When Sara had said, *soon I'll see Juliet*, Juliet had found no reply. Could it have been managed? Why should it have been so difficult? Just to say *Yes*. To Sara it would have meant so much – to herself, surely, so little. But she had turned away, she had carried the tray to the kitchen, and there she washed and dried the cups and also the glass that had held grape soda. She had put everything away. (Munro 2006, 125)

As by some ironic fateful retribution, the story "Silence" shows Juliet herself as an abandoned mother. Her only child, Penelope, Juliet's daughter by Eric, soon to come of age, has been missing from home, for the first time since she was born, having left for "the Spiritual Balance Centre:"

> "Because my daughter is there," Juliet says. "She's been on a retreat there or taking a course, I don't know what they call it. For six months. This is the first time I've got to see her, in six months."
> "There are a couple of places like that, the woman says. They sort of come and go. I don't mean there's anything suspect about them. Just that they're generally off in the woods, you know, and don't have much to do with the community.
> Well, what would be the point of a retreat if they did?"
> She says that Juliet must be looking forward to seeing her daughter again, and Juliet says yes, very much.
> "I'm spoiled," she says. "She's twenty years old, my daughter – she'll be twenty-one this month, actually – and we haven't been apart much."
> (Munro 2006, 127)

This is merely the ominous beginning of the story, depicting Juliet's dialogue with a casual acquaintance on the ferry taking her to "the Spiritual Balance Centre." From now on, the story will oscillate between, on the one hand, Juliet's

memories of her daughter; of her fights with Eric and then of his death, while Penelope, thirteen years old then, was away from home on a trip with Heather, her best friend at school, and her family; and on the other hand, Juliet's continual and desperate efforts of ever finding Penelope again.

At first there seems to be some kind of hope, when the funny birthday card arrives on Penelope's birthday. The impersonality of this strictly conventional message puzzles Juliet:

> Penelope did get in touch with Juliet, a couple of weeks later. A birthday card arrived on her own – Penelope's – birthday, the 19th of June. Her twenty-first birthday. It was the sort of card you send to an acquaintance whose tastes you cannot guess. Not a crude jokey card or a truly witty card or a sentimental card.
> On the front of it was a small bouquet of pansies tied by a thin purple ribbon whose tail spelled out the words *Happy Birthday*. These words were repeated inside, with the words *Wishing you a very* added in gold letters above them. And there was no signature. Juliet thought at first that someone had sent this card to Penelope, and forgotten to sign it, and that she, Juliet, had opened it by mistake. Someone who had Penelope's name and date of her birth on file. Her dentist, maybe, or her driving teacher. But when she checked the writing on the envelope she saw that there had been no mistake – there was her own name, indeed, written in Penelope's own handwriting. (Munro 2006, 133)

"That unkind card" (2006, 133) was followed by a second one, within a year, in the same tormenting style. The mother reproaches herself having "neglected" her daughter's "spirituality," as "Mother Shipton" – the only one to whom Juliet had managed to talk at "the Spiritual Balance Centre" – had rebuked her.

Then, deserted by her daughter, little by little, Juliet withdraws from the world. She quits her successful local television job. She moves house. She finds some superficial comfort in ephemeral friendships. She resumes her Classical Studies, even with a view to eventually writing her Ph.D. thesis.

Then all of a sudden, *after some solid years of silence*, Juliet incidentally reencounters Heather, Penelope's former school friend:

> And just about three weeks ago I was visiting Josh – you remember my brother Josh? – I was visiting my brother Josh and his family in Edmonton and I ran into Penelope. Just like this, in the street. No – actually it was in the mall, that humongous mall they have. She had a couple of her kids with her, she'd brought them down to get uniforms for that school they go to. The boys. We were both flabbergasted. I didn't know her right away but she recognized me. (Munro 2006, 154)

Juliet asks the young woman how many children she has. When Heather says "three," she also adds up: "But my life's a picnic compared with Penelope's. *Five*" (Munro 2006, 155).

And this is as much as Juliet gets to ever learn about her daughter. The rest is the subdued mother's mere speculation, guesswork and despondent hope – enough to fill in the story's final page. Before absolute silence.

*

Alice Munro's contemporary short stories "Silence" and "Corrie" will always remind me of Edith Wharton's elegant narrative style in depicting *utter maternal defeat* and *self-denial*. Likewise, they will always remind me of Flannery O'Connor's fine rendering of *failed motherhood and disastrous daughterhood*; also of O'Connor's so-called anti-intellectualism, which is nothing if not a plea for authenticity in literary narrative.

Last but not least, I shall always admire the stylistic virtuosity of each one and of all these three (in an echo from one of Duke Ellington's finest jazz tunes) *sophisticated ladies of the short story in English*. It is only in their exquisite ways of dealing with *horror, (hurt) hubris* and *humility* that they can make us readers aware of the *horror, (hurt) hubris* and *humility* of being a genuine woman and also writing like one.

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Narrative Discourse, Memory and the Experience of Travel in W. G. Sebald's *Vertigo*

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Abstract. Sebald's first prose work, entitled *Vertigo* (*Schwindel. Gefühle.*, 1990) is perhaps the most intriguing in terms of the absence of clear-cut links between the four narrative segments: "Beyle; or Love is a Madness Most Discrete," "All'estero," "Dr. K Takes the Waters at Riva" and "Il ritorno in patria." Beyle, i.e. Stendhal, Dr. K, i.e. Kafka, and the first-person narrator of the two quasi-autobiographical parts, are three subjects living in distinct times and places, whose journeys and experiences coalesce into a Sebaldian puzzle to solve, challenging the most varied interpretive terms and discourses, from the Freudian uncanny, through intertextuality (Kristeva) and the indexicality of photography (Barthes, Sontag), to the working of cultural memory (Assmann) and the non-places of what Marc Augé calls hypermodernity. By trying to disclose the discursive strategies of a profoundly elusive and highly complex narrative, the article is aimed at pointing out the rhetorical and textual connections lying at the heart of Sebald's floating way of writing, heralding a vertiginous oeuvre, an unsettling literary journey.[1]

Keywords: travel, narrative, intertextuality, memory, photography, non-places.

"Is literary greatness still possible? Given the implacable devolution of literary ambition, and the concurrent ascendancy of the tepid, the glib, and the senselessly cruel as normative fictional subjects, what would a noble literary enterprise look like now? One of the few answers available to English-language readers is the work of W. G. Sebald" (Sontag 2009, 41). Susan Sontag's words with which she starts her essay on Sebald, entitled *A Mind in Mourning*, direct attention to an oeuvre that distinguishes itself by dint of an unmatched profoundness and subtlety, setting against any kind of trend or norm in fiction. Sebald's low but forceful voice as a novelist, memoir writer, essayist, poet and critic – defined

1 This work was created within the framework of a group research project entitled *Travel and Cognition*, supported by the Sapientia University – Institute of Research Programmes.

by a penchant for hybrid literary formations, genres and modes of expression – testifies to a state of permanent exploration and reflection driven by an impulse of penetrating into the deeper layers of the self and European/human culture. To what extent the three – the self, the European and the universally human – are interconnected is truly attested by his self-imposed exile that is highly similar to that of Joyce, the great predecessor. To be one with one's "uncanny homeland" – with Sebald's own phrasing borrowed from the title of his volume of essays, *Unheimliche Heimat* (1995) – in emigration, to be at home in homelessness by assuming a distinct geocultural position, provides, paradoxically, the right angle of contemplation and brings the *own* irrevocably closer to the *self*.

Sebald found this eminently "distinct" perspective by moving from Germany, through a transitory period in Switzerland, to Norwich, Great Britain, where he became a lecturer at the University of East Anglia and author of an impressively rich and profound literary oeuvre. The East Anglian geocultural landscape, carrying the remnants of the once booming British Empire, was transformed into a literary landscape, into a symbolical terrain of decline, loss and destruction in Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* (*Die Ringe des Saturn. Eine englische Wallfahrt*, 1995). In his 1997 Zürich lectures on *Air War and Literature* (*Luftkrieg und Literatur*), published in book form under the title *On the Natural History of Destruction* (*Luftkrieg und Literatur. Mit einem Essay zu Alfred Andersch,* 1999), the same East Anglian scenery was connected back to World War II as the place from where the Royal Air Force launched its air raid against the Third Reich, which caused the death of six hundred thousand German civilians and induced a collective trauma that, oddly, was not processed at all, on the contrary, it was almost totally evaded in German literature. Sebald himself assumes the personal responsibility of breaking the silence and unveiling issues repressed into the collective unconscious of the German people – this is what he proposes to carry out in *On the Natural History of Destruction*, in which he writes: "I grew up with the feeling that something was being kept from me: at home, at school and by the German writers whose books I read hoping to glean more information about the monstrous events in the background of my own life" (Sebald 2002b, 66).

Implicitly, Sebald's entire oeuvre, also including *Vertigo* (*Schwindel. Gefühle.*, 1990), *The Emigrants* (*Die Ausgewanderten*, 1992) and *Austerlitz* (2001), assumes the task of breaking the silence in the face of collective traumas of the past and redirects attention to Europe's traumatic twentieth century historical heritage, to the mechanisms of erasure of grand history and the working of individual memory. The "Sebald-phenomenon" has reached a large audience and launched an avalanche of critical reflections especially in the English and German language area. Sebald's voice has proved to be capable of stimulating a sense of personal ethical responsibility set against cultic memory and the monstrous machinery of history. The kind of literary archaeology that Sebald pursues preeminently

makes us rethink the borders between history and representation, text/image and reality, and not least, life and writing.

Sebald's works rely on the gesture of gleaning; Sebald is a great collector, of personal experiences, others' stories and all sorts of visual material that he works into his books. Collecting is essentially linked with writing; as Christina Kraenzle puts it:

> A self-described collector, Sebald has noted the importance of collection in his own creative process. As Noam Elcott has observed, collection is also an important structural principle in the prose narratives themselves. Sebald does not so much tell a story, but rather collects and retells other stories, juxtaposing "quotations and commentary, facts and fictions, images and multiple languages […] without great distinction" so that "Sebald the author vanishes beneath his fabulous miscellany only to reappear as Sebald the collector." (Kraenzle 2007, 127)

Many of the real and fictitious characters appearing in his books are collectors themselves; thus, an impressive amount of detail, of textual and visual material is accumulated on the pages of Sebald's books, one leading to the other, in boundless series, detours and superimpositions. In this sense, from the perspective of the collected and processed material, his books turn into immense archives, striving to preserve every – even apparently insignificant – item, as if restaging and thus reinstating the role of the institutions of memory (museums, historiography, photography) that came into being in the nineteenth century. Sebald's major concern is memory and the crisis of memory at collective level that characterizes modernity and that can be traced back to the nineteenth century, when the acceleration of the new forms of capitalism brought about the erasure of older patterns. According to prominent Sebald researcher J. J. Long, "[o]ne characteristic of memory crisis is that memory ceases to be a pure matter of consciousness, and comes to reside instead in the very material of our social and psychic life" (2007, 4). Sebald, a researcher himself not only in the academic register but also in his belletristic activity, is particularly interested in the – individual and collective – crisis of memory and in all forms of mnemonic prostheses that emerged to counterpoint the crisis. It is in this respect that the medium of photography becomes significant in the Sebaldian oeuvre, as a possible extension of memory, which also models the working mechanism of memory. In the case of both photography and memory image, the represented/remembered is evoked with the power of "being there" but the act of evocation can never be completed; there is always a rupture, a sense of deferral that hinders the accessibility of the past.

What has been discussed perhaps the most extensively in relation with Sebald's works is the intricate relationship between text and image (Long 2007, Patt and

Dillbohner 2007, Seale 2013). At Sebald the inserted visual material is never reduced to the mere functions of illustration, documentation or demonstration; the photos apparently underpin the textual information, but at a closer look there is often a sense of displacement between what is said and what is shown, between the referential/factual and the non-referential/fictional. As Lynn L. Wolff remarks, "[o]ntologically tied to an extratextual reality, photographs testify to a past existence, yet Sebald's narratives show that it is only through literature that the documentary nature of photography can be unfolded" (2014, 48).

Sebald's first prose work, entitled *Vertigo* (*Schwindel. Gefühle.*, 1990) is perhaps the most intriguing in terms of the absence of clear-cut links between the four narrative segments: "Beyle; or Love is a Madness Most Discrete," "All'estero," "Dr. K Takes the Waters at Riva" and "Il ritorno in patria." Beyle, i.e. Stendhal, Dr. K, i.e. Kafka, and the first-person narrator of the two quasi-autobiographical parts are three subjects living in distinct times and places, whose journeys and experiences coalesce into a Sebaldian puzzle to solve. *Vertigo* carries in germ all the motifs to be encountered in the Sebaldian oeuvre, first of all, the motif of travel, in close connection with the issue of memory.

The title of the book, *Schwindel. Gefühle* in the German original, which has been translated into English as *Vertigo*, becomes meaningful at several levels: as the particular state of mind of the narrator, a kind of dizziness arising from some personal crisis, the crisis of creation most of the time, as we can read at the beginning of the chapter entitled "All'estero:" "In October 1980 I travelled from England, where I had then been living for nearly twenty-five years in a county which was almost always under grey skies, to Vienna, hoping that a change of place would help me get over a particularly difficult period of my life" (2000, 33). This state of mind urges the narrator-protagonist to change place, to travel, which occasions a distinct mode of perception, being simultaneously stuck in the concrete physicality of the journey and dissolved in the wide space of reflection. Further on, "vertigo" indicates the mode of reading pursued by both the narrator-protagonist, who reads the signs with particular sensitivity, and the reader of Sebald's book, who is urged to develop in him/herself a similar skill. Lastly, and perhaps above all, "vertigo" becomes the signifier of the connectedness of all things, the figuration of coincidences and correspondences, a mode of cognition that Sebald reflects on in his essay on Robert Walser, entitled, in the wake of Rousseau, "Le Promeneur Solitaire:" "Slowly I have learnt to understand how everything is connected with everything else across time and space" (Sebald 2014).[2]

Vertigo displays a highly idiosyncratic narrative discourse. The book has a four-part structure, a composition of musical inspiration which can also be encountered in *The Emigrants*. At first reading, there is little narrative cohesion

2 The essay originally appeared in Sebald's volume of essays entitled *A Place in the Country* (2013 [1998]).

among the four parts. The first chapter of *Vertigo* is centred on the figure of Beyle, alias Stendhal, and on the question of memory. Sebald's text pursues a special kind of *performative intertextuality*, in the sense that it invites and sort of reactivates a prior text, Stendhal's diary in this case, examining the issue of memory through the filter of the evoked text. As J. J. Long remarks, Sebald is particularly interested in "the question of memory, its relation to the archival practices that characterise modernity, and the kind of subjectivity that is produced by 'archival consciousness'" (2007, 93). Stendhal's diary reflections, mediated by Sebald's text – Sebald is driven by the impulse of multiple mediations – are preoccupied with the nature of memory, with the loss of individual memory, as memory image is profoundly disturbed by – cultural, artistic, even logistical – representations. Sebald investigates in Stendhal's notes those textual places where this experience is reflected on: Stendhal returns to the scene of a traumatic war experience and is surprised to discover that his memories of the Marengo battle scene have been totally replaced by maps and drawings of battle strategy, the visual material functioning as to supersede the trauma experience. This phenomenon can also be interpreted psychoanalytically, in terms of trauma processing: there is always an act of mediation which hinders, as defense mechanism, the full access to the past trauma. A similar moment of loss of authentic memory is revealed in the sculpture of the beloved Méthilde's left hand, cast in plaster, the sight of which stirs strong emotions in the old Stendhal but takes the place of the authentic memory of the lady's hand. Sebald complicates this scheme by examining the relationship between the nineteenth century archival consciousness and its twentieth century aftermath, which also appears in Sebald's last work, *Austerlitz*. In this novel Sebald positions the scheme into a post-World War II time frame and examines the relationship between photography and film as operators of cultural memory which considerably restructure the working of individual memory. In *Vertigo* Sebald points at the fact that technologies of reproduction as forms of archiving that precede the twentieth century development of optical media have a similar effect upon the working of individual memory (cf. Long 2007, 94).

The second chapter of *Vertigo*, entitled "All'estero" – the Italian phrasing meaning, but also linguistically performing, the sense of being "Abroad" – is a quasi-autobiographical account of the narrator-protagonist's journey to European cities, among them Vienna, Venice, Verona and Milan, in the course of which the traveller appears as a twentieth century corollary of Baudelaire's flâneur. Baudelaire's flânerie is related to the experience of rambling in the crowded, anonymous environment of cities that offer a great deal of spectacle, visual attractions in the economically and demographically altered conditions of the nineteenth century. The "visual boom" of the streets (the changing image of the city due to demolition and construction, shopwindows, advertisements, etc.), also complemented by the emergence of new visual media, i.e. photography and

film, transformed the city into a new spectacle, which led to an altered status of the individual and the observing gaze (cf. Dunajcsik and Nemes 2010). In his famous passage Baudelaire describes this experience as the ecstasy of the spectacle, comparing it to a kaleidoscope reflecting the variegation of life:

> The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world – impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. The lover of life makes the whole world his family, just like the lover of the fair sex who builds up his family from all the beautiful women that he has ever found, or that are or are not – to be found; or the lover of pictures who lives in a magical society of dreams painted on canvas. Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life. (Baudelaire 1964, 9; emphasis in the original)

The perceiving subject is described as the "'I' with an insatiable appetite for the 'non-I'" (Baudelaire 1964, 9). This ecstatic dissolution of the "I" in the "non-I," however, lacks human connections, the individual becomes isolated in the vibration of the metropolis; isolated reflection will lead to the loss of the self. Thus, by the twentieth century the euphoria of Baudelaire's flâneur turns into the cultural shock of the loss of the self, into the sensory disturbance of Rilke's "histerical flâneur" (Dunajcsik and Nemes 2010). In Rilke's only novel, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (*Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, 1910) – translated into English by the same Michael Hulse who is also the translator of Sebald's *Vertigo* – the city becomes a space of alienation and homelessness, the discursive terrain of the "I" not rapturously immersed by, but himself becoming the "non-I."

Sebald's aimless urban wanderer in *Vertigo* is closer to the Rilkean version of the flâneur. He travels by train from one city to another, walks in the streets, stays in cheap hotels, getting in contact with what Marc Augé (1995) calls the *non-places* of hypermodernity. In Augé's sense of the terms, "[i]f a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which

cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place" (1995, 77–78). Augé's non-places, distinct from anthropological places, such as airports, hotels, railway and petrol stations, and supermarkets, are places of transit, which do not provide stable patterns of identity, do not play a role in cultural memory, do not dispose of historicity; they only provide the subjects with transitory status, that of travellers, consumers, etc. The Sebald-flâneur, experiencing a state of self-alienation, deliberately seeks these non-places, he seems to feel at home in this homelessness. He travels incognito – he feels comfortable under the disguise of a commercial traveller – and in a state of constant anxiety, driven by an impulse of escaping from a state of crisis, but still under the effect of crisis (depression, nervous breakdown), which results in an altered perception and sensitivity.

The narrator-protagonist perceives the city as the space of the uncanny; his perception goes beyond the actual spectacle. Every place reminds the narrator of another space, as if there were some kind of signified behind each visible sign but which is never ultimately attainable. What is more, he perceives the haunting presence of historical and literary figures, e.g. once he has the impression that he has seen Dante among the crowd in Vienna:

> On one occasion, in Gonzagagasse, I even thought I recognized the poet Dante, banished from his home town on pain of being burned on the stake. For some considerable time he walked a short distance ahead of me, with the familiar cowl on his head, distinctly taller than the people in the street, yet he passed by them unnoticed. When I walked faster in order to catch him up he went down Heinrichsgasse, but when I reached the corner he was nowhere to be seen. After one or two turns of this kind I began to sense in me a vague apprehension, which manifested itself as a feeling of vertigo. (Sebald 2000, 35)

This altered perception turns the cityscape into a space of the uncanny, which is reinforced by the activation of literary intertexts, Franz Kafka's *The Trial* and Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, as well as painterly references. The memory of the region of Venice occurs to the traveller through the mediation of a painting by Tiepolo, and the text contains the ekphrastic description of the altarpiece *St. Thecla Liberating the City of Este from the Plague* (1759).

> The low-lying cloud drifting in from the Alpine valleys and across that desolated country was conjoined in my mind's eye with a Tiepolo painting which I have often looked at for hours. It shows the plague-ravaged town of Este on the plain, seemingly unscathed. In the background are mountains, and a smoking summit. The light diffused through the picture seems to have

> been painted as if through a veil of ash. One could almost suppose it was this light that drove the people out of the town into the open fields, where, after reeling about for some time, they were finally laid low by the scourge they carried within them. In the centre foreground of the painting lies a mother dead of the plague, her child still alive in her arms. Kneeling to the left is St. Thecla, interceding for the inhabitants of the town, her face upturned to where the heavenly hosts are traversing the aether. Holy Thecla, pray for us, that we may be safely delivered from all contagion and sudden death and most mercifully saved from perdition. Amen. (Sebald 2000, 51)

Here, again, individual memory finds its prosthetic extension in cultural memory, mediated through art, and the spectacle of the here and now turns into a vision extended across historical time.

The third chapter, entitled "Dr. K Takes the Waters at Riva," is centred on the figure of Kafka and reflects Sebald's preoccupation with Kafka's letters and diaries. The Sebaldian text evokes Kafka's visit to Riva in 1913, and describes a state of mind similar to the narrator's, alongside "Kafka's melancholy longing, his *Seh(n)nsucht* to enter and disappear into the world of images" (Zisselsberger 2007, 291). Markus Zisselsberger points at the interrelatedness of the figure of Kafka and photography in Sebald's thinking, Kafka's famous photo as a child being situated at the root of this connection:

> For Sebald, the picture of Kafka epitomizes the epic and affective appeal of a photographic image that links the demand for a narrative with the poetic possibilities afforded to the traveller who follows Kafka's footsteps. As such, the image of Kafka not only illuminates Sebald's understanding of photography but also provides important clues about the narrator's strange immersion in Kafka's image-world in *Vertigo*. (2007, 282–283)

Here we can detect the Derridean *différance* between text and image. Similarly to Sebald's other books, *Vertigo* is also infused with the uncanny presence of photographs and miscellaneous visual material. Two inserted photos in the third chapter apparently document Kafka's journey, but in fact they only "show" Kafka's absence, e.g. on the two photos that, according to the text, show the inhabitants of Desenzano waiting for Kafka on September 21, but Kafka himself does not turn up (cf. Zisselsberger 2007, 288–293). Thus the illustrative and referential function of the photos is suspended, the Barthesian indexicality of the photos is subverted; instead, there is a relation of indeterminacy between text and image, which characterizes the whole Sebaldian oeuvre. The inserted visual material, and the photos in particular, perform the mediatedness of memory, in that there is always deferral, lack of direct access in the photos; thus, the act of mediation

performs, both in photography and memory, the infinite regress of the ultimate signified in the Derridean sense.

The fourth chapter, entitled "Il ritorno in patria," relates the Sebald narrator's return to the scene of his childhood, in search of the remnants of a distant past that connects back to post-war Germany. The narrator is in search of the roots of his melancholy nature and sensitivity to decay, which he seems to find in the visual material – paintings, films, family albums, book illustrations – which populated his childhood, as well as in the post-war state of German towns, about which he used to think that decay was their natural state, that they were meant to be so: "and almost every week [in the newsreels] we saw the mountains of rubble in places like Berlin or Hamburg, which for a long time I did not associate with the destruction wrought in the closing years of the war, knowing nothing of it, but considered them a natural condition of all larger cities" (Sebald 2000, 187). The mediated memories of the childhood attest to the experience of belatedness of postmemory (cf. Vees-Gulani 2006, 346). Ultimately, the protagonist of Kafka's short story, *The Hunter Gracchus*, reveals the literary embeddedness of the narrator's own childhood memories.

There are several links that connect the four parts: the recurrence of dates (September 21, the year 1913), life situations, impressions and melancholy states of mind, as well as recurrent patterns of travel and memory. "What anchors the unstable consciousness of the narrator," Sontag writes, "is the spaciousness and acuity of the details. As travel is the generative principle of mental activity in Sebald's books, moving through space gives a kinetic rush to his marvelous descriptions, especially of landscapes. This is a propelled narrator" (2009, 46). The narrator travels in the wake of literary figures, Stendhal, Kafka, Rilke, who are also travellers. The routes traversed by the narrator often follow routes previously traversed by himself and/or by other – favoured – writers. Thus travelling is performed in its multiple layeredness, that is, in its concrete physicality and as (inter)textual travel, signs, hints, references incessantly alluding to further texts and literary antecedents. This results in the superimposition of routes, states of mind and epiphanies during the journeys.

The manifold constituents of Sebald's style, the richness of detail, the intricate text-image relations, the superimposed intertextual and intermedial layers retain a sense of enigma that calls forth the vertigo of the reading experience. Carsten Strathausen speaks about the "ontological openness" of Sebald's books; Sebald's texts, she says, "never really arrive anywhere, but continue to wander aimlessly in an infinitely expanding, labyrinthine space that defies traditional topography" (2007, 472). In *Vertigo*, as in Sebald's other works, travelling is performed as a quest, as a "metaphysical search for something that cannot be named or seen" (Strathausen 2007, 475). According to Zoltán András Bán (2010), the unnamable is no other than the past, which is ultimately unexplorable, only

memory has access to it, but never to the full, it proves insufficient as it implies not reconstruction, but construction.

Sebald's works are characterized by the simultaneous perception of the past and the present; the observing and reflecting gaze always perceives the spectacle of the present in an uncanny interlocking with the haunting vision of the past. His books reveal an intense preoccupation with the past: *The Rings of Saturn* redraws the patterns of history along the route of the East Anglian "pilgrimage;" *The Emigrants* evokes private fates and memories; in *Austerlitz* the protagonist seeks his own past that turns out to be related to the Holocaust. Sebald's obsession with the past and the complexity of the spatio-temporal, cultural, historical and intertextual connections turn his books into "morally accelerated travel narratives" (Sontag 2009, 45).

Space is an activator of memory; the traversed places turn up as points of encounter between individual and cultural memory. What makes Sebald's way of writing especially unique is the superimposition of the own experiences and cultural-textual traces, and their continuous displacement through the medium of images. Consequently, what the narrator experiences is at the same time profoundly personal and the *remediation* of textual traces, experienced by others, performing travel also as *textual travel*. This is a special form of intertextuality that Sebald pursues; there is a permanent oscillation between the concrete, physical journey and the textual journey, which can never come to a halt as there is always an urge to seek further correspondences, thus the sense of continuous deferral is inscribed in this narrative pattern. Sebald's works stage the concrete, physical journey as (inter)textual and (inter)medial travel, while the reader, partaking of the testimony of writing, also turns into a traveller – into a flâneur in Sebald's unsettingly enigmatic textual spaces.

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Literature as Enchantment or the Regained Grandeur of the Novel: An Essay on Salman Rushdie's Novel *The Enchantress of Florence*

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Abstract. My essay intends to analyze the dialectic relationship between historical reality and fiction in the novel *The Enchantress of Florence* by Salman Rushdie. I will point out a sophisticated and playful story in which the author interweaves elements of history and literature, a game-story that transcends the canonical limits of postmodernism where the novel has constantly been placed by the critical establishment, and goes back to the beginnings, to the anthropological function of play as an essential human activity that was once defined by Johan Huizinga in *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture***.** Moreover, my paper will explore how this play becomes Rushdie's attempt to return to the original function of literature which used to enchant and inform at the same time. Once these roots have been reached, however, and the secondary reality of the literary game is well-established, Rushdie manages to break the barriers between reality and fiction, and through versatile textual mechanisms, to intermingle history and reality in a way that makes them merge. Consequently, he composes a play within fiction that is just as powerful as reality itself and suggests the fact that representation has more ontological consistency than the represented body or event itself. We exist as long as we are written and talked about, and nothing in the order of reality can be as powerful as the reality of language.

Keywords: Rushdie, reality, history, representation.

Critical Perspectives

Salman Rushdie's tenth novel *The Enchantress of Florence* has received over time a multitude of mixed reviews. While the majority of the critics agree that the novel is definitely not of the same caliber as the masterpiece *Midnight's Children* and even accuse it of redundancy of themes and literary motifs, they also have to admit that we are facing the novel of a great writer, a novel that would have

probably deserved the Man Booker Prize the year it was published, 2008, with Andrew Anthony's interview with Rushdie in *The Observer* and John Sutherland's review in the *Financial Times* being clear supporters of it. Other interpretations, such as William Deresiewicz's essay in *The Nation* or the excellent study on Rushdie's work edited by Robert Eaglestone and Martin McQuillan, are more reserved and discuss the image of the storyteller or the subtle relationship in the text between reality and imagination, while others, such as Andrew Martino in *World Literature Today* criticize the novel for parts that lack quality or depth. As my interest lies exclusively in the dialectical game between history/reality and fiction/imagination, I cannot say that Rushdie's novel disappointed me; on the contrary, it is one of the most interesting examples of such a relationship that I have ever read. Therefore, in my overview of its critical reception, I will explore three categories of texts some of which I mentioned above – interviews and confessions, reviews, and longer studies or parts of longer studies about Rushdie before I commence my own research. The two main objects of this overview will be the idea of play with its variants, game and enchantment, and the relationship between reality and fiction (imagination, illusion, or magic as some of the analysts call the latter). I will also connect these critical points of view to the texts I will use for my own analysis, which do not refer *to* the novel *per se*, but explore the world of play and the difference between reality and fiction.

Among Rushdie's interviews about his work and the novel *The Enchantress of Florence,* three of them are particularly important, especially because they were broadcast or published for wide audiences. The first is the interview conducted by Robert Siegel for *All Things Considered* on NPR, on May 27, 2008, in which Rushdie explains how certain characters in the novel are "figments of other characters' imagination" (Siegel 2008), the motif of Pygmalion that this idea is based on, the hybridity of a character such as Johda who is unclear to have even existed in reality, and the fine line between reality and fiction. Later in the same interview, the writer points out an idea that will be discussed at length by many of his reviewers: mainly that he thinks "all the stuff that people will think of as magical realism [...] is actually in the historical record [...]. And vice versa – all the stuff that people will assume is real" is actually fictional (Siegel 2008). The same idea had been discussed in April earlier that year when in an interview for the British magazine *The Observer*, Rushdie claimed that "a lot of [the novel] is true [...]. All kinds of stuff that I suspect people will assume is magic realism, isn't" (Anthony 2008). Later that same year in an interview for Charlie Rose, Rushdie deplores the inaccurate use of the term "magical realism," in which, he says "what [people] hear is magical and what they don't hear is realism," and addresses the ambivalence of the famous historical characters in a novel which have to be made up but at the same time still have to be "faithful to the historical record" (Rose 2012). The main downfall of these interviews is the fact

that they are destined for a wide public, and thus the author cannot venture too far into the theoretical background of his novel, but even so, it is clear from all of them that Salman Rushdie is permanently preoccupied with the veridicity of the representation of history and has tried repeatedly to defend the connection between his writings and reality. He always feels the need to make clear that many times his texts incorporate truth that is very often mistaken as magic. When the interview genre boundaries do not apply, Rushdie becomes even more explicit, as he does in his memoirs, this time referring not only to a historical, but also to a geographical connection. This is Rushdie speaking about himself in the third person in *Joseph Anton*:

> He needed to connect those worlds to the very different world in which he had made his life. He was beginning to see that this, rather than India and Pakistan or politics or magic realism, would be his real subject [...] the great matter of how the world joined up, not only how the East flowed into the West and the West into the East, but how the past shaped the present while the present changed our understanding of the past, and how the imagined world, the location of dreams, art, invention and, yes, belief, leaked across the frontier that separated it from the everyday, 'real' place in which human beings mistakenly believed they lived. (2012, 68–69)

But if Rushdie sees his literature as a way to change human perceptions, this idea may contrast with another reference to his own writings in the same interview with Anthony mentioned above, when he claims that he just wants "to stay at home and write stories and send them out every couple of years. That's why [he] got into the game" (Anthony 2008). Is literature for Rushdie a space in which everything falls into place, reality and imagination coexist, contraries disappear, past and present connect, or is it a place of play, or both?

One possible answer belongs to Kenan Malik in his "Foreword" to the highly acclaimed study on Rushdie's work edited by Robert Eaglestone and Martin McQuillan. Malik argues that "the truth that emerges from Rushdie's writing is the truth of the experience of that in-between world, the world of migration and mélange, belonging to more than one place, multiple rather than singular" (2013, viii). The writer allows the imagination to change the real world by "forcing ideas, and memories, and thoughts and histories to clash with each other" (2013, viii). The critic suggests that the real force behind Rushdie's novels is this emphasis on the power of imagination, but he does not elaborate where exactly this power leads. Neither does Marianne Corrigan in the third chapter of the same study when she discusses, following Mads Rosenthal Thomsen's theory, the link between Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze's concept of rhizome and Rushdie's fiction. However, in spite of the fact that Rushdie's novel contains

indeed a "plot that travels across continents from the Mughal court of Akbar to Renaissance Florence, while simultaneously engaging with the cultural and philosophical ideas of the historical periods in question" (Corrigan 2013, 42), I think the novel remains a one-dimensional, highly organized world in itself, and the rhizomatic model would only complicate the discussion surrounding it. Putting together these very distant and distinct elements of geography, culture, and historical periods means for Rushdie more than the call of multiculturalism or postcolonialism, or any -ism for that matter, including postmodernism,[1] to which his work is usually attributed, but rather an attempt to tell what Martin McQuillan calls in the same study "a story about storytelling and the intrigue it engenders" (2013, 82). As strange as it may seem, this "phenomenalization of reference" as the same critic later names the ambiguous fictional nature of some of the characters as Qara Köz, shows that, for Rushdie, literature is "a space where the tension real-unreal remains as a constant question that predicates reading" (2013, 97).

McQuillan's opinion is not singular. Several reviews of the novel, written right after its publication, seem to follow the same line of thought. One example is JoAnn Conrad's essay which argues that in *The Enchantress of Florence* there is "no clear-cut boundary between reality and fantasy," yet historically and geographically Rushdie "is not so much fictionalizing this interconnected world [that spreads on several continents], but bringing it to light" (2009, 433). Mogor's story is the "central puzzle of the book" (Conrad 2009, 434) and, just as in the *1001 Nights*, his outside frame includes many other interconnected stories as well. The novel is thus, in Conrad's opinion, an interrogation of "the nature of narrative and the specifically human tendency to narrate and thus fabricate reality" (2009, 436). In a review of the novel published in *The Atlantic*, Rushdie's friend Christopher Hitchens writes in his turn that "the worlds of illusion and enchantment seem to collapse in upon themselves, leaving a rich compost of legend and myth for successor generations" (2008, 135). He also notices, very importantly, the presence of the element of water as a central image of the story to which, as Hitchens points out, "all potentates and serfs are in the end equally subservient" (2008, 136), an image that in my opinion has a multitude of possible interpretations which I will review later. For John Sutherland in "Of Medicis and Mughals" there is "more magic than realism" (2008) in Rushdie's novel, but the reviewer does not give any further explanation of how the two of them relate, while for Martin Tucker in *Confrontations* "Rushdie's fascination – or obsession – with the reality of illusion plays a climatic role in the novel," one example of how this fascination materializes being the character of Qara Köz who "exists as

1 Here I am talking about Linda Hutcheon's considerations on Rushdie in *The Politics of Postmodernism* which I decided not to use for my paper because first they are a very beaten path, and second I do not think the techniques described there even apply to this novel.

surely as those she inspires. It is their belief which sustain her, and their vision she inspires" (2009, 214).

There are, of course, critical voices, such as Andrew Martino or Justin Neuman, who talk mainly about the novel's downfalls. For Martino *The Enchantress* is "at best a wonder of intertextual thought, and, at worst, a burdensome game [in which] postmodern calisthenics defeat the number one rule of storytelling: keep the reader captivated" (2009, 70–71). Neuman goes even further and declares that the novel "eschews the significant stylistic innovation and overt, high stakes cultural commentary that energizes Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*" (2008, 675). The critic notices, however, the importance that the motif of the mirror has in the novel, an importance analyzed in depth by D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke as well in his study on Rushdie, but which is for Neuman "a mirror veiled with gauzy multicultural platitudes" (2008, 675). Nevertheless, Neuman's essay has the merit of offering a deeper explanation for the dialectical relationship between reality and fiction in Rushdie's work. As he asserts, "fiction and narrative are powerful transformative forces; narrative is less a means of representing the world than a mode of apprehension, a metaphysical hammer he uses to smash certainties of causality, a forge of the alternate real. For Rushdie, fictions are the world entire" (2008, 680). While I fully agree with Neuman's view on the narrative force that builds a new world in its entirety, I am not satisfied with the way the description of this alternate reality is suspended, and with the fact that the critic does not go further in his interpretation of the self-referentiality of the novel which he considers again a series of "platitudes and pomposity" (Neuman 2008, 682). Finally, in a more moderate tone, William Deresiewicz observes that Rushdie "seeks to reanimate the printed page" and places in the center of the novel "storytelling [in] itself" (2008, 34). Deresiewicz further asserts that even if the novel "exhibits none of the complex allegorical structures, dense systems of allusions or broad political implications – in short, none of the satanic ambition – that both weigh down his major work and give them weight, [it] is probably Rushdie's most coherent and readable novel" (2008, 34). The writer, as Deresiewicz rightfully observes,

> never fully commits to the magic-realist premise, a hesitation that makes his practice more sophisticated and less satisfying. [...] Rushdie is also testing [in *The Enchantress*] the power of imagination to affect reality. This is his highest theme, his persistent obsession. If so much of what seems magic at first turns out to be the result of art or artifice, that is exactly the point. (2008, 35)

Indeed, Rushdie's novel does seem to bring imagination and reality together, trying at the same time to demonstrate the impact the first has on the other. It is a double process though, a play of mirrors that can go both ways. None of the

reviews above answers, however, the question of purpose – why does Rushdie go to such great lengths to combine reality and imagination? Why does he choose this particular way to connect cultures and historical figures under the spell of fiction? Is his novel, as I asked at the beginning of my essay, a place where reality and imagination influence each other antagonistically or do the two of them coexist? How are that tension or coexistence connected to the idea of play, as some of the reviewers discussed it, or "game" as Rushdie himself called it? For a possible answer to all these questions I turned to two studies – one is Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture,* which analyses the origins and the manifestations of play in culture, and the other is Virgil Nemoianu's study *Imperfection and Defeat: The Role of Aesthetic Imagination in Human Society,* an essay on the relationship between fiction and reality.

Play and Reality

Huizinga's study analyzes the nature of play as a cultural phenomenon from an anthropological point of view. In "Chapter I: Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon," he observes that "play is older than culture" because man is not the only being that plays (1950, 1). He consequently discusses its main features. First of all, "play" is not a material activity because it has a supra-logical nature that breaks the "absolute determinism" (1950, 3) of real life, and therefore it is essentially different from it. Second, since play existed even before the creation of culture, it becomes an inherent element of it, accompanying it through all the stages of civilization and through all "the great archetypal activities of human society" (1950, 4), such as language – even metaphor is a play upon words – myth, literature, etc. Thirdly, "play is based on the manipulation of certain images, on a certain 'imagination' of reality [and] it is the direct opposite of seriousness" (1950, 4–5), as it is usually seen as fun, yet the rules of the game are serious for its participants. It "lies outside the antitheses of wisdom and folly, and equally outside those of truth and falsehood, good and evil" (1950, 6). Play, the Dutch anthropologist continues, is always a voluntary activity, one beyond duty, one that is essentially free, and limited only in terms of time and place; its time and place are well-defined and distinct from ordinary life. The fact that play is distinct from ordinary life also implies its repetitiveness and its ability to create its own order, an order, explains Huizinga later on, which has strict rules, so anyone who trespasses them immediately destroys its elaborated structure. Moreover, "the words we use to define elements of play belong for the most part to aesthetics [...] play casts a spell over us; it is 'enchanting', 'captivating'" (Huizinga 1950, 11). It likes to surround itself with secrecy and it has an element of tension as well, the tension of trying to achieve something difficult. Finally,

play has the ability to bring people together, "it promotes the formation of social groupings" (Huizinga 1950, 13); it is "indispensable for the well-being of the community" (Huizinga 1950, 26), a sacred sphere where the child, the savage, and the poet feel equally at large. In "Chapter VII: Play and Poetry," Huizinga talks about *poiesis* as a play-function, a play of mind. Ancient poetry was equally "ritual, entertainment, artistry, riddle-making, doctrine, persuasion, sorcery, soothsaying, prophecy, and competition" (Huizinga 1950, 120). The poet is a *poeta vates*, the possessed and the voice of God, but by reciprocity also the one who possesses the knowledge of the world. Throughout history, his image ranges from prophet to priest, from sorcerer to philosopher, from *rhetvor* to the buffoon or jester. An analogue to the play which has certain "limits of time and space, in a visible order, according to rules freely accepted, and outside a sphere of necessity and material utility," poetry in particular, and, I would add, literature in general, is an "arrangement of language, [...] the deliberate disguising of sense, the artificial and artful constructions of phrases" (Huizinga 1950, 132). The writer's goal, in Huizinga's terms, is to "enchant the reader and hold him spellbound" (1950, 132). As I will demonstrate, all these features apply to Salman Rushdie's novel.

Apart from the analysis of the mechanism of play, another interesting aspect in Salman Rushdie's novel is the way this mechanism interacts with reality, so I based this second part of my essay on a theory belonging to Virgil Nemoianu which discusses particularly the dialectics of historical progress/reality versus literature/fiction. This distinction, which, as I pointed out above, is mentioned frequently as the main theme of *The Enchantress of Florence,* does not seem to be fully explained by other studies. Nemoianu's text investigates precisely this relationship between reality and its textual reflection in literature and argues that in the course of historical evolution certain elements are lost and defeated, certain parts are inevitably imperfect, and this imperfection is the domain of literature. In other words, the role of literature is to warn of the existence of imperfection and to attempt to organize it, because otherwise the human consciousness will not be able to function. Progress is a sum of human efforts to shape and organize reality in a homogeneous unit, but homogeneity "is closely akin to death" (Nemoianu 2006, 8). The secondary, on the other hand, preserves the heterogeneity, and in its reaction to it manages to reestablish "the very possibility of vitality and survival" (Nemoianu 2006, 8). A literary text is characterized through multiple meanings and textual openness, a quality that scientific texts do not acquire, even though some of them do become more literary with the passing of time. In what we generally define as progress, the principal and the secondary coexist, and there is a permanent mutual transformation between the two, but the first is dominant and the second is its antagonist. Nemoianu compares this relationship with what Mircea Florian called "recessiveness:" an interaction in which one dominates the other (and the domination can always be reversed), synthesis is impossible,

and there is always a tensional coexistence between them (Nemoianu 2006, 14). Literature "tends to collect what is abandoned and discarded" (Nemoianu 2006, 16) – in other words the imperfection – and reintroduces it while opposing orderly progress. Basically, it restores what was missed by history; progress becomes a matter of indifference, and the text can include imperfections. Its conflict with history relies precisely in its compromising and synthetic nature, which contradicts the nature of rationalism, politicking, and the historical reality. As literature does not have to obey the rules of the political establishment, "the role of the writer and artist in [a pluralist] society is simultaneously that of a conservative" (Nemoianu 2006, 26), and of an opponent of the ideology of the day. Good literature "unmasks and subverts its own prevailing ideology. In doing so, it provides for the preservation and transmission of values for keeping the historical process open" (Nemoianu 2006, 30).

Huizinga's study and Nemoianu's considerations are useful especially because they can offer a broader perspective on the nature of the relationship between reality and fiction in Salman Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence*. Therefore, I have decided to use both of them in my analysis below.

Play in Literature

The Enchantress of Florence is not only a historical novel, but also a meditation on the role this type of novel in particular, and the representation of history in general have in culture. The beginning of the text marks the entrance in the territory of fiction. The traveler is in the liminal space between of the world and the city, and his every step is marked in a language that deserves to be quoted fully:

> In the day's last light the glowing lake below the palace-city looked like a sea of molten gold. A traveler coming this way at sunset – this traveler, coming this way, now, along the lakeshore road – might believe himself to be approaching the throne of a monarch so fabulously wealthy that he could allow a portion of his treasure to be poured into a giant hollow in the earth to dazzle and awe his guests. And as big as the lake of gold was, it must be only a drop drawn from the sea of the larger fortune – the traveler's imagination could not begin to grasp the size of that mother ocean! (Rushdie 2008, 5)

As the sun sets, the sea of gold proves to be an illusion, and it is reduced to a simple lake, with the water being the only remaining "treasure to offer" (Rushdie 2008, 5). Some might call this a return to reality from magical realism, but I think this episode is meant to signify something completely different: namely that the description has reached its goal. Through the "manipulation of images"

as Huizinga once put it, we have entered not only the territory of fiction, but also the territory of play, or rather, the two of them are equivalent here. It is not random, therefore, that water was chosen to be the barrier for such a passage; with water we are talking of a space of "play" different from the space of real life, a space with a life of its own. Water is an archetypal element with a dual nature – it is primordial, and it can make life appear, but it can also be deadly for those who trespass its boundaries unprepared. Water in Rushdie's novel allows a fluid passage between empirical reality and the play of literature, but it does not necessarily mean a farewell to the first and the beginning of life for the other. It becomes a metaphor of the flexibility of the literary play capable of incorporating but also producing reality; and this is the very reason the writer defends the realism of his novel. Its importance is clear throughout the whole text as it is always referred to in the most important moments, sometimes even mentioned to be the real ruler of the world, because "even an emperor, denied water, would simply turn to dust" (Rushdie 2008, 8).

Not surprisingly, the thirsty traveler accepts the gift of water, and thus he symbolically completes his arrival in the city, a place of trade and commerce, an obsession in Rushdie's novels as Deresiewicz once noticed (2008), but a place that, just like play, brings people together. His situation, gestures, and appearance are in the beginning hilarious at best, but as the description unfolds, the irony is replaced slowly by seriousness. He travels in a bullock-cart, a risible means of transportation, yet he progressively instills admiration into the puzzled driver as he stands like a god wearing "a fool's unsuitable clothes" but "a graceful fool," nevertheless, "or perhaps not a fool at all" (Rushdie 2008, 6), a stranger, as the driver says to himself later, who seems "not so foreign [...] after all" (Rushdie 2008, 6). This description of the main character who belongs to the space of fiction, seen as a fool, or even a jester, a magician, or a sorcerer in the following episodes of the novel, places him outside the antithesis of wisdom and folly mentioned earlier by Huizinga, just as the rules of the play require. As he attains more and more centrality in the novel, his image tends to juxtapose with that of the *poeta vates*, the owner of knowledge, and the enchanter who is meant to keep the reader spellbound. We are far away here from Mario Vargas Llosa's traveling storyteller who was supposed to save the world of the Machiguengas with his stories; in *The Enchantress of Florence* we only have a storyteller who is very aware and in full control of his magical abilities, of the rhetorical mechanisms of language, and intends to use them to make his way through to the emperor and the reader alike. He tells the bullock-cart driver that he is in the possession of a secret meant only for the kings, another sign of the presence of play which in the early rituals was supposed to surround itself with secrecy while it was performed by masked or disguised players, and, as we go further in the novel, we read about the nature of this disguise: he stole a diplomatic document from

a Scottish milord, in fact a former pirate suddenly turned into an emissary of the Queen of England, and he pretends now to be the rightful representative of the British Empire at the court of the Indian emperor Akbar the Great. This secret will be just a means to an end, a way to grab Akbar's attention; his other secret, a distant claim to the throne, will be revealed far later in the novel. What is important for now is that, as the traveler falls asleep, he has the world of play and fiction in his mind:

> As soon as he fell asleep half the world started babbling in his brain, telling wondrous travelers' tales. In this half-discovered world every day brought news of fresh enchantments. The visionary, revelatory dream-poetry of the quotidian had not yet been crushed by blinkered, prosy fact. Himself a teller of tales, he had been driven out of his door by stories of wonder, and one in particular, story which could make his fortune or cost him his life. (Rushdie 2008, 10)

Apart from the motif of Scheherazade which is obvious in the text and has been mentioned before by various critics, Rushdie's novel seems to follow extremely closely Huizinga's recipe: the enchanter is there ready to exhibit his sorcery and even compete with the divinity – hence, for example, the episode in which Mogor / Ucello di Firenze multiplies "fishes and loaves with a couple of passes of his elegant hand" (Rushdie 2008, 12) – and to create a second, more poetic world different from the real one but not necessarily opposing it. The space and time are also clearly delineated: the place of the story, the time of Akbar combined later in the novel with Florence in the time of Machiavelli, the freedom with which characters move and invent themselves or others, all are there too. The novel becomes a magic circle, an arena of thought with its own special rules, a temporary world within the world of reality. The secret the storyteller carries with him is a play within language, but also a play of life and death, which brings this language close to its biblical meaning. It can help him get to Akbar, and in this point the novel is a demonstration of linguistic virtuosity, but it kills Lord Hauksbank, and it kills Ucello symbolically when Mogor abandons that name as if he would leave behind the "skin of a snake" (Rushdie 2008, 23). As a matter of fact, it almost kills Mogor too who ends up in Akbar's prison, but saves him at the same time when he realizes that his only mission is to tell his story because without the story he would cease to exist:

> He would die without telling his story. He found this thought intolerable and so it refused to leave him, it crawled in and out of his ears, slid into the corners of his eyes and stuck to the roof of his mouth and to the soft tissue under his tongue. All men needed to hear their stories told. He was a man, but if he

> died without telling the story he would be something less than that, an albino cockroach, a louse. The dungeon did not understand the idea of a story. The dungeon was static, eternal, black, and a story needed motion and time and light. He felt his story slipping away from him, becoming inconsequential, ceasing to be. He had no story. There was no story. He was not a man. There was no man there. There was only the dungeon, and the slithering dark. [...] He would not rest in peace. In death as in life he would be full of unspoken words and they would be his hell, tormenting him through all eternity. [...] The most beautiful woman. The story was saving his life. (Rushdie 2008, 89–90)

Paradoxically, Mogor is a copy of Scheherazade, but at the same he is not. He relies on his storytelling to stay alive, but, unlike his predecessor in *1001 Nights,* he understands that the story is not a burden he has to perform out of duty, and he sees it as the art it really is, an art that creates and destroys characters, images, places, empires, but an art in the absence of which the memory of humankind itself would disappear. The idea is not new – even in *Beowulf* we are told that immortality is on "men's lips" – but here in Rushdie's text, which comes after an entire line of writers and philosophers who attempted to deconstruct the ability of literature to create new meaning, to abolish its value, and to deny the writer's power of imagination, this is quite an interesting move. It is not a very surprising one, however, for someone who openly declared that he wants to stay in the game of literature, to be left alone so he could write stories. He understands that he needs to create a tension, as Huizinga defined it, to play with images and characters, to work within the limits of the imaginable and instill mystery in the story, so he can keep the reader committed. Basically, in this point, the writer himself becomes an enchanter.

The same is also true for Akbar because the only true enchanters in the story, apart from the story itself which becomes a vehicle for the writer's enchantment, are Mogor and Akbar. Of course, one can argue that the real enchanter in the novel is the enchantress Qara Köz / Angelica; after all, even the title is dedicated to her. But I have doubts that this is really the case as she is ultimately just a character in Mogor's story. Akbar is probably the most powerful enchanter in the text, even more powerful than Mogor/Niccolo Vespucci, although the latter provides the frame to keep the story together, because Akbar, mirroring the writer at another level, is also in the possession of power. In fact, the narrator admits it: "he was the Enchanter. In this place he would conjure a new world, a world beyond religion, rank, and tribe. [...] An emperor was a bewitcher of the real, and with such accomplices his witchcraft could not fail" (Rushdie 2008, 43). Through his power he can not only enchant, but also manipulate reality, as it is the case with Jodha, one of the most interesting characters in the book. As Rushdie observes in his interview with Robert Siegel mentioned above, it is unclear if Jodha has

ever existed as a historical figure, although she is mentioned by history books as Akbar's Hindu wife. Rushdie concludes, however, that she does not have enough historical consistency, so he recreates her in the novel not as a real person, but as the product of Akbar's imagination. His decision to make her come into being, and the process that follows it, remind us indeed of the myth of Pygmalion, but goes even further than that:

> she had heard from the emperor a traveler's tale of an ancient sculptor of the Greeks who brought a woman to life and fell in love with her. That narrative did not end well, and in any case was a fable for children. It could not be compared with her actual existence. Here, after all, she was. She simply was. Only one man on all the earth had ever achieved such a feat of creation by pure act of will. (Rushdie 2008, 47–48)

Her influence grows as art helps her acquire more existence, "Tansen wrote songs for her and in the studio-scriptorium her beauty was celebrated in portraiture and verse. Master Abdus Samad the Persian portrayed her himself, painted her from the memory of a dream without even looking upon her face, and when the emperor saw his work he clapped his hands at the beauty shining from the page" (Rushdie 2008, 28). In other words, Johda's creation is a self-referential artistic act equivalent to a *mise en abyme* ("the memory of a dream"). Still following closely the rules of the play, the novel undermines the barriers between truth and falsehood and situates itself beyond their antithesis. Rushdie's choice for a historical novel is not, therefore, surprising at all; for him history is imperfect because none of the accounts about a certain historical figure is complete, but in the space of the novel this imperfection is annulled because a character does not have to prove its authenticity. After all, it does not really matter if Jodha has existed or not. In the end, even after people's physical death, there is no reality other than the word reality; they continue to exist only if they are spoken of: "in the end her victory will be apparent to everyone, for in the end none of the [real] queens will exist anymore than she does, while she will have enjoyed a lifetime of your love, and her fame will echo down the ages" (Rushdie 2008, 45). Similar to Johda, who knows she simply is, is play. It can exhibit its mechanisms, but that does not mean they need to be explained. Just as for Chaucer before him, the product of imagination can become for Rushdie more real than real life itself, and it can contain more meaning. Since play is not a material activity and its nature is supra-logical, it does not matter if such an operation is justified. Thus, what many critics have considered an array of intertextual platitudes, is actually Rushdie's idea of freedom in building a historical character.

The same freedom manifests itself again in the case of Akbar's contrasting personality features. As it has been observed before, Akbar himself is a sum of

paradoxes. He is described as "a Muslim vegetarian, a warrior who wanted only peace, a philosopher-king: a contradiction in terms" (Rushdie 2008, 45). We find him throughout the novel striving to become, trying to balance the different parts of his personality or his different duties, dealing with relatives' betrayals, falling in love and being enchanted by one figment of imagination after the other – Johda, Queen Elizabeth of England, Qara Köz/Lady Black Eyes/Angelica – and also being genuinely interested in the life of his subjects and in the life of the other city that he manages to travel to through Mogor's stories, Florence. There is, however, a very interesting moment in his trajectory, the moment when he desperately tries to abandon the pronoun *We*, the plurality reserved only for the emperors, and reduce his persona to the singular pronoun *I*:

> He was the definition, the incarnation of WE. He had been born into plurality. When he said 'we,' he naturally and truly meant himself as an incarnation of all his subjects, of all his cities and lands and rivers and mountains and lakes, as well as all the animals and plants and trees within his frontiers, and also the birds that flew overhead ... he meant himself as the sum of all his victories, himself as containing the characters, the abilities, the histories, perhaps even the souls of his decapitated or merely pacified opponents; and, in addition, he meant himself as the apogee of his people's past and present, and the engine of their future. [...] Perhaps this idea of self-as-community was what it meant to be a being in the world, any being, such a being being, after all, inevitably a being among other beings, a part of the beingness of all things. Perhaps plurality was not exclusively a king's prerogative. (Rushdie 2008, 31; emphasis and ellipsis in the original)

At this point the novel challenges the boundaries of its genre. It states that a novelistic character, a historical figure, and, ultimately, any human being have one thing in common: they all depend on the way they reflect themselves in the minds of others. Therefore, Akbar cannot transgress his status and become one-dimensional. No matter how much he tries, he is not allowed to become a singular person: he remains all of them in the novel – a character, a historical figure, and even a man – and perceives this idea as traumatic. He is a plurality "in the eyes of the world" (Rushdie 2008, 52), a metaphor of the fact that, as in Johda's example too, characters, and historical figures, no matter how well known or documented, cannot escape the countless possible interpretations which the world bestows on them. The play, the novel, the historical figure, the work of art in general can be seen again, repeated or revisited, and with each time they acquire a different meaning. Again this is not a very new idea; it is recurrent in the works of the philosophers of postmodernity, from Jean Baudrillard to Francis Fukuyama, but in Rushdie's novel the fact that such an endeavor is attributed to a

Mughal emperor is indeed unique. So is the fact that he feels utterly alone in his meditation. Not even Johda, the perfect queen, the product of his imagination, is capable of understanding it. She is too focused on the problems concerning her own existence, on her possibility to stay alive even without his help:

> The question of her independent existence, of whether she had one, insisted on being asked, over and over, whether she willed it or not. If God turned his face away from his creation, Man, would Man simply cease to be? [...] Was her will free of the man who had willed her into being? Did she exist only because of his suspension of disbelief in the possibility of her existence? If he died, could she go on living? (Rushdie 2008, 49)

This point marks the end of their relationship. Akbar learns his lesson and will never refer to himself otherwise than plural, and he gets a companion in his counterpart/enchanter/storyteller Ucello di Firenze/Mogor dell'Amore/Niccolo Vespucci, who just like him, although not always so evident, is another pluralistic personality, this time one built exclusively on his own stories meant for others to read and make them complete. Like two chess players, they will accompany each other throughout the rest of the novel, with Akbar almost determined to name Niccolo his successor at some point.

All of this said, some questions still arise. What is the real purpose behind all this complicated mechanism of "play" within history and fiction? Is Rushdie's only goal to show the dissolution of the barriers between imagination and reality, to put them both *sub specie ludi*, or just to write a novel that demonstrates, as many analysts have said before, the fact that the world of illusion is stronger than the real one? Or to even unify in a playful, and very postcolonial manner the East and the West, and two different historical periods in one place and time?

Indeed, it seems that way at first. With Machiavelli, Botticelli, Andrea Doria, Amerigo Vespucci, Lorenzo de' Medici, Simonetta Cataneo as historical figures, with Nicollo Vespucci, Qara Köz and Argalia as fictional characters that create the links between them, with the action unfolding in two placeable, recognizable cities such as Fatehpur Sikri and Florence, and even with the impressive bibliographical exhibit at the end, *The Enchantress of Florence* could be just another example of a historical novel which, as Virgil Nemoianu defines it while referring to Walter Scott's work, has established even from the beginning of the genre a generic rule according to which "the main and well-documented historical characters ought to function as secondary fictional characters in the background (or obliquely referred to), while secondary or outright invented historical figures are the ones who function as a foreground" (Nemoianu 2006, 75). The distinction between literature, which Nemoianu calls secondary, and historical progress appears to be in place too; Akbar's hesitations, the episode

with Rana, Argalia's defeating Vlad the Impaler which fills a historical gap since Vlad's real opponent is not known, the story of the hidden princess Qara Köz/ Lady Black Eyes/Angelica who manages to connect all the continents together in her travels; every one of them are possible examples of the imperfection of the secondary because literature is meant, as Nemoianu suggested, to recuperate what was lost or defeated and thus challenge history, and to stir up the complacencies of linear progress by reintroducing those elements. Rushdie seems indeed to use the freedom of the fictional text to explore the psychological and cultural motivations behind the acts of recognizable historical figures, and in the case of Akbar he appears to pursue the process through which literature alters the signified from an individual, as a sum of characteristics documented by historical records, to "human by adding retrospection to reality" (Nemoianu 2006, 20). Also, if we follow Nemoianu's argument, the novel would elicit a clear distinction between literature and history because the two of them are never meant to merge completely; they are only destined for tensional coexistence, for a relationship of recessiveness which puts them in a condition of inequality. This would explain the fervor with which Rushdie's novel was interpreted as a triumph of imagination over reality, a flip between two worlds, a magical realist tale with nonconformist historical conjunctions.

The Sacred Function of Literature

However, this interpretation elicits a few technical problems. The first and the most important one is that, if the highlighting of the antagonistic relationship was the real purpose of the novel, the idea of a textual play loses its significance, as it makes no sense to build a separate world with its own time, space, rules, enchanters, mythology, etc., if one only wants to oppose the world of illusion to reality. This would make the play obviously redundant. Second, in spite of the fact that the text seems to breach the laws of history and geography and make the time of Akbar and the Florence of Machiavelli collide in one place, there is no direct reference to the actual city of Florence at all; in fact, Akbar's image of it is permanently filtered through Niccolo Vespucci's story:

> Akbar was walking the streets of that other stone city in which nobody seemed to want to stay indoors ... When solitude was banished, did one become more oneself, or less? Did the crowd enhance one's selfhood or erase it? [...] But Akbar's cloak was cut from the cloths of time and space and these people were not his. Why, then, did he feel so strong a sense of kinship with the denizens of these braying lanes? Why did he understand their unspeakable European tongue as if it were his own? (Rushdie 2008, 139–140; ellipsis in the original)

In other words, it is only the fictional play put together by Vespucci's story that connects the two cultures and makes Akbar exclaim so many times in the novel that "the curse of the human race is not that we are so different from one another, but that we are so alike" (Rushdie 2008, 311). In the world of play where all the contraries and boundaries are nullified, languages are translated, cities are traveled through a fictional character's eyes, emperors can have paradoxical personalities, pirates can become emissaries of queens, East and West of different historical times can meet and people share the same dreams and aspirations. Rushdie himself confessed in his 2008 interview with Charlie Rose that he wanted to write a novel which would explore the differences between two worlds, but ended up demonstrating their similarities. In other words, in the space of play there is no difference between history and fiction.

Moreover, since in the same world reality and its representation are no longer separate, the story of Qara Köz and the episode with the Memory Palace are just means to establish the rules of the game, to create the "great matter of how the world joined up" that Rushdie mentioned in the interviews above. Significant in this respect is the motif of the mirror prevalent in the novel. D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke makes a rigorous inventory of the mirrors in the novel in his study on Rushdies's work and observes that "Qara Köz has her own Mirror" which towards the end of the novel is suspected to be Vespucci's mother; "the hero of Dashwanth's pictures became the emperor's mirror" (Goonetilleke 2010, 117). Apart from them, the critic discusses further on the mirrors of the artists and their models Dashwanth and Qara Köz, Filipepi/Botticello and Simonetta, Fatehpur Sikri and Florence as cities, Elizabeth I as the Western mirror of Akbar, and the lake Sikri as the mirror of the city. I would add the mirrors of Akbar and Vespucci and the writer himself as enchanters, of Akbar and Machiavelli as philosophers, and even the solitary mirror from the Medici castle which predicts the fate of Qara Köz once she ceases to enchant the city, and her presence becomes overly familiar. The mirror reflects the object without excluding it, and in the European cultural tradition, including in Romanticism, it has represented a means to reach the essences of the soul or to access higher knowledge. The essence reflected by the mirrors in Rushdie's novel refers to the relationship between the referent and its representation as the latter supports the existence of the first. Regardless of their historical or fictional nature, the characters in *The Enchantress of Florence* exist as long as they are talked about or represented, as long as they reflect in other characters' minds. It is the reason why Qara Köz has to leave Florence, it is what determines Johda's replacement, and also the reason for the beautiful, poetic promise at the end "until *you're not*, the Universal Ruler thought. *My love, until you're not*" (Rushdie 2008, 349), which speaks of the same threat of a possible replacement and symbolic death; this time referring to Angelica. Ultimately, this is the writer's/enchanter's and his novel's/play's most important

role – to make these characters and events reflect in the minds of the readers and hold them under the spell of literature.

The same type of self-referentiality is present in what was seen as a downfall of the novel – the incest Niccolo Vespucci is supposedly a product of. As facile as it would stand for a prosaic explanation of the jump over time through which the plot operates, I think it suggests in fact the same idea of a self-sufficient novel, turned toward itself, following the rules of a play contained only within its limits and offered to the readers to be shared and reiterated with every new reading. After a long period of time in which literature in general and the novel in particular have been so bluntly denied originality and purpose, Rushdie's novel tends to return to its origins, to the point where, as I discussed at the beginning, "the visionary, the dream-poetry of the quotidian had not yet been crushed by blinkered, prosy fact" (Rushdie 2008, 10), in other words, the point where reality and the world of dreams and illusion were not yet separated. The story becomes a desire to re-establish a sacred world in which the two of them coexist, and the play as a suspension of logic can help the novel achieve that. That is why the writer sees no point in placing his work within the narrow boundaries of magical realism and defends its historical accuracy. The novel/play has its own substance which incorporates both of them and even makes them merge. The distinction between principal and secondary, historical progress versus literature, and all the terms associated with them (imperfection, defeat, etc.) is no longer necessary. Through this complicated labyrinth of play, the writer attempts to return to a primordial state in which literature had the sacred function of bringing people together under the spell of the storyteller, and this state is in my opinion symbolized in the novel by the element of water which even disappears from the city once the enchanter and his magic of language are gone. Thus, the end of the novel also marks the exit from this sacred world of play, a return to the "prosy" everyday life.

In fact, at a closer look, Rushdie actually fulfills the conservative role of the writer as Nemoianu defined it: in a time in which literary texts have become consumer objects and their importance has been under scrutiny, Rushdie tries to write novels that challenge how we see reality, how we define our place in history, and how we conceptualize otherness. It is a novel which returns to its former complexity and represents a world in itself, one in which characters are not plain textual beings, but they attempt to reconnect their readers to a complex archetype to which everyone can relate. As he declares in his book of memoirs, *Joseph Anton*, Rushdie misses the good novels of the past in which:

> [a]ll writers and readers knew that human beings had broad identities, not narrow ones, and it was the breadth of human nature that allowed readers to find common grounds and points of identification with Madame Bovary, Leopold Bloom, Colonel Aureliano Buendia, Raskolnikov, Gandalf the Gray,

> [etc.]. Readers and writers could take that knowledge of broad-base identity out into the world beyond the pages of books, and use the knowledge to find common ground with their fellow human beings. (Rushdie, 2012, 627)

More exactly, in his writings in general and in *The Enchantress of Florence* in particular, Salman Rushdie tries to help the novel as a genre regain some of its lost grandeur, and this is probably the very reason why his work will last in time.

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The Genetic Essence of Houses and People: History as Idealization and Appropriation of an Imagined Timelessness

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Abstract. Marina Fiorato's *The Glassblower of Murano* (2008) tells the story of Eleonora, a young woman who travels to Venice in search of her genealogical past and existential roots. Coming from London, Eleonora incarnates a "modern" outlook on what she assumes to be the timeless life and culture of Venice. At one point in the novel, admiring the old houses on the Canal Grande, Eleonora is "on fire with enthusiasm for this culture where the houses and the people kept their genetic essence so pure for millennia that they look the same now as in the Renaissance" (2008, 15). This discourse of pure origins and unbroken continuities is a fascinating fantasizing on characteristics that extend from the urban territory to the people who inhabit it. Within narratives centred on this notion, Italian culture, perceived as holding a privileged relation with history and the past, is often contrasted with the displacement and rootlessness that seem to characterize the modern places and people of England and North America. Through a discussion of two Anglo-American popular novels set in Italy, and several relocation narratives, this paper proposes an exploration of the notion according to which history is the force cementing the identities of societies perceived as less modern and frozen in a timeless dimension. From a point in time when the dialectics of history have been allegedly transcended, Anglo-American popular narratives observe Italy as a timeless, pre-modern other.

Keywords: taxonomy of cultures, Italy, temporal difference, tradition/modernity, popular literature.

Introduction

Reading contemporary popular novels and relocation narratives[1] on Italy, one understands how well-established the view is according to which Italians hold a privileged relation with history and the past; a notion which is often contrasted with the displacement and rootlessness of the modern places and people of England and North America.

This paper will discuss "history" as the force cementing the identities of "less modern" societies, freezing them in a timeless dimension. In this perspective, history is equated with "tradition" and made to belong to the past. Fully modern societies and their inhabitants, having overcome history, live in the present, which is not so much conceived of as a historical phase, but as the culmination of historical development, the highest possible peak of human progress. Traditional, pre-modern societies, on the contrary, still hold "history" as a powerful referent for moulding their identities and ways of life. This confers on the individuals who inhabit them a timeless wisdom, but also, at times, a stuck-in-time mentality that does not let them fully function in the present. This paper will analyse, in particular, two contemporary popular novels based on a conceptualization of Italy as a frozen in time world in discontinuity with modernity. In the second part of it, I will discuss several relocation narratives set in Italy that maintain a similar discourse and point of view.

The Glassblower of Murano

In *The Glassblower of Murano* (2008), Anglo-Italian author Marina Fiorato tells the story of Eleonora, a young woman who travels to Venice from London in search of her genealogical past and cultural roots, after an unexpected and painful divorce. The novel combines the contemporary established narrative pattern of a woman who abruptly finds herself in the condition of having to find a new purpose to life, with a historical tale. Eleonora will find guidance and inspiration in the life-story of her famous ancestor, Corradino Manin, a glassblower artist active in the eighteenth century and celebrated in Europe for his unparalleled skills in working with glass. Although the character of Corradino Manin is entirely fictional, the historical context is not: Fiorato makes Corradino meet Louis XIV of France, she intertwines Corradino's story with the construction of the Palace of Versailles, and makes Corradino a member of the Manin family, a prominent historical Venetian clan.

1 A sub-genre of travel literature consisting of recent accounts of Italy written by financially privileged, highly educated cosmopolitan Anglo-American expatriates.

Coming from London, Eleonora incarnates a "modern" outlook that she brings to the timeless life and culture of Venice. In her quest for a job and a life away from England, Eleonora is guided by the need to anchor her own fleeting existence to something solid and unchanging: continuing genealogical ties, and a continuing line of work. Eleonora's father is a recently deceased Venetian, but her most immediate and recent family relations do not interest her very much; she expects to find the key to her own identity in the distant past of Corradino's time. Eventually, Eleonora will find her due place in the history of the city as a talented glassblower; she will discover herself to be the rightful heir to Corradino's skills, and she will find continuity by giving birth to a child whom she will name Corradino.

At one point in the novel, admiring old houses on the Canal Grande, Eleonora is "on fire with enthusiasm for this culture where the houses and the people [sic!] kept their genetic essence so pure for millennia that they looked the same now as in the Renaissance" (2008, 15). This is a clear fantasy of pure origins and unbroken continuity that tells much of the way Italy is perceived in the European and global configuration of cultures. It is a fascinating conceptualization of a certain sort of fantasizing on characteristics that extend from the urban territory (the old houses) to the people. The idea of an essence preserved throughout the centuries is widely fantasized upon in contemporary popular literature on Italy.

Eleonora often has the impression of meeting people whose physical features are the same as those depicted in classic Italian paintings. References to Italians looking like timeless prototypes of Southern beauty are recurring throughout the novel. When Eleonora falls in love with Alessandro, an Italian man who "looks like he has stepped from a painting," (2008, 41) he casually comments: "It's common here. You see the same features walking around that have been here for hundreds of years. The same faces"[2] (2008, 114).

These fantasies of unbroken continuity tell us of an idea of the modern world (England in this case) as a place disconnected from its past. On the contrary, Italy's perceived unbrokenness through time, visible in the culture, customs, architecture, and the physical features of its inhabitants is a common (mis)conception and a recurring theme of contemporary popular narratives. In a different instance of the same perception, while observing a historical parade in Orvieto, in which the participants wear medieval costumes, De Blasi comments:

2 A particularly interesting aspect of the novel is the fact that Italians seem to perceive themselves in the same way as the author does, as timeless prototypes made up of certain physical and emotional features. Sometimes they are even depicted as perceiving themselves through Shakespearean lenses, which is particularly amusing. Referring to *The Merchant of Venice*, Alessandro asks Eleonora "I live here. D'you think you can grow up in the city without knowing the story?" (2008, 115–116). The question is interesting because it takes for granted the universality of Shakespeare's work as a literary referent of self-constitution and self-representation. There are obviously plenty of Venetians who do not know the Shakespearean story.

> One begins to understand that these are not men masquerading as other men for the sake of a parade; rather, they are themselves bristling with the roots and fiber of their own blood and bones. Over and over again among the ranks, a spectator can see how a cape, a headdress, a posture can transform a man, change his twentieth-century face into a medieval one. How these people look like the portraits of their ancestors. And I wonder, How must it feel to march to the pounding of the pages' drums in the Sunday-morning light of the town where you were born, where your father and his father and ten generations of your fathers before them were born? (2007, 183)

Very few Italians can claim to know where the previous three generations of their ancestors lived, let alone the previous ten. The idea of an Italian past that continues unbroken and makes its timeless essence visible in the architecture as well as in people's physical features is a social collective fantasy. As such, it can certainly be a compelling narrative device, a fantastic conceptual premise to a fictional story. It is problematic, however, when this construction gets articulated in a pseudo-scientific (ethnographic) language and authoritative tone of voice that has, as one of its most obvious functions, that of distancing Italian culture and placing it in discontinuity with the modern world. This fantasy of unbroken ties with the past, a past that continues in the present, comes from a perspective that sees modernity as emanating from a circumscribed geographical space and fracturing the world into a "before" and an "after." Italy is seen as occupying a place in between, a "relatively undisturbed" space of tradition.

In *The Glassblower of Murano*, the architecture and the people are nonchalantly assimilated in the composition of this nostalgic image, and Eleonora's quest will be that of finding her rightful place in the eternally intact tissue of Italian society from her position of displaced and fragmented modern individuality. The myth of a privileged relation with the past pervades the novel: family lineages continue unbroken for centuries, preserving, along with their "genetic essences," not only their surnames, but also the same first names – which crop up regularly – characters, rivalries, and, inscribed in their bloodlines, the same tendencies towards good or evil.

This is a novel in which, in spite of its clear vocation for a light and graceful sort of entertainment, we see at work a number of themes that characterize contemporary representations of Italian culture in the English language: the general classification of Italy as the other of modern Europe, the *naturalization* of certain characteristics that extend from the territory to the people and get inscribed in the genetic code of Italians, the *idealization* of Italy in its relation to the past – its history is here, ready to be accessed and read as from an open book – and the *appropriation* of this imagined world from a distant modernity that has lost authenticity and continuity along the way. These rhetorical figures,

isolated and employed by David Spurr in his *The Rhetoric of Empire* (1993), in which he analyses journalistic discourses on the Third World to shed light on its construction and representations of foreign cultures, apply to several instances of popular literature about Italy.

Eleonora wanders the streets of Venice and sees in it something beautiful, picturesque, and unchanged, a place she feels she belongs to but which she is also able to contemplate from a different position, and from a different time. As a Londoner, Eleonora enjoys the advantage of being "ahead in history," and as the counterpart of Venice, London is implicitly represented as a place that has cut all its ties with the past, a city that because of its lack of historical traditions and relations with the past, is incapable of offering that "existential steadiness" that somehow naturally belongs to Italy. Italy's backwardness has "saved" it, and made it forever different.

When Eleonora decides to look for work in Murano, this proves to be a difficult endeavour, but not for "contingent" reasons, related to the present-day political and economic situation. In the novel, Italy is never contextualized in the present-day world; it is an idealized piece of past set in the present. The Venetians' glassblowing community, still made up entirely of male glassblowers, reveals itself to be as hostile, chauvinistic, closed, and distrustful of change as it used to be three centuries earlier. Archaic in character and caught-up in time, the community of glassblowers is essentially a present-day re-enactment of the same eighteenth-century organization.

Eleonora is initially hired by the glassblowing enterprise as a potential economic asset on the basis of her blood relation to her famous ancestor Corradino. In the course of the story, she will discover to possess a real talent for the craft (a genetic legacy, of course) and, after various vicissitudes, she will be accepted within the community, bringing a fresh and modern perspective to the current state of affairs. At one point in the novel, Eleonora accepts to pose for an advertising campaign for the Murano glasswork. In the campaign, "her role was to bring modernity to the Antique end of Adelino's [the owner of the glassblowing factory] business. In modern day dress she was placed in classic Venetian paintings which featured glasswork and mirrors" (2008, 159). In this symbolic representation, her young and modern presence is contrasted with the timeless life of Venice. This scene perfectly epitomizes the function of Eleonora's presence in the story of the novel.

A widely-spread misconstruction according to which Italy is qualitatively different from Northern Europe and America by virtue of its supposed pre-modern character is at the basis of this kind of literary fantasies. In Fiorato's novel, Italians deal with historical events of previous centuries as if they were urgent and pressing matters; as if, as Alessandro explains, they "happened only yesterday" (2008, 41). The novel's characters are involved in old feuds, still fighting their ancestors' fights. In the novel, modern-day Italian characters often

speak on behalf of their ancestors, and centuries-old news still make headlines in Italian local newspapers.

Below is an excerpt of an interview with author Marina Fiorato in which she reveals some of her intentions in writing the novel:

> Venice is so unchanging; it's essentially the same place architecturally as it was in the seventeenth century. There are few places in the world about which one can say this, because most cities have changed to accommodate roads and sprawling suburbs. But because Venice as a "character" was the same then as now, I thought it would be really interesting to take a look at ideas of heritage and continuity of a particular Venetian family, with a peculiar creative genius. I was interested in whether or not a skill like glassblowing is passed down in the same way that, say, facial characteristics are. Is glassblowing in the Venetian DNA? Are these skills built into the Venetian genome, and how much does the city itself create artists by a kind of osmosis which has nothing to do with the century they are in? These are the kind of questions which interested me. ("A Conversation with Marina Fiorato" 5)

Fiorato assumes that Venice and the Venetians have preserved an unchanging "character" because its architecture has not changed during the last centuries. The author clearly does not admit the possibility of a place constantly changing in spite of its old buildings, and extends the quality of timelessness from the architecture to the people. At this point, she consigns this perceived timelessness and continuity of Venetian architecture, character and genius to genetic causes, to a DNA that gets transmitted throughout the centuries. In order for this to happen, Venice has to be construed as a time-capsule, a world of timeless isolation from the modern world and discontinuous with it. In other words, in the novel, Venice is presented as a "self-contained ecosystem" in which people share the same genetic essence as the houses in which they live. Eleonora momentarily disrupts this continuity only to get absorbed by it at the end of the story.

Juliet

Another instance of a fictional narrative that presents several similar characteristics – the young (this time American) heroine who comes to the old world in search of her long-lost (and preferably noble) origins, the intertwining of two stories, one in the past, one in the present – is *Juliet*, written by Anne Fortier in 2010. The novel tells the (quite intricate) story of a young girl, Juliet, who decides, following the death of her aunt, to go to Siena and solve the mystery that has always surrounded her real identity. Juliet discovers to be the descendant of no

one other than Giulietta Tolomei, the noble woman who inspired the literary creation of the Shakespearean heroine. Once in Siena, she predictably falls in love with the descendant of the nobleman Romeo. The family feuds that held sway in the city during the Middle Ages are still rampant in present-day Siena, and Juliet, just like Eleonora, will discover her destiny to be indissolubly linked to that of the city, its history, and its culture.

Italians are, on the one hand, clearly historically pre-determined, with their never-ending rivalries and written (Shakespearean) destinies. They are also incapable of interpreting their own past and clearly need someone coming from the new world to help them uncover and understand their history. In the course of the story, for instance, Juliet will be able to unearth nothing less than the tomb of Romeo and Giulietta, buried underneath Siena's Palazzo Pubblico, at the heart of the city. The tomb, forgotten there for centuries and unknown to Italians, is easily unearthed by a young American girl during the time of a short holiday.

The novel's Siena is self-enclosed and mysterious, still anchored to a medieval past. Unlike in the real modern-day Siena, contradas still hold political and juridical power.[3] This magical city offers valuable teachings for Juliet, who will learn to treat the past as a force very much alive in the present: "Don't underestimate the power of events that happened a long time ago" an older American woman warns Juliet "that is the tragic flaw of modern man. I advise you, as someone from the New World: listen more, and speak less. This is where your soul was born" (2010, 30). The quotation could hardly make more explicit the difference between the postulated modernity of Americans and the archaic character of Italy. Modern American men and women come to Italy from the new world to learn about the lost origin of their souls; what they can learn from Italy pertains to a peculiar existential register, an unsubstantial and mystical one, not to the concrete and utilitarian modern world.

In the novel, the people of present-day Siena habitually wear medieval dresses at parties, women address one another as "monna,"[4] contemporary painters descend from famous artists of the past. Everyone in Siena seems to have a long, unbroken, and thoroughly traceable family history. Everyone knows exactly who their ancestors were and what they were doing at any given time. The real identity of all the contemporary characters we meet in the novel is preserved in the past, within the walls of the city. Moreover, people in the novel recognize each other by looking at the facial features of one another's ancestors as portrayed in frescos. Newborn children, in the 1970s, receive their baptism in the public fountain of

3 A *contrada* is a district, a ward. Siena retains a ward-centric structure from medieval times. The city is divided into wards, each represented by a mascot, usually an animal. Originally instituted as battalions in defense of the city, current contradas do not hold any form of administrative or juridical power. Contradas compete against each other every year at the Palio.

4 "Monna" was a formal way of addressing married women in the Middle Ages. It comes from the contraction of the word "Madonna."

their own *contrada*. The novel depicts a contemporary Italy in which superstition is rampant, current members of the clergy descend from the Shakespearean Fra' Lorenzo and perform wedding rituals, in private castles, in the medieval fashion.

The novel presents the reader with a pastiche that stretches its boundaries enough to comprehend the Palio, historical families from Siena (the Tolomeis and the Salimbenis), Romeo and Juliet, the mafia, Charlemagne, a curse that has been in place for centuries but gets broken by Juliet in the course of a few weeks, the magical water of a fountain that makes one lose their mental faculties… Clearly the novel does not aim at being a realistic depiction of life in modern-day Siena, but at the same time, the imagined character of this fantasy offers numerous clues on the self-perception of Americans on Italian soil.

In the novel, American lives are given a sense of history and purpose by the Italian way of life, that the author romanticizes – and this is the particularity of the narrative – not as a present-day instantiation of the Italian Middle-Ages, or of the Renaissance period, but as a reproduction of a Shakespearean interpretation of Italy, to which the Italian characters wholeheartedly adhere, and which incarnates values opposite to those of American modernity. It is not merely the fact that Italians demonstrate, at any given moment, a great familiarity with Shakespeare's works. More importantly, they recognize to them the inescapable power to shape their own characters and personalities in real life. In other words, they effortlessly perceive themselves as contemporary avatars of Shakespearean characters. The result is the creation of a fictional Italy, devoid of any sign of sheer plausibility, in which traditional stereotypes concerning Italian culture and traditions find a place in a larger pseudo-Shakespearean structure.

The projection that the author makes is of a kind that proceeds from a perceived universal centre and expects its periphery not only to share in the same game of references, but to truly identify with its creations. It is certainly true that the status of the Shakespearean canon has acquired a global value (Shakespeare is not a local cultural phenomenon), but this body of works is certainly not constitutive of all national literary and cultural histories in the same way. Throughout the novel, Italy (past and present) is made to emulate a Shakespearean interpretation of it, a fantasy constructed in a romantic opposition to what the author perceives as modern-day American culture. I could maybe clarify my point by advancing the hypothesis of an Italian contemporary author writing contemporary stories set in Malaysia and depicting Malay people as perceiving themselves as variations of characters created by Emilio Salgari.[5] It could certainly be an entertaining idea, but there should be, I believe, some awareness of the artificial (and possibly

5 Emilio Salgari (1862–1911) was an Italian author of adventure books. He wrote extensively and his books have been extremely popular, not only in Italy, but also in Spain, Portugal, and South-America. Many of his most popular novels have been transformed into comic books, children books, films, and animated films.

controversial) nature of the operation. In Fortier's novel, on the other hand, there is no sign of irony, not the weakest reference to the author's awareness of the contrived (and ideologically charged) character of her literary expedients.

In both *The Glassblower of Murano* and *Juliet*, a modern-day heroine goes to the South of Europe to find herself and start anew. In both novels she ends up reconnecting to her past and finding a whole existential collocation that she did not have at the beginning of the story. Italy has the role of providing displaced and fragmented Anglo-American souls with continuity and purpose. In return, Italians get just a little emancipated by the new world outlook, realizing their sometimes excessive clinging to the past. In both novels, the Italian present (Italy's present-day political, social, and cultural situation) is not at all acknowledged, and in *Juliet* Italian history is subsumed in the two historical phases of the Middle Ages, still in a way on-going, and the Renaissance, just not the Italian one, but the Shakespearean one, that provides present-day Italian people with the opportunity to fulfil their predetermined destinies.

The present paper aims at problematizing precisely the notion of Italy as a world in discontinuity with modernity, a partially "magical" place capable of illuminating a novel aspect of the self. It has become commonplace to "expect" from Italy a revelation, the possibility of self-discovery, of existential change. Travelers do not only expect "to be dazzled," but they hope for "enlightenment, for relaxation, transformation" (Mayes 2010, 142). Instead of taking this notion for granted by attributing it to the place itself, as David Leavitt does in the following passage about Florence:

> The promise of a destiny, verging on the erotic on one side and the artistic on the other, seems always to have attached itself to Florence in the imagination of the Foreigner, drawing him to the city not merely so that he can *see* but so that he can be or become something more than he is. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that in Florence he hopes to retrieve a quality endemic to himself the expression of which the atmosphere of home has stifled. (2002, 31)

I wish to problematize it and, within the larger scope of my inquiries, look for its emergence and current meaning in the contemporary taxonomy of cultures. Far from being an idea that has "always been there," it is in fact a modern construct, a notion that has been and is always subject to change.

Relocation Narratives

Let us now discuss a few memoirs and relocation narratives that picture Italy as presenting an actual margin, temporal and existential, with the rest of the

world (especially the rest of Europe) without taking sufficiently into account the projections and expectations that continuously reproduce such difference.

In the memoir *Every Day in Tuscany* (2010), while contemplating the sight of a few students gathering for a graduation celebration, Mayes observes:

> On one boy, I spot a Dante nose. The red-gold hair of one girl falls in Botticelli curls. They look as charming, classical poets reincarnated and walking among us. The lovely La Primavera's friend suddenly laughs, mouth wide open, head back. I can see his molars. How they talk with their bodies! They bond, gesture, smack each other on the back. Their responsive faces are lit. What's that spark in the DNA and why don't other cultures have it? If I had another life, I'd definitely want to be an Italian student with that Renaissance hair. (2010, 35)

These present-day avatars of medieval poets and Renaissance characters carry a spark in their DNA (a genetic legacy) that makes them open, responsive, alert, and at ease in their bodies. Mayes makes repeatedly, in her memoir, similar observations in which she compares the Italians she sees in the streets of Cortona, the town where she lives for a part of every year, to ancient Romans and saints: "Albano could only be Italian. His profile looks like a Roman senator on a medallion" (2010, 111); "He looks like one of the saints in Luca's paintings, only he's constantly in motion"[6] (2010, 113); "I always look at his paintings and recognize people I see in the piazza. I trace the cast-down eyes of the pizza server to an exalted Annunciation Mary, and the rippled curls and short legs of a local antiques dealer to the flagellated Christ" (2010, 157).

A sort of continuity of modern Italy with the ancient world is constantly sought after: sometimes with the people of the Middle Ages, sometimes with the Romans, and sometimes with the Etruscans. Throughout this kind of reflections on fundamentally unchanged ways of life is visible the effort to look for the fundamental traits of today's Italian lifestyle and cultural traits in the distant past: "Since the Etruscans, and maybe before, food in this hill town has been the daily focus of 99 percent of the population. Those tomb frescoes show people feasting even after death. They shimmy among the olive trees. And so it continues" (Mayes 2010, 243).

Mayes is not the only contemporary popular author to fantasize on the Italian supposedly unchanging genetic legacy. References to recurring traits in Italian features and their resemblance with works of art are persistent in contemporary popular literature in the English language. In *Lost Hearts in Italy* (2007), for instance, Mira, the protagonist of the novel, takes a walk in Rome and observes "the casual resonance between art and life. Botticelli angels in groups of high school girls, young Caravaggio toughs doing wheelies in suburban squares" (Lee 2007, 68).

6 Luca Signorelli, celebrated artist of the Renaissance.

This "reassuring spectacle of sameness" and cyclical instantiations is, on the one hand, aesthetically attractive for the spectator, but, on the other hand, the Italian "privileged connection" to the past carries within it the disadvantage of tying Italians to an essential passivity and backwardness when dealing with present-day matters.

Mayes experiences the downside of Italians being supposedly connected to an older order of things when she finds a stripped grenade at her door, a threatening gesture in response to her protest against the construction of a swimming pool nearby her house. As a part-time resident of the small city of Cortona, Mayes naturally feels she has the right to voice her opinions, openly protest, and support a petition to try and stop the works at the building site. However, she is not supported in her battles by the locals who do not wish to come forward and object to the project. Mayes does not attribute this, as usual, to contingent reasons. It cannot be, for instance, that the Cortonese, living in a small community all year long, are simply more careful about their relationships with their fellow citizens and are therefore prepared to go a longer distance than Mayes to avoid conflict. The reasons for their passivity in this and other matters will have to be found back in time, into the old battles and feuds that still supposedly motivate the present-day behaviour of the Cortonese. Mayes even individuates the cause of such behaviour in the Italian "collective brain" (2010, 88) that she sees duplicated in the design of the city:

> We were called into tiny shops, spoken to in doorways, smiles on the faces seemingly speaking everyday greetings but really recounting an uncle's dealings with a certain unsavoury person, World War II grudges from when someone turned in a partisan, dreams of revenge over a broken rental agreement. Bewildering. "Ed maybe it's the architecture of the town – all the steep, dark *vicoli* [tiny streets] leading off the main street, winding into nether Cortona."
> "Really. The city as a metaphor for the collective brain." (2010, 88)

All the conversations entertained with the locals do not speak to Mayes of the pettiness of every-day life in a small town, of how difficult it is to up-keep civilized relations in spite of personal antipathies, of events in the past… some of the Cortonese were probably trying to explain to Mayes the reasons why they could not adopt the outspoken sort of behaviour she was expecting from them. But Mayes only sees the immobility of the "collective Italian brain," as sturdy, shady, and convoluted as the small city streets.

The only fellow-citizen who is as outspoken as Mayes is an "Italian friend who has lived his adult life in America" (2010, 91). Mayes feels that her friend's support helped her in introducing to the Cortonese community the previously

unknown notion that "you can speak up" (2010, 91). It does not cross Mayes's mind that this option might already be known among the locals, who might have ruled it out, not for reasons coming from the distant past, or for some inherent flaws of their "collective brain," but for current motives. Maybe most Cortonese simply do not care enough about the cause, maybe they select their battles differently, or maybe they do not want to overstep social boundaries that are not even visible to Mayes. But no, if they do not protest and voice their concern, it is because they do not know how to do so, having not lived their adult lives in America. Bewildering, indeed.

Tradition is somehow schizophrenically seen, within the space of a few pages, as (1) an ideal but stagnant existential dimension, a nostalgic model, a paradise lost; (2) a limitation on personal freedoms that are, on the contrary, highly valued in and by "modern" cultures. In other words, there is a romantic exaltation of tradition at the same time as there is contempt towards it. In this perspective, tradition and modernity are perceived as opposite realms and both attitudes towards tradition are reflected in descriptions of Italians.

Italians can be picturesque, by aesthetically or culturally revealing their supposedly unbroken "genetic connections" to the past eras. It is certainly fine to look like a Renaissance Primavera, to be at ease with one's physicality, to be responsive and open. The pleasantly exotic is welcome: the medieval noses, the olive oil, cooking without recipes… It is fine to be determined by history and genetics in this way, when all is finally reduced to a pleasant and unthreatening spectacle set up for the foreign gaze.

This timeless way of being and living, however, does not allow Italians to be really modern, because modernity is supposedly opposed to tradition. If Italians do not speak up, do not react, and do not seem to know their rights, it is because they still live in the past; it cannot be because *in spite of living in the present* they have elaborated different ways and different strategies in dealing with everyday matters. In other words, protesting is the universal and transparent mark of emancipation whereas not doing so is the (universal and transparent) sign of backwardness.

In the end, Mayes will resolve to a kind of behaviour that many people, Italian or not, would without hesitation label as "mafioso." By talking to "a few influential people around town" (2010, 91–92), she will manage to stop the works in course. This is morally acceptable, however, because Mayes adapted to "the local ways" of doing things after having tried the properly emancipated and modern ones. Nowhere in her narrative is acknowledged the possibility of a doubt, or two actually: that (1) one cannot simply "export" a way of thinking and doing things in a different culture and complain for the lack of positive responsiveness, and, more importantly in this context, (2) her ways are traditional too, just of a different tradition. She seems to really believe that her ways are "modern" and "free" from

the reasons of the past, they are "the" reasonable ways, the ways Italians would adopt too if they only understood them, and she does not see that this attitude is perfectly traditional, belonging as it does to a tradition of thought that in so far as it equates "tradition" with "backwardness," and with all that comes before modernity, remains distrustful, *a-priori*, of traditional ways.

In the memoir *Notes from an Italian Garden* (2000), by Joan Marble, the relocation adventure of Marble and her artist husband in the Roman countryside during the 1960s, there is the following long description of ancient physical traits returning in the features of contemporary Italians who are, in the passage, explicitly described as embodiments of timeless "ghosts." This sort of fantasizing usually happens in the course of folkloristic festivals or historical re-enactments. Just as in the passage by de Blasi reported above, and in the passage by Mayes, who sees the students wearing graduation crowns made of laurel, the mere fact of seeing Italians de-contextualized from the world of today, dressed in historical clothing, and marching within ancient walls, ignites in the mind of the author(s) a play of juxtapositions and historical periods in which Italians appear as instantiations of the same immutable genetic essence. In this case, the author is describing a young man dressed in Renaissance clothes who is taking part in the celebration. This event makes her fantasize on the resemblance of Italians to ancient Etruscans:

> One figure who caught my eye was a young man holding a flaming torch, which he would use to light the festival bonfire. He was wearing a green velvet tunic and beige tights and he marched ahead of five other youths who were carrying bundles of branches for the fire. It was his profile that attracted my attention. The line from the forehead ran almost straight to the nose with barely a dent at the bridge. The eyes were large and almond-shaped and the mouth turned up at the edges in a faintly self-mocking smile. The face seemed familiar to me and then I realized that I had seen a profile very like it on the wall of an Etruscan tomb at Tarquinia. These ghosts from the past flicker into your consciousness whenever you wander through the scrabbly little towns of central Italy – when a farm lady setting down her basket of eggs at the market in Barbarano has her black hair curled like the dancer's ringlets on an Etruscan chalice, or when a mason's helper limbs on to a roof balancing a load of cement on his shoulder, his back perfectly straight and his legs showing the over-developed calf just below the knee that is so typically Etruscan. (2000, 20)

At another point in the memoir, Marble notices that "in almost every building crew there would be one youngster who had the strong profile and muscular legs of a figure of an Etruscan vase" (2000, 73).

This type of fantasizing, which is by now familiar, and pivots on the gesture of making present-day Italians appear as current instantiations of historical figures, characterizes Marble's relation with Italians throughout the book. Marble perceives herself and her husband as "representatives of the modern world" on a visit to Italy:

> Another thing we didn't realize was that we would be the first modern settlers in this rough and forbidding area. No one had lived in the open countryside below Canale for decades, perhaps even centuries, so amenities such as water, electricity, television, postal services, refuse collection and police protection were absent. (2000, 39)

The "rough and forbidding" area Marble is talking about is just over one hour drive away from Rome. If Italians do not, by definition, qualify as "modern," then it is very possible that Marble and her husband had been among the first (modern) foreigners to settle in the area during the 1960s, but this kind of reasoning is only possible if one imagines the land and the people as elements of the same changeless landscape, a world of pre-modern availability for those "modern settlers" brave enough to venture outside of Tuscany.

Marble does not consider it problematic to state, at the beginning of her memoir, that, over her years in Italy, she has learnt a great deal "[a]bout the flora and fauna of the place and about its sturdy inhabitants who have remained surprisingly resilient, even buoyant, despite the fact that their area of southern Etruria remained virtually frozen in a feudal system until the dawn of the twentieth century" (2000, 15). Etrurians are assimilated to the flora and fauna of the territory, a third natural realm treated as an object of study. Marble seems to assume that since the feudal system has been in place for centuries, Etrurian life has not changed either. This is a little like thinking that life in China has not changed from the Qin dynasty until 1911 because the Imperial dynastic system has been in place from 221 BC until that very year.

At times, therefore, these "modern settlers" feel invested with the responsibility to "witness history" before the disruptive advent of modernity. Persuaded that history is nothing more than an unbroken long tradition of past habits and customs that modernity is about to shatter away, they feel responsible for being the representatives of this unsettling event in a territory that they paradoxically perceive as yet untouched by the historical events of the present: "I will always be happy that we found the area when we did, in 1964, while it was still an unknown backwater, for we were able to catch – just before it began to disappear – a way of life that had gone on virtually unchanged since the Dark Ages, and sometimes much longer" (2000, 25).

Thinking that people's way of living has not changed in Italy from the Middle Ages tells us of a mythical construction of history as simply divided between a "before" and an "after" modernity. One of the most significant and interesting aspects, from the point of view of this study, is that these remarks about a fabled continuity are offered in a tone and a style that aspire to some kind of ethnographic credibility. This is quite explicitly stated in Marble's presentation of her book, in which she describes it as also "a study of the rugged people of southern Etruria."[7]

Marble formulates authoritative comments of a pseudo-anthropological kind such as the following: "[The] twin compulsions to resist authority but also to scoop up its benefits have fostered a complex, not to say schizophrenic, personality among the citizens of southern Etruria" (2000, 24). "When Italians feel guilty or embarrassed they always raise their voices" (2000, 38). And the remark below, articulated in terms of an analogy with Darwinian theories: "Just as giraffes developed long necks to reach the tops of trees, so Canale women have, over the centuries, developed voices strong enough to reach their menfolk in the fields" (2000, 50).

The "denial of coevalness" (Fabian 1983) that separates Italy from the fully rational world is culturally charged, a device for the construction of identities based on essential dichotomies. It is possible for American authors to recognize the "traditional elements" of Italian culture because they contemplate it from a more advanced historical phase of rationality and scientific progress.

Some people in Umbria light a fire to keep warm while eating outside and celebrating the festivity of Sant'Antonio:

> Trenchers of oak, split and drenched in benzine, piled one atop another; it is a totem, primitive and dreadful, that they set alight. Sixty feet high it is, but higher still it seems the flames licking now, gasping in a rampage up and over the oily black skin of the wood. The crowd sways in a primal thrall and, save a sacrificial lamb or a pale-skinned virgin, the ritual flames are barely removed from those of the ancients. In a single brazen voice, they are a pagan tribe saying psalms in the red smoke of Saint Anthony's fire. (De Blasi 2007, 11)

De Blasi, who, at the very least, is reading too much into the event, imagines what she sees as a present-day instantiation of old ritual practices. By making use of words such as: "totem," "primitive," "primal," "sacrificial," "ritual," "ancients," "pagan," she invests a twenty-first century festivity with an aura of timeless pre-modernity. There is such a gap between the unpretentiousness of the event and how de Blasi reads it: a country celebration is invested with

7 Italians are, in Marble's pages, as pre-modern and "rough" as the jobs they have: builders, farmers, market-people, well-diggers, cleaners, helpers, house painters, all with their "archaic" (2000, 72) working methods.

an excess of projections on the "primal" and "ritualistic" character of Italian collective events. Probably, this is exclusively due to the fact that the event takes place in the countryside *and* in Italy, the combination being enough to ignite an overabundance of primitivistic images.

This kind of genetic determinism associated with the Italian individual is, I believe, related to the self-grounding myth of modernity translated into everyday discourses of cultural distinction and classification. By "self-grounding myth of modernity," I mean a certain notion which implies that transcending tradition and choosing freely one's way of life is a possible option for truly modern individuals. In his article on the notion of tradition, Yaacov Yadgar discusses this modern myth in the following terms:

> Accepting the dichotomous distinction between 'modern' […] and 'traditional' as a paradigmatic axiom of the scientific study of society (part of the more comprehensive narrative of secularization and modernization), a dominant self-image of the modern, liberal West has tended to discount tradition as a matter of the bygone past. Viewing the Modern, rational, epistemologically secular individuals as sovereign over their pasts, these social sciences tended to view tradition as a taken-for-granted, authoritatively unchallenged, and rather unambiguous element of the 'pre-modern' (indeed, '*traditional*') socio-cultural setting. They thus tended to view tradition as a restraint on individual liberty, on rationality and on reflectivity. The liberation from tradition thus became a precondition of one's ability to view reality in an unbiased, truthful, rational manner. (2013, 454)

In a way, therefore, several of the narratives I discuss in the present paper represent a romantic opposition to this myth, in the sense that they represent Italian closeness to tradition as, in most cases, positive. Nevertheless, although this perspective questions the rejection of tradition in modernity, it does so preserving the dichotomy (tradition/modernity) whole.

If instances of this outlook in contemporary popular literature in English are too numerous to list here, it is because although in academic discourses the notion of tradition as a diametrically opposed dimension to modernity has been seriously questioned for over half a century, it has also thoroughly saturated common sense and penetrated everyday discourses and practices. An eminent example of such questioning is encapsulated in the following observation by Hans-Georg Gadamer: "Tradition is not simply a pre-condition into which we come, but we produce it ourselves, inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition and hence further determine it ourselves" (1979, 261).

Therefore, instead of recognizing to tradition an "on-going" character, comments of the kind that have been so far discussed, see it as a residue of and a

clinging to a by-gone past. After describing a religious tradition which has been taking place in Bologna for a long time, Joel Backman, the protagonist of John Grisham's *The Broker* (2005), takes it as evidence of an unchanging continuation of the past into the present and confidently proclaims about the city: "It's a real city, with people living where they work. It's safe and clean, timeless. Things haven't changed much over the last centuries" (2005, 231).

Concluding Remarks

Most of the novels and memoirs that have been under scrutiny in the present paper, assume a neat break between an era characterized by traditional values and the present day; most of the authors of such narratives simply do not seem to conceive of the present as a historical time informing their perspective, but as a "place" from which one can observe reality from an "objective" position, a locus free of perspective (a view from nowhere, as it were). After giving modernity the positive connotation of a time beyond history that transcended tradition, it becomes possible to speculate on the aspects that align Italy with the present era and those that place them in discontinuity with it, making of Italy a time-capsule outside of the present-day, a perpetual spectacle of sameness. I have argued that assumption produces highly deluded and serialized accounts, often camouflaged as ironic ethnography.

Narratives that construe Italy as having a privileged relation with history depict, on the one hand, Italians as able to access their own past without mediation, and, on the other hand, see history as having such a dominant role in Italian culture and society, that it ends up epitomizing its very essence. As a result, Italy is often depicted as caged, isolated, and static; permanently caught in a pre-modern dimension.

In this manner, Italy is idealized and appropriated at the same time. It is idealized in its relationship to history and its own past, and appropriated as a place capable to restore a certain degree of existential steadiness and meaningfulness to modern fragmented souls visiting in a quest for balance and authenticity.

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Reticence in Cicero's Discourse

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Abstract. M. Tullius Cicero is one of the most prominent figures of ancient rhetoric. His rhetorical speeches are characterized first and foremost by outspokenness and offensiveness and they do not lack in temper either. Since he also dealt with rhetorical theory, Cicero was fully aware of the fact that not only the uttered words and revealed facts hold significance in a rhetorical speech but also concealment and omissions. The latter rhetorical techniques are used mainly in his *ad personam* attacks. An eloquent example of this is his invective against Piso which I would like to present in more detail.

Keywords: Cicero, discourse, omission, *in Pisonem*, reticence.

Marcus Tullius Cicero's name is strongly related to the heyday of classical Roman literature: the erudite world justly considers him one of the biggest literary, political and philosophical talents of the antiquity. Building a political career was very important to Cicero; to this end, he tried to climb the rungs of *cursus honorum* as soon and as high as possible. Finally, in 63 BC he reached his goal to become *consul*. One of his most significant deeds carried out in that capacity was to circumvent the Catilina-conspiracy. Unfortunately, this glorious act led to his downfall, as after the expiration of his mandate he became the victim of political games and ended up being exiled under the pretext of illegal retribution of the Catilina-conspiracy. Cicero's exile lasted until 57 BC, when he could return to the City. However, he continued to make disadvantageous decisions such as supporting Pompeius instead of Caesar in the triumvirs' battle and tried to revenge on his enemies, e.g. on Lucius Calpurnius Piso, consul in 58 BC, who had had a significant part in Cicero's exile.[1] After his year as a consul was over, Piso

1 At the beginning, Piso had a good relationship with Cicero, the consul of 63 BC, and even approved of his strong actions against the Catilinarians, while, however, he also maintained a good relationship with the Catilinian Cethegus. After a while he decided to act against the execution of the Catalinarians: he even supported his fellow consul, Clodius, in his attempt

obtained the province of Macedonia as a reward for the success of Cicero's exile. During his two-year-long governance he continuously ransacked the province; then finally in 55 BC the senate appointed another governor, Quintius Ancharius instead of him. In his speech delivered in the debate on Piso's recall, Cicero did not spare his enemy at all, which fact was later held against him by Piso after his return from Macedonia. But Cicero, instead of an act of propitiation, wrote his *in Pisonem* speech. This invective, which does not lack temper at all, uses a big variety of rhetorical means in order to paint the most unfavourable picture of his enemy. One of the techniques or figures used by Cicero is omission.

When we think about Cicero's career as an orator, he does not appear to us as a reticent speaker, especially not in his *ad personam* attacks. But what could the word "reticence" refer to in the title, then? However weird it might seem, reticence is a significant part of a speech, it could not be defined without the concept of speech. As Sartre puts it, reticence does not mean that one is mute; it rather means that one chooses not to speak, and by this, he speaks after all (quoted in Benyovszky 2006, 10). According to Mikhail Bakhtin, silence is when nothing can be heard (or something cannot be heard), while reticence is when nobody talks (or somebody – a person – does not talk); the concept of "reticence" can only be referred to within the context of humanity (quoted in Benyovszky 2006, 10). Spoken words have a great influence in rhetoric, but they are not the only means to create effect. Since Cicero also dealt with rhetoric theory besides building his political career, the central topic of his works is the identification of the characteristics of an ideal rhetor. He obviously knew that the ideal orator did not exist; however, he also knew that identifying a set of requirements to strive for could be quite useful. Cicero wrote rhetorical works of real scientific value about an orator's objectives, about his character, about the structure of a speech, the theory of style, etc.[2]

He also dealt with the technique or figure of reticence *(reticentia, ocultatio, paraleipsis)* and tried to define it.[3] The interpretation of this rhetorical technique may be easier if we take a look at Cornificius' work entitled *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which was written about the same time as *ad Inventione,* and in which the author describes the figure of omission praeteritio, occultatio (apophasis, paralipsis) as follows:

to exile Cicero. Furthermore, it was during Piso's governance that his fellow consul, Clodius submitted to the senate two laws agains Cicero: *lex exilio Ciceronis and lex capite civis Romani.*

2 *De inventione, De oratore, Partitiones oratoriae, Brutus, De optimo genere oratorum, Orator, Topica* (cf. Sumner 1973; Adamik 2012).

3 "[P]ersonarum ficta inductio vel gravissimum lumen augendi; descriptio, erroris inductio, ad hilaritatem impulsio, anteoccupatio; tum duo illa, quae maxime movent, similitudo et exemplum; digestio, interpellatio, contentio, reticentia, commendatio; vox quaedam libera atque etiam effrenatio augendi causa; iracundia, obiurgatio, promissio, deprecatio, obsecratio, declinatio brevis a proposito, non ut superior illa digressio, purgatio, conciliatio, laesio, optatio atque exsecratio. His fere luminibus inlustrant orationem sententiae" (Cicero 1990, III. 205).

> This figure is useful if employed in a matter which is not pertinent to call specifically to the attention of others, because there is advantage in making only an indirect reference to it, or because the direct reference would be tedious or undignified, or cannot be made clear, or can easily be refuted. As a result, it is of greater advantage to create a suspicion by Paralipsis than to insist directly on a statement that is refutable. (Cornificius 1978, IV. 27)

This definition quasi completes and explains Cicero's interpretation. Quintillianus, a later illustrious figure of the ancient theory on rhetoric, enumerates in his handbook those figures of speech which are created by the omission of certain elements: he classifies reticence/omission, or *ocultatio* not within the category of "figures of speech" but within the "figures of thought" category (Quintilianus 1920, 9.3.97, 99). As we mentioned earlier, Cicero applies this figure of speech – or rather figure of thought – mainly in his *ad personam* speeches,[4] and within that category, the *post reditum* invectives are the ones with an abundant use of this formula (Beasley 1973, 16–17). Earlier invectives of Cicero with similar topic also contain this figure, without any doubt, but not with such a big frequency and efficiency. There are more than ten occasions in *in Pisonem* where a figure of speech related to reticence occurs (Cicero 1978, 3, 17, 23, 33, 49, 51, 53, 55, 79, 90).

Cicero attacks his enemy from several angles: with one of the targets being Piso's political career, the way he managed – or rather did not manage – to live up to the requirements of the *cursus honorum*. Cicero, conveniently, describes his own career in contrast with the former's, putting emphasis on the huge differences between the two, so that the audience can easily be convinced about Piso's despicable character. The long list of accusations is composed artfully by the orator: right at the beginning he resorts to an *omissio*: "But I say nothing of the circumstances under which each of us was elected. I will allow that chance may have been the mistress of the Campus Martius. It is more to the purpose to say how we conducted ourselves in our respective consulships, than how we obtained them" (Cicero 1978, II.4). Behind this "generosity" of not talking about the way each of them got elected to be consuls, lies the bare fact that even Cicero himself had to give up on some of his principles,[5] at least if we accept that Quintus Cicero's *Commentariolum* serves as the handbook (David 1973, 239–277)

4 Mainly *Verrinae and Orationes in Catilinam*.

5 For example, this is what he says about the *blanditia*, suggested by Quintus: "Nec vero neglegenda est fama, nec mediocre telum ad res gerendas existimare oportet benevolentiam civium; quam blanditiis et adsentando colligere turpe est" (Cicero 1935, XVII. 61); "Ut igitur et monere et moneri proprium est verae amicitiae et alterum libere facere, non aspere, alterum patienter accipere, non repugnanter, sic habendum est nullam in amicitiis pestem esse maiorem quam adulationem, blanditiam, adsentationem; quamvis enim multis nominibus est hoc vitium notandum levium hominum atque fallacium ad voluntatem loquentium omnia, nihil ad veritatem" (Cicero 1935, XXV. 91.).

of Marcus Cicero's election campaign.[6] With that in mind, it is understandable why Cicero did not insist on entering into details about this circumstance, because by doing so he would have offered a good opportunity for his enemy to counterattack.

There was yet another fact for Cicero to consider when opting for this tack: in case he had talked openly about the way Piso's political career started, pointing out its negative aspects, he could not have avoided mentioning Caesar's name, Piso's son-in-law, who had actively supported Piso's campaign not just because of a sense of duty towards his father-in-law, but because he had had high hopes to control legislation through the prospect of a Pompeius-Gabinius consulate (Pap 2015, 21). True enough, Cicero mentions pointedly that some luck was also necessary for someone to land in such a high position. He does not wish to further discuss who was lucky and when, only makes some hints – but, as a *homo novus*, he refrains from going into details, especially given the fact that he would like to remain on good terms with Caesar. He will affirm this idea in a broader context later (Cicero 1978, 81, 82). He continues to purposefully avoid dissecting those actions which could be linked to Caesar. In two instances he cuts short some elaborate reasoning saying that he wishes to avoid those: "Why need I say more on this subject?" (Cicero 1978, 79), "But I will say nothing of what is past" (Cicero 1978, 80). However, by opting for this technique of reticence, Cicero briefly reminds the audience of facts known by everyone in Rome, so it is not necessary for him to talk about these in detail; at the same time, this way he can avoid getting himself in an awkward situation in front of Caesar. It is more convenient for him to exploit the contrast between the savior of the state – the one who eliminated Catilina – and the enemy of the state, the one who plots against Caesar: why would a brilliant politician such as Cicero compare his own activities as a consul to an insignificant period such as that of Piso's consulhood: "For why should I speak of my consulship? whether as to the manner in which it was obtained, or in which it was conducted" (Cicero 1978, II. 3).

Obviously, he will not forego the opportunity to highlight his own actions as a consul at the expense of his adversary. Piso committed lots of heinous crimes but the orator chooses to generously leave some of these unmentioned: "For, I say nothing of the fact of a consul issuing an edict, that the senate should not obey a resolution of the senate; an action than which none more shameful can either be done or imagined" (Cicero 1978, VIII. 17).

6 Quintus thinks of *blanditia* as a necessary means and even recommends its use: "Sed opus est magnopere blanditia, quae etiam si vitiosa est et turpis in cetera vita, tamen in petitione necessariast; etenim cum deteriorem aliquem adsentando facit tum improba est, cum amiciorem non tam vituperanda, petitori vero necessaria est, cuius et frons et vultus et sermo ad eorum quoscumque convenerit sensum et voluntatem commutandus et accommodandus est" (Cicero 2002, XI. 42.). For more see: Shackleton (2002), Németh (2005), Nótári (2006), Voinea (2014).

As we could see, Cicero was not driven in the least by piousness or generosity when he chose to avoid mentioning important details. In fact, by highlighting his desire to avoid mentioning these, he directs the attention of the audience to the question and affirms that it is a shameful thing for someone not to obey the decisions of the senate.[7] At the same time, his desire to avoid mentioning certain details also calls attention to the fact that this important component could even be neglected, as the previously mentioned evidence has already created sufficient grounds for incrimination. Exercising the supreme power of a consul has not increased the reputation of the incriminated person either. Cicero reveals that Piso was only concerned about outward appearance while he was a consul, and he considered outwardly factors the essence of holding a function. After having listed such severely condemning facts, he continues to reveal even more onerous details – while between these two parts of his speech, Cicero shines again as a pious accuser, as he uses an ambiguous sentence and feigns avoidance: "But I pass over all those points" (Cicero 1978, X. 23). Regardless of the interpretation, Cicero keeps his promise neither before nor after this sentence; instead, he continues to depict the nefariousness of Piso as a consul. Perhaps he would rather not go into details regarding the fact that Piso's position as a Macedonian proconsul has not been voted properly by the senate, but by the *concilium plebis*[8] (Nisbet 1961). The fact that, in Cicero's eyes, the two previously mentioned laws are a result of collusions of powers of some sort, cannot question the lawfulness of Piso's position as a proconsul. Because of this, further details should not be mentioned, reckons the orator. When questions raised by the orator are not answered, or seemingly not answered, it means that, once again, he applies some strategy which is also part of reticence. Why should the glorious consul of the year 64 BC compare his brilliant year in office with such a lowly person's? "If that most disturbed period, when I was forced to depart from the city, is superior to the time of your greatest triumph, why need I compare our other circumstances, which in your case were all full of disgrace, and in mine of dignity?" (Cicero 1978, XV. 33).

However, according to his previous invitation – "But to proceed!" (Cicero 1978, XV. 33) – he will choose not to be so generous as to forget about his own dignified and popular persona which he managed to remain even during his exile, and to glorify himself at the expense of the shamefully exiled Piso, who lost his leading position and was forced to flee. In this context it is unnecessary to even mention obvious facts. Interestingly enough, though, when he expresses his wish to avoid mentioning these facts, he includes some details that he could not possibly overlook:

7 Perhaps once again he avoids on purpose to talk about the fact that valid laws should be obeyed, as this was Cicero's main crime in the case of the Catilina-execution.

8 During their meetings, plebeians brought their own laws called plebiscita. Their decisions became generally applicable beginning with the announcement of *lex Hortensia* (B.C. 287).

> Why should I speak of my arrival in the different towns? why of the crowds of men who thronged out to meet me? why of the way in which the fathers of families with their wives and children gathered together to greet me? why of those days which were celebrated by everyone on my arrival and return, as if they had been solemn festival days of the immortal gods? (Cicero 1978, XXII. 51)

In spite of the fact that Cicero is the only contemporary source of knowledge for us about his own triumphant return, the enthusiastic welcome he mentions is credible in the given political context. At the same time, the apparent avoidance of giving details of his triumphant return may be considered a proof of his modesty. That is, it may be – if only he did not exclaim a few lines below:

> That one day was to me like an immortality, on which I returned to my country, and saw the senate which had come forth to meet me, and the whole Roman people; while Rome itself, torn, if I may so say, from its foundations, seemed to come forward to embrace her saviour. Rome, which received me in such a manner that not only all men and all women of all classes, and ages, and orders of society, of every fortune and every rank, but that even the walls and houses of the city and temples appeared to be exulting. (Cicero 1978, XXII. 52)

While he talks about Piso's return, once again he is forced to be reticent – yes, he is forced to be so, as it is impossible to give the names of those, for example, who welcomed Piso, as such persons simply did not exist. Ironic wording (cf. Haury 1951) is not strange at all to the writing; the following question provides a great example for it: "But why do I count up all the people who did not go forth to meet you? when I say that scarcely any one did, not even of that most officious body of candidates for office, though they had been repeatedly warned and requested to do so, both on that very day, and many days before" (Cicero 1978, XXIII. 55).

Cicero is in the possession of thorough knowledge regarding the points of accusation, and yet he does not mention many capital crimes: "Why need I bring forward your investigations into capital charges, your agreements with criminals, your most iniquitous condemnation of some, your most profligate acquittal of others?" (Cicero 1978, XXXVI. 87). He reckons that he will forego mentioning a lot of details, but he cannot resist the temptation to drop a few hints about the atrocities Piso committed in several provinces (trafficking with weapons, leather hoarding scandals, shady business deals, etc.). However, these arguments are not entirely credible – that is, as Nisbet (1961, 175–176) remarks, the points of the accusation are tendentious. The capital charges, about which the orator remains

silent, could not have been much more objective either – in fact, they were not objective at all, and the lack of a solid foundation would have offered grounds for Piso's counterattack. The reduction of the crimes to a mere list, as well as the pious avoidance of giving details, increase the amount of crimes attributed to the adversary, which the audience might accept right there and then, given the lack of opportunity to verify the statements.

> I say nothing of the gold for a crown, which tormented you a long time, while at one time you were inclined towards it and at another time unwilling to take it […]; I say nothing of the commissions which you scattered at random over the provinces; I say nothing of the number of vessels, or of the sum total of the plunder you acquired; I say nothing of the system under which you levied and extorted all the corn; I say nothing of your having stripped both nations and individuals of their liberties, even though they had had those liberties given them by name as rewards, not one of all which things is not carefully provided against and expressly forbidden to be done by the Sullan law. (Cicero 1978, XXXVII. 90)

The triumphant deserves the gold wreath and the triumphal march, and it is every Roman soldier's and Roman politician's desire to become such a triumphant. The ironic remark "while at one time you were inclined towards it and at another time unwilling to take it" refers to Piso's Epicurean philosophical views.

Piso, who uses his power to commit atrocities and is an enemy of the state, is not only despicable as a functionary, but also as a private person. One of the favourite topics of the invective is exposing and publicizing his personal vices. The Arpinum native will not forego the great opportunity to do this in the present speech either. After disclosing the official atrocities and crimes, he starts discussing the trespasses of Piso's personal life. The disclosure begins with an attempt to use reticence again, as Piso leads such an outrageous life, that "horribile dictu: And these things I scarcely venture to say. I am afraid that there may be someone who does not clearly see his enormous wickedness, concealed as it is under his impenetrable countenance; still I will say it" (Cicero 1978, VI.12). He seemingly seeks to spare the audience from finding out details about Piso's horrible lifestyle, but in fact he only stirs up their interest and encourages people to start gossiping. A head of a state who spends his nights at taverns drinking to oblivion, rolls around in the dirt, belches and manifests signs of hangover, would be a favourite target of tabloids in our days as well. Romans used to listen with the same mean gusto to such juicy details of private lives which an honest man would rather not talk about – but he, Cicero simply has to.

As a conclusion, we can state that Cicero uses the possibilities offered by the figure of speech of reticence or *ocultatio* masterfully. He applies it in accordance

with the given situation, when revealing cases that are difficult to reason about, and their complete analysis and dissection would not necessarily contribute to the success of the orator. As a consequence, he keeps himself and others safe from useless and dangerous confrontations. At the same time, when he refers implicitly to scandals and lawlessness, it seems more proactive for the pious orator to refrain from discussing such events in detail. Instead, it seems more salutary to announce his silence in regards to the respective event in order to excite the audience. Even if the audience cannot remember the ominous events anymore, they would thoroughly investigate the stories, which in many cases do not lack some piquancy either. The irony that permeates such speeches was useful for Cicero to make his adversaries less credible and gain the favour of the audience.

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At the Intersection of Identities

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Abstract. It is assumed that part of today's societal difficulties, uncertainties and crisis worldwide can be attributed to the competing of multiple identities, to their intersections and their overlapping nature – on the level of nations, on the level of communities and also on the level of the individual. We aim at presenting a typology of identities that come into play in the public and in the private domain of the individual. It is hypothesized that there is a strong interdependence of cultural heritage, human values and social traditions in the competition of identities. These questions, which are interrelated and interconnected with each other through a common denominator, namely "cultural-mental programming" and "reprogramming efforts," are going to be pondered about in the presentation. In the context of globalization the relevance of this topic is reinforced by the need to adapt to changes within the ever-intensifying shift from intercultural to multicultural environment in communities, in business and in work places. Attempts will be made to articulate some projections with respect to future trends that are to be expected: the way to go from competing identities to establishing a competitive identity (Simon Anholt). The contribution does not offer ready solutions but rather serves as fuel for further discussions.

Keywords: multiple identities, cultural-mental programming, competing identities, competitive identity.

> *Mammals require three essentials in life, identity, stimulation, and security, and by far the most important of these three psychological cornerstones is identity.* (David Sheldrick 1919–1977)

1. Our Identities

Social psychologists have been engaged in the study of identity and the individuals' self-identification for almost fifty years. It suffices to refer, in this regard, to the works by world-renowned scientist George Mead (1934). In fact, all of us carry several identities: gender and racial identities are innate (*biologically*

determined) properties. And we might well believe that such identities constitute constant and unchangeable attributes. Yet, experience attests that different ages and different societies recognize, accept and tolerate such issues in diverse ways and that societies relate differently to the legal, social, moral and technical conditions associated with self-initiated changes in the above attributes. On the other hand, it is also noteworthy that different societies likewise judge and control these issues in diverse ways. Let us consider Michael Jackson's desperate attempts to undergo operations through which he wished to approximate his image to that of an ideal "white rockstar." A similarly debated and widely-negotiated issue is the one currently on the table in Sweden: the individual can and will determine his/her gender identity. Accordingly, visa application forms, apart from the two traditional gender categories of "male" and "female," also contain a third option called "undefined."

In addition to the above, another set of identities is constituted either by features we are born with or features in which we are socialized: these make up *social identity*, including e.g. ethnic, national, religious and class identity. This identity means belonging to a specific social group. At the same time, however, it must be noted that the approval to satisfy demands either for the acceptance or for the change of such social group membership is similarly highly dependent on both the society and the culture concerned. Such is the case of the Indian caste system, which had been sanctioning vertical social mobility for long-long centuries. As opposed to this, North American societies and public thinking celebrate vertical social mobility and deem it a virtue, which is well-reflected by the ideal of the "self-made man."

Ultimately, a great majority of our identities are *acquired identities*, which result partly from our professional relationships (job-related) and partly from our human relationships (family and friend roles and relationships). In a lucky scenario, the individual has a greater say in matters of acquired identities, even though some societies and cultures may actually restrict the opportunities and the rights of individuals to do so. We could mention here the institution of arranged marriage, which has been flourishing in numerous cultures (e.g. in Indian, Japanese, some Arabic and African societies).

As a consequence of the above, all of us live and exist at the focal points of the intersections of identities and this is true even if the effects as well as the deepness and strength of the impact of such identities may vary from time to time, from age to age, from place to place and from situation to situation. Thus, one of the identities of a person may temporarily become stronger and may actually overwrite any task associated with any other of his/her identities (for example, motherhood may push into the background all other identities for a while). However, with changes in life, the sequencing of these identities and the priorities associated with them may easily alter. Out of the above three types of

identities (biological, social and acquired), the present essay wishes to discuss and focus on social identity.

2. Changes in Social Identity

As we see it, in today's world the importance of the issue of social identities has greatly intensified and has shifted into the centre of the narratives of not only political and public life but also of everyday life. With respect to the world surrounding us as well as the different walks of life, lifestyles, objects and behavioural patterns in it, these days we perceive and witness two unique worldwide tendencies. One of these tendencies points towards unity, whereas the other towards its opposite, i.e. diversity (Hidasi 2008b). On the one hand, what we experience is that in the developed world people more or less dress in the same way, young people mostly listen to the same songs, and surround themselves with very similar objects, let such objects be smart phones, portable players or any other novelties. At the same time, we can also observe that bigger towns offer an unprecedented range of culinary delights and we can similarly experience that workplaces and residential areas are increasingly becoming more and more multicultural (Berger and Huntington 2003). The first tendency of unification is generally attributed to globalization (Lewis 2001), while the second tendency can be connected to the process of diversification. In other words, multiculturalism is perceptibly present in all countries of the world thanks to the intensification of both mobility and migration (Hidasi 2011). Irrespective of the fact whether multiculturalism in a given country, community or region is a temporary or a permanent state, challenges related to interculturalism will surface in all likelihood (Hidasi 2008a). Among groups of diverse cultural backgrounds, workplace communities, residential area communities and the individuals themselves who constitute these communities, conflicts in value systems relating to the formation of opinions about healthcare and educational services or to residential and living conditions are likely to evolve (Huntington and Harrison 2000). Difficulties caused by communication about these issues are also prone to appear even if the people involved in such discussions communicate about these topics using the same language (Földes 2007). Studying and possessing intercultural knowledge and skills have traditionally been prescribed as expectations for newcomers, i.e. those who wish to enter a new culture. Nevertheless, growing multiculturalism and its rising intensity force us to realize that recipient cultures are also compelled to take steps towards a more expedient use and application of intercultural knowledge. This tendency is visible not only in Europe but also in the United States, where social researchers have been voicing their concerns to this end for several decades (Huntington 2005).

Within the organizational structure of the European Union, integration (and let us bear in mind that former successful European examples of integration include, among others, the construct of state of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy) has gained ground at a per-defined pace and in line with an already defined scenario set by the EU in the area of commerce, in the application of levies, in economy, in finances, in defence and safety as well as in politics: indeed, integration appears to be increasingly prevalent in all fields ranging from monetary policy to law-making. As opposed to this, in two fields, namely in culture and language, efforts aimed at diversification are also apparent besides and parallel to efforts of integration. Among others, Borgulya (2006) points out that, in a unique manner, Europe's cultural and linguistic realities are concurrently shaped by two, in some way opposing, effects: diversification and globalization. While diversification is connected to internationalization and refers to the fact that apart from a given nation's or country's culture other nations' or countries' cultures should likewise be present in a geographical area, globalization exhibits a countertendency and denotes unification on a global scale.

On a social level, this very process of unification and homogenization (to some extent) may in fact lead to the distortion of social consciousness: the dilemmas of "who am I?" and "who are we?" surface, and ultimately an anxiety caused by the potential loss of identity may be formed both on the level of the individual and at the level of the larger community.

As European citizens, we all experience that the process of European integration, which extends to numerous areas of life, exhibits a "glass ceiling": this glass ceiling halts all those efforts that would aim at a meaningful integration of languages and cultures. This is so as language and culture constitute particular areas the "surrendering" of which would, in social consciousness, mean the loss of a shared national and cultural identity. This fear surfaces in those reactions that are visible in the form of European attempts of the past two–three decades targeted to achieve cultural and linguistic renewal. Extending to a number of areas and genres such as dance, applied arts, culinary culture, language use, religious movements, etc., numerous countries and regions (including the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the Baltic states, the Balkans, Transylvania and Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, etc.) boast of initiatives aiming at the renewal and popularization of conventional, local and ethnic customs, traditions and other one-of-a-kind characteristic features (Hidasi 2008b). It is no accident, either, that there seems to be a Europe-wide demand for building "country images": some countries in fact allocate considerable funds for this purpose in their budgets (Anholt 2007). In the scope these initiatives, the need to "be different" from others not only increases the given country's economic and touristic appeal but also serves as a means of reinforcing national identity and national self-identity. As a matter of fact, in all contexts such actions are necessitated by social consciousness, which undergoes

more and more extensive homogenization. In fact, the appearance and quickly rising popularity of the Hungarian concept of "hungaricum" is also classifiable as a phenomenon of this kind.

3. Multiculturalism in Europe in the Twenty-First Century

In a *de jure* sense – and with the active support of the European Council and the European Union –, the observance of the principle of "may as many as a thousand native tongues be used and may as many as a thousand cultures be cultivated" is not hindered by any legal obstacles and in fact a certain portion of public funds is allocated to this purpose. Thanks to this, the Welsh nation, for example, by way of following a very conscious language policy, could revive their almost dead Celtic language only within a few decades and the young generation has become an active user of the ancient Welsh language. The Frisian languages have likewise been awakened from their deep sleep and as a result of the activities of some enthusiastic activists and language cultivators they have by now acquired a much more active role in Dutch cultural life than they used to assume twenty or thirty years ago. Nevertheless, apart from a few similar positive examples, it can still be generalized that, in a *de facto* manner, linguistic globalization is taking place right in front of our eyes. The expansion and the gaining ground of the English language are a clear example of a cause and effect relationship: globalization causes English to spread, and the spread of the English language reinforces globalization. Put differently, the English language constitutes both the result and the means of the same process, notably that of globalization. At the same time, it must also be noted that knowing a mutually understood language does not necessarily mean knowledge of some commonly used terminology or shared rules of communication. The imperative of "speaking the same language" and "using the same language" is especially markedly present in multicultural and multilingual Europe (Falkné-Bánó 2001).

The successful management and handling of multiculturalism (i.e. peaceful co-existence and collaboration) pose challenges both to those who wish to enter a given country and to those who receive such people in their country (Herm 2008). The greater the cultural distance (i.e. the national, ethnic, religious and linguistic distance) between the receiving society and the members of the migrating groups is, the more likely it is that such challenges will be present in increasingly marked ways and that they will constitute a source of conflict more and more often. From the point of view of identity, the situation of migrants is extraordinarily difficult: they feel they are second-rate citizens both in numerous ways and in a number of walks of life. They feel this way because it is not only their national identity that is pushed into the background, the fear

of which potential loss keeps haunting them, but, in addition, they also have to face the fact that they usually end up being offered positions below the ones they previously filled in their native country. An internal medical specialist who formerly worked as a head physician will end up in the position of a consultant; a teacher formerly employed by a secondary school will hold a job as a daycare teacher; while a person who worked as a software developer engineer in his homeland will find himself in the position of a technician. And, on top of all this, all these professionals belong to that very group of migrants who have actually found a job in their area of expertise. The majority of immigrants are actually forced (possibly only initially or only temporarily) to give up their professional identities in order to be able to earn a living. They will also have to make do with a job whose status is below their levels of qualification or former position: that is the way child psychologists end up working as waitresses, teachers as taxi drivers and agricultural engineers as security guards. From the perspective of self-definition and self-identity, this group of people is certainly made frustrated and disadvantaged by having to undergo these experiences. Yet, many seem to undertake these kinds of defenceless situations in their lives in spite of all difficulties this may involve: they do so partly in the hope that sooner or later their social acceptance will increase and partly because they suppose they will be able to create better and more advantageous living conditions for their children.

From the 2010s, Europe has been seeing the intensification of debates, problems and conflicts connected to political or economic refugees, or to people wishing to settle down in the hope of a better life (Hidasi 2011). These debates, problems and conflicts are due primarily to two reasons: on the one hand, to the number of migrants arriving in the receiving countries, which ultimately seems to have exceeded the number of immigrants manageable by the countries concerned. On the other hand, the second reason is that the proportion of non-indigenous migrants has also increased, thereby posing a cultural challenge to the receiving societies concerned, which seem to have been unprepared to tackle this issue. In the originally multicultural Europe, diversification appears to further intensify and the influx of non-indigenous migrants is expected and prognosticated to cause significant changes in the composition of the population (Herm 2008; S. Kriszt and Hidasi 2010; Hidasi 2009). In fact, no viable scenarios have been prepared to address the ways the effective cultural and civilizational integration of these groups can be realized. Furthermore, the societies of the receiving countries are rightfully astonished to witness and recognize repeated instances of vandalism and acts of terrorism in their homelands. Typically, the perpetrators of such acts are not first-generation migrants but the children or grandchildren of such persons. From a social psychological perspective, this is explained by the fact that first-generation migrants do their best to settle down and establish an existence for themselves in the new environment: all

their efforts and energy are channelled into their daily struggle to achieve successful social integration and to earn a decent living. Second and third-generation people, however, are not focused on existential problems any longer but on issues related to experiencing and defining their own identities. It is my conviction that identity crises of this kind are responsible for the great majority of violent acts. In addition, it is also true to say that no patterns of processing or channelling this second and third-generation experience have been established or have been introduced. The leaders of the countries concerned and experts of this field are also trying hard to devise some solutions; these efforts, however, have not proved successful so far. For example, in 2010 in France, at the initiation of the Minister of Immigration and National Identity Eric Besson (it is also telling that it was necessary to establish such a ministry) organized nationwide discussions and debates about national identity. These events were coordinated by praefecturates and were attended by local politicians, religious leaders, diverse associations and clubs, teachers, students, parents, trade unions and companies. The questions addressed included the following: is the wearing of the Muslim burqa, which covers the entire female body, compatible with French national values?; what does it mean to be French in today's society at all? The then French government also suggested discussing questions such as making it compulsory for young people to sing the national anthem once or twice a year; the ways immigration has contributed to French national identity; and possible ways of integrating people coming from former French colonies.

4. Tendencies and Perspectives

Diversity and internationalization not only generate need for identity building and identity preservation but they also cause quality improvements in other areas of life. The appearance of previously unknown claims for quality as well as never-before-seen and ever-increasing expectations for good quality constitute one of the advantages of the process of internationalization. In fact, diversity is indispensable for achieving *better quality*. There is not one single leading football club in the world with football players coming from the same country: each club tries to "buy" and contract the best players thereby assuring high quality game. Likewise, good orchestras are also heterogeneous as far as the nationality of their musicians are concerned: these orchestras can come up to internationally good standards only if they invite "the best" musicians of the world. Similarly, affluent universities "buy" and contract the best professors from all over the world thus offering the best possible quality education in their institutions. Nevertheless, in order to introduce *new quality* in sports, in arts or in sciences, i.e. to be able to respond to challenges of innovation, a selection from among the pool of diversity

must be made and the best professionals must be hired. This increased demand for quality and innovation can only be satisfied on condition mobility gets introduced in the system concerned.

At the same time, the importance of educating people about intercultural knowledge and sharing this knowledge with the most extensive possible audiences through the media and different channels of the education system must definitely be recognized and consequently exploited. As opposed to former approaches, when intercultural communication was treated as a general and broad subject, these days intercultural studies tends to increasingly become purpose-oriented and functional in curricula. At numerous universities in the world, new intercultural courses are being introduced including "intercultural communication in patient care" (the relationships between patients and caregivers and between doctors and patients differ from culture to culture and are characterized by different expectations, fears, customs, therapeutic regimes, etc.), "intercultural communication and criminology" (cultural differences, norms and people's judgements widely vary concerning the nature and motives of crime, the means of criminal investigations, the methods and ways of law enforcement as well as the different methods and ways of repentance and penance), "intercultural communication and the global environment" (in certain cultures, it is possible to hunt for whales, whereas in other cultures the same act causes a public outcry; one culture consents to making changes in the natural environment including the construction of huge dams or concrete river beds, in other cultures this is disapproved of; one culture distributes genetically modified products in consumer markets, while other cultures support biological cultivation, etc.) or "intercultural communication and family planning" (certain cultures support human intervention in physiological processes – see for example debates about the status of abortion in different countries or the Chinese one-child policy –, whereas other cultures deem the same unacceptable; in one culture it is the mother's ethnicity that is decisive in terms of the child's ethnic affiliation, while in other cultures it is the father's affiliation that counts; etc.). The introduction of these new courses signals that knowledge provided under the umbrella term "intercultural communication" has become necessary in an increasing number of fields and in very diverse walks of life. And thus the question rightly arises: could it be the case that previously there was no healthcare, there was no crime prevention, there was no environmental protection and there was no family planning? The answer to these questions is certainly 'no': all of these fields existed also formerly but they were not explored in an intercultural context. By now, due to the often-referenced globalization, even those issues have an international relevance that are related, for example, to any of the following acts: the killing of whales in the Southern Seas, the flooding of the world's food markets by genetically manipulated foods and also the failure to observe and

control drug trafficking routes with the help of international co-operation. In fact, these days, as a result of ever-intensifying migration, we can also witness internationalization in the fields of legal interest representation and healthcare service provision (according to some witnesses, the most effective language to use with today's personnel at London-based emergency departments is Russian as the majority of the staff are from the Ukraine, the Baltic countries and Poland; at Tokyo-based clinics nurses from the Philippines can soothe Japanese patients only by using smiles as these caregivers do not speak the local language and they are supposed to communicate somehow even in that case; in Swedish hospitals a system of volunteer interpreters has been set up to help immigrants as it is really important for non-Swedish-speaking mothers to understand doctors' instructions when they have to care for their sick children). And the list concerning such internationalization is really endless (Kováts 2009).

If in the same living space people with different cultural backgrounds live together, let this co-existence be the result of their own will or be caused by some kind of coercion, then misunderstandings, frictions and conflicts arising both from differences in cultural values and the divergent assessment and evaluation of such values will be experienced on a daily basis. It is in the interest of all parties concerned, may they be migrants, immigrants or members of the receiving culture, that multiculturalism should be treated as an opportunity for synergy rather than a source of conflict (Avramov 2008). In the field of European Union level politics, Europe has been treating migration as a key issue, thereby recognizing that migration constitutes an inevitable tendency from the point of view of employment. For this reason, the intensification of mobility to this end is one of the top priorities of the EU's 2020 economic growth strategy. As a conclusion, I argue that in our era of unification and diversification, efforts must be targeted at ensuring and strengthening identity in people's consciousness both at the level of nations and individuals. One way to promote this is to preserve and guarantee multicultural diversity by legal instruments. Inevitably, for the promotion of multicultural diversity, necessary means, resources and funds must be allocated at the EU's community, national and small community levels. In my understanding, this is the price we have to pay if we wish to co-exist peacefully, prosperously and constructively.

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Centrality of the Concept of Representation in Sociotherapy

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Abstract. "Representation" is a relevant concept in many scientific disciplines, from linguistics to social psychology, but in sociotherapy, a branch of sociology dedicated to the intervention on individuals in situations of addiction or hardship of social origin, it becomes absolutely central. There are different approaches to sociotherapy, from the original one of Rudolf Steiner (1924), to those of Marshal Edelson (1970) and John Stuart Whiteley (1986), but it is the more recent one of Leonardo Benvenuti (2002) to fully integrate the concepts of "culture," "discourse" and "representation." This author, underlining the limited range of psychoanalysis, focuses his idea of therapy both on "culture," interpreted as identification of the peculiar form of psychological organization of the patient as precondition to any intervention, and on "discourse" as method of interaction based on a dialogue supported by the phenomenological tool of "empathy." The whole dialogue between the therapist and the patient is aimed to reach a complete knowledge of the system of "representations" of the latter. Benvenuti defines a "representation" as the combination of a cognitive element, the "image," and an affective element, the "affective investment." He looks for the roots of hardship or addiction in one or more "representations" of the patient, and this is the reason why they always must be unveiled and investigated. Only the successful intervention of the therapist on these representations and their correction in a desirable way may ensure the patient the acquisition of the needed level of autonomy and therefore the success of therapy.

Keywords: sociotherapy, psychotherapy, culture, discourse, representation.

1. The Polysemic Meaning of the Term "Representation"

"Representation" is a concept taken in consideration in many disciplines, and with a wide variety of meanings. Here are some examples:

In linguistics, the term of "underlying representation" is opposed to the one of "surface form" and "used to capture generalizations in grammar that would be

easy to miss if real naturally-occurring data were used;" this can be convenient for phonology and syntax, but it is also used when describing morphology (Barthmaier 2014). In politics and political analysis, it has to do with the idea of influence of others, both individuals and institutions, and commonly it is defined as one's ability to influence the political process. In the field of lobbying and public affairs, it is the position or the point of view of a group of individuals or an organization about an issue, and may be summarized in some form of external document, such as a "position paper." For law, in juridical terms, it is the power or the faculty to do one or more activities in the name and on behalf of another person, like in the case of the "power of attorney." In art, the concept of representation can be found in the definition of depiction, where depiction is a form of non-verbal representation in which two-dimensional images (pictures) are regarded as viable substitutes for things seen, remembered or imagined. In mathematics, it is a very general relationship that expresses similarities between objects, while a "group representation" describes abstract groups in terms of linear transformations of vector spaces.

In social sciences like sociology and psychology, strictly interrelated, the question to define what a "representation" is looks even more complex and it is subject to continuous debate. For Emile Durkheim, one of the historical founders of sociology as discipline, collective representations are the main object of study of sociology and they concern those intellectual forms which include religion, moral sphere, law and science. Representations are a very wide range of products of the mind, which a unique discipline is not capable to interpret. Therefore, collective representations must be in any case separated from individual representations, which are object of psychology. Collective representations are "stabilizing forces of social reality, static entities, nearly unchangeable," like ideologies, which endure for a certain time, even if proven unfounded (Durkheim 1898, n.p.).

Later Durkheim returns on the topic and writes "the collective life, like the mental life of an individual, consists of representations," where "a representation is the interval, the separation between two organic impressions in the cerebral tissue. [...] The organic fact is the unquestionable premise for the existence of something wider, something which allows to consider representations as real phenomena, similarly to other social facts" (1924, 140). On the other hand, collective representations "do not originate from individuals separately taken, but from their cooperation because of the action of *sui generis* forces produced by association" (Durkheim 1924, 157).

Serge Moscovici, one of the main contributors of social psychology, introduces the concept of "social representations," which "concern a specific way to express knowledge in a society or in the groups composing it," a sort of "shared knowledge, often in the form of theory of common sense" (1961, 39). Social representations, according to the author, give body to ideas, incarnating them in

experiences and interactions in the present, and so they are dynamic, mobile and circulating (Moscovici 1961, 42–44).

Social representations may be shared between the members of a wide and highly structured group, even if not elaborated by the group itself. They may alternatively be the product of ideas or knowledge of sub-groups, in a more or less tight contact, inside a certain social context, or be not shared by the whole society, but just by some variably wide groups and be elaborated in the meetings and in the conflicts between different groups (Moscovici 1989). Benvenuti states that Moscovici "keeps up to date and expands" the concept of representation of Durkheim; he "gives prominence to the symbolic nature of this concept and its capacity to induce communication between human beings beyond the peculiar object of reference" (Benvenuti 2002, 72).

According to more recent approaches of social psychology, social representations are "the elaboration that a group or a community does of a social object, to allow to its members to behave and to communicate in an understandable way" (Palmonari, Cavazza, Rubini 2002, 73; Palmonari, Emiliani 2009, 40–41). They are not opinions on something or attitude toward something, but "theories or real branches of knowledge useful to organize reality" (Palmonari, Cavazza, Rubini 2002, 73).

The main topics of the following paragraphs are a brief history of sociotherapy itself and the particular meaning of the concepts of culture, discourse and representation in the recent and innovative approach of Associate Prof. Leonardo Benvenuti of University "G. D'Annunzio" of Chieti-Pescara, Italy.

2. Sociotherapy and Its Different Approaches

According to the definitions of two dictionaries of medicine, sociotherapy is respectively "any treatment emphasizing socio-environmental and interpersonal rather than intrapsychic factors" (Miller-Keane 2003) and "any treatment emphasizing modification of the environment and improvement in interpersonal relationships rather than intrapsychic factors" (Dorland's 2007). The idea of sociotherapy itself originates from the philosopher and pedagogue Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), who held in Dornach (CH 1924) a cycle of conferences on "Heilpädagogischer Kurs," "curative pedagogy," in response to the requests of the Institute Lauenstein of Jena founders, Albrecht Stohschein, Siegfried Pickert and Franz Löffler. At these conferences of Dornach there were also present Karl Schubert, teacher of the special class of the Waldorf School of Stuttgart, and Emil Bock with some members of the new Society of Anthroposophy, as well as several medical doctors and collaborators of the Arlesheim Institute. For Steiner "curative pedagogy" means to accompany and support a delicate developmental process in which individuality, always intact and healthy, may run into

difficulties or obstacles. Spirit is never ill, but body and/or psyche, which are the tools at his disposal to reveal itself, may be in a condition of deficit. It is the task of the educator, of the family, of the society to create situations adequate to the features and needs of every single individual, in order to make him/her find an own right place, experience the feeling of belonging to a group or a community, live reciprocity, to be valorized and appreciated for his/her own contributions.

According to Steiner, "curative pedagogy" naturally evolves into "anthroposophic sociotherapy" when the individual reaches the adult age. The basic elements of "sociotherapy" are:

a) social life, in the shape of living contest where to experience a sense of belonging and reciprocity;

b) working activity, to feel, through a personal and concrete contribution and the donation of own efforts to others, part of collectivity;

c) cultural and artistic activities, as well as a focused care of spiritual elements, as "soul nurture," in a process of continuous evolution.

Both "curative pedagogy" and "anthroposophic sociotherapy" have the scope to give to people with a physical or psychic handicap, children, young and adults, the chances of both physical and spiritual development. They propose a holistic vision of the person, for a life characterized by dignity, self-determination and integration in the social community (Steiner 1924).

The medical doctor Marshal Edelson (1970) is the author of a book which represents a great contribution to the development of sociotherapy, *Sociotherapy and Psychotherapy*. The author states that at least a part of what man considers as his unique individuality exists only as something that is shared with others, that is *de facto* exclusively social. Apparently inner elements as behavior, feelings and thoughts are not just expressions of an individual's personal history. They are rather ruled by features of social condition or interaction (Edelson 1970, 7–8).

Sociotherapy and psychotherapy are both treatment methods. Psychotherapy focuses interest and intervention on the person, on the intrapersonal system and on the intrapersonal states of motivation, and to the attempts to intervene on this intrapersonal system to alter it (Edelson 1970, 47). Sociotherapy, which is a necessary ally of psychotherapy, works with the social system, more than with the one of personality; it focuses on the situation or the external reality in which a person acts, more than on his/her internal world. Sociotherapy requires as basis a theory of the social system and a theory of interaction between the social system and the system of personality (Edelson 1970, 44).

Edelson takes from the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud both the concepts of *Super-ego*, formed by the identification with social objects, and that of *introjection*, by which values and norms of society are internalized and become constitutive elements of the system of personality and the base of its present and future interaction with the social system (Edelson 1970, 44). He also relies on the

contribution of the sociologist Talcott Parsons, who generalizes and transforms into a sociological category Freud's concept of *introjection*, which becomes the normal way through which any newborn becomes oriented by the social norms and values transmitted by the parents in the course of primary socialization. Parsons also proposes a *theory of action*, where both the *social system* and the *system of personality* are systems of action in a sort of cybernetic hierarchy, the second subordinated to the first. Both are part of a unique scheme together with the *cultural system*, which is at a superior level compared to the social system, and the *organism*, which is at an inferior level with respect to the system of personality (Parsons 1951).

These premises are taken from Freud and Parsons because to operate an effective treatment it is necessary to previously clarify the way in which the systems of personality and the social systems articulate the one in the others, regulate each other, and produce mutual interchanges. According to Edelson, *sociotherapy* is interested in the situation; the social system and the social conditions; the reality of objects at disposal: physical, social and cultural; the world of means, opportunities, capacities, tools, values, norms, relationships and tensions between entities, both persons and groups, which have different roles in the achievement of common goals in the social system; the attempts to intervene in any way on this social system to alter it (1970, 13). Every clinical phenomenon, in order to grant an effective treatment, should be considered both from the point of view of *psychotherapy*, which focuses on the *system of personality* of the patient, and from the point of view of *sociotherapy*, which focuses on the *social system* which the patient belongs to (family, working environment, school, hospital, therapeutic community, network of relationships). In conclusion, Edelson states that neither psychotherapy, nor sociotherapy are self-sufficient in the treatment, but are necessarily interdependent (1970, 248).

Another medical doctor, John Stuart Whiteley, with an article published in 1986, *Sociotherapy and Psychotherapy in the Treatment of Personality Disorder,* contributed to the further development of sociotherapy, starting from the apparently more limited objective of building an ideal therapeutic environment for the treatment of patients affected by the syndromes of personality disorder. Whiteley considers psychotherapy as a readjustment of the intrapersonal attitudes and feelings of the individual, based on a process of re-experiencing attachment to key figures and working towards a better resolution of the tensions and conflicts involved therein. This is the reason why it is primarily a listening process, with understanding coming from the therapist's interpretation of the individual's communications and facilitating the development of a more stable emotional life. Sociotherapy is intended as the relearning of social roles and interpersonal behaviour through the experiencing of social interactions in a corrective environment. This is the reason why it must be considered as a more active process, with behavioural change

coming from the experience of new and more satisfactory ways of coping with interpersonal interactions. Personality disorder is thus a heterogeneous diagnostic entity, with a mixture of emotional and social factors in the aetiology, reflected in a wide spectrum of psychological types. Whiteley observes that patients with personality disorder (as in the case of borderline disorder of personality) have an overwhelming fear: that they do not even exist and much of their behaviour is directed at making their presence felt, picking up some recognizable identity and being acknowledged by others as an individual to be reckoned with. Whiteley states that most psychiatrists now finally accept that this disorder is not so much an illness in itself but results from a failure of socio-emotional development, and this at once directs our therapeutic approach towards a relearning programme rather than a curative endeavour (Whiteley 1986, 721).

The final proposal of Whiteley is a therapeutic community able to work in three steps in a combination of psychotherapeutic and sociotherapeutic processes, based on a firm skeletal structure which gives stability and security. The three necessary steps prospected by the author are:

a) Interaction, promoted by the close-living, inward-looking community. All decisions and all problems are referred back to the community, that is, the large group.

b) Exploration of the observed behaviour, by reflective group meetings to comment on what has just been seen to go on and the effect this has had on others.

c) Experimentation, to try out other modes of coping, mostly alternative to those already experienced with negative or otherwise non-satisfactory effects (Whiteley 1986, 722).

This is largely mediated through the allotted roles, with varying degrees of responsibility and different styles of interaction with different expectations. Roles are allocated not because the patients might do that job well, but because they will give them a chance to try out new forms of behaviour (i.e. a retiring individual is made chairman to force him into a position of authority and assertiveness) (Whiteley 1986, 722–723).

A recent and important contribution to the development of sociotherapy, as mentioned above, comes from Leonardo Benvenuti, both sociologist and psychologist, who worked for more than twenty years, between the 1980s and the 2000s, in therapeutic communities for the rehabilitation of drug-addicted people, and realized that in many clinical cases neither medicines, nor psychotherapy were useful (Benvenuti 2008, 10). If the problem at the basis of addiction seems to be the same for thousands of people, then probably it is social. He then proposed the immediate recourse to sociological tools, interpreting sociotherapy as "a new kind of employ of sociology as empirical discipline, directly usable in the cases of individual hardship," through an "ecological analysis of hardship" (Benvenuti 2002, 295–296).

3. Culture: Historical Drift of Media and Plurality of Forms of Psychological Organization

The definition of "culture" given by Benvenuti is strictly linked to the one of communication. The term "communication" derives its meaning from the "act to put in common," with "a conventional, but repeatable meaning" given to a determined sign inside a certain group. It is in that moment that "the cognitive capacity of man toward environment has probably begun to acquire the features of a culture" (Benvenuti 2002, 106). Culture is then "the term by which that approach is indicated that, from sharing of meanings attributed to signs, which have so acquired the capacity to label contents, has begun to face the problems of the development and storing of dyads sign/content, rather of symbols, inside memory" (Benvenuti 2002, 106). This is the reason why the idea of cultural change for Benvenuti corresponds to the passage between the various levels of historical development of media, in direction of an expansion of "the quantity of information transmitted," from orality, to iconic systems, to handwriting, to press, to the new technologies of information and communication (Benvenuti 2002, 106). For Benvenuti, the main mistake of psychotherapy, especially of psychoanalysis, is to postulate that human beings are all and have always been the same, with identical intrapsychic mechanisms of the system of personality, disregarding the contribution of the cultural dimension. Instead, culture is somehow essential in the process of shaping the form of the psychological organization of any individual.

Herbert Marcuse already explains that psychoanalysis epitomizes a precise theory of the human being, the "subject," who is psychically organized to be able to interiorize in a certain way the repression of instincts, and to subordinate the principle of pleasure to that of reality, functions both essential to allow the very existence of modern, acquisitive society (Marcuse 1955). Nicklas Luhmann defines the "subject" as "a system which makes use of sense." He also explains that subjectivity "unlike directly lived experience, is not an innate quality, and not something already existing simply to bring into evidence through phenomenological reflection, but a late form of human self-construction, socially full to the maximum with presuppositions" (Luhmann 1971, n.p.).

The main characteristic of the individual organized as a subject is the ability to use sense individually, without referring to foundations of sense institutionalized at the level of the overall society, and thus to be self-referential. The subject is the actor and unique judge of his/her actions, free to choose among many possibilities and to find success and master roles based only on his/her performance. In other words, the subject builds him/herself as the possessor of individual rights, recognized as such by the partial system of law and immunized by the social link

with his/her community of origin against any religious entity overseeing his/her life (Luhmann 1984).

Michel Foucault observes that the bourgeois society of the Age of Reason never manifested itself as a simple "association of isolated juridical subjects," but on the contrary, the individual has become "the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society." The modern individual conceived as a subject is "a reality fabricated by the specific technology of power […] called discipline," which is "the unitary technique," made possible by the scientific knowledge of the body, "by which the body is reduced as a 'political' force at the least cost and maximized as a useful force" (Foucault 1975, n.p.).

Benvenuti adopts the theories of Luhmann and Foucault about subjectivity, stating that it is only one of the possible forms of psychological organization of man, typical of western modernity, but with the extraordinary feature to appear as the only existing, ever existed and possible one. He states that "subjectivity retroacts on the human beings born in a later age, even if it is a consequence of the creative capacity of the intellects of their species" (Benvenuti 2002, 14).

But what is really innovative in Benvenuti's work is the merger of the theories on subjectivity of Luhmann and Foucault with the theories of Marshall McLuhan about media and communication, creating the theory of "*historical drift of media,*" to which his operational definition of "culture" is linked. Each change in the dominant medium leads to a different kind of society and to a different form of human psychological organization. More precisely, Benvenuti links the development of subjectivity to the invention of the press, and the advent of typographic society. Press is "a mechanical tool which retroacts modifying the society which invented it," the base factor of the transition from oral and amanuensis societies to the typographic ones, in which a non-oral and non-personal transmission of knowledge becomes possible (Benvenuti 2002, 15).

Before the advent of *subjectivity* as main form of psychological organization of the human being, there existed another form, *ascription*, typical of oral societies, in which man was referent to a superior religious or metaphysical principle or entity and to a collectivity experienced as "necessary sharing." This form, dominant also in the western world prior to the invention of the press, is still dominant in many non-western cultures, such as those still tribal, strictly religious or in any way traditional. *Ascription* is typical of oral media and cultures/societies, while *subjectivity* is representative of media and societies that are typographic.

But subjectivity, born in a certain historical moment and under certain preconditions, nowadays seems to be experiencing a crisis. The new electrical-electronic media of communication have introduced, from the end of the twentieth century, "a different manner of transmission of information" (Benvenuti 2002, 115). Because of the difficulties of the reproduction of subjectivity, due to the decline of disciplinary approach in family and scholar education, because of the

fall of the linearity of transmission of knowledge, and several other factors, the era of new media has produced a different form of psychological organization, which Benvenuti names *new-oral*. It is still not perfectly definable, but in any case it looks different from subjectivity, which at present appears to be a surviving product of a medium of the past.

All these are the reasons why the premise and the precondition of any possible intervention of the therapist, are the identification of the patient's form of psychological organization. This requires a previous analysis of the cultural dimension, especially of the nature of media that has mostly characterized or contributed to the patient's path of growth, experience and socialization (in the case of subjects) or acculturation (in the case of most non-subjects).

Benevenuti observes that several situations are not easily understandable on the base of traditional psychoanalysis. The one of Freudian origin of *id*, *ego* and *superego* "is a psychical organization so deeply rooted in our culture to be taken for granted in the common sense." The point is "not even the unsuitability of the three entities, but that the theoretical premises which led to their elaboration – in their entirety or partially – seem to have lost their validity" (Benvenuti 2002, 186).

Nowadays conditions are such that people with a *new-oral* form of psychological organization no longer develop a *superego* or something comparable. To have a scheme valid for people with every form of psychological organization, it is thus necessary "to start from representations and to reduce to two the intrapsychic entities, *I* and *Self*" (Benvenuti 2002, 186), a thought not far from what George Herbert Mead proposed (Mead, 1934). The consequence of this observation is the necessarily limited range of psychoanalysis. Being a doctrine conceived around a certain model of man, the "subject," psychoanalysis works only on those who are psychologically organized as subjects, formed through a disciplinary approach and thus with a "personality structure," and who consistently behave as subjects. However, it has no chance to function with people with different forms of psychological organization, such as *ascription* or *new-oral*.

4. Discourse: the Core Interaction between Therapist and Patient

The main limit of any psychological approach to therapy for Benvenuti is the one already identified by Allport: "it does not work any more on persons, but starts from some clues and works on pathologies, going beyond the single human being. Often the starting point is the first symptom reported from the patient to arrive to identify a specific classification of pathology, to follow its protocol. The person at that point disappears and in his/her place there appears the theoretical

case," to which the protocol is applied mechanically, without any consideration for the real features and problems of that patient (Allport 1962, 15; Benvenuti 2008, 109). Contrary to this, in sociotherapy "the therapeutic intervention cannot be done abstracting from the person: it is the theory which must be adapted to the person, and not the person to the theory" (Benvenuti 2008, 110). And also sociotherapy has its main trait in being focused on the social context: "the single human being should not be considered as an isolated individual, but as someone belonging to a context" and "it is at this level that he/she may face difficulties in the formation of such identity, in decoding the environment, in defining his/her role in it and in the relations with others" (Benvenuti 2008, 10).

Benvenuti also observes that "a fundamental function of any therapeutic approach, above all in the case of social hardship, is in the comprehension of what the other does or wants to say." To project any intervention it is necessary to succeed in comprehending the thought and the sensations of the patient (Benvenuti 2008, 56). And this is where the main objective of "discourse" can be identified: "The therapist, speaking with the person, should try to arrive to know his/her system of representations (RR) and its manners of development." He should "learn to act even in absence of direct knowledge on the case he is dealing with, starting from a strong methodological imprint, to build knowledge on the patient, to help him/her therapeutically" (Benvenuti 2002, 105). But the "discourse" of the therapist would probably not be able to reach its ambitious goals without the capacity of listening to the patient, employing the phenomenological tool of empathy.

Benvenuti argues that "one basic tool in therapeutic activity is listening," which may be "of passive type, or listening in silence;" of active type, to "understand totally the other person both at verbal and non verbal levels." Here the dynamic "passes through the reformulation of what the other has said;" listening may also be of empathic type, "where empathy is used in the first place as a tool." In the moment when the therapist "applies an empathic-finalized relationship, he/she suspends his/her knowledge (both as cognitive and affective dimensions); the person that is in front of him/her must be neither pleasant, nor unpleasant, and must have no gender either" (Benvenuti 2008, 118).

Benvenuti makes an overall synthesis of what the sociotherapist is expected to do. He has to suspend any form of knowledge, including sociological or psychological theories (but not the technical-methodological knowledge), because it would be a "potential source of prejudices. He has to apply the empathic reflection on himself/herself, becoming aware of ideas, experiences and opinions on related aspects of reality. He has "to avoid to fall prey of mechanisms of self-reference"; he must listen "empathically" to the patient, and "use some methodological tools in order to understand what the patient wants to say and why he/she wants to say it," "use some methodological tools of sociology" (in-depth interview, life-story, etc.). He must phrase direct or indirect questions in order to build a complete knowledge

of the person; he must retrace "the way in which the person reasons" and "above all the mode in which he/she justifies his/her assertions." This is a very important "preparatory phase to the therapeutic intervention;" the therapist has to "ask a series of control questions," but also work with "tools of direct confirmation, with the person, and indirectly, with the people inside his/her relational sphere." He has to "use his knowledge, going (fully) back in the role of therapist, to co-project (with the patient) the path of exit from (the condition of) hardship," "having an active relation of consultation" with the patient, "both using the resources already at his/her disposal, and all those typical" of sociotherapy. He must also establish synergic alliances with other therapists possibly involved, because "each one is in charge of absolutely different – even though complementary – aspects of the same person" (Benvenuti 2008, 117–119).

"Discourse" and not "observation" is the main tool of knowledge of the therapist. Non-verbal elements like posture and clothing of the patient "may or may not be sources of information" because they "are linked both to a certain image of himself/herself artificially built, and a passive behavior due to personal schemes, which may have been borrowed from the external world" and so great caution is necessary in the analysis and evaluation of this kind of clues (Benvenuti 2008, 120). "Discourse" is at the center of the therapeutic relation, because this relation "to be such must be between an expert and a person who asks for his/her intervention" and requires "an educational relationship, aimed at personal growth." Especially in a context of intense new media fruition, where any solution or intervention may be perceived as predictable and already experienced by the patient, "the unpredictability of response may be the winning weapon" (Benvenuti 2008, 122).

5. Representation: Image and Affective Investment

Benvenuti states that "a central concept of sociotherapy is the one of representation (R)," which is "a variable composed by two sub-variables, image (I) and affective investment (A.I.)." The image "is all what arrives to our brain through the organs of sense" (following Luhmann, it is the result of a *sensorial reduction of environment*). But "image in itself is not susceptible to be memorized; to be memorized it needs to be positively or negatively affectively invested." "Images memorized at neutral or null affective investment do not exist." "When the affective investment on an image weakens or cancels, it is no longer remembered" (Benvenuti 2008, 53).

The representations "are the outcome of an affective capacity innate in the human being" (Benvenuti 2008, 54). "The dimension of image (I) as direct product of the senses, or self-produced by our nervous central system, indicates

the cognitive component of the representation (R)." The "affective investment represents the quality of image (I), its affective frame, the feature which allows its parting from the background and therefore its memorization and its management by the brain itself." "The two components of the representation are […] indissolubly tied to each other" at the level of the concrete experience of environment and the separation happens only entering the first level of virtuality, "the one originated by the authonomization of symbolic dimension, typical of typographic cultures" (Benvenuti 2008, 55).

In his therapeutic activity with people with problems of drug addiction, Benvenuti observed that "these considerations have been very useful, because […] drug addicted people do not seem to reason from the point of view of a break between affective (A.I.) and cognitive element (I)." This essentially happens because "very often many of them simply like or do not like a situation or a substance, independently of any predictable consequence." In such cases, they do not seem to behave as *subjects* (Benvenuti 2008, 55). Some representations come from the translation of sensorial stimuli coming from the environment, while others "are due to the work of internal elaboration (fully symbolical) of the nervous central system, whose organization leads to the realization of theoretical constructs with different levels of formalization" (Benvenuti 2002, 105).

Every human being stores representations and uses them to give meaning and consistency to the following flows of experience: "to store representations and to use them as tools to decode every new image is a fundamental function." Benvenuti then introduces the term of *R-dictionary*, "as sum of inventories of systems of representations (RR), everyone with its own history" (Benvenuti 2008, 66). The R-dictionary "contains all the inventories of representations and systems of representations which a person has developed in his/her life and above all has memorized, where the memorization is function of the quantity of affective investment" of each representation. A representation may be deleted because of the weakening of its affective investment for "different causes such as the overcoming of a certain situation, the passing of time, the competition with other representations with a superior affective charge" (Benvenuti 2008, 68–69).

The sociotherapist "must understand the paths which have generated those conditions and the representations that seem not to function" (Benvenuti 2008, 117). A partial or total change of some representations is both possible and feasible, and the therapist is expected to intervene in this direction by the action of "discourse." This becomes necessary when these representations are directly or indirectly responsible for a condition of hardship, addiction or suffering of the patient, or they reflect negatively on his/her social, relational and affective sphere, or have the effect to block his/her path to autonomy. "The sociotherapist works on non-divided representations (RR) with the aim of modifying their system" in the patient. He may "emphasize his intervention either on the side of image (I)

or on that of affective investment (A.I.) [...] To emphasize the one or the other dimension is useful, because the other one is automatically involved" (Benvenuti 2008, 111). At the same time, Benvenuti also phrases the warning that, even if the therapist should be successful in obtaining a modification in the system of representations (RR) of the patient, "such a change could enter in conflict with the one earlier possessed, which has an own inertia." Secondly, "the consciousness of the origin of a condition of hardship does not act automatically as antidote in order to provide the activation of virtuous behaviors, or the deactivation of the pathological ones" (Benvenuti 2008, 112).

But the work of the sociotherapist does not end here. "Once the situation is decoded, he must continue the work together (with the patient), co-projecting the path of exit from the condition of hardship, and in a situation where there exist two conflicting systems of representations, he may find himself in the position of having to suggest, even with a certain resoluteness, one instead of the other way" (Benvenuti 2008, 115). The sociotherapist co-builds, from the reconstruction of the mental processes of the patient; he does not build alone, oriented by a fixed doctrine (Benvenuti 2008, 117).

6. Conclusions

Benvenuti explains well the origin of representations, but makes limited hypotheses about how the representations evolve, how they connect to each other, and organize themselves in more or less complex and durable systems of beliefs, which seem to be something different from a simple *vocabulary*. As opposed to Benvenuti, George Kelly, in his approach to psychoanalysis, makes an effective use of the concept of "personal construct," which becomes the turning point of therapy (Kelly 1955).

In some aspects, Benvenuti's approach seems to be rather "psychological" than "sociological." The therapist, focalized on the systems of representations of the patient, which are part of his/her inner world, pays less attention to the outer world: the social conditions and context, the family, the peer groups, the roles, the institutions, the values, the norms, the opportunities, the threats, the interactions and the relations of the patient in general. Benvenuti's approach is centered on the sociology of cultural and communicative processes, and in the first place on the key role of media, ascribing them a quasi-deterministic power in shaping societies and forms of psychological organizations; however, he does not take into account many concurrent elements of social change at a general sociologic level.

Benvenuti's ideas about forms of psychological organization, even if very interesting, still do not seem to draw up a complete and exhaustive typology.

While very much is said about *subjectivity*, its limits, its sicknesses and its doomed destiny, very little is stated about *ascription* and, for instance, the social consequences of its massive importation through immigration in modern acquisitive societies. Also the *new-oral* form of psychological organization, even if outlined with certain optimism, does not have a clear profile yet.

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Alejandro Jodorowsky's Therapeutic Dreamscape. Blending History, Memory, and Symbolism in *The Dance of Reality*

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Abstract. After an absence of more than two decades, the octogenarian cult-movie auteur Alejandro Jodorowsky (*El Topo* and *La montaña sagrada*) is back with a surreal cinematic memoir, *The Dance of Reality* (*La danza de la realidad*, 2013), a funny and bizarre feature that challenges categorization. Set in the 1930s, in the small coastal Chilean village of Tocopilla, *The Dance of Reality* is an eccentric autobiographical meditation on his painful childhood, in which the filmmaker himself takes on the role of both the narrator and the onscreen guide to his younger self: "For you, I do not yet exist. For me, you don't exist anymore," Jodorowsky whispers to the boy at some point. In this family memoir, the filmmaker's shamanic presence follows his non-cinematic pursuits, namely psychomagic, a therapeutic method in which the principal weapon is his imagination. Using this idea as a point of departure, I will analyse the mode in which Jodorowsky uses the grammar of narrative cinema and a hyperbolic visual style to create a poetry of voices and characters who act as metaphors, suggesting or emphasizing some ambiguously conveyed mystical idea.

The key element of my study focuses on Jodorowsky's cinematic poetry and on the filmmaker's mode of filtering history, memory, subjectivity and magical realism, adding a critical dimension to our understanding of the politics and poetics of self-representation. *The Dance of Reality* is Jodorowsky's most personal work to date, intentionally blurring the lines between past and present into oblivion, and consequently finding salvation through art.

Keywords: culture and identity; film memoir; cinematographic representation; autobiographical discourse; cinematic poetry.

"*[R]eality is the progressive transformation of dreams; there is no world but the world of dreams*" (Alejandro Jodorowsky, *Where the Bird Sings Best*)

Introducing a compelling mixture of European art-like theatrics in combination with Oriental philosophy and Jungian tokens, as well as esoteric traditions and enthralling depravity, the films of Alejandro Jodorowsky (b. 1929) have inspired over the decades an enthusiastic audience, equally scandalized and seduced by his shamanic presence and personal mythology. "He appears to have always been looking for guru figures," Michael Richardson explains, "and to regard himself as one" (2006, 136). The young man from Chile, who in the early 1950s moved to Paris as a mime artist and theatre director, would soon become one of the most controversial figures in cinema, both in relation to the Surrealist Group, and for a broader history of film criticism. The filmmaker is considered today the initiator of the "midnight movie" movement, consequently establishing a cult reputation. His cinematic aesthetic can be described using terms such as "unsettling," "grotesque," and "psychedelic," blending surrealist imagery with extreme violence, and yet, however self-centred and inwardly focused his vision might have been, "autobiographical" was never a characteristic of Jodorowsky's films. Nevertheless, in 2013, Jodorowsky ended a twenty-three-year absence from the movie scene with *La danza de la realidad* (*The Dance of Reality*), a trippy but heart-warming reimagining of his unhappy childhood in 1930s Chile: "The meaning of something in a child's consciousness changes when we pass on to the adult level of consciousness. In memory, as in dreams, we can amalgamate different images" (Jodorowsky 2014, 262). The octogenarian Jodorowsky revisits his childhood, finally finding the words to translate the things that were – "in a child's consciousness" – "openings into other planes of reality" (Jodorowsky 2014, 24). It should be noted that the events depicted in the film "took place over a period of ten years. My relating them all together may make it seem as if my childhood was full of bizarre events, but this was not the case. These were small oases in an infinite desert" (Jodorowsky 2014, 24).

The Dance of Reality is a film adaptation of the first two chapters of his 2001 hallucinatory autobiography, *La danza de la realidad. Psicomagia y psicochamanismo*, translated into English in 2014, after the film premièred at Cannes Film Festival in 2013. Both the autobiographical text and its cinematographic representation reflect Jodorowsky's world views, philosophy, psychology and fantasy, according to which reality is not objective but rather a "dance" created by our own imagination:

> The past is not immovable; it is possible to change it, enrich it, strip it of trouble, give it joy. It is evident that memory has the same quality as dreams. The memory consists of images as immaterial as dreams. Whenever we remember we recreate, giving a different interpretation to the events remembered. The facts can be analyzed from multiple points of view. (Jodorowsky 2014, 262)

The mechanisms of memory are not constant nor invariant, and Jodorowsky genuinely embraced the impossibility of re-experiencing earlier and discontinuous states of selfhood.

In the study at hand I employ, as point of departure, the theory of adaptation – the translation from the literary to the filmic (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013) – to question whether the autobiographical "I" survives Jodorowsky's use of the cinematic medium and his hyperbolic visual style, and if indeed there is – as Bruss suggests – "no 'eye' for the 'I'" (1980, 298). I hope to show that it is possible to characterize and exhibit selfhood through film, and that *The Dance of Reality* succeeds as both an expression of the autobiographer's personal vision, and a representation, albeit mystical, of that person. In the pages that follow I shall analyse how, in writing and in filming *The Dance of Reality*, the Chilean director is "living autobiographically" through the language of art. First of all, I focus on transference – in his attempt to re-create the first person narrator, Jodorowsky uses voice-over and appears "in person" in film, along the actor portraying his younger self. Secondly, through the auto/biographical demand, he must speak to and for the dead, trying to challenge an irresolvable dilemma, in which "demands of autobiography (to tell my story) and the demands of biography (to tell your story) coincide" (Gilmore 2001, 72).

But it is premature to speak of his autobiographical project, until I have offered the reader a brief look into Alejandro Jodorowsky's filmography. His first full-length feature, the surrealist fable *Fando y Lis*, incited riots during the film's 1968 premiere, challenging viewers with its shocking imagery, and eventually being banned from the movie theatres in Mexico. Jodorowsky then entered the wild weird west in 1970, with *El Topo*, a film drenched in blood, symbolism and philosophical posturing. In 1973, the filmmaker released his astonishing occult ode to sex, drugs, mysticism, and mostly anti-everything, *La montaña sagrada*. Both are considered foundational works in establishing the alternative midnight movie circuit (Olsen and Jodorowsky 2014), with their eye-catching visual style and allegorical storytelling. Following his ill-fated attempt to adapt Frank Herbert's sci-fi epic *Dune* for the big screen and a disastrous return with the 1980's *Tusk*, Jodorowsky was persuaded to get behind the camera, lured by the promise of creative control by producer Claudio Argento for the masterful Mexican horror parable, *Santa Sangre*. But his artistry was subdued once more in the film that followed, *The Rainbow Thief* (1990), which Jodorowsky has since disowned, hating working with the actors Peter O'Toole and Omar Sharif, judging their chemistry on set and on screen as "[t]here is no poetry there" (Père and Jodorowsky 2013). Still, truth is always obscured when it comes to the details of Jodorowsky's life (Harrod 2015). He claims, for example, that the first thing he did after he got off the train in Paris, at two o'clock in the morning, was to visit André Breton, whose address and telephone number he knew by heart, demanding to see

him: "I'm Alejandro Jodorowsky and I come from Chile to save surrealism" but the writer, naturally, refused to meet him (Jodorowsky 2014, 184–185). Along the years, he has published countless comics and other books on tarot, philosophy and religion, held a number of art exhibitions, has been involved in theatre, and has given lectures on a form of therapy he calls "psychomagic." Jodorowsky's list of unfinished projects is just as captivating as his completed works. Critics will recognize many motifs that have recurred throughout Jodorowsky's writing and filmmaking: "If you know *The Dance of Reality*, you will better understand my other pictures" (Nastasi and Jodorowsky 2014).

Perhaps this is why it took reviewing the making of *Dune* – one of the greatest movies never made – subject of the touching 2013 documentary, *Jodorowsky's Dune* (dir. Frank Pavich), and a reunion with French producer Michel Seydoux to inspire him to pick up the camera once more. For this reason alone, his comeback turned out to be Jodorowsky's greatest act of psychomagic – a fusion of therapeutic and symbolic actions intended to heal psychological wounds. *The Dance of Reality* was a true family affair, Jodorowsky is known to work with non-professionals, his sons have acted in his movies from a very young age (here, Brontis Jodorowsky is a real force to witness as he plays his own grandfather, Cristóbal Jodorowsky plays the mysterious Theosophist who introduces young Jodorowsky to the spirit of tolerance and love in religion, while Adan Jodorowsky, besides having an episodic role in the film, also created its hauntingly beautiful score); Jeremías Herskovits, the child portraying young Alejandro, is evidently not an actor, whereas Pamela Flore, playing his mother, is in reality a professional opera singer. The additional cast consists of other gender-bending actors, circus performers, limbless mine workers, as well as local people.

Living Autobiographically: The Convergence of Selves in Writing and Film

When asked how much of this film is autobiographical, Jodorowsky answered:

> Everything in the film is true, but it's explained with the language of art. It's about a child who's thinking, but at the same time it's an old person who's guiding, so it's a mix. But both characters are me. And it's all true. Even the place is true: I went back to the real town where I grew up. The town was exactly the same, because it's a dead town. Everything was the same – except for my house, which had burned down. So I reconstructed that. And I give it to the town. It's for the tourists now. It's there. (Ebiri and Jodorowsky 2014)

The real, "dead town" Tocopilla is the birthplace of the characters who reappear throughout Jodorowsky's films – the circus performers, the crippled beggars, the blatant transvestites, and the cunning thieves are in truth the misfits of his youth. "The workers in my village were in misery, mutilated in the mines from dynamite" (Nastasi and Jodorowsky 2014), he reflects with sadness in an interview. "They lost their arms and legs and were treated like dogs. They drank alcohol meant for lamps while hiding in the backs of ships. I saw them. Every day. That is life. They are in the picture" (Nastasi and Jodorowsky 2014). In the way that the film echoes, "all things are connected in a web of suffering and pleasure" (Nastasi and Jodorowsky 2014).

If the first part of the movie is an adaptation of the first two chapters of his psychomagical autobiography, *The Dance of Reality: A Psychomagical Autobiography*, the tale shifts from his younger self to his father for a better part of the second half of the picture, inspired from another book, *El Niño del Jueves Negro*, in which he imagines that his father set out to kill president Carlos Ibáñez del Campo. This part is by all means imaginary. His father wanted to do it but he never carried out his plan. Jodorowsky Senior is here propelled through a Christ-like transformation. Likewise, his mother wanted to be an opera singer but, in truth, she never was. "In the film, I realize my parents' dreams and I realize my own dream of bringing them together again and creating a family" (Père and Jodorowsky 2013).

In reading and watching *The Dance of Reality*, I focused on the way Jodorowsky structures his narrative task as a combination of autobiography, biography, family history and myth. No longer positioned to tell simply "my" story, this "I" must struggle to organize, even contain his father's figure within the narrative, in addition to portraying his past and present selves – the "child who's thinking" and the "old person who's guiding." A poignant episode in the book, masterfully translated onto the screen, is a tremendous illustration of how the past becomes present and beckons and secures the way to self-knowledge:

> [I]n front of me, next to the bed, my imagination brought forth the apparition of an elderly gentleman with silver beard and hair, his eyes full of tenderness. It was myself, changed into my older brother, my father, my grandfather, my master. "Do not worry so. I have accompanied you and I always will. Every time you suffered, believing yourself to be alone, I was with you." (Jodorowsky 2014, 27)

Here, Jodorowsky the writer is playing an identity game, placing himself further apart from the rule-governed autobiographical discourse. Its structure is that of an extended self, "stretching across time, and it is this temporal structure, apparently sustained by memory, which supplies the armature for the meaning of experience,

the content of a 'life,' of an 'existence'" (Eakin 2008, 47). In the film, the scene displays as follows: the silver haired elderly gentleman, the director himself, embraces his younger self (Herskovits), alone in his bed, afraid in the dark, a metaphor for his future unknown self/selves and his yet unexplored life story.

However, Bruss suggests that

> the unity of subjectivity and subject matter – the implied identity of author, narrator, and protagonist on which classical autobiography depends – seems to be shattered by film; the autobiographical self de-composes, schisms, into almost mutually exclusive elements of the person filmed (entirely visible; recorded and projected) and the person filming (entirely hidden; behind the camera eye). (1980, 297)

Jodorowsky is undoubtedly the creator of the film – or rather its author – controlling most of the filming and editing process, putting "nothing between camera and what is being filmed," always careful not to make unnecessary camera movements, getting rid of all the "equipment and paraphernalia that normally clutters up shoots, stripping it" (Père and Jodorowsky 2013). This would address Bruss's objection to the director appearing "in person" in film, creating a "flash of vertigo, an eerie instant when 'no one is in charge'" (1980, 309). "This film represents a technical prowess," Jodorowsky explains in his interview with Père, "because it was made in a very original way" (2013). The viewer does not perceive his disappearance from behind the camera – the "eye", the person seeing – as alarming when he passes into view, giving his whole person over to "the side of the object" – the "I", the person seen. The movement seems genuine, by means of preserving somehow the properties of classical autobiography.

What is more, the voice-over accompanying the events and images mimics the first-person narrator in the autobiographical text, and the cinematic subject seems much less shrouded in mystery than the speaking subject, thus recovering "identity-value" in film (Bruss 1980, 307). What strikes us as a genuine personal reminiscence is the fact that, in narrating his childhood, everything is manifested from the boy's point of view. Furthermore, in regard to the autobiographical protagonist, "both characters are me," Jodorowsky explains (Ebiri and Jodorowsky 2014). There is no denying that his old self is Jodorowsky the writer, director and – on top of that – a character in the film. The question Bruss asks, though, is as follows: "Does the figure on screen look like the artist as a young man or only behave like him?" (1980, 302). As to whether Jeremías Herskovits's appearance on screen resembles or not that of his younger authentic self, Jodorowsky seems to have cynically solved this tension, in the book, prior even to filming *The Dance of Reality*: "I gathered all my photographs and watched them turn to ashes on those pieces of carbon lit up like rubies. Now no one would ever be able to

identify me with the images of what I had ceased to be" (2014, 56). The "child who's thinking" is pressed into the present through the film, the lost photographs are metaphorically brought to life by the continuous series of moving pictures. There can be no question whether Jeremías Herskovits resembles Jodorowsky as a boy, but he is the one that the director chose to impersonate his younger self, and we must accept it as a given within the autobiographical project.

Even though certain events the film depicts are entirely fictitious, a cinematic, albeit therapeutic, representation of his internal monologues, some episodes stand out as perfect examples of Jodorowsky's eccentricity of style and use of hyperbole. When the tall, silver-haired Jodorowsky steps in front of the camera, each time cradling the tearful younger Alejandro and consoling him – at one point even preventing him from committing suicide "Stop! Don't jump! You are not alone. You are with me" (*The Dance of Reality* 2014), the director is further heightening the meta-reality. While both of them sitting on the scorching cliffs of Tocopilla, Jodorowsky acts as a spiritual guide, and the installation of this guru figure – through its symbolism – at the threshold of knowledge about family, self, suffering and love testifies to its intimacy no less than its pervasiveness:

> "Everything you are going to be, you already are," the Old Jodorowsky whispers. "What you are looking for is already within you. Rejoice in your sufferings, for through them, you will reach me. […] For you I do not exist yet. For me you do not exist anymore. At the end of time, when all matter returns to its origin, you and I will have only been memories – never reality. Something is dreaming us. Give yourself to the illusion. Live!" (*The Dance of Reality* 2014)

In the manner that Jean Starobinski proclaims in *The Style of Autobiography*, "it is because the past 'I' is different from the present 'I' that the latter may really be confirmed in all his prerogatives" (1980, 78), in this spiritual experiment, the elder Jodorowsky masters his anxiety by submitting to it, hoping to anchor his shifting identities through time, while the child follows unceasingly the call of his own being.

Authoring Childhood: The Road to Self-healing and Redemption

When moving to Europe, Jodorowsky not only left behind his homeland and family, but he also shed his identity, the Alejandro he had been born as, and went on as a new self-created individual:

> It was a form of suicide for me to disappear. To rid myself of emotional knots, to stop being someone born of painful roots, to change myself into someone else, a virgin ego, permitting me – by being my own mother and my own father – to eventually become what I wanted to be and not what family, society, and my country imposed on me. (Jodorowsky 2014, 184)

His new path was one of dreaming and becoming that dream. Through going back to Chile to film *The Dance of Reality*, Jodorowsky reconciles with this naïve innocent child-self. The adult Jodorowsky brings the little boy back to life, empowering him to tell the story through the cinematic medium. This "suicidal" act of disappearance is symbolically represented in the final scenes of *The Dance of Reality*: on the seaside pier, the young Alejandro passes by washed-out cardboard props – held by hidden figures dressed in black – portraying characters from the film, as he heads towards the tugboat leaving Tocopilla; in the next cut, the adult Jodorowsky is caringly holding his younger self, and behind them, in the purple-painted boat, there is a skeleton figure (a man garbed in a store-bought costume), implying the inescapable death of his previous self; in the closing image, the old Jodorowsky and the skeleton figure are alone in the tugboat, disappearing into the horizon. Where the child character is a fictional construct, the adult self is a cultural construct, and stands as a representation of the artist's point of view, using the optical language of film to create a mirror image of his creative personality, the film thus being a powerful tool for self-healing and self-realization (Douglas 2010, 67).

The story of the filmmaker's boyhood and who Alejandro Jodorowsky is today, cult-movie auteur, writer, performer, and "psycho-magician," emerges in relation to this mosaic of the family, villagers, firefighters, cripples, and beggars, – dictators, anarchists and fascists even –, as the autobiographical film goes beyond the history of the family by turning to fiction and magic realism. Jodorowsky's cinematic poetry casts doubt on the traditional representation of childhood and challenges the identities that are available for articulating childhood experiences in favour of constructing a relationship between the autobiographical child and the adult self onto the screen (Douglas 2010, 68–69). The adult autobiographer reconstructs his previous self, bringing the child back to life in this re-discovered boyhood, where the image of child self and the family relies mostly on Jodorowsky's dreams, memories and ideas – the little pieces of reality are shaped into poignant inner pictures or, to use Mitchell's typology, "mental images" (1986, 10). The unstable, shifting nature of his memories is reflected by the dream-like logic of most of the events portrayed in this overtly therapeutic film. They serve as rituals in overcoming psychological trauma. For this reason, despite having written the autobiographical volume, in itself a therapeutic endeavour, Jodorowsky felt the need to act out, to personally materialize his re-constructed version of the

childhood lived in the remote Chilean fishing town of Tocopilla, to completely redeem his past self through psychomagic or "shamanic psychotherapy." This suggests that Jodorowsky's representation of reality is unconsciously endowed with archetypal, symbolic or mystic meanings and attitudes, consequently being a creator and an observer of his autobiography (Douglas 2010, 79).

There Will Always Be a Father: The Auto/biographical Demand

In constructing his personal identity, Jodorowsky must also speak to and for the dead: "My memory is not only my own; it also forms part of the cosmic memory. And somewhere in that memory, the dead continue to live" (Jodorowsky 2014, 223). His task is structured through what Leigh Gilmore calls auto/biographical demand, which "entails an irresolvable narrative dilemma because it both divides and doubles the writing subject with respect to the task (whose story is this? mine? ours? how can I tell them all?)" (2001, 72).

Alejandro's father, Jaime (played by Brontis, the director's son), a Jewish immigrant from Ukraine, is a communist who has a picture of Stalin, whom he worships, hanging in his store. At the time, the right-wing dictator Carlos Ibáñez is bringing together opponents, while Stalin is starving peasants in the Jodorowskys' native land. On the home front, Jaime is a macho disciplinarian who subjects his son to a series of punitive and capricious tests, including a dental extraction without anaesthetic, hoping to make a man out of him. Before the movie ends, his mother Sara (played by Pamela Flores) tells him: "You found in Ibáñez everything you admired in Stalin. You are the same as they are! You have lived in the guise of a tyrant" (*The Dance of Reality* 2014). The three-way resemblance among these moustachioed tyrants, political and domestic, is scarcely accidental. That is why, the burning of the three portraits – of Stalin, of Ibáñez, and of Jaime himself – towards the end of the film, is not only symbolic, but also necessary for his father's transformative and purifying experience.

But the sensibility governing this film is as entirely and unmistakably Alejandro Jodorowsky's as the experiences – dreamed and lived – that feed it. It is as much his father's tale as his own, and though it is unsparing in its depiction of Jaime's cruelty, vanity and cowardice, it is also profoundly compassionate, then implicitly political in its fury, undimmed by the passage of years, at the violence inflicted by the powerful on the weak. Jaime is a bully to his son and wife, but circumstances conspire to teach him a lesson. "The limit, then, between autobiography and biography," Gilmore writes, "is stalked by the impossible stories of trauma, love, and family" (2001, 77). After Jaime leaves home on an

ill-fated mission to assassinate president Ibáñez, he suffers a series of physical and spiritual torments that both break and redeem him, which give the movie extraordinary moral force and emotional power.

The film offers Jodorowsky the opportunity to experiment artistically: the boy's mother communicates by singing, the actress portraying Sara Jodorowsky delivering her every line in an operatic voice, a peculiarity that becomes more and more comical as the story unfolds, especially in the sadder moments. The relationship between child and mother is no less difficult than the one he has with his father. Sara denies him her maternal love after Jaime drags the terrified boy to have his flowing blond curls cut off, and constantly confuses poor Alejandro by alternating chilly indifference with mild erotic provocation.

The Dance of Reality illustrates the extent to which autobiography and biography transpire through the demands the dead place on the living, as well as the ambivalence of speaking to and for them. "The dead stalk the unconscious," Gilmore remarks, "and wait for any opportunity to appear: dreams, current relationships, the writing with this book. They make demands on him, and he issues them pleas" (2001, 72–73). Jodorowsky at the outset wanted to understand his father, in the sense that *The Dance of Reality* has both this tyrant father and a loving father in his representation of the past, and this is the very line between his story and their story. There are many ways to tell the story of the father, and eventually acquire knowledge of one's self and the fact that life in all its complexity can be simultaneously gruelling and giving, making it not an enigma to understand but rather a moment to savour, for it is all but an illusion we should whole-heartedly give ourselves to. I would like to make reference once again to the "Give yourself to the illusion" highly poetic moment in the film, as an example.

Distilled through the filter of Jodorowsky's own stylistic and lyrical predilections, the writer and director allows his father a fictional opportunity to find himself. This is particularly evident in the second half of the film, which is irrational in the broad strokes (Jodorowsky has publicly disclosed that his father had not even attempted to kill Ibáñez), but which is nevertheless a powerful and deeply felt endeavour by an artist to become reconciled to his complicated relationship with the father figure, whom he undoubtedly hated and loved in equal measure. As Jacques-Alain Miller writes in his essay, "The Analytic Experience," one "would rather love than know, and it is the value of transference as obstacle: love, instead of knowledge […] There is no desire to know. It is love, not desire to know, that is directed toward knowledge" (1991, 91). In trying to understand his inflexible, difficult father, Jodorowsky gains self-knowledge and a better understanding about selfhood. In bringing his father onto the screen and having Brontis interpret him, Jodorowsky cements his relationship with his own son, showing that the therapeutic dreamscape goes beyond the medium of cinematography.

The Dance of Reality is a quasi-autobiography enriched by Jodorowsky's humour and exuberance, his trust of the imagination and sense of hyperbole. His first impulse is to entertain, here he is foremost a comical storyteller, and a spiritual guru second. The film has something that both *El Topo* and *La montaña sagrada* lacked: the graceful harmony of fairy tales. One of the most impressive elements of Jodorowsky's autobiographic project is certainly the raw, unapologetic manner in which he communicates his ideas and emotions, without getting caught up in just usually eccentric techniques and style, such as outrageous, surreal imagery, and colourful, yet cathartic violence, which even today make it easy to see how *El Topo* managed to establish its cult reputation. Since his earlier cinematic endeavours borrowed themes and structures from different movie genres – the western for *El Topo*, the quest for enlightenment for *La montaña sagrada*, the psychological thriller for *Santa Sangre* –, *The Dance of Reality* makes no exception and draws on the language of "shamanic psychotherapy," a form of therapy, derivative from tarot-card reading, which he calls "psychomagic."

There might be critics and theorists who will find it difficult to accept Jodorowsky's version of reality: "I realized that so-called 'reality' was a mental construct. Was it a total illusion? This was impossible to know, but quite clearly I never perceived what was real in me in its entirety" (Jodorowsky 2014, 70). His self-styled "perpetual dance of reality" is a poetic act: "What is the definition of a poetic act? It should be beautiful, imbued with a dreamlike quality, should be above any justification, and should create another reality within the very heart of ordinary reality. It should allow for transcendence to another plane. It should open the door to a new dimension, achieving a purifying courage" (Jodorowsky 2014, 139). So for Jodorowsky, this dance of reality goes on: "If I die, it [*The Dance of Reality*] is my testament, if I don't die, it is my comeback," he confesses, "I see it as the beginning of something" (Olsen and Jodorowsky 2014).

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Hofstede's Dimensions of National Cultures Revisited: A Case Study of South Korea's Culture

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Abstract. In about thirty-five years since the first publication of Hofstede's (1991) study on the dimensions of national cultures, people all over the world have evolved in various directions and to various extents due to the phenomenon known as *globalization*. The present paper aims to investigate whether within this time span South Korea, a technically and economically developed country, whose way of life is strongly influenced by Confucianism, has complied with or resisted this phenomenon. The data that will be discussed have been collected from a Korean best seller (Shin's *Please Look After Mom*, 2012) that approximately covers the period in which Hofstede conducted his investigations on national cultures. Hopefully the findings will indicate that the deeply rooted values have remained almost the same, while the outer layers of culture (such as the symbols or rituals, also known as 'practices') have changed due to the influences exerted by the other important economic and cultural powers of the world (such as Japan, the United States or some of the European countries) Korea has come in touch with.

Keywords: cultural dimensions, changes, values, practices, Korean culture.

1. Introduction: Why Korea?

One may wonder why from all the countries in the world the one I have chosen to focus on in this paper is South Korea. There are several reasons for this choice. First, I have been living in this country for half a year now and in this short period of time I have experienced mixed feelings about it. When I arrived on the Global Campus of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, I thought I had been dropped in a deserted village: no shops, no restaurants, no huge buildings, just a couple of low, though modern-looking dormitories and school buildings scattered along the road that is winding through a forest. This was not at all what I had expected when I left Romania. But soon I came to visit the capital city, Seoul, which is breathtaking: the very sophisticated skyscrapers, the modern office buildings,

expensive brand shops, the crisscrossing highways, the hustle and bustle of the town, all made me feel I was in a different world. This was one of the many contrasts that Korea revealed to me and, at the same time, intrigued me.

The second reason for my choice is my interest in intercultural communication. This was my first encounter with an Asian culture and in my everyday interaction with the Korean students and strangers I have sensed a lot of differences between their way of thinking and behaving and mine. In my desire not to act improperly while living among Koreans, I started reading books about their culture, which helped me gain deeper insight into the history, customs and rituals, the education system, and economic growth which made this country one of the strongest in the world. Michael Breen is of the opinion the Koreans' "rise out of poverty into democratic capitalism is one of the inspirational themes of our age" (2014, ix). On the other hand, Tudor shows his admiration towards this country by saying that "quite simply, South Koreans have written the most unlikely and impressive story of nation building of the last century. For that reason alone, theirs deserves to be called 'the impossible country'" (2012, 10).

Thirdly, among the books I got hold of was the Korean best-seller *Please Look After Mom* written by a Hyung-Sook Shin, whose plot unfolds in two time periods: the first one closely following the Korean War (i.e the 1960s), while the second one is closer to the present (the 2000s). This is exactly the time span in which Korea grew from its ashes into a flourishing and strong economic power of the world.

The purpose of this paper is to bring to the fore some changes that the Korean culture underwent in this period of development, the framework of the analysis being Hofstede's (2010) cultural dimensions. The paper is structured as follows: the next section (section 2) contains an overview of the framework employed, which will be followed by a short presentation (section 3) of the book that constituted the main data base for the analysis. Section 4 revisits four of the six cultural dimensions put forward by Geert Hofstede, using data from the bestseller *Please Look After Mom* by Kyung-Sook Shin. In the last part of the paper some conclusions will be drawn on how this country has changed within a period of approximately thirty-five years.

2. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

In this section I will provide an overview of Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures as they emerged from a series of studies beginning with the larg-scale research project he carried out on the employees of the IBM subsidiaries in fourty countries. As time went by, Hofstede extended his investigation to other countries and to people involved in other activities (such as students or commercial

airpilots), so that in the 2010 edition of his book *Cultures and Organizations. The Sofware of the Mind* a number of eighty-five countries were mentioned (Hofstede et al. 2010, 36). Though initially Hofstede came up with four dimensions, namely *power distance*, *masculinity, collectivity,* and *uncertainty avoidance,* two other dimensions, *long term orientation* and *indulgence vs. restraint*, emerged from the investigation of the people in the East, in an attempt to account for the differences in thinking between the eastern and the western world. Hofstede defines the dimension as "an aspect of culture that can be measured relative to other cultures" (2010, 31), all the cultures he investigated being characterised by a score along each of the dimensions. Let us now have a closer look at the dimensions, so as to have a better understanding of the Korean culture, bearing in mind the fact that they are reflected in all aspects of life, starting with the family, continuing with the school, the workplace and the society, as a whole.

The first dimension, *power distance,* can be defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede et al. 2010, 61 and *http://geert-hofstede.com/*). South Korea's score on the cultural scale of Hofstede's analysis is 60. This means that in comparison with other countries, such as Austria, where the power distance index is low (wealth is distributed equally among the members of the country), in South Korea there seems to be a gap between the rich and the poor people, as well as a hierarchy of social positions which the Koreans have to respect very strictly, as we shall see in section 4 of the paper.

Individualism has to do with the relationship between individual persons or with the extent to which individuals are integrated into groups. In the individualistic cultures, the ties between individuals are loose, which means that everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his/her immediate family, while "in collectivistic societies, in which most of the world's population still lives, one conceives as oneself much more as belonging to a community, whether this be ethnic, regional, or national, and one's sense of identity derives mainly from that group affiliation" (Hofstede et al. 2010, 23). Korea, with a score of 18, classifies as a collectivistic culture in which the family, the school, and the institutions encourage *sharing* of food, of feelings, of places. The Korean culture is characterized by the concept of *jeong* "a bond that exists between people, and gives them a sense of mutual destiny" (Tudor 2014, 10).

Masculinity is related to the way in which roles are distributed between genders. In masculine cultures the social roles played by men and women are quite different: the former are expected to be the breadwinners, to be tough and protective of their families, while women have to focus more on the house chores, to look after the children and to create a pleasant family atmosphere. In feminine cultures the social gender roles are not so distinct, which means that house

chores and child-rearing can be carried out by either sex. South Korea's score on this dimension is 39, which places it in the category of feminine cultures. Japan, on the other hand, which geographically is very close to Korea, has the highest masculinity index (95).

The fourth dimension*, uncertainty avoidance,* indicates the level of comfort with unfamiliar or ambiguous situations, in which such situations are novel, unknown, surprising, and different from usual. In Hofstede's terms, *uncertainty avoidance* can be defined as "*extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations*" (Hofstede et al. 2010, 191, emphasis in the original). If this is the case, these people will feel more comfortable and less stressed if certain rules exist according to which they have to act. Korea's uncertainty avoidance index is 85 (much higher than that of Germany – 65 or Austria – 60, two countries known for their keenness on exactity).

Two other dimensions, *long-term orientation* (Hofstede 1991) and *indulgence* were added later, when researchers realized that some of the findings related mainly to the Asian countries could not be accounted for in terms of the previous four, due to the strong influence of Confucianism, "a set of pragmatic rules for daily life derived from Chinese history" (Hofstede et al. 2010, 237). The former refers to the people's preference for fostering values for the future (long-term orientation) or for the past and present (short-term orientation). The latter stands "for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun,"[1] as opposed to restraint that characterizes societies in which people's actions could be restrained by social norms, where enjoying life could lead to a feeling of guilt.

For reasons of space, only the original four cultural dimensions will be approached in the present paper.

3. The Data: Kyung-Sook Shin's Novel *Please Look After Mom*

The data I have employed for the present study have been excerpted from a book that was first published in 2008, entitled 엄마를부탁해*Please Look After Mom.*[2] This novel has been a best seller both in South Korea, as well as all over the world, being translated in a number of languages, including Romanian.[3] For this novel,

1 *http://geerthofstede.nl/dimensions-of-national-cultures*

2 The fragments I have excerpted for analysis come from the 2012 Vintage Books edition.

3 The book has been translated into Romanian by a distinguished professor and colleague of mine, Oum Tae-Hyun, at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Korea, whom I am very grateful for sharing his work with me.

the author, Kyung-Sook Shin was awarded the "Man Asian Literary Prize," being the first woman to receive such a prize. The plot of the story focuses on a family with 5 grown-up children, in which the mother, suffering from Alzheimer's disease, is accidentally left behind on the subway platform at Seoul Station and is searched for by her entire family. Making use of her still existent long-term memory, the Mother,[4] who is completely helpless, starts looking for places where her children had once lived. Each of these places triggers flashbacks related to all the roles she played in her past life: as a wife, mother, sister-in-law, neighbour, and friend. The unfolding of plot is interrupted by flashbacks of each and every family member. The first-person flashback technique employed by the authoress brings to light aspects of the Korean society. This enabled me to find out how the Korean culture changed from the generation of the parents, who were young people after the Korean war (1950–1953) to that of their children, who are adults in present-day Korea, i.e. in a time span of about thirty-forty years, along the dimensions suggested by Hofstede (1991, 2010).

The reason why I have chosen this particular book for the present paper is twofold: on the one hand, I wanted to get a glimpse into Korean literature, as Romanian or English translations of it are not very accessible in Romania; on the other hand, by reading this book I came to understand the driving force that has radically changed Korea in the past fifty years.

The research questions that guided my analysis are as follows: a) what aspects of life have changed in Korea between the 1960s and the present moment? b) which cultural dimension has been more affected by the passing of time? c) what is people's attitude toward the changes? With these questions in mind, let us now proceed with the analysis of the available data.

4. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Revisited in South Korea

As mentioned previously, the Korean culture is very much influenced by Confucianism, a philosophy or religion that stemmed from China and spread over most of Asia. "At its heart is a belief that humans are improvable through cultivation and moral action, and that collectively, a harmonious society can be created when all members fulfill certain obligations" (Tudor 2014, 78). Confucius was of the opinion that people should act with virtue, empathy and justice. At the same time, he also encouraged them to learn from their ancestors. He taught an attitude toward one's fellow humans of respect, particularly respect for one's parents, teachers, and

4 I will capitalize the word in keeping with the English text and also for the sake of highlighting the importance of this character in the book.

elders. In his mind, he envisaged a strict hierarchy between family members (father-son, husband-wife, older brother – younger brother). The dependence relationships shape not only the family life of modern Korea, but the society as a whole.

The teachings of Confucius are still very much respected in current Korea. This is obvious especially in what the dimension of *collectivism* is concerned. Unlike the Western cultures, which, according to Hofstede's framework, are individualistic, Asian cultures are characterised by collectivism. What this means is that the family and the community, in general, play an important role in someone's life. The Koreans cherish 'jeong' (a feeling of affection or attachment) for their close families, neighbours and friends. "Koreans who live together with their acquaintances believe that sharing happiness and saddness together is a virtue" (Nam 2014, 104). This living together and sharing everything is very nicely depicted in Shin's book in a number of instances. Thus, when one of the characters (i.e. one of the adult daughters of the family) recounts her childhood, she mentions the fact that they used to share the same room for sleeping: "It was the way they used to sleep in the large room at home, rolling around as much as they pleased" (Shin 2012, 108).

As each of the five children grew up and settled down, the relationships in the family loosened. The only moments when they still got together was when they celebrated their parents' birthdays, and, sadly, when they started searching for their missing mother.

Currently, the drive for *sharing* seems to characterize the older generation rather than the young one. In the early 60s, when Korea was extremely poor, people could hardly make ends meet. Food was very scarce and women had to ration it. But even so, if other members of the community were in a worse situation, the ones who were better off would share the little they had, no matter if the relationship between people was tensed or if the person in need was a mere stranger. The main charater of the book, the Mother, was once coming from the mill with a barrel of flour on her head. A stranger riding a bike saw her and offered to help her by carrying the barrel on his bike, promising to deposit it in her village, near the convenience store. As the barrel was quite heavy, the woman consented to have her burden transported by the stranger, but much to her disappointment, he fled with the flour. Desperate that she would not be able to feed her five children, the woman searched for the wrongdoer and eventually found him in a terrible situation: with a blind mother, a famished three-year-old child, and a wife in child-labour. Instead of scolding the man, the Mother tried to help the ones in need:

> I'd come to retrieve the basin you'd stolen. Instead, I grabbed a pot off the wall in the dark and narrow kitchen. I heated water in it. I pushed you aside, since you did not know what to do […] and I held your wife's hand […]. I delivered the baby and scooped some flour from my basin and made dough

> for dough-flake soup and laddled it into a few bowls and put some broth into the room where the baby's mother was. (Shin 2012, 221)

When her own children grew to be independent and left the family house to move into the city, the Mother started sharing her food with the children of a poor family in her village, so that these little souls came to treat her as their grandmother:

> "They must be so hungry to do that. It's not like before, when things were difficult for us… It's nice to have them around, it's not as lonely."
> After the girls started to come for meals, your wife would, even in the morning, cook an eggplant dish and steam mackerel. When your children visited from Seoul with fruit and cake, she saved the treats until the girls poked their heads through the gate, around four in the afternoon. (Shin 2012, 158; ellipsis in the original)

Nowadays, the sharing of food may still be encountered at various official gatherings, but not so much among strangers. This is due to the fact that families have been torn apart by the development of the country: many people from the countryside, who had been encouraged by their parents to study, left for big cities and, after graduation, they never returned home, choosing instead a life among strangers. Due to the extremely long hours of work, the members of the new Korean generation keep postponing having a family of their own, many of them living alone. Also for the same reason, they do not have the opportunity of visiting family members and sharing with them food or affection. So in this respect, we sense a slight change along the collectivism-individualism scale, Korea moving towards its latter extreme.

The collective culture of Korea was and is still driven by the notion of *embarrassment* or *shame*. Koreans feel profound shame for any failings. A fragment from Shin's novel which highlights this feature is related to the Parents' Day, celebrated on the 8th of May. On this day children usually offer their parents a carnation which they pin onto their chests. But as the life of the adult children has become more and more strenuous in present-day Korea, many of them frequently forget about this celebration, as it is also the case of the five children in the novel under consideration:

> On Parents' Day in May, years ago, none of the children called. Your wife went to the stationery store in town and bought two carnation buds, each tied to a ribbon that said: "Thank you for giving me life and raising me."
> She found you standing by the new road and urged you to come home. You followed her home. She persuaded you to come inside and lock the door, then

> pinned a carnation to the front of your jacket. "What would people say if we went around without a flower pinned to our clothes, when everyone knows how many children we have? That's why I bought these." (Shin 2012, 136–137)

The fragment above illustrates not only the hidden pain of the Mother for not being remembered by her children on such a special occasion, but it also highlights that if the other members of the community percieved that you did not meet their expectations, this could be grounds for deep shame. This may well have been valid for the parents in Shin's novel, who had been brought up in a time when tresspassing led to shame and loss of face for self, but not for their adult children, who due to their busy schedule, are incapable of performing the expected duties. This change of attitude is also reflected in the fact that the younger daughter of the family, who is a well-known writer, lives with a man without being married to him. In her parents' youth, this would have shamed the family, as in a community that treasures family bonds, living together 'in sin' was very much disapproved of. As more and more young Koreans choose not to marry, people have become more tolerant with such couples.

Collectivism in South Korea may also translate into a form of "herd mentality" which is reflected in the way parents encourage and support their children in receiving the best education possible and in getting them involved in a sport that brought Korea in top ranks, namely golf. Nam mentions the fact that "after Park Seri won a golf tournament in 1998, many parents started to teach golf to their children. And in 2013, five of the top golfers on the American LPGA were Korean women" (2014, 168).

Education and golf are strongly related to another cultural dimension, namely *power distance.* In Korea, just like anywhere in the world, golf is quite an expensive sport and it is basically the rich that practice it. In *Please Look After Mom,* the eldest child, Hyeong-chold, who became the marketing director of an estate agent, had to "spend Sundays accompanying CEOs or other directors to the golf courses in Sokcho or Hoengsong" (Shin 2013, 58). But how did the society come to be divided into rich and poor? After the Korean war, the "South Korean society was surprisingly level […], almost no one had any money or major social advantage over the rest" (Tudor 2012, 206). But in the 1980s and 1990s the gap between the classes widened, so that today there are many poor people and also a lot of 'nouveau riches.' The latter, like in many parts of the world, set a bad example for the rest of the society in that they started showing off. Hong recounts that "these vulgar nuveau riches rose up from among us and started showing up at the fish market in mink coats" (2014, 23). At the same time, company executives are laughed out if, when they come to a restaurant to meet their colleagues, they show up in cars they drive themselves, rather than by a chauffeur. So, having a chauffeur, nowadays, seems to have become a professional necessity.

In an attempt to help their children get rich and happy, parents would encourage them to study, not sparing anything for fulfilling this aim. This trend began in the 1960s, when people realized the importance of education in one's life, which led to the world's greatest education fever. The Mother in Shin's novel managed to send all her children to school, herself having received no education whatsoever. She would sacrifice everything so that her children should not experience the feeling of shame and uselesness she felt due to the fact that she did not have the chance to study. Thus, she sold the only piece of jewelry she had in order to get the money for the school fee of her children, as illustrated in the fragment below: "Around the time the fee for middle school was due, the gold ring that used to be on Mom's left middle finger, her sole piece of jewelry, disappeared from her hand. Only the groove on her finger, etched by many years of wearing the band, was left behind" (Shin 2012, 43). The Mother even tried to help her youngest brother-in-law, Kyun, a dilligent and motivated pupil, to continue his education, only to encounter the resistence of her husband and of her sister-in-law. Just like for her own children, she would have sold anything they were left with, such as the garden, so that her brother-in-law could pursue his dream. But this idea made her sister-in-law reproach to her "You are going to ruin this family!" (Shin 2012, 126) and triggered the rage of her husband who sent her back to her home village.[5] Her failure in doing this made her experience a feeling of shame and guilt until the end of her life. Harmony in Confucianism meant that "all members of society must play their proper role and fulfill the duties that came with that role" (Tudor 2012, 220). Only that the main character in the novel failed to see that the role she assumed for herself at a certain moment in her life (that of a benefactor) was in contradiction with that attributed to her by her husband and her sister-in-law (a prodigal aiming to destroy the harmony in the family).

Sometimes the Koreans' unforgiveness of failure may lead to suicidal acts. Having been denied the chance to continue his education by his own siblings, Kyun left the village to try to find a job in another place, not to be a burden for his brother's family and to save their face. But after four years, he returned to the village, defeated and ashamed of the fact that he had failed in his attempts and committed suicide. Nowadays, the rate of suicide among young people has increased tremendously due to the fact that many fail to adapt to the education system and decide to drop out of school, which casts shame on their families (Nam 2014).

All the struggle for education is due to the fact that it means entry into prestige class, and, implicitly, social advancement. Moreover, in Korea, education plays an important role not only in an individual's face, but also in one's family's face.

5 In Korea, when a woman marries, she becomes part of her husband's family and has to obey the orders of her in-laws. Until the 1990s, Korean women were not permitted to take decisions on behalf of the family. In case of a divorce, the wife was not entitled to the division of the family's property, while the children were granted to the father's custody (Hong 2014). Things changed within two decades: in 2012, South Korea elected its first female president, Park Geun-hye.

Power distance in the family is also reflected in the fact that parents teach children obedience, while children have to treat their parents with respect. But education in present-day Korea seems to have counter-effects, in that the young generation tends to have less respect for parents. An illustration of this attitude was provided above, in connection with the Parents' Day; another example is the dialogue below between Mother and her youngest daugher, the writer, who out of the five children of the family seems to be the non-conformist one:

> "You weren't like this before, but you've become cold. If your mother hangs up like that, you're supposed to call her back. How could you dig in your heels?" It wasn't that you had been stubborn; you hadn't had time to think about it for that long. […] "*Are all educated people like this*?" (Shin 2012, 54–55, emphasis mine)

In what concerns the *masculinity* dimension in South Korea, this is also related to Confucianism. The original idea of this philosophy was that the man and the woman each had a certain role, "but their relationship was not supposed to be top-down; originally they were on equal footing" (Hong 2014, 69–70). Until the fifteenth century, Korean women enjoyed equal rights with men in that they could be head of the households. But later on, Korea turned Confucianism into some kind of political tool and, thus, women seemed to have been attributed an inferior status: while women were very young, the parents decided on everything, when they got married, it was their husbands who decided on everything. This was still the state of affairs in the 1950s or 1960s.

In the second half of the previous century, the Korean culture was classified by Hofstede as a feminine one: people were traditionally characterized as being supportive, caring and relationship oriented. They still cared for the relationship with the community they lived in and even for the relationship with their deceased. The latter was due to Confucianism, too, according to which ancestors had to be worshipped at least twice a year (i.e. at Chuseok, the Korean equivalent of the American Thanksgiving, and at Seollal, the lunar new year). This implies families visiting gravesites and conducting rituals (like burning incense and bowing in front of the tombs, women having to bow twice as many times as men), after which they would lay out food and eat in front of the tombs, acting as if the dead were eating with them. While the Father in the novel, a man who left the family without a word, would return home for the ancestral rites, "as if this was printed in his genetic code" (Shin 2012, 102), his adult children nowadays, instead of paying respect to the ancestors at the gravesite, prefer to take advantage of the free days granted by the government on such occasions and spend them with their own family members (i.e. the nuclear family) either at home or, in most of the cases, travelling, as illustrated by the fragment below:

> The Full Moon Harvest holiday is several days long. The media reports every time that this year more people were going abroad during the holiday than ever before. Until a couple of years ago, people criticized those who went abroad during the holiday, but now people blatantly say, "Ancestors, I'll be back," and go to the airport. When people started to hold ancestral rites in time-share vacation condos, they worried whether the ancestral spirits would be able to find them, but now people just hop on planes. (Shin 2012, 107)

Nowadays Korea seems more a masculine culture, whose dominant values are material success, competition, and progress. There is no wonder that people of this country strive for a better and more prosperous life considering the nation's poverty some fifty years ago. This determined a competitive edge among people, starting from school, continuing through university education, workplace and family. The outcome of this competition is that present-day Koreans are more ego-oriented, trying to outperform their opponents. This goes hand in hand with their tendecy of becoming more individualistic. The novel under consideration provides an example in this respect in connection with the eldest son, Hyong-Chol, who in his capacity of marketing director of an estate agent's had to place a large number of appartments. In his endeavour he makes use of promotional presents that touched a sensitive spot of his customers, in contradiction with a fellow employee, who was less successful:

> His co-worker, Kim, who was usually respectful and polite, made a subtle dig after a few drinks, pronouncing him 'clever'. At work, Hyong-chol was in charge of the sale of the apartments near Songdo, in Incheon, and Kim oversaw the sale of the apartments near Yongin. Kim's remark referred to Hyong-chol's idea of giving out concert tickets as promotional gifts for the people coming to the model home. […] Everybody liked his suggestion of a cultural gift […]. His apartments in Songdo had almost all sold, whereas the occupancy rate of Kim's Yongin apartments stood at only 60 percent. (Shin 2012, 92–93)

Another feature that makes Korea more a masculine rather than a feminine culture is people's tendency to *live in order to work*. I do not think there is another country in the world where people spend so much time in the office or school than in Korea.

> Today's South Koreans live busy lives. They work the longest hours in the OECD, and most women – who were expected to stay at home until perhaps one generation ago – are now part of the work force. Competition makes adults toil away in offices all day long and forces their children to study

around the clock. Most people simply lack the time to visit relatives often. (Tudor, 2012, 260)

This idea is also revealed in the novel in connection with three of the Mother's children, the eldest son (the manager of an estate agent's), her eldest daughter (a pharmacist who runs her own chemist shop and looks after her family of four), and her youngest daugther (a famous writer, who is invited to various professional events not only in her country, but also abroad). Women in present-day Korea are not simply satisfied with being housewives (*jubu*), but strive to be equal to men in many respects, even if this places a heavier burden on their shoulders. On the other hand, if thirty-forty years ago, men simply wanted to marry a housewife, nowadays they want to marry someone "with a strong educational background and a decent career" (Tudor 2012, 197). So, along this dimension, Korea has changed from a feminine into a more masculine culture.

With respect to the fourth dimension, *uncertainty avoidance,* South Korea's index score (87) shows that its people feel threatened or uncomfortable in ambiguous situations. In these circumstances, they may sometimes be impulsive and impatient. An illustration of the behaviour of Koreans in uncertain situations is the behaviour of two of the Mother's children (the eldest son's and the youngest daughter's) when they realize that they may never see their beloved mother again. In an argument he has with his wife, Kyong-chol somehow blames her for not being more involved in the search for his mother and for not sharing his feeling of loss:

"Do we all just stop doing what we do because Mother isn't here?"
"She is missing, not 'is not here.'"
"So what do you want me to do? You yourself go to work!"
"What?" He picks up a golf club from the corner and is about to hurl it across the room.
"Hyong-chol!" Father is standing at the open door. (Shin 2012, 128)

The same impulsive attitude characterizes the Mother's youngest daughter, Chi-hon, who is intrigued by her eldest brother's apparent lack of consideration for their missing mother, in that he goes to play golf. She started shouting at him, blaming him that he had given up the hope of finding Mother. "You saw your brother get out of the car with his golf clubs and screamed, 'You asshole!' […] You grabbed his clubs and threw them on the ground" (Shin 2012, 263–264).

Impulsiveness and impatience, but also activeness are contained in the Korean expression 'palli, palli.' The *palli, palli* culture is related to the Korean's ambition to have an accomplished life, which, in the long run, would also enable a rapid economic growth of the country. Despite the fact that the *palli, palli* culture is the driving force behind Korea's development, there are also disadvantages related

to it, in that people do not find the patience to listen to the others' problems, sorrows or achievements as they seem to be in a rat race without end.

5. Conclusions

As the analysis revealed, the Korean culture, just like most of the cultures of the world, has been influenced by globalization. Shin (2006) stressed the fact that "the paradox of globalization in South Korea is the existence of two (seemingly) contradictory trends: the co-existence between a 'nationalist appropriation of globalization' and an 'intensification of ethnic/national identity' in reaction to globalization" (quoted in Marinescu 2014, 2). All aspects of life have undergone changes starting with the family, moving on to the educational system and the society as a whole.

Out of the four dimensions that have been investigated, the one that has been most affected by the passing of time is collectivism. The people of current Korea, who have busy schedules and who live in "cookie-cutter apartments" (Tudor 2012, 189), do not even know their next-door neighbours. This shows they feel less inclined to provide mutual support to each other. This may also be due to the fact that the wealth they so much desire destroys their relationships. At the same time, the culture of *jeong* seems to be weakening. Older Koreans, especially the ones living in Seoul, would say that the younger generation is cold and individualistic, or even Westernized (this was reflected in the loose relationships between the adult children and the old parents of the novel, especially of those of the youngest daughter, who travelled abroad extensively). Individualism is also triggered by the heightened competition between individuals, by the Koreans' need to outdo others, starting at school, then in professional exams, and later at the workplace, becoming thus ego-oriented rather than collectivity-oriented. Also affected is the masculine-feminine dimension, Korea becoming little by little a masculine culture, in which women tend to have jobs that used to be done by men, and, as such, have less time to interact with their extended families. The least affected of the four dimensions seems to be uncertainty avoidance; the reason for it could be the fact that this was the driving power that propelled Korea among the top advanced countries in the world.

With respect to the third research question, related to the Koreans' attitude towards the changes, I would dare say that many of them disapprove of the tendency of the young generation to be less respectful towards the elder people and also lament the decline of the large family and its replacement with the nuclear one, made up of two parents and one or two children. "It is a development they see as part of the general decline of social unity and *jeong* in today's urban South Korea. Old people arguably lost the most from the rise of

the nuclear family: between 1975 and 1996, the percentage of the elderly living in an 'elderly-only household' rose from 7 percent to 53 percent, according to government statistics" (Tudor 2012, 261). These changes had, nevertheless, some advantages, especially for young women. In the past, apart from being responsible for the house-chores and the raising of children, Korean wives had to comply with the demands of their in-laws (as was the case of the Mother and her sister-in-law). They were also the ones to organize the rituals for the ancestors. Nowadays, as at Chuseaok and Seollal most Koreans choose to travel abroad, women do not have to do that any longer.

As Tudor nicely puts it, "a fundamental fact about this country is that it has an immense capacity for change. Because of this, a statement about life in Korea that is true at a particular moment may become completely false far sooner than can be predicted" (2012, 266).

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Barriers to Women Entrepreneurship: A Comparative Analysis between South Korea and Romania

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Abstract. Even in the twenty-first century, women entrepreneurs from all over the world continue to encounter different types of barriers in their activity. Depending on their location, history, culture, etc. the restraints can be more or less strict, distinct or similar. This article analyses and compares the constraints that the women entrepreneurs from South Korea and Romania are encountering, barriers concerning the professional stereotypes such as smaller medium wages for women, difficulties in getting specific jobs, the traditional collective mentality and prejudices, the roles of women in society, the balance between professional and family/private life, as well as the maternity and child care systems. The analysis is based on the data provided by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, OECD and the World Bank, the legislations of the two countries and the literature related to the two social environments. The findings indicate that although there are many similarities between the two countries, such as smaller salaries for women, discrimination against women, difficulty to advance, conservative attitudes towards women, lack of ways to monitor and penalize discrimination, lack of successful women entrepreneurs, the number of women entrepreneurs in South Korea is significantly smaller than the number of Romanian ones. This is due to the South Korean stricter social environment, harsher work environment (with shorter holidays, longer working hours, obligatory group activities and stricter hierarchy), higher gender wage gap and poorer maternity and childcare legislation.[1]

Keywords: women, entrepreneur, barriers, Romania, South Korea.

1 This work was supported by Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund of 2016.

1. Introduction

Women's entrepreneurship has been recognized as an important source of economic growth in the last decades (OECD 2004). Women create jobs for themselves and for others, they come with different solutions to current problems than their male counterparts and they exploit the entrepreneurial opportunities in directions that men could not. However, they still represent a minority (OECD 2004). Women have lower participation rates in entrepreneurship than men and generally they tend to activate in different industries than men do (retail, education, service industries, etc.), sometimes perceived as being less important to economic development and growth (OECD 2004). Moreover, women are faced with specific obstacles (household work, family responsibilities, child rearing, etc.) and unless these are overcome, they cannot have access to the same opportunities as men. Other obstacles are related to the lack of role models in entrepreneurship, weak social status, gendering of entrepreneurship, access to finance, maternity and child care policies, etc. (OECD 2004). At the same time, depending on the area, society, culture, etc. the barriers that women entrepreneurs face can be more or less high.

Regarding the two countries chosen for this paper, Romania and South Korea, they experienced different histories, traditions, development, economic level, etc. and knowing the strict social environment that can be found in the majority of Asian countries related to women at work, we wanted to analyze which one of them has a more supportive environment and what the barriers that women entrepreneurs face are. The reasons for choosing these two countries start with the location of the two authors, one in South Korea and one in Romania, their interest in the topic and the worldwide increasing enthusiasm in topics related to this Asian country. The analysis has been made based on the literature related to the two countries' environments (social, political, etc.), the legislations of the two in this field and on the data provided by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, OECD and World Bank.

2. Backgrounds

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 2, states the following: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (United Nations 1948). This means that no woman should be deprived of the opportunity to be an entrepreneur. Throughout history, women struggled to gain personal and professional space, took risks, were divided between family and work, and "invented" jobs. Thanks to them, we can speak today of female entrepreneurship. Part of the results of their fight are considered to be March 8th – International

Women's Day; September 23rd – International Day against Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Women and Children; November 25th – International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Despite all the victories and the fact that today women should have the same rights as men do, we cannot always speak of equality and partnership. The reasons why this happens are strictly related to the image of women in a society, and thus to the culture and the mentality of that society (Rosu 2015). Moreover, the entrepreneurship development, regardless of gender, is linked to economic trends, technological progress, demographic trends and social changes, every country being different. Regarding Romania and South Korea, before proceeding with the comparative analysis, it is imperative to first have a look at all the elements related to entrepreneurship, such as the professional stereotypes, the traditional collective mentality and prejudices, the roles of women in society, the balance between professional and family/private life, as well as the maternity and child care systems. The hypothesis that guided the analysis is that despite the different historical, economic and cultural background, the situation of female entrepreneurs in both countries is similar.

2.1. Romania

Romania is a former communist country, member of EU and NATO, that is still struggling to create an entrepreneurial culture in a strongly corrupted environment. The main concern here is gaining money and not the client, nor the quality of the product or the service. The years spent under communist control reduced the entrepreneurial capacities to zero, and people that now should be mature and represent a successful model to the young generations are missing. However, the year 2007 came with a new challenge for Romanians, after the country's entrance in the EU: they had to learn how to compete with their European counterparts. Many had the chance to activate in the European environment and to learn a great deal from that. Also, they started to have access to structural funds from the EU, which gave them the financial support to create new businesses and improve their activities (Piti 2010).

Based on data provided by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) and the European Commission (Scărlătescu 2013), in 2013 Romania was the first country from the EU in terms of entrepreneurship intentions, 27% of Romanians declaring they wanted to start a new business. However, in terms of sustainability of entrepreneurship initiatives, it was on the last but one place in Europe, more than half of the new companies not being able to survive the critical period of forty-two months (Scărlătescu 2013).

Regarding Romanian women, according to two Romanian proverbs, i.e. "Man should wear pants and the women skirts"[2] and "A woman's place is in the

2 In Romanian: Omul să poarte nădragii şi femeia fustele.

kitchen,"[3] the woman's place is inside the house, in the kitchen, the equality of chances remaining still a utopia. In order to understand a Romanian woman's role in the society, it is also very important to mention the religion and the place of a woman in it. Romania is composed of 86.45% of its citizens with Orthodox religion (INSSE 2013), which considers women inferior to men.

As Mihaela Miroiu, expert in feminism and gender studies in Romania said, although the communist era brought egalitarianism and women were supposed to work the same way as men did (in factories, agriculture, etc.), the lack of free expression and the control did not give women a big chance to become independent (qtd. in Ofiteru and Ion 2014). Nevertheless, due to the fact that the Romanians were 80% peasants before communism, men have never really financially supported the women, the latter having to earn their bread by themselves, meaning that Romania did not have many women as housewives. Romania is characterized by an education in the spirit of self-sacrifice, women coming on the second or third place in what concerns their importance, investment and food. Also, Romanian women are the ones who supported men during the crisis of the 1980s, in communism, and also in that of the 1990s, when due to deindustrialization men were left without jobs (Ofiteru and Ion 2014).

During communism, the system's biggest promise, equality, did not mean equality between sexes. However, the party and the state supported women to get involved in the public sphere, to break the economic barriers imposed by the old traditions and to leave the children in the public organizations' care. Ceauşescu named them "equal socialist workers" and "mothers of the nation" (Massino 2004).

There have been identified two distinct phases during the communist regime for highlighting the status of women: policies for empowerment at the beginning of communism (1948–1965) and aggressive pro-natalist policies (anti-abortion decree 1966–1989). During the debate "After twenty-five years. Communism in East Europe", Alina Hurubeanu explained that after the war, in Romania, there was an acute need of women labor and thus an intense propaganda of emancipation and freedom for women through work (qtd. in Pădurariu 2014). She also mentioned that women, through their efforts as producers, mothers and wives, contributed to the meeting and exceeding of the plan, to the blossoming of communism and of the country. Paid employment became the solution for women's emancipation and the way to demonstrate equality with men (Pădurariu 2014). The second period, also known as the "Golden Age," was characterized by a strict pro-natalist policy. The anti-abortion decree of 1966 represented a new stage in the standardization of the brutal status of women. They became more important for reproductive purposes, kept under strict control by every three months gynecology checks (especially for the women who worked in factories).

3 In Romanian: Locul femeii este la cratiță.

Women were supposed to have at least four children by the age of forty-five, making Romania one of the strictest communist countries regarding abortion. There are two movies that present very clearly women's condition during that time: *Children of the Decree* (*Decreței*i, Florin Iepan, 2005) and *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* (*4 luni, 3 săptămâni şi 2 zile*, Cristian Mungiu, 2007), the latter being the winner of the Palme d'Or award at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival.

In 1973, Ceauşescu defined women's role and status during a meeting of the Communist Party's Central Committee: "The highest honor for women is to give birth, to give life and raise children. There can be nothing more dear for a woman than being a mother" (Banciu, Chipea and Bancila 2012). He was aware of the power, the talents and determination of women that were an important element in the construction of communist Romania.

After the fall of communism, the Constitution from 1991 acknowledged for the first time the equality between sexes: Title 1, Article 4 – "(2) Romania is the common and indivisible homeland of all its citizens, without distinction of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, opinion, political affiliation, wealth or social origin."[4] Also after the fall of communism many laws concerning equality of chances appeared: 1999 – the law concerning paternity leave, 2000 – the law concerning the prevention and sanctions against discrimination, 2003 – the labor code, 2006 – National Strategy for equality between sexes 2006-2009, 2010 – National Strategy for equality between sexes 2010-2012, 2010 – the law concerning child care leave, monthly allowance for children, etc. Concerning maternity leave, the 2005 law which was updated several times until 2015 consists of: pregnancy leave – sixty-three days before birth; and confinement leave or maternity leave – sixty-three days after birth. The monthly child allowance represents 85% of the net average income earned in the last twelve months (European Commission 2016). There is also a parental leave that mothers can take: up to two years, with an allowance of 85% from the average net income earned in the last twelve months, maximum 1.200 lei/month (around 300 $). The children's allowances are as follows: 42 lei/month (around 10 $) or 75 lei/month (around 14 $) for the children that come from low-income families.[5] Moreover, the employer is forbidden from firing a woman who is pregnant or is currently on maternity leave/parental leave and he/she has to receive her back on her previous position after the leave is finished. The situation is the same for men who take parental leave. Statistics show that 95% of the persons that take the parental leave resume their work at the end of it (Agerpres 2016). Regarding men

4 Translated from Romanian by the authors of the present study. Original text: "România este patria comună şi indivizibilă a tuturor cetăţenilor săi, fără deosebire de rasă, de naţionalitate, de origine etnică, de limbă, de religie, de sex, de opinie, de apartenenţă politică, de avere sau de origine socială."

5 *http://legislatiamuncii.manager.ro/a/14521/mod-de-calcul-indemnizatie-crestere-copil-2014.html*

who take parental leave, the Romanian National Agency for Payments and Social Inspection declared that at the end of 2014, 137.000 people were on parental leave, out of which 15.153 were men (Alexa 2014). The Romanian National Press Agency released at the beginning of this year an analysis which indicates that only 4.5% of Romanian men who become fathers choose to take parental leave, compared to 42% for women (Agerpres 2016). However, by law, Romanian men have the right to five fully paid days of holiday in the first eight weeks from the birth of their child (Law 210/1999).

2.2. South Korea

On the other side is South Korea, with a society deeply influenced by Confucianism and patriarchy, where a woman's value was given by her position as obedient daughter, wife and mother, for the preservation of the bloodline. Moreover, men were seen as superior and leaders, while women were seen as inferior and blind followers (Ro 1998). Traditionally, women and men were separated inside the household, having separate spaces at their disposal (*anbang* for women and *saranbang* for men) (Lee 1996). Also, a woman, even after marriage, would not take the husband's name but she would be moved to her new family's record book (Ro 1998) and she would be obedient to them. She would not be allowed to remarry in case of divorce or death of the husband. In the 1940s, there still existed some cases of suicide after the husband's death.

In the late 1980s an interesting variation of traditional female roles was observed in the villages of Jeju Island, where women were economically self-sufficient due to the fact that they were working as divers in search of oysters, seaweed, etc. Their husbands took care of the household and children, in contrast with the Confucian norm (Savada and Shaw 1992). The women from this area are called "sea women," *haenyeo* in Korean. They were famous for being able to dive to depths of around sixty feet to find sea creatures to sell, while the husbands stayed at home and took care of the children and the house. Men were still in charge of the political affairs and other "manly" activities. Nowadays, however, due to the increasing tourism in the area, many male-dominated economic activities have been put in place and the need for their women to dive for food is not as big as before (Tudor 2012).

Modern South Korea is an androgenic country constructed by the traditional Korean neo-Confucian patriarchy, Japanese colonialism (1910–1945), the implementation of the US's political and social infrastructure, together with the Japanese military trained Korean former president Park Chung-Hee's dictatorship (1962–1979) that promoted masculine integrity and chastity upon women (Kim and Choi 1998). The military government fortified the idea of male domination and legitimized the subordination of women for the benefit of the country's

development and declared "Korean mothers the sacred emblem of the Korean nation" (Kim and Choi 1998, 17).

In 1948, the Republic of Korea was established and women achieved constitutional rights for equality concerning education, work, public life, etc. but the war that followed (1950–1953) brought again many changes for women. Many became widows (16.1 percent in 1955) (Lee 2008) and the gender roles tradition had to be interrupted. Single mothers had to provide for their families and so their role experienced an upgrading. In the 1960s, during the economic development under state control, the Korean family system underwent many changes concerning the family planning project. If traditionally the Koreans prefer sons to daughters, the 1970s slogan changed that preference: "Son or daughter, let's just have two babies and raise them well" (Lee 2008). The 1980s came with another slogan: "Given the small territory, let's have just one child and live young" (Lee 2008). This slogan had a big influence on the current low birth rate in South Korea (1.210 in 2014, based on OECD's data), but put higher focus on the nuclear family (i.e. the parents and their child), leaving outside the couple's parents.

One of the factors that paved the road to South Korea's spectacular growth in the last decades was the quality of the labor force, women and men alike. In the 1960s, industrialization brought women jobs in manufacturing industries like foods, textiles, etc. Between the 1970s and 1980s the banking, the insurance, the service sectors demanded more and more women work force (Lee 2008). In 1988 the government passed the "Equal Employment Act" in support of women's protection against discrimination in work places (Lee 2008). The 1990s came with technology and more service industries and more women were invited to work. In 2006 the ratio of women participation in economic activities was 50.3 percent (Lee 2008).

The women who graduated in the 1980s or early 1990s did not have a high chance of using their education; they were strongly discriminated inside the companies and forced to quit after their marriage. Because of this, among the current leaders in their forties or fifties, female representation is low, only 4.7 percent of executives are women in the large Korean companies. The ones who graduated in the late 1990s and 2000s had different experiences, the male colleagues being more permissive and accepting, but still treating women as women "engineers" not as engineers, for example, and still surprised by the success of their female colleagues (Tudor 2012).

The South Korean corporate world is a male-oriented one and the *wage discrimination* is a difficulty that women still face, the wage gap being around 38% in 2013, based on OECD's Gender wage gap research findings (2013). The main reasons for this are related to education, experience and "the old boy's network," companies valuing who you know rather than individual qualifications (Lowe-Lee 2006).

At work, the Korean women encounter, besides the small salaries, discrimination related to employment and promotion. In some cases there is also pressure from their colleagues or their friends/society to give up their jobs and career after marriage or having children (Kwon 2014). The ones who continue working face multiple tasking such as child rearing, wage earners, housekeeping duties, family and social obligations and expectations, due to the fact that women are still considered primarily responsible for raising children (Lowe-Lee 2006). The society, the literature, the social media still strongly sustain the image of women as mothers who sacrifice everything for their children and have a strong relationship with them (Kim 2013).

Compared to the old days, daughters/women in South Korea are seen as an asset and are supposed to get an education and find jobs, but companies still tend to choose men over women when hiring as the former are considered a better option on the long term, due to the high possibility that women might give up their job after marriage. This also happens because of the lack of childcare facilities, inflexible working environment, lack of paid maternity leave and security of being able to resume their activity after the leave is over (Kim, Lee and Shin 2014). The result of this is the M-curve pattern, which means that Korean women start working in large number after graduating, quit their jobs after having children and return to work after their children are grown, but on positions that are low-paid and have law added value (Tudor 2012).

South Korea is number three in the top ten countries in terms of the average annual hours worked, with 2057 hours per worker (OECD 2014). In Korea, China and Japan, the three countries of the Confucian belt, there is a belief in total dedication and any job has to be done excessively. The culture of working hard and long hours has post-Korean-War origins, when the country was in ruins and the leaders from 1950-1990 promoted the long working hours of employees as the path to success, the ones who did it being glorified. In 2009 Samsung Electronics adopted flexible work hours, but old habits die hard because employees are trying to impress the management and do not want to lose their jobs. Another important aspect of the Korean culture is the "Business drinking" or *Kyojesul* in Korean, an integral part of maintaining interpersonal relationships with the companies' customers, suppliers, but also inside the company, between coworkers, for building the company's loyalty and spirit. Generally, these "drinking outings" take a long time, until late in the night, and heavy drinking is a must, no excuse is accepted (Lafayette de Mente 2014). This is hard for married women and mothers because of the housework that also needs to be done after work and the time and attention that the family needs. Thus it is easy to understand why companies prefer men instead of women, the latter not being as resistant to drinking as men are, who had been trained with respect to the drinking etiquette in a highly hierarchical society during their military service (two years of obligatory service) (Novak 2015).

In 1987 a maternity protection law was introduced, which granted pregnant women ninety days of paid leave and their right to return to work. Yet, in practice, things move slower and companies still tend to violate the law. The government is also encouraging men to take a "father's month" off work, but Korean men do not even want to take the holiday they are entitled to, due to the worry that their absence from work will damage their career and relationship with the other colleagues. According to a survey released by the Ministry of Employment and Labor in 2015, the number of men that took paternity leave in the first half of 2015 was 2.212, up 40.6 percent compared to the same period a year before. However, these numbers only account for 5 percent of those taking time off for childcare, indicating a bigger burden for women than for men in raising children in South Korea. In 2001, the first maternity leave legislation was introduced and some improvements have been made, with more than three hundred laws having been changed since 2005 in order to increase gender equality (Tudor 2012).

Moreover, in 2001, the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs that was established in 1998 became the Ministry of Gender Equality, after being elevated and expanded. This new ministry covers six basic areas:

> to revise and establish laws and rules that involve discrimination in any sector and to increase the representation of women, to facilitate women's employment and provide support for female workers, to increase educational opportunities for women to be competitive in the labor market, to provide social welfare policies for women, to promote women's involvement in various social activities including volunteer work and women's organization activities, and to strengthen the cooperation of Korean women's organizations with international women's organizations. (Korean Overseas Information Service 2016)

Among the present South Korean president's policies childcare and female employment are of utmost interest. A good childcare support and more flexible hours could increase the economic participation among women and could fix the M curve in the future: high labor force participation rate in the twenties, low in the thirties until their forties (becoming one of the lowest globally, according to a report by the World Economic Forum in 2013) and again high after their children are grown up. However, the problem seems to be the traditional culture. For example, South Korean men are not supposed to do housework. A study conducted by OECD revealed that among developed countries, South Korean men spend only a total of forty-five minutes daily doing housework, which ranks the country as lowest in sharing of house duties (2014).

3. Comparative Analysis between South Korea and Romania

As seen in the previous chapter, the two countries chosen for this study, South Korea and Romania, are different in their location, history, culture, traditions, economy level, religion, etc. On one side, South Korea experienced an impressive economic growth during the second half of the twentieth century. If in the 1960s it was a poor country with limited social freedoms, today it is one of the most advanced societies, economically and technologically as well. On the other side, Romania is still in transition after many decades under communist control and it is fighting with corruption, but it experienced one of the highest economic growths among the EU countries in 2015 (Agerpres 2015), it is rich in land and resources and it is a strong manufacturing base with a low-cost work force.

In order to make a clearer distinction between the places of women in the two countries and to understand the differences, the next table provides statistical information:

Table 1. *Statistical information: South Korea and Romania.*

Country name	South Korea	Romania
Population in 2014	50.02 million	19.91 million
Female population	50.3% (2014)	48.7% (2013)
Female labor force	41.61% (2013)	44.62% (2013)
Total fertility rate	1.25 children/woman (2014)	1.32 children/woman (2014)
Female representation on boards	1% (2012)	11.9% (2013)
Female CEOs	0.73% (2013)	10.0% (2013)
Women in Parliament	15.7%	11.7%
Women presidents	1	0

Source: World Bank – www.worldbank.com, Trading Economics – www.tradingeconomics.com and Index Mundi – www.indexmundi.com

Regarding the weak political representation in both countries, the main reasons for this are prejudice and discrimination, the process of socialization and communication of women, family responsibilities, etc. (Vass 2015). In South Korea's case, it is also important to take into consideration the strict Confucian society that marginalized women from the political sector, women being considered passive, obedient, soft, while men aggressive, active, and dominant. However, the inauguration of the first woman president of South Korea in 2013 was a turning point in the place of women in this country's politics (Resos 2014).

In Romania's case, if in communism women were seen as equal in work places,

as supporters for the building of the nation, in reality they did not have any power. After the fall of communism, women stayed away from power mainly due to the image that Elena Ceauşescu (wife of Nicolae Ceauşescu) left about women in power (participation not based on competence). However, during the transition period women started to get more involved but the reasons mentioned before plus the high number of corruption scandals in politics keeps them far from it. Also, the Romanian media rarely offers enough time to women in politics, which makes them invisible in the public eye. And when the press gets interested in a woman politician, it is more for her appearance than for her capabilities or position. For example, a search on Google for the topic "women in Romanian politics" will show more articles about the most beautiful politicians, not about the most qualified ones (Glavan 2014).

As seen in the table above, although South Korea has a higher percentage of female population, in terms of labor participation Romania ranks higher. The difference is not big, and actually if we consider the percentage out of the total population, the real number of women working in South Korea is at least double the number of Romanian female workers. Concerning the number of women on boards and CEOs, Romania accepts ten times more women in leading positions, an aspect possible also due to a more relaxed work environment, shorter extra working hours, no need to socialize after work, higher support in maternity leave and security of still having the job after returning.

Based on OECD's data, in South Korea 27.7 percent of the entire female work force have part-time jobs (Ryan 2014). Also, female college graduates do not have an employment rate higher than women with only compulsory education. One reason for these might be the gender pay gap, South Korean women being paid only around 44 percent of a male salary (Ryan 2014). In order to change this situation and also to enjoy more stable fertility rates, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family's budget promised to increase the childcare support (Ryan 2014).

Regarding the percentage of university graduates by sexes, in Romania, in 2013, there were 57.8% women and 42.2% men (INSEE 2014). According to OECD data, in 2011 around 48% of the South Korean women were university graduates, while college completion rate was on average 10% higher than men's (Chamie 2014). Despite the educational gains, women continue to fall behind men in income, politics, employment, business ownership, etc. This is due to societal expectations and cultural norms but also to the fields they choose to study: men dominate majors such as engineering, computer science, manufacturing, while women focus on education, humanities and arts, health and welfare, fields that are less remunerative (Ryan 2014).

Many women that graduate with high dreams of a good future, when faced with the inequalities and the lack of job opportunities, decide to emigrate. While South Koreans emigrate due to long hours of work, jobs that are unstable or

unfit for their level of education, and the high unemployment rate, Romanians emigrate because they consider their country to be poor, corrupted and without opportunities (Stănculescu and Stoiciu 2012).

Korean women who despite the above mentioned facts join the labor force in their country and advance their careers interrupt their employment for motherhood responsibilities, which causes a fall behind men on their work capabilities. Also, women are more likely to take time off from their job to take care of family matters, including care for elderly relatives (Chamie 2014).

Related to the ease of doing business, in 2015 the World Bank Group ranked South Korea as number four and Romania as number thirty-seven out of one hundred and eighty-nine economies (2016a and 2016b). The analysis also shows that the time for starting a business is much shorter in South Korea (four days, three procedures being necessary) (World Bank Group 2016a) compared to Romania (eight days, with five procedures) (World Bank Group 2016b).

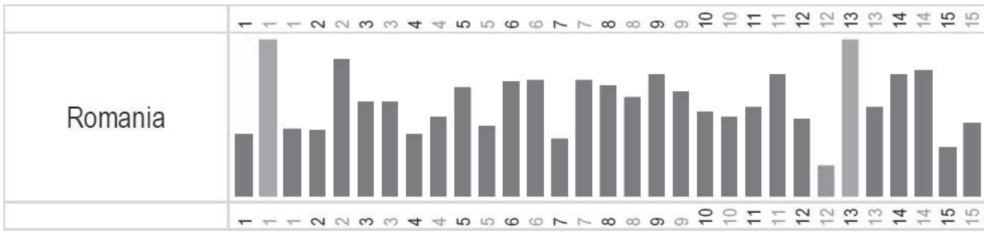
Concerning the Female Entrepreneurship Index 2015, Romania is located on the thirty-third position with a score of 49.4 and South Korea on the forty-third position with a score of 40.1. The same research also indicated that South Korea, together with Japan, Taiwan and Singapore create the right conditions for entrepreneurship among women (Terjesen and Lloyd 2015).

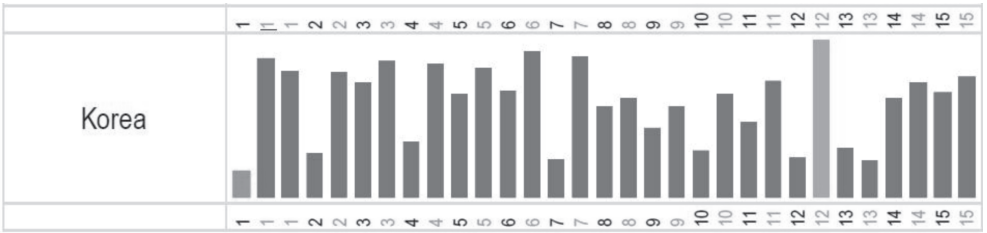
FEI Results by Country

Pillar	Indicator	Pillar	Indicator	Pillar	Indicator	Pillar	Indicator
1	Opportunity Recognition	4	Know an Entrepreneur	8	Highly Educated Owners	12	New Technology
1	Equal Rights	4	Internet and Networks	8	SME support and training	12	R&D Expenditure
1	Market Size	5	Executive Status	9	Innovativeness	13	Business Gazelles
2	Perc. Of Skills	5	Access to Childcare	9	Monopolized Markets	13	Female Leadership
2	Secondary Education	6	Opportunity Business	10	Entrepreneurship Ratio	14	Export Focus
3	Willingness to Start	6	Bus Freedom & Movement	10	Labor Force Parity	14	Globalization
3	Business Risk	7	Tech Sector Business	11	New Product	15	1st tier financing
		7	Tech Absorption	11	Technology Transfer	15	3rd tier financing

Individual level indicators are listed in black; Institutional level indicators are listed in blue

Highest score Lowest score





Source: Terjesen, S.; Loyd, A., 2015 Female Entrepreneurship Index. Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute, p. 25, 33

Table 2. *FEI Results by country.*

As indicated in the FEI analysis's results by country, Romania ranked the highest in the Equal Rights area and Business Gazelles, Number 2 in Secondary Education and the lowest in New Technology, while South Korea got the highest score in New Technology, middle high in Tech Absorption, Bus Freedom and movement and lowest in Opportunity Recognition.

In Romania women entrepreneurship is supported by measures and actions taken specifically for women or indirectly by encouraging entrepreneurship in general. Such measures are financed from the national budget or from European funds and are supported by public or private institutions. The European projects that encourage entrepreneurship are in high number, so just a few will be mentioned here: Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, "Youth in action," European Social Fund, etc. The Romanian entrepreneurial environment promotes women entrepreneurs through the improvement of the access to financing and to different supportive networks and through projects as "Women Entrepreneurs in Rural Areas,"[6] "Feminine Entrepreneurship,"[7] "A Better Future for Women,"[8] etc. (Rosu 2015). Based on the findings of Romania's National Statistics Institute, in 2005 around 38% out of the total of Romanian enterprises were led by women, and in 2015 the female unemployment rate was 5.9%, lower than that of men, which was of 7.2% (INSSE 2016).

In South Korea's case, in order to improve women entrepreneurs' economic activities, the Government has established the "supporting law for women enterprises" and many local government services together with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family have created and operate several support programs. They give assistance for locating funds, international expanding, management innovation trainings, development of brands, etc. (Lee, Sohn and Yong 2011).

In what concerns the percentage of enterprises owned by women in South Korea, it is increasing continuously: in 2011 it was 36%, out of which 93% were

6 In Romanian: "FAR – Femeia antreprenor in Rural"
7 In Romanian: "Antreprenoriatul la feminin"
8 In Romanian: "Un viitor mai bun pentru femei"

small-scale enterprises with maximum five employees and were related to the service industry and retail. In 2004, Korean women entrepreneurs exported approximately 2.13 billion dollars, less than 1% of Korea's exports (Lee, Sohn and Yong 2011).

The 2013 GEM Global Report divided the economies in three categories: factor-driven economies, efficiency-driven economies and innovation-driven economies. As probably expected, Romania and South Korea belong to different categories, Romania to the second and South Korea to the third (2013a, 10). This indicates that while South Korea is a generator of new knowledge, Romania is dominated by imitation (GEM 2014, 9). Based on the key indicators of GEM, TEA (total early-stage entrepreneurial activity) rate was 6.9% in 2013 in South Korea (GEM 2013a, 3) and 11.3% in 2014 in Romania (GEM 2013a, 16). In entrepreneurial intention Korea only rated 13% (GEM 2013a, 14) while Romania rated 32% (GEM 2013a, 16). In terms of fear of failure both countries rated similar numbers, Romania 47% (GEM 2013a, 32) and South Korea 44% (GEM 2013a, 13). Female TEA in 2013 was 3.9%, compared to 9.7% for men in South Korea (GEM 2013a, 16).

Other numbers and percentages are as follows:

Table 3. *Key indicators – South Korea and Romania.*

	Romania	**South Korea**	**Comments**
Financial environment related with entrepreneurship	2.43	2.85	
Government policies bureaucracy, taxes	2.24	3.01	
Government programs	2.51	2.98	
Education and training	2.68	2.26	
R&D transfer	2.59	2.42	
Professional and commercial infrastructure	3.09	2.41	
Market dynamics	3.14	2.96	
Physical infrastructure and service access	2.89	4.16	
Cultural, social norms and society support	2.61	3.08	
Support for female entrepreneurship	Numbers missing	2.87	
Interest for innovation		3.34	Only for innovation-driven countries

Source: GEM NES database 2012-2014

In the case of South Korea, GEM declared that despite a slight growth in 2013's entrepreneurial activity, the country still had low levels of entrepreneurial education, youth and female entrepreneurship. Moreover, the research indicates that South Korea's results are low, compared to other innovative-driven economies like the USA, Finland and Singapore (2013b, 1).

Among the factors that positively affect the entrepreneurial environment in South Korea there are the good physical infrastructure, market dynamics and effective government policies (the development of a "Creative Economy" with focus on improving entrepreneurial education at all levels and assisting entrepreneurs in fields like secure financing, service infrastructure, etc.). Among the challenges for the future, GEM highlights the necessity of changes in the entrepreneurship policies and in the culture of entrepreneurship by modifications in the education system, support for professional infrastructure, etc. Related to women entrepreneurship, the present weak levels should be tackled by identifying role models, by improving the societal view of female entrepreneurs and by providing specific governmental programs and family support, such as day-care centers (GEM 2013b, 1).

In Romania's case, the factors that affect positively the entrepreneurial environment are the market dynamics, the legal and physical infrastructure. Also, due to an increase in the number of established business owners in the last years, the proportion of people involved in any kind of entrepreneurial activity has increased, becoming one of the highest in the Central and Eastern Europe region. The biggest constraints are regulations and taxes, the availability of financial resources, and entrepreneurial education. With respect to the challenges for the future, Romania should improve the access to finance, the promotion of entrepreneurial education and should create better government policies that can provide real support to entrepreneurs (GEM 2014, 1).

In South Korea the ratio of male participation in entrepreneurship is 10.8%, four times more than women's, which is 2.3%. Compared to the other innovative-oriented countries where the rate is only double in favor of men, South Korea's is extremely high (GEM 2013b, 16). To resolve this issue, the GEM report proposes improvements of the social perceptions through government programs, efforts in discovering and fostering competent female entrepreneurs, supportive structures for working mothers, such as day care centers and more education programs for female entrepreneurs (GEM 2013b, 1).

In Romania's case, the GEM analysis also indicates the fact that Romanian women consider themselves having the required knowledge and skills to start a business (76.71% compared to men 84.33%), but the share of those who think that the fear of failure will stop them from starting a business is almost the double of that of men (46.22% for women and 29.62% for men) (GEM 2014, 33–34). The Romanian physical infrastructure (roads, utilities, communication, waste

disposal) that supports the new and growing firms is in need of improvement, Romania ranking the lowest among the EU's efficient-driven countries: Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania and Poland (GEM 2014, 43).

In the end, it is important to mention the immediate necessity of more female labor participants, especially in South Korea, where the aging society and the future pension fund issue are pressing. By 2026, 23 percent of the population will be aged over sixty-five, due to the low birth rate (1.2 children on average), high costs for children rearing (around 230.000US$[9]) and insufficient childcare policies (Tudor 2012).

4. Conclusions

The concept of equality between sexes exists both in Romania and South Korea in theory and legislation, but in reality societies consider women as the only ones responsible for the household and men as responsible for providing the income, with the difference that in South Korea women are the "heads" of the family in that they receive their husbands' salary and manage it. In the last decades, women's necessity of getting out of the household and working grew significantly due to increasing economic issues, causing a double burden for working wives and mothers.

At work, women from both countries have to deal with smaller salaries, discrimination, difficulty to advance, etc. This is mainly due to the patriarchal societies and conservative attitudes towards women, the lack of legal mechanisms and institutions to monitor and penalize discrimination. Other reasons, as found in the research, are related to the family's constitution and the role of each member in it, to school, mass media, civil society and political sphere.

A difference is found in the existence and implementation of maternity leave for working mothers. Romania ranks higher with a more supportive legislation for parental leave (for mothers or fathers), better childcare institutions and parents' integration after their return in the office. Also, Korea's work environment comes with more requests related to working hours, shorter holidays, obligatory group activities (especially dinners and drinking) and stricter hierarchy that make it harder for women to succeed on long-term due to their home responsibilities.

Other barriers that were found in both countries are related to the lack of successful female entrepreneur examples that could motivate other women to get more involved, the lack of confidence that generates fear in innovation and taking decisions, presenting new ideas, etc. Further barriers are common with men's: financial difficulties (for example, South Koreans complain that the access to funding is easier for bigger companies than smaller ones); difficulties in

9 Numbers according to Korea Institute of Health and Social Affairs.

finding proper contracts for business, lack of information, pressure of taxation, bureaucracy (higher in Romania than in South Korea) and lack of modern technology (again higher in Romania, compared to South Korea). It is important, however, to remember that the two countries are part of different levels of entrepreneurship countries: innovation-driven for South Korea and opportunity-driven for Romania, which puts them in different stages of economic development. Moreover, by choosing a woman president in 2013, Korea seems to have opened the gate towards gender equality and support for women entrepreneurship and other female-related issues.

However, Romanian and Korean women entrepreneurs seem to have the same fate and to be hindered in their successful careers by the same barriers, despite the different backgrounds. The need to involve more women and in better conditions in the labor sector is pressing especially the government of South Korea, due to the aging society and future pension fund issues, but Romania does not fall behind either since the economic growth and the path towards an innovation-driven country requires the help of all citizens.

Nevertheless, whatever the future will bring, women will always have power. Both in Romania as well as in South Korea history has shown many times that women were able to pass over difficulties, political changes and economic struggles with strength, a strong sense of responsibility, and sometimes with more diplomacy than men were.

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